

CHAPTER 3

THE ARRIVALS OF THE MALAYS AT THE CAPE AND GAUTENG

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter attention will be given to the origin of the Cape Malays as well as the main features of their subsequent history, including the migration of some of them to the area previously known as Transvaal. (Gauteng)

Firstly the arrival of the Malays at the Cape will be discussed, focussing upon prominent Muslim scholars of the Cape. Secondly the chapter will give an overview of the history of Muslims in Johannesburg and surrounding areas. As in the case of the Cape, particular attention will be paid to prominent Muslims.

3.2 THE ARRIVAL OF THE MALAYS AT THE CAPE

There is a variety of different views pertaining to the arrival of the first Muslims in the Cape and in South Africa.

According to J.S. Mayson the arrival of the first Muslims in the Cape dates back to the settlement of the Dutch in 1652. He confirms oral tradition that “in 1652 a few Malays of Batavia were brought by the Dutch into their residency and subsequent settlement of the Cape of Good Hope...”¹

According S.E. Dangor it was not long after the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 that the first Muslim, 'Ibrāhim of Batavia, was brought here as a slave.²

¹ Mayson, J.S., *The Malays of Cape Town*, Cave and Sever, Manchester. 1865:7

² Dangor, S.E., *Shaykh Yūsuf*, Iqra Research Committee, Durban. 1982:iii

According Achmat Davids the first Muslims in the Cape were the Mardyckers who arrived at the Cape in 1658.³

Du Plessis mentions that according to Theal the first group of Malays arrived at the Cape in 1667.⁴

The dates proposed by scholars thus range between 1652 and 1667.

3.3. FIRST MUSLIMS

The Mardyckers who were free people from Amboyna in the southern Molucca Islands were the first significant group of Muslims to arrive in the Cape. They were brought to protect the forts and as labourers to the newly established Cape settlement. Their religious practices and activities were limited and restricted by the Dutch.⁵

The Dutch conquered Batavia, Moluccas, Macassar, Bantam and Mataram and took most of the Muslim leaders as prisoners. These Muslim leaders were sent to the Cape as exiles. The Dutch were afraid of the spread of Islam and severely curtailed the movement of the Muslim leaders in the Cape.⁶

On 13 May 1667, the first political exiles, known as *Orange Cayen*, who were men of wealth and influence from the west coast of Sumatra arrived at the Cape. These men were Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmān Matahe Sha, Shaykh Mahmūd and Shaykh Yūsuf of Macassar. The Dutch East India Company did not leave these men to mingle with the general populous. Two of them were sent to the company’s forest and the other to Robben Island.⁷

³ Davids, A., *Mosques of the Bo-Kaap*, The South African Institute of Arabic and ‘Islāmic Research, Cape Town, 1980:34

⁴ Du Plessis, I.D., *The Cape Malays*, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1972:3

⁵ Ibid : 35

⁶ Davids, A, op. cit.: pp.35-36

⁷ Davids, A, op. cit.: pp. 36-37

From 1681 onwards the Cape of Good Hope became an official place of confinement for Eastern political prisoners of rank and esteem of the Dutch East India Company. In order to curtail their activities and influences amongst the slave communities these men were posted to the outposts of the Company.

3.4 PROMINENT MUSLIMS AT THE CAPE

Among those Malay Muslims who were sent to outposts such as the Cape we find several legendary persons, some of whom will be discussed below.

3.4.1 SHAYKH YŪSUF OF MACASSAR⁸

Abidin Tadia Tjoessoep, popularly known as Shaykh Yūsuf, was born in 1626 in Goa, East Indies. On his maternal side he was related to the King of Goa. In 1644 he went on pilgrimage to Makka and on his return he married the daughter of Sultān Ageng of Bantam in whose household he became an 'Imām. He was active in the spread of Islam in Java.

In 1680 Shaykh Yūsuf fought against the revolution headed by Pangerang Hājjī, Sultān Ageng's son. The Sultān was defeated. In 1684 he was persuaded by Van Happel to surrender on the promise that he will be pardoned. This promise was however not fulfilled and Shaykh Yūsuf was imprisoned.

In September 1684, Shaykh Yūsuf was sent to the Castle of Colombo in Ceylon. The King of Goa requested his release, but it was refused. The Company decided to transfer him to the Cape in 1693.

He arrived at the Cape on the 2nd April 1694 on *Die Voetboeg* with a group of 49 people consisting of his two wives, two slave girls, twelve children, twelve

⁸ Dangor, S.E., op. cit.: pp. iii - 59
Davids, A., op. cit.: pp. 37-39
Mahida, M.E., op. cit.: 3

religious scholars and several friends with their families. He was royally welcomed by Governor Simon van der Stel at the Cape.

They were housed on a farm in the remote Zandvleit district, near the mouth of the Eerste River in the Cape, on the 14th June, 1694. His sanctuary at Zandvleit became a place of safety for fugitive slaves. This was the first established Muslim community at the Cape. He died on 23rd May 1699 at the age of seventy-three. After his death his party were returned to Indonesia on the *De Liefde* and *De Spiegel*, with the exception of his daughter, Zytia Sarah Marouf, and two others who remained behind.

Shaykh Yūsuf is often referred to as the founder and pioneer of Islam in the Cape, but he was certainly not the first Muslim at the Cape. There were other Muslim political exiles before him.

Since many of Shaykh Yūsuf's followers came from Macassar in the Bantam, the district around Zandvleit is still known today as Macassar. Some even call it *Kramat*.



3.4.2. THE RAJAH (KING) OF TAMBORA⁹

'Abd al-Basi Sultana was the Rajah of Tambora which was originally part of the Majaphit Kingdom of Java. He arrived at the Cape in 1697 after being convicted of rebellion against the Dutch East India Company, having started a conspiracy against King Dampo and murdering of the Queen. At the Cape he was housed in the stable of the Castle. On the intervention of Shakyh Yūsuf he was transferred to Vergelegen in the Stellenbosch district.

⁹ Davids, A., op. cit.: pp. 39-40
Mahidah, M.E., op. cit.: pp. 3-4

While at Vergelegen, he allegedly wrote the first complete Qur'ān at the Cape from memory and presented it as a gift to Governor Simon van der Stel. The Qur'ān probably never left Vergelegen.

The Rajah like his counterparts, the *Orange Cayen*, were isolated and had no effect in the establishment and spread of Islam at the Cape. This has been clearly illustrated by the children from his marriage to Zytia Sarah Marouf, daughter of Shaykh Yūsuf, as they all became Christians.

3.4.3 TUANG SAIDD (SA'ĪD) AND HĀJI MATARIM ¹⁰

Sayyid 'Alawi, popularly known as Tuang (Sir/master) Sa'īd, of Mocca in Yemen, Arabia, arrived at the Cape in January 1744 with Hāji Matarim a Muslim priest. They were incarcerated on Robben Island. In 1755 Hāji Matarim died there and lies buried in a tomb (Kramat) at the far corner of Robben Island. Although Tuang Sa'īd was an Arab, he associated himself with the Malay people at the Cape and was accepted by the Malays as one of them.

Tuang Sa'īd served a prison sentence of eleven years on Robben Island. After his release he settled at the Cape and became a policeman. This enabled him to enter *locked and guarded* slave quarters and propagate Islam. He was amongst the *De Vryezwarten* (Free black community) who was dedicated to the spread of Islam in adverse circumstances. He was generally regarded as the first official 'Imām of the Cape Muslims. He lies buried at the Tana Baru cemetery in Cape Town.

¹⁰ Davids, A., op. cit.: pp. 42-44

Mahida, M.E., *History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology*, Arabic Study Circle, Durban. 1993: pp. 6-7

3.4.4 TUANG GURU ¹¹

‘Abd-Allah Qādi ‘Abd al-Salām, known as Tuang Guru arrived at the Cape as State prisoner on the 6th April 1780. He was a prince from Tidore in the Ternate Islands of Indonesia. His genealogy is traced to the Sultān of Morocco and his ancestry to that of the holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H).

He had a thorough knowledge of Islam. He was incarcerated on Robben Island until 1793. There is no clarity regarding his crime. In 1781 he completed a hand written book on Islamic Jurisprudence in Arabic and Malayu.

By 1800, his handwritten Qur’āns, written entirely from memory, were in wide circulation amongst the Cape Muslims. He was the principal teacher of Islam at the Cape in the eighteenth century. He was also the founder of a school, which by 1807 had a student enrolment of 375 slave children. They were taught the precepts of the Qur’ān, and to read and write Arabic.

It was through the efforts of Tuang Guru that a property for a Masjid was obtained in the Cape. It is on the very same site that the first Masjid was built in the Cape. Tuang Guru died in 1807 at the age of 95. He lies buried in the Tana Baru cemetery. He was a pioneer among the Cape ‘Ulamā’ (Islamic Scholars) and the first Qādi to settle at the Cape of Good Hope.

It is these Malay ‘Ulamā’ who deserve credit for establishing Islam in South Africa during the days of slavery and during a time when Islam was forbidden to be practised as a religion. It is through their efforts (together with those of others) that we today find Islam well cemented in this country. The Muslim communities who later came to South Africa enjoyed the fruit of the seeds planted by these imprisoned ‘Ulamā’.

¹¹ Davids, A., op. cit.: pp. 43-46
Mahida, M.E., op. cit.: pp. 8-9

3.5 RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ¹²

The early Cape Muslims used their own homes as places of worship and gathering and as a basis from where Islam could be spread with acts of patience and perseverance. On 25th July 1804 the patience and perseverance of the Muslims was rewarded when the Decree of the Commissioner De Mist granted Muslims religious freedom and promised equal protection to all religious societies. Permission was however still required for the erection of places of worship. There were furthermore still social restrictions and political inequality prevalent at the Cape, which was an obstacle to the spread of Islam.

The first Masjid in Dorp Street, Cape Town ('Awwal Masjid), played an important role in the cultural and social development of the Cape Malays. In 1838 slavery was completely abolished. Thereafter the Muslims increased in number and many other Masājid and institutions were established at the Cape of Good Hope.

3.6 ARRIVAL OF MALAYS IN JOHANNESBURG (GAUTENG)

According to oral reports the first Muslims to arrive in the Z.A.R. (Transvaal) were Malays from the Cape in 1870. The historians now refer to them as the Cape Muslims rather than the *Cape Malays*, due to the preference expressed by this community in the Cape. ¹³

According to oral reports some Malays travelled by train from the Cape to Kimberley, from there they travelled by ox-wagon to the Transvaal. Some other Malays travelled all the way from the Cape to the Transvaal by ox-wagon. They moved to Kimberley due to the diamond rush and to the Transvaal in search of better and more lucrative employment and due to the

¹² Davids, A., op. cit.: pp. 46-47

Mahida, M.E., op. cit.: 14

¹³ 'Ishāq, A. Maulānā. *A short survey of the Indian Muslims of Transvaal with special reference to the introduction of Islam*, B.A. Honours Research Paper, Unpublished, R.A.U. Johannesburg. 1979 : 21

gold rush as well. Paul Kruger gave them land to settle in Ferreirastown, Johannesburg, which was known as Malay Camp. They pitched a tent in this area for performing their daily prayers. The Kerk Street Masjid is built on the same place. There were a few Malays living on the outskirts of Malay Camp.¹⁴ Here in *Malay Camp* the Malays lived in harmony and peace and were able to lead good Muslim lives until 1900 when they were forced to move further on to Vrededorp (Pageview).

During the early days the Malays of Transvaal originated, according to oral reports, from two main cities. The majority originated from the Cape and they were known as the *Kaapenaars*, while the smaller group who originated from Port Elizabeth, were known as the *Baainaars*.

The names of the people who originated from the Cape were the Tofees, 'Ibrāhim, Rasdiens, 'Ishāq, Tumanarys, Solomons, Malicks, Maulānas, Manan, Davids and many others, and the names of those who originated from Port Elizabeth were Sallies ('Imām Muhammad Taib Sālih), Khairullahs, Raffies, Abrahams, Hendricks, Gamieldiens and many others. People were named according to these places of origin, for example Baainaar for a person who originated from Port Elizabeth and Kaapenaar for a person who originated from Cape Town.

3.6.1. RESETTLEMENT OF MALAYS IN VREDEDORP

From 1894 living conditions became intolerable for the Malays in Ferreirastown (Malay Camp) after living there for almost 6 years.¹⁵

¹⁴ Interview Malick, Hamza, Johannesburg 25/7/95

¹⁵ *The Star*, Johannesburg, 7 September 1981

At this stage Ferreirastown became congested with Blacks, Chinese, Asians and other races. These newcomers were not Muslims and had no respect for Islamic beliefs and principles. To most of them Islam was an unknown religion. Many illegal and ungodly things started to emerge and develop there. Soon shebeens and brothels started off and increased so fast that Ferreirastown deteriorated into a slum, which was not conducive and acceptable to any God-fearing person and growing child.¹⁶

These early Malay settlers of Johannesburg were very religious, God-fearing and peace loving people. It is with this deep profound fear of God that a deputation was sent by the Malays to President Paul Kruger in 1894 requesting a new area far away from Ferreirasdorp and far away from pig-eaters, liquor drinkers, brothels and shebeens where they could develop spiritually and morally.¹⁷

Another reason why the Malays had to leave Ferreirastown was that they were fighting on the side of the Dutch against the English towards the end of the 19th century. This resulted in fierce hostilities from the English army camps, adjacent to Ferreirastown where the Johannesburg city hall stands today.¹⁸

After some negotiations with the authorities, President Paul Kruger who was commonly known amongst the Malays as “Oom Paul” because of his kindness towards them gave them a large piece of ground next to Vrededorp in the same year (1894). This became the Malay location and was subsequently renamed Pageview in 1942, after the mayor of Johannesburg of the time, Colonel J.J. Page.¹⁹

In 1896 Albertsville, today known as Albertskroon was given to the Malays of Johannesburg.²⁰

¹⁶ *The Star* Johannesburg, 8 September 1981

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Jaffer, I.E. *History of the early Muslims of Pretoria*, M.A.Dissertation, R.A.U. Johannesburg, 1993: 94

¹⁹ *The Star*, Johannesburg, 8 September 1981

²⁰ *Ibid*

3.7 THE BURGERSDORP LANGĀR

When Malays arrived in Vrededorp in 1894 they found the place to be an undeveloped empty piece of land, which offered no shelter to them or a place wherein they could worship and congregate daily. A need for a place of this nature became the utmost priority of the day.

It was decided that a langār had to be built immediately. A langār was eventually erected in Burgerdorp on the corner of Bree and Burgersdorp Streets, Burgersdorp, Johannesburg where the Fordsburg Police Station used to be and where Rand Funeral undertakers are situated presently. (Opposite the Johannesburg Muslim School).

The langār used to be a wood and iron structure. The wood and iron used for the erection of the langār was the material which had been dismantled from the Kerk Street Mosque in central Johannesburg when the Mosque was rebuilt in 1917.²¹

The langār served the Malays as a place where they could perform their five daily prayers, where they could congregate whenever the need which arose especially on Thursday and Sunday nights for various forms of 'Adhkār. All forms of 'Ibādāt was performed at the langār except for the Jumu'ah prayers on Fridays. At this stage the Jumu'ah prayers were only performed at the Kerk Street Masjid.

The residents of Vrededorp soon found it difficult to attend the langār for their daily prayers and to travel even further to the Kerk Street Masjid for their

²¹ Interview: 'Imām Hamza, Bosmont, JHB - 8/9/95.
Sha'bā Sālih, Fleurhof, JHB - 10/12/95

Jumu‘ah prayers as most people had to walk to these places of worship which was quite distant from their homes.

In light of these difficulties the Malays of Vrededorp applied to president Paul Kruger to grant them a piece of land where a place of worship could be erected. The date on which this application was made and the names of the people who initiated it could not be ascertained.

In 1900 President Kruger gave the Malays of Vrededorp a piece of land on erf 386 and 387 in 23rd Street, Vrededorp for the erection of a Masjid and Madrassah and a section for Muslim Burials at the Braamfontein cemetery.²²

According to oral reports the late Hāji Bāsi Rasdien and the late ‘Imām Tayyib (Taib) Japie were the first ‘Imāms of the Langār. ‘Imām Tayyib came to the Transvaal in 1870 from Cape Town. He was educated in Makka and was a tailor by trade.²³ Hāji Bāsi Rasdien came from Port Elizabeth and was educated locally.²⁴

In conclusion of what was discussed above it is evident that wherever the Malay folk settled they found it of paramount importance to establish places of worship and create unity in the community. The history of the 23rd Street Masjid in Vrededorp, Johannesburg will now be discussed.

²² Jaffer, I.E. op. cit.:35

²³ Naude, J.A., ‘Ulamā’ of South Africa, *Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol. 2, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.1982: 20.

²⁴ Interview, ‘Imām Hamza Malick, Bosmont 25/7/95.

3.8 THE 23RD STREET MASJID

3.8.1 INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

After receiving the piece of land for the erection of a Masjid and Madrassah on erf 386 and 387, the Burgersdorp langār was almost immediately dismantled and re-erected where the 23rd Street Masjid is presently situated, using the very same building material (wood and iron).

This langār was used for quite a lengthy period of time for all the Islamic religious activities of the Malays of Vrededorp including the Friday Jumu‘ah prayers and the two ‘Id prayers as well.²⁵

It was presumably in the year 1910 that the Vrededorp Muslim Jamā‘a was founded under the leadership of either ‘Imām Tayyib Japie or Hājjī Bāsi Rasdien. The most important objective for the formation of the Jamā‘a was to construct a more durable brick-build Masjid and Madrassah. A management committee was nominated and formed to regulate and steer fund-raising efforts for the proposed building project. This committee was formed at a house, which was situated next to where the Nasriyah Madrassah was build. The exact date of this important meeting could not be confirmed or verified.

This committee according to ‘Imām Ahmad ‘Alī interviewed on 18/10/1995, consisted of the following Malay people:

‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālih (Chairman)
Husayn Sālih (Secretary)
‘Alī Sāhib (Treasurer)
Sulayman Isaacs (Kaamie)
Bayān al-Dīn
Hājjī ‘Amin ‘Alī (Amien Skaapie)

²⁵ Interview, ‘Imām Hamza Malick, Bosmont, Johannesburg : 8/9/95

Hāfith al-Din Hendricks (Gafieleng)

Sa‘īd Maman

’Imām Siray

Slamang Davids

Nasim Muller

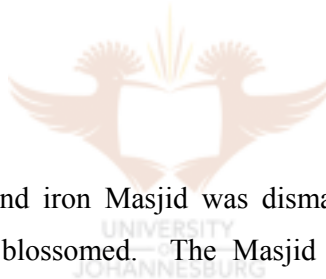
Mr Hiemang (Pang Hieman) and

Muhammad Appollis (Gamat)

In 1910 building plans were drawn up for the proposed building which included the following:

A Madrassah, a Masjid with a mezzanine floor (galary) in the inside of the Masjid, minaret, toilets, ablution block, caretakers room and a residence for the ’Imām.

3.8.2 THE MASJID



In 1931 the wood and iron Masjid was dismantled and building operations started which soon blossomed. The Masjid was built gradually as funds became available. Labour was provided by the community themselves as most of them were artisans. The building works on the Masjid was supervised by Hāji Hampi Boomgaard. The Masjid complex was completed in 1934/1935 consisting only of the Masjid toilets, ablutions block and a room for the caretaker. The minaret, mezzanine floor and a residence for the ’Imām was not built. The minaret was not built as the ground on which the Masjid was built was leasehold and not freehold, and thus not consecrated.

The 23rd Street Masjid served the Malay community not only as a place of worship but also as a comprehensive religious and cultural centre. Everything that took place amongst the community evolved around the Masjid. All marriages were solemnised in the Masjid, all funeral prayers (Salāh al-Janāzah) was performed in the Masjid before proceeding to the graveyard for burial,

new born babies were named in the Masjid, and at the end of the pupils' Primary Madrassah career they used to graduate in the Masjid in a ceremony which was commonly known as *tamat*.

It is also believed that all sacrificial animals were sacrificed at the back of the Masjid in earlier times and the meat distributed from there.

The Malays of Vrededorp followed various orders of Tasawwuf (Sufism). The whole community used to gather at the Masjid to practice their various orders of Tasuwwuf on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons for Arabic and Malaysian anthems (religious songs) and poetry. Some of the Tasawwuf orders which were practised in the Masjid were the Rātib al-Haddād, the Rātib al-‘Atās, Chistiyya, Naqshabandi, Qadriyah, and ‘Ismu‘al-Latīf orders.²⁶ These early Muslims of Johannesburg were very religious and God-fearing in all their deeds and actions²⁷

3.9. PROMINENT EARLY ‘ULAMĀ’ IN GAUTENG

Prominent early Malay ‘Ulamā’ in Gauteng, their origin, educational history and dedication to the Malay community will be discussed.

3.9.1. ‘IMĀM ‘ABD AL-MALIK HAMZA

‘Imām ‘Abd al-Malik was born in Cape Town in 1867. He was born into a family of four generations of A’immah at the Awwal Masjid in Cape Town. ‘Imām ‘Abd al-Malik was the son of ‘Imām Hamza whose father was ‘Imām Hamza Muhammad Ahmad; and he was the son of ‘Imām Muhammad Ahmad and he in turn was the son of ‘Imām Ahmad van Bengalen.

²⁶ Interview, ‘Imām Hamza Malick 8/9/95

²⁷ Carrim, Nazir, op. cit.: 52

'Imām 'Abd al-Malik's great, great grandfather 'Imām Ahmad van Bengalen was married to Saartjie van de Kaap (Sa'idah), a free black woman²⁸. The property on which the Awwal Masjid in Cape Town was built is registered in the name of Saartjie's parents, Coriden and Trijn van de Kaap.

'Imām 'Abd al-Malik did not receive any formal secular education. The task of his Islamic education was undertaken by his father who instructed him in this field from the age of six. At the tender age of ten the young 'Abd al-Malik was sent to Makka to further his Islamic studies. He remained here for twenty-two years.

During his years of study in Makka 'Abd al-Malik was tutored amongst others by Shaykh Muhammad Sharbini.²⁹ While studying in Makka he managed to accomplish a number of notable feats. He was the first South African Muslim to become Hāfiz al-Qufān in the Masjid al-Harām in Makka. He also had the honour of being the first South African to represent Saudi Arabia in an international Qur'ān recital in Istanbul, Turkey. In addition to the above 'Imām 'Abd al-Malik was also the first of only a select few South Africans who were permitted to lead the Tarāwīh salāt in the Masjid al-Harām.

'Imām 'Abd al-Malik returned to South Africa from Makka in ±1899. Upon his return he completed the first Khatam al-Qur'ān during the Ramadān Tarāwīkh prayers in Cape Town in 1900.

The marriage between 'Abd -Malik and Qubra Regal took place in Cape Town in 1902. Almost immediately thereafter the couple left for Johannesburg by train, having been granted a three-year permit. Upon his arrival in Johannesburg in 1903 'Abd al-Malik was appointed the 'Imām of the Kerk Street Masjid in Central Johannesburg. At that time the Masjid was still an iron and wood structure.

²⁸ Davids, A., op. cit.: 97

²⁹ Ibid : pp. 105-106

Four children were born to 'Imām 'Abd al-Malik and his wife during his appointment as 'Imām at the Kerk Street Masjid. They were Muhammad Tāhir, Fātimah, 'Abd al-Hamīd and Mariam. He remained at this Masjid until 1915.

'Imām 'Abd al-Malik spent one year in Heidelberg, Transvaal. Upon the death of his father, he returned to Cape Town in 1916 and remained there until 1923, thereafter resuming his residence in Johannesburg. Upon his return to Johannesburg 'Imām 'Abd al-Malik was assigned as 'Imām at the Newtown Masjid and later at the Queen Street Masjid in Pretoria. The dates of these appointments could unfortunately not be verified and remain unknown.

The 'Imām retired from community work due to illness and resided in Fordsburg, Johannesburg. It is notable that at this point he had given the Muslim communities of Transvaal approximately forty-five years of dedicated service. 'Imām 'Abd al-Malik passed away during the month of Ramadan, on 8 January 1949. He was buried at the Croesus Maqbarah in Johannesburg.

The 'Imām was survived by his eight children, four of whom had memorised the Holy Qurān under his direction. From amongst the four who included Muhammad Tāhir, Fātimah and 'Abd al-Malik and Hamza, it was Hamza who so generously furnished me with all the above mentioned information.³⁰

³⁰ Interview Malik, 'Imām Hamza in Bosmont, Johannesburg 2/3/97. 80 years old 'Imām Hamza is the only surviving offspring of the late 'Imām 'Abd al-Malik Hamza.

3.9.2. 'IMĀM KAMĀL AL-DĪN BOOMGAARD

'Imām Kamāl al-Dīn who was better known as 'Imām Kamāli was born in Port Elizabeth in 1873. The matters regarding his birth and youth remain relatively unknown. He was orphaned at an early age and was reared by his maternal grandparents in Cape Town. He received a very high level of secular education at an elite school in Cape Town. This was made possible due to the generosity and financial status of his maternal grandparents.

'Imām Kamāli left for Makka in 1890 in order to pursue an Islamic education. Here he studied in the Masjid al-Harām for twelve years, during which time he met a fellow South African student, 'Imām 'Ismā'īl Jappie; both of whom were to later settle in Johannesburg. 'Imām Kamāli became a specialist in the field of Tafsir, Jurisprudence and the Arabic language.

'Imām Kamāli returned to Cape Town in approximately 1902. Shortly after his arrival he married a Coloured woman who converted to Islam. Her identity and other particulars could not however be verified. Two children were born of this marriage. After a few years of marriage the couple were divorced. Sadly 'Imām Kamāli's ex-wife reverted back to Christianity along with their two children. She and their children died out of the fold of Islam.

Very disappointed, the 'Imām left Cape Town in 1908 and arrived in Johannesburg in 1910. In Johannesburg the 'Imām married a lady by the name of Kulthūm. Seven children were born to this marriage; six daughters and one son, Ra's al-Dīn, who was sent to study in Makka. For the two years that Ra's al-Dīn studied in Makka, he lived amongst the Beduines.

'Imām Kamāli became the chief 'Imām at the 23rd Street Masjid in Vrededorp. He was also an official interpreter in the Johannesburg Supreme Court due to his proficiency in seven languages, which included, English, Afrikaans, Malayu, Arabic, French, Persian and Dutch.

'Imām Kamāli officially opened the Amod Jajbhay Memorial School in Krause Street, Vrededorp on the 20th December 1931. This school was to later become a hallmark in the development of Islamic education in the Malay community of Vrededorp.

'Imām Kamāli retired from community work in 1932 due to ill-health and settled in Sophiatown which is today known as Triomf. The 'Imām returned to Cape Town and retired there towards the latter part of 1934 and settled at 11 Arnold Street, Observatory.

'Imām Kamāli passed away peacefully on 21st August 1935 at the age of 62. He was buried in the Mowbary Maqarah in Cape Town. Amongst the 'Imām's descendants, his grandson 'Abd-Allah Farah was to become a very prominent academic figure in the Malay community in Johannesburg. He was a teacher by profession.³¹

³¹ Interview Rashida Bagus, granddaughter of 'Imām Kamāli, Newclare, Johannesburg 5/3/98

3.9.3. 'IMĀM 'ISMĀ'ĪL JĀBIR (JAPPIE)

'Imām 'Ismā'īl Jābir, better known as 'Ismā'īl Jappie, was born in Cape Town in 1877. His great grandmother, a princess, belonged to the Royal family of the Baltic Islands in Indonesia.

Like 'Imām Kamāli, 'Imām Jappie also received a high level of secular education; due to his parent's healthy financial status. 'Imām Jappie was also tutored by various local Islamic educators in Cape Town. He later spent a decade furthering the latter area of his studies in Makka. The exact dates of his departure and arrival from Makka are unknown, however, on approximation this could have taken place between 1890 and 1902.

'Imām Jappie excelled in Arabic, Tafsi'r, 'Ulūm al Hadith and Tajwīd. His recitation of the Holy Qur'ān is reported to have been outstanding as he successfully mastered seven different modes of recitation.

'Imām 'Ismā'īl arrived in Johannesburg in 1918 and settled in Malay Camp. It was here that the 'Imām began spreading his influence amongst the Chinese Muslims. This was largely due to his ability to communicate effectively in the Chinese language.

He was appointed as an 'Imām at the 23rd Street Masjid in Vrededorp where he was later elected as the secretary for the Masjid. During this time the 'Imām spent some time residing in Ophirton.

'Imām 'Ismā'īl fought on the side of the Dutch settlers in order to obtain his burger rights. He also received his Kruger rights, which authorised him to purchase property. The Kruger rights also permitted him to live amongst the Syrians and Jews, thus allowing him to live in the then, white area of Claremont, which lies adjacent to Newclare.

The 'Imām became a property magnate in Newclare and Claremont. He also became the proprietor of a furniture factory. He was an animal enthusiast, especially of chickens and goats. He owned Malay Game Chickens from Jakarta, which he entered into competitive exhibits. At one particular venue, the Rand Show, his chickens were awarded the first position for ten consecutive years.

In Johannesburg, the 'Imām became the principal Tajwīd tutor. It was related by the late 'Imām 'Ismā'īl Reid that recollections of his childhood brought back memories about 'Imām Jappie teaching Tajwīd to the diverse population of Johannesburg. 'Imām Jappie was in possession of numerous handwritten Islamic texts, both in Arabic and in the then famous Arabic / Afrikaans script.

'Imām 'Ismā'īl Jappie passed away on 11 April 1957 at the age of 80 after having survived the 1920 epidemic as well as the 1934 Terric fever epidemic. He is buried in the Croesus Maqbarah.³²

3.9.4. 'IMĀM MUHAMMAD KHALĪL GALLIE

'Imām Muhammad Khalīl Gallie, better known as 'Imām Piesangtjie, was born in Cape Town on the 15th Ramadan in 1884. He had no secular education but was a tailor by trade. The responsibility of his Islamic education was undertaken by his father 'Imām 'Ibrāhīm.

In 1900 his parents established residence in Johannesburg. His father took ownership of a laundry and it was here that 'Imām Muhammad was taught his trade as a tailor.

In 1900 he left with his parents on pilgrimage to Makka, where he remained behind and studied for eighteen months. He thereafter studied at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, for a further four years. Upon his return to South

³² Interview Ali and Hanif Jappie, the 'Imām 'Ismā'īl Jappie's only two surviving sons, Newclare, Jhb. 1/3/98.

Africa in ±1907 he was appointed as 'Imām at Malmesbury. He remained there for seventeen years.

The 'Imām was first married to Fātima in Malmesbury. One son was born to this marriage, but sadly both mother and son passed away during the 1922 epidemic. He then married Khādīja Schroeder of Kimberley. Two sons and a daughter were born of this marriage. Khādīja passed away on the 27th April 1949. 'Imām Muhammad then married Ruqayyah Hendricks. Two daughters were born of this marriage. Ruqayyah passed away in 1997. The 'Imām also adopted his second wife's nephew 'Ismā'īl Richards who was to become an influential figure in the political arena. Sadly none of his descendants became 'Ulamā'.

'Imām Muhammad was, during his time, the first and only registered marriage officer. 'Imām Muhammad was also the official translator to 'Ulamā' visiting from the Middle East.

'Imām Muhammad serviced the Muslim society across various parts of Southern Africa. After his service of 17 years at Malmesbury he left for Lesotho and Mozambique in 1924 and he remained there until 1927. From 1928 to 1931 he was 'Imām at the Clairwood Masjid in Durban. Finally from 1931 until his demise in 1964 he was 'Imām at the 23rd Street Masjid in Vrededorp, Johannesburg.

The 'Imām became visually impaired and totally lost his sight two years before his death. 'Imām Muhammad passed away on 27 January 1965 during the month of Ramadan at the age of eighty two. The 'Imām is buried at the Newclare Maqbarah.³³

³³ Interview 'Ismā'īl Richards, Newclare 6/3/1997

3.10. ARRIVAL OF MALAYS IN PRETORIA

The exact time of the arrival of Malays in Pretoria is unknown. According to I E Jaffer there were no Malays residing in Pretoria before the turn of the 20th century and before the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902. He further states that during the time of the formation of the Pretoria Mohammedan Congregation (now Pretoria Muslim Congregation) in 1906 no Malays were mentioned in it. All Muslims ethnical groups in Pretoria at that time were mentioned here except that of the Malays of Pretoria.³⁴

From my interview with some families in Pretoria and my own maternal family history I do believe that Malays resided in Pretoria before the Anglo-Boer war of 1899 to 1902. My sources were several reliable people.

‘Abd al-Munjarí (Pang Moenie) Solomons arrived in Pretoria in the year 1898. He travelled to Pretoria from Cape Town via Kimberley. He settled in Pretoria and fought on the side of the Boers during the Anglo-Boer war.³⁵

Fātima Solomons (widow of Pang Moenie) was born in Pretoria in 1885. Although born into a Christian family she would always talk about their Malay neighbours who used to live there long before she was born.³⁶

The late Mrs Hasina Waja (born Jabbār) was born in Pretoria in 1903. Mrs Waja was the third child born to her parents in Pretoria. It is estimated that her eldest brother was born in Pretoria in ±1898. Mrs Waja’s parents were both Malays originally from Cape Town.³⁷

³⁴ Jaffer I.E., *Early Muslims of Pretoria*, M.A. Dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg .1991 : 22

³⁵ Interview - ‘Abd al-Karim Solomons (son of the late ‘Abd al-Munjarí and Fātima Solomons), Eldorado Park, Johannesburg 13/07/1998.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Interview – Mrs Rabia Christiaan (daughter of the late Mrs Hasina Waja), Bosmont, Johannesburg. 18/07/1998

'Imām Ahmad 'Āli Fredericks' mother, the late Mrs. 'Ā'isha Fredericks, was born in Pretoria in 1895. Her parents also originated from the Cape.³⁸

The Malay people in Pretoria originally settled in the Malay location alongside the Coloured people adjacent to the Indians in Asiatic Bazaar. The Malay location later became known as Marabastad from where the Malays were forcibly removed from 1969 onwards, after which some of them were resettled in the new Coloured residential area Eersterust. However the majority of Malays resettled themselves in the Indian residential area Laudium.

The only conclusion I can draw is that in the early days of Pretoria prior to the Anglo-Boer war Malays were definitely residing in Pretoria. The Malays possibly disassociated themselves from the Coloureds due to the fact that the Coloureds of Pretoria at that time were notorious for their alcoholic abuse. Malays rather preferred to associate themselves with the Indians to be nearer to Islam and together the Malays and Indians formed the *Arab* nation (*Arabi*) as the Muslims were known in old Pretoria at that time.

The Malays preference to reside in Laudium gives rise to the previous conclusion and provides an answer to the misconceptions about the actual arrival of Malays in early Pretoria before the end of the nineteenth century.

3.10.1. RESETTLEMENT OF THE MALAYS OF PRETORIA

From 1969 Malays in Pretoria resettled in Eersterust after being removed from the Malay Location (Marabastad) by the Group Areas. At that time there were already a few Malay families who willingly resettled there from 1958 onwards. In Eersterust most of the Malays of Pretoria for the first time in their history had the opportunity to purchase their own residential properties. Most of them lived in rented houses in the Malay location (Marabastad).

³⁸ Interview - 'Imām Ahmad 'Āli Fredericks, Bosmont, Johannesburg 02/05/1998

The Coloured Residential Area, Eersterust, lies 12km North East from Central Pretoria, East of East Lynne and Riverside, North East of Silverton and Koedoespoort and West of the Black residential area Mamelodi.³⁹

Eersterust is situated on Lot no. 49 on the Farm Derdepoort which belonged to a Mr Wolmarans who initially intended to divide it into portions, name it *Eerste Rusplek* and offer it for sale to Coloured people for development. It was, however, proclaimed a Coloured Area by Proclamation 150/1958 in the Government Gazette no. 6067 of 6 June, 1958.⁴⁰

3.10.2. EERSTERUST MASJID ⁴¹

In 1970 the Eersterust Muslim Jamā‘āt was established in order to stabilise the very shaky Malay Community which existed there. It was only in 1985 after this community found it inconvenient to travel to and fro to central Pretoria or Laudium for their daily Salāt that an application was lodged with the Pretoria City Council for the purchase of a piece of land to build an Islamic Centre in Eersterust. A piece of land was allocated to the Eersterust Muslim Jamā‘āt the same year on stand 2468 at 508 Blaawberg Avenue, Eersterust. The Centre consisting of a Masjid, Madrassah and ‘Imām’s residence was completed in 1988.

The community started using the Masjid from 1987, even before it was completed. The first appointed ‘Imām at the Masjid was Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Malick Fanie from Cape Town. The biggest donation towards the building of the Masjid was received from the Queen Street Masjid Committee of central Pretoria.

³⁹ Du Toit, A.S., *Die Vrugbaarheid van Kleurlinge in Eersterust*, M.A. Dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.1967 : 5

⁴⁰ Jacobs, P.P. *Die Herskoms en die Sosiale, Ekonomiese end Opvoedkundige aspekte van die Kleurlinge van Eersterust*, M.A. Dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.1968 : 6-7

⁴¹ Interviews: Sulayman Hartz, Pretoria. 18/11/2001
‘Abd al-Khatib, Pretoria. 18/11/2001

The first committee of the Masjid consisted of the following people:⁴²

Karim Meer	Chairman	(Indian)
‘Abd al-Khafīb	Secretary	(Malay)
Sulayman Hartz	Treasurer	(Malay)
Boeta Hayāt		(Malay)
Anwar Kala		(Indian)
Muhammad Khan		(Indian)
Muhammad Bhana		(Indian)
‘Umar Sulayman		(Malay)

The Eersterust Masjid is the only Masjid in the Gauteng Province with half of its committee members from the Muslim Indian community and half from the Malay community. The building of the Masjid rejuvenated the former very shaky Malay community of Pretoria. Malay folk traditions and customs are becoming very evident in this area now. Unfortunately no ‘Imām officiated in Eersterust long enough to establish a well cemented Islamic community and leave behind him a legacy to live on. From 1993 up to 2002 five different A’immah (‘Imāms) served this community.

⁴² Interview - Boeta Hayāt, Pretoria 19/11/2001

3.11. ARRIVAL OF MALAYS IN NIGEL ⁴³

Between 1976 and 1977 Malay families from Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth moved to Gauteng in search of better prospects and settled in Nigel. Most of these males were artisans involved in the building and construction fields. Most of them were employed at the Sasol plants in Secunda. They all resided in Alra Park, the Coloured residential area of Nigel adjacent to the Indian residential area McKenziville. Alra Park was the nearest Coloured residential area to Secunda at that time.

A vibrant Malay community consisting of ±200 families was formed in Alra Park in the late 70's. The Alra Park Malays initially attended the McKenziville Jamāt-Khana for Salāt and sent their children to the McKenziville Madrassah. They soon realised that the McKenziville Hanafi Jamāt would not accommodate or even try to accommodate the Alra-Park Shāfi'ī Jamāt. The Alra Park Malay community then decided to establish their own Jamāt-Khāna and Madrassah in order to provide for their spiritual needs and to preserve their Malay customs and religious culture.

The Alra Park Islamic Jamāt was formed in 1978 at the residence of 'Abd al-Karīm Charles (Boeta Karīm) at 48 Bango Drive, Alra Park. This residence also served as the first Jamāt-Khāna and Madrassah of this area. Boeta Karīm became the first acting 'Imām of Alra Park.

In 1980 an application for an Islamic Centre was lodged with the Nigel City Council. Land was granted to the Malay community in Nigel in 1988. A Masjid, Madrassah and caretakers residence was built on stand 916. Building operations started January 1989 and were completed December 1990.

⁴³ Interviews: Nazīm Brinkhuys, Johannesburg 15/02/2001
'Abd al-Karīm Charles, Nigel 14/02/2001
'Ismā'īl Hendricks, Johannesburg 13/04/2001

The Masjid was completed and officially opened on Sunday 27 January 1991 by Shaykh Kāshif Damons from Cape Town.

Boeta Karīm was duly elected as the official 'Imām of this Masjid the following Sunday, 3 February 1991.

The first Malay family who settled at Alra Park was that of 'Abd al-'Aziz (Abdul Aziz) Hendricks. They were followed by the families of 'Abd-Allah De Long, Rashād Williams, Ahmad Samaai, Mu'ayn Thomas, 'Abd al-Karīm Charles and the Cornelius brothers.

The first committee of Alra Park Islamic Community consisted of the following Malays:

Rashād Brenner	Chairman
Nazīm Brinkhuys	Vice-Chairman
Sādiq Hendricks	Secretary
'Āli Losper	Treasurer
'Abd al-Karīm Charles	Spiritual Leader (Acting 'Imām)
Yahya Elay	
Mu'ayn Thomas	

Soon after the completion of the Masjid in Alra Park, most of the males employed at the Sasol plants were retrenched with the result that most of the Malay families had to move out of Alra Park in search of employment in other parts of the country. Sadly by the end of 1995 only 50 out the 200 Malay families remained behind in Alra Park. The once capacity filled Masjid now only had a few Musallīs daily. The Malay culture and customs however are still very vibrant in this community.

In 1998 Boeta Karīm initiated the establishment of a boys orphanage at his residence. Soon the number of residents of this orphanage amounted to 30 boys. This sacrifice and initiative of Boeta Karīm an old age pensioner made it possible that this Masjid could have an increase in the number of its daily Musallīs.

3.12. CONCLUSION

Of what has been discussed in this chapter, the conclusion can be drawn that the Malay communities in both the Cape and Transvaal (Gauteng) were blessed with well educated and sincere Muslim scholars in their respective early histories. A well reinforced foundation was thus established on which they could build their future.

The following chapter discusses the syncretic practices and customs of the Malays of Gauteng.



CHAPTER 4

THE SYNCRETISTIC PRACTICES OF THE MALAYS OF GAUTENG

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the syncretistic and Islamic innovative practices to be found under the Malay community of Gauteng with regards to pregnancy, doopmaal, 'aqīqah, circumcision, Islamic education, (*tamats*), engagement parties, weddings, hajj, burials, haddād and merangs. Attention will be focussed on its definitions from secular and Islamic perspectives.

4.1.1. SECULAR DEFINITIONS

It would be very difficult to give a single definition of the word syncretism. It is easier to give the different definitions of the word as they are defined in different sources.

Attention will first be given to the general or secular definitions of syncretism as defined in certain dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

According to the Oxford dictionary, the word “syncretism” is both a philosophical and theological attempt to unify or reconcile differing and opposing schools of thought, concepts, principle sensations, etc. especially when success is partial or the result is heterogeneous¹. Other definitions are:

An attempted reconciliation or synthesis of opposing principles or practices.²

The attempt to combine different or opposite doctrines and practices in religious systems.³

¹ Simpson J.A. (editor), *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition), Clarendon press, Oxford, Vol 17 1989:475

² *Encyclopaedia Americana*, Grolier incorporated, Danbury, 1985. Volume 26:180

³ Cross, F.L. (editors), *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University press, Oxford, 1988 : 1332

An attempt to combine and bring together as harmoniously as possible divine religious views.⁴

A blending of religious ideas and practices by means of which either one set adopts more or less thoroughly the principles of another or both are amalgamated in a more cosmopolitan and less polytheistic shape. The outcome which is the unification of deities and the creation of a new and distinctive tradition and is as old as Pluto.⁵

A special kind of connection between languages, cultures or religions. This term is more frequently used in the history of religion, where a special effort has been made to give it a more precise meaning.⁶

Further the *Webster Dictionary* defines syncretism in four possible ways:-

- 1) The reconciliation or union of conflicting (religious) beliefs or an effort intending such.
- 2) Flagrant compromise in religion or philosophy, eclecticism that is illogical or leads to inconsistency, uncritical acceptance of conflicting super-session of other religions.
- 3) The developmental process of historical growth within a religion by accretion and coalescence of different and often conflicting super-session of other religions.
- 4) The union or fusion into one or two or more organised different inflectional forms.⁷

⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Robert P. Gwinn, Chicago, 1993 Volume 9:1015

⁵ Hasting, James (editor), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, T&T Clarke, New York, 1921. Vol. 12 : pp. 155-156

⁶ Esposito, J.L., *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World*, Oxford University press, New York 1995 : Vol. 4:149

In the above sources divergent opinions are reflected. It does however appear as if syncretism has to do with a merger of some kind. The given definitions use words such as “reconcile”, “reconciliation”, “combine”, “bring together”, “blending”, “connection of a special kind”, “union”, “flagrant compromise”, “accretion”, “coalescence” and “fusion”. Attention is also drawn to the fact that it is an ongoing process. Sources use such words as “attempt”, “attempted”, “effort”. The result is seemingly viewed as imperfect. It is characterized by words such as “heterogeneous”, “cosmopolitan”. Webster does however refer to “organise different inflectional forms”. The characterization “differ” may imply “opposing” or “conflicting”.

Syncretism may thus be characterised as an evolutionary process of adaptation of customs which are part of the tradition of other religions. Objectively seen the process is natural and accepted. A system is ever adapting to and environment in accordance with its needs. Subjectively experienced (that is from within a religion) syncretism, however, is a process which is viewed with suspicion, particularly by Islam where fixed customs are very much part of the faith.^{7a}



4.1.2. AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Islam has its roots in the Arabic soil, where various religious groups had their abode. In time however it developed distinctive traditions and ways to express revelation.

Furthermore Islam is ever adapting to new circumstances and times. In this process however the old or accepted norms (*qiyās*) serve as a yardstick to evaluate the new traditions. It is however not so easy to decide whether custom is acceptable or not. The community must ever ascertain whether a (new) habit of doing things is not *bid'ah* (innovation) or syncretistic.

⁷ Webster Third New International Dictionary, G & C Merriam Co. 1976 Vol. 3:2319

^{7a} Droogers 1989: 8, quoted by Beyers 2009: 9

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* *bid'ah* (innovation) is defined as follows:

A belief or practice for which there is no precedent in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), something introduced on an arbitrary principle without having any basis in the recognized foundation of Islam, its not heresy, it include matters which have been introduced in disagreement with the tradition of the Prophet. It is done in confusion and not in rebellion.^{7b}

The sad “disagreement” is problematic. In a narrow sense innovations may also refer to wider applications of an existing practice.

Syncretism proper takes place when a said custom has (directly or indirectly) been *borrowed* from another religious group. When the origin of the custom is no longer known the custom may still be called an innovation. Such an innovation may thus potentially be syncretistic in nature. Syncretism and *bid'ah* (innovations) are therefore closely related and will therefore not necessarily be distinguished in this dissertation.

Syncretism from an Islamic perspective is nothing but *dalālah* (error) because through syncretism un-Islamic practices enter into the belief pattern given by the Almighty Allah to the ummah (followers) of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) tells us that the best book is the book of Allah (Qur'ān) and the best guidance is the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad.⁸ Therefore one should scrutinize additional ideas to the body of Islam very carefully and compare them with the touchstone of the Islamic Law. The worst of these ideas are those which are concocted in the name of Islam for they are satanic innovations, religiously viewed, which lead believers astray, and those things which lead people astray will throw them into hell.

^{7b} Encyclopaedia of Islam, Brill, Leiden, volume, 2000: 1199

⁸ Sabiq, Sayed, *Riyād al-Salihīn*, Maktab al-Riyadh, Riyadh 1412 : 198

The word used for syncretism in Arabic is *takhlīt*, the connotation of this word from a literally point of view is mixture. *Takhlīt* thus refers to the mixture of beliefs and practices of Islam with paganism, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and any other religions or ideologies such as Communism, Atheism, Scientific Humanism, etc. The famous Muslim scholar al-Mughilli used the word *mukhallit* for the practices of Muslims in his time.⁹ Robin Horton (Professor of Anthropology and Sociology) describes syncretism as part-time religion, for instance “part-time Islam.”¹⁰

No definition of syncretism is possible without a specific context and the term cannot serve as an adequate description of all related homogeneous sets of phenomena. It is possible to use the concept of syncretism as a conceptual category for the explanation of historic and genetic processes. Seen from this angle it makes possible a critique of the romantic, ideological contrast between syncretism and its counterpart, namely pure normative religious tradition or uncontaminated popular religion (Islam).¹¹ They are not static concepts.

It can be stated that all world religions, can be regarded as syncretic in their origins, since each was shaped in dialogue with other faiths. Each one diverges from the parent religion and become a core of ideal expression. Syncretism in a believer's eyes maintains a residual identification with the parent faith. It is however difficult to distinguish syncretism from simple religious innovations. What some believers regard as syncretic others may hold to be Islamically acceptable. This will result in a push and pull between syncretizing concessions to local sensibilities, on one hand, and reformist efforts to maintain the purity of the message on the other.¹²

⁹ Quoted by Doi, A.R.I., *Islām in a Multi-cultural society*, Kuala Lumpur 1990 : 233-234

¹⁰ Quoted by Cassim, Mobeen, *Syncretism*, B.A. (Hons.) Research Essay, R.A.U. 1995:3

¹¹ Eliade, Mircea (Editor in Chief), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, MacMillan Publishing Co. Ltd., London, 1987, vol. 14:219

¹² *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Modern Islamic World*, vol. 4, pp. 149-152

Stated in a more neutral way, syncretism can thus be defined as the blending of pure religion with other diverse outside elements and then presented, and at times accepted, by some people as pure religion.

Peculiar to the syncretist life is the interplay of many deities and spirits, while the orthodox Muslim regards such polytheism with aversion and contempt. To the orthodox, all aspects of life hold religious meaning, and the *extra* rituals syncretists perform are in violation of Islamic doctrine.

Islam forbids all innovations and syncretic practices in the Qur‘ān and the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.). The following five Qur‘ānic verses, elucidate the matter, followed by a traditional explanation.

- *Such is Allah your true Lord: Apart from the truth what (remains is) but error, how then are you turned away?*¹³
Whatever one adds to Islam, when its origin is not found in the Qur‘ān, leads to error and this error will lead to the creation of syncretic practices.
- *Nothing have we omitted from the Book (Qur‘ān).*¹⁴
Allah in his divine wisdom has revealed to mankind the Qur‘ān in truth and justice. No law of nature and that of the creation have been omitted. Believers need not to invent and design their own laws.
- *If you differ in anything among yourselves refer it to Allah and His Messenger.*¹⁵
Should any disputes arise in religious matters and Muslims cannot find a solution to the dispute, they must find out what Allah says in the Qur‘ān and what the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) comments with regard to the respective verse. In these two sources they will find their answers.

¹³ Al-Qur‘ān : 10 : 32

¹⁴ Al-Qur‘ān : 6:38

¹⁵ Al-Qur‘ān : 4:59

- *Verily this is My Way leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths: They will scatter you about from His Path.*¹⁶

In this verse attention is called to the Straight Way, the Way of Allah, the only Way that leads to righteousness. It also warns believers that they will go astray in this world if they follow any other way.

- *Say: If you love Allah, follow me (the Prophet): Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.*¹⁷

If the believers truly love Allah they will have to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet, and if they do that Allah will shower his mercy upon them and forgive them for their shortcomings in life.

The above verses emphasize that obeisance to Allah can only be accomplished through the revealed Prophetic guidance found in the Qur'ān. Principles are laid down, but detail may be given in other verses of the Qur'ān.

From the Ahādith of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) the following narrations are quoted.

‘Ā’isha (may Allah be pleased with her) said, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) said: *Whosoever innovate in the matter of religion, then it will be rejected.*¹⁸

And also

*Whosoever practices such actions that are not part of religion will be rejected.*¹⁹

The two above quoted Ahadith make it clear that Muslims have no right to create their own innovation nor add any new ideas to Islam which Allah had perfected and completed for believers.

¹⁶ *Al-Qur'ān* 6:153

¹⁷ *Al-Qur'ān* 3:31

¹⁸ Ibn Hijr, Ahmad bin ‘Alli, *Sahih al-Bukhāri*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1379 A.H. Vol. 15:221

¹⁹ Nawawi, Al-‘Imām, *Sahih al-Muslim*, Maktab al-Riyadh, Riyadh. 1349 A.H, Chapter 18:17-18

Innovations are thus frowned upon, but specifying undesirable actions leaves scope for difference of opinion.

From a religious perspective, syncretism involves the introduction or an assimilation of traditional, cultural practices within the doctrines of a particular religion. Specifically, from an Islamic perspective, it would most likely involve the alteration of ritual practices as well as the undermining of central principles of faith.

According to sociological studies syncretic practices are often part of a wider process of acculturation. That is, a process which includes the transmission of elements of one culture to another. Often it results in a modification of a primitive culture by a more advanced culture. Hence, in these circumstances there exists a super-ordinate society or culture, which initiates the change within a subordinate society or culture.²⁰

In an Islamic context the super-ordinate culture would be the Islamic culture based on the teachings of the Qur‘ān and the Sunnah, whilst the subordinate culture would be the religious or cultural background from which the individual or the society that is accepting Islam comes from. So, for example in the case of Nigerian Muslims, the super-ordinate culture is Islam and the subordinate culture is the traditional African religious practices.

Syncretism may be manifested in three forms. Firstly, within a modernist or post-modernist paradigm, the intellectuals of a particular faith may feel the need to re-interpret doctrines of the faith in order to derive a new understanding from a modernist or post-modernist perspective. In the case of Islam this is not to be done without a thorough understanding and knowledge of the sciences of the Qur‘ān and the Sunnah. The second form usually occurs when a community of believers migrates to a country in which their faith is practiced by a minority within the new country. In such circumstances the

²⁰ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, op. cit. : Vol. 16:922

migrants have a need to assimilate their faith with that of the dominant faith of the new destination. This process of assimilation by migrants usually occurs amongst middle and lower class societies. The reason is that illiteracy and ignorance creates a vulnerability of one's faith, which creates the need to assimilate with the newly found society. An example of this form is to be found in the history of the early Malay Muslim migrants to the Cape coast of South Africa. The third manifestation of syncretism is as a consequence of ignorance. When people within a society of believers begin to rely on knowledge of their faith from their forefathers and stop referring to their original sources of information regarding their beliefs, a process of imitation of the society at large results. These situations lead to the prominence of some un-Islamic factors in society. Examples of this type of syncretistic practices are evident among the Indian Muslims of South Africa.²¹

According to Doi syncretism may be found in two forms. The first is the official acceptance of certain traditional practices by the super-ordinate culture. Such practices are sanctioned and are evident in various places of worship. The other involves the individual introduction of traditional practices as part of the new faith, without consideration of conflicting principles between the super-ordinate and subordinate cultural values. Inevitably this will result in the creation of an *own brand* of religion.²²

There are a number of key differences between syncretism and pure Islam. A syncretistic *brand* of Islam often focuses keenly on the ritualistic practices of Islam with an obsession to perform these rituals correctly. Intolerance of other believers is a natural result of such practices. Syncretistic practices in the extreme by Muslims can result in a moving away from monotheism towards polytheism. The spread of syncretistic norms is not done through organised structures. Instead it depends on the sincerity with which followers practice their beliefs.

²¹ Doi A.R.I., lecture Rand Afrikaans University 26/10/97

²² Ibid

Allah says: *Say: O people of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even way.*²³

In this concluding verse Allah reminds believers that excess (to exceed) in religion means that truth is sometimes concealed or trampled upon, that the fashions of ancestors or contemporaries are copied or overdone, and Allah's name is dishonored by blasphemies or the setting up of false gods or fetishes, or that good people are deified and worshipped. The true path is the even path, the path of rectitude.

4.1.3 CONCLUSION

The guidelines to be found in the Qur'ān and Sunnah are quite clear. Any innovative elements which interfere with accepted norms, practices and the true spirit of Islam are ruled out. Problems of "right and wrong" however arise when certain customs have become part of the cultural heritage of people. Such is the case with several features of the religious observances of the Malay people.

Many Malays do not doubt or regard any of their practices as potentially sinful. To the majority all these beliefs are regarded as being part of their broader Islamic faith and are thus accepted and practiced on without reservations or questions. In the next subdivision attention will be paid to Malay customs in order to pinpoint doubtful elements.

²³ *Al-Qur'ān* 5:77

4.2. SYNCRETISTIC AND INNOVATIVE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE MALAYS

This subsection further discusses beliefs and customs of the Malays of Gauteng which may be categorised as syncretistic or alternatively as innovative. The practices associated with different phases of life will first be described and afterwards evaluated in this chapter. Attention will be drawn to instances where pure Islam was transformed into alienating syncretistic belief system. These practices were well meant but unfortunately not always reconcilable with orthodox Islam.

4.2.1 PREGNANCY

During the period of pregnancy, beginning at the first pregnancy, the expectant mother remains in her matrimonial home. Here she is assisted by her husband in all her domestic responsibilities. From the early stages of the pregnancy a succulent brown withered plant called the *Flower of Fātima* is placed in a container filled with water. The expectant mother then drinks some of this water and continues doing so until the time that her baby is delivered.

The drinking of the water of the *Flower of Fātima* is believed to ease the pangs of labour and childbirth. It has been observed that this flower gradually opens and expands just as the embryo grows in the womb of the mother. When the flower reaches full expansion it serves as an indication of the imminent birth of the baby.

Some of these plants have been used by Malay families for many generations; the same flower having been soaked in water and dried again and again for numerous childbirths.²⁴

²⁴ Du Plessis, I.D., op. cit: 51

During earlier times a private midwife was contracted to assist the mother to deliver the baby at home. During these times great care was taken to ensure that the *afterbirth* and the *umbilical cord* were buried. In recent years almost all babies are delivered at hospitals and private clinics where no care is taken with regard to the retrieval of the *afterbirth* and the *umbilical cord*.²⁵

After the birth of the baby the mother is confined to bed for ten days. During this period she is cared for and nursed by her in-laws. She is also confined to her home (placed under *'iddat*) until her baby is forty days old. During this period she is only allowed to leave her home when it is absolutely necessary to do so. The wisdom behind this seclusion is that the mother must rest in order to give her body a maximum chance to heal and also to give her an opportunity to begin the process of taking care of her newborn child.

Islam does not mention any significance with regards to the use of the *Flower of Fatima* during pregnancy or at the time of childbirth, nor does Islam instruct the burial of the umbilical and the afterbirth of a newborn baby. Islam also does not prescribe that a woman should be confined to an *'iddat* period after childbirth. The only *'iddat* period prescribed to a Muslim female is at the time of her husband's death. These acts had beauty and wisdom in it but it is all acts of Islamic innovations.

4.2.2 DOOPMAAL (TASMIYAH)

On the 7th day after the birth of the baby a ceremony called the "Doopmaal" (naming of the baby) takes place. The doopmaal ceremony has always been and still is a very colourful occasion. During previous generations the doopmaal was held at the Masjid, but for the past few decades it has been held at the home of the newborn baby's parents. Relatives and friends are invited to attend this ceremony.

²⁵ Interview : Sister J. Variawa, registered midwife, 10/7/96, Fordsburg, Johannesburg.



The father of the baby appoints an 'Imām or Shaykh to name the baby on his behalf. During the doopmaal ceremony the males and females are seated in separate rooms. The baby is named in the presence of the males.

If the baby is a girl she is adorned in a *medora* and if the baby is a boy he is draped in an *umāmah*. The baby is then placed on a cushion emblazoned with fresh flower buds. An unmarried male member of the family then carries the baby to the 'Imām or Shaykh who is to name the child. During the ceremony a lock of the baby's hair is cut off and placed in a glass of water. After the ceremony the water in this glass is thrown up high against a wall. The intention behind this action is to ensure that the baby's future education will be of a high standard.²⁶

Something sweet like honey, a date or sugar is placed in the baby's mouth while the name is given. Prayers are then offered for the long life and prosperity of the child.

After the ceremony the baby is passed from person to person. Each person kisses the baby's forehead before passing the baby on to the next person. The baby is then returned to the mother.

At the end of the ceremony tea is served with a variety of cakes, biscuits and sweetmeats. The most popular cake to be served is the melktert (milk tart).

If the parents are financially able, a sacrifice (*'aqīqah*) is offered on behalf of the newly named infant.

The placing of something sweet in the baby's mouth and naming the baby and offering an *'aqīqah* for the baby on the seventh day is pure Islamic. The cutting of a few locks of the baby's hair and the throwing of it against the wall

²⁶ Interview, the late 'Imām 'Ismā'īl Ried, Johannesburg, 1980

is not Islamic but an innovation. The cutting of the baby's hairlocks is symbolic to the actual shaving of the baby's hair after the 'aqīqah which the parents of the baby could possibly not afford at earlier times.

4.2.3 'AQIQAH (BIRTH CEREMONY)

The same rules and customs pertaining to the *korbān* is also applied to the 'aqīqah but with the following differences.

The 'aqīqah can be done at any time during the year but it is preferable that it should take place on the 7th day after birth.

In the case of a boy two lambs or goats should be sacrificed, and one lamb or goat in the case of a girl.²⁷

The bones of the animal are not cut with a saw but only at the joints. The skin and bones of the sacrificed animal are buried.

If the 'aqīqah is done on the 7th day after the birth of a baby, food is made from some of the meat and served at the doopmaal (*tasmiyah*). What remains of the meat is distributed amongst relatives, friends and the needy.

The cutting of the bones of the sacrificed animal at the joints is Islamic but the burial of its bones and skin is innovative in its practice.

4.2.4 CIRCUMCISION (SOENNAT)

Circumcision, better known as *soennat*, of boys used to take place during the hot seasons, especially the December month. In earlier eras the circumcision used to be carried out by an 'Imām on boys between the ages of 3 – 6 years. The circumcised boy would be showered with gifts from relatives and family

²⁷ Sābiq, Sayed, *Fiqh Al-Sunnah*, Vol. 3, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1985 : 327

friends. This does not happen anymore. The last 'Imām in the Johannesburg area to perform circumcisions was the late 'Imām Muhammad Hanif Rāfi'ī (died 1962).²⁸ The 'Imām, unlike the medical practitioner, did not receive a fee for this service but a *slawat* was most welcome. During present times the circumcision is only carried out by medical doctors before the baby is 40 days old. According to oral reports some girls are also circumcised. This practice cannot however be verified.

The circumcision of boys is Islamic but that of girls is not Islamic but possibly syncretistic. The origin of this practice cannot be traced. It has been observed that some Moroccan Muslims in South Africa parade with their sons immediately after they are circumcised as it is customary done in Morocco. Many Malays are married to Moroccans; it might eventually become part of the Malay heritage.

4.2.5 ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Malay parents are very concerned about the Islamic education of their children. The basic Islamic tenets are taught to the child by the parents before the child starts with formal secular education at the age of six years. The child spends 8 to 10 years in a formal Islamic educational institution which used to be known as *Slamseskool*. This is in addition to the child's formal secular education. At the end of this period the child graduates from the institution. This graduation is commonly known as *tamat*.

4.2.6 TAMAT (COMPLETION OF THE QUR'ĀN)

The *tamat* or graduation ceremony, takes place after a child has completed his Islamic education. The child completes this primary aspect of his education, which includes the recitation of the entire Qur'ān under the guidance of a mentor. The *tamat* is a cultural tradition, which has been carried on from

²⁸ Interview: 'Imām Khāyir al-Dīn Rafi'ī, Johannesburg, 10/6/1996

generation to generation. In Johannesburg, the tamat has remained a colourful ceremony in spite of the passage of time.

The male graduate is dressed in Arabian attire, complete with *sorbaan* or turban and the female graduate wears a *medora* on her head. The graduates are accompanied to the Masjid by an entourage of boys and girls. These attendants are usually younger than the graduates and are dressed slightly differently.²⁹



²⁹ Davids, A, op. cit.: 1980 : 25





At the Masjid the graduate is required to recite sections of the Qur‘ān from memory. He is also tested on his fluency with regards to the recitation of the Qur‘ān. In addition to this the graduate is further tested on his knowledge of elementary Islamic teachings. All this testing of the graduate is done by the ‘*Ulamā*’, who are invited to do the testing. After the *tamat* ceremony all those that are present are invited to have lunch at the Masjid. Thereafter tea and various delicacies are served at the homes of the graduates.

The *tamat* remains an annual event in former Coloured Areas of Johannesburg such as Riverlea, Bosmont, Newclare and Ennerdale. The *tamat* is seen as an encouragement so that the child may strive towards higher Islamic education.³⁰ Many Malay ‘*Ulamā*’ have been produced from these *tamats*.

Islam stresses on the importance of education but the format of these *tamats* are not strictly Islamic. Islam does not allow the free mixing of opposite sexes like it is found at these ceremonies. The current *tamats* are very similar to that of the Jewish Bamitsva and the Christian conformation ceremonies. On ceremonial level the *tamat* practices may be categorized as been potentially syncretistic in nature.

³⁰ Interview: Abrahams, G. ‘Imām : Johannesburg, 17/3/96.

4.2.7 LAMBAAR (ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY)

Although Islam makes no mention of engagement parties, but marriage preposals are allowed in Islam. It is notable to mention that the Malay marriage preposals are very different from the rest of the masses of the Muslim communities of South Africa.

The prospective bridegroom requests his father, who is accompanied by close members of his family and an 'Ālim, to go to the parents of the "bride to be" and request her hand in marriage. Her father in turn gives an answer on her behalf. Should the proposal be accepted the couple become engaged. The father of the future bridegroom or his representative, should his father not be living, then hands over an engagement ring to "the bride to be's father".

The "bride to be's" father then puts the ring onto her finger. Nowadays the boy himself presents the ring to the girl. The 'Ālim then offers prayers, to ask Allah to bless the couple with kindness, love and understanding, to protect them, to grant them the goodness of this life and the hereafter and also to protect them from the fire of hell. The future bridegrooms' family are then served with tea and cake. On their departure from the "bride to be's" home they are presented with *Barakats* in cut-glass plates covered with cellophane and ribbon.

The future bridegroom's deputation returns to his home and informs him of his proposal's acceptance. Thereafter the ladies of his family proceed to the house of the "bride to be" with young girls carrying a variety of gifts such as jewellery, flowers, fruit and cake which are also wrapped in cellophane and ribbon for the "bride to be". In return gifts to the future bridegroom are also handed over to these young girls. The ladies are then served with tea and cake.

At a later stage the two families get together and discuss the date, time and place (Masjid) where the wedding ceremony will take place as well as the amount of the *maskāwi* (dowry).

The presentation of the engagement ring could be classified as been syncretistic in nature due to the fact that it is a common practice in many religions.

4.2.8 THE NIKĀH or MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Of all the Malay feasts, weddings are the most glamorous and extravagant.

4.2.8.1 THE VIRGIN BRIDE

4.2.8.1.1 THE WEEKEND BEFORE THE WEDDING

The weekend before the marriage the future bride's female family gather at her home and iron out and display all her clothing and trousseau, which could be viewed by the Malay female community. The night before the wedding, female members of the bride's family take her clothing and trousseau to her new matrimonial home where they are received by the mother of the bridegroom. The bride's family at this stage are not allowed to see the bridal chambers (*bruidskamer*) as this is a surprise for them and the bride.

4.2.8.1.2 THE WEDDING DAY

The *nikāh* ceremony takes place in a Masjid and is conducted by an 'Ālim appointed by the bride's father or *walī* (*wakīl*). The bride does not go to the Masjid but is represented by her father, grandfather or representative. Customarily the *nikāh* ceremony takes place at 11h00, thereafter lunch is served by the bridegroom's family to all the men present. Immediately after the *nikāh* ceremony the bride is sent a bridal basket consisting of various

traditional Malay dishes and desserts for her lunch by her husband. The bridal basket or “bruidsmantje” as it is commonly known is also wrapped in cellophane and ribbon and carried to the bride by young girls from the bridegroom’s family. This is regarded as the groom’s first step of *nafaqah* (maintenance) to his wife.

Later during the day a reception is given by the bride’s family where tea and cake is served followed by supper. The bride and bridegroom are seated on a two-seater sofa on a beautifully decorated stage. The bride is dressed in a white bridal gown with a *medoura* headdress.

In early years the bride would be transported to the reception area by coach, drawn by four white horses plumed with ostrich feathers, driven by a coachman wearing the traditional Malay straw hat (*tudong*). Nowadays she is driven by car to the reception area. At the wedding reception Malay folk songs are played.³¹

After supper the bridegroom takes leave of his bride. The bride is then led off from the stage accompanied by *hajjis* from the bridegroom’s family and taken to her parental home. Here she formally greets and takes leave of her family. While the bride leaves her reception area and parental home Arabic songs and the *ashrakal* on the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) is chanted.

The *hajjis* then take the bride, accompanied by her family, to the bridal chamber “bruidskamer”. The “bruidskamer” is decorated in satin sheets and spreads of amazing workmanship. The bridal chamber is a surprise to the bride and her family. The bridegroom rejoins his bride at the bridal chamber where an ‘Ālim advises them on how to live and understand each other according to the laws of Shari‘ah. Thereafter a prayer is offered by the bridegroom’s father. For the following seven days, the bridal chamber remains on display for who ever wishes to view it, an act which is

³¹ Davids, A, op. cit. : 90

completely un-Islamic.³² During this period the new bride is also secluded to her bridal chambers.



³² Mentoor, A.A. *Syncretism in the Belief and practice of Malays in the Cape*. Unpublished B.A. (Hons.) dissertation, R.A.U. University, Johannesburg. 1995 : 31



The morning after the wedding night, the matrimonial bed is inspected by the bridegroom's mother to ascertain whether her new daughter in-law was a virgin or not. If she was, her mother would be congratulated by her new son in-law.

This wedding night and "morning after" tradition and fuss is dying out and is replaced by wedding nights in hotels and honeymoons.

Very little fuss and glamour is attached to the wedding of widows and divorcees. Weddings of expecting mums are treated with very little respect. These marriages normally take place at the bride's parental home on either, a Thursday night, Saturday night or Sunday afternoon with very few family members invited.

The chanting of the *ashrakal* is innovative and once again the only period of 'iddat for a lady is at the time of her husband's death.



4.2.9 HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

The *hajj*, (pilgrimage) to Makka which is a Qur'ānic injunction, is greatly revered by the Malay Community. Pilgrims on their departure and return are honoured by the community. A proof of this is the huge crowds which gathered at air terminals and train stations in earlier days during the pilgrimage season.³³ The Malay pilgrims used to leave for Makka at the end of the month of Sha'bān and return during the month of *Dhu al-Hajj* in which the pilgrimage is performed.

The pilgrimage is regarded as one of the biggest sacrifices of the Malays as it is only possible to undertake it after a life long saving or on retirement from work. A Malay pilgrim will attend a special class long before his or her intended journey to learn the rites of *hajj* and how he or she must conduct himself or herself while on pilgrimage and on their return. Every family member, friend and neighbour, Muslim and Non-muslim are greeted and forgiveness is sought before leaving for *hajj*.

A week before departure and a week after return from Makka the pilgrim is confined to his or her home, a custom which has died out completely. Pilgrims are annually honoured by farewell and welcome receptions at the local community centres. At these functions, leaving aside the refreshments which are served, lectures pertaining to the rites of *hajj* is also delivered by the 'Ulamā'. They also offer prayers for the safety and wellbeing of the pilgrims and for the acceptance of their duties by the Creator. The pilgrim takes with him a white cloth on which the names of all those who wish to perform pilgrimage in future are written. This cloth will be buried on the plains of Mount 'Arafāt. Every Malay who visits the pilgrims before their departure gives a *slawat* to the pilgrims which can be used during their stay in Makka.

³³ Davids, A, op.cit. : 27

The Malay pilgrims' return from pilgrimage is very colourful. The males arrive in Arabian garb and the females in Malaysian garb which is commonly known and *moedering* which includes the *medoura* (headgear) and *melaya* (shawl) embroidered in gold or silver.

The burying of the white cloth is not an Islamic act but an innovation. Again the only *'iddat* period is that of a lady at the time of her husband's death. A Muslim male is never subjected to any form of *'iddat*.





4.2.10 BURIALS (KIFĀYAT)

It is an Islamic practice for Muslim men to attend the funeral service and to accompany the bier to the cemetery, while the women gather at the home of the deceased. The members of the family of the deceased are responsible for the burial expenses of the deceased. It was the practice of the Malays of yesteryear to buy their own *kafang* (Shrouding) and keep it aside in preparation for their final abode. Today, this responsibility has been transferred to the *kifāyat klops* (burial societies). Up to fifteen years ago a *malboet* would go from house to house to inform the whole Malay community about the *kifāyat* (funeral) of the deceased. Today notices are written on the Masjid notice boards.

On the death of a male the 'Imām or *Tuang Manie* and some men folk of the deceased will give the ceremonial bath known as the *abdās*, followed by the washing of the body with soap and water and then the ceremonial bath known as the *ghusal* where water is poured thrice over the whole body starting from the head up to the toes, down the right and left sides. Then a treatment with water to which camphor is added is given to the corpse, and then carefully dried. In the meantime three shrouds have been prepared. A number of aromatic oils, benzene and rose petals are used to perfume the body. Cotton wool which is known as *kapas* is pressed in all the hollow portions of the body, and treatment of aromatic oil and camphorated oil is again applied. The shrouds are wrapped around the body and the ends tied below the feet over the waist and above the head.³⁴ This ritual is carried out mostly at the home of the deceased even if death occurred in a hospital or anywhere outside the home. In the case of a female the above procedure will be carried out by a *Tuka Manie* and some female folk of the deceased. The corpse is then placed on a bier until the scheduled time of the funeral. In the meantime the Holy Qur'ān is recited by those present. It is however regretful to mention that it is only females who are present in the room where the deceased lies, whether the deceased is a male or a female. In some remote cases candles are lit in the room where the

³⁴ Du Plessis, I.D. op. cit. : pp 30-31

deceased is lying. This is a completely Christian belief imitated by some Muslims.

At nearly all funerals, meals are prepared and served to mourners after the funeral. This is an expense and practice which has been discouraged by Islam since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). At the time of the death of his cousin Ja'far, the holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: *Prepare food only for Ja'far's family, because they are busy mourning his death and they have to prepare his burial.*³⁵

There are many cases where the family of the deceased could not afford the burial fees and the deceased had to be buried from the *bayt al-māl*, but where they had enough money to prepare meals for mourners after the funeral. Preparations would be made for food even before the death had been certified or even before the deceased had been released and collected from the hospital.

When the corpse is about to leave the house the Muslim males gather around the corpse and offer salutations on the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) followed by a *du'ā'* (prayer) for the forgiveness of the deceased. The bier is then lifted on to the shoulders of the men and followed by a number of other men, who take turns in carrying the deceased to the hearse which is parked about 40 steps further. On the bier and grave of chaste bachelors and spinsters a garland with flowers is placed as a mark of honour and respect for their chastity until death. The *Salāt al-Janāzah* (funeral prayer) used to be offered at the local Masjid but is nowadays offered at the graveyard led by the 'Imām. Behind him in uneven numbered rows the relatives, friends and mourners follow. The *Salāt al-Janāzah* is followed by a *du'ā'*. The recitation of the *du'ā'* is innovative and not Islamic. There may be traces of syncretism. Evidence for example may be provided of parallel practices among certain Christian groups.

³⁵ Sābiq, Sayīd, op.cit, Vol. 1, 508

While the deceased is placed to rest and the grave filled with sand, portions of the Qur‘ān are recited, which is regarded as better than to discuss worldly matters. After the grave has been filled the ‘Imām recites’ the *Talqīn* (which is a reminder of death) followed by a *du‘ā* for the forgiveness of the deceased.

After the men return from the graveyard, mourner, relatives and friends are served with meals. In the past it used to be wortel bredie (carrot stew) and rice, but nowadays mutton curry, served with rice or bread and salads are served as they are easier to prepare.³⁶

After the seventh, fortieth and hundredth day up to one year, customary memorial prayers are said at the home of the deceased, which are known as *Arwāh* and *Haddād* respectively which will be further discussed.

During the *‘Iddat* (the waiting period of the wife after the death of her husband) if the children are not self-supporting, the husband’s relatives take charge of all affairs, paying the house rent, giving the widow food and attention until she may resume her normal life again.

Social life amongst the Malays in the Johannesburg, Nigel and Pretoria areas is greatly determined by the religion of Islam and is designed to fit into an Islamic socio-cultural pattern. Religion, therefore determined the development and preservation of customs and culture amongst the Malay people. They were developed during the days when their forefathers were in bondage and these customs and cultures were carried over from generation to generation.

Memorial prayers on the 7th, 40th and 100th days up to one year are not Islamic it is a Hindu religious custom still practiced by the present day Hindus. This custom will thus be seen as been syncretistic.

³⁶ Williams, F., *The Cape Malay Cookery Book*, Cedars Press, Cape Town, 1988 : 95

4.2.11 HADDĀD (ARWĀH)

Social life in Johannesburg and Pretoria is determined by the Islamic religion and is tailored to fit into the Islamic socio-cultural pattern. One of these socio-cultural patterns is the community prayer meeting, *haddād*, also known as *arwāh*. The word *arwāh* is the plural of the word *rūh* which means soul. The *haddād* or *arwāh* is usually made with the intention that the blessings of it should be on the soul of the deceased.

The *haddād* consists of the recitation of certain chapters from the Qu'rān, praises of Almighty Allah, supplications and prayers. It is a common Thursday night activity in Johannesburg, Nigel and Pretoria in reverent respect for the Friday. These gatherings are held in private homes, with neighbours taking turns in arranging a *haddād* at their homes. It is sometimes also held at the Masjid. The *haddād* was a very famous spiritual activity on a Thursday night and on some occasions on a Sunday night until 1966, when the Malays were forcibly removed from their Habitat.³⁷

During early times the Malays were very religiously conscious. On a Thursday night after sunset no radios could be heard playing and no cinemas were attended, in fact no un-Islamic entertainment was allowed. The only thing that could be heard was the recitation of the Qur'ān or that of the *haddād* which is also known as the *arwāh* and the fragrance of *miang* could be smelled.³⁸ Even during this modern age of television and video it is still observed that no television will be switched on in certain Malay homes on a Thursday night.

³⁷ Davids, A. op. cit.: pp. 224, 27, 95

³⁸ Carrim, Nazir, op. cit.: 61

The *haddād* is normally led by the 'Imām and after completion of the *haddād*, tea and cakes are served as well as *gadadmelk* and *boeber*. The *haddād* is not only recited on a Thursday night but also on the 7th and 100th night after the death of a Malay, but on these two occasions a *barakat* is given to all those who attend. The 'Imām is given an extra large *barakat*. The *barakat* tradition can be traced back to the days of slavery in the Cape when parcels of cake would be sent to slaves who could not attend, creating a bond of love and brotherhood. The *barakat* must have been a relief to the slaves.³⁹

During the *haddād*, the *Gadadmelk* is placed in front of the 'Imām and after completion of the *haddād* it is served to all those present, while the *salawāt* is recited. Thereafter all other refreshments are served.

4.2.12 MERANG

Merang is a religious ceremony held on the following occasions, a Sunday morning, on the 40th day, on completion of a year after the occurrence of a death, on the occasion of a child's 21st birthday, on birthdays and on wedding anniversaries. The religious aspects of the *merang* conforms to those of the *haddād*, it only differs in feasting, when food instead of cakes are served.⁴⁰

It must be remembered that the *haddād*, *merang* and *barakat* are partially products of the slave milieu when no freedom of religion existed amongst the slave community. It gave the slaves a feeling of community and an opportunity to participate in a religious activity, breaking at least temporarily their bondage. At the same time the institution of the *barakat* taught the slaves to care for their fellow Muslims. The religious aspect conforms to Muslim spiritual practices⁴¹ because the *haddād* and *merang* are always preceded by a complete *khatam* of the Qur'ān. (communal recitation of the Holy Qur'ān).⁴²

³⁹ Davids, Achmat, op. cit. : pp 33 – 34

⁴⁰ Davids, A, op. cit. : 33, 94, 95

⁴¹ Du Plessis, I, op. cit. : 41

⁴² Davids, A, op. cit.: 27, 35

The haddād and merang are not Islamic practices but it was religious alternatives created by the Malay slaves prior to 25th July 1804 when Malay slaves were not allowed to practice Islam freely as a religion. Strictly speaking one may say that these two practices are *innovations*. They are however embedded in the history of the country and reflect the heritage of the religious struggle of the Malays at the Cape. The legal status of *innovations* such as these still have to be determined. Personally I would not judge them in a completely negative manner.

4.3. CONCLUSION

It must be mentioned that the above mentioned practices and customs were well cemented into the communities. They served a useful purpose but are gradually dying out.

Although the Malay practices were *syncretistic* and *innovative* in nature they were beautifully preserved and practised. These were the only Islamic alternatives they could practice during times when Islam could not be practiced openly as a religion. No religious alternatives have been offered to replace these practices. Most important, they kept the Malay communities united and the youth off the streets.

Among the ceremonies and customs described *innovative* practices were identified with regard to pregnancy customs (the Flower of Fatima and the lady's 'iddat period), doopmaal (cutting of a few hairlocks of the new born baby and throwing it against a wall, aqīqah (burial of the bones and skins of the sacrificed animal), marriage ceremonies (chanting of the Ashrakal and the 'iddat period of the bride), Hajj (burial of the white cloth on the plain of Arafāt as well as the male and female 'iddat period) and the Haddād and Merang (prayer meetings).

Practices categorized as *syncretistic* were identified with regard to circumcision of women, the *tamat* ceremony, offering of the engagement ring, du'ā after burial as well as the commemorative prayer on the 7th, 40th and 100th days after death.

Many ceremonies or customs with unidentified origin were then discovered. For practical purposes the word *innovative* were used. Potentially some of them could be fitted within the category *syncretism*, e.g. *the Flower of Fatima* during pregnancy. Others can be termed as superfluous religious practices such as the additional 'iddat periods for women and the commemorative prayer meetings. Prayer meetings however have become part of the Malay history dating from the time of slavery.

An example of clear syncretistic blending of Islamic and Hindu practices was indicated (commemorative prayer meetings on the 7th, 40th and 100th day). Christian influence was suggested in the case of the use of the engagement ring and the *tamat* customs

The definition of *syncretism* as a blending of customs of various religious groups has been found to be the most practical. Practices which are not part of traditional Islam were categorized as *innovative*. In line with the definition defined in 4.1.2., they were found not to demonstrate any heresy. The arbitrary principle, however, when applied to Malay customs causes some problems. Malays at present and in the past have several customs as part of their heritage. One cannot say that they were arbitrary introduced. Certain historical circumstances may have motivated their existence. The question now is whether they should be retained or abandoned. If the first option is chosen further investigation would be necessary.

The following chapter discusses the various forms of superstition found amongst some Malays.

CHAPTER 5

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS OF THE MALAYS OF GAUTENG.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses in detail the various murky superstitions which drift like a dark cloud above the heads of many Malays. This chapter focuses on the various forms of superstition which have formed part of the weird beliefs of some Malays, educated and the uneducated, rich and poor.

5.2 SUPERSTITION

Some Malay people are unfortunately very superstitious and vulnerable to imitation and indoctrination. Superstition is so deep rooted that it has led many Muslims, not only Malays, to the lowest forms of disbeliefs such as peer-worshipping, grave-worshipping, revering the *Holy circle of Tombs (kramats)* and the consultation of *dukums*.

These superstitions constituted an integral part in the belief system of the pagan Arabs. Prior to the advent of Islam the Arabs were steeped in superstitious beliefs that regulated their social, economic and political activity. Superstition created a mysterious value system that gave rise to fear, suspicion and enmity. It deprived man of rational thinking, and every ailment, accident or calamity was attributed to some evil force bent on destroying their lives. The situation was further aggravated by wicked *spiritual doctors* who exploited the unwary masses and ran lucrative businesses treating and exorcizing the *evil forces*. Even today there are people who claim to know the future and try to impress people with their divine powers. Belief in superstition distracts a person from *'imān* and *taqdīr* and the *qudra* of Allah. For Allah has power over all things.

The Holy Qur'ān states: *No misfortune can happen on earth nor (afflict) your souls, but is recorded in a Book (long) before we bring it into existence; that is truly easy for Allah.*¹

Disaster and misfortune take place according to the Will and Plan of Allah. No other force or power can direct one's destiny or cause harm to a person except with the permission of Allah.

5.3 SOOTHSAYERS – FORTUNE-TELLERS

There are certain imposters who pretend to know the future through contact with the *spirits* of certain saints. The Holy Qur'ān rejects the notion that anyone besides Allah knows the future in the following verse:

*Say – No one in the heavens and earth knows the unseen except Allah.*²

5.4 PREGNANT WOMEN

It is a strong belief amongst mostly old Malays that an expecting mum should not look at a corpse because the unborn baby is frightened by the sight of a corpse. A pregnant woman should also not pose for a photograph as it can cause physical harm to the unborn baby. It is also an old belief that if a pregnant woman cuts the hair of another female then that female's hair will grow very well and very long.³ This belief still exists among many Malays today.

¹ Al-Qur'ān: 57: 22

² Ibid.: 27: 65

³ Interview: A.M. Lawrence, Riverlea, Johannesburg. 28/08/1996.

5.5 THE HOME

It used to be a belief that it was bad luck to buy salt after sunset, to borrow a broom to another person (including neighbours), to enter, or to leave the house or to start off a journey at midnight. When entering the home late at night especially after midnight it was advisable to enter the door with your back first. Another superstition was to sleep with an open scissors towards the door to ward off evil.⁴

5.6 PEER WORSHIPPING AND REVERING

Peer worshipping has escalated in the Malay community of Johannesburg in the last ten years. During the past this practice was nearly unheard of or unseen. At certain Masjids some worshippers are in the habit of kissing the hand of the 'Imām after completion of their *salāt*, a custom which is practiced by people who never kissed or attempted to kiss the hands of their own parents. At times people will queue up in order to kiss the hand of their *saint* and the *saint* patiently stands and waits for his hand to be kissed.

I will relate an incident which I personally witnessed on a Friday evening during May 1994. I attended an Islamic school meeting at the home of a *Shaykh* in Johannesburg. We were all seated in a room with the *Shaykh* seated at the furthest end of the room. As his *mūrīdūn* (followers) entered the room they greeted and first went over to the *Shaykh*, kissed his hand and thereafter shook everybody else's hands. After the meeting, as they were about to leave, they kissed the *Shaykh's* hand again and left the room with their backs towards the door in order not to turn their backs on their *Shaykh*.⁵

⁴ Interview: S. Sallie, Bosmont, Johannesburg. 30/07/1996.

⁵ Incident confirmed by A.A.H. Ahmad, Newclare, Johannesburg. 30/07/1996, and R. Ismail, Riverlea, Johannesburg. 30/07/1996. Both persons attended the meeting with me.

Some 'Ulamā' amongst the Malays are so respected that special attention is given and services rendered to them at social and religious functions, which include reserved seating and food, and the power to instruct the wives of their followers to prepare special meals or beverages for them. They have free access to the homes of their followers, an act which is not only syncretic in practice but completely un-Islamic. The following verse of the Qur'ān instructs Muslims that they may not enter any house other than their own except with the permission of the owners of it. Some 'Ulamā merely open the door and enter.

O you who believe, enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and saluted those in them ...⁶

5.7 THE MONTH OF SAFAR

The month of Safar which is the 2nd lunar month in the Islamic calendar is associated with many superstitions and strange beliefs, ill fortune and bad luck. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed Safar to be a serpent that dwells in the stomach of man. It stirs to life in this month and causes various types of illnesses and diseases. Thus people are more prone to fall ill in this month. Because of the various evil omens attached to this month some Muslims regard:

- *Nikah* contracted in this month to lead to bad luck and to be ill-fated.
- Any important business venture initiated in this month bound to collapse.
- The first fifteen days of this month to be specifically evil and susceptible to bad luck.

Nabi Muhammad (peace be upon him) condemned such superstitious beliefs in various ahadīth.

A hadīth narrated in Muslim states: *There is no (ill fortune) in the month of Safar nor (do) evil spirits (exist).*⁷

⁶ Al-Qur'ān: 24: 27

⁷ Al Nawawi, A.Z., *Riyādh al-Sālihīn*, 'Alim al-Kutub, Riyādh. 1986:630

Another hadīth narrated in Muslim also states: *Do not revile time (i.e. do not regard any particular day, week or month to be bad), for I (Allah) am (the embodiment) of all time.*⁸

It is related that in older times at the sighting of the moon for the month of Safar, the old people used to pray and ask Allah to protect them from all calamities during this month, because it is believed that the month of Safar brings bad luck and calamities. People are very cautious of things they do during this month. If an accident occurs during the month of Safar, people will say that the month of Safar was the cause of the accident.

It is a seemingly acceptable superstition amongst many Malays that no weddings or engagements should take place during this month, as it will be full of misfortune and bad luck. No contracts will be concluded and no buying or selling will take place either. The first fifteen days of this month is deemed to be specifically evil and to bring bad luck.

5.8 DOUBLE WEDDINGS

It is very strongly believed amongst the Malays that two sisters may not get married on the same day. The one sister however, may get married on the Friday and the other sister on the Saturday or Sunday. It is believed that if both sisters have to get married at the same *Nikah* (marriage ceremony) one of the sisters will be barren, and if both of them have children one of them will either become widowed or divorced at a young age.

⁸ Ibid: 631

5.9 LADIES

A menstruating woman is not allowed to cut her nails or wash her hair or attend any religious functions, not even a funeral, and if she attends a funeral then she is not allowed to enter the room where the corpse is lying.

5.10 NEW BORN BABIES

On the forehead of a new born baby a little arrow is drawn with coal to ward of stares from people and to ward of evil. Small black beads tied around the wrists of the baby also ward off evil. Soon after birth an *azīmat* is ordered for the baby's protection against all evil.¹⁰

5.11 GRAVE WORSHIPPING

Grave worshipping is very seldom practised amongst the Malays in Gauteng. There are isolated cases when people will sit around the grave and offer prayers for the dweller of the grave to intercede on their behalf or to forgive them (more like a confession of sins). There are a few people who actually prostrate at the foot end of the graves of pious people. (This I have witnessed on several occasions). This practice is however very rife amongst the Malay community at the Cape.

¹⁰ Mentoer, E.A., op. cit.: 23

5.12 THE HOLY CIRCLE OF TOMBS (KRAMATS)

In the recent years a series of *kramats* shot up in the Braamfontein and Croesus Cemeteries in Johannesburg. These *kramats* are very well maintained by the Mazaar Society of Johannesburg. It must be noted that the Mazaar Society does not include any members from the Malay community of Gauteng. Of the ten *kramats* or *mazaars* as they are commonly known in Gauteng, only three of them are graves of Malay people.

No one ever goes to these *kramats* during busy weekdays, but over weekends and on public holidays these shrines are packed with *worshippers*. Often at night a lonely figure may be seen jumping the fence of the cemetery toiling up the pathway to one of these tombs.

People visit these tombs for some of the following reasons: It might be a mother whose child is critically ill, or a young boy or young girl on the eve of marriage, or someone who intends to leave on a long journey, the pilgrim before the departure on pilgrimage to Mecca, the businessman on the eve of a very big and important business deal or the accused before appearing before the courts of law. They all go to offer prayers and to burn incense for intercession. If help cannot be found at any of the local *kramats* a special journey is undertaken to the Cape to visit the *kramats* there. The dwellers of these *kramats* are all classified by the masses as *awliyā* (friends of Allah).¹¹

¹¹ Du Plessis, I.D. et al, *The Malay Quarter and its people*, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town. 1953: p.p. 16, 33

Many sincere followers venerate these *kramats* but some followers do it for financial gains. Some people take water to the *kramats* for blessings and at their return this blessed water is sold at a considerable price.

5.13 AZĪMATS (CHARMS)

A descendant of Tuang Guru was said to have a dice with an Arabic inscription, which was used by the said 'Imām for divination or as a remedy for all kinds of illnesses. The dice is cast several times while prayers are being recited. The Arabic inscription which appears on it contains Qur'ānic references. From these the future or a suitable remedy is determined. These stories cannot be verified though Tuang Guru was deeply concerned with spiritual medicine. An entire chapter in his book on Islamic Jurisprudence is devoted to this subject. This chapter contains instructions for the preparation of talismans or *azīmats* to ward off evil or for general protection, recipe potions for all kinds of illness, and prayers to soften the heart of an unresponsive lover, etc.¹²

Azīmats are pieces of paper on which Arabic words, normally verses from the Holy Qur'ān, are inscribed. These pieces of paper are folded into little sachets and stitched into black cotton containers. It is either fixed to a person, especially small babies, nailed behind doors,¹³ or hung at the entrance of a business premises, depending on the purpose. This is popular and commonly used in Gauteng. This practice has a psychological explanation and is syncretical. This practice is also very famous in Nigeria.¹⁴

Azīmats can be of a dual purpose. It can either be beneficial or harmful. Practicing magic is tantamount to *kufṛ* in Islam. Just as it is *harām* for a Muslim to consult diviners or fortune tellers, it is likewise *harām* for them to seek help from magicians, sangomas, witch doctors, etc.

¹² Davids, Achmat, op. cit. : 18-20

¹³ Ibid : 20

¹⁴ Doi, A.R.I. *Islām in a multi-religious society, Nigeria – a case study*, A.S. Noordeen, Kuala Lumpur. 1992 : 233.

5.14 HAKĪM

Beneficial *azī mats* are obtainable from the *hakīm*, who writes out *azī mats* directly from the Holy Qur’ān . This service is gratis and is not intended to do harm to anybody or to infringe upon the property of another person. For this service the *hakīm* receives a *slāwat* if the recipient can afford it. No stipulated amount is charged or expected.

5.15 DUKUM

Harmful *azī mats* are obtainable at a high price from the *dukum* who usually runs a very lucrative business. These *dukums* can cause any type of harm to anybody through the medium of their satanic powers and black magic. *Dukums* usually visit the *Kramats* and graveyard very often, especially very late at night.

Some *dukums* have many *patients* who consult them regularly even for ordinary health reasons. These *azī mat surgeries* are normally more crowded than the medical surgeries. A visit to an *azī mat surgery* can even guarantee a win at a gambling stake, or a victory in a sporting activity. *Dukum* activities date back to the 1800’s. It is not as popular any more as it used to be in the olden days. In an interview with one of the elderly ’Imāms, ’Imām Hamza Malick from Bosmont related to me that in the olden days whenever an ’Imām entered the *mihrāb* he had to lift up the *musallah* to see whether an *azī mat* was not perhaps placed underneath it to harm the ’Imām and remove him from his position as ’Imām.

I have observed over the years that ’Imām Hamza Malick even up to now always lifts up the *musallah* before he enters the *mihrāb*. From this statement and practice it is evident that the use and practice of the evil *azī mats* was also recognised by the ‘*Ulamā*’ of the Malay community of yesteryear.

The necessity and the use of *azī mats* have declined to such an extent that some *dukums* nowadays have to advertise their services under the guise of some great

Sufi orders. Most of these *dukums*' Islamic knowledge is very limited. Some of them write out *azī mats* in the Arabic script but cannot read Arabic themselves.

These *dukums* treat people to make profit in a cheap way. They focus attention upon themselves rather than Allah and ask people to respect and love them, instead of loving Allah. These *dukums* are in fact robbers, liars, traitors in religion, cheaters and thugs.

5.16 CONCLUSION

Islam is a religion based upon dogma and not superstition. To attribute every ailment, calamity and hardship to evil spirits is to be a defeatist. People doing so ultimately become the victims of suspicion, hatred and fear. They become blind to their own weakness and shortcomings and simply attribute all ills to some external forces.

Fortunately most of the Malays have stayed clear of practicing these forms of superstition. Some Islamic scholars are working laboriously to save their communities from this insanity. The following chapter will focus on a more positive aspect of the *dīn* of the Malays, namely their religious celebrations.

CHAPTER 6

RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses various religious celebrations of the Malays. The focus is placed on how once again the pure spirit of Islam has been diffused, refined and given new dimensions within this community.

6.2 MAWLŪD AL-NABĪ

The *mawlūd* is the most colourful and beautiful festival of the Muslim year. It is conducted with the Masjid in the centre, is communal and involves both males and females. This celebration is held on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) which falls on the 12th *Rabī' al-awwal*. This festival may also be held at other times of the year especially at the official opening of a Masjid, Madrassah or any other Islamic Institution. The *'Imām's* wife (*Motjie 'Imām*) is normally responsible for the organising and smooth running of this celebration. The community contributes towards the cost of it. The *mawlūd* celebrations are held over the weekends of the month of *Rabī' al-awwal* at different *Masājid* in the Johannesburg area where everybody is welcome to attend. Many years ago it was also celebrated in Pretoria. The *mawlūd* celebrations consist of the *rampie-sny* for ladies and *surat dhikr* for men. The *mawlūd* celebrations during the month of *Rabī' al-awwal* is known as *komnies mawlūd*.

6.2.1 RAMPIE SNY (CUTTING OF THE ORANGE/LEMON LEAVES)

This festival takes place on a Saturday afternoon either in the Masjid or in the hall adjacent to the Masjid. From 10:00 am onwards the females gather at the Masjid, dressed in their most colourful attire. All young girls are dressed up with a *medoura* pinned to their headgear and the female hajjis are dressed in their *moedering* which are specially bought in Mecca for occasions like these. The ladies are all seated on the floor, each with her own special knife and wooden board for shredding, which varies in beauty and quality.¹

They gather to prepare the *rampies*. The orange/lemon leaves are cut into small strips. Small girls up to the age of ten years old will take the orange/lemon leaves to those ladies who are cutting them and collect from them small cut strips and take them to the *Motjie 'Imām*. While the orange/lemon leaves are cut into strips, poems about the life and history of the Prophet Muhammad are recited melodiously. Different refreshments are served as well.²

The *rampie sny* tradition still exists in Johannesburg although it is very evident that it will die out soon as it has already died out in Pretoria. This tradition has no Islamic background at all. It is believed to be of Indonesian origin although it is no longer practised there³. This tradition is vibrant in some areas of Johannesburg, where it is celebrated annually, like Bosmont, Riverlea, Eldorado Park, Coronationville and Ennerdale, and in Alra Park in the Nigel district. Over the years many *mawlūd jamā'āt* have been formed, especially to arrange *Mawlūd* celebrations in conjunction with the *Motjie 'Imām*. The males in the *Ja mā'āt* are led by a *shaykh* and *khalifa* and the females by a captain.

¹ Du Plessis, I.D, *The Cape Malays*, Maskew Miller Ltd. Cape Town 1946 : 14

² Davids, Achmat, op. cit.: pp 24-25, 34, 94-95

³ Ibid. : pp 24-24

Du Plessis, op. cit.: 31

6.2.2 OEKER

After *Asr Salāt* the *oeker* of the rampies takes place. All the shredded orange/lemon leaves are gathered together and scented with rose water, rose oil, lemon oil and bergamot oil and spread out onto a big mesh tray known as the “*oeker tray*”, which is covered with the *abayas* and *melayas* of the hajjis present. A burning container with olabium is placed underneath the *oeker tray*. At this point all those present will stand while salutations for the Prophet, which is known as the '*ashrakal*' are recited.

After completion of the *oeker* the ladies pour the scented leaf shreds into small multi-coloured tissue paper sachets called *rampies*⁴ which are distributed at the *mawlūd* celebrations that evening or the following afternoon. Before sunset, supper is served to the ladies. During yesteryear it was complete Malaysian dishes with the most famous to be *bobotie*, but nowadays they have been replaced by curry and rice or biryani. On leaving the gathering all the ladies are given *barakats* to take home. The *rampie sny* is of Indonesian origin.

6.2.3 SŪRAT DHIKR

The actual *mawlūd* takes place either on the same day after '*Ishā*' prayers or the following day after two in the afternoon. All the men gather in the Masjid, where a lecture is delivered on the history of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) Thereafter some men split up into two groups according to the *mawlūd jamā'a* that they belong to. Verses on facets of the life of the prophet (S.A.W) from the *ruwāyāt* of the *mawlūd barzanji* are recited very melodiously. One group will lead and introduce the facet which is known as *tukang* while the other group will chorus which is known as *jawāb*. This carries on until *Maghrib Salāt* after

⁴ Du Plessis, I.D, op. cit.: 31

which everybody stands and participates in the recital of the *Askarakal*. At the end of the celebrations all males are given *barakats* to take home⁵.

Hajji Muhammad Riyā' Abrahams who originated from Port Elizabeth in ±1910 was seemingly the first person to introduce and teach the people of Transvaal the *mawlūd al-Nabi*.

6.2.4 MAWLŪD JAMĀ'ĀT, PAST AND PRESENT IN GAUTENG ⁷

6.2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Below follows a list of *mawlūd jamā'āt* groups who specialised in organizing and sustaining the *mawlūd* celebrations in Johannesburg from as far back as ±1910 when the first *mawlūd al-Nabi* was held in Vrededorp, Johannesburg.

Johannesburg

Vrededorp

Ferns / Fadheelas

Sweet Peas

Goodhopes

Newclare

Moulanas

Bikoedratillas

Bosmont

Sorayas

Riverlea

Masudias

Hamlul-Misaal

Eldorado Park

Mastooras

⁵ Davids, A. op. cit.: pp 24- 25

⁶ Interview : Uthman Abrahams, Newclare, Johannesburg. 16/08/1997

⁷ Interview : 'Abd al-Masjid Lawrence : Riverlea, Johannesburg 20/8/1997



The most famous teachers of *mawlūd al-Nabi* in Gauteng were as follows:

Late Muhammad Riyā Abrahams

Late Muhammad ‘Adnān Abrahams (Pankie Perskes)

Late ‘Abbās’ Domingo

Late ‘Husayn Sālih

Late ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sālih (Pankie Dol)

‘Abd al-Karim Sālih

Late Muhammad Allow (Boeta Malla)

‘Uthmān Abrahams

6.3 RATIEP OR KHALIFA

Ratiep or *khalifa* is an old Malaysian tradition. It is characterised by piercing the body with sharp objects, or hitting it with a sharp sword without causing blood to flow. It also involves the eating of fire together with chanting in Arabic and the beating of drums (*rabana*). Muslim scholars differ on the origin and purpose of the *Ratiep*. Some scholars are of the opinion that it is a foreign Hindu custom which became closely associated with the religion of the Muslim slaves in the Cape. This became very impressive to the other slaves and led to their conversion to Islam⁸.

The act of *Ratiep* eventually causes harm to the human body. It is foreign to Islam and probably of Hindu origin⁹.

Some Islamic scholars are of the opinion that it is a practice which demonstrates the power of Islam and the powers of deep concentration and belief. It is part of the *Rifā‘ī* sufi order and is still currently practiced in Indonesia.¹⁰ Some scholars are of the opinion that it belongs to the *‘Alāwiyyah* Sufi order.¹¹

⁸ Davids, A. op. cit. : 33

⁹ Interview : Shaykh ‘Ismā‘īl Hasan, Cape Town 14/12/1997

¹⁰ Interview: ‘Imām Gafieleng Abrahams, Bosmont, Johannesburg 13/4/1998

¹¹ Interview: C Abdul Kader, Springs 25/6/1996

The *ratiep* order has never operated in an organised way. They have been opposed in Gauteng, but the rituals are freely practiced in Johannesburg and Pretoria. It always begins with prayers and recitals from the Holy Qur'ān.

6.3.1 MANTU ABLAS

Mantu Ablas is a celebration which is held during the Islamic month of *Rabī' al-Akhir*, and especially on the 12th night of this month. It is held in honour of Sayed 'Abd al-Qādir Jaylāni who used the (ratiep) *rifa'ī* order to spread Islam. This night commences with the recital of the Qur'ān, which is followed by the *ratiep* practice. It is normally celebrated in a hall after the *'Ishā* prayers and carries on until the early hours of the next morning.

The *ratiep* proceedings are led by the group leader who is known as the *khalifa*. The *khalifa* and his two assistant *khalifas* are seated behind a *bench* which is commonly known as the *rifa'ī-bank* (bench) which is beautifully decorated in Arabic Qur'ānic calligraphy and draped with two flags on either side of the *bench*. All the other participants are seated in two rows facing each other, beating the *rabanas* and chanting. They sit from the side of the *bench* in rows stretching towards the spectators. All those who are piercing their bodies will be doing so in between these two rows at the beat of the *rabanas* while facing the bench. At the the end of the ceremony all those present will stand up while reciting the *'ashrakal* collectively¹². Thereafter meals are served. These meals used to consist of sugar beans curry and rice but nowadays a variety of dishes are served¹³.

In the bygone eras the *ratiep* used to be a religiously orientated, devotional practice. Nowadays it has become a commercialised venture at fund raising efforts and for entertainment at social gatherings.

¹² Du Plessis, I.D., op. cit. : 36
Davids, A., op. cit : pp 110 – 111
Du Plessis, I.D. op. cit.: 11

¹³ Interview: 'Imām Ggfilieng Abrahams, Johannesburg 4/9/1997

Before a *ratiep* performance some of the *khalifas* and some members of the Ratiep groups go to the *Kramats* to seek protection from the *kramats* while performing the Ratiep. It is believed that the *rifa'ī* order was brought to Johannesburg by the late Khatib Schroeder, the late Khalifah Gayr al-Din Raffie and Khalifah Sālih from Port Elizabeth in the early 1900's. There are presently three *rifa'ī* groups in Johannesburg and one in Pretoria.





6.4 THE ISLAMIC YEAR

Some monthly celebrations and commemorations throughout the Islamic year will be discussed below.

6.4.1 10th MUHARRAM – THE ISLAMIC NEW YEAR

The 10th day of the month of Muharram is observed by optional fasting and the distribution of alms and food to the poor, needy, orphans and destitute. Parcels with sweet ingredients are sent to the *Slamseskool* during the afternoon to be handed over to all the pupils. At night a lavish supper is served at home, which must include sweet rice, large meatballs (“oond frikkadelle”) and Boeber. After *Ishā Salāh* lectures are delivered at all the Masājid on the meaning of this day.

6.4.2 RABI‘ AL-AWWAL

Mawlūd al-Nabi (Komnies Mawlūd) is celebrated on the 12th of this month in most of the Masājid of Johannesburg. This was already discussed in detail in the beginning of this chapter.

6.4.3 RABI‘ AL-AKHIR

Mantu Ablas (Ratiep) in veneration of Sayyed Abd al-Qādir Jaylāni, is commemorated on the 12th night of this month in some areas of Johannesburg. This was also discussed in detail in this chapter under 6.2.1.

6.4.4 RAJAB

In this month, according to tradition, the *Mi'rāj al-Nabi* (Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to Heaven) took place.

The advent of the *Mi'rāj* of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) is commemorated in almost all the Masājid in the *Malay areas* of Johannesburg. The day is observed with optional fasting. Lectures are delivered in the Masjid at night about the Prophet's earthly journey from the Sacred Masjid (*Masjid al-Harām*) in Makka to the remote Masjid in Jerusalem (*Masjid al-Aqsā*), and thereafter the Prophet (S.A.W)'s heavenly journey from the *Masjid al-Aqsā* to the seven heavens and back in the same night. Also discussed is the Prophet (S.A.W)'s receiving the command to perform the five daily prayers from the Almighty 'Allah. This day is observed on the 27th night of the month of Rajab.

From the beginning of the month of Rajab the Malay community start to prepare themselves spiritually for the month of Ramadān that lies ahead. All earthly pleasures are abstained from and virtuous deeds increased¹⁴.

6.4.5 SHA'BĀN

Laylah al-Barā (night of freedom and purification) or *Ruwa*¹⁵, as it is commonly known in Malayu and amongst the Malays in Gauteng, is celebrated and commemorated on the 15th night of the month of *Sha'bān*. Normally the 14th, 15th and 16th days of this month are observed with an optional fast. On the 15th night the whole community gathers at the various Masājid from *Maghrib Salāh* until well after *'Ishā' Salāh*. Immediately after *Maghrib Salāh* the males collectively recite *Surah Yāsin* thrice. This is followed by a special *du'ā'* which is repeated by the congregation, led by the 'Imām at the completion of each *Surah Yāsin*. Each *Surah Yāsin* is recited with the intention of acquiring a specific blessing:

¹⁴ Du Plessis, I.D., op. cit.: 14
Carrim, Nazir, op. cit.: 61

¹⁵ Du Plessis, I.D., op.cit.: 14

The first blessing is Tawl al-‘Umr:

This first intention is that the Almighty should grant the reciter a long life filled with piety, happiness and obedience to the Almighty.

The second intention is Daf‘ al-Balā’-

The second intention is that the Almighty should protect the community from evil and calamities

The third intention is ‘Istighnā ’an al-Nās –

The third intention is that the reciter should never depend on fellow human beings and that his/her dependence should only be on the Almighty.

This recitation ends at *‘Ishā Salāh*. After completion of the *‘Ishā Salāh*, the ‘Imām delivers a lecture on the meaning of this night. This lecture concentrates on the destiny and pre-destination of mankind (*al-Qadā wa al-Qadr*), which is determined by the Almighty for all His Creation on this night.

On returning from the Masjid some men visit the *Maqbarah* (cemetery) and offer prayers for the inmates of the graveyard as it was the tradition of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to visit the graveyard on this night.

The rest of the night is devoted to various forms of worship like recitation of the holy Qurān, *Dhikr*, optional prayers, etc. It is believed that this night starts at *Maghrib Salāh* and continues until *Subuh al-Sādiq*. Some ‘Ulamā’ are convinced that the commemoration of Laylah al-Barā has no Islamic origin and regard it as syncretistic in practice. However the visiting of the cemetery on this night is purely Islamic.

6.4.6 RAMADĀN (BULANG PWASA)

The month of *Ramadān* which is known as *Bulang Pwasa* is observed by compulsory fast as commanded by the Almighty in the holy Qur'ān.

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those (that came) before in order that you may become God – fearing¹⁶

Muslims are commanded to abstain from eating, drinking and carnal pleasures from *Subuh al-Sādiq* until *Maghrib*. The Malay people are particularly fond of fasting. The early morning meal before the start of the daily fast is known as *Sawar* which consists of either breakfast cereals or cooked food. The evening meal at the break of fast is known as *Boeka* which consists of vegetable soup, savouries, sweet dishes and dessert. Some men partake in *Boeka* at the Masjid.

6.4.7 PWASA BARAKAT

An hour before the daily breaking of fast all families in the same neighbourhood start swapping sweet dishes and desserts which have been prepared for the evening. These sweet dishes and desserts are also sent to families that cannot afford to send anything back in return. This takes place until the 27th night of *Ramadān*.¹⁷

During this month the financially stable Malays and other ethnic groups among Muslims distribute food parcels amongst the less fortunate Muslims. The month of *Ramadān* is a month of generosity and blessings. No Muslim family goes without food for the whole month of *Ramadān*.

¹⁶ Al-Qur'ān: 2: 183

¹⁷ Du Plessis, I.D. op. cit. : pp 16-19.

6.4.8 SALĀH AL-TARĀWIKH

Salāh al Tarāwikh which consists of twenty optional *raka'āt* is performed at all the Masjids during the month of Ramadān after the *'Ishā Salāh*. After the completion of every two *Raka'ātān* salutation is recited on the Prophet (S.A.W) and after every four *raka'āt* the *First Kalimah* (proclamation of faith) followed by salutations on the Prophet (S.A.W) is recited. After completion of the 20 *Raka'āt* a special *du'ā'* is recited by the *Bilāl*. After the completion of *Salāh al-Witr* (the closing prayer) a special dedication is recited by the congregation. This is followed by a special *du'ā'* which is also recited by the *Bilāl*. The evening's devotion at the Masjid is ended by the recitation of *Niya* (intention) for fasting which is repeated by the congregation after the Imām. The *Adhān* for the *'Ishā Salāh* is preceded by the recitation of the *mināyat*.

6.4.9 LAYL AL-QADR (KERSOPSTEEK)

Layl al-Qadr is observed on the 27th night of Ramadān. This is the night on which the first Qur'ānic revelation was revealed to the holy prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) in the cave of Hira in the outskirts of Makka. On this night every Malay home is decorated and has on display the best of bedding, curtains, tableware and flowers that the family can afford. After *Maghrib Salāt* candles are lit in every room of the house while *Surah al-Qadr* (chapter 97 of the Holy Qur'ān) is recited. The candles give more light to the house and the recital of the Surah is to demonstrate the divine light (the Holy Qur'ān) that the Almighty Allah has sent down to the earth. It is from these practices that the night is known amongst the Malay people as *Kersopsteek*.¹⁸ After the men have left for the Masjid, the ladies pay each other visits in order to see whose house is the best decorated.

¹⁸ Ibid.: 16

On this night the *Zakāt al-Fitr* (charity of fasting) or *Fitra* as it is known among the Malays is distributed to the poor, elderly and needy Muslims.

Boeber is usually served at the Masjid with a variety of cakes after the lecture.¹⁹

6.5 'ID AL-FITR (THE MONTH OF SHAWWĀL)

'Id al-Fitr or *Labarang Ramadān* as it is known to the Malays is celebrated on the first of *Shawwāl* to mark the end of the fasting period of *Ramadān*. On this day fasting is not permitted at all. Breakfast is only served after the males return from the Masjid in the morning, dressed either in Arab garb or in their newest clothes. From after sunrise the males proceed to the Masjid for the *'Id Salāt* which is preceded by the melodious chanting of the *Takbir* by all those present. During the *'Id* ceremony the *Salāt* precedes the *Khutbah* unlike with the Jumu'a ceremony when the *Khutbah* precedes the *Salāt*.

In the olden days at the time when the *'Id Salāt* was about to start, the *'Imām* or *A'immaḥ* of the Masjid used to be escorted from the back of the Masjid to the *Mihrāb* in a procession led by a *Bilal* of the Masjid. At the same time the *Bilal* melodiously recited certain portions from the holy Qur'ān. This custom is not practised anymore but after completion of the *Khutbah* the *Bilal* still makes a special *du'ā'* which has been customary amongst the Malays since the earliest times.

After the *'Id Salāt* the males proceed towards the *Koebers* to offer prayers on behalf of the deceased. This is a very special day for the younger generation who have completed their first full fast. They receive money and presents from their parents and relatives for their efforts at their tender young ages. Their ages vary between seven and eight years. From the age of five years children are encouraged to fast half a day.

¹⁹ Ibid.: 26

6.6 'ID BALL

The 'Id Ball (dance) which was held on the night of *Labarang Ramadān* was a big distraction to a few Malay people who used to attend this immoral gathering on this Holy night, wasting all their efforts which they have spent during the month of Ramadān. Fortunately this un-Islamic act does not exist anymore. 'Id Balls were never organised by the Malays, but by Indian Muslims in Fordsburg, Johannesburg.

6.5 FASTING OF SHAWWĀL

Six days of optional fasting during the month of *Shawwāl* is observed immediately after the day of *Labarang Ramadān* especially by those who are about to leave for *Hajj* to the holy city of Makka in Saudi Arabia that year.

6.8 DHU AL-HAJJ

'Id al-Adhā known as *Labarang Hajjī (Day of Sacrifice)* is celebrated by the Muslim World on the 10th day of *Dhu al-Hajj*. *Labarang Hajjī* is held in commemoration of the prophet 'Ibrāhīm and his obedience to Allah to sacrifice his son 'Ismā'īl. It also calls to mind those who make the pilgrimage to Makka. On this day a sheep, or a goat or an ox is sacrificed by families who can afford to do so and shared with the poor.²⁰ This sacrifice which is known in Malayu as *Korban* is usually slaughtered at home in order that the whole family can participate in the sacrifice. The sacrificial rites are normally done by the 'Imām.

²⁰ Ibid.: 16

The animal selected for this sacrifice must be without blemish, treated well and should not see the knife or any blood. It is customary under the Malays in Gauteng to dress the sacrificial animal with an ornamental covering with a turban round its horns and to lay it upon the ground where it is held and stroked by the person on whose behalf the sacrifice is made in order to soothe it. Every part of the animal that cannot be eaten is buried, including the blood and bones after the meat has been cooked and eaten.²¹

One goat or lamb suffices for one person and an ox suffice suffices for 7 persons. This sacrifice is done on the 10th, from after the 'Id prayer in the morning until *Salāt al-'Asr* on the 13th of this month.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The customs discussed in this chapter and previous chapters have been defined and viewed by many Muslims as syncretistic in their nature. Alternatively they can be seen as the preservation of traditions and old customs presented in a most beautiful and colourful manner. The following chapter focuses on new residential developments for the Malays and focuses on higher Islamic education and its development in the Gauteng Province.

²¹ Davids, A., op. cit.: pp. 24-27