

Tracing the Indian Ocean at the Cape

Locating Performance and Writing Practices of the Cape Muslim Community

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of southern Africa, Islam has been a consistent factor in its relationship with the Indian Ocean world. In this framework, the word *Malay* has become a synonym for Islamic influence in the region. This article outlines some contours of Indian Ocean influence in the region. We suggest that, by querying the word *Malay*, we might enable new inquiries into the relationships between the Cape and the Indian Ocean world. Much of that history predates the colonial period, hence, this article considers a genealogy of Islam's influences of thought and practice through a discussion of its sonic residues. Might one map its fortunes by considering the ebb and flow of the meanings of Islam in southern Africa? These fortunes have shifted over time, although they are traceable through archives.¹ In southern Africa, it is unavoidable that viewing race in and through a literary and musical lens is important.

The epistemic frames and archive of music research are bound up with those of the colonial world and the Global South. In this article, we propose to locate the concept *Malay* inside this shifting field of scholarship. One might triangulate these inquiries with examples from text and song and with a historiography of Muslim archives and of thinking about archives as a whole in the region.

The article investigates archival vestiges—erasures, creations, adaptations, and community mobilizations—as cultural practices of the Cape Muslim communities

in Cape Town. These communities include descendants of Southeast Asian and East African enslaved individuals brought to the Cape from India, Indonesia, Mozambique, and Madagascar. Although apartheid submerged the geographical and cultural origins of the Creole community of Cape Town for decades, the cultural practices remained strong. These practices appear in the form of a religion, remnants of a patois, a vocal technique within choral singing, instruments, and a ritual mutilation ceremony. While these practices are not equally celebrated—some are more clandestine, others submerged, and yet others enjoying a revival of interest—they all point toward the Indian Ocean migration through slavery under Dutch colonialism at the Cape from the mid-seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century.

In the first part of this article we consider how to negotiate the “Cape Malay” as object and subject in discussions of the southern African Indian Ocean world. Thereafter, we locate the Cape Muslim community’s cultural practices. Arjun Appadurai used the “pragmatic” past to challenge the static, ritualized past, arguing that there is a third, culture-specific past, which consists of norms whose sole purpose is to regulate the inherent debatability of the past in the present. Given the ephemeral nature of the culture-specific past, it is apt to ask about fragments rather than seek wholeness. In other words, to ask what is marked as incidental in the record. Stoler confirms that the past is also present in fragments that are often audible or visible (Stoler 2016, 5). These “imperial durabilities” are sometimes so ineffably threaded through the fabric of contemporary life forms they seem indiscernible as distinct effects, as if everywhere and nowhere at all. Such reading of musicking can help in tracing an arc of the postapartheid through the musical life of a community.

CAPE MALAY: GENEALOGIES OF A WORD

In Indian Ocean scholarship, the Cape was a node in the Dutch East Indies Company empire connected to Batavia and Colombo (Alpers 2014, 94). Different usages of the word “Malay” came into being in the course of southern Africa history. For example, the word came to designate black settlements—as “Malay” quarters—in towns as far apart as the inland town Kimberley and Cape Town at the southwestern coast.

In considering Muslim performance in South Africa, therefore, it would be hard to avoid the category of the “Cape Malay” given its pervasiveness in South African discourse. However, to take performance practices of Muslim communities at face value is to risk repeating a particular “commencement” of the colonial archive (Derrida 1996, 4).

Under apartheid South Africa, “Cape Malay” was a legislated category of people with a historical narrative favorably aligned with the official story of apartheid South Africa. In crude terms, this preferred narrative is explained in the fact that apartheid institutionalized race and its classification and social taxonomy as the central logic of the state—with its assumption of white European civilization as the broader social objective.

Several strands of meaning converge around the term “Malay” in South African discourse: it could refer to a linguistic group, a religion, or a geographical designation. As scholar Gabeba Baderoon confirms, by the end of the Dutch colonial period, the word “Malay” lost its direct link to forced migration from the Indian Ocean world and became tied to the fact of being Muslim (Baderoon 2014, 12). Now and then, the interests of various groups coincide in producing “Malayness.” For example, Malay traditions are in vogue in Cape Town’s contemporary tourism industry, where Malayness is reified as a commodity in tourism and becomes part of the social narrative for the “historical” city (Witz 2011).² In narrative terms, the presence of such a category of people marks the city’s profile as a place “inside” history and lends it a certain purchase on Western-styled narrative. This commodification applies to “Cape Malay” cuisine and to historic parts of the city. In other spheres, people render it archaic—for example, in its marginalized traditional carnival. That is to say, the attractions of identifying as Muslim Malay in South Africa have waxed and waned with different moments in history.

For context, it may help the reader to locate the Cape Malay as an artifact of Cape Town’s geography and location in the global tourism industry. The area called Bo-Kaap in the city of Cape Town is marked as the home of the Cape Malays. The Malay Quarter was built largely by and for the artisans of Cape Town between 1790 and 1825. Only about 1 percent of the 63,000 enslaved individuals who were brought to the Cape were from Malaysia; the bulk of them came from India, Africa, the island of Madagascar, and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, during the founding years of Cape Town, the population in the Cape was diversified, initially able to communicate by way of Melayu and Malayo-Portuguese, the trading languages of the Indian Ocean basin. However, after 1770, these languages were replaced by Dutch, which eventually evolved into Afrikaans (Kotze 2013, 128). People who settled in the Bo-Kaap included political exiles from Java and Ceylon, who moved into the area around 1820. Liberated enslaved individuals moved into the area after 1834 and with them people who had already been living in the town. Over the years the area has come to be identified as the heart of the cultural life of the Muslim community. The area is now considered to be the historic enclave of that group of people.

In the 1930s, Bo-Kaap came under scrutiny from the South African government in an era of rapid racialization of South African society. The area has survived the urban iconoclasm of apartheid only because of a discourse that presented it as the traditional environment of an ethnic identity that authorities should recognize and protect from a municipality intent on modernist urban renewal. Immigration pressures in the city occasioned a new Bo-Kaap spatial pattern (Al Sayyad, Todeschini, and Japtha 2004, 190).

We might think of the phenomenon of the “Cape Malay” as an effect of the waning Dutch colonial influence as the British took over the colony in the “long nineteenth century” (Alpers 2014, 98). Cape Town in the mid-nineteenth century still looked to the Indian Ocean world as its dominant “hinterland.” Over the previous hundred years, few blacks had made their way across the

Helderberg Mountains to the settlement at the foot of Table Mountain (Harries 2016, 34). For sailors, traders, and travelers, the time spent waiting for the monsoon winds in Indian Ocean ports and on board ships encouraged cultural exchange and Creolization. Over time these developing social networks nurtured both the evolution of hybrid cultures and international communities. These exchanges and the shifting factors that influenced them shaped central themes of Indian Ocean history (Alpers 2014, 7).

By the end of the century, new Muslim arrivals from the Province of Natal and India, so-called Passenger Indians, created a new dynamic between the old established Muslim inhabitants and the new Indian immigrants. Distinctions arose between this Muslim group and the older established communities around ritual practices and language. Moreover, Jeppie asserts, “moral panic” around Indian immigration made the Malay moniker more desirable in the early twentieth century (Jeppie 2001, 83–84). For instance, the fez worn by performers in the Cape Malay Choir competitions is an example of a global vector of identification (Tayob 1995, 61).³ Today we recognize it as part of the ‘traditional’ attire of the Cape Malay, at formal events and choral competitions.

For Gabeba Baderoon, South Africa’s racialization of Muslims as “Coloured” or Indian or Malay had the effect of transforming slavery into a minority concern and enslaved people as a minority rather than as the “first modern people” (Baderoon 2014, 16–19). For Baderoon, the coloured trope in apartheid was meant to stabilize the meaning of blackness and whiteness. Within this worldview, Malayness signaled a promise of purity within the mostly “impure” colored designation. In this sense, a key challenge for the South African colonial state was the native question—how to institutionalize the racial order to serve South Africa’s mineral-driven capitalist economy.

We propose that in tracing this codification of race in musical performance, we may glimpse how people and institutions produce racial identities in the social world. What are the remnants in performance, institutions, and social inscriptions? In framing this question, we suggest ways to understand how the concept of Malay character and identity circulates in performance in the region. Bahasa Melayu had been a lingua franca in the Indian Ocean region. The oceanic connection may be a still-underestimated aspect of “Malayness” as it circulates in cultural memory. Might we put this premise to work with archival traces of the Cape, recognizing that such traces have life in a variety of forms, including written and oral forms? This maritime aspect invites us to consider the archive in terms of “command” and “commencement” and of the genealogy of Malayness (Derrida 1998, 1). The great contest for power in the Indian Ocean world is an important context for the laws that came to govern the archive:

Each European pretender to Indian Ocean power also created its own network, none more effective than that established by the VOC linking its capital at Batavia with Colombo and Cape Town. Colombo, on the southwest coast of Sri Lanka,

represented the midway node between the two extremes of Indonesia and the Cape, while Cape Town acquired the moniker “tavern of the seas” for its role in provisioning VOC ships that made port there, restoring its crews, and being the Dutch link between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. (Alpers 2014, 94)

This vast sphere of influence potentially opens several lines of possible inquiry but also complicates the explanatory links between oceanic memory on the one hand and performance institutions on the other. In this regard, the emerging discipline of sound studies may help to think of the sonic as an archival fragment.

The notion of Malay is an elusive category, marginal within the Islamic community in Cape Town itself and within the larger cosmopolitan city. It may not be enough to describe traits common to this community. There is flux. Also, both Atlantic and Indian Ocean movements have influenced the performance practices in this community. Rosa Ribeiro pointed to a “conflation of territory, language, and ethnicity, not to mention religion, [which seems] to be a nineteenth-century creation that became almost paradigmatic in the twentieth century” (Rosa Ribeiro 2015, 7).⁴ Moreover, Ann Laura Stoler offered the Foucauldian notion of genealogy as a political method, not invoked as a substitute for history but attuned to unachieved visions and interrupted imaginaries, demanding alertness to “those haphazard moments when we revise narratives when dissension is demoted or displaced” (Stoler 2016, 23). The archive may reveal ways in which performance was rendered archaic. Given the area studies concerns, one also takes a cue from Appadurai’s critique of “trait” geographies in favor of what he calls “process” geographies (Appadurai 2000, 6). In this sense our observations in this essay should be considered a contribution to the trace of archival fragments pointing to processes of its commencement. In other words, this work unmoors the “traits” that have hardened around the legacies of Cape Malay histories to better attend to underlying processes in future work, to arrive at more nuanced, helpful understandings of how these work in this part of the Indian Oceanic world.

The term “Malay” therefore exemplifies the potential *pitfalls* of working with cultural memory in South Africa, and, we suggest, potential *rewards* of a critical approach to doing this scholarly work. To engage with Islam as cultural memory in South Africa is to trouble its representation. As a noted Afrikaans poet influenced by the European romantics, I. D. du Plessis⁵ was interested in the instrumental value of the Malays for the cause of the Afrikaans language (Jeppie 2001, 86). Gabeba Baderoon concurs that, “Far from purveying a harmless romanticism, Du Plessis’s work disrupted the furthering of a broader black identity and helped to fragment the development of independent political movements among the ‘Coloureds’” (Baderoon 2014, 15). In a much-cited extract, Du Plessis sympathetically described Cape Malay racial “temperament” as follows:

He is introspective, kind towards women, children and animals; inclined to speak slowly, to be passive and insolvent. When aroused he may lose all self-control and run amok. (Du Plessis 1944, 3)⁶

This extract points to the critical formative influences shaping Du Plessis as a young intellectual: his gravitation toward Afrikaner nationalism in a context of English imperial power and attitudes toward the local Afrikaans communities, and his immersion in nineteenth-century romanticism and its attendant orientalism. Raised and educated during rising Afrikaner nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century, Du Plessis became an important figure in the Afrikaans nationalist poetry movement called the *Dertigers* (literally *Thirtiers*), a generation of white Afrikaans writers and poets heavily influenced by European romanticism and its emphasis on the rustic and the noble.

We may tie the designation “Malay” to two relevant questions for our purposes. The *first* concerns archival fragments, marks of empire traceable in the archive, and how the archive is authorized and commenced. The *second* question concerns the dynamics of what historians call the “Native Question” in South Africa (Mamdani 1996, 1–8).⁷ These political considerations are important because any ethnographic description of cultural practice is challenged to reckon with the mediated nature of social reality. The positioning of the concept *Cape Malay* seems in keeping with Mamdani’s scheme, in which colonialism produces the Malay, not as an “African tribe” but as a “subject race,” which is to say, colonized, nontribal but still “Other” to whiteness. It emerges from “ways of knowing” or the production and commencement of knowledge (and the archive) in service of empire (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, 16).⁸ “Malay” came against what Veit Erlmann described as Empire’s monopoly of the means of representation (Erlmann 1999, 24). Historians of Africa’s heritage collections refer to “an army of reformers, linguists, folklorists, chiefs, missionaries, elders who ‘invented tradition in Africa.’ These interlocutors were ‘preservationists,’ defending ‘endangered’ cultural practices” (Peterson, Gavua, and Rassool 2015, 9). These champions in most colonial conquests are objects of controversial debate, which we need not repeat here, save to emphasize their role—withstanding the ethical nuances of such production—in producing the epistemologies that produced the object of ethnomusicological inquiry.

In the next section, we discuss the actual cultural traits that are still prevalent or extant examples of a previous, vibrant cultural form. These considerations intersect and produce the key to understanding how the performance practices survive as traditional forms. The recent sensory turn enables us to engage “imperial visuality” with sound. This engagement conditions and reveals the qualities we discern in what we hear in imperial structures as regimes of knowledge. Scholars argue that Western tonality brought into distinct forms “naturalized, iconic civility,” which rendered that which sounded different as “many calamities of noise in need of discipline, muting, silence.” For these scholars, “the ‘command to silence’ grew from an effort to contain the din—the noise of the Negro, Chinaman, and lazy native portrayed in European travelogues over four centuries, together with those interior, domestic forms of irrationality and difference within emerging empires: the hysteria of women; the clatter of the rabble” (Radano and Olaniyan 2016, 8).

So far, we have considered the term “Malay” as an archival fragment and considered how these fragments are “authorized” and “commenced.” The phonograph has influenced the form that music takes. It is noteworthy that *goema* as a Cape folk music was not part of the groundswell of phonograph recordings of the first half of the twentieth century. This offers an index of the marginalization of Malay performance.

ARABIC SCRIPT

In signposting a possible genealogy of Arabic script and how it might help make sense of Malayness in the Cape, we are mindful that scholars need to consider the implications of script as archival commandment and commencement. Stoler considers how the archive produces common sense from textual evidence, and for this purpose she distinguishes between what was “unwritten” because it could go without saying and “everyone knew it,” what was unwritten because it could not yet be articulated, and “what was unwritten because it could not be said” (Stoler 2008, 3).⁹

Besides the many regional languages, the enslaved people brought aspects of their cultural practices such as religion, rituals, music, musical instruments, and written script to the Cape. They did not coalesce as a subaltern society due to the harsh patriarchal Dutch rule as well as there being a lack of leadership within the community of enslaved individuals until much later in the eighteenth century. As discussed previously, one of the more dominant languages was Melayu, tied to the written script called Jawi. Both were in use in the early colony as was the Arabic script. As the Creole Dutch form became the lingua franca among the enslaved individuals, Arabic-Afrikaans script replaced Jawi (Jappie 2011). The Arabic script was kept alive particularly from the mid-eighteenth century by a high-ranking political prisoner, who, when freed, opened the first Muslim school (*madrrasah*) in Cape Town in 1793 and a mosque in 1795. It was here that children and adults learned to read the Arabic-Afrikaans script and were educated about Islam, and thus the possibility of a Cape Muslim community/identity emerged. The written tradition persisted until the mid-twentieth century, by which time it had developed into a distinctive literary tradition in which several manuscripts and religious textbooks had been published in this Arabic-Afrikaans script (Davids 2011). Sarah Jappie suggests there were three main uses for textual production in the early Cape Muslim community: religious, talismanic (mystical/secret knowledge), and quotidian texts (letters, lists).

One of the most influential men to emerge out of the early Cape Muslim community was Sheikh ‘Abdullah ibn Qadi ‘Abdus Salam (1712–1807), commonly referred to as Tuan Guru (Esteemed Master). He was a prince and religious scholar from the island of Tidore in the Moluccas who was banished to the Cape, held captive on Robben Island, and was held as a political prisoner by the Dutch for

conspiring with the English against them. Robben Island is renowned for being the prison island on which Nelson Mandela spent eighteen years of his twenty-seven-year incarceration. The island's almost four-hundred-year history of banishment and imprisonment began with Dutch convicts from the East Indies; they were often political leaders and nobility who had opposed Dutch rule. In his recent book in which he gives a trenchant account of the maritime history of the Bay of Bengal and other parts of the Indian Ocean, Sunil Amrith points out:

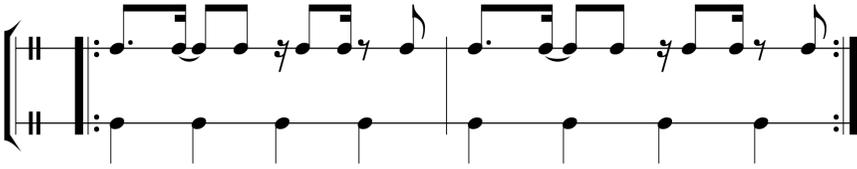
The British system of punitive transportation spanned the Indian Ocean, depositing convicts from India in a network of island prisons stretching from Robben Island to Mauritius, from the Andaman Islands to Singapore. The movement of convict labor was a global phenomenon. (Amrith 2013, 77)

Tuan Guru, referred to as an “Eastern Free Black,” transcribed the *Ummul Barahin* (The Demonstrative Proofs), a classic text on Islamic belief written by the Algerian scholar Sheikh Mohammad bin Yusuf al Sannusi (1435/6–1490). Along with the transcriptions, Tuan Guru provided commentary as well as transcribed parts of the Qur’an into Arabic-Afrikaans (Rafudeen 2005, 77–78). According to Achmat Davids (1991, 37, in Rafudeen 2005, 79) the *Ummul Brahini* provided an essential text for the Cape Muslim scholars at the madrasa in Dorp Street, Cape Town. This text, along with several other *kietaabs* (from the Arabic word *kitab*, meaning book) revealed in the mid-twentieth century, has been recognized as an important literary body of works written in Arabic-Afrikaans. Dutch linguist Adrianus van Selms, who coined the term “Arabic-Afrikaans,” and German linguist Hans Kahler, uncovered these works and pioneered this research in the 1950s. Both men made inventories of the extant manuscripts, which eventually amounted to sixty-four texts (Jappie 2011). Many of these books were produced as school notebooks or *kopies boeke*, which was an integral part of the rote-learning education system in the madrasa (Jappie 2011, 376).

The recent interest and celebration of these texts has yet again cast the orientalist lens on the Cape Muslim community. This time the Malaysian and Indonesian governments endorsed the orientalist lens, as they were interested in the Malay and Indonesian diaspora. Interestingly, Jappie (2011, 389) comments that this archival collection was not celebrated within the larger archive of Arabic-African texts, such as the Timbuktu manuscripts, but was rather narrowly placed within an ethnic Malay identity.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

A few instruments that have possible links to the Indian Ocean world are the *goema* drum, *tamboer* (frame drum), the *ramkie* (lute), and the *ra'king* (spike lute). The *goema* drum, a single-headed barrel drum originally made from a small wine cask, is like many barrel drums from Asia (including India, Indonesia, and



MUSIC EXAMPLE 9.1. The *goema* rhythm.

Malaysia). Percival Kirby suggests that the name *ghomma* (or *goema*) is related to the Bantu word *ngoma*, which is a common term for drum in many sub-Saharan African cultures. Furthermore, he asserts that the drum is a relic of an earlier type of drum with either an indigenous or foreign antecedent. *Ngoma* also refers to various drum dances in East Africa and is the term that people of Zanzibar of Arab descent use for their dances (Kirby 1939, 477 and 480).

The *goema* drum is held under the left arm and played with both hands alternating; the left hand marks the beat while the right hand plays the syncopated *goema* rhythm (music example 9.1).

The *goema* rhythm, an underlying rhythm found in western Cape musical practices such as the minstrels/*klopse*,¹⁰ Malay choirs, Christmas bands,¹¹ and Cape jazz,¹² has become emblematic of the music of the Creole peoples of Cape Town. The *goema* drum is used by the *klopse* on their street parades and accompanies the *moppie*, a comic genre sung in both the *klopse* and Malay choir competitions.

The *tamboer* is played in the minstrel/*klopse* troupes alongside the *goema* drum. It is a small frame drum made of a strip of plywood bent into a circular shape and covered with goatskin. It is a ubiquitous instrument in the Middle East and is believed to have been favored by the Prophet Mohammed (Kartomi 2005, 34). Interestingly, the name *tamboer* seems to come from European names for drum, such the Portuguese *tambor* or French *tambour*, whereas similar words to *tamboer* in the Indian Ocean world relate to the lute, such as the Indian *tambura*, or *tanbur* from Iran or Turkey. The frame drum is embedded in many genres of Aceh and West Sumatra, both places from which the enslaved people of the Cape were imported, and which are known to have had various sizes of frame drums before Islam was introduced to the area. The *ratiep* ceremony (discussed further on) uses a larger frame drum than the small *tamboer* played in the *klopse*.

The history of the *ramkie* lute seems to be more complex and rather speculative. O. F. Mentzel, who visited the Cape between 1733 and 1741, was the first to write about an instrument, which may have been similar to what is referred to as the *ramkie* (see Kirby 1939; Rycroft and Impey 2001). Mentzel proposed that this was an imitation of an instrument that the enslaved people of Malabar brought with them and that the name was suggestive of the Portuguese *rabequinha*, little violin, although it has always been a plucked lute with three or four strings. The autochthonous Khoekhoe, with whom the instrument is more often associated these days,

may have copied it from the enslaved people. Several similar names associated with slightly different instruments emerged over the years (see Kirby 1939, 482, for the exhaustive list), and an extant version is held in the Kirby Collection of Musical Instruments (hereafter Kirby Collection) housed at the South African College of Music. A precursor to the ramkie is the *kabossy* from Madagascar, which suggests its Indian Ocean roots. Although likened to a ukulele, the body of the *ramkie* is perhaps only that in size, not shape. In the extant version of the instrument, the shape has been localized, and the boxlike resonator is made of metal (see www.digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/collection/islandora-20238).

The ra'king is a spike lute with three full-length strings and one half-length string; its shape is reminiscent of the spike fiddles and lutes of the Middle East and Indian Ocean world. It is no longer used in performance and is not much known except for the extant version held in the Kirby Collection (see <https://digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/collection/islandora-20257>). In the past it accompanied songs and dances (see Kirby 1939, 484–85).

MUSICAL STYLE

Another cultural vestige of the Indian Ocean world is the vocal style displayed in the song genre referred to as *Nederlandslied* (Dutch song). *Nederlandsliedere* (pl.) ostensibly began as old Dutch songs (reflected in the High Dutch and older forms of Creole Dutch) brought to the Cape by settlers, sailors, and soldiers (Martin 1999, 26–27). Enslaved individuals emulated this singing, localizing the songs and thereby forming a new musical genre. Historically, people sang *Nederlandsliedere* at family and community celebrations. The most widely known *Nederlandslied* is “Rosa,” a love song popularly sung at Cape Muslim weddings, extolling the moral virtues of fidelity. In the past, weddings were prolonged affairs of several days’ duration with the families of the bride and bridegroom taking turns singing various types of songs as entertainment (Martin 1999, 72–73). These days the *Nederlands* (as it is referred to in common parlance) is a prestigious, competitive genre of the Malay Choirs, which are all-male choral groups that host annual choral competitions during the summer months (January to March). Its prestige and historicity have bestowed much contention on the genre, so much so that only cultural insiders adjudicate this genre until recently, often older men, former winners of this category in bygone years. All the other song genres are adjudicated by music specialists who are not necessarily (most often not) cultural insiders. Musically, the genre is a responsorial song of moderate tempo between a soloist and chorus, in which the soloist often joins the chorus for part of the response. The *Nederlands* is a Creole song in which there is a fusion of some musical traits that landed in the Cape under conditions of slavery during Dutch rule. Both European musical characteristics and Arabic influences, which came through the Islamic religion of the enslaved people, are prevalent.

The most distinctive feature of the *Nederlandslied* is the nasal vocal quality of the soloist and the rather high-pitched vocal melismatic ornamentation called *karienkels* in Afrikaans. The practitioners and the culture-bearers hold these qualities to be innate or a gift, which cannot be taught. The *karienkels*, consisting of various ornamentations (such as glissandi, turns, and *acciaccaturas*) around certain melodic pitches of longer duration, confer a minor inflection to the piece reflecting the Islamic vocal traditions that influence the soloist's singing. For instance, the *adhan* (call to prayer) or Qur'anic recitation, which both have similar ornamentation, probably influenced this melodic style. The soloist's voice is quite independent of the choral texture of the music as he produces these melismatic ornaments and intonational fluctuations with a rather constricted throat; he is also rhythmically freer than the chorus and accompaniment. His singing provides a contrast to the choir, which sings in Western block harmonies with a steady slow tempo and a rather even and controlled sound production compared to the more emotional quality of the soloist. The accompaniment, consisting of string instruments, has an Iberian feel to it through the combination of the strummed string instruments and their rhythmic patterns, reflecting the earlier Portuguese influence in some of the locations from which the enslaved individuals originated (Martin 1999, 172–73). Earlier, the instrumentation consisted only of mandolins, guitars, and banjos, but these days it includes other string instruments such as violins and cellos. At the annual street celebrations on December 31, when Malay choirs usher in the New Year with song, parading through the city of Cape Town, they end their parade at the old sports clubhouse in Rose Street, Bo-Kaap, where performers stand in a semicircle, reverently singing a *Nederlandslied*, swaying gently to reflect the movement of being on the sea. This visual reference harks back to both the enslaved individuals brought by ships to the port city and the fact that many men worked as fishermen in the early colony.

People have institutionalized fragments in the competitive practices that sustain them. Most of the songs were, if not composed, at least collected and put in their present form at the beginning of the twentieth century: they wrote some of these songs down in the early years, but around 1892 a Malay choir leader named Rasdien Cornelius, helped by a retired Dutch sailor, Frans de Jongh, recorded what was being lost. When Rasdien began, a mere twenty songs were all the younger singers could recall. They imported other songs from Holland and persuaded the oldest Malays to recall snatches of ditties sung in their youth. Later, the collector Willem van Warmelo also contributed by reintroducing Dutch songs into the repertoire of the *Nederlandsliedjies* (Martin 2013, 115). There are about two hundred to three hundred songs in existence, the repertoire is considered closed, and no one composes these songs any longer. There are a series of assumptions here about the forms of memory, the taxonomies at work in these interventions.

RELIGIOUS RITUAL

The *ratiep* or *khalifa*, “the eastern sword ritual” (Davids 1987, 63), emerges from the Sufi-inspired Islam that was practiced in the Cape. The Muslim mystic Al Rifa’i founded the Rifai’iyyah Sufi Brotherhood in the twelfth century in Arabia. Sufism is characterized by certain doctrines and ritual practices involving music and musical instruments, which occupy a contested space within Islam. This form of mystic Islam is practiced in places around the Indian Ocean basin, particularly in Sri Lanka and Indonesia where similar mutilation ceremonies exist in which devotees in a state of trance cut and stab themselves without any flow of blood. The term “mutilation ceremony” is a problematic term as the practitioners see this rather as a trance state that demonstrates the power of their belief and the power of the spirit over the body. In the case of the Cape, it is speculated that this ritual came with Sheikh Yusuf, brother of the Sultan of Makassar in Sulawesi (formerly Celebes) who was a political exile to the Cape from Bantam, Java. He went to Bantam where he spread the Islamic faith, married the daughter of the Sultan of Bantam, and assisted his father-in-law in his strife against Dutch trade monopoly. Sheikh Yusuf was forced to surrender and was initially imprisoned in the Castle of Batavia, then banished to Ceylon in 1684 and ultimately exiled to the Cape Colony. He and his entourage of forty-nine, including his two wives, twelve children, and twelve imams, settled on a farm in Zandvleit near Cape Town (currently Macassar, a small town in the Western Cape, 34 kilometers from Cape Town) in 1694. Sheikh Yusuf became the leader of the Cape Muslims, and Macassar became a vibrant place for Islamic activity for fugitive enslaved individuals and other exiles, the place where the first cohesive Muslim community was established (see South African History Online, www.sahistory.org.za/). Bantam was the original capital of Java, situated in the extreme northwest of the island. There are two places in the Indian Ocean basin from which aspects of the *ratiep* as well as the Cape enslaved individuals can be traced. Bantam was the center for *gedeboes* (iron spikes or ceremony including these), and West Sumatra was known for *dabus* activity (Sufi-inspired Muslim ritual including singing, playing the frame drum, bodily movements, and self-mutilation. See Kartomi 2005, 25).

In the *ratiep* ritual, men hit swords across their bodies and pierce skewers into their cheeks without letting the blood flow or feeling any pain while being accompanied by drumming and Arabic chanting.¹³ Although this ritual is not part of Islam, it attracted many enslaved people to the religion and became ensconced in the Cape Muslim community. This charismatic aspect of the tradition of Islam in the Cape was not necessarily supported by the religious authorities, and by 1854 when the colonial authorities wanted to ban it as a nuisance; the imams did not object. However, the imams realized the power of the ritual and its usefulness for religious conversion. They agreed to a compromise: that it be performed only once a year, on the twelfth day of the month of Rabir Ahir, giving it the Melayu name of *Amantu Ablas* (Davids 1987, 64).¹⁴ Davids (63) asserts that *ratiep* “must

have given the slaves tremendous feelings of power over their body [*sic*], despite their bondage,” as did the promise of the afterlife. This hope in the afterlife was underscored by an imam: “We teach them (the slaves) to believe that their souls are free and that they must look up to God to make them free when they die” (see Davids 1987, 63).

Regarded as the founder of Islam in the Cape, Sheik Yusuf’s burial place, or *kramat*,¹⁵ near Macassar is considered a holy place, and devout Muslims regularly visit the shrine. This early settlement in Macassar was instrumental in founding a more cohesive Cape Muslim community. Again, Amrith (2013, 77) is instructive here:

Across the Indian Ocean, small groups of political prisoners turned their places of exile into new homes: transported rebels from the Dutch East Indies formed the core of the “Cape Malay” community, and their journeys continue to evoke powerful memories to this day.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered Indian Oceanic cultural traits in South Africa as having been produced in social and cultural processes that involve inscription, sonic, performative, and textual mediation. It has sought to point out ways in which the making of identities leaves archival residues. We set out to show that the concept “Malay” in South Africa is not a stable category of its own making. This, we argued, had special bearing on the inherited category of the Cape Malay, an artifact of southern Africa’s historical relationship to the Indian Ocean world. It has foregrounded the work of colonial-era interlocutors in enabling the production and the curating of identities, considering the mediations that this involves, and trying to keep a sense of it as process, as opposed to finished forms. If reality is socially constructed, then the living archive is necessarily constructed by that reality. In this case, the social reality of Cape Muslims was initially constructed under Dutch and British colonialism and later crystallized by apartheid policies of separation and forced removals. The role of I. D. du Plessis cannot be underestimated in this process of identity construction and formation of the Cape Muslims in the twentieth century. We, therefore, seek to supplant the use of “Cape Malay” as a category of racial, ethnic, or even religious identification or a trace of something authentic. In its place, it may be more helpful to think of “Cape Malay” as an apartheid term for a wide range of humans with indirect or direct connections to the cultural world of the Indian Ocean. We might, after Appadurai, think of this as a “process geography” with several social features rather than a “trait,” or ethnic geography. The social production of race and identity is emphasized here. Although the origins of Cape Malay individuals in the Indian Ocean world were downplayed to foment a local identity and acceptance of the local authority, the cultural remnants of the Indian Ocean world remained very present in the expressive practices of the Cape Muslims.

NOTES

1. We use the term “archive” to denote those discursive relations of meaning-making that include but are not restricted to institutional archives, and in which institutionalized forms of power enable a claim to authority. In his influential account, Jacques Derrida referred to “commandment” and “commencement.” In this, we draw on its broader usage in humanistic and historical studies. See Derrida (1996).

2. The South African tourism industry has affected people’s ways of identifying and how they respond to pressures relating to identity. In a related context, Leslie Witz (2011) considers how places, people, cultures, and histories are made and remade in an image economy. The visual apparatus of tourism, depictions of place through writers, and officials, gender relations, allocation of resources, claims to expertise, local and national politics, institutional arrangements, and previous histories of images, are potent mechanisms in the establishment, production, and circulation of visual tourist knowledge.

3. In the drive to assert a unity that would strengthen their collective position, Indian traders invoked global affiliations to the Ottoman Empire. Indian Muslim traders adopted symbols of Islamic communalism to distinguish themselves in South Africa. Earlier in the nineteenth century, Abu Bakr Effendi introduced the Turkish fez to Cape Muslims. Abu Bakr Effendi had been sent by the Ottoman sultan Abdülmecid I in 1862 at the request of the British Queen Victoria to the Cape of Good Hope, to teach and assist the Muslim community. In 1903, his son, Achmat Effendi, as Imam of the Pretoria Mosque, petitioned the Pretoria Court to allow Muslims to wear it during trials. Subsequently, Muslims in the Cape, Natal, and Transvaal adopted its use. Echoing the Khilafat movement in India, there was support for the Ottoman caliph.

4. Rosa Ribeiro rejects any trenchant separation of the Indian and Atlantic oceanic worlds, arguing that there were complex interactions between the two.

5. I. D. du Plessis played a decisive role in lobbying the South African government to recognize Cape Malay as a “population group” worthy of special consideration inside the apartheid vision.

6. The purported Malay propensity in orientalist discourse to “run amok” is itself the subject of scholarly scrutiny, connected to the social phenomenon of ritualized suicide in Malaysia. See Panikkar (2005).

7. Mahmoud Mamdani argued that the African colonial experience came to be crystallized in the state, forged through that encounter. The African state contained two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority, organized differently in rural areas than in urban ones. In this, public power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, and rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, while customary power pledged to enforce tradition. Critically, this also drove a distinction in which the native was considered an ethnic category and the colonizer a civic and “racial” one. All other human formations—including in different African contexts “Cape Malays” in South Africa, Tutsis in Rwanda—were held under the sign that Mamdani called “subject races.”

8. For Europe, mass culture is modernism’s “other” in music as in the other arts, while reference to “authentic” folk and ethnic musics, primitive and exotic constructions, have remained more enduring and acceptable as forms of appropriation and projection in music.

9. In this section, we sketch the process by which texts operated at an empirical level. The work of reading this commencement is something for the future.

10. Klopse are carnival troupes that have been in existence since the days of slavery (which ended in 1834) and formalized in 1907 as the Coon Carnival, now Cape Town Minstrel Carnival (see Martin 1999).

11. Christmas bands are Christian wind and string bands that emerged as caroling groups in the 1850s and are mostly operative from November through April (see Bruinders 2017).

12. Cape jazz is a particular jazz style and sound, connected to the city of Cape Town, which incorporates the rhythms, harmonies, and sounds of the minstrels and Christmas bands. Its most celebrated international proponent is Abdullah Ibrahim.
13. There are similar forms of self-mutilation ceremonies called *ratib* in India and Malaysia as well as Rifa'i Ratib in Iran and Sri Lanka.
14. These days the ritual is practiced more often than once a year.
15. Afrikaans spelling of the Malay word *keramat*.

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