We See a Different Frontier / a phenomenological approach to the Grace Street Mosque and the makings of 'Islamic Heritage' in the Eastern Cape.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Acknowledgments

[*Glory be to Allah*]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

It truly takes a village. To all those who made up this little village of research, I offer my heartfelt thanks—to my parents, who were always a shoulder to lean on and gave me the space to become; to my grandfather, for giving me the ocean; to my sisters for their belief in me; and to my friends Manu and Mia, who took me to the mountains to gain new perspectives.

Many thanks go to my supervisors. This work has been many years in the making and started with a discussion with Dr Pascall Taruvinga in the Margaret Kenyon room at Rhodes. His presence is felt throughout this body of work. To my co-supervisor, Professor Michelle Cocks, a true wordsmith, thank you for helping me find my voice.

I am indebted to the Gqeberha Muslim community for opening their homes, shops and hearts to me, you have indelibly changed my life. To Imam Jappie, thank you for trusting me with your story, I hope I did it justice; to Yusuf Agherdien, thank you for showing me around the city and giving me insights that only a native son could; to Yusuf and Yahya Bemat for all their assistance, and to the South African Muslim Network (SAMNET) for their generous funding:

جزاك اللهُ خيراً

(May Allah reward you [with] goodness).

And to my baby boy, Bonzo, for howling at the moon with me.


GRACE ST

To the Palestinian peoples,

and the many *houses of worship* they have lost.

Abstract

Within the heritage field, Islam faces a crisis of representation, particularly regarding tensions between material preservation and living religious practice. This thesis examines how Muslim communities maintain their heritage through a phenomenological study of the Grace Street Mosque (Masjid-ul-Akbar) in Gqeberha, South Africa. Despite mosques playing vital roles in Muslim communities, they remain underrepresented in South African heritage registers and are primarily valued as architectural monuments. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, this research explores how mosques emerge as heritage through ritual practice rather than solely through physical fabric. Drawing on a living heritage framework and critical heritage theory, the research uncovers the role of Islamic rituals in producing sacred space, the instituting of traditional management systems like waqf in heritage conservation, and the complex dynamics of community inclusion in heritage processes. The findings challenge conventional material-centric approaches to the mosque, contributing to heritage scholarship by documenting how ritual practices produce heritage meaning and how communities maintain their heritage through traditional care practices. It suggests ways to better recognize living religious heritage sites through frameworks that honor their spiritual resonance and physical conservation needs.

Keywords: Living heritage, Islamic heritage, Mosques, Sacred, Community

I come from the Creator, trailing wisps of glory…

Maya Angelou

~

You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. . . . You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you. . . . The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

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Terminology

Heritage	The inheritance of cultural and historical elements - both tangible (buildings, artifacts) and intangible (traditions, practices) - that communities preserve, transform, and transmit across generations, providing value in the present
Intangible Cultural Heritage	Living expressions, practices, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage, including oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and festive events
Living Heritage	Heritage sites that maintain their original function and are actively used by their communities.
Authenticity	Refers to the credibility and truthfulness of a cultural property/practice.
Core Community	Refers to the primary group of people who maintain ongoing cultural/spiritual connection with a heritage site, regardless of geographical proximity.
Core Function	Refers to the primary spiritual purpose and ongoing religious activities that give a sacred/religious site its meaning and significance
Care practices	Refers to the traditional methods, protocols, and systems communities use to maintain and protect their heritage site
Imam	Religious leader who leads prayers at a mosque and provides Islamic guidance to a Muslim community
Musalli	(pl. Musallis): Person(s) who performs prayer; congregant(s)
Waqf	Islamic endowment of property for religious or charitable purposes that renders it inalienable
Adhān	The Islamic call to prayer, performed five times daily to announce prayer times
Dhikr	The practice of remembrance or recitation of Allah's names and attributes
Duʿāʾ	Supplication or informal prayer in Islam to Allah.
Ġusl	Full ritual bath required for major purification in Islam
Wuḍūʾ	Minor ritual ablution performed before prayer
Ritual	A sequence of symbolic actions and ceremonies, often with religious or cultural significance, performed according to prescribed order and traditional protocol
ʿIbādah	Corpus of worship that encompasses all aspects of a believer's life

Iqāma	The second call to prayer, made immediately before prayer begins inside the mosque
Niyyah	The intention made before performing any act of worship in Islam
Qibla	The direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, towards which Muslims face during prayer
Rak'āt	Unit of Islamic prayer consisting of specific movements and recitations
Ṣalāt	The ritual prayer in Islam performed five times daily
Sunnah	Optional prayers performed in addition to obligatory prayers
Fajr	The dawn prayer, from true dawn (first light) until sunrise
Ẓuhr	The noon prayer, when the sun passes the meridian until mid-afternoon
ʿ**Aṣr**	The afternoon prayer, when the shadow of an object equals its length until sunset
Maghrib	The sunset prayer, which starts after sunset until disappearance of twilight
ʿ**Ishā**ʾ	The night prayer, which starts after the disappearance of twilight until dawn

Abbreviations

AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
CBD	Central Business District (referring to Gqeberha's downtown area)
CHF	Critical Heritage Framework
GSM	Grace Street Mosque
SSM	Strand Street Mosque
LVH	Living Heritage
LRH	Living Religious Heritage
NHRA	National Heritage Resources Act (1999)
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizatizon

A note on Arabic terminology

This thesis adheres to a simple version of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration method for Arabic terms. Diacritical marks are employed to denote Arabic phonemes that lack direct equivalents in English. Common Arabic terminology that are in usage in the English language (such as Quran, Imam, or Muslim) are presented without diacritical markings.

~ Part I ~

Chapter I:
Introduction

Situated on Grace Street, just off the main Gqeberha thoroughfare stands the 169-year-old inconspicuous house of worship, 'Masjid-ul-Akbar'[1]. Housed in the bustling CBD, the mosque intersects the daily lives of Muslim workers, and represents a complex set of notions crisscrossing religion, heritage, and community. Globally, mosques play a central role in the socio-spiritual lives of 1.8 billion Muslims. Acting as spiritual hubs (Farahati, 2011), educational institutions (Nurhadi, 2019), and disaster relief bases (Moslehi et al., 2023); they facilitate the collective identity of Muslims (Lotfi, 2001) and foster social cohesion (Al-Krenawi, 2016). However, as heritage, they are primarily understood as architectural monuments, emerging from the artistic expression of religious culture – belonging to a distant past and cared for by heritage experts (Joy, 2012; Rudolph, 2006). This material-centric approach to the past is what Wijesuriya (2017: 2) terms the "secularisation of heritage". That is, the artificially imposed separation and overemphasis on materiality, over the intangible dimensions articulated by communities at heritage sites. In response to this approach, emerging perspectives view religious sites as living heritage – a term denoting their dynamism (Stovel et al., 2005) and has been applied to mosques (Apotsos, 2023; Griera et al., 2024). This approach aligns with the epistemological shift called for in religious heritage (Rico, 2021); acknowledging religious perspectives, and actively engaging with them – levelling faith and conservation through foregrounding religious value as endemic to heritage (Thouki, 2022). As Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the world (Lipka & Hackett, 2017), there is an urgent need to acknowledge and engage with Muslim perspectives on heritage.

In the collective imagination, mosques have become synonymous with 'Islamic heritage', from World Heritage sites like the Hagia Sophia (Turkey), the Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba (Spain), and the Grand Djenné Mosque (Mali). However, they continue to face a "crisis of representation" to borrow a term from Rico (2021). They are mainly framed as built heritage, undercutting the rich tradition of the intangible, the present, and the local. It is increasingly recognized that heritage is informed by communities` worldviews and emerge from specific geo-cultural locations (Taruvinga, 2019). A one size fits all approach to heritage is untenable in the face of regional, and local contexts. In addition, post 9/11, and with the rise of religious

[1] Masjid-ul-Akbar in everyday parlance is referred to as the Grace Street Mosque, which subsequently is how it is referred to in this thesis.

fundamentalism, Islam and Muslims are continuously framed as iconoclastic or as anti-heritage (Rico, 2021; Stein, 2022; Clapperton et al., 2017; Rebat Al-kanany, 2020). These challenges emerge as, despite religion playing a vital role in the production of heritage (Meyer & de Witte, 2013; Labadi, 2013), it is often considered an outcast in heritage studies (Rico, 2017). In the South African context, this crisis may be positioned as a misrepresentation of mosques: mainly seeing them as "buildings" on existing heritage registers, obscuring their intangible dimensions, and reinforcing a Western-centric perspective of heritage. As for their underrepresentation, despite a 300-year legacy of Islam in South Africa, as of 2024 Islamic related sites comprise a meagre 15 of the 3740 heritage listings, of which only seven are mosques. What contributes to their absence in the national, provincial, and local heritage registers? Whatever the case, the current approach to mosques in South Africa provides minimal space for exploring the personal narratives, lived experiences, belief systems, and social relations underpinning the reason these mosques exist on lists in the first place.

This thesis argues that a focus on the "brick and mortar" of a mosque cannot articulate the total expression of its importance – and that by exploring the intangible dimensions that wrap around these structures, a more holistic, nuanced, and critical understanding of the mosque as an expression of heritage can emerge. This requires a definitive shift in methodology and approach. Heritage, Filippucci (2009: 320) states, is "concerned first and foremost with people, shaped by a diverse range of social practices, processes, and experiences." In this sense, it is not ready-made in the world but rather something produced via rhetoric (Lafrenz Samuels & Rico, 2015) and shaped through methodologies. This study is grounded in the qualitative tradition, with phenomenology as its methodological backbone; it foregrounds the lived Muslim experiences of heritage to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experiences of the mosque's community. To achieve this, it makes use of participant observation and interviews. The theoretical framework for this study draws strongly on Poulio`s (2010) Living Heritage approach (hereafter LVH), which understands heritage as dynamic, evolving, and present-centered. Additionally, this study is prismed through a critical heritage lens, which requires a reflexive, situated, ethical take on heritage research (Winter, 2013).

Bringing a critical heritage lens to this study is vital due to the author's positionality. First, as a researcher who identifies as male, Indian-Malay, Muslim, and South African, their views inevitably play a part in this study. Secondly, stemming from their Javanese ancestors, who

were brought to South Africa by Dutch colonialists, they have a personal link to the Grace Street Mosque as their ancestors were directly involved in its establishment. This perspective provides a unique outlook but also requires a reflexive approach. Throughout the research process, from participant observations, data analysis, and the write-up, I aimed to strike a balance between my insider perspective and a certain critical distance, allowing the voice(s) of the space to frame themselves while recognizing the lens through which their voices were interpreted. The scope of this research is a master's thesis, with fieldwork being conducted for three months. Given the slight variation in the daily practices in the mosque activities, data saturation can be argued to have been reached within this period.

1. Research questions

The study draws on the following research questions, leveraging the 169-year-old Grace Street Mosque as a research site:

- How do members of the Muslim community in Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) perceive, and experience the GSM as living heritage?
    - What has sustained the mosque for 169 years?
    - Who forms part of the community, and what is it based on?
    - How do members of the community conceptualize the mosque?
    - What ritual practices do they carry out, and how does it influence their experience?
    - How do these rituals influence their behaviour in the mosque?
    - What are the care practices of the community, and what do they protect?
    - What role does the sacred play in protecting the space?

- In what ways can a living heritage approach, applied to the GSM, challenge and expand upon the current western/material-centric approach to mosques as heritage in South Africa?

2. The origins of Islam, and its emergence in the Eastern Cape, South Africa

Islam is a religious understanding of the world, mediated by the concepts of the absolute unity of God (tawhid) and the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ), which emerged in the 7th CE in present-day Saudi Arabia (Armstrong, 2009). Foundationally, it rests on five pillars: the *Shahādah, Ṣalāt, Zakāh, Ṣawm,* and *Ḥajj*. The second pillar, ṣalāt, is routinely performed by members of the Muslim Ummah (community) at mosques, which serve as "trans-Islamic

spatial medium[s]" (Apotsos, 2021: 6). The ummah, understood pluralistically, comprises various cultural expressions of Islam from around the globe (al-Ahsan, 1986). On the African continent, as Islam spread during the 7th CE through trade and conquest (Levtzion, 2010), local cultural practices blended with Islamic principles to create specific African expressions of Islam. In South Africa, the arrival of Islam and its inextricable link to slavery and colonialism resulted in the cultural formation of a Cape Malay expression of Islam (Baderoon, 2015).

Before the introduction of European colonists, the Khoikhoi and San populations inhabited Southern Africa for millennia, exhibiting distinct cultural customs, language, and spiritual rituals (Deacon, 1999). The commencement of European colonization during the 15th CE, initiated by the Portuguese and subsequently followed by the Dutch and British, began a protracted era characterized by the displacement and marginalization of the Khoisan population. When the Dutch settled at the Cape, both Islam and Christianity spread through South Africa, making these faiths closely intertwined with colonialism and slavery (Opoku, 2023). At the Cape, the Khoisan and Xhosa adhered to what is known as African traditional religions. Colonialism and Christianity took the religious African landscape as "*tabula rasa*" (Opoku 2023: 2); they set out to inscribe their version of religion and ethics into it, ignoring African traditional ways of being. These Abrahamic faiths viewed African traditional religions as primitive and pagan, and in the case of Christianity, as a barrier to its civilizing mission (Opoku 2023). Under the current South African national dispensation, all religions are considered equal.

2.1 The Malays in South Africa

A definitive timeline for the presence of Malays in the Eastern Cape has yet to be established. However, records begin to show their presence in Grahamstown (Makhanda), Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha), and Uitenhage (Karieg) towards the late 1830s (le Roux, 2007). These early Muslims from the Cape Colony, known as "Malays," either migrated or volunteered to help the British fight against the amaXhosa in the region (Davids, 1980) and remained after the battle of the Axe. The Cape colony (Cape Town) was initially established by the Dutch East India Company in 1652 as a refuelling station. It later became a full settlement, incurring onto Khoi/San territory. To aid in their territorial expansion, the Dutch made use of enslaved peoples from various territories in the Indian Ocean, including Mozambique, Madagascar, India, and Indonesia (Baderoon, 2015). This resulted in Islam being brought to the colony by enslaved people, free servants, and political exiles (Hoogervorst, 2021).

The Muslim community residing in the Cape region underwent significant transformations in terms of their identity and customs during periods of enslavement, coerced prostitution, colonial governance, and the challenging post-emancipation era (Hoogervorst, 2021). During this time, Islam emerged as a sanctuary for both enslaved individuals and indigenous Khoi/San populations (Baderoon, 2013). The community's capacity to assimilate individuals from diverse backgrounds resulted in a lasting impact of racial indeterminacy in the South African interpretation of the term "Muslim." However, this inclusive history of the Muslims was re-written, first during the period of colonial administration, initially by the Dutch and later by the British, and again during apartheid (Baderoon, 2013). As a result, the term "Malay" has a complex history in South Africa. From the Dutch colonial period of the mid-17th to the early 19th century ^{CE}, the collectively enslaved peoples from the various territories were all identified as "Malay". Initially, it gestured toward the lingua franca used by the enslaved peoples, which was *Bahasa Melayu* (Hoogervorst, 2021); later, it became emblematic of the enslaved people from various territories, then to refer to Muslims in general from the Cape and finally as a distinct racial and cultural category under apartheid through the work of scholars like du Plessis (Hoogervorst, 2021). In its current usage, the term "Cape Malay" refers to Muslims, especially to those in the Western Cape (Baker, 2009), losing its connotations to specific geographical origins. Baderoon (2013: 37) cautions against racializing Islam as "Indian" or "Malay," as this trend obscures Islam`s creolized history and diverse roots in South Africa, stating that to "assign a race to Muslims retrospectively is to accede to apartheid's fantasy of racial separateness." Instead, she advocates for Tayob's (2002:20) view that "Muslims in the various racial categories of apartheid South Africa experience Islam in very different ways."

The history of Port Elizabeth, now known as Gqeberha, began at Fort Frederick, a British military post, in 1799 (Harvey, 2000). Fort Frederick grew into a small port town when hundreds of British settlers arrived at the colony in 1820, lured by promises of land and financial assistance. During the 19th century CE, the town experienced significant growth, emerging as a prominent port city (Roux, 2021). During this century, Malay communities were present in Port Elizabeth (Le Roux, 2007), forming part of the city's social fabric, working as stevedores, ship hands, and carpenters. As a result of rapid urbanisation driven by a growing settler population and migrations from the Eastern Cape hinterland, the city was ethnically diverse (Labour, 2020). Later, in 1950, under the apartheid regime, the Group Areas Act was

implemented, playing a crucial role in dividing the population by race. This legislation allocated racial groupings to distinct residential and commercial zones within urban spaces, displacing families and individuals from places not designated explicitly for their racial group (Mesthrie, 1993). For Port Elizabeth, this meant the end of the cosmopolitan suburb of South End, which housed many Malays (Hendricks, 2017). The Malays sustained several mosques constructed in previous centuries, many still standing. These include "*the big five Musjids of Port Elizabeth*" (Agherdien & Bemath, 2023), or the *Strand Street Mosque* (1866), *Musji-ul-Abrar* "Rudolph Street" (1894), *Musjid-ul-Aziez* "Pier Street" (1901) and *Musjid-an-Nabwai* "Humphries Street" (1911) – and finally *Masjid-ul-Akbar "*Grace Street" (1855). As one of the city's oldest mosques, it provides fertile grounds to explore its rich Islamic heritage. A number of proposals have been made in recent years to officially designate the mosque as a National Heritage Site (Rogers, 2021). But how well can the mosque's heritage value be recognized by current approaches to heritage, and what is the likelihood that the physical structure is given primary attention?

2.2 The legislative context of heritage in South Africa

In the post-apartheid era, the democratic government was faced with the imperative of transforming the Western-centric heritage landscape inherited from apartheid (Kotze & Van Rensburg, 2003). This transformation was cemented by legislative reforms via the *National Heritage Resource Act 1999*, enacted to redress past inequalities and conserve previously neglected forms of heritage. The act pays attention to both the tangible (sites/artifacts) and intangible (values, traditions, rituals, and language) elements of heritage (Rautenbach, 2014). The new legislation provides for a national body, alongside provincial bodies, to designate new sites, places, and objects and administrate cultural heritage according to grades – ranging from I (national) to III (local). National heritage is the purview of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). At the regional level, it is the responsibility of the nine provincial agencies. Their respective municipalities oversee local heritage (III) (Deacon, 2010).

Nevertheless, three decades since the act's inception, transformation has been slow (Marschall, 2019), with a recent study by Reddy & Russell (2024) determining that over 88% of declared heritage is still European and revolves around buildings. This statistic underscores the pressing need to engage with and create a genuinely representative heritage register. This cannot come at a more critical juncture, as frustrations with this slow rate of transformation are aptly reflected in the #RhodesMustFall protests of 2015 (Marschall, 2019), which, amongst other

things, was a physical demand for greater inclusive and representative public heritage (Barnabas, 2016). Moreover, the slow transformation of the heritage landscape can also be accredited to the consequence of the limitations inherited from the apartheid system (Ndlovu, 2011). As per the National Monuments Council's – the governing body of the *National Monuments Act 1969* – recommendation, all national monuments previously designated under the apartheid regime were reclassified from Grade I to Grade II to facilitate a revaluation of their significance (Deacon, 2010). The slow re-evaluation of these sites means that the designation of new non-colonial heritage places is the sole viable path to creating a more representative heritage register.

However, thirty years since the enactment of the NHRA, only 234 sites have been declared, a mere 6.2% of the existing register. There is also a notable disparity in the distribution of sites between provinces (Reddy & Russell, 2024), with the Western Cape having the highest number of sites (1,487: 39.7% of the country's total). In the Eastern Cape, most sites were declared before the NHRA, with only 13 sites (2.1%) declared under the new dispensation (Reddy & Russell, 2024). The act also has not been revised in over two decades, despite numerous authors stating its inability to contend fully with Intangible Cultural Heritage. Boswell (2023) highlights its shortcomings in dealing with Marine Intangible heritage (MICH); Ingelson & Owosuyi (2022) state that it "lacks direction and detail on the restitution of SCO [sacred ceremonial objects]"; and Skosana (2017) notes its ambiguity in dealing with burial reparations. More importantly, in the context of mosques – or religious heritage, of the seven mosques nominated as heritage sites, six fall within the category of "buildings". Bakker (2007) argues that the Act understands the term "heritage site" in tangible terms, effectively obscuring the intangible and associative aspects of a heritage site.

2.3 The current state of mosques in South Africa

South Africa currently has over 701 mosques (Smartscraper, 2024), some of which could catalyze the revitalization of the existing heritage register. However, despite ongoing research in South Africa that explores the intangible dimensions of mosques, such as Jethro & Lehloenya (2023) who tune in to the adhān as ICH, Shaikjee's' (2023) thesis on the embodied nature of mosque visits, and Tayob`s (1999) and Vahed`s (2006) work highlighting the relevance of a mosque's community; South Africa continues to face a challenge in holistically recognizing mosques as a form of religious heritage. While Islamic sites with a strong focus

on associative qualities have emerged in the designation of Karamats (Thebus, 2024), the current perception of mosques reflects a material-centric approach. That is, mosques are categorized as “buildings” on the heritage registers, perpetuating Bakker`s concern of the overemphasis on the tangible or, in value terms, their aesthetic and historical values. These designations come in the form of seven mosques, proclaimed by SAHRA and Heritage Western Cape, supported by their respective communities. Six of these mosques are in Bo-Kaap, a neighbourhood within Cape Town, graded I, while the seventh, Al-Jaamia mosque in Claremont, another area within Cape Town, is grade II."

While the designation of these mosques as heritage sites is a step towards recognising Islamic heritage in South Africa, the current dispensation has several limitations that must be addressed. Firstly, all the designations occur in the Western Cape; this geographical concentration may inadvertently perpetuate the notion that the region is representative of Islam in South Africa, perpetuating notions of “Malayness” (Baderoon, 2013). This risks obscuring the rich history of Muslim communities along the South African coast, from the Eastern Cape to KwaZulu-Natal and the interior. For example, the Grey Street Mosque in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, is one of the largest mosques and oldest in the Southern Hemisphere, spanning over 144 years. Secondly, their religious connotations and spiritual practices are obscured, effectively de-sacralising the space to “fit” into the heritage register. For example, in the nomination file for the Auwal mosque, there is no mention of the ritual practices that occur in the mosque. It is referred to as “Islamic worship” (Vidamemoria consultants, 2015).

As this thesis will argue, a mosque gains its significance from its core function(s). That is its ability to play host to the numerous rituals in a believer’s life that comprise their ʿibādah (the corpus of worship). The current responsibility to nominate sites rests with individuals, communities, and NGOs; are they being led to centre a site's architectural/historical values over spiritual ones? Moreover, what has led to the slow uptake in the number of nominations from Muslim communities? In the Western Cape, Muslim communities and organisations have played a key role in nominating their heritage, ranging from mosques to karamats; in the broader South Africa, this is yet to manifest. The current state may reflect a complex set of concerns, namely: (i) a lack of involvement of heritage authorities with Muslim communities, (ii) a lack of knowledge and awareness of the heritage nomination process by communities, (iii) Muslim communities may not value heritage recognition and inclusion in the discourse, (iv) or they may emphasize the functional adaptation of their mosques to fit present-day needs

over preserving them as historical sites. This research aims to engage with Islam and Muslims from a heritage perspective, placing them as worthy heritage subjects. It focuses on the spiritual values and attributes, as well as the significance(s) that communities have for their places of worship and, in doing so, contends with the "crisis of representation" (Rico, 2021) that religious heritage faces on both the global and local scales.

The significance of this research will be manifold for the heritage field; primarily, by emphasizing Muslim communities' lived experiences and viewpoints, it will challenge the prevailing material-centric paradigm of heritage designation and their marginalization from the heritage discourse. The transition towards acknowledging the intangible dimensions of heritage may result in more inclusive and culturally attuned policies applicable to Islamic heritage and other marginalized religious sites and forms of heritage. By applying a living heritage approach to the GSM, this research can contribute to the ongoing dialogue on reconciling heritage conservation with the evolving requirements of practicing communities and present a framework for perceiving sacred spaces as sites of continuous spiritual value.

2.4 Orientation of the study

Part I, comprising four chapters, outlines the arguments for a shift in conceptualizing mosques as heritage. It sets the scene for how the focus on tangibility in heritage has excluded the intangible dimensions of heritage as understood by specific communities' worldviews, which are influenced by their geo-cultural contexts. This opens a gap for Islamic heritage, which is both global and local, to be the site of how these dimensional views are framed and influence how heritage is viewed in the present.

Chapter II traces the evolution of heritage concepts and the place of communities, rituals, and Islam in the heritage discourse. This provides a robust foundation for the study and reveals the prevailing gaps in studying religious heritage.

Chapter III establishes the theoretical underpinnings of the study and primarily draws on the Critical Heritage Framework (CHF) and the Living Heritage (LVH) approach. It explores how these frameworks allow for a nuanced examination of Islamic heritage in South Africa and introduces the fundamental concepts utilized in subsequent chapters.

Chapter IV which concludes Part I, outlines the rationale for adopting a qualitative, phenomenological approach to studying the (GSM) and the methods used.

Part II comprises of four chapters that are arranged according to the themes generated from the data analysis. The first three chapters present the findings and analysis of the themes they contend with. The final chapter discusses the insights generated and recommends heritage policy and management adjustments.

Chapter V traces the origins and evolution of the mosque's original community and provides its historical context. It explores how it transformed from a predominantly Malay congregation to a diverse, multi-ethnic group that challenges static notions of community in heritage contexts. It also uncovers community perceptions of the mosque as heritage, revealing tensions between official heritage designations and local perspectives.

Chapter VI the core thrust of the thesis, presents through a series of vignettes the ritual practices that occur at the mosque, offering a detailed phenomenological analysis, focusing primarily on the experience of ṣalāt (prayer). It also examines how these experiences contribute to producing sacred space.

Chapter VII reframes the community's taboos and norms as care practices employed to safeguard the GSM and foregrounds the Islamic principle of waqf as a community-endemic form of heritage care.

Chapter VIII synthesizes the study's key findings, articulating how the living heritage approach has resulted in a new perspective on mosques as heritage sites. It discusses the implications of this research for heritage theory and practice, particularly in the context of religious heritage sites. The chapter concludes with recommendations for more inclusive, culturally responsive approaches to heritage management and suggests areas for future research.

Chapter II:
An Entangled Tradition: Religion, Heritage, and the Makings of a Mosque

Drawing from various disciplines, including anthropology, religious studies, and heritage studies, this chapter maps the complex interplay between heritage, Islam, and the mosque. As a starting point, it introduces an overview of the evolution of heritage, detailing the shift from the conventional approach, which solely focused on material wellbeing, to emerging approaches, and in doing so, makes an argument for a living heritage approach. Thereafter, it provides an overview of the relationship between heritage and religion and the need for a localized view of Islam. It discusses what constitutes "Islamic heritage" and explores how mosques have been framed in the global heritage discourse. Underpinning these debates is the notion of the sacred, which focuses on the Islamic rituals that occur at the mosque and their place in contemporary Muslim lives. The chapter concludes with an overview of Islamic rituals to establish a foundation for understanding the GSM as a living heritage site.

2. From the past to the present: the evolution of heritage

2.1 An introduction to heritage studies

Heritage studies is an emerging discipline that contends with the past in the present and the kinds of actions that emerge from this relationship – from governmental policies to individual/community actions. In a post-World War II era, the objectives of the field became increasingly apparent, but it was not until the 1980s that it was firmly established (Offen, 2016). One factor Louise & Carman (2010) state was the need for and recognition of fresh perspectives on history/heritage from the Global South. The other factor was academic; concepts such as post-colonialism, post-structuralism and postmodernism inspired a critique of knowledge claims and authority (Logan et al., 2016).

2.2 Defining heritage

Numerous authors have intimated that heritage is difficult to define due to its relationship with history, its multiple users/creators, and the breadth of concepts it contends with (Waterton & Watson, 2015; Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Harvey, 2001). As heritage evolved, scholars sketched out its contours creating a working definition (Ahmad, 2006). This is not surprising, given that heritage is not a singular discipline but rather one drawing, influencing, and being

influenced by various social science disciplines that Waterton & Watson (2015: 3) states span: "archaeology, history, sociology, anthropology, museum studies, cultural studies, tourism, architecture, geography, and memory studies". A working definition of heritage comes from Turnbridge & Ashworth (1996: 20) who state that it is "a contemporary product shaped from history". Smith (2006: 11) defines heritage as "a cultural process or performance that is concerned with the production and negotiation of cultural identity, individual and collective memory, and social and cultural values." Yet, Muñoz Viñas (2023) cautions that definitions of heritage should be understood in their contexts and that a single notion of heritage is neither universal nor superior to others.

2.3 The historical development of heritage conceptualization

Initially, the heritage field was dominated by a Eurocentric approach, one couched in ideas of monumentalism and statism. Its attendant conservation practices focused on materiality – in other words, the fabric/materials that made up monuments, statues, and buildings (Zazu, 2011). Harrison (2013) traces this modern theoretical discourse and practice of heritage conservation to the Enlightenment era. A period that provided the theoretical foundation for the Western approach to heritage (Muñoz Viñas, 2023). This tradition was rooted in canonical positivism, intrinsic value, monumentalism, and Cartesian dualism, which firmly fixed the past to the past, devoid of the present context, with a strong emphasis on physicality (Harvey, 2001: Zazu, 2011: Munjeri, 2004). Attention was given to collecting, curating, listing, and identifying those heritage sites and objects under threat. Gradually, newer approaches to heritage began to emerge.

2.3.1 The critical turn in heritage, and voices from the South

The critical turn in heritage meant a challenge to established views about its conceptualization and conservation, providing a basis for questioning existing practices and their epistemological foundations. What emerged was a reconceptualization of heritage (Waterton & Watson, 2015); it went from something accepted without question to questioning how it is formed, what its purpose is, and how communities engage with it (Harvey, 2008). The reconceptualization of heritage emerged within the 'critical' turn in academia (Waterton & Watson, 2015). This turn was produced from the criticisms scholars had levelled at heritage: that it was Western, elitist and exclusionary (Muñoz Viñas, 2023). As Logan et al. (2016:18) writes,

> "Heritage is […] a political act and we need to ask serious questions about the power relations that "Heritage" has all too often been invoked to sustain Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fetishizing of expert knowledge have all exerted strong influences on how heritage is used, defined, and managed."

These serious questions have prompted scholars to take a critical perspective of heritage, which has been honed and described as a critical heritage framework; this framework will be further explored in the theoretical framework chapter. From the African perspective, the Western approach to heritage was untenable – as it was deeply enmeshed with colonialism (Munjeri, 2004). Thinking around and caring for Africa's heritage has been deeply influenced by colonial structures that systematically displaced traditional custodianship (Abungu & Ndoro, 2023). The central point of contention between Western and African approaches revolves around the relationship between the tangible and intangible. African scholars stress that intangible values should form the basis of heritage recognition instead of physical monuments (Abungu & Ndoro, 2023). As Munjeri (2004: 13) argues,

> "Cultural heritage should speak through the values that people give it and not the other way round. Objects, collections, buildings, etc. become recognized as heritage when they express the value of society and so the tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible."

These scholars emphasize how African heritage operates within distinctly different cultural and social frameworks from Western models. Furthermore, within the African approach, there is no binary between the natural and cultural, or tangible/intangible, offering an alternative view that challenges Western categorical divisions (Abungu & Ndoro, 2023). In addition, Munjeri (2004: 13) articulates that "society and values are thus intrinsically linked." Highlighting the key role that communities play in producing and promoting heritage. Scholars note how Western heritage management approaches have historically marginalized Indigenous knowledge systems and community participation (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). Chirikure (2013: 17) observes that "local communities are still not widely involved in heritage conservation endeavours." The exclusion of local communities is problematic because they often hold traditional conservation knowledge predating colonial interventions (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008).

African perspectives also challenge Western notions of authenticity and value. In the Western paradigm, authenticity lies with the tangible, that is, in the material of a heritage site/place (Wijesuriya, 2013); this approach is codified in charters such as the Venice Charter. However, African scholars have begun to highlight how heritage value can persist in the face of material changes (Taruvinga, 2019). The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali, for example, is replastered in an annual mud ceremony (Joy, 2012); such material changes do not diminish cultural significance (Mujeri, 2004) but rather bring to the fore that from the African perspective, heritage is dynamic, and lies in the intangible.

2.4 Contemporary approaches to heritage conceptualization

2.4.1 Top-Down vs Bottom-Up approaches

Harrison (2013) emphasizes the dynamic nature of heritage by drawing attention to the influences that define it and its subsequent interpretation of history. Harrison`s analysis brings to light two interrelated perspectives crucial in shaping how heritage is conceptualized and conserved. These have included the 'top-down' approaches governments and global institutions take to categorize and advocate for particular heritage assets as examples of local, national, or global significance. This often establishes 'official' heritage, emerging from adopting a top-down approach. This approach has been critiqued as contributing towards an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith, 2005). Alternative approaches centre inclusive engagements with local communities and their identified heritage assets, or a 'bottoms-up' approach to heritage. In response to such interpretations, it was noted how heritage may be constructed through discourse, understood in the Foucauldian tradition (Graham et al., 2000; Schramm, 2015), bringing attention to the power dynamics embedded in heritage. While shedding light on specific facets of reality, discourse concurrently obscures or 'veils' other elements. For heritage, this notion implies that specific stakeholders may prioritize the arrangement or designation of particular heritage assets while disregarding or downplaying other aspects of heritage (van Knippenberg et al., 2020).

2.4.2 Dissonance and heritage

The distinction between the values attached to heritage's tangible and intangible aspects is not fixed. Ludwig (2016: 820) notes that rather than being static, they can mean "different things, to different people, at different times and in different contexts." Thus, multiple heritage

representations may compete, as heritage(s) belonging to one group or persons naturally excludes others (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1997). This is essentially the concept of 'dissonance'. A term used to denote the tensions and contradictions between different interpretations and uses of heritage within a society, suggesting that heritage is often contested, with different groups laying claim to and interpreting heritage in divergent manners (Smith, 2006).

2.4.3 Present-centred approach

As heritage studies began to mature, based on grounded fieldwork observations and advancements in other disciplines, new approaches to heritage were conceptualized and put into practice (Harvey, 2008). This discursive turn saw discussions emerge around heritage as 'evolving and dissonant' (Perez et al., 2010). It also positioned heritage as 'natural and cultural' and 'tangible or intangible.' The scope of heritage expanded to include vernacular heritage(s) –reed huts, igloos, and adobe homes– a definitive shift from prioritizing Western monumentality. Scholars also began to raise the need for the inclusion of local expressions of heritage (beyond the expert), those that are firmly rooted in the present, articulating that: "heritage is formed in the present and reflects inherited and current concerns about the past" (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1997; Lowenthal, 2004). Moreover, the shape of this connection with the past may manifest as an object, building or place and embody a set of intangible practices which become embedded within specific relationships (Graham et al., 2000; de la Torre, 2002; Smith, 2006).

2.5 The heritage- religious nexus: making and breaking heritage

The renewed interest in religion and its role in heritage, once "an outcast in heritage studies" (Rico, 2021: 1), has taken centre stage in the heritage discourse (Meyer & de Witte, 2013; Isnart & Cerezales, 2020; Hemel et al., 2022). This relationship, or religious-heritage nexus, raises questions about how various actors represent, interpret, and deploy religious pasts in the contemporary world. Religion can be understood as a collection of beliefs and practices situated with a framework of an institution oriented toward engaging with the transcendent realm (Meyer, 2023). Whilst heritage may be understood as "a contemporary product shaped from history" (Turnbridge & Ashworth 1996: 20). The absence of faith as a primary epistemological lens within the heritage discourse states has resulted in tensions between acknowledging the role of religious belief in shaping the places and traditions constituting global heritage (Rico, 2017). The epistemological lens referred to is obscured due to the

secularist ideologies that shape the prevailing cultural heritage discourse and preservation practices (Gómez-Martínez, 2022; Tatay & Merino, 2023; Rico, 2021). While these ideologies may not explicitly reject the reality of religious doctrine, institutions, or bodies, they often devalue religious experiences and authorities. They are exemplified by international bodies such as UNESCO's World Heritage List, which is critiqued for its reliance on secular criteria for heritage recognition, prioritising historical and aesthetic values over spiritual values concerning religious buildings (Rudolff, 2003). Meyer & de Witte (2013: 227) understand this process as "profanation through which their [a site's] initial sacrality is being lost." This is also encapsulated in Ndoro's (2003) pithy, "your monument, our shrine," whereby on the ground, a site's religious/sacred connotations, such as rituals, myths, and spiritual experiences, hold greater resonance for a people than the official view projected onto a site from external bodies. In the framework of Asad (2003), secularisation is not merely the nonexistence of religion. Instead, it is a conceptual construct investigating novel modes of spirituality and meaning construction by ascribing transcendental qualities to various cultural and political figures and phenomena *outside* religion (Hemel et al., 2022). That is, it re-appropriates elements of religion in the cast of the secular; works of art in museums and historical monuments are often touted and understood in the language of the sacred and regarded as symbols of a new kind of civil religion (Naguib et al., 2015).

Religious traditions have long engaged in heritage-making, preserving sacred objects, buildings, texts, and rituals (Meyer, 2023). These traditions have transformed and declined throughout history, often becoming heritage as a secondary life, as seen in monuments and buildings from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome (Weir et al., 2023). As a second life, they are subject to "heritagisation," a term used to explain the move of religious sites, practices, and objects from the sacred realm to the secular one – in the form of heritage (de Jong & Mapril, 2023). Isnart & Cerezales (2020: 1) call this process the "migration of the holy". Religious actors also engage in "heritage-breaking" (Meyer, 2023: 15). As interests in their sacred spaces fluctuate over time (Stovel et al., 2005), these spaces often become part of adaptive reuse (Weir et al., 2023). Moreover, conflicting demands from coexisting religions often lead to the destruction of religious heritage (Stovel et al., 2005).

Islam is often linked to this form of heritage-breaking (Stein, 2022), effectively rendering the diversity of Islamic perspectives and practices that make heritage invisible. This invisibility is evident in early disciplines, from archaeology to art history, as they could not contend with the

living Islamic practices that produced heritage (Rico, 2021). Rico (2017: 184) critiques this association, terming it a "crisis of representation." Meaning that the dominant narrative has problematically framed Islam primarily through the lens of destruction and iconoclasm, creating a "caricaturized Islam whose main feature is a dislike for preservation that articulates through scandalous acts of iconoclasm across the broad Middle East region" (Rico, 2017: 183). Rico argues that this reductive framing persists despite scholarly work demonstrating the varied and changing attitudes to non-Muslim forms of representation through time. In addition, this focus has resulted in a problematic dynamic where heritage value is primarily constructed in opposition to its destroyers rather than through meaningful engagement with diverse cultural practices and interpretations. Rico (2017: 183) particularly critiques how this framework has been "empowering a monolithic debate that would benefit from a more critical—and ethical—analysis."

2.5.1 Heritage, Islam, and African traditional religions

Religious heritage comprises the tangible and intangible manifestations of faith-based practices and worldviews passed down through generations (Meyer, 2023). Outlining the origins of the term "religious heritage" (Meyer, 2023) determines that it emerged out of religious objects and spaces being transformed into heritage as they lost their original religious function, with the term religious standing in for the "past." It also exhibits hybridity, standing at the intersection of religious and secular domains, operating in the secular domain whilst keeping its religious significance. The interaction of the religious and secular dominions is not always harmonious. However, it is within the African context that this tension between traditional belief systems and colonial-era religious introductions is most pronounced, making it a significant case study in the study of religious heritage (Ndoro & Pwiti, 2001).

Formal heritage frameworks have historically marginalized African traditional religious ways of custodianship and engagement with forms of heritage due to the legacies of colonialization (Jopela & Fredriksen, 2015; Pwiti & Ndoro, 1999; Ndoro & Pwiti, 2001). However, African traditional religions and Indigenous Knowledge systems play a crucial role in providing an alternative framework to understanding heritage. They help reconsider values, authenticity, and management outside of the Western perspective, often by utilizing the intangible (Jopela & Fredriksen, 2015). Dondolo (2005) states that Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and its systems are components of intangible heritage, with one form providing significance to the tangible and

the other including “traditions, rituals, Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), customs, oral history, oral traditions, language, values, beliefs, songs, music, dance, performing arts” (Dondolo, 2005: 110). IKS are socially constructed and inform a person or collective's worldview(s) and influence their “socio-cultural spiritual, religious, ecological, economic, political and historical dimensions” (Dondolo, 2005: 111). IKS may be positioned as “local knowledge”; that is, it is culture that sits in place, or that is distinct to certain communities and their geo-locations (Dondolo, 2005).

Tayob (1999: 4) highlights the deep involvement of Muslims in the 350-year settlement history of South Africa, narrating how Islam became “localized” through diverse practices by distinct populations influenced by African, Indian, and Southeast Asian elements. This further underscores the need to analyse Islamic beliefs as a fluid “discursive tradition” whose creation is “dialogical-informed by the core texts but locally produced -and situational as a response to local spiritual and social contexts” (Reese, 2014: 23). Tayob (1999) narrates that the early Southeast Asian and Bengali slaves were prohibited from publicly practicing Islam during the period of Dutch colonial control. This led them to cultivate rituals and customs within their households, influenced by Sufi traditions. Upon their arrival at the port of Durban, businessmen built their inaugural mosque close to the Indian market. While Malawians toiled in the forests of eastern Transvaal, they orchestrated Mawlid festivities on improvised platforms (Tayob, 1999). These narratives outline how Muslims developed Islamic rituals and institutions according to their political, legal, and social contexts in South Africa, with the historical environment influencing every facet of life. Hence, it is becoming increasingly necessary to re-establish Muslim communities’ role in producing and safeguarding heritage through their specific belief systems and conservation practices in South Africa, as there is “very little support for the study of contemporary heritage preservation practices in the context of Muslim communities as a lived practical experience” (Rico 2019: 151).

2.5.2 The various terminology used for religious heritage

In the complex and often inconsistent terminology used to describe heritage related to ‘religion’, ‘faith’, and ‘spirituality’ (Stausberg, 2017; Ström, 2022; Rudolff, 2003), it is essential to develop a clear framework for referencing such heritage. The terms religious and spiritual are used to indicate a cultural and traditional connection to the divine or the otherworldly (Ström, 2022). The latter suggests something beyond institutionalized beliefs,

which religion refers to (Lynch, 2014). The term sacred serves as both a definition and a means of classifying and organizing objects and occurrences within the realm of religion (Farouk-Alli, 2002). Additionally, sanctity is closely linked to specific locations, known as sacred sites, exemplified by the practice of pilgrimages (Olsen & Timothy, 2022). Trinidad Rico states in "*Global Heritage, Religion, and Secularism*" (2021: 8):

> "For the purposes of this [book], I use the term 'religion' pragmatically with a focus on establishing the contours of the debate rather than on proposing definable category. [...] Likewise, [...] I use the term 'religion' as an aggregate that encompasses 'religion', 'belief', 'faith', and 'sacrality'. While such simplification may be sacrilegious in religious studies, these terms are used loosely by different authors and institutions across heritage preservation debates and policies, not least due to the claim that cultural heritage encompasses all dimensions".

An analysis of the terms "sacred," "spiritual," and "religious" in heritage contexts brings out several issues. The term sacred is prevalent in expressions like "sacred sites" and "sacred objects" (Brown & Verschuuren, 2018). It has mainly been used for natural sites under the UNESCO framework, whilst religion is usually associated with constructed sites (Ström, 2022). However, its use is problematic, as it suggests an intrinsic value of heritage expressions, creating an implicit dichotomy between the sacred and the profane (Tatay & Merino, 2023), which is not evident in many religious traditions where life cannot be separated from a sacred realm, as the Islamic expression "the whole of this earth is a mosque" hints at (Wersal, 1995: 545). Similarly, the term "spiritual" is often contrasted with material, leading to "needless stereotypes" (Serageldin, 1992: 3). Using the term spiritual causes confusion with the "spiritual values" category in the heritage field and incorrectly equates spiritual heritage with intangible heritage (Rudolff, 2003). In the expanding discourse, Stovel (2005) further adds the term "living" to "religious heritage" in a move to reconcile these dimensions. Under such contexts and following Trinidad Rico`s lead, this research uses the term "Living religious heritage" (2021). This term acts as an encompassing framework that facilitates tangible and intangible expressions of faith while recognizing the various ways religion, belief, and spirituality manifest in heritage contexts.

2.6 The conventional heritage approach and its limitations for living heritage

Wijesuriya (2017: 2) determines that heritage conservation has been "secularized". A term used to describe the phenomenon of

> "The separation or distancing between materiality (the fabric of the sites) and spirituality (the concerns of the people connected to sites) and the overemphasising of the importance of the former."

Wijesuriya (2017) bases this on the fact that the early iterations of the conservation philosophy of heritage were rooted in the secular values of the Western world. Such a philosophy locates authenticity in bygone ages, cultures, and simpler lifestyles (MacCannell, 1999; Lowenthal, 1995). The link between the past and the present is fractured and broken. It is with "nostalgia" that the past is recalled (Lowenthal, 1995), and there are few living aspects to conserve. Instead, the focus becomes the physical fabric of sites, contributing towards what Wijesuriya (2013) calls the "Conventional Conservation Approach." The fabric or tangible material becomes essential as they are seen as the only *authentic* link to the past, which is non-renewable and thus needs to be cared for.

The unlinking of the past with the present also meant that people in the present were not considered; instead, conservation became the domain of 'experts' who defined its contours (Ndoro et al., 2015). This discontinuity defines the leading conservation practices regarding the fabric of heritage, such as those included in the Athens and Venice Charters (ICOMOS, 1964). These charters influenced UNESCO and its heritage instruments, such as the World Heritage Convention, effectively globalizing and entrenching a secularised, material-focused paradigm (Goetcheus & Mitchell, 2014; Wijesuriya, 2013).

Overlooking the continuity component at heritage places and the excessive emphasis on materiality has frequently led to the loss of communities' ties to heritage (Peutz, 2011). This has also resulted in the exclusion and marginalization of communities from heritage conservation and management, ultimately harming the heritage itself (Ndoro et al., 2003). The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali, a UNESCO World Heritage site, provides a case study for analyzing the interaction between local spiritual traditions and the global discourse on heritage represented by UNESCO. Joy (2012), in their ethnographic study at the mosque, uncovers the dissonant perspectives between the lived experiences of heritage and UNESCO's universalist approach. The mosque's significance extends beyond its architectural and historical value. Joy

(2012: 15) observes that "the mosque is not only a sacred building but also a social space where people come to sit in the shade, chat, and exchange news." It is woven into the daily spiritual practices and social fabric of the Djenné community. Such an understanding of heritage, rooted in the ongoing cultural and religious traditions, is at odds with UNESCO's emphasis on material authenticity and static preservation. Joy (2012) contends that UNESCO's approach to heritage at Djenné fails to reckon with the cyclical nature of time experienced by the residents. As part of the mosque's conservation, it is annually replastered. It is not only part of its routine maintenance but is communal ritual that revitalizes the community, town, and the mosque. The failure of UNESCO to recognize these linkages results in the performative and dynamism of the community being relegated in favor of the mosque's materiality. Joy (2012) argues that this trend exemplifies how global heritage regimes favour specific forms of expertise and knowledge, often at the expense of local ones, and in many instances results in conflict. This example demonstrates how Western European conservation practices were applied to and enforced upon non-Western cultures. This practice Poulios, (2014) states, often overlook the distinctive viewpoints and needs of Indigenous communities in order to preserve an authentic past, which Lowenthal (1985) describes as an 'illusion' that, in fact, results in the opposite.

The World Heritage Convention as a global project did not align with alternative expressions of heritage, resulting in an underrepresentation on the World Heritage List of countries from the Global South (Aikawa, 2009). Smith & Akagawa (2009) contend that the recognition and understanding of a heritage place is contingent upon the values attributed to it by its people. Heritage does not hold any intrinsic worth that automatically designates it as such; instead, ascribing cultural significance to a place or location creates its status as heritage. To rectify these imbalances, UNESCO has attempted to incorporate intangible elements into its selection criteria, including cultural landscapes. Attempts to rectify this 'imbalance' have not come without criticism (Smith et al., 2009). Scholars have observed that while the convention is the first to attempt to integrate nature and culture as heritage categories, such a distinction does not exist for some communities (Dailoo & Pannekoek, 2008).

2.6.1 Value-centric heritage and its limitations for living heritage

As the pitfalls of the monumental/materialist approach became apparent, there has been a shift towards centring the significance of intangible cultural and spiritual heritage (Berkes 1999; Dudley, Higgins-Zogib, & Mansourian 2009 ; Mallarach & Papayannis 2007; Mallarach 2008;

Papayannis & Mallarach 2010). On an international level, this was addressed by UNESCO`s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Burra Charter from Australia. In addition, there was the Nara Document on Authenticity and NARA+20 (Tarvingua, 2019). The 2003 Convention created a 'new paradigm' in heritage protection, which a large majority of countries and people around the globe have long called for (Stefano & Davis, 2019). In the mining town of Burra, the Australian branch of the *International Council on Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS), came together in 1978 to discuss several theoretical conservation aspects (Muñoz Viñas, 2023), resulting in the "Burra Charter". It introduced a new way of thinking through heritage, one that was based on values. Values in the document referred to "aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value", inspiring several values 'typologies' which culminate in a place`s 'cultural significance' (Bond & Worthing, 2016). The fundamental concept of a values-based approach is that of stakeholder groups. Through the concept of stakeholder groups, a values-based approach claims to place people at the core of conservation (Spoormans et al., 2023). It tries to recognize and involve the whole range of stakeholder groups and their differing values equally. Regarding spiritual values, Bond & Worthing (2016:65) states that it:

> "[…] refers to the intangible values and meanings embodied in or evoked by a place which give it importance in the spiritual identity, or the traditional knowledge, art and practices of a cultural group. Spiritual value may also be reflected in the intensity of aesthetic and emotional responses or community associations and be expressed through cultural practices and related places."

Spiritual value is one of the components through which intangible cultural heritage is conceptualised and evaluated, and it refers to the transcendent attributes that cultural practices, manifestations, and knowledge systems possess for the communities that uphold them (Vecco, 2010). Numerous components of ICH, including rites, ceremonies, traditional crafts, and performing arts, possess spiritual significance (Lenzerini 2011; Vecco, 2010). These practices connect communities to the divine, the ancestors, and the metaphysical. Brown & Verschuuren (2018) outline that since 2003, the term spiritual values has expanded in its meaning and usage. Initially, it was associated with indigenous peoples, but it is now applied to local communities and mainstream faiths (Mallarach, 2008). This is also evidenced in various IUCN resolutions, one of which holds that the "cartesian distinction between material and spiritual does not exist in most cultures, where people consider that spiritual realities permeate everything." Byrne &

Goodall's (2013) research shows how Muslims utilise any space to conduct their prayers; in their case, it was a park, which led them to reiterate the Islamic concept that there is no such thing as a profane world or in the words of the Prophet: "the whole of this earth is a mosque" (Wersal, 1995: 545). ICH has valorised Islam in the discourse. Works centring around diverse practices have been inscribed on the ICH list. Recently, the Iftar meal has been recognised in a joint application from Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan (UNESCO, 2023). Malaysia's Mak Yong theatre was also included (Ishiguro, 2018), alongside Istanbul's whirling dervish practices (Pietrobruno, 2015).

The values-centric approach recognises the importance of cultural pluralism, acknowledging that "values are not innate or inherent to a place or to an object, but are assigned to them by people through complex processes of remembering and valuing" (Smith et al., 2010). This means that people, rather than the expert-driven processes, are central to heritage making and conservation and must be engaged at the grassroots level (Bortolotto, 2007). This trend culminated in UNESCO`s ICH convention (2003), which saw the intangible as deserving of preservation and safeguarding. As Vecco (2010: 124) writes, the notion of cultural heritage has undergone a "threefold process of extension", moving from an exclusive emphasis on monuments to one that considers their wider intangible dimensions and contexts. The convention provides a working definition of ICH, stating that it is:

> "The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." (UNESCO 2003: 4).

The above definition centres on communities' role in the heritage process and their intangible dimensions. Thus, ICH includes spiritual/religious/sacred knowledge and rituals. It focuses on cultural diversity by including Indigenous and local communities' perspective. Additionally, it highlights the interconnectedness of the tangible and intangible (Avrami et al., 2000). Any cultural manifestation (material or immaterial) embodies distinctive spiritual, historical and intellectual values collectively created, valued, shared, and handed down generationally (Avrami et al., 2000). Despite the progressive nature of the values approach to heritage, it struggles in practice, specifically with heritage typologies with high religious and spiritual resonance (Poulios, 2010). As Smith & Akagawa (2009) argue, spiritual value is often deeply personal, subjective, and culturally specific; any attempts to define, assess, and manage

spiritual value through standardised heritage processes often "essentialise" the qualities that make it meaningful to communities. De la Torre (2005: 8) critiques its tendency to prioritise preserving tangible heritage elements despite the intended equal consideration supposed to be given:

> "While the values and significance of a place ought to be the touchstone of management decisions, day-to-day operations are most often concerned with the use and care of the physical resources".

This focus on tangible elements can marginalise intangible heritage and its associated values (Poulios, 2010). Rudolff (2003) in their research on Muslim communities and their relationship to the Umayyad Mosque, makes the argument that the categorisation and deconstruction of heritage into "empty" values and subcategories impedes stakeholders from effectively expressing values that may not align seamlessly with the given categories. Poulios (2014) argues that experts' views often trump local communities' perspectives; even though conservation professionals are painted out to be only one of the stakeholder groups, in practice, they are often the managing authority unto themselves, prioritising the conservation of a site's fabric to ensure 'authenticity' over local practices.

2.7 What are communities?

With the shift in how heritage is understood – from a static physical entity – to a process produced by people in the present, there has been increased recognition of the concept of community in the heritage discipline (Jung et al., 2024; Fernández-Álvarez et al., 2022). This shift is reflected in formalized heritage conventions such as UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972), the Burra Charter (Bond & Worthing, 2016), the Faro Convention (Bak, 2016), and UNESCO`s Convention on intangible cultural heritage 2003 (Bak, 2016). A community is defined as a collective of individuals residing in a shared locality and can operate at various scales, from local to national or global (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). On the African continent, inherited heritage legislation failed to provide for community participation, and reform was often a low priority (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). However, in South Africa, the NHRA specifically empowers previously marginalized local communities (Deacon, 1999).

The connection between heritage and community has been taken as a natural affinity, obscuring the need to explain or justify the concept (Waterton & Smith, 2010). This natural affinity masks

the cyclical and self-reinforcing nature of the concepts, or as Waterton & Smith (2010: 8) describe it, "the community group is defined and justified because of its heritage, and that heritage is fostered and sustained by the creation of community." This produces essentialist ideas of both concepts – effectively invisibilizing the intra-diverse, conflictual, and power hierarchies *within communities*. Such conceptualizations of community align with the AHD – imagining communities myopically, set around a rigid set of characteristics: "rural, geographically defined, traditional, working class, ethnic, face to face, and so forth" (Waterton & Smith, 2010: 12). Waterton & Smith (2010: 12) call this "misrecognition," or the space in which complexity and diversity within communities are left aside for an idealized version. Stripping aside loaded explanations of community, Apaydin (2018: 4) emphasizes the social aspect of community, stating that it is where "one learns and continues to practice how to be social," and that this is inextricably connected to the production and maintenance of heritage. For Apaydin (2018: 5), these relationships: "build elements of cultural heritage such as monuments, objects, songs, folklore, and landscape."

Social sciences and anthropology developments have influenced community approaches to heritage, contributing to seeing them as dynamic, socially constructed entities rather than fixed, homogeneous groups (Cohen, 2015). However, as Watson (2011) argues, community engagement in heritage and conservation under the purview of heritage authorities is still abstract and problematic. Addressing this critique, Spoormans et al. (2023: 731) state the need for engaging with stakeholders to "[...] further specify stakeholders beyond the commonly used 'community' and 'experts'". The idea of stakeholders has produced many interest groups and people who differ in their values and hold intra-differences within a group. This is not surprising in the modern era of greater mobility and interconnectedness. However, it does point to the struggle of determining who forms part of a "community" concerning heritage sites, as "the membership of a local community may range from a small group of people to the entire living world population" (Spoormans et al., 2023). Myopic takes on communities such as "locality" often feed into the traditional approaches to heritage management. Population movements and diasporic communities challenge such "localized" perspectives of a heritage site/process.

As a result, there has been a paradigm shift in the conceptualizing of community, which includes looking at it as a network of interrelationships, allowing for acknowledging the messy entanglements and potential conflict within communities. These new readings upend the

dominant narrative of community in heritage contexts, which "blend each individual member of a group into a blander, homogenous collective, with no allowance for internal unease, disappointment, conflict or power" (Waterton & Smith, 2010: 12). Poulios (2011) offers a nuanced exploration of different types of communities and their relationships to heritage sites, identifying several key categories, including local communities, dwelling communities, changing/evolving communities, and communities with claimed particular associations. For Poulios (2011), "continuity" is a crucial criterion for defining living heritage sites and their associated communities. That is, communities that primarily associate and safeguard the core function of a site should be seen at the root of a living heritage site (Poulios, 2011). This is especially relevant at religious sites, as religious communities are increasingly heterogeneous and transnational in a globalised world.

2.8 Not a category, but a process: perspectives on Islamic heritage

There is no one definition of "Islamic heritage" (Alshehaby, 2020; Rico, 2017; UNESCO, 2005). This ambiguity emerges from the relative newness of the term. As a burgeoning field, Islamic heritage stands at an intersection of complex concepts— spanning various contexts, from archaeology to numismatics — all within differing cultural contexts with their own spatial and temporal dimensions (Rico, 2017). Islam, as an overarching worldview with global resonance and a local presence, makes it increasingly difficult to come to a single definition/understanding of "Islamic heritage". Thus, Rico (2017: 2) advocates that the construction of Islamic heritage should emerge from "different disciplines facilitating specific heritage debates as they navigate the concept of Islamic heritage through their particular methodologies, sources, languages, and boundaries". Islamic heritage requires a multidisciplinary approach, whereby different fields and perspectives contribute to understanding and constructing what it constitutes, considering its diverse contexts, and dimensions alongside its tangible and intangible aspects. This shift is required as a tangible materialist construction of Islamic heritage, has led to several misconceptions, as explored earlier in the case of the Djenné Mosque. Mainly, that historical Islamic narratives must be understood through a past-centred perspective, or that they solely address an Islamic past, and that their values are fixed and discernible (Rico, 2017; Bashir, 2014).

The identifier "Islamic" serves several purposes for scholars. Feener (2017) asserts that the identification does not refer to a singular, normative perspective on the cultural heritage of pre-

Islamic civilizations, highlighting many forms of interaction and appreciation of pre-Islamic histories within Muslim contexts. Bashir (2017) articulates that Islamic heritage is a valuable past constructed based on assessments of value in contexts, which are dependent on the setting within which they originate and individuals' perspectives. Aksoy (2017) notes that the identifier is challenged by the view that all pasts can be made into Islamic pasts beyond chronological and geographical particularities. For Mulder (2021), defining a heritage site as 'Islamic' is not to fix it within the narrow limits of a spiritual tradition or religious faith but rather to situate it within the long, 1,400-year history of the entirety of cultural production of the Islamic world, a faith which 'contains multitudes' – including those productions created by Christians, Jews, and Hindus. This creates a scenario in which no historical period is distinctly characterized as Islamic within the Islamic world.

More importantly, for Rico (2017), it is a way to centre Muslim peoples in the heritage discourse and how they negotiate their engagements with non-Islamic heritages. Mahdy (2019) contends that Islam is a comprehensive worldview that influences every facet of life and cannot be confined to the realm of "spiritual value", moreover he advocates for integrating Islamic methods and instruments for evaluating the authenticity of heritage sites, citing the long-used waqf system, which has been crucial in preserving and overseeing cultural heritage in Islamic contexts. Furthermore, Allahham (2020) argues that within the realm of built heritage, Islamic heritage might be considered a "myth" that has emerged due to modernity, capitalism, and the influence of state power, which produces a mythologized and inauthentic depiction of Islamic heritage – devoid of any historical or social context – and functioning primarily to bolster state authority and advance capitalist objectives.

These different disciplinary perspectives highlight the complexity and diversity of approaches to understanding and constructing Islamic heritage. They set out to dispel the notion of a monolithic and temporally cohesive Islamic past encapsulated in 'Islamic heritage' instead, it focuses on plural "Islamic heritage(s)," not as a discrete category but as a discursive, situated process continuously constructed through the lenses and practices of different disciplines, institutions, communities, and individuals. More importantly, such a perspective facilitates knowing

> "[…] what the construct of Islamic heritage authorizes and perpetuates but also what different disciplines that contribute to heritage studies allow Islamic heritage to

authorize and perpetuate through their practices, values, and standards" (Rico, 2017: 4).

2.8.1 The mosque and the challenges of living heritage sites

Ayyad (2019: 21) asks, "Why has the religious context for mosque evolution been underestimated to date?" Ayyad assigns this trend to the formulaic views on Arabia and Islam, a region believed to be poor in architectural heritage and a religion dismissive of buildings and decoration. This resulted in scholarship seeking the answer in the material instead of devotional prompts that occur at a mosque. The devotional prompts, it is argued, are central to understanding how a mosque is made. Ayyad (2019) leverages the ahadith of the Prophet (ﷺ): "the whole earth is made a mosque for me (and my nation)", which is taken to mean that prayer is valid on any clean piece of land. Conventionally, the mosque is a designated place, typically a structure, where individuals regularly gather to engage in communal prayer. The formal requirement for a mosque is for land to be set aside in accordance with a feasible scheme (waqf is frequently used), in regular usage (ṣalāt) and remains clean (Ayyad, 2019).

The first mosque constructed by the Prophet is characterized as a hypaethral edifice (Akkach, 2005), built entirely of mud and slightly above the height of a standing man. The mosque remained exposed to the sky except for specific portions covered by palm trunks. Barring the qibla wall, the central area of the mosque featured three entrances, one in each cardinal direction (North, East . The establishment of the mosque by the Prophet and the Muslim community was both fundamental and simple, reflecting the inherent simplicity in both form and function (Akkach, 2005). In its simplest form, a mosque comprises a level expanse of land; its sole structural prerequisite is a means (such as a trench, wall, or reed fence) to ensure that the congregation stands in a straight line parallel to the qibla (Akkach, 2005). Ayyad (2019: 15) goes on to state that "the term masjid does not seem in and of itself to connote a building of any kind".

Global heritage regimes have had a contentious relationship with Africa. Ndoro (2005) examines the tensions between local communities and international heritage organisations at the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage site. Highlighting issues relevant to discussing Islamic heritage and mosques in Africa. Ndoro (2005) maintains that UNESCO's prioritisation of the tangible aspects of heritage over the intangible aspects has had detrimental effects. This leads

to a disconnect between the goals of international heritage organisations and the needs and aspirations of local communities, who view these sites as living, dynamic spaces of worship and cultural practice. Ndoro (2005) states that this perspective is reflected across the continent, and their work finds resonance with multiple scholars concerning mosques (Joy, 2012; Apotsos, 2021; Cantone, 2022).

There are over one hundred UNESCO World Heritage Sites on the African continent, of which 10% are either Muslim sites or sites affiliated with Islamic culture (Apotsos, 2021). Joy (2012) in their book "The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali" articulates the intricacies surrounding the Great Mosque of Djenné, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Mali. Joy (2012) highlights the tensions when international heritage standards and practices intersect with local religious and cultural traditions—often leading to clashes. Arguing that the global heritage regime, through its emphasis on preservation and authenticity, overlooks the living, and dynamic nature of the Great Mosque, underscoring the need to consider local perspectives and the Muslim community's ongoing use of these spaces when developing heritage management strategies (Joy, 2012).

Apotsos (2021) takes a critical stance in their analysis of several case studies, examining how UNESCO's 'monumental' heritage regime is experienced by focusing on on-the-ground narratives of world heritage mosques. One such case study is that of Harar Jugol in Ethiopia, a historic town with multiple mosques. The close relationship between the community and their built environment is apparent in how the town's mosques and shrines are interspersed into the community's daily life, creating a "spiritual topography" (Apotsos, 2023: 82). Or as Nuryanti (1996: 256) puts it: "local people interact [with these structures] directly as they go about their everyday lives". While the town is just one of the case studies presented by Apotsos, this example illustrates the relationship between World heritage and the mosque space as dynamic, whereby the mosque space is not only a place of prostration but also as a site that is "simultaneously a memorial to the past and an aspiration towards what is to come" (Rizvi, 2015: 4). Aposto`s research using a CHF, highlights the importance of considering the experiences of communities and their stories as they intersect heritage, and Islam in Africa, giving agency to the perspectives of those who inhabit and engage with their sacred spaces (Apotsos, 2021).

In their work, Cantone (2022) sets out to "deconstruct the mosque as a monument", noting that throughout the ages, the mosque had to be made, often through vernacular forms of architecture and myth, especially on the African continent. For Cantone (2022: 15), "the masjid clothes its worshippers with its seasonal, regional, and cultural apparel so that its appearance acts as and morphs into an extension of the identity". The humble origins of the mosque (the prophet's mosque) and their vernacular construction, such as the mosques in Sudan, have little to differentiate them from "other flat roofed mud buildings" (Cantone, 2022: 39). The diversity of styles and the occasional absence of iconic elements like minarets challenge the notion of the mosque as monumental, monolithic, and inadaptable. Within the African context, mosques need to be recognised as an expression of the makers` collective imagination – shaped by identity and the vernacular architecture of the surrounding environment. Cantone (2022: 39) describes this as "the interconnectedness of built form – whatever its function – [which] results ultimately from experiments with various configurations of habitat".

2.9 What is the sacred?

In the words of Marshall (2010), "The sacred was and remains indispensable to understanding religion […]". The concept of the sacred has been subject to continuous debates and study within the domains of sociology, anthropology, and religious studies (Durkheim, 1912; Eliade, 1959; Lynch, 2012). As the quote above articulates its relationship to religion has remained a mainstay, yet it is being applied to different settings including the secular (Coleman & White, 2006: Evans, 2003). Moreover, scholars have set out to rework the notion of the sacred from its earliest iterations (Taves, 2009; Knott, 2005; Meyer & Houtman, 2012). These early definitions came from the works of Mircea Eliade (1959), and Emile Durkheim (1912). They developed two perspectives of the sacred and its attentive components. The first perspective or the substantial/phenomenological approach was exemplified by the works of Rudolf Otto (1923), Gerardus van der Leeuw (1963), and Mircea Eliade (1959). They emphasized the inherent supernatural qualities of the sacred and its ability to evoke a sense of awe and mystery in individuals (Farouk-Alli, 2002; Burge, 2011; Naguib et al., 2015). For Eliade, the first possible definition of the sacred – is its opposition to profane. Developing the concept of "hierophany", which he describes as "man" becoming aware of the sacred due to it manifesting itself or showing itself on a plane that contrasts with the profane (Farouk-Alli, 2002). However, criticism abounded (Bergmann, 2009; Kong, 2001; Chidester & Linenthal, 1995). This led to a perspective that focused on the situational and processual nature of the sacred, focusing on

how social and cultural settings influence its experience and interpretation (Naguib et al., 2015). This approach is rooted in the works of Durkheim (1912), who articulated that the sacred is not an inherent quality of objects or places but rather a product of social interactions and rituals that imbue them with sacred significance (Coleman & White, 2006: Burge, 2011). Durkheim determined that the sacred is 'set apart' from the profane because of its special meaning. For Durkheim, the sacred is contingent on rituals and social relations; nothing is inherently sacred; instead, it is formed as "a by-product of sacralisation," that is, through ritual and cultural practices (Farouk-Alli, 2002: 66).

2.9.1 Sacred heritage in South Africa

In South Africa, the binary notions of the sacred have also been challenged. Chidester (2012) highlights how the sacred was deployed to legitimize exclusion and control. The Dutch colonial settlement, exemplified by Van Riebeeck's hedge, sought to create a defensive sacred space that kept indigenous Africans at bay. However, the sacred was also appropriated by those resisting colonial and apartheid rule. Indigenous African religious categories, centred on the dichotomy between "home space" and "wild space," were adapted to the urban environment, creating a migrating sacred between rural and urban contexts and a "hybrid sacred" that blended Indigenous and Christian elements. Likewise, the Muslim community of Cape Town developed an alternative sacred geography, with a ring of shrines or karamats encircling the city, subverting the exclusion they faced from the colonial centre (Chidester, 2021).

In the post-apartheid era, Jethro (2013) explores the state's attempts to express a new African identity through Freedom Park evoking the sacred. The park is a national heritage site located on Salvokop Hill in Pretoria. It was conceptualised as a post-apartheid monument to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives during the liberation struggle. The park was made "sacred," with elements such as the Isivivane Memorial, the Wall of Names, and //hapo Museum using indigenous knowledge. The Isivivane memorial draws upon soil samples from significant historical locations and boulders to construct "Lesaka", a sacred resting place for the spirits of those who died in the struggles for freedom. It was created as a "sacred centre" for the country and was consecrated by religious leaders performing sacred rituals. The making of Freedom Park vividly illustrates the "cultural labor invested in the process of casting a new material form as heritage" by evoking the sacred using Indigenous African religious idioms (Jethro, 2013). Jethro`s work highlights that notions of the sacred in heritage sites are not

intrinsic but are dynamically constructed, negotiated, and leveraged by various stakeholders. Sacred sites can be desacralised, re-sacralised with new meanings, or even newly created by drawing on religious concepts.

2.9.2 Conceptualizing the sacred in Islam

In Islamic studies, Bürge (2011) draws attention to the limited application of the concept of the sacred. The few scholars who have tackled this issue include Farouk-Alli (2002) Bürge (2011) and Dockrat (2005). In their paper "A Qur'anic Perspective and Analysis of the Concept of Sacred Space in Islam", Farouk-Alli (2002) walks through how sacred space is conceptualized within the Islamic tradition, using the Qur'an as the primary lens of analysis. Farouk-Alli argues that the Qur'an favours a situational rather than a substantial definition of sacred space. Sacredness is produced through the cultural labour of ritual practice rather than being inherent to the space itself, which Farouk-Alli arrives at through their analysis of the Qur'anic narrative of the Ka'bah.

Closely reading relevant Qur'anic passages, Farouk-Alli (2002) demonstrates that the Ka'ba's sanctity derives from its function as a site of monotheistic worship rather than from any inherent sacred quality. Verses are cited showing that Abraham built the Ka'ba as a "house of worship" and "an asylum of security and pilgrimage for humankind" (Quran: 5: 97), underscoring its functional rather than ontological sacrality. He notes that even the divine appointment of Mecca as the site for the Ka'ba does not prove its inherent sacredness, as the Qur'an emphasizes that "to God belongs both east and west" (Quran, 2:142). Moreover, all of the earth is recognized as a place of prayer. In Islam, "any space utilized for ritual worship is sacred" (Farouk-Alli, 2002), whether permanently like a mosque or a temporary site. Farouk-Alli`s reading of the sacred asserts that any place through a two-part locative strategy of prayer - the physical movements that appropriate the space and the devotional invocations that connect one to the divine - can become sacred. Hence, the sanctity of the Ka'ba and other enduringly sacred Islamic spaces derives from their long-established function as worship sites and monotheistic symbolism, not from any intrinsic holiness.

In their work "Angels, Ritual and Sacred Space in Islam", Bürge (2011) explores the role of angels, ritual practice, mythic history, and sacred archetypes in defining and validating sacred spaces in Islam, with a particular focus on the Ka'ba in Mecca through a religious comparative analysis. Bürge sets out to demonstrate that the Ka'ba has a heavenly counterpart, the Inhabited

House (Bait-ul Ma'mur), in the spiritual realm, which serves as its archetype and establishes a direct link between the earthly and divine realms. For Bürge (2011: 240), the Ka'ba is portrayed as the axis mundi, Islam's "centre of religious activity". Its sacredness is further authenticated by its mythological associations with crucial figures like Adam, Abraham, Ishmael and Muhammad. Bürge (2011) implicitly establishes a hierarchical structure of the sacred. The Ka'ba assumes a central position, observing that sacred spaces, through their spatial orientation towards the Ka'ba, confirm both their sacrality and the Ka'ba`s. Sacred spaces in Islam, Bürge (2011) notes, include shrines and mosques and those temporary sacred areas established through ritual prayer. While these spaces may assert a certain level of sacredness, they can ultimately not rival the Ka'ba as the foremost sacred site, as they lack a heavenly archetype, specific prescribed rituals (circumambulation etc), and mythological history.

Dockrat (2005) maps the historical evolution of the mosque as a sacred space within the Islamic tradition in his article "The Development of the Masjid as Sacred Space in Islam". Dockrat argues that Islam designates certain places as sacred, and in the case of the mosque, it emerged as a sacred space gradually over time. Dockrat (2005: 323) suggests that this development is rooted in

> "The fundamental conviction that all place is sacred and that through worship, architecture and traditional city planning there is an attempt to sacralise all space by extending the 'sacred' into the 'secular'".

Examining the earliest mosque architecture, Dockrat (2005: 324) notes that before the Hijrah, "Muhammad and his followers appear to have gathered for prayer in any convenient location in and around Makkah". Only after the establishment of the prophet's house in Medina, which incorporated a space for prayer, a basic template for mosque design emerged, which gradually assumed a sacred status in the collective memory of the Muslim community. The proliferation of Islam in non-Muslim areas prompted adherents to take pre-existing sacred locations, such as churches and temples, as their designated grounds for religious worship. Dockrat (2005) suggests such acts were not simply a matter of convenience but a manner of asserting Islamic hegemony; that is, they were not concerned with the architectural components of the mosque, which later evolved to meet the demands of religious rituals and to represent Islamic supremacy.

The initial iterations of a mosque, particularly the congregational mosque, functioned as the focal point for religious and social activities within the Muslim population of any given locality. Dockrat (2005) notes that for centuries, the mosque was a multi-purpose space, collapsing the distinction between sacred/profane serving not only as a place of worship but also as

> "A popular meeting place for gossiping townsmen; a forum for the dissemination of sacred knowledge and secular opinion; a venue for creative interaction among special interest groups; [and] a retail outlet for hawkers of food and drink". (Dockrat, 2005: 330)

In their palimpsest interpretation of sacrality, as the sanctity of mosques grew, it became evident that there were concerns regarding exclusivity and proper decorum. This included the exclusion of women and non-Muslims in mosques. Moreover, strict regulations, or taboos were developed to maintain the mosque`s sanctity. Dockrat highlights the practical and context-dependent aspects of sanctity in Islam, contending that using or performing a function confers the mosque sanctity and that it is no more inherently sacred than any other structure (Dockrat, 2005). Despite the strong relevance of rituals in sanctifying space, previous research has determined them as mere formalism, hence there is a need to examine the importance of rituals in Islam.

2.10 Beyond empty formalism: the breadth and depth of rituals

Until recently, UNESCO's concept of religion was primarily associated with institutionalized world religions (Stimac, 2023). With the introduction of ICH, UNESCO's cultural diversity now subsumes not only ethnic and cultural diversity but also the broadest possible range of religions and world views. What has emerged is discourse around sacred places, such as temples, shrines, burial grounds, and pilgrimage routes (Shackley, 2001; Bremer, 2006); religious rituals which connect communities to the divine, honour ancestors, and mark significant life transitions (Stovel, 2005; Lixinski, 2013); a deepening of the discussion around the traditional mythologies, creation stories, and cosmological understandings that provide a framework for making sense of the world for communities (Munjeri, 2004; Smith, 2006); and the role that spiritual heritage plays in providing a sense of belonging and connection to a community's shared history, values, and way of life (Waterton & Watson, 2013). However, as their approach to religion has broadened, on the ICH list, many rituals and practices associated with indigenous and folk traditions are featured (Stimac, 2023), with rituals explicitly linked

to Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam categorized separately. What this reveals, Stimac (2023) argues, is that there is a conceptual distinction in UNESCO's approach; that intangible heritage pays special attention to one dimension of religion—rituals. The extraction of rituals from their larger spiritual framework and treating organized religions as a separate category from the "spiritual traditions" of indigenous peoples and local communities obscures the interconnection of the two. Indigenous worldviews cannot be fully understood without engaging their religious and cosmological dimensions. Moreover, religious traditions have deep spiritual components. Extracting rituals from their larger context risks fragmenting and distorting their meaning.

In anthropology Kreinath & Snoek (2006) advocate for a more nuanced and methodical approach to defining the term ritual. They posit that the problematic nature of existing meanings of the term is due to the reliance on classical Aristotelian understandings that assume that rituals are defined by a set of necessary and sufficient characteristics. Snoek (2006) notes that academics differ in terms of the criteria of the essential characteristics of the term, producing conflicting definitions. Early definitions of ritual focused on determining a specific cluster of qualities required. These conditions include formality, standardization, repetition, symbolism, and invariance (Turner, 1967; Tambiah, 1979; Kertzer, 1988; Rappaport, 1999). Kreinath & Snoek (2006) contend that the use of these criteria to define rituals is problematic as it presupposes that a ritual must adhere to the classical form.

To overcome the constraints of traditional definitions, Kreinath & Snoek (2006) propose the notions of 'fuzzy' sets and 'polythetic' classes, which provide a more adaptable approach to categorization. They argue that the attributes utilized to delineate rituals frequently exhibit polythetic features —not universally present in all members of the category— or fuzzy characteristics —present in variable degrees—. Kreinath & Snoek (2006: 7) write that once this premise is acknowledged, the objective shifts from identifying the distinct features that unequivocally differentiate 'rituals' from other phenomena to compiling a comprehensive set of characteristics that are commonly found in most rituals, or at least in the ones under examination in a specific project.

Kreinath & Snoek (2006) suggest that a biphasic approach to formulating a working definition of 'rituals' tailored to a particular project needs to be made. Such an attempt should include

using the existing literature on the term as a guide. Researchers should then create a list of qualities that may be used. Followed by an attempt to determine the context and intent for which the definition is being developed. The working definition should not be considered exclusive or the only one, but rather, as an example of their approach. Rituals, therefore, need to be recognized as behaviourally specific, as they differ from ordinary behaviour, whose actants are (in part) their audience. Ritual conduct is predominantly observed in designated locations and during specific periods and tends to be more formally styled, organized, and standardized than everyday behaviour. Additionally, they hold a purpose and symbolic significance for those who engage in them (Kreinath & Snoek, 2006).

Sikandar (2000) argues that the concept of ritual struggles to find resonance in an Islamic context. Islam has its own corpus of worship that is rich and detailed well beyond early definitions of ritual. Additionally, the neglect of Islamic normative rituals in academic studies has been noted by Graham (1981: 59): "Neither in terms of rich comparative study nor in terms of interpretive study of Muslim ritual on its own terms, […] do we have any really significant work to build upon." Additionally, Denny (1985: 63) states that "the systematic study of ritual within traditional Islamic studies has been recessive," even though "Islam itself places great emphasis on ritual activities." Reinhart (1990: 23) still spoke of "a desiccating lack of studies […] of Islamic ritual life". Hence, renewed scholarship has begun to tackle these issues (Powers, 2004; Mustafa, 2020; Otterbeck, 2024). The study of normative Islamic rituals, such as that of wuḍūʾ (ablution) and ṣalāt (prayer), has been significantly shaped by Western academia. In many cases, rituals were considered antiquated, formalistic, and a reduction of religion to triviality – or as "empty ritualism" (Katz, 2005). This view was prevalent in the writings of influential scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher, who took the emphasis on rituals in Islamic law as anti-rational (Mustafa, 2020). Moreover, Western academics saw Islamic ritual practices as rigidly procedural and lacking spiritual significance (Powers, 2004).

The disparity in the study of Islamic ritual can be attributed Katz (2005) writes to normative Islamic ritual`s resistance to some forms of analysis, particularly the decoding process that cultural anthropologists and historians of religion favour. Katz (2005: 107) contends that the anthropological analysis of normative Islamic rituals has been rendered unfeasible due to the perceived "symbolic blankness" or "emptiness" of these practices that Western scholarship has posited. Nevertheless, contemporary academic research has questioned this assumption and shifted towards a praxis-oriented understanding of rituals within Islamic settings (Katz, 2005;

Mustafa, 2019; Otterbeck, 2024). This approach emphasizes the significance of practice and embodiment in the religious life of Muslims. Otterbeck (2024: 252) effectively examines how the ritual of ṣalāt permeates the Islamic identity and worldview by utilising a sophisticated combination of physical gestures, spoken words, and symbolic actions of listening. Otterbeck (2024: 260) writes:

> "Al-ṣalāt allows believers to allocate a fixed time, in a certain space, under specific conditions, to connect to Allah. The routine repetition of ritualised, embodied movements produces a 'ritualised body'".

Katz (2005:145) similarly contends that the Islamic tradition has ascribed several religiously significant interpretations to rites such as wuḍūʾ by incorporating themes from the Quran and Hadith:

> "[the] examination of the range of meanings attributed by Muslim authors to a ritual such as wuḍūʾ demonstrates that, despite the scholarly consensus to the contrary, Islamic ritual is not sui generis. It is not fundamentally or uniquely devoid of symbolic resonance or of links to the wider world of Islamic ethics and myth".

2.10.1 An overview of the forms of rituals in Islam

Islamic religious practices are diverse in nature due to Islam`s capacity to facilitate various readings, whether they be spiritual or cultural. Thus, this section covers the universal normative rituals practised by Muslims worldwide that most believers agree upon that are performed at a mosque. These include niyya, wuḍū, adhān and ṣalāt. Before the performance of any ritual, the process of niyya needs to take place. Powers (2004), discussing the idea of niyya, states that many scholars have mischaracterized it as a spiritual component of Islamic rituals. This misinterpretation was rooted in the desire to defend Islam against charges of empty ritualism and legalism, but which, ironically reinforces the notion that Islamic praxis is spiritually defective. Niyya refers to the cognitive concentration or purpose accompanying the execution of religious practices, such as prayer, fasting, giving to the poor, and pilgrimage (Powers, 2004). Wuḍūʾ as a ritual, primarily involves cleansing the physical body and removing impurities, using water passed over the extremities of the body (Katz, 2005; Wigley & Bibi, 2024). This is required to perform the ṣalāt, which refers to the physical enactment of the prayer rite and is conducted five times daily. During this prayer, Muslims face the qibla, orientating

themselves towards the Ka`ba. These prayers hold deep religious significance for Muslims worldwide and are often performed in congregation at a mosque (Al Bakri et al., 2019). Before the performance of ṣalāt at the mosque, the ritual of adhān takes place. It involves reciting a set of Arabic phrases that alert Muslims that the time of prayer has entered. These rituals are the bedrock of the mosque and will be explored in depth in chapter VI. Following the framework laid out by Kreinath & Snoek (2006) it may be argued that the defining characteristics of Islamic ritual (Table 1), are religious acts that are conducted to worship Allah, and entail precise physical movements, gestures, and verbal recitations that are carried out at specified times and/or at specific locations. Often, they require physical purification and aim to cultivate a feeling of solidarity and collective identity among Muslims. Engagement in these rituals is seen as a fundamental aspect of Islam, and to most Muslims, they must be performed correctly as authorized by Islamic texts and tradition. Although researchers and practitioners may attribute different interpretations to these rituals, their main objective is not to communicate or interpret symbols. Instead, they focus on developing a physical language and embodiment practice to shape the practitioner's identity as a servant of Allah. The interpretations linked to these rituals are frequently multifaceted, improvised, and purposeful and can range in strength and complexity depending on the specific circumstances. As Katz (2005) states, "the symbolic logic of ritual is an embodied logic, and its meanings are physically mastered rather than spiritually pondered or intellectually understood." These rituals form part of a larger corpus of worship and are central to Muslims` lives.

Table 1. Characteristics of Islamic Rituals. Source: Adapted from Sikandar (2000); Powers (2004).

1	Requires a set intention
2	Required by Islamic scripture (Quran) and tradition (Sunnah)
3	Performed to glorify Allah, and earn his pleasure
4	Often involve particularized physical movements, gestures, and recitations
5	Conducted in specific locations (such as mosques/ Ka'ba) and at particular times (e.g ṣalāt)
6	Often necessitates the need for ritual purification before engagement (wuḍūʾ or ġhusl)
7	Foster a feeling of communal belonging and shared identity among individuals who follow the Islamic faith

2.10.2 ʿIbādah, the Islamic corpus of worship

In the Islamic worldview, the sole reason for the creation of "mankind" is the worship of Allah, who states: "And I created not the Jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me" (Quran, 51:56). Here Sikandar (2000) understands "Worship Me" in the context of the term ʿibādah, which is derived from the same root as Abd, which in Arabic means slave or servant; thus, Sikandar (2000) uses this verse to emphasise that a servant (believer) is required to give their devotion, servitude, submission, and obedience to Allah. ʿIbādah is more than just doing certain rites or acts. It is an all-encompassing idea that includes a person's whole life. In its direct sense, it means serving, worshipping, following, and giving oneself to Allah (Sikandar, 2000). In this context, Sikandar uses the notion of ʿibādah to contextualize Islamic rituals, emphasizing that these rituals are not mere meaningless formalities but rather a specific set of activities designed for the worship of Allah. Therefore, rituals are positioned as components of a complex system of beliefs, practices, and acts intended to maintain faith, promote goodness, deter evil, and express gratitude towards Allah. Consider this excerpt by Al-Ghazali (1975: 82-85), shown here to cement the centrality of ʿibādah in a believer's life and the role that rituals play:

> Ibadah means acknowledging Allāh as one's God and then following the path that He has ordained (His shari'ah) ... ibadah in this sense, therefore, embraces two types of actions: First, the ones whose forms, essence and structures are laid down by Allāh, and we know them only through Him alone, such as salah and fasting; next, all human activities so long as they are done with the intention of obeying Allāh and the noble purpose of pleasing Him. And ibadah henceforth, in the second sense covers a vast domain of human life so much so that even a purely mundane activity will be regarded as ibadah if the underlying intention behind it is to prepare oneself to live as a dignified servant of Allah. For instance, the Qur'an declares the reward for a trader, who with the purpose of sustaining his family engages in business instead of participation in jihad, to be the same as it is for the one who undertakes it […]. Therefore, the scope of ibadah in Islam is as vast as is the domain of Islam as a way of life. Hence, any activity which is carried out with the paramount impulse of the urge to obey Allah and surrender to His Will, shall be ibadah […].

The relationship between ʿibādah and rituals is marked by symbiosis. Rituals constitute a fundamental element of ʿibādah but do not encompass the entire corpus. Rather, rituals function to foster and demonstrate devotion, submission, and obedience to Allah. When rituals are performed sincerely and with cognition, they cultivate an approach to faith that acknowledges

the significance of incorporating worship into all facets of life (table 2). Concurrently, the expanded interpretation of ʿibādah enhances the importance of rituals, endowing them with profound significance and intention as religious practices contributing to the overarching objective of leading a life united in absolute submission to Allah. The overarching components of ʿIbādah are theorized as such:

Table 2. The Islamic corpus of worship. Source: adapted from (Sikandar, 2000)

Type	Outcome
Normative Rituals	Ṣalāt (prayer) wuḍūʾ (ablution) Adhān (call to prayer) Ṣawm (fasting) Ḥajj (pilgrimage)
Other acts of Worship	Duʿāʾ (supplication) Dhikr (remembrance of Allah) Ṣadaqah (charity) Tilāwah (recitation of the Quran)
Daily Life (with intention):	Working, Eating, Sleeping, Family life

Overarching observations

This chapter reveals theoretical insights and critical gaps that have emerged from engaging with the intersecting literature debates around heritage, Islam, and mosques as sacred spaces. It has drawn attention to the literature that has articulated the shift in heritage studies, which is now focused on more inclusive, intangible, and bottoms-up approaches, aligning with this thesis's focus on the lived experiences of the GSM community (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006). This shift is essential for religious heritage as conventional heritage approaches have routinely failed to hold space for the spiritual significance and living practices that define religious/sacred heritage. As seen in the numerous examples of Islamic heritage related explicitly to mosques, there remains a persistent tendency to frame them primarily as architectural monuments, particularly at World heritage designations. This approach often fails to capture the breadth and depth of how Muslim communities experience and sustain their sacred spaces via ritual practice and spiritual engagement (Joy, 2012). Moreover, this review has revealed the need to engage critically with religion and heritage given their complex and intertwined nature. This review has also unearthed new readings of sacred space and ritual in Islamic contexts, as recent works have demonstrated how Islamic sacred space is enacted rather than inherent (Farouk-Alli, 2002; Bürge, 2011). In addition, works on Islamic rituals have begun to demonstrate their deep significance in believers' lives, moving beyond critiques of

"empty formalism" (Katz, 2005; Otterbeck, 2024). In South Africa, these developments are yet to make their way into heritage management frameworks, as mosques remain understudied and positioned on heritage registers as "buildings". Thus, what emerges from this review is the need to engage Muslim experience(s) of heritage and how it is made through ritual practice and the care they exhibit for these spaces. In the next chapter, the theoretical tools required to achieve this shift are explored.

Chapter III:
Theory Crafting: Living and Critical Heritage Theories

Heritage theory has developed significantly over the past three decades, moving from conventional material-centric approaches to more critical perspectives that recognize the complexity of cultural heritage (Gilchrist, 2020). The complex relationship between religion and heritage necessitates such a critical framework. A theoretical framework offers guidance and direction to any study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014) by providing philosophical, epistemological, and analytical approaches to investigating a particular phenomenon (Eisenhart, 1991). This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings guiding this study's investigation of Islamic heritage through mosques. It details the complementary frameworks chosen for this study: the Critical Heritage Framework (CHF) and the Living Religious Heritage (LRH) approach, which offer a nuanced perspective; allowing for an analysis of how Muslim communities interact with, preserve, and transmit their heritage through mosques. The chapter concludes by outlining key concepts that structure the research, including heritage, livingness, continuity, community, care, sacredness, spirituality, and rituals.

3. Taking a position: the Critical Heritage Framework

A CHF requires a more theoretically engaged study alongside adopting a socio-political lens. A fundamental stance of the CHF involves its departure from the conventional conception of heritage (Winter, 2013). Instead, there is a growing emphasis on the intangible and dynamic processes that create meaning and produce culture in the contemporary context in conjunction with its tangible elements (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006). It draws on various philosophical and theoretical ideas, primarily critical theory, postmodernism, and postcolonialism, which emerged during the critical turn in heritage studies in the late 1980s (Rico, 2017). During this period, there was a greater awareness of the network of relationships due to globalization, which coincided with the emergence of heritage tourism and the commodification of heritage sites (Graham et al., 2000; Hewison, 1987). It was positioned as "bringing a critical perspective to bear upon the socio-political complexities that enmesh heritage, tackling the thorny issues those in the conservation profession are often reluctant to acknowledge" (Winter, 2013: 532). Rico (2017: 5) contextualizes these thorny issues as "in response to a lack of support for marginalized modes of engagement and expertise in the work of heritage preservation and management."

Several seminal key works shaped the framework, including Lowenthal's '*The Past is a Foreign Country'* (1985), which brought about meditations on heritage and nostalgia. Tunbridge & Ashworth's work '*Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict'* (1997) introduced the concept of 'dissonant' heritage, underscoring the often-contested nature of heritage in various contexts. Smith's work, '*Uses of Heritage'* (2006), was particularly influential, articulating the concept of an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), which undercut the dominant Western understanding of heritage and highlighted the power dynamics of heritage. Later, Harvey (2010) and Winter (2013) built upon these seminal works. With the former contributing towards noting that heritage and memory provided theoretical foundations for understanding heritage as a socially constructed and contested domain in '*Heritage pasts and heritage presents: temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies'* (2010); Winterton further solidified the 'critical' aspect of the framework in their work '*Clarifying the critical in Critical Heritage Studies'* (2013), calling for critical heritage studies to contend with real-world issues, promote greater dialogue across disciplinary and professional limitations, and formulating post-western perspectives.

A CHF draws on several perspectives through which a researcher or practitioner can begin to "see heritage." One is the AHD, which refers to the dominant, officially sanctioned manner of considering and presenting cultural heritage, often determined by heritage experts and institutions. It emphasizes the inherent value, materiality, and expert understanding of heritage, downplaying alternative perspectives from local communities or marginalized peoples (Smith, 2006). This lens then critically examines the prevailing narratives and beliefs that influence the definition of "heritage," delving into alternative viewpoints from excluded communities and unearthing the attendant power dynamics (Smith, 2006; Waterton & Watson, 2015; Graham et al., 2000). A critical perspective goes beyond the understanding that heritage is solely static sites; it begins to critique the universalizing, often Eurocentric premises and values that have traditionally underpinned the heritage discourse and practice - enabling an understanding of heritage as a continuous process involving negotiation, dissonance, contestation, and meaning-making (Perez et al., 2010). It requires that practitioners and researchers involved in heritage studies have their ears on the ground as an act of amplifying the voices of marginalized groups, allowing for the plurality of how heritage is perceived and comprehended by various communities to emerge. This approach challenges the top-down, expert-driven approach to defining and managing heritage-promoting social inclusion (Harvey, 2001; Parkinson et al.,

2016; Waterton & Smith, 2010; Pendlebury et al., 2004). Conclusively, the study of heritage and its practice should utilize heritage to confront inequality, advance human rights, and cultivate societal and ecological sustainability (Winter, 2013).

When examined from this perspective, the emphasis on the GSM presents a chance to shift the focus away from traditional narratives surrounding heritage, whether at a global scale, which frequently portrays Islam as incongruous with heritage, or at local levels, where the recognition of Islamic heritage in South Africa may be incomplete or limited to the perspective of "built heritage". By paying attention to both dimensions of heritage, tangible/intangible – two sides of the same coin – a critical perspective acknowledges the historical/architectural significance of the GSM whilst locating the belief system, spiritual rituals, social history, and conservation methods tactics of the mosque community. This gives agency to the active individuals in the mosque, producing a multi-vocality of place instead of the mosque being a passive receptacle waiting to be assigned values from heritage experts/academics. By paying attention to Muslim voices and experiences of engagement with their heritage places, a counter-narrative to the dominant modes of Islamic representation in heritage is expected to emerge. Providing the Muslim communities' lived experiences as they actively create, dis/engage with, and safeguard their sacred space. It provides an opportunity to generate "small stories" that may contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Islamic heritage in South Africa.

3.1 Living heritage and living religious heritage

The living religious heritage (LRH) approach is the central approach of this study. It draws on the idea of living heritage (LVH), a broad term encompassing both secular and sacred heritage. LRH refers explicitly to the spiritual dimensions of living heritage at religious/sacred sites. It focuses on communities and their sacred practices and connections to religious/sacred sites in the present (Stovel, 2005). As a subset of LVH, LRH emerged as a more contextual approach to engage with sacred and religious heritage (Gilchrist, 2020; Jamaludin et al., 2021). LRH is a multifaceted concept encompassing many faith-based systems, from traditional approaches to institutionalized religions, that emerged in 2003 under ICCROM's Forum on Living Religious Heritage (Stovel et al., 2005). A LVH approach was developed in response to the limitations of the traditional conservation approaches that were material-centric and expert-driven (Poulios, 2014). It differs from 'intangible heritage' as understood in UNESCO's

Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003. The approach starts with “the present and the present community’s association with a heritage site” (Poulios, 2010: 180).

Previous Western-centric approaches have had a detrimental effect on the conservation of religious/sacred (Poulios, 2014; Stovel et al., 2005). Ndoro (2005) provides an example of these effects: the Domboshava caves in Zimbabwe, primarily known for their rock paintings, were designated national monuments. However, the site exhibits three crucial elements: rock art, a sacred forest, and a place for rainmaking rituals (Taruvinga & Ndoro, 2003). With an exclusive focus on the material well-being of the site, a conflict between the local community and managing authorities ensued, as the former were restricted from practising their rainmaking rituals at the site as authorities referenced the need to protect the rock art. In response, the community defaced the rock art in an act of defiance due to the negligence of authorities regarding the overlapping intangible values held at the site (Taruvinga & Ndoro, 2003).

Borrowing from the LVH approach are three components relevant to the LRH, they are continuity of function, core community, and care (Poulios, 2014). Continuity is rooted in a site’s original function, the strong connection communities have with them, and the care they receive through traditional knowledge and maintenance practices. Continuity of function is contrasted with the ‘discontinuity’ of heritage conservation approaches prior (Poulios, 2014). It is portrayed as the community’s initial link to heritage and serves to protect and preserve that heritage through this connection. This perspective views continuity as a dynamic process that embraces change over time, ensuring that the heritage remains meaningful to the modern community even if it means potential harm to the heritage fabric (Poulios, 2014). This continuity is supported by a ‘core community’ that maintains its original connection with a heritage site; they are not simply ‘one’ of the stakeholders but have a strong sense of ownership of the site. They are not restricted to the idea of a “local” community as they are not defined by geographic proximity to the site but by their continuous cultural or spiritual connection to a site (Poulios, 2014). Additionally, they institute community-specific care practices for the heritage site. Care refers to the tools, methods, and techniques that core communities have adopted for their heritage sites, passed down through generations, forming the basis for maintaining the site and emerging from the communities’ cultural practices and beliefs. These are not static interventions but are dynamic and adaptive, often focusing on prioritizing the maintenance of the site's original function and includes practices that go beyond physical maintenance (spiritual components).

The CHF and LRH complement each other in the context of this research. In the context of a mosque, the LRH approach has salience as it can begin to recognize the mosque as a living and dynamic place of religious practice and community life, where the intangible aspects of Islamic faith, traditions, and social interactions are inextricably linked to the tangible structure (mosque) and its ongoing use (functionality). It facilitates prioritizing a community's continuous engagement with the mosque and its religious practices. It also ensures that its significance is not reduced to its historical or aesthetic values or any other type of value. Instead, it acknowledges the mosque as a total expression of the communities` culture, ongoing and rooted in their belief system and continuous rituals. This approach gives agency to communities and how they conserve their heritage, moving beyond an expert-led perspective. By adopting the CHF as a lens, the researcher can begin to critically examine the prevailing narratives and power dynamics that underpin the understanding and management of Islamic heritage in South Africa, allowing for the challenging of the dominant discourse that often associates Islam with destruction and iconoclasm.

When understood as a discursive and situated process (Rico, 2017), Islamic heritage recognizes the role of communities, institutions, and individuals in creating and maintaining the significance of heritage sites and practices, contributing to a pluralistic understanding of Islamic heritage that “contains multitudes”. More importantly, by engaging with Islamic heritage through the lens of phenomenology, which this study adopts, the research can explore how this methodology's specific practices, values, and standards may shape the understanding and representation of Islamic heritage.

3.2 The components of the conceptual framework

The concepts that organize and drive the assumptions of this study include heritage, livingness, continuity, community, care, sacredness, spirituality, and rituals. This section articulates the connections between the elements, embracing multiple concepts.

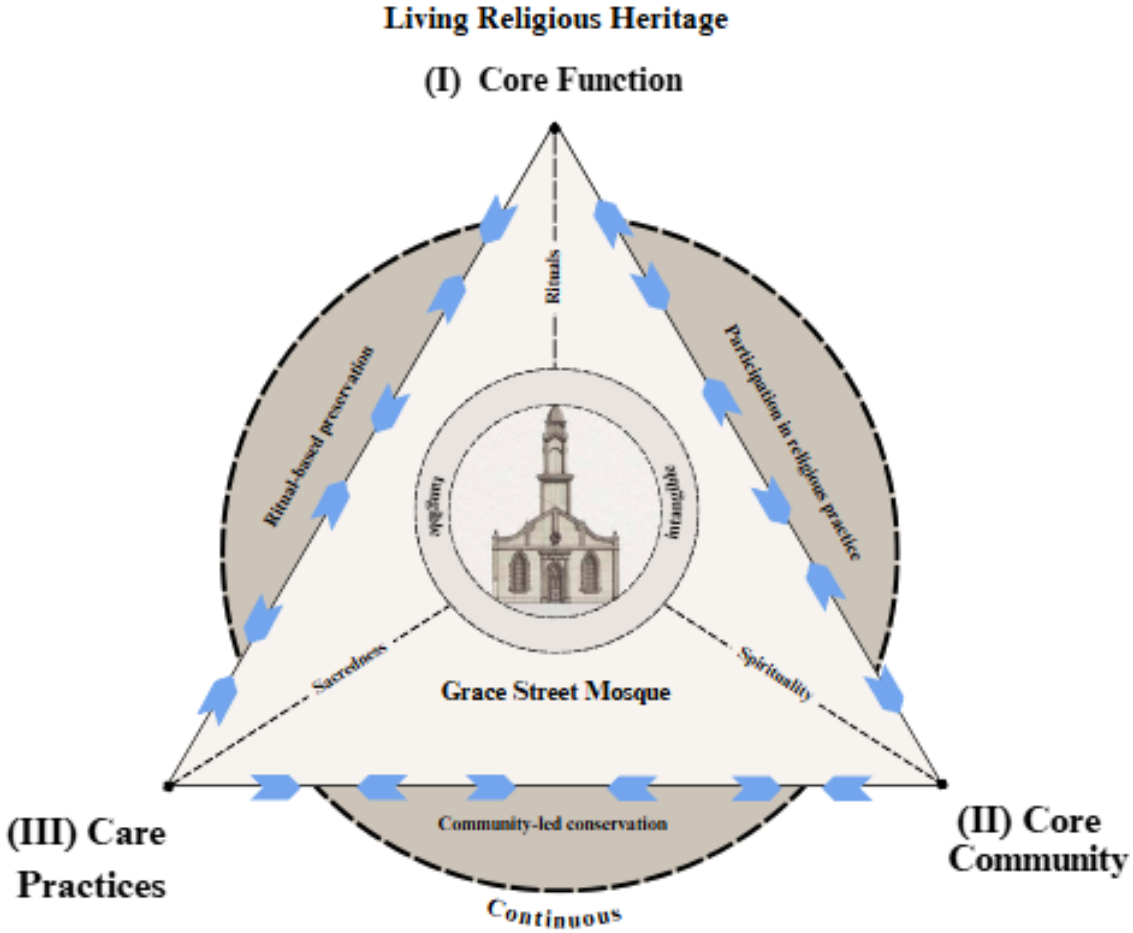

Figure (1): Visualization of the Grace Street Mosque as a living religious heritage site and its related concepts.

The GSM is placed in the centre of the illustration and represents the tangible dimension of the heritage site (figure 1). Placed at the vertices of the diagram are (I) core function, (II) core community, (III) and care practices. The pillars of mosque functionalism, include sacredness, spirituality, and rituals. The function component at the apex of the triangle refers to the ongoing purpose and utilization of the mosque through various rituals and ceremonies that are dynamic and "living". At the bottom right, the core community enacts these rituals and signifies the collective peoples connected to the mosque, and the power dynamics related to the community.

The community's spirituality, their personal and experiential religious beliefs, is the reason for the mosque's existence. Communities also care for the mosque, which is represented at the bottom left of the diagram. Care refers to the practices, methods, and efforts dedicated to preserving and maintaining the mosque. It encompasses physical conservation and the preservation of intangible aspects of heritage framed through "sacredness". The blue arrows, between concepts indicate their mutual interaction and reliance. The open circle along the diagrams border underscores these dynamic and continuous nature of the concepts. Continuity refers to the ongoing religious practices performed at the mosque. The concepts are further explained below.

Heritage

Situating heritage as a dynamic, iterative process uncovers the power dynamics related to communities and heritage authorities (Harrison, 2013). Key ideas around power dynamics include concepts such as dissonance and AHD, with the latter referring to the privileging of certain narratives over others in heritage contexts, specifically Western and expert views (Smith, 2006). Through deconstructing these views, emergent perspectives that recast the mosque become available, allowing for a discussion on how Islamic heritage is defined, valued, and managed in South Africa. This draws attention to community aspirations and whether they desire to be included in the heritage discourse, uncovering those privileged in heritage decision-making processes. The concept of heritage dissonance is also essential (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1997), revealing the subtleties and contestations around heritage.

Livingness

The concept of "*livingness*" is fundamental to the LRH, which refers to the idea that heritage sites, particularly religious ones, are intagible. As living places, they continue to meet a site's daily rituals or social activities (Poulios, 2014). The concept of livingness allows for exploring how mosques function as historical monuments and active centres of contemporary Muslim life (Cantones, 2022). Livingness also refers to non-materiality (Stimac, 2023).

Continuity/of function

Focusing on the present – a break from viewing heritage through nostalgic lenses (Stovel et al., 2005), the concept of continuity explores the core functions of a mosque and why they retain their cultural significance over time. The notion of continuity is relevant in discussions around intangible cultural heritage (Poulios, 2014) – where debates centre on navigating continuity

with change and the often-conflictual nature between traditional practices and contemporary values. In this case, the concept engages with GSM through its core function, which it has retained since its inception, and how it influences expectations of the site.

Core community

Communities are a central component of a heritage site – instead of solely being one of its stakeholders, as not all stakeholders have equal connections to or investments in a heritage site (Poulios, 2014). A core community refers to individuals intimately connected to an LRH. By situating the focus on the core community, their perspectives of heritage and the community-based care practices they enact can be focused on. Shifting the spotlight to Muslim congregations and residents who are the primary users of the mosque – effectively prioritizing local perspectives on heritage.

Spirituality

Spirituality means the personal, experiential component of religious belief and practice (Ström, 2022). For this study, the notion of spirituality is operationalized to determine the individual and communal religious experiences linked to the GSM. In doing so, the contours of how spiritual practices and beliefs shape the community's relationship to the mosque can be mapped. This concept allows for engaging with intangible dimensions of heritage, which often remain hidden but hold deep significance for the core community.

Rituals

Rituals hold an ambivalent space within anthropology and religious studies, with some seeing them as empty and formalistic (Katz, 2005), and others as deeply symbolic (Powers, 2004). In Islam, rituals play a key role in a believer’s life (Sikandar, 2000). The concept of rituals will be used to examine the specific religious practices that take place in and around mosques. This work positions rituals as the core function of a mosque, which are related to its living aspect, to do so a phenomenological approach is used; focusing on both the physical and symbolic dimensions of rituals that occur at the mosque.

Sacred spaces

The concept of sacred has its roots in religious studies and anthropology; in Islamic contexts, the understanding of sacred space is shaped by Quranic teachings and hadith (Burge, 2011). There is an ongoing debate about whether Islamic sacred spaces are inherently sacred or become sacred through ritual and use. Some scholars argue for a more fluid understanding of

sacredness in Islam, where any clean place can become a space for prayer (Farouk-Alli, 2002). This study recognizes designated sacred spaces and the potential for sacredness to be created through ritual and community practice. This concept will be crucial in examining how the community develops and maintains sacred space through daily practices, rituals, norms and taboos.

Chapter IV:
Research design and Methodology

A certain research approach is required to focus on the lived experiences of heritage, this study's research question. This chapter presents the appropriate methodological approach to studying the GSM and its outcomes. Concerned with exploring lived experiences, this study situates itself in the qualitative tradition, drawing on a phenomenological approach. At the onset, it contextualizes the qualitative tradition and its relationship to heritage studies, emphasizing the need for new, transparent approaches to heritage research. The phenomenological approach and its relevance to this study are detailed, including how it was carried out and what some of the challenges were. It locates the research site, providing its brief history and relevance to the study. It also outlines how participants were selected and engaged with, how information was elicited – participant observations and interviews – and the challenges faced. It contends with the ethical considerations at play when conducting intrafaith research and discusses the researcher's positionality in relation to the community under study.

4. Methodology in heritage studies

There is a need for greater discussions of methodology in heritage research, as it is mainly case study based (Rodéhn, 2024). Methodology is instrumental in exploring heritage issues and must be made explicit (Waterton & Watson, 2015); as it has become increasingly interdisciplinary (Stig et al., 2010), and the newfound emphasis on politics in heritage renders methodology implicit in studies (Rodéhn, 2024). Once taken as self-evident and intrinsic, the central methodologies of heritage studies were analysed from those factors that affected it: the environmental, chemical, and mechanical, i.e those elements that affected the integrity and authenticity of a place or thing (King & Rico, 2024). This produced 'surveys', 'technical reports' and 'risk assessments', the language of scientific studies. This focus on the material meant that authority stemmed from the material-centric disciplines that privileged positivist methodologies and expert opinions (Winter, 2013). Amidst the 1980s, or during the critical turn in heritage, Stig et al. (2010: 320) state that the field now concerns itself "foremost with people, shaped by a diverse range of social practices, processes and experiences". The remit of heritage studies has expanded, with a greater emphasis on heritage subjects (King & Rico, 2024), requiring a constructivist episteme that caters to various methodologies and methods.

This has resulted in the lexical expansion of heritage to include: “living and cultural landscapes, intangible heritage, performances, spirituality” (King & Rico, 2024).

4.1 Qualitative research framework

There are two primary research traditions: Quantitative and Qualitative. Each has ontological/epistemological foundations that determine their tools and methods for data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The Qualitative approach is “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) and is often exploratory in nature. Instead of aiming for objectivity and generalizability, as the quantitative tradition does, it embraces an ontological position that embraces “multiple realities” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It maintains that knowledge is subjective and co-produced between the “researcher and the researched” (Hatch, 2002). The researcher’s position, and reflexivity, is a core qualitative research component. This approach aims to make the world more apparent through interpretive and material actions, and in doing so, transforms the world into representations such as field notes, interviews, conversations, images, recordings, and personal memos. It lends itself to an interpretive and naturalistic style, analyzing occurrences in their natural environments and interpreting them based on the meanings attributed by people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This tradition is based on philosophical approaches, which include phenomenology and hermeneutics. These philosophers argue that reality is subjective and highlight the centrality of context in producing human experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus on human experiences, Creswell (2013) highlights, gives qualitative research the capacity to focus on underrepresented persons in research, and is the approach of this study. Several methods are used in qualitative research, and they are often used in combination to explain the phenomena under study. These include ethnography, focus groups, observations, and interviews. The findings emerge as patterns inductively and form part of an iterative process (Hatch, 2002). The qualitative tradition allows the researcher to situate themselves within the study setting, and as heritage requires an interpretive and contextual attitude this tradition is appropriate. As a dialectic of knowledge production, the situatedness of the researcher needs to be explained, which requires a researcher to detail their paradigms/background and how it contributes to their interpretation(s) of phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

4.2 The research approach: phenomenology

This study makes use of a phenomenological approach. Established by Edmond Husserl, a German philosopher, it is described as an "approach to study lived experiences of human beings at the conscious level of understanding" (Qutoshi, 2018: 215). For Ram & Houston (2015: 1) it is "an investigation of how humans perceive, experience, and comprehend the sociable, materially assembled world that they inherit at infancy and in which they dwell." The foundation of phenomenological investigation lies in uncovering the structure of a phenomenon through the lens of the individual experiencing it (Desjarlais & Jason Throop, 2011). Husserl proposes applying a heuristic principle to capture a phenomenon's original existence, known as descriptive phenomenology. This involves faithfully expressing the phenomenon as it appears on the experiential plane and accurately characterizing its manifestation to consciousness (Desjarlais & Throop, 2011). However, for Heidegger (1938), a student of Husserl, in addition to its descriptive aspect, phenomenology works towards getting a deeper understanding of the events under study through interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Heidegger`s contributions have led to the development of interpretive-hermeneutic phenomenology. Nevertheless, both highlight a core component of the methodology: bracketing. Bracketing is a methodological principle that necessitates researchers to set aside their preconceived notions, judgments, and biases pertaining the phenomenon under study (Desjarlais & Throop, 2011). Speziale & Carpenter (2007) maintain that it is valuable for safeguarding the integrity of data collected and its analysis. A further discussion of the process of bracketing will be discussed in the positionality section.

Phenomenological approaches have been applied in heritage research since Masberg & Silverman's (1996) study: '*Visitor experiences at Heritage Sites: A phenomenological approach'.* Applied within recreation and leisure research, they sought to bring it within the ambit of heritage studies, noting that very little research has addressed 'visitor' experiences and perspectives of heritage sites. By using this approach, this study aims to flip the term 'visitor' to 'congregant' and explore the Muslim community's experiences at the GSM. In religious settings this approach has also found resonance (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010), as it is helpful to phenomenologists who aim to uncover the essential structures and meanings of spiritual experience by focusing on the descriptive and comparative aspects of religious phenomena. Murphy et al. (2023) and Williamson (2018) utilized phenomenological

approaches to determine the worldview and prayer experiences of Muslims in the UK and America, exploring participants' lived experiences from a first-person perspective.

4.3 Research setting: Masjid-ul-Akbar (GSM)

Little is known about the early Malays in the Eastern Cape, attested to by their absence in Mohammed Haron's annotated bibliography "Muslims in South Africa" (1997). Their documented history begins with the presence of Malay individuals in the Eastern Cape in the mid-19th ^{CE} (Le Roux, 2007). In two successive movements, from the Battle of Blaauwberg (1806) to the War of the Axe (1846), they established themselves in the Eastern Cape. By 1846, Malay communities were present in Uitenhage, Graaff-Reinet, Port Elizabeth, and Grahamstown. In Port Elizabeth, the inaugural street directory of residents compiled in 1849 indicates that seventeen Malay households inhabited the town, with eleven located in the "Malay Quarter", the central area of Port Elizabeth (figure 2) (Hendricks, 2017). The quarter was known for its "unsavoury practices" and hosted the two "beacons of morality" (Hendricks, 2017: 43) – the Grace Street and Strand Street Mosques, established in 1855 and 1852. Families resided around the beachfront, living on Union Street and Rudolph Street, providing for themselves as boatmen, fishermen, painters, tailors, and masons (Hendricks, 2017). The acquisition of land for a railway terminal (1860s) meant these Malays had to be relocated to South End, which was already dotted by Malay fishermen's cottages along South End beach. In 1855, the government allotted the Malays a cemetery in the lower Baakens Valley, and concurrently, construction on the GSM began (Historical Society of Port Elizabeth, 1979).

The Grace Street stand upon which the mosque is located was owned by Fortuin Weis in 1821. There is limited information on Fortuin Weis, sources detail that he was entrepreneurial, accruing affluence within the Gqeberha community (McCleland, 2023). He was a metal smith and had an enterprise that provided fresh water to anchored ships in Port Elizabeth Bay. It is thought that he was of Malay descent and a freeman. According to Abrahams (1998) the acquisition of the Grace Street stand was executed in his name, which was officially granted to him in June 1820. After his passing in April 1841, the property was passed to his wife, Deitjie Weys, who, upon her death, passed the property to "Abo Rafie and his successors" (Agherdien & Bemath, 2023: 8). In a similar vein, there is limited information about Abo Rafie. He is thought to have arrived in Gqeberha with his brother (Abo Salie) during the 1800s. He assumed the role of imam of the GSM, which was established in 1855 (Agherdien & Bemath, 2023).

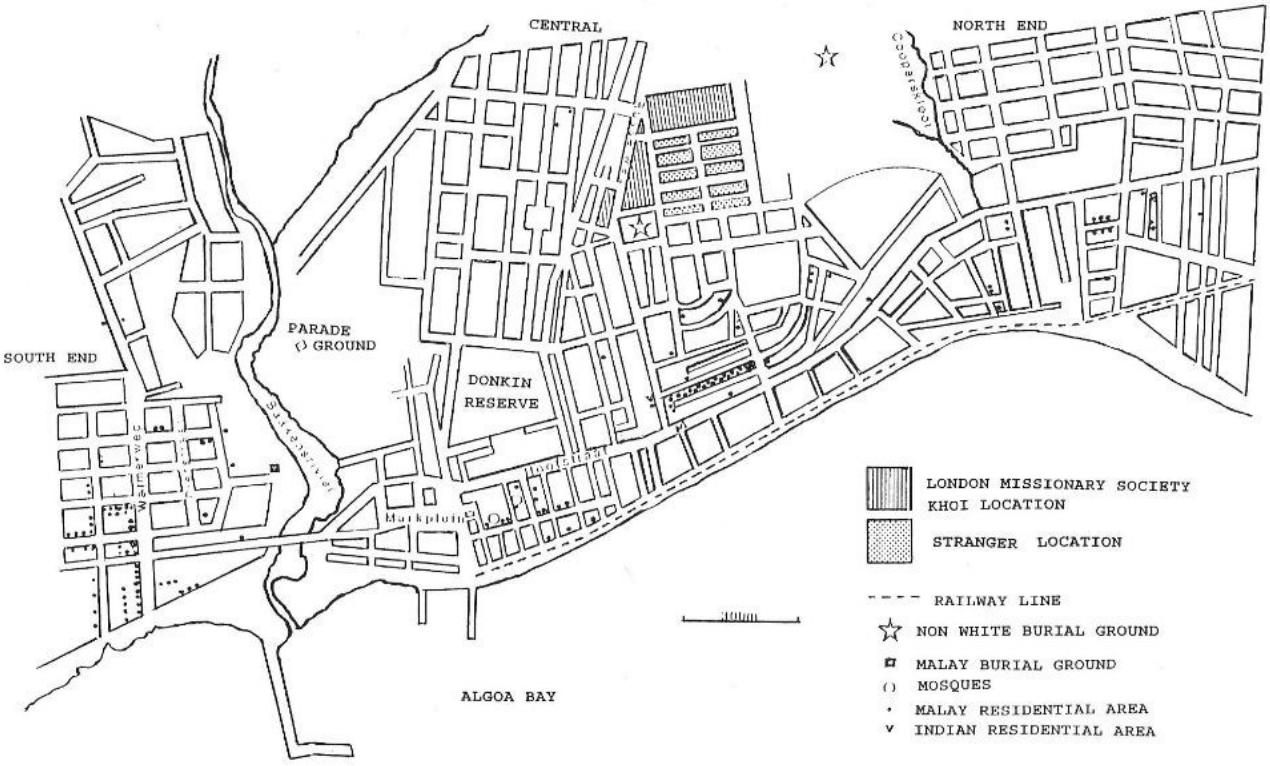

Figure (2): The distribution of the Malays in Port Elizabeth (1884). The SSM and GSM are marked using the () symbols in the area known as the Malay Quarters (McCleland, 2023).

The mosque is situated in the Gqeberha CBD (figure 3), on Grace Street (figure 4), and is simple in design. Painted teal, the façade features an octagonal minaret with arched windows and a domed roof with a crescent star atop. There are two large arched windows in between an arched doorway with a metal gate. Inside, the bottom floor is made up of the main prayer hall, which is carpeted in maroon, with the traditional floral, geometric design, arranged in rows angled towards the Qibla. Several columns intersect the carpet, supporting an upstairs prayer gallery (figure 5). At the far end of the right wall, a white wooden staircase leads to the male section of the upstairs prayer area. Upstairs extends to the front of the mosque, just shy of reaching the mimbar. High on the walls, a white Qur'anic inscription against a black backdrop wraps around the mosque. At the mosque's entrance (figure 6), to the left of the doorway, is a second staircase for the female entrance to the upstairs. The mimbar, covered in the same red/maroon carpet, is made of wood and has three steps leading to an elevated seat. On its left stands a wooden pole, a desk, and a podium featuring a mic. Behind this stands a digital clock. Further to its left is the niche, shaped as an Islamic archway tiled in black with a white marble-like inside. Entering the mosque, on the right side, leads to the foyer, ablution facilities and toilets.

Figure (3): The GSM is visually distinguished by an orange highligh (star and crescent). It is located at the crossroads of Grace Street and Strand Street. On the bottom right is the SSM, also highlighted in orange (OpenStreetMap, 2023).

Figure (4): Grace Street leading to the GSM. **Figure (5):** the internal lower gallery of the mosque (source: author).

Figure (6): The external façade of the GSM (source: author)

4.4 Data collection methods

Fieldwork is a generic term for a researcher's continuing presence in the field (study site) instead of 'grab-it-and-run' methodologies (Gobo, 2008). The fieldwork for this study took place at the GSM and progressed sequentially over a four-week period in November 2023. Before this, pre-trips were made in September 2023 to introduce the research study to the gatekeeper (Imam) and gain access to the site. The early weeks involved gaining familiarity with the site and engaging in informal dialogue with potential participants. The qualitative tools utilized for this study included participant observation, open-ended interviews, and fieldnotes. Together these methods allowed for the thorough capturing of the experiences of participants at the GSM.

4.4.1 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this study, a method that relies on the researcher's judgment when selecting individuals from a targeted group. Potential participants were approached during the first week of fieldwork. They were approached depending on their frequency of visiting the mosque. The intent was to select participants who have experience with the core phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2018). That is, individuals who frequently utilized the mosque for religious purposes. The limited active fieldwork time for the study set the target sample size between 10 and 20 individuals. This was based on the following factors: the mosque only facilitates two ṣalāt times, ẓuhr (1PM) and asr (4PM). Individuals who did not attend at these times were not considered. Ten participants were necessary to ensure various perspectives were elicited and with the limited resources in terms of time and personnel, focusing on 10 participants would allow for a more in-depth exploration of the research themes. In addition to the frequency of attendance, the sampling parameters included speaking English, religious affiliation, age, and male. These parameters focused on male Muslims over the age of 18, who spoke English and frequented the GSM to understand this specific religious community's practices, traditions, and beliefs. The age parameter was chosen to engage with participants who had a long history/experience with the mosque. In addition, most congregants of the mosque were adults. To be as inclusive as possible, no restrictive parameters were operationalized that stopped any individual from partaking in the study that fit the original four factors. For example, educational status, nor occupation were factors of consideration. The parameter for only male participants is based on religious instruction. Following the cultural norms and practices of the community being investigated, as a male

researcher, it would be frowned upon to engage with women at the mosque without the presence of their *Mahrams*.

4.4.2 Participant observation

Participant observation, described as producing a written portrayal and descriptions of phenomena at a research site (Gray, 2014) was employed. Participant observation is a valuable method for this research, as it allows for direct immersion in the mosque's daily religious practices and social dynamics. This supports Gobo's (2008) argument that sustained presence in the field enables researchers to document both routine and exceptional aspects of social life in religious settings. Participant observation as a method was particularly apt for this study as it facilitates direct engagement with the mosque's daily religious practices and social dynamics, addressing the research question, of learning about participants experiences of the mosque. In action, this involved active participant observation, as the primary means of data collection — partaking in the daily activities and religious practices at the GSM. Over the weeks, the architectural features, ritual functions, social dynamics, community interactions, and mundane occurrences were observed. The main focus was on the ritual functions at the mosque, chiefly the ẓuhr ṣalāt, jotting down how it was conducted weekly, the variations, and surrounding rituals, such as the duʿāʾ and dhikr. This routine prevailed throughout the fieldwork, with only Friday differing. The Friday prayer included a sermon and Arabic Khutbah, which resulted in a longer time frame for observation (1 hour), and an influx of congregants were observed, which included greater social interaction and exchange than usual. The time frame for the normal routine was 10 to 20 minutes, as this was the only time the prayer occurred, and people were present. The process began with the adhān around 1:00 PM, followed by a waiting period of 15 minutes before the main congregational ṣalāt started. This lasted for around seven minutes, followed by individual prayers. Upon completion, the mosque would empty and be locked around 1:30 PM. This particular ṣalāt time was chosen due to the higher volume of worshippers at the mosque, most of whom were on lunch break. No seasonal or ceremonial functions or festivities were observed.

4.4.3 Open-ended interviews

Qualitative interviews are an attempt to discover the lived reality of the subjects before scientific explanation, to grasp the world from their perspective, and to interpret their experiences (Kvale, 2005); a method in-line with the approach of this study as it provides

flexibility to learn of participants' personal experiences of the mosque, whilst keeping the focus on heritage themes. Having developed relationships with the congregation, they were approached for interviews, gaining insights into participants' experiences at the GSM. Interviews were guided by preliminary questions but remained open-ended and flexible, often taking detours, and producing novel insights. This approach was also beneficial, given the nature of participants' educational backgrounds. Conversations centred heavily on the dynamic and spiritual experiences of the ṣalāt performed at the mosque, their role in its community, ideas around heritage, and religious taboos. They took place in various settings, including shop fronts, parking lots, alleyways, and inside the mosque, as these were participants` preferences. Follow-up interviews were conducted electronically for clarification on certain themes.

4.4.4 Field documentation

Drawing from participant observations, a series of vignettes – a situation meticulously described – were also utilized as a method and are apt for this study as they allow for effectively replicating and contextualizing religious practices and experiences (Hultgren, 1990). The vignettes in this research (presented in the findings chapters) derive directly from the field notes of the mosque. They were written to capture and illustrate the ritual practices observed in the mosques during the data collection phase. To replicate the phenomena as they transpired, they are employed to locate and generate a snapshot of the experience. The use of vignettes is in accordance with the phenomenological framework, as it offers a contextualized explanation of the phenomenon being studied (Finch, 1987).

4.5 Data analysis framework

The data analysis component of this study drew on the principles of thematic analysis. A form of qualitative analysis that comprises of "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 6). The formal data analysis was a separate research phase and occurred once face-to-face fieldwork concluded. Whereafter they were reviewed. Interviews were transcribed, and together with field notes were analyzed using Atlas.ti, a qualitative coding software. Familiarisation and identification of key themes emerged after repeated readings, capturing initial thoughts and observations. An inductive thematic analysis was used to produce themes and categories, meaning no pre-established concepts or frameworks were used but rather that themes arose naturally (Stevens, 2023). The coding procedure involved generating labels to capture essential concepts and patterns in the data (field

notes and interviews). These labels were subsequently applied to pertinent sections of text. For instance, codes were derived from interview texts such as “rituals”, “social interaction,” and “taboos”. The connected codes were organized together to create prospective themes, for example, under the theme of ‘community’. The notion of bracketing was consciously applied during the data analysis section, codes and themes were produced from the pure descriptions of the lived experiences of participants in the mosque, minimizing the author injecting prior mosque experiences into their perspective.

4.6 Ethical considerations

There are unique ethical concerns in qualitative research, as it typically involves collecting unstructured data in naturalistic environments and engaging with people (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012); which means that qualitative methods have a greater capacity to infringe upon individuals' personal lives than quantitative ones. As the goal is to get as close to the subjects` perspective as possible (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The ethical process for this research followed the guidelines of Rhodes University. The fieldwork began once the research was cleared and approved by the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee (for one-year). The application number for this research is: 2023-7470-8032. This study followed the baseline ethical principles in qualitative research: informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Participants were provided with written consent forms in English, which explicitly stated the research objectives. In addition, these objectives were explained to them verbally. All participants opted to provide verbal consent, captured through an audio recording device. They were made aware that their involvement in the study was voluntary and were free to decline any questions that made them uncomfortable. The measures implemented to safeguard the privacy and anonymity of participants and maintain confidentiality include the utilization of pseudonyms unless persons were functioning in their official roles. Access to the data collected was restricted to the researcher. Conducting intra-faith research requires sensitivity and consciousness towards aspects of religiosity, especially when the researcher shares the same religious affiliation. This was evident during the interview phase of this study, as participants were often sceptical or hesitant to describe religious feelings of connection or the daily number of their prayers. It was not until it was made clear that the frequency of usage did not suggest a diminished dedication to their religious beliefs or that a lack of connection to their prayers was a sign of a religious failure that answers were furbished.

4.7 Research limitations

Limitations in the research context refer to the "constraints on a study based on the research methodology and design" (Adu & Miles, 2024: 137). First, the phenomenological and the practice of bracketing presented a challenge. As the researcher actively participated in the ritual of ṣalāt, the deliberate cognitive process of bracketing within the ṣalāt to focus on the occurrences, as they are – outside of the religious framework – "disconnected" the researcher from the spiritual component of the ṣalāt. The religious maxim "Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended*"* (Al-Bukhārī) springs to mind, which produced feelings of unease for the researcher as the motive or niyyah for the prayer did not correspond with the act of ṣalāt (intended for worship), but rather for research purposes (observation). In other words, as a participant observer, the goal was to be attuned to the happenings of the mosque and its congregants to produce a holistic account of the phenomena as they occurred, yet as a Muslim, the researcher was compelled to engage in the religious practices with undivided attention. To remedy this experience, vignettes were written as close to the time of experience as possible.

However, the approach allowed for insights into the meaning and significance of their spiritual practices, beliefs, and experiences from their perspectives to emerge. Focusing on the experiences that occur in the mosque (the research question) enabled the study to engage with the spiritual phenomena occurring there. Emphasis was placed on how these were shaped and manifested through collective experiences, individual activities, fleeting occurrences, physical sensations, cognitive stimuli, and emotional intensity. This produced the ability to see religious rituals from the viewpoint of practitioners instead of merely distilling them into abstract notions or explanations. Whilst there were challenges applying this design in the field, which will be expanded on later, it served as a valuable approach to understanding the subjective realities that participants experienced. Specifically, regarding the rituals they engaged in at the mosque, effectively presenting the research participants rather than 'concealing' them.

Second, the method of interviews faced their own set of challenges. Before interviews, it was assumed that the mosque`s community spoke English. However, none of the participants spoke English as a first language, instead they either spoke Afrikaans, Shona, or Urdu. This resulted in a reduced sample pool. Moreover, it affected the depth of conversations. Recruited participants who did speak English often struggled to fully express themselves. Due to the

limited budget, no translators were available for this study. This resulted in only six interviews being conducted as opposed to the original 10, making the generalizations of the findings unfeasible. The overlap between the language barrier and the educational backgrounds of participants also presented a challenge. Most participants come from backgrounds with little to no formal education. The monolingual status of the researcher and this demographic trait combined hindered the gathering and analysis of data.

The strength of this current sample set should not be underestimated. They have a long-standing relationship with the mosque, collectively averaging 12.5 years of experience and engagement with the mosque. Within the sample set, there is also diversity in terms of ethnicity and the inclusion of a perspective from a revert and a female. Moreover, the combination of methods (observations and interviews) helped mitigate the need for many interviews to be obtained.

4.8 Researcher positionality

The need for positionality has found strong resonance in qualitative research, as it is grounded in interpretation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2025). In heritage studies, Smith (2006) asserts that "heritage is a process," emphasizing the role of interpretation in constructing heritage, necessitating expanding on who the interpreter is. Bourke (2014: 3) explains that positionality represents "a space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet […]". My cultural upbringing was starkly mono-cultural; I was raised in a traditional Gujarati (Indian) home as a Muslim male (figure 9). My religious upbringing was rooted in the Hanafi Madhab, like most Indian South Africans. Alongside my Gujarati ancestry, my paternal grandmother`s family originated from Java (Indonesia); in South African parlance, they are "Malay" and were brought to South Africa in the early 1800s. I knew little of my father's side of the family, with my grandmother passing away whilst I was still young. I was always keen to explore this side of my heritage. During my early years, I was told that our family had built one of the first mosques in Gqeberha. Having completed my honours in heritage studies, revolving around Muslim subjects and looking for a master thesis topic, I recalled my family's association with the early Islamic heritage in the Eastern Cape. I then consciously chose to situate my research in Gqeberha to explore my Javanese ancestry and expand the lexicon of Islamic heritage in South Africa. Upon embarking on the research and engaging with my extended family in Gqeberha, I discovered that my lineage is linked with the Abo Salie and Abo Rafie. Abo Salie and Abo Rafie established the GSM and SSM. A chronicle written in the early eighties provided a family tree that linked my great-grandfather to Abo Salie and Abo Rafie (Figure 7) My family links to Abo

Saliee`s through the marriage of Gadija, daughter of Abdul Wahab Salie (son of Aboo Salie), to Jelaludien. The sixth generation of their offspring, Ebrahim, Habeba, Hakiem are my father's uncles (Figure 8). Curiously, my paternal grandmother was not included in the tree, she would be placed after Mohammed Loutfie. These added dimensions meant I now had a personal stake in the research. As Dwyer & Buckle (2009: 61) state

> "The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders".

Wading through these dimensions, I occupied what Dwyer & Buckle (2009: 61) term a "space between". As a Muslim with Indian-Malay heritage, I was seen as and acted as an "insider" to the GSM's community. However, my academic background and lack of knowledge of the local context of Gqeberha placed me as an "outsider". As a Muslim male researcher, I had ease of access to the mosque space and participants, as they are usually male-centric spaces. Community members were open and willing to engage with me, and I freely conducted my observations within the mosque, a circumstance that a female researcher might not encounter. Raised within the Hanafi Madhab gave me the background and knowledge of Islamic practices required to engage respectfully with the community, from ways of greeting to general cleanliness, allowing me to navigate the mosque space and relationships appropriately, yet it also had drawbacks. Participants often took for granted that I understood specific religious contexts and did not go into detail regarding them, which occasionally led to assumptions on my part. I had to bracket my preconceptions consciously and elicit explanations even when I thought I understood certain practices or beliefs.

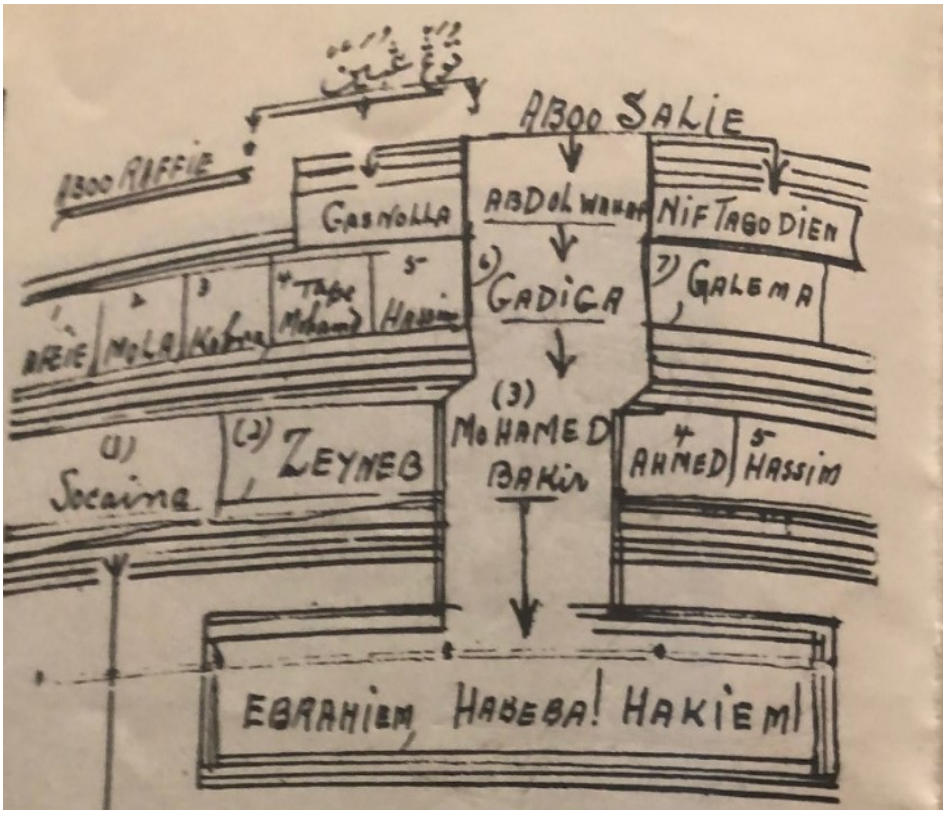

Figure (7): My family tree connecting to Abo Rafie and Abo Salie.

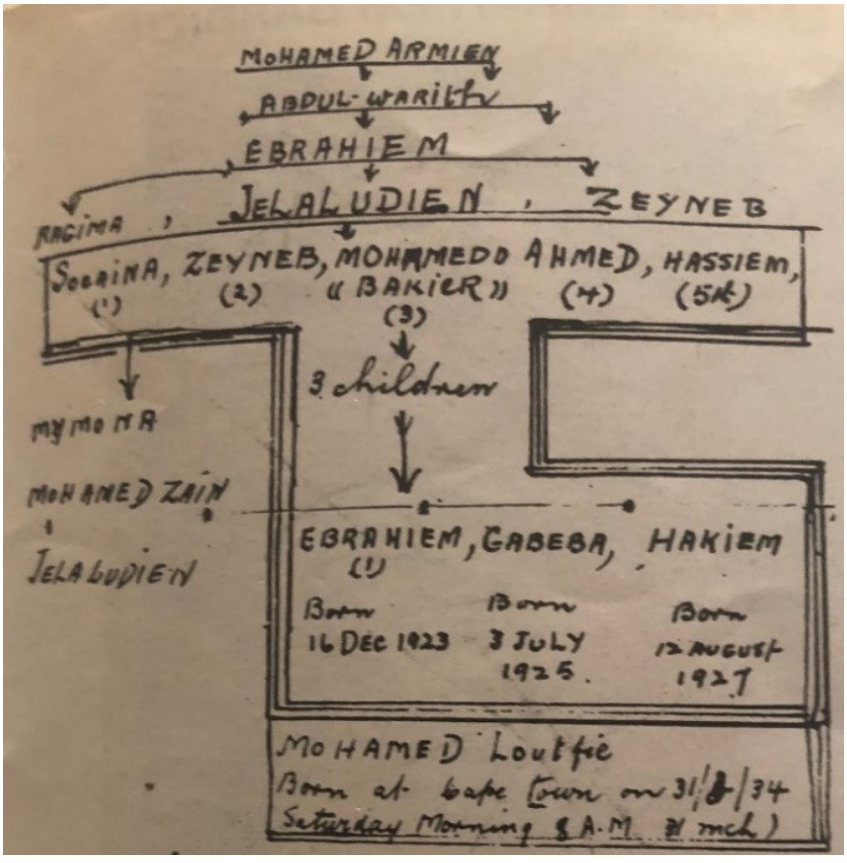

Figure (8): Continuation of the family tree, my grandmother would be born before Mohamed Loutfie (Source: Abrahams, 1987).

Figure (9): Myself (centre) and my extended Javanese family.

Overarching observations

Methodologies play a key role in shaping heritage, with the critical turn in heritage, and the infringing nature of qualitative research, it is imperative to articulate how and why a certain approach was taken. To this end, this chapter detailed the methodological approach used to explore the lived experiences of the Muslim community at the (GSM), what insights it garnered, and the challenges it faced. The choice of phenomenology as the guiding methodology allowed for a deep engagement with the subjective realities of the mosque's congregants, focusing on their experiences of ritual, community, and sacred space. This approach proved particularly valuable in capturing the nuanced ways in which the community perceives and interacts with the mosque as a living heritage site, achieved through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and the use of vignettes. These methods faced serval challenges, the small sample size, alongside the language barriers and gender imbalance make generalizability difficult. As a researcher intimately connected to the research topic and site, it necessitated a constant reflexivity to maintain analytical distance, fostering dynamics of being both and insider/outsider. Next, shifting into Part II, the research finding's chapters, the themes that emerged from this methodological approach will be explored in depth. These chapters will delve into the community's perceptions of the mosque as heritage, the role of rituals in creating and maintaining sacred space, and the care practices endemic to the community sustaining the mosque.

~ Part II ~

Chapter V:
Community perceptions of heritage at the GSM

This chapter draws on insights from field observations and interviews to chronicle the historical emergence of the GSM and its community. It introduces study participants who shed light on the demographic shift that has seen the Mosque community evolve from ethnically homogenous to a diverse multi-ethnic congregation centred around the spiritual significance of the mosque. Built in 1855 by Malay Muslims, the mosque has remained a figure in the urban landscape, even in the face of apartheid, demolition attempts and demographic shifts. It details how the mosque community contests essentialist definitions of "local" community and captures their perspectives on heritage. Engaging with the participants` perspectives and experiences brings to light the ambivalence that the community holds towards heritage designation and argues for critically engaging with communities beyond the empty rhetoric of "social inclusion" in heritage. Guiding the analysis of community is Apaydin's (2018) view of community as socially constructed and at the core of heritage production. What does the term community refer to in heritage contexts? A simple definition of community is a collective of individuals sharing a common trait(s) or characteristic, such as geographical proximity, language, or faith (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). For the GSM community, what is the connection and glue that holds the community together, and how does it influence their relationship to/with the mosque?

5. The origins of the Grace Street Mosque and its community (1845–present)

Before establishing the GSM/SSM mosques, oral narratives detail that Muslims residing in Port Elizabeth would travel to Uitenhage via oxen wagon for Jumu'ah (Friday). By 1845, the Malay community had established *Masjid-al-Qudama* in Uitenhage (Le Roux, 2007). With a growing Muslim community in Port Elizabeth, their spiritual needs were served by two early mosques established by two brothers, Abo Salie (GSM) and Abo Rafie (SSM). The mythology surrounding the construction of the GSM details a well nearby that inspired its founding. It is narrated that the brothers came across a freshwater well in proximity to the future Mosque, and from this well, they provided fresh water to the boats lying in the bay. Thus inspired, it is determined that "Allah made it like that". The brothers lived in sheds on the beach and would take water to the boats in the harbour, and later when they were given a piece of land, they built the GSM.

The Malay community had houses of worship in their city for the first time. By 1901, however, the Strand Street Mosque was demolished, and funds from selling the lot established the Pier Street Mosque, which left the GSM as the only Mosque in the once-Malay quarters. That is until the Group Areas Act was enacted. Imam Jappie explains

> […] All the people of color had to move out of South End everywhere […] The Malay people used to have a very old tradition: they used to come from South End, used to walk into the main street, all the Malay people on Sunday night, and when no one was looking; we went inside [GSM] we went discretely, and we used to make salaah, if they ever asked, we used to say "no we just came to clean the masjid." They didn't want us [at the mosque], but we made a plan.

Just as the Malay quarters had to make way for the railroad, the cosmopolitan enclave of South End (figure 10), was threatened by the Apartheid government. Declared a "white area", all non-whites of South End were forcibly removed between 1965 and 1975, culminating in the end of South End. This cosmopolitan enclave was home to people of Chinese, Indian, Malay, Greek, Portuguese, Jewish and Black heritage, residing in the area since the 1800s (Hendricks, 2017). du Pré, R. (2019: 47) chronicles this displacement:

> "After years of discussion, protest, letters and petitions, the government got its way and the people moved. When the last "non-white" family had left; when the laughter and cries of the children had slowly died; when the excited gossip had trickled to a halt; when the calls of the fishermen and other hawkers were finally silent - the bulldozers moved in and levelled the area. Within a short time, houses, shops, schools, churches, and various businesses disappeared. The life went out of the old South End."

Residents of South End who were forcibly evicted from their homes were relocated to the racially segregated neighbourhoods of Malabar, Korsten, Gelvandale, Salsoneville, Kabega Park and New Brighton (Hendricks, 2017), losing proximity and thus connection to the GSM. However, they refused to stop "keeping the mosque alive." Imam Jappie, who grew up in South End expands

> We were not allowed to come to the masjid, that was now my worse time that I can say, we had to steal our fathers car and come to the masjid, we had to make salaah in the dark, we didn't want the police to know that we are here, you see they were hoping that we would never come here to the masjid, and it happened to all the other masjid here. You get tired of it, and you give up the masjid, but we never gave up, we always came to the masjid. You see we didn't allow them to touch our mosques, the Christians allowed them to break down their churches and they were paid out, we just told them

> one thing: it's not our house, its Allah`s house, we can't sell the house - we couldn't come to the masjid, but we stole to come here we parked the cars somewhere else, and we came in the dark, there was no lights here, and we used to come into the masjid.

Displacement was one form of threat to the mosques in South End and the City Centre. The other came in the form of direct demolition. The white-declared areas presented the question of what to do with the remaining mosques, and threats were made to demolish them. The Pier Street Mosque (figure 11), constructed from funds from the SSM, was one such mosque. The pushback from the Muslim community resulted in the issue escalating to the United Nations, where Muslim nations strongly protested the mosque's destruction, asserting that a mosque constitutes holy ground and could not be destroyed (Agherdien & Bemath, 2023). A brief reprieve was won for the mosque, as later, the municipality intended to build a freeway through the mosque. The Muslim community opposed this invasion by presenting the issue to the South African Parliament, resulting in the Nationalist Government's agreement to prevent the highway from across the mosque. However, the nationalist government still removed the mosque's dome even though the highway was re-routed (Hendricks, 2017). Imam Jappie recounts his experience of these events and also places the GSM in the path of demolition

> [they wanted to] break it down, that Pier street was supposed to be broken down, this masjid was supposed to be broken down (GSM), 95 thousand pounds they offered my grandfather, he said no, the demolishing company was standing ready there at the Pier Street, that freeway, that goes straight through the masjid, that masjid was supposed to be broken down, it's supposed to go right over the masjid to Summerstrand street, so people was there already, even here, the tractors were ready to break down the masjid: [they said] "just take out your whole stuff" [we said] no we don't take nothing out, if you want to touch the holy stuff it's up to you, Pier Street did exactly the same. With Allah's khudrat (power) now the Malays are at masjid Taqwa, Sabireen where they live, they are few Malays that live here but it's mostly as you can see the Somali people who got shops here and stuffs. They fill this masjid upstairs and downstairs.

The GSM and Pier Street Mosque are a testament to a bygone community in South End. The Malay community are still present at the GSM, retaining formal control, and continue to conduct their specific religious practices, albeit in much smaller numbers. The battle to ensure the survival of these mosques does not reflect a material concern; instead, they were trying to save an entire way of life, keeping safe those spaces that enabled them to practice their faith and sustain social relations. Responding to the question of why the community did not leave the GSM even in the face of trouble, Imam Jappie shares,

> We loved our masjid, we loved our masjid, and we knew that – we as Muslims, there were no other masjids, in those areas [Malabar, Korsten, Gelvandale], this was the only

> place we could come together to make Jamaat (congregation), and Sunday morning if there was a wedding we used to come, so with Allah's kudrat (power), we are still here.

The mosques did not belong to the community, but to Allah, and as such, they fought through legal and personal means to keep the mosque "alive", even willing to die for them, as many Muslims signalled their intention to go so far as to lay down their lives, promising to fast till death (Agherdien & Bemath, 2023). In the next section, the current users of the mosque are presented through their participant profiles.

5.1 Participant profiles

During the first week of fieldwork, numerous Musalis (congregants) who frequented the mosque were asked to participate in the study (table 3). Eight agreed, one of which was Adam a long-time resident in the city, he spent most of his life around the mosque, working as a youth in his father's workshop and later inheriting the business.

> I've always been in the area, my father's business was here, my uncle's business was here, my grandfather's business was here, so whenever it was school holidays, all the cousins would be in this area, […] we'd get together, we'll go to the Campanile, spend time there, when it used to be safer, we'd take a walk up until central, there used to be a movie theatre, […] most of my life has been in this area.

He brushes the question of identity aside, saying, "I don't really worry about those kinds of things, like my sister will say, she's Malay, but to me it doesn't really matter, we classified as coloured". Adam first thinks of himself as Muslim. His sister Mary (52) readily identifies as Malay. Mary recently joined her brother, Adam, in working at their store. She mainly attends the mosque for the Friday prayer, in the past, it used to be just her and her mother; lately, many women have been attending the Friday prayer. Their connection to the area is longstanding. Adam recalls the changes that have occurred in the CBD

> It changed a lot [the area], I think it used to just be my father and my uncle. There weren't many Muslim business in the area, but now it's mostly Muslim businesses in the area, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Somalis, all over. That is why [when] I used to go to this [Grace Street] mosque as a child, we used to have maybe have six people (Musallis) and the imam.

One of these Muslim businessmen is Jameel, a Muslim-born Senegalese, a devout Muslim, he continuously fingers his prayer beads during interviews. Arriving in Gqeberha from Senegal in 2007, he set up a stall selling various clothing merchandise along Govan Mbeki Road. He belongs to a Senegalese brotherhood that hosts spiritual ceremonies and assists fellow

Senegalese Muslims at their commons. Over the years, he has worked up to the shop he runs, named Toubah, which means "[…] a tree in paradise […] when you go into Toubah you go in paradise, […] it also means repentance or dua". He is strongly affiliated with the West African spiritual movement of Sheikh Ahamed Mumba and has been a Musali at the GSM since he arrived in Gqeberha. Yahya, a Malawian-born Muslim who came to the city in the early 2000s, also migrated to the city. The GSM was the first mosque he prayed at when he arrived, and it holds a special resonance for him. He worked as a travelling salesman around the Eastern Cape before securing his job at the car lot adjacent to the mosque, where his interviews were conducted. He continuously strives to improve his knowledge of Islam and enjoys attending the Friday sermons. "I am a Muslim […] I'm a little weak in learning, so I learn by attending the mosque each and every time." Khalid, the youngest of the participants, grew up Christian and recently reverted to Islam. He shares his life story in the alley above the mosque after the Ẓuhr prayers. He identifies as coloured, and his decision to revert was personal:

> I've been reverted for a few years, when I started to learn about Islam […] I haven't had someone convert or influence me […] I made it out of my personal reason. I thought that Islam was a beautiful religion.

He doesn't have many avenues to learn about Islam and has been utilising the mosque in his religious journey, "I've come to know the Imam, [he] sometimes reads to me a few surahs [...]". He works as an office aid at a government department close by and, during his lunch breaks, performs Ẓuhr at the mosque. His teacher, Imam Behardien Jappie, the oldest participant, identifies as Malay, and has deep roots in Gqeberha. Now in his late 70s he has been imam of the GSM for over 50 years. The interview coincided with his 50-year anniversary of Imaamhood. He is a 12th generation imam and his connection to the mosque spans decades and is deeply interwoven with his personal history. He shares, *"*I grew up in this masjid, from a baby, my father used to bring me here." A descendant of Sultan Nabier - who settled in Uitenhage after being exiled from Indonesia, from his grandmother's line, he takes pride in his Malay heritage. As a youth, he grew up in South End, and every week, with his father, he would attend the mosque. Assuming the Imaamhood of the GSM when his father retired, he now resides over the verification of halaal products, the naming of children, leading the burial process, and officiating marriages. He holds great respect in the Gqeberha Muslim community.

Table (3): Demographic and religious affiliations of the participants recruited for the study

Name	Age	Gender	Education	Ethnicty	Madhhab	Status	visits	No. of Years
Jameel	53	Male	Primary School	Wolof	Maalki	Born Muslim	Daily	15
Adam	43	Male	Matric	Malay	Shafie	Born Muslim	Daily	30
Khalid	31	Male	Matric	Coloured	Shafie	Revert	Often	4
Imam Jappie	78	Male	Primary School	Malay	Shafie	Born Muslim	Daily	65
Yahya	46	Male	Primary School	Chewa	Hanafi	Born Muslim	Daily	8
Mary	52	Female	Grade 11	Malay	Shafie	Born Muslim	Weekly	10
Yusuf	NA	Male	Vocational college	Malay	Shafie	Born Muslim	-	-
Maalik	NA	Male	-	Indian	Hanafi	Born Muslim	-	-

Participants were assigned pseudonyms (table 2), except for Yusuf and Imam Jappie, who acted in their official capacities. Male participants made up most of the sample. Participants' ages varied, between 31 and 78 years, with the average age being 54. The educational backgrounds of participants were similar, with the majority having finished either primary school or having matriculated. Participants were ethnically heterogeneous, with a majority of 4 out of 8 of Malay heritage. All participants adhered to the Sunni branch of Islam, but there were differences in their madhhab. Most participants were born Muslim, with only one participant reverting to Islam. The frequency of mosque attendance by participants was substantial, with almost all attending the mosque daily. Participants' relationship to the mosque, or years of attending the mosque, collectively averages 12.5 years, with the longest being 65 years. The last two participants (Yusuf and Maalik) did not form part of the study at the GSM but were interviewed regarding the state of Islamic heritage in Gqeberha. The inclusion of a female participant in the student arose from an interview with her *Mahram* (a family member unlawful to wed). Mary, Adam`s sister, works with her brother in their office space, and during his interview, he invited her to be included. The researcher outlined the study and got her consent; subsequently, she was interviewed. Within such a context, the dynamics of male/female Muslim interaction were religiously sanctioned (i.e. her *Mahram*) was present.

Figure (10): A view of early South End (1960) (Source: Agherdien, 1979).

Figure (11): The Pier Street Mosque, which was set to be demolished during apartheid (Source: Agherdien, 1979).

5.2 The makings of a community: the social dimensions of the GSM

Despite the diverse backgrounds of participants, they all spoke of the socio-spiritual dimensions standing at the centre of the mosque's significance. They detailed their memories, connections, rituals, ceremonies, and relationships with the mosque. From birth to death, the mosque plays a crucial role in their lives. Children are named, reverts become "born again" after taking their Shahada, marriages are officiated, and Janazahs are performed (funeral prayers) at the mosque. The mosque brings together a kaleidoscope of relationships: fathers, sons, brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandfathers, and facilitates the forming of new relationships. Adam captures this phenomenon

> I always speak to my friends about what I love about this masjid [GSM] is, the diverse melting pot of different people from different places, you know it starts out with seeing someone new, just greeting every day [at the mosque], and eventually you [get to] know each other, speaking to each other, "how's the family?," [when you] meet them maybe if you in a shopping mall, and you spot them, you greet and talk, and I introduce them to my wife, "this is so and so from so and so", and we become very close, like most of the guys in this area I've gotten to know through the masjid.

The Islamic calendar holds various ceremonies/celebrations throughout the lunar year, such as *Eid-ul-Adha*, the celebratory day at the end of Ramadan, and the weekly Jummah (day of gathering). The Mawlid, the celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammed, also takes place at the GSM. These communal events form part and parcel of the participants' religious calendar, wherein they bring their families to the mosque, meet friends, chat, and celebrate the day. Adam shares,

> I used to come when I was younger for Eid salaah, my father's family is originally from South End, my father's grandmother`s house was in South End, that's where they grew up, so we used to during Ramadan drive all the way to make salaah at Masjid Aziz, we grew up over there, and then Eid we would come here [to the GSM] because my father was close to the imam [Jappie]. It was pretty normal you listen to the khutbah, you more excited to get home, eat, see the family, what we used to do is go door to door, greeting all the Muslims, I don't know if they still do it, that's like a tradition I don't know if they still do it, cause they just driving with their parents, but the excitement of Eid was getting out of the mosque, putting on your outfit, seeing family.

Imam Jappie, sketches out the communal practice of Mawlid (figure 12/13) that takes place at the mosque

> You see the Malay community has got a special way of celebrating the birth of the prophet: the ladies have got their part, and the gentlemen their part and at the end of the

> day, we all used to come to the masjid (GSM), ladies, they sit upstairs, but before the actual Mawlid day, the ladies keep themselves busy with cutting lemon leaves, because the Nabi (SAW) used to have love of the lemon leaves. You know they cut it [the leaves], they come to the masjid, this is a ceremony on their own the ladies, they call it rumpi snai: the cutting of rampis, is now a Malay word, rumpi, we call it rumpi, Afrikaans is now mixed and all that they, they cut rumpis [the ladies]. […] the ladies come and do it in the mosque, all the years it takes place here. All the children from South End used to come and attend this.

Sustaining the social and communal experiences of the mosque community are their religious holidays, underpinned by their shared faith. The early iterations of the GSM community (1856/1990) were "Malay" based on localness, similar ethnic identity and shared faith. Their connection to the mosque was fractured through successive waves of separation from the "Malay quarters" and then from South End, yet it remains an undercurrent. From early 2000, continuous immigration to South Africa from other African countries occurred, with one study indicating that Gqeberha possesses the third largest migrant population in South Africa (Barbali, 2009). This resulted in a demographic shift in the GSM community. People from Senegal, Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are now residing in areas adjacent to the mosque, effectively reformulating the mosque community. It is no longer a "Malay" mosque sustained by a Malay community but a community constituent of an array of ethnic and religious identities. Adam succinctly captures this reformulation

> […] There is a sense of community but not local; they have become local to us because we see them every day. It's more foreigners that frequent the mosque, but as I said, over time, you get to know people and become friends, and they feel like they have been here forever.

The mosque communities` identity and social relationships are sustained through communal experiences in the form of their religious holidays, underpinned by their shared faith. On Jummah, whole families are present, fathers, mothers and children. They make their way down to the mosque, and engage with other families, and chat, gossip, and for the kids, play. On the day of Eid, the mosque acts as a space where the personal hardship of the fast are transformed into a communal celebration. Other celebrations include the birth of the prophet, where each member of the community plays a role – women, men, and children. Today, the community revolves around individuals who routinely congregate at the mosque, effectively becoming "localized". They are inculcated into a form of community established and maintained by engagement in the various rituals and celebrations at the mosque until "*they feel like they have been here forever."* It is sustained by the Islamic injunction that males perform their prayers as part of a congregation. As such, the GSM community is premised not on localness, ethnicity,

or religious identity but rather on a shared faith and continuous communal and ritual occurrences. This community is most evident during the *Jummah*, where different ethnicities, ages, genders, and dominations are present. This diversity is subsumed under a framework of Ummah, or brotherhood (figure 14), as Yahya notes: "a Muslim brotherhood [the community] a Muslim is the brother of another. All Muslims are your brothers and sisters, might not be your blood sisters."

Figure (12): Imam Tawiludeen leading the Mawlid ceremony at the Grace Street Mosque, early 1960s (Source: Agherdien, 2021).

Figure (13): A group of women cutting rampis for Mawlid at the Grace Street Mosque, they are dressed in their best clothing (Source: Agherdien, 1979).

Figure (14): A group of "brothers" take a selfie outside the Grace Street Mosque after the Jummah prayer (2023) (Source: author).

5.3 Community perceptions on the mosque as heritage

Participants' views of the mosque as heritage and its possible nomination emphasize the intangible, experiential aspects they prioritize over its materiality. This attitude also underpins their hesitation and apathy toward heritage nomination. On September 24, 2021, the Heraldlive published a story outlining the GSM's appeal for the mosque to be designated as National Heritage (Rogers, 2021) – the status of the application is unknown. The idea of nomination, however, was Imam Jappie outlines was thrust on the community; Imam Jappie (Figure 15) recounts an incident where "two white women" approached him to suggest nomination, rather than the community seeking it, stating, "I never knew about things like that [heritage sites]". Whilst the article emphasises "the Muslim community" calling for its nomination, Imam Jappie offers another account, ultimately, he believes this process didn't go anywhere as he does not see the value in being nominated. During the Jummah speech, a visiting Imam succinctly summarises the participants' views on the importance of the mosque. During the Jummah speech, a visiting Imam succinctly summarizes the participants' views on the importance of the mosque:

> One of the struggles [of the community] were the Group Areas Act, as you will see these areas, people had houses, and then they become homeless, bulldozers would come and evict them, and they had to leave, but alhamdulillah the sincerity of our predecessors is evident, because this masjid [GSM] is still here, it is still alive, and what is keeping the masjid alive? Not just the brick and mortar it is the Musallis (congregants), look Alhamdulillah if you come here for zuhr salaah, [look] how full is this masjid […].

Adam who has grown up attending the mosque shares his thoughts on the mosque and heritage

> You know it's just a title [heritage], it doesn't change anything for me, I don't really think of the masjid in that way [as a heritage site], for me it's just a place of worship, and nothing more than that. I don't think it's important (heritage designation), for me it's more important that people actually attended the masjid, we`ll have a lot of people that will celebrate the fact that it's a heritage site [if designated], and whatever but they`ll hardly go there – like till today I'll speak to some people that don't even know that there's a mosque in town; They only know about Pier Street the green mosque, but they don't know about the one in the side street (Grace Street). [about heritage designation] I think it will probably become like a place where tourists will want to come and see it, as long as they respect the rights of the masjid, when entering and stuff, we`ve had tourists come there before, I think the one window on top has the star of David and they think its synagogue and their shocked when they find out that it's a masjid, we`d invite them in, have a look around and whatever, I think most of the time they are very respectful.

Imam Jappie, the manging authority of the mosque shares in detail

> I would say without officially, [that] the mosque is part of the early Port Elizabeth [history], the mosque was started when the town was starting, so I take it as a heritage site from our perspective, but to say that it's going to be a heritage site that we are going to be a heritage site, it doesn't mean anything to me, so decided, I'm not interested. We don't need benefit from anybody, they are trying now to contact me, so I've decided, let's just forget about this heritage thing, I don't want the masjid to be a heritage site that we have no control over, you know things like that, so I've come to where I don't want to discuss it with them anymore, in fact I spoke to the guy last year, he`s in charge of the council or something, he asked me how far did I come? now I said man I'm not interested anymore, he said no its important, he asked my reason why, here`s my reason why: even if it had to benefit anything, why do we have to benefit, there masjid is here, the congregants are here, the people every month they give towards the masjid. You know what I'm saying, money towards the masjid for the maintenance and so on, and all the alternations, not with heritage money, so I've come to the conclusion, that I told them I don't feel it's necessary anymore.

Faced with the question of what he thinks would happen if the mosque was declared a heritage site, he responds

> I don't know, first of all someone told me you can't just paint the mosque any colour you must first, you know you can't do anything without getting their approval [councils], and things like that. Look the bathroom area it was in a bad way, old and ancient, we changed all that as time went on, and we did a new bathroom area, and so that is all things we did ourselves, painting the masjid it cost us R80,000 / R90, 000 for the scaffolding and all that, but with Allah's kudrat (power) we are surviving. Why do we still need to go on, someone was telling me, don't know if it was one of them, telling me if you want to paint the mosque a certain colour, I must now speak to them first, now I don't want to have any restrictions, regarding the masjids, I don't want anything where I must first speak to them and get their approval, that is my idea now.

Participants thinking around the mosque as heritage stands firmly along the intangible track. That is, the mosque's core functions, rituals and communal practices are the key reasons it is of value to them. This present-centred focus situates the mosque in their daily routines and can foster and sustain their relationships in and through their *rituals*. This mode of heritage comes up against the mosque as a "historic building". Quotes like "for me it's just a place of worship, and nothing more than that" and "for me it's more important that people actually attended the masjid" allude to the focus of participants on a set of socio-spiritual practices and beliefs that make the mosque. When the Friday speaker asks, "what's keeping the masjid alive?" he is hinting towards the conceptualization of the mosque beyond its "brick and mortar", reorienting the focus to the community or the "*the Musallis"* who keep the mosque "alive".

Moreover, heritage designation is not seen as endemic to the community – or beneficial to the mosque. Adam clearly articulates this when he thinks of heritage in terms of tourists, with outsider recognition holding little weight for the actual community. It is a peripheral concern

for most participants, yet it has more serious consequences for the imam with formal authority over the mosque's management. He is concerned about losing formal control over the mosque: "*I don't want the masjid to be a heritage site that we have no control over*". Being hamstrung by heritage authorities is not an attractive prospect. If the mosque continues to fulfil its function, is sustained, and remains within the community's control, what need is there for heritage designation? Designation is not seen as endemic but rather something thrust on them by two "white women". The long history of the mosques of Port Elizabeth and their contentious relationship with the apartheid government undergird the imam's ambivalence to the incursion of government into the space. His experiences of loss and the hard-fought battle to sustain the GSM under apartheid are critical factors in his hesitancy to be designated a heritage site. Any incursion that would lead to the community losing control of the mosque is unattractive; he states, "there are many people who want to come in here [and take control of the mosque]". This loss of control could critically impact the functioning of the mosque; he believes that as a heritage site, it would not be able to be upgraded, refurbished, and revitalized.

Figure (15): Imam Behardien "Jappie" in front of the Grace Street Mosque. The image was used for the cover of the HeraldLive`s article (Source: Rogers, 2021).

5.4 A community of communities

It is often a trend in South Africa that "Muslims are largely viewed as monolith" (Vahed, 2006: 10). However, as reflected in their mosque communities, they are diverse and experience Islam differently (Tayob, 1999). Vahed (2006) who studied the Memon Mosque community of Grey Street in Durban, found that it was multi-ethnic, multi-denominational, and differed in class, language, and ethnicity. Often, these dimensions were conflictual. Vahed (2006: 25) writes

> "these challenges on the basis of class, ethnicity, or good governance showed that the small diasporic community of Muslims did not subsume differences under broad umbrella 'Islam' but was riven by conflict."

Yet the conflictual nature should not overshadow the mosque community's ability to integrate these various dimensions through the lens of a shared faith. The community can be both integrative and conflictual; focusing on either or feeds into a myopic understanding of community (Waterton & Smith, 2010). For example, the GSM, which began as an ethnically homogenous community, has incorporated a wide range of congregants over time. Its diversity is multi-dimensional: comprising of Indian, Malay, Wolof, and Chewa persons who differ in age group, religious affiliation, class, and educational backgrounds. It includes long-term residents, recent immigrants, and born Muslims/reverts. Despite these differences, participants highlighted the mosque as a space to "make friends", engage with peers and fulfil their spiritual needs. Couched in religious terminology, Yahya's description of the community as a "Muslim brotherhood [where] a Muslim is the brother of another" reflects a relational approach to community that emphasises shared spiritual values and beliefs over traditional community boundaries.

Whilst participants did not describe tensions *within* the GSM community, they did articulate tensions *between* mosque communities, a trend that will be explored in a later chapter. The observation that there is a sense of community at the mosque but that it is not local, "they have become local to us because we see them every day" points to Apaydin's (2018) take on community which centres on its social aspect. Framed as such, this mosque community is formed through regular social interaction and shared practices rather than fixed ethnic, class, or geographic boundaries, which inevitably challenges traditional notions of "local" communities in heritage contexts. This upends the homogeneous community grouping under a single umbrella exemplified under the stakeholder approach, highlighting the relevance of

Spoormans et al.`s (2023: 736) argument for the need to "further specify stakeholders beyond the commonly used monolithic term of 'community'".

The GSM is a social platform where social exchanges occur - congregants make new friends, chat with old ones, and utilize it as a family outing. It hosts the Islamic religious calendar that brings together people from all walks of life, facilitating their social engagement. This is not unique to the GSM. In Syria, at the Umayyad Mosque, a World Heritage Site, Rudolff (2003: 213) writes that the mosque

> "[…] is a symbolic centre of social activities and information exchange; […] social contacts are established, and one meets friends and perhaps future spouses and through this process the mosque becomes a matter of personal social identity […]".

Before thinking of the mosque as solely a place to pray, Wheatley (2001: 235) outlines that it was "a popular meeting place for gossiping townsmen; […] a venue for creative interaction among special interest groups." However, it is Vahed (2006: 24) who captures how the mosque works to form community:

> "The mosque was more than a house for prayer. The process of building mosques was simultaneously a process of constructing community because *they were places where Muslim males met* [emphasis added]."

Overarching observations

This chapter explored the history of the GSM and its associated community, illustrating the complexities of living religious heritage in South Africa. Transforming from a "Malay" spiritual centre to a multi-ethnic congregation – the case of the GSM highlights its community's resilience and adaptability in the wake of social and political change. Instead of a rigid, homogeneous grouping, this chapter reveals the mosque's community as a fluid, relationally constructed and produced through shared spiritual practices and social interactions that transcend ethnic and geographic boundaries. This finding points to the need for a more nuanced approach to stakeholder engagement in heritage management. Communities with religious heritage may hold alternative interpretations of heritage that emphasize functionality and spiritual importance over the physical structure. Whilst this thesis opened with the argument that Islamic heritage can contribute to addressing the imbalance of the heritage register in South Africa, it is vital to acknowledge that formal heritage designation may not be universally sought or advantageous for religious communities. Whilst the sample of the community was restricted

to a select few, the shared views may represent the whole. In the following chapter, the role of the spiritual practices of the community is explored and how they contribute to producing a living heritage site.

Chapter VI:
Rituals and Sacred Space

In this chapter, participants' lived experiences of the ritual practices that occur in the mosque are drawn into focus, as well as how they create a sacred space. Making use of the author's participant observation(s) and interviews with participants, it documents and analyzes five rituals: ṣalāt (prayer), wuḍūʾ (ablution), adhān (call to prayer), duʿāʾ (supplication), and dhikr (remembrance) and how they represent the core function(s) that sustain the GSM as a living heritage site. Of particular focus is the ẓuhr (midday) prayer, which intersects the daily routine of congregants. At the outset, the chapter presents detailed vignettes drawn from field notes, presenting the observed rituals and capturing their sensory and social dimensions in line with the phenomenological approach. This is followed by an analysis of participants' lived experiences of their rituals, revealing a complex dialectic of connection and disconnection to the Divine. The analysis draws on two perspectives. First, the Islamic concept of ʿibādah, as understood by Sikandar (2000), serves as a framework for understanding these rituals as part of a larger worldview. Second, a phenomenological approach illustrates the experiential, embodied nature of the rituals that occur at the mosque and how they produce sacred space.

6. Descriptive overview of the observed rituals at the GSM

The ẓuhr ṣalāt (1PM) is the core ritual practice of the GSM. The prayer, one of the five obligatory prayers in Islam, is performed at 1:00PM at the mosque. It coincides with participants' lunch breaks, rendering it a crucial element of their daily schedules. Before examining the ritual itself, it is crucial to understand its foundations. Ṣalāt refers to the physical enactment of the prayer rite and has its roots and cosmological foundations in the Quran and hadith (Akkach, 2005). Islamic tradition holds that the performance of the five daily ṣalāt was bestowed upon Muslims during Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) nocturnal voyage known as the miʿrāj. The Quran consistently underscores the significance of prayer. Verse (20:14) states: "There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Salah for My remembrance". This verse succinctly captures the fundamental concepts linked to the ṣalāt, including the unity of Allah, devotion, mindfulness, and consistent prayer. The five daily ṣalāt are temporally governed by the motions of the sun and are scheduled around specific times, which include fajr (before sunrise), ẓuhr (after zenith), 'asr (afternoon), maghrib (after sunset) and 'ishā' (after dusk). Ṣalāt can be performed with a congregation or alone in any clean location, but men should perform

it in a congregation at a mosque (Akkach 2005). To accommodate the ritual prayer, the GSM has a designated prayer area with marked lines for congregation formation, a sound system to amplify the sound of the payer, and ablution facilities to accommodate supporting rituals.

6.1 The ambience of the mosque interior

The mosque holds a particular quietness that immediately makes one feel at ease despite the muffled sounds seeping underneath the door and through the windows. It feels like a space outside of time. The lack of natural light and the strength of the pockets of darkness make the space feel intimate and old. It draws attention to the space's thousands of moments of prayer and reflection. It feels like a lived space; nothing is overtly pristine; the floorboards creak, the paint peels, and the carpets are worn. The mix of everyday details (water coolers and shoe racks) interspersed with sacred objects such as the mimbar and texts creates a feeling of being grounded and transcendent.

6.2 The core ritual

6.2.2 Vignette one - the ritual of Ẓuhr ṣalāt

The Iqama is made when the clock strikes 1:15PM; today, the muezzin is a Senegalese brother dressed in yellow overalls. He recites the Iqama in Arabic using a deep voice, announcing: “the prayer has been established”. From their various spots, the congregants work their way to the first saff (row), placing themselves on the sides of the muezzin. The congregation comprises different ethnicities, mainly Indian/Bangladeshi Western/Southern African. They are the businessmen, shopkeepers, and staff in the CBD, dressed in their work attire: slacks, jeans, polos, or t-shirts. The congregants shuffle closer to one another, closing the gaps between their shoulders and position their feet in line with the carpet. Collectively they are facing the Qibla (direction). Today, the Imam is an Indian shop owner dressed in a kurta, vest and topee. Imam Jappie follows behind on his chair. After the Iqama, the Imam in front of the niche observes the row, encouraging the congregants to close the gaps. Facing forward toward the Qibla, he recites the takbir: “Allah is greatest,” his voice echoing up the rafter. The mic is not used today.

The fardh Zuhr ṣalāt has begun. The saff follows the Imam's lead, raising their hands to their ears, with palms facing forward, repeating the takbir. Gazes are fixed on the floor where their foreheads will touch the ground. As it is the Midday prayer, the Imam does not vocalize his recitations and leads for four rak'āt. A silence pervades the mosque. The congregants stand tall, their hands placed over their abdomen, the right hand over the left; some leave their hands hanging to their sides. There is constant motion: an ear is scratched, a piece of clothing is adjusted, and a sneeze goes off. The saff moves with each bodily adjustment; a new congregant joins on the right.

The Imam recites the first chapter of the Quran quietly, followed by a surah. The duration of the rak'āt depends on what he recites, whether a long or short surah – the

first rakat lasts about three minutes. The silence in the prayer hall is disrupted by the noise seeping in through the open doors behind. Directly across the mosque, a tavern blares music, heavy bass reverberates within the small confines of the mosque, and snatches of conversation from passers-by mingle with the music, all under the thrum of passing cars from the highway several meters away.

After a short surah is recited, from the standing position, the Imam announces the takbir again (Allah is the greatest), and together, the saff transitions to the bowing posture (ruku). Here, they collectively position their upper bodies forward creating a 90-degree angle, placing their hands on their thighs, heads hanging. The length of the ruku is measured in three recitations of "glory to my Lord the Exalted", which in the saff can be heard as a soft murmur. Raising from the ruku back into the standing position, the Imam announces, "Allah hears whoever praises Him". In unison, the congregation follows him.

From this brief standing position, the Imam leads the congregation into prostration (sajdah). The congregants fold to their knees and bend their upper bodies forward, touching the ground with their hands, forehead, and nose in a posture of prostration. Here again, they pause for three recitations of "Glory is to my Lord, the Highest". From the Sajdah position, the Imam leads them into a seated position. Here, various postures are held; Imam Jappie in his chair, raises from his bend into a standard chair seated position. Some remain seated on their heels; others tuck their left foot underneath them with the right remaining upright. Hands placed on thighs. From here, takbir is again recited, and they head back into the Sajdah. They hold for three recitations and, upon the next takbir, raise back into standing. This completes the first rakat.

In the second rakat, the same process as the first rakat is repeated, except for a change from the seated position. The standing position is slightly shorter as the Imam recites a shorter surah than in the first rak'āt. From the second Sajdah, instead of raising back to standing, they straighten their backs and remain kneeling, hands on their thighs in the Tashahhud position. At various times, the saff in this seated position raises their index fingers.

From this tashahhud position, the Imam announces the takbir, and they return to standing. This standing position is shorter than the first two, as the Imam only recites fatiha and not a surah, followed by the Takbir to head into the ruku. The Imam takes them through the remaining two rak'āt. In the last rak'āt, the tashahhud position is longer than the first. At the end of the tashahhud, the Imam announces the salaam, turning his headfirst to the right, "May the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you". After that, he turns to the left and repeats the same phrase; collectively, with few variations; the congregants follow suit, first turning their heads to the right, repeating after the Imam, and then to the left again, repeating after him, signalling the end of the zuhr prayer.

Islam is based on a reward system. Participants believe that Allah rewards them for performing the ẓuhr ṣalāt collectively at the mosque, accruing a greater number of good deeds than if performed alone – outside of the mosque. The act of ṣalāt served as the *raison d'etre* for participants to attend the mosque. Routinely, they used the GSM for their Ẓuhr ṣalāt over the

observation period. The exact performance of the ṣalāt differs slightly between different schools of law, but it adhered mainly to the Sunni performance at the mosque. The congregation was multi-ethnic and mainly working class, as congregants made their way down to the mosque from their various occupations/businesses. Adam and Jameel describe their daily routine

> My routine for Zuhr, I take wudhu at the business, then I'll go over two minutes before iqamat, [...] I'll make my sunnats [optional prayers] and then wait for the iqamat, after salah I'll make dua, then I'll usually come back here [workspace] and make tasbih if I'm not busy.
>
> […] At seven I'm at the shop, I open at 8 till five. I wait for the customers, clean, and oversee my workers, at one [zuhr time], I tell my lady, I'm coming back in thirty minutes or twenty minutes, I go straight to the masjid [for zuhr].

All participants referenced a single ahadith, regarding the motivation for attending the mosque

> […] All Muslims must try to be on the masjid, they should be on Jummah. It means congregation, together, one congregation [is] equal [to] 27 times more than if you did it in the shop or alone, that's why it's better in the congregation. That's why the Muslim must go to the masjid, try to respect the masjid, to see what's going on and see your other friends […].

The performance of ṣalāt is universal - Muslims pray at the same time, in the same manner, in the direction of Mecca, and in Arabic. Standing shoulder to shoulder, they produced saffs, or rows, before the ṣalāt began and oriented themselves towards the Qibla. Their movements were synchronized during the prayer, moving from the standing, bowing, and kneeling positions. Prayer times can range from 4 to 6 minutes long, depending on the Imam. The external environment, specifically the sounds from outside, is a prominent feature of the mosque. Figure (16) visualizes the performance of the Ẓuhr ṣalāt that occurs at the mosque as described in vignette one.

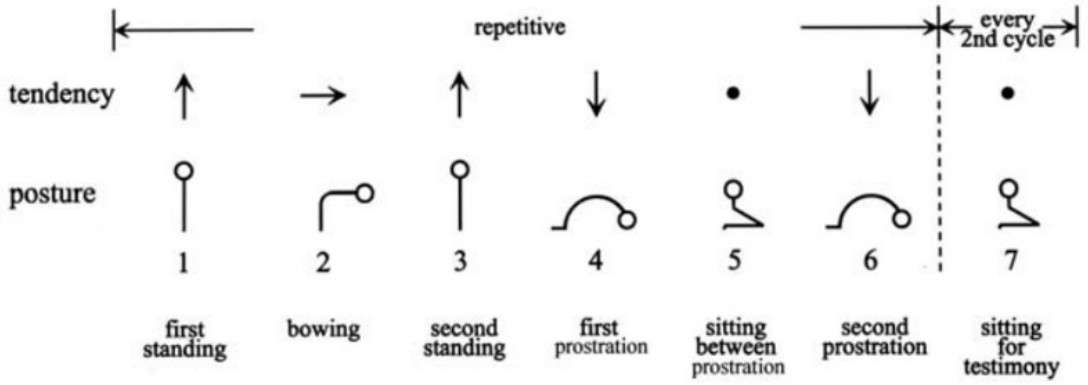

Figure (16): The bodily movements involved in the making of ṣalāt. Adapted from (Akkach, 2005: 201, Fig 4.17).

6.2.2 The sacralising elements of the ṣalāt

The processual, emergent nature of the sacred in the mosque is evident from the vignette above. The interplay between the tangible/intangible "sacralises" the mosque space (Farouk-Alli, 2002) as it allows participants to situate themselves in time and space. The ṣalāt ritual, an embodied and ritualised performance of worship, is central to producing this sacred space. Drawing on a two-part locative strategy, participants' physical actions (rituals) appropriate the mosque space and their devotional invocations link them to the Divine. Prayer is felt in the body and understood in the mind, working together to create the experience of ṣalāt, Jameel states:

> I try to put myself [and] concentrate only Allah: how to do this from where? from one sujood to the next I try to see [from posture to posture] I try to think only Allah and Nabi (SAW) […].

The body is spatially oriented towards the Qibla (Ka`ba), the revered focal point of the Muslim world. Akkach (2005: 170) notes that "orienting a built form [the mosque] toward the sacred center means positioning oneself and space on the grid of the divine map of holiness". The act of ṣalāt and its specific bodily postures, standing, bowing, and kneeling, connects the body to the horizontal and vertical directions – linking the worshipper to Islam's earthly and heavenly cores. These movements and linkages imprint a sacred choreography onto a Muslim's body. Otterbeck (2024: 253) writes that the ritual gains a "supra individual quality" due to the impact of these "formalised steps, words, deeds, and emotions, inscribed in the body through socialisation, training, and memorisation". After that, ṣalāt becomes an integral part of the "directionalities" of Muslim life, influencing identity, social connections, and spiritual goals (Otterbeck, 2024: 253). In order to bring this ritual to bear, participants performed certain pre-ṣalāt rituals, which include the wuḍūʾ and the adhān. The next sections describe these rituals and how they support the process of sacralising the mosque.

6.3 The supporting rituals

Wuḍūʾ acts as a supporting ritual for the ṣalāt, as purification (ṭahāra) is required before it. This purification can be achieved by the performance of wet ablutions (wuḍūʾ), dry ablutions (tayammum), or bathing (ġusl). Wuḍūʾ is an injunction from Quran:

> "O you who believe! When you stand (intend) to offer the Salah (the prayer), then wash your faces and your hands (forearms) up to the elbows, rub (by passing wet hands over)

> your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. If you are in a state of Janaba, purify yourselves (bathe your whole body) (Quran 5:6).

Impurity in Islam is classified into two categories: major impurities, which require whole-body bathing (ġusl), and minor impurities, which only require ablutions of the head/face and extremities (Wigley & Bibi, 2024). At the mosque, adjacent to the main prayer hall, are the wuḍūʾ facilities, a long corridor with a row of taps on its left wall. These are used to perform wuḍūʾ by the men (figure 17). The women have separate facilities upstairs. Wuḍūʾ involves the ritual purification of the body in preparation for the Zuhr ṣalāt.

6.3.1 Vignette two – the ritual of wuḍūʾ

> Khalid enters the mosque and proceeds to sit on the bench up against the wall, removing his shoes. He heads into the wuḍūʾ facility - a long corridor, with taps running parallel on the left wall with a drain for the flowing water. He begins by washing his hands, cupping the water in his right hand, running it over his left hand, up to his wrists, three times (each of the following acts are done three times), for each hand. This is followed by rinsing his mouth. With his right hand cupped again, he brings it to his nostrils and passes it into his nasal passage. Concluding the ablution of his face, he splashes water onto his whole face, rubbing it in circular motions. He segues into washing his body starting with the right arm, running it under the water, his left palm underneath the right hand catching the water. He repeats the process for the other arm. He gives his hands a shake and proceeds to dip his hands under the running water and wipe over his head in a single swipe, from forehead to the back of his nape, using his index fingers to swirl on the outside of his ears. For the lower part of his body, he raises one leg, with the right foot positioned under the flowing water, using one hand for balance against the wall, he uses his right hand to wash his feet. He proceeds to do the same for his left foot. He is quiet throughout this process, and heads to the foyer, drying himself off with the tissue stuffed into his pocket.

Wuḍūʾ is a bodily practice performed individually and sequentially, from right to left - starting with washing the hands and ending with the feet. This washing is done three times but can be done once over. Water is a core part of this ritual and is intertwined with physical and spiritual purification. The proximity of the wuḍūʾ facilities to the main prayer hall highlights its crucial role in sustaining the core ritual of ṣalāt and is often the busiest section of the mosque outside of the main prayer hall. Wuḍūʾ acts to cleanse the physical body, which also has an intangible dimension – spiritual purity. These two elements play a central role in preparing participants for worship. Without purification, the ṣalāt cannot be enacted. The corporeal and spiritual forms must be purified first: Imam jappie articulates that “wuḍūʾis [needed] to offer your ṣalāt, because you have to be in a pure state, you can’t perform it if you are in an impure state.” Physically cleansing the body is tied to its spiritual component, whereby participants imagine their sins “falling off” their bodies and the water resulting in being impure. In Islamic thought,

the human body is not only a vessel for the soul but a whole organism in which the spiritual aspects may be actively influenced by manipulating the body's many components (Katz, 2005; Wigley & Bibi, 2024).

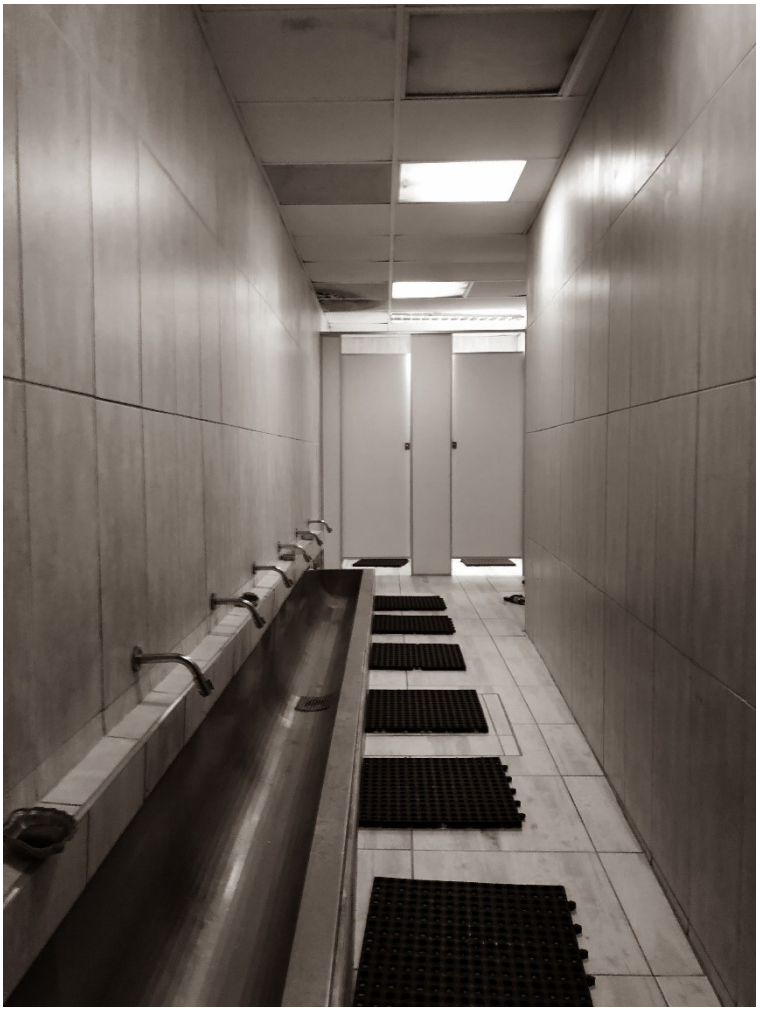

Figure (17): The wuḍūʾ facilities at the mosque (source: author).

6.3.2 Vignette three – the ritual of adhān & Iqāma

Yahya heads to the front of the mosque, turning on the sound system and heading for the mic, on the right side of the mosque. He shifts his body, angling himself towards the Qibla; the mic crackles and he begins. His voice echoes inside the main prayer hall "Allah is the Greatest!" the first of which is performed in a faster tempo in relation to the second repeated "Allah is the Greatest!". He goes over this four times, with his hands raised, positioned near his ears on both sides, with his index just outside his ear drum. There is a brief pause, with a slight inhale for breath, followed by "I testify that there is no god but Allah" He recites this line twice, followed by: "I testify that Muhammad Is the Messenger of Allah". Next, he proceeds to recite "Come to the prayer" twice, where his upper body shifts to the right and then returns to the Qibla, this is followed by the verse "Come to success". Again, this is repeated twice, here his

> upper body shifts to the left when repeating. Coming to the concluding verses of the adhān, he announces facing the Qibla "Allah is the Greatest", ending with "there is no god but Allah".

There is no sound more associated with Islam than the call to prayer. The origin of the ritual and recitation of the adhān can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the foundations of Islam in the 7th CE (Moosa, 2021). The Prophet introduced it to enhance the existing methods of announcing prayer times (Al Bakri et al., 2019). After the adhān**,** a subsequent announcement known as the iqāma is made. It follows the same pattern as the adhān but with increased speed and reduced volume, audible inside the vicinity of the location of the ṣalāt. During ẓuhr time, the adhān is often technologically amplified, going well beyond the confines of the mosque, and serves as a temporal marker for participants, altering them that the time for the ẓuhr prayer has set in. Daily, it is rung from the base of the mosque through the loudspeaker, Yahya recounts that

> When a Muslim hears the adhān, you must respond, it's the same when your mother calls you, what do you do, even if you're eating you must stop and respond and go. When you are called, don't hesitate don't waste time.

Inside the mosque, adjacent to the wall of the wuḍūʾ facilities, stands the mic system of the mosque (figure 18). It is used to announce the ẓuhr and ʿaṣr prayers through the loudspeakers above the mosque. The adhān is performed by anyone who comes early to the mosque, and as such, differs in its sound, rhythm and tempo as each congregant has their style. The adhān also engages the whole body and serves as a temporal marker. The muezzin (the caller of the adhān) follows specific bodily movements that correlate with the Arabic line they recite and spatially orientates themselves towards the Qibla. Othman (2017: 7) writes, "proper audition of the adhan implies an active process engaging not only the ears but also the entire body of the Muslim." The muezzin, the caller of the adhān, enters a dialogue with the listeners of the call – he announces, "Come to the prayer" and "Come to success", whereafter Muslims must physically respond. The amplified adhān intersects the sacred and profane, producing an acoustic space saturated with spiritual resonance and weaves through and among the profane sounds of the city: conversations, shouting, hawking, and music. The wuḍūʾ and adhān serve as supporting rituals for the ṣalāt at the mosque, assisting in sacralising the mosque space. In addition to the supporting rituals, there are optional or devotional practices that also occur in the mosque.

Figure (18): The mic system inside the mosque (source: author).

6.4 The supplementary devotional practices

While ṣalāt is formal and obligatory, necessitating the execution of accompanying rites, the duʿāʾ and dhikr are informal activities without stipulations on frequency or structure. The former is the act of supplication, which is usually articulated in the participants' local language and can be performed anywhere. In the Arabic lexicon, dhikr means to remember and to think about; in the context of prayer, it refers to the act of reciting Allah's praise and remembrances and is often chanted rhythmically in Arabic.

6.4.1 Vignette four - the practices of duʿāʾ and dhikr

> After the Zuhr salaat, the Imam begins the collective duʿāʾ. Some participants leave before its completion others stay seated, hands raised, cupped close to their faces. The imam prays for peace and prosperity, a throng of "ameens" are let out, and a final ameen is said upon the conclusion of the duʿāʾ, whereupon they wipe their hands over their faces. The congregation disperses, some going to perform their sunnah salaat, others leave. Some remain seated still engaged in duʿāʾ, their eyes closed, lips racing.
>
> -
>
> A Musali sits in the first saff, tasbih beads in hand, his fingers move over the wooden beads with his lips following suit. He is in a seated position bent forward rocking; his eyes closed. As he reaches the end of the wooden beads, he starts again, repeating the process until he leaves. A Musali next to him makes use of a digital device strapped to his finger, keeping record of his dhikr, in a similar position.

The performance of duʿāʾ and dhikr form part of the fabric of the mosque. Dhikr is often performed alone, with accompanying tasbih beads, and involves the rhymical usage of the body. Duʿāʾ also plays a part in the mosque. It is done collectively and individually after the main ẓuhr ṣalāt, where the imam of the prayer alights on a duʿāʾ, which is followed by most of the congregants. Afterwards, they make their own individual duʿāʾs, usually with their hands cupped to their faces and in the kneeling position. Visually, there are reminders to make duʿāʾ in the mosque (figure 19); the entrance of the mosque instructs congregants to enter with their right foot and recite. For participants, duʿāʾ's act as a means of showing thanks to Allah for his favours, seeking protection from evil and requesting his assistance. Adam explains

> [it is] protection from the evil eye and that type of thing, jealousy etc, these are the types of things the prophet used to read to protect himself from. By reading the four kuls and ayutual kursi, especially if you're around other people, like in the marketplace, business world, school for example, [dua is a] protection from all types of evil.

Jameel paints a picture of dhikr in his life

> It is rosary beads, it is from Senegal, this one is a hundred beads, it is split into different parts, with different numbers, it is used one by one. It is made of wood, and after salaah, you use it. Every day I use it, when I'm walking, it is always one me. I use my right hand, every salaah I must do it.

The embodied nature of the duʿāʾ - using specific hand gestures (cupping of the hands) and bodily positions (kneeling) enhances the congregants' spiritual experiences and situates them before the divine. The rhythmic usage of wooden beads and electronic devices in the dhikr - rocking back and forth, movement of fingers - relies on bodily techniques and tangible items to establish concentration and connection to the divine. These acts transcend the boundaries of the sacred/profane; they are carried out in shops, streets, mosques, homes, and taxis. The supporting rituals, the wuḍūʾ, adhān, dhikr and duʿāʾ coalesce around the core ritual function of the mosque: ṣalāt, serving as a scaffolding to produce the sacred at the mosque. The vignettes above describe how rituals have occurred at the mosque; in the following sections, an analysis of the phenomena from the participants' perspective is explored, specifically the ritual practice of ṣalāt.

Figure (19): A dua on display at the entrance of the mosque (source: author).

6.5 A phenomenological analysis of participants` experiences of ṣalāt

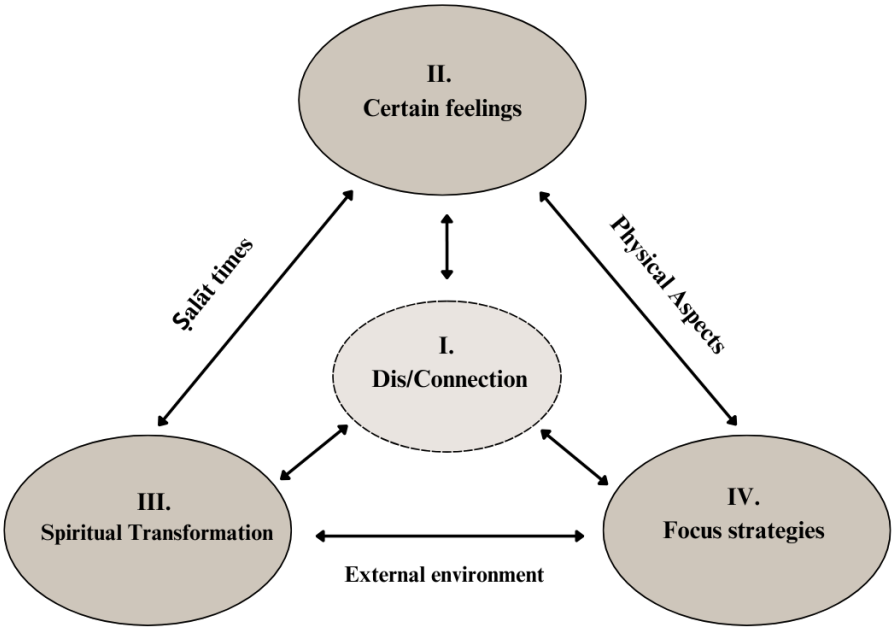

Figure (20): Framework of participants phenomenological experience of ṣalāt (adapted from: Williamson, 2018).

Vignette one explored the external observable phenomena of ṣalāt that occurred at the GSM. This section explores what the experience meant to participants. To participants, ṣalāt is dynamic. This dynamism is related to their intention (niyya) at the outset of the prayer and their concentration level in ṣalāt, which produces specific outcomes. This includes a connection/disconnection to Allah, spiritual transformation, and focus strategies linked to certain feelings. Niyya refers to the mental act of determining the goal of an action which accompanies the execution of ṣalāt, serving to mark it as the performance of an obligatory act of worship. It enables the ritual performer to understand that a specific action is legally prescribed and that they have completed their obligation. Figure (20) represents the dynamic experience of ṣalāt. At its core (I) lies the dialectic of dis/connection. Connection is embedded in participants' concentration in the ṣalāt, linking them to Allah and bringing them closer to him. Disconnection represents the opposite, which is influenced by internal/external factors. This dialectic is the cornerstone of all other aspects of the ṣalāt experience spring. In circle II, certain feelings are the spectrum of emotions experienced during ṣalāt, which are primarily positive and include peace and contentment. The groupings, spiritual transformation (III) and focus strategies (IV) are interconnected elements that mutually engage with I. The ability to

experience spiritual growth is intimately tied to participants' ability to maintain focus in their ṣalāt, which affects and is affected by their sense of connection to the divine.

6.5.1 The dialectics of dis/connection

In recounting their prayer experiences, all participants articulated instances of feeling either a connection to Allah (God) or a sense of disconnection. Connection to Allah was central to the experience of prayer, facilitating the emergence of other themes and structuring meaning in the experience. This connection was cultivated through concentration, which ebbs and flows as participants perform their ṣalāt. Participants described this connection as being in dialogue with "your creator," or as a process of "surrender[ing] your life to the almighty." Alternatively, it is seen as establishing a link with a higher power (Allah) that "brings taqwa (awareness)." Jameel elaborates on what connection in ṣalāt can refer to

> [It is the] attending one of the pillars [of islam] that you are commanded to do, and by doing so you have to do it in a proper way. You have to bring taqwa, you have to bring faith, make sure you are clean, and clean your heart, spiritually, that is the connection.

Yahya, encapsulates the dynamics of connection and disconnection

> I try to put myself - concentrate only Allah, how to do this from where, from one sujood to the next I try to see [from movement to movement] I try to think only Allah and Nabi (SAW). But you know life is like that, you push yourself to be here, but sometimes your mind goes to Senegal or whatever, life is like that. I concentrate [on] what the Quran says to me; when I recite the Quran what it says to me, particularly if its maghrib loudspeaker, I try to make translation of the ayaa (verses) of the Quran what they say exactly, when we say the bismillah, what does it mean exactly, and try and concentrate yourself, nothing else.

Connection is predicated on a certain closeness to Allah, in both the physical and spiritual sense, Adam who performs ṣalāt seated on a chair says,

> I miss making sujood, I miss the connection to your creator... when you are in sujood you are the closest to your creator, I feel like I'm robbing myself of that experience.

Connection to Allah made the prayer experience meaningful for participants however they understood it. Other times, participants experienced a sense of disconnection or performed a mechanical exercise of faith. When experienced this way, prayer had little spiritual resonance for them, but one can move beyond this automated practice and transform disconnection into connection.

6.5.2 Disconnection

Participants oscillated between connection and disconnection in ṣalāt, in their routine performance of their ṣalāt Yahya states

> If its long [disconnection] it disturbs me, but mostly its not so long, a couple of seconds, you see life is like this, I use a tasbih every day, I try not to be disconnected from it, if I swear someone in the street, I say astaghfirullah (forgiveness), when I take the tasbih I reconnect, its very important [tasbih] Senegal people put it here [on his neck] when you put it on you hand you don't lost connection. Life is about connecting everyday to Allah. Life will fight you.

Jameel explains, "From God to the dunya [worldly life], to my family […] when you concentrate on these things there is a disconnection [from Allah]." When his mind focuses on aspects other than Allah, he feels like he is going "through the motions [of ṣalāt]". Aspects like work-related issues, family matters, and mundane tasks take mental space and "blocked" participants` connection to Allah. When this occurs, Jameel states that he tries to "come back and connect, it's the same like the network […] when you lose connection [you should] try and get it back and reconnect, try and think about Allah." Jameel's metaphor of a fluctuating network connection aptly captures the ebb and flow of concentration and connection to a higher power that participants experience during prayer. Adam notes how this dialectic is a lifelong process,

> Sometimes you reach the end of salaah without knowing how you reached the end of salaah, you just have no concentration in salaah, that happens many times throughout my life, you end up feeling like your salaah was worthless, shaitaan (devil) gets to you, and says certain things, you try and shake it off and get back to where you used to be.

Disconnection is influenced from the external environment and participants' inner worlds. In their inner worlds, stress is highlighted as a crucial factor that creates a sense of "disconnection". Mary describes that because of a transition in her life, she has been more stressed than usual which has taken its toll on her

> There are times, where your mind just wonders, and I actually feel bad about [it] after I've made the salaah. You can't help yourself; it sometimes just happens, a thought comes to mind or someone, you lose your concentration, you are reading but you are not emotionally there. The last couple of months I`ve been stressed, and it's been coming into my salah, and I try to block it out. I feel bad, cause it's my time with my creator, and now my mind starts wondering, and I start thinking was that salah worth it? do I need to re-do that salaah?

For Adam, this disconnection is mainly related to stress and overthinking

> [It occurs] especially if you need some type of thing in your life, […] maybe after my salah I want to make dua for this that or that […] so its in your mind the whole time, it will distract you, sometimes its random things, I remember when I used to train, you get thoughts of training […] sooner or later you catch yourself and come back.

Other times, this disconnection is facilitated by thoughts of family matters. Jameel, whose family is in Senegal, states that he sometimes thinks of his mother and son and the problems they are experiencing, to which he concludes that "when you concentrate on these things, there is a disconnection [from Allah]". Interestingly, a few participants reframed this struggle as spiritually significant. The mental distractions that facilitate a disconnection from Allah are described as being from shaitan (devil) and are viewed as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Disconnection may also come from the external environment. Loud noises were a critical theme that distracted participants' concentration levels in ṣalāt. Jameel states, "unfortunately, you get those noises from that side (the tavern), I take it as a test, you know Allah gives us a test". Yahya, a revert to Islam, explains his struggle with distraction:

> Performing the salah when you are starting out, when there's distractions in the external environment it can make you lose focus inside the salah itself, that's when you focus isn't too much on the salaah.

For a few, the quality of the ṣalāt is influenced by the type of ṣalāt, whether it is read aloud or not, which assists in concentration:

> When [the imam] recites loudly it is better, when the imam says the bismallah, they touch your heart, the concentration is better, for example in Asr and Zuhr there's no recitation, and the imam is still busy and then there's that space for your mind to wander, you know that type of thing.

The lack of concentration in ṣalāt affects participants' attitudes towards their ṣalāt, posing questions to themselves if "they have completed their obligation" as Mary recounts "[…] was that salaah worth it? do I need to re-do that salaah?". When participants recount a strong connection in their ṣalāt, it interacts with two other themes: certain feelings and spiritual transformation.

6.5.3 "Certain feelings"

The theme of "Certain Feelings" is linked to the connection aspect of ṣalāt. All participants articulated experiencing feelings of peace and contentment that upended prior feelings of heaviness and unease, amongst others. Reacting to the eloquent recitation of an imam in ṣalāt, Adam mentions, "somehow it touches you when you are listening […] to the words of the

Quran," so much so that he became overcome with emotion and began to cry. When asked to describe the emotive aspect, Jameel articulates, "you feel it in your chest, and you start tearing up a bit, and if you try to hold it in your body will shake obviously". Khalid also experiences this peace:

> Obviously, I can't see Allah or experience him but with regards to how I feel, and that change is happenings it's like a positive connection, I feel a sense of peace.

Talking about feelings of peace Adam narrates:

> You not thinking about things that's outside of the masjid, like I said there's a feeling of serenity in the masjid I remember going to a new masjid that open up, and their imam came to speak to us, and I told him I feel at peace inside this masjid, and he told me this mosques name is salaam meaning 'peace'.

He continues,

> There's been many times when you enter ṣalāt, like I said with stress you`ll have all of these things on your shoulders and as soon as you say 'Allahu-akbar" all that just disappears and I can just focus on my ṣalāt and finish my ṣalāt, so you have those moments as well [of peace].

Interestingly, Adam, who experiences sciatica, makes mention of the potential psychosomatic influence of ṣalāt on his pain perception. He describes experiencing transient analgesia during some of his ṣalāt,

> Sometimes I'll enter into salaah, and by the time I finish, I would have totally forgotten about the pain, and then once I get up from salah, it will hit me.

6.5.4 Spiritual transformation

In relation to "Certain Feelings," participants described a sense of spiritual transformation occurring; that is to say, they somehow felt different during prayer than before. Khalid notes that he

> Experience[s] a feeling of calmness and peace […] when I come back from salah and I'm at work, I can even feel a slight change or a big change […] it's a positive change.

Jameel draws on his imagination, which affects change in him. He narrates:

> I try to have connection with Allah [in salaah], I put myself like a dead body, and put myself in front of me, and think about my death, my Janazah (funeral) salah if people think [Jameel] is past away in front of the people, I think like that, when I think like that I remind myself, one day I will be dead, I will be there, my janazah salaah.

The outcome of such a practice is a sharper focus in his daily life, and a closer connection to Allah: he is reminded of his life's purpose. Mary shares,

> After my salaah, I make my duas and all that once I'm done, then I feel abit at ease, because I know everything happens because of the will of Allah, so I try not to stress so much, if I didn't have it I'd most probably go crazy.

6.6 Strategies and experiences of maintaining connection in ṣalāt

As participants fluctuated between connection/disconnection, they coped through different strategies in their ṣalāt to regain their momentum. Adopting a mindful approach to ṣalāt assists Adam in "being present". He notes that the process of ṣalāt starts from your intention and "how you take your wudhu", alongside preparing the surahs you wish to read in the ṣalāt. Weak preparation for him results in "[going] into default mode [where you] read whatever comes into your mind first." Mary tries "as much as possible to get my focus, my attention back to my salah and block out whatever it is that disturbed my salaah." Similarly, Khalid states that

> When I engage in salaah I turn my thoughts to what I'm reciting, and if I have any matter, I'd like to speak to Allah about then I just engage myself in that, and block everything out.

Jameel focus on his bodily positions as a strategy

> I try to put myself, concentrate only Allah, how to do this from where, from one sujood to the next I try to see [from movement to movement] I try to think only Allah and Nabi (saw).

Others seek protection in Allah, by reciting the bismallah, as Yahya details "you ask for protection, to take away those things, because it might be some of the tests that you have been given."

6.7 Experiencing ṣalāt

Drawing on a two-part investigative strategy – description and explanation – the findings present Muslim participants/first-person experiences of their prayer. It uncovers that ṣalāt is a powerful, dynamic, and meaningful religious experience for its practitioner(s). The collective facets of the experience show the experiential quality of the prayer. Prayer involves experiences of dis/connection with Allah, with the former referring to the mindless, mechanistic bodily procedure of performing the prayer and invocations as the mind is located elsewhere. Connection, however, is located through the practitioner's attention, linking them to a higher power, affecting their body. Through this attention, certain feelings become manifest, ranging from peace, a reduction of stress and a sense of calmness. Cumulatively, participants experienced a spiritual transformation; that is to say, they felt different than when they entered

the ṣalāt; this includes a refocusing on their life goals, an easement of their pain, and a more positive outlook. These themes are all located within the experiences of the body; disconnection was referred to as "going through the motions," whilst connection was exemplified by paying attention to the bodily sensations and position. Certain feelings and spiritual transformations, such as bodily convulsions, muscle relaxation, and pain reduction, are also reflected in the body. These experiences also expanded/contracted time, as participants felt like time "flew by" when disconnected from Allah.

6.8 A comparative approach to the experience of ṣalāt

There are few studies on the phenomenological experience of ṣalāt despite it being a 1500-year-old practice. More recent studies from the Global North include Williamson`s (2018) "The Experience of Muslim Prayer: A Phenomenological Investigation", which is relevant, alongside Murphy et al.`s., (2023) "Allah has told us everything: An interpretative phenomenological analysis exploring the lived experiences of British Muslims". The studies conducted in the United States (Williamson) and Britain (Murphy et al.) demonstrate consistent core experiential themes. They also highlight differences in how these experiences are interpreted and embodied within different cultural contexts despite their different geographical and participant data sets. They reveal compelling arguments that salāt can serve as the basis for living heritage at mosques which transcends local boundaries, while being intimately shaped by specific mosque communities. The fundamental dialectic between connection and disconnection during salāt is a primary convergence across all three studies. Williamson's American participants positioned the dialectic as "No Connection/Connection," while participants of this study understood it as "dis/connection,". Murphy et al.'s British participants articulated this as feeling either "close to" or "distant from" Allah. This points to the experiential nature of salāt, which involves an ongoing negotiation between states of spiritual presence and absence, as Yahya shares

> Life is like that, you push yourself to be here, but sometimes your mind goes to Senegal or whatever... I concentrate [on] what the Quran says to me... when we say the bismillah, what does it mean exactly, and try and concentrate yourself, nothing else.

His quote and the consistent finding of presence and absence reflect Williamson's (2018) notion that "connection was essential for the emergence of all other themes in the structure of meaning in the encounter." Meaning that the dialectic(s) of dis/connection is intrinsic to the lived experience of salāt rather than being culturally determined. Whilst Williamson's study

focuses more on individual psychological experiences, and Murphy et al. emphasizes the social dimensions of prayer practice, this study brings to light how the physical space of the mosque mediates the prayer experience or how the intersection of embodied practice and sacred space is navigated. The mosque plays a crucial role in acting as a facilitator of this connection, as Adam notes: “I feel at peace inside this masjid... and I told him I feel at peace inside this masjid, and he told me this mosques name is salaam meaning 'peace'.” Similarly, “when [the imam] recites loudly it is better, when the imam says the bismallah, they touch your heart, the concentration is better.” In addition, this study highlights that the external environment also plays a part in mediating participants' attention, bringing into focus the need for a calm, peaceful environment to allow participants to situate their awareness and establish a link to Allah.

Another consistent theme across all three studies was the emotional and affective aspects of salāt, even though they are conceptualized, and expressed differently. This is most evident in the theme of peace as a primary emotional outcome of successful prayer engagement. In Williamson's study, all his participants described “a feeling of peace and contentment that displaced previous concern with prob.lems.” At the GSM, Adam shares something similar

> There's been many times when you enter ṣalāt, like I said with stress you`ll have all of these things on your shoulders and as soon as you say ‘Allahu-Akbar’, all that just disappears.

In Murphy et al.'s case, his participants described prayer as creating “a sense of peace and a connection to God.” The affective dimensions of salāt emerge as crucial mechanisms through which living heritage is embodied and transmitted. It is not merely a ritualistic practice but a dynamic experience, renewed and revitalized by each practitioner. While the core emotional experiences show consistency across the three studies, their expression and interpretation reveal important cultural variations that deserve further investigation. The themes centred on peace and calmness experienced in ṣalāt could shine a light on how prayer aids sick individuals (Rayhan, 2023; Sarkingobir et al., 2022), or the notions of connection to Allah and the tranquillity it produces may be linked to higher levels of well-being and pain relief (Ghous & Malik, 2016).

All three studies identify various strategies that Muslims employ to maintain or regain connection during salāt, with variations. Participants of this study emphasized mindfulness

techniques and focused on bodily positions, with Jameel describing how “I try to put myself, concentrate only on Allah, how to do this from where, from one sujood to the next.” American participants in Williamson's study more frequently mentioned visualization techniques, such as picturing the Ka'bah, while British participants in Murphy et al.'s study emphasized scriptural recitation and community support. These comparative findings suggest that salāt is a profoundly emotive, dynamic practice. In addition, it is a crucial mechanism through which mosque heritage is actively maintained and transmitted. That is, there is a need to recognize the role of the mosque as both a physical space and a spiritual container. This is the first study to have used a phenomenological approach to the religious experience of ṣalāt with a sample of South African Muslims in the context of heritage. It has pushed the envelope of what the mosque as heritage can be to consider the intangible dimensions embodied at the mosque. The participants' lived experiences effectively contribute to the ongoing arguments for the reconceptualization of the mosque as a place of worship outside Western perspectives.

Overarching observations

Through a detailed examination of the GSM communities` daily rituals performed at the mosque - from the bodily movements of ṣalāt to the acoustic dimensions of the adhān – this chapter has shown how heritage is actively produced and maintained via practice instead of merely lying in the tangible. These rituals form part of the mosque’s core function. They are linked to a cohesive system of worship that transcends the simple categorization of “religious activity,” and contributes to creating sacred space. Participants’ experiences of these rituals, particularly the salāt, demonstrate the deeply embodied nature of intangible heritage, where heritage is lived and felt rather than observed or preserved. The GSM community’s daily engagement with these rituals exemplifies what living heritage means, continuing the 169 years of worship at the mosque. While this study focuses on one mosque community, it suggests the need for a broader investigation of lived experiences at other religious heritage sites using qualitative methods. Further research could conduct comparative studies across different religious traditions regarding the place of rituals or the impact of heritage designation on religious practice. The insights gleaned from the lived experience of heritage have important implications for how heritage conservation is approached at religious heritage sites. In the next chapter, what these conservation practices are and what they conserve are explored.

Chapter VII:
Community Care practices at the GSM

Care, Tronto & Fisher (1990: 40) write, is "[an] activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible". It is also the framework that Poulios (2012) uses to explore the conservation practices enacted by communities of their living heritage. The thinking around heritage conservation has evolved significantly over the past century, with increasing recognition being paid to the role of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems (Waterton & Smith, 2010). What was once the purview of heritage experts concerned with the conservation of the physical materials of a site has been opened to numerous methods. In Africa, traditional heritage management practices are deeply rooted in community structures and Indigenous knowledge systems, which Chirikure & Pwiti (2008: 467) note are a "holistic approach, where tangible and intangible heritage were managed as an integrated whole, guided by traditional custodians and knowledge holders". These ways of management often incorporate spiritual beliefs, customary laws, and communal decision-making processes. In South Africa, IKS and traditional custodianship play a crucial role in heritage management.

As part of the South African heritage landscape, Muslim communities exhibit their own forms of heritage care. Care, as understood by Poulios (2014), refers to how community practices maintain and protect their heritage sites, not just their physical preservation but also the collective practices, beliefs, and mechanisms that ensure a site's continuity of function (Poulios 2014). In this chapter, the final component of the LVH approach, care, is examined. It will explore how the GSM community uses both formal (waqf) and informal practices (norms and taboos) to preserve and safeguard the mosque. By utilizing Poulio`s (2014) approach to heritage conservation and concepts of sacred space production, it examines how the GSM community maintains the mosque's functionality while resolving intercommunity conflicts regarding heritage interpretation and management. It unfolds through three main sections, with the first introducing the various ways the community safeguards the space to allow the "sacred" to be produced. Second, it outlines what the principle of waqf is and its role in Islamic history, and finally, the contentions it carries among the mosque communities in Gqeberha.

7. Observed care practices

At the mosque, there is a set of norms and taboos expected of participants that govern the usage of the mosque. These are taught, enacted, and enforced. The focus of this form of care goes beyond materiality. Instead, this set of principles acts as a means of allowing the specific rituals at the mosque to be brought forth. In a sense, these norms and taboos "make safe" the mosque space to *produce* the core function of the mosque. These range from how participants are allowed to dress, their cleanliness, and how they should conduct themselves. Taboos are a set of prohibitions, restrictions or protocols believed to be imposed by divine or supernatural powers (Negi, 2010). They are passed down orally, from generation to generation and in action, they are usually self-imposed/surveilled and are often resistant to change (Cleaver, 2017; Sinthumule, 2022). The following are a few of the expected norms and taboos observed at the GSM.

7.1 Community roles and responsibilities in regulating the mosque space

Imam Jappie explains, "the normal procedure of someone coming to the mosque, is firstly you got to be clean, you must have wudhu, take a proper shower, and things like that." Spiritual and physical cleanliness were linked to the acts of wuḍūʾ and ġusl. Being in a state of major impurity prohibited participants from being in the mosque space, and a lack of wuḍūʾ restricted them from performing salāt. This spiritual form of purity also extends to the clothes that participants wore. Adam shares,

> [You need] just like overall cleanness when it comes to the masjid, you know I understand sometimes people some of the guys have hard manual labour that they do, so when they come to the masjid, their cleanliness might not be on the top level.

General cleanliness was also something strongly articulated and enacted. Participants utilized Itar (oil) and perfume within the mosque. Yahya explains, "when people smell nice with Itaar, alhamdulillah, if they don't, try and keep yourself quite […] worry about yourself." On Friday, fragrant incense sticks are lit and carried around the mosque, cleansing the mosque of foul smells from the outside. Khalid tries to maintain the cleanliness of the mosque; he shares his process of attending the mosque

> When I come in [to the mosque], I make a short dua, then I take of my shoes, and before that even, I see if the area is clean, if it`s not clean i`ll sweep the mosque, then i`ll take off my shoes and i`ll take my wudhu.

There are several purity rituals involved in his attendance – the removal of shoes, the sweeping of dirt, and the use of water in ablution. The clothing participants wore at the mosque was also

regulated. This is done to ensure the covering of the *awrah* - which refers to the part of the body from the navel to the knees for men. Men are required to have certain parts of their bodies concealed, and wear loose fitting clothing, which are free from deceptions of life forms. At the mosque, exposing the awrah Adam states "can affect others, and even break the wuḍūʾ, you not supposed to dress that way." Breaking this regulation has serious outcomes, potentially "breaking" the ṣalāt of the offender and those around him. Speaking on the depiction of life forms on clothing in the mosque, Adam has this to say

> People aren't always wearing their normal traditional clothing for salaah, when they come for salaah you're working in a jeans or t-shirt or something like that, but for me its especially when they come with animal prints, or cartoon characters stuff like that. Its not like their intention, they are totally oblivious to it, they weren't taught or something like that, they just wearing it for the sake of wearing, [it is] ignorance I would say.

Summarizing these practices, Jameel shares

> [In general] cleanliness, be dressed properly, don't make a noise sometimes, there's a group of friends whispering in the back, its fine you know, but not like making a noise, just respecting the other musalis in the masjid, most people will be sitting and reading some type of Quran in the masjid, some will be on WhatsApp or playing games. Before everything else starts if you want to sit and unwind its fine especially like on jummah, before the actual lecture starts, you want to sit with your friends. I don't see that as a problem, but it is a problem whilst the actual program is happening. Then you should be respecting what is happening and put your phone away.

The strictures around silence are a strong norm in the mosque. Being loud, and disruptive is actively frowned upon, and shows a lack of respect for other congregants. Adam explains

> You know sometimes people are concentrating in their salaat, or they are reading the Quran, so a noise will disturb them, or they are making tasbih or something, you will always notice in the masjid, if someone comes into the masjid making lots of noise, everyone turns around and looks, it disturbs them from what they were doing.

Beyond looks, when this norm is broken, congregants are verbally warned by reminding them of where they are, or in extreme cases, the Imam would make an announcement on the mic regarding the noise level in the mosque. Mobile phones and devices are advised to be put on silent, a poster on the mosque wall motions to congregants to "turn off their phones,". Yahya explains the idea around the noise of the mobile phone "you in salaah and one phone rings, it disconnects you, [it] distracts you, [you should] try to disconnect your phone when you go to the masjid." Whilst this norm was strongly advised, it is often the one most broken, as cell phones routinely went off inside the mosque. When this occurs, there are often varying reactions.

Infractions or breaking these norms are often dealt with by participants themselves, in the instances of loud noises, those are communicated through disapproving looks from those effected. Alternatively, congregant's share with one another "brother don't do this or that". In the instance of the exposing of the awrah Yahya shares how he goes over to the offending party and "I say my brother do you need a kurta (dress shirt)?" Adam details

> Maybe like seven out of ten times, I'll just get up and tell them just take your t-shirt and turn it inside out, or put something else on, you know. And they get confused but I explain to them that you can't wear this inside the masjid [depictions of lifeforms].

In other occurrences, if the infractions are severe

> For us that have been here for years, if we see something we`ll either bring it up to imam, or handle it ourselves, depends how bad it is, if it's something we think imam should handle, then well speak to imam, if not well just speak to them and then it will be over.

The norms and taboos that govern the mosque are inculcated from young. Participants explained that from a young age they were taught the proper etiquette of being in and attending the mosque. Most participants attended the mosque from as little as six and were taught these rules either from experience or from attending Madrassa

> Like even in tarawih (night prayer) you`ll see them [children] maybe just sitting in the back and relaxing. Maybe up until the age of ten they`ll do the tarawih and then they'll be sitting with their friends, but the older they get then they start getting like warned they need to be getting in the salaah.

Children are taught how to present themselves in the mosque and, later, as teenagers and young adults, how they should act. Children are exempt from performing the prayer and often linger in the back, playing, chatting or observing the rituals. When children infract the norms and taboos of the mosque, they are often less taken to task than if they were adults. However, as they age, they are expected to engage in the mosque's norms fully.

7.2 Financing and donations

Given the age of the mosque, the internal structure has gone through several additions, as there was a need to accommodate the influx of Musallis and repair/upgrade the space. As a custodian of the mosque, Imam Jappie leverages funds donated to the mosque to ensure the upkeep and upgrading of the space. Given the limited external space, the imam opted to extend vertically. An upstairs gallery was initially installed for women only, but the growing number of male congregants resulted in the upstairs gallery being rezoned. The larger front portion was designated for men, and a smaller back section for women. To ensure the smooth operation of

the mosque and maintenance of its façade, participants privately donated money, especially on Fridays – when a donation box is passed around the mosque during the sermon. There is also a donation box affixed to the entrance of the mosque (figure 21). Imam Jappie describes

> On Friday we collect, not much but we are thankful, you see that roll of paper, we got to have ready for them every day, it cost about R120 for one of them, we got to see that there's always rolls [for ablution], [and] that the masjid is kept clean, once a week [we need to] clean the toilets, the money we collect goes into a bank account […] but that's how we upkeep the mosque, there's still a few things that need to be done, the bathrooms was in a very poor state, old and terrible the drop pit, we managed to modify it. You see where the first pillar is [that] top section, I organized with the builders and we extended it, because you see how full the mosque is.

Figure (21): A donation box mounted at the entrance of the mosque (source: author).

7.3 Safeguarding the sacred at the mosque

Taboos/norms uphold the sacredness of an object or place and are strictly regulated (Negi, 2010). The mosque community enacts various norms and taboos to ensure that the sacred can be produced. That is, they function not to sustain an *a priori* sacred place; instead, they make the mosque safe so that the various rituals that *sacralize* the mosque can take place. These are often informal care practices enacted by congregants, such as removing shoes, maintaining silence, purifying the body and donating to the mosque. These care practices not only focus on the physical aspects of the mosque but also work to produce a sacred space in the *present*. The core function of the mosque is at the centre of these care practices. Restrictions on clothing, dress, and smell are done to ensure that the salāt is not broken and that participants' focus on their prayers is maintained. This is not to say that the community does not care for the material structure of the mosque; they routinely donate funds for the physical maintenance of the site, which the Imam manages in favour of upgrading, refurbishing, and revitalizing the mosque space to accommodate their needs. Participants were taught how to regulate their behaviour at the mosque from a young age and become aware of the consequences; for example, noise in the mosque is met with social disapproval. These norms operate differently for different age groups, being more relaxed for the youth than adults and depending on the day. For example, the notions of silence are more relaxed on Friday with more people in the mosque. These practices shed light on the importance of maintaining a proper environment to bring forth the rituals of the mosque and highlight their dynamism. This dynamism is also reflected in the physical space of the mosque.

7.4 Dynamism, and change at the GSM

As the mosque community grew, there was a pressing need to provide more space to accommodate them. This led to an upper gallery being installed and later rezoned again to accommodate more men. In addition, the carpets were replaced several times due to usage, the bathrooms were upgraded, and a new wuḍūʾ facility was installed. All these changes are reflective of the needs of the community. They required more space to pray and better facilities to perform their acts of worship. They were not concerned with freezing the mosque in the past. Instead, they were open to change and willing to embrace it to accommodate their needs in the present better. This dynamism and adaption are a central tenant of care at religious sites, reflecting the community's attitude towards their heritage as fluid and present-centred. As a waqf property, the mosque is administered locally as a self-contained unit by an independent

mutawalli (trustee), which is Imam Jappie. He is guided by the waqf stipulations, i.e., maintaining the mosque's premises to ensure its function. Imam Jappie maintains the mosque's spiritual and physical aspects through donations received by congregants, which he directs towards the community's needs, and by facilitating an imam to perform religious duties at the mosque.

7.5 The role of waqf in producing the mosque

Assi (2008) states that

> "Reconsidering the issue of awqaf *[pl.waqf]* today might be one step towards initiating a sustainable and indigenous mechanism for the management of cultural heritage that could be adopted and adapted in different countries of the Muslim world."

Waqf as a heritage conservation mechanism has been found to resonate within cultural heritage studies (Assi, 2008; Khalfan & Ogura, 2012; Kühle, 2021). It is a component of Islamic jurisprudence, which is instated through extinguishing the owner's right (of a property) and its subsequent dedication to God in perpetuity; it is done for religious or charitable reasons (Kühle, 2021). A deed is usually drawn up to stipulate the conditions of the waqf and is often managed by a committee or board of trustees. It contains detailed information on the usage of the property, who the beneficiaries are, and all the conditions set by the endower (Assi, 2008). Often considered as a trust or endowment, waqf has had a prominent role in shaping cities in the Islamic world, exerting significant influence on the physical layout of cities throughout the ages in the form of mosques, madrasas, hospitals, and soup kitchens (Deguilhem, 2020). There are two distinct categories of waqf: the family waqf (*waqf ahli*) and the religious or charitable waqf (*waqf khayr*i). The religious or charitable waqf is established for religious purposes, such as the establishment or upkeep of a mosque (Mahdy et al., 2019). The GSM is determined to be a *waqf khayr*i.

As a practice, waqf has endured for over 1500 years yet remains dynamic (Khalfan & Ogura, 2012). Mahdy et al. (2019) echo a similar sentiment, describing waqf as a formidable mechanism for conserving and managing cultural heritage in Islamic contexts. Most historic Islamic buildings today are tied to a waqf arrangement – partly due to shari'ah rules regarding waqf (Mahdy et al., 2019). According to shari'ah, a waqf deed is considered a contract with God, meaning that once the waqf document is written and registered by the

judicial system, no one, not even the initiator-patron, has the legal power to make any changes (Mahdy et al., 2019). These rules have made them a vital component for protecting cultural heritage. The notion of perpetuity is often linked to sustaining the waqf for the benefit of future generations whilst meeting the needs of the present. Moreover, the revenue aspect of the waqf shows that it is self-sustaining and can carry out its functions independently. Waqf is not only used in Islamic countries. South Africa has numerous charitable and religious awqaf (Dadoo, 2017).

7.6 A tale of two façades, waqf and the first mosque in Gqeberha

The GSM and the Strand Street Mosque (SSM) are inextricably linked. The tale of one is interspersed with the other. This relationship was recently brought to the public`s consciousness as the SSM was reconstructed in 2020, a 'stone's throw' away from the GSM. This reconstruction shines a spotlight on the power dynamics at play between the two mosques. Imam Jappie goes into depth regarding constructing the first mosque in Gqeberha. His insights are generated from oral history, as his forefathers have been imams of the mosque since 1861. He recalls

> Abo Rafie was the imam of the masjid [Grace Street], Abo Salie was the brother of the masjid, but Abo Rafie became ill. [....] So the imam of this masjid, when he felt his time was coming, he told his brother [to select a new imam], there was somebody else his brother wanted to become the next imam, but because one reason or another he felt someone else should be the imam, and because of that he had a house around the corner here, I'm not sure where they making the front of the masjid is the right place, I doubt it very much, but anyway the brother was living around the corner, then he left, he told his brother if that is the case if I can't become imam of this masjid, I'm going to make my own masjid around the corner, he took his lounge and dining front section and he made a masjid.
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> I'm doubtful that this masjid [Strand Street] is standing [in its] proper spot that it used to stand, I got the notion that they just took two shops and made it the masjid. […] they keep on saying it's the first mosque, [there is] one source recording that the mosque was built in-between to large buildings in a lane off strand street, there's a lane here, if you go around the corner, that's where the masjid is, where the tavern is, just conveniently, they just took two shops… they trying to use those two shops, they still trying, the people told me to speak to them again, when they came to ask me I explained to them the whole thing, and I showed them all my sources. They made the mosque exactly like this picture that I shared with them.
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> So, he went around the corner the brother Salie, it's very important [what I'm telling you] so this brother he had this house there, but he didn't have enough money to build a mosque type of thing, what he did, he wrote letters to all the Muslim countries of the world, on the letter head of Grace Street Masjid. So, they wanted to know where's the

> other masjid nearby? so he said “no, there is another masjid around the corner”, so they [respondents to the letters] told him look, if the masjid is around the corner, the prophet said, you cannot build a masjid next door: “if you can take a stone, stone throws, if you can throw a stone” a saying that they use, it shouldn’t be so nearby because there’s going to be a lot of strive, and a lot of arguments and ill feelings. So, nobody gave him no money, the only government that gave him money was Turkey. Anyway, the Turkish government gave him a certain amount of money.
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> This is very important I’m telling you now, I’ve told this to the [patrons] I’ve showed them all the photos, anyway, they built a masjid there, made a masjid, the masjid was there, and he had other properties [Abo Salie], he had three sons and a daughter, [his] eldest sons name was Abdul Waheb […]. From what happened, they instructed the lawyer to do the estate of the properties, he had quite a few properties around, so, the masjid was also in the estate, and they sold it. The people my father used to tell me, that the people was very angry with this Jewish lawyer, but they had no leg to stand on as far as he was concerned, you know why? Why do you think why? He didn’t make the masjid waqf. It was still on his name, and the lawyer wanted to know what must I do? “The masjids on the man’s name all the other properties were on the man’s name, I cannot just take the one it is beyond my capabilities, expectations, they have to go.” [The] people were very angry with him, but he said look the man didn’t make it waqf, like if something happened to me now, I’ll go bankrupt, whatever, they can’t come here and take this masjid, cause this masjid is made waqf.
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> All the mosques must have waqf, so he sold everything, and those days people were very in a hurry to buy. […] when he was of age [Abdul Waheb], they got the money, the son Abdul Waheb, he bought a piece of land there by Pier Street masjid, the red masjid on the left-hand side, a small masjid they bought that land, and that land was a very big land […] and the first imam of that mosque, was the eldest son of Abdul Waheb, his name was Abdul Waheb Salie.

The Imam's narrative comes up against the heritage patrons who were interviewed. The older of the two, Yusuf Agherdien, used to live in South End and was forcefully removed – he recently published a book on the enclave's history. A skilled trade, he has recently retired and now describes himself as an amateur historian. The younger of the two, Maalik, a businessman who grew up in Gqeberha, has a deep passion for Islamic heritage and is involved in various local and international projects. Together, they have been instrumental in restoring the Strand Street Mosque. Relying on archival sources, the heritage patrons argue that the SSM is the first mosque in Gqeberha. Furbishing newspaper articles, specifically an excerpt from the Heraldlive (1852), they challenge the arguments put forth by the imam and provide a counterclaim that the GSM is, in fact, not waqf. The excerpt reads:

> It is the intention and desire of the undersigned Abo Salie Naby, a Malay Priest residing at Port Elizabeth,[…] in community of property-to give, donate, and make present of certain House and Premises now erected in Strand-street, in this town, measuring 18 ft. wide and 37 ft. long, to the Trustees of the Malay population in this town, who worship the same God, […] as a place of worship and for the purposes of religion, for all persons

> following the true belief of the Mahomedan religion, […]. The said Abo Salie and his said wife further give up and donate a piece of 52 ft. of ground in front of the said building and 3 ft. on the eastern side for the purposes aforesaid [...]. (Heraldlive, 1852).

From this excerpt, it is clear for the patrons that the home of Abo Salie was given as waqf to the "Malay population," the term used here for "Muslims". It was to be used as a *Mahomedan* place of worship. The dedication to the "Muslim community" is an essential factor for the patrons, and they highlight that the GSM is held under Imam Jappie`s personal family name, something they see as incompatible with the principles of waqf. The original home of Abo Salie was later replaced, aligning with Imam Jappie`s account. In 1866, a newly constructed mosque was completed. They furbish the following excerpt

> On Friday last the new Malay Mosque, situated in Strand-street, was opened for Mahometan worship. It is a neatly constructed building on the orthodox mosque principle, the exterior walls being composed of yellow and red brick "tuck pointed". Overall, of course is a dome, around which is a gallery from which the Mueddin announces to the faithful the hour of worship. […]. We are not informed of its cost; but we believe that the ground was given for the purpose by the elder Salie-some time deceased, and that it was built by his two sons, one of whom, Abdol Wahab Salie, is the priest of the congregation worshipping in this temple. […] We must not forget to mention that through the intercession of the Hon. P. E. de Roubaix, the Sultan of Turkey subscribed £200 towards its erection. […] It is creditable to the Malays that they have succeeded in erecting such an elegant temple in which to worship (Heraldlive, 1852).

Relying on these excerpts and historical archives on the mosque's location, the patrons articulate that it was their religious duty to reconstruct the mosque on the grounds that it previously stood. They plainly articulate "once a mosque, always a mosque." Their use of historical documents challenges the imam's oral narrative surrounding the first mosque in PE. While the managing authorities compete over notions of firstness and waqf, on the ground, users of the mosque attitudes held a different attitude. They focused on the mosque's ability to continue to play host to its core function, i.e. salāt. They utilize both mosques in the performance of their religious duties; Adam a long time local in the area shares

> Like we learnt about that masjid [Strand street] years ago, we grew up knowing about it, that it was somewhere in this area, when they started [reconstructing] we were always talking to each other, "they putting it in the wrong place" that's not where it's supposed to be, behind this building, there used to be an open parking lot, you know people start these urban legends, "you know the reason they can't build there is because the masjid used to be there." And, that just probably stuck with us, this is where the masjid originally was. Even when we looked at the old pictures of the masjid, the building next to it, looks like the building that's infront. So it kinda of confirms to us that it is in the wrong place, but then we saw the actual building plans, we realized we were wrong all these years, yea we heard lots of stories, Imam used to tell us stories about the masjid

> how it came into existence, for me it doesn't really matter, people have stories, I just think that its great that its there, and people have another masjid to go to. […] who owns the masjid doesn't matter to me, what matters to me is the structure, there should be a permanent imam, Sunday to Sunday, for instance on Friday what happens if he gets sicks on Thursday and there's no one to replace him in the current structure.

7.6.1 The governance structure of the mosque

As a waqf property, the mosque is required to have certain stipulations. Imam Jappie, explains his position as the *mutawalli* and what it means for governance structure of the mosque

> Look I'm the imam, I manage the funds, look I tell you, why because we had committees normally they were doing all these things but there was always problems, but the imam of this masjid, I'm not talking about other masjids, I'm talking of this masjid, there was always fighting and squabbling this committee member against that one, every Sunday there'd be fighting outside, so my grandfather decided no more, the imam, picked his secretary, and a chairman, but the imam, what he says is law.

Asked if the mosque doesn't have a committee he responds

> No, we have one but it's not a real committee, because they fight too much. There's no progress, I said I was going to be chairmen and select my people. The imam musn`t be a useless person, and the committee does their thing, according to the title deed of this masjid the imam of this masjid, not to say the owner, got all the say in this masjid.

He concludes that

> [I'm] not the owner [of the mosque] Allah is the owner of this masjid, [if I was] it wouldn't be waqf, that masjid (Strand Street) wasn't waqf that why people didn't want to support that masjid, I'm not the boss of this masjid, I'm here as Allah's slave to ensure things go right.

7.6.2 Debates around the first mosque in Gqeberha

The competing claims around which is the "first" mosque bring to light the centrality of waqf in these debates. In his narrative, the imam sets up two premises, that the GSM was already established by the time the front portion of Abo Salie`s home was converted into a mosque by referring to the dispute that caused the split. Moreover, it was not made 'waqf' when the mosque was established. He justifies this by pointing to it being sold and destroyed, a clear violation of the principles of waqf. He counters arguments around the GSM`s waqf status, "like if something happened to me now, I`ll go bankrupt, […], they can't come here and take this masjid, cause this masjid is made waqf." Following the narrative of the heritage patrons, they use archival sources to cement their narrative. Their articles, published in October 1852, clearly predate the establishment of the GSM in 1855, setting the scene for the SSM as both the first mosque in Gqeberha and its status as a waqf-designated property. For the managing authorities, the centrality of waqf grants the mosque its status *as a mosque.* Any doubt around it raises

questions about the authenticity of said mosque and implicates the question of which mosque is the 'first' in the city. From both narratives, several nuances can be extrapolated (see table 4). Under the criteria of the first 'purpose-built' mosque in Gqeberha, the GSM holds that distinction, as it was initially built "as a mosque" – that is, it did not emerge out of another structure, as the SSM did. The first land to be designated as the place of worship within an already existing structure or as a "portion" of Abo Saliee`s home would be the SSM in 1852. Its double destruction, first in 1866 and 1901, confers the GSM with the distinction of being the oldest existing mosque in the city. The inter-communities of each mosque have lobbied the claim that the other does not adhere to the principles of waqf; in the SSM example, it is the selling of the mosque and its demolition, two clear violations of the principles of waqf, for the GSM it is the fact that the title deed is under the name of a family or as one participant called it is a "family-owned masjid". It is established that Abo Salie intended for the SSM to be dedicated to the Muslim community as waqf. However, its implementation as a legal instrument was not followed. For the congregation, however, these concerns are of marginal importance so long as the mosque continues to sustain its core function as a house of prayer or as Adam states: "I just think that it's great that it's there [SSM], and people have another masjid to go to."

7.6.3 The power dynamics of mosques and the implications of "firstness"

Writing about the Grey Street Mosque in Durban, Vahed (2006: 45) mentions that mosques are not only "[…] neutral 'houses of God' that Muslims frequented for prayer. Mosques also represent an arena of contestation where differences among Muslims are played out." Vahed (2006: 24) outlines that "control of mosques brought prestige and honour to trustees, and permitted them to determine practices, beliefs, traditions and religious orientation." Mosques provide a claim to prestige, and honour, especially when they have a "grand" element to them, for example being the first in an area. Thus, control of them and their narratives are often zones of contention. From the perspective of imam Jappie, too much conflict between the mosque community, alongside the committee retaining more power than the imam is not a tenable situation. Moreover, seen in heritage terms, the seminal idea of Tunbridge & Ashworth (1997) explains that heritage *dissonance* is the tension/contradictions arising from different interpretations and uses of heritage within a society as different groups claim to/interpret heritage differently, which often leads to conflict. The case of the two mosques illustrates this dissonance, which is underpinned by the Islamic principle of waqf and relates to notions of firstness. The imam and the heritage patrons assert the basis of the "firstness" of their

respective mosques based on the premise of waqf, showcasing how a single heritage place may be viewed differently *within the* same community. Under a stakeholder approach, this dissonance is often cast between local communities and tourists (Zhang & Smith, 2019), local communities and managing authorities (Ndoro et al., 2003), and local communities and global heritage regimes (Joy, 2012). By shifting away from a stakeholder approach, the findings articulate a dissonance that can be conceptualized as inter-community dissonance: members of the same Muslim community but different mosque communities have conflicting views of the same heritage site. These competing claims are centred on two strands of thought regarding establishing a mosque. Le Roux (2012: 50) captures these two strands; he determines that

> The Caledon Street Mosque is the fourth oldest mosque in South Africa, the first to be built on a site dedicated to worship and the first to be conceptualised as a place of prayer complete with minaret, and not having grown gradually inside or from an existing building like the first three in Cape Town. The process was completed at least three years before the first free-standing mosque was erected in Cape Town.

Some distinctions determine the firstness of a mosque: either it emerges out of an existing building, as in the case of the Auwal mosque, or, from the outset, conceptualized and built on a site dedicated to worship like the GSM. Further complicating these notions is which one of the sites was first dedicated as waqf. These distinctions have implications for the prestige of a mosque and its subsequent heritage designation. Inclusion in the heritage register is not value-neutral but can obscure competing claims and cover the contentions in favour of being included in the discourse. Joining official heritage registers means becoming part of the AHD, which refers to the ability of an official narrative to exclude alternative narratives and freeze heritage meanings (Smiths, 2006). For example, if the GSM is nominated as a heritage site, it could argue its place as the first mosque in Gqeberha, obscuring the SSM`s establishment. Moreover, each side contests the other narratives and "authorize" their version through specific means. The imam, through oral history and community support, the heritage patrons using archival resources and their considerable resources to "reconstruct" the mosque of the past, creating a visible manifestation to compete with the GSM claims to firstness. For example, advertising their mosque heritage tour, a company states that the SSM is the first mosque in Gqeberha (figure 22).

Table (4): The differing perspectives of waqf and firstness in the mosque communities (source: Author).

Aspect	Grace Street Mosque (GSM)	Strand Street Mosque (SSM)
Claim to Firstness	First purpose-built mosque in Port Elizabeth (1855)	First dedicated Muslim place of worship (1852)
Waqf Status	Claimed as waqf, but held under family name	Originally designated as waqf, but legal implementation unclear
Historical Continuity	Oldest existing mosque in the city	Destroyed and reconstructed multiple times
Community Perception	Seen as "family-owned" by some community members	Viewed as community property
Current status	Active, continuous use since establishment	Recently reconstructed (2020)

Figure (22): A heritage tour advertising the SSM as the first mosque in Gqeberha (source: Al Hidayah Centre, 2021).

Figure (23): The external façade of the Strand Street Mosque (source: author)

Overarching observations

Adopting Poulio`s (2014) notion of care, which extends beyond the tangible, the case of the GSM reveals the interplay between formal and informal mechanisms of heritage care in religious settings. This chapter showcases how the Muslim community at the GSM safeguard their sacred spaces, using both tangible and intangible means that transcend conventional preservation approaches. The community's establishment of norms and taboos does not aim to preserve a predetermined sacred space but rather to foster conditions conducive to the emergence of sacred activities. These acts are dynamic and adaptive, differing by age group and occasion, illustrating how living heritage addresses community needs rather than being static. In addition, this chapter outlined the notion of "inter-community dissonance" by analysing the conflicting assertions between the GSM and SSM - demonstrating how heritage disputes may arise within the same religious community, specifically over assertions of "firstness" as power and prestige are at stake. The conflict between oral histories and archival evidence, purpose-built vs repurposed structures, and varying interpretations of waqf status illustrated the negotiation of heritage meaning at the local level.

Chapter VIII
Discussion and Recommendations

The preceding chapters have detailed how a living heritage approach to the mosque as heritage can reshape current understandings of religious heritage sites in South Africa. Engaging in an extensive examination of the (GSM), this research pieces together numerous arguments that position mosques as more than static monuments. They are spaces where heritage emerges through continuous ritual practice and community care. This discussion section synthesizes the central findings, showing how they collectively challenge and expand upon conventional Western/material-centric approaches to mosques. By making use of new frameworks, such as the LRH, alongside a phenomenological approach and methods, this research makes several pertinent contributions. At the outset, it reveals how authenticity in mosque heritage emerges through what Taruvinga (2019) terms "current authenticity" - the continuous performance of religious practices that have sustained the mosque for over 169 years. Second, it details how traditional Islamic institutions like waqf can serve as legitimate heritage management tools that integrate tangible and intangible heritage concerns. Third, it complicates dominant assumptions about community inclusion in heritage processes by revealing what van Knippenberg et al. (2020) term the "ex/inclusion paradox." Moving beyond instituting another binary between material and spiritual approaches, this research, as evidenced through the GSM case, reveals how mosques operate as the "total expression of their host culture" (Stovel, 2005: 10) That is, the tangible and intangible dimensions work together in a non-hierarchical/dualist grounding. Such perspectives have implications for heritage theory, management, and communities, detailed in this chapter's final section.

8. Communities and the inclusion/exclusion paradox

Communities' role in heritage identification (Sethaba & Scholes, 2021; Townsend, 2004) and conservation (Loza, 2023) have taken centre stage in South Africa. In reality, Marschall (2019) determines that it is unrealistic to assume that communities beset by poverty and survival issues are both interested and capable of actively engaging in public participation relating to heritage. In communities with deep ties to heritage, this process is undermined by insufficient community dialogue, a lack of trust, tedious bureaucratic procedures, and outcomes that in the short-term benefit local political entities (Marschall 2013; Ndletyana & Webb, 2017; Mancotywa, 2014). Yet, what these studies and the National Heritage Resource Act take as an

a priori is that communities wish to be engaged with. That is, all communities see inclusion in the heritage dialogue as a good. Yet this stance is challenged by the case of the GSM, which sees engagement as an incursion on the ownership of the mosque. Working with the Ahmadiyya Mosque community in the Netherlands, van Knippenberg et al. (2020) explored the Muslim communities' perceptions of heritage and willingness to participate in the Netherlands heritage discourse. They determined that a paradox lies at the centre of the inclusive, participatory approach of heritage – namely, assuming *a priori* that these communities wish to be recognized reinforces the superiority of the AHD. They refer to this as the "ex/inclusion paradox" or that

> "Naming a process to be inclusive, without truly exploring the needs and aspirations of those being "excluded", does not in itself lead to a more inclusive heritage management approach. Instead, it contributes to the upholding of a framework that is holding us back from actually achieving social inclusion" (van Knippenberg et al., 2020: 266).

Social inclusion should not be viewed as merely integrating the excluded into existing frameworks. Instead, in heritage contexts, the emphasis must be on understanding the perspectives of excluded people, particularly regarding their conceptualizations of heritage. Assuming that all mosque communities seek to be included in the discourse obscures their historical and contemporary contexts and once again emplaces them as a "monolith." This approach has even more detrimental effects in South Africa, as it also assumes that communities cannot care for their heritage or construct their histories (Mokoena, 2019)**.** Whilst other mosques have received heritage designations nominated by their communities (Vidamemoria consultants, 2015); not all mosque communities hold the same aspirations and differ in their values, desires and forms of recognition. Communities may emphasize the social and ritual functions of the mosque over its physical attributes; as one participant shared, "for me it's just a place of worship, and nothing more than that," which often comes into conflict with the dominant view of heritage mosques designation (as a building). Whilst the community recognizes the historical value of the mosque, it is not held in as high esteem as the function it serves, as Adam puts it "I'm not really attached to the brick and mortar side of the masjid."

Like the case of the Mubarak Mosque, the GSM illustrates the paradox outlined by van Knippenberg et al. (2020), and sheds light on their ambivalence to National heritage nomination. This ambivalence stems from fears of its use by other stakeholders "*I think it will*

probably become like a place where tourists will want to come and see it", who don't understand the norms of the mosque. Tourist incursion onto religious sites has a long history (Timothy & Olsen 2006; Levi & Kocher 2012; Coleman 2019), resulting in the "secular" incurring onto "sacred grounds". It also stems from the mosque's turbulent history with the apartheid state and the city's municipality. A heritage designation might lead to losing control of the site – a historic trend Imam Jappie is keen to avoid, which would interfere with the functions of the mosque as a place of prayer. Alongside the challenges identified by Marschall (2019) communities' reluctance to engage with the AHD may stem from differing perspectives on heritage. For example, they have aspirations for alternative forms of recognition, such as enhanced *inter-community* acknowledgement, or prevailing assumptions held by managing authorities. In the case of the latter, the NHRA (1999) expressly states,

> "The owner of a place which is under guardianship shall, except as expressly provided by this Act, continue to have the same estate, right, title and interest in and to the place as before."

8.1 In search of authenticity: the role of Islam in producing the mosque

Heritage and identity are concepts intimately tied to the notion of authenticity, which can be framed as the quality of being original or genuine (Zaprzalskas, 2023). Any community, drawing from the past to build the present, accepts that the material with which identity is constructed as authentic is important (Silverman 2015). In Islam, worshipping Allah is the central worldview of believers, and prayer is a crucial pillar of faith and identity, forming part of the corpus of ʿibādah. Hence, there is a need to understand the various rituals that occur at the mosque as part of a larger worldview. Engaging with and through participants' worldviews contextualizes these rituals as part of the larger framework of ʿIbādah, combating the trend of heritage regimes (defined as the systems or authorities responsible for preserving and interpreting cultural heritage) removing rituals from their religious and spiritual framework (Stimac, 2023). Moreover, emplacing them in their context rescues them from criticism of being "empty ritualism." As authors have argued, the salāt can "sacralises space" (Farouk-Alli, 2002; Bürge, 2011; Dockrat, 2005). Whilst the observations at the GSM confirm this view, it is not only the salāt that sacralises space but the whole corpus of rituals that work in tandem to produce the sacred. Discussions of salāt's role in producing the sacred cannot occur without the associative rituals accompanying it. As a whole way of being, Islam cannot be limited to

the category of "spiritual value." For instance, Jameel's tasbih never leaves his person; he carries it with him through mundane activities, such as working and walking. These acts are not singular instances but form part of participants' way of life and are interwoven in their daily routines: they make wudhu in their shops, missed prayers are performed at work offices and homes, they greet one another with prayer and take whole days as sacred (Jummah). A focus mainly on the tangible by heritage authorities relegates the religious experiences of communities to the background and, by proxy, their worldviews, conservation practices and perspectives on authenticity.

Religious communities have their frameworks for authenticity (Zaprzalskas, 2023; Aulet & Vidal, 2018) – which operate on multiple levels. Poulios (2014) notes that within the values framework, authenticity lies in the past, and hence in the fabric and materials of a site. However, authenticity is present in a living heritage site and is associated mainly with the communities' (intangible) association with a site in experience, tradition, and memory. A living heritage site is in a continual creation process rooted in the present. Going further, a LVH asks whether the concept of authenticity – a Western concept – is even necessary as the LVH takes the exclusive definition of authenticity to lie in a core community's everyday presence in and of a heritage site. Such perspectives have also been articulated from Africa, as Taruvinga (2019) positions it: "this brings us to the question as to whether we even need authenticity in conservation at all as change over time is real for cultural practices." This position argues that it is best to understand heritage resources as evolving practices rooted in their specific geolocations. This has led to Taruvinga (2019) putting forward the notion of "current authenticity," which refers to the authenticity that is derived from the current, lived experience of a heritage site, or, in living heritage terms, a "living reality."

Levi & Kocher (2012) articulate a behavior-anchored perspective on sacredness, where religious activities help define and maintain a place's sacred character. Similarly, authenticity for the GSM community is tied to the communities' control and their continuous religious practice(s) at the site. This perspective finds resonance in the work of Zaprzalska (2023) and Antohin (2019), who, in their examination of Christian religious spaces, underscore that authenticity in religious contexts extends beyond material preservation; it must also encompass the liturgical practices that sustain sacred places. This study's finding supports the concept of "current authenticity" or, in LVH terms, a "lived reality"; the mosque space is authenticated through ongoing religious use. At the GSM, the routine performance of the central and rituals

supplementary rituals such as salāt and wuḍūʾ creates a "religious heritage complex" - where heritage value and religious significance mutually reinforce each other (Zaprzalska, 2023). This conceptualization of authenticity is made possible by thinking through the religious–heritage nexus engagement with objects, bodily sensations, and embodied practices in making people's socio-spiritual worlds.

For the community members, authenticity lies in their religious experience of the mosque and is dynamic. Participants' experiences of the mosque, particularly through their salāt, authenticate their experience of the mosque. If they feel as if their salāt was not "accepted" or that they were not present in the prayer, it reflects on the authenticity of the experience that they go through. These rituals serve as the authentic link with the past, practiced in the present – they are collectively or individually performed, can bring about strong emotive responses or none at all, can help manage pain, and provide a new outlook on life. At the GSM, these various rituals have been continuously and unceasingly performed for over 169 years, demonstrating the enduring nature of the community's religious practices. The socio-spiritual dimensions that participants experienced at the mosque serve as the basis for answering the question of how the GSM community perceives and experiences the mosque as a living heritage: they seek personal meaning and connection to the divine through their ritual and social practices. This is not unique to the GSM; across the board, religious sites centre the practices – or core functions that make them. In opening their analysis of the multiple typologies that the Umayyad Mosque (WHS) in Syria holds, Rudolph (2006: 165) has this to say

> "[…] I dare to say that the topology I have called 'faith and duty – performance of prayers' is the most dominant theme associated with the concept Umayyad Mosque. […] The concept Umayyad Mosque is certainly not a physical place, but a complex assistant and facilitator of one of the duties of faith in Allah, the performance of the obligatory and voluntary ritual prayers."

Rudolph (2006) highlights how none of the 10 World Heritage inscription criteria mentions expressions of faith. The inscription of religious buildings is often based on statements of Outstanding Universal Value that Rudolph (2006: 98) states do not explicitly reflect what they call "narratives of faith that construct the heritage value". The operational guidelines for World Heritage offer criterion (vi) for the recognition of values related to faith amongst others, which refers to "associations with living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs" (UNESCO, 2005: 77). However, heritage that pertains to religious narratives are frequently excluded from this

criterion, and when criterion vi is applied Rudolph (2006: 35) calls it a “black sheep” or – in the words of the World heritage committee “the Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria” (UNESCO, 2005: 77). That is, it cannot serve as a single criterion for inscribing a site.

Current frameworks for heritage, especially at the provincial and national levels, frequently mirror global approaches that value the Western approach to heritage—as such, nominating a mosque as a heritage site presents challenges, revealing the tensions between heritage frameworks and religious values. As the case of the GSM demonstrates, there is a need to acknowledge that religious and spiritual values can act independently as sufficient grounds for heritage designation. Instead of using religious significance as the main justification for designation, the current assessment criteria frequently present it as an adjunct or subordinate to other heritage values. This hierarchical assessment ignores the notion that a site`s spiritual significance should be given equal weight when designating it as a heritage site.

8.2 Authority and authenticity

Community control and care are a starting point for authenticity in the GSM community. Religious leaders play a dual role within religious heritage sites. They negotiate religious authority, heritage requirements, and congregational expectations. These leaders are not a monolith. Thouki (2024) identifies two distinct types of religious leaders regarding conservation: some embrace preservation, and others advocate restoration as a religious duty. The case of the two mosques in this study reveals that religious leaders often take a more nuanced stance; for example, Imam Jappie, as *mutawalli* (trustee), illustrates what Thouki (2024) terms a “hybrid narrative.” This “hybrid narrative” is a perspective that integrates concern for both the authenticity of the material and spiritual, acknowledging the interconnectedness of these aspects. This stance reimagines authenticity as a sacred trust that holistically cares for both the material and spiritual rather than as a choice between material preservation and religious use; as the imam notes, “I’m not the boss of this masjid, Allah is the owner of this masjid”.

Religious leaders also have differing views on ownership and authenticity, as noted between the GSM and SSM. Such insights were garnered by taking a critical heritage perspective that emphasizes understanding the many discourses at historic sites. The reconstruction and restoration of the (SSM) by the heritage patrons represents what Thouki (2024) identifies as a

“constructivist authenticity” approach, where restoration is seen as an act of religious duty. These patrons justified reconstruction through religious obligation, stating, “once a mosque, always a mosque”. This aligns with Thouki’s finding that some religious stakeholders see restoration as a way to honor sacred spaces rather than compromise their authenticity. In line with the LVH's approach to authenticity, even though the physical and material structure of the mosque was harmed, its authenticity was not actually harmed as its original function can continue (i.e., salāt). Religious authorities play a meaningful role in shaping and managing religious heritage and need to be acknowledged as such. They require support from congregations and heritage bodies to carry out their duties. To support them, it is crucial that religious perspectives are integrated more into conservation planning and vice versa; religious authorities would benefit strongly from heritage management training, enabling knowledge sharing between religious and heritage professionals.

8.3 Waqf as a viable instrument for heritage conservation

A religious community’s approach to conservation/care draws not only from the heritage discourse but also from religious precepts. Assi (2008) argues that the waqf system, a historically significant mechanism, has been used to manage cultural properties like mosques. In the modern age, it stands as a sustainable means of care. In the case of this study, waqf emerges as a formal mechanism that the Muslim community uses to conserve and safeguard their heritage. Waqf provides a legal mechanism to ensure the mosque's viability for the future and institutes a moral and religious obligation to be maintained. Hence, the GSM, dedicated to the Muslim community in its locale, becomes the community's duty to maintain in perpetuity. Its resonance with the GSM community is rooted in the fact that it emerges from the Islamic tradition, motivating believers to conserve the mosque through both tangible (monetarily) and intangible (ritual) functions, caring for both the mosque's material and immaterial being. This embodies what modern heritage management strives for - integrating physical conservation with living tradition(s). Its principle of perpetuity serves dual purposes, ensuring the physical preservation of the mosque structure and the continuation of religious practices.

Waqf closely aligns with Poulio`s (2014) definition of care – it redefines what heritage is by focusing on continuity of function and community connection over its physicality. It determines who is responsible for heritage, centering the core community; for example, the

SSM was dedicated to the "Malay Population." Finally, it changes how heritage is cared for by locating endemic religious practices over Western conservation practices. However, it is not without its challenges. In South Africa, the case of waqf has been brought to the fore by Bulbulia (1982). They describe how, due to the Group Areas Act, thousands of Muslims were forcibly removed from their residences, bringing into question the fate of the mosques they left behind. Several local authorities at the time were under the impression that these mosques could be expropriated. On the contrary, the Muslim community opposed any proposals that aimed to demolish mosques. Their primary objection was that mosque properties were deemed inviolable due to their status as permanent endowments, or "waqf" properties as defined by Islamic jurisprudence. Being held under a family name or individual did not stop it from being 'waqf.' For instance, a case in 1958 presented before the Group Areas Board raised the question to the Muslim community in Johannesburg: "In whose name can the land (upon which a mosque has been constructed) be registered in the deeds office?" The reply was

> "As such ground exclusively belongs to God alone, it cannot really be registered in the name of any person or persons, as human beings as such cannot own such land. However, the affairs of the Mosque will have to be conducted by persons entrusted with the responsibility of managing it, but the mere registration of it in the deeds office in the name of a person does not affect God's ownership." (Bulbulia, 1982: 10)

During Apartheid, a select few Mosques were saved from demolition under the principle of waqf. As Imam Jappie explained in chapter five, "[…] *we just told them one thing it's not our house, its Allah's house, we can't sell the house […]*." The communities affirmed the mosque's perpetuity principle in the face of destruction. However, the SSM was destroyed due to religious law not being respected under state law. Yet its tale did not end there; again, using the principle of perpetuity, the heritage patrons restored and reconstructed the SSM, declaring it as their religious duty. The government has historically respected the principle of waqf, but it has no legal standing. This raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of the instrument. For example, in the case of the GSM, it is acknowledged as waqf but not formally designated as such, as it is still held under a family name. Such a situation can lead to the mosque being appropriated or destroyed, as the case of the SSM demonstrates.

8.4 Why methodology matters

The phenomenological approach to studying salāt as a participant and researcher presented opportunities and significant methodological challenges. As the findings point to– specifically the dialectics of dis/connection, tension exists as a Muslim/researcher sets out to completely immerse themselves in the experience of salāt while maintaining an analytical stance required for research. This dual role splits their attention, detracting from both the ritual and research experience, comprising the authenticity of the experience. However, what this methodology and its attendant method(s) do best is allow for these tensions to emerge; that is, the lived experience of the Muslim researcher studying salāt weaves part of the data rather than a bias to be eliminated. As Poljarevic et al. (2023: 284) write regarding phenomenology, "the central premise here is that a scholar, as much anyone else, is a part of the world experiencing it in similar ways as other humans."

The challenge, then, is how to bracket one's pre-existing knowledge and assumptions to encounter the phenomenon with fresh eyes. This became complex for a Muslim researcher studying ṣalāt, as their prior knowledge and lived experience of the ritual is deeply ingrained. The first move is to resolve this tension by accepting its presence and shifting the focus to remedial strategies. These included leveraging previous studies that discussed the topic, presenting raw data written directly after the experiences, and quoting participants faithfully. This facilitated uncovering the essential structures that shape the experience of ṣalāt. Ultimately, Katz (2005) summarizes it best: "the symbolic logic of ritual is an embodied logic, and its meanings are physically mastered rather than spiritually pondered or intellectually understood." The following sections offer recommendations to the GSM community, heritage practitioners, and policymakers.

8.5 Recommendations and future pathways

The religious leaders of the GSM and SSM and their communities should jointly nominate their sites for the provincial heritage list of the Eastern Cape as a place. Such an outcome can be achieved by utilizing traditional Islamic conflict resolution procedures, such as *mashwarah*, a process of communal decision-making and consensus-building. This process asserts that choices impacting the community must be decided through collaborative engagement among pertinent parties. Through such a process, consensus may be reached regarding the "firstness" of the mosques. The joint nomination will represent a definitive shift away from heritage

experts and academics, assigning authenticity and value to a site's material, to a community-endemic perspective of authenticity, which focuses on function and acknowledging the multiple paths to authenticity. Such a position opens pathways for other community heritage(s) to begin to be recognized through their worldviews. It is a crucial step in redressing the historic imbalance of the current South African heritage list. However, Provincial Heritage Resources Authorities (PHRAs) may face difficulties in nominating religious sites, as the existing legislative framework requires amendments to make provisions for assessing and protecting intangible religious values. The focus on material fabric in current heritage criteria may hinder sites that have undergone physical modifications from being recognized as heritage, for example, in the case of the Strand Street Mosque and its restoration. Lastly, PHRAs may lack the skills to evaluate religious significance from within a faith community's value systems.

As a traditional Islamic institution, waqf must be understood within broader discussions of IKS and community-driven heritage practices. Religious communities enact heritage conservation methods that may complement formal conservation frameworks (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). This is evident in the case of the GSM, as waqf can create an integrative pathway between community-driven care practices and a formal heritage management system. The integrated approach will advance the decolonization of heritage management in South Africa in addition to the added advantage of protecting religious sites. This will effectively establish a link between differing knowledge systems by successfully recognizing that effective conservation requires combining traditional beliefs and practices with modern preservation techniques.

To achieve this, a waqf property should have a waqf deed that comprehensively documents the property's management and includes the waqf declaration. This deed serves as a crucial tool in preserving the heritage site. As such, a comprehensive waqf deed regarding the management of the GSM needs to be drafted. This deed would outline the principles of succession, financing, and ownership, which will go a long way in articulating and strengthening religious communities' conservation practices in South Africa. The GSM's waqf deed must clearly state that the mosque belongs to the community and that it is held in custodianship by Imam Jappie. Under the current dispensation, the community lacks transparency on mosque ownership and management principles. Should the mosque be nominated as a heritage site, it would provide a space for the state and religious institutions to work together, protecting the mosque from appropriation and destruction.

The National Heritage Resources Act should be revised to better accommodate living religious heritage sites. Although many religious structures and their contents are safeguarded as historical monuments, legally, they are indistinguishable from other components of cultural heritage. As living heritage sites are deeply enmeshed with the intangible, the first step would be to expand the definition of "place" beyond physical structures to the idea of "place," which is conceptualized as a cultural construct that emerges "from the synergetic relationship existing between an individual […] and a physical site and its related elements […]." (Bakker, 2007).

Heritage authorities must rethink their assumptions concerning community inclusion within the heritage landscape. Real inclusion requires them to adopt flexible procedures that allow religious communities to engage with heritage processes on their terms instead of following blanket inclusion policies. Part of this process is acknowledging and respecting that some communities may prefer to care for their heritage through traditional means rather than formal designation. Moreover, when communities hold unfounded assumptions regarding social inclusion, it becomes imperative to engage in dialogue with them to dispel these. New approaches need to be developed to effectively communicating the governments' approach to communities and heritage. To do this, public education has a role in spreading awareness of the advantages of heritage and conservation (Azman et al. 2010).

This research highlights the need for further/future research on the lived experiences of religious communities, which requires a methodological shift. Phenomenological methods provide important insights into how communities use ritual practice and traditional care systems to create and safeguard heritage meaning. These practices operate through multiple, interconnected dimensions: physical care is performed through regular cleaning and facility upgrades; ritualistic/spiritual care through ablution practices and sensory management using incense and perfumes; financial stewardship through systematic donation collections; and social regulation through communally enforced behavioural norms. These practices are dynamic responses to community needs. They are underpinned by traditional structures like waqf, operating via intergenerational knowledge transmission, where mosque norms/taboos and practices are instructed and maintained across age groups. Researchers should utilize methodologies that can grasp religious heritage sites' tangible and intangible dimensions. In addition, academic understanding of authenticity in religious heritage contexts requires expansion beyond material fabric to include what Taruvinga (2019) terms "current authenticity"—the continuous performance of religious practices. This requires new theoretical

frameworks, such as the living heritage approach, to better account for how sacred spaces maintain significance via ongoing use rather than historical preservation alone.

Conclusions

Religious buildings, set amidst a backdrop of increasing secularization, are progressively being reinterpreted as cultural heritage, a process that effectively desacralizes them (Griera et al., 2024) and transforms them into museum-like entities (Naguib et al., 2015). They assume a "second life" (de Jong & Mapril, 2023) through intricate technical, legal, and methodological processes, which assign secular value to them, relegating their religious significance to a bygone era (Griera et al., 2024). However, this perspective is not the only way of "seeing" religious buildings, as this study has demonstrated. As one of the first studies to adopt Poulio`s (2014) LVH approach in the context of the mosque, this thesis offers a radical reconceptualization of the mosque. It reveals a place that is *peopled, produced,* and *safeguarded*. It maps the spiritual landscape of the mosque, unravelling the threads of worship that have been woven for over 169 years and continue to be practiced in the present, thereby contributing to the argument that the mosque is fundamentally *alive* – in the embodied and intangible sense. In the words of Stovel (2005: 10), the mosque can be seen to represent the "total expression of their host culture, combining tangible (both immovable and movable) and intangible expressions of heritage."

By drawing on disciplines such as religious studies, anthropology, and heritage studies, and employing a qualitative approach to the study of mosques, this thesis has made a significant contribution to the understanding of Islamic heritage. It has provided a refined, contextually based framing of how Islamic heritage is conceptualized, experienced, and maintained. The focus on the lived experiences (phenomenology) of mosque users has revealed how heritage is actively constructed and contested through everyday practices and rituals, answering Rico`s (2021) call to contend with "what different disciplines that contribute to heritage studies allow Islamic heritage to authorize and perpetuate through their practices, values, and standard."

But, as Kenneth Burke declared at the outset of this thesis, the hour is growing late, and the debate continues. This thesis has entered the dialogue between Islam, Heritage, and Religion in the context of South Africa, reimagining the mosque. However, the limitations of this study, particularly its focus on a single case, underscore the urgent need for broader comparative research. This is a crucial step in advancing the understanding of Islamic heritage in South Africa. The call for future research is not just a suggestion, but a necessity to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to heritage studies, as religious heritage demands the

epistemological lens of faith embedded in communities to be engaged with; the well-being of religious and sacred sites hinges on it. This conclusion is a call to action for heritage experts, academics, and authorities to begin engaging with this lens and explore future research areas. This includes collaborating with other religious communities in South Africa that use religious buildings daily to understand their perspectives and lived experiences of heritage. Moreover, there is a need to engage with other mosque communities in the country to identify the similarities and conflicting perspectives of the mosque as heritage. This will ultimately contribute to the true ethos of social cohesion and inclusion envisioned in the NHRA.

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