# UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

**Topic:**

Performances of Muslim-ness in post-apartheid Cape Town:
Authenticating Cultural Difference, Belonging and Citizenship

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Doctoral
Degree in Anthropology
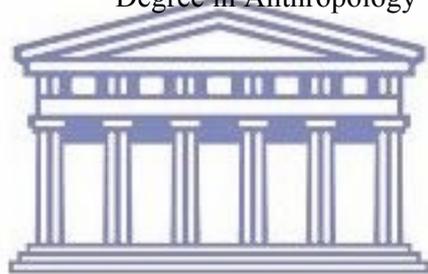
**Presented to:**

Supervisor: Professor Heike Becker

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# Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic study of the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness and an exploration of the Muslim politics of cultural difference in the democratic, post-colonial, and liberal context of the post-apartheid South African nation-state. The central argument that underpins my approach throughout this thesis is that the post-apartheid cultural politics of 'rainbowism' has led to an enhanced and remarkable resurgence of public performance of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. This thesis posits that this resurgence has mediated a sense of belonging that is defined by the multiple allegiances of Muslims to their local cultural particularity, to the South African nation-state, and to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Underpinning my approach in this thesis is the understanding of the politics of culture as a primary category of difference in the post-apartheid context (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004; Becker 2015). My analysis of this period is framed by the notion that the post-apartheid era is marked by an institutional and vernacular politics of cultural difference. Following from this, a Muslim aesthetic politics of belonging is understood throughout as a manifestation of the culturalisation of citizenship and of the multiculturalist imagination of the 'Rainbow Nation'. This dissertation includes a historical ethnography that locates the present research material within a trajectory of Muslim public performance and community formation in Cape Town. To this end, primary research questions explored throughout include the following: What are the Muslim aesthetic politics of belonging and citizenship? What are the aesthetic forms of Muslim public visibility and community formation? How do performances mediate what it means to be a South African Muslim in the post-apartheid context?

The ethnographic exploration presented herein is centred on both Capetonian South African Muslims and Somali refugees—whose public visibility in Cape Town is a phenomenon of the post-apartheid period. The discussion of public performances of Muslim-ness within and across both Capetonian Muslims and Somali refugees is geared toward unpacking points of aesthetic commonality and difference between two Muslim communities in Cape Town. My aim here is to investigate whether there is a "common aesthetics of Islam" that constitutes an Islamic style shared among Muslims in Cape Town—including locals and refugee populations—as well the larger Muslim *Ummah*.

The ethnographic exploration of the public performance of Muslim-ness entails an investigation of the visual, audio, and food sensual performances of Muslim-ness. Research observations and discussion around these aesthetics involves two key areas of enquiry: Firstly, consideration of the way in which these aesthetic forms of Muslim-ness materialise Muslim public visibility within Cape Town. Secondly, an examination of the role of the sensorial affect of these aesthetics in forming a personal sense of religious piety amongst Muslims and in binding Muslims together within an aesthetic style of an imagined community within Cape Town.

The theoretical concepts that underpin the analysis of my research observations draw mainly on the power of performance in the formation of individual and collective identity, belonging, and imagining of the community (Askew 2002). To explore Muslim politics of authenticity, the analysis leans on anthropologist Birgit Meyer's (2009a, 2009b) theorisation of 'aesthetic formations', which centres upon the affect of aesthetics in forming embodied and sensorial 'styles'. Here, 'aesthetic formations' are seen as practices that mediate the imagining of a community style by forming commonalities between members and a sense of shared identity and recognisable appearance.

Research observations draw upon an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that brings together the theorisation of the integral relationship between power and performance in the making of post-colonial citizenship, belonging, and politics of cultural difference. My discussion connects this theorisation with that of the integral relations between aesthetics, affect, sensory experience, and subject and community formations. Another theoretical concept that underpins this ethnography is that of 'religious urbanity', which puts forward the understanding that urbanity and the process of urbanisation are not merely secularisations of the public sphere, but are elements of modernity that also incorporate a resurgence of religious public performances visible within metropolises across the globe

The material presented and analysed in this dissertation was generated through fieldwork hinged on a sensorial ethnography of the public, private, and the everyday performance of Muslim-ness in Cape Town during the period 2011-2105. This ethnography traces the life history of female, male, local and refugee Muslims living in Cape Town to develop narratives of their sense of citizenship and belonging, and

the interplay between Muslims living alongside one another within a secular democratic society. Further to this, the ethnographic enquiry presented here attempts to move beyond the hierarchal position of researcher in fieldwork by including performative ethnography as a methodological intervention.

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# Declaration

I declare that *Performances of Muslim-ness in post-apartheid Cape Town: Authenticating Cultural Difference, Belonging and Citizenship* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.


Ala Alhourani                                                                 April 2017

Signed …………………………….

## Acknowledgments

Firstly, I express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor and dear friend Professor Heike Becker for her constant mindful guidance, emotional support, and encouragement during the writing of this thesis. I first enrolled at the department of Sociology and Anthropology at UWC in 2006 for an honours degree in Anthropology. My first class was with Heike Becker and Emile Boonzaier, both of whom realized that my academic background in business administration and my poor English skills limited my understanding and engagement with the class. Yet both were gentle and always included me in the class discussions and kept me on track. I am indebted to both for giving me the opportunity to study and be an anthropologist.

I am extremely grateful to the academic staff of the department of Sociology and Anthropology at UWC. I thank Professor Diana Gibson, Professor Olajide Oloyede, Professor Krishnavelli Kathleen Nadasen, Dr. Sharyn Spicer and Dr. William Ellis for their friendship, support and inspiration. My thanks extend to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at UWC Professor Duncan Brown. I am also deeply thankful to Professor Birgit Meyer, Professor Abdulkader Tayob, and Dr. Chrisoula Lionis. Finally, I express deep gratitude to the Muslim community in Cape Town, in particular to those whose personal experiences form a vital part of this thesis.

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# Chapter One

## *Introduction*

### *1.1 Mass Celebration of Mawlid Al-Nabi in Cape Town*

On 27 January 2013, I stood amongst a crowd of approximately twenty thousand Muslims gathered at Green Point Urban Park in Cape Town to perform and participate in a mass open-air celebration of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi,* the annual celebration of the birth of the Prophet Mohammed (fig. 1.1).[1] At this celebration, Muslims from diverse South African and immigrant communities gathered as a 'sea of faithful'.[2] Joined by their faith but also by a common dress code (with most dressed in white Islamic garb), attendees united in professing their shared love and devotion to the prophet Mohammad. By the time I arrived to the event at 7:00 a.m., many of the attendees were already at the forecourt of the Cape Town Stadium after being transported there by buses from their respective points of departure.[3] The majority of the crowd were Capetonian Muslims, but there were also many Arab, Turkish and African immigrants and a group of Somali refugees. The diverse backgrounds of the attendees were accentuated by their positioning within the forecourt of the Cape Town Stadium: attendees were found grouped under banners of assorted mosques, Islamic schools (*madrasah*) and *Mawlid* groups (*jamaha*) whilst singing various Arabic religious songs (*inshudah*).

At 8:30 a.m., the Habibia Siddique Muslim Pipe Band led thousands of participants in a procession from the forecourt to the large green Reddam Field within the Stadium.[4] There we gathered facing the main stage, where official representatives were seated preparing to address the crowd.[5]

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[1] *Mawlid Al-Nabi* is an Arabic phrase: *Mawlid* means 'birth' and *Al-Nabi* means 'the Prophet'.
[2] This was the title attached to the *Mawlid* picture that was featured on the front page of the *Cape Times* newspaper the following day (January 28, 2013).
[3] The *Mawlid* organiser coordinated with various mosques, *Mawlid* groups, and Islamic schools to recruit and transport their respective members to the forecourt of Cape Town Stadium at 7:00 a.m.
[4] The Habibia Siddiqui Muslim Brigade was founded by Islamic luminary Moulana Shah Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui al-Qadri, who visited Cape Town from India in 1952.
[5] Official representatives included the MJC president, Mawlanah Ihsaan Hendricks; the then Deputy President of South Africa, Kgalema Motlanthe; the Western Cape Premier, Helen Zille; and Mayor Patricia de Lille. Many Muslim scholars from different countries were also involved: Shaykh

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**SEA OF FAITHFUL**

HOLY MOMENT: More than 20 000 Muslims from across Cape Town gathered for the Mawlid al-Nabi celebrations at Greenpoint Urban Park yesterday. It is an annual event that commemorates the birth of the Prophet M

**FIGURE 1.1**  Front page of *Cape Times*, Monday, 28 January 2013.

At around 10:00 a.m., Sataar Parker, master of ceremonies,[6] officially opened the *Mawlid* by welcoming everyone, saluting all the prophets, and calling to the stage *Hafiz* Abdu Alaziz Brown to recite selected Quranic verses.[7] Whilst the sacred liturgical Quranic sound positioned the crowd in an Islamic religious mood evoking their sense of religious belonging to Islam and the Muslim community, Sataar Parker evoked their sense of national belonging.[8] He did this by highlighting the historical and ongoing involvement of Muslims in national political affairs and by requesting that the crowd rise and sing the national anthem—performed by a group of young Muslim women on stage—as a way of showing respect and belonging to South Africa.[9] Following this, Moulana Ihsaan Hendricks, the president of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) in Cape Town, welcomed everyone by saying 'Salam,

Muhammad bin Al-husayni Al-Ninowy from Syria, Shaykh Ahmad Tijani ben Omar (born in Ghana) from the USA, and human rights activist Na'lan Dal from Turkey (*Cape Times*, 28 January, 2013).

[6] There were three masters of the ceremony: Sataar Parker, Moulana Abdu Rahman Khan and Shaykh Fakhruddin Qwaisi. All three MCs are South African Muslim religious figures: Sataar Parker is the spokesman of Gatesville mosque in Cape Town; Moulana Abdu Rahman Khan is committee member of Darul Uloom Nu'amaniyyah in Durbin; and Fakhruddin Qwaisi has been Imam in various mosques in Cape Town and currently lectures at the International Peace College of Southern Africa in Cape Town.

[7] *Hafiz* is an Arabic word that translates to mean 'memorizer of the Quran', or someone who has the ability to recite the Quran by heart.

[8] For further analysis of the role of sound and religious urbanity in Cape Town, refer to chapter Seven.

[9] He made brief reference to Abdullah Haron's resistance to apartheid and to Dala Aumar—the first Minster of Justice in the post-apartheid government. Implicit in this reference was an attempt to assert the Muslim stand against apartheid, their political leadership and engagement in the politics of the post-apartheid nation-state.

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shalom, molweni, hello'.[10] His use of different languages demonstrated his recognition of the breadth of diverse cultural, linguistic and religious communities in Cape Town, and an attempt to cut through the boundaries existing within the diverse Muslim community gathered there. These multiple salutations thus served both a practical and symbolic purpose, for the salutation *shalom* (Hebrew for peace) addressed Jews despite it having little practical function in addressing or connecting to the languages of Cape Town's Muslim communities.

This *Mawlid* is a clear example of an event (amongst others discussed throughout this thesis) that coalesced a diverse Muslim community in Cape Town and provided a platform for public visibility and community formation. Nabeweya Malick of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), who coordinated the mass *Mawlid* in 2013, initiated the event in an attempt to bring a sense of unity and belonging amongst Muslims of diverse cultural backgrounds (including locals and immigrants) within Cape Town and in South Africa at large. In an interview with me, Malick reflected on the impetus behind the event:
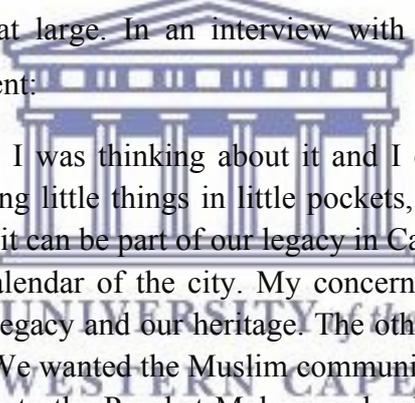
> Two years ago I was thinking about it and I come to the idea that instead of having little things in little pockets, we need to have one major event so it can be part of our legacy in Cape Town. We need to put it in the calendar of the city. My concern was that we need to look after our legacy and our heritage. The other reason was that we wanted unity. We wanted the Muslim community to feel that spirit of expressing love to the Prophet Mohammad collectively and not just within separate little groups.[11]

She stated in her interview with The Voice of the Cape (a Muslim radio station in Cape Town) that 'the event is also about going beyond the Muslim community'. Further, she explained in an interview with me that the MJC attempted to be inclusive not only of diverse Muslim groups but also across the cultural and religious spectrum of Cape Town. To this end, the *Mawlid* organizers had sent invitations to representatives of all faith communities and civic organizations in Cape Town to join and express their love toward the Prophet Mohammad, who according to Malick (referencing the Quran), 'sent compassion to all humankind'.

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[10] The term *Moulana* (literally translating from Arabic to mean 'our lord/master') is a title typically preceding the name of a respected Muslim religious leader.
[11] Nabeweya Malick's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 10 February 2013, MJC office, Athlone, Cape Town.

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The MJC's attempt at inclusivity was not limited to official invitations. Members of the Muslim Students' Association (MSA) were assigned by *Mawlid* organizers to distribute five thousand roses, each of which was attached to a *Hadith* (a report of the Prophet Mohammad's actions and sayings).[12] The volunteers from the MSA walked around the area surrounding Urban Park, handing out roses to people and passers by regardless of religious affiliation, encouraging everyone to participate and attend the mass *Mawlid*. This endeavour to reach the larger public of Cape Town is indicative of strategies to extend the Muslim public; it is significant because it illustrates the stress placed on forging connections beyond the Muslim population and welcoming members from other religious groups to experience 'sensorial performances' of Muslim-ness.[13] This inclusive approach by Muslims in Cape Town was echoed in the words of the Mayor of Cape Town, Patricia de Lille, who addressed the crowd at the *Mawlid* celebration:

> I would like to encourage you to revive and revitalize your great cultural traditions and thus provide an example to the country and the Muslim world of the great Cape Muslim legacy of a tolerant, peaceful and progressive vision of Islam.

Beyond her call for inter-religious understanding, Patricia de Lille's *Mawlid* address signified an acknowledgement that Muslim identity in Cape Town is shaped and mediated by both local and international cultural, religious and political influences. This sentiment was particularly pertinent in the context of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi,* as the event is deeply reflective of the historical trajectory of Muslim cultural difference and belonging in Cape Town.

Importantly, despite the organizers' attempts at inclusiveness, the event was not free from contradiction. While thousands of Muslims were queuing to enter and participate in the mass celebration, three Muslim men stood across the road holding signs protesting the *Mawlid* celebration. They were standing silently, not attempting to intervene or argue with the crowd, and neither did the crowd attempt to engage and debate with them. Yahea Adam—chairperson of South African Islamic political party, the Cape Muslim Congress—criticized the involvement of Kgalema

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[12] Participating MSA members were from the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

[13] Throughout this thesis I call upon the term 'sensorial performances' to describe diverse Muslim social, cultural and religious performances that trigger sensory experiences that utilize the five senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and sound. For further discussion on this term, refer to chapter Two (2.3).

Motlanthe and Helen Zille in mass *Mawlid* celebrations on the basis that they were representatives of political parties (the African National Congress and Democratic Alliance respectively). Yahea complained to the *Mawlid* organizers about the exclusion of local Muslim politicians from such a gathering. In response to this critique, Nabeweya Malick stated that those 'official representatives were invited based on their capacity as representatives of civic institutions and not political parties'.

Malick has expressed significant pride in her initiative, as the mass *Mawlid* has became an official annual event within the city of Cape Town's calendar and has since grown to a national level.[14] Whilst planning the *Mawlid* in Cape Town, Malick was partially involved in planning a similar ceremony in Pretoria. Indeed, the day before the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebration took place in Cape Town, Malick and other members from the MJC attended the first mass open-air celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi* in Pretoria on 26 January 2013.

My intention in opening this chapter with a detailed description of the *Mawlid* is to deliver a vignette of a seminal event in the annual calendar of Muslims living in Cape Town, thus laying the foundations for understanding the context of my research. The *Mawlid Al-Nabi* (and other Muslim performances discussed throughout this thesis) is indicative of my research focus on the politics of belonging, citizenship and cultural difference that emerge as a result of the post-apartheid era's 'politics of culture' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004; Becker 2015). The mass celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi* suggests a new scale of public performances of Muslim-ness, and an emerging politics of belonging. This culturalisation of Muslim as citizenship in South Africa signifies post-apartheid's liberal policies of communitarian cultural rights, as Steven Robins (2008) has argued for the wider South African context, as well as its politics of cultural difference (Becker 2010). What is thus particularly significant to consider is that Muslim politics of belonging, citizenship and cultural difference in the post-apartheid era do not differ substantively from other religious or cultural communities. Rather, the *Mawlid* celebration is best understood as an example of rainbowism and post-apartheid politics of cultural diversity. This I will now discuss in detail.

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[14] The date of mass *Mawlid* celebration in Cape Town has shifted over the last few years. It took place on 27 January 2013, 19 January 2014, and 18 January 2015.

*1.2 Post-apartheid Rainbowism*

At the final public hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu coined the term 'rainbow nation' to emphasize equality in cultural diversity and racial difference in the post-apartheid period. Post-apartheid rainbowism and its promotion and celebration of cultural diversity is observed at institutional levels but also within vernacular politics of cultural difference. At the institutional level, one can see the post-apartheid celebration of cultural diversity in the new South African national anthem, which embraces the eleven official languages of South Africa; in the slogan of Cape Town Festival, 'One City, Many Cultures'; and in events such as the Cape Town Carnival, which 'showcases and celebrates the diversity of Cape Town and South Africa'.[15] However, anthropologist Heike Becker (2010) has been critical of the notion of rainbowism and its practices of Culture as the language of difference in postcolonial South Africa. She points out that the post-apartheid model of the 'rainbow nation' centres around a notion of a diversity of (ethnic) cultures which has been evoked and embraced by the growing heritage and cultural tourism industry, by art, by state and private media, by academic discourse, through individuals' association with social groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, among others) and in everyday identification and social interaction. The notion of a rainbow nation has been criticized for seemingly essentializing cultural difference (see Baines 1998) and for underplaying the contested nature of cultural diversity (Tayob 1995).

Underpinning my approach in this thesis is the understanding of the politics of culture as a primary category of difference in the post-apartheid context (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004; Becker 2015). In the post-apartheid era, culture became an influential tool for social integration and inclusiveness, and the recognition of cultural difference was a point of departure for building the rainbow nation (Garuba and Raditlhalo 2008, 40-43). In this context, cultural difference has been positioned as central to the rights of citizenship and this has been invoked at state and vernacular levels. However, while public discourse in post-apartheid South Africa

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[15] Cape Town Festival is an art and culture festival run by the city of Cape Town. Beginning in 1999, it takes place for one week in March each year. For more information, visit the Cape Town Festival website at http://www.capetownfestival.co.za (last accessed 29 October 2016). Cape Town Carnival started in 2010 and takes place annually each March at Green Point, where artistic and cultural groups parade through the streets. For more information, visit the Cape Town Carnival website at http://capetowncarnival.com/ (last accessed 29 October 2016).

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tends to emphasize cultural difference, many studies have shown hybridity and processes of creolisation in popular youth culture: for example, in clothes and urban visual media (Nuttall 2004, 2009), musical tastes (Dolby 2001), hip-hop culture (Becker and Dastile 2008; Badsha 2003), and gender roles (Salo 2005). This research indicates that in contemporary South Africa we witness an emphasis on cultural difference as well as processes of hybridization and creolisation. In this context, the notion of 'cultures' can be seen best as transformative flexible entities in that both their content and members are changeable along the lines of anthropologist Terence Turner's notion of 'critical multiculturalism' (1994, 412). Significantly, the notion of changeability and hybridity is not limited to culture but also applies to the historical authentication of religion (Asad 1993).

My analysis of this period is framed by the notion that the post-apartheid era is marked by a vernacular politics of cultural difference. As such, my approach to the politics of culture in South Africa builds on the work of various anthropologists including Steven Robins (2008), John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff (2004), Richard Wilson (2002) and Heike Becker (2015). The work of the Comaroffs is particularly significant in this regard: most notably I draw from their argument that the 'pragmatics of (cultural) difference' plays a definitive role in post-apartheid political dispensation. In their analysis of postcolonial citizenship within South Africa and elsewhere, the Comaroffs argue that the nation-state 'is less multicultural than it is policultural'. Through the addition of the prefix 'poli', the Comaroffs draw attention to cultural plurality and its politicization (2004, 191). Their argument focuses on the ways in which Afromodernity is shaped by accommodating liberalism whilst absorbing growing demands of difference in postcolonial contexts. Thus, within their framework, postcolonial citizenship in South Africa entails at once a transcendence *and* tolerance of diversity, leading to a situation where the understanding of citizenship is caught between 'Euromodernist' universalism and cultural relativism.

What is significant here is that although the Comaroffs signal the significance of 'policulturalism' in regards to spheres such as religion and the arts (2004. 200), their analysis in centred on jurisprudence and state mechanisms. This emphasis on the politics of cultural difference at the level of state mechanisms is also shared by Robins (2008) and Wilson (2002), who generally focus on a scrutiny of political and

public culture discourses. Robins' book, *From Revolution to Rights in South Africa* (2008), explores the emergence of new identity politics employed as rights-based strategies by post-apartheid NGOs and social movements. His study posits that there has been a shift from an apartheid racial regime of cultural struggle to 'rights talk' underpinned by post-apartheid democratic multiculturalism and citizenship. The book unpacks the ways in which NGO-social movements such as the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and the South African San Institute, among others, mobilize for constitutional rights and recognition as part of spectrums of post-apartheid cultural rainbowism.

In her introduction to *Anthropology Southern Africa*'s special issue on 'engaging difference', Heike Becker (2010) drew attention to the troubling connection between the politics of difference, belonging and exclusion in the context where global multiculturalist discourse alongside Africanization has come to replace the ethno-racial culture of apartheid South Africa. She maintains that the 'surprising obsession of the post-apartheid era with difference presents an unexpected image where the earlier rejection of ethno-racial labels, informed by the non-racialism politics of the anti-apartheid 'struggle', has been reversed completely' (Becker 2010, 75). Becker digs deeper into the Comaroffs' and Robins' theorizations of the ways in which the politics of difference, identity and belonging are employed to claim rights. She calls for anthropological investigation that pays attention to the historical construction of present cultural difference, with keen focus on aesthetic performance and its politics of authenticity.

Further to this, in recent years, research on the role of the politics of cultural difference in the post-apartheid context have concentrated analysis beyond state mechanisms to investigate manifestations of these politics in everyday forms of culture. Notable in this regard is the work of Heike Becker (and in particular her work *How We See Our Culture* [2015]) that investigates demotic forms of the politics of cultural difference. This emphasis upon vernacular forms has been explored further within the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* research project, which brings together the work of several scholars and postgraduate research projects including this thesis.

*Performing the Rainbow Nation* is an interdisciplinary project that aims to 'investigate the significance of cultural performance in the processes of reconfiguring citizenship in contemporary South Africa' (Becker 2010, 1).[16] The research develops connections between cultural performance, belonging, and citizenship in contemporary South Africa. This interdisciplinary project is underpinned by several key research questions that investigate how individuals establish 'belonging' in the context of contemporary South Africa: How do forms of performance mediate what it means to be South African in the contemporary post-apartheid context? What is the significance of aesthetic strategies for reconfiguration and authentication of citizenship? How are the politics of belonging and dynamics of inclusion and exclusion related to understandings of performance? Following from these questions, *Performing the Rainbow Nation* aims to find out how and why particular forms of performance become framed as 'authentic' and 'true' and thus are able to evade scrutiny and questioning. Accordingly, the project also investigates what conflicts arise over competing notions of authenticity; in other words, what makes people feel that certain cultural elements provide an authentic experience (see 2.2) where they are in touch with the 'real world' and their 'true selves' (Becker 2010).
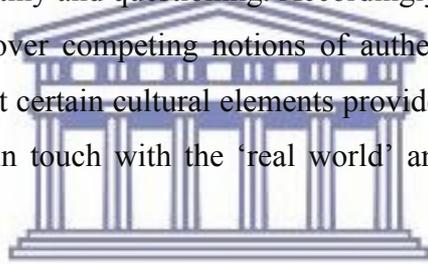
The theoretical concepts that underpin the analysis of my research observations—and of *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project—draw mainly on the power of performance in the formation of individual and collective identity, belonging and imagining of the community (Askew 2002). To explore Muslim politics of authenticity, the analysis leans on anthropologist Birgit Meyer's (2009a, 2009b) theorization of 'aesthetic formations', which centres upon the affect of aesthetics in forming embodied and sensorial 'styles'. Here, 'aesthetic formations' are seen as practices that mediate the imagining of a community style that forms commonality amongst members and a sense of shared identity and recognizable appearance.

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[16] Collaborators on this project are all affiliated with the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The project is directed by Heike Becker and draws on contributions from anthropologist Emile Boonzaier, scholar of theatre and performance Miki Flockmann, and literature and cultural scholar in gender studies Desiree Lewis, together with a group of Masters and PhD students (including myself).The project has also benefitted from the input of anthropologists working in the field of religious studies including co-applicant and leader of the project at Utrecht University, Birgit Meyer, and Mathias Krings and Anna-Maria Brandstetter from the Department of Anthropology and African studies at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz—through whom our project was interlinked with a larger project, *Performance, Belonging, and the Politics of Difference in Africa.*

Another theoretical concept that underpins this ethnography is that of 'religious urbanity', which puts forward the understanding that urbanity and the process of urbanization are not merely secularizations of the public sphere, but include also a resurgence of religious public performances visible within metropolises across the globe. Religious urbanity refers to the impact of growing infrastructure and transnationalism, and the adoption of new media technologies in religious public performance (Becker 2014). Emerging new media and infrastructure for religious public performance are seen as formations of what Eickelman and Anderson (2003) refers to as 'public Islam'.[17] For example, the description of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebration indicates a symbiotic relationship between Muslim religious public performances and the urban structure of Cape Town. The *Mawlid Al-Nabi*, a symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness, renders Muslim style visible within the multicultural public sphere of Cape Town. This public visibility of Muslim-ness is understood as a manifestation of religious urbanity.

What is particularly significant to our purposes here is that the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* mediated Muslim emergent politics of belonging and cultural difference through performances of aesthetic forms including the sound of Quranic recitations and the crowd's unified donning of white Islamic garb. In the empirical riddle of the *Mawlid* we begin to see how aesthetic forms are employed as strategies that both represent and mediate Muslim cultural difference and community formation in Cape Town and South Africa at large. By framing these aesthetic forms as 'strategies', my aim is to make clear the impetus behind, and impact of, these aesthetic forms—thus revealing Muslim politics of authenticity within contemporary South Africa. At the *Mawlid* celebration, around twenty thousand individuals came together to form a Muslim public whose shared style and identity were rendered recognizable through their collective sensory experience of the *Mawlid* event. Aesthetic forms that engendered these sensory experiences include the visual formations of Muslim-ness (images, dress codes and the built environment), the sound of the Arabic language and the taste and smell of Muslim food culture—each of which embody symbolic enactments of Islamic style and are analysed in depth in subsequent chapters (see 1.7).

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[17] Key theoretical terms are discussed in greater detail throughout chapter Two. These terms include 'performance', 'aesthetic formations', 'sensorial style', 'religious urbanity' and 'public Islam'.

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*1.3 The Big Question*

Underlying my ethnography is an aim to explore the ever-increasing resurgence of performances of 'Muslim-ness' and Muslim aesthetic strategies of cultural difference and belonging in the democratic, post-colonial and liberal context of the post-apartheid South African nation-state. Here, the big question is whether the recent resurgence of performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim aesthetic politics of cultural difference is owed to a dual allegiance of Muslims to the South African nation-state and the transnational *Ummah*,[18] or whether it is a manifestation of the multiculturalist imagination of the 'rainbow nation' consisting of different cultures— 'each one distinct, and all harmoniously co-existing' (Becker 2012, 31). This entails further enquiry into the politics of Muslim belonging and sense of citizenship through an examination of the various ways in which Muslims position themselves within the 'multicultural' context of contemporary South Africa and their multiple belongings to their respective and distinct cultural localities (such as Malay, Somali, Indian, African, and white), to an imagined Muslim community in Cape Town, to the South African nation, and also to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. These enquiries raise other important questions: Who constitutes the Muslim community of Cape Town? What forms a community of Muslims in Cape Town? How do religious-based and hybridized cultural forms intersect in the social imaginary of Muslims in Cape Town?   How do Muslims perform their sense of national belonging and citizenship? How do Muslims perform their identities in different contexts?

Throughout this thesis I explore aesthetic forms in diverse public and domestic performances of Muslim-ness to map the ways in which they operate as strategies that enact public visibility of Muslim cultural style, engender community, embody cultural difference and mediate the push and pull between local and international understandings and performances of Islam (see 1.3). Research observations and discussion of performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town are geared toward an aim that is twofold: Firstly, this project aims to explore the way in which performances of Muslim-ness (such as the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebration, and other Muslim performances discussed throughout this thesis) materialize Muslim public visibility within Cape Town. Secondly, this thesis seeks to explore the way in which performances of Muslim-ness operate as sensorial aesthetic strategies that form a

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[18] Arabic word meaning 'community' or 'nation' that refers to the Islamic community specifically.

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personal sense of religious piety amongst Muslims and serve to bind them together within an aesthetic style of an imagined community within Cape Town. As described in the example of the *Mawlid* above (and further examples presented in following chapters), aesthetic strategies, including Quranic recitation and the crowd's unified donning of white Islamic garb, seemed to form a commonality and lend a culturally diverse group of Muslims a sense of shared religious style. The diversity of Muslim communities in Cape Town must be understood as resulting from multiple social classes and ethnic affiliations to Cape Malay, Coloured, Indian, African, White South Africans, and immigrant Muslims including Somalis (Vahed and Jeppie 2005). The multiplicity and diversity of Muslims in Cape Town reveals a religious identification that spans race, gender, nationality, age, class, language, politics, and ethnic communities (Vahed and Jeppie 2005).

Here it is significant to note that Muslims number approximately 654,000, and thus comprise 1.46% of South Africa's population of 44.8 million. Despite being a minority, Muslims in Cape Town and South Africa at large enjoy a high level of public visibility 'disproportionate to population numbers' (Vahed 2007, 117). In the Western Cape, the number of Muslims is estimated at approximately 293,000, thus comprising 6.5% of the population of 4,524,000. The present Muslim population in the Cape Town area consists of approximately 137,280 persons out of a total population of 1,149,200.[19] Moreover, since the 1990s, the political and economic liberation of the post-apartheid era has encouraged thousands of immigrants to seek job opportunities and to settle in South Africa and in Cape Town, many of whom are Muslim. Hence, performances of Muslim-ness in the post-apartheid era are not limited to local Capetonian Muslims but rather are also enacted by Muslim refugees with diverse backgrounds (including Somali, Pakistani, and Arab, among others).

Exploring the resurgence of performance of Muslim-ness and Muslim aesthetic strategies of public visibility, cultural difference, and belonging in the post-apartheid context entails an observation not only of Capetonian South African Muslims but also of Somali refugees, whose public visibility in Cape Town is a phenomenon of the post-apartheid period. The post-apartheid era's emphasis on communitarian cultural rights and equal citizenship allows South African Muslim citizens to

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[19] City of Cape Town 2011 Census.

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improve their communitarian infrastructure and public performances of Muslim-ness. This was amplified by increased migration in the post-apartheid era that witnessed new arrivals to South Africa in search of a better life. Many of these immigrants originated from dominantly Muslim countries such as Senegal, Somalia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Egypt, and Jordan, and each of these groups form distinct diasporic communities while still claiming to be a part of the imagined Muslim community in Cape Town. The impact of Muslim immigrants and their role in enhancing the visibility of Muslims in Cape Town (explored in detail in chapter Four) has generated further diversity and complexity in Muslim community formations and aesthetic strategies in Cape Town.

My main aim in including analysis around Somali Muslims in Cape Town is first to map the ways in which the post-apartheid context enables the expansion of Muslim public visibility, not merely by local Muslims but also for more recent Muslim migrants. Secondly, my analysis here explores the ways in which the arrival of Somali refugees (within the post-apartheid context) added a great deal of complexity to Muslim diversity in Cape Town, fragmenting the formation of a cohesive community of Muslims in Cape Town. By way of example, the Somali attendees at the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebration grouped together and were not wearing white Islamic garb with the majority of the crowd. To follow the line of enquiry raised above, my research here addresses several questions including: How do Somalis position themselves within the multicultural context of Cape Town? What are the Somali politics of belonging and cultural difference in the democratic, post-colonial and liberal context of the post-apartheid South African nation-state? Are Somali Muslims considered part of the larger Muslim imagined community of Cape Town? How do Capetonian Muslims interface with Muslims of other nationalities who live in Cape Town? How do Capetonian Muslims and Somali refugees perceive each other? As will be pointed out in the following chapters, Somali aesthetic and sensorial performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town (their food, language, use of images, and religious practices) differed significantly from that of local Capetonian Muslims who consist of Cape Malay, Indian, African, and White South African Muslims, each of whom differed only slightly in their interpretations of Islamic conventions and practices (Vahed and Jeppie 2005).

The discussion of public performances of Muslim-ness within and across Capetonian Muslims and Muslim Somali refugees' attempts to provide a comparative analysis of the different ways in which the cultural style of Cape Town and transnational Muslim *Ummah* shapes performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. Here, the ethnographic explorations are intended to unpack points of aesthetic commonality and difference between two Muslim communities in Cape Town; the various ways in which the cultural localities of each influences their performance of Muslim-ness; and how these performances signify and are informed by a shared common aesthetic of Islam. In the chapters that follow, I present an analysis of my ethnographic research and question whether there is a common aesthetic of Islam that signifies an Islamic style shared among Muslims in Cape Town—including locals and refugee populations as well as the larger Muslim *Ummah*. In this thesis I use the shorthand of 'common aesthetic' to describe aesthetic forms that are identified as distinctly Islamic within both local and international contexts. These aesthetic forms including sound, dress, the built environment, design, and food. This line of ethnographic enquiry responds to anthropological concerns around diverse religious practices and beliefs that can be understood within a universal common aesthetic of Islam (Geertz 1968; Eickelman 1982; Abu-Lughod 1987; Launay 2004). This entails further observation of how the interface between the local politics and transnational influence impacts upon the shaping of Muslim community formations, identity and politics in Cape Town, and the extent to which local Muslim religious aesthetic strategies resemble those of the Muslim transnational community, known as the *Ummah Islamia*.

### 1.4 A Contextualisation of the Mawlid Al-Nabi Celebration in Cape Town

Importantly, public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim community formations (seen in celebrations such as the *Mawlid Al-Nabi*) must not be understood as merely a post-apartheid phenomenon but rather as part of an ongoing historical and political trajectory of Muslim cultural difference in Cape Town.[20] This trajectory runs from slavery, colonialism and apartheid and continues through to the post-apartheid era (explored in chapter Three). For instance, the celebration of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* in Cape Town dates back to the nineteenth century. The Sufi master Alias

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[20] Throughout this thesis I use the term 'community formations' as shorthand for describing the ways in which communities are formed and represented.

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Soofie Saheb, who arrived to South Africa in 1895, encouraged the performance of Islamic folk rituals to bond Indian Muslims and distinguish them from Hindus. Subsequently, the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* became an annual celebrated ritual, often occurring on a small scale within imagined boundary-lines of various Muslim groups in South Africa (Tayob 1995, 42-45). According to Cape-based Muslim historian Achmat Davids (1980), Muslims in Cape Town have embraced a range of festive religious rituals such as *Mawlid Al-Nabi*, *dhiker* (a Sufi ritual of recitation in remembrance of God) and *ratiep* (a Sufi ritual that includes recitations, *ghoema* beat, and dancing with swords)*,* through which they assert their religiosity and a collective communitarian belonging. These rituals provide Muslims with platforms for convivial sociality, for revealing their diversity, and for enacting an Islamic identity and sense of belonging to an imagined Muslim community in Cape Town and beyond.

What is vital to understand here is that these religious practices have changed significantly over time, despite being known by the same religious names throughout various historical periods. In other words, these religious rituals and practices have changed their format, participation, public visibility—and in turn, their political meaning—according to the historical context in which they were performed. At the time of Cape Dutch colonial rule (1650s-1790s), the prohibition of Muslim religious freedoms meant that these rituals were performed in domestic spaces away from the colonial gaze and often at the periphery of the Cape Town city centre. This changed with the official and public recognition of Islam in Cape Town in the 1790s, which allowed Muslims to perform their religious rituals publically in the centre of the city (discussed further in chapter Three). In the case of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi*, the first open-air mass celebration of the event took place on 12 October 1952, a few years after the establishment of the apartheid state. On this occasion, Moulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Al-Qaderi (a prominent Islamic cleric from India) visited Cape Town to join the celebration of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* with approximately sixty-thousand Muslims at the Green Point Track. At the time, the *Cape Times* newspaper described the scene of the *Mawlid* celebration as 'a vast field of red tulips, broken by

grey colourful clothing of Malay women'.[21] This description of the 1952 *Mawlid* celebration conveys a clear sense of community reflected through aesthetic forms as evidenced in the crowd's donning of local dress and the 'field of red tulips'. This description of a unifying style at the 1952 event was also echoed in the 2013 *Mawlid* where the 'sea of the faithful' were dressed collectively in white Islamic garb. Despite this impressive public performance of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* in 1952, the annual celebration of the event in Cape Town continued to be performed on a smaller scale at various mosques. It was not until 2013 that a second large-scale *Mawlid* celebration took place again in Cape Town.

## 1.5 Research Methodology

My research findings here come as a result of ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Cape Town between 2011 and 2015. The research methodologies employed for this ethnography draw on a wide range of sources, ranging from interviews and participant observation to extensive research in art and media (including radio material, newspapers, websites, and magazines) which help to unpack empirical insight into Muslim infrastructures for the performance of Muslim-ness and its trajectories in Cape Town.

During the fieldwork I lived in two dominantly Muslim neighbourhoods in Cape Town: from 2012 to 2013, I lived in Bo-Kaap, and during 2013 and 2014 I lived in Walmer Estate. The Bo-Kaap neighbourhood, formerly known as the 'Malay Quarter', is situated above the city centre of Cape Town on the slopes of Signal Hill and is one of the oldest urban residential areas in Cape Town dating back to the mid-eighteenth-century. As Achmat Davids argued in his study of Islam in Cape Town (1980), the history of Bo-Kaap reflects the history of Cape Town from colonialism to apartheid through to post-apartheid. As Cape Town's first mosque and *madrassah* were built in the area in the 1800s, Bo-Kaap is associated with the Cape Malay Muslim community. This association was amplified by the Group Area Act No. 41 (1950), which enforced racial segregation and restricted Black ownership and

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[21] The *Cape Times* reporting of Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Al-Qaderi's visit to Cape Town and the newspaper's description of the 1952 *Mawlid* was cited in *The Muslim Digest* (February/March, 1993. http://mawlidsa.org/wp-content/A-Glimpse-into-the-Past-The-Founder-of-Makka.pdf).
Here it should be noted that Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Al-Qaderi's 1952 visit to Cape Town took place at a time in which the apartheid government had established the category of 'Cape Malay'—and therefore facilitated the invention of a distinct Muslim community. This is discussed further in chapter Three (3.8).

occupation of land in white areas, leading to Bo-Kaap being declared as a residential area exclusively for Muslims (discussed in chapter Three [3.2, 3.7]). In recent years, Bo-Kaap has become known for its brightly coloured houses and its narrow cobble-stoned streets, which, as Steven Robins (2000) argues, have been staged as a tourist attraction emblematic of post-apartheid multiculturalism in South Africa (see 6.3.3).

The area of Bo-Kaap has experienced gentrification, and recently many non-Muslims have bought or rented houses in the area. These newcomers are often perceived by local residents as agents of gentrification responsible for the dilution of Muslim culture.[22] My experience living in the area allowed me to observe a great deal about the changing nature of Bo-Kaap and the attitudes of local residents. I lived on Sack Street at the top of Bo-Kaap between 2012 and 2013. The day I moved to the house, I was informed by Alawia Amran, the landlady, that girlfriends were not permitted to sleep over and that no alcohol was permitted on the premises. Two months later, the maid working at the property found an empty bottle of wine and informed the landlord. The next day Amran visited the house and appeared very disappointed, leading me to apologise and claim that the wine belonged to my friends and it was not me who drank the alcohol. With my apology, Amran somewhat softened her approach and explained that I could drink alcohol at the house, but what really mattered was that neighbours must not see or know about my consumption of alcohol. She maintained that I could not walk home overtly carrying alcohol and that my visitors and I had to hide our alcohol. My neighbours initially showed respect, interest and sympathy for me as a result of my Palestinian background. Engaging in this convivial relationship, I would walk around greet and engage in conversation with neighbours, most of whom showed keen interest in the religious and political history of Palestine. By the end of 2012, two white men (one German and the other South African), each rented a room in the house. From the moment we started to have house parties, the neighbours started to become more distant toward me and their demeanour became very formal. In February of 2013, the property experienced three burglaries and when I complained to the neighbourhood night watch committee, they seemed indifferent. A few days later, Amran informed me that the neighbours complained about us and she asked me to vacate the property.

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[22] The significance of Bo-Kaap is further discussed in chapters Three and Four.

In March of 2013, I relocated to the Walmer Estate neighbourhood that is situated between District Six and the Woodstock areas overlooking Cape Town's Harbour.[23] Walmer Estate has a large percentage of Muslim residents who were historically perceived as being more upper class than District Six and Bo-Kaap residents (Ridd 1994). This perception of the superior status of Walmer Estate residents was further amplified by their everyday use of the English language, something that stood in contrast to District Six residents who spoke the local dialect of Afrikaans (McCormick 2002, 43). These cultural and class divisions have become more pronounced in recent years as many non-Muslims have bought or rented houses in Walmer Estate. In contrast to Bo-Kaap, however, the increased presence of non-Muslims in the neighbourhood has not generated significant debate amongst Muslim residents in Walmer Estate. This might be explained by the fact that although Walmer Estate residents are still predominantly Muslim, there is less of a sense of community amongst them than there is amongst Bo-Kaap residents. This in part comes as a result of the infrastructure of the area: while there are sixteen mosques in Bo-Kaap, there are only two mosques in Walmer Estate at the edge of the District Six area; hence, there is less communal gathering of Muslims and the sound of *azan* (the call to prayer) held less resonance in the area than it did in Bo-Kaap. Although my decision to live in predominantly Muslim areas in Cape Town was vital to my research for this project, my research methodology extended beyond living in predominantly Muslim areas.

During the first few months of my research, I conducted a broader ethnography of Muslims in Cape Town by investigating their institutions, spaces, public performances, and social affairs. This was guided by a general eagerness to observe the aesthetics of Muslim public visibility, cultural difference, and community formations. In addition, this stage of broader ethnography involved an observation of the ways in which Muslims in Cape Town incorporate the national secular culture of South Africa, their responses to and involvement with broader local/national issues, and their relationship and engagement with other communities in Cape Town. I

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[23] The District Six neighbourhood is a residential area located at centre of Cape Town city. It was a lively neighbourhood where locals and immigrants across various cultural and religious affiliations made up a cosmopolitan community. In the 1970s, the area was declared a White area and most non-white inhabitants were forcibly removed by the apartheid regime (South African History Online, 'Land: dispossession, resistance and restitution', 26 March 2016, http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/district-six-declared-white-area ).

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learned much about Muslim diversity in Cape Town and their public events by listening to the Muslim radio stations The Voice of the Cape and Radio 786. I visited the offices of both radio stations and interviewed the program director, who eventually invited me to speak about my research observations on air.[24] During this early stage of my fieldwork where I worked toward gathering research on cultural diversity of the Muslim community in Cape Town, I was excited by the immense and diverse scale of my observations that challenged me against making generalisations regarding what constitutes Muslim cultural style within various communities. Hence, for this ethnography, any person who decides to identify herself/himself as a Muslim is a Muslim, regardless of the ways she/he chooses to practice their Islamic faith.

During the last few months of 2012, I extended my fieldwork to include observations of the Somali community living within the Bellville Central Business District (CBD)—an area that forms part of the greater Cape Town metropolitan area and the city of Cape Town municipality. Located approximately thirty kilometres from the Cape Town city centre, Bellville CBD is populated by South Africans and refugees from countries including Somalia, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Jordan, and Pakistan (among others). Most members of the latter group immigrated to South Africa and Bellville after the 1990s (see chapter Four).

From 2006 until 2010, I lived at the student residence within the University of the Western Cape (UWC). During this time, I mainly did my shopping at Bellville CBD, as it was the closest market. Thus, I was familiar with the cultural diversity and the presence of Somalis in Bellville CBD prior to the inclusion of the Somali community within my fieldwork. However, with the commencement of my ethnographic fieldwork researching Somalis in Bellville CBD, I began to regularly attend prayer at the Al-Sunny mosque. I would often have lunch at Somali restaurants and sit for hours at the various street corners where I met, had coffee, and chatted with many Somalis. Through participant observation, I learned about Somali ethnic and cultural diversity, their community's aesthetic styles, and the ways in which they practice Islam. Despite this, it was particularly challenging for me to observe their politics of belonging, and the ways in which they perceived themselves

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[24] On 20 November 2014, I was a guest on The Voice of the Cape, and on 26 May 2015, I was a guest on Radio 786.

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in relation to the larger Muslim community in Cape Town and to the South African nation and society at large.

The main challenge was that Somalis seemed hesitant to respond to my research inquiries. Although some were keen to be research interlocutors, a few asked if I would pay them money in exchange for their contributions to my research. I noticed that many of my Somali research interlocutors had participated and been interviewed in previous research and thus appeared to have prefigured answers to my questions. They often responded very formally and rationally, as if they were speaking through me to convey their responses to institutions or government departments. To move beyond these limitations and to be more accepted within the fieldwork context, I needed to do something for the Somali community in order to demonstrate my good will and intentions toward them. In order to do this, I volunteered to teach English to Somali newcomers and conducted performative ethnography (discussed in chapter One, 1.6).

Throughout my fieldwork, I participated—and still participate—in various public and private performances of Muslim-ness (discussed in detail in subsequent chapters). These performances included occasional public gatherings such as the mass *Mawlid*, the Ramadan Expo (a three-day market that takes place prior to the month of Ramadan), sighting the moon of *Eid ul-Fitr*,[25] and pro-Palestinian marches. These performances were attended by thousands, the majority of whom were Muslim, but they are also often accompanied by media campaigns inviting the broader (non-Muslim) public to participate. Other public performances of Muslim-ness were smaller in scale, attended by hundreds, and were not publicly advertised. Such events included weddings, funerals, the *hijab* fashion show, and mass cooking events. In addition to this, I also attended regular performances of Muslim-ness such as Friday prayer, *ratiep* and *dhiker*. My participant observations during these performances was informed by conceptualisation of the sensorial affect of religious aesthetics (see 2.5 and 2.6), but also by Dwight Conquergood's argument that 'ethnography is an embodied practice; it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing' (1991, 180). Hence, this project presents a sensory ethnography (Pink 2009) that relies on 'participant sensation' and observation (Howes 2006) as research methods

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[25] *Eid ul-Fitr* refers to the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast at the end of Ramadan.

to draw meaning and make sense of the aesthetic styles of Muslim-ness across and within multiple sites in Cape Town. To this end, I consciously decided to engage my body and lifestyle in order to feel, appreciate, and understand the sensory experience of my own participation in aesthetic performances of Islam in Cape Town.

Although research observations allowed for mapping and unfolding aesthetic strategies and the ongoing performance Muslim-ness, they did not sufficiently allow for a comprehensive understanding of the politics of these events. Hence, to follow and delve deeper into my observations, I conducted in-depth interviews with the organisers of large events (such as the *Mawlid*, the Ramadan Expo, the *hijab* fashion show, etc.); organisers of more intimate and private events (such as weddings); and regular participants of events (such as *ratiep* and *dhiker*). I often utilised audio recording for my fieldwork notes, which I later transcribed. I filmed most of these events to keep records of the audio-visual aesthetics of each event, and I later used this material to produce seven short films that served as sensory representations of my research observations.[26]

In order to glean insight into the research interlocutor's points of view, I volunteered with Muslim civic organisations, namely the Mustadafin Foundation, for two years from 2012 to 2014. During this time, I regularly took part in their various outreach projects. For example, I conducted drum and drama lessons for twelve teenagers, male and female, at the Delft township located on the outskirts of Cape Town.[27] On 11 September 2014, the group performed a theatrical piece at the commemoration ceremony of Imam Abdullah Haron.[28] In addition to this, I volunteered for six months at the Bellville Education Centre in the Bellville CBD, teaching basic English to Somali newcomers. This class consisted of one female and six male students and took place once a week for three hours. The class took place between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., during which we would take a break to attend the sunset prayer at the mosque. I always joined the students at the mosque to avoid what

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[26] These films can be viewed at https://vimeo.com/user15164918/videos.

[27] The Cape Flats and the term 'township' refer to geographical areas populated by Coloured and Black residents, located away from the city centre of Cape Town. This race-based residential segregation is a result of the Group Areas Act, which entailed the forced removal of the Black and Coloured population from urban areas in the 1950s. Anthropologist Elaine Salo (2005) emphasises the socially marginalized character of these groups, marked by a high level of unemployment, poverty, and gangsterism.

[28] Imam Abdullah Haron is public figure who is well-known for his anti-apartheid struggle. The significance of Imam Haron and his life history will be discussed in chapter Three (3.3).

Johannes Fabian explained as 'ethnographic misunderstanding' (1995), and also as a way of maintaining their respect and expectations of me as a fellow Muslim. This was particularly important, as they were aware that I am a Muslim and, more importantly, that I come from Palestine. Being an English teacher shifted the power relationship between myself and my Somali students; instead of being a researcher seeking answers with no tangible reward or exchange for their assistance as research interlocutors, my role became one of a teacher that provided assistance. I became known amongst the Somalis in Bellville CBD as a volunteer English teacher, and not just a researcher. These voluntary participations enabled me access to what Erving Goffman (1959) identified as 'backstage' performance, where planning, preparations, and mistakes—which are often hidden and not seen by the public in 'front-stage' performances—can be observed.

My observations extended beyond the religious activities of Muslims to include broader cultural settings—namely art exhibitions—that deal with Muslim history and identity formation. To conduct this research I attended openings and touring exhibitions by Muslim artists, including the *Three Abdullahs*, *I'm Royal*, *Remembrance*, and *Unrest* exhibitions—most of which took place in established art galleries in Cape Town.[29] Although my analysis of art practice was vital to my research, my ethnographic observations extended beyond institutional settings and staged performances of Muslim-ness and included explorations of the everyday politics and intimacy of Muslim identity formations. This was made possible through analysis conducted via research interlocutors.

Following from this, my ethnography here also presents the life histories of five Capetonian Muslim artists (Igshaan Adams, Weaam Williams, the twin brothers Hassan and Husain Essop, and Thania Petersen) and their various artistic sensorial embodiments of Muslim-ness—each of which triggers emotional responses and mediates a collective imagining of Islam beyond religious institutional settings (discussed further in chapter Five). Research interlocutors discussed throughout this thesis are mostly Muslims living in Cape Town but also include two artists who are not Muslim but who are deeply involved with Muslim artists and the formations of

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[29] The *Unrest* exhibition took place in 2014 at the National Art Festival in Grahamstown. I attended this festival with Heike Becker as part of my fieldwork but also as part of our joint research.

Islam in Cape Town: Justin Davy, the curator of the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition, and artist Haroon Gunn-Salie (discussed in chapter Three, 3.4).

Research interlocutors include ordinary Muslims and public figures (such as officials within the Muslim Judicial Council, the Islamic Unity Convention, the Mustadafin Foundation, artists, Muslim fashion designers, broadcasters, imams and mosque committee members). I explained to all research interlocutors the nature of my research and offered them the choice of anonymity. Significantly, most research interlocutors, especially those who are known publicly, chose to be identified by their real full names. That said, my social interactions with Muslims in Cape Town extended beyond research interlocutors. Throughout my five years of fieldwork, I regularly conversed about my research interests with many other Muslims: some of these exchanges are not presented in thesis due to the thesis scope, whilst others were not included as individuals explicitly requested not to take a formal part in this research.
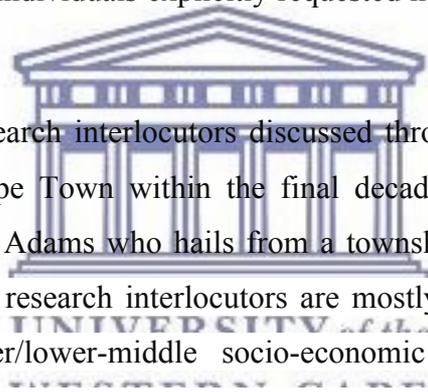
Most Capetonian research interlocutors discussed throughout this thesis are young Muslims born in Cape Town within the final decade of apartheid and, with the exception of Igshaan Adams who hails from a township, all are from middle-class backgrounds. Somali research interlocutors are mostly immigrants, and thus many are belong to lower/lower-middle socio-economic classes. Some Capetonian research interlocutors discussed throughout this thesis identify as politically left-leaning and are not strictly religious (Adams, Williams, Petersen, Davy). This is particularly significant as it reinforces the idea that Capetonian Muslim performances of Muslim-ness are best understood as a cultural sense of belonging and not merely a mediation of their religious piousness. Following from this understanding, aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness in Cape Town are best understood and explored as cultural styles rather than merely performances of faith.

Importantly, my relationship with most research interlocutors involves close friendship that began before my engagement with them as interlocutors, and that extends beyond research settings. Igshaan Adams, Weaam Williams, Thania Petersen, and Justin Davy are among the first circle of friends I established in Cape Town. We meet regularly and share lots of common friends and interests. Together we have brainstormed various artistic projects and my conversations with them are

not limited to research inquiries—rather, we know and share with each other our very personal affairs. Although these interlocutors and friends volunteered to be involved in this research project, not all research observations gleaned from interactions with these interlocutors have made their way into this thesis. Importantly, this comes as result of the fact that interlocutors have on select occasions explicitly expressed that particular content remain private and 'off the record'. Our conversations were often mutual, open, and not interrogative. That is to say that discussions were often not comprised of a rigidly structured set of questions. Research findings for this project are shaped by these close relationships with several of the research interlocutors, but also by my cultural background and extended period living in Cape Town: two factors that came together to result in a perception of being 'a native anthropologist'.

### 1.6 The Conspiracy of Being a Native Anthropologist

It is important here to acknowledge the ways in which my Palestinian cultural background has impacted upon my research into sensorial performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. Having lived in Cape Town for a decade I have been understood as 'native anthropologist', and my cultural background has occasionally served to position me as a presumed expert on Islam. For example, on 19 April 2013 I joined the Friday prayer at the Al-Sunny Mosque in Bellville. After the prayer concluded and many attendees left the mosque, Khaya, a 22 year-old man from Gugulethu township, approached Imam Abdullah Majed for guidance on how to convert to Islam.[30] He sat facing Imam Abdullah Majed surrounded by a few Somali youths and confided that he wanted to become a Muslim. Imam Majed welcomed him and blessed him with Quranic recitations, and then asked him to repeat after him the *Al-shahada* (Islamic declaration): '*Ashhado An La llaha Illa Allah, Wa Ashhado an Mohammadan Rasool Allah*' ('there is no God but Allah, and I declare that Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah'). Then Imam Majed advised Khaya 'now you are Muslim, you are our brother, this mosque is your home, and we are your

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[30] The Gugulethu township is located 20 kilometres north of centre of Cape Town. Established in the 1960s, the Gugulethu township is today considerably more peaceful than it was under apartheid. The significance of this township in the history of apartheid centres around the murders of the 'Gugulethu Seven' (members of the uMkhonto weSizwe armed wing of the African National Congress), who were ambushed and killed by South African security forces in March, 1986. Today, this township has a notably high crime rate, as evidenced by the fact that according to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), over 700 people were murdered there between 2005 and 2010.

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family. Now you are Muslim, you can't drink alcohol, you can't eat pork, don't do drugs or have sex before marriage—these are all *haram,* forbidden'. He then asked him if he had chosen an Islamic name for himself; Khaya responded with elation, 'Yes, I want to name myself Abdullah'—a choice that cheered Imam Abdullah Majed. Meanwhile Qassem, one of the Al-Sunny Mosque employees, stepped into the office and brought for the new convert a CD of Quranic recitations, a *dishdasha* (long male robe), and *taqiyah* (rounded skull cap) which, as will be explained in the following chapters, symbolised an aesthetic of Muslim style and identity formation. After we each shook Abdullah's hand and embraced him, Imam Majed pointed at me and said, 'This brother is from Palestine, please Ala come and speak to our new brother Abdullah about Islam and how to be a good Muslim'. I first advised him to take Imam Majed instructions very seriously, to attend prayer at the mosque, and to listen to Quranic recitations. I then recited *Al-fatiha* Quranic verses.[31] My accurate pronunciation of Arabic phonetics seemed to impress all who were present and seemed to make-authentic my religious expertise.

It was not merely my expertise of the conventions and practices of Islam that rendered me as native, rather it was the sensorial performance of a common aesthetics of Islam that enacted a commonality among a highly diverse crowd of participants. During my participation and observation of Muslim religious performances, I always wore a *taqiyah* (hat) and a *kaffiyeh* (a Middle Eastern scarf) to perform and render visible my Islamic identification and aesthetic commonality with the crowd. Beyond the *taqiyah* and *kaffiyeh* , visual performances of Islamic rituals seemed to enact my native-ness and belonging to the Muslim community. Further, my fluency in Arabic often positioned me not only as native but more as an expert of Islam. This perception of expertise during fieldwork occasionally hindered my relationship with research interlocutors, as this presumed religious expertise created a hierarchal power relation in which research interlocutors often observed me and seemed hesitant of their performances of Muslim-ness as if they sought my approval. Importantly, however, my position in fieldwork must not to be understood as a lack of Islamic expertise or understanding amongst Muslims in Cape Town, but rather as an indication of their sense of belonging to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Often when research interlocutors discovered my Palestinian background,

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[31] *Al-fatiha* means the opening; it is the first verse of the Quran.

they responded in admiration with the expression, '*Ma Sha'a Allah*' ('what God wanted'), and proceeded to empathically welcome my research inquiries whilst also taking the opportunity to question me about both Islam and Palestine.

My familiarity with the conventions of Islam is based on my primary school education and experience being raised in Hebron city where the Quran and *Hadith* are main references for individual behaviour and social norms.[32] Although like most Palestinians I lived with sensory experiences of Islamic spirituality and occasionally participated in various religious rituals, my involvement in Palestinian political affairs entailed a critical engagement and distance from Islamic practices.[33] Following the completion of my BA degree at Hebron University, I moved to Ramallah, which is more liberal and cosmopolitan than Hebron. In Ramallah, I lived within contestation between 'liberal' and 'conservative' Muslims. Ironically, it was my study of Muslims in Cape Town that somehow served to bring me closer to Islam. That is to say that this research nurtured a re-evaluation of my connection to Islam that differed from my experience in Palestine (where I was born and raised), a place where Islam is highly politicised and involved in both state and everyday politics. In Cape Town, I observed the spirituality of Islam through performances of *ratiep*, *dihker*, and *Mawlid Al-Nabi* that involved and evoked the emotionality of diverse Muslims (including myself) in a common sensory experience of intimacy and belonging. While searching and investigating aesthetic forms of Muslim identity in Cape Town, I found my own belonging to Islam. Importantly, however, becoming a scholar of anthropology and of religious studies destabilised this certainty of religion and of its sacredness, thus causing a tension between my spiritual sensory experience and my intellectual conceptualisation of religion. This led to a situation where, although I was living 'in the field' and participating in many religious rituals, my observation of religious customs was in fact selective and 'part-time'. For instance, during Ramadan, I would only fast on the days I intended to join the *iftar*; I attended mosques only for research inquiries; and I did not pray regularly.[34]

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[32] Hebron is a conservative city located in the southern area of West Bank in Palestine. The majority of its inhabitants are Muslim.

[33] During my study at Hebron University (1996-2000), I joined *Fatah*, a secular Palestinian liberation party. My involvement entailed contestation with *Hamas,* a Palestinian Islamic party.

[34]*Iftar* is the evening meal that marks the end of the daily Ramadan fast at sunset.

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My familiarity with the sensorial performances of Islamic rituals established relationships and built a rapport with research interlocutors that offered me a native insight. In spite of this, my lack of expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and my part-time participation in religious practices often served to distance me as an outsider in fieldwork. Hence, it aided me to avoid observation framed through pre-existing expectations of 'proper' performances of Muslim-ness. This duality put me in the position of being a 'halfie' (Abu-Lughod 1991) and served to enrich my insight into 'partial truth' (Clifford 1986), whereby my sensory experiences counted as ethnographic observations (Pink 2009). The diversity of Muslim practices and conventions of Islam in Cape Town (Vahed and Jeppie 2005) involved me in new sensory experiences and performances of Muslim-ness. During this period, it was my first time, attending the celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi*; learning about various *dhiker* orders; participating in *ratiep* (a forbidden ritual in Palestine); and sighting the moon for *Eid Ul-fitr*. My participant observations and sensory experiences in a range of diverse performances of Muslim-ness led me to contest my claim of being native, and to realise a distance within fieldwork both intellectually and emotionally. The complex and unpredictable diversity and ongoing hybridisation of multiple cultural domains invited a rethinking of the essentialist and polarising categories of native and non-native researchers (Narayan 1993), and nurtured an understanding of performative positionality. In other words, it was through engagement with the performative acts of the aesthetics of Islam that led research interlocutors to perceive me as a native. However, this perception of being native did not necessitate a prefigured insight into Muslims sensory experiences and performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town; rather, it was the performative nature of being 'native' that allowed me to achieve acceptance within fieldwork.

My identification with Islam and with my cultural background as a Palestinian did not mean that I entirely evaded the perception of being a foreigner or outsider. Despite my close friendship with many of the research interlocutors, and the long period I spent living in Cape Town and engaging in social issues there, research interlocutors (including those who are friends) often positioned me as outsider when discussing my research. This positionality was maintained whilst discussing their opinions and experiences of living as Muslims within the post-apartheid social and political context of Cape Town, and South African society at large. Research

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interlocutors reacted differently to my nationality and to my being Arab. While, as mentioned previously, many of the research interlocutors expressed sympathy and interest in my being Palestinian, several Capetonians expressed disapproval toward the way in which Arabs practice Islam—which was seen by many as very conservative, backward, oppressive, and fundamentalist. On the contrary, many Somalis (both research interlocutors and individuals I met informally) articulated their appreciation of the way in which Arabs practice Islam. Despite my long hair that seemed to lead many Somalis to question my adherence to Arab and Islamic cultural styles, declarations of approval toward Arab Islamic practices made clear that Somalis both assumed my religious conservatism and claimed a stronger understanding of how to be 'true' to Islam than fellow Capetonian Muslims (discussed in chapter Four).

Being a male researcher also challenged my interactions with some of female research interlocutors. Female Capetonian research interlocutors agreed to meet me and be interviewed, but female Somali research interlocutors refused to speak to me or be interviewed. The few Somali women I managed to interview were accompanied by male relatives (husbands, cousins, etc.) and other women. Throughout this thesis, analysis is interlaced with discussion of the social, class and cultural backgrounds of research interlocutors as well as my relationship to them. In accordance with this, my research makes clear the ways in which my observations, interactions and ethnographic data were impacted as a result of relationships, class structures, lifestyles and cultural backgrounds. That having been said, in order to move beyond the challenges of my gender and the research positionality that led to perceptions of me as both native *and* foreign, I conducted performative ethnography as a methodological intervention.

### 1.7 Performative Ethnography

My point of departure in utilising a performative ethnographic approach is anthropologist Johannes Fabian's advice to ethnographers to move beyond the limitations of informative ethnography.[35] Within Fabian's analysis, efforts to refine

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[35] Fabian's advice regarding performative ethnography stems from his own ethnographic experience with theatre performance and actors in the Shaba province of Zaire, in which he explores the way in which the performance of *le pouvoir se mange entier* (power is eaten whole) was created, rehearsed and performed.

communication, approach, and positivistic conceptions of research are always to be confined by a model wherein ethnographers ask questions of the other, who is expected to respond with information. For Fabian, this ethnographic model is argued to restrict research as it encourages 'asymmetrical' situations and relies on the assumption that individuals can simply call up and express information in discursive statements. Fabian (1990) argues that in order to give sufficient consideration of important aspects of culture, ethnographers should adopt a performative approach and method. He explains:

> Knowledge can be represented—made present—only through action, enactment, or performance. . . . The ethnographer's role, then, is no longer that of a questioner; he or she is but a provider of occasions, a catalyst in the weakest sense, and a producer (in analogy to a theatrical producer) in the strongest. (6-7)

Fabian's view of performative ethnography was informed by his own ethnographic experience with the performances of actors and was triggered by the limitations he perceived in Dell Hymes' 'ethnography of speaking'. Namely, although Hymes' ethnographic model achieves communicative dialogical conversation, it still implies a hierarchical power relation between observer and observed. To move beyond this hierarchical positionality in fieldwork, Fabian advises the researcher to avoid acting as an 'investigator', and to instead initiate a social event in fieldwork around which research interlocutors gather and engage. My utilisation of performative ethnography can be evidenced in an art project I conducted as methodological intervention at Bellville CBD in 2013.[36] On Sunday, 21 April 2013, thirty-eight women, men, and children from the *Good Hope Entertainer* minstrel troupe were picked up from

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[36] Initially, the project proposal consisted of three artistic performances. The first proposed event was the painting of the phrase 'feel home' in several languages (English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Swahili, Somalian, Nigerian, Arabic, Amharic, French, and Pidgin) in an attempt to symbolise the recognition and celebration of Bellville's multiculturalism. Second was the setting up of ten painting stands for participants to draw/paint their memories of their original home and the things they missed in order to document their experience and to chronicle how they perceive South Africa (see Alhourani 2015). Third was the minstrel performance that marched in and through Bellville CBD. I attended three meetings with Bellville City Council, in which I explained my position as student and the academic purpose and benefit of such performative ethnography. However, I also proposed that an art project might provide a missing link between locals and immigrants, and thus might ultimately aid in integrating immigrants into the larger society of Bellville. After obtaining consent from various shop owners in Bellville CBD (as was requested by the City Council), I was given a permission to conduct the latter two performances but not the graffiti, because the council claimed that graffiti did not accord with the strategic planning of the city of Bellville. A member of the City Council stated 'graffiti is underground art for gangsters'. The permission detailed that the project must only take place on a Sunday, as it is a quieter day with less traffic and most of the shops in the Bellville CBD are closed on Sundays.

Mitchells Plain and dropped at the south end of Durban Road in Bellville CBD, where they started a procession in a circle within Bellville CBD (fig. 1.2).[37] The procession was led by a police car to manage the traffic, ensure accurate timing, and provide a secure route for the procession. It was the first time a minstrel troupe marched in the Bellville CBD, and therefore it was also the first time for most immigrants—many of whom live in Bellville CBD and do not attend cultural events in central downtown Cape Town—to experience such a performance. Upon the first round through the CBD, spectators appeared amazed but attempted to avoid showing their attention toward the troupe. Initially, a little tension emerged as many Somalis stepped out of the Al-Sunny mosque. Some of the individuals who appeared were those that I had met formally or informally during my fieldwork and they approached me to state their disapproval of the minstrel performance, claiming that it did not accord with Islamic values. Abdulkadir Khalif, the chairperson of the Somali Association of South Africa (SASA) in the Western Cape, with whom I discussed the project beforehand, asked me to pack up the painting stands and to stop the minstrel procession, stating that 'Somalis do not like this kind of thing'.[38] Khalif advised me in our early discussions not to conduct the project, however the presumed gains of such a performative ethnography encouraged me to take the risk and ignore his advice. That having been said, it was his advice that allowed me to prepare sincere and diplomatic responses to complaints aired by numerous individuals. Their main complaint was that the nature of such performances as that of the minstrel troupe do not accord with Islamic values—especially due to aspects such as the dancing women in the street. The other complaint was that minstrel performances disturb their businesses. My response was that the performance was arranged by the city of Bellville, and by not me alone—a claim that was validated by the support of the police at the event.

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[37] The minstrel troupe, who are locally referred to as 'Klopse', are Capetonian performers. They are mainly known for their participation in the New Year Minstrel Carnival event that takes place every year on 2 January—a day when Coloured slaves were traditionally granted a one-day holiday. In 2012, I drummed with *Good Hope Entertainer* in their procession at the New Year Minstrel Carnival. The Minstrel Carnival first emerged in 1823, and since then it has become one of the most celebrated events among the working class of the Coloured community in Cape Town. It serves as a symbolic cultural representation of the Coloured community at local and national levels (Jeppie 1990; Baxter 2001). Mitchells Plain is one of largest townships in South Africa, located approximately 35 kilometres from the city of Cape Town. With a population of about 300,000 people (most of whom are Coloured), Mitchells Plain was created in the early 1970s by the apartheid government to relocate those who were forcefully evicted from their houses (Arendse 2010).
[38] Abdulkadir Khalif's comments in this section are cited from interview with the author, 20 March 2013, Bellville Education Centre, Cape Town.

As the minstrel troupe continued their performance, they managed to progressively evoke a different response: traders began to step out from their shops, more spectators (mainly men) gathered on both sides of the road, many stood on the balconies of shopping malls, and women looked out from their windows. The ambience of the minstrel's songs eventually dislodged the anxiety and uncertainty of the crowd, and spectators began to get amicably involved by clapping and taking pictures with performers. Eventually, it turned into a festive event and a moment of conviviality where immigrants and locals gathered and cheered around the entertaining Capetonian sound. As the minstrels made their fifth round, spectators became less resistant to the persuasive power of minstrel's aesthetics and appeared to loosen their boundaries and collectively engage in a joyful mood of sociality. Some local spectators, those who appeared to be familiar with the minstrel songs, joined the procession. Even the police escorts became less serious and started to take pictures, clapping and chatting with crowd. The chief of the policemen, a white South African man, appeared particularly pleased and he thanked me whilst encouraging me to bring more local performances to Bellville CBD stating 'today the place is less hectic . . . people are having a good time . . . immigrants and locals mingling'.
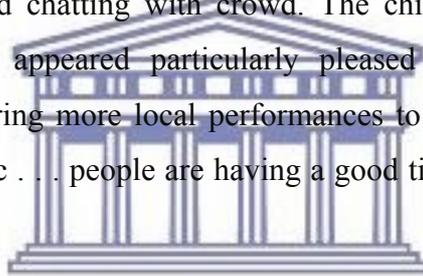


FIGURE 1.2  Minstrel Troupe, Bellville CBD, 21 April 2013. (Photo by the author)

What is significant here is the way and extent to which the persuasive power of the

minstrels' sound threw a culturally diverse group into a common sensory experience of hearing a distinctly Capetonian sound. Hearing the sound of the minstrel songs fused with the typical soundscape of Bellville CBD drew upon the emotionality of listeners, placing them in jovial sociality, beyond the rational and institutionalized settings of cultural difference. The rhythmic sound of the minstrels' songs, their dance, humour and colourful body formations, embodied an ' aesthetic of persuasion' (Meyer 2010 ) that triggered an appealing emotional mood of conviviality.[39] This mood of conviviality threw the multicultural population of Bellville CBD into a jovial sociality. These amicable interactions were significant for their potential to foster modes of togetherness that transcended difference and rendered the Bellville CBD as a space of convivial multiculturalism (Alhourani 2017).

The significant achievement of this performative ethnography is that it involved more participants in research observations, triggered the emotions of participants, and encouraged them to speak their minds through playful performance instead of answering formal research questions. This allowed me to observe the reaction and perceptions of Somali women and children. None of the Somali women agreed to converse with me on the basis that I am male and that this is forbidden according to their understanding of Islam. The number and kinds of participants who became involved through such events significantly extended my research observations beyond the formal/informal conversations I had with selected interlocutors who are mainly leaders or influential individuals in their respective communities. Through performative ethnography, more interlocutors got involved, were provoked and were exposed to each other to reveal their thoughts and feelings. Their collective engagement and debate brings to mind Stephen Tyler's (1986) definition of ethnography as 'therapy' that restores, re-assimilates and reintegrates the self in society, but also re-defines and restructures the conduct of everyday life within a common sense world.

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[39] Employed in the contexts of heritage formations politics of authentication Meyer's concept of an 'aesthetic of persuasion' evokes the sensorial affect of aesthetics in the politics of authenticating identity and belonging. In this regard, this paper frames aesthetics through an Aristotelian view of aesthesis, in other words 'our total sensory experience of the world and our sensitive knowledge of it' (Meyer and Verrips 2008, 21), rather than a Kantian notion of 'pure' beauty confined to the sphere of the arts.

My approach whilst conducting research for this thesis harnessed performative ethnography as a means of forging connection with research interlocutors who would have otherwise been closed off to me, and also signifies my attempt to overcome the hierarchical power relations resulting from other ethnographic methodologies. Further still, this performative ethnography challenged my power and positionality in fieldwork and rendered me invisible while being a participant observer. Beyond my performative ethnographic approach, I also utilised my own participant involvement in diverse events including art exhibitions, religious cooking events, Islamic fashion shows, and religious rituals involving sound (such as the *ratiep* and *dhiker*). Put together, my involvement in these events (investigated in detail in subsequent chapters) was able to generate a nuanced understanding and analysis of diverse aesthetic strategies of cultural difference that are representative of the ever-increasing resurgence of performances of 'Muslim-ness' in Cape Town.

### *1.8 Thesis Thematic Structure*

This chapter has outlined the contextual background for this thesis. Beginning with an ethnographic account of the mass celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi* (1.1), this introduction has located my research within a broader context of post-apartheid and transnational influence and presented the essential questions that inform this ethnography (1.3). These key questions centre on the research and analysis of the resurgence of the public performance of Muslim-ness and the politics of aesthetics in Muslim community formations in the liberal democratic context of Cape Town and South Africa. This chapter also provides an insight into my methodological approach to data collection (1.4) discussed in regards to my fieldwork position as 'native anthropologist' (1.5), which lead to a discussion of the gains of conducting performative ethnography in which art is applied as a research tool (1.6). Having provided the research background context and methodology for this thesis, it is useful to here outline subsequent thematic chapters in this thesis.

Chapter Two maps the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, lending further insight into the research context and key theoretical frameworks employed throughout the chapters that follow. This chapter begins with a discussion of this thesis' connection to the broader interdisciplinary research project of *Performing Rainbow Nation* and makes clear the impetus behind this thesis' focus on issues of

Muslim belonging in contemporary South Africa (2.2). Chapter Two also investigates what has been described as 'the performative turn' in anthropology (2.4) and clarifies the origins and pertinence of key theoretical terms employed throughout this thesis—including 'aesthetic formations', 'sensorial forms', 'performance' and 'religious urbanity' (2.3, 2.5, 2.6). Chapter Two concludes with discussion around 'public Islam' and a review of seminal ethnographic studies on Muslim resurgence and revivals in West Africa after the end of the Cold War (2.7), thus providing a contextualisation of the various ways Muslims across Africa negotiate community, religious, and national belonging in a post-colonial context of secularisation, neo-liberalism, and globalisation. This discussion includes a review of various studies on Muslims in Cape Town.

Chapter Three maps the trajectory of Muslim religious infrastructures in Cape Town, with particular attention paid to the gradual growth of both Muslim public performance and community formations. This chapter advances an understanding of the resurgence of Muslim public performances and community formations as not merely a phenomenon of the post-apartheid era, but rather as a signal of continuity of Muslim efforts to freely and publicly perform their religion. Beginning with a discussion of a contemporary art exhibition entitled *Three Abdullahs* (3.1, 3.3), the chapter brings to light the emergence of alternative performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim identity formations in post-apartheid Cape Town. To examine the history of Muslim public performance and community formations in Cape Town, this chapter maps three historical eras: first is the seventeenth century slavery era (3.6), second comes the period of the nineteenth century that brought religious freedoms that permitted public performances of Muslim-ness (3.7), and finally the chapter moves to a discussion of the re-construction of 'Cape Malay-ness' (3.8) and outlines the political and economic changes of South Africa that led to the democratic turn of post-apartheid South Africa (3.9).

Chapter Four focuses on the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness in the post-apartheid context. The longest chapter in this thesis, chapter Four provides examples of the enhanced scale and diversity of Muslim public performances engendered through diverse institutions and organisations. The chapter presents conversations and observations from within the Muslim community of Cape Town

regarding the ways and extent to which Muslims tolerate post-apartheid state politics and accommodate secular culture. To provide this analysis, chapter Four opens with discussion of the marches for Palestine to highlight the mass public appeal of the two main Muslim organisations in Cape Town: the MJC and Islamic Unity Convention (IUC). The chapter goes on to present an analysis of diverse forms of Muslim infrastructure and performance in Cape Town, including the moon sighting of *Eid Ul-Fitr*, the Ramadan Expo (4.3), Muslim radio stations, alternative performances of Muslim-ness, People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (4.7), and Islamic schools. This chapter thus provides examples of the ways in which the liberal democratic context enhances the infrastructures of South African Capetonian Muslims but also provides a discussion on Somali refugees, whose recent appearance in public spaces within Cape Town is a post-apartheid phenomenon. The discussion focuses on Somali refugees in the Bellville CBD and the ways they enhance and form a part of Muslim public visibility. More specifically, this discussion addresses distinct aesthetic formations of the Somali community and how they reflect and negotiate belonging to the community of Muslims in Cape Town as well as the transnational Somali community.

Chapter Five explores the points of convergence between art practice and ethnography to reveal the ways in which contemporary art is capable of forging an ethnographic encounter that is akin to non-site-specific fieldwork (Marcus 2010). Providing an analysis of the work of Hassan and Husain Essop (5.2), Thania Petersen (5.3), Igshaan Adams (5.4) and Weamm Williams (5.5), this chapter investigates the ways in which art reflects a conscious sense of co-existent belonging to the cultural particularity of Cape Muslims, the South African nation and the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Discussion of these five Capetonian Muslim artists investigates the ways in which artistic strategies reconcile Muslim identity in a secular context and makes clear the ways in which art negotiates Muslim women's visibility and agency in the historical and contemporary formation of Cape Muslim cultural styles. Chapter Five concludes with discussion around how contemporary art practices enhances Muslim public visibility in local and international contexts (5.6), how it mediates the politics of belonging and citizenship (5.7), and how it is representative of Cape Muslim aesthetic styles (5.8).

Chapter Six draws discussion around how visual aesthetics (including dress codes, the built environment, text and signage) not only serve as aesthetic forms that mediate an identification with Islam but also function to mediate citizenship in the context of post-apartheid South Africa and its subsequent emphasis on multiculturalism, diversity and cultural rights. Mapping the significance of design in visual aesthetic formations of cultural difference this chapter begins with an analysis of various approaches to Muslim dress codes (6.2) and then moves on to investigate forms of mediation forged through the urban landscape (through a discussion of *kramats* and mosques in Cape Town), text (including Arabic calligraphy) and signage (most notably, restaurant and grocery *halaal* signposting). The analysis and discussion of this chapter considers the sensorial affect of visual performances of Muslim-ness in the formation of Muslim community through a consideration of the ways in which Muslim bodily formations enact their visual-aesthetic commonality and sensory experiences of Muslim piety (6.4). In so doing, it demonstrates the ways in which visual formations and designs are charged with a sense of sacredness, thus demonstrating how visual culture successfully evokes Muslim religious subjectivity and triggers a sense of Islamic identity in Cape Town.

Chapter Seven reveals how the Muslim politics of aesthetics in performances of Muslim-ness in a post-apartheid context is often accompanied by a sensorial audio-aesthetic of Islam that resounds and expands Muslim cultural difference in public culture and the landscape of Cape Town. By focusing on the concept of 'authenticity' around Arabic sound, this chapter explores the way Arabic constitutes a sensorial common aesthetic of Islam that signifies a distinct cultural style of the Muslim community not only in Cape Town, but also within the Muslim *Ummah* at large. Unpacking the heard and recited Arabic sound in relation to Muslims' intimate sensory experiences, this chapter investigates the vital relationship between sound and collective and individual religious subjectivity (Hirschkind 2006; Schulz 2012).

Chapter Eight explores sensory experiences of food in performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. It does this by exploring the way in which the aesthetic of Malay food not only enacts Muslim cultural difference but also embodies a national culture of South Africa. Chapter Eight presents an analysis of the public visibility of Muslim food at local and national levels. The chapter then moves to explore the ways in

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which food establishes a moment and space of conviviality, through which Muslims perform a sense of citizenship and humanitarian belonging. This chapter unpacks the way in which the aesthetic of Muslim food extends Muslim public visibility, crosses boundaries, and includes non-Muslims in sensory experiences of social gatherings through the sharing of Muslim food in Cape Town. The chapter explores the Muslim sensory experience of the month of Ramadan and the ways in which fasting evokes religious subjectivity.

This thesis ends with a conclusion that provides an overview of the research conducted for this thesis and provides a broad discussion of the findings presented within previous chapters in order to conceptualise the way in which the aesthetic performances of Muslims in Cape Town embody a symbolic enactment of aesthetic commonality, belongings and citizenship. Most importantly, this discussion provides a conclusion that maps the contribution of this project to the field and suggests further lines of enquiry in future scholarship that may build upon my research findings here.

# Chapter Two

## *Theoretical Underpinnings:*
## *Performance, Aesthetics and Muslim Publics*

### *2.1 Introduction*

This chapter maps the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis by lending insight into the research context and key theoretical frameworks employed throughout the chapters that follow. Beginning with a discussion of this thesis' connection to the broader interdisciplinary research project of *Performing the Rainbow Nation*, this chapter makes clear the impetus behind this thesis' focus on issues of Muslim belonging and culturalisation as citizenship in contemporary South Africa (2.2). Building upon discussion in the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project, this chapter also investigates what has been described as 'the performative turn' in anthropology (2.4). It does this as a means to provide a trajectory both for the performative ethnography engaged throughout this thesis and to provide further background for 'the big question' that underlies my ethnography in this thesis (1.3): namely, the question of whether the resurgence of performances of 'Muslim-ness' and Muslim aesthetic strategies of cultural difference in the context of the post-apartheid South African nation-state is owed to the re-establishment of contemporary community and cultural allegiances, or to the specific context of the multiculturalist 'rainbow nation'.

Crucially, this chapter clarifies the origins and pertinence of key theoretical terms employed throughout this thesis including 'aesthetic formations', 'sensorial forms', 'performance' 'religious urbanity', 'public Islam' and 'Muslim public' (2.3, 2.5, 2.6). Beyond providing vital background for each of these terms and their applicability to my ethnography presented in subsequent chapters, this chapter provides discussion of the relationship between these key theoretical ideas and their relationship to scholarship centred on 'public Islam'. This chapter concludes with a discussion on Muslim resurgence and revivals in West Africa after the end of the Cold War. Providing a brief review of seminal ethnographic studies in Mali, Gambia, Niger and South Africa, this chapter provides a contextualisation of the

various ways Muslims across Africa negotiate community, religious, and national belonging in a post-colonial context of secularisation, neo-liberalism, and globalisation (2.7). This review of scholarship centres on Muslim belonging, citizenship, and the dual allegiance of Muslims to the transnational *Ummah* across diverse African nation-states, providing vital background for the historical account of public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim community formations in Cape Town presented in chapter Three.

### 2.2 Belonging and Identity: The Performing the Rainbow Nation Project

The theoretical framework that informs analysis presented throughout this thesis is reflective of the research emphasis of the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project. Scholars involved in this project have, through conversation and research workshops, critically engaged with a range of scholarly frameworks building towards an innovative analytical approach that engages notions of performance in the analysis of identity, belonging, and citizenship in postcolonial societies. The *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project (and in turn this thesis) draws on interdisciplinary theorisations of performance, identity, and belonging to investigate performed practices of hybrid, multiple, and intersecting self-identifications and attachments to various collectives (e.g., ethnic, racial, national, cultural, religious, gender, class, age) in the context of South Africa.

Vital here is the way in which *Performing the Rainbow Nation* focuses critically on performance of identity as a mediation of the notion of 'belonging', and how the project engages with the concept of identity as a category of practice and not as an analytical category (Brubaker and Cooper 2002). This approach critically engages with research on the hybridity and creolisation of identity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Nuttall and Michael 2000) to challenge the 'unfortunate tendency to fix what is in constant flux' (Geschiere 2009, 31).

The usefulness of the concept of identity as an analytical category was earlier questioned by sociologist and cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall in his introduction to a collection of papers that investigate why and how 'cultural identity' became a prominent term in late modernist cultural and social theories. Hall (1996) points out that identity is constructed by specific historical contexts and is evoked as a 'process of becoming rather than being' (4-6). This statement is qualified by Hall in his

assertion that 'identity is constantly in the process of change and transformation', and that it is 'increasingly fragmented and fractured'. For Hall, identity is never unified or singular but rather is 'constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'. Thus, 'identities are constructed through, not outside, difference'.

This understanding of identity as a process of self-identification that is not inherent or 'natural' but rather negotiated through performance resonates with discursive critiques of essentialised understandings of identity (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013; Nuttall 2004, 2009; Bell, 1999; Baumann 1996). This line of critical enquiry has been investigated in multiple disciplines including anthropology, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies and feminist theory. Notable in this field of enquiry is the work of Judith Butler, who investigates gender performativity to argue that gender identity is not an expression of who someone is but rather something that one does. In other words, for Butler 'gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be' (Butler 1990, 34). Butler's understanding of 'performativity' directly draws upon Friedrich Nietzsche's arguments that 'there is no "being" behind doing, acting, becoming; "the doer" is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything' (1887, 29).

Perhaps not surprisingly, these seminal theoretical understandings of performativity have been reflected in the approach of many projects in the social sciences that relate to the thrust of this thesis. These works maintain a research emphasis on the means through which individuals establish a sense of belonging. This includes, for example, the work of Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) who distinguishes between belonging and the politics of belonging. In Yuval-Davis' analysis, an individual's sense of belonging is 'always a dynamic process and not a reified fixity' and thus belonging is an emotional attachment constructed along multiple axes of intersectional identification (such as race, gender, class, nation, religion, and age). Within this framework, the politics of belonging is enacted by specific institutional projects (nationalist, religious, etc.) that aim to maintain and produce a sense of belonging and membership to a particular community. This process of belonging involves participatory politics, a sense of entitlement, and a constant construction of narratives of identity and cultural difference that embody a sense of shared identity

and common belonging. The analysis of Yuval-Davis is reflected in the work of sociologist Vikki Bell, who, in the introduction to the edited volume *Performativity and Belonging* (1999), follows the arguments of Judith Butler to point out the performative dimension of belonging as a series of repetitive practices that link individuals to collectives through identity formation and the enactment of attachment. For Bell, 'one does not simply ontologically belong to the world or to any group within it. Belonging is an achievement at several levels of abstraction' (3).

Vital here is also the work of anthropologist Gerd Baumann (1996), who, in his ethnography of multi-ethnic inhabitants of Southall (a suburb of London), distinguished between 'domestic' and 'public' discourses in the cultural dynamics and self-identification of South Asians. His notion of domestic discourse involves a performance of aesthetic cultural particularity and formations of ethnic belonging and identity alongside 'public discourse' that signifies a dominant culture of national integration, belonging, and citizenship. Baumann's emphasis on both 'public' and 'domestic' performances—described throughout this thesis as 'public' and 'private'—calls attention to the crucial significance of two spheres of performativity in the creation of an individual's sense of belonging. This analysis makes clear the importance of focusing on the way in which performances of ethnic belonging and identity intersect, diverge, and come together with the performance of dominant cultural forms of belonging in national identity and citizenship. This approach is vital to my concerns throughout as this thesis investigates public and private forms of performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town and the way they mediate a sense of belonging to community, the transnational Muslim *Ummah*, and the South African nation (see 1.3).

Following from this, my research here draws upon these theoretical underpinnings to explore whether a sense of belonging by Muslims to their particular community negates their sense of national belonging, or whether a sense of belonging to the nation is enacted through self-identification with specific communities. To this end, analysis throughout this thesis is grounded in the question of whether performances of Muslim-ness are merely an enactment of cultural difference or whether it is a culturalisation of Muslim citizenship negotiating national belonging in post-apartheid South African society.

As a point of departure, this thesis (and the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project) explores the vital role of performance and its intrinsic relationship to aesthetic forms and politics (see 1.2, 2.3) in the construction of culture and identity. Maintaining a keen interest in the concepts of 'embodied enactment' and performance, and in processes of authentication, this approach is geared toward a critical re-evaluation of the perception of 'fixed' culture and identity (Becker 2010, 2012). Here, the politics and process of authenticity are key. Analysis of this process calls attention to 'how constructions, even though admittedly "in the make" are fashioned in such a way that they can be experienced as persuasively "authentic" and "real"', thus leading to a question of 'how mediated cultural forms operate through processes of authentication' (Meyer et al. 2008, 3).

Here, my research is particularly conscious of the idea that authentication rests on its 'denial of being a fabrication' (Meyer et al. 2008, 3). In other words, although values are socially and culturally constructed/authenticated and re-enacted through a cultural performance to maintain a collective continuity,[40] and although identities are changeable and multiple, people still authenticate and fix their fluid identities and cultures as representative categories and codes of practice (Lindholm 2008). Butler argues that authenticity—in regards to the social reality of gender power relations— is constructed through a repeated theatrical performative act (1988). The process and politics of authenticity are often ideological and involve a sense of subjective qualification that is contextual and relational, and which relies on and produces power (Meyer 2009b). Authenticity thus relies on emotional identification, as people appeal to religious symbols that authorise cultural practices (Parkin 1996, xxii), requiring an analytical 'shift from performances or text to context' (Amadiume 1996, 41). According to Bruner (1994, 399-400), authenticity comes about when objects enjoy historical credibility, imagined or real, that is institutionally certified and validated. Authenticity limits the meanings of performance to one preferred meaning that implies legitimate authority over audiences in a particular context (Baily, 1996).

This ethnography analytically investigates these processes of authentication by building upon the work of scholars contributing to the *Performing the Nation*

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[40] Social constructionism argues that social phenomena and common/authentic values are socially constructed and maintained (contextually) through social interaction (Berger and Luckman, 1967).

project, including Heike Becker and Carola Lentz's (2013) theorisation of performance as a strategic 'embodied symbolic enactment'. In their introduction to a collection of papers centred on independence celebrations and other national days in southern and central Africa, Becker and Lentz (2013), refer to Kelly Askew's (2002) theorisation of performances as emergent, contingent, actively created, and engaging both performer and audience. They bring this approach together with Birgit Meyer's (2009) theorisation of 'aesthetic formations' to argue that performance serves as an 'embodied symbolic enactment and interaction' mediated through aesthetic forms to explore the politics of authenticity (see also Becker 2010). For Becker and Lentz (2013), the motivation behind this approach was to analyse 'why the imagination of the nation as "community" actually "works", and why, despite all contestations, citizens and rulers alike believe the imaginary of the "nation" to be real' (6). Now I will discuss in detail Meyer (2009) and Askew's (2002) theorisations.

## 2.3 Aesthetic Formations / Community Formations

The concept of 'aesthetic formations' is crucial to the theoretical underpinning of this thesis. For Meyer, 'aesthetic formations' work to substitute and solve limitations found within Benedict Anderson's (1991) pioneering notion of 'imagined community'. Triggered by Anderson's remarks that communities are realised 'by the style in which they are imagined' (1991, 6), anthropologist of religion Birgit Meyer explores the 'sensorial forms' that mediate the imagination of community styles—which she describes as 'aesthetic formations' (Meyer 2009a). At the core of Meyer's concept of 'aesthetic formations' is the argument that communities are to be distinguished by styles that form commonality amongst members, hence lending them a sense of shared identity and recognisable appearance. For Meyer, whose long-standing research emphasis rests upon religion and the public sphere (including the media, visual culture, and aesthetics), the making and remaking of a religious community depends on formations of common 'aesthetic styles' that induce a 'shared sensorial perception of the world' and evoke a feeling of authentic being and belonging (Meyer and Verrips 2008).[41] Meyer's use of 'aesthetic formations' as a

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[41] Birgit Meyer is a cultural anthropologist who has worked in Ghana for over 20 years. Her work is notable for its ability to synthesise fieldwork, religious studies, and interdisciplinary scholarship in the study of religion from a global and post-secular perspective. Beyond her research emphasis on religion in the public sphere, Meyer's research has also focused on the rise and popularity of global Pentecostalism.

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lens through which to understand processes of authentication is crucial to the ethnography and argument presented in this thesis, which harnesses Meyer's framework of 'aesthetic formations' to offer a way of understanding how Muslims strategically authenticate their 'communitarian style' by performing it and materialising it through diverse aesthetic forms.

Within Anderson's framework, the nation is an imagined community that exists in the imaginations of its members and is forged via a new reading public created through the rise of 'print capitalism'. The wide-ranging appeal of Anderson's argument resides in its extension of earlier understandings of how communities are formed (in that they were previously argued to depend on face-to-face communication). Meyer's (2009b) work digs even deeper into Anderson's notion of 'imagined community' and builds upon his analysis that communities are imagined through the media of print capitalism. Meyer extends this framework by exploring the ways in which imaginations are mediated as tangible aesthetics that exist and operate outside the realm of the mind or imagination. Exploring community styles with an eye to 'formations' rather than 'community', Meyer attempts to overcome what she sees as a limitation within Anderson's framework: namely, that it seems to imply a fixed understanding of community cultural styles. Thus, for Meyer, the use of 'aesthetic formations' offers a more refined approach to Anderson's arguments and extends his framework focused on written communication to include diverse cultural styles. Importantly, Meyer theorised 'aesthetic formations' within the context of 'religious communities', whereas Anderson's theorisation of imagined community was within the context of nationhood.

As outlined above, Meyer's framework allows for an exploration of the ways in which imaginations are mediated as tangible aesthetics that exist outside the realm of the imagination and are made 'real'. This approach is also reflected in the work of anthropologist Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) who investigated the way Turkish immigrants in Germany navigate their belongings through various collectives. For Pfaff-Czarnecka, the formation of a sense of commonality is vital in the creation of collective belonging, which often serves as a perceived cultural boundary that demarcates the line between membership and outsiderness. Pfaff-Czarnecka's emphasis on commonality calls attention to how aesthetics, religious styles and

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performances are implicated in processes of belonging and authentication. Considered alongside Meyer's framework of aesthetic forms as a means of mediation, the sharing of common religious styles evokes a mood of shared affiliation, collective participation, and a communal attachment to the sacred that encourages the creation of, and an identification with, a collective religious identity.

Meyer (2009a) draws from Aristotle's *aesthesis* and its emphasis on sensorial experience to develop the term 'aesthetic formations' as a means to contribute to a growing understanding of aesthetics that 'signals a shift from the study of imaginations in terms of representations' towards a more 'visceral and material approach' to cultural forms (6-7). The key to Meyer's approach is the way she analyses how sensorial experience impacts upon what she describes as 'aesthetic formations'. This is evident in Meyer's (2009a) adoption of the term 'sensational forms', which she uses to describe the way in which sensory experiences impact upon the ways in which imaginations are materialised and made to appear 'authentic'. This approach is focused on 'the role of bodies, the senses, media, and things in the making of religious subjects and communities' (2). To unpack the significance of 'sensational forms', Meyer coins the term 'aesthetic formations' as a means of establishing an understanding of religion as 'a practice of mediation that is centred around distinct "sensational forms"' that engender community and identity (2009a). Within this definition of the role of aesthetics and 'sensational forms' in religious practice and community, Meyer deliberately chooses to utilise the word 'formations' rather than 'community'; she does this in order to indicate how 'aesthetic styles' are vital to performativity and the continuous 'forming' of community—thus challenging perceptions that communities are 'fixed'.

My analysis of community formations is based on the understanding that they are a form of cultural performance that is constantly evolving and involves its members' active participation in the shaping of aesthetics and their function. Following from this, my project addresses the ways in which cultural performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town generate a sense of an imagined community of Muslims in Cape Town. Here, my project builds on anthropologist Kelly Askew's arguments presented in her work *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (2002), and in particular her criticism of a long-standing conception of

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nationalism (see Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991) on the grounds that it fails to account for citizens' active engagements as a way of influencing state culture. Following from this, my thesis highlights the ways in which Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community (generated through print capitalism produced by political elites) fails to account for the active participatory role of citizens in the shaping and imagining of the nation. Here, the realisation of the active role of ordinary Muslims in the formation of communitarian cultural style invites us to move beyond state politics of cultural difference—as in the work of Robins (2008), Comaroff and Comaroff (2004), and Wilson (2002)—toward an observation of vernacular forms of the politics of cultural difference as seen in the work of Becker (2015).[42]

I also draw upon the connections that Askew's analysis develops between performance and power in the making of postcolonial nationhood. Askew (2002) argues that cultural performances enact, create, and authenticate national cultural values as common 'truths' that influence the construction of identity and a sense of belonging which is then mediated through nationalist discourse. Her ethnography focuses on three genres of musical performances in the Tanzanian coastal town of Tanga: *Ngoma, Dansi,* and *Taarab*. She points out the ways in which nationalist discourse relies on the mass appeal of such musical genres to promote a collective sense of national community, identity and belonging. Askew explains that musical performances in Tanzania serve as discursive means of 'national imaginaries', which authenticate a national culture that claims a nationalist social position and ideology (2002, 221-23, 270-73). Hence, values become authenticated through these performative strategies that are seen to constitute the foundations of national identity and collective culture—fundamental requirements for nationalism (Smith 1993) and the 'national imaginary' (Askew 2002). The public appeal of these musical performances thus establishes a shared experience through which the citizens of Tanzania engage and realise their memberships to particular communities and to the nation at large. Askew's work is exemplary for its ability to develop the connection between the state, power structures, and performance in the making of post-colonial nationhood. Within her powerful theoretical exploration of this relationship, Askew argues that 'as politics are predominantly performative, so too is performance

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[42] For further analysis of the need to look beyond the state politics of cultural difference, refer to chapter One (1.2) and the discussion of Becker and Lentz's concept of 'embodied symbolic enactment' in this chapter.

predominantly political' (2002, 127). Clear in this statement is an emphasis on the strategic power and ideological implementation of performance as a means of authenticating national identity.

Askew's exploration of the ways in which the national community of Tanzania is formed through musical performance is particularly relevant to my research here, as I address the ways in which a community of Muslims in Cape Town is formed through strategic aesthetic performances (Alhourani 2015). Further, I consider the aesthetic politics of authenticity and the related forms of material culture that serve to turn a Muslim 'imagined community' into a tangible, lived reality. Building on analysis that reveals the politics of nationalism as akin to that of religion (Hedetoft 2009) also bolsters the relevance of Askew's ethnography of performance in the formation of Tanzanian nationalism to my research enquiry here—which is anchored in an investigation of the making of an imagined community of Muslims in Cape Town.
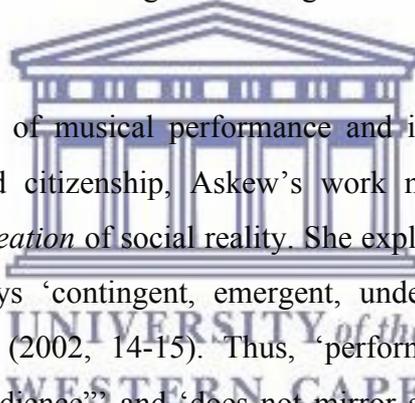
Through her analysis of musical performance and its relationship to community, national identity, and citizenship, Askew's work makes clear the vital role of performance in the *creation* of social reality. She explains this clearly by saying that performance is always 'contingent, emergent, undetermined, and susceptible to unrehearsed actions' (2002, 14-15). Thus, 'performance is a process engaging "performers" and "audience"' and 'does not mirror social reality or merely reflect upon it, it actively creates it' (Kautondokwa 2012, 14-15). Here, Askew's work channels the notion of performance as a creation that is championed in the work of multiple researchers. In particular, in the work of Victor Turner (1982), who argues that performances are 'making, not faking' social facts, and Johannes Fabian (1990), who finds that 'a performance does not "express" something in need of being brought to the surface, or to the outside; nor does it simply enact pre-existing text. Performance is the text in the moment of its actualization' (9). Similarly, this approach echoes the work of Paulla Ebron (2002), who argues that 'performance and the politics of culture-making come together to inform one another's ability to exist' (1).

This understanding of performance as having autonomous potency and a persuasive power to involve the performer and audience in culture-making—in the moment that

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it takes place rather than in a representation of pre-existing reality—is something vital to the work of Heike Becker and Carola Lentz. Becker and Lentz (2013) explore the role of performance in the politics of nationalism and state-making through a comparative approach that draws on various case studies from southern and central Africa. Their work is notable for bringing together the work of Askew and Meyer to develop an understanding of performance as a strategic 'embodied symbolic enactment' (6). For Becker (2010) performance is argued to be a process of creation *and* enactment. This conception urges for an understanding of performance as signifying more than merely representation, thus helping us to move beyond the anthropological argument that 'all cultures are creole' (Caglar 1997, 172); a conception that still implies a temporal fixing of 'culture' and 'identity'. Becker and Lentz's conception of 'embodied symbolic enactment' draws on Askew and Meyer's arguments to further develop understandings of performance as a process of creation that is significant in unpacking the integral relationship between the power of aesthetics, senses and politics in 'authorising authenticity' (Becker 2012). In Paulla Ebron's words, performance 'allows us to see how culture and politics are negotiated and reformulated in context-specific enactments involving social processes and sensual relationships' (2001, 227). Following from this, through an investigation of performance and aesthetics as a process of authentication, we are able to explore a politics of aesthetics in culture making and the formation of community—described in this thesis as 'community formations'.[43]

In my analysis, ethnographic accounts of 'politics' are not narrowed to a formal conception of politics but rather are framed and understood as the politics of everyday Muslim self-presentation and staged performances of Muslim-ness in private and public spheres (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; see also Soares and Otayek 2007). Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) draw upon various case studies in societies that have both majority and minority Muslim populations in order to establish their argument that Muslim politics rely on 'persuasion rather than force' (11). To demonstrate this argument, they advocate for the unpacking of the

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[43] The phrase 'the politics of aesthetics' is associated with the work of French philosopher Jacques Ranciere (2003) whose work has formed a central emphasis in visual culture studies over the last decade. Ranciere's work investigates the relationship between art and politics, within which he identifies a political 'regime of aesthetics'. Despite the pertinence of Ranciere's work in other disciplines, my emphasis here is not on an art historical or philosophical re-evaluation of aesthetics but rather on aesthetics in ethnographic practice.

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persuasive power of language as a symbolic act. That is to say that, as a symbolic act, language intimately attempts to construct communal identity by evoking stable Islamic expressions that are charged with political resonance (and are thus never neutral). In so doing, it serves the function of affirming hierarchical and oppositional power relationships. Such Islamic expressions are enacted at public gatherings (at mosques, political rallies, and protests) and through technological instruments of modern mass communication (televisions, radios, cassettes, videos, newspapers, and the Internet) that reach audiences within their private spaces. These politics of persuasion count on the sensory effects of aesthetics in enacting authenticity (Meyer 2009b). In this regard, my ethnography (drawing on Birgit Meyer) frames aesthetics through an Aristotelian view of *aesthesis*. In other words, 'our total sensory experience of the world and our sensitive knowledge of it' (Meyer and Verrips 2008, 21) rather than a Kantian notion of 'pure' beauty confined to the sphere of arts (see Morgan 2010, 2009, 141). Combining an understanding of performance as a strategic 'embodied symbolic enactment' (Becker and Lentz 2013) and 'appreciating aesthetics as performance, and performance as aesthetics' (Hobart and Kapferer 2007), this thesis aims to contribute knowledge to the ways in which Muslims in South Africa harness performance as a means of enacting the authenticity of identity and community.
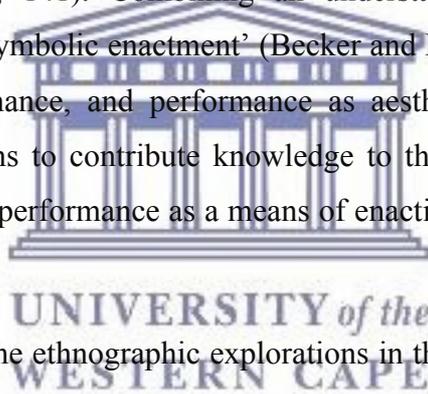
Within this context, the ethnographic explorations in this thesis focus on the politics inherent in 'aesthetic formations' and performance. I aim to do this through an emphasis on the making and remaking of authentic cultural styles in the negotiation of belonging and citizenship to an 'imagined community' of Muslims (including Capetonian South African Muslims and Somali immigrants) in Cape Town. Harnessing the analytical lens and theoretical underpinnings of aesthetics and performance outlined above, this project explores formations of Muslim communities and their cultural difference as culturalisation of citizenship in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. The key theoretical concern here is how the process of authentication through performance and the senses, described throughout as 'sensorial performances', encourages Muslims to perceive their identities and communities as 'real'. To this end, this research (and the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project more broadly) aims to explore the 'vernacular|' ways of 'seeing/authenticating' culture as the basis of South African citizenship (Becker

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2015). Crucially, the ethnographic exploration of this research goes much further than the analysis of Robins (2008) or the Comaroffs (2004, 2005), whose research largely remains focused on the scrutiny of political and public culture discourse (see 1.2).

*2.4 The Performative Turn in Anthropology*

Whilst the previous chapter highlighted the benefits of the performative ethnographic method, here it is important to draw a distinction between method and theoretical underpinnings. In order to do this, it is crucial to provide discussion of the performative turn in anthropology and the ways in which it contributes to the theoretical frameworks that inform analysis presented throughout this thesis. This ethnography builds on the work of Victor Turner, whose conceptualisation of the notion of social drama opened the space for performance in ethnography, and drew scholarly attention toward an analysis of the dialectical relations between power and performance (1957, 1988). This thesis follows Turner's theorisation of the role of performance in anthropology, and his call for empirical fieldwork studies that address the processes and genres of performance and conceive of performance as an accepted analytical category and metaphor in scholarly modes of enquiry.

Drawing on his fieldwork on ritual and symbolism in Zambia, Turner (1974) described formal social events as social dramas that consist of four interrelated processes that essentially emerge out of conflict and seek conflict resolution: breach, crisis, re-dressive action and reintegration. Another vital contribution from Turner in this line of enquiry is his suggestion that performance alludes to processes and dynamics of social organisations. This forms the basis of what he describes as the 'performative turn' in anthropology (1986). Following this, Turner advised that ethnographers shift their observations and analysis from a preoccupation with structure and universal systems toward processes, dynamics, and the particularity of people in social life. Hence, this notion, which developed into the concept of performance as a lens and method of research, entails a shift from the study of performance of cultures to study of 'culture as performance' (Conquergood 1989, 82).

Various scholars have followed this line of argument around the performed nature of culture (e.g., Butler 1988; Turner 1990; Baumann 1996). However, particularly

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important in this regard is the work of anthropologist Gerd Baumann (1996) and his ethnography of multi-ethnic immigrant groups living in one of the most densely populated areas of London: the suburb of Southall at the western edge of the city (11). Baumann's ethnography explores the shift and fluidity of identity in the area explaining that '[t]he same person could speak and act as a member of the Muslim *community* in one context, in another take sides against other Muslims as member of the Pakistani *community*, and in a third count himself part of the Punjabi *community* that excluded other Muslim but included Hindus, Sikhs, and even Christians' (5). Based on this observation, he argues against a reified equation of culture, identity, and ethnic communities to state that culture 'exists only insofar as it is performed'. His analysis draws on Butler's theorisation of gender performativity (outlined in section 2.2) to encourage the understanding that the Muslim sense of imagined community—evoked in performances of Muslim-ness—is contextual, temporal, and performative in a sense that it is 'real only to the extent that it is performed' (Butler 1988, 527). Further, his research makes clear the significance of looking toward not only public performances but also performances that exist in the domestic or private sphere.

Another theoretical underpinning of this research is Erving Goffman's conceptualisation of everyday self-presentations as performance (1959). For Goffman, daily social interactions and routines are argued to be performative, insofar as people theatrically mask and perform their everyday self-presentation according to social situations and cultural expectations. For Goffman the presentation of the self in the everyday is a means of communication that is both verbal and non-verbal. However, what distinguishes this approach from that of Victor Turner is that Turner's theorisation argues that performance provides an analytical insight into formal events set aside from everyday social life, whilst Goffman's analysis (1959) allows for an understanding of the performative dynamics of informal and mundane social interactions.

These theorisations of the performative nature of social drama and self-presentation in everyday life provide an analytical and methodological lens through which I conceptualise research observations of formal and vernacular everyday performance of Muslim-ness throughout this thesis. This thesis and the *Performing the Rainbow*

*Nation* project draw upon the work of Turner (1982), Goffman (1959), Ebron (2002), Askew (2002), among others. My work (and the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project) present a connection with—and extension of—the analysis and methodology advocated in such scholarship by addressing cultural performance in three overlapping analytical categories. These three analytical categories as conceptualised by Heike Becker (2010) are: Firstly, a consideration of the self-presentation of Muslims in their everyday lives in Cape Town, during which they perform and enact their cultural style (Goffman 1959). Secondly, through investigation staged performances, I analyse performativity in formal and marked events that are set aside from everyday life (as in Turner's conception of 'social drama'). Thirdly, my research here is concerned with performance as an analytical category and metaphor in scholarly modes of enquiry (Turner 1982).

Harnessing this three-pronged analytical approach toward performance, research presented throughout considers both formal and informal cultural performances, looking in particular to the ways in which Muslims in Cape Town utilise cultural performance as both a means of establishing and reflecting cultural identification and collective cultural continuity. In such a way, my research also follows the work of Paulla Ebron (2002), who argues that cultural performance is a 'frame of enactment' of power, in that cultural events, political rallies, and other cultural performances represent and authenticate collective values (1-2).

## 2.5 Religious Practices of Mediation

Having established the significance of performance and 'aesthetic formations' as a means of establishing and negotiating cultural identification, belonging to community, and the imagining of the nation, it is crucial to consider how these approaches impact upon religious identification, practice, and materiality. To this end, it is apt to begin with Birgit Meyer's suggestion that religion is 'a practice of mediation that is centred around distinct sensational forms' (Meyer 2009, 2). Here we see the application of Meyer's framework of 'aesthetic formations' applied to include the role of religious sensorial forms in the mediation of community. Her argument that religious sensorial forms facilitate the binding and banding of communities around particular communitarian styles is a framework that informs my analytical approach and methodology in this thesis. Following from this, an

understanding of religion as a practice of mediation implicates the material culture of religion as the means through which religion is performed, enacted, and lived as a tangible reality. The discussion presented in this thesis draws on Meyer's theorisation of religion as a practice of mediation to offer a way through which to observe the material culture of Muslim public visibility in Cape Town.

Meyer is not alone in urging a more rigorous scholarly emphasis on the material culture of religion; this is an approach advocated by numerous scholars (Meyer 2006; Keane 2008; Morgan 2010; Meyer and Houtman 2012). These writers maintain that the material culture of religion not only forms a personal and collective connection to the divine but also generates networks of relations amongst human beings. As Meyer and Houtman (2012) point out, this concern with religious materiality moves beyond Edward Tylor's definition of religion as a 'belief in spiritual beings' that is a private and interior, spiritualised religiosity of an individual's subjectivity to move toward seeing religion as a practice of mediation that makes religious presence visible and tangible within the public sphere. Taking the material culture of religion into account therefore argues against the perception of a binary opposition that privileges spirit over matter, mind over body, belief over ritual, and content over form (Meyer and Houtman 2012).

The interest in religious materiality should not be understood as a reduction of the interior affect of spiritualised belief. Rather, it should be understood as an enquiry into the inextricable relationship between religion and material culture that renders the sensorial affects of the material forms of religion as process of mediation. As an example, one might take the approach of the journal *Material Religion*, whose editors explain that 'a materialised study of religion begins with the assumption that things, their use, their valuation, and their appeal are not something added to a religion, but rather inextricable from it' (Meyer et al. 2010, 209). Adding to this is the repetitive nature of religion practices, and the way in which religious sensorial forms (objects, sounds, images, smells, and rituals) are invested with a sense of sacredness and authenticity that renders the material culture of religion as part and parcel of the sacred that it aims to mediate. In Meyer's words: 'immediacy thus depends on mediation *and* its denial' (2011, 12).

Meyer refers to the material culture of religion as sensational forms, which are 'relatively fixed, authorised modes of invoking, and organising access to the transcendental, thereby creating and sustaining links between religious practitioners in the context of particular religious organisations' (2006, 9). She expands on this by explaining that 'sensational forms are transmitted and shared, they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship and play a central role in forming religious subjects'. Following from this, sensational forms of mediation evoke a sense of immediacy and position believers in a sensory experience of the 'sacred'; hence, they are allowed to feel and perceive the divine as a lived reality (Meyer 2011). Sensational forms of religion are made to appear authentic through strategic performances of religious aesthetics that undergo a process of authentication through the repetition of socially constructed religious practices. In other words, through a structure of repetition, religious practices shift from being conscious performances to unconscious habits (Bourdieu 1980). Performances and community formations entail repetition so as to offer participants and community members a sense of familiarity, continuity, stability and authenticity (Meyer 2006). Religious mediation therefore depends on performance and aesthetic strategies that encourage sensorial formations that invest in the imagination of a community of believers a sense of truth and authenticity. The discussion presented in this thesis draws on this theorisation of the role of the sensorial affect of religious aesthetics in the formation of Muslim subjects and communities.

Understanding Muslim subject and community formations as a practice of sensorial mediation explains the vital relationship between aesthetic and sensory regimes of religious practices. As outlined earlier, considering aesthetics in the Aristotelian sense enables the exploration of the sensorial affects of aesthetics, and this can be applied to considering how aesthetics are utilised in religious practice and performance. This embodied and sensorial understanding of aesthetics indicates its visceral affect and thus power over the self. As David Morgan (2010) argues, material cultures of lived religions 'work as a way of engaging the human body in the configuration of the sacred' (1). What is particularly significant for my research observations here is the understanding that the material culture of religion is not to be considered merely as an exterior representation but rather as an interior sensorial embodiment of religious experience. Thus, this ethnography investigates the exterior

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(public visibility) and interior sensorial affects (self-formations) of Muslim embodied enactments of aesthetics of Islam.

My research here reveals how performances of Islamic religious aesthetics (including sound, images, design, and food) evoke both a sensory regime of bodily sensations that mediate believers' religious piousness and their sense of belonging to community and the nation. As many scholars argue, formations of religious community and pious subjectivity rely on a sensory regime that disciplines believers whilst evoking their religious sensibilities (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005). I explore multiple examples of this sensory regime in my work here by investigating examples of Muslim religious bodily practices such as prayer, fasting, wearing *hijab*, eating *halaal* food, and reciting and listening to Quranic recitations. These manifestations are revealed in subsequent chapters as sensorial technologies that form Muslim pious subjectivity and trigger their sense of accountability to the divine while engendering a sense of belonging to community and to the nation.

### 2.6 Muslim Religious Urbanity

A key concept harnessed throughout this thesis is 'religious urbanity', which refers to the public visibility of religious performance as part of urbanity and the urbanisation process of metropolises across the globe. This emphasis on the public visibility of religion in urban structures and spaces contests earlier understandings of urbanity and urbanisation as always leaning on and leading to secularisation (Lanz 2014). My use of the term reflects the notion that 'religious urbanity' is representative of a continuous two-sided process wherein the urban and the religious exist symbiotically, each mutually defining, producing, and transforming the other (Becker et al. 2014, 26). Anchored in examinations of the mutual influence of religion and urbanism, the *Global Prayers* project provides an account of how various forms of faith manifest themselves in large cities throughout the world.

Taking a trans-disciplinary approach, *Global Prayers* explores 'the interactions and interrelation between the urban sphere and those religious movements that have grown to become significant urban players over past decade' (Becker et al. 2014, 12). Locating particular emphasis on 'the exploration of images, sounds, spaces and practices that the religious adopts in the period of globalisation', the *Global Prayers* project maps the ways in which metropolises (and in particular postcolonial cities)

have become sites of religious practice that challenge problematic traditions of urban theory. The project's emphasis on religious practice and aesthetics specifically challenges the idea that the process of modernisation equates 'urban modernity with secularism', and follows the argument 'that religion is an integral component of the material, social and symbolic production of the urban at all levels' (Lanz 2014). The importance of this argument lies in the fact that it indicates how religious material relates to the social and symbolic production of the urban and, accordingly, how religious material impacts upon diverse global populations in the context of globalisation.

The project's book, *Global Prayers: Contemporary Manifestations of the Religious in the City*, includes a collection of articles that investigate manifestations of 'religious urbanity' in various cities (in the Global North and South), and are themed according to the categories of 'deconstructing the fundamentalist city', 'staging street politics', and 'popular culture of conversion' (Becker et al. 2014, 12).[44] Becker et al.'s investigation of what they describe as 'religious urbanity' takes into account both the way in which the urban affects the formation of new forms of religion, and how religious communities and practices affect the urban (Lanz 2014, 25). Following from this definition and the thematic frameworks that inform the approach of the text, the notion of 'religious urbanity' refers to the symbiotic relationship between religion and the urban with a particular emphasis on the growing infrastructure of religious public performance, visibility and community formations. *Global Prayers* explores the infrastructure of religious urbanity through case studies that show an emerging public scale and political significance of events such as the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* public celebration in Jakarta (Danusiri 2014), and debates such as the contestation over public visibility of religious Muslim women in Istanbul (Yildiz 2014; Aktas and Unlu-Yucesoy 2014). In addition to these essays focusing on how religion is present and performed visually, other contributions focus on religious soundscapes such as the amplified religious sound in Nigeria (Larkin 2014).

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[44] Importantly, the *Global Prayers* project establishes the concept of 'religious urbanity' in relation to global metropolises (e.g., Lagos, Kinshasa, Berlin, Istanbul, Beirut, London, Cairo,). Although Johannesburg is often seen as the only global metropolis in South Africa, Cape Town is increasingly understood as a global metropolis—a perception validated by events such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

In her own contribution to the *Global Prayers* project, Birgit Meyer notes that religion holds a strong material presence in the city through objects, pictures, sounds, buildings, and styles of dress, and that each of these categories indicates a practice of mediation through authorised sensational forms. The acknowledgement of and focus upon the materiality of religion within the *Global Prayers* project allows us to view performances of religious urbanity as aesthetic formations (Meyer 2014). This is particularly relevant to the examples of emergent infrastructures of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town discussed in this thesis. These include (amongst others) the increasing scale of the *Mawlid* celebration (chapter One), the Muslim adoption of new media such as radio stations and satellite channels, the growth of mosques and Islamic schools (chapter Four), Muslim artistic performances (chapter Five), Islamic dress and fashion (chapter 6), Islamic sound (chapter Seven), and Muslim food in Cape Town (chapter Eight). Understanding that the ethnography of this thesis is underpinned by the theoretical concept of 'religious urbanity' sheds light on why this thesis began with discussion of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi*. The *Mawlid* signifies an 'aesthetic formation' (see 2.3) of 'public Islam' (see 2.7) that, as part of an infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity, renders Muslim communitarian styles publically visible.
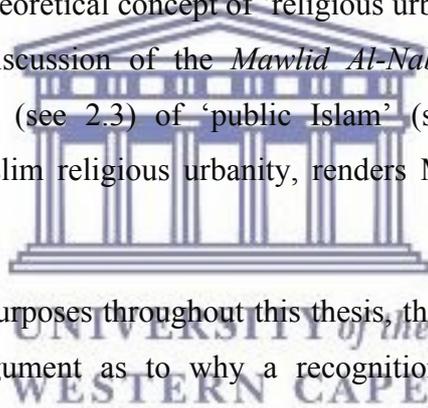
Importantly for my purposes throughout this thesis, the *Global Prayers* project also provides a clear argument as to why a recognition of the distinctive cultural complexity of given societies and cities is crucial to avoiding the Othering of the urban dynamic in cities of the Global South. In his editorial introduction to the *Global Prayers* book, urban studies scholar Stephan Lanz puts forward the notion that the 'religious urbanity' evident in societies in the Global South must not be understood as separate from that observed in the Global North. He elucidates upon this by explaining that cities in the Global South pursue their own processes of modernisation (urban development) that are often understood as a process of contestation between 'modernity' and 'tradition'. This allows us to see the ethnographic observations of public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town as an exploration of Muslim religious urbanity in the Global South—hence offering scholarly contribution to the aims of the *Global Prayers* project.

*2.7 Public Islam*

Here it is important to make clear that the research emphasis outlined above—a focus upon the concept 'aesthetic formations' and 'religious urbanity' and its applicability to Muslims in Cape Town—also corresponds with the notion of 'public Islam'. Examples of public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town discussed throughout this thesis—which include Muslim radio stations, Muslim artistic performances (chapter 5), *hijab* fashion (chapter 6), Islamic sound (chapter 7), and Muslim food in Cape Town (chapter 8)—attempt to provide an insight into Muslim aesthetic politics of public visibility and community formations. The potential of these performances to mediate Islam in the public sphere (and thus to form public Islam) allows us to view formations of public Islam as resulting from infrastructures of religious urbanity. A keen focus on the material forms of public Islam (and of religious urbanity as discussed above) serves to highlight their significance in the practice of mediation and aesthetic formations.

Anthropologists Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson describe 'public Islam' as 'discursive, performative and participative', and as unconfined by formal institutions recognised by state authority (2003, 2). In their edited book, *New Media in the Muslim World* (2003), Eickelman and Anderson explore the formations of public Islam through new media practices, including the Internet, audiocassettes, Islamic novels, and television dramas, which come together to signify an emerging social infrastructure of public communication. What is particularly significant is that aesthetic formations of public Islam reach far beyond the urban sphere, to include rural public audiences, who now have access to Internet radio, television, and audiocassettes. The point here is that the emerging media of public Islam holds the potential to reach audiences far beyond the urban setting, opening up the boundaries of religious urbanity to establish a connection to audiences in rural areas.

Beyond its ability to extend from urban to rural areas, public Islam is argued to provide access to highly diverse Islamic religious ideas and practices at local, national and international levels. Following from this, Eickelman and Anderson (2003) put forward the idea that the formation of public Islam involves a process of active involvement by participants. Importantly, however, it engages not only religious authorities and secular intellectuals, but ever-emerging public audiences

who, regardless of their social status, gain access to a variety of religious informational resources through which they examine and reassess their religiosity and ultimately challenge the authority of existing religious experts (*ulama)* who are often asserting traditional Islamic jurisprudence (Eickelman and Piscatori, 2006). Expanding upon this, Salvatore and Eickelman explain that 'in this "public" capacity, "Islam" makes a difference in configuring the politics and social life of large parts of the globe, and not just for self ascribed religious authorities' (2004, xii).

Within this framework, the notion of 'public Islam' is understood as a religious public sphere that is formed as a result of Muslim enactments and debates around 'common good' within public contexts (Salvatore and Eickelman 2004; Tayob 2010). This religious public sphere is enhanced by new media, democratic politics, and the fragmentation of religious and state authorities which has enabled ordinary Muslims (living in and outside urban settings) to publicly articulate their views of Islam and be part of the Muslim public (Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Salvatore and Eickelman 2004; Tayob 2007). The outline of 'religious urbanity' provided above (see 2.6) and the framework of 'public Islam' described here is presented so as to make clear that it is personal and collective participation in 'public Islam' and 'religious urbanity' that establishes a 'Muslim public'. Therefore, put simply, the 'Muslim public' is an outcome of both religious urbanity and public Islam.

In spite of the appeal of the 'public Islam' framework, this approach has been subject to criticism for failing to include counter-public voices and critical expressions of public Islam. This criticism was made specifically by religious studies scholar Abdulkader Tayob in his introduction to a collection of papers investigating formations of Muslim publics in various cities throughout Africa (2012). In particular, Tayob criticises the limitations of Eickelman, Salvatore and Anderson's notion of public Islam in Africa, arguing that it is confirmative and fails to include the voices of counter-public and critical expressions of public Islam. Tayob's critique draws on Nancy Fraser's (1990) conceptualisation of 'alternative publics' that emerge as 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretation of their identities, interests, and needs' (67). For Tayob

(2014) the limitation of Eickelman, Salvatore and Anderson's notion of public Islam is that it focuses on the present while ignoring the historical political context in which public 'Islams' have emerged, and the effect of these 'Islams' on existing Muslim practices. Therefore, he advises that in order to better understand the effects of public Islam, one needs to critically explore the historical context and political complexity in which it has emerged.

Employing these theoretical concepts in the investigation and analysis of empirical riddles presented by performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town aids my unpacking of Muslim aesthetic politics of cultural difference, citizenship, and multiple belongings. Here it is particularly significant to make clear the interrelatedness of the theoretical concepts that underpin this thesis in the sense that infrastructures of Muslim religious urbanity are seen as performances of Muslim cultural styles that are rendered as public, visible, authentic, and lived realities through aesthetic formations. Further, aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness are practices of mediation through which Islam is embodied as a symbolic enactment of Muslim communitarian style. The examples discussed throughout the following chapters describe the aesthetic formations of public Islam through an ethnographic exploration of urban structures and infrastructures that facilitate the public performance of Muslim-ness in Cape Town; examples include Capetonian Muslim artistic production (see chapter Five), Islamic garb (see chapter Six), the resonance of Islamic sound within public soundscape of Cape Town (see chapter Seven), and the public and national appeal of Muslim food in Cape Town and South Africa (see chapter Eight).

## 2.8 Muslim Resurgence in Africa After the Cold War

Having provided a brief introduction to the notion of public Islam and its resonance in my research, it is useful to briefly map scholarship on Islam and Muslim culture in Africa. This is essential in order to establish insight into the trajectory of the public performance of Muslim-ness and formations of public Islam in diverse postcolonial contexts, to map Muslim resurgence and revivals in West Africa after the end of the Cold War. Outlining important ethnographies that each provide significant insight into Islam in Africa within specific contexts, my aim here is to highlight the reconfiguration of religion in contemporary societies that are impacted by

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globalisation, religious resurgence, and neoliberal economic forces. Besides the insight these ethnographies provide into the nature of each religious locality, they move beyond national boundaries to explain the growing appeal among Muslim youth of belonging to a transnational community.

Here, we might take as a first example the work of anthropologist Dorothea Schulz and her book, *Muslims and New Media in West Africa: Pathways to God* (2012), which provides a historically informed account of Islam in Mali from the colonial to post-colonial period. Schulz explores the way in which 'Islam goes public' in post-colonial Malian society through mass media (such as radio, video, and audio-cassette recorders), and the role of such media in the reconfiguration of conventional forms of religiosity among Malians. Counting on religion as a 'practice of mediation', Schulz maintains that Islamic renewal is best understood as process and consequence of 'mass mediation'. For Schulz, this mass mediated religiosity is argued to on the one hand enhance the presence of Islam in the public sphere, and, on the other, offer sensorial spiritual experience and education for Muslim women understood as 'pathways to God'. Further, Schulz's analysis explains shifts in gender relations in a changing urban neoliberal economy in Mali, where men lost a great deal of authority over family affairs due to their inability to contribute to family income.

The emphasis on Islam as a process of mediation in the public sphere in Africa is also picked up in the research of anthropologist Marloes Janson. Her book, *Islam, Youth and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at* (2013), provides a brilliant account of the fragmentation of the Muslim public and uncertainty in the formation of Muslim pious-subjectivity, which are seen to be the result of the processes and practices of modern nation-building, globalisation, and neoliberalism. Her ethnography focuses on the Tablighi Jama'at in Gambia, and explores their 'spiritual journey' and moral transformation, their struggle to attain a sense of higher purity and the realisation of a pious self, and the courage behind their counter to the established religious authority of their elders. This approach is intended to form an alternative understanding of belonging to the Tablighi Jama'at imagined community at local, national, and transnational levels. Janson's insight into the everyday struggle of Gambian youth provides an account of the effect and implications of neoliberalism and globalisation in Gambia. Janson's ethnography demonstrates the

contradictions and confusions that are involved in the identity formation of Muslim youth in Gambia: while the Tablighi endeavour to live their everyday lives according to the tenets of the prophet Mohammad by wearing the Tablighi uniform and prohibiting television, music, and dance, they also claim to be more modern and globalised than mainstream Muslims in the Gambia. To explore this phenomenon, Janson investigates how mainstream Muslims in Gambia associate their religious sensibilities with Middle Eastern Arab countries (such as Egypt or Saudi Arabia) whilst the Tablighi Jama'at are more inspired by South Asian Islam which they consider to be more truthful than Saudi Arabian practices of Islam. Her study thus examines not only Muslim politics of authenticity at local or national levels but also the contested nature of the politics of belonging to a transnational Muslim *Ummah.*

The research of anthropologist Adeline Masquelier explores emergent alternative interpretations of the Quran in Niger in her book, *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town* (2009). Focusing particular attention on the Awaliyya Sufi order, Masquelier argues that, in provincial town of Dogondoutchi, these alternative interpretations have led to transformations in gender roles and the emergence of modes of religiosity that position women as central to the moral order. Although this emerging interpretation of Islamic practices advocates that women be secluded and veiled, Masquelier's book focuses on the agency of Mawri women and their active participation in ongoing debates about Muslim women. Masquelier examines how newly emerging ideologies of gender, power, and domesticity have enabled Dogondoutchi women to anchor their religious identity as guardians of moral and religious values while at the same time limiting their powers of autonomy and self-expression. Masquelier's text traces the trajectory of Islam in Niger from the colonial to the postcolonial era in order to argue that the emergence of the alternative interpretation of Islamic practices in Dogondoutchi is due to the complexity and contestation between two different Sufi orders in Niger (the *Tajaniyya* and *Qadiriyya*) and the Middle-Eastern-inspired anti-Sufi (*Izala*) religious movement. This contestation is argued to have provided the space for the emergence of *Awaliyya* Sufi order and its gain in wide public appeal through its redefinition of 'proper' local Islamic practice.

The ethnographies presented by Schulz, Janson, and Masquelier provide insight into the complex ways Muslim practices in diverse African nation-states have mediated the impact of globalisation, secularisation, and neoliberal economic forces. The intent behind delivering this review is to provide a brief account of ethnographic scholarship that considers the politics of Muslim public visibility and community formation in diverse African post-colonial contexts as a background for the in-depth analysis of public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim community formation in Cape Town presented in chapter Three.

Research on Islam in South Africa is indebted to the seminal work of historians such as Achmat Davids (1980) and scholars of religious studies such as Abdulkader Tayob (1995, 1999a), each of whom provide detailed historical accounts of Islam and Muslims in Cape Town and South Africa at large. The work of Shamil Jeppie, who explores the apartheid creation of 'Cape Malay' as communitarian category (1987) and the Cape Muslim claim of Malayness as a politics of difference in post-apartheid context (2001), provides vital insight for discussion in this thesis. It is useful here to also provide an account of the important work of Norwegian anthropologist, Sindre Bangstad, and Capetonian poet and scholar of women's and African studies, Gabeba Baderoon. Bangstad and Baderoon have each published compelling books based on PhD dissertations about Islam and Muslims in Cape Town, and their scholarly contributions have been foundational to the research surrounding secularisation and the visibility of Muslims in Cape Town that is presented throughout this thesis.

Bangstad's book, *Global Flows, Local Appropriations: Facets of Secularisation and Re-Islamisation Among Contemporary Cape Muslims* (2007), explores the impact of secularisation and globalisation—factors that come together to characterise social and political change in the post-apartheid area—on contemporary Cape Muslim communities. He maintains that Cape Muslims have witnessed a simultaneous and symbiotic process of secularisation and re-Islamisation, arguing that these processes are equally modern social phenomena that are locally appropriated globalised discourses. Bangstad's ethnography draws on various examples that make clear the contextual tensions—as well as re-alignment—between secularisation and Islamisation in post-apartheid Cape Muslim communities. For example, on the one

hand, Cape Muslim religious experts (as represented by the Muslim Judicial Council) tactically invoke constitutional religious rights to ensure that Muslim prisoners have access to halaal food; on the other hand, they appeal for constitutional exceptions for Muslims to have the right to enter into polygamous marriages. Bangstad's ethnography accounts for the diverse voices of Cape Muslims, including those of the middle-class that claim the authority of religious expertise (as representatives of the MJC) and those of the marginalised Muslims living in the Cape Town townships and informal settlements. The dynamic interplay between the processes of secularisation and Islamisation informs Bangstad's position that Islam does not embody a uniform determinative factor of Muslim identity formation in any given society—nor is secularisation a uniform process of social change. Rather, Bangstad (2007) puts forward the argument that the exceptional social and political engagement of Cape Muslims within the broader post-apartheid multicultural society provides an example of how Muslim minorities living in secular contexts might achieve inclusion within the public sphere and take active roles in political and social debates.

Similarly, Gabeba Baderoon's research into Muslims in South Africa offers a model for how a Muslim minority can become fully integrated into a secular democracy and how a minority might harness state apparatuses to protect its religious freedoms. Baderoon's book, *Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-Apartheid* (2014), provides a historical insight—described as 'neither picturesque nor redemptive' (24)—into the formation of South African discourses around Islam and Muslims in Cape Town. Exploring the public visibility and invisibility of Muslims, Baderoon establishes the term 'ambiguous visibility' as a theoretical frame for understanding the position of Muslims in Cape Town, who she describes as 'disproportionately visible and strangely overlooked' (27). To this end, Baderoon explores the representations of Muslims in an extensive repertoire of nineteenth and twentieth century South African popular culture including visual art, jokes, bodily practices, oral narratives, and literature.

Drawing on popular and official archives, Regarding Muslims locates particular focus upon an archive of images documenting the presence of Muslims in South Africa to illustrate how these images are central to the formation of concepts of race,

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sexuality, and belonging. For example, in her analysis of historical artworks, Baderoon focuses on the strategic positioning of Muslim slaves in the outer edges of paintings, which is argued to indicate the colonial attempt to marginalise Muslims and render them invisible within the landscape of Cape Town. Through her analysis of art and popular culture, Baderoon maintains that representations of Muslims in South Africa are marked with both visibility and erasure, since popular depictions fail to account for the trauma of slavery. Highlighting the inadequate representation of Muslim slaves in public discourse, Baderoon goes on to investigate the language of domestic spaces (particularly that of kitchens) exchanged between slave-owners and the enslaved, which she argues was also marked by unequal intimacy. Building upon the historical analysis presented in her text, Baderoon's book (2014) concludes with a complex vision of Islam in the post-apartheid area, focusing particular attention on public visibility and media representation. She discusses South African media coverage (e.g., in the *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus*) of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD; discussed further in 4.7). Baderoon braids this analysis into her historical account of Cape Muslims in popular culture to point out that the ways in which media representations of Muslims (as represented, for example, in the militant images of PAGAD) serve to disrupt the historical picturesque depiction and perception of Cape Muslims.

These ethnographies (Bangstad 2007; Masquelier 2009; Schulz 2012; Janson 2014) provide tremendous insight into Islam in Africa within specific contexts (South Africa, Mali, Niger and Gambia) and, considered together, their analysis explicitly contests the notion that post-Cold-War era was merely marked by secularisation, rather they place emphases on the resurgence of religion in post-colonial society. Their works position the effect of globalisation, secularisation, and neoliberal economics on religion as a process of 'global flow and local closure' (Meyer and Geschiere 1999). Each of these ethnographies provides a noteworthy account of the complexity of emergent identity formations of Muslims, and the negotiation of Islamic piety in the context of postcolonial, globalised, neoliberal, secular African nation-states. These ethnographies move beyond national boundaries and provide insight into the fragmented nature of religious locality, while also offering some explanation for the growing appeal among Muslim youth for belonging to a transnational community.

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Reading these scholars together, the resurgence of public Islam in Africa can be explained through the fact that in the last half of the twentieth century various countries in Africa have experienced liberation from colonialism to enter a post-colonial period of presumed freedom of expression, the adoption of a democratic multi-party state system, the secularisation of state politics, and an increase in global interconnection and the application of neoliberal policies of economic privatisation. These three factors—globalisation, secularisation and neoliberalism—have effectively weakened state sovereignty (Moore 2010; Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). This has been amplified by a spreading politics of communitarian cultural difference, which has seemingly interrupted the sense of belonging through citizenship and the perception of and attachment to the nation as a unified community. This has led to a situation where the imagination of community and identity formation is no longer confined within the boundaries of nation-states, nor to a bounded locality, but rather is linked to a 'network society' bound to the transnational public sphere. Beyond the weakening of state sovereignty and an interruption in the sense of national belonging, the post-colonial context of religious resurgence, globalisation, and neoliberalism has importantly allowed for diverse public engagements and expressions of Muslim-ness that challenge the singularity of religious authority.
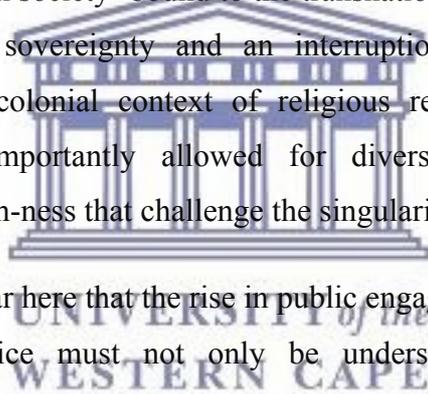
It is vital to make clear here that the rise in public engagement with Muslim religious discourse and practice must not only be understood as a reaction against globalisation, secularisation, or a global Islamophobia that has constructed Muslims as 'Other' (Bangstad 2007; Tayob 2007; Said 1997). The resurgence of Muslim public performances is associated with the embracing of globalisation and the adoption of new media, as Eickelman and Anderson (2003) argue is the case for Muslims in various societies. From an anthropological perspective, Meyer and Moors (2005) suggest that the adoption of religion in new media and within the 'information age'—and in the context, therefore, of religious urbanity—has not only led to the increased visibility and audibility of Muslims and other religious groups in the public sphere but, more significantly, has also served to transform 'existing practices of religious mediation' that impact upon the politics of identity and cultural difference (290).

The resurgence of public performances of Islam must also be understood as a result of Muslim tactical engagement with secularisation. An example of this tactical engagement with secularisation is seen in Bangstad's ethnography of Muslims in Cape Town (2007), and the observation that Muslims approach freedom of religious practice through a tactical engagement with the importance of human rights in post-apartheid South Africa's secular democratic constitution. For Bangstad, Cape Muslim accommodations of state secular regimes and societal secular culture resulted in their inclusion within the public sphere and in local and national debates of post-apartheid society.

Anthropologist of Islam and religion Talal Asad (2003) argues, that religion and the secular most not be understood as static discrete categories, but rather as, mutually constitutive, claiming that they 'are closely linked in thought and in the way they have emerged historically' (22). This is clearly connected to the analysis of anthropologist Sindre Bangstad (2007), who notes that Cape Muslim responses to state and social secularism in post-apartheid South Africa challenge the assumed anathema between secularism and Islamic traditions. Bangstad (2007) sees Cape Muslim secularisation as implicated and interlinked with a process of re-Islamisation. For Bangstad (2009) 'there are multiple ways of being Muslim in a modern and secular world', which include 'accommodation to, contestation of, or resistance to the secular worlds and frameworks in the contexts in which they live' (201). The discussion presented in this thesis draws on this theorisation of the linkages between religion and the secular to explore how Muslim identity politics and public identification stand as an integration of religious and secular values rather than an affirmation of the mutual exclusivity of the secular and the religious.

This Muslim engagement with secular state politics calls to mind Birgit Meyer's (2012b) arguments that contemporary religious revitalisation should not be understood as an attempt to live daily life according to orthodox religious conventions and separated from secular values, nor should it be understood as a triumph of religious movements over the modern state.[45] This argument is reflective of the post-secular thesis posited by numerous scholars, including Talal Asad (2003)

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[45] Although Meyer's observations are spawned from research relating to Christian Pentecostalism in West Africa, my arguments throughout this thesis reiterate the applicability of these concepts of 'contemporary religious revitalisation' beyond Pentecostalism to include Islam in South Africa.

and political philosopher, Charles Taylor (2007) and who point out that religion in modern societies is in a state of 'transformation' rather than 'vanishing' as a result of modernity. In this post-secular context, emergent religious politics and practices are conducted within and through a secular structure and public sphere, signifying an integration of power and interest in religion and the secular within the creation of modern religiosity and citizenship.

Although secularisation, globalisation, and neoliberalism are greatly responsible for common resurgences of Muslim public performances, what distinguishes public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town from those of Muslim societies in West Africa is the dynamic of the integration of religious and secular values in Cape Town and the extent to which the South African liberal constitution and its emphasis on equal citizenship allow for critical performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim identity formations. As the following chapters describe, gay Muslims in Cape Town form a part of the public performance of Muslim-ness and, through this performance, they reconcile and publically claim Islamic identity. This in turn has forms a counter-public (Warner, 2002) that presented direct challenges to the Islamic religious authority of Cape Town, to an extent that is not witnessed among Muslim societies in West Africa (see 4.5 and 5.4).

Following from this, and in order to understand the fluidity and diversity of the aesthetics of performances of Muslim-ness in any given society, one needs to explore the context of the society in which these aesthetics have emerged—as well as its complex cultural locality and the intervention of various global forces. The Islamic landscape in Africa is diverse and ever-shifting, reflecting and negotiating the impact of global and local forces. For example, while Egypt and Libya have lost much of their influence since they became more occupied with solving their local problems, nations such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey (and, more recently, Qatar) attempt to influence Islam in Africa through various aid programs that instruct Muslims how to conduct their religiosity. Loimeier (2003) argues that there is no homogeneous 'African Islam' but rather, as Brenner (2000) argues, 'religious concepts and practices are constantly being transformed in relationship to social and political circumstances' (162). Further, performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim discursive practices are regulated according to the distinct locality in which they

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emerge (Appadurai 1996; Loimeier 2003) and are influenced by different and shifting global forces. In order, therefore, to understand the particularity of the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town, the next chapter provides a historical account of public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim community formation in Cape Town from slavery to post-apartheid.

## *2.9 Conclusion*

This chapter began with a discussion of this thesis' connection to the broader interdisciplinary research project of *Performing Rainbow Nation*, and proceeded to map the key theoretical underpinnings of this thesis (2.2). It provided an analysis of the concept of performance and its essential role in the formation of individual and collective identity, community, and the imagining of the nation. This chapter also clarified the origins and applicability of theoretical terms employed throughout this thesis including 'aesthetic formations', 'sensorial forms', (2.3) 'performance', and 'religious urbanity' (2.6), and also provided discussion regarding the interplay between these key theoretical ideas and their relationship to scholarship centred on 'public Islam' (2.7). These theoretical concepts provide analytical frameworks through which to understand public visibility of Muslim religious urbanity in post-apartheid Cape Town (chapter Four), and the aesthetic politics of mediating difference, identity, and belonging (chapters Five, Six, and Seven). Concluding with a review of scholarship centred on Muslim belonging, citizenship, and the dual allegiance of Muslims to the transnational *Ummah* across diverse African nation-states (2.8), this chapter has provided vital background for the historical account of the trajectory of public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim community formations in Cape Town presented in next chapter.

**Chapter Three**

***From Slavery to Post-Apartheid:***
***A Historical Account of Public Performances of Muslim-ness and***
***Muslim Community Formations in Cape Town***

*3.1 Introduction*

This chapter explores the trajectory of Muslim-ness in Cape Town, with particular emphasis upon the gradual historical growth of both Muslim public performances and community formations. The central aim of this overview is to provide crucial insight into how contemporary religious urbanity in Cape Town is mediated, reflected, and impacted upon by these histories in the present. Further, it advances the understanding that the resurgence of Muslim religious urbanity (as evidenced in public performances and community formations) is not merely a phenomenon of the post-apartheid era but rather signals a continuity of Muslim efforts to freely and publicly perform their religion.

This chapter opens with a discussion of the art exhibition, *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance*, which reflected, drew connection with, and stirred discussion around past and present forms of Muslim resistance (see 3.2). Analysis and discussion of this exhibition brings to light the emergence of alternative Muslim public and identity formations in post-apartheid Cape Town that have opened the way for public performances of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Muslims—as well as the increased visibility of Muslim women. This chapter then goes on to provide a chronological trajectory of Muslim public performances and community formations in Cape Town across and within three historical eras. The first of these periods is that of slavery (from the mid-seventeenth-century through to the end of the eighteenth century), during which Muslims first entered South Africa. This era was marked by private performances of Muslim-ness in the region as a result of Dutch colonial restrictions upon religious freedoms. The second era is the nineteenth century wherein, under British rule, the region witnessed religious freedoms that extended to a public performance of Muslim-ness and the abolishment of slavery. The third era discussed is the twentieth century, which was marked by

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significant political and economic changes to South Africa, including the apartheid creation (and invention) of the 'Cape Malay' category and the involvement of Muslims in the anti-apartheid struggle, followed by the democratic turn of post-apartheid that gave rise to alternative performances of Muslim-ness Cape Town.

### 3.2 A Genealogy of Muslim Resistance in Cape Town

On 8 November 2013, I attended the opening of an art exhibition at the Centre for African Studies (CAS) Gallery at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The exhibition, entitled *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance,* was curated by the young Capetonian artist and curator, Justin Davy, as a final project for his honours degree in curatorship at UCT.[46] At the opening of the exhibition, guests gathered in the foyer before entering the CAS Gallery. Here, we were welcomed with a piece of vanishing art made up of *koeksisters*, pies, and samosas, which, as items of Cape Malay cuisine, served as a symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness strategically performed by artist Igshaan Adams as part of his art performance, 'Please Remember Me II'. As we proceeded to enter the venue, we were met on the right-hand side by Adams' naked body covered with a small light-blue towel as he lay silently on a table covered with a white cloth (fig. 3.1). On the wall next to Adams' body were mounted a series of images that addressed Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam's legacy of early Islamic teaching in Cape Town during the eighteenth century. Among these images was a popular colourful depiction of Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam—respectably known as *Tuan Guru* ('esteemed master')—surrounded by eight young male students reading and writing in the first *madrasah* (Islamic school) that he established on Drop Street in Bo-Kaap (fig. 3.2). This image stood alongside a photograph of his *kramat* (shrine) at the Tana Baru cemetery in Bo-Kaap (Davids 1980).[47]

On the walls leading to the opposite end of the venue, there were two bodies of work that recalled Muslim resistance to apartheid. On the left wall of the space, curator Justin Davy had hung a collection of sleeves of LP records by Cape-Town-born jazz

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[46] For further discussion of my relationship with research interlocutors discussed in this chapter (including Justin Davy, Igshaan Adams, Haroon Gunn-Salie, and Weamm Williams), see chapter One (1.4).
[47] 'Tana Baru' means 'new ground' and is a burial ground that was allocated for Muslims in 1805 to bury their dead according to Islamic tradition. For further discussion of *kramats*, refer to chapter Six (6.3.1).

musicians Abdullah Ibrahim, Basil Coetzee and Robbie Jansen—including sleeves for the albums *The Pilgrim*, *Ekapa Lodumo*, *Knysna Blue*, and *Mannenberg – 'Is Where It's Happening'* (Figure 3.3). On the opposite wall, the artist Haroon Gunn-Salie had mounted a series of photographs of Imam Abdullah Haron—a prominent Capetonian Muslim cleric of the 1950s and 1960s renowned for his political activism against apartheid—including images of Imam Abdullah Haron preaching against apartheid in the Claremont Main Road Mosque and photographs of his funeral which took place after he had died at the hands of the apartheid state in 1969 (fig. 3.4).

The left end of the venue was reserved as a stage for Weaam Williams' performative work, 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega', which explores the agency of Muslim women in the aesthetic formations of Cape Malay cultural styles (fig. 3.5).



FIGURE 3.1 Igshaan Adams' 'Please Remember Me II', performance stills at *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance*, 8 November 2013. (Photos by the author with permission from exhibition curator, Justin Davy)



FIGURE 3.2 Images depicting the legacy of Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam in Cape Town, *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance* exhibition, 8 November 2013. (Photo courtesy of exhibition curator, Justin Davy)

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**FIGURE 3.3** Abdullah Ibrahim album sleeves, installation view, *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance* exhibition, 8 November 2013. (Photo courtesy of exhibition curator, Justin Davy)



**FIGURE 3.4** Images of Imam Abdullah Haron, *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance* exhibition, 8 November 2013. (Photo courtesy of exhibition curator, Justin Davy)
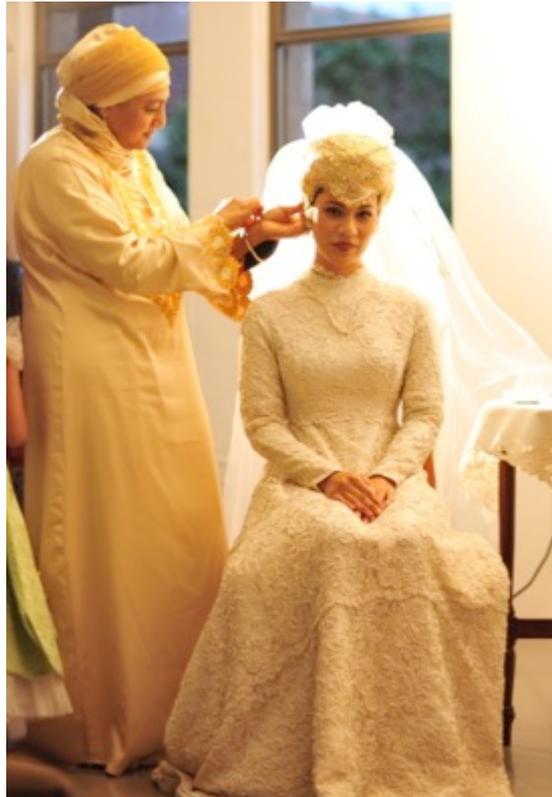
**FIGURE 3.5** Weaam Williams' performance, 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega', at *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance* exhibition, 8 November 2013. (Photo courtesy of exhibition curator, Justin Davy)

Carefully curated, the exhibition explored a genealogy of Muslim resistance covering three centuries from the eighteenth century slavery-based society to the present post-apartheid era. To explore this genealogy, the exhibition centred around three key public figures in political, religious, and creative artistic resistance in Cape Town who were all Muslim and who also held the first name 'Abdullah': Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam, Abdullah Ibrahim and Imam Abdullah Haron. It is significant to mention here that the participating artists and curator are not all Muslims; Adams and Williams are Muslim, but Davy and Gunn-Salie are Christians. As such, Davy's curatorship broadened the conversation and connected the genealogy of resistance traced in the stories of the 'three Abdullahs' to a narrative that moved beyond the Muslim community. All participating artists are well-established artists in Cape Town. They have each exhibited artworks in various galleries locally, nationally, and internationally (refer to chapter Five). Adams and Williams are both main research interlocutors, whose formation of religious-self will

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be traced in the following chapters, whereas Davy and Gunn-Salie (as non-Muslims) are discussed in this chapter only.

In his opening address, curator Justin Davy explained that the idea for *Three Abdullahs* was developed during the time he lived in the Netherlands, where he completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. It began with his listening Abdullah Ibrahim's music. Davy's distance from South Africa that provided the space to both reflect and interrogate his own personal history and that of South Africa more broadly. This distance evoked nostalgia toward South Africa, and urged him to search for memories and a taste of home. Being a big fan of jazz and of Abdullah Ibrahim's music in particular, his search led him to Chris Austin's documentary film, *Brother with Perfect Timing* (1987), which chronicles the life history of Abdullah Ibrahim and his resistance against apartheid. For Davy, Abdullah Ibrahim's music signifies 'African, local taste of jazz' that 'punctuated [his] childhood memories'.[48] Through this film, Davy learned about Tuan Guru's resistance to colonialism and his influence on Abdullah Ibrahim. This then prompted him to search for the legacy of Tuan Guru, which in turn led him to find the name Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam. The fact that both these men were Muslim and held the first name Abdullah, whilst also sharing a legacy of resistance to oppression, prompted Davy to recall a third Abdullah: Imam Abdullah Haron. The shared first name of the three Abdullahs gave Davy a curatorial point of entry to explore the trajectory of resistance in Cape Town. Growing up as the son of an activist in an Anglican family in Cape Town encouraged Davy to be politically conscious of the consequences of the struggle against apartheid. Davy proudly exclaimed that his 'mother had smuggled weapons for Umkhonto weSizwe while she was pregnant with [him] in the late 1980s'. Reflecting on his own history and bloodline, Davy identifies as 'Coloured', thus linking his own identity to the history of slavery and therefore to Islam. Like many Capetonians, Davy also has Muslim family connections. As he explained, 'I realise that part of my ancestry is connected to slavery and of course a lot of slaves who came here were Muslim. There is a connection there, even if I can't pinpoint it necessarily'. Beyond an indication as to why issues around Islam and resistance are appealing personal inquiries for Davy,

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[48] Justin Davy's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author and Heike Becker, 14 March 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

his comments here highlight the interconnectedness of Muslim histories and communities and their lasting legacy in understandings of identity in Cape Town today.

### 3.3 The Life Histories of the Three Abdullahs

Before moving to a discussion of the politics of aesthetics engaged in the work of participating artists in the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition (see 3.4), it useful here to provide a brief biography of each of the Abdullahs that formulate the curatorial emphasis of the exhibition.

#### 3.3.1 Tuan Guru

Abdullah Kadi Abdu Salaam was a former prince born in 1712 in the island of Tidore in Indonesia. Due to his resistance against the Dutch (6 April 1780), Tuan Guru was exiled to Cape Town. With three of his compatriots, Callie Abdol Rauf, Noro Iman, and Badroedien, he was imprisoned on Robben Island where Callie Abdol Rauf and Badroedien died (Davids 1980, 18). During his time in prison, Tuan Guru wrote the Quran from memory as well as the *M'arifat ul-Islam wa al-Iman* (the acknowledgement of Islam and faith) a compendium of Islamic jurisprudence texts that drew on Sufism (Davids 1980). His religious texts became the main religious source for Islamic schools in Cape Town and the main reference for Sufi esoteric teaching and rituals such as *dhiker* (a Sufi ritual of Islamic recitation in remembrance of God) and the *Mawlid*.[49]

After serving a prison sentence of nearly thirteen years, Tuan Guru was released in 1793 at the age of 81 years. He lived on Drop Street in Bo-Kaap, where he met and married Kaija Van de Kaap, a Muslim free woman. Soon after his release, at a time during which the British colonial rule offered Muslim some religious freedoms, he led Cape Muslims in the first public open-air congregational prayer at Chiappini Street in Bo-Kaap. Shortly after, Tuan Guru established the first Islamic school or *madrasah* in 1793 and South Africa's first mosque (Auwal Mosque) in 1794—both located in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town (Davids 1980, 93-98). His Islamic teachings relied on his book, *M'arifat ul-Islam wa al-Iman,* which is based on the Sunni *Shafi'i* theology (one of the four schools of Islamic law) and on *Ash'ari* theology, which

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[49] For further discussion of *dhiker*, refer to chapter Seven; for further discussion of the *Mawlid* refer to chapter One.

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promotes logic and rationalism in understanding Islam from the Quran and *Hadith*. Tuan Guru's approach of following the *Shafi* and *Ash'ari* characterised him as a rational-traditionalist (Marasabessy 2004) and through this approach he taught slaves about Islamic concepts such as *Qada* (the judgment of God) and *Qadar* (the decree of God), which state that 'everything is determined by Allah'. Given this, Tuan Guru's Islamic teaching aided slaves to both transcend *and* accept their subjugation, offering a possible explanation as to why Muslim slaves never resisted their position as slaves or organised a political community to resist the colonial state during the nineteenth century (Marasabessy 2004).

According to Muslim religious leader and prominent scholar of Cape Islamic studies, Achmat Davids (1980), Tuan Guru was instrumental in the revival and institutionalisation of Islam in the Cape. His importance can be measured in the fact that his teaching of Islam had earned him the Malay nickname, Tuan Guru ('esteemed master'), and in that he was one of the first Muslim prisoners on Robben Island and the first Imam and the first official Islamic teacher in South Africa (Davids 1994). Tuan Guru died (at the age of 95) in 1807 and was buried at the Tana Baru cemetery on Signal Hill, Cape Town. Following his death, Tuan Guru's legacy in Islamic education is increasingly understood as a strategy of resistance to colonialism that played a vital role in the formation of a community of Muslims in Cape Town, as well as cementing their public visibility. The enduring importance of this legacy is clearly articulated in *Three Abdullahs* exhibition.

### *3.3.2 Imam Abdullah Haron*

Imam Abdullah Haron was born on 8 February 1924, in the Newlands/Claremont area of southern Cape Town. At the age of fourteen, he pursued Islamic studies in Mecca for two years, and upon his return to Cape Town in 1941 he continued his Islamic studies under various local *shaykhs*—including Shaykh Ismail Ganief, who encouraged him to engage in issues of social welfare. Imam Haron married Galiema Sadan in 1950, and in 1955 was appointed as an Imam of Al-Jaamia Mosque in Claremont, making him the youngest Imam in Cape Town. His religious approach at the mosque did not submit to the regulations of the established Islamic authority in Cape Town—the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC)—whose primary concerns were religious, thus leading them to advise Muslims against engagement with political

matters. Imam Haron challenged the MJC by allowing women to fully participate in the mosque's executive activities and, most importantly, by establishing discussion groups about the role of Islam within broader society.[50]

The Imam worked with the confectionary company Wilson-Rowntrees as a sales representative, allowing him to move across and within various townships in Cape Town where he observed and engaged with African oppression and political resistance. This broader social engagement and his political concerns provoked Imam Haron to establish the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (CMYA) in 1958. The CMYA published a monthly bulletin, *The Islamic Mirror,* which led him, along with other Muslim Imams and activists, to establish the monthly newspaper, *Muslim News*, in 1960—edited by Imam Haron. What is significant here is that through the CMYA and the *Muslim News*, Imam Haron was able to open conversation and work closely with other Muslim and non-Muslim activists and scholars. This is evidenced in the fact that the CMYA hosted Muslim and non-Muslim speakers who did not merely focus on Muslim and Islamic affairs but also addressed various social and political issues concerning the wider society of South Africa.[51]

This broader social engagement helped the CMYA to observe and formulate an Islamic anti-apartheid stance that was characterised by the establishment of the Call of Islam in 1961. The Imam was among those who were affected by the Group Areas Act that forced thousands of non-whites (Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians) to be evicted from central city areas.[52] In 1965, the Imam and his family had to move from their Jefferson Road Lansdowne house to Repulse Road, Athlone. The Imam was influenced by and had connections to both the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.[53] Although he had been warned that the Security

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[50] South African History Online, 'Imam Abdullah Haron', 17 February 2011, http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/imam-abdullah-haron.

[51] Such speakers included Zac de Beer of the Progressive Party, Ray Alexander of the Food and Canning Union, and Mrs. Eulalie Stott of the Black Sash, who each addressed the CMYA on relevant aspects of their respective organisations.

[52] The Group Area Act No. 40 of 1950 was primarily aimed at establishing compulsory residential separation, preventing non-whites from owning property, residing, or working in areas that were designated by the apartheid state as White-only areas. The act led to the forced eviction of thousands from areas such as District Six (see South African History Online, 'The Group Areas Act', accessed 7 July 2015, http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/71the-group-areas-act. ).

[53] The PAC is a South African political party that was formed in 1959. A few years after its establishment, the PAC was banned until 1990. Although PAC refused to participate in the

Branch was pursuing him, he rejected the suggestion that he emigrate. On the morning of 28 May 1969, the Imam was summoned by the notorious Security Branch to Caledon Square. On 27 September 1969, after 123 days of detainment and the prohibition of outside communication, the Security Branch announced that the Imam had died and explained that he had 'fallen down some stairs' (Günther 2004).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of Muslims in Cape Town were largely influenced by the theological and religious authority of the MJC, who took a conservative stance against apartheid and whose main concerns were religious matters and not issues of oppression in broader society. Hence, the MJC and the *Muslim News* did not protest the detention of Imam Haron, viewing his detention as being related to his political views and not religious matters. Various Capetonian Muslim scholars have criticised the MJC's accommodation of apartheid and described them as being complacent, collaborationist, silent, and apolitical with regard to the political landscape (Davids 1985; Omar 1987; Jeppie 2000, Tayob 1995). However, the death of Imam Haron in detention broke the silence of the majority of Muslims, and around thirty thousand Muslims and non-Muslims joined in his funeral procession. For many, the Imam's death in detention is understood as the turning point for the awakening of Muslim political consciousness in South Africa (Günther 2004). Scholar of Islamic studies, Ursula Günther (2004), has drawn on historian Eric Hobsbawm (1983) to explain the ways in which, during 1980s, some Muslims in Cape Town had constructed Imam Haron as an icon for mobilising Muslim youth to join the struggle against apartheid. What is significant about Günther's application of Hobsbawm's concept of the 'invention of tradition', understood as the process of building national symbols characterised by references to the past, is that it makes clear the fact that Imam Haron has been constructed as an icon of liberation. This is evident in many public arenas including the post-apartheid Muslim annual commemoration of Imam Haron, the renaming of Lansdowne Road to Imam Haron Road, and *Three Abdullahs* exhibition discussed in this chapter.

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Convention for Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiation, it participated in the 1994 elections and obtained 1.3% of the vote (South African History Online, 'Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)', last modified 21 October 2016, http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/pan-africanist-congress-pac). The Muslim Brotherhood is a religious, political, and social movement founded in Egypt by Islamic scholar Hassan Al-Banna in 1928.

### 3.3.3 Abdullah Ibrahim

Abdullah Ibrahim was born in Kensington, Cape Town, in 1934. Born a Christian named Adolphus Johannes Brand, Ibrahim's mother was a pianist and leader of the African Methodist Episcopal Church choir. She encouraged him to learn piano at the age of seven, and by the age of fifteen he had become a professional musician playing and recording with local musicians including Tuxedo Slickers and Willie Max. In 1958, Ibrahim changed his name to Dollar Brand and formed the band Jazz Epistles, and by 1959 he had released his first ground breaking jazz album with South African musicians including saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi, trumpeter Hugh Masekela, trombonist Jonas Gwanga, bassist Johnny Gertze, and drummer Makaya Ntshoko. In this same year, he met and performed with South African jazz-vocalist, Sathima Bea Benjamin, and soon after the couple were married.[54]

In the 1960s, the apartheid government perceived jazz as form of resistance and thus proceeded to close many jazz clubs whilst also harassing jazz musicians (Titlestad 2003). As a result, in 1962 Dollar Brand and Sathima Bea Benjamin left for Europe where they were soon joined by two other members of the Dollar Brand Trio: Johnny Gertze and Makaya Ntshoko. Together they performed in many cities in Europe, and spent two years performing at the Cafe Africana in Zurich. During this time, they met Duke Ellington, who listened to their jazz performance and subsequently invited the Dollar Brand Trio to perform at premiere European music festivals that led to the band's recognition in the international jazz world. In 1965, Brand and Benjamin moved to New York, where Dollar Brand's career advanced as a result of increased exposure. By 1966, he was appointed leader of the Ellington Orchestra in five concerts, followed by a six-month tour with the prominent Elvin Jones Quartet. During his stay in the USA in the 1960s, Dollar Brand was influenced by Malcolm X and the Elijah Mohammed's Nation of Islam. This in part resulted in Dollar Brand's conversion to Islam upon returning to Cape Town in 1968, at which time he changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim (Titlestad 2003, 58).

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[54] Sathima Bea Benjamin was born in Johannesburg, 17 October 1936, but was raised in Cape Town. She is descended from the island of St. Helena off the coast of West Africa. The Population Registration Act of 1950 categorised St. Helenians immigrants living in Cape Town as Coloured (Muller 2004, 68-70).

The musician's conversion to Islam was not merely due to his experience in the USA but can also be attributed to various local factors. These include the close proximity of Christians and Muslims living in Cape Town (particularly in Kensington where the musician was raised; Watkins 2008, 87), the stress upon unity in Islam, and the strong presence of Sufism in Cape Town during his youth (Muller 2012, 152). In particular, the *ratiep* ritual (Sufi ritual including recitations, drum beats, and dancing with swords) that can be argued to have held a strong influence over the musician. Further, as acknowledged by curator Justin Davy in *Three Abdullahs*, the Ibrahim's conversion to Islam was also influenced by the teachings and political engagement of Imam Abdullah Haron in South Africa during the 1960s. The impact of these influences and Abdullah Ibrahim's commitment to Islam was demonstrated by his decision to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1970.

According to pianist and musicologist Christine Lucia, who writes extensively on South African music and explores the rhythm and style of Abdullah Ibrahim's songs, the musician's sound signifies what she describes as 'African Pianism' (2005). For Lucia, African Pianism is significant for its ability to combine Cape Malay music, Western classical music, African traditional music, church music (gospel), and Sufi chanting. Ibrahim's groundbreaking jazz album, *Mannenburg – 'Is Where It's Happening*', released in 1974 with Basil Coetzee and other South African musicians, is acknowledged not only as a masterpiece of South African jazz, but is arguably, as Maya Jaggi suggests, 'an unofficial national anthem' (quoted in Lucia 2002, 126). This is in part because Abdullah Ibrahim's jazz concerts served as political rallies against apartheid, leading him to become an icon of anti-apartheid resistance (Lucia 2005, 56). In 1976, after the Soweto student uprising, Ibrahim organised an illegal ANC benefit concert and, soon after, returned to settle in New York where he openly joined the ANC. He returned to Cape Town in 1990 when Mandela was freed from prison, and was memorably invited to perform at Mandela's 1994 inauguration in recognition of his stand against apartheid.

### 3.4 Exhibition: The Three Abdullahs
A knowledge of the biographies of the 'three Abdullahs' is crucial to understanding why curator Justin Davy chose to bring these three individuals together in the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition. He did so as a means to explore and celebrate their legacies

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and to trace a genealogy of resistance toward the post-apartheid mood of resistance. In the exhibition's description, Davy introduced the curatorial rationale of the project as follows:

> Tuan Guru (Imam Abdullah Qadi Abdus Salam), Imam Abdullah Haron, and musician Abdullah Ibrahim share not only a first name but also a firm grounding in Islam. Together they have plotted a course of resistance to colonialism and Apartheid with Islam as their vehicle. The three Abdullahs' lives have become salient points within the trajectory both of Islam in South Africa and the story of South Africa itself.[55]

Following this rationale, the exhibition's visual representations enacted the history of Muslim resistance to colonialism through the religious education of Abdullah Kadi Abdu Salaam, the political resistance to apartheid through the activism of Imam Abdullah Haron, and the jazz music of Abdullah Ibrahim. Exploring the historical trajectories of Islam in South Africa, the exhibition brought the iconic heritage of an imagined community of Muslims in post-apartheid Cape Town into dialogue with young Capetonian artists Igshaan Adams, Weaam Williams, Haroon Gunn-Salie, and Justin Davy. Each of these artists employed innovative and sensorial aesthetic strategies to provoke new public imaginings of Islam in Cape Town. Davy and the artists he invited 'respond[ed] to this idea of resistance in a contemporary text' in order to allow for 'slightly more nuanced ideas of resistance or even more broader concepts of resistance'.[56] Davy expands by explaining, 'I didn't want to just prescribe—I wanted it to be a conversation'. Thus, the exhibition expressly aimed to establish a bridge that bound past and present in order to exhibit the trajectory, continuity, shifts, and ever-emergent contestations of Muslim public performances and community formations.

Davy's curatorial rationale in exploring the ongoing impact of these three central figures in South African history, and their contemporary relevance in personal and collective identity in South Africa, was reflected in the floor plan of the exhibition. The floor of the exhibition and the relationship formed between works was significant in generating meaning. This is made clear in the pairing of artists' works.

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[55] 'Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance', last modified 3 April 2015, http://www.artthrob.co.za/Galleries/Center-of-African-Studies.aspx.
[56] Justin Davy's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author and Heike Becker, 14 March 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

Davy and Gunn-Salie's works faced each other, and both works reflected Muslim resistance to apartheid; the works of Williams and Adams were performed opposite one another, and reflected similar themes as socially-engaged performative pieces that related to gender and sexuality, the strive for recognition and visibility, and alternative performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town.

Davy's own work exhibited in the show explored not only the history of these figures but also the visual representation of Islamic identification in South Africa. For instance, Davy included the covers of Ibrahim's albums *Ekapa Lodumo* and *Knysna Blue*, which show the musician dressed in *kaffiyeh* . Alongside this Islamic aesthetic, the cover of the album *Mannenberg – 'Is Where It's Happening'* reflected Ibrahim's resistance to apartheid in that, as mentioned previously, it is understood as an 'unofficial national anthem' (Lucia 2002, 126). On the wall opposite the album covers, Gunn-Salie mounted a series of photographs the artist describes as the 'Imam Haron archive'. Born in Cape Town in 1989, Gunn-Salie completed his honours degree in sculpture at the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Art in 2012. Gunn-Salie is the son of a former anti-apartheid activist, and the artist's first name 'Haroon' was deliberately chosen by his parents because of the association to Imam Haron. As the artist's mother, Shirley Gunn, explained in an interview in the film *Imam and I* (2011), she named her son after Imam Haron because the 'principals he stood for [that] were the principals we were fighting for'.[57] In conversation with Gunn-Salie, he disclosed that being named after Imam Abdullah Haron is 'a narrative [he] ha[s] been coming to terms with throughout [his] life'. For the exhibition, he intended to dig deeper into the archive of his namesake whilst simultaneously adding to it by documenting new stories throughout the course of the exhibition. His project was a collaborative effort with the Capetonian poet James Matthews, who had known the Imam well and recited a poem, *Patriot or Terrorist,* during the exhibition opening.[58] During the opening, Gunn-Salie sat patiently with

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[57] As a former anti-apartheid activist and member of the uMkhonto weSizwe cadre, Shirley Gunn was arrested soon after her son was born in 1990. She was detained with her new-born baby for what turned out to be a false accusation of being behind the Khotso house bombings. Haroon was taken from her and a sound recording of his voice was used to coax information out of her (South African History Online, 'Shirley Gunn', 9 May 2013, http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/shirley-gunn).
[58] The South African activist and poet, James Matthews was the second editor of *Muslim News* after Imam Haron. He wrote his poem, *Patriot or Terrorist*, in 1969 right after the funeral of Imam Haron. The poem describes the funeral and the feeling of mourners in the street, questioning whether the

his recording devices next to the photographs, ready to explain to interested visitors about the historic figure of the outspoken Imam of the Claremont Mosque who had paid his life for his activism during the 1960s. In this work, we see a collision between personal and collective histories of resistance in South Africa. This is also reflected in Davy's work through the use of music, where the artist linked his own connection with jazz music to that of the South African history and resistance more broadly.

In addition to visual artwork there was also performance. The curatorial pairing of Igshaan Adams' work and that of Weaam Williams brought to the surface a concern with the significance of ritual, gender, community formation, and issues of inclusion and exclusion and social and cultural invisibility. In Igshaan Adams's performance 'Please Remember Me II', the artist posed as if dead while his father (Amien Adams) prepared him for burial through Islamic cleansing and wrapping rituals. Adams explained that his performed death implies a 'death of [his] fear and conflict of how and who to be, and a celebration of a reconciliation of being Muslim and gay'.[59] At the opposite end of the exhibition space was Weaam Williams' performance piece 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega', which was positioned in direct contrast to Adams' work: where he performed aesthetics of death, Williams explored the dramatic scenes of a Cape Malay wedding. 'Ancestral Omega' brings forth Muslim women's aesthetic formations of Cape Malay and distinct cultural style to highlight resistance, absence, and invisibility in the male-dominated historical narrative of performances and formations of Cape Muslim community.

Considered together, the performance works of Williams and Adams reference an alternative performance of Muslim resistance and intimacy through the exploration and embodiment of formations of their religious-self and community cultural styles. Both performances relate to gender, sexuality, and the strive for recognition and visibility. What is particularly significant is that whilst 'Please Remember Me II' signified an emerging mood of resistance within the Muslim community in post-apartheid Cape Town, the 'Medora' performance embodied a historical mood of resistance in regards to Muslim women's invisibility. Following from this is the

Imam was a patriot or a terrorist and whether his death was to set an example or whether it was a crying shame (Shamis 2011)

[59] Igshaan Adams' comments are cited from an interview with the author and Heike Becker, 15 March 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

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argument that both performances pronounce an alternative politics of Muslim-ness. Adams' performance strives for the recognition of gay Muslims in a critical challenge to mainstream religious conventions of Islam as practiced in Cape Town; Williams offers an alternative reading of Muslim history in Cape Town that both challenges and attracts Muslim attention toward the invisibility of women and their involvement in the narrative and aesthetic formations of local Muslim communitarian styles. Both performances are armed with the ethos of the post-apartheid equal right of citizenship, and allude to the provision of space for inclusion and visibility for both LGBT Muslims and Muslim women through public performance and the aesthetic formations of the Muslim community in Cape Town.[60] The alternative politics of Muslim-ness seen in these works are symptomatic of a great deal of ever-emerging and critically engaged public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim identity formations in post-apartheid Cape Town (see chapters Four and Five).

Both the curatorial rationale and works included in *Three Abdullahs* reveal the 'practical' value of aesthetics to consider how aesthetic practices imagine social relationships and generate new spaces and operations beyond fixed social identities (Bennett 2012). Aesthetic practices such as those employed in the exhibition reveal how art reflects personal and collective identification with history but also challenges the formation of social identities. In this way, the exhibition reflects the arguments of visual culture theorist Jill Bennett, who reassesses the role of art to argue that aesthetic strategies are well placed to encounter 'problems' of identity and history—and thus society and culture. For Bennett, artistic 'practices reimagine social relationships in the face of such problems . . . they generate new spaces and terms of operation beyond the social identities already in place' (Bennett 2012, 5).

Bennett's argument about the practical value of aesthetics is something we clearly see at play within the work of contemporary artists in Cape Town; Davy, Gunn-Salie, Williams and Adams engage in practice and art-making that generates new space for negotiating a history of resistance, Muslim identity, and religious urbanity in Cape Town. What is significant to our purposes here is that the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition provides a window into the complex ways in which Muslim religious

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[60] Homosexuality is a disputed issue in many Muslim societies; see for example the film *A Jihad for Love* discussed in greater detail in 4.5.

urbanity and aesthetic politics of cultural difference are manifest in the post-colonial nation-state of post-apartheid South Africa. This thesis engages in extensive discussion concerning the role of art in mediating public visibility of Muslim religious urbanity and multiple communitarian, national, and transnational belongings (chapter Five). That said, comprehending confirmative and alternative performances of Muslim-ness and diverse sensorial aesthetic strategies of community formation in Cape Town, not only in this exhibition but also in the scores of examples explored in subsequent chapters of this thesis, requires a familiarity with South African history. More specifically, one must understand the historical background of how Islam emerged in South Africa in order to follow and trace its growing relevance and impact through Muslim religious urbanity in post-apartheid Cape Town. In order to achieve this understanding, this chapter provides the historical narrative of the emergence of Islam in South Africa by mapping the colonial era of South African history and performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim community formation in Cape Town.

### 3.5 From Slavery to Post-Apartheid

Public performances of the Muslim-ness and Muslim community formations in Cape Town represent an intersection of historical complexity and cultural, social and religious hybrid diversity in Cape Town. The diversity of Muslim communities in Cape Town must be understood as resulting from multiple social classes and ethnic affiliations from Cape Malay, Coloured, Indian, African, and White South Africans to immigrant Muslims including Somalis (Vahed and Jeppie 2005).

Although this thesis focuses on the ways in which the post-apartheid context enhances the resurgence of Muslim religious urbanity and cultural difference for both Capetonian Muslims and Somali refugees, the multiplicity and diversity of Muslims in Cape Town reveals a religious identification that spans race, gender, nationality, age, class, language, politics, and ethnic communities. In simple terms, any South African might be a Muslim. Moreover, since the 1990s, the political and economic liberation of the post-apartheid era has encouraged thousands of immigrants to seek job opportunities and settle in South Africa and in Cape Town specifically. Many of these immigrants are Muslims from Somalia, West Africa, Pakistan, and Arab countries. The interplay of such factors in the formation of

Muslim identities and multiple belongings suggests the impossibility for predicting or measuring Muslim diversity. Despite this contemporary complexity, an understanding of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town can be garnered through familiarity with the historical trajectory of Muslim community formations in the area. It is for this reason that this chapter provides a trajectory from slavery to the post-apartheid period.

### 3.5.1 The Era of Slavery: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Private Performances of Muslim-ness

Poet and scholar of cultural studies Islam in South Africa, Gabeba Baderoon, successfully links the inescapable relationship between slavery and Islam to the formation of historical and contemporary culture in South Africa (2014).[61] She maintains that 'slavery and Islam combine to form a South African beginning' (7), meaning that Islam in South Africa is to be understood not as an origin but as a 'beginning' (Said 1975). In other words, to understand Islam in South Africa, one needs to recognise the consequences and impact of slavery and colonial history on the shaping of racial categories and social fabric of South Africa. Baderoon also argues that Muslim public visibilities and invisibilities during the era of slavery have been erased from the narrative of colonialism in the Cape (2014, 1). Hence, she convincingly provides an argument for what she calls the historical and contemporary 'ambiguous visibility' of Muslims in the public imagination of Cape Town. Baderoon relates this ambiguous visibility of Muslims to the lack of accounting for the 'trauma of slavery through which Islam first entered the South African colonies'. Baderoon's argument resonates with the work of Pumla Gqola, a scholar of African literature who traces the memory of slavery in post-colonial South Africa to point out that 'slavery is evoked and remembered as part of negotiating current ways of being' (2010, 1). Gqola goes on to explore the various ways in which claims to slave ancestry and slave heritage have been invoked and performed in the formations of post-apartheid Coloured identities (see Worden 2009).

As mentioned above, Gabeba Baderoon argues that to understand how this history of slavery impacts upon contemporary formations of identity, we must understand the 'beginning' of the Muslim colonial encounter in South Africa. Muslims were

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[61] For further discussion of Gabeba Baderoon's work, refer to chapter Two (2.7).

brought to South Africa for a variety of reasons by Dutch and British colonialists from multiple countries of origin. The Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC) brought Muslims to Cape Town six years after they established a re-fuelling station at the Cape in 1652. Scholars of Cape Muslims such as Achmat Davids (1980) and Abdulkader Tayob (1995, 1999) point out that the Mardyckers from Amboyna—an Indonesian island in the southern Moluccas— were the first Muslims to be brought to Cape Town in 1658 by Dutch colonists to protect their settlement from the resistance of the indigenous Khoi and San populations. 'Mardyckers' is a name given by Dutch colonists to free Muslims who were not officially registered as slaves, but who were settled as servants of high officials within the Dutch East India Company (du Plessis 1972, 46).[62] Due to the Cape indigenous population's resistance to work for the Dutch company, this group was depended heavily to serve labour needs.

From the 1660s until the end of the slave trade in the 1790s, Muslims were brought from countries colonised by the Dutch, British, or French. For example, contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, Bengal, Madagascar, and Zanzibar each of had significant Muslims populations (Davids 1980; Shell 1994; da Costa 1994). Most these Muslims left their countries as free servants, but upon arrival were registered as slaves (Mayson 1861, 11). Cape Muslims therefore originate from different Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries and the diversity of their Eastern origins forged a diversity of language. This diversity consisted of seven main languages and fourteen dialects (Crawfurd 1820, quoted by Davids 2011, 43). Most arrivals knew Malayu, as it was the lingua franca of the Indian Ocean region. Based on this presumable lingual commonality, Cape Muslims came to be classified by the Dutch colonialist as 'Malays'.

Scholars of Islam and Muslim culture in South Africa maintain that the formation of a Cape Malay community was strategically enacted by the Dutch colonialists in order to distinguish Muslims from Christians within the Coloured community (Baderoon 2014). From the eighteenth century onward, the cultural distinctiveness of 'Cape Malay'—as manifest in food, dress codes, religious rituals, language, and

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[62] The English translation of the term relates to 'freedom'. For more on this term, consult the Dictionary of South African English (last modified 15 April 2016, http://dsae.co.za/#!/search/hws/mardycker/sN/pN).

music—came together to establish the authentic aesthetic style of an 'imagined community' of culturally diverse Muslims in Cape Town. Images of Cape Malays were publically enacted in travel writing, colonial paintings, cook-books, and cartoons, all of which recreated a public image of Cape Malay as exotic, submissive, kind, quiet, slow-speaking, fatalistic, and passive (Jeppie 1988). Since the early eighteenth century, the public visibility and formation of distinct aesthetic style of the Cape Malay community gained continuous growth in terms of both its members and its public visibility. Many of the enslaved populations converted to Islam for both faith (sacred) and secular reasons (see Shell 1994). By the middle of eighteenth century, conversion to Islam had rapidly increased to include not only free black and Cape slaves, but also African, English, Scottish, and Welsh immigrants who further enriched the diversity of Cape Muslims (Shell 1994) to the extent where it became inapplicable to refer to Cape Muslims as 'Malays' as had been advocated by the Dutch colony in Cape Town (Tayob 1995, 45).

Historians have also suggested that Islam offered slaves a sense of agency and culture, away from paternalistic slave-owners (Worden 1985; Bank 1995). Historian Andrew Bank (1995) explains the way in which slaves claimed ownership over their bodies through West Eastern Islamic performances of *ratiep* (184).[63] In addition, the Cape-Town-based Muslim historian Achmat Davids (1980) explains the growth of the Muslim community in Cape Town as a reflection of the white colonist reaction to the 1770 regulation of the Statutes of India, which prohibited the sale of Christian slaves (41). Thus, the colonists forced their slaves to convert to Islam, so that they could claim ownership over them and trade them. It was the compounding of these forces that resulted in the spread of Islam within Cape Town, and by 1842 the Muslim community grew to a third of the population of Cape Town with about 6,435 Muslims residing in the region. This Muslim community included slave descendants, slave owners (Davids 1987, 68), and many political exiles.

Various scholars have acknowledged the contribution of many religious and political leaders exiled to Cape Town as a punishment for their resistance to colonial regimes in their respective countries, and the subsequent impact of these figures in the formation of Muslim communities and their public religious performances (Davids

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[63] The *ratiep* performance is discussed further in chapters Seven and Eight.

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1980; Dangor 1994). Among these political and religious leaders were Shaykh Yusuf Al-khalwati and Abdullah Kadi Abdu Salaam (Tuan Guru). Shaykh Yusuf Al-khalwati was exiled to Cape Town in 1694 from Bantam province in Java. He was located on the farm Zandvliet, away from the city to avoid his potentially influential engagement with slave populations. However, Shaykh Yusuf initiated the first class of Islamic religious teaching that was attended by many of those who escaped the brutal conditions of colonial slavery and converted to Islam (Dangor 1994). Therefore, the very first formation of a community of Muslims in Cape Town was based on Islamic religious teaching. It thus comes as no surprise that Islamic scholars and Cape Muslims publicly acknowledge Shaykh Yusuf as the founder of Islam in South Africa, as he was the first to form a community of Muslims (Dangor 1994; Tayob 1999). Further, the year 1694 (Shaykh Yusuf's arrival to South Africa) has been chosen as the date to mark the anniversary of Islam in South Africa, rather than 1658 or the arrival of Mardyckers, who were brought as soldiers to support the Dutch against the Khoisan resistances (Tayob 1999, 23).

### 3.5.2 The Nineteenth Century: Muslim Religious Freedom and the Abolishment of Slavery

While the very first formation of a community of Muslims in Cape Town is attributed to Shaykh Yusuf, the first public performances of Muslim religious rituals are attributed to Abdullah Kadi Abdu Salaam (Tuan Guru). Public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town date back to early nineteenth century (1804) when, under British colonial rule, Cape Muslims were allowed religious freedom and were permitted to conduct public performances of Muslim-ness—albeit under the condition of obtaining consent from the governor (Davids 1980). Within this context of conditional religious freedom, Tuan Guru found an opportunity to obtain permission to publicly perform the Friday prayer and to establish the first Islamic school (*madrasah)* in 1793. The *madrasah* enhanced conversion to Islam, as it was open to all and provided an alternative education that attracted slaves and free Blacks, thereby perpetuating Islamic norms as intrinsic to the communal social life of Cape Muslims (Shell 1994). The increased number of the *madrasah* students inspired Tuan Guru to establish the first mosque in South Africa (the Auwal Mosque in Cape Town), a building that was constructed between 1795 and 1807 on land made available by Muslim woman, Saartjie van de Kaap (Davids 1980, 93-98).

The abolishment of slavery in 1834 urged Muslims to open more mosques and *madrasahs* so as to serve existing Muslims and persuade freed populations to convert to Islam. At that time mosques and *madrasahs* were the main institutions in the formation of Muslim community, providing a space of worship, Islamic education, community meeting, and religious rituals (Davids 1980; Tayob 1999). As noted by African studies scholar Robert Shell (2006), the Islamic education that began in the year of slavery provided a vital platform for free slave and black populations to convert to Islam. By the 1820s, some 370 slaves attended Islamic schools in Cape Town, and this number rose to 491 by 1825. By 1840, the number of scholars enrolled in Islamic schools in Cape Town reached 2,451 (Shell 2006). These Islamic schools relied on Arabic hand-written texts of Tuan Guru and their curriculum provided basic Islamic knowledge and training of Arabic language for oral Quranic recitations.

Evidenced here is fact that the growth of the Muslim community and the transition from private to public performances of Muslim-ness led to a more pronounced visibility of Muslims that was enhanced by two critical events in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first was the granting of religious freedom to Muslims by the British in 1804; the second was the emancipation of slaves in 1834 that resulted in a rapid increase in conversion to Islam. These events entailed a steady growth of Islam and urged Muslims to construct many more mosques and *madrasahs*, most of which were built in Bo-Kaap to meet the significant demand there.

Davids (1987, 58-66) points out that primary concern amongst Cape Muslims was their religion, and never the opportunity to obtain political power and be involved in state politics. As Davids noted, the strength of Cape Muslims in the nineteenth century was mainly attributed to their belief in Islam. This can be seen in the response amongst Muslims toward their mistreatment as patients during epidemics of smallpox in the mid to late 1800s. The hospital regulations at that time did not provide *halaal* food for Muslim patients, and denied Islamic burial rights and ritual ablutions for Muslims who died from smallpox. After enduring such mistreatment of Muslim patients for approximately forty years, in 1882 Muslims called for a public meeting in which they made it clear that 'their religion is superior to the law' (Davids 1987, 57; Esack 1988, 472). Another significant event demonstrating the

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strong religious belief and commitment of Muslims in Cape Town can be witnessed in the contestation around the closure of Tana Baru Muslim burial cemetery, which was given to Muslims in 1805 and closed in 1886 under the Public Health Act No.4 of 1883 (Davids 1980, xviii). In response to the Act, about three thousand Muslims marched through the city of Cape Town in a funerary protest. Davids (1987) argues that this protest marks 'the first urban uprising of a black community in the history of South Africa' (58). Considered together, these two events mediate and form a public Islam that urged the urbanisation process of Cape Town city to accommodate infrastructures and regulations of Muslim religious difference. These public performances strengthened a Muslim sense of community and enhanced their public visibility.

### 3.5.3 Formation and Fragmentation of a Community of Muslims in Cape Town

Yet despite the apparent strength of this Muslim sense of community, the formation of a cohesive community of Muslims in Cape Town has been challenged by the sheer growth of the Muslim population and transnational influences that resulted in contested diversifications of Cape Muslim religiosity. The growth and diversity of the Muslim imagined community in Cape Town was enhanced by the arrival of Indian Muslims to South Africa. The first wave of Indian Muslims brought to South Africa in the 1860s by the British were contracted labourers working on sugar plantations in Natal. The majority of them were Hindu, and around 90% of them resided in Natal (Vahed 2000). The second wave of Indians arrived in South Africa between the 1860s and 1910s. They came not as contracted workers but as traders, with their capital in hand to make a living in South Africa. This second wave of Indians mainly consisted of Gujarati, Urdu, and Marathi speaking peoples. The majority of them were Muslim, settled mainly in Transvaal and Natal, with only about 10% settling in Cape Town to open businesses and form part of the Cape Muslim imagined community (Vahed and Jeppie 2005).

This divergent historical experiences of Malay Muslims, most of whom were registered and treated as slaves), and Indian Muslims, many of whom were business people or entrepreneurs, created a great deal of disparity in terms of class, level of education, and religious authority. These differences were also reflected organisationally, as is evident in the Cape Malay Association, established in 1920,

and the South African Indian Moslem Congress, founded in 1923. In general terms, the Indian population was much more middle class than the Malay, and this resulted in Indians being perceived by some Malay as possessing the potential for upward social mobility. Over time, however, the distinction between groups has been slightly altered through intermarriage and joint cooperation to achieve communal and political goals (Moodley 1975). Indian Muslims living in Cape Town differ in their religious practices, language, class, food, and clothes from Malay Muslims. That said, the differences between Indian and Malay Muslims living in Cape Town have been reshaped since the 1990s, when, as Vahed and Jeppie (2005) assert, the impact of globalisation and Islamophobia seemingly began to forge a sense of Islamic identity and an imagined sense of community among Capetonian Muslims that transcended Malay-ness or Indian-ness.

The formation of a cohesive community of Muslims in Cape Town has been challenged by class differences and transnational influences that resulted in contested diversifications of Cape Muslim religious sensibilities. Cape Muslims embrace various Islamic schools of thought; the majority of Malay Muslims community adhere to *shafi'i* Islamic law and most Indian Muslims have followed *hanafi* traditions that were promoted and taught by Abu Bakr Effendi. Although Abu Baker Effendi was sent by the Ottoman Empire to Cape Town in 1862 to resolve religious disputes amongst Cape Muslims, his propagation of *hanafi* teachings led to a Hanafi-Shafii dispute (see Davids 1994). In addition, *Malakism* emerged among African Muslims who refused to assimilate to Malay or Indian culture and who, due to the popularity of *Malakism* in West and North Africa, considered it to be an African Islamic tradition. Beyond that, Muslims in Cape Town have historically (and continue to be) influenced by various Islamic approaches including Sufism, reformism, Islamism, revivalism, progressiveness, and fundamentalism (Tayob 1999b).

The diversity of Cape Muslim religious practices also came as a result of the increased number of imams and sheikhs in Cape Town, who advocated for different religious practices and understandings of Islam. The launching of steamships in 1850s and the building of the Suez Canal in 1869 made it possible for Cape Muslims to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, where they in turn advanced their knowledge of

Islamic jurisprudence and established transnational ties with the Muslim *Ummah* community. Further, many Cape Muslims enrolled at Islamic schools in Egypt, Damascus, Pakistan, or in Saudi Arabia where they pursued degrees in Islamic jurisprudence in order to claim religious expertise. This increased the number of Imams in Cape Town, each of whom assumed independent religious authority, leading to various religious disputes over the appropriateness of religious practices performed by Cape Muslims (see Davids 1980). Their disputes culminated in an urgent need for the establishment of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) in 1945 as a representative body that accommodated rather than challenged the diverse Islamic schools of thought. Most imams who were trained in Islamic jurisprudence in the Middle East were mistaken to judge the Cape Muslims religiosity according to conventions of the Muslim community in which they studied (Tayob 1999b). As in the case of Abu Bakr Effendi, these Imams maintained their popularity and religious authority to the extent that they accepted and respected the peculiarities of Cape Muslim localities and ways of practicing Islam (Tayob 1999b).

### *3.5.4 The Establishment of Apartheid State*

While the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced colonial interest in the Cape, as it was no longer the only sea route to India, the discovery of various minerals in the 1880s renewed the importance of South Africa as a source of valuable natural resources. This newfound wealth generated through minerals formed the basis of a struggle over territory that, in 1899, triggered war between the British-controlled colonies (the Cape colony and Natal) and the Boer governed republics (the Transvaal and the Orange Free government by the descendants of Dutch colonists in South Africa). This war came to an end in 1902, when the Boer surrendered and a peace agreement was formed (Berger 2009). This peace agreement implied that the Boer republic recognised the sovereignty of the British Empire over what would become the Union of South Africa in 1910 (79-83). Driven by a chief interest in economic growth, the formation of the Union of South Africa served to dispossess native Africans of their land through various forms of legislation that enforced racial

segregation, maintained white dominance, and secured the institutional racialisation of South Africa's political system (Stapleton 2010).[64]

This context of economic growth entails the gradual uplift of Muslims' elite and middle class, thereby inflating the number of Muslim graduates who could advance the Muslim position within state politics. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Abdullah Abdurahman, a Muslim Capetonian medical doctor, played a crucial part in coloured community politics. Abdurahman was born in 1872 in Cape Town and graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Glasgow in 1893. Upon his return to Cape Town, he joined the African Political Organization (APO)—the first coloured political organisation founded in 1902 in Cape Town. In 1904, Abdurahman became the first coloured person to be elected to Cape Town City Council, and in 1914 he was elected to be a member of the Cape Provincial Council. Under the leadership of Abdurahman, the APO established a network of hundreds branches and thousands of members across South Africa by 1910. Up until the 1930s, the APO played a vital role in mobilising the socioeconomic advancement of the coloured community.[65] Abdurahman was an ex-student of Achmat Effendi— the son of Abu Bakr Effendi. Following Effendi's Islamic reformist approach, in 1913 Abdurahman started to establish Muslim Mission Schools in Cape Town (Tayob 1995). His approach to progressive and inclusive secular education further advanced Cape Muslims' position within Cape Town society and state politics.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the Boers started to restore their power. Founding the National Party in 1914, the Boers increasingly enacted the sense of the 'Afrikaner' identity fostered by the Afrikaner Broederbond ('brotherhood')—an organisation founded in 1918 by the Dutch Reformed Church (Berger 2009, 103).[66] The Broederbond established the Federasie van Afrikaner Kultuurorganisasies (or the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organizations known as

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[64] These discriminatory laws were the Natives Land Act of 1913, which gave whites control over almost all farmland in South Africa, and the Native Labor Regulation Act of 1911, which established rules for Africans working in urban areas. African workers needed special passes to enter cities. This was followed up with the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, which enforced housing segregation in South Africa's cities. Black workers then had to stay in black-only neighbourhoods called townships. In response to these discriminatory legislations, the Africans protested and formed various organisations to demand basic civil rights, the largest being the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which was later renamed the African National Congress (ANC) (Berger 2009).
[65] South African History Online, 'Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman', last modified 29 October 2016, http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/dr-abdullah-abdurahman.
[66] 'Afrikaner' is a term used to describe non-British South African whites of mostly Dutch heritage.

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'FAK') which promoted Afrikaner distinctiveness through an emphasis on the art, culture, and language forming the aesthetic style of the Afrikaner. During the 1940s the National Party gained more white supporters based on its intensification of racial segregation. This racial segregation continued to spread and become further institutionalised, and eventually it was 'apartheid' that became the slogan that won the Afrikaner National Party the election of 1948.

The apartheid state passed two significant laws in 1950. First was the Population Registration Act that categorised all South Africans according to race. Initially this division was 'White', 'Coloured', and 'Native'—with a fourth category, 'Asian', later added to identify Indians. The second law was the Group Areas Act that separated each of the racial groups into specific geographical areas (Thompson 2001). Within this context of the formation of a distinct Afrikaner identity and of discriminatory apartheid legislations, two significant developments unfold in Cape Town: the remaking of 'Cape Malay' as a distinct community of Muslims, and the emergence of the Muslim anti-apartheid struggle.

### 3.5.5 The Re-making of Cape Malay-ness

Up until the 1920s, Muslims in Cape Town were referred to as 'Mohammedan, Malay, Mussulman or Coloured Muslims' (Vahed and Jeppie 2005, 253). However, from the 1920s the category of Cape Malay was re-constructed as a distinctive Afrikaans-speaking community of Muslims (Jeppie 2001). Izak du Plessis (formerly a folklorist at the University of Cape Town, and later an apartheid administrator) was the most prominent proponent of reinventing a distinctive ethnicity, history, and language that strategically distinguished Muslims as 'Malay' and differentiated them from the Christian and secular groups within the Cape coloured community—which would hence fragment the development of political movements among the coloured community of the Western Cape (Jeppie 2001). As Jeppie (1987, 2001) notes, the reinvention of Cape Malay must not be understood as du Plessis' personally motivated project, but rather as crucial to the development of white, Afrikaans-speaking nationalism. Du Plessis' project of constructing boundaries of a distinctive community known as 'Cape Malay' found resonance among some Muslims in Cape Town, such as the Cape Malay Association (1922), which mainly represented the

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affairs of Malay Muslims and created division between Malay Muslims and Indian Muslims.

As Gabeba Baderoon (2014) notes, the apartheid state's recognition of the Cape Malay explains its strategic attempt to neutralise and legitimise racial categorisation by fabricating a 'beginning' that, in the sense theorised by Edward Said (1975), is made, not discovered. The making of distinct boundary lines for Cape Malay-ness purportedly distinguished Coloured Muslims from Indian Muslims, and distinguished Muslims from Christians within the coloured community (Baderoon 2014; Vahed and Jeppie 2005, 254). Put more simply, these boundaries created a situation wherein the distinction of 'Muslim-as-Malay' was constructed against 'Christian-as-Coloured' in official discourse (Zegeye and Harris 2003, 95).

Casting a critical eye over this crucial period in the socio-political history of South Africa, Shamil Jeppie (1987) carefully explored the role of du Plessis, as is evident by the subtitle of his thesis: *I.D. du Plessis and the Reinvention of the Malay*. Jeppie's seminal research into the (re)construction of the Cape Malay unpacked du Plessis' activities between 1930s and 1960s and his strategic involvement with the apartheid administration in order to successfully argue that du Plessis not only reinvented the Malay identity and community but also reinforced it as an expected result of the political development of South Africa. According to Jeppie (1987), du Plessis reinforced and fabricated Malay identity through not only his own scholarly research and publication but also the establishment of a special institute for Malay Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Further, as Jeppie argues, the reinvention of the 'Malay' as a distinct community supported the political project of the Afrikaner identity and the notion of South Africa as consisting of separate nations, including the Afrikaner nation (see Sharp 1988). Du Plessis' project of reinventing Malay-ness includes his book, *The Cape Malays* (first published in 1944 and reprinted many times until 1972), in which, as Jeppie (2001) points out, he primarily draws and re-works the nineteenth century colonial writings on slave populations. According to Jeppie (2001), du Plessis' constructed narrative of the Cape Malay was based mainly on race, history, and language. Following from this, du Plessis' description was primarily concerned with essentialised characterisations of the body, gestures, and mind of the Malay of the Cape, and this was supplemented

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by his secondary concern with social norms and religion, followed by folklore and music. Most importantly, what we understand from this is, as Jeppie notes (2001), du Plessis' orientalism staged Cape Malays in a way that froze and fixed their lived experience and community in Otherness.

Du Plessis' integral role in the construction of the Cape Malay as a racial, cultural, and social category was not limited to scholarship. As noted by sociologist Abebe Zegeye, du Plessis' 'project consisted of knowledge (texts), expertise (institutions), the associational life (social clubs) and geographical space (residential segregation)' (Zegeye and Harris 2003, 95) As outlined above, du Plessis' 'project' was manifest in 'knowledge' through his scholarship, and in 'expertise' through his work with apartheid governments. His authority as a scholar and apartheid administrator was crucial to his ability to establish 'associational life' for the Cape Malay (through, for example, the Cape Malay Choir founded in 1939) and to successfully position him as a powerful advocate for 'preserving for some Malays a place which enables them to live according to their custom' (1972, 80). This emphasis on the 'preservation' of the Cape Malay was clearly a process of control over geographical space that in turn led to residential segregation. This is evident in the establishment of what was known as the Malay Quarter located at the foot of Signal Hill and in part of the Bo-Kaap residential area, where the earliest urban slaves and their masters lived. In the 1950s, when the National Party passed the Group Areas Act and forcibly removed black South African populations from their land after declaring them white areas, the 'Malay Quarter' was declared as a 'Malay Group Area'.

Importantly, despite the decades-long, multi-dimensional pervasiveness of the Cape Malay category, from the 1970s onwards many prominent Muslims actively rejected this apartheid driven racial category (Davids 1980, 12), and instead aligned themselves with the category of 'Black' to assert their association with the anti-apartheid struggle (Jeppie 2001). This is evident in, for example, historian Achmat Davids (1980, 12) advocacy for the term 'Cape Muslim' instead of Cape Malay, which he argued was an essentialising racial category. Further to this, the Muslim Teachers Association was among the many Muslim groups that condemned du Plessis's book *The Cape Malay* (first published in 1942), as they perceived it to be part and parcel of the apartheid state's politics of embodying racial difference among

non-White South Africans (Jeppie 1987; Ajam 1986). What is significant here is that beyond being one of the chief manifestations of du Plessis' architecture of racial difference, the lasting legacy of *The Cape Malay* is that it, according to Jeppie (2001), was also responsible for triggering anti-apartheid sentiment amongst Muslim groups.

### 3.5.6 The Anti-Apartheid Struggle

Muslim initiatives orchestrated in opposition to apartheid are clearly visible in the launching of Call of Islam on 7 May 1961 to oppose the forced removal of Muslims from their homes under the Group Areas Act. The Call of Islam was active for a year during which time they continued their anti-apartheid struggle through the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (CMYA). Under the leadership of Imam Abdullah Haron, the CMYA advocated for the joining together of the Muslim Teacher's Association and the Muslim Mission School together with many other Muslim and non-Muslims activists in order to mobilise a more collective anti-apartheid stance. Following this, by the 1970s, the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), the Muslim Students Association (MSA), and the Islamic Council of South Africa (ICSA) were established (Esack 1988).

During the 1970s and 1980s a significant number of Coloured and Indian groups (in particular, university students) increasingly identified and became affiliated with Black Consciousness. Thus in 1983 the National Party drafted a new constitution offering new dispensation for Coloured and Indian groups through the introduction of the Tricameral Parliament (Welsh 1984). The Tricameral Parliament consisted of three representative bodies: the House of Assembly (white), the House of Representatives (Coloured), and the House of Delegates (Indian). Within this division, the largest parliamentary body was white, with 178 members, while Coloured populations were represented by 85 members and Indians were represented by 45 members (Welsh 1984). Since the larger white parliament could outvote the other representatives on any legislation, the role of Indian and Coloured representatives was essentially rendered meaningless.

This sparked a strong reaction amongst South Africans from diverse racial and religious backgrounds, eventually leading to the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Launched in Cape Town in 1983, the UDF incorporated

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hundreds of anti-apartheid organisations, one of which was the Call of Islam (Kelly 2009).[67] Despite its historical reluctance to engage in political affairs (see 3.3), even the MJC took an anti-apartheid stance by advising Muslims not to participate in the 1984 election and to join the UDF. Even so, the MJC distanced itself from the UDF and remained separate from political involvement. At this time, Ebrahim Rasool (a Capetonian Muslim politician who became the premier of Western Cape in 2004 and South Africa's ambassador to the United States in 2010) and Hassan Solomon (the Imam of the Claremont Main Road Mosque or CMRM) were both executive members of the MJC and members of the MYM.[68] Both were under pressure as a result of the MJCs decision to avoid officially joining the anti-apartheid struggle. As a consequence, Rasool, Solomon, and many other Muslim activists sought religious justifications (Quranic and *Hadith*) for their anti-apartheid struggle, and this formed the basis of the foundation of the 1984 Call of Islam and its later affiliation with the UDF (Kelly 2009).

Scholar of African history Jill E. Kelly (2009) points out that while the UDF provided a platform for Muslims to join the anti-apartheid struggle, it caused a conflict within the Muslim *ulama* (clergy) over Muslim involvement against apartheid and association with secular organisations such as the UDF (124). Conservative Muslims, represented by the MJC, did not advocate for political struggle against apartheid (Günther 2004). As the representative of the larger religious authority of Islam in Cape Town, the MJC had a remarkable impact of over the majority of lower-class and conservative Muslims. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of Muslims remained, in a sense, politically passive in the struggle against apartheid. This would suggest that the Muslim anti-apartheid struggle and the foundation of the Call of Islam was instigated by elite and middle-class Muslims who dared to challenge not only apartheid but also the MJC. However, the Call of Islam did eventually succeed in bringing Muslims from across the ethnic and class spectrum to a stand against apartheid by framing the oppression of Muslims as similar to that of South Africans. As various scholars argue, through the Call of Islam, Muslims directly joined the liberation struggle as a religious group

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[67] This was a new initiative and not related to the Call of Islam that emerged in 1961 under the leadership of Imam Abdullah Haron.

[68] The Claremont Main Road Mosque was established in 1854. See section 4.6. (see also CMRM, 'History', last modified 30 October 2016, http://cmrm.co.za/history/).

and not based on their ethnic, class, and socio-economic backgrounds (Esack 1988; Kelly 2009). Further to this, the extent and impact of the Muslim anti-apartheid struggle is visible in the aesthetics of Islam. This, according to Islamic studies scholar, activist, and co-founder of the Call of Islam, Farid Essack (1988), is evident in the enthusiastic adoption of the Palestinian scarf (*kaffiyeh*), the white *fez*, and the chanting of *Allah Akbar* (God is the greatest) as public symbols of the anti-apartheid struggle (473).

Importantly, however, not all Muslim organisations of the 1980s focused solely on the oppression of apartheid. For example, the Muslim anti-apartheid organisation founded in 1981, Qiblah, established strong ties with Iran under the leadership of Achmet Cassiem, and saw the Iranian revolution as a model for solving the problem of Muslim discrimination in South Africa and elsewhere. Their popular slogan 'One Solution, Islamic Revolution' makes clear that their primary concern (at least on the surface of things) was one of religion rather than politics. Hence, Esack (1988) argues that the Qiblah symbolises a transnational approach to Islam in Cape Town, as their efforts were centred on making South African Muslims part of the Muslim *Ummah* and the Islamic Iranian revolution, rather than on a local stand against the social, cultural, and political discrimination of apartheid.

The culmination of multiple forms of resistance (including those of the Muslim population) meant that, by the late 1980s, the apartheid government was under intense pressure as a result of local resistance and global sanctions. Thus, by the late 1980s, the National Party opened negotiations with the ANC that led to the end of apartheid by the first democratic election in 1994. Post-apartheid multiculturalism has meant, among other things, recognition of communitarian cultural rights and the emergence of new conceptions of citizenship (Von Lieres and Robins 2008). In 1996, South Africa embraced a liberal democratic constitution that was drafted according to multiculturalist policies ensuring communitarian cultural rights and equal citizenship to all South Africans. As anthropologist Steven Robins (2008) has argued regarding the wider South African context, the contemporary constitution of South Africa offers Muslims, like anybody else in the country, recognition and the freedom to express and practice their religious values in private and public insofar as they do not deny the constitutional regulations of the Bill of Rights (Amien 2010).

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This constitutional recognition of a distinctive cultural style of an imagined South African Muslim community signifies post-apartheid formations of a culturally diverse 'rainbow nation'.

Within the post-apartheid context's emphasis on communitarian cultural rights, some Muslims in Cape Town have sought to re-enact the distinctiveness of their cultural style through an assertion of Malay-ness and laying claim to membership of a Malay diaspora (Jeppie 2001). Among the proponents of this approach was historian Achmat Davids, who in 1994 chaired the organising committee for the festival 'Three Hundred years of Islam in South Africa', which took place in Cape Town. As Jeppie notes (2001), this festival constructed the appearance that Islam was the only religion of the Cape Malay, with strong emphasis on ethnic links to Southeast Asia. Further, the relationship between Southeast Asia and Cape Muslims were further enacted through various seminars and the formations of various organisations including the Cape Malay Chamber of Commerce, the South African Malay Cultural Society, and the Forum for Malay Culture in South Africa (Vahed and Jeppie 2005).

It is vital here to make clear that the South African post-apartheid democratic constitution did not only secure legal and political freedoms for religious expression and communitarian cultural rights, but also created a situation where cultural rights of difference became a signifier of citizenship to post-apartheid South Africa. It is this combination of the legal securement of freedom for religious expression and cultural rights as a signifier of citizenship that has allowed for the emergence of substantial and critical formations of Muslim identities and alternative public performances of Muslim-ness.

The post-apartheid constitution secured the cultural rights of various South African communities who were previously silenced due to apartheid discrimination and the overwhelming political atmosphere of the anti-apartheid struggle. Importantly, the cultural rights and resistance of those who have been previously overlooked—including for example those that identify as Muslim, LGBT, women, and those who are HIV positive—have become more publicly visible, heard, and debated in the post-apartheid context of cultural rights and equal citizenship. For instance, while since 1950s there has been unpronounced tolerance toward gay Muslims in Cape Town (Bangstad 2007), the post-apartheid context's assurance of the equal rights of

citizenship has served to enhance the public visibility and identification of LGBT Muslims. Significantly, this public visibility has in turn triggered considerable contestation and opposition to those who identify as LGBT by Cape Town Muslims.

This alternative performance of Muslim-ness is clearly reflected in the work displayed within the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition, which both reflected on Muslim history in South Africa and drew attention to the contestation and fragmentation of religious authority encountered by previously sublimated Muslim voices, including those of women and those that identify as LGBT. The post-apartheid era's focus on freedom of expression not only allowed for individual performances of critical Muslim identities—as seen for example in Igshaan Adams and Weaam William's art performances in *Three Abdullahs*—but also enabled the emergence of alternative institutional performances of Muslim-ness. This emergence can be clearly seen in various Muslim organisations, including Positive Muslims, the Inner Circle, and the Open Mosque. Each of these organisations challenge conservative Islamic values and mainstream South African Muslim approaches (as represented by the MJC) and will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the trajectory of Muslim public performances and community formation. It makes clear that this development must not to be understood as merely a phenomenon of the post-apartheid era but rather as a continuity of Muslim historical efforts to freely and publicly perform their religion. To this end, this chapter explores the 'genealogy' of Muslim resistance to colonialism through religious education; the political resistance to apartheid through organisations such as the Call of Islam; and the innovative mood of resistance to conservative approaches to Islam in the post-apartheid context. I have traced here the trajectory and growth of Muslim public visibility and the aesthetic politics of Muslim community formations across three historical periods in Cape Town: first, the slavery era that was marked by the 'ambiguous visibility' of Muslims and private performances of Muslim-ness. Second was the era of religious freedom and of public performances of Muslim-ness granted in 1804 by the British colonists who had emancipated slaves in 1834, leading to a rapid increase in conversion to Islam. The third era outlined was that of the twentieth century, which was characterised by a

significant growth in Muslim public visibility and political engagement with state politics. This included the reformation of the 'Cape Malay' identity that triggered Muslim involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle followed by the democratic turn of post-apartheid that ensured constitutional recognition of the cultural styles of various South Africa communities, through to the establishment of equal rights of citizenship.

This chapter conclude with a brief remark regarding the ways in which the post-apartheid period has served to nurture a resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness. This resurgence has become so pronounced that it has led writers such as the scholar of Islamic studies, Suleman Dangor (2009), to perceive the post-apartheid era as a moment of 'Islamisation' (113). Examples of this post-apartheid resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness include the mass celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi* (chapter One), Marches for Palestine, the moon sighting of *Eid Ul-Fitr*, the Ramadan Expo (open market in preparation of Ramadan), Muslim radio stations, the increasing number of Islamic schools, People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD), alternative performances of Muslim-ness, and public Somali performances—which are the focus of next chapter.

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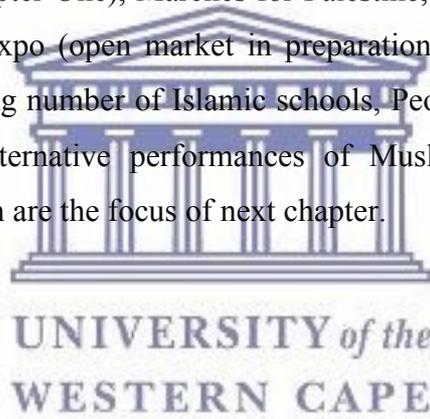
# Chapter Four

## *Muslim Religious Urbanity in Post-Apartheid Cape Town*

### *4.1 Introduction*

As the previous chapters have set out to made clear, the historical trajectory of Muslim public visibility and community formations in Cape Town has come together with the context of post-apartheid democratic cultural rights (Robins 2008), political dispensation (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005), and the vernacular politics of cultural difference (Becker 2015) to foster a resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness that has been taking place in Cape Town since the 1990s. In accordance with the aims of this thesis, this chapter explores examples of this resurgence as manifestations of public Islam and religious urbanity. The conceptualisation of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town rests on an ethnographic exploration of the way in which Islamic organisations, their structure, governance, performances, and audiences strategically enact a religious aesthetic of Islam within the public multicultural sphere of Cape Town. This chapter draws attention toward the contestations evident within formations of public Islam in the post-apartheid context in order to provide an analysis of Muslim politics of difference and belonging, and the enhanced scale and diversity of their public visibility and community formations.

This chapter begins with an ethnographic account of the Marches for Palestine to put forward two competing claims of religious authority in Cape Town: the first one is led by the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) and the second is led by the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC). The discussion goes on to describe the moon sighting of *Eid Ul-Fitr* (4.2) and the Ramadan Exposition (4.3). The discussion of these large public performances is an attempt to provide evidence of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town. The competition between these two Muslim organisations and the quiet conflict over religious authority in Cape Town is made clear in a subsequent discussion of Muslim radio stations. Importantly, however, contestation within the Muslim community is not confined to a narrow binary opposition between the MJC and the IUC. This chapter includes discussion of alternative performances of

Muslim-ness, Islamic Schools (4.7), and PAGAD (4.8) to put forward an account of the diversity of performances of Muslim-ness—which includes conservative, democratic, and violent approaches to Islam that challenge the formation of a cohesive public Islam in Cape Town. This chapter concludes by providing an account of Somali refugees, whose recent appearance in public spaces in Cape Town is a post-apartheid phenomenon (4.9). This discussion focuses on Somali refugees in the Bellville Central Business District (CBD) and unpacks the contestations around how Somali and Capetonian Muslims practice and understand Islam and their perceptions of each other (4.10 and 4.11).

*4.2 Marches for Palestine*

The two annual marches for Palestine in Cape Town (one arranged by the MJC and the other by the IUC) are often attended by tens of thousands—most of whom are Muslims. In 2014, the first march for Palestine took place on 16 July. Arranged by the MJC with support from various Palestinian solidarity groups, the result was a substantial turnout of approximately forty thousand protestors. A few days later, on 25 July, the IUC organised the Al-Quds Day March. The IUC March was held on a rainy day, but in spite of this around five thousand protestors turned out for the march.[69] Both marches took place during the month of Ramadan, during which Muslims intensify performances of their religiosity. Having this in mind, it would appear that Muslim solidarity for Palestine is both a religious performance of Muslim-ness and a marker of transnational belonging to the Muslim *Ummah*, rather than merely a signifier of political belief.[70]

Both the MJC and IUC marches for Palestine usually take place on a Friday. Departing from the Alzahra Mosque in Walmer Estate after Friday prayer, these marches attract thousands of participants to march to Cape Town's parliament in solidarity with Palestine. Both marches are usually led by trucks that serve as a moving stage on which loudspeakers resound mostly Arabic chants for Islam and

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[69] Ra'eesah Isaacs, 'Quds Day rally draws 5000', The Voice of the Cape, 25 July 2014, http://www.vocfm.co.za/quds-day-rally-draws-5000/.
[70] Due to the brutal Israeli attack on Gaza in 2014 (Operation Protective Edge), a third march took place on 9 August 2014. This remains the biggest march in the recent history of Cape Town, as it was made up of 100,000 participants consisting of both Muslims and non-Muslims. The march was organised by a coalition of numerous organisations including, amongst others, the MJC, the Palestinian Solidarity Committee (PSC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), Cosatu, and the Anglican Church in Cape Town. This march brought Muslims and non-Muslims together to form a shared political identity regardless of religious affiliation.

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Palestine. The visual formation of participants, are noticeably dressed in Middle-Eastern scarves (*kaffiyeh)* and *hijab* and hold the flags of Palestine, Iran, or Hezbollah to enact a symbolic aesthetic of Islam. What is significant here is that the sounds and visual aesthetic formations of Muslims marching for Palestine mediate an aesthetic of Islam within Cape Town urban public space, thus forming public Islam and Muslim religious urbanity.

Importantly, these aesthetic formations are also representative of fractures within the formation of public Islam in Cape Town. In the first march organised by the MJC, participants were under explicit instructions not to raise any flags with the exception of the Palestinian and South African flags. The MJC dictated that flags should not represent particular political affiliations to parties such as Hamas, the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation), or Hezbollah, nor should there be flags of other Islamic countries such as Iran or Saudi Arabia. Conversely, on the march organised by the IUC, in addition to Palestinian and South African flags, there were many Iranian and Hezbollah flags (fig. 4.1).



FIGURE 4.1 Al-Quds Day March for Palestine, 25 July 2014, Cape Town. (Photo by the author)

In response to this, the president of the MJC in Cape Town, Ighsaan Hendricks, stated in an interview:

> The MJC has strong ties with the Muslim *Ummah,* but we are not submissive to any Islamic countries. We are active participants in the Muslim *Ummah* and Muslim global political affairs, however we are first and foremost South African citizens and our support for Palestine is continuity of the South African struggle against apartheid. We stand with the people of Palestine not because they are

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Muslims, but because they are oppressed as we South Africans used to be.[71]

Although Hendricks expressed attachment and concern toward the Muslim *Ummah*, his statement suggests that he understands Muslim national belonging and the sense of citizenship as necessitating a divorce from an overt attachment and belonging to the Muslim *Ummah*. Put another way, for Hendricks, the waving of flags other than those of South Africa or Palestine in the march in Cape Town seemed to fracture a Muslim sense of national belonging and citizenship in South Africa. Contrary to this, however, Achmat Cassiem, the chairperson of the IUC, explained that the Cape Muslim attachment to the Muslim *Ummah* is not to be understood as a submission to transnational influence, nor as a lack of Muslim national belonging. During our conversation, Cassiem expressed a high level of commitment to the South African struggle, which he argues the ANC post-apartheid state did not resolve. Further to this, Cassiem sees the attachment and belonging to a Muslim *Ummah* as a source of inspiration and support for Cape Muslims to better learn how to engage and contribute to the broader society of Cape Town through Islamic values.[72]

The second point in Ighsaan Hendricks position is that he claims Muslim citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa as a continuity of political involvement against apartheid. He asserts political affinity with oppressed people in Palestine through the fact that Palestinians are Muslim. He went on to quote Mandela, saying that 'The freedom of South Africa will not be completed without the Freedom of Palestine'. Further, Hendricks also spoke proudly to me about his meeting with George Habash, the non-Muslim founder of the leftist socialist party, the Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The citing of Habash served to emphasise his point that the MJC's political involvement and understanding of belonging is beyond the boundary of Muslim-ness and linked more closely to a shared sense of political oppression. Importantly, the MJC's rhetoric of national belonging surpassed their transnational belonging. This can be seen for instance through the MJC's support for Palestine, which is centred on a shared sense of political struggle and history rather than religious commitment.

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[71] Ighsaan Hendricks' comments throughout are cited from an interview with the author, 12 August 2014, MJC office, Athlone, Cape Town.

[72] Achmat Cassiem, interview with the author, 8 October 2014, Lansdowne, Cape Town.

The organisational impetus behind both these marches is the same (to express support for the Palestinian people), though they remain marketed and attended as separate events. Thus, these marches further Muslim public visibility and appear to have a united motivation and vision but are also indicative of the fractures in Muslim authoritative bodies in Cape Town. The points of convergence and divergence in the approaches of the MJC and the IUC—the two main Muslim organisations in Cape Town—indicate two contradictory ways in which Muslims position themselves within the multicultural society of Cape Town and in relation to state politics.

### 4.2.1 Muslim Judicial Council

The Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) is a faith-based, non-profit organisation that was established at an inaugural public meeting taking place on 10 February 1945 at the Cathedral Hall, Queen Victoria Road, Cape Town, where 62 public and religious figures of the Cape Muslim community gathered to elect the MJC first Executive Committee. Since its establishment, the MJC has been the most influential religious organisation representative of Muslims in Cape Town. Their overall vision is to form 'a Home for all Ulama' that 'preserve[s] and promote[s] Islam as a practical, divine way of life, resulting holistic approaches to all challenges and in all spheres of human activity'.[73] In my conversation with Moulana Abdul Khaliq Allie, the secretary general of the MJC, he listed the various aims of the MJC which are to provide religious guidance that reconciles and accommodates the cultural diversity of Muslims in Cape Town; to establish infrastructures for the facilitation of practices and promotion of Islamic values (such as mosques, *Madrasahs*, radio stations, and social welfare organisations); and to represent and negotiate Muslim affairs in state politics.[74]

Since its establishment in 1945, the MJC has attempted to silence Muslim political activism against apartheid. Despite its condemnation of the Group Area Act of 1950, the MJC did not support the emergence of the Call of Islam in 1961, neither did it embrace Imam Haron's anti-apartheid struggle (Esack 1988). In the 1980s, the MJC rejected the division of Muslims into racial groups and joined the UDF anti-apartheid struggle, but soon withdrew and resumed non-political stances. The MJC

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[73] MJC, 'Our Mission', 2015, last accessed 29 October 2016, http://mjc.org.za/about-us/our-mission/ .
[74] Abdul Khaliq Allie's comments are cited from an interview with the author, 7 September 2014, MJC office, Athlone, Cape Town.

endeavour to silence Muslim political activism against apartheid attracted a great deal of criticism from some of the more politically active members of the MJC—including Hassan Solomon and Ebrahim Rasool, who, in 1982, formed the Call of Islam and joined UDF (Esack 1988).

In my conversation with Ighsaan Hendricks, he insisted that, in the post-apartheid era, the MJC paid more attention to nurturing a Muslim sense of citizenship and national belonging in South Africa. He showed pride whilst recalling the high political profile held by Muslims in the post-apartheid state at local, provincial, and national levels. For Hendricks, these high political positions held by Muslims were generated mainly due to 'their early involvement in the frontline of the political struggle against apartheid, and not because they were Muslims'. He explained that 'five years after democracy, Muslim political representation decreased because of Muslim lack of interest and participation in national politics'. Therefore, he sees the MJC's task as being 'to encourage Muslims participation in post-apartheid democracy and to awaken their sense of citizenship . . . to urge Muslims to engage and be part of civic institutions, where they can contribute according to Islamic values to humanitarian crises that threaten the nation and society of South Africa, mainly poverty'. According to Hendricks, the MJC sees 'Muslims as being part of South African freedom as active citizens, avoiding the formation of an isolated community'.

Hendricks' statement explains the way in which the MJC attempts to evoke a Muslim sense of active citizenship within the multicultural society of Cape Town and in relation to the state. Hendricks puts forward two interrelated tasks and challenges for the MJC: one is to nurture and evoke a Muslim sense of national belonging and South African citizenship, to thus form an integrated part of the multicultural society of Cape Town and not form an isolated community geared only toward transnational belonging. As made clear above, the MJC endeavours to foster a Muslim sense of citizenship and national belonging that entails an integration of Islamic and secular practices. Here, the MJC's endeavours signify their attempt to reconcile Muslim cultural difference and national belonging.

The MJC's second major task and challenge stems from the fact that Muslim participation in post-apartheid democracy requires the accommodation of the cultural

diversity of Cape Muslims alongside the liberal secular values of broader society. An example of the MJC's accommodation of liberal secular values is the case of the burial of Kader Asmal.[75] As requested by his Irish-born wife, Kader Asmal was cremated and not buried as dictated by traditional Islamic law (*Weekend Argus*, 25 June 2011). I asked Moulana Ighsaan Hendricks whether the MJC's acceptance of this funerary process was a special case indicative of tolerance toward ANC power or whether it was a general tendency of the MJC to accommodate secular practices. Hendricks commented:

> The MJC acknowledge that Islam is *Din Yousr wa Les Aousr* ['religion of ease not hardship']. We respect and realise the cultural diversity of Muslims practices . . . Our job is not to challenge Muslim cultural practices, but to advise them of how to combine their secular or traditional practices with core conventions of Islam. In the case of Kader Asmal, the MJC made sure that his body was prepared according to Islamic cleansing and wrapping ritual, which for Majsel Al-ulmmah (the council of religious expertise) of MJC is enough to assert his Islamic identity.

Hendricks also pointed out that there are many cases that constitute daily tasks for assessment and evaluation by the MJC. Other examples referred to include the MJC's accommodation of cultural practices associated with funeral ceremonies of African Muslims. Hendricks explained that African Muslims prepare the bodies of their relatives according to Islamic rituals involving the cleansing and wrapping of the dead. The difference for African Muslims, however, is that they retain the water that is used for cleansing for later disposal in an alternative way. More importantly, they also keep the dead body above ground for a longer period of time than the majority of Muslims in both Cape Town and the *Ummah*, who bury their dead shortly after cleansing and wrapping.

I asked Hendricks about the extent to which the MJC accommodates practices and represents the interests of homosexual Muslims living in Cape Town, and he responded that 'the MJC do not promote any discriminatory practices against homosexual Muslims, neither publically represent or support their status'. That said,

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[75] Kader Asmal was born in 1934 in KwaZulu-Natal. He was Professor of Human Rights at the University of the Western Cape (1990-1994). In 1991, he was elected to the ANC's national executive committee; in 1994, he was appointed Minster for Water Affairs; and, in 1999, Minster of Education (South African History Online, 'Professor Kader Asmal', 17 February 2011, http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/professor-kader-asmal).

the MJC's accommodation of secular practices are limited; this is due to their concern with the maintenance of what they perceive as core conventions of Islam that do not always accord with secular values. Thus the MJC's conditional accommodation of aspects of secular culture explains concern amongst scholars of multiculturalism who argue that the core conventions of Islam might potentially interrupt Muslim national belonging, integration, and contribution to multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1994). Although the MJC's accommodation of secular values is limited, their performances of the moon sighting and the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebration (see 1.1) signify the ways in which the MJC form part of state politics through their willingness to operate within urban infrastructure and secular structure of Cape Town.

Despite the MJC nationalist rhetoric and their attempts to accommodate Cape Muslim cultural diversity and liberal secular values, various scholars argue against the MJC's claim of being representative of Cape Muslims, and question their religious accommodations. South African sociologist Aslam Fataar (2009) points out that Muslim leaders who occupy political positions are driven by elitist class and institutional interests and do not represent the interests of the marginalised poor in South Africa. Fataar encourages Muslim leaders to take a more critical political position, calling for the creation of internal dialogue among Muslims to explore more possibilities around how Muslims can engage with local and national issues concerning all South Africans. Anthropologist Sindre Bangstad and sociologist Fataar (2010) perceive the MJC's support of post-apartheid politics as 'ambiguous accommodation'—not in the sense of a betrayal but rather as a structurally dependent position. They maintain that the MJC makes a 'loyalist accommodation' of post-apartheid ANC politics that have constrained Muslims 'to engage in a direct politics of challenge to political power' (820).

Goolam Vahed (2007), a historian of Islam in South Africa, calls for a more democratic production of religious knowledge against the powerful position of MJC's *Ulama* (religious experts) in the production of confirmative religious-knowledge. Vahed advocates for democratic Islam that 'respects diversity and accepts that Islamic values are one of a number of values co-existing in a politically plural and multicultural society. They are at ease in intercultural and inter-religious

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dialogue' (130). To this end, he perceives the MJC as traditionalist and not nationalist, and hence out of touch with South African realities. For Vahed, the MJC's *Ulama* are argued to be in a powerful position to shape the production of knowledge and beliefs as a result of their control over mosques and theological institutions. However, there are dissenting voices providing alternative practices and narratives of Muslim-ness in contemporary South Africa. The South African post-apartheid liberal constitution secures equal rights at have allowed for substantial though emergent alternative public performances of Muslim-ness.

### 4.2.2 Islamic Unity Convention

The Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) is a national voluntary association that was formed in March of 1994 at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) in Bellville, Cape Town, and its constituent members are Muslim social welfare organisations are primarily from the Western Cape. The IUC cites its main objective as being 'to unite Muslim organisations under one umbrella body', and to this end it claims to be comprised of 250 Islamic organisations operating within South Africa.[76] Providing a variety of social services that aim to uplift marginalised communities in South Africa, the infrastructure of the IUC includes a radio station, newspaper, and the membership of social welfare organisations—some of which discussed below and in the following chapters.

In spite of this official description of the Islamic Unity Convention and its contemporary infrastructure and role in South Africa, the historical trajectory of the IUC is also vital to understanding its role within Muslim infrastructure in Cape Town. In order to do this, we must return to the IUC's position in the mid-1990s. The IUC political stance at the time rejected the peace and reconciliation of the recently established post-apartheid state, seeing it as illegitimate because it is the outcome of a dubious negotiated settlement that the IUC deemed as compromising on justice. In accordance with this, the IUC called on Muslims to boycott South Africa's first non-racial democratic election in 1994, and to resist the newly established post-apartheid state as a continuation of the anti-apartheid struggle.

In 1995, the founder of Qiblah (see 3.11 and 4.8), Achmad Cassiem, was elected chairman of the IUC. Cassiem was born and raised in Cape Town and joined the

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[76] IUC, Social Forum profile description, November 2014, http://iucsocialforum.blogspot.com/.

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armed struggle of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) against apartheid in the 1960s. This resulted in his arrest and five-year incarceration at Robben Island.[77] I first met Cassiem on the day I joined Mustadafin Foundation staff members and my drumming students for a leisurely trip up to Table Mountain. In our conversation that day, Cassiem made clear his disappointment toward post-apartheid state politics and the extent to which he saw these politics as continuing to exclude and marginalise poor communities. For Cassiem, post-apartheid state politics serves 'elite nationalists' who have failed to abolish the discrimination inherited from apartheid. Further, for Cassiem, the MJC is 'representative of elite and upper-class Muslims who are implicated in the marginalisation and misrepresentation of the majority of poor and lower-class Muslims'.[78] Within this context, Cassiem expressed the view that the MJC's alliance with the ANC acted as a denial of Muslims' anti-apartheid struggle. Some time after our visit to Table Mountain, where Cassiem had expressed the aforementioned views to me, I visited him at his house at Lansdowne. There we sat in the living room, which was decorated with a few pictures. Among these was a picture of Ayatollah Khomeine, the Iranian religious and political leader, and a picture of Robert Sobukwe, the founder of the PAC. In this conversation, Cassiem expressed high political commitment to oppressed people in South Africa and elsewhere. He expressed scepticism toward the notion of political correctness, quoting Edward Said and saying 'speak truth to power'.

For Achmad Cassiem, the IUC's mission is not merely political, but rather one that seeks to provide social services that are geared toward empowering members of disadvantaged communities to become active citizens in post-apartheid South Africa. Importantly, however, whilst Cassiem elucidated upon the IUC mission, I noticed a great deal of commonality between the IUC and MJC's objectives—both of which aim to provide an infrastructure for Muslims to practice and promote their Islamic values, and to create a unified Muslim community within Cape Town. That said, the main difference between the MJC and IUC is first and foremost their relationship with state politics. The second point of difference between the MJC and IUC is their transnational affiliation. Whilst the MJC places more emphasis on Muslim national belonging and thus underplays their affiliation to the Muslim *Ummah*, the IUC

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[77] South African History Online, 'Achmad Cassiem', *SAHO*, 19 March 2012, http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/achmad-cassiem.
[78] Achmad Cassiem, informal conversation with the author, 7 August 2014, Table Mountain.

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overtly expresses their strong allegiance to Iran and the Islamic Iranian revolution as a source of inspiration.

Crucially, the IUC's multiple organisational bodies, organisational structures, funding, and facilities indicate both a challenge and fragmentation of the authority of the MJC as leading representative of Muslims in Cape Town. Further, the points of convergence and divergence in the approaches of the MJC and the IUC are reflective of the political positionality of Muslims and their engagement with state politics. While the MJC embraces and calls on Muslims to participate in the democratic process of post-apartheid South Africa, the IUC continues to engage a revolutionary rhetoric against post-apartheid state politics. This is an issue taken up at length in Heinrich Matthee's doctoral dissertation, *Muslim Identities and Political Strategies: A Case Study of Muslims in the Greater Cape Town Area of South Africa, 1994-2000* (2008), which unpacks the various transnational influences that impact upon Muslim local politics, Muslim groups, and Muslim engagement with post-apartheid state politics. Scholar of international studies Matthee makes clear that while the MJC advocates for a notion of participatory citizenship for Muslims in South Africa, the IUC stands at a distance from state politics and refrains from involvement in state elections—a stance that reiterates their support of the PAC.

Beyond their divergent politics, the way in which both the MJC and IUC contribute to the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness is something that can be seen in their facilitation of infrastructure and mass public activities that form Muslim religious urbanity and enact their public visibility in Cape Town. Both the MJC and IUC conduct mass public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town that draw together a range of affiliated organisations including (amongst others) mosques, Islamic schools, civic institutions, and radio stations. Significantly, both the MJC and the IUC and their respective affiliated organisations mediate aesthetics of Islam and Muslim cultural style, aiding in the public visibility of Muslims within the spectrum of Cape Town rainbowism. In order to appreciate the role of the MJC and IUC in facilitating this visibility, it is useful to analyse several MJC and IUC public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town and the ways in which they operate within the urban structures of Cape Town to form religious urbanity.

*4.3 Moon Sighing of Eid Ul-Fitr*

One of the largest public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town is the annual moon sighing of *Eid Ul-Fitr* organised by MJC. On the last day of the month of Ramadan, thousands of Muslims gather at the Sea Point Promenade to witness the moon that confirms the end of their fasting and to welcome the following day of the *Eid Ul-Fitr*.[79] I joined this gathering four times between 2012 and 2015. In 2014, the last day of Ramadan was on 29 July, and on that day fifteen thousand Muslims blanketed the grass area of Sea Point Promenade to lay out their food and drink and wait for the sunset *azan* (the call to prayer) to break their fast, and for the moon to appear in the sky. From about 4:00 p.m., Muslims started to inhabit the space with their visual bodily formations that occupied the landscape, and create the soundscape of Arabic-Islamic recitations, filling Sea Point Promenade with the symbolic aesthetics of Islam. Sitting around in groups made up of friends and family, the crowd appeared calm, chatting softly with the gentle background sound of Quranic verses heard through loudspeakers. As the sunset *azan* began, most of the crowd (with the exception of children) broke their fast with water and dates so as to perform their belonging to the Islamic community through the imitation and enactment of the eating style of the prophet Muhammad. After eating their food, the women, men, and children faced toward Mecca to pray, listening tentatively to the Imam's Quranic recitations, moving their bodies together as they formed a community through a common sensory experience of Islam.

Performances at the moon sighting should be understood as representative of an infrastructure of public Islam and Muslim religious urbanity. The moon sighting performance brings thousands of Muslims together in public space, and their sensorial formations (as manifest in visual, aural, olfactory, and gustatory performances) come together to enact a visibility of Islamic aesthetics. In other words, the sensorial performances of the sound of Quranic recitations, the crowd's bodily formations, the smell of their food, and their eating style publically embodied a symbolic enactment of an Islamic religious aesthetics in public urban space in Cape Town. The sensorial experience of the moon sighting affected not only Muslims, but all who happened to be at Sea Point Promenade; while thousands of

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[79] The Sea Point Promenade is attached to a long walkway along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, and is crowded with hundreds of tourists and local Muslims and non-Muslims on a daily basis.

Muslims gathered at the grassy area, hundreds of people passed by on the walk way of the Sea Point Promenade and could hear and see the aesthetic formations of public Islam. In other words, aesthetic formations of the moon sighting mediated Muslim cultural styles within the public sphere that is shared and observed by Muslims and non-Muslims.

The chapter highlights how gatherings such as the moon sighting provide a vital modality of Muslim belonging through community formations and public visibility in Cape Town. The sensorial aesthetics of the moon sighting form the individual Muslim religious self and also evoke a collective spirituality made possible through the common sensory experiences of Islam. Further, the event mediates communitarian styles made tangible and authentic through aesthetic sensorial forms. These aesthetic forms mediate a sense of belonging to an imagined community of Muslims in Cape Town and to the transnational Muslim *Ummah.* This sense of belonging to a Muslim *Ummah* was clearly evidenced at the moon sighting of 2014 that coincided with the Israeli bombing of Gaza, and where attendees performed solidarity with Palestine. At this time, people raised the Palestinian flag, gathered at the ocean edge of the Promenade, and chanted for the freedom of Palestine. Hundreds of other young Muslims joined them, queued to take selfies with the Palestinian flag, and eventually joined the chanting. The moon sighting is a central religious activity of the Muslim community in Cape Town and, as evident from the observations above, the event is indicative of the push and pull between a local and transnational sense of belonging amongst Muslims in Cape Town.

 The inauguration of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) in 1945 helped to incorporate moon observers from various mosques in Cape Town and to establish the Crescent Observers Society in 1951, which carefully observed the monthly phases of the moon. However, the establishment of Crescent Observers Society did not prevent dispute amongst Muslims over the accurate day that marked the start and end of the month of Ramadan. In 2013, some Muslims in Cape Town had celebrated *Eid Ul-Fitr* on the 7 August, as announced by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, whilst others celebrated on 8 August, as confirmed by the Crescent Observers Society in Cape Town. Such disputes make clear the fragmentation of Muslim religious authority in Cape Town, and the impact of transnational influence.

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Despite the large extent to which the MJC organises public performance of Muslim-ness that appeal and attract the majority of Muslims in Cape Town (such as the mass *Mawlid Al-Nabi* and the *Eid Ul-Fitr*), other Muslim organisations such as the IUC also appeal to Muslims in Cape Town and have a strong track record in successfully attracting mass attendance to events they organise. The mass public performance of the IUC is illustrated in the following account of the Ramadan Expo.

### 4.4 The Ramadan Expo

In celebration and preparation for the holy month of Ramadan in Cape Town in 2015, Radio 786 collaborated with the well-established business, Spice Mecca, to organise the Ramadan Expo 2015.[80] Taking place within the Good Hope Centre, an exhibition hall in the centre of Cape Town, the exposition opened from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day between 6 and 8 June 2015. During the event, the Good Hope Centre was separated into three sections: the foyer, where Radio 786 set up lounges and broadcasted their hosts' reflections on the event; a hall filled with stalls where exposition participants displayed their goods and services; and a dining venue, where participants and attendees relaxed, socialised, ate together, and watched television. The exposition included local, national, and transnational participants, and throughout my time at the event I met participants from Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, India, Somalia, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Spain, Ireland, China, and Thailand. The variety of their displays included food, spices, clothes, Indian fabrics, jewellery, perfume, artworks (landscape paintings and Arabic calligraphy), a range of civic Islamic services, and Thai massage. The majority of the participants were small businesses promoting homemade food products, however there were also some participants from well-established businesses such as the Spice Mecca, the main sponsor of exposition. Beyond this variety of products, the exposition offered a free educational program about the use of electricity and the services of various national and international Muslim institutions including, amongst many others, the African Muslim Agency and Muslim Hands (local) and Albaraka bank (international)—each of which provide social and financial services according to Islamic regulations.

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[80] Spice Mecca is a spice business that established in Cape Town in 1994. Its products are available in major retailers in South Africa including Pick 'n Pay, Shoprite/Checkers, and Spar. For more information, visit http://www.spicemecca.co.za/ (last accessed 29 October 2016).

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I visited the Expo every day and witnessed first hand the coming together of multiple Cape Muslim organisations at the event. These included businesses, civic institutions, and media outlets. Upon my arrival on the opening day of the event (6 June), Ishah Abdullah, a presenter from Radio 786 (who hosted me two weeks previously at the station's offices in Athlon to present my research findings), warmly welcomed me and introduced me to the Radio 786 crew, who were organising a live broadcast of the exposition.[81] This broadcast tracked the events taking place at the exposition as well as gauging the responses of the attendees, as the event is attended by thousands of Muslims and non-Muslims, locals, and foreigners. The majority of the event's attendees were Capetonian Muslim families; however, there were also many South African Muslims from Johannesburg and Durban alongside Somali, Jordanian, Turkish, and European Muslims (from Spain and Ireland), and many non-Muslims.

This exposition was the fifth annual Cape Town Ramadan Expo organised by Radio 786. However, what was particularly remarkable about the 2015 exposition was the shift evident in both the event's scale and geographic location. While previous expositions hosted mainly displays of local goods and services and took place in the peripheral region of the city, the 2015 exposition included local, national, and transnational vendors and took place at the Good Hope Centre in the very centre of the city.[82] What is significant here is that the number and variety of exposition participants and its move from the periphery to the centre made the event more attractive and accessible for a broader multicultural public, and thus the exposition attracted local, national, and transnational media coverage.[83] The remarkable growth of the exposition is symptomatic of an emergent infrastructure of Muslim urbanity in Cape Town that strategically enacts public visibility and embodies a politics of aesthetics of Muslim cultural difference within the multicultural society of Cape

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[81] Ishah Abdullah asked me to join their broadcast and to share my views of the potential gains of the Ramadan Expo with Radio 786 listeners. The moment I realised that their broadcast was being aired within the Expo venue, I apologised and explained to Ishah the disadvantage of being positioned as an expert by the Expo participants, making clear that it is preferred that I be seen as a researcher whilst conducting fieldwork. For further discussion of my work with Radio 786, refer to chapter One.

[82] The 2014 event took place at Turfhall sports ground in Lansdowne, approximately 20km from Cape Town city centre.

[83] At a local level, the exposition was broadcast via Radio 786 and reported on The Voice of the Cape, on Cape Town TV, and in the *Muslim Views* newspaper. In addition, visitors shared and reflected on their sensory experiences at the expo via web/social media (Facebook and blogs). At a national level, all Muslim radio stations in South Africa reported the daily progress of the expo; at global level, the Anadulu Agency (Turkey) covered the expo.

Town. Beneath this growth is also an indication that the Ramadan exposition mediated Muslim public visibility through aesthetic formations of Muslim cultural style.

I interviewed one of the exposition's executive coordinators, Salamma David from Radio 786, who pointed out the various aims and anticipated benefits of the exposition, explaining:

> The Expo's aim is to inform, educate, and uplift the entire Western Cape community, not only Muslims. First the Expo introduces the beauty of being Muslim and of Islam to the larger multicultural community of Cape Town, against ongoing Islamophobia and misrepresentations of Islam. Second, it empowers small emerging businesses by offering them a platform to display their good and services. Lastly, the Expo aims to evoke Muslims' religious-self and to remind them of how to position themselves in the holy spirit of Ramadan.[84]

Salamma David's statement puts forward three points relative to the discussion presented throughout this thesis. Firstly, her seemingly politically correct statement reveals the organiser's intentional encouragement of the public performance of Muslim cultural styles within and toward the larger multicultural community of Cape Town. In the case of the exposition, the performances of Muslim aesthetic styles were driven by the organisers' sense of ongoing local and global politics of Islamophobia and the misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Islam. This aligns with the observation by scholars of Islam and Muslim cultures that the revival of Islam in South Africa and elsewhere (see 2.8) is shaped, mediated, and impacted upon by shifting global geopolitics of the post-Cold-War era (Schulz 2012). For instance, Gabeba Baderoon (2014) points out the ways in which the media represented images of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD; see 4.7) to link Capetonian Muslims with the global media emphasis on the war against terrorism. Not surprisingly, the Islamophobic impact of the 'war on terror' has been clearly witnessed in South Africa. This is manifest in diverse and multiple ways beyond reactions to the PAGAD. Another clear example comes in the fact that ten days after the 9/11 attacks in New York, there was an arson attack on the offices of

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[84] Salamma David, interview with the author, 6 June 2015, Good Hope Center, Cape Town.

the MJC headquarters in Cape Town (Tayob 2002).[85] Significantly, the increased public attention toward Muslims and Islam has urged many Muslims to publicly perform and make visible what it is to be Muslim, in order to counter what they perceive as a misrepresentation of Islam and Muslim culture.[86]

The second point apparent in David's statement is that the exposition aimed to empower and offer a platform for small businesses to display and sell their goods and services. The exposition's endeavour to empower small business entails a commodification of Muslim food culture that is hinged on the showcasing of the diversity of Cape Malay food along with public and official recognition and celebration of cultural difference that characterises the post-apartheid 'rainbow nation'. This attitude will be explored in detail in chapter Eight.

The third point that David expressed is that the Expo aimed to 'evoke Muslims' religious-self and to remind them to position themselves in the holy spirit of Ramadan'. This point was also reflected in the sentiments of Imam Abdul Samad Abdul Kader, radio presenter and member of the Expo organising committee, who explained in our conversation that the Expo is about 'bringing unity among Muslims . . . bringing Muslims together under one roof to interact and learn about each other, but also to buy all that they need for Ramadan so that they can focus on their religious duties during the holy month of Ramadan'[87]. With this statement, Abdul Kader makes clear that public performances of Muslim-ness are not limited to an enhancement of public visibility of Muslim cultural styles, but also embodied by Muslim politics of aesthetics in forming a sensorial regime that functions as an agent of both subject and community formations. The capacity for aesthetic politics of subject and community formation amongst Muslims in Cape Town is evident in the sensorial affect of aural, visual, and gustatory aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness— something that will be made clear in examples and discussion in following chapters.

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[85] The MJC issued an unequivocal condemnation of the attacks on the Twin Towers; a move that was supported by a number of student and social organisations. However, when the United States' retaliatory attacks began, a number of organisations openly called for Muslims to prepare for a *jihad* against the US. Unable to halt popular sentiment against the US, the MJC cautiously took the lead in organising an anti-war rally alongside various Christian groups and the Congress of South African Trade Unions on 11 October 2001 (Tayob 2002).

[86] An example of this is Hasan and Husain Essop's photographic exhibition discussed in chapter Five.

[87] Abdul Samad Abdul Kader, interview with the author, 6 June 2015, Good Hope Center, Cape Town.

In addition to formal interviews with some of the Expo organisers, I had informal conversations with many of the participants and attendees who were all at the event for diverse reasons. As an example, Hussam Ali, a participant from Jordan, was at the event to display Islamic clothes and accessories (including *abaya*, *hijab*, Islamic carpets, embroidered Arabic calligraphy, perfumes, Palestinian scarves or *kaffiyeh*, and flags). In our informal conversation conducted in Arabic, Ali doubtfully asked me, 'hadol kolhom Muslimmeen?' or in English, 'Are these people all Muslims?' Ali's question reveals his surprise toward both the number and the diversity of the exposition's participants and attendees and the size of the Muslim community within Cape Town. Further to this, Ali expressed amazement and pride around the Muslim presence in Cape Town saying, 'Ma sha'a Allah, al'salam Qawe fe Cape Town' or 'God bless, Islam is strong in Cape Town'.

In contrast to my exchange with Ali, who was there for the promotion of his own business, on the second day of the exposition (Saturday) I met with a group of seven American exchange students who lived with Muslim families in Bo-Kaap and were visiting the event in order to support the businesses of the families with whom they were living. I sat with these attendees in the dining venue to chat and eat our take away samosas. There, Yasser, a Muslim American of Pakistani origin, pointed out that the Expo defied his expectations as it was 'like an Asian bazaar' and reflective of a particular diverse Muslim presence in Cape Town.

In addition to Muslim attendees and participants, I also engaged with local non-Muslims at the event. On the last day of the Expo (Sunday 8 June), I met Mark, a Jewish South African born and raised in Cape Town, who heard about the event through Cape Town TV.[88] Mark visited the expo with his two children. During our brief conversation, he explained, 'I grew up with Malay food, my mother cooked curry a lot, and my wife loves spicy food . . . Malay food is our food'. Mark's comments here reveal an understanding of Malay food as not merely 'Muslim food', but rather as representative of a national cuisine of South Africa.[89]

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[88] Cape Town TV know as CTV is a community-based television station founded in Cape Town in 2006. See http://www.capetowntv.org (last accessed 29 October 2016).
[89] The power of Muslim food aesthetics in forming cross-over cultural similarity among culturally diverse South Africans is discussed in further detail in chapter Eight.

The aesthetic formations facilitated through the Ramadan Expo brought together thousands of culturally diverse Muslims and non-Muslims in sensory experiences and performances of public Islam. The Expo's public visibility and the range of its audience is thus representative of public Islam in Cape Town that alludes to Muslim religious urbanity. The Expo's public visibility was further enhanced through media coverage, and in particular through the Radio 786 station.

### 4.5 Muslim Radio Stations in Cape Town

There are two Muslim radio stations in Cape Town which were both established in 1995 as community radio stations for Muslims: The Voice of the Cape (VOC; 91.3FM) and Radio 786 (100.4FM).[90] Their broadcasts cover local and national audiences whilst establishing their transnational public reach via the Internet (e.g., online broadcasts and social media including Facebook and Twitter) and mobile broadcasts. Further, both radio stations initiate and run various cultural events. For example, Radio 786 organises the Ramadan Expo (as discussed in 4.3) and, since 1997, the VOC organises it own annual four-day festival. I attended this festival three times—in 2012, 2013, and 2015. In 2015, the festival took place at Vygieskraal Stadium in Athlone, the second biggest stadium in Cape Town. Similarly to the Ramadan Expo, it included a display of a wide variety of goods (foodstuffs, clothes, electronic devices, cars); services (Islamic bank, welfare, and social organisations; Islamic outreach programs); diverse and socially-engaged forms of entertainment (live artistic performances, sport competitions, and *koeksister* competitions); and lectures and seminars about various cultural, political, and religious issues concerning Muslims in Cape Town and elsewhere (including health matters, *halaal* food, and political issues pertaining to Palestine).

What is of particular interest here, however, is that both radio stations form part of a crucial infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town. Through the radio waves, these stations extend formations of public Islam far beyond their visual formations, reaching the auditory range of a public consisting of both Muslim and non-Muslim listeners in central and peripheral areas. That is, the target audiences for

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[90] There are six Muslim radio stations in South Africa, all of which were established post-1995. Due to the high number of applications for radio licenses, the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) granted one license to be shared between VOC and Radio 786. Both radio stations broadcasted on shared frequency (104.8FM) until 2013, when Radio 786 was granted another permanent license term that lasts until 2018.

each station is not limited to Cape Town society but includes national and transnational audiences who are reached, for example, via live broadcast available on their websites.

The contribution of Muslim radio stations in Cape Town and South Africa at large is not limited to the enhancement of Muslim public visibility. As Muhammad Haron (2004) notes, radio has been transforming Muslim communities through broadcasting public debates about HIV, children, and women's rights, among other issues. Both stations—alongside other Muslim radio stations in South Africa—share a great number of common values and principles, which were agreed upon in 2007 through the establishment of the Association of Muslim Broadcasters (Dangor 2009). In my conversation with senior staff members in both radio stations, I learned two common principles and objectives shared by both Muslim radio stations in Cape Town. Firstly, both stations aim to, from an Islamic perspective, educate and engage Muslim audiences with social, cultural, economic, and political affairs at local, national, and transnational levels. Secondly, they each aim to provide information about Muslims and Islam to the broader public, in order to educate multicultural society about Islamic values. These two common principles are evident in the mission statements of each radio station; for the VOC, this is clear in their declaration that the 'the station's mandate is to inform and educate the community about Islam, with an inherent focus on religious teaching', and, for Radio 786, this is evident in their proclamation that their guiding motto is to 'inform, educate and uplift'.

Despite their seemingly common principles, the two radio stations express heterogeneous, competing, and contradictory Muslim voices. The VOC is the Muslim Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) radio station, an organisation formed by the MJC and other Muslim community organisations, whilst Radio 786 is an Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) radio station (Haron 2004). The day I was hosted at Radio 786 to present some of my research findings regarding Muslims in Cape Town, I met with the station manager, Rushni Allie. During our informal conversation, Allie placed lots of emphasis on reaching and serving what she described the 'disempowered community'; in other words, those who live in marginalised areas.[91]

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[91] Rashni Allie, informal conversation with the author, 26 May 2015.

She expressed lots of interest in my research observations about Somalis, and advised me to focus my radio talk on Somalis living in Cape Town since, as she explained, 'our listeners would love to learn about Somalis. The Somalis are our listeners'. Further, Allie gently expressed disapproval and disappointment with the VOC—which she described as 'the voice of MJC'—and their impact upon formations of Islam and Muslim identity in Cape Town.

Scholar of religious studies and Islam Muhammad Haron (2004) categorises the VOC as characterised by their conservative Islamic voice, whereas he defines Radio 786 as representative of the liberal revivalist voice. Haron sees the VOC as a conservative radio station because their founding organisations (namely the MJC) do not favour critical or sudden social changes. Rather, they maintain and promote traditional Islamic lifestyles and value systems (137). That said, Haron also notes that the VOC's reformist approach to women's participation and the diversity of genres featured on their musical playlist offer a more progressive Islamic perspective than other Muslim radio stations that are run by theological organisations similar to the MJC. Most significantly, Haron sees Radio 786 as offering an alternative voice of Islam, one that challenges and fragments the authority of the MJC voice in Cape Town.

Significantly, the contestations between MJC's VOC and IUC's Radio 786 are not overtly broadcast but rather rendered silent through their promotion of a united image of Muslims in Cape Town, and strong ties with the Muslim *Ummah*. Despite the contestation between the MJC and the IUC as the two primary Muslim organisations in Cape Town, both emphasise the value of Muslim unity locally in Cape Town and beyond. Both stations promote Muslim intra-religious relation and involvement in social issues of the broader multicultural society of Cape Town and South Africa at large. The difference is that the VOC appears to strive for a particular kind of political correctness toward local and global politics, while Radio 786 takes a more critical stance with regards to local, national, and global politics. Significantly, both claim to have a progressive Islamic voice, yet both appear conservative in regards to issues of HIV-positive and LGBT Muslims.

Muslim identity politics and public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town are not limited to a conservative Islamic approach but include alternative performances

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and critical formations of Muslim identity, which are increasingly forming part of Muslim public visibility in post-apartheid Cape Town.

## 4.6 Alternative Performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town

The post-apartheid constitution's emphasis on freedom of expression and recognition of equal citizenship allows for a great deal of critical conversation within the Muslim community of Cape Town. This critical approach in turn fosters alternative performances of Muslim-ness, some of which highly challenge the religious conventions of Islam in Cape Town as advocated by the MJC and IUC alike. One example of an emergent alternative performance of Muslim-ness in Cape Town is the Open Mosque.

On 19 September 2014, the Open Mosque launched its first Friday sermon in Wynberg, Cape Town. At this significant event, what first triggered my attention was the degree of police and media presence ensuring safety and media coverage for the event. Hundreds of police officers were spread around the mosque to suppress the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) threat to attack the Open Mosque, and to restrain protestors who contested the Open Mosque as an affront to their religious sensibilities (see 4.6).[92] Local and international journalists were all competing to capture interviews and footage outside and inside the Mosque. I stood outside to observe Muslims protesting against the opening. The protestors outside were diverse, many seemed to be driven by their own individual pious subjectivities, sense of belonging, and moral involvement in the Muslim 'common good'. Few of these protestors grouped together as an organised or unified collective to advocate for closing the Open Mosque.

I then moved inside where I found journalists and their media crews outnumbering the few men and women who sat to listen to Taj Hargey's opening sermon. A few assistants stood at the entrance, handing out pamphlets about the Open Mosque alongside three men wearing security gear, one of whom constantly guarded Taj Hargey. Eventually we sat on the carpeted-floor surrounded by camera tripods facing Hargey, who stood on the podium reading the words he preached from a MacBook Pro, wearing a grey suit and tie. Importantly, he did this without wearing *kaffiyeh* or

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[92] The PAGAD, a collective of Muslims was established in 1996 in the Cape Flats area in Cape Town, are discussed further in the following section of this chapter.

headgear that characterises other Imams—who often wear these items as a symbol of their legitimacy, authenticity, and religious expertise, and as a performance of Muslim-ness.[93] Hargey's ceremonial address advocated two main points: First, the religious acceptance and equal rights of homosexual Muslims—a case he made by criticising the current understanding and practices of local religious authorities such as the MJC. Second, he advocated for more inter-religious relationships and welcomed adherents of other religious groups to visit the Open Mosque and to join Muslims in prayer. The ceremony was disturbed many times by the few protesters who stood outside the door shouting at Hargey, 'Kafir!' ('infidel') and threatening to kill him.

We were only nine (six men and three women), and after the ceremony we lined up and participated in the prayer. While in all the mosques I attended in Cape Town men and women lined up separately, at the Open Mosque we lined up together. Besides that, there was no separation between men and women, and some women prayed without covering their hair. As we finished the prayer, assistants set up an open buffet around which a few journalists and myself surrounded Taj Hargey to ask questions. The journalists centred their enquiries on Hargey's criticism of the MJC and response to the PAGAD's threats. In his response, he claimed expertise in constitutional regulations of South Africa and did not seem to fear an encounter with either PAGAD or the MJC. The public engagement with the event was not limited to Muslims, neither to the local level. The event and the protest held against it was reported in most local and national media outlets, as well as multiple global media platforms, thus amplifying the public visibility of Islam in Cape Town at local, national, and global levels.

Taj Hargey, the founder of the Open Mosque, was born in 1955 and raised in the Cape Town suburb of Wynberg. A controversial figure, Hargey calls for 'the start of a religious revolution within the Muslim community of South Africa to match the political revolution of democracy' (*Cape Times*, 18 Sep 2014). This religious revolution implies both a separation from, and an opposition to, existing religious institutions (such as the MJC) in South Africa and the way it practices and understands Islam. The Open Mosque's online 'Mission & Vision' statement

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[93] The dress code of Imams is explored further in chapter Five.

explicitly outlines its opposition to existing religious infrastructure in Cape Town. It states that Islam in the Western Cape 'is based mainly upon mindless rituals, superstitious legends, cultural mythology, and a blatant sexist contamination of the pristine faith'. This same mission statement goes further to articulate a strong critique aimed directly at the MJC, saying that 'most mosques in the Cape Peninsula are either MJC-aligned or influenced. This self-appointed, un-accountable and non-transparent body of often poorly trained clergy dictates and controls the lives of the Muslim masses'.[94] As such, the Open Mosque characterises itself as being explicitly in opposition to the dominance of the infrastructure facilitated and associated with the MJC:

> In contrast with existing mosques, women will have equal presence, and also full parity in its governance. . . . Most significantly, this new mosque will be autonomous, non-sectarian, gender-equal, inter-racial, and unaffiliated to any specific school of thought *(madhab),* ideology or denomination. (*Cape Times*, 19 Sep 2014)

In response to Taj Hargey's public criticism of the MJC and the way Islam is understood and practices in South Africa, the MJC assembled 110 Muslim scholars and representatives of mosques and institutions to debate and respond to the establishment of the Open Mosque. Their discussion, concluded with a *fatwa* announced by MJC president, Moulana Ighsaan Hendricks:[95]

> The Open Mosque deliberately excluded the Prophet's traditions which along with the Qur'an formed the bedrock of Islam . . . we therefore strongly advise our community to absolutely refrain from attending the so-called 'Open Mosque' based on their interpretation of aspects of Islam that clearly contradict Quranic and Prophetic directives as well as centuries of Islamic scholarship. (*Cape Times,* 18 Sep 2014)

Following the issuing of this *fatwa* by the MJC, Taj Hargey stated that 'there have been threats about castrating me, beheading me, hanging me upside down. But South Africa has the most liberal constitution in the world, they cannot stop us opening today' (*Cape Times*, 19 Sep 2014). Despite their issuing of a *fatwa*, the MJC evidently appreciates the democratic policies of post-apartheid that ensure the legal

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[94] The Open Mosque, 'Mission & Vision', accessed 18 October 2014, http://theopenmosque.co.za/mission-vision/
[95] *Fatwa* is of multiple origins, and refers to a ruling on a point of Islamic law by a recognised authority.

rights of Hargey to publicly launch the Open Mosque. The MJC's Nabeweya Malick stated, 'As South Africans, we live in a democracy which gives its citizens freedom of religion and ideological discretion' (*Cape Times*, 18 Sep 2014). Hargey responded to Malick's statement by saying that he was 'pleased that the MJC has recognised religious liberty and ideological diversity to be the bedrock of a free democratic South Africa' (*Cape Times*, 19 Sep 2014). Despite heated disputes within the Muslim community, the Open Mosque was made possible in the time and space of a liberal democratic South Africa that values equal rights and the protection of citizenship. In this way, the establishment of the Open Mosque is representative of the freedom of an individual's religious practices and belief, something that Charles Taylor (2007) argues as being a central requirement for liberal democratic states.

Hargey claims that the Open Mosque is the first mosque in South Africa that is 'Quran-centric, gender-equal, and a non-sectarian Islamic house of God' (*Cape Times*, 18 Sep 2014). Against Hargey's claim, feminist activist Farhana Ismail argues that 'this Open Mosque in not quite so new', asserting that 'two pioneering mosques established an inclusive, tolerant, and non-sectarian space. Claremont Main Road Mosque (CMRM) in Cape Town, and Masjid al-Islam in Brixton, Johannesburg. Both of these mosques have placed a strong emphasis on community building and social justice for more than 17 years' (*Mail & Guardian*, 19 September 2014). Following Ismail's argument, one might take the example of Capetonian based Imam Omar Rachied, who invited Amina Wudud to give a pre-sermon at Friday congregational prayer at the Claremont Main Road Mosque (CMRM) in Cape Town over two decades ago in August of 1994. Historically, the CMRM has provided intellectual space for middle-class, politically left-wing Muslims who played a prominent role in the anti-apartheid struggle during 1980s under the leadership of Imam Gassan Solomon. In the post-apartheid era, the CMRM maintains a long-standing tradition of social and political seminars that was instigated by Imam Haron, and they hold a weekly seminar where they invite scholars and activists (Muslim and non-Muslim) to present and engage the crowd in a discussion around social and political matters that address local, national, and global concerns.

Beyond the point that the CMRM and Masjid al-Islam appear to have advocated for a gender-equal and non-sectarian religious approach prior to the establishment of the Open Mosque, the Open Mosque is also not the only organisation to engage the issue of homosexual Muslims in Cape Town. One might take as an example the work of Capetonian Imam Moegsien Hendricks, who brought the issue of homosexual Muslims into the public sphere. He initiated The Inner Circle (TIC) in 1996 to help Muslims in Cape Town to reconcile Islam and their sexuality. In 2004, the TIC was officially registered as a Not-for-profit Human Rights Organisation that specifically addressed issues around Islam, gender, and sexual diversity. Members of TIC meet regularly on Thursday nights in the form of a *halqaat* (study circle) to study and practice Islam. The Inner Circle's vision is to establish 'a global Muslim community free from discrimination based on religion, sexual orientation and gender identity'.[96] The impact of Hendricks' work stretches so far that in 2007 he featured as one of the main subjects of the film *A Jihad for Love*, directed by gay Muslim filmmaker Parvez Sharma (2007). The film explores the complex intersection between Islam and homosexuality in India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, France, and South Africa. What is particularly significant, however, is the fact that Hendricks is seen as a seminal international figure as he was one of the first to promote a Quranic interpretation of the acceptance of homosexuality within Islamic orthodoxy. In the national context of South Africa, however, Hendricks has been subject to severe criticism ranging from public insults to death threats. In spite of this, he has maintained his position going so far as to say that he is willing to die for this cause (Parvez 2007). Maintaining his public profile and offering counselling for those struggling to reconcile their sexual and religious identities, Hendricks' work with TIC provides a new interpretation of Islam in a local and international context.

The alternative Muslim infrastructure evident in The Inner Circle and the Open Mosque is also reflected in the Muslim organisation Positive Muslims, which was founded in 2000 to raise awareness and provide non-judgmental and compassionate support to Muslims living with HIV. Faghmeda Miller, one of the founders of Positive Muslims, was the first Muslim woman to publically declare her HIV status. Miller, along other HIV-affected Muslims, was supported by local scholars such as Farid Esack to found Positive Muslims in order to counter the widespread stigma

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[96] The Inner Circle, last modified 20 September 2016, http://theinnercircle.org.za/.

against Muslims living in Cape Town with HIV (Westh and Noordien, 2008). The organisation provides an interpretation of Islamic religious values based on a 'theology of compassion' that reconciles Muslim-ness with HIV, hence offering a sense of inclusion and belonging for Muslims living with HIV that stands against local conservative Islamic perceptions (as represented by the MJC) that authorise gender inequality and exclusion for HIV-positive Muslims (Ahmed 2003).

Significantly, the existence of such alternative performances manifest infrastructures of religious urbanity that form a public Islam and constitute a Muslim public (see 2.6 and 2.7). These alternative politics challenge the religious authority of mainstream conservative Muslims in Cape Town as they enact critical formations of Islamic identities and resist conformity to conservative Islamic discursive formations. The emerging alternative public and politics of Muslim-ness rely on a reinterpretation of Islamic religious conventions through a contemporary and contextualised lens. This has the consequence of allowing Muslims to reconcile multiple dimensions of their identity and lived experience—for example, being LGBT and also practicing Islam or being a Muslim woman and reclaiming active social roles in the politics and public performances of Muslim-ness. In short, it is this context that provides a plethora of possibilities for Muslim diversification and identity formation. As the above examples illustrate, alternative performances of Muslim-ness form a crucial part of Muslim religious urbanity and public visibility, and this is inclusive of infrastructural performances within institutional settings (including, amongst other examples, the Open Mosque, the Inner Circle, and Positive Muslims).

Considered together, these alternative performances of Muslim-ness form a public Islam and urban infrastructure that has served to enhance Muslim public visibility. The emergent alternative performance of Muslim-ness and the contestation over it are indicative of a fracturing of religious authority in formations of public Islam and the Muslim public. Significantly, such alternative performances of Muslim-ness appear to bridge a gap between Muslim cultural difference and the secular culture of multicultural society of Cape Town and South Africa at large. Although Muslim accommodation of secular values appeared conditioned by the uncompromised core conventions of Islam—as in the case of the MJC and IUC—these alternative interpretations of Islamic practice move beyond what are perceived as core

conventions of Islam to demonstrate the possibility of secular formations and hybridisation of Islamic identity within the multicultural context of Cape Town. Muslim cultural difference and the reconciliation of secular culture in the multicultural society of Cape Town is evident in both the establishment and official state recognition of Islamic schools in South Africa in the post-apartheid context.

### 4.7 Islamic Schools in Cape Town

In the post-apartheid period, twelve Islamic schools around the city of Cape Town have been registered with the Western Cape Education department as independent schools. Islamic schools have operated in Cape Town since the early twentieth century, and the largest of these is the Islamia College founded in 1984 by Moulana Ali Adam (who is of Indian origin). Since the 1990s, the College has grown steadily with the establishment of one primary school, two high schools (one for boys and one for girls), and its own mosque. As indicated on the Islamia College website, the school currently has over one thousand students and eighty teachers, and remains dedicated to improving the quality of teaching through teacher-training programmes and to realising its goal to 'Islamise' the secular curriculum. Other examples of Islamic schools established prior to the post-apartheid context include the Habibia Primary School, which opened its doors in 1946 and has seen a growth in enrolment from a mere 465 students and 12 teachers in 1946 to a total of 960 students and 36 teachers, administrative, and support staff in 2006.[97] Another example is the Salt River Moslem Primary School, established in 1917. Further, the Muhammadeyah Primary School, established in 1929, reached a total of 720 students and 28 teachers in 2014. Significantly, there has also been a notable growth in Islamic schools in South Africa following the fall of apartheid. These include the Darul Arqam Islamic High School (formally known as Mitchell's Plain Islamic Girls High School)—which was founded in 1992 and has a student population of over three hundred pupils—and the Darul Islam Primary School established in 2000, which currently has an enrolment of 250 students.[98]

The number of Islamic schools in Cape Town and South Africa at large increased in the 1980s at a time of deep crisis in the general education system of South Africa,

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[97] Habibia Primary School, 'About the School', 8 June 2016, http://habibiaprimary.co.za/.
[98] See *Muslim Directory: Your Gateway to Islam in South Africa*, accessed 8 June 2016, http://www.muslim.co.za/education/primaryschools.

indicated by national school boycotts and the effects of the dismantling of apartheid. However, it was in 1996 under the South African School Act (No. 84 of 1996), that Muslims obtained the constitutional right to establish and register independent Islamic schools. The South African Schools Act divided the schools into two categories of public and independent (private) schools. Following from this, Islamic schools were established as independent under a constitutional condition of not excluding people on the basis of race, religion or disability (Fataar 2005).

What is significant to the argument here is that the resurgence of Islamic schools in the post-apartheid era make publically visible a spectrum of South Africa's rainbowism—one that is coloured with the aesthetic of Islam. According to sociologist of education Aslam Fataar (2005), the establishment of these Islamic schools indicates the ways in which Muslims in Cape Town have negotiated and capitalised upon the post-apartheid democratic constitutional dispensation. These Islamic schools, among other examples, are part of Cape Town's urbanisation and signify an infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity that forms a public Islam within the secular education system of post-apartheid, embodying a model that integrates Islamic education within a state secular structure. The institutional structures of these schools, their public service, and visibility contribute to their status as a manifestation of Muslim religious urbanity.

Significantly, the development of Muslim schools in Cape Town is reflective of changes to structures of Muslim religious urbanity from the time of Dutch colonialism through to the context of democratic, post-colonial, and liberal post-apartheid South Africa. Due to the Dutch colonial prohibition of religious freedom, Muslims in Cape Town operated Islamic schools secretly in domestic settings. The first public Islamic school in Cape Town was the school of the Auwal Mosque established in 1793 under the leadership of Tuan Guru, the exiled Indonesian scholar (see 3.3). This Islamic school enhanced conversion to Islam, as it was open to all and provided an alternative education that attracted slaves and freed black populations, thereby perpetuating Islamic norms as intrinsic to the communal social life of Cape Muslims (Shell 1994). It was Abu Bakr Effendi—the Turkish Islamic scholar who was sent by the Ottoman Sultan (at the request of Queen Victoria) to aid in the reconciliation of religious disputes among Cape Muslims—who, in the 1870s, was

the first to initiate a reformist approach to Islamic schools in Cape Town by offering Muslim women an education and by encourage the use of Afrikaans at Islamic schools (Ajam 1989).[99] Following Effendi's Islamic reformist approach, Doctor Abdullah Abdurahman began to establish Muslim Mission Schools in Cape Town in 1913.[100] As discussed in the previous chapter, Abdullah Abdurahman played a very important role in integrating Cape Muslims with the general politics of Cape Town. By the 1950s, fourteen Muslim mission schools were established throughout the city of Cape Town, which, through a combination of secular and Islamic education, advanced Cape Muslims' position within the larger project of state modernisation (Davids 1980; Ajam 1986).

The Association of Muslim Schools was established in 1989 as a national network of Muslim schools in South Africa that now consists of 68 Muslim schools. Islamic schools in Cape Town form part of the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS), which has adopted the Islamisation of education as their main objective whilst maintaining accordance with the secular state education structure.[101] The diverse approaches to education within Islamic schools in Cape Town is evidence of a Muslim religious urbanity that relies upon infrastructure and organisations that reflect the push and pull between an emphasis on secular education and the 'Islamisation of knowledge'. Importantly, this is indicative of a politics of Muslim cultural difference that reflects the concern and endeavour to operate within the secular structure of the South African nation-state. Islamic Schools in Cape Town are obliged to accommodate the national curriculum, which focuses on democratic citizenship. This indicates that the endeavour to integrate Muslim students into the secular education system of the broader multicultural society of South Africa is not only conducted by Muslims but by the state also.

An example of the way in which Islamic schools in Cape Town manage to integrate and reconcile secular and religion education is best seen in the Islamia College. The Islamia College has joined an international research organisation called the International Board of Educational Research and Resources (IBERR). The IBERR

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[99] For further discussion of Abu Bakr Effendi, refer to chapter Three, section 3.7
[100] Abdurahman was an ex-student of Achmat Effendi (son of Abu Bakr Effendi). He was a medical doctor who, became a member of Cape Town City Council and the Cape Provincial Council in 1904 and 1915 respectively (Tayob 1995, 80). See also 3.5.4.
[101] For further information on the Association of Muslim Schools, visit www.ams-sa.org.

project of the 'Islamisation of knowledge' indicates a certain sense of transnational identity shared among different Islamic schools across and within different localities.[102] The case of Islamia College has convinced Inga Niehaus (2008) to argue that 'Islamic schools in South Africa are sites where concepts of Islamic education are transformed to address the challenges of a multi-cultural democratic society and where curricula requirements of a modern education system are modified to suit Islamic educational goals as defined by the school' (21). In their introduction to an inter-disciplinary collection of papers, *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa*, scholars Abdulkader Tayob (Islamic studies), Inga Niehaus (political science), and Wolfram Weisse (education) draw comparative discussion around Muslim schools in the UK, the Netherlands, and South Africa (2011). Therein, they put forward the argument that Muslim minority/Islamic schools have the potential either to isolate Muslims and disturb their integration and interaction in the broader national society or to strengthen Muslim children's understanding of their religion, thus enabling them to face and overcome the challenges of living in secular multicultural societies. In her contribution to the volume, Niehaus (2011) explores the ways in which Islamic schools in UK, Netherlands, and South Africa enact an Islamic ethos while accommodating education hinged on democratic citizenship. Within her discussion, Niehaus argues that Islamic schools obtain a religious ethos through praying together and introducing basic Islamic knowledge driven from the Quran and *Hadith*, without emphasis on any specific Islamic schools of thought.

Abdulkader Tayob (2014) puts forward the argument that Islamic schools in the post-apartheid context face two imperative integration issues: The first is that Islamic schools are required to follow a national curriculum in order to foster nation-building and social cohesion—hence to promote Muslim integration and interaction in the broader multicultural and secular society of Cape Town and South Africa. Second is that Islamic schools are required to conceptualise the national educational framework through Islamic schooling, hence serving to nurture a religious ethos and a sense of Islam. Most significant to our discussion here is Tayob's argument that the

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[102] The notion of the 'Islamisation of knowledge' was launched by Ismail Al-Faruqi in the 1980s, and refers to the teaching and interpretation of secular curricula (mathematics, sciences, Western literature, etc.) through an Islamic lens (Tayob 2014).

central challenge of these two imperative integrations is how to achieve a reconciliation between national building and Islamisation.

Aslam Fataar (2005) points out that the process of the 'Islamisation of knowledge' in Islamic schools in Cape Town is limited to symbolic discursive resources, such as the use of Quranic verses or *Hadith* that provide for the school a reference and a sense of a religious aesthetic. In Fataar's words, 'the teachers' reflexive adaptation to the Muslim schooling environment is constituted by a variably applied pedagogical repertoire overlaid with Islamic symbols, while the substance of their pedagogical practices is primarily informed by the expectations of the secular state curriculum' (36). Following from this, the difficulty of achieving an appropriate 'Islamisation of knowledge' is attributed in large part to the lack of conceptual guidance for teaching secular knowledge through an Islamic interpretation, and also to the fact that 90% of the teachers are trained and/or have previously taught in secular schools (Fataar 2005).

Despite their shared objective to 'Islamise' secular education, Islamic schools in Cape Town are heterogeneous. Fataar (2005) puts forward four governing styles of Islamic schooling. Firstly, there are mosque-based community schools that cater for the lower-middle class. These are driven by a strong moral purism and do not promote engagement with broader society; hence, they distance their adherents from other communities. Secondly, there are Islamic schools established and governed by Turkish expatriates. These are driven by a strong emphasis upon the integration of religion and secular education; hence, they encourage their adherents' interaction with other communities and coexistence in secular multicultural society in Cape Town. Thirdly, there are the Islamic schools established in the Cape Flats for working-class Muslims and which are governed by the Tabligh Jama'at, who adhere to strict pre-modern literalist interpretations of Islamic teachings.[103] Finally, there are the Islamic schools governed primarily by Indian Muslims, which host mainly middle- and upper-middle class children.

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[103] Tabligh Jama'at is a Sunni Islamic proselytising movement that urges Muslims to refrain from state politics and to maintain traditional practices of Islam in terms of ritual, dress, and personal behaviour. It emerged in India in 1927 and spread across and within Muslim societies worldwide (see Vahed 2003; Janson 2013).

These multiple emphases and styles of school governance and administration can be argued to provide evidence for Tayob's argument that approaches to Islamic schooling seem 'to perpetuate the racial identities of the past' (2011, 44). Of particular importance here is that the multiple styles of Islamic school governance embody the various Muslim positions within multicultural secular Cape Town society. It appears that the schools that cater for the middle and upper-middle class strive to integrate Islamic education within a secular structure with a view to formulating an active Muslim sense of citizenship and integration within the social cohesion of the broader multicultural society of Cape Town. On the other hand, it would appear that the Islamic schools catering for the working and lower class perceive secularism not as a bridge of integration but rather as a threat to their Islamic identity. Hence, their approach seems limited to reconciling Muslim cultural difference with the secular culture of the broader society of Cape Town.

Beside these Islamic independent schools, there are numerous unregistered Islamic schools known as *madrasah*, which solely teach religious education. In Cape Town, most mosques have an afternoon *madrasah* that is attended by pupils after their normal school hours and on the weekend. These Islamic schools mainly teach the Quran and the *Hadith* and, more importantly to our purposes here, do not face the challenge of integrating religious and secular education—neither do they explicitly aim to foster a sense of active citizenship and nation-building amongst Muslims. As an example, in the Bellville CBD, there are six afternoon Islamic schools, each established post-2000 and offering basic Quranic education for young Somalis (both male and female).

While many of the schools discussed above showed the ways in which performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim infrastructure operate within state secular structures, the case of the organisation People Against Gangsterism and Drugs is quite different—if not to say the exact opposite of the organisations discussed above.

### 4.8 People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD)

On Sunday, 4 August 1996, hundreds of PAGAD members marched through Salt River—a working-class neighbourhood near the centre of Cape Town—to the house of Rashaad Staggie, a drug-lord of the Hard Living gang. PAGAD members proceeded to grab Staggie from his car, shoot him, and then set him alight in the

presence of the public and media (*Cape Times*, 5 August 1996). A few days later, on 11 August 1996, PAGAD held is first mass public meeting at the Vygieskraal Stadium in Athlone, where almost ten thousand people gathered. The then president of the MJC, Nazeem Mohamed, and official representatives of Qiblah, were present, and all committed themselves to support PAGAD's ideal—albeit whilst reserving the right to criticise their actions and methods (*Cape Times*, 12 August 1996).[104] In the years that followed, PAGAD organised many public meetings and marches against drugs and gangsters whilst launching a drug awareness campaign within schools in the Cape Flats. Their public marches reached beyond areas of Cape Flats and also took place in the centre of Cape Town. For instance, on 3 November 1996, PAGAD called for a family day rally at the Waterfront (an upper-class and tourist district in the city). There, things turned violent and batons and rubber bullets were used to disperse the crowd, resulting in the arrest of twenty PAGAD supporters and one death by gunshot wound.

PAGAD emerged in the Cape Flats in 1995 as a response to ongoing gangsterism and drug use by youths in Cape Town—a problem that was most evident amongst residents of the Cape Flats neighbourhoods.[105] Its members consist of a predominantly Muslim network of civic movements and neighbourhood watches. Although PAGAD historically has an overwhelmingly Muslim face, it claims to be supported by and representative of diverse religious, racial, and gender communities of working-class neighbourhoods. In the early years of its foundation, the organisation gained local and national support for its public mobilisation against organised crime gangs and drugs. Indeed, PAGAD reached significant levels of support within the community (62% of Muslims and 17% of Christians), and this support was largely from the middle class and lower-middle class (Bangstad 2005). Further, as mentioned previously, the MJC and Qiblah initially expressed public support for PAGAD. However, a few years after its emergence, the PAGAD's public appeal declined rapidly. For example, in 1996 and 1997 the PAGAD organised approximately twenty-five marches and meetings attended by thousands, whereas,

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[104] For more information on the PAGAD and its public terrorism, see South African History Online, 'PAGAD', 11 March 2011, http://www.sahistory.org.za/organisations/people-against-gangsterism-and-drugs.

[105] See footnote 25.

between 1998 and 1999, it organised less than ten marches and meetings which were attended by hundreds.

The public, scholarly, and official support for PAGAD dramatically decreased as a result of their association with urban terror. PAGAD's brutal killing of Staggie is understood as a pivotal turning point that turned PAGAD into a violent vigilante movement, with bombings and hundreds of murders in Cape Town attributed to the organisation. PAGAD was accused of attacks on gay nightclubs and restaurants with Western associations, such as the bombing of an American restaurant and the Planet Hollywood at the Waterfront in August 1998, and the bombing of the St Elmo's pizzeria in Camps Bay in November 1999.[106] These attacks were followed by several others in Constantia, Gatesville, Observatory, and central Cape Town. Some of the attacks targeted Muslims who opposed to PAGAD, such as Cape-based scholar of Islamic studies Ebrahim Moosa. As a result, PAGAD catapulted into the local, national, and international spotlights and often became implicated in debates around issues of Islamisation, urban terrorism, and criminology in the post-apartheid public space (see Dixon and Johns 2001). This association was amplified and made concrete by images of PAGAD violence and militancy previously plastered on the front pages of national Cape-based South African newspapers (*Cape Times* and *The Argus*). The most memorable of these images depicted PAGAD members carrying guns and masked with red Middle-Eastern scarves (*Cape Times,* 12 August 1996), and a Casspir (an armoured police vehicle) parked outside the Gatesville Mosque (*Cape Times,* 6 August 1996). Although PAGAD has repeatedly and publicly condemned attacks on civilian targets, it became perceived as an urban terror organisation threatening not just the State's authority and the very foundations of constitutional democracy, but the mass public of Cape Town society including Muslims (as in the case of the contestation over the Open Mosque). PAGAD's association with public urban terrorism indicates formations of public Islam that are divergent to the state structure and undermine constitutional mandates rather than take advantage of them in positive ways.

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[106] These attacks were reported on local and international media. See, for example, *The Guardian* and BBC UK coverage. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/nov/29/chrismcgreal; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/160998.stm (accessed 1 October 2016).

To avoid a reductionist understanding of PAGAD as representative of an expression of Islamisation (Tayob 1996), Suren Pillay (2003) argues for a more critical reading of PAGAD's performance of Muslim-ness against an understanding of PAGAD 'as representative of homogeneous Islam and as the local incarnation of global Islamic threat' (283). He locates PAGAD's formation at the interface of globalisation and the particularity of the local context of post-apartheid Cape Town to argue that PAGAD is representative of a hybrid formation of Muslim identity. In the same line of thought, Shamil Jeppie (2000) sees the emergence of PAGAD as a local Muslim response to increased gangsterism and drug use among Muslim youths living in the Cape Flats. Similarly, Sindre Bangstad (2005) maintains that PAGAD's violence most not be reduced to a mere expression of Islamism but rather that it links to a complex social and cultural historical context of marginalisation, anti-apartheid violence, and the absence of police and court interventions in the post-apartheid context. Considering the compounding of these forces, Bangstad argues that the PAGAD is best understood as 'an expression of a Muslim masculinity under threat' (191).

Despite scholarly efforts to detach PAGAD from Islam (Pillay 2003), the organisation's assemblage of Islamic aesthetics indicates, as this ethnography argues, an aesthetic formation of public Islam. PAGAD's public Islam is reflective of the push and pull of local and transnational understandings of Islam both in terms of 'the war on terror' and aesthetics associated with Islam (donning of *kaffiyeh*, etc.). The perception of PAGAD as representative of public Islam was triggered by the organisation's performances of various aesthetics of Muslim-ness, including the recitation of Quranic verses in their meetings, the donning of the red or black Middle-Eastern *kaffiyeh* (scarf), and the wearing of a green or black headband marked with Arabic calligraphy (Tayob 1996). PAGAD Islamism is also underpinned by the claim that the organisation adopts an Islamic ethical code. This overt association of Islam with PAGAD positioned them as a Muslim terrorist group who constituted a threat to state politics and the wider society Cape Town. This assemblage of Islamic aesthetics not only evoked a sense of PAGAD's Islamism on a local level in South Africa, but also linked it to the international media idiom of Islam and terrorism (Baderoon 2014).

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Within Gabeba Baderoon's seminal research on PAGAD (2014), she claims that these images 'interrupted the longstanding picturesque tradition and changed the way Muslims would be portrayed in South Africa' (107). Baderoon's analysis provides a critical reading of the media representation of PAGAD, which she argues represents Islam rather than PAGAD as being implicated in ways that intersect with a global idiom for representing Islam. While Baderoon discusses media representations of PAGAD Islamic fundamentalism, Abdulkader Tayob explores the history of Islamic fundamentalism in Cape Town. He examined PAGAD as 'a home-based version of Islamic fundamentalism' (1996, 23). According to Tayob, the discourses of Islamic fundamentalism in the Western Cape reflected the two-pronged roots of Islamism and South African political tradition. He traced the emergence of Islamism in Cape Town to the 1950s Non-European Unity Movement, which supported youths to challenge the conservative forms of religious authority and their silence and complicity within the apartheid state.[107] Scholars perceive PAGAD's involvement in social and political affairs as something nurtured by Qiblah's discourse regarding the anti-apartheid struggle's adoption of international Islamism (Tayob 1994; Matthee 2008). Although PAGAD denied an alliance with Qiblah, the subtle link between the two organisations is perhaps demonstrated in such moments as Abdu-Salaam Ebrahim's (one of the leading figures of PAGAD) speech at a PAGAD public meeting at the City Park Stadium, Crawford, in February of 1997, which extended PAGADs fight against gangsterism and drugs to include opposition to certain politicians and religious leaders (Matthee 2008).

Considered in sum, the accounts and discussions presented above put forward a few important points regarding the main argument of this thesis. The primary point that underscores discussion presented within this chapter is that public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town are indicative of a publicly visible Muslim cultural style, as distinctive but integrated within the spectrum of post-apartheid rainbowism. This apparent public visibility of Muslim-ness forms part of Cape Town's public culture and urbanity. Large-scale public performances such as *Mawlid Al-Nabi*, moon sighting, the Ramadan Expo or the March of Palestine indicate a recognition and

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[107] The Non-European Unity Movement was established in 1943 as a socialist liberation movement, but had disappeared as a political organisation by the early 1960s (Baruch Hirson, 'Non-European Unity Movement', 30 March 2011, http://www.sahistory.org.za/organisations/non-european-unity-movement-neum.

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integration of Muslim religious performances within Cape Town urbanity and rainbowism. The resurgence of public performance of Muslim-ness in Cape Town is indicative of the growth in Muslim urban infrastructures in Cape Town that mediate a religious aesthetic of Islam into the urban public of the larger multicultural society of Cape Town. This constitutes the aesthetic formations of Muslim religious urbanity. Muslim organisational structures and sub-structures in Cape Town operate within an urban infrastructure and secular structure that has resulted in Muslim inclusion and visibility within the public sphere and in local and national debates in post-apartheid society.

Despite the diversity in approaches to Islam in Cape Town, what is significant is that representatives of various approaches (the MJC, the IUC, and alternative performances, except PAGAD) all lean and capitalise on the post-apartheid democratic constitution that ensures their rights and citizenship. The discussion above outlines the conservative MJC and critical IUC political stances, both of which promote active and participatory senses of Muslin South African citizenship. It is these performances that mediate Muslim aesthetic politics of culturalisation as citizenship; relationships to post-apartheid politics; and oscillating and intersected multiple belongings and attachment to the aesthetically-formed imagined community of Cape Town, the post-apartheid nation, and the Muslim *Ummah*.

Public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town involve long-term locals and more recent Muslim immigrants who, since the 1990s, have become visible in public spaces and debates in Cape Town and South Africa. As the following account attempts to demonstrate, the arrival of Muslim immigrants to Cape Town enhanced the visibility of Islam in public space and increased the complexity of Muslim diversity in the area. In particular, the Somali public presence in Cape Town enhanced formations of public Islam through the establishment of Somali organisations, mosques, restaurants, schools, and street vendors, as well as participation in formal and everyday performances of Muslim-ness. To understand how Somali infrastructures of public Islam have rendered the Somali population a significant part of Muslim public visibility in Cape Town, the following section describes fieldwork observations of Somali public performances in Bellville, Cape Town.

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## 4.9 Performances of Muslim-ness in Bellville Central Business District (CBD)

During Ramadan on Saturday, 4 August 2012, I went to the Bellville CBD to film the space's gradual occupation from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., looking at the first arrivals and the social meanings of sounds, lights, smells, and images embodied in the space.[108] There was nobody there when I arrived; it was dark, rainy, and somehow frightening, with dogs barking in the distance. The first to appear were Somalis and, from about 5:40 a.m. onward, the sound of cart-pushers arrived from different corners, approaching the bus terminal and creating an echo as the lights of the Somali bistro glared and the odour and steam of coffee and food swirled. These sounds, sights, and smells engaged all senses and revealed an aesthetic formation of Bellville CBD public space. At 6:25 a.m., the rhythmic sound of the *azan* pervaded the space, calling Muslims to pray, many of whom approached the mosques. As the sun rose, the shops opened and vendors started mopping the floors on which they set up their stalls. It was the sixteenth day of Ramadan, during which Muslims increase their religious performance and the enactment of a religious-self. Hence, many shops played loud Quranic recitations that embodied an audio-aesthetic of public Islam (see chapter Six).[109]

Such public performances of Muslim-ness signify an emergent aesthetics of public Islam and the Muslim public in Bellville CBD that is mostly formed and performed by Muslim immigrants. The Muslim population in Bellville CBD consists of local Muslims alongside other Muslim immigrants including Somalis, Ethiopians, Pakistanis, Arabs, and West Africans. Of this group, post-1990s Somali refugees constitute the largest Muslim community in Bellville CBD, and as their numbers constantly increase they are gradually buying more properties in Bellville. Somali infrastructure in Bellville CBD includes several mosques, *madrasahs*, restaurants, backpacker lodges, Internet coffee-shops, call centres, and more than one hundred retail stores.

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[108] An ethnographic film of the Bellville CBD from this day can be found at https://vimeo.com/55197076.

[109] Despite this significant performance of Muslim-ness, cultural diversities in Bellville CBD are heard through the complex sonic composition of various songs overlapping Quranic recitations. The sound was mixed, featuring English, Afrikaans, Swahili, Somali, Amharic, and many other West African languages. This brings to mind sociologist Jean-Paul Thibaud's (2003) statement that 'the city is also to be heard and not to be only seen' (331).

Among the most active Somali organisations in South Africa are the Somali Association of South Africa (SASA), the Al-Bayaan Islamic Council Trust, and the Somali Community Board South Africa—all of which operate with the urban structure of Cape Town and South Africa at large. The SASA aims to protect and represent the affairs of Somalis living in South Africa and to integrate them within the larger society.[110] The Somali Community Board South Africa shares these objectives also.[111]

Although the headquarters of these organisations are in Johannesburg, each has representative branches across and within the various provinces of South Africa. Each of these organisations serves as an umbrella body for a range of affiliated sub-structures such as mosques, education centres, and *madrasahs*. These organisations facilitate the Somali performance of Muslim-ness, enact their difference and belonging, and facilitate their integration within the broader society of South Africa. In 2013, the Somali Association of South Africa (SASA) opened the Bellville Education Centre where Somalis can learn English language skills, and the Al-Bayaan Islamic Council Trust opened a Quranic school to teach Somali children the Arabic language and Islamic law. Mohammad Hadith, the secretary general of SASA in the Western Cape and one of the founders of the Bellville Education Centre, stated in an interview that the main aim of teaching English to Somalis is to help them integrate and communicate with the broader society of Cape Town.[112]

Somali infrastructure, public visibility, and formations of public Islam spread far beyond Bellville CBD to reach within and across urban and marginalised areas in Cape Town. This infrastructure includes a business network that facilitates support for newly arrived Somalis. Upon arrival, Somalis often seek help from members of their ethnic clan to work either as shopkeepers, street traders, or hawkers (Steinberg 2014; Jinnah 2010). According to Jinnah (2010), the Somali business network offers a valuable contribution to the local economy, since they provide goods at cheaper

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[110] To view some of SASA's aims, visit their website at http://islamicfocusarticles.blogspot.com/2008/05/somali-association-of-south-africa.html (last modified 3 October 2014).
[111] Most Somali organisations do not have an official website. They publish their vision and activities through their Facebook pages. See: https://www.facebook.com/SomaliSouthAfrica/?fref=ts and https://www.facebook.com/somali.association/?fref=ts (last accessed 29 October 2016).
[112] Modammad Hadith, interview with the author, 7 April 2013, Bellville Education Centre, Cape Town.

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prices, and their service reach townships where such goods and service are not available. Somali public visibility within urban and rural areas forms a mobile public of Islam within and beyond Cape Town. Over the last decade, Somalis in South Africa have successfully created bases and 'homes away from home' for immigrants, evident in Bellville CBD and beyond (Alhourani 2015).

### *4.9.1 Bellville Central Business District (CBD)*

Bellville is a city in the greater Cape Town metropolitan area, located in the northern suburbs, twenty kilometres east from Cape Town city centre. Since its establishment in 1861, Bellville serves as a vital station on the railway line from Cape Town to Johannesburg. It became a town in 1940 and a city in 1979. Previously, Bellville was a village of White Afrikaans without pronounced public visibility of Muslims as in the case of Bo-Kaap and Walmer state in Cape Town city. As Bellville infrastructure and society continued to grow, its population reached 44,209 in 2011, with an ethnic split of 61% White, 16.9 % Black, and 16.9% Coloured South African. Bellville city is comprised of many sub-regions that differ in class stratification and ethnic concentration. Since the 1990s, the Bellville CBD has become increasingly populated by immigrants, the majority of whom are Somali.

Walking in and through Bellville CBD was an act of 'appropriation' (de Certeau 1998, 97), of building a relationship and familiarity with different spaces to capture its temporality. I visited Bellville CBD regularly, and each time my feelings in the area shifted as I moved from space to space. I usually had a feeling of fear and discomfort in the space of the bus terminus that is mainly occupied by young West African immigrants, who once offered me drugs and often gazed at my belongings. Police located on the corner advised me to be cautious when I use my camera there. Entering Middestad Shopping Mall on the other side of the road (Charl Malan Street), the phonetic sounds are mainly either Afrikaans or Xhosa, marking the mall's space as a South African territory crowded with local South Africans. Exiting at the opposite end of the mall, you approach a Somali territory.

Bellville CBD is a space of intense temporality and mobility, with a constant flow of locals and immigrants bringing about a hybrid cultural complexity (Hannerz 1992). The continuous interactions of people at Bellville CBD are not determined by a single factor such as ethnicity, religion, nationality, race, gender, or age; instead,

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their social relations and interactions involve variable shared factors which make Bellville CBD a space of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). Ighsaan Nor Alden, the chairperson of the Ethiopian Muslim community in Bellville, asked to meet me for an interview at the Pakistani Chicken Restaurant in Bellville CBD where I also met Ahmad, a Somali businessman who previously worked and lived in Saudi Arabia and therefore liked curry and Pakistani food more than Somali food. Before conducting my interview, I had to wait for Igshaan to finish a previous conversation with Mohammad Abu Baker Kadire, the owner of the restaurant. Their conversation took on pensive and humorous mood that represented their shared interests, experiences, and memories of living in Bellville CBD.

Inhabitants of Bellville CBD, the vendors, and shopkeepers/owners are familiar with and accepting of their own cultural diversity; their interactions and power relations are not tied to a fixed centralised, hierarchal power relationship. Instead, their interactions and power relations are, in the words of Arnaut (2013) 'post-panoptical'—that is, 'interactive and decentralist, even messy and opaque' (8). The notion of the 'post-panoptical' interaction alludes to the acceptability of people's mixing across communitarian boundaries. This framing renders the Bellville CBD as a space of 'commonplace diversity' where cultural differences are experienced as normal (Wessendorf 2011). Wessendorf proposed the notion of 'commonplace diversity' based on her ethnography of the super-diverse residents in the Hackney neighbourhood of London. For Wessendorf (2011), 'commonplace diversity' is used to describe those whose diverse ethnic, religious, or linguistic backgrounds have become a familiar and normal reality and are not a crucial point of reference in their social interactions and relationships.

As in the case of the Mayfair suburb (see Jinnah 2010), Bellville CBD is also a vital centre of Somali businesses, which include a range of street vendors, restaurants, shops, and wholesale traders from which Somali and non-Somali patrons purchase goods for their grocery shops. The continuous rise in the Somali presence and inhabitation of Bellville CBD also explains why the area has become known as 'Little Mogadishu' or 'Little Somalia' in the years since the fall of apartheid (Tita 2008, 437).

### 4.9.2 Somali Migration to Cape Town

Somali migration to South Africa and public appearance in Bellville and across Cape Town is a post-1990s phenomenon. The experience of migration relayed to me from Somali research interlocutors reflects the three main phases of Somali migration to South Africa. The first wave occurred in the early 1990s, the second took place between 1995-2000, and the third phase was in 2006 after Ethiopia invaded Somalia. The onset of civil war and the collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991 has led to a continuing exodus of the Somali population to neighbouring countries and beyond. The largest camp of Somali refugees today is at Dadaab, located in north-eastern Kenya, hosting 387,077 refugees with a monthly influx of approximately nine thousand new arrivals (Lindley 2011). Southern Africa has also registered an increasing number of Somali immigrants, many of whom consider South Africa as their main destination. This is because immigrants to South Africa can gain refugee status that allows them more freedom of mobility and business opportunities, in contrast to being located in an enclosed camp as in Kenya or Ethiopia (see Sadouni 2009; cf. Steinberg 2014).

None of the research interlocutors engaged during my research have migrated directly from Somalia to Bellville CBD. Rather, each has their own story of crossing borders, of settling temporarily in Somali enclaves in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Dar es Salaam, or Maputo, where they sought help from ethnic clan relatives to make a living or to continue their journey to Johannesburg and then Bellville. The experiences of my Somali research interlocutors are exemplified through the journey of Imam Mohammad Alawal, who was born in 1979 in Ethiopia and moved with his family to Somalia in 1982, only to escape the war in Somalia by fleeing again to Ethiopia in 1991. One year later he enrolled at the Islamic college in Mombasa, Kenya, where he studied Islamic law. In 1995, he was nominated as best student for his involvement in an eight-month course on Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia, and in 2000 he moved to South Africa in search of better opportunities. In the years since 2000, he has worked with the South African National Zakah Fund (SANZAF) and has taught Islamic law throughout various Islamic schools in South Africa. He moved to Cape Town in 2010 and became the Imam of the Al-Salam Mosque in Bellville, and currently teaches at the Nor Alslami Centre and at Dar Alaslam Islamic schools in Cape Town (see 4.10).

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The Somali experience of migration from Mogadishu to South Africa was intimately documented by South African writer and academic Jonny Steinberg in his book, *A Man of Good Hope* (2014). *A Man of Good Hope* tells the story of Asad Abdullah, a Somali refugee living in the relocation camp Blikkiesdrop, located approximately thirty kilometres from the centre of Cape Town. In a non-fictional narrative in tune with the ethnographic nature of the novel, Steinberg traces Asad's journey from Addis Ababa to South Africa, which entailed crossing borders to Kenya, to Tanzania, to Zambia, to Zimbabwe, and then to South Africa. Mapping Asad's tumultuous journey and his need to hire a people smuggler to negotiate his crossing at each border, the author chronicles the story of one individual as a way of reflecting the common struggle faced by Somalis fleeing their country. Further, Steinberg's narrative of Asad's life history and journey to South Africa, shows the reliability of clan affiliations, the struggle, the fear, the success, and the continuous mobility and transience of Somali refugees.

This continuous mobility and transience of Somali immigrants proves to be the case within South African borders, which make it difficult to count the number of Somalis in South Africa or in Cape Town. The number of Somalis in South Africa is estimated to be between approximately twenty-seven and forty thousand (Jinnah 2010). Daheer, the chairperson of the Older Council of the Somali Community in Western Cape, estimated that the number of Somalis in Cape Town is fifteen to seventeen thousand, while Somali residents in Bellville CBD were estimated to be between six and seven thousand. This population of Somalis in Bellville CBD reaches its peak each Sunday, when Somalis come from the surrounding townships to visit, eat at Somali restaurants, and socialise with their relatives and friends. In 2008, as a consequence of xenophobic attacks, many Somalis moved from the townships to live in Bellville CBD where they sought and found community protection and support.

What is evident here is that the migration and establishment of Somali infrastructure in the post-apartheid period has meant that Bellville is increasingly marked by an emergent public Islam. This growth in Somali infrastructure and everyday performances of Muslim-ness (the Islamic sound and the visual formations, especially Somali women's dress codes) mediate an aesthetic of Islam within the

multicultural public sphere of the Bellville CBD. Significantly, Somali infrastructure and everyday self-presentation enhances public visibility of Islam in Cape Town. Having describes Somali organisational infrastructures and public visibility, the following section unpacks Somali cultural diversity and aesthetic politics of belongings and community formations. While the discussion in the first half of this chapter sheds light on the contestation within the local Muslim community of Cape Town and the various ways in which they negotiate their sense of citizenship and national belonging, the following account explores the intersection of Somali multiple belongings. That is to say, the ways in which Somali aesthetic formations negotiate a sense of distinctive community, the Somali perception of the larger Muslim community in Cape Town, and a sense of transnational belonging.

### 4.9.3 *Somali Aesthetic Formations: Contestation, Authenticity, and Belonging.*

It is vital to understand that Somalis in Bellville CBD are heterogeneous and belong to different clans with diverse cultural backgrounds, statuses, ages, gender, classes, and languages (see Alhourani, 2015). Despite the complex diversity of the Somali population, they claim a strong sense of a shared, cohesive, and distinct community. For instance, Mohammad Hadith, the secretary general of SASA, stated in our conversation that 'Somalis are brothers and sisters, we are one family, we are all Muslim and we all speak the same language'.[113] What is of primary significance here is that formations of the 'imagined community' of culturally diverse Somalis relies first and foremost on Islam in the formation of a collective identity. That having been said, the formation of collective identity also relies on a shared feeling of fear among Somalis that results from ongoing xenophobic attacks against them. This has ultimately fostered a diasporic culture of solidarity among Somalis.[114] Finally, to be a member of the Somali community, or to be considered a 'true' Somali, is predicated on an individual's ability to speak the Somali language (Alhourani 2015).

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[113] Mohammad Hadith, interview with the author, 10 August 2012, Bellville, Cape Town.
[114] Although this diasporic culture of solidarity plays a big role in the construction of Somali communities, it is indelibly marked by clan affiliations which often challenge the construction and representation of cohesive Somali communities in the diaspora (Hopkins 2006) or in Somalia itself (Lewis 1994).

This sense of Somali collective identity within Cape Town is also amplified by a sense of difference in understandings and practices of Islam as compared to Capetonian Muslims. In an interview with Imam Majed, I asked if the Somali community were encouraged to participate in the mass Mawlid Al-Nabi of 2013. In response, he stated that 'such activity is considered forbidden [haram] . . . because it is political . . . there were non-Muslims and women on the stage'. Going further, the Imam stressed that 'politics should not corrupt religion'. [115] Yet despite Imam Majed's critical view, many Somalis did attend the mass Mawlid celebration, and some of them were featured forming a group and reciting an Islamic Inshudah in the DVD recording of the 2013 mass Mawlid. Differing perceptions of the Mawlid celebration are in part the result of long standing theological contestations within Muslim Sunni communities, some of whom totally reject the Mawlid celebration and its intended glorification of the prophet Mohammad (Schussman, 1998).

The view of Imam Majed was also echoed in my conversations with Somali research interlocutor, Imam Mohammad Alawal. He explained that he was shocked by how Capetonian Muslims practiced Islam in a 'Western' way and went further to say that 'they are colonised with the White minority in the country. They are very Western. They don't completely practice the Islam. Maybe they don't understand, they don't know very much what Allah commanded in the Quran'. [116] The Imam went further in his criticism and also expressed concern about the attitudes of those in religious authority. He explained 'sometimes I can see that someone is regarded as a *sheikh* [religious expert] while his daughter and/or wife do not dress Islamically'. Imam Auwal sees Muslims in Cape Town as being different to other Muslims in South Africa explaining that 'they're very good people, they're very welcoming people, very generous people, and they do whatever they can for their other Muslim brothers who immigrated to their country'. Alawal's experience of Muslims in Cape Town made him 'understand that sometimes a person can come to love Islam and be a very good Muslim although they don't practice all the principles of Islam'.

It was clear in my conversations with Alawal that he saw South Africa as responsible for shifting his perspective on Islam and how it is practiced. He conveyed this clearly

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[115] Abdullah Majed, interview with the author, 7 March 2013, Al-Sunny Mosque, Bellville, Cape Town.
[116] Mohammad Alawal's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 10 August 2015, Food Inn, Long Street Cape Town.

by explaining that 'it has changed me, I can learn a lot from this country, for example, where I come from we are 100% Muslim. . . . But we who claim ourselves to be 100% Muslim, we are divided in Somalia and we brought this problem to South Africa'. The Imam also clearly relayed the differences in how Islam is understood by the Somalis explaining that 'people from my country, they place more emphasis on the different sectors of Islam. We consider someone Muslim if he belongs to my sector. You are my brother if you are from my sector, but if you belong to another *madrasah* or school, or other grouping of Islam, you can even be considered a non-Muslim'. It is clear from the Imam's statements that the formation of community and the understanding of Islamic identity in Somali Muslims is different to that witnessed in Capetonian Muslims. In spite of Alawal 's identification of the points of difference in approaches to Islam, he clearly identifies the possibilities generated through the diversity of Muslims in South Africa. He expressed this clearly by saying that 'We must learn from the people here how the people live together. There are different groupings of Muslims here, but they do not differentiate between each other. This helps me to understand what Islam is really about'.

Although most Somali research interlocutors emphasised the distinctiveness of Somali cultural styles, they saw Somalis as part of the larger Muslim community in Cape Town. Imam Mohammad Alawal, Abdullah Majed (Imam of Al-Sunny Mosque), and Mohammad Hadith are all engaged in working relationships with various local Muslim civic institutions. The secretary general of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), Abdu Alkhaleq Allie, indicated in an interview with me that Imam Majed is an official member of the MJC who receives invitations to all MJC activities and general meetings. Most of my Somali research interlocutors mentioned their meeting and contact with MJC and other Muslim civic institutions.[117] Maulana Ighsaan Hendricks, for instance, stated in an interview that 'Somalis are part of Muslim diversity in Cape Town, which all form the Muslim community'. [118] Hendricks statement indicates that Somali organisations and performances of Muslim-ness are best understood as an integral part of Muslim public visibility and religious urbanity in Cape Town.

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[117] Abdu Alkhaleq Allie, interview with the author, 7 September 2014, MJC office, Athlone, Cape Town.
[118] Ighsaan Hendricks, interview with the author, 12 August 2014, MJC office, Athlone, Cape Town.

Beyond the fact that Somalis perceive themselves to be a distinctive community as well as part of the larger Muslim community in Cape Town, Somali Muslims in Cape Town actively form a part of the transnational Somali community. This is amplified by access to and use of evolving communication and media technologies that play a vital role in the construction of a transnational Somali community stretching its ties to include Somalis from all over the world. As an example, Somali restaurants in Bellville CBD constantly show Somali satellite television channels, which mainly broadcast in the Somali language.[119] Several Somali-owned international call centres in Bellville CBD provide a low-cost service for Somalis (and others) to contact their relatives and friends abroad. In addition, there are various Internet cafés in Bellville CBD, which are often filled with immigrants watching clips on YouTube or chatting with friends on Facebook. These technological devices and outlets provide a medium for global engagement employed by Somalis to share their aesthetic forms and various experiences in different localities. On the one hand, this serves to form the imagination of a transnational Somali community, whilst on the other providing a mechanism that facilitates sociocultural, economic, and political transformations across transnational borders (Vertovec 2004). Moreover, the construction of the Somali transnational community is manifested through economic frameworks and systems. An example of this is the money transfer system known by its Arabic name, *Hawala*. The *Hawala* money transfer system has been practiced in the eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, Iran, and parts of Asia since the early medieval period of Islam (Lindley 2009). As argued by Anna Lindley (2009), Somalis' post-1990s adaption of *Hawala* shows the way in which they navigate their crisis and turn it into an opportunity for developing informal economic infrastructure in the absence of state institutions. She points out that the *Hawala* transfer system is underpinned by traditional Somali values and strong social ties. What is significant is that the *Hawala* system forms connections and an active network among Somalis living in refugee camps, remote rural areas, and cities across the globe. Through *Hawala* one can transfer money from any rural or urban area to the rest of the world. Hawala transfer systems work similar to Money Gram or Western Union systems, through which one could send or receive money through particular interconnect agents. The

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[119] Such Somali satellite channels include Universal TV, Somalia Channel, Somali National TV, Ethiopian Somali TV (ESTV), Royal TV, Somalia Land TV, and Horn Cable TV (HCTV).

*Hawala* not only provides a service that is cheaper and faster than any formal transfer system (such as banks, Money Gram or Western Union), but importantly provides a service for undocumented immigrants who cannot send or receive money through the formal transfer system.

The multiple and shifting sense of belonging to an imagined Somali community in Cape Town, to an imagined Muslim community in Cape Town, to a transnational Somali community, and to a transnational Muslim *Ummah* indicate the various positions inhabited by Somalis within the multicultural context of Cape Town. Loren B. Landau and Iriann Freemantle (2010) argue that this multiple and shifting ethnic, national, and transnational sense of belonging marks an immigrant's reactive strategy 'to live outside of belonging while claiming the benefits of it'—which they describe as 'tactical cosmopolitanism' (381). Their research explores the ways in which immigrant groups in Johannesburg contextually claim the right of membership to South Africa, and yet enact a self-exclusion to escape localised social and political obligations and to distance themselves from cultural integration and assimilation.

What is significant to our discussion is that beneath Somalis' shifting belongings is a great deal of commonality *and* difference in their performances of Muslim-ness and understanding of Islam, which will be explored in the following chapters.

### 4.11 Conclusion

This chapter provides an insight into the resurgence of public performance of Muslim-ness in the post-apartheid era. It unpacks the approaches of the MJC and the IUC as the two main organisations representative of Muslims in Cape Town and their positions and engagements with state politics. The chapter proceeded to unpack layers of organisational structures, including those of the MJC and IUC. As discussed in this chapter, in the post-apartheid turn, there has emerged alternative performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim identity formation. These alternative performances of Muslim-ness indicate an unpredictable and immeasurable diversity of Muslim community and identity formations. Muslim infrastructure discussed in this chapter (and in the chapters that follow) are integral to the formations of public Islam within the urban structure and public space of Cape Town. The marches for Palestine, moon sighting, Ramadan Expo, Muslim radio stations, the Open Mosque,

PAGAD, Islamic schools, and Somali performances are only a few examples indicative of a resurgence of the public performance of Muslim-ness in post-apartheid Cape Town. The post-apartheid period's enhancement of Muslim public visibility is not only due to the local Muslims performance of Muslim-ness, but is also enhanced by post-apartheid legitimisation of Muslim refugees and the facilitation of their integration into Cape Town.

The post-apartheid politics of rainbowism and cultural rights has been shown to trigger Muslims to publically enact their communitarian cultural difference, yet its democratic politics are responsible for stirring contestation within the Muslim community regarding the extent and ways in which Muslims accommodate secular values. Put differently, although post-apartheid democratic politics have enabled communitarian formations of Muslim cultural difference they have also fragmented the formation of a cohesive community of Muslims through ever-increasing diversity within the Muslim community of Cape Town.

The resurgence of the public performance of Muslim-ness and Muslim politics of difference, integration, and belonging are not only seen through Muslim organisational performances, but also mediated in the artwork of individual Muslim artists in Cape Town, which is the focus of next chapter.

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**Chapter Five**

*Art and the Mediation of Muslim Religious Urbanity and Community
Formation*

*5.1 Introduction*

Discussion throughout this chapter aims to unpack how art mediates personal or
collective tensions generated by broader conflicting facets of multicultural society in
Cape Town. Ethnographic data generated through an investigation of art practice
here focuses on Muslim artists in Cape Town who employ aesthetic strategies that
harness sensorial forms (sound, images, taste, smell, touch) and mediate the material
culture of Islam and communitarian styles. The decision to deliberately focus on art
practice in this thesis stems from the intertwined relationship between art and
anthropology (see 3.4 and 5.8), and the unique ability of art practice to bring together
aesthetic forms that are individually investigated in subsequent chapters (design,
dress, architecture, sound, and food). Further, artwork by Capetonian Muslim
contemporary artists mediates and reflects upon the history of Islam, conflict
regarding Muslim religious infrastructure in South Africa, and contemporary and
historical forms of Muslim communitarian styles in Cape Town. The analysis of art
practices presented here aims to investigate how such practices enact artists'
strategic aesthetic politics of belonging and authenticity, and facilitate the formation
of alternative performances of Muslim-ness.

The artists discussed in this chapter are young Capetonian artists who describe
themselves as Muslim: Hasan and Husain Essop (6.2), Thania Petersen (6.3),
Igshaan Adams (6.4), and Weaam Williams (6.5). Through a close analysis of the
strategies and impetus behind the work of these artists, this chapter investigates the
ways in which art mediates Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town. Beginning
with an analysis of the *Unrest* exhibition by artists and twin brothers Hasan and
Husain Essop, and moving to a discussion of the work of artists Thania Petersen,
Igshaan Adams, Weaam Williams, works discussed here are examples of
contemporary art presented within institutional contexts including an art festival, art
fair, and gallery setting. In other words, art discussed here exists within the domain

of 'high art'. Importantly, however, when this mediation occurs within institutionalised spaces such as the art gallery, these art practices target the gaze of both local and international audiences. This is significant because these spaces serve to encourage a complex local *and* global representation and reflection on Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town. Accordingly, this chapter concludes with a discussion of how the practices of these artists contributes to Muslim public visibility (6.6), and how their artwork mediates Cape Muslim aesthetic styles (6.8) and a sense of belonging and citizenship in the post-apartheid context (6.7).

## *5.2 Hasan and Husain Essop*

At the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on 9 July 2014, I attended a walk-through of the exhibition *Unrest*, featuring the work of twin brothers Hasan and Husain Essop.[120] Upon arrival, the artists walked us through the exhibition consisting of a series of large-scale panoramic photographs. As they proudly explained the technique behind their photographs, visitors became acutely aware that each of the works consisted of individual photographs meticulously 'stitched' together by the artists. The subjects of these photographs are the twins themselves, who are depicted as though performing or referring to dramatic narratives that they explained as being geared toward capturing a sense of 'unrest' in particular social contexts within Cape Town. They explained the social issues represented in each photographs included gangsterism, drugs, poverty, consumerism, and self-discipline— major issues that the twins believe are forms of social malaise affecting youth, not only in Cape Town or South Africa but also in the world at large. According to the exhibition statement, 'each photograph reflects the twins in a battle of moral, religious and cultural conflict'.[121]

As well as the photographs, the exhibition also included sculptures of two militant Muslim men and an audio-video installation of Hasan and Husain reciting an Urdu

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[120] The National Arts Festival in Grahamstown is an annual art festival that dates back to 1974, and is the main national art festival in South Africa.

[121] You can view all the images from the *Unrest* photographic series and other Essop exhibitions discussed in this chapter at http://www.goodman-gallery.com/artists/hasanandhusainessop (last accessed 29 October 2016).

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*Inshodah* while striking their back with a chain, thus referencing blood-letting rituals performed by Shia Muslims in commemoration of the Karbala massacre.[122]



**FIGURE 5.1** 'Drug Den' from the *Unrest* series, 2014.

As such, the works included in the *Unrest* exhibition reflected a clear combination of global Islamic practices alongside an engagement with social issues affecting the broader society of Cape Town. This served to suggest a reflection on the way in which Muslims position themselves within the secular context of South Africa. Further, the artists' staging of themselves as symbolic embodiments and Muslim-ness within a complex context marked by secular politics but also multiple social crises, was indicative of the Essop twins' sense of belonging, integration and active citizenship in liberal and secular Cape Town. The works on display indicated a mediation of Muslim-ness in the context of Cape Town that suggested a coming together of local connections to place with larger imaginings of the 'East' and 'West'. As a result, their work suggested a collapse between the personal (through their own bodies) and the collective (religious rituals, international forms of social malaise, locales in the region, and the imagining of 'east' and 'west'), in a way that highlighted the complex interplay of Muslim identification, belongings, and cultural difference in the context of South Africa and beyond. The Essop brothers brought

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[122] Karbala massacre occurred 50 years after the death of the prophet Muhammad in Iraq, in which Hussein, the son of Ali, was martyred along with his guards and the members of his family by Yazed, the son of Muawiyad.

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their local and global identifications and belongings together in *Unrest* to reflect Muslim concerns and engagement with social crises affecting the broader society of Cape Town. This was manifest in their multiple identifications and belongings to the Muslim community in Cape Town, to broader multicultural societies of Cape Town, and to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*.

The first time I met the Essop twins was at their office in Hout Bay, where they had just returned following an outreach event with teenagers from townships nearby. The twins proudly reflected on their engagement and impact on outreach participants. I waited until their lunch break and, though Husain was still busy, I was then joined by Hasan for a cup of tea. Our conversation was not intended as a focused interview; rather, we broke the ice and introduced ourselves whilst agreeing to set a future date for the three of us to meet for an extended interview. Hasan introduced himself as 'South African Indian Muslim' and proceeded to express his commitment to Cape Town society whilst explaining his urge to address and engage in solving social crises. He expressed a lot of support for the Palestinian struggle and was eager to tell me that had visited Palestine and prayed at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

The Essop twins were born in 1985 in Cape Town, lived in Rylands until the age of 12, then moved to Penlyn. They were raised in what they described to be a conservative Indian Muslim family. The Rylands and Penlyn neighbourhoods are sub-areas within the Athlone suburb, located fifteen kilometres east of Cape Town city centre. Both areas are predominantly inhabited by Indian Muslims. Ryland residents are lower and middle class, while Penlyn Estate residents are middle and upper class. The Essops graduated in 2006 with bachelor degrees in fine art (Hasan majored in printmaking and Husain majored in photography), and have been collaborating since their graduation from the Michaelis School of Fine Arts at the University of Cape Town in 2009. In my conversations with Hasan and Husain, the twins both placed strong emphasis on their national belonging and South African citizenship, but also on their belonging to Islam and their Indian heritage. Husain explained to me in conversation that 'first and foremost, we are South African citizens, we belong to South Africa, but we also belonging to Islam and to our Indian

heritage'.[123] To emphasise this point, the twins explained that their commitment toward South African society was not limited to art exhibitions. To this end, they expressed significant pride for their work designing t-shirts for the national soccer team, and their involvement with teaching photography to youths in marginalised areas of Cape Town.

I noticed in my interactions with the twin brothers that they are both strict in their adherence to Islamic practice. For example, motivated by religious belief, they only use their own bodies as subjects in their photography, since they are convinced that Islam forbids the depiction of the human figure. The Essop's passion for art and their social concerns transcend to some extent their regret for depicting human presence in such a way. They express acceptance of God's blame and punishment for photographing their own bodies, but avoid involving other people in what they perceive as an 'Islamic sin'.

In spite of this, the twins maintain that they see themselves as 'liberal Muslims . . . open to secular values . . . not conservative'.[124] The Essop's active role in representing Muslim cultural styles was mainly triggered by a growing concern for Muslim culture and identity, their feelings of discrimination, and their sense that both Muslims and Islam are generally misrepresented in Cape Town. In Hasan's words:
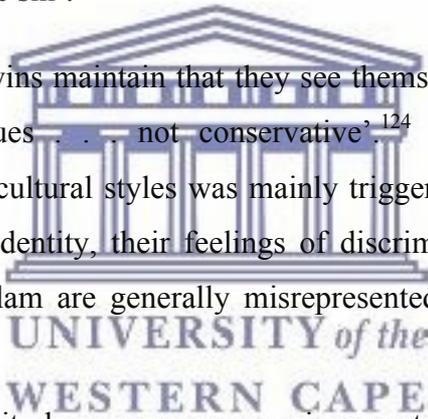
> Muslim visibility become more conscious post 9/11 . . . in the sense that we've become much more interested in what is this identity. . . . What is this religion. . . . People started to ask questions about Islam and Muslims. The representations of Islam caused Muslims to react and to retaliate because they've been misrepresented in the media. . . . We personally, our intentions, inspirations and motives for using Islamic identity in our work was stirred on by post-11-September Hollywood movies depicting Islam as fundamentalist . . . as terrorist.

Adding to his brother's comments, Husain commented, 'art is our belief'. The brothers' comments suggest that they are driven and motivated by their religion and spiritual beliefs and use their own bodies to form a counter-narrative that responds to the global outbreak of Islamophobia following 9/11. The twin brothers made it clear

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[123] Husain and Hasan Essop's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 3 April 2014, Essop twins' parents' house at Penlyn Estate, Lansdowne, Cape Town.
[124] Hasan Essop, Penlyn Estate, interview with the author, 3 April 2014.

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that they see the way in which Muslims are represented in South Africa and globally as a manifestation of Islamophobia, which they argue is as problematic as any other social problem plaguing the nation. They recalled their personal experiences of being Muslims in post-9/11 Cape Town and explained that during their study at the Mitchells Plain High School and UCT, they often felt 'Othered'. Hence, they see that their contribution to South Africa is related to, as Husain put it, 'Introducing a better understanding of Islam and Muslims in Cape Town to the broader South African and global society. In our work we try to show how Islam can contribute to a better life for all South African citizens'.

The Essop twins' artworks clearly reflect the multiple intersectional sense of belonging and the strive toward active citizenship, something that is also articulated in their previously cited comments. In their artwork, they perform belonging and attachment to the social context of South Africa, with its emphasis on coexistence, alongside a performance of transnational belonging and attachment to the Muslim *Ummah*. Thus, the work of the Essop twins suggests that Muslim identification and transnational belonging does not dilute a sense of connection and national belonging to South Africa. Further, their artwork reconciles what they described as the 'inner tension' of being a Muslim living in a secular context. *Unrest* is not the only example of works by the twin artists. The trajectory of the Essop exhibitions indicate an enactment of Muslim cultural style, a continuous reconciliation between their Islamic and secular identification and between national and transnational belonging. While *Unrest* reflects the Essop twins concern for social issues, their first exhibition, *Halaal Art* (2009) mediated Muslim cultural style as an example of Cape Town cultural diversity. Their second exhibition, *Remembrance* (2012), embodied their transnational belonging.

### 5.2.1 *Halaal Art*

The *Halaal Art* exhibition (the Essops' first collaboration) opened at Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, on 20 February 2009. Similar to their artwork in *Unrest*, *Halaal Art* consisted of a series of large-scale photographs that each featured the twins staging their bodies in carefully chosen religious and secular locations in Cape Town (fig. 5.2). The title *Halaal Art* referred to the notion of being 'pure', and

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thereby directly addressed the space and tension that Muslim youths negotiate in a secular environment—a theme also visible in the *Unrest* exhibition.

Triggered by the experience of Islamophobia following 9/11, the works in *Halaal Art* are centred upon the representation and embodiment of Muslim cultural difference as part and parcel of the multicultural context of Cape Town. In this series, the twins dressed in secular and religious clothing, and the locations of their photographs included religious sites, central urban spaces, and street corners located deep within various Cape Town neighbourhoods.



**FIGURE 5.2** 'Thornton Road', from the *Halaal Art* series, 2008.

Emphasising Islamic bodily formations and Islamic religious sites in the city, the *Halaal Art* exhibition embodied a symbolic enactment of Muslim cultural styles situated on the spectrum of Cape Town cultural diversity and rainbowism. Conversely, their secular dress and appearance in secular locations alluded to their secular cultural identifications and intimate knowledge of the landscape of Cape Town, indicating an attempt to visually represent the reconciliation of cultural difference and national belonging.

What is evident here is that the Essop twins mediate the Islamic aesthetics of Cape Muslims through thoughtful embodiments of bodily formations and performances of Islamic rituals such as *salah* (prayer), w*udhuu* (cleansing), *qurbani* (the sacrifice of animals)*,* and *Eid* mass cooking. Enactments of Islamic style are also performed through the twins' dress formations, including *dishdasha* (Islamic garb), *kaffiyeh* (Middle-Eastern scarf), and the Palestinian flag—which often appears in their

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photographs and audio-video installations. Beyond this emphasis on Muslim aesthetic style, the visual aesthetics of the various religious and secular locations in *Unrest* and *Halaal Art* have been strategically chosen to reveal the artists' intimate knowledge, attachment, and belonging to Cape Town.[125]

What is significant here is that for local audiences many of the neighbourhoods, landmarks, and cultural markers referenced in the work would be familiar. However, to an international audience, these locales, landmarks, and signifiers of religious and secular identity would likely not be understood in terms of their specific Capetonian contexts, but rather as drawing reference to Islamic practices and identity more broadly. The exhibition *Halaal Art* thus enacted a symbolic embodiment of Muslim attachment and belonging to the locality of Cape Town but also drew reference to the global *Ummah* at large. The Essops shift their representation of Muslim belonging and concern for local social crises, as seen in both *Halaal Art* and *Unrest*, toward religious-cultural symbolic embodiment of the Muslim *Ummah* seen in *Remembrance* (2012).

### 5.2.2 Remembrance

The emphasis upon a connection to the global Muslim *Ummah* in the Essops' work can be seen clearly in the exhibition *Remembrance*, the opening of which I attended at the Goodman Gallery in Cape Town on 11 August 2012. The exhibition consisted of a series of large-scale photographs, each featuring the twins performing symbolic enactments of Muslim-ness within and across various locations (fig. 5.3).[126] The exhibition also included an audio-video installation of the twins reciting the Arabic-Islamic *inshudah*, performed in Jerusalem. Through the framing of their identity as young Muslim artists, the *Remembrance* exhibition traced and embodied both Muslim history and contemporary presence in Mecca, Jerusalem, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Senegal. This was done in an attempt to explore the trajectory, roots, and present standing of the Muslim *Ummah* in the global context. This emphasis was made clear in the exhibition statement:

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[125] The locations of their *Unrest* and *Halaal Art* photographs include mosques, *kramat*, *madrasah*, street, and corners in Athlone, District Six, and Sea Point Promenade. These sites, amongst others, are representative of a visual enactment of Muslim-ness.
[126] The locations include the slave-port in Senegal, *Al-Buraaq* in Jerusalem, *Jabal Arafat* (Mount of Mercy) in Saudi Arabia, and a Catholic church in Amsterdam.

> [T]he photos seek to uncover and engage with particular and unstable memories of each location—the birthplace of Islam in Mecca, inaccessible to most non-believers, and now paved over with parking lots and luxury hotel chains; the sacred sites of Jerusalem, fought over, destroyed and restored time and again for centuries; the ostensibly liberal cities of Western Europe, where paranoia, surveillance and religious profiling are becoming the new normal; and Dakar, where the legacies of slavery and colonialism gave rise to unique Islamic identities and practices, which are increasingly under assault by globalizing forces.[127]

Significantly, the Essop brothers journey and exploration of the trajectory of Islam and Muslims in a global context, and their search for cultural identification and belonging to the Muslim transnational *Ummah* should not be misunderstood or interpreted as a marker of uncertainty around their sense of national belonging and cultural identification. Rather, this emphasis must be understood as signifying the way in which one can belong to the nation through particular communitarian cultural styles. In other words, the Essop brothers search for belonging to Islam and the Muslim *Ummah* did not dilute their sense of belonging or concern for Cape Town society. This was made clear in the *Unrest* exhibition (2014), where the twins pronounced once again their active citizenship and the various ways in which they advise Muslims in particular to take an active role in solving local social problems.



**FIGURE 5.3** 'Three Imams, Dakar, Senegal', from the *Remembrance* series, 2010.

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[127] Goodman Gallery, 'Solo Exhibitions', last accessed 29 October 2016, http://www.goodman-gallery.com/artists/hasanandhusainessop.

The Essops' exhibitions successfully represent and embody Muslim cultural difference in local and global contexts that reference not only contemporary cultural and political paradigms but also reflect on Muslim notions of self-discipline and morality, and the emphasis on belonging and commitment to South Africa and to the global community at large. This commitment is understood not only through hearing the impetus behind the work from the artist's themselves, but also in the critical response to the twins' work. For example, in his analysis of the *Remembrance* exhibition, visual artist and art historian Rael Jero Salley (2015) stated that 'in the Essops' photographs, I see activity that links aesthetic practice to the articulation of thought, the shaping of community, nation building and ideals of democratic governance' (496). Salley's critique of the Essop twins' work reflects the fact that audiences and scholars of art understand their aesthetic practice as centred upon the mediation of national and transnational belonging and community formation.

The similarities and differences between the Essops' exhibitions indicate a continuous reconciliation between their Islamic and secular identification, and between national and transnational belonging. In their first exhibition *Halaal Art* (2009), the twins embodied a symbolic enactment of aesthetic styles as representative of coexistence within the broader multicultural society of Cape Town. While the *Halaal Art* exhibition reflected a sense of multiple intersected belongings and Muslim identification on a local level, their exhibition *Unrest* extended the investigation of what the Essops perceived as a tension between secular and Islamic values to a global level. While in the *Unrest* and *Halaal Art* exhibitions the Essop twins expressed a sense of national citizenship and intimate familiarity and belonging to Cape Town, in the *Remembrance* exhibition they performed a global identification to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. The Essops' shift from an emphasis on their belonging to Muslim *Ummah* to their belonging to the particularity of their cultural locality was mediated through audio-visual installations in their exhibitions. In *Remembrance,* they performed a recitation of Islamic Arabic *Inshudah*, while in the *Unrest* exhibition they performed an Islamic-Urdu *Inshudah*—both of which were screened on televisions and heard via headphones. As Husain Essop explained, their recitations of Islamic-Arabic *Inshudah* enacted their belonging to the Muslim *Ummah*, while their recitations of Islamic-Urdu *Inshudah* enacted their belonging to their cultural locality as Indian Muslims living

in Cape Town. This shift in recitations between Arabic to Urdu is indicative of a thoughtful aural embodiment of Muslim identity formation and belonging. The Essops' multiple and shifting belongings and identifications were further manifested in a thematic shift from more religious-cultural belonging (as seen in *Remembrance*) to social problems (as seen in *Unrest*). Importantly, Muslim concern for social issues affecting the broader society in Cape Town is an attitude observed not only at individual level but rather signifies practices of wider collectives of Capetonian Muslim—as seen in the case of PAGAD (4.7) and, more broadly, through Muslim food practices of sharing and feeding needy people (discussed in chapter Eight).

What is significant to our purposes here is that the work of the Essop twins is representative of the ways Capetonian Muslim artists utilise art practices as a way of forming and mediating cultural difference and multiple belongings. This can be seen in the two chief points that underpin the work of the Essop twins: Firstly, their work reflects a sense of intersected Muslim belonging to both their particular cultural context and religion that does not dilute their national belonging nor diminish their concern of being part of a global community. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the Essops' artwork presents endless possibilities around the representation and coexistence of secular culture and Islamic religious values in South Africa. These two concerns are, however, not entirely unique to the work of the Essop twins but rather form an undercurrent in the work of a number of contemporary Capetonian Muslim artists.

### 5.3 Thania Petersen

The emphasis upon the collision of secular culture and Islamic religious values in South Africa is a concern evident in the work of Cape-Town-based Muslim artist Thania Petersen. As both research interlocutor and close friend of mine (see 1.7), Petersen has often shared with me the challenges she faces as a Muslim living within a secular society and culture, and her disappointment with mainstream representations and perceptions of Muslims in Cape Town. Petersen's concern is not centred on contemporary Islamophobia; her central emphasis rests on the historical connotations of the Muslim presence and history of slavery in Cape Town, on the challenge of being Muslim living in secular society, and on the aesthetic particularity of Muslim aesthetic styles in Cape Town.

Petersen was born in Cape Town in 1980 and grew up in her grandparents' house, which she described as a 'typical middle-class Cape Malay home'.[128] When she was four years old, her father was exiled to the United Kingdom for his political involvement against apartheid. This was not only traumatic but also symptomatic of politics and culture in the country at the time. Petersen returned to live permanently in Cape Town seven years ago. The artist studied fine art at Central Saint Martins College of Art in London; completed a one-year sculpture apprenticeship in Chitungwize, Zimbabwe; and then spent a year in South Korea, where she learned ceramic sculpture. Thania Petersen is important example for the younger generation of Muslim artists working and living in Cape Town. This is not just because of the way her work reflects and mediates Muslim identity in South Africa, but also because her life story signifies a collision between being culturally local whilst also capitalising and drawing inspiration from the fact that she has spent much of her life abroad and benefited from international training as an artist. She explained that her interest in her 'Cape Malay heritage' was triggered by her father's search for his cultural and ethnic roots, which he traced back to Tuan Guru. To reflect upon the impact of uncovering this personal and collective history, Petersen relied on art to explore and represent Cape Malay cultural style and identity formations.

### 5.3.1 I'm Royal

Given that I share many common friends with Petersen, and that we both lived in the Observatory neighbourhood in Cape Town and ran into each other regularly at various coffee shops and social gatherings, I knew Petersen long before I know about her artwork. One day in mid-July 2014, I was passing through the Lower Main Road in Observatory and saw Petersen, who briefly told me that she had made a photographic artwork that addresses Muslim identity in Cape Town, and that her intention was to exhibit the work in an art gallery. Following from this, it became clear that Petersen had learned through our common friends about my doctoral research and general interest in art. Although I appreciated her telling me about her art project, I did not express considerable interest at the time as I was not aware that Petersen was an artist—nor had I ever seen or heard anything about her art practice. A few days later, Petersen invited me to her house to see her first photographic series

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[128] Thania Petersen's comments throughout this chapter are cited from, as indicated in the text, an interview with the author, 2 April 2014, Observatory, Cape Town, and the artist's walk-through talk given on 21 August 2015, Association for Visual Arts Gallery, Cape Town.

entitled *I'm Royal,* and the moment I saw the work I appealed for Petersen to be part of my research. To this she smiled and agreed and we sat for hours looking and exchanging our views about the composition and narrative of each photograph prior to the official opening of the exhibition.

On 21 August 2015, I attended a walk-through of Petersen's work at the AVA Gallery in Cape Town.[129] At this time, Petersen was holding a solo exhibition of two series of photographic self-portraits, one entitled *I'm Royal* and the second entitled *Barbie & Me*.

On the day of the walk-through, Petersen started her talk by saying, 'I'm a princess not a slave'. She then walked us through the *I'm Royal* series, explaining the transformations of Muslim dress codes and geographical locations. The *I'm Royal* series consists of several large-scale photographs of Petersen dressed in different costumes in various locations in Cape Town. The first photo encountered in the

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[129] The AVA (Association for Visual Arts) is a non-profit, membership-based art organisation whose aim is described as 'the advancement of South African visual art'. The oldest not-for-profit gallery in Cape Town, the AVA's origins are the South African Fine Arts Society—the first organised art body in South Africa founded in 1850. See AVA's website: http://ava.co.za/about/ (last accessed 29 October 2016).

space was taken at Sea Point, the area from which Muslims first entered the land of South Africa, and featured dress that Petersen explained as being 'royal Indonesian' (fig. 5.4).

Other photographs were taken in Bo-Kaap, where Muslims first settled and observed Islam more closely, particularly when Tuan Guru opened the first mosque and *madrasah* there. Hence, their early costumes were East Asian but became more religious.[130] The costumes for the three Bo-Kaap photographs were borrowed from the Indonesian embassy in Cape Town, which certified that they were authentic Indonesian costumes.

Another picture was taken in District Six, and as Petersen explained, 'The costume shows that Muslims started becoming more diluted with Western influence, they started . . . mixing, inter-marrying and changing. Their costume has [a] Western style, like the fox fur and women's face make-up'. The last picture was taken in Athlone (a Muslim neighbourhood), and as Petersen explained 'this picture portrays a typical Muslim house in Crawford, huge house, no plants, no garden, big car, which show Muslim money and wealthy status in post-apartheid'. The costume Petersen wore in this photograph was black *hijab* and *abaya* (fig. 5.5), which is for Petersen a 'completely different identity and costume'. She refers to the relationship between styles of dress and identity, saying that the black costume represents an 'Arab identity', and that her ancestors 'completely lost their Indonesian identity and culture and now . . . only identify themselves as being Muslim . . . [F]or them, the closest to be[ing] Muslim is what they see when they do [the] *hajj* pilgrimage'. The artist concluded her talk about *I'm Royal* saying. 'We remained Muslim throughout this time, but we did not remain Indonesian. Thus, our customs changed and keep changing'.

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[130] For further discussion of Bo-Kaap, see sections 1.5 and 6.3.3.

**FIGURE 5.5** Thania Petersen, photograph from the *I'm Royal* series, 2015.

In my conversation with Petersen she explained her personal motives as follows:

> People seem to know our curry and that we were slaves. I felt we are looked down upon. I became so tired of feeling or being made to feel I'm less, so I got *gatvol* [fed-up] and I decided to do this artwork to say look here I'm royal, not a slave. . . . It is not about being royal but it's more about our dignity, representing our dignity and our pride that we kind of meant to be stripped off. I chose to tell the story of Muslims in Cape Town through costume, because adornment and costume shows your status and shows pride.

The artist's choice of costume trace historical changes in Cape Malay clothing style through which she offered an insight into a trajectory of Muslim aesthetic style and identity formations, including their geographical displacement within Cape Town and the local and transnational influence on aesthetic formations of Cape Muslims. Significantly, Petersen decided to picture herself as dressed with an Indonesian dress code that was embroidered with gold to claim Muslim royalty within the historical and present narrative of the multicultural society of Cape Town. Through this, we see that the *I'm Royal* exhibition not only introduced Muslim dress styles but, more significantly, provided a counter-narrative of the Muslim historical trajectory in Cape Town that reclaims the artist from any personal perception of inferiority as a result of being a descendant of slavery. Petersen's claim to royalty alludes to the way in which Muslims perceive their position in the democratic multicultural context of post-apartheid South Africa.

Petersen's claim to royalty stands in opposition to the various ways in which Muslims and non-Muslims often invoke the trauma of slavery in the formation of

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post-apartheid identity and cultural rights. For example, Gabeba Baderoon (2014) places considerable emphasis on the Cape Muslim traumatic experience of slavery, which for her has been strategically misrepresented within the colonial archive (see 2.7). Baderoon's premise resonates with the work of Pumla Gqola (2010), a scholar of African literature who traces the memory of slavery in post-colonial South Africa and points out that 'slavery is evoked and remembered as part of negotiating current ways of being' (1). Gqola's book *What is Slavery to Me?* (2010) goes further to explore the various ways in which claims to slave ancestry and slave heritage have been invoked and performed in the formations of post-apartheid Coloured identities (see Worden 2009). These include public enactments of Khoi heritage, the figure of Sarah Bartmann, artworks by Berni Searle, Eastern spices, and the art of Malay cookery, which are presented as symbolic embodiments of the marginalisation and dispossession of the Coloured community—including Muslims and non-Muslims— by colonialism (Baderoon 2014; Gqola 2010). In contrast to these various aesthetic strategies of reflecting on the traumatic experience of slavery, Petersen focuses on a seemingly positive reclamation of her ancestry through an emphasis on royalty rather than an explicit emphasis on the trauma of slavery.

Besides this claim, the *I'm Royal* exhibition indicates a complex interplay of local and transnational influences on the aesthetics of Cape Muslim styles. Cape Muslim adoption of fur in their dress code is indicative of early Muslim integration and adoption of the secular culture of Cape Town, while the visual aesthetic embodiment of the black *abaya* referenced the Arab transnational influence on Cape Muslim aesthetic style. Tracing the historical changes of Cape Muslim women's dress formations indicates ongoing local, national, and transnational influences over Cape Muslim style. Petersen's continuous enactment of this continuous hybridity is also reflected in the photographic series *Barbie & Me.* While the *I'm Royal* series reclaims the 'royalty' of the artist's Cape Malay Muslim descendants, the *Barbie & Me* series brings to light Petersen's inner conflict of being Muslim living in the secular culture of Cape Town.

### 5.3.2 Barbie & Me

Petersen proceeded in her walk-through to an explanation of the *Barbie & Me* photographic series (fig. 5.6). She opened her talk by saying, 'Here I photographed

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myself through the three stages of my life—childhood, adulthood and motherhood—to reveal the constant struggles I face as a Muslim living within a secular culture in Cape Town'. The first photograph we encountered in the series focused on the first three objects Petersen owned at age four: her prayer book, prayer bag, and a Barbie doll (see figs. 5.7 and 5.8). She explained, 'I would go to Muslim school where I learned about Islam and how to be modest in my behaviour and my dress, but when I returned home I played with Barbie who speaks of the complete opposite. I was torn between what I should be and what I wanted to be, which leaves me with a constant feeling of guilt'. The rest of *Barbie & Me* series was made up of self-portraits of the artist, which suggested that Petersen's desire to be Barbie had not entirely dissipated.



**FIGURE 5.6** The author with Thania Petersen at the walk-through of the *I'm Royal* and *Barbie & Me* exhibition, 21 August 2015. (Photo by the author)

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FIGURE 5.7 Thania Petersen, photograph from *Barbie & Me* series, 2015.

FIGURE 5.8 Thania Petersen, photograph from *Barbie & Me* series, 2015.

The first self-portrait was one of Petersen in adulthood; she pictured herself dressed in Western clothes presenting a cheery, happy demeanour that imitated Barbie's style and (according to the artist explanation) what she wanted to be (fig. 5.9). In the second self-portrait Petersen wore black *abaya* and *hijab*, carrying her prayer bag and holding her Barbie in hand, however her facial expression revealed the artist's sadness and dissatisfaction around expectations of what she should be and how she was expected to perform her identity and gender. The third self-portrait pictured Petersen in the phase of motherhood, this time wearing black *abaya* and scarf yet without her Barbie. Instead, she was pictured looking forlorn with her children; one child was dressed in a Spiderman costume, and the other a Batman mask (fig. 5.10). For Petersen, the Spiderman and Batman costumes signify Western culture.

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Significantly, these self-portraits of Petersen were all placed against backgrounds of colourful Islamic carpets placed there by the artist to reflect 'the constant presence, and conflict of secular and Islamic culture in Muslim everyday life'. I then asked Petersen, 'I see the Islamic background of your photographs as beautiful and as being aesthetically equal with your self-portrait, does this juxtaposition try to show harmony and integration of the secular and religion or a conflict?' In response to this query, the artist smiled and responded that, 'the problem is not being Muslim, but actually it is what people expect from Muslims'.



FIGURE 5.9 Thania Petersen, photograph from the *Barbie & Me* series, 2015.

FIGURE 5.10 Thania Petersen, photograph from the *Barbie & Me* series, 2015.

Both from the content of the works and Petersen's comments during the walk-through of her exhibition, it can be seen that the *Barbie & Me* photographic series negotiates Muslim challenges of living in secular society, which for Petersen consists of conflict and feelings of guilt and uncertainty around how to reconcile Islam and secular South African citizenship. For Petersen, 'secular culture' is understood as a culture that has 'no consideration for religious values in its value systems' and further to this secularism is associated with 'Western ideology and way

of life'.[131] Petersen's understanding of secularism would appear to stand as a binary to Islam, and this can explain the inner conflict she experienced in Cape Town and seeks to represent through her art practice. However, as Petersen indicates, the challenge is not merely to reconcile the religiosity of being Muslim with the secular public culture in which you live, but also to negotiate expectations of Muslims within broader society. However, as is made clear through the discussion presented throughout this chapter, the inner conflict, negotiation, and reconciliation of identification with both Muslim and South African secular culture is a shared experience among other Muslim artists and research interlocutors.

### 5.3.3 The Cape Town Art Fair

In 2016, the success of Petersen's photographic works meant that she was chosen to exhibit two photographs from the *I'm Royal* series at the National Art Gallery in Cape Town. To convey this news to me, Petersen called me to meet her for coffee and expressed lots of excitement at becoming an art 'celebrity'. Although her tone was playful, she was genuinely very proud that her artwork was due to hang next to Hasan and Husain Essop's photographs at the National Art Gallery in Cape Town, and, more importantly for her, she had been nominated as one of the feature artists of the 2016 Cape Town Art Fair.[132]

The fourth annual Cape Town Art Fair took place from the nineteenth to the twenty-first of February 2016 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. Before driving to the Art Fair, I sent Petersen a picture of her artwork on the front-page of a local newspaper with the intention of congratulating her on the success of her work and to ease her anxiety about the presentation and reception of her artwork. When I arrived to the Art Fair, Petersen received me outside and offered me a media pass to the venue. She seemed very happy for her success, yet also nervous, as she was in rush to tell me that she was nominated for the Cape Town Art Fair Special Project Prize and to ask for my view regarding her being interviewed by CNN.[133]

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[131] Thania Petersen, Skype interview with the author, 10 July 2016.

[132] This was the fourth edition of the Cape Town Art Fair, which is organised with the aim of becoming the primary art fair in Africa and to represent contemporary art from the African continent, the diaspora, and new local, and global art markets (Cape Town Art Fair, last accessed 29 October 2016, http://www.capetownartfair.co.za/about/).

[133] Eight artists were nominated for the Cape Town Special Project Prize: Thania Petersen, Rehema Chachage, Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude, Masimba Hwati, Laura Windvogel, Ruby Onyinyechi Amanze,

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Petersen's work occupied prime position at the Art Fair, located in a booth at the entrance of the venue. Within this booth, which functioned as an enclosed space for the display of her work and a promotion of the Everard Gallery that represents her work, Petersen exhibited three artworks: a video entitled 'Baqa', an installation entitled 'Rampies', and two photographs from the *Botanical Imperialism* series (fig. 5.11).[134] Petersen's booth was painted white both on its exterior and interior, and was divided into two spaces. In the front space of the booth, the artist exhibited the two photographic works from the *Botanical Imperialism* series, and five small still photographs from the 'Baqa' video. I stepped into space where the 'Rampies' installation and 'Baqa' video work were exhibited. The 'Rampies' installation was made up of hundreds of organza bags filled with cut orange leaves. When I first entered the space where the work was exhibited I stood close to the installation to inhale the smell of orange leaves, and watch and listen to the 'Baqa' ('nirvana') video installation.



FIGURE 5.11 Thania Petersen, photograph from the *Botanical Imperialism* series, 2016.

The 'Baqa' work featured an aerial view of a woman's body (Petersen) sitting still in a crouched position whilst she was covered over repeatedly by various coloured pieces of cloth. This process was ongoing and eventually her body became less visible under all the layers of fabric, and until it dissolved and merged with nature— returning to what Petersen described as 'a natural state of truth and purity'. According to Petersen, the multiple coloured cloths depicted in the work represent

Kyle Morland and Mathias Chirombo. These artists were part of a special project at the Art Fair called 'Tomorrows/Today', and the winner of the prize, Masimba Hwati, was awarded 75,000 Rand.
[134] Everard Gallery is one of the oldest commercial galleries in South Africa. Originally founded in Johannesburg in 1913, it opened its Cape Town branch in 1996. See http://www.everard-read-capetown.co.za/gallery (last accessed 29 October 2016).

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the various Sufi orders in Cape Town, and the processes of covering the body embodied the ways in which religious rituals contribute to the preservation of Cape Muslim community throughout a trajectory of hardships including the period of colonialism, apartheid, and post-apartheid.

The 'Rampies' installation consisted of hundreds of organza bags filled with citrus leaves that were cut carefully, scented with essential oils, and then laid onto a muslin sheet that was placed within an enclosed space inside the white booth at the Art Fair (fig. 5.12). For Petersen the scent of the citrus leaves 'arouses [her] deep sadness. It is the scent of a land and a life lost but not forgotten. It is the smell of forced removals, the bittersweet smell of life and death and more rawly the scent of survival' (artist's statement, Cape Town Art Fair exhibit). Further still, for the artist, the smell of orange leaves is connected to Sufi performances that signify what remains of Cape Muslim cultural style; in her own words, the smell of orange leaves 'were reminiscent of their lives and past left behind'. The *Rampies-sny* practice referenced in the work dates back to the era of Cape Muslim slavery (and represents the practices of Muslim women at the celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi* [Davids 1987]). Both 'Rampies' and 'Baqa' symbolise Cape Muslim strategies for preserving a distinct cultural style in the midst of colonialism, apartheid, and the post-apartheid period. While both of these artworks indicate Petersen's symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness, her *Botanical Imperialism* series broadens her social concerns to include the effect of colonialism on the natural environment of the broader society of Cape Town (fig. 5.11).



**FIGURE 5.12**  Thania Petersen, 'Rampies' installation, Cape Town Art Fair, 2016. (Photo by the author)

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A consideration of Petersen's wider body of work indicates her strong attachment to Cape Muslim style and her effort to represent what she perceives as the inner conflict of being a Muslim woman living in the secular society of Cape Town. Further still, the artist's sense of citizenship and belonging to South Africa is performed through her work's representation of concern for the way in which colonial politics toward the natural environment impacts upon the broader society of Cape Town (as evident in the *Botanical Imperialism* series). In such a way, her work is suggestive of the attempt to reconcile both the inner and outer conflict of Muslim history and contemporary politics in Cape Town, and thus indicates the collapse of her Islamic identification with her sense of being a secular South African citizen. The use of art to mediate inner and outer conflict of identification with Islam is also evident in the work of Igshaan Adams, who, like Thania Petersen, is a rising art star in the South African art scene.

### 5.4 Igshaan Adams

On 8 November 2013, Igshaan Adams performed 'Please Remember Me II' as part of the exhibition *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance* (see 3.2, 3.2, 3.4). This performance piece, which I presented in chapter Three, involved the artist posing as dead whilst his father, Amien Adams, prepared his body for burial through Islamic cleansing and wrapping rituals. Whilst we the audience stood surrounding the table on which the artist's naked body lay, Amien Adams opened the performance by facing us and reciting the *Alfatiha* Quranic verses with both hands raised in an appeal to God to bless his son's body.[135] Amien Adams wore a light-grey *dishdasha* with long sleeves, a Palestinian scarf (*kaffiyeh* ), and a fez. He proceeded to wash his son's body with water whilst quietly reciting Quranic verses and moving around the table to reach, turn, and wash the artist's body (fig. 5.13). When completing the cleansing and drying of each part of the artist's body, Amien Adams then gently rubbed his son's face, shoulders, arms, hands, and feet with an Islamic perfume (a pure perfume without any additives), and then wrapped the artist's body on the table using a white cloth, under which was a green cloth ornamented by Quranic verses written in gold. The impact on the audience viewing

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[135] *Alfatiha* is the opening verse of the Quran. Muslim's start their prayer with *Alfatiha*; hence, it is one of the most well-known or recognisable Quranic verses amongst Muslims.

the performance was amplified by the fact that the artist's wrapped body was then left on the table, immobile and still, positioned as though a dead body (fig. 5.14).



FIGURE 5.13 Igshaan Adams, 'Please Remember Me II', *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance,* 2013. (Photo by the author)



FIGURE 5.14 Igshaan Adams, 'Please Remember Me II', *Three Abdullahs: A Genealogy of Resistance,* 2013. (Photo by the author)

Beyond the artist's own statement, a critical engagement with Adams' performance reveals an attempt to strategically evoke religious sentiments by enacting a symbolic embodiment of the artist's death alongside a resistance to his everyday sense of a 'living death'. The performance thus drew attention to Adam's conflicting sense of dual identification (of being gay and Muslim) whilst intimately celebrating his own 'rebirth' as a gay Muslim. He explains, 'I always felt out of place in every environment, no matter where, I was always Othered by one aspect of my identity against the others.'[136]

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[136] Ighsaan Adams' comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author and Heike Becker, 15 March 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

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This sense of alterity came as a result of the artist's family background, religious identification, sexual orientation, and experiences in the art world. Born in the Bonteheuwel Coloured township in Cape Town in 1982, Adams was raised a Muslim despite being reared by his Christian grandmother, and at the age of fifteen the artist personally acknowledged his own homosexuality. The complexity and uncertainty generated by a set of perceived contradictory cultural expectations have had a profound impact on the artist's sense of identity. This is made clear in his statement that:

> Being Cape Coloured in the art environment . . . [and] the school at the time being so dominantly White . . . and being gay and being Muslim and that not working so well . . . and being Muslim but identifying also with being Christian or within a Christian environment. And so being an artist and going back to the townships where I no longer fit in anymore because now I am seen as a crazy person, as an artist. So everything just kind of was against each other. So I wanted to know where the hell do I belong? Where do I fit in? Who am I?

Adams statement reveals uncertainty in his practice and identification spawned by the realisation of his status as a gay Muslim and as Cape Coloured in dominantly white art schools. During his study at Ruth Prowse School of Art from 2008-2009, where he obtained a scholarship, Igshaan encountered the challenge of identification and socialisation that came as a result of being Coloured and from Bonteheuwel whilst studying in a school filled primarily with white staff and students.[137] Igshaan relied on performance art to reconcile and critically negotiate his identity formations, his multiple belongings, and multiple shifting identities. In his graduation body of work in 2009, he exhibited an installation of what he (at the time) considered to be a typical Cape Coloured living room. He decorated the wall with various self-portraits, including framed verses from the Quran to assert his Muslim identity. The performance included his grandmother who was staged sitting and watching a TV soap opera (fig. 5.12). In this work, Igshaan seemed aware of the power of aesthetics in audience sense-making: in addition to the sound of the TV and the presence of his

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[137] Bonteheuwel is a township that was established in the 1960s in response to the Group Area Act, and is located at the southeast of Cape Town. According to the 2001 national census, its population was 55,707, 95% were Coloured and 4% of whom were Black (Fuller Center for Housing, 'Identifying Our Communities in Need', last accessed 29 October 2016, http://www.fchwc.org/the-communities-we-serve )

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grandmother, he also relied on the smell of cigarettes to imitate a real sensory scene of a Coloured living room. The success of this performance is seen in the fact that most of the audience did not realise that this room was an art installation—they assumed that they were entering a 'real' living room. Igshaan had informed his grandmother not to interact with attendees, most of whom entered the room and greeted her whilst she welcomed them and engaged in conversation with some of them—reflecting the fact that she herself perceived and lived the performance as though a 'real' event. This was because the installation was an identical intimate environment to her own. The furniture that was mostly hers, and the sound and images of her chosen soap opera with the smell of the cigarettes enacted a feeling of home and of authenticity—of cultural comfort and familiarity. Igshaan titled this installation *Jou Ma se Poes* (translating from Afrikaans to mean 'Your Mother's Pussy'), which, he states, is 'an expression for me saying "fuck it", you know. To hell with it, I give up, I accept that all of this is who I am, and I'm not going to fight it anymore . . . I'm Coloured'.

Adding to this complex relationship to his Coloured identity, Adams previously ignored his religiosity and focused on observations and mediations upon his sexuality and gender orientation based on an assumption that there was no way to reconcile being both gay and Muslim. This period in the artist's life was by no means a peaceful time, as Adams felt a lingering nostalgia and need for spirituality that was amplified by the fear of losing his family and friends. Thus, Adams considered an attempt to negotiate his sexuality and reconvert and adopt an Islamic way of life. To reconcile these conflicting identity formations, he joined The Inner Circle, a group of gay Muslims in Cape Town (see 4.6), and started to explore the possibility of being both gay and Muslim in the context of Cape Town. Adams both resisted and unpacked the conflict he assumed to exist between his sexual and religious identity through his art performance. Adams explained that his performed death implies a 'death of inner fear and conflict of how and who to be, and a celebration of a reconciliation of being a gay Muslim'. In our informal conversation, Adams stated that now he feels no doubt and that his search for identity had reached a peaceful and satisfactory conclusion of self-knowledge and acceptance. This sentiment was most clear in his statement to me that 'I'm done with identity'. The bravery shown by Adams to encounter and challenge the religious authority of

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Muslims in Cape Town and to openly enact his sexual identity is also an indication of his sense of citizenship and belonging within a democratic South Africa. This can be seen through his remarks in our last conversation, when he expressed 'I know I'm protected by the constitution and I'm definitely prepared to claim my rights as a gay South African. I do feel safe enough to live queer life out in the open, but ultimately claiming my Islamic identity comes from wanting to live authentically'.[138]



FIGURE 5.15 Igshaan Adams, *Jou Ma se Poes*, performative installation, 2009.

A few days before Adams performed 'Please Remember Me II' at the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition I visited him at Greatmore Studios in Woodstock.[139] We were not yet in the position of researcher and research interlocutor; we were establishing our friendship and exchanging our views on art. On this particular day, we walked to nearby coffee shop to sit and talk. After ordering coffee, we proceeded to engage in a very intimate and open personal conversation in which Adams explained his urge to re-establish his ties with his father and friends despite his fear of being excluded. He went on to explain that he felt a need to be reborn and accepted, and to celebrate a death of his uncertainty by reconciling his personal dual-faced conflict. He explained to me his attempts to reconcile what appeared to him to be a clash of identities

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[138] Igshaan Adams, Facebook interview with the author, 30 November 2015.

[139] Greatmore Studio was established in 1998, and in 2007 was registered as an NPO. It provides a studio for local and international artists to work freely and develop their skills. See http://www.greatmoreart.org/greatmore_studio/Home.html (last modified 5 September 2016).

through 'Please Remember Me II', involving a strive toward healing the rift that was created between the artist and his family, his friends, and the Muslim community as a result of his sexuality. Knowing that a performance of his death would implicate his father in a sensory experience, the artist instigated a re-connection with his father by purposely simulating the rituals and feelings emerging from the loss of his son.

This sensorial performance strategy of simulating death and its corresponding religious rituals indeed served to generate the missing link between Adams and his father. After the performance at the *Three Abdullahs,* the artist asked me if I could provide a lift for his father and mother to the Bonteheuwel Township. We drove for about forty minutes, during which time the artist's parents discussed and reflected on their feelings around their son's performative death. Adams' mother enjoyed the performance and clearly articulated her pride around the 'strong personality' of her son. Adams' father pointed out that it was his first time performing the Islamic cleansing and wrapping ritual and explained to Adams' mother that, 'I fear losing my son . . . he is good son, he works hard . . . I try to understand him and accept him as he is'. Therefore, whilst the performance aided the artist to overcome his fear of being rejected and excluded, it also facilitated a feeling of fear in his father around the loss of his son. The significant shift in dynamics between father and son was revealed to me, when, months after the performance I conducted research at the 2014 Grahamstown National Art Festival with anthropologist Heike Becker. There we met Igshaan and his father before they again performed 'Please Remember Me II' (renamed 'Bismillah'[140]) as part of *The Blind Spot* art project.[141] There, his father not only accepted the fact that Igshaan is gay but was also open to meeting his boyfriend.

### 5.5 Weaam Williams

Igshaan Adams' 'Please Remember Me II' at the *Three Abdullahs* exhibition was curated to sit alongside Weaam Williams' 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega*'.* Williams' work stood in direct contrast to that of Adams: while Adams performed

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[140] The significance of renaming the performance to 'Bismillah' is discussed in chapter Seven.
[141] *The Blind Spot* was a collaborative art project curated by art historian, Ruth Simbao. It included four site-specific performances from well-known South African artists, including 'Barongwa' by Mohau Modisakeng; 'Bismillah' by Igshaan Adams; 'Everse' by Simone Heymans, Ivy Kulundu, Chiro Carolyn Nott, and Joseph Coetzee; and 'What difference does it make who is speaking?' by Mbali Khoza.

aesthetic rituals of death, Williams explored the dramatic scenes of a Cape Malay wedding. 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega' consisted of several audio-visual performances wherein Williams invited her cousin to perform the pinning of a *medora* (a turban-like headdress) on a bride's head as if it were her wedding day. This was accompanied by the musical performances of a Malay choir (the Happy Boys) and Indonesian and Afrikaans opera performed by a Fairuze Simons, alongside the screening of an audio-visual installation titled 'Ancestral Omega'.

Worn by Malay brides, the *medora* is a traditional headdress made from very fine cloth and heavily embroidered with pure gold or silver thread in symbolic patterns. It is known amongst Muslim women in Cape Town as a symbol of purity. Williams' focus on the *medora* in her work served as a vehicle for reflection upon the visibility of Muslim women in the reclamation of local history, particularly that of the Cape Malay people who were dispossessed and brought to South Africa through Dutch colonialism. For Williams, the *medora* is of particular personal significance, as it is linked to her great-grandmother, Hadji Gadija Shadley Awaldien, who learned about the *medora* from an Indonesian woman she met in Mecca in the 1920s. Upon her return to Cape Town, according to Williams, she was the only woman who held the knowledge to craft this costume in South Africa.

Weaam Williams was born in 1979 on Walmer Estate, a middle-class area inhabited mostly by Muslims. At the age of four, she enrolled at the Al-Rahmaniah Islamic school, where she learned to recite Quranic verses and their interpretations. Williams grew up in Cape Town, in what she described as a middle-class, conservative, religious Cape Malay family. Yet, in spite of this, in secular high school she adopted a hippie style and joined a rock band. Upon her completion of high school, Williams enrolled at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and studied English literature whilst embracing Rastafarian culture. Today, Williams is married to Naphtalim Vector, who was born Christian but converted to Islam and adheres to Sufi rituals as a way of practicing his spirituality. A poet, filmmaker, and singer, Williams describes herself as a 'Muslim feminist', and claims that her main concern rests with everyday patriarchal manifestations of power over women and their social agency—not only within the Muslim community but within society at large.

This concern is evident in the artist drawing upon a personal connection to the history of the *medora* and reflection on collective identification with Muslim dress codes in the region. 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega' brings to light Muslim women's aesthetic formations of Cape Malay cultural styles to highlight acts of resistance to the absence and invisibility of Muslim women in the male-dominated historical narrative of performances and formations of the Cape Muslim community. 'The Medora' performance enacts a continuous visibility and agency of women in the historical and present formations of a Cape Muslim aesthetic style, and in the broader society of Cape Town and world at large. Williams' enactment of female visibility and her emphasis on their involvement in the formations of Cape Malay aesthetic styles embodies both the historical and contemporary resistance of Muslim women against male authority over public narratives and formations of the Cape Muslim community. Here, the emphasis on the dual themes of invisibility and agency were stressed through the accompanying 'Ancestral Omega' audio-visual installation, in which Williams is heard narrating the following:
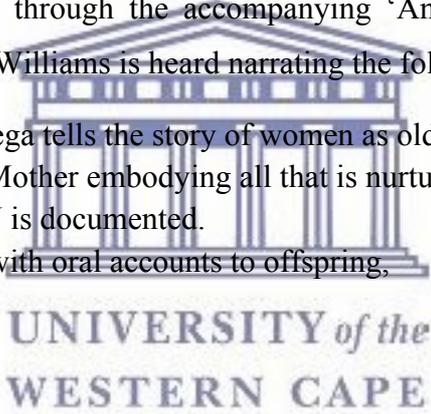
Ancestral Omega tells the story of women as old as earth.
The intuitive Mother embodying all that is nurturing.
For HISTORY is documented.
Her story lay with oral accounts to offspring,
and theirs,
and theirs,
and theirs
DILUTED.
. . .
Her story lay in your taste buds.
Those finely made delicacies,
RECIPES
From generations across the sea.
Her story lays in intricate *mehndi* which fades,
Her story is illusive like the wind,
It invades your senses and is then forgotten.

Her story is one of symbols and patterns.
Architecture of headgear.
Her story is beauty masking pain.[142]

[142] To view a video of 'Ancestral Omega' visit
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJF9QmDYpwI&feature=share (posted 29 August 215).

Whilst Williams' live performance of pinning a *medora* focuses on the agency of Muslim women in the aesthetic formations of Cape Malay cultural styles, her visual installation 'Ancestral Omega' addresses the 'diluted' and 'forgotten' agency and visibility of women in general. Through this work, Williams expressed her concern for the broader female population, and stressed the need to acknowledge their sense of citizenship and belonging to broader society. What is significant here is that William's strong sense of women's agency is driven by both her Islamic and secular beliefs and commitment. Through her artwork she mediates aesthetics of Cape Malays within a secular conversation about women's visibility and agency. Williams performed the aesthetics of Cape Malay style through the visual forms of the *medora,* the red *fez*, the Malay choir performers, and the use of various Islamic sounds. The video installation accompanies Williams' 'Medora' performance, which begins with an Arabic love song, followed by Malayu and Afrikaans songs performed by a Malay choir (the Happy Body), and ending with Fairuze Simons singing Indonesian opera. This was not a religious enactment but rather a symbolic embodiment of the diversity of cultural aesthetics of the Cape Muslim locality.

Williams performed the 'The Medora: Ancestral Omega' three times in Cape Town: at the Homecoming Centre at the District Six Museum, at *Three Abdullahs* exhibition at CAS, and at the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (GIPCA) live art festival in 2014.[143] At the first solo performance at the District Six Homecoming Centre, Williams included a buffet of Cape Muslim food through which she enacted a symbolic embodiment of Muslim women's agency in the formation and development of Cape Muslim aesthetic styles. In the first and third (solo) performances, the majority of the audience appeared familiar with the rhythm of each song and enthusiastic to engage. This was evident in the audience clapping hands and singing along with the performers. Here it is significant to note that the rhythmic sound of minstrel troupes and the Cape Malay choir songs are performed in various cultural gatherings to embody a long-standing tradition of Muslims in the Cape and their attachment to the cultural heritage of East Asia. The aesthetic style of

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[143] In 2002, the District Six Museum purchased the Sacks Futeran building and established the Homecoming Centre to showcase some of the Museum's new work. The Centre provides opportunities to view films from the Museum's archive as well as promotional footage on the Museum, storytelling, and cultural performances. The Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (GIPCA) is responsible for the annual live art festival that was established by the University of Cape Town in December 2008. It is one of South Africa's premiere annual cultural events.

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the Cape Malay choir and the minstrels are known not only across diverse Muslims' communities, but are also familiar to members of other diverse South African communities.

William's work clearly enacts a re-assertion of Cape Muslim aesthetics into the public culture of Cape Town, an attempt to claim visibility and agency for Muslim women, and, more broadly, an attempt to make visible and audible the sublimated voices of diverse oppressed and marginalised communities within Cape Town. The appeal of Williams' work across diverse communities and her emphasis upon the reclamation of history and cultural practice of marginalised groups in South Africa is evident not only in her art practice, but also her work as a filmmaker.

Williams has produced and directed several documentary films, most notably, the *Hip Hop Revolution* (2006), which explores the emergence of hip-hop music in Cape Town and the ways in which it inspires political and social change in Cape Town. More recently, Williams has been heavily involved with the claims towards first people status of the so-called 'Khoisan movement', which has in recent years gained prominence among the Capetonian majority population, people of mixed descent, and so-called 'Coloureds'. Williams has been working since 2007 on producing and directing three interrelated documentaries (*A Khoe Story 1*, *A Khoe Story 2*, and *A Khoe Story 3*) that she describes as carefully documenting the historical narrative, the unspoken genocide, and the ambiguous representations and cultural rights of Khoi people in the post-apartheid state. This *Khoe Story* series has been broadcasted by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and screened in many schools in Cape Town as educational material. Besides these feature length documentaries, Williams has produced and directed many short documentaries, all of which signify her political activism, strive for social change, and belonging to the history and present struggle of Cape Town society.

In my conversations with Williams, she placed lots of emphasis on her sense of national belonging and responsibility toward the marginalised communities of Cape Town society. Williams' artistic involvement in social and political debate is driven by her strong sense of belonging and identification with the Cape Malay, with

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women, and with those that she regards as the 'oppressed people . . . the Black'.[144] William's political and social commitment to diverse oppressed groups within Cape Town is a concern often reflected in her artwork. During both my social exchanges and formal interviews with Williams, I noticed that she often focuses dialogue around patriarchy, and this is also evident in her artwork and everyday exchanges. When we spoke about the issue of belonging to Cape Town society, Williams firmly asserted that, 'Yes, I belong', but made clear that her first and foremost concern rests with women's rights, agency, and social roles alongside her commitment to represent and join the struggle of oppressed black communities. When considering these social exchanges and comments alongside William's art and film practice, we see a clear indication of a multiple and coexistent sense of belonging to the Muslim community and to the broader society of Cape Town. Put differently, this is indicative of the integration of Williams' communitarian and national belonging, and her sense of cultural difference and citizenship.

Considered together, the practices of Williams, the Essop twins, Petersen, and Adams reflect, mediate, and construct an infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity and public visibility in Cape Town. Bringing the work of these artists together as a subject of analysis here serves to draw attention to how contemporary art practice relates to significant research questions in this thesis. These artworks are all indicative of a complex mediation of Muslim communitarian and national belonging to post-apartheid South African society whilst also signifying a Muslim aesthetic politics of belonging and citizenship. Further to this, the work of Muslim contemporary artists provides an insight into the aesthetic formations of Muslims in Cape Town including the hybridity of Muslim dress codes, the complexity of their identity formations, the diversity of Muslim sounds, aesthetic of Muslim food, and alternative performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town—all of which are subjects of analysis within this thesis.

### 5.7 Art and Muslim Public Visibility

What is of particular significance here is that the art of Essop, Petersen, Adams and Williams signifies a proliferation of artistic performances of Muslim-ness in urban art and spaces in Cape Town, and this exposure enhances Muslim visibility at local,

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[144] Weaam Williams' comments throughout this section are cited from an interview with the author, 2 February 2014, District Six.

national, and international levels. Further, the embodiment of the aesthetic of Muslim-ness in these artistic performances forms part of Cape Town urbanity. Significantly, the contemporary art industry promoted the exposure of these artists' work, and as a result served to enhance public visibility and a better understanding of Muslim styles at national and global levels. Given the artists' emphases on addressing social issues affecting Muslim youth in South Africa and the world at large, it is important to note that the work of these artists received considerable traction in the cultural landscape of South Africa and beyond.

For instance, the *Unrest* exhibition toured various art museums and galleries in South Africa as well as being listed as an official Art Week Cape Town 2014 event.[145] Beyond their solo exhibitions, the Essop brothers have participated in numerous local and international group exhibitions and their art has been reported upon in most local media and several global art news networks.[146] Their reputation continues to grow (for example, they were the recipients of the 2014 Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Arts) both within the South African cultural landscape and beyond.[147] Petersen has exhibited her photography in many galleries in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and her work has been featured at the Cape Town Art Fair (2015 and 2016), at the Johannesburg Art Fair (2015 and 2016), and in high-impact fashion publication, *Skattie*—which (in partnership with Art South Africa), declared Petersen as an emerging artist to watch in July 2015. This recognition of

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[145] *Unrest* was exhibited at the National Art Festival, Grahamstown, 3-13 July 2014; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum in Port Elizabeth, 24 July-31 August 2014; Durban Art Gallery, 18 September-26 October 2014; Iziko South African National Gallery, 28 November 2014-25 January 2015; Johannes Stegman Art Gallery Bloemfontein, 4 March-2 April 2015; Stand Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, 21 April-20 June 2015; and University of Potchefstroom At Gallery, 30 July-18 September 2015.

[146] Exhibitions include: *Cape Town Art Fair*, Cape Town, 2015; *From Sitting to Selfie*, Standard Bank Gallery, South Africa, 2014; *Am I not a man and a brother? Am I not a woman and a sister?* James Harris Gallery, Seattle, 2013; *Rendez-Vous 13*, Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne, France, 2013; *Photography of The Rainbow Nation*, Museum Beelden aan Zee, Den Haag, Netherlands, 2012; *Les Rencontres d'Arles 2012*, a photography festival held annually in France; *Next Generation*, Thami Mnyele Foundation, Amsterdam, 2012; *Rencontre de Bamako: 9th African Photography Biennale*, Bamako, Mali, 2011; *Paris Photo: African Emerging Photography*, presented by Bamako Encounters, Paris, 2011; *Figure and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography*, V&A Museum, London; *Peek-a-boo Current South Africa*, 2011, at The Helsinki Art Museum, Finland; *The Dakar Biennale*, 2010, Senegal; *Integration and Resistance in the Global Age*, Tenth Havana Biennial, Cuba; *BREDAPHOTO 2010*, The Netherlands.

[147] Funded by the Standard Bank (one of South Africa's largest and longest serving banks) the Young Artist Awards form part of the National Arts Festival programme. These awards are regarded as the some of the most prestigious awards in South Africa, and they are geared toward the recognition of established South African artists of a relatively young age who are yet to achieve adequate national and international exposure.

Petersen's work in commercial art spaces, is also reflected in prestigious art institutions, as evidenced by the fact that the National Art Gallery in Cape Town bought four images from Petersen's *I'm Royal* photographic series, and by the fact that her work has been reviewed by notable art critics and journalists. In the last few years, I have also witnessed a rapid growth in the profile of Igshaan Adams' work, through multiple performances of 'Please Remember Me II'/ 'Bismillah' at various local, national, and transnational art forums and, most impressively, Adams' work was exhibited at the Frieze Art Fair in New York in 2016.

Despite the remarkable visibility of these artworks on local, national and global levels, their space within the public sphere would appear to be almost socially exclusive to art audiences, who often belong to middle and upper classes. The point here is that art performances that place in spaces that are highly charged by class difference and audience access to art infrastructure (Sifakakis 2007). The work of Igshaan Adams reflects an engagement with class differences and its related sense of exclusion (as evident in the work *Jou Ma se Poes*). Importantly, the absence of Somali artists and their apparent lack of engagement with art in Cape Town also reinforces this point: it is their socioeconomic situation (most Somali migrants belong to the lower socio-economic classes) that places them at the periphery of the urban art scene.

### 5.8 Aesthetics of Belonging and Citizenship

A close analysis of artwork by Capetonian Muslim contemporary artists aims to explore the aesthetic strategies used by practitioners to negotiate and reconcile Muslim identity and belonging in the context of post-apartheid, democratic, secular South Africa. What is importantly made clear through an analysis of these strategies and their context, is that these art works and art practices are reflective of the social and historical patterns and experiences of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century in Cape Town.

An analysis of the work of theses artists clearly indicates particular political motivations that inform their practice and their focus on Islamophobia, the history of slavery, and Islam in Cape Town. Further to this, on my conversations with these artists I was able to trace several common concerns including their awareness of their rights of equal citizenship, their parallel-belonging to South Africa and to the

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Muslim community, their aesthetically coded sensorial integration of religious Islamic values and national secular cultural identification, and finally, the intimate formation of their own subjectivity as secular South Africans and pious Muslims.

Given that the artworks discussed here unpack the various ways in which Muslims position themselves within the multicultural context of Cape Town these works indicate an ongoing attempt by Muslim artists to bridge their dual belonging and identification with the particularity of Muslim cultural styles alongside that of the secular post-apartheid South African nation. Of importance in this regard is that the work of these artists indicates a reconciliation of their uncertainty regarding being a Muslim yet belonging to a secular nation.

What is particularly interest here is that the artwork of each of these artists expressed different social experiences as Muslims living within a secular environment. For example, the Essop twins' artwork is motivated by what they perceived as a misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims. This perspective resonated with Thania Petersen's statement that "the problem is not being Muslim, but actually it is what people expect from Muslims". Considered together, the work of the Essop twins and Petersen points to Muslim lived experiences of tension within a secular society. Further, the work also indicates how the integration of Islam and the secular is not merely a struggle to reconcile religion and secular values, but equally challenged by broader public misperceptions of Islam and Muslims. Put differently, the work of the Essops and Petersen alludes to the challenges faced by Muslim living in a secular society where the broader public assumes a mutual exclusivity between Islam and secularism. In contrast, Igshaan Adams and Weamm Williams' artworks embody a reconciliation between a sense of exclusion and invisibility of both the LGBT and female members of the Muslim community. Adams expounds upon this by relating his 'inner conflict' not to broader public misperceptions of Islam, but rather he relates this more particularly to the challenge of being accepted as a gay Muslim within the Muslim community.

The differing interpretations of the tension and the experiences of living as Muslims presented by these artists are indicative of multiple understandings of the relationship between secularism and religion. The Essop twins, Thania Petersen and Weam Williams perceived secular value and practices as representative of Western

culture. Although Petersen assumed a rigid polarity between Islam and secular, William sees Islam as a secular religion arguing that Western culture (and corresponding secularism) emerged after Islam and thus drew upon it. For Igshaan Adams secular values are and not understood as merely Western, but rather understood as local values promoted by post-apartheid constitutions. What is clear through a comparison of these artist perspectives and differing social experiences, is that religious practices and public identification can be understood as indication of diverse approaches to secularism.

This continuous process of resistance, reconciliation and integration of religion and secularism is not merely limited to art performances, but is also vested in everyday social experiences and public identifications of these artists. Further, the sense of citizenship and multiple belongings, the understanding of cultural particularity as South African citizens, a sense of religious aesthetic commonality as members of the Muslim *Ummah*, Islamic secular identity formations, and the constant tension and on-going negotiation between secular and Islamic values in Cape Town is a shared experience among most research interlocutors. This is something that was made particularly clear when considering visual Muslim bodily formations in secular contexts (discussed further in chapter Six).

A significant contribution of these artists comes in the fact that they subvert the assumed anathema between secularism and Islamic traditions (Bangstad 2007) by performing aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness within a secular institutional structures (such as galleries, art fairs, museums); hence evoking a secular sensorial experience of Muslim-ness that is cultural and not religious. Looking closely, these artworks signify Muslim modernity in Cape Town and their integration of secular structures and contemporary art methods in their strategic enactment of the aesthetic style of Muslim individuals and the Muslim imagined community within the secular society of Cape Town.

Considered in sum, the artists' embodied integration of religion and secularism in turn signifies Muslim formations of secular religious sensibility and culturalisation as South African citizens. Further, the discussion attempts to illustrate how contemporary art practice is capable of presenting a sense of co-existent belonging to the cultural particularity of Cape Muslims, the South African nation, and the

transnational Muslim *Ummah,* enacted and mediated through art practice. To this end, their work reflects a sophisticated negotiation of multiculturalist democratic politics of cultural difference through performances that reveal a sense of parallel belonging, confirming both identification with South African national citizenship and a connection to a Muslim cultural style. The art of the Essop twins, Petersen, Adams, and Williams offer a critically engaged approach to Muslim identity formation and the multiple ways Muslims negotiate, reconcile, and integrate their religious and secular practices and public identification. Motivated by this understanding, I argue that the absence of Somali artists in Cape Town is indicative of the relative lack of alternative politics in the Somali community and Somali identity formations. The lack of Somali alternative performances of Muslim-ness limits formations of the 'counter-public' and the possibilities of cultural hybridity. This, however, does not suggest a static notion of culture and identity among the Somali imagined community in Cape Town; Somalis in Cape Town are culturally super-diverse, and their cultural dynamic is influenced by a dialectic of religion and secularism and of closure and global cultural flow.[148]

This tenor within the work of Muslim Capetonian artists working in the field of contemporary art today is reflective of the analysis put forward by sociologist Nikos Papastergiadis (2012), who observes that 'art does not proceed as an investigative exposé followed by a judicious declaration of truth. It does not possess a fixed knowledge of things, but rather develops a critical attitude towards the possibilities in and between things' (13). Papastergiadis, who has written extensively on issues surrounding visual art and its relationship to identity and cosmopolitanism, has pays particular attention to the way in which contemporary artists negotiate complex histories and the impact of transnationalism in the contemporary art world. His arguments about the 'relational mode of thinking' in art hold particular relevance in considering the work of Capetonian Muslim artists. This is because within their work we clearly witness Papastergiadis' argument that contemporary art 'gives form to alternate imaginings and emergent systems of making sense of our place in the world' (13). Following this approach to the function and role of contemporary art, we see more clearly how it is that the work of Capetonian Muslim artists provides an

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[148] For further analysis of the diversity of Somali communities in Cape Town, refer to chapter Four (4.9, 4.10 and 4.11).

ideal starting point from which to consider the 'present order of things' in the local context of Cape Town, whilst also offering a complex bridge for the representation and investigation of local and global identities, histories, belongings, and identifications. The ability for art to, as Papastergiadis notes, 'give form to alternate imaginings' and new systems for 'making sense of our place in the world' is of vital significance in my analysis here (12).

Importantly, the artworks discussed in this chapter are also reflective of wider concerns within visual culture and contemporary understandings of the potential of visual art. In my engagement with aesthetics in this chapter and beyond, I draw from the work of visual culture theorist Jill Bennett, who reassesses the 'practical' value of aesthetics to consider how aesthetic practices imagine social relationships and generate new spaces and operations beyond fixed social identities. Her work asks what art can do in the field of social relations beyond what is already achieved in social science. Bennett (2012) indicates that art and aesthetics encounter 'problems', and develop 'practices [to] reimagine social relationships in the face of these problems . . . they generate new spaces and terms of operation beyond social identities already in place' (5). This concern is also reflected in Alfred Gell's (2006) anthropological theorisation of art as a 'technology of enchantment' through which an individual strives to secure acquiescence in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed (43). As indicated in the discussion presented in this chapter, analyses of Bennett and Gell can be clearly seen in the art of the Essop brothers, Adams, Petersen, and Williams. Their work generates a new space for negotiating alternative Muslim identities within an imagined community of Muslims.

### 5.9 Artistic Mediations of Cape Muslim Styles

The artists' aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness include a convergence of visual, gustatory, olfactory, and aural sensorial enactments, each of which mediates aesthetics of belonging to the cultural particularity of Capetonian Muslims, their secular identification as South African citizens, and their Islamic identification and belonging to the Muslim *Ummah*. Each of these artists effects a collapsing together of the religious and cultural aesthetic formations of their identification and everyday practices. They strategically mediate Cape Muslim religious aesthetics of Islam within a secular culture of Cape Town society, and their symbolic enactments of

Cape Muslim styles ultimately signify a cultural formation that is not merely religious.

We might take as an example the use of sound within the artworks of these artists and the way it functions as an embodiment of the diversity of Cape Muslim cultural styles, serving to locate the religiosity and cultural style of Muslims in Cape Town within a sphere of transnational influence. Examples of this include the use of Arabic language in the performances of Adams and Essop; in this context, Arabic becomes symptomatic of a sense of Muslim religious belonging, and attachment to Islam and to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. However, the Essops did not limit their enactment of Islamic identification to the sound of Arabic language, but rather enacted a religious aesthetic through the sound of the Urdu language that is symptomatic of an Indian cultural aesthetic. At the same time, their use of Urdu and Petersen's use of Malayu and Indonesian appears to indicate both Muslim belonging and nostalgia for Asian heritage, while the use of Afrikaans seems to signify national belonging and South African citizenship.

As noted by anthropologist Corinne Kratz (2002) in her analysis of the reception of her own photographs of Okiek people from Kenya, the gallery and exhibition space is one that generates mediations and imaginations. As an institutional space, the exhibition space inherently connotes a politics of representation that 'conveys authority, [so that] images and interpretations presented [there] are often assumed to be true and incontestable'. Yet at the same time, exhibitions are able to promote communicative practices and mediation strategies that create a space of silence that triggers viewers' imaginations and promotes their own subjectivity in the construction of meaning. Kratz points out that this subjective process of constructing meaning combines both the assimilation and exoticisation of a subject. Art thus encourages an aesthetic politics that mediates cultural style to trigger viewers' subjective and collective imaginations to create meaning, in accordance with the philosopher R. G. Collingwood's (1958) definition of art as an 'imaginative experience' evoked by aesthetic sensibility (96-7).

Birgit Meyer's (2015) anthropological approach to art drew commonalities between the aesthetics politics of artwork and her own anthropological approach to the material culture of religion. Reading the work of Capetonian Muslim artists through

Meyer's (2011, 2012a, 2015) lens conjures an understanding of the practice of mediating aesthetic sensational formations of Muslims' lived and imagined religion. Indeed, the artists' imaginative experience of mediating aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness in staged spaces of exhibitions and galleries is embodied and driven by their public and everyday performance of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. Each artist's performance presents a 'social drama' (Turner 1957, 1988) that is driven by their personal lived or imagined history and social experience, reflecting a conflicted attempt at reconciliation of the complexities of her/his identity formation and the celebration of being a pious Muslim, and a reclamation of local histories—including the sublimated experiences of women and gay Muslims.

An appreciation of how artworks offer analytical insight into the aesthetic politics and social drama of an artwork can be established through an understanding of the entwined relationship between art practice and ethnography, where artistic performances are capable of an ethnographic encounter that is akin to non-site-specific fieldwork (Marcus 2010). George Marcus' conceptualisation of art as non-site-specific fieldwork explains the way in which art embodies an imaginary scene of social narratives that are formed through aesthetic compensations. Marcus and fellow anthropologist Fred Myers argue that 'art has come to occupy a space long associated with anthropology, becoming one of the main sites for tracking, representing, and performing the effects of difference in contemporary life' (1995, 1).

Myers and Marcus' (1995) approach is but one example suggestive of the benefits of an ethnographic approach to art and its sensorial affect. The turn toward an understanding of the intertwined nature of art practice, ethnography, and anthropology has been a considerable focal point of interest in visual culture studies over the last two decades. In contemporary art theory, this is understood as the 'ethnographic turn', which refers to the wave of art practices, productions, and events that have shown significant similarities to ethnographic research and anthropological approaches to representational practices and cultural difference (Rutten, Dienderen and Soetaert 2013). In visual culture studies, the 'tipping point' for this shift is commonly attributed to the work of art historian Hal Foster—in particular, his text 'The Artist as Ethnographer?' (1995). In this work, Foster claims

that anthropology has become the common language of contemporary artistic practice and critical discourse. By which he means that visual culture is 'read as text and texts as microcosmic cultures' (Hopkins 2003). Though Foster's model is intended to subvert the authority of anthropology, it has been argued that his approach reinforces the position of anthropology by positioning the anthropologist as the expert reader of culture-as-text (Hopkins 2003).

Throughout my engagement and conversation with the artists I observed their efforts in studying and researching the topics of their artworks. For instance, in the process of making the 'Baqa' installation, Petersen joined me for the *Urs* ritual commemorating Shaikh Yousf Macassr at his *kramat* in Macassar.[149] For Petersen, the part of the ritual that stood out was the moment when they change the clothes of the Sheikh Yousef shrine. In particular, Petersen showed interest in the various colours of the clothes, and expressed her desire to search and learn more what each colour signifies.

### *5.10 Conclusion*

Drawing upon discussions of contemporary art in institutional contexts, this chapter began with an analysis of the *Unrest* exhibition before investigating the ways in which selected Capetonian Muslim artists mediate Muslim religious urbanity within the institutionalised space of the art gallery. This discussion was framed by an understanding that institutionalised settings target the gaze of both local and international audiences, thus encouraging a complex local *and* global representation and reflection on Muslim religious urbanity in the region. Through an analysis of the work of the Essop twins, Petersen, Adams, and Williams, this chapter revealed the ways in which art reflects a conscious sense of co-existent belonging to the cultural particularity of Cape Muslims, the South African nation, and the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Further, my discussion explored artistic strategies that negotiate and reconcile Muslim identity in a secular context, and revealed how art can negotiate Muslim visibility and agency in the historical and contemporary formation of Cape Muslim cultural styles.

My analysis attests to the ways in which Capetonian Muslim artists' aesthetic politics is capable of forging an ethnographic encounter that is akin to non-site-

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[149] The *Urs* ritual is explained in chapter Seven.

specific fieldwork (Marcus 2010). It does this by showcasing how the public visibility of Islam is mediated through aesthetic formations of the visual, sound, and food—sensorial forms that each make visible the Islamic identification and cultural style of Muslims in the public sphere. Discussion of these sensorial forms in art practices opens the ethnographic analysis presented in following chapters, which are thematically focused on the sensorial affect of visual, sounds, and food performances as representative of Muslims' everyday practices of self-presentation and formal performances of Muslim-ness. This paves the way for an in-depth analysis of particular visual aesthetic forms including design, dress, architecture, and text—all of which signify an aesthetic embodiment of Islam and will be explored in the next chapter.

# Chapter Six

## *Visual Mediations of Islam in Cape Town*

### *6.1 Introduction*

To understand how 'public Islam' is mediated and the ways in which it is 'discursive, performative and participative' (Eickelman and Anderson 2003), it is vital to consider the material culture of religion as manifest in visual forms, including dress codes and the urban landscape (i.e., the built environment, text, and signage). These various forms are each indicative of the significance of visual culture in the formation of Muslim communities and their visibility within the context of Cape Town. My aim here is to reveal the ways in which design elements serve as visual aesthetic formations that mediate not only an identification with Islam, but also a mediation of citizenship in the context of post-apartheid South Africa and its subsequent emphasis on multiculturalism, diversity, and cultural rights. Throughout this chapter I provide an analysis of how 'aesthetic formations' are engendered through the experiences, behaviours, and approaches of Capetonian Muslims and Somalis living in Cape Town. In so doing, my analysis provides insight into how Capetonian Muslims understand the public Islamic identification as being part and parcel of the culture of post-apartheid South African citizenship. Drawing particular attention to the ways that Muslims in Cape Town utilise design for mediating the connection between local community and citizenship alongside belonging to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*, this chapter illuminates the ways in which discrete visual forms reflect a complex engagement with Islam that negotiates lived local experience and history alongside that of Muslim religious aesthetics internationally.

To observe aesthetic formations of public Islam and the way in which Muslims in Cape Town mediate and enact their cultural religious style it is vital to consider the visual-aesthetic formations of Muslim communities and their visibility within the public culture of Cape Town and beyond. Mapping the significance of design in visual aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness by drawing on analysis of research interlocutor experiences, this chapter begins with an analysis of various approaches

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

to Muslim dress (6.2). The discussion then moves on to investigate forms of mediation forged through the built environment (6.3) and discuss *kramats*, mosques, the Bo-Kaap neighbourhood in Cape Town, text (including Arabic calligraphy), and signage (most notably, restaurant and *halaal* grocery signposting). My analysis and discussion of visual-aesthetic formations throughout this chapter traces the history of these formations to provide a contemporary account of Muslim visibility in the public culture and collective imagination of Cape Town.

The analysis and discussion of this chapter considers the sensorial affect of visual performances of Muslim-ness in the formation of Muslim subjects and communities through a consideration of the ways in which Muslim bodily formations enact their visual-aesthetic commonality and sensory experiences of being Muslim. In so doing, it examines the ways in which visual formations and designs are charged with a sense of sacredness (Morgan 2005, 2010; Meyer 2008), which in turn demonstrates how visual culture successfully evokes Muslim Islamic identification and triggers a sense of Islamic identity in Cape Town. This chapter makes clear how the 'practice of meditation' is not merely an exterior representation, but rather functions as an 'embodied sensorial style' (Meyer 2009a) that facilitates a sensorial affect influencing the formation of the subjectivities of the beholder (6.4). This chapter thus contributes to the overall aim of this thesis by providing an ethnographic study of the exterior and interior sensorial affects of the visual performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town and their role in the mediation of a sense of Muslim belonging in the post-apartheid context of Cape Town.

### 6.2 Muslim Bodily Formations

Aesthetic embodiment of Muslim-ness in Cape Town is evident in visual formations of dress through which Muslims strategically perform their Islamic identification to each other and to the larger society of Cape Town. The following discussion aims to provide insight into how bodily formations are tightly bound to performances of public Islam, the coming together of Islamic and secular styles in Muslim fashion, and the culturalisation of citizenship. The account and discussion below explores both the motives and experiences of Muslims who publicly enact their identification with Islam and the larger multicultural society of Cape Town.

*6.2.1 Hijab Fashion Show*

The third *Hijab* Fashion Week South Africa took place on Sunday, 14 June 2015, at The Venue on Imam Haron Road in Cape Town. The show brought together four local Muslim women designers to exhibit their new modest fashion designs as part of the 2015 Eid Collection. The four participating designer labels included Fabulous in *Hijab*, *Hijab*uki ('your *hijab*'), Europa Design Emporium, and A-Zee Scarves, each of which showed innovative styles and an emphasis upon beauty within Muslim women's dress codes. The popularity of the event can be measured by the fact that although the entry fee was 100 Rand, hundreds of Muslim women attended the event and together formed a Muslim public. Despite this event being for women only, I was permitted to sit in the kitchen from where I saw and heard the event. Upon arrival, attendees were welcomed with Malay *koeksisters* and tea and at 9:30 a.m., Sharmia Hoosen Luyt (the master of ceremonies) opened the events by welcoming the crowd in Arabic: 'asalamu alekum wa rahmatu Allah' ('peace upon you and God mercy') and *marhaban* ('hello'). After attendees were seated, Sharmia called Khadija Hoosen to recite Islamic *Dua'a* (religious scripts of appealing to God blessing). Attendees sat on both sides of the catwalk as each of the four designers proceeded to hold their parades within the show, and various colourful styles of *hijab*, *abaya*, skirts, dresses, shirts, jackets, and coats came down the runway.

The *Hijab* Fashion Week aims first and foremost 'to show the quality of local designers, and to support them by exhibiting their modest clothes design to Muslims and non-Muslims. Second, it aims to provide alternative clothes for Muslim women who want to be fashionable, but still modest according to Islamic codes'.[150] In an interview, Abashiya Achilles, the designer of the Fabulous in *Hijab* label, is the initiator and organiser of the event, explained that, '*Hijab* Fashion Week is not about being Western, and is not about making Muslims more accepted in Cape Town. We Muslims in Cape Town love fashion'. Achilles mentioned that the inspiration behind her initiative was to draw upon Turkish and British (Londoner) *hijab* fashion movements and her own observations of global fashion design, including Islamic and secular styles. She described her fashion style as one that 'modifies liberal clothing styles into modest yet stylish designs that appeal to modest women, Muslim

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[150] Abashiya Achilles' comments in this section are cited from interview with the author, 14 June 2015, Lansdowne.

and non-Muslim'. Achilles' approach is also mirrored in the comments of the designer of the Europa Design Emporium label, who stated:

> We Muslims love fashion and beauty, Islam is fashion, my fashion style is inspired by Cape Town culture. I'm not trying to imitate Western design; I'm trying to move out of this Western box. My style draws on Islamic heritage, my clothing design aims to bring out the inner beauty of modest Muslim women, and to enable Muslim women to fit and be part of Cape Town culture and fashion.[151]

After the event, I stood outside and had brief conversations with many of the attendees, most of whom mentioned the lack of fashionable Islamic clothes in the Cape Town market—especially in the summer, since most summer clothes available on the market are short-sleeved. One of the attendees stated, 'Here we see young Muslim designers coming out to say we are here, see the fashion of Islam'. Another attendee, Tazneem Khan, who is a convert to Islam, stated '*hijab* fashion makes it easier to be Muslim. It is nice to be stylish and modest instead of just wearing black'.

Looking at this empirical riddle through an analytical lens, the Hijab Fashion event signifies an urban infrastructure of public Islam that facilitates performances of Muslim-ness that form a part of and operate within Cape Town. Aesthetic formations evident at the *Hijab* Fashion Week South Africa mediate a public Islam that signifies Muslims' politics of aesthetics in a fusion of visual forms of Islamic piousness and identification with contemporary fashion styles of the broader secular multicultural society of Cape Town. The *Hijab* Fashion Week provides a public platform for Muslim women to announce their piousness, integration with the national clothing styles and trends, and attachment to the Muslim *Ummah*. The emergence and forms of *hijab* fashion indicate a collage of multiple identifications and belongings that embody Cape Muslims' culturalisation as citizens in South Africa.

Radio 786 reported that the event, advertised through Facebook and street posters, was attended by approximately 150 women. This remarkable growing interest in *hijab* fashion is not limited Cape Town; Abashiya Achilles, expressed her plans to organise the Hijab Fashion Week in Johannesburg and Durbin the following year, so that it will become a national event. The increase in Muslim women wearing *hijab* is

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[151] Designer at Europa Design Emporium (anonymous by request), interview with the author,14 June 2015, Lansdowne.

yet to be seen reflected in the contemporary fashion industry of most Muslim societies, regardless of whether Muslims make up the majority or minority. Hence, recently there have emerged various public platforms for *hijab* fashion. Various *hijab* fashion magazines are increasingly published and circulated around the world (through printed and electronic social media), and various annual Islamic fashion events (*Hijab* Fashion Week in London, and Muslim Miss World) have also been on the rise, signifying a religious urbanity that forms part of a global public Islam and Muslim modernity.[152]

Importantly, '*hijab* fashion shows' are mostly attended by members of the middle-class as the vast majority of women in townships and informal settlements in and around Cape Town are unable to participate in these practices of consumption. Further to this, the show's entry fee of 100rand is also indicative of a hindrance and exclusion based on class difference. This however is not to say that *hijab* fashion is limited or pre-determined by class difference, as all classes of Muslims in Cape Town are seen to take on innovative and culturally diverse approaches to *hijab* style.

Although class differences play a significant role in the choice of *hijab* style, the strive to incorporate diverse fashion trends also relates to cultural style. This is particularly pronounced in the styles of Somali women in Cape Town. As an example, although some Somali women are owners of established businesses (and therefore of a higher socio-economic class than many refugees) they appear not to strive to be publically perceived as contemporary or 'stylish'. This is evident in a brief conversation I had with Somali woman Sharifa Hassan in her shop in Bellville CBD. I asked her how she perceives the clothing style of Capetonian Muslim women, and in response she explained that 'Somali women are conservative Muslims, when they are in public, they cover all their body, in respect of their religion and culture'.[153] However, Hassan did not doubt the Capetonian Muslim women's respect for Islam, and she saw their fashionable *hijab* and secular dress style (pants, skirts and shirts) as cultural practices. She explained,

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[152] *Hijab Fashion*, for example, is a monthly fashion magazine for Muslim women, was established in 2004. It is published in London and distributed throughout the Arab world.
[153] Sharifa Hassan's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 12 May 2013, Bellville CBD.

> We have the same religion, we are all Muslim, but our cultures are different, they [Capetonian Muslims] have been here for hundreds years, so they are now South African, we have only been in South Africa for tens of years, hence we still wear the same clothes as in Somalia, I hope our culture will not change here.

Hassan's comments indicate a close identification with cultural practices and beliefs practiced in Somalia; her description of Somali approaches to dress reveals how fashion mediates and reflects a point of separation in the belonging and imagining of a Somali place within the South African rainbow nation.

### *6.2.2 Muslim Culturalisation of Citizenship*

The ways in which *hijab* fashion signifies a Muslim culturalisation of citizenship is not limited to formal events, but is performed in Muslim everyday self-presentation, personal creativity, and passion for fashionable *hijab* styles. Zahra Ismail, a twenty-two-year-old theatre student and aspiring performance artist was born and raised in Cape Town. Ismail's mother is Mauritian-Indian and her father is Algerian. She describes her parents as 'liberal communists', and maintains that she is 'the most religious person in [her] family'.[154] Beneath this description was the intimation that Ismail's parents took a flexible approach to Islamic practices, whereby, whilst they always observed Ramadan and do not consume non-*halaal* goods, they never agreed with their daughter wearing *hijab every day*. Ismail has her own interest in *hijab,* however:

> I learned different styles of pinning and styling *hijab* on YouTube. I was fascinated and I wore a different style everyday, it was an art for me. I always made trendy clothes to accommodate *hijab* and I developed a real interest in the *hijab* fashion world.

When I asked women with whom I worked if they would wear black *hijab* and *abaya*, many of them considered my question as a joke and their responses all had the same thing in common, namely the comment that 'its not our culture'. When I pressed the issue further by asking Hameda Deedat whether she is 'a South African Muslim, or a Muslim South African', she responded:

> The desire to be part of a nation with a common national identity was our struggle and so once democracy was attained in 1994, I could

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[154] Zahra Ismail's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 4 April 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

give back the misleading identity of being 'Indian' to my oppressor and take on an identity that was nationalistic. Not once did I ever feel that my Muslim identity and South African identity were at odds or that one had to dominate the other. So in reflecting on this question I say proudly I am South African. I also suppose that since our constitution enshrines the right to religious freedom to all its citizens we are South Africans of diverse cultures, races, religions and practices, and so, in keeping with that, I would say I am a South African Muslim. I think the only time I would probably say I am a Muslim South African is if Islam and the right to be Muslim was to come under threat in South Africa.[155]

Hameda Deedat is the eldest child of a South African Muslim family of Indian origin. Born in 1970, Deedat had been inducted, initiated, and socialised to be a pious Muslim from a young age. At the age of three, she attended the *madrasah* where she learned various *Dua'a* by heart and by the age of five began fasting full days. Despite this, Deedat was critical of Muslims and throughout her Islamic education she attempted to transcend traditional Islamic dogma. In 1989, she enrolled at the University of Cape Town, where she completed her honours degree in industrial sociology. Deedat's statement affirms her national belonging and sense of citizenship and cultural rights as a Muslim in South Africa. Whilst she acknowledges partially compromising her identification with Indian ethnic groups in the name of reclaiming national citizenship and belonging, Deedat never considered compromising her religious belonging to Islam and the Muslim *Ummah*. This is also reflected in the comments from male research interlocutors such as Husain Essop, who stated, 'I'm South African Indian, I belong to South Africa not to India'. This should not be understood as a total divorce from Indian heritage, but rather as a realisation of post-apartheid multiculturalism and rights of cultural diversity.

The important point here is that Muslim public enactments of cultural difference— either in formal or everyday informal performances—must not be understood as a lack of national belonging. Conversely, *hijab* fashion reveals how public Islamic identification for Muslims in Cape Town is understood as a signifier of Muslim culturalisation of citizenship in the rainbow nation. Gole (2011) points out that Muslim politics of visibility are a form of agency not merely to assert their cultural difference in public, but rather to articulate their sense of citizenship. In Nilüfer

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[155] Hameda Deedat, interview with the author, 4 June 2015, Salt River, Cape Town.

Göle's (2011) words, 'one becomes a citizen as one makes oneself visible to others' (390). Hence, Capetonian Muslims' sense of citizenship is realised and embodied within the multicultural society of Cape Town, and their imagining of the rainbow nation reflects their aesthetic politics of cultural difference. Here, Muslim bodily formations and visual-aesthetics of Muslim-ness serve to mediate their Islamic identification to each other, and to the larger multicultural communities of Cape Town. Muslim endeavours to bridge Islamic communitarian and secular national identification is also seen in their innovative *hijab* fashion events and practices.

This aesthetic politics of Muslim culturalisation as South African citizenship was also observed by Hibah Hendricks (2013) through her ethnography for her master's thesis (a *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project of which this thesis is also a part). Hendricks conducted a seven-month ethnography to explore the emergent politics and forms of *hijab* fashion in Cape Town.[156]. Hendricks narrates the experiences, motives, and challenges of three Muslim women wearing *hijab* in Cape Town. She puts forward three points that are relevant here. Firstly, she explains Muslim culturalisation as citizenship and the ways in which Muslim women in Cape Town appropriate *hijab* fashion to forego their apartheid-made 'Cape Malay' ethnic identity, claiming Islamic religious identity as South African Muslims as distinct from Malay Muslims. Reading Hendricks through the concerns of this thesis, we see the formation of public Islam and a Muslim public forged around an aesthetic style of *hijab* fashion. Secondly, Hendricks' (2013) intimate engagements with Muslim women, and her own experience as a young Muslim living in Cape Town, provide insight into the struggle and reluctance Muslim women encounter while reconciling their Islamic and secular cultural identifications, and the inspiration generated by the certainty of belonging to the Muslim *Ummah*. Thirdly, her ethnography shows the way in which *hijab* fashion forms online (Facebook) and offline (shopping malls) spaces for Muslim publics, which accords with the ever-increased appearance of Islam in post-apartheid Cape Town. Hendricks provides an insight into the emergence of *hijab* fashion in Cape Town through an ethnographic exploration of the increase of *hijab* markets in shopping malls, fashion shows, as well as online marketing, hence demonstrating the enhancement of the visibility of Muslims in public spaces in Cape Town.

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[156] For further discussion of the *Performing the Rainbow Nation* project, refer to chapter Two (2.2).

Of particular importance to the argument here is that many Muslim women in Cape Town do not wear *hijab* or wear it only for specific religious rituals and not within everyday self-presentation and practices. In such a way, *hijab* is not a local religious practice among Cape Muslims, rather it appears to emerge as a result of Cape Muslim belonging and accommodation to religious values of the Muslim transnational *Ummah*. Historically, Muslim women in Cape Town wore *medora* at religious events such as the celebration of the *Mawlid Al-Nabi*, naming ceremonies, and, most importantly, on their wedding days to symbolise their purity.[157] These distinct dress formations of Muslims were depicted in many colonial paintings (see Toffa 2004), but also modernist painters such as Irma Stern, whose painting *Malay Bride* (1942) was used by Gabeba Baderoon on the cover of her book, *Regarding Muslims* (2014).[158] Whilst some scholars suggest that the *hijab* was introduced to Muslim women in Cape Town in the 1860s by Turkish missionaries (see Wilkinson and Kragolsen-Kille 2006, 85), Hibah Hendricks (2013) points outs that, up until the 1950s, Muslim women in Cape Town were mainly wearing a Western style of dress. Looking back at Petersen's exhibition *I'm Royal* (see 5.3) promotes the understanding that the *hijab* is not a Cape Muslim tradition, but rather is reflective of an Arab influence upon Cape Muslim religious practices and dress style that mostly emerged in 1970s.
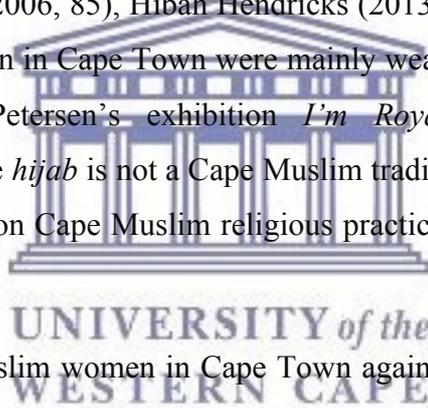
The resistance of Muslim women in Cape Town against wearing the *hijab* is driven by various personal experiences and motives. Importantly, adoption of the *hijab* in Cape Town is not to be understood as the passive engagement of Cape Muslim women with religious values of the transnational Muslim *Ummah*, but rather, as the following account shows, as an embodied symbolic enactment of Muslim cultural difference and Islamic identification.

### 6.2.3 Experiences and Motives for Wearing Hijab in Cape Town

To investigate female attitudes and approaches to Islamic dress within the context of Cape Town, I had in-depth conversations with female research interlocutors to unpack their various motives and subjective feelings towards the wearing of *hijab*.

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[157] The *medora* is also discussed in the analysis of Weamm Williams' work presented in chapter Five (5.3).

[158] Irma Stern is one of the foremost South African artists known for oil painting. She was born in 1894 and died in 1966. She was awarded many national and international awards.

One response came from the previously mentioned interlocutor, Hameda Deedat, who only started wearing *hijab* at the age of nineteen. She explains:

> During the month of Ramadan, it was expected that all women and young girls wear a *hijab*. I was being coerced (was not of my free will) to wear the *hijab* and I had done so for several days. As a result, wearing the *hijab* after Ramadan became a non-issue, it became routine and I felt something missing without it, it became part of my dress and my identity.[159]

Deedat's experience of being forced to wear *hijab* for Ramadan reveals an imposed practice of Islam within Cape Town that might be understood as contrary to the emphasis on democratic rights of Muslims as South African citizens in the post-apartheid context. Yet Deedat's decision to conform to the wearing of *hijab* whilst maintaining a critical engagement with Islam blurs the boundaries between notions of being either a conforming or critical Muslim. What is significant here is that her family never forced her to adopt a particular interpretation of Islam, yet they insisted upon her wearing of *hijab* during Ramadan. This reveals two significant points: firstly, it indicates that visual formations of Muslim women's appearance are viewed as essential to a perception of Muslim identity; secondly, it illustrates the extent to which Muslims insist upon making their sense of cultural difference visible in the context of Cape Town.

Another woman I worked with and who shed light on approaches to the *hijab* in Cape Town is Zahra Ismail, who explained her motives and sensory experiences of wearing *hijab* as follows:

> I started to take *hijab* more seriously and started wearing it when I was sixteen years old. That's because I went through a phase when I was very confused about myself and who I was. I was very self-conscious and insecure, so I decided to throw myself into Islam and be officially identified as Muslim and to act like a Muslim should as stated in the Quran. I felt better with *hijab*; I felt I became recognised as an individual, people noticed me for the first time and I felt that others recognised that I was someone with purpose.[160]

Ismail's comments here suggest that she found a sense of belonging and self-identification to a community of Muslims through the wearing of *hijab*. Ismail's

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[159] Hameda Deedat, interview with the author, 3 March 2015, Salt River, Cape Town.
[160] Zahra Ismail, interview with the author, 4 April 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

*hijab* publically announced her Islamic identity and belonging to Muslim community, and further, her sense of belonging to Islam filled her with a sense of purpose that she believed others recognised. Her belonging and subjective identification with what it means to be a Muslim was fed by projections of the Muslim and non-Muslim public as though the *hijab* was an act of recognition of her identification with Islam. Ismail's free choice in wearing the *hijab* was, as she explains, driven by her attempt to practice Islam according to Quranic instructions. This would suggest that the visual aesthetic of the *hijab* forms an exterior embodiment of Islam, one that mediates a personal connection to the divine whilst also mediating a connection to community that the multicultural society of Cape Town recognises as signifying membership within the Muslim community. Importantly, this membership to Muslim 'community' is both local (Cape Town) and international, as it connects Ismail to aesthetic practices of Muslim women in the international Muslim *Ummah*.

The positive attitudes toward *hijab,* adopted by both Zahra Ismail and Hameda Deedat, are of course not shared by all Muslim women in Cape Town. As an example, artist Weaam Williams had a completely opposing view and experience of wearing *hijab*. She explained:

> I feel that the notion of *hijab* is patriarchal, that women need to protect themselves and defend themselves from men. So I asked myself why do I need to do that, I don't often feel threatened. *Hijab* seems to imply that women are sexual objects. My father tried to get me to wear *Hijab* when I was twelve years old, I did not want it, I could not understand it, and I think that tainted my perspective a lot. It was too enforced and I refused to wear it—it does create social borders, a barrier, it felt like Othering. I don't wear *hijab* because I feel that I will be perceived as an oppressed Muslim woman, and I'm not. I feel that I will be stereotyped, I do not necessarily want to not be identified as Muslim. In Cape Town there are so many Muslim women that do not wear *hijab* and people are still able to tell that they from Malay Muslim community.[161]

Williams does not wear *hijab* for two reasons: first and foremost because she perceives the *hijab* as a patriarchal exercise of power over women's agency and

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[161] Weaam Williams' comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 15 June 2013, District Six.

visibility. This perception is derived mainly from her strict upbringing. Secondly, Williams sought to escape the burden of stereotypical perceptions of Muslim women centring on ideas of victimhood, and a perceived lack of agency. Williams' refusal and rejection of what she perceived as an imposition of conservative Islamic values also highlights the agency of Muslim women in Cape Town. That said, Williams' refusal to wear *hijab* must not to be understood as a lack of religious commitment or belonging to Islam. Williams often wears *hijab* when she goes to the mosque, or when she participates in religious rituals. As an example, on the day of the naming ceremony of her new-born, Williams' and her eleven-year old daughter Anjom wore *hijab*. Williams has also posted a picture of Anjom wearing *hijab* at the celebration of *Mawlid Al-Nabi* at mosque in Bo-Kaap on Facebook. I asked Williams if she had advised her daughter to wear *hijab*. She explained, 'no, she picked it up alone, she wanted to experience it, she even wears it at home sometimes and stands looking at the mirror'. Williams also wore *hijab* for two consecutive months, when, as she explained, she and Shabnam (her sister-in-law) met a group of Muslim women from Dubai visiting Cape Town. Williams and her sister liked their style of wearing *hijab*, which Williams describes as 'not blank white, it was colourful and very aesthetic, it's called *shallah*'. Williams tried it, and 'experimented with it as an artist'. Yet she only wore it for two months, because as she explained 'it does create social borders, a barrier, it felt like otherness'.

Williams' experience of wearing *hijab* put forward significant points; importantly Williams' approach to wearing *hijab* indicates an example of how the performance of Muslim-ness can be viewed as a symbolic enactment of cultural style rather than a strictly religious identification. Despite Williams' experimentation with innovative *hijab* fashion, she experienced the sense that a social barrier was created by the visual affect of the *hijab*. Williams' experience suggests that *hijab* fashion seems to integrate Muslims into the larger society to a certain extent, but it still failed to free Williams from a sense of oppression and otherness.

The different attitudes to *hijab* demonstrated by Williams and Deedat can be understood through scholar of Islamic studies Ephraim Mandivenga's (2000) comparative account of Malay and Indian Muslim in South Africa, in which he points out that the dress code and practices of Indian Muslim women living in Cape

Town (such as Deedat), are generally more conservative than Cape Malay Muslim women (such as Williams). The conservative approach to Islamic dress code is more practiced among Somali women living in Cape Town than local Muslim women. In the Bellville CBD most Somali women wear *chador*, which is a full dress covered by full-length cloak that covers the head and the body, but not the face (figs. 6.1 and 6.2). Aside from its distinctive shape, the various colours of *chador* also signify aesthetic styles of Somali women. This visual impact of the *chador* worn by Somali women embodies an aesthetic of Islam within the visual cultural landscape of Bellville CBD, and South Africa at large.



**FIGURE 6.1** Somali woman, Bellville CBD, 12 July 2013. (Photo by the author)

**FIGURE 6.2** Somali woman, Bellville CBD, 12 July 2013. (Photo by the author)

The various experiences of and motives for wearing *hijab* described above indicate the diversity of *hijab* styles in Cape Town and agency felt by many women in regards to resisting or adopting *hijab*. Anthropologist of contemporary European Muslim society, Annelies Moors (2009), points out that many Muslim women wore the *hijab* to assert public formations of Islam against growing Islamophobia. Haddad (2007) discusses a similar case regarding Muslims in the USA. Adding to this is the seminal work of anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, who has investigated the agency of women to wear *hijab* in different historical periods. In her early ethnography in Egypt, Abu-Lughod (1986) showed how *hijab* is not passively carried and handed down from generation to generation, but instead is seen as a Muslim woman's

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agency and as reflective of an aesthetic of modern Muslim women. Abu-Lughod conducted her ethnography in the 1980s at time when Egypt—along with many other post-colonial states—witnessed an institutional and social secularisation as part of the building of a modern nation-state (see Abu-Lughod 2005). In her recent book, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (2013), written in a post-secular time of re-Islamisation, Abu-Lughod re-emphasises the agency of women to wear *hijab*. She argues that it is not Islam that oppresses women but rather it is the economic and political context in which they live. Further, she explains that the rhetoric of 'saving' or 'rescuing' Muslim women is often used as a means of justifying foreign interference—something that has become particularly pronounced within the politics of the 'War on Terror'. Scholars of Islam and Muslim cultures have formed a counter-narrative against the perceived victimhood and oppression of Muslim women. This narrative is often hinged on the agency of Muslim women and their various reasons for adopting Islamic dress (Tarlo 2007; Abu-Lughod 1986). Having said this, the appearance of the *hijab* in public spaces (regardless of whether Muslims are a minority or majority) and Muslim women's bodily formations are often perceived by some human rights activists, policy makers, journalists, academics, members of the media, and certain sectors of the public as a form of Islamic oppression over Muslim women—and thus as flying in the face of Western ideals of universal human rights.

### 6.2.4 Hijab Controversy

On 13 February 2014, a thirteen-year-old Muslim student from Egypt, who had recently transferred from the German International School in Cairo to the Deutsche Internationale Schule Kapstadt (the International German school) in Cape Town, was dismissed from her grade nine class for wearing *hijab*. The school's regulations did not allow any form of visible religious expression and required a signature from the student's father confirming that he would advise his daughter to adopt the standard school uniform and not to attend school wearing *hijab*. Her expulsion triggered a wave of public debate around the issue of 'common good' and Muslim publics at local and national levels. On a local level, The Voice of the Cape radio station launched a special program to debate what became known as the '*hijab* controversy' in Cape Town. The radio station sought many Muslims to voice their opinions—most of who condemned the school's decision by evoking the constitutional religious

rights of Muslims. This was mirrored in national debates, wherein, for example, the basic education department spokesperson, Panyaza Lesufi, stated in an interview on eNCA TV, 'wearing such religious attire is a constitutional right'.[162] In solidarity with the Muslim student, fellow male and female students—Christian, Jewish, and Muslim—protested against the school's policy by wearing *hijab* themselves. Eventually the school council called for a general meeting to debate the matter. The meeting included the school's students, staff, and teachers. The result was that the school modified their policy, and not only permitted *hijab* in the school, but also opened the *Hijab* Fashion Store at the school.

The debate generated by the Cape Town '*hijab* controversy' was a reflection of an enactment of public Islam and recognition of Muslim cultural difference within the scope of post-apartheid multiculturalism. What is particularly significant about the '*hijab* controversy' and the solidarity of the students is that the event demonstrated the extent to which South African multiculturalism accommodates the politics of cultural difference. This situation would appear to stand in opposition to Mahmood's (2006) point that the banning of *hijab* in public spaces in France shows the limits of the secular state's neutrality and ability to ensure communitarian liberty. What is significant to note here is that the Deutsche Internationale Schule Kapstadt is partly governed under German law and not according to South African regulations. It is quite common for Muslim students to wear *hijab* in Cape Town state and private schools. Hence, the supporters of the student in *hijab* in Cape Town often invoked their constitutional rights of cultural difference in democratic South Africa. Through this controversy, we witnessed the clear recognition of Muslim cultural difference in Cape Town as not only protected by the constitution, but also supported by the views and actions of citizens who, through acts of solidarity, demonstrated a commitment within the multicultural society of Cape Town to recognise and protect Muslim cultural difference and their rights of equal citizenship.

The public visibility of Islam and debates centred on Muslim cultural difference are perhaps nowhere more evident or recognisable than in contestation over Muslim dress codes—which are referred to throughout this thesis as 'bodily formations'. Forms of dressa adopted by Muslim women have been the subject of fierce debate in

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[162] The eNCA is a South African news channel, launched in 2008, available on DSTv.

many secular nations around the world. Since 9/11, public expressions of Islam have been constructed and perceived as a threat to Western cultural ideals of secular liberalism and associated values of universal human rights. The perceived threat of Muslim public visibility cannot, however, be universally applied. As an example, one might take the work of sociologist Nilüfer Göle (2002), who who potentially over-states the issue regarding public visibility of Islam in European societies:

> The public visibility of Islam and the specific gender, corporeal, and spatial practices underpinning it trigger new ways of imagining a collective self and common space that are distinct from the Western liberal self and progressive politics. (174)

> Islamic women hurt the feelings of modern women and upset the status quo; they are playing with ambivalence, being both Muslim and modern without wanting to give up one for the other. They are outside a regime of imitation, critical of both subservient traditions and assimilative modernity. One can almost twist the argument and say that they are neither Muslim nor modern. . . . [A]nd this goes further than a question of abstract identity. It takes place in the public sphere, it involves a face-to-face relation, which means that difference is marked on the body; it is an embodied difference, one that is visible to others. (181)

The argument of this chapter is reflected in Göle's arguments above concerning the ambivalent space occupied by Muslim women through aesthetic forms of Islamic embodied cultural difference. However, Göle goes further still to draw attention to the idea that bodily formations of Muslim women not only mediate a visual aesthetic of Muslims' shared Islamic identity, but invites us to acknowledge how the public visibility of Muslim cultural difference might also impact upon the feelings of non-Muslims. This impact is argued by Göle to interrupt the perception of 'progress' in the politics of Western societies.

In contrast to Göle's arguments, the acts of solidarity that followed the '*hijab* controversy' would suggest an acceptance of cultural difference within the multicultural society of Cape Town. This openness toward Muslim cultural difference in Cape Town is also reflected in the everyday experiences of Nabeweya Malick and her social experience of wearing *hijab* in Cape Town. Malick explains that 'in Cape Town we Muslims are very fortunate, there are no stares and no question marks. I never felt different or I was never put under suspicion because of

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my *hijab*. Actually people complimented the beauty of my *hijab* and the style of my *hijab* many times'.[163] Malick's social experiences of wearing *hijab* in Cape Town indicates that the public visibility of Muslim cultural difference is not perceived as a threat nor is it seen as an agent of offence toward non-Muslims.

Understanding Cape Town as a democratic secular multicultural society *and* as a Western liberal city, Malick's case disapproves Göle's generalised conception that is anchored on an idea of a conflicting dichotomy between Muslims and modernity. Göle's antagonistic dichotomy between Muslim and the modern, and the doubt she casts over the possibility that Muslim women can participate and negotiate contemporary liberal contexts, stands in opposition to anthropologist Emma Tarlo's (2007) ethnographic observations of professional middle-class Muslim women in London. Within Tarlo's ethnography, middle-class women in London have obtained secular higher education and occupy positions within the secular structure, and deliberately appropriate the *hijab* instead of absolutely assimilating to the secular values of women's emancipation.

Considered together, the dress formations of Muslim women in Cape Town (both Somali and Capetonian Muslims) include different varieties that serve to embody overall an association to Islamic style and the modesty of Muslim women. The majority of Capetonian Muslim women dress in a casual style similar to other South African women, and they mainly perform Muslim-ness through wearing *hijab*. Hence, the public visibility of Islam in Cape Town is mainly enacted through the *hijab*. Few Capetonian Muslim women wear *niqab*—a *hijab* covering head and face, but not the eyes, that is usually worn with black *abaya* that covers from head to feet. Despite the diversity of Muslim women's dress codes and the ever-emerging hybrid *hijab* fashions in Cape Town, the *hijab* still stands as a signifier of an aesthetic of Islam that makes visible the Muslim presence in public spaces within Cape Town. Despite the association to modesty, part of the appeal of the *hijab* for female research interlocutors was often cited as being to enhance the public visibility of their Islamic identification. Indeed, they noticed that they became more visible in public spaces when they wore fashion designs reflective of Islamic dress codes. This is particularly significant because, as sociologist Nilüfer Göle (2011) points out, it is

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[163] Nabeweya Malick, interview with the author, 15 April 2013, MJC office, Athlone, Cape Town.

the public visibility of Islam that triggers a contested debate around the overt cultural difference of Muslims in the public sphere.

### *6.2.5 Public Visibility of Muslims' Bodily Formations*

Research interlocutors noticed that they became more visible in public spaces when they wore fashion designs reflective of Islamic dress codes. For instance, Zahra Ismail described her increased visibility and identification as a Muslim when she wears *hijab*. She explained:

> When I first started wearing *hijab* everybody was looking at me, some of my acquaintances thought and asked me if I converted to Islam. They never knew that I was Muslim until I put my *hijab* on. I found Muslims greeting me with '*Salam*'. I found more people looking at me either because they were also Muslim or because they were just judging me with their eyes.[164]

This publicly shared perception of *hijab* as a visual form of Islamic identity invites us to see the *hijab* as a common aesthetic of Islam. In Ismail's comments, we see that it was not social behaviour that announced her Islamic identity, but rather it was the visual formation of her *hijab* that mediated Ismail's Islamic religious identification to her acquaintances, to fellow Muslims, and within the multicultural society of Cape Town at large.
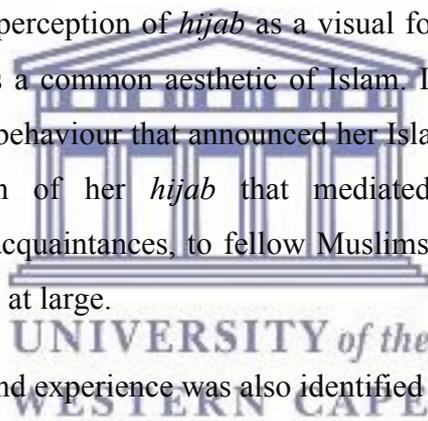
This line of enquiry and experience was also identified by Weaam Williams:

> In Cape Town definitely you became more visible if you wear *hijab* . . . it actually did the opposite of what it's meant for, I got more male attention wearing *hijab* than being normal. Whenever you meet Muslim they will greet you '*Salam*'. Funny, when I had dreadlocks I used to wrap them with a headscarf, but it never felt like *hijab*, and nobody treated me as Muslim.[165]

Williams' observation that the *hijab* 'did the opposite of what it's meant for' is underscored by the perception of the *hijab* as a patriarchal exercise geared toward rendering Muslim women invisible and yet, according to Williams, she conversely attained more visibility while wearing *hijab*. This experience and analysis of the *hijab* highlights the power of the exterior visual affect of the *hijab*, and the way it is imbued with social meanings that are shared and stereotypically understood amongst

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[164] Zahra Ismail, interview with the author, 4 April 2014, Observatory.
[165] Weaam Williams, June 15th 2013, District Six, interview with the author.

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Muslims and non-Muslims. Williams' sensory experience and the different responses she received covering her dreadlocks in a headscarf and in *hijab* triggers potent questions around how people differentiate between different aesthetics and dress practices or hair coverings. Namely, considering the variety of *hijab* styles and innovative *hijab* fashions emerging around the world and in Cape Town, the question is 'what are the aesthetic styles that charge the *hijab* as being an embodiment of Islam?'

The way in which Muslim bodily formations enact public visibility of Islam is not limited to the clothing styles of Muslim women, as it is also observed in the dress and aesthetic practices of Muslim men. Muslim men in Cape Town—Somali and Capetonian—wear casual pants and shirts, but, for prayer on Fridays or during the days of *Eid* and other religious rituals, many of them wear Islamic garb including *kaffiyeh* and a hat that Capetonian Muslims refer to as 'fez'. In my conversations with twin brother artists, Hasan and Husain Essop, Hasan pointed out that 'the Islamic garb is a means to de-branding yourself, to de-Westernise yourself. . . . In our everyday work we dress in jeans, we are branded, we are product of consumption . . . when we wear our ancient garb, our Islamic garb, we wash it all away'.[166] Contributing and building upon the same point, Husain Essop described his experience at Hout Bay where he was previously employed:

> Friday when I wear my *gurta* (Islamic garb) and walk to the office people look at me, like who is this guy. They see me Monday to Thursday everyday, and sometime some of they will greet me, but on Friday they look at me differently and treat me differently.[167]

Husain's description of his experience wearing Islamic garb indicates the affective visibility of Islamic dress codes and the way dress renders Muslim identity and cultural difference visible to others in public spaces. Further, Husain's comments here reveal that his Islamic garb never became familiar to his co-workers, as it continued to exoticise him in their eyes every Friday. Although Husain maintained that people looked at and treated him differently whilst he was in Islamic garb, he argues that it never triggered an overt sense of tension in Cape Town. Husain

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[166] Hasan Essop, interview with the author, 3 April 2014, Essop twins' parents' house at Penlyn Estate.
[167] Husain Essop, interview with the author, 3 April 2014, Essop twins' parents' house at Penlyn Estate.

emphasised that no one in Hout Bay, or in Cape Town more generally, ever made a negative comment about his Islamic garb.[168] The varying experiences and motivations behind the wearing of Islamic garb and the consequent reactions identified in the comments of the Essop twins and other research interlocutors provides a window of understanding to the complex role of dress in the mediation of identity in Cape Town. More specifically, it indicates that the material culture of Islamic dress in Cape Town mediates a sense of identity. From the experiences outlined by research interlocutors, we see that dress mediates a connection to the global Muslim *Ummah*, whilst proclaiming Muslim identity and cultural difference in the liberal democratic context of post-apartheid South Africa. In such a way, the adoption of Islamic garb can be understood as a symbolic enactment of social, cultural, and religious mediation. Yet, importantly, this enactment of cultural difference and identity also mediates a personal and collective mediation of the connection to the divine.

The public visibility of Muslim bodily formations is best observed during periods of shared Muslim religious ritual, celebration, and prayer—something that is most pronounced during the *Eid* period. On 20 August 2013, the first day of *Eid ul-Fitr*, I attended the *Eid* prayer at the Auwal Mosque in Bo-Kaap. Hundreds of Muslim men and women gradually filled the mosque, and the rituals started around 7:00 a.m. and included recitations and prayer. At the end of the rituals, attendees greeted each other and expressed mutual wishes of blessed *Eid*.

All of them—men and women—wore what they perceived to be an authentic form of Islamic dress. Women wore different styles of *hijab* and long dresses that covered all their body, and men wore various styles of colourful Islamic garb and *fez*. I recognised that many of them were people that I saw regularly in the area of Bo-Kaap. As attendees walked back to their homes in different directions I proceeded to walk around in Bo-Kaap's narrow roads for three hours, recording the various aesthetic styles of women's *hijab*s and male's Islamic garb. I was particularly impressed by the children who filled the street with joy and excitement around wearing their Islamic garb. At 11:00 a.m. I drove through and stopped at different

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[168] Hout Bay is a seaside neighbourhood situated 20 kilometres south of the centre of Cape Town. Hout Bay is a predominately white affluent area that attracts national and international tourists to its seaside location, proximity to the centre of Cape Town, and purposeful maintenance of a rural atmosphere in the area.

corners in the Walmer Estate and Athlone areas—both Muslim neighbourhoods. Similar to Bo-Kaap, the streets of Walmer Estate and Athlone were filled with children playing and groups of men walking to visit their relatives—the majority of whom wore Islamic garb and *fez*. I then went to Hibah Hendricks' family home in Athlone to join her family for *Eid* lunch.

Hibah Hendricks is twenty-eight years old and was born and raised at Surry Estate, a middle-class Muslim area in Athlone. She is the only child of Miriam and Faiek Hendricks, who Hibah describes as a middle-class liberal Capetonian Muslim family. Upon my arrival, Hendricks and her husband, Isa, stepped outside to welcome me, and we mutually wished *Eid Mubarak* ('Blessed Eid'). Hendricks was wearing a long stylish black dress, and despite having her hair tied back and a scarf on her shoulders she did not wear *hijab*. Hendricks' mother was busy preparing the lunch in the kitchen, but came out to welcome me with samosa. She was wearing a colourful long dress and *hijab*, whilst Faiek and Isa wore Islamic garb and white *fez*. The way Hibah's family chose to dress that day whilst each recognising *Eid* is indicative of a cultural approach to performance of Muslim-ness rather then religious identification.

I left the Hendricks's house at 2:30 p.m. and drove to Bellville CBD to celebrate *Eid* with Somali friends and research interlocutors. I walked around and made my way to the Al-Sunny Mosque, to the ZamZam Somali restaurant, to the Bellville Education Centre, and I stood outside a coffee shop to join tens of Somalis who had gathered to drink coffee, to socialise, and to chat or trade *qaat*.[169] The elders were wearing Islamic garb and *kaffiyeh* , but the majority of young Somali men wore pants and shirts or t-shirts. What is significant here is that the dress of the young Somali men ran contrary to the perception Somali Muslims' projection of themselves in Cape Town: namely, the view that they are more devoted to Islam than their Capetonian Muslim counterparts (see 4.9). This claim amongst Somalis in Cape Town is often expressed through the proclamation that Capetonian Islam 'is too open-minded'. This claim is then reinforced in the performance of Islam in the Somali community through dress, where a perceived closer dedication to Islam is performed through the dress code of Somali women who largely wear *chador*. However, it was the majority

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[169] *Qaat* is a flowering plant chewed for thousands of years in social contexts similar to coffee drinking.

of Capetonian Muslims rather than Somalis who overwhelmingly wore Islamic garb at such a religious celebration as *Eid* to perform publically their cultural difference through a dress style overtly identified with Islam.

What these various accounts indicate is that the public visibility of Islam in Cape Town is clearly enacted through Muslim bodily formations that form a mobile visual aesthetic known to both Muslims and non-Muslims as a symbolic embodiment of Muslim-ness. Muslims in Cape Town announce their cultural difference and Islamic identification through visual aesthetics of bodily formations. Importantly, Muslims' bodily formations reveal their aesthetic politics of cultural difference and their culturalisation as citizens within the rainbow nation. On the contrary, Somali men seem less concerned with publically enacting Islamic identification. Abdulkadir Khalif describes himself as a 'very conservative Muslim', yet he often wears regular clothes (shirts and pants), with the exception of Friday when he wears Islamic garb. He explained, 'I wear Islamic clothes for Allah to accept my Friday prayers, and not to show off my religion, or to prove to anyone that I'm a Muslim'.[170]

This lack of interest toward the public enactment of Islamic identification amongst Somalis must not be understood as an attempt to hide their Islamic identity—nor should it be understood as a lack of piousness. Indeed, this may indicate that Capetonian Muslim public identification with Islam should be understood as the culturalisation of citizenship, whereas the Somali lack of interest in publically performing their Islamic identity is best understood as an absence of a sense of citizenship and belonging to South Africa's multiculturalism and its ensuing politics of cultural difference.

That having been said, the role of Islamic garb in differentiating Muslims from other groups in South Africa is of course not a post-apartheid phenomenon. The role of fashion in mediating alterity has a long history in the region. Since 1755, various clothing regulations enforced a social hierarchy that distinguished European settlers from Muslim slaves (Toffa 2004, 27). While the top hat signified the class and style of Europeans, and Imams and other Muslims of higher status wore turbans, the East Asian *toedang* (conical straw hat), the *kopdock* (red headscarf), and the *kaparring* (wooden sandals) represented Muslim dress codes and thus embodied forms of

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[170] Abdulkadir Khalif, interview with the author, 4 June 2014, Bellville Education Centre.

otherness. In the nineteen-century, Turkish missionaries introduced Cape Muslims to the red *fez*, which has since embodied an aesthetic of Muslim clothing culture (Worden, Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998). The public visibility and mediation of alterity generated by forms of dress is also reflected in other forms of urban design and visual formations in the region, including architectural spaces, text, and signage.

## *6.3 Urban Landscapes: Built Environments, Text and Signage*

An insight into the historical development of the built environment of Cape Town city provides a lens through which to understand the trajectory of Muslim religious urbanity and public visibility in Cape Town. Historically, the public visibility of Muslims in Cape Town was mediated through the shrine of Muslim religious figures, known as *kramats*, and the mosque—each of which aesthetically embodied architectural Islamic design. While the *kramat* and mosques form a religious aesthetic of Islam, the colourful formations of Bo-Kaap embody cultural aesthetics of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. Visual formation of Muslim-ness in post-apartheid Cape Town is enacted through the renaming of roads and bridges after Capetonian Muslim public figures. Moreover, public visibility of Islam in Cape Town is also mediated through images of *halaal* signage and Arabic calligraphy. The following accounts describe the way in which these visual formations mediate aesthetics of Islam and Muslim cultural style within Cape Town.

### *6.3.1 Kramats*

Although visual formations of Muslims are historically evident in clothing regulations and practices, the first visual marker of an Islamic religious aesthetic in the landscape of Cape Town was the erection of shrines for religious figures known as *kramats*.[171] Up until the end of the eighteenth century, Muslims were prohibited from publicly performing any religious rituals. As a result, they navigated alternative geographies and established *kramats* on the periphery of the Cape Town landscape away from the city centre. This legislative form of religious discrimination resulted in the establishment of the Shaykh Yusuf's *kramat* at Macassar in 1699, which stands as the first architectural visual marker of Muslims' religious urbanity on the urban landscape of Cape Town. More *kramats* were built and eventually constituted

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[171] *Kramat* is an Arabic word means 'divine marvels'—it refers to the sacredness of the location where Muslims bury religious figures.

a 'circle of Islam' surrounding the Cape Peninsula.[172] The historical accumulation and geographical mapping of the *kramats*, in a visually tangible way, reflects the historical expansion of Muslim religious urbanity from the periphery toward the city centre.

What is significant to our concern here however, is the way in which the visual presence of the *kramats*, as architectural structures and heritage sites, make visible an aesthetic of Islam over the landscape of Cape Town and in the public imagination of a national culture anchored on cultural diversity. In the area of Cape Town, *kramats* are largely rectangular or square structures with coloured dome roofs that are often topped with the Islamic star and crescent.[173] There are twenty-four *kramats* which, according to the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) of 1999, are recognised and protected as heritage sites. Each of these *kramats* is a burial site for one or more significant Muslim religious figures. Hence, these *kramats* are embodied as sacred places of pilgrimage for Muslims and non-Muslims to commemorate the legacy of Muslim political exiles and leaders who are significant to the history of Islam within Cape Town. Throughout my fieldwork, I participated in the religious ritual known as *Urs* at various *kramats* to celebrate and commemorate the legacy of a number of Muslim leaders whose shrines remain as visual markers of Islam, maintaining a symbolic embodiment of the historical narrative of Muslims in Cape Town.[174]

In 1982 the Cape Mazar (*kramat*) Society was established to renovate and maintain various *kramats* in the Western Cape whilst also taking responsibility for the interpretation and propagation of the teachings of Muslim leaders buried within the region's *kramats*. The Cape Mazar Society has published several revisions of a pamphlet titled, *Guide to the Kramats of Western Cape* (1996, 2001, 2010), which

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[172] The circle of *kramats* consists of the shrines of Shaykh Yusuf in Macassar, Shikh Abdurahman Motura on Robben Island, Sheikh Abduagman and Sayed Mahmood in Constantia, Sayed Abdul Malick of Vredehoek, Tuan Guru in Bo-Kaap, Sayed Mohamed Hasan Ghaibe Shah on Signal Hill, and Sheikh Nurul Mubeen and Sayed Jaffer of Bakoven in Oudekraal (da Costa and Davids 1994, 130-2).

[173] Now established as an important part of tourism in the area, the *kramats* are argued by Cape Town tourism authorities to be positioned according to a 250 year-old prophecy that a 'circle of Islam' will be formed around Cape Town beginning at Signal Hill and ending on Robben Island. For further information on how *kramats* are advertised and discussed by tourism authorities refer to capetourism.co.za.

[174] The significance of these rituals is discussed in greater detail in chapter Eight.

addresses the historical and religious significance of *kramats* in the region.[175] The *Guide to the Kramats* provides pictures and mapped directions, and carefully frames the location of each *kramat* as a significant public space, so as to attract local and international Muslim and non-Muslim visitors. The Cape Mazar Society acknowledge that 'visitors to the Kramats are representative of all the different faiths' and, in the forward of the third edition of their pamphlet, they explicitly state their expectation that Cape Town is 'to become the tourist capital of South Africa'— hence making clear their intentional efforts to be part of an emerging tourist industry. The pamphlet also includes messages from the MJC offering their support and appreciation of the Cape Mazar Society's efforts to preserve the history and legacy of Cape Muslims, alongside similar massages from the Robben Island Museum and Cape Town Tourism—each of which proclaim their support for the Society and their recognition of the historical and tourism significance of *kramats*.[176]

To further establish the significance of the *kramats* within the history of South Africa, the pamphlet provides brief descriptions of the making of each *kramat* and the contributions of the various religious leaders to the narratives of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. Through its emphasis on the nobility and resistance of Muslim leaders in Cape Town, and the framing of *kramat* locations as heritage sites and tourist attractions within multiculturalist South Africa, the Cape Mazar Society provides a strong example of the various ways in which Muslims invoke their slave ancestry to enact a distinctive community style of Muslims that is not pitched as separate, but rather as a vital part of a new public imagination of the visual landscape of post-apartheid Cape Town.

Since 1994, considerable public and scholarly debate has emerged over the sacredness of *kramats* and the rights for public access to them as heritage sites. This is because many of these sites are located in private property that was acquired during years of colonialism and apartheid (see Green and Murray 2004). However,

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[175] See http://www.capemazaarsociety.com/ (last accessed 4 November 2016).
[176] The Robben Island Museum is one of South Africa's most important tourist museums, located on a World Heritage Site. Although over the centuries, Robben Island has housed a prison, hospital, mental institution, leper colony, and a military base, it is most famous for the fact that Nelson Mandela spent eighteen years of his incarceration imprisoned on the island (South African History Online,'Robben Island', 14 July 2011, http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/robben-island). Cape Town Tourism is Cape Town's official regional tourism organisation. It is responsible for visitor and industry services and destination marketing.

the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 dismisses the claim of *kramats* as private property and provides for the protection of the structures as 'national estates' that are open to the public. Another significant ongoing debate over the *kramats* emerged within the Muslim community around whether the visiting of *kramats* and the commemoration of Muslim leaders is an appropriate Islamic practice, as veneration at these sites may be interpreted as a form of idolatry. However, as Adulkader Tayob (2010) noted, these debates over the sacredness of the *kramats,* and contestations within the Muslim community over religious rituals associated with these sites, forms a critical public of Islam that reaches beyond the boundaries of the Muslim community to involve a broader spectrum of the multicultural society in a public debate of Islamic affairs in Cape Town.

### 6.3.2 Mosques

Despite being the oldest form of Muslim architectural presence in Cape Town, *kramats* are of course not the sole architectural form to make up Muslim material culture in Cape Town. The most remarkable visual aesthetic of Islam in the built environment of Cape Town can be found in the exterior visual forms of mosques. There are 198 mosques in Cape Town, and they can be found in most urban areas and townships featuring façades and minarets topped with *helaal* (moon) signs.[177] They are often elevated above the built landscape to establish a pronounced visibility of public Islam and infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity. During Friday prayer, mosque attendees often block the traffic—especially at mosques that are on main roads. Prayer lines often reach outside, marking the space surrounding the mosque as Muslim territory (fig. 6.3).

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[177] This is a statistic from 2010, published in the Mosque Guide in Cape Town.

**FIGURE 6.3** Friday Prayer, Noor el Hameida Mosque, Long Street, 15 December 2014. (Photo by the author)

Since the eighteenth century, mosques are constantly being established in Cape Town, and, beyond having a vital role in the formation of Muslim communities and impacting upon the public aural-aesthetic of Cape Town, mosques also articulated a clear visual aesthetic of Islam within the built environment of Cape Town.[178] The building of the Auwal Mosque in Bo-Kaap during the 1790s signified the shift of Muslim public presence from the geographical periphery to the very centre of Cape Town city. The erection of the Palm Tree Mosque in 1807 and the Nurul Islam Mosque in 1820 further enhanced Muslim religious infrastructures and made Islam more visible within the public eye in the city centre of Cape Town. Although these mosques formed a public space for Muslims to gather and perform and enact their Islamic identity and religious style, the exterior architecture of these three oldest mosques did not embody the common Islamic aesthetics of mosques, such as the minaret and façade (Toffa 2004).

The exterior visual form of Muslim architectural style only became overtly pronounced when the British colonial government officially granted Cape Muslims public land in Bo-Kaap to build a mosque. On this land, the Queen Victoria Mosque was built in 1850, which was later renamed the Jamia Mosque. Important to our concerns here, the style of Jamia Mosque enhanced Muslim public visibility precisely because it reveals an Islamic aesthetic. Architect Tariq Toffa's (2004)

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[178] For an analysis of the historical formation of Muslim communities, refer to chapter Three. For analysis of the audio-aesthetic of Islam within Cape Town, refer to chapter Seven.

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account provides an apt explanation of how the mosque embodies the Islamic aesthetic, and the ways in which it signified a shift in mosque architectural styles within Cape Town (29). He explains that the Jamia Mosque displayed three architectural devices that had never previously appeared in mosque architecture in Cape Town: the façade, the corner site location (appropriated from the church that was previously a freestanding building there), and the minaret. Put together, these features resoundingly reflect Islamic aesthetics and forged a direct relationship between the aesthetics of Islam and the Cape Town public. Toffa (2004) goes further to explain:

> These devices constituted the new public language of mosque architecture, finally giving public form to the transformation from sub-culture and private identity to public identity that was part of the revolution sixty years earlier initiated by Tuan Guru, and from lived reality to emergent material culture. Mosques were now not only for the everyday, for religious and community activity, but were now celebrated so as to rival the public presence and urban markers that had for so long been the exclusive terrain of the town's churches. (30)

Toffa's analysis here of the Jamia Mosque's architectural features makes clear that the Islamic aesthetics used in the design of this site rendered the mosque as a visual marker of Islam and Muslim public presence. The minaret in particular signifies a common aesthetic of Islam that, because of its pronounced visibility (as in the case of *hijab*), has recently been the subject of debate and contestation in various European cities (Göle 2011; Cherti 2010). In a special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* focused on conflicts around mosques in European cities (see Cesari 2005), various scholars explored the negotiation and contestation over the building of new mosques and their visual affect as structures of Islamic urban visibility. Here it is significant to note that neither the minaret nor the mosque itself is obligatory for Muslim religiosity, as Muslims can pray anywhere. Therefore, as Azra Akšamija (2005) notes, Muslims transform any space— indoors or outdoors— into a mosque the moment they face toward Mecca to perform their prayer. Hence, the mosque and its minaret are best understood as a visual manifestation of Muslim aesthetic politics that exteriorises cultural difference and Islamic territorialisation through the built environment.

In the Bellville CBD, there are three mosques established since the 1990s, which are mainly attended by Somali refugees. Importantly, however, the exterior visual forms of these three mosques do not embody the architectural Islamic aesthetics that would distinguish them from the surrounding buildings. That is to say, none of these mosques have minarets and Islamic façades or gables, and none of them are separate buildings—they are venues within bigger commercial centres (fig. 6.4). Thus, Somali mosques in Bellville CBD do not enact public visual forms of Islamic aesthetics through the built environment. Similarly, most mosques in townships have neither the façade, nor the minaret nor a corner site location, all of which embody mosque architectural styles. Considered together therefore, the extent to which mosques in Cape Town present Islamic style is indicative not only of historic presence in specific geographic locales, but is also contingent on Muslim financial resources within these locales, and is thus also representative of class difference.
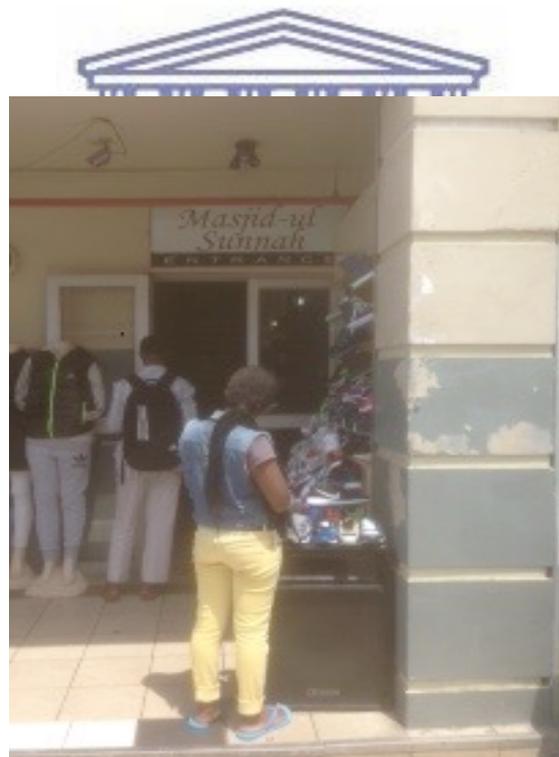


FIGURE 6.4 Al-Sunny Mosque, Bellville CBD, 12 August 2014. (Photo by the author)

In the case of Somalis, the lack of distinguishing mosque architectural features is driven by a lack of financial resources and not by the lack of a Somali desire to have an appropriate mosque. Imam Alawal explained in our conversation that Somalis had

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appealed for Turkish, Saudi Arabian, and local Muslim financial support to buy land in Bellville on which to build a mosque, but unfortunately their appeals were dismissed. Hence, they collected donations from Somalis in Cape Town and abroad.[179]

Despite the relative Islamic architectural discretion evident in mosques within the Bellville CBD, the public enactment of the presence of Islam within the Bellville CBD is achieved through an aesthetic of Islamic sound that is amplified through loudspeakers (discussed in chapter Eight) and the visual bodily formations of mosque attendees through their Islamic dress.

Beyond the ways in which religious sites—such as the *kramats* and the mosques—publicly enact an aesthetic of Islam, in recent years the visibility of Muslims within the built environment of Cape Town has been capitalised upon as a way of making clear the multicultural emphasis of post-apartheid South Africa. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Cape Town suburb of Bo-Kaap.

### *6.3.3 Bo-Kaap and 'Rainbowism' in Tourism and Civic Infrastructure*

The visibility of Muslims within the built environment and the public imagining of Cape Town has been strategically capitalised upon through the making of Bo-Kaap as a 'lived-in' heritage site that is associated with its distinct architectural aesthetic and the 'Cape Malay' Muslim community. The distinct aesthetic and Malay heritage of the area is manifest through colourful houses, narrow streets, the Iziko Bo-Kaap Museum, the Tuan Guru *kramats*, and the historical status of Bo-Kaap as the 'Muslim quarter' (see 1.5). The promotion of Malay heritage and aesthetic styles as tourist attractions for local and foreign consumption is something that is seen everyday within Bo-Kaap. Tourists often get off their buses at the door of the Bo-Kaap museum on Wall Street, from where they spread through the area's colourful streets. At the Iziko Bo-Kaap Museum, visitors get an insight into a historical narrative of Muslim heritage and the aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness in Bo-Kaap. This narrative has been curated chronologically using a range of visual objects (photographs, clothes, musical instruments, etc.) that depict the lifestyle of a

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[179] Mohammad Alawal, interview with the author, 10 August 2015, Food Inn, Long Street, Cape Town.

nineteenth century Muslim in Cape Town.[180] Beyond this first hand observation of Muslim movement through Bo-Kaap, the promotion of the area as a signifier of post-apartheid rainbowism is evidenced in the vast coffee-table book literature on Bo-Kaap, in images of Bo-Kaap on many postcards, and through the fact that images of Bo-Kaap were posted on the wall along the walkway of the international arrival entrance of Cape Town airport during the years 2012 and 2013.[181]

The instrumentalisation of the visual aesthetic of Bo-Kaap's colourful houses and narrow streets is hinged on the exotic styling of Malay Muslims that, as Robins (2006) notes, has become a tourist space of the seemingly distinctive cultural style of post-apartheid multiculturalism. Put more clearly, aesthetic formations of Bo-Kaap stand as a prominent example of the way in which the culturalisation of Muslim-ness signifies post-apartheid rainbowism. In this case, the aesthetics of Muslim-ness in Cape Town are therefore encouraged not only to be seen as the cultural difference of a Muslim minority, but rather as national icons representative of cultural diversity and heritage. This emphasis on Muslim aesthetics as a central part of the national culture of post-apartheid South Africa is also mirrored in the way in which Malay cuisine is also framed and understood as vital to the local and national food culture of South Africa (see Chapter Eight).

Though the multiculturalist emphasis on the post-apartheid era enhances the aesthetic formations of the Muslim community, this has been accompanied by a neoliberal economic drive resulting in significant gentrification that has impacted local inhabitants from Bo-Kaap and the surrounding metropolitan area of Cape Town. This ongoing gentrification and the increased presence of non-Muslim residents are perceived as threats that challenge the essence of Malay Muslim styles within Bo-Kaap. By way of example, on 7 April 2012, I attended a community meeting of Bo-Kaap residents at the Iziko Bo-Kaap Museum. Their heated debate flagged two main concerns of Muslim inhabitants in Bo-Kaap: First and foremost were the cultural practices of non-Muslims visitors and/or residents in Bo-Kaap, which were seen as contradictory to Islamic values. This was primarily reflected in the presence of alcohol in Bo-Kaap. Second was the sense that Cape Malay culture

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[180] The Museum was established in 1978 (as a satellite of the SA Cultural History Museum).
[181] The most notable coffee-table book on Bo-Kaap is a largely photographic text entitled *Bo-Kaap: Colourful Heart of Cape Town* (2006).

has been staged for a tourist gaze and consumption, which has led to an inundation of tourists into Bo-Kaap—something that is perceived by many Bo-Kaap inhabitants as a violation of both their privacy and everyday lives. What is interesting is that these two concerns are, to some extent, paradoxical in that while Bo-Kaap Muslim residents seem bothered by the 'un-Islamic' cultural practices of non-Muslims in Bo-Kaap, they also seem concerned about being staged as culturally distinctive Muslims.

The urgency and sense of threat underlying these community concerns is perhaps made most clear when considering that various Muslim scholars, activists, Imams, and Muslim civic institutions encourage Muslim inhabitants in Bo-Kaap not to sell their houses to non-Muslims.[182] However, it is important to note here that it is not only post-apartheid multiculturalist strategy and national identity that seeks to promote Malay heritage and aesthetic styles as tourist attractions for foreign consumption. This is something also encouraged by Muslims themselves, some of whom realise that a commodification and staging of Malay culture can be used for personal or capital gain.[183]

The emphasis on Bo-Kaap's significance in South African tourism is centred on the fact that the area embodies a history of religious diversity in the region. The deliberate governmental emphasis on Muslim history in Cape Town also extends to other forms of the built environment. Another visual marker of Muslims in Cape Town is seen in the renaming of a part of Lansdowne Road to 'Imam Haron Road', and the naming of two (out of seven) footbridges along Nelson Mandela Boulevard and Rhodes Drive after Muslim public figures (Tuan Guru and Taliep Petersen).[184] Taliep Petersen was a Muslim Capetonian musician, born in 1950 in District Six, who composed and directed various musical and theatrical performances addressing the history of the Coloured community in Cape Town. Tuan Guru's biography is discussed in chapter Three.

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[182] The new Bo-Kaap Civic Association, established in 2004 and headed by Osman Shaboodien, is similarly orientated toward laying foundations for the future of Bo-Kaap.
[183] This is evidenced in the case of the Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway (discussed in chapter Eight).
[184] The other five bridge were named after father John Oliver (Anglican priest), father Basil Van Rensburg (Catholic priest), Dawid Kruiper (Tradition healer and leader of the khomani San), I Aikunta (leader of San hunters clan), and Ingrid Jonker (Afrikaner poet).

This process of renaming civic spaces with the names of Muslim public figures not only enacts public visibility of Muslims, but assigns specific spaces for Muslims within the broader urbanity of Cape Town. This leads to an emphasis on cultural difference or diversity by the City of Cape Town as a signifier of national culture. This is acutely demonstrated in the comments of Patricia de Lille, the Mayor of Cape Town city, who, on 23 September 2015, attended the renaming ceremony of the footbridges to say that, 'We have chosen to name these seven footbridges after these individuals who are unsung heroes, as it is a true reflection of our diverse history, heritage and culture'.[185]

The renaming of civic spaces with the names of Muslim leaders and cultural figures, and the proliferation of architectural spaces dedicated to Islam within the built environment of Cape Town, offer a pronounced public visibility of Muslim presence in the region. This presence is often deliberately framed as a manifestation of cultural diversity within the post-apartheid context, something that is clearly seen in the case of Bo-Kaap and the renaming of the bridges in Cape Town. That said, civic forms such as architectural spaces or roads offer a physical manifestation of Muslim presence that is quite literally larger than other forms of visual design and aesthetic formations.
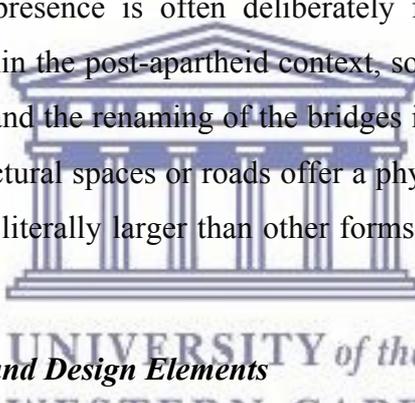
### 6.3.5 Images and Design Elements

Visual formations of the Muslim public in Cape Town are also enacted through smaller and often more discrete design elements and images including the *halaal* sign, Arabic calligraphy, photographs of religious sites, the flag of Palestine, and the Islamic green flag ornamented with white Arabic calligraphic text (*La ilaha ella Allah*: 'No God but Allah'). The image of the *halaal* sign is a visual marker that symbolises the aesthetic of Islam in the public culture of Cape Town. There are different designs of *halaal* sign: it is either an Arabic or English calligraphy of the word *halaal*, or a *helal* (moon) sign with a star in the middle, or both are placed together. In Cape Town, most food products in markets have the *halaal* sign on the packaging to reassure and to attract Muslim customers. More recently, several of the main grocery shops, including supermarket chains such as Pick n Pay and Checkers,

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[185] Patricia de Lille's comments were recorded and discussed by The Voice of the Cape (Umarah Hartley, 'City bridges named after Tuan Guru and Taliep Petersen', 23 September 2015, http://www.vocfm.co.za/city-bridges-named-after-tuan-guru-and-taliep-petersen/).

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have allocated shelf space for *halaal* meat products (fig. 6.5). Most Muslim-owned, and many non-Muslim-owned restaurants in Cape Town post *halaal* signs to announce their embrace of Islamic cooking styles, as recommended by the MJC. As visual markers of Islam, *halaal* signs enact Muslim cultural differences within the multicultural context of Cape Town. While Capetonian Muslims make sure to post and recognise the *halaal* signs in restaurant spaces, Somalis do not post *halaal* signs in their restaurants because, as Majed Abdullah, the manager of ZamZam (a Somali restaurant in Bellville CBD), told me, 'Somalis are 100% Muslim'.[186] This suggests that Somalis not only perceived themselves to be 'more Muslim' than Capetonians, but also alludes to their uneasy sense of citizenship and the politics of cultural difference in Cape Town.

Another visual aesthetic of Islam is the Arabic calligraphy that decorates most Muslim public and private spaces in Cape Town. Most mosques, *kramats*, and Islamic schools decorate their interior and exterior walls with Arabic calligraphy (fig. 6.6). Further, most mosques, Islamic schools, and Muslim civic institutions in Cape Town have Arabic names that are often written in Arabic (alongside English) over their main entrance. Stickers of Arabic calligraphy — either of Quranic verses or *Hadith* — are seen in many shops; they are also stuck on to cars, which also provide a mobile formation of Muslim religious aesthetics (fig. 6.7). Images of Arabic language thus materialise a visual aesthetic of Islam that is seen by Muslims and non-Muslims.

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[186] For further discussion of food, refer to chapter Eight.

**FIGURE 6.5** Halaal Certificate, Pick n Pay, Observatory, October 2014. (Photo by the author)

**FIGURE 6.6** Al-Quds Mosque, Athlone, 14 July 2014. (Photo by the author)



**FIGURE 6.7** Sticker of Quranic verses, Main Road, 2 January 2015. (Photo by the author)

Further to this, most Capetonian Muslim family homes that I have visited feature framed Arabic calligraphy and/or images of Islamic religious sites (*Al-Kabah* in Mecca, *Al-Aqsa* mosque in Jerusalem, or local *kramats* and mosques). Hameda Deedat has images of the Quranic verses (*Al-Kursi*) in several spaces in her house in the suburb of Salt River in Cape Town. She explained this presence by saying that these images 'bear significance in terms of protection and security and the reminder of the omnipotence of Allah'.[187] She also has two images depicting the names of the

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[187] Hameda Deedat's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 4 June 2015, Salt River, Cape Town.

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prophet Mohammad and Allah written in golden Arabic calligraphy, which for her 'depict that the home is that of Muslims'. Thania Petersen had an image of a text written in Arabic letters, which she thought was an Arabic-Islamic text. When I first visited her, she directed my attention toward the image and jokingly told me, 'You see, I'm Muslim'. Then she proceeded to ask me to read it and explain the text.[188] Petersen expressed disappointment when I told her that the text does not make sense, and that the words represented within have no meaning in Arabic, as the text appeared to be in Farsi. When I visited few weeks later, the image was not on the wall and the moment Petersen realised that I noticed, without me even asking, she smiled and commented 'I kept it on the wall because I thought it was Islamic holy script that will bless and protect the house, but now I'm worried that it's a sort of witchcraft'.

Unlike Capetonian Muslims, most Somalis in the Bellville CBD do not display Arabic calligraphy. The sign of Al-Sunny Mosque is written in English only, and there are no framed texts of Arabic calligraphy in the majority of Somali shops or restaurants in Bellville. When I asked Abdulkadir Khalif, the director of Bellville Education Centre, why there are no framed Quranic verses in the school, he explained, 'The Quranic verses are very sacred, and this is secular space. It is disrespectful for the Quran and for our religion to hang it here. . . . We don't need to show that we are Muslim, everybody knows that we are Muslim'. Khalif went further to point out that he has many framed Quranic verses at home, which he believes 'bring protection, and essence of Islam into the space'.[189] Here we witness again an apathy regarding Somali public enactment of Islamic identification. While Capetonian Muslims utilise all these visual forms to enact in public their Islamic identification and embodiment of their cultural difference within the multicultural society of Cape Town, Somali public visual markers of Islam are mainly mediated through bodily formations of Somali women and few religious figures, such as Imam Mohammad Alawal and Abdullah Majed.

Visual formations of Islamic-aesthetics such as images of Arabic script, *halaal* signs, the *hijab*, and the mosque minarets topped with the *helal* sign designating Islamic

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[188] Thania Petersen's comments are cited from an interview with the author, 5 May 2014, Observatory.

[189] Abdulkadir Khalif, interview with the author, 5 June 2014, Bellville Education Centre.

architectural style, are visual forms of public Islam that signify Muslim aesthetic style and politics of cultural difference. As Baderoon (2014) argues, Cape Muslim visibility and invisibility are politically charged through exoticisation, as in the case of making visible the Malay style; erasure, as in the case of Muslim's traumatic experience of slavery; or misrepresentation, as in the case of the media's depiction of the PAGAD. In the post-apartheid South African context, visual aesthetic formations of cultural difference often inform the centre of interest within cultural institutions and events—which is clearly demonstrated in the analysis of visual art practice in the previous chapter. In such contexts, cultural difference may be more readily understood as a form of aesthetic performance of identity and reflection and mediation of history, social, culture, and community. Visual aesthetic formations of Muslim cultural difference are most often manifest in discrete, portable, and personal forms revealing a Muslim religious urbanity that publically mediates community, identity, history, local and international networks, and connection to the divine through various aesthetic styles of Muslim-ness.

The power of these visual aesthetics is not limited to exterior symbolic embodiments of Islam and the pronounced Muslim public visibility they generate, but is also reflected in sensorial affects forged in the formation of Muslim pious subjectivity and sense of community. Muslim visual formations Islamic aesthetics are thus not merely exterior representations of public visibility but serve as symbolic sensual embodiments of an absent divine that, once charged with a sense of sacredness, form a bridge between believers and the invisible divine they seek to worship (Morgan 2005, 2010; Meyer 2008). The ways in which visual aesthetics are both invested in and loaded with the potential to become sacred serve to induce spectators' sensory experience that mediates the connection with the divine, resulting in formation of Muslim pious-subjectivity and community. This is something that can be witnessed in religious events in Cape Town.

### 6.4 Visual Formations of Muslim Subject and Community

At the mass *Mawlid* celebration in Cape Town in 2013, thousands of Muslims could be found gathered both inside and outside the Green Point Stadium area dressed in white Islamic garb.[190] Aside from the way that their Islamic white garb enacted a

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[190] The *Mawlid* celebration is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.

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public visual-aesthetic of Islam, their unified white dress signified a symbolic commonality of their religious aesthetic and their common belonging to Islam. This was no accident, as the organiser of the mass *Mawlid,* Nabeweya Malick of the MJC, instructed attendees to wear white via various media outlets.[191] Malick explained to me that 'the white dress aims to imitate Muslim garb at the *hajj*; it symbolises purity, cleanliness and it is the favourite colour for the prophet Mohammad'.[192] This shows the MJC's attempt to form communitarian commonality at a local level, but also to show commonality and belonging to the global Muslim *Ummah.* This collective performance of aesthetic commonality embodied a modality of collective belonging and community formations for Muslims. Even Helen Zille (the Western Cape Premier) and Patricia de Lille (the Mayor of Cape Town) covered their hair with headscarves to show respect for Muslim cultural dress. Here we see a clear example of how visual aesthetic formations mediate a public of Islam that includes not only Muslims but also whoever is present to experience the event.

Scholar of religion David Morgan (2010) theorises the 'material culture of lived religion' in an attempt to explain the way in which material cultures of dress, dance, sound, food, space, and prayer serve as vital modalities in the formation of community and belonging. His theorisation draws on strategic formations of visual commonality among Orthodox Jewish boys who visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem to receive their first *siddur* (prayer book). Morgan (2010) indicates that all these bodies wear black trousers and a white shirt, and all cap their *esprit de corps* with crown; he argues that 'none of them sees himself, but he does see his fellows, these other versions of himself, and he is seen in return by them. This exchange of a common gaze assures each member that he belongs to the group' (3-5). Therefore, it is their common uniform that serves to 'fabricate shared identity' and constructs a 'social body' of a religious community. Further, Morgan explains that 'the group performs its unity by dressing similarly and coming to the Wall together on this ritual occasion. The boys' knowledge of their identity is an enacted and embodied knowing, a felt-cognition'. This understanding explains the way in which the *Mawlid*

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[191] The event was supported by a huge media campaign that involved the Islamic satellite channel Deen TV, Muslim radio including The Voice of the Cape, and various printed media—all of which promoted and instructed Muslims on the proper conduct in the event.

[192] *Hajj* is the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, which takes place in the last month of the year and which all Muslims are expected to make at least once during their lifetime if they can afford to do so. It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

participants' common uniform forms an aesthetic commonality that induces their sense of belonging and membership to a community of Muslims in Cape Town and to the Muslim *Ummah* at large.

Of particular interest here is also the fact that a small minority of the *Mawlid* participants did not wear white Islamic garb. They wore darker-coloured Islamic clothes and thus were easily spotted out of the vast crowd dressed uniformly in white. Although it was difficult to observe the various cultural backgrounds or the ethnic affiliations of those who did not wear white Islamic garb, I noticed among them a group of Somali men—some of whom were featured on the event DVD.[193] Looking at this through Morgan's framework, this would suggest that their dissimilar visual bodily formations fail to mediate their aesthetic commonality and sense of inclusion and membership to the community that is joined together through the *Mawlid* celebration. Importantly, however, despite their Islamic clothes not all being white, they still reflected and embodied an identification with Islam. Their Islamic identification was also evidenced in their recitation of Islamic *Inshodah*, whereby they affirmed their belonging to Islam and membership to a community of Muslims.

Not all Muslim public gatherings are characterised by a unified dress code. For instance, attendees at the moon sighting did not wear a unified dress code. The majority of the men wore a different style of Islamic garb, *kaffiyeh* , and *fez*; others chose to wear regular, everyday clothes (pants and shirts) but donned the *kaffiyeh* and *fez*. Many men wore their Islamic garb, *kaffiyeh*, and fez over their regular clothes upon arrival. The majority of women, including some pre-pubescent girls, covered their heads with different styles of *hijab* and a few wore black *niqab*. Most of the older women wore *abaya* and *hijab*, while some young women wore only *hijab* and regular clothes. Some women did not wear any form of *hijab*. The various styles of the attendees' *hijab, dishdasha, kaffiyeh*, and *fez* signified their cultural diversity and transnational influences. In my informal conversations with some of the attendees, one man who was wearing blank white *dishdasha* and white *kaffiyeh* claimed that his white Islamic garb signifies a Saudi Arabian style. He stated, 'I have a collection of Islamic garb at home, Pakistani, Indian, Moroccan, African, and many

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[193] The DVD was produced by Cape-Town-based Islamic satellite channel, DEEN TV.

other. . . . This garb [pointing at the *dishdasha* and *kaffiyeh* he was wearing] I bought from Saudi Arabia . . . it's not proper for Cape Town weather, its cold here'. I had a conversation with a group of women, who were wearing colourful slick *hijabs* ornamented with embroidery. The elder woman stated, 'This *hijab* is Indian style. We don't wear black *hijab*, it is Saudi Arabian in style, it is depressing and sad, it is not our culture'. Despite the variety of styles witnessed in the Islamic dress code of Muslims in Cape Town—which are creole and unmeasured—overall, their dress code embodied an Islamic style that formed their religious subjectivity as members of Muslim community.

The ways in which Muslims' bodily formations enact an aesthetic of Islam and form a sense of commonality and shared identity is not limited to mass gatherings but is also observed in their everyday self-presentations. Men and women with whom I worked during my field research stated that when they wore Islamic garb, they become more identified and observed—but they also become an observer of other Muslims. Bodily formations of Muslims materialise Islamic identity and enable them to identify each other as members of the same religious community. Most of the research interlocutors have the same social experience when meeting other Muslims in public space in Cape Town. To return to Weaam Williams, this explains her previous observation that when she wore *hijab*, she met Muslims who greeted her with 'Salam'. Again, this was a sentiment echoed by Zahra who observed, 'When I first started wearing *hijab,* everybody was looking at me, some of my acquaintances thought and asked me if I converted to Islam. They never knew that I was Muslim until I put my *hijab* on'.

Muslim bodily formations therefore function as an aesthetic of mediation *and* materialisation of religion that transforms belief into a lived visible and tangible reality. Most research interlocutors stated that when they wore Islamic grab, they become more aware and attentive, careful to behave according to Islamic codes. Two reasons were common among research interlocutors: first, when they wore Islamic dress code, they became more identifiable as Muslim and thus more observed by others (Muslim and non-Muslim); and, second, their Islamic dress code serves as a reminder and evocation of their religious-self and pious subjectivity. With this in

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mind, the adoption of hijab seen as a technology of the self strives to gain God's reward.

Further to this, the ways in which religious visual aesthetics attune religious subjectivity is explained in the mutual relations between religious images and the beholder. As Birgit Meyer (2012) notes, 'visibility, after all, depends on the perspective of the beholder' (6). Meyer's observation urges a consideration not only of what it means to see and be seen, but the 'perspective' or context from which we look and are looked at. Meyer's sentiments here can be further developed by considering Morgan's suggestion that 'the power of images commonly consists of the way they are experienced as embodied' (2005, 134). Considered together, Meyer and Morgan point to questions that have perhaps most clearly been articulated in the work of Merleau-Ponty, who challenged us to consider the embodied human being as a locus of ideas, experiences, and forms. In this coming together of influences, Merleau-Ponty's work asked us to rethink the role of objects (later understood as 'material culture') not as passive subjects for interpretation, but as active subjects that shaped perception and behaviour (1964, 12).

The role of objects of material culture as 'active subjects' is also reflected in the analysis of Morgan (1998), who argues that religious images are central to practices of 'visual piety'. This can be seen, for instance, in Hameda Deedat's images of the Quranic verses, *Al-kursi*, that are found in several spaces in her home and which, for Deedat, 'bear significance in terms of protection and security and the reminder of the omnipotence of Allah'. This visual piety entails what Morgan (2005) calls a 'sacred gaze':

> A sacred gaze is the manner in which a way of seeing invests an image, a viewer, or an act of viewing with spiritual significance. The study of religious visual culture is therefore the study of images, but also the practices and habits that rely on images as well as the attitudes and preconception that inform vision as a cultural act. (3)

Looking at religious forms of design is a process of understanding cultural codes within religious practices that requires particular traditions of sensorial engagement with religious aesthetics, upon which a believer's engagements with both images and sound are grounded (Hirschkind 2006; see chapter Seven).

Through this positioning of the images, viewers gain a particular sensorial connection and mediation toward the invisible sacred and its connection to the eye (Morgan 1998; Meyer 2008). Hence, religious images are best understood not merely as representations, but rather as symbolic embodiments that wield power over the beholder, triggering their sensations of blissful amazement, anxiety, or, indeed, confusion. For Meyer (2010) religious images 'do not have an intrinsic power, but appear as powerful in the context of specific social settings' (301). This understanding of images as symbolic embodiment means seeing and, in return, being seen by the divine that is invested in the images (Morgan 2010). Pinney (2004) explains this mutuality of seeing and being seen as 'corpothetics'; that is, an embodied sensory corporeal aesthetics which entails 'a desire to fuse image and beholder, and the elevation of efficacy as the central criterion of value' (194).

*6.5 Conclusion*

This chapter makes clear the ways in which various forms of aesthetic formations in design (including dress codes, the built environment, text, and signage) are all indicative of the significance of visual culture in the formation of Muslim communities and their visibility within the context of Cape Town. In so doing this chapter demonstrates how visual forms operate as a symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness. This enactment operates externally, making Muslim communities visible in the context of Cape Town and by making clear the individual and collective identifications with Islam. This enactment also operates internally, as forms of visual culture elicit a sensorial power of forming the Muslim pious self and community.

These visual design aesthetics of Islam embody a sense of religious sacredness not only for Cape Muslims, but also for the larger Muslim *Ummah*. This understanding is also reflected in Meyer's (2011) framework, which reveals how images mediate the believer's imagination of an absent divine and facilitate a universal pictorial devotional practice around images.[194] This can be seen in the ways that visual culture operates in Cape Town, drawing a connection between local community and identity with a shared aesthetic of the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Hence, the visual aesthetics forged through forms of design such as dress codes, the built environment, text, and signage are features of a common aesthetic of Islam that reflects a Muslim

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[194] Meyer establishes this framework for understanding the role of images in mediating the absent divine in her analysis of the Sacred Heart image of Jesus in Ghana (Meyers 2012b).

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http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

cultural style at local and global levels. This conceptualisation of a common visual aesthetic of Islam is also observed and supported by artists engaged in the politics of the visibility of identity in post-apartheid South Africa.[195]

The exterior and interior affect of the aesthetic forms in embodying Muslim visibility and forming their religious-self and community is, however, something that is not limited to visual performances of identity and community. To return here to Merleau-Ponty (1964), we must understand that 'matter is "pregnant" with its form, which is to say that in the final analysis every perception takes place within a certain horizon and ultimately in the "world". If, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, 'we experience a perception and its horizon "in action"' (12), it is important that we consider not only visual manifestations of culture, identity, and a Muslim public in Cape Town. The engagement of anthropology with visual studies has move beyond the central place given in to vision in Western culture and develop an anthropology of the senses which takes into account the total sensory experiences of sense-making (Stoller 1989). Thus, to fulfil the aim of this thesis, which is to provide a comprehensive ethnographic study of aesthetic formations of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town, we must consider other aesthetic forms. The following chapter explores the significance of sound as it, quite literally, amplifies the formation of Muslim religious urbanity through Islamic sounds that often accompany Muslim visual performances, public engagements, and community activity.

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[195] This is explored through an analysis of the work of Hasan and Husain Essop, Weaam Williams, Thania Petersen, and Igshaan Adams presented in chapter Five.

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## Chapter Seven

## *The Aesthetics of Sound:*
## *Arabic Language and Sensorial Audio Performances of Muslim-ness*

### *7.1 Introduction*

James Clifford's question, 'But what of the ethnographic ear?' is underpinned by the poignant observation that in recent times 'the dominant metaphors for ethnography shift away from the observing eye and toward expressing speech' (1986, 12). Approaching this from the field of religious studies, David Morgan (2005) amplifies Clifford's observation through the argument that sacred aesthetic forms of representation are capable of being transformed into the things they signify (10). Within such an understanding performances that involve the speaking, singing, hearing, or seeing of sacred forms mediate a connection with the divine. This framework holds particular significance when considering sound for, as Morgan notes, 'sound is a powerful "icon" when it turns into the very thing it represents: the voice of the divine' (10). It should come as no surprise that the relationship between sound and social signification, organisation, and power relationships has been a central concern in music and sound studies. For example, Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer (1977) addresses the soundscape by defining it as a 'sonic environment' and as a field of research enquiry into social organisation, power relations, and interactions within urban spaces.

The observations of Clifford, Morgan, and Schafer are considered here in unison to urge an understanding of the intersection of these three distinct yet interrelated disciplinary approaches toward sound. Although the concept of the 'human sensorium' is applicable to a broad spectrum of material cultures relating to religion, including art (chapter Five), dress (chapter Six), and food (chapter Eight), this chapter builds upon the notion to contribute to scholarly observations of the sensorial affects and politics of sound. It does this by exploring the aesthetics of Capetonian Muslim sensorial performances that utilise sound. The aim is twofold: Firstly, this chapter investigates how sound serves as a vital agent in the mediation of a Muslim public visibility. Secondly, this chapter considers how sound mediates the politics of

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cultural difference in post-apartheid South Africa by negotiating and forging a sense of Muslim identity and belonging to community, nation, and the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Drawing from the concept of the 'ethnographic ear' (Clifford), the analysis in this chapter is anchored on performative 'sensory ethnography' (Pink 2006; see 1.6) that examines several key manifestations of Islamic sound in Cape Town including the *azan* (call to prayer), recitations of the Quran and *Hadith*, and the use of the Arabic language in Muslim everyday self-presentation and staged public and private performances of Muslim-ness.

In so doing, this chapter contributes to the overall aim of this thesis by revealing how sound is representative of a resurgence of Muslim public visibility in Cape Town. This resurgence is symptomatic of an aesthetic politics of cultural difference that is reflective of the reconfiguration of Muslim citizenship in the democratic liberal context of post-Apartheid South Africa. Building from the understanding that culture 'exists only insofar as it is performed' (Baumann 1996, 11), this chapter reveals how the resurgence of a Muslim religious urbanity and the politics of aesthetics in performances of Muslim-ness in a post-apartheid context are often accompanied by a sensorial audio-aesthetic of Islam that resounds and expands Muslim cultural difference in public culture and the landscape of Cape Town. Beginning with an exploration of the concept of 'authenticity' around Arabic sound, this chapter is framed by an analysis that explores the way Arabic constitutes a sensorial common aesthetic of Islam that signifies a distinct cultural style of the Muslim community— not only in Cape Town but also within the Muslim *Ummah* at large. Unpacking the heard and recited Arabic sound in relationship to Muslims intimacy and sensory experience in key examples within Cape Town (including the *azan*, Quranic recitations, public and private exchanges, and performances of the *ratiep* and *dhika)*, this chapter illuminates the vital relationship between sound and collective and individual religious subjectivity (Hirschkind 2006; Schulz 2012).

### 7.2 Aesthetics of Muslim-ness in Sensorial Performances of Arabic

The Voice of the Cape (VOC) radio station in Cape Town provides a range of religious programs. In such programs, they invite different Imams to explain Islamic values and practices with specific reference to the South African context. The Imams often refer to various Quranic scripts (the Prophet's sayings) to convey values as

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absolute truths that they recite in Arabic as a way of making their arguments appear more authentic. The Imams often expand the meaning of certain Arabic words far beyond their literal meanings, and charge them with religious values that are later explained and translated into English. This process of translation and interpretation of the Arabic language within certain Quranic verses often offers new meanings and indicates a hybridity of Islamic values. Surprisingly, during breaks within such programs, the VOC plays contemporary Arabic love songs whose content and messages stand in direct contradiction to what the Imams attempt to authenticate as 'true' Islamic values. I discussed this observation with Munadia Karaan, the current webmaster and the former program coordinator of the VOC, who replied that one of main challenges for VOC is how to attract a Muslim youth audience who are, in her words, 'culturally more South African than Muslim'.[196] Further, Karaan expressed the opinion that 'the Muslim youth in Cape Town are just Muslims during Ramadan month', during which they desire to listen to traditional Islamic music like *Inshudah* (songs) or Quranic recitations. Throughout the year, however, the radio plays contemporary Arabic songs to accommodate their Muslim audience's requests for contemporary melodies whilst at the same time maintaining a perceived connection to Islam through the religious programs since, as Karaan explained, 'the sound of the Arabic language seems to be an indication of Muslim-ness'. Karaan's statement triggered my exploration of the way in which the sound of the Arabic language mediates an aesthetic of Islam that embodies a symbolic enactment of the religious and cultural styles of an imagined community of Muslims in Cape Town.

When Munadia Karaan was pressed by my repeated questioning regarding the contradiction between the program's message and the content of Arabic songs played, she smiled and explained:

> The problem with that is twofold: number one is that most people who are living as Muslims here do not understand Arabic, so the person who schedules the music does not know that the song he just scheduled is saying exactly opposite to what the Imam is saying. And the second part is a very big dilemma we set out with in the beginning. . . . What exactly is Islamic music? And what is acceptable to our audience?

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[196] Munadia Karaan's comments throughout this section are cited from an interview with the author, 7 April 2012, VOC office, Woodstock.

Indeed, most Muslims in Cape Town do not understand Arabic—this includes religious leaders. I tried to have a conversation in Arabic with many Imams who were reciting Quranic and *Hadith* scripts in many of the events that I attended, and they often struggled to speak in Arabic. Besides that, they often write in Latin letters in a way that directly reflects their understanding of spoken Arabic. An example of this can be found in one of the biggest mosques in Cape Town called Masjid Al-Quds, where the entrance to the site is labelled as 'Masjidul Quds' in Arabic (see fig. 6.6). Another example of this can be found in my observation of Imam Abdullah Majed, who occasionally invites other Imams from Cape Town to deliver Friday sermons at Al-Sunny Mosque. The Capetonian Imam Mohammad Dahoud was invited on 8 March 2013. On this occasion it appeared that Imam Mohammad Dahoud assumed that mosque-goers at Al-Sunny Mosque, who are mainly Somalis, understood the Arabic language. In his address, Imam Mohammad spoke in Arabic, trying to induce emotional momentum among attendees, but he noticed that very few of them were engaging or appeared to understand his sermon. He consequently started to code-switch and translated his sermon into English. In doing so, he attracted greater resonance with attendees by allowing them to understand and engage.
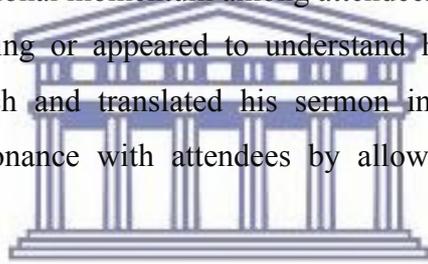
This complex approach to language amongst Muslims in Cape Town is reflected in Somali research interlocutors, Imam Modammad Alawal and Mohammad Hadith, who both speak Arabic and claim that their ethnic origin is Arab and not African. Imam Mohammad Alawal explained to me that the 'Arabic language is our language'.[197] It appears that Somalis perceive being 'Arab' and speaking the Arabic language is likely to give them more credibility and a better position within South Africa's Muslim community. Some Capetonian Muslims also claim to be of Arab origin.[198] After Friday prayer at Al-Sunny Mosque, I had a conversation with Imam Mohammad Dahoud in which he also claimed to be of Arab descent originating from Hadhramaut in Yemen. Here, the strive to claim literacy of Arabic language can be understood through Frantz Fanon's psychoanalysis of the ways in which black men strive to speak French as 'a way of proving to [themselves] that [they are] culturally adequate' since, as Fanon argues, 'to speak a language is to appropriate its world and

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[197] Mohammad Alawal, interview with the author, 4 March 2013, Bellville, Cape Town..
[198] According to Samadia Sadouni (2009), the ethnic affiliation to being 'Arab' is also observed among Somalis in Johannesburg.

culture' (1952, 21). Following from this understanding, the claim of expertise and use of Arabic phrases in everyday and staged performances seems to implicate a sense of dominance and a hierarchical power relation. It also serves to authenticate Islamic identity, religious subjectivity and belonging to Islam, to the community of Muslims in Cape Town, and to the Muslim *Ummah* at large. This is evident in the way in which my proficiency in the Arabic language has been misinterpreted as a marker of piety and religious expertise by many of the people I met formally and informally in fieldwork (see 1.5). Following from Fanon's analysis, the perception amongst research interlocutors in Cape Town that my fluency in Arabic is reflective of an authentic engagement with Islam is suggestive of the notion that language is understood as a tool of verification of cultural and religious legitimacy or 'cultural adequacy'. Put differently, for Muslims, a proficiency in Arabic is understood as appropriate to the world and culture of Islam, and is thus equated with piousness and an authenticity of Muslim identity and belonging to Islam.[199]

The lack of Arabic language skills among Muslims in Cape Town suggests that the sound of the Arabic language, rather than its actual meaning, is what constitutes a common aesthetic of Islam. This is clear, for instance, in the playing of Arabic music on the VOC radio station and the use of Arabic in religious sermons. Most Muslims—whether they are Arabic speakers or not—cultivate an experience of the Quran based more on the sound and practice of recitations than on the text as a written object (Hirschkind 2006, 39). Here it is useful to consider Steven Feld's (1982) ethnography of sound among the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea, in which he explores the expressive modalities of weeping, poetics, and songs of the Kaluli people, which are communicated through sound as an embodiment of deeply felt sentiment and a structured cultural system.[200] Hence, the sound of the Arabic language is seen as an 'aesthetically coded sentiment' that constitutes an 'ideology of emotion' (217) and, as philosopher R. G. Collingwood argues, 'is an imaginative

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[199] The way in which fluency in the Arabic language enacts an authenticity of Islamic identity and belonging to Islam is not limited to Muslims in Cape Town. For example, Sudanese film director Hajooj Kuka (2014) shows in his recent documentary film, *Beats of the Antonov*, the way in which proficiency of the Arabic language forms a social hierarchy and politic of exclusion and inclusion among Sudanese inhabitants of the Blue Nile.

[200] For South American societies, Sullivan (1986) argues that 'sound identifies and gives shape to societal values and structures' (15). In more recent work, Taylor (2012) argues that the advertising industry in the United States relies more on the rhythmic sound of music than on genres or artists in the construction of the 'Other' and the production of a non-Western aesthetic that referred to as 'world music'.

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activity whose function is to express emotion' (1958, 224). The aural aesthetic of the Arabic language thus enacts a sensorial embodiment of Muslim-ness that is perceived by Muslims as having a shared social meaning.

### 7.3 Sound and Muslim Public Audibility

The shared Muslim social identification and mediation of Muslim religious urbanity and cultural difference generated through sound is best understood through an 'ethnographic ear' attuned to the sound of Islam within the public soundscape of the multicultural society of Cape Town. A prime example of this is the daily sound of the *azan* that echoes over the urban soundscape of Cape Town. The melodic sound of the *azan* emanates from the loudspeakers on the top of the mosque's minaret and resounds within the city, traveling across various neighbourhoods of Cape Town to temporarily inflect the public domain with an outpouring of the Islamic audio-aesthetic into the city's soundscape. The rhythmic sound of the *azan* pervades Cape Town five times a day beginning at around 6:00 a.m., when the *azan* of the sunrise-prayer announces the beginning of the day in Bo-Kaap and echoes through to connect with the *azan* of District Six and Walmer Estate mosques, marking the space and time of the metropolitan area of Cape Town with an aesthetic of Muslim cultural difference.[201] The *azan* is thus the first amplified sound to be heard in most urban areas (including Cape Flats) in Cape Town. There are 198 mosques in Cape Town that not only play a vital role in Muslim community formations (Tayob 1999; Davids 1980) and function as visual formations of Muslim religious urbanity (see 6.3),[202] but also serve to materialise aesthetic formations of a distinct cultural style of an imagined Muslim community within the multicultural context of Cape Town as the sound of the *azan* spreads the sensorial audio-aesthetic of Muslim-ness far across the public space. The *azan* therefore becomes a practice of mediating a sensorial mood of Islamic spirituality and authenticity through which 'sacred sound creates sacred space' (Eisenberg 2013, 194).

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[201] The time of *azan* is not fixed, it shifts approximately a minute each day in accordance with the sun. There is considerable debate and dispute over the amplification of the *azan* in South Africa and elsewhere. In Cape Town for instance, the mosque in Rondebosh is prohibited from broadcasting the *azan* through loudspeakers. Scholars and journalists observe official and public contestation over the sound of the *azan* which, for some non-Muslims, is heard as (unpleasant) noise. Such contestation exists also in Singapore (Lee 1999), London (Eade 1996), Cairo, and Kenya (Eisenberg 2013).
[202] This is a statistic from 2010, published in the Mosque Guide in Cape Town.

The Arabic sound thus constitutes part of the urban soundscape of Cape Town by extending the boundaries of Muslim public visibility through auditory range. This has the effect of broadening the reach of the Muslim religious urbanity, as sound (quite literally) travels much further than visual enactments and performances of Muslim identity and practice. This is evidenced in participant observation at the gathering of the 2014 *Eid Ul-Fitr*, where the sound of the Quranic recitations reverberated through loudspeakers and echoed over the Sea Point Promenade from about 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and crossed above and beyond a visual enactment of Muslim-ness to reach a broader aural sweep of the Muslim public. Most of the crowd (with the exception of children) were quiet; they listened attentively to the Quranic recitations. Some recited verses whilst others closed their eyes, appearing humbled by the perceived holiness of the Quranic sound. As the sunset *azan* sounded, the crowd grouped around their food to break their fast. For a few minutes, an absolute silence covered the space and only the sound of the *azan's* echo remained. There, the sound of *azan* and the Quranic recitations marked the space and time of their gathering with an audio-aesthetic of Muslim-ness, involving and implicating individuals (Muslim and non-Muslim) within the auditory range of Muslim public.[203]
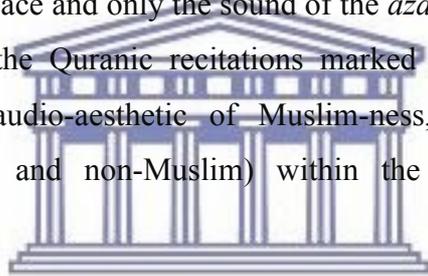
In this instance, the Quranic verses were recited by an Imam sitting within the VOC radio station vehicle from where the recitation was broadcasted to larger audiences across Cape Town. Recitations were thus rendered mobile, moving across spaces within the city. The audio-aesthetic of Muslim religious urbanity was amplified, and purposely disseminated to a broader public and space through the performance on the Muslim radio stations. Further to this, the two Islamic radio stations in Cape Town, VOC and Radio 786, regularly broadcast the *azan* and Friday sermons, provide media coverage of Muslim religious or cultural events, and broadcast various social, religious, and educational programs. These Muslim radio stations therefore extend Muslim religious urbanity beyond urban areas to include Muslims and non-Muslims living in peripheral areas (townships and Cape Flats), resulting in the establishment of an extensive acoustic community of listeners.

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[203] An ethnographic video of the 2014 moon sighting can be found here: https://vimeo.com/70481318.

Beyond the accounts provided above, throughout my fieldwork I encountered many other instances where the sound of the Arabic language provided an extension of the boundaries of the public presence of Muslim cultural difference. For example, on 21 June 2014 (the shortest day of the year), I volunteered with the Mustadafin Foundation to distribute blankets and food for homeless people at the Parade in the Cape Town CBD. At 6:00 p.m., around thirty-five Muslim and non-Muslim women and men gathered at the Grand Parade public square in Cape Town's city centre and installed three tents, each with a long table and wired a light inside. A volunteer sound technician set up two large speakers outside the tents and proceeded to play a recorded Arabic-Islamic *Inshudah* (song) that loudly resonated over the space that was previously both dark and silent. As a result, the *Inshudah* sound announced our presence aurally, thereby transcending visual-presence. Hundreds of young men and women started to arrive from the different edges of Cape Town Parade, queuing to take their blankets, dinner, and coffee. Many of those who were passing on their way to bus and taxi stations stood for a while, not queuing for food but enticed and implicated in the event through the sensorial affect generated by hearing the Islamic *Inshudah*. It is clear from this account that Islamic sounds not only expand Muslims presence, but also engage non-Muslims with Muslim aesthetic styles.
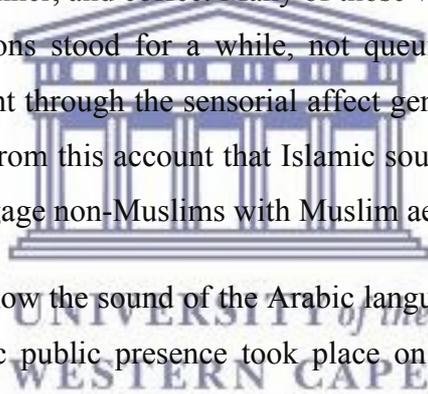
Another example of how the sound of the Arabic language provides extension of the boundaries of Islamic public presence took place on 24 December 2013, when a handful of young Muslim men visited the site of Mustadafin Foundation at Athlone. There, we gathered to cook thirty-five pots of *akhni*, traditional Malay chicken and rice, which we distributed for needy people to enjoy their Christmas celebration.[204] The organiser of the event welcomed the group and proceeded to lower the sound of the Arabic Islamic *Inshudah* that was playing on a CD player. The group then stood in a circle reciting Islamic verses and shortly after were joined by some other volunteers, many of whom were American exchange students, who, although not familiar with the *Inshudah*, appeared to enjoy its rhythm. These events coordinated by the Mustadafin Foundation are but a sample of several Muslim mass cooking gatherings I participated in throughout my fieldwork. These events usually take place at public sites in Muslim neighbourhoods in Cape Town, and all of these public performances of Muslim-ness were accompanied by the sound of Quranic

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[204] For further discussion of this event and the role of food refer to chapter Eight.

recitations and Arabic-Islamic *Inshudah*. As Muslim rituals of mass cooking often take place after sunset, the surrounding often limits the visual enactment of Muslim-ness. In these instances, Islamic recitations become the most pronounced (and embodied) sensorial aesthetic formation that mediates a sense of Muslim-ness and communitarian style. In all these performances, the Islamic recitations were amplified through loudspeakers, and hence echoed over the soundscape, reverberating within and across geographical spaces to engage those who are within auditory range—Muslim and non-Muslims alike—with Muslim aesthetic style.

The way in which aesthetics and sensorial performances of Arabic sound enact Muslim public visibility are not limited to Muslim religious or cultural communitarian performances, but are also reflected in secular institutional settings through artistic performances of Muslim-ness.

### 7.4 The Sound of Arabic in Artistic Performances

In December 2011, Igshaan Adams exhibited an art installation entitled 'I Am You' in the Stevenson Gallery group exhibition, *What we talk about when we talk about love,* curated by Federica Angelucci. Adams' installation consisted of a circular maze structure made up of fabric suspended from the ceiling hung in such a way that allowed people to walk inside it. He sat in the centre of the structure, unseen behind the fabric, wearing only white garb and *fez*, chanting softly in Arabic. There, the sound of Arabic mediated an aesthetic of Muslim-ness and the artist's Islamic identification. For the artist, the power of the Arabic sound in the performance is something he came to understand through his participation in the *dhiker* ritual. *Dhiker* is a Sufi ritual formed by repeated rhythmic Arabic-Islamic recitations that are performed in remembrance of God. This ritual is seen as a means to purify the self and form a sensorial sense of piousness amongst participants (see 7.9).

Adams is not the only artist to draw inspiration from the *dhiker*; this is also reflected in the work of South Africa's most prominent sound artist, James Webb.[205] His art installation *Al Madat,* exhibited at Blank Projects Gallery in Woodstock Cape Town in February 2014, consisted of four tripod-based speakers placed at the corners of a

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[205] James Webb was born in 1975, and in 1996 obtained his BA degree (drama and comparative religion) from the University of Cape Town. He has won many national and transnational art awards. See James Webb's website, last modified 21 October 2012, http://www.theotherjameswebb.com/.

Persian carpet. Within this sound installation, Webb repeatedly played a recording of *dhiker* ceremonies, which he recorded through his work with the Sultan Bahu Rehab Centre, a drug rehabilitation centre run by a Sufi mosque in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town. The artist's emphasis on Arabic sound is not limited to this work: another example of Webb's sound art installations is *Prayer (Malmö)* (2000-2015), a work comprised of recordings of vocal worship of various religions in Malmö (Sweden), broadcast simultaneously from twelve floor-based speakers. These recordings included sounds of the Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as new religious movements and traditional pre-Christian faiths. Here, the non-Muslim engagement with the sound of Muslim-ness is not limited to hearing. As in the case of James Webb, the aesthetic of Muslim-ness is also performed by a non-Muslim.

### 7.5 The Sound and Private Muslim Performances

Beyond events that are open to the public, Islamic sound forms an integral part of Muslim gatherings including weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies for new-born children. An example of this in Cape Town can be found in my experience attending the wedding ceremony of my colleague at the University of Western Cape, Hibah Hendricks. This wedding was a Cape-Town-style Islamic wedding that commenced in a mosque where the official marriage took place, followed by a morning and an evening reception. The event took place on 8 July 2012 and commenced at 7:00 a.m. at the Masjiedul Mansoor mosque in Mountview Estate, Athlone, where we gathered to witness and celebrate the *nikkah* (marriage ceremony) of Hibah Hendricks and Ashley Jacobs. The ceremony started with Imam Hassan reciting verses from the Quran, followed by Sheikh Thaafir Najjaar's speech on marriage being a union chosen and blessed by God, followed by Hibah's father Faiek Hendricks' announcement that he accepted to give her hand in marriage to Ashley. When Hibah's cousin Sheikh Hashim Salie addressed Ashley, he called him Isa—an Arabic name accepted by Ashley, who converted to Islam months before the ceremony. Sheikh Hashim then requested Isa (Ashley) to declare to Allah that he will take Hibah as his wife according to the agreed dowry. After Isa (Ashley) signed the marriage certificate, Imam Najjaar and Imam Hashim recited short verses from the Quran and the ceremony ended with the prayer led by Hibah's uncle, Edroos Salie.

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In 2004, Hendricks enrolled at the anthropology department at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). In her first year studying at UWC, she met Ashley Jacobs—who was studying sport and exercise science— in a psychology class. It happened that both had applied for a job at the same branch of Cape Union Mart (a store stocking adventure gear). As Hibah explains, it was there that they got to know one another through mutual high school and university friends also employed at the store, and the group spent much time socialising together.[206] Hibah says, 'We were friends for three years before we started taking a more serious interest in each other and it was after five years that we decided to marry'[207]. Ashley (Isa) Jacobs is twenty-nine years old. He was born in August 1985 to Sheila and Antonio Jacobs, and was raised Christian until converting to Islam a few months prior to his wedding. According to Hibah, 'Ashley has such a sound belief in God, and was undoubtedly the best Muslim man I've met long before he converted to Islam due to his beliefs and good character'.

After the *nikkah* ceremony, we left the mosque and went to a nearby reception hall on Kromboom Road in Athlone to attend the morning reception and congratulate Ashley and Hibah. There, Hibah's father symbolically handed Hibah over to Ashley, who informed Hibah that they have been married and that he had accepted her dowry and asked her to sign their marriage certificate, which she did before they exchanged rings and kissed. We again gathered at 7:00 p.m. to join the evening reception ceremony, which was attended by the bride and groom's families, family friends, closest friends, colleagues, and a few acquaintances. It is significant to note that guests where of diverse cultural backgrounds; this was most clear in Hendricks's bridesmaids who were her fellow master's students, and were of different cultural, racial, and national backgrounds. These bridesmaids included, amongst others, Meseret Wodaje, originally from Ethiopia; Chanell Oliphant, a Coloured South African; and Black South Africans, Lerato Makhale and Disebo Motau. Crucial to our concerns here is that attendees to this event were also culturally diverse, and thus both Muslim and non-Muslim. As a result, their experience and connection to the sacredness of the event was mediated through Islamic sounds present at the wedding.

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[206] Retailing in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, Cape Union Mart is South Africa's oldest store stocking adventure gear including hiking supplies and camping equipment.
[207] Hibah Hendricks' comments in this section are cited from an email discourse with the author, 4 April 2014.

The evening ceremony was opened by an Imam reciting Arabic-Islamic *Dua'a*, so as to bless the event and to bring a sense of Islamic sacredness to the function. The bride then entered the function against the background sound of the song 'Barak Allah Fekoma' ('God bless you') by Mahir Zain, which combines Arabic and English lyrics.[208] The contemporary melody of the song appeared to appeal to and enliven the crowd, whilst the Arabic lyrics performed an aesthetic of Muslim-ness through which Hibah and her family enacted their belonging and commonality to the Muslim community. Hibah indicated to me that her family recommended this song, and that her real favourite song is the Spiderman theme song by Michael Bublé.[209]

Another example of an intimate gathering involving sound that I attended was the funeral ceremony for Jasmine Ahmed, the aunt of my friend Irshad Goffry. The funeral took place on the 3 March 2012, and commenced at 12:30 p.m. at the family's house in Maitland, where relatives were gathered. Jasmine's family stood close to the covered body, accompanied by an Imam who led in the recitation of Quranic verses.[210] Men and women started reciting verses, unified through the common aesthetic sound, rhythmically performing their feeling of sadness, evoking their emotional attachment to Jasmine, and collectively appealing to God to forgive, bless, and place Jasmine in paradise. There, the sound of the Arabic language filled the silence with a symbolic embodiment of sacred-ness, connecting people together— including the few Christian attendees, who bonded with the Muslim crowd through their attentive listening. Many of the Muslims present knew the recitations and therefore collectively performed the culturally and socially constructed ritual of the funeral, knowing each appropriate step. Further to that, participants were able to channel the feelings and emotional expressions needed, which include physical sensations such as tears and mourning behaviours mainly performed by women as a result of gender specific interpretations of emotion within Islam.

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[208] To hear the song Barak Allah Fekoma visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHpTdsBbYRM (published 20 January 2012).
[209] See https://youtu.be/9WQJg5fP0U8 (posted 20 October 2009).
[210] Maitland is a suburb located 20 kilometres east of Cape Town city centre.

*7.6 Sound in Everyday Exchange*

Beyond private events (such as weddings and funerals) and public events (such as the *Eid Ul-Fitr* and artistic performances), the scale of the audio-aesthetic of Islam within public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town is extended by the presentation of self in everyday performances of Muslims. The echo of Arabic and Muslim sounds is mobile within and across public spaces, as it carries along Arabic names and basic Arabic words/phrases for sociality. Muslims in Cape Town often have Arabic first names; this includes those who have converted to Islam and have been given an Arabic name as an indication of their Islamic identity formation. Muslims in Cape Town use many Arabic words and phrases in their everyday conversations with each other, but will often replace these expressions with English in their conversations with non-Muslims. In addition, Muslims in Cape Town often give Arabic names to various places including, but not limited to, their houses, companies, shops, institutions, and mosques. The Arabic script therefore has not just remained a sacred script but has become an important commercial commodity, as Arabic religious texts decorate most private and public spaces of Muslims in Cape Town.[211]

Cape Muslim use of Arabic words/phrases in their everyday conversations with each other constitutes and reveals their commonality, thus allowing them to identify each other as members of the same community. Anthropologist Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) argues that the formation of commonality is vital in the creation of collective belonging and a community's culturally perceived boundary that includes members and demarcates outsiders. What is significant to note here is that the everyday use of Arabic sounds amongst Muslims constitutes an association to Islam that embodies not merely a religious aesthetic, but rather a cultural style that reflects and mediates Muslim identity—no matter the community's locale, mobility, or structure. This understanding of Arabic sound as a symbolic enactment of Cape Muslim cultural style rather than merely religious signifier is evident in, for example, the use of Arabic love songs on Muslim radio stations in Cape Town. Further evidence is seen in Weaam Williams' artwork *The Medora: Ancestral Omega* (see 5.5), which opens with an Arabic love song in much the same way that Muslim radio stations in Cape Town include Arabic love songs in their playlists. Put more clearly, the significant

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[211] For further analysis of the role of design elements such as Arabic script, refer to chapter Six (6.3).

point here is that the sound of the Arabic language signifies a cultural style of Muslim-ness in Cape Town that, beyond the religious setting, forms part of both everyday exchanges and intimate celebrations.

Here it is significant to return to VOC's Munadia Karaan's assertion that the sound of contemporary Arabic songs broadcast through Muslim radio stations embodies a persuasive aesthetic of Muslim-ness. Karaan's observation supports the understanding that aesthetic formations of Arabic language are not limited to enactments of the religious or the sacred, but are nonetheless appreciated as vital forms of Cape Muslim cultural style. The listener's request more religious *Inshudah* or Quranic recitations to evoke their religious self during Ramadan, but the contemporary Arabic songs played throughout the rest of the year are no less tied to the aesthetic of the Muslim community. This connection is made through the Arabic language rather than through religiosity. This establishes an understanding of Muslims in Cape Town as 'culturally more South African than Muslim', meaning that Muslim identity and community formations are affected more by cultural aesthetics rather than embodied by religious beliefs. Yet even in this cultural performance, the radio station counts on the sound of the Arabic language 'as an indication of Muslim-ness'. This invites us to appreciate the aural aesthetics of Islam as a symbolic embodiment of a cultural style of Muslim community and not merely a religious aesthetic.

The discussion presented here posits that the sound of the Arabic language embodies a symbolic enactment of Muslim religious aesthetic and cultural style, which accompanies Muslims' public and private performances as well as their everyday self-presentation of Islamic identification. These examples are indicative of the ways in which the sound of the Arabic language signifies and extends public visibility of Muslim religious urbanity beyond its visual boundaries. These sounds mediate an aesthetic sensational form of Muslim lived religion that on the one hand triggers a sense of sacredness and piousness; on the other hand, it announces Muslim commonality, membership to the same community, and the cultural style within the multicultural society of Cape Town.

## 7.7 The Emergence of Arabic Language in Cape Town

The contemporary and ongoing prominence of Arabic sounds in art, intimate ceremonies, everyday practices, and mass gatherings in Cape Town is symptomatic of a long history of engagement with Arabic language in Cape Town. As such, it is useful for our purposes here to consider the historical origins of these sounds and the use of the Arabic language in Cape Town more specifically. Since the Arabic language is the language of Muslim worship, the sound of it dates back to the day of Muslim arrival in Cape Town. As noted by Rochlin (1940), despite the early use of Quranic sound in Muslim worship in Cape Town, very few understood the meaning of the Arabic. Since the vast majority of Muslims came to Cape Town from East Asia and Africa, it is safe to assume that none or few of these individuals were Arabic native speakers.

The growth of Arabic language in Cape Town therefore corresponds with the growth of Islamic teaching that began in the years of slavery when Sheikh Youssef established the first circular for Islamic learners. Although some scholars believe that Sheikh Youssef wrote the first Arabic treatises in Cape Town, it is generally agreed that Abdullah Qadi Abdus-Salam (Tuan Guru) wrote the first Arabic treatises in Cape Town during his prison time on Robben Island (Haron 2003). He wrote the entire Quran from memory, and a theological book, *Ma'rifat Al-Islam Wa'l-iman*, which became the main treatise for Islamic teaching in Cape Town. The growth of Cape Muslim understanding of Arabic language corresponds with the establishment of Islamic schools in the 1790s (see 4.8). The establishment of the Islamic schools alongside its Arabic teaching material gradually enhanced the knowledge and use of Arabic language among Cape Muslims. Importantly, a vital part of the *madrasah*'s educational material was the handwritten *Koples Boek* in Arabic script (Jappie 2011).

As Saarah Jappie (2011) notes, the growth in Arabic language proficiency among Cape Muslims resulted in the expansion of its use beyond the religious setting to become the written script of Cape Muslim local languages, the Malayu language, and, later, Cape Afrikaans. The Arabic-Malay script, which was refereed to as *Jawi*, declined due to the growth of Afrikaans in the late eighteen centuries. Thereafter, the Arabic-Afrikaans script emerged, and was known as *Ajami* script (*Ajami* is an Arabic

word that means foreign). What is significant here is that the written Arabic-Afrikaans visual form implies that it is Arabic whilst the sound is Afrikaans. By the late nineteenth century, Muslims acquired a more secular education in Cape Town. This shift from *madrasah* religious education to secular schooling led to a growth in the use of Latin script and the limited use of Arabic script within religious settings (see Jappie 2011).

Despite the growth of Latin script, the everyday use of Arabic religious terms formed part of Cape Muslims' Malayu and Cape Afrikaans language, since the translation of Arabic religious text to Afrikaans avoids the translation and use of certain conceptual keywords of Islamic thought (Davids 2011). Hence, many Arabic keywords were absorbed into the vocabulary of the Cape Muslim community and the phonetics of the Arabic alphabet impacted upon the acoustic nature of Cape Muslim Afrikaans (Davids 2011).[212] Moreover, since the 1970s Muslims in Cape Town have replaced many Malayu words with Arabic words, such as *Eid* instead of *labarang*, and *shukran* ('thank you') instead of *terima kasih*. This recent increase in the use of Arabic words in Cape Muslim's everyday exchanges can be understood as representative of the politics of Islamisation that resulted from the increased number of Cape Muslims graduating from Islamic studies from various Arab countries (particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia).

The emphasis upon Arabic in various institutions was reignited again in early 1955 by Dutch scholar Professor Adrianies Van Selms, when it became a subject of study at the University of Pretoria and later the University of South Africa. Muslim scholars succeed in 1975 to gain an academic status for the Arabic language and to include it as a third language within Islamic schools (Mohamed 1997). Many seminars and programs were held at provincial levels, which culminated in the first national workshop of Arabic language in South Africa, which hosted by the University of the Western Cape in 1994 (Mohamed 1997). Recently in South Africa, the Arabic language is taught academically at three levels: at universities, at Muslim

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[212] Such Arabic keywords include: *saheeh* (correct), *salah* (prayer), *zakaah* (charity), *niekah* (marriage ceremony), *rieziek* (bounty), and *waajieb* (necessary). Examples of composite expressions include Sanskrit-Arabic, *graana-salaah* (prayer for the eclipse); Sunda-Arabic, *kierie-slaam* (best greeting); and Malayu-Arabic, *tuan-Koeber* (gravedigger). For more about Cape Malay vernacular, visit https://alexfam786.wordpress.com/501-2/?blogsub=confirming#subscribe-blog (accessed 3 March 2013).

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theological institutions, and at school level. The historical trajectory of the use of Arabic in South Africa and its absorption into fields of study within the region reflects not only the growth of the Muslim population and changes to class structure and cultural diversity in South Africa, but also a growth in the visibility of Muslim public presence in South Africa.

## 7.8 The Sacredness of Arabic

As Haron (2003) notes, Arabic language was treated as sacred since its earliest usage amongst Cape Muslims. The way in which the sound of the Arabic language embodies a symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness and a sense of sacredness is achieved through a politics of authenticity and related process of materialisation (see 2.2). A clear example of this is the Al-Sunny mosque in Bellville CBD, where the majority of attendees are Somalis but there are also include other African immigrants and Pakistanis, Afghans, Indians, Arabs, and South African Muslims—most of whom work in Bellville CBD and attend Friday prayer regularly at Al-Sunny Mosque to form a Muslim public in Bellville CBD. During Friday prayer, Imam Abu Allah of the Al-Sunny Mosque explains his sermon in the Somali language before stepping onto the podium, from which he proceeds to deliver his sermon in Arabic. The positioning of the Imam, on and off the podium, explains the politics of authenticity and the enactment of commonality and collective attachment to a shared Islamic-religious sacredness.

Not all Imams in Cape Town include Arabic text in their sermons, and thereby do not position themselves as unquestionably sacred. Some Imams, such as Rashid Omar (the Imam of Claremont Main Road Mosque) delivers his sermon in English whilst translating and explaining the meaning of certain Quranic verses and *Hadith,* which he recites in Arabic. That said, Imam Rashid Omar does not seem to entirely deny the sacredness of the Arabic language, as he avoids the translation of certain Arabic religious keywords, which seem to be representative of Islamic discursive practices. The Imam at Aluawal Mosque in Bo-Kaap often delivers the Friday sermon in Afrikaans while referring to various Quranic verses and *Hadith*, which are recited in Arabic language. An exception to this approach comes in Taj Hargey, who led Friday prayer at the opening of the Open Mosque by translating the Quranic

verses that he recited into English line by line, whilst praying.[213] In the following, I will show how responding to their respective congregants' language, class, and positioning, the diverse use and emphasis on the Arabic language outlined above provides an insight into Muslim layers of multiple belonging.

Al-Sunny Mosque attendees are mostly Somali refugees, and hence their related politics of authenticity and emphasis on Arabic language suggests an overt transnational belonging to the Muslim *Ummah* and a lack of a sense of belonging as South African citizens. In contrast to this, the Claremont Main Road Mosque and the Open Mosque are both geared toward well-educated, middle-class Muslim attendees, who do not necessary feel religiously inferior due to their lack of Arabic language but are rather assertive of the particularity of their cultural locality through which they embody a belonging to their Cape locality and the culturalisation of their citizenship. This sense of belonging is not limited to well-educated, middle-class Muslims, but is shared among most Cape Muslims who emphasise the cultural particularity of their religious aesthetic formations through the use of local language (as seen in the use of Afrikaans at the Aluawal Mosque in Bo-Kaap). What is important to make clear here is that regardless of whether Muslims place more emphasis on transnational belonging to Muslim *Ummah*, or assert cultural particularity in their performances of Muslim-ness, they all rely and refer to original Islamic scripts recited in Arabic to authenticate their religious claim and expertise. In other words, regardless of the various languages used in religious services, there appears to be no examples of Islamic religious performances in Cape Town that entirely exclude the use of Arabic, and it remains the main aesthetic used to signify Muslim authenticity.

This type of complex relationship between native language, ethnic background, and Islam falls under the concern of the reformist Nazir Khaja (2013), who calls for reinterpretations of the Quran based on various localities that runs counter to the authority of the Arabic language and Arab Islamic culture over the narrative and epistemology of Islam.[214] The Arabic language is a powerful mediator in the formation of Muslim community and sense of equivalence, commonality, and

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[213] For further discussion of the Open Mosque, see chapter Four (4.6).
[214] Dr. Najir Khaja is a medical doctor, journalist, and Chairman of the Islamic Information Service in the United States.

belonging to a community of Muslims at local, national, and transnational levels. However, Khaja explains that 20% of the global Muslim population are Arabs, and that the majority of Muslims do not speak or understand Arabic. Despite this, the language is still considered superior and is classified as sacred in that 'the Arabic Qur'an is the Divine response to the Prophet's calling, the Arabic language itself is understood by Muslims to be divine', and this is responsible for the 'attitude of deep reverence among all Muslims whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs to the extent that a literate interpretation or understanding of the Qur'an remains a dominant mode' (Khaja 2013). Adding to the irony of this perception of divinity associated with the Arabic language is the fact that the majority of Muslims around the world pray five times a day or recite Quranic Arabic during prayer sessions with little understanding of the words they hear or recite. This should not be understood as implying a passive engagement in sensory experiences and practices of Islam, nor should it be understood as curbing the distinctiveness of Muslims within diverse localities.

This can be demonstrated in the behaviour and use of languages within the crowd at the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* in 2013. Whilst the performativity of a common aesthetic of Quranic sound drove a sense of a shared sacred among the crowd at the event, their diversity was evidently performed through the use of different languages. The masters of ceremony spoke in Arabic, English, Xhosa, Urdu, and Afrikaans to show respect and recognition of Muslim's diversity in Cape Town. Sheikh Alexander sang repeatedly the same *inshudah* in Arabic, Urdu, English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa, all of which evoked emotional resonance within the crowd.[215] There was often a mixing of various languages that served to characterise and reveal the complexity of a diverse intersection of Muslims in Cape Town. These aesthetics and sensual performances of Muslim diversity signify multiple Muslim belongings, and are indicative of the ways in which they belong to and constitute part of an imagined Muslim community through their cultural particularities and shared performances of a common aesthetics of Islam.

The multiple identifications with particular religious sites and diverse language and cultural backgrounds within Muslim communities in Cape Town is reflective of a complex sense of belonging within the post-apartheid context of South Africa.

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[215] Muslim identification and performance of diverse languages is also evident in Capetonian Muslim artistic performances, such as that of the Essop twins and Weaam William discussed in chapter Six.

Moreover, it also suggests the impossibility of an exclusive sense of belonging to the ethnic community, religious community, or nation-state. This complex state is mapped by several scholars who explore the ways in which individuals navigate their belongings to various collectives to argue against an exclusive sense of belonging (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013; Bangstad 2007; Nuttall 2004, 2009; Baumann 1996). This pyramid of identification is understood as layering an individual's sense of belonging that is affected, negotiated and performed through collective constellations (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013, 14). Again, this understanding is reflected in the unfolding of events at the mass *Mawlid Al-Nabi* where, in recognition of Muslim diversity in Cape Town, speakers often quoted some verses form the Quran or *Hadith* to once again trigger a commonality of Islamic aesthetics within the crowd. When the speakers appealed to God for mercy, the crowd often collectively said 'amen', either aloud or in the form of a murmur. Here, their collective sensory engagement was seen to instigate a feeling of togetherness, and made apparent their commonality and collective attachment to a shared understanding of sacredness within a common aesthetic of Islam.

Although the sound of the Arabic language appears to enact authenticity and a common sense of the sacred that binds and bonds a community of diverse Muslims, local languages evidently reflect power relations and a sense of exclusion. As an example, the dominance of the Somali language at the Al-Sunny Mosque has led many non-Somali Muslims to attend Friday prayer in other mosques. Igshaan Nor Alden, the chairperson of the Muslim Ethiopian community in Bellville (the second largest Muslim community after the Somali community) explained in an interview, 'Ethiopian Muslims feel excluded in Al-Sunny Mosque, because they don't understand the Somali or Arabic language'[216]. A similar statement was also made by Pakistani Muslim, Mohammad Abu Baker Kadire (the owner of a Pakistani chicken restaurant), who stated, 'Pakistanis don't understand the Somali language—the majority of Muslims in Bellville CBD attend Friday prayer at the Bellville South Mosque. The sermon there is in English and Afrikaans. I attend all prayers at Al-Sunny Mosque; it's close to my restaurant, and because most of my customers are Somalis'.[217] The dominance of the Somali language at the Al-Sunny Mosque has led

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[216] Igshaan Nor Alden, interview with the author, 4 March 2013, Bellville.
[217] Mohammad Abu Baker Kadire, interview with the author, 4 March 2013, Bellville.

Ethiopians in Cape Town to open a new mosque and Quranic School in the Bellville CBD and mandate that Imam Mohammad Alawal establish it and be its Imam. On 20 April 2012, Imam Mohammad Alawal fetched me from Bellville CBD and drove a few hundred meters to Voortrekker Road to show me the site of the new mosque. We walked into the space that was made up of four rooms and a big kitchen. Mohammad walked me through each room and explained his passion to open an Islamic school that will offer teachings, lectures, and Friday sermons in different languages, although mainly English.

The diverse use of language and the ambivalence toward the use of Arabic in religious performances in Cape Town is representative of the resurgence of the public performance of Muslim-ness in the city. The point here is that the public visibility of Muslims is established through diverse cultural, national, ethnic, and linguistic groups, and their approaches to language are symptomatic of an aesthetic politics of cultural difference that is reflective of the process of the reconfiguration of Muslim citizenship in the democratic liberal context of post-apartheid South Africa. That said, the role of Arabic sound in performances of Muslim-ness is not limited to extending the boundaries of Muslim public visibility and the way in which it materialises Muslim cultural styles within the context of multicultural Cape Town society. Rather, sound should also be understood as an agent that embodies sensorial politics that activate Muslim subject and community formations.

### 7.9 The Role of Arabic sound in Muslim Subject and Community Formations.

The sensorial affect of Islamic-sound in the formation of Muslim pious self and sense of community is most clearly seen in performances of the Sufi rituals of *dhiker* and *ratiep*. Both entail a rhythmic repetitive structure and recitation of Islamic scripts (either Quranic verses or Islamic poems known as *Qasida*) performed in the remembrance of God (as in the case of *dhiker*) or in commemoration of Muslim leaders (as in the case of *ratiep*). As the following ethnographic accounts demonstrate, both rituals are understood as serving to purify participants and, more crucially for the purposes of this thesis, to form their sensorial sense of piousness through the recitation and hearing of Islamic sound.

### 7.9.1 Dhiker

*Dhiker* is a Sufi ritual that relies on the repetitive recitation of religious scripts, whether out loud or silently, publically or privately. Every Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., approximately twenty-five to thirty Muslim women gather at the Aljehad Mosque at Leeuwen Street in Bo-Kaap to perform their weekly congregational *dhiker*, known as the *Khatmul Khawajagan.* When I first attended these gatherings in 2012, I was not allowed to join their *dhiker* because of my gender; however, once female attendees knew about my research and discovered that I am from Palestine, they welcomed me and allowed me to observe from the second floor of the mosque where I was able to clearly see and hear their participation in the *dhiker*. They sat in circle; some sat on the floor while the elderly sat on plastic chairs. Most of the women read the recitations from the *Naqshbandi*, a small book from the Sufi order, except for a few women who were senior members and had memorised the recitations by heart.[218] Zynaap Yaseer, who had been chosen by Sheikh Yusuf da Costa to lead the *dhiker,* opened the ritual by welcoming everyone and by asking God to accept their appeal and to grant them their desires.[219] This was followed by a moment of silence that was succeeded by the women collectively following Zynaap's recital. Their recitation started by rhythmically repeating *Astaqfeerw Allah* (the request for the forgiveness of God) ten times, then the recitation of the Quranic verses, *Alfateha.* Together, they repeated over and over numerous Quranic verses and certain Arabic religious texts. Moving collectively, connected by both their bodies and mental focus, the women closed their eyes and rocked their bodies side to side and back and forth, letting the rhythmic sound fuse with their breath to induce emotional momentum and to evoke their feeling of a sensorial 'mystical experience' (Pinto 2010).

Following from this, Zynaab closed the *dhiker* by stressing the importance of the moral quality of social practice and public behaviour, and asked participants to pray for the Muslim *Ummah* in Somalia and Palestine. She then concluded by announcing local Muslims' affairs including weddings, funerals, school exams, and sociocultural

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[218] The book is often given free for new attendees as sign and encouragement of their membership. It consists of Arabic texts with pronunciations transliterated into English.

[219] Sheikh Yusuf da Costa is a prominent leader of the *Naqshbandi* Sufi order in Cape Town. He was born in 1935 in Cape Town, and became a scholar of Islamic studies. During the 1990s, he was an associate professor at the arts faculty at the University of the Western Cape and, up until 2000, he was at the Islamic College of South Africa in Cape Town.

events, which all required women's solidarity and their voluntary contribution. Due to the limitations of my gender status in fieldwork, I appointed a female filmmaker, Prune Martinez, to film the *dhiker* and more importantly to interview Zynaap. Although Zynaap did allow Martinez to film their recitations, she did not agree to being interviewed and asked Soriah to explain to Martinez what their *dhiker* was all about.[220] Soriah and a few other women from Bo-Kaap serve as a committee that assist Zynaap to organise the weekly *dhiker* and to follow up social issues within the Bo-Kaap community. Soriah is a middle-aged Capetonian Muslim that I met many times at the Bo-Kaap Market where she sells spices and honey.[221] There we had many informal conversations, in which she expressed that the '*dhiker* purifies my soul and self. . . . *dhiker* initiates a feeling of humility, tranquillity, and closeness to God. . . . *dhiker* unites us, bringing us together to feel and to know each other's problems, and to accept Islamic law as absolute and non-negotiable'. Soriah's statement explains the powerful affect of hearing and reciting Islamic sound in purifying the soul, the self, and fellow *dhiker* participants. This process also assists Soriah in obtaining a sense of piousness for the *dhiker* that enables her to feel 'fearless in Allah's hands to make me for what I was born for'. The *dhiker* not only forms Muslim individual's subjectivities, it also forms a sense of community among its participants. From these observations of Muslim women, *dhiker* is seen to provide a communitarian platform in which they socialise and engage with social issues concerning other members of the Muslim community in Bo-Kaap, in Cape Town, and elsewhere.

*Dhiker* is an Arabic word that translates to mean 'remembrance' or 'mention'; hence the use of this word for this Sufi ritual makes clear that *dhiker* performances are hinged on oral citations that 'remind' participants of God and facilitate the remembrance of the divine. The emergence of *dhiker* in Cape Town dates back to the era of slavery in the seventeenth century (see 3.6), when Sheikh Yusuf first introduced the *Nagshbandi* Sufi order in Cape Town. Following from this foundation, Sheikh Abd al-Rahim ibn Muhammad of Iraq introduced the *Alawiyyah* Sufi order in the nineteenth century, and Sayyid Muhsin ibn Salim al-Idrus of Arabia introduced the *Qadiriyyah* Sufi order in twentieth century (Dangor 1994). In the

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[220] To see the video visit: https://vimeo.com/70079440.
[221] For further discussion of the Bo-Kaap market, refer to chapter Eight.

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post-apartheid era, the increasing number of West African immigrants (particularly from Senegal) has led to the emergence of the *Tijaniyya* Sufi order in Cape Town (Lliteras 2010). The melodies and texts used in recitations by these various Sufi orders slightly differ from one another, creating a diversity of *dhiker* styles in Cape Town.

The various *dhiker* groups in Cape Town and their recitations form part of a range of Muslim performances of cultural diversity and belonging in Cape Town. At the mass *Mawlid* celebration of 2013, various *dhiker* groups were grouped under various *madrasahs* and mosques. Each group collectively sang Islamic *Inshudah* using different texts and melodies. Each group consisted of twenty to thirty male members led by senior Imams who chanted the *Inshudah* from heart, while the other members read the recitations from a book as they collectively sang together as one. Considered together, *dhiker* performances embody a sensorial enactment of Muslim-ness that mediates Muslim communitarian religious aesthetics that serve to bind and bond Muslims, form commonality and belonging, and signify their politics of cultural difference and rights of citizenship within the multicultural context of Cape Town and the post-apartheid nation at large.

I joined the *dhiker* at the Jumah Mosque where men and women are separated by a transparent. There we sat in lines, each holding a copy of the *inshudah* book in Arabic, facing a few senior male reciters. Imam Abu Alfatah from Morocco welcomed everyone and indicated the page from which we would recite. The prominent members recited from heart, while the rest of us read from the book. Imam Ismail indicated how many times we should repeat particular lines from the *inshudah* by knocking his wooden *sibha* (rosary) numerically. After we completed the required recitations, we stood in circles surrounding Imam Ismail, who stood in the centre conducting the motions of our breath and bodily movements. We collectively followed Ismail's body movements, breathing, and making sounds whilst Ismail continuously chanted '*Allah Hae*' ('God is alive'), threw his body back and forth, and raised the momentum of his breath and chanting faster and faster; he then softened the sound of his chanting, slowed down and reduced his chanting to '*Hae, Hae, Hae*' ('Alive, Alive, Alive'). As we relaxed our breath, Ismail drew Imam Ahmad Perez to the centre and indicated the he take over and lead. Imam

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Ahmad Perez started over again, chanting '*Allah Hae*', breathing and moving faster and faster, then slowing down to chant, *Hae, Hae, Hae'*. Our collective rhythmic breathing, chanting, and movement induced an emotional attachment and conviviality among us. After the *dhiker*, we sat and listened to a short Islamic lecture by Imam Ismail, and then grouped in circle around food where we proceed to eat, talk, and eventually leave.

The *dhiker* at the Jumah Mosque differed from the *dhiker* at the Aljehad Mosque in that the former included male and female participants but, perhaps more importantly, it also involved greater physical engagement for all participants. My involvement in this *dhiker* was not limited to participant observation from the second floor (as in the case of my participant observation of *dhiker* at Aljehad Mosque). Rather, it involved total bodily sensation in the research enquiry. During the time we were sitting reciting *inshudah*, our sensory experience centred on hearing and reciting, the sound was the main affect. We then stood in a circle, and the moment we stood, holding each other's hands and chanting '*Allah Hae*', we were thrown into a ripple of motion wherein we become invested in our collective breathing, sound, and bodily movements. The breathing and structured chanting required a physical strength, and I needed to push hard to maintain my engagement and keep with the group's rhythm. I could hardly hear my voice, as the voices of other participants were more attuned to rhythm and louder than me. At the end of the *dhiker*, I felt extremely relieved and particularly in touch with the rest of the group, resulting in a feeling that I was a member of their *dhiker* community. What is particularly significant here is that my involvement allowed me to not only observe participation in this ritual in aid of my research enquiry, but to enter into a personal sensory experience of Islam and of being Muslim that I had never experienced in Palestine.

During the *dhiker*, participants enact feelings, emotional attachments, collective sentiments and their commitment to their community and to the Muslim *Ummah* at large. There, feelings and emotions, as constructed sensational forms and as 'discursive practices' (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990) provide the 'missing link' that connects personal feelings to public morality, bridging mind, body, individual, and society (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, 28-9; Lupton, 1996, 5). Most of my research interlocutors included in this project have participated in *dhiker*. For

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example, artist Igshaan Adams joins *dhiker* sessions regularly to seek spirituality and peace. In one of our conversations, he explained the way in which *dhiker* sensorially affected him:

> I felt a bit fearless, overwhelmed, I push my self internally, push beyond the boundaries of my fear and anxiety, and really allowed myself to let go. I had strange experiences, my body stated vibrating, I felt I need to cough and at some point I could not feel my hands, I get very deep smell, it smells like incense but its not, its from inside, it was familiar smell.

Adams went on to explain that with time and repetition of the *dhiker*, he began to let go of fears and anxieties and that the process allowed him to feel part of the group where he felt 'safe and free' in a space that made him feel 'powerful . . . [with] no doubts, empty, and clear'. Most importantly, however, Adams reflected that the *dhiker* helped him to forge a closer experience of Islam. He explained that the *dhiker* 'made me strong, a Muslim in the sense that I don't get upset when someone tells me how can you be gay and Muslim. *Dhiker* is more important, is powerful than *salah* [prayer]. *Dhiker* softened my soul and heart and made it easy to deal with the hardness of reality and people's judgments'.[222]

A native speaker of Afrikaans, though now more of an English speaker, Igshaan Adams does not understand Arabic. That said, Adams' sensory experience of hearing and reciting the Arabic sound is part of a total sensory experience that was not limited to sound and sight, but also triggered sensational vibrations in his body and evoked his sense of smell. The interior affect of the *dhiker* practices thus transcended Adams' emotional uncertainty to encounter and overcome his feelings of fear and anxiety; his sensorial involvement in the *dhiker* 'purified' and 'healed' him in a way that he perceived as integral to the removal of his doubts around his belonging to Islam (see 5.4). Here, the repetition of the *dhiker* and the hearing and reciting of Islamic *inshudah* should be seen as a practice of initiation through which Adams performed, formed, and mediated for himself and for others an aesthetic formation of Islamic identity and belonging. As Adams confidently expressed, he is now less 'concerned with people's approval' and their judgment. Important here is the knowledge that Adams is not particularly religious, nor does he strives to obtain a

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[222] Igshaan Adams, Skype interview with the author, 3 December 2015.

sense of piousness; rather, Adams sought spirituality and a sense of belonging and membership to a community of Muslims. The *dhiker* practice and its associated collective hearing and recitation of the sound mediated for Adams, and for other participants, their Islamic aesthetic commonality that signified his and their membership in the *dhiker* community and Muslim community at large.

The practice of hearing and reciting Islamic sounds is one that for Adams mediates his Islamic identification and belonging. In this sense, what is important here is that Adams' engagement with the *dhiker* was expressed as being more sensational and affective than the experience of prayer; it was the power of sound and his own voice that allowed Adams to emotionally transcend his state of mind and be carried away from his doubtful subjectivity. This had the consequence of allowing Adams to place himself more confidently within a community of Muslims and to overcome perceptions of alterity within that community. Igshaan Adams' sentiments were also reflected in statements from fellow research interlocutors and artists, Hasan and Husain Essop.

Whereas Adams is not particularly religious, was raised in a lower-class context, is Coloured and grew up speaking Afrikaans, the Essop twins are middle-class Muslims who identify as strong believers. They are Indian South African, and their primary language is English. Despite these differences, both expressed Islamic identification and common sensory engagement with the Arabic sound. Hasan Essop's statement demonstrates this:

> Sound is so important, people who don't know Islam when they hear *dhiker* they think its music, but for Muslims its not. *Dhiker* is a means for meditation, accessing and communicating with your creator. We don't understand Arabic but we still enjoy *dhiker*, we relate to it. As a Muslim when we hear Arabic its so embodied in you, you need to set down, you need to respect it, we connect with it, its sound is a language. When we play *dhiker* in exhibition we hope that non-believers will connect to its Islamic essence.[223]

Here, Hasan Essop reminds us of the opening argument presented in this chapter: that it is not the literal meanings but rather the sound of Arabic language that embodies a symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness. Essop's hearing and reciting of

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[223] Hasan Essop, interview with the author, 2 April 2014, Essop twins' parents' house, Penlyn Estate, Cape Town.

Islamic sounds is a practice of meditation, and this would appear to suggest that Essop's sensorial engagement with these sounds facilitated a point of access for him to embody social meanings that are aesthetically coded in the language of sound. For Essop, hearing the Islamic sounds required modesty and respect, for it is a practice of mediation that connected Essop with his creator. Essop's sentiment reveals a sense that the 'creator' manifests in a lived reality, experience, and practice that evoke his sense of belonging and formation of an Islamic identity. His imaginative experience calls to mind philosopher R. G. Collingwood's (1981) argument that 'a person who listens to music instead of merely hearing it . . . he is imaginatively experiencing all manner of visions and motions' (148). What is of interest here is the fact that *dhiker* continues to serve diverse purposes in Cape Town. These functions range from bringing together various community groups for prayer and social engagement and organisation, to mourning and commemoration, reflection, and meditation—and even to aid the individual reconciliation of sexual orientation within the Muslim community, as in Adams' case. Performances of *dhiker* are thus not limited to mosques; for example, Cape Muslim funeral performances often involve a *dhiker* group that recites Quranic verses for the wake held at the family house of the deceased.
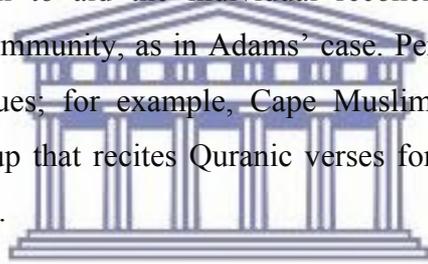
Drawing on the work of sociocultural anthropologist Charles Hirschkind (2006), I am concerned here with the way in which Arabic sound figures in the Muslim sensorium and sensibility whilst serving to form community and pious subjectivity. The *dhiker* positions the crowd in a collective sensory experience of reciting and hearing with the heart the sound of a shared sacred (Hirschkind 2006). This sensorially-centred 'hearing' implies a synaesthetic experience that stimulates the crowd's imagination of, and attachment to, Islamic shared values that transcend the rationality of Muslim religious 'discursive traditions' (Asad, 1993) to sensorially coded belongings and 'moral subjectivities' (Hirschkind 2001, 2006; Mahmood 2001, 2005). This is supported by Hirschkind's ethnography based on the practice of listening to recorded cassette sermons in Egypt, wherein he argues that 'sermons are listened to as a disciplinary practice geared to ethical self-improvement' (36). For Hirschkind (2006), 'listeners hone those affective-volitional dispositions, ways of the heart, that both attune the heart to God's word and incline the body toward moral conduct' (9). Further, he specifies a form of listening that involves the body in its

entirety by implicating many of the sensory registers of each participant, 'including the affective, kinaesthetic, and gestural . . . for these listeners as well, the organ of audition is the human sensorium in its entirety' (25-28). Hirschkind's analysis of a sensorial experience that involves the entire body in a kinaesthetic form of 'listening' is something evident not only in *dhiker* but also in another form of Sufi ritual known as *ratiep*.

### 7.9.2 Ratiep

The *ratiep* is another Sufi ritual that forms a sense of piousness through the enactment of its participants' sense of belonging and Islamic identification, in this case also relying on the use of the Urdu language. Many times I have attended various *kramats* to participate in *Urs* rituals that follow the *Qadiri* Sufi order.[224] The Sufi *Urs* is a commemorative tradition in honour of Muslim 'saints' and follows a particular process of rituals. On 4 November 2012, and 8 November 2013, I participated in *ratiep* rituals at Macassar to commemorate the memory of Sheikh Yusef Alkhalwati. On 8 November, the organiser set up two tents and loudspeakers. As men gathered in one large tent next to the Sheikh Yusef shrine, women sat in the other tent approximately ten metres away. Participants started to arrive at 10:00 a.m., and many of them approached the mosque to pray before joining the *ratiep*. Adult men and male teenagers gathered inside the tent whilst singing Arabic and Urdu Islamic *inshudahs*. At both Sufi *Urs* I attended, Sheikh Sayed Haroon Al-Azharis (an Islamic scholar) and Moulana Sayed Imraan Ziyaee (the principal of the Darul Uloom Islamic Education Centre in Cape Town) were invited to address the attendees. Sayed Ziyaee opened his speech by saying, 'They call us Capetonians, not because we from Cape Town, but because we live in Cape Town'. Following these remarks, Ziyaee went on to state that 'We came from India', thereby encouraging attendees to acknowledge, celebrate and embrace their Indian origins.

What is of particular significance here is that Sayed Ziyaee's comments reflect the complexities of Muslim-Indian South-African-ness. His sense of belonging significantly differs from other research interlocutors, in that he prioritised a connection to Indian culture in a way that was a vastly different to the approach of interlocutors including Hameda Deedat and the Essop twins, who both expressed

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[224] *Urs* is an Arabic word that translates to mean celebration. It often refers to marriage ceremonies, among other events. For further discussion of *kramats* refer to chapter Six (6.3.1).

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their attachment to their Indian culture but who were yet more assertive of their South African citizenship and national belonging. This was amplified by the fact that Sayed Ziyaee spoke mainly in Urdu and English, with only intermittent references to Arabic phrases from the Quran and *Hadith*. Even the *ratiep inshudah* were mainly in Urdu language, reflecting the language with which most of the attendees were familiar. Few senior Imams recited from heart; the majority read from a book. One hour later, the *ratiep* group arrived and laid down a big wooden box and a few *ghoema* drums.[225] They opened the box and took out three swords, a handful of blades, and a wooden hammer. They started drumming and chanted Urdu *inshudah*, which included a few Arabic phrases. Repeatedly, a few men stood and walked to the centre, grabbed a blade or sword, and rhythmically danced and struck their flesh. Thus, the Islamic sound of the *ratiep* consisted of the melodic sound of religious *inshudah* increasingly combined with and reflected in the structure of the *ghoema* beat.

Importantly, the *ratiep* is not an exclusively Urdu/Indian ritual. Although it is a celebrated ritual in Cape Town, it is contested and seen by many local Muslim clerics as a non-Islamic practice (Davids 1987, 63). In spite of this contested status, *ratiep* is representative of a long intercultural history of Islamic ritual in Cape Town. The *ratiep* performances stand as Cape Muslim cultural innovations developed for temporarily releasing slaves from the yoke of their masters and their slavery by evoking their sense of authority and power over their own bodies and souls, providing a culture and sensory experience similar to their ancestral homelands and past (Davids 1987; Bank 1995).

Significantly, the *ratiep*'s sensorial affect encouraged many slaves to convert to Islam (Mayson 1861, 20). Consequently, the British colonial authority sought a way to ban it, and consulted many Imams in Cape Town who agreed that the *ratiep* could not be classified as a legitimate Islamic ritual. Yet, despite the attempts of colonial authorities to ban the *ratiep*, and doubts around its Islamic significance as argued by Imams, the *ratiep* ritual continued to be performed in Cape Town. The enduring

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[225] The word 'ghoema' refers to a single headed drum, built like a wine cask, that is usually played under the arm or by striking with both the left and right hands. Desmond Desai (1993) notes that in *ratiep*, it is placed horizontally on the floor with a drummer sitting astride it (33). Also significant is the fact that the *ghoema*, as pointed out by Denis-Constant Martin (2013), is a creole instrument from wine making country, made with materials available to slaves (351).

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performance of *ratiep* also adds weight to Achmat Davids' (1987) argument that the performance was perceived by Muslims to embody a sense that 'religion was superior to the law of the infidel authority' (64). Desmond Desai (1993), a scholar of Islamic music in South Africa, notes the lack of conclusive evidence regarding the *ratiep*'s origins. He argues that previous scholarly investigations of the *ratiep's* origins (e.g., Davids 1987; Shell 1994; du Plessis 1942) suffered from scholarly generalisations that assert that the *ratiep* ritual is of South-East-Asian origin. In his exploration of forms of the *ratiep* performance, Desai (1993) linked its origins to a musical Sufi mutilation ritual called the *dabos*, which is practiced in Sumatra and Syria and is related to Adbul Kader Al-Jilani—the founder of the *Qadiriyyah* Sufi order.

On 8 June 2013, I participated in a *ratiep* ritual at the Sayed Jafar *kramat* in Camps Bay, one of the most affluent suburbs in Cape Town. We walked from the edge of the ocean up the hill, along a narrow path paving the way to the *kramat*. We passed by a few graves of other Imams before we arrived at the Sayed Jaffer *kramats*, located in a slightly flatter space deep within a silent forest. His shrine was housed in a structure of bars covered up by green netting. Participants at the ritual were mainly Muslim men, but there were also a few women. Whilst the men sat around the shrine and inside the barred structure, women sat outside from where they heard, saw, and participated in the *ratiep*. The recitations of the Islamic *inshudah* were in Arabic and Urdu languages, and were joined by drumming. One young man grabbed the sword and stepped to the centre, danced, and struck his arm, and after a few strikes he slashed his arm and bled. As the *ghoema* beats continued, another man stepped up and took a blade and wooden hammer, danced, and then hammered the blade into his chest repeatedly and in time with the *ghoema* rhythm. The sensory experiences witnessed in my ethnographic study of these *ratiep* performances indicated that they are not only a practice of mediation and imagination, but can be argued to initiate a connection to the divine through what is perceived to be an encounter with God that encourages the examination of one's spiritual purity and piety.

The emphasis on purity in the *ratiep* ritual is evidenced in the responses to my offer to drive a bleeding *ratiep* participant to the nearby hospital. Most of the *ratiep* participants who were present and who heard my offer did not welcome my

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suggestion; instead, a few of them burned herbs and positioned the smoke on the injured participant's wound to encourage healing. Amongst these participants who frowned upon my offer was a senior male, who responded to my suggestion with the comment that 'He [the participant] is not pure . . . he is hesitant . . . God wanted him to bleed . . . to clean his sins'. In these responses to my suggestion, it is clear that *ratiep* participants understood a bodily association between the ritual and the sense of spiritual purity and cleanliness. Further, the participants' sensory experiences were not merely an imaginative experience stimulated by hearing and the reciting of sound (as in the case of the *dhiker*); rather, *ratiep* involves its participants in physical bodily sensations of striking pain that occasionally involves bleeding. These physical bodily sensations are viewed, reflected upon, and understood as a measure of one's connection to the divine—but also to community. In this sense, *ratiep* is anchored on a performance of subjectivity that serves as a platform for community formations.

The dual emphasis on personal subjectivity and community formation alongside a connection to the divine was also reflected in my participation in a Sufi *Urs* ritual at the Sayed Abduraghman Motura *kramat* on Robben Island on 24 May 2015. Although Robben Island is mostly associated with the imprisonment of political prisoners (most notably, Nelson Mandela), the Sayed Abduraghman Motura *kramat* remains an important destination for Muslims. It was the biggest *Urs* event that I attended, with a gathering of 250 men and women. Many of the attendees came from Durban and Johannesburg specially to participate. At 8:00 a.m., we took a boat to Robben Island. Many of the attendees brought food and drink, which they laid out on a large table for everybody to share upon arrival. We lined up inside a large tent to pray, and then we sat facing a few senior Imams who led the recitations. We first recited collectively an Arabic *inshudah*. Then few men stood, taking turns to read Urdu poetry that was written in commemoration of Sayed Abduraghman Motura. Most of the attendees praised the Urdu poems, cheering in support of its meaning and reflecting their praise by throwing money on the poet. This response generated the feeling that perhaps the event was also a festival of Urdu, as the vast majority of those present were from Indian and Pakistani origins. After the *ratiep* performance, I sat with a few others inside the shrine surrounding Abduraghman Motura's grave, while the rest of the attendees stood outside the shrine listening closely to a Durban-

based musical band that sang in Urdu using a typical Pakistani melody that was very similar to the music of Pakistani singer, Nusrat Ali Khan.[226]

At this *Urs* event (alongside others reflecting linguistic diversity), the emphasis on a different language engenders an understanding and insight into Muslim diversity and multiple belongings. In most instances the emphasis on language serves as a symbolic embodied enactment of the sacredness of the Arabic language and enacts a religious belonging and commonality toward the Muslim *Ummah*. At the same time, performances in Urdu draw reference to particular East Asian Muslim cultural styles and signify a way in which Muslims connect to Islam through their own cultural particularity (see 3.6 and 3.7). The use of Urdu as an embodiment of East Asian cultural style is seen, for example, in the *Unrest* exhibition by the Essop twins (see 5.2), wherein their recitations of Islamic-Urdu *inshudah* enacted their belonging to their cultural locality as Indian Muslims living in Cape Town. Further to this, performances in Urdu might also be interpreted as a form of resistance against assimilation and the overwhelming perception of 'authenticity' associated with the Arabic language in aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness.

Considered alongside other Islamic aesthetics of sound in Cape Town, the *ratiep* and *dhiker* are emblematic of the ways in which sound serves to negotiate and coalesce identity, make visible and audible an aesthetic of Islam within intercultural and intracultural audiences, and forge a point of both commonality and difference between various Muslim groups in Cape Town. Significantly, considered alongside other rituals and behaviours that absorb and utilise the aesthetic of Islamic sound in Muslim identity and community formation, *ratiep* and *dhiker* practices vary enormously in their personal and collective significance in the context of Cape Town. Of particular significance here is that fact that the use of sound or, more specifically, language in these two rituals (Arabic in *dhiker* and Urdu in *ratiep*), serves to highlight cultural heritage whilst embodying a sense of sacredness. As evidenced by views expressed by research interlocutors, Islamic rituals involving sound mediate a complex Muslim history, identity, and community formation in Cape Town. However, the use of sound in Muslim subject and community formation is evident not only in private rituals, but also in broader scale public events.

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[226] This Indian-South-African style of singing, known as the *Qawwalli* (seclusion) music performance, and is performed in Urdu, Persian and Hindi (see Meleveen Jackson [1991,181])/

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## 7.10 Sound and Community Formation in Mass Public Events

The affect of the Islamic sound in the process of Muslim subject and community formations is also observed at public performances of Muslim-ness that take place on a broader scale. This was made clear at the 2013 celebration of the mass *Mawlid* where the master of ceremonies, Sataar Parker, officially opened the *Mawlid* by welcoming everyone in various languages (see 1.1) and saluted all the prophets before calling *Hafiz* Abdu Alaziz Brown to the stage to recite some verses from the Quran.[227] He stated that:

> We now commence with the appropriate manner for any Islamic function and that is to open up with recitations from some passages of the holy Quran. As we know, almighty Allah has commanded us in the holy Quran that when the Quran is read there needs to be absolute silence and no distractions whatsoever.

As the sound of *Hafiz* Abdu Alaziz Brown's Quranic recitations resonated over the space, attendances gradually quieted down. Sataar's statement therefore invoked obligatory listening as an Islamic ethical code. Here, the sacredness of the sound is driven by the practice of reception known as 'ethical obligation' (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005). By positioning the crowd in a collective sensory experience of obligatory hearing, Sataar made clear a Muslim politics of aesthetics in self and community formations and a politics of truth (Foucault 1980, 131). This is also reflected in the sensorial audio-aesthetic of the *azan* that attunes an individual to a sense of religiosity whilst evoking Muslims' collective attachment to a shared sacred, calling for the daily confirmation of their belonging to Islam. This is further supported by the understanding that Muslims regulate their everyday activities in accordance with the *azan* times (see 7.3).

Drawing from his research in northern Nigeria, anthropologist Brian Larkin (2014) argues that the fixed repetition of the *azan* provides a powerful temporal and social structure to the life of a Muslim (361). This system regulates and unites people in a 'common acoustic space' that is recreated each day. This is also reflected in the case of Kenyan Muslim Swahilis in Mombasa's Old Town where, scholar of music and anthropology Andrew Eisenberg (2013) points out, the sound of the *azan* amplifies

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[227] *Hafiz* is an Arabic word that means memoriser of the Quran, or an individual who is reciting from Quran by heart.

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an 'Islamic soundscape' that serves as an apparatus that 'recruits those within earshot as particular types of inhabitant-subjects (residents, visitors, etc.)' (191). Further still, the *azan* demarcates a space for Muslims in that the call to prayer literally hails a community of believers—the *Ummah*—to join together in shared behaviour. The sound of the *azan* is performed and heard in all dominantly Muslim societies, regardless of their cultural and linguistic diversity. This is poignantly reflected in the words of anthropologist Talal Asad's father Mohammad Asad, who observes that, 'This chant of the mu'azzin was the theme song of my days and evening in Cairo—just as it had been the theme song in the old city of Jerusalem and was destined to remain in all my later wandering through Muslim lands' (1954, 109). In this comment, we see that the call to prayer serves to collapse and unify different geographical locales through a shared soundscape. This soundscape transcends dialects, language and intonation of daily speech to reveal, in Asad's words, 'the inner unity of all Muslims, and how artificial and insignificant were the dividing lines between them'.
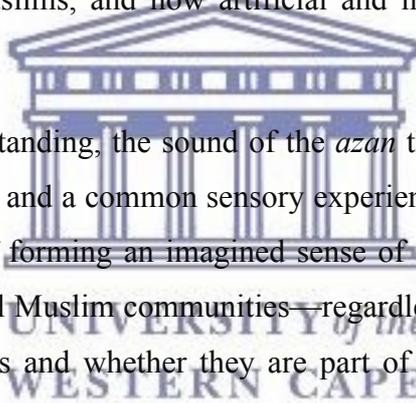
Following this understanding, the sound of the *azan* thus signifies a shared practice of aesthetic mediation and a common sensory experience of hearing the same sound. This has the effect of forming an imagined sense of unity within and across trans-local and transnational Muslim communities—regardless of the cultural particularity of individual localities and whether they are part of the majority or minority. Put differently, Muslim sensory experiences of 'hearing' the *azan* transcend differing understandings and practices of Islamic 'discursive traditions' (Asad 1993) to trigger an emotionality around the collective imagining of Islam, and unity beyond religious institutional settings. The sound of *azan* therefore mediates a common aesthetic of Islam that is performed and heard in all Muslim communities where it is permitted by state law. Formations of a common aesthetic of Islam mediate a religious style of Muslim *Ummah* at large. Hence, the sound of the *azan* in Cape Town (and elsewhere) mediates an aesthetic commonality between Muslims and the larger transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Muslims in Cape Town and in other sites around the world embody a symbolic enactment of their belonging to and attachment to the Muslim *Ummah* through performativity (see 2.2) or, in other words, through the performance of a common aesthetics of Islam. Formations of a common aesthetic of Islam through the Arabic language is limited neither to the *azan* nor to sound.

Despite the difference in their physicality and form, the sound of Quranic recitation accompanies visual forms of Arabic religious texts to form a common aesthetic of Islam which inflects and decorates Muslim public and private spaces and serve to mediate a sense of Muslim-ness.[228]

The sensorial affect of the Islamic sound in Muslim self and community formations is enhanced not only by obligatory hearing but also by participatory listening. This is clear when we consider the relationship to prayer and, in particular, the hearing of the *azan* or Quranic recitations. Pious Muslims mute the sound of the television or radio, and often respond by proclaiming 'Allah Akbar' ('God is the greatest'), 'La ilaha ella Allah*'* ('no God but Allah'), or 'Mohammad Rasool Allah' ('Mohammad is God's messenger')*.* The aural aesthetic formations of the Muslim community are also understood through prayer that begins with an Imam reciting *Alfatiha* Quranic verses and ends with listening to the prayer collectively and proclaiming 'Ameen'— a responsive sound that serves to bond believers together. The participation in prayer by believers is often engaged through the Imam with the repetition of certain Arabic phrases that involve a response from participants in accordance with what the Imam is saying. Arabic phrases such as *Ameen* (amen)*, Ma Sha'a Allah* (what God wanted)*, Sobhaan Allah* (glory to God)*, Astaqfer Allah* (forgiveness of God)*,* and *Allah Akbar* (God is the greatest)*,* are well-known religious phrases used in Cape Town amongst Somalis and other Capetonians that are also used within the Muslim *Ummah* at large. These Islamic proclamations stimulate a collective engagement with the Imam and reveal the community's commonality and collective attachment to a shared sacredness.

Another example of the broad scale of the affect of Islamic sound in Muslim subject and community formation is observed through performances of Muslim radio stations that form an acoustic community of Muslim and non-Muslim listeners in and beyond urban areas. In her ethnography of southern Mali, Schulz (1999, 2006, 2012) points out the ways in which local radio stations offer cultural resources for the formation of listener identities, creating a critical public made up of a community of radio speakers and listeners (see 2.7). When applied to the context of Cape Town, Schulz's analysis reveals how acoustic performances of Muslim radio stations

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[228] For further discussion of visual design aesthetics such as text refer to chapter Six (6.3).

embody a vital modality that mediates the formation of Muslim community and religious subjectivity. Stations do this by offering educational programs that enhance a commonality of Muslim understandings and practices of Islam, and by offering a platform for a community of listeners to actively participate in various discussions concerning the Muslim 'common good', and their status as national citizens and as members of Cape Muslim community and transnational *Ummah*.

## 7.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the way in which the sound of the Arabic language embodies a symbolic enactment of Muslim-ness that accompanies Muslim public and private performances. Following this understanding of Arabic sound as an aesthetic embodiment of Islam, this chapter explored the various ways in which Arabic sound expands the boundaries of Muslim religious urbanity and public visibility beyond its visual formations by voicing Muslim cultural difference in the public soundscape of Cape Town. As this chapter made clear, strategic performances of Arabic sound engage a Muslim politics of aesthetics in making authentic a sense of the religious sacred whilst enacting a belonging to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*. Importantly, the authenticity of Arabic sound drives practices and their reception, and is seen as an ethical, and occasionally practical, obligation. Thus, the religious authority of Arabic sounds embodies a common aesthetic of Islam that references the Muslim *Ummah* and includes the Muslim community that inhabits Cape Town within it.

What is clear from the ethnographic accounts mapped in this chapter is that the audio-aesthetic of the Muslim community in Cape Town is not limited to religious settings neither to Arabic sound. Rather, Cape Muslims enact cultural aesthetics and multiple belongings through sound performances of various languages such as Malayu, Urdu, Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. This chapter also discussed the role of the interior sensorial affect of hearing and reciting *inshudah* (both in Arabic and Urdu) in purifying the self and in forming a shared aesthetic of a community of Muslim. As such, the role of Arabic and Islamic sound in Cape Town must be understood as lending significant insight to the potential of sound for various disciplines (including religious studies, music studies, and ethnography, to name but a few); it plays a crucial role as both an agent and a reflection of individual and

collective identity formations created within religious minorities living in a multicultural setting. Finally, sound is but one form of everyday material culture that mediates Muslim identity and religious urbanity in Cape Town. This is clearly evidenced in design elements and visual art (as discussed in previous chapters), but also in a form of material culture that is crucial to Muslim life, behaviour, and beliefs: food.



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*Taste, Smell, and Food Performances of Muslim-ness*

*8.1 Introduction*

Building on the discussion presented in previous chapters regarding the significance of aesthetic forms in the formation of public Islam and the urban infrastructure of Muslims, this chapter explores the role of food practices in the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness and aesthetic politics of cultural difference in post-apartheid Cape Town. This chapter begins with an ethnographic exploration of the sensory experiences of Cape Muslim food and its familiarity as commonplace culture to both Muslims and non-Muslims in Cape Town and South Africa at large. Drawing on the way in which sensory experiences of food initiate a convivial multiculturalism (Rhys-Taylor 2013), this chapter investigates the ways in which Cape Muslim politics of identity and difference are enacted through food. The discussion shows how Muslim food serves as a commodity of post-apartheid rainbowism and as a signifier of shared national culture. The analysis provided in this chapter aims to show how Muslim food culture of sharing, production, and consumption signifies a culture of conviviality.

Drawing on public, private, and everyday performances of food, the chapter maps the vital role of food in the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town, and its function as an aesthetic agent that mediates and enhances public visibility of Muslim cultural styles in the democratic context of liberal post-apartheid South Africa. Through a close analysis of mass cooking and distribution of food, the chapter describes Muslim performances of citizenship and belonging. The chapter explores the diversity of Muslim food in Cape Town, and the religious aesthetic of *halaal* food. The chapter then proceeds to explore Muslims' sensory experience of fasting at Ramadan, and the role of the fast in forming the pious self and a sense of community.

*8.2 Sensory Experiences of Cape Muslim Food*

On the first Saturday of every month, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., a food and craft market takes place at the Bo-Kaap Civic Centre. I first attended the market on a rainy Saturday morning in July of 2012, and the moment I stepped into the Civic Centre's open space, I was immersed in a sweet smell that guided my path toward the food stalls. I first encountered Rafiqah standing behind an open pot of *boeber,* a sweet milk drink. The steam pushed its way out of the pot to form a white cloud that dissolved within the space, dispersing the smell of cardamom overlapped by the scent of cinnamon. She offered me a cup of *boeber*, and I proceeded to buy two sweet potato *samosas* and two pieces of *koeksisters* dipped in sugar and coconut. I sat to enjoy and taste my breakfast (*boeber*, *koeksisters* and *samosa*), letting my nose explore a complexity of scents that came together to signify an aesthetic formation of Muslim cultural style.

*Boeber*, known as *melkkos* in Afrikaans, is a traditional Cape Malay sweet milk drink made with sago, vermicelli noodles, and sugar that is flavoured with rose water and spiced with cardamom and cinnamon sticks. *Koeksisters* are syrup-infused doughnuts. Typically, they come in two forms: the Afrikaans version comes in a braided shape (most often referred to as a 'koeksister'), and a Cape Malay version (often referred to as 'koesister') that is shaped like a ball and infused with cinnamon, aniseed, ginger, and dried tangerine skin. It is deep-fried, cooled, and soaked in sugar syrup before being rolled in coconut. *Samosas* are Indian in origin (Abraham 1995) and are deep-fried pastry triangles traditionally filled with mince. There are, however, many alternative fillings for Cape Malay samosas, including cheese and onion, sweet potato, feta cheese, and corn.

Following breakfast, I walked around the market to get a closer sense of the variety of food colours, smells, and tastes. Each stall offered different food and the sellers were local Muslim women, some of whom I recognised—including a woman, Soriah, who I also encountered at the *dhiker* rituals held at the Aljehad Mosque (see in 7.2). Soriah's stall displayed a variety of honey, spices (nutmeg, cloves, aniseed, etc.), and a few books, including Cape Malay cook-books. I moved on to other stalls, beginning first with one that was dominated by the smell of coriander, where a woman and her two daughters were selling meat curry stew that was served with a

choice of roti or rice. Other stalls offered a variety of what are known as Malay baked cookies including chocolate coconut dreams, saucy chocolate puddings, apple and cinnamon pies, snowballs, and strawberry mousse vanilla cupcakes. Upon arriving to these stalls, I was immersed in the smell of cinnamon and coconut that enticed me toward the sweetness of the Malay cookery. Feeling myself absorbed by the scent and taste of the diverse food on display and for sale, it became clear that these products mediate aesthetic formations of Cape Malay food culture. The market attendees—mainly Muslims, a few non-Muslim locals, and some tourists who happened to visit Bo-Kaap that day—together witness and form part of a Muslim public.

The making of Malay food in Cape Town is characterised by both its religious aesthetic of being strictly *halaal* (discussed below), and by a creole tradition of cooking that combines elements of African, European, Asian, and Khoi and San indigenous food cultures and ingredients (Baderoon 2007, 115; Abrahams 1995). While the sensorial formations of *boeber, koeksisters*, curry*, cookies, meatballs, and fried *samosas* mediate Muslim aesthetic politics of communitarian food style, other stalls were selling pizza slices and *boerewors* rolls served with fried onion and a variety of sauces (mayonnaise, ketchup, and chutney)—all of which are strictly *halaal*. The *boerewors* rolls are served at most social and cultural gatherings in Cape Town, and is the most popular street food.[229] What is significant about the constellation of food offered at these stalls, is that whilst the smell, colour, texture, and taste of the *boeber*, *koeksisters*, *samosas*, meat curry, and Malay cookies can be understood as mediating Cape Muslim aesthetic style, the *halaal boerewors* rolls and pizza slices signified Muslim culturalisation of the public food culture of Cape Town.

Immersed in the taste and smell of these foods, I was reminded of Paul Stoller's anthropological approach outlined in *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* (1989), which claims that the 'tasteful fieldworker' will eschew the search for 'deep-seated hidden truths' and instead 'describe with literary vividness the smells, tastes and textures of the land, the people, and the food' (29). Stoller's multi-sensorial approach informs my ethnography throughout this chapter, which is also complemented by the

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[229] *Boerewors* are a popular type of sausage in South African cuisine.

approach to food developed in Alex Rhys-Taylor's (2010) doctoral research investigating multicultural vendors in an east London street market. Rhys-Taylor's (2010, 2013) ethnographic account of the sensorial embodiment of food (how it looks, smells, and tastes) argues that food is representative of formations of convivial metropolitan multiculturalism. Harnessing Stoller's approach alongside that of Rhys-Taylor's, my ethnographic enquiry into the sensory experience of food is motivated by an attempt to make clear how sensory encounters with food (such as those at the Bo-Kaap market) reflect the diverse ways in which the taste and smell of Muslim-ness is performed and understood by both Capetonians and the broader South African society.

This ethnography posits that Muslim performances relating to food must be understood as practices of mediation and aesthetic formations of cultural styles. Here, the market is seen as an infrastructure that mediates an aesthetic of Cape-Malay Muslim cultural style and convivial integration into the larger society of Cape Town. The appreciation of the significance of food has been reshaped as a result of post-apartheid multiculturalism and its rainbowism, which entails a politics of difference and appreciation of community styles as signifiers of cultural citizenship (see 1.2, 1.3, and 2.2).

Within the Cape Town context, Malay heritage is promoted as a seemingly 'exotic', distinctive cultural styles representative of Muslim minorities within the post-apartheid multicultural project.[230] This staging of Cape Malay heritage is also carried out by other local Muslims who receive economic gain from marketing what is perceived as Malay heritage as a commodity for local and foreign consumption.

### 8.3 Commodification of Cape Malay Muslim Food

During my first visit to Bo-Kaap market I met with Bilqees Baker, the chairperson of the Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway and organiser of the market. The Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway is a community organisation that was established in 2008 'to create a pathway toward **empowerment** and **financial self-sufficiency** for women and youth while preserving and sharing our cultural

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[230] See https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g312659-d1588434-Reviews-Biesmiellah-Cape_Town_Central_Western_Cape.html.

heritage'.[231] After a brief conversation with Baker about my research interests, she invited me to join the upcoming Gateway meeting at the Auwal Mosque, and the following Monday I joined the meeting of the executive committee (a collective of Muslim women with whom I met regularly at Bo-kaap market). We met at 12:30 p.m. at an office space in the Auwal Mosque in Bo-Kaap. They were seven women: five sat around the table, and two women were in the next room cooking a one-hundred litre pot of *Akhni*, a distinctive Cape Malay rice and meat curry dish. All seven women were involved in the discussions, which touched on each of their respective duties including finance, media and public relations, managing resources, and accommodating new sellers. Their discussion was mainly an evaluation of their operation and previous activities, and planning for coming events. On my way out after the meeting, I saw that people were queuing outside the mosque waiting to receive hot plates of *Akhni*.

The Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway initiative includes the Bo-Kaap Food and Craft Market, the Bo-Kaap Walking Tour, Cape Malay cooking classes, *halaal* catering, boutique clothing and corporate apparel, and reading classes—most of which I witnessed first hand. Beyond these activities in Bo-Kaap, the organisation regularly hosts visiting American student groups or individuals who come to learn about Islam and Muslim culture in Cape Town. They provide them with homestay accommodation with a Bo-Kaap Muslim family, daily breakfast and dinner, a tour of Bo-Kaap with various lectures and presentations about the historical and current Cape Muslim community, and an invitation to participate and learn the cooking style of the Cape Malay community.

The Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway supports infrastructure for Muslim women to display various products including foods, craft, clothes, and books—most of which are homemade. The aesthetic formation of their products is permeated with a politics of authenticity and sensual embodiment of what they perceive and market as 'Malay cultural style'. Through my conversation with Bilqees Baker, I learned that 'the Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway aims to provide a platform for Muslim women's empowerment and financial self-sufficiency, while capitalising

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[231] Bo-Kaap Cultural and Heritage Gateway mission statement from their website. For further information, see their website: https://bokaap.org/ (accessed 2 August 2014).

upon and promoting Malay heritage'.[232] This indicates that the Heritage Gateway realises the economic opportunity forged through cultural difference as a commodity of post-apartheid rainbowism—a situation explored in depth by Comaroff and Comaroff in regards to Zulu ethnicity in South Africa. Comaroff and Comaroff's book, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009) drew on many cases from Kenya, Scotland, the USA, Peru, Pakistan, and South Africa to put forward the ways in which neoliberal economies strategically commodify and market a distinctive style of ethnicity, nationality, and divinity for public consumption. According to Comaroff and Comaroff, this economy of identity corporatisation and commodification counts on a politics of authenticity that it imposes by homogenising the culture it sells, rendering all the internal diversity of a given national, ethnic or religious group invisible.

### 8.4 The Public Visibility of Muslim Food in the Public Cuisine of Cape Town and the National Cuisine of South Africa

Performances of Muslim food as cultural commodity of post-apartheid rainbowism not only achieves economic gain, but signifies a resurgence in the public visibility of Muslim cultural style within the public and national culture of South Africa. An example of the way in which Muslim food styles form part of the public cuisine of Cape Town is seen in one of the oldest Cape Malay restaurants in Cape Town. Located in the historical Muslim neighbourhood Bo-Kaap, the *Biesmiellah* restaurant was established in the early 1980s by Bo-Kaap resident Abdullah Osman. With an interior design made up mainly of wood and mirrors, the restaurant is also adorned with two tapestries hanging on its walls, one depicting Mecca and the other a mosque. I ate at the *Biesmiellah* restaurant on two separate occasions. During both meals, I sat near the glass wall where I could view Bo-Kaap street life. Upon my first visit to the restaurant, the server advised me to try *boboties* with fruity yellow rice, as representative of Cape Malay food. On my second visit, she advised me to try Indian cuisine by ordering *breyani*. The Biesmiellah restaurant menu includes starters and main courses. The starters include (amongst others) samosas and chilli bites, and main courses include chicken or mutton akhni, chicken or mutton *breyani, bobotie*, and tomato *breedie*—all of which are perceived as Cape Malay and Indian cuisines. Both locals and tourists post online reviews of their experiences at

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[232] Bilqees Baker's comments in this section are cited from an interview with the author, 21 July 2012, Bo-Kaap Food Market, Cape Town.

*Biesmiellah*, many describing it as an 'authentic' and 'exotic' experience of Cape Malay Food. In such a way, the public repertoire of Malay food (as seen at *Biesmiellah*) appears to be representative of how food plays a vital role in the making of Malay-ness as part of the spectrum of post-apartheid rainbowism, of Bo-Kaap, and distinct Muslim style.

The post-apartheid resurgence of Muslim public performances of food is encouraged by the public demand for Muslim food, instigating a rapid shift of Muslim food from domestic kitchen spaces to the public domain within Cape Town. This is can be seen through the growth in Muslim food markets, in the repertoire of Cape Malay cookery that fills many popular South African cook-books (see Sitole 1999; Williams 1993; Abrahams 1995), and through the growth in Muslim catering services. The way in which the post-apartheid context of democratic multicultural society and its resurgent politics of cultural difference has been seen to trigger Muslim populations to publically perform communitarian food styles is seen in the account and discussions of Muslim restaurants, the Bo-Kaap Food and Craft Market and the Ramadan Exposition (4.5). Food has become a vital vehicle in Muslim strategic enactments of cultural style within the public culture of Cape Town, and South Africa at large. This growing impact of Muslim food culture on the national cuisine and public taste of South Africa is in part indicative of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's theorisation post-colonial national cuisine (applied in the context of India) and the erasure of local specificity (1988).

The extent to which Muslim aesthetics and sensual performances of food implicate and affect the larger multicultural public of Cape Town and South Africa can be witnessed through an investigation of the local and national appeal for Muslim food styles. For example, at the centre of Cape Town city, The Eastern Food Bazaar and Food Inn on Longmarket Street and the 'Bollywood' restaurants on Long Street offer customers a culturally diverse variety of foods (Malay, Pakistani, Indian, Turkish, Thai, Chinese), many of which signify aesthetics of Muslim-ness.

The Eastern Bazaar is located in a venue with two entrances that open onto both Longmarket Street and Adele Street in the centre of Cape Town. The internal space of the restaurant is decorated with wallpaper, crafted wood, and a few wooden

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statues that each represent an aesthetic associated with Indian culture. At the same time however, the restaurant's interior is also adorned with Quranic calligraphy hanging on the wall and framed *halaal* certificates, which both mediate an aesthetic of Islam. This coming together of Indian aesthetics with those of Islam is also evident in the sound of the space. For example, during my regular visits to the Eastern Bazaar, I heard them playing what sounded like Indian or Pakistani music; however, when I went there to have lunch one Friday prior to the time of the prayer, the restaurant was playing Quranic recitations.

The variety and affordable price of local and transnational foods made available at the Eastern Bazaar invites many people across various class, religious, and national backgrounds to dine at the establishment. The setting of Eastern Bazaar is one of self service: people first queue at the cashier counter where they pay and take a slip of paper registering their order. Customers then proceed to hand over their slip to servers located at the food stall of their choice, and then collect plastic cutlery and wait for their food. The space of the Eastern Bazaar is often crowded, and the smell of curry, *masala*, and coriander constantly fill the space. Put together, these elements of the Eastern Bazaar's informal atmosphere facilitate convivial interaction between culturally diverse locals and tourists.

Aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness at the Eastern Food Bazaar are mediated through *akni*, *biryani*, *samosa* and chicken tikka, alongside a colourful range of curries and *masala* stews with their corresponding smells and tastes. Beside these varieties of Cape Muslim local foods at the Eastern Bazaar, the restaurant also includes a Turkish stall displaying *shawarma* and *baqlawa* (Turkish dessert), and Chinese and Thai stalls offering a menu of what they claim to be 'authentic' Chinese and Thai food. The food made available at the Eastern Bazaar is therefore emblematic of an infrastructure of Muslim urbanity. Further, as it is often crowded with a broad spectrum of Cape Town society and international tourists, the Bazaar enhances public visibility of Muslim food styles and positions them as part of the public cuisine of Cape Town.

The way in which Muslim food forms part of Cape Town urbanity and public cuisine is also seen in the mass public appeal of the Food Inn restaurant on Long Street. The Food Inn faces Long Street with glass walls that open to allow the public insight into

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the space. This is significant, given that Long Street is located in the City Bowl—an area lined with various backpacker hostels, clubs, bars, and restaurants that attract locals and tourists alike who crowd the street to hang out and to party. The popularity of the restaurant on Long Street led to the opening of two other branches of Food Inn: one opening in 2013 on the Main Road in the Rondebosch area, which is highly populated by local and international students; and the other opening in 2014 on Voortrekker Road in Bellville CBD. The interior design of all three branches of Food Inn are quite simple. The spaces are filled with wooden tables and chairs, and each includes a long counter on which a variety of food is put on display and covered with a curved glass top that is often clouded by the steam of the food below. Above the counter is a light box menu detailing the large variety of meals on offer. Each of these dishes is affordably priced and includes fast food, Indian and Pakistani cuisines that accommodate the needs and tastes of the broad spectrum of Cape Town society.
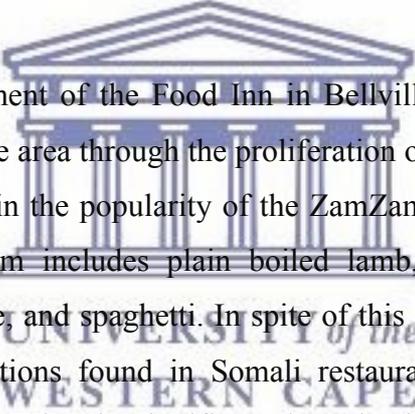
Beyond the establishment of the Food Inn in Bellville CBD, Muslim food is also publically visible in the area through the proliferation of Somali restaurants. This can be seen, for instance, in the popularity of the ZamZam Somali restaurant. The food on display at ZamZam includes plain boiled lamb, lamb vegetable stew, fried chicken with plain rice, and spaghetti. In spite of this limited variety, the affordable prices and ample portions found in Somali restaurants attract diverse local and immigrant customers. What is significant here is that eating Somali food is an everyday practice for most Somalis living in Bellville CBD. This is also amplified by the fact that many Somali restaurants in Bellville CBD are often crowded with Somalis and a few other African immigrants. Public visibility of Muslim food in the Bellville CBD is also enacted through a variety of Pakistani and Indian food offered at the Pakistani Chicken restaurant. The main meal sold at the Pakistani Chicken restaurant is grilled spicy chicken, but the restaurant's menu also includes lamb curry, chicken *masala*, served with *naan* bread, fried potato and rice. Significantly, the restaurant is located at the back door of Al-Sunny Mosque facing one of the biggest parking spots in Bellville CBD, and is therefore located in an area that is continuously populated by culturally diverse locals and immigrants who are both residents of and visitors to the area.

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Considered together, Cape Muslim food culture and practices provide a framework through which to observe the aesthetic politics of difference, public visibility, and culturalisation of citizenship. The significant point here is that the public performances of food markets and restaurants discussed above can be seen as forms that integrate an aesthetics of Cape Muslim cultural style and culturalisation into the larger society of Cape Town. Further, what is significant to my thesis is that all these restaurants (with the exception of Bismillah restaurant in Bo-Kaap) were established post-1990, and are all located in urban areas populated by Muslims and non-Muslims, locals and foreigners. Looking closely at the extent to which these restaurants provide food for the larger society of Cape Town invites us to perceive these restaurants as part and parcel of an emerging infrastructure of post-apartheid Cape Town urbanity. Of particular significance here also is the fact that most of these restaurants (with the exception of Biesmiellah) are owned and managed by Muslim immigrants and not by local Capetonian Muslims. Through my regular visits to each of these restaurants, I learned that the owners and most members of staff at the Eastern Bazaar, Food Inn, and Pakistani Chicken restaurant are Pakistani immigrants. This indicates that the resurgence and commodification of Muslim public performances of food is something that is instigated not only by local Muslims, but also by Muslim immigrants who appear to realise the economic potential of providing Muslim food to the larger society of Cape Town.

Importantly, the making of a distinctive Muslim food and its public visibility in Cape Town and South Africa at large is not a post-apartheid phenomenon; rather, it dates back to the time of the arrival of Muslims in the area in the seventeenth century. In line with this, the account provided below unpacks the trajectory of the making of Muslim food in Cape Town.

## 8.5 The Historical Context of Muslim Food in Cape Town

Capetonian familiarity with Muslim food and the impact of Muslim food culture on the national cuisine of South Africa must not be understood as a strictly post-apartheid phenomenon. Rather, the presence and significance of Muslim food dates back to the era of slavery within Cape Town. Historically, Muslims have shown exceptional skill in cooking. Skilful cooks within the slave population were advertised for sale as 'an acknowledged artist of the pot' (Leipoldt 1976, 18, quoted

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in Baderoon 2014, 47). For Baderoon (2007), the skilful practices of Muslim food culture in Cape Town are indicative of slave presence and agency. This skilful combination enhanced creolisation and created a similarity of food traditions between Cape Malay and Dutch/Afrikaans populations (Baderoon 2009, 100). For this reason, food historian Cass Abrahams argues that Cape Malay cookery is 'food from Africa' (1995).

From even this brief account of Muslim food history in South Africa, what becomes clear is that Cape Malay food, as the 'food from Africa', has always been charged with politics of cultural difference. This is particularly pronounced in Hilda Gerber's cook-book, *Traditional Cookery of the Cape Malays* (1954), which presents recipes and customs of the Cape Malay and stands as a historical document in its own right. Significantly, Gerber's book was part of the apartheid state's endeavour to construct a cultural boundary of distinct Cape Malay-ness—a project that was mainly led by Izak David du Plessis (see 3.6 and 3.8). Within the forward of Gerber's cook-book, du Plessis argues that 'no aspect of Cape Malay life has been more closely interwoven with life at the Cape than Cape Malay cookery'. Here, du Plessis, a folklorist at the University of Cape Town (and later an apartheid government official), reiterates his argument that the distinctiveness of Muslim cuisine is one of the main aesthetic forms constructing an authentic exotic culture of the ethnic Muslim community that is referred to as 'Cape Malay' (see 3.8).

In the decades following du Plessis' work, the importance of food in forming Muslim positions within the multicultural society of Cape Town has become a subject of increased and complex enquiry. Notable in this regard is the work of Gabeba Baderoon (2007, 2009, 2014). Baderoon (2014, 50-52) draws on Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael's (2000) argument regarding the existence of 'intimacies and connectivities' to point out the way in which Muslim food culture allows an alternative reading of South African history against a fixation on race. For Baderoon, intimacies facilitated through food mediated power relations between slave-owners and slaves. This was made clear in Baderoon's analysis of Muslim domestic work within farm kitchens, a space where intimate power relations with the farm owners allowed Muslim cooks to gain power and position in the labour hierarchy of slavery in the Cape colony. Muslim work in kitchens involved an

everyday exchange which resulted in similarities between Malay and Dutch (later Afrikaans) cooking styles, as seen in Malay *boeber* and Afrikaan *melkkos*, and Afrikaan *koeksister* and Malay *koesister*, among other examples (Baderoon 2009, 99).

Baderoon's (2009; 2014) analysis makes clear that power relations between slave-owners and slaves were charged with a mutual sense of fear, where slaves feared their master's brutal punishment and masters feared their slaves power to poison their food. Here, Baderoon (2014) draws on Michel de Certeau's (1998) notion of 'submissiveness' to explore the ways in which the powerless slaves navigated and changed the dominant food culture in ways that heavily influenced what later became understood and appreciated as the national cuisine of South Africa. Despite the great extent to which Muslim food culture shaped the taste of South Africa, Baderoon (2014) argues that 'the visibility of Malay cooking in dominant food culture is paralleled by the invisibility of the people who make it' (56). She points out that the visibility of Muslims in the production of food culture was enhanced with the publication of cook-books by Muslim authors.

The historical account of Cape Muslim food culture, its link to slavery and its ever-growing public enactment in the post-apartheid turn, resonates with anthropologists Carolyn Rouse and Janet Hoskins's (2004) arguments surrounding African American Muslim food culture. They assert that 'food was found to be a central medium for expressing religious commitment, and for positioning oneself in relation to a history of slavery and new forms of liberation' (229). Further, the historical account provided above indicates that the public visibility of Muslim food in Cape Town, and South Africa at large, is not a post-apartheid phenomenon but one that dates back to the seventeenth century.

What is particularly important to appreciate in this regard is the fact that Muslim food culture in Cape Town is understood and appreciated as desirable. Whilst aesthetic formations of Islam manifest through sound and visual forms serve as an inescapable part of the public cultural landscape of Cape Town (one cannot, for example, escape the sound of the *azan* in most areas in Cape Town), visitors and residents in Cape Town participate, indulge, and readily embrace Muslim food culture as a result of their own free will. It is for this reason that Muslim cultural

difference as manifest through food culture is best understood not through a framework of multiculturalism that essentialises cultural difference, but rather through the notion of conviviality, wherein cultural differences are shared as commonplace culture (see Gilroy 2006; Nowicka and Vertovec 2013).[233]

### 8.6 Conviviality of Muslim Food in Cape Town.

The understanding of conviviality as commonplace culture can therefore be understood to underpin the claim made by the aforementioned Jewish South African Ramadan Expo attendee, Mark, that 'Malay food is our food' (see 4.3). The conviviality of Muslim food practices allows South Africans (Muslim and non-Muslim) to claim the aesthetic of Muslim food as characteristic of their 'own' food culture. This is also reflected in the comments of Emile Boonzaier, a white South African anthropologist lecturer who was born and raised in Cape Town and who, in an anthropology seminar at the University of the Western Cape once jokingly stated that, 'I cannot take any more curry, my mother cooked curry everyday, I have had enough curry in my life'. These comments are but one indication of the vital role of food culture in facilitating conviviality in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

Other examples of the convivial culture of Cape Muslim food practices are observed at the Bo-Kaap Market and Ramadan Expo (see 4.3). The attendees at both events were mainly Muslims but included non-Muslim locals and some tourists that together witnessed formations of public Islam and formed part of the Muslim public. Both events are thus representative of the complex ways in which Cape Muslim food culture mediates aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness to Muslims and to the larger multicultural society of Cape Town.

Here it is useful to return to Rhys-Taylor's (2013) argument that the sensorial affects of food (how it looks, smells, and tastes) aid in the formation of convivial cultural practices of multiculturalism. When applied to the context of Cape Town, this understanding of the convivial culture of food can be understood as operating to

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[233] This seemingly inclusive aesthetic formation of Muslim-ness is observed not only within the context of food performances, but is witnessed through most public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. The *Mawlid* celebration, the moon sighting, Ramadan Expo, Muslim radio stations, *hijab* fashion, the march for Palestine, and the other examples discussed throughout this thesis mediate aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness within the public sphere—hence, they involve and affect the non-Muslim public of Cape Town with their sensorial style that is woven into the urban landscape and also embraced through the voluntary attendance at events.

facilitate an understanding of an 'obvious sense of human sameness' (Gilroy 2006, 6). Following this line in my analysis, I build upon the notion of conviviality as a conceptual and analytical frame that moves beyond fixations of assumed categorisations of strategically authenticated cultural differences, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitism (Nowicka and Vertovec 2013; Gilroy 2004, 2006) to instead focus on an emotional sociality of 'convivial society' (Illich 1975; Overing and Passes 2000). Within my approach, 'conviviality' transcends its literal English meaning of a 'joyful', 'festive', or 'good time' to embrace Joanna Overing and Alan Passes' assertion that conviviality (applied through the analysis of indigenous Amazon populations) is a form of sociality where 'the ethical, the aesthetic, emotion talk, styles of relating and speaking' in a shared life and environment not only relies on love, peace, and goodness but also 'recognises a continuous interplay between the constructive and destructive emotions and reasonings' shared by a population living together (2000, xii).
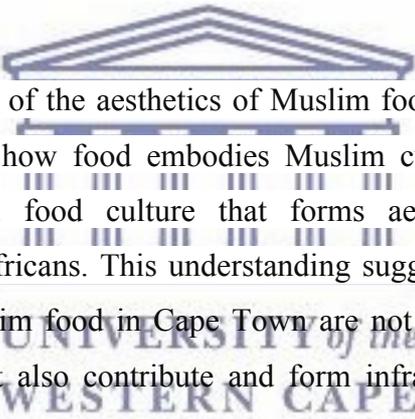
With a closer analysis of the aesthetics of Muslim food culture in Cape Town, one comes to clearly see how food embodies Muslim cultural difference whilst also signifying a national food culture that forms aesthetic commonality among multicultural South Africans. This understanding suggests the way in which public performances of Muslim food in Cape Town are not merely indicative of Muslim religious urbanity, but also contribute and form infrastructure within Cape Town urbanity.

Significantly, for Muslims in Cape Town the post-apartheid moment was not only about attaining economic opportunity through commodifying their communitarian cultural difference; rather, as evidenced in analysis of other performances discussed in previous chapters, Cape Muslims have sought various ways to perform an active sense of citizenship through which they could contribute to the larger society of Cape Town. In such a way, the emphasis on cooking skills has provides an avenue in which Muslims perform a humanitarian sense of citizenship and belonging.

### 8.7 Food and the Performance of Citizenship and Humanitarianism

The convivial culture of Muslim food not only embodies Muslim aesthetics in the public and national food culture of South Africa but, considered more closely, also provides an avenue through which Muslims perform their citizenship and

humanitarian belonging. In Cape Town, there are many Muslim civic institutions serving the humanitarian needs of the larger Cape Town community with a particular emphasis on food. Recognised as one of the top five welfare and relief organisations in South Africa, the Mustadafin Foundation is an example of a Muslim not-for-profit organisation that provides a range of services to lift destitute communities in the Western Cape out of poverty. Established as a response to political unrest and violence in Cape Town, the Mustadafin Foundation was established in 1989 by Ghairunisa Johstone-Cassiem, an anti-apartheid activist who joined al-Qibla in the 1980s. It is predominantly led by Muslim women, and aims at empowering women and children to reach self-sufficiency. The constant growth and recognition of the Mustadafin Foundation has served to convince many non-Muslim sponsors to collaborate with the Foundation on providing services for the needy in Cape Town.

On 23 and 24 December 2012, I joined the Mustadafin Foundation to prepare and cook 25 pots of *ahkni* (each 100 litre pot made 250 food packages) which were distributed to needy Christian and Muslim families to enjoy during their celebration of Christmas. On 23 December we met at 9:00 a.m. at the Foundation's main office in Athlone. Here, I met with eight other volunteers: five white South African women from Table View, the west coast suburb of Cape Town; two Muslim men from Athlone; and a French woman visiting Cape Town. Ebrahim Smith and Shameemah de Jongh from the Mustadafin Foundation welcomed us with tea and *koeksisters*, and at around 10:00 a.m., a truck from the large supermarket chain Pick n Pay delivered oil, onion, rice, potatoes, and spices needed for the *akhni*. These made up all the necessary ingredients except for the meat, which was stored in the fridge and bought from a Muslim farm to ensure its *halaal* quality.

Ebrahim Smith and Shameemah de Jongh allocated different roles, and advised us to swap our tasks so that each of us could learn all the facets of cooking *akhni*. Some volunteers took responsibility for putting the meat in water to defrost, others washed the rice, some peeled the potatoes, and the rest cut onions (fig 8.1). We chatted and engaged in jovial interactions including making fun of one another's tasks—for example by laughing together about the tears induced by the cutting of the onion. We talked about our sensory experience of preparing a huge amount of food. For us, it was the first experience of cooking for a large group—with the exception of Nicole,

a twenty-five-year-old nurse from Table View who had volunteered the year before. Thus, Nicole was more familiar with the feeling and sensual experience of touching and preparing the rice and meat and of peeling potatoes and tearing up whilst cutting the onions—something which she related to the social values of sharing and caring about others in an attempt to motivate us in our efforts. Most of us joked about the fact that Ebrahim Smith brought us fast food from Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) for lunch, and our laughter at this also included Smith himself who jokingly stated, 'Yes, see guys we are not anti-American, we are modern Muslims'. After preparing all the ingredients, the volunteers left the office at 5:00 p.m. Nicole and her four female friends apologised for not joining us the next day, as they needed to attend the Christmas eve celebrations held by their respective families.

The next day, on 24 December 2012, we again met at 6:00 a.m. to start cooking and set up the 25 pots above gas stoves. In each pot, chef Smith combined the right amount of ingredients (oil, cloves, cardamom, sticks of cinnamon) needed and the moment spices started to fry, he instructed us to add particular amounts of water, potato, rice, and meat whilst he took responsibility for adding the *akhni masala* spice. When the food came to a boil, we were charged with the responsibility of stirring it so that it did not burn (fig. 8.2). At this time, Smith (who holds an administrative position within the Mustadafin Foundation) explained that he learned how to make *akhni* from his mother. He appeared uncertain as he kept checking each pot and proceeded to taste and touch the food to make sure that he was on the right track. I asked him if his mother tasted and touched the food when she cooked, he smiled and said, 'My mother speaks to the food, she doesn't need to taste it or touch it, she knows it'.



FIGURE 8.1 The author peeling potatoes, 23 December 2012, Mustadafin Office.

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**FIGURE 8.2** The author stirring the *akhni*, 24 December 2012, Mustadafin Office.

At around 10:00 a.m., the food was cooked and ready for distribution. Ghairunisa Johstone-Cassiem, the head of the Mustadafin Foundation, came to oversee the final product along with a representative from the Pick n Pay supermarket chain, Mark, and two Muslim businessmen—both of whom were main sponsors of the Mustadafin Foundation. Upon seeing us, the group praised our efforts and Ghairunisa said, 'Many people will thank you today', and proceeded to extrapolate upon the social value of our service. She then stepped inside the office and returned with a list of the locations to which the food was to be distributed. Three trucks from the Mustadafin Foundation lined up at the exit gate and while we were loading the pots into the trucks, Ghairunisa cheered us up again and attempted to encourage us by reiterating the fact that our assistance was not merely for the Mustadafin Foundation but for the larger community of Cape Town: 'Let's deliver a warm meal for those who need it'. Following the delivery truck to Brooklyn, a dominantly white South African lower-class area, I drove with Ghairunisa to deliver five pots of *akhni* to the house of a white South African community activist whose responsibility it was to disperse the food to the needy people of her neighbourhood. Before we left her house, Gharisunisa and I witnessed the queue of people outside carrying bowls in preparation for taking their *akhni* home for Christmas celebrations, and thus we viewed first hand the outcome of our groups' efforts.[234]

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[234] The Mustadafin Foundation is not the only Muslim organisations that performs Islamic values through food. The Islamia Cares Foundation also prepared a large amount of *akhni* that they distributed around Cape Town for needy families to enjoy during the celebration of Christmas (*Cape Argus*, 27 December 2012).

The preparation, cooking, and distribution of *akhni* is a sensorial aesthetic formation of Cape Muslim food culture created through the cooking and delivery of food to the people of the wider society of Cape Town. This food culture then is continually and viscerally connected to the taste and aesthetic of Muslim food culture in Cape Town, as it has been for hundreds of years in different ways.

Further, the collaboration between a Muslim organisation (the Mustadafin Foundation) and a Jewish sponsor (the supermarket chain Pick n Pay) for the benefit of thousands of needy families to enjoy the celebration of Christmas is indicative of the convivial power of food to facilitate formations of a Muslim sense of citizenship and belonging to the larger multicultural society of Cape Town.[235] In this case, the Mustadafin Foundation performed a collaborative sense of citizenship that signified a Muslim sense of humanitarian responsibility as South African citizens. In ways reminiscent of the performances of the Essop twins in their artwork (see 5.2), the Mustadafin Foundation performs Muslim belonging to South Africa through a contribution to South African society that is based on Islamic values. In such a way, the Mustadafin Foundation is another example of the way in which Muslims seek to contribute and perform their societal duty and responsibilities as South African citizens through aesthetic forms that signify their Cape Muslim cultural particularity. Ghairunisa made this point clear when she explained, 'We are South Africans who happen to be Muslim, Islam sees all humans as equal before God and Islam urges us to help all those who need help—Muslim and non-Muslim'.[236]

The impact of the Foundation is recognised in its receipt of the Community Builder of the Year Award (2005) and the Lead South Africa Hero of the Month Award (July 2013). With branches in various townships and Cape Flats areas in the Western Cape, the Foundation provides education, food, clothing, health care, and skill development for culturally divers lower class populations. In each of these locations, the Mustadafin Foundation operates a daily kitchen, and on many occasions I have witnessed hundreds of women and children, and few men, queuing at branches for food. I observed this most often at the Mustadafin branch in Delft, where I taught

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[235] Pick n Pay is one of the largest supermarket chains in South Africa, established in 1967 by Jack Goldin who moved from Lithuania to South Africa when Nazis invaded his town. See the Pick n Pay website: http://www.picknpay.co.za/about-us-introduction (last accessed 29 October 2016).
[236] Ghairunisa Johstone-Cassiem, interview with the author, 15 June 2013, Mustadafin Office, Athlone, Cape Town.

drum and drama (see 1.4). One distinct characteristic of the group awaiting food at the Delft branch was that few of them wore *hijab*, whilst many wore short skirts and slightly tight shirts. What is significant here is that the bodily formations of the majority did not enact visual formations of an aesthetic of Muslim-ness. While carrying the drums inside for one of my lessons at the Mustadafin Foundation branch in Delft, I asked a few women who stood at the entrance waiting for the door to open if they were Muslims. One women softly shouted in reply, 'We are all Muslim'; and to this comment many of whose who heard her proceeded to smile and thereby seemed to affirm her comments.

Ghairunisa estimates that the 'Mustadafin feeds fifteen thousand persons daily, regardless of their race and religious affiliations'.[237] Thus, through the production and distribution of food, the Mustadafin Foundation is best seen as an infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity. Here, Muslim food culture forms a daily public of Islam in various areas in Cape Town. This is not only an establishment of visibility but an active engagement that draws culturally diverse Capetonians into a sensory experience of Muslim cultural style. While the recitation and hearing of Islamic sound enacts a sense of sacredness that encourages spiritual fulfilment for Muslims and mediates the aesthetic of Muslim cultural difference for Muslim and non-Muslim (see chapter Seven), food satisfies the essential feeling of hunger and fulfils daily requirements for survival for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Put more clearly, in the case of Islamic sound, non-Muslims may continue to observe Muslims as outsiders; through food production, distribution and consumption, non-Muslims are positioned as insiders who are equal to Muslims in their sensory experience of the intimacy and the taste of Islam.

Further, Muslim practices of sharing food and feeding the needy signifies a politics of Muslim conviviality and a culture that welcomes inclusion rather than asserting cultural difference. This is a characteristic of Muslim food culture that I investigated through performative ethnography during my volunteer involvement with the Mustadafin Foundation. More specifically, my volunteering experience with the Foundation allowed me to instigate discussions with Ghairunisa about the possibility of inviting Somalis for mass *iftar*, in order to gather and eat Malay Muslim food

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[237]Ibid. Why is this in a footnote? Should it not be a reference in text

together as part of a Mustadafin humanitarian outreach program. As a result of this, we agreed to invite four hundred Somalis on the last Friday of Ramadan in 2014, which was also the same day the Mustadafin joined efforts to organise the Al-Aqsa Day march for Palestine.[238] This mass *iftar* was designed as a performative ethnographic research enquiry into Somalis sensory experiences of Cape Muslim food.

### 8.8 Somali Sensory Experiences of Cape Muslim Food

In order to observe Somali sensory experiences of Cape Malay Muslim food, on 25 August 2014 and 3 July 2015, I organised mass *iftar* for Somalis at the Al-Sunny Mosque in Bellville CBD. The food used for both *iftar* events was donated and cooked by the Mustadafin Foundation, and both events were planned with Albulkadir Khalif and Abdullah Majed, the Imams of Al-Sunny Mosque, both of whom invited Somali participants to join the *iftar*. Both *iftar* events took place in the month of Ramadan and the location and food were consistent at both events. Hence, the unfolding of both *iftar* events share a great deal of similarity and, to avoid repetition, my analysis here is anchored on the account of the latter *iftar* performed in 2015 and a discussion of key moments at both events.

On 3 July 2015, the second Friday of the month of Ramadan, Somalis were invited to break their fast together at Al-Sunny Mosque. After the sunset prayer, around 400 Somalis remained in the mosque to join in the mass *iftar*. In accordance with the sunset *azan,* the *iftar* took place at 5:18 p.m. sharp. Hence I appealed to Ebrahim Smith to deliver the food at 5:00 p.m. to ensure that attendees got their meal on time, since all of them were fasting and it was important that they be fed without delay. Given that the food arrived late to the previous mass *iftar*, I called Smith many times and went to the Mustadafin office to stress that it was imperative that food be delivered on time. At 5:00 p.m., I went to Al-Sunny Mosque to join the sunset prayer, and wait for the food. However, despite all efforts, the food unfortunately did not arrive on time. As a result, I could not sit inside the mosque, and many Somali attendees appeared to disapprove of my efforts. I called Smith and assured Somalis that the food was on the way, but many of them no longer appeared keen to join the *iftar* that was due to take place. As a result, attendees started to leave and return to

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[238] For further discussion of the Al-Aqsa march for Palestine, refer to chapter Four (4.5).

their homes in order to break their fast. Imam Majed was very disappointed for the second time, and although he did not state any blame, he did share with me his feelings of being embarrassed in front of his fellow Somalis and his feeling of being disrespected by the Mustadafin Foundation. He explained 'Ala, my brother, we accepted their invitation not because we don't have food, but to show our respect and appreciation, but you see your people do not respect us, they were supposed to come pray and break their fast with us, not only donate food, we don't need food, we need respect'.

Finally, at 5:40 p.m., the Mustadafin truck arrived and a few Somalis took out two pots of *akhni* and a pot of *boeber* and carried it to the backdoor of the mosque from where the food was distributed. Once we plated and distributed the *akhni* and *boeber* to the two hundred Somalis who remained seated in the mosque, the atmosphere turned from one of tension to a more joyful and festive environment. Attendees sat in small groups, calmly waiting for their meal as we rushed to give each one a plate of *akhni* and a cup of *boeber*. I moved from group to group to observe their sensory experiences of eating and asked if they were familiar with *akhni* and *boeber* or if they had eaten it before. Many of them seemed to taste *akhni* for the first time, and appeared surprised with the sweet taste of the *boeber*. While we were busy distributing food, Imam Majed called me by saying, 'Brother bring your food and join us'. I took up his invitation and grabbed a plate to join the Imam alongside a few Somali elders. I asked Ebrahim Smith to join us and to meet Imam Majed. Once we had exchanged greetings, we sat together in a circle and Imam Majed proceeded to thank Smith for the food. I then mentioned to the group that Smith was responsible for cooking this food, and at this time Imam Majed thanked Smith again saying, 'It tastes very nice, its sweet and very spicy—you Capetonians love spices'.

This performative ethnography of the mass *iftar* outlined above presents various analytical riddles significant to my research question in this thesis (see 1.3). Firstly, it reveals a power relation between Somali and Capetonian Muslims, and a way in which they form a perception of each other. For both the Somali and Mustadafin Foundation, the gathering that took place at the *iftar* was perceived as a means to bridge and strengthen their relationship. The Somali decision to accept the offer of coming together for the *iftar* is demonstrative of the fact that the Muslim Somali

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community holds a desire to participate and form part of the larger community of Cape Town. Further to this, the acceptance of Mustadafin to donate *iftar* for hundreds of Somalis is indicative of their endeavour to include Somalis into the largest Muslim community in Cape Town.

However, this fragile sense of inclusion came undone with the absence of the Mustadafin Foundation staff at the sunset prayer at the Al-Sunny Mosque, and the late delivery of the food—both which were perceived by Somali attendees as a sign of disrespect. It is important here to qualify the fact that the late delivery of food must not be understood as a deliberate attempt to disrespect the Somali community. At the same day of this event, the Mustadafin Foundation cooked and delivered food for four other mass *iftar* that took place in various locations in Cape Town. Of particular interest within the encounter of these two groups were the ways in which perceptions of the role of women impacted upon their convivial relations, understanding, and community formation. This was clear in the fact that the Mustadafin Foundation decided to abstain from joining the Somali sunset prayer due to the absence of Somali women at the Al-Sunny Mosque. For the Mustadafin Foundation, the absence of Somali women at the mass *iftar* was understood as partly responsible for limiting the Foundation's social engagement with the Somali community at large.

In our meeting, Ghairunisa insisted that Somali women have to be invited to the events and she described her interest in meeting and forming working relationships with Somali women. In 2014, Ghairunisa and five other Muslim women from the Mustadafin Foundation joined the first mass *iftar* with Somalis at Al-Sunny Mosque where they stood outside the mosque and aided in the serving and distribution of *akhni* and *boeber*. Following the event, they expressed their dismay at the total absence of Somali women, and their dissatisfaction at not being welcome to enter the main venue of the mosque where Somali men sat to break their fast. When I approached Ghairunisa in 2015 to support a second mass *iftar*, she agreed to donate the food and drink needed for the event but she announced that neither she nor her staff can join the Somali *iftar* as there are no women allowed, maintaining that 'Our main task is to empower women, and not to feed their oppression'.[239] When I

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[239] Ghairunisa Johstone-Cassiem, interview with the author, 10 June 2015, Mustadafin office.

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discussed her request with Imam Abdullah Majed, he explained that Somali women 'have to remain at home to cook *iftar* for their kids . . . they are welcome at the mosque. We have a weekly class for women'.[240] Yet Imam Majed emphasised the difference of the status of women between Somali and Cape Muslims, and implicit in this division was the view that Somali culture is more conservative than Capetonian culture.

The second point evident through this performative ethnography is that despite the collapse of the convivial connection between Somali and Cape Muslims at the *iftar*, Somalis nonetheless formed a part of the Cape Muslim community through their sensory experience of tasting Cape Muslim food, thus reinforcing Bourdieu's notion that taste is a 'practical affirmation of an inevitable difference' (1984, 56). The *iftar* event failed to establish a relation between the Somalis and the Mustadafin Foundation (due both to the exclusion of women in the mosque and the late delivery of the food by the Foundation), both of which were perceived by the other as being disrespectful in some way. Nevertheless, eating *akhni* allowed Somalis to engage in the sensory experience of the Cape Muslim food style, and therefore become a temporary part of the Cape Muslim community. This is reminiscent of sociologist Pasi Falk's argument that the act of eating sees individuals 'eating into one's body/self and being eaten into the community' (1994, 20)—a view similar to Bourdieu's argument that the sharing of a taste serves to form a group (1984). Many Somalis seemed to taste *akhni* and *boeber* for the first time, and appeared to enjoy the sweet taste of the *boeber*. Most of them returned to refill their plates of *akhni* and cups of *boeber*. It would seem that what was remarkable in this instance was that the sensorial experience (taste and smell) of *akhni* and *boeber* triggered the Somali imagination of what it 'tastes like' to be a Capetonian Muslim. In other words, the aesthetic and sensorial performances centred on *akhni* and *boeber* mediated for Somalis a food style of a larger community of Muslims in Cape Town. Particularly interesting in this regard is the fact that during the *iftar*, I observed that the Somalis present soon claimed knowledge of these foods and swiftly began to explain their ingredients to one and other.

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[240] Abdullah Majed, interview with the author, 18 June 2015, Al-Sunny Mosque, Bellville.

Beyond the *iftar*'s significance as representative of a mediation of Cape Muslim style, this mass *iftar*—and other mass *iftars*, for that matter—signified for the attendees the Islamic values of charity and sharing food. This was particularly significant on this occasion as, due to the late delivery of food, many Somalis had left to break their fast at their home and thus there was more *akhni* and *boeber* than needed. As a result, the Somalis present started to distribute what remained of the *akhni* and *boeber* to beggars and other African immigrants living around the Al-Sunny Mosque—many of whom were non-Muslim. Here, therefore the Somali act of sharing food and redistributing food came to resemble that of the Mustadafin Foundation's own donation of that very same *iftar* food. Thus, what was made clear through this progression of events was that regardless of the breakdown in convivial relations, the practices of sharing food signified an Islamic value shared between Somalis and the larger community of Muslims in Cape Town.

## 8.9 Islamic Value of Sharing Food

The culture of production, distribution, and consumption of food amongst Muslims is not limited to institutional performances but is also embodied and encouraged as an Islamic value referred to as *sadqah* (charity), which is understood as a manifestation of Muslim humanitarian belonging. The importance of *sadqah* was demonstrated when, on 2 October 2015, I joined Friday prayer at the Jumah Mosque where the Imam Habib Bewley directly addressed the religious benefits gained through the feeding of the needy. Imam Bewley cited many religious quotes, which he recited first in Arabic before translating their meaning to English as a way of making his comments appear more religiously authentic.[241] His ceremony was on the first Friday after the *Eid ul-Adha*, which signifies the culmination of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. For this event, Muslims participate in the sacrifice of an animal (cow, sheep, or lamb) and distribute the meat to a needy family regardless of religious or racial background. Hence, the Imam's ceremony was aimed at encouraging, admiring, and confirming the religious gains of providing and sharing food, since he appeared to expect that most of the attendees had already sacrificed an animal.

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[241] For further discussion of the way in which the Arabic language is understood as holding greater 'authenticity' amongst Muslims in Cape Town, refer to chapter Six.

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While the *zakat* is a religious duty and one of the Five Pillars of Islam,[242] the Muslim custom of sharing and distributing food is to be understood as a form of *sadaqah* that scholar of religious studies Mark R. Woodward (1988, 64) describes as a 'gift of the heart', which is therefore not related to the fulfilment of duty. As such, it is a religious choice separate to a distinct Islamic mandate, and thus the Muslim culture of *sadaqah* is a symbolic embodiment of an Islamic practice of the *barakat* (God blessings). Although Muslim practices of *Sadaqah* is not a religious duty, its also relate to God's reward and the individual's strive for salvation.

The Muslim practice of *sadaqah* is particularly pronounced and emphasised during the month of Ramadan when Muslims have to fast from sunrise to sunset. One of the lessons that Muslims are supposed to learn during their fast is the sensory experience of thirst and hunger, of longing to eat—a feeling that needy people encounter everyday. Yet the Islamic *sadaqah* is not only geared toward the needy. This can be seen during the month of Ramadan in Cape Town, when, before Muslims break their fast with the sound of the sunset *azan*, many children in the Bo-Kaap area carry plates of homemade food to deliver to their neighbours irrespective of their financial circumstances (see Baderoon 2007). Here, the Muslim practices of *sadaqah* embodies social meaning expressed through the sharing of sensorial experiences of Muslim food that metaphorically enact and mediate practices of Islamic religious aesthetics for Muslims and for the wider society in which they are enmeshed. The importance of food sharing is further emphasised during Ramadan when anyone who is ill or cannot fast—for example, pregnant women—is recommended to feed a person for the equivalent days that they are unable to fast. As Gabeba Baderoon (2007) notes, the sharing of food is crucially related to a notion of Muslim identity.

The Muslim culture of *sadaqah* is pronounced during festivities such as the *Eid ul-Adha*. The literal translation of *Eid ul-Adha* into English is 'the festival of sacrifice'. For those with the means to perform the *hajj,* it is a preferred religious practice to sacrifice an animal so that God may bless and accept their pilgrimage. In this sense, the performance of *sadaqah* is a ritual of faith that meditates one's intentionality and religious self, reflecting a sense of Muslim piety toward the divine. What is significant here is the way in which Muslims in Cape Town (and elsewhere)

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[242] *Zakat* is an obligatory tax paid annually under Islamic law, and is principally used to raise money for charity.

strategically bridge their ritual of faith with their humanitarian belonging to the larger community. This is reflected in Ghairunisa's comment that 'Islam urges us to help all those who need help, Muslim and non-Muslim'.

The Muslim culture of *sadaqah* is thus indicative of both a Muslim religious performance that embodies an enactment of piousness, faith, and belonging to a community of Muslims, whilst also mediating a performance of a humanitarian sense of citizenship and belonging to the larger multicultural community of Cape Town.

### 8.10 Performing Communitarian Belonging Through Food

On the last day of Ramadan, Muslim institutions facilitate the performance of faith and communitarian belonging by cooking a vast amount of food, which they distribute to poor families around Cape Town early on the first day of *Eid Ul-Fitr*. On 18 August 2012, I joined the mass *iftar* moon sighting at Sea Point between 4:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Thereafter, I visited two sites where the Muslim performance of cooking a huge amount of food was taking place. The first site was organised by the Nakhlistan Organisation in Athlone.[243] At approximately 10:00 p.m., Fatima Ali, a representative from the Nakhlistan Organisation opened the event by asking an Imam to recite some verses from the Quran. The Quranic sound served to imbue the event with a religious aesthetic and a sense of sacredness that evoked the participants' religious self-awareness, marking the gathering as a religious performance. Following this, Fatima Ali announced that they would be cooking 158 pots of *akhni* and that the rest of the money that the Nakhlistan Organisation collected from Muslim donations in the year 2012 was to be sent to Muslims in Palestine—a comment through which she attempted to demonstrate a sentiment of belonging to the Muslim transnational *Ummah* (see 4.5).

After Fatima Ali finished her speech, she asked a young Muslim girl to start the fire, and then the volunteers were divided to teams led by cooks who knew precisely each step and the amount of ingredients needed for each pot (fig. 8.3).[244] The lead cooks relied on the smell and appearance of the *akhni* to judge the accuracy of their

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[243] Nakhlistan is a non-profit Muslim organisation founded in 1984 in Cape Town. Its main objective is to provide food for needy people in Cape Town.
[244] You can watch the the cooking performance at https://vimeo.com/70474824.

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cooking. These sensory experiences of preparing the food—looking at it, smelling it, and touching it—evoked emotions and memories (see Lupton 1996, 31), which brought together the past and present and meditated aesthetic formations of Muslim style that attached these volunteers and cooks to a community of Muslims and to the larger society that they intended to serve. Hundreds of Muslims, some of whom, as indicated by Fatima Ali, had donated money and ingredients (such as potatoes, meat, rice, and oil) came to experience the sensorial aesthetic formations of Muslim food culture and to be part of the transformation of raw food into cooked food. The witnessing and participation in this transformation is particularly significant, as the shift from raw food to cooked food is, according to Levi-Strauss (1970), something that serves to define culture.



**FIGURE 8.3** Cooking for *Eid Ul-Fitr* with the Nakhlistan Organisation, 18 August 2012, Athlone. (Photo by the author)

Following my time in Athlone, at 11:00 p.m. I moved to Bo-Kaap, to participate in the preparation of another huge amount of food, this time organised by the Boorhaanol Islam Movement (BIM).[245] The gathering in Bo-Kaap was considerably less formal than at Athlone, as the majority of participants were Bo-Kaap residents who knew each other and were therefore at greater ease with checking each other's pots, smelling and tasting the food, and exchanging ingredients and experiences. They were separated into groups and divided into clusters of family or friends who had donated the ingredients needed for one hundred litres of *akhni*. Participants at

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[245] Boorhaanol Islam Movement is one of the first community organisations established in Bo-Kaap 50 years ago under the leadership of Imam Abdurahmann Bassier and historian Achmat Davids. Its main objectives are to provide education and socio-economic support and for needy Muslims and non-Muslims in Cape Town.

the Bo-Kaap site were given a printed guideline of how to cook *akhni,* and as many of them were not experts, they hesitated and needed to consult older cooks to confirm the colour, smell, and texture of their *akhni*. A group of musicians who I knew from having performed drumming sessions with them previously, seemed lost and worried about their pots. I joined them for coffee and to listen to their conversation, and upon doing so I heard a guitarist named Razeeq repeatedly asking fellow musician Arshaad to continue stirring, because there was smell of burning onion. I then followed the chef Zaid, who was appointed by the BIM to advise participants of how to make *akhni*, and heard his recommendations to each group that included suggestions such as, 'You need more oil', 'Don't add more water', 'The colour is not right, add more *masala*', 'I can't smell the cloves, add more'. I told him jokingly that it seemed that each pot would have a different taste. He laughed and said 'Sure, but the taste is not what matters, it is the making of *sadaqah* and the experience of gathering together that people will remember'.[246]

Zaid's comment suggests an understanding that, in certain contexts, priority should be given to the value of sharing, with taste being perceived as a more minor concern. It seemed that for many participants the gain through their participation was actually their sensory experience of cooking and claiming expertise over Muslim food styles, alongside the performance of a common practice that holds Islamic value and enacts their sense of piety whilst embodying their commonality as members of the same community of Muslims. Within this context, the Muslim value of sharing is seen as a symbolic enactment of piousness and belonging to a community of Muslims. Their sensorial involvement in cooking Muslim food was thus a practice of mediation, where aesthetic forms of their lived culture materialised their commonality as members of the same community and indicated their participation and belonging to an imagined Muslim community in Cape Town.

Further, the cooking site was in Bo-Kaap located at top of Cape Town CBD. Thus, whilst the sensory experience of cooking and the social gathering formed a commonality and offered a sense of community, the light and smoke of the fires and the accompanying Islamic sound marked the Cape Town CBD with an aesthetic of Islam (fig. 8.4). In such a way, both events served to embody sensorial aesthetic

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[246] You can watch the cooking performance at this link: https://vimeo.com/user15164918.

formations of public Islam. Importantly, aesthetic and sensual performances of Muslim-ness enacted through food are not limited to mass-scale public performances discussed above; rather, the way in which food mediates communitarian styles can be clearly seen in Muslim private performances also.



FIGURE 8.4 Cooking with the Boorhaanol Islam Movement for *Eid Ul-Fitr,* 18 August 2012, Bo-Kaap. (Photo by the author)

## *8.11 Food in Muslim Private Performances*

Beyond events that are open to the public (such as the *Eid Ul-Fitr*, mass *iftar*, Christmas), aesthetic and sensorial performances of food accompany Muslim private performances such as weddings, funerals, particular religious gatherings (*dhiker* and *ratiep*), and art. This is illustrated in Igshaan Adams' performance art piece, 'Please Remember Me II'. This work offered a buffet of Cape Muslim snacks (including *koeksisters*), through which Adams metaphorically represented a fixed and closed-minded Muslim (see 5.4). Here Adams' use of the koeksisters as a metaphor calls to mind Stoller and Olkes (1989, 22) ethnographic account of Djebo, a Songhay woman who used the disgusting taste of *Fukko Hoy* sauce to express her anger and social frustration. Another example of the use of food in Muslim private performance is the catering at Hibah Hendricks' wedding (see 7.5), which included a variety of Cape Muslim snacks (e.g., *samosas*) as starters, and crayfish as the main course—which not only embodied an aesthetic of Muslim food, but, as Hendricks indicated, signified an upper-class meal. Interestingly, in the past, crayfish was a food of lower-class people (Baderoon 2007, 118).

The use of food in intimate religious gatherings can be found in *Eid* breakfast. On 24 September 2015, the first day of *Eid ul-Adha*, Hameda Deedat invited me to join her for *Eid* breakfast with very close friends, whom she described as her 'family in Cape Town'. We gathered at 8:30 a.m. at the house of Nadeem Gafieldien and his wife Asma Achmat in Athlone. Gafieldien and Deedat identify as having Indian origins, while Achmat strongly identifies as Cape Malay. The food was mainly prepared by Achmat who described it as 'a traditional Malay *Eid* breakfast' and included both a starter and a main meal. The starters were a croissant roll, assorted pastries, and *samosa*s that were bought frozen the day before. The croissant rolls and pastries were baked and served with cheese and jam, and the *samosas* were fried and served hot. The main meal was spicy roasted beef and mince pies. Deedat made large pots of tea and coffee that were served with optional milk and sugar.

As we sat around the table eating, chatting and getting to know each other, Gafieldien and Deedat expressed lots of admiration for Achmat's cooking skills and for Cape Malay food. Our conversation over the meal included discussion around Palestinian and Muslim affairs in Cape Town and internationally, and also centred on talk around our employment. Here, I learned that Gafieldien worked at the department of building and facilities management at Stellenbosch University and that Achmat is a social worker at the Bridge Town Day Hospital in Cape Town. After explaining my research interest in Muslim food within Cape Town, Achmat made it clear that her food signifies her 'Malay culture' and proceeded to explain with pride that she learned to cook Malay food from her mother and grandmother, and that it is her duty to maintain the aesthetic of Malayness. Making this sentiment explicit, Achmat stated that, 'Our food is our culture and identity, if we don't maintain its practices we might forget who we are'.

The way in which Malay food is adopted by Muslims of Indian origin living in Cape Town was evident in various ethnographic encounters. For instance, the Sufi *Urs* ritual of celebrating and commemorating Muslim leaders ends with eating food.[247] At the end of the *Urs* performances, the organiser always delivers two pots of *biryani*, one small pot of *sogi*, and one pot of *boeber*. The way in which the emphasis on Urdu language at the *Urs* performances embodies a symbolic enactment

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[247] For further analysis of the *Urs* ritual refer to chapter Seven (7.9).

of Indian style (see 7.9) made me expect the food to taste hot and spicy. This expectation was driven by what I have learned through both my ethnographic enquiries and my personal experience of living in Cape Town, during which I discovered that the main difference between Indian and Malay food in Cape Town is that the former is characterised by the taste of hot spices and the latter is typically seasoned with sweet spices. Following from this, the moment I tasted the food at the *Urs* performance I noticed the sweet taste of *boeber* and *sogi*, and the medium heat of the spice within the *biryani* indicated a mix of Malay and Indian tastes. I shared my expectation and observation with the male who cooked and delivered the food, and asked him why the food tastes sweet and not very spicy. He jokingly responded, this is 'Cape Indian food'.

### 8.12 Food in Muslim Everyday Performances

Beyond private events (such as weddings and funerals) and public events (such as the *Eid Ul-Fitr* and artistic performances), the integral role of food in culture and identity in Cape Town is made clear through the ways in which food accompanies the everyday mundane experiences of Muslims. Whenever I visited Weaam Williams or Thania Petersen, food was clearly their favourite topic of conversation, despite the fact that I often met with them for the purposes of discussing their art practice. Both professed an expertise in the Malay cuisine, since it is a daily practice for both of them to cook for their respective families and both claimed that the first thing their mother taught them was how to cook Malay food. Williams claims to be 'master of the art of Malay spices'; for Williams, 'making food is art'.[248] For Petersen, cooking Malay food became a 'practice of heart'. She explained that she cooks while taking care of her kids and doing other domestic tasks. The artist went on to explain that she does not need to stand in the kitchen the whole time during the cooking process, and that she knows her food very well and knows by heart the amount of spices and the time needed.[249]

The significance of food for Muslim families is so pronounced that, as Sindre Bangstad (2001), notes in his research with Muslims living at the periphery of Cape Town, Muslims spend more money on food than their Christian neighbours of the same economic class. Bangstad's (2001) observation is not only applicable to lower-

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[248] Weaam Williams, interview with the author, 8 May 2014, District Six.
[249] Thania Petersen, interview with the author, 8 October 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

class Muslims living in townships or in the Cape Flats; it is also something I observed amongst middle-class Muslims living within urban areas in Cape Town.

Williams and Petersen both expressed a lot of pride around the array of Malay food publically available in Cape Town. The pronounced public presence of Malay food in Cape Town appeared to provide for Williams and Petersen a sense of certainty and confidence in their belonging to a community of Muslims. Similarly to Williams and Petersen, Husain Essop and Hameda Deedat expressed considerable pride and confidence at the diversity and availability of Muslim food in Cape Town. While Williams and Petersen claimed a connection between their identity and their fondness and expertise in the cultural style of Cape Malay food, Essop and Deedat perceived Indian food to be representative of their cultural style and to provide a sensory link to their identity. In such a way, it would seem that for Deedat and Essop, living in Cape Town has fused cultural boundaries and inflected their Indian food with the sweet taste of the Cape Malay cooking style.

### *8.13 Somali Food Culture*

In my conversation with Mohammad Alawal, he described Somali food as very simple: 'It is plain boiled lamb meat with either rice or spaghetti'.[250] Despite the seemingly 'simple' style and ingredients of Somali food, Alawal expressed that Somali food 'offers a taste from home'. Thus, Somali restaurants offer a space for Somalis living in Cape Town to connect to their community whilst offering a vital platform for the maintenance and practice of Somali eating habits. I noticed in my frequent visits to Somali restaurants in the Bellville CBD that when a Somali enters a restaurant, he often joins a table with other Somalis rather than sitting alone at an empty table. Both Somali food and eating styles within restaurants signify a distinct cultural style. For instance, Somalis often eat bananas with their main meal, something that the manager of the ZamZam restaurant, Majed Abdullah, explained as serving to stimulate the customer's appetite. They either mix the bananas with rice or noodles, or have it as dessert after their meal. In addition to bananas, Somalis often order a jug of milk, to which they add sugar, to drink whilst eating. Further to this, the 'proper' way to eat Somali food is with the right hand and without utensils something that also embodies a distinct Somali cultural style within Cape Town.

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[250] Mohammad Alawal, interview with the author, 10 August 2015, Food Inn, Long Street Cape Town.

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Significantly, Somali food culture is not to be understood as a homogenous ethnic tradition. Rather, Somali food practices are hybrid and include South African food practices. For instance, most Somali restaurants and coffee shops offer *samosas,* which are very popular and consumed by Somali and most other immigrant groups in Bellville CBD. Significantly, the Somali chef at ZamZam restaurant baked a variety of *samosas* daily, which are offered at the restaurant and supplied to a street vendor and coffee shop in Bellville CBD. The Somali production and consumption of *samosa* is only one example of Somali culturalisation and integration into the larger society of Cape Town. Other examples include the consumption of soft drinks such as Coca Cola, 7UP, and South African Stoney Ginger Beer.[251] Figure 8.5 is a picture of a lunch meal of two Somali customers whom I observed eating regularly at ZamZam restaurant. They used cutlery and drank soft drink instead of milk. They explained that milk made them lazy, but Coca Cola drinks gave them energy to carry on with their work.



FIGURE 8.5 Lunch meal at ZamZam, 5 July 2013, Bellville CBD. (Photo by the author)

Somalis are regular customers in other Muslim restaurants. In my experience at the Pakistani Chicken restaurant I met Ahmad, a Somali businessman who previously worked and lived in Saudi Arabia and who therefore preferred curry and Pakistani food over than Somali food. During our final conversation for this research project,

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[251] Stoney Ginger Beer is soft drink that has been produced by The Coca Cola Company in South Africa since 1971. See http://www.coca-cola.co.za/brands/stoney.html (last modified 14 June 2016).

Mohammad Alawal chose to meet me at Food Inn restaurant in Long Street, which he described as 'affordable, *halaal*, and tasty'. However, Alawal's experiences of Capetonian Muslim food are not the case for most Somalis living in Bellville CBD, the majority of whom seemed unfamiliar with popular and common Malay cuisines such as *akhni* and *boeber*—something that was observed through the Somali mass *iftar* organised in conjunction with the Mustadafin Foundation.

As illustrated in the ethnographic research presented above, the ways in which food accompanies Muslim public, private, and everyday performances make clear the approaches through which food mediates a distinct cultural style of Muslim-ness. Aesthetic formations of Muslim food culture appear to lend Muslims a sense of commonality as members of the same imagined community. However, what is particularly significant about these examples is that they reveal the diversity of Muslim food culture in Cape Town.

### 8.14 Cultural Diversity of Muslim Food in Cape Town

A great deal of diversity in food is evident at Muslim mass public performances of Muslim-ness, such as the moon sighting of the *Eid Ul-Fitr* (see 4.2), mass *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebrations (1.1 and 1.2), The Voice of the Cape Festival, the Ramadan Expo (see 4.3), and the Bo-Kaap Market (see 8.2). These public performances form a social platform for Muslims to perform both their diversity and common aesthetic style for each other and for wider society. At the moon sighting of the *Eid Ul-Fitr*, thousands of Muslim women, men and children gathered to watch the moon and to break their fast together; they blanketed the grassy area of the ocean's edge, lay out their food and drink, and waited for the call of the sunset prayer to break their fast. Their food included local Muslim cuisine, among which were baked cookies, *samosas*, *akhni*, and fragrant curry soups. When the prayer call started, most of them broke their fast with water and dried dates, which indicated their attempt to perform authentic Islamic identity and eating style, as water and dates are recommended by the prophet Mohammad. Importantly, the food consumed and shared at the *Eid Ul-Fitr* was not all local Muslim cuisine; the variety extended to include food from popular fast food outlets such as KFC, Nandos, McDonalds, and pizza, among

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others.[252] These food brands are among the most popular in Cape Town and South Africa, with branches across and within all South African cities. Significantly, many of the branches of these restaurants in South Africa and across the world accommodate Muslim *halaal* regulations.[253] In Cape Town, Muslim consumption of these popular fast foods can be seen as indicative of their culturalisation as South African citizens.

Considered together, the consumption of local cuisine, fast food, and foods understood as representative of Islamic food practices internationally (e.g., dried dates), points toward the hybridity and the multiple identities of Cape Muslims, who consist of Malay, Indian, African, and transnational Muslims who come together to form the complexity of an imagined Muslim community in Cape Town. What is particularly significant is that the diversity of Muslim food culture in Cape Town is not limited to ethnic diversity, but is also influenced by globalisation and by local multicultural cuisines of Cape Town. This hybridity of food practice was also evident at the Ramadan Expo.

Prior to the month of Ramadan, Muslims organise various open public markets, including the Ramadan Expo. The diversity of food at the Expo embodied a variety of local, national, and transnational Muslim food styles. There I met a Turkish woman named Dilek Aktan who offered free samples of *lokum* for visitors to show the quality of homemade Turkish delight. In my conversation with Aktan, she pointed out that in spite of the fact that she has been living in Cape Town for fourteen years and sees herself as part of the Muslim community in Cape Town, she aspires to continue to showcase the beauty of Turkey to the Muslim community of Cape Town. Her comment was but one reflection of the coming together of transnational influence and food in an event that showcased diversity and the resurgence of Muslim urbanity in Cape Town. Beyond goods and services, the exposition involved visitors in the sensory experience of regional Islamic food practices. Of particular interest was the socially-engaged and performative *samosa* folding competition, which, according to the competition's MC, 'symbolised Cape

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[252] Nandos is a South African international restaurant chain that was first established in Johannesburg in 1987. It is famous for its Afro-Portuguese flame-grilled Peri-Peri marinated chicken. See http://www.nandos.com/our-story (accessed 7 August 2016).

[253] Accommodation of *halaal* regulations is posted on their respective websites. See for example: https://www.kfc.co.uk/halal; https://www.nandos.co.uk/halal (accessed 7 August 2016).

Muslim food culture'. The competitors were local Muslim women, some of whom I recognised—including a woman named Soriah who I know from the *dhiker* rituals held at the Aljehad Mosque and from the Bo-Kaap Markets where she sold honey and spices.[254] Spectators were offered tastings of *samosa* in order to assist with the judging of the best *samosa* maker. I participated in these tastings, and despite my cheering my loudest for Soriah's *samosa,* she regrettably did not win the competition; the award instead went to an African Muslim woman from the Khayelitsha township, who folded thirty-four *samosas*. Performances such as the *samosa* competition and the dominance of Muslim foods at the Expo indicates that despite the impact of globalisation on the consumption of local food (Gillette 2005), or the impact of what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) refers to as 'liquid modernity' on individual and collective identities, culinary communitarian styles and eating habits are still maintained and practiced among Muslim in Cape Town.

Muslim food practices are characterised by a great deal of hybridity, adaptability, and innovation. This hybridity is also reflected in the dietary habits and approaches to food observed in research interlocutors. Artist and filmmaker Weaam Williams found that Malay food limited her ability to accommodate her vegetarianism, and thus she created a range of what she perceives as vegetarian Malay dishes. I have enjoyed many formal and informal meals and *iftar* dinners at Williams' house. Williams and her husband Natfalime often invite friends for dinner, many of whom are non-Muslim. At their housewarming party, Williams decorated the table with *boeber*, green curry vegetable stew, grilled sweetly-spiced fish, *samosas*, pies, and a variety of freshly baked cookies. Although the sweet taste and smell of cinnamon, coconut, and cloves form a sensorial aesthetic of Malayness, Williams' food indicates a further creolisation of the aesthetic of Malay food that is, importantly, already understood as creole cuisine. What is significant here is that Williams' adaptability toward food is an indication of the artist's accommodation and absorption the lifestyle and food practices of the wider society and culturally diverse food practices within Cape Town. This was evident at Williams' housewarming party, where she offered *halaal* wine (the bottle of which is very similar to alcoholic wine) that she poured into wine glasses so that we could toast a blessing for her new

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[254] For further discussion of research and analysis involving Soriah (and in particular the *dhiker* ritual) refer to chapter Six.

home. Considered more closely, what was evident in this exchange is that we imitated and performed a social experience of what is perceived by Williams to reflect 'secular culture'.

This hybrid approach to food culture is also reflected in the practices of other research interlocutors. For example, Thania Petersen has a collection of cook-books in her kitchen, some of which are not South African; she claims to be a particularly gifted in her cooking of the Italian dish of lasagne. Hasan Essop, also commented that he liked 'Western food too' and explained to me that 'on a Saturday we normally have fast food or just make chip rolls with a bit of spice on the chips'.[255] This hybrid approach to food production and consumption was clearly echoed by Zahra Ismail, who described the complexity of food culture and the way it negotiates her cultural heritage and sense of belonging in South Africa. As she explained:

> [My food culture is] multicultural . . . [and is] based on the ethnicities of my parents and my existence in South African society. At home I eat more cultural meals based on Indian cuisine because of my mother's Indian heritage. I cook the North African meals in my home as I enjoy them a lot and it makes me feel closer to my Algerian identity. I enjoy eating Western foods outside of my home [and] it's not unusual to see Western meals in my home from time to time.[256]

Given the descriptions provided above, the variety of research interlocutor food practices is clearly unpredictable and their combination and food preferences are unmeasured. Further to this, their innovative food cultures demonstrate a great deal of local, national, and transnational influence. The adaptable and innovative food culture of these interlocutors is in accordance with the statement made by current webmaster and former program coordinator of The Voice of the Cape, Munadia Karaan: that is, that Cape Muslims are 'culturally more South African than Muslim' (see 7.2). Here, the convivial power of food enables Muslims to blur their communitarian food culture with national food and to experience, creolise and adapt the tastes of the multicultural society of Cape Town and South Africa at large. The point here is that Muslims in Cape Town are influenced by national foods, as much as the Muslim food culture influences the national cuisine of South Africa. Further, it

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[255] Hasan Essop, interview with the author, 3 April 2014, Essop twins' parents' house, Penlyn Estate, Lansdowne, Cape Town.
[256] Zahra Ismail, interview with the author, 15 June 2105, Observatory, Cape Town.

is through the sensory experiences of food that Muslims enact a secularised sense of citizenship. In such a way these food practices echo Maris Boyd Gillette's (2005) ethnographic exploration of food practices of Chinese Muslims. Gillette claims that though mass-produced Western food is aesthetically (in terms of ingredients, texture, appearance, and food type) not considered to be 'authentic' for Chinese Muslims, it can still be a part of the diverse Muslim aesthetic in Cape Town. This can be seen in Ibrahim's commenting that 'We are modern Muslims' when he brought us KFC during the preparation of the *akhni* at the Mustadafin Foundation office.

Gabeba Baderoon (2002) argues that 'Muslim food in Cape Town is open, permeable' (8). In support of this assertion, Baderoon points out that the variety of food meanings and practices among Muslims in Cape Town are seen to sustain the family tradition for older generations while appearing to the younger generations to be a fluid, individual, creative and innovative expression rather than a woman's duty to her family. Similar observations were also made by Joan Watdrop (2012) in her exploration of the way in which Muslims of Indian backgrounds in Durban authenticate culinary heritage through specific ingredients and cooking styles that manifest collective cultural continuity but also indicate a shift in practice and meaning amongst younger generations. As Baderoon (2007) notes, the shift in Muslim food culture in Cape Town is an indication of Muslim innovation and adaptability that serves to connect the present with past, and individual with community. Baderoon's arguments around innovation and adaptability in food cultures are supported by the approaches of most research interlocutors for this project.

### 8.15 Halaal Food

The adaptability and innovation evident in Muslim food culture is, however, restricted by *halaal* regulations. The importance of *halaal* regulations to Muslims in South Africa is expressed in the film *Material* (Freimond 2012), wherein the actor Riaad Moosa (a Muslim stand-up comedian) jokingly says that some Muslims in South Africa might drink, smoke, go clubbing, or have sexual relations before marriage, but they will never compromise by eating pork or non-*halaal* food. Indeed, the Muslim research interlocutors place a strict emphasis on the *halaal* quality of their food.

The regulations of *halaal* food in Cape Town vary according to the different Islamic schools of thought. For example, in the nineteenth century, Turkish religious expert Abubaker Effendi, who adhered to the *hanafi* school of Islamic jurisprudence, perceived the consumption of *snoek* and crayfish by Muslims to be religiously forbidden (not *halaal*), while the *shafi* school of thought argued that Muslims in the Cape are permitted to consume *snoek* and crayfish as they have been designated as *halaal* (Baderoon 2007). The understanding, designation, and certification of *halaal* standards in South Africa is non homogenous; the various Muslim religious institutions that issue *halaal* certificates all differ slightly in their regulations.[257]

Yet, despite the relatively minor differences in understandings and the practice of *halaal* prescriptions, Muslims by and large follow common *halaal* regulations that embody a sense of an assertive and uncompromised Islamic value of Muslim food culture within the greater public food culture of Cape Town. Understanding the significance of *halaal* through a Durkheimian lens reveals it as a form of social control and a religious prohibition that divides the world into the sacred and the profane. Looking closely at *halaal* regulations in her ethnography of Uyghur Chinese Muslims, anthropologist Maria Cristina Cesaro (2000) argues that Muslim dietary prescriptions are forms of Muslim identity that function as an uncompromising boundaries of cultural difference. Thus, what is significant here is that although the Muslim research interlocutors indicate a diverse, innovative, and creole approach within their food habits, the adherence to a *halaal* diet is an embodiment of their cultural difference. *Halaal* food forms part of regular Cape Town food production and consumption; this is reflected in the fact that most stores and many non-Muslim restaurants obtain *halaal* certificates to accommodate the religious values and practices of Muslim customers. Hence, *halaal* food embodies a politics of aesthetics that operates as an enactment and acceptance of Muslim public visibility. Further to this, the *halaal* attribute of Muslim food requirements is a shared practice of mediation amongst Muslims within the *Ummah* at large. Hence, the performance of the consumption of *halaal* food is a common aesthetic of Islam through which Muslims in Cape Town form commonality and belonging to Muslim

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[257] There are six Islamic organisations issuing *halaal* certificates in Cape Town: The South African National Halaal Authority (SANHA), the Islamic Council of South Africa (ICSA), the Muslim Judicial Council Halaal Trust, the National Independent Halaal Trust (NIHT), The Shura Assistance and Relief Trust, and the Halaal Foundation of South Africa (HFSA).

*Ummah*. The aesthetic and sensual performance of food forms an infrastructure of Muslim religious urbanity and public visibility, but beyond this it also facilitates a sensorial affect that contributes to the formation of Muslim piousness and the imagination of a community.

### *8.16 Food, Ramadan, and Muslim Subject Formations*

One of the clearest periods in which the role of food becomes pronounced as a sensorial affect that mediates Muslim subject and community formation is during the time of Ramadan. Fasting during Ramadan, and the sensory experiences associated with it, play a vital role in the Muslim formation of a pious self—which is clearly visible in the comments and behaviours of the people with whom I have worked during my research. For Hameda Deedat, the most fascinating experience of fasting for Ramadan is 'discovering one's inner self and measuring one's spiritual growth'. She expands upon how fasting enables a 'discovery of self':

> The daily experience of fasting placed Allah at the top of the agenda not just at the *salah* times but almost all of the time. The constant remembrance of fasting is a remembrance of Allah itself. And the continuous spiritual journey of controlling the weaker self for the sake of Allah. Fasting and this spiritual development and growth I think has been fundamental in determining who I am as a Muslim, framing my relationship with Allah and developing my sense of *taqwah*, or God consciousness. I make a concerted effort to connect and worship Allah more than I do other times of the year. I think I do behave differently; I do not watch TV [or] listen to music and I socialise less during this month.[258]

Deedat's constant affirmation of the need to remember God and her extensive worship and burning drive to purify her religious self are shared sentiments amongst most male and female Muslim research interlocutors. For example, for Zahra Ismail, Ramadan is a month that provides 'a time to cleanse my mind and my soul. This is my personal annual ritual for self-betterment'.[259]

The month of Ramadan is the period in which the first verses of the Quran were revealed and is referred to as *shaher al'abadat* ('the month of worship'), during which time Muslims all over the world focus upon their religious self and

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[258] Hameda Deedat, interview with the author, 3 March 2015, Salt River, Cape Town.
[259] Zahra Ismail, interview with the author, 15 June 2105, Observatory, Cape Town.

spirituality. This period connects Muslims to practices adhered to in the international *Ummah* and within Muslim communities in Cape Town. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and is perhaps best understood as what Foucault termed a 'technology of the self' (1988), which places the physical body as the centre of the ritual. Fasting during Ramadan involves the abstinence from food and water from sunrise to sunset, and therefore encourages sensory experiences of the bodily sensations of thirst, hunger, waiting, and eating together, and the sense of sacrifice of the self for God.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims pay careful attention to Islamic practices, involving their bodies, emotions, and imaginations in sensorial performances that tune and discipline their selves in the service of the divine. Beyond sensory experiences including thirst and hunger, Ramadan involves hearing and reciting Islamic scripts, wearing Islamic dress code (such as *hijab*), and at the same time maintaining a high moral discipline and abstaining from things such as wearing makeup, drinking alcohol, sexual activity, lying, gossiping, watching television, and listening to music. Deedat noted that during the month of Ramadan she refrains from watch television or listening to music. Besides fasting and the required five daily prayers, Hasan Essop indicated that throughout Ramadan he performs the optional *taraweeh* prayer, attends more *dhiker* recitations, and reads the entire Quran. This intensified sensory experience of Islamic practice has been observed by anthropologist Sarah A. Tobin (2013) amongst Muslims in Jordan's capital of Amman. Tobin observed the way in which Islamic practices are amplified in Amman, providing evidence of how Muslims listen to more Quranic recitations or Islamic *inshudah* and abstain from listening to music, instead preferring to pray more and tune their behaviours to what is perceived as virtuousness.

Although this emphasis on abstinence and the strive toward virtuousness is evident amongst Muslims in Cape Town (as evidenced by responses from research interlocutors), relationships to Ramadan practices can be temporally specific and ambiguous. Williams and Petersen did not fast for the last few years because they were either pregnant or breastfeeding. However, despite refraining from fasting in previous years, Petersen began to fast again in 2015 and she described her experience by saying 'Fasting really reminded me that I'm Muslim . . . it made me

feel pious, I feel happy'. She did not express any sense of uncertainty or contradictory feelings toward this religious practice, instead she explained, 'I behaved the same in Ramadan. I did not wear *hijab* . . . it is not about wearing *hijab* . . . it is about fasting for God'.[260] Igshaan Adams fasted during the month of Ramadan for a few years, but in the last two years he changed his attitudes toward fasting, expressing the belief that it is a behaviour that is 'ego driven to show off to everyone else what a good Muslim [one] ha[s] become'. The moment Adams sensed that he was 'fasting for the wrong reasons', he immediately ceased this practice during Ramadan.[261] Despite this, Adams did not express any sense of guilt or uncertainty; instead, he maintained confidence in his 'Islamic identity' and was relieved that he no longer participated in what he saw as a contradiction of his religious practices and intentions.

The temporality and ambiguity of Cape Muslim religious practice during the month of Ramadan can be clearly seen in the public response and reflection on Ramadan by Cape-Town-based female fashion blogger, Zahrah Perry, who in 2015 posted a critique of overt Muslim religiosity during Ramadan. In her post titled 'The Hunger Games—Ramadan Edition' she described some Muslims as 'part-time religious folk' who 'head into hibernation' during Ramadan.[262] She went further to provide a searing critique of the fact that dress codes, behaviours, and familial obligations become pronounced during the holy month, writing, '[out] come the silk scarves that have been collecting dust for the last year and going to mosque seems to be the latest trend...If you aren't doing it, you aren't cool . . . High-five to you for trying to either please mum and dad this month, cleanse, lose weight, do it because your friends are doing it or do it for the right reasons'. Whilst critiquing the behaviour of others, Perry also aimed her criticism at overt judgments upon her own behaviour during Ramadan saying:

> Do what you wish, but to those of you who I will be seeing out and
> about in the next month or two, don't turn your nose up at those who
> are not partaking or entertain this alter-ego shit, where I can't have a
> decent conversation without your eyes throwing down judgement of,
> 'how Muslim are you?' Let The Hunger Games begin, may the odds
> be ever in your favour and Ramadan Mubarak friends.

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[260] Thania Petersen, interview with the author, 8 October 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.
[261] Igshaan Adams, Skype interview with the author, 3 December 2015,.
[262] Zahrah Perry, 19 June 2015, http://theperrybook.co.za/raw-the-hunger-games-ramadan-edition/.

Despite offering a clear caveat in her post where she explains that her critique 'is in no way a reflection of an entire community', her post triggered outrage within the Muslim community in Cape Town and South Africa at large. As a result, hundreds of Muslims posted responses to Perry, doubtful of her Islamic identity and practice. However, although Perry's provoking piece and the surrounding controversy were both centred around judgemental attitudes, it is relevant that she too noted the temporality and ambiguity of the intensification of Islamic practices during Ramadan month. Perry's arguments around Cape Muslim temporal intensification of religious practice during Ramadan resonates with Munadia Karaan's description that 'Muslim youth in Cape Town are just Muslims during Ramadan month'.[263]

To understand the temporality and ambiguity of Muslims' intensification of Islamic practices during Ramadan month, it is useful here to return to the observations of anthropologist Samuli Schielke (2009) and the analysis of young Muslims in Egypt. Schielke's study explores ambivalence and fragmentation in Muslim religious identity in Egypt and urges scholars to avoid idealising Muslims politics and processes of piety. Instead, Schielke urges an enquiry into the complexity, partiality, and often contradictory formations of Muslim identity and everyday experience. Schielke's observation of the temporality and ambiguity of Ramadan Islamic practices in Egypt, however, do not comfortably resonate with ethnographic observations of Muslims in Cape Town. This is because Egypt is a dominantly Muslim society and fasting is hence not a marker of cultural difference but a dominant form of public culture. In Cape Town, Muslims form one part of a multicultural society; within this context, they both perform and are observed performing aesthetics that mediate their communitarian culturalisation of citizenship. The difference evident in Ramadan cultures of fasting between Muslims in Egypt and Cape Town should be understood within a framework of the multiculturalist politics of cultural difference.

In the ten years I have lived in Cape Town, I have been repeatedly questioned by Muslims and non-Muslims about the fact that I do not fast during Ramadan. This questioning of my behaviour is echoed by interlocutor Thania Petersen's description of the challenges faced by Muslim women in their bodily-visual formations when

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[263] Munadia Karaan, interview with the author, 7 April 2012, VOC office, Woodstock, Cape Town.

she explains that 'the problem is not being Muslim, but actually it is what people expect from Muslims'.[264] The point that I wish to make here is that when Muslims form part of a multicultural society, they become implicated and in a sense accountable for maintaining and performing their cultural difference for non-Muslims and Muslims alike. This results in Muslims claiming recognition and public visibility of a distinct communitarian style.

### *8.17 Food and Muslim Community Formation*

On the last day of Ramadan in 2014, thousands of Muslims gathered to sight the moon and sit in circles with friends and family members to break their fast together at Sea Point Promenade in Cape Town. When the *azan* sounded, closely seated participants broke their fast together. Their sensory experience of fasting, the bodily sensations of thirst and hunger, the longing to eat, waiting and then eating together forms a great deal of collective emotionality triggered through a shared sense of belonging to a community bound by a common religious identification and practice. Their sense of community and pious self was also triggered by the power of Islamic sound that stimulated a religious mood of common sensory experience of hearing a common aesthetic of Islam (as discussed in chapter Seven)**.**

The sensorial affect of aesthetic and sensorial performances of food in Muslim community formations are not limited to public performances of Muslim-ness (such as the Ramadan Expo, mass *iftar*, or the ritual of mass cooking for charitable or celebratory purposes), nor is it limited to religious performances. Rather, the aesthetics of food forms a community of Muslims at a family level and signifies a cultural performance of their ethnic food style. For instance, the family of twin brothers Hasan and Husain Essop gather every Thursday for dinner at their parents' house. Husain described his mother, saying 'She is amazing with spices and she manages to combine the best spices to create her food, even Western dishes, she adds an Indian twist to it'.[265] He went further to explain that on Thursday nights his mother 'only makes traditional Indian food', which encourages him to consider his cultural heritage. He explained this by saying, 'I think of my Indian roots, the past, where we come from. She [his mother] does not allow us to eat in front of the TV

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[264] Thania Petersen, interview with the author, 21 August 2015, AVA Gallery, Cape Town.
[265] Husain Essop's comments in this section are cited from interview with the author, 3 April 2014, Essop twins' parents' house at Penlyn Estate, Lansdowne, Cape Town.

and no phones, we must sit together and enjoy the meal she has prepared'. For Husain, Thursday dinner is a 'family ritual . . . [they] all set around one table and the food guides the conversation'. Hasan's wife is of Cape Malay origin and Husain's wife is of Indian origin. As a result, the conversations about food are often centred on cultural difference, which Husain describes as a 'nice cultural debate between mother, and my wife, and Hasan's wife'. Thursday night is an intimate gathering of Essop's close family, while the extended Essop family gathers every Monday night to make and share in a large pot of Indian food.

For Thania Petersen, food gives a rhythm to the start, middle, and end of her day. She schedules her working and family time according to the time of the meals. Petersen often feels 'guilty of being busy with her artwork', hence she 'loves her family through food'; with her 'tasty food' she 'rewards her husband's support . . . and persuades her kids to gather around the table'.[266]

The communal approach to food and the practice of eating together signifies an Islamic value that is stressed within religious texts. This is clear in the Quran and *Hadith,* reported in the *Sahih Bukhari* (a collection of *hadiths*) that urges followers to 'eat together and [not] separately, for the blessing is with the company' (quoted in Goody 1982, 206). This approach to eating is also echoed in Appadurai's (1988) argument that 'eating together is a carefully conducted exercise in the reproduction of intimacy', and Lupton's claim that 'sharing the act of eating brings people into the same community, they are members of the same food culture. . . . [F]ood is instrumental in marking difference between cultures, serving to strengthen group identity' (1996, 25). The long acknowledged role of food in generating community whilst also marking a line of cultural difference thus reveals the seminal function of food in aesthetic formations. The consumption, production, and distribution of food by Muslims must therefore be understood as instrumental to the formation of collective identity and an imagined community in Cape Town. These practices must also be understood to provide a means through which to mediate a sense of belonging and citizenship in the context of liberal post-apartheid South Africa, with its emphasis on the politics of cultural difference.

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[266] Thania Petersen, interview with the author, 8 October 2014, Observatory, Cape Town.

## 8.18 Conclusion

This chapter began with a sensorial ethnographic account of the Bo-Kaap Food and Craft Market as a way of illustrating the taste and smell that accompanies the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town. Providing sensory vignettes anchored on wafting smells, tastes, and engagements with food in diverse settings, this chapter investigates the resurgence and commodification of Muslim food styles in post-apartheid Cape Town. As such, the chapter describes the way in which the Muslim food styles historically embody cultural difference whilst also standing as a signifier of a shared national culture within South Africa. It then proceeded to explore how Muslim food provides a vital contribution to Cape Town urbanity. My analysis here aims to reveal how the Muslim food culture of sharing, production, and consumption signifies Muslims politics of conviviality and a culture that welcomes inclusion rather than the assertion of cultural difference. In such a way, by unpacking the ways in which Muslim food practices are representative of cultural, political, *and* economic strategies of cultural difference, my motivation in this chapter is to contribute to the overall aim of the thesis (see 1.3) by providing an analysis of how food mediates a Muslim sense of belonging and the culturalisation of citizenship in the democratic, post-colonial secular context of the post-apartheid South African nation-state. By mapping public, private, and everyday performances of Muslim food, this chapter unpacks public visibility, diversity, and hybridity in Muslim food practices in Cape Town. This discussion has shown that, while the enactment and acceptance of food practices enhance Muslim public visibility, the sensorial affect of food is active in the formation of the Muslim pious self and community style.

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# Chapter Nine
## *Conclusion*

### 9.1 Cultural Performances of 'Muslim-ness' in Post-Apartheid Cape Town: Citizenship and Belonging

This ethnography sought to explore the resurgence of public performances of 'Muslim-ness' and the Muslim aesthetic politics of citizenship and belonging in the democratic, post-colonial, secular context of the post-apartheid South African nation-state. The ethnography presented in preceding chapters observed a broad range of contemporary public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town whilst mapping the trajectory of these public performances from the time of slavery through to post-apartheid (chapter Three). Having established the significance of this historical narrative, discussion went on to reveal how post-apartheid politics of cultural difference and 'rainbowism' have served to foster a resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town (chapter Four). This resurgence was made clear through observation and analysis of the growth in Muslim urban infrastructure, which indicates both an emergent scale of Muslim public visibility and an increased diversification of their community formations. Examples of this infrastructure and process of diversification included Muslim radio stations, mosques such as the Open Mosque, the state recognition of Islamic schools, the emergence of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD), the appearance of Somalis within Cape Town, and public events such as the *hijab* fashion shows, *Mawlid Al-Nabi,* moon sighting, and Ramadan Expo. Following this discussion, the thesis explored diverse emergent performances of Muslim-ness in post-apartheid Cape Town, which include conservative, democratic, and violent approaches to Islam. When considered together, these performances enhanced public visibility and challenged the formation of a cohesive public Islam in Cape Town (chapter Four).

Significant to the argument presented in this thesis is that the resurgence of Muslim infrastructure stems from political, cultural, and social formations of post-apartheid South Africa that are anchored on the notion of 'rainbowism'—a concept hinged on a cultural politics that embraces difference in the culturalisation of citizenship and

national belonging. In light of this, this ethnography located empirical findings and discussion within the broader theoretical literature on post-apartheid cultural politics of rainbowism, putting forward the understanding that post-apartheid rainbowism entails ethnically-specific cultural performances as signifiers of a diversely cultured and active citizenry. Importantly, however, my fieldwork moved beyond mere observation of the institutional politics to deliberately staged formal performances of cultural difference addressing everyday self-presentation and personal vernacular narratives of the Muslim politics of cultural difference and belonging.

The ethnography presented here indicates how the resurgence of public performances of Muslim-ness and Muslim aesthetic politics of cultural difference should be understood as signifying a Muslim culturalisation of citizenship that is symptomatic of the post-apartheid cultural politics of rainbowism and the corresponding emphasis on cultural diversity. The embodiment of Muslim cultural style as a vital part of the spectrum of post-apartheid rainbowism was seen clearly for instance in the discussion of the commodification Malay heritage and the staging of Bo-Kaap as a tourist destination (chapters Four and Eight).

Further, research observations and discussion throughout this thesis explored the way in which Muslim infrastructure both contributes to and is reliant upon performances of Muslim-ness that materialise Muslim public visibility within Cape Town. To unpack Muslim public visibility, empirical findings assessed three aesthetic forms: the visual, the aural, and food. Islamic visual aesthetic forms analysed included Muslim everyday dress such as hijab, architecture such as mosque minarets, and images such as Arabic calligraphy and *halaal* signage; aural aesthetic forms of Islam included the sound of the *azan* and Quranic recitations, whilst discussion of food explored Cape Malay food as a cultural style of Muslim-ness and not merely a religious aesthetic of Islam. Discussion of these aesthetic forms indicated how each is a symbolic enactment of Muslim cultural style that is seen, heard, tasted, and smelled across and within Cape Town by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Discussion presented throughout framed public performances of Muslim-ness as evidence of an infrastructure of Muslim 'religious urbanity'; in other words, as symptomatic of the practice of mediating Islamic religious aesthetics within a public

sphere shared by the multicultural society of Cape Town. Public visibility of Muslim religious urbanity in Cape Town was seen for instance through Islamic aesthetic forms such as *hijab*, mosques, *kramats*, and the sound of *azan*. Significant to my argument here is that aesthetic formations of public Islam were observed to operate within the urban infrastructure and secular structures of broader society—something that resulted in their inclusion within the public sphere and in local and national debates and perceptions of post-apartheid society.

Through a conceptualisation of Muslim urban infrastructures as powerful performances, this ethnography contributes to the expansion of the conceptual framework of the *Global Prayers* project discussed in chapter Two. It does this through an investigation of how Muslim religious urbanity in the context of South Africa not only challenges previously held views regarding urban secularisation, but expands its own parameters beyond the urban settings of metropolises to reach and involve peripheral and rural areas.[267]

It is vital to reiterate here that the ethnography presented in this thesis puts forward the understanding that not all public performances of Muslim-ness are indicative of public Islam and religious urbanity, since some Muslim public performances are mediating cultural styles rather religious identifications. A clear example of this can be seen through the extent to which (both currently and historically) Cape Malay cuisine plays a vital role in mediating a cultural aesthetic of Muslim-ness within the public food culture of Cape Town and national food culture of South Africa more broadly (chapter Eight). Cultural performances of Muslim-ness indicate that Islam is not the only factor involved in Muslim politics of identity and difference. Following from this understanding, aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness in Cape Town should be understood and explored as a cultural style that is more than just a religious performance of faith.

Discussion and analysis presented throughout this ethnography sought to explore Muslim aesthetic politics of cultural difference and belonging with an aim to answering the question of how a sense of Muslim local, national, and transnational belonging intersects with the sense of Islamic identity, citizenship, and the imagining of post-apartheid rainbowism. To respond to this complex question, the ethnography

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[267] See, for example, the discussion around Muslim radio stations in chapter Four.

presented various ways in which Muslims position themselves within the multicultural context of Cape Town. This included both the nationalist accommodation of state politics (as in the case of MJC), and a critical stance regarding state politics (as in the case of IUC)—both of which are indicative of a Muslim aesthetic politics of the culturalisation of citizenship that also demonstrates an oscillating and intersectional multiple-belonging to an aesthetically-formed and imagined Muslim community in Cape Town, the South African nation, and the Muslim transnational *Ummah* (chapter Four).

Further, this ethnography also responded to the question of how Islamic and secular cultural forms intersect in the social imaginary of Muslims in Cape Town. The process and politics of the Muslim culturalisation of citizenship and various attempts to accommodate secular cultural values and the lifestyle of broader South African society alongside Islamic identity was a point of analysis seen perhaps most clearly in this ethnography in chapter Five. Analysing at length the artworks and artistic practice of Capetonian Muslim artists, chapter Five unpacked the variable sense of conflict, reconciliation, and resolution among research interlocutors who sought to accommodate secular cultural values alongside religious values—both in their personal lives and in their careers. Building on this discussion, the integration of secular style and cultural values and its relationship to Muslim culturalisation as South African citizens was further explored in chapter Six through the example of the emergent *hijab* fashions in Cape Town. Discussion of *hijab* showed Muslim endeavours to style their bodily formations in accordance with the secular fashion of the broader multicultural society of Cape Town whilst maintaining Islamic identification in the public sphere. The integration of Muslim cultural difference and national cultural practices was also seen, for instance, in the adoption of *boerewors* rolls that maintained an adherence to Islamic religious *halaal* regulation (chapter Eight). While scholars have pointed out the difficulties of reconciling national belonging and the politics of cultural difference (Becker 2010; Brown 2001), the examples presented in this thesis provide an insight into the Muslim aesthetic politics of reconciling cultural difference and national identification in the context of post-apartheid multiculturalism. This process is seen to draw lessons from other multicultural societies where Muslims are a minority (Bangstad 2007).

This thesis encouraged an understanding of the Muslim culturalisation of citizenship as more than a celebration of post-apartheid rainbowism. Rather, it described Muslims as active citizens who not only seek cultural rights, but actively express their eagerness to contribute to social problems facing the larger multicultural society of Cape Town. This was elucidated upon in the discussions of the nationalist position of the MJC (chapter Four), and in the Mustadafin Foundation's humanitarian contributions that are representative of a sense of national belonging (chapter Eight). This was also made clear in, for example, the analysis of the artwork of Hasan and Husain Essop, whose concerns are social crises affecting the broader society of Cape Town (chapter Five).

## 9.2 Diversity and Public Performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town

The discussion of public performances of Muslim-ness indicated that although post-apartheid cultural politics of rainbowism has enabled public performances of Muslim communitarian styles, it has also added a great deal of diversity that served to fragment the formation of a cohesive community of Muslims. This diversity was demonstrated by the fact that public performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town are not homogenous; rather, there is a display of ongoing contestation within the Muslim community over religious authority and the extent to which Muslims should accommodate state politics and secular values. As expanded upon in chapter Three, local Capetonian Muslims historically adhered to various Islamic schools of thought that differed slightly in their interpretations of Islamic conventions and practices. However, as was made clear in subsequent discussion (chapter Four), contemporary Muslim religious authorities in Cape Town are subject to increased fragmentation and diversification—something that can be seen in the contestation between 'conservative' and 'progressive' Muslim organisations (namely, the MJC and IUC). Further, the fragmentation of Muslim religious authority increased with the emergence of alternative approaches to Islamic practice that have in turn challenged existing interpretations and practices by allowing, for example, LGBT Muslims to claim a public Islamic identity.

The preceding chapters draw upon ethnography to make the argument that Muslim identity formations and collective constellations are unpredictable within the post-apartheid context. Muslim aesthetic formations and hybrid multiple identities and

belongings imply that none of the strategic public performances of Muslim-ness are homogeneous or free of contradiction. This complex and contested diversity in Muslim community of Cape Town recalls Abdulkader Tayob's (2002) argument that although 'a public image of the Muslim community is constructed . . . the idea of a Muslim community as a clearly identified social group is not in principle a social fiction, but it is an extremely complex construction' (1-2). The ethnographic analysis presented here makes clear that any generalisation of Muslims that frames them as one homogenous community is misleading.

As the discussion within this thesis has made clear, the Somali appearance in the cultural, social, and political landscape of Cape Town (and South Africa at large) has served to not only amplify the public visibility of Muslims across and within various urban, township, and rural areas, but has also added a great deal of diversity to aesthetic and sensorial performances of Muslim-ness. Further, these diverse aesthetics and performances of Muslim-ness point to the ways in which the everyday and staged performances of Somali and Capetonian Muslims are determined by their distinctive cultural localities (Appadurai 1996; Loimeier 2003). The ethnographic research presented here thus contributes to the argument presented by anthropologist Suzanne Brenner (2000), who notes that localities of Islamic religious culture provide a 'much broader and more inclusive conceptual frame of reference than "Islam" and include[s] all cultural manifestations and social and political institutions' (144). Further, Brenner argues that 'religious concepts and practices are constantly being transformed in relationship to social and political circumstances' (162).

The discussions presented in this thesis drew on interdisciplinary theorisations (chapter Two) that come together to explain the way in which performances of Muslim-ness mediate the aesthetic styles of an imagined community of Muslims in Cape Town. The ethnography explored everyday self-presentation of Islamic identity, as in the case of wearing *hijab*, and formal staged performances of Muslim-ness—such as the *Mawlid Al-Nabi* celebration, the moon sighting, and the broadcasts of Muslim radio stations. The discussion of this ethnography explored the performance of Muslim-ness as a sensorial embodiment of religious aesthetics.

*9.3 Sensorial Aesthetics of Muslim-ness*

This ethnography sought to explore the way in which aesthetic formations of Muslim-ness embody a sensorial affect that serves to form a personal sense of religious piety amongst Muslims, whilst at the same time serving to bind and bond Muslims together within a cultural style of an imagined community within Cape Town. To unpack this argument, the Muslim aesthetic politics of subject and community formation were explored through the discussion of the sensory experiences of wearing *hijab*, of hearing and reciting Islamic sounds, and of fasting. In turn, these aesthetic practices were shown to serve as practices that mediate sensorial embodiments of Islam that come together to authenticate a shared sense of sacredness that disciplines the self and forges a collective emotionality and attachment amongst culturally-diverse Muslims—thus lending them a sense of shared identity and common cultural style. As was made clear in the discussion presented in this ethnography, the formations of a Muslim religious self and sense of Muslim shared identity and common communitarian style was made authentic and lived as an everyday reality through religious bodily practices such as wearing *hijab*, fasting, and reciting and listening to Quranic recitations (chapters Five, Six, Seven, and Eight). These religious aesthetic practices evoke a sensory regime that serves as a Foucauldian 'technology of the self' that disciplines the body and mind.

This discussion thus made clear the significance of material culture in religion, and sought to contribute to a conceptualisation of religion as a lived reality through an ethnography that bridges an understanding of exterior embodiments of religion and their sensorial affect in subject and community formations. In other words, this ethnography argues that aesthetic formations of religious style serve as a politics of representation and public identification and as sensorial technology of the self implicated in community formation.

*9.3 The Formation of a Common Aesthetic of Islam*

This thesis directly addressed Muslim diversity in Cape Town and South Africa, and sought to establish which particular aesthetic forms constitute a Muslim politics of authenticity and the sensory experience of a shared religious style. That is to say that my research sought to discover whether there is a common aesthetic of Islam that signifies an Islamic style that is shared among Muslims in Cape Town—including

locals and refugee populations—as well a the larger Muslim *Ummah*. My research here made clear the ways in which diverse politics are manifest within public performances of Muslim-ness, thus providing evidence of a contradictory 'Islamic discursive tradition' in Cape Town (Asad 1993). Crucially, however, my ethnography went on to argue that the politics of authenticity within public performances of Muslim-ness rely on a performative common aesthetic of Islam. Performances of the common aesthetics of Islam include, for example, various visual manifestations (including *hijab*, mosque minarets, and *halaal* signage, as discussed in chapter Six), the sacredness of the Arabic language (discussed in chapter Seven), and the religious requirement that food be *halaal*—regardless of the ethnic origins of the dish (discussed in chapter Eight).

This understanding of the common aesthetic of Islam contributes to the anthropology of Islam by moving beyond Tala Asad's theorisation of Muslim community-making as based on an 'Islamic discursive tradition' toward a view that the making of an imagined Muslim community is reliant on shared sensory experience of performed common aesthetics. Importantly, Asad (1993) argues against an understanding of the Islamic tradition as a homogeneous discourse and emphasises the idea that Islamic discursive traditions differ within and across the various Muslim societies. Here, the notion of a common aesthetic of Islam provides a framework that moves beyond the acknowledgement of the particularity of 'discursive traditions' to map a universal sensory experience of Islam. The common aesthetics of Islam form a sense of commonality and trigger emotionality and sensory experiences of Islam beyond religious institutional settings. As has been shown in the analysis presented throughout, performances of the common aesthetics of Islam enact a sacred sense of Muslim-ness that embody the sensory experience of 'being' a Muslim, as well as forging a sense of belonging to the Muslim community in Cape Town and to the transnational Muslim *Ummah*.

My approach here thus builds upon research that investigates the complex construction of Muslim communities, their immeasurable diversity, and the multiple identity formations within them. More specifically, my approach draws upon Goolam Vahed's (2007) argument that 'South African Muslims' hold a common shared identity (119). To build his analysis, Vahed draws on Ralph Grillo's insight

regarding the 'transethnicisation' of the Muslim community. In exploring Islam and transnationalism in Western Europe, Grillo (2004) describes 'transethnicisation' as 'the emergence of an identification, covering all strands of Islam from the point of view of religious doctrine and practice, and national and ethnic origin. Muslim thus become a kind of "supertribal"' (886). Vahed (2007) and Grillo's (2004) conceptualisation of an imagined coming together of diverse groups of Muslims attests to the way in which Muslims could be understood within a universal common aesthetic of Islam. This ethnography sought to explore a common aesthetic of Islam with an aim to extend Vahed's argument of a shared Islamic identity among South African Muslims to include Somali refugees living in Cape Town.

### 9.5 Recommendations for Further Research

That having been said, although the scope of this ethnography allowed for a wide view of the spectrum of performances of Muslim-ness in Cape Town, the breadth of my research in this thesis may have served to limit the depth of individual ethnographic explorations throughout. Put more simply, each thematic chapter presented in this thesis could be argued to be in and of itself worthy of a separate dissertation. Further, one of the primary recommendations for further research to emerge from this thesis pertains to the issue of class. Although this thesis briefly discusses the impact of class difference upon performances of 'Muslim-ness' in Cape Town within various chapters, an extensive analysis of class as a social category a was not possible in an ethnography of this length. Finally, although my research here contributed vital scholarship to research on Muslims in South Africa through the discussion of public performances of Muslim-ness by more recent arrivals to South Africa (namely, Somalis), this too is worthy of a much more in-depth ethnography and separate research project. On this note, this ethnography puts forward the argument that Somalian lack of interest in publically performing their Islamic identity appears to indicate an absence of a sense of citizenship and belonging to South Africa's multiculturalism and its ensuing politics of cultural difference.

### 9.6 Conclusion of the Conclusion

Gabeba Baderoon's (2014) points out that 'today Muslims form an integral part of the post-apartheid nation and are visibly represented in politics, education, business,

the media, and art' (14)., Baderoon argues that South Africa's 'relationship with its Muslim citizens in many ways offers a model to the world, treating them as fully integrated members of a secular democracy that expressly protects religious expression' (159). Having witnessed and participated in formal and everyday performances of Muslim-ness, I have come to realise the pronounced public visibility of the Muslim community and its dynamic integration into the broader multicultural society of Cape Town. Thus, with Baderoon in mind, the ethnographic accounts and analysis presented here support two interrelated points: Firstly, that Muslim dynamic integration of local, national, and transnational belongings; their sense of active citizenship; and their integration into the broader society of Cape Town provides a model for Muslim minorities' negotiation of identity politics and position within a multicultural society. Secondly, this research effectively supports the notion that the South African cultural politics of rainbowism and emphasis on cultural rights provide a lesson regarding the extent to and ways in which other post-colonial multicultural states might integrate minority groups as equal citizens.

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