

# HERITAGE WESTERN CAPE

Provincial Heritage Authority of the Western Cape

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## Provincial Heritage Site Nomination Form

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This form precedes the submission of the 'Nomination Document' and is designed to assist with the grading of heritage resources in terms Section 3(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, as part of the process of declaration as a Provincial Heritage Site (Section 27). Nominated heritage resources that are of special provincial significance will be graded as Grade 2 and considered for Provincial Heritage Site status.

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### Proposed Provincial Heritage Site: Auwal Masjied

**Brief Statement of Significance:** *(A full statement of significance is required as an attachment)*

The Auwal Masjied is considered to possess to provincial social and historical heritage value whilst possessing high local landmark quality. The Auwal Masjid, situated on 34 Dorp Street, Cape Town, became the first to be established and is still functioning as the noble founders had intended. It became a centre of Muslim communal activity, regulating and patterning their social and religious life (Mahida1993:12). The statement: 'Put your highest to the lowest in adoration of light and power' expresses the sentiment of Mogamad Faadiel in discussing the powerful role of prayer and importance of the Auwal Mosque in the history of Islam in Cape Town. The Auwal Mosque is of cultural significance based on its association with living heritage, links to slavery, importance in the community, strong association with the muslim community and special association with among others, Tuan Guru, Achmat van Bengalen and Saartjie van die Kaap. The mosque presents a monument to the struggle of the Cape Muslims for the recognition of their religion and the freedom to worship. Significance is thus as a sacred space and not specifically for aesthetic and / or architectural value. The Auwal Mosque, the first Mosque in South Africa, is a worthy monument to South African Muslim Society (Davids 1980:113).

**Date Proposed** 09 July 2015

**Proposed By:** Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa

**Contact Details:** (021) 684 4600 / Email: [idaarah@mjic.org.za](mailto:idaarah@mjic.org.za)

**Name of Property:** Auwal Masjied .....

**Street Number and Street:** 34 Dorp Street.....

**Suburb:** Bo-Kaap.....

**Town:** Cape Town..... **District:** Western Cape .....

**Cadastral Information**

**Erf/ Farm Number:**

**Registration Division:** Bo-Kaap , Cape Town.....

**Longitude:** . .....18°24'52.81"E .....

**Latitude:** ..... 33°15'19.40"S  
.....

**Map Reference:** ..... **Recording Method:** .....

## Type of Resource

- Place   
Structure   
Archaeological Site   
Palaeontological Site   
Geological Feature   
Grave

Do moveable objects relating to the site form part of the Nomination?

Serial nomination (Is more than one site being nominated as part of a 'Joint Nomination')

**Note: this is the first site to be considered as part of a serial nomination**  
(For serial nominations, complete one form for each site, supply additional details about the information relating to the relation of the sites, and the management and phasing of proposed nomination be attached).

Sphere of Significance	High	Med	Low
International	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provincial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist group or community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## What other similar sites may be compared to the site? How does the site compare to these sites?

*(Please expand on separate sheet)*

Palm Tree Mosque 185 Long Street, Nurul Islam Mosque 134 Buitengracht Street, Jamia Mosque lower Chiappini Street.

### Owner:

Saartjie van de Kaap

*(If state-owned; responsible department and official position of contact)*

Postal Address Telephone: Fax: E-Mail Web Page Contact Person

- \* Expanded statement of significance; *(Refer specifically to significance criteria listed below)*
- \* Motivation for declaration as a Provincial Heritage Site, including potential, threats and vulnerabilities;
- \* Short history of the place;
- \* Physical description of the heritage resource;
- \* Locality plan (map) and Site Plan;
- \* Photographs and plans;
- \*\* List of moveable objects relating to site that are proposed as part of nomination, or for archaeological or palaeontological site ;list of repositories where these are housed;
- \*\* Bibliography of documentation relating to the heritage resource;
- \*\* Statement of current protections and restrictions (e.g. previous national monument; register of immovable property; conservation area; current zoning; servitudes);
- \*\* List any heritage organizations consulted and their comments on the proposed nomination.
- \*\*\* Site plan (with proposed site boundaries);
- \*\*\* Conservation or management plans (send immediately if any exist);
- \*\*\* Heritage Agreement (if required).

*(Please supply those marked (\*) with this nomination form, as well as any others that are already available. Those marked (\*\*) will be requested when the proposal first goes to HWC Council for endorsement (Tentative List of Provincial Heritage Sites). Those marked (\*\*\*) will be required when the Nomination goes to the following Council Meeting for approval as a Provincial Heritage Site).*









39 Dorp Street  
Cape Town  
South Africa  
info@auwalmasjid.co.za

To whom it may concern/ the IGIC committee

We pray that this brief note reaches you well.

The committee and *Imāmah* of the Auwal Masjid of Dorp Street in Cape Town acknowledges the significance of the mosque as the first in South Africa. It was established in the year 1794 and as such celebrates its 222<sup>nd</sup> anniversary this year.

We fully support and encourage it to be declared as a heritage site and will facilitate any further help in that regard if so required.

Yours sincerely

The *Imāmah* (Co-Imam team) and committee of

The Auwal Masjid

10/08/2016





AUWAL MASJID  
39 Dorp Street BO-KAAP



## INTRODUCTION

vidamemoria heritage consultants in association with the Muslim Judicial Council and Auwal Masjid have prepared the necessary documentation towards the declaration of the **Auwal Masjid, Dorp Street Bo-Kaap** as a Provincial Heritage Site.

The Auwal Masjid is the oldest mosque and madrassah in South Africa. It dates to 1797, when a Dorp Street warehouse was first used as a mosque, with Tuan Guru as Imam (Mountain 2004:90-91). The Auwal Masjid is considered to possess social and historical heritage value whilst possessing high local landmark quality. The Auwal Masjid, situated at 34 Dorp Street, Cape Town, was the first mosque established in South Africa and is still functioning as the founders had intended. The site became a center of Muslim communal activity, regulating and patterning social and religious life (Mahida1993:12). *'Put your highest to the lowest in adoration of light and power'* expresses the powerful role of prayer and the importance of the Auwal Moasjied in the history of Islam in Cape Town. The Mosque is of cultural significance based on its association with living heritage, links to slavery, importance in the community, strong association with the muslim community and special association with among others, Tuan Guru, Achmat van Bengalen and Saartjie van die Kaap. The mosque presents a monument to the struggle of the Cape Muslims for the recognition of religious freedom and expression. Significance is thus as a sacred space and not specifically for aesthetic and / or architectural value. The Auwal Masjid, the first Mosque in South Africa, is a worthy monument to South African Muslim Society (Davids 1980:113).



Bradlow and Cairns provides encyclopedi britannica definition of a mosque or place of worship as incorporating essentially an open space that is generally roofed over, a mihrab and mimbah from which the Imam leads the congregation in the direction of Mecca (qiblah), a minaret used by the mu'azzin and a place for ablution containing running water, either within or attached to the mosque (1978:25). Du Plessis refers to the mosques of the "Malay Quarter" as characterized by striking simplicity (1972:7) in relation to the hadith (a saying of holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH) referring to 'all the world as a Masjid', implying that prayers can be conducted in a clean space regardless of a mimbah, mihrab or minaret. Running water for wudu (cleansing prior to prayer) is however essential. Worden noted that in the late eighteenth century, Islam was not yet apparent in the architecture or spatial layout of Cape Town and mosques still looked like ordinary houses (2004:127) with minarets as later additions.



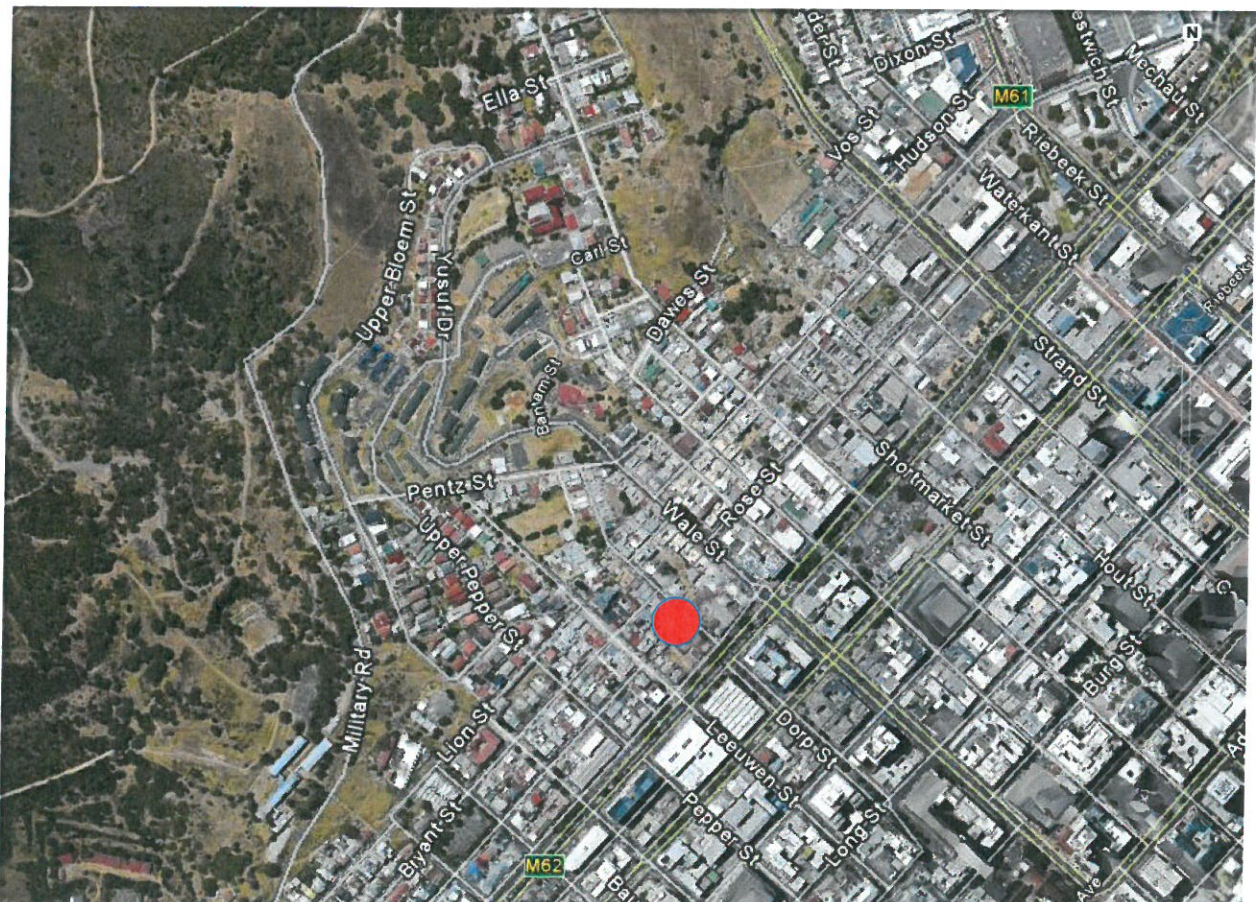
## SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Auwal Masjid is situated in Upper Dorp Street, just above Buitengracht Street in Bo-Kaap, providing a focal point along the upper portion of Dorp Street. The striking mountain backdrop to the minaret provides a strong landmark quality.

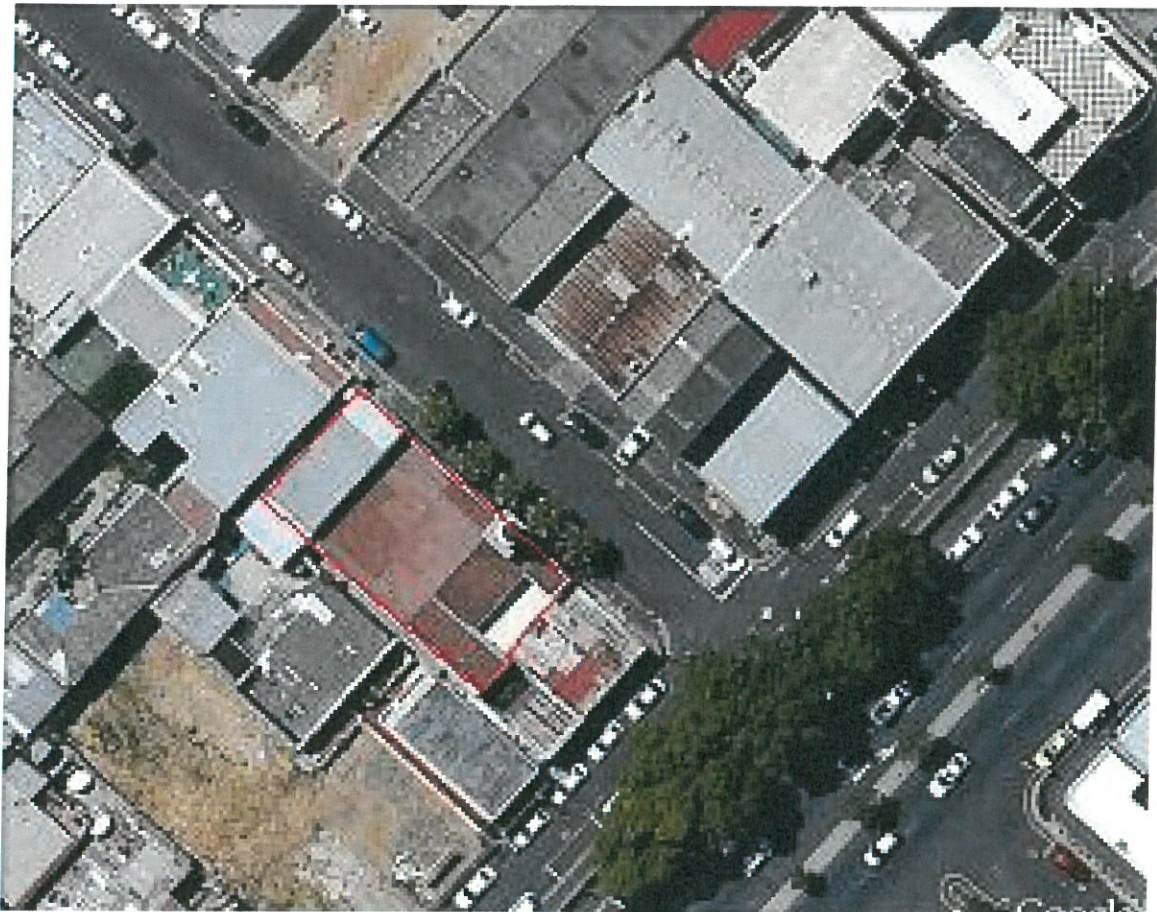
The Auwal Masjid has undergone architectural changes under the influence of local styles, builders and materials. Often, poor materials and structures have resulted in the need to upgrading and alterations. Evidence exists of layering and growth of mosque where different buildings are clearly visible. As one moves from Buitengracht Street up along Dorp Street, it is clear that a number of buildings have been incorporated. The difference in style, size and placement of windows and doors provide such evidence. A house later incorporated as a madrassa shows clear evidence of such layering. An old doorway has been bricked up and a window added to blend with the rest of the mosque.

The mosque hardly retains any historic elements. Windows have been added and smaller windows replaced with larger ones. The modest entrance was replaced with a grand recessed entrance and moldings added. The mosque has been significantly altered and bears little resemblance to its original structure. Adjacent houses have also been extended over time. The old lane still runs behind the mosque and provides access to a number of adjacent properties.

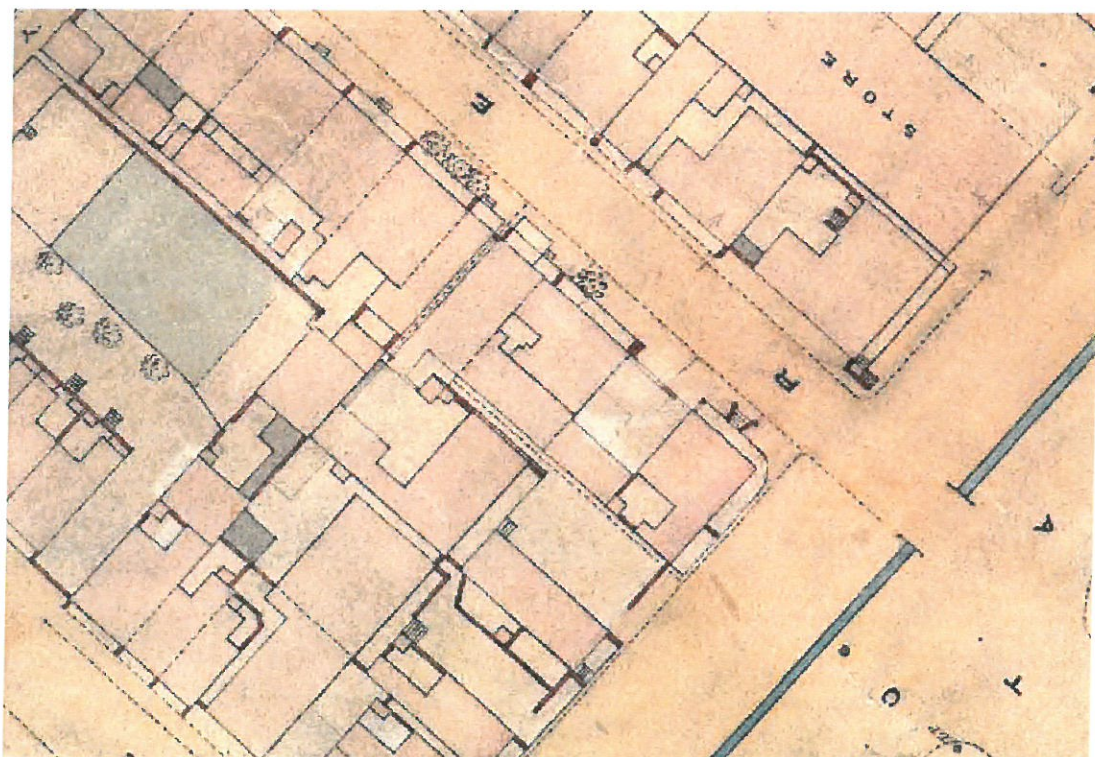
The Auwal Masjid grew from a small structure and was altered and extended over time, with only 2 walls of the original structure remaining. Additions to accommodate a growing congregation necessitated expansion, however, alterations were necessary after part of the original structure collapsed in 1930. Funds were raised to build a new structure and to add the minaret. Prior to 1930, the mu'azzin used a ledge to give the call to prayer (Davids 1980:113).







Aerial photograph depicting extent of Masjid boundaries

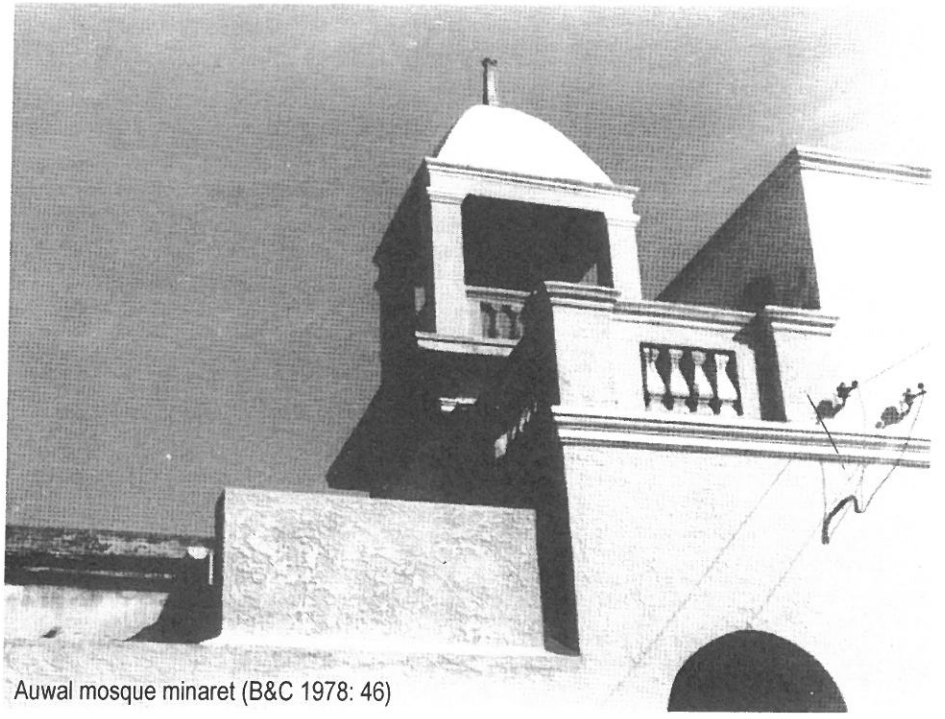


Thom 1900 indicating mosque structure and series of courtyards





Auwal mosque recessed mihrab and mimbah (B&C 1978: 43)



Auwal mosque minaret (B&C 1978: 46)



View of Auwal mosque (Davids, 1980)



Dorp Street with Auwal mosque in background (Luckhoff circa 1950's)



### Timeline of additions and alterations

- The Auwal Masjid was initially a modest single-storey structure providing a prayer space. The prayer space most probably incorporated a mimbah and wudu area. The mosque would have been modest in its appearance given issues regarding religious freedom.
- By 1900 the mosque had incorporated the courtyard separating the mosque from the house located on the corner of Dorp and Buitengracht Streets.
- It was only in 1936 that extensive renovations were made to the Auwal Masjid (Mahida 1993:13). A fire in the 1930's resulted in alterations occurring and minaret added in 1939. The 'store' would later be incorporated into the mosque for additional prayer space on the ground floor and for a library on the first floor.
- The 1943 plans reflect the 'yard' that had not yet been incorporated into the mosque prayer area. The current storerooms indicated as a kitchen and living area with the existing staircase leading to living areas. In terms of the mosque function, this residence was not yet incorporated, but may have had links in terms of the occupants as access to the residence was through the courtyard to Dorp Street.
- By 1963 the mosque was a single-storey structure and had not yet expanded to the yard or store. The courtyard area had been converted to accommodate ablution facilities and wudu area was formalised. The remainder of the courtyard is indicated as a 'yard' on the 1963 plans. The internal layout of the main prayer section had not changed. Structural columns were added as building techniques changed.
- By 1990 the mosque was double volume and incorporated yard area for the main prayer area. The ladies prayer section was added. The minaret was raised at this time and a new mimbah and mihrab was incorporated. Elements (pillars) of the old mimbah was incorporated into the mosque. Doors were retained and additional windows incorporated.
- By 1996 the residence was incorporated as storeroom and madrassa rooms. The ladies ablution and wudu facilities were added and mens ablution facilities were upgraded.
- By 2005 the stores were incorporated into the mosque including the small courtyard. The first floor was planned as a library space and the ground floor additional space for the main prayer area. A new mimbah and mihrab was added.

The main entrance of the mosque has remained in the same location; however, windows have been altered over time, with larger windows incorporated in the 1990's. The profile (roof) of the mosque has remained the same, with the only major change being the addition of the minaret. With each expansion of the mosque, the mimbah was moved, so that the Imam would address the congregation and lead the prayer from the front of the mosque, facing qiblah. The location of the mimbah has changed over time and also, the mimbah itself has become more elaborate. Sections of the walls were clad and an accent wall is incorporated within the main prayer section. The mosque does not seem to follow a specific detailing pattern, however as previously stated, its significance is linked to its history and the mosque as a sacred space and less so for its architectural value. The mosque does however possess aesthetic value in read in conjunction with landscaping incorporated along Dorp Street.

*Description of the exterior of the mosque (see attachment for description of interior)*

The Auwal Mosque is situated in Upper Dorp Street, just above Buitengracht Street, providing a focal point along the upper portion of Dorp Street. The striking mountain backdrop to the minaret provided a strong landmark quality. Albeit the tall structure lacks detail on its front façade, the structure is imposing, with a definite presence.



Evidence exists of layering and growth of mosque where different buildings are clearly visible. As one moves from Buitengracht Street up along Dorp Street, it is clear that a number of buildings have been incorporated. The difference in style, size and placement of windows and doors provide such evidence. A house later incorporated as a madrassa shows clear evidence of such layering. An old doorway has been bricked up and a window added to blend with the rest of the mosque.



Doorway and bathroom windows adjacent to entrance



Joints evident



Evidence of old doorway

The mosque hardly retains any historic elements. Windows have been added and smaller windows replaced with larger ones. The modest entrance was replaced with a grand recessed entrance and moldings added. The mosque has been significantly altered and bears little resemblance to its original structure. Adjacent houses have also been extended over time. The old lane still runs behind the mosque and provides access to a number of adjacent properties.







### The Development of Islam at the Cape

When setting up a refreshment station at the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck had been ordered to barter- but not wage war- with the indigenous population. Instead of enslaving the local Khoekhoen, he and subsequent commanders were obliged to import slaves to the Cape to ease the chronic shortage of labour (Worden et al 1998: 21). It was not until six years after his arrival that a significant cargo of slaves was diverted to the Cape, and while slavery at the Cape had a slow start, by 1808 approximately 63 000 slaves had reached our shores from Africa, Madagascar, India and Indonesia (Shell 1994: 40). The majority of slaves were of Indonesian origin from Java, the Celebes, Bali, Timor, Buton, Madura, Tambora, the Moluccas, Bengal in India and Ceylon (Townsend 1977: 9). Some were brought to the Cape not only as slaves, but political exiles and company convicts, many of whom were Muslim. In 1681 the Cape was officially made a place of confinement for high-ranking prisoners from the lands situated in Indonesian Archipelago where the Dutch East India Company was attempting to establish control (Ibid: 10). It is through these Eastern slaves, convicts and political exiles that Islam was brought to the Cape.

According to historians, the rapid growth of Islam was one of the most striking features of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Cape Town. "Although Muslims had formed a significant part of the Dutch settlement, it was only in the early British period that a distinctive and sizeable Muslim community began to be visible. From less than 1000 in 1800, the number of Muslims in Cape Town grew to 3000 in 1822 and then doubled to over 6000 by 1840. This growth was not just the result of natural increase, but of conversion, especially among the slave and labouring classes of the town" (Worden et al 1998: 124). It was perhaps a combination of a lack of missionary effort to Christianize slaves as well as the very real social and spiritual benefits that Islam offered to its adherents in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cape Town that stood behind this growth: "The Muslim community transcended divisions of class, if not race, and was marked by an increasing number of institutional structures which gave support and identity to its members, both slave and free" (Ibid).

"Although there had been Muslim slaves, exiles and free blacks in the town from the seventeenth century, this sense of community only began to emerge markedly in the late VOC period" (Ibid). There are written accounts that celebrations used to take place in the homes of free blacks in 1772 to honour the Prophet's birthday and the end of Ramadan (Thunberg 1986:47-48). With the development of Islam by individuals such as Tuan Guru who had been banished to the Cape in 1780, a religious school and place of worship was established in his house in Dorp Street. At this stage no formal approval of these religious practices or establishments had been secured from the authorities. It was noted by John Barrow in 1797 that Muslim slaves and free blacks, without the permission to build a mosque, held their prayer meetings in the stone quarries at the head of town (those situated in Chiappini Street) (Bradlow & Cairns 1978: 10). In 1822 Wilberforce Bird similarly noted that not only did the 'Malays' carry their devotions in the stone quarries near the town, but also in rooms and halls fitted for that purpose (Ibid: 16). These places of worship were not formal mosques, but 'langgars' or places of worship in a house (Ibid: 24). By 1811 there were reportedly 12 langgars for daily prayers in the houses of imams around the city (Townsend 1977: 12).

But in 1797 under a new British administration, permission was granted for the conversion of a warehouse in Dorp Street into the Auwal Masjid with Tuan Guru presiding as imam. In 1804 when the interim Batavian government guaranteed religious freedom, land was granted on the slopes of Signal Hill for a Muslim cemetery. This measure was aimed at maintaining Muslim



loyalty in the event of a British invasion at the Cape (Davids 1985: 5). In 1807 Cape Town's second Mosque was founded in a Long Street house bought by Frans van Bengal and Jan van Bougies. Known as the 'Palm Tree Mosque', its establishment was set against the backdrop of the property owners breakaway from the Auwal Masjid (when Jan van Bougies had failed to secure succession as imam to Tuan Guru). Rivalry between the two congregations continued through the 1830s until the death of Jan in 1846 at the age of 112 (Ibid: 127). According to Worden et al by 1824 the number of Muslim schools had increased to twelve and the Dorp Street *madrassah* (religious school), "which had 372 slave and free black pupils by 1807 and almost 1825 'initiated a prolific process of literacy among Cape slaves'" (Ibid:126).

While slaves were not permitted to marry under Christian rites until 1823, under Islam recognition of their unions was able to be obtained. As formal slavery drew to a close at the Cape, access to Muslim meetings and services increased. By the mid-1830s former slave masters found it increasingly difficult to prevent their Muslim apprentices from attending religious practices or festivities. At this stage, places of worship had not yet taken on the characteristics of Islamic architecture, and Mosques looked like ordinary houses. Minarets were only added in the mid-century which is around the same time that Islam became an officially recognised religion in the town (Ibid:127 and 187). While Muslim slaves were still scattered quite broadly across the Town, a community of Muslim free blacks began to concentrate themselves in the area that would become known as the Bo-Kaap. In 1840 there were only two fully constituted mosques in the Bo-Kaap district, by 1860 this had grown to five with the first Mosque in Claremont being built in 1854 (Ibid: 187). According to Worden et al, the most prominent Mosque was the Jami'a Mosque (or Queen Victoria Mosque) situated in lower Chiappini Street, built in 1850. "It was the first mosque to be erected on land granted by the government for such a purpose, and was sanctioned in a deliberate attempt to secure the loyalty of the 'Malay Corps' during the frontier war of 1846" (Ibid: 187). By 1860 teachers reportedly came from Arabia and India to work in Cape Town, and by the 1870s Muslims were residentially concentrated around the Mosques springing up in District One on the waterfront and on the slopes of Signal Hill.

In 1863 Abu Bakr Effendi was sent to the Cape by the Ottoman government to settle religious differences at the request of the British Government. Effendi's school at 71 Wale Street was the beginning of organized higher religious education (Townsend 1977: 13). But it was the formation of the Cape Malay Association in 1923 in the Bokaap that "was the first attempt by Muslims at the Cape to organize themselves politically" (Ibid: 13). When the Group Areas Act was passed in 1950, many Muslim communities in and around Cape Town were subject to forced removals to new townships situated on the Cape Flats (Ibid).

## Slavery and Islam

It was not only the whites who were slave-owners. Most of the Muslim Free Blacks owned slaves themselves. Achmat van Bengalen, as a result of Tuan Guru's influence, laid down strict rules in this regard stating 'No Mohometan can or ought to sell a Mahometan as a slave. If he buys a slave from a Christian and that slave becomes a Mahometant, he is entitled to sit down as an equal in the family, and cannot be slaved afterwards. He is allowed to earn the means of redeeming his freedom if he chooses, or remain connected with the family of the original owner' (Davids 1980:95).

Achmat van Bengalen, or those Imams before him, would not have been able to exert control had it not been for the fact that they officiated as Imams of the Auwal Masjid. The mosque was a vital institution in the life of a Muslim and regulations flowing from it, or uttered by the Imam, were generally obeyed. It was through the kind treatment of their slaves that the Free Black



Muslims gained the greatest number of converts. Islam offered some hope and some security to the slaves in their bondage, a security which was vital for their existence. This is indicated by Imam Muding (whose father himself was a slave but who was redeemed when he adopted Islam), in his evidence to the Colebrooke and Bigge Commission of 1825: "Their bodies are in slavery, but we teach them to believe that their souls are free, and that they must look up to God to make them free when they die" (Davids 1980:96).

The Auwal Masjid acted as an anchorage for such sentiments. The owner of the property, Saartjie van de Kaap, was herself a manumitted slave, so was her father, the original purchaser of the property, Coridon van Ceylon. The slaves could thus identify with this mosque, where it must have appeared to them as a symbol of ultimate liberty (Davids 1980:96).

### Malay identity

'Malay' had become a white synonym for Cape Muslims by the 1850s. "In 1875 almost 7000 Capetonians were described as 'Malays' by the census enumerators. By the 1870s many people also applied this term to themselves though they distinguished themselves too by religion as '*Slam*' (Islam)" (Worden et al 1998: 242). During the twentieth century, the notion of a 'Cape Malay culture' was particularly popularized by I.D. du Plessis who created an archetypal 'Malay' derived partly from nineteenth century writing and partly from current theories about race types as segregationist policies began to be enforced by the Apartheid Government (Worden et al 1999: 83).

### Religious freedom

Prior to the construction of the "Saartjie's Masjid", the construction of masajid and open freedom of worship were strictly prohibited in the Cape. Under the Dutch East India Company, Muslims were not allowed places of worship and prayer meetings were often held in private homes or in stone quarries. The only "Kerk" (Church) permitted in the Colony was that of the Dutch Reformed Church. Religious freedom was granted in 1804 and permission granted to build a mosque during the first British Occupation. According to Achmat van Bengalen the construction of the Auwal Masjid was made possible through General Craig who, for the first time, permitted Muslim to pray in public in the Cape Colony. This had not been permitted by the Dutch Government, but General Janssens gave authority for it when the Dutch resumed the government, and when he enlisted the free Malays as soldiers (Davids 1980:93; Mahida 1993:12-13).

The Auwal Masjid was considered as the main religious institution in the life of the Cape Muslim community at the time. By 1824 there were 2 mosques, 5 prayer rooms and 4 madrassas in the Bo-Kaap as greater religious freedom after the end of VOC restrictions resulted in the emergence of open Islamic practice. Another contributing factor as noted by Schofield (1861:14) is that by 1842 there were only 4 Imams that were Hadjies and disputes were developing within congregations, causing division and necessitating additional mosques (Davids 1980:93,109; Worden 2004:125-126).

### Trijn and Saartjie van de Kaap

The Dorp Street properties, the house and the mosque, numbers 42 and 43 (these numbers changed over the years), became Muslim owned on 26 September 1794 when it was transferred to the name of the Free Black, Coridon van Ceylon. Coridon, according to his will filed on 7 October 1797 was the manumitted slave of Salie (Davids 1980:107; Mountain 2004:90-91).



Coridon was the first Muslim to own properties in Cape Town. On his death, his wife, Trijn van de Kaap, inherited the properties, as he had willed. Both Trijn and her daughter, Saartjie, were former slaves. They became the property of Gerhardus Hendrick Craywagen before 1779. In that year Craywagen applied to manumit Trijn and her daughter Sara, who was then four years old (Davids 1980:108). Trijn van de Kaap was a woman of astute business acumen. In a miscellaneous volume of Wykmeesters Returns for 1800 in the Cape Archives she is shown to be occupying her own property in Dorp Street, the owner of four slaves and employer of a Hottentot. Together with this she provided accommodation for four male and one female slave, belonging to the Heer van Oudtshoorn. Saartjie and her husband, Job van Bengalen (in all probability Achmat van Bengalen) with their three children, two daughters and a son, are shown to be inwoners of Trjin. From the ages of their children she and Achmat must have been married by 1800 already. On 13 February 1809 Trijn sold her late husband's properties to her daughter, Saartjie, for 3000 guilders. It was a distinctly unusual occurrence at that date for a woman to buy immovable property during the subsistence of a marriage and the fact that Saartjie was a Muslim rendered the situation more uncommon than it would otherwise have been. As far as is known, Saartjie's case is an isolated instance for the period (Davids 1980:107-108).

Saartjie van de Kaap was an equally remarkable woman. Born in slavery she played a subdued but vital role in the history of the Cape Muslim community. It was through her foresight that the Auwal Masjid had remained as a citadel of the struggle of the Cape Muslims in the consolidation of their religion in the Western Cape (Davids 1980:107). Before Saartjie died in 1847 she had a will drawn up in terms of which the property at number 28 Dorp Street (Auwal Masjid) would be used as 'als een Mohammedaansche Kerk' (as a Mohammedan church) for as long as Islam was allowed as a form of worship in the colony. In this way she secured a home for Islam and a base from which it could spread in the Cape. The Masjid was constructed in 1794 with additions in 1807; the construction of a mihrāb (niche) indicating the direction of the qiblah – was made in order to convert the warehouse into a masjid. This Masjid was established during the era of slavery, and established its roots in a climate of social and political prejudice (Mahida 1993:13; Mountain 2004:90).

The second site (adjacent to Auwal Masjid) is still presently occupied by the family of the late imam of Auwal Masjid, Imam Gasant Achmat Gamja (Hasan Ahmad Hamzah) (d 1981), a descendant of Corridon of Ceylon (Mahida 1993:13).

## Tuan Guru

The Auwal Masjid in Dorp Street was founded by Tuan Guru, supported by oral tradition that Tuan Guru was the first Imam of the Auwal Masjid. To add colour to this claim, oral history relates further that Taun Guru's voice could be heard as far away as Simon's town, about twenty-five miles from Cape Town, when he gave the call for prayers through a window at the mosque (Davids 1980:98).

Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam referred to as Tuan Guru, or as mentioned in the records of Robben Island, Imam Abdulla van Trinaten, was born in Tidore (Indonesia) in the Trinate Islands in 1712. Although Tidore was a small island, only a few kilometres in diameter, it had 25 mosques. Tuan Guru was a prince from a Muslim sultanate and as a result exposed to Islam from a very early age and well versed in Islamic law. In 1780 the prince and some friends, Callie Abdol Rauf, Noro Iman and Badroedien were captured by the Dutch for conspiring with the English. They were banished to the Cape and incarcerated as "state prisoners" on Robben Island. After serving his sentence in 1793 Tuan Guru was freed and allowed to socialise freely with the people of Cape Town. He immediately involved himself in the religious affairs of the local community. According to oral



tradition he became their Kadi or Chief Imam concerning himself primarily with the teaching of Islam. This earned him the nickname Tuan Guru, meaning "Mister Teacher" (Davids 1980:98; Mountain 2004:89).

One of Tuan Guru's first tasks after being released from prison was to write the entire Qur'an from memory. Whilst still incarcerated on Robben Island in 1781 Tuan Guru wrote a manuscript of some 600 pages entitled *Mar'rifah al-Islam wa al Iman* (The Manifestation of Islam and Faith). In it he expounded a theological philosophy based on the school of thought of the Ahli Sunni Wal Jamaat sect of Islam, commonly referred to as 'Sunnism'. The manuscript was written in Malayu using Arabic script (Mountain 2004:91). In addition to its theological treatise, the manuscript also dealt with Islamic law, customs and practices and provided a jurisprudential basis for a system of social relations in which slaves and free-black slave owners could coexist harmoniously in the Cape. Tuan Guru declared that the differences between men should not be measured in terms of social station or material possession, but rather in the acquisition of degrees of piety. Accordingly a slave could become an imam of a congregation or an assistant in a mosque (Mountain 2004:91).

Tuan Guru's manuscript was used as a textbook at the *madrasah* (Islamic school) which he established in Upper Dorp Street in 1793, the first Muslim institution of learning in the Cape. The school proved popular and within four years the number of converts to Islam had grown to such an extent that a regular mosque was needed (Mountain 2004:91).

There was no mosque at the Cape at that time. In 1795 Tuan Guru petitioned the local authorities for a mosque site, but when this was turned down he led the Cape Muslims in open air Friday Congregational (*Jamu-ah*) prayers in the quarry in Chiappini Street in defiance of the law. This fact is supported by the testimony of John Barrow who wrote that the "Malay Mohammedans, not being able to obtain permission to build a mosque, perform their public services in the stone quarries at the head of town" (Davids 1980:100). In 1798, during the first British occupation when restrictions on religious worship were relaxed and open Islamic worship was first permitted, the British gave permission for the mosque to function. Tuan Guru continued to push for land to be made available to establish a mosque and in 1797 started a mosque in an old warehouse in Dorp Street. This mosque, known as the *Auwal Masjid*, is situated in Upper Dorp Street and is still in daily use, playing a crucial role in the development of Islam in the Cape.

Tuan Guru is considered to be the founder of the Cape Ullamma (spiritual leadership). Supporting the Cape Ullamma were other Muslim convicts from Indonesia who had served their sentences and stayed on in Cape Town. Many held religious meetings in their homes, and they formed an important clerical class which played a significant part in advancing the spread of Islam amongst slaves, free blacks and the *Khoekhoen*. As a result of these endeavours a third of Cape Town's population was Muslim by 1842 (Mountain 2004:91).

The *Auwal Masjid* was a Shafee mosque right from the beginning and as such was in complete harmony with the doctrines of the Muslims of Indonesian origin. From it the Shafee teachings were inculcated into the Cape Muslim community, indicating a strong influence of Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salaam (Tuan Guru) on this community. He, in his book on Islamic jurisprudence written in 1781 declared his Shafee doctrine at the school he conducted from the *Auwal Masjid* (Davids 1980:96).

### **Achmat van Bengalen**

Achmat van Bengalen was born in Chinsura in Bengal and arrived at the Cape around 1783. The circumstances around his arrival are still clouded in obscurity, though his Bengali origin suggests that he might have had some grounding in Islam. At the



Cape he married, by Muslim rites, the Free Black woman, Saartjie van de Kaap. There is no certainty when this marriage took place, though from the ages of their children it would appear to have been in the 1790's. After the marriage Achmat took up residence with his in-laws at their properties in Dorp Street. Right through the formative years of the Auwal Masjid, he and his wife, Saartjie van de Kaap, stayed at the property (Davids 1980:105).

Achmat Bengalen was certainly one of the Cape Muslims' most charismatic leaders who reigned as the leading religious teacher for the better part of the first fifty years of religious freedom. As Chief Priest or Kadi during this period of Islamic consolidation, he contributed substantially to the development of the individualistic culture of the Cape Muslim community. It was his students who became the first Imams of the Nurul Islam, Jamia and the Shafee mosques, the first three mosques established since 1844 (Davids 1980:105).

But apart from this, and following in the footsteps of Tuan Guru, he must have had remarkable influence in the development of the cogent aspect of Cape Muslim culture, Arabic-Afrikaans, i.e. Cape Dutch transcribed in Arabic. About thirteen years after his death, in 1856, the *Al-Qawl Al Matim*, a treatise on Islam in Afrikaans, was published in Cape Town. This publication preceded the first book in Afrikaans with Western script, *Zamespraak tusschen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twijfelaar* by L H Meurant, by almost six years (Davids 1980:106).

It is as a negotiator that Achmat van Bengalen's charisma really came to the fore. He was sensitive to the social and political issues which affected his people and complained when he felt that they were being dealt with unjustly but expressed his approval of government action which he deemed in their interest. This is clearly indicated by his evidence to the Colebrooke and Bigge Commission of 1825, a commission instituted to investigate the conditions and treatment of persons of colour in the Cape Colony. Achmat did not confine himself to government's regulations regarding their slaves, marriages and mosques. He uses the official platform to bitterly complain about the prejudices of the fiscals and the privileges they "have had of breaking into our boxes in search of stolen goods, from the general impression existing with the police authorities of our dishonesty. Similarly, nine months before his death in 1843 he wrote to the Cape Town Municipality protesting the quarrying of stones by their order at the burial ground granted to him on 26 November 1820 for the Muslim community (Davids 1980:106).

Achmat van Bengalen died at 42 Dorp Street on 9 October 1843 at the age of 93 years. On his death notice he is revealed as the "High Priest of the Malays", the son of Abduraghmaan and Roosje. On his death he was succeeded by Abdol Barrie as the Imam of the Auwal Masjid and Kadi of the Cape Muslim community (Davids 1980:107).

### **Imams of the Auwal Masjid**

The first imam of the Auwal Masjid was Tuan Guru (Imam Abdullah) from 1797 to 1800, followed by Iman 'Abdul Alim' (1800-1810), Imam Sourdeen (1810-1822), Imam Achmat van Bengalen (1822-1843), Iman Abdol Barrie (1843-1851), Imam Mochamat Achmat (Muhammad Ahmad) (1851-1872), Imam Saddik Achmat (Sadiq Ahmad) (1872-1878), Imam Gamja Mochamat Achmat (Hamza Muhammad Ahmad) (1878-1912), Imam Amienodien Gamja (Hasan Ahmad Hamzah) (1955-1980).

The history of the Auwal Masjid is indeed exciting. Much of it would have disappeared into obscurity had it not been for a dispute between Achmat van Bengalen and Imam Asnoun, better known as Jan van Boughies, in 1836. The issue was the position of "Chief Imam" and was hotly disputed through the pages of the South African Commercial Advertiser (Davids 1980:97). Tuan Guru appointed as his second-in-command or Senior Gatiep, Rijaap in the hope that Rijaap will succeed him as the Imam.

Rijaap unfortunately died prior to him being able to take over the Imamship of the mosque. At this time Tuan Guru's health also began to fail and he could no longer actively lead the congregation, being a man of over ninety years. He then appointed Abdulalim as the Imam. Abdulalim was reluctant to accept this position, declaring with tears in his eyes that he was incompetent to be the Imam. Nevertheless, Tuan Guru insisted and as to give confidence to Abdulalim added, "Achmat shall be your second Priest and will assist you in the performance of your duties." Achmat was given strict instructions to be loyal to Abdulalim and never to leave him. From then onwards Abdulalim acted as the Imam (Davids 1980:100).

Shortly after this Tuan Guru became very ill and on his death bed called for Achmat van Bengalen. He pointed out to Achmat that he was certain that after his death, some members of the congregation would abandon the mosque and start their own congregation. Achmat must not prevent them if they wanted to go, but must carry on with those who remained. In 1836, Achmat van Bengalen recalled that Tuan Guru said: "Remember that Jan van Boughies can never, as long as he lives, take my place, and whoever gives him my lace must answer on the day of judgement, and not to me. I have made the church with the hope that it may remain for as long as the world stands". After this Tuan Guru gave Achmat the rules and laws of the religion, solicited from him an oath of loyalty to serve Abdulalim and appointed him the guardian on his two sons, Abdol Rakiep and Abdol Rauf. Achmat van Bengalen's main function at the mosque was to be that of religious teacher, Tuan Guru having previously instructed the students to take lessons from Achmat (Davids 1980:101).

The appointment of Abdulalim created no problems while Tuan Guru was alive but tension emerged immediately after Tuan Guru died in 1807. Frans van Bengalen, who led the Javanese Artillery at the Battle of Blaauwberg, preferred Asnoun, better known as Jan van Boughies, as Imam. He approached Achmat van Bengalen with the request to have Jan appointed as the Imam instead of Abdulalim. Achmat declined this request, staying loyal to his oath to Tuan Guru. The declination infuriated Frans van Bengalen. Thereupon he and Jan van Boughies ceded from the Auwal Masjid in order to found their own congregation. They acquired a property in Long Street known today the Palm Tree Mosque, where they, as Tuan Guru predicted, started another mosque with Abdolgamiel, brother-in-law of Achmat van Bengalen, as the Imam (Davids 1980:101).

The new mosque was not without its pains. This Achmat van Bengalen attributed to the troublesome character of Jan van Boughies. Within a year most of the congregation including the Imam, Abdolgamiel, were back at the Auwal Masjid, leaving Jan with a small congregation. Achmat van Bengalen claims that Frans van Bengalen too would have returned but he was ashamed and left the Cape for Batavia (Davids 1980:101).

Meanwhile Abdulalim continued being the Imam of the Auwal Masjid assisted by Achmat van Bengalen. Achmat van Bengalen, in accordance with the wishes of Tuan Guru, applied himself vigorously to his tasks as religious teacher and guardian of Tuan Guru's sons. The school in particular proved very popular with slave and Free Black children and soon came under the attention of the authorities. The Earl of Caledon, who preceded Sir John Cradock as Governor at the Cape, expressed the concern that if the slaves were left in a state of ignorance they would fall prey to the zeal of the Imams who were conducting a school in Cape Town. This school, which operated from the Auwal Masjid in Dorp Street, had an attendance of 372 slave children who were taught precepts from the Quran and to read and write Arabic (Davids 1980:102).

But neither did Achmat van Bengalen neglect his responsibility with regard to his wards. By his own charge he provided them with the best education and training possible. He treated them even better than his own sons for he had accepted a "wāsi-at", i.e. a sacred duty, to be their guardian. No wonder that Abdol Rauf, the younger ward wrote about Achmat in glowing terms in 1836 stating "Achmat treated us two as his own children, in fact he could not have done better towards us and may I wish that

he live twenty years longer in this world for he is like a father and a mother to me." It is to Achmat's credit that both Abdol Rakiep in 1834 and Abdol Rauf in 1844 became Imams of the Mohammedan Shafee Congregation of Buitengracht Street (Davids 1980:102).

Through all this Achmat van Bengalen remained loyal to Abdulalim, serving him faithfully as his assistant Imam even though it appears that he was more competent than the Imam, Abdulalim himself. This position continued until about 1810 when Abdulalim's health began to fail. Surprisingly, Abdulalim also did not nominate Achmat van Bengalen as his successor. He in fact nominated Sourdeen to succeed him as the Imam of the Auwal Masjid. Again Achmat abided by this nomination as if in loyal submission to the wishes of Abdulalim. Thus when Abdulalim died, Sourdeen became the Imam of the Auwal Masjid with Achmat and Abdol Barrie assisting him (Davids 1980:102).

Not much is known about Sourdeen or his competency as Imam. Circumstantial evidence indicates that Achmat van Bengalen served Imam Sourdeen as faithfully as he served Tuan Guru and Abdulalim. It was only when Sourdeen died, probably in 1822 that he became the Imam of the mosque. Achmat appointed as his assistants Abdol Barrie and Abdol Bazier. In 1850 Bazier became the Imam of the Jamia Mosque in lower Chiappini Street (Davids 1980:103).

One cannot help to wonder why Achmat did not become the Imam of the Auwal Masjid immediately after the death of either Tuan Guru or Abdulalim as he, after the death of Tuan Guru was probably the most competent person in the congregation. What the Cape Muslim community needed then, was not a strong Imam at the Auwal Masjid, but a controlling religious authority. A leader who could fill the position of Kadi or Chief Imam. It would appear that there were only two people capable to fill this role, Achmat van Bengalen and Jan van Boughies. For some reason or another Tuan Guru discarded Jan. Achmat on the other hand had proved his loyalty, and hence he was appointed as Tuan Guru's spiritual successor. Tuan Guru knew, and in fact predicted, that cleavages were going to emerge in the Cape Muslim community after his death. The Imam of the Auwal Masjid would be a central figure in such emerging cleavages. It was, therefore, not reasonable that the Kadi or Chief Imam position should be directly linked with the position of Imam of the Auwal Masjid (Davids 1980:103).

There was at least two instances to indicate that Achmat van Bengalen was nominated by Tuan Guru as Kadi or Chief Imam and as such his spiritual successor. It was Achmat and not Abdulalim who was called in by Tuan Guru and given the "rules and laws of our religion"; and it necessitated Frans van Bengalen approaching him with the request to have Jan van Boughies be installed as the Imam of the Auwal Masjid. These instances have nothing to do with his "ownership" of the mosque property. It must have been generally known that Achmat van Bengalen at the time was merely the "wakil" or custodian, having accepted the "amanat", i.e. trusteeship, from his wife's family to administer the use of the property as a mosque. The "amanat" gave him no special privileges except that the property be used as a mosque as must have been agreed upon. His appointment as Kadi or spiritual head became a separate issue. He needed to be competent and to be appointed, as he was, by his predecessor, Tuan Guru, as the Kadi of the community. It was his right as Kadi, more than Wakil that gave him the final say over the appointment of the Imam, for the Kadi can overrule the decision of a Wakil. Hence Frans van Bengalen approached Achmat van Bengalen and not Trijn van de Kaap, the rightful owner of the property, with his request for Jan's appointment as the Imam (Davids 1980:104).

In Islamic jurisprudence the term Kadi implies the overall ruler of the state, the final authority for the implementation of Islamic law. The correct term in plural society like the Cape, where the Muslims were not the governing community, would be "Wazir". The Wazir has basically the same functions as the Kadi except that these functions are more of a theological rather than secular



nature and are directed to the Muslim community in a non-Islamic social and political milieu. At the Cape the term Kadi was preferred and translated into Dutch as "Hoogepriester" with its English rendering of "Chief or High Priest" (Davids 1980:104).

In terms of Islamic law the Kadi need not necessarily be the Imam of the mosque, even if it is the only mosque in the community. Ideally it is better if he is not the Imam for he would, at times, be called upon to arbitrate in matters involving the Imam. There is nothing though to prevent him from assisting the Imam at a mosque if he so desires. He has, however, more specific congregational functions for example, leading the congregation in prayers for rain, officiating at the funeral of a leading member of the community, being responsible for the Islamic education of the community as well as its dissemination to the broader society and to act as spokesman and negotiator for the community on matters touching their lives. He must, therefore, be the most knowledgeable person in the community (Davids 1980:104). Achmat van Bengalen exerted himself admirably as the Kadi of the Cape Muslim community engaging himself in their Islamic education. For almost twenty years he avoided the position as Imam of the Auwal Masjid, in view, one could suggest, of the existence of the rival Jan van Boughies Mosque. He, as Kadi, could be called upon to arbitrate in disputes between the two congregations. If he was also the Imam of the one mosque, he would have been directly involved in the dispute, or his arbitration could have been construed as being swayed by congregational loyalty. He, in all probability, during his time, might have hoped for the re-emergence of a single congregation. This, after 1820, was no longer possible with the increase in the number of Muslims and the development of the three additional prayer rooms. It was thus only when the Jan van Boughies Mosque was a *fait accompli* and a single congregation no longer possible, that he became the Imam of the Auwal Masjid when the vacancy occurred in 1822. He still retained the position of Kadi together with that as the Imam of the Auwal Masjid (Davids 1980:105).

### **The sons of Achmat van Bengalen**

The character of Saartjie van de Kaap, the first lady of Cape Muslim history, is brought out in her will which she executed on 1 December 1841. Prior to this she plays the quite role of the devoted wife of the Chief Imam. In her will she names her children Noran, Somiela, Mochamat, Hamien, Saddik, Jumie and Rashieda together with her husband, Imam Achmat, as her universal heirs, and appoints her husband, Imam Achmat, together with her three sons, Mochamat, Hamien and Saddik, as her executors (Davids 1980:108).

When Achmat died in 1843, she added a codicil to the will in which she revoked the executor's powers of her sons and appointed instead her attorney, Carel Jeremia Auret, as her executor. The codicil goes further than this, for she appointed Abdol Barrie or his successor as the "Chief Priest of the Mohamedans" to be in charge of her funeral (Davids 1980:108).

Saartjie seemed to have good reason for this. Her sons, before their father's death became involved with Baderoen and Abdol Ruaf in the establishment of the Nurul Islam Mosque in Buitengracht street, not even a hundred yards from the Auwal Masjid. Their involvement in the establishment of the Nurul Islam Mosque possibly caused a rift between them and their father. There is hardly any likelihood that Mochamat or Saddik would have succeeded their father when they, with Hamien, became involved in the establishment of a new mosque. Saartjie had no idea that her sons would become Imams of the mosque, neither did she nominate them or indicate in any way that it is her desire that they should become the Imams. Saartjie, it would seem, did not agree with this action of her sons either, hence she revoked their appointment as the executors of her estate. She must have been terribly hurt, for she appointed Abdol Barrie or his successor to be in charge of her funeral despite the fact that her sons were already competent imams. Abdol Barrie succeeded Achmat van Bengalen as the Imam of the Auwal Masjid. He was

Achmat's assistant Imam and had been associated with the mosque since the time of Tuan Guru, not as an ordinary member but in the hierarchy of officialdom (Davids 1980:109).

The will, in essence, makes provisions that the property number 28 Dorp Street shall be used by her husband and children "al seen Mohamedaansche Kerk" (as a mosque), for as long as Islam shall be allowed as a form of worship in the Colony. She states further that the house number 43 shall after the death of her husband and herself, become the property of her children and their descendants with the condition that neither of the properties shall be sold or mortgaged but that its first use shall be for the performance of the "Mahomedaansche Godsdienst" (the religion of Islam) (Davids 1980:109).

This was written on 1 December 1841 before the establishment of the Nurul Islam Mosque in Buitengracht Street. The codicil of 27 October 1843 which appoints Abdol Barrie to be in charge of her funeral tends to indicate that either her sons were not interested in the position of Imam at the Auwal Masjid or she had changed her mind about their using the property for religious purposes. It is customary in Muslim society for sons, if they are capable, to conduct the funeral services of their parents. There is no question as to the competency of Mochamat, Saddik or Hamien in this regard (Davids 1980:109). One can only speculate why her sons were excluded from a function which is regarded as honourable? She was possibly aggravated by them. She could not completely disinherit them. Such disinheritance could have been construed to be contrary to Islamic law on inheritance. She punished them instead by revoking their powers as the executors of her estate and denied them the honour of her burial (Davids 1980:110).

The sons of Achmat van Bengalen never displayed the charisma of their memorable father. Mochamat Achmat became the Imam of the Auwal Masjid after the death of Abdol Barrie and maintained this position until his death in 1872. He was assisted by his brother, Saddik. Hamien (also known as Gamien) became the Imam of the Nurul Islam Mosque in Buitengracht Street in 1861 and died on 4 November 1867. Saddik succeeded Mochamat and remained the Imam of the Auwal Masjid until his death on 2 January 1878. In 1873, as the surviving trustee of the Nurul Islam Mosque in Buitengracht, Saddik became involved in the Hanafee-Shafee Juma-ah case, when he in his capacity as trustee of that mosque sued unsuccessfully for the removal of the Imam, Abdol Rakiep, on the grounds of religious malpractices (Davids 1980:108,112).

On his death, Saddik was succeeded as Imam of the Auwal Masjid, by his brother, Mochamat's son, Gamja Mochamat Achmat. During Gamja's reign the Auwal Masjid again played an important role in the affairs of the Muslim community of Bo-Kaap. Gamja had as one of his congregants, the articulate Abdol Burns, who since 1875 became involved in the cemeteries issue. This problem was conceived as a major one in the Muslim community of Cape Town during the latter part of the nineteenth century (Davids 1980:112).

An organisation called the Malay Cemetery Committee was established to affect a sustained protest against the closure of Muslim burial grounds in municipal areas in terms of the Public Health Act of 1883. Gamja Mochamat Achmat became the chairman of the Malay Cemetery Committee with Abdol Burns as secretary, the two major officials coming from the Auwal Masjid. During the heat of the cemetery argument – 1883 to 1886 – the Auwal Masjid became the main venue for public protest meetings against the Public Health Act of 1883. Gamja served on all the deputations to the Governor and Colonial Secretary to present the case of the Cape Muslims with regard to the closure of burial grounds in municipal areas. He died in 1915 (Davids 1980:112).

Gamja in his will, compiled in 1904 initially appointed his third son, Abdol Maliek as his successor but revoked this in 1912 and appointed, Amienodien, the eldest son, who was then already performing the duties of Imam, to succeed him. Amienodien according to the will would be succeeded by Achmat Gamja, his second son who would, in turn, be succeeded by Abdol Maliek. Abdol Maliek never became the Imam of the Auwal Masjid though he was the most competent of the brothers having studied in Mecca. He went to settle in Johannesburg where he became an Imam (Davids 1980:113).

Amienodien, two years after his appointment became involved in the Shafee-Juma-ah question. After general agreement had been reached by the Cape Imams to perform one Juma-ah at the Jamia Mosque in Lower Chiappini Street, he refused to become part of the arrangement despite the fact that he, too, had been offered a turn to read the sermon at the single Juma-ah. He argued that as the Auwal Masjid in Dorp Street was the oldest mosque in Cape Town, Juma-ah could be performed only at this mosque. Bitter as this dispute was and central to the disunity in the community as Amienodien was, he remained one of the Bo-Kaap's most respected and loved Imams until his death in 1936. He was succeeded as Imam by his brother Achmat Gamja. Achmat Gamja died in 1955. He, instead of being succeeded by Amienodien's son, Hadjie Abdurachman Amienodien Gamja, was succeeded by Gasant Achmat Gamja, who died in 1980 (Davids 1980:113).



## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Auwal Masjid is considered to possess to **high social and historical heritage value** whilst possessing **high local landmark quality**.

Statement of significance considers various criteria as stipulated by the NHRAct and also addresses the following aspects:

- Role of Islam and slavery in the Western Cape
- The value of historic environments
- Consciousness of the sacredness of Muslim places of worship
- Cultural connections

The Auwal Masjid is the oldest mosque and madrassah in South Africa, which came into existence during the time of the British Occupation of the Cape of Good Hope. During the first British occupation, restrictions on religious worship were relaxed and open Islamic worship was first permitted and permission granted for the mosque to function. An extract from a letter by Abdol Barrie (an assistant Imam but later Imam of the Dorp Street Mosque), in the *South African Commercial Advertiser* of 27 February 1836 clearly indicates that the Auwal Masjid is the first mosque in South Africa. This mosque is still in daily use.

Imam Abdulla Kadi Abdus Salaam, Tuan Guru, was the first Imam of the Auwal Mosque and is considered to have played a very important role in terms of spiritual leadership of the Cape Ullamma (Mountain 2004:91). The Auwal Masjid was established at a crucial period in the history of the Cape Muslim community, where religious freedom was allowed for the first time in 1804. During the years 1804 to 1850 the Auwal Masjid was the main religious institution in the life of the Cape Muslim community. The role of this mosque, in the rapid spread and consolidation of Islam at the Cape, must have been tremendous. After 1850, when a considerable number of mosques were constructed, it still played an important role, perpetuating Tuan Guru's desire that, "it must remain for as long as the world stands" (Davids 1980:94).

A mosque in its Islamic sense is the 'cultural and ecological base on which the entire social, cultural, institutional and associational framework of the community is focalised and concentrated' and thus plays an important developmental role within the community (Davids 1980: 109). As the first cultural ecological base of the Cape Muslims, the Auwal Masjid provided the community a tangible identification with their religion. As a centre of communal activity, regulating and patterning social and religious life. Here, first Tuan Guru and later Achmat van Bengalen, conducted a Muslim school for Free Black and slave children, perpetuating the culture and the religion of this community through its young, it is the oldest madrassah (school) in South Africa. In 1825 this school had a roll of 491 scholars (Davids 1980:94). The Auwal Masjid contains the hand-written Quran recalled from memory by Tuan Guru.

The Auwal Masjid is of cultural significance based on its association with living heritage, links to slavery, importance in the community, strong association with the muslim community and special association with among others, Tuan Guru, Achmat van Bengalen and Saartjie van die Kaap. The mosque presents a monument to the struggle of the Cape Muslims for the recognition of their religion and the freedom to worship. Significance is thus as a sacred space and not specifically for aesthetic and / or architectural value. The Auwal Masjid as the first Mosque in South Africa, is a worthy monument to South African Muslim Society (Davids 1980:113).

The contribution of the Muslim Community of Cape Town to the history and traditions of our City has been enormous since the days of the early Cape Settlement in the 17th Century. Indeed, the social and cultural uniqueness of Cape Town is largely due to the important role played by the Muslim people through the centuries (Gordon Olivier 2001). The saints of Islam played a large role in creating present-day Cape Town, they had suburbs named after their place of origin, and created socio-religious boundaries. On national level they have introduced the religion of Islam to Southern Africa.

In 1994, the commemoration of 300 years of Islam in South Africa was celebrated. A wide variety of cultural, religious, academic and sporting events took place which ushered in a renewed spirit of unity and pride amongst Muslims amidst the birth pangs of the country's new democracy. That spirit was epitomised by the Chain of Barakah, a truly unique Ghatam-Quran whereby a portion of the Quran was sequentially recited in 146 mosques all over the country over a period of 56 days. It culminated on the 4th April, the anniversary of Sheikh Yusuf's arrival, at his shrine where the late Hafith Sheikh Salie Abadie completed the Ghatam and placed that special copy of the Holy Quran in a niche inside the shrine. The event, over the Easter weekend, was witnessed by a huge number of Muslims who had earlier marched through the streets of Cape Town in a remarkable display of identity and unity. The Tricentenary commemoration also rekindled the links between Cape Muslims and their brethren from Indonesia and Malaysia who provided enthusiastic support for the events. Since then close links have been forged on many fronts both at community and governmental levels.

The history of the Islamic community is considered as an important part of our common African heritage. In reference to such role, Nelson Mandela was quoted as saying 'I know that Muslim organisations in South Africa will continue their sterling humanitarian work, transcending the divisions which were imposed upon us. In this way they are helping to heal our social fabric torn by apartheid's long and destructive history' (SAHO 1998/12/30).

December 1st 2014 marked 180 years since the abolition of slavery in South Africa. Few remember that apartheid was built on the systemic violence, displacement, racial formation and institutions of social control that marked slavery in the South African colonies from 1658 to 1834 (G Baderoon 2014). Over the course of almost two centuries of slave-holding, enslaved people came to constitute the majority of the population of the Cape Colony, numbering more than 60,000 people (Ross 1999:6). Studies of South African history written before 1980 portrayed the role of slavery in the Cape as minor and its character "mild" (Keegan 1996, 16), a benign view also reflected in popular culture through texts such as cookbooks, cartoons and landscape paintings. It was only in the 1980s that significant new scholarship demonstrated that slavery shaped all aspects of life at the Cape and its hinterland (Worden, 1985), and slave labour was in fact central to the economy and the culture of the Colony (G Baderoon 2014). To remember slavery is not only to remember pain, but also enslaved people's "modernity" (C. L. R. James, 1962) their creation of new cultures, their evasion of official strictures and categories, their remaking of received practices, and their splicing of language, food, music and beliefs in ways that would eventually come to shape national culture as a whole (Gabeba Baderoon). "The slaves" arrived here with chains around their necks, leg-irons and hand-cuffs on their wrists, but their minds could not be chained. These very 'slaves' were the leaders of resistance against the Dutch colonialists and exploiters in the Far East. These 'slaves' did not have experiences in battles, but they brought with them a supra-national ideology of liberation, the ideology of Islam (MJC 2001).

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