

EDITOR'S VIEW

Win or lose, Springboks are already winners

AS THE Rugby World Cup reaches its grand finale, I have been reflecting on the closing dialogue of the movie, *The Last Samurai*.

The 2003 movie starred Tom Cruise who played Nathan Algren, an American soldier who goes to Japan to help train their army.

Algren is captured by the Samurai (traditional warriors) and, over a period of time, becomes inspired by their lifestyle and principles. He develops a deep-felt respect for the Samurai leader, Katsumoto, who is eventually killed in battle.

When Algren presents Katsumoto's sword to the Emperor, he is asked: "Tell me how he died". Algren responds: "I will tell you how he lived."

There are many like Katsumoto in the Springbok team. Men who are committed, disciplined, focused. It would be great if they lifted the Webb Ellis Cup on Saturday. But, win or lose, their achievements are already remarkable.

Just a year ago, South Africa was ranked seventh in World Rugby rankings. On Saturday they will start as the second-best rugby team on earth. If they win, they will clinch the top spot for the first time in a decade.

Within the team are several individuals who have overcome huge odds to be where they are. These include captain Siya Kolisi.

He was born in Zwide, a poor township in Port Elizabeth. His mother was 16 when she gave birth to him and his dad was in his final year of school.

Kolisi's mom died when he was a teenager and he was brought up by his grandmother. It goes without reason that life was tough.

Twelve years ago, when the Springboks won their second and last World Cup, Kolisi was just 16 years old. He went to a local tavern to watch the game (also against England) because his family could not afford to have a television set at home.

Starting on the wing alongside Kolisi is another player who has succeeded against the odds. Makazole Mapimpi comes from Tsholomnqa, a rural area in the Eastern Cape.

Unlike many other local rugby stars, he did not attend a rugby school. He was noticed fairly late in his career, at the age of 25.

He played for the Kings, the Cheetahs and the Sharks before getting his national colours. Last year coach Rassie Erasmus said he was the most improved Bok player.

On Saturday, Mapimpi will start the match as one of the tournament's top try scorers. If he scores in the final, he will end the tournament with the most number of tries.

Win or lose the Boks are already winners. They have proven that where you come from should not determine where you end.

The Quote

Happiness comes from peace.
Peace comes from indifference.

NAVAL RAVIKANT
wisdomquotes.com

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Rise of a new Ottoman empire?

Death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi will see the emergence of a new power

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

FOR ABOUT 500 years after the passing of Jesus of Nazareth, the people of the Arabian peninsula were a disparate group of tribes; some in established settlements around oases, but mostly nomadic.

There was no definitive shared belief system. Christianity, Judaism, Mandaeism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Manichaeism and many others competed for attention.

This changed dramatically in around the year 622 when the Prophet Muhammad united the tribes under the Constitution of Medina.

It took eight years of consolidation before Muhammad, with an army of 10 000, marched on and took control of Mecca.

By the time of the death of the Prophet in 632, most of the people of the peninsula had converted to Islam.

The passing of Muhammad left a leadership vacuum. This was filled by the creation of the first caliphate; literally, Islamic State. The first caliphate, Rashidun, lasted almost 30 years until the assassination of the fourth caliph, Ali, in 661.

The Umayyad caliphate which followed saw a dramatic expansion of territory into Caucasus (modern day Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and southern Russia), Transoxiana (modern day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and southwest Kazakhstan), Sindh (one of the four provinces of modern day Pakistan), Maghreb (modern day Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania), and the Iberian peninsula (part of modern day Portugal and Spain).

The expansion would no doubt have continued if not for a politically disastrous decision of the caliphate to disenfranchise Muslims of non-Arab origin.

The Abbasid Revolution from 746-750 led to the toppling of the Umayyad caliphate.

The Abbasid caliphate which followed gave rise to what is today referred to as the Golden Age of Islam.

The caliph Harun-al-Rashid is well known to those of us who grew up delighting in the tales of 1 001 Nights or The Arabian Nights. These gave us the stories of Aladdin and his lamp, Ali Baba and the 40 thieves, Sinbad



THE leader of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was killed recently. | AP

the Sailor. Baghdad was the epicentre of an unprecedented global growth in science, culture, and art.

This came to an end in 1258 when the Mongol empire sacked Baghdad.

The fourth caliphate was established only two centuries later when the Ottomans conquered the Mamluk Sultanate (comprising modern day Egypt, modern day Syria, and much of modern day Saudi Arabia) in 1517. With control over the holy cities of Medina and Mecca, the Ottomans assumed the role of leaders of the Muslim world.

The Ottoman Caliphate held sway for almost 500 years until defeated in World War I. Their territory was partitioned by Britain and France, leading to the creation of the modern Middle East and the Republic of Turkey.

The first Turkish president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, passed a law formally abolishing the caliphate in 1924.

The partitioning of the Ottoman Empire led to the creation of states where none had existed before. For example, Iraq was created from three unrelated provinces.

The process also dispossessed many people of a national home, most notably the

Kurds, who found themselves split between south eastern Turkey, north western Syria, and northern Iraq, and north western Iran.

Since that day, Kurds have waged ongoing battles in pursuit of a land they hope to call their own. Their fortunes have been mixed with world powers alternating between favouring them and abandoning them as they provided a useful bulwark between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq.

Which brings us to Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai, born in Iraq on July 28, 1971.

There are mixed reports to Ibrahim's early years; some describing him as a religious scholar, others as a mediocre student who had to retake his high school.

Nevertheless, what is true is he was captured by US forces in Iraq and detained at Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca detention centre.

On his release, Ibrahim and his fellow detainees became the founders of the Iraqi division of al-Qaeda (which referred to themselves as the Islamic State of Iraq or ISI).

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as Ibrahim became known, was confirmed as leader of ISI in May 2010.

It's difficult to comprehensively outline the atrocities committed by ISI under Baghdadi. These involved terrorism, genocide, sex slavery, organised rapes, and mass crucifixions.

With ISI expanding its territory into the Levant (Syria) came a massive displacement of refugees fleeing into neighbouring states and across the Mediterranean.

Baghdadi established his capital in Raqqa, Syria. He proceeded to declare himself leader of the 5th caliphate with himself as caliph, to be known as Caliph Ibrahim.

No doubt Syria would have fallen to Baghdadi's forces had not Russia entered the fray at the request of Syrian president Assad. A US-led coalition of forces proceeded to bomb Raqqa forcing Baghdadi to flee to Mosul in 2014.

Last week, on October 26, US forces conducted a raid through air space controlled by Russia and Turkey into the rebel-held Idlib province of Syria on the border with Turkey.

While being hunted by an American special forces team with a dog unit, Baghdadi was cornered in a tunnel. He died by detonating his suicide vest. Three young children, believed to be his own, died with him.

It's an extraordinary achievement for US President Donald Trump, who had persuaded Russia and Turkey to allow helicopters, jets and drones through airspace controlled by those countries. Trump publicly thanked Russia, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and the Syrian Kurdish forces for their support.

The death of Baghdadi does not mean the end of Isis. It does, however, mean that there is a real possibility for peace to return to the war torn areas once controlled by his forces.

The Turks have achieved their objective, to establish a buffer zone between themselves and the Kurds. Trump has achieved his objective, to get US forces out of the conflict and to take out Baghdadi.

What remains now is for Bashar al-Assad to show leadership. He should give the Kurds control of sufficient Syrian territory to establish a safe haven. And they can continue to play the role for him that they have always done – be a bulwark against external forces.

As for the future of the caliphate, I have every sense Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan has ambitions to establish a new Ottoman empire. Watch him closely.

Srikanthan is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, "the unstoppable force", which gives us the modern word juggernaut. Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.

Racist liquor laws could've driven you to drink



YOGAN DEVIN

HOW times have changed. And how many times the infamous Liquor Act has changed.

Liquor stores now stay open until the late afternoon on Sundays and public holidays. Yet there was a time when no liquor store could trade on a Sunday.

However, in upholding the apartheid policy's institutionalised racial segregation, only whites were freely served drinks in hotel bars and restaurants on a Sunday, without a mandatory meal.

Those who were not melanin-challenged could only get a drink on a Sunday – even in what was then regarded as a non-white pub or restaurant – provided a meal order was first placed.

Many older readers will recall the Sunday routine that was in force until about 40 years ago. That's when you had to purchase a ticket to enter the dining lounge between noon and 2pm. This two-hour period was regarded as the session. The bar area was out of bounds on a Sunday.

The "session" ticket, which cost around 10 cents, could be exchanged for a small meal – either boiled egg chutney; a plate of cheese squares with toothpicks and now-discontinued Cheese Tang biscuits; or sausage slices. Only then could you order and pay for a drink or two or three or as many as you desired.

By the way, what can you get for 10 cents today?

The tiny copper-plated steel coins are strewn all over parking lots of supermarkets as even car guards find them worthless.

You get more in return for a bag full of 10-cent coins at a scrap metal dealer than at a bank counter.

Over the years, the liquor laws were tinkered with more frequently than the smoking engine of a maternal uncle's blood-red Chevrolet Impala.

Distressing has been the fact that drinking laws often targeted specific race groups with negative outcomes.

The history of liquor in South Africa is an integral part of the history of segregation and apartheid. Liquor was alternately made available and prohibited as a means of economic and social control.

The racially-differentiating liquor legislation at one time prohibited the sale of hard or European liquor to the African race group



ABOVE: Cheese Tangs – a mandatory meal that could accompany a Sunday drink.

LEFT: iJuba has become the accepted name when a person refers to traditional beer. | Supplied

on any day of the week.

Hard liquor refers to an alcoholic beverage that is produced through the distillation process, such as whisky, brandy, vodka and rum, as opposed to a beer which goes through the fermentation process and has a much lower alcohol content.

There was a time when only whites were granted licences to buy liquor. Whites were considered responsible and respectable enough to buy and consume as much liquor as they wished, and to own liquor stores and sell liquor.

Those who were not white but were not opposed to the act of pursuing happiness and self-destruction simultaneously kept at least one white as a useful friend.

The results of the apartheid liquor policy were countless raids, harassment, arrests, prosecutions and imprisonment of mainly Africans.

Also, it led to social breakdown, family violence, alcohol-related diseases, crime and accidents in poor communities. A large illegal liquor trade mushroomed in the African townships.

The Prohibition Act of 1897 made it illegal for Africans to drink alcohol. They were presumed to be incapable of responsible liquor trade or consumption. Their dignity as responsible adults was undermined.

This ban only led to organised crime

and illegal drinking establishments named shebeens. Police often raided shebeens and those found on the premises were arrested for alcohol-related offences.

Fast-forward to until a few years ago, when even policemen would frequent Fowl Aunty's shebeen in Bayview, Chatsworth, and in exchange for some free liquor and tasty bites, they turned a blind eye to the jovial goings-on.

The 1927 Liquor Act, among other restrictions, prohibited Africans and Indians from selling alcohol. Nine decades later, my friend Mahendra Narotam, whose family owns Panjivans, one of the largest liquor wholesalers in KwaZulu-Natal, still has hysterics about the absurdity and silliness of yesteryear's racist regulations.

In the 1930s, the government introduced beer halls which were government-owned and the only places where Africans were allowed to buy beer.

A beer hall was typically a bleak, brick structure which sold tickets to drinkers, who moved through turnstiles to collect their cartons of traditional beer.

There used to be a beer hall or eMatsheni in Victoria Street, Durban, adjacent to what was then called the Indian Top Market.

Income from beer halls was used for native welfare such as the establishment and maintenance of barracks, hostels, beer halls

and breweries.

Workers referred to the experience as drinking in a cage. They were only sold traditional sorghum beer or utshwala.

Today the iJuba brand is an institution in South Africa and the market refers to the brand name as a generic product. Thus, iJuba has become the accepted name when a person refers to traditional beer.

In years gone by, there were laws governing how much liquor Africans were allowed to carry. If they carried more than the law allowed, it was a criminal offence and they were considered traders.

Thus, if they bought enough for a wedding or a funeral and were apprehended, they earned a criminal record. Today Africans push trolleys brimming with premium brand liquor from Makro Liquor to load into their luxury German SUVs.

In 1957, a sixth of all convictions of Africans were for statutory liquor offences. In 1960, the Malan Commission of Inquiry reported that despite prohibition laws, Africans were still able to obtain liquor through illicit channels at high prices, and it was often in an adulterated form.

The commission concluded that to apply the Liquor Act was impossible and recommended changes in the law. Amendments easing restrictions were consequently passed.

In 1961, shebeens were legally allowed to sell white man's liquor.

In 1962 the apartheid government allowed some Africans to sell liquor. However, Africans could still not drink in white areas, but they could now buy commercial beer at off-sales or white outlets.

Yet they weren't allowed in the general liquor stores and there was still a legal maximum to how much beer they could carry or buy.

Today many blacks sit on the main board of SA Breweries.

In the late 1960s, the government allowed liquor to be sold in African townships but only in nightclubs and restaurants and not in bottle stores.

The alcohol could only be bought with a meal. Thereafter, Pretoria allowed on-consumption without a meal, and then finally off-consumption.

Yesteryear's racist liquor laws must have been evil enough to drive many people to drink.

And recent data published by the World Health Organisation shows that South African consumers of alcohol are some of the heaviest drinkers globally. Perhaps a case of the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the sons.

Devin is a media consultant and social commentator. Share your comments with him at yogin@meropa.co.za