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50 YEARS OF MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS

ERIC ROOSE

50 years ago this year, the first purpose-built mosque in Holland was constructed by an Ahmadiyya missionary group bringing the light of Islam from North-India to The Hague. Holland had of course already seen Muslims coming in for centuries, mainly from its colonies in the East- and West-Indies. Nevertheless, until then these had never managed to establish much more than a prayer hall within buildings that were already there, without establishing any significant outer signs of their inner function. It was only in 1955 that Dutch society was confronted with the visible materialization of Islam, and the small mosque in The Hague proved to be the starting point of a fascinating proliferation in Islamic architecture in The Netherlands. Of late, this proliferation has gained the attention of a growing group of architects, architectural historians and interested laymen, resulting in a number of photographic exhibitions and journalistic articles on the subject. These have shown that Dutch mosques use building traditions representing all of Holland's main Muslim cultures, originating in Pakistan, Indonesia, Surinam, Turkey and Morocco.¹

From the very start in The Hague, mosque design also proved to be a sensitive topic in Dutch society, and it has even become the subject of a heated popular debate. While most mosques in Holland still are provisionally appointed prayer halls in old garages, unused warehouses and abandoned churches, the ever-growing number of Muslims show a correspondingly growing need to materially represent their presence in their own, newly designed buildings. At the same time, this rising outward visibility of Muslim presence has resulted in rising resistance in local Dutch communities. At the

¹ E.g. *Moskee-Architectuur in Nederland*, exhibition traveling through The Netherlands from September 2004, see: www.museumarabesk.nl; *Moskeeen in NL*, exhibition in the ABC Architectuurcentrum Haarlem, 2005, see: www.architectuurhaarlem.nl; M. Guillet, Godshuis langs de Snelweg, in: *Algemeen Dagblad*, 03-08-1996, p. 44; R. van der Zee, Kathedralen voor Allah, in: *HP/De Tijd*, 28-11-2003, pp. 26-32; R. Meerhof, Dit Moet de Laatste Traditionele Moskee zijn, in: *De Volkskrant*, 16-01-2004, p. 16; B. Hulsman, Heimweemoskee of Poldermoskee. Jonge Moslms in Nederland zijn Uitgekeken op de Minaret, in: *NRC*, 01-05-2004, pp. 33-34.

start in The Hague, aesthetic norms of city destination plans were mainly invoked to prevent their appearance from being too ‘eastern,’ and in later decades these were extended with arguments of parking problems and noise. Nowadays, however, legal and functional arguments are often openly supported by the popular view that ‘un-Dutch’ architecture should be prevented because it forms a disturbance of ‘Dutch’ architectural culture. While Dutch commissioners frequently put down buildings that do not explicitly fit into their surroundings, calling for reactions in terms of aesthetics and not of cultural identity, mosque design is often viewed as a measure of how far its Muslim commissioners have wanted to give up their cultural identity and assimilate to Dutch society. In this reasoning, disturbance of the physical environment is a symbol for disturbance of the cultural environment.

In Dutch architectural discourse the view is often assumed that in the old days in the various Muslim ‘homelands’ everything was ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic,’ and that migrants in the West, in order to hang on to their old cultural identities, resort to ‘fake,’ ‘fantasy’ and ‘homesickness’ mosques. Trend-following cases are selected from their contemporary homelands to prove that there they have ‘progressed,’ while their counterparts in the Dutch Diaspora are presented as backwards, totally out of place in their new context. This view is quite understandable as it simply corresponds to the general approach to modern mosque design on the international scene, using the classic art-historical approach of ‘development’ in architecture. Generally, an outline is presented of the evolution of Mohammed’s house in Medina, the Primeval Mosque, into later formal and stylistic types.² The straightforward dynastic and regional typologies that result from this exercise are often presented as having been scrambled up in the ‘post-colonial era’ or ‘modern period,’ when ‘neo-styles’ and ‘hybrid,’ ‘ecclectic’ and ‘fantasy’ forms appear to have been invented.³ Whole new typologies are now constructed, with authors warning of the constant danger of ‘worthless pastiches’ and ‘Arabian Nights’ or ‘Hollywood’ mosques lurking around the corner.⁴

² E.g. R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture. Form, Function and Meaning*, New York 1994, pp. 31-128; R. Holod and H.-U. Khan, *The Mosque in Muslim Society: Past, Present and Future*, in: R. Holod and H.-U. Khan, *The Contemporary Mosque. Architects, Clients and Designs since the 1950s*, New York 1997, pp. 10-21; M. Hattstein and P. Delius (eds), *Islam. Kunst und Architektur*, Cologne 2000; M. Frishman and H.U. Khan, Preface, in: M. Frishman and H.U. Khan (eds), *The Mosque*, London 2002, pp. 11-14.

³ E.g. I. Serageldin, *Architecture and Society*, in: Serageldin 1989, pp. 255-259; Proceedings of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Seminar, *Architectural Education in the Islamic World*, Singapore 1986, pp. 75-88; Introduction. A critical Methodology for Discussing the Contemporary Mosque, in: I. Serageldin and J. Steele (eds), *Architecture of the Contemporary Mosque*, London 1996, pp. 12-19; Introduction: Regionalism, in: Frishman and Khan 2002, pp. 72-75; J. Steele, *Symbolism and Context: The New Dilemma*, in: Serageldin and Steele 1996, p. 145.

⁴ E.g. H. Fathi, *The Mosque Today*, in: Cantacuzino, S. (ed), *Architecture in Continuity. Building in the Islamic World Today*, New York 1985, pp. 53-62; S. Özkan, *Regionalism*

However, if we look at recent studies of identity and representation in architecture, the reality of the built environment seems to be a continuum or ‘flux’ that is ‘fixed’ by communities themselves, mentally constructing a cultural identity using an extremely fluent body of building traditions.⁵ In this view, researchers should not try to quasi-objectively categorize the reality of architecture into essentially subjective types, but rather study the communities’ subjective constructions of their own realities. Architecture is no more than one of many ways at cultural identification, and the typologies that art-historians devise say much less about the identities of commissioners of architecture than about those of art-historians themselves. In terms of Islamic architecture, the old days of regionally and dynastically demarcated types were at least as complicated and fluent as they are in our own age of globalization.⁶ Consequently, there is no analytical use in distinguishing between ‘authentic’ and ‘fake’, or ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ mosque design. And, as there is no such thing as a coherent and consistent ‘architectural culture’ except in the minds of subjects themselves, there is certainly no analytical use in constructing a distinction between ‘Dutch’ and ‘un-Dutch’ architecture.

Nevertheless, the conceptual categorizations that subjects themselves construct in processes of cultural identification are all-important in understanding why buildings look like they do. As a result, one of the main tools for the analysis of cultural identity in Dutch mosque design should be interviewing commissioners, or, if they are no longer available, trying to find other sources in which they have given some clue as to their identity-needs. Importantly though, as architectural design by definition represents identity, subjects do not always express it as such, using instead terminology of aesthetics, style and functionality as if these were non-explicable on a deeper level. If this conceptual level seems to suffice for some, it certainly should not for the analyst of Islamic architecture. The much-heard need for a beautiful, modern and practical mosque design can be, has been and will always be substantiated in innumerable ways, and preferences for these have as much to do with group identity as does cultural background. The same goes for the terminology of regional and dynastic types of Islamic architecture from classic art-history that commissioners have come to use. In Holland, ‘eastern’ forms have been incorporated in design in quite different ways, ‘Ottoman’ architecture has been used by quite diverging communities for representing

within Modernism, in: Serageldin 1989, pp. 279-282; Proceedings of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Seminar, *Regionalism in Architecture*, Singapore 1987, pp. 8-16.

⁵ E.g. C. Aasen, *Architecture of Siam. A Cultural History Interpretation*, New York 1998; A. Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial. Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia*, London 2000; S. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building. Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, Seattle 2001; J. Cracraft and D. Rowland (eds), *Architectures of Russian Identity. 1500 to the Present*, London 2003.

⁶ N. Rabbat, Islamic Architecture as a Field of Historical Enquiry, in: *Architectural Design*, vol. 74, no. 6, Nov/Dec 2004, (‘Islam+Architecture’), pp. 18-23.

quite divergent cultural identities, and not all Moroccan communities have used forms that are actually found in Morocco.⁷ Architectural traditions are not static phenomena but processes of transmission whose content may continuously be recreated and redefined over time.⁸

Towards the Analysis of Dutch Mosque Design

Rather than involving Dutch mosque architecture in typologies of form that distinguish different Islamic ‘cultures,’ it is time we concentrate on the role it plays in processes of generating the cultural identity of Islamic communities in The Netherlands. Mosque commissioners will always first aim at a certain mentally constructed reality, while only secondly do their thoughts go out to finding suitable building traditions with which this reality can best be represented.⁹ Meaningful traditions used might be visible not only in choices of materials, plans, forms, construction techniques, location, orientation or designer’s background, but also in the use of grand categories of (sub)religion, ethnic background, region, style, period, dynasty, spiritual principles, geometry, aesthetics or ‘archetypical’ mosque features. However, these mentally constructed ‘fixes’ of the ‘flux’ of Islamic architecture are essentially invented traditions and should never form a-priori research categories. Although they are often presented as general or even universal, we should realize that in every individual mosque design they are conceived and represented in different ways, springing from different identification motivations: commissioners define their relative identities in a never-ending story of ‘mutual contrasting.’¹⁰

In this constant process of identification and mutual contrasting, a newly proposed construction always tends to reject some existing construction, because traditions used in the latter, in the mind of the commissioner, might trigger associations with a community that is to be contrasted against. To represent his identity, the commissioner then would have to reach out to other traditions, but the resulting choice still can only be fully understood when the available but rejected traditions are known. This means that the whole design process, not just the artificially isolated end-product, is an important entry into

⁷ Even in Ottoman times, ‘Ottoman’ mosques showed quite divergent results of individual negotiations between architect and commissioners, representing their individual identities, as shown by Gülru Necipoğlu in her study *The Age of Sinan. Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton 2005.

⁸ M. Vellinga, Constituting Unity and Difference. Vernacular Architecture in a Minangkabau Village, in: *Verhandelingen van het KITLV*, vol 220, Leiden 2004, pp. 36-44; p. 5.

⁹ A.J.J. Mekking, Architecture as Representation. Representation of Architecture, in: *World Art Studies*, Leiden University, Forthcoming 2006.

¹⁰ R. Schefold, G. Domenig and P. Nas (eds), Indonesian Houses. Tradition and Transformation in Vernacular Architecture, in: *Verhandelingen van het KITLV*, vol 207(1), Leiden 2003, p. 5.

the identity motivations of our subjects. As a consequence of the latter, the history of the design, including the sketches that didn't make it, is to be reconstructed as much as possible before we can come to any worthwhile 'inside' conclusion on the commissioner's identity needs as they are expressed in his mosque. Importantly, that gives us also the opportunity to establish in what measure these needs have been restricted or supplied by architect, financier and government. The experience of this research shows that, with mosque commissions, the architect at first instance is generally provided with a relatively clear program of functional requirements but with a very vague idea of culture traditions. The latter are usually formulated along the lines of 'we want our mosque to be modern/ Islamic/ Eastern/ Turkish/ Dutch,' to which the architect understandably reacts with a concept in which he feels free to process his own views on mosques and on architectural design in relation to the commissioner's undefined cultural notions and to the location planned for the mosque. In short, his initial proposal is largely a representation of his own identity, during the construction of which he is bound by needs of mutual contrasting as much as his commissioner. Of course, he himself will have different traditions and target groups in mind, like certain architectural trends and other architects, trying to create his own 'oeuvre' in the process. Then, equally understandable, when confronted with a design proposal that is functionally appropriate but as for traditions does not represent what he had in mind, the commissioner is forced to think about how he wants his community's identity, so obvious to him but not to the architect, substantiated in an architectural design. Moreover - and that goes for the architect as well of course - he is forced to take into account the restricting or prescribing preferences of financier and authorities, who have their very own identity needs.

The Mobarak Mosque: From Shelter Church to Beacon of Light

By virtue of its complex architectural history, the Mobarak Mosque in The Hague forms an excellent case-study of the options that Muslim communities have for expressing a cultural identity in architecture. It is also a good example of the different reactions of architects, authorities and financiers that have to be met, sometimes restricting, but sometimes also enthusiastically supporting the commissioners' architectural cause. The building has seen multiple design proposals and building phases, with an 'Ahmadiyya' identity being substantiated in architectural traditions ranging from 'Dutch' to 'Qadiani' over a period of 50 years. Each addition to the once empty plot on the Oostduinlaan has seen its own design process, consisting of negotiations between mosque administrators, architects, the movement's leaders and governmental institutions, resulting in several design proposals, rejections, adjustments and, ultimately, in the plans that have been realized one by one at

the edge of the Oostduin Park. It is by studying these design processes that we can really discern the specific architectural identity-needs of the Ahmadiyya commissioners at the times of each of the mosque's building phases. This paper will try to give a reconstruction, as much as possible in light of the restricted availability of commissioners, architects, historical documents and drawings, of the Mobarak Mosque's design history and the identity that it represents.

The Socio-Political Context: Rise of the Ahmadiyya Movement

In the second half of the 1830's,¹¹ a man called Ghulam Ahmad was born in Qadian, in the Punjab. He was soon to create a new, reformist vision of Islam that would shake up that corner of the world profoundly. Ghulam Ahmad traced his forefathers to a member of a noble family of Persian descent in Samarqand.¹² Mirza Hadi Beg, said to be a descendant of the Mogul's ancestors, decided to start for himself and migrate to the Punjab in 1530, founding the fortified village of Islampur. As a relative of the imperial family, he was granted an estate and appointed Qadhi or magistrate in his district by emperor Babur. Islampur came to be known as Islampur Qadhi, and in the course of time the word Islampur was dropped and the village was called Qadian. Under Mogul control of the Punjab, the family acquired considerable wealth, and during the decentralization of Mogul rule, they were able to increase that wealth by becoming a ruling family themselves. However, during the rise of Sikh power in the Punjab, the family was uprooted and forced into poverty. An improvement took place during Maharajah Ranjit Singh's reign once Sikh rule was firmly invested, with Ghulam Ahmad's father Ghulam Murtaza being allowed to return to Qadian and join the Sikh army. Nevertheless, it was only under British rule that the family could try to restore its ancestral status, and Ghulam Murtaza even showed loyalty during the uprising of 1857. All he got out of it financially, however, was a yearly pension, and the rest of his life was characterized by legal attempts to regain the family's former landowning glory under Mogul rule.¹³

Much to the initial disdain of his father, Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be sent by God to restore Islam to its original purity, later even proclaiming himself to be the Promised Messiah instead of Jesus. The latter did not reside in heaven, waiting to return at the End of Days as Christians and Muslims alike believed, but had been taken from the cross alive, ending up in Srinagar, Kashmir, where his tomb was discovered by Ghulam Ahmad himself. As

¹¹ Several birth dates are given in different biographies. For references see Y. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous. Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background*, Berkeley 1989, p. 3.

¹² I. Adamson, *Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian*, London 1989, pp. 13-16.

¹³ Friedmann 1989, pp. 2-3; Still, Ghulam Murtaza's loyalist policy towards government, when allowing for freedom of religion, has been a feature of the movement ever since.

Mohammed was generally seen as the ultimate Prophet, Ahmad's claims called for strong reactions in contemporary Islamic communities. Although, after his revelation from God, his idea was to purify Islam from worldly corruption, steering it towards a defense against Christian mission and sectarian Hinduism, his religious views proved too drastic for most Muslims and were later designated as 'un-Islamic' by some.¹⁴ However, he managed to assemble a small group of adherents and, when in March 1889, his followers pledged allegiance to him in the city of Ludhyana, the Ahmadiyya movement came to life. As Ahmad declared: 'The community shall be a lighthouse so high as to illuminate the four corners of the world. The members thereof shall serve as models of Islamic blessings.'¹⁵ In 1891, Ghulam Ahmad declared his intentions to spread missionary activities to Europe and America. 'The rising of the sun from the West means that Western countries, which have for centuries been in the darkness of unbelief and error, shall be illumined by the sun of righteousness, and shall share in the blessings of Islam.'¹⁶

In 1882-1883, Ahmad built a white mosque in Qadian, the Mubarak Mosque, which he specifically meant to be the starting point for the spread of Islam around the world, literally 'laying the foundation stone of Islam's Renaissance and a superior world order.'¹⁷ After that, he made plans for the construction of a white minaret at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, built by his father in 1875. This 'Minaret of the Messiah' would literally and spiritually fulfill the prophesy in Islam saying that 'the Promised Messiah will descend by the White Minaret to the East of Damascus.' Although Ahmad interpreted this tradition to mean only that 'the Promised Messiah will come when there will be light throughout the world and distance cannot keep things hidden from view,' and that 'the truth of Islam will tower up like a minaret and attain a height which will establish its superiority over all other faiths,' clearly he also saw the representational advantages of its materialization. A muezzin would be able to proclaim loudly that there is no God but Allah, bright lights could be fixed to the top 'to dispel darkness and to show that the age of heavenly light and spiritual advancement has arrived,' and a clock could be installed to indicate that 'the doors of heaven are open here and now and there is no need for a war with the sword in order to convert the world to Islam' (**Figure 1**).¹⁸ After objections by the (mainly) Hindu inhabitants were put aside by the authorities, the foundation stone could be laid on Friday March 13th, 1903. Due to lack of finances, the minaret itself was built only after Ahmad's death, but it is still depicted on the Ahmadiyya flag and all its major publications.

¹⁴ In April 1974, the World Muslim Association urged Islamic governments to declare the Ahmadiyya non-Muslims, which was followed up by Pakistan, Jordan and several other countries and organizations. Friedmann 1989, p. 44.

¹⁵ Adamson 1989, p. 4.

¹⁶ Adamson 1989, p. 79.

¹⁷ *Noor Ul Haq*, vol 2, p. 42.

¹⁸ Adamson 1989, pp. 152-153.

Ghulam Ahmad died in May 1908. Nur al-Din, an erstwhile follower, was appointed by the elders of the movement as his successor or Caliph al-Masih. Under Nur al-Din, missionary activities were expanded to other countries, with resulting conversions in Southern India, Bengal, Afghanistan and England. When he died in March 1914, however, the movement's latent conflicts in leadership as well as religious doctrine came to the fore. As soon as Ahmad's son, Mahmud Ahmad, was elected new leader, another faction was created under Muhammad Ali. The first group called itself the Qadiani, after their headquarters and birthplace of the Founder, while the second based itself in Lahore and was named after their new headquarters as well.¹⁹ In Mahmud Ahmad's version, the figure of the Founder and his birthplace came to be seen as central and all-important, and he and his successors retained the title of Caliph. In the Qadiani organization, the Caliph represents the highest power, with followers pledging obedience to him as they had done in the founding days. Mahmud Ahmad himself claimed that he had become Caliph not only because he was chosen but also as a result of divine appointment.²⁰ It was he who actually constructed the Minaret of the Messiah between 1914 and 1916, for which his father had laid the foundation stone. The white marble-clad minaret, with the names of 298 donors engraved on its walls, was 105 feet high and its stairs counted 92 steps. Mahmud Ahmad himself was elected for life, and his approval was necessary for any new plan of action. In January 1944, he enhanced this already quite powerful political status by the religious claim to be the one and only Promised Reformer whose birth had been predicted by the movement's Founder.²¹ After the partition of British-India in 1947 and the ensuing formal split-up of the Punjab, headquarters moved from the now-Indian Qadian, first to the now-Pakistani Lahore, but soon after, in August 1948, to the specially built town of Rabwah, whose name was meant to provoke an association with the hill where Jesus was given refuge by Allah according to the Qur'an. Only a few members of the movement remained in Qadian to preserve the historical monuments of the town and to maintain it as a center for the Indian followers.²² In November 1965, Mahmud Ahmad's son Nasir Ahmad was elected third Caliph. In June 1982, Nasir Ahmad's younger brother, Tahir Ahmad, was elected fourth Caliph.²³ And in 2003, Masroor Ahmad, the grandson of the Founder's youngest son, was elected fifth Caliph.

¹⁹ Friedmann 1989, p. 147-162. In Muhammad Ali's Lahori-version, Ahmad came to be seen as a spiritually gifted reformer, the Promised Messiah indeed, but not a prophet in Mohammed's unique sense. While in Qadian his claims to prophethood are stressed, in Lahore his denials are regarded more important. This movement is much more decentralized into regional departments, with headquarters only having a coordinating role.

²⁰ Friedmann 1989, p. 23.

²¹ Friedmann 1989, p. 32.

²² Friedmann 1989, p. 39.

²³ Mirza Tahir Ahmad moved to London in 1984: in April that year, Pakistan forbade the Ahmadiyya to use titles like Mahdi and Khalifa for persons other than 'those of the Islamic

Under Mahmud Ahmad's leadership, which lasted for more than 50 years, the movement's missionary activities were expanded almost world-wide from the now-bustling town of his forefathers. He had been sending missionaries to the Netherlands for lectures and discussions on Islam beginning in 1924, and in 1947 a stationary missionary post was established in The Hague. From that time it was continuously manned by a head missionary and one or more assistants who gave lectures with the aim of banishing misunderstandings about Islam and propagating the Qadiani beliefs. Next, a monthly magazine, *Al-Islam*, appeared from 1948, and in 1954 the Qur'an was translated into Dutch. From the very start, the movement's missionary attempts were directed towards discussion, explanation and peaceful conversion of other believers, with the notion of Jihad surviving as something to be carried out solely by the tongue or the pen as a 'sword of arguments.'²⁴ The movement has always been oriented towards good contacts with Dutch society, inviting officials and orientalists, profiling itself as peaceful, tolerant, intellectual and progressive. Dutch converts were given a prominent place in the organization and its external relations. Meanwhile, the missionaries had frequent visits from the Caliph himself, and generally received direct instructions from their headquarters whenever a crucial decision had to be made. They have had regular get-togethers with their European colleagues and have organized frequent exchange-programs and international conferences. This high degree of organization and its ambitious outward presentation have led to a striking visibility in Dutch society, keeping in mind that the Ahmadiyya are hugely outnumbered by Holland's mainstream Muslims, of whom the majority, denying the Islamic aspect of the movement, have tried to reject it from most consultational institutions.

The Design Process: First Steps

Of course, one of the most visible and enduring outward presentations of any community is a proper building, and men with a mission like Ghulam Ahmad and his successors stressed the importance of building missionary posts and mosques around the world. Thus, it is no surprise that, already in February 1950, 3 years after the arrival of Holland's first Ahmadiyya head-missionary Qudrat-Ullah Hafiz, reports of a future mosque in The Hague started appearing in local newspapers. On February 6th 1950, city council member Schuermann, always pressing for post-war reconstruction of the destroyed parts of The Hague, complained about the insufficient width of the sidewalk at the entrance of Oostduin Park during discussion of the budget of the department of

past;' to call to prayer; to call their religious buildings mosques; to call their faith Islamic or to preach or propagate it in any way. Friedmann 1989, p. 46.

²⁴ Friedmann 1989, pp. 177-178, 185.

Reconstruction and City Development.²⁵ Alderman of Reconstruction Feber's answer, according to the official *Handelingen* of the City Council, was that a house would arise on that particular location, which the council member was sure to appreciate²⁶ - although one newspaper reported the alderman to have said that it would *astonish* the council member.²⁷ A few days later, the press started reporting on negotiations between the city government and the Ahmadiyya mission on the construction of a mosque and its possible location on the Oostduinlaan.²⁸ And indeed, on July 7th 1950, Hafiz officially announced to the press that a piece of land on the Oostduinlaan had just been bought, and that the first mosque in the country was soon to be built under supervision of Mahmud Ahmad, the movement's leader in Pakistan. It was also announced that the construction was to be financed by the women of the movement worldwide, and was intended to form a connection of enduring and deep friendship between The Netherlands and all the Muslim countries in the world (**Figure 2**).²⁹ The press generally covered this announcement under the headline 'First Mosque in The Netherlands,' with a short introduction to the Ahmadiyya mission, its headquarters and its history.³⁰ On July 15th 1950, reports appeared that the plans of the mosque had been finished and that 100.000 guilders had been collected.³¹

Starting on August 12th 1950, an interview on the subject with Hafiz was published by several newspapers. Hafiz stated that the first mosque in Holland would rise as soon as Rabwah headquarters and the local city government had accepted the plans designed by 'the The Hague architect Z. de Lyon.' An 800 square meters plot of land had been bought from a private property-owner,³² and the building would cost 100.000 guilders. For that amount, 'a sparkling white mosque' would arise, harboring 200 people, with a meeting-room holding another 200.³³ However, De Lyon appeared to be a follower with technical experience but not an actual architect under Dutch law. Unfortunately, this first sketch seems to have been lost, but in the following weeks, while the land was plotted out, several somewhat vague newspaper reports appeared on the mosque's lay-out. It would have two floors containing the actual prayer-room, a lecture room and living quarters for the missionary

²⁵ *Handelingen van de Gemeenteraad* 1950, pp. 210-211, *The Hague City Archive*.

²⁶ *Handelingen van de Gemeenteraad* 1950, p. 219, *The Hague City Archive*.

²⁷ *Haagsch Dagblad*, 07-02-1950.

²⁸ *Het Parool*, 11-02-1950.

²⁹ Q.U. Hafiz, press release of De Ahmadiyya Muslim Missie in Nederland, 07-07-1950, *Private Archive 'Kerkgemeenschap De Ahmadiyya Beweging in de Islam'*, The Hague, Mobarak Mosque; Henceforward abbreviated as '*Archive Mobarak Mosque*.'

³⁰ *Haagsche Courant*, 08-07-1950; All English quotations from Dutch sources in this paper are my translations.

³¹ *Haagsch Dagblad*, 15-07-1950.

³² The sale was official on 02-10-1950, and the price was 25.376 guilders. Buyer's contract, 02-10-1955, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

³³ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 11-08-1950; *Geldersch Dagblad*, 12-08-1950.

and his family, and it would be adorned with some small minarets and a modest central dome. A design was on its way to headquarters in Rabwah, where the leader would have to give his permission for the collected 100.000 guilders to be spent on the proposed construction.³⁴ However, this press statement seemed a bit too early, apparently caused by the early mission's understandable unfamiliarity with the difficult Dutch procedures of architectural construction and, not unimportantly, with the relatively high costs of design, materials and construction in The Netherlands. Any plan submitted to the city's Aesthetic Commission had to be accompanied by extensively detailed drawings. Moreover, when the original estate sold its land in pieces, the properties themselves were vested with the obligation to build nothing else on it than 'a villa,' thereby keeping the neighborhood exclusive and the prices high. Each successive owner would be bound by this obligation. However, Hafiz' lawyers arranged for the mosque to be exempted from this obligation by the estate owners' successor.³⁵

First Architect: J. G. Wiebenga

Nevertheless, in that particular area the destination plan 'Arendsdorp' appeared to apply, stating that the edge of this - high-status - park was only to be built on by half-open housing - in essence, expensive, free-standing constructions or villas. This was clearly stated in the buyer's contract,³⁶ but perhaps the mission did not fully realize that any exception would have to be hard won. In addition, all kinds of strict, detailed constructional rules applied, like the non-allowance of flat roofs, the minimum distance to accompanying streets and houses, and the allowance for trees and shrubs. The mission needed a local specialist, and new head-missionary Bashir paid a visit to the famous The Hague architect J.G. Wiebenga, later renowned as the 'Apostle of New Construction,'³⁷ on October 7th 1951. He brought with him a crudely drawn sketch which can be found in Wiebenga's archive (**Figure 3**).³⁸

Wiebenga explained the Dutch rules to Bashir. With all the demands of the area's destination plan, the costs would easily rise quite high. On Wiebenga's advice to sell the plot and buy an existing house, Bashir instead decided to go ahead as planned and returned to Wiebenga the next day, starting intensive contacts and negotiations on the design, which resulted in a changing

³⁴ *De Telegraaf/Nieuws van de Dag, Amsterdam*, 26-08-1950.

³⁵ Letter from Dekker, Paats and De Vries to Hafiz, 30-05-1950, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

³⁶ Buyer's contract, 02-10-1955, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

³⁷ J. Molema and P. Bak (eds), *Jan.Gerko Wiebenga. De Apostel van het Nieuwe Bouwen*, Rotterdam 1987.

³⁸ Calendrical Overview, Wiebenga 1954, and sketch 07-10-1951, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive Netherlands Architecture Institute*, henceforward abbreviated as *Archive NAI*.

series of sketches.³⁹ The architect came up with a new plan, taking in mind Bashir's comments but not necessarily including elevation sketches because first Wiebenga wanted to get the customary approval for ground plans and volumes.⁴⁰ However, the missionary specifically asked for gable drawings.⁴¹ Apparently, while preferences were initially mainly formulated in terms of size and costs, gable forms were at least as important to the commissioner as functional requirements. Wiebenga made some notes on the architectural forms in India and Persia for the occasion, coming to the general conclusion that here the 'Persian School' applied (**Figure 4**).⁴² The architect started in October 1951 with proposals for what in essence are villas as he had designed them before in The Hague,⁴³ only now with minarets as either roof-chimneys or as a detached structure (**Figure 5**).⁴⁴ He gave these minarets some fairly standard Indian 'helmet-shaped domes,' as he had called them in his notes. Clearly, these first plans totally deviated from Bashir's own ideas as expressed in his rudimentary sketch.

Apparently, however, these designs were not sufficiently recognizable for Ahmadiyya headquarters either. On August 12th 1952, Bashir came to Wiebenga with a sketch made by the Pakistani architect H.R.Wahid from Rabwah (**Figure 6**). This drawing had a distinctively 'Indian' look, although abstracted into the then-popular 'modernist' trend in Pakistan. The Qibla faced exactly towards Mecca, where Wiebenga had always hoped to use the slightly-off Southeast wall, which saved costs and architectural objections from the city.⁴⁵ However, this design was not up to the strict Aesthetic Commission's standards and when Wiebenga adjusted the plan he calculated it would cost 106.000 guilders.⁴⁶ The mission decided to continue negotiations with Wiebenga on the architect's own designs.

On October 29th 1952, a final plan of 703 square meters was sent to Rabwah and subsequently accepted,⁴⁷ and soon after the design was ready to be submitted to the Aesthetic Commission (**Figure 7**). This design included translations of Bashir's early drawing's main gable-elements like a central dome, here in the form of a barrel-vaulted roof, two turrets beside the central part, and corner minarets on the flanking wings. At this point the domes on the

³⁹ At first Wiebenga used the assistance of architects J. Lipplaa and H.A. Van Oerle, but later continued the commission on his own. Letter from Van Oerle to Wiebenga, 06-11-1953, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴⁰ Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 26-08-1952, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴¹ Calendrical Overview, Wiebenga 1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴² There are picture postcards of mosques in his files, together with a written description of 'Indian' and 'Persian' architectural forms, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴³ P. Bak, *De Laatste Werken*, in: Molema and Bak 1987, pp. 128-137; p. 132.

⁴⁴ Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 25-10-1951, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴⁵ Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 07-11-1951, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴⁶ Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 26-08-1952, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁴⁷ Calendrical Overview, Wiebenga/Bashir Litigation 1954, and Costs Overview, Wiebenga/Bashir Litigation 1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

turrets and minarets had changed from ‘helmet’ to ‘onion,’ as Wiebenga had also named them in his notes on Indian and Persian architecture. However, it took another year-and-a-half for any mosque design to be accepted by the city of The Hague. From July 25th 1953, when officially confronted with the proposal for the first time, the Aesthetic Commission kept rejecting plans and asking for rigorous adjustments like the elimination of the four corner minarets.⁴⁸ In this way, Wiebenga was steered back towards his familiar villa designs (**Figure 8**).⁴⁹ Wiebenga summarized: ‘These authorities could not agree with the plans and required that another plan should be made. Mr. G.A. Bashir and the architect J.G. Wiebenga asked information for the reasons why the plan could not be approved, and also pleaded to suggest some changes so as to improve the plan in the eyes of the authorities. But without any success. A totally new plan was asked for. The opinion was, that the design did not suit in the surroundings and did not harmonize with the architecture in the vicinity.’⁵⁰

Or, in Z. de Lyon’s view: ‘I can imagine that the Aesthetic Commission has objections against the proposed plans, although by now it starts appearing that the nature of these objections seem to apply to other than purely architectural aesthetical considerations.’⁵¹ According to one newspaper, while the land had already been bought in 1950 and the plans finished in 1952, the ensuing long delay was caused by silent opposition in Christian circles of the city government. Reportedly, one member of the Aesthetic Commission had suggested designing a so-called shelter church, a house of prayer not recognizable as such on the outside, a feature once forced on Catholics and Remonstrants.⁵² Other articles blamed the city’s invocation of the destination plan: only after the design was sufficiently villa-like, with nothing too explicitly hinting at its inner function, would the authorities exempt the Ahmadiyya from the rule and permit the construction of a mosque.⁵³ As it seems, this happened on March 5th 1954, when one of Wiebenga’s plans was finally approved by the Aesthetic Commission (**Figure 9**).⁵⁴ In Wiebenga’s own words: ‘After several meetings we succeeded at the end of many trials in making a plan that might find favor in the eyes of the authorities and such with the kind- and helpful-ness of the city engineer who told us the directions in

⁴⁸ Letters from Wiebenga to Bashir, 05-11-1953, 07-11-1953 and 03-04-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*; Behandelstaten van de Commissievergaderingen (henceforward abbreviated as ‘Behandelstaten’) 1953/1954, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 388, decisions nr. 774, and Notulen van Commissievergaderingen, Notulenboek (henceforward abbreviated as ‘Notulen’) 1947-Feb.1958, inventory nr. 360: 02-10-1953, 06-11-1953 and 26-02-1954, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

⁴⁹ Drawings of 18-11-1954, 23-11-1954 and 19-12-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁵⁰ Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 03-04-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁵¹ Letter from Z. de Lyon to Wiebenga, 25-11-1953, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁵² *Haagsch Dagblad*, 13-08-1954; *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16-08-1954.

⁵³ *Haagsche Courant/Het Vaderland*, 14-08-1954.

⁵⁴ Behandelstaten 1954, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 389, decision nr. 774’53, and Notulen 1947-Feb.1958, inventory nr. 360, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

which the authorities were thinking in terms of the architecture wanted.⁵⁵ The official permit for the design was granted on June 21st 1954.⁵⁶

In August 1954, the press reported that Rabwah had approved the design made by Wiebenga, that the necessary permit had been given by the Ministry of Reconstruction, and that, after long doubts, the The Hague Aesthetic Commission had agreed to the drawings as well. The architect was finishing the construction plans, and Bashir hoped to begin construction even before winter. The nine meter-high building, according to the architect, would have two floors, with office space and living quarters located on the first. A minaret would rise three meters above the building, ‘non-ascendable by keeping its diameter restricted to 66 centimeters, with a loudspeaker calling for prayer only once a week, on Fridays.’ The prayer room would be located on the second floor, together with a lecture room, connected to the prayer room by loudspeakers, which could be used for religious events as well.⁵⁷ In this design, the mosque had lost most of Bashir’s preferred gable traditions, appearing as a ‘New Construction’ building instead. As such, it had more similarities with Wiebenga’s existing oeuvre, as in his brickwork factory hall and chimney for the ceramics industry in Maastricht (**Figure 10**),⁵⁸ than with any building in the Punjab.

Only the detached minaret, supplied with the onion-shaped domes that Wiebenga had started designing in November 1953, and the small minaret-poles at each side of the entrance, as sole reminders of Bashir’s early ideal, gave away its function. At the end of August 1954, more details on the planned construction started appearing. The tender was planned for September 11th 1954, and if the commission were allotted right away and construction saw no delays, it should have been ready in May 1955. The first floor would contain an office, a reception-room, a library, a living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and some smaller spaces. The second floor, with the prayer room and the mission room, would be connected to the first floor by a grand hall, with open stairs emerging from one of the walls. The gables would be made of grayish-yellow bricks and concrete, materials often used at that period.⁵⁹

Second Architect: Frits Beck

After the tender on September 11th 1954, the architect counted 11 candidate-contractors. In October, the expectation was that the first stone could

⁵⁵ Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 03-04-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁵⁶ Letters from Wiebenga to Bashir, 03-04-1954 and 07-07-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁵⁷ *Haagsch Dagblad*, 13-08-1954; *Haagsche Courant*, 14-08-1950.

⁵⁸ J.B. Vercauteren, *Fabrieksgebouwen voor de Societe Ceramique te Maastricht*, in: Molema and Bak 1987, pp. 30-35.

⁵⁹ *Haagsche Courant*, 30-08-1954.

be laid in March 1955.⁶⁰ However, at the end of November, the press reported that construction could not commence. Apparently, the mission found the price difference between Wiebenga's initial estimate and the lowest construction company's offer much too large,⁶¹ even after a simplification of the plan.⁶² While Wiebenga still maintained that the commission was his when they reached a solution of the disagreement Bashir decided to give it to the Voorburg architect Frits Beck.⁶³ His design was much simpler, as Beck clearly took the restricted financial means of the mission into account more than Wiebenga had done. His plan had even more the appearance of a villa than Wiebenga's approved alternative, with the already approved grayish-yellow brick and concrete materials but now with a chimney-like structure on the back of the roof serving as a minaret through a concrete extension with a small crescent moon and star cut out (**Figure 11**). Importantly though, Bashir's early drawing's gable-scheme, with a protruding center and two flanking wings, could again be recognized. It still had to be submitted to the Aesthetic Commission,⁶⁴ but the former experiences of the mission with city building authorities and its subsequent choice for a straight villa-design with already-approved materials, an entrance portal that looked remarkably like the last one and a non-conspicuous minaret led to a very quick approval indeed: already on November 18th 1954, the Aesthetic Commission decided to approve the plan Beck had sent in on November 11th 1954, on condition of the adjustment of some minor details.⁶⁵ On December 2nd 1954, they asked for some further adjustment of details⁶⁶ and on December 9th 1954 the plan was approved.⁶⁷

Beck's plan was given an official permit on January 29th 1955,⁶⁸ and on February 11th 1955, Ahmadiyya member Zafrullah Khan, former Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs and judge at the International Court of Justice in

⁶⁰ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 08-10-1954.

⁶¹ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 03-12-1954; *Nieuws van de Dag*, 15-12-1954.

⁶² Letter from Wiebenga to Bashir, 23-10-1954, and Letter from Wiebenga to the City Council of The Hague, 20-10-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*; *Behandelstaten 1954*, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 389, decision nr. 1065, and *Notulen 1947-Feb.1958*, inventory nr. 360, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*. Apparently, Wiebenga had gained the city's permission, after the initial permit, to reduce the side-wing to only one floor, and that seems to be the plan that is shown in Molema and Bak 1987, p. 134.

⁶³ Letters from Bashir to Wiebenga, 27-09-1954 and 08-11-1954, NAI.WIEB.204, *Archive NAI*.

⁶⁴ *Haagsch Dagblad*, 25-11-1954.

⁶⁵ *Behandelstaten 1954*, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 389, decision nr. 1159, and *Notulen 1947-Feb.1958*, inventory nr. 360, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

⁶⁶ *Behandelstaten 1954*, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 389, decision nr. 1159, and *Notulen 1947-Feb.1958*, inventory nr. 360, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

⁶⁷ *Behandelstaten 1954*, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 389, decision nr. 1159, and *Notulen 1947-Feb.1958*, inventory nr. 360, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

⁶⁸ *Het Parool*, 10-02-1955; *Beschikking 184/668/55*, Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, Dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling, Gemeentelijk Bouw- en Woningtoezicht The Hague, henceforward abbreviated as *Archive DSO*.

The Hague, was photographed cutting the first sod next to a wooden model of the future mosque.⁶⁹ The foundation stone was to have been laid by the Caliph on May 20th 1955, but as he had to stay in Zurich for reasons of health, it was Zafrullah Khan again who was photographed doing the honors, after reading a message in name of the leader.⁷⁰ Some newspapers stated that the ceremony consisted of bricklaying a piece of stone from the Mubarak mosque in Qadian, the first center of the Ahmadiyya mission,⁷¹ while another wrongly thought it came from a mosque in Rabwah, the current center.⁷² Later, accompanying a photograph of the construction site, one newspaper described it as a building that, at first sight, did not recall ‘the exotic eastern atmosphere that comes to mind when we think of a mosque:’ it was rather seen as ‘modern western architecture.’⁷³ On December 9th 1955, the mosque was officially opened, again by Zafrullah Khan. After Imam A.B. Ayyub from Sumatra had opened the ceremony with a Qur’an recital, head-missionary Bashir thanked those present for their interest, saying that the mosque perhaps did not look like some Islamic countries’ mosques, but that one had to take the city’s demands into account (**Figure 12**). After thanking the cooperation on the city’s side, he stated that ‘a mosque does not have typical forms and that is why the mosque has been adjusted to its surroundings.’⁷⁴

Third Architect: J. M. Straathoff

In July 1962, at a press conference on the 15th anniversary of the mission in Holland, Hafiz announced that the mission would extend its activities to the Dutch speaking areas of Belgium, that the first Qur’an translation would see a second print, and that the mission had gained 300 believers since 1947. ‘Crown on these achievements’ were the plans for the addition of two small minaret-turrets, which had already been sent to the Aesthetic Commission for approval,⁷⁵ and, again, would be financed by the movement’s female members.⁷⁶ The turrets were to be made of concrete and copper, and to rise two meters above the building.⁷⁷ On July 5th 1962, the Aesthetic Commission decided to ‘hold’ a plan by architect J.M. Straathoff on

⁶⁹ *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant/Het Vrije Volk/Het Binnenhof*, 12-02-1955, with a separate photograph of the wooden model itself in *Het Vaderland*, 12-02-1955.

⁷⁰ *Het Vaderland*, 21-05-1955.

⁷¹ *Haagsch Dagblad/Het Parool*, 21-05-1955.

⁷² *Het Vrije Volk*, 21-05-1955.

⁷³ *Haagsche Courant*, 12-10-1955.

⁷⁴ *Het Vaderland*, 10-12-1955.

⁷⁵ *Het Vrije Volk/Haagsche Courant*, 14-07-1962.

⁷⁶ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 19-07-1963.

⁷⁷ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14-07-1962.

the ‘placement of two minarets above the entrance.’⁷⁸ On February 2nd 1963 Straathoff’s plan was approved,⁷⁹ and in July that year the minarets saw the light of day (**Figure 13**). When the two gold-plated turrets were officially in use, a reception was held.⁸⁰ Hafiz stated: ‘Our minarets will complete the mosque. They were constructed in Holland with Pakistani examples in mind. They will have a symbolical meaning. We are not that far yet that they can actually call to prayer, like in Muslim countries.’⁸¹ ‘We ourselves do not value them that much. But when the outside world hears the word mosque, it wants to see something.’⁸² And: ‘We are satisfied with what we have, but the symbolism of it is of importance to the outside world.’⁸³

One newspaper reported that the minarets gave the building ‘the appearance of a real mosque, with the unpretentious turrets perfecting the mosque’s character.’⁸⁴ Another stated: ‘Those who have walked along the Oostduinlaan every now and then probably never noticed that the small building at the end of the path is a mosque. This may very well be the case because of the absence of minarets. But now they are here. On the protruding part of the simple gable stand two small, thin minarets, crowned by beautifully shining gold-plated copper domes that sparkle in the sunlight.’⁸⁵ One newspaper, although showing a photograph of the two new minarets with the old one still rising visibly above the building, signaled the fact that many outsiders, while not having been able to notice the mosque at first, could now do so with these new additions.⁸⁶ Another stated that the mission was giving ‘their western house an eastern appearance,’⁸⁷ and, again, another one found the mosque ‘a modest, modern construction that, aside from the tiny minarets and the crescent moon on the chimney, appears to be an attractive villa.’⁸⁸ Apparently, the old minaret was indeed, by most parties concerned, perceived to be not much more than a chimney.⁸⁹

⁷⁸ Behandelstaten 1962, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 396, decision nr. 825, and Notulen Nov.1961-Sept.1964, inventory nr. 362, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

⁷⁹ Behandelstaten 1962, bnr. 579, inventory nr. 396, decision nr. 825, and Notulen Nov.1961-Sept.1964, inventory nr. 362, *Archive The Hague Aesthetic Commission 1948-1990*.

⁸⁰ *Haagsche Courant*, 29-07-1963: ‘last Saturday.’

⁸¹ *Haagsche Courant*, 09-07-1963, with a photograph of one of the turrets.

⁸² *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14-07-1963.

⁸³ *Haagsche Courant*, 14-07-1963.

⁸⁴ *Het Vaderland*, 16-07-1963.

⁸⁵ *De (?)*, 17-07-1963; see partly burnt newspaper article-collection, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

⁸⁶ *Haagsch Dagblad*, 23-07-1963.

⁸⁷ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 14-07-1963.

⁸⁸ *De Tijd-Maasbode*, 01-02-1964.

⁸⁹ One newspaper even concluded that it was ‘a lovely house at the edge of the forest, in which everyone would want to live. It even lacks a minaret.’ *Het Vaderland, Den Helder*, 06-02-1961.

Fourth Architect: Abdul Rashid

Already in 1964, Hafiz expected his mosque to be too small for the celebration of the end of Ramadan,⁹⁰ and a photograph of the celebration of Abraham's sacrifice in 1965 showed that, by then, tents had to be used to handle the growing numbers of followers.⁹¹ However, the much needed extension would have to wait more than twenty years. Then, on the morning of August 8th 1987, the mosque was almost burnt down by what later seemed to be a member of an anti-Ahmadiyya Sunnite movement, claiming that the Mobarak Mosque did not preach the real Islam and that he felt that something had to be done.⁹² The total damage was estimated to be a hundred thousand guilders, if not two,⁹³ although the insurance company paid up only a sum of 74.550 guilders.⁹⁴ After the fire, the mosque of course had a somewhat dilapidated appearance,⁹⁵ and in September 1987 the Ahmadiyya architect Abdul Rashid from London made some provisional sketches, approved by the Caliph, for a local architect to work out, answering to the desperately needed renovation and extension.⁹⁶

As Rashid had been designing mosques for missions all around the world without charge, gaining much experience in the process and the trust of the Caliph himself, this was a welcome and affordable option for the Mobarak Mosque's extension. He decided that it would be best if the existing materials and forms were to be copied in an evenly large volume attached at the back of the current building. However, as city authorities kept asking for adjustments of plans in reaction to volume drawings,⁹⁷ the extension was heavily delayed. The first official extension proposal by the movement was sent on July 24th 1989 and received by the city authorities on August 25th 1989.⁹⁸ After several rounds of negotiations, on September 13th 1990 the Aesthetic Commission advised against the proposed volume enlargement with the aim of protecting the green zone at the back of the mosque.⁹⁹ On October 9th 1990, the mission sent in a volume plan and a wooden model, including a minaret (unfortunately now lost), which proposed about 80% of the initial enlargement, thereby saving

⁹⁰ *De Tijd-Maasbode*, 01-02-1964.

⁹¹ *Haagsche Courant*, 13-04-1965.

⁹² *Haagsche Courant*, 11-08-1987.

⁹³ *De Volkskrant*, 12-08-1987.

⁹⁴ Letter from H. Verhagen, chairman/Amir of the Movement in Holland, to the Caliph, 20-11-1987, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

⁹⁵ *Het Parool*, 30-05-1996; *Wijkblad Benoordenhout*, April 1996, p. 10.

⁹⁶ Letter from Rashid to Verhagen, 29-09-1987, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*; The local architect hired to work out Rashid's drawings was The Hague-based Deurloo.

⁹⁷ Letter from Van der Velden, secretary of the Movement in Holland, to the Caliph, 30-03-1990, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

⁹⁸ Letter from the Mission to DSO, 24-07-1989, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*; Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, *Archive DSO*.

⁹⁹ Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, *Archive DSO*.

the trees in the back yard (**Figure 14**). On November 2nd 1990, the authorities stated that they would not disapprove of a plan based on this reduced volume, with the added remark that future extension would not be permitted.¹⁰⁰

On November 5th 1992, a worked out plan by Rashid was approved by the Aesthetic Commission.¹⁰¹ On July 23rd 1993, the plan was submitted to the city government.¹⁰² After some adjustments of details on parking space and after several retries,¹⁰³ the city gave a permit on February 22nd 1995 (**Figure 15**).¹⁰⁴ The condition was that for the extension the same brick material would be used as for the original parts.¹⁰⁵ The renovation was meant to transform the mosque into a multi-functional space: the first floor would have class-rooms for religious lessons and prayer-spaces for men and women; the second floor would have guest rooms for visiting missionaries; and a basement would be constructed that would provide necessary office space. With the argument that the neighborhood did not have any Muslim inhabitants and the community did not want to disturb the neighbors, the minaret would not have a loudspeaker. When one neighbor heard of the inclusion of a minaret, he first foresaw a shock in the neighborhood, but when he was told that it would have no loudspeaker, he dismissed the subject as a non-issue.¹⁰⁶ The authorities spoke of a careful procedure with sufficient opportunity for objections, which nobody seemed to have made use of except for the neighborhood association requesting the non-disturbance of the green zone around the building.¹⁰⁷ Because Rashid's design was a formal copy of the existing building, it would remain in harmony with the mosque's surroundings just as the original building had done. Moreover, available drawings and calculations could be used for the extension, reducing costs and effort.¹⁰⁸ To finance the construction costs, all followers would donate one month's salary a year for the next three years.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, when confronted with the high prices of local contractors, the mission decided to keep things in their own hands. Under supervision of a follower with extensive building experience, a group of volunteers started construction on May 29th 1996 when the foundation stone for the renovation and enlargement was laid by the fourth Caliph, Tahir Ahmad (**Figure 16**). 'The old little brick that the Caliph puts down does not compare to the brand-new,

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Verhagen to the Caliph, 02-11-1990, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹⁰¹ Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, *Archive DSO*; Starting with this plan, the local architects who were hired to work out Rashid's drawings were Leiden-based Prinsen and Den Ouden.

¹⁰² Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, *Archive DSO*.

¹⁰³ Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, *Archive DSO*.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from the city administration to the Ahmadiyya Community, 22-02-1995, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Verhagen to DSO The Hague, 29-10-1996, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹⁰⁶ *Wijkblad Benoordenhout*, April 1996, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Wijkblad Benoordenhout*, April 1996, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Verhagen to Kromhout Rijnsburg BV, 07-06-1995, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹⁰⁹ *Haagsche Courant, Section The Hague*, 30-05-1996.

white stones that his followers place on the earth behind the mosque. But the yellowish stone does come from the Punjab, the spiritual homeland of the Ahmadiyya movement, as declared the 69-year old ‘pope’ (*sic*) of the Ahmadiyya later.¹¹⁰ Another newspaper reported the brick was ‘red,’ originating from what is then misunderstood as being ‘the first house of prayer in India, anno 889 (*sic*).’¹¹¹

Where Rashid had initially designed the minaret as a completely abstracted form, or a cylindrical steel post with a round bulb on top, later somewhat more familiar traditions appeared. On January 23rd 1998, the mission was permitted to deviate from the initial permit by building a more recognizably ‘eastern’¹¹² steel minaret by Rashid (**Figure 17**), who himself uses the general, art-historical term ‘Mogul.’¹¹³ The minaret eventually decided on was a design that Rashid had made before, one of some 21 models that he had created as different options for different Ahmadiyya commissioners.¹¹⁴ It was not the copy of the lighted Minaret of the Messiah, which several other Ahmadiyya mosques had chosen indeed. The minaret that the Dutch commissioners preferred was the one that appeared to be based on forms as used in the smaller corner minarets of the Founder’s Mubarak Mosque, which Rashid had extensively studied (**Figure 18**).

When the extension was officially opened on October 30th 1998,¹¹⁵ only the foundation for the minaret had been laid. Importantly though, by now the mission had come to realize that by using brickwork and concrete for the minaret, in the style of the existing building, the foundation would be able to support it, the reverse of what they had assumed before.¹¹⁶ As the construction of the minaret could not be started before the obligatory date due to lack of funds because of an ongoing investment in a conference-centre in Nunspeet, on January 28th 2001 the city revoked that part of the permit.¹¹⁷ So, on June 21st 2002, what might have been a difficulty was turned into an advantage by having to request another permit according to Rashid's earlier design,¹¹⁸ now based on brickwork and concrete decorations which gave it a much less abstracted and much more detailed appearance. In February 2003 we read about objections placed by the neighborhood association and inhabitants

¹¹⁰ *Het Parool*, 30-05-1996.

¹¹¹ *Haagsche Courant*, 30-05-1996.

¹¹² Interview with Mahmood, financial specialist of the movement in Holland, The Hague, 31-08-2005.

¹¹³ Interview with Rashid, London, 18-08-2005.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Rashid, London, 18-08-2005.

¹¹⁵ *Trouw*, 31-10-1998; Press release Ahmadiyya Gemeenschap, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Verhagen, The Hague, 08-09-2005.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Stadsdeelkantor Haagse Hout to the Ahmadiyya Gemeenschap, 28-01-2002, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*; Dossier Oostduinlaan 79, *Archive DSO*.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Verhagen to Stadsdeelkantor Haagsche Hout, 21-06-2002, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

against this new minaret ‘that, while having only symbolical and no functional meaning, does not fit, as to height and form, into the architectural structure of the neighborhood.’¹¹⁹ However, on May 16th 2003, the plan, as received on July 3rd 2002, was approved by the authorities who rejected all objections from neighbors, stating that ‘a minaret is characteristic for this function and fits in the extraordinary destination on this location,’ while following a positive advice from the Aesthetic Commission which said that ‘we appreciate the care with which the minaret is substantiated in materials, colours and details.’¹²⁰ Apparently, they enthusiastically supported the minaret now that it would be kept ‘in style.’ In answer to a request of December 2004, on March 24th 2005 the community received permission to change the minaret’s dome’s green colour to gold, and to restore the green-eroded turret-domes besides the entrance to gold-plating as well (**Figure 19**).¹²¹ This way, the turrets as well as the minaret would be in line with Straathoff’s original design as approved in 1963.

On April 28th 2005, some local neighbors retracted their legal procedure against the permit for the construction of the minaret once they understood that it would not be used for the call to prayer,¹²² a feature on which the community had not planned. The commissioners’ stress on the right to a minaret was a victory. ‘We want to have a minaret, because a minaret is a symbol for the spread of the light of Islam,’ said missionary Naeem Ahmad.¹²³ Construction of the minaret started early 2005 and it was officially opened on December 9th 2005, as a token of what the Ahmadiyya mission and Muslim communities in general had achieved in 50 years of mosque architecture in The Netherlands (**Figure 20**).

The Construction of Identity: Qadian in The Hague

What the very first design for the first purpose-built mosque in The Netherlands looked like is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm, but it could very well have been the early commissioner’s drawing in Wiebenga’s archive or at least something like it. In any case, the stress on the whiteness of the structure and the mention of small minarets and a dome might harbour references to traditions used around the Qadiani holy places, as Bashir’s gable drawing is very similar to the main gable of the Founder’s Mubarak Mosque. After all, Caliph Mahmud Ahmad had made the figure of the Founder and his birthplace Qadian the pivot around which everything revolved, and, on a

¹¹⁹ *Wijkblad Benoordenhout*, February 2003, p. 35; Several letters from neighbors to DSO, February 2005, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹²⁰ Letter from DSO to the Ahmadiyya Gemeenschap, 16-05-2003, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹²¹ Letter from DSO to the Ahmadiyya Gemeenschap, 24-03-2005, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹²² Letter from C. Breedveld to Verhagen, 28-04-2005, *Archive Mobarak Mosque*.

¹²³ *Haagsche Courant*, 23-06-2005.

plaque inside the Mobarak Mosque in The Hague, there is even mention of Qadian being referred to in the Qur'an next to Mecca and Medina. In his Mubarak Mosque, Ahmad used the architectural traditions that his father already had incorporated into his Al-Aqsa Mosque, albeit in a much more sober manner. It appears that Ghulam Murtaza represented his 'Mogul' claims in 'Mogul' architecture as well, as his mosque has the basic features of the more famous imperial mosques like the one in nearby Lahore. From Babur, the emperors traced their ancestors to the great Jenghis Khan and Timur Lenk, combining Muslim architectural traditions from Persia and Central-Asia with Hindu traditions from Rajput temples and palaces, and with the Sufi and Holy Men shrine-architecture that thrived under pre-Mogul Sultanates. In the end, their imperial mosque designs often shared a three-domed prayer-hall at the end of an arched courtyard with four minarets at the corners, while they more frequently associated themselves with divine power by using white marble plating, formerly used mainly for tombs of revered local saints and only in a later phase for the emperors' own tombs, palaces and mosques.¹²⁴

When the The Hague's 'sparkling white mosque,' as a possible reference to the Qadiani Mubarak Mosque, proved to be inadmissible in Christian circles and the mission realized their want of a local specialist, they hired one of Holland's most famous architects to get Holland's first mosque begun. They then tried to move him to include ever more recognizable Qadiani features in his designs: his proposals range from contemporary Dutch villas with chimneys on the roof as small 'Indian' minarets (as he had studied them), to much more recognizable 'Qadiani' traditions in gable schemes with entrance portal-turrets and corner minarets. Apparently, the mission chose to represent its identity to Dutch society by using certain traditions from the movement's Founder's mosque, which itself referred to Mogul times. When the final proposal was rejected by the authorities, they forcefully steered back towards Dutch traditions as Wiebenga had already included them in his earlier, admired oeuvre, with only a main minaret with an abstracted dome and two smaller versions besides the entrance as reminders of its inner function. When this design proved too costly, a new one was very quickly commissioned and accepted, making even more use of Dutch villa-traditions than the last one. This time, the (sole) minaret did not even really pretend to be much more than a chimney, although in its structure, the main gable still included references to Bashir's 'Qadiani' drawing, and the foundation stone still came from the Mubarak Mosque in Qadian. Apparently, the commissioners had learned from previous experiences and decided that Dutch society was just not ready yet for any representation more visible than that. They went with the shelter church idea and even turned it for the best, representing the Dutch traditions used as a

¹²⁴ Catherine B. Asher, *Sub-Imperial Palaces. Power and Authority in Mughal India*, in: *Ars Orientalis*, vol 23, 1993, pp. 281-302: p. 283.

sign of the flexibility of Islam and the integration of the movement into their Dutch surroundings.

However, seven years later, when the movement had grown more confident and the dust of the first mosque in Holland had settled down a bit, the need for a more recognizable representation returned - if it had ever left. With the extension of missionary activities to Belgium, the second printing of the Dutch Qur'an and the growth in numbers, the mission wanted Qadiani traditions, in the form of two turrets, for the missionary post in The Hague as a 'crown on these achievements.' Of course, the missionary's suggestion that he only responded to the outside world's need for confirmation of an image, is no more than saying that, in his opinion, a recognizable architectural representation is at the basis of every Muslim community's identity towards others. The fact that 'Pakistani' examples were chosen without much ado, with 'Pakistani' geographically referring to headquarters but the used dome-traditions being very similar to the abstracted 'Mogul' helmet-shaped domes on either side of the main entrance to the Founder's Mubarak Mosque in Qadian, is an indication that Qadiani traditions were still very important in the construction of the movement's identity.

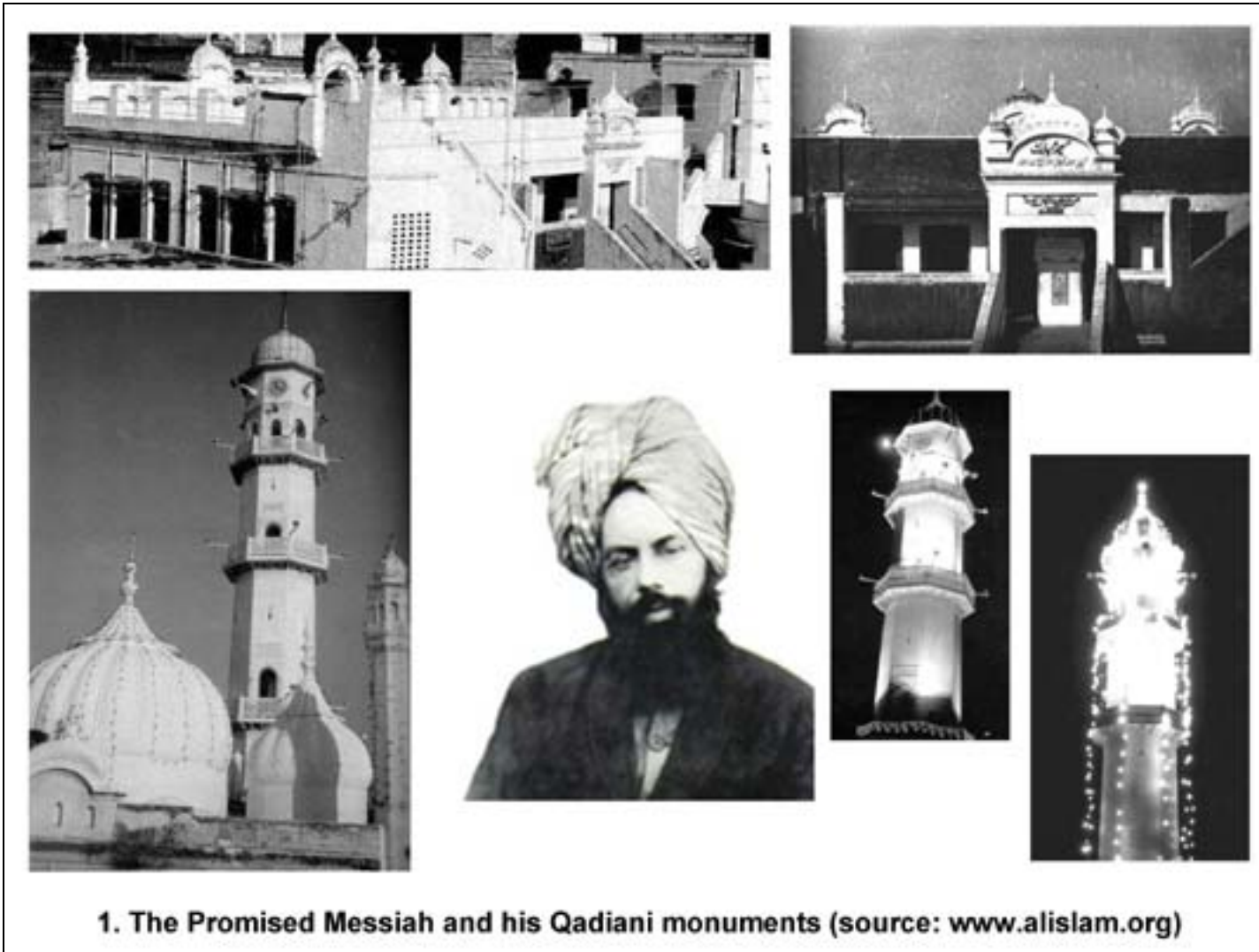
The extension of the main building using the same architectural forms was the idea of the Ahmadiyya architect Abdul Rashid. The multiplication of the main building by two was a perfect way to save costs and effort, and in architectural terms as well it was sure to provoke the least possible objections by authorities and society. However, that does not mean that the Qadiani traditions were no longer valued: indeed, it could be argued that it was the simultaneous request for, and approval of, a very visible minaret on the street side that made the rest acceptable. A recognizable Ahmadiyya identity would be vested in the minaret, and less in the main building. Where Abdul Rashid initially had planned a fully stylized minaret in answer to his views on compatibility with the modernity of the surrounding architecture and that of the main building, later a more recognizably Qadiani form was chosen by the commissioners, representing the regional background of the movement, as well as its religious beliefs, by way of association with the Founder's mosque.

The authorities, by now much more used to minarets in the city-scape of The Hague, found this element to be no more than a logical step, and even welcomed it after the mission applied for the minaret to be constructed in brickwork and concrete. Neighbors retracted their objections as soon as became clear that they would not be hearing the call to prayer, supplanted as it would be by lights. The inclusion of foundation stones, turret-dome traditions and corner-minaret traditions from the Mubarak Mosque, together with the copying of its name, can be seen to represent the world-wide Islamic Renaissance that began with the construction of the Founder's mosque (**Figure 21**). At the same time, the use of the lighted lantern-tradition from the Minaret of the Messiah represents the beacon of light that the community wants to be,

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just as their Founder represented himself as light in the symbolical darkness of his religious surroundings, and his movement as a lighthouse lighting the four corners of the world, with his own minaret as an everlasting, material reminder of his message (**Figure 22**).

50 YEARS OF MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS





„In naam van Allah“

**AHMADIYYA MUSLIM MISSIE
IN NEDERLAND**

„GOD GAFF ZIJN WOORD AAN DE BELOOFDE MESSIAS (HAFIZ)
„KEDAL UN BOCCORAP TOT AAN HET EINDE DER AARDE BRENGEN“

„Ik ben het licht van deze
dusriyya awwa“
(Ahmad, de belofte Messias)
RUYCHROCKLAAN 54
s-GRAVENHAGE
TEL. 721106

DE EERSTE MOSKEE IN NEDERLAND

Hierdoor hebben wij het genoegen U mede te delen dat, na de overeenkomst voor de grond zo juist te hebben gemaakt, het ons nu mogelijk is het definitieve nieuws aan-
gaande de in Nederland te bouwen Moskee voor publicatie wij te geven.
Deze Moskee zal de eerste zijn die binnenkort hier te lande zal worden gebouwd en wel
aan de Oostindianen te s-Gravenhage.

De werkzaamheden ten opzichte van deze Moskee werden onder leiding van Mirza Bashir-
ul-Dien Mahmood Ahmad, het tegenwoordige Hoofd van de wijd verspreide „Ahmadiyya
Beweging in de Islam“ te Pakistan, ten uitvoer gebracht.

Deze Islamitische Beweging heeft bloeiende Missies bijna overal ter wereld. Onder de
vele Moskeeën die de Beweging in verschillende landen heeft gebouwd zijn de Moskeeën
te Londen en te Washington (U.S.A.)

Als verdere bijzonderheid kan nog worden vermeld dat de bouw van deze Moskee in
Nederland hoofdzakelijk door contributies van de vrouwelijke leden van de Ahmadiyya
Gemeenschap worden bekostigd, terwijl de gelden voor de te bouwen Moskee in Ame-
rika door mannen worden bijeengebracht.

De Ahmadiyya Beweging (tegenwoordige hoofdzetel Rabwah, Pakistan) werd te Qadian,
India, gesticht door Hazrat Ahmad (1835-1908), die de door God gezonden Belofte van
deze eeuw was voor het heilige en geestelijke doel.

Het is onze oprechte wens niet alleen onder de Muslims liefde, eenheid en harmonie te
brengen, doch ook onder alle godsdiensten door allerlei onderlinge wanbegrippen te ver-
wijderen, geestelijk eenheid te zoeken en één te zijn in de eenheid Gods.

Moge deze Moskee een schakel van diepe en blijvende vriendschap en betere verstand-
houding vormen tussen Nederland en alle Islamitische landen ter wereld en mogen deze
onze nederige pogingen een teken van vrede zijn en welgevallig zijn in de ogen van God.

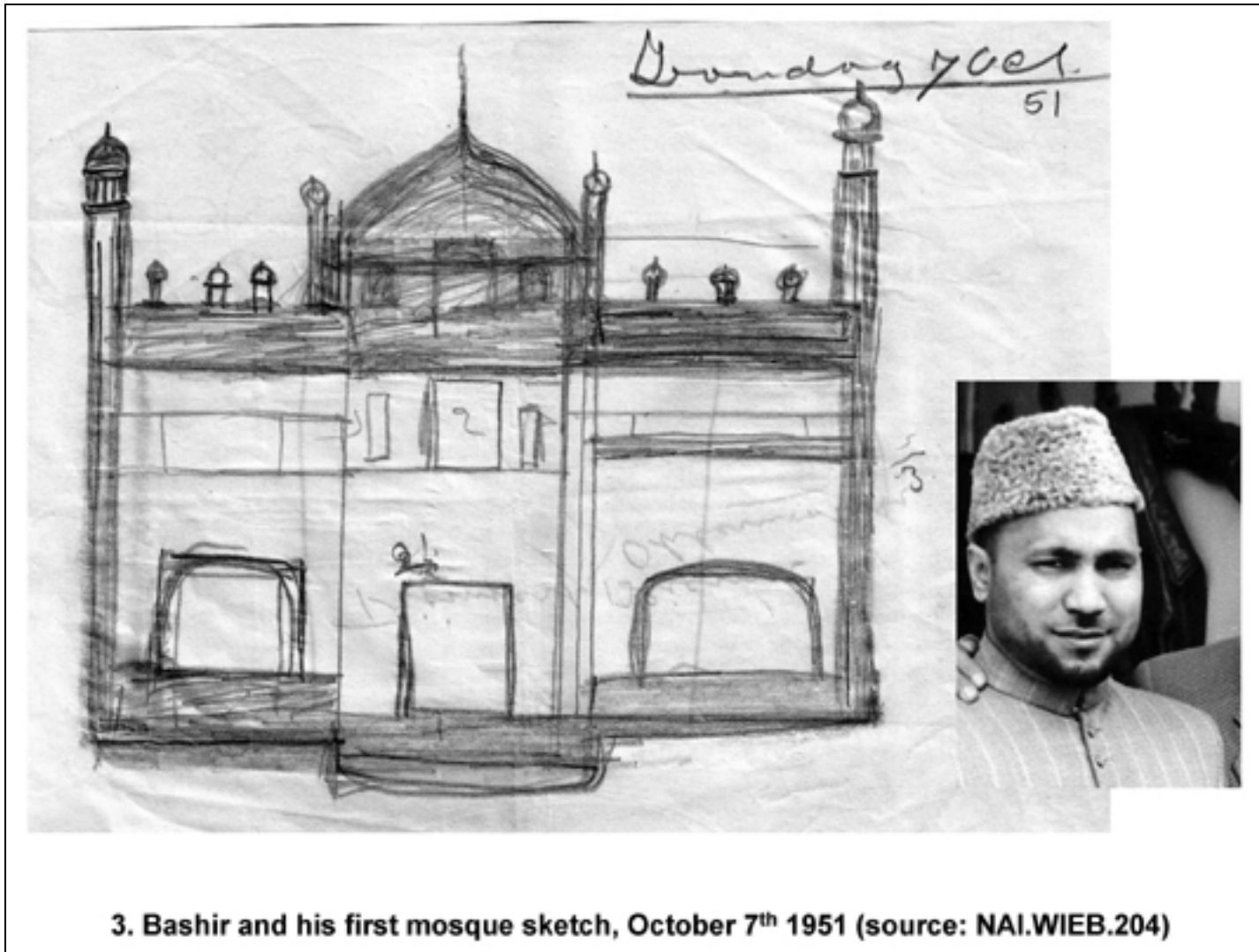
Amin.

Q. U. HAFIZ, H. A.
Hoofd van de Ahmadiyya Muslim Missie
in Nederland

7 Juli 1950

2. Hafiz and his 'first mosque' announcement (source: Archive Mobarak Mosque)

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3. Bashir and his first mosque sketch, October 7th 1951 (source: NAI.WIEB.204)

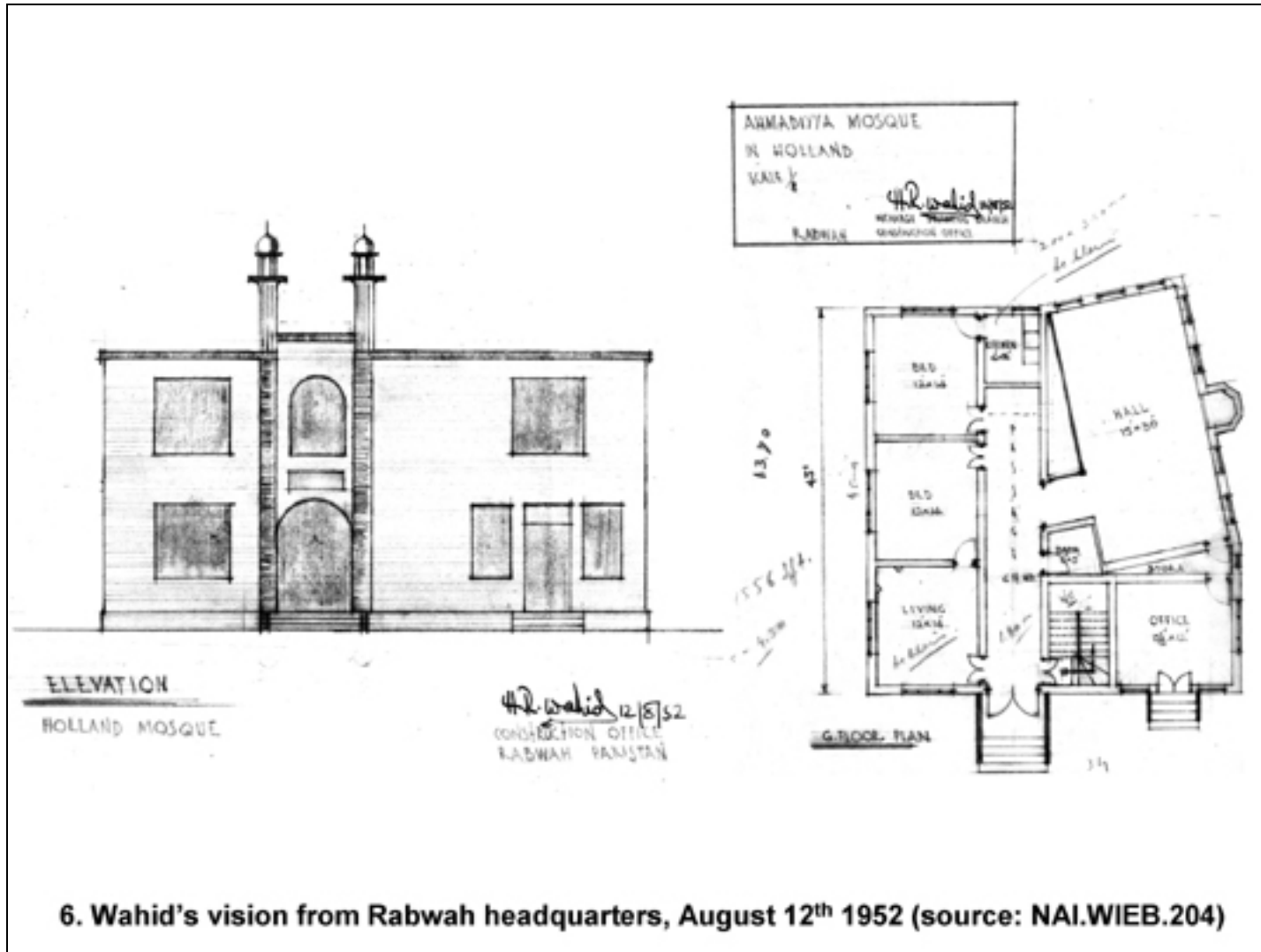


Bel op: smilten onder basement (kerstok!)
bogen met grillige vormen op de muur
kruisboog in Indië & Perzië.
koepel peer of vierkant
rundering faience decoratie
pleister als
byzantijnse of tent
wand in rijkte
verduelen
Arabische d. i. een
merfries van dooreen
gevlochten geom. fig.
a type of oud Arab.
schriftnotie
Stalactites! als hoekverlenging
en alle uitsteking van de muur
Polychromie de muur en
gekleurde muur!
Wielvormige koepel hoekvormige minarets
in overal
Plat dak grote overstekken als
↓ min! bamboe!
stengels.

4. Wiebenga and his notes on Islamic architecture (source: NAI.WIEB.204)

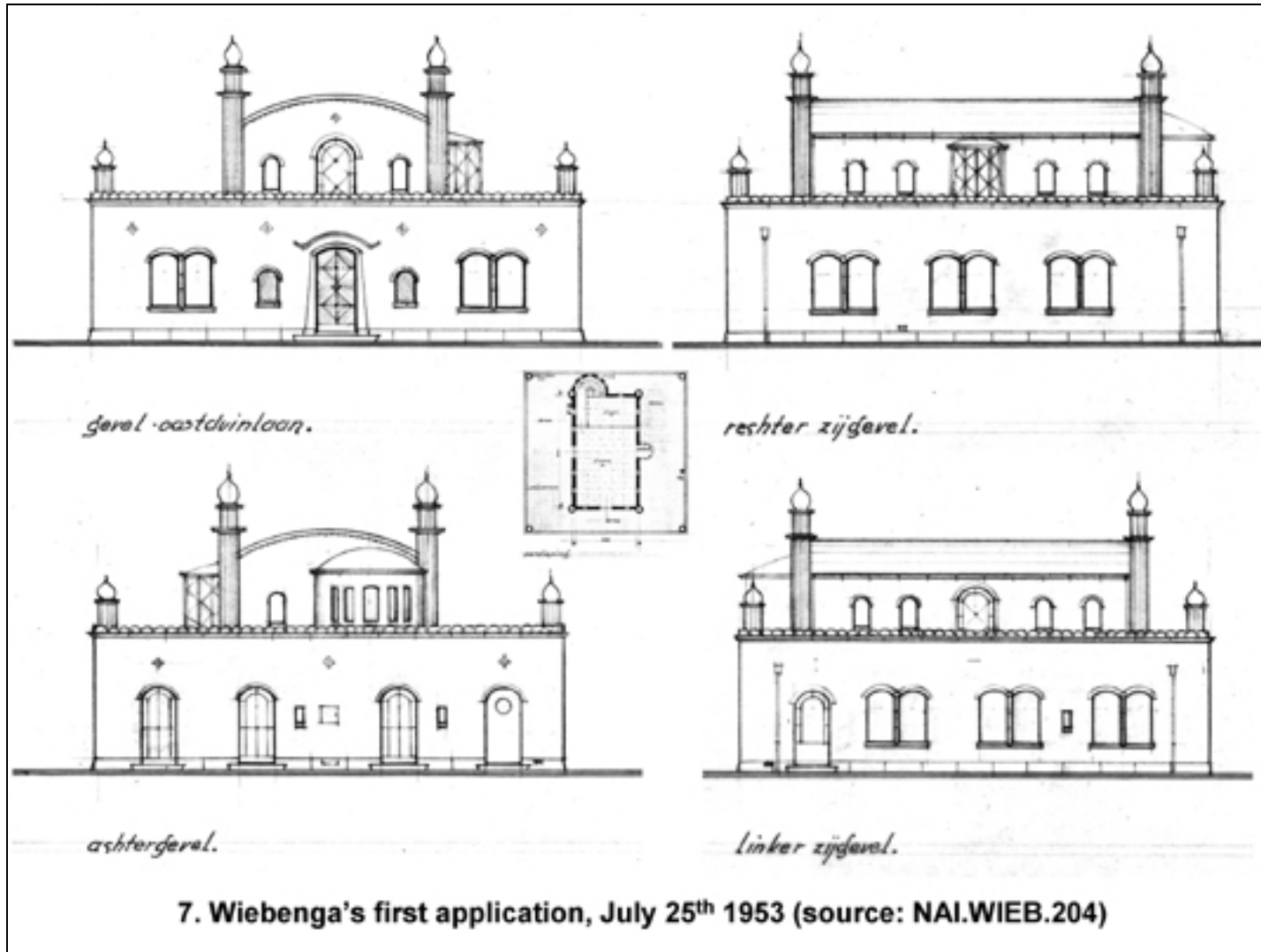
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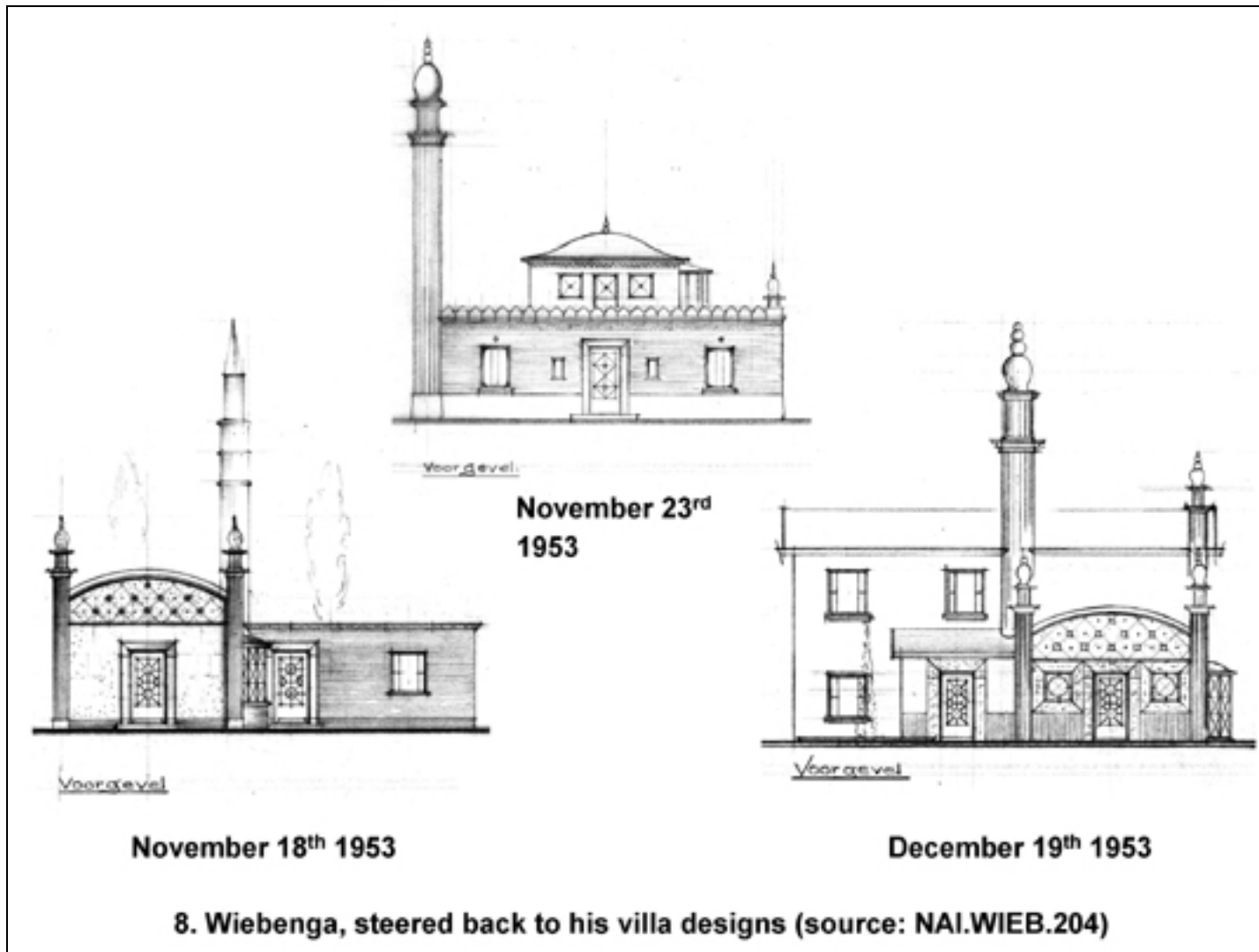




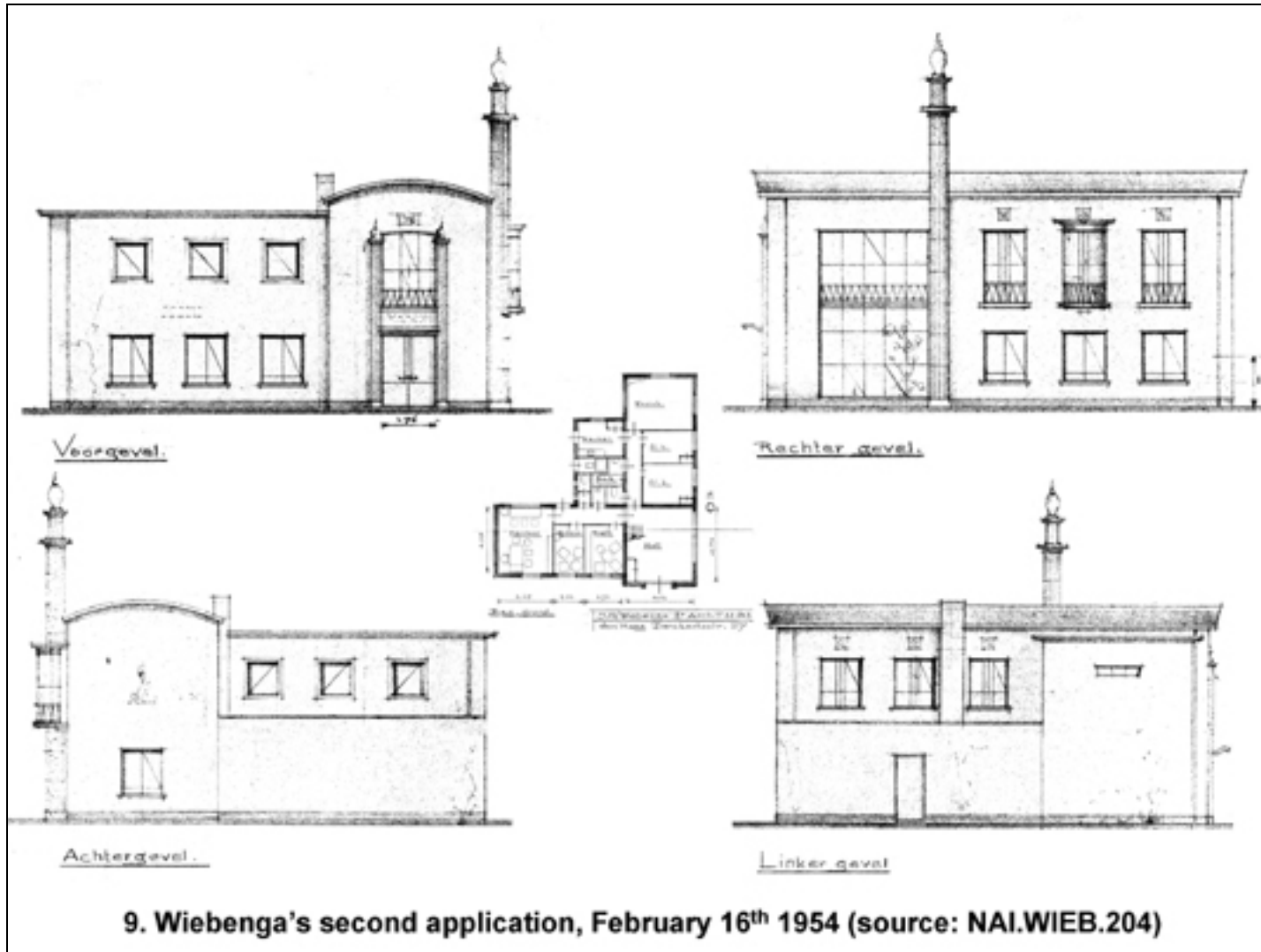
6. Wahid's vision from Rabwah headquarters, August 12th 1952 (source: NAI.WIEB.204)

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50 YEARS OF MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS



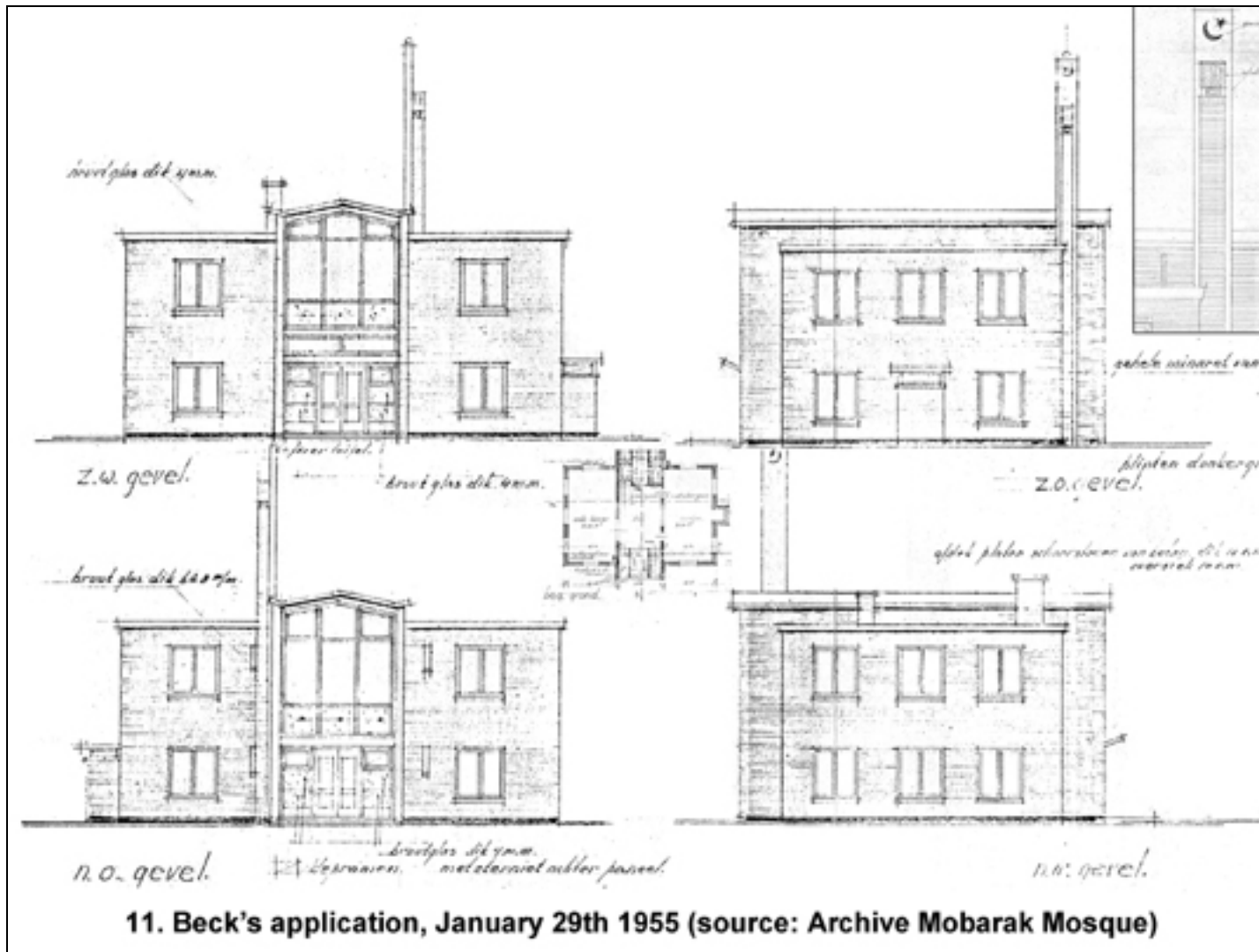
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Céramique, Maastricht 1912-1955

10. Wiebenga's mosque design and factory (sources: NAI.WIEB.204, Molema and Bak)

50 YEARS OF MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS





February 11th 1955



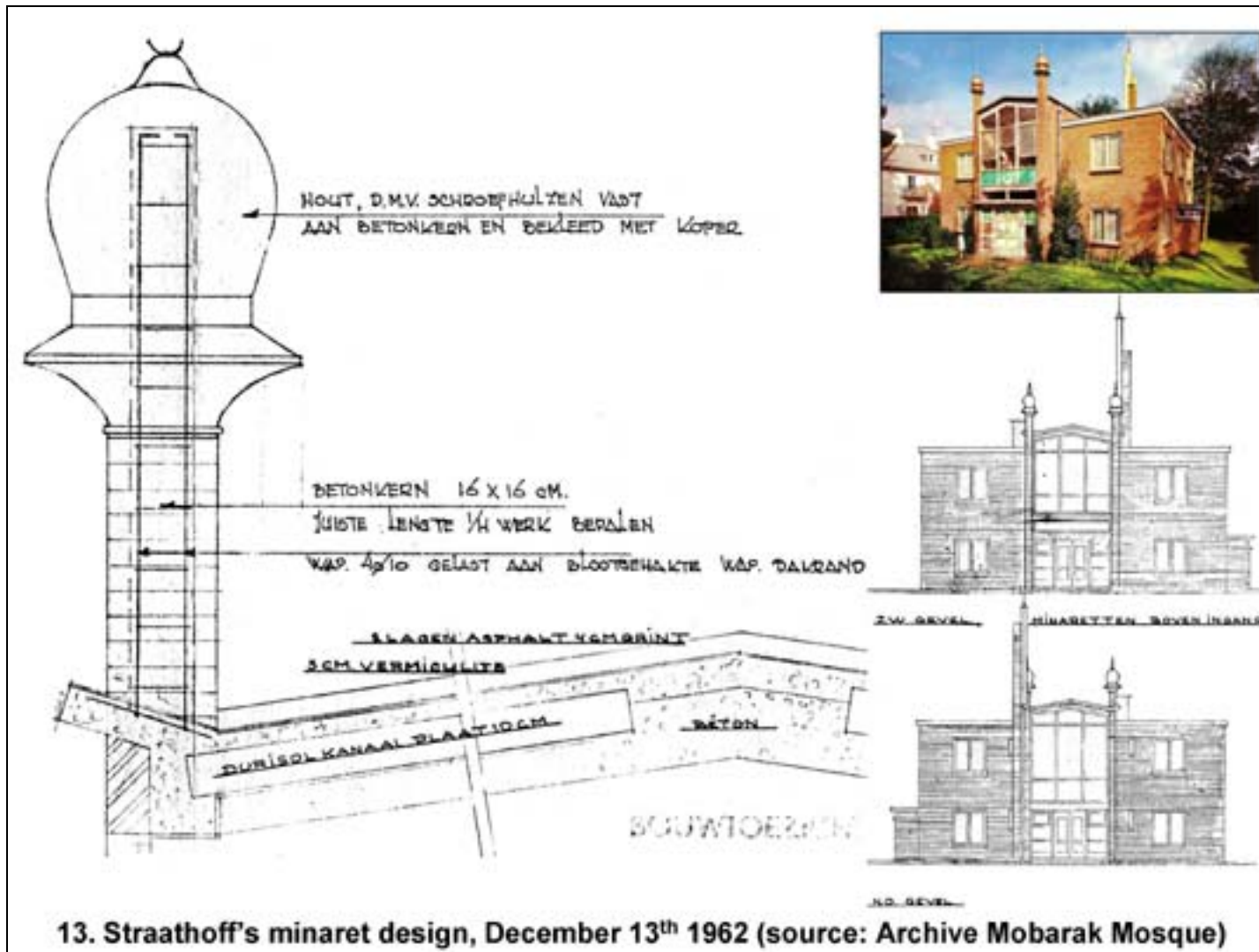
May 20th 1955

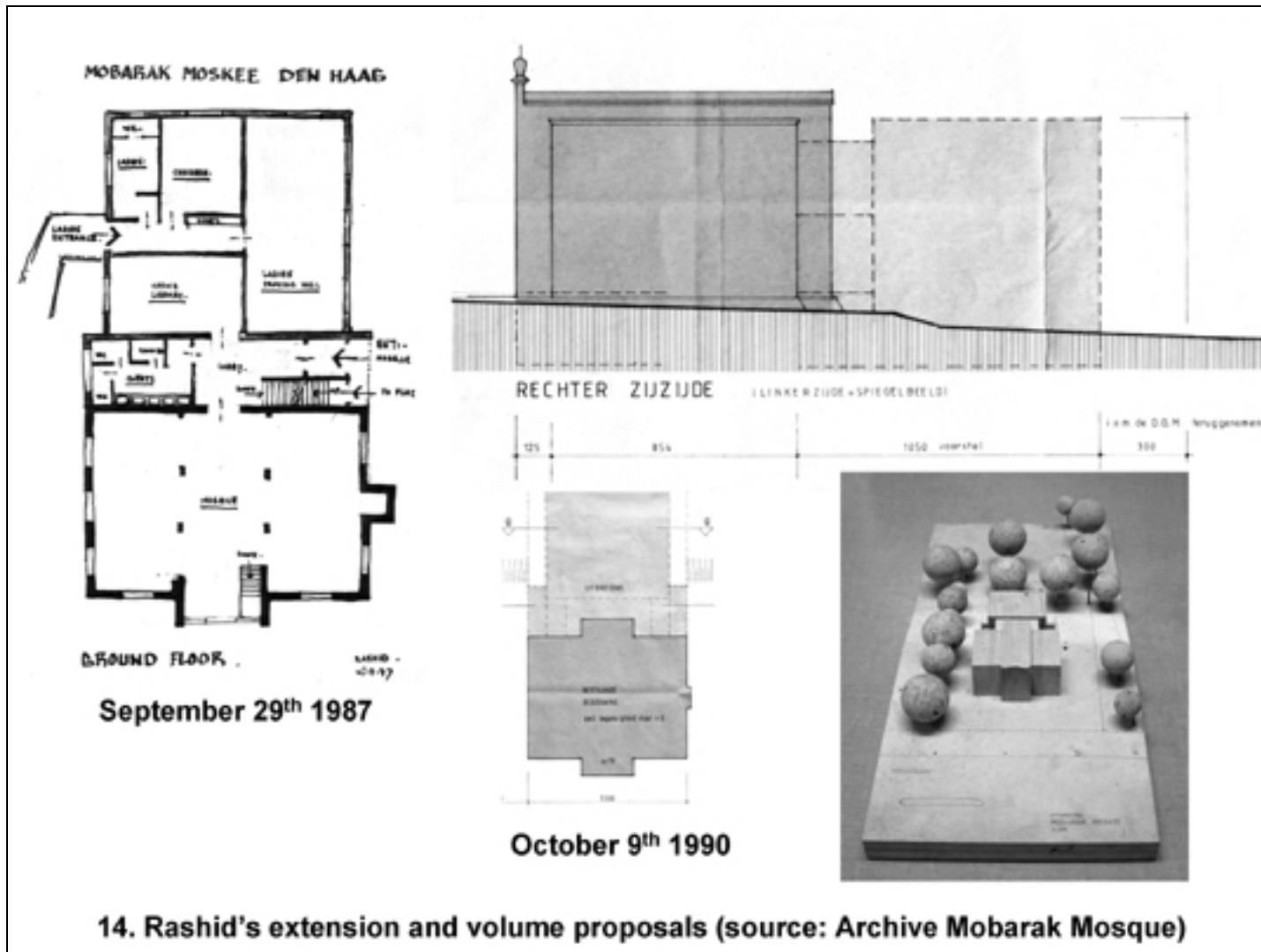


December 9th 1955

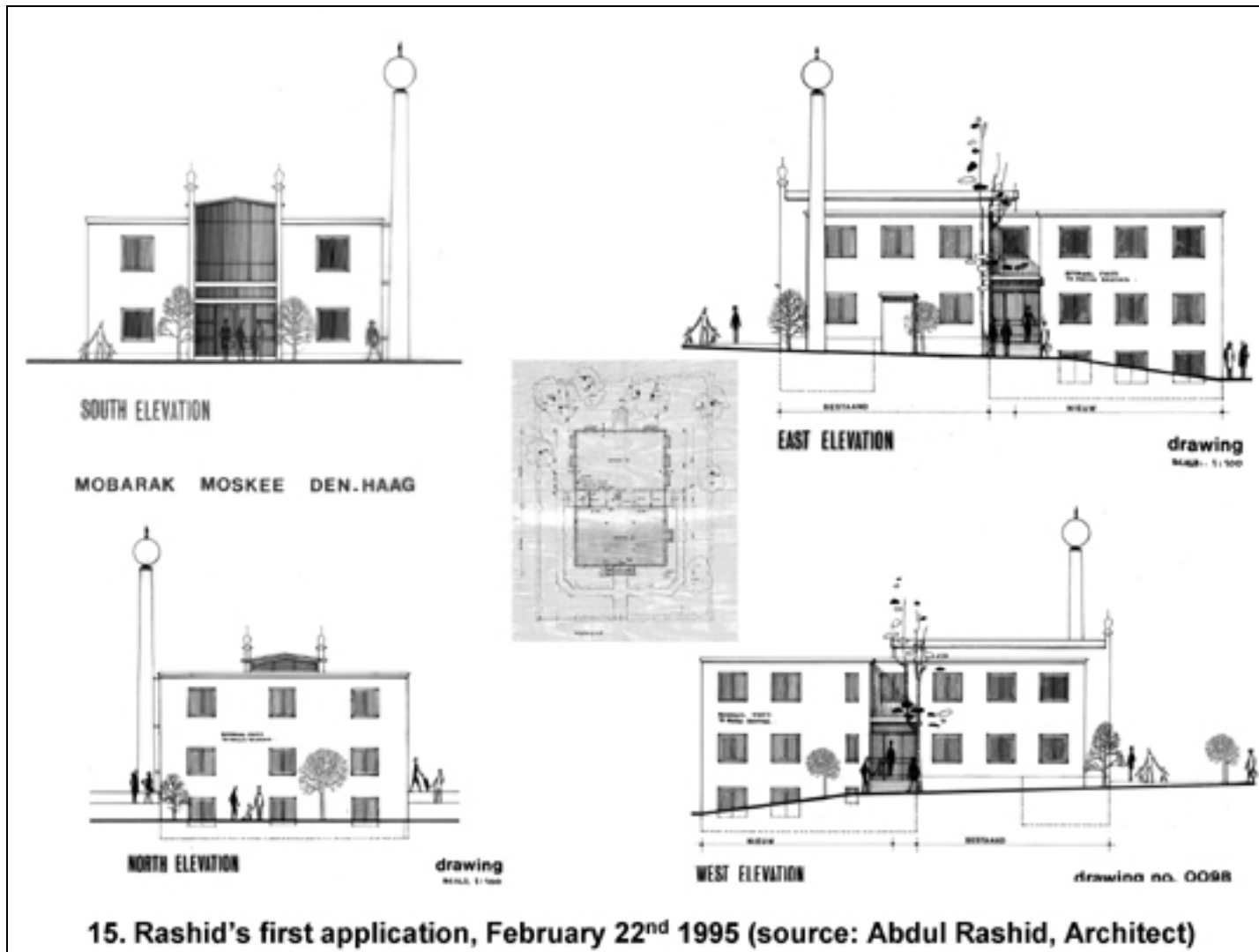


12. First sod, foundation stone and opening (source: Archive Mobarak Mosque)





50 YEARS OF MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS



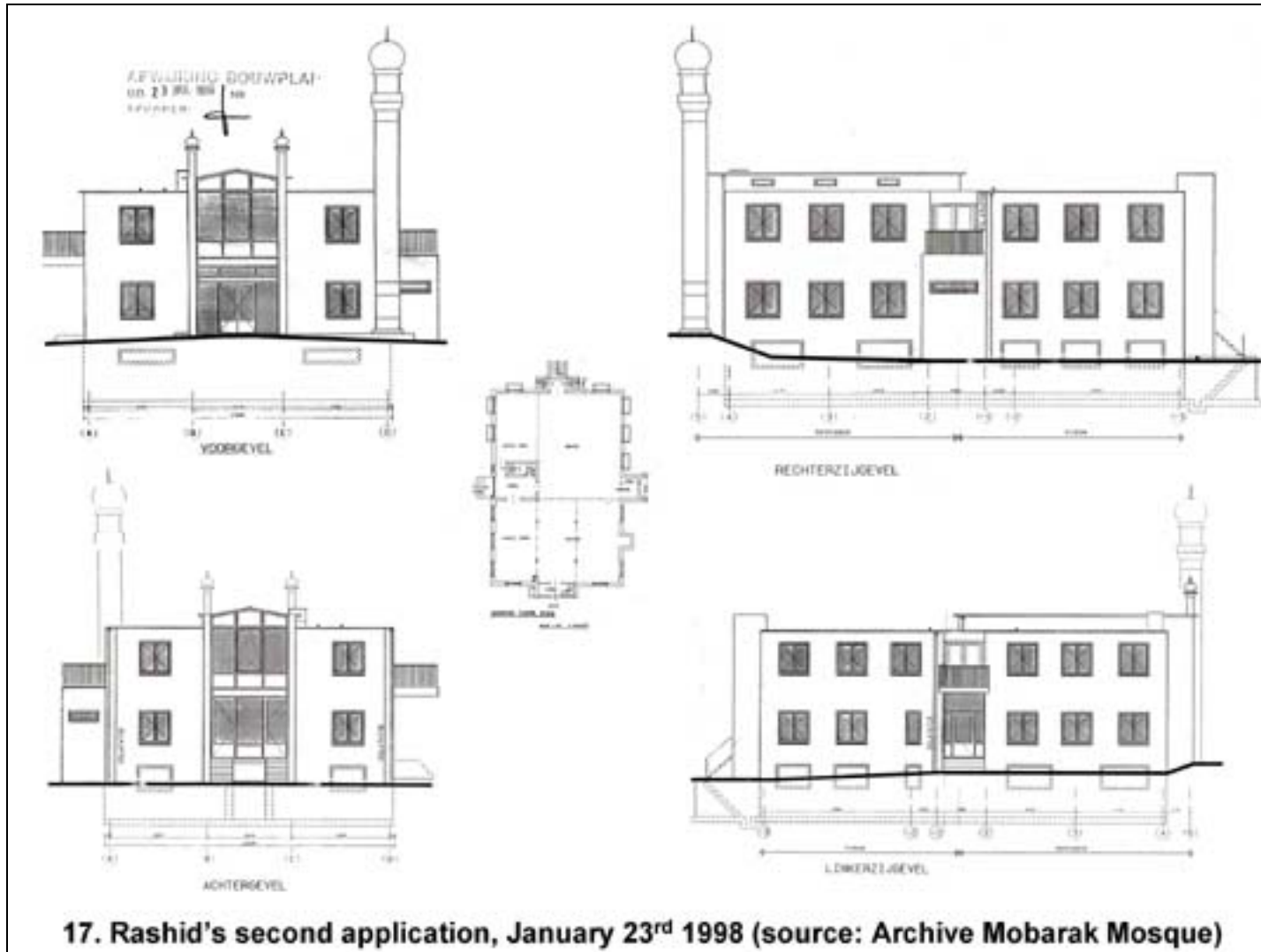


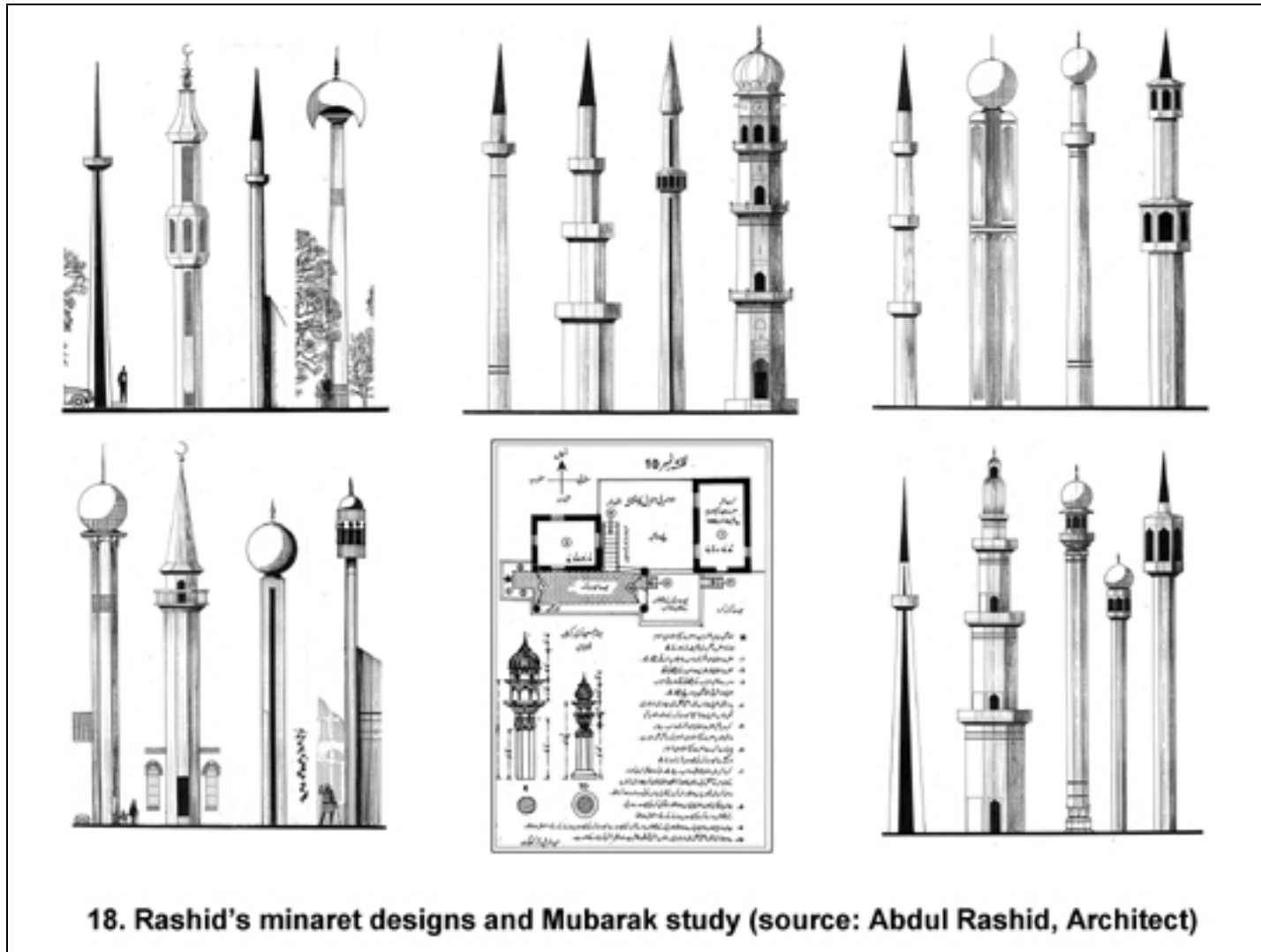
May 29th 1996



16. Second foundation stone and extension construction (source: Archive Mobarak Mosque)

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18. Rashid's minaret designs and Mubarak study (source: Abdul Rashid, Architect)

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December 8th 2005

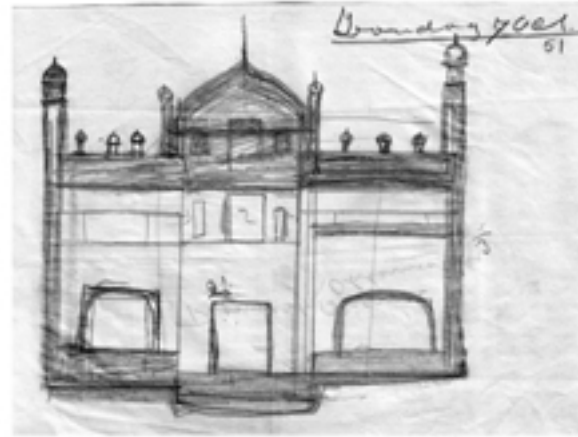


December 9th 2005



20. Minaret construction and opening (source: Archive Mobarak Mosque)

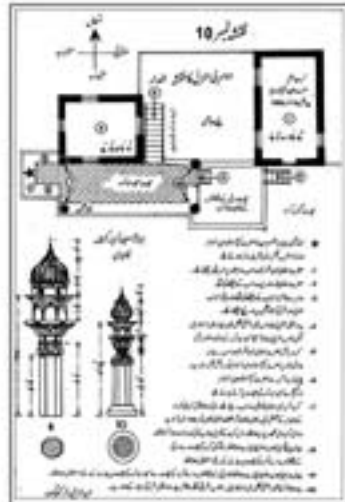
50 YEARS OF MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS



gevel oostwinloos.



21. Gable traditions from Qadian to The Hague: Islamic Renaissance continued



22. Minaret traditions from Qadian to The Hague: the spread of Ahmad's light