

The (Dis)Continuity of the Johannesburg West Dutch Reformed Church

A Study of the Impact and Significance of the Conversion
of a former Dutch Reformed Church into a Mosque

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January 2013

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A dissertation submitted towards the completion of a Masters of Philosophy in the
Conservation of the Built Environment

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how cultural significance has changed through the reuse (conversion) of an existing religious building to perform a new religious function. The conversion of the former Johannesburg West *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church) to become the Masjid-ul-Islam is used as a vehicle for this study. The history of the Afrikaner and South African Muslim communities and their architecture is explored as well as the history of the changes to the building. The post-colonial concept of hybridity is used to understand the new identity of the building. This new identity determined as being hybrid. Concepts of memory and its use in the construction of identity are further examined with the former church being understood as a site of memory. Through the personal perceptions of significance expressed by both the mosque and church communities the change in significance is explored. It is determined that the building is the site of hybrid memory, with multiple layers of significance which have created a sense of continuity for both communities creating a sense of place and continuity in the post-Apartheid city. The building has come to be a symbol of the changes that have occurred in post-Apartheid South Africa through its layering of history, sense of inclusivity and regeneration.

DECLARATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the completion of this dissertation and master's degree:

My amazing wife Yasmin for all her input, love and support, all while completing her own master's dissertation.

My parents and extended family for their support encouragement

My supervisor and co-supervisor, Prof Stephen Townsend and Prof Kathy Munro

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

TERMS

(Bewley 2008, Maqsood 2003)

<i>adhan</i>	call to prayer
<i>Allah</i>	Arabic word for God
<i>apartheid</i>	term developed by the NGK to describe the policy of segregation and separate development
<i>Apartheid</i>	legislated policy of segregation employed by the nationalist government post 1948
<i>ghusl</i>	complete bath act of ablution required to achieve ritual purity before prayer
<i>hadith</i>	sayings or account of the actions of the Prophet
<i>haram</i>	forbidden
<i>Haram</i>	a sacred precinct– usually the covered space/hall of a mosque
<i>Imam</i>	leader congregation
<i>jamaat khana</i>	prayer hall. All five daily prayers are performed in a mosque but not in a <i>Jamaat Khana</i> .
<i>Jummah</i>	friday
<i>Ka'ba</i>	cube shaped shrine in Mecca
<i>khutba</i>	sermon
<i>madrassah</i>	religious school often associated with a mosque
<i>masjid</i>	mosque
<i>mihrab</i>	niche showing the direction of Mecca.

<i>minaret</i>	tower for the call to prayer
<i>minbar</i>	pulpit for sermon
<i>muezzin</i>	person who performs the call to prayer
<i>namaaz</i>	daily prayer
<i>qibla</i>	direction of Mecca
<i>sadr</i>	wall, at right orientated at right angles to the direction of Mecca, to which congregant line up when praying
<i>sahn</i>	courtyard
<i>salah</i>	daily prayer
<i>sujud</i>	prostration in prayer
<i>tahara</i>	state of ritual purity
<i>wudu</i>	act of ablution required to achieve ritual purity before prayer

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

NGK	<i>Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk</i> (Dutch Reformed Church)
NHK	<i>Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk</i>
OVS	<i>Oranje-Vrystaat</i> (Orange Free State)
VOC	<i>Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie</i> (Dutch East India Company)
ZAR	<i>Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek</i> (Transvaal)

Certain terms are used in the context of this dissertation which have derogatory and defamatory contemporary meaning. They are used to accurately represent the prejudices and discrimination of their specific historical contexts. Their use in this historical context does not endorse or negate their meaning.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In April 2012 an article appeared in the Johannesburg daily newspaper, *The Star*, headlined “Holy War for One of City’s Oldest Churches” (Molosankwe 2012a). In the article, and in further articles published in other newspapers, online and on talk radio, the church was spoken of as the latest “casualty” of the migration of Afrikaners from the Johannesburg inner city suburbs, the NGK (*Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk*) being “lambasted” by an independent evangelical Christian bishop, who had been renting the building, for allowing the building to be sold to a “foreign religion” (SAPA 2012). The building in question is the former Langlaagte NGK, reputedly one of the city’s oldest, completed in 1902. The ‘uproar’ was as much about its sale as the purchasers, the Islamic Academy, who intended to use the building as an educational institution (Molosankwe 2012b).

In the post-apartheid city of Johannesburg traditional legislated boundaries between different races, and by implication certain religions, have been removed. The western inner city suburbs of Johannesburg have traditionally had a working class, white, largely Afrikaans identity. With the repeal of the Group Areas act in 1991 and the advent of democracy in 1994 the previously fixed identities and demographics of these communities, and communities throughout the city, began to change, driven now primarily by economics instead of politics. Change in population and demographics are a normal part of a city’s growth and evolution. In South Africa the stasis, due to the artificial and seemingly unchanging nature of suburban life in place under apartheid law, makes the contrast with post-apartheid change even greater.

While the process of “greying” (where non-white residents started illegally to move into then white suburbs due to a shortage of housing) had been happening in the area since the 1970’s (Beavon 2004:214-215) newfound equality, economic and social freedom led to more rapid and more visible change. In the western inner city suburbs an Indian, largely Muslim, population started replacing the existing white Afrikaans community. As the one population group physically and economically displaced the other institutions, such as churches, became redundant.

The sale of the Langlaagte NGK building is an example of this redundancy. The existing NGK community had become too small to support the cost of maintaining the building. The resulting ‘uproar’ could be interpreted as a reaction to the apparent ‘threat’ that the changes in the broader community place on Afrikaner heritage and identity with the building being seen as a physical anchor or mnemonic device for this identity.

1.2 AIM AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The Langaagte NGK is, post 1994, one of many former churches in the western inner city suburbs to be sold for reuse (conversion) for different religious uses. The aim of this study is to look at the effects that these changes of religious use have on heritage, significance and identity to the communities involved and to explore what these may mean for the post-Apartheid city. The vehicle for this exploration will be the case study of the conversion of the former Johannesburg West NGK building.



Figure 1 The western inner city suburbs of Johannesburg showing the location of the former Johannesburg West NGK (After Google Earth 2012).

The Johannesburg West NGK was the first NGK building in the western inner city suburbs of Johannesburg to be sold post 1994. After its closure in 1994 and subsequent sale in 1995 the building has been converted for use as a mosque, the Masjid-ul-Islam. This is one of many new mosques that have emerged to serve the local, largely Indian, Muslim community.

The study aims to demonstrate how the significance of the former Johannesburg West NGK has changed and evolved through its conversion to become the Masjid-ul-Islam. Through this the potential value and impact that such post-Apartheid or post-colonial change has will be considered within the context of Johannesburg as a post-Apartheid city. The examination of the impact of the change of significance on the micro, the former church building and its old and new congregations, will be used as a means for gaining insight into the impact of similar change on the macro, the city.

In order to examine changes in significance it is necessary to explore the identities of the communities who are impacted by this change. An introduction to their social, politic, religious and architectural histories is used to gain insight into their meaning(s) of significance. This history provides a background of where these communities come from in order to allow for an assessment of how they have changed and evolved. The post-colonial discourse around the concept of hybridity and the hybrid becomes an important means for analysing this change to the physical and social context as well as of the building examined in this study.

Hybridity speaks of the emergence of a new form of identity. The concept of identity is further explored by looking at how it is coupled with the act of memory, a powerful tool in its own formation. Modern society is accused of being obsessed with memory. This is, as suggested by French historian Pierre Nora (1989:7), because memory is under threat with the pace and rapid change of contemporary society being the cause. It is from this threat that the 'site of memory' emerge as a means of anchoring memory. These discourses of hybridity and memory with their resultant identities will be used to demonstrate the nature of the changes and significance of the former Johannesburg West NGK / Masjid-ul-Islam.

Looking at the historical continuities as well as discontinuities, be these physical or social, the study aims to explore the new hybrid identities and cultural significances that have and are emerging.

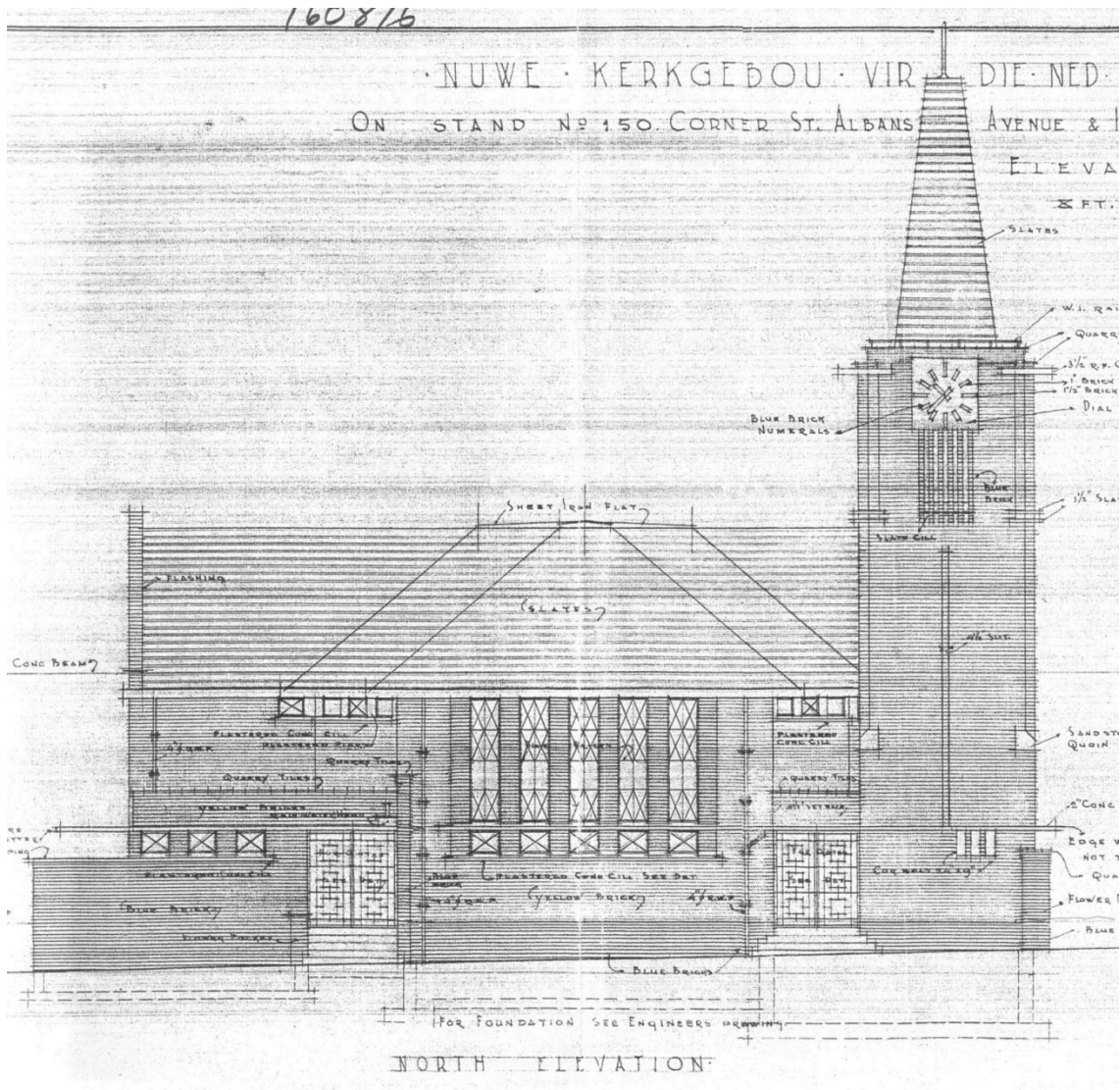


Figure 2 North Elevation of the Johannesburg West NGK, Erf 150 Mayfair West. Drawing number 18/3, Geers & Geers Architects, 1940. City of Johannesburg planning Archives.

1.3 THE QUESTIONS TO BE EXAMINED IN THE STUDY

The questions of this study, while specifically directed at the case study of the Johannesburg West NGK, aim to be a means of gaining insight into the changes of significance within post-Apartheid Johannesburg. The main question of the study is:

How has cultural significance changed through the reuse (conversion) of an existing religious building to perform new religious functions in post-Apartheid Johannesburg?

This question is supported by various sub questions which are more specific to the case study and aim to enrich and expand the understanding of the main question of the study. The sub questions are as follows:

What is the cultural significance of the Mayfair West NGK now that it is no longer used as a church? What is the church's policy and stance on this versus popular sentiment?

Is the reuse (conversion) of the disused church building by another religious group the best (or most desirable) compatible reuse?

Is the type of reuse important for the retention of the cultural significance of the building?

Does the change in religious identity mean a loss of historical meaning and therefore significance?

Is the result of the conversion perceived to be richer in meaning because of the layering of historical religious function?

What does the reuse and appropriation of spaces (and possibly identities) mean in the context of the city?

Does a new hybrid identity for the city emerge?

1.4 INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

The literature used in the study can be broadly divided into two categories. The first of these is literature that deals with the understanding of the historical background of the NGK, of Islam and the social and political context of the built environment in South Africa and Johannesburg. The second category of literature deals with the theoretical background through which the historical background and interviews undertaken are interpreted. These categories are explored in more detail below.

The history of the NGK, the Afrikaner people and South African politics are closely intertwined. The history NGK therefore traverses a large body of knowledge. Herman Giliomee's vast and detailed history of the Afrikaner people, 'The Afrikaners' (2003) forms an authoritative base text for this understanding. This is further supplemented by texts that focus specifically on the history of the NGK. These include apartheid era church endorsed publications such as Krüger's 'Lest We Forget' (first published in 1969 with a revised edition published in 1986) as well as numerous other texts published post 1994. Of these post-Apartheid texts the collection found in 'Perspectives on Christianity: 1948+50 Years. Theology, Apartheid and Church: Past Present and Future' (2001) provides various authors (Lombaard, Lubbe, Meiring, Pillay, Rossouw) who present a self-critical analysis of the history of the NGK, and of South African churches in general, broken down by era as well as thematically.

For the understanding of the architectural principles and development of NGK architecture Schalk Le Roux's paper '*Die Soeke van Drie Argitekte na 'n Planvorm vir Afrikaanse Gereformeerde Kerkbou*' (The search of three architects for a plan form for the Afrikaans reformed church building) in The South African Journal of Cultural History (2008) is a valuable primary text. This is supplemented by texts that give additional detailed information including Fisher's (1998) article 'The Third Vernacular' in 'Architecture of the Transvaal' which gives a broad overview of contemporaneous architectural thinking; Hammond's (1960) 'Liturgy and Architecture' for insight into contemporaneous international thinking on church design and Vermeulen's (1999) biography of architect Gerard Moerdijk, '*Man en Monument: Die Lewe en Werk van Gerard Moerdijk*' (Man and Monument: the Life and Work of Gerard Moerdijk) for detailed information on the architectural thought of this influential figure in NGK architecture.

For chapter three Cajee's paper 'Islamic History & Civilisation in South Africa: The Impact of Colonialism, Apartheid, and Democracy (1652-2004)' provides a comprehensive history of the religion in South Africa. This history is supplemented by Davids's (1994) Article on three hundred years of Islam in the Cape (300 Years – The Cape Muslims and Cape Architecture) and Giliomee's (2003) references, from 'The Afrikaners', on the influence of Islam on the Afrikaans language.

The understanding of the principles of Islamic architecture are structured around information gathered from Davies's broad work on religious architecture, 'Temples Churches and Mosques' (1982), as well as Küban's two volume study 'Muslim Religious Architecture' (1974 & 1985). This provides an understanding of the basic principles of Islamic architecture and the functional requirements of a mosque as well as the history of the development of Islamic architecture in different cultures. This forms a base from which the discussion on Islamic architecture in South Africa (with specific focus on the Transvaal) emerges. For this section Schalk Le Roux's study 'The Transvaal Mosque – Towards a Theory

of Precedent' (1998) forms an important base text. Current issues in Mosque architecture specific to the post-Apartheid city are then looked at with Tayob's paper 'The Mosque after the Group Areas Act' (1994), Le Roux's article 'Islam and Conservation: The Juma Masgied as a Case study' (1994) as well as Mayet's 'The City Room: Kerk Street Jumah Masgied' (1994) (which can be seen as a response to some of the issues raised by Le Roux in his article) support the base text.

The exploration of the context, history and architecture of the Johannesburg West NGK makes use of historical information provided by various sources. Giliomee's biography of the Afrikaner people (2003) is supplemented by Lubbe's 'The Storey of 1948' (2001) to form a contextual background. Anna Smith's highly comprehensive 'Johannesburg Street Names' (1971), which provides more insightful information than its title suggests, adds local historical context. This is followed by information on the architects and architecture of the Johannesburg West NGK provided via the Artefact website and Clive Chipkin's 'Johannesburg Style: Architecture and Society 1880s – 1960s' (1993). The changes to the context and community that eventually lead to the closure of the church and the establishment of the Masjid-ul-Islam make use of the apartheid era 'The Greying of Johannesburg: Racial Desegregation in the Johannesburg Area' by Pickard-Cambridge of the South African Institute of Race Relations. This is balanced with, amongst others, Keith Beavon's 2004 book, 'Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City' which provides a detailed historical account of the events.

Homi Bhabha's post-colonial concept of hybridity is explored using his text 'Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences' supported by AlSayyad's exploration of Bhabha's ideas in 'Hybrid Urbanism' (2001). These two texts form the base for the understanding of the concept of hybridity. They are supported by Ashcroft *et al*'s general commentary on post-colonial theory and hybridity as presented in their 2006 edition of 'The Post Colonial Studies Reader'. Further texts by Holst Peterson and Rutherford, Tiffin, Rushdie and Young (2006) add to and support the base understanding of the subject.

In chapter six the concept of memory, how memory is crucial to the formation of identity, and the memory culture of contemporary society has been explored. The works on memory of French historian Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire' (1989), and German born cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen, 'Twilight Memories: Marking time in a Culture of Amnesia' (1995) and 'Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia' (2000), form base texts for this exploration. This is supplemented by the works of AlSayyad (Hybrid Urbanism, 2001), Crinson (Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City, 2005), Olick (Collective Memory, 2008), Rushdie (Imaginary Homelands, 2006) and others. These texts supplement the primary texts with specific focused additional information or conceptual approaches to the concepts of memory and identity.

1.5 THE APPROACH AND METHOD OF THE ENQUIRY

This dissertation follows a case study approach. The localised study of the Johannesburg West NGK / Masjid-ul-Islam will be used as a means of exploring the evolving cultures of the two religious groups and the transitions occurring in their social and built environment. This creates a foundation for the examination of the effects of the conversion of the building on its cultural significance.

The method of enquiry is divided into two parts. The first is a comprehensive historical background study which acts as an introduction to the communities. This focuses on the social, political and architectural histories of the NGK and Islam in South Africa. The unique architectural styles of each religion that have evolved in South Africa are then explored as responses to their histories. This is further supported by a theoretical understanding of the concepts of hybridity, identity and memory.

The second part of the method of enquiry focuses on a series of interviews (see appendix B for a list of persons interviewed). The aim of the interviews was to gain personal insights into perceptions of significance and the impact of change on the individuals and the community. They are also a tool for exploring the different communities' perceptions of each other and their values.

Questions of significance and in particular personal perceptions of significance in the face of change make it important to interview persons directly involved with the building in both its current and past use. The persons interviewed are therefore equally divided between members of the former church and current mosque congregations. The limits of the dissertation, being only for 60 credits and spanning over a total of six months part time from inception to completion, have restricted the number of persons that it has been possible to interview as well as the overall scope of the study.

In total seven persons were interviewed (see Appendix B for a list of persons interviewed). Due to these limitations and as a means of gaining as varied and balanced a range of opinions as possible interviews were split evenly between church and mosque communities (three persons each), with the seventh interviewee being the Deputy Director for Immovable Heritage for the City of Johannesburg, Eric Itzkin. The composition of the people interviewed from the church and the mosque is as follows. For each group a person in a leadership position was interviewed. For the NGK this was the last *dominee* (minister) of the Johannesburg West NGK, Hennie Van Rooyen. For the mosque the current, and founding, chairman of the mosque committee, Akhtar Thokan. The remaining interviews for each community were made up of active members of the congregations.

The NGK interviewees were determined by approaching the national Synod of the NGK who were able to provide contact details for *Dominee* van Rooyen. He in turn provided contact details for former members of the Johannesburg West congregation. The mosque interviewees were contacted through a colleague who is a member of the congregation.

Prior to the interviews all interviewees were contacted telephonically. The nature of the study was explained to them and they were given the option to participate. Thereafter an interview date was set at a location of their desire. At the interview an information and consent form was given to all participants (see Appendix A). This further outlined the nature of the study. At this point interviewees gave their informed consent to participate. They were given the option of remaining anonymous which they all declined. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured conversational manner with questions (see Appendix C) used to guide, but not restrict the responses of the interviewee. It was decided not to electronically record the interviews in the interest of keeping them informal. Notes were taken and a typed transcript produced. This was made available to the interviewees.

The information gathered from these interviews has then interrogated through the lens of the theoretical and historical discourse of hybridity, memory and identity as well as the historical background explored. This has been used as a means of gaining insight into the responses of the interviewees.

1.6 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The chapters of this dissertation first introduce the historical and theoretical background. This is followed by the results and interpretation of the interviews using the historical and theoretical background introduced previously as a tool for analysis.

Chapter two introduces the NGK. The first part of the chapter details the history of the NGK in South Africa and its relationship to Afrikaner society and politics. This is followed in the second part of the chapter by an analysis of the development and significance of NGK architecture. Chapter three similarly introduces Islam. The first part of the chapter details the history of Islam in South Africa. The second part details the origin and functional requirements of mosque architecture. This is then followed by an analysis of the mosque architecture that emerged in South Africa with particular reference to that of Johannesburg and the Transvaal.

Chapter four introduces the case study, the Johannesburg West NGK / Masjid-ul-Islam. This chapter looks firstly at the historical context in which the Johannesburg West NGK emerges before looking at the church building itself. The study of the church building looks at its context and history. This is followed by an analysis of its architecture in terms of the NGK

architectural precedents outlined in the second part of chapter 2. The understanding of how the context and community around the building has changed and evolved is explored in the section titled 'The "Greying" of Johannesburg and the End of Apartheid'. This forms the introduction for the current functioning of the building as the Masjid-ul-Islam. The conversion of the former church building into a mosque is then examined looking at the functional requirements and architectural precedents for mosque architecture outlined in chapter 3.

Chapter five and chapter six look at the post-colonial concept of hybridity followed by an understanding of memory and identity as discourses. These concepts are explored so as to become tools for the exploration and interrogation of the nature of the building, of its significance and of changes to both the building as well as its communities.

Chapter seven introduces the findings of the interviews, looking at the perceptions of significance of both the former Johannesburg West NGK as well as current Masjid-ul-Islam congregations. This is followed by an analysis of the outcomes of the interviews in relation to the historical and architectural background explored previously as well as through the discourse of hybridity, memory and identity investigated in chapters five and six.

The conclusion, chapter eight, looks at the findings in relation to the research questions.

CHAPTER 2 THE NGK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of the NGK in South Africa is closely linked to that of the Afrikaner people, the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism and Apartheid. An introduction to this intertwined political, social and religious history is necessary in order to allow for proper understanding and interrogation of the significance of NGK architecture, with particular reference to the case study of the former Mayfair West NGK.

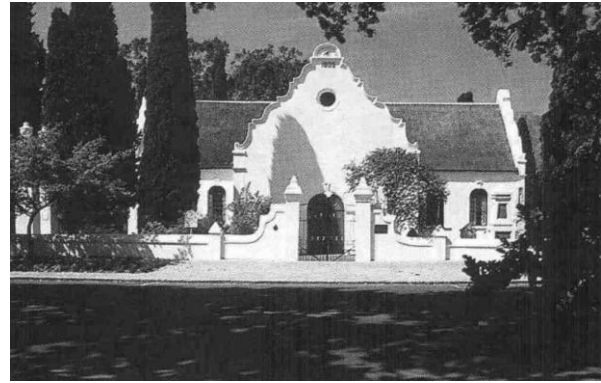
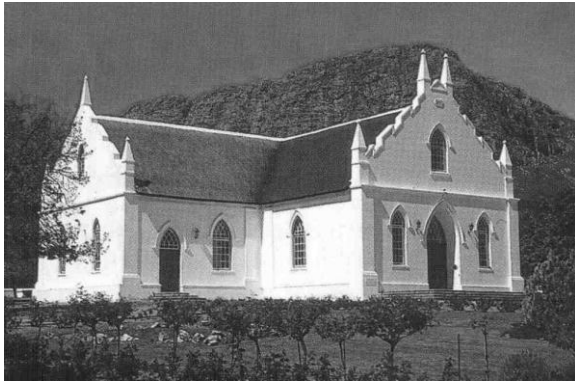
2.2 HISTORY OF THE NGK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Early History

The Dutch settlers who arrived in the Cape in 1652 brought with them their reformed Calvinist religious beliefs in the form of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK). The refreshment station that was established at the Cape, and later the Cape colony, was a commercial venture of the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (the Dutch East India Company, VOC) (Giliomee 2003:5).

The relationship between the church (the NGK) and the state (the VOC) followed the pattern widely accepted in Europe at the time, that of *cuius region, eius religio* (Pillay 2001: 53), meaning “whose realm, his religion”. This principle was adopted in Europe in the sixteenth century to end post reformation violence between Protestants and Catholics (Wikipedia 2012). The intention of this principle was that the unity of the state would be confirmed by a unity in religious belief. The NGK was therefore, for more than a century, not only the official church in the Cape but the only allowable form of religious practice. All other religions were forced underground out of public view. This religious suppression only ended in 1795 with the first British occupation of the Cape (1795 – 1803) (Pillay 2001:53). In addition to this, the early NGK ministers were all employees of the VOC and the church expected to follow the capitalist imperative of the company (Giliomee 2003:5).

The combination of “capitalism and Calvinism” (ibid) that the NGK represented became very powerful for the identity of the settlers. The church influenced education, insisting that members be able to read and write before being confirmed (ibid:20), as well as politics. Being Christian, and in the early Cape colony therefore a member of the NGK, meant “being civilised”, with this often being used to justify a sense of entitlement and European domination (ibid:41).



Figures 3 & 4 Early Cape Dutch Style NGK buildings, Left - Franschhoek (1847), Right – Paarl, 1805. (Hofmeyr 2002:55)

After the Peace of Amiens (1802) the Cape was returned from British to Dutch rule. Under the Batavian Republic religious tolerance officially arrived in the colony, with the Church ordinance of 1804 giving legal protection to “all religious associations which for the furtherance of virtue and good conduct respect a supreme being” (Pillay 2001:56). This was not necessarily a popular decision. Krüger (1984:4), in his official church history “Lest We Forget”, notes somewhat regretfully that the church itself had very little say in the passing of this law.

In 1806 the Cape once again returned to British rule. The British, who brought a multitude of different religious beliefs with them (Irish Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians, Anglican English) (Pillay 2001:56) soon realised the importance and influence of the NGK on the Dutch colonists and therefore supported it financially until 1875 (Giliomee 2003:199 & 208). This was an astute political decision. Many of the ministers “felt obliged to defend the government” when faced by criticism within their congregations, even after the church was given “virtual self-government” by the state in 1843 (Krüger 1984:5).

Although there was officially no distinction between different races in the NGK a pattern emerged whereby different communities worshipped separately (Giliomee 2003:123). In 1857 the Synod of the NGK reluctantly buckled to the pressure that was placed on it by many congregants and agreed to make it church policy to hold separate church services for different racial groups. This concession was made “for the sake of the weakness of some” members, a qualification on the part of the church that seems to acknowledge no theological justification for the action (Rossouw 2001:95). While originally seen as a temporary measure it eventually led to the establishment of *dogter* (daughter) churches for different races, separate from the white *moeder* (mother) church but still falling under its control and influence. With this practice the NGK became one of the first places to practice *apartheid*, long before it became institutionalised in the mid twentieth century (ibid).

The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism

From 1836 onwards many Afrikaners living in the Cape began moving north into the uncolonised interior of South Africa. This migration, largely due to dissatisfaction with the British government in the Cape, was an attempt by the *voortrekkers* to regain self-determination over themselves, their community and culture. These *Boers* (Afrikaans for farmers and a collective term for the *trekker* community) largely ended up settling in what would later become the Boer republics of the *Oranje-Vrystaat* (OVS, Orange Free State), the *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR, Transvaal) (Krüger 1984:5) as well as in Natal which would be annexed by the British in 1843.

The Cape based NGK, still under financial support of the British government, was unsympathetic towards the settlers “regarding the *trek* as an act of disobedience towards the colonial Government”. The trekkers themselves however still regarded themselves as members of the NGK and welcomed NGK ministers from the Cape who visited the OVS and ZAR (ibid:5 & 6).



Figure 5 *Nagmaal (Holy Communion) pre 1900, Church Square, Pretoria*
The memory of the Netherlands Digital Archive
Photograph 86.8, Zuid-Afrikahuis Archive

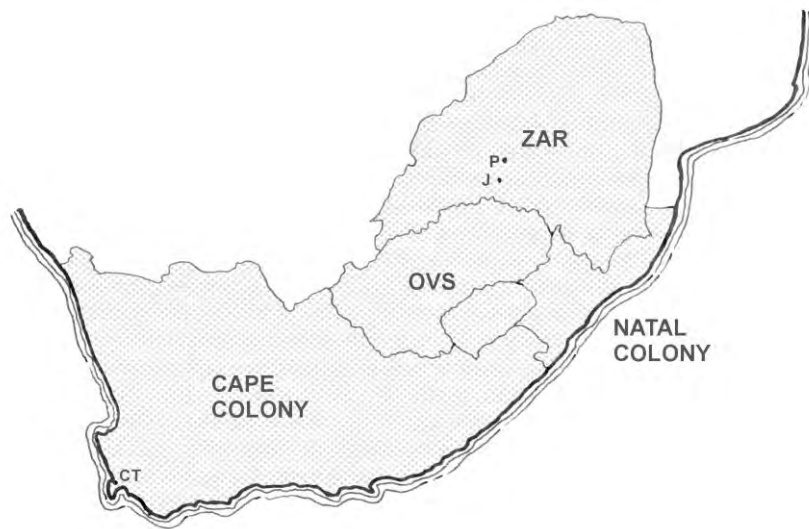


Figure 6 Map showing the ZAR, OVS, Cape and Natal Colonies
(After Itzkin 2001:1)

Initially there were struggles within the NGK in the ZAR, OVS and Natal as to whether they should fall under the jurisdiction of the Cape synod of the NGK. The final result of this was the formation of separate synods of the NGK in Natal, the OVS as well as the ZAR (known in the ZAR and later the Transvaal as the *Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk*). In addition to the different synods of the NGK two additional independent Afrikaner reformed churches emerged, namely the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (NHK) and the *Gereformeerde (or Dopper) Kerk*. They emerged as breakaways from the NGK and were largely located in the more conservative ZAR (Krüger 1984:7-11, Giliomee 2003:456).

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century saw the rise of a large poor, newly urbanised, Afrikaner community. This community congregated both in Pretoria and Johannesburg in search of work. The emergence of this community was due to many factors. In the late nineteenth century there was a rise in the price of wheat and dairy products due to increased demand. With a limited amount of arable land, many farmers in South Africa responded by consolidating into larger commercial enterprises (ibid:320). Farming methods among the Afrikaner farmers until this time were generally poor and unsustainable, often leading to the degradation of their land. The traditional subsistence farming methods practiced did not adapt too well to market orientated commercial farming and a cash economy. Slowly farmers became more indebted to traders and, unable to make ends meet, had to sell off their land. To compound these already difficult circumstances was the ZAR's Roman Dutch inheritance law. This law required that a farmer's property, on his death, be divided equally among his children. Farms therefore became smaller and smaller in size to the point where they were often no longer able to support the farmer and his family. It was a "natural and inevitable process" (ibid:320 & 321). The Anglo Boer South African War (1899 – 1902) exacerbated this trend with the British 'scorched earth' policy destroying farms and displacing even more farmers and their families.

Following the loss of their land and livelihoods a process of rapid, and often traumatic, urbanisation occurred. The new arrivals were forced into an environment where potential employers spoke a foreign language, English, where their lack of formal education made it difficult for them to gain employment and to be integrated into a cash economy for which they were unprepared (ibid:323).

Coming to Jo'burg

“Man, I felt like a rabbit thrown into a cage full of dogs. You don't know which side to run to. Wherever you look, there are people... I wasn't used to so many people... It was a frightening discovery to walk in the streets... I was far removed from the open plains of the Free state, and to be in Johannesburg was a terrible thing.”

Hendrik Hoffman, arrived in Johannesburg in 1933 (Callinicos 1993:10)

The situation was deeply concerning for the NGK. From the 1880's the NGK in the ZAR was already commenting on the “urban problem” that was emerging in the working class western suburbs of both Pretoria and Johannesburg (ibid:316). At the same time in 1880 the church also started to organise separate church structures for different communities and races (Rossouw 2001:96). Church policy at the time was that charitable work should not only help the emerging white poor but should be directed towards all races. With time however the charitable focus of the white *moeder* church would focus only on white Afrikaner poverty (Giliomee 2003:317). The government was similarly concerned about white poverty. While people of all races were impoverished and lived in slums, the ‘poor whites’ still had the vote. It was feared that their living in close proximity to poor people of other races would lead to the development of “social intimacy” and eventually “eliminate race consciousness” (Beavon 2004:110).



Figure 7 The Abraham Kriel Orphanage, set up by the founder of the Langlaagte NGK to assist with the relief of white poverty (Kalaway 1986:86)

The church saw the rise of poverty, urbanisation and the post war British governments “vigorous policy of Anglicisation”, including the banning of Afrikaans from schooling and the public sector (Rossouw 2001:96) as a threat to both itself and to Afrikaner culture. “Being Christian and speaking Afrikaans was central to *Boer* [Afrikaans] identity” (Giliomee 2003:269). The battle against Anglicisation was particularly fierce in the *uitlander* (foreign) city of Johannesburg (ibid:378). The response to this threat on language and culture, as well as the post war humiliation felt by many Afrikaners, would in the beginning of the twentieth century give rise to Afrikaner nationalism.

Their besieged language became a rallying point. It was seen as the core of their “identity, pride and dignity” (Rossouw 2001:97). At the centre of this rise in nationalist sentiment was the NGK which feared that a loss of the Afrikaans language among its constituents would result in a decline in faith (Giliomee 2003:384). “The church became their fortress against what they experienced as a total onslaught on their identity”, with Afrikaners so strongly identifying with the church that “it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between the NGK and the Afrikaner nation” (Rossouw 2001:97). As Anglican Bishop Nathaniel Merriman (1809 – 1882) noted “in their church lies the salt of the Afrikaner character. Many things they lack...but faith they certainly have and that keeps them strong and sound” (Giliomee 2003:384). Strong nationalist and religious themes occurred in the works Afrikaner writers of this period. These included the idea of the Afrikaners as “God’s chosen people” and a religious interpretation of their history.



*Figure 8
National Party Prime Minister
and ordained NGK minister D.F.
Malan (Hofmeyr 2002:188)*

Politicians also began to realise the power of the NGK regarding it, as early as 1910, as the most important and influential institution amongst Afrikaners (ibid). Future National Party Prime Minister DF Malan, at a church meeting in Bloemfontein in 1915, stated that the NGK had a “special calling to the Afrikaner people”. It was the duty of the church “to be national in character and to watch over our particular national interests, to teach the people to see in their history and origin the hand of God, and furthermore to cultivate among Afrikaner

people the awareness of a national calling and destiny, in which the spiritual, moral and material progress and strength of a people is laid up” (Ibid: 385). As Giliomee (2003:385) notes Malan was very aware that for a nationalist movement to succeed the members of that movement had to believe that the community to which they belonged was unique. With this in mind he noted that the church held the Afrikaner community together socially. “The church was the means by which God guided and forged our people and our church is still the guarantee of our nationality” (ibid).

In 1929, in a speech by NGK minister Rev J C Du Plessis, the term *apartheid* was first recorded in use. The term means separating, and was a response on the part of the church to the perceived threat on Afrikaner culture (Giliomee 2003:454 & 458) and as a means of dealing with the different population groups that existed within South Africa (Lubbe 2001a:1). The claim of the church was that “it was in accordance with God’s will that different races and *volke* [cultural groups] exist” (Giliomee 2003:463). This policy was justified through a “pro-*apartheid* reading” of the bible (particularly Old Testament stories such as that of the tower of Babel (ibid: 620)) which, as noted by Lombaard (2001:71), appeals to the sensibilities of an intimidated minority with a claim to power. At the time there were some disputes within the NGK as to the specific scriptural interpretations justifying the policy but a broad consensus on the “principle of *apartheid*” (Lubbe 2001b: 14 & 26).



Figure 9 *The Great Trek centenary celebrations in 1938 became a focus for Afrikaner nationalist identity. Ox-wagons were driven from Cape Town along the routes taken by the trekkers. “Passionate enthusiasm seized Afrikaans speaking South Africa” with the arrival of the wagons in small towns drawing excited crowds (Callinicos 1987:224).*

While, as noted by Giliomee (2003:459), the NGK was unlikely to condone blatant racism, its policy of *apartheid* opened the door to nationalist politicians and academics. In 1947, Malan, who would be elected prime minister a year later, stated that “it was not the state but the church who took the lead with *apartheid*. The state followed the principle laid down by the church” (ibid 460). Proposals for separate education, already practiced by the NGK, and separate suburbs, which the NGK felt were necessary to keep the “community together and for the dignity of poorer members”, were all church policies or proposals adopted by the nationalist government (ibid).

Apartheid emerged as a means to “comfort” a threatened Afrikaner community. This “pastoral *apartheid*”, as Rossouw (2001:99) describes it, changed as it became more political. Apartheid was “no longer a means to an end but became an end in itself”.

The NGK and Apartheid

Post 1948 the NGK was the most powerful religious body in the country. The church’s “policy” of *apartheid* had become government policy and many of its members held powerful government positions, with the first Apartheid era prime minister, DF Malan, an ordained NGK minister (Lubbe 2001c:29). Many Apartheid era laws, such as the prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, the Immorality Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, were directly motivated by, or in the case of education at least influenced by the policy of the NGK (Giliomee 2003). The close relationship between the NGK and the nationalist state provided “a theological basis for Apartheid ideology” (Pillay 2001:60) creating moral justification for the state’s actions.

From very early on there were warnings sounded from within the NGK against a government which had too much power. There was fear that,

“when a church is silent when the sovereignty of family life, the practice of art and science, trade and commerce is violated by the state, such a church will have no moral ground for a forceful defence when its own independence and freedom is affected” (Lubbe 2001c:30).

In 1960, as a response to the Sharpeville Massacre earlier that year, the World Council of Churches sent a delegation to meet with representatives from various churches in Cottesloe, a suburb of Johannesburg to the east of Brixton and Mayfair West. The NGK, a member of the World Council of Churches, was among those in attendance. At the Cottesloe Consultation, as it became known, a number of recommendations were agreed upon. Three of these were very contentious:

- That every person had the right “to own the land where he is domiciled and to participate in the government of his country” (Giliomee 2003:527).
- That there were no biblical grounds for the banning of mixed marriages (ibid).
- That the church could not discriminate on the grounds of race.

The agreement of the NGK and the NHK caused a “crisis of confidence for Afrikaner nationalists” (ibid). The actions of the churches were met with strong opposition from the Afrikaner community, press and government. As Lubbe (2001c:39) notes the church had stepped out of religion into the area of politics. The Prime Minister, HF Verwoed, strongly urged the churches to distance themselves from the recommendations, an action covertly supported by the Afrikaner *Broederbond*, resulting in the withdrawal and rejection of the recommendations by all of the NGK and NHK signatories by the end of 1961 (Giliomee 2003:528, Lubbe 2001c:39). The two churches also withdrew from the World Council of Churches. Anti-Apartheid activist Beyers Naude, the then leader of the Transvaal NGK, was unable to reconcile this decision with his faith, which eventually led to him leaving the NGK.

The power relationship between the NGK and the state had shifted. Giliomee (2003:559) notes that the unspoken view of the NGK at the time was that Afrikaner, and therefore its own, survival depended on the continued existence of Apartheid, and as long as the church endorsed it the people would follow. The church views were ‘kept’ in line with those of the states until the 1980’s.

The NGK faced a key turning point happened in 1983. The Cape synod declared that faith was the only basis for membership of the church (Lubbe 2001c:46) with the general synod of the now unified NGK opening the church to all races in 1986 (Giliomee 2003:620). Individual churches and congregants were not always in agreement with the synod’s decisions and many broke away from the church after 1986 (Lubbe 2001c:47).

In 1990, after the nationalist government’s unbanning of political parties and releasing of political prisoners, the church “confessed”, accepting responsibility for the injustices and suffering under Apartheid. It accepted that it had made a mistake in its biblical justification of Apartheid. At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings the NGK representatives admitted that the church had actively participated in the Apartheid state and that many of its members were directly involved in the government (Giliomee 2003:621, Meiring 2001:108).

Post-Apartheid the church, which at its core remains an Afrikaner Church, became pragmatic in its approach to race relations, with its view based on New Testament teachings where race plays no part (Giliomee 2003:620, 660).

2.3 NGK ARCHITECTURE

The first dedicated NGK building in South Africa is the *Groote Kerk* (Big Church) in Cape Town, started in 1700 (www.grootekerk.org.za). The early architecture of NGK buildings in South Africa was developed locally and was not bound by an overriding architectural concept. This resulted in buildings with a great variety of styles and forms. In the nineteenth century, after the second British occupation of the Cape (1806 - 1910), the neo-gothic style became dominant in the design of new churches (Le Roux 2007:100).



Figure 10 *The Groote Kerk, Cape Town*
(Van Bart 2010a)

After the Anglo Boer South African War (1899 – 1902), as part of the rise of Afrikaner nationalist consciousness, the need for an “Afrikaans” architectural style for church buildings (*ons eie kerkboustyl*), was expressed and motivated for. The leaders of this call at the beginning of the twentieth century were the architects Gerard Moerdijk (1890 – 1958) and Wynand Louw (1883 – 1967) (Le Roux 2007:100 & 2008:23). Their call for an “Afrikaans” architecture can also be interpreted to mean an African architecture, an architecture that is different from the Cape Dutch and colonial British building styles, that draws inspiration from its place, in this case the Highveld (Fisher 1998:124).

Until 1966, when the church itself published its own findings on appropriate architectural styles for its buildings, the design NGK churches was led by individual architects who were usually members of the church. The debate over architectural style and form was a public one with the leading proponents publishing various articles in the popular as well as church press between the 1930’s and 1960’s (Le Roux 2008).

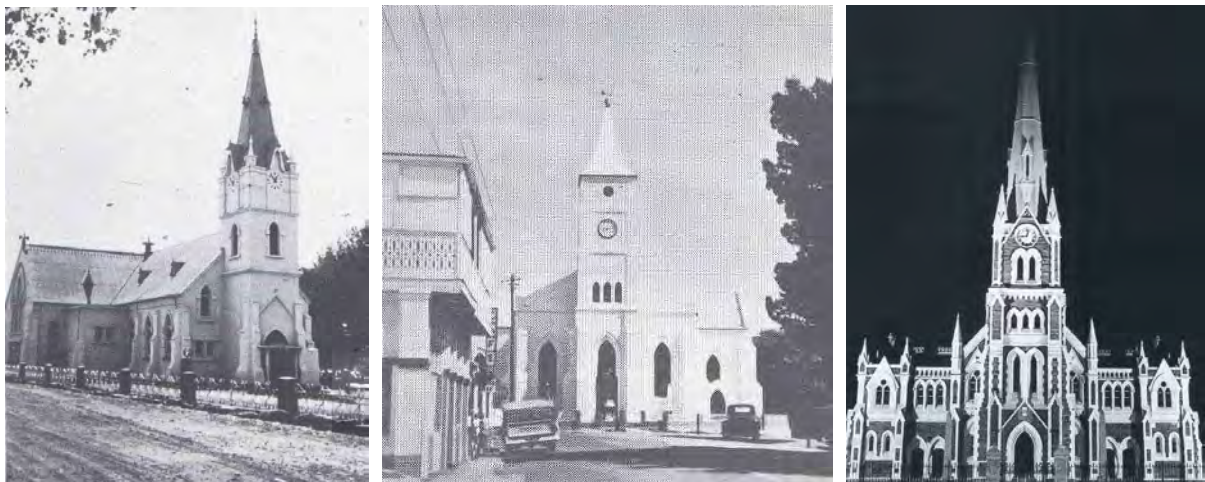
Moerdijk wanted the church building to be a reflection of the identity of the Afrikaner. In 1935 he said that:

“No matter how poor, how humble his home is, the Afrikaner always gives generously to the building of his church. This is one of the most worthy character traits that distinguishes our people. The church and religion are still at the centre of Afrikaner society, despite all modern trends, a fact which bears testimony to the value of tradition and history” (Fisher’s translation from Afrikaans, 1998:132).

Moerdijk developed a set of principles that he applied to his architecture. He felt that these would result in an appropriate architectural style. The nine key points, collated by Vermeulen (1999:38) from Moerdijk's 1935 “*Kerkgeboue vir Suid-Afrika*” (my translation from Afrikaans), are as follows:

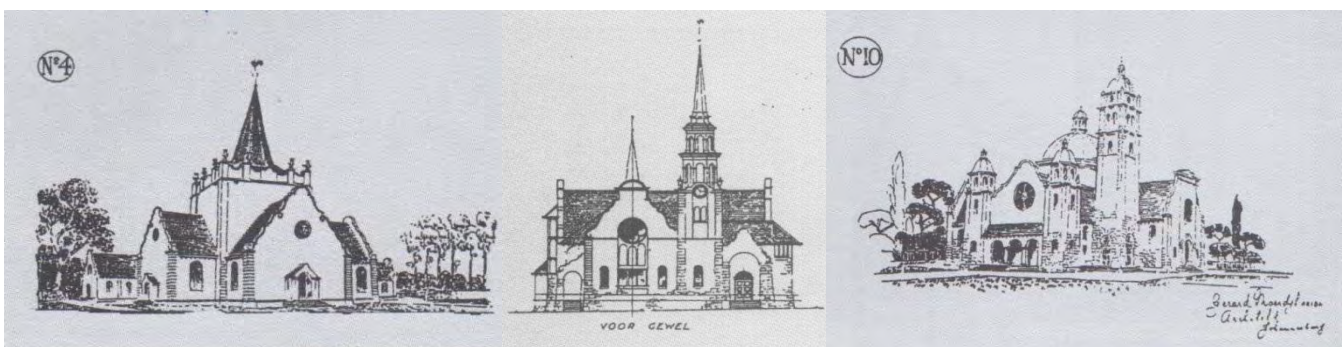
1. An architect must make use of locally available materials.
2. The purpose of a building must be immediately apparent.
3. A building must ‘grow’ out of its site.
4. A building must express the nature and personality of its owner.
5. A building must have a harmonious form.
6. A building must be well proportioned.
7. A building must have ‘life’.
8. A building must have atmosphere.
9. A building/building style must be *volkseie* (a nation’s own).

The last point, as note by Vermeulen (ibid), was the most important for Moerdijk. He used this as a motivation to move away from a neo-Gothic architectural style towards a Romanesque, and later neo-byzantine, style of architecture. Many communities, influenced by his reasoning, demolished their earlier ‘unsuitable’ churches, often to have new ones built to a design by Moerdijk (Fisher 1998:132).



Figures 11-13 Neo-Gothic NGK Buildings in Nylstroom (1898), Philippolis (1871) (Grieg 1971:171 & 175) and Graaf-Reinet (1886) (Hofmeyr 2002:70)

In an NGK building the general requirement is that “the first thing that a person sees is the pulpit with the open bible placed upon it” with the congregation seated so as to easily see and hear the preacher. The liturgical centre, being a Calvinist reformed church, is the Bible read by the preacher in the pulpit. The connection between it and the congregation should be direct, sitting in the same volume or space. This was very different to the liturgical and spatial requirements of a traditional neo-gothic or Catholic Church building (Le Roux 2008:21 & 22). In addition to functional requirements Moerdijk felt that these architectural styles were unsuitable climatically and laden with negative political associations, both Catholicism and the British. It was “an anachronism for a protestant church to take this non-protestant form” (ibid: 23 & 24).



Figures 14-16 Various church designs by Moerdijk from his 1935 book “Kerkgeboue vir Suid-Afrika” (Vermeulen 1999:60, 62, 63)

Many of the ideas regarding the form of church buildings and their functional requirements employed by Moerdijk and other architects in the early to mid-twentieth century followed trends in pre and post Second World War Europe, although usually without the nationalist overtones found within the NGK. In post-war Europe there was a break from traditional church forms and the basilican plan. In addition, due to a new understanding of liturgy, the altar (or pulpit) moved closer to the centre of the building and the congregation (Hammond 1960:4 & 33).

Functionalism, at the forefront of architectural thinking since the emergence of modernist architectural thinking in the early twentieth century, was a strong influence on church design in both Europe and in South Africa. Moerdijk's principle of “*Die doel van die gebou moet duidelik sigbaar wees*” (the purpose of a building must be immediately apparent) (Vermeulen 1999:38) mirrors the modernist idiom of “form follows function”. As noted by Hammond (1960:29 & 33) the first purpose of a church building is purely practical. It needs to fulfil a specific liturgical function. “The building should be shaped by worship, and not worship by architecture”.

“The church building is the house of the Church, in the biblical sense of that word; the house of the people who are themselves the temple of the living God, the habitation of the Spirit; a spiritual house built of living stones. It has no meaning apart from the community which serves. It is first and foremost a building in which people of God meet to do certain things: to perform the various communal activities known collectively as liturgy, or public service. This is what a church is for. It is a building for corporate worship; above all, a room for Eucharistic assembly. Reduced to its bare essentials, it is a building to house a congregation gathered around an altar” (Hammond 1960:28).

Moerdijk, on functional grounds, motivated for the plans of NGK buildings to be based on a Greek rather than a Latin cross. This form, he said, had fewer acoustic problems and, with seats arranged in a theatre format, created a focus towards the preacher. The majority of the NGK buildings that he designed would follow a variation of this plan form, creating an internal space described as “byzantine” (Le Roux 2008:24 & 28).

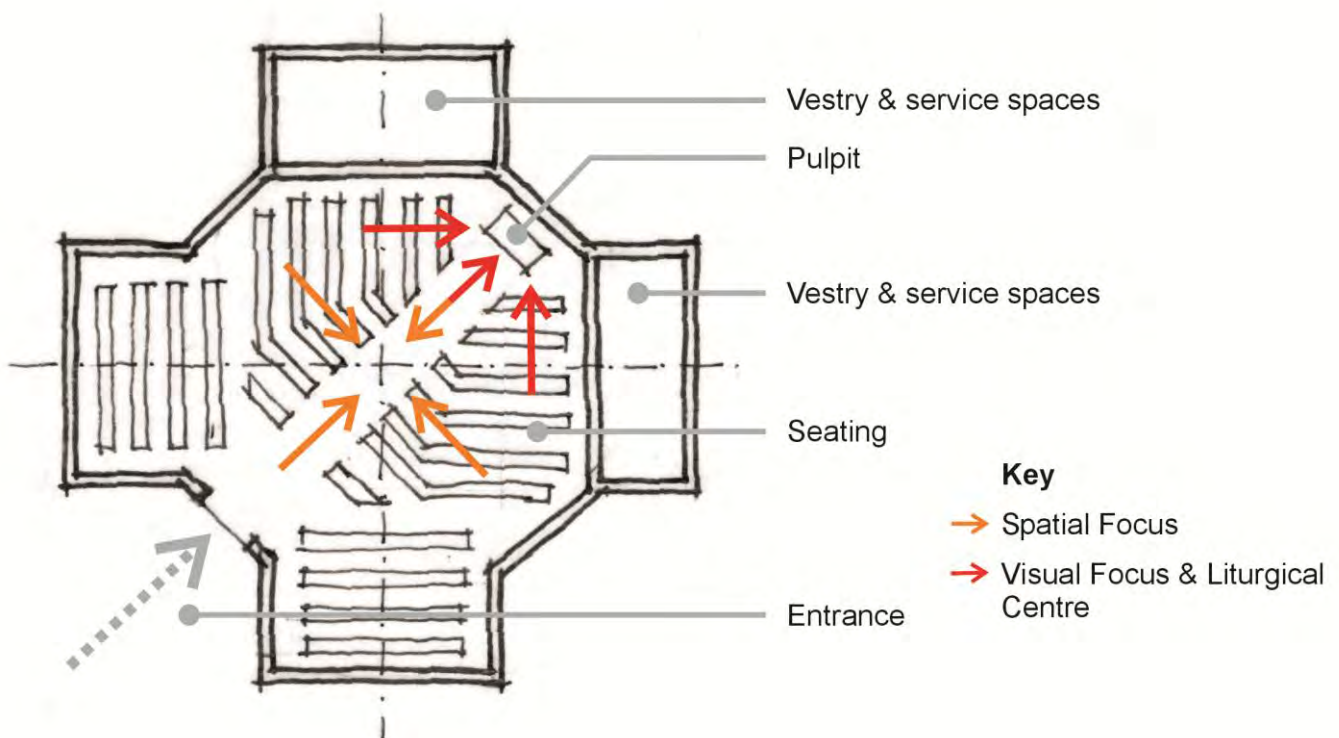


Figure 17 Diagrammatic representation of Moerdijk's preferred Greek cross plan form (derived from Le Roux 2008 and Vermeulen 1999).

Byzantine architecture, in the sixth century, was the first break in church architecture with the basilican planning tradition. It created a centralised architectural planning focused around a point (Davies 1982:104 & 113). The 'neo-Byzantine' style of architecture, as it was to become described, was used by Moerdijk and others for reformed church buildings. The style later incorporated the use of exposed brickwork. This material sat "comfortably with protestant conscience" (Fisher 1998:130) due to its "honesty", with modernist functionalism and Moerdijk's requirement for the use of locally available materials. This style of NGK architecture would be dominant until the arrival of Pretoria architect Johan de Ridder's "tent kerk" (tent church) in the 1960's and 70's (Le Roux 2008:24).

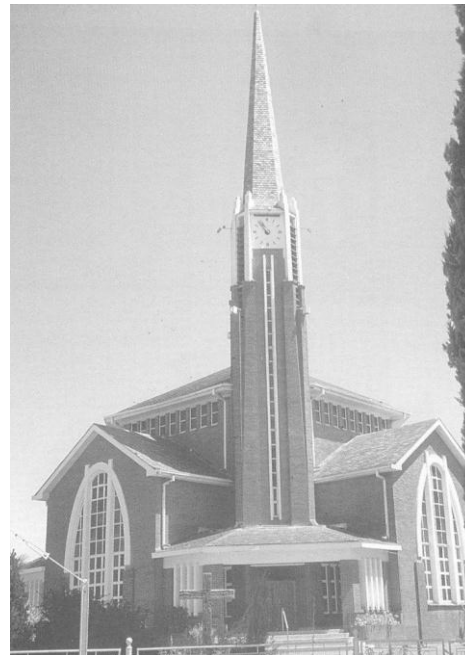


Figure 18-19 Two neo-byzantine NGK building's by Moerdijk in Pretoria East,1927 (left) and Noordhoek, Bloemfontein, one of the last before his death in 1958 (Vermeulen 1999:65 & 66).

From early on the Greek cross as a plan form was problematic. Architect JMJ Koorts, who was to publish an influential book on NGK architecture, criticised the placement of the pulpit, awkwardly in the corner, with the focus on it forcibly created by the placement of the seating rather than the space itself (ibid).

The 1966 findings of the NGK synod and Koorts's later 1974 book on the same subject looked at the planning of the church buildings, the liturgical requirements of the plans and international and local history and trends and came up with new recommendations on NGK design and planning. Their findings were that plans should be rectangular; the liturgical axis horizontal (rather than the dominant vertical axis of the neo-byzantine) with a clear focal point; there should be clear site lines to the pulpit (at the focal point) with no interruption and good acoustics (Le Roux 2008:21).

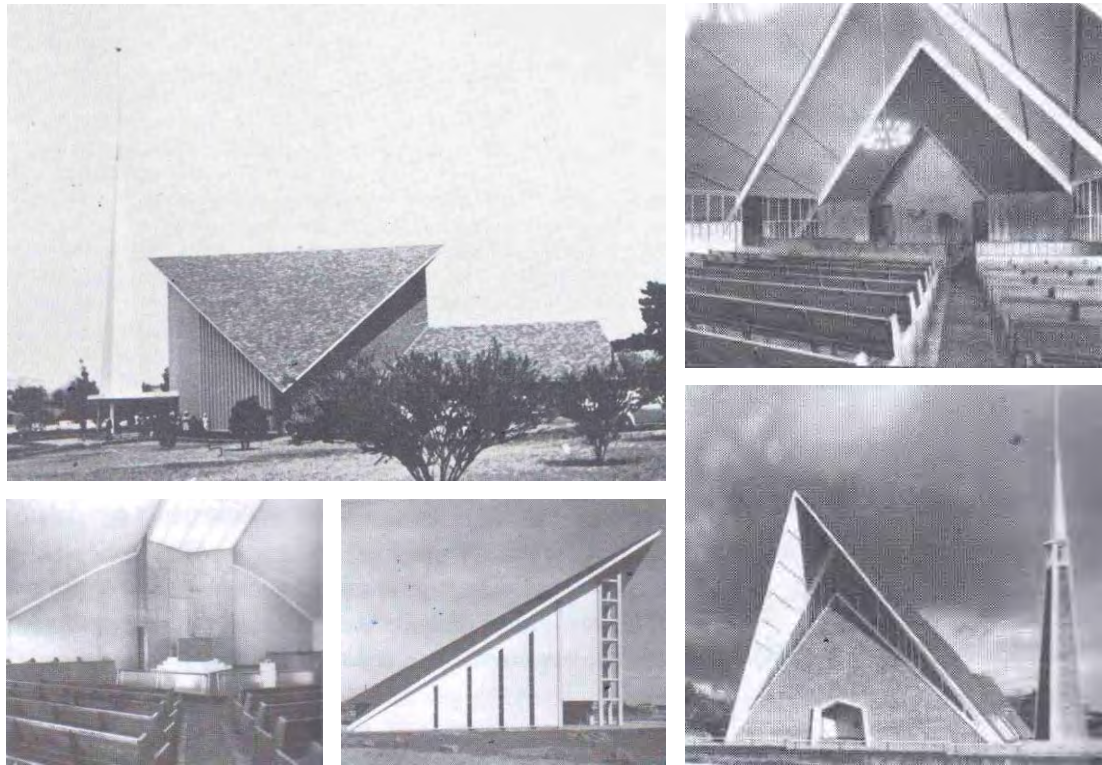


Figure 20-24 “Tent kerk” buildings by Johan de Ridder.
 Clockwise from top left Protea Park, Krugersdorp (1965) (Grieg 1971:176),
 Parys (1955) interior and exterior (Le Roux 2008:40), Totiusdal (1995) interior
 and exterior (ibid:42)

The eventual development of these principles was the so called “tent kerk” developed by Pretoria based architect Johan de Ridder and characterised by tent-like roofs that would often come right down to the ground. These churches were based on cost effective construction methods and functional planning methods stripped of all decoration. “The building becomes a diagram, a story in concrete materials of what happens inside and of what it stands for” (Le Roux 2008:38-40).

2.4 CONCLUSION

Barrie Biermann, respected architectural academic, (as translated by Fisher 1998:133), noted that development of NGK architecture in the twentieth century influenced the rapid acceptance of modern architecture by the Afrikaans community. It could be said that it developed into the *volkseie* (a nations own) style desired by early nationalist architects, a style best described by Fisher (ibid) as “Modern tempered by critical regionalism.” This combination of architecture with national and religious identity ensures that collective memory, and perhaps cultural significance, is anchored to NGK buildings.

CHAPTER 3 ISLAM IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The arrival of Islam in South Africa is the direct result of colonialism through the importation of Muslim slaves from 1652 and indentured labourers from 1860. This ‘forced’ establishment of the community, dislocation and distance from its origins, has had an impact on the built environment created by it. In order to understand the significance of this environment it is necessary to have an understanding of the history of the community.

3.2 HISTORY OF ISLAM IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRANSVAAL

The Arrival of Islam

Islam emerged on the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century. The year 622 marked the Prophet’s departure from Mecca for Medina, and is the start of the Islamic calendar. Islam arrived early in North Africa, starting in Egypt in 639 followed by Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco shortly thereafter. By the tenth century, traders had introduced Islam to the East coast of Africa as far south as northern Mozambique (Hattstein 2010:14, 33, 582).

The arrival of the Dutch in the Cape in 1652 also marked the arrival of Islam in South Africa. The first Muslims were slaves owned by the VOC. The Dutch trade had led to the colonisation of much of the East Indies trade by the seventeenth century, creating what they referred to as the “Indian Empire” (Cajee 2004:5). It is from this empire that slaves from origins as diverse as the coastlands of India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), the Malaysian-Indonesian archipelago, Madagascar and the coastlands of Africa were brought to the Cape. These slaves brought with them their religion and formed the core of the Cape Muslim community (Davids 1994:17).



Figures 25- 26 The Bo-Kaap, Cape Town. Centre of the Cape Muslim community.

The VOC used the Cape and Robben Island as a prison for a number of high ranking Muslims. These political prisoners, who included educated princes and *imams*, were brought by the Dutch to the Cape from the colonies of their 'Indian Empire' and, after their release, settled into the Cape Muslim community. Amongst these learned individuals was Shaykh Yusuf of Macassar (Abidin Tadia Tjoessop) who arrived in 1694 and is credited with establishing the first cohesive Muslim community in South Africa (Cajee 2004:5-7).

Under Dutch rule the reformed Calvinism of the NGK was the only permitted religion with the practice of Islam having to take place in private. During the first British occupation of the Cape (1795 – 1803) the practice of Islam was more openly tolerated but it was only in 1804, with the Cape having been returned to the Dutch by the British, that religious tolerance became official and Muslims were for the first time allowed to openly practice their religion (Pillay 2001:56).



Figure 27
An extract from Abubaker Efendi's book "Bayanudin", published in 1873 in Arabic Afrikaans.
(Callinicos 1993:115)

The Cape Muslim community, composed as it was from persons from different cultures and language groups, adopted Afrikaans as their common language. Controversial historian and author, Achmat Davids, claims that Afrikaans was actually created by the slaves. They did this by adapting the Dutch spoken by their masters, combining it with words from their own cultures. Afrikaans was then spread by the *voortrekkers* into the interior of South Africa. He claims that when Afrikaner nationalists claimed the language as their own they removed Malay, African and English words from it, replacing them with Dutch equivalents in an attempt to clean it up (Callinicos 1993:115). Afrikaans was used as a means of religious instruction by Cape Muslims. This provided the first incentive to write the language with the first Afrikaans language book being published in the Cape in 1856 using Arabic, rather than Latin, script (ibid, Giliomee 2003:101).

The Second Wave of Immigration

The second wave of Muslim immigration to South Africa started in 1860 while South Africa was under British colonial rule. Sugar farmers in the Natal colony required labour and since the African population still practiced traditional subsistence farming, a practice that the colonial government had not yet ended, an alternative supply of labour was needed. Indentured labourers from India were sought as a solution to the shortfall. Indentured labourers were contractually bound to a service of five years with the incentive of a free return trip or a grant of land being given for a further five year service. They were not quite slaves but neither were they free, experiencing great hardship during their contracts. From 1860 a total of 152 184 indentured immigrants arrived in Natal, of which less than twelve per cent were Muslim. Most chose to stay in South Africa rather than return to India (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000:10 – 11).

From the 1870s onwards a number of so called “passenger Indians” followed the indentured immigrants. They were largely traders and merchants, who paid their own way to come to South Africa, looking for business opportunities. While the indentured labourers were mostly Hindu, the traders and merchants were predominantly Muslim. The British government guaranteed freedom of religion for the immigrants. Soon after their arrival, and with the financial backing of Muslim traders, numerous mosques and *madrassah*'s were constructed (Cajee 2004:7-8).



Figure 28 The routes of migration of Muslim Traders to the ZAR and the establishment of mosques (Leroux 1994:32)

From the 1870's, these Muslim traders started migrating into the Boer republics, either directly from Natal or from India via Durban or Lorenzo Marques, now Maputo, Mozambique. As they moved they established shops and trading posts in almost every town and city. These small settlements formed the nucleus of the future Transvaal Muslim community. The discovery of gold and the establishment of Johannesburg in 1886 led to further migration (ibid:8).

Immigration to the ZAR was not however easy. Adding to the long distances, immigrants travelled by foot, wagon or cart, while restrictive and discriminatory laws imposed by the state made the life of the Muslim immigrants difficult. These laws included legislation such as Law No. 3 of 1885 "relating to Coolies, Arabs and other Asiatics" that restricted their rights to own land and forcing people into segregated areas, and the 1888 prohibition of movement on the street after nine o'clock. Trade became an obvious choice of profession with land rights limited, restrictions on participation in mining and limited options for training in any other professions (Randall 1967:1 – 5).

Establishment and Resistance

After the Anglo Boer South African War Muslim migration to South Africa virtually stopped. This was due to restrictive immigration laws which favoured European immigrants. The small existing Muslim communities, in both the Transvaal and Natal, being economically independent, started to establish their own mosques, *madrassahs* and schools in relative isolation from the influences of the outside world, both Muslim and other (Cajee 2004:9).

Under apartheid era legislation, such as the Population Registration Act, the Immorality Act and the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Indian Muslim community was further forced to become more insular, which in many respects reinforced their community and religious identity. No longer able to stay in areas that had served as home for up to seventy years many Johannesburg Muslim families were moved to the distant Indian group area of Lenasia. In addition to this, systems such as Christian National Education and the lack of legal recognition of Muslim marriages further undermined the community (ibid:11).

The South African Muslim community has always been active in resisting all forms of oppression. This is evident from as early as 1793, where open prayers were held in protest against religious restrictions, continuing through the anti-Apartheid struggle where numerous Muslim activists were either imprisoned or forced into exile. In the 1980's the Islamic Council of South Africa (ICSA) rejected the Apartheid State's proposals for partial participation of Indian and Coloured persons in government due of the exclusion of African people. It was also in this era that the NGK went as far as declaring Islam a false religion (ibid:12, Dinath 2002:115).



Figure 29 The 1908 protest and burning of passes outside the Hamidia Mosque, Newtown, Johannesburg. (Kallaway 1986:95)

The mosque, as the centre of Muslim religious and community life, was often the site for these acts of resistance. In 1908 the Hamidia Mosque in Newtown Johannesburg became the site for the burning of passes. It was the first passive resistance campaign led by Gandhi during his time in Johannesburg and South Africa (1893 - 1914) and the implementation of his philosophy of *Satyagraha*. This act of resistance was in protest against the restrictive “Asiatic Law Amendment Act” requiring the registration of all Indians living in the Transvaal Colony (Itzkin 2001: 1-3, Kallaway 1986:95).

From the late 1980’s, with the decline and eventual end of the Apartheid state, a third wave of Muslim immigrants entered South Africa. This new group is not homogenous in identity like the earlier Indian Muslim immigrants. Their commonality is their shared religious identity. They come from all over Africa (Somalia, Malawi, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana) and Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh). These new immigrants, much as those before them, come to South Africa as political and economic refugees or as traders seeking a better life. This has resulted in an increasingly vibrant multicultural Muslim community (ibid: 9), a marked change from the artificial stasis created by the restricted group areas.

3.3 ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

The English word mosque is derived from the Arabic name for the building, *masjid*, which means to prostrate. As this suggests, the design of a mosque is based firstly on the functional and spatial requirements of housing congregants for the five daily ritual prayers (known as *salat* or *namaaz*) as well as for the congregational Friday prayer (*Jummah namaaz*), which is compulsory for all male Muslims (Davies 1982:118). Beyond liturgical requirements, a mosque will often also include spaces for social and educational functions as well as shelter for travellers and the poor. As such the mosque becomes a centre for both religious as well as secular life (Kuban 1974:1). This makes the mosque a 'place' in the community rather than just a building (Davies 1982:141). The "common architectural principles of a mosque... transcend variations in style, form, construction techniques", tying together a wide variety of building forms and architectural traditions (Le Roux 1998: 100).

Functionally a mosque does not need to be a covered space, as the *hadith* (a saying of the Prophet) says "all the world is a *masjid*", and any temple built by a previous faith can be repurposed as a mosque because "there is no other god but Allah." The first mosque was the mud brick house of the Prophet in Medina. It consisted of a large courtyard with an adjoining covered area which acted as a place for prayer. Facing onto the courtyard were rooms as well as a small shelter for the poor and visitors. Originally the direction of *qibla* (direction of prayer) was orientated towards Jerusalem but later this was changed to face the *Ka'ba* in Mecca. This house serves as the precedent for the functional requirements and spatial arrangement of all mosques (Kuban 1974:1 & 12).

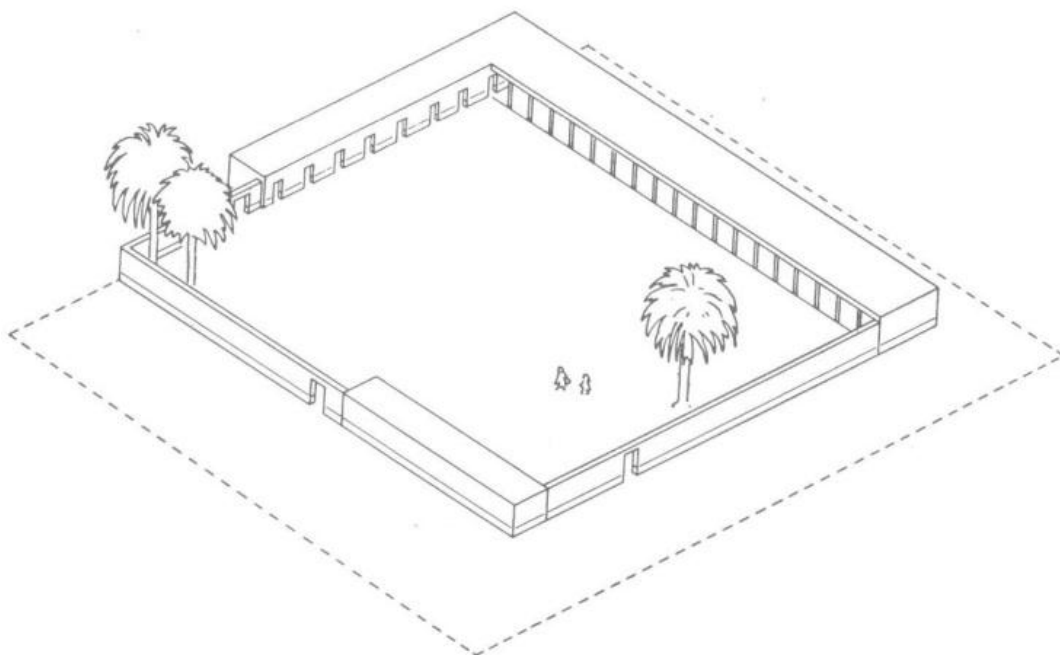


Figure 30 The house of the Prophet in Medina, a template for all mosques. (Kuban 1974:2)

The basic requirements of a mosque are as follows. *Salah* is performed in parallel rows by congregants behind the *imam*. These parallel lines are orientated towards Mecca (*qibla*). The lines of congregants form the main spatial director for the form of the mosque and run parallel to the *qibla* wall (or *sadr*) which orientates you (ibid:2 & 3). The directional orientation of all mosques acts as a means of tying Muslims, anywhere in the world, together through the act of prayer.

Before prayer, the *muezzin* gives the call to prayer (the *adhan*) to call the congregants to the mosque. The *adhan* would traditionally be made from the roof top or highest point of the mosque or adjacent buildings. Over time this evolved into the tower form of the *minaret* common to most mosques (Davies 1982:120). Before prayer the state of *tahara* (state of ritual purity) needs to be achieved. This is done through *wudu* or *ghusl*. For this ablution facilities need to be provided. This requirement led to the inclusion of fountains or pools within the courtyard outside the mosque (Kuban 1974:9).

Inside the mosque the main focus is the *mihrab*. This 'niche', located in the *sadr*, indicates the direction of *qibla* and is the location of the *imam* during *namaaz*. It is often the focal point of decoration in the mosque with a cupola (often circular or segmented in form) above (ibid:3 & 4, Davies 1982:120). At Friday prayer a sermon (*khutba*) is usually delivered to the congregation. The Prophet would deliver sermons to his followers either seated or standing on a chair. Over time this chair evolved into the *minbar* or pulpit located alongside the *mihrab*. Besides this the only other furniture located within the mosque are Koran stands with the remaining area carpeted for prayer (ibid:119, Kuban 1974:3 & 5). From these requirements the basic mosque plan with a courtyard (*sahn*) with adjoining hall used for prayer (*Haram*) evolved.

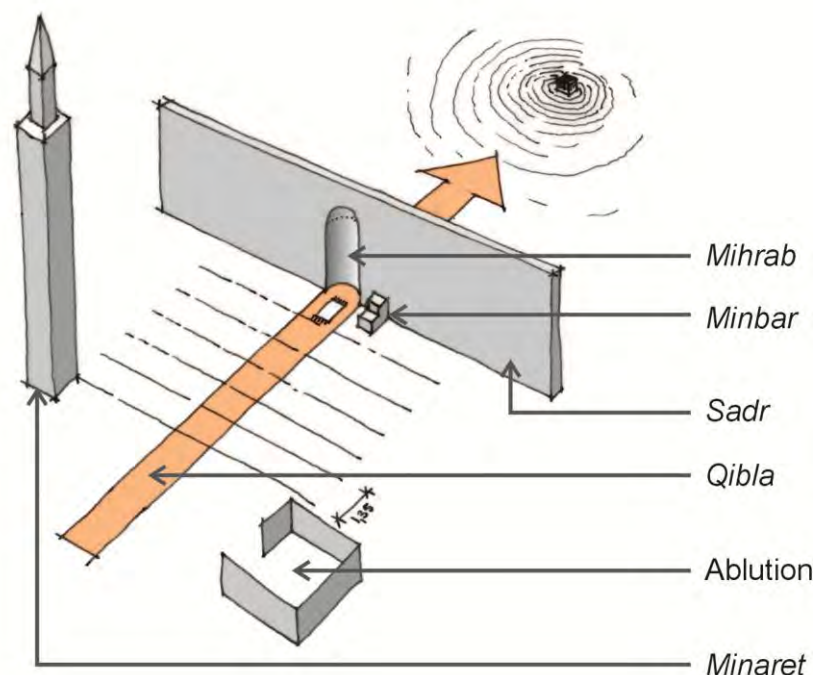


Figure 31
Diagrammatic representation
of the functional requirements
of a mosque.
(derived from Davies 1982,
Kuban 1974 and Le Roux 2007)

Early mosques were very simple in form and decoration, following the *hadith* that “the most unnecessary activity that eats up wealth of a believer is building” (ibid:12). Over time, and with the influence of local cultural and decorative traditions, ornamentation became integral to the design of mosques. This decoration is generally geometric in form as iconic decoration (the depiction of plants, animals and people) is frowned upon in Islam. Decoration was not just applied to the buildings. It is very much part of the architecture in the form of carved stucco relief, pattern in materials through the use of brick and stone, mosaic and tiling, the use of light and shadow and calligraphy. These techniques, in a mosque, are said to “dissolve a surface into ideas” (Davies 1982:129 – 134). With the spread of Islam from its epicentre in the Arabian Peninsula Islamic architecture evolved through the contact with different local building customs, leading to a variety of structural forms and solutions. The use of the dome, while initially frowned upon, became common place as did the arch in a variety of shapes. These elements were often repeated, again forming a pattern and adding further ornamentation through architecture to the building (ibid:135 & 136).

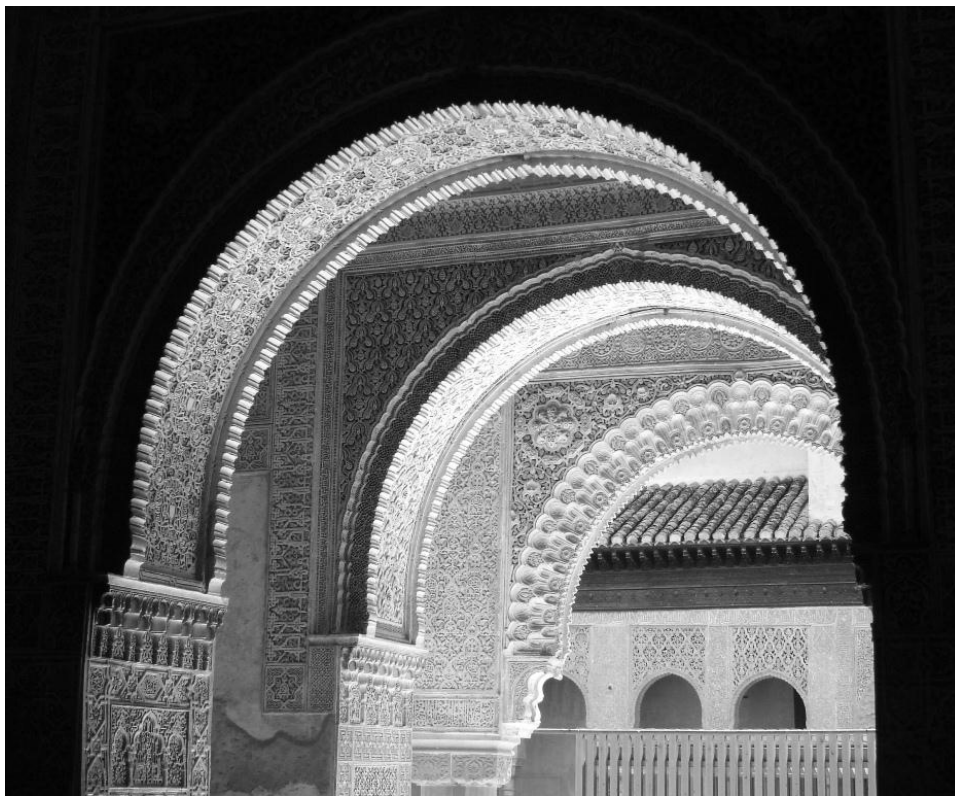
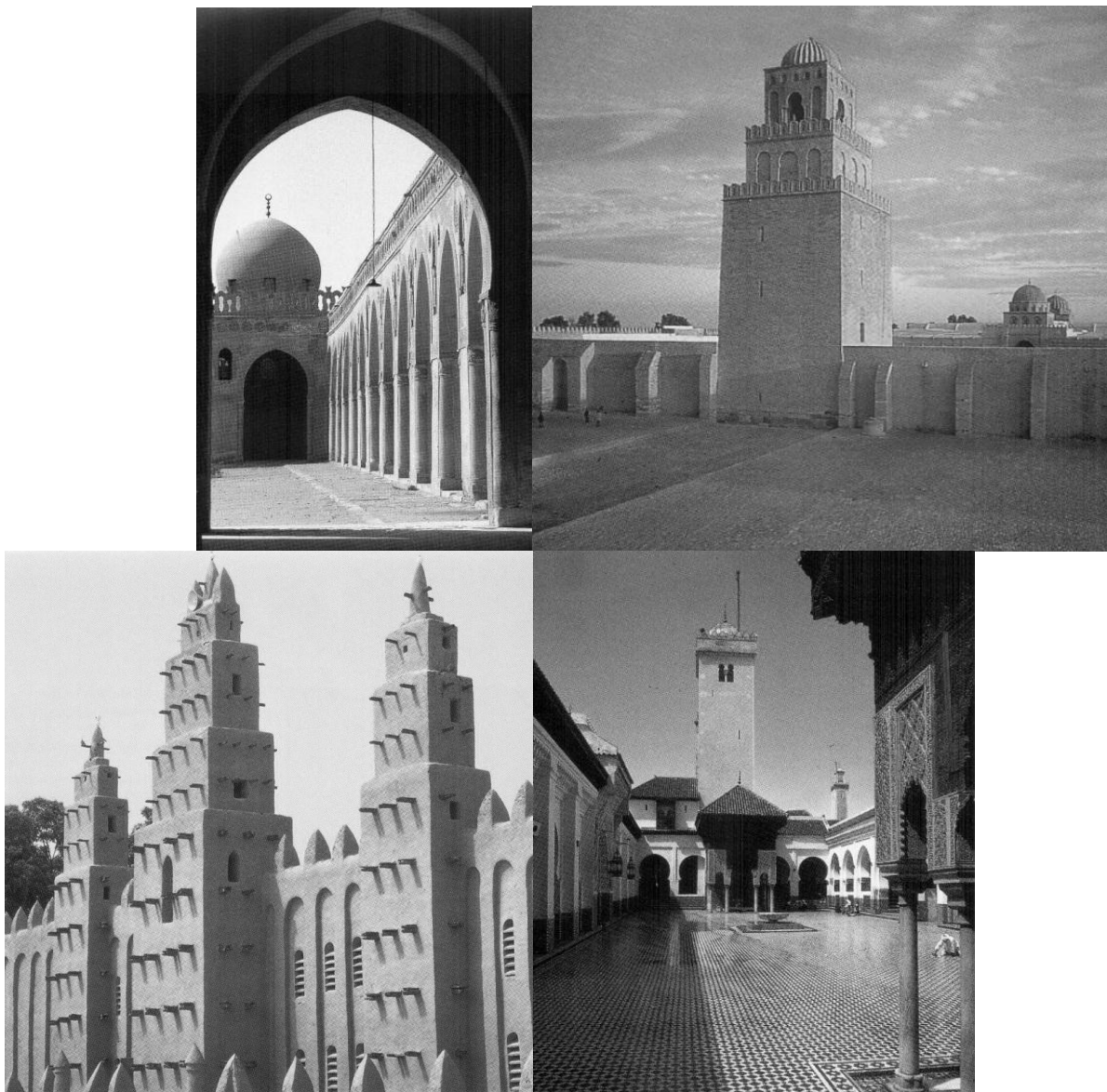


Figure 32 Pattern created through the repetition of elements and surfaces “dissolving into ideas” at the Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain (14th to 16th century)

Over time the functional requirements of the mosque have led to the development of a basic form that is reasonably consistent wherever Islam is practiced. Beyond the functional requirements what is considered as an Islamic architectural style varies from region to region and is strongly influenced by local climate, existing culture and building traditions.

3.4 ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRANSVAAL

As noted Islam has a long history in Africa with its establishment in North Africa in the seventh century. This long continuous history and direct links to the religion's origins in the Arabian Peninsula have led to a very rich architectural and building tradition. This varied tradition finds expression in the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo (876 – 879), the Great Mosque of Kairouan, Libya (ninth century), the Qarawiyin Mosque in Fez, Morocco (twelfth century) or the mud brick mosques of Mali (Hattstein 2010:113, 133, 310, 588). Islamic architecture in South Africa is however not part of this building tradition and traces its origins to very different roots.



Figures 33-36 Islam in Africa (Clockwise from top left) the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo (876 – 879), the Great Mosque of Kairouan, Libya (ninth century), Mud brick mosque, Mali (1948), the Qarawiyin Mosque in Fez, Morocco (twelfth century) (Hattstein 2010:113, 132, 588, 310)

South Africa's first mosque is the Auwal, located in Upper Dorp Street in Cape Town. It dates from the end of the eighteenth century and was adapted from an existing warehouse located on the site, which belonged to a freed slave. Still in use today, this building bears little resemblance to its original form having been extended on numerous occasions (Davids 1994: 17, Le Roux 1998:99). Early Cape mosques differ little in form from the contemporary Gothic revival churches found in the city. The Cape Muslim community, so long isolated from their heterogeneous cultural roots, had no Islamic precedent to follow. In the case of the Natal and the Transvaal the Muslim community was made up largely of Indian traders or former indentured labourers. As new immigrants many had strong connections to their Islamic culture and recollections of their "place of origin", India (ibid).

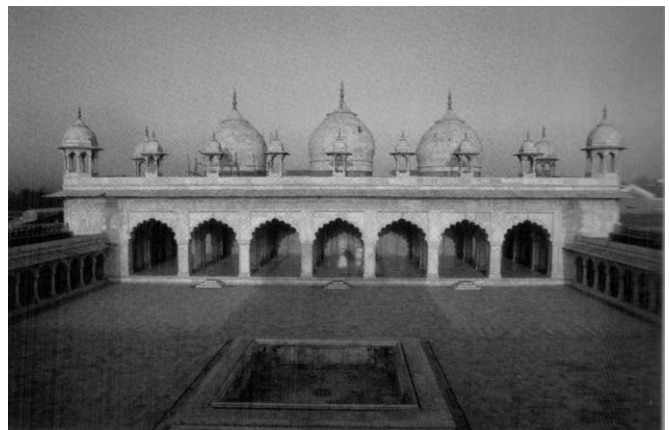


Figures 37-38 Cape style mosques. From left the Galielol Rahmaan Mosque, District Six, Cape Town (Fisher 1994:15) and the Auwal, Bo-Kaap, Cape Town (Van Bart 2010a).

Le Roux (ibid:113), in his study on the Transvaal Mosque, notes that there is little documentary evidence of the lineage of and precedent for local Mosque architecture. A study of traditional Indian Muslim architecture does however reveal some clues. The first Muslim state on the Indian subcontinent emerged in the twelfth century, culminating in the rise of the Mogul empire in the fifteenth century. Muslim states developed in the northern and central parts of the Indian subcontinent, from whence most of the Muslim traders that arrived in Johannesburg originated. Islamic architecture in India is described as an "incomparable expression of artistic imagination" (Kuban 1985:14). Early Indian mosques followed the standard mosque plan that had emerged in North Africa and the Middle East. Over time however original spatial arrangements came to characterise Indian Muslim architecture. The local architectural traditions and building techniques of India strongly

influenced the form and appearance of the buildings, making what has been described as “the least Islamic of the great Muslim architectural styles” (ibid).

Although a large variety of different Indian mosque types developed, they became characterised by a flat roofing system “enhanced by domes” over large pillared halls decorated in a traditional Indian style. The domes were often of different shapes and sizes, with the native onion dome being the most common. The mosques were often symmetrically composed externally with minarets often reduced in size and repeated in number to become more decorative than functional (ibid: 16, Kuban 1974:6 & 7). Internally the *mihrab* is usually made out of marble and the *minbar* inconspicuous (Kuban 1985:18).



Figures 39-40 Indian Mosques.

Left, the Village Mosque, Walwati (Thokan 1995: 7)

*Right, The Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque), Agra Fort, 1647-1653
(Hattstein 2010:466)*

In Gujarat and the Deccan, where the majority of the Transvaal Muslim community originates, mosques were characterised by spacious inner courts fronting roofed halls. The three dimensional form of the mosque building, often painted white, is “seen across open courts with pools of water, sturdy minarets in the corners, filigreed ridges silhouetted with rounded antefixa at the parapets, the space in the mosque open to the court through central arches beneath the parapet” (Le Roux 1998:113).

Transvaal mosques were originally housed in small temporary wood and iron structures. The permanent masonry buildings that replaced these were the first to be “conceptualised as mosques” and, as argued by Le Roux (ibid: 114), were designed using the perceptual image of a mosque brought with the community from India to their new home. The designers of these original buildings are largely unknown with Le Roux (ibid:114 & 115) suspecting that they were “designed” either by their builders (who, if not Muslim would look at other local examples as precedent) or by a draughtsman led by the instruction of the community.

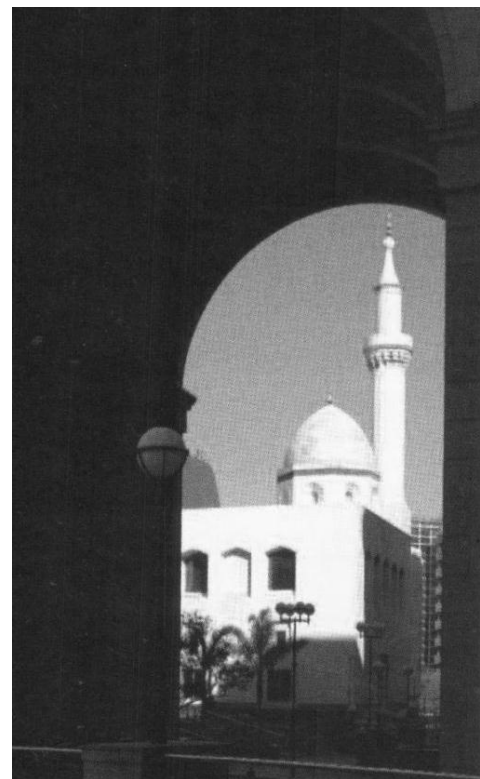
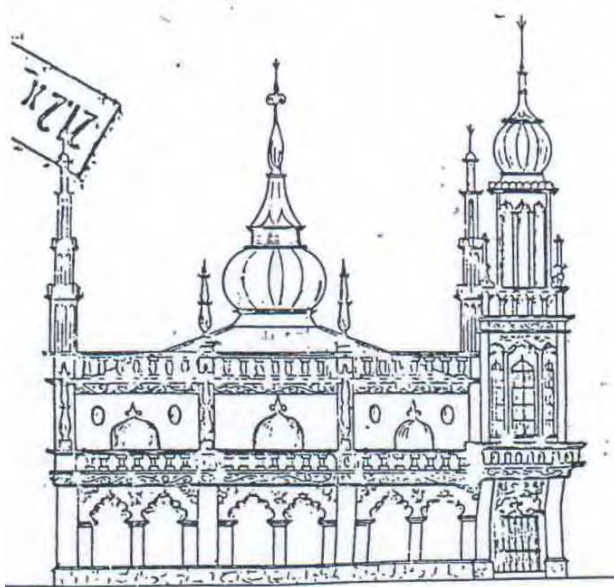
These early mosques were constructed out of locally available materials – clay brick, corrugated iron and precast concrete. Painted white, the mosques were usually free standing brick structures, the iron roofs often hidden (or at least “supressed”) behind parapets decorated with readily available precast concrete mouldings. The buildings were often simple in form, occasionally with a lean to veranda. *Minarets* were seldom used and where they did appear, such as in the old Juma Masgied (*Jumma Masjid* – Friday Mosque) in Johannesburg, they were reduced in size so as to be purely decorative and symmetrically arranged. Internally decoration was focused on the *mihrab*. These buildings were “tempered by the economic reality” of living in the Transvaal with Le Roux describing them as “*maquettes* of the original”. Local materials were “reinterpreted” and “reinvented”, as a “veneer over a local form”, to create a building that was recognisable as a mosque to the local community (ibid).



Figures 41-43 The Transvaal Mosque in Johannesburg
Clockwise from left: the old Juma Masgied, 1918, now demolished (Le Roux 1994:20); The old Hamidia Mosque, Newtown, 1906, now substantially altered (Itzkin 2001:54); The 23rd Street Mosque Pageview, the last remaining Transvaal style mosque in Johannesburg.

Under Apartheid, the Group Areas Act made it necessary to establish two types of mosques to serve the South African Muslim population. This is a situation that is unique in the history of Islam. A Muslim community will typically settle within a close proximity of their local Mosque, usually within a fifteen minute walk (or a short drive). Due to legislated segregation older mosques that now found themselves in white areas no longer had a community. New mosques were established in the residential group areas while the older mosques continued to serve the business area. Mosques, that under normal conditions would be busy at all prayer times, would now be quiet depending on the time of day with *Imams* not allowed to live on site in non-Indian residential areas. In the Johannesburg city centre the mosques of Pageview, Vrededorp and the Nugget Street all suffered this fate. The resistance of the community however enabled them to remain active (Tayob 1994:29 & 30).

In 1989 the old National Monuments Council (NMC) issued approval for the demolition of the old Juma Masgied, built in 1918 in downtown Johannesburg, to be replaced by a new larger mosque designed by the architect Muhammed Mayet (Le Roux 1994:20). This demolition represented a growing sense confidence in the local Muslim community as well as a new internationalised trend in Mosque design. This trend in mosque design is what Na'eem Jeenah, the director of the Africa Middle East Centre, refers to as a 'pan-Islamic' style of architecture (Jeenah 2012).



Figures 44-45 Original drawings for the Juma Masgied, 1918 (Le Roux 1994:20) and the new Jumah Masjid, Muhammed Mayet Architects, 1993-2003 (Chipkin 2008:428)

The unusual form of the Transvaal mosque, as represented by the Juma Masgied, was actually used as an argument in favour of its demolition. In a presentation made to the NMC, the trustees of the mosque said that “the mosque was not aesthetically representative of Islamic architecture” and that “in Islam the purpose of the building is their need, and not historic, monumental or aesthetic splendour” (Le Roux 1998:115). The NMC’s argument for the retention of the building was that it was an important historical landmark in the city and was of architectural importance. As noted by Le Roux (1994:23), what the NMC did not count on was that their values and interpretations of significance were not universally accepted. As Fisher (1994:15) notes the argument exploiting the differences in value of conservation to different communities floored them. This raises the important question of how conservation and preservation can occur in culturally diverse societies.

The architect Mayet (1994:26) argued that mosque architecture uses an established “vocabulary of existing words” and that, as with language, “there is no need to use new words or grammar”. His argument was that a mosque should be “original”, not meaning that it should be different or unique but that it should relate to its origin. “Identity can only flourish through the umbilical cord leading to the origin” (ibid:27). After the restrictions of colonialism and Apartheid this could be seen as an attempt by the Johannesburg Muslim community to connect with the larger Islamic world from which it had so long been isolated. This is in many ways similar to the way in which the styling and decoration of the original Transvaal mosques acted as a connection for their communities to their place of origin, India.

Le Roux (1994:21-23) agrees that it is often difficult to identify communality in Islamic architecture but notes that it is the ritual of prayer that make a building Islamic, not its architectural style. If buildings that are deemed to be worthy of conservation are to retain functional relevance for their communities a means of adapting these structures needs to be found. Without this, the unique tradition of mosque building that has existed in the Transvaal will be lost.

Adaptation and incremental growth has a long tradition in the history of mosque architecture. Many great mosques are the result of this. The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was adapted from the Byzantine cathedral to become a mosque, later giving rise to the typical form of an Ottoman or Turkish mosque. The Great mosque of Cordoba in Spain is the result of incremental growth and later adaptation and addition to make it into a Christian church. In these examples the main driver was functional use, yet the result is a powerful architectural expression. The opportunity for adaptation and incremental growth in Johannesburg mosques should not be lost as this offers many opportunities that could possibly result in a new hybrid Gauteng mosque architecture.



Figures 46-47

Left, the adaptation of an existing building, the Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (532-537), to become a mosque (Hattstein 2012:547)

Right, the incremental growth through repetition and enlargement in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, Spain (785-988)

3.5 CONCLUSION

The diverse and unique traditions of Islamic architecture and mosque building in South Africa are a reflection of the diversity of the origins of the Muslim community. With the increasingly multicultural Islamic community in post-Apartheid South Africa the possibility exists for the expansion and enrichment of the heterogeneous identity of South African Islamic architecture. This would require a conscious effort on the part of the mosque builders to embrace the existing cultural heritage rather than follow the international trend towards the 'pan-Islamic' architectural style described previously. Adaptation and reuse, be it of existing mosques or other buildings repurposed to become mosques, can add to the development and significance of this local architectural tradition.

CHAPTER 4 FROM CHURCH TO MOSQUE – THE CASE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

With an introduction to the history of both the NGK and of Islam it is now possible to examine the case study, the Masjid-ul-Islam. The building has been explored further in the context of this background while its own particular history has been looked at in further detail. The founding of the church and its conversion to a mosque are explored within the social and political contexts from which they emerged. This has been followed by an investigation of each building as an architectural response to their heritage.



Figure 48 The former Johannesburg West NGK / Masjid-ul-Islam

4.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Johannesburg

Johannesburg was founded in late 1886 after the discovery of gold on the farm of Langlaagte. The small mining village boomed, attracted fortune seekers from across the world and was declared a city by 1928 (Beavon 2004:21-24). It is into this rapidly changing context that the newly urbanised Afrikaner population described in chapter 2 emerged.

The suburbs to the west of the Johannesburg city centre, many of which are located on the former Langlaagte farm, have long been characterised by a large Afrikaans working class community. In the 1890's the steady stream of poor Afrikaners to Johannesburg prompted the ZAR's President Paul Kruger to have the suburb of Vrededorp established, located to the west of the small mining town, to house this community. This suburb, along with working class Fordsburg immediately to its west, became the nucleus of this future Afrikaner community. In the 1890's just over 10% of the white population in Johannesburg was Afrikaans, with the NGK's in Fordsburg and Vrededorp reported to be "full to overflowing". The trend of urbanisation among Afrikaners continued with 29% of the national Afrikaner population urbanised by 1910, 50% by 1936 and 75% by 1960 (Giliomee 2003:236, 325 & 405).

By the late 1930's and early 1940's near to half of the members of the NGK lived in cities, with half of the church's new congregations being established in large urban centres. The formerly "rural" NGK was becoming urbanised (Lubbe 2001b:12). The church however still saw urbanisation as essentially bad and associated it directly with moral decline. It pleaded with the synod to allow it to establish smaller congregations in Johannesburg as a means of attracting more people to the church and allow it to better serve these "strangers" in the city (ibid: 13). This led to a boom of new NGK congregations in Johannesburg's western suburbs which can be seen by the rapid increase in the construction of new NGK buildings. These included the NGK Linden in 1936, the NGK Brixton in 1937, the NGK Westdene in 1938, the NGK Melville 1939 and the NGK Johannesburg (Mayfair) West in 1940 (Artefacts 2012a).

Mayfair West

The suburb of Mayfair West was established in 1931 as an extension of the older suburb of Mayfair, established in 1896, located to its immediate south. To its immediate north is the suburb of Brixton, established after the Anglo Boer South African War in 1902 (Smith 1971:64, 326, 327). The suburb, characterised by its small free standing single storey homes, was established at the time of great urbanisation and change in the Afrikaner community described previously. Located close to existing communities, Mayfair West came to house a largely working class Afrikaner community, often employed by the state institutions such as the railways or in the mining industry (Giliomee 2003:325, Naude 2012 interview).

The push on the part of the NGK to establish smaller congregations (Lubbe 2001b:13) meant that as soon as an existing congregation reached around, in *Dominee* Van Rooyen's estimate, 300 to 400 people it would split to form a new congregation requiring a new church building (Van Rooyen 2012 interview). The concentrated Afrikaner population resulted in a large number of small NGK, as well as a number of NHK and Gereformeede

Church buildings being built, often within very close proximity to each other. The greater Mayfair West area has become characterised by these buildings, often built in a version of Moerdijk's 'neo-byzantine' style. The scale of the buildings with their tall steeples makes them important markers in the largely single storey residential landscape. It is in this context that the Johannesburg West NGK was established.

4.3 THE JOHANNESBURG (MAYFAIR) WEST NGK

Founding

The Brixton NGK congregation was established in 1937. By late 1939 it was large enough to split and form a new congregation. This led to the creation of the Johannesburg West NGK, within six blocks of the original Brixton church. The congregation commissioned the architectural firm of Geers and Geers to design the new church building for them, having already designed the Brixton church building three years previously (Artefacts 2012a). The new church was to be built on a small residentially sized corner stand surrounded by existing houses. With the small size of the site, the church hall had to be located four blocks to the south.

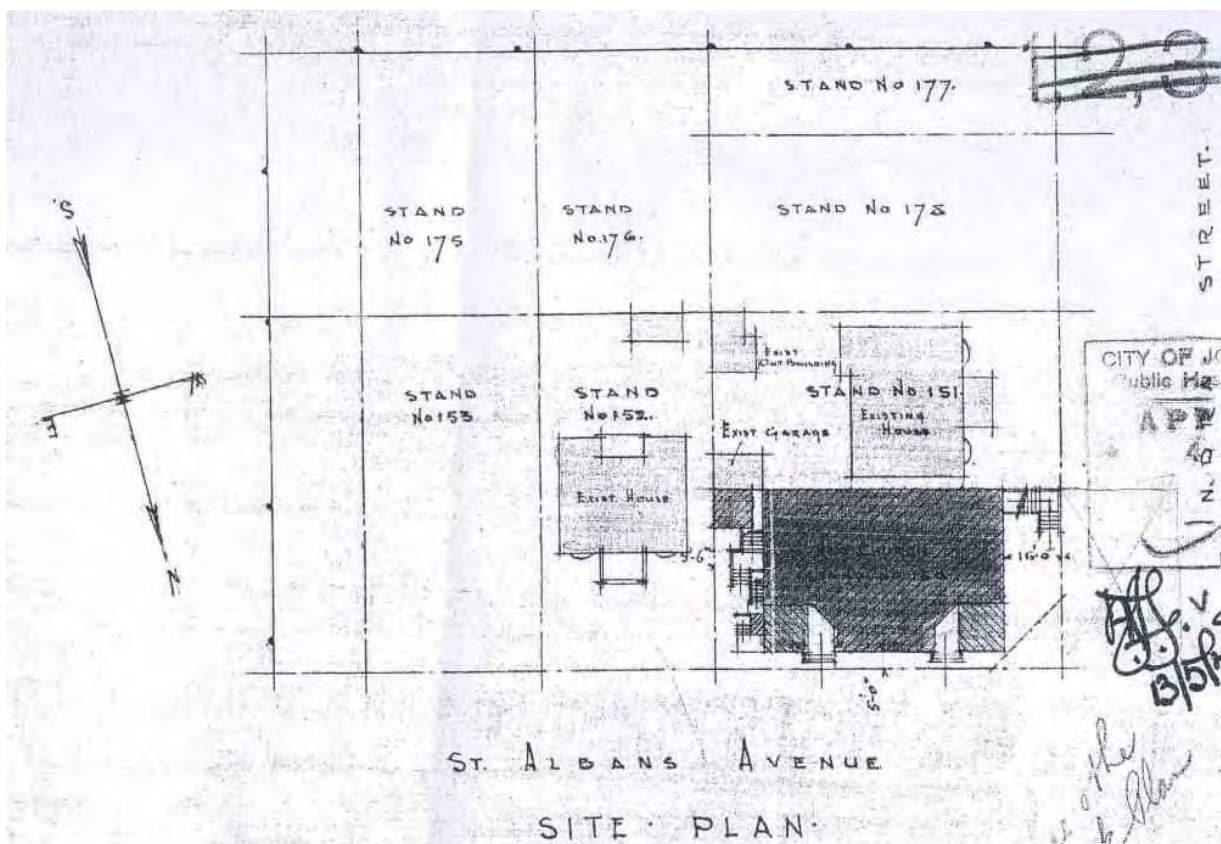


Figure 49 Site Plan of the Johannesburg West NGK. Drawing number 18/5, Geers & Geers Architects, 1940. City of Johannesburg planning Archives.

The streets in Mayfair West are all named after saints, gods and goddesses with the Johannesburg West NGK located on the corner of Indra and St Alban's Streets in Mayfair West. Indra is the god in Vedic theology that is the head of all the deities of the air, the god of thunder storms and of war. St Alban is an English saint and the first British Christian martyr executed by the Romans (Smith 1971:229 & 478). It is interesting that from its founding the church has been, even if it is only in name, located at the intersection of different religious beliefs and cultures.

The Architects

The architectural practice Geers and Geers was a partnership between father and son, Leendert Marinus Geers (1877 – 1957) and Geurt Marinus Jacobus Geers (1909 – 1945). During the practices short life (from 1934 when Geers junior graduated from Wits until his death by drowning in 1945) they designed a number of NGK as well as other Afrikaner reformed church buildings. These included the NGK Odendaalsrust (1934), the NGK Biesiesvlei (1935), the NGK Linden (1936), the NHK in central Pretoria (1937), the NHK Germiston (1937), the NGK Brixton (1937), the NGK Westdene (1938), the Eeufees Church in Pietermaritzburg (1939), the NGK Melville (1939), the NGK Krugersdorp (1939), the NGK Villiers (1940), the NGK Johannesburg West (1940), the NHK Roodepoort (1940), the NGK Standerton (1941), the NGK Harrismith (1942), the NGK Ermelo (1945), the NGK Sabie (1950), the NGK Bethal (1950) and the NGK Tweeling (Artefacts 2012a,b&c, Chipkin 1993:112).



Figures 50-52 Architecture of Geers & Geers in Johannesburg.

From left the Brixton NGK (1937), Melville NGK (1939), Westdene NGK (1938)

The younger Geers had been apprenticed in Gerhard Moerdijk's architectural practice between 1932 and 1933 (Artefacts 2012b). This time in Moerdijk's office clearly influenced him. This can be seen in the practice's work, particularly in the planning, materiality and stylistic treatment of their NGK buildings. Geers and Geers churches are designed in what can be described as a variety of Moerdijk's preferred "neo-byzantine" style with some art deco overtones, characteristic of his later work. The churches are characterized by, what Johannesburg architectural historian and author Clive Chipkin (1993:112) refers to as, "their carefully modulated rectangular or octagonal towers of golden-brown face brick supporting pyramidal steeples" with "vertical recesses and openings in the towers, with narrow projecting slabs or dentils". The planning of these buildings was often a variation of Moerdijk's preferred Greek cross plan form, although the practice was not opposed to adapting this if necessary as can be seen in many of their designs. The stylistic and material unity of the practices work, perhaps due to its short lifespan, is quite striking. Similar to Moerdijk's, it helps to construct a sense of unity and identity for the church community in which they practiced.

The Building

The Johannesburg West NGK was approved by the Johannesburg city council in April of 1940 with construction commencing thereafter. It is typical of the work of Geers and Geers. The building was built using the firms preferred golden-brown face brick, with the plinth and brickwork detailing in a darker 'blue' face brick. The verticality of the brickwork and stained glass windows was in turn contrasted with the continuous white horizontal lines of the projecting slab above the entrances and the eaves with black slate roof above. The building was anchored to its corner site by its rectangular shaped steeple located at the intersection of the two streets. The steeple, with its tall slate roof, weather vane and clock, acted as landmark in its suburban surroundings.



Figures 53-54 Details of the Steeple and stained glass windows

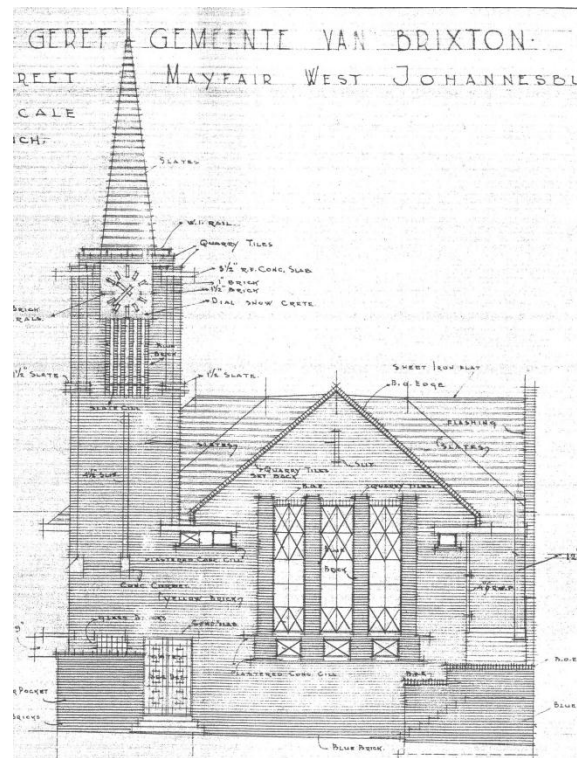


Figure 55 West Elevation of the Johannesburg West NGK, Erf 150 Mayfair West. Drawing number 18/3, Geers & Geers Architects, 1940. City of Johannesburg planning Archives.

The plan of the church was based on Moerdijk's Greek cross. The site was however constricted, and rectangular in shape measuring only approximately 490m² in area. This limitation forced the southern leg of the cross to be 'cut off' in order for it to fit on the site. The effect of this 'amputation' has had a limited impact externally. The neighboring residence to the south has however ended up being overlooked by a two story, windowless face brick wall. Internally the spatial quality and functionality has not been affected, although the space does perhaps lack some of the purity and impact that the full Greek cross plan form would have had.

As required, the pulpit was the focus of the internal space. It was however located on the southern wall of the building where the missing leg of the cross would normally be located and not at the intersection of the two legs as was typical of Moerdijk's planning. A pair of entrance doors on the northern façade led to two aisles which would have focused you towards the pulpit on entering the building. This along with the orientation of the raked theatre style seating and the placement of the pulpit closer to the spatial centre of the building seems to have resolved many of the functional issues that Koorts and others (Le Roux 2008:32) had with Moerdijk's use of the Greek cross plan form. These issues related to what they felt was a conflict between the central focus of the architecture and space created and the functional focus on the pulpit, which Moerdijk typically placed to the side, created by the seating. In this interpretation by Geers and Geers both the spatial focus and visual focus coincided.

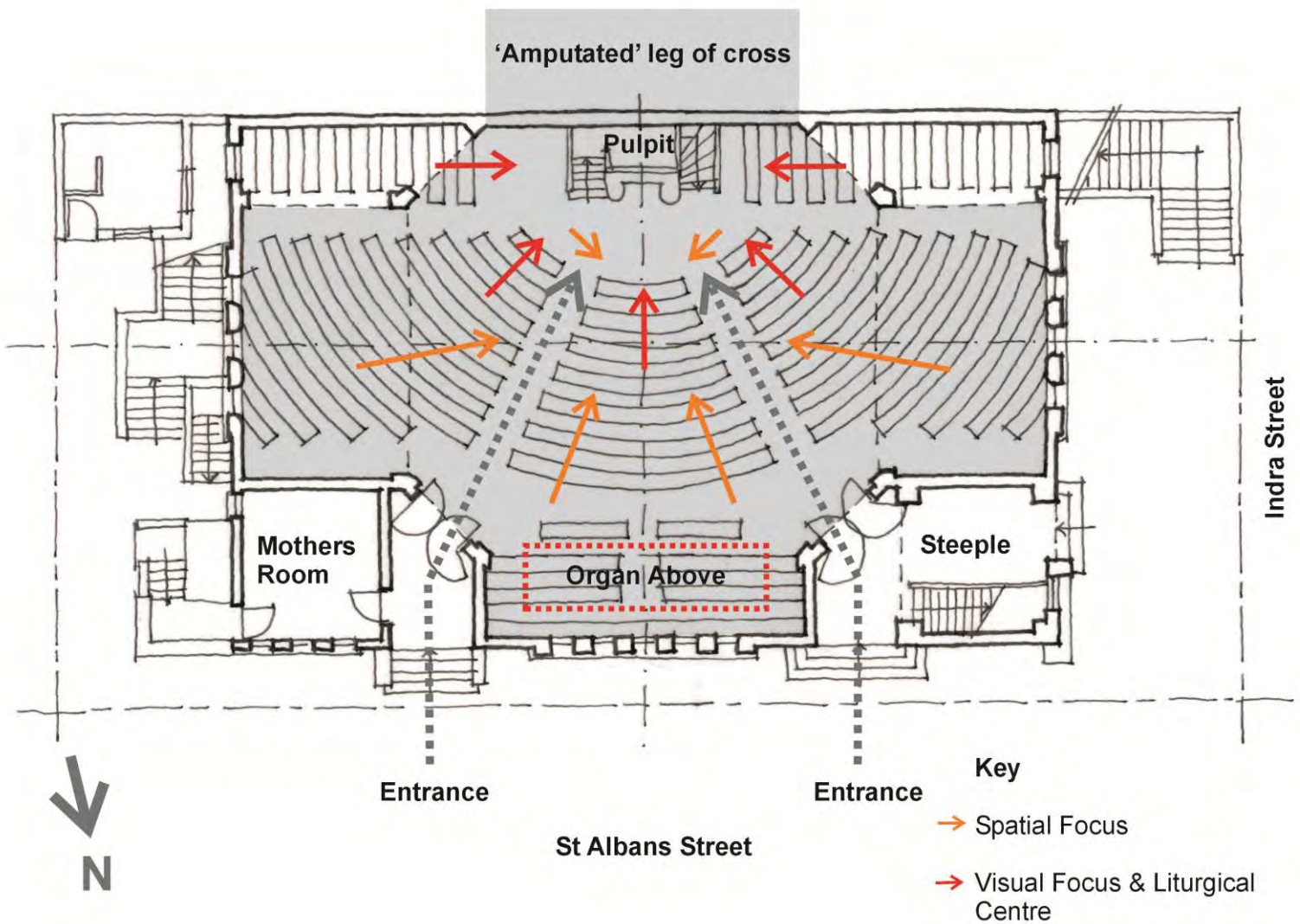


Figure 56 Analysis of the planning of the Johannesburg West NGK (after Geers & Geers Architects 1940, Drawing number 18/2 City of Johannesburg planning Archives)

Internally finishes were kept very simple, with the materials often left in their natural state. A face brick dado, using the same finish as the outside of the building, was used with the walls above plastered and painted. The pews were of timber and the floor carpeted in a burgundy carpet (Engelbrecht 2012 interview). Again the focus was on the pulpit. The wall behind this was finished in a grey marble with a simple geometric design. Calvinist reformed churches, similarly to mosques, do not use figurative decoration. As such the tall stained glass windows, which use a combination of clear, burgundy and orange/yellow obscured leaded glass, were of a simple geometric pattern.

4.4 A CHANGING CONTEXT

The “Greying” of Johannesburg

From the 1970’s an acute housing shortage prompted a number of upper middle class Indian and coloured families to move into what were then white group areas. The descriptive term “greying” was introduced to describe this process (Beavon 2004:213). In Johannesburg greying started in the inner city suburbs of Hillbrow to the north east and Mayfair to the west of the city centre (Pickard-Cambridge 1988:1).

The main reason for these individuals and families breaking the Apartheid state’s laws of segregation were economic rather than political. A housing shortage in coloured and Indian group areas was coupled with an oversupply of housing in white group areas (ibid:3). The reduction in transport costs and the high cost of accommodation in the limited number of apartments in the Indian Group area of Fordsburg made the risks associated with breaking the law economically justifiable. The illegal tenants, and later owners, made use of a white ‘nominee’ as a means of circumventing the law with the lease or the title of the house or flat would be under the name of the nominee. Nominees were occasionally paid, but acting as a nominee was often done as an act of resistance on their part (ibid:1).

In Mayfair the response of the white residents was surprising, with few complaints. Pickard-Cambridge (1988:4), in a contemporary publication by the South African Institute of Race Relations, suggests that this was because the new upper middle class Indian residents were from “well-paying jobs” and of “sober habits”, suggesting that they were probably preferred by the existing white residents, and particularly by landlords, to low income white tenants. For many of these Indian residents moving into Mayfair can be seen as a home coming, with many of them having lived in the adjacent suburbs of Fordsburg and the formerly Indian area of Pageview (ibid:8, 26).

The government tried to take action against illegal residents, mostly in response to complaints. Legal action was met with strong resistance with the formation of ActStop, an organisation set up to fight or delay evictions, increasing the cost and inconvenience to the government (ibid:vii, 2, 5). In 1982, in the State versus Govender, ActStop won an appeal against an eviction in Mayfair in the Supreme Court. The ruling of this case stated that a resident could not be evicted unless suitable alternative housing was supplied. The backlog in the supply of housing for the Indian and coloured community made this impossible, effectively opening the doors to more people moving into white group areas. With the greater confidence, the ‘illegal’ residents invested further in their accommodation, upgrading or even building new homes on existing sites. Property prices in Mayfair soared with the increased demand, increasing by 161 per cent in the area in 1986 comparison with a decline of 20 per cent across the rest of Johannesburg (ibid, Beavon 2004:219).

The End of Apartheid

With the repeal of the Group Areas Act in 1991 and the end of Apartheid, the Indian community that was already established in Mayfair and Fordsburg began to expand. The movement of the community into the surrounding suburbs, including Mayfair West, corresponded with the subsequent decline in the original Afrikaner community. The gradual movement of the community out of these suburbs could be seen as a reaction against the influx of the Indian community. Pickard-Cambridge (1988:25) however notes that during Apartheid the response of disapproving residents to the demographic changes in their neighbourhood was generally “apathetic”. Residents of Mayfair West interviewed concur with this view, with long term resident Mrs Magda Naude saying that these people generally don’t talk about feeling threatened or being disapproving as they don’t want to stand out (Naude 2012 interview).

Economics seems to have been the main driver behind the movement of the existing Afrikaner community. This assumption is concurred in interviews with members of both the mosque and church community. *Dominee* Van Rooyen noted that initial property sales by the Afrikaner community were probably driven by fear (Van Rooyen 2012 interview). This however seems to have changed. Akhtar Thokan, chairman of the mosque committee, added that the increased demand for properties by the Indian community had pushed prices up. The older Afrikaner residents “were able to get a much better price for their properties [by selling them to the new Indian community rather than the existing white community]” (Thokan 2012 interview). It became profitable to move.



Figure 57 Signs of change in Mayfair West – The former church hall of the Johannesburg West NGK converted into a mosque.

The slow movement of non-white residents into the area and their increased contact with the existing community seems to have softened the resolve of the Afrikaner community. Mrs Naude said that initial feelings of threat were largely due to ignorance on the part of the existing community (Naude 2012 interview). The result is that the members of the original community that stayed are, as *Dominee* Van Rooyen expressed, “more accepting, more liberal” (Van Rooyen 2012 interview).

With the movement of the NGK and other Afrikaner reformed church members out of the area, running so many congregations became problematic. This was, as noted by Mrs Naude, coupled with financial pressures felt by individual members. These pressures led to members no longer donating the customary tithe (ten per cent of their income) to the church for its running and maintenance (Naude 2012 interview). *Dominee* Van Rooyen said that the increasing running costs of maintaining a large number of older buildings, the dwindling community and attendance put extreme financial strain on the congregations (Van Rooyen 2012 interview). It was due to this that the existing congregations started to merge, reversing the trend of expansion of the 1930 and 1940. The first two congregations in the area to merge, in 1994, were the Brixton and Johannesburg West congregations. With two church buildings and one congregation, it was decided to sell off the one property. The decision of which building to keep was purely practical, explains Van Rooyen. The property of the Brixton church was larger, the building bigger and the hall on the same site (Van Rooyen 2012 interview).

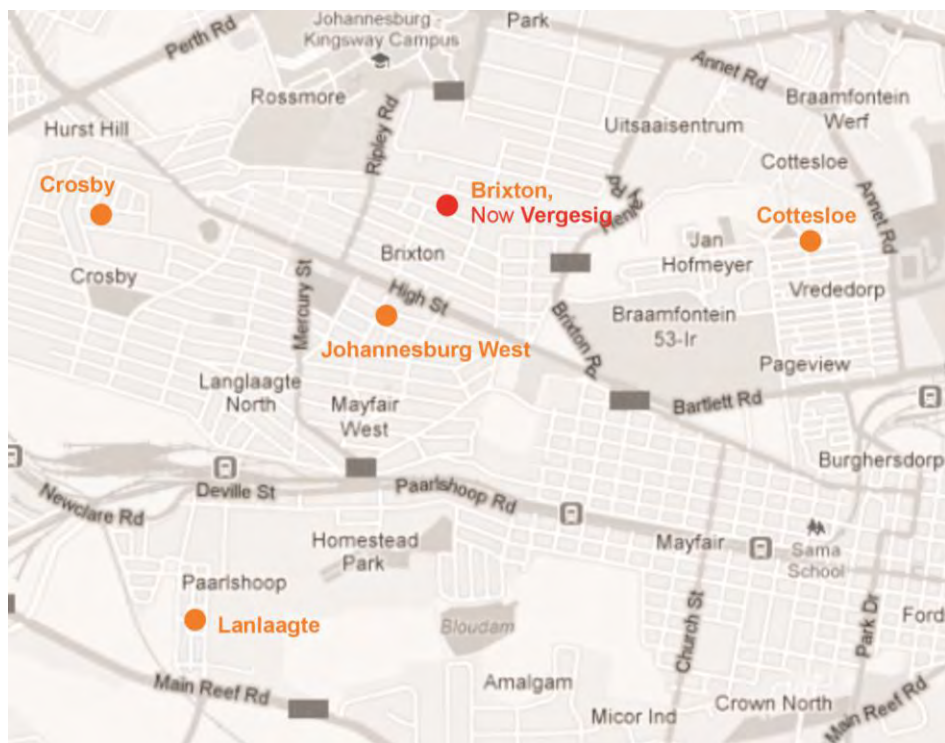


Figure 58 The merging of former NGK congregations to form the Vergesig congregation (after Google Earth 2012)

In 1995 the former Johannesburg West NGK building and its church hall were sold. The money from the sale was to be used, as noted by church elder Ms Engelbrecht, for furthering the work of the church (Engelbrecht 2012 interview). The church building was purchased by Mr Akhtar Thokan who had been looking for premises for the establishment of a mosque in the area. The merger of congregations and later sale of the Johannesburg West NGK was to set a pattern for the area. The sale, as Mr Thokan (2012 interview) noted, was “about economics, not religion”. Eventually the Brixton, Cottesloe, Crosby West, Langlaagte and Johannesburg West NGK congregations all merged and their redundant buildings sold. The new congregation rebranded itself as the *Vergesig Gemeente* (the View Congregation), based at the former Brixton NGK. It was seen as “a new start” for the church and community Ms Engelbrecht (2012 interview) noted.

4.5 MASJID-UL-ISLAM

There is a general pattern of the emergence of mosques in formerly white group areas. This process usually starts with the establishment of a *jamaat khana* by the community to fulfil their immediate needs. This is often in a space which is simply adapted for prayer without many of the usual characteristic features associated with a mosque, such as a *minaret* or a *mihrab*. As the local community grows funds are mobilised by the board of trustees or mosque committee, and a mosque is built. With time this is usually followed by a *madrassah* and, if the mosque is big enough even a hall (Dinath 2002:114 & 118). For Masjid-Ul-Islam the process was slightly different.

The mosque committee was looking for suitable premises for the establishment of a mosque in the Brixton, Mayfair or Mayfair West area. Members of the committee had been involved at various mosques in the area and had become dissatisfied with how they were run. We wanted “a place of our own”, Mr Thokan said, where the whole family would feel welcome. They felt that existing mosques were all too conservative, limiting the access of woman to mosques and the restriction of who could address the congregation and give the *khutbah* before *Jummah namaaz* (Thokan 2012 interview).

Dominee Van Rooyen says that he and the church congregation were actually happier to sell the former Johannesburg West NGK to become a mosque. “Since the building had always been used as a religious building the preference was that it continue as a religious building” he said, “using the building for a non-religious use would be sad, but in the end it is only a building” (Van Rooyen 2012 interview). While the NGK and apparently also the NHK, who sold one of their former churches in the area to become a Hindu temple, felt this way, Van Rooyen notes that the *Gereformede* (or *Dopper*) church did not share these sentiments. One of their former church buildings, located almost adjacent to the *Vergesig* NGK, was rather sold to be turned into a private home (Van Rooyen 2012 interview).



Figures 59-60 The former Brixton NHK building (left) converted into a Hindu temple and the former Brixton Gereformeede Church building turned into a house

Conversion

The conversion of the former church into a mosque has been surprisingly straight forward, with only minimal functional changes having been made. In order for the building to be orientated towards Mecca the internal spatial orientation of the building has been rotated by 180 degrees, now facing what would have been the wall behind the organ rather than the pulpit. The organ itself was removed by the church before the sale of the building. Fortuitously the street grid of this section of Mayfair West corresponds almost exactly to the required direction of *qibla* in Johannesburg, which is 13 degrees east of north. With the pews no longer being needed they were removed and the entire internal space carpeted for prayer, although with the raked floor for the original theatre seating of the church this can be described as being 'up hill'. In addition to this the church's former mother's room was turned into an ablutions area for the making of *wudu*.

Masjid-Ul-Islam prides itself in being "the only progressive 'Indian' mosque" in Johannesburg. As such woman are allowed full participation in the life of the mosque including praying in the main space of the mosque, serving on the mosque committee, giving the *khutbah* and leading *namaaz* (Thokan 2012 interview). To accommodate this a light weight timber screen has been installed dividing the men's and woman's sections of the mosque. No other changes have been made. There is no internal decoration and no *mihrab*. The gallery, all finishes, the marble backdrop to the pulpit, the stained glass windows and the steeple (with its clock and weather vane) all remain – although the steeple is now referred to as the *minaret*.

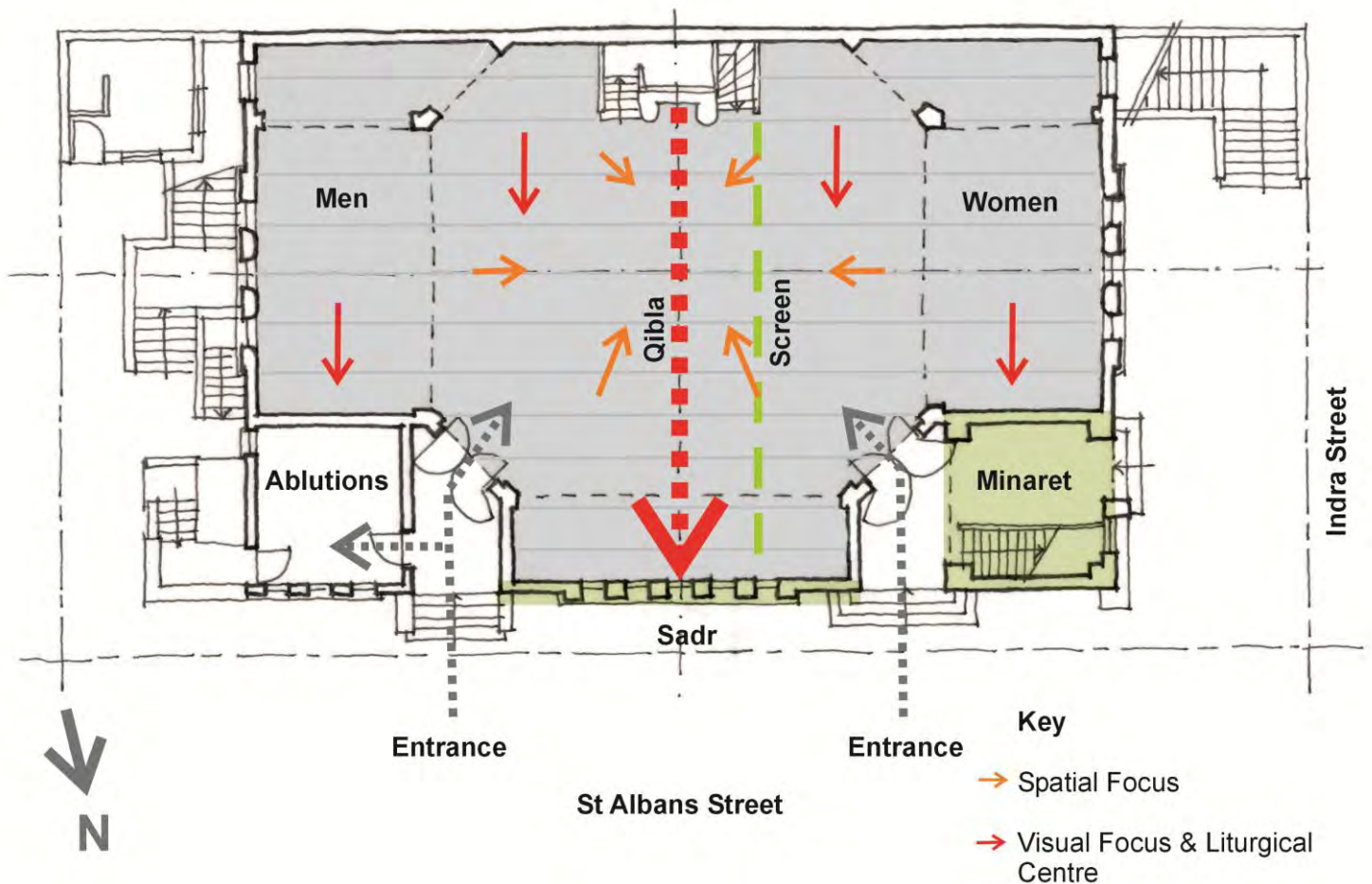
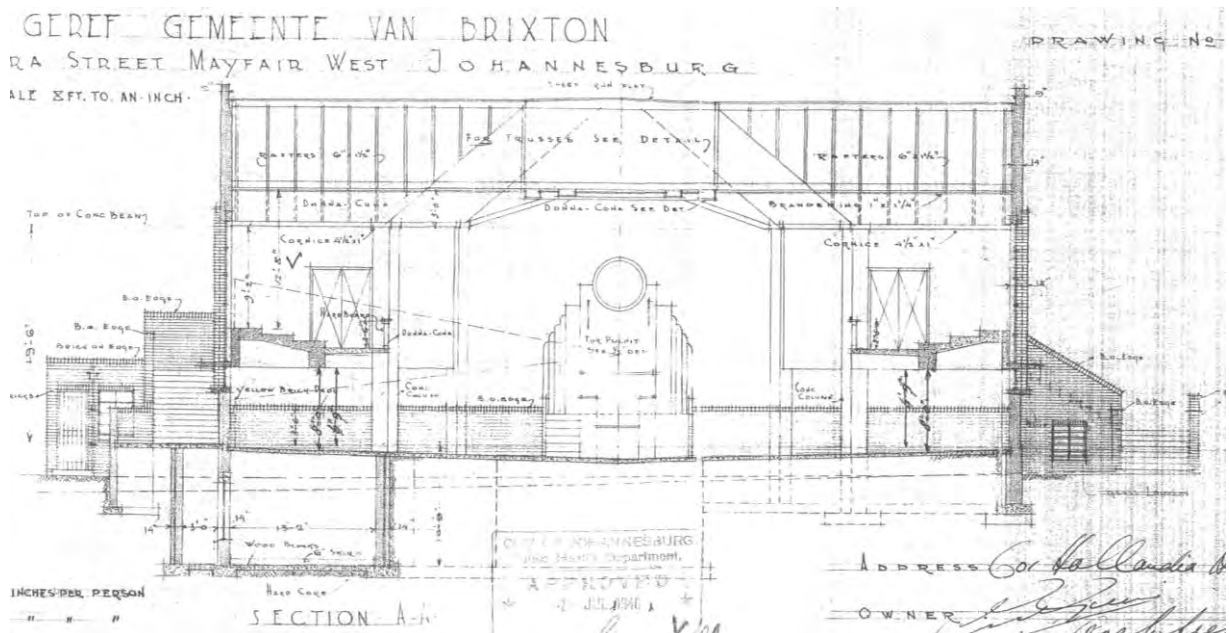


Figure 61 Analysis of the Plan of the Masjid-ul-Islam showing adaptations made (after Geers & Geers Architects 1940, Drawing number 18/2 City of Johannesburg planning Archives)

Na'eem Jeenah, current member of the mosque committee, explains that the philosophy of the founding mosque committee was that "simplicity be used as a bench mark for all decisions", with money being spent on the development of people rather than buildings. The notion of the committee was that the building "does not need to have a particular look" in order to be a mosque. It is a functional space (Jeenah 2012 interview). As congregant Reyhana Satar (2012 interview) notes "there is an economy about the reuse of the space, all that was needed was a new label". These concepts follow the traditions in the evolution of mosque architecture described in chapter 3. Firstly from a scriptural point of view there is the *hadith* that "all the world is a *masjid*", and that any temple built by a previous faith can be repurposed as a mosque because "there is no other god but Allah" (Kuban 1974:1 & 12). Secondly there is a long tradition of mosque architecture adapting and developing from local architectural traditions. This has led to the creation of various Islamic architectural styles that are embedded with the *genus loci* of their location.



Figures 62-63 Top, the only external sign that the building is now a mosque.

Bottom, section showing the pulpit.

Drawing number 18/1, Geers & Geers Architects, 1940.

City of Johannesburg planning Archives.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Visually, the Johannesburg West NGK is still very much in existence. No visible changes have been made to the outside of the building and, despite the immense social and demographic changes in the community, the building continues to act as a constant anchor for memory, meaning and identity. It can also be seen as a vehicle for the creation of a sense of continuity and belonging for its new congregation.

CHAPTER 5 HYBRIDITY

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO POST COLONIAL THEORY

Post-colonial theory, or perhaps ‘post-Apartheid’ as it should be known in the South African context, emerged following the end of European colonisation in the twentieth century. It arose out of the tensions that continue to exist between the imperial or colonial structures of power, identity and cultural knowledge and the indigenous systems of knowledge, identity and counter colonial resistance.

Post-colonial theory can be seen as a reflection and expression on the part of the formerly colonised peoples on this tension which continues to exist. It is often used in reference to the power relations that exist within issues of “cultural diversity, ethnic, racial and cultural difference” (Ashcroft 2006:1 & 5). ‘Hybridisation’ is one of the results of this tension. For the understanding of hybridity in the context of this study Apartheid is understood ideologically as a form of colonial oppression, with the term post-colonial being interchangeable with the term post-Apartheid.

5.2 HYBRIDITY AND THE HYBRID

Helen Tiffin (2006:99), in her study of post-colonial literature, comments that pre-colonial ‘purity’ can never be completely recovered. This, by implication, means that the post-colonial subject, environment, discourse and identity are more than their colonial or pre-colonial forms. They are hybridised.

What does hybridity, or being a hybrid, mean? The word originates in the biological sciences. It refers in the study of plants and animals to the ‘hybrid’ offspring of two separate species. Hybridity is effectively “cross-fertilization” (Ashcroft 2006:138) between two separate entities resulting in the creation of something new.

One of the main theorists in the post-colonial discourse of hybridity is Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity emerges out of an understanding of the differences between ‘cultural diversity’ and ‘cultural difference’. In his understanding cultural diversity speaks of many different cultures, each with their own nature and “pre-given state”, living side by side but not affecting or interacting with each other. Cultural difference on the other hand is seen as a statement on or of culture (Bhabha 2006:155). Cultural diversity implies the possibility of simultaneous coexistence between various cultures. Cultural difference however does not have the same implication of the possibility of unaffected coexistence (AlSayyad 2001:7). It is from this difference, this inability to coexist in their “pre-given state” without some sort of interaction, that hybridity emerges.

Where two cultures are forced to interact, such as occurs in the post-colonial condition, there is a tension that exists due to their cultural difference. Bhabha (2006:155) refers to this 'boundary' where "meanings and values are (mis)read or signs misappropriated" as the 'third space'. It is in this 'third space' between the tensions of different cultures that new fields of knowledge are produced (ibid) and that the hybrid emerges. In Bhabha's concept of hybridity the hybrid is not simply a mix or synthesis of two different components or cultures, the often used image of the cultural melting pot (AlSayad 2001:3). The hybrid does not resolve the tensions between the two cultures. It emerges as something separate from both as a result of the encounter of and difference between the two cultures (Ibid:6 & 7).

The characteristic of the hybrid is that it takes aspects of both of its 'parent' cultures. As Ashcroft *et al* (2006:137) note, in the post-colonial world the transaction of characteristics that make up the identity of the hybrid is not "a one way process". Aspects of the cultures of both the oppressor and the oppressed, coloniser and colonised will remain. From this it can be said that the hybrid, to use Young's (2006:158) description, "turns difference into sameness and sameness into difference". This process results in the hybrid belonging to both, but at the same time to neither, of its parent cultures. Young refers to this as a state of "impossible simultaneity" and a characteristic of the hybrid.

Ashcroft *et al* (2006:137) notes that this characteristic nature of hybrid post-colonial culture should be seen as its strength rather than as a weakness. Its simultaneity is very powerful allowing it to challenge existing prejudices and categorisation while not being a repetition of the past. A hybrid's perceived difference may be threatening, particularly to a dominant majority. This allows it to "challenge both the hegemony of the norm and the power of the dominant majority" (AlSayyad 2001:4).

5.3 HYBRIDITY AND IDENTITY

Identity implies a sense of belonging, a similarity to or connection with something outside of yourself. This sense of identity can come from various sources. AlSayyad (ibid) argues that identity is actually defined by difference rather than similarity. A person or a culture defines itself by how it differs from 'the other'. This is similar to how Edward Said explored the concept of orientalism which was used as much to define the identity of the occident as it was an understanding of the orient. The hybrid, being composed of heterogeneous sources, can therefore have complex and multiple senses of identity and of self (ibid:5).

The national identity of settler colonies, Ashcroft *et al* (2006:117) argues, are always constructed. This identity is formed in the face of a "sense of place and placelessness". The inhabitants are culturally and physically located between the colonial centre and the indigenous (colonised) people. The Afrikaner identity is such a construct. It was, as detailed in chapter 2, intentionally 'constructed'. This was a response to their 'colonisation' by the

British as well as the threat of Anglicisation after the Anglo Boer South African War. Can the Afrikaner identity however be considered to be hybrid? The conflict of identity, of “place and placelessness” discussed above, that settler colonies face and the constructed nature of their identities suggest that they could be considered as being a hybrid.

The identity of the immigrant, in this study the Muslim Indian community, has a similar duality. Novelist Salman Rushdie (2006:431) argues that this identity is “both plural and partial” being of two countries but not belonging to either. Muslim Indian culture in South Africa was however, under the legislated restrictions of Apartheid (as detailed in chapter 3), forced into becoming relatively isolated and insular. These are not conditions that are conducive to the emergence of a new hybrid culture or identity. The spaces that the community produced, in the form of the Transvaal Mosque, can however be interpreted as hybrid spaces, emerging as something separate to its origins. AlSayad (2001:16) reminds us that it is not necessary to have hybrid people (or a hybrid culture) in order to create hybrid spaces. In the case of the Transvaal Mosque it was the difference, and possible conflict, between building traditions that can be said to have resulted in its hybrid architectural form rather than a difference in cultures.

Post-Apartheid, in formerly white suburbs such as Mayfair-West, the necessary interaction and sense of cultural difference between communities is present for the emergence of hybridity in many forms. Perhaps what has, and is, emerging are new hybrid cultures, both Afrikaans and Muslim. The question of whether the spaces that have been created post-apartheid by these cultures, such as the Masjid-ul-Islam, are hybrid spaces is interrogated further below.

5.4 HYBRID SPACE

What is hybrid space? If we again use Bhabha’s (2006:155) definition for the emergence of hybridity, hybrid space would emerge at the boundary or overlap between two different cultures that are forced into some sort of interaction. Bhabha’s entire concept of hybridity is to an extent spatialised. It revolves around the concept of the ‘third space’ as the place of the emergence of hybridity. While he may have been speaking of a metaphorical rather than physical space between cultures, this can be quite easily applied to physical space and space making.

In the post-Apartheid city areas of new contact between previously separated ‘different’ cultures become the necessary boundary and space for ‘tension’ from which hybridity can emerge. The space where this takes place can therefore be considered a physical manifestation of the concept of ‘third space’. The ‘third space’ itself is not necessarily a hybrid space, but rather a place in which hybrid spaces and cultures can emerge. From this understanding the suburbs of Mayfair, Mayfair West and Brixton, with their newly mixed

post-Apartheid communities, can be considered as examples of Bhabha's 'third space'. The spaces that emerge from this environment, such as the Masjid-ul-Islam, could therefore be considered to be hybrid spaces.

In established suburbs with an existing history and cultural significance the emergence of hybrid spaces may be seen by some as threatening. They do however offer many opportunities. With change, the loss of historic built fabric often results in a cultural loss (Latham 2000:6). Often, as will be explored in chapter 6, built fabric acts as an anchor for memory, with memory an essential element of cultural identity. The hybrid's characteristic of simultaneity allows for both continuity and discontinuity in the urban fabric, preferable to complete loss. As AlSayyad (2001:ix) notes, hybrid environments achieve a sense of sameness and difference. This sense of continuity contributes to the cultural continuity of the community with cultural cross referencing creating a sense of mutual respect (Latham 2000:6).

When one cultural group leaves an area, such as in Mayfair, Mayfair West and Brixton, they leave behind physical remains in the built environment. Kirsten Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherford, in their piece 'Fossil Psyche', refer to these remains from a colonial past as 'fossils' (2006:142). The former Johannesburg West NGK can be considered as one such fossil. Without their original communities and use these fossils lose some of their original significance and power. This "ambivalence of fossils" is seen by Holst Peterson and Rutherford as their great potential. It allows for the new users of these spaces to visualise new possibilities and meanings for them with the "creative recognition" of the existing fossil giving the new space new layered significance (ibid).

The ambivalent potential of fossil space has strong parallels with the nature of the hybrid. What emerges from the creative reuse of these existing spaces is more than the simple mixing of two different cultures or architectures. The act of recognition by the new users gives birth to something new, a hybrid space, which represents both continuity and discontinuity in the cultural and the urban environment.

CHAPTER 6 MEMORY AND IDENTITY

6.1 MEMORY

In the social sciences memory is defined as the act of recalling a past experience or is used as a descriptor for the recalled experience. It is “a residue of past experiences that somehow stuck or become active in the mind and thus in our sense of ourselves” (Crisson 2005:xii). The concept of memory, particularly of contemporary society, has been explored in detail by French historian Pierre Nora and German born cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen. They understand memory as more than just a person’s ability to recall the past. Nora (1989:8) describes memory as “life, borne by living societies founded in its name” adding that it is something that is in constant flux, “open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived”. Memory provides coherence to people’s lives, it structures their identity. Huyssen (1995:3) describes memory as “the fissure between the past and the present” and is something that, as described by Nora before, is alive. This idea of memory as the fissure or space between is not dissimilar conceptually to Bhabha’s ‘third space’ as the place in which hybridity arises.

The dynamic nature of memory, as described by both Huyssen and Nora, is due to the fact that memory does not simply exist. Memory is an act and not something physical, although it can ‘attach’ itself to objects and places. As such memory has to exist in the present, even though it is a representation of the past (ibid). It is what Nora refers to as “a bond tying us to the eternal present” (Nora 1989:8). Without “the will to remember” on the part of a person or community memory would not exist (ibid:19). This genesis of memory is what gives it its nature, described by Huyssen (2000:38) as being transitory, unreliable and prone to forgetting.

Forgetting is a very important part of memory. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, said that “memory and forgetting are indissolubly linked to each other, that memory is but another form of forgetting, and forgetting a form of hidden memory” (ibid:27). Forgetting becomes a mean of filtering memory, keeping what is important for the formation of identity. Spanish film maker Luis Buñuel felt that you have to actually lose your memory, to forget, to realise how important memory is, saying that “life without memory is no life at all” (Huyssen 1995:1). This juxtaposition is what makes memory so dynamic and subject to change.

Memory can generally be divided into two categories, collective and individual. Collective or public memory is the common memory of a group, be it a society, a family or an institution. It is the working of minds together in society, often subconsciously, giving groups social structure and identity (Olick 2008:7). This memory is considered by many

theorists, Nora and Huyssen included, as being the main driver of identity, both individual and communal. Collective memory even has the strength to produce memories in individuals of events that they have not directly experienced. Maurice Halbwachs, the philosopher who developed the concept of collective memory, argued that it is not possible for clear individual memory outside of the individual's group context. He stated that "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (ibid).

Individual memory is the term used to describe a person's own memories. Individual memory is made up of a composite of collective memories and personal memories, be they from past experience or histories. They are the "active past" that forms our individual identities within society (ibid). Nora (1989:16) argues that in modern societies as collective memory is lost through rapid social change and reduced shared experience it is increasingly individual memory, rather than collective memory that is structuring identity.

Both of these types of memory can come in various forms. Firstly there is what Nora refers to as real or true memory. This memory is unselfconscious and accidental in its recollection. It is the sort of memory that is held in gestures and habits, traditions and inherent self-knowledge. This is the memory from which traditions emerge and social identity is born (Nora 1989:8 & 13).

Autobiographical or lived memory is memory that develops from direct experience. This is the sort of memory that is used to construct local memories and identities, creating individuality in an increasingly global world (Huyssen 2000:38, Olick 2008:7). Its nature makes this type of memory to be continually evolving and subject to individual or political change. In contrast to this is historical or archival memory. This type of memory cannot be directly experienced. It is the recollection of a distant past from which one is by definition removed (ibid). This distance makes historical or archival memory closer in nature to history, a concept which will be explored further.

Regardless of what form memory takes, be it collective or individual, autobiographical or archival, it does not simply exist. Memory is not the past. It is an act, a representation, of a real, or sometimes imagined, past. It is something that has to be created and can just as easily be forgotten and disappear. Memory belongs to the present (Huyssen 1995:2-3).

6.2 MEMORY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

There is currently what is referred to as a global obsession with memory. Both Huyssen and Nora feel that this obsession is a sign of crisis. They feel that memory is spoken of so much because “there is so little of it left” (Nora 1989:7). This is said to be a result of the nature of modern society. Memory has become associated with the authentic and the personal, with a slower pace of life, a greater sense of certainty and continuity (Crinson 2005:xii). This rise in the prominence of memory, even the “privileging of memory over history” as Huyssen sees it (1995:6), is read by many as a response to globalisation, the temporality of modernity and the effects of this on personal and collective memory and identity (ibid, Huyssen 2000:27).

Nora similarly attributes the obsession with memory to modernity, especially today’s globalised, fast paced, information and communication heavy society, which has caused a break in the continuity of traditional culture with the emergence of a mass globalised culture. This break with the past is symbolised by the end of colonialism and the subsequent emergence of new societies. This breakdown of traditional societal structures is characterised by the rise in multiculturalism and the decline of the nation state with its associated ideologies as the source of identity (Olick 2008:8, Nora 1989:7, Huyssen 2000:22). This disjunction with the past, coupled with a discontinuity of lived and communal memory, has led to a crisis of identity. We live in fear of forgetting the past, of losing our identity and sense of self.

The memory, and associated identity, that emerges from this disconnect with the past is an attempt at creating “spatial and temporal anchoring” in a fast paced contemporary society (ibid:36). What is created is however seldom lived or real memory. Society today relies on an “intensely retinal and powerfully televisual memory” (Nora 1989:17). It is archival, recorded and replayed back to us in place of lived experience.

Amnesia

The current obsession with memory is prompted by, in Huyssen’s opinion, a fear of forgetting, “an intense public panic of oblivion”. As previously noted memory is by its nature associated with forgetting. Does a boom in memory therefore come with a reciprocal boom in forgetting? Contemporary memory culture is accused of just that. It is accused of creating amnesia (Huyssen 2000:27 & 28). It is however not the only agent of amnesia. Mass media, globalisation and the fast pace of modernity are all accused of being “inherently amnesiac” (Crinson 2005:xii, Huyssen 1995:7).

Modern society’s response to the threat of amnesia is what is referred to as “self-musealization”. This is a process of active memorialising and archiving of ‘memories’ by

individuals, institutions and states – an attempt to protect and create memory and identity (Huysen 2000:24, 35). All of this remembering has its dangers. Real, lived memories are generally not intentionally created. They are unselfconscious, almost accidental in their recollection. They are by their nature difficult to memorialise and archive.

How do you decide what is worth remembering and what should be forgotten? It is often only with hindsight that real importance can be seen. Nora fears that the anxiety of forgetting, of the uncertainty of modern identity and the future, leads to everything, “even the most humble testimony, the most modest vestige” being treated as something that should be remembered and even memorialised (Nora 1989:13). How do you sift out real memory, meaning and identity when there is so much being archived?

If memory and forgetting are indivisibly linked, where in contemporary societies obsession with memory does the forgetting lie? If everything is being archived, historicised, to protect against forgetting, real lived memories are no longer going to be created. All that will be left is a distanced historical memory rather than something with which you have some sort of personal connection. All that will be left is “paper memory” (ibid).

Memory and History

It is important at this point to make the distinction between memory and history. Halbwachs describes history as an “instrumental and over rationalised version of the past” while memory is “intimately linked to collective experience” (Crison 2005:xiii). History is a connection to a past to which we have no relation to, it is dead, whereas memory is experienced, it is living (Olick 2008:7).

Real, or lived, memory is in permanent evolution. It is a spontaneous dialogue between remembering and forgetting, accommodating only the historical facts that suit it. Memory is specific to the group that creates it and to whom it gives identity. It exists in the present and is anchored to physical reality, be that buildings, spaces, objects, images or gestures (Nora 1989:8, 9). History by contrast is a reconstruction or representation of the past based on analysis and criticism. It belongs to everyone and no one which is “its claim to universal authority”. History is about the continuation between past points in time. It is about the changes and relationships between things (ibid).

With memory in modern society being more distant and no longer lived, society has, Nora argues, started to use history to organise its understanding of the past. Collective memory has in his opinion become “nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces” (Nora 1989:8). The resulting memory is something less than the lived memory of the past. It is located somewhere between memory and history. This memory is no longer

spontaneously or accidentally created, it is deliberate and constructed often relying more strongly on physical sites of memory to anchor it (ibid:13).

The Politics of Memory

The nature of memory enables it to be used politically. As previously mentioned memory does not simply exist. It is created, the result of the act of remembering. Memory is therefore a representation or interpretation of the past and as such is subject to change and evolution. This constructed nature of memory, coupled with forgetting, allows it to be “shaped” over time through political processes (Huysen 1995:2, 71). This allows memory to be used as a political tool, especially in the construction of national identities (Crinson 2005:xii).

Benedict Anderson refers to a nation as an “imagined community” (Ashcroft 2006:117), a direct reference to the often constructed nature of national identities. “A nation, like race is a political construct rather than a given essential character” (Huysen 1995:71), and as such is subject to change and contestation. In new nations, such as post-Apartheid South Africa, memory is used both to construct identity and to create a sense of justified authority. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission can be seen as an exercise in the collection of memories, often difficult and traumatic, to be used as a means of constructing the post-Apartheid identity. Huysen (2000:26) notes that these memories are then used for “securing the legitimacy and future of their emergent polity by finding ways to commemorate and adjudicate past wrongs”, often memorialised as physical sites of memory.

6.3 SITES OF MEMORY

Memory is often anchored to physical objects and places. It is a characteristic of memory to “take root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects” (Nora 1989:9). These objects and acts are known as sites of memory. They act as mnemonic devices, forming an important part of how a person or community locates its memory and formulates its identity. Italian architect Aldo Rossi argues that a city remembers through its buildings, its physical sites of memory (Crinson 2005:xiii), with “a city without buildings [being]...like a man without memory” (Latham 2000:6).

Nora has explored the concept of sites of memory, what he refers to as *lieux de mémoire*, in great detail. In contemporary society and memory culture, he argues that sites of memory have risen to prominence because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, which are environments of real lived memory. They have become physical points of memory in a landscape of amnesia. As Nora notes identity is buttressed upon these sites, yet they only

exist because of the threat that modern society poses to the existence of real lived memory (Nora 1989:7, 12).

Contemporary sites of memory can be seen as a response to the predominance of archival rather than lived memory. They are often given their meaning through history, emerging as a dialogue between memory and history. The result of this is that these sites do not have the spontaneous and evolving character of lived memory but rather the deliberate and analytical nature of history. As Nora notes the less memory is experienced or lived, the more it and its sites of memory are experienced superficially through “exterior scaffolding and outward signs” (ibid:12, 13, 19).

Nora has devised various categories for the understanding and definition of sites of memory. The first is what he refers to as a material site. This site will contain or even be a physical relic from the past which has gained a “symbolic aura”. The second category is a functional site. These are often related to and are needed for some sort of ritual purposes, a church for example. The third category is that of a symbolic site. This site is representative of a larger group and is usually a concentrated site of memory. Symbolic sites often break “temporal continuity” though their existence, a fixed point in a sea of change. Nora argues that every site of memory has a mix of the varying characteristics of each of these categories (ibid:19).

The main function of a site of memory is, in Nora’s (ibid) words, “to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial.” It acts as an anchor for identity. Memory however is not fixed. It is constantly changing and evolving. Memory is not a historical fact which can be archived, nor can it be permanently secured through physical monuments or memorials (Huysen 2000:38). Memory has to be lived.

6.4 IDENTITY

Identity is how an individual or groups defines themselves, their individuality and connections. As such memory is very important as a means of constructing and maintaining a sense of identity. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall describes it, “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves in, the narratives of the past” (Huysen 1995:1), it is a sum of all of our memories. Identity is generally understood to mean a sense of sameness or belonging. It is usually however defined by difference rather than likeness, requiring contact with something outside of itself in order to give it meaning (AlSayyad 2001:4).

Identity takes many forms. Mirroring memory, you have personal, collective identities as well as national identities. These identities are formed from memories of biographical

experiences, Nora's real or lived memory. Identities are created from various sources, each with their own attributes and identifiers. It is from the combination of these that identity is formed, with some identities, such as national identities, often being consciously constructed (ibid).

Memory is used in the formation of identity, and must be maintained if the sense of identity is to be sustained. As the memory changes and evolves, so will the sense of identity. As such the existence of sites of memory becomes important for the maintenance of identity, but only because the memories that these sites represent are threatened in contemporary society (Nora 1989:12). These sites become identifiers or markers for that identity.

It is important in the context of this dissertation to understand two particular types of identity, that of the settler and that of the diaspora. In this study they are represented by the Afrikaner and the Muslim Indian communities. Both of these groups have particular identity traits or characteristics identified in post-colonial theory. It is necessary to understand these traits to understand the impact that post-Apartheid change has had on these communities.

The Settler

The identity of the settler and "settler colony cultures" is quite complex. In many ways the identity of the settler colony, in this case the Afrikaner, is a prime example of the constructedness of national identities. This identity is constructed from memories of 'home', through the contrast with the identity of the indigenous peoples and out of what is referred to as a "sense of place and placelessness". The settler colony wants to differentiate itself from both the colonial centre and the indigenous people who bring into question any sense of belonging or legitimacy (Ashcroft 2006:117).

For the Afrikaner community this identity was only consciously developed when, as discussed in chapter two, their way of life and culture was threatened by the British occupation of South Africa (1806) and of the former Boer republics after the Anglo Boer South African War (1899 – 1902). As has been shown sites of memory were consciously developed as ways of anchoring and legitimising this identity. These ranged from the early twentieth century boom in Afrikaans language literature to Moerdijk and others' search for a new NGK architecture. Perhaps the ultimate site of memory for Afrikaner identity, constructed purely as a symbol of memory, identity and national pride is the Voortrekker Monument. This is an example of what Nora would refer to as a primarily symbolic site, with its main function being the anchoring of memory and identity.

The NGK buildings and the distinctive architectural styles that were developed can be understood as primarily functional sites of memory due to their use for religious ritual. They

also have some of the qualities of a material site of memory, particularly with long term usage, as well as characteristic of a symbolic site of memory, through the symbolic references incorporated into their architectural design.

The description of the memory culture and identity of the settler colony, with reference to the Afrikaner people above, is in many respects the description of the emergence of hybridity. The multifaceted memory, being both African and European, resulting from tension and conflict arguably resulted in a hybrid identity.

The Diaspora

Memory and the resultant identity of the post-colonial diaspora are, like that of the settler, complex and multifaceted. The emergence of diaspora due to labour practices or economic pressures and opportunities, is one of the hallmarks of colonialism. As explored in chapter three, the South African Muslim population was largely created through this form of inter colonial immigration, with the largely Indian Johannesburg Muslim population immigrating to South Africa from the late 1800's as traders.

The communal identity of the diaspora is strongly connected to memory, initially as lived memory but, for subsequent generations, as archival or historical memory. As author Salman Rushdie (2006:428) explains "for an immigrant – it is the present that is foreign, and the past is home, albeit a lost home is a lost city in the mist of lost time." Initially identity is fixed to the homeland, often through a romanticised and sanitised form of memory. As such distance, both physically and temporally, makes the smallest "shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragments made trivial things seem like symbols, the mundane acquire numinous qualities" (ibid:429).

This can perhaps be seen in the early mosque architecture that was produced by the Transvaal Muslim community. The architectural language was reminiscent of 'home' and as such acted as an identifier for an Indian diaspora identity. Rushdie (ibid) describes this sort of identity as being plural, being of two countries, and partial, not fully belonging to either country. As a diaspora community lives in a 'foreign' country and new generations are born in that country, lived or real memory and its resultant identity is of the new country rather than of the homeland. Over time the homeland is only identified through archival memory. This inevitable move away from an 'Indian' identity may account for the apparent end of the building tradition of Transvaal mosque architecture. The sites of memory that new mosques embody then speak to the new identities of their users. The trend towards a pan Islamic style of architecture could perhaps be read as a result of globalisation, being a site of memory for a global rather than local memory. Chapter seven will explore what the meaning of Masjid-ul-Islam, as a converted NGK building, is for its community and how this affects their sense of identity.

Post-Apartheid Identity

Identity in post-Apartheid South Africa is constructed from a vastly mixed, often conflicting and traumatic group of collective memories. Huyssen (1995) argues that post-colonial national identities need to be heterogeneous in order to remain viable with the often multicultural communities that they represent. A singular fixed national identity is not possible.

In post-Apartheid South Africa traumatic memory, such as those collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, are used to construct a shared national identity as much as cultural commonalities. It has been argued that this memory is used to justify political legitimacy. It can also be argued that it acts as a means of counter balancing the forgetting that acts such as reconciliation can inadvertently create (Huyssen 2000:25, 26). The resultant identity, or perhaps identities, that are borne out of conflict and difference, situated at the boundary between memory and forgetting, can be best described as being hybrid.

CHAPTER 7 QUESTIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Cultural significance is a personal interpretation and statement on value. It is an accumulation of values based on a combination of memory, identity and history. The concept of 'heritage' as used in contemporary practice centres on the question of what is significant and why. This judgement or perception of value is what differentiates heritage from history. The personal nature of significance however means that it is not fixed. It can and will change. In a similar manner to how the personal nature of memory is said to give it life (Olick 2008:7), this characteristic of heritage and significance makes it possible to consider them both as being alive. In environments that are in a state of flux changes in identity and the loss of collective memories all affect interpretations of significance. This in turn affects heritage values. Suburbs such as Mayfair West and buildings such as the Johannesburg West NGK / Masjid-ul-Islam are examples of these changing (or changed) environments.

In heritage discourse the assigning of significance or value to an object or place can be seen as the confirmation of it as a site of memory, Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989:7). It is a characteristic of memory to "take root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects" (Nora 1989:9), with these sites becoming physical manifestations of that memory.

As explored previously memory is specific to the group that creates it and to whom it gives identity. Significance is similarly connected to those whose value judgements generated it. In order to explore the changes in significance and value of the former Johannesburg West NGK building it is essential to look at what it means to both its original and current users. It is their personal connections and interpretations that greatly determine the buildings significance, far more so than its history or the value of its architecture ever will. It is these values that make it a site of memory.

7.2 MEMORY & THE PERCEPTIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The changes in the significance of the Johannesburg West NGK / Masjid-ul-Islam have been explored from many points of view including the institutional, the personal, those of past and current communities. In order to assess the change in significance it is important to explore what each group's expectations of the other's understanding of significance are. The value or significance placed on something is often closely connected to a sense of identity and personal history. As was explored in previous chapters identity can be understood as a sense of self, of belonging or connection. It is however, as argued by AlSayyad (2001:4), usually defined by difference rather than similarity. As such identity is often defined outside of ourselves, by how we differ from others. The exploration of how

the different groups perceive the others' view of significance can therefore be seen as an insight of how they identify and understand the value of the building themselves.

Institutional Stance

The accepted stance of the NGK and other Christian churches, even Judaism (Itzkin 2012 interview), is that the church is the community, the congregation who worships together, rather than the space in which the act of worship takes place. "Buildings serve as a place for people to congregate" *Dominee* van Rooyen explains, "a place where this connection with God can exist" (Van Rooyen 2012 interview) but, as church congregant Mrs Magda Naude (2012 interview) explains, from a Christian perspective "God does not live in a building". The relationship between the NGK and their church buildings is perhaps best summed up by Na'eem Jeenah (2012 interview), director of NGO the Africa Middle East Centre and mosque congregant, when he observes that "Christianity seems to have a more functional relationship to buildings". Once a church has been deconsecrated what remains is just a building.



Figure 64 The former Johannesburg West NGK, a constant in the changing environment of Mayfair West.

In Islam a mosque cannot be destroyed or closed. As Jeenah (2012 interview) explains “once a building is a mosque it is always a mosque”, although, as mosque congregant Reyhana Satar (2012 interview) adds, it is through the daily ritual of prayer that the space gains its meaning and significance. This significance, as explored in chapter 3, does not however reside in the physical materiality of the building, but in its continual functional use (Le Roux 1998:115).

Although the official views on the continued significance of the built structure, space and place of where worship occurs is quite different between the two religions, the issue of functionality is common. In the eyes of Christianity and Islam a place of worship is of significance if it is functionally relevant.

Personal Interpretations

Cultural significance is not however determined by an institutional stance. Being a personal interpretation and statement of value, it is more often defined by the individual or community. Personal views are most directly expressed by the outbursts of anger recorded in the media over the sale of former NGK buildings (Molosankwe 2012a) or the death threats received by *Dominee* Van Rooyen as a result of these transactions. These expressions of anger are all, as he explains, from people who are outside the community, who do not directly interact with the everyday issues of living in a changing environment (Van Rooyen 2012 interview). Eric Itzkin (2012 interview), the Deputy Director of Immoveable Heritage for the City of Johannesburg, feels that these outbursts are the result of a “fear of the loss of heritage”, possibly combined with elements of prejudice and ignorance.

The members of the church congregation interviewed as part of the research for this dissertation agreed with the accepted Christian attitude that “it’s just a building” (Engelbrecht 2012 interview). Their comments do however show that their individual as well as collective memories, and therefore significances, are attached to the building. They do not explicitly speak of these as cultural significance or as a statement of heritage value. For them it is a collection of memories that have formed a part of their personal histories and shaped their identities.

For Van Rooyen, as the last *dominee* of the Johannesburg West NGK and as official head of the new *Vergesig* congregation, the building has come to represent many things. “When I pass by the building it reminds me of my time that I was there” he says, “there was a sense of community. You would walk to church and people would gather outside before and after the service. People would chat about personal stuff, about their lives.” For Van Rooyen the building holds special memories. “Johannesburg West was my first parish. I was inducted there as a pastor. I started my ministry there” he recalls, “When I see the building now I

think of my beginnings.” Van Rooyen passes the building daily on his way to the new church and remarks that there is nothing that “visually disturbs you”. When looking at the building “I am able to recall my fond memories” he explains. “I appreciate it that the building has not been changed”, explaining that he is unsure what he would feel if the appearance of the building had been dramatically changed (Van Rooyen 2013 interview).

Van Rooyen muses that the attachment that a person has with a building is much like that you would have with a piece of art or design. It is something very personal and can have a profound effect on you. He notes that it was difficult to re-establish himself as a pastor at the new church.

“I liked the building because you felt that you were in the middle with people all around you. Now in the new church you feel very far away. There was a far greater interaction with the congregation because of the form of the building. You could get a personal connection and have eye contact. It was very nice when you are trying to communicate with the people. It was like being an actor in an intimate theatre. This all helped with the connection with the congregation” (ibid).

“It is difficult to be a church in this area. There are so many people from so many backgrounds and cultures” he explains. A church’s style and approach to religion needs to be “adapted to suit the community”. “God put me here for a reason”, he says, “maybe it is to deal with the diverse social circumstances of the community” (Van Rooyen 2012 interview).

Van Rooyen admits that the process of being interviewed and thinking about what the building, which he still passively interacts with on a daily basis means to him, has been a valuable opportunity to reflect. He admits to liking the old “high church” style of worship and the ritual and ceremony symbolised in the building but feels that “during Apartheid buildings were used as a means of keeping people apart” with the church building being representative of this. Although there is some sense of loss, he explains, the building is a very “powerful symbol”. To him it represents the changes in area but more importantly “the interactions of us as people”. It is about “the connections that exist between different religions, the connectedness between religions and the wonders of everybody before God” (Van Rooyen 2012 & 2013 interviews).

The congregation shows a similar mix of sentiments. For Magda Naude, a former deacon at the Johannesburg West NGK, the church is part of her history. “It reminds you of who you are and where you come from” she explains. “I feel very grateful that I can show my children, that it still looks the same.” Naude joined the former Johannesburg West congregation at a very traumatic time in her life and remembers being accepted into the congregation. “You can go anywhere to pray” she explains, “You choose to go where it is

convenient, in walking distance". "At Johannesburg West you felt welcomed" (Naude 2013 interview).

Her memories of the building are both bittersweet. Her daughter Deana was confirmed there and her late husband was buried from the building.

"My husband's funeral was held at the church about 6 months before the church closed in 1993. I will never forget it. Even today I remember every detail, from where we parked to the weather. It was bitterly cold. It was the coldest that I have been in my entire life" (ibid).

For Naude the history lives through material substance. When thinking about the appearance of the building she comments on the beautiful colour of the bricks and the warmth of the timber pews. "The sense of generations before is important" she explains, of many people having used the building, having sat on that pew before. Rituals are similarly important. "When you go to the church you get into certain habits. You always pick the same entrance and always sit in the same chair". When reflecting on the move to the new church in the former Brixton NGK building he explains that "all of the things with roots", the pews, the lampshades were taken with the congregation. Not knowing that the Brixton NGK building is by the same architects as the Johannesburg West NGK or that the buildings were built only three years apart she explains that to her "The Brixton church is more or less the same", something that she attributes with making the move seem easier. "Maybe the move to Brixton was easier because the building is so similar. The same benches, the same lamps. It makes you feel at home" (ibid).

Naude and her daughter, Deana, place great significance in the appearance and character of the area of Mayfair West. "It is a pity for me that the style of the suburb [the built environment] has to change" she explains, "I think that it is important to keep the old character of the suburb. I get a bit heart sore about the visual changes". Being the last member of the former Afrikaner community left on her street this is perhaps an expression of sorrow over the loss of the community she grew up in. For her the unchanged appearance of the Johannesburg West NGK gives a sense of continuity even though the new *Vergesig* church is now "home". When talking about the change she admits that "changes are easier for the young members of the community. They don't have the baggage. They don't know any better". The former Johannesburg West NGK is "a landmark, a beacon. Everyone knows that tower" she explains "We have got used to it being a mosque. It looks the same from the outside and people don't talk about it anymore" but "if you took it down we would lose a landmark. It would matter to people if it were gone. It would worry you" (Naude 2012 & 2013 interviews).

Church elder Tersia Engelbrecht's family and personal memories have been connected with the former Johannesburg West NGK for as long as she can remember. "I was baptised and grew up in the Johannesburg West NGK which my grandparents attended" Engelbrecht explains. "My grandfather was buried from there; both my mom and my gran were confirmed there" she explains, "I still remember my first day at the church. My father took me. I was 4 or 5 years old. We sat at the back of the church. I remember how the organ pipes caught my eye and the old ladies with hats. I also remember the cloth on the pulpit. It was maroon with golden writing" (Engelbrecht 2012 & 2013 interview).

For Engelbrecht many of life's most important and memorable events happened at the former church.

"I met my first real close friend at the church; I fell in love in the church for the first time... There were very special people there... it felt like being part of a bigger family. I still love that church. It is nice to be able to float back and remember these things." (Engelbrecht 2013 interview).

Engelbrecht grew up in the area but moved to the North of Johannesburg a few years ago after the death of her parents. She still however attends church services at the *Vergesig* congregation. She keeps coming back for the "community and family" with the environment being important to her. "Mayfair West is comfortable for me" she says. When referring to the former Johannesburg West NGK she says that "it was a lovely building" (Engelbrecht 2012 interview).

The former church building "is something I can always go back to" she explains, "It is a steady beacon in my life". When looking at the building she can picture the sun shining through the stained glass windows in the early mornings, how birds would come inside and sit on the chandeliers or looking up at the clock and the weather vane as a child. "All of these things are signs for my memory" she says "the building represents the beauty that occurred within it" (Engelbrecht 2013 interview).

Engelbrecht is not however angry about the changes that have occurred. "When the Indian people moved into the area they had to travel far to go to mosque. This was not fair" she sympathises, "Muslim or not they become your community." For her the whole of the community and built environment of Mayfair West has become a site of memory to which she returns to and fixes her identity to. This acts as an antidote for the self-confessed "fast track" world she now finds herself in. "The fact that it is now a mosque is not important to the memories" she explains. Even after having "cut her ties" with the old building by moving to the *Vergesig* church she explains that you can never completely let go. "You still own a part of the building" she explains. For Engelbrecht the building does not represent

politics but rather faith, it is a continued place of holiness, “a place for people to come together for spiritual growth” (Engelbrecht 2012 & 2013 interview).

Possibly the clearest collective expression of the significance or value that the congregation placed on the building was how they chose to dispose of it. As has been explained once a church has been deconsecrated it is considered as being just a building. As such it should not matter whom it is sold to. This was not however the case with the sale of the Johannesburg West and other NGK buildings in the area. Van Rooyen explained that the NGK in this community preferred and are even “happy” that the building continued to be used for other religious purposes. He feels that the “general truth of God is in all religions” and that the shared history and “roots” of the different faiths can actually be used as a tool for unifying the community, explaining that there is a mutual respect between the communities (Van Rooyen 2012 interview). These sentiments are echoed by the members of the congregation interviewed with Engelbrecht (2012 interview) explaining that “maybe it is a little easier since it [the church] is being used as a sacred space”. Van Rooyen perhaps sums it up best when he explains that the building now represents a spiritual continuity that would have been impossible with its reuse for a non-religious purpose, explaining that he would probably have very different sentiments towards the building if it had been for example changed into a house (Van Rooyen 2013 interview).

The new Muslim congregation is more circumspect in their expression of the significance of the building. All interviewees explain that the building is just a functional space, with some associated significance, which happens to have previously been used as a church. Satar however adds that with time “people form a sense of loyalty to a space”. She could imagine how the church community could have feelings of hostility towards the mosque, as she has feelings of hostility when for example thinking of the Cordoba Mosque in Spain being converted into a church or the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul into a museum. For Satar the open attitude of Masjid-ul-Islam is its significance and makes her return to the building despite not living in the area. The physical appearance of the mosque is not important, although it does help “to contextualise it”, with the “formerly white NG Kerk, strongly associated with the former government changing to a ‘black’ multicultural, multi race mosque” (Satar 2012 interview).

Jeenah similarly attends the mosque because it “promises to give an open and diverse range of views” and for “their effort to include women”. The building has come to represent this. Although no longer living in the community he still returns as he feels very much a part of it. When thinking about the past significance of the building through its use as an NGK, Jeenah notes that for some there may be some “satisfaction” in the reuse of the building, particularly among older members of the congregation who remember the Apartheid era NGK’s prejudicial declaration of Islam as a false religion. Similarly he would understand a sense of dislocation and unhappiness on the part of the former church congregation. When

questioned about the appearance of the building, still very much that of a NGK, he feels quite strongly that it should not change. "It is a layer of history" he explains. Giving it a more generic Islamic appearance would, in his opinion, result in a loss of significance and unique identity. As he puts it "when this happens you not only lose your mosque but also your heritage" (Jeenah 2012 interview).

For both Satar and Jeenah the real value of the Masjid-ul-Islam being in a former NGK building is the layering of history that is added to both the building and the area. Satar (2012 interview) feels that the building should be seen as a tool for the telling of the changing history of the area while Jeenah (2012 interview) thinks of it as being symbolic, a site of memory, for the transition from Apartheid to post-Apartheid South Africa.

It is the chairman of the mosque committee, Akhtar Thokan who has the greatest misgivings regarding the significance of the building and its role as a site of memory. He feels that "the Afrikaners as a people are good at heart. Very God conscious." They are, in his opinion "the most transformed community in the new South Africa". He knows that, as a former church, the building is filled with the memories and identity of the former congregation. As a site of memory his reservations are about the implications and significance of the fact the former church building is now being used as a mosque. He wonders about what the impact of this will be on perceptions within both the Christian and Muslim communities. He does not want this to lead to hostility or unnecessary arrogance. It was for this reason that he ensured that the sale was a business rather than personal transaction, brokered by an estate agent who was an outsider to both congregations. He did not want personal interpretations or prejudices to take hold. His actions could possibly be interpreted as an attempt to pre-empt the use of the memories embodied in the building for political gain (Thokan 2012 interview).

Thokan notes that as a mosque the building is gaining significance. "Lots of people have identified with the mosque" he explains, "We have attendance from the whole of Gauteng, not just the surrounding area" due to the open attitude of the congregation. The importance of the building as a new site of memory is enhanced by this attitude. The delivery of the *khutba* by both men and woman, by individuals as diverse as various Christian priests, a rabbi, Gauteng premiers, political party representatives and many foreign dignitaries has added new layers of memory and significance. Thokan explains that it is often the international visitors who are the most excited about the building. They are able to read it as a site of memory and understand its significance (ibid).

Throughout the interview process there was no overt declaration of the building as being significant. As a site of memory it embodies everyday lived memories as well as potentially difficult past memories. It seems that a strange sense of continuity is the one of the greatest significances of the conversion of the former Johannesburg West NGK to become

the Masjid-ul-Islam. The building's significance as a church and as a former NGK has to a certain extent been retained and is easily read. To this, new memories and layers of significance have been added. The building has become a site of memory for a much larger community. In the rapidly changing post-Apartheid environment continuity becomes very important.

This apparent sharing of memories that the building allows for is perhaps what can be learnt from this environment. Reuse and adaptation can be a way of creating shared, collective and even hybrid identities. The building has become an important symbol for political change and is a shared point of significance for both communities.

7.3 A SITE OF MEMORY

As explored in chapter six the obsession of contemporary society with heritage and sites of memory has been interpreted by theorists such as Nora and Huyssen as a response to a crisis of identity and a sense of memory loss caused by the fast paced rapidly changing nature of contemporary society. In this situation the function of a site of memory is to act as a temporal anchor, to stop forgetting and to create a fixed state for the anchoring of memory and identity (Nora 1989:19). The rapid post-Apartheid social change experienced in the western inner city suburbs of Johannesburg provides the environment in which sites of memory are required in order to create a sense of continuity.

As has been demonstrated church building is a site of memory. A gathering point for communities, it is the focus for the creation of collective memory. Church buildings are the sites of personal rights of passage, sites for the creation of collective memory and the location of important events. All of these memories become anchored to the building, giving it significance.

The former Johannesburg West NGK can be explored as a site of memory using the categories devised by Nora (1989:19) which have been explored previously. It is obviously a 'material' site of memory, being a physical remain or relic of NGK architecture and Afrikaner culture. For both the church and mosque congregations it is largely a 'functional' site of memory. Here its significance and the memories attached to it are from its ritual religious purpose. Finally it is also a 'symbolic' site of memory. The architectural style of NGK buildings has, as was explored previously, been layered with meaning and symbolism. The building was to the Afrikaner community a symbol of national identity. Conversely to other communities it was, as expressed by Jeenah (2012 interview), a symbol of oppression and prejudice. Now, as the Masjid-ul-Islam the building has come to symbolise something different. As Satar (2012 interview) mentioned it can be interpreted as being symbolic of the "progress of Islam" or the end of Apartheid. Similarly, as shown by outbursts in the

media it can also be seen as a symbol of the decline of the Afrikaner community or the “the church losing ground” (Van Rooyen 2012 interview).

As expressed by Engelbrecht (2012 interview) for the community “it is the memories that are important” in a changing environment. These memories, which through the continued use of the building, will continue to grow and evolve, are their anchors for identity. It is perhaps as a site for new memories, the combined memories of the two communities that the building has its greatest significance. It becomes a symbolic site for positive post-Apartheid social change and interaction.



Figure 65 A site of memory.

7.4 IDENTITY

As explored in chapter 2, NGK buildings, particularly of the type promoted by Moerdijk and his contemporaries, were designed to be a reflection of Afrikaner identity (Fisher 1998:124). The former Johannesburg West NGK presently no longer affirms these early twentieth century notions of Afrikaner identity and nationalism. With the use of the building as a mosque the new congregation has started to take ownership of the identity of the building. The fact that the building was a church, an NGK, has actually in Satar's (2012 interview) opinion helped to give Masjid-ul-Islam its own unique character.

Beyond being known as "the mosque that was a church" (Satar 2012 interview) the reuse of the building has allowed the new predominantly Muslim community to take ownership of the environment in which they live. The building has, in the opinion of Engelbrecht (2012 interview) allowed the mosque and its community "to become part of the history of Brixton" and Mayfair West. The reuse of this unused religious structure can be seen as a way of legitimising the new community's place in the history of the neighbourhood.

This complex interplay of histories, identities and memories is exactly what results in the emergence of hybridity. It is the boundary where different cultures are forced to interact, the 'third space' referred to by Bhabha (2006:155). Masjid-ul-Islam can therefore be considered as a hybrid space, and with time perhaps the community that uses it will also become hybridised, with the new hybrid identity becoming that of the post-Apartheid city. The new hybrid identity of the building allows for a sense of continuity. Although not resolving any tensions that may exist between communities it comes to representative of both communities.

7.5 CONCLUSION

When a site of memory is changed, as has happened with the conversion of the former Johannesburg West NGK to become the Masjid-ul-Islam, memories are often threatened. What has happened with this building, with the sense of continuity created by the continuation of its appearance and use as a place of worship, is that many of the older memories associated with the building have remained while new memories are layered and fixed onto it. The existence of these memories, from different cultural backgrounds with different meanings and interpretations, all attached to one object has the potential to lead to the creation hybridised memory. The building has possibly come to represent more than its two individual communities. It has come to represent the interactions between the communities and the changes that have occurred in its environment. As such it could be considered as a site of hybrid memory, possibly one of many that have emerged in post-Apartheid Johannesburg.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation has been to explore how cultural significance has changed through the reuse (conversion) of an existing religious building to perform new religious functions in post-Apartheid Johannesburg. The former Johannesburg West NGK, which has been converted to become the Masjid-ul-Islam, has been a vehicle for this analysis.

Through the exploration of the history of the NGK and of Islam in South Africa it is possible to identify the inherent significances of the architecture and buildings of both religious communities. While the significance of the Johannesburg West NGK may no longer be in its affirmation of Afrikaner identity and nationalism, it has been demonstrated that it is still of importance to its original community. In addition to this the building now has new layers of significance that have been added through its current use as a mosque. The building has become a site for multiple memories, identities and significances. This complex interplay of histories, identities and memories, a mutual interchange between the two communities and their value systems is what results in the emergence of hybridity.

It has been demonstrated that the former church can be still be considered to be a site of memory even though its identity and the memories attached to it have and are evolving. The current identity of the building is both that of a church and a mosque. It is a hybridised post-Apartheid space. This new identity is more than that of the original NGK or the current mosque. The environment of Mayfair West is a prime site for the emergence of such hybrid spaces. The hybrid spaces are in turn the sites for the emergence of hybrid memories and significances. As has been explored in chapter seven, the building can therefore be considered as a site of hybrid memory.

The change that has occurred in the conversion of the building has contrary to my expectations resulted in a sense of continuity among many interviewees. This seems largely through its reuse as a religious building and its unchanged outward appearance. This is of significance. As discussed in chapter six, continuity is essential for the maintenance of memory and the formation of identity. The sensitive reuse and the conservation of the built environment, as shown in this case study, can be seen as a way of creating new shared memories and collective identities. It can be a means of creating a sense of place and continuity in the post-Apartheid city.

The greatest change in the significance of the former Johannesburg West NGK through its conversion to become the Masjid-ul-Islam is what it represents. As an Apartheid era NGK building it represented oppression and exclusion. Through its conversion it has come to represent the changes that have occurred in post-Apartheid South Africa and has come to represent not only a layering of history but a sense of inclusivity and regeneration.

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APPENDIX A INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORM

THE CONVERSION OF THE FORMER BRIXTON DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

Dear _____

I am conducting research towards a Master's Degree in Conservation of the Built Environment (Heritage Architecture) through the University of Cape Town.

My research is focussed on the conversion of religious buildings, looking particularly at the conversion of former Dutch Reformed Churches into Mosques, as has happened with the former Johannesburg West Dutch Reformed Church. I am conducting interviews to understand the effect that this has had on the heritage of the communities involved.

Your participation in my research is voluntary and, if you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time. I would however be grateful if you would assist me by allowing me to interview you.

The interview will be a discussion based around a series of questions to which you can respond. I will make notes from this discussion. A copy of these notes will be made available to you. There is no perceived risk to you in your participation and you can opt to remain anonymous (known only to myself) if you desire.

The information gathered from these interviews will form part of the research for my masters and may be included in my dissertation. A digital copy of this can be made available to you if desired.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Yours Sincerely,

Brendan Hart

082 376 7884

Brendan@mayathart.com

Consent: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

ENGELBRECHT, T. (12 December 2012). Elder at the Vergesig NGK, former member of the Johannesburg West NGK. Auckland Park, Johannesburg.

ITZKIND, I. (5 November 2012). Deputy Director of Immovable Heritage, the City of Johannesburg. Newtown, Johannesburg.

JEENAH, N. (30 October 2012). Director of the Africa Middle East Centre, congregant at the Masjid-ul-Islam and current member of the mosque committee. Hyde Park, Johannesburg.

NAUDE, M and NAUDE, D. (7 December 2012). Congregants at the Vergesig NGK, former deacon and members of the Johannesburg West NGK and long term residents of Mayfair West. Mayfair West, Johannesburg.

SATAR, R. (26 October 2012). Congregant at the Masjid-ul-Islam. Illovo, Johannesburg.

THOKAN, A. (5 December 2012). Chariman of the mosque committee and founding member of Masjid-ul-Islam. City Deep, Johannesburg.

VAN ROOYEN, H. (29 October 2012). Current minister at the Vergesig NGK, last minister of the Johannesburg West NGK. Brixton, Johannesburg.

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS

ENGELBRECHT, T. (1 February 2013). Elder at the Vergesig NGK, former member of the Johannesburg West NGK.

NAUDE, M. (1 February 2013). Congregants at the Vergesig NGK, former deacon and members of the Johannesburg West NGK and long term residents of Mayfair West.

VAN ROOYEN, H. (30 January 2013). Current minister at the Vergesig NGK, last minister of the Johannesburg West NGK.

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

MOSQUE

1. What is your connection with the mosque?
2. How long have you been coming to the mosque?
3. Do you live in the area? If so, how long have you been living in the area?
4. Why do you think that the church closed and the building was sold left the building?
5. Why do you think that the mosque decided to buy the building?
6. Do you think that it matters that the mosque is in a former church?
7. Does the fact that the building was a church have a positive or negative affect on its new use as a mosque? Does it have a positive or negative affect on the people who worship there? Has this fact it increased the buildings importance/significance?
8. How do you think that the change of use has affected the significance of the building? What does the mosque community feel?
9. Do you think that the church or its congregation still has feelings towards the building? Do you think that it is important/significant to them?
10. Do you think that the church or its congregation is unhappy that the building is now being used as a mosque?
11. Why do you believe the appearance of the building not been changed?
12. Do you think that it is important to maintain the appearance of the building? Would you prefer it if it was changed to look more like a mosque?
13. Do you think that, over time, the building will be changed to look more like a mosque?
14. Do you consider the church history as part of the heritage of the mosque?

CHURCH

1. What is your connection with the church?
2. How long were you a member of the congregation?
3. Do you live in the area? If so how long have you been living in the area?
4. Why do you believe the church closed and the building was sold?
5. Why do you think that the mosque bought the building?
6. Do you think that it matters that the old church building is now being reused as a mosque? What other uses would you have preferred?
7. How has the change of use affected the significance of the building for you? How has this changed in the eyes of the community?
8. Do you think that the mosque and its congregation have any feelings towards the building and its heritage? Do you think that it is important to them?
9. Do you think that the fact that the building was a church matters to the mosque congregation?
10. Why do you think that the appearance of the building has not been changed?
11. Do you think that it is important to maintain the look of the building now that it is no longer a church?
12. Do you consider the building to be part of your heritage?
13. Would you still consider it part of your heritage if its appearance was changed to look more like a mosque?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any specific memories that are connected with your use and experience of the former Johannesburg West NGK.
2. When you look at the building now does it remind you of these or other memories? What about the building reminds you? How does this / do these memories make you feel? What would happen to these memories if the building were no longer there?
3. What did the building mean to you when it was still in use as a church?
4. What does the building mean to you now?
5. When you think about the building do you think of it as a mosque, as a church or as both?
6. How would you feel if the building were to be demolished?
7. What do you think that change of use of the building represents?
8. How much of a difference does it make that the building is being reused for a different religious purpose?
9. Do you think that the change that has occurred is important for the community? Do you think that the attitude of the community has changed because of this building or is the building merely representative of a change that was already occurring?