

FRIDAY WRAP

#2.35.1

'A Glimpse of Humour'

16 September 2011



Sheik Yusuf Shrine Faure

Wrap

- ~ Rap -- to talk., *conversation*.
- ~ a piece of thin, flat bread *that can contain anything* eaten as a sandwich.
- ~ Signaling *the end (ie of a week)*
- ~ *Under wraps – secret.*

Saying Goodbye

In Cape Town just before and just after Ramadaan it is time for an annual ritual – the greeting of the Karamats.

Let's start at the beginning.

In the 17th Century, both the Dutch and the Portuguese were battling for supremacy in South East Asia, from Goa across India to Malacca, Batavia, and Java. Very soon the population

began resisting.

The people in those days were lead by men of very 'high calibre' and men of 'great spiritual intellect' who were greatly respected in their communities.

They were eventually caught and banished to the Cape.

At the grave of Sheik Yusuf is a plaque that describes him and *'his 49 followers and his family were the first to read the Holy Qur'an in South Africa. It is said that through his first holy teachings the first true Muslim community developed in the Cape'*.

So instead of Islam dying away completely like in Angola or South America it actually flourished.

And four centuries later we still revere these great 'Auliyah' (friends of Allah).



From L to R Salie, Shanaaz (sitting), Moulana, Bahaa, Fairuz, Sakiena, Ashaan, Fatima, Nazeem

By reverer I do NOT mean we pray to them, we do not idolise them, we do not ASK anything from them.

Least of all we do not ASK them to 'intercede on our behalf' in any way. If we require any intercession we will speak to God ourselves. If we require assistance we can just ask as it says in holy Quraan, '*Allâh is "closer to him (the human) than [his] jugular vein."*' (50.16)

No, we treat these great men as our forefathers. We are thankful to them for introducing Islam to us here in the southern most point in Africa and for making us Muslims of an exceptional quality.

After 4 centuries we still have new Mosques and Madrassas being built and Islam is still growing.

Here in Cape Town we do not have any qualms when it comes to halaal food as we are actually over catered for. Most of the food chains are halaal; most of the meat in Cape Town is halaal.

In places like Angola for example, the people have Muslim names but Islam has long ago disappeared. This I personally heard from an Angolan with a Muslim name and nothing else Islam.

But there is a re-emergence of Islam in places where only a handful of Muslims existed; all over the world in fact.

'*Current reports from various sources have estimated that 1.2 to 1.57 billion Muslims populate the world, or about 23% of an estimated 2009 world population of 6.8 billion.*' (Wikipedia)' There is even one practising Muslim in Greenland!

Anyway.

So at this time of the year all the Hujajis or Hujaaaj, people that will be making their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, go and 'greet the Karamats'.

The Hujajis go to different Karamats to pray and thank them for our Islam and to greet them as we would greet our parents and grandparents.



Admiring the view

In the old days people went with busses and it took the entire day. There was a full breakfast and a full lunch. These days with superfast cars on superfast highways you can do it in half a day.

So.

Saturday morning 0855 we set out; two cars, nine people (4 Hujajis, 5 'support staff'), no busses required. First stop Makassar, to give it the original spelling. Named after 'the provincial capital of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and the largest city on Sulawesi Island.' See how rich our cultural history is?

We do not have to proclaim links to Yemen and Egypt, we got the links right here.

Same with links to India; there were many great Moulanas that came to Cape Town but how many of them came in chains, as prisoners, against their will. The calibre may be the same but the circumstances are way, way different and with a time difference of about three hundred years.

So let's still call it Solah instead of Namaaz, let's still call it Kramat (from the Indonesian word Keramat meaning 'sacred') instead of Mazaar. Let's retain Our Heritage.

Anyway.

We arrived at the Karamat at 0925. We were the only people there. If there is a big crowd we would've had to wait. If there was a big crowd AND they were making a long Thikr we would've had to wait even longer.

This is one of the distinctive Karamats of the Cape Peninsula and it used to be visible from the N2 and for miles around. Now the area is being built up but behind and on the side is a conservation area so no houses will ever be built there so this Karamat will always be in a rural area.

The view from here is stupendous all the way to Table Mountain and to the Hottentot Holland Mountains with the Helderberg Mountain within almost touching distance.



Islam Hill, Constantia

We wasted no time in getting started.

We were blessed to have our very own Mawlana with us. He will also be doing a Badal Hajj this year. A Badal Hajj is a Hajj on behalf of someone else. He will be doing it on behalf of his Mother. He has already done one on behalf of his Father. His father passed away when he was five and his mother when he was six. Little did they know that, that little boy would be by the means and intellect to perform their Badal Hajj. Nice story né. May he and his parents be blessed.

Oh yes, Mawlānā is an Arabic word literally meaning "our lord" or "our master" but is used normally as to describe 'a respected Muslim religious leader, in particular graduates of madrassas or a darul uloom, or scholars who have studied under other Islamic scholars.'

Mawlana was never a man to prolong anything and within seven minutes we were done and, with a few pictures taken, we were on our way.

Sheikh Yusuf

Sheikh Yusuf was born at Macassar in 1626. He was also known as Abadin Tadia Tjoessoep. He was of noble birth, a maternal nephew of King Biset of Goa. He studied in Arabia under the tutelage of several pious teachers.

When Sheikh Yusuf arrives at the Cape, on the Voetboeg, he was royally welcomed by Governor Simon van de Stel.

His Indonesian background necessitated that he and his 49 followers be settled well away from Cape Town. They were housed on the farm Zandvliet, near the mouth of the Eeste River, in the general area now called Macassar. He received an allowance of 12rix dollars from the Cape authorities for support of himself and his party.

At Zandvliet Sheikh Yusuf's settlement soon became a sanctuary for fugitive slaves. It was here that the first cohesive Muslim community in S.A. was



Islam Hill, Constantia

established. The first settlement of Muslims in South Africa was a vibrant one, despite its isolation.

It was from here that the message of Islam was disseminated to the slave community living in Cape Town. When Sheikh Yusuf died on 23 May 1699, he was buried on the hill overlooking Macassar at Faure.

A shrine was constructed over his grave. Over the years this shrine has been rebuilt and renewed.

Today it remains a place of pilgrimage.

Next stop Constantia. We were at Islam Hill within half an hour. Up a road past a lot of posh houses and bordered by vineyards with a backdrop of the Tokai Mountains. Did I say beautiful?

This Karamat has extensively and beautifully renovated. The walls and doors have been replaced by glass. Not windows but glass. It is exceptionally exquisite.

Quick prayer and we went on to our last

stop, the Karamat at Klein Constantia.





Klein Constantia, Constantia

Sayed Mahmud

Sayed Mahmud was a spiritual and religious leader of the Malaccan Empire. He was one of the religious advisor captured with Shiekh Abdurahman Matebe Shah.

He was also banished to Constantia in the Cape where the following inscription on his shrine on Islam Hill, Constantia appears:

“On 24 January 1667, the ship Polsbroek Left Bataavia and arrived here on 13 May 1668 with three political prisoners in chains. Malays of the West Coast of Sumatra, who were banished to the Cape until further orders on the understanding that they would eventually be taken that they were not left at large as they were likely to do injury to the Company. Two were sent to the Company’s forest and one to Robben Island.”

The Shrine is situated some distance from the road on “Islam Hill” in Groot

Constantia and has a beauty all of its own. The need to walk up the hill fills you with a desire to pay your respects to this noble saint in his majestic court





Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah Shrine

This Karamat too is in a beautiful setting alongside a small brook and surrounded by vineyards with a stupendous view of the mountainside.

There is a story I heard, how true it is I don't know, of the farmer who bought this property and did not allow access to the Karamat. Then he had a lot of problems and the farm did not prosper. Only after he allowed access to the Karamat did his farm start to prosper again. And he maintains the road and the Karamat at his expense. Nice story né. I don't know how true it is but it is totally believable.

Another quick prayer and prayer for the safety of all Hujajis and we were done.

We finished off with a hiker's breakfast, nothing lavish; just Fatima's rolls and spice beef, Fairuz's boiled eggs (this woman is really good with eggs, any eggs, not that I have first-hand experience) and Shanaaz Price's Chilli Tuna Salad and some of Sakiena's doughnuts and biscuits and cake.

Lekker. Bahaa was fasting so she brought herself.

And so we were done.

We were lucky as we did not encounter crowds anywhere.

When will we do this again? Who will we be accompanying next time? This we can't answer but hopefully it will be soon.

Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah

On the 24th January 1667, the ship the Polsbroek left Batavia and arrived at the Cape on the 13th of May 1668, with three prisoners in chains defeat at the at the Castle of Soeroesang in 1667. One of them was incarcerated on Robben Island, while the other two were to the Company's forest at Constantia.

Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe shan, the last of the Malaccan Sultans, was one of the two.

He was regarded as Orange Cayen, a title which means 'man of power and



Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah Shrine

influence; and viewed as particularly dangerous to the interest of the Company In 1667, and after a fierce battle. Soeroersang fell. The Sultan, Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah, and his two religious advisors, were captured. His execution would have made him a martyr, and thus an inspiration to his people to continue the war.

The three were thus banished to the Cape becoming the first political exiles here. Oral history relates that Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah, soon befriended the slave population he met at Constantia, teaching them on the spot, near the river, where he took his ablutions, meditated and prayed.

His shrine is at the gateway to Klein Constantia. It was contained in a wooden shack quaintly situated amongst the trees, adjacent to a stream of running water. Visiting the shrine was unique experience.

One felt as if one was in the living presence of history, standing in a sacred spot filled with spiritualism in a serene atmosphere.



Klein Constantia, Constantia