



Press Kit

By Compass and Quran
History of Australia's Muslim Cameleers

Directed by Kuranda Seyit
Produced by Fred El Harris

Contact Details

Produced by Whirling Dervish Media & Filmotion Productions Pty Ltd
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www.battleofbrokenhearts.org.au

Key Crew

Director	Kuranda Seyit
Producer	Fred El Harris
Writer	Kuranda Seyit
Original Concept	Kuranda Seyit
Director of Photography	Fred El Harris
Editor	Fred El Harris
Sound Editor	Khaled Sabsabi
Titles	Keith Li
Script Consultant	Trevor Graham
Consultant	Trevor Graham
Narrator	Jessica Douglas-Henry
Legals	Jenny Lalor

Key Characters

Marie Williams
William Bejah
Mona Akbar
Janice Mahomet
Lil Hassan
Bobby Shamroze
Azzie Fazulla
Rosalind Fullwood

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Technical Details

Running Time	26 Minutes 45 Seconds	
HDV	16:9 format	PAL

One Line Synopsis

This film is a tribute and a testament to the great contribution and sacrifice that the 'Afghan' camel drivers gave to Australia between 1846 and 1939.

One Paragraph Synopsis

The Afghan cameleer's induction into Australia was a rough ride and not without its intrigues, however, they conquered the outback and they achieved in part their role as nation-builders. It is a tragic story about men who lost their great tribal warrior-like identities and became impotent fringe-dwellers, who lived below the poverty line, constantly struggling, to preserve their religion, to find marriage partners, to continue the work that they loved and to find acceptance in a society which had little sympathy towards them during the White Australia policy.

One Page Synopsis

150 years ago Australia gained a small but permanent Muslim population. During a time when the nation was still establishing itself, it was decided that camels were the best way to explore and service the outback. In 1866, the first large shipment of 121 camels arrived in Port Augusta on the Blackwell steamship, accompanied by 31 camel handlers. This was the beginning of a new adventure for these men and the men that followed. Their life was one of hardship, unpredictability, segregation and alienation.

Most traces of the cameleers have vanished today, although their houses of prayer still stand in some of the places where they lived and many of their artifacts can be found amongst their descendants hidden away in old chests or proudly displayed on a mantle piece. Only in the memories of their descendants and in local histories of outback towns, has their heritage remained.

The Cameleers contributed greatly to the building of this nation; in outback exploration, in construction and carting goods and post across the dry interior bringing life to the remote settlements.

The By Compass and Quran retraces the steps of the early Afghan cameleers, and explores the amazing lives of some of these men and the many years of discrimination and injustice that many of the cameleers had to endure in a white Australia.

The film will evoke what life was like for a Cameleer: their survival instincts, their religion, their relationship with Europeans and Aborigines, and the discrimination they experienced. It will illustrate how the Cameleers' legacy lives on today through their descendants.

Press Release

Australia owes a lot to Muslim pioneers

We are pleased to announce the launch of the much anticipated DVD for the documentary film, ***By Compass and Quran: History of Australia's Muslim Cameleers***, which covers a fascinating episode in Australian migration history.

Between 1846 and 1929 Australia gained a small community of Afghan and Indian Muslim cameleers. These men worked in the mining towns of West Australia, in the outback of South Australia and across the continent travelling with their camel strings along the Strzlecki and Birdsville tracks to Queensland and Western NSW. Without their contribution Australia would not have been developed for another 50 years or more.

Writer/Director, Kuranda Seyit, said, "In this journey we re-discover a significant and fascinating part of our nation's history, one that is rarely told. We meet living descendants who tell their stories, complemented by archival photographs and footage. This film is a tribute and a testament to the great contribution and sacrifice that the camel drivers gave to this country and a valuable lesson in human frailty and emotion. "

The documentary was featured on ABC television in 2015, (on the Compass Program) and has been warmly welcomed in screenings in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

ABC Presenter Geraldine Doogue said, "A remarkable film about a fascinating aspect of our identity. Australia should be proud of these men and the legacy that they left behind."

"I've spent a significant part of the past seven years researching these outback pioneers and personally it has enriched me, I have learnt a lot about the Australian outback but especially just how important that these men were to the survival of outback settlements. I think a film of this nature is long overdue and I sincerely believe that ALL Australians should watch this film." Seyit added.

Media Enquiries: Tel: 0412 318045

To obtain a copy of the film email fairdirector@gmail.com

How the film came about ...

Many moons ago when I was at university I had heard about an incident in Broken Hill involving a shooting by two "Turks" at a picnic train on new years day 1915. One of the men was an ice-cream vendor and the other a religious leader. This immediately grabbed my interest and at the time I wanted to make a film about the incident, (calling it the Ice-cream Wars) however, some time passed and it wasn't until I actually met an Afghan descendant named Eric Sultan in Alice Springs that my vigour to make the film was renewed.

Then a couple of years later I commenced my research. I read every book on the subject and started researching on-line as well. Eventually I got in contact with an author named Pamela Rajkowski, who was also the convenor of the Afghan Cameleers' Descendants Association. She put me in touch with some excellent people who were lively and articulate. We started filming and capturing their stories and the film started to take shape. I wanted to focus on the great work these men did, create a picture of what life was like as a cameleer and highlight the challenges they faced, particularly under the Government's White Australia Policy. It was also important to hear this from the descendants themselves.

It was a long and difficult process, with little funding on offer, but eventually with community support and the help of experienced film makers and the ABC Compass Program, we got to the stage where a strong historical document of the Afghan cameleers had emerged. Seven years on and the film was completed in 2015 and was one of ABC Compass' highest rating programs of the year with over 400000 viewers.

BIOGRAPHIES

DIRECTOR/WRITER

Kuranda Seyit has completed a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies at Sydney University. He has also studied Film and TV at Metro Screen and in 2001 he wrote and directed his first documentary "Always A Visitor" for SBS television. He has continued to make films covering a variety of community issues. In 2004 he was selected among the Bulletin Magazine's SMART 100 people in Australia. He received the Pride of Australia Medal in 2005. In 2010 he made a short report for SBS TV's Dateline current affairs program titled 'Kyrgyzstan in Crisis'. He has made a several human rights documentaries in various conflict zones including Mindanao (Philippines), Aceh (Indonesia), Somalia, Southern Thailand and Burma (Rohingya crisis in Arakan). He continues to make films, mentor youth and work with disadvantaged communities.

He served five years as an Executive Member of the Sydney Peace Foundation and is currently the Secretary of the Islamic Council of Victoria.

PRODUCER

Fadle Fred El Harris (Film producer) is an award winning filmmaker, originally trained in animation, he later extended his talent to include live action film and documentary making. His most recent projects include an enormous 26 episode 'The Wildlife Man' featuring David Ireland , a one hour series which has been nominated for several awards including the Australian TV-week Logies. The series was also screened regularly on channel 9 and sold to the world s biggest and most stringent documentary buyers Discovery HD in the US, Canada, and translated to many languages throughout Europe and Asia. Furthermore, he has worked on countless educational films, feature scripts and some independent docos.

Fred has completed a certificate in animation and a certificate in film and television production at TAFE NSW and continued his education studying a Bachelor of Art Education at the NSW University and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Specializing in film production, UNSW). Fred has served as an inspiration to young people where he has taught editing and filmmaking at dozens of community workshops, TAFE NSW and Metro Screen College.