Grave of Tagh Mahomed, Coolgardie Cemetery, 2002

Description

This is a digital colour photograph of a grave in the Coolgardie cemetery in Western Australia taken in 2002. The inscription in English on the gravestone reads 'Sacred to the memory of Tagh Mahomed who died by the hand of an assassin at Coolgardie January 10th 1896. Aged 37 years. His end was peace'. Mahomed was a Muslim living at the time of the gold rush. There is also an inscription in Arabic.

Educational value

- This asset is a reminder that many 'Afghans' moved to Western Australia's eastern gold fields to make a living following the gold rushes of the mid-1890s - 'Afghan' was a general term used at that time by Europeans for any Muslim man wearing a turban; most of the Afghans were cameleers and played an important role in providing transport and supplies to isolated regions; some, like Tagh Mahomed, died on the gold fields; the name of these early immigrants is preserved today in the 'Ghan' train; apart from the English inscription, the gravestone has an inscription in Arabic taken from the Koran.
- It shows the grave of Tagh Mahomed (or Mahomet), one of the most prominent Afghans on the Coolgardie gold fields - the grave is one of the 'Afghan' graves in the north-west corner of the second Coolgardie cemetery; Tagh Mahomed and his brother Faiz were leading cameleers who came out from India to work for Sir Thomas Elder in the far north of South Australia; they went into business as camel proprietors in Western Australia's Murchison and Coolgardie districts and employed many other cameleers; they regularly carted water into Coolgardie from the 35-Mile Soak at Moorowing Rock due west of there with a train of 70 camels, until the completion of the Coolgardie Water Supply pipeline from the Perth hills.
- It refers in its inscription to an interesting story - the headstone, erected to the memory of Tagh Mahomed by his brother Faiz, refers to both assassination and

Categories: Life on the Goldfields

© NTWA For Conditions of Use see - http://valuingheritage.com.au/learningfederation/ConditionsOfUse.html

dying in peace; Tagh Mahomed did not die peacefully but was shot in the back while praying in Coolgardie's small corrugated iron mosque, built by the Muslim community; Goulam Mahomet was convicted of the murder; until his hanging at Fremantle Gaol on 2 May 1896 Goulam proclaimed he was innocent of murder, acting in self-defence; he apparently believed Tagh was going to kill him and that the only way to save his own life was to act first.

- It is historically connected to the Afghan community in Coolgardie - although small in number, the Afghans in Coolgardie, mainly cameleers, were quick and generous in responding to the needs of the wider community, providing hospital funds, fighting fires, supplying water and helping in search and rescue missions; following a disastrous rush in 1893 Mahomed camels carrying water saved many miners from death; in October 1895 Afghans directed by Tagh Mahomed extinguished a fire that threatened the town; the Mahomed brothers erected a tombstone as a tribute to one of their employees, reportedly drowned when angry teamsters, seeing him washing his feet in the precious local water, pushed him into a well.

Copyright Reproduced courtesy of National Trust of Australia (Western Australia)

Creator Gary Peters, photographer, 2002

Identifier National Trust of Australia (Western Australia) number W21P28527-10

Source National Trust of Australia (Western Australia) http://valuingheritage.com.au/

Categories: Life on the Goldfields

© NTWA For Conditions of Use see - http://valuingheritage.com.au/learningfederation/ConditionsOfUse.html