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To cite this article: James Barry & Ihsan Yilmaz (2019) Liminality and racial hazing of Muslim migrants: media framing of Albanians in Shepparton, Australia, 1930–1955, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42:7, 1168–1185, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2018.1484504](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1484504)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1484504>



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Published online: 20 Jun 2018.



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Liminality and racial hazing of Muslim migrants: media framing of Albanians in Shepparton, Australia, 1930–1955

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ABSTRACT



This article is a historical empirical study of the Albanian Muslim migrant community of Shepparton. Through analysing newspaper reports, the authors discuss how these migrants were portrayed as liminal between their first arrival and acceptance as Australians a generation later. This is characteristic of a practice which the authors term “migrant hazing”, where a migrant group is demonized as a threat to the society during the liminal phase. Migrant hazing occurs in public discourse, particularly the media, and ceases with the replacement of the group by newer migrants, who are subjected to the same process. Furthermore, migrant hazing remains present in contemporary depictions of Australian Muslims. In this longitudinal study, media reports on Albanian Muslims revolved around three persistent themes: their supposed criminality, the wrongful use of land and the threat of dual-loyalty. These three items constituted the main weapons of the media in hazing the first, liminal generation.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 18 February 2018; Accepted 24 May 2018

KEYWORDS Muslims; media; liminality; framing; social exclusion; hazing

Introduction

Migrants often exist in a liminal space between their first arrival and their general acceptance as members of the new society. The trials of liminality, while experienced on an individual level, are closely related to group identity. Migrant groups that are deemed potentially problematic are especially demonized during the liminal phase, as the migrant is expected to work (both in an individual and collective sense) towards gaining acceptance from the majority. Demonization is conspicuous in sites of public discourse, such as the media and statements by politicians, and is justified as a period of hazing through which all migrants must pass before integration. Hazing is

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characterized by humiliating, demeaning and harmful behaviour inflicted by one member of an entity towards another, which establishes the hazer's authority and the lesser status of the victim. Migrant hazing most often occurs in the media, where a specific group is framed as unable to integrate due to underlying racial, religious or cultural barriers.

In this article, the authors outline these issues by focusing on the transition of the first generation of Albanian Muslim migrants to Shepparton (a regional Australian city) from their arrival in the 1930s until the foundation of their mosque in the 1950s. The authors use contemporary newspaper reports which constitute the largest publicly available archive of written material on the daily life of Albanian Muslims in Australia. While the archive poses some limitations as it is largely an outsider's construction of the community, it provides insight into the practice of scapegoating migrants through their portrayal as liminal, threatening and in need of hazing before they can be integrated. The authors argue that the Albanian Muslim experience of hazing is part of a convention which continues to the present, and is extant in the framing of more recent Muslim migrants.

The authors begin by describing liminality and hazing, followed by a background of the case study. The authors then discuss how Islam is presented by the Australian media in reference to Albanian migrants, and how reports on Albanian Muslims in Shepparton focused on three themes: their perceived criminality, the threat of dual-loyalty and the wrongful use of land at the expense of "true" Australians.

Liminality and migrant hazing

The media plays an important role in migrant hazing through influencing public opinion and policy making. The way the media achieves this is through a phenomenon called "framing" (Bleich, Bloemraad, and de Graauw 2015, 860). Framing includes the journalistic decision to link immigration with security or economic matters. This frame is reflected by the readership who adopt it in order to explain their own views on immigration (Caviedes 2015). Framing is not always a negative practice; for example, Mai (2005) argued that Albanian migrants in Italy have benefited from positive framing in the media which has enhanced their sense of self as well as contributed to positive interactions with non-Albanians. However, in this case study, the framing is more often negative. This type of framing, the authors argue, is part of a continuing practice of hazing migrant groups in the media.

Hazing is often associated with rites of passage in the military (Bronner 2006; Keller 2015), sports clubs (Trotta and Johnson 2004), criminal organizations (Cyriax, Wilson, and Wilson 2006, 217) and American college fraternities (Jones 2004). Hazing is broadly defined as conduct which is "cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning or harmful" that is inflicted by one

member of an entity onto another (Keller 2015, 5–6). It establishes the authority of the inflictor and the lesser status of the victim, and can be of a physical, verbal or psychological nature. It is ritualistic and often associated with “social training” and initiation rites (Meštrović 2015, 5). The authors use the term “migrant hazing” to refer to a practice by, but not limited to, media organizations whereby a migrant group is targeted for negative coverage through selective reporting that portrays the group as riven with problems, unable to integrate and creating disturbances for other members of society. Underlying racial and cultural barriers are cited as the causes for these issues. As these migrants transition from new arrival to established group (over about a generation), the negative reporting lessens, as another target becomes the focus of hazing. Migrant hazing is a frequent theme in both lay and academic descriptions of discrimination in Australia, with a trajectory that moved from the Irish before the Second World War, to Greeks and Italians in the post-War period and then Asian migrants from the 1980s onwards (McNamara 2002, 13). Hazing occurs when the migrants are in a liminal state, having left their previous homes without yet being integrated into Australia.

In Arnold van Gennep’s work on rites of passage, he argued that liminality is an individual’s transition from one group to the next, either through ceremony or social mobility, which involved certain steps which he termed pre-liminal, liminal (or threshold) and post-liminal (van Gennep [1909]1960, 21). Liminality or transition is a neutral but temporary zone characterized by a wavering “between two worlds” (van Gennep [1909]1960, 18). Turner (1969, 125) further developed van Gennep’s concept of liminality, arguing that liminal individuals across cultures “fall into the interstices of social structure, are on the margins or occupy its lowest rungs”. Furthermore, liminal beings are potentially dangerous as they exist within a vacuum of “statuslessness” and therefore have the potential to “pollute” society (Turner 1969, 97). Consequently, and across cultures, societies establish a hierarchy to govern liminal individuals or groups, where designated instructors guide the liminal in their transition towards reintegration.

Liminality and the rites of passage have previously been applied in studies of migration. Aguilar characterized Filipina labour migrants’ movement from poverty to better wages as stages in a rite of passage, and their existence in their country of work as a liminal space (Aguilar 1999, 102–103). This article follows a similar logic, while emphasizing the movement from liminality to reintegration instead occurs in the country of settlement, and the liminal phase exists between their first arrival and general acceptance as “Australians”. Liminality is characterized by rejection by the majority as a problem for the society and a need for the migrant to work (both figuratively and literally) before they can gain the acceptance of the white Anglophone majority. A persistent theme in media reporting on liminal migrant groups is that they must acquire proficiency in English, a sense of civic responsibility and

economic self-sufficiency before they are (re)integrated. The rejection of migrants is justified as a period of hazing through which all migrants must pass before acceptance.

Background and methodology

In order to carry out this research, the authors searched for media reports on the Albanian Muslim community of Shepparton from 1924 onwards. Using the search tool Trove, the authors employed the codes “Albanian” and “Shepparton”, yielding more than 800 results from approximately 80 Australian media outlets (Table 1). The authors created an archive for these reports which they systematically analysed, ignoring overlaps and general pieces. While Albanians began settling in Shepparton by the late 1920s, they do not begin appearing in newspaper reports until the 1930s. Media interest in the community peaked during the 1940s following a series of violent incidents linked to blood feuds alongside the classification of the community as “enemy aliens” during the Second World War.

The articles generally take a neutral or negative approach to the Albanian community, although reports in the *Shepparton Advertiser* were generally less dramatic than publications from other parts of Australia. None of these articles were written by Albanians as many of the first arrivals were illiterate. The rare instances that include Albanian voices mostly consist of reported speech from court proceedings, much of which was translated by an interpreter. To make up for the shortage of Albanian voices the authors have also included publications by the community, which are cited throughout the article to enhance the context of the archival material.

The site of Shepparton was chosen due to its unique Islamic history. Shepparton is a rural city with an agrarian economy located 190 km north of Melbourne. According to the 2016 national census, more than 600,000 people in Australia identified Islam as their religion (2.6 per cent of the population), making it the third largest response after Christianity and “no religion”. Seventy per cent of these respondents lived in either Melbourne or Sydney, where Muslims make up 4.2 and 5.3 per cent of the metropolitan population, respectively. In Shepparton, approximately 5.5 per cent of the population (roughly 3,500 people) are Muslim, making it the largest per capita Muslim population in Australia. Shepparton is home to four mosques – two Sunni

Table 1. Outline of media sources, obtained through Trove using the codes “Albanian” and “Shepparton”.

Year	Shepparton Advertiser	The Argus (Melbourne)	The Age (Melbourne)	Other Victorian (21)	Other Australian (54)
1930–1939	21	36	24	33	31
1940–1949	275	63	49	36	70
1950–1959	78	18	19	5	20

(Albanian and Turkish), and two Shi'a (Iraqi and Afghan) – and an influential South Asian Muslim community.

Since 9/11, Australian Muslims have found it increasingly difficult to obtain council approval for the construction of mosques and most applications are the subject of intense media scrutiny and opposition campaigns, often led by a network of far right activists (see e.g. Bugg 2012; Rudner 2017; Vahed and Vahed 2014; Villaroman 2012). Shepparton has resisted this trend, and two of its four mosques were built in the 9/11 era. This situation is not due to Shepparton's regional location since other regional centres have experienced a significant level of anti-Muslim sentiment. Instead, there has been a greater continuity to the Muslim presence in Shepparton than elsewhere in Australia which has contributed to its level of social cohesion (Moran and Mallman 2015). At the core of this old Muslim community sits an Albanian foundation.

The Shepparton Albanian Muslim community trace their origins to five migrants who disembarked at Fremantle in 1924 (Victoria Immigration Museum 2007, 2). These migrants were known as *kurbetxhi* because they were participating in *kurbet*, a form of circular migration common in Albania, whereby an individual would live and work in a foreign country for a few years before coming home to settle permanently. Returning *kurbetxhi* would be replaced (in theory) by a relative who would spend a similar amount of time abroad, working and saving money, before returning to Albania to be replaced by another (Victoria Immigration Museum 2007, 2). Most *kurbetxhi* at the turn of the twentieth century travelled to other parts of Europe or the Middle East, returning home after a period of two to three years; however, migration to far-away nations such as Australia made regular returns difficult and these migrants usually stayed abroad for a decade or more (Pistrick 2015, 58, 185).

Albanian migration to Australia was at a height in the 1920s and 1930s, a direct result of the quota placed on "Southern Europeans" entering the United States (previously a popular destination for *kurbetxhi*) by the 1924 Immigration Act (Carne 1984, 185). Almost all Albanian migrants to Australia during this time were born in the Korçë district near the border with Greece. Varying reports estimate 300–500 Albanians living in the Shepparton area in the late 1930s, mainly in the city's rural east between Lemnos and Orrvale (*Gippsland Times*, June 5, 1939). The community was predominantly male and most women were either the wives or children of *kurbetxhi*. The majority of these migrants found employment in agricultural labour. Roughly half of Shepparton's Albanian community were Muslim and the other half Orthodox Christians (*Smith's Weekly*, June 12, 1937), although some Orthodox Albanians identified as Greek, meaning that most Albanians mentioned in the sources were Muslim. There were 227 self-identifying Muslims in Shepparton in the 1947 census (Table 2), almost all of whom

would have been Albanian. Over the decades, the community was replenished by successive waves, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the rise of Hoxha regime in the late 1940s, and following the collapse of communism in the early 1990s. The post-90s migrants included one hundred families from Korçë sponsored for work visas by the Shepparton community (Carswell 2005, 28), and the descendants of *kurbetxhi* who had returned to Albania from Australia and were eligible for Australian citizenship (Mehmet 2014).

Islam and Albanian migrants

Australian media depictions of Muslims often focus women’s clothing, criminality and the persecution of non-Muslims (Kabir 2006b). The scrutiny around these subjects are the main methods of hazing in contemporary discourse on Muslims in Australia. Albanian Muslims do not figure prominently in these reports, which tend to focus more on Australian Muslims with Arab (especially Lebanese), Afghan or South Asian backgrounds. This is partly due to their smaller numbers: they numbered less than 20,000 in the 2011 census, although Australian Albanian societies believe that their numbers are under-reported. Despite their numbers, Albanians are represented in most federal Islamic organizations, including as senior members.

Interestingly, Islam was not a point of contention in the hazing of Albanian Muslims in the first part of the twentieth century. References to “Mohammedan priests” appear in funeral reports (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 29, 1948) and a “mosque” in Shepparton East is mentioned in a few passing reports (*the Argus*, October 25, 1938). There was some awareness of Islam among their Anglo neighbours and reports note that Albanian defendants, plaintiffs or witnesses took their oath on a Qur’an provided by the court. There are no mentions of festivals such as Ramadan, the observance of prayer, or of any particular practices regarding dress code or diet. There are numerous accounts of Albanian Muslims drinking alcohol and those who were prosecuted for public drunkenness did not express shame or remorse for their drinking. For example, when asked to explain why he had been drunk and disorderly, Ferik Mohammad simply stated: “I came into town on Saturday to get

Table 2. Census data on the number of Muslims (“Mohammedans”) living in Shepparton.

Year	Shepparton (town)		Shepparton (shire)		Total	Per cent
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
1933	4	0	12	0	16	0.1
1947	8	1	190	28	227	1.7
1954*	25	12	105	55	197	1.2
1961*	18	12	141	95	266	1.6

Note: There was no “Mohammedan” category in the 1954 and 1961 censuses; consequently, the number listed accounts for all other “non-Christians”, excluding Jews who were listed separately as “Hebrews”.

my ration book and I got tanked up" (*Shepparton Advertiser*, December 10, 1946). In a drink-driving case, a witness stated, "a dozen drinks is not much—it's nothing" (*Shepparton Advertiser*, October 5, 1945). Veiling is completely absent from reports on Albanians in Shepparton; at the time, the veil was neither a politically charged issue nor was it an exclusively Islamic practice, and many Australian women – from British, Irish and continental European backgrounds – wore headscarves either for fashion or for religious reasons (such as inside a church). However, the veil was a political issue in Albania; in 1923, a congress of Muslim clerics in Tirana resolved that the veil was not compulsory for women, and in 1937, the veil was banned by the state (Vickers 1999, 108–109, 135).

The religious practices of Albanian Muslim migrants were strongly influenced by Bektashism, a Sufi order dating from the thirteenth century. For Bektashis, rituals such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage are understood in esoteric terms, whereby sincerity of belief is far more important than the physical practices of doctrine (Doja 2006, 100). The legacy of Bektashism is evident among contemporary Shepparton Albanians, some of whom identify their school of Islam as "muhip". *Muhips* are lay members of a Bektashi order who have undergone initiation by clerical members of their *tekke* (Trix 1994, 378). However, the Albanians who migrated to Shepparton during the 1920s and 1930s did not call themselves "Bektashi" but rather "Moslems" or "Mohammadans", and they did not call their house of worship a *tekke* but a mosque (*xhami*).

Unlike in contemporary Australia, Albanian Muslim migrants in the first half of the twentieth century were viewed as a national group, not a religious group. As a result, any suspicion towards Albanians from Australians – either their neighbours or the authorities – came from fear of dual identities relating to nationality, not religion. This is similar to contemporary portrayals of Albanians in Italy, where the media does not focus on their faith, in contrast to depictions of Moroccans and Pakistanis (King and Mai 2009, 131). Negative portrayals instead focus on the alleged criminality of Albanian Muslims, their conflicting loyalties and hoarding of land.

Portrayals of Albanians as criminals

The association of Albanians with criminality is not limited to Australia and reporting in Italy has also framed Albanians as socially deviant (King and Mai 2009, 122–123). In the case of Albanians in Shepparton, the local press portrayed their social clubs as sites of violence and law-breaking. Shepparton's three Albanian clubs were the target of the authorities' attention throughout the 1930s and 1940s, including "frequent" health inspections (*Shepparton Advertiser*, March 11, 1936), and raids in pursuit of weapons, "sly grog" (the unlicensed sale of alcohol) and illegal gambling.

For example, Goli Feshti, the owner of an Albanian Club in High Street, was repeatedly in trouble with the law for selling “sly grog”, allowing gambling and causing neighbouring tenants trouble through the venue’s poor sanitation (*Shepparton Advertiser*, September 24, 1943). Another club, the Seven Stars Café, was the centre of a major media story in the early 1940s after the owner, Rakip Begir, shot another Albanian man outside. The media portrayed this as the fulfilment of a vendetta between the two men’s families, and cultivated the message that Albanians were bringing their backward customs to Australia. At the trial, the judge saw fit to warn all Albanians that “foreigners who brought continental feuds to this country would receive different treatment under British law from that to which they had been accustomed” (*The Argus*, April 25, 1940).

However, there is no evidence presented in these reports that Albanians were any more violent than other groups. Many Albanian men carried pistols at the time, either to protect the large amounts of remittance money they held on their person (*Shepparton Advertiser*, February 4, 1936), or to protect their property in general (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 18, 1937). While violence between Albanian men was depicted by the media as characteristic of an ancient tradition of tribal feuding, known in Albanian as *hakmarrije* (revenge-taking) or *gjakmarrije* (blood-taking), violence was more often caused by their isolation from traditional family life, and became less frequent as the proportion of families to single men grew (Carne 1984, 189).

The vast majority of reports on Albanians are limited to trivial criminal cases where the accused’s Albanian background was given special emphasis, singling them out for hazing. In the 1930s and 1940s, Albanian participants in court cases often relied upon interpreters, and instances of poor English were made light of, with the Albanians involved presented as the butt of a joke. This is demonstrative of their liminality: as they had not mastered English, they were not Australians. In one case, an interpreter was directed by the judge to ask the defendant, who was representing himself, if he had any further questions for the witness. After an extended conversation in Albanian, the interpreter turned to the court and said, “Judge, I have told him he can only ask questions at the moment but he can’t even understand that in our language” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, February 28, 1947). Repeat offenders were often described comically, such as Kaja Islam, who appears from 1939 for a variety of offences, with one judge describing his police record as a “mixed grill” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, November 28, 1944). These articles were designed for the amusement of the reader, where the punch-line was the humiliation of Albanians, demonstrating the power dynamic of the hazing party using their authority to present a flawed and submissive victim.

Dual loyalties

A key theme in Australia's migration policies is the loyalty of migrants to their host country. This discussion permeates debates around the Muslim community in Australia today, and has been applied to successive waves of migrants in the past. It is a prominent justification for hazing behaviour in public discourse, as well as for the perception of a migrant or minority group as liminal. It is therefore understandable that questions of loyalty surrounded the Albanians of Shepparton. As with the contemporary Muslim community in Australia, gestures of loyalty were often noted in the media but did not stop their portrayal as disloyal or untrustworthy. This increased after Fascist Italy invaded and annexed Albania in 1939, and intensified during the Second World War. It is during this time that we see a widespread abandonment of the "return-migration" concept as Albanians in Shepparton began to seek naturalization as British subjects in large numbers.

Shortly after the Fascist takeover of Albania in April 1939, a rumour circulated in Shepparton that Mussolini's government wished to impose Italian citizenship upon Albanians living abroad. The issue came to a head in late May 1939, when Stephen Narlan, the proprietor of an Albanian club in Wyndham Street, claimed to have been contacted by an anonymous Italian who asked him to make the club available for a visit by the Italian consul from Melbourne. He was told that the meeting was for the purposes of distributing the oath of allegiance in order for the Albanians of Shepparton to become Italian citizens. Narlan added that the message came with a threat, "that unless local Albanians became Italians they would have difficulty in obtaining passports to re-enter Albania" (*The Argus*, May 29, 1939). Members of the Albanian community nervously approached the local government about the issue, who relayed their concerns to the federal government in Canberra. Surprisingly, the Interior Ministry excused the Australian government from any responsibility. The Secretary to the Minister wrote that:

Although England and Australia had not recognised the conquest of Albania by Italy, it was within the power of the Italian Consul to call up those whom he considered were Italian nationals. The Italian consul would now naturally regard Albanians in Victoria as nationals, and therefore he had a right to call them up.

Furthermore, the Ministry appeared to support the threats relayed to Narlan, stating, "Albanians in Australia could not be penalised by Italy, but the relatives in Albania of nationals here could be prejudiced" (*The Age*, May 27, 1939). The visit from the Italian consul never happened, but this did not prevent the media from reporting on the alleged "racial tensions" between Italians and Albanians in the district (*Shepparton Advertiser*, May 29, 1939).

On 30 May 1939, the Italian community held a fundraiser for a local hospital hosted by a journalist from the Melbourne Italian newspaper *Il Giornale*

Italiano. Members of the Albanian community protested the event, believing it to be the original citizenship ceremony, leading to widespread interest by local and national media. Shepparton Albanians used this protest as an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to Australia. Narlan told *the Argus* that since the invasion of Albania several weeks prior, “there had been a rush by Albanians in the Shepparton district to take out British naturalisation papers” while those “Albanians who were saving up to return to their country had abandoned the idea” (*The Argus*, May 27, 1939). Another member of the community, a naturalized resident, told a reporter “All we want is to become Australians, not Italians. Long live the British Empire” (*Gippsland Times*, June 5, 1939). The same individual publicly destroyed an image of Mussolini, shouting that the Italians had murdered his brother in Albania (*the Weekly Times*, June 3, 1939). As feelings ran high, the media reported on the “large numbers of foreigners present in the streets of the town” and the volatility of the situation, although the event amounted to nothing more than a protest (*The Age*, May 29, 1939).

The Albanian community’s near-unanimous rejection of Italian nationality did not prevent them from being labelled as “enemy aliens” when Italy declared war on the Allies in 1940. This is characteristic of how even sincere demonstrations of loyalty can have very little positive effect on the framing of a community during the liminal stage. As most Albanians in Shepparton were engaged in primary production, they were exempt from internment and service (Kabir 2006a, 200–202). No Albanians were interned in Shepparton although a few Italians (who had been under police surveillance before the war) were detained (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 14, 1940). Nevertheless, enemy aliens were subject to a firearm ban and travel restrictions, which meant that they needed to apply for police permission before leaving the town. These rules were strictly enforced and on at least one occasion an Albanian farmer was fined for travelling to Melbourne without a permit in order to sell his fruit at the Queen Victoria Market (*Shepparton Advertiser*, February 28, 1941). However, once anti-axis partisans seized Albania from the Nazis in 1944, the status of Albanians in Australia was reclassified from “enemy aliens” to “friendly aliens” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, August 22, 1944).

More than thirty Albanian-born individuals enlisted in the Australian army; some were discharged after a few months while others saw out the war. Some served in combat service support on the domestic front, while others were deployed to combat divisions in the Pacific theatre, saw action and were decorated. The majority (at least three-quarters) were Muslims and at least two died on active duty: Kurt Ali Raman (QX15630), a native of Mançurisht, Korçë, was killed in action in Papua New Guinea, and Muharem Ali Kolayasi (VX54223, misspelt on his enlistment as Muhabem Ali), born in Sul, Korçë, died as a Japanese prisoner-of-war in Ambon. Three men from Shepparton enlisted: Azis Floky Ibrahim (Ibrahim Floky), Istrif (Estref) Ramadan and Vahit

Riza. Albanian organizations in Shepparton were extremely proud of their enlisted men, and made reference to the presence of Albanians in the AIF, RAAF and Labour Battalions when founding the Free Albanian Association (*Shepparton Advertiser*, April 4, 1944). At the outset of the war, the Albanians gave generously to the war effort as they saw the interests of Australia and Albania as aligned. For the Albanian community, these war sacrifices represented a movement from a liminal migrant group to an integrated part of Australia. Again, these gestures and sacrifices were often acknowledged but did not change the frame in which Albanians were placed in media and political discourse, an issue that will be outlined in more detail in the discussion on land.

The Albanian contribution to the war effort, both in terms of money raised as well as the enlistment of their men, remained an important theme in the post-war Shepparton community. Albanian organizations participated in Anzac Day commemorations, laying wreathes at the war memorial during the annual ceremony (*Shepparton Advertiser*, April 28, 1953). The same practices can be found among Albanian communities throughout Australia, and it is significant that the community in Mareeba, a regional suburb of Cairns, chose Anzac Day 1970 as the opening day of their mosque, which was consecrated in memory of veterans (Carne 1984, 191). The pride that the Albanian community has in their veterans continues to this day, and is symbolic of their loyalty and decision to make Australia their permanent home.

The Albanian community was conscious of the risk of being perceived as holding dual loyalties during the Second World War. Consequently, they frequently demonstrated their commitment to the war effort through generous donations to various causes. They did so as an ethnic bloc, and this did not fail to get the attention of the local press, who expressed admiration (and a little astonishment) that on one occasion, the editor wrote: "Such a display of loyalty and anxiety to help the war effort by people who are suffering no little inconvenience at the present time must earn the admiration and gratitude of every true Australian" (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 10, 1940). The pinnacle of Albanian efforts to maintain their culture while integrating to Australian society was the foundation of the Free Albanian Association in Shepparton in 1943. The expressed reason for its founding was for "the fostering of loyalty to Australia, and the study of English and Australian customs and law" (*Shepparton Advertiser*, August 31, 1943). In their original charter, they laid out nine principal aims:

- (1) In general to foster the interests of Albanian residents in Australia.
- (2) To provide mutual assistance in establishing as Australian citizens members of the Albanian community.
- (3) To provide assistance to poor and needy Albanians.

- (4) To promote the study of the English language and a knowledge of Australian customs and law.
- (5) To foster loyalty to Australia and to organize support for the successful prosecution of the war.
- (6) To improve methods of agriculture and the production of other primary produce.
- (7) By means of the Red Cross and any other channel lawfully available for the purpose, to provide relief and assistance to wives and relatives of Albanians resident in Australia who remain in Albania and who are suffering the consequences of the invasion of the country.
- (8) To join by means of affiliation with other bodies having similar objects and in particular with the Association of Albanians in the United States of America.
- (9) To provide such other spiritual and material benefits to members as from time to time may be determined (*Shepparton Advertiser*, August 31, 1943).

While items seven and eight held transnational objectives, items four through six emphasized a strong desire to integrate and be accepted as Australians. The Free Albanian Association was active during the last two years of the Second World War where their main activity was raising money for the war effort, the Red Cross (their main source of contact with relatives in Albania) and the Mooroopna Hospital. After the war, they used the Albanian national holiday on 28 November as a cultural gathering for the community and a fundraiser (*Shepparton Advertiser*, December 10, 1946), but the organization disappears from the records shortly after.

As most of the Albanian community was born in Albania before the 1960s, events in the home country influenced life in Shepparton. In particular, the communist takeover of Albania in 1944 had an effect on the political life of the community, as happened in many Eastern European migrant communities throughout Australia during the Cold War. Initially, Enver Hoxha (and his regime) was viewed positively; in a photograph of a gathering in the late 1940s, a pro-Hoxha slogan is held up by a member of the community (Victoria Immigration Museum 2007, 15), although the relationship soured some time later. The Cold War not only affected transnational relations, it also influenced how Albanians did business in the Goulburn Valley. For example, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Albanian tomato growers were at the forefront of efforts to organize their industry into a union so as to get a better deal from buyers of their produce (*Shepparton Advertiser*, March 25, 1938). One Albanian (and one Italian) was guaranteed a place on the Shepparton Tomato Growers Organisation committee in recognition of the number of Albanians involved in the industry (*Shepparton Advertiser*, January 22, 1940). But by the early 1950s, the same Albanians rejected the very existence of the organization. While not explicitly labelling the union as communist,

they did explain their rejection as emanating from their belief in the freedom of the individual, as “they had experienced loss of freedom in their homeland and they were not prepared to take action to limit their freedom in their new country” (*Adelaide Advertiser*, July 25, 1953). The founding of the Shepparton Albanian Moslem Society in 1955 in part occurred due to the Cold War; members believed that communist sympathizers would be reluctant to join a mosque as opposed to an ethnic-based institution. These actions were in line with what the community believed was necessary for their acceptance as loyal Australians by the government in the context of the Cold War. However, tensions between members of the Albanian community over politics were not limited to the pro-Hoxha and anti-Hoxha divide. Only one incidence of violence within the community was related specifically to the politics of Albania, the shooting of an “Agrarian” (member of Balli Kombëtar, also known as the National Front) by a “Royalist” in 1953.

Land

The greatest area of tension in Shepparton during the first half of the twentieth century was over land ownership and usage. The theme of foreigners coming to Australia and taking land or jobs from “real” Australians has been pervasive throughout the country’s history (Chua and Miller 2009; Ferreira 2016; Neerup 2011; Tian and Shan 1999). Articles about “aliens” forming “colonies” began appearing in the 1930s. The focus was not limited to the Albanians, but was also applied to the other Southern and Eastern European migrant communities in the Goulburn Valley. One such article from a Sydney tabloid went as far as to say 25 per cent of Shepparton’s population was made up of “aliens” and soon the town would be a “second Albania” (*Smith’s Weekly*, June 12, 1937). The article caused enough of a stir in Shepparton that the local newspaper felt obliged to respond that it was “bunkum” and that the percentage of foreigners in the area was grossly exaggerated (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 11, 1937).

Albanians were repeatedly singled out for “buying land at inflated prices, hoarding the land and distributing it among relatives and fellow countrymen” thereby stealing good irrigated land from “our boys” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, August 22, 1944). By the mid-1940s, it became the centre point for a populist anti-foreigner protectionist campaign spearheaded by future Prime Minister John McEwan and supported by the Returned Services League. McEwan, who was the federal member for Indi (which at that time included Shepparton), rallied against enemy aliens, even those who were naturalized, stating that it is “completely indefensible that rich districts such as Shepparton – which already has beyond question an over percentage of alien population – should have more and more of their land falling into the ownership of men of alien birth” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 8, 1943). The Shepparton

branch of the Returned Services League supported this motion with the President denouncing in a “fiery speech ... cases of Italians, Jews and Albanians taking land from Australians, including from a woman whose husband is serving” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, July 13, 1943). At one stage, the RSL circulated a pamphlet that placed a list of forty men who were serving in the armed forces alongside a list of “foreigners” who had bought land during the war. On one side the headline read: “These are a FEW of the Goulburn Valley Boys who are away Fighting for the FREEDOM of the Country” while on the other the headline stated: “These are a FEW of the ‘Boys’ in the Goulburn Valley who are buying the FREEHOLD of the Country!” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, July 31, 1945). All of the servicemen listed had British surnames, while twenty-five of the forty “aliens” listed beside them had Albanian Muslim names, among which was Ibrahim Floky, a soldier in the Australian army, and several other naturalized Australians. In other words, these men were grouped with the others in this hazing discourse, in spite of their contribution.

Racist attitudes were prevalent during this time. In one instance, a disgruntled Anglo-Australian was reported as referring to an Albanian as a “black c***” and “dago” during an assault (*Shepparton Advertiser*, October 10, 1941). These epithets are telling since although Albanians are called “white Muslims” within some sections of the Australian Muslim community (Deen 2011, 158), it is clear that wider society in which they lived did not regard them as white. It is characteristic of how many non-Anglo migrants undergo a process of “whitening” alongside their integration. For example, before Australia’s Federation in 1901, the Irish were generally considered to be non-white (Stratton 2016, 23). In addition, the Italians have moved from being “olive” to “white” Australians over the course of the twentieth century (Andreoni 2003; Dewhirst 2008; Sheills 2006). However, the process of whitening over the liminal phase is mostly restricted to migrant groups of European origin, and Australians of Asian or African descent have found it much more difficult to break this barrier of perceived foreignness, even after the liminal phase has ended. For example, Vietnamese Australians, and Asian Australians more broadly, experienced a significant amount of vilification throughout the 1980s and 1990s, being the primary target of far right groups during this time, but are now generally described as a group who have successfully integrated into Australia. However, many second generation Vietnamese Australians still find it difficult to describe themselves as Australian on the grounds that they do not look Australian, demonstrating how closely Australian identity is tied to skin colour (Nunn 2017, 221). In other words, while the non-white status for Albanian Muslims endured as long as they were in a liminal state, this is not a universal experience for migrants in Australia, and many others face racial barriers even after being designated as an accepted group.

Despite the negative attitudes of a few, there also appears to be a significant section of Shepparton’s population that were welcoming and accepting

of Albanians and other migrants. By 1937, the primary schools were including Albanian songs amongst other standards such as “Waltzing Matilda” and “Little Bo Peep” at school concerts (*Shepparton Advertiser*, September 26, 1938). Furthermore, the Country Women’s Association, a highly influential regional organization, held welcome functions for Albanian and Jewish refugees in the lead up to the Second World War (*The Age*, August 14, 1939). By the 1940s, there were various initiatives by Shepparton residents aimed at integrating migrant communities into Australian society. These included an adult English class, run by high-school teachers in their spare time, in which several Albanian men enrolled (*Shepparton Advertiser*, March 23, 1945).

After the Second World War, the volume of articles that portrayed the Albanians in a negative light decreased, and more reports focused on the respectability, industriousness and civic involvement of Albanians in Shepparton. Among such examples were the Kaso brothers, who began life in Shepparton as share farmers and ended up running a transport business. The untimely death in 1948 of Eqrme Kaso at the young age of 32 was mourned throughout Shepparton, and his funeral from the mosque to his burial place was well attended by Albanians and non-Albanians alike. In particular, the Shepparton East Football Club formed a guard of honour, with the local newspaper reporting that “He and his brothers are held in the highest regard by players and officials, and almost the whole team attended, led by captain-coach P. Dalton, and accompanied by most of the club officials” (*Shepparton Advertiser*, June 29, 1948). The transition towards acceptance is evident in the frequency of such articles after this time, but also demonstrative of the fact that the media had moved on to another target.

Conclusion

The rites of passage have previously been applied to theories of migration; however, in this case, the authors have emphasized that liminality is a time frame between the arrival of the first migrants to their perceived integration into the fabric of society. Notwithstanding their efforts to demonstrate integration (by learning English and engaging in performative demonstrations of loyalty), migrants are still subject to hazing until popular opinion becomes preoccupied with the threat posed by another newer group. The Albanian contribution to the war effort did not prevent them from being accused of “stealing land” in the 1940s. In the same way, the present Muslim community has struggled to shake the media’s tendency to link them with terrorism, despite the active participation of Australian Muslims in combating radicalization. Liminality and hazing are therefore a mechanism of othering built around a momentary fear of one group over all others.

Through this case study, the authors have discussed how migrant hazing functions during the liminal phase, placing it in a longitudinal setting. While

the Australian media is presently preoccupied with problems posed by Muslim migrants, Islam as a belief system did not factor into fears generated by the media against Albanian migrants in the 1930s and 1940s. This establishes how the 9/11 era has shaped public perceptions of Muslims and of Islam in Australia; historically, Islam has been viewed as foreign by mainstream Anglophone Australia, but it did not constitute a threat. Rather, other elements tied to the idea of conflicting loyalties were seized upon to single out migrant groups as dangerous. Most of the media's attention stereotyped Albanians as motivated to violence and lawlessness simply by being Albanian. The rhetoric around backward cultures is still present in current immigration discourse in Australia. The allegation that migrants are culturally prevented from integrating was aimed at arrivals from Vietnam in the 1980s and 1990s, and is currently applied to Muslims and Australians of African descent. In other words, while the focus and specifics of migrant hazing have changed over time, the tools through which hazing takes place are recognizably the same.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend their thanks to the Shepparton Albanian Moslem Society, and in particular Cr Dinny Adem, Reg Qemal and Enver Sabri, for their feedback. In addition, the authors would like thank Prof Jamie Winders for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper, Prof Albert Doja for his advice, and to the two anonymous reviewers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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