

ÇANAKKALE 1915

TARİH, EDEBİYAT VE SANAT

GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN 1915

HISTORY, LITERATURE AND ART

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# **Broken Hill Attack 1915 – Revisited: A Battle Fought for Gallipoli on Australian Soil**

**Prof. Dr. Mehmet Mehdi Ilhan<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

On a Friday morning, the New Year's Day of 1915, two Afghans attacked a train carrying 1200 picnickers from Broken Hill. The inhabitants of the town had only recently bidden farewell to its volunteers to Egypt where they were to be trained and protect the Suez Canal. These forces were then sent to Gallipoli to fight the Ottomans to Europe to fight along the British forces at the Western Front. The two men – first identified as Turks but later identified as Afghans – killed two men and a seventeen year-old girl, and wounded some picnickers. They were then hunted down and killed within a couple of hours by the police and the armed volunteers from the town.

The Australian media interpreted this attack, to a modern term a terrorist attack on Australian soil, as a retaliation for the Allies fighting the Turks, and continued this line whenever radicalised Muslims killed Australians or Christians in Europe or elsewhere. This incident at Broken Hill will be revisited and analysed in the light of newspapers published in Broken Hill as well as the feature articles written about the attack in newspapers of our days and online.

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1 Australian National University, Canberra & Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University. I would like to thank Dr Brendan Whyte, Assistant Curator of Maps at the National Library of Australia (NLA) for reading this article and making substantial correction and valuable suggestions.

## Introduction

The Battle of Broken Hill, although it occurred over a hundred years ago, is kept alive, most probably for political reasons, both by in Turkey and Australia. It has been subject matter of artists such as Muhsin Kut, who migrated to Sydney in 1969. He painted the entire story, entitled “Battle of Broken Hill”, exhibiting it at the Aladdin Galley, Elizabeth Bay in 1974. According to the Sydney Morning Herald his “paintings are a dramatic and stark record of his compassion for his lonely and patriotic countrymen.”<sup>2</sup> The approach to the incident at times is objective and at times misinterpreted as a conspiracy theory. Both Turkish and Australian academics are aware that the perpetrators were of Afghan origin. Yet to make the story an interesting and appealing one, they are called either Turkish terrorists or heroes who took up arms on Australian soil against civilians or soldiers<sup>3</sup>. In Australian perspective they are the Turks who attacked the MU Order of Oddfellows’ picnic train packed with 1200 civilians, women and children, from Broken Hill to Silverton. The Turkish perspective is much more interesting and told in a number of contradictory versions. Basically the perpetrators are two Sydney-based Turkish ice-cream vendors from the city of Maraş, a city in southeastern Anatolia famous for its ice-cream, who arm themselves and blow up a train carrying ANZACs to fight at Gallipoli; they kill hundreds of soldiers before they fall martyrs.<sup>4</sup> This in fact was how the story was related to me when I first arrived in Australia in 2003 except that the attack had taken place in Broken Hill. I never took much interest in the story until Dr. Brendan Whyte sent me the letters of Gül Muhammed and Abdullah for translation.<sup>5</sup> However to be fair and objective there are a number of Turkish and Australian websites that relate the story in a version very close to actually what happened, although each still

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2 Frizell, H. 1974: “The Battle of Broken Hill,” The Sydney Morning Herald – Sep 9, p. 4.

3 For misinterpretations of the story that were developed in Turkey and a fair approach to the Broken Hill attack see Saltık, E. 2013: “Avustralya’yı Savaşa İngilizler mi Soktu?” in Yedikita, Mart, pp. 66-71.

4 Akyol, A.: Broken Hill Olayı <http://www.ahmetakyol.net/broken-hill-olayi/> accessed on 27 January 2015; <http://vadetamam.blogspot.com/2014/05/broken-hills-savasi.html#.VMdwjGSUd04> accessed on 27 January 2015

5 Dr. Brendan Whyte, then in Melbourne, is now Assistant Curator of Maps at the NLA. I am grateful to him for sending me the two letters and photos. Likewise I would like to thank Jenny Camilleri and gratefully acknowledge Broken Hill City Archives for the photos and images published in this paper.

interprets it from their own perspectives<sup>6</sup>.

### **Broken Hill Attack**

Silver ore was discovered in far western NSW by Charles Rasp in 1883. The Broken Hill Propriety Company was founded in 1885, and from a few tents the town of Broken Hill developed rapidly. In 1888, almost five years after Rasp pegged the first mineral lease, the population of the town reached 11,000 people. By 1907 Broken Hill was NSW's second largest town after Sydney, with 35,000 people in 1915, the year the Broken Hill attack took place.<sup>7</sup>

Although the Broken Hill attackers were an Afghan and an Indian, and at times referred to as Afghans, they were identified as Turks probably due to their flying the Turkish flag over the ice cream cart they used to transport their weaponry to the ambush site. Due to Britain's declaration of war on Turkey on 5 November 1914, the locals were familiar with the so-called strange flag, and therefore the Turks were targeted as the murderers. The news of the murderous Turks must have travelled so fast that the Germans interpreted the attack as an act of heroism of their allies, the Turks, only few weeks later. "A German newspaper in Freiberg carried the following item":

"We are pleased to report the success of our arms at Broken Hill, a seaport town on the west coast of Australia. A party of troops fired on Australian troops being transported to the front by rail. The enemy lost 40 killed and 70 injured. The total loss of Turks was two dead. The capture of Broken Hill leads the way to Canberra, the strongly fortified capital of Australia"<sup>8</sup>

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6 Broken Hill – Gallipoli 1915 (Broken Hill Katliam) <http://www.gallipoli-1915.org/broken.hill.htm> accessed on 11 November 2016; Mike Dash, *The Battle of Broken Hill*, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-battle-of-broken-hill-113650077/?no-ist> accessed on 6 November 2016.

7 Town excursion notes – Friday 23 April 2010 [www.aicomos.com/wp-content/uploads/Histoic-Townships-Excursion-Notes.doc](http://www.aicomos.com/wp-content/uploads/Histoic-Townships-Excursion-Notes.doc) accessed on 27 January 2015. For the development of Broken Hill see Rainbird, P. 2003: "Representing Nation, Dividing Community: The Broken Hill War Memorial, New South Wales, Australia," *World Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 1, *The Social Commemoration of Warfare* (Jun.), pp. 24–25.

8 Nicholas Shakespeare, "When Jihad Came to the Australian Back" in *Newsweek* <http://europe.newsweek.com/how-jihad-went-australian-outback-272619?rm=eu> accessed on 24 December 2016. The same item appeared in a Turkish newspaper Hodges, D.: *The Battle of Broken Hill (Third World Islamic Immigration imperils Australia)* <http://www.wwwnews.net/story.php?id=267> accessed on 27 January 2015. Gwendoline is doubtful whether this was an official statement from Berlin. See Garrulous Gwendoline, *The Battle of Broken Hill – New Year's Day 1915*, <https://garrulousgwendoline.wordpress.com/2016/04/09/the-battle-of-broken-hill-new-years-day-1915/> accessed on 25 December 2016.

Although this German version of the story was fictitious (apparently it originated as a parody in a Sydney weekly, the *Bulletin*), within a short time spread all over Australia and New Zealand. According to Whyte “this obvious satire seemed to be taken seriously in some quarters, the newspapers began to reprint the invented hyperbole as a true example of Germany’s propagandistic mendacity.”<sup>9</sup> This obvious satire was taken seriously and, along with a brief account of the attack on picnic train, was published in a dozen newspapers first in Australia and then New Zealand, and even English and American newspapers. The story continued to be reprinted as if it were a factual account of German propaganda, even in Broken Hill, as late as 1951<sup>10</sup>.

Conspiracy theories also developed around the Battle of Broken Hill. It was speculated that the British either took the advantage of the incident or they were behind the attack in order to flame hatred against the Turks and thus increase the number of conscriptions from Australia of which Britain was badly in need.<sup>11</sup> Apparently the recruitment into the Australian Imperial Force doubled following the attack on 1 January 1915.<sup>12</sup> According to an article entitled “Men for the Front: More Departures” in the *Barrier Daily Truth*, (Thursday 14 January), 28 men volunteered and joined the Barrier Boys’ Brigade at 6:30 pm on 13 January “en route for Murphettville”. They were requested to bring evidence of their parents’ consent, as they were not of age. They boarded the train and departed at night<sup>13</sup>.

The terrorists used 48 cartridges during the attack on the picnic train. The attack was the first or rather only terrorist attack of the First World War on

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9 Whyte, Brendan 2016: “Propaganda Eats itself: The *Bulletin* and the Battle of Broken Hill,” in *Sabretache*, vol. LVII, no. 3, September, p. 50.

10 For the list of newspapers and quotes from a number of them including *Barrier Miner* and *Barrier Daily Truth* see Whyte 2016, pp. 50-57

11 Yilmazer, T.: *Geliboluyu Anlamak*, [http://www.geliboluyuanlamak.com/363\\_derin-nefret-anzaklari-canakkale-savasi-na-sokan-komplonun-hikayesi-omer-ertur-ismail-bilgin.html](http://www.geliboluyuanlamak.com/363_derin-nefret-anzaklari-canakkale-savasi-na-sokan-komplonun-hikayesi-omer-ertur-ismail-bilgin.html) accessed on 27 January 2015, cf. Ertur, Ö. 2005: *A Prelude to Gallipoli: The Battle of Broken Hill 1915 (Derin Nefret: Anzakları Çanakkale Savaşı’na Sokan Komplonun Hikayesi)*, Istanbul.

12 Commonwealth War Graves Commission Newsletter, January 2013, [www.cwgr.org](http://www.cwgr.org)

13 Although the article is entitled “Men for the Front”, it is not clear whether they were accepted into the army since they were not of age. However, for a list of boy soldiers listed on the Roll of Honour for the First World War see *Australian War Memorial: Boy soldiers on the Roll of Honour for the First World War*, <https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/boysoldiers/first/> accessed on 25 December 2016

Australian soil and Alma Cowie was the first victim<sup>14</sup> for the Australians to raise their voice just like Haron Monis' attack on the Lindt Café in Sydney's Martin Place on 15 December 2014. The attack likewise swiftly encouraged the Anzacs to retaliate at least on the Ottoman soil as one of the young Victorian Anzac wrote to the people of Broken Hill "I can tell you we will be letting the Turks know there will be more to shoot at than a picnic train."<sup>15</sup> The attack inflamed Australia: "The Sydney Morning Herald's six-deck headline shouted "The fight with the Turks"... The Melbourne Argus was equally as shrill: «Turks Attack Train» which was actually a bald statement of fact. Three days after the attack, 11 enemy aliens were arrested in Broken Hill and sent to Adelaide for incarceration in the Torrens Island Concentration Camp."<sup>16</sup>

Long before the Broken Hill attack the relations between the Afghans and the local teamsters had deteriorated. The cameleers had taken the jobs that the teamsters believed rightly belonged to them and therefore they never welcomed the Afghans. Therefore probably due to only not this but also to cultural differences as well as for the fact that camels could not be kept in town in an era of horse transport, the Afghans had founded their own distinct communities know as "ghantowns." By the time the First World War started the relationship was already very tense. The local Barrier Miner had been campaigning to drive the cameleers out of Broken Hill district. Soon after the outbreak of the war, Gül Muhammed, one of the Broken Hill attackers who had formerly served in the Ottoman army, wrote to the Ottoman Sultan to reenlist and surprisingly received a positive reply encouraging him to fight for the Sultan, although without specifying how, from wherever he was. Gül then must have then encouraged Molla Abdullah, the other attacker, to join forces in a fight against the Australians.<sup>17</sup> As such Nicholas Shakespeare in his novella *Oddfellows*, based on the Battle of Broken Hill, called the attack "an act of Holy War and part of jihad."<sup>18</sup> However, Shakespeare's approach is simply for literary and dramatic purposing.

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14 Murphy, D.: Broken Hill, New Year's Day, 1915 was Australia's first terrorist attack <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/broken-hill-new-years-day-1915-was-australias-first-terrorist-attack-20141014-115weh.html> accessed on 6 November 2016

15 Murphy, D.: Broken Hill...

16 Murphy, D.: Broken Hill...

17 Dash, M.: The Battle of Broken Hill, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-battle-of-broken-hill-113650077/?no-ist> accessed on 6 November 2016.

18 Debelle, P.: A jihadist attack on picnickers in Broken Hill brought WW1 home <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/a-jihadist-attack-on-picnickers-in-broken-hill-brought-ww1-home/story-fni6uo1m-1227172982998> accessed on 25 January 2015.

## **The Battle of Broken Hill based on the Reports of Local Newspapers**

The Barrier Miner<sup>19</sup>, local newspaper, was the one that basically covered the Broken Hill attack on the very same days as the events and coronial inquests took place in the court, starting from Friday 1 January to Tuesday 12 January 1915. Another local newspaper Barrier Daily Truth<sup>20</sup> also covered the whole events with some interpretations. For a clearer picture of the attack rather than a battle I have summarized and reinterpreted the events with reference to some other newspaper and secondary sources. I have also studied Barrier Daily Truth and rephrased the articles that might throw light on the background of the events. In doing this I very much hope to reveal the whole picture in summary to the readers and ease their minds from conspiracy theories.

### **The Attack<sup>21</sup>**

It was Friday morning, the New Year's Day of 1915, the First World War had just broken out and Australia had only recently bidden farewell to its volunteers to Egypt for training to fight along the British forces at Gallipoli and the Western Front. About 1200 picnickers of Broken Hill have boarded 40 ore trucks of a train. The train would take them to attend the annual Manchester Unity Picnic at Silverton, a small town 25 kilometres North West of Broken Hill built by miners. The train left Broken Hill at 10 a.m. and about 20 minutes later two men, later identified as Turks or Afghans, attacked the train firing about 20 or 30 shots.<sup>22</sup> They killed two men and a seventeen year-old girl, and wounded some picnickers. Mr A. E. Millard who was riding a bicycle along the tracks was also hit by a bullet and died spontaneously.

The train was taken little further and stopped at the Silverton Tramway Company's reservoir, where there was telephonic communication with Broken Hill. A call was made to Broken Hill to summon medical assistance and alert the police to the attack. The bodies of the three victims were left at the pumping station at the reservoir and the train headed back to Broken Hill. On the way they met the motorcars of Dr Moulden and others who had responded to the call. Some of the wounded were moved to the motorcars and both the motorcars and the train shortly after arrived at Broken Hill.

19 Barrier Miner can be accessed on the Internet and also at the NLA.

20 I am grateful to the Staff of NLA, for allowing me to have access to the copy of Barrier Daily Truth.

21 Barrier Miner, Friday 1 January 1915, p. 2 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45309452> accessed on 26 January 2015. Barrier Daily Truth, Saturday 2 January 1915.

22 According to Barrier Daily Truth 2 January (p. 1) 40-50 shots and 4 January, about 60 to 70 were fired.

Inspector Miller, who was alarmed by the telephone call from the pumping station immediately mobilised a force of police to the scene. The police communicated with Lieutenant Resch, who then dispatched all available men connected with military forces<sup>23</sup>. They all pursued the two Afghans/Turks, who after attacking the train have moved off east towards Broken Hill, on their way shooting another man<sup>24</sup> and then took cover in the ridge of white jagged rocks only few hundred meters to the west of the Cable Hotel<sup>25</sup>. The civilians, mainly members of rifle clubs, and members of citizen forces also armed with guns and rifles rushed to the rocks. They joined over thirty men with rifles and guns under the direction of Inspector Miller and Lieutenant Resch spread out on the adjoining hills and encircled the enemy pouring hot fire on them. The two Turks/Afghans returned fire, but without effect despite the facts that the range was short and the attacking parties in some cases exposed themselves. Obviously

23 "Colour-sergeant Williams, of the 82nd Infantry, has supplied the following list of the members of the military forces who took part in the fight: —

Lieutenants Anderson, Shepherd, J. M'Carthy, Color-sergeants Williams, Tester, Sergeants Bishop, Nettle, Petney, Reid, Price, Main, Corporals Roland, Matthew, Com-ley, Jefferys, Lance-corporals Davies Harris, Riley, Privates Purcell, Lean, Richards, M'Leeney, Braithwaite, Anderson, Kenworthy, Day, Hayes, Gibson, Battle, Wickham, Ash-wood, Hoare, Bevan, Jones, Shore, Curnow, Wallace, Hanley, Ju...Shelley, Partington, Collicot, ...Murray, Dowd, Chenhall ... Arthur, Brad... Camp..." See Barrier Miner (Broken Hill, NSW: 1888 - 1954), Friday 1 January 1915, p. 2. According to Barrier Miner (Wednesday 6 January), some British forces also joined the besiegers. See A Reporter Visits, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310185> accessed on 28 January 2015. For and incomplete list see also Barrier Daily Truth, 4 January 1915.

24 According to the newspaper [Barrier Miner, Friday 1 January 1915, p. 2] report "The Turks, after their attack on the train, moved off towards the west of Broken Hill, and were followed by their armed pursuers... After shooting another man on their way" and also "On their way across to their rocky stronghold, the Turks knocked at the door of a house near the Allandale Hotel. The resident opened the door and some words passed between him and the Turks. Then one of them raised his rifle, and without warning fired point blank, the bullet going through the victim's body."

25 According to the newspaper [Barrier Miner, Friday 1 January 1915, p. 2] report "When the police cars reached a point near the Cable Hotel, Sergeant Gibson saw two men amongst the white quartz rocks on a hill. Not suspecting that they were the enemy, Sergeant Gibson was about to make inquiries of them, when suddenly they opened fire on the car. Mounted Constable Mills was struck by two bullets at the outset, and then the firing commenced on both sides." According to another account of Barrier Miner (Friday 8 January 1915, p. 4) "Sergeant Gibson and Sergeant Dimond procured two motor cars and with 10 policemen they went to the Frieberg Hotel, and from there, to West Broken Hill, near the scene of the tragedy. They then preceded West Camel camp an about 250 yards past the camp they saw two men leaving West camp going in a northerly direction; they were dressed in turbans and khaki coats and carried rifles. As Sergeant Dimond was about to pull up his car, the two men knelt down and fired at them. The police fired back. Constable Mills was wounded twice during the exchange of fire. The exchange of fire continued for a considerable time." According to Barrier Daily Truth, 7 January, Cable Hotel after the attack became a focal point and made more business than before.

the two Turks/Afghans were not professional shooters despite the claim that one of them had served in Ottoman army.<sup>26</sup> Eager men from the town constantly reinforced the attacking party of Broken Hill, determined to leave no work for the hangman. The battle lasted almost two hours. One of the men was found dead shot through the head and the other one alive, but motionless with several wounds. Although the latter was taken to the Hospital, he died several hours later<sup>27</sup>.

**Comments:** According to the reports in Barrier Daily Truth, January 5, the “Turks” prior to the attack had approached a number of Afghans to join them in their venture. The Afghans warned them against such an attempt and even informed the police. Yet according to another contradictory report of January 6, based on the statement of Mr Box and his close acquaintances a lady and her daughter married to a cameleer, the Indians were not aware of what the “Turks” were up to. However, according to the same report a man named Kiduram (in Barrier Miner spelt as Kodaram and in similar report of Barrier Daily Truth, January 7, spelt as Khadram<sup>28</sup>) – a compatriot of Indians and a frequent interpreter in the court despite the fact he did not speak very good English – had some feelings that the two “Turks” were up to something evil, but had the general impression that they were going shooting. Although Kiduram at 9:30 a.m. on January 1, rushed to the police station just after the “Turks” started, the Police formed the impression that his “story was one of the frequent alarms raised from the camp.” According to Barrier Daily Truth, January 7, “Had Khadram spoken better English, the result might had been different. The “Turks” might had been caught; before the tragedy, or they might not.” The Afghans attacked the train after 10:20 a.m. and the battle according to Barrier Miner (Wednesday 6 January) lasted another two hours<sup>29</sup>. By the time Gül Muhammed<sup>30</sup>, was admitted to the

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26 According to Barrier Daily Truth, Monday 4 January, “... the Turks were not novices with rifles. Their shooting at short range was certainly not good, ...”

27 See War in Broken Hill: Attack on a picnic train <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45309452> accessed on 26 January 2015.

28 According to Khadram’s statement to the Police “Abdulla was out for vengeance on account of the court case [as he was fined for slaughtering animals without a certificate by the local sanitary inspector.] ... to get (his) money’s worth out of the infidels.” Although Khadram immediately rushed to the police, it was too late for an action. The news of Broken Hill attack must have travelled very fast for in this same report it is stated: “By the way, a Turkish spy, boasting the name of Abdulla, has just been arrested in Egypt.” See Barrier Daily Truth, 7 January.

29 A Reporter Visits, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310185> accessed on 28 January 2015.

30 The name is spelt in a number of ways as Gool Mohamed Gul Mahomet. I preferred to use the Turkish form throughout the article.

District Hospital it was 1:30 p.m.<sup>31</sup>. The report about the incident most probably was prepared within an hour and then the newspaper published it by evening. The next report was on Monday 4 January 1915, that is, three days later. One would expect the reports to include certain other matters related to the incidents such as the opinions of the Afghans in the town. Also by the time the incident was over it was the time for Friday prayers and one would expect that the crowd would attack the mosque in retaliation.<sup>32</sup> However according to the Barrier Miner there was an attack on the Afghan camp, but the police stopped the crowd. The mob then attacked the German club on Delamore Street. According to Barrier Daily Truth 2 and 14 January, a crowd of 1000 pushed down the club's galvanized iron fence, threw stones at its windows, and then entered the premises and set the building on fire.<sup>33</sup>

### **Dispute over the Burial of the Bodies of Perpetrators<sup>34</sup>**

The two perpetrators were Gül Muhammed and Molla 'Abdullah, two cameleers who had migrated to Australia. According to the Barrier Miner, the police authorities disposed of their bodies, either cremated or buried in an unknown location. Although word got around that they were buried at the gaol reserve, Inspector Miller did not confirm this. The police in fact refused to give any further information other than assuring the public that they were definitely not buried in Broken Hill's Muslim cemetery. However, it appears that the authorities first intended to have them buried in the Muslim cemetery. According to the report there were two graves dug on Saturday, the day following the attack, in a corner of the Muslim cemetery; a crowd of people objected, threatening that the bodies of the perpetrators would be dug up again if they were buried in any part of the cemetery, being sacred ground. The Afghans also came to know of it and bitterly objected, arguing that the two perpetrators had acted contrary to the Islamic law in killing innocent civilians. It is also clear from reports that they also refused to perform prayers for them. Therefore, the digging

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31 New Year's Tragedy, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310235> accessed on 28 January 2015.

32 On the history of Broken Hill Mosque/Afghan Mosque constructed in 1887 and the Cameleers see Broken Hill Mosque, <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5051563> accessed on 26 December 2016.

33 See Barrier Daily Truth 14 January for a full description and an inquiry into the cause of fire that ended in no one being identified. And also the witness who had been "stationed in Broken Hill for about four months" could identify no one that set the club on fire.

34 Barrier Miner, Monday 4 January 1915, p. 2 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45309928> accessed on 28 January 2015.

of the two graves was left incomplete<sup>35</sup>. I also believe, any other Muslims basically for two reasons never used these two half-dug graves: the graves were dug in a northwest by southeast direction, and the fact they were dug for the two sinners. According to the Islamic law a deceased Muslim in Broken Hill cemetery should face the Kiblah laid down on the right shoulder in a grave dug north by south direction. The fact that there were only few Muslims buried in the Broken Hill Muslim cemetery is an indication that the Afghans at the time were still of the first generation Muslims that have arrived in Broken Hill and therefore were not integrated into the Australian community as yet.

**Comments:** Although according to the Barrier Miner (Monday 4 January 1915, p. 2), the Muslims in Broken Hill refused the burial ground to the two Afghans arguing that they had committed sin by attacking and killing the innocent civilians, it is not clear whether their refusal was due to their religiosity or out of fear. If the Afghans of Broken Hill were aware of the true meaning of jihad they were right to refuse. However, then it could equally be argued that these two Afghans – who apparently were religious, one an imam and the other a devout Muslim who claims that he had served in the Ottoman army and wanted to become a martyr – would not have attacked the civilians<sup>36</sup>. Instead one would have expected, as the Bulletin's satiric version of the story jokingly suggested, they should have attacked a train carrying soldiers if they believed their fight was for the sake of jihad, or the Sultan's call to jihad.

### **The Scene of Battle<sup>37</sup>**

The premeditated attack, the scene of battle, and the exchange of fire between the Afghans and their killing were covered by the local newspaper, Barrier Miner, basing its information on a reporter visiting the battlegrounds, the police enquiries, inquests and the testimonies of witnesses at the inquest. The inquest was simple and was based on the testimonies of police, medical personnel, and a number of witnesses all providing incidental and circumstantial evidence about the perpetrators and the victims.

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35 Assassins' Bodies, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45309928> accessed on 28 January 2015

36 Assassins' Bodies, ...

37 Barrier Miner, Wednesday 6 p. 2 & Thursday 7 January 1915, p. 1 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310185>; <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310235> accessed on 28 January 2015.

**Perpetrators:** Gül Muhammed and Molla ‘Abdullah both were residents of Broken Hill. Gül Padişah Muhammed (c.1875-1915), an Afridi tribesman was from mountainous Tirah region of Afghanistan. He arrived in Australia in his early youth and most probably worked as cameleer<sup>38</sup> and then went back to his home country. While back at home, he enlisted in the Ottoman army four times and received Sultan’s ferman<sup>39</sup>. However the ferman found on Gül Muhammed was sent to Adelaide for translation was then introduced at the court and a translation was published in the Barrier Daily Truth on 13 January<sup>40</sup>. He returned back to Australia in 1912 and first started working in the silver-mines until the war commenced, and then became an ice-cream vendor<sup>41</sup>. He lived in a room rented from an Assyrian in Argent-lane, Broken Hill; some time after the war commenced, he went outback and went for a trip with a camel team trading from Tarrawingee; he returned to Broken Hill between three to four weeks before the attack<sup>42</sup>.

Molla ‘Abdullah (c.1855-1915), a camel driver and a learned man, was known to the Australians as an imam as he was leading the prayer for the Afghans at the local ‘Ghantown’ either always or whenever there was no one else to lead the prayer. He had arrived in South Australia around 1890, and had been working at Broken Hill since 1899. A sanitary inspector fined him twice for illegally slaughtering animals and prosecuted him<sup>43</sup>.

38 For cameleers working in Australia see Philip Jones, P. & Anna Kenny 2007:

Australia’s Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the Inland, 1860s-1930s. Paperback-December.

39 The word used in Gül’s letter is hukm meaning order, decree and commandment in Ottoman Turkish. The word hukm here may well mean an Ottoman ferman.

40 According to the translation of the ferman Gül sent an application to enlist in Ottoman Empire and received a reply of acceptance.

“The application for enlistment read:-

I hope you will accept me as the member of the Turkish Army, which I will serve by the will of God and be true to H. M. the Sultan of Turkey, and to my country, and will to the best of my ability fight there in. (Signed) Gool Arnah Mohammed, (dated) October 2nd 328.

Accepted (Signature of endorsing official). Witnesses (several with seals attached to signatures).

The official reply to the above was as follows:-

We have accepted your requested to be a member of Turkish army, and the will of God will help you to be a true member of the Turkish army, and to fight only for the Sultan.”

41 Mahomed, Gool Badsha (1875-1915) by Christine Stevens, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mahomed-gool-badsha-13288> accessed on 27 January 2015. This article was published in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Supplementary Volume, (MUP), 2005.

42 Inquest on the Turks, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310395> accessed on 28 January 2015.

43 Abdullah, Mullah (1855-1915) by Christine Stevens, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/abdullah-mullah-12763> accessed on 26 January 2015. This article was published in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Supplementary volume, (MUP), 2005.

Apparently Gül Muhammed and Molla ‘Abdullah were close friends, together smoking ganja (gungha: marijuana or cannabis), a fairly common practice in parts of Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan. In fact someone at the North Camel Camp had told Kodaram, one of the witnesses at the court, that on the morning of 1 January (that day) Molla “‘Abdullah had been smoking gungha, and had gone away into the bush with his gun.”<sup>44</sup> Also according to Barrier Daily Truth, 4 January, Gül Muhammed “was [an] absolute slave to drug ... and was not in his right senses” when he committed the crime<sup>45</sup>. It is very probable that he was the one who persuaded the old man Molla ‘Abdulla “to join him in the murderous venture. There is not a vestige of evidence that the plan was pre-arranged and a concerted plot, and it appears to have emanated from the two Turks alone, with Gool Mahomet the ring leader.”

Molla ‘Abdullah at the time of attack was sixty years old and Gül Muhammed was forty. They were well known and respected in the town. They were frequent customers at the shop of a Mr. Pincombe, “making all kinds of purchases. Mullah [i.e. Molla] was often given credit, and was always found to be honest.”

The sources cite very insignificant incidents that could possibly have motivated Gül Muhammed and Molla ‘Abdullah to attack the picnic train. Gül Muhammed had claimed that he had served in the Ottoman army and therefore was known as a Turk. In fact the Barrier Miner (Wednesday 6 January 1915) refers to the perpetrators as “the Turk and his (Hindoo) companion.”<sup>46</sup> At the break of First World War the British silver-mine where Gül was working laid him off after all contracts with the German smelters were cancelled. Sultan Reşad Mehmed V (r. 1909–1918) had already made a call for jihad against the Entente in mid-November 1914, as the Ottomans had entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary in late October<sup>47</sup>. The Australian forces were already mobilized and the Anzacs were going to land at Gallipoli in a few months time. Molla ‘Abdullah was also a voluntary butcher slaughtering animals for halal food consumption. An Irishman called Cornelius Brosnan, who was the

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44 Inquest on the Turks, ...

45 According to Mr. Lord Gariques’ statement the effect of “gangha or Indian hemp, which is in common use among the Turks and Afghans ..., on its slaves is far worse than smoking of opium.” (Barrier Daily Truth, 6 January).

46 A Reporter Visits, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310185> accessed on 28 January 2015.

47 Just Wars, Holy Wars, and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges, edited by Sohail H. Hashmi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 298.

local sanitary inspector, refused to give him, or cancelled his certificate, and then tracked him down and fined him twice. Now and then Anglo-Saxon boys were ridiculing and chasing Molla down the street throwing stones at him whenever he hobbled by them. He never retaliated and the police failed to act despite his complaints<sup>48</sup> as the Sydney Morning Herald reported only shortly after the attack on 4th of January 1915.<sup>49</sup> These surely could not be valid reasons for a molla and so called a veteran (gazi) to plan an attack on civilians. But apparently they were and this is very clear from the reports in the Barrier Miner (Thursday, 7 January 1915, p. 1). Considering that Gül had returned from Tarrawingee between three to four weeks previously, we are faced with a puzzle, since the sources state that the perpetrators apparently were planning to attack the train at least five weeks before the incident took place, that is, sometime mid-November, and Gül enquired about cartridges from Pincombe's shop five weeks before and bought them three weeks before the incident. Also according to Mr. J. Dolman, an assistant in Mr. Pincombe's shop, Gül Muhammed was contemplating the attack, as he was talking of war, specifically referring to the Gurkhas' bravery fighting in Europe. Despite all this he concealed his grudge and managed to buy from Mr Pincombe's shop first eighty, and then another ten cartridges for a Schneider rifle. Apparently Mr Pincombe was the only shop keeper who had cartridges for a Schneider, and these cartridges had been there for ten to twelve years and no one had enquired for them ever before. The perpetrators had another rifle and the sources are silent on not only where the perpetrators got the rifles particularly the Schneider, but also where the bullets came from for that other rifle<sup>50</sup>.

**Comments**<sup>51</sup>: According to the report on 6 January the battle between the Turk [and his companion] and their killers lasted nearly two hours. If this is the case then the Afghans were using their bullets with care or the killers were cautious in their siege to avoid further casualties. Because the Afghans only had ninety bullets and they had already used thirty according to Barrier Miner or fifty according to Barrier Daily Truth (2 January), the remaining sixty bullets plus the bullets of the other gun should not last that long since there was a continuous exchange of fire. Apart from this the report states that there was an exchange of fire between the enemy that is the Afghans and Sergeant Dimond for half an hour

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48 Outback Jihad: How World War One came to Broken Hill by Nicholas Shakespeare, <http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2014/november/1414760400/nicholas-shakespeare/outback-jihad> accessed 6 February 2015.

49 D. Murphy, ...

50 New Year's Tragedy, ...

51 Barrier Miner, Wednesday 6 January 1915, p. 2

with an assumption that he was hit because he had not taken good cover. The two Afghans then most probably already used most of their remaining bullets during this half an hour exchange of fire. The reports however are contradictory. If the following statement of Barrier Miner (6 January) is correct then the perpetrators would have been killed within a short time or the firing squad aimed to capture them alive:

“But for two facts the Turk and his Hindoo companion might have held the crowd at bay for longer than the two hours they did do so. In the first place they frequently stood up above the top line of rocks and were easy targets for the time, and in the second place the shots on the inner side of their defense showed that they had been attacked from the rear.”

There were also British forces in Broken Hill and they also participated in the siege of the two Afghan perpetrators. Therefore the Afghans were facing a small army of experienced fighters and surprisingly the siege lasted nearly two hours.

The report also uses the phrase “the Turk and his [Hindoo] companion” indicating that the leading perpetrator was Gül Muhammed who allegedly served in Ottoman army and therefore was known as a Turk. In another part of the report it is stated that there were already few Turks in Broken Hill. How far this claim is true is questionable. According to the Census of 3rd of April 1911 reported in an official letter of the Commonwealth of Bureau and Statistics and Census dated 11th November 1914, there were 223 males and 143 females a total of 366 persons from Ottoman lands living in Australia. They were mostly Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Greeks and Georgians, and only few of them were Muslims. At the start of First World War Australia declared war on Turkey on 6th November 1914. Turkish born residences were declared as enemy aliens and were put under surveillance. They were all required to fill in Aliens Registration form, John Mahomet being one of the few Muslim Turks who filled the form<sup>52</sup>.

**Comments<sup>53</sup>:** It appears that Gül Muhammed and Molla ‘Abdulah were well know in the town and most probably were respected by the people of Broken Hill, as they were frequent customers of Mr Pincombe and therefore

52 Letters from the Chief General Staff (NAA: MP16, 1915/3/1508, p. 7 and p. 3) and the form used by John Mahomett to register as an alien under the War Precautions (Aliens Registration) Regulations, 18 October 1916 (NAA: MT269/1, VIC/TURKEY/MAHOMETT JOHN, p.16). Cf. <http://uncommonlives.naa.gov.au/muslim-journeys/arrivals/turks.aspx> accessed on 26 August 2015. I would like to thank NLA and NAA for the copies of these documents.

53 Barrier Miner, Thursday 7 January 1915, p. 1

were not suspected of carrying such an atrocity as the seller of cartridges did not have any suspicion and sold him ninety cartridges. If Gül Muhammed had not bought any cartridges before, then he should have been suspect, but apparently not. The frequent customers of Mr Pincombe neither Gül Muhammed nor Molla ‘Abdullah had ever asked for ammunition before. They were found trustworthy and were always given credit. We have no proof whether Mr Pincombe, his son and their assistant were questioned on Sunday or Saturday. Obviously the police could have had access to anyone at any time in a town as small as Broken Hill. However, Mr Pincombe telephoned the Police letting them know that the cartridges were bought from his shop. The enquiry was left to Monday and Mr Pincombe provided full report.

It should further be noted the perpetrators should have been suspected in advance because according Mr J. Dolman, who is an assistant in Mr Pincombe’s shop, Gül Muhammed was talking of war specifically referring to the Gurka’s bravery fighting in Europe. The Gurka’s also fought the Turks at Gallipoli.

It is also a surprise and should be questioned that if Mr Pincombe was the only shopkeeper who had the cartridges for a Sniper and these cartridges had been there for ten to twelve years and no one enquired them ever before, then where did the perpetrators got a Sniper that was not used in the town. Apparently they had another type of gun. Then one should ask where did the bullets came from for the other rifle.

#### **The Inquests on the Victims<sup>54</sup>**

The inquest on the victims took place on Thursday 7 January 1915 by the coroner (Mr. C. F. Butler, S.M.). No legal gentleman represented the victims.

On Thursday 7 January the coroner took the evidence on the four victims and left the inquest on the bodies of two Turks/Afghans to a later date.

“The four victims were:

Alma M. (Priscilla) Cowie, Railway Town.

Albert (Alfred) Elvin Millard, Railway Town.

William John Shaw, West Broken Hill.

James Craig, West Broken Hill.”

Fully qualified medical practitioners examined the bodies of these four victims either on spot or in hospital:

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54           Barrier Miner, Thursday 7 January 1915, p. 2; Barrier Daily Truth, 8 January 1915

Melville Birks had examined 67-year-old James Craig in hospital. The victim died later afternoon from bullet wounds in the hipbone and the abdominal cavity (cf. Barrier Daily Truth, 8 January)

Archibald B. Nairn had examined William John Shaw at about 11 o'clock on Friday morning at the pumping house at the Silverton Tram-way Company's Dam. The victim died from an expanding bullet that had caused a 2 inch long wound in the victim's back. "The cause of the death was shock caused by the wound."

Owen Meredith Moulden examined the bodies of Albert Elvin Millard and Alma M. Cowie at about 1:30 p.m. at a spot three miles out on the railway line from Railway Town. Both victims were already dead when he arrived there. Miss Cowie "was in a truck ... and had died from a large gaping wound in the front of her skull". Millard also found dead was wounded in the back and had several ribs broken.

John Coe, a railway guard in the employ of the Silverton Tramway Company, was one of the witnesses at the Inquest. He testified that he left Sulphide Street at 10:20 a.m. in charge of a train with a picnic party. At about 1½ mile from the Railway Town station he saw two dark men wearing turbans in the Umberumberka pipeline trench at a distance of 40 to 50 yards from the rails were shooting with rifles in their hand aiming at the train. He also "saw a horse in a light cart a few yards from the trench; on it was what at first looked like a red flag". They continued firing until the train passed. Coe applied the brakes and stopped at about 850 yards away from the men. Some people had got out of the train, but he ordered them back and the train went on as the men were still shooting. The train stopped at about three-quarters of a mile further. Several people were wounded. Elsegood, an assistant guard, ran about half a mile to the company's private telephone at the pumping station. He raised the alarm in the city; and about 10 minutes to 11 the relief train arrived with men with rifles; doctors and other people then followed.

There were a number of other witnesses in the court. Mary Wilkes standing at the door of her residence on 1 January at 9:45 a.m. saw an ice-cream cart with a red flag on a corner on the Silverton Road and two men in light-coloured clothes walking about. She went in and got some opera glasses to look for the men, but could not see them. Just then she heard shouts and screams, and rifle shots. The train pulled up a few yards (as opposed to Coe's claim 850 yards). Before this she also saw the two men fired four shots at a cycling man who then

fell on a crouching position. She then lost the sight of the men round the hill, but soon after saw them again (down) the hill coming from the cart making their way for Rocky Hill on which Mr Campbell was shot. They passed 200 yards of her. They were dark and wore turbans.

Jane Beaumont, a resident of Cobalt-street, Railway Town is another witness whose testament is equally interesting. Beaumont testified that Alfred Elton Millard, an employee on pipe track work, resided in her home. He left her house at 10.20 a.m. on 1 January on his bicycle going to the pipe track to repair a leak. The witness next saw his body in the coffin at the undertaker's. He was single.

Edward John Glasson was the witness who testified William John Shaw's death. Glasson heard about a dozen shots and thought that one of the bullets hit Shaw who was sitting opposite to him. Mr. Shaw died in about a quarter of an hour from a big wound in his back. The witness also saw a bullet struck against the leg of the young girl he was with, and bruised her skin, but did not cut it. Glasson also testified that the men in the trench wore turbans; a white cart with a bay horse was a few yards away; a red flag was flying on the cart with some device on it. Likewise Alice Shaw, William John's wife, testified that her husband fell in her arms after he was shot and died instantly after shouting two times "I'm shot."

Joseph James Perkins, manager for Jabez Wright, testified that he received the body of deceased A. E. Millard from the Hospital with a bullet wound on the middle back of his body.

Charles Ashton Oliver, a grocer residing in Morgan-lane, Broken Hill, also a passenger on the picnic train, testified that he saw a white cart with a light bay horse in it, and two dark skinned men lying in the pipe track trench with rifles shooting at the train. He witnessed that Alma Cowie was shot bleeding from her mouth. He also testified that Miss Kavanagh was also shot.

Clarence Oliver O'Brien, a mill hand at the South mine, who was on the M.U. picnic train on 1 January, testified that he saw a wound in the top of Miss Cowie's head as she fell in his arms after being shot and died about 45 minutes later. He also testified that he saw two dark men and the white cart with a flag on it.

William Cowie testified that the deceased, Alma Priscilla Cowie, was his daughter; she was 17 years of age in March last, and was born in Broken Hill.

May Shirff Khan a widow and stepdaughter of the late James Craig resided

with him at West Broken Hill about 100 yards from the Cable Hotel. She testified that at about 11 o'clock a.m. on 1 January, the deceased was standing at the door of their house cutting wood. When she heard shots coming from the direction of the white rocks opposite the Cable Hotel and falling around the house, she asked her father to get inside. But as he continued talking to her few minutes he was shot. She carried him inside and telephoned to Dr Bartley who attended him. However he died at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the same day, in the hospital as George Gordon Wondle Dally testified. Although not clarified or testified it is possible that James Craig was shot by the perpetrators or by a stray bullet that might have come out of one of the guns of the squad. Barrier Daily Truth's report of 4 and 8 January is similar to that of Barrier Miner with an exception that Craig, as he was carrying a bundle in and talking to his daughter for a few minutes, was picked up from the rocks. Yet it should be noted that Barrier Daily Truth two days earlier on 2 January reported that Craig who lived near Cable Hotel, when he saw the Turks approaching he ran inside his home, but "they came to the door and shot him."

Frederick E. Wenzel, a journalist residing in Wolfram-street, was also on the excursion train. He testified that he saw distinctly the men who fired on the train from the pipe track trench. He afterwards saw the bodies of the men who were shot near the Cable Hotel and testified that they were the same men. He knew that one of them was Molla 'Abdullah, a butcher, who had been fined in the court recently. He came to know that the other man was called Gül Muhammed.

**The Coroner's verdict was as follows:**

I find that the said Alma Priscilla Cowie, William John Shaw, Alfred Elton Millard, and James Craig, at Broken Hill, in the State of New South Wales, on 1 January 1915 died from shock, the result of gun-shot wounds feloniously and maliciously inflicted on them on the same day by Gül Muhammed and Molla 'Abdullah, since deceased.

**Comment [Victims and Coronial Inquests]:** There is not much to comment on the inquests. In short the inquest on the victims took place on Thursday 7 January 1915 by the coroner (Mr. C. F. Butler, S.M.) and inquest on the Turks/Afghans was postponed to another day. Apparently no legal gentleman represented any of the victims or the perpetrators.

The court held the inquest in the best possible way leaving no space for any criticism or doubts. Fully qualified practitioners (Owen Meredith Moulden,

Archibald B. Nairn, and Melville Birks) examined the four victims (Alma M. Priscilla Cowie, Albert Alfred Elvin Millard, William John Shaw, and James Craig) either on spot or in hospital. According to both practitioners and witnesses the victims all had died from bullet wounds.

The verdict was that all four victims were killed by the gunshots fired by Gül Muhammed and Molla ‘Abdullah.

### **Inquest of the Turks<sup>55</sup>**

Inquest on the Turks was left to last and it took two days, Friday 8 January and Tuesday 12 January<sup>56</sup>. Meanwhile the bodies of the perpetrators must have been buried in an unknown ground or cremated.

Inspector Miller acting on behalf of the police conducted the inquiry. On the press table there were a long knife in a sheath, the rifles, bandoliers, and several revolver bullets.

Apart from the witnesses there were surprisingly very few persons in the court and most probably no Afghans.

Melville Birks, medical practitioner and surgeon superintendent of the Broken Hill and District Hospital, testified that Gül Muhammed was admitted to the hospital at about 1:30 p.m. suffering from small-bore rifle bullet wounds on his chest, neck, forearm, left hand fingers, and left thigh. He died shortly afterwards from shock<sup>57</sup>.

The only Muslim who testified in the court was Kodaram who lived in the North Camel Camp. He took oath according to Islamic creed. He had just returned from a trip on Christmas Eve. On the New Year’s Day in the afternoon in the company of Inspector Miller and Lieutenant Resch he had gone to the Hospital where he had seen Molla ‘Abdullah’s body in the morgue and that of Gül Muhammed in a bed<sup>58</sup>. He knew both Gül Muhammed and Molla ‘Abdullah. Molla ‘Abdullah used to live in the North Camp, but did not know whether Gül

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55 Barrier Miner, Friday 8 January 1915, p. 4 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310395> accessed on 28 January 2015; Barrier Daily Truth, 9 January 1915

56 The inquest of the Turks according to Barrier Daily Truth, 8 January, started at 2:30 p.m. on Friday 8 January.

57 According to Barrier Daily Truth of 2 January Gül Muhammed, the unidentified assassin, was shot through legs, shoulder and groin, and the first finger of the right hand. He did not speak before he died in hospital at 3 o’clock (in the afternoon). Yet according to the same paper dated 9 January, “the fingers of the left hand were lacerated. There were bullets through both thighs.”

58 Yet Barrier Daily Truth on 2 January reports that the name of second assassin is not yet known and the police would be pleased if some one could identify him.

Muhammed did. He had not seen them on the morning of 1 January. However, someone had told him that day ‘Abdullah had been smoking gungha,<sup>59</sup> and had gone into the bush with his gun. Kodaram had seen Senior-Constable on Monday and had told him about ‘Abdullah going into the bush. Kodaram had not seen previously the rifles, belts, cartridges etc. produced in the court.

Apparently Kodaram<sup>60</sup> is the only Afghan Muslim who had testified on the perpetrators, but the information he had given is not first hand. It is also strange that he is not sure where Gül Muhammed lived since the number of cameleers was not great and most probably they all knew each other.

The other witnesses mostly were those who had testified in the proceedings of the victims and therefore the information overlaps.

Charles E. Oliver, grocer residing in Morgan-lane, Broken Hill, testified that he was on the picnic train on 1 January. He saw “an ice cream cart, on which flew a Turkish flag” and two dark men firing at the train several times. He saw Miss Cowie who was behind him shot, Miss Kavanagh, beside him, wounded<sup>61</sup>, and Mrs Crocker, seated opposite him, shot in the jaw.

Edward John Glasson, mill hand residing in Cornish-street, Railway Town, was another passenger on the picnic train on New Year’s Day. He likewise saw an ice cream cart and a bay horse, and two dark men, wearing turbans, “lying in the Umberumberka pipe track trench” firing at the train. One of the bullets entered the body of Mr Shaw, who died after quarter of an hour.

Mary Wilkes, married woman, residing at West Broken Hill, not far from the railway line, also saw a white cart with a red flag on it, and two dark men firing on the train. They also fired on a man on bicycle heading towards Silverton. They then went towards West Broken Hill.

Frederick Edward Wenzel, journalist attached to the staff of “Barrier Daily Truth” (cf. 9 January), residing in Wolfram-street, repeated his yesterday’s evidence regarding the men who fired on the train. Afterwards he testified that he joined the attacking parties; “in a rocky outcrop behind the hotel he saw two men; he

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59 Gunga or ganja and ganga means marijuana (a term originated in India). Marijuana is made from dried leaves of the hemp plant and smoked in a cigarette.

60 “Kodaram is a Village in Vadgam Taluka in Banas Kantha District of Gujarat State, India. It is located 32 km towards South from District headquarters Palanpur. 18 KM from Vadgam. 96 KM from State capital Gandhinagar.” See <http://www.onefivevine.com/india/villages/Banas-Kantha/Vadgam/Kodaram> accessed on 5 February 2015.

61 According to Barrier Daily Truth 2 January, Miss Kavanagh was not shot by a bullet but was hit by a bone from the shattered skull of Miss Cowie.

was informed that one was dead and the other wounded; they were similarly dressed, and similar in appearance to the men who fired on the train, and witness had no doubt that they were the same; the flag produced was identical with the one the witness saw on the ice cream cart, where the men fired on the train.”

William Francis Dimond, sergeant of police, stationed at Broken Hill, testified that at about 10.30 a.m. on 1 January, he received a telephone message at the Central Police Station, stating that the M.U. picnic train had been shot at by two armed men near the cemetery, and that there were several passengers killed and wounded. And about 250 yards past the West Camel camp, they saw two men leaving. Sergeant Gibson and Sergeant William Francis Dimond procured two motorcars and with 10 policemen they went to the Frieberg Hotel, and from there they went to West Broken Hill, near the scene of the tragedy. They then preceded West camp going in a northerly direction; they were dressed in turbans and khaki coats and carried rifles. As Sergeant Dimond was about to pull up his car, the two men knelt down and fired at them. The police fired back. Constable Mills was wounded twice, in the buttock and the thigh, during the exchange of fire. The exchange of fire continued for a considerable time.

Sergeant Dimond’s testament can be complemented by Mrs Willis’ statement that appeared in Barrier Daily Truth on 2 January. According to Mrs Willis - who had earlier seen a cart with a red flag and two men near the railway line as the train passed and also a man on a bicycle fell/shot – the two men proceeded in the direction of Afghan camp and to her horror they passed by her daughter and a friend of hers within short range of the men whom she later came to know were murderers. “Fortunately, however, the girls were not attacked.” It could not be argued that the murderers felt sorry for the two girls as they had earlier according to Barrier Daily Truth had fired three shots that whizzed over the heads of children before they had arrived at the rear of Cable Hotel. Is it possible they had saved their bullets for the attacking party?

The police and volunteers from civilians formed an attacking party within only three quarters of an hour. They stormed the hill where the perpetrators had taken refuge behind the rocks. Molla ‘Abdullah was dead and Gül Muhammed was taken to hospital wounded from his right hand with a handkerchief tied around it. Although some people said that the victims waved the flag of truce, Inspector Miller claimed it was not so.

Sergeant Dimond produced the rifle and cartridge belts that he found on the body of the victims. The cartridges of one belt fitted the long rifle, of the

Mauser pattern (small-bore rifle), found next to Gül Muhammed, and of the other belt fitted the Snider found near Molla ‘Abdullah. A sheath knife found on Molla ‘Abdullah, and a black bag containing documents in foreign language (Ottoman Turkish) found on Gül Muhammed were also produced at the court.

Sergeant Dimond’s testament can also be complemented with the Barrier Daily Truth dated 2 January: Senior Constable Grigor informed a representative of “Barrier Daily Truth” that one of the Turks loaded his rifle and as he was about to fire he fell mortally wounded. Constable Grigor almost immediately visited the scene and recovered the rifle, which was of the Sydney pattern. Sergeant-major Clarke recovered the other rifle from the other Turk who was “in the act of firing when, a bullet splinted the butt, and then ended his career, as the butt was saturated with blood.” The gun “was of the English pattern of 1882.”

Frank Rahim Bughush, a Bombay Hawker, testified that he knew Gül Muhammed for fifteen years and told the court that he served in Turkish army several times and therefore was known as a Turk although he was an Afridi. According to Bughush the last time Gül Muhammed served in Ottoman army was about eighteen months or two years ago. He further testified that he wore European clothes and rented a room from an Assyrian in Argent Lane

The documents described by Sergeant Dimond found on Gül Muhammed and the letters found two days later on the battle scene, near the rocks, were handed over to Captain Hardie of the military to be taken to Adelaide for interpretation. Captain Hardie was requested to attend the court on Tuesday morning 12 January. Also according to Barrier Daily Truth, 7 January, the documents were found on Monday, two days later.

**Comments [The Inquest on the Perpetrators and Evidences]**<sup>62</sup>. The most important evidence, the two letters, was presented on Tuesday 12 January. However, there were two other important pieces of evidences presented at the court, a white handkerchief with blood on it, and a little black bag containing documents written or printed in a foreign language. Both belonged to Gül Muhammed. Barrier Miner gives no other information on the documents found in the black bag. The white handkerchief however, poses a problem.

The handkerchief was found tied round Gül Muhammed’s right hand. Whereas according to the report given by Melville Birks, medical practitioner, when Gül Muhammed was admitted to the hospital he had bullet wounds on

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62            Barrier Miner, Friday 8 January 1915, p. 4; Barrier Daily Truth, 13 January 915

his chest, neck, right forearm, left hand fingers, and left thigh. The handkerchief therefore most probably was tied round his left hand. Inspector Miller said he brought this piece of evidence out because some people said they thought they saw a flag of truce waved; but that was not so. However, in the light of these evidence it is very likely that Gül Muhammed actually waved the flag of truce, but as the firing continued he had the fingers of his left hand lacerated. He then gave up hope and tied the handkerchief of truce round his fingers<sup>63</sup>.

The other witnesses mostly are those who have testified in the inquests on the victims and therefore the information overlaps.

Charles E. Oliver, grocer, residing in Morgan-lane, Broken Hill, and Edward John Glasson, mill hand, residing in Cornish-street, Railway Town, were the two passenger on the picnic train who testified that they saw an ice cream cart and a bay horse, and two dark men, wearing turbans, “lying in the Umberumberka pipe track trench” firing at the train. Likewise Frederick Edward Wenzel, journalist, residing in Wolfram-street, repeated his yesterday’s evidence regarding the men who fired on the train. He also testified that he joined the attacking parties and saw the same men in a rocky outcrop behind the hotel and was informed that one was dead and the other wounded. These men were similarly dressed and were similar in appearance to those who were firing at the train in the morning and the flag produced was similar to the one on the ice cream cart.

#### **Two Letters Found after Three Days of the Attack<sup>64</sup>**

“James Patrick Lyons, miner, residing at North Broken Hill, said he saw the documents produced (the confessions); he found them planted under the north end of a firm rock where the men were firing; by men he referred to the deceased; both papers were in an envelope together; he found the papers on Monday, 4 January (also according to Barrier Daily Truth, 3 January); he went out to the scene of the fight, and was rooting about in the dust; the papers were almost completely covered; he took the papers to the police station, and gave them to Inspector Miller; there were bloodstains on the envelope when he found it. (Lyons, however, did not explain why he visited the white rocks on Monday 4 January and not on Saturday or Sunday.)

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63 Inquest on the Turks, ...

64 Barrier Miner, Tuesday 12 January 1915, p 2 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45310954> accessed on 28 January 2015; Barrier Daily Truth, 13 January 1915 includes translations of the two letters and Gül Muhammed’s application to the Ottoman Army

John L. Hardie, captain in the permanent military forces and D.A.A.G. of the 4th Military District, stated that on 5 January, in Broken Hill, he received the two documents, marked A and B, from Inspector Miller; he took the papers to Adelaide, and obtained an interpretation, which he tendered, together with a statutory declaration by the interpreter (the interpretations were marked exhibit 1); he produced a further document, the translation of part of which was attached; part was an application for enlistment in the Turkish army, part was a private letter; further documents were copies of extracts from the Koran and a priest's visiting card."

Mr Butler cross-examined Inspector Miller at the court. The outcome was that Gül Muhammed was an Afghan, but the Mahommedans recognised the Sultan as the head of their religion. Gül Muhammed was a warlike and very religious man. The case seemed to be one of the Muslim fanaticisms. It was certain that the men were not Turks, at least not by birth, but were naturalised. This statement was rejected since there was no evidence. In India the Mahommedans frequently come out and kill the Christians.

Mr Butler also asked Captain Hardie whether the letters were written by one hand. He answered "No, sir; they were in different handwritings"

Mr. Butler recorded the following verdict: —

"I find that the deceased Gool Badsha Mahomed and Mullah Abdullah, at Broken Hill, in the State of New South Wales, on the 1st day of January 1915, died from shock due to gun-shot wounds were inflicted up-on them on the same day by some person to me unknown. I further find that gun-shot wounds inflicted by such un-known person or persons in self-defence, and the shooting which inflicted such wounds was justifiable and under the circumstances disclosed." What they left behind was simply two rifles,<sup>65</sup> a knife, a ferman, and two letters. The two letters that throw light on the purpose of attack since then have been the point of controversy.

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65 I am grateful to Jenny Camilleri for letting me know that the rifles are stored in the Police Historical Museum in Sydney.

### **The Translation of Gül Muhammed's letter<sup>66</sup>**

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. There is no god, but Allah (and) Muhammed is Allah's Messenger.

I am poor and humble servant of the Sultan, the commander of the believers. My name is Gul Badshah Muhammed Afghan Afridi. In the reign of Sultan 'Abdulhamid, I have visited his kingdom four times to fight for the sake of becoming a martyr [or I went four times to the country of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid<sup>67</sup> for fighting to become a martyr]. At the time (On the day) that I was humble servant of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Reşid,<sup>68</sup> I was blessed and honored with an edict (hukm – decree, order, commandment - ferman) signed and sealed by his honorable seal. It is now in my waist belt. You will find it there if (at) some point artillery (lit. cannon) and rifle bullets have not destroyed it. We killed you people, and our/my life is also (sacrificed) for the honor of our religion, and our/my life is (sacrificed) in the service of Allah as combatants (mujahidin), special to the rule of the Sultan, the commander of believers. I have no enmity with anyone nor do I have (a personal) benefit (in this fight). We did not inform any one (on this matter). Allah is only witnessing that ... we two men, without informing any one on this issue (carried out this act). And we swear on the Noble Qur'an that no one other than two of us know anything about this (that we are here). We both pray that peace in Islam may reach you all.

Written by my own pen Mala (Molla) 'Abdullah only

(for) Gul Badshah Muhammed Afridi.

### **The Translation of Molla 'Abdullah's letter**

....Yehu?

We are poor, wretched, and humble servant sinners (in the eyes) of Allah, hopeful of His beneficent mercy. I am traditionally wretched foreigner (lit. away from home) in this country. Mala (Molla) was added to my name for lenience. One day Inspector blamed me for no means. And the second time when it

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66 I have retranslated both letters with the help of existing ones sent to me by Dr. Whyte and Dr. Aly Zaman, a former graduate student at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, ANU. I have also checked and corrected the final version against the translation by Dr Muhammad Fahim of İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University. I would like to thank them all. According to Dr Fahim the letters are in Urdu and Molla 'Abdullah was poorly educated. His level of education was no more than a third grade modern day primary school student.

67 Sultan Abdu'l-Hamid ruled from 31 August 1876 to 27 April 1909.

68 Sultan Reşad (Mehmed V) ruled from 27 April 1909 to 3 July 1918.

happened I pleaded for a favor, but he did not listen. As I was sitting angry, this man Gul Muhammed Badshah came to me. We conversed and revealed to each other our conditions and circumstances. I was happy and felt very joyful for Allah has accepted my request (prayer) that we die as combatting martyrs in the path of Allah. I have no enmity against anyone. I have acted (against you?) in the name of my religion/faith only and by means of the decree of the Sultan and that of Qur'an. If I were to kill my (personal) enemy, it would have been the inspector, but I have none. I swear to Allah (Khuda) and on the Noble Qur'an that in doing this (action), I have informed no one.

(Signed) only Mala 'Abdullah

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The two letters prior they were sent to Adelaide for an official translation, an Afghan or Indian, most probably Kodaram, was asked to make a rough translation of them into English. These rough translations that differ greatly from the official ones, but overall with same meaning, most probably are the ones published in Kerang New Times (Friday 8 January 1915, p. 2)<sup>69</sup>. The copies of the two letters in Urdu and their official translations can be accessed on the Internet. The translation of the two letters and Gül Muhammed's application to enlist in Ottoman army and the official reply were also published word by word in Barrier Daily Truth, 13 January.

Although according to Captain Hardie's statement the letters were of different handwritings, Molla 'Abdullah makes it clear that he himself wrote Gül Muhammed's letter and naturally he must have also written his own letter. However, an expert can make a forensic comparison. Gül Muhammed in his letter claims that he visited Ottoman land four times during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909), and states that he fought in the Ottoman army. His claim that he received an order (ferman) from Sultan Reşad (Mehmed V – 1909-1918) might mean that following the reply from Sultan to his letter to join the Ottoman army, he went to the Ottoman land a fifth time and probably participated in the First Balkan War of 1912, but not the Second, if he returned back to Australia in 1912. At the time he was 36 or 37 years old<sup>70</sup>. This however can only be verified if we have an access to the original ferman. On the other hand if the date given in the translation of Gül Muhammed's application to

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69 Kerang New Times, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/91974415> accessed on 19 January 2015.

70 Christine Stevens: Mahomed, Gool Badsha (1875-1915), ...

enlist in the Ottoman army and the reply he received on 15 October 1912 [corresponding to 2 Teşrinievvel/October (1)328 of Mali71 calendar] published in *Barrier Daily Truth* (13 January), is correct then he must have participated in the Second Balkan War and returned to Australia sometime at the end of 1913 at the conclusion of the war following the Istanbul peace treaty signed between Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria on 29 September 1913. This date will also confirm his claim in his letter that he received an order (ferman) from Sultan Reşad and also Frank Rahim Bughush's statement that Gül Muhammed served in the Ottoman army eighteen months or two years previously, that is, in 1913.

Both Gül Muhammed and Molla 'Abdullah in their letters make it clear that they had no grudge against anyone and that their fight as combatants (mujahidin) was simply to fall martyrs in the path of God. However neither firing on the civilians nor the joined armed forces of attacking party of Broken Hill hunting them down can be justified.

The Broken Hill attack, also called the Battle of Broken Hill, an incident that happened over one hundred years ago, is kept alive through the media and commemoration.<sup>72</sup> The relatives of the victims criticized the Department of Veterans' Affairs for not including in its Centenary of Anzac commemorations.<sup>73</sup> The Broken Hill attack, despite a distance of a century, was identified with Lindt Chocolate Café hostage crisis at Martin Place, Sydney, on 15–16 December 2014 as mentioned earlier. Haron Monis, the culprit, was gunned down and one of his victims, Katrina Dawson, was identified with Alma Cowie.<sup>74</sup> The Broken Hill attack has also been identified with Islam on the occasion of other Muslim-instigated attacks such as the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center in the US in 2001, Muslim Chechens blowing up a bus and detonating explosives at the central train station in the Russian city of Volgograd in December 2013

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71 Mali calendar, although in use since 1677, became an official calendar of Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Selim III in 1789 A.D. Cf. <http://www.oriold.uzh.ch/maliyya.html>

72 Breen, J.: Broken Hill remembers victims of 1915 attack by gunmen brandishing Turkish flag (ABC) <https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/25886862/broken-hill-remembers-victims-of-1915-attack-by-gunmen-brandishing-turkish-flag/> accessed on 19 January 2015.

73 Drewitt-Smith, A.: Relative of man killed in Battle of Broken Hill, angry it won't be commemorated <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-09/battle-of-broken-hill/5953956> accessed on 25 January 2015.

74 Durie, M.: From Broken Hill to Martin Place: Individual Jihad Comes to Australia, 1915 to 2015, <http://www.icjs-online.org/index.php?article=5681> accessed on 26 January 2015.

killing 34.<sup>75</sup> The Broken Hill attack has also been associated with ISIS; and Turkey is blamed for the atrocities they committed as if the First World War has never ended.<sup>76</sup> The most important fact is that although the perpetrators were Afghans they were and still are mostly addressed in feature articles as “Turks” and as such similar speculations continue to this day.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from a number of articles there are too many sites both in English and in Turkish on Broken Hill attack on the Internet. Most of these sites hardly reflect what actually happened at Broken Hill. Some sites correlate Broken Hill attack with recent terrorist attacks. Some other sites interpret the attack with conspiracy theories. Such approaches cannot be justified. The local newspapers have covered the attack and the battle between the local police and the inquests. A close study of these newspapers clearly indicates that the attack actually happened as described. The Mali date given in Barrier Daily Truth (13 January) as I have already explained confirms Gül Padişah’s claim that he visited to the Ottoman land and also received the Sultan’s ferman. Access to the original ferman to be compared with the Ottoman ferman of the time will no doubt certify his claim and leave no room for conspiracy theories. A close and forensic study of the letters that were discovered three days later likewise will confirm that letters were not forgery and were written by the same person contrary to Captain Hardie’s claim that they were in different handwritings. I already said that hunting down the assassins could not have been justified for I believe that they would have easily been captured alive since they stood no chance of winning the fight against a strong force of the police and the armed volunteers, and the fact that they had already used most their bullets and therefore were bound to run out of the remaining ammunition. Had they been captured alive, bearing in mind they had raised a white handkerchief, would have given us a chance to find out what motives they had in attacking the civilians and whether they were sincere in claiming that they had no grudge against anyone.

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75 Folkes, N. H.: The Battle of Broken Hill – Islam’s gift to Australia <http://www.nick-folkes.com/2014/01/01/the-battle-of-broken-hill-islams-gift-to-australia/> accessed on 13 February 2015.

76 Diamadis, P.: History repeating: from the Battle of Broken Hill to the sands of Syria <http://theconversation.com/history-repeating-from-the-battle-of-broken-hill-to-the-sands-of-syria-32146> accessed on 25 January 2015. N. H. Folkes, ...

77 Battle of Broken Hill: Turks Attack on the Picnic Train <http://www.brokenhillaustralia.com.au/about-broken-hill/local-factbook/turk-s-attack-on-the-picnic-train/> accessed on 13 January 2015.

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**PICNIC TRAIN FIRED ON.**  
By Turkish Murderers.  
**Three Men and Woman Killed.**  
Men, Women and Children  
Wounded.  
Great Battle in the Hills.  
Dum-dum Bullets Used by  
Fanatics.  
Barrier Men Turn out in Force.  
Constable Mills Shot in Leg.  
Turk Captured by Police.  
One Moslem Shot Dead.  
Another Dies in the Hospital.  
Truth' Reporter Continuously  
on the Scene.

Image 1. Barrier Daily Truth, Saturday January 2, 1915



14/8318

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE,

MELBOURNE, 6th November, 1914.

WL 7602

Commandant,  
3rd Military District.

The following copy of a telegram sent to  
Commandants all Military Districts is forwarded for your  
information:-

"War has been declared against Turkey"

G. H. Reynolds  
To: [Signature]  
Date: 7/11/14

G. H. Reynolds Esq.  
Colonel,  
Chief of the General Staff.

Intelligence Section G.S.  
State that subjects of  
the Turkish Empire are  
enemy subjects

7/11/14

G. H. Reynolds  
G.S.O. [Signature]

Image 2: Australia declared war against Turkey and Turks as enemy subjects

2/0.  
TELEGRAMS AND CABLES  
SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS SHOULD  
BE ORDERED AT  
THE Commonwealth Statistician,  
"Justice," Building, Station,  
Melbourne.



DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS.

COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS.

PLEASE COPY THIS NUMBER IN BLOCK

Melbourne, 11th November, 1914.

*Approved*

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 10th instant relative to the number of Turkish subjects in Victoria, I have to state that the only statistics of this nature available are those showing the birthplaces of the population at the Census of 3rd April, 1911. At that date the number of Victorian residents who had been born in Turkish countries was as follows:-

Birthplace	Males	Females	Persons
Turkey in Europe	27	4	31
Asia Minor	7	2	9
Syria	186	137	323
Arabia	3	-	3
Total	223	143	366

Yours truly,

*L. Kibbles*

Commonwealth Statistician.

*L. Kibbles*

Captain H. Jones,  
Intelligence Section,  
General Staff,  
Head Quarters,  
3rd Military District,  
MELBOURNE.



Image 3: Turkish Subject in Australia 1911

## THE WAR PRECAUTIONS (ALIENS REGISTRATION) REGULATIONS 1916.

## Form of Application for Registration.

This form is to be filled up in duplicate, and the Alien is to attend in person, with the duplicate forms, before the member of the Police Force in charge of the Police Station nearest to his usual place of abode.

Name (in full) John Mahomet  
 Nationality Turkey Sex Male  
 Birthplace Constantinople Date of birth 1854  
 Place of residence\* 35 Colindale Avenue  
 Place of business (if any) 35 Colindale Avenue  
 Occupation Fishmonger  
 Date of entry to Commonwealth 1900

\*If a member of a ship's crew, state base name of ship, port at which voyage commenced, and port to which bound.

## Personal Description.

Height 5ft 8 inches Colour of eyes Blue  
 Colour of hair Grey Notable marks Nil  
 Remarks—

Let check print if unable to write  
 signature to be made by person  
 of Alien Registration Officer.

Date of application 18th October 1916



Signature of Alien

(THIS SPACE FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.)

Certificate No. 49 Issued on 18th October 1916

Remarks—

Signature of Aliens  
 Registration Officer

Police Station Colindale

Image 4: John Mahomet's form for application for registration



Image 5: MU Picnic Train after the Attack



Image 6: Riflemen of Broken Hill



Image 7: Broken Hill Riflemen returning from their 1st Battle with Turks



Image 8:Visitors to the Battle Scene the day after the Shooting



Image 9:Turks Armament and Turkish Flag

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَلِیْمٌ  
 اے میرے عزیز ترین عزیز! سلام امیر المؤمنین کا ہوں میرا نام گل بادشاہ محمد ہے اتفاقاً آفریدی  
 سلطان تاج العبد کی وقت سے چار و پندرہ سال کی ملک کو گیا ہوں لڑائی کو واسطہ شہید  
 بیٹوں کو اور وقت غلام کو سلطان جسد الرشید سے حکم اور مہر مبارک دست خط مبارک  
 غلام کو سخت دیا جتا اب میری پاس میں کر میں اور جو کچھ تو بہ یہہ ماہند قوق کی  
 گویاں سے خراب نہ ہوا و تملو گوں کہ بلی بگا بہنی تملو گوں کہ اور اپنی ہ جان ہی وقت میں  
 اپنے دین کو خیرت سے اور میرا جان ہی سبب اللہ جو محمد بن خلیفہ حکم سلطان امیر المؤمنین  
 اور میرا کہ سے دشمن ہوں میں اور ناسے۔ مصلحت کیا کسی کہ خیر نہی کر خدا واحد شاید  
 والہ بیلہ مستملہ ہم دو اور نہ خیر نہیں کیا ایس بات کا بہد و تو قسم قرآن شریف کا  
 جو کہہ تہا ہی اگر یہ کہہ اختیار کیا ہے ان بہا ہی دونوں کی طرف سے تمام اسلام کو سلہ ہو ایک پونجی البتہ

تعلیم خود مدد اللہ و  
 گل بادشاہ محمد آفریدی

LETTER SIGNED GOOL BADSHA MAHOMED AFRIDI.

Image 10: Gül Muhammed's Letter (for translation see the text)

