

Comparing camels in Afghanistan and Australia: Industry and nationalism during the Long Nineteenth Century

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Abstract:

This paper compares the roles of camels and their handlers in state building projects in Afghanistan and Australia during the global ascendance of industrial production. Beginning in the mid-1880s the Afghan state-sponsored industrial project known as the *mashin khana* or Kabul workshops had significant consequences for camel-based commercial transport in and between Afghanistan and colonial India. Primary effects include the carriage of new commodities, new forms of financing and taxation, re-routing, and markedly increased state surveillance over camel caravans.

In Australia the trans-continental railway and telegraph, and other projects involving intra-continental exploration and mining, generated a series of in-migrations of Afghan camels and cameleers between the 1830s and 1890s. The port of Adelaide was the urban center most affected by Afghan camels and cameleers, and a set of new interior markets and settlements originate from these in-migrations. The contributions of Afghan camels and their handlers to state-building projects in nineteenth-century Afghanistan and Australia highlight their vital roles in helping to establish industrial enterprises, and the equally important point that once operational these industrial projects became agents in the economic marginalization of camels and the social stigmatization of the human labour associated with them.

Introduction: camels, political economy and national identities

The movement of camels through the Hindu Kush mountain passes was greatly transformed beginning in 1893. That year the Durrani Amir of Kabul Abd al-Rahman signed an agreement with the British Indian colonial official Sir Henry Mortimer Durand acknowledging there would be formal demarcation of the border between their respective vastly unequal powers, one being a patron and the other a client. This agreement involved an immediate 50% increase in the Amir's British subsidy and initiated the final stages of the international bordering of the polity now recognized as Afghanistan. Abd al-Rahman's greatly increased subsidy allowed him to significantly expand his industrial workshops, and the new border arrangement allowed him to impose commercial monopolies that transformed the movements and relationships between the people, goods, and camels comprising the commercial caravan traffic between Kabul, other markets in Afghanistan, especially Qandahar, and colonial markets, especially Peshawar and Quetta. The so-called Durand Line is more than a mere territorial border. It represents a large set of global influences on the political economy of Afghanistan, and on the processes of national and ethnic identity formation within the 'new' country.

1893 was also an important year for the small but important group of Afghan cameleers in Australia. For over three decades camels and camel handlers had been coming from India to Australia where they played important roles in the history of the continent's exploration, settlement and communications integration. In May 1893

the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales in Sydney received a petition from over 2,500 local residents about the “unlimited ingress of Afghans and camels.” During the same month in South Australia’s capital city Adelaide, a local newspaper published a letter from a self-described Afghan who went to great lengths to describe how not all Indian Muslims are Afghans and how many of them regularly attempt to “Afghanize” themselves.

With state legislation targeting Afghans, and Afghans targeting local imposters, there are clearly some contradictory valences at work in the politics of Afghan identity in late-nineteenth century Australia that must be explained. During this period similar contradictions arise when looking at how Afghan state formation processes affected tribal and ethnic identities and interactions, particularly among Pashtuns and between Pashtuns and the large number of other tribes and ethnic groups sub-national communities in Afghanistan. Questions about the cultural, territorial, and economic parameters of Afghan identity are what this paper explores using camels as key and contested symbols of Afghan identity and claims over it. Although historically and geographically separated by great distances, in Afghanistan and Australia we find state-directed attempts to industrialize and modernize generated increasing social and cultural tensions around camels and their handlers. These geographically separate but socially similar sets of tensions were predicated on changing social and political hierarchies that carried significance for emerging ethnic and national identities in each location.

Global industrial modernity and colonial re-circulations of Afghans and camels

Eric Hobsbawm argued “twin revolutions” in European politics and industry led first to global colonization and then imperial war. Hobsbawm’s integrated view of the European revolutions and their global context and impact during the 1789 and 1914 period he termed the “long nineteenth century” identifies the local, regional and global relationships such as those between Europe, India, Afghanistan and Australia at issue in this paper. Fernand Braudel’s combined short- and long-term view of revolutions, particularly his integrated multi-sectoral approach to the industrial revolution in England, and Eric Wolf’s attention to the new inter-continental flows of commodities and laborers generated by capitalist industrial production, allow us to conceptually situate camels and their handlers in a rapidly transforming global order. Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory helps us to position Europe, India, Afghanistan and Australia in a hierarchy of global power relations composed of cores, peripheries, semi-peripheries, and external zones. World systems theory involves the concept of peripheralization, or how external areas that are brought into the global system of colonialism and capitalism become structurally anchored on the margins of the global order. Finally, Thomas Metcalfe’s recent work demonstrates the importance of India as a center of colonial circulation throughout the Indian Ocean world, particularly in the areas of law and policing. It is in the general context of global industrial capitalist expansion, particularly the India-based circulatory regime of the Indian Ocean trading world, that our narrative of Afghans and camels must be located. Our destination point is a conclusion about camels, migration, and diasporas in the context of the introduction of nationalist ideologies by Afghan elites.

Afghanistan: An Indus port, war, powering state industry, and wage labor nomads

Richard W. Bulliet’s *The Camel and the Wheel* is perhaps the book most commonly read by participants and audience members alike at this conference. Afghanistan and

Australia are both mentioned in important ways in this seminal work, and I will elaborate on the place of the camel in each location in pursuit of answers to some of the questions about the camel in global economic history Bulliet raises but does not explore.

For Afghanistan Bulliet offers a deep history of Indo-Aryan migrations using linguistic data especially well to support his larger camel hybridity hypothesis between one- and two-humped camels, particularly the inter-breeding practice's Indian, specifically trans-Indus origin. There are, for example, references to multiple kinds of camel hybrids in Kabul in the ninth century. In terms of the technology emphasis at the core of the larger argument in the book, there is reference to the *zamburak* or "little bee" camel mounted artillery used in 1722 when Ghalzi Afghans from the Qandahar environs revolted and laid siege to the Safavid capital Isfahan for approximately six months before the city capitulated. The symbolic culmination of Isfahan's siege was the last Safavid Shah Husayn's distribution of meat from his remaining three camels to his subjects, some of whom had been reduced to eating shoe leather to survive, prior to praying (while weeping) and then surrendering the city to its Ghalzi conquerors from the vicinity of Qandahar.

Traditional historiography identifies Ahmad Shah Abdali *cum* Durrani as the founder of the Afghan state in 1747. Ahmad Shah was born in Multan, he gained political notoriety in the service of Nadir Shah Afshar in Persia, and he is buried in Qandahar. The official court history *Seraj al-Tawarikh* indicates that in the winter of 1162/1749-50 while retreating from Nishapur to Herat, and after disposing of artillery in a underground irrigation tunnel and crossing the Hari Rud river, Ahmad Shah lost as many as 36,000 followers, with survivors butchering pack camels to warm themselves in the carcasses. Also worth noting is that each day the Prophet Muhammad's cloak or *khirqā* was transported from Faizabad in northern Afghanistan to its new and current location in Qandahar, Ahmad Shah would release the camel that carried the *khirqā* that day with a banner tied around its neck indicating the person who corralled the camel could keep it as an almsgiving.

The *Seraj al-Tawarikh* contains hundreds of references to pack, transport, and riding camels identified as Bactrian, Turkestanian, Baluchi breeds. The *Seraj al-Tawarikh* regularly mentions the rental and leasing of camels, Government camel stables and pastures, stolen camels, camels as gifts and the camel dealings and interests of British colonial authorities. The most common uses for camels indicated are commodity (indigo, water, wheat, textiles, for example, and even bolts of camel hair) and military transportation. The numbers of camels referenced range from single digits to multiple hundreds to as many as 12,000 camels in a single event's narration. The *Seraj al-Tawarikh* is mainly concerned with narrating the events of Abd al-Rahman's reign (1880-1901) when readers encounter a noticeable surge in references to various new taxes that involve camels directly, the commodities being transported, the owners of the camels, and the owners of the commodities being transported.

The proliferation of camel taxes in late nineteenth-century Afghanistan was directly connected to Abd al-Rahman's industrialization agenda that was in turn predicated on the British subsidy he received. As a result of the Durand Treaty that 'finalized' Afghanistan's cartographic disposition, and its impoverished status on the margins of the global economy, Abd al-Rahman's subsidy was increased by 50%, from 1.2 to 1.8 million British Pounds Sterling per year. The colonial subsidy and the new borders of the country arose in part from the 'Great Game' competition between

imperial England and Russia over emergent Iran and Afghanistan. The subsidy was the key to how colonial authorities played their game in Afghanistan, and Abd al-Rahman wanted to be on the playing field, if only as a mere cheerleader or linesman. Contested gaming metaphors aside, Abd al-Rahman's subsidy was a catalyst for the increasing impoverishment and isolation of the Afghan economy.

Between the 1830s and 1930s we find three major colonially inspired industrial initiatives in Afghanistan, each of which involved substantial camel input and consequences for camels. Well before the Great Mutiny of 1857, British colonialism in India suffered a dramatic reversal as a result of the first Anglo-Afghan war of 1839-42. The British invested heavily in the occupation of Kabul and benefitted substantially from the reorganization of Afghan state finances, but in the end the East India Company lost considerable human, material and political capital with the destruction of the occupation army. The occupation force was labeled the Army of the Indus, and the colonial plan to occupy Kabul was part of the larger imperial strategy to bring large-scale commercial steamships to a new industrially produced flood proof port at Mithenkote. The proposed port was to be located roughly on the frontier between Sind and the Punjab where the Indus takes shape as single river out of its many tributaries to the north.

The occupation of Kabul was designed to serve global industrial production by transforming patterns of inland caravan and river traffic in the context of a blossoming new set of inter-continental commercial networks. Four "commercial experiments" collectively validated the fiscal logic of the Mithenkote market scheme that in turn motivated the first British colonial invasion of eastern and southern Afghanistan and occupation of Kabul and Qandahar. Large-scale use of camels characterizes the commercial and military aspects of a single compound colonial-imperial-industrial enterprise known as the Army of the Indus.

The commercial part of the equation involved the Afghan nomad Sayyid Muhin Shah who was contracted by colonial authorities four times between 1832 and 1835 to perform a series of experiments involving the marketing of textiles (varieties of chintz, muslin, satin, and silk) at various points between Calcutta and Bukhara. In the capstone and most fully documented of Muhin Shah's experiments, detailed attention was paid to the purchase price of camels at various locations and the rate and nature of the taxes levied at and between the markets in question.

Sarwar Khan Lohani enters our discussion because of his prominent role in providing camel transportation for the Army of the Indus during the course of the invasion and occupation. From the very beginning to the bitter end of the occupation Sarwar Khan was arguably the primary provisioner of camels for the British. For example, he handled over three thousand camels for the British upon their occupation of Qandahar, transported large amounts of rum for them between Qandahar and Kabul, and perhaps most famously escorted the forcibly repatriated Shah Shuja's family from their long-term home in Ludiana where they had both resided under British patronage since 1816.

It is unclear what became of Sayyid Muhin Shah, but we do know something about the descendants of Sarwar Khan. Records indicate Sarwar Khan's descendants spent much of the remainder of the century fleeing Afghan state attempts to extract what in various guises appear as fiscal reparations from the immense profits their well-known forefather accrued through his camel-based colonial associations during the first Anglo-Afghan war.

Colonial documents relating to Abd al-Rahman's British subsidy help to explain twin surges in camel-based taxes imposed throughout Afghanistan and the increasing bureaucratic activity in the 1890s as recorded in the official state history Seraj al-Tawarikh. Abd al-Rahman's continually expanding steam powered state workshop complex known as the *mashin khana* used industrial machinery to mint coins and produce weapons, boots, clothing, distilled spirits, soap and other commodities primarily for military and palace consumption. The subsidy was used to import industrial machinery and raw materials such as iron and steel for the mashin khana. Especially after Abd al-Rahman established the commodities monopolies in 1893, the Afghan state began to textually and territorially impose upon nomadic commercial regimens in an effort to appropriate the camel transport services necessary to supply its burgeoning industrial base.

Using government documents to physically funnel Kabul's camel supply line unitarily through the Khaibar Pass to and from Peshawar in British India was the primary tactic in the state's attempt to re-route and monitor nomads and their camels in accordance with the commodities monopolies that fueled production at the mashin khana. The Kabul-Khaibar-Peshawar routing involved a barrage of new taxes that applied to the fall migrations from Afghanistan to India and the return spring migrations. The monopolies were designed to comprehensively identify for taxation purposes the nomads, their camels, and the commodities being transported to and from Afghanistan. The textually taxing Khaibar routing undermined the viability of alternate routes to and from colonial India such as the Gomal and Bolan pass routes to the south of the Khaibar.

The main bureaucratic unit developed to execute the commodities monopolies and the overall supply line of the mashin khana was the *qafilabashi*, or state caravan master, which can be understood as the Bureau/Office/Ministry of State Caravans. The qafilabashi office had a single individual head and a number of institutional representatives and branches giving the office a social and physical presence well beyond Kabul throughout Afghanistan, and perhaps most significantly also in Peshawar and Kohat, at the very least, in British India. Although as yet no textual evidence has emerged, we can deduce the qafilabashi office frequently referenced in colonial records had close dealings with the state camel farms, pastures and taxes frequently referenced in the third volume of Seraj al-Tawarikh.

In the early twentieth century, under the direction of Abd al-Rahman's son and successor Habibullah (r. 1901-1919), the Afghan state continued to industrialize. The primary development during this period was a hydro-electric project roughly fifty miles north of Kabul along the banks of the Salang river in what is now the province of Parwan. The site is known as *Jabal al-Seraj* or Latern Mountain. Jabal al-Seraj was originally designed to power the *Arg-e Shahi* or King's Citadel and the mashin khan, and to provide artificial lighting for other palaces that had become exorbitantly expensive to fuel by steam, which required a supply of wood that consumed an increasing proportion of a declining revenue base. By 1907 wood accounted for approximately US \$150,000 of the state's budget, and the mashin khana's wood consumption contributed to the progressive deforestation in Afghanistan.

An American engineer contracted by the Afghan state through the Bombay representative of an English firm oversaw the construction of the Jabal al-Seraj industrial plant. The book based on A. C. Jewett's experiences in Afghanistan contains pictures of camels transporting wire and iron for steel towers along a 42 mile circuit for a 44,000 volt three-phase transmission line capable of carrying 1500

kilowatts of energy. In the 1950s with Czechoslovakian assistance a cement quarry and mill were connected to the plant by a small gauge rail line. What draws our attention is the role of camels in the timber harvesting and distribution networks that became obsolete and redundant in the context of American-inspired hydraulic engineering.

During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries Afghan nomads migrating to British India were increasingly engaging in wage labor opportunities in the context of industrially inspired agricultural irrigation projects in the so-called canal colonies of the Punjab. Afghan nomads were also involved in mining and transportation infrastructure projects including road and railway construction in and around Quetta. These activities led to a diversification of labor terminology in the Pashto language. For example, the term *lawgar* (*darawgar* Persian) arose for nomads involved in seasonal harvesting, while *charra* applied to Afghan nomads performing wage labor tasks in British India.

Balland demonstrates substantial fluctuation in the nomadic groups and numbers of camels involved in the seasonal migrations between Afghanistan and India during this period. In British India Afghan nomads were subject to forced disarmament and their camels were subject to per-head pasturage taxes. As a result of those and other factors some nomads became involved in small-scale money-lending enterprises. However, that particular economic adaptation was impeded when the nomads' money lending activities were rendered illegal by legislation favoring the growth of indigenous banking facilities in lieu of private money lenders.

In the twentieth century the Afghan state took a number of steps to cultivate an early sense of Afghan national identity. The primary textual vehicles the state used to advance notions of nationality and modernity were the newspaper *Seraj al-Akhbar* (1911-1918) and the monthly and annual editions (*Salnama*) of the *Mojalla-ye Kabul* or Kabul Magazine (1932-1955). In 1916 *Seraj al-Akhbar* published an unequivocally western industrial modernity embracing declaration that “now is the era of motor, rail and electricity... the days of the camel, donkey and oxen are bygone.”

The founder and editor of *Seraj al-Akhbar* was Mahmud Tarzi whose family was exiled by Abd al-Rahman and repatriated by Habibullah. Mahmud Tarzi circulated through British India to the Ottoman Empire where he spent most of his time in exile. The Tarzi family's exile and return were motivated by person-centered politics revolving around heads of state. In the long nineteenth century a far larger number of ordinary Afghans regularly migrated for economic reasons to India, Iran and Central Asia, and back to Afghanistan. The economic opportunities related to nomadism and camels carried many Afghans to Australia. Indeed, between 1914 and 1916 *Seraj al-Akhbar* contained at least two letters from a self described Afghan in Australia, Sayyid Jalal Shah.

Sayyid Jalal Shah had never been to Afghanistan, and his claims to Afghan-ness are not routed through his father who came from Bombay, but his mother who was a daughter of the Sufi Saint Mewa Shah Baba. Mewa Shah's shrine in Karachi and the cemetery that has grown around it near the Sher Shah colony of the Haroonabad district have become well-known components of this important port city. Given his Sayyid status as a patrilineal descendent of the Prophet Muhammad in addition to his matrilineal Sufi heritage, Jalal Shah must have performed innovative genealogical demonstrations to sustain his Afghan identity in the eyes of Pashtuns who would

have necessarily located him outside of their kinship-based tribal structure.

Sayyid Jalal Shah was born in Karachi and his claims to Afghan identity were anchored in Islam, not Pashtun tribalism of any sort. His activities in Australia were predicated on Islamic networking and mosque building, for which he required and actively solicited donated funds. Sayyid Jalal's praise of Mahmud Tarzi and his patron Habibullah found in the nationalist newspaper *Seraj al-Akhbar* rested on the Islamic merits of Afghans and Afghan civilization. Sayyid Jalal appears to be using Afghan identity tactics for an Islamic financial strategy, and Tarzi appears as a fiscally accommodating host for these Islamized diaspora sentiments. What needs to be explained is the Australian national context within which local Afghan and trans-national Muslim identities emerged and were contested.

During the long nineteenth century we have seen Afghan nomads such as Sayyid Muhin Shah and Sarwar Khan Lohani handling considerable numbers of camels in the context of large-scale long-distance credit-based exchanges and military transport leading up to and during the first Anglo-Afghan war. We have also seen how after the 1893 Durand Agreement that finalized Afghanistan's borders, Abd al-Rahman instituted commodities monopolies and an aggressive industrialization agenda that were organized and executed in conjunction with the Bureau/Ministry/Office of State Caravans, or the *qafilabashi*. The monopolies, the state industrial complex and the *qafilabashi* office collectively transformed camel caravan traffic to and through Afghanistan in significant ways. A primary effect was to specify the sole route for all traffic between recently territorially delineated Afghanistan and British India. After 1893 Afghan state policy routed camel traffic between Afghanistan and India between Kabul and Peshawar using the Khaibar Pass. And of course state policies are always circumvented!

Peshawar was a British colonial space where Afghan state officials exercised unique extra-territorial privileges over Afghan nomads and their camels. They did so using an expanding range of state paperwork that identified Afghan nationals and state property for purposes of taxation and labor requirements upon them. Afghan nomadic and camel traffic fluctuated but generally decreased steadily in the early twentieth century. Alongside the increasing legislative curtailment of the nomads' money lending activities in British India, we also find a sharp rise in wage labor work involving harvesting, irrigation and mining activities in Afghan and British territory.

For Afghan nomads and their camels Afghan state industrialization and economic intervention carried significant implications for commodity traffic patterns that became increasingly Kabul- and Khaibar-centric. For nomads and camels, the Afghan state's ideological quest for the twin elixirs of modernity and nationality were mediated through British India and fundamentally economically regressive. The exercises and expressions of Afghan nationalism greatly affected the claims, privileges, opportunities and obligations concerning nomadic and camelid labor, mobility, property and taxation. Afghan nomads were exposed to multiple forms of pressure and imposition from the Afghan state while also encountering ever-more limited opportunities in British India. When Sayyid Jalal Shah's letters from Australia exuding nationalist sentiments appeared in *Seraj al-Akhbar*, Afghan nomads and camels were being cast as too traditional and economically retrograde in the same newspapers and government publications that fetishized steel, electricity and mechanical travel. Some of the same nationalist and industrial processes were at work for the combined diasporas of Afghans and their camels in the Australia.

Australia: Exploration and breeding, transportation and communication, and an unrecognized diaspora

To help explain the successful importation of camels in Australia as measured by the tens of thousands of feral camels found in Australia today, Bulliet pursues his economically and technology-focused investigation of the camel in ways that continue to resonate here. He describes new forms of harnessing, some of which quite uniquely connected camels to wheeled carts and buggies, a connection that moves against the grain of his theory about the camel-wheel relationship organizing the book as whole. Bulliet also notes the presence of the *pakra* or Indian saddle in Australia, which helps to support his conclusion that the cameleers in Australia who are commonly referred to as Afghans are in fact Baluchi. The position Bulliet adopts in relation to the ethnic identity of the cameleers in Australia is important because it reflects the contested identity of this fascinating camel-centered diaspora, no matter which homeland may be in question. We will return to this issue of ethnic, national and other forms of identity, and the issue of homeland-diaspora connections, after a brief review of the history of camels and their handlers in Australia during the long nineteenth century.

The general outline of this continent's camel chronology follows global capitalistic and scientific advances, emerging India-centered Indian Ocean migration patterns, and the history of inland exploration and colonization that coincides in important ways with the formation of Australian national identity. In general we can identify three phases within these tiered and interrelated local, regional and global processes.

Exploration was the dominant camelid theme in Australia between approximately 1836 and 1866. From then until about 1893 camels were increasingly involved in supplying the interior mines, settlements and pastoral breeding outposts that represent a first industrial phase in Australia. Between roughly 1893 and the 1920s camels become important factors in Australia's second phase of industrialization involving the construction of railway and telegraphic links, primarily. Australia's second industrial phase also involved roads and wheeled lorry traffic that ultimately undermined the camels' economic value as transportation labor, thus socially stigmatizing their handlers. Economic and social factors combined to generate the intra-communal and national debates over the cultural identities of Afghans and Australians in and beyond Australia. These debates involved Afghans, Australians, and the aboriginal community with whom Afghans interacted extensively.

Between 1836 and 1859 a handful of official and private initiatives led to a series of small importations of camels totaling approximately 21 animals that did not form a self-sustaining breeding pool in Australia. The Victorian Exploring Expedition of 1860-61 used 24 camels purchased by the Victorian Trading Company through the agency of George Landells. Landells traveled to Peshawar to obtain the camels then stopped in Karachi to hire three camel handlers on one-year contracts and escort the whole group back to Australia. The larger exploration known to posterity as the Burke and Wills Expedition ended unsuccessfully and tragically for most involved, but camels played a key role in the entire effort.

During the late 1850s and early 1860s the entrepreneur Joseph Elder developed a plan to import the first large contingent of camels into Australia to stock the continent's first camel breeding stations at Beltana and Umberatana. Elder dispatched James Stuckey to Karachi where through the Commissioner of Sind he contracted with Morad Khan, a Baluchi chief with considerable land holdings near

the Hubb River to the west of Karachi on the border of Sind and Baluchistan. Stuckey obtained 124 camels, scores of sheep and donkeys, a handful of bullocks and birds, and 31 men on three-year contracts that arrived as a group in Port August in 1866. Scientific explorations and expeditions of Australia's interior zones continued for the remainder of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Camels and cameleers played roles in at least those efforts led by Horn (1894), Calvert (1896-97), Strzlecki (1916), and Madigan (1939).

Elder and his breeding stations were primary catalysts in launching a period of relatively regular importations of camels into Australia. The steady flow of camels to Australia lasted until mechanized rail, wheeled and telegraphic transportation and communications systems were established by approximately 1930. During this period there were a number of relatively large-scale importations of camels and cameleers, for example there are records of combinations such as 250 camels and 68 cameleers in 1869 and 300 animals with 59 handlers in 1880. One estimate is that approximately 20,000 camels and 2,000 cameleers arrived in Australia between 1870 and 1920. It is important to reiterate that most of the cameleers returned to British India upon the expiration of their labor contracts, and to note that white European Australians learned camel handling skills and invented new techniques during the camelized colonization of the Australian Outback.

Economic competition fueled racial discrimination that in many ways culminated with a violent clash between Afghans and Australians during the 1890s gold rush. Gold was discovered in western Australia in 1880, and the identification of a rich vein in 1893 at Kalgoorlie led to the development of large gold mine that today remains in operation twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The violence between Afghan cameleers and white Australians who had entered the growing business of industrial construction and supply coincides with a number of other local, national and international tensions surrounding economic identities and activities of Afghan nomads and Afghans more generally. While the Kalgoorlie incident may signal the beginning of the end for camel enterprise in Australia for the vast majority of Afghan migrants, a small number of them were able to sustain their activities through this turbulent period, and an even slimmer minority managed to expand their commercial portfolios.

One such 'success story' was Abdul Wade who was born in Quetta and arrived in Australia in 1879. Based upon a consignment of 340 camels and 59 cameleers he imported for his breeding station at Wangamana in New South Wales, in 1895 Abdul Wade established the Bourke Transport Company. Abdul Wade was the major donor behind the establishment of Australia's first urban mosque in Adelaide in 1888, and he returned to Kabul in the 1920s to become involved in gold mining in Afghanistan. Abdul Wade was taken to court in Australia for failing to fulfill the contractual obligations for a number of his contracted camelmens, some of whom became 'destitute public nuisances' whom Abdul Wade had to compensate. Manual labor in the expanding mining sector and entry into the business of "hawking", or the individual small-scale provisioning of groceries and other supplies, were the two major adaptive strategies exhibited by cameleers as they were pushed out of the corporate industrial construction and transport sectors due to the growing strength of official policies and popular practices that combined to sustain the myth of "White Australia" in economic practice.

Afghan camels and cameleers were involved in the construction of industrial communications networks in Australia for multiple decades during the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were a significant presence during the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line between Darwin and Port Augusta that was completed in 1872. From 1912-1917 camels and cameleers played substantial roles in the construction of the trans-Australian Railway between Port Augusta and the aforementioned Kalgoorlie, comprised of more than 1,000 miles of standard gauge track, including nearly 300 miles of absolutely straight track, the longest stretch of straight track in the world. Afghans and camels were of such significance to the first branch of what is now an 1,800+ mile railway connecting Adelaide and Darwin that the entire line is now known as “The Ghan”, Ghan being the local term for Afghan. The first half of the line between Adelaide and Alice Springs was constructed between 1878 and 1929, with some interruptions.

As roads and motorized wheeled transport began to complement rail and telegraph lines in the 1920s and 1930s, camel imports and local breeders and transport agencies declined considerably. McKnight indicates a sharp rise in officially recorded total camel population of 8,426 across all colonies and states in Australia immediately before construction on the Trans-Australian Railway began in 1912, reaching a peak of 12,734 in 1917 when the railway was completed, followed by a rapid and steep decline to 6,252 in 1929.

Urbanization is a key aspect of industrialization that requires attention. At the turn of the twentieth century in Australia camels were being incorporated and marginalized by the industrial mode of production in the Indian Ocean arena of global capitalism. Adelaide and Perth were growing and industrializing cities in their own right while being increasingly interconnected by railway and telegraphic communications into emerging trans-continental, intra-imperial, and global political economies. The biographies of Mahomet Allum in Adelaide and Musa Khan in Perth will return us to the questions about ethnic, national, and diaspora identities broached by Bulliet and addressed in varying degrees of detail by all subsequent academic commentators on the Afghans and camels in Australia.

Mahomet Allum was born 1857 or 1858 in Qandahar where he became a horse dealer who sold animals to the British and used colonial channels to make his way to Australia. He arrived in Australia in about 1890 and worked as a cameleer for roughly 20 years, including time invested with the Coolgardie mine that did not prosper like Kalgoorlie did and is now visited by tourists who want to see an outback mining ghost town. Mahomet Allum established a successful herbal medicine business in Adelaide in the 1920s. A picture and short story about Mahomet Allum under the heading of “An Afghan Doctor Abroad” appeared in a 1937 volume of the Kabul Monthly Magazine where he was noted as being a generous financial contributor to the magazine and other literary activities. We do not know if Mahomet Allum intended to support the publication of materials in the Pashto language that Afghan state authorities were promoting in 1930s, but we do know Mahomet was a printer of English language materials.

Mahomet Allum actively propagated Islam in the context of his medical business and office in Adelaide, and between 1914 and 1953 he printed at least five pamphlets popularizing Islam that entered British imperial networks of information circulation throughout the Indian Ocean. Mahomet Allum returned to Afghanistan in 1953 with an Australian wife approximately 50 years his junior whom he had married after curing her illness and her conversion to Islam. His wife contracted smallpox and died in Afghanistan and after performing the Hajj to Mecca Muhammad Allum returned to Adelaide where he died in 1964.

Muhammad Hasan Musa Khan, aka Musa Khan, was born in Karachi in 1863. He was a nephew of Morad Khan who contracted with Stuckey in the mid-1860s. In the 1880s he attended universities in Bombay and Karachi, and he worked as a schoolteacher in India in 1890. Musa Khan arrived in Australia in 1896, and building upon his membership in a South Asian commonwealth of learning, by 1904 he was an established bookseller, newsagent and stationer in Perth. Like Mahomet Allum, Musa Khan also wrote a pamphlet on the *History of Islamism in Australia, 1863-1932* (1932). Musa Khan was among the founding members of the Perth mosque within which he held administrative and secretarial duties.

In his autobiography while reflecting on the history of the Perth mosque Musa Khan recorded details of a serious conflict in 1905. Tensions between Afghans and Indians expressed only a year after the mosque in Perth opened remind us of the Afghan mentioned at the outset of this essay who editorialized in the Adelaide press about the distinctions between Afghans and Indians in 1893, five years after Australia's first urban mosque opened there in 1888. In the context of describing the conflict between Afghans and non-Afghans within the Muslim community in Perth Musa Khan provides a very useful set of demographic statistics about mosque membership between 1904 and 1906. Musa Khan considered himself one of the four Tarin Afghans indicated in these tabulations. This is an interesting claim given the identification of his uncle as a Baluch chief. In pursuit of information about Musa Khan's background the linguistic aspects of his identity are important, and we know he spoke English, Pashto, Persian, Sindhi, Urdu, and some Arabic.

The parameters of the tribal, ethnic and regional identities listed in these mosque membership records are not defined or described, but from them considerable cultural diversity is apparent. In an attempt to placate the ethnic and class-based tensions within the Muslim communities in Perth, the mosque took the step of appointing two trustees to the mosque, one from the Afghan community and one from the remainder of the congregation. After Partition in 1947 mosque bylaws were amended to specify members of the "Afghan nationality... (as anyone), irrespective of place of birth, whose parents, both father and mother, are Afghan of full blood (who) resided in Afghanistan or the North-West Frontier of Pakistan", while also excluding any Australian-born Muslim from the Imamate or leadership of the mosque.

It is important to note that the first Australian definitions of what constitutes Afghan nationality stand opposed to the then operative Afghan state definitions of 'subjects' and 'citizens' (used interchangeably) of Afghanistan. Article 8 of the 1923 Constitution of Afghanistan defines an Afghan as anyone residing in within the borders of country. While the Afghan state viewed residency as the sole criterion for membership, in Australia variables including matri- and patrilineages and extra-territorial exemptions were among the defining characteristics of an Afghan. The asymmetry between the Afghan state's definition of its members and how the Afghans in Australia viewed themselves raises important questions about the relationship between homelands and diasporas. The relationship between the Afghan homeland and its Australian diaspora during the long nineteenth century involved differential chronologies of industrialization that carried structurally similar results for camels and their handlers in each realm, that is, economic regression and social stigmatization. At home and abroad Afghan nomads were being forcefully conscripted into what Marx called the Industrial Reserve Army.

Afghanistan's official non-recognition of its national diaspora is ironic in the sense

that historically Afghan rulers and state elites often spend considerable years in the diaspora as exiles, pensioners and refugees before being 'recycled back' into power in Kabul. It appears contradictory for Afghan political elites, who are in many ways products of the diaspora, to deny national membership privileges to commercially motivated actors from subaltern classes who exhibit a similar pattern of circular migration from and back to Afghanistan. In the age of nationalism new relationships between the Afghan homeland and its multiple diasporas generated new questions about Afghan identity that were being asked in Afghanistan and Australia.

During the period of our concern in Afghanistan there was a precipitous rise in the state's attachment to Kabul, the urban locus of an ambitious industrialization agenda that intensified Kabul's relationship with Peshawar while simultaneously distancing the city from Qandahar in economic, social, and political terms. The industrial shift in the relationships between Kabul, Qandahar and Peshawar and the closely related Afghan state commodities monopolies carried particularly significant consequences for Afghan camels and their handlers in terms of routing and taxation. These industrial transformations required an enlarged bureaucracy to be implemented and the office of the qafilabashi was the Afghan state's new administrative mechanism for reconfiguring camel caravan traffic patterns to and through the country. The power of Persian language documents and bureaucrats was an important aspect of the state's imposition upon Pashto-speaking nomads that intensified the tension between the two national languages and between spoken and written forms of both languages. The overall consequence of Afghanistan's industrial agenda enabled by colonial subsidies was the inescapable poverty induced on the periphery of an increasingly violent and hierarchical global capitalist political economy.

In heuristic terms we can venture to say that in the long nineteenth century for the Afghan nomads Kabul became a locality for the expression of Persianate state power, while Peshawar became associated with English and the global power of British colonialism. Qandahar remained the closest thing to a Pashtun city if a tribal city is in fact a realistic analytical compound (and I do not think it is!), while also serving as a gateway to Quetta, Karachi and the Indian Ocean commercial orbit the gravity of which increased through global 'gravitational pull' of British colonialism in India. During this period there was a conspicuous rise in the interchangeable metonymy between the terms Afghan, Pashtun, and Pathan. The term Pathan was increasingly favored in a wide variety of colonial writings that carried an expanding array of consequences as the long nineteenth century progressed. The proliferations of industrial printing in British colonial and imperial contexts involved educational, legal, and military institutions, as well as emerging genres of popularized English language literature, including perhaps most importantly newspapers and novels. The Pathan term became ubiquitous through these official and unofficial print forums.

Beyond the issue of printing which carries great importance for the expression of nationalism, there were additional similar bundles of interrelated industrial effects on the territorial and linguistic identities and dynamics at work within the Afghan diaspora in Australia. These complexities help us to work through the contradictory claims about the origin and 'real' identities of the Afghans in Australia whom Bulliet believes were actually Baluchis.

Moving from the territorial to the linguistic, it is important to note that among all the various elements evident in the documentation relating to the identity of Afghans in Australia that I have seen, Kabul is conspicuously only very rarely mentioned, while Peshawar and Qandahar are widely referenced. Peshawar is where Landells procured

the first herd of camels for the Burke and Wills expedition. According to the Perth mosque membership records of 1904-06 nearly 40% of the self-identified Afghans indicate Peshawar as their original home. The Peshawar 40% was by far the dominant minority within the mosque, the next largest demographic being Sayyids averaging around 15% (a steep drop from about 20% to 10% in one year) whom, it is important to note, are not associated with any territory.

Deducing some degree of connection to Qandahar through Pashtun tribal origins (including references to Kharoti Ghalzay, Tarin Durrani and Kakar tribal units) we can identify single digit percentiles of representation for that city among the Perth mosque members. More importantly, the history of migrations of Pashtun horse and camels dealers to Quetta and Karachi draw our attention to entrepreneurs who like Mahomet Allum used colonial connections to migrate to Australia in pursuit of a familiar economic niche or an expanded commercial portfolio. In that sense Qandahar represents connections to British India independent of the Kabul-Peshawar axis increasingly favored by the Afghan state. Privately arranged connections to India, particularly Karachi, allowed access to Indian Ocean commercial circuitry in ways that state-sanctioned colonial interaction between Kabul and Peshawar did not.

Conclusion:

From camels to nationalism through language, migration, and diasporas

Long distance commercial migrations between Central and South Asia involving Afghans and proto-Afghans and their camels commenced before the arrival of Islam in the Hindu Kush roughly a millennium ago. These migrations generated interactions between the Arabic and Persian languages and a number of Indian and Turkic languages that contributed to the emergence of written Pashto about 500 years ago. Afghan nomads are generally Pashto speakers who use Persian to deal with states and urban markets. These nomads developed various degrees of familiarity with English under British colonial auspices during the long nineteenth century that carried them and their camels into the Indian Ocean and Australia. In Australia the Afghans as a whole are identified as speaking one or more of the following languages: Baluchi, Pashto, Persian, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Urdu.

There is textual evidence regarding the use of Persian in labor contracts and on tombstones (where use of ceremonial Arabic is also found), Urdu in memoirs, and English in the Islamic literature mentioned above and on Australian state paperwork such as Hawkers' Licenses. There does not appear to be any written Pashto among the various genres of documentation generated by the Afghans in Australia. Even more conspicuous is the contemporaneous absence of the category Pathan, either as a self-referent or an ascribed label that, as noted above, became increasingly commonplace in British colonial and imperial discourse.

A summary of the existing treatments of Afghans in Australia, including attention to the 'true identity' of the Afghans, is now in order. Rajkowski and Stevens offer social and economic histories and biographies and draw very useful attention to the role of Anglo-Afghan wars and the provisioning of camels therein as important catalysts in propelling Afghan camels and cameleers to Australia. However, Rajkowski and Stevens reify the colonially induced discursive metonymy between Afghans, Pashtuns and Pathans, to argue that the Afghans in Australia were actually Pathans. Rajkowski identifies Baluchis and Pathans as the two main groups of Afghans in Australia, while Stevens sees these Pathans as being from the rural sectors of Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier Province. Kenny does not

impose the term Pathan as Rajkowski and Stevens do, rather, she sees Pashtuns, Baluchis, Sindhis and Punjabis as the four main types of Afghans in Australia. Jones and Schinasi view the Australian Afghans as originating in Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the NWFP. Most recently Jones and Kenny have provided an excellent window to view the camel-centered material culture of the Afghans, and Schriver has interrogated the physical and spatial aspects of their presence for Australia's sense of national identity. What interests us is how the wide range of territorial referents attached to the Afghans in Australia might fit together in their own right, how they transcend the boundaries of Afghanistan, and how these diaspora claims to Afghan identity or nationality relate to their homeland/s. We will therefore close with a few words on these subjects that will include attention to camels.

Schinasi comes closest to considering the place of the Afghans in Australia for Afghanistan and Afghan nationalism, but that is not her primary purpose. Schinasi is important for being the first scholar to draw attention to the fleeting references to the Afghans in Australia in the newspaper *Seraj al-Akhbar* and the *Salnama Kabul Annual Magazine*. These two bodies of literature were the Afghan state's primary textual vehicles to express its version nationalism during its formative period between roughly 1911 and 1940. These government publications articulate an industrial version of modernity and served as forums for the Afghan state to celebrate its technical and scientific accomplishments and expertise. In many ways these Afghan state publications were "anti-camel" as the quote above from Mahmud Tarzi about camels representing a bygone era made explicitly clear. Traditional intellectuals like Tarzi were looking outward beyond the boundaries of Afghanistan for ideological and technical inspiration and material aggrandizement. For the class of state elites that produced Afghan nationalism the camel represented an inward looking past that need to be surmounted. The teleology of Afghan nationalism coded the camel as an artifact of the rural zone that was destined to be overrun by the natural progression of urban industry.

In the first half of the twentieth century Tarzi and others state officials emphasized the value of foreign travel and the Pashto language as tools to cultivate a sense of Afghan nationality. However, the strength of those emphases was rhetorical and in practice foreign and even domestic travel was increasingly restricted to elites and the steps the state took to emphasize Pashto were episodic, unintegrated and generally more disruptive than productive for the highly Persianized bureaucrats in Kabul, the center of the Persianate Afghan state, who resisted linguistic Pashtunization initiatives. Nationalism in Afghanistan appears largely as a commodity produced and consumed by non-Pashtun Persianate state elites in Kabul for whom Pashto and Pashtuns, like the camel, were rural historical artifacts to be remade by urban industrial modernity. Similarly, Tarzi spent time in exile as a member of the Afghan elite diaspora. His migration outside of Afghanistan and his return to the country occurred by political design, not through commercial motivations. The camel-based Afghan commercial diaspora that had been carrying Afghans to India and beyond since well before the Mughal period was far more voluminous and historically significant than the recent colonial recycling of a few Afghan political elites. However, the Afghan diasporas in India and Australia, and camels they handled, did not figure into the version of Afghan nationalism Tarzi was shaping in Afghanistan. Quite to the contrary, the Afghan diaspora and its camels were ideologically condemned by Tarzi and legislated out of the nation by the 1923 Constitution he helped write.

Our historical narrative has covered two industrial phases in Afghanistan and Australia. The first phase of Afghanistan's industrialization began in the late-

nineteenth century and it resembles Marx's period of manufacturing. A more mature phase of industrial capitalism epitomized by large-scale railroad construction began in Australia in the early twentieth century. Communication between the Afghan homeland and the Australian diaspora reveals an interesting aspect of these unsynchronized industrial chronologies, that is, an inversion of the relative economic strength of the two areas.

When the Afghans in Australia wrote to congratulate Abd al-Rahman on his assumption of a new royal title *Zia al-Millat wa al-Din*, or "Light of the Nation and Religion," they did so to seek pecuniary aid in the form of leverage with his patron British India to relieve the new immigration tax that was being imposed on non-white Orientals upon entry to Australia in accordance with the White Australia dictates. In the 1930s when notice of Mahomet Allum appeared in the *Kabul Magazine* the British subsidy that enabled Abd al-Rahman's and his son and successor Habibullah's industrialization efforts had been terminated. The brief Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, within which the airplane, the most potent symbol of British industrial capability, was tactically determinant, resulted in Afghanistan's full independence from British India that also meant the elimination of the Afghan state's colonial funding.

When Mahomet Allum was profiled in the *Kabul Magazine*, he was apparently helping to fund the industrial printing initiatives that were the textual engines of Afghan nationalism. In the official state version of Mahomet Allum's biography presented in the *Salnama*, his history in Qandahar, his Pashto mother tongue, and the camels that carried him to Australia in more than metaphorical ways were elided. In place of a full treatment of his cultural and economic profile, an edited version of Mahomet Allum's biography was mass-marketed to the nation. In doing so, the nationalism produced by the Afghan state was rejecting the camel that stands as a key symbol of Afghanistan's past, and its highly mobile, commercially vibrant rural zone that continues to dominate the social and political landscape of the country and connect it in various ways to the outside world today. Multiple migrations and the various diasporas that result continue to generate complex interwoven histories that exert strong sets of internal and external influences over the economy and society of Afghanistan.

The industrially inspired camel rejectionism permeating the Afghan intellectual environment produced by the Afghan state in the 1930s is mirrored today. In the historical present state bureaucrats who fetishize new electronic technologies rather than the steam technologies of a 'bygone industrial era' exude a degree of astonishment if not condescension when presented with camel-centered questions and questionnaires. In that sense the colonially constructed version of Afghan nationalism produced during the long nineteenth century that elided the camel --and the economically, geographically and culturally rich meanings and important social and economic actors (*not* social or economic "problems") attached to it-- is being reproduced by today's intellectual and technocratic elite. Today's technocrats continue to articulate a view of nationalism that is dependent on external resources and inspiration and counterproductively limited in class, ethnic, and territorial terms.

Camel consciousness will not solve the epistemological quandaries or the immensely practical issues facing the Afghan nation, but it can certainly lead us in a positive direction. Afghan nationalists and nationalism need to reckon with Afghan camels more seriously before the Afghan national ideal is consumed by the very violent global industrial forces that produced it. The Afghan nation needs to know where its

camels went, why, how and with whom, and it needs to act with urgency on the knowledge of its camels and the people, places and things they historically unite at home and abroad. To be more successful than their traditional intellectual forefathers, a new breed of organic intellectuals will have to be more attentive to the subaltern classes of Afghanistan whose voices remain unheard. Nomads and their camels are rich and rewarding subjects to examine within the larger project of historiographically rescuing and resuscitating Afghanistan's cultural past to save its most grim political future.

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