

DEATH AT KURACHI

Warning to Westralian White Women

Further Facts Furnished

The Grigos' Relations with the 'Ghans Explained

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In our last issue we referred to the recent foul murder of a white woman, Mrs Dost Mahomet, at Kurachi. During the week further information has reached us from an absolutely reliable source which places the family of the murdered woman in a distinctly better light and, at the same time, adds greatly to the weight of the warnings to white women to ban the Afghan elements as vigorously as the devil. The impression that the family acquiesced in the marriage of Mrs Dost Mahomet to her Afghan husband is not borne out by subsequent information. As a matter of fact we are assured that the family were greatly distressed at the murdered woman ever becoming allied with an Afghan.

It appears that the family came to WA a number of years ago and the father entered into business at the Old Camp. The family, at that time, were all residents in Perth and the father had one of the girls, the murdered woman, with him at Coolgardie. Unfortunately, the old gentleman was a bit violent in his temper, but he was always solicitous for his family's welfare. He looked after his daughter well and had no desire that her life should ever be allied with Afghans or other Asiatics. In those days of the goldfields, however, there were many queer people about, and some of the queerest were found among the female section of the community. So far as the father could see, the girl was mixing with women who were reputedly decent members of their sex. Whether some devilish dealings were indulged in by some of these women was never quite proved but it was undoubtedly due to some of them that the girl, only 16 years old at that time, came to know Dost Mahomet.

The swarthy Asiatic established a certain amount of sway over the girls and, to give him credit, he does seem to have been a superior man amongst his countrymen, although given to peculiar tempers on occasions, during which he was and apt to run amok.

One day Dost Mahomet persuaded the girl to accompany him for a drive and used his opportunity to abduct her. He father, accompanied by a posse of men, set after Dost Mahomet when it was found out what had happened. The Afghan had too good a start and catching a boat at Fremantle, he fled to India taking the girl with him. Mrs Mahomet had a somewhat unique experience in the matrimonial line, for she was married twice, once according to Christian customs and once under Mahommedan. The couple sojourned for some time in India, and eventually returned to this state, where Dost Mahomet's principal interests lay. From the time that the girl fled from home no communication was held with her by her family, the members of which disowned her for her action in allying herself with the Pathan. This state of affairs prevailed for the better part of ten years or until about five years ago when a reconciliation was effected.

At this time her father and two brothers were working the Hope Syndicate at Bulong. The father was anxious for his daughter's welfare and enquired of her if she were satisfied with her lot and if she were not, he told her that he would provide for her. She replied that she would put up with her lot and remain with her husband and young family. At this time Dost Mahomet and his wife were at Port Hedland and a little later her sister and one of her brothers went to the same town to take over the Poondina Hotel. This sister became married to a white man, and the brother disposed of his interest in the hotel. The best speculation he could see for his money was to purchase a camel team and enter into trading business with the men in

the inland mining camps. In this line he was very successful, and ultimately took a trip to Perth. While in the city he saw an opportunity for a good investment, and therefore he tried to dispose of his camel team. The offers for the team being wholly unsatisfactory, he returned to Port Hedland and at his sister's request he agreed to enter into business relations with her.

Dost Mahomet was not concerned in the matter at all, for it was only at Mrs Mahomet's personal request that this brother was ever brought into any semblance of relationship with the Afghan element at all. Even then he was not associated with them by business, or any other ties, and had as little to do with them as possible. Being concerned with camels it was impossible that he should not come into contact with the Afghans, and quarrels happened. One Afghan named Said Kudoos, a Mahomedan priest, was particularly nasty and was given a hiding on one occasion for his behavior. This Kudoos exercised a strong religious influence over Dost Mahomet, and could do a good deal with him, although Dost Mahomet heartily detested him. Later the brothers in question became engaged in business transactions with Dost Mahomet to some extent and Said Kudoos sought to poison his countryman's mind against his white relatives. Dost Mahomet informed his wife's brother that Kudoos had told him that he was not getting a fair deal in their business dealings. Accordingly, the brother severed any connection he had with Dost Mahomet and struck out entirely on his own account.

About this time when the quarrel happened which resulted in Dost Mahomet's death, and the subsequent complete acquittal of the two brothers of the murdered woman, Dost Mahomet had one of his peculiar fits of semi-insanity upon him. He had not slept properly for two or three nights and on the morning of the fateful day he came into the room where his wife and her brother were. He was in a wildly excited state, and after saying something to his wife in his own language with which she became fairly well acquainted, he wound up by striking her on the left breast with his right hand and kicking her in the stomach. Her brother naturally immediately jumped up and Dost Mahomet flew at him like a tiger, and a violent struggle ensued. The Afghan, though an exceedingly powerful man, was overcome for the time being, but the row was resumed a little later on, and resulted in the injuries to Dost Mahomet which caused his death.

Dost Mahomet had a brother named Jourach, who was associated with him in business transactions. Jourach brought all his sinister influence to bear on the unfortunate white women. He persuaded her to make over her property to him to be held in trust for the children: in fact, to give him absolute control of it. He threatened her with the likelihood of being done away with if she remained in W.A., and told her that if she went to Kurachi with the children and had them brought up under Mahomedan conditions, she would ensure her safety. He drew up an agreement in which he became the sole trustee of the property but for a time the woman fought against signing it. Singularly enough the harassed woman did not communicate all her fears to the members of her own family. To others she expressed herself with almost Oriental fatalism, and stated that if she was to be murdered she might just as well be slaughtered in India. Strong persuasion was used to try and dissuade her from taking the trip, but the fear of Jourach and his compatriots was so great that she was afraid to disobey them. Not only was persuasion used, but a practically bogus arrest was fixed up in order to detain her but all was to no purpose. The Afghan influence prevailed, and the unfortunate woman went away to her death. It is believed that another thing which weighed greatly with her was the fear that her two brothers would be made the victims of Afghan vengeance if she attempted to defy Jourach in getting his way.

A sinister feature of the way in which Jourach was working in order to get full control of the whole of the property, is revealed by a knowledge of Mahommedan customs. Among these people the absolute rule is that the Mahommedan children have to render complete submission to the male head of the family. Jourach claimed that position, and therefore wanted the full control of all property so that he could govern and mould the children as he willed. By having then brought up in India he knew that their minds would be trained in that direction, and his power would be paramount. At the same time he would have the benefit of the full control and disposition of their property, amounting to something like £3,000. It was an agreement giving Jourach all the powers that Mrs Dost Mahomet was so strongly urged to ignore, but the hypnotism or fear was too great for her powers of resistance.

The brother, whom we have most particularly referred to, was away from Port Hedland at the time of these transactions. When he heard of them he made all haste to catch his sister in time to prevent her taking the trip, but he arrived too late upon the scene. When writing to his sister in Kurachi he advised her to always carry a small revolver and to keep herself as closely as possible under the protection of the British Resident at Kurachi. The last letter received from the murdered woman is pathetic in the light of after events. She informs her people that she is being made a great deal of by the relatives and friends of Dost Mahomet, being supplied with a beautiful white horse and everything being done for her comfort and pleasure.

In another part of her letter she states that the children are happy and play about in the fields with other little mites, but she does not like to leave them when she was returning to Western Australia. The significant portion of her letter is that which refers to the opinions held in Kurachi by the Mahommedan people regarding her husband's death. The story which had reached there stated that her two brothers had deliberately murdered Dost Mahomet, and that she had assisted them to the extent of allowing them into the house to do so. She had given the people the true explanation of the matter, and they had expressed themselves as quite satisfied with her version. So they told the unfortunate woman, and thereby lulled her fears, but it was almost certainly a part of their Asiatic cunning. At Port Hedland where the whole of the circumstances were widely known the opinion has all along been hold that the woman's death was contemplated from the very first. Considerable justification exists for that opinion, for Jourach and his following packed all their belongings and quietly fled from Port Hedland ten days before the news of the murder reached W.A.

As far as could be discovered they had all cleared to Tanami. When the news reached Port Hedland feeling ran high, and had Jourach and his gang then been within striking distance it is probable that serious racial disturbances would have ensued. All through the sad history the devilry of the panther-like Pathan is apparent. From the abduction of the girl to the murder of the woman it is one series of clarion-toned warnings to white women to beware of the Afghan or any other man of Asiatic extraction. A strong movement is on foot to have the children, now under British protection, returned to their native land. Even if the people were saddled with the cost of doing so, it would be a justifiable expense, as it would remove the children from the malign Mahommedan influence. These children, however, are not paupers and the demon Jourach should be made to disgorge any of their property or possessions which he may hold. In addition, if there exists any possibility of proving his complicity in the Kurachi murder he should be punished to the utmost extent of the law.

[NOTE: the racial views expressed in this report are reprinted as a true reflection of the "Truth" newspaper in 1910 and in no way reflect the views of the researcher in 2022].