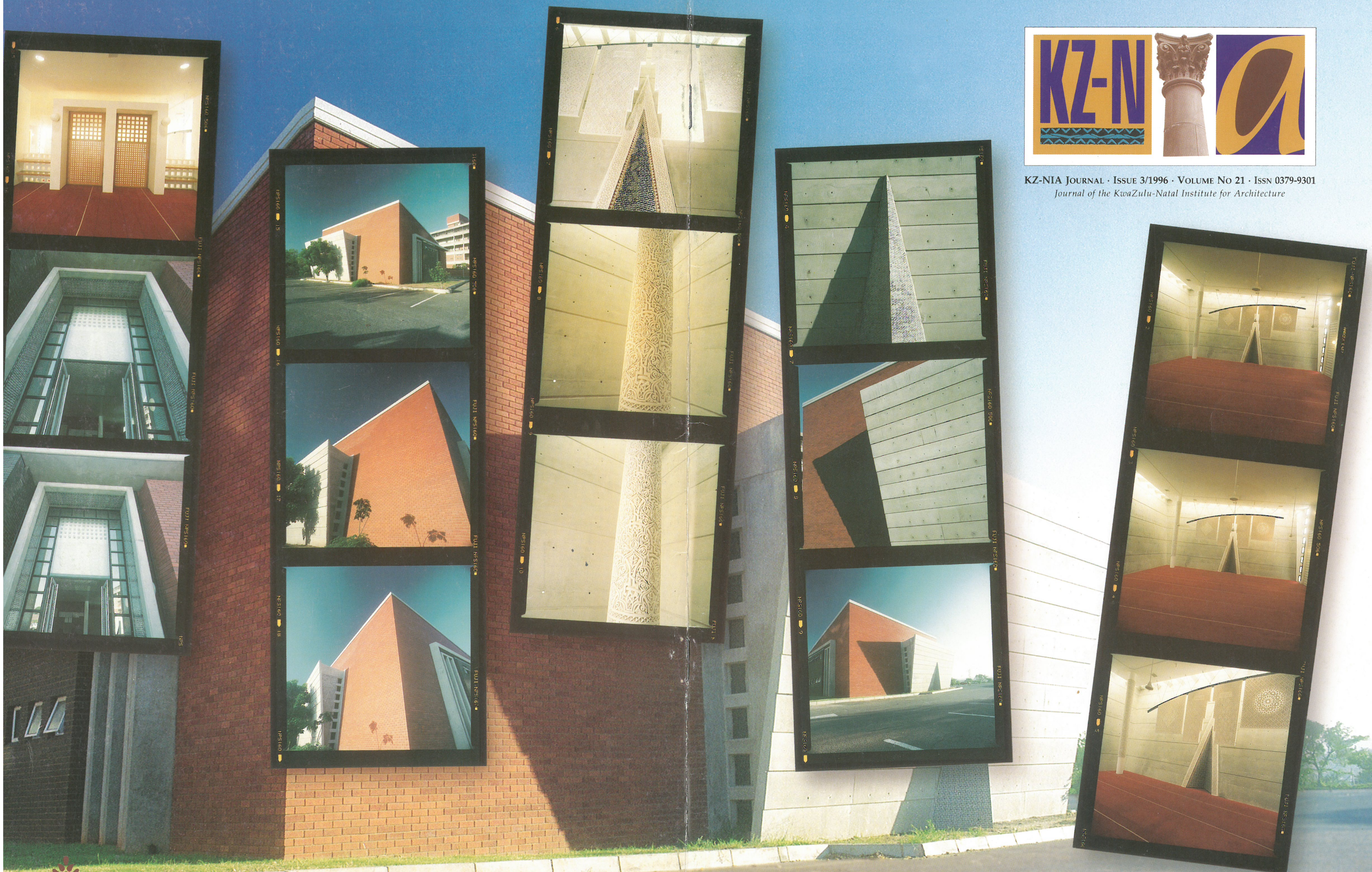




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Islamic Architecture



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1997/98 KZ-NIA REGIONAL COMMITTEE

The following members were elected to the Regional Committee at the Annual General Meeting held at Stella Park on 12 September: Bruce Clark, Patricia Emmett, John Frost, Rodney Harber, Dean Jay, Brian Johnson, Janina Masojada, and Walter Peters. As constituted, the Committee includes a further member, the Chairperson of the Northern KZ-N Chapter, Rouxlene van Zyl.

At the first Committee meeting Rodney Harber and Janina Masojada were re-elected President and Vice-President respectively. These two members together with Dean Jay will constitute the Executive while the last named together with Brian Johnson will represent KZ-N at the SAIA National Board of Representatives. Co-options to the Committee will be named once these members have accepted.

The following Portfolio appointments were agreed to: Public Relations – Janina Masojada; Architectural Environment and Heritage – John Frost; Professionalism – Bruce Clark; Education – Walter Peters; Finances and Premises – Dean Jay; and Membership: Patricia Emmett.

KZ-NIA SUFFIXES

With the adoption of the new KZ-NIA Constitution on 12 July 1996, the following suffixes apply: KZ-NIA for ordinary members; KZ-NIA(Ant) for Architects-in Training; and Hon. KZ-NIA; KZ-NIA(Life); KZ-NIA(Retired); or KZ-NIA(Affiliate) respectively.

SA INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

With the adoption of the new National Constitution on 2 September 1996, the national Institute became known as the South African Institute of Architects. As a result thereof, members should now use the following suffixes: MIArch for National (ordinary) and retired members; and MIArch(Life); or Hon. MIArch respectively.

The postal address of SAIA is Private Bag X10063, 2125 Randburg, and the street address is Ground Floor, Office Block A, Sandton View, Conduit Street, Lyme Park Extension 4, 2021 Bryanston. Telephone numbers are 011-8869308, 8869317, 8869321.

The SAIA Board of Management for 1996-98, comprises the President Bryan Pringrove; Vice President Vivienne Japha; and KZ-N Members Brian Johnson and Dean Jay.

COVER:

Islamic Jamā 'at Khānah, University of Natal, Durban.

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MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE - SOME TERMINOLOGY

Why a *jamā'at khānah* (literally, place for congregating) and not *masjid* (literally, to prostrate) which is the more common term to describe a building of this nature for the University of Natal? Although they both serve the same function, the terminology and intention is quite deliberate. A *masjid* is built on freehold, titled land which is consecrated for eternity, whereas a *jamā'at khānah* may be constructed on untitled land, is not necessarily consecrated, and its use or future change of use, is not as onerous as that of a *masjid*.

While there are no specific liturgical requirements for a mosque other than that of a demarcated space oriented towards Makkah, the common elements of mosque architecture and furnishings are:

The *jamā'at khānah*, a demarcated prayer space oriented towards Makkah: this space (*haram*) varies in relation to the ante chamber (*sahn*), which could be open to the sky as in a courtyard. Women are segregated from male worshippers either by screens or in a separate part of the building such as a gallery.

The *qiblah* wall and *mihrab*: the *mihrab* is a niche or a recess in the *qibla* wall which indicates the orientation of Makkah.

The *minbar*: this is a pulpit to the right of the *mihrab*, generally a raised platform with steps leading up to it and which is traditionally used on Fridays by the *imam* to deliver the sermon (*khutba*) before the congregational prayer.

The *wudū'* area: this is the place for washing the face, hands, head and feet for the ritual ablution before prayer.

The minaret: towerlike feature whose original purpose was to call the faithful to prayer and is now generally a symbol to identify this type of building.

The portal: gateway to the mosque, a threshold between the external, urban, and the tranquil internal domain.

Once a *masjid* is established, its sanctity becomes inviolable and it can neither be sold nor privately owned. Historically the first *masjid* established was that at Qubā which the Prophet built at the time of his migration (*hijrah*) from Makkah to Madinah. He then established the *masjid* in Madinah which was a simple structure of mud bricks, palm trees and leaves, around a courtyard which was to become the model for subsequent buildings of this type.

Yusuf Patel

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

jamā'ah congregation, assembly

jum'ah masjid congregational ie Friday mosque

jamā'at khānah place for congregational prayer

madrasah place of study

masjid mosque

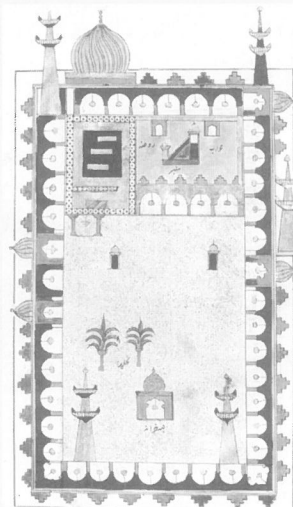
mihrāb niche indicating the qiblah

musallā prayer rug

qiblah direction of prayer

sahn courtyard

wudū' ablution



Islamic Architecture

Editorial

In a multi-cultural society such as ours, I believe a level of knowledge and understanding of one's compatriot's values is essential to good citizenry. For architects that translates into an understanding of the architecture of other cultural groups.

This is not the first time the subject of Islamic architecture has been addressed in the journals of our profession: in 1974, Rodney Harber guest edited an issue of *Plan* magazine (4/74), and *Architecture SA* covered the topic as recently as July/August 1994 to acknowledge 300 years of Islam in South Africa. Much has happened since then in KwaZulu-Natal and the Editorial Board felt it timeous for *KZ-NIA Journal* to refocus on Islamic architecture and its context in our Province. It is gratifying to note that this time the principal contributors are members of the Muslim community.

As a short introduction for non-Islamic readers: Islam is the name of the religion, and its adherents are referred to as Muslims. Fundamental to Muslims is the belief in *Allah* (God) and the revelation of the *Qur'an* to his prophet Muhammad. The generic term for Muslim places of worship is *masjid* (mosque). At the heart of Islamic life stand Five Pillars: attestation of faith; prayer; fasting; charity; and pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca), the birthplace of Muhammad.

Salāh, prayer, the Second Pillar, concerns architecture and in this regard places of worship and the rituals of prayer are rather different from Christian traditions which proscribe a processional liturgy and pews for the congregation. Mosques evolved as square or rectangular buildings because they have to cope with a radial liturgy, aligned on the axis to Makkah. In practice, the lines drawn from all the mosques in the world represent spokes of a wheel centred on Makkah. Reduced to essentials, a mosque is thus little more than a wall

(*qiblah*) at right angles to the axis to Makkah, an axis made visible in the *mihrāb* (niche) and in the directionality of the *musallā* (prayer rugs). To maximise this objective, the first row could be extended laterally to accommodate most worshippers at the greatest proximity to the source of blessing but, according to James Dickie (Yaquub Zaki), the success of a mosque architect may be measured by the degree to which he succeeds in reconciling these conflicting principles to produce that impression of "total equipoise" which "a successful mosque never fails to convey".

When positioned in an urban area, mosques are often surrounded by shops, residences and a religious school, *madrasah*. The article by Ismail Cassimjee on the "Islamicness" of the mosques in Pietermaritzburg best sums this up.

While the prayer rug can be considered a "portable mosque" (James Dickie), it is natural for communities to articulate their needs for congregational worship. That the achievement of a permanent place of worship and its maintenance is not without a considerable struggle is well set out by Mohideen Abdool Gafoor with regard to the two central mosques in Durban.

A distinguishing Islamic feature is however the tradition of decoration, without parallel in the architecture of the non-Muslim world. While the appearance of the exterior of the mosque is often given relatively little attention, unlike most Christian churches, decoration of the interior is important. According to Ernst Grube, the main purpose of decoration is to achieve an "effect of weightlessness, unlimited space, non-substantiality of



walls and pillars". The decoration varies from geometrically abstract shapes to floral patterns and inscriptions in a variety of calligraphic styles. It is indeed rewarding to see the traditions applied at the new "mosque" at University of Natal's Durban campus, where Moroccan craftsmen were procured.

As particular sources for this KZ-NIAJ issue, I acknowledge the *Musjid* (sic) *Design Primer* (1978) by Yusuf Patel and the book edited by George Michell *Architecture of the Islamic World* (London:Thames and Hudson, 1995). The Glossary at the end of this issue is taken from the former and amended by Suleman Dangor, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Durban-Westville, whom I thank not only therefore but especially for his article which sets out the background to Islamic architecture in our region. It was deemed appropriate by all contributors that after 22 years since his original guest editorship, Rodney Harber should have the last word.

Walter Peters, Editor

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Islamic Architecture

Muslim Society & Islamic Architecture

The daily life of a Muslim is interwoven with the foremost ceremonial duty, the *salah* (prayer), one of the fundamental pillars of Islam. The *salah* is performed both individually and collectively. The mandatory component has to be performed in parallel rows (*saff*) in congregation (*jama'ah*) behind an *imam* (leader) – hence the need for a place of prayer. Worshippers must face the *qiblah* viz direction of Makkah. The act of *salah* culminates in *sujud* (prostration) from which comes the word *masjid* (the place to pray before God).

At the advent of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad and his followers had no special place of prayer in Makkah and had to gather in private. They were subject to torture and persecution at the hands of their Makkah opponents who even prevented them from praying near the *Ka'bah*, the cubic structure built by the Prophet Abraham and dedicated to the worship of God. Muslims were thus compelled to leave Makkah. They migrated to Madinah in 622 AD, from which year the Muslim era, *hijrah* [*anno hegirae* (AH)], begins.

As soon as they arrived in Madinah, the Prophet purchased land from two orphans and established a *masjid* built with palm tree trunks which supported a roof of palm leaves and mud. This mosque, known as *al-Masjid al-Nabawi* (Prophet's Mosque), is second in importance to *al-Masjid al-Haram* – the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. The third most important mosque in Islam is *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* in Jerusalem from where the Prophet made his ascension (*mi'raj*). All these mosques have been renovated at regular intervals over the last fourteen centuries.

The Prophet's Mosque was not merely a place of prayer. It served as a court of justice and public treasury, as well as a rest house for the poor, needy and for wayfarers. Here, teachers and *imams* were trained, political decisions taken and military strategies planned. Furthermore, ambassadors and foreign deputations from kings and neighbouring tribes were received by the Prophet in the *masjid*.

The *masjid* retained its administrative and political functions during the period of the first four caliphs – *al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun* – and the Umayyad dynasty. It was during 'Abbasid rule that the *masjid* lost its original character – the court of the caliph at Baghdad became the seat of political power. Nonetheless, within its precincts the *masjid* continued to provide space for social functions such as education, community gatherings, shelter for travellers and food distribution to the poor.

In the course of time, basic requirements connected with *salah* gave birth to the essential

elements of a *masjid*: *mida'a* (fountain or basin for ablution, *wudu'*), *manarah* (minaret), *mihrab* (prayer niche), *minbar* (pulpit), *maqsurah* (box near the *mihrab* reserved for the ruler). Mosques built today contain all these features, except the *maqsurah*.

Throughout the history of Islam, in keeping with the practice of the Prophet, Muslims built *masjid* wherever they settled, even where the community comprised just a few families. The *masjid* has served as a centre for education, rallying point for the community, and as a social institution. The *masjid* is, in fact, the most distinctive feature of Muslim presence in any part of the world today.

MUSLIM ARRIVAL IN NATAL

While Muslims have been present in the Cape since the 17th Century, they arrived in Natal only in the last century. Soon after the British had colonised Natal in 1843, they began recruiting indentured labourers from India for the sugar-cane plantations. Among the labourers who were brought here on a regular basis from 1860 were several hundred Muslims from South and North India.

The indentured Indians were followed by another group of migrants – the "passenger" Indians – who were mainly traders from India and Mauritius. The majority of these traders were Muslims which is why they were often called "Arab" merchants. The first "Arab" merchant to arrive in Natal (circa 1871) was Aboobaker Amod who spoke the Memon language. He was followed by other "Memon" traders from Mauritius and India.

The Gujarati-speaking Muslim traders, known commonly as "Surtis", arrived about three years later. Language identity was of prime significance for these traders of Indian origin. It is not surprising, therefore, that settlement

areas became defined: the "Memons" settled in the area between Queen and Leopold Streets, and "Surtis" resided in the area between Queen and West Streets.

MUSLIM ESTABLISHMENT IN CENTRAL DURBAN

Since 1875 several *jama'at khānahs* (places for congregational prayer) sprang up in and around Durban. As the number of Muslims grew, the need for a *masjid* became urgent. In 1881 Aboobaker Amod and Hajee Mahomed Dada purchased a site in Grey Street, Durban, for the erection of a *masjid*. Though there was an existing *jama'at khana* on the site which had been established in 1880, it proved to be inadequate to meet the demands of the growing Muslim population in the central business-cum-residential area.

In 1884 Aboobaker Amod commenced negotiations for building a *masjid* on the site. By the end of that same year, the simple brick and mortar structure was transformed into the *Juma Masjid*, or as is popularly known today, the Grey Street Mosque (the first *imam* was Mianjee Elahi Bux). This early edifice was sim-

ple, though large enough to cater for the needs of the time. Since the major funders as well as trustees of the mosque belonged to the Memon group, it came to be labelled a "Memon Masjid".

The identification of the mosque with the "Memon" community had profound implications. The Gujarati and Urdu-speaking Muslims demanded "open" elections and representation on the governing body of the mosque. As a consequence, since 1916, "Surtis", Konkani (Muslims from the Bombay area) and the Colonial-born (born in the colony of Natal) were permitted to become trustees. This, however, did not resolve the contention between the two major "factions": "Memons" and "Surtis."

It is alleged that one day a "Surti" congregant who criticised some aspect relating to hygiene was rebuked by a Memon who reminded him that he had "no rights in that mosque." This incident provided the catalyst for the establishment of another mosque. At an informal meeting held later by the Surtis, the idea of a separate *masjid* was mooted for the first time.

Thus, in 1885 a year after the Grey Street Mosque was completed, the West Street Mosque came into being. Initially, only

Muslims originating from "Rander Surat in the Presidency of Bombay" in India could assume trusteeship, irrespective of whether they spoke Gujarati or Urdu. The first trustees were Ahmad Mohamed Tilly and Hoosen Meeran. This condition was eventually removed in 1970. The first *imam* is said to have been from Saudi Arabia.

OTHER MUSLIM SETTLEMENTS IN DURBAN

Sufi Sahib of Kalyan in India was sent to South Africa by his *murshid* (spiritual guide), Habib 'Ali Shah, in order to provide guidance for the Muslim indentured labourers and traders. A year after his arrival in Durban in 1895, Sufi Sahib established his *khanaqah* (Sufi retreat) which included the *masjid*, today known as the Riverside Mosque. Sufi Sahib himself was the *imam* until his death in 1911. The Riverside complex was declared a National Monument in 1978.

Between 1873 and 1880 the British brought slaves to Natal to be employed in public works. These slaves were from Kenya, Tanganyika, Mozambique, Somalia, Malawi, Zambia and Zanzibar but came collectively to be known as "Zanzibaris." Upon their arrival, they were housed at King's Rest on the Bluff.

Initially they travelled by boat to attend prayers on special occasions at the Grey Street Mosque.

In 1899, seven Indian Muslim merchants purchased 43 acres of land on the Bluff for the "Zanzibaris". Immediately, a simple wood and iron building was erected for use as a *masjid*. Plots were let to families at a nominal rate for market gardening and residence. The Juma Masjid Trust (Grey Street) took control of this property as soon as it was purchased, and administered and maintained the mosque at its own expense. The first *imam* of the King's

CLOCKWISE, TOP RIGHT: Grey Street Juma Masjid; Riverside Mosque remodelled and dome added in 1987; King's Rest Mosque, Bluff; and Juma Masjid, West Street.

Rest Mosque was Mr Mustafa Uthman of the Comores.

THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS

The Group Areas Act had a disruptive effect on the above four mosques. The "Zanzibaris" were no longer welcome on the Bluff, because of their close association with Muslims of Indian origin, they were classified as "Other Asiatics" and were, therefore, permitted to settle in Chatsworth. The King's Rest *masjid* was virtually deserted and robbed of its vibrant role in the community's life but did not cease to function.

The same fate befell the Grey and West Street mosques since the Act led to the dispersion of Muslim inner city dwellers to neighbouring suburbs. They were well attended only at lunch time which coincides with the *zuhr* and *jumu'ah* prayers. State expropriation of land that accommodated the *madrasah* (school), orphanage and public kitchen at Riverside in 1968 also resulted in a decline in attendance at the Sufi *masjid* there.

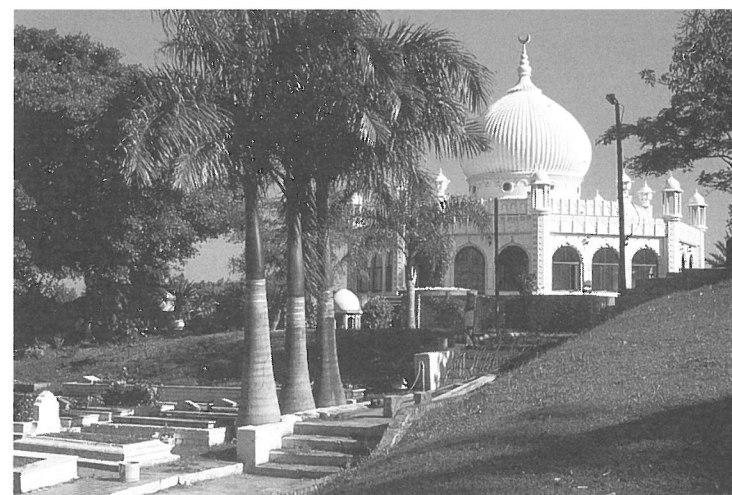
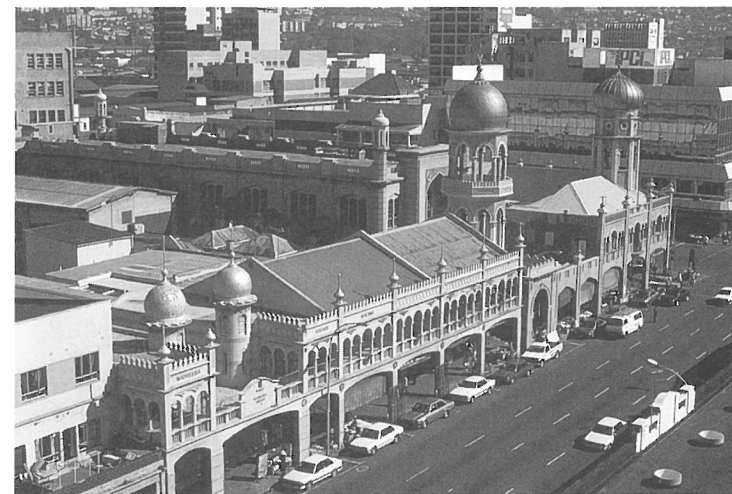
Today, these mosques – though poorly attended at dawn and in the evenings – are well patronised during working hours and at night during the month of Ramadan. Their recent renovations attest to their "revival" as vital community institutions.

Suliman Essop Dangor

Suliman Dangor is an Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Durban Westville.

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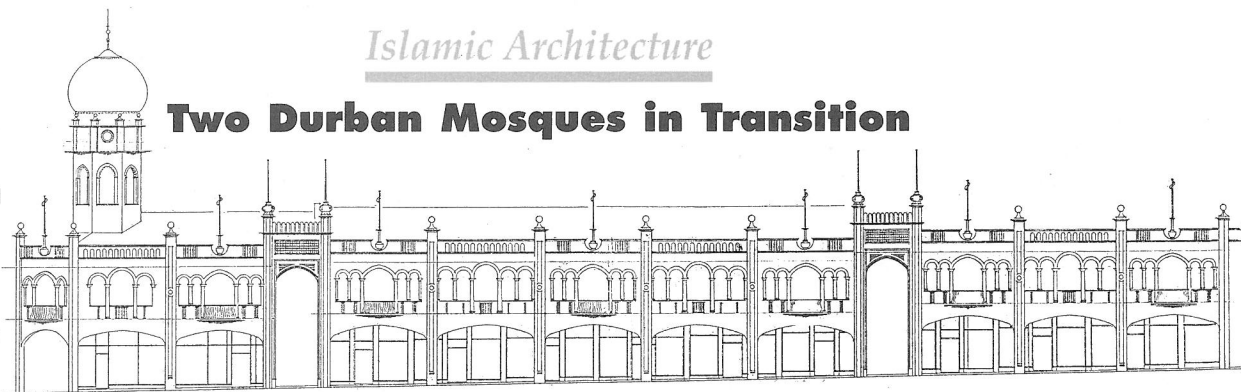
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Islamic Architecture

Two Durban Mosques in Transition

The commercial and residential surround to the mosque. Architects Payne & Payne, 1926. Note the portals marking the entrance to the mosque.



One of the first institutions built by any settlement of Muslims is the *masjid*. It serves as the rallying point of the community and as an important link that knits the community into a strong bond. It was in this spirit that two of the first congregational mosques, the Grey and West Street mosques, were built in Durban.

GREY STREET JUMA MASJID

The first mosque was a simple brick building which could accommodate 48 prayer mats. This building was demolished in 1884 and a new *masjid*, built to accommodate 280. There were no minarets.

In 1903 that *masjid* was enlarged to accommodate 480 prayer mats. The previous verandah now formed part of the *masjid*, the division being built with arches and pillars giving it an Islamic interior. A Victorian bandstand was bought and converted into an ablution gazebo to seat 43 people. In 1904 a minaret was added by Durban architect Arthur Cross and reportedly built by artisans from Surat, India. The minaret exists to this day and is over the main entrance to the *masjid* on Grey Street. Two shops were also added on the Grey Street side to earn revenue for the upkeep of the mosque. This principle of shops on the street face with a mosque behind has been successfully used and extended over the years. Another minaret was built in 1905 and rooms were added behind the mosque to provide temporary shelter for travellers.

In December 1926 architects Payne & Payne prepared plans for shops and flats along the Grey and Queen Street peripheries. The original minaret built in 1904 was retained but the second minaret was demolished. A new minaret was built over the shop at the corner of Grey and Queen Streets.

In 1941 the present Grey Street mosque was designed by architect William Barbour. The building was completed in 1943. It consists of 2 floors with 825 prayer spaces on each floor. The roof is used as both a play space for the *madrasah* and as an overflow space for prayer if neces-

sary. An ablution facility was built at the west entry to the *masjid* and exists until today. The southern side of the mosque opened onto a courtyard, which combined with the open space flanking Madressa Arcade, was used as a social space. The Juma Masjid Trust owned half of the courtyard. This was unfortunately built over when a new ablution chamber was built in the mid 1980s.

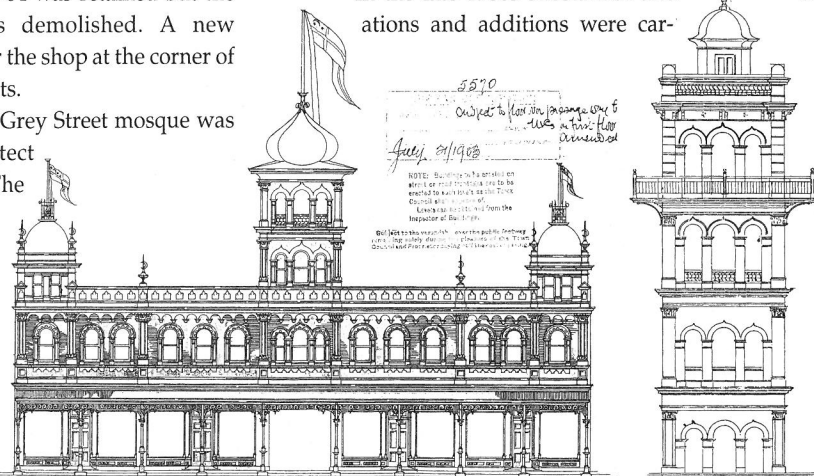
WEST STREET JUMA MASJID

The original mosque was built in 1885. It was a simple plastered brick structure approximately 14sqm in area with a verandah on the south side. It was located in a prime business and residential area. *Wudu* was performed in a pool situated south of the main building. The pool was later built over to become the *sahn*. To the west of the pool was a urinal and a bathroom. There were no minarets.

During 1903 a *masjid*, was extended to approximately 100sqm. A *madrasah* quarters for the *mu'adhdhin* (announcer of the hour of prayer) and shops were built with a 2-storey high minaret over the shops (Could this be the "Venetian" styled front referred to by Rodney Harber on p9? Editor). Access to the mosque from West Street was via a central passage between the shops which led through a gateway into the courtyard. The original pool was covered and a platform built over to become the *sahn* of the mosque.

Only a few months later, revised plans were prepared in 1904 by architects Henry & Hill for the minaret to be raised to four floors but with a reduced dome.

In the late 1980s substantial alterations and additions were car-



ried out, significantly affecting the character of the mosque. The courtyard was built over and a floor added to the mosque.

ISSUES FACING DESIGNERS

The evolution of these two mosques have taught us several important lessons:-

1. The need for privacy and silence during prayer achieved by creating a buffer of shops and residential accommodation on the street side.
2. The need for informal social spaces: - both mosques had courtyards which were lost in the 1980s. These courtyards also served as "ventilation" spaces which allowed for the cooling of the prayer space. The West Street courtyard was most successful through its connection from West Street to Saville Street. The present West Street *masjid* is now air-conditioned because of insufficient "natural cooling."
3. Interior Design - Both mosques have had considerable money spent on the interior design in the 1990s, the success of which is debatable. Established *masajid*, having peaked developmentally are now using considerable funds for interior design and user comfort. The concentration of donor funds, in established *masajid* in comparison to the needs of the poor emerging Islamic communities should be debated and rationalised.
4. Conservation and heritage: both mosques are vitally important buildings in the history of the Muslim community and also that of the City of Durban. Therefore any work to the mosque must be handled with utmost sensitivity and care.

Mohideen Abdool Gaffoor

Jamal, R. A Study of the West Street Mosque, Durban. Unpublished BA (Hons) Dissertation, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Durban-Westville, 1987.

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FAR LEFT: Front to West Street mosque by Henry & Hill Architects, 1903.

LEFT: Additional two floors and balcony added to miaret, 1904.

Islamic Architecture

The "Islamicness" of the Mosques in Pietermaritzburg

A mosque is not only a house of worship, but is also a public building serving a multiplicity of uses. It is a gathering place for prayer five times a day, a school, a centre for community functions, and a shelter for travellers. Hence it contains amenities such as wash rooms and toilets for public use. And, as much as it is a container of space, it is also contained within the city fabric. Both the free-standing mosque and the mosque integrated in the City fabric are typical of the early mosques of KwaZulu-Natal.

Within the city grid of Pietermaritzburg lie two mosques both accessed from the main street, Church Street. These are good examples of mosques contained within the city fabric. Our practice was fortunate to have worked on the restoration of one mosque and is at present working on extensions to the other.

UPPER CHURCH STREET MOSQUE

The Sunni Mosque at 69A Church Street, popularly known as the "Top Mosque" was built in 1903. The mosque lies at the heart of a single urban block. It cannot be seen from the street and in typical Persian fashion, can only be viewed from the inside. On the perimeter of the block are the shops, and the market place forming a hard edge around the block. Above and behind the shops are dwellings. Inside the urban block are the community institutions and the mosque.

The city grid is at 45 degrees to the north-south axis. The mosque is directed to Mecca at 11 degrees 30 minutes east of north, thus the mosque is aligned almost diagonally to the city grid. The resolution of these two geometries is achieved by rotating the mosque within an external wall that corresponds to the city grid. The transformation from one geometry to the other is never felt when walking through the spaces, resulting in a successful resolution to the problem of conflicting geometries.

It is interesting to note that the central space of the mosque is raised a metre above ground and the walls below the floor formed a large water reservoir. (The stairs are located at the head of the ablution area). This water reservoir opened onto the *wudu* area on one side of the mosque at ground level. The maintenance of this water reservoir became a problem and was subsequently drained and is now used as a storage cellar. The craftsman who built the original mosque subsequently built the mosque in Newcastle and repeated the principle of introducing a water reservoir below the mosque.

LOWER CHURCH STREET MOSQUE

The Lower Church Street Mosque, the Islamia Mosque, more popularly known as Middle Mosque, was built in 1942 and is situated at 487 Church Street. Half way through the construction, the work had to stop due to a lack of funds. Fortunately a passing traveller, Latiff

Osman from Lydenberg agreed to fund the completion of the mosque.

The pattern of growth of the complex was again similar to that of the "Top Mosque." The site was first made up of a shop facing Church Street with housing behind. The mosque was then built on a portion of vacant land on the rear of the site. Once built the mosque also functioned as a *madrasah*. As the need grew, a separate school was built between the shops and the mosque. Housing was provided by purchasing the adjoining site to the rear facing Pietermaritz Street. The purchase of this property allowed for a continuous walkway linking the two streets. Again shops were located on

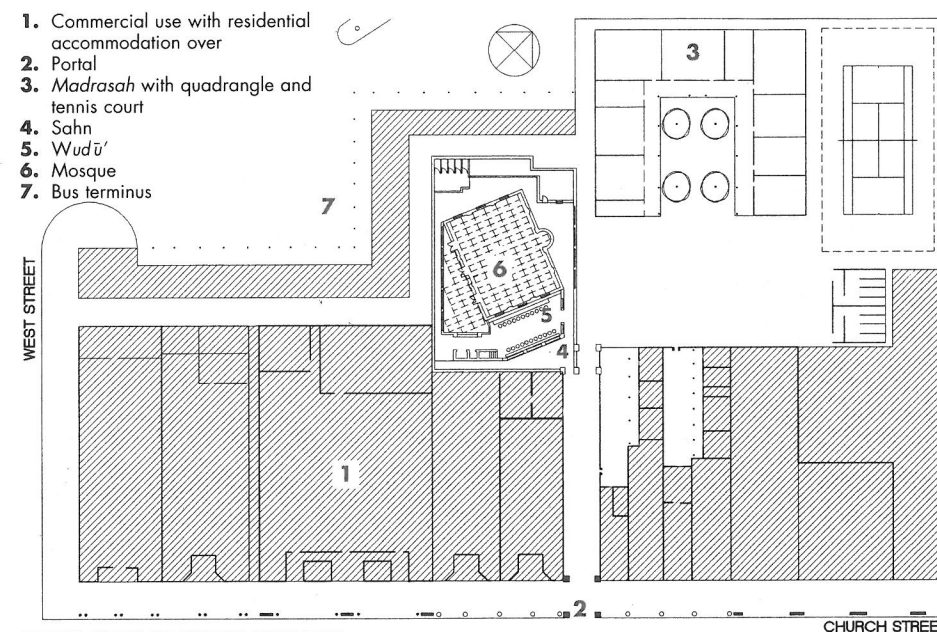
the ground floor facing Pietermaritz Street with housing provided above. The whole strip of property now became commercial or *waqf*, a form of charitable endowment. Funds generated from the property were used to fund a school and maintain the property.

CONCLUSIONS

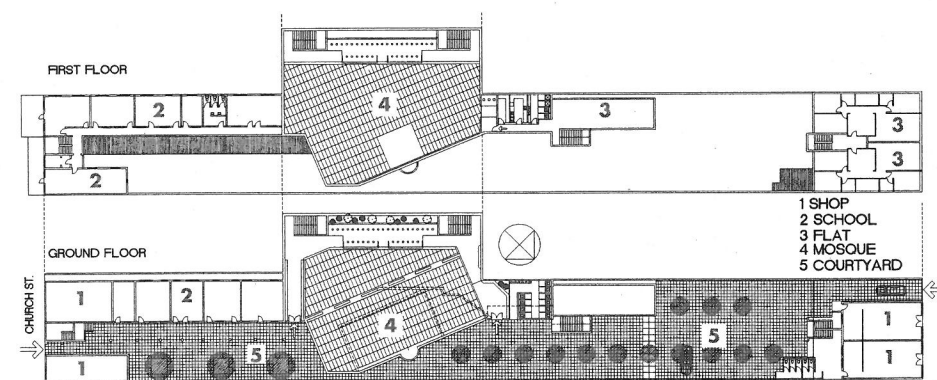
The Upper Church Street and Lower Church Street mosques are good examples of self-supporting complexes that have grown in an organic way over time accommodating both growth and change. The plan layouts were not preconceived but rather additive and a response to boundary conditions.

The proposed new Pomeroy mosque I am working on, has been influenced by the study of these mosques which also reminds me of the quotation by Viollet-leDuc I came across while at University: "An architect can only form part of a whole...."

Ismail Cassimjee



UPPER CHURCH STREET MOSQUE

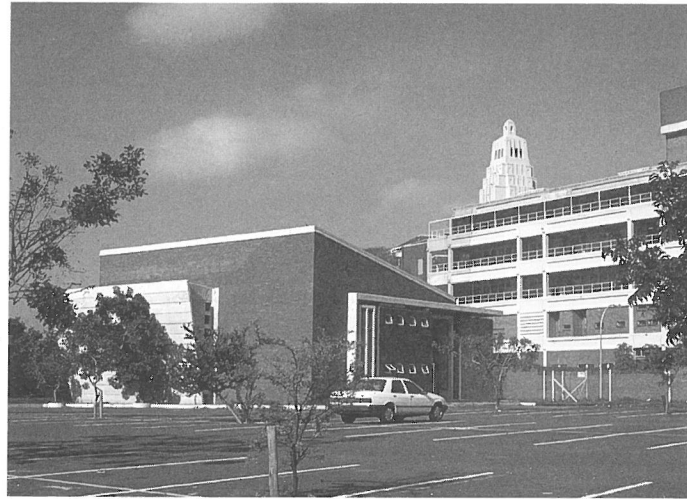


LOWER CHURCH STREET MOSQUE

Islamic Architecture

The University of Natal Jamā'at Khānah

Reconciling the quest for contemporaneity with the development of Islamic arts and crafts



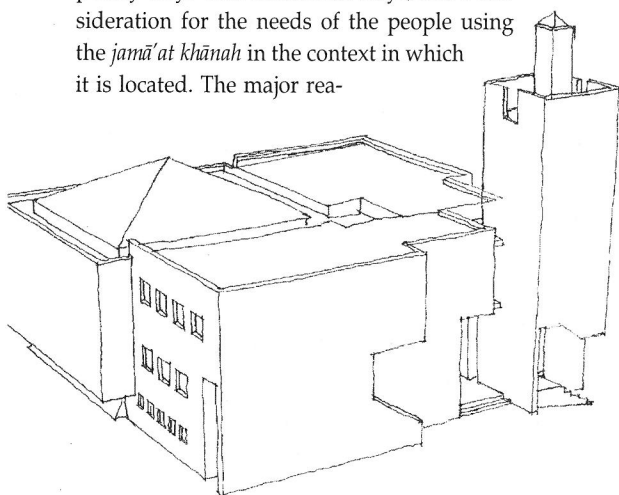
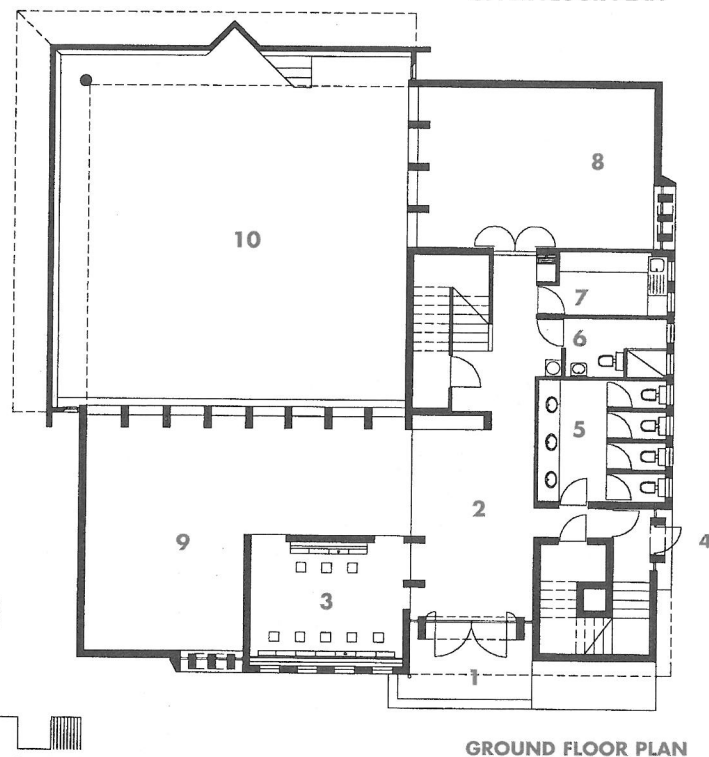
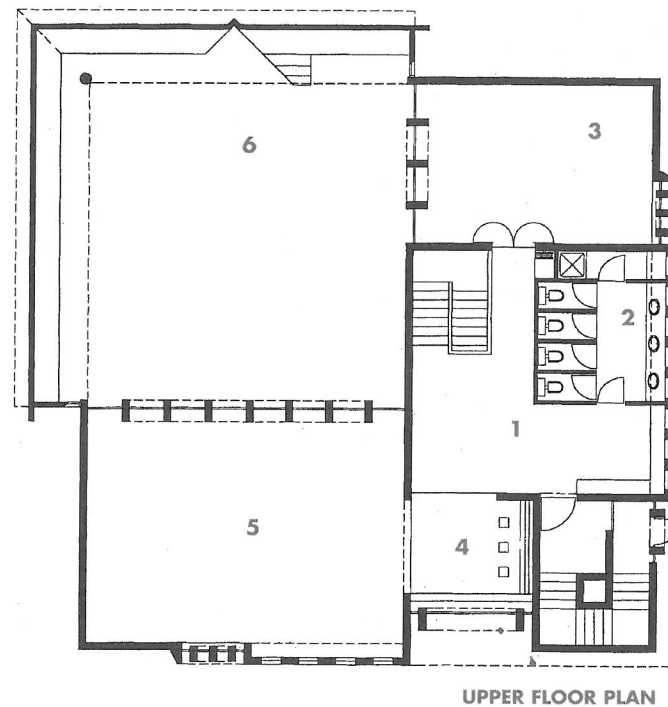
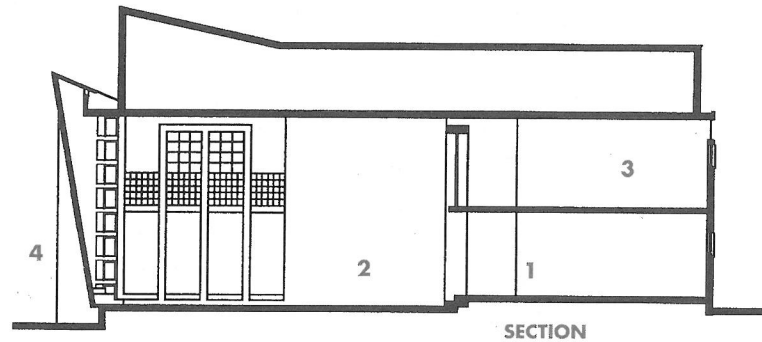
The University of Natal jamā'at khānah is not a mosque, but is not unlike a mosque. This building provides prayer facilities for the growing community of Muslim staff and students on the campus. For that community the jamā'at khānah is an embodiment of a social institution, a symbol of their important values and goals – it is ultimately a place that creates a setting for their rituals. Yet, it is like a mosque, because it holds the elements found in a mosque without which rituals could not take place. It also has its own interplay of form, volume, light, texture, approach and entry that evokes its own sense of spirituality.

The jamā'at khānah is located on campus, in a wide open parking lot. It is an edifice that deals with Islamic ideology in today's modern world – a synthesis of the new and the old, contemporary ways with traditional ways; and a consideration for the needs of the people using the jamā'at khānah in the context in which it is located. The major rea-

Section
1. Sahn
2. Male prayer
3. Female prayer
4. Canted qiblah wall

Ground Floor Plan
1. Male entrance
2. Shoe lobby
3. Wudū'
4. Female entrance
5. Toilets – Male
6. Disabled
7. Tea kitchen
8. Library
9. Sahn
10. Male prayer

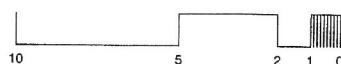
Upper Floor Plan
1. Female shoe lobby
2. Toilets – Female
3. Committee room
4. Female wudū'
5. Female prayer
6. Upper volume of congregational prayer space



TOP: The Jamā'at khānah surrounded by tarmac and conditioned by the materials of the adjacent Shepstone Building.

ABOVE: The symbolism

of the minaret was not acceptable to the University. Fortunately this is not an obligatory feature and many small mosques and places for congregational prayer lack them.



Islamic Decorative Art: A Touch of the Old

The jamā'at khānah at the University of Natal is without easily recognisable Islamic architectural features but rather makes links with traditional decoration and the skills of Mohammed Kanar and his team of craftsmen from Morocco. Their art has been used to define the entrance, the focus of the front door from the campus, and the mihrab, the focus of the faithful from inside the building. The team used two forms of applied craft, both are trades: mosaic panels known as *zali*j and plaster decoration known as *geps*.

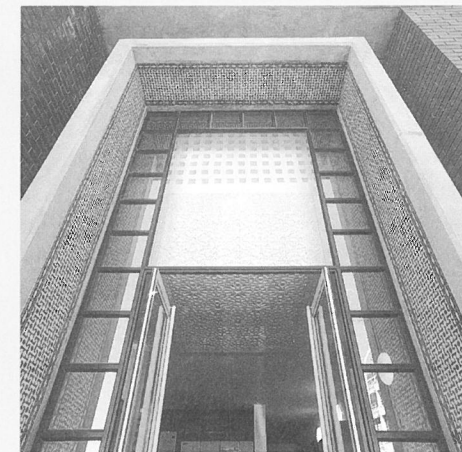
The art of *zali*j consists of enamelled terracotta mosaic squares cut by hand with heavy hammers to form special tiles which when assembled are applied as a panel to the surface to be decorated. The size, the cut, and thickness of the tiles varies and comes in vivid colours. Before setting the *zali*j the craftsman marks the basic lines of his design on the ground. The tiles are then assembled face down with great precision over the basic pattern.

Once the whole design is carefully laid out, the craftsman powders the *zali*j with a mixture of gypsum and cement which will then be moistened to glue the various parts together. Mortar is then poured over the panel and smoothed over with a long wooden paddle. When the panel has dried, it is ready for laying in place sometimes being cut into manageable pieces. Once correctly placed, the *zali*j panel is set against the surface where it is properly set, balanced and held in place by hooks or blobs of gypsum. Finally the craftsman pours thin mortar behind the panel from a bucket. This process may take several days and is done in successive layers to avoid pressure bursting the panels. When finished the panel is examined for any missing pieces or discrepancies and repaired if necessary and finally polished off with steel wool.

Geps or gypsum plaster decoration is extensively used in Morocco. Gypsum is applied in layers on the surface to be decorated after which it is levelled. The craftsman then usually sketches the pattern with the help of a ruler and divider or more frequently with a jig or stencil. If he uses a stencil the pattern is transferred to the surface with a pouch filled with cement or black powder. When dry the plaster is carved in 4 or 5 successive layers not only on the surface but in the hollows which may vary in depth. Sometimes the decorations are painted in different colours to further highlight the pattern.

The Moroccan craftsmen have remained loyal to the ancient *geps* and *zali*j traditions in carrying out in the same painstaking way the blending of old and the new in the jamā'at khānah at the University of Natal.

Yusuf Patel



son for the dominant use of the red brickwork and off-shutter concrete has to do with the environmental context. Therefore certain requirements had to be followed such as the materials of the adjacent Shepstone Building.

Islamic religious buildings are not seen as monuments but as places for people to worship and can be defined as "hidden architecture." The building has to be experienced internally that one can understand the external relationships between the different parts of the composition and their significance. The entrance is the only element that allows the outsider a chance to glance into the building.

Essentially what is expressed on the outside is the structure, the form and materials. There is no surface decoration except at the entrance and at the mihrab.

The qiblah wall contains the mihrab and its function is to direct the worshippers in the direction of Makkah when praying. It is through the mihrab that an invisible axis eventually terminates in Mecca. The mihrab is expressed as an elongated prism and its underlying importance is expressed externally by its surface decoration that is a continuation from the inside. Decoration is minimised on the outside.

The main entrance keeps to the strict but simple geometry found throughout the building's form. The notion of this entrance has been visually reinforced by a concrete portal that frames the entrance and a series of decorative designs above the double doors. Men enter through this entrance while women enter from a smaller (side) entrance on the east with direct access to the first floor gallery.

Before prayer, both men and women remove their shoes and perform wudū. In the support spaces (ablutions and tea kitchen) the windows are small, the ceilings are low, and the volumes reduced.

A series of rectangular portals define and separate the lobby from the prayer room. This transition is clearly articulated by a change in level down to the prayer space.

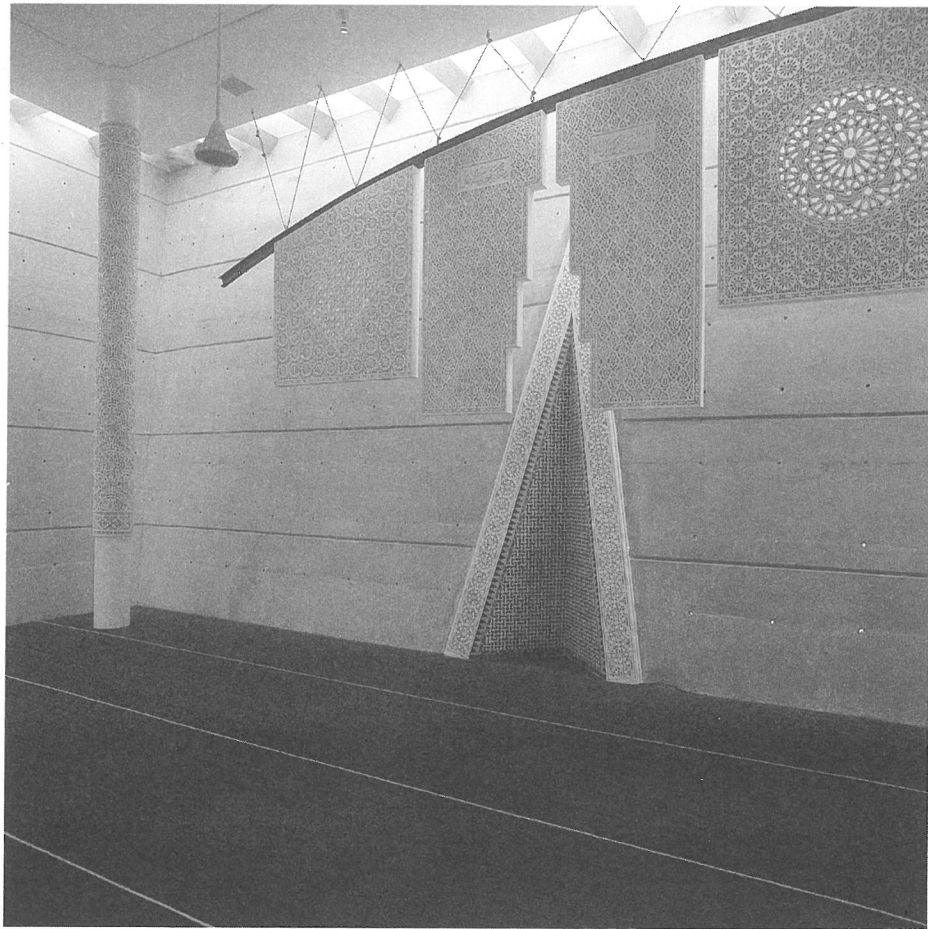
The double volume prayer space has natural light filtering through roof lights washing down onto the canted concrete walls. Although on plan the prayer room is square, there is a definite focus onto the *qiblah* because of the suspended decorated panels and the ornamentation in the *mihrab*.

The *jamā'at khānah* on the campus has reinterpreted the interplay of form, texture, light, volume, approach and entry in an Islamic way that evokes a sense of wanting to come and pray.

Extracted from an essay by Natal University student Miguel Francisco for the subject Theory of Architecture 1, 1995.

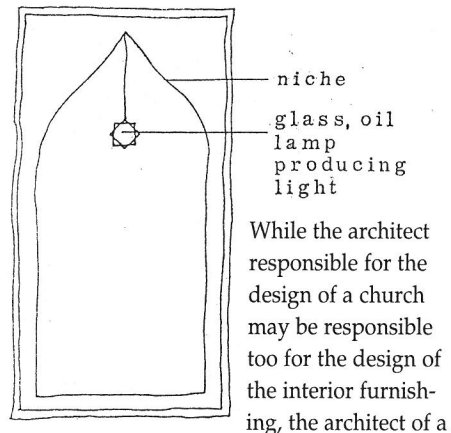
Architects: Architects Collaborative cc
Engineers: Young & Satharia
Quantity Surveyors: Bham Taylob & Khan

Interior of space for congregational prayer. Note the suspended panels and the corner column finished in *geps* (gypsum plaster). The *mihrab* is finished in *zali* (mosaic).



Islamic Architecture

The design of *musallā* (prayer rugs)



While the architect responsible for the design of a church may be responsible too for the design of the interior furnishing, the architect of a

mosque may be called upon to design the prayer rugs.

As prayer in Islam is mental, verbal, and physical, and involves repeated sequences of standing, bowing, prostration and genuflection, the space allowed therefore is the basic module for the design of the prayer space. According to the *Musjid* (sic) *Design Primer* of Yusuf Patel, the optimum module is 550 x 1300 which provides for 0.715 sq m per person.

In the design for the prayer rug for the Upper Church Street Mosque, Pietermaritzburg, Ismail Cassimjee sought inspiration from the *Qur'an*, in particular from the Sura Nur (Chapter of Light).

Verse 35: Parable of Light

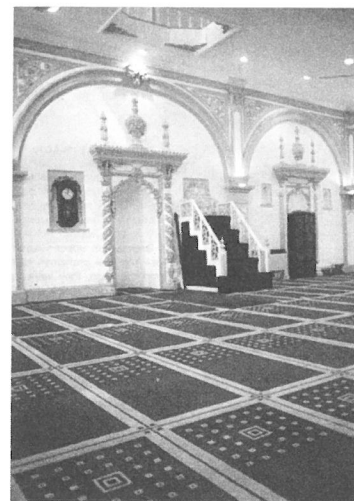
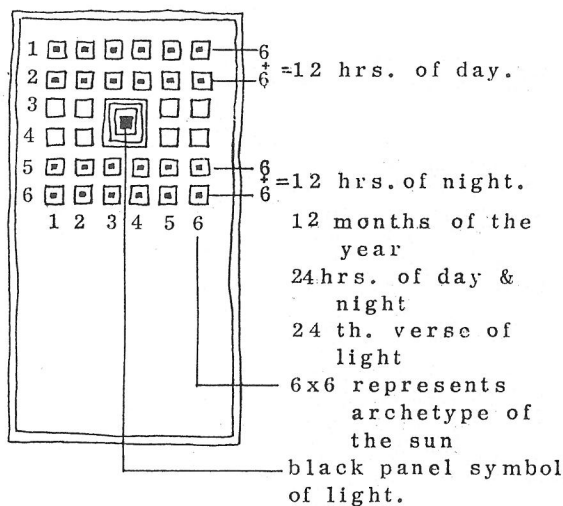
Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. the lamp is in a glass. the glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things.

Verse 40: Parable of Darkness

Or as darkness on a vast, abysmal sea. There covereth him a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon layer of darkness. When he holdeth out his hand he scarce can see it. And he for whom Allah had not appointed light, for him there is no light.

Verse 44: Parable of Day and Night

Allah causeth the revolution of the day and the night. Lo, herein is indeed a lesson for those who see.



Islamic Architecture

From *jihād* to *GTi*

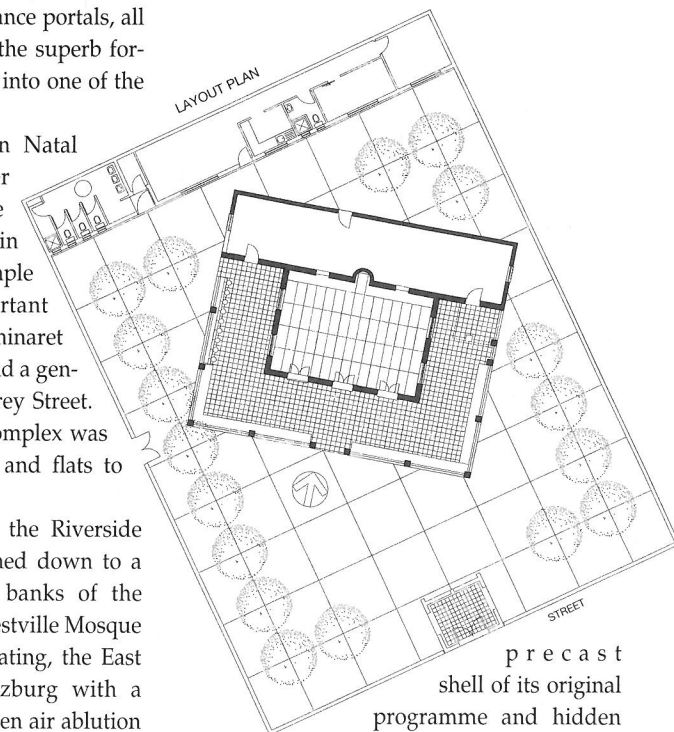
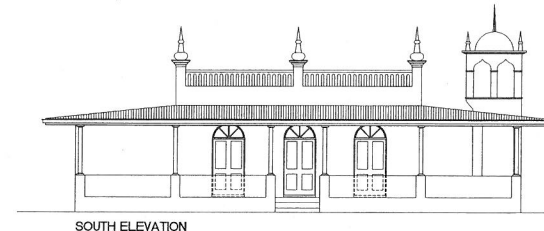
Islam originated on the Arabian peninsula, a sandy land of nomads and small towns clustered around sources of water. The vernacular shelters were sophisticated responses to climatic extremes but architecturally limited. This naivety changed dramatically as the new belief burst fanwise over the world, absorbing styles from newly conquered communities. The oldest extant Islamic building is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem [58AH (690-692AD)] built in the "Byzantine" style as a challenge to the existing buildings in that magnificent city.

Distinct schools emerged. The Maghribi (Moroccan/North African) style of North Africa with its stout minarets, battered walls and prayer halls was filled by a forest of columns due to the structural limitation of datepalm trunks. In contrast, the Ottoman style from Turkey with soaring domes was modelled on Hagia Sophia. Elsewhere the pencil minarets and tall pointed arches covered with dazzling patterns of glazed tiles reflected in long pools, defined the Persian style. Although distinctive, these styles shared strong similarities. They were all on the leading edge of available technology, richly pat-

terned with calligraphy, and introverted. The dominant prayer hall, open courtyard, water features, tall minarets and entrance portals, all orientated to Makkah, offered the superb formal opportunities that evolved into one of the golden ages of architecture.

The first Muslim settlers in Natal brought memories of another style, the Moguls of India. The first congregational mosque in Durban soon grew from a simple decorated box into an important civic focus, with a prominent minaret on the corner of Queen Street and a generous courtyard opening off Grey Street. Seventy years ago the whole complex was wrapped by decorative shops and flats to earn income for the mosque.

Elsewhere Sufie Sahib built the Riverside Mosque complex which stretched down to a high entrance portal on the banks of the Umgeni River. There are the Westville Mosque with its moulded courtyard seating, the East Street Mosque in Pietermaritzburg with a small entrance portal and an open air ablution area, the Howick Mosque, and many others.



precast shell of its original programme and hidden from the Umgeni River by a

block of flats. The May Street Mosque is usually behind roller shutters and the direct open air simplicity of the Westville and East Street Mosques has vanished. Finely proportioned prayer halls are doubling up and becoming sealed for air conditioning. *Wudūk hānas* resemble en-suite bathrooms and symbols are often reduced to an overworked selection of cut-out, pointed arches, gypsum mouldings, applied decorative pastes and the ubiquitous fibreglass onion dome. There is an apparently greater pre-occupation with the imagery of "mags" on a *GTi* than with the appreciation of subtleties such as the inwardly curved tips of an Arab stallion's ears, arguably the inspiration for the onion dome.

Perhaps the system of patronage is at fault. All patrons like to have their say. After all it has been suggested that a camel is a horse designed by a committee!

Fortunately, there are exceptions, notably by the contributors to this journal. The twist on to the axis of Makkah can be exploited as an exciting planning device, clear sequence of preparation for prayer or the retreat from the bustle of the city. Our growing band of Muslim architects deserve to be unfettered to rediscover patterns, climatic responses, innovative structural solutions and so restore a forward vision for Islamic Architecture.

Rodney Harber

Professor Harber is President of the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture - in his third term now! Editor

TOP RIGHT: Howick Mosque, 1926. Conservation proposals by Ismail Cassimjee. LEFT: Soofie Mosque, Ladysmith, 1965 - "a successful integration of traditional Islamic architecture with the building materials and structural systems of the '60s". BELOW & INSET: Reservoir Hills Mosque, Hallen Theron & Partners, 1971. Perforated cube (left) now "Islamically" gentrified with protruding fibreglass domes (below).

