

KRAMAT GUIDE

Introduction

Kramats are much more than spiritual icons. Their life histories bristle with inspirational endeavours befitting of men favoured by Almighty Allah. From Sayed Mahmud in the mid-17th century to Maulana Latief in the early 20th century, these men sacrificed their homes unperturbed by prospects of treacherous seas and distant lands, for they knew that their Compass would never fail them. Many of them like Sheikh Yusuf and Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe were exceptional leaders who and fought oppression and injustice against the colonists and had been venerated by their people. All of them clearly understood their purpose on this earth, to propagate Allah's message whatever your circumstances.

Such calibre leadership, dedication and devotion transcends time and space and is worthy of our emulation. Let us move beyond the sterile ritual of paying homage to these great men only when we embark on holy travels. Sea travel of yesteryear was fraught with pitfalls and our forefathers rightly sought Allah's protection with the baraqah of these great men. Let us ask ourselves what are the pitfalls in our lives today? Drugs? Divorce? Gansterism? Maybe consideration should be given to developing a culture of visiting the kramat before embarking on the journey of marriage or puberty.

The compilation of kramats in this issue is by no means exhaustive, for the purpose of this publication is to provide a user-friendly companion guide to the more well-known kramats in the Cape Peninsula. Thus we have concentrated on ensuring that our readers find the shrines, along with brief descriptive notes about their struggle diaries, legends and legacies. The histories of these kramats have been painstakingly researched by our beloved Achmat Davids (may Allah grant him Jannatul-Firdous, Insha-Allah) and published in serialized form in the Boorhaanol Islam Magazines. However, more recently, the Cape Mazaar Society has published a well-produced and illustrated Guide to the Kramats of the Western Cape. Readers wishing to obtain more information about these and other kramats are encouraged to obtain a copy of this publication.

1. Sheikh Yusuf of Macassar (Faure)
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3. Sayed Mahmud (Constantia)
4. Sheikh Noorul Mubeen (Oudekraal)
5. Sayyid Musa/ Sheikh Suleiman/Abdul Samad (Simons Town)
6. Sayed Jaffer (Bakoven)
7. Tuan Guru (Tana Baru, Bo-Kaap)
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10. Sayed Moegsien Alawie and Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Muhammad al Iraqi (Mowbray)
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12. Sayed Abdul Malik (Vredehoek)
13. Sayed Abdurahman Motura (Robben Island)
14. Sayed Abdul Haq (Deer Park)

1. Sheikh Yusuf of Macassar (Faure)

Name: Sheikh Yusuf

Other names (also known as): Abadin Tadia Tjoessoep

Where: Macassar at Faure

Location/Directions: [Photo]

From the N2 highway, take exit 33 (Baden Powell turn-off), turn left into Macassar Road and proceed to Faure Kramat (follow directional signs).

Lifespan: 1626 - 1699

Ancestry: Maternal nephew of King Biset of Goa

Personal History: Abadin Tadia Tjoessoep was born in Goa and then studied in Arabia under several learned teachers. He left Jiddah in 1664 for Banten in Western Java. Here he was appointed as Chief Religious Judge and personal advisor of Sultan Ageng of Banten. After a revolution broke out in 1680 in Banten, he was captured by the Dutch and incarcerated in the castle of Batavia in 1684. He was transferred to a castle in Colombo, Ceylon in 1684 and finally to the Cape of Good Hope in 1693. He was welcomed by Governor Simon van der Stel and granted residence in Zandvliet, Macassar. Zandvliet became a place of safety for fugitive slaves. Sheikh Yusuf provided great wisdom and spiritual upliftment for the slaves establishing the first Muslim community in South Africa.

Legacies

Tricentenary : In 1994 Muslims all over South Africa, under the leadership of historian Achmat Davids, commemorated 300 years of Islam since the arrival of Sheikh Yusuf to this country. A wide variety of cultural, religious, academic and sporting events took place which ushered in a renewed spirit of unity and pride amongst Muslims amidst the birth pangs of the country's new democracy. That spirit was epitomised by the Chain of Barakah, a truly unique Gatamal-Quran whereby a portion of the Quran was sequentially recited in 146 mosques all over the country over a period of 56 days. It culminated on the 4th April, the anniversary of Sheikh Yusuf's arrival, at his shrine where the late Hafith Sheikh Salie Abadie completed the Ghatam and placed that special copy of the Holy Quran in a niche inside the shrine. The event, over the Easter weekend, was witnessed by a huge number of Muslims who had earlier marched through the streets of Cape Town in a remarkable display of identity and unity. (See official video).

Indonesian Linkage : The Tricentenary commemoration also rekindled the links between Cape Muslims and their brethren from Indonesia and Malaysia who provided enthusiastic support for the events. Since then close links have been forged on many fronts both at community and governmental levels, including the substantial upgrading by the Indonesian government of the Faure mosque near the shrine of Sheikh Yusuf.

Easter Camp : Muslims annually congregate in vast numbers over the Easter weekend at the camping site below the shrine. Whilst it represents an opportunity to relax, consideration should be given to develop an activity which draws from the life of this remarkable wali.

Legend

The long voyage from Ceylon to the Cape had depleted the fresh water supplies of the crew on the ship. In desperation they approached their prisoner Sheikh Yusuf. He merely lowered his foot into the

sea and told them to let down the caskets into that spot. To their amazement, the water was fresh and perfectly good to drink.

2. Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah (Klein Constantia)

Name: Sheikh Abdurahman Matebe Shah

Other names (also known as): Orang Cayen – meaning ‘man of power and influence’

Where: Klein Constantia

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Shiekh Abdurahman Matebe Shah, one of the last Malaccan Sultans fought valiantly in the rebellion against the Dutch. He was regarded as a formidable threat to Dutch rule. In 1667 he was captured and banished to Constantia in the Cape. He played a prominent role in the conversion of many slaves to Islam. He passed on in 1682 and was buried at the gateway to Klein Constantia, near a river where he took his ablutions and performed his prayers. The Cape Mazaar Society was instrumental in the creation of the building housing this kramat.

3. Sayed Mahmud (Constantia)

Name: Sayed Mahmud

Where: Constantia – Summit Road

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Sayed Mahmud was a religious leader of the Malaccan Empire. The inscription on the kramat (corresponding to the records in the Cape Archives) reads as follows:

‘On 24 January 1667, the ship the Polsbroek left Batavia and arrived here on 13 May 1668 with three political prisoners in chains. They were Malays of the West Coast of Sumatra, who were banished to the Cape until further orders on the understanding that they would eventually be released. They were rulers ‘Orang Cayen’ men of wealth and influence. Great care had to 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 Dutch made sure that they would distance any influential Muslims from the rest of the slave population as they were seen as a political threat. Sayed Mahmud was captured with Abdurahman Matebe Shah and exiled in Constantia. The Kramat in Constantia serves as a reminder of the courage, fortitude and sacrifice of Sayed Mahmud in promulgating Islam.

4. Sheikh Noorul Mubeen (Oudekraal)

Name: Sheikh Noorul Mubeen

Where: Oudekraal

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Sheikh Noorul Mubeen was banished to the Cape in 1716. He was incarcerated on Robben Island from where he escaped. There are several legends surrounding the details of his escape. It has been narrated that he escaped by walking across the Atlantic Ocean from Robben Island to the mainland. Another version of his escape is that he swam across from Robben Island where he was helped by fishermen to the spot in the mountain, where his kramat now lies. He taught the fishermen Islam and became their Imam. It has also been related that he escaped by 'unknown means' and found this safe site to live. This was a good site helping him to keep watch over the area which included the peaks of the Twelve Apostles and Lion's head. He began to teach the local slave Islam mostly at night.

The kramat serves to commemorate the life of a great spiritual leader, living his life in exile yet always exerting his utmost effort in keeping the beauty of Islam alive through his Islamic teachings.

5. Sayyid Musa/ Sheikh Suleiman/Abdul Samad (Simons Town)

Name: Sayyid Musa/ Sheikh Suleiman/Abdul Samad

Other names (also known as): This kramat has not been uniquely identified and is believed to be one of the three abovementioned holy persons

Where: Discovered among the trees on a terrace in Goede Gift, above Runciman's Drive, Simonstown

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Legend: A distinct spiritual aura surrounds this kramat. It is narrated from authentic sources that there was a raging fire in the 1940's which spread from Cape Point along the mountain ranges in Simonstown, however amazingly, the area of the kramat remained completely untouched by the fire.

History: Many Muslim slaves lived in Simonstown - the kramat could have been the grave of a fugitive slave. There are many graves situated around the kramat and this could have been the burial ground of other slaves. Slaves were not allowed to be buried in cemeteries and there is no record of slaves' graves.

The establishment of a mosque in Hospital Lane in 1880 bears testimony to the commitment of the Simonstown Muslim slave community in upholding Islam. There is evidence that Islamic learning took place at the mosque as in 1913 Muslim children were recorded as being refused admission to the local secular school. The Kramat and Simonstown Mosque should be regarded as a treasured legacy of our Muslim ancestors who fought oppression and never compromised their Islamic beliefs.

6. Sayed Jaffer (Bakoven)

Name: Sayed Jaffer

Where: Bakoven

Location/Directions: Sayed Jaffer's grave is located off Victoria Road next to the jeep track on the mountain slope. The grave of Sayed Jaffer can be reached through a small pathway and lies in a ravine.

[Photo]

Personal History: Sayed Jaffer was a Sheikh of the Alawiah Tariqa. He was banished by the Dutch to the Cape. Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Muhammad al Iraqi discovered the grave of Sayed Jaffer at the end of the nineteenth century. There are many other graves of Muslims in the area. Sayed Jaffer's grave lies near the grave of his disciple Sayed Alie and the grave of his wife. The fourth grave nearby is that of Sheikh Muhammad Zaid.

The grave of Sayed Jaffer is located in an area which has often been flooded yet the grave has never been washed away during the Cape winter storms. In 1970 the surrounding tomb of Sayed Jaffer was swept away in flood waters, however the grave has miraculously remained unscathed up to the present day.

7. Tuan Guru (Tana Baru, Bo-Kaap)

Name: Tuan Guru

Other names (also known as): Imam Abdullah ibn Kadi Abdus Salaam

Where: Bo Kaap – Tana Baru

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Perched on the slopes of Signal Hill with magnificent vistas of both the City Bowl and the world-famous Waterfront, the Tana Baru today represents prime real estate eyed by many developers. For Muslims though the Tana Baru is more than the burial ground of the pioneers of Islam at the Cape. Its importance is vested not only in the events and personalities that highlight Cape Muslim History (see the History of the Tana Baru, by Achmat Davids), but should serve as an inspirational memorial to man's courage and in adversity.

Personal History: Tuan Guru was a prince from Tidore in the Trinate islands and a descendant of the Sultanate of Morocco. He was banished by the Dutch to the Cape on 6 April 1780 because of an alleged conspiracy with the English against the Dutch. He was incarcerated in Robben Island until 1792. He married Ka'ieja van de Kaap after his release from Robben Island and they had two sons Abdul Rakiep and Abdul Rauf.

Handwritten Books: Although he spent twelve years on Robben Island he was never daunted by his incarceration and used his time on Robben Island carefully transcribing the Quran from memory. Here he also wrote an influential book on Islamic jurisprudence. These handwritten books served as the most important sources of Islamic knowledge for Cape Muslims in the 19th century.

First Madrasah: When he was released from Robben Island he went to live in Dorp Street, Bo Kaap. In 1793 he established the Dorp Street Madrasah in the home of Trijn van der Kaap to teach Free Blacks and slaves Arabic. Tuan Guru, in fact means Mister Teacher! This Madrasah served as an excellent model and by 1832 twelve madrasahs had been established in the Cape.

Juma'ah: Tuan Guru was also instrumental in organising the first Juma'ah in the Cape which took place in the open in a disused quarry in Chiappini Street, as the authorities refused permission for a

mosque site. It was only in 1795 when the British occupied the Cape that the first mosque opened in the Dorp Street Madrasah premises.

Legacies

a) **Bicentennial** : In September 2004, the bicentennial anniversary of the unbanning of Islam in this country was commemorated. Yes, before 1804 the practice of Islam was a criminal offence and it bears testimony to the faith and dedication of our forefathers that the authorities were forced to promulgate such a statute. Central to the Muslim community at that time was its de facto leader Tuan Guru, who had pioneered the establishment of the first madrassah, the first Jumu'ah and the very first Mosque in the country. Remarkable achievements and truly deserving of the accolade as the "father of Islam in South Africa". The bicentenary celebrations in Bo-Kaap focused on his courageous struggle for religious freedom and juxtaposed it alongside the freedoms Muslims take for granted today. The highlight of the anniversary occurred on Friday 24th September 2004 when the Imams of the Bo-Kaap agreed to a unified Jumu'ah at the Lower Chiappini Street mosque, a few metres down the road from the original quarry site of Tuan Guru's first Jumu'ah. It was also the first time in over 80 years that a unified Jumu'ah in Bo-Kaap was held after the break-up of the Hiempu in the 1920's.

b) **Handwritten Qurans** :Two Qurans handwritten by Tuan Guru are still extant today. Remarkably these were written purely from memory while he was incarcerated on Robben Island. The one is kept at the Dorp Street mosque, while the other is in the possession of one of Tuan Guru's descendants.

8. Tuan Sayed Alawie (Tana Baru, Bo-Kaap)

Name: Tuan Sayed Alawie

Other names (also known as):

Where: Bo Kaap – Tana Baru

Location/Directions: [Photo]

In 1980, the late Imam Manie Bassier was aghast when he witnessed the derelict state of the Tana Baru, including 'bergies' defecating over the tombstones. Along with Achmat Davids, they responded by establishing the Committee for the Preservation of the Tana Baru, with the aim of restoring and preserving this historical landmark of Muslims for posterity. That committee has since become the Tana Baru Trust, under the leadership of Mr Talip Sydney who can be contacted at Tel.....

Personal History: Tuan Sayed Alawie was from Mocca in Yemen, Arabia. He performed missionary work in Indonesia. He was imprisoned in the Cape in 1744 with Haji Matarim as this was the fate of Muslim priests under Dutch rule. He spent twelve years in prison. It stands as testimony to his adherence to a strong Islamic belief system and his depth of character that he was able to overcome the hardship he experienced in prison. He forgave those who incarcerated him and later worked as a policeman. It is believed that he took this position in order to help him to gain access to prison where he could provide Islamic teaching and food to the incarcerated slaves. He passed away in 1803.

Legends : Tuan Sayed entered the locked and guarded slave quarters at night with a Quran in his hand. After teaching the slaves, he would leave and return with food. The guards could never account for his visits.

9. Tuan Nuruman (Tana Baru, Bo-Kaap)

Name: Tuan Nuruman

Other names (also known as): Imam Norman, Paay Schaapie de Oude

Where: Bo Kaap – Tana Baru

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Tuan Nuruman was a great spiritual leader who arrived as a slave in 1779 in the Cape. He lived in the slave lodge and played a very important role in the Islamic upliftment of the slaves. He made an azeemat as a form of protection for some escaping slaves. This was unfortunately discovered by the ruling authorities and he was convicted of being involved in the escape plan. He was imprisoned on Robben Island. When he was released he went to live in the city as a free man and became a well recognized Imam. He later moved back to the slave lodge, with his daughter, where once again he provided Islamic teaching to the slaves. He also worked in making wells and dams and repairing roads in the area between Lion's Head, Green Point and Cape Town. He developed a good relationship with General Janssens, the Commander of the Cape who later offered him the land which is now the Tana Baru Muslim cemetery. Tuan Nuruman died in 1810 and was buried in the Tana Baru cemetery.

Legends : i) When he prayed, he was engulfed by a strange light which radiated from his body.
ii) He diligently executed his vow to work from sunrise to sunset everyday at some public place.
iii) At age 80, he was still repairing roads, sinking wells and building dams for collecting fresh water.

10. Sayed Moegsien Alawie and Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Muhammad al Iraqi (Mowbray)

Name: Sayed Moegsien Alawie and Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Muhammad al Iraqi

Where: Mowbray: Gamediyah Cemetery

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Muhammad al Iraqi came from Basra in Iraq. He was extremely learned in Islamic knowledge and wrote many books in Arabic-Afrikaans on Islam. He was regarded as a great spiritual leader and practiced spiritual medicine. Sayed Moegsien Alawie was the pilgrim guide who was held in high esteem by Muslims from Cape Town. He was invited to Cape Town where he lived until he passed away. Sheikh Abdurahman ibn Muhammad al Iraqi and Sayed Moegsien Alawie are both buried in the Gamediyah cemetery.

Other leaders buried in Gamediyah cemetery:

Dr Abdullah Abrahams - the first Muslim doctor. He established educational institutions including Trafalgar High School and Rahmaneyeh Muslim primary school.

Imam Abdullah Haron – political activist who campaigned for the rights of the oppressed in the Apartheid time and died in detention.

Gamediyah Muslim cemetery – this was the first Muslim cemetery to be bought by Muslims as a communal private burial land. The first burial took place in 1886 so the site must be over 120 years old.

11. Moulana Abdul Latief (Habibia College)

Name: Maulana Abdul Latief

Where: Athlone: College

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Maulana Abdul Latief was born in India. He was sent to the Transvaal and the Umgeni River Islamic Centre in Natal as an Imam and teacher by Hazrat Goolam Muhammad Sufi (Sufi Saheb) – his brother-in-law and spiritual mentor. Sufi Saheb had purchased land in Doornhoogte and requested that Maulana Abdul Latief establish a mosque and an Islamic centre. The very Friday after his arrival in January 1904 at Doornhoogte, Maulana Latief led the first jumu'ah on the Cape Flats in the open-air. A year later the foundations of the “mosque in the jungle” was laid. Maulana Abdul Latief endured much hardship during this time living in a wood and iron hut with sparse provisions in the hope of realising this vision for the good of Islam. He hoped to establish a mosque and learning centre which would overcome cultural boundaries and unite the Muslims in the Cape.

Legacies : i) He lit the torch of Islam on the Cape Flats – an area that is now the heart and soul of the Deen in this region.

ii) The baraqah emanating from the Habibia Complex as a centre of knowledge, spirituality, wisdom and compassion.

iii) The harmonious relationship between Muslims of India and Malay origins is credited to the vision of unity espoused by Maulana Latief.

12. Sayed Abdul Malik (Vredehoek)

Name: Sayed Abdul Malik

Other names (also known as):

Where: Vredehoek, near St Cyprian's School

Location/Directions: [Photo]

Personal History: Sayed Abdul Malik came to the Cape towards the end of the 18th century. He was an Imam and a doctor which meant that he was learned in medical matters as well as spiritual knowledge. He played an important role in the formation of the Dorp Street Madrasah. He was a close and trusted friend of Tuan Guru. Tuan Guru made him executor of his estate and guardian of his two sons.

13. Sayed Abdurahman Motura (Robben Island)

Name: Sayed Abdurahman Motura

Other names (also known as): Tuan Matarah

Where: Robben Island

30 minute boat trip leaving from the Nelson Mandela Gateway on the Waterfront every hour from 9am till 3pm. Adults R150 per person, children R75.

Location/Directions:

Robben Island is a World Heritage Site which symbolises the struggle for human freedom. Likewise the shrine on the island is a symbol of the struggle for the establishment of Islam. It is an expression of the power of Islam, having prevailed over all kinds of restrictions, prejudices and imprisonment at the tip of Africa.

Legends:

Tuan Matarah could come and go as he pleased on the island, without being detected by the prison wardens. How did he reach the mainland? He walked on the water, of course. He was also known for the comfort and miracle cures he provided to his fellow prisoners.

14. Sayed Abdul Haq (Deer Park)

Name: Sayed Abdul Malik

Other names (also known as):

Where: Vredehoek

Follow Upper Buitenkant Street from Gardens Centre towards Table Mountain. Shrine on the right near St Cyprians School. [Photo]

Location/Directions:

Beautiful green and white Mausoleum with arched windows and green dome imparting distinctly eastern feeling to the area. Historic data beside the grave unfortunately incorrect.

Struggle Diary

Arrived at Cape as a slave. Married a free woman Ruska of the Cape. Administered spiritual medicine and guidance. Confidante of Tuan Guru who appointed him as executor of his estate and guardian of his two sons. Became wealthy businessman who owned several slaves.

Origin : Batavia

Legends:

Friendly old Malay man often engages the learners of St Cyprian School in their playground.