

## ANZAC MUSLIMS: AN UNTOLD STORY

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**Abstract:** When the Commonwealth of Australia became immersed in two World Wars, Australian Muslims accepted the national call – they shed their blood and gave their lives for Australia’s freedom and democracy. With their Australian brothers-in-arms and allies they fought courageously with honour against their common enemies in different battlefields – but this is an almost forgotten history.

Muslims in Australia were challenged by Britain’s imperial might and by their status as British subjects and ‘aliens’ to take part in ANZAC showing their commitment to their adopted country. The virtue of justice, sense of responsibility and loyalty are peculiar qualities that find their full justification in the organised welfare of Australian society.

This pioneering article, based on ongoing research on ANZAC Muslims, makes known their unique contribution. It reveals historic facts about ANZAC Muslims who were members of what has come to be known as the *Heroic Generation*. Although their names have not appeared in history books, they achieved the glory of victory for a better future for new generations to come. Their contribution is part of Australian National Heritage – Lest we forget.

**Keywords:** *Australian Muslims, ANZAC, World War, loyalty*

### INTRODUCTION

This article is dedicated to Muslim servicemen and those who had Islamic ancestry along with all other Australians who served in the Australian armed forces – the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) or the Merchant Navy. By examining fragmented sources, this article provides a preliminary overview on Muslims in the ANZAC forces. These sources include literature, booklets, academic journals, newspaper articles and online records from the Australian War Memorial and the Australian National Archive.

Muslim servicemen fought to defend the Australian nation and the British Empire in World Wars I and II. Like other Australian families, some Australian Muslim families gave their sons to the nation’s fighting forces. Many of them were descendants of the early Indian, Malay and Arab Muslims who were founders of Muslim communities and mosques. Australian Muslim women also played an important role. When their fathers, sons, brothers

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and cousins went to war, they helped the Red Cross and in hospitals. Records exist of Muslims in World Wars I and II who served and/or died for Australia, such as at the Australian War Memorial and the National Archives of Australia.

Muslims living in predominantly non-Muslim countries of the Commonwealth, such as Australia, were seen as loyal British subjects, having duties and responsibilities toward it. At that time, until 1949, the nationalities of most of those who may have considered themselves Australian were in fact British subjects.<sup>1</sup> Sir Muhammad Iqbal praised the British Empire, in whose realm lived a large Muslim population that enjoyed its freedom, rule of law and democratic principles, which correspond to Islamic values.<sup>2</sup>

From an Islamic legal and historical viewpoint, members of a Muslim community can serve in the army in defence of their country or its protecting ‘motherland’, even if it is a non-Muslim state involved in fighting against a Muslim state. Service in the Australian army and expression of loyalty toward it while participating in a war against a Muslim state could be justified – “flouting such an order may endanger the life, property and honour of the remaining Muslims living in the non-Muslim state.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, serving under these conditions and with good intentions was not only permissible (*jā’iz*, also right/possible), but commendable (*mandub*).<sup>4</sup> Some Muslims considered going to war was illegitimate as they saw it as *déjà vu* – a repeated bloody cause of sorrow, destruction and obliteration. However, they also expressed their loyalty to Australia by taking part in other activities to contribute to society. Similar to other religions, Islam’s orientation is towards peace.<sup>5</sup>

In the *Islamic Doctrine of Peace and War*, Abdel Salam highlights that war must necessarily be considered a form of self-defence; hostilities must be carried out with decency, while non-combatants should be shown respect and kindness.<sup>6</sup> Islam requires Muslims to defend not only Muslims, but also Jews and Christians.<sup>7</sup> As such, Muslim soldiers in Australia took a pathway of social integration into a new political and legal framework.<sup>8</sup> The individual and collective virtues of all, including Muslims, in times of war and peace are the basis for any nation’s social order. Imamovic, in *Outlines of Islamic Doctrine*, points out the virtue of justice and sense of responsibility, obedience and loyalty, apart from representing a moral way of thinking and acting, are qualities that find their full justification in contributing to the organised welfare of Australian society.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Len Kenna and Crystal Jordan, *Indians Gallipoli and World War One Including Sikhs, Hindus, Mohammedans and Christians, Are Indians An Ethnic Minority Vols 1-5*, Australian Indian Historical Society, 2013<<http://australianindianhistory.com/indians-gallipoli-and-world-war-one/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Nazir-Ali, ‘Islamic law, fundamental freedoms, and social cohesion: Retrospect and prospect’, eds. Rex Ahdar & Nicholas Aroney, *Shari’a in the West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 87.

<sup>3</sup> Abdur Rahman Doi cited in Fikret Karcic, *The Bosniaks and challenges of modernity: Late Ottoman and Hapsburg times*, (Sarajevo: El-Kalem Publishing, 1999), 122.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Abdel Elfatih Abdullahi Salam, *Islamic Doctrine of Peace and War*, (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>8</sup> Karcic, *The Bosniaks and challenges of modernity: Late Ottoman and Hapsburg times*, 122.

<sup>9</sup> Ishak Imamovic, *Outlines of Islamic Doctrine*, (Brisbane: W.R. Smith & Paterson, 1971), 402.

Together, Australian soldiers, Muslim as much as those of other backgrounds, fought against their common enemies in different battlefields. Service records for recruited soldiers do not ask about race.<sup>10</sup> Like other Australian soldiers, Muslims were recruited from all states to be trained to become an efficient military force, while maintaining their physical strength, stamina and strong spirit. They were treated well and willingly accepted the national call. Airmen, air traffic controllers, pilots, parachutists, sailors, gunners, horsemen, camel drivers, volunteers and others were accepted for service and commissioned according to their abilities, becoming responsible for carrying out whatever duties and tasks they were assigned.

Despite their involvement in Australia's defence forces, their Australian Muslim identities were not recorded accurately in historic accounts for a few reasons. Muslims were 'invisible' minority groups in Australia, hence they were absorbed by majority groups. They often were publicly silent about expressing their identities, while others used Anglicised names and/or nicknames and some embraced diverse cultures. For instance, Mariyam Crenan, a third generation Australian from Mackay of Javanese origin whose father and brothers went to war, explained that many parents in the early 20th century did not know their children could be registered with Muslim names even though they were born in Australia.<sup>11</sup> Their identities were misperceived due to their part- or full-assimilation. Those who had a Muslim or part-Islamic family link did not always practise their religion, even though they had an awareness of their heritage. Some even converted to other faiths. At that time, there were no Islamic schools in Australia, which taught Arabic, a language of the Qur'an, nor an available English translation of the holy book for their generations to develop knowledge on Islam and to facilitate self-determination of a Muslim identity.

Their identities were often misinterpreted by others due to their lack of knowledge of Islam. They were often recorded as 'Mohammedans' or followers of other religion, while others had blank spaces in their recruitment files. Articles on them in newspapers showed little or no interest in their religious orientation, although there was some puzzling information on their ethnic backgrounds. There was also some fear Muslim troops would be reluctant to fight their Ottoman co-religionists. Stories on Muslim soldiers in the Australian army are largely unwritten, as opposed to the many stories about Gurkhas, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in the Indian army.

Muslims managed to enlist despite the impact of the White Australia Policy on ethnic diversity. Most Muslims, recruited from different parts of Australia, were British subjects in Australia or natural-born British subjects, and their Muslim identities were noticeably heterogenic. Most Muslim servicemen, whose names can be found in military lists and records, were Indians, Afghans, Malaysians, Indonesians and Albanians along with those of an Arabic background. There is also a record of one Zanzibari and a Tatar.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rodney Noonan, 'Adelaide's Indian Enlistees in the First AIF', (Adelaide: The South Australian Genealogist, 2007), 18-9.

<sup>11</sup> Emad E. Soliman, *Butterflies in fresh fields: Stories of Muslim women in Queensland*, (Queensland: Islamic Women's Association of Queensland Inc, 2005), 41-2.

<sup>12</sup> [discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/](http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/); [recordsearch.naa.gov.au/](http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/).

Over time, Muslims would reflect their own Muslim Australian identity. They developed a tremendous bond and attachment with officers and soldiers, further reinforcing their loyalty to Australia. Many Australian brothers-in-arms shed their blood or gave their lives hoping for a better world and fought with honour. Those of Islamic ancestry in the Australian army who survived the heat of battle returned home to generally lead productive lives and head families. These brave men, ANZAC Muslims, “were members of what has come to be known as the Heroic Generation.”<sup>13</sup> They are all remembered with respect and gratitude.<sup>14</sup>

## ANZAC MUSLIMS IN WORLD WAR I

At the start of the 20th century, the whole world was in turmoil, which erupted into accelerated conflicts. The impact of World War I on the colonies was profound and multi-faceted. This was a conflict that began in the Balkans and became a general European and world war in 1914.<sup>15</sup> Different nations and armies were on the move along many roads and this proved to be a turning point in the history of the 20th century.<sup>16</sup> The Australian army in World War I was involved in Gallipoli (Turkey), Palestine, France and Belgium.

Compulsory military training existed during 1911-29, but only volunteers were enlisted into active service in World War I, serving overseas as the Australian Imperial Force. Training began in Australia and included basic fitness, discipline and weapons handling.<sup>17</sup> Across major centres, patriotic gatherings were held. For instance, when war was declared in 1914, Muslims gathered in Redfern, Sydney, for the feast of Ramadan – “a special prayer was offered for the success of British arms and European peace.” Afterwards, money was collected, which was given to the Lord Mayor’s Patriotic Fund as a sign of Muslim loyalty.<sup>18</sup> In 1914, the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote that a well-known Afghan, Abdul Wade of Bourke, known as the “Prince of the Afghans,” demonstrated his loyalty to the Empire by providing the use of his 500 camels as transport for defence purposes free of charge.<sup>19</sup>

On the Western Front, one could hear diverse languages among the men. Soldiers from many different parts of the Empire served alongside each other and this contributed to a deepened cosmopolitan experience. Though the British and ANZAC troops and the Indian Sikhs and Muslims (“Musalmans,” as the army quaintly termed them) had little shared

<sup>13</sup> VADM Tim Barrett AO, CSC, RAN Speech to Iftar Ramadan Reception ANZAC HALL AWM 23 June 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century: Volume One: 1900-1933*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 302.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Alex Cousley, Peter Siminsk & Simon Ville, *The Casual Effects of World War II Military Service: Evidence from Australia*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 9725, (Germany: Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor, 2016), 4.

<sup>18</sup> “News of the day”, *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate* (NSW : 1876 - 1954) Wednesday 26 August 1914 p 11.

<sup>19</sup> “The King of the Cameleers – the rebellious patriotism of Abdul Wade,” Special report, *Mojo News*, (Melbourne: Monash University, 2015). <http://mojonews.com.au/special-report-the-king-of-the-cameleers-the-rebellious-patriotism-of-abdul-wade/>.

language; Hindi and Urdu speakers were found among the Australian troops. Indian troops also learned English as they lived with and fought alongside British and ANZAC troops.<sup>20</sup>

Gallipoli looms large in Australia's national story. Korpe in *The Gallipoli campaign* highlight the foresight of John Monash, the commander of the AIF 4th Infantry Brigade, as he wrote in a letter to his family about the forthcoming event of Gallipoli: "Long before this letter can possibly reach you ... great events which stir the whole world and go down in history will have happened, to the eternal glory of Australia and all those who participated."<sup>21</sup> In the very first report on the Gallipoli landing, the British observer Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett described heroic images of ANZAC soldiers – they are "cheerful, quiet and confident" going into battle, "rather than nervous or excited" and the "physique of the men is remarkable."<sup>22</sup> Soon after landing, men of the various allied forces were deepening their respect and admiration for each other.<sup>23</sup> ANZACs tell stories of how they fraternised. Indian soldiers were comrades in arms with Australian and New Zealand troops on the rugged hills of Gallipoli from day one – "they fought together were wounded and died together, ate meals together and shared dugouts together."<sup>24</sup>

One Australian soldier also noted what he described as a "Mohammedan native" observing Ramadan and making "the air noisy with their prayers and recitations from the Qur'an."<sup>25</sup> The Ottoman victory at Gallipoli was relayed throughout the empire and beyond.<sup>26</sup> When peace was restored, from another side of the battle lines, Turkish field marshal and statesman Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) would say words of compassion and wisdom to the mothers of the ANZAC soldiers who fell in Gallipoli: "those heroes ... after having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well."<sup>27</sup>

These words are often quoted for good purpose and resonated in the future and constituted a foundation for Turkish–Australian friendship. In 1935, Tasman Malcolm Millington, of the Imperial War Graves' Commission, stationed at Gallipoli, gave some impressions in *The Mufti*, a booklet-tabloid of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia – Victorian Branch. Living in the little town of Chanak (Canakkale) in the Dardanelles, Millington gained some insights into the Gallipoli campaign from the enemy's view-point:

They [Turks] have the greatest respect for the Australian soldiers and the way they fought ... They in no way regard the Gallipoli campaign as a victory for themselves. They are

<sup>20</sup> Peter Stanley, "Indians on Gallipoli, 1915," *The Gallipolitan*, *The Journal of the Gallipoli Association* No. 137 – Spring, 2015) 48-56.

<sup>21</sup> Reyhan Korpe, "The Gallipoli campaign: History and legend", eds. Antonio Sagona, Mithat Atabay, C.J. Mackie, Ian McGibbon and Richard Reid, *Anzac battlefield: a Gallipoli landscape of war and memory*, (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley, "Indians on Gallipoli, 1915," 48-56.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 51.

<sup>25</sup> Amanda Laugesen, 2014. Amanda. 'Language, Australian soldiers, and the First World War', (Canberra: Manning Clark House, 2014), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Reyhan Korpe, "The Gallipoli campaign: History and legend", 30.

<sup>27</sup> Australian War Memorial; [www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/ataturk](http://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/ataturk).

simply thankful to Allah that it ended when it did, and they look upon it as a very bloody and very regrettable conflict for both sides.<sup>28</sup>

ANZAC Muslim servicemen also served in the first AIF. Abdul Rahman Kaus, born in Inglewood, Queensland, of Indian descent, a motor driver from Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, enlisted in 1916.<sup>29</sup> Abraham Mohamed (also recorded as Abram Mahomet) was described as a “fine young Indian,” who was saying he was going out to “bash the blooming Turk for the honour of Australia ...” He wanted to be an Australian, otherwise “he would remind the well-wisher that he was a Mohammedan not a Hindoo.”<sup>30</sup> This soldier had been born in Bombay, and was, in reflecting contemporary mores, discharged in 1918 because he was not of European descent.<sup>31</sup>

A Muslim resident from Fremantle, Pte Thabet Subeih, a Yemeni national, born in Bombay, India, enlisted in the AIF in Perth in 1915. On his enlistment papers, his birthplace is given as Bombay around 1878-80 and his occupation as “tea and coffee merchant.” Thabet was in a partnership with well-known Muslim businessman Mockbell.<sup>32</sup> He served under the surname “Suby” and was assigned the rank of private and service number 3937. On 12 February 1916, he embarked on *HMAT Miltiades* with the 9th Reinforcements, 28th Battalion. He returned to Australia on 17 March 1917.

A famous artist, Cassim ‘Cass’ Mahomet, served in the AIF. Cass Mahomet was the first Indian digger in the AIF. He enlisted without his parents’ consent. His parents did not relish the idea of a son fighting the Turks, who was also committed to the Islamic faith. Being a Muslim, he was rejected the first time he attempted to enlist. He was recorded as a Roman Catholic on his army record when he enlisted as a private in the AIF in 1916 in Adelaide. His regimental number was 7036 and he was assigned to the 23/10th Battalion. Mahomet embarked on the *Berrima* in 1916 from Adelaide, destined for France and in 1918 was part of the 3rd Brigade Concert Party that entertained the troops in France and England. Mahomet returned to Australia in 1920 with his battalion and was discharged from the AIF in Sydney in 1920.<sup>33</sup>

In his AIF service with the 10th Battalion, Mahomet threw aside all barriers of caste and religion, and became a “dinkum Aussie.” He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal. He died aged 61 in 1955 and was given a soldier’s burial on 21 November at Auckland, New Zealand. During his relaxation times away from the fighting, he successfully organised many concert parties and one of them, “The Boomerangs,” became well-known on

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<sup>28</sup> Tasman Malcolm Millington, *The Chance We Lost at Gallipoli: An Interview with Mufti Representative*, in *Mufti* (Melbourne: Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia - Victorian Branch Volume: 1 Issue, 11, 1935), 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/>.

<sup>30</sup> “Three More Volunteers Making Sixteen For the Week”, *Inverell Times* (NSW: 1899 - 1954), Tuesday 19 October 1915, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> [abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/06/26/4033679.htm](http://abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/06/26/4033679.htm).

<sup>32</sup> “Kabell Mockbell and his coffee empire”, Part 2., 2015.

<http://onecrumbatatime.blogspot.com/2015/11/kabell-mockbell-and-his-coffee-empire.html>

<sup>33</sup> [australianindianhistory.com/indians-gallipoli-and-world-war-one](http://australianindianhistory.com/indians-gallipoli-and-world-war-one).

the Western Front.<sup>34</sup> Mahomet was also the vice-president of the Showmen's Guild of Australia, and while overseas, was the representative for the New Zealand Showmen's Association and member of the Actors' Equity.<sup>35</sup> He also contributed to humanitarian programs. On Armistice Day, he helped with the Poppy Appeal, singing and conducting auctions from a lorry. He also raised funds to help widows and children.<sup>36</sup> Mahomet expressed his loyalty and love for Australia in a poem he wrote and sung titled *Australia for Mine!* The music for it was composed by W.E. Naunton. A few lines of his poem said:

Far away from home, I don't rave about places,  
But, I say, there is Australia my home  
I am thinking of it every day and night,  
Not another possie like dear old Aussie...  
Anywhere in Aussie for mine!<sup>37</sup>

Charles Khan, known also as "Charley," was described variously as a Brahmin, Indian, Afghan, Sikh, Mohammedan, coloured man, but was actually an Indian Muslim from Calcutta who lived in Renmark, South Australia. Khan was a good soldier. He served in Gallipoli, France, Flanders (Belgium) and Egypt, and was badly wounded in the field at Bullecourt, France, in 1917.<sup>38</sup> He was a soldier with an excellent record and was entitled to wear four decorations. Khan was also mentioned in despatches by General John Monash.<sup>39</sup> His Aussie brother-in-arms remarked:

Everybody in the battalion to which I belonged knew him as Charley. He was a most valuable ally. I can testify to that. He was an Indian and the only coloured man in the unit. Everybody liked him; there was no colour line in the trenches.<sup>40</sup>

Khan's work was always carried out efficiently and his cheerfulness and willingness in adverse circumstances made his services valuable to the battalion. The King was pleased to approve the award of the Meritorious Service Medal to Khan and he was proud of it. When Khan died in Renmark, the flags in the town were flown at half-mast.<sup>41</sup>

In historical accounts, other Muslims, following the examples of Mahomet and Khan, served in the AIF in various combat zones in World War I. For instance, Kiam Deen, 30-years-old, a labourer from Delhi, who lived in Sydney; Abdullah Ahmed, of Indian descent, a labourer born in North Melbourne; Mahomet Hassian, resident of Potts Point; Mahomet Hussen, born in Sydney; and Cecil Khan, an 18-year-old from Surry Hills, NSW.

<sup>34</sup> "The Indian Digger", Western Mail (Perth, WA : 1885 - 1954), Thursday 27 November 1930, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> "Side Show Attraction", Barrier Daily Truth (Broken Hill, NSW: 1908; 1941 - 1954), Saturday 20 September 1947, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> "The Indian Digger", Western Mail (Perth, WA : 1885 - 1954), Thursday 27 November 1930, p.2.

<sup>37</sup> Booklet: Cass Mahomet. *Australia for mine!* (NSW: Literary Dramatic Musical, 1920).

<sup>38</sup> [australianindianhistory.com/indians-gallipoli-and-world-war-one](http://australianindianhistory.com/indians-gallipoli-and-world-war-one).

<sup>39</sup> "Drunk at the Wheel: Ex-Soldier with Excellent Record Fined £10/10", Murray Pioneer and Australian River Record (Renmark, SA: 1913 - 1942), Friday 26 February 1926, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> "Coloured Man, but a Friend", News (Adelaide, SA: 1923 - 1954), Wednesday 12 February 1936, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Glamallie Khan was a Punjabi Indian hawker who enlisted in Adelaide with service number 2019. He previously served in the Native Light Horse in Punjab for three years and was assigned to the 14th Reinforcement of the 3rd Light Horse Regiment.<sup>42</sup> He embarked from Adelaide as a trooper aboard the *Warilda* in 1916, landed in Egypt, and for short time remained there until he embarked for England. While in England, he was transferred to the infantry with the rank of private. Glamallie then embarked for France aboard the *Golden Eagle* and joined the 32nd Battalion. He was wounded and hospitalised in Rouen and remained in France until February 1917. Once back in England, he marched to a convalescent depot and stayed there until May when he embarked for Australia aboard the *Ayrshire*. He was discharged from the AIF as medically unfit on 3 September 1917.<sup>43</sup>

In service records, there is a note about Abdullah Bin Dahomey, originally from Zanzibar, of “black complexion” who served in 1915.<sup>44</sup> Another interesting example is Abdul Ganivahoff, a 30-year-old Muslim seaman from Kazan, a city in Tatarstan (south-west Russia). He was recorded as a “Russian subject” and enlisted in Melbourne for World War I. His service number was 1703.<sup>45</sup> Wade Abdul Hamid, born in Paddington, Sydney, enlisted and served in the navy in World War I. His service/reference number was 1204. Although he had a Muslim name, his record of service stated his religion as “Church of England.”<sup>46</sup>

Some names of Muslim servicemen are preserved through their actions, bravery, sacrifice, commitment and awards. Among these are listed:

- Hassenain Suliman Joli for bravery under heavy shell and machine gun fire while leading camels bearing wounded men out of line at El Bur, morning of 1 December 1917.
- Khalile Mohammed Talel, final rank driver, Egyptian Camel Transport Corps attached to the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance.
- Ali Hamod Mohamedain, served in the AIF in World War I as a driver in the Egyptian Camel Transport Corps attached to the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance.
- Suliman Abu Zaid, driver, and Abdul al Belnhit Khomis, native, were leading camels and organising cameleers under heavy high explosive shellfire at Beit Sira on 30 November 1917, displaying coolness and bravery. One camel at the time was conveying two British wounded patients from the front line and Khomis, at the risk of his own life, led them to a place of safety.<sup>47</sup>
- Mohammed Ali, previously the servant of Lieutenant General Henry Gordon Bennett, employed in the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade at Heliopolis, near Cairo.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Noonan, ‘Adelaide’s Indian Enlistees in the First AIF’, 18-9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Abdullah Bin Dahomey: <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/records/490990>.

<sup>45</sup> Abdul Ganivahoff: <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/records/208598>.

<sup>46</sup> Wade Abdul Hamid: <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/records/481561>.

<sup>47</sup> [www.awm.gov.au/collection/P10167349](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P10167349).

<sup>48</sup> AWM28 2/127 - [Recommendation file for honours and awards, AIF, 1914-18 War; A.L. H. Book Recommendations, June 1917 – Dec 1917.



Further honours and awards were recommended to Sarbaland Khan, Jemadar (junior officer) in the 19th Lancers; Igbal Khan, a driver in the 28th Mule Corps; and Naik Piri Khan, a Naik Corps Troops.<sup>49</sup>

The group of surviving World War I veterans that comprised “Other” at the time of the national 1930 census would register their religious adherence in more than 30 denominational categories, including Islam.<sup>50</sup> On the Australian War Memorial website, the following Muslim soldiers from World War I are recorded: gunner Mahomed Khan; member of the Camel Transport Corps Bash Rais saved Ahmed Zeir, service number B10529 (award date: 3 April 1918); member of the 1st Remount Brigade Fatte Allie Khan; member of the 7th Battalion AIF Khyat Wady; member of the 32nd Battalion Khan Glamallie; member of the 21st Kohat Mountain Battery Sultan Ali; gunner Ali Ahmed (recommended for Order of Merit – award date 16 August 1915); Havildar Dost Mohammed (equivalent to sergeant); Mohamed Alam; Reemat Khan; and Mahomed Baksh, Liakat Ali and Ghulam Mohamed of the 26th Jacobs Mountain Battery.

The bravery and patriotism of these soldiers was well-known. In 1916, the *Hobart Daily Post* remarked on a story of a patriotic Indian – Fattee Allie Khan – who was a Launceston resident.

The Indian was dressed in the khaki uniform of a member of the Australian Expeditionary Forces. He said that he, when a boy of 15 years of age, took part in Lord Roberts’ famous march to Kandahar. When the war broke out he offered his services to the Australian forces and was accepted. He got as far as Lemnos, but there contracted muscular rheumatism and was ordered back home. Upon recovery he again volunteered for service, but was told he had done his bit, and would be kept in Tasmania for home duties. Fattee Khan said he was a Mahomedan and was a native of Northern India. He is also proud of the fact that he has a son now serving with the Australian forces abroad.<sup>51</sup>

When World War I ended, those Muslim heroes who returned home were greeted with a hearty welcome. Under cheerless conditions, these men had “done their bit” on the frontline. The enthusiasm of hundreds of relatives and citizens welcomed the returning men, and the squares and streets were thronged with well-wishers. Many moving scenes occurred as soldiers were re-united with their loved ones.

Newspapers *Reveille* and the *Hobart Mercury* in 1937 wrote about a unique scene at Kingaroy (Queensland), describing it as “an unusual tribute” in the Anzac Day remembrance services that year:

As the war veterans’ procession was nearing the memorial gates, a coloured man dressed in Oriental costume, red Turkish fez, and medals on his breast, was noticed. He jumped smartly to the salute, and held it till the procession passed. Then he joined the crowd and remained till hymns were sung, speeches made, the lament played, and the ‘Last Post’ sounded. Then he walked smartly up to the memorial, which, by then, was covered in flowers. He saluted and stepped smartly back one step. Then he prayed an Islamic prayer

<sup>49</sup> [discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/](http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/).

<sup>50</sup> <http://forum.lighthorse.org.au/index.php?topic=362.0>

<sup>51</sup> “A Patriotic Indian”, *Daily Post* (Hobart, Tas.: 1908 - 1918), Wednesday 5 July 1916, p.4.

... With his hands raised heavenwards, he ‘recited something in a foreign [Arabic] tongue.’ Another backward step and he went down upon his knees and placed his forehead on the ground for a few seconds ... Rising, he put his right hand over his left breast, saluted, and walked back into the ranks. Several diggers spoke to him after the ceremony and ascertained that he was a ‘full-blooded Mohammedan Indian – Cass Mahomet, ex-10th Battalion, AIF.’<sup>52</sup>

## ANZAC MUSLIMS IN WORLD WAR II

A few decades later, Australians found themselves committed to another global conflict – World War II. Australia, as a young and peaceful nation, and as an example to others in the South Pacific, was immersed in the war against Japan until after its victory in this unprecedented event.<sup>53</sup> As World War II continued, more countries were dragged into it. It had a devastating effect globally, and the loss of life was at least 60 million persons, mostly civilians. The events of World War II surpassed World War I in their “utter ruthlessness,” due to advances in military technology.<sup>54</sup> While many Australians served in Australia, New Guinea, South-east Asia, Japan and the nearby Pacific Islands, others found themselves in a variety of locations in Europe and the Middle East.<sup>55</sup>

World War II was particularly significant for Australia, as it was the first time it faced the threat of invasion, requiring full mobilisation of the nation.<sup>56</sup> Like the United States, however, the war was largely fought beyond its shores. As part of mobilisation, conscription for wartime service was introduced in Australia for the first time and almost one million Australians entered armed service, with hundreds of thousands more in auxiliary and war industries.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, in 1940, compulsory training was resumed. Young unmarried men were drafted for training.<sup>58</sup> During the war, when camels were needed for a special Northern Territory camel corps, Gool Mahomet, also one of the best-known members of the Australian Afghan community, offered 20 camels for free as his war effort.<sup>59</sup>

“Malay” Muslims recalled their forebears’ contributions to Australia during wartime. A number of Javanese Muslims and “Malays” also contributed to the national defence during World War II, such as John Ismat Contor who was in his early 40s and actively involved with the Voluntary Defence Force in Mackay. He was given a certificate of acknowledgment after the war. His son, Vivian Sunim Contor, became a national serviceman at 18 years of age.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> “Un Unusual Tribute”, Mercury (Hobart, Tas. : 1860 - 1954), Wednesday 16 June 1937, p.12.

<sup>53</sup> Mining Clark, *A History of Australia: The old Dead Tree and the young Tree Green – 1916-1935 with an Epilogue*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987), 496.

<sup>54</sup> Cousley, Siminski & Ville, *The Casual Effects of World War II Military Service: Evidence from Australia*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> “Left trip too late”, News (Adelaide, SA: 1923 - 1954), Tuesday 23 May 1950, p.2.

<sup>60</sup> Nahid Afrose Kabir, *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, race relations and cultural history*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 126.

Mariyam-Elayne Crenan, an Australian-born Muslim of a Javanese heritage, remembered her childhood in Mackay in these terms:

My family were poor and my father had a small cane farm with his two brothers. I remember my father training with other Volunteer Defence Corps members in long grass using broom sticks as guns.<sup>61</sup>

Fred Atim Shandiman, a third generation Javanese Australian, enlisted in the AIF having trained in Wacol, Brisbane, for about four months before being sent to Japan. However, he was brought back in an aircraft because “he looked like Japanese,” although he was not discharged from the army. His brother was killed in the war in Papua New Guinea.<sup>62</sup>

Many other Islanders served the war efforts as civilians. Among them was Ali Drummond, who in World War II served in the Civilian Construction Corporation in the Torres Strait. His mother was from the Yadhagana and Wuthuthi Aboriginal peoples of Cape York Peninsula, and his father was from Sarawak, Borneo. In 1999, Ali received a Civilian Medal for his services to the Defence Force in Torres Strait and later in Townsville.<sup>63</sup> About his Muslim Malay heritage and identification as a Torres Strait Islander, his granddaughter Samantha Faulkner recalled that Ali was a respected elder and recognised across Australia. He was a cultural ambassador for Thursday Island and the Torres Strait, educating people about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, thus assisting greatly in the subsequent reconciliation project.<sup>64</sup> In 1998, he was named the NAIDOC Sportsman of the Year for his contribution to lawn bowls and later named Senior Australian Achiever of the Year. He was considered “an outstanding role model for a lifetime of community service.”<sup>65</sup> Although both his parents were adherents to the Muslim faith, Ali was not taught their religion. He embraced Christianity.<sup>66</sup>

Samsudin bin Katib (or Kalib) was recorded in the official military record as an unmarried Muslim who was born in Sumatra. He arrived in Broome in 1937 to work as a pearl diver. Samsudin bin Katib, a 24-year-old diver, joined the 23rd Labour Corps of the Australian Military Forces in 1942.<sup>67</sup> He also qualified as a parachutist. He served for almost four years, volunteering with other Indonesians, Malays and Timorese to be part of a top-secret force called Z Special Unit, fighting as guerrillas behind Japanese lines.<sup>68</sup> He was considered an “alien” (foreign national, non-citizen). He was discharged with the rank of corporal in

<sup>61</sup> Soliman, *Butterflies in fresh fields: Stories of Muslim women in Queensland*, 41-2.

<sup>62</sup> Nahid Afrose Kabir, ‘Mackay revisited: The case of Javanese-Australian Muslims, 1880-1999’, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, (Philippines: Scalabrini Migration Centre, vol. 16, no. 3. 2007), 407

<sup>63</sup> Anna Shukul, ‘Torres Strait Islanders’, in M Brandle (ed.), *Multicultural Queensland 2001: 100 years, 100 communities, A century of contributions*, (Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2001).

<sup>64</sup> Julia Martinez, ‘Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage: Negotiating citizenship rights in twentieth-century Australia’, (*Aboriginal History*, vol. 35, 2011), 179-197.

<sup>65</sup> “NAIDOC Ball honours unsung heroes”, Media Release by The Hon Jenny Macklin MP. 2010. <https://formerministers.dss.gov.au/14072/naidoc-ball-honours-unsung-heroes/>

<sup>66</sup> Samantha Faulkner & Drummond, Ali. *Life b'long Ali Drummond: A life in the Torres Strait*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> <http://vrroom.naa.gov.au/print/?ID=19574>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Melbourne in 1946. At the end of war, when he applied for naturalisation, his application was rejected as it was not government policy to naturalise “natives of Asia.”<sup>69</sup> Sadly, he was deported in 1948 and died in Singapore in 1950.<sup>70</sup>

When the largest draft of recruits for the AIF and Home Defence Corps was to leave Mackay in 1941, its contingent consisted of 17 men. Arrangements were made for the men to be entertained at the Soldiers’ Club Rooms before their departure, and they then marched through the main streets of the city, headed by the City Band, to the railway station. The parade assembled at the Soldiers’ Club Rooms. Most of the men in the draft were from district centres and fulfilling a promise made some time ago to join up at the end of the crushing season. Among them in the AIF were listed Alec Aleman, from Taylor Street, Mackay, and William Saron, from Baker’s Creek in the Mackay region. In 1942, residents of Mackay witnessed another unique occasion of the departure of an exceptionally large contingent of volunteers for the AIF. Forty men who had been accepted for service overseas, including William Dulvarie, from Walkerston in the Mackay region, assembled at Drill Hall and marched to Diggers’ Hall, where, following custom, they were farewelled by the older WWI Diggers. The march was led by the Mackay City Band and supported by a large contingent of returned soldiers and members of the Volunteer Defence Corps. This striking farewell march went through the city streets to the railway station. It was anticipated the route of the procession would be thickly lined with a multitude of townspeople to send the lads away with a cheer, which echoed in their hearts for many days to come.<sup>71</sup>

At the outbreak of World War II, a third-generation Muslim, Arthur (Sarrip) Saron was so desperate to fight that he raised his age from 16 to 18 years. In early 1941, at the time of his embarkation to the front with his mates, newspapers mentioned his name:

An enjoyable evening was spent at the Diggers’ Hall, when Lieutenant T. G. Mulherin presided over a large gathering. The function was a farewell service to servicemen. Thirty-three men left by train for Brisbane to join the AIF. The draft comprised the volunteers, including Arthur Sarrip Saron.<sup>72</sup>

Saron served in Malaya and became a prisoner of war in Changi Prison, Singapore. Private Saron’s name appeared in the Army News in 1945 in the official lists of AIF servicemen who were recovered from Singapore among 4,585 Australian prisoners, and he was returned to his home in Mackay, Queensland.<sup>73</sup>

Returning after the war, *The Brisbane Truth* in 1945 wrote about Saron and other servicemen:

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<sup>69</sup> “From cameleers to citizens: Muslims in Australia, 1901–75”, Memento, Winter 2007 Issue 33, (the National Archives of Australia, 2007).13

<sup>70</sup> <http://vroom.naa.gov.au/print/?ID=19574>

<sup>71</sup> “Big A.I.F. March This Afternoon: Another Large Mackay Draf”, Daily Mercury (Mackay, Qld. : 1906 - 1954), Thursday 15 January 1942, page 4.

<sup>72</sup> “Mackay Notes”, Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld. : 1907 - 1954), Saturday 10 May 1941, p.7.

<sup>73</sup> Kabir, ‘Mackay revisited: The case of Javanese-Australian Muslims, 1880-1999’, 415.

Over 400 Service personnel including Pte Arthur Sarrip Saron will return to Brisbane by the Largs Bay, including a number who were transferred from the *Esperance Bay* to the other vessel. This is the number that is expected to be disembarked here, though Army authorities advise that some may request to be disembarked in southern centres. Relatives wishing to meet their boys are advised to go along the Moorooka tramline then turn into Bracken-street, to the end of that road, where guides will be available to direct them to their lads. The Red Cross is organising a ‘fleet of cars’ to drive other personnel from the ship on a sight-seeing tour of the city.<sup>74</sup>

Four brothers – Raymond, Henry, Alfred and Edward Long – went to war in 1941, while another brother, Archibald, served with the Volunteer Defence Corps. Their mother did not let the youngest son join the AIF.<sup>75</sup> The shortage of labour increased the roles for women and voluntary self-sacrifice was promoted by the government; hence, their mother and sister Dorris, like many other women, helped the Red Cross during wartime. Private Edward Long served in Unit 2/26th in the Australian Infantry Battalion, died due to cholera at the age of 24 in 1943 as a prisoner-of-war in Sonkurai camp in Thailand (formerly Siam) and was buried in Burma. Of the 1,600 men sent to Sonkurai camp by 1943, 1,200 died, with 200 hospitalised and many not expected to recover. A large number died because of disease, starvation and exhaustion.<sup>76</sup> Edward died in the arms of his brother, Raymond Maroop Long, who later returned home from the war.<sup>77</sup>

Archival sources also reveal others who enlisted and became privates in the AIF to serve in World War II. Most of them were registered as “Muslims by religion and labourers by occupation.”<sup>78</sup> The Department of Veterans’ Affairs Case File (Soldiers Pay Book, service records only) at the Australian National Archives, Queensland, registered Raymond Long and Alec Aleman as Christians; however, researcher Dr Kabir’s interview with Raymond and her conversations with Alec’s relatives, indicated both men were Muslims. Alec Aleman was the uncle of Imam Barry Hassan, a fourth generation Australian-born Muslim of Javanese origin. Later, Alec Aleman enlisted voluntarily in the AIF in World War II and served in Jerusalem, Crete, New Guinea and the Middle East. Other names included William Dulvarie and William (Wilson) Saron.<sup>79</sup>

A younger brother of Cass Mahomet, glassworker Hussein Mahomet of NSW, attempted to enlist, but was rejected as he was only 14 years of age. Later, Hussein Mahomet enlisted in the AIF and was medically discharged from the Middle East.<sup>80</sup> Gunner Pte Ro Mahomed paid the supreme sacrifice in Syria in 1941.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> “Largs Bay Contingent Due For Big Welcome”, Truth (Brisbane, Qld.: 1900 - 1954), Sunday 7 October 1945, p.13.

<sup>75</sup> Kabir, *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, race relations and cultural history*, 415-7

<sup>76</sup> bobkelsey.net/camps.html.

<sup>77</sup> Kabir, *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, race relations and cultural history*, 415-7

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> “Noelene Mahome and Pt Hussein Mahomet: Photo” Daily Mercury (Mackay, Qld.: 1906 - 1954), Thursday 15 January 1942, p.4.

<sup>81</sup> “In Memoriam”, Camperdown Chronicle (Vic.: 1877 - 1954), Friday 16 June 1944, p. 5.

Flight sergeant Moheddeen Abdul Ghias (also written as Abdul Kaus), known as ‘Bob’ Howsan, served in the RAAF in World War II. He was the grandson of two of the first Muslim families to settle in Mt Gravatt and the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Fred Madeen Howsan, also of Mt Gravatt, Brisbane. He was educated at Buranda Boys’ School and Brisbane Boys’ Grammar School. After the outbreak of the war, he joined the Air Force in 1940 and left Australia in April 1941 for training in Canada, before going on to England. His younger brother, Hamid Abe Howsan, also joined the RAAF and survived the war.<sup>82</sup> Bob Howsan wrote to his parents:

You know Mum and Dad, it may seem strange to other people but I have a very strong feeling that I am coming back to Australia safe and sound. It can be described in one word – faith. I have it, so neither you nor I have any cause to worry.<sup>83</sup>

A cushion cover from Egypt was the last gift sent home to his mother in Brisbane, a few months before he died in action.<sup>84</sup> The plane he piloted was shot down in aerial combat over France and he was killed. Before the plane crashed, Sergeant Howsan steered the stricken aircraft away from the French village of Marly-le-Roi, near Versailles, to avoid falling on the village and causing civilian casualties. He served with No. 405 Squadron, RCAF.<sup>85</sup> The Minister for Air and members of the Air Board gave formal expression of their profound sympathy to Sergeant Howsan’s family in their great loss. An acknowledgement letter also came from Buckingham Palace:

The Queen and I offer you  
our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow.  
We pray that your country’s  
Gratitude for a life so nobly  
Given in its service may bring  
you some measure of consolation.

King George R. I.<sup>86</sup>

Bob Howsan was buried with full military honours. In the letter from the office of the Directorate of War Graves Service stated:

His grave will be cared for by the Imperial War Graves Commission and you may be assured that everything possible will be done to ensure that it is maintained in a manner befitting one who has given his life in the service of his country. I trust this knowledge is some consolation to you and loss.<sup>87</sup>

In the words of Bob Howsan’s parents “death is but the gateway to eternal life.” In loving memory of their brother, his two sisters dedicated the poem High Flight by John Gillespie Magee (1922-1941):

<sup>82</sup> crescentsofbrisbane.org/Newsletter/CCN0486.asp.

<sup>83</sup> Bob Howsan’s dairy. (From Queensland Muslim Historical Society’s collection).

<sup>84</sup> crescentsofbrisbane.org/Newsletter/.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Buckingham Palace, n.d. (From Queensland Muslim Historical Society’s collection).

<sup>87</sup> From the official letter, 10. 7. 1945. (From Queensland Muslim Historical Society’s collection).

Oh. I have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
 And danced the skies on laughter silvered wings  
 Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth  
 Of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred things  
 You have not dreamed of— wheeled, soared, and swung  
 High in the sunlit silence, hovering there  
 I've chased the shouting wind along,  
 And flung my eager craft through footless halls of air  
 Up, the long, delirious blue  
 I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
 Where never lark or even eagle flew  
 And while with silent, lifting mind  
 I've trod the high, untrampled sanctity of space  
 Put out my hand and touched the face of God

His loving Sisters, Lucy and Muriel<sup>88</sup>

Bob Howsan's five cousins also served in the Australian armed forces. These were grandsons of 104-year-old white-bearded Indian Muslim Abdul Kaus. Four of his grandsons served in the RAAF and one in the Navy.<sup>89</sup> According to a local Brisbane historian, Janeth Deen, a young William Bernard 'Bill' Kaus, from the Abdul Kaus Muslim family of Brisbane, served in the Australian Army in World War II. He served in Unit No. 161 Squadron (RAAF) having the rank of Flying Officer. He was a wireless air gunner in Halifax for three and a half years. Flying Officer Kaus completed numerous operations against the enemy, in the course of which he "invariably displayed the utmost fortitude, courage, and devotion to duty."<sup>90</sup>

Bill Kaus was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his "skill and fortitude in operation against the enemy,"<sup>91</sup> the insignia for which was presented by the Governor of Queensland at Government House, Brisbane, on 20 November 1946. In 1945, the *Brisbane Telegraph* and *Maryborough Chronicle* articles read, respectively:

Flying Officer W. B. 'Bill' Kaus, second son of Rahman Kaus, of 36 Raby Road, Brisbane, has been awarded the DFC in recognition of gallant service.<sup>92</sup>

When paraded, before 600 people at Sandgate F/O, 'Bill' Kaus, of Brisbane, one of the 110 men who reached Brisbane received 'a pleasant shock' when told he had won the Distinguished Flying Cross. The award of DFC was promulgated after Kaus had left England, on his way home.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> "Roll of Honour", Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld.: 1933 - 1954), Monday 1 April 1946, p.10.

<sup>89</sup> "Mosque Has Five Members Now", News (Adelaide, SA: 1923 - 1954), Saturday 14 February 1942, p.5.

<sup>90</sup> "D.F. C. Awaiting Him Here", Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld.: 1933 - 1954), Tuesday 31 July 1945, p.3.

<sup>91</sup> Bill Kaus: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C275322>

<sup>92</sup> "Service Awards", Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld.: 1872 - 1947), Wednesday 1 August 1945, p.7.

<sup>93</sup> "D.F. C. was surprise for Brisbane F/O", Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld. : 1907 - 1954), Tuesday 31 July 1945, page 1.

Bill Kaus was also awarded the Legion of Honour, France's highest honour.<sup>94</sup> He was a businessman, joining his father in business. His father was a mattress-maker with an imposing shop, the walls of which were lined with quilts, making a very gorgeous display. Bill Kaus was a keen sportsman, especially in cricket, football, shooting and bowls. He was an inaugural member of the Queensland Cricketers Club and president of the Queensland Rifle Association. He also had a successful political career.<sup>95</sup> In 1966, he was elected as Queensland Liberal member for Hawthorne. He later represented the state seat of Mansfield from 1972 until 1986, switching to the National Party in 1983.

Australian-born Arab Salah al-Samman served with the 2/1 Infantry Battalion AIF throughout World War II. He first went to Egypt in 1940 with the AIF, fought in the Western Desert battles, was transferred to New Guinea and finally discharged in Australia in 1946. He spent the following three years touring the Middle East.<sup>96</sup> His family had emigrated from Damascus, Syria, to Sydney around 1860. His father married a Christian. While Al-Samman's brothers and sisters took up their mother's religion, he was brought up alongside his father's Islamic faith.

When the war was over, Al-Samman taught English for a living. He also wrote articles for various publications and edited the *Standard of Islam*. He visited al-Azhar University in Cairo. He intended to publish a book of facts about Muslim communities, followed by a series of pocket books explaining the Muslim religion. In his view, Muslim communities knew little or nothing about each other and the understanding of Islam by the rest of the world could be strengthened by better acquaintance of people with Muslims. When he returned home to Australia, his religious mission was to establish better intra-Muslim relations and promote interfaith understanding.<sup>97</sup>

In his post-war life, he promoted local and international understanding through the similarities in outlook of the adherents of the different religions. He set young friends of the three religions — Christian, Jewish and Muslim — to find out in how many respects their religions agreed, instead of trying to identify where the other was wrong. Al-Samman pointed out, in continuity of the Golden Rule, Islam teaches:

No one is a true believer until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself. The most beloved unto God is the person who does the most good to God's family ... Any man or woman who refutes a Commandment is refuting his or her God. Any believer who does not love his neighbour as himself is not a believer. Individuals differed, and he believed that the secret of unity lay in this diversity.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Kim Landers, *Australian vets honoured with French Legion of Honour*, Interview/ transcript, ABC, 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Wikipedia - Former Members. Parliament of Queensland. 2015; William Bernard Kaus (1923 - 2006) — Heaven Address; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill\\_Kaus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Kaus).

<sup>96</sup> "Australian Moslems's Work", *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Qld.: 1878 - 1954), Saturday 6 August 1949, p.4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> "Moslem Tells Christians of Things in Common", *Northern Champion* (Taree, NSW: 1913 - 1954), Tuesday 25 August 1953, p.1-7.



Through invitations, Al-Samman spoke to Christians of various denominations in Australia on international racial and religious goodwill. Al-Samman was a guest speaker at Apex Clubs, the Methodist Hall convened by the Taree Ministers' Association and at the Taree Rotary Club.<sup>99</sup> Other Arabs also fought in the Australian Defence Forces in both wars. These were Druze from Mt. Lebanon who were also doctors in the Australian Army, while Druze women sewed and knitted garments for the soldiers.<sup>100</sup>

Billy Bonsop was an Australian-born Malay from Brisbane whose people lived in Singapore. Billy was a British subject of Muslim faith. His brother and two cousins were enlisted in the AIF and on his 25th birthday he joined. He regarded his military uniform as his best birthday present – "I'm mighty proud of my uniform," he said. He was a strapper in a Brisbane racing stable.<sup>101</sup> A keen horseman and noted rough-rider, Bonsop was at first rejected from the AIF because of "nationality difficulties." However, he persisted and became a "dinkum digger."<sup>102</sup> Private William Bonsop, service number QX26806, served in 2/6th Australian Infantry Battalion and sacrificed his life in 1943 in New Guinea.

Lance Sergeant Bin Shalid Ma'aruff was born into a Muslim family in 1923 in Ulu Klang, near Kuala Lumpur. He gained experience as a crew member on lugger fishing boats. He came to Australia as a young man to work as a pearl diver in and around Perth as well as finding work in the Fremantle fish markets. In June 1942, bin Shalid enrolled for service in a labour company in Perth. From mid-1943, he began his service in the 8th Brigade as an instructor in the Malay language. His work was so valued that in 1944 he was allowed to enlist in the AIF. Bin Shalid continued to excel in his role with the army, and in August 1944 was seconded to Z Special Unit, a joint Allied unit that had been formed to operate behind enemy lines in the Pacific and South-east Asia. The newly promoted Corporal bin Shalid was fully transferred to this unit a month later, and soon incorporated into operations. In March 1945, he successfully completed a parachute course and was promoted to lance sergeant in preparation for a secret operation in Borneo. Bin Shalid was a member of a small party that was to land in the Mount Mentawir area, north of Balikpapan. He died weeks short of his 22nd birthday. His name is listed on the Roll of Honour. One of his brothers-in-arms in Z Force was Corporal Abu Kassar.<sup>103</sup>

Albanians also served with the Australian military forces. Hodo Hamit was a farmer who migrated to Australia in 1937, enlisted in 1942, served in Darwin and was discharged in 1944. Estref Shemshedin enlisted in 1942 in Shepparton, served in Darwin with the 5th Battalion of the Scottish Regiment and was discharged in 1943. Siran Zanel enlisted in 1942, served in Darwin and was discharged in 1944. Sherif (Jack) Reese migrated to Australia in

<sup>99</sup> Manning River Times and Advocate for the Northern Coast Districts of New South Wales (Taree, NSW : 1898 - 1954), Wednesday 19 August 1953, p.1.

<sup>100</sup> Giancarlo Chiro and Denice Daou. *The maintenance of the core cultural value and identity among the Druze community in South Australia*, (Adelaide: University of South Australia, 2007), 33.

<sup>101</sup> "Billy Bonsop in uniform: photo" Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Tuesday 13 January 1942, p.7.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Meleah Hampton. 'The last post ceremony commemorating the service of (WX41467) 2015. Lance Sergeant Ma'aruff bin Shalid, Z Special Unit, Second World War.<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2118674>

1938, lived in Shepparton, enlisted in 1942, was a member of the 82nd Air Squadron in Japan and was discharged in 1947. Mustafa (James) Sheriff lived in Adelaide, enlisted in the RAAF in 1942, served in Papua New Guinea and was discharged in 1947. For serving in the Pacific, Mustafa Sheriff was awarded the Pacific Star medal. Muharem (Mick) Perona came to Australia in 1938, first registered at Tatura, Victoria, enlisted in 1942, served with the Australian Civil Construction Corps in Darwin and was discharged in 1945.<sup>104</sup> The Mareeba Mosque, built by Albanians and officially opened in 1970 on Anzac Day, has an inscription dedicated to Australia's fallen servicemen and all Australians who served.<sup>105</sup>

The men of the Merchant Navy were “men of service” who would often become front-line fighters, even though they had no official uniforms and bravely crossed the seas at great risk to themselves. Australia's Merchant Navy provided the nation's commercial shipping lifeline, hospital ships, transport for munitions, troop supplies, materials for ship building, and whatever else was needed to support the country's war effort.<sup>106</sup> During World War II, they were at just as much risk as Royal Australian Navy warships. They were attacked not only in distant waters, but also within sight of the Australian coastline while traversing much-frequented trade routes.<sup>107</sup>

During World War II, Muslim seamen gathered in the Eastern Seamen's Club, which was established in Fremantle under the auspices of the Missions to Seamen.<sup>108</sup> In the club, “there was a fascination about ethnic diversity of seamen” from the East.<sup>109</sup> The club was formed to meet the needs of accommodation, food and entertainment for many hundreds of seamen from Eastern countries when their ships harboured in the port. The Mission to Seamen acquired a two-storey building in Fremantle to serve as a “home-away-from-home” for seamen. It included an Oriental room, a separate dining room and bedrooms, a kitchen arranged for Muslim meals according to Islamic dietary laws and an Eastern garden.<sup>110</sup> The club was furnished throughout, with separate quarters for officers, petty officers and seamen. It had a hostel that welcomed men irrespective of their creed or colour. At the club's opening, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir James Mitchell, unveiled a commemorative tablet, declaring:

I hope this club will be a comfort to all Eastern seamen who enter it. We should be grateful to the committee of the Missions to Seamen for providing such a fine home away from home for Eastern seamen who have risked their lives for us. Transport is of the

<sup>104</sup> Booklet: *Kurbet*, the continuing journey of Albanians in Victoria, (Melbourne: Immigration Museum) 12-3; National Archive Australia recordsearch.naa.gov.au/.

<sup>105</sup> JC Crane, Moslem Albanians in North Queensland, (*Lectures on North Queensland History*, no. 4, 1984), 184-194.

<sup>106</sup> The Merchant Navy — Australia's unsung war heroes – anzacentenary.gov.au/news/merchant-navy-australia.

<sup>107</sup> awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/merchant\_navy.

<sup>108</sup> “Coloured Seamen”, *West Australian* (Perth, WA : 1879 - 1954), Thursday 5 December 1946, page 3.

<sup>109</sup> “Eastern Seamen”, *West Australian* (Perth, WA : 1879 - 1954), Tuesday 22 August 1944, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> “For Eastern Seamen: ‘Dell’”, *Western Mail* (Perth, WA : 1885 - 1954), Thursday 24 August 1944, page 15.

utmost importance especially during wartime and we shall never forget the merchant seamen for their splendid work.<sup>111</sup>

In the Eastern Seamen's Club, music was provided by a military band. The soldiers could eat their customary food, listen to Indian records on a gramophone or play specially imported Indian drums. Air letter forms were also provided to the seamen to assist them in writing home. Languages spoken within groups there included Gujarati, Hindee, Bengali, Urdu and Pushtu. On the bookshelves of the club, various books and magazines in Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Hindee and Chinese were available, including magazines called 'Oranje' for the Javanese seamen.<sup>112</sup>

The Indian name for the Eastern Seamen's Club was Kush Dil, which means "Heart's Delight." It was written in Bengali on the front of the building alongside its official name. The club was considered the only one of its kind in the world outside India. In the club, besides the Indians, were Malays and Javanese seamen, and others were also welcomed – "Chinese, Arabs, Abyssinians and Egyptians have all made the club their home during their temporary stay in port."<sup>113</sup> However, the need for the club largely disappeared in peacetime.<sup>114</sup>

One of the Malay seamen, Amat bin Kassam, was called up in Australia for military service in 1943 as he "was a British subject." The seaman served throughout the war in various capacities in the navy and with the American small ships. He was a third-class engineer gunner on HMS *Bawong-Liong* and was discharged with a certificate of competency. He then joined the USA Service of Supplies, SW Pacific Area, and was discharged in 1945. His discharge paper noted his "conduct and ability very good." Afterwards, Amat began working at Howard Smith's shipyard, but soon faced deportation.<sup>115</sup>

Many Muslim soldiers after service returned to Australia remembering their brothers-in-arms and recalling unforgettable memories. In the Muslim section of the Mt Gravatt cemetery, graves of World War II soldiers are clearly identified, including those of: Gunner Ramzan Din (d. 1944), Hong Kong-Singapore Royal Artillery; Muhammad Sarwar (d. 1945), Rajput Regiment; Allah Dita (d. 1945), 14th Punjab Regiment; and Pt. A. Aleman (d. 1990), 20th Infantry Brigade. On their headstones, there are Islamic inscriptions. The badge of their regiment is carved on each with the man's name, date of death and age.<sup>116</sup>

After the wars, Australian soldiers shared their memories. When not on duty, they organised entertainment to enhance their friendship. In 1940, *Smith's Weekly* reported about two brothers, the "Indian Diggers" of the 1914 and 1939 wars. The story was related about

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<sup>111</sup> "Eastern Seamen: New Club in Fremantle", *West Australian* (Perth, WA: 1879 - 1954), Tuesday 22 August 1944, p.2.

<sup>112</sup> "For Eastern Seamen: 'Dell'", *Western Mail* (Perth, WA: 1885 - 1954), Thursday 24 August 1944, p.15.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid*

<sup>114</sup> "Eastern Club Closing", *Western Mail* (Perth, WA: 1885 - 1954), Thursday 16 November 1944, p.6.

<sup>115</sup> "Malay Seaman As a British Subject", *Tribune* (Sydney, NSW: 1939 - 1976), Wednesday 10 December 1947, p.6.

<sup>116</sup> Dzavid Haveric, notes after visiting Mt Gravatt cemetery, Brisbane, 2017.

Cass Mahomet, whose brother Hussein served in the army in World War II. It told a little of what the 1914 Indian Digger was doing for the war of 1939-40:

... at the church army hut in Ingleburn, I noticed a crowd of our boys streaming in. So I joined the crowd, and on to the stage came a dark-skinned chap, wearing a returned soldier's badge. He [Cass] said he was a soldier of the last war and had come over from New Zealand to see his brother [Hussein], who was in Ingleburn camp. At his own expense, he had brought out a little concert party to amuse the boys. The programme was a very good one. The 1914 – 18 Indian Digger and his wife were the principal artists. But what appealed to one was that the 1939 Indian Digger also took part in the programme, presenting some good items. It must have been a great thrill for these two Indian brothers to be up on the stage entertaining the boys. At the end, the crowd got up and gave them three hearty cheers. I hope he reads this, to show we fully appreciate his action.<sup>117</sup>

During their time of military service, such Australian soldiers remembered that they not only learned about other countries and their cultural-religious heritage, but also the native lands and background of their fellows. It has been recorded that a party of Australian soldiers were the honoured guests at Muslim religious ceremonies in an ancient Muslim graveyard in the Middle East – “a scene none of the Australians is ever likely to forget.” Small parties of Arabs sat around the tombs in the swirling, white mist swaying rhythmically from side to side and chanting sections of the Qur'an in unison.<sup>118</sup> In Jerusalem, the soldiers visited the Mosque of Omar. After obtaining passes and donning felt slippers, they entered the mosque proper. Their guide explained to them the history of the mosque from its foundation to the present. They thus saw magnificent sights, including centuries-old mosaics, a huge dome, rounded with magnificent pillars of marble, and which, some historians suggest, once graced the Temple of Solomon. They also saw the stained and coloured glass windows “the most wonderful that can be imagined,” in such hues that is a “lost art.” The lofty dome and ceiling re-echoed the soldiers' voices, finding themselves “speaking to one another in subdued tones.” From the Mosque of Omar, they went to the al-Aqsa Mosque, “a smaller mosque, but just as cherished.” From there, they went to the mosque museum. There they saw “the treasures of the ancients in a marvellous state of preservation.” In the museum, they saw the second oldest copy of the Qur'an, in a remarkable state of preservation, although the pages were yellow with age.<sup>119</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Whether Muslims participated in Australian defence forces is not under question. Through the discovery of historic source materials, it became evident that Australian Muslims took part in various ANZAC military units on numerous battlefields in Australia and overseas. By identifying the ethnicity of ANZAC Muslims it is apparent they belonged to diverse Muslim

<sup>117</sup> “Unofficial History of the A.I.F. Soldiering On”, *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney, NSW: 1919 - 1950), Saturday 17 August 1940, p.16.

<sup>118</sup> “AIF Men Guests At Moslem Ceremony”, *Daily News* (Perth, WA: 1882 - 1950), Saturday 2 November 1940, p.3.

<sup>119</sup> “Jerusalem as A.I. F. Captain Saw It”, *Telegraph* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1872 - 1947), Saturday 25 January 1941, p.15.

communities across Australia. Defending Australia gave Muslims a new challenge in their effort in building their Australianness.

ANZAC Muslims proved themselves by their noble duties and triumphant actions. They demonstrated their personal challenge to overcome adversity with a spirit of bravery and courage, and by fostering a hope and liveliness in their units. With their brothers-in-arms they developed friendships that would be regularly described as a “mysterious cement of the soul.” The young soldiers, after crossing considerable distance to join the front-line, learned to value the meaning of true friendship through sharing the joy of success and grief at loss. They found in their service a unique attachment to Australia – it was Islam that connected them, providing needed salvation on the battlegrounds, enhancing loyalty and love to Australia, as well as altruism, compassion and commitment, helping to sustain the Muslim community and contributing to the fabric of society.

Within a framework of rights and obligations of participation in Australia, discourses and symbols of belonging, ways of remarking themselves about their fondness for an adopted country, Muslims took their part in celebrating the victory of Australian defence forces – Lest we forget.

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