



Australian Journal of Islamic Studies

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ISSN (online): 2207-4414
Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation
Charles Sturt University CRICOS 00005F
Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia

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To cite this article:

Sneddon, David. "The Early History of Micro and Meso Dialogue between Muslims and Non-Muslims in Australia." *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, Iss 3 (2018): 23-44.



Published online: 31 December 2018



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THE EARLY HISTORY OF MICRO AND MESO DIALOGUE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

David Sneddon*

Abstract: Interfaith dialogue has been touted as a means to solve many of the religious divisions that have arisen in an increasingly global and multifaith society. In Australia, now a multicultural and multi-faith society, a range of organisations facilitate this dialogue, most coming into existence after the 1960s. This article reviews the early dialogue and interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims (interfaith) as portrayed in the public record. It covers pre- and post-colonial Australia, up to the 1950s. As interfaith dialogue becomes more important in an increasingly global society, it examines how micro and meso level dialogue has influenced social harmony. By examining the public record and narratives surrounding the Macassans, Afghans and other early Muslims, this article first argues that micro and meso dialogue prior to the 1950s between Muslims immigrants and non-Muslims contributed to social harmony in Australia. Second, despite many attempts by Muslims, meso level dialogue was often ineffective and sometimes failed for a variety of reasons. This points to the need for further research to paint a complete picture of the levels of dialogue between Muslims and others throughout Australian history.

Keywords: *Interfaith dialogue, Australia, Islam, Muslims, non-Muslims*

INTRODUCTION

Interfaith dialogue has been touted as a means to solve many of the religious divisions that have arisen and encourages “the peaceful coexistence of humanity and the acceptance of others”.¹ In Australia, now a multi-cultural and multifaith society, a range of organisations facilitate this dialogue, most coming into existence after the 1960s. From a modern standpoint, interfaith dialogue is a broad concept that fosters “a meeting of people of different religions in an environment of freedom and openness”.² Often, it is based around the ‘golden

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¹ Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. “About Us”. Accessed September 10, 2018. http://www.dicid.org/about_us_dicid/.

² Columban Mission Institute Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, *Resource – Interfaith Dialogue in Australia* (Strathfield, NSW: St Columbans Mission Society, 2014), accessed October 10, 2018. <https://www.columban.org.au/assets/files/2014/the-far-east-school-resources/columban-mission-institute-interfaith-dialogue-high-school-resource.pdf>.

rule' – “Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others”,³ a concept that appears to pre-date the Ancient Greeks and the establishment of the Abrahamic faiths. It is important to note this dialogue commenced at a micro or individual level, with initial interactions, then passed through a meso (community or state level) before finally developing at a community or national level.

Interfaith dialogue has become increasingly prominent in the 21st century. As Australia became a more broadly multicultural, multifaith society after World War II, contact and communication between various faiths increased, and a need for more formal dialogue emerged. In the 21st century, many people see interfaith dialogue as conforming to Leonard Swidler's ten requirements for effective interfaith dialogue.⁴ However, the nature of dialogue infers an opportunity for both parties to state a position with mutual respect. In the early days of the Australian colony, any discussion was decidedly one way, more akin to a monologue. Early colonial dialogue was not necessarily perceived as interfaith⁵ and was mostly at a micro level; that is, between individuals. Over time, as migrants who remained passed through the liminal or transitional stage and became at home in Australia, true dialogue moved through the meso level to finally become accepted as true interfaith dialogue at a macro level late in the 20th century with the creation of faith-based organisations to drive this discourse.

From a sociological perspective, the concepts of micro, meso and macro refer to the size or scale of the population being investigated.⁶ They are general levels that begin with the individual, usually referred to as the micro level. This can include families or small groups. As interactions develop, they proceed through a middle or meso stage, often involving community relationships. Once interactions have become developed, they can shift to the macro, national or global level. By aligning dialogue with these classification, one can see how it has shifted over time.

Through the use of the public record, this article first focuses on micro and meso dialogue in the pre-colonisation period between Indigenous Australians and Macassan fishermen. Second, it looks at how early micro and macro level dialogue in the post-colonial period contributed to understanding and social harmony within communities, which helped to develop an awareness of Islam and some semblance of social harmony in the largely Protestant Christian Australia. It also highlights that at times meso level dialogue was ineffective, often due to prejudices that existed in a largely homogeneous white society.

³ Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29 in Jacob Neusner and Bruce D Chilton, *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions* (Strathfield, NSW: St Columbans Mission Society, 2014), 69.

⁴ Leonard Swidler, “The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20, no. 1 (1983).

⁵ Accordingly, the term “dialogue” will be used as opposed to “interfaith dialogue”.

⁶ Hubert M. Blalock, *Social Statistics* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 169-175.

EARLY MICRO TO MESO LEVEL DIALOGUE

Pre-Colonisation, Macassans and Indigenous Australians

Islam has had a presence in Australia that precedes colonialism. The history of this contact has only lately been the subject of volumes of research and suitably documented.⁷ Suffice to say, long before the establishment of the colony of New South Wales in 1788, relationships existed between Muslim Macassan fishermen⁸ and the Yolngu peoples, the indigenous inhabitants of north-eastern Arnhem Land. The actual start date for this contact is debated, with some scholars indicating a trade relationship formed sometime between the 1720s and the 1740s, and others suggesting it began prior to 1640.⁹ The Macassans sailed down in the north-west monsoon in December each year, staying for about four months.¹⁰ After establishing a camp, they collected and dried trepang (aka sea-cucumber or *beche-de-mer*) for trade with the Chinese, who prized it for its aphrodisiac qualities. Records of this trade include rock paintings from the area that clearly show a *prau*, a type of vessel the Macassans would have used,¹¹ as well as clear written reports of interactions observed by Dutch sailors in 1754.¹²

Dialogue requires a common language. During the periods of first contact between the Macassans and Indigenous Australians, this would have been the first issue overcome prior to peaceful negotiations. In 1846, trader and navigator George Windsor Earl (1813-1865) pointed to the fact “that nearly all the words the natives use when speaking to us are *Macassarese*” and the Indigenous Australians had “considerable proficiency their [the Macassans] language”.¹³ One of the clearest examples of loan words is that used for money, a concept that did not exist prior to first contact. The Yolgnu word for money is ‘*rrupiya*’,¹⁴ a derivation of the Sanskrit word ‘*rupyah*’ meaning wrought silver.¹⁵ Somehow this word travelled from India to Arnhem Land; theoretically over hundreds of years via Indonesia.¹⁶ The use of loan words is not exclusive to the Yolgnu people; linguistic studies suggest Macassan contact with the entire range of northern Australians.¹⁷ This evidence of a broad

⁷ See: Abdullah Saeed, *Islam in Australia* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Allen & Unwin, 2003); Marshall Clark and Sally K. May, eds., *Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013); Regina Ganter, “Muslim Australians: The Deep Histories of Contact,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 32, no. 4 (2008); Ian S. McIntosh, “Islam and Australia’s Aborigines,” *The Journal of Religious History* 20, no. 1 (1996).

⁸ Macassar, a (Muslim) region in South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

⁹ Ganter, *Muslim Australians*, 483.

¹⁰ Clark and May, *Macassan History and Heritage*, 2.

¹¹ Paul Tacon and Sally K. May, “Rock Art Evidence for Macassan-Aboriginal Contact in Northwestern Arnhem Land,” in *Macassan History and Heritage*, eds. Marshall Clark and Sally K. May (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013).

¹² Campbell Macknight, “Studying trepangers.” *Macassan History and Heritage*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2013

¹³ James Urry and Michael Walsh. “The Lost ‘Macassar Language’ of Northern Australia.” *Aboriginal History* 5:2 (1981): 92

¹⁴ Beulah Lowe. “Yolgnu - English Dictionary.” Winnellie, NT: ARDS, 2004. 163

¹⁵ Douglas Harper. “Rupee (n.)” *Online Etymology Dictionary*. 2018.

¹⁶ Nicholas Evans. “Macassan loanwords in top end languages.” *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 12:1 (1992): 45-91.

¹⁷ Evans, “Macassan loanwords”, 45-46

exchange of language highlights the meso level dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims that preceded European colonisation.

Aboriginal spirituality, the Dreaming, is a vastly different concept to the Abrahamic faiths. It operates outside the duality of heaven and hell, and, similar to Islam, is more of a way of life.¹⁸ Islamic Macassan influences have also been found in Indigenous rituals and ceremonies. Studies of the Elcho Island and Milingimbi peoples from 1920s describe a mortuary ceremony, part of the ‘Wurramu’ song cycle that make reference to Allah.¹⁹ During the ceremony, the words ‘*Oh-a-ha-la*’ are repeatedly used, and ‘*Ra-bin-a-la la-ha-ma-ha-ma,*’ which McIntosh clearly links to Islamic rites and “the passage of the soul of the deceased to a heavenly abode above, the abode of *Allah*.”²⁰ When (phonetically) translated from Arabic, this roughly equates to “Our Lord Allah and Muhammad”, although it is possibly incomplete. This phrase and the inclusion of a heavenly abode in Indigenous rituals and stories clearly indicates a form of duality, showing the influence of the Muslim Macassans and, importantly, the existence of meso level dialogue between these two long-time trading partners.

Many studies have been done in association with the Yolngu (and other) peoples of Arnhem Land and have established clear connections between the Yolngu and Macassan peoples. As indicated above, this has included a range of linguistic, cultural and archaeological evidence. Given the oral nature of Indigenous Australians, these studies are important, as Western history has in the past placed little importance on oral cultures, relying on the written word as fact.

What is missing is a viewpoint or narrative that the Macassans took resources by force; ergo, they must have negotiated a truce or treaty in order to camp for long periods on the coast, despite language barriers. McIntosh²¹ raises the prospect that a treaty was in place and Macassans may have “perhaps only briefly, at the very beginning of the trade, at places like Dholtji ... live(d) according to the principles of Aboriginal law.”²² All of the evidence appears to indicate the existence of social harmony and ‘*proper*’ dialogue on a meso level. This long-running dialogue and continuous tradition was effectively abolished in 1906 when the Australian Government placed an embargo on the trade.²³ In doing so, it effectively ended a way of life for the Macassan trepang fisherman and a trading partner for northern Australian Indigenous peoples. It also marked the end of any true cross-cultural dialogue, at least for some time.

¹⁸ There is no one “Dreaming” or set of beliefs across the Indigenous groups of Australia. It has been variously described as animistic, pantheistic or totemistic however none of these would appear to capture the true essence of the belief system. For more information see W.E.H. Stanner, *On Aboriginal Religion*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2014.

¹⁹ McIntosh. “Islam and Australia’s Aborigines.”, 59

²⁰ McIntosh. “Islam and Australia’s Aborigines”, 53

²¹ McIntosh. “A Treaty with the Macassans? Burrumarra and the Dholtji Ideal.” *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 7,2 (2006) 153-172

²² McIntosh, “A Treaty with the Macassans?”, 169

²³ Ganter, “Muslim Australians”, 484

Colonisation period, 1788 - 1901

Colonial Australia was established in 1788 and its state religion was supplied by the Church of England. The First Fleet was predominantly Protestant, with a large minority of Catholics and a handful of Jews.²⁴ The biggest religious concern in Australia for at least the first hundred years was sectarian division between the Protestant and Catholics, an imported historical division between the Irish and English.²⁵ From an interfaith dialogue perspective, especially concerning Islam, Hinduism and other non-Abrahamic faiths, a number of key issues acted as obstructions. Language was initially always problematic and, backed with small numbers of migrants, assimilation was seen as the only policy. This also applied to the original inhabitants of Australia, with whom little serious dialogue took part. Speak (and act) English was the order of the day. In the case of the Afghans and the variety of languages they brought with them, their small numbers and initial location of their employment in outback and central Australia seemed to ensure limited contact with much of the nation. Those who had or acquired English language skills rose above the noise and helped pave the way for future ‘real’ dialogue. In addition, the ‘*Mohamedans*’ were in fact a broad range of tribal Afghans, Indians, Pakistanis, Persians and Turks. Australia’s constructed version categorised them all as ‘Afghans’, the enemy of the British Empire during the 19th century and again when the Ottomans joined the war in 1914.

MICRO LEVEL DIALOGUE

Afghans and Europeans

The initial immigration of Muslims began around 1860, with the importation of camels from India and handlers to assist.²⁶ Three individuals (one of whom was a Hindu) accompanied Burke and Wills part of the way on their fateful journey to the Gulf of Carpentaria,²⁷ and another group ran later explorations into the South Australian interior with Sir Thomas Elder.²⁸ The construction of the Overland Telegraph from Port Augusta to Darwin in the 1870s and the building of the overland rail (1878-1884) also required the services of these “ships of the desert” and their skilled handlers. Once gold was found in remote Western Australia, the camels were put into service providing water and provisions, as well as also running rescue missions for stranded miners.²⁹

The cameleers who travelled to the Antipodes with their charges were a mixed lot. The collective ‘*Afghan*’ was a catch-all phrase: “the cameleers were in fact a rather loose

²⁴ Maleeha Ahmad, “Religious Trends in Australia.” *The Review of Religions*. 2. (2014)

²⁵ Ahmed “Religious Trends”

²⁶ Peter FitzSimons. *Burke and Wills: The triumph and tragedy of Australia's most famous explorers*. (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2017). 39-40

²⁷ FitzSimons, *Burke and Wills*, 136, 139-140

²⁸ Christine Stevens. *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Cameldrivers in Australia*. (Melbourne: OUP, 1989): 14-17

²⁹ W.A. Record. “The Search for gold in Western Australia.” January 1, 1894. Accessed October 1, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article211986801>.

federation of skilled camel handlers of various ethnicities,”³⁰ mainly drawing from tribes in modern Afghanistan, some from British India (modern Pakistan)³¹ and the occasional Turk and Persian.³² The classification also included Hindus as well as Sikhs. The journals, diaries and reports of the many Europeans in contact with the Afghans extolled their virtues through “their strict adherence to the code of Islam (especially in regard to their daily prayers and the eating of halal meat and the avoidance of alcohol), and their; excellent character, reliability, stamina and live-saving skills.”³³ This was not a universal view of the Afghans. At times, issues arose over ritual ablutions, where the Afghans were seen to be polluting the scarce waterholes by washing their feet and hands prior to prayer.³⁴ They were also linked with the transmission of a range of diseases and one 1893 West Australian Government report described them as “the filthiest lot that ever went near water.”³⁵ The nature of their work meant they lived a nomadic life, with little in the way of organised religion. When in towns, they were usually segregated along racial lines, limiting communication between the dominant Christian hegemony and any different ‘others’. This reduced contact and therefore dialogue between Europeans and the Afghans, Chinese and Indians, in fact any non-white.

In colonial Australia, the Afghans assisted in solving a problem. The vast desert interior represented the problem; the camels a solution. The Afghans were merely a necessary by-product of the arrangement. For the Afghans, the more than indifferent treatment would have met their expectations of colonial rule with a “familiar (if not comforting) logic of spatial division — of ‘divide and rule’ — that the Afghans would have known all too well from their contact with British colonial authority in Peshawar and other garrison towns on India’s North West Frontier. As one of the white residents of Marree would later recall, the Afghans ‘knew their place.’”³⁶

Adelaide seemed to offer a different context and circumstances. As the closest town to the outback, the cameleers drifted in, some of them settling into comfortable circumstances, others needing some assistance. As the Afghans grew older or destitute, Adelaide offered a glimmer of hope in the form of Hadj Muller Merban (1801-1897),³⁷ who provided a place for rest and respite in surroundings that supported their faith. Construction of a mosque began in 1889 and was completed in 1890, with the drive led by Merban and Abdul Wade (1866-1928).³⁸ It became a prominent feature of the Adelaide skyline with its minarets. Visits were

³⁰ Peter Scriver. “Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers in the Settlement History of Colonial Australia.” *Fabrications* July (2004):19-41.

³¹ Saeed, “Islam in Australia,” 5

³² Flinders Ranges Research. “The Afghan Camelmen.” *South Australian History*.2018 Accessed 8 28, 2018. <https://www.southaustralianhistory.com.au/afghans.htm>.

³³ Zachariah Mathews. “Origins of Islam in Australia.” *Focus*, Jul-Aug (1997): 27-29.

³⁴ Nahid Kabir. *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations and Cultural History*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 52.

³⁵ Kabir, *Muslims in Australia*, 51

³⁶ Scriver, “Mosques, Ghantowns,” 28

³⁷ Haji, Hajj, Muller, Mulla, Mullah; again, the variations are endless.

³⁸ Katharine Bartsch. “Building Identity in the colonial city: the case of Adelaide Mosque.” *Contemporary Islam* 9 (2015): 260

made by prominent local officials and journalists, with reports appearing in newspapers as far away as Brisbane.³⁹

Hadj Mullah, although referred to as the caretaker,⁴⁰ was in reality the imam and/or spiritual leader and spokesperson for community. From all accounts, he managed dialogue between the local *umma* (community), the media and a range of (Christian) charitable organisations.⁴¹ From about 1891, the Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friend Society through their Sick Poor Fund began distribution of blankets and other comforts to the Adelaide Mosque "for the relief of the Afghans sent down sick and helpless from the Great Northern line."⁴² While it was established in 1849 as a Christian benevolent society,⁴³ it went to great lengths to announce its "non-sectarian" mission.⁴⁴ This support was limited; however, it clearly demonstrated a level of awareness and engagement within the local or state community, across religious divides.

Mosques were central to Islamic life in Australia, as they have been throughout history. Perth (1905)⁴⁵ and Brisbane (1908)⁴⁶ followed on from Hergott Springs (Marree) (c1884) and Broken Hill (1891).⁴⁷ They allowed some semblance of traditional life for Muslim migrants and allowed access to Islam for those who were curious and interested. However, Australia's two main cities did not get mosques until the latter part of the 20th century.⁴⁸ Many of these mosques opened their doors to non-Muslims to allow some education and information about Islam. They also allowed for dialogue to move from a micro to meso level. While the offer was not always taken up, media reports about the mosques and prominent members of the local *umma* lead to a basic understanding of Islam as practiced in many Australian towns and cities, allowing a level of social harmony.

Significant Contributions

Then, as now, health problems transcend racial and religious boundaries. Just as we may see a physician of Islamic, Jewish or other faith, so too did early colonial Australians. In

³⁹ *The Telegraph (Brisbane)*. "Visit to a Mosque." February 21, 1864. Accessed September 15, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article172556640>.

⁴⁰ *South Australian Chronicle*. "The Hajj Mulla." September 1, 1894. Accessed September 15, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article92313563>.

⁴¹ *South Australian Chronicle*, Hajj Mulla

⁴² *South Australian Register*. "Sick Poor Committee." August 12, 1891. Accessed September 10, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article48241242>.

⁴³ Hilliard, David. "Playford, Thomas (1795-1873)." Evangelical History Association of Australia. 2004. Accessed September 9, 2018. <http://webjournals.alphacrucis.edu.au/journals/adeb/p/playford-thomas-1795-1873/>.

⁴⁴ *South Australian Register*. "Poor Sick Fund." October 20, 1891. Accessed September 10, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article48253322>.

⁴⁵ Mohamed Hasan Musakhan. *History of Islamism in Australia from 1863-1932*. (Canberra: NLA, 1932.) Accessed September 10, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52784725>.

⁴⁶ Janeth Deen. "The history of the Holland Park Mosque." *SBS News*. November 2, 2017. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.sbs.com.au/guide/article/2017/11/01/history-holland-park-mosque>.

⁴⁷ Stevens, "Tin Mosques and Ghantowns", 171-175

⁴⁸ Nahid Kabir. *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations and Cultural History*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 150-151

Adelaide, Mahomet Allum (d. 1964) established a successful practice.⁴⁹ Described variously as a ‘herbalist,’ ‘healing wonder’ and ‘miracle man,’⁵⁰ he was born around 1858 in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Allum migrated to South Australia between 1884 and 1890.⁵¹ Employed variously as a camel driver, station-hand, butcher, storekeeper, sailor and mine-hand, he settled in Adelaide in 1928 or 1929.⁵² Prominent as a devout Muslim, he established a business as a herbalist and by all accounts managed a thriving practice, recorded as ministering to 2,000 patients a week.⁵³ Testimonials pronounce him curing all range of ills. Despite never learning to write in English, he was a prolific contributor to the media of the day as well as producing a range of pamphlets expanding on the virtues and beliefs of Islam.⁵⁴ This interaction with the citizens of Adelaide shows interfaith dialogue and interaction attempting to move beyond the micro to the meso level through the network of patients who became reliant on his unique services. He ran afoul of the law in 1935 for not being registered under the *Medical Practitioners Act of 1919*.⁵⁵ In his defence, he produced “a motor car load of documentary evidence,”⁵⁶ including hundreds of testimonials.⁵⁷ When the case came before the courts, the defence called upon the Commissioner of Police (Brig.-Gen R. L. Leane) who stated he knew the “defendant well” and Allum had donated “large sums for charitable purposes.”⁵⁸ The case was also raised in Federal Parliament by Mr Riches (ALP, Newcastle) who inquired as to whether the case was an issue of persecution, given “many of the people who visited Allum did so on recommendations of the police officials and other officers (of the crown).”⁵⁹

Allum married for the third time in 1950 to a local Adelaide girl, Jean Emsley, and at the age of 83, he fathered a daughter with his 20 year-old bride. Headlines focussed on the age difference, not his religious beliefs.⁶⁰ Jean died from smallpox in 1954 in Afghanistan while they were returning from hajj (pilgrimage).⁶¹ On his return, he continued to live in and serve the community of Adelaide, using his skills as a healer without charge, for the benefit of all.⁶²

⁴⁹ Musakhan, *History of Islamism in Australia*, 68

⁵⁰ Musakhan, *History of Islamism in Australia*, 72

⁵¹ Valmai Hankel. “Allum, Mahomet (1858–1964).” *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 1979. Accessed September 10, 2018. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/allum-mahomet-5006/text8323>.

⁵² Hankel, “Allum, Mahomet”.

⁵³ *The Argus (Melbourne)*. “Afghan with 2,000 patients a week.” January 23, 1936. Accessed 9 10, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11875898>.

⁵⁴ Hankel, “Allum, Mahomet”.

⁵⁵ *The News (Adelaide)*. “Charge against Mahomet Allum. Reference in House.” November 21, 1935. Accessed 9 15, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news>.

⁵⁶ *The News (Adelaide)*, “Charge against Mahomet Allum”.

⁵⁷ See Musakhan, *History of Islamism in Australia from 1863-1932* for examples.

⁵⁸ *The News (Adelaide)*. “Police Chief’s Evidence in Allum Case.” November 28, 1935. Accessed September 15, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article129288881>.

⁵⁹ *The News (Adelaide)*, “Charge against Mahomet Allum. Reference in House.”

⁶⁰ *The Telegraph (Brisbane)*. “Father 83, Mother 19, Baby 9lbs.” August 21, 1941. Accessed September 15, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article172637021>

⁶¹ The West Torrens Historian. “Mahomet Allum - A Most Unusual Man.” *The West Torrens Historian*, Vol 7;3 (2015):1-2

⁶² Hanifa Deen. 2018. “Muslim Journeys, The Wonder Man.” In *Muslim Journeys*, National Archives of Australia. 2018. Accessed September 15, 2018. <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/snapshots/uncommon-lives/muslim-journeys/index.aspx>.

He died in 1964 and the funeral procession was allegedly over “a mile long.”⁶³ Given there were less than 400 Muslims in South Australia at that time,⁶⁴ the majority of the crowd must have been Christians; a clear indication of the influence and public respect afforded to Allum. Importantly, it demonstrated his commitment to and engagement with micro and meso level dialogue that was not always reciprocated. As a role model of the most extraordinary nature, he demonstrated the altruistic, peaceful and caring aspect of Islam that appears to have been forgotten over the last half century.

From looking at the public record of Mahomet Allum, it is clear he was engaged in a broad range of dialogue with individuals and officials at state and national levels, including communications to the Prime Minister.⁶⁵ He was philanthropic and was described as a “Friend alike to Human Beings and Dumb Animals.”⁶⁶ He espoused the positive virtues of Islam through his compassion and observance of *zakat* (charity). When many of his compatriots were suffering under the racism and prejudice imparted by the *Immigration Restriction Act*, Allum rose above it. He was never able to obtain citizenship; however, he contributed beyond the levels expected of any Australian.

The ability of Muslim migrants to use and share their skills across faiths as herbalists or doctors has also gone largely unsung, as is also evident by the story of Ali Acem Efendi,⁶⁷ who was an Ottoman Turk who came to Australia as a cameleer. Residing in Adelaide, he often travelled to Melbourne and visited the Turks from Cyprus who immigrated after World War II. Additionally, he provided herbal remedies and treatment for a range of afflictions and, unlike Allum, was licenced by the government to provide herbal remedies.⁶⁸

Allum and Efendi were not alone in their contributions to early Australia. Another successful immigrant, often referred to as the “King of the Cameleers,” was Abdul Wade. Born in Afghanistan in 1866 and arriving in Australia in the mid-1880s, he quickly seized the opportunity and imported large numbers of camels and Afghans to look after them.⁶⁹ He was naturalised in 1902 and, after founding the Bourke Carrying Company, it was reported in 1905 he owned between 600 and 700 camels, dealing with many non-Muslim station owners and suppliers.⁷⁰ Again, this is an example of dialogue with non-Muslims attempting to move beyond the micro to the meso level, when he offered his services to the Federal Government. In 1914, after the Imperial Camel Corps was founded to fight in Egypt and Palestine, Wade

⁶³ Deen, “Muslim Journeys”

⁶⁴ Muslims were included under “other” in the 1966 Census. For details see Australian Bureau of Statistics. “Census of Population and Housing, 30 June 1966, Part 7 – Religion”

⁶⁵ Deen, “Muslim Journeys”

⁶⁶ *The Sport (Adelaide)*. 1935. “Mahomet Allum continues work of mercy.” January 17, 1935. Accessed September 18, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article216264495>.

⁶⁷ Salih Yücel. *The Struggle of Ibrahim: Biography of an Australian Muslim*. New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2010. 52-54.

⁶⁸ Yücel. *The Struggle of Ibrahim*

⁶⁹ Stevens, Christine. “Wade, Abdul (1866–1928).” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, ANU, 2005. Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wade-abdul-13230/text7395>

⁷⁰ Monash University. “Special report: The King of the Cameleers – the rebellious patriotism of Abdul Wade.” *Mojo News*. May 4, 2015. Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://mojonews.com.au/special-report-the-king-of-the-cameleers-the-rebellious-patriotism-of-abdul-wade>.

offered the services of 500 camels and associated Afghan handlers. Despite this generous offer, the Australian Government took only five; however, it has been “speculated from old newspaper articles⁷¹ that this was an opportunity to showcase the superiority of white Australians over the Afghans and Indians in the tasks that they mastered.”⁷² He adopted the dress and mode of a European and purchased a large property in Lane Cove, Sydney,⁷³ with his children from his European-born wife receiving private school education in Sydney. While he espoused the key virtues of Islam, *rahmah*, *ihsan* and *hikmah*,⁷⁴ even giving away an expensive saddle after finding out it was made of pigskin and therefore not *halal*.⁷⁵ Despite his outwards attempts at piety, like many he clearly had his faults; his gambling debts accumulated and he lost most of his wealth.⁷⁶ Following the death of his wife, and possibly due to racial persecution, he handed back his Australian citizenship and returned to Afghanistan, apparently dying in England sometime after 1928.

Despite suffering under the persecution of the White Australia Policy, Wade was a loyal Australian. The following statement sums up his commitment to his new country, along with his Islamic sense of justice (‘*adl*).

I have suffered a number of hardships under the White Australia policy but am now quite independent. I, of course, would not like to see this beautiful country flooded with cheap labour, but rather than block a man from entering the country, because he happens to be a different colour, I would inquire into his qualifications, and, if he was worthy admit him, with full rights of citizenship.⁷⁷

Again, this is an individual whose commitment to the Australian cause was exceptional, even in the face of governmental road blocks. His dialogue clearly took the micro form, while attempting to move to a meso level. Despite some serious individual failings from an Islamic perspective, he provided another Muslim role model for others to follow with his attempt at assimilation while maintaining some semblance of his cultural heritage. Wade’s descendants still live in Sydney, with his son (educated at the King’s School in Sydney) serving in the Navy during World War II, despite being denied entry to Australia’s military academy, Duntroon, during World War I.⁷⁸

The Converts

In addition to Muslim migrants, there were European and Indigenous converts to Islam. Many of these converts married “in”, such as Jean Emsley, Allum’s wife, and Emily Ozadelle (née Murcutt), Abdul Wade’s wife. Others adopted it once the beliefs and practices became

⁷¹ *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*. “The Camel Corps.” January 9, 1917. Accessed November 30, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article125934501>

⁷² Monash University, “Special report”

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ Compassion, benevolence, and wisdom.

⁷⁵ Stevens, King of the Cameleers.

⁷⁵ Stevens, “Wade, Abdul”.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ Monash University, “Special report”

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

clear, such as Allum's secretary, Halimah Schwerdt.⁷⁹ Another significant individual was the indomitable Winifred Steger, possibly the first Australian woman to perform Hajj.

Steger's story is remarkable. Born in England in 1882, she migrated to Queensland around 1890 with her father.⁸⁰ Winifred married Charles Steger at the age of 16, giving birth to four children then deserting them; possibly due to issues of domestic violence.⁸¹ In 1915, she married Indian hawker Ackba Nuby and converted to Islam.⁸² Following his death, she re-married, this time to Karum Bux in an Islamic ceremony at Marree Mosque.⁸³ In 1927, accompanied by Bux and her small children, she made Hajj to Mecca, an account of which was published in the *Adelaide Register* on her return.⁸⁴ The entire journey was eventually serialised in the Register.⁸⁵ She also wrote 14 novels, along with a range of other writings, most of which never saw a printing press.⁸⁶ Her account of the Hajj is one of the first by an Australian, maybe one the earliest accounts by a 'white woman'. In her narrative, she is matter of fact, describing the scene from a unique perspective. The sad pity is that her voice was not heard outside of a few regional areas until a few years ago, indicating that, despite all her writings and reporting on various aspects of Islam, her contribution to meso level dialogue was largely unsuccessful.

Steger's marriage was not unique. Christine Steven's seminal work on the Afghans outlined problems with isolation and a lack of suitable brides.⁸⁷ Stephenson adds that cultural convergence and inversion played a part, given both groups were marginalised by white society and the options available to Muslim men were limited.⁸⁸ A range of solid relationships did form between Muslims and both indigenous and Europeans. Nameth Khan married an Aboriginal Sunday School teacher in Hermannsburg; Beejah Dervish married an Irishwoman, Amelia Shaw; and Gool Mahomet married a French courtesan, Adrienne Lesire.⁸⁹ Today, towns like Marree in South Australia have descendants of the various unions between Afghans, Europeans and Indigenous Australians, who come together for the annual

⁷⁹ Daud Batchelor. "Mahomet Allum, Australia's leading herbalist-benefactor." *Australian Muslim Times*. September 22, 2018 Accessed September 24, 2018. <https://www.amust.com.au/2018/09/mahomet-allum-australias-leading-herbalist-benefactor/>.

⁸⁰ Hilarie Lindsay. "Steger, Jane Winifred (1882–1981)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2012. Accessed 9 October, 2018. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/steger-jane-winifred-15523/text26735>

⁸¹ Hilarie Lindsay. *The Washerwoman's Dream: The Extraordinary Life of Winifred Steger 1882-1981*. Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2002

⁸² Lindsay. "Steger, Jane Winifred (1882–1981)."

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Bessie George. "A White Women in Mecca." *The Australian Womens Mirror*." August 30, 1927. Accessed October 1, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-493063484>.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Leigh. "Women under Islam." *The Register (Adelaide)*, August 2, 1927. Accessed September 10, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article55041684>.

⁸⁶ Hilarie Lindsay. "The story behind the Washerwoman's dream." *Southerly* 67:1 (2007): 287

⁸⁷ Stevens. "Tin Mosques and Ghantowns", 212-218

⁸⁸ Peta Stephenson. "Keeping it in the family: partnerships between Indigenous and Muslim communities in Australia." *Aboriginal History Journal*. Vol 33. (2019) Accessed November 30, 2018. <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p74631/html/ch05.html?referer=1055&page=8>.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 219-224

Camel Cup,⁹⁰ demonstrating a local instance of social harmony. Many of the descendants of these unions still identify as Muslims, even though they may have lost the language, beliefs and practices their forebears brought with them.⁹¹ It clearly remains a significant contribution to many peoples' cultural heritage and provides localised social harmony in country towns such as Marree.

The marriages of Muslim men to Australian women demonstrate some significant issues regarding early Islamic dialogue in Australia. Marriage demonstrates micro level dialogue, despite cultural and language barriers. Furthermore, the Muslims gained a sense of belonging in their new homeland, putting down roots and enabling the foundations of a family, a key aspect of Islamic society. In some aspects, it showed a desire for permanency on behalf of the Muslim men, and the acceptance of Islam by their wives demonstrated that Islam can be a universal religion; not just the religion of Muslim immigrants but also, new Australian converts.

MESO LEVEL DIALOGUE

Federation. A White Australia is invented, 1901 - 1945

Although the records are hazy, in 1901 it has been estimated there were between 2,000 and 4,000 Muslims in Australia,⁹² representing less than 0.001% of the population.⁹³ As a result of the passing of the *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901* (aka the White Australia Policy⁹⁴), many Muslim migrants returned to their place of birth, as, apart from British Indians, citizenship would not initially be conferred on them. This legislation was initially designed to prohibit the immigration of Asians; however, its net spread wide, capturing anyone the new country deigned to be undesirable. This prevented the predominantly male Afghans from bringing brides over, leaving some to return to their homelands and others to marry Australians. In addition, employment patterns for the Afghans were changing. Within 20 years, the motor vehicle would render the camel surplus to requirements; in fact, great herds were soon liberated into the Australia bush. Being unable to have their voices heard at a meso level in State and Federal Parliament, they were not able to have the discriminatory policy changed to allow family based immigration. Additionally, a lack of government support following the cessation of their livelihood showed that attempts at meso level dialogue failed, leaving many of the remaining Afghans destitute and reliant on the limited largesse provided in cities such as Adelaide.

⁹⁰ Traveller. "Speed Humps." Traveller.com. May 2011. Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://www.traveller.com.au/speed-humps-1e816>.

⁹¹ For interviews with descendants: Seyit, Kuranda. *History Of The Muslim Cameleers Of Australia*. Video. Australia: Whirling Dervish Media / ABC. 2015

⁹² Bilal Cleland. "Uncommon Lives: Muslim Journeys." *National Archives of Australia*. 2018 Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/snapshots/uncommon-lives/muslim-journeys/stories.aspx#section1>.

⁹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*. "The Churches." January 1, 1901. Accessed January 1, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14366059>.

⁹⁴ National Museum of Australia. *1901. White Australia Policy begins*. 2016. Accessed October 1, 2017. http://www.nma.gov.au/online_features/defining_moments/featured/white_australia_policy_begins.

Shepparton

Despite segregation in Ghantowns and other areas where Muslims initially settled, the rural Victorian town of Shepparton appears to have been an early success story for Islam in Australia. It also marks a clear shift towards greater community or meso dialogue, in what would be a protracted series of interactions. Shepparton has a long history of engagement with Islam. As early as 1914, stories have emerged linking Islam to this country town, a couple of hours north of Melbourne. During the festival of *eid al-adha* in 1914, over a “dozen of Shepparton’s Moslems gathered on the banks of the Goulburn River to celebrate.”⁹⁵ The service was led by Said Jeelani Shah from Melbourne, who explained the proceedings to the bemused locals who had gathered to watch. At the conclusion of the ceremony, he led prayers (in English) for all in attendance, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, in appreciation of “King George and the Royal family, and for the victory of the Allied forces over the Austro-German troops.”⁹⁶ This inclusive gathering shows an understanding of the country the Muslims were inhabiting, as well as some clear meso level dialogue supporting ‘King and country’ and the burning issue of the day, World War I.

During the 1920s, a number of Albanian Muslims migrated to Australia and eventually settled in Shepparton, once again to fulfil a labour shortfall.⁹⁷ By 1933, they had established the town’s first social club,⁹⁸ which by 1934 was contributing financially to the local community through donations to the hospital.⁹⁹ Like many previous (and subsequent) migrants, the Albanians were subject to discriminatory hazing in the media, often in a manner disproportionate to the alleged crimes.¹⁰⁰ In 1938, during the centenary celebrations of Shepparton, the Muslim and Jewish communities were not included in the official program of events. Despite this, the 500 strong Muslim community “felt compelled to take part in the celebrations to show their appreciation of the freedom of their life in Australia,” as did the 200 or so Jews.¹⁰¹ Over time, the Albanian Muslims and others created three social clubs and, in the 1960s, a mosque.¹⁰²

Examples of developing meso level dialogue include support from the local Shepparton Council. When the mosque was constructed, it was just out of town on a dirt, often muddy, road. The local council trucked in gravel for the opening ceremony to ensure accessibility for

⁹⁵ *Shepparton News*. “A Moslem Festival.” November 1, 1914. Accessed October 21, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article121140563>.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Shepparton Albanian Moslem Society. “History.” Accessed May 29, 2018. <https://sheppartonalbaniansociety.org/history/>.

⁹⁸ *Shepparton Advertiser*. “Club for Shepparton.” 26 June, 1933. Accessed October 1, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article168644024>.

⁹⁹ *Shepparton Advertiser*. “Gift to Hospital.” March, 5 1934. Accessed October 1, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article176795052>.

¹⁰⁰ Barry James and Ihsan Yilmaz. “Liminality and racial hazing of Muslim migrants: media framing of Albanians in Shepparton, Australia, 1930–1955.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2018): 1-19

¹⁰¹ *The Argus (Melbourne)*. “Shepparton.” October 25, 1938. Accessed October 26, 2018. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12522648>.

¹⁰² Shepparton Albanian Moslem Society. “History”.

the Albanian Muslims and visiting dignitaries.¹⁰³ This ceremony was reported on and broadcast by ABC television and included speeches by local non-Muslim dignitaries.¹⁰⁴ The coverage also showed a large number of local non-Muslim residents in attendance, indicating that, after 40 years of co-habitation, dialogue had successfully moved to the meso level in Shepparton.

In 2017, when deliberations became problematic around the founding of a mosque in Bendigo, less than a few hundred kilometres away, Shepparton was put forward as a model demonstrating how Islam can integrate into Australian rural society.¹⁰⁵ This could not have happened without increasing levels of dialogue, demonstrating how, following the initial contact, dialogue moved from the micro through to the meso levels.

ANALYSIS

It appears the most effective micro and meso dialogue to date was between the Macassan Muslim fishermen and the Indigenous people of the Yolgnu (and other mobs) prior to European settlement. While it would be unrealistic to state there was no conflict between the two groups, it does not appear to have been detrimental to long-term trade. This initial contact with Islam was at a micro and meso level, involving individuals and communities. Inter-marriage and short-term migration added some permanency to the relationship. All of this points to high level dialogue between the Indigenous Australians and Muslim Macassans, something that most likely would have continued to deliver mutual benefits had the colonists not intervened in 1906. This particular era probably represents a peak in interfaith dialogue and possibly a point to which we still have not returned.

Colonisation brought social Darwinism and social stratification based on skin colour. This generally precluded any serious micro or meso dialogue, as Christian settlers tended to believe they came from a position of superiority, first racially and second religiously. Non-Christians appear to have been tolerated, although often on the receiving end of some scurrilous media reports. Segregation, owing to skin colour not necessarily religion, hampered any meaningful dialogue in many country towns. This led to affiliation and inter-marriage with the Indigenous community, often neighbours on the outskirts of town. Despite this, when necessity intervened, relationships were formed. Sir Thomas Kidman, a pastoralist whose properties were supplied by camel, often ate with the Afghans in their style as a special guest at their camps.¹⁰⁶ The dialogue of this time was still at the micro level, between individuals. Other micro level dialogue involved inter-family relationships formed through

¹⁰³ Cameron Wilson. "Rural Mosques." *ABC Radio National: Bush Telegraph*. June 25, 2014. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/busstelegraph/rural-mosques/5546288>.

¹⁰⁴ Australian Broadcasting Commission. "ABC Goulburn Valley." *Shepparton Mosque Opening*. 1960. Accessed October 24, 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/ABCGoulburnMurray/videos/1470762692958955/>.

¹⁰⁵ Ashlea Witoslawski. "Shepparton most accepting community of Muslims in country, study." *Shepparton News*. August 29, 2018. Accessed October 1, 2018. <https://www.sheppnews.com.au/@news/2018/08/28/213226/positiveplacetolive>.

¹⁰⁶ Stevens, *Tin Mosques*, 255-260

‘mixed’ marriages and local neighbourhood conversations. It was difficult to push through this level of dialogue, simply through the small number of Muslims living in Australia at that time.

Muslim communities existed in the Goldfields and the north-west of Western Australian. Darwin and Broome were early cultural and religious melting pots, as were sections of north and western Queensland. Small numbers of Muslims eventually integrated; however, numbers were limited. In the 1911 census, there were 3,706 Muslims;¹⁰⁷ however, by 1947, the total number of Muslims had dropped to 2,334,¹⁰⁸ demonstrating a significant decline over the first half of the century.¹⁰⁹ This decline also seems to have some correlation with a loss of effective dialogue, showing early attempts may have been unsuccessful at establishing Australia as a safe haven for Islam.

The *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901)¹¹⁰ (aka the White Australia Policy) had a significant impact on dialogue at a meso level, simply by lowering the number of Muslims in Australia. In the outback, the act “reduced the number of Afghans to few hundred,”¹¹¹ impacting the availability of any meaning dialogue or interaction with most of the population in the areas frequented by the cameleers. It also affected employment opportunities for those who remained, causing significant financial hardship.¹¹² With the passing of the *Camel Destruction Act* in 1925¹¹³ and the advent of the motor vehicle, the livelihood of the original Afghan migrants was removed. Many returned home and others simply disappeared into the margins, again removing the opportunity for interaction or dialogue. The 1901 act also had ramifications for the Macassans. In the north of Australia, the long-standing dialogue and interaction between the Macassans and Indigenous Australians was abruptly terminated. By 1906, an embargo had been enforced, prohibiting “Asian” trepangers from accessing the fishing grounds.¹¹⁴ Across all aspects of Muslim migration and settlement, the opportunity for further meaningful dialogue was removed in a pen stroke.

In towns like Shepparton, Muslim migrants just got on with the job. They appear to have integrated into the community, albeit under the microscope of the media. After the initial

¹⁰⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. “Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911. Volume II - Part VI Religions.” *Australian Government, ABS*. April. 1911 Accessed October 10, 2018. [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/B8982A23D75F18B6CA2578390013015D/\\$File/1911%20Census%20-%20Volume%20II%20-%20Part%20VI%20Religions.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/B8982A23D75F18B6CA2578390013015D/$File/1911%20Census%20-%20Volume%20II%20-%20Part%20VI%20Religions.pdf).

¹⁰⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. “Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 1947. Part XVI - Religion.” *Australian Government, ABS*. 1947 Accessed October 10, 2018. [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/BDB6D970204DD4C0CA2578410019B05B/\\$File/1947%20Census%20-%20Volume%20I%20-%20Part%20XVI%20Religion.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/BDB6D970204DD4C0CA2578410019B05B/$File/1947%20Census%20-%20Volume%20I%20-%20Part%20XVI%20Religion.pdf).

¹⁰⁹ This must be viewed as a low estimate, as any children of inter-faith marriages with indigenous Australians were probably not counted. Accurate figures for Muslims in the early censuses are hard to come by. Often, minority religious groups were lumped together under the title of ‘Other’.

¹¹⁰ National Museum of Australia.” 1901. White Australia Policy begins.

¹¹¹ Kabir, *Muslims in Australia*, 58

¹¹² Nahid Kabir. “The Economic Plight of the Afghans in Australia, 1860—2000.” *Islamic Studies* Vol. 44, No. 2 (2005): 229-250.

¹¹³ South Australian Government. “‘Camels Destruction Act, 1925,’ Act of Parliament, No. 1704.” Accessed September 19, 2018 <https://dspace.flinders.edu.au/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2328/24276/17041925.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹¹⁴ Ganter, “Muslim Australians”, 484

period, once communities were established and identities created, dialogue shifted. While initially keeping to themselves, again through problems with language, relationships formed. Applications for the establishment of an Albanian club and the required licences for serving meals meant lines of communication within the local community were established. Dialogue moved to the meso level. Towns such as Shepparton thrived.¹¹⁵ In Adelaide, following the decline of the camel trade, attendance at the mosque dwindled. Sad stories emerge from the 1950s when a new generation of Muslims arrived and found some “ancient Afghans” still living in the mosque.¹¹⁶ For a long period, there was no significant *umma* in Adelaide for anyone to have any meaningful dialogue with.

CONCLUSION

If you look at the long history of Australia, the initial interfaith dialogue between the Yolgnu (and others) and Macassans represented a high point in regional meso level interfaith dialogue. This mirrored the way Islamic traders with their Sufi teachers moved into Indonesia between the 7th and 13th centuries.¹¹⁷ It seems to have allowed true two-way conversation to have taken place, with mutual respect offered from both sides. Once Australia was colonised, monologue was the rule. White Anglo Saxon Protestant was the preferred hegemony, to the detriment of the Indigenous population and other migrants. This monologue painted anyone outside the required profile as the different other. What we see from the public record is a small group of mostly devout Muslims trying to live in a strange country with some even stranger customs. The individuals discussed in this article represent a small portion of the stories available. However, they demonstrate attempts by the early Australian *umma* to be heard. They engaged in a range of individual and community negotiations and used any opportunity to demonstrate their good intent and the nature of their religion. In doing so, they set the scene for the next period and the waves of migration to come after 1945.

The legacy of the early Muslim migrants has only recently been written back into history. What is apparent from our past historical writings is not what is there, but what is missing. As an example, Manning Clarke’s opus, *The Complete History of Australia*,¹¹⁸ make no mention of the Afghans or early Muslim migrants throughout the six volumes, despite their contribution to early infrastructure building. This cannot be seen as the fault of the Afghans, Albanians or other Muslim migrants, many of whom attempted to have their voices heard above the often racist white noise emanating for much of our early colonial history.

What is apparent is that, throughout Australian history, dialogue has waxed and waned. It would be disingenuous to talk of this early colonial Islamic dialogue as true interfaith dialogue. Post colonisation, the initial dialogue with non-Christian religions occurred at a

¹¹⁵ The author holidayed in Shepparton in the 1960’s and 70’s and had no idea about the Islamic connection until recently. When he asked his father, he replied “Yes. They’ve been there for years”.

¹¹⁶ Bartsch, "Building Identity", 260

¹¹⁷ Nina Nurmila. “The Indonesian Muslim Feminist reinterpretation of inheritance.” In *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations*, edited by Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk, 109-122. Amsterdam: AUP, 2013

¹¹⁸ C.M.H. Clark. *A History of Australia. Volumes 1-6*. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978).

micro level. Miners, farmers and squatters probably engaged in dialogue with Afghans and Indians through necessity, despite the colonial narrative emphasising White European's social superiority.

This initial research touched the tip of the iceberg. Further research through private holdings and un-digitised records should enable a more complete exploration of dialogue in the early days of colonial Australia that has led to the establishment of our current range of interfaith dialogue organisations.

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