MUSLIM COMMON RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AT THE CAPE:

IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS.

AHMED MUKADAM.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Cape Town.
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It is our duty to proceed from what is near to what is distant, from what is known to that which is less known, to gather the traditions from those who have reported them, to correct them as much as possible and to leave the rest as it is, in order to make our work help anyone who seeks truth and loves wisdom.

ABU-AL-RAYHAN MUHAMMAD AL-BIRUNI (973-1050)

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

This dissertation examines the side by side existence of Popular Islam, or Muslim Common Religious Practices, with Official Islam in the Cape of today.

Our task is thus primarily to identify the popular movement as no systematic documentation in this field has to date been attempted. Almost all approaches in Islamic Studies have concentrated on Official Islam and mostly from theological perspectives. In those works references to particular common beliefs and practices, have been made and sometimes suggestively. Comparatively, however, much more, and perhaps methodologically not enough, has been done in Christian studies under the headings of Popular Religion, African Christology and very importantly, African Indigenous Church movements.

The academic study of Islam, however, is still a relative novelty in South Africa and we suspect that the area of research into the popular movement may not gather momentum as rapidly as studies on the official movement. This apathy towards this "invisible institution" is attributable to the marginality it receives as a religious response.

The phenomenon is discounted as cultural, traditional or customary. "It is easy for those, both within and outside it, who have attained to a more rational understanding of natural processes to despise them. But merely to despise them is to overlook their effects and potentialities". (GIBB, 1982) Hence we hope this pioneering effort will be constructive in itself and to its field.

We mentioned earlier that our task was the identification of Muslim Common Religious Practices (MCRP's) in the Cape of today. Simultaneously we have a commitment methodologically. A phenomenological approach to document and interpret will be pursued in the hope that analysis of the data through theories of <u>power</u> and of <u>symbol appropriation</u> may avoid the pitfalls of theologizing. Thus we hope, more fervently this time, that the academic study of religion be served as we suspend "personal investments" and "self-referential" theologies. We also mention that aspects of this work will reveal the potential for synthesizing Western categories with Islamic interests.

Chapter one grapples with the search for a suitable definition of Popular Islam. This chapter not only seeks to establish the parameters of a popular Muslim religion

within the whole but also seeks theoretical tools that would be applicable in analyzing the evidence. The concern is thus with theory and method generally in religious studies and specifically in popular Islamic religious studies.

Chapter two deals with the historic foundations of the popular movement which relate to the present Cape Muslim community.

Two important personalities, Shaykh Yusuf and Tuan Guru feature significantly in the development of not only Scripture-Islam but also the parallel popular movement, at least as we see it from their "charismatic-leader" potential and their writings.

The third chapter, representing the main thrust of our thesis, projects the actual face and form of Muslim Common Religious Practices in the Cape of today. We suggest that just as slave-Islam and later a slightly emancipated Islam met religiopolitical monopolies over power systems and interrelationships, with common responses, so too present Muslims have turned to sacred symbols to claim power or adjust symbols to compensate for disempowerment in their lives which are dichotomied between western

industrial and Islamic value modes.

The final chapter concludes the thesis by drawing together the segments of evidence and its analysis in attempting to invite attention to the deeper significance of MCRP's as facilitators in the network of human power relationships.

We intend also to display that the minority Muslim community, like all minority religious groupings, will experience tensions in the broader sprectum of the dominant society within which they seek a space of continued existence.

Just as common practices evolve as an extension and often opposition of the official religion, so too will minorities reveal similar tensions in their social, political and economic aspirations, within the larger western industrial-cum-Christian value society. Such that, ideally, Islamic sociological perspectives will be inhibited by the practical immediacy of a society structured and stratified along economic lines.

The activation of political philosophies based on the Quran will be limited by the extensive power wielded by a government that arrogates to itself the sole proprietorship

of the sources and, instruments and principles of power.

Capitalist economies function antithetical to Islamic models, one of the major differences being the "interest-usury" factor. Yet Capitalist Muslims have generally flourished economically.

Thus the tension and often the clear dichotomy between competing ideologies of control, forces Muslims, especially minorities create alternative responses in the various aspects of their lives. MCRP's are just one of such energetic responses.

Some may succeed in mastering their circumstances, some apologize, a good many straddle dual worlds and this is evidently the quality and texture of Muslim life in the Cape and in South Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

POPULAR ISLAM: The Search for a definition.

INTRODUCTION

The problem, it seems, is that before we can begin "identifying" and "classifying" the elements of Popular Islam, we should "define" the phenomenon. However this act of defining is itself a problem. If the concept, "religion", has averted definition by researchers, who opted rather for multiple definitions of religion relative to the interest of the particular researcher, then "popular religion" as being in a meaning, a religion within a religion, would similarly defy a single exhaustive definition.

We thus have to search for some type of unitary definition for the popular dimension of religion.

APROACHES TOWARDS DEFINITION

In the absence of a clear academic definition of Popular Islam from within Islam, that being the task of this chapter, we see it proper to overview some non-Islamist approaches as our point of departure.

NON-ISLAMIST APPROACH

Bill Musk in seeking a worldview paradigm for popular Islam states:

> "Popular Muslim religion in Egypt, and indeed throughout the Islamic world, demonstrates a human longing for immediate answers to human need". (1)

However, Musk's considerable energies were directed towards missiological ends and in his words:

> "... the following (thesis) is offered as part of the whole endeavour to bring the Kingdom of Christ and God into reality, on Islamic soil and in Muslims' hearts". (2)

This revelation of his intentions he supports by "epoche", which Waardenburg defines as :

> "... the suspension of the student's 'natural world', his openness to the essential prblems of human existence, his focussing on the specific object of his interest and investigation".(3)

The suspension of a western Christian view of Islam and then offering the project as an act of missiological faith, is perhaps an incongruous endeavour on the part of Musk, the missionary. This is not the place to pursue the debate, but suffice it to say that such an approach cannot assist in understanding power dynamics within Popular Muslim religiosity. It does however reveal something of a modern conquering approach to colonize peoples through powers of religion.

Musk sees Popular Islam as a weakness to be capitalized upon to gain Christian converts among common Muslims. He seems to interpret the dichotomy between theological Islam and common Muslim practices as reflecting a duality between religious intuition and theological reason. He means that there are "strong" official Muslims and "weak" common Muslims.

Interestingly, Musk the theologian and Muslim puritanist Ulama see common religious practices as a threat to clerical structures and designs as we shall later see.

The problem with accepting Musk's approach has to do with his assumptioms about human "need" and the implied weakness of the popular movement. In fact our contention is anti-thetical. We believe that Muslim Common Religious Practices is a matter of power and the appropriation of powerful sacred symbols.

Chidester, in a provocative review article clearly demonstrates his response to using the analytic term "needs" hypothetically:

> "We do not require any hypothesis about "needs" in order to document, interpret, and analyze the patterns and processes of the universal human ability to symbolize whatever may be held or beheld to be sacred in the forms of discourse, practice and association in human societies. Because sacred symbolic forms are invested with power, they coalesce with economic, social, and political power interests".(4)

So, instead of reducing popular religion to a psychological or socio-psychological categorization we will rather attempt to document creative common Muslim abilities and analyze highly charged power interests.(5)

A second approach is offered by Ruggieri:

Writing about modern Popular Italian Christianity, Guiseppe Ruggieri, postulates two main approaches to Popular religion. The first, stemming from Antonio Gramsci(one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, who realized the inadequacy of the classical Marxist interpretation), sees the Popular religion as the channel through which the traditionally deprived sectors of society express their nostalgia for a different human condition, but also their particular riches, their special zest for life and their culture. The other approach rejects the significance of class. Ruggieri quotes G. de Rosa: "Religious practice," even when interwoven in a framework of magic and superstition, is found in all classes: manual labourers, peasants, tenant farmers, large landowners, and even the clergy". (6)

Ruggieri in his article entitled "Popular Faith, Ecclesiastical Strategy and Religious Needs", examines the above approaches and the development of a pastoral strategy in answering the question:

"How does one believe, be converted, experience Christian life now, in the particular cultural situation in which it is one's lot to live? (7)

Indeed, in our attempt at setting up a definition for Cape Popular Islam, Ruggieri's pastoral strategy seems irrelevant. Not totally though. In a country like South Africa where religious studies and even Islamic Studies can and does become political practice, it is not difficult to relate definitions of religion to class struggle. (8)

Therefore, appropriating Ruggieri's dual approaches to locate our approach is relevant. Slave-Islam under Dutch rule at the Cape was 'not found in the "lower-class" in fact it was found in total "no-class" an alienation suffered by slaves that meant social death. On the other hand present Popular Islam, as we shall see, is not restricted to the socio-economically deprived class of Cape Muslim society. Our study while it is primarily the identification of present Popular Islam, we will be linking it to its historical roots. The milieus of the historic Popular movement and the present one are of course three and a half centuries apart. What, in our view, has not changed and it is the central theme of our thesis, is that human societies, old and new,

negotiate relationships in terms of power. Access to power, in our case sacred power, is sought and where it is not available in face of countervailing power systems, symbolic actions, reactions and negotiations take place either to re-appropriate the lost power or to compensate for the de-stabilizing disempowerment.

A third alternative in approaching popular religion is forwarded by Segundo Galilea who suggests that popular religion be seen as a spirituality. (9)

Unlike the preceeding two approaches which are from psycho-logical and social dimensions, this approach as Karl Rahner also maintains that:

> "... alongside all these variegated psycho-logical and social relations lies a deep-seated need for completion and salvation to be found only in God". (10)

Popular religion is nore than a psychological or social reflex and the Ultimately Real is not just a psychological or social cipher, but represents a transcendent infinity as against the finitude of the human condition. (11)

Viewing popular religiosity as an authentic spirituality not only allows us to appreciate its subtleties and its depths (12) but it would also assist in avoiding official condescension and thus allow the spiritual response of common

people to be viewed with respect and significance. In fact, even if the clergy hope to impose control over the extent of the popular religion, then such domination it seems can only be made effective by genuinely listening to the pulse of this particular spirituality.

Nevertheless, as we have noted, popular religion in non-Islamist terms ranges in form from the fulfilment of human needs, and psycho-social demands to being considered an authentic spirituality. The positive and negative values of these approaches have also been briefly dealt with.

We now move to a few Islamist approaches in defining this elusive spirituality.

ISLAMIST APPROACH

To turn to Islamist definitions of the popular phenomenon, according to Muhammad Haron who quotes Kritzeck:

> "Islam has become a folk religion, adjusting itself to local tribal and clan situations, blending with the pantheon of indigenous religious beliefs and prevailing social patterns". (13)

Muhsin points out that Islam is an absorbing religion rather than a converting one,(14) whilst Khurshid Ahmed noted that it has a built-in system through which its religious indigenous elements are assimilated within its religious and social framework. (15)

Haron advances upon Ahmed by adding that:

> "This process continues as long as the culture which is accommodated or assimilated does not diametrically oppose the fundamental beliefs of Islam". (16)

These preceding citations relate to what has been termed as "Popular Islam", "Folk Islam" or "Muslim Common Religious Practices" (MCRP's). These observations above may be helpful as an anthropological viewpoint or from a position that generates, as Ruggieri puts it, a certain ecclesiastical astuteness. This astuteness is characterized by a willingness to adapt, but an effective lack of openness to being questioned. (17)

Puritan Muslim ecclesiastical authorities refer to Common Muslim ingenuity in this fashion:

> "It is this phenomenon - the total effect of superstition, miracle-mongering, tomb-worship, mass hysteria and of course, charlatanism - that we have described above as the moral and spiritual debris from which Muslim society has to be reclaimed for Islam". (18)

The mainspring of this type of discourse originates from puritanical Wahabism. Named after its founder Muhammad ibn abd-al-Wahhab (d.1791) this form of official Islam espouses an absolutist, puritanical interpretation of Islam.

This puritanism today has to a large extent become a project for religious monopoly and theological sanction for the continued custodianship of Islam's most holiest of places Makkah and Madinah. Obviously sustained political hegemony over "Saudi" Arabia is the prime motive and interest of the theocratic Saudi kings. Control over central symbols guarantees religiopolitical dominance.

Regarding the founder of Wahabism, Hitti pursues an important connection:

> "The new prophet found in Muhammad ibn Saud (d.1795), (precursor of the Saudi dynasty),(19) who was then a petty chief in Central Arabia, an ally and son-in-law. This was another case of marriage between religion and the sword resulting in the speedy spread of religion (Wahabism) (20) with the authority of ibn-Saud throughout Central and Eastern Arabia".(21)

Espousers of puritan Islam have perpetually in the past and even presently, totally rejected the popular movement, let alone critically approaching this manifestation of peoples' religious powers:

> "This is not to overlook the historical denouncements of popular Islam by such purists as ibn Taimiya nor to ignore contemporary reform movements such as that espoused by the Wahabis". (22)

Suitable definitions or objective criticisms of popular Islam unfortunately, it seems, have not been entertained with integrity.

Thus in our search for a parameter to enclose popular Islam phenomenologically,it seems we may have to return to a particular definition of religion first.

Since our analytical approach to the understanding of Cape Muslim folk belief and practice is bound in the dynamics of power it would be advantageous to cite Kenelm Burridge:

> "Religions, let us say are concerned with the systematic ordering of different kinds of power, particularly those seen as significantly beneficial or dangerous". (23)

Burridge moves thereafter to a working definition of religion and religious activity, which he defines as:

> "The redemptive process indicated by the activities, moral rules, and assumptions about power which, pertinent to the moral order and taken on faith, not only enable a people to perceive the truth of things, but guarantee that they are indeed perceiving the truth of things ... for not only are religions concerned with the truth about power, but the reverse also holds: a concern with the truth about power is a religious activity". (24)

Granting that Islam is an exhaustive way of life, as that most powerful treasury of symbols, the Quran, divinely informs:

> "Verily the whole of life by Allah is al-Islam", (25)

and that it is the "weltaanschauung" of billions of people

from diverse cultures, from different and distant geographical areas and varied languages, yet its impact and message has taken firm root in its adherents who have come to appreciate the power of their beliefs and practices. What, however, also has to be regarded is the cultural matrix within which this way of life was initially historicized and no less of importance, its stepping out of Arabia into cultures sometimes similar and at other times totally different to the Arabian milieu. Islamization also meant Arabization:

> "Only Islam acknowledged provincial culture as content of the ethos of Islam proper, and managed to maintain a universal adherance and loyalty to it amid the widest ethic variety of the globe". (26)

In the dialectical relationship between revelation and culture, "Arabness" nevertheless stood subservient to "Muslimness". Hamady recognized this:

> "Religion is the fundamental motivating force in most aspects of Arab culture and has its say in practically every act and movement in life. Islam, once revealed, is a complete civilization by itself, it is interested even in the most ordinary acts of the individual. The observances of the traditional forms and rites - whether of the 'official' or of the 'popular' kind - is an integral part of every day life ... Thus the totality of life is permeated with religion"(27)

Al-Faruqi, with ecclesiastical astuteness, also drew the parameters of contending cultural systems:

> "This absoluteness of Islamic culture did not make it intolerant of the ethnic sub-cultures of its adherants, of their languages and literatures, of their folk customs and styles. But it has distinguished the culture of Islam from adah, literally, local custom, the provincial content which Islam tolerated even to the point of regarding it juristically acceptable, but which it always kept in the place proper to it". (28)

Ideally we accept Al-Faruqi's sentiments, but on opening the collective memories of the past one millenium and a half of Muslim civilization, we cannot accept a simplistic explanation about a dynamic culture that has experienced movement from desert simplicity to global sophistication, countless wars, imperialism, colonialism, orientalism, political truimphs and traumas, class conflicts, heresies and controversies.

All of this has imprinted itself upon the tapestry of human history , a history also reflecting the relationship between religion and power. What may have been juristically acceptable under the Ommayyads may not be so during the milieu of Abbasid rule. What Wahabism theologically labels "un-Islamic" may have been sanctioned as "permissable" by the Islamic judiciary when the Turks were holding the reins of power, and so on.

That the ideas of the dominant are the dominant ideas, as Marx would put it, is a politico-historic fact. We would concede the same to be perhaps a religiopolitical truth.

Thus Burridge's definition of religion in terms of power seems to be the best option for formulating a definition of Muslim popular religion.

> "The definition implies, and therefore leads us to expect - despite the conservatism of particular religious orthodoxies - that religious activities will change when the assumptions about the nature of power, and hence the rules which govern its use and control, can no longer guarantee the truth of things". (29)

Another option in our search for definition is presented by Shreiter.

Shreiter suggests that from the point of view of the participants in folk movements three sets of considerations should be kept in mind. These are:

1. Psychological
2. Social
3. Religious

The relevant question, then, Shreiter poses is:

> What do individuals seek from participation in popular religion? The answer: access to power in times of crisis. (30)

But since "there is now a realization that all theologies (official and popular) have contexts, interests, relationships of power, special concerns - and to pretend that this is not the case is to be blind", (31) and since our analytical approach to defining and interpreting the popular Muslim phenomenon is bound in the dynamics of power and concerned with the appropriation of powerful sacred symbols, we must clarify this central concept of power as it will also constantly recur in the following pages of this work.

"Power", says Weber, is "that opportunity existing within a social relationship which permits one to carry out one's will even against resistance and regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests". (32)

Goldhammer and Shils maintain that a person has power to the extent that he influences the behaviour of others, whilst Bierstedt calls power, latent force. Dahl contends that: A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that he would not otherwise do and Blau also frames his definition of power in the ability of persons or groups to impose their wills on others. (33)

Michael Mann affords us a more general definition of power:

> Power is the ability to pursue and attain goals through mastery of one's environment. (34)

From Weber to Blau, the five definitions of power are formulated in terms of mastery exercised over others. Mann's definition implies the same and a little more. Mann's definition includes not only mastery over human others but implies also the non-human environment or circumstances that may inhibit the realization of minimally a sense of humanness and maximally a comprehensive human franchise and freedom. For our purposes both meanings of power will be used and in fact we will not be able to strictly confine ourselves to these meanings as:

> "In most social relations both aspects of power, distributive and collective, exploitative and functional, operate simultaneously and are intertwined". (35)

Thus when we discuss say slave-Islam then power will mean total control or domination over the totally powerless or socially dead.

The central concept of <u>baraka</u> like <u>mana</u> will be translated as energy or force that energizes or empowers the recipients or negotiatiors thereof. This usage of the concept will be akin to Bertrand Russell's analogy of power to energy and vice versa. (36)

In our treatment of the "clergy - laity" or "official - popular" polemic regarding Muslim common religious practices, then power from the official functionaries will be used in the Weberian sense. From the dominated commoners' point of view, power will be interpreted in terms of Mann's definition of attempting to gain mastery over circumstances.

In summary, then, we have acquainted ourselves with approaches and definitions from within as well as outside of Islam. The conclusion we arrive at is an uneasy one. The academic study of popular Islam in South Africa is an "innovation" which is presently being undertaken through this work. Regarding definitions of the popular movement, these were offered from motivated points which secured the particular interests of the researches who saw popular aspirations as weak, marginal, dominated and impure.

These descriptive synonyms all point to a state of disempowerment. Academics it seems, have strangled the cord that is to feed the beginning or facilitate the birth of Religious Studies generally and Islamic Studies specifically, in South Africa.

As a logical step in that direction we offer a formative definition of popular Islam in our attempt to understand the

phenomenon, explaining it's powerful and sacred function, as it now lives in the Cape Muslim community, having been born with the arrival of Pioneer Islam at the Cape:

> Popular Islam is the response of common people in their negotiation of a sense of sacred power relative to person, place and time in their attempt to consolidate, by appropriation, existing experiences of power or to compensate for disempowerment.

Having established our parameters of popular Islam we proceed to historic Islam at the Cape. The historical location of official and popular Islam is important in linking the present popular climate with the past. A revisiting of the past religious activity superimposed by a framework of the dynamics of power, will be among the courses of the next chapter.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Musk, B.A. A worldview Paradigm For Popular Islam, Journal for Islamic Studies, R.A.U., No. 5, 1985, p. 60.

2. Musk, B.A. Popular Islam: An Investigation into the Phenomenology and Ethnotheological Bases of Popular Islamic Belief and Practice, D. Litt et Phil Thesis, UNISA, 1984, p. v.

3. Ibid. p. 7.

4. Chidester, D. Religion Alive/Religious Studies Unborn? Journal for the Study of Religion in S.A. September 1988, Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 86 - 87.

5. Ibid. p. 86.

6. Ruggieri, G. in Concilium. Religion in the Eighties: Popular Religion Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Meete, T & T Clark Ltd, Edinburgh 1986, p. 97 - 98.

7. Ibid. p. 98.

8. Muslim political activists, in the past under Dutch rule and presently under Oligarchic Nationalist Party government have been incarcerated on the basis of their religio-religious convictions which ran counter to the religio-political power interests of the dominant group.

9. Shreiter, op. cit. p.141.

10. Ibid. p. 141.

11. Ibid. p. 141.

12. Ibid. p. 141.

13. Cited in M. Haron, Conversion of Africans to Islam in the W. Cape. Unpublished B.A. Honours paper. U.C.T. p.5.

14. Ibid. p. 5.

15. Ibid. p. 6.

16. Ibid. p. 6.

17. Ruggieri, G. op. cit. 98.

18. Rahman, F. "Islam", Second Edition,Chicago, (1979) p.246

19. My insertion.

20. My insertion.

21. Hitti, P.K. History of the Arabs, London, (1974) p. 740

22. Musk, B.A. op. cit. p. 256

23. Burridge, K. New Heaven New Earth, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980. p. 5.

24. Ibid. pp. 6 - 7

25. Al-Quran (3: 19 - 20)

26. Al-Faruqi, I.R. "Islam as Culture and Civilization", in Islam and Contemporary Society ed. Salem Azzam, Longham, London and New York, (1982).

27. Cited in Musk, B.A. op. cit. p. 227.

28. Al-Faruqi, I.R. op. cit. pp. 142 - 143.

29. Burridge, K. op. cit. p. 7.

30. Shreiter, R.J. op. cit. p. 139.

31. Shreiter, R.J. Constructing Local Theologies, Orbis, London 1985, p. 4.

32. Patterson, O. Slavery and Social Death: A Comparitive Study, Harvard Press, Cambridge 1982, p. 1.

33. Mott, P.E. Power, Authority and Influence" in Aiken, M and Mott, P.E. (eds.). The structure of Community Power, Random House, New York 1970, p. 5.

34. Mann, M. The Source of Social Power, Volume 1, A History of Power from beginning to A.D. 1760. Cambridge University Press, New York 1986, p. 6.

35. Ibid. p. 6.

36. See Bertrand Russell's, Power: A New Social Analysis. Unwin Paperbacks, London 1975.

CHAPTER TWO

A NON-CONVENTIONAL HISTORY OF CAPE MUSLIMS

INTRODUCTION

This is not a conventional history of Cape Muslims, nor is it in fact a strict historiography. Both of these disciplines invariably would have been undertaken by individual researchers who have recorded data concerning the Cape Muslim community with presupposed frameworks of how they nevertheless perceived the actions of that community. In his reassessment of the situation, Lubbe acknowledges this rare but indeed welcome statement by Elphick and Shell:

> "The generally Eurocentric historiography of the early Cape has over-emphasized the role of Christianity. Conversely, Islam has been duly neglected".(1)

Thus we have accounts of missionaries, travellers, government agents, imperialist historians and orientalist scholars and politicians. Instead of entirely relying on their inter pretive handling of their subjects, (viz, the subjective history of a subject people), we will attempt rather, to retrieve from their accounts the existence of official and popular Muslim movement in the Cape. In this regard "oral history", "legend" and "myth" will be considered with serious symbolic implications rather than making the enterprise an act of theological evaluation or conventional historiography.

For instance, as Bradlow succinctly observes:

> "The official VOC records often clearly state the religious persuasion of people. Where the established historiography fails, however, is in understanding how the personal religious convictions of individuals come to take on a social character". (2)

Thus it seems that we will have to conduct a selective approach (a eurocentric evaluation of history will be avoided) in establishing official Islam and its popular extensions in the Cape. This selection we will effect by casting the mould of that history around two important personalities. They are Shaykh Yusuf (d. 1699) and Tuan Guru (d. 1807) Shaykh Yusuf will represent the founding of Islam in the Cape and South Africa and Tuan Guru's period will be considered as having consolidated the movement as a permanent presence here. Their influences upon the nascent community through their personal achievements i.e. their charismatic leadership, their activities and writings and mainly the mythology that surrounds them, will be discussed in an effort to trace and understand the movement of Islam and Muslims in the Cape.

THE BREAK WITH CONVENTION

In proposing a non-conventional history of Cape Islam we two interests. One is the re-affirmation of "oral-history" and "myth" as legitimate and academically acceptable modes of establishing historical continuity alongside the "real"

history. Besides, the "real" Cape history appears to be largely recorded from a conquering viewpoint, an exercise in familiarizing the strange, and offers no apology regarding the subjectivity of such a collation of history.

The second interest in the non-convential approach is more immediate to the nature of our field, i.e. common religion. Oral-history and myth we believe will reveal how the popular masses perceive the two important personalities in Cape Muslim history and in turn how such a perception informs and influences their religious behaviour. For example an official historian may refer to the act or person of a legendary character with the adjective, "remarkable". Common Muslims however might use the qualification "powerful" to relate to the act and person of such an individual.

Thus, oral traditions are an important source of history. To this end we offer a brief review of Jan Vansina's book: "Oral - Tradition, - A study in Historical Methodology".

This book was a pioneering attempt, opening up the field. During his fieldwork among the Kuba in Central Africa in the fifties he observed that "oral tradition", though relied upon by historians during the classical, middle and contemporary periods, it has not been accorded its appropriate place within historicism as an important trustworthy and valid historical document. (3)

Vansina provides us with a useful definition:

> "Oral traditions consist of all verbal testimonies which are reported statements concerning the past". (4)

Regarding myth, Eliade says that it is " a true history of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behaviour". (5)

Eliade's suggestion that myth is the symbolic patterning of human behaviour is useful in our intended analysis of how myth informs religious perception and activity.

Dillistone, explaining Eliade's revolutionary treatment of history and myth says that:

> "History of religions is designed to show that a purely rationalistic or positivistic interpretation of human life cannot be sustained in view of research ... He (Eliade) is convinced that myths and symbols are of the very substance of spiritual life and that their function as expressions of human dependence upon transcendent reality and a meta-empirical purpose can never be dismissed or destroyed". (6)

According to Cumpsty, "Myth" is spoken symbol. It is not necessarily the opposite of truth. The question about myth is not whether it is true. The story in the myth may be historically true or it may be historically false or simply non-historical. The important thing to ask is rather, what is it meant to do?

Cumpsty cites S.H. Hooke's classification of myth into five functions: Ritual, Origin, Cult, Prestige and Eschatological Myths. (7) Functionally then we can restate for our purpose:

The spoken symbol has power, power to maintain order, power to re-enact relationships betweeen the beholder and that beheld as sacred, and the power to explain disorder.

Perhaps as a concluding word it is significant to note that the very authenticity of the Quran as being the Quran is ultimately accepted upon the oral testimony of the Islamic Prophet who was and is considered to be truth personified and sinless. Here in the Cape both Shaykh Yusuf and Tuan Guru wrote the Quran from their memories and these texts were reverently accepted as the uncreated Word of Allah by their respective communities. Perhaps the particular quality of Islam, Sufi-Islam, afforded such beliefs, perceptions and actions.

It may emerge that the history of Cape Islam is essentially the history of Sufi-Islam. We therefore should acquaint ourselves with this overtly communal Islam.

SUFI ISLAM

The intergrated Islam that arrived at the Cape of Good Hope and Spirit, was an Islam that was lived and practiced by Shaykhs of "tasawwuf" or Sufism.

This form of Islam, evidently, at the time was universal:

> " ... it was mainly due to them (the Sufis) (8) that the religious frontiers of Islam were steadily extended in Africa, in India and Indonesia, across Central Asia into Turkestan and China, and in parts of South Eastern Europe. (9)

Nasr confirms the move and development of this form of integralistic Islam - an Islam exoterically based on the "Shariah" (The Divine Law) and esoterically existent in "Tariqah" (The Way):

> "In certain sections of India, South East Asia and in much of Africa, Islam first spread through the personal example of Sufi masters and the establishment of a Sufi Order. It is the inner link between the Law and the Way that has made possible the spread of Islam in many areas through the Sufi masters and saints who have provided a living example of Islamic spirituality". (10)

Burckhardt, to an extent, also understood that despite the challenges and trials of an everchanging world societal mode, Islam, through its esoteric form in Sufism has been reasonably able to withstand countervailing systems of power:

> "... if Islam has been able to remain intact throughout the centuries despite the changes in human psychology and ethnic differences

> between the Islamic people, this is assuredly not because of the relatively dynamic character it possesses as a collective form, but because from its very origin it includes a possibility of intellectual contemplation which transcends the effective currents of the human soul". (11)

This "living spirituality" or "transcendent intellectual contemplation" did not arrive from no-where. Primarily, this integrated form of a spiritualised Islam was apparent in the very founder of historic Islam, the Messenger of Allah, as Fazl-al-Rahman informs us:

> "Muhammad's prophetic consciousness, which issued in his mission, was founded upon very definite, vivid and powerful mystic experiences briefly described or alluded to in the Quran". (12)

We admit that the term "Sufi" or "Tasawwuf" may not explicitly occur in the Quran nor is the concept used by the Prophet of Islam, and in fact Hughes states that:

> " ... the word does not occur in the celebrated Arabic dictionary, the Qamas, which was compiled in 817 A.H., nor in the Sihah (Hadith collections), 393 A.H. ". (13)

However, Hughes' lexicological acumen is best summed up by himself regarding his "cyclopaedia" as being useful...

> "... to the Government official called to administer justice to Muslim peoples, to the Oriental traveller seeking hospitality amongst Muslim peoples; to the student of comparitive religion anxious to learn the true teachings of Islam; - to all, indeed, who care to know what are those leading principles of thought

> which move and guide over hundred and seventy-five millions of the great human family, forty million of whom are under the rule of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Empress of India". (14)

The orientalist "otherness" (15) concept allowed the classification and blanketing of entire religions, whole cultures and their adherents under strategic labels that legitimated the dominance and control of eurocentric systems of power over their subjects. Thus Hughes' allusion to the non-Islamic origins of Sufism can be expected.

Nasr expected it too:

> "Such theories were not uncommon regarding the origin of Sufism as being non-Islamic or borrowed from anything between Neoplatonism, Christian monasticism, the Aryan reaction to Semitic religion, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, Hinduism, Buddhism and practically every other conceivable source". (16)

However what cannot be argued is the phenomenon of cross-cultural interaction between Islam and the many and diverse cultures it came into contact with, and more importantly the social and political conditions under which this interaction took place.

As a conquering culture, Islam's ideas in the hands of the dominators will set the pattern of beliefs and practices. As a dominated movement for example, under Dutch colonial

oppression, in a slave milieu, Islamic responses reveal the signs of minimal survival, of negotiating at least a "humanness" or in a relatively emancipated condition, but still subject to state power, constructing perhaps the expectation of a "superhuman" deliverer.

> "At all historical times, religiously orientated charismatic leadership could reaffirm Islam by its messianic expectations." (17)

It is to such a historic period in Cape Muslim aspirations that we now turn.

SHAYKH YUSUF

> "One of the best known of the exiles to the Cape is Schech Yusuf from Makassar. He is regarded by the Muslims in South Africa as well as other authorities as the founder of Islam in South Africa, and his grave at Faure is regarded as one of the holy places of Islam in this country". (18)

Shaykh Yusuf or Abidin Tadia Tjoessoep was a learned man-cum-Sufi. That he was an "aalim" (learned) is evident from the fact that he learnt all the religious customs and rituals and how to write Arabic (19) as one researcher puts it and according to another, Yusuf undertook the pilgrimage to Makkah in 1644 where he studied apparently for a long period the religious sciences, the Quran, Hadith, Jurisprudence and of course the language of Arabic. (20)

His sufistic connections were equally strong. He was chief of the Khalwatiyyah Order at Makassar (21) and a listing of the Arabic works he wrote (these manuscripts are at the University of Leiden library) leaves no doubt about his spiritual achievements:

1. The Flowing Blessings
2. Afflictions of the Beginner
3. The Treatise of Yusuf explaining the accomplishments of the Sufis
4. Imparting of Information
5. The Condition of the Deliverer
6. The Demands of those who follow the Spiritual Path
7. The Flowing Fragrance
8. Coolness of the Eyes
9. Secret of Secrets
10. Crown of Secrets
11. Essence of Secrets (22)

He thus became a leading religious authority and was viewed as a saint or "waliyullah" meaning friend of Allah. (23) Official as well as popular Islam recognize this designation. However in terms of power, the state and capabilities of the saint, are interpreted differently by puritan clergyman and common muslims and as we shall see later, the claims and counterclaims to the ownership of text interpretations is essentially concerned with power. Shaykh Yusuf was also a revolutionary and political activist.

The man that came as an exile, at the age of sixty-eight years, in 1694 to the Cape with a retinue of forty-nine

followers was already a man of character, a charismatic leader and sufi hero. Greyling quoting van Selms and Cense states that in the last instance the influence of Shaykh Yusuf lay not so much in what he taught or what he wrote but in what he was. (24)

In what and who he was, we have an interest. Not only "was", but also what he presently means to common Muslims. The present common perception concerning Shaykh Yusuf we will undertake in our discussion on "Sacred Persons", in Chapter Three. What he was to common Muslim pioneers among the slaves is what we have to ascertain.

It is here that we dispense with convention. Oral histories, legends and myths is what symbolic discourse is made of, or vice versa. At the very beginning Shaykh Yusuf seemed destined to become an important symbol in the world of the common Muslim in the country of his birth.

THE MACASSARIAN "LEGENDEN"

Relying on B.F. Matthes', "Boegineesche en Makassarsche Legended" we are informed:

> "The Makasar folk tradition has it that Yusuf is the son from a marriage between the daughter of the Gallarang of Montjong-loe, and an old man. This old man, it is alleged, appeared by super-

natural means near the town of "Komara". (25)

The Makasar legends cite the following account of a vist to Yusuf by a wali (saint) from Celebes on his way to Makkah:

> The Wali was blind. He came from Rapang, thus bearing the name Toewang Rappang. He was called Sehetta l-Wodi, or the Shaykh from Wodi and also by the name "Abd-al-Basir". Shaykh Yusuf immediately took him to his hospitable home and did not allow him to travel any further. As Toewang Rappang spent some time with Yusuf, the latters wife, due to certain unknown circumstances, got an irresistable urge for a certain type of "lawi-lawi" or algae which could be obtained at Koeri, near Maros. In spite of his blindness, the wali volunteered to obtain it for her. He went alone in a "lepa-lepa" or dugout canoe to Celebes. And in an unbelievably short while he brought from there the "lawi-lawi" for the Shaykh's wife. After the two "walis" had lived together for a considerable time in Bantam, Shaykh Yusuf received an urgent request from the king of Goa to return to his fatherland with a view to giving religious education to the royal family and to serve his people. But Yusuf did not feel inclined to this and sent, therefore, in his place, his friend Toewang Rappang. When the king of Goa saw the blind man coming, he could not think otherwise than that the people were playing the fool with him". (26)

Even the Dutch seemed to have measured the esteem Shaykh Yusuf enjoyed in the perception of the people:

"en die leider zijner Makkassaarsche hulp-troepen, sjeik Yoessoef, een invloedrijk "paep" of opperpriester, stond by de bevolking in een reuk van heiligheid". (27)

("and the leader of his auxiliary troops, Shaykh Yusuf, a very influential high priest, stood, in the eyes of the populance, in an aura of holiness").

The history of Shaykh Yusuf's escape from and capture by the Dutch seems equally legendary; the escape:

"After the defeat and arrest of Sultan Ageng, Shaykh Yusuf escaped and managed to hold the country in unrest against the new Sultan for another year. This is a remarkable feat considering the fact that both regents-Ageng and Poerbaya - had already been captured and that many of their followers had already abandoned the battle against Haji". (28)

The capture:

"There are two versions. According to the first version, Van Happel disguised himself in a Moorish garb, pretending to be an Arab. In his guise as an Arab, Van Happel was able to approach Yusuf and capture him. The other account describes how Van Happel went to Mandale were Yusuf had taken refuge, to offer him pardon. To convince Yusuf to give himself up, Van Happel took with him a daughter of Yusuf named Asma. "On receiving a letter from Van Happel and Asma", Shaykh Yusuf emerged from his hiding place and gladly accompanied them to Cheribon". (29)

Regarding Shaykh Yusuf's second tomb the "Legenden" record:

"The King of Goa now sent someone to Bantam to bring back to Goa the remains of Lehe-Yoesoepoe (Shaykh Yusuf).

According to the legend, Yusuf appears to have been buried at Bantam. But the Governor-General of the time refused this

request. The King's envoy was naturally very upset by this. Fortunately the Shaykh appeared that night to the envoy in a dream and informed him that on the way to his grave, he would see a ray of light rising from the ground. From that place the envoy should take a handful of the earth and take it with him to Goa.

The envoy in accordance with the dream, put a little of the "sacred" earth in a type of pot known as "baloeboe" and returned to Goa. Before long the soil increased so much that the pot became too small and he had to acquire a bigger type of pot known as "goembang". But soon this was also too small and now he took recourse to a "doeni" or coffin. And lo! it was not long before the soil, which had increased meanwhile, had actually taken the exact form of the long-deceased Shaykh with a Quran under the right arm and a rosary around the shoulders. Thus one finds to this day at Lakiyoeng (Lakiung) in Goa the grave of the famous "wali", Sehe-Yoesoepoe (Shaykh Yusuf)". (30)

> "The esteem in which he was held is not only seen in the titles ascribed to him, (Our great lord Schech Yusuf, the crown, the follower of the Khalwati-order, the Makassarian, Allah sanctify his inner being and lighten his tomb), (31) but Valentijn mentions the fact that in Bantam the population even picked up his sapa or betel-chew, which he spat out after chewing it dry, keeping it as a holy relic". (32)

THE CAPE LEGENDS

In Cape Town, as in Makassar and Goa, Shaykh Yusuf seems to have attained a "sacred" personality.

> "As with other founders of Islam, legends have gradually grown up around Yusuf: for instance he is reported to have performed many mircacles". (33)

In his "History of South Afrcia" under the Administration of the Dutch East India Company (1652 to 1795), M'Call Theal records:

> "... various traditions ... have gathered about his name, and it is commonly believed by those of his creed at the Cape that he performed many miracles. Thus it is asserted by them that when he was on the passage to this country the fresh water in the ship failed, upon which he dipped his foot in the sea and told the crew to replenish their casks, when to the amazement of all on board that which they took up in buckets was perfectly good to drink". (34)

Another legend is given by du Plessis:

> The Shaykh is said to wander about the place of his burial dressed in a green robe. For a long time his grave was forgotten and afterwards could no longer be traced. One day a herd boy in the neighbourhood lost his master's sheep. Afraid to return, he found a spot in which to hide, and there had a dream in which a green-robed person led him to the place where the sheep had wandered. In this way the sacred spot was refound". (35)

Greyling informs us:

> "Among the Muslims in the Cape we also find a legend telling that only a finger of Schech Yusuf was taken to Makassar. Others say his body was taken and only a finger left here".

What, then, is the function of this mythology respectively to the common Muslims of Shaykh Yusuf's homeland, to the slave-Muslims who rallied around him at Zandvliet and to the ordinary Muslims of present Cape Town?

MYTH-MAKING AS A RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

As we have mentioned earlier, the theological evaluation of myths is not our intention. The truth or falsity of a particular form of symbolic discourse does not necessarily reveal the sacred power available in it.

What is significant in myth, is its potential to establish "an action to secure the continuity of the proper order of things" (ritual). Myth could also be stories explaining the origins of significant things, people or places (myths of origin). The retelling of significant historical events in the life of a nation imbibing it with moral power so that it may act (cult myth or historic myth). To invest something with importance, like the birth and exploits of some popular hero, with an aura of mystery (presige myth). And finally,

"eschatological myths", which mean myths of the end. (36)

For any Muslim, official or popular, engaging in any of the above activities will not only himself consider it a religious activity but this pervasive sense of sacrality (cognitively or affectively), he derives from a worldview - Islam - which views nothing in the universe or hereafter except that it is under Allah's sovereignty. There is no admittance, at least, ideally, to the dichotomy: religious / secular.

Thus the myths connected to Shaykh Yusuf's person functioned as cult or historic myth as well as prestige myth.

Each interested group appropriated the powerful, mythologized personality of the Shaykh.

Officials and historians saw him as a leader and a pious man, and the "founder" of South African Islam. His adversaries, the Dutch, conceded that he was a "heilige" and powerful enemy. His own people venerated him to the point that the myths supported his physical return to them, whereafter a tomb was erected. His adopted Cape followers constructed myths to maintain ownership over him by either retaining a finger or the body of the saint at his tomb in Faure.

The slaves and other underpriveliged persons that accompanied him on the ship or repaired to him, clandistinely in search of humanity, under foreboding Dutch colonial eyes, were in fact negotiating empowering spatial and personal relationships:

> "At all historical times, religiously orientated charismatic leadership could reaffirm Islam by its messianic expectations". (37)

And as Albert Raboteau writes about slave religion:

> "The religious meetings in the quarters, groves and "hush harbors" were themselves frequently acts of rebellion against the proscriptions of the master. In the context of divine authority, the limited authority of any human was placed in perspective ... slaves experienced status, achieved respect and exercised power ..." (38)

TUAN GURU

Tuan Guru or Shaykh Abdullah ibn Qadi Abdus Salaam (d. 1807) was a prince (39) from Tidore in the Ternate Islands of Indonesia and was brought to the Cape and incarcerated on Robben Island in 1780. (40) In 1793, after 13 years in prison he returned to the Cape mainland.

While in prison, Tuan Guru busied himself with scholarly as well as sufistic activity which included the writing of several books. (41)

Imam Abdullah, records Davids, wrote a book on Islamic Jurisprudence and several copies of the Holy Quran from memory. His hand-written work on Islamic Jursiprudence, became the main reference work of the Cape Muslims during the nineteenth century. (42) He was also nicknamed "Tuan Guru" meaning "Mister Teacher" (43) or "Master Teacher" (44).

Nevertheless as an official of Cape Islam in his times and well into the nineteenth century his tremendous impact on the Cape Muslim community can be guaged. He not only provided the community with its text, the Quran, but also its jurisprudence and mysticism and Islamic education system. For instance in 1807, the first organized school operating outside the colonial education system had 375 students, made of slaves and Free Blacks, (45) which meant that such classes were apparently open to all irrespective of colour or religion:

> "the madrasah system was open to all children, regardless of race or religion thereby drawing hundreds of otherwise excluded children into the Islamic circle; the Islamic schools offered an alternative education for many people hostile to , or suspicious of, the ruling Christian order". (46)

Bradlow sums up the Tuan's first year of freedom:

> "Indeed within a year of his release Tuan Guru had brought about a veritable revolution in the nature of social relations within the Muslim community in Cape Town. Apart from having played a crucial role in the establishment of a mosque in Dorp Street, he had opened a school for the education of the children of Cape Town's under classes, established the Jumu'ah prayers at a quarry on the edge of town, and made significant inroads towards creating the rudimentary political apparatus of an Islamic society. (47)

On the sufi level, Tuan Guru too, like Shaykh Yusuf, revealed strong connections with Islamic mysticism and its social application in the lives of the theologically lesser informed and the oppressed:

> "Indeed it is in this latter work (jurisprudence or fiqh) that conclusive evidence of Tuan Guru's mystical inclinations are offered. Interspersed with the presentation of the more mundane, temporal aspects of ritual worship, is a profound concern for the mystical dimensions of Islam. The sections dealing with dhikr and herbal and spiritual healing (hakimat) clearly demonstrate this. (48)

What Bradlow succinctly observes is the tendency of "sufi-ulama", like Tuan Guru, who move toward a more integrated form of social practice that acknowledges the importance of temporal matters in the lives of their followers. (49)

Thus it seems that it would not have been abnormal for Tuan Guru to lead his people in prayer at the mosque, teach their children at the madrasah, write out azeemats (talismans) for the benefit of the troubled in his flock, engage in merang and qadat (prayer meetings) and in short, apply the principles and strategies required to enfranchise his community with senses and experiences of empowerment in the relevant socioreligious and political levels.

Nevertheless even on the folklore side, Tuan Guru, receives popular certification for himself and his activities. Far from undermining his official position the mass perception of Tuan Guru,again like all "hero-leaders" or charismatic personalities, the extraodinary also can become a legitimate effect of the creation of myths of prestige.

Du Plessis and Luckhoff cite a widely circulated and acknowledged "legend":

> "... Tuan Guru happened one morning to be mong the crowd in Greenmarket Square, then a vegetable market, when a European farmer arrived with a wagon-load of sacks, which he began to stock in the potato section. When Tuan Guru asked what they contained, the answer was "stones".
>
> He thereupon tapped the sacks with his staff, and when the auctioneer arrived to sell the potatoes, every sack was found to contain only stones. Only after the farmer had pleaded with him did the Tuan again tap the sacks and reconvert the stones into potatoes". (50)

Recording an oral history about the same incident Davids writes:

> "Tuan Abdullah had great mystic powers and many legends have been woven around his life. He is reported to have turned potatoes into stones on Riebeeck Square at the time when the square acted as a market. The story goes that Imam Abdullah was walking across Riebeeck Square on his way to buy some vegetables, when a farmer pulled in with a wagon loaded with sealed bags. On his inquiring what the bags contained the farmer curtly replied, "Stones!" Imam Abdullah touched the bags and walked away. When the farmer eventually opened his bags to display his produce he found that it had turned into stones. It was only after he had managed to locate Imam Abdullah again that the produce was returned to its normal state- potatoes. (51)

Another interesting artefact that survives to this day with a descendant of Tuan Guru is a fortune telling book and a

dice inscribed with letters from the Arabic alphabet. It works likes this. Prayers are recited while the dice is thrown and the letters appearing on top indicate a reference in the book which will, in turn indicate references in the Quran. From these references the future or a suitable remedy is determined. (52)

Tuan Guru seems to have been able to join Quranic exegesis with numerology and divination (53) in an exercise that is enough to unsettle many a puritan.

Common Muslims however seem to have been ably possessed by the Tuan, and judging by some of the contents of an entire chapter, in his book on jurisprudence, which he devoted to spiritual medicine and healing:

> "This chapter contains instructions for the preparation of talismans or "Azeemats" to ward off evil or for general protection, potions for all kinds of illness and prayers to soften the heart of an unresponsive lover". (54)

Such disadvantaged conditions of personal suffering were met by Tuan Guru's creative ability, socially and spiritually.

THE FIRST MOSQUE AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Tuan Guru is also confirmed as the founder of the first mosque in the Cape and in South Africa, that being the Awwal Mosque (First Mosque) in Dorp street and evidently he was its first Imam. One of the "karamahs" (miracles) that is related to Tuan Guru is the belief that not only is the Awwal Mosque founded by him but that:

> "This statement of historic fact supports the oral tradition that Tuan Guru was the first mosque's first Imam and to add colour to this claim, oral history further relates that Tuan Guru's voice could be heard as far away as Simonstown, about twenty five miles from Cape Town, when he gave the call for prayers through a window at the mosque". (55)

Nevertheless, what is important is that this first mosque, unlike most of today's structures, was the community's cultural, ecological base whilst it was a sacredly consecrated piece of ground and building for the worship of Allah, as "it must remain for as long as the world stands". (56)

This religio-cultural base, under the capable all-round personality of Tuan Guru as sufi-cum-imam, became the community's tangible symbol of identification with their religion. It was also the sacred centre of communal

activity, regulating and patterning their social and religious life. (57)

> "Indeed under Guru's (RA) leadership it was to become the focal point of an expansionist impulse that not only sought to regularise the practice of Islam but also to popularise its message among the inhabitants of the town". (58)

Thus we are able to discern Muslim common religious practices that evolved within a particular social milieu.

The Awwal Mosque saw the birth of most of the Cape Muslim traditions or common religious practices. "Rampie-sny", the cutting of orange leaves, placing them in colourful sachets on the occassion of the Prophet's Birthday and "Merang", a religious ceremony followed by feasting might have originated here as a communal "get-togeter". During the early nineteenth century the Merang was arranged through the

mosque on the seventh, fortieth and hundredth day after the occurrence of a death. Members of the congregation were required to make a contribution of one shilling, called the "Tallie" for the purchase of fish and rice which were served to all those who attended. Portions of fish and rice were also sent to those who could not attend.

These traditions are unique to the Cape and have presently, in instances, not without foundation, been frowned upon by the Muslim purist. Nevertheless, it was necessary, not only for the survival but also the spread of Islam among the heathen slave and Eastern Free Black community. (59)

More than that, it seems that Cape Town's pioneer informal community, around Shaykh Yusuf and then the permanent establishment of Muslims signalled by the first mosque and its institutionalization within the formal community under Tuan Guru, sought multiple principles and strategies in negotiating claims to power. These attempts to share or appropriate power were conducted from and through various views and actions. Muslim common religious practices as a type of religious response to challenge the oppresive and de-humanising conditions, was, it seems, one certain way in which Tuan Guru and the early Cape Muslims responded.

Imam Muding himself a son of a slave, in his evidence to the Colebrooke and Bigge Commission of 1825 clearly codifies the relation between religious symbols and their liberating powers:

> "Their bodies are in slavery, but we teach them to believe that their souls are free, and that they must look up to God to make them free when they die". (60)

CONCLUSION

Thus if popular Islam is an expression of liberation then surely, it's constituent elements, the rituals, the traditions, the legends, the innovations, the healing movements, the sacred places, persons and relics - all now fit into a significant body of common responses - such responses that can find sanction and sometimes that could look (depending on where you stand) like anything but Islamic.

However it does seem that even where purists today see threatening overtones, (unlike Islam's pioneering officials who agitated through popular practices against the interests of hegemonic class structures and its peculiar politics of control), it will emerge that it is not so much what is right or wrong, or "kosher" or not, but rather it seems to be a matter of who has the power to label, to regulate, to control the supply of religious ideas and practices.

This problematic challenge to officialdom in terms of power interests, unfortunately has not been clearly recognized let alone actively pursued. We therefore hope that in identifying some areas of Muslim common religious movements our exploratory effort will enlist a more probing investigation into common Muslim spirituality.

We thus turn to identification in the next chapter.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

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8. The insertion is mine.

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20. Dangor, S.E. Shaykh Yusuf, Iqra Research Committee, Mobeni, (1982), p. 2.

21. Ibid. p. 3.

22. Ibid. p. 65

23. A Quranic verse (10:62) reads: "Beware, verily the friends of Allah have no fear of the future nor do they bear sorrow of the past...".

24. Greyling, C. op. cit. p. 19.

25. Dangor, S.E. op. cit. p. 2.

26. Ibid. pp. 3 - 4.

27. Greyling, C. op. cit. p. 14.

28. Dangor, S.E. op. cit. . 20.

29. Ibid. pp. 21 - 22.

30. Ibid. pp. 53 - 54.

31. Greyling, C. op. cit. p. 12.

32. Ibid. p. 12.

33. Shell, R. C-H. op. cit. 23.

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35. Ibid. p. 61.

36. Based on Prof. J.S. Cumpsty's Lectures on Myth, delivered at the University of Cape Town in the department of Religious Studies.

37. Rice, D.C, op. cit. p. 276.

38. Raboteau, A.J. Slave Religion, Oxford University Press, New York (1978) p. 318.

39. Davids supports Tuan Guru's royal background whereas Bradlow argues that the Tuan, according to his name, was the son of a Qadi (judge) rather than the son of of a king. Bradlow says that Tuan Guru's significant sociopolitical influence upon the Cape Muslim community was as a result of the Tuans qualification and ability as a "sufi-qadi" rather than a "sufi-prince".

40. Davids, A. The Mosques of Bo-Kaap, Athlone, 1980,p. 17.

41. Lubbe, G. op. cit. p. 53.

42. Davids, A. op. cit. p. 18.

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48. Bradlow, M.A. op. cit. p. 145.

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50. Ibid. p. 145.

51. Davids, A. op. cit. p. 18.

52. Ibid. pp. 18 -19.

53. This exercise could have been the "Istikhara" which means: 'to ask of Allah the good and beneficial aspect of an impending act or intention'.

54. Ibid. p. 18.

55. Ibid. p. 98.

56. Ibid. p. 94.

57. Ibid. p. 94.

58. Bradlow, M.A. op. cit. p. 146.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE FACE AND FORM OF CAPE POPULAR ISLAM

> "We need an entirely different approach to the holy, and to the ritual path of life, to appreciate what the positive spiritual significance might be of seasonal rites to make the crops abundant, menstrual taboos, or medicines hidden in the roof thatch to ward off witchcraft". (1)

INTRODUCTION

We have historically, though admittedly selectively and non-conventionally, shown the origination of aspects of the popular movement. These were briefly related to the present Cape community. Some of the practices have essentially remained intact whilst others, expectedly, have undergone change or diminished in intensity or simply disappeared in keeping with the changing social demand.

We now turn to identification.

The specific area of our study will concentrate on the popular movement as it surfaces in :

1. Rituals
2. Sacred Persons, Space and Relics
3. Healing and Movements

RITUALS:

Maulud-un-Nabi

The "Maulud-un-Nabi" is the celebration of the birth of the Islamic Prophet. It is especially celebrated on the 12th of Rabiulawwal the third month of the Muslim lunar calendar, although the celebration is also held throughout the year. In mosques, homes, halls and tents, wherever it is possible to congregate people, the Maulud is held. The function consists of thikr (repetitive incantation of Allah's Names or Attributes) and poetical renditions eulogizing the Prophet. The celebration ends with salutations and blessings and (salaam and salawaat) upon the Prophet in a standing posture.

Here is a typical form of the veneration literature in Arabic that has developed with the masses paying homage to the Prophet:

> "Oh one of beauty, Oh master of mankind
> From your luminous face the moon was lit
> It is not possible to praise you enough
> The truth is that after God, you are
> the greatest".

The "Salawaat" similarly is read with stunning musicality and devotion:

> YA NABI SALAAM ALAYKA!
> YA RASUL SALAAM ALAYKA!
> YA HABIB SALAAM ALAYKA!
> SALAWATULLAH ALAYKA!

MEANING:

> Oh Prophet, peace upon you!
> Oh Messenger, peace upon you!

After the salaam Allah is beseeched in a final dua (supplication). The participants then greet each other while sweetmeats are being passed around. Depending upon the time, full meals are otherwise served.

In the mind and heart of the participants there is a pervasive experience of "sacred power" translated into a single concept - "barakah". The place, the person and the food is invested with a barakah.

THE "BARAKA" CONCEPT

This central concept of blessed power operating in official and common Muslim life, requires some clarification. In pre-Islamic Arabia, Arabian animism seemed almost to have been religion in itself:

> "In it's crudest form, the old Arabian religion might be summed up as the endeavour to find and to use the most powerful conveyors of baraka against the ever-present malevolence of evil spirits". (2)

Thus the Arabs believed in the appropriation of magical powers that were supernaturally inherent in objects, humans and non-humans like the jinn.

Islam transformed these sources and instruments of power through the Quran, by "superimposing upon the deposit of Arabian animism a supreme controlling power in the personality and activity of an all-powerful God". (3)

Gibb's Quranic treatment of the concept is enlightening:

> "...God Himself is the sole and direct source of all barakat. The same applies to all its cognates; the frequent use of tabaraka in glorifying God; the active baraka to express God's conferring baraka upon persons or things; and the participle mubarak to describe persons or things upon whom God has conferred baraka or the power to confer baraka". (4)

An important observation that Gibb offers regarding symbolism is that it is necessary to draw a distinction between animistic beliefs and animistic symbols:

> "All living religions preserve (and perhaps must preserve) a certain number of symbols which were originally related to animistic rites and beliefs. In the course of religious development great religious teachers have been careful not to destroy a symbolism which served to stimulate the imaginitive complex out of which the intuitive religious vision emerges; but they have given to these symbols a new interpretation that entirely transforms their spiritual and intellectual significance. Thus in Islam reverence for the Black Stone, originally an animistic symbol, was transposed by Muhammad into a rite associated with the worship of the One God, just as the Christian Eucharist transposed the Temple sacrifices and pagan sacrificial meal". (5)

This type of deeper rationale, one expects, should channel the puritan thinker's vehemence critically, however, popular practices here in South Africa still remain a fertile ground for polemics. But the matter does not seem to be one of "calling to the truth", rather than "imposing a particular

truth about power". This ongoing tension and powerplay that has disrupted Muslim life in South Africa was strikingly real in the "Azaadville incident" in 1987. Puritans and commoners or the neo-Wahabi, Deobandi-Tableeghi movement clashed with the popular movement who refer to themselves as Sunni. The result was one dead, several injured, the destruction of state and private property as well as the desecration of about five thousand rands worth of foodstuff. A court case has also resulted.

The ideological diffusion between the two groups centered around an immense souce of power, the person and personality of the Islamic Prophet.(6) The Wahabis object to the Maulud-un-Nabi or Meelad assembly as being a ritual that is bidah, an innovation (7) in opposition to the Sunnah (manner of the Prophet). The Sunnis claim the Meelad as permissable and rewarding. (8)

The power evidently available in the symbolic interaction between the believer and his Prophet seems to be interpreted diversely. To the Wahabis, the personality of the Prophet represents an ethico-moral exemplar par excellence, while the Sunnis seem to claim his person enveloped in an aura of powerful barakah and nur (light). Each group hope to impose

their wills on each other, but in negotiations of power it seems, as in the Azaadville incident, where conditioned power fails, condign power or violence can become a sacred duty, a redemptive process.

To return to the Maulud-un-Nabi.

"RAMPIE-SNY"

In the Cape there is a unique ritual which accompanies the Maulud or the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday. It is called Rampie-sny, which entails a ceremonial cutting of orange leaves, heavily scented with rose essence. This operation is strictly done by the women who dress in their best and read venerational poems to the Prophet whilst they are making up sachets of the fragrant contents.

The men are then given these sachets to keep on their persons when they go to the mosque for the Maulud celebrations.

Mrs Salie of Crawford said to us:

> "Rampies is not necessary, but, you know we must do it. It's the birthday of our Nabi and our men must smell nice, they must smell good when they go to the Maulud at the mosque". (9)

She uses an ambivalent vocabulary. She does agree officially perhaps, that the Maulud and Rampies may not

necessarily be an official religious obligation, however she uses the emphatic "must" several times, intimating that she intuitively feels a compulsion to up keep the popular tradition.

Possibly it is the women's way of displaying that they are an important facet of the Muslim community in that they have a monopoly and, as such, a power not available to the men. This is one occassion where symbolic anointment of their men allows them a sense of ascendency even if only for one time in a year:

> "...this process of transmutation of awareness from a literal or personal, or even social mode, to a symbolic and transcendental one, lies at the heart of all ritual action". (10)

The "Rampie-sny" also serves as a socialization and initation rite for younger girls who have to submit to the direction of the elder ones. Perhaps it is a way of unconsciously conditioning younger people to respect age.

Nevertheless, the Maulud or in official Arabic, Maulid, seems to be an active reverence of the Prophet. The problem between the puritan and the popular thus reflects attempts "to define permissible reverence as against blameworthy adoration". (11) But common Muslims interact

with their Prophet intuitively, emotionally and perhaps that is why poetry, as music of the heart, is thematic to the Maulid. To fix the limit or restrain the extent of reverence towards the most powerful personality in the world of the ordinary Muslim is not a practical exercise.

> "It would be difficult to exaggerate the strength and the effects of the Muslim attitude toward Muhammad. Veneration for the Prophet was a natural and inevitable feeling, both in his own day and later, but this is more than veneration. The personal relationships of admiration and love which he inspired in his associates have echoed down the centuries, thanks to the instruments which the community created in order to evoke them afresh in each generation". (12)

Common people exult in the spirituality they feel they experience in participating in the Maulud. The fluid independence with which they celebrate leaves them unintimidated by legalities and Maulud gatherings only seem to have proliferated since the issuing of a fatwa (legal ruling) by the Council of Theologians of the Eastern Cape. Their counterparts from the Transvaal and Natal support them in this opposition to the celebration.

In the Cape, the Muslim Judicial Council have rather remained non-committal as no fatwa in favour or against has been issued. Possibly this strategic stance reflects

the attitude of the internal structure. Unlike other theological councils, the M.J.C. welcome lay as well as non-clerics to membership alongside the professionally qualified clergy.

A substantial number of Imams act not only as power functionaries within the organizational structure of the M.J.C. but also enjoy the position of "culture-broker" among their localized communities in and around the numerous mosques. They are important transformers between the official theology and the community.

However, it does seem that in the instance of the Maulud celebrations, the consensus of the community has proven stronger than the consensus of the custodians of theology.

THIKR, MERANG AND GADAT

We discuss these movements together as all three function with an identical concept and modus. We will thus refer to these prayer-meetings as THIKR (remembrance of Allah).

The essential feature is that the names and attributes of Allah are chanted, recited and sung with a variant melody. There are scores of these voluntary associations and their membership varies between ten to thirty as a group.

These groups do perform at mosques but are more "home to home" based. Wherever they are invited to perform the "thikr" they go. It can often be a problem to get a thikr group at short notice as they are "booked" for weeks in a row. The ideal thikr night is Thursday night, eve of Friday, the Muslim Sabbath. Sunday mornings, possibly because of the holiday, is also used.

At every possible opportunity like the birth or naming of a child or in the days preceeding a marriage or when sending off or welcoming returning hajis from Makka or even in adversity like on the third, seventh, tenth, fortieth and hundredth day after death, almost certainly there will be in their homes a gathering for thikr.

Indeed the entire rites of passage of the individual will be accompanied by the ritual of thikr.

> "The stress laid by the Koran on the goodness of God... Mere intellectual assent, however, is not enough. Gods goodness must be felt (13) with such intensity that it calls out the emotion of gratitude". (14)

Muslim people want to experience spirituality (the power of Allah) immediately. They feel happy and satisfied after participation in thikr and are able to return to their

normal life routines with a sense of having achieved something. Again the concept of barakah surfaces as the householder and his family, neighbours, relatives and friends, feel they receive an inexplicable spirituality, a blessing, a power, a fortification, a renewed sense of protection through involvement in the thikr.

The householder believes that barakah has entered his home. The specially prepared eatables that are served is an expression of gratitude and honour to the people who have graced the place. Portions of eatables are also taken home by the participants as it too has attained the special power of barakah.

The thikr prayer meeting also allows them the socialized experience of an "elect" group-consciousness. They feel elected hence powerful because they engage in "Allah's work".

Witness and testification to Allah's Power further consolidates and perpetuates the movement, for instance at a particular house in the Bo-Kaap in a room where the thikr normally takes place, there is a conspicuous mark on the wall in an otherwise neat and painted room. The son of the late householder informs us:

> "If the walls could speak, they would have a lot to tell, as they witnessed the event". (15)

The event is that in a particular thikr the crescendo of the chanting had reached such a stage that one of the participants was seen walking on the wall. That spot has not been repainted since but sacredly left untouched. We spoke to the man himself about his reported experience. He says: "I do not know, I was unconscious". (16)

Nevertheless, in thikr gatherings here in the Cape, common Muslims have found a religious way of coming together semi-formally yet on a regular basis that started with their arrival at the "Cape of Good Hope and Spirit" and has persisted to this day.

Religious symbols, being transcendant and ambivalent, allow religionists to construct realities or views of reality by negotiation and appropriation. Thikr as symbolic expression would provide unending opportunities and possibilities in liberating men from psychological and social restraints.

In Muslim folk religion in the early Cape, the thikr allowed the psychological and social interest of being free and fully human to be realized, even though this was made possible at intervals only, as the symbol-pool, Islam, and the symbol users, the slaves, were severly controlled and curtailed by the Dutch colonialists.

We suggest that just as dehumanized slaves sought identity, having been "natally alienated" (17)' and human dignity, having been classified as "sub-human" others, so too now, do ordinary Muslims, enslaved through compensatory power by economic and political organization, struck by the inundations of a routinated life, dichotomied between Islamic and contemporary real life patterns, seek a reconfirmation of their personalities and the experience of the mystical barakah that will attend them in the world of their daily trials with work, family, society and related interrelationships.

As long as the Names of Allah are accessible, the tendency of groups of people to extract from them symbolic expressions of empowerment in the form of thikr, to that extent Muslim common religious practices will continue. Just as the people found in it a fulfilment of their spiritual motivations in primitive times and corditions, moreso today as immediate interests multiply and the technology of domination increases will people direct their creative abilities to appropriate the genre of thikr as soul-diet.

Puritan clerics today, however, are disdainful about the role of thikr, especially the thikr jahri (loud rememberance) or the melodied form. Perhaps the cold and rigid interpretation of law is being conducted as an absolute, without cognisance or consideration regarding the psycho-social experiences and the spirituality of ordinary people. Maybe it is a reflection of the constant dynamics of power that have to be sustained in the religious hegemony of the clerics over the laity.

SACRED SPACE AND PERSON

Certainly if we are to talk about places that create a "holy geography" then the abundant mausoleums or "kramats" are not only religio-historic, but also even to this day remain important symbols of Common Muslim spiritual aspirations.

Cape Town has the power of the presence of a "Holy Circle". According to the Prince of Tidore who arrived here in 1778:

> "There will be a circle of Karamats round Cape Town wherein all its inhabitants will be safe from disasters for the rest of their lives". (18)

This holy circle is formed by a series of "kramats" where Cape Muslim pioneers considered to be "auliyaa" (friends of Allah) lie in perpetual bliss.

Common Muslim cosmology which derives from official Islam, considers such extra-ordinary personages as living in a state of heightened perception regarding worldly matters because they have in dying, passed on to an eschaton that allows them limitless powers to intervene in worldly affairs. Thus not only can they be employed to make "shafaat" (intercession) on behalf of the supplicant, but in fact the very place they inhabit becomes a sort of spiritual refuge. For one, all the kramats of the "Holy Circle" are at sensational settings. The tombs are situated at Signal Hill, Camps Bay, Constantia, Oudekraal, Macassar and Robben Island. These form the rough circle. See appendix for map.

All of the tombs have been converted into embellished mausoleums. Domed buildings, arch windows, carpeted floors, the perpetual smell of incense and perfume as well as bunches of fresh flowers combine to give the saint's tomb an aura of deliberate sanctity.

The Kramats are visited regularly at all hours of any day with special fervour on Thursday nights, the eve of the Muslim Sabbath (Jumu-ah). Pilgrims visit, taking off their shoes and engage in Quranic recitation, supplications and ask Allah through the mediation of the saint to grant them anything from wealth, good fortune, health, employment to a peaceful death - like the dweller of the tomb.

The designation "kramat" reveals the mind of the pilgrim. "Kramat" is a localized pronounciation of the Arabic "karamah" which means noble, venerate, exalt and miracle. Miraculous events are assigned naturally to the saints and here in Cape Town they have been called not by the generic name for such powerful persons, but are remembered by their potential attributes of wielding miracles. Thus in the mind of the subscriber there is a strong association of "miracle" with the saint's person. He is viewed as a source of power.

This religio-cultural vocabulary displays the awe and reverance but mainly the power that the kramat generates for the Common Muslim. The death anniversaries of the local saints as well as overseas ones are regularly celebrated by the followers or disciples of spiritual orders. Vast sums of money are collected and spent, mainly on feasting, on the death anniversary celebration which is known as "Urs".

The kramats have attained a special place in the belief system of idea and praxis in the lives of Cape Muslims.

Jaffery has correctly observed:

> "Saints tombs are a characteristic feature of the landscape in most Muslim countries. where, whether associated with mosques or isolated, they are popular centres of visitation. The orthodox divines have spoken frequently and vigourously against this practice of visitation but the consensus of the community has almost everywhere proved stronger than the condemnation of the theologians and the common folk still visit the tombs of saints to pray, to leave ex-votos, to seek blessing (baraka) and the intercession of the Holy persons buried there". (19)

However, legalists refer to common Muslim ingenuity in this fashion:

> "It is this phenomenon - the total effect of superstitionism, miracle - mongering, tomb-worship, mass hysteria and of course, charlatanism - that we have described above as the moral and spiritual debris from which Muslim society has to be reclaimed for Islam". (20)

Locally too ulama have ruled that these common Muslims are guilty of grave-worship. However, troubled people return again and again to their spiritual refuges.

To the common Muslim visiting the tomb, the chief of his attention is the miracle-working power of the saint. This notion and belief is borne out explicitly by the very naming of "kramat" (miracle). The fear and sorrow that the visitor is plagued by in his life, he believes can be removed or transformed by the saint's knowledge of the unknown.

Besides, the Quran says of the "auliyaa" (friends of Allah) that:

"... verily they have no fear no sorrow..." (21)

The popular interpretation then will concede that they (the saints) have conquered the unknown and must have the power to alter adverse conditions. The saint and his shrine offer satisfaction to the inner longings and yearnings of the heart. When outward tangible power-sources are inhibited or denied then internal experiential senses of power are sought.

SACRED RELICS

In Muslim Common practicess at the Cape, abundant use is made of the azeemat or taveez. This consists of pieces of paper that have been inscribed with Quranic verses. They are suspended around the neck, waist or arm of the afflicted person. Affliction could be physical sicknesses or such disorders that are considered as resulting from the "evil-eye" of jealousy or posession by spirit-like entities called Jinn (genie). Taveez are also sought for almost any need ranging from want of children, employment, love, success in court cases, for hanging as a protection in homes, in businesses for increased business etc.

Other relics which feature strongly in pocular religion are the personal belongings of departed or living saints or spiritual mentors and the hair of the Prophet.

At the Palekar (A well-known family in the Cape) residence in Signal Street in Bo-Kaap one of the rooms have been religiously set aside. It is carpeted and well-kept. It is also used as a "salaah-room" (where the five times daily obligatory prayers are made). There is a cabinet on the wall at head level that houses a few strands of the hair of the Prophet. The actual hair is set up in a soft clay-like base in a tiny bowl-like silver container. It has a cover. The hair is only viewed once a year on the eve of the Prophet's birthday on which occasion an elaborate and delicate ceremony of anointing the hair with rose water and sandalwood paste is conducted. The resulting liquid of the ablution is bottled and given to the participants who for a whole year will use it as an elixir for any conceivable condition or reason.

Muslims are taught not to throw their hair and nails away, but are cautioned to bury it. This conscious effort stems from the belief that nails and hair also manifest the soul of the person. The Prophetic hair would then symbolize the proximity of his soul thus the belief would inspire a conviction that his hair is alive.

In fact every year the gaurdian of the sacred relic will exclaim regarding the growing and sprouting of the hair even taking count of each strand comparing it with the count a year ago.

Again the "baraka" concept is the main dynamic as with great reverance the hair is viewed, the container touched because the viewer considers himself too inferior to directly touch the Prophet's hair. If there is anybody who qualifies to handle it, it would be an imam or spiritual mentor or an elder of the community known for his piety. Supplications are made near it so that the prayer may be acceptable since the immediate tangible presence of the holy hair of Allah's beloved Prophet is sensed. The hair is considered to have an innate sacrality that binds the viewer and venerator thereof immediately and spiritually to the Prophet himself.

Access to an immense source of power is negotiated in this symbolic manner. The effect is an experienced felicity deep inside, as the ceremony has moved young and old to tears. Thereafter Allah is thanked, salutations upon the Prophet is melodiously sung and all sit down to partake of sweetmeats which have also received baraka from the presence of the hair. There is a sense of satisfaction that will last with apprehension until the next "ziyarat" (viewing), next year.

The Quran, as a relic and artifact of over 1400 years is possibly and potentially the richest treasury of symbols for the complete system of belief and practice of the life, death and afterlife of a Muslim. It is his ultimate source of power. Since it is believed to be the unaltered, uncreated Word of Allah, it's power is limitless.

Legalist ulama have constructed elaborate and intricate theologies in order to elicit the form ideal Islam must take. On the other hand common Muslims have interpreted the Quran and its symbols to cater for their immediate interests. Thus the Quran has attained for the masses certain talismanic properties that seem to be unrecognized by officialdom. The claims to ownership of text interpretation seems to be at the heart of the tension.

The Quranic verses are utilized in amulets, it is recited over food and water which action imbibes such perishables with sacred power that can remove illness or expel unwanted spirits. Certain select verses are audibly recited to a dying Muslim and thereafter recited at the funeral rites.

The Quran is draped or covered reverentially and never touched except in a state of ceremonial purity. It is kissed and held to the breast or momentarily placed on the head to transfer all-round protection to the person.

It thus seems that legalists work with the Quran in an academic way whilst common Muslim hold it as a panacea. The ulama because of their training in Quranic sciences and hermeneutics hold the monopoly on legal interpretation. The masses too have to gain access to the ultimate treasury of symbolic power. Thus by interpreting the Quran in an excercise of "psycho-social-interest-hermeneutique", tney avail of the talismanic-cum-spiritual power of the majestic book. In this way common religious practices reflect a sophisticated challenge to the monopoly of powerful religious symbolisms. Common religious practices in the Cape are the witness to the game of symbol appropriation in a religious community that is structured into an "elite" and "commoner" stratification.

The relevance of the above we believe is evident, for instance in the socio-political arena where muslim mass movements have politicized funerals, death anniversaries, declaring of martyrs etc. These popular responses reflect the shift of perspective in theology construction. The movements take place in settings and on occasions where "Ulama-power" is limited or where their symbolic presence can be favourably appropriated. In the mosques, the ulama

stronghold, only that amount is sanctioned which its elite functionaries sanction. Popular movement seems to be expressing a "theology of liberation" in their quest for power.

HEALING MOVEMENTS

Cape Town abounds in Muslim spiritual healers. Although men are in the majority there is at least one woman spiritualist we have been able to trace. The lady lives at Johnston Road in the Athlone area and conducts her practice from her home. Two people that had visited her tell us, however, that she is very authoritative and displays a very commanding almost masculine demeanour. Possibly, patients expect, just as they turn to spiritual healers who have knowledge of the occult and access to desired powers, similarly many would seem to also appreciate an outward manifestation that attributes an image of strength or power.

The remaining healers are based in the Bo-Kaap, Claremont, Rylands, Athlone, Grassy Park , Greenhaven and Mitchell's Plain. These areas are by no means exhaustive as oral information points to there being scores of healing movements around the entire Peninsula.

Although there are slight variances between the healers regarding modus operandi, essentially there is a typicality which is common to all.

The movements' power sources can be reduced to primarily the Quran and its relevant verses and secondly, though perhaps considered more potent, is the contact with the spiritual world. This ethereal existence is cosmologically inhabited by Jinns who are believed to enjoy almost the same network of social and familial ties as mankind, the major difference being that Jinns are created from fire whereas man is created from sand. All the healers contacted revealed the conviction that they enjoyed an extraterrestrial communication with Jinns and even with the honorific souls of departed saints. One healer is known to have master-like control over a particular Jinn who then obeys the orders of his master regarding the revealing of unseen information and impending events.'

Attendance at healing stations, which in all cases were the homes of the respected healers, ranges from anything between a score of people or more at a time, where consultation hours are fixed, and where free access is allowed there is a steady but constant flow of people in need of assistance.

The actual materia medica that the healers dispense to their patients are the "taveez" or "azeemat" which are Quranic verses inscribed on square pieces of paper. Sometimes the numerical equivalent of the verse is transcribed since the Arabic alphabet has a numerology of its own specifically developed for spiritual interpretations. Other holy transformers of power are verses of the Quran written with safron-water on new plain white porcelain plates that are washed with water and ceremoniously drunk by the particular patient. Such operations will in fact ensure that the Quranic powerful "baraka" will permeate every part of the body and expel the invading physical or spiritual affliction or malady. Water and edible oils are also used. These are breathed upon by the healer after certain incantations which again are either direct verses from the Quran or relative litanies which invoke the names of angelic or Jinn spirits. The liquid is either drunk or applied to the body or parts of the body.

Exorcising of "ill-spirits" or "unclean" Jinns is also undertaken although all the healers do not readily engage in this operation as sometimes they themselves fear that the demonic spirit may be stronger than the available power of the exorciser.

Last but not least - the economics of the healing movement. Normally there is no fixed consultation fee as such levied. This is left to the voluntary discretion of the patients. However there are instances when amounts have been stipulated and even medical specialist fees are dwarfed by the amounts asked. People, even poor, especially those that find benefit, pay homage and money freely. It is not uncommon to hear how much money this one and that one is making, however, attendances increase all the time as the word spreads and business (no inflation, no tax) is brisk.

All in all, the healing movements in Cape Town are well established practices that without dispute, prove the existence of an immediate and tangible power source that is available to people who are affected by adversity, anxiety, pain and crisis that create disequilibrium in their lives.

People do turn to Allah, but common Muslims feel the necessity to witness the power of Allah. For this reason they would even prostrate and pray to Allah, but they will still seek out persons who have access to Allah's power, who can transform such power into tangible, experienceable ways and means. None seem to be able to claim their obeisance better than the spiritual healers.

A certain Mr Sawant of Rylands Estate was medically diagnosed as having a growth in the brain and needed an operation. He consulted his spiritual healer Sayyid Jaffar who after divination gave him the go ahead. The man had a successful operation. He thanked Allah, the surgeon and his mentor. A few months later he returned for a routine check up to find that his surgeon ordered a second operation. He returned to his mentor who informed him that he (the mentor) was informed that it was not necessary for a second operation. In the meantime the man's doctor booked him for the theatre. The man reluctantly signed the permission to be operated but entreated his doctor for one final scan of the brain. The amazed surgeon cancelled the operation as the scan and X-rays showed health and clear signs. This time Mr. Sawant, says, he thanked Allah, his mentor-healer and asked the doctor to make sense out of the event!

There are too many oral histories that we have heard, playing along the same dynamic, that elicit the cognisance of the ease and content with which troubled Muslims, either solve their problems through common religious practices, or otherwise, accept the trials of pressing physical hardships in a spirit of the significance of such indisposition. It is again the tangible relief experienced or the immediate explanation regarding the continuing disequilibrium, that brings meaning to their dominated lives.

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. Zuesse, E.M. Ritual Cosmos, The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1979 p.7.

2. Gibb, H.A.R. Studies on the Civilization of Islam, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1982 p. 180.

3. Ibid. p. 181.

4. Ibid. p. 188 - 189.

5. Ibid. p. 183.

6. For a useful insight into "personality" as a source of power see J.K. Galbraith's. The Anatomy of Power, London, 1985 p. 51.

7. A Fatwa (legal ruling) was issued to the effect by Saudi Arabia's religious head, reportedly a descendant of ibn Abdul Wanhab (d. 1791) founder of Puritan Wahabism.

8. Suyuti, Jalal-al-din. Al-Hawi li-al Fatawa, Lylpur. n.d., Volume 1, p. 189.

9. Interview, Mrs Salie, Raft Road, Crawford, Athlone.

10. Zuesse, E.M. op. cit. p. 4.

11. Von Grunebaum, G.E. Muhammadan Festivals, London, 1976, p. 77.

12. Gibb, H.A.R. op. cit. p. 194.

13. Both emphases are mine.

14. Ibid. p. 191.

15. Interview Hafiz Shafiq Jacobs, Douglas Road, Wynberg. Cape Town.

16. Interview Ahmed Ebrahim, Whitford Street, Cape Town.

17. This term is used by Orlando Patterson in his defintion of slavery: "slavery is the permantent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonoured persons". (Slavery and Social Death: A comparitive Study, Harvard University Press. Cambridge, 1982, p. 13).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Intellectual Muslims in the Cape and elsewhere have been preoccupied with concentrating on Islam from an elitist position as the ideal life system and despite the strong existence of common religious practices, they seem not to have identified these as an important reflection of Islam being practiced in a particular social and historical setting. This elitist apathy seems common to all world traditions and we can understand that, as they leave documents and literate records, these ideas are perpetually propagated. Unfortunately this literacy, unconsciously or perhaps strategically, tends to ignore popular phenomena. Thus the idealizing goes on in the mosque and the madrasah whilst daily, Muslims are adjusting their religious perceptions to create alternative ways of meeting their religious and spiritual interests. Ideally the Quran is sufficient, but accessible via the Ulama, hence interpretations are legal, cold and independent of psycho-social interest considerations. But common Muslims have supplemented the spiritual vacuum in their lives by establishing discourses and actions that afford sacred power or can symbolize the disempowerment in their lives.

Islam's officials should not and in fact cannot ignore MCRP's. Pleading ignorance genuinely or deliberately will not solve the challenge.

Having no knowledge of the existence of something does not mean that it does not exist. The sometimes ambivalent approach and often outright antagonism that characterizes the clerical hierachy's responses to MCRP's further amplifies the problematic challenge that the popular religiosity poses to, as Otto Maduro would say, the expropriators of the means of religious production. (1) But then, in a class stratified society such as South Africa:

> "... every religious activity is an activity carried out within class conflicts, and as such is an activity permeated, limited and orientated by these conflicts". (2)

Nevertheless, MCRP's have persisted not only as an energizer for common people but as an authentic spiritual response:

> In a system which denies one meaningful identity and social existence, and against which one feels powerless to effect any changes, it is to alternative social cultural activities more than overt political action that one tends to look in order to regain some degree of one's humanity". (3)

If the causes of this persistence can be understood, which we see as the continual empowerment sensed or experienced by the popular practitioners, and if the deeper significance of elitist antagonism can be revealed as the ongoing battle for the control of sacred symbols, whether they be construed in texts, ideas or practices, then only we believe can popular Islamic religious studies begin on the one hand and tensions and conflicts between a dominant minority and a dominated majority be resolved, on the other hand.

The thrust of the above argument is enhanced when we view the remarkable and concrete manner in which Shaykh Yusuf and Tuan Guru succeeded. (May their powerful memories not only invigorate populist politics today but also conscientize their modern day role imitators, the ulama, as religious officials and spiritual leaders). The two succeeded in gaining mastery over themselves first and then over their environments and circumstances. Where real power was not available, symbolic power was appropriated.

This they did through Sufi-Islam, by intergrating the authority of official Islam with the fundamental understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the spiritual interests of disadvantaged and harshly repressed human beings. Authority tempered with mercy, Muslims will

maintain, was found in Prophetic times and in the eras of the Khulafa-al-rashidun (four rightly-guided caliphs). If any proximation can be made, then the Cape's two pioneering Muslim personages may be looked upon as having credibly internalized and externalized that ideal quality of exemplary authority and leadership.

The closest that any modern day imam has come to these historical authors of Islam seems to be the late Imam Haron. He concerned his political activism and social service with spiritualism. His son, Muhammad, informs us that his father regularly visited the tomb of Shaykh Yusuf where he engaged in meditative sessions.

Could it have been the attempt to resuscitate the original sufi trends? Was it an acknowledgement that contemporary leaders lack the spirit and philosophy of the Sufi-Shaykhs?

Well it seems that Imam Haron tried to avail of that heritage by translating it into his own philosophy, life, actions and death as has been witnessed in an abrupt page of Cape Muslim history.

Nevertheless Muslim common religious practice in the Cape is a social reality that is powered with an available transcendant spirituality affording its practitioners, participants and celebrants, instead of confusion, meaning, instead of no-oneness, identity.

Most of all it affords them the power and warmth of being human in an otherwise rigidly structured and conditioned this world and it legitimates the conviction of the reality of an inevitable hereafter. Nobody wants to accept or recognize this, but common Muslims have improvised in a free spirit of holy democracy and unilateral independence.

Common Muslim Capetonians too have their own access to sources and instruments of sanctified power in an otherwise powerfully organized religious and secular legislative capital.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Kruss, G. Religion, Class and Culture: Indigenous Churches in South Africa with special referance to Zionist-Apostolics. Unpublished M.A.Thesis University of Cape Town. 1985

2. Ibid. pp. 150 - 151.

3. Ibid. pp. 209 - 210.

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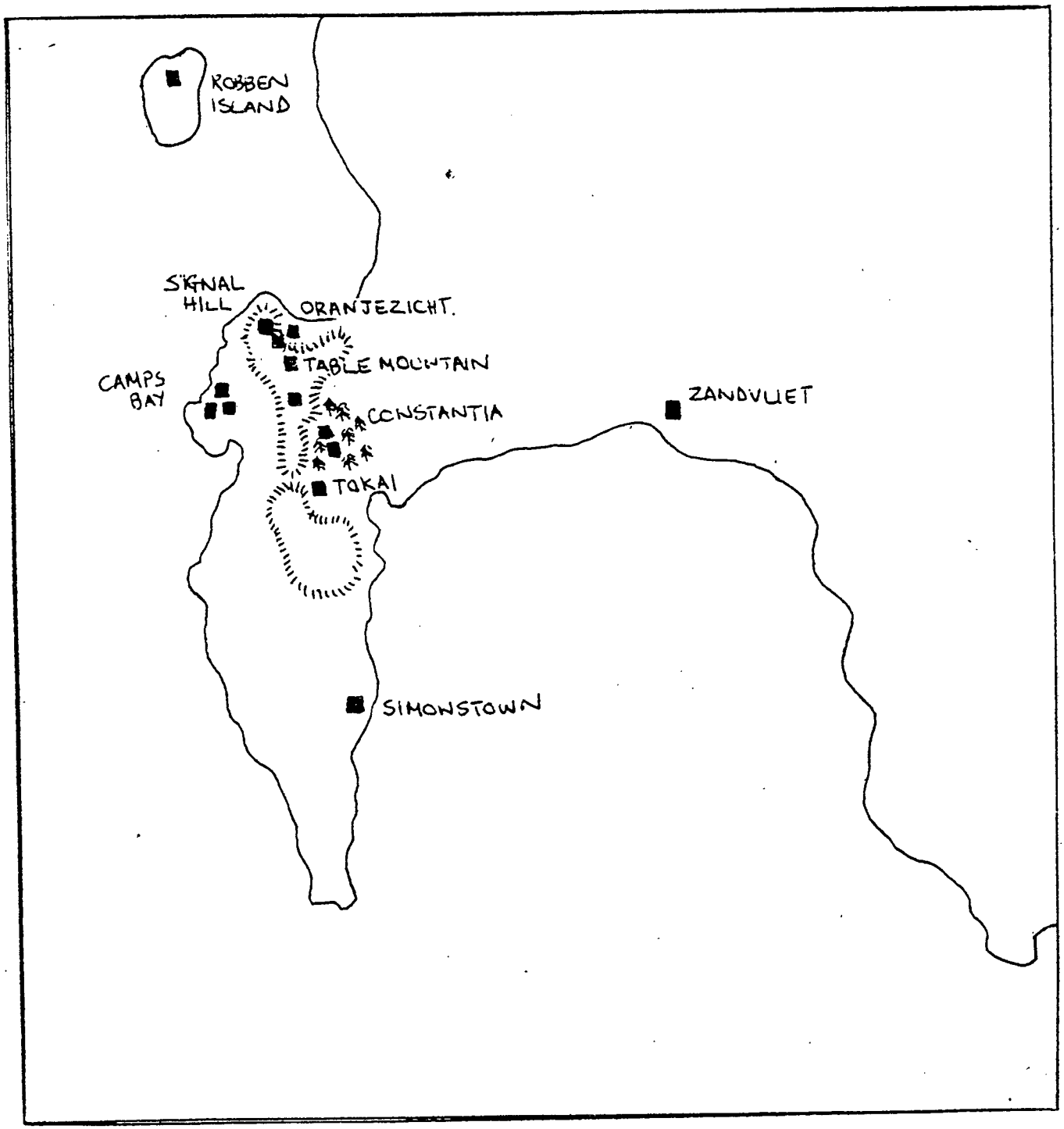
APPENDIX 1

MAP DETAILING THE LOCATION OF KRAMATS AT THE CAPE.

MAP BY COURTESY: M.A. BRADLOW



APPENDIX 2.

LIST OF THE NAMES OF KNOWN SHAYKHS OF TASAWWUF BURIED AT THE VARIOUS KRAMATS AROUND THE CAPE PENINSULA.

LIST BY COURTESY: M.A. BRADLOW

NAME:	LOCATION:	DATE:
Shaykh Yusuf	Faure	17th Century
Shaykh Hashim Shah	Faure	17th Century
Sayyid 'Abdul Mattara	Robben Island	18th Century
Robben Island Shah (1)	Robben Island	18th Century
Sayyid Ja'ffa	Camps Bay	18th Century
Sayyid Ibrahim	Camps Bay	18th Century
Sayyid Kassim (2)	Camps Bay	18th Century
Baddah Shah Ja'ffa	Camps Bay	18th Century
Sayyid Nuurulmubin	Camps Bay	18th Century
Sayyid 'Ali	Camps Bay	18th Century
Hassan Shah (3)	Signal Hill	17th Century
Hazrat Sulayman	Signal Hill	19th Century
Sayyid 'Uthman	Signal Hill	18th Century
Tuan Kappa-Lee You	Signal Hill	18th Century
Hazrat Sayyid Nuuruman	Longmarket Street	18th Century

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(1) Murid of Sayyid 'Abdul Mattara

(2) Son of Sayyid Ja'ffa

(3) Murid of Shaykh Yusuf

Hazrat Sayyid Nuur	Longmarket Street	18th Century
Tuan Guru	Longmarket Street	19th Century
Hazrat Jami'	Longmarket Street	date unknown
Sayyid 'Abdul Malik	Oranjezicht	17th Century
Abdul Haq al Qadari	Oranjezicht	17th Century
Sayyid Muhammad Ja'ffa	Table Mountain	18th Century
Badda Shah	Table Mountain	18th Century
Sayyid Mahmud	Constantia	17th Century
Hazrat Sayyid Sulayman	Constantia	17th Century
Hazrat Sayyid 'Abdur Rahman(4)	Constantia	17th Century
Hazrat Sayyid Muhsin (5)	Tokai	17th Century
Sayyid Musa	Simonstown	18th Century

There are also reputed to be kramats in Newlands, Kalk Bay, Table Mountain, Cape Point, and along De Waal Drive.

My thanks go to Mr K. Goliath for providing me with this list.

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(4) There are the graves of three murids burried in close proximity to that of Sayyid 'Abdur Rahman.

(5) There are also the graves of four murids near that of Sayyid Muhsin.

APPENDIX 3

Hereunder is the translation from the Arabic, of one form of salutations and supplications that are made at the saints' kramats by mendicant visitors:

Arabic original by courtesy: MAHMUD THOKIER

Peace be upon you oh friend of Allah. Peace be upon you and upon those around you from amongst the dead Muslims and Allah's Mercy and His Blessings be upon you. We come to you as visitors and we stand at your mausoleum, so return us not as losers nor send us from your door bereaved and Allah is happy with you, an excellent happiness. And He made Paradise your station, your rest place and your home and your refuge. Peace be upon you and upon the dead of the Muslims around you. We ask Allah, the benevolent, sustainer of the mighty empyrean that He benefit us by your blessings and that He envelope us with your blessings and your light and your secrets and your knowledge in religion in this world and the hereafter. Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allah and his Blessings.