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Matthias Gebauer

## Black Islam South Africa

Religious Territoriality, Conversion, and the Transgression of  
Orderly Indigeneity

With 19 color figures, a table, and 5 color photos

Selbstverlag Fach GEOGRAPHIE der Universität Passau

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## 7 Attempting Muslim Blackness in KwaMashu: The Limitations to Re-Ordering Indigeneity within the Doxic Landscape

What began as the traveling of ideas and ideologies of Muslim Blackness into the South African sphere, with contact zones to Islam as an *other* order offered by organizations such as the IPCI or the MYM, brought about a slow but steady shift within the *doxic landscape* of the modes of orderly indigeneity with regard to religion. In the greater Durban area, the specific local focus of this study, a small number of Muslim converts can be found—together with their children, the first generation of native born South African Black Muslims—in each former African township. Mostly as a consequence and continuation of the institutionalization carried out by the Muslim Youth Movement, these Muslims are closely connected with each other, investing an outstanding degree of energy, time, and economic resources into African Muslim community work and the shared efforts to estab-

lish an identity of being Muslim *and* Black. The case featured in the following chapter is set in the township of KwaMashu, north of Durban, a place specifically developed by the local apartheid government to function as a border township between the White urban area and the homeland of KwaZulu. Here, the organizational efforts of converts to Islam lead to the foundation of a mosque, which can be regarded in its material sophistication, visibility, size, and meaning as the most important development of African Muslim autonomy in KwaZulu-Natal. Nevertheless, the case also reveals the effects of contestations on Black Islam, as well as the impact that the conflicts with other Islamic organizations have had on the endeavors of those once classified as Black African to transgress orderly indigeneity. The case presented here represents a common sequence of events, as it is characterized by the dy-

namic cultural-political bricolage of Islamic grassroots developments among the Muslim converts in Black African areas, which have experienced strong contestations by and severe confrontations with Islamic organizations from the field of Indian Muslims. The broader field research related to this study documented other, similar stories and developments within various African areas of KwaZulu-Natal, whose comprehensive presentation here would exceed the scope of this study. Instead, the featured case from the township of KwaMashu will serve as a representation for the contested belongings of converts to Islam among the indigenous African population and their attempts to continue their transgressions despite the persistent power of an orderly indigeneity that renders the wish for belonging and re-grounding a continuation of the signification as the *African other*.

### 7.1 A Space of Not-Belonging: New Township KwaMashu

Together with Umlazi and KwaDabeka, KwaMashu (Tab. 1) was one of the very first designated Black African townships near White Durban planned on the basis of British New Town principles (cf. MAYLAM, EDWARDS 1996: 116). Labelling the newly established townships New Towns was highly misleading: While the planning of New Towns was guided by the idea of creating fully independent habitats for living and working, the townships were still dependent on the White core city of Durban on a level of services and labor. Such settlements only served to cater to the demands of the White capitalist city, namely by housing a cheap, non-White labor force.

The built-up habitat of KwaMashu consisted of two forms of housing, high-density male hostels, and family residential houses with two or four rooms, which could be rented or purchased. Only one house could be owned or rented; sub-leasing or trading was not permitted at all. After the neighboring homeland of KwaZulu gained its self-governing status in 1974, the Durban townships of KwaMashu and Umlazi fell to the homeland-administration (LODGE et al. 1991: 155). The removal of almost all Black African residents from the Greater Durban area to the newly created townships on the outskirts was completed, and the population deemed unwanted by apartheid legis-

lation was removed from White Durban: “The largest towns with Zulu inhabitants are on the outskirts of Durban. Kwa Mashu is administered by the Port Natal Bantu Affairs Administration Board, but the official intention is that it should be incorporated in KwaZulu” (HORRELL et al. 1975: 195).

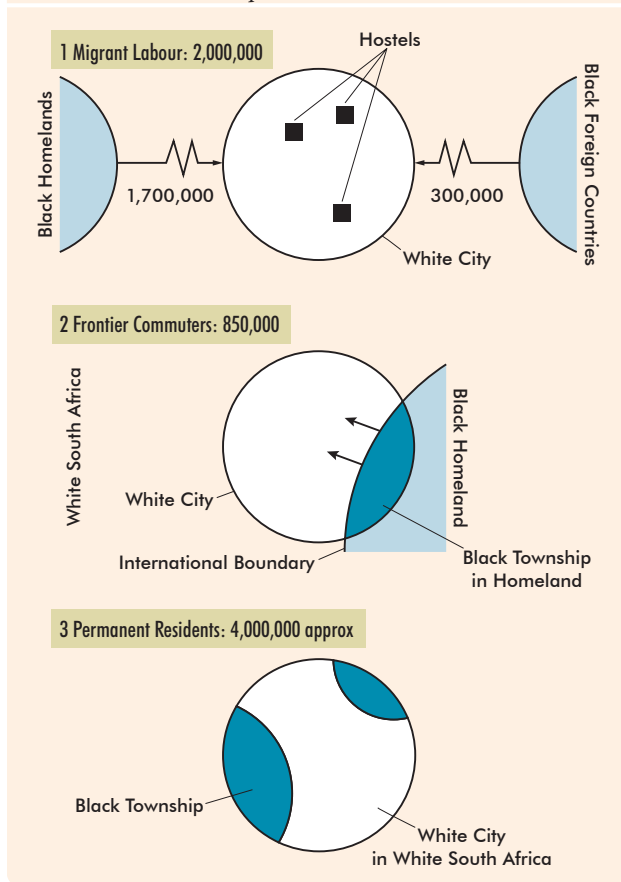
Although Black African-classified people were regarded as temporary sojourners in the city space from that time on, the territories on both sides of the racialized border were intrinsically linked with each other. This is illustrated by SMITH (1990: 47) in Figure 19.

Tab. 1: Historical development of KwaMashu.

Historical development of KwaMashu	
	proposed in 1948
1952	Durban City Council authorizes negotiations for land acquisition for 5,000 acres in Duff Road area; acquisition of 2620 acres in 1954
1956	Approval by Minister of Native Affairs (nine village units, two hostel units, R 19,362,000 for land, services, facilities, etc.)
1957	Renaming Duffs Road scheme to Kwa-Mashu Housing scheme for approx. 123,500 people plus 2,500 beds in the hostels; construction takes place
1959	KwaMashu is handed over to the Director of Bantu Administration (accommodation for 10,000 people available)
1963	KwaMashu scheme completed as planned
1966	Spatial extension of KwaMashu
1970	Recreation facilities become available (soccer fields and stadiums, tennis courts, swimming pools, community halls, childcare centers)
1971	15,404 houses for 107,000 people, plus hostel units for 16,880 people
1973	Establishment of Port Natal Bantu Affairs Administration Board (commencing the work of the Bantu Administration Committee of the Durban City Council)
1974	Self-governing status for KwaZulu
1977	Jurisdiction transferred to the KwaZulu ‘Homeland-Government’

Source: MANZI 1994: 46ff.

Fig. 19: Segregating a Black workforce: migrant labor, frontier commuters, and permanent residents.



Source: SMITH 1990: 47.

The author notes: “[T]he KwaZulu townships are effectively part of metropolitan Durban and many of their residents commute into the city daily [...], yet officially they belong to a separate self-governing territory which could ultimately become independent of the RSA” (SMITH 1990: 5).

The exclusion of KwaMashu from the territory of White Durban and the subsequent transfer of jurisdiction to the pseudo-independent but relatively powerless government of KwaZulu rendered the inhabitants of the incorporated townships foreigners in Durban, frontier commuters (as explained above in the chapter “The Spatial Ordering of Indigeneity,” see also Fig. 6 and 18), living on the supposedly international boundary between the White-inclusive urban and industrial core and the excluded Black African homeland-to-be KwaZulu (SMITH 1990: 47). MANZI (1994) presents an intriguing socio-economic analysis of KwaMashu and its residents, exposing a cruel sense of place based on a constant feeling and knowledge of not-belonging. The majority of the people interviewed in his study stated that—despite having been forcefully evicted—they initially perceived the relocation from their

administration of the city of Durban promised the new housing scheme would bring to the Black African population could not cover the actual lack of choice and opportunity it brought, nor make up for the frustration that was and is experienced by the younger inhabitants, who have constantly found themselves “facing barriers when trying to improve their life chances” (MANZI 1994: 63) (whereas the older generation has tended to find itself in apathy). The whole area quickly devolved into a state of social and spatial decay, brought about by a combination of violence, crime, delinquency, and alcoholism. All these conditions are of crucial relevance for the unsettledness inscribed upon the inhabitants in bodily terms, as well as for their contested longing for belonging and their struggle for control over the very modes of social and spatial ordering while living in the dis-orderly dystopia of everyday life. As MANZI (1994: 64) summarizes it: “The problems encountered are directly responsible for the generation of either demoralization or personal rebellion. [...] The salient characteristics of the culture of ‘NOT BELONGING’ include a high incidence of social ‘pathologies,’ family dis-

former slum homes to the housing scheme to be an improvement in housing quality at least; however, the hopes they projected onto KwaMashu were not fulfilled. Instead, insecurity, in terms of both social ties and safety, became their reality. While the costs for the newly erected public housing homes were relatively low, the uniformity of the poorly built, box-shaped houses together with the lack of maintenance and the lack of proper service facilities and communal places resulted in socio-economic degradation, which left the inhabitants of KwaMashu with a severely low standard of living (MANZI 1994: 62). All the so-called improvements the White

organization and breakdown; mother dominance and male marginality in the family; the weakness or absence of male models in child socialization; self-control bringing no rewards, leading to wasteful hedonistic lifestyles; a belief that life is ruled by luck or supernatural forces.”

Despite their self-developed sense of belongings, the places of origin of the new denizens of KwaMashu had been declared dis-orderly by the logics of social and spatial orderings of apartheid legislation. The new township was meant to be a space for the *African other*, ordering the population group into the larger scheme of apartheid segregation. In contrast, the lived-in reality of the relocated people quickly inscribed a sense of continuous unsettledness within the boundaries of the orderly planned New Town-Ship of KwaMashu, a dystopia of dis-orderly indigeneity.

From the mid-1970s onwards, KwaMashu and the two neighboring townships of Inanda, which developed out of a mission station (cf. HUGHES 1996), and Ntuzuma became major centers for the work of the Muslim Youth Movement and the organization’s Africanization strategy. The Sunday Islamic School Program (cf. MYMSA 2017: 22) and events meant to serve the African community of KwaMashu took place on a regular basis. The result was a relatively high degree of organization among the African Muslim congregation and a pull factor for Muslim converts from other Black African townships around Durban. KwaMashu, and especially the area of Section J, became an epicenter for Muslims among the indigenous African population. The work of the MYM in that area and its subsequent impact were multiplied to a great degree by the presence of the Malawian Islamic scholar Shaykh Abbas Phiri in KwaMashu (VAWDA 2004, 1994). Phiri, a charismatic personality, entered South Africa in the 1940s and settled in Ntuzuma in the 1970s, turning his home into a jamāt khane, a madrasa, and a meeting place for Muslims in the area. From the beginning, the MYM and Phiri joined forces in their efforts to bring Black African-classified people in contact with the ordering sphere of Islam.<sup>47)</sup> His proselytizing strategies among the indigenous African population were built on welfare work together with the lobbying of Islamic activities among the traditional, local authorities (VAWDA 1994: 539). His mandate to speak *for the African self* and to be heard by authorities of the indigenous population must be seen in relation to his origin as a Muslim

47) Interview with Bongani (March 23, 2015).

of African nativity. This is of crucial importance for understanding how nascent Black *and* Muslim indigeneity could only gain momentum when translated by personalities that the converts themselves regarded as indigenous. While the MYM's da'wah activities were extended into the sphere of Black South Africa, making use of globalized narratives of Muslim Blackness as a facilitator to transport the ideology of Islamic resurgence as an *other* order through the contact zones and the racialized socio-spatial boundaries, they were still perceived as deriving from the field of Indian Muslims. The fact that only a person of African descent could be accepted as a leader and transmitting intermediary for the converts to Islam underscores the degree of racial segregation and racialized modes of orderings resulting from three centuries of White domination. Another personality ascribed the quality of an indigenous leader is Imam Issa al-Seppe, a convert from the Black African townships who became a chairman of the Muslim Youth Movement (SROTO 2002, 2003; cf. LE ROUX, NEL 1998). His death in 2002 is described by Black African Muslims still today as a tragedy and the heavy loss of a leader.<sup>48)</sup> Presently, the aforementioned Malawian-born Islamic scholar Ishaq Kasim is widely regarded by Muslims from former Black African areas of Durban as the successor to indigenous Islamic leaders such as al-Seppe or Abbas Phiri: "When Essa Al-Seppe passed away, ay, every African Muslim said, now we are in trouble. He was a leader; he was a great leader. The quality of leadership. He had everything. Now we got another Shaykh, we call him a shaykh, Kasim Ishaq. He is another great scholar. He is the only one that we have, an indigenous Muslim."<sup>49)</sup>

The persistence of the modes ordering indigeneity up until today presupposes a racialized ascription to the question of who is mandated to represent the African Muslim community. The early converts to Islam from KwaMashu formed a committee with the purpose of erecting a mosque in KwaMashu. Phiri facilitated the process and the necessary fundraising and later became head of the mosque. Before it was established as a solid building, the mosque started in a provisional tent (*Photo 4*). In the 1980s, the mosque became more than a religious place: It hosted a variety of welfare initiatives and social programs, ranging from

educational courses, to feeding schemes and sports programming, such as Karate classes and its own football team, the Mosquitos.<sup>50)</sup>

At the same time, a number of the converts to Islam from different Black African group areas who were active in the foundation and construction of the mosque decided to move into the vicinity of the building in order to materialize the creation of a Black Muslim community and to make Islam more visible in the African township: "I felt that all the group who were Muslim in that town must all go and buy houses next to the masjid so that we can support the masjid and that people can easily know that this is a Muslim. And fortunately, most of the guys who were part of us at that time all had their houses here at J Section. I am counting who is late, Abdumalik is also late, Cassiem was at P Section, though others have moved out from the township, we were all concentrated in this area. With the hope that, because our intention was to try first Islamize J Section. Let people in J Section become Muslim so that we can be able to spread Islam throughout the township. Even our letterheads were KwaMashu-Ntuzuma Muslim Association because we originated from Ntuzuma. So, we expand to KwaMashu. So, we grew up, I bought this house in 1983, and Idris [see *Photo 5*] also bought another one, also in 1983. We all stayed within this area since then, in the J Section. After 1985, I resigned my job. I started with, both of us Idris and I, we start business here in the cen-

ter because we wanted to be seen doing our prayers as it has been stated by the Quran."<sup>51)</sup>

The founding of the mosque created momentum for community building and intensified the grassroots approach to Islamic education and the religious appropriation of Islam among Muslim converts. The vision for a re-ordered lived-in place was based on the image of the ideal Muslim community of the prophet Muhammad and the first congregation of Muslims, forming a spatial nucleus around the mosque. Guided by scholars such as Abbas Phiri and Ishaq Kasim, who mainly organized the social activities in the 1980s, the converts read and discussed the Qur'an and other Islamic sources, learned about the Hadith (the verified expressions of the prophet and the second most important scriptural source after the Qur'an), and educated themselves in the history of Islam, especially from a Pan-Africanist perspective. As a result of the Black Muslim ideologies from the Afro-American realm circulating among the converts and serving as a foil to the re-ordering of indigeneity as Black *and* Muslim, the new theological sphere was imbued with a strong connotation of social justice. These discursive processes were most definitely influenced by the work of the MYM that brought the religious dimensions of Islam together with the desire to have an impact on everyday life, and they offered the converts a way to contextualize their existence as the *African other* and locate it in a larger framework of oppressive Western and Christian

*Photo 4: Provisional KwaMashu mosque, probably in the late 1970s.*



Photo: Amin Ngubane, date of recording: unknown.

48) Interview with Shaykh Dawud Cele and Shaykh Thabani Isreal Ally Mwandla (2015).

49) Interview with Shaykh Dawud Cele (2015).

50) Interview with Shayk Ishaq Kasim (2015); Interview with Amin Ngubane (2015).

51) Interview with Amin Ngubane (2015).

regimes. At the same time, aside from such religious-political implications, the shifting of the routines of everyday life through the newly adopted rituals, such as keeping strict prayer times and the associated washing rituals, or the visible wearing of dress inspired by the new Islamic perspective, led to a constant re-ordering on the level of the bodily subject. Creating visibility was important for connecting the social impact and change with the new normality of Islam as everyday life practice.

Each step the grassroots development of Muslims in Black African townships took in transgressing the modes of ordering indigeneity was answered by contestation from other Islamic organizations from the field of so-called Indian Muslims. The institutionalization of a growing number of African Muslims did not happen independently but was supported from the very beginning by funds from other Muslim organizations or families. In the view of the interviewed converts, such help and funding were not per se problematic; however, a growing number of Muslims among the newly founded congregations viewed it in light of the hegemonic relations and segregationist hierarchy among the different population groups during apartheid and began to perceive the influence as oppressive: “Indians enslaved the whole system, telling you what to say and to do.”<sup>52)</sup> Based on the Islamic principle of *zakat*, the welfare-related fundraising and religious obligation to share one’s wealth, the Islamic financial landscape and the structure for collecting funds for Islamic developments saw a certain professionalization during the second half of the twentieth century. The Muslim Youth Movement founded its own Zakah fund, which later became the South African National Zakah Fund. Furthermore, the Youth Movement created the financial investment company Jaame. In addition, two Islamic banks, the Al-Barakah bank linked to a wealthy family from Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Bank of South Africa, grew in importance to the structural development of Islam in South Africa (cf. TAYOB 1995: 182). The construction and development of the mosque in KwaMashu was mainly funded by these banks.<sup>53)</sup> Parallel to receiving funds from such organizations, the new converts began to create their own institutional structure. The aforementioned KwaMashu-Ntuzuma

Muslim Association became the first attempt to do so, with an organizational structure consisting only of Muslims from Black African areas. To finance welfare activities and social events, each Muslim belonging to the congregation had to make a weekly donation. As the number of converts grew, so did the funds. At the same time, a discourse of making the mosque financially independent from other Islamic institutions evolved among the Muslim converts. However, not all of them supported such a move, criticizing that this would only run along the lines of those racist modes of orderings they had hoped to overcome by joining a brotherhood of Muslims with an ordering logic beyond the sphere of apartheid.<sup>54)</sup> Nevertheless, while the structural support from Indian Muslim organizations was seen as a help in terms of funds, it was also perceived as an attempt to control the Islam preached and discussed in KwaMashu.<sup>55)</sup> These tensions led to a split in the group after the circulation of an article from a Saudi-Arabian newspaper in the 1990s that mentioned an additional donation given to the mosque of the indigenous African converts. Some of the converts demanded to see the money, and an open conflict about the legitimacy of the mosque leadership broke out. The dispute led to a certain disillusionment among the congregation, a subsequent discrediting of the group, and a loss of religious followers. Respondents who were active during that time pointed out that many of those from the townships who had been attending prayer times and social functions could be found at the Shembe church after the conflict broke out. The remaining Muslim converts had to realize that the Shembe, or Nazareth Baptist Church, was a direct competitor of the Islamic ideology when it came to acquiring followers in the Black African townships, who sought a religious authenticity and native religiosity.

“Shembe? Those people, they are supposed to be Muslims. But I cannot see where it went wrong. And Shembe is a very big church because it comes from an indigenous African. If Islam from that time it came from a Black person, it would be all over. Many Muslims, Black Muslims, who left Islam they went to Shembe.”<sup>56)</sup>

Within the religious sphere of transgressing the *African other* resulting from the modes of ordering indigeneity, Shembe had

a decisive advantage over Islam among those once classified as Black African, as it builds on a reputation of originating from an indigenous African leader, not only in terms of organization but also of theology and religious rituals. As an African-initiated church, the Shembe belief system builds strongly on merging Christian elements with rituals deriving from pre-Christianized African religions. Especially among the Zulu, Shembe enjoys a good reputation and is endorsed by the existing traditional leadership structures (cf. RIEDKE 2016: 53).

In reaction to the conflict over the donations from Saudi Arabia and the influence of non-African Muslims on the KwaMashu mosque, the splinter group founded the Organization of African Muslim Unity in 1997 (cf. SITO 2003, 2002), named with obvious reference to the Organization of Muslim Unity founded by Malcolm X after his parting ways with the Nation of Islam. They built their own jamāt khane, a house for prayers and religious functions, two blocks away from the KwaMashu mosque. The impact and outreach of the organization has remained limited up until today, although their jamāt khane has become a vibrant space for African Muslim activities. With the modes ordering indigeneity consisting of spatial *and* bodily inscriptions, the conflicts and contestations between the field of Indian Muslims and those converts to Islam seeking African indigeneity as Black *and* Muslim became more than just religious-political disputes over institutionalized power relations. The transmutation and re-ordering of the *African self* is a transgression of the very body of the *African other* as delineated by the social and spatial modes of order that defined indigeneity—for the African subject as well as for people of other classifications, e.g. Muslims once classified as Indian, who had come to look at the indigenous population as the other. The developments around the KwaMashu community reveal that the contestations around the contact zones run deeper than merely the question of who is organizing the mosque. Transgressing orderly indigeneity by means of Islam touches the spheres of social disputes and territorial struggles, as well as the scale of the body as the realm where resisting and transgressing the permanence of inscribed modes of orders becomes a highly

52) Interview with Shaykh Ishaq Kasim (2013).

53) Interview with Bilal Zizi (2015); Interview with Bongani (2015).

54) Interview with Bilal Zizi (2015).

55) Interview with Amin Ngubane (2015).

56) Interview with Shaykh Thabani Isreal Ally Mwandla (2015).

contested and difficult task. The following chapter will present a case from the town-

ship of KwaMashu which highlights these bodily dimensions of the politics of indi-

genization in the context of Islamic ideology.

## 7.2 KwaMashu Cemetery: Death, Deathscapes, and Politics of the Corpse

In September 2015, news circulated about a Muslim cemetery being reopened in the former Black African township of KwaMashu. Its origins can be dated back to 1908, with five Muslim graves from the Dhooma and Bassa families still on site. The cemetery is situated close to Inanda, the neighboring area of KwaMashu and the assumed place of residence of the buried families (SUDER 2015a). The head of the Islamic Burial Society, Ahmed Paruk, is cited in the *Al-Qalam* online newspaper saying that more cemetery space is needed due to an increasing influx of Muslims from the Indian sub-continent and African countries, especially over the last ten years (SUDER 2015a). No reference is made to African Muslims from the KwaMashu area or any other Muslim community from neighboring townships. This is even more curious, as the KwaMashu mosque, which had been established under the auspices of converts from the Black African-classified population in the 1970s and 1980s, is included in the preliminary planning for the reopening of the graveyard. These plans include extending their building with a ghusl khane, where the ritual washing of the body of the deceased is performed. At the same time, a small graveyard next to the mosque, established by Muslim converts from KwaMashu themselves, is poorly maintained. The aforementioned Imbumba Muslim Foundation, a burial foundation established in 2011 by Muslims from former Black African areas of KwaZulu-Natal, is linked to these efforts to finance and organize Islamic burials for African Muslims, and the setbacks they have experienced reflect the struggle for independent facilities for that group. The reopening of the cemetery and the associated connotations of superiority and inferiority along the lines of racial and colonial population groups can be approached by understanding the specific configuration as a *deathscape* (KONG 1999, 2001a, 2004; MADDRELL, SIDAWAY 2010), i.e. as meanings invested in space through place-making processes anchored in matters of death, dying, mourning, and remembrance (cfr. forward by Lily Kong in MADDRELL, SIDAWAY 2010). A space of mourning reflects not only the sensual, emotional, bodily-inscribed, and ascriptive qualities of the *scape* but also the power relations within and between social groups.

Thus, it is considered an expression of power politics with the potential to express and manifest and hence secure hegemonic positions over time. Following MADDRELL, SIDAWAY (2010: 4f.), *deathscapes*, are thus a way of understanding contemporary social processes and the intersection of society, space, and power. The extent of such thinking and the spatial scale of the *scape* can range from artifacts such as roadside memorials (HARTIG, DUNN 1998), to burial and memorial sites like cemeteries or columbaria (TEATHER 1998; KONG 1999), or even complete sections of an urban space, appropriated in its meaningful significations by death, memory, and power. (KONG 1999: 3, 6f.) provides the example of the Tel Aviv city square in reference to the assassination of the former prime minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin.

Deathscapes “illustrate the constructions of nations and the politics of internation [sic!] relations. [...] [M]eanings are invested in deathscapes which speak about the power relations between nations” (KONG 2001a: 217). In this regard, the fact that the KwaMashu cemetery was reopened by a group of Muslims described by the interviewed converts as Indians represents the perceived superior positioning of the one population group (Indian) over the other (Black African). Against the backdrop of the segregative politics of colonial South Africa as well as the social, economic, and spatial interventions of apartheid, this conflict resembles the scale of the previously mentioned relations between nations (cf. KONG 2001a: 217) and represents the persistent divisions stemming from centuries of division and rule. CHRISTOPHER (1995) provides us with an intriguing analysis of the cemeteries in the city of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. He reveals that a racial segregation within the burial sites ultimately gave way to a segregation of the cemeteries themselves along the lines of racialized segmentation of space after 1948, the year when the National Party gained power over South Africa and began instituting apartheid. Such patterns have been replicated throughout South Africa, with the effect that the radical segregation of space and society in terms of religion and race (CHRISTOPHER 1995: 45) is again reproduced in the example of the Muslim

graveyard in KwaMashu. This cemetery reopening fails to include all Muslims, thereby revealing territorial tensions among the population groups brought into social and spatial existence by apartheid.

Contestations through space for death can, as KONG (1999: 3) identifies, evolve around three major fields, i.e. the sacred vs. the secular, within and between constructs of sacredness, and as power relations along the lines of gender, class, and race. Those aspects apply too in the featured case. First, Muslims from the KwaMashu township avoid entering the old cemetery as it is located in proximity to the former workers' hostels and therefore sits in a socially problematic area: “We [Muslims from KwaMashu] do not go there because of the area as we could be seen there and then could get into problem with gangsterism at the location. [...] It is easy for the Indians to go there because they could just come and fffff [blows air through his teeth], in and out.”<sup>57)</sup>

Here, not only do the racialized aspects of the *deathscape* come to the fore but also the different secularized positions of the actors in relation to the locale of the cemetery. While both actor groups may share the inherent sacredness of a Muslim graveyard, they decode the socio-spatial implication of the secular space of the hostels on various levels with different implications for the everyday lives of the actors that want to access the cemetery.

Those workers' hostels or compounds can be found around all major industrial cities of South Africa. They date back to a system established at the beginning of the twentieth century that was set up to facilitate accommodation to an all-male workforce from the indigenous population working in the industrial sector or the mines. Those men were initially hosted on a private basis, mostly in so called backyard quarters (DAVIES 1991: 76). The municipal administration perceived them as a migratory workforce and thus as temporary sojourners. The social reality of the workforce-related influx developed differently than the cities and their administrators had anticipated, threatening the idea of an orderly, exclusively White urban space in colonial South Africa.

Durban followed the same path as the other major metropolises of twentieth cen-

57) Interview with Abdulrazaq (2015).



## Summary

**S**ocial alienation and the struggle to belong in the South African society are not only matters of political discourse but touch the practical sphere of everyday life in the respective places of residence. This book approaches the entanglements of religion and space within the processes of re-ordering African indigeneity in post-apartheid South Africa. It asks how conversion to Islam constitutes the longing for a post-colonial and post-racialized *African self*. This study specifically engages with dynamics surrounding Black and Muslim practices and identity politics in formerly demarcated Black African areas. Here, even after the official end of apartheid, spatial racialization and social inequalities persist. Modes of orderings rooted in colonialism and apartheid still define what orderly belonging and African indigeneity mean. Thus, the inhabitants of those spaces find themselves in situations every day in which their habitat continuously ascribes oppression and racialization. The post-1994 promise for equal citizenship seems to be slowly fading, becoming a broken promise, on whose fulfillment the majority of people who were previously—by official definition and demarcation—only granted the right of being a migratory workforce, sojourners in the White spaces, are still waiting. Against this background, this book engages with the attempts to reformulate and recreate African indigeneity on the basis of a counter-hegemonic ideology of being Black and Muslim. It pays attention to the emergence and

articulation of a *Black Muslim indigeneity* that is based on bringing together a pre-colonial idealization of the *African self* with global ideologies of *Muslim Blackness*.

With a regional focus on KwaZulu-Natal and a specific look at the developments in and around the urban and peri-urban areas of eThekweni (Durban), it features particular case studies which highlight religious territorialization on the one hand and attempts to transgress the social and spatial modes of orderings by converting to Islam on the other. Here, South Africans once classified as Black African seek a common modus operandi in *Muslim Blackness* in order to break with *orderly indigeneity* as ascribed, defined, and structured by colonialism and apartheid, even going as far as to out-migrate from the *lived-in places* which continue to be experienced daily as unsettling and uprooting. With preparations being made to create a new settlement and establish a new social order, the unfulfilled promise of post-apartheid will be left behind, once and for all.

This makes the featured case a peculiar, though so far under-researched, example: Throughout the history of colonization and especially during the time of apartheid, the practice of Islam was strongly interwoven with a changing but persistent struggle for identity and belonging. Being Muslim became oppressively obscured as it was directed as an institutional term towards such politically created population categories as Indian or Coloured. This implied a very

structural and spatial effect, as the communal practice of Islam was limited to those respective residential areas. Thus, the former Black African areas of South Africa are important places to engage with: Segregated and socio-spatially ordered over decades of colonialism, racism, and apartheid, these vast areas of relatively high-density living conditions and desolated livelihoods characterize the surroundings of every major city in South Africa. The duality of White urban core and Black outskirts represents a spatial and social pattern whose inequalities persist up until now. But these places also came to manifest a stratification of religious practices and orderly religious belonging, as *orderly African indigeneity* was unquestionably linked to Christianity, while Islamic institutions were almost non-existent within the Black African areas. The case of conversions to Islam among the indigenous African population of South Africa also exemplifies the paradoxical untouchability of religiously territorialized space within the ideology of apartheid, which enabled some to maintain an exclusive sense of belonging to their former places of residence and a practical connection to the land from which they had been forcibly removed. By moving beyond the specific cases, the ideas and practices of *Blackness* and *Muslimness* are discussed in light of diasporic identity formations in relation to their colonial connotations, thereby opening up a perspective on creating an indigeneity transgressive to the conditions of everyday life.

Religious Territoriality, Conversion, and the Transgression of Orderly Indigeneity

With 19 color figures, a table, and 5 color photos

## Zusammenfassung

Soziale Entfremdung und das Ringen um Zugehörigkeit in der südafrikanischen Gesellschaft sind nicht nur Gegenstand des politischen Diskurses, sondern berühren insbesondere die praktische Sphäre des Alltagslebens an den jeweiligen Wohnorten. Die Publikation setzt sich daher mit den Verschränkungen von Religion und Raum in Bezug auf Prozesse der widerständigen Aneignung und des selbstbestimmten Lebens *afrikanischer Indigenität* im Post-Apartheid-Südafrika auseinander. Zentral ist dabei, inwiefern Konversion zum Islam die Sehnsucht nach einem postkolonialen und post-rassistischen *afrikanischen Selbst* konstituiert. Diese Studie befasst sich insbesondere mit alltäglichen Praktiken des Zusammenkommens von *Black* und *Muslim* in vormals der rassistischen Kategorie *Black/African* zugeschriebenen Wohngebieten. Hier, auch nach dem offiziellen Ende der Apartheid, bestehen räumlich-rassistische Einschreibungen und soziale Ungleichheiten fort. Die im Kolonialismus und in der Apartheid verwurzelten Ordnungsmodi definieren bis heute, was *geordnete Zugehörigkeit* und *afrikanische Indigenität* zu sein haben. So finden sich die Bewohner dieser Räume tagtäglich in Situationen wieder, in denen die Räume des Alltags kontinuierlich Unterdrückung und rassistische Ordnung reproduzieren. Das nach 1994 ausgerufene gesellschaftliche Ideal einer gleichberechtigten Staatsbürgerschaft scheint langsam zu verblassen und zu einem gebrochenen Versprechen zu werden, auf dessen Erfüllung die Mehrheit der Menschen immer noch wartet. Vor diesem Hintergrund beschäftigt sich diese Arbeit mit den Versuchen, *afrikanische Indigenität* auf der Grundlage einer gegenhegemonialen Ideologie von *Blackness* und *Muslimness* neu zu formulieren und an den Orten des Alltags zu leben. Dabei richtet sich das besondere Augenmerk auf die Ent-

stehung und Artikulation einer Indigenität basierend auf dem Zusammenkommen von *Black* und *Muslim*. Hierbei ist zu erkennen, wie eine idealisierte, vorkoloniale Vorstellung des *afrikanischen Selbst* auf Basis von globalen Ideen und Ideologien von *Muslim Blackness* gelebt wird.

Die präsentierten Fallstudien haben einen regionalen Schwerpunkt auf KwaZulu-Natal und einen spezifischen Blick auf die Entwicklungen in und um die städtischen und stadtnahen Gebiete von eThekweni (Durban). Die Analyse stellt dabei Effekte religiöser Territorialisierung in den Vordergrund der Auseinandersetzung mit Versuchen der Überschreitung sozialer und räumlicher Ordnungsweisen mittels Konversion zum Islam. Der *modus operandi* von *Muslim Blackness* umfasst dabei sowohl die selbstbestimmte Definition und alltägliche Neuordnung von Indigenität im Bruch mit Kolonialismus und Apartheid im Sinne einer kulturellen Praxis als auch räumliche Transgressionen der gelebten Alltagswelten. Der Versuch des Bruchs reicht dabei von materiellen Arrangements im Sinne des Erschaffens muslimischer Gemeinschaftsorte bis hin zur Antizipation der Auswanderung aus den bewohnten Orten, die nach wie vor täglich als beunruhigend und entwurzelnd erlebt werden. Mit den Vorbereitungen zur Schaffung einer neuen Siedlung und zur Errichtung einer neuen Gesellschaftsordnung soll das unerfüllte Versprechen der Post-Apartheid endgültig hinter sich gelassen werden.

Die Studie setzt sich mit einem bisher wenig erforschtes Themenfeld auseinander, das in seiner historischen Einbettung an der Schnittstelle von Raum, Religion und Gesellschaft besondere Eigenheiten mit sich führt: Während der Zeit der Kolonisierung und insbesondere während der Apartheid war Islam als religiöse wie alltagsweltliche Praxis stark mit einem wechselnden, aber

anhaltenden Kampf um Identität und Zugehörigkeit verwoben. Islam und muslimisches Leben waren unweigerlich mit den Modi des Ordens qua Bevölkerungsgruppen, insbesondere der Gruppe der *Indian* und *Coloured* verbunden. Dies implizierte eine außerordentlich strukturelle und räumliche Wirkung, da die gemeinschaftliche Praxis des Islam auf die jeweiligen Wohngebiete beschränkt war. Deswegen ist die wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit muslimischer Praxis in den ehemaligen *Black/African*-Gebieten Südafrikas von besonderer Bedeutung, da an diesen Orten sozial-räumlich manifestierte Segregation mit der Segmentierung religiöser Zugehörigkeiten einherging. Geordnete *afrikanische Indigenität* im Sinne von Kolonialismus und Apartheid war demzufolge unweigerlich mit Christentum verbunden, während islamische Gemeinschaften in *Black/African*-Gebieten kaum vorzufinden waren. Der Fall der Konversion zum Islam unter der dortigen Bevölkerung ist also ebenfalls ein Beispiel für das der Apartheid als religiös begründete Regierungsform der geplanten Segregation innewohnendes Paradoxon der quasi Unberührbarkeit religiöser Orte. Hieraus entwickelte sich ein Effekt, der sich als religiöse Territorialisierung beschreiben lässt und es während der Apartheid und danach ermöglichte, ein exklusives Gefühl der Zugehörigkeit zu früheren Wohnorten und eine praktische Verbindung zu dem Land aufrechtzuerhalten, von dem Bewohnerinnen und Bewohner im Sinne der rassistischen Bevölkerungseinteilung vertrieben wurden. Jenseits der konkreten Fallbeispiele bietet die Untersuchung ein konzeptionelles Verständnis für Praktiken und Politiken von *Blackness* und *Muslimness* im Lichte indigener Selbstbestimmungsprozesse und damit eine Perspektive auf transgressive Praktiken post-kolonialer Alltagswelten.

With the history of colonialism, oppression and apartheid, the indigenous African population of South Africa found itself socially and spatially ordered and profoundly kept in place by racist politics and practices of segregation and territorialization. Religion played a crucial role in the bringing about of colonial and most importantly apartheid domination, but also influenced resistance to oppression on individual and communal scales. Nevertheless, Christianity was increasingly perceived by a younger generation as the religion of the oppressor and therefore part of the racialized dialectic of social and spatial exclusivity and segregation. In this context, Islam became attractive as a revolutionary anti-colonial and anti-establishment religion as well as realm of everyday life with conversion to Islam working as a *modus operandi* of a self-determined Black and Muslim indigeneity. Not the historically situated Islam of South Africa, but Islamic ideologies emanating from the United States and Europe facilitated these socio-religious developments, offering connections to ideas and practices of a global, counter-hegemonic community and the bringing about of a Black Islam in South Africa.

This book is informed by an interdisciplinary perspective of cultural geography and Islamic studies and highlights how a racialized Black Islam has been invoked in order to reclaim authority over the religious and political scale of the *African self*. Building on qualitative research and the hermeneutics of religious Black Muslim ideology, it connects the struggle to belong within a post-colonial society to the utopia of a *Black Muslim indigeneity* as part of a global Black and Muslim community. It will be argued that South African Muslim Blackness is the result of global entanglements and circulations of anti-colonial ideologies with an Islamic framework and their subsequent translation into the realm of social and spatial orderings. The self of the African convert to Islam, culturally inscribed by racialized path dependencies and bodily ascribed by racist social realities, is translated into the Islamic counter-hegemonic narrative. Black Islam becomes a state of exception, a *heterotopia* to the everyday life, and makes transgression of persisting modes of social and spatial ordering possible.

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