

## Already here: writing Lebanese into Queensland history

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Will the white people who are engaged in business pursuits without a protest suffer themselves to be ousted by Javanese, Syrians, Chinese or Japanese? Should all white people unite to save their race and civilisation from going down before the black, brown and yellow invaders?<sup>1</sup>

Of the four peoples identified in 1897 by the radically pro-white newspaper the *Worker* as part of ‘the swarming hordes of Asia’ that should be absolutely excluded from Australia, it is the ‘Syrians’ whose identity is perhaps the least well known. Recognised as non-white and non-European, these ‘Syrians’ are rarely mentioned in Australian historical texts.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a search through historical sources could justifiably lead to the conclusion that there were no Lebanese in Australia before the 1940s. Hence, it is generally assumed that Lebanese migration to Australia is a relatively recent phenomenon and is concentrated in the southern states. As I will demonstrate in this paper, this is not the case, and even though they are still rarely mentioned in Australian historical studies, there has been a Lebanese presence in Australia and in Queensland since at least the early 1880s.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding who the ‘Syrians’ were is the key to understanding the Australian Lebanese story. The researcher scrutinising archival records and newspapers for information about the Lebanese in Australia in the period 1880 to 1947 would be searching in vain. Not because there were no such immigrants but because they were identified as ‘Syrians’. Situated on the Mediterranean, Lebanon borders Syria to the north and east, and Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to the south. After approximately 400 years of Ottoman rule, and then 25 years as a French mandate, Lebanon became an independent state in 1943. Under Ottoman rule, modern Lebanon was part of the province of Syria, which included ‘the Alexandretta District in present-day Turkey, all of present-day Syria, all of present-day Lebanon, all of Palestine (present-day Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip), and part of Jordan’.<sup>4</sup> Until the 1940s, immigrants who came to Australia from the area now known as Lebanon were usually identified as ‘Syrians’, and prior to the defeat of the Turks in World War I ‘Syrians’ in Australia were officially classified as Turkish subjects.<sup>5</sup> Although technically

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<sup>1</sup> *Worker*, 15 May 1897, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> In Jens Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia: influence on population and progress*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1935, Lyng discusses Syrians as one of the ‘brown’ races (pp. 181–8); and in Alexander T. Yarwood, *Asian migration to Australia: the background to exclusion 1896–1923*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1967, Yarwood includes a chapter on Syrian immigration (pp. 141–50).

<sup>3</sup> This paper is based on Anne Monsour, ‘Negotiating a place in a white Australia: Syrian/Lebanese in Australia, 1880 to 1947, a Queensland case study’, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Eric J. Hooglund, ‘Introduction’, in Eric J. Hooglund, ed., *Crossing the waters: Arabic-speaking immigrants to the United States before 1940*, Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987, pp. 3–4.

<sup>5</sup> In 1939 Lebanese and Syrian nationals were classified separately for the first time. See Commonwealth Statistician to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 38/32817, 30 December 1938, A1/1, 38/32817, National Archives of Australia (NAA) (ACT).

correct, neither classification was based on how these people identified themselves.<sup>6</sup> For them, the use of the term 'Syrian' was merely a political expedience adopted when, as immigrants, a collective identity became necessary. As such, this 'Syrian' identity constructed in the context of the emigration process did not signify the existence of a cohesive group. Under Ottoman rule, non-Muslim religious communities were relatively self-governing and, as a consequence, the early Lebanese immigrants did not have a common national identity; rather, they were loyal to their family, village and religious sect.<sup>7</sup>

Until the second half of the twentieth century, the majority of emigrants from Syria/Lebanon were overwhelmingly Christian.<sup>8</sup> With the exception of four people who were Druzes, a religious sect originating from Islam, the Lebanese immigrants who came to Queensland from 1880 to 1947 were Maronite, Melkite and Orthodox Christians.<sup>9</sup> If any were Muslim, this is not evident in the sources.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of their own churches, the early immigrants attended other Christian churches. As they were affiliated with the Roman Church, Maronites and Melkites attended the local Catholic Church. For Orthodox Lebanese, the decision was more open and consequently they worshipped in both Catholic and Protestant churches. Until 1936, when Queensland's first Lebanese church, St Clement's in South Brisbane, was opened for public worship, Orthodox, Maronite and Melkite priests from Sydney travelled throughout Queensland to visit their members, perform sacraments and collect donations.<sup>11</sup> St Clement's was unique in the world because, although its establishment was initiated and overseen by Monsignor Sophronus Khoury, a Melkite priest, his objective was not only to serve the Melkite community but also to unite the approximately 'two hundred Lebanese of different Rites in order to build a church of their Eastern Rite and Customs'.<sup>12</sup> This uniting of the three Rites, Melkite, Orthodox and Maronite, was unusual and a source of pride for many of the Lebanese in Queensland.

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<sup>6</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the early Arab immigrant experience*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, pp. 14–17.

<sup>7</sup> Werner J. Cahnman, 'Religion and nationality', *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIX, July 1943–May 1944, pp. 524–9; Philip M. Kayal and Joseph M. Kayal, *The Syrian–Lebanese in America: a study of religion and assimilation*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1975; Philip K. Hitti, *The Syrians in America*, New York, George H. Doran, 1924.

<sup>8</sup> This assertion is made in almost every study of Lebanese immigrants.

<sup>9</sup> In Kamal S. Salibi, *The modern history of Lebanon*, Delmar, New York, Caravan Books, 1977, p. xviii. Salibi describes the Druzes as the 'followers of the Fatimid Caliph al Hakim (996–1021) who proclaimed his own divinity in the early eleventh century, deviating from traditional Isma'elite Shi'ism'.

<sup>10</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 19 November 1892, p. 4; *Bulletin*, 18 January 1906, p. 7. Egerton L. Batchelor to General Secretary, Australian Natives Association, Perth, 14/20363, 4 January 1911, A1/1, 14/20363, NAA (ACT); Chief Clerk, Department of External Affairs, Memorandum, 20363, 27 October 1914, A1/1, 14/20363, NAA (ACT).

<sup>11</sup> By the end of the 1890s there were Melkite, Maronite and Greek Orthodox churches in Sydney.

<sup>12</sup> Alexious Malouf, *Golden Jubilee, St Clement's Church South Brisbane, Queensland, 1929–1979*, Brisbane, Leader Press, 1979.

Early Lebanese emigrants are commonly described as poor, unskilled and illiterate peasants; however, these generalisations are simplistic and create a false impression.<sup>13</sup> The term ‘farmer’, for example, is likely to create an image of people living and working on the land, but in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East most farmers lived in villages and were ‘quite familiar with urban life and occupations’.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, while the term ‘peasant’ tends to conjure up an image of landless farm labourers, in Syria/Lebanon they were, to the contrary, not even sharecroppers but ‘mostly independent farm owners’.<sup>15</sup> Information from marriage records shows that the immigrant families in Queensland had varied occupational backgrounds. As Table 1 illustrates, it is inappropriate to characterise the early Lebanese immigrants as unskilled peasants, because less than one-third of this sample described their parents as farmers. In a few cases, the occupation of the immigrants prior to emigration has been recorded and these also reveal a variety of occupational backgrounds (Table 2).

**Table 1: Occupations of Fathers as Noted in Marriage Certificates**

Occupation	Number
Tradesperson/artisan	10
Carrier	6
Manufacturer	1
Merchant/storekeeper	10
Public servant	1
Farmer	13
Other	2
Total	43

Source: Marriage Certificates in Naturalization Records (1880 to 1947, QSA & NAA), in family histories or produced as part of an oral history interview.

**Table 2: Occupational Background of Lebanese Who Arrived in Australia Before 1900**

Occupation	Number
Shoemaker/Bootmaker	2
Blacksmith	1
Pottery maker	1
Tailor	1
Farmer	4
Wool spinner	1
Merchant	2
English teacher	1
Picture-frame maker	1

Source: Naturalization Records 1880 to 1947, QSA & NAA.

<sup>13</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*.

<sup>14</sup> Afif I. Tannous, ‘The village in the national life of Lebanon’, *Middle East Journal*, 8, 1949, pp. 151–63; Kayal and Kayal, *Syrian–Lebanese in America*, p. 72, and Samir Khalaf, ‘The background and causes of Lebanese/Syrian immigration’, in Hooglund, ed., *Crossing the waters*, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Tannous, ‘The village in Lebanon’, p. 153.

The role of foreign missionaries establishing western-style education in Syria/Lebanon and the consequent exposure of the population to western influences are well documented.<sup>16</sup> American Protestant missionaries opened the first American-style public schools in Lebanon in 1834 and by 1867 there were 21 of these schools.<sup>17</sup> The activities of American missionaries in the early part of the nineteenth century prompted European missionaries, including the Roman Catholics, Russian Orthodox, German Lutherans, British Anglicans and even the Ottoman government to follow their example and take a more serious interest in education.<sup>18</sup> What this meant in practical terms is illustrated by the example of Zahle, the town from which many of the Lebanese who settled in Queensland came:

By the 1890s, Zahle with a population of about fifteen thousand had two Jesuit boys' schools, a Roman Catholic girls' school, a Russian Orthodox school, a British Anglican school and one American Protestant school; it also had a Jesuit College and one Catholic and one American library.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, Lebanon was described as:

easily the most advanced part of the Ottoman Empire in the field of popular education. Literacy was widespread in the country, particularly in Mount Lebanon and in Beirut, Sidon, and Tripoli. Anyone could easily obtain primary instruction, and a good secondary education was available for those who could afford it.<sup>20</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Beirut was an important port and financial centre and the Lebanese economy was transforming into a cash economy.<sup>21</sup> From the 1860s, due to European investment and control of the silk industry, Mount Lebanon was integrated into the world capitalist system and was 'much closer to Europe than it had ever been before'.<sup>22</sup> The workforce in the silk factories was predominately female.<sup>23</sup> Inevitably, female access to paid work challenged traditional patriarchal structures.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, access to money eroded existing class structures and raised material expectations.<sup>25</sup> When occupational background, access to education and changes in the nineteenth-century Lebanese economy are taken into account, the general perception of early Lebanese immigrants as being mainly illiterate peasants with few skills and no capital is evidently too simplistic.

Some of the earliest Lebanese immigrants who came to Queensland were neither poor nor

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<sup>16</sup> Salibi, *Modern history of Lebanon*, pp. 120–48; Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon*, Beirut, Librairie Du Liban & Longmans, 1968, pp. 37–8; Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon, a political essay*, London, Oxford University Press, 1946, pp. 35–6.

<sup>17</sup> Khalaf, 'Background and causes of Lebanese/Syrian immigration', p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Salibi, *Modern history of Lebanon*, p. 138; Naff, *Becoming American*, pp. 36–7.

<sup>19</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> Salibi, *Modern history of Lebanon*, p. 140.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing home: emigration, gender and the middle class in Lebanon, 1870 to 1920*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, pp. 25–31.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 34–8.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 38–47.

uneducated. The Arida brothers, who opened a store in Charters Towers in 1886, the first of a chain of stores across north-western Queensland, were well educated (both spoke several languages), widely travelled, and had enough capital to go into business soon after arrival.<sup>26</sup> Mary Michael, a Lebanese woman in Cunnamulla, was described as a well-educated person who could read, write and speak three languages.<sup>27</sup> In 1899 the police reported that Daher Aboud was well educated and had brought a lot of money into the colony.<sup>28</sup> Joseph George Lutvey, who arrived from Zahle in 1886, was literate in Arabic.<sup>29</sup> His nephew, Abraham Lutvey, could speak three languages fluently, and is thought to have taught English at a University in Beirut before migrating in 1891.<sup>30</sup> Abraham Lutvey's sister, Regina, was also well educated and could speak English fluently before coming to Australia.<sup>31</sup> The presence of even a few well-educated immigrants was important, because their skills were used to help others. When John Isaac arrived in Queensland in 1896, he was literate in Arabic.<sup>32</sup> With the help of the police sergeant in Childers, he soon learnt to read and write in English, and for the rest of his life his skills in the two languages were used by other Lebanese.<sup>33</sup>

Because Lebanese often came in family groups that included young children or had children soon after arrival, these immigrant families, within a relatively short period, had the benefit of children educated in Australian schools. According to a police report in 1903, Michael Nasser, a Lebanese immigrant living in Roma, was married to 'a Syrian woman' who had 'received a good English education'.<sup>34</sup> Slaman Malouf was four years old when his family arrived in Brisbane in 1892, and subsequently went to school in South Brisbane.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, John Mellick, who was born in 1892 *en route* to Australia, was educated in Rockhampton.<sup>36</sup> Michael Malouf was six months old when his parents arrived in Queensland in 1889, and was also the beneficiary of a Queensland education.<sup>37</sup> These children, educated in Queensland in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, were obviously important assets in the Lebanese families' adaptation to life in Australia.

<sup>26</sup> Postmaster, Charters Towers to Secretary, Commonwealth Department of External Affairs, 05/8109, 27 December 1905, A1/1, 05/8109, NAA (ACT). Director, Investigation Branch, Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, to Secretary, Home and Territories Department, 15526, 5 September 1922, A1/1, 30/376, NAA (ACT).

<sup>27</sup> George Story, MLA to Home Secretary, Brisbane, 12232, 12 October 1903, 12232/1903, Col/74(a), Queensland State Archives (QSA).

<sup>28</sup> Daher Aboud, Naturalization application, 10 January 1899, Col/73(a), QSA.

<sup>29</sup> Police Constable to Sub Inspector, Police, Bundaberg, 10334/1902, 23 June 1902, 7426/1903, Col/74(a), QSA; Margaret Casalaina, 'Joseph George Lutvey', in Carmel King, *A new beginning*, Brisbane, Carmel King, 1994, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> King, *A new beginning*, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> Monica Simpson, interview with author, Brisbane, 1993.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Police report, Michael Nasser, Naturalization application, August 1903, Col/74(a), QSA.

<sup>35</sup> Slaman Malouf, Naturalization application, 14 February 1913, A1/1, 13/4284, NAA (ACT).

<sup>36</sup> John Mellick, Naturalization application, 11 November 1924, A1/1, 24/29587, NAA (ACT).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Malouf, Naturalization application, 11 July 1918, A1/1, 30/1083, NAA (ACT).

The arrival of increasing numbers of Lebanese in Australia in the last two decades of the nineteenth century was part of a mass emigration from the Syria/Lebanon region. What began as a trickle became a flood, and between 1900 and 1914 the population of Lebanon is estimated to have decreased by almost one-third.<sup>38</sup> Some of the commonly cited push factors for this massive movement out of Lebanon are Turkish oppression, the violent conflict between the Christians and the Druze in the 1860s, an exploitative feudal system, the influence of foreign missionaries who encouraged and assisted converts to pursue study abroad, the depressed state of the economy due particularly to the opening of the Suez canal in 1869 which caused a decline in the silk industry, a rapidly increasing population putting pressure on the availability of land, and reports of success of early immigrants which then influenced relatives and friends to follow in their footsteps.<sup>39</sup> While some scholars emphasise the desire to escape religious and political persecution, most agree that the primary reasons were the deteriorating economic conditions and/or the lure of possible wealth and prestige.<sup>40</sup>

Although religious persecution, Turkish oppression, poverty and a spirit of adventure are all given as reasons for early Lebanese migration to Queensland, the search for better economic opportunities is the most important. Labeeb's father, for example, decided to emigrate from the village of Bishmizzen in 1891 not because of poverty but because of a growing population and a lack of available land.<sup>41</sup> He did not give religious persecution as a reason for leaving Lebanon and this is supported by the fact that Lebanon was still under Turkish rule when he returned in 1913 to visit his mother.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Yvonne's grandfather did not leave Lebanon because he was poor or because of religious strife; he came in about 1888 to work in the thriving business that his wife's uncles had established in north Queensland.<sup>43</sup> According to Hazel, it was not religious conflict that drove her father and his younger brother to Australia in 1899, but the desire to make money and provide financial support for their family in Lebanon.<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately for the early Lebanese immigrants, their arrival in increasing numbers in the last decade of the nineteenth century coincided with a period of economic insecurity and burgeoning nationalism, which resulted in the broadening of anti-Chinese legislation to include all non-Europeans. Legislation designed to guarantee a white Australia made it clear

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<sup>38</sup> Khater, *Inventing home*, p. 48.

<sup>39</sup> For a summary of these reasons, see Jim McKay, *Phoenician farewell: three generations of Lebanese Christians in Australia*, Melbourne, Ashwood House Academic, 1989, p. 30; Naff, *Becoming American*, p. 82.

<sup>40</sup> McKay, *Phoenician farewell*, p. 30. Naff, *Becoming American*, p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> Labeeb McGuire, interview with author, Brisbane, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Yvonne Carrigan, interview with author, Brisbane, 1995.

<sup>44</sup> Hazel Francis, interview with author, Brisbane, 1994.

that non-Europeans were not welcome and discriminatory measures had a tangible impact on the lives of the immigrants and their families. A dramatic increase in Lebanese arrivals throughout the 1890s was effectively reversed by the implementation of the Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901. So, between 1880 and 1947 Lebanese immigration to Australia is most accurately divided into two periods: unrestricted and restricted. After 1901, the decision to come to Australia was no longer as simple as being able to afford the fare; for Lebanese, entry was now dependent on either passing the dictation test or having an exemption permit.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, regardless of the push factors in their homeland, it was primarily the implementation of the *Immigration Restriction Act* that determined the character of Lebanese immigration and the subsequent settlement pattern.

In the period to 1947, the number of people born in Lebanon and living in Australia was always relatively small. New South Wales was the state in which the majority of Lebanese immigrants settled.<sup>46</sup> Although almost one-quarter (23 percent) of Lebanese immigrants in Australia were in Queensland in 1901, in subsequent years the percentage declined and, even though it varied, was never more than 12 percent. Although some Lebanese are known to have arrived in Australia towards the end of the 1870s, the first record of Lebanese in Queensland was in 1884.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the 1880s, 31 Lebanese, including six women, were living in Queensland. In contrast, 193, more than six times as many, arrived between 1890 and 1899. Illustrating the impact of the *Immigration Restriction Act*, despite a persistent increase in the number of people leaving Lebanon, between 1900 and 1909 the number of Lebanese arrivals in Queensland actually dropped by more than 50 percent, to 87; between 1910 and 1919 even fewer (35) Lebanese came to Queensland.

From its inception, Lebanese immigration included a significant proportion of women. Mary Malouf came to Queensland with her husband and two young sons in 1889.<sup>48</sup> In 1895 Katoora Dahur, a widow, arrived in Brisbane with her four children to join her brother, Calile Malouf, who had arrived with his wife and young family a few years earlier.<sup>49</sup> Jacob Adymee arrived in Queensland in 1894, and in 1901 was living in Ilfracombe with his wife and five children.<sup>50</sup> Daher Aboud, who had been in Australia since 1884 and in Queensland since 1888, migrated with his wife Karma, their six children and a nephew.<sup>51</sup> The migration in

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<sup>45</sup> Barry York, *Studies in Australian Ethnic History, Number 1, 1992: Immigration Restriction, 1901–1957*, Canberra, Centre for Immigration & Multicultural Studies, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Jim McKay and Trevor Batrouney, 'Lebanese immigration until the 1970s', in James Jupp, ed., *The Australian people: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, North Ryde, Angus & Robertson, 1988, p. 668.

<sup>47</sup> David Tomi, Naturalization application, 16 April 1904, A1/15, 04/2368, NAA (ACT).

<sup>48</sup> Jonas Malouf, Naturalization application, 2 June 1902, Hom/A39, QSA.

<sup>49</sup> Nick Dyer, *The Dyer family: a loving tribute to Salem Dyer and Mintaha Trad*, Brisbane: Nick Dyer, 1991, p. 2; Calile Malouf, Letter to Fared Tooma, 2 October 1995, private collection.

<sup>50</sup> Jacob Adymee, Naturalization application, 1955/1903, 14 January 1903, Col/73(a), QSA.

<sup>51</sup> Daher Aboud, Naturalization application, 10 January 1899, Col/73(a), QSA.

family groups and the birth of at least 86 Lebanese Queenslanders between 1887 and 1899 indicates that the intention of the early Lebanese immigrants was to be settlers rather than sojourners and was a characteristic noticed by politicians and bureaucrats that favourably distinguished Lebanese from other Asians.<sup>52</sup>

Due in part to the decentralised and provincial nature of Queensland's development, Lebanese settlement in Queensland was dispersed.<sup>53</sup> Although Brisbane was the only recorded settlement location in 1885, by 1890 Lebanese were also in Townsville, Charters Towers, Barcaldine, Rockhampton, Maryborough and on the Darling Downs. While the numbers in Brisbane continued to increase, so too did the dispersal of Lebanese throughout Queensland. By 1895 Lebanese were located as far north as Thursday Island, in western towns such as Normanton, Croydon, Winton, Longreach and Charleville, on the Darling Downs, and in towns and cities along the coast. Brisbane was consistently the most significant settlement, but was challenged in 1900 by Toowoomba and Warwick. In Toowoomba and Brisbane, Lebanese immigrants chose to live in close proximity, in areas such as James Street in Toowoomba, and South Brisbane, Woolloongabba and West End in Brisbane. Due to the *Immigration Restriction Act*, after 1901 only Lebanese who already had family and friends living in Australia were accepted as immigrants; as a result, a pattern of chain migration and subsequently clustered settlement within geographic regions was entrenched. So, while the specific reasons the original immigrants chose to settle in particular places are not always possible to ascertain, for later immigrants the choice was often predetermined by the location of relatives or friends from their home village. The Darling Downs, including Toowoomba, is a good example, as almost all the Lebanese who settled in the area came from either KfarsGhab or Zahle.

Although numbers fluctuated, throughout most of the twentieth century there was a continuous Lebanese presence in many towns and cities throughout Queensland. The following examples illustrate clustered settlement and also show that in Australia, as in their homeland, the role of the family remained central. Indeed, by engendering a pattern of chain migration and neglecting to provide services for new arrivals, government immigration and settlement policy actually reinforced the importance of the Lebanese family. Abraham Selim Mellick and his brother, Habib, were 16 and 14 respectively when they arrived in Sydney in 1899. With the help of relatives already established in Australia, they worked as hawkers in New South Wales and then in the Townsville district until 1902 when Abraham established a store in the town of Geraldton, now known as Innisfail. By the 1940s Abraham had brought

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<sup>52</sup> Registrar-General's Office, Queensland, *Index to Queensland births: 1885–1889*, Brisbane, Registrar-General's Office, Queensland, 1997.

<sup>53</sup> WR Johnston, *The call of the land*, Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1982, p. vii.



his six brothers and two of his three sisters to Australia.<sup>54</sup> Abraham, his brothers and his brothers-in-law operated as drapers or mercers in Innisfail, Townsville, Mossman, Tully and Cairns.<sup>55</sup> This pattern of one or two members of a family, usually the original immigrants, settling in a particular place and then bringing siblings or relatives from Lebanon and settling them in the same district was constantly repeated.

Originally domiciled in New South Wales when they arrived in Australia in 1928, by 1935 brothers Wadih and George Wigan had opened drapery stores in Charleville and Cunnamulla.<sup>56</sup> Over the next 15 years they successfully encouraged relatives from their home village of Batroun to join them in western Queensland.<sup>57</sup> According to the *Queensland Post Office Directory* for 1947 and 1949, Wigan Brothers drapery stores were operating in Blackall, Charleville, Clermont, Cunnamulla and Longreach.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, in 1920 members of the Lisha family, the first of whom had arrived in Queensland from Bscherre in the early 1890s, were operating businesses in Cairns, Atherton, Yungaburra, Herberton and Stannary Hills.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, businesses established by the brothers Joseph and Richard Arida and their relatives were operating in Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Hughenden and Selwyn.<sup>60</sup> Queensland's decentralised economic development, government policies and the tendency of Lebanese to be self-employed as hawkers and shopkeepers all contributed to their dispersed settlement throughout the colony/state.

Issues associated with racial classification are fundamental to understanding Lebanese settlement in Queensland. Based on the location of their homeland, Lebanese immigrants were officially classified as Asian and this determined their status within the colony and later the nation. Of all the disabilities they faced as Asiatic aliens, exclusion from naturalisation was the most significant. Failure to become a British subject meant a continuance of alien status with its accompanying disabilities.<sup>61</sup> The reasons given by Lebanese for wanting naturalisation indicate they had decided to settle permanently in Queensland and wanted the status of British subjects, particularly the right to buy land or property (Table 3). There are many examples of individuals losing the opportunity to buy land, often for business purposes, because they had failed in their bid to become naturalised. In 1904, for example, Kazea Betros, a storekeeper, was prevented from buying land because as 'an aboriginal native of Asia', he

<sup>54</sup> *Cairns Post*, 3 September 1982.

<sup>55</sup> *Queensland Post Office Directory (QPOD)*, 1935–1949.

<sup>56</sup> Wadih Wigan, Naturalization application, A1/1, 34/9986, NAA (ACT); George Wigan, Naturalization application, A1/1, 35/7512, NAA (ACT).

<sup>57</sup> Application to bring S Wigan to Australia, 47/1427, J25/64, NAA (Qld); Application to bring G Haddad to Australia, 49/11695, J25/66, NAA (Qld); *QPOD*, 1935–1949.

<sup>58</sup> *QPOD*, 1935–1949.

<sup>59</sup> *QPOD*, 1919/1920; Register of aliens, 1893–1901, SCT/CF38-39, QSA.

<sup>60</sup> *QPOD*, 1919/1920.

<sup>61</sup> Prime Minister's Department, 'Disabilities of aliens and coloured persons within the Commonwealth and its Territories, 1920', A1/1, 21/13034, NAA (ACT); 'List showing restrictions or disabilities in Queensland applicable to aliens, 1943', 1234/43, A/7513, QSA.

was refused naturalisation.<sup>62</sup> For Lebanese, exclusion from citizenship meant continued alien status in the country they had adopted as their home.

**Table 3: Reasons Given for Wanting Naturalisation, Listed in Descending order**

To buy land or property (fee-simple)	54
To obtain the rights of a British subject	50
Have settled permanently in Queensland	39
To obtain a hawkers licence	11
Business reasons	10
To provide security for family	6
To obtain the right to vote	5
To work in the public service	1
To enlist in the AIF	1

Source: Naturalization Records, QSA (1894–1903) and NAA (1904–47).

In colonial Queensland, it was difficult but not impossible for Asians to become citizens. While the Queensland *Aliens Act* allowed European and North American aliens to become British subjects simply by taking the oath of allegiance, Asiatic, African and Pacific aliens were only eligible if they satisfied certain conditions.<sup>63</sup> As well as residing in the colony for at least three years, they had to be married, with their wife also living in Queensland. The details in their application were verified by a police report from every place of residence in Queensland and then the granting of naturalisation was at the discretion of the governor.<sup>64</sup> However, for non-Europeans in colonial Queensland, naturalisation did not mean full citizenship, because, despite being British subjects, they were still denied the right to vote and were disqualified from holding political office.<sup>65</sup> In the lead-up to Federation, access to naturalisation by non-Europeans in Queensland became increasingly difficult. By 1901, for example, an applicant had to pay a fee of ten pounds and provide documentary proof of marriage, and these requirements often stalled applications, sometimes indefinitely.<sup>66</sup> According to the records, at least 11 Lebanese couples remarried in Queensland to become eligible for naturalisation. Daher Aboud applied for naturalisation in January 1899.<sup>67</sup> He was 58 years old, had been married for 28 years, and had six children aged between 29 and 12. His naturalisation was approved in January 1902, after a ‘legal’ marriage had been

<sup>62</sup> Kazea Betros, Statutory declaration, 04/3684, 21 April 1904, A1, 04/3684, NAA (ACT).

<sup>63</sup> *Aliens Act 1867*(Qld).

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, s. 7.

<sup>65</sup> ‘List showing restrictions or disabilities in Queensland applicable to aliens, 1943’, p. 1, 1234/43, A/7513, QSA.

<sup>66</sup> Stewart and Hemmant to WH Ryder, Home Secretary’s Office, 12561, 7 August 1901, and Morris and Fletcher to Home Secretary’s Office, 14130, 3 September 1901; Calile Malouf, Naturalization application, Hom/A35, QSA.

<sup>67</sup> Daher Aboud, Naturalization application, 10 January 1899, Col/73(a), QSA.

contracted at the Toowoomba registry office.<sup>68</sup>

From 1904 to 1920, Lebanese immigrants experienced total exclusion from naturalisation based on their racial classification. The Commonwealth *Nationality Act 1920* removed the racial disqualification embodied in its *Naturalization Act 1904*. Consequently, from 1920 to 1947 a Lebanese immigrant could be granted a certificate of naturalisation at the discretion of the governor-general. As permanent residents, Lebanese immigrants were persistent in their attempts to become naturalised. Massoud Nowham, for example, who had failed to become naturalised in colonial Queensland, became a British subject in 1921, 18 years after his original application.<sup>69</sup> Initially refused naturalisation in 1902, Joseph Lahood did not obtain citizenship status until 1921.<sup>70</sup> However, Commonwealth naturalisation granted non-Europeans a qualified citizenship, as they were still disqualified from the right to vote, were denied access to some social services, such as the old age pension, and were excluded from employment in a wide range of occupations.

The archival sources show that skin colour and religion were significant considerations when assessing an applicant's suitability for citizenship. Police routinely commented on skin colour and religious affiliation. Generally, individual Lebanese were described as 'white' or 'not coloured'. However, some were identified as 'coloured' and this could result in the failure of their application. In 1909, for example, Lutoof, who was described as 'a coloured man' whose parents 'were probably Syrians' was refused citizenship.<sup>71</sup> Official records show that the racial classification of an individual by the police was quite arbitrary and often ambiguous. George, for example, was reported to be 'a coloured man, but not a full-blooded foreigner', Salim was 'the ordinary colour of the Syrian, but not what I would term a coloured man', and Richard was considered to be swarthy in complexion 'but not darker than many natives of Europe or some individuals of the British race'.<sup>72</sup> As individuals and as a group, Lebanese sought to improve their status by arguing that, despite the geographic location of their homeland, they were white, European and Christian. According to Wadih Abourizk, 'Syrians' were 'Caucasians' and 'a white race as much as the English' and their 'looks,

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Massoud Nowham to Home Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 03487, 9 March 1904, Col/74(c), QSA; Massoud Nowham, Naturalization application, A1/1, 21/24130, NAA (ACT).

<sup>70</sup> Acting Sergeant George Dillon, Warwick, to Sub Inspector Dillon, Toowoomba, 7051, 27 November 1902, in Joseph Lahood, Naturalization application, 18718/1902, Col/73(b), QSA; Secretary, Home and Territories Department to Frederick W Turton, 21/15323, 22 August 1921, A1/1, 21/15323, NAA (ACT).

<sup>71</sup> Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office, Brisbane, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 9/6279, 10 June 1909, A1/1, 09/13029, NAA (ACT).

<sup>72</sup> Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office, Brisbane, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 15/665, 16 February 1915, A1/1, 15/665, NAA (ACT); Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office, Brisbane, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 08/78, 27 January 1908, A659, 43/1/6000, NAA (ACT); Postmaster, Charters Towers, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 05/8109, 27 December 1905, A1/1, 05/8109, NAA (ACT).

habits, customs, religions, blood' were European.<sup>73</sup> In their bid for equal status in an environment hostile to non-Europeans, the early Lebanese immigrants denied their eastern characteristics and sought to be absorbed into white Australia by assimilating into mainstream churches, insisting their children speak only English, and not passing on information about their Lebanese heritage.

Although the Australian government clearly knew that Lebanese did not support the Turkish regime, during World War I Lebanese people in Australia were classified as enemy aliens. Being under scrutiny was not unusual for Lebanese immigrants, but their enemy alien status generated unwanted attention and reached into ordinary activities. Many had already been refused naturalisation despite a long period of residence in Australia. Now, they, and even their Australian-born children, were required to register at the local police station and to notify the police if they were leaving town or changing their address. Thomas Rey, an itinerant labourer of Innisfail, for example, registered as an alien of Syrian origin in December 1916.<sup>74</sup> Between 1918 and 1921 he submitted 11 *Notice of Change of Address* forms as he moved between Innisfail, South Johnstone, Gordonvale and Babinda.<sup>75</sup> Australian-born women who had acquired Syrian nationality by marriage were also obliged to register as aliens. So when Elsie Malouf moved from one Brisbane suburb to another, she was required to notify the police of her movements and to report to the police station in her new locality.<sup>76</sup> If any Lebanese had taken their classification as enemy aliens lightly, the internment of Nicholas William Malouf of Gatton in 1917 would certainly have confirmed the seriousness of the situation. It seems that his internment was the result of his friendship with an Australian-born German solicitor and the fact that he had sold Buick cars to several German farmers in the district.<sup>77</sup> There was some suspicion that if the allied position in Europe faltered the Germans in and around Gatton would organise to damage the railway line to delay reinforcements getting away, and it was thought that the Buick cars were part of this plan.

The existence of widespread legislative discrimination against non-Europeans in employment restricted the choices available. Hawking and shopkeeping were viable options which Lebanese immigrants in Queensland were able to develop and sustain because they were marginal economic activities that did not directly threaten the employment prospects of

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<sup>73</sup> Wadih Abourizk to Alfred Deakin, 09/5456, 10 January 1910, A1/1, 10/3915, NAA (ACT).

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Rey, Form of Application for Registration, 8988, 29 December 1916, BP4/3, Syria, NAA (Qld).

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, Notices of Change of Place of Abode 1918–1921.

<sup>76</sup> Elsie Malouf, Form of Application for Registration, 16360, 7 June 1918, BP4/3, Syria, NAA (Qld).

<sup>77</sup> Malouf, Gatton, Correspondence files related to the investigation of Germans living in Queensland in the lead-up to and during WWI, 1914–1922, BP4/1, 66/4/1256, NAA (Qld).

white Australians.<sup>78</sup> However, even in these marginal enterprises, their presence was resented. In the 1890s, for example, there was agitation against Asian hawkers in all the colonies. In Queensland, pressure to restrict Asian hawkers and to protect 'legitimate' traders increased throughout the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. The issue of Asiatic hawkers was of greatest concern in the Warwick district. This is not surprising, as throughout the 1890s they were present in the district in increasing numbers, partly due to the refusal in New South Wales to grant hawker's licences to Asians.<sup>79</sup> The Warwick Trader's Association persistently lobbied the Home Secretary to stop issuing hawker's licences to Asians.<sup>80</sup> This lobbying culminated in the passing of the Queensland *Hawkers Acts Amendment Act 1905* which shifted the power to grant hawker's licences from police magistrates or Justices of the Peace to the discretion of the Home Secretary.

Hawking and shopkeeping gave the immigrants a public visibility, brought them into direct contact with the police and, at times, led to trouble with the law. The most common offence was hawking without a licence. Any breaches of the law were reported in the newspapers, inevitably contributing to a negative image of Lebanese traders. In 1901, Lebanese women in Brisbane were placed under police surveillance after an anonymous informant alleged they were hawking without licences.<sup>81</sup> Police stations throughout the Brisbane area were alerted and asked to report on this matter.<sup>82</sup> A constable in plain clothes was appointed to watch Lebanese women in South Brisbane for several mornings.<sup>83</sup> Earlier, in 1897, charges for defrauding customs had generated a great deal of publicity and authenticated a negative image of Lebanese traders. Customs officials raided the South Brisbane stores of at least six Lebanese and then raided Lebanese storekeepers and hawkers in Rockhampton and Townsville. In Rockhampton, fourteen Lebanese shopkeepers and hawkers were investigated for breaches of the Queensland *Customs Duties Act*. Five were subsequently charged with using falsified invoices. Four of the five cases were dropped. One storekeeper was convicted and fined.<sup>84</sup> Queensland customs officials continued to pursue Lebanese traders until Federation. In 1899 and 1900, for example, at least seven Lebanese in Warwick and Toowoomba were charged with customs fraud.

Evidence given in the Rockhampton court cases shows that Lebanese traders were being

<sup>78</sup> McKay, *Phoenician farewell*, p. 39; Janis Wilton, *Immigrants in the bush: hawking to haberdashery*, Armidale, Multicultural Education Coordinating Committee, New South Wales, & Armidale College of Advanced Education, 1897, pp. 8 and pp. 46–7.

<sup>79</sup> Police Magistrate, Charleville to Under Colonial Secretary, 01601, 14 February 1893, Col/A742, QSA.

<sup>80</sup> Register of letters to the Home Secretary, 19233M, 22 November 1902, Hom/B32, QSA.

<sup>81</sup> 'Fairplay' to the Queensland Treasury, undated, in-letter 7010, A/44790, QSA.

<sup>82</sup> Reports from police sub-stations, in-letters 17917, A/44790, QSA.

<sup>83</sup> Senior Sergeant George Bain to Sub-Inspector of Police, South Brisbane, 6 November 1901, in-letter 17917, A/44790, QSA.

<sup>84</sup> *Capricornian*, 6 March 1897, p. 35.

specifically targeted by customs authorities. At the port of Rockhampton, it had been ‘the usual practice’ since July 1895 ‘to add fifteen per cent on all goods imported by Syrians from Syrian houses’.<sup>85</sup> The Sub-Collector of Customs was acting within his powers when he added the 15 percent because he believed the goods were undervalued; however, some contemporaries criticised this collective treatment of Lebanese traders at the Rockhampton port. George Shaw, a customs agent, for example, claimed he had told Mr Fahey that adding the extra amount was unfair:

... because he believed the Syrians were straight men; if he had thought the invoices were incorrect he would not have accepted them; he always found the Syrians were very straight men.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, Robert Harvey-Allen, another customs agent, said he had ‘frequently protested’ against the 15 percent being added on.<sup>87</sup> The concerted enforcement of the *Customs Duties Act* in relation to Lebanese traders generated bad publicity and affected both the livelihood and the personal privacy of individuals and their families. Customs officers entered shops and homes. They seized goods from hotel rooms, shops, ports and railway stations. Goods seized were stored until charges were laid, often weeks or even months later, and Lebanese traders were in the short term effectively put out of business.<sup>88</sup> It is possible that Lebanese traders were acting fraudulently. However, it is also possible that they were targeted because the relationship between the Lebanese warehouses and Lebanese hawkers and shopkeepers was vertically integrated and hence was an almost exclusively non-European enterprise. While the close scrutiny of Lebanese traders by customs officials may have been justified, the subsequent publicity encouraged the racialisation of the alleged offences, hence emphasising the outsider status of Lebanese and tarnishing the reputation of all Lebanese traders in Queensland.

Yet despite being identified as a non-white, non-European minority group whose business methods were dubious, Lebanese in Queensland continued to operate as hawkers and to establish successful businesses, which were characteristically family enterprises. The Innisfail store started by Abraham Saleem Mellick, open for business for 100 years in 2002, closed in 2004.<sup>89</sup> The Georges have been trading in the Rockhampton district since 1899 when Elien George began hawking.<sup>90</sup> He later opened a store in Rockhampton that operated until the late 1970s. Elien’s youngest son, Alec, set up a branch of the business in 1948

<sup>85</sup> *Capricornian*, 6 March 1897, p. 33.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 27 February 1897, p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 6 March 1897, p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Hennessy to Crown Solicitor, 3001, 19 June 1900, Briefs and associated papers relating to the prosecution of certain Syrian residents for breaches of the Customs Duties Act of 1888, CRS/263, QSA.

<sup>89</sup> Thelma Mellick, 2002, ‘Migrants in the bush: Lebanese drapers’, *ABC Rural online*, <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/bushmigrants/lebanesedrapers.htm> (accessed 25 May 2009).

<sup>90</sup> Jessica Owers, ‘Generation game’, *Outback*, February/March (63) 2009, pp. 110–11.

which Elien's granddaughter still operates today.<sup>91</sup> Soon after the floods in 1893, Calile Malouf established a store in Stanley Street, South Brisbane.<sup>92</sup> He also opened shops in Ipswich and Wynnum. After an interlude as a general storekeeper in Charleville from 1909 to 1919, he opened a drapery store in Brisbane at 657 Stanley Street.<sup>93</sup> A second store was established in 1933 in Adelaide Street opposite City Hall. This was closed by the end of the 1930s due to the depression and was replaced by small fashion boutiques that grew into the successful Marcia Gowns in Queen Street, Brisbane.<sup>94</sup> In 1970 the business closed and the company was liquidated.<sup>95</sup> However, as demonstrated by Calile's descendants who operate the Malouf Group Pharmacies, an interest in business has continued.

Having made Queensland their home, many of the Lebanese immigrants developed a deep attachment to their adopted locality and became active participants in their local communities. While he was obviously a shrewd businessman, Abraham Salim Mellick's involvement in local community projects indicates a civic mindedness that went beyond personal commercial interests. Mellick was a foundation member of the Innisfail Turf Club, the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade, the Bowling Club and the Show Society, and a trustee of the Innisfail Choral and Orchestral Society. A founding member of the Innisfail Chamber of Commerce, he was its president for 11 years.<sup>96</sup> Additionally:

He played a major part in the removal of the State School to Emily Street, thereby securing the establishment of Innisfail's ideally located Memorial Park.

He was a powerful force in the opposition to the cutting up for town allotments of the present-day Pearce Park and the Innisfail Golf Course. He was an unashamed leading advocate for Innisfail's own General Hospital and for the opening of Mourilyan Harbour and the formation of the Mourilyan Harbour Development League.<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, Richard Arida was also active in his community. He was a member of the Charters Towers Traders Association from 1900, an elected member and treasurer of the School of Arts committee from 1902, a member of the Charters Towers District Hospital committee from 1907 to 1943, and he served on the Townsville Harbour Board from 1917 to 1944.<sup>98</sup> Arida supported the labour movement as a trustee of a branch of the Australian Workers' Union, and 'during the shearers' strike in Hughenden', he 'stood by the shearers for over 3000 pounds'.<sup>99</sup> He was involved in the water and fire brigade boards, the Charters Towers Electricity Supply Company, the local Patriotic and Repatriation Committee and the Charters

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<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Calile Malouf, letter to Fareed Tooma, 2 October 1995.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Advocate*, 'Abraham Selim Mellick's "Land of Promise"', 27 April 1993.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Youssef Toauk, *Rashid Arida (1873–1944): a philanthropist and a patriot*, Coogee, Australian Lebanese Historical Society, 2009, p. 28.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

Towers Civic Club.<sup>100</sup> He was an ardent supporter of the Catholic Church and of Catholic education, and after his death in 1944 the R.D. Arida Trust administered annual prizes and scholarships to students in Charters Towers and a bursary for students accepted at the University of Queensland but unable to afford the cost.<sup>101</sup> While these are outstanding examples, involvement in local community is a common feature of Lebanese settlement in Queensland. This may partly have been due to the immigrants' involvement in business and their desire to be accepted into the community, but it was also a result of their decision to embrace life in Australia.

The early Lebanese immigrants were settlers rather than sojourners, and despite the serious obstacles they faced they were determined to stay and make Queensland their new home. The White Australia Policy was intended to exclude and to control 'undesirable' immigrants. In their encounter with white colonial power, Lebanese immigrants sought to position themselves on the 'white' side of the colour line, emphasised their Christian credentials, and concealed their Eastern identity. As a consequence, the early immigrants passed on little information about their own background, language and culture to their children and grandchildren. This silence, which deprived their descendants of an understanding of their identity and of information about the early immigrant experience, is testimony to the success of discriminatory legislation – colonial, state and federal – that made it quite clear that non-Europeans were not welcome and their acceptance tenuous.

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<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.