A note to readers:

Dear WISH Seminar participants,

This paper is the second chapter of my doctoral dissertation, *Between Makassars: Site, Story, and the Transoceanic Afterlives of Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar* (2018). The dissertation explores the cultural afterlives of Eastern Indonesian exile, Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar (1626-1699), in Makassar, Indonesia and Macassar, South Africa over three centuries, in an attempt to understand the ongoing influences of early modern exile in the Indian Ocean world. Part of the project involves historicizing Shaykh Yusuf’s twin tombs (one in each of my study sites). The paper below deals with the development of his Macassar/Cape Town tomb as a site for the contestation and assertion of Muslim rights to property and recognition. My aim is to extend this chapter, to contextualise it within the broader literature on nation-making and citizenship in South Africa. I welcome any comments or questions regarding these themes, as well as any other queries that may arise.

- Saarah Jappie
Baas of the Kramat: Muslim place and belonging in 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century Cape Town

Introduction: Losing the Land

As we are sitting here, we are sitting on a very important historical and heritage site. It is a tradition that goes back for more than two hundred years, according to my research. And we are now facing a danger, and this is what Nazeem will talk about. We run the risk that the land here around the kramat will be involved in a land claim by...people...and also the Methodist Church. It is a huge threat, a threat that threatens the heritage of Muslims, who’ve been coming to this place, according to my research, for more than two hundred years. And I want to sketch a picture, just to make you aware of how important this area has been and still is for Muslims, especially Muslims of the Western Cape, and also of the whole of South Africa, because this is the cradle of Islam, where Shaykh Yusuf came to establish Islam in this area.\footnote{Ebrahim Rhoda, “Tuan Yusuf and His Sacrifices,” (Public talk, Kramat Easter Festival, Faure, Cape Town, April 5, 2015). I was physically present at the event and was also fortunate to obtain a recording courtesy of Voice of the Cape Radio.}

On the morning of April 5, 2015, community historian, Ebrahim Rhoda, took to the stage along with businessman and independent researcher, Nazeem Braaf, at the annual Kramat Easter Festival in Faure. They addressed the thin crowd as a part of the “Golden Hour” (Afr. Goue Uur) programme, aimed at promoting local Muslim history to both festival attendees and a radio audience, for the talk was broadcast live on Voice of the Cape Radio.\footnote{“Tuan Yusuf and his Sacrifices,” hosted by Yusuf Fisher, Goue Uur, aired April 5, 2017, on Voice of the Cape Radio.} Rather than simply discuss an idealised Muslim past, the two men aimed to alert their audience to an imminent legal threat, namely a land claim to the very ground that they occupied that day. Both Rhoda and Braaf used their heritage talk to call for community support of their counter-claim to the land, urging audience members to come forward and write affidavits in support. Towards the end of their thirty-minute discussion, Rhoda asked the audience, “Are we going to allow that we should lose this land around here? No way. No way.” The event ended with his request for the Cape Malay choir, the next scheduled act, to sing the so-called Cape Malay anthem, the Afrikaans song Roosa, perhaps as a rallying call for collective solidarity and pride in shared cultural heritage.\footnote{The song “Roosa” is the most famous of the so-called Nederlandsliedjies (Dutch songs), which form a significant part of Cape Malay musical traditions. For more on these songs, see: Armelle Gaulier and Denis-}
Rhoda and Braaf’s attempt at community outreach is one instance in a string of community mobilisation efforts that have stemmed from conflicts over Shaykh Yusuf’s gravesite, or *kramat*, and its surrounding landscape. Indeed, as much as the *kramat* is a site of memory for a specific religious-historical figure, it has also become a space for the contestation of land rights, ownership and identities, all linked to the site’s spiritual and historical importance. These histories of contestation have in turn become entangled with the shrine’s older history, adding new layers of memory to it. In this chapter I explore the *kramat*’s development, paying specific attention to its status as a place for both the assertion and contestation of minority rights and identities. As I will demonstrate, for the last three centuries, the *kramat* has been at the centre of contestations over land ownership, minority rights and heritage claims between local Muslims and a diverse range of “others,” from the Afrikaner elite to wealthy Muslim foreigners, with each instance demonstrating competition over who should be the master (or *baas*) of the *kramat* and its surrounding territory.

*The Circle of Islam*

Referred to by locals as the “Faure Kramat,” Shaykh Yusuf’s shrine is one of at least two dozen ornamental Muslim tombs scattered around the Western Cape, from the farmlands of the Boland to the slopes of Table Mountain. Tucked away in bushland or on mountainsides overlooking the ocean, these *kramats* mark the burial places of the pious, pioneering ancestors of the local Muslim community. The Cape Mazaar Society, a grassroots organisation overseeing these tombs, recognises twenty-four official *kramats* today. Their placement on the landscape is said to form a sacred geography, referred to as the “Circle of Islam,” which guards the city and its inhabitants from natural and other disasters.

The *kramats* mark both an historical and a spiritual geography in the greater Cape Town region. In most cases, they signal the burial site of a significant historical figure from the early Muslim community, such as seventeenth and eighteenth century political exiles and convicts believed to have first spread Islam at the Cape, and to have led resistance struggles

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4 The word *kramat* comes from the Arabic word *karama*, which literally means “blessings,” but in the context of saints refers to both closeness to Allah and the miracles associated with this status. In the Cape Town context, the shrine itself is referred to as a *kramat*, while in the Malay-Indonesian world, the shrine is sometimes referred to as a *makam keramat*, or “sacred grave.” For a discussion of the concept of *karamat* in Indonesia, see Julian Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), 2.

5 Mansoor Jaffer, ed., *Guide to the kramats of the Western Cape* (Cape Town: Cape Mazaar (Kramat) Society, 2010).

against the Dutch East India Company. Such figures include the political convict, Imam ‘Abd Allah bin Qādi ‘Abd al-Salam, more commonly known as Tuan Guru (d.1807) of Tidore in the East Indies, now buried in the Bo-Kaap, and K.H. Mataram, known as Tuan Matarah, exiled in 1744 to Robben Island, where his kramat still stands. The kramats thus record on the landscape both the historical presence of Muslims, and that of generations of individuals forcibly removed to the Cape of Good Hope from around the Indian Ocean Basin within VOC imperial networks. They invoke a history of struggle, cosmopolitanism and diaspora.

They are also perceived as spiritually potent sites, and represent what Victor Turner terms “a threshold in and out of time,” where the physical and supernatural worlds are seen to interact. As sacred spaces housing the pious deceased, many Muslims view the individual tombs as hubs of blessing, where miracles occur, wishes are fulfilled and closeness to God can be attained. Consequently, the tombs draw a consistent stream of visitors throughout the year who pray, reflect and deepen their connection with God via the buried “friend of God” (Ar. ṭālī Allāh). According to their caretakers, the tombs also attract clandestine visits from healers (Afr. doekoems) and their clients, who seek worldly rewards by manipulating the site’s power.

The existence of the kramats and the praxis related to them have in recent decades caused contention both within and without the Muslim community. From within, debates have arisen around the legality of saint veneration within Islamic tradition. For those against visitation (Ar. ziya`ra) of sacred tombs, Cape Town’s kramats are sites of polytheism (Ar. shirk), where pilgrims are seen to seek the favour of or even worship the dead, thereby

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7 Locals know Tuan Matarah as “Sayed Abdurahman Motura.” However, in a personal communication with the author on October 29, 2017, Michael Laffan pointed out, based on his archival research, that Tuan Matarah’s name was in fact K.H. Mataram. On Tuan Guru, see: Achmat Davids, The Mosques of Bo-Kaap (Cape Town: South African Institute of Arabic and Islamic Research, 1980). On oral histories of “Tuan Matarah” on Robben Island, see: Harriet Deacon, The Essential Robben Island (Bellville, Western Cape: Mayibuye Books, 1997), 34.


10 Caretakers at both the Tana Baru and Shaykh Yusuf kramats told me that they were aware of local, Muslim spirit guides, known as doekoems in Afrikaans (from the Malay/Indonesian term dukun) who would frequent the sites at strange hours, and would sometimes bring clients. The caretaker of the Tana Baru cemetery told me during a telephone interview in July 2013, during my pre-dissertation research, that the grounds keeper’s wife had been cursed by a doekoem. Aunty Barbie, Shaykh Yusuf’s kramat’s custodian, shared some stories about doekoems there during an interview. Zainunisa Benjamin, interview by author, Faure, Cape Town, April 25, 2015.
equating their significance and power with that of Allah.\(^{11}\) This intra-community contestation has run alongside broader disputes about private property and sacred heritage sites in the expanding city. In the early 2000s, a handful of high profile cases arose wherein *kramat* spaces on or adjacent to schools, homes or prime real estate, caused conflict between property owners seeking to expand their premises into the sacred space and concerned Muslims. Such situations, separate from but resonating with the more recent controversy at the Faure *kramat*, in turn led to land claims made on behalf of the Muslim community by the Muslim Judicial Council, and added to existing scholarly and public debate regarding restitution, burial grounds and the status of heritage space in Cape Town.\(^{12}\)

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The Big One, Shaykh Yusuf

Shaykh Yusuf’s kramat lies around 40 kilometres outside of Cape Town’s city centre. A whitewashed, green-domed building within a walled complex, it stands atop a hillock, and out from the surrounding farmland and sand dunes. The hill looks over an empty plain and several cottages below, which in turn skirt the banks of the Eerste River. I visited the site on multiple occasions in 2015, on weekend mornings, weekday afternoons, and sometimes towards the evening. Often the tomb would be empty for long periods, the silence eventually broken by a small group of pilgrims, who would recite Quranic verses together from memory, or who would read together from prayer books that they had brought with them. Others arrived alone, to seek solitude, reflect silently or recite from sacred texts by themselves. Unlike the gravesite in Indonesia, which we will visit in Chapter Three, ziyāra in Cape Town is an independent process, without the constant presence of official overseers, prayer readers or hawkers to engage with pilgrims and direct their pilgrimage experience.

While she is not permanently based there, the kramat has an official caretaker, named Zainunisa Benjamin (1950-). Also known as “Aunty Barbie,” she lives in a cottage below the shrine. She is a lifelong resident of the kramat area, having been raised there along with her six siblings, by parents who had chosen to move from Cape Town to what was then the small, isolated community as a young couple. Aunty Barbie is unsure of what prompted her parents
to relocate to the area, but once suggested to me that “maybe because it was the cheapest at that time.” Of her childhood, she described an isolated, rural and somewhat lonely place where “there was only bushes,” and “it was very hard, there were no cars and [they] had to ride in horses and a cart,” such that “it took us two days to go to Cape Town.” She also spoke of darkness, snakes, barefoot walks across the main road to school, and, in the wintertime, flooding rains. Aunty Barbie has been caretaker of the kramat since 1999, having taken over from the previous custodian, also a local woman, who, at the time of her death, had cared for the site for more than forty-five years. This woman in turn had taken over from her father-in-law, who was also a resident of the small kramat neighbourhood.

Aunty Barbie, a retired machinist, works on an unpaid basis for the Shahmahomed Trust, which has owned the kramat since 1908. Her day is spent between her home and the tomb, which she visits multiple times each day, from the early morning until just after the final, evening prayers [Ar. ‘Ishā’]. Her work is officially limited to ensuring that the tomb is clean, lighting some incense next to the grave, and reporting any concerns to the trustee. However, through sixteen years as the site’s custodian, in addition to her lifetime residency

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13 Zainunisa Benjamin (Aunty Barbie), interview by author, Faure, Cape Town, April 25, 2015. All direct quotations attributed to Aunty Barbie in this section stem from this interview, unless otherwise stated.
14 Unfortunately I was unable to get the names of the previous two caretakers.
of the area, she is the foremost authority on pilgrimage processes and patterns, the relics pilgrims leave behind at the site, and the stories they take back home with them.

Of all of the kramats in Cape Town, Aunty Barbie noted to me that people choose to come most frequently to Shaykh Yusuf’s, “because this is mos the big one,” for he was the first one to read the Qur’an in South Africa, to her knowledge. From her observations, the ziyāra process at the Faure kramat is, at its basic level, a matter of seeking divine mediation, whereby individuals and groups enter the tomb and connect with Shaykh Yusuf, as a wālī, in order to have their prayers relayed to the Almighty. However, the means, motivations and schedules vary. Hajj season is the busiest time, when the prospective pilgrims to Mecca visit the major kramats around the Cape peninsula, in an act of spiritual reflection and honouring of one’s spiritual roots before embarking on Islam’s most important pilgrimage of all. In contrast to the festivities of the hajj season, during Ramadan, people come alone to sit by the grave and read from the Qur’an, seeking “peace of mind” in the quiet of the kramat. On weekday evenings, Sufi groups and students from local Muslim schools perform collective remembrance (Ar. dhikr) inside the tomb, sometimes spilling over to the mosque at the bottom of the hill if the group is too large. Often these groups come to spread large cloths, called chadars, over the grave, as an act of respect and reverence for the saint.15

In terms of types of visitors, alongside dhikr groups and hajjis there are once-off visitors, usually foreigners, whose names she records in her guestbook. Aunty Barbie notes that Indonesian tourists often come on ziyāra to take pictures, but they insist that Shaykh Yusuf’s body is back in Makassar. And then there are the people whom she calls “the regulars,” who, to her knowledge, journey to the kramat “with their intentions … to do other things,” referring to both unorthodox and unsavoury ziyāra practices. These individuals come alone, or sometimes with clients, to draw on the site’s spiritual potency for worldly purposes, often through black magic. Aunty Barbie rarely engages with these people and only knows them by face. However, she explained to me, purposefully using veiled language, that she “can see what [they are] doing, with what they go in, [and] how they come out.” Furthermore, once a year she comes face to face with the materiality of this work, when she removes the chadars stacked high upon the grave, of which she claims there are “thousands.” Between the many layers of cloth, she has found all manner of objects. Describing this

process to me, she exclaimed, “You won’t believe me, there’s teeth, panties, pads, it’s unbelievable the stuff you get in there … Every time it’s the same … And love letters …”

Once she has removed the chadars and the objects wedged between them, she burns them all, and then she burns the resulting ashes too.

Over the years she has heard many stories of healing, supernatural occurrences and strange sightings at the kramat. One day, when we visited the tomb together, she relit the incense and then mentioned to me that some people say they’ve seen “him,” meaning Shaykh Yusuf, in the area. He goes to the river (Afr./Ind. kālī) to perform his ablutions, according to these stories.\(^{16}\) As for the history of the gravesite, and whether his remains were still buried there, she had told me, “Some people say only his thumb is here, but his body did go back to Indonesia … Everyone is talking about it … but I don’t know.”

![Layers of chadars on Shaykh Yusuf’s kramat. Image by author.](image)

**Figure 4:** Layers of chadars on Shaykh Yusuf’s kramat. Image by author.

*Securing A Place for the ‘Malays’*

The early history of Shaykh Yusuf’s Cape Town gravesite remains vague, with few sources detailing its physical condition or social function prior to the nineteenth century. Following his death in 1699, Shaykh Yusuf was buried at the farm where he and his retinue had been exiled five years earlier, and where the kramat now stands. We know that in 1704, VOC

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authorities permitted representatives from Gowa to exhume Shaykh Yusuf’s remains and return them to South Sulawesi.\textsuperscript{17} As Aunty Barbie pointed out, myths circulating in both South Africa and Indonesia relate that only a portion of his body – in most versions, a finger – was exhumed and the rest remained in the original grave.\textsuperscript{18} Around the same time Dutch minister, Francois Valentijn, observed an “ornamental Moslem tomb,” believed to be the grave of Shaykh Yusuf, during a visit to Zandvliet.\textsuperscript{19} Despite this sighting in 1704, there is no evidence to suggest that the grave persisted through the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, nor are there accounts of Muslim visitation to Zandvliet during this period. Indeed, a local folktale has it that the grave was forgotten, and only rediscovered much later by a shepherd boy, who fell asleep in the fields nearby and was led to the grave in a dream, by a man dressed in a green cloak.\textsuperscript{20} While the grave may have been forgotten, the memory of Shaykh Yusuf’s past presence at Zandvliet persisted. As Hendrik Cloete noted in 1791, the surrounding sand dunes were named the “Macassar Downs” (D: \textit{Macassar Duijnen}) in memory of the Makassarese retinue that had briefly lived there.\textsuperscript{21}

A noticeable Muslim presence at the site re-emerged only from the 1820s. It is from that time that European travellers’ and Colonial Government reports on the Malays – a common but problematic term used by the British to describe the established, creole Muslim community – make reference to Muslims journeying to the site and camping on the field below the \textit{kramat} over the Easter weekend. In a visit to Zandvliet in 1834, traveller James Holman remarked on the “Mahommedan Chapel” there, and described how at Easter time the Malays would “travel in vehicles of various descriptions, from the largest wagon to the smallest cart, taking with them a sufficient quantity of provisions to serve for the whole of the time they intend being absent from their homes,” which was generally the entire Easter Weekend.\textsuperscript{22} This visible and vocal Muslim presence can be attributed to two main factors: the

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\item\textsuperscript{17} Frederik De Haan \textit{Priangan: De Preanger-Regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuur tot 1811} (Batavia: Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1912), 248.
\item\textsuperscript{18} B.F. Matthes, “Eenige Makassaarsche en Boeginesche legenden,” in \textit{Jaarboekje Celebes}, vol. 1, ed. K. Sutherland (Makassar: K. Sutherland, 1864), 49-77.
\item\textsuperscript{21} As explained by Hendrik Cloete in a complaint about outsider use of land at Zandvliet, made to local authorities in 1791. See: WCARS, Resolutions of Council of Policy (C) 1226, November 11, 1791, fol. 133.
\item\textsuperscript{22} James Holman, \textit{Voyage Round the World including travels in Africa, Asia, Australasia, America etc etc: from MDCCCCXVII to MDCCCCXXXII}, vol. 2 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, 1834), 153.
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effective unbanning of the public practice of Islam in 1804, and, as we will see below, the granting of certain rights to the colony’s “Mahommedan” subjects.

Aside from this camping tradition, the tomb had already become a much-revered Muslim pilgrimage site, and formed a spatial anchor for its core religious beliefs and practices. Illustrating this point, in 1837 Cape Town-based Imam Achmat of Bengal (c.1750-1843) sent a statement to the Governor General of the Cape, G.N. Napier, regarding Muslim access to the kramat. Achmat stressed the utmost importance of the burial place of “the High Priest of the Mahommedan faith” close to the Macassar Downs, and claimed that pilgrimage there had been occurring for close to a century and a half.23

As your excellency well knows it is required of all who are devout in our worship and who have the means of doing so to go to Mecca or Medina every year – but owing to the distance and many obvious difficulties such a pilgrimage is impractical to our people residing in the Colony. It has therefore been permitted and practiced since the death of the high priest who was buried on the spot above mentioned and which he so long occupied to proceed thither as to the most sacred place for us to assemble for the worship of the almighty.24

As a “second Mecca,” access to Shaykh Yusuf’s tomb was imperative and Muslim leaders began to voice their collective rights to this land. This discourse of land rights emerged in the context of potential dispossession in the 1830s, when the government granted much of the farmland surrounding the kramat to Pieter Laurens Cloete (1803-1884), one of the largest slave-owners of his time, and a member of a powerful landowning dynasty.25

Achmat sent his memorial to the governor in protest, to warn him of the risk that this grant posed to the Muslim community. As he noted, it was “obviously the design of [the] government to protect the rights of the Mohammedan subjects,” such that the grant title given to Cloete included a clause stipulating that privilege should be granted to Muslims and any others visiting the tomb, and further that “neither the present nor any future proprietor of the said land shall at any time molest or prevent persons going there or interrupt them in their worship.”26 Other conditions included that the buildings were not to be damaged, and

23 WCARs, Colonial Office (CO) (Memorials Received), 3996, “The Memorial of Imam Achmet, High Priest of the Mahommedans of this Colony, 1837,” fol. 22.
24 WCARs CO 3996, fol. 22
26 WCARs CO 3996, fol. 22-23.
pilgrims should not be charged for access to the site. Achmat questioned the clause’s effectiveness, suggesting that “the wording is so loose and defective that the whole of our people live in constant apprehension of being ultimately ejected and of suffering in the meantime every species of obstruction.”27 Thus, while acknowledging the “evident paternal intentions of the government of a great and liberal empire” he criticised the “imperfect mode” of communicating them.28

Achmat was informed that the grant could not be changed, and in the years to follow, the community’s fears came to pass. In 1857, Achmat’s son, Gamien, appeared at the Cape Town police office to lodge a complaint about Cloete’s attempts to prevent Muslims from reaching the tomb.29 He expressed that “Last year, when proceeding thither in the nights-time, we found that a ditch had been cut across the road by which an accident had almost happened” and on the next day, a servant of Cloete approached Gamien Achmat and his companions, demanding that they pay a fee for their carts. However, the group refused to pay. The outcome of this complaint is unknown. However, it demonstrates that Muslims were prepared to take official recourse to maintain long-held rights of access. It also illuminates Cloete’s attempts to again hinder, and even monetise, Muslim access to the property.

Over the next few years, rights of access were transformed into rights of ownership, which were the result of Muslim military support during the British frontier wars against the amaXhosa. During the “War of the Axe” (1846-7), a mixed group of conscripts and volunteers formed the so-called “Malay Corps.” Upon their return to Cape Town they were rewarded for this service through two land grants: one in Cape Town proper, and the other at Zandvliet.30 The land in Cape Town was used to build a new mosque in Chiappini Street, which came to be known unofficially as the “Queen Victoria Mosque,” in reference to its connections to the British Crown. Meanwhile, the plot at Zandvliet was designated as a camping ground for local Muslims. The deeds were officially registered under the name of Imam Abdol Wahab of Cape Town, for the benefit of the “Mohomedan Congregation.”31 In

27 WCARS CO 3996, fol. 22.
28 WCARS CO 3996, fol. 23.
31 Deeds Office Cape Town, T121/1862, Deed of Transfer between Pieter Laurens Cloete and Abdol Wahab for and behalf of the Mahomedan Congregation. The price of the transfer was the minimal (perhaps nominal) amount of three pounds and fifteen shillings (roughly US$336 today, according to Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, “Computing ‘Real Value’ Over Time.” In 1866, Abdol Wahab purchased two more lots at Zandvliet, again on behalf of the Mahomedan Congregation. See: Deeds Office Cape Town, T266/1866, Deed of Transfer between Henry Benjamin and Abdol Wahab for and behalf of the Mahomedan Congregation.
1862, after this plot was granted, a new tomb for Shaykh Yusuf was built, once more under Imam Abdol Wahab’s direction. As historian Achmat Davids has pointed out, the decision to gain ownership of land at Zandvliet, and to construct a new shrine for a shared ancestor and “powerful leader of the past” was part of a strategy to unite the fracturing Muslim community at the time. The new tomb marked a clear Muslim-owned space and story of shared ancestry in the farmlands of the Cape Colony.

The securing of the land in 1862 appears to have sparked an upturn in Muslim land ownership of plots at Zandvliet. Nazeem Braaf’s meticulous research on this matter demonstrates that individuals and families purchased multiple plots, and sometimes subdivided plots, in the vicinity. Families eventually built small cottages on sites close to the kramat, which went on to form the small residential community that Aunty Barbie grew up in.

While the camping ground was listed under the name of Abdol Wahab and other Muslims owned plots nearby, the actual land of the kramat was under different ownership. It appears that the relevant plot was first secured from Zandvliet’s owners in 1862, by a “Henry Benjamin.” Within 15 years it passed through the hands of three different Muslim owners, the last of whom was a man listed as “Abdol Ragman,” who owned the kramat from 1877 until 1908, when he went bankrupt. The property was then placed for sale at public auction, and drew interest from Muslim and Christian buyers alike. Mohamed Galies, the self-proclaimed “Mohammedan Bishop of Cape Town,” declared in a sworn statement in 1919 that the auction presented another opportunity to keep the site in Malay hands. He explained that, on the day of the auction, the imams of Cape Town gathered to discuss a plan to collectively purchase the ground for the Malays, on the reasoning that “the man who is dead is a Malay and not an Indian, and the Malay people have looked after it all this time. And all this time … it has been free to the Moslem people.”

During the bidding, the price of the kramat plot increased, until the Muslims present realised that not one of them could afford to make another bid, and that the kramat might be lost to their community once more. Yet all hope was not lost, for there was a man with grand

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This transfer cost twenty-one pounds (about US$2,330 today, according to Officer and Williamson, “Computing ‘Real Value’ Over Time”).

32 Achmat Davids, The History of the Tana Baru: The Case for the Preservation of the Muslim Cemetery at the Top of Long Market Street (Cape Town: Committee for the Preservation of the Tana Baru, 1985)


intentions and sufficient wealth to eventually make the winning bid. This was Hajee Sullaiman Shahmahomed, who obtained the land for the “fancy price” of 87 pounds and 10 shillings (roughly 11,000 US dollars today).\textsuperscript{35} Although the kramat remained in Muslim hands, this new ownership presented threats of an entirely different variety to collective identity and rights.

\textit{The Newcomer}

Shahmahomed was an Indian businessman who had arrived in Cape Town just sixteen years earlier. Born in 1859 to a Memon family in the Kathiawar region of Gujarat, he was raised by a single mother and spent much of his early life in poverty. At the age of fifteen, he left school to study business under the tutelage of merchants, and at twenty years old he left India to become a travelling merchant, dealing primarily in cloth. His travels began in Southeast Asia with a business partner before he moved west to Yemen and then down the East African coast, eventually reaching the British colonies in southern Africa. While he had initially planned to continue on his trade route to Australia, Shahmahomed decided to make Cape Town his new home instead. According to family oral history, he began his business activities in Cape Town as a fish merchant.\textsuperscript{36} He then transitioned into real estate, where he made a considerable fortune – so much so that he was able to travel the world by steamship twice.\textsuperscript{37}

As an Indian merchant who chose to settle at the Cape in the late nineteenth century, Shahmahomed belonged to a class of immigrants generally known as “passenger Indians,” a term used to describe people who paid for their own fares and made their journeys independent of governmental arrangements between India and the British colonies, in stark contrast to the predicament of Natal’s indentured labourers.\textsuperscript{38} Passenger Indians first began to arrive in South Africa from 1869, and by 1911 it was estimated that around thirty thousand


\textsuperscript{36} This information was described by Shahmahomed’s youngest daughter to local cultural expert Dr Cassiem D’arcy. Cassiem D’arcy, interview by author, Cape Town, November 10, 2016. Shahmahomed also regularly advertised his real estate business in the Indian Opinion newspaper.

\textsuperscript{37} These travels and his biography are documented in Shahmahomed’s travelogue. See: Hajee Sullaiman Shah Mahomed, \textit{Journal of my Tours Round the World, 1886-1887 and 1893-1895: Embracing travels in various parts of Africa, Australia, Asia, America and Europe} (Bombay: Duftur Ashkara Oil Engine Press, 1895). The travelogue was republished in 2007 as: Hajee Sullaiman Shah Mahomed, \textit{Tales from Five Continents: The 19th Century Travel Diaries of Hajee Sullaiman Shah Mahomed, 1880–1895} (Cape Town: Dome Publications and International Peace University of South Africa, 2007).

such immigrants were present in South Africa. Their main motivation for migration was commercial: specifically the trade in goods supplied from India to the growing market of indentured labourers. By the 1890s their success proved to be a threat to white traders and consequently legal restrictions were placed on their activities.

Most passenger Indians at Cape Town hailed from the Konkan coast and parts of Gujarat other than Kathiawar, making Shahmahomed an outsider even within the community of Indian migrants in the area. However, as a Memon he most likely would have found some affinity with fellow Muslim Indian merchants, who were at least partially accepted by the Malay Muslim community, praying in the same mosques and sometimes marrying into the community. In 1888 Shahmahomed himself married local Malay woman Rahima Salie (1869-1918), daughter of an imam and fishmonger, with whom he resided in Cape Town’s city centre and raised eleven children.

![Figure 5: A photograph of a young Shahmahomed in Bombay [n.d.]. Image courtesy of Dr. Cassiem D’arcy.](image)

While sharing a faith with, and even being married into, the community, Shahmahomed was not necessarily wholly integrated, nor did he self-identify with the local Malays. Indeed, his decision to purchase the kramat was equally – if not less – motivated by the needs of the local Muslims as it was by his own desire to establish a lasting, personal
legacy in Southern Africa, specifically in the arenas of history, education and culture. For, in addition to purchasing the *kramat* of Shaykh Yusuf, he went on to endow the Department of Arabic Studies at the University of Cape Town, and to purchase and rebuild the *kramat* at Constantia. He later bequeathed generous amounts of money in his will to the South African National Society for the preservation of old landmarks, and to several libraries in the area.\(^{39}\)

![The Constantia kramat today. Image by author.](image)

The roots of Shahmahomed’s turn to cultural philanthropy, and part of his social distance from the local community, lie in his travel experience. Indeed the impact of travel on the merchant’s character has been emphasised by at least one historian, M.T. Ajam, who once noted, “it was travelling and heightened powers of observation that also made [Shahmahomed’s] temperament quite unlike that of his Capetonian contemporaries of his social and political status.”\(^{40}\) During his time in Cape Town Shahmahomed embarked on two world tours, the second of which lasted two years and took him from Australia to North America, via Southeast and East Asia. He subsequently journeyed through Europe to the Middle East, and then from the Sub-Continent back to Cape Town. Through this impressive journey Shahmahomed was struck by strange climates, intriguing mannerisms, curious

\(^{39}\) For details of Shahmahomed’s will, see: WCARS CSC 2/1/1/1212 REF: 311, “Illiquid Case: South African Association as Executor of Hajee Sullaiman Shahmahomed Estate vs. The Trustees, Hajee Sullaiman Shahmahomed Academy Trust & Two Others. 30 November, 1931.”

characters, saints’ tombs and other architectural wonders. For instance, his travelogue entry from his trip to Turkey, reads:

I spent twelve days in Constantinople and saw many remarkable mosques, among other things. When our vessel reached Constantinople and we made for the shore, the numerous domes of these mosques struck me as offering a grateful welcome to a follower of the Prophet. As Moscow is known as the City of Temples, so Constantinople is styled the City of Mosques. They are to be seen here, there and everywhere.41

Of his trip to Japan, he wrote:

Having spent a day in the Japanese town [of Nagasaki], our vessel resumed its progress in the evening. Japan is divided into four islands, and we made our way across the inland sea. And what a weird, wonderful sight was presented as we went along! There were isles on either side of us, with their wooden houses nestling peacefully in the bosom of the trees. The hills were full of forest, clothed in the loveliest green. The snow-clad tops of distant peaks were grandly illuminated by the sun. I cannot really describe this delightful scene. I was totally charmed by this beautiful paradise, as indeed was everyone else on board.42

After his return in 1895, and inspired by all he saw, Shahmahomed vowed to bring an appreciation of education, culture and history to the Muslims of the Cape Colony, and to contribute towards the preservation of historical relics within the region. Thus, when the news of the sale of the kramat property reached him, he had found the perfect opportunity to establish his legacy. Once he gained the deeds to the property, Shahmahomed enacted a host of changes connected to both the site and its history – with no apparent consultation with the existing community connected to the kramat – which would ultimately transform the physical face and social meaning of Shaykh Yusuf’s tomb.

Making Changes: Access, Story and Structure

Between his purchase of the kramat in 1908 and his death in 1929, Sullaiman Shahmahomed’s activities at Shaykh Yusuf’s tomb complex altered its accessibility, received history and physical appearance. Ultimately these revisions worked to simultaneously open

41 Shahmahomed, Tales from Five Continents, 78.
42 Shahmahomed, Tales from Five Continents, 116.
the *kramat* to a broader audience, and to distance the existing Muslim community from the site.

The most immediate innovation Shahmahomed introduced was that of ownership. In December 1908, he approached a notary public in order to establish the Hajee Sullaiman Shahmahomed Trust, for the purposes of the overseeing of the site. During his lifetime he was to be the sole trustee. Following his death, the Trust stipulated that three people were to have ultimate power over the *kramat* and the funds allocated by Shahmahomed for its upkeep: the Civil Commissioner of the Cape or another official administering the region, a “Moslem professing the Sune faith” selected by the Mayor of the City of Cape Town and a descendant of Shahmahomed. 43 By creating this power structure through legal channels, Shahmahomed effectively narrowed possibilities for the involvement of the broader Muslim community in decision-making regarding the *kramat* – both during his lifetime and in the distant future. Instead, the upkeep of the site was now the exclusive business of local government authorities, a single Muslim appointed by a government authority, and the Shahmahomed family.

As the years progressed, limitations over legal rights to the property spilled over into pilgrims’ rights of access and movement. These restrictions emerged in 1914, when Shahmahomed issued a notice, via his attorney, in the South African News banning “persons visiting or frequenting” the *kramat* from bringing their vehicles and animals, or lighting fires within the fenced boundaries of the site.44 The notice also warned readers that Shahmahomed had become aware of vandalism at the site, including the removal of silk coverings and carpets from inside the shrine, and that anyone caught damaging the monument would be prosecuted. In February 1918, these restrictions were further extended and formalised through the placement of a formal notice listing all actions prohibited on the property, and within the *kramat* itself. Visitors were not permitted to: sit, loiter or sleep in the *kramat*; beg for alms or make collections; disturb, remove, injure or destroy rugs, decorations or articles of any description; pick or uproot trees or plants in the area; tamper with or remove any portion of the enclosure or the structures within it; pitch tents or erect any other temporary structures without written consent; bring vehicles or animals into the enclosure. The notice was signed by Shahmahomed, as well as the Mayor of Cape Town and the Commissioner of

43 WCARS, CSC 2/1/1/859 Ref 253, “Deeds Constituting the Hajee Sullaiman Shahmahomed Kramat Trust.” Shahmahomed ultimately established three trusts, the deeds of which can be found in archival files – from personal correspondence to court cases – in a number of repositories in South Africa.

44 J.B. Kayser, “Warning: To persons visiting or frequenting the KRAMAT and DARGAH near Eerste River Mouth,” *South African News*, January 24, 1914.
the Cape. The authorisation of these regulations by two non-Muslim, governmental authorities no doubt added insult to the injury of having the community’s behaviour policed. In addition to these prohibitions, the caretaker began to lock the kramat, limiting pilgrims’ access. Indeed, the caretaker seems to have been the only community member that Shahmahomed had an amicable relationship with.

Many of the rules that Shahmahomed enforced seem reasonable, in particular those restrictions aimed to limit damage to the kramat. Yet the forcefulness of these notices and threats of prosecution, in addition to the locking of the shrine itself, communicated a clear message of control and ownership. Specifically, such moves told visitors that they were not on their own territory and that their actions and practices in the once communal space were now both monitored and restricted.

*Rambles Through the Archives*

One of the reasons behind Shahmahomed’s initial attraction to Shaykh Yusuf’s tomb was that he had read about the Shaykh's life story in official history books, such as the work of archivist Henry C.V. Leibbrandt (1837-1911) and journalist Ian D. Colvin (1877-1938). Attracted to the romance of a noble, Muslim man who fought the imperial oppressor to the end, Shahmahomed desired to pay proper homage to this contribution. And what better way to do this than to ensure that the story was retold at Shaykh Yusuf’s final resting place, where there was no written information about the great man at all? Instead, it had been through collective memory and the annual visitation of the site at Easter that knowledge of both Shaykh Yusuf and the space itself had been passed down through the generations. Until the coming of Shahmahomed, Shaykh Yusuf’s history was not attached to the site, but rather to the traditions of the people who frequented it.

In his mission to publicly record the biography, Shahmahomed neglected to consult the existing Muslim community about their understanding of Shaykh Yusuf’s life and importance. Rather, he went straight to what he most likely deemed “proper historians” for their assistance in piecing together the narrative. His main resource was the official parliamentary archivist at the time, Colin Graham Botha. Botha’s certainly revisited the notes of previous archivists and consulted the VOC records held at Cape Town for

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46 See Chapter Four for a detailed exploration of the textual life of Shaykh Yusuf in Cape Town.
information regarding Shaykh Yusuf’s stay in Cape Town.\(^{48}\) Having exhausted these resources, Botha reached out to his counterparts at Batavia, B.J.A. van Wettum of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, and the Netherlands Indies national archivist, Frederik de Haan, who both provided crucial details about Shaykh Yusuf’s activities in the Indies. He then compiled the relevant fragments of information and integrated them into an historical pastiche included as “Annexure C” of the Kramat Trust Deeds. It was this narrative – one drawn from colonial archives, and, via colonial scholars – that Shahmahomed eventually engraved on the site itself. In inscribing an official story onto the kramat, Shahmahomed hoped to educate the local Muslim community about their own, proud past. However, by privileging a history sourced externally from the local population, he further alienated them from the site and its story.

*Constructing a Famous Moslem Shrine*\(^{49}\)

The most drastic shift Shahmahomed orchestrated at the kramat was the reconstruction of the site itself, inspired by “the fashion of those he had seen during his travels,”\(^{50}\) and by the grand, domed buildings of the East in particular. This project took eleven years to complete, and involved the addition of two new monuments and a complete renovation of the tomb.

Rather than begin with the rebuilding of the tomb, Shahmahomed and his construction team started with two smaller projects: the erection of the dargah and the monument to Shaykh Yusuf.\(^{51}\) The dargah was a plot of land where four of Shaykh Yusuf’s companions were believed to be buried, and consisted of, in the words of architect F.K. Kendall, “a stone platform about eight feet high with a low wall raised above the platform level, and four graves indicated by slightly raised stones on the top of the platform.”\(^{52}\) This part of the burial complex, although adjacent to the tomb, was not on the kramat property, but rather on a separate plot, which Shahmahomed purchased 5 years after his original purchase of the kramat. To bring it in line with his vision, in 1918 Shahmahomed had his monumental stonemasons rebuild the structure’s wall and erect an impressive stone pillar with a

\(^{48}\) These papers are held at the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Branch. NLSA, C. Graham Botha Collection, MSC 42 C A (10) (1) “Sheikh Yussuf.”

\(^{49}\) As the kramat was described in the article “A Famous Moslem Shrine at Cape Town,” *Moslem World*, 1931, 85-86.

\(^{50}\) “A Familiar Figure at the Faure Kramat,” *The Cape Standard*, December 14, 1936, 3.

\(^{51}\) The term dargah is of Persian origin, and is often used to refer to the tombs of Muslim saints.

\(^{52}\) WCARS CSC 2/1/1/1107 Ref: 83 “Illiquid case: Shahmahomed vs. R Cane and Son (Philip Albert Cane),” 17.
commemorative tablet briefly explaining the journey of Shaykh Yusuf’s companions. In addition to the tablet, they installed four headstones to represent the four companions.

Seven years after the dargah stones were erected, Shahmahomed unveiled what was to become an iconic element of the site: the monument to “Sheikh Joseph.” Described by one newspaper as a “slender, tapering minaret outlined against the sky,” and featuring an aesthetic mix of Mughal and Art Deco influences, the monument was in many ways a grand gesture.\textsuperscript{53} It cost close to 600 pounds (roughly 45 000 US dollars today) and some of its stones required a team of sixteen oxen to drag it up the hill.\textsuperscript{54} Towards the bottom of the minaret were four stones, featuring an eclectic group of inscriptions that together commemorated the history of Shaykh Yusuf and the unveiling of the monument itself.

![Figure 7: The dargah today. Image by author.](image)

The rebuilding of the tomb itself began at the unveiling ceremony of the minaret-monument in 1925, during which the foundation stone was laid. Its construction was completed in 1929. With its large dome and white-washed walls, the tomb looked nothing

\textsuperscript{53} This description comes from the article, “A monument to Shaikh Yusuf,” \textit{The Moslem Outlook} December 26, 1925, 3. On the monument’s aesthetic influences, see: Willemina Van der Linde, “Die Neerslag van Art Deco in Suid-Afrika as manifestie van ’n internasionale tydges en styl, met spesifieke verwysing na die argitektuur” (PhD diss, Stellenbosch University, 2000), 204-5, and Jo-Marie Claassen, “Functional and symbolic use of domes and arches in some examples of South African religious architecture,” \textit{Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kultuur en Geskiedenis} 1, no.2 (1987): 110-119.

\textsuperscript{54} “A monument to Shaikh Yusuf,” 3.
like its surrounding landscape and stood out even from the existing architecture of mosques in Cape Town, which tended to feature minarets but had no domes.

In all three construction projects, as with his legal and historical endeavours, Shahmahomed chose to work with individuals from outside the Muslim community. Seeing the Malays as “inferior workmen,” he chose to employ one of the most well-known stonemasonry firms in the region, that of R. Cane and Sons. From a design perspective, he chose the Australian-born architect F.K. Kendall (d.1948), who had worked on several prestigious projects in Cape Town, including the Rhodes Building (1900-1908). The new aesthetic for this most significant Muslim site thus became the vision and handwork of complete outsiders to the community.

![Figure 8: The monument today. Image by author.](image)

**Peninsula Moslems and their Rights**

From his perspective, Shahmahomed’s activities were for the benefit of the Muslim community and more broadly for Muslim culture at the Cape. Indeed his purchase of the **kramat** in 1909 was “subject to the rights of the Malay community,” much as P.L. Cloete’s

55 WCARS CSC 2/1/1/1107 Ref: 83, 74
56 From the article “Peninsula Moslems and Their Rights,” Cape Times April 3, 1918.
grant for Zandvliet had included a clause protecting Muslim privileges close to a century earlier. However, with his consistent neglect of the needs and opinions of the community, in addition to the restrictions he placed on their access to the *kramat*, some Malay leaders developed a great deal of bitterness towards him. They felt acutely that their rights and privileges, which the *kramat* had once been a manifestation of, were threatened, and expressed their discontent in ways that damaged their relationship with Shahmahomed and hindered the progress of the changes he attempted to institute.

The most explosive expression of the collective Malay anger towards Shahmahomed occurred in March 1918, less than a month after he had installed the notice detailing prohibitions at the *kramat*. Over the Easter Weekend, which fell on 29 March – 1 April that year, thousands of Muslims gathered at the *kramat* to camp at the site, as usual. However, this year the schedule was slightly different, as a mass meeting was planned to air the community’s concerns regarding the recent restrictions placed upon their activities. At this gathering they would “see who [was] *baas* of [the] place.”

The meeting was convened by Ismail Abdurahman, Omar Dollie and Joseph Gool on 31 March, and took place in Gool’s home, located 100 feet away from the *kramat* caretaker’s cottage. The gathering featured a prolonged discussion, during which various speakers voiced their grievances. There were some “hot-heads” present, who suggested burning down Shahmahomed’s house, and in response other community members attempted to pacify them.

At some point during the proceedings those present came to a decision: it would be necessary to make a statement, by physically removing the changes being made by the Trustee. Two men, Moostafa Hendricks and Mourien Ajam, were chosen for the job. Their task was to take down the framed regulations and to remove the new safe, installed inside the tomb for donations, without disturbing its contents. Thus, the assembled crowd watched as Hendricks and Ajam made their way up the stone steps leading to the tomb. Shortly afterwards they exited, carrying the heavy safe with the framed rules resting on top. At some point – some claim it was an accident, others believe the act was intentional – the men let go of the safe, sending the box tumbling down the steps, eventually ending up in a nearby

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57 WCARS CSC 2/1/1/859 Ref 253, 19
58 WCARS CSC 2/1/1/859 Ref 253, 23. The Afrikaans word *baas*, literally meaning “master” or “boss” has a long and complicated history in South Africa, most often associated with forms of white dominance, from that of slave overseers to the apartheid ideology of *baasskap*, sometimes translated as “boss-ship.” The term *baas* is revealing of underlying power structures at play in the contexts in which it emerges, such as its use here by so-called Malays amongst co-religionists, to refer to entitlement to land.
59 WCARS CSC 2/1/1/859 Ref 253, 28.
chicken run, with its contents scattering all over the ground. Onlookers ran to their aid, calling upon the children at-hand to pick up the scattered money and to place it back into the box. However, the damage had been done. The safe was broken and what was meant to be a controlled gesture of dissatisfaction had ended up as a loud, reckless cry of anger.

Taking the Community to Court

In January of 1919 Hendricks, Ajam and four other men implicated in the incident stood before the Cape Town Magistrate’s Court to defend themselves. 60 Shahmahomed had sued for damages made to the kramat property and for the repair costs of the safe, estimated at 50 pounds (approximately 3000 US dollars today). The trial took place over four months, with some postponements necessary for site inspections by the court. It saw caretakers, onlookers and respected religious figures of the Muslim community testify in support of both parties. The case hinged on two main points: the first issue was the nature of access to the kramat in collective memory, and by extension the ways in which Shahmohamed’s ownership and its related changes had affected this access. The second concern was the intentionality of the broken safe incident.

On June 2, 1919, Magistrate J.M. Richards issued his ruling. He declared that Muslims had always had rights to the kramat, until Shahmohamed had purchased the land, and in his actions suggested that they in fact had no rights except as stipulated by him and his Deeds of Trust. Richards further opined that Shahmohamed was wrong to appoint a group of Trustees beyond himself, as per the rules laid out in his Deeds of Trust, and that it was understandable that the Muslims would not accept a list of rules signed by Christians. Given these restrictions on their rights, the magistrate declared that in removing the safe and the framed rules, the defendants were entirely justified. Furthermore, he deemed damage to the safe accidental. The case was granted in the defendants’ favour, with all costs due to the plaintiff. Despite this victory, the ordeal continued for the remainder of the year. Shahmahomed appealed against the ruling in August of 1919 at the Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. When he lost that appeal, he took his case to the Supreme Court.

60 The defendants were: Moostafa Hendriks, Mouriën Ajam, Joseph Molvie, Hamid Gool, Omar Mohamed Dollie, Mohamed Arsad Gamiet and Ismail Abdurahman.
A Monument for South Africa

It appears that following the drama of Easter 1918 and the legal case of 1919, Shahmahomed and the leaders of the Malay community maintained a working, but far from harmonious relationship. The unveiling of the monument to Shaykh Yusuf in May 1925 illuminates these fractured relations. Shahmahomed had hoped that the Prince of Wales, who had been visiting the Cape at the time, could conduct the grand reveal. However, the prince was otherwise occupied and the task fell to Sir Frederic de Waal, Administrator of the Cape Province and co-Trustee of the Kramat Trust. By publicly acknowledging the site and Shaykh Yusuf’s story, indeed his participation, De Waal made the story as much one of the history of the Cape province and the Union of South Africa (1910), as of the Muslim community. During his unveiling remarks, he stated that “[n]o one who was insensible of the past could worthily live in the present. Everyone must remember where he came from, what were the traditions of his race, and why he was there.”61 Yet while the Malays were credited for acknowledging their own history, they had no agency in the project or its unveiling.

Despite their suspicion towards the Hajee and their bitterness regarding his curtailing of their rights, many Malays still attended the unveiling ceremony. This included Arshad Gamiet, President of the Cape Malay Association (est. 1923), and a host of other prominent Malays, including six imams and the Mecca-educated Shaykh Ahmad Behardien (d. 1974).62 While merely observers, their presence made Shahmahomed and his construction team anxious, and ultimately convinced them to change their original plans for the day. Whereas the original tomb was supposed to be demolished and the foundation stone of the new tomb laid in its place, the team decided to instead lay the stone as close as possible to the original structure, without breaking it down. This decision was motivated by the notion, according to mason Phillip Cane, “that feeling amongst the Malays was very bitter against Shahmohomed,” and that if the tomb were demolished “there [would] be a riot, and the ignorant Malays [wouldn’t] understand.”63

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62 Shaykh Behardien was a religious and political leader of the Cape Muslim community and had at one point held the position of Vice President of the Muslim Judicial Council. He was also the author of Islamic literature in the Arabic-Afrikaans script, see: Adrianus Van Selms, *Arabies-Afrikaanse Studies I: ’n Tweetalige (Arabiese en Afrikaanse) Kategismus* (Amsterdam: Noord-hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1951), and Mohamed Haron, “The Making, Preservation and Study of South African Ajami Mss and Texts,” *Sudanic Africa* 12 (2001): 1-14.
63 WCARS CSC 2/1/1/1107 Ref: 83, 84.
A Struggle ’til the End
The glory of the unveiling of 1925 was short-lived. Construction on the new tomb came to a halt in 1926, when the firm employed by Shahmahomed refused to continue the project. This predicament led to yet another court case for the Hajee, in which he sued R Cane & Sons for not completing the agreed upon work. Legal questions over whether R Cane & Sons were qualified to do the requested work – as monumental stone masons and not builders – then arose. In addition, tough working conditions and heavy rains impeded the work, as did undisclosed personal grievances. The judge in the case sided with the Hajee, and ordered that the work be completed as soon as possible, with damages to be paid.

Shahmahomed had meanwhile found a new contractor, by the name of Klopdyk, to complete the project. By 1929 new features had already been completed, including the shrine with its copper dome, the semi-circle of gun emplacement holding canons from Cape Town’s dismantled forts, and the large granite staircase leading up to the tomb. As a whole, these changes ended up costing Shahmahomed close to 7000 pounds (about 4,250,000 US dollars today).  

Klopdyk had hoped to complete the project for Shahmahomed without any damage to the site. However, he worried that this might have proven difficult to achieve, as there had already been “some friction” between the contractor and the Malay community. At that point in time, it seemed that the Malays were still divided over whether the renovations were desirable or not. Those vehemently against Shahmahomed’s alterations voiced their disapproval through vandalism: indelible black marks were left on the newly built, granite wall and part of the grave’s chadar was torn. Although Shahmahomed had proven that he indeed was baas of the place, their disapproval would still be felt.

The project was completed in June 1929 with no grand ceremony. Shahmahomed died just two months later, living “only to see his life-long dream realised – the beautiful shrine with the back-ground of snow-white sand hills.”

Reviving the Shahmahomed Brand
In many histories of Shaykh Yusuf, writers have ended his story with Shahmahomed’s renovation of his tomb, interpreting this contribution as both a part of Shaykh Yusuf’s story and as the end of history at the site. These accounts have failed to detail the controversies and challenges surrounding the Hajee Sullaiman Shahmahomed Kramat Trust and its activities at

64 “A Famous Moslem Shrine at Cape Town,” 85-86.
65 “A familiar figure at the Faure Kramat,” 3.
the Faure kramat. They have also overlooked the Trust’s ongoing life and influence beyond Shahmahomed’s death. One of the reasons for this lack of further inquiry is that, until very recently, the Trust itself experienced significant decline in power, struggling to stay vital after the passing of its founder.

The current Trustee and great-grandson of Shahmahomed, Professor Faadiel Essop, has described the forty-year period between Shahmahomed’s death and the Trust’s revival as a “black hole,” during which the family’s involvement was virtually non-existent. He attributed this sidelining of the family to the emergence of apartheid, hinting that the company managing the Trust, the South African Association, assumed full control, leaving little room for Shahmahomed’s descendants to have a say in the matters of the estate. While Professor Essop later declined to expand on this issue further, claiming both “nothing really on record” and that it was a topic of research he was pursuing himself, evidence held in the Western Cape archives points to tensions between the South African Association and the trustees of Shahmahomed’s three separate trusts.

Already from 1931, there was a civil court case between Johannes Jacob Hofmeyr, then general manager of the South African Association, and the Trustees of the Kramat, Constantia Kramat and Academy Trusts, regarding the funds accorded to each of them. Hofmeyr, as executor of Shahmahomed’s estate, declared that he held sway over the funding amounts each trust would receive, while the trustees argued that this decision was in their hands. It is likely that further frictions emerged and, with apartheid’s legal, social and political marginalisation of people of colour, Shahmahomed’s descendants could easily have found themselves silenced and isolated from the affairs of his estate.

According to Essop’s version of the Trust’s development, in the 1970s, his own father took an important step towards securing the family’s interests in Shahmahomed’s legacy. He declared that trustees should formally be appointed again, which he eventually achieved, albeit only in name. Essop explained that his father needed to work strategically in this regard, making requests, rather demands of, the Association. In the 1980s, Professor Essop and a cousin were appointed to the board, and a corporate trustee also joined, to assist them. Ironically, the corporate trustee, Dudley Cloete-Hopkins, was married into the very family whose ancestors had once hindered Muslim access to the kramat in the nineteenth century. Apparently Cloete-Hopkins began inviting Essop to board meetings, and from these

66 M. Faadiel Essop, interview by author, Stellenbosch, April 28, 2015.
67 M. Faadiel Essop, e-mail messages to author, October 20-21, 2010.
68 WCARS CSC 2/1/1/1212 Ref: 311.
interactions, both his vision and bargaining power grew. The Trust transitioned from what he described as an “aloof” organisation to a more open, accessible one. With the passing of time, Cloete-Hopkins and Essop’s cousin became further removed from the Trust’s affairs, thereby opening up a space for him to, as he claimed, “push the agenda.” While he was indirect about what this agenda was, his recent activities indicate that it has been to promote the intertwined legacies of Shahmahomed and Shaykh Yusuf.

In our brief interaction, Essop communicated his reverence for both his great-grandfather and Shaykh Yusuf alike. He explained how Shahmahomed’s example inspired him, despite majoring as a scientist, to “dabble” in the humanities when he was in college, joining a philosophical reading group and then pursuing an honours degree in Arabic. His role in the Trust later enabled him to maintain active engagement with the humanities and with the community. Shahmahomed’s legacy also motivated Essop’s interest in Shaykh Yusuf. He described the *kramat* as a “personal shrine,” because of his family connection to the site, and mentioned childhood memories of visits there with his father. Through this connection and his own research, he developed a heightened respect for Shaykh Yusuf. Shaykh Yusuf was so inspiring to Essop due to his multifaceted prestige: he was complete in that he was both a spiritual and political role model, and he was also royalty, and therefore of high standing. Essop therefore wanted to use his status and what he referred to as the “Shahmahomed Brand” to promote community awareness of Shaykh Yusuf’s legacy.

In recent years, Essop has promoted local Muslim history initiatives, sponsoring a public writing competition, the “Shahmahomed Writing Prize,” hosting an annual colloquium at the Islamic Peace College of South Africa, and providing a library at the same institution. In 2007, he contributed to the existing literature on Muslims at the Cape by publishing a revised edition of Shahmahomed’s travelogue, originally published in Bombay in 1895. He has also invested time and funds into the renovation of the Faure *kramat* grounds, adding new features such as a water fountain and a shaded seating area for visitors. At the time of our interactions he had commissioned a new set of historical inscriptions for the *kramat*, written by Ebrahim Rhoda, to complement and even correct the existing histories inscribed on Shahmahomed’s monuments. However, rather than retell the story of Shaykh Yusuf, these

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69 M. Faadiel Essop, interview by author, Stellenbosch, April 28, 2015.  
70 Ibid.  
71 Ibid.  
72 The writing competition has been administered by the *Muslim Views* newspaper. The annual symposium, established in 2011, is called *Wasatiiyyah*, meaning “middle way” or “balance” in Arabic. See: Islamic Peace College of South Africa, *Prospectus 2017* (Cape Town: Islamic Peace College of South Africa, 2017), 24.  
73 Shahmahomed, *Tales from Five Continents*.  

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additions would tell the history of the physical site – how the structure came into being, and Shahmahomed’s role in its twentieth century evolution. Through this innovation, the *kramat* will be both a monument to Shaykh Yusuf and to Shahmahomed.

Despite these recent efforts he has made in the way of restoring and reviving the *kramat* physically, Essop admitted that he does not have much of a relationship with the surrounding community. Much like his great-grandfather, whose only functioning interpersonal relationship with *kramat*-goers and those who lived nearby was with the caretaker at the time, Essop’s only connection is through Aunty Barbie. In contrast to his great-grandfather’s conflict-ridden relationship with the broader community, that of Essop and *kramat*-goers is based on mutual anonymity. For his part, during our conversation, he even wondered how it might perceive him and the Trust, eventually suggesting “shadowy” and “mysterious.”

*Present Day Struggles*

While it appears that tensions between the Trust and the broader Muslim community are a thing of the past, trouble continues to brew in the surrounds of the *kramat*. Echoing property-related struggles of the past, there is an ongoing *kramat* land claim on the behalf of the Muslim community of South Africa, spearheaded by the largest local, Islamic organisation, the Muslim Judicial Council. Although this land claim draws on the figure of Shaykh Yusuf and has been described as a response to potential actions that threaten “the sanctity of the *kramat*,” it does not affect the *kramat per se.* Rather the claim deals with land that for centuries was marked as commonage, and was available to both Muslims visiting the site and those who lived nearby, for the use of collecting firewood, grazing their animals and other activities pertinent to their livelihoods. However, when Albert Johannes Faure acquired the deeds of Zandvliet (1934), he began a process of selling off parts of the commonage, thereby restricting Muslim access to it.

In 1998, the Muslim Judicial Council, with the help of community researchers, lodged a formal claim to the Land Claims Commission, to have that area recognised as Muslim heritage. Over a decade later, the claimants have still received no official response to their application, while a joinder application filed in 2006 was also left unassessed. In the

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74 M. Faadiel Essop, interview by author, Stellenbosch, April 28, 2015.
meantime, individuals and representatives of the local Methodist Church had submitted their own claims to the same land. By 2014, the Land Claims Court ruled that all claims should be collectively assessed, hence there was a strong community mobilisation at the time of my research in 2015.

The Muslim Judicial Council and their associates no doubt considered that, with the fall of apartheid and the related attempts to acknowledge the histories and contributions of all communities within the “rainbow nation,” Muslim dispossession of land at Faure could be reversed. Yet, even when the claimants drew on histories of connection to the land dating back three centuries, their claims seemed to fall on deaf ears. In the long aftermath of the initial claim, and in the close to two-decade span of waiting to be heard, leaders of the kramat land claim, like Nazeem Braaf, have begun to publicly question the discourse of a multicultural South Africa, and to petition the government to take Muslim heritage seriously.

Conclusion: The Discourse of Cumulative Dispossession
The Muslim Judicial Council’s kramat land claim has not simply been grounded in the site’s origin story, or yet Shaykh Yusuf’s importance, but rather the multiple instances of Muslim dispossession in this area, over the longue durée. The claimants thus assert that continuous attempts to dispossess Muslims of access, and of their historical attempts to regain rights, are equally important as the actual Muslim presence. This discourse of long-term dispossession demonstrates the site’s status as an anchor of collective memory, and as a territorial reference for broader issues of Muslim land struggles in the Western Cape. However, there is an obvious lacuna in the story presented, namely that of intra-community contestations, and the entire Shahmahomed chapter in the kramat’s story. What was seen as an outrage in the twentieth century has now become an unproblematic thread in the Muslim kramat narrative that has perhaps even fortified Muslim claims to the site.

While the site continues to be embroiled in local conflict, in the past three decades it has also been exposed to claims of a diasporic, transnational variety. For, as we will see in the following chapters, the kramat has been embraced by Indonesian diplomatic figures seeking their influence in Africa, and attempts have even been made to physically build Indonesian structures on the site. Meanwhile, South African Muslims seeking their heritage in Southeast Asia have come to view the kramat as evidence of their distant ancestry. Thus,

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while the *kramat* has been a battleground for Muslims establishing their place as a religious and ethnic minority in South Africa, for some it has now become a site to locate their place in the world.