

Preservation of the Bokaap, Cape Town: changes in attitudes and actions

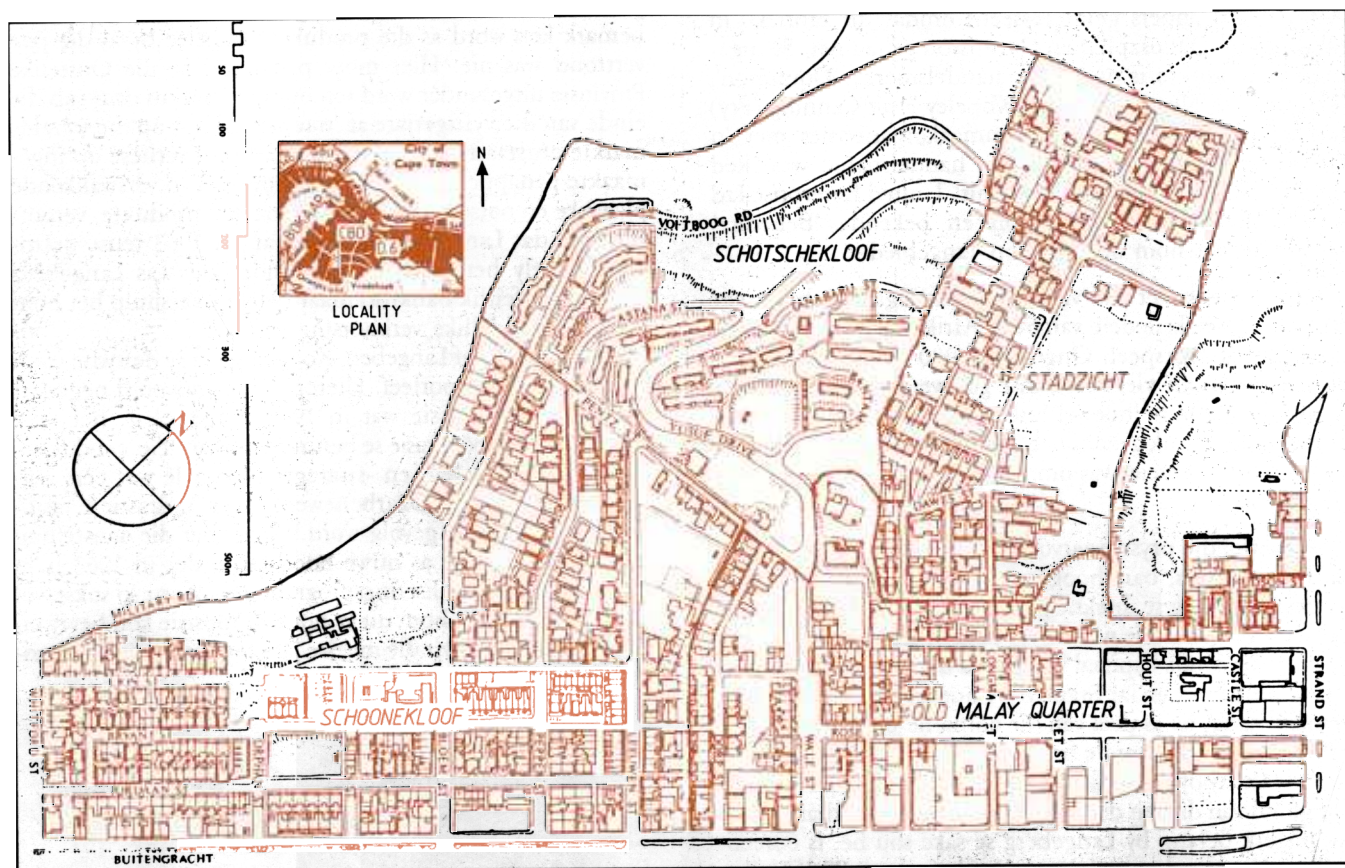
T.F. Truluck

Department of Environmental and Geographical Science
University of Cape Town

G. Cook

Portsmouth Polytech (UK)

THE BOKAAP IS SITUATED on land adjacent to and overlooking the Central Business District (CBD) of Cape Town on the south-eastern slopes of Signal Hill (see Map). It is a small residential area just under one and a half kilometres in length. It is about 800 metres at its widest point but usually no more than about 300 metres wide elsewhere. It is densely settled, having a population of about 6 000, more than 90 per cent of whom are Cape Muslims.¹ Although the Bokaap may be roughly divided into four areas, the boundaries between them are not distinct and even the residents are not sure where one area begins and another ends.² This reflects the organic development of the Bokaap over many decades and a gradual shift of residents from one area into another. Today the area is known by several names, with Bokaap being the one preferred by the local residents.³



Map of the Bokaap.

MAP: CAPE PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, *The buildings of Cape Town*.

It is important to look beyond the more obvious and superficial reasons for the development of the unique character of the Bokaap as espoused by municipal bodies and sympathetic people in order to understand the changes that have taken place there over the last 50 years. Attitudes provide an input to those factors which determine behaviour and they are therefore important and worthwhile objects of studies in their own right.⁴ However, there is no direct and mechanistic relationship between attitude and behaviour. The reasons why attitudes are not translated into behaviour can provide important clues as to the hidden, or at least less apparent, machinations of society and social norms. They put a filter or barrier between expressed attitudes and eventual reaction in a particular situation. Because of the

very indirectness of the relationship, it is essential to study both attitude and behaviour, rather than to regard one as

¹ A. Davids, *Mosques of Bokaap* (Cape Town, 1990), p.10.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* The others in descending order of preference to local residents are Schotschekloof, the official name of the area; Malay Quarter, the 'traditional' name used by outsiders especially since the 1940s and carrying connotations of patronism and subservience; and 'Slamsebuurt', a local *patois* corruption of 'Islam's neighbourhood' and definitely not locally acceptable. A less emotive and less well defined name for the Bokaap is the Signal Hill Area.

⁴ V. Robinson, 'Spatial variability in attitudes towards "race" in the UK', in P. Jackson (ed.), *Race and racism: essays in social geography* (London, 1987), p. 166.

a surrogate for the other.⁵ This article therefore examines changes in attitude towards the Bokaap, and the Old Malay Quarter in particular, and highlights the actions taken in response to these attitudinal variations. Of primary concern is the change from the 1930s, when the Old Malay Quarter was perceived as a slum which had to be eradicated, through to the 1960s when it was regarded as an area which warranted preservation, not just by concerned citizens, but also by both national and local official bodies. Presently, in its more sanitized version, it is often perceived as an important tourist attraction for the city.

As the oldest and most architecturally distinctive area in Cape Town, the Bokaap is an anomaly within the apartheid city. It has been allowed to remain as the home of Cape Muslims and coloured people, while other similar residential areas surrounding the Cape Town CBD have either been demolished and redeveloped or gentrified with the replacement of the original residents by white occupants. The original settlement in the Bokaap, now called the Old Malay Quarter, is regarded as its heart, and serves as a focus for the Cape Muslim community. There are very few surviving areas in South Africa that have such a strong identity with one particular group established over such a long period, as this section of the Bokaap.

BOKAAP THE SLUM

Specification of the conditions under which an area may be regarded as a slum can be, and usually is, highly subjective. In general slum areas are perceived as a problem, and Kirby⁶ notes that the problem is primarily a state of mind — it is a situation that worries members of society, either as individuals, or as groups. The problem may also be perceived differently by different individuals and sectors of society. These features are clearly illustrated in attitudes to the Bokaap.

CONTROL AND ERADICATE

At the beginning of the 1930s Cape Town launched a concerted onslaught against slums. The liberal newspapers were vociferous in their condemnation of such areas. The *Cape Times* lead the way in 1933 with a series of articles resulting from 'a searching investigation into the foulest dens of the city.'⁷ The sanitation rhetoric of the time was used to make the point that 'People are now living on the lower slopes of Signal Hill [Bokaap] under the foulest conditions ...'⁸ Leading members of society were drawn into the fray along with the Cape Town Municipality and its councillors. Bishop Lavis felt that 'Unemployment and bad housing are twin evils'⁹, whilst a Mr Brinton argued that,

The eradication of slums would improve the public health of Cape Town by 30 percent. A great deal of sickness and colds among the Europeans today, can be traced to slums through domestic servants and others.¹⁰

These views tie in with Kirby's observations that for non-slum dwellers whose experience is restricted to that of outside observers, the slum is both a threat to themselves as well as to society.¹¹ Concern is mainly focussed on the effect of the slum on non-slum dwellers and its impact on the external image of society of which they are part. These attitudes resulted in action being taken by the Cape Town City Council (CCC) whereby they made recommendations to parliament that formed the basis of the 1934 Slums Act.¹²



Bokaap dwellings, possibly Rose Street, 1936.

PHOTOGRAPH: SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY, CAPE TOWN

Of the attitudes of the Bokaap residents, however, little is known for they had little chance to voice their opinions at any meaningful level. Their focus of concern may have centered on deficiencies in their own living conditions but the discomfort, stigma and pain associated with life in the slum was not made explicit. Nor could it be, for in the words of the *Cape Times*:

Their present discontent and distrust are merely evidence of their ignorance; and their ignorance, which allows them to become attached to verminous haunts of bacteria, is evidence of the need for better conditions.¹³

For the residents, however, the hardship of living in slum conditions was aggravated by the imposition of the Slums Act. The declaration of an area as a slum as well as the expropriation and transfer of property, was a tedious and time consuming process.¹⁴ The Slum Elimination Committee of the CCC declared most of the slum areas as slums in 1934, but it still had to work out its own procedure to deal with the further implementation of the Slums Act. In addition, considerable opposition to the acquisition of property was experienced. A number of owners also enacted some repairs in an attempt to keep their property, but eventual purchase by the CCC was inevitable as the council slowly and methodically acquired the slum areas block by block.

The time lag between demolishing the slum areas and building tenements or flats on the same site, meant that a considerable number of dishoused people had no alternative suitable accommodation in the interim. In the words of one displaced Bokaap mother:

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁶ D.A. Kirby, *Slum housing and residential renewal: the case in urban Britain* (New York, 1979), p.10.

⁷ J.P. Joyce, 'Cape Town and the origins of the Slums Act of 1934' (B.A. Hons, University of Cape Town, 1981), p. 82.

⁸ *Cape Times*, 10.8.1933.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.3.1933.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.8.1933.

¹¹ Kirby, *Slum housing*, p. 11.

¹² Joyce, 'The origins of the Slums Act', p. 84; The main points of the Draft Bill (later accepted by Parliament) were summed up in the *Cape Times* on 1.9.1933: 'The local authority, by a two-thirds majority, may declare as a slum any building which is overcrowded or unsanitary and which is a nuisance. A nuisance is: (a) a dwelling which does not conform to the requirements of the Medical Officer of Health (MOH). (b) so dirty or verminous as to be injurious or dangerous to health. (c) is unsafe or injurious to health in the opinion of the MOH. (d) has no proper water supply available on account of distance.'

¹³ *Cape Times*, 11.9.1936.

¹⁴ *Cape Times*, 25.4.1936.

I have tried everywhere round here, but there is nowhere. They want to charge 16s and 17s 6d a month rent, but I cannot pay that. Here I pay 6s 6d.¹⁵

The displaced people could not be transferred to other areas as the CCC would have faced severe criticism from those rate-payers in, or near, the new area.¹⁶ The CCC were also reluctant to house the displaced people in the peripheral areas, as they would have had to extend the municipal boundaries to include the unofficial settlements which consisted mainly of illegal black and coloured rural migrants.¹⁷ The CCC was also not able to provide enough housing in other newly created townships on the Cape Flats (e.g. Kewtown, Bokmakirie and Alicedale). Although some people did eventually move there, the majority of residents resisted the demolition by refusing to move. A number of reasons for not relocating were advanced by the residents, namely it was too far from their place of work; too expensive to pay rent and moving costs; they would not be near their friends and relatives; they would be removed from their basic sense of identity associated with the area.¹⁸ The feelings of local residents are summed up in the words of a displaced Bokaap woman:

None of us defied those people this afternoon [CCC officials ordered them to vacate the premises]. We just told them we had nowhere else to go. I have walked until I could not walk any more, looking for a place. None of the others know where to go. We could get places at Goodwood and Parow, but we cannot get there or take our things there. Tomorrow I'll pack up and get out. I suppose I shall just have to go to District Six.¹⁹

The effect of the Slums Act was that once a property was declared a slum, the local body might then acquire it by paying compensation for land value only. The CCC therefore bought up properties in the area at low prices from about 1936 onwards. The full extent of the insanitary and physically dangerous condition of the Bokaap still remains doubtful. From scanty evidence available, it seems that not all the dwellings were derelict and/or in a bad condition. J. Hardie Stewert, for example, admitted that:

It is not that they are entirely bad from the point of view of housing conditions. The actual construction of the buildings is not always rotten.²⁰

The fact that many of the buildings survived without renovation until well into the 1970s and 1980s, while the CCC procrastinated over their demolition and subsequent preservation, further supports this point. Nevertheless the whole area was regarded as a slum, and property prices consequently remained depressed. The result was that the CCC had acquired, at a cheap price, most of the Old Malay Quarter, as well as the vacant piece of triangular land called Schotsche-kloof. By the end of 1937 the CCC had become the largest slum landlord, not only in the Bokaap, but also in Cape Town as a whole.²¹

Once the slum properties were acquired, the demolition of slum buildings around the Cape Town CBD continued through the 1930s, though to a lesser extent in the Bokaap. For many Bokaap residents the impact of legislation was felt only when the CCC initiated action by demolishing buildings regarded as too derelict and dangerous to ignore. Those that were reported as health hazards, but still habitable, were left untouched and inevitably deteriorated over time. Disillusionment with the slum clearance programme caused the CCC to delay demolitions, for as the City Engineer, W.S. Lunn, pointed out,

...more than 1 000 people were dishoused by the operations of the Slums Act, and there have also been a *serious deterioration in the slum areas which have [sic] been acquired [emphasis added]*.²²



Van der Meulen Street, Bokaap, 1957.

PHOTOGRAPH: JAGGER LIBRARY, UCT

REHOUSING THE ANSWER?

Even before the land had been acquired and difficulty in slum clearance programmes had been experienced, the dominant attitude supported slum eradication, but there was evidence of alternative attitudes. This issue was raised as early as 1933 by Dr A. Abdurahman,²³ who in a debate on the proposed Slums Act said that:

You have no right to pass regulations of this kind when you yourselves cannot supply the houses. Rather send this back and deal first with the physical overcrowding.²⁴

The idea that slum problems could be overcome by providing better living conditions is reflected in an article proclaiming that 'Workmen's Flats [were] to be Built' and that soon the 'City's Garden Suburb on Signal Hill' would be started.²⁵ The alternative attitude to slum eradication came through explicitly in a further headline announcing the 'Clearing [of] Slums by Providing Homes'. These headlines were in fact referring to the two schemes targeted for the Bokaap approved by the committees on housing, slums clearance, and town planning of the council in 1933. The first scheme was to be the building of 500 flats on the site of the existing Old Malay Quarter, and the second was to

¹⁴ *Cape Argus*, 25.4.1936.

¹⁵ *Cape Times*, 15.7.1938.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.8.1933.

¹⁷ C.C. Swart, 'Windermere: from peri-urban area to suburb, 1920s to 1950s' (B.A. Hons, University of Cape Town, 1983), pp. 58-60.

¹⁸ *Cape Argus*, 19.6.1936.

¹⁹ *Cape Times*, 15.7.1938.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.6.1936. J. Hardie Stewert was a journalist commissioned by the *Cape Times* in 1936 to write a series of articles on overcrowding and slum conditions in Cape Town.

²¹ Cape Town City Council Municipal Reference Library, Cape Town City Council (CCC), Mayor's Minutes, 1936-1938, from an analysis of the City 'Treasurers' Reports contained therein.

²² *Cape Times*, 29.1.1937.

²³ Dr Abdurahman served continuously as the first non-white city councillor in Cape Town from 1904 to his death in 1940. He was also a member of the Provincial Council, representing the Woodstock area. He was a strong champion of rights of the coloured people, and was president of the African People's Organisation for 33 years.

²⁴ *Cape Times*, 1.9.1933.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.8.1933.

erect 1 020 flats on the Schotschekloof site (see photograph; only 191 flats were eventually constructed). The area to be redeveloped was approximately 10½ acres (4½ hectares) with 300 buildings, housing about 2 900 people.²⁶ The atti-



Schotschekloof flats, 1957.

PHOTOGRAPH: JAGGER LIBRARY, UCT

tude towards those affected by the decisions was strongly paternalistic. The *Cape Times* of 11 September 1936 says it all:

We hope that nobody will accuse the City Council of hard heartedness in turning them out ... if slum buildings are to be replaced by decent dwellings their present inhabitants must be moved during rebuilding ... it is inevitable that there should be some hardship.

The plans, complete with 'grassy banks, shrubs and trees' were never fully implemented and in 1937 when the situation had worsened the City Engineer finally recommended that

... because of the situation it is not wise to report anymore [sic] premises until accommodation was available for the occupants. *The overall need was for a programme of building rather than slum demolition* [emphasis added].²⁷

Attitudes to alternative types of accommodation also varied. Doubts were expressed at municipal level on the utility of providing blocks of flats to solve problems of poor (or non-existent) accommodation and bad living environments. As Mrs Zerilda Steyn of the Citizens Housing League pointed out, 'Everybody must acknowledge that flats are only the second best provision for a home.'²⁸ On the other hand due to the value of the land so near the CBD, difficult building conditions and the high cost of building materials, tenement flats were regarded as providing the only obvious method of alleviating the housing shortage.²⁹ Nevertheless the zeal with which the CCC expropriated the so-called slum properties in the Bokaap was not matched by the building of alternative accommodation.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AN ALTERNATIVE?

Since the late 19th century commercial and light industrial interests had increasingly penetrated the lower section of the Bokaap, between Rose and Buitengracht Streets.³⁰ However, the penetration was slow. During the 1940s, the proposed development of the foreshore and the filling in of vacant areas in and adjacent to the CBD, helped create a feeling of optimism. Businesses, looking to expand into new and convenient areas, perceived the Bokaap as highly desirable.³¹ In order to capitalize on the area's potential for CBD expansion, it was proposed in 1941 to zone the Old Malay Quarter for commercial and light industrial use. This inevitably caused a renewed interest by the business sector to locate there.

Concurrent with the escalation in commercial development was an increased emphasis on the preservation of not only old and historic buildings, but also other urban environmental artifacts. It is not unusual for these seemingly opposite processes to occur simultaneously. Ford maintains that preservation is often a reaction to the rapid pace and massive scale of change rather than the change itself.³² Thus it was not surprising that the *Cape Times* should point out during July 1945 that there was 'a danger that if somebody does not look after it, the Malay Quarter would be sacrificed and commercially developed.'³³

The advent of the Second World War (1939-1945) further affected the building of new working-class accommodation, since it partly deflected attention away from domestic matters as well as reducing revenue available for construction. Therefore, despite all the elaborate plans, only 198 flats, situated in Schotschekloof, out of 1 200 units originally planned for the whole area, were built. The parsimony of war-time capital expenditure, disillusionment with the whole slum-clearance programme and the realization that they had acquired valuable land at a low cost ensured that no rebuilding occurred in the Old Malay Quarter.

Nevertheless the CCC continued with their attempts to rezone the Old Malay Quarter. As late as 1954 they proposed, under a new town-planning scheme, to put into practice the 1941 attempt at rezoning.³⁴ However, the then administrator of the Cape rejected this proposal in February 1955. This, coupled with the government's declaration of its intention to proclaim all the areas west of Rose Street for residential use only, meant that the CCC finally conceded that it could not sell its Bokaap properties for commercial use and they became resigned to the fact that they were faced with the slum problem again.³⁵

PRESERVATION

During the 1940s the public's attitude to the built form of the Bokaap showed yet another change. The Old Malay Quarter had been attracting interest from artists for many years prior to its declaration as a slum, and even as a slum the area had become a distinctive place from the standpoint of middle-class values. However, it was Dr I.D. du Plessis who first made a plea to save this 'most picturesque part of the city'³⁶ for, as he points out,

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.5.1936.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.11.1937.

²⁸ *Cape Argus*, 29.11.1937.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.12.1939.

³⁰ T.F. Truluck, 'Mapping the Bokaap: the use of maps as historical documents with reference to the Bokaap up till 1900' (History project, University of Cape Town, 1988), p. 18.

³¹ M. Cook, 'The Malay Quarter' (Pamphlet written for South African National Monuments Society, 1936), p. 6.

³² L.R. Ford, 'The burden of the past: rethinking historic preservation', *Landscape* 28(1), 1984, p. 44.

³³ *Cape Times*, 20.7.1945.

³⁴ CCC, Restoration of the Old Malay Quarter, Second Extension Scheme 1977: a review and re-estimation of the Second Extension Restoration Scheme of 1977 (Cape Town: City Engineer's Dept., 1977), p. 3.

³⁵ CCC, Mayor's Minutes, 1955, p. 13.

³⁶ I.D. du Plessis, *The Cape Malays* (Cape Town, 1944), p. 82. Dr du Plessis was a noted Afrikaner poet, author and intellectual. His Ph.D. from UCT dealt with 'Cape Malay' music and he was often recognised as the unofficial champion of the 'Cape Malays'. However, he was a product of his time and S. Jeppie's honours dissertation was most revealing about the motivations of Du Plessis in attempting to preserve such 'Malay' culture as choirs, colourful dress, and other superficial features of Malay life. His work as a member of the Coloured Affairs Department from 1951 to 1962 served to substantially weaken his influence on and credibility with the Cape Muslim people.

Even now, though sadly fallen into neglect, the Quarter makes a strong appeal to anyone with an eye for beauty in buildings ... because of the charm which time has bestowed on these dwellings, these houses once demolished, cannot be compensated for by modern replicas.³⁷

This attitude slowly gained favour and by 1947 there was a strong case that the Old Malay Quarter should be preserved because it 'contained a number of individual houses, as well as groups of dwellings and mosques of undoubted historic and aesthetic value.'³⁸

Du Plessis, along with the 'Group for the Preservation of the Malay Quarter' (hereafter called the Preservation Group), which was formed in 1943 and consisted of a number of 'prominent South Africans', exerted pressure on the CCC and alerted other national bodies to the importance of saving the Bokaap. Even the administrator later went so far as to suggest the possibility of provincial support to subsidize the cost of restoration, thus alleviating a major obstacle to the CCC involving themselves with a costly preservation programme at the rate-payers' expense. Finally, the actions of the Preservation Group, in conjunction with the National Monuments Commission, culminated in the declaration of the Bokaap as a national monument in 1966 which ensured the preservation of the area.

The upsurge of interest in preservation issues in Cape Town does not offer an adequate explanation of why the Old Malay Quarter in the Bokaap became the focus of a concerted preservation campaign. What was of concern though, was its predominantly 'Malay' residents, and their position and significance to the hegemony of the ruling white elite. According to an official, the 'historic and picturesque quality and character of the area largely depended on its continued occupation' by the 'Malays'.³⁹

A MALAY ENCLAVE

The ideological concept of 'Malayism' was born out of political flirtation with General J.B.M. Hertzog's National Party by the Cape Malay Association (CMA) in 1925.⁴⁰ The CMA wanted an exclusive 'Malay' identity which would put them above the Indian and coloured communities, along with an enhanced status equal to the 'white man'.⁴¹ During the 1930s when the Bokaap was first declared a slum, no distinction was made between the residents; they were all regarded as degenerate.⁴² The concept of 'Malayism' was taken up in the 1940s by the well-known I.D. du Plessis as he actively pursued a policy of separating the Cape Muslims from the other non-white groupings in Cape Town. Through his experience as an Afrikaner intellectual during the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and as the self-proclaimed champion of the 'Malays' he was aware of the importance of creating a sense of identity. He virtually created and embellished the Cape Muslims with an aura of 'Malayness' which he then exploited to achieve a 'Malay otherness'.⁴³ In addition, the work of various writers and commentators on the Cape Muslim community resulted in the late 1930s and early 1940s in the popular perception of this community as a 'peaceful and law abiding community; as a group, in total submission to the ruling authority'.⁴⁴

Although the Cape Muslims, through the concept of 'Malayness', were subjected to the same forces of oppression as other non-white groups, they were made to believe that they were the 'elite of the coloured people'.⁴⁵ It created for them a sense of submission to the white authority — the purpose of which, Jeppie noted, was to facilitate a divide and rule policy in a distinct local setting.⁴⁶ To allow the Cape Muslims their own identity, both separate from and

superior to the other non-white groups in Cape Town, helped to diffuse the potential threat, whilst posing no real menace to white interests.

By the mid 1940s the 'Malays' were constituted as the 'good subjects' forced into overcrowded conditions and decaying houses through no fault of their own. Du Plessis felt that the 'natives' and other undesirables who 'contaminated' the 'Malay way of life' became the bad subjects on whom attention was focussed.⁴⁷ According to Du Plessis

Shebeens have sprung up in clusters, wine is brought in from Monday to Saturday by 'runners', ... dagga smokers make the Malay Quarter unsafe, and an influx of natives ... has added to the housing problems of the Malays.⁴⁸

Undoubtedly it was believed that the influx of the outsiders, or more specifically, 'natives' who intruded where they were not wanted, were to blame for the problems in the Bokaap.⁴⁹ If the area was to be kept for the 'elite Malay' then these unwanted elements had to be removed and it was the 'Whiteman' who could help the poor 'Malay' return to the 'lovely old days, when life in the Quarter was serene and good ...'⁵⁰

This essentially paternalistic attitude meant that the local authorities were seen by those pressing for preservation as the cause of the deterioration of the 'Malay'. According to I.D. du Plessis and C.A. Luckhoff, by not controlling the type of tenant who rented the property, the CCC allowed the Muslim residents to be overwhelmed by the influx of people of 'all Non-European races usually of the poorest class' and thus created slum conditions.⁵¹ The Muslims themselves had 'tended to intimacy' with these more recent inhabitants, with a consequent 'loss of character'.⁵²

Providing the Cape Muslims with their own exclusive residential area became an important component because the place or territorially-defined area in which divided groups reside, can be used as a powerful agent for the entrenchment of ethnic identity. This is especially evident if the identity is imposed (at least initially) by internal or external authoritative sources.⁵³ By highlighting and romanticizing aspects of Cape Muslim religious and traditional life, Du Plessis created a rich store of facts with which the Bokaap residents

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

³⁸ CCC, Mayor's Minutes, 1947, p. 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ A. Davids, 'Complacency to activism: the changing political mood of the Cape Muslims from 1940-1985' (Unpublished paper presented at the Fifth Workshop on the history of Cape Town, UCT, December 1985), p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Cape Times*, 24.3.1933 and 23.6.1936.

⁴³ S.M.S. Jeppie, 'Historical process and the constitution of subjects: I.D. du Plessis and the reinvention of the "Malay"' (B.A. Hons, University of Cape Town, 1986), p. 50.

⁴⁴ Davids, 'From complacency to activism', p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Jeppie, 'Historical process', p. 51.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Du Plessis, *Cape Malays*, p. 81.

⁴⁹ I.D. du Plessis and C.A. Luckhoff, *The Malay Quarter and its people* (Cape Town, 1953), p. 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵² University of Cape Town, 'The Malay Quarter' (Architecture students' final year project, School of Architecture, UCT, Cape Town, 1957. Commissioned by the Group for the Preservation of the Malay Quarter.)

⁵³ K.J. Anderson, 'The idea of Chinatown: the power of place and institutional practice in the making of a racial category', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77(4), 1987, p. 581.

could sustain and re-create their sense of place in the city. The approach is summed up in the aim of the Preservation Group for the Malay Quarter, along with the endorsement of the Historical Monuments Commission, which was to:

Achieve the ideal of seeing the Malays reinstated and, one might add, rehabilitated, to live a community life in which they can regain their pride in the practice of their artistry and handicrafts, under conditions which are propitious for their maintenance.⁵⁴

However, the efforts of Du Plessis to create a sense of identity and to situate this identity within a unique place culminated when, as a member of the Coloured Affairs Department (1951-1962), he was instrumental in securing the proclamation of the major portion of the Bokaap as a Malay enclave.⁵⁵ The position and significance of the Muslim residents were such that it had become vital to preserve the Old Malay Quarter, to reinforce the ideas of 'Malayism' and provide a visible example of the Malays' superiority over those who had to vacate the 'whites-only' city centre and its environs.

Under a proclamation of 5 July 1957 dealing with the Malay Quarter Area, the CCC was, however, limited to allowing any future development to residential use only.⁵⁶ The status of the Bokaap had been finally determined and the Housing Committee asked the City Engineer to prepare a report and plan for its redevelopment 'with due regard ... to the need of preserving any building of outstanding historical or architectural value in the Malay tradition.'⁵⁷ The identification of an ethnic group with a specific area and the preservation of the distinctive character of the built form which reflect the community traits had been achieved.

THE CAPE TOWN CITY COUNCIL'S PRESERVATION ATTEMPTS

The effects of the CCC's decision to preserve the Malay character of the area have been far reaching. The report by the city engineer for the 'First Extension Scheme' at an estimated cost of R212 000 was adopted in 1960.⁵⁸ Because of the prohibitive cost, 'complete restoration' in the Old Malay Quarter was not considered. Although the council obviously had in mind the preservation of a sort of authentic past where all the structures in the historic area must be in the same style, a programme of rebuilding behind similar facades was envisaged, so as to keep the architectural integrity of the area while providing a 'living and useful communal unit.'⁵⁹ The idea of the First Extension Scheme was to house the original residents in proper dwellings and not to force people 'to live in them, merely to create a showpiece of early Cape Town.'⁶⁰

Historic or traditional preservationists, such as the Preservation Group, were not pleased with the council's facadist style of restoration, as they wanted 'the whole of the Malay Quarter' to be retained.⁶¹ However, facadism was seen as the 'rational compromise' between those who wanted complete demolition and those who wanted complete restoration. Administrative wranglings and financial haggling continued and construction work on the First Extension Scheme only commenced in 1969 and was finally completed in 1976. The residents were not terribly enthusiastic about the new and modern houses as they were small and had taken such a long time to be built. Nonetheless costs had been kept within reasonable bounds which meant that houses could be rented out by the CCC at municipal tariffs, although at the highest rate.

The Second Extension Scheme was first planned in 1977, and was approved by council in 1980. Work began in 1985 and has still to be finally completed. The Second Extension Scheme was conceived and implemented with scant regard for or negotiation with local residents and led to an upwelling of residents' dissatisfaction with the actions and attitude of the CCC. The buildings that have been reconstructed are regarded as being too small and too expensive to maintain. Above all, with the move to encourage home ownership, even at marginal costs they are too expensive for purchase by the majority of the Bokaap residents.

Although the Bokaap is comprised predominantly of Cape Muslims, there is still a fairly large number of non-Muslims living there. This non-Muslim component is steadily growing as small nuclear families and young professional couples, who can afford the higher prices or who qualify for housing assistance, are able to buy up the small expensively renovated or new dwellings.

The Muslim residents of the Bokaap do not mind others moving in. What they do object to is that much of the urban renewal has been conducted without any meaningful consultation with them, with the result that much of what has been done has not been acceptable to the residents. However, a compromise was reached in 1987 between the residents and the council over the remaining vacant land and the so-called derelict (un-renovated) buildings still occupied, often by the same families who had owned or lived in them in the 1930s.⁶² However, implementation of the agreement between the CCC and the residents has not yet started.

CONCLUSION

Today the area remains a Cape Muslim enclave, although not exclusively Muslim as envisaged by Du Plessis in the 1940s and 1950s. There is still a mix of properties ranging from uninhabited derelict shells through to renovated modern houses and from council flats, to a small core of carefully restored buildings which form the tourist focus of the Bokaap. Through the examination of the changes in attitudes and actions towards the Bokaap since its acquisition by the CCC, an attempt has been made to show that there is not necessarily a correlation between attitudes held and actions taken. In the Bokaap there was always a series of complicating issues, both covert and overt, which obscured the relationship between attitudes and actions. This article has highlighted some of these complicating issues and has emphasized the political nature of the preservation campaign. ■

⁵⁴ University of Cape Town, 'Malay Quarter', p. 4.

⁵⁵ Jeppie, 'Historical process', p. 52.

⁵⁶ CCC, Mayor's Minutes, 1957, p. 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1961, p. 12.

⁵⁹ S.S. Morris, 'The restoration and preservation of historic buildings: practical relation to town planning' in R.F.M. Immelman and G.D. Quinn (eds), *The preservation and restoration of historic buildings in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1968), p. 58.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54 (Newton Thompson's views).

⁶² The houses that have not been renovated by the CCC are to be sold to bona fide Cape Muslim residents for a nominal price of R1 000. Empty plots are also to be sold off at R1 000 per plot or R5 000 if a concrete slab had been laid on it. Cheap loans from the CCC would also be available to the prospective buyers for any necessary renovations or rebuilding.