



Threads of Conservation

Social fabric • Fabric and place • Conserving fabric

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Dr Katharine Bartsch, Dr Mizanur Rashid, Dr Peter Scriver, Izhar Ismail, Dr Philip Jones

Dr Katharine Bartsch, Dr Mizanur Rashid, Dr Peter Scriver, Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture, School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Adelaide
Izhar Ismail, International Islamic University of Malaysia
Dr Philip Jones, South Australian Museum

Golden Threads: Understanding the Transnational Significance of the Perth Mosque (1905)

Paper Abstract

We've golden soil and wealth for toil...
Australian National Anthem

The relationship between Australia's rich mineral deposits and the material wealth of urban Australia is captured in the National Anthem. The narratives of the nations' early Anglo-Australian entrepreneurs are woven through the urban fabric of our capital cities.

This paper aims to fray these golden threads in an examination of lesser-known entrepreneurs. It tells the story of Faiz Mahomet (b. circa 1846) and his partner Tagh who found success in the Western Australian goldfields. Faiz was a cameleer whose entrepreneurial debut was enabled by a £1000 loan from Sir Thomas Elder (1818-1897), his original employer as an indentured labourer. Faiz is identified in two lists. The first list, identified in *The Western Australian* (1894), documents lots in Coolgardie. The second list, prepared by Muhamed Hasan Musakhan, records financiers of the Perth Mosque completed in 1905 (heritage listed in 1995). The latter list was published in *Islam in Australia 1863-1932* and includes the names of no less than 204 cameleers who donated their earnings in this cause.

In addition to his role as the primary financier, Faiz was the key liaison with the Western Australian Governor and a galvanising leader who brought together funds from the diverse community of Muslim cameleers as well as Hindus and Sikhs in Australia. The list links so-called 'Afghans' from outback South Australia to Perth, demonstrating the currency of relations at this time.

The aim of this paper is to understand the significance of the Perth mosque that is embedded in place but also serves as a focus of identity for a far-flung Muslim community. Through the narrative of Faiz, this paper picks up new threads in Australia's rich colonial history.