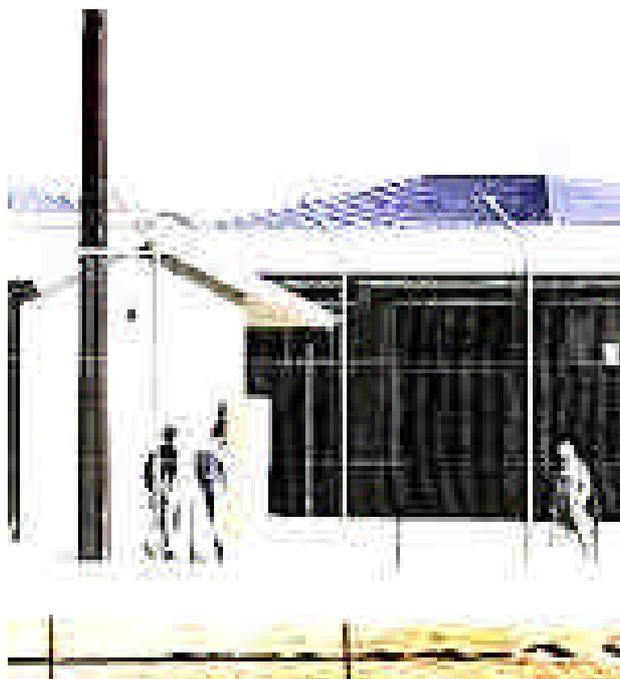


# The Muslims in Australia

## A Brief History

*By Bilal Cleland*



*Woomera High Security Detention Centre for immigrants in Southern Australia, the inmates of which are mainly Muslim.*

*July 2000, courtesy & © Bilal Cleland*

**Islamic  
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Published July 2000 by Islamic Human Rights Commission |  
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Bilal Cleland July 2000

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### Islam in our Near North.

Many Australians are accustomed to thinking of the continent as being isolated for thousands of years, cut-off from the great currents flowing throughout world civilisation. A sense of this separation from 'out there' is given in "The Tyranny of Distance" by Blainey who writes "In the eighteenth century the world was becoming one world but Australia was still a world of its own. It was untouched by Europe's customs and commerce. It was more isolated than the Himalayas or the heart of Siberia."<sup>1</sup> The cast of mind which is reflected in this statement, from one of Australia's most distinguished modern historians, understands 'the world' and 'Europe's customs and commerce' as somehow inextricably linked.

Manning Clark writes of isolation, the absence of civilisation, until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, attributing this partly to "the internal history of those Hindu, Chinese and Muslim civilisations which colonized and traded in the archipelago of southeast Asia."<sup>2</sup> While not linking Europe with civilisation, Australia still stands separate and alone.

There is no doubt that just to our north, around southeast Asia and through the straits between the islands of the Indonesian archipelago, there was a great deal of coming and going by representatives of all world civilisations. Representatives of the Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and latterly, Western Christian civilisations, visited, struck root and occasionally, evolved into something else. Some left or were cast out.

There was substantial trade between Arabia and China from the Tang Dynasty (608-907 CE) and that trade was plied around the seas to Australia's near north. The history of Islam in the region commences with the maternal uncle of Muhammad, Abi Waqqas, who went on the migration to Ethiopia during the persecution but did not return to Arabia with the other refugees. He went on a trading voyage with three other Sahaba (Companions of the Prophet), from Ethiopia to Canton in about 616 CE. He then returned to Arabia. Chinese Muslim annals record that after 21 years he returned to Canton bringing the Quran with him.<sup>3</sup> He founded the Mosque of Remembrance, near the Kwang Ta (the Smooth Minaret) built by the Arabs as a lighthouse. His tomb is in the Muslim cemetery in Canton.

The precise date of Islam's arrival in insular southeast Asia cannot be readily established. Some historians argue "that by the beginning of the ninth century Arab merchants and sailors, (and other Muslims) had begun to dominate the Nanhai or Southeast Asian Trade."<sup>4</sup> There was already a colony of foreign Muslims on the west coast of Sumatra by 674 CE and other Muslim settlements began to appear after 878 CE.<sup>5</sup> Islam steadily spread, Islamisation of societies occurred and according to even hostile commentators, Islam "was a factor in the life of the islands by the end of the twelfth century."<sup>6</sup> There are indications that Arab explorations off northern Australia did take place. The map of the Sea of Java of Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi 820 CE shows Cape Yorke Peninsula, a "V" shaped Gulf of Carpentaria and a curved Arnhem Land<sup>7</sup>. A later map, that of Abu Isak Al-Farisi Istakhari 934 CE, also includes an outline of the northern coast of Australia.<sup>8</sup>

Islam was well established by the time Ibn Battuta visited Sumatra in about 1350 where he found the sultan al-Malik Az-Zahir "a most illustrious and open-handed ruler, and a lover of theologians."<sup>9</sup> Marco Polo had found the Kingdom of Sumatra inhabited by idolaters a few years before in 1292 CE, but the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Perlak on the same island had changed from idolaters to Muslims "owing to contact with Saracen merchants who continually resort here in ships".<sup>10</sup>

Other famous travellers also left their accounts. Chinese Muslims, Admiral Zheng He and his lieutenant Ma Huan (Muhammad Hasan), in the service of Yung Lo third Emperor of the Ming Dynasty, became famous as

<sup>1</sup> Blainey, Geoffrey. The Tyranny of distance. Sun Books Melbourne. 1966 p. 2

<sup>2</sup> Clark, C.M.H. A History of Australia Vol I MUP 1999 p.3

<sup>3</sup> Liu Chih. The Life of the Prophet. 12 vols. 1721

<sup>4</sup> Majul, Cesar Adib. Muslims in the Philippines. University of the Philippines Press. Quezon City. 1999 p.41

<sup>5</sup> Majul, Cesar Adib. Muslims in the Philippines.p.44

<sup>6</sup> Gowing, Peter Gordon. Muslim Filipinos - Heritage and Horizon. New Day Publishers, Quezon City. 1979 p.15

<sup>7</sup> Whitehouse, Eric. B. Australia in Old Maps 820-1770. Boolarong Press. Queensland. 1995 p.65

<sup>8</sup> Whitehouse p. 16. 66

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Battuta. Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354. Translated and Selected by H.A.R. Gibb. Augustus M Kelley Publishers. NY 1969 p.274

<sup>10</sup> Marco Polo. The Travels. Penguin Classics. 1979 p.253-254

navigators and explorers between 1405 and 1433. The chronicler Fei Xin accompanied many of these voyages and it is from his records that we know “the treasure fleet reached Timor, which is just 400 miles north of Darwin”.<sup>11</sup> The discovery of an image of the god Shou Lao in Darwin in 1879, wedged in the roots of a banyan tree over a metre underground, points to a very early Chinese contact with Australia,<sup>12</sup> but it is not known whether it was Zheng-He or some other Ming sailor.

The palace revolution which caused the permanent cessation of Chinese voyages of exploration opened the way for other seekers of new worlds in our near north. According to Clark: “In the 1430s it looked as though this inheritor of the Chinese would be the Muslim merchants from Persia and the Gujerati Province of India.”<sup>13</sup> Islam steadily spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago, extending across the whole of Java by the eleventh century, into the Moluccas in the early sixteenth century and into Macassar via the Royal Courts of Gowa and Tallo’ in the first decade of the seventeenth century.

As it was pushing onwards into West Papua and beyond, Islam met its nemesis. Clark claims, “the coming of the European ended the spread of Islam, for when Torres first sailed through the strait which still bears his name, he met Moors in west New Guinea. That was in 1607. This marked the limits of the Muslim expansion and knowledge of the area.”<sup>14</sup> Torres came from the east across the Pacific, for the Americas and beyond had been given to Spain by the Pope, Africa and India and beyond to the Portuguese.

The Portuguese Christians, who came via the Cape of Good Hope and India, were clear about their objectives. They well knew of the significance of Islam in the region. Albuquerque, in 1511 the conqueror of Muslim Malacca, the main centre for the dissemination of Islam in southeast Asia, had some time before devised “a scheme to divert the Nile to the Red Sea to make the lands of the Grand Turk sterile, and then to capture Mecca and carry away the bones of Mohammed so that, as he put it, these being reduced publicly to ashes, the votaries of so foul a sect might be confounded.”<sup>15</sup> By winning a monopoly of the Indonesian spice trade these Crusaders hoped to fatally wound Islam.

Although the aggressive Portuguese presence hindered the process of Islamisation in the Moluccas and Timor, Islam remained dominant throughout the archipelago. It was Muslim Macassans and Buginese who established links with Australia.

### The Fleet of Prahus

There are suggestions of trading camps on the northern coasts dating back several centuries. Macknight reports (and rejects) evidence that some fireplaces date back 800 years<sup>16</sup> and Levathes suggests a relationship between the light-skinned Bajunis of Kenya’s offshore islands and the “Baijini” of northern Australian legend, possibly linking the early Chinese explorations of both areas.<sup>17</sup> However, as Islam did not come to Macassar until the early 1600s, unless these Baijini were like Zheng-He, also Muslim, they are not part of this history. Certainly Alexander Dalrymple, an English seafarer in the 1760s related “The Bugguese describe New Holland to yield gold, and the natives, who are Mahometans, to be well inclined to commerce.”<sup>18</sup> Macknight attributes this religious designation to the fact that circumcision was practiced amongst the northern tribes, not to their ideology.<sup>19</sup>

There were annual voyages of prahus from Macassar in southern Sulawesi to the coasts of Marege, the area of coastline east of Darwin to the coasts of the Gulf of Carpentaria and to Kai Djawa the coastline from Darwin westwards. When they began is not yet established.<sup>20</sup> Macknight argues that the southeast Asian

<sup>11</sup> Levathes, Louise. *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne*. Simon and Schuster. N.Y. 1994 p.197

<sup>12</sup> Worsley, P.M. *Early Asian Contacts with Australia. Past and Present* 1955 pp.1-11

<sup>13</sup> Clark, C.M.H. Vol I p.8

<sup>14</sup> Clark, C.M.H. Vol I p. 9

<sup>15</sup> Clark. C.M.H. Vol I p.11

<sup>16</sup> Macknight, C.C. *The Voyage to Marege’ MUP* 1976 p.67, 98

<sup>17</sup> Levathes, Louise. p.198

<sup>18</sup> Macknight, C.C. p.95 quoting from Alexander Dalrymple *A Plan for Extending the Commerce of this Kingdom and The East-India Company*. London 1769 p.92

<sup>19</sup> Macknight, C.C. p.96

<sup>20</sup> Worsley, P.M.p.1

trepang trade did not commence before the late seventeenth century so that this annual traffic between Marege and Macassar could not be earlier than about 1650. There is a Dutch reference from 1654 which mentions tortoise shell and wax amongst other commodities, obtained from a great crowd of islands to the south but Macknight does not accept this as a reference to Macassar. The ethnographers R.M. and C.H. Berndt also suggested in 1947, from their observation of the depth of influence, that there had been some form of contact between the Aborigines, the people of Marege, and Macassar from the early sixteenth century. This too is rejected by Macknight. He insists that letters from 1751 and 1754 provide the first reliable evidence of the trepang trade between these Muslims and Marege.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps other commodities dominated commerce until the opening of the more lucrative Chinese trepang market, but this is still within the realms of speculation.

Pobassoo, the Macassan master of a fleet of six prahus, encountered by Flinders in 1803 in the Malay Roads at the north western tip of Arnhem Land, informed the English visitor that he had made six or seven voyages in the preceding twenty years and that he was one of the first to come. Flinders recorded, "These people were Mahometans, and on looking in the launch expressed great horror to see hogs there. Nevertheless they had no objection to port wine, and even requested a bottle to carry away with them at sunset."<sup>22</sup>

Each year in December, as the low pressure cell moved over Australia and the winds blew towards the south, the prahus left Macassar for camps along the shores of Marege. Then four months later, as the sun moved over the northern hemisphere and the winds blew from the continent towards the northern equatorial zone, they sailed back. By May they had all gone. While they were here they caught, cooked and dried the sea slug or trepang in beach camps which have since been mapped by archeologists. One of the markers of these camps, apart from the stone fireplaces, is the presence of tamarind trees. Tamarind pods were used to flavour their rice and the seeds thrown away near the camps.<sup>23</sup>

So significant was the Macassan trade that for many years the British tried schemes to make the northern coast into a second Singapore. Smarter than modern Australian policy-makers, they quickly understood that the Muslims offered a bridge to trade with the region. While the Dutch tried to wrest control of Singapore to the east of the Indonesian archipelago from them, the British believed that they could, through trading with the Macassans and Buginese, economically infiltrate the Dutch controlled areas of the west. A second Singapore on Australia's northern coast offered great wealth. William Barns put this plan to the British government in 1823 and this gained the support of a lobby of London merchants. An expedition was sent to northern Australia in 1824 and Fort Dundas established on the strait between Melville and Bathurst Islands. However British control of the first Singapore was assured by the Treaty of London March 1824 thus removing one major incentive for its establishment and the fort was located too far from the trepang fleet's camps to trade. It was a failure.

In 1827 a second settlement was established 200 miles further east in Raffles Bay. Fort Wellington was built but abandoned in 1829. Blainey argues that this abandonment was a mistake for by 1829 "Regular contact with the Indonesian fleet had at last been made,"<sup>24</sup> Thirty-four prahus with more than 1000 men had arrived but there were no merchants at the trading post to barter textiles and metals for their trepang. It was abandoned too quickly, possibly on the verge of success, based on an outdated 1827 report. Thus died the hopes for great trade with the near north for another hundred years.

The trepang trade continued but it was viewed with jaundiced eyes by the new masters of the north coast. Searcy, sent to impose customs duties upon the prahus, revealed the thinking of the time. "So long as this portion of the coast was waste there was no reason why the Malays should not gather the annual harvest and turn it to their own profitable account. But now that there was some chance of Europeans following suit, and with the idea of local trading on the coast, it was decided that the time had come for the Malays to be placed on an equal footing with the local people, and to pay something towards the revenue of the country..."<sup>25</sup> Oppressive imposition of the customs dues by men such as Searcy, growing racism in Australia after the introduction of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act and jealousy over Macassan success combined to crush this link with our neighbours.

A telegram which appeared in the S.A. Register 9 September 1904 reveals something of the thinking and of the tactics used to destroy it. It is significant that Searcy included it in the preface to his 1909 publication. "The Malays who man the proas which sail down from Macassar to Port Bowen in the Northern Territory, are suspected by officers of the Customs Department of smuggling, and it was recently suggested that some

<sup>21</sup> Macknight C.C. p.94-95

<sup>22</sup> Searcy, Alfred. In Australian tropics. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. George Robertson and Co. London 1909 p.15

<sup>23</sup> Macknight C.C.p.48-60

<sup>24</sup> Blainey, Geoffrey. p.87

<sup>25</sup> Searcy, Alfred. p.13

of their number also obtain admission to Australia despite the Immigration Restriction Act. After considering these representations, the Minister for Customs determined to close Port Bowen as a reporting station from January 1, and make overseas Asiatics who wish to engage in the trepang industry go to Port Darwin. It is believed that the trade-winds will not enable proas to go to Port Darwin, and therefore they will in all probability be prevented from visiting Northern Australia."<sup>26</sup> By changing the reporting station at which custom dues were paid, the administration opened the way to intensify harassment of the Macassans so that they would cease their annual visits.

The trepang trade with Macassar had ceased by 1907, but the frequent arrests of Indonesian fishing trawlers off Darwin indicates that old habits die hard. Fishermen used to centuries of traversing waters to our north are hard to deter. Indeed the Sultanate of Gowa, in southern Sulawesi, the old Macassan Kingdom, included the coast of northern Australia within its realm.<sup>27</sup> Arnhem Land Aborigines performed an opera about the historical links between the Yolnu people and Macassar at the foundation day anniversary of the city of Gowa in 1997.<sup>28</sup> That sense of belonging does not vanish without trace.

### The Impact of Macassar

Contact brought changes to language. The languages of the tribes along the northern coast can be as distinct as English and Greek. Although the children of Marege grew up in communities which had a variety of language and were all multilingual,<sup>29</sup> contact with tribes from different areas could be difficult. As the Macassans were in contact with widely dispersed tribes, their language became a *lingua franca* right along the coast. Searcy's vessel was manned by Malays, who were valued by the English colonists, as they had the ability to communicate with the prahu masters and the local inhabitants. There are several vocabulary lists demonstrating the widespread use of Macassan terms<sup>30 31</sup> but there is evidence of a deeper influence than just vocabulary. "A number of verbs in Gupabuyngu, the best known language of northeast Arnhem Land, are used in irregular fashion. All are derived from Macassarese."<sup>32</sup>

Another consequence of the relationship with Macassar was noticed by several British explorers. Stokes, who visited the northern coastline on several occasions between 1837 and 1843, reports observations by Captain Grey in 1838 and a Mr Osborne in 1840 that they had noticed individuals of different physical appearance from their peers in groups of Aborigines they had encountered in the north.<sup>33</sup> While Grey considered that they were probably the descendants of shipwrecked Dutch sailors, Stokes was more of a mind that they were Malays either captured from the trepangers or voluntarily associating with the locals. There was quite close contact between them. "As we know that the Australian not infrequently abandons his country and his mode of life, to visit the Indian archipelago with them (the trepangers)."<sup>34</sup> There were several documented cases of Macassan Muslims living amongst the Aborigines. Timbo, a Macassan left at Port Essington in 1839 to act as interpreter with the Aborigines, walked into the interior with the local tribespeople and was gone several months. Da' Atea from Macassar deserted a prahu in 1829 and walked across the northern part of the Cobourg Peninsula.<sup>35</sup>

Searcy in the 1880s also remarked upon the results of association with the Macassans. "Naturally some of the aborigines showed unmistakable signs of having Malay blood, in the way of a lighter skin and sharper and more refined features. In some of the women it was very marked."<sup>36</sup> Using (Hussain) Daeng Rangka had children to an Aboriginal wife (perhaps wives) in eastern Arnhem Land and one of his Australian daughters visited Macassar.<sup>37</sup> In 1985 his 81 year old daughter, Ibn Saribanung Daeng Nganna, appealed through the

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<sup>26</sup> Searcy, Alfred. p.vi

<sup>27</sup> Batchelor College Report 22 June-4 July 1986. Makassar and Northeast Arnhem Land: Missing Links and Living Bridges. 2<sup>nd</sup> printing. Batchelor College N.T. Oct.1987 p.45-46

<sup>28</sup> Alan Whykes, group interpreter and assistant to the Coordinator of the Trepang Project. Interview with Greg Clough Secretary of the Islamic Society of the Northern Territory, March 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Batchelor College Report pp.7-8

<sup>30</sup> Batchelor College Report pp.53-58

<sup>31</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. Muslim Impact on Early Australian Life in Mary Lucille Jones, (ed.) An Australian Pilgrimage: Muslims in Australia from the Seventeenth Century to the Present. Victoria Press. Melbourne. 1993 p.36

<sup>32</sup> Macknight, C.C. p.89

<sup>33</sup> Stokes, J. Lort Discoveries in Australia ..in the Years 1837-43. Vols I and II. T & W Bone, New Bond St. London 1846 p.73

<sup>34</sup> Stokes, J. Lort p.211

<sup>35</sup> Macknight, C.C. p.86

<sup>36</sup> Searcy, Alfred p.58

<sup>37</sup> Macknight, C.C. p.87

Northern Territory News for contact with her Australian relatives. The result was a field trip by 11 teacher trainees from Batchelor College to Sulawesi to re-establish family relationships.<sup>38</sup>

The introduction of new commodities into tribal communities, such as metal knives, axes and spear-heads, increased the efficiency of hunting and gathering. The Macassan dug-out canoe, which replaced the more fragile indigenous bark canoe, also permitted expanded trading and contact with other tribes. Inter-tribal trade appears to have expanded as a result of the introduction of such commodities.<sup>39</sup> The pearls, pearl-shell and turtle-shell prized by the annual visitors also meant that there was some specific production for the market. Aborigines occasionally worked for payment in the process of trepanning, an unusual development in a hunter-gatherer economy.

Despite these innovations there was little impact upon the dynamics of tribal society. This has been attributed by European commentators to the great strength of tribal culture with its focus upon social relations. In a society in which kinship is the dominant feature, capital accumulation cannot occur. According to Worsley, writing in 1955 "Since everybody in such a society is closely related, there is no chance of accumulating wealth when one's relatives cannot rightly be refused if they are in need."<sup>40</sup> Whatever the reasons, Aboriginal culture was not disrupted by contact with the Muslims, something which cannot be said about the later cultural contact experiences of these now oppressed people.

There were cultural and religious effects from contact with the Macassans, but these were not destructive either. New developments in carving, particularly carving in the round, are found in Marege, "unknown elsewhere in Australia except in that part of Cape Yorke Peninsula under the influence of the culture of the Torres Strait Islands." Worsley commented "Mourning ceremonies, magical practices and important religious ceremonies...are all shot through with Macassarese influences," and "The totemic system on Groote Eylandt was also modified with the introduction of the Ship totem...and of the north-west and south-east wind totems."<sup>41</sup>

Arnhem Land Aborigines later spoke of the period of contact with Macassar as a Golden Age. There is a resentful undercurrent in some of the European commentary, for this attitude of the indigenous people contrasted so starkly with relations during the period of assimilation and oppression under the white colonial administration. Worsley understood: "The contrast is plainly between the generosity and democracy of the Macassarese and the parsimony and colour bar of the Whites."<sup>42</sup> Both Macassans and inhabitants of Arnhem Land remembered each others names, significant from the Aboriginal viewpoint where identification implied some 'placement within the kinship framework'. Revealing an attitude similar to that of other white commentators, Macknight adds "but the clan affiliations suggested by some informants for several names may reflect later rationalisation rather than the reality of direct contact."<sup>43</sup> Today the positive attitude remains despite decades of separation.<sup>44</sup>

### White Christian Civilisation to the East

When the Europeans had penetrated the seas north of Australia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Muslims were seen as the major enemy of Christian civilisation. By 1788, when the British penal colonies were established on the east coast of Australia in Port Jackson and on Norfolk Island, the power of the Muslims was on the wane. The Moguls, the Muslim rulers of India, had been reduced to impotence and the Muslim sultanates of the East Indies, apart from the fiercely independent Aceh, were under Dutch East India Company control. The militant anti-Muslim and anti-Protestant Christian Portuguese Empire had declined to a couple of outposts in Timor and in India. The Dutch, along with the spice trade to Europe, were waning in significance.

Now rivalry between the Christian Powers of Britain and France had become the main arena of action. Although the French had been driven out of India and were concentrating upon Indo-China, they were still seen as a potential threat to British ambitions. This explains the hasty sending of the First Fleet to Botany Bay in 1787 without any preliminary inspection.

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<sup>38</sup> Batchelor College Report p.2

<sup>39</sup> Worsley, P.M. p.4

<sup>40</sup> Worsley, P.M. p.7

<sup>41</sup> Worsley P.M. p.5

<sup>42</sup> Worsley, P.M. p.8

<sup>43</sup> Macknight, C.C. p.85

<sup>44</sup> Batchelor College Report p. 12-37

No longer independently powerful, the Dutch still held key ports and controlled key waterways on the sea route from Europe to India, China and Northwest America. The outcome of an internal struggle for power in Holland in the 1780s between factions backed by the French on one hand and the British on the other was of vital importance. If the French backed faction won, all of the Dutch bases would come under effective French control. The Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, in the middle of the ocean on the route to India and China, Dutch ports in southern India and Ceylon and the waterways between the islands of the East Indies could become closed to British shipping. "The plan to settle at Botany Bay (or any better harbour in that region) was thus in part an insurance against a French takeover of the Netherlands and of its trading bases."<sup>45</sup> Ships could sail in the winds which blow from the west in the latitude of the 40s, and sail south of Australia instead of sailing northwards along the west coast towards the East Indies. Ships could sail up the east coast, get supplies and repairs in Sydney, then sail on to their trading destination. An indication of the sort of profits involved in some of this trade was given by John Ledyard. This man who had sailed with Captain Cook, who, "in his brief reference to the fur trade stresses that an outlay of sixpence brought furs worth a hundred dollars in Canton."<sup>46</sup>

Convicts were not sent to Port Jackson or Norfolk Island for reform or punishment, but rather as a cheap form of labor. "The policy of sending convicts to New South Wales stands recorded upon the rolls of Parliament - it was and it is to improve the colony and make it more useful to the British nation," stated Mr Justice Forbes in 1827.<sup>47</sup> The labour was needed to set up a restaurant port for British shipping on the route to the fur trade of Nootka Sound off Vancouver, for the whaling trade in the Pacific and for the China tea trade. The sending of convicts to Norfolk Island reflects the great hopes set in its flax and pine trees. Rope, sails and masts for the navy and merchant ships, were strategic resources as important for a naval power as oil in the modern world. Their presence on Norfolk Island may indeed have been a major reason the British chose this part of the world. Lord Sydney, when announcing the decision to send convicts here in 1787 remarked upon the supply of flax which "would be of great consequence to us as a naval power." He also mentioned the tall trees, valuable for masts, which grow in New Zealand and the islands near Australia.<sup>48</sup>

British shipping companies were already making good use of the vast supply of labor British imperial expansion had delivered to them. Muslim sailors were apparently frequently employed and in January 1796 Norfolk Island acquired several of them at one time. They were classed as Lascars (Indians and Ceylonese) by the Norfolk Island Victualling Book, the record of all those receiving government food assistance. They were abandoned there due to a misfortune related to the shoddy quality of colonial shipbuilding at that time and of course to the racist attitudes of their officers. In September 1795 the colonial-built ship named *Endeavour* left Port Jackson with a companion ship *Fancy*, intending to touch at New Zealand and Norfolk Island before sailing to India. The *Endeavour*, with its Muslim sailors and with convicts destined to expand the labor supply on Norfolk Island, began leaking and it was feared it might break-up. It had to run aground at Dusky Bay New Zealand. The sailors found a partly assembled ship on the beach, built by the carpenter of *The Britannia* while at Dusky Bay in 1793. The crew finished the ship, named it *Providence* and with *Fancy*, sailed on to Norfolk Island. Some forty of the convicts from the *Endeavour* were returned to Norfolk Island and completed their sentences.<sup>49</sup> The excess sailors were dumped with them.

Little was recorded of these exotic arrivals but it is apparent that they were not provided with passage home. Some fifteen years later, according to the Victualling Book, John Hassan a sailor from the *Endeavour* was on the Island working as a labourer. He was relocated to Port Dalrymple in Tasmania with the remaining settlers in 1813 when this settlement was closed.<sup>50</sup> Another Muslim from *Endeavour* was Sua (or Saib) Sultan. He had an eleven and a half acre block of land on the island. He and his unnamed wife were transferred from Norfolk Island on the *Lady Nelson* as third class passengers on 9 November 1809. He was given the name of Jacob on the 1818 stores list for Hobart Town and by then he had a much larger block of land. He was given a 27 acre grant in his new location on the Derwent River near the village of New Norfolk.<sup>51</sup> He apparently did well as The Land and Stock Muster of Van Diemen's land for 1819 notes that Saib Sulton (sic) possessed 28 acres of pasture and two acres of wheat.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Dallas, K.M. Trading Posts or Penal Colonies: The commercial significance of Cook's New Holland Route to the Pacific. C.L. Richmond and Sons. Devonport Tasmania 1969 p.53

<sup>46</sup> Dallas, K.M. p.49

<sup>47</sup> Dallas, K.M. p. 93

<sup>48</sup> Blainey, Geoffrey. P.27

<sup>49</sup> Wright, Reg. "The Forgotten Generation of Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land." Library of Australian History. Sydney 1986 p.27

<sup>50</sup> Wright, Reg.p.28

<sup>51</sup> Sims, Peter C. The Norfolk Settlers of Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land Quoiba Tas. 1987 p.29

<sup>52</sup> Schaffer, Irene (ed) Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists. Van Diemen's land 1803-1822. St David's Park Publishing. Hobart 1991.p.145

Mahomet Cassan is also listed<sup>53</sup> as coming free on the *Endeavour* 1795. An alternative spelling of his name is also given on this list as "Cassom". Another name which crops up on the Stores Lists is that of number 615, Mahomet Cassem. Probably the same as "Cassan" and "Cassom" he appears on the "General Muster of Free Men, Women and Children off and on Stores in His Majesty's Settlement of Hobart Town 2 October 1818" as "came free", from Norfolk Island and off the stores. Number 514 on the list is a Memerich Cossam.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that some semi-literate clerk confused by the foreign name mixed up the lists but this may be another individual.

These names disappear from the records, they left no Muslim families, no institutions, no mosques. Perhaps they changed their names, like Saib Sultan, assimilated into the Christian community or returned home after earning sufficient for their passage. It is certain that they would have suffered from considerable religious intolerance. As Muslims and a subject people, despised for their race, they would have lived on the edge of society. Even Christians suffered persecution at that time if they were from the wrong sect. The British Test and Corporation Acts were not repealed until 1828. These Acts, passed under King Charles II,<sup>55</sup> required that any person who wished to hold a position under the Crown or even in a town corporation, had to take Church of England communion. Protestant sects which differed in doctrine from the Established Church were thus humiliated. Roman Catholics were excluded from public office until the Catholic Relief Act of 1829. Even so, until this day, no Catholic can become King or Queen or Regent of Britain.

The men who 'came free' might have been despised, but they were not subjected to the horrors of the penal system which the convicts experienced. The system of transportation of convicts was cruel enough, separating them from all they knew for years, perhaps forever. It was however relatively humane compared to the system which followed the Bigge Report of 1823. The administration of NSW was accused of excessive leniency, contributing to the failure of transportation as a deterrent to crime whereas Bigge "wanted to tighten up the transportation system and make punishment more of a deterrent."<sup>56</sup> Zimran Wriam, an Indian Muslim convict who arrived in *Atlantic* on the Third Fleet in 1791,<sup>57</sup> missed this most oppressive time. Born in Hyderabad, Zimran was sent to Norfolk Island and in 1813 was removed to Port Dalrymple in Van Diemen's Land as a third class passenger on the *Lady Nelson* with John Hassan. He was given a 40 acre land grant to permit him to be economically independent.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately he did not live long to enjoy it as two currency lads (locally born men) beat him to death.<sup>59</sup>

Other Muslim convicts who arrived in this relatively humane period included a convict from Oman, Nowardin, who said he was born in Muscat. A sailor on a ship visiting London, he had been convicted of a minor offense and in 1815 was sentenced to seven years transportation. He arrived in Sydney on the *Fanny* on 18 January 1816. Another Muslim, one John Johannes of Bengal, in London on 6 December 1815, was also sentenced to transportation for seven years. He arrived in Sydney on the *Almorah* on 3 August 1817.<sup>60</sup> A relatively minor offence committed in the Port of London could have disastrous consequences.

In total there were at least eight convicts who arrived in Australia after 1813 who may have been Arab or part Arab. Five came from Oman, one from Bussarah (Iraq), one from Mauritius and one from South Africa. All of these people were Muslims.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately many of them arrived in the 1830s after the deliberately atrocious convict regime recommended by Commissioner Bigge was being implemented. The Report of the Select Committee on Transportation 1837-38 heard evidence of terrible crimes against humanity being perpetrated in the Australian penal colonies. "Sir Frances Forbes, chief-justice of Australia, stated in a letter to Mr Amos on the subject of transportation that 'The experience furnished by these penal settlements has proved that transportation is capable of being carried to an extent of suffering such as to render death desirable, and to induce many prisoners to seek it under its most appalling aspects.'"<sup>62</sup> Men murdered their comrades in order to be executed so that they could escape the horrors of living any longer in the places of secondary punishment.

Siedy Abdullah, like Nowardin, was also from Muscat, Oman. Looking for employment no doubt, he had migrated to Mauritius and worked as footman or groom. He was one of several sentenced to ten years transportation in February 1837 for the crime of mutiny. Under the conditions of that time this meant disobedience of an employer or refusal to work. He arrived in Sydney on 26 May 1838 where he

<sup>53</sup> Schaffer, Irene (ed) p.177

<sup>54</sup> Wright Reg. pp 177-178

<sup>55</sup> Green, John Richard. A Short History of the English People. Macmillan. London 1884 p.627

<sup>56</sup> Shaw, A.G.L. Convicts and Colonies. Faber and Faber. London 1966 p.88

<sup>57</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. The Forgotten Australians. Published by James Hugh Donohoe. Sydney 1991.p.91

<sup>58</sup> Sims, Peter C. p.34

<sup>59</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.91

<sup>60</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.86

<sup>61</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.40

<sup>62</sup> Clark, C.M.H. Select Documents in Australian History 1788-1850. Angus and Robertson. Melbourne. 1958 p.142

subsequently disappeared. On the 26 April another footman and groom, also convicted of mutiny in Mauritius, arrived in Sydney to serve a life sentence. He was Hassan Sheikh of Bombay and he arrived on the *Moffat* via Hobart.<sup>63</sup> Siedy Maccors Mahomed originally from Bussarah, was another of those sentenced for mutiny in Mauritius and he arrived at the same time as Siedy Abdullah. He completed his ten years and was granted a Certificate of Freedom in 1847.<sup>64</sup>

Mauritius must have offered a hazardous work environment for three years before, in 1834, Bargatta Lascar, also known as Sheikh Burkhit, had been sentenced in that place to fourteen years transportation. He was born in Calcutta in 1798. He arrived in Sydney in July 1834 and was later assigned to work for a Mr J. Philips on his property near Port Macquarie.<sup>65</sup>

Capetown, a key supply port on the British route to the East, and now included within the British Empire, also supplied its convicts to New South Wales. Two men described as 'of the Malay faith' arrived in Sydney on the *Eden* on 11 January 1837. Ajoup, a groom, had been sentenced to fourteen years transportation in Capetown and another named Matthys was sentenced to seven years. Both men were born in 1815.<sup>66</sup> They appear but briefly in records and like those who 'came free' to Norfolk Island, disappear without trace.

There may have been a much larger Muslim population of Australia from this early period had a scheme advanced by some NSW pastoralists come to fruition. To help solve the labor shortage they intended to import labourers from India. Evidence was given before an Immigration Committee in 1838 that over a hundred settlers had organised for 1203 Indian labourers to be brought in. The Colonial Office prohibited this traffic in 1839.<sup>67</sup>

Revolted by the nature of the system of convict transportation, the colonists of NSW agitated for its abandonment. The British Government granted this demand in 1840, but factors other than colonial public opinion may have been responsible. The need for cheap forced labor in other parts of the Empire may have been that reason. "Thus it is arguable that transportation to New South Wales had ceased partly because of agitation in the colony but mainly because of the need to press on with naval and military installations in Britain and Bermuda and Gibraltar. By 1845 the urgent need for advanced bases for steam ships on the Channel coast had more to do with the new policy of making all convicts serve their hard labor sentence in Britain than did the alleged failure of the transportation system in Van Diemen's Land."<sup>68</sup>

### The Conquest of the Interior

As pastoralism expanded in the Australian colonies and it became apparent that convict labor could never fulfill the needs of the growing economy, free labor had to be obtained. From 1840 to 1880 European settlement spread from the southeastern lands across the continent. This was the period of exploration of the interior of the country, of the extermination of large numbers of indigenous people, of massive immigration schemes and of a booming wool industry. The demand for wool from Britain's factories was immense and the ten million pounds weight of wool supplied by Australia in 1840 increased to three hundred million pounds by 1880. Over the same period the number of sheep increased from four million to eighty million.<sup>69</sup> By 1891, on the verge of the economic depression, the Australian colonies were supplying five hundred and forty million pounds weight of wool from a flock of one hundred and seven million sheep.<sup>70</sup>

The Gold Rush of the 1850s added another strand to economic development, that of minerals and interest in exploration for minerals. It also served to deliver a huge increase in population to the colonies. For example, the population of Victoria increased from 97,489 in 1851 to 539,764 by 1861.<sup>71</sup> This led to demand for farms and the development of agriculture. This in turn required the opening up new lands in the interior of the continent.

Early explorations of the southeastern part of the continent, the last of which was that of Major Mitchell through southern NSW and the Western District of Victoria in 1836, opened up vast tracts of land for the squatters and their sheep. The terrain and the climate allowed reliance upon horses. When the drier west and

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<sup>63</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.45

<sup>64</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.46

<sup>65</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.47

<sup>66</sup> Donohoe, James Hugh. p.82

<sup>67</sup> Lyng, J. Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress. MUP in association with OUP. 1935 p.183-183

<sup>68</sup> Dallas, K.M. p.107

<sup>69</sup> Fitzpatrick, Brian. The British Empire in Australia 1834-1939 Macmillan of Australia. Melbourne. 1969 p.132

<sup>70</sup> Fitzpatrick, Brian. P.137

<sup>71</sup> Clark, C.M.H. Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900. Angus and Robertson 1955.p.664

central parts of the continent had to be explored, horses were found to be of limited value. Camels from India were first suggested as suitable in 1837.<sup>72</sup> A few years later at the suggestion of Governor Gawler of South Australia, the Colonial Commissioner in London purchased six camels in Tenerife but only one survived the trip, landing in Adelaide in October 1840.<sup>73</sup> They could carry "...from seven to eight hundred pounds weight... they last out several generations of mules...the price paid for them does not exceed one half of that paid for mules...and it is proved that these 'ships of the deserts' of Arabia are equally adaptable to our climate."<sup>74</sup>

Marvellous Melbourne, rich with the gold of the 1850s, certain of its leading role in the future of Australia, was eager to spread its influence into the far reaches of the continent. In 1858 the Victorian Exploration Committee requested George Landells, who regularly accompanied exported Australian horses to India, to buy camels and recruit camel drivers on his next visit. He bought twenty-four beasts and hired three drivers, Samla, a Hindu and two Muslims, Esan Khan and Dost Mahomet. They arrived in 1860 and were housed at Parliament House and both beasts and men were kept in stables there. The men were hardly regarded at all. It is interesting to note that Manning Clark in his History of Australia reports upon the whole Burke and Wills Expedition and the debacle it became, without mention of the Afghan cameleers at all.<sup>75</sup> The expedition set out with great fanfare in August. Dost Mahomet and Esan Khan "killed their own expedition stock cattle in the *al halal* manner prescribed by the Qur'an. Though severely ill with dysentery, they diligently performed the five daily Muslim prayers and held to their faith in Allah during the months of waiting at Menindie."<sup>76</sup> Dost Mahomet was bitten by a camel at this camp, his arm was smashed. He was effectively disabled for life at the age of twenty-three. Despite his appeals to the Victorian Government he was awarded only 200 pounds compensation and was never to see his home again. He also requested that he be paid as promised. He had been told that he would have the same pay as the other members of the exploration team, ten pounds a month. This was not honoured. He and Esan Khan were paid only three pounds a month, increased to four pounds five shillings a month after Landells had resigned from the party.<sup>77</sup> Afghans were not white and not Christian. Dost Mahomet died soon after this refusal and is buried at Menindie.

Although the various exploration parties which went into the interior depended upon the camels and their Muslim drivers, they were scarcely recognised for their contribution. The white leaders of the expeditions received the credit from their peers and their exploits were recorded by white historians. It was Kamran who, with Gosse in July 1873, was the first recorded non-indigenous person to see the great rock, Uluru, named for the then Governor of South Australia Sir Henry Ayers.<sup>78</sup> Gosse at least had the grace to name a "Kamran's Well" between Uluru and Lake Amadeus for his leading Afghan cameleer and "Allanah Hill" 28 miles southeast of Uluru for the other Muslim on the team.

Saleh, who physically led the Giles Expedition of 1875-76 across the Nullabor Plain and then to Perth and back via Geraldton to South Australia, was given the honour of having "Saleh's Fish Pond" named for him near Mount Gould on the way back east from Geraldton. A suggestion of the type of intolerant superiority these Muslims had to cope with is indicated. "Saleh faithfully performed his lone daily prayers, regularly teased by the others. Sometimes he would ask Giles the direction of east and the leader would playfully point the other way. On these occasions Saleh was more likely to have been facing closer to Mecca for, from Australia, the Holy City was not eastwards but north-westwards."<sup>79</sup> Of course Saleh from Afghanistan would have been used to the qiblah facing west and no doubt had prayed in many mosques in Australia. For an experienced cameleer and bushman not to have known his directions or the qiblah rather stretches the imagination. This has the ring of a smart story from Giles rather than truth.

These expeditions were not just brave manly exploits. They had economic motives. Giles was being supported by the major importer of camels Thomas Elder and on this expedition had agreed to survey country near Fowlers Bay for a prospective English squatter, a friend of Elder's.<sup>80</sup> The expedition that Saleh accompanied some years later in 1886, surveying the Queensland-Northern Territory Border, took prospecting parties with it, hoping to find new mineral wealth.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Stevens, Christine. *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns; A History of Afghan Cameldrivers in Australia*. OUP Melbourne 1989 p.13

<sup>73</sup> Stevens, Christine. p. 13

<sup>74</sup> *The Argus*. Melbourne. 24 January 1846. p.2

<sup>75</sup> Clark, C.M.H. *A History of Australia*. Vol IV Chapter 8, pp.146-163

<sup>76</sup> Stevens, Christine. *Afghan Camel Drivers: Founders of Islam in Australia*. in Mary Lucille Jones, (ed) *An Australian Pilgrimage*. p.52

<sup>77</sup> Stevens, Christine. *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns*. OUP Melbourne 1989 p.33

<sup>78</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.39

<sup>79</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.42

<sup>80</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.40

<sup>81</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.44

With camels from Marree and Farina, Moosha Balooch and Guzzie Balooch accompanied the 1894 Horn Expedition, named for the director of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company who financed it. He wanted it to seek out minerals between the Macdonnell Ranges and Oodnadatta and to study new biological, botanical and ethnological material. Another two famous cameleers, Bejah Dervish and Said Ameer accompanied the 1896 Calvert Expedition. Two of the European members managed to get lost and starve to death. The willingness of the Afghans to search for days in terrible conditions and the offer from the major camel owner Faiz Mahomet to send his camels and men to the search, impressed contemporary opinion. Larry Wells, the leader of the expedition, named a landmark in the sandy desert "Bejah Hill" and gave Bejah Dervish his compass.<sup>82</sup> Years later Nora Bejah, daughter-in-law of Bejah, still had that compass. She also recalled that Bejah had been given the name "the Faithful".<sup>83</sup>

Abdul or "Jack" Dervish, the son of Bejah, was most significant in getting the Madigan Expedition across the Simpson Desert in 1939. This was the last major exploration of the interior. Afghan Muslims had been on all of them since 1860. The second Afghan on this expedition, "Nurie", Nur Mohamed Moosha, was the son of Moosha Balooch who had accompanied the Horn Expedition over forty years earlier. However things had changed. "By the 1930s the second generation of cameleers ate the same meat as the Europeans. The Muslim faith had diluted and halal-killed meat was no longer a requirement to the younger men."<sup>84</sup>

### The Camel Communications Network

It was the Afghans and their camels who gave access to the vast interior of the continent. They proved themselves during the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line 1870-72. They were used in both the survey and construction work, carrying loads of materials into otherwise impenetrable country. "The workers were able to forge ahead into the arid unknown for they could be assured of regular and reliable service and supply by the camels and cameleers. Horses and bullocks often could not travel the long waterless stretches with any degree of reliability."<sup>85</sup>

Marree, formerly known as Hergott Springs, was an important centre in the "interstate camel communications network" the first outback "train" in this region.<sup>86</sup> "Several sources state that in 1880, four years before the arrival of the line, Hergott was "a little Asia", the focus of camel strings that travelled the Queensland Road (later to become known as the Birdsville Track); the Strzelecki Track to Innamincka; the way through Blanchewater eastwards into New South Wales; the track to Charlotte Waters, and so to Alice Springs and other far northern stations on the Overland Telegraph Line. These were the chief routes of the camel communications network, though all-particularly those leading to the east-branched into many side tracks."<sup>87</sup>

Winifred Stegar, the wife of Ali, a cameleer in Birdsville in the early twentieth century, has left us an account of the scene at one railhead where the Afghans picked up the goods. "Once the mail was cleared the station-master would take off his shirt and, with his one porter, would repair to the goods shed, loaded with cart-note books; consignee notes must match with corresponding loads, and then the load would be allocated to the particular camel train. Not only the shed but the dirt platform would overflow with huge mounds of bundles and cases; the station-master would grow so frantic that his voice at times, would fade almost to nothing as he hurled orders and directions to the camel-men and their native helpers while he endeavoured to collect the consignments in their correct order. The loadings for transit were assigned to different drivers by the station-owners or their managers. Some goods had hundreds of miles to go, and the return trip might take months." Asked to help the camel-men with their consignment notes and bills of lading, Winifred reports "The trouble really began when I had to make out their freight charges, each man clamouring to tell me his idea of what his freight should be, each load going to a different station with its corresponding mileage, different freights for different goods-it was bedlam."<sup>88</sup>

When the Coolgardie gold rush occurred in 1894, the cameleers were quick to move in. The goldfields could not have continued without the food and water they transported. In March that year a caravan of six Afghans, forty-seven camels and eleven calves, set out across the desert from Marree to the goldfield. It arrived in July with the camels, carrying between 135 and 270 kilograms each, in good

<sup>82</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.52-53

<sup>83</sup> Fuller, Basil. The Ghan: the story of the Alice Springs Railway. Rigby. 1975 p.19

<sup>84</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.56

<sup>85</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.71-72

<sup>86</sup> Fuller, Basil. p.4

<sup>87</sup> Fuller, Basil. p.5

<sup>88</sup> Stegar, Winifred. Always Bells. Angus and Robertson. Melbourne 1969. p.36

condition.<sup>89</sup> Another fifty-eight camels for Coolgardie arrived by ship in Albany in September. By 1898 there were 300 members of the Muslim community in Coolgardie and 80 on average attended Friday prayer. Indeed as is indicated by Table 1, Coolgardie held the main Muslim community in the colony at that time. There was not one Muslim woman amongst them, no marriages were performed and no burials, reflecting a relatively young, celibate and transient population.<sup>90</sup> There appear to have been two mosques in Coolgardie, if that is what was meant by “church buildings” with five other buildings used for public worship. The one “Minister” and three “Lay Readers” might be taken for imam and other less educated prayer leaders. Fremantle had two buildings used for public worship but no main mosque and one lonely “Lay Reader” or prayer leader. Perth had three buildings used for public worship but no mosque at that stage. It claimed one imam and three prayer leaders.

**Table 1 Statistical information relating to Muslims Western Australia for the year 1898<sup>91</sup>**

	Coolgardie	Fremantle	Perth
No. Ministers	1	nil	1
No. Lay Readers or Local Preachers	3	1	3
No. Church Buildings	2	nil	nil
No. other buildings used for public worship	5	2	3
Total seating accommodation in Churches and Buildings	300	80	120
Average number attendants at Sunday morning and evening services	80	12	25
Average number attending Divine Service on weekdays	80	12	25
Approximate number of Public Services performed during the year (including weekday services)	1825	1825	1825
No. of marriages	nil	nil	nil
No. of burials	nil	nil	nil
Number of persons admitted to Membership of the Denomination in the District during the Year	nil	nil	nil
Estimated number of adherents in the District adults and children	male 300 female nil	male 23 female nil	male 80 female nil

The extent of the camel industry in Coolgardie is indicated by the list of camel owners 1898-1899 in Table 2. The predominance of Afghans can be seen through the number of Muslim names on the list of owners. The sudden drop in the number of camels by 1899 is a reflection of the opening of the neighbouring field at Kalgoorlie.

### Racism rears its head

Camel teams competed with the bullock drivers and horse teamsters. The cameleers were Afghan, the bullockies were European. Clear cases of assault against Afghans, even murder, were dismissed by racist courts.<sup>92</sup> In western Queensland there was a major campaign of racist vilification against the cameleers in the 1890s. Local newspapers declared Afghans as more detestable than the Chinese and attacked them for refusing to drink grog and for opening their own stores and butcher shops.<sup>93</sup>

The rising union movement in Queensland also had a strong racist rhetoric. Chinese and Afghans were seen as cheap labour, undermining the standard of living of the white man. Unionists did not fight for equal wages for all, apparently seeing economic exploitation as inextricably linked to “racial inferiority”. Afghans, unaware of the greater social issues, for they were socially ostracised by the Europeans, continued to carry wool to railheads for the Queensland pastoralists during the Shearer’s Strike which nearly took the country into civil war, a watershed in the history of Australia. In 1891 the Toowoomba Infantry had to escort Afghans and their camels within Queensland and up to the NSW border as they were in danger from enraged and militant unionists.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.84

<sup>90</sup> Application for statistical information relating to churches of the Mohammedan denomination in Western Australia for the year 1898. NAA Series Number PP95/1 Item Number 1899/114

<sup>91</sup> Application for statistical information relating to churches of the Mohammedan Denomination in Western Australia for the year 1898. NAA Series Number PP95/1 Item Number 1899/114

<sup>92</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.140, 180

<sup>93</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.141

<sup>94</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.143

A strong supporter of the Shearer's Strike, and editor of the Australian Republican, a Queensland newspaper, F.C.B. Vosper had drifted to the Coolgardie goldfield and became editor of the Coolgardie Miner. In 1894 he was supported by 2000 miners in his proposal to establish a body to put pressure on the government to have Afghans and other Asians removed from the area. Nine branches of this Anti-Afghan League were established but it died as rapidly as it had grown.<sup>95</sup> In several colonies of the time debates were occurring about the control and possible eradication of the 'coloured labor' problem, and from 1897 it became difficult for 'aliens' to enter the country.

**Table 2. A List of Owner of Camels in the Magisterial District of Coolgardie.<sup>96</sup>**

1899		1898			
Duncan McGregor	12	Ahmad	12	Khram	20
F & T Mahomet	359	F & Tagh Mahomet	444	E. Leaney	1
do do	51	do do	56	Actor Mahomed	7
Abraham do	12	Anwar	72	Dean Mahomed	4
Parley Alline	42	Mahamet Azim	30	Malata Mahomed	30
Frank E. Randell	125	F.E.Randell Co.	142	S. Peer Mahomed	9
Mahomet Raswell	15	Cobb & Co. Ltd	2	G. Mahomed	19
Transport Trading Co of WA	61	Transport Trading Co of WA	60	Mamadrizza	17
Gungzar Belooch	16	Geelan	10	Masum	7
Hampton Plains Estate Ltd.	6	Hampton Plains Estate Ltd.	7	Mazooola	3
Maurice Leaney	7	Osman Guny	35	Mohidin	18
		Mahomet Hasson	100	Said Nazar	12
<b>Total for 1899</b>	<b>700</b>	Said Hookmat	20	Neemomed	3
		Zrim	16	Produce	5
		Amer Jon	29	Rahmin	15
		Kahan	6	Mahomed Rassool	21
		Pain Kahn	18	Abdul Rennie	13
		Oom Kahn	13	Sabarizi	9
		Sultan Kaka	26	Shak	10
		Karam	8	Shacoor	22
		Amer Khan	15	Sing	10
		Esau Khan	14	Maosa Sing	26
		Derri Khan	17	Stura	15
		M. Llan	10	Vazir	7
		Mizza Khan	32	General Water Supply	79
		Paster Khan	7	J.H.Wood	50
		Zar Khan	2	Zachan	14
				<b>Total for 1898</b>	<b>1649</b>

The 1898 W.A. Royal Commission into Mining took evidence about the presence of Afghans on the goldfields and one witness raised objections which have rung down the years, being raised most recently with regard to Muslim attitudes to Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War of 1990-91.<sup>97</sup> Probyn-Smith, another journalist, in evidence to the WA parliament regarding local Afghans, claimed "Many... were still in sympathy with those Afghans who fought the British during the Second Afghan War. He declared they were traitorous by nature and warned of the peril to Australian lives if a Jihad (Holy War) were to be proclaimed somewhere in the Muslim world."<sup>98</sup>

A third journalist, the socialist editor of the Barrier Truth in Broken Hill, R.S. Ross wrote an article on 'The Afghan Menace' 13 March 1903, well after the 1901 Immigration restriction Act had introduced the White Australia Policy. He attributed everything from sexual depravity to brutality and gross superstition to these people who were 'by breed and nature a bird of prey'.<sup>99</sup> There was no apparent awareness leave alone gratitude shown for the contribution made by these isolated and exploited men to the economic development of Australia. In the atmosphere of European Australia, denigration of racial or religious difference was the

<sup>95</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.144-145

<sup>96</sup> Return of Camels for 1898-1899. National Archives of Australia. Series Number PP131/1 Item Number 1900/240

<sup>97</sup> Documentation of Incidents of Harassment of and Racism Towards, Australians of Arab Descent and Australian Muslims August-October 1990. Committee on Discrimination Against Arab Australians. Melbourne. October 1990. p. 53-70

<sup>98</sup> Stevens, Christine.p.148

<sup>99</sup> Stevens, Christine.p.149

norm. Similar venom was displayed in Protestant-Catholic disputes in the community at that time, overlain in many cases with anti-Irish racism.

The life of Mahomet Allum, Adelaide's much loved Afghan herbalist, spanned the history of the Afghan Muslims in Australia.<sup>100</sup> He had sold horses to the British Army in the Second Afghan War and came to the goldfields of WA as a cameleer.<sup>101</sup> He witnessed the opening of the Coolgardie water pipeline in 1903,<sup>102</sup> worked in the Broken Hill mines where he laboured for hours underground in icy cold water.<sup>103</sup> He bore witness to the teachings of Islam on racial difference in racist Australia. One of his letters to the press is reprinted by Brunato in which he challenges the editor. "If any Britisher can prove to me that he is white and I am black, I will unreservedly give him five hundred pounds. In God's earth we are all his creatures. He brought in the sun and the moon and the stars to function twenty-four hours a day for all of us, and as an indication that He expects us to, every hour of the day to do His work. Why then this invidious distinction, even in the cemetery, between peoples of different races?"<sup>104</sup>

His reputation for charity, six thousand pounds over four years, was explained as "a practical demonstration of the Islamic doctrine that all men are brothers and should be treated as such."<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately his entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography is marred by a doubtlessly false claim that he "referred to himself as God's messenger."<sup>106</sup> Such a claim is a crime in Islamic law and puts the claimant outside the faith of Islam. When he died at his home in Everard Park in 1964 at the age of 106, he had witnessed the decline of the Muslim population and was on the edge of witnessing its revival as the White Australia Policy died. He had been denied Australian citizenship because he was classified as non-white and when the law changed he made no application. Perhaps he decided that it was not worthwhile.

### Muslims and the Policy of Racial Exclusion from 1901

The Immigration Restriction Act was passed in 1901 as soon as the new Commonwealth Parliament was established. It provided that all 'coloured' people trying to enter Australia would be required to submit to a medical examination and to a dictation test. This test could be in any European language. In practice this meant any language of which that individual was ignorant.<sup>107</sup> Resident 'coloureds' were also required to apply for a special certificate to enter another state. The free crossing of inland borders, a necessity for the Afghan cameleers inland trade, was thus abolished at a stroke. This discrimination was intensified by the 1902 Roads Act requiring that a license had to be obtained to run a camel carrying business and a registration fee had to be paid for each camel.<sup>108</sup>

So strict was the implementation of the Act that Afghan cameleers were not permitted, even during the severe drought of 1901-1902, to cross the border between South Australia and NSW without going through procedures similar to those required of racially unwelcome visitors to Australia. A reliable person had to act as guarantor for them, paying a bond of 100 pounds for each person. Samuel Drew and Company, merchants of Broken Hill performed this function for several Afghan camel drivers at that time.<sup>109</sup> Lack of experienced men to distribute urgently needed provisions to outlying stations, meant that they had to call on Afghans from across the border. The Afghans admitted to NSW in April 1902, although still under the 100 pounds bond, were permitted to remain until the drought had eased. However handprints were now included on file for proof of identity, presumably to ensure that the same men who entered from South Australia eventually returned.<sup>110</sup>

Not only was interstate trade impeded, but international business links as well. There were several requests by Muslims with business interests in both India and Australia for a general pass, to allow unhindered travel. Matters were not clear in the first few months and the case of an Afghan named Meerhez appears to have stimulated the development of policy. The Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, in response to a request for a

<sup>100</sup> Stevens, Christine p.198-199

<sup>101</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.13

<sup>102</sup> Stevens, Christine p.91

<sup>103</sup> Brunato, Madeline. Hanji Mahomet Allum: Afghan Camel-driver, Herbalist and Healer. Investigator Press. Leabrook SA. 1972 p.27

<sup>104</sup> Brunato, Madeline. p. 40

<sup>105</sup> Smiths Weekly 12 August 1933

<sup>106</sup> Australian Dictionary of Biography. General Editor John Ritchie. Vol 7. p.47

<sup>107</sup> Reese, Trevor R. p.38

<sup>108</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.148

<sup>109</sup> Arajah, Seyd, Mahomet Seyd Gool and Madin Seyd Goolam. [box 1] NAA Series Number SP42/1 Item Number C1901/1551

<sup>110</sup> Bez Mahomet, Zareen, Doz Mahomet, Adam Khan [4 Afghans applications for certificates of domicile] NAA Series Number SP11/26 Item Number A3

general pass for Meerhez, with his need for constant travel on business between Australia and India, decided that the idea of a general pass was of doubtful legality, that a Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test, with its tight time specifications, was not what was required either. The letter requesting the general pass had explained that he had lived in Australia for some years and spoke English fluently. The Prime Minister decided that, given the special circumstances of the case, a promise was to be given to Meerhez that he would be allowed to re-enter the Commonwealth on returning from India without being subjected to the education test.<sup>111</sup> Offshore business visitors found it hard to gain entry, even when quoting international treaties in support of their claims,<sup>112</sup> and the importation of neither camels nor their drivers was permitted.<sup>113</sup>

Then the 1903 Naturalization Act provided that applicants for naturalization could not be natives of Asia, Africa or the Pacific Islands (except for New Zealand).<sup>114</sup> Men who had worked in Australia for over a decade were not acceptable as citizens. Jan Mahomet, a 35 year old Afghan storekeeper and camel-driver, who had worked in South Australia for nearly four years, Coolgardie for over a year and then in Murchison, near Geraldton WA, for eleven years, received his rejection of naturalisation from the Department of External Affairs in Melbourne in October 1906 about three weeks after submitting his papers. The only sign in the archives of his response is a curt telegram to the Department on 25 October asking for the return of all his papers. When Mahomet Solomon's application for naturalisation, after seven year's residence, was rejected he went to his local Member of Parliament. He informed him that he had substantial interests in Port Pirie, where he was a storekeeper and enclosed a newspaper cutting which showed that 28 Turks had been naturalised in 1905. He noted in his letter that he was by birth a Turk. His MP approached the Department on his behalf, which explained that his claim that he had been born at Mount Lebanon in Asia disqualified him from citizenship, but if as now appeared that he was indeed a Turk, the Minister would be glad to be notified of the date of the arrival of his parents in Syria.<sup>115</sup>

The Muslim community was learning that more than individual approaches to the authorities were required on issues of non-European residence in Australia. As well as using the local member of parliament, like Mahomet Solomon, petitions were also used. They were not just Muslim community petitions either. The lobby for the right of Sayyid Mahomet Shah Banuri to a certificate of domicile, used a petition to the Secretary of the Department for External Affairs signed by a variety of local Indian and Syrian Muslims and Christian merchants, most of whom appear to have lived in Redfern NSW, to press their case. Mahomet Shah Banuri was apparently a well educated religious leader who spoke Arabic, Persian, Pashtu, Hindustani and Sindhi.<sup>116</sup> As he intended to visit India and the Hejaz to further his religious education, it was feared Banuri would have difficulties returning to his flock. He was eventually granted a 12 month Certificate of Exemption (from the dictation test) in November 1903. This twelve month visit, with, after representations from their legal firm, the option of renewal for a further year, meant that he would be unable to remain in the country. In April 1905 he made a last ditch attempt from WA where he was then located, to get a general permit to allow him to come and go as he wished. This was curtly refused by External Affairs in Melbourne, within two weeks of his making the request. Banuri had only been in Australia since 1901 so he was not regarded in the same way as those with longer periods of residence. Moaz Khan, an Afghan camel driver, who had resided in Australia since 1899 or 1900, dates on documents differed, was permitted to leave and re-enter the Commonwealth on several occasions between 1913 and 1931, each time being granted a Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test without the limited time specified for those who were regarded as visitors. That he had arrived before the Immigration Restriction Act came into force in 1902 and that he had been here five years and was of good character, apparently allowed right of re-entry.<sup>117</sup>

The method of the petition was again used in a request to the Minister of External Affairs to allow Syed Ahmad, "our High Priest" (so described) to visit Australia for twelve months. It was signed by seven Muslims from Hergott Springs in August 1909.<sup>118</sup> Permission was granted 30 October that year, but the letter to Gulam Mahomet conveying the news never reached him. In January 1910 it was discovered he had

<sup>111</sup> Exemption certificates under the Immigration Restriction Act decisions by the Prime Minister. NAA Series Number A8/1 Item Number 1902/116/10

<sup>112</sup> Request by Gunny Khan for permission under the Treaty of 1893 for Abdul Jellal an Afghan to enter the Commonwealth. NAA Series Number A8/1 Item Number 1902/116/184

<sup>113</sup> Governor General's Office - Correspondence - Concerning a petition to the Sovereign asking for permission to import camels and camel drivers. NAA Series Number A6662/1 Item Number 83

<sup>114</sup> Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. (DILGEA) Australia and Immigration 1788 to 1988. AGPS. Canberra 1988 p.24

<sup>115</sup> Mahomet Solomon - Naturalization. NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1906/720

<sup>116</sup> Banuri, Saiyid Mahomet Shah [correspondence of the Collector of Customs relating to immigration restrictions] [box 12A]. NAA Series Number SP42/1 Item Number C1905/3746

<sup>117</sup> Immigration Act - Application for Document of Identity Moaz Khan - Afghan camel driver. NAA Series Number D1976/1 Item Number SB1947/149

<sup>118</sup> Admission of Afghan Priest named Seyd Ahmed Pasha. NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1911/192

gone to Western Australia and the necessary documents had to be forwarded again. That the man was illiterate, that he was really coming to get his son, unemployed and residing at the Adelaide Mosque, who was refusing to rejoin the family and that he did not enjoy the confidence, according to Fatteh Baruck of 248 Hindley Street Adelaide, of "several foreign residents of the City", caused some official concern but not the withdrawal of his Certificate of Exemption.<sup>119</sup>

Despite these accommodations of individuals and the admission of religious teachers for limited periods, the Immigration Restriction Act had the desired effect. Between 1901 and 1921 the number of Afghans fell from 393 to 147. By the 1930s "Many of the owners and breeders of camels are still Afghans, but since the war the industry has begun to pass into the hands of Australians who handled camels in Egypt and Palestine."<sup>120</sup> The experience of Moaz Khan from the Punjab illustrates the decline in the Muslim camel industry. Arriving as a camel driver at the start of the century, he was a camel proprietor working in Bourke, Wilcannia and Broken Hill before 1913, then after his visit to his wife and family in India 1918-1921, he returned to employment as a labourer, doing station work. He eventually retired, via a period at the Adelaide Mosque, to India and his wife in 1947.<sup>121</sup>

### The Muslim Community before the Great War

The picture that emerges of the Muslim community in Australia at this time is one of impermanence. In the inland areas there do not appear to have been settled imams or communities around mosques. Many itinerant religious leaders appear in the records, here for limited periods due to the Immigration Restriction Act and perhaps to the nature of the Muslim community at that time. The men were constantly on the move, which interfered in their efforts to obtain overseas scholars. Many of those who were credited with leadership appear to have been illiterate, signing documents with a mark, although there were those with Islamic knowledge too. There were prayer places in the major cities without mosques, Melbourne and Sydney, there were permanent imams devoting their time to serving the religious needs of the community and there were permanent mosques where there was a sufficiently large number to support them.

The August 1909 request for a Certificate of Exemption for Syed Ahmad from Hergott Springs, stimulated a request from the Secretary of External Affairs for an investigation of the number of "Mohammedan priests" in South Australia of the "same faith" as the petitioners. The SA Collector of Customs ascertained that there was only one resident "priest" in the state, one Swasa Mahomet serving Port Augusta and district. Itinerants and visitors included Syed Omar, who since his arrival a year ago from North Queensland had been engaged in Hergott Springs, Port Augusta and Adelaide. He was intending to depart from the Adelaide Mosque to Broken Hill in the near future. There was also one Afghan "priest" Syed Iran Shah Sahib, with his son, at Broken Hill, visiting Australia for a year from February 1909 on an Indian passport. Constable Simpson had reported to the Collector of Customs that there were Afghan camps in Farina, Hergott Springs and Port Augusta West but that "it is impossible to ascertain how many Afghan priests there are in those camps as they are always moving about."<sup>122</sup> It was specified by Shair Mahomet of the Adelaide Mosque that if Syed Ahmad was admitted to the country he would be engaged in "conducting services in Western Australia, Adelaide, Hergott Springs, Oodnadatta, Broken Hill and Bourke." There were in 1910, three mosques in South Australia, at Adelaide, Port Augusta and Hergott Springs.<sup>123</sup>

In Melbourne the Austral-India Society of 257 Brunswick Street Fitzroy appears to have represented the interests of the Muslims of Victoria to the government. Serving all Indians, (including Afghans), it appears to have been dominated by Muslims. The President in 1912 was Mr Mukand Lal, Vice-President Syed Jeelaine Shah and Treasurer Mr Marm Deen. There were two Secretaries, Mr A.H. Pritchard and Mr Maboob Allum. Its headquarters were not stable as in 1913 its address was given as 78 Lonsdale Street Melbourne, which was also the business address of the prominent Syrian Muslim merchant Mr Jaboor. In this Austral-India Society we appear to have the germ of the later cross-ethnic Islamic Council of Victoria, which now represents Muslims in that state.

When the Department of External Affairs sent out a memo in June 1910 to all Collectors of Customs around Australia to ascertain the number of "Mohammedan priests" there were in the country, A.H. Pritchard of 200

<sup>119</sup> Admission of Afghan Priest named Seyd Ahmed Pasha. NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1911/192

<sup>120</sup> Lyng, J. p.187-188

<sup>121</sup> Immigration Act - Application for Document of Identity Moaz Khan - Afghan camel driver. NAA Series Number D1976/1 Item Number SB1947/149

<sup>122</sup> Admission of Afghan Priest named Seyd Ahmed Pasha. NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1911/192

<sup>123</sup> Number of Resident Mohammedan Priests in Australia [Islam] NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1910/3502

Johnston St. Fitzroy also received the same request. He was apparently highly regarded as a link to the Muslim community by the government.<sup>124</sup>

The responses indicate that there were already Muslims in nearly every corner of the nation. It was the Muslims living there who informed the Collector of Customs that Tasmania did not have a “priest” and was still without a mosque. The reply from Brisbane noted that there was one permanent mosque and one “priest” at Mount Gravatt, as well as another “priest” in Brisbane who was about to move to Cloncurry. That town was the site of a substantial Muslim community serving the mines with camel transport. Queensland explained that no official records were kept on such priest or mosques because these religious leaders “are not recognised by the Registrar General’s Department.”

The Collector of Customs NSW ignored the substantial Muslim community then in Broken Hill, replying that there was no mosque in the State. There were in fact two mosques at Broken Hill and one permanent imam but these were considered as part of South Australia as they were in the hinterland of Adelaide. There was a visiting or “Missionary” religious leader, in the Lismore district, where there was a small Muslim community. He reported there was only one resident “Mohammedan priest” in the state, Mohamed Shah who had been appointed to the position three months previously, suggesting the existence of an Islamic Society in Sydney. Although there was no mosque in the city, a room in a store at 79 Alderson Street Redfern was set apart for prayer. That the Muslim community of Sydney was located mainly in Redfern and was led by merchants is indicated by the petition of Indians, Syrians and Australians requesting the right of return to Australia for Sayid Mahomet Shah Banuri in 1904. They had also apparently established sound relationships with the non-Muslims for 14 Christian and (one) Jewish businessmen from the City and Redfern signed the petition along with the Muslim businessmen who appear to have been located mainly in Elizabeth Street Redfern.<sup>125</sup>

A.H.Pritchard reported that there was no resident “Mohammedan priest” in Melbourne or in Victoria “who devotes all his time in giving religious instruction, teaching of the Koran and such like and who is supported by the Muslims of Victoria.” However there were three “Haffieses or Mullahs” Noor Allum, Jallal Deen and Mahboob Allum who paid their share of the rent for 124 to 126 Young Street Fitzroy. They were licensed hawkers. There were also “two ‘Shahs’, descendants of the priest caste in this State” and they were also hawkers. Although there was no mosque in Victoria a room for prayer and religious instruction was set apart at 126 Young Street. A detached room especially built “for praying and holding religious ceremonies” was built at the house in McCormick Place off Little Lonsdale Street in the City of Melbourne. Pritchard also knew of permanent mosques in Bourke and Coolgardie built and kept by the Afghans.

Western Australia appears to have been the centre of the Islamic community in that period. The Acting Collector of Customs reported that apart from the principal mosque in Perth there were others at Coolgardie, Mount Malcolm, Leonora, Bummers Creek, Mount Sir Samuel and Mount Magnet. In 1898 there had only been Muslim communities in Perth Fremantle and Coolgardie.<sup>126</sup> There were two resident “Mahomedan Priests” in Perth and about “25 Sayeds (Priests) who are called descendants of the Prophet.” These men led the prayers in other districts. “They are all working men and conduct these services without any remuneration.”

### Muslim Family Life

As in all frontier societies, women were very scarce in outback Australia. At Cloncurry in 1886 there were ten males to every female, so marriage was practically impossible. The returns on mosques in 1898 in W.A. suggest celibacy or at least absence of marriage, in that Muslim community.<sup>127</sup> Many Muslims had wives and families back in India or Afghanistan and some returned infrequently to visit them. Moaz Khan returned to India 1914 to 1916, then from 1918 to 1921, then again from 1935 to 1931, finally retiring to join his wife in India in 1947.<sup>128</sup> The mullahs and “Shahs” mentioned by Mr Pritchard, renting buildings in Fitzroy and the

<sup>124</sup> Number of Resident Mohammedan Priests in Australia [Islam] NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1910/3502

<sup>125</sup> Banuri, Saiyid Mahomet Shah [correspondence of the Collector of Customs relating to immigration restrictions] [box 12A] NAA Series Number SP42/1 Item Number C1905/3746

<sup>126</sup> Application for statistical information relating to churches of the Mohammedan Denomination in Western Australia for the year 1898. NAA Series Number PP95/1 Item Number 1899/114

<sup>127</sup> Application for statistical information relating to churches of the Mohammedan denomination in Western Australia for the year 1898. NAA Series Number PP95/1 Item Number 1899/114

<sup>128</sup> Immigration Act - Application for Document of Identity Moaz Khan - Afghan camel driver. NAA Series Number D1976/1 Item Number SB1947/149

city who were all registered hawkers, and spent much of their time travelling, suggests a life style similar to that of the camel-drivers of the frontier society.<sup>129</sup>

Where it was possible these Muslims did have wives with them. Winifred Stegar had married an Indian Muslim, Ali, in China. Winifred's account describes her less than perfect relationship with the wife of Sherali, her Australian resident brother-in-law.<sup>130</sup> She did not comment on the woman's ethnicity but from the text it is assumed that she is also Indian. Sherali offered Ali his first job in Australia. Located somewhere in rural Queensland 50 miles from the coast, he owned a large general store, ran a motor car and employed a governess for his children. The settled Muslim merchants encountered in the documents, signers of petitions and hosts for visiting imam, who are obviously respected by the authorities, might have enjoyed a life-style similar to that of Sherali and different from that of the itinerant hawkers and outback Afghans. Mr Jaboor of Melbourne with his large store, 76 to 78 Lonsdale Street and the merchants of Elizabeth Street Redfern were apparently prosperous and able to live a settled family life.

Despite the odds, many of the Afghans in the outback did eventually marry. Some of those who had left wives back in India or Afghanistan also took wives here. Stevens mentions the history of Nameth Khan, a camel-driver with a wife and two daughters back in Peshawar, who took an Aboriginal wife as well, marrying her in the Registry Office in Alice Springs.<sup>131</sup> His Aboriginal wife died of the Spanish influenza in 1919 and he too died here, never seeing his family in India again. His Australian daughter however kept in contact with them, visiting the Punjab in the 1960s. Many of the women the Afghans married were marginalised Aborigines whose tribal social system was disintegrating under the impact of white settlement. Some were marginalised European women, widows with several children, deserted wives and occasionally, gold-diggers entranced by the wealth of established camel owners. Bejah Dervish married a deserted wife with eight children, and it was their son who went on the 1939 crossing of the Simpson Desert. Gool Mahomet of Coolgardie and then Farina, married a French prostitute, Adrienne Desiree Lesire from a Kalgoorlie brothel in 1907.<sup>132</sup> They married in the Coolgardie Mosque and she lived in the Ghantown with him, much to the disdain of her fellow prostitutes.

There was no effort made to bring wives from Afghanistan or India to Australia as life here was too different, although there are several reports of men bringing their sons to join them. The wealthy camel owner Faiz Mahomet brought his son from Karachi in the late 1890s but not his wife. Moosha Balooch also brought out his ten year old son Omedally Balooch to join him and his second wife at Marree, but left his first wife in Afghanistan.<sup>133</sup>

As these families produced offspring, the issue of brideprice became a source of friction. Although the mahar, or payment of an agreed amount by the groom to his bride, a requirement of Islam, was obeyed, the pagan custom of the groom paying the father of the bride a dowry or brideprice was also observed. At a time when a good weekly wage was two pounds, brideprices of one hundred and fifty and two hundred pounds had been documented.<sup>134</sup> Young men usually lacked the necessary resources, so many old men were married to very young Ghantown brides. As the second generation of Australian born and acculturated Afghans grew up, such a custom became onerous and eventually, like much of the culture, both Islamic and tribal, died out.

## The Great War

The declaration of war by Britain in August 1914 committed, without consultation, the whole empire to war. Australia was an enthusiastic supporter in the main, with only the Industrial Workers of the World opposing the slaughter. With a population of four and a half million in 1914, this country by 1918 had recruited 400,000 volunteers. Of the 330,000 men tiny Australia put in the field, over 59,000 lost their lives. An entire generation was thus sacrificed. Prime Minister Hughes had tried to introduce conscription for overseas service in 1916 but was defeated in a referendum campaign which split the nation. Sectarian divisions amongst Christians were widened by the championing of anti-conscription by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne Dr Mannix.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Number of Resident Mohammedan Priests in Australia [Islam] NAA Series Number A1/15 Item Number 1910/3502

<sup>130</sup> Stegar, Winifred. *Always Bells: My Life with Ali*. Angus and Robertson. Melbourne. 1969. p. 28

<sup>131</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.218

<sup>132</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.221

<sup>133</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.219

<sup>134</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.224-225

<sup>135</sup> Reese, Trevor R. *Australia in the Twentieth Century*. F.W. Cheshire. Melbourne 1964 p.57-59

There was apparently a slanderous claim by anti-conscriptionists that conscripts sent off to war would be replaced by “the introduction of coloured or cheap labor into Australia.” Prime Minister Hughes denounced such lies and exposed the false claim made at an anti-conscription meeting “that 4000 Maltese had landed in the Northern Territory.” It was true that a batch of 200 Maltese was on its way to Australia “but, owing to my having given an undertaking that during the war no coloured labor would be admitted into Australia, I have notified the British authorities that it is not the intention of the Commonwealth Government to admit them into Australia.”<sup>136</sup> White European Christians, the Maltese, were not acceptable in 1916. Muslims were even less acceptable. That was revealed in 1919 by an outcry over a false rumour about the Northern Territory. Seeking to make political capital out of a racial scare, Senator Ferricks had told a meeting in Brisbane that 379 Turks had arrived in the Territory. The Minister for Home and Territories quickly explained that during the past three years about 300 Greeks had entered the Territory but on passports issued by the French, who had been in charge of some of the islands captured from Turkey. They were not Turks at all.<sup>137</sup>

Attitudes towards Muslims were affected by the war. War propaganda in the press against the Caliph of Islam, the Sultan of Turkey, wounded many Muslims but physical assaults against Muslims do not appear in the record. Even when two “Turks” who were in fact Afghans, shot up a picnic train in Broken Hill on 1 January 1915, there was no anti-Muslim or anti-Afghan pogrom, although there may have been one intended. The Melbourne Argus carried a six level headline on the day after the shootings: “Turks Attack Train; Entrenched near railway; Broken Hill Sensation; Four Picnickers Killed; Seven others Wounded; Police Shoot Murderers.”<sup>138</sup> An ice-cream cart with a Turkish flag flying on it, and two men crouching with rifles pointing at the train, were noticed by a passenger just as the train passed them. They fired 20 or 30 shots, killing Elma Cowie and three men and wounding six, including four women, one of whom was a 15 year old girl, Lucy Shaw.

Mulla Abdullah, who was killed in the subsequent gun-fight, was about 60 years old and acted as imam at the Broken Hill mosque. Just a few days before the attack on the train. “...Chief Sanitary inspector Brosnan had taken him to court for slaughtering sheep at the Ghantown when he was not a licensed member of the Butchers’ Union.”<sup>139</sup> Mullah Abdullah said in his last letter that he was dying for his faith and in obedience to the order of the Sultan “...but owing to my grudge against the inspector it was my intention to kill him first. Beyond this there is no enmity against anybody, and we informed nobody.”<sup>140</sup> The translation of his letter which appeared in the Melbourne Argus included the statement “I have never worn a turban since the day some larrikin threw stones at me, and I did not like it. I wear the turban today.”<sup>141</sup> Gool Mahomed, now an ice-cream vendor, was most likely an ex-cameleer who had worked in the mines after the railways had moved in. Many men, including Afghans who had sought work in the mines, were retrenched when the price of silver fell with the onset of war. The letter he had in his waistbelt, certain he would die, stated that he was a subject of the Sultan and that “I must kill your men and give my life for my faith by order of the Sultan.”

That night a crowd of patriotic Australians burnt down the German Club in Broken Hill. Heavily booted soldiers and police searched the mosque in the Ghantown for a constable the Afghans had supposedly imprisoned and then as the searchers were leaving, a mob from the burning of the German Club arrived. The police and soldiers guarded the camp until the mob departed. “By the following day Broken Hill mines had rid themselves of all employees deemed under the 1914 Commonwealth War Precautions Act to be ‘enemy aliens’”. The incident was to have even further repercussions. At the instigation of the Attorney General, Billy Hughes, all ‘enemy aliens’ in Australia were interned for the duration of the war.”<sup>142</sup>

Turkish subjects were the main object of interest for the authorities rather than Muslims as such. The Commonwealth Military Forces Third Military District Headquarters Melbourne on 6 November 1914 had requested police for any information as to the whereabouts of any agents of the Turkish Government. It also asked for the “issue of secret instructions for all Turkish subjects to be kept under surveillance by the police throughout the State.”<sup>143</sup> Detective Howard reported on 22 November that instructions had been issued that Turkish subjects were to be treated the same as Germans and Austrians and that all non-naturalised Turkish subjects were reporting weekly to the police. On 30 November he reported that the Turkish Consulate, an Australian military officer, had informed police that “he does not know of a single Turk in Melbourne and if he knows of any he will at once let me know”. He also reported that the leading member of the Muslim

<sup>136</sup> Argus 19 October 1916

<sup>137</sup> Argus 10 March 1919

<sup>138</sup> Argus 2 January 1915

<sup>139</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.162

<sup>140</sup> Stevens, Christine. p.163

<sup>141</sup> The Argus. 6 January 1915

<sup>142</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille The Years of Decline: Australian Muslims 1900-1940 in Mary Lucille Jones, (ed) An Australian Pilgrimage. p.64

<sup>143</sup> Turkish Agents in Victoria. NAA Series Number MP16/1 Item Number 1914/3/917

community, a Syrian merchant “ Mr Jaboor of Lonsdale Street has also promised to inform me of any Turks that may come to the State.”<sup>144</sup>

General Niazin Bey created a security scare in 1915. An Admiralty Secret Circular was sent out to all ports in Australia, warning that this Turkish General had “recently returned from a Mission to spread sedition among the peoples of India.” It was understood that he was seeking to return to “Constantinople via Dutch Borneo and Holland” so all Boarding Officers were instructed to look for him. His detailed description was given. He was believed to be carrying “signed or at least named, photographs of the German Emperor.”<sup>145</sup> A little less than three weeks later, in July, the Sub-Collector of Customs in Port Pirie was warned that a man under the name of L. Dillon, expert mechanic had left Galveston for Sydney on 1 July. Boarding Inspectors were instructed to look for him and report by wire should Dillon arrive. He was apparently suspected of being General Niazin Bey in disguise.

There was evidence of suspicion of Muslims compared to Christians in wartime regulations. The Director of Military Operations for the Chief of General Staff on 22 January 1915 issued instructions that “Any Turkish subject who is by race a Greek, Armenian or Syrian or member of any other community well known to be opposed to the Turkish regime and a Christian and who gives no cause of complaint may be excepted from paragraph 4 Aliens Instructions. Any such person now interned may be released.”<sup>146</sup> The list of internees in March 1915 showed in Six Military Districts 2200 German and Austrian internees and only one Turkish subject. Sixty-nine Turkish subjects were on parole, reporting weekly.<sup>147</sup> States were required to provide a list of all Turkish subjects registered under the Aliens Registration Regulations. Returns for South Australia indicate that they were all Christians, mostly from Lebanon.<sup>148</sup>

The authorities were vigilant in defence of patriotism and took swift action where disloyalty was suspected. The flying of a Turkish flag in Northcote, Melbourne, caused some consternation. Mr Sharp of Fairfield Park reported to Victoria Police Intelligence Section that the offending flag was flying from a 30 foot flagpole in Separation Street Northcote next to the Little Sisters of the Poor. Sergeant Arthur of the Northcote Police was sent to investigate and he reported back to Captain Jones of Victoria Barracks on 6 August 1915 that he had interviewed the man responsible, Dervish Ali. The Sergeant gave him sound credentials as “...a loyal subject married to an English woman and his house inside is bedecked with the portraits of our King and Union Jacks”. “Dervish Ali informed me that it is the Mohammedan flag and that he being an Indian he is simply keeping up the religious custom of the fast of Ramadan which is now being kept in the Mohammedan world.”<sup>149</sup> The flag was taken down.

A taste of the nastiness brought out by war and its accompanying jingoism is given by the records on the “Turkish Tom Thumb”. In a file marked “Secret” there is a letter written in blue pencil on tissue paper addressed to Commander, Victoria Barracks Melbourne. From Fred H. Jones it is a warning that his ‘small man performer’ understood to be ‘a Turk’, “...has given his intention of slipping away by boat, taking several hundred pounds with him.” Jones went on “I am an Australian and consider that this money should be made stop in the state.” Telling the Commander “I considered it my duty to inform you” he asks the authorities to call before Saturday at his lodgings 539 Victoria Parade East Melbourne where the miscreant Hayati Hassid was also staying.<sup>150</sup> They acted quickly. The denunciation was received on 21 January 1915 and on 23 January, Hayati Hassid was hauled in as an alien and required to sign an undertaking “that I will neither directly nor indirectly take any action in any way prejudicial to the safety of the British Empire during the present war.” Described as “European Tom Thumb”, Hassid weighing two and a half stone and only thirty inches tall, was released on parole the same day. On 26 March Fred Jones again denounced his employee, accusing him of spying, presumably for the Sultan of Turkey. He was also still obsessed about the funds he claimed Hassid was accumulating. Writing about their country tours he said Hassid “...gets full particulars of each town visited and he has of big heap of particulars of each town.”

The Melbourne Argus carries a report from some months later headed “Mayor of Tiny Town; Claim for Wages; Question of Nationality.”<sup>151</sup> Hassid was claiming forty-six pounds in back wages from Fred Jones, but the defence argued that as he was a Turk and an enemy subject he had no right to sue. Mr Lazarus for Hassid, argued that his client was born in Salonica which was now Greek territory so could not be regarded

<sup>144</sup> Turkish Agents in Victoria. NAA Series Number MP16/1 Item Number 1914/3/917

<sup>145</sup> [Undesirable persons - L DILLION mechanic, Niazin BEY Turkish General] Series Number AP378/2 Item Number P11

<sup>146</sup> Turkish Subjects. NAA Series Number MP16/1 Item Number 1916/1537

<sup>147</sup> Numbers of Internees of German, Austrian and Turkish Nationalities. NAA Series Number B543 Item Number W175/1/2188

<sup>148</sup> Turkish aliens registered. NAA Series Number D1921/1 Item Number 1918/42

<sup>149</sup> Flying Turkish Flag in Northcote. NAA Series Number MP16/1 Item Number 1915/3/1070

<sup>150</sup> Hassid Hayati Turkish Tom Thumb. NAA Series Number MP16/1 Item Number 1915/3/78

<sup>151</sup> Argus. 23 June 1915

as a Turk. The presiding magistrate reserved his decision until Friday. That very day, according to the police files, Hassid was accepted as a Greek subject by the Greek Consul in Melbourne. As a Greek subject of Hebrew parents he was "entitled to the privileges which accrue as a subject of a neutral country." The last entry is dated 5 November 1915 with Detective Howard reporting that when last seen, Hassid had told him he was going to America. He had been sending money out of the country, to his sister-in-law in New York, at the rate of five pounds a month.

There was no doubt that Turkey was seen as an enemy, but not the leading enemy. The press was replete with stories of German atrocities. There were stories of Turkish atrocities but Australian troops denied them. In June 1915, just after the horrors of the attempted landing on Gallipoli, the wounded arriving in Cairo "...state that the Turks are fighting most fairly. In one case a Turk dressed the wounds of a British soldier under fire. Another left his water bottle with a wounded Australian. An Australian who was taken prisoner, but subsequently escaped, states that he was very well treated."<sup>152</sup> Sergeant Niven Neyland who was captured, wrote to his wife in Toorak, telling her that he and his companions, three Englishmen and two Frenchmen, were being well treated by the Turks. "I did not expect to be so well cared for."<sup>153</sup> "Turkish Chivalry" was again reported in 1916. A barge loaded with 300 wounded and medical personnel had become stuck in the mud in the British march on Baghdad and was abandoned. It was the Turks who towed the barge downstream under a white flag and returned all on board to the British camp unharmed.<sup>154</sup> Such reporting was a contributing factor to ameliorating anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim hatred in Australia.

The Crusader tone of reports on the capture of Jerusalem must have been the source of misgivings amongst those Muslims who had not thought of the implications of Indian and some Arab soldiers fighting against the Sultan of Turkey. The victory was reported as enhancing Britain's prestige in the east and exercising an important influence in Russia which supplied the majority of Christian pilgrims to the shrines in the city. The Chief Rabbi of London described the news as 'soul-thrilling'.<sup>155</sup> A Papal Encyclical decreed that Roman Catholics all over the world, even those in enemy countries, should give thanks for its delivery from the hands of the Turks. Papal neutrality was clearly suspended: "the Pope has addressed to the Catholic bishops an official communication stating that any attempt to return Jerusalem to the Turks would be a crime against Christianity."<sup>156</sup>

### **The Indians, the Empire and White Australia**

The question of British India and the White Australia Policy was placed on the national agenda well before the outbreak of the Great War. Voices in India were being raised against it and legislation against dominions which discriminated against Indians was being discussed as early as 1911.<sup>157</sup> Dr J.W.Barrett, who had attended the Universities Conference in Britain in 1912, returned to Melbourne with a negative report. He said that "Unpleasant reflections upon Australia had been made in his hearing as a result of the manner in which the White Australia Policy was being enforced." "Educated Indians...expressed strong resentment at the conditions which educated and enlightened men,...were obliged to put up with." And further "...Indians had even advocated the exclusion of persons from the dominions from India."<sup>158</sup>

The war did not make matters any easier for the racists. Report after report came in of the valour of Indian soldiers in the Imperial Armies. One such report from 1915 mentioned one of many examples of heroism. "A battalion of Pathans, after a forced march, was advancing along a road towards the scene of action when a shell fell, killing and wounding 16 men. The survivors did not even break their columns of fours, but simply closed up and marched straight on."<sup>159</sup> Despite these sacrifices, the Australian press was adamantly denouncing any weakening of the policy of racial exclusion and warmly reporting any defence of White Australia. Lord Carmichael, former Governor of Victoria and of Madras, presiding over a London meeting of the East India Association at which Indian migration to the Northern Territory was attacked, said that it was useless to hope that Australia would ever abandon the White Australia ideal, with which he made clear, he "thoroughly sympathised." In fact, he suggested, those who opposed it had base motives. "The only exception were a handful of Australians financially interested in exploiting Indian labour."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Argus 22 June 1915

<sup>153</sup> Argus 1 November 1915

<sup>154</sup> Argus 9 February 1916

<sup>155</sup> Argus 12 December 1917

<sup>156</sup> Argus 20 December 1917.

<sup>157</sup> Argus 24 November 1911

<sup>158</sup> Argus 4 March 1913

<sup>159</sup> Argus 22 June 1915

<sup>160</sup> Argus 13 February 1918

Others were not quite so adamant in their support for racially based immigration restriction. Sir Henry Richards, Chief Justice of the North-Western Provinces of India, on a tour of Australia the year before, did not mince words. "It is permitted to me I think to point out that your immigration restrictions were resented, and bitterly resented, in India-not by men who would like to come here, but by the ruling chiefs and educated class. From the standpoint of national dignity, those regulations are regarded as an insult to Indians."<sup>161</sup>

The local Muslims apparently did not dare to call for the overthrow of the racist policy. In 1918 in a letter to the editor over the issue of the policy, Sheikh Abdul Kader of Carlton Victoria called for 'justice and fair play'. In his letter he reminded readers that "India has remained a loyal and staunch supporter of the British throughout the present crisis" and he reassured them "I do not hint in any way against the White Australia policy. I would be the last man to see Australia flooded with cheap labor". The matter of justice was to appeal "for certain rights which are denied to us on the ground of our being Asiatic. We should be allowed to vote, and also we should have the benefit of old-age and invalid pensions." He recounted the story of one member of the community, an old man who had spent his life in the community, "...applied for a pension and was pointblank refused on the ground of his being Asiatic. After all we are human and it did seem humiliating to us."<sup>162</sup> A response a week later, from F.T.Hodgkiss supported the call for change, based upon respect for Indian loyalty to Britain. "The spirit shining through Sheikh Kader's letter illustrates the loyalty of the Indian Moslem, and is the reply to the Kaiser's grandiose appointment of himself as 'Protector of the Mohammedans'. Cannot Australia render something in return for all this, so that we can meet this brave and loyal people with countenance unashamed?"<sup>163</sup> The right to vote was withheld until, after a visit of the Indian statesman Dr Sastri in 1925, some Indians in Melbourne tested the matter in court and won a favourable verdict.<sup>164</sup>

At least Muslims were not discriminated against on religious grounds during the course of the war, that is, if they were Indian. The Austral-Indian Society of Melbourne applied successfully for Saied Lal Shah to visit in 1911, extended to cover Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr and in November "Bakra Eid". It was necessary for him to obtain a Certificate of Exemption from Provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act to stay. Unable to come in 1914 due to illness, his exemption was extended twice. On 1 September it is recorded that Lal Shah was residing at the shop of Mr S.M. Jaboor in Lonsdale Street Melbourne who had put up a one hundred pound security bond to the government for his visit. Mr Jaboor was the same man who had told the police he would inform them of any Turks he might come across. Lal Shah was given an exemption for another twelve months. Although the authorities made sure he was about only religious duties, there is no indication at all that he was even suspected at the height of the war of being a possible security risk although a well respected and active Muslim imam. He spent much of his time travelling around the interior of the country visiting Indian Muslims on their rounds.<sup>165</sup>

Several years later, in 1928, Fazal Deen of 299 Exhibition Street, applied to bring Lal Shah again. Fazal Deen, on investigation, was found to be a substantial property owner with a good bank balance. However when informed that there was already a 'Mohammedan priest' in Melbourne, Sayed Ameer Shah, Mr Deen replied that "...he does not belong to his (Fazal Deen's) faction but to another faction altogether. Deen further stated that 22 Mohammedans make his place their headquarters when they return to the city after their country excursions." Nearly all of his congregation "spend the greater part of their time hawking about the country." On 9 October the Minister regretted that he was unable to grant the desired authority in this case. By that time racial and religious tolerance was weaker and the Muslim population had declined.

### **Pearling and White Australia**

At the time of Federation in 1901 Australia was leading the world in the pearling industry. Broome, with its many Malay inhabitants, produced 80% of the world's pearl shell.<sup>166</sup> The pearlery, originally Malays from the Dutch East Indies but later Filipinos and Japanese also came, were indentured to their employer. This was going on certainly until the 1940s. Abu Bin Draham, brought to Australia by North West Pearlery Pty. Ltd. in 1918, applied for registration under the Aliens Act in October 1941. He is recorded as "indentured to

<sup>161</sup> Argus 17 July 1917

<sup>162</sup> Argus 19 July 1918

<sup>163</sup> Argus 25 July 1918

<sup>164</sup> Lyng, J. Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress. MUP in association with OUP. 1935 p.185

<sup>165</sup> Re: Return to Commonwealth of Lal Shah (Mohammedan Priest) NAA Series Number B13/0 Item Number 1928/22985

<sup>166</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. Muslim Impact on Early Australian Life. in Jones, Mary Lucille (ed.) p. 40

Owen.<sup>167</sup> Pearling is extremely hazardous and claimed many lives. It was an industry which despite the immigration laws of the time, was not regarded as suitable for 'white men'.

Although there were voices raised to end this reliance on 'coloured labor', the industry fought back. Reports of the sessions of the Pearling Commission in 1916 show how strongly industry opinion supported the status quo. There was even a suggestion, delivered by the Mayor of Broome, that the North-West should secede from Western Australia and become a Federal territory 'with an administration in touch with local affairs'<sup>168</sup> This suggestion, delivered to a civic reception for the Pearling Commission, gained a hearing from the members present. Witness after witness warned that the end of Malay, Japanese and 'Manilla Men' divers would kill the industry. One master pearler, Mr Tilly said that it would be possible to work the pearling grounds from the Dutch islands but if that was done it would be the end of Broome as 95 per cent of the shell came from outside the territorial limit.<sup>169</sup> It was clear that English divers were not able to do the job.<sup>169</sup> The witnesses presented their case well. Mr Hugh Richardson, pearler and managing partner of a major firm, said that if the pearling industry was destroyed by the inability to employ 'coloured' labor, "nothing would be left to Broome but the supply of a few inland stations."<sup>170</sup>

As expected, exemption from the Immigration Restriction Act was granted but the Japanese became the most favoured divers. In 1908 of 165 licensed divers only one was a Malay. Malays were forced into taking employment as boat-builders, labourers, cooks and wharf-labourers. In 1911 there were in Australia, 2191 Malays of whom only 99 were females. Although most were still engaged in pearl-shelling 238 were in agricultural jobs and 311 in shipping. Not many attained economic independence. In 1921 of a total of 1860 Malays 1207 were wage earners, 14 employed labor and 131 worked on their own account.<sup>171</sup> An official report presented to the Governor General in 1916 noted that the population of Broome stood at 2,700 of whom 2,200 were "Asiatics" principally Japanese and Malay. It noted "notwithstanding the preponderance of Asiatic races the population is singularly law-abiding."<sup>172</sup>

### Between the World Wars

The obsession with peopling of the empire with the white race had begun even before the Great War had ended. It could be seen from the beginning to be serving a political and economic purpose for 'the Motherland'. Sir Rider Haggard, author of the immensely popular novels "King Solomon's Mines" and "Allan Quartermain" visited Australia on behalf of the Royal Colonial Institute to study the question of the emigration from Britain of soldiers and their families at war's end. It was understood in Britain that when the troops returned "there would be a great industrial disturbance". The men might not wish to return to their old jobs, many of which had been taken by women anyway. That meant they would emigrate and probably to the United States. As they would be lost to the British Empire if this happened, Haggard was seeking possible opportunities in the dominions. South Africa and Rhodesia had already offered support for the settlement of British soldiers and he was seeking similar support in Australia. The scheme was openly racist. He stated: "The Empire is not over-populated with white folk. In fact, it is greatly under-populated. That being so, it is surely highly desirable that at any sacrifice...the Empire should attempt to retain the sons who have fought for her."<sup>173</sup>

Italians, who had fought on the side of the British, did not count as 'sons'. The Protestant Federation assembly eleven years later was echoing the Anglo-chauvinism of Haggard. Mr Linton MLA, who delivered the main address to the gathering, advocated scientific migration rather than mass migration and spoke approvingly of the Big Brother movement with its slogan 'Britons for Australia and Australia for Britons.' The retiring president said that it was wrong to think that the Protestant Federation opposed southern Italian migration because of difference in religion. It was rather that they always retained their nationality and although an Italian had to have forty pounds when he came, "the one forty pounds went back to Italy again and again."<sup>174</sup>

Indians apparently did not count as Haggard's 'sons' either, despite their sacrifice for the British Empire. Ghulam Gana, a farm labourer of Lismore NSW who had worked in that district for fifteen years, had to offer to put up the huge sum of one hundred pounds to guarantee the good behaviour of his 23 year old son

<sup>167</sup> Draham Abu Bin-Nationality Malay-Arrived Broome per Minderoo 1918 NAA Series Number K1331/1 Item Number 1950/DRAHAM A B

<sup>168</sup> Argus 25 April 1916

<sup>169</sup> Argus 26 April 1916

<sup>170</sup> Argus 28 April 1916

<sup>171</sup> Lyng, J. p.176,188

<sup>172</sup> Lyng, J. p.179

<sup>173</sup> Argus 10 April 1916

<sup>174</sup> Argus 10 August 1927

for whom he wanted permission to visit Australia for three years. Mr Brewer, who wrote to 'The Chief Customs House Official, Melbourne' on Ghulam's behalf, mentioned that the son, Shar Mahomet, was also a farm labourer used to the cotton industry, which was to be started in Lismore that same year. On 19 September 1922 permission for three years visit was granted.<sup>175</sup>

Relations with India troubled Australia throughout the inter-war period. Sir Archibald Strong warned of the weakening effect the White Australia policy could have upon relations with India at a 1928 meeting of the Victoria League of Victoria. He argued that Australians must explain to Indians that they are not despised but that the policy has been introduced "because we desire to avoid the creation of conditions under which we might eventually do so." It is the wish to avoid racial strife that this policy is upheld. "Yet the belief is strong in India that Australia as a country, and Australians as individuals are inspired by a blind and unreasoning hatred of the Indian."<sup>176</sup>

By the 1930s the White Australia Policy was showing signs of success. The numbers of non-Europeans was in decline. Table 3 shows Australia was moving towards racial homogeneity.

Racial classification was a difficult matter and there were some uncertainties. Did Turks classify as white or 'coloured'? Inspector Brown of Melbourne had been asked by the German Consulate to ascertain whether Turkish nationals were regarded as of Asiatic race and therefore banned or as Southern Europeans. He also wanted to know whether Turkish nationals were permitted to settle in Australia and to acquire property as other European nationals. It was unofficially known that this query originated with the Turkish Government which asked the German Consulate in London to find out. The reply came from the Director of the Investigation Branch of the Attorney General's Department on 26 May 1928. "Asiatic Turks are not permitted to settle in Australia." A Certificate of Exemption allowing a temporary visit might be granted upon payment of a bond. However "European Turks may, subject to application in each case, be permitted to enter and settle in Australia. The acquisition or otherwise by these aliens of land is a State matter."<sup>177</sup> In a gazetted notice dated 23 January 1930 it was declared by the Governor-General that the section of the Immigration Act forbidding the immigration of "Turks of the Ottoman race" should no longer apply.<sup>178</sup>

Other Muslims further to the west of Istanbul, were a little more acceptable. Adventurous young Albanian men, some only 18, were coming into Australia, seeking earnings sufficient to allow them to return home and buy a farm. Travelling up to seven weeks in ships they came to Fremantle in Western Australia looking for casual work. Their travel documents and personal declarations are still held in the National Archives of Australia and reveal that they were mainly under 30 years of age, and from unskilled jobs, such as ploughman<sup>179</sup> and farmer.<sup>180</sup> Like the Afghans, they left their women at home because they were only coming for a few years. Although they could enter Australia, for they were white and therefore racially acceptable they were not really the type of migrant the government wanted. British migrants safely Christian, were preferred. In 1928, to make it harder for them, a quota for non-British migrants was established. They were also required to either have a letter from a sponsor or forty pounds as insurance. "British settlers entering Australia under the United Kingdom Assisted Passage Scheme...were only expected to pay three pounds."<sup>181</sup>

Most Albanians found work in the sugar areas of Queensland. Cane cutting was extremely hard work but even this was subjected to racial tests in the Depression of the 1930s. British Preference Leagues demanded that all sugar industry employees should be Anglo-Celtic Australians.<sup>182</sup> The Albanian Mosque in Shepparton, one of the original members of the Australian Federation of Islamic Societies, is based upon the men who moved into the area in the mid-1920s, leaving behind the cane-fields and tobacco farms of Queensland. Many of them became orchardists and market-gardeners, building a prosperous community in the countryside.<sup>183</sup> The area around Shepparton also attracted Turkish migrants interested in farming in the 1970s and in the 1990s became home for a significant Iraqi refugee population.

It should be understood that the general level of racism within Australian society was at a high level during the pre-war period. The relations between the dominant community and indigenous Australians illustrates

<sup>175</sup> Shar Mahomet, son of Ghulam Gana of Lismore-Permission to come to Australia for 3 years. NAA Series Number B13/0 Item Number 1922/15333

<sup>176</sup> Argus 22 May 1928

<sup>177</sup> Turkish Nationals in Australia-Entry of. NAA Series Number B741/3 Series Number V/5036

<sup>178</sup> Revocation of restriction placed on admission into the Commonwealth of Turks of the Ottoman race. NAA Series Number b13/0 Item Number 1930/2418

<sup>179</sup> Islam Tehin Nationality Albanian. NAA Series Number PP246/4 Item Number ALBANIAN/ISLAM T

<sup>180</sup> Islam Ahmet-Passport and or travel documents NAA Series Number PP9/4 Item Number NN

<sup>181</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. The Years of Decline: Australian Muslims 1900-40. in Jones, Mary Lucille (ed.) p.78

<sup>182</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. p.79

<sup>183</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. The Years of Decline: Australian Muslims 1900-40. in Jones, Mary Lucille (ed.) p.83

the atmosphere of the time. As late as 1929 there were reports of the murders of indigenous Australians in the outback by white pastoralists and their henchmen. The Federal Board of Inquiry constituted to inquire into several such shootings in 1929, consisted of a police magistrate, a police inspector and the Government resident of the district. No independent person was appointed despite demands from some churches. No lawyer was allowed to appear on behalf of the indigenous people. The Board relied heavily upon the word of "reputable settlers" who were present at the shootings and had apparently take part, one admitting he had fired eight or nine times at the Aborigines. The Australian Board of Missions, a church body, in a resolution sent to the Prime Minister Mr Bruce, expressed its dissatisfaction with both the composition of the Board and its findings. "Among the causes given for the dissatisfaction of the aborigines there had been no reference to injustice and wrongdoing on the part of any whites." Indeed one of the causes of dissatisfaction, according to the Board of Inquiry was "unattached missionaries wandering from place to place, having no knowledge of blacks and their customs and teaching a doctrine of equality."<sup>184</sup> This was the only wrongdoing of whites that came up.

Some of the churches were not all that sympathetic to the indigenous people either. During the course of its investigations the Federal Board had interviewed the acting superintendent of the Hermannsburg Mission Station. Amongst the causes for dissatisfaction amongst the blacks, according to him, was the work of a white woman missionary Miss Annie Lock, who "had said she would be quite willing to marry a black man." This was reported as shocking evidence. The acting supervisor also added his view that a white woman, moving amongst unclothed blacks, "lowered her in their eyes to their own standards." This spiritual leader also said "He believed in legalised corporal punishment for blacks who misbehaved."<sup>185</sup>

### The Thinking behind Racial Classifications

A well respected scholar of the between wars period, J. Lyng, who enjoyed the title of 1927 Harbison-Higinbotham Scholar of the University of Melbourne, wrote "Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress" in 1935. It carried a foreword by Ernest Scott, one of the outstanding Australian scholars at the time. His ideas can be regarded as mainstream ideas for that period of history. In his foreword, Ernest Scott wrote "Mr Lyng ...wishes to analyse and indicate those elements in the racial mixture of Australia which are likely to conduce most effectually to the successful development of the country." Scott appears to have been a little dismayed by the emphasis placed upon non-Britishers as he went on: "...the discerning reader must apply a corrective to the facts here presented. Otherwise the impression will be acquired that the distinctively English, Scottish and Irish strains in the Australian amalgam have been less important than has, in fact, been the case."<sup>186</sup>

The ideological basis of the 'modern emphasis upon race' commented Scott, is due largely to the writings of the French Count Gobineau. That philosopher contended: "The history of mankind proves that the destinies of people are governed by a racial law. Neither irreligion, no immorality, no luxurious living, nor weakness of government causes the decadence of civilisations. If a nation goes down, the reason is that its blood, the race itself is deteriorating."<sup>187</sup>

### Table 3 Non-Britishers in Australia.<sup>188</sup>

The Census taken on June 10, 1933

Europeans	
Italians	26,693
Germans	16,829
Scandinavians	11,042
Greeks	8,293
Russians	4,873
Yugoslavs	3,928
Poles	3,231
Maltese	2,782
French	2,587
Swiss	1,938
Finns	1,272

Coloured races exclusive of Aborigines	
Chinese	10,846
Syrians	2,879
Indians and Cingalese	2,679
Japanese	2,241
Polynesians	1,364
Malays	969
Philipinos	292
Papuans	239
Asiatic Jews	199
Afghans	153

<sup>184</sup> Argus 29 April 1929

<sup>185</sup> Argus 7 January 1929

<sup>186</sup> Lyng, J.p.v

<sup>187</sup> Lyng, J.p.vi

<sup>188</sup> Lyng, J. p.245

Dutch	1,141
Spanish	1,141
Austrians	1,097
Estonians	996
Czechoslovakians	606
Belgians	580
Letts	427
Rumanians	302
Turks	281
Bulgarians	274
Hungarians	271
Lithuanians	235
Other Europeans	947
<b>Total</b>	<b>92,448</b>

Arabs	124
Negroes	122
Maoris	75
Others	639
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,821</b>

All of humanity is, Lyng believed, divided into different races and sub-classifications of races, each of which has particular inherent characteristics. The main classifications are white, yellow, black and brown. The whites are subdivided into the Nordics or Aryans, the Alpines and the Mediterranean.

The main mental characteristic of the Nordics, in which he apparently classified himself, was “restless creative energy.” “In this peculiar quality they surpass not only the other European stocks, but also all other branches of mankind.”<sup>189</sup> They were natural rulers of course. “Extremely race-conscious and politically efficient, they settled down as a ruling aristocracy in many lands.”<sup>190</sup> Less aristocratic but more suited to rural pursuits and soldiering were the Alpines, a “sturdy tenacious race, very stable but apt to be stolid and unimaginative.” Further south from the Nordics were those of Mediterranean temperament. Flighty and emotional “They are inclined to lack stability and tenacity, and neither in politics nor in war do they possess a high sense of discipline...They are quick-witted but prove to be superficial.”<sup>191</sup>

Lyng attributed the progress of the Australian people towards racial homogeneity to “the decline of the aboriginals”, the fact that the Chinese who came in such large numbers between 1854 and 1891 did not bring their women with them and to the White Australia Policy.<sup>192</sup> So significant were the racial characteristics of the population, he argued, that they could explain political history. “The higher percentage of Mediterraneans in Queensland and the correspondingly lower percentage of Nordics may explain the fact that politically Queensland for long has been the most turbulent and unstable State in Australia, while in South Australia and Tasmania, where the racial composition is the opposite, political disturbances of a serious nature have practically been unknown.”<sup>193</sup>

There were concerns at that time about new groups which had been entering the country, groups which were not British. They included such groups as the Maltese, the Albanians and the Yugoslavs. He allayed fears about the Albanians who were he said ‘very few’. The greatest number who landed in any one year was in 1924 and they totalled only 176. However they were, with the Yugoslavs, not dangerous to the well-being of the nation. “The Jugo-slavs and Albanians, being in the main Alpines, should prove a valuable addition to Australia’s rural population.”<sup>194</sup> Hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Nordics no doubt.

The brown race offered something of a puzzle to those who shared the world view of J. Lyng. Geographically stretching from Polynesian and Micronesian islands in the Pacific through Asia to Persia and Turkey, these ‘brown people’ were really a series of types clearly distinguished from one another. “Some of these types, like the Persians and Ottoman Turks, are largely white; others like the southern Indians and Yemenite Arabs, are largely black; while still others, like the Himalayan and Central Asian peoples, have much yellow blood. Again, there is no generalised brown race culture like those possessed by yellow and whites.”<sup>195</sup> “The great spiritual bond” Lyng recognised, “is Islamism.” However there were exceptions such as the majority of Hindus in ‘brown race’ India and the Syrian and Armenian peoples in Asia Minor. “The principal bond between them is a feeling of being ‘Asiatics’ and that, as such, they have a common grievance

<sup>189</sup> Lyng, J. p.9

<sup>190</sup> Lyng, J. p.10

<sup>191</sup> Lyng, J. p.11

<sup>192</sup> Lyng, J. p.7

<sup>193</sup> Lyng, J. p.22

<sup>194</sup> Lyng, J. p.145

<sup>195</sup> Lyng, J. p.181

against domination by Europeans.”<sup>196</sup> In Australia this segment of humanity, making up only about 10,000 people, was represented by “Indians, Afghans, Syrians and Malays.” That was practically the racial composition of the Australian Muslim population at that time.

These brown races were clearly on the decline in Australia. In 1901 there were 4383 “Hindus and other races of British India” in the Commonwealth of Australia. By 1921 there were only 3,150 and of them only 176 were female.<sup>197</sup> Syrians were a slightly different case. They were treated differently by immigration authorities as there “is a large element of pure whites in Syria of the Mediterranean strain.”<sup>198</sup> They had the added advantage that they did not club together and did not set up Syrian Societies very frequently. They also did not make any great effort to preserve their Arabic language. “It is lost with the second generation”. That was clearly interpreted by Lyng as an advantage. Of the 1921 total of 2892 Syrians, more than half were born in Australia and they had only increased by about 500 since 1911. The 1933 census showed a slight decline. Afghans had continued to fall and there were only 147 in Australia in 1921. The number of Malays fell from 2191 in 1911 to 1860 in 1921. By the 1933 census there were less than one thousand. The future domination of European strains in the Australian population seemed assured.

Racism was socially acceptable as were the associated notions of selective breeding and the sterilisation of the unfit. Press coverage was given the views of Professor Agar of Melbourne University. He openly advocated the sterilisation of the insane in 1936 at the University Public Questions Society. “The trouble caused by insanity and its hereditary dangers was due not so much to the mentally unfit as to the proliferation of low grade normals.”<sup>199</sup> He was elected chairman of the provisional committee of the Racial Hygiene Society of Victoria in October 1936.<sup>200</sup> In the following June he is again reported as addressing the inaugural meeting of the Eugenics Society at Scots Hall, Melbourne. In his speech he emphasised that the most serious problem the Society might address was: “the extreme disparity between the fertility rate of the two classes of society—those of superior natural endowments, intellectual and physical, and those of inferior qualities of mind and body.”<sup>201</sup> He wanted some scheme to encourage the better type of persons to have large families but did not go so far as to advocate family allowances or child endowment, “which might be an inducement to the unskilled labourer but not to the man in the higher occupational groups.” It is significant that his entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography carries no mention of his absorbing interest in eugenics or his rabid support for racially discriminatory immigration policy.<sup>202</sup> Such views are now unmentionable.

### The Second World War, Refugees and Australia

In September 1939, the Prime Minister of Australia declared war with the statement “Great Britain has declared war upon her (Germany) and as a result, Australia is also at war.”<sup>203</sup> Loyal member of the Empire, now wearing the name of British Commonwealth of Nations, Australia sent troops off to the Middle East. The Australian Navy was placed under British orders. At first the focus of the war was in Europe and the Mediterranean, similar to 1914-1918. The entry of Japan into the war in December 1941 changed the situation. Churchill was prepared to allow the countries of the Pacific, including Australia, to be invaded and to rescue them later, but that was not the reality of the British Empire in the 1940s. John Curtin, Prime Minister, insisted that the Australian 9<sup>th</sup> Division should be returned to Australia instead of being sent to Burma to defend India. He did not sleep as he waited for those troops, fourteen days on the sea without any naval escort, to get to Fremantle.<sup>204</sup> They took up the battle to defend Australia from the Japanese, who attempted to enter via Papua New Guinea.

There were very few Muslims in Australia during these years. In 1933 the total was 1,877 and by 1947 had only increased to 2,704.<sup>205</sup> The most recent group consisted of Albanians. Indians and Malays were apparently the other main groups (Table 3). The Albanians were ostracised during the war as ‘enemy aliens’ and they had few voices to defend them. One lonely letter to the editor in Melbourne asked that they be given justice and not be confused with Italians.<sup>206</sup> That did not save them from internment. “Albanians, whose country was annexed by Italy, a member of the Axis powers, were among those interned as enemy

<sup>196</sup> Lyng, J. p.182

<sup>197</sup> Lyng, J. p.183-184

<sup>198</sup> Lyng, J. p.186

<sup>199</sup> Argus 29 April 1936

<sup>200</sup> Argus 6 October 1936

<sup>201</sup> Argus 22 June 1937

<sup>202</sup> Australian Dictionary of Biography. 1891-1991. General Editor John Ritchie. MUP 1988. Vol.7.p.16-17

<sup>203</sup> Reese, Trevor R. Australia in the Twentieth century. p.113

<sup>204</sup> Thompson, John. On Lips of Living Men. Lansdowne Press. Melbourne. 1962 p.71

<sup>205</sup> Omar, Wafia and Allen, Kirsty. The Muslims in Australia. AGPS Canberra. 1997 p.23

<sup>206</sup> Argus 25 June 1940

aliens....Among the Albanians interned in the surveillance camp at Monte in Queensland, were boys as young as 16 as well as some individuals who had already been naturalised."<sup>207</sup>

The spread of Nazism and Fascism in Europe created thousands of refugees, desperate to find a safe haven. There were very few Muslims amongst them as the new form oppression, as distinct from the old imperialism, was concentrated in Europe. This did not mean that racist prejudice was ameliorated. Even fellow Europeans, mainly Christian, were regarded with suspicion. The Commonwealth of Australia, in December 1938, approved the admission of 15,000 refugees over the next three years. This was a large number of non-Britishers for that time. It caused considerable uneasiness in Australia.

In 1939 the Minister for the Interior announced that the assistant secretary of the Department of the Interior was to be sent to Australia House London, to supervise arrangements for the migration of these aliens. The suspicions of the time were reflected in the statement by the Minister, Mr McEwen, that "Inquiries were made by Australia House to ascertain if applicants were Jews or Aryans, or non-Aryan Christians."<sup>208</sup> The Australian Natives Association in its 1939 Congress in Warrnambool, while condemning the spread of fascism, also carried a motion calling for tight restrictions on the number of aliens who could be permitted to enter the country, and demanding that they should not be permitted to concentrate together in communities, should not be permitted to have their own schools or teach in their own languages, not have foreign language newspapers and should be subjected to an English language test after three years. Failure to "be a ground for expatriation."<sup>209</sup> This extreme position on the acquisition of English was not exceptional. Only a few days before the Victorian Minister for Education had stated that a working knowledge of English should be made a condition of entry for refugees and other aliens. He considered it would be too difficult to make adult aliens attend English classes as the state had no power to compel attendance at school beyond the age of 14 years.<sup>210</sup>

There was great concern that Australia was not attracting British migrants and was increasingly reliant upon Southern and Central European States for its intake. Over the 12 month period ending 31 March 1939, there had been a loss of 85 British persons and a net gain of 9,502 Europeans by migration. Of them some 3,101 were Germans, mainly refugees, 2,671 Italians, as well as 565 Yugoslavs and 289 Albanians.<sup>211</sup> The President of the Victorian Legislative Council was reported in the same edition of the Argus, objecting to the type of Southern European migrants entering the country and alleging "They were working under 'sweating' conditions to the detriment of Australian industrial standards." "Colonies of Aliens" were a particular fear and Mr McEwen had been defending the regulated admission of aliens against Labor Party criticism in Federal Parliament a week before. "Investigation had been made into the aggregation of aliens into colonies, and in the sugar-growing areas of Queensland, for example, it had been found necessary to refuse any further permits to migrants desiring to go there." He continued "Investigations at the Leeton (NSW) irrigation area had not disclosed an alarming aggregation of aliens, but at Shepparton and Werribee permits for further settlement had been refused." Reflecting awareness of the changing international situation, he said "In these unsettled days no country could take action more calculated to cause bad international feeling than to discriminate between the nationals whom it would permit to come to its shores. Unwarranted stress had been placed on the fact that many of the aliens were southern Europeans."<sup>212</sup>

Avoidance of 'aggregation of aliens' appears to have been part of the thinking behind refusal by the Commonwealth Government to permit the settlement of large groups of Jewish refugees in the Northern Territory, a proposal which had been raised several times in the past. The Minister of the Interior said that the government was determined "that no minority problems shall arise in Australia." "A plan for the settlement of a few families, or of 20 or 30 families, at some suitable spot might not involve the risks against which the Government is determined to guard; but in general our policy is to select carefully from individual applicants for admittance, thus ensuring that the migrants admitted are of a type that can be readily assimilated into the Australian community."<sup>213</sup>

The fact that some churches were also attacking the 'alien' intake indicates the depth of public feeling at the time. In its annual assembly that year the Congregational Union called for world peace and demanded that action should be taken to eradicate slums but it was most deeply concerned with other matters. Under a headline "Migration Policy: Church Attack" the article commenced: "Protest against the indiscriminate and unrestrained admittance into Australia of foreigners is made in a report submitted by the public questions committee to the annual assembly.... It was a scandal, the report stated, that unemployed Australian working

<sup>207</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. p.86

<sup>208</sup> Argus. 17 February 1939

<sup>209</sup> Argus 23 March 1939

<sup>210</sup> Argus 17 March 1939

<sup>211</sup> Argus 10 May 1939

<sup>212</sup> Argus 10 May 1939

<sup>213</sup> Argus 9 May 1939

men should be emigrating to New Zealand while the Commonwealth Government permitted the country to be filled with cheap foreign labour."<sup>214</sup>

Even during the war such hostile attitudes persisted. When Prime Minister Curtin was passing through Kalgoorlie in January 1942 he was met by a deputation of miners who expressed fears that there would be race riots on the gold fields unless action was taken "to conscript all aliens into labour battalions". They complained that the aliens had taken all the good jobs of Australians who had enlisted and that they were earning 15 to 20 pounds a week in mines and wood cutting. "Evidence that high feeling exists is the fact that Australians are demanding that all foreigners must speak English in public....Many aliens are ignoring the request to speak English in public and several incidents have already occurred."<sup>215</sup> Australia had already set about making use of the labor of the refugees, internees and prisoners of war who were available. In January the War Cabinet decided that aliens and refugees would be allowed to enlist or would be called up for military or labor service.<sup>216</sup> Later that month the Commonwealth advised Victoria that 300 war internees and 150 war prisoners would be made available for fruit picking.<sup>217</sup>

### After the Second World War

Between 1947 and 1971 the Muslim population of Australia increased from 2,704 to 22,311.<sup>218</sup> Apart from the immigration of Albanians, who came in relatively small numbers, the only Muslims acceptable under the White Australia Policy were Turkish-Cypriots who held British passports by virtue of the occupation of their land by the British Empire.<sup>219</sup> European Turks and "Turks of Ottoman race" were theoretically acceptable but were certainly not encouraged to migrate. Assimilation was dominant. What this meant is explained by Bouma: "The immigrant was to settle into the pre-existing culture and society without causing any noticeable change. The immigrant did all the changing; the society did none. The immigrant was expected to learn English, acquire an Australian accent, eat Australian-style cuisine, go to Australian schools, adopt a footy team, attend Australian churches and *blend in*."<sup>220</sup>

Despite the experience the world had just been through with the highly developed racial theories of Nazism and the terrible cost these had inflicted upon all humanity, including the German people, old myths about "Nordic" racial types apparently still prevailed in Australia. Blond haired blue eyed migrants from north western Europe were clearly favoured by the Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell. 'White' Muslims from Cyprus, Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria and Russia did get in as refugees but they were small in number. Non-Europeans could not get resident status in Australia until 1947. Even then the concession was minimal. "It was decided that non-Europeans admitted for business reasons, who had lived in Australia continuously for 15 years, could be permitted to remain without applying for periodical extensions of permits. In effect, such people achieved resident status."<sup>221</sup>

However what appears a fairly enlightened development did not benefit Samsuddin Bin Katib, an Indonesian who had only been here for 11 years. In Australia since 1937 he was working on a pearling lugger until the war. With the outbreak of war he first enlisted in the Australian Navy, then volunteered as a commando. Undertaking extremely hazardous action, he spent 199 days behind Japanese lines and gained non-commissioned rank.<sup>222</sup> However his service record did not protect him when he became involved in an industrial dispute with the Pearlers' Association over attempted reduction in divers' wages. As founder and president of the Indonesian-Malay Association, a type of pearling workers union, he was selected for deportation as a troublemaker in February 1948. After representations by the Seamen's Union, Calwell, a Minister in the Labor Party government, suspended the deportation order on condition he found employment in the pearling industry.<sup>223</sup> Returning to Broome to the offer of a job, Samsuddin's potential employer insisted that he resign from the Indonesian-Malay Association.<sup>224</sup> Samsuddin refused to resign, all other employers refused to hire him, so he was again subject to a deportation order which, this time, was carried out. His former employer, to whom he was under bond, was ordered to provide repatriation to his country of

<sup>214</sup> Argus 4 May 1939

<sup>215</sup> Argus 26 January 1942

<sup>216</sup> Argus 22 January 1942

<sup>217</sup> Argus 29 January 1942

<sup>218</sup> Omar, Wafia and Allen, Kirsty. *The Muslims in Australia*. p.23

<sup>219</sup> Deen, Hanifa. *Caravanserai: Journey among Australian Muslims*. Allen & Unwin Australia. 1995 p.15.

<sup>220</sup> Bouma, Gary, D. *Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia*. AGPS. Canberra. 1994 p.9

<sup>221</sup> Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. (DILGEA) *Australia and Immigration 1788 to 1988*. AGPS. Canberra 1988 p.31

<sup>222</sup> Herald 6 July 1948

<sup>223</sup> Argus 20 February 1948

<sup>224</sup> Indonesian Malay Association - Broome Western Australia. NAA Series Number A6122/31 Item Number 1203

origin.<sup>225</sup> John Pattiasina, a Javanese, was also deported for his activities as secretary of the Association. As the Melbourne Herald noted, it was strange that the president and secretary of the IMA were being deported under the Immigration Restriction Act for trying to maintain a reasonable standard of living for all residents of Australia, supposedly the purpose of the Act.<sup>226</sup>

An article warning of dangers in the north appeared during the development of this controversial series of events. The article, obviously reflecting some of the ferment in the north, was headed "Malays 'In Control' in the North-West". It suggested how dangerous matters could become if too many 'Asiatics' became influential in the north. The Broome Branch of the RSL had charged that the Commonwealth Government was allowing breaches of the policy in their region. The Lord Mayor of Perth added his voice, describing the "racism" of so many Malays. "Malay crews of pearling vessels would not allow white men to join the vessels." Such an attitude could have only once cause. "Communism, he alleged, was 'rampant' among the Malays, who adopted a belligerent attitude toward white men."<sup>227</sup> Indeed the leaders of the Seaman's Union, who intervened for Samsuddin were communists, and these were the first years of the Cold War. Indonesians in the 1940s were also highly politicised by the liberation struggle going on in their homeland. The press in an increasingly politically aware Malaysia reported that it was the militancy of Indonesian pearl divers which was encouraging Australian lugger owners in Broome to concentrate on Malays.<sup>228</sup> The Investigation Branch of the Attorney General's Department did note in a report in April 1949 Ali bin Baharon, originally of Sarawak, who had replaced Samsuddin and was acting chairman of the Association, had been "holding private meetings amongst Asiatic indents and lecturing them on Communism".<sup>229</sup> He left Australia of his own accord in December 1949.

Malays, Minister Calwell and the White Australia Policy were very much in the news in 1947 and 1948. Amidst the 5500 nationals of Asian countries admitted on a temporary basis, about a third wished to remain. More than 100 were deported before 1949 when adverse publicity forced the prime minister to halt the process.<sup>230</sup> One of the public relations disasters for the Chifley Government commenced in November 1947. Mr Calwell, determined to expel 43 Malayans of whom 14 had Australian wives and families, claimed that "It would amount to discriminatory treatment if [they] were permitted to stay here on the sole ground of their marriage to Australian women."<sup>231</sup> That these men had served as merchant seamen during the war meant nothing. This breaking up of families understandably created a storm. The Australian section of the World Council of Churches called upon the government to reconsider its decision, stating: "As men who stood beside our own servicemen in the defence of Australia surely these Malayans have earned the right to humane consideration at Australian hands."<sup>232</sup>

The government would have to pay social service payments of about three pounds a week to families it had deprived of breadwinners. Speaking for the wives Mrs Phyllis Osman of Brougham Street Woolloomooloo said "As the Government is taking our husbands away and leaving us without support, I think it should increase the social service contribution at least to enable us to live and feed the children properly." Bishop Pilcher of Sydney organised a rally for 27 November to protest against this unjust decision and had called together several churches, womens' organizations and the Waterside Workers' Federation.<sup>233</sup> The Prime Minister Mr Chifley was not swayed and publicly supported his Minister for Immigration, emphasising to Parliament that "Since the war the Government has been deporting large numbers of people of all nationalities who were given temporary shelter here."<sup>234</sup>

The Bishop of Armadale then joined in the fray, telling a Church of England Men's Society luncheon that Australia was "turning potential friends into enemies." He advocated the admission of quotas of people from neighbour-lands "firstly for friendship and secondly so that Australians could absorb something of their culture."<sup>235</sup> The Sultans of Malaya were also getting restive, asking for an explanation of the decision. Twenty-five Malayan associations demanded retaliatory action against the Australian export trade. As the Herald editorialised "These are unfortunate repercussions and we may not have heard the last of them."<sup>236</sup> Despite the pressure the Prime Minister refused to review the case.

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<sup>225</sup> Herald. 30 June 1948

<sup>226</sup> Herald 6 July 1948

<sup>227</sup> Herald 31 January 1948

<sup>228</sup> The Straits Times. 10 October 1949

<sup>229</sup> Indonesian Malay Association - Broome Western Australia. NAA Series Number A6122/31 Item Number 1203

<sup>230</sup> Markus, Andrew. Australian Race Relations 1788-1993. Allen and Unwin. St Leonards NSW. 1994. p.166

<sup>231</sup> Herald 13 November 1947

<sup>232</sup> Herald 17 November 1947

<sup>233</sup> Herald 24 November 1947

<sup>234</sup> Herald 24 November 1947

<sup>235</sup> Herald 25 November 1947

<sup>236</sup> Herald 26 November 1947

Trying to defend the indefensible, Mr Calwell told Parliament that one of the Malays being deported already had a wife and family in Malaya. He had attacked the wrong target. Mrs Phyllis Osman said that if the Minister for Immigration had had the decency to check his statement, he would have found that her husband had already divorced his wife. She was very critical of his “thoughtless and unconfirmed statements”. Her husband had cabled Malaya asking for papers confirming his divorce as soon as he heard Calwell’s statement, she said. She also said that she knew of the children from that marriage and was sending them food parcels each week.<sup>237</sup> Her husband, Ahmat Bin Osman was permitted to stay until 30 June 1948 as they were expecting a baby in February.

The other men however had to leave as soon as possible and would be sent by air if a ship was not available.<sup>238</sup> A ship was not available until February 1948 but the wives who wished to accompany their husbands to Malaya were not taken. There was no room on the ship. The Federal Government promised that they would be permitted to join their husbands without undue delay.<sup>239</sup>

The war had awakened Asia. The Europeans could no longer assume the mantle of invincibility they had worn in earlier times. They had been soundly trounced by the non-Nordic Japanese, and Asia and the world would never be the same. The Malayan people no longer accepted British or white domination. They were asserting their equality along with billions of other former colonial peoples. They no longer accepted racial insults with politeness born of subservience, a common response in the nineteenth century. The Malayan newspapers strongly attacked the “blundering, tactless, unreasonable, harsh and provocative” Calwell. He had at least united all Malaysians by insulting the Malays, the Chinese and the Eurasians, the Straits Times article said, but his actions had also “offended the racial pride of Malaya.” This hostile article was part of the welcome received by the Australian Goodwill Mission to Singapore.<sup>240</sup>

Within Australia a serious debate about the future of the policy began. Leading Australians differed on what should be done. Professor Agar of Melbourne University, the eugenics advocate of the 1930s, had learned nothing from the Third Reich and the war. In 1948 he still believed in the enforcement of the White Australia Policy to the maximum degree. “If we are forced to give way on this question we shall be swamped in a generation or so. ..We must hold at all costs and even take the risk of being forced to yield, because the alternative is the certainty of being overwhelmed by more fecund races.” Dr Booth the Archbishop of Melbourne held a more civilised view arguing that “Australia must take the initiative and put herself right by bringing up to date an immigration policy which has become obsolete and dangerous.”<sup>241</sup>

However the old order held strong. When Mr Jennings of the Singapore “Free Press” was in Melbourne in 1948 he said that harsh enforcement of the White Australia Policy was the only cause of ill-will between Malaya and Australia. The Minister for External Affairs Dr Evatt, warrior for the United Nations Organisation and for human rights, accused the Singapore Free Press of being ‘extremist’ and raising “irrelevant issues of immigration policy when the Australian Goodwill Mission was in Singapore.”<sup>242</sup> The Opposition still held to the policy too, arguing only about details of implementation. Losing an opportunity to serve the country and its reputation in Asia, Mr Holt MHR, later the Prime Minister who disappeared while swimming in Port Philip Bay, stated in July 1948 that “..he found little to criticise in the general policy approach of the Minister for Immigration (Mr Calwell)...But it was to be regretted that Mr Calwell had taken so long to make a clear statement of his Government’s attitude.”<sup>243</sup> The debate went on for years with the politicians mainly holding to the old traditions and criticism and new ideas coming from some academics, the churches and some left-wing trade unions.

### **White Australia sinks into oblivion**

A revised Migration Act was introduced in 1958, abolishing the blatantly racist dictation test<sup>244</sup> although entry permits were still given at the discretion of immigration officials. The first Lebanese families came after this reform. The following year, 1959, there was a further weakening of the discriminatory policy. Australian citizens normally resident in Australia were permitted to sponsor their non-European spouses and unmarried young children to come and live here.<sup>245</sup> Then in 1964 entry regulations for people described as

<sup>237</sup> Herald 3 December 1947

<sup>238</sup> Herald 30 December 1947

<sup>239</sup> Herald 3 February 1948

<sup>240</sup> Herald 4 June 1948

<sup>241</sup> Herald 3 March 1948

<sup>242</sup> Herald 18 June 1948

<sup>243</sup> Herald 13 July 1948

<sup>244</sup> DILGEA. p.42

<sup>245</sup> DILGEA.p.43

of 'mixed descent' were further relaxed.<sup>246</sup> The term itself reveals that racist assumptions still lay behind the policy. Another step was taken in March 1966 when it was announced that applications for entry of well-qualified people would be considered on the basis of their suitability as settlers, however the announcement included the sentence: "The changes of course are not intended to meet general labor shortages or to permit the large scale admission of workers from Asia..."<sup>247</sup>

The climate of official opinion at that time is illustrated by a letter from the Attorney-General's Department in June 1963 to Imam Ahmed Skaka of Medindie S.A. It was to announce that on 1 September the State marriage law would be superceded by the Marriage Act 1961. The message was of shattering import. "Persons registered under State law as authorized to solemnize marriages will automatically be registered under the Marriage Act 1961 and continue to have authority to solemnize marriage only if they are ministers of religion of a religious denomination recognized for the purposes of the Act. The Islamic religion is not recognized for the purpose of the Act."<sup>248</sup> Informed that it would henceforth be an offence for him to perform marriages, it was further explained that the Act was for monogamous marriages only "not polygamous or potentially polygamous marriages." It was magnanimously conceded that this would not prevent people of the Muslim faith marrying in Australia, so long as they were prepared to accept "the conditions and obligations of monogamous marriage" and have their marriages solemnized by "properly authorized celebrants." Imam Skaka was still outraged by this letter when visited by the author in 1997 at his residence next to the Adelaide Mosque.

A migration agreement with Turkey was signed in 1967 providing for assisted passages to Australia for "selected workers and their dependents."<sup>249</sup> However it was not until the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in December 1972 that the White Australia Policy was totally abolished and the introduction of multiculturalism as the dominant theme of immigration and settlement policy began. No longer was discrimination based on race, colour or nationality to be permitted.<sup>250</sup>

The disorder and civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s resulted in large numbers of Arabic speaking migrants for the first time. By 1981 there were about 17,000 Lebanese Muslim migrants here. Many Turkish Cypriots were forced out by fighting in their homeland in the early 1970s as well. Then as a result of the migration agreement with Turkey, in the period 1967 to 1971 over 10,000 Turkish migrants came. They were needed as a labour source because it was feared that migration from Italy and Greece was not at high enough levels to meet the future needs of the Australian economy. In 1967 Australia had tried to attract 150,000 migrants but due to the growing prosperity of Europe it was 10,000 short of the target. It was hoped that the 2000 Turkish migrants who would come in the next financial year would provide skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled labor "to boost our sagging migration program."<sup>251</sup>

This was the first large scale migration from a Muslim society and there was considerable good-natured interest in the people who came. A story about what happened at the Yakka Factory in Broadmeadows Melbourne, which suburb now has one of the largest concentrations of Turks in Australia, appeared in the Herald newspaper in November 1968. The personnel officer had apparently responded to a request from Broadmeadows Migrant Hostel following the arrival of 160 Turks the week before. He offered a woman a job as a pedal machinist and she arrived with another 19 women, thinking that they had all been offered work. Then their husbands arrived. "So that's why Yakka's 850 staff now includes a battalion of Turkish women set up in a section to themselves in the machine room. And a similar section of Turkish men working on the automatic presses. But there's more. The Turks, all Moslems, sought and received permission for their womenfolk to wear head scarves at work. And because they are still new to their surroundings, Yakka lays on a bus to take them to and from work each day."<sup>252</sup> Thus formerly racist "White Australia Policy" Australia moved towards multiculturalism and relegated, in remarkably few years, the old racist attitudes to the lunatic fringe of Australian society.

Apart from Australian born Muslims who make up more than a third of the Australian Muslim community, mainly the children of immigrants, the largest Muslim ethnic groups since the 1970s have been the Lebanese and Turks. They naturally gravitated to the largest urban centres which offered employment in manufacturing and service industries. According to the 1991 Census 50 per cent of Australian Muslims lived in Sydney and 32 per cent in Melbourne. Overall, 93.21 percent live in State capitals.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>246</sup> DILGEA. p.48

<sup>247</sup> DILGEA. p.50

<sup>248</sup> Letter to Mr Ahmed Skaka Medindie S.A. from The Secretary, Attorney-General's Department Canberra. 17 June 1963. Ref: 61/2141

<sup>249</sup> DILGEA. p. 51

<sup>250</sup> DILGEA. p.56-57

<sup>251</sup> Herald 21 February 1968

<sup>252</sup> Herald 22 November 1968

<sup>253</sup> Omar, Wafia and Allen, Kirsty. p.29

## Building a National Body

During the years of decline from the 1920s onwards, the Muslim population fell steadily so that the mosques in Perth and Adelaide were the only reminders of past days. In NSW and Victoria where most post-war migrants landed, Muslims started from a great disadvantage. Unlike Christian immigrants who found churches waiting for them, the Muslims had to establish Islamic Societies and mosques from zero. In the 1950s the small but ethnically diverse community would jointly celebrate Eid Al Adha and Eid Al Fitr together in rented halls.<sup>254</sup> In both NSW and Victoria the first Islamic Societies were established in the mid-1950s, consisting of representation from all ethnic groups in the Muslim community. The Islamic Society of Victoria, established in 1957, had representation from the Arabic, Turkish, Yugoslav and Indian Muslim communities and it remained as a multi-ethnic society until well after the establishment of the national organisation.<sup>255</sup> The Turkish Muslims were amongst the first to leave, establishing their own society and setting up the Fatih Mosque in Coburg in 1971. The Islamic Society of Victoria eventually became a Lebanese Muslim Society after a takeover by more nationalistic elements in the 1970s. The NSW Islamic Society did not transform in the same way but in 1961 the Lebanese left it to establish the Lebanese Muslim Association.

Muslim immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds, even while ethnically based Islamic Societies were springing up, sought to build a degree of unity amongst the family members of Islam. Due to the efforts of some leading Muslims, people like Fehmi Al Imam, Abdul Khaliq Kazi and Ibrahim Dellal, as well as many others, the Australian Federation of Islamic Societies (AFIS) was established in 1964. Although division and argument was common, as it is in any voluntary community organisation, it grew in strength.

A turning point came in 1974 when a two man delegation arrived from Saudi Arabia to investigate the needs of the local Muslim community. Dr Ali Kettani encouraged a new approach to national organisation which would, if followed, overcome the ethnic divisions which were causing such grave concern amongst the religious leadership and the problem of uniting all states under the one umbrella. If the national organisation was to be dominated by the 90 per cent of the Muslims in Sydney and Melbourne, why would the small states bother joining at all? This was a similar problem to that faced by the Australian Federation Movement, resolved by means of the Senate, the States House, representing the places rather than the size of the population. Kettani's recommendations were accepted by the mainstream of the Muslim community but still await implementation in full. They were fourfold. The gradual elimination of Islamic Societies based on ethnic, national language, racial or sectarian grounds. The establishment of Islamic Societies on a purely geographical basis in each state. The formation of an Islamic Council in each state or territory to represent the entire Muslim population of that state. The association of those State Councils into a federation at national level.<sup>256</sup> Only the last two recommendations have been brought into effect, as ethnic pride still divides the community, although it is already into a second and third generation of Australian born Muslims.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils was formed in 1976.<sup>257</sup> Based in Melbourne at first it shifted to Zetland, near Redfern in Sydney, the location of the early Muslim community in that city. AFIC is based on a constitutional structure which takes account of the concentration of Islamic Societies in two cities by giving the power of election of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer to the State Council Chairmen at election Congresses, which occur every second year. The President of AFIC, supposedly in consultation with the other office bearers, then chooses the general members of the Executive Committee. Policy is determined by a general vote of all societies at Annual Congress but control of the organisation is vested in the Executive. There are State Councils in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, ACT, Northern Territory, WA, SA, Tasmania and Christmas Island. Islamic Societies are permitted to join the State Council if they have 100 financial members, control their own Islamic Centre and are a certain distance from other member societies. These rules are waived for Islamic Societies in remote areas. Internal democratic organisation, elected leadership and consultation with members are features of all AFIC member societies.

Although the bulk of the Muslim population today is found in Melbourne and Sydney, the spread of voting rights amongst all State Councils has meant that the role of President of AFIC is shared amongst the states. In the four presidencies to the year 2000, the presidents came from Queensland, NSW, Tasmania, and Adelaide. They have also come from a wide variety of ethnic groups. The past four presidents have been, in origin, Indo-Fijian, Lebanese, Pakistani and Singaporean. AFIC Executive Committee is still dominated, as are State Councils, by overseas born Muslims, although over a third of the community is Australian born.

<sup>254</sup> Mograby, Abdallah. Muslim Migration and Settlement: The Australian Experience. in Islam in Australia. Middle East Research and Information Section, NSW Anti-Discrimination Board. Sydney NSW 1985 p.27

<sup>255</sup> Interview with Sheikh Fehmi Al Imam June 2000

<sup>256</sup> Mograby, Abdallah. Muslim Migration and Settlement: The Australian Experience. in Islam in Australia. Middle East Research and Information Section, NSW Anti-Discrimination Board. Sydney NSW 1985 p.28-29

<sup>257</sup> Jones, Mary Lucille. p.101

The next generation has yet to come into leadership positions. However the last two secretaries of AFIC and one of the last four presidents have been New Muslims.

As a result of the 1974 delegation from Saudi Arabia, in order to assist the Muslim community establish itself on a sound financial bases, \$1.2 million was given by the Saudi Arabian government to AFIC to distribute among Islamic Societies for the erection of mosques and Islamic centres.<sup>258</sup> The delegation recommended that AFIC should be recognised as the sole representative of Muslims in Australia and also that AFIC should become the sole authority in Australia to certify that meat had been killed in accordance with Islamic rites. It was the intention of this recommendation to make the Muslim community self-sufficient and less reliant on overseas support. A Saudi Royal Decree of February 1976 specified that only halal certification by AFIC would be acceptable on meat imported from Australia.<sup>259</sup> Other countries followed suit. The Arab Emirates specified AFIC halal certification in 1980 and Kuwait in 1982.

The issuing of halal certification became both a blessing and a curse to AFIC. A blessing in that it provided, with the fee charged for the issue of certificates to abattoirs, a source of income which permitted societies to establish mosques. Unfortunately much of the mosque building directly contradicted the recommendations made by Kettani in that every ethnic group wanted to set up its own mosque and then even sectarian groups within ethnic communities wanted their own places of worship. The halal certification rights of AFIC also stimulated greater opposition from those groups which had established their own halal certification businesses, such as the Perth Halal Sadiq Company, the Muslim Association of Brisbane and the Adelaide Mosque Islamic Society.<sup>260</sup> At the 1982 Royal Commission into the Australian Meat Industry the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation, and a section of the meat industry in Australia, also opposed the system on the grounds that AFIC charged too much for certification and that it was not run efficiently enough by AFIC with its very limited full-time staff. There was also a lot of criticism of the system which it was believed was open to abuse. Indeed the abuse was so severe that Justice Woodward stated in his report that he was convinced that the existing system could not be allowed to remain.<sup>261</sup> Certificates, signatures and seals had been forged to avoid paying the AFIC fee and AFIC registered halal slaughtermen had signed false certificates. One company stated that the inability to get certificates and seals on time to meet air freight deadlines encouraged such forgeries. The Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Nixon, in the House of Representatives 26 August 1981 reported that he had heard that kangaroo meat has been found in mutton cartons in Saudi Arabia.<sup>262</sup> It was due to the existence of such scandals and the associated threat to the Australian market in the Middle East that it was decided by all the participants in the Royal Commission that evidence on these matters would be given in private session.<sup>263</sup> The Royal Commission recommendations on halal slaughter and certification included the introduction of a single system of certification with an official Australian government certificate and an official Australian government stamp 'The system was to be under direct and continuous supervision by the Export Inspection Service of the DPI.'<sup>264</sup>

AFIC maintained its separate certification but within the general government supervised system. The great benefit of the scandals of the 1980s was that any falsification of documents or breach or abuse of Islamic halal requirements in the meat industry is now met with sanctions under the law.<sup>265</sup> However disputes between the leadership of AFIC and Saudi Arabian Embassy led to the selective appointment of 55 Islamic Associations from around Australia, to certify halal meat for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s. The 40 or so organisations left off this "approved list" were left, it was intended, without any source of financial support. The AMLC welcomed this development as they had been opposed to the domination of the system by AFIC since the beginning. The result was disaster for the Muslim community with intense competition between warring groups for the halal certification market and growing accusations of fraud and corruption on all sides. The anarchy was impossible to work with so the Saudi Embassy had to set up five State groupings of "approved" Islamic Associations, but there has been competition between these as well.<sup>266</sup> Even private individuals with no credible link to religious authorities or Muslim organizations have set themselves up as "halal certifiers" to the discredit of this nation's reputation in the Muslim world.

<sup>258</sup> Report of the Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry. September 1982. The Hon. Mr Justice Woodward Commissioner. AGPS Canberra 1982. p.221

<sup>259</sup> Report of the Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry. September 1982. p.222

<sup>260</sup> Report of the Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry. September 1982. p.225

<sup>261</sup> Report of the Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry. September 1982. p.228

<sup>262</sup> Hansard. House of Representatives 26 August 1981 p.784

<sup>263</sup> Report of the Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry. September 1982. p.226

<sup>264</sup> Report of the Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry. September 1982. p.277

<sup>265</sup> Certification of Halal in Australia: A Situation Report. First Regional Cooperation Meeting (South-West Pacific) Sydney 5-6 December 1998. AFIC. Sydney. 5 December 1999 p.4

<sup>266</sup> Certification of Halal in Australia: A Situation Report. First Regional Cooperation Meeting (South-West Pacific) Sydney 5-6 December 1998. AFIC. Sydney. 5 December 1999 p.5

At the 1998 regional meeting of Islamic peak bodies from Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, attended by the Islamic authorities of Malaysia and Indonesia, both importing countries expressed concern that only genuinely halal products should be consumed by their people and were most interested in standardisation of procedures in Australia in order to ensure that only the highest quality products were imported to their respective countries. The delegates at the meeting resolved that the three national bodies attending, AFIC, the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) and the Fiji Muslim League (FML) should be recognised as the prime national halal certifying bodies in their respective countries and that other halal certifying bodies should be registered with their respective national organisations. It was also agreed that the three umbrella organisations would recognise each other. The halal accrediting authorities in the importing countries were also requested to develop accreditation criteria for accepting halal certifying organisations.<sup>267</sup>

AFIC has also worked to establish Islamic Schools, in response to community demand, from the first decade of its existence. The first school was established in Victoria in 1983, with generous assistance from the Saudi government. King Khalid Islamic College of Coburg, which now has a second campus in Merlynston, was placed under the control of a trust, for a nominal rent, by AFIC in early 1990s. This proved a very controversial decision. This College offers both secondary and primary education and takes in overseas students. The Sydney school, Malek Fahd Islamic College, Chullora, NSW, was established in 1988 and now caters for over 1400 students. It too offers a complete primary and secondary curriculum. The Islamic School of Brisbane was established in 1995 for primary level but is now also offering lower level secondary. The Islamic College of S.A., established in 1998, provides primary education but has plans to develop a secondary section within the decade. Several other Muslim organisations have also established schools apart from those set up by AFIC. Most of them are in NSW and Victoria.

Although disputes within AFIC are ongoing, the destructive nature of past divisions is absent. There are disagreements over the central position given to the small State and Territory Councils in decision making, influenced by their power over elections. There are disputes over constitutional provisions regarding membership, voting rights and policy making, but it is widely agreed that a national organisation is of vital importance. Only the most marginalised groups, which see themselves as the sole “bearers of Islam” are indifferent to its fate. It does however have profound faults. For example, although it enjoys good relations with government, it was unable to save Muslim personal law, which had been enjoyed by Muslims on Christmas Island until its replacement by Australian family law in July 1992.<sup>268</sup>

Australia has a multicultural policy framework which has completely replaced the old discriminatory policies. The aim is admirable. “Government multi-culturalism policies aim to bring all Australians to fully participate in society and development. Australian institutions are expected to acknowledge, reflect and respond to its culturally diverse communities.”<sup>269</sup> Unfortunately events sometimes overtake theory.

### **Discrimination at the level of Local Government**

Muslims have, in the past two decades, faced many attempts to prevent them from exercising the most fundamental of freedoms, freedom of worship. Many have been surprised to find that, despite the rhetoric about freedom of religion, which is supposedly one of the most firmly established features of the Western way of life, denial of permission to establish mosques has become the norm in the relations between our community and local government. It is widely suspected, due to this experience, that this freedom is at best, tenuous and that under the pressure of events, it could emerge as but a Western surface value, rapidly shed.

Victoria, which is home to about one third of Australia’s Muslims, been a difficult place in which to establish a place of worship. Practically every Islamic Society there has had to wage a political or legal campaign with its local Council to obtain permission to build or extend a mosque.

In the northern suburbs of Melbourne, the Broadmeadows Islamic Society had to face a protracted dispute in the mid-1980s between the Society and local residents.<sup>270</sup> Spearheaded by the local Progress Association, objecting to the construction of a mosque in a residentially zoned area, the dispute raised divisions which nearly twenty years later have not fully healed. Local government feared to take a strong stand in the face of the anti-mosque lobby and State government intervention was eventually necessary. A mosque was

<sup>267</sup> Personal notes of Bilal Cleland, First Regional Cooperation Meeting (South-West Pacific) Sydney 5-6 December 1998. AFIC. Sydney.

<sup>268</sup> Boyle, Kevin and Sheen, Juliet. *Freedom of Religion and Belief: A World Report*. Routledge. London and New York. p.168

<sup>269</sup> Boyle, Kevin and Sheen, Juliet. p.167-168

<sup>270</sup> DILGEA. *Ethnic Affairs Sector. Ethnic Religious Centres: Difficulties Experienced by Some Ethnic Communities Concerning Approval to Build Mosques and Temples*. May 1988 p.9

subsequently constructed on a different site. There was also a major dispute over the erection of a minaret on the mosque in the late 1980s.

The Lebanese Muslim Community in Newport also faced considerable hostility. In June 1984 this group purchased a small house in Newport as a place of worship. The Melbourne Age reported that Williamstown City Council had received 10 objections to the mosque, including a petition with 90 signatures. However the Muslims had their defenders in the community. One of them, Councillor Schutt, said 2000 of Newport's 7500 residents were Lebanese. "She said most of the objections were based on prejudice and misunderstanding of Muslim traditions. 'They said the Lebanese would be performing strange sacrificial acts with animals and that we would be encouraging a rash of proposals from other minority groups'"<sup>271</sup>

The Lebanese Muslims were denied a planning permit by the Council on the grounds that the premises did not meet local planning requirements and because there were objections from local residents. The house had to be closed and the local authority made it clear that permission would only be granted for a site already designated as a place of worship. The Islamic Society subsequently purchased a church building and now has a functioning mosque.

An application by the Islamic Society of Victoria, Preston to build a minaret in 1986 was rejected by the local council. . It subsequently applied for permission to build the minaret and to install facilities to provide for funeral services from the mosque. Although the Preston Council planning committee recommended approval, the Preston Council refused the application.<sup>272</sup> The Society appealed the decision and won. It now has a minaret which is an accepted part of the local scene and provides funeral facilities for the Muslim community.

Thomastown Turkish Islamic Society experienced problems with the Whittlesea Shire Council in 1987 and 1988 in gaining renewal of its permit to use its premises as a place of worship and a community centre. Its original permit had only been for a community centre, not a place of worship. This was due to the advice of a local councillor who thought it would be easier to get a permit for such a facility than for a place of worship. It lodged a series of applications to use the premises as a place of worship in 1987 and 1988 and each application was rejected.

In late 1991 the Coburg Council imposed restrictions on the use of an Islamic Centre in Coburg which was the meeting place and place of worship of the Australian Islamic Social Association. Local residents protested that night prayers attracted too many people to the locality so the premises should not be used after 8.30 p.m., despite the fact that there are noisy clubs with loud music in the same street. The restrictions upon the building made it almost useless to the Muslim community so it had to move.

This Association purchased the former Broadmeadows Technical College and established a mosque in the old Commonwealth Library of the school and quickly moved to establish an Islamic College in the classrooms. From the announcement of the purchase there was protest from the community, again led by one of the local Progress Associations. In order to ameliorate this dissension, the Broadmeadows Council organised a community seminar to introduce the new owners to the local community. The aims and purposes of the Association were explained and the fears of the local residents were laid on the table. Both sides were impressed by the normality and decency of the others and a repeat of the divisive campaign whipped up over the Broadmeadows Turkish Islamic Society Mosque was avoided.

However the holding of two Eid Festivals each year on the school site over the next few years, attracting up to 30,000 visitors, combined with the slamming of car doors late at night after Night Prayer, led to a new protest by local residents. The Council offered an alternative site for the Eid Festivals, which has been used successfully for several years now, in the main commercial precinct of Broadmeadows. The State Government found an alternative site which was offered to the Association but this offer in the end was not taken up. The mosque has had to be closed but the Islamic College continues.

A dispute with local government, based on a resident action campaign, led to legal action before a minaret could be built on the mosque of the Albanian Islamic Society in Carlton. Some local residents opposed the un-Australian nature of the minaret. In Footscray the Islamic Society, when rebuilding its mosque, suddenly found that new parking regulations had been imposed beyond those which has existed before. They ended up abandoning plans to build there and purchased land in St Albans.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>271</sup> Age 2 June 1984

<sup>272</sup> DILGEA Ethnic Religious Centres: Difficulties Experienced by Some Ethnic Communities Concerning Approval to Build Mosques and Temples. May 1988 p.10

<sup>273</sup> Cleland, Bilal. Islam and the West. Without Prejudice. AIJA May 1993. p.9

New South Wales, with over half the Australian Muslim population, has also been the scene of many disputes with local government. In Campbelltown the local Islamic Society sought council permission to establish an Islamic Centre from 1981 until 1991. Opposition from local residents and a local newspaper, which had portrayed the centre as a potential fortified building bristling with armed guards, prevented any progress being made for a long time. As in most cases, after protracted dispute, the mosque went ahead. Camden Council and the Fairfield Council were also both involved in lengthy disputes with the Muslim community over the rights of Muslims to have Islamic Centres.

The Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs revealed a degree of concern over trends in the 1980s. A 1988 paper commented, on the matter of rejection of mosque and temple projects; "In some instances, the authorities involved have raised legitimate planning questions - e.g. access and noise problems - when objecting to religious development, and sometimes assistance has been given to find an alternative site for the development. There is also evidence, however, that in other cases certain councils and local residents are unduly and unfairly resisting an ethnic religious presence in residential areas."<sup>274</sup>

In February 1987 a Conference of Planning Ministers was held in Wellington NZ. At the request of the then Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs the Hon. Chris Hurford, the then Minister for Local Government and Administrative Services the Hon. Tom Uren supported the adoption of the recommendations of the Agenda Paper prepared by the NSW Department of Environment and Planning. This paper was adopted by the Conference.

The five recommendations were:

1. Circulars should be prepared by planning agencies in each State, outlining for Local Government, suitable guidelines for religious developments.
2. In each State community information officers or their equivalent provide and co-ordinate information and advice to ethnic communities about available properties suitable for religious use and development including underused or disused church sites.
3. Christian church organizations be approached in each State to provide information about redundant properties in their possession suitable for re-use by other religious bodies and be requested to consider the implications of the social and functional problems suffered by other religions.
4. The function of the Land and Environment Court in New South Wales and its equivalent in other States and in particular the respective appeal processes be clarified to the representatives of ethnic religious minorities.
5. Local Government associations in all States be approached to give consideration to the planning aspects connected with ethnic religious developments.<sup>275</sup>

However this did not solve the problem.

The Sefton Mosque case, which aroused interest throughout the Muslim world, creating inquiries from Islamic organisations as far away as Turkey, shocked the Australian Muslim community, which despite some knocks, believes in the potential of the multicultural society. In 1995 the Bangladesh Islamic Centre of NSW bought a disused Presbyterian church in Helen Street, Sefton. Since 1954 it had been zoned as a place of worship, so the Society was sure it would be a safe choice for a mosque. They did not take into consideration the attitude of the Bankstown Council. It permitted use of the existing church as a place of public worship for only 12 months. This expired in 1997 and permission was withdrawn.

Closure of the mosque was challenged by the Islamic Society and the case ended up in the Land and Environment Court of NSW. Jon Marsh of the Sydney Morning Herald reported "No fewer than six dictionaries were quoted in the case. In his conclusion, Justice Terry Sheahan ruled that: "A mosque, while a place of worship, is not a church, which is a place of worship in the Christian tradition." The implications were obvious. The Bangladesh Society thus lost the court case and costs of \$37,000 were awarded against it. These included the cost of their own solicitor and the cost of the QC who argued against them on behalf of the Bankstown Council.

The situation was serious. The mosque was permitted to remain open pending an appeal. The Premier of NSW, Mr Carr, was asked by the Muslim community to intervene. He spoke on the Voice of Islam radio station, saying he would like to help and his spokesman said that the Premier had asked the Ethnic Affairs

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<sup>274</sup> Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. Ethnic Affairs Sector. Ethnic Religious Centres: Difficulties Experienced by Some Ethnic Communities Concerning Approval to Build Mosques and Temples. May 1988 p. 1

<sup>275</sup> DILGEA Ethnic Religious Centres: Difficulties Experienced by Some Ethnic Communities Concerning Approval to Build Mosques and Temples. May 1988 p.3

Commission to discuss the matter with the Department of Local Government. The degree of concern within the Muslim community and amongst ethnic communities generally, was profound. "It is a very significant ruling. Every council all over Australia will use that ruling," said Mr Ali Roude, chairman of the Islamic Council of NSW. "To say that a place of worship is only for Christians is something that should be addressed by the law makers immediately. If we are talking about multiculturalism and we are not being able to practice our religion freely, what's the use of having multiculturalism in place?"<sup>276</sup> Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian, chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, also expressed grave concern over the implications of the ruling.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils established a "Save Sefton Mosque Fund" and in conjunction with the Islamic Society commenced a political lobbying campaign at both the State and Bankstown Council level. An appeal was lodged by the Islamic Society and the Vice-President of AFIC, Dr Sikander Khan, was assigned by the national organisation to provide support and liaison with the Bangladesh Society. It was essential that the decision that a church is different from a mosque should be overturned. A barrister was appointed and an outside consultant, a Town Planner, hired.

The issue has been resolved. On 16 March 2000 AFIC issued a press statement thanking the three Judges of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of NSW for setting aside the ruling that a church was not a mosque.

This did not mean that the genuine concerns of the residents had been forgotten. "The Muslim community of Sydney expressed relief and happiness as this decision. However, leaders of the Bangladesh Islamic Centre in Sefton, south west of Sydney assured the local community that this does not change anything and that the local community's legitimate concerns would not be ignored by them. A spokesman said that the Mosque officials are ready to work with the local residents to overcome any concerns."<sup>277</sup>

### The Gulf War

Another indication that all was not well in Australian society was provided by the Gulf War. The invasion of Kuwait by the Baathist regime of Iraq in 1990 led to a crisis for the Australian Muslim community. Attacks on Muslims and Arabs became so serious that the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, after the outbreak of hostilities in January 1991, warned Muslims to keep a low profile and suggested that Muslim women only go out when absolutely necessary. The Islamic Council of Victoria had to employ a security firm and advised all Islamic Societies to do likewise.

The ACTU Ethnic Liaison Officer, Alan Matheson, issued several papers, "Developments in Migration" on the question of Muslims and Arabs in Australia during the Gulf Crisis. In a paper to the City of Prahran's Multi Faith Civic Service he said that there are two periods in which minority groups have cause to fear: "In tough economic times minorities are frequently blamed for the hurt and despair that such times bring. And in times of international tension, crisis and war, minorities quickly learn how fragile is their place in the community."<sup>278</sup> His warning was taken seriously by the Muslim community.

In September 1990 in Victoria, attackers tried to burn down an Islamic School in Coburg, attacked a mosque in the same suburb and twice ransacked the Islamic Council of Victoria's offices, stealing files containing names and addresses of Victorian Muslims. Graffiti were sprayed on the Preston and Lysterfield mosques in Melbourne. Earlier the same month in Sydney, the Lakemba mosque which has up to 5000 worshippers at Friday prayers, received bomb threats on two consecutive Fridays. In January 1991 the Rooty Hill mosque in Sydney was fire bombed.

Some mosques received a stream of threatening phone calls, warning of bombs, or of hit-lists of Muslims. Arabic writing on an Islamic School bus in the northern suburbs of Melbourne had to be removed because of attacks on it as it carried primary school children to and from their homes.<sup>279</sup>

Apart from these attacks upon Islamic properties, there were many cases of abuse and assault of individuals identified as Muslim. Many women reported being abused by people in the street and on more than one occasion attempts were made to rip off their 'hijab'. In Broadmeadows, a woman wearing Islamic 'hijab' was smashed onto the floor in a shopping centre and knocked unconscious. One woman was refused service

<sup>276</sup> Sydney Morning Herald. Thursday, October 29, 1998

<sup>277</sup> Church is a Mosque- Supreme Court Upholds Appeal AFIC Media Release.Sydney. 6 March 2000.

<sup>278</sup> Matheson, Alan. Paper to City of Prahran Multi-Faith Civic Service 30 August 1990. ACTU Melbourne.

<sup>279</sup> Cleland, Bilal. Islam and the West Without Prejudice No. 6 May 1993. AIJA.p.10-11

at a Werribee service station and told to "get her petrol from Saddam" (the President of Iraq).<sup>280</sup> The car of a Kashmiri Muslim woman wearing traditional dress was deliberately bumped into in Brunswick and its driver accused her of being an 'Iraqi terrorist'. One Muslim lady from Bosnia was subjected to constant telephone harassment because of her family name.

In Campbelltown near Sydney, the Melhelm family was subjected to such constant racist harassment that it had to shift and Ali Melhelm's death was attributed by his doctor to the one month terror campaign waged against him and his family.<sup>281</sup> Several Muslim families received threatening mail and a brick was thrown through the window of one home in Burwood.

Muslim school students were subjected to abuse and girls wearing 'hijab' were often made feel afraid for their safety. Although the teacher unions and the Ministry of Education strongly defended Arab and Muslim students from harassment, there were some isolated instances of harassment of these students by individual teachers.<sup>282</sup>

The Prime Minister on January 14 1991 and then the Governor General in his Australia Day Message, issued statements against the harassment of Australian Arabs and Australian Muslims.

The Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Gerry Hand, the Minister for Justice, Senator Tate, the Premiers of Victoria and NSW, the Federal Opposition spokesperson on Immigration, Mr Ruddock, the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, Sir Ronald Wilson, the ACTU, the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the Council of Churches, the Equal Opportunities Commissioner, the Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils, the Victorian Police, the Ministry of Education in Victoria, all issued statements against the harassment of and discrimination against Arab and Muslim Australians.<sup>283</sup> Most government departments dealing with the Arab and Muslim communities set up strategies to deal with racist attacks, harassment and discrimination.

The Equal Opportunity Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission took the initiative in organising a media forum in Melbourne on 21 February 1991, at which members of the Muslim and Arab-Australian communities could discuss their concerns about the media stereotyping of their communities with representatives of the press, radio and television.<sup>284</sup> Concern about increased reports on racist violence had led to a National Inquiry into Racist Violence being established in December 1988 and its report was presented to the Commonwealth Attorney-General in March 1991. It concluded "Evidence to the Inquiry has shown that the victims of racist intimidation, harassment and violence on the basis of ethnic identity are most likely to be Asian or Arab Australians."<sup>285</sup>

The response of mainstream Australia to the persecution of the Muslim and Arab communities during this period was heartening but there were creatures lurking in the shallows which were worrying.

The lack of inhibition which was displayed by some public figures in verbally assaulting Muslim and Arab members of the community was itself worthy of note. One example was provided by Mr Bruce Ruxton. President of the Victorian Branch of the RSL. He put out a statement which said in part: "Its high time the Western World took on the Arabs. They are nothing more than a tribe of ratbags who got an overblown sense of their own importance when oil was discovered in their part of the world. They were happier it seems to me, when they were nomads. Any race that can spawn the likes of President Hussein of Iraq is a strange race indeed and any country which tolerates his antics as his own people do, must be a strange people."<sup>286</sup> The lack of reflection thus displayed about some of the perverted offspring of Western European civilisation, people like Adolf Hitler, General Franco and Benito Mussolini, says much about the mind-set of those who launch such attacks.

## Trends

<sup>280</sup> Baldock, John. Discrimination Against Muslim Australians.: A Report on Discrimination Against Muslim Australians Since August 1990. The World Conference on Religion and Peace. Melbourne. January 1991 p.16-18

<sup>281</sup> Documentation of Incidents of Harassment of and Racism Towards, Australians of Arab Descent and Australian Muslims. p.13-15

<sup>282</sup> Documentation of Incidents of Harassment of and Racism Towards, Australians of Arab Descent and Australian Muslims. p.16-18

<sup>283</sup> Cleland, Bilal. History of Muslims in Australia. Paper delivered to Muslim Student Association Swinburne. May 1995

<sup>284</sup> Cleland, Bilal. History of Muslims in Australia. May 1995

<sup>285</sup> Report of the National Inquiry into racist Violence in Australia. AGPS. Canberra. 1991 p.175

<sup>286</sup> Ruxton, Bruce. Press Statement AAP 18 August 90

Based upon the past experience of the Muslim community in Australia and in European countries, trends towards neo-Nazism in Europe, countered by the rise of inter-faith dialogue and growing support for human rights amongst the peoples of the world, two possible pathways emerge.

One of the givens in the equation is that the Islamic Renaissance will proceed, despite attempts to divert it or crush it by the various regimes in Muslim majority countries. Many existing dictatorial regimes will fall in the next few years. This is certain. The ferocious response to any sign of Islamic revival in most Muslim majority countries indicates the growing weakness of the status quo.

If the culture of fear about Islam becomes dominant in the ruling countries, the European Community and the USA, that will be reflected in Australia. There is still a Western colonial mentality amongst our rulers in this land. An extreme variety of "One Nation Party" Hansonism is likely to spread, encouraged by the older generation of haters. Racist violence will become more pronounced, religious bigotry will become acceptable. Already France is providing a model of what could happen in the civil unrest in the big housing estates around Paris. Police racism and violence produces ever more violent reactions from youth. Already in France there is considerable propaganda about Muslim unemployment, crime rate and abuse of social security provisions. The extreme right in France, led by Le Pen's Fascist Party, is already talking about repatriation or exile of Muslims and other minorities from France.

However, given the multicultural basis of Australian policies and the fact that some 20 per cent of the population is overseas born<sup>287</sup> added to the growing economic ties between Australia and Asia, with its huge Muslim population, an alternative scenario seems more likely. The Muslim renaissance in Australia will lead to more interest in the Muslim community itself to developing links with Muslims in neighbouring countries. The development of a business community within the Australian Muslim population as the second generation gains education and skills, will also lead to closer trade links with Asia. This will benefit the whole Australian economy. Productivity and appreciation of the benefits of cultural diversity will grow together. Muslims will feel more integrated into Australia as discrimination declines and they will no longer be perceived as a community replete with immigration and social welfare problems. One sign of this will be the representation of Muslims in our public institutions and government.

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<sup>287</sup> Boyle, Kevin and Sheen, Juliet. p.167