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Analysis of the Impact of Dutch Colonization Upon Indigenous South African Tribes

At the southern tip of the African continent sits a jewel of a country rich in gems and precious metals. Leading exported natural resources include sugar, timber, diamonds, coal, and gold. The history of mankind itself traces back to this African motherland, but South Africa's evolution from pastoral tribal groups to European farmers to emancipated and struggling twenty-first century players is fraught with bloodshed, exploitation, and greed. The settling of South Africa by the Dutch in 1652, with the founding of Cape Town as a stop-over for resupplying trade ships, helped European merchants gain a foothold in the land previously inhabited by the Khoekhoen (Hottentots) and San (bushmen). This paper examines the impact of Dutch colonization upon indigenous South African people and the theft of their claim to diamonds and gold discovered in the 1800s. Under analysis is the economic well-being of native tribes, the Dutch settlement of Cape Town in 1652 as a waystation between Europe and Asia, and how the colony expanded swiftly to clash with multiple tribes. Furthermore, Britain's invasion and subsequent marginalization of natives, and how the Dutch and British stole the wealth of South Africa's land while leaving the original descendants in poverty and war is also under analysis. Last discussed is how South Africa in 2021 handles the wealth of resources as well as the state of society after apartheid. Note the different spellings of Khoekhoe/KhoiKhoi and van Riebeeck/van Riebeck. The former is used in both circumstances.

Founding Cape Town

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) dispatched Jan van Riebeeck on a five-year contract in command of the expedition to found Cape Town along the southern tip of the African continent. His role was overseeing the building of a fort and provisioning station to serve ships traveling between Europe and the East Indies.¹ Cape Town and the Table Bay area of South Africa had access to fresh water that other locations lacked, thereby influencing the location of the outpost's establishment. Van Riebeeck and two accompanying ships arrived in April of 1652 and were granted permission to own land, farm, and contribute to the available food stores being used to supply transport ships stopping by the Cape.



Fig. 1 - Portrait of Jan van Riebeeck (1619-77) Commander of the Cape of Good Hope (1652-62) and Malacca (1663-65) and Secretary of the High Government of Batavia (1665-77), anonymous, c. 1660

Painted during his lifetime, this portrait of the founder of Cape Town illustrates the austerity of the Dutch colonists.

Description: Standing, half-length, a staff in the right hand. Top left the family coat of arms. The following inscription is on the back: 'Antony Joansz van Riebeeck obiit Maij 1639 buried in Brezie in Phernambucq on the recif Olinda in the church St. Paulo'.

The Cape Town settlement grew slowly due to labor shortages. Initially, van Riebeeck attempted to obtain cattle and labor through negotiation, but talks broke down, and eventually and reluctantly, slavery was implemented.²

¹ Amy McKenna, "Jan van Riebeeck," *www.britannica.com*. July 31, 2009. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-van-Riebeeck>.

² SAHistory.Org.ZA. *The Dutch Settlement*. June 30, 2011. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/dutch-settlement>.

Realizing that sufficient labor was not available to farm the land, run the settlement, and power the nearby ships, the Dutch allowed some of the indentured East India Company personnel to get out of their contracts early. These farmers became known as “free burghers”³ and established the white population that eventually became known as the Boers or Afrikaners. The free burghers continued to struggle with agricultural output sufficient to make the settlement successful, and the Khoekhoe were the unwilling laborers the Dutch attempted to press into service.

For the conservative Dutch settlers, the Khoekhoe people were something of a curiosity due to the contrast between the reality of them in the flesh versus the stereotypes most Europeans read in books about the Cape of Good Hope. An anonymous artist sketched a series of pictures depicting Khoekhoe men and women taking part in everyday life in different poses, wearing native dress and adornment.⁴ Some of the figures were drawn in provocative poses, indicating at best an appreciation for the figures of the native women and at worst hinting of probable exploitation of the Khoekhoe women by the invading Dutchmen.



Fig. 2 – Drawing of Khoe dancers and musical instruments. In The Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope: Seventeenth-century drawings in the South African Library, Text by Andrew B. Smith and Translations by Roy H. Pheiffer. Cape Town: South African Library, 1993.

³ SAHistory.org

⁴ Andrew B. Smith. "Cape Town: South African Library." 1993. In *Cape Town: South African Library*, by Andrew B. Smith. South African Library.

Kroata/Eva

Commander van Riebeeck became acquainted with a Khoekhoe woman named Krotoa (called Eva by the Dutch), and he came to rely on her to orchestrate peace talks with tribal leaders. She was a domestic servant in the van Riebeeck household who worked for his wife, and she became a translator to help facilitate communication between the Dutch and the Khoekhoe. She is mentioned in van Riebeeck's journal as early as January, 1654, and it was also noted that she mastered Portuguese in addition to Dutch.⁵



Fig. 3 - Kroata, (called Eva by European settlers), niece of Khoe leader Autshumao, became an interpreter for Khoe/Dutch interactions

Ultimately, Eva lived suspended between two cultures. In journal entries kept by van Riebeeck, he recounted an example of Eva's split loyalties in his entry from June 21, 1658: "The freeman Jan Reijnierssen came to complain early in the morning that during the night all his male and female slaves had run away, taking with them 3 or 4 blankets, clothing, rice, tobacco, etc. We thereupon called the new interpreter Doman, now called Anthony, who had returned from Batavia with the Hon. Cuneus, and asked him why the Hottentots (Khoekhoe) would not search for the runaway slaves, to which he coolly replied that he did not know. The Commander, not trusting him, then called the interpreter Eva alone into his office and privately asked her whether our blacks were not being harboured by the Hottentots. On this she asked whether such was the Commander's opinion, and being answered in the affirmative, she (speaking good Dutch) said these words, namely: "I tell you straight out, Mijnheer van Riebeeck, Doman is no good. He told the Hottentots everything that was said in Mijnheer's room the day before yesterday. When I told

⁵ SAHistory.org

him that it was wrong to do so, he replied: “I am a Hottentot and not a Dutchman, but you, Eva, try to curry favor with the Commander, etc.”⁶

Later that year, in a journal entry from September 23, van Riebeeck wrote about the visit that Eva and Doman made to their friends and family, and how the two requested gifts of copper, tobacco, brandy, and other goods (not only as rewards for their interpreter services but also as inducements to their tribe to part with more cattle and animal hides). The entry describes Eva changing from her Dutch clothing into the animal hides of her people and then sending the Dutch clothes back to van Riebeeck’s wife for safekeeping. His journal entry in January, 1661, indicates Eva’s return to his household and resumption of her former role, laying aside the animal skins for the Dutch dress once more.⁷



Fig. 4 - A study of everyday life experienced by a group of Khoekhoe women. This collection of drawings was made in situ most likely by a Dutchman with the Dutch East India Company (DEIC), probably no later than 1713, and possibly much earlier. Most of the drawings have Dutch annotations made by an unidentified person, after 1730. (Public Domain <http://www.wdl.org/en/item/11267/> n.d.)

The attire worn by Khoekhoe African native women was vastly different from the modest dresses of Dutch settlers with strict Protestant backgrounds. This illustration suggests the way Eva might have appeared to the van Riebeecks upon her return.

⁶ Jan van Riebeeck. *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck. Volume II, III, 1656-1662*, 1954. Cape Town: Edited by H. B. Thom and translated by J. Smuts.

⁷ Van Riebeeck



Fig. 5 – Robben Island (Prison where both Eva and later Nelson Mandela were housed)

A few years later, Eva married a surgeon named Pieter van Meerhoff and had three children; after his death, she became an alcoholic, was arrested and sent to the prison colony of Robben Island⁸ for disorderly conduct, and eventually died there in 1674. Her Christian burial illustrates how she left the Khoekhoe life behind her and sank into the life of the Dutch.⁹

Eva played an important role in furthering the interests of both her natural family and the adopted Dutch family that helped shape her future. A savvy businesswoman, she successfully negotiated trade deals and smoothed over land squabbles between the adversaries, which helped delay the inevitable war between natives and settlers for several decades. Eventually though, without Eva as an intermediary, land appropriation by the free burghers and the Dutch East Indies Company sparked conflict and launched the first Boer war.

Why Colonize Africa?

So far from home, with hostile natives and the difficulties encountered by anyone trying to turn a frontier into a habitable town, what would make these European settlers want to stay? “Southern Africa is 5,000 miles from Europe. How was it possible for the settlers to import European crops and animals to such a distant part of the world? As much as skill it came down to good fortune. Geography had dealt the settlers an immensely lucky hand. They had stumbled across one of the few parts of the southern hemisphere that feels just like Europe. Because the Cape and Europe lie at a similar latitude, or distance from the equator, and this means that the

⁸ SAHistory.org. Robben-island-pic.jpg

⁹ Van Riebeeck

temperature and climate of these widely separated regions are almost exactly the same. The Europeans were able to establish prosperous farms and settlements.”¹⁰

As a nomadic tribe, the Khoekhoe used the Table Bay area of South Africa to allow their cattle to graze, seeing the pastures as communal and not privately owned. The Dutch viewed the land as a commodity with monetary value and private land rights, and they began to establish farms on those grazing pastures which forced the Khoekhoe to adapt by either finding new resources or rationing existing ones.¹¹ With the appropriate amount of labor, the settlement farms could have flourished, but the colony lacked workers. The Dutch first began with negotiating and bartering with native Africans to induce them into working the farms, but when those tactics failed to achieve the desired result, the uneasy civility between free burghers and Khoekhoe faltered, and a violent and bloody conflict erupted.

Sowing Seeds of Unrest

The overall disgruntled mood of the native population was expressed by sneaking onto the settlements at night to poach the Dutch settlers’ cattle. Affronted that the native people were retaliating over the loss of their land, the free burghers wanted to live in peace but could not endure any more [justifiable] harassment, so they took their complaints to a council

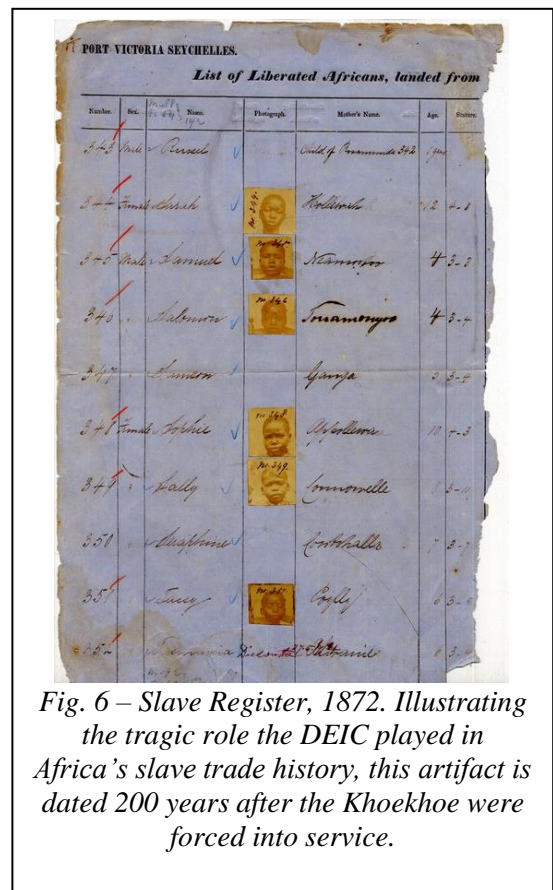


Fig. 6 – Slave Register, 1872. Illustrating the tragic role the DEIC played in Africa’s slave trade history, this artifact is dated 200 years after the Khoekhoe were forced into service.

¹⁰ Jared Diamond. “Guns Germs & Steel: The Show. Episode Three. Transcript.” PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, 2005. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://www.pbs.org/gunsgermsteel/show/transcript3.html>.

¹¹ SAHistory.org

meeting with the DEIC. Doman the interpreter and his war party pounced that same night and caused such a panic that the settlers fled to the fort.

Van Riebeeck responded to the attack, and what became ongoing fighting, by setting up perimeter patrol around a now-formal border surrounding the settlement. This skirmish lasted from 1659-1660, but the end result was restricted movement for the Khoekhoe, as they were forced to “walk designated footpaths and to use designated gates when entering the fortified area.”¹² Eventually they were restricted from residing near the castle compound, an area where they used to set up temporary shelter as the annual grazing occurred. This war firmly established the Cape Town colony, seizing from the Khoekhoe the last of their former pastureland and pushing them further inland.

The 1670s brought more armed conflict between Dutch settlers who were encroaching on Khoekhoe and San lands and belligerent and defensive tribespeople who refused to give in to pressure, despite losing further land and more cattle to the free burghers. As additional land was ceded, the Khoekhoe, unable to support themselves in their traditional style, fell into servitude

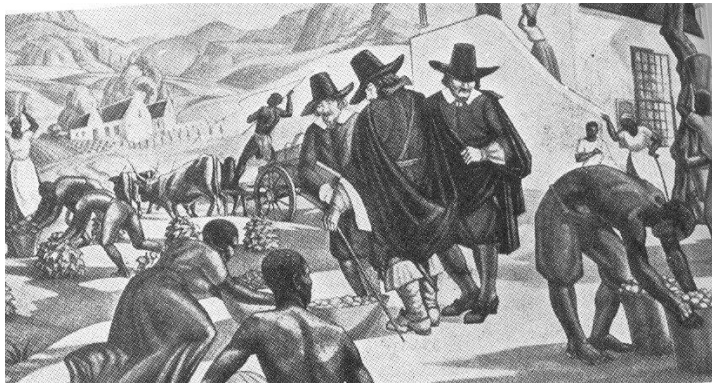


Fig. 7 – Masters and Slaves scene from late 1600s in Cape Town. Anonymous Painting.

and became unwilling slaves on the farms of these settlers. This enslavement was not a matter of official DEIC policy.¹³ Unofficially, the audacious way the Dutch¹⁴ excused enslaving the tribe that initially welcomed trade with them

¹² SAHistory.org

¹³ Photographer, Unknown. *Inventory Item: A299.1*. Photograph. Port Victoria Seychelles, 1872. University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg.

¹⁴ South Africa: Slavery and Creolization in Cape Town. *SlaveryinCapeTown.blogspot.com*, September 11, 2006. https://slaveryincapetown.blogspot.com/2006_09_10_archive.html.

was so repellent that the acrimony still simmers in South Africa today. The ongoing racial tension between indigenous tribes and non-African settlers is still evident in South Africa's socioeconomic and political culture. This enslavement also marked the beginning of what would become 20th century apartheid.

The Khoekhoe joined forces with the San, a hunter-gatherer tribe, to fiercely but unsuccessfully fight the spread of the colony, losing men to fighting and women and children to enslavement as they were left vulnerable and without proper labor to run their own farms.¹⁵ The second and third Dutch-Khoekhoe wars then took place.

“Following the various exploratory excursions into the interior north of the colony, the Dutch discover fertile grazing land to the north-east of the Hottentots-Holland Mountains, which belong to the Chainoqua, Hessequa, Cochoqua and Gouriqua Khoi-Khoi chiefdoms. These Khoi-Khoi have big herds of livestock. They are also willing to engage in trade with the Dutch. Land is actually bartered from Chaitain Dhouw. However, the Dutch terms of trade lead to warfare and raiding of livestock, also amongst the Khoi-Khoi chiefdoms. [On]18 July, The Company sends Hieronimus Cruse to attack the Cochoqua. This attack, executed on horseback, marks the beginning of Second Dutch-Khoi-Khoi War. The Dutch take approximately 1800 head of livestock.

“The VOC launches a second attack on the Chocoqua. In this Third Dutch-Khoi-Khoi War, almost 5000 head of livestock and weapons are taken from the Chocoqua.”¹⁶

Arrival of the Huguenots

In 1688, the Huguenots fled France for South Africa to escape religious persecution and settled in and around Franschhoek (literally “French corner” in Dutch). These vintners brought with them the art of wine-making; their knowledge and expertise in vineyard cultivation was knowledge highly sought after by the Dutch. The mass migration of the Huguenots was not

¹⁵ SAHistory.org

¹⁶ SAHistory.org

entirely for religious freedom but also to attempt to gain a foothold for France in the Cape's trade route industry and for the Dutch colonists to gain wine-making knowledge from subject matter experts. The DEIC had welcomed the Huguenots¹⁷ not only for sharing the same religious views but also for, which largely had failed under the Dutch in South Africa. Wine kept better onboard ships than water, so the DEIC was most interested in providing adequate supplies to the fleet.¹⁸ The success of the French winemaking endeavors is still apparent today, where vineyard tourism is a lucrative industry in South Africa.



Fig. 8 – The Noord-Nieuwland in Table Bay, 1762.
Anonymous Painting.

Unlike the impoverished Dutch who had settled the Cape, the French protestants fleeing after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes were of the bourgeoisie, and a portion of those new settlers even belonged to the aristocracy if the passenger manifests from the ships can be viewed as fact.¹⁹ In an astute community planning

move, the Huguenots were given farms among the Dutch farmers so as to assimilate more quickly. The schools in the settlement taught strictly Dutch, so French started to fall away and be forgotten as the French and Dutch intermarried.

¹⁷SAHistory.org. *The Noord-Nieuwland in Table Bay, 1762*. Anonymous Painting.

¹⁸Tristan D'Albis. *Musee Protestant*. 1988. Accessed November 27, 2021. <https://museeprotestant.org/en/notice/the-huguenots-in-south-africa/>

¹⁹.D'Albis

Adding to the pressure of the South African battle for dominance against the Dutch and later the French was the outside influence of other European countries wanting a portion of the colony's trade route pie. Britain decided that the strategic location of Cape Town was most desirable as their own waystation on the journey between their colonies in the East Indies and Europe, and became the focus of the Battle of Muizenberg that began in 1795.

“When war broke out between the United Provinces of Netherlands against both Britain and France, the DEIC [VOC] declared itself the rightful owner of the Cape district, which included Table Bay, Houtbay and Saldanha Bay in 1672. The Dutch claimed that they had purchased the land from Osingkhima leader of the Khokhoi group known as the Goringhaiqua with brandy, tobacco and bread. Thus, the order to set up a permanent settlement was an attempt by the Dutch to exclude the British with whom the Dutch were at war. In 1795, the British, who were at war with France, invaded the Cape Peninsula from False Bay and took over the Cape (including Cape Town) from the Dutch until 1803 when the colony was handed back to the Dutch. When war between the British and French broke out once more in 1806, the British permanently occupied the Cape Colony.”²⁰

²⁰ *The Dutch Settlement* from “South African History Online,” www.sahistory.org.za (2011) Accessed November 2, 2021.

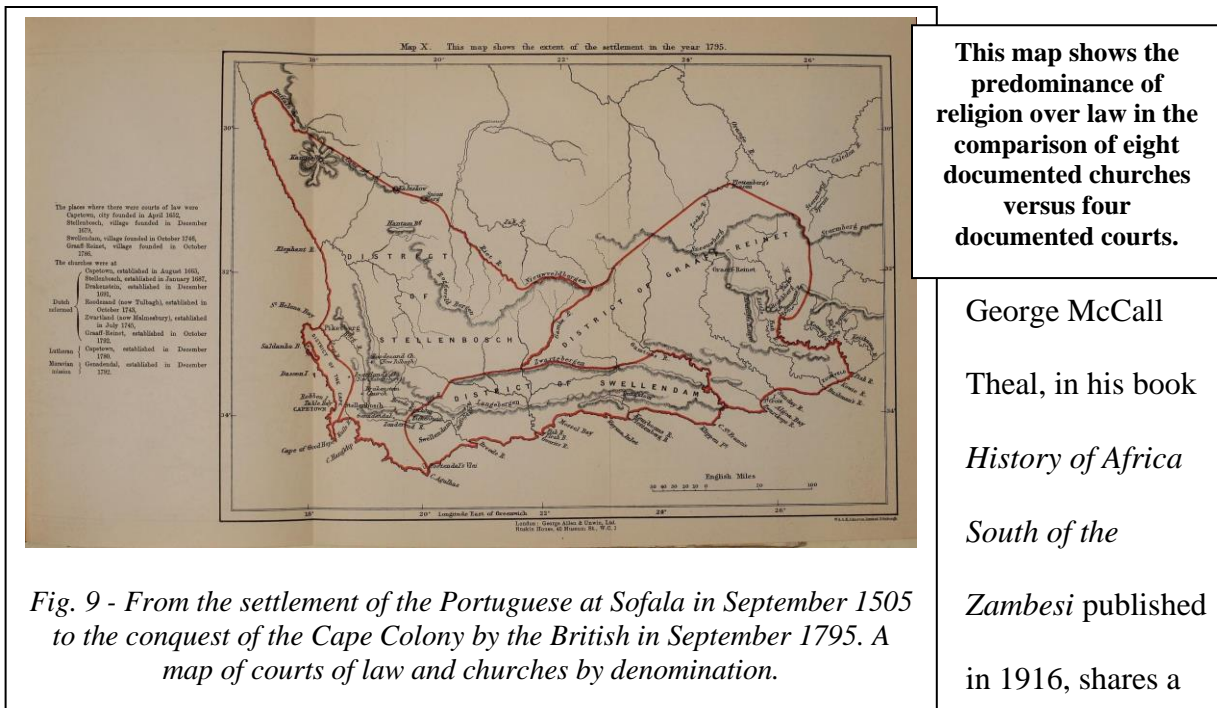


Fig. 9 - From the settlement of the Portuguese at Sofala in September 1505 to the conquest of the Cape Colony by the British in September 1795. A map of courts of law and churches by denomination.

comprehensive “Map of the Dutch Cape Colony in 1795.”²¹ Districts had been formed by this time, with the area surrounding Cape Town its own district that encompassed Cape of Good Hope.

Dutch East India Company the Conglomerate

The DEIC was unique in its operations, becoming the first global international conglomerate (i.e., a multi-industry company comprised of multiple businesses operating under the umbrella of one corporate group), and as such wielded immense power. “On the surface, the Dutch East India Company, and its British counterpart, The East India Trading Company, were merely private mercantilists, but in reality, they existed almost in states unto themselves, having their own ships and military forces.”²² The following excerpt from the *Charter of Privileges and Exemptions the Dutch West India Company* lays out the Dutch Company’s plan to monopolize

²¹ George McCall Theal. “Map of the Dutch Cape Colony in 1795”, *History of Africa south of the Zambesi*. 1916. Page 374. Accessed on November 10, 2021. <https://archive.org/stream/historyofafrican03thea/historyofafrican03thea#page/n374/mode/1up>

²² J-P Rodrigue, et al. *The Geography of Transport Systems*, 2020. Hofstra University, Department of Global Studies & Geography, <https://transportgeography.org>. Accessed November 2, 2021.

the coastline of Africa with exclusive rights to sail and trade, and more specifically to block native inhabitants from sailing or trading in the prescribed regions. This is primary source proof of Dutch intent to exploit the land they were colonizing as well as cordon off any revenue from sailing or trading along the coast to keep it away from the natives.

“... there shall be erected one General Company, which we out of special regard to their common well-being, and to keep and preserve the inhabitants of those places in good trade and welfare, will maintain and strengthen with our Help, Favour and assistance... and moreover furnish them with a proper Charter, and with the following Priveleges and Exemptions, to wit, That for the Term of four and twenty Years, none of the Natives or Inhabitants of these countries shall be permitted to sail to or from the said lands, or to traffic on the coast and countries of *Africa* from the *Tropic of Cancer* to the *Cape of Good Hope*, nor in the countries of *America*, or the West-Indies, beginning at the fourth end of *Terra Nova*, by the streights of *Magellan*, *La Maire*, or any other streights and passages situated thereabouts to the straights of *Anian*, as well on the north sea as the south sea, nor on any islands situated on the one side or the other, or between both; nor in the western or southern countries reaching, lying, and between both the meridians, from the Cape of Good Hope, in the East, to the east end of New Guinea, in the West, inclusive, but in the Name of this United Company of these United Netherlands. And whoever shall presume without the consent of this Company, to sail or to traffic in any of the Places within the aforesaid Limits granted to this Company, he shall forfeit the ships and the goods which shall be found for sale upon the aforesaid coasts and lands; the which being actually seized by the aforesaid Company, shall be by them kept for their own Benefit and Behoof...”²³

²³ J. Magnus, C. Aerssen, et. al. “Charter of Privileges and Exemptions the Dutch West India Company.” June 3, 1621. O’Callaghan, *History of New Netherland, I*, 112-120. June 7, 1629. Modified Concessions of 1040. Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York. Vol II. pp. 553-57. JUNE 3, 1621

British Invasion

After the British finally seized control of the Cape Colony in 1806, some 10,000 of the Dutch settlers (known as boers, or farmers) began a trek northward away from British rule.²⁴ These cattle farmers became quasi-nomadic, moving herds between summer and winter pastures, still competing with indigenous groups for grazing land rights. Approximately 5000 ended up settling in an area known as the Orange Free State near the Orange River, while the other roughly 5000 invaded Natal and began an uneasy, and at times violent, process of assimilation within the Zulu community.



Fig. 10 – Model of Cape Town circa 1800

After the Battle of Blood River in 1838, the Boers defeated the Zulus to establish the Boer Republic in Natal. Beyond the Khoekhoe territory, the Xhosa settlement was the next of several groups to fall, with a protracted struggle of nine wars over a century trying unsuccessfully to remain independent of the British colonial rule.

²⁴ Unknown. "Britain Acquires Cape Colony." Britain Acquires Cape Colony. CC BY-SA 3.0 image from Wikipedia., January 1, 1970. <https://historymoment.blogspot.com/2018/12/britain-acquires-cape-colony.html>.

Not long after, precious natural resources were discovered: diamonds were found in 1867 and gold in 1884, adding further fuel to the fire of conflict between the Dutch, British, and native Africans. The British wanted to unite their colonies and the Boer republics into one union to gain control of gold mines, but the Boers actively resisted. This led to war (1899 – 1902). The British used concentration camps to house both white and black settlers after destroying their farms; some 28,000 women and children died in these camps.²⁵

Gandhi's Involvement

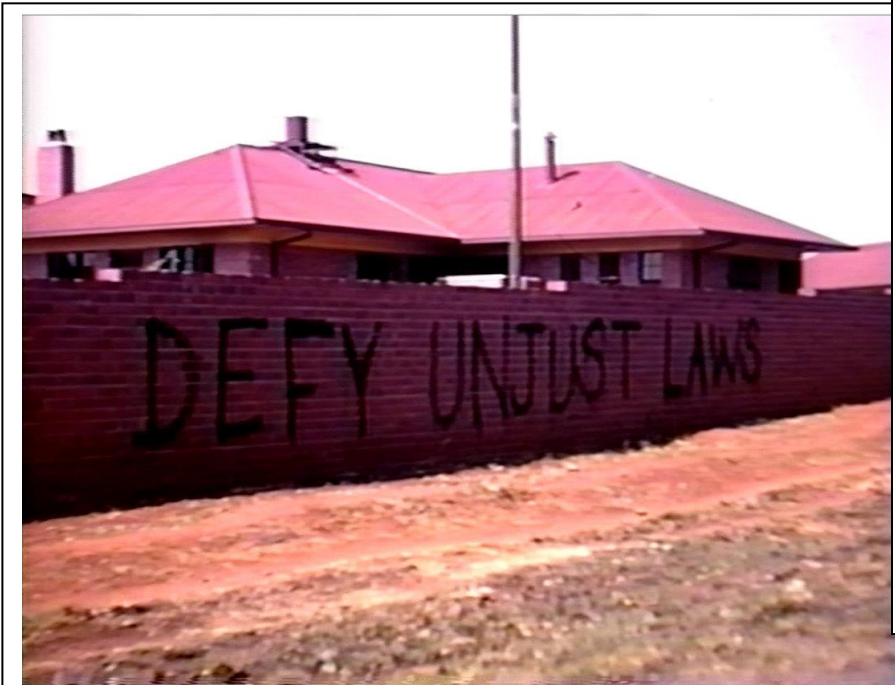
Throughout the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, the emphasis was on the conflict between the British and the Dutch, but the black African people remained just as resentful as they had always been to be under the rule of the land grabbers, no matter what was their origin country.

Resistance movements began in 1902 with the founding of the African People's Organisation [sic], which grew to 20,000 members by 1910. Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi and his passive resistance campaign fought against the new Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance that required all Indians, including children over the age of eight, to register with the government, submit to fingerprinting, and produce on demand their registration certificates. This pass system also affected the African people, who could no longer be employed by any miner, farmer, or other industrialist without passes. Imprisonment or worse were the consequences of failing to provide passes when asked. Adding yet another layer of cultural mixing, Chinese laborers who were brought in to work the diamond and gold mines siphoned off some of the wages of the black workers, and the introduction of a poll tax only added to the misery.

²⁵ SAHistory.org

In June of 1913, the Natives Land Act was passed that legalized territorial segregation and created, essentially, reservations for the black Africans. They were not permitted to purchase land in white areas, which were the most fertile areas of the region.

Further restrictions made sharecropping forbidden, with the aim suspected by the black to be the subjugation of the black Africans as laborers for the white farmers.²⁶ The roots of apartheid had grown, and the segregation became legally enforceable by 1948. A separate but equal proposition on paper, the reality of apartheid was one where social integration caused suspicion, interracial marriages were forbidden, and the practice of different racial groups living and developing separately, by force, became law.²⁷



Photograph of a slogan of the Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws of the African National Congress (ANC) that was presumably painted in 1952 or early 1953 during the campaign. The photograph was taken by George M. Houser, a founder of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), during a trip to Africa in September 1954. After returning to the U.S., Houser became Executive Director of ACOA. Houser did not get into South Africa again until the 1990s.

Fig. 11 -by George M. Houser, South Africa, About September 1954

Apartheid lasted from 1948 through the early 1990s, with legislation finally being repealed in 1991, when F.W. de Klerk made good on his campaign promise to repeal

²⁶ SAHistory.org

²⁷ *Defy Unjust Laws* by George M. Houser. September 1954. Photograph.

discriminatory laws and lift 30-year bans against anti-apartheid groups like the African National Congress, with the charismatic ANC leader Nelson Mandela being released from prison after 27 years. Both men jointly earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their cooperative work to end apartheid and put a democratic foundation in place for modern South Africa. Transition was not easy, although great pains were taken to make the process as conflict-free as possible. The “crime of apartheid” is now an internationally recognized crime against humanity.

The diamond industry in Africa became so violent and volatile that “blood diamonds” and the plight of the African laborers were documented in various media, including feature-length film. “Conflict-free” stones became the socially responsible way to enjoy the gemstones and equitably support the miners. The vast vineyards established by the Huguenots bring additional revenue that benefits South Africa, and a railroad line previously used to move resources between the north of Africa to Cape Town has been reconditioned into a wine tram that visits various vineyard estates. These industries do not, however, offset the deficit begun by the establishment of the Cape Town colony.

As demonstrated in this paper, the Dutch colonization of South Africa has had a tremendous impact on the indigenous African tribes. Due to their encroachment, the native tribes were marginalized into smaller and smaller plots of land. Then the French and British colonists and later, Indian and Chinese laborers, further divested them of rights and resources. What resulted was the systematic theft of land, cattle, fresh water, freedom of movement, independence, gold and diamond mining rights, wages, stable economy, nationalism, and autonomy from the native African tribes.

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