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EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN SOCIETIES

Humankind had its earliest origins in Africa and the story of life in South Africa has proven to be a micro-study of life on the continent of Africa. South Africa is a rich store of fossil evidence that has helped to shed much light on the evolutionary history of humankind, going back several million years.

The history of man in Africa is marked by the rise of complex societies (chiefdoms and states), migrations, agriculture and pastoralism (a way of life in which people’s livelihood depends on the herding of animals within a certain area. When the natural resources are depleted, the herders move on to the next area with similar resources, and a nomadic lifestyle is created).

The introduction of iron changed the African continent irrevocably and was a large step forwards in the development of the people. Mainly, it created the potential for agriculture, which changed the lifestyles of the African people forever. Population numbers rose and a pattern of migration started. The nomadic lifestyle was no longer the only way to live and people were starting to intrude on each other’s territories. However, while farming with implements changed the way of life in Africa, just as it did in Europe, other ways of life were equally important. Nomadic herders were successful in the central part of Africa in the great savannas. Hunters and gatherers continued to survive in limited areas such as the Kalahari Desert in Southern Africa, where life has changed very little over the last 10 000 years.
Another complication of the Iron Age was that populations grew more complex and social structures were affected. The histories of African kingdoms, passed on by word of mouth, usually tell of a male founder who persuaded or forced people to accept his rule. Many of these legends refer to the founder-king as a blacksmith, reminding us of the great impact that iron had on African social history.

Almost all the myths also refer to the presence of supernatural authority behind the power of the ruler. African societies were held together by social control that was tied to this supernatural force. The masks and forms of dress unique to African societies, still serve as a reminder of their strong links to the spiritual world.

In short, the story of Africa is one of contrast and diversity, a tribute to all the people who adapted to the challenges of nature with enthusiasm and courage.
The history of man in South Africa covers such a vast period of time that it is difficult to know exactly where to start. A possible start could be the development of Hominidae (human race), five million years ago, or 2.3 million years ago with the development of the genus Homo. Archaeologists have found evidence that both Homo habilis and Homo erectus inhabited southern Africa.

Archaeological evidence suggests that modern humans have lived in South Africa for over 100 000 years. Most scientists believe that the Khoisan are probably the descendants of the Late Stone Age peoples and evidence has shown that they were living in southern Africa long before either the blacks or the whites. Among this evidence is rock art created by the Khoisan some 26 000 years ago. The earliest distinctively Black inhabitants are believed to have arrived significantly later than the Khoisan.
The term “Khoisan” has been used to describe a broad similarity in cultural and biological origins. It is derived from the names “Khoikhoi” and “San”. “Khoikhoi” was the original name used by the Hottentots in reference to themselves and “San” was the name the Bushmen used when they referred to themselves. This term was invented because it is often difficult to distinguish clearly between both the past and present “San” and their “Khoikhoi” neighbours, especially after significant changes had occurred in their lifestyles. The Khoisan and the Black peoples are believed to have merged from common gene pools but to have developed separately.

The San (Bushmen)

Up to as recently as 3 000 years ago, all the inhabitants of southern Africa depended on hunting game and gathering wild plant foods for their survival. However, by the middle of the 20th century A.D., the influence of pastoral, agricultural and industrial societies had caused most hunter-gatherers to become assimilated into new ways of life, to have been wiped out by their enemies in conflicts over land or to have died from the diseases brought by the new inhabitants. Consequently, hunter-gatherers could be found only in and around the near-desert Kalahari basin.

The hunter-gatherers of Southern Africa have been called by many names: “Bushmen”, “San” or “Sonqua”, “Soqua”, “Sarwa” or “Basarwa”, and “Twa”, all basically meaning, “those without domestic livestock”.

The San are much shorter than members of the Black group - the average height of an adult is approximately 1,5 m and their complexion is yellowish. They probably originated on the north coast of Africa and were then driven further and further south by stronger nations. When the San reached the southern point of Africa, the Black tribes were primarily still living in the tropical and equatorial parts of Africa.
The migration of the Black tribes to southern Africa caused the San to meet up with them again after millennia of separation. It also brought them in contact with the phenomenon of agriculture and stockbreeding (pastoral industry). As hunter-gatherers, it was the women’s work to gather food and the men’s work to hunt with bows and arrows. The hunters smeared poison, gathered from certain beetles or snakes on the arrowheads, which would paralyse or kill their prey.

The San were known to be excellent trackers, a skill that helped them to survive for so long on the land. They lived in caves or shelters made of branches built near waterholes, so that drinking water would be near and animals could easily be hunted.

The San people have left us an invaluable legacy of rock art and their paintings, depicting their way of life and their religious beliefs, can still be found all over the country. They give us a glimpse into the lives of these tough little people, capable of such courage and compassion that they could survive on the land for such a long time, without destroying all they touched.

There is a small group of San in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa, today, who are trying to live as their predecessors did. It has, however, become increasingly difficult for them and most of them have turned to either agriculture or stockbreeding to make a living.
The Khoikhoi (Hottentots)

The Khoikhoi adopted a pastoralist lifestyle (a nomadic lifestyle based on herding of cattle) some 2,000 years ago and adapted their cultural lives accordingly. Like the San, the Khoikhoi also had a yellowish complexion but they were bigger in size. This can be attributed to the fact that their staple diet was protein. Their whole lives revolved around their cattle and they were constantly on the move in search of better grazing for their cattle and sheep. The Khoikhoi had perfected their nomadic way of life to a fine art. They slept on reed mats in dome shaped huts made from stripped branches which could be taken apart easily to facilitate moving. Their huts were erected in a circle formation so that the animals could sleep in the middle. A fence of thorny branches was constructed around the circle of huts to keep intruders from entering. In addition to milk and meat, their diet consisted of berries, roots and bulbs. Sometimes, like the San, the Khoikhoi used bows and arrows to hunt.

Some scientists believe that the Khoikhoi originally came from the great lakes of Africa and only migrated to Southern Africa long after the San. Other scientists, however, are of the opinion that the Khoikhoi shepherds evolved from hunter-gatherer communities in Southern Africa. Language studies have proven that certain languages spoken by the San are remarkably similar to certain Khoikhoi dialects and some linguists have even mentioned the possibility that the Khoikhoi language developed out of a San language. This is another reason for combining the words “Khoi” and “San” into “Khoisan”. But the word also refers to the deeper connection between the two peoples, which originated when they started to marry into each other’s tribes and, in this way, became one people.

With the arrival of the black and later the white people in South Africa, trouble started for the Khoisan. The San regarded the farmers’ cattle as game and started hunting them and the Khoikhoi saw the farmers as intruders on their grazing fields. This caused much strife between the different groups. Eventually, the San moved to drier parts such as Namibia and Botswana.

Once Europeans began to colonise the Cape, the Khoikhoi lifestyle began to change as the colonists began to intrude on their living space and they were eventually reduced to a state of servitude. The population of the Khoikhoi was also severely reduced by warring and epidemics such as smallpox. They eventually became detribalised and started mixing with the freed slaves. Because of all these changes, the Khoikhoi ceased to exist as a nation, although they numbered nearly 100,000 when the Dutch arrived in 1652.
BLACK SETTLEMENT

With the development of the iron blade, reaping became easier and agriculture took on a whole new meaning. Populations grew faster than before and people were encroaching on each other’s land. This necessitated an enlargement of territory, which led to the migration of African peoples from the Great Lakes in central Africa, to the North, East and South of Africa. Some anthropologists believe that this migration process could have taken up to 2 000 years. Some 2 000 years ago, when the first waves of black settlers began arriving in southern Africa, they brought with them the advantages of an Iron Age culture, farming skills and domesticated crops. After they had settled in the eastern parts of South Africa, they eventually spread out across the high veld some 1 000 years ago, because of their need for more land on which to practise their growing cattle culture. The first African settlements in South Africa were mainly in the Transvaal and Natal areas.

In the African culture, chiefdoms were based on control over cattle, which gave rise to social systems of protection (patronage) and hierarchies of authority within communities. The exchange of cattle formed the basis of polygamous marriage arrangements. This system operated on the basis of social power built through control over the labour of kin groups and dependants.

The development of metalworking skills promoted specialisation of products and trade between regions followed. The different chiefdoms settled in different patterns; dispersed homesteads were found in the fertile coastal regions to the east, and concentrated in towns in the desert fringes to the west. In the western half of the country, rainfall was low and desert conditions prevailed and the African farmers were not interested in settling there. These dry regions remained a safe haven of the Khoikhoi and the San. The African settlement patterns had the effect that, for the first century and a half of European settlement, the African farmers were hardly affected by the white presence at all.

The black population of South Africa is divided into several ethnic groups, of which the Nguni forms a major part. Other main groups are the Sotho, the Venda and the Shangaan-Tsonga.

THE NGUNI

The Nguni group migrated along the eastern part of southern Africa in their southward move from central Africa. Some groups split off and settled along the way, while others kept going. Thus, the following settlement pattern formed: the Swazi in the north, the Zulu towards the east and the Xhosa in the south. Owing to the fact that these people had a common origin, their languages and cultures show marked similarities.
The first Xhosa tribes arrived in the 14th century in the area known as the Transkei. At first, they settled in this area but, in time, moved further southwards until they met up with the white settlers at the Fish River, in 1788. At this point, the Xhosa had already been living in the area near the Fish River for more than a hundred years. In their move to the Fish River, clashes with the Khoikhoi (Hottentots) often occurred but they eventually defeated the Khoikhoi.

Many of the Xhosa tribes chose to settle along the south-eastern coast of Africa. These were divided mainly into the Thembu section and the Mpondo section.

Some other Xhosa tribes such as the Fingo, Bhaca, Nhlangwini and Xesibe chose to settle in the eastern part of the Transkei.
The Zulu

While the Xhosa tribes migrated to the Transkei and the Ciskei, other Nguni tribes such as the Zulu, chose to remain in Natal. In 1806, there were a large number of tribes in the area and there were four important and well-known ones. The Zulu tribe which, during the early nineteenth century, was only a small tribe, had settled between the Umhlatuse and the Umfolozi Rivers. The tribe’s first leader was Malandela and the tribe was named after his son Zulu. The Mtethwa tribe lived east of the Zulu and was a strong tribe under a strong leader called Dingiswayo. The Qwabe tribe lived south of the Mtethwa and its first leader was called Phakatwayo. The Ndandwe tribe was also powerful and its first leader was named Zwide. The Ndandwe lived north of the Mtethwa.
The Ndebele

Some Nguni groups migrated from Natal to Transvaal in the middle of the 17th century. The Ndebele constituted two important groups. The northern group settled in the area around the towns today known as Pietersburg and Potgietersrus. Intermingling between them and the North Sotho took place and this ultimately caused language changes. Important tribes constituting this section of the Ndebele are the Langa and the Moletlana.

The southern group of the Ndebele people migrated to the southern part of the Transvaal under the leadership of their chief Msi. After Msi died, his two sons, Manala and Ndzundza, founded two tribes and split up the southern section of the Ndebele people. They settled in the districts around the towns today known as Middelburg (Transvaal), Bronkhorstspruit, Bethal and Belfast. These tribes became known as the Manala and Ndzundza, after their founders.
The Swazi

During the 19th century, Swaziland was home not only to Nguni tribes but also to Sotho tribes. The Ngwane tribe under the leadership of paramount chief Sobhuza became very strong after 1820. Mswazi, who ruled from 1840 until 1875, succeeded him and incorporated the Sotho tribes into his tribe or drove them out of the area. These changes made the Swazi nation take shape and the new nation was called after its founder.

Small groups of Swazi people trekked across the border into the Transvaal. These groups constituted tribes such as the Nkosi, Shongwe and Khumalo who today live in the districts of Barberton and Nelspruit. The Hhlatyawako live in the districts of Paul Pietersburg and Piet Retief, together with some other Swazi tribes.

The Sotho

While the Nguni group, living in the eastern parts of the country, was moving southwards, the Sotho group, which was living at the edge of the Kalahari, was doing the same. This sporadic movement to the south took place before the year 1600. These people had originally also come from the area around the Great Lakes in central Africa. One of the most important tribes was the Kgalagadi who settled in Botswana.

Other Sotho groups migrated as far as the Orange River. During the Mfecane/Difaqane (displacement of black peoples due to intertribal warring and hunger) the Sotho suffered greatly under other tribes with leaders such as Mzilikazi and Mmantatise. The Sotho ethnic group is today divided into three main groups: the Western Sotho (Botswana), Southern Sotho (Basotho) and Northern Sotho (Bapedi).
The Western Sotho

The Kgalagadi, initially the main tribe, gave life to the Kwena, which divided into a large number of tribes. The Western Sotho live primarily in the area of Bophuthatswana. The most important tribes belonging to this group are the Tswana, Kwena, Kgatla, Tlhaping, Tlaro, Rolong and Ngwato.

The Southern Sotho

Prior to the Mfecane, many independent tribes lived in Lesotho and the eastern Free State. These people were related to the Batswana (Tswana people) and Sotho people who lived in Swaziland. They suffered greatly during the Mfecane and many of them were either driven away or killed. However, many of these fugitives found refuge with Moshweshwe’s tribe and in this manner, a strong nation was built. Today this group lives mainly in Lesotho and the eastern part of the Free State. Smaller groups are also found at Griqualand East, Thaba Nchu and Nqamakwe. The most significant tribes are the Kwena, Kgatla, Tlekoa, Taung, Tebele and Vundle.

The Northern Sotho (Bapedi)

Certain tribes that initially formed part of the Bakgatla are today part of the Northern Sotho. They can be found in the areas formerly known as Sekhukhuneland and the Pokwani district. These tribes defeated other tribes who used to live there and after that, a strong tribe was built up by Thulare and Malekuta. They are commonly known as the BaPedi. Mzilikazi often attacked the BaPedi during the Mfecane. The most important Northern Sotho tribes are the Pedi, Koni, Phalaborwa, Lobedu and Kutswe. They mainly live in areas of Northern Transvaal and North-Eastern Transvaal.
THE VENDA

During the 16th century, the Venda migrated from central Africa to the area between the Soutpansberg Mountains and the Limpopo River. Some of them initially lived south of the Soutpansberg, but today they live mainly to the north of the Soutpansberg mountains in the districts known as Louis Trichardt and Sibasa. This area is called Venda. The most important Venda section is the Mphephu. One of the smaller sections of the Venda is known as the Lemba.

THE MASHANGANA-TSONGA

During the Mfecane, Soshangane, together with a part of Zwide’s tribe, fled to Mozambique. He oppressed the Tsonga who were already living in the area, some of whom chose to flee across the Lebombo Mountains into the Northern Transvaal. Their descendants now live in the districts of Pilgrims Rest, Leydsdorp, Tzaneen, Duiwelskloof, Sibasa and Louis Trichardt. Some Tsonga tribes are the Nhlanu, Nkuna and Tembe. The most significant tribes belonging to the Shangaans are the Tulilamahashe, Shangana and Nkuna.
THE MFECANE/DIFAQANE
(Destroyed in total war)

One of the most significant historical occurrences in the early history of South Africa was the Mfecane. The term Mfecane (Nguni languages) means “destroyed in total war”. The Sotho speaking people on the highveld used the term Difaqane, which means “hammering” or “forced migration/removal”. This occurrence forever changed the settlement patterns and ethnic structure of the African population of the area.

Whole communities of peoples were displaced in their flight from larger warring tribes. The winning tribes would often incorporate the losers into their tribes. Two key figures in this all-out battle for power among the African tribes in southern Africa were Dingiswayo (leader of the Mtethwa tribe) and Zwide (leader of the Ndandwe tribe).

**Dingiswayo**

When Dingiswayo became leader of the Mtethwa, his main concern was to improve the military system of his tribe. Young men of a similar age were divided into regiments. Each regiment had its own name, colour and weapons. The young men were even required to remain celibate until such a time when they had proven themselves worthy of the name “warrior”. Dingiswayo’s army soon went from strength to strength and was employed in an attempt to expand his territory. The army attacked smaller tribes which were allowed to continue their existence as tribes, but only if they agreed to recognise him as their paramount chief. Some of the tribes which were dominated in this way were the Thembu, Qwabe, Mshali Mngadi and the Zulu.

**Shaka**

The Zulu tribe was initially a small tribe which recognised Dingiswayo as its paramount chief. The tribe consisted of approximately 2 000 people and its tribal chief was Senzangakona. Shaka, his son, was born in around the year 1787. Shaka and his mother Nandi could not get along with some of the other members of the Zulu family and went to live with Nandi’s family, among the Lungeni people. When Shaka was 16, his mother took him to the Mtethwa and, at the age of 22, he became a soldier in one of Dingiswayo’s regiments.
He was brave and intelligent and soon became leader of one of the regiments. When Senzangakona died in 1816, Sigujane, a half-brother of Shaka, became chief of the Zulu. Shaka, together with another half-brother Ngwadi, plotted against Sigujane, who was soon murdered. With a regiment borrowed from Dingiswayo, Shaka made himself chief of the Zulus.

Shaka was an exceptional military leader and organised the Zulu army with military precision. All the men younger than forty were divided into regiments, based on their age. Shaka built his capital at Bulawayo and, although he recognised Dingiswayo as paramount chief, started incorporating smaller tribes into the Zulu nation.

In 1819, when war broke out between the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa, Dingiswayo was killed by Zwide, after which the defeated Mthethwa tribe was incorporated into Shaka’s tribe. In time, Shaka destroyed the Ndwandwe tribe completely.

He employed cunning military techniques such as the following: when Zwide sent the Ndwandwe to attack Shaka, the latter hid the food and led his people and cattle further and further away from the capital. Zwide’s army followed and Shaka’s soldiers waited until night fell to attack them, when they were exhausted and hungry. The Ndwandwe army turned back, after which Shaka attacked and destroyed them. A second attempt was made by Zwide later in 1819 to destroy Shaka, but once again the Ndwandwe had no luck. After this attempt, Shaka ordered the complete destruction of the Ndwandwe people. Shaka went on destroying several smaller tribes until Natal was practically depopulated.

The Zulu eventually grew into a mighty nation when Shaka succeeded in uniting all the people in his chiefdom under Zulu rule. In 1828, two of Shaka’s half-brothers, Dingane and Mahlangane, murdered him and Dingane took his place as leader of the Zulu nation.
Dingane’s capital was built at Umgungundlovu. He was not as good a soldier as Shaka and this caused his defeat in many of his wars. In order to combat the decline of the Zulu kingdom, Dingane decided to kill a few important leaders. One of these leaders, Ngeto (of the Qwabe tribe), realised that his life was in danger and, after gathering his people and livestock, fled southwards and settled in the Mpondoland district, from which he himself started to attack other tribes.

Dingane soon sent soldiers to fight the Mpondo people but he also launched attacks against Mzilikazi and the Voortrekkers.

On 3 February 1838, Dingane’s tribesmen killed Piet Retief, together with 67 of his followers, during an ambush. Retief had had an agreement with Dingane that if he succeeded in returning Dingane’s cattle that had been stolen by Sikonyela, the Voortrekkers would be allowed to buy land from the Zulu. When the Voortrekkers returned with the stolen cattle, they were killed.

The Voortrekkers swore vengeance and Dingane’s army was defeated at Blood River on 16 December 1838 by Andries Pretorius. Dingane’s death brought with it an end to the extermination wars waged by the Zulus. However, in other parts of the country, the Mfengu continued under leaders such as Msilikazi, Soshangane and Sikonyela.
Mzilikazi

Another small Nguni tribe that was forced to join Zwide’s Ndwandwe tribe was called the Khumalo. The Khumalo tribe was suspected of treachery during the war against Dingiswayo’s Mthethwa and its leader, Mashobane, was summoned to Zwide’s kraal and killed. Zwide appointed Mzilikazi as the new leader of the Khumalo. He was an intelligent leader who knew how to gain the trust of the tribes that had been incorporated into his own. Trouble started when Mzilikazi began to suspect that Zwide wanted to kill him. In preparation, Mzilikazi formed an alliance with Shaka, who allowed him to be the leader of one of his regiments.

In 1821, Mzilikazi felt strong enough to become independent. Shaka sent him to attack a small Sotho tribe northwest of Zululand and, as always, he brought back with him a number of cattle taken during the battle. However, this time he did not hand them over to Shaka as he had done before. When Shaka sent his messengers to collect the cattle, Mzilikazi refused to return them. After this, he was attacked by Shaka’s army and had no option but to flee with his people.

Mzilikazi trekked northwards with his people until he reached the Olifants (Elephants) River. He was now in the territory of powerful Sotho tribes, which he attacked, taking their women, children and livestock. He attacked tribes as far as Tswanaland and overpowered them by the military tactics perfected by the Zulu people. His tribe eventually became known as the Matabele.

Mzilikazi decided to trek to the central Transvaal and he eventually settled in the vicinity of what is today known as Pretoria. He moved because he needed to put even more distance between himself and Shaka and he was also in need of more grazing land. After this move, his tribe became even more bloodthirsty.

When the Voortrekkers came on the scene in 1836, Mzilikazi once again went on the attack. At Vegkop, the Voortrekkers succeeded in defeating the Matebele, but they lost all their cattle. In 1837, the Voortrekkers once again succeeded in defeating the Matebele at Mosega and the Voortrekkers, under the leadership of Potgieter, recovered some of their stolen cattle. The Matabele then moved away only to be defeated by the Zulu. In an attempt to get away from his enemies, Mzilikazi crossed the Soutpansberg Mountains and the Limpopo River into which is today known as Zimbabwe. He died in 1868.
Soshangane

After the tribes of Zwide, Soshangane, Zwangendaba and Nxaba, had been defeated by Shaka, they fled to Mozambique. There, they destroyed the Portuguese settlement at Delagoa Bay.

As the Mfecane continued, the land was devastated and tribes were attacked. Much damage was done. Soshangane’s capital was near the modern day Maputo and Shaka attacked him here in the campaign that cost Shaka’s life. Soshangane then moved on to Middle Sabie and settled near Zwangendaba and his people.

The tribes of Soshangane and Zwangendaba coexisted in harmony until 1831, when they went to war. Zwangendaba had to flee before Soshangane, after which Soshangane, went on to attack Nxaba, who responded by fleeing with his followers to the present-day Tanzania. With Soshangane’s biggest enemies out of the way, he began building his Gaza Kingdom. From his capital, Chaimite, soldiers were sent in all directions to attack other tribes. Even the Portuguese were forced to accept him as paramount chief. His kingdom stretched from the Zambezi to the Limpopo Rivers and his army resembled that of the Zulus in its military strategies. As Soshangane grew older, he began to believe that the Matshangano had bewitched him. In retaliation, he attacked them and many fled to the Transvaal where their descendants still live today. Soshangane died around the year 1826.
**Mmantatise**

During the early 19th century, two of the biggest Nguni tribes, the Hlubi and the Ngwane, lived near the present-day Wakkerstroom. The Hlubi was under the leadership of Mpangazita and Matiwane was the leader of the Ngwane. The Zulus had forced these two tribes across the Drakensberg Mountains into Sotho territory, which meant the start of the Mfecane for the Sotho tribes.

The first tribe to be attacked was the Batlokwa. The tribe’s chief had just died and his successor, Sikonyela, was still too young to rule. His mother, Mmantatise was a strong leader and ruled in his place. After the Hlubi tribe defeated the Batlokwa, they took to wandering around and attacking other tribes and tribes such as the Bafokeng were forced to flee. The Batlokwa eventually settled at Butha-Buthe, a mountain stronghold.

**Sikonyela**

Moshweshwe was living on the mountain with his small tribe and after repeatedly attacking Mmantatise, Moshweshwe’s tribe moved to Peka. There they continued the Mfecane and defeated the Hlubi. Sikonyela was by now old enough to lead the Batlokwa in battle and, in 1824, they made another attempt to reconquer Moshweshwe’s mountain stronghold at Butha-Buthe. The mountain was surrounded in order to stop the Sotho people from obtaining food. After two months, a Nguni tribe came to Moshweshwe’s rescue and the Batlokwa were forced to leave. The Batlokwa subsequently went to settle on two other mountains. In 1852, Moshweshwe finally drove the Batlokwa away.
**Moshweshwe**

Moshweshwe, the builder of the Sotho empire, was born in 1793. His mother belonged to the Bafokeng tribe and his father was chief of the Bakwena tribe. When the Mfecane began in 1816, Moshweshwe was 23 years old. During the early years of his chieftainship, leaders such as Shaka, Dingane and Mzilikazi were waging the destructive wars of the Mfecane. Many of the people who got caught up in these wars turned to Moshweshwe for refuge. He took them all in and his tribe grew bigger and stronger. In 1823, Moshweshwe established Butha-Buthe as the capital of his chiefdom. A year later, he established a safer stronghold at Thaba Bosigo. This mountain stronghold was so secure that when Mzilikazi attacked it in 1831, he had to turn back without accomplishing anything.

Moshweshwe was a diplomatic and powerful leader and was too clever to try to expand his territory northwards because he knew that this would incur the wrath of strong leaders such as Mzilikazi, Shaka and Dingane.
Consequences of the Mfecane/Difaqane

The Mfecane had a great influence on the history of South Africa. Large parts of the country in Natal, the Transvaal and Free State were largely depopulated because people fled in droves to safer areas such as the Transkei, the edge of the Kalahari, the Soutpansberg and the present-day Lesotho. In consequence, these areas could not cope with the sudden influx and became overpopulated.

After the Mfecane, the Black peoples were living in an area shaped like a horseshoe. The Tswana and Pedi lived in the west and the Venda, Shangaan, Tsonga and Swazi lived in the north. The Zulu lived in the eastern part of the country, as did the Sotho and the inhabitants of both Transkei and Ciskei.

The whites took advantage of this situation by moving into the empty areas and in this way the ethnic map of South Africa was changed completely.

Many people died during the Mfecane. Violence and starvation were rampant, because the livestock was stolen and people could not stay long enough in one place to cultivate crops. Although hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives, it also gave rise to the formation of big new nations such as the Sotho. The tribes of leaders such as Dingane, Shaka, Mzilikazi and Soshangane were significantly strengthened and changed.
EUROPEAN INTERESTS

The Portuguese

The white population arrived on the South African scene long after the blacks. Bartolomeu Dias was the first Portuguese seafarer to sail around the southern point of Africa in 1486. He named it “The Cape of Good Hope” (“Cabo de Boa Esperanca”), because it was hoped that it would clear the way to India, which would simplify trade with the East. Upon returning home Dias and his men reported that they had spotted Khoikhoi along the coast.

Nine years were to pass before Vasco da Gama, another Portuguese seafarer, attempted a voyage around the southern point of Africa on his way to India. Once again the seafarers met up with Khoikhoi and some of the crew were hurt in a skirmish with them. The Khoikhoi were prepared to trade with the seafarers but, because of communication problems and misunderstandings, there were many problems and disagreements between the two groups. On 25 December 1497, Da Gama reached the coast of Pondoland and called it “Natal”, meaning “Christmas”.

Although the Portuguese were the first to travel around the Cape, they were not seriously interested in southern Africa. They were wary of the indigenous population and the weather at the Cape was sometimes treacherous and dangerous. Some of the early Portuguese seafarers referred to the Cape as “The Cape of Storms” and preferred not to sail around it. Furthermore, as far as trade was concerned, South Africa offered very little - gold had not yet been discovered and, except for the presence of the Khoikhoi, the southern point of Africa seemed deserted and without promise.

The British

In June 1580, nearly a hundred years later, Sir Francis Drake sailed past the Cape. He was on a voyage around the world, commissioned by Elizabeth I of England. It was winter; the weather was calm and the landscape serene. The sight inspired Sir Francis Drake to utter the following words: “This Cape is a most stately thing and the fairest Cape we saw in the whole circumference of the earth.”

More British expeditions followed and other European countries soon followed in their footsteps.

In the first half of the 17th century, it was mainly the English and the Dutch who made use of the route around the Cape of Good Hope for trading purposes. Danish and French ships also made stopovers to replenish their water supplies and to stock up with fresh produce. Although the English, French and Dutch East India Companies all toyed with the idea of establishing a base at the Cape in the 17th century, it was the Dutch who finally took the plunge.
**The Dutch**

On 6 April 1652, Jan van Riebeeck arrived in Table Bay with his three ships, De Reiger, De Drommedaris and De Goede Hoop. His mission was to establish a supply station on behalf of the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.) where fresh produce could be cultivated to supply the ships passing through on their way to the East. They soon realised the importance of trading with the indigenous people of the country and, as a result, intermingling started to take place on several levels. The V.O.C. also realised that a hospital was urgently needed at the outpost.

Proper food and medical care were needed to combat the great loss of men on their trade expeditions to the East. At this time approximately half of all ships’ crews died, mainly from scurvy. Scurvy was caused when people consumed only food preserved in salt over a prolonged period of time, resulting in a lack of Vitamin C.

Originally, the V.O.C. did not intend to establish a full-fledged colony at the Cape, but it committed itself when it gave nine Company servants their freedom in 1657 to establish private farms in the Rondebosch area below the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. This was done in an attempt to combat a wheat shortage at the time.

In 1679, Simon van der Stel was sent to the Cape to become the new governor and a further 20 settlers were granted land beyond the dunes in the area that is today known as Stellenbosch.

The population at the Cape grew even larger as the granting of property to private citizens encouraged the immigration of white woman to the area and servants and seamen were recruited from the hinterlands of Europe.

**The French**

In 1689, some 180 Huguenot refugees were brought to the Cape after Louis XIV had banned Calvinism in France. They settled mainly in the Stellenbosch district near what is today known as Franschhoek. People from Germany, Scandinavia, Flanders and Switzerland also contributed to the diverse population of the Cape.
THE SLAVES

The importation of slaves greatly enlarged the population of the Cape. Slaves were imported from other parts of Africa, Madagascar, India and East Asia. They were mainly used as labourers and servants but many of them were skilled carpenters and bricklayers. Their skills played an invaluable role in speeding up the progress and development of the Cape.

The Dutch East India Company (V.O.C) owned some of the slaves and they lived in a huge slave hostel in the Cape. This slave lodge was later converted to house the old Supreme Court and currently houses the South African Cultural History Museum in Adderley Street.

Many of the slaves were owned by free citizens (vryburgers). They were called free citizens because the Dutch East India Company gave them their freedom to make a living independent of the Company, e.g. by farming their own land. The slaves who were in the employ of the free citizens helped with the cultivation of wine, wheat and vegetables and others were employed as domestic servants. A number of slave owners used the slaves to work in their businesses which supplied goods such as shoes, clothes and furniture.

Most slaves were condemned to a lifetime of slavery, but a few owners made provision for their slaves to be freed after their death. Slaves would do extra work during their free time to save some money for when they were freed. The freed slaves at the Cape often earned a living by catching fish, selling vegetables and running small canteens. But the end of slavery was near, although owners tried to fight it. Towards the end of the 18th century, the V.O.C. declared that no people who belonged to the Christian faith could be sold as slaves and slave owners became very reluctant to let their slaves convert to Christianity.

In 1807, the British Parliament made the slave trade illegal throughout the British Empire. However, it was only in December 1833 that slaves were set free under a law allowing a period of four years’ apprenticeship for domestic slaves and six years for plantation slaves. After the period of apprenticeship, the slaves would finally be free to leave the employ of their owners. The emancipation of the slaves bankrupted many slave owners because there was no one left to do the work. Many ex-slaves joined the bands of roaming Hottentots, while others went into business for themselves or started a new life as paid employees.

In addition to the economic contribution that the slaves made to the Cape, they made other important contributions, e.g. social and religious, as well. The slaves from Malaya brought Islam with them, which religion is still practiced in South Africa. The intermingling between the slaves and the European population created the Coloured community, which today still lives mainly in the Western Cape.
THE TREKBOERS  
(MIGRANT FARMERS)  

During the early years of Dutch occupation, the focus was primarily on agriculture. With the growth of the population, more and more people started cultivating agricultural products, which, before long, resulted in a surplus of products such as wine, wheat and vegetables. This overproduction of agricultural products forced the free citizens to explore other avenues, such as stock farming. Soon the stock farmers began to move deeper into the interior in their search for more and better grazing. Young men married and set up their own farms and the resultant large families caused the number of stock farmers to increase rapidly. The lack of sufficient space for proper stock farming prompted the farmers to pack their possessions into their ox wagons and move deeper into the interior. This kind of farmer was called a “Trekboer”. The word means, “a migrant farmer”.  

Until 1750, there was nothing to prevent the Trekboers from advancing rapidly into the interior. There was plenty of water in the interior and they employed Khoikhoi to tend to the cattle. However, the Dutch East India Company became worried about the Trekboers moving so far because it became increasingly difficult to exercise any authority over them. In order to maintain its authority, the V.O.C. was forced to follow in their tracks. This constant moving also resulted in the V.O.C. having to continually change the boundaries of the eastern frontier of the colony. Eventually, in 1778, the Great Fish River became the eastern frontier. It was also here that the Trekboers first experienced problems with the Xhosa.
Until that time, the Trekboers had only experienced serious clashes with the San when the San attacked them with poisoned arrows and hunted their cattle. The Trekboers frequently organised hunting parties in reprisal for the San attacks.

When the frontier farmers, as they were now called, met up with the Xhosa, serious clashes followed. Each group felt that the other was intruding on their livelihood and wanted to protect its territory at all costs. The V.O.C. established new districts such as Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet in order to maintain authority over the frontier and to quell the ongoing violence, but to no avail. The frontier farmers kept on moving across the border and the Xhosa refused to let go of their heritage that easily. A number of frontier wars followed and both groups learnt to live with regular occurrences of theft, arson and murder.
After the French Revolution, the newly founded Republic of France conquered the Netherlands in 1795. The Netherlands became known as the Batavian Republic and the ruler of the Netherlands, Prince William of Orange, had to flee to England. In England, the prince asked the British to prevent France taking possession of the Dutch colonies. Britain obligated and, as a result, became involved with the Cape. Problems occurred almost immediately because not all the inhabitants of the Cape were in favour of British occupation.

However, the British did bring with them certain improvements. Under British rule, officials received set salaries and were no longer dependent on incomes from fines. This eliminated most malpractices in the government. British iron ploughs were imported, which assisted with agricultural development. Because of the war in Europe, there was a growing demand for agricultural products from the Cape, which furthered economical growth. British taxation was also lenient.

The biggest problem the British had to contend with was the unrest on the eastern frontier. The farmers on the frontier were not prepared to submit to British rule without a fight and the African population also resisted. The farmers tried to recapture the Cape, but eventually surrendered.

When Gaika became chief of the Xhosas, unrest and tension on the eastern frontier intensified. The farmers revolted under the leadership of Adriaan van Jaarsveld and relations between the farmers and authorities deteriorated.

In 1803, after the Cape had been returned to the Dutch in terms of the Peace of Amiens (signed between England and France), British rule at the Cape came to an end.

### Batavian rule: 1803 - 1806

The Batavian Republic appointed Janssens as governor of the Cape and De Mist became Commissioner-General. These two leaders were supporters of the Dutch Patriots and they tried to re-establish Dutch settlement at the Cape. They also brought about some significant political and administrative changes. Janssens, as governor, held supreme legislative power and a political council assisted him in his duties. He also instituted a Council of Justice to represent the interests of the colonists. Municipal councils were instituted in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet and every district had an appointed landdrost (magistrate).
In 1804, De Mist published the Church Order that allowed for freedom of religion. Education was improved by importing teachers from the Netherlands. Sheep farming was also improved by importing merino rams from Spain. Wine experts from Germany were imported to try and improve the quality of wine.

Unfortunately, some of De Mist’s plans for the frontier failed. The alliance between the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa on the frontier caused more friction and De Mist did not have sufficient funds to effectively carry out his frontier policy. When the Batavian flag was lowered for the last time on 10 January 1806, the Cape Colonists were sad to see De Mist and Janssens leave, because they had achieved much good over a short period of time.
Second British Occupation: 1806

When war broke out in Europe in 1803, Napoleon I tried to stop British trade with Europe. Britain had lost its American colonies with their valuable trading opportunities and was forced to look elsewhere to find new markets for trade. The logical choice was the East. This meant trading by sea and the Cape was the ideal place for ships to obtain fresh water and produce. This prompted the second occupation of the Cape by Britain, in January 1806.

Remembering the problems that it had had in its American colonies, Britain decided to be more autocratic in its governance of the Cape. The Cape would be governed as a crown colony, with a governor appointed by England and inhabitants of the Cape would no longer have any say in political matters. The governor took his instructions only from the Minister of Colonies in London and was given the power to make laws and dismiss officials as he saw fit. However, the system of local government, which enabled magistrates and councils to continue as before, was retained.
British Governors

British governors ruled the Cape from 1807 - 1814. The first governor, Caledon, formed the Circuit Court, which had magistrates travel to remote districts to conduct court cases of importance. The administration of justice was greatly improved by this new method. These courts also kept an eye on the magistrates and councils in the remote areas.

In 1811, Cradock took over as governor and he ruled until 1814, after which Lord Charles Somerset became the new governor.

Slagtersnek Rebellion

Somerset was a particularly stern governor and did not tolerate any insubordination from the colonists. His harsh attitude gave cause to much dissatisfaction and one particularly ugly incident took place during his rule. A farmer, who had been accused of ill-treating one of his labourers, was summoned before court but resisted arrest and was killed in a subsequent shoot-out. His brother swore to avenge his death and this led to a revolt against Somerset’s government in which sixty men took part.

After the revolt was crushed, a tribunal was held in which 39 men were found guilty. Five of them were hanged at Slagtersnek and the others were imprisoned. It was occurrences like this that strengthened negative feelings against the British government.

The British Settlers: 1820

Following the Napoleonic wars, Britain was experiencing a serious unemployment problem and Somerset was therefore keen to entice British immigrants to the Cape. He also thought that they would help to maintain peace on the border between the Fish and Sundays Rivers. In 1819, the British government decided to send emigrants to the Cape. Attractive conditions such as free land were offered and 90 000 applications, of which only 4 000 were approved, were received.

The first settlers arrived in Table Bay on 17 March 1820. From there they were sent to Algoa Bay, today known as Port Elizabeth. Life on the border was harsh and the settlers encountered many problems such as drought, rust (a condition affecting crops) and a lack of transport. As a result, many settlers left the eastern border in search of a better life in the towns. The eastern border thus never became as densely populated as Somerset had hoped.
The settlers who did remain as farmers, made a significant contribution to agriculture by planting maize, rye and barley. They also started wool farming which, in time, became a very lucrative trade. Some of the settlers, being traders by profession, also made a significant contribution to business and the economy, and new towns such as Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth grew rapidly.

The settlers also effected some significant political changes in the Cape. They had known a “free press” as their right in England and could not see why it should be different in the Cape. Despite Somerset’s opposition, a free press was obtained in 1825. The settlers also played an important part in establishing the Council of Advice in 1825. This council consisted of six members who advised the governor on matters of importance.

Despite the efforts of the council, dissatisfaction was rife at the Cape, especially among Afrikaners who felt that, since the churches and schools were rapidly being anglicised, their language was in danger of becoming extinct.

Unrest on the eastern border became worse and caused much dissatisfaction. When Somerset intervened in tribal matters between two Xhosa factions, it caused a backlash by those who resented his intervention. The Xhosa group also did not take kindly to the British settlers who, according to them, had been given land that rightfully belonged to the Xhosa. Neutral zones were established but not even this could stop the violence and fighting.

It was just a matter of time before the people living on the eastern border would devise and implement their own strategies to stay alive, because it was evident that the British governors could not fully control the situation. Many farmers left the eastern border in an attempt to establish independent states in the interior. This move was later referred to as the Great Trek, the historical event that, together with the Mfecane, greatly determined the shape and structure of the South Africa of the future.
THE GREAT TREK

Over a time span of three years starting in 1835, more or less 10 000 white people left the Cape Colony and trekked/moved into the interior by ox wagon. In time, after facing many hardships, these farmers started to build a unique identity and started calling themselves Afrikaners. They also developed a hybrid language, Afrikaans, which stemmed from high Dutch but incorporated strong French, Malay, German and Black influences. The Afrikaans-speaking descendants of these people would later simply be called Boere (Farmers).

Causes of the Great Trek

One of the most important causes of the Great Trek was the unrest on the eastern border. The government was unable to segregate the Xhosas from the whites and the two groups kept on clashing. The Xhosas stole the white farmers’ cattle and the farmers occupied territory that had traditionally belonged to the Xhosa. Not even the establishment of neutral territory could keep the parties from becoming involved in battles with each other. Some governors did more than others to protect the frontier farmers but there was nevertheless a significant number of wars on the eastern frontier.

During the sixth eastern frontier war, farmers lost livestock to the value of R600 000.

Vagrant Hottentots also plundered the farms. Conditions deteriorated badly after the institution of Ordinance 50 of 1828, which cancelled the pass laws. In 1834, when the slaves were freed, the situation worsened even further, as many of them had no option but to steal to make a living. The freeing of the slaves also meant financial loss for the farmers and this added to their dissatisfaction.
The Dutch-speaking people also felt that their identity was being threatened. A series of laws proclaimed between 1823 and 1828 enabled the government to substitute the official use of Dutch with English. When the magistrates and councils were also abolished, the colonists no longer had any say in the government and their desire for self-government increased.

Different Trek groups

Trichardt and Van Rensburg

Louis Trichardt and Hans van Rensburg led the first groups to leave the Colony. There were 53 people in Trichardt’s group and they crossed the Orange River in 1835 on their way to the Soutpansberg. Hans van Rensburg also left the colony at the same time with his group of followers but his aim was to move to Mozambique. The Van Rensburg party was subsequently massacred near the Limpopo River.

Louis Trichardt moved on to the area where the town of Louis Trichardt is situated today. He waited for some time for Potgieter’s trek to meet up with them but eventually became impatient and moved on to Lourenco Marques (present day Maputo). By the time Trichardt reached Maputo, on 13 April 1838, many of his cattle had been killed by tsetse flies and nearly half of his group had died of malaria.

Andries Hendrik Potgieter

Potgieter left the Cape Colony towards the end of 1835 with 200 people. They also wanted to go to Lourenco Marques for trading purposes, but they did not get that far. They were attacked by an army of 1 000 men sent by Mzilikazi. A few of the Voortrekkers were killed and Potgieter left his trek temporarily to meet up with Louis Trichardt. On his return, he instructed his people to form a laager (circle of ox wagons) as a defence strategy against the black armies. Two months later, all their cattle were stolen during another attack at Vegkop. Moroka (chief of the Barolong) and Gerrit Maritz helped Potgieter’s group to get back to Thaba Nchu.
Gerrit Maritz

Gerrit Maritz left for Thaba Nchu with 700 people. When they arrived in November 1836, they held a mass meeting with the Voortrekkers who had already arrived. Maritz was elected as the president of a council of 7 members who were to look after the interests of the Voortrekkers. Potgieter was elected the military leader. One of the first decisions of the council was to send an expedition out to recapture their cattle from Mzilikazi.

Piet Retief

Piet Retief was the commandant of the Winterberg ward in the district of Albany. He was also a farmer, building contractor and speculator and had sufficient money to finance a venture into the interior. Before he left, he published a manifesto in the Grahamstown Journal in which he explained the reasons for the trek. He left the Cape in March 1837, together with 400 people. When he joined the Voortrekkers in the Free State, they numbered more or less 5 000. Retief was elected governor and military leader at a convention held at Winburg. At the same convention Maritz was elected chairman of the Political Council.

Piet Uys

Piet Uys and his followers were the last to leave the Cape as part of a big organised trek. These 100 odd men, women and children departed from the district of Uitenhage in April 1837. They arrived in the Free State in August of the same year.
Voortrekkers in Zululand and Natal

The Voortrekkers had opposing views about the direction the trek should take. Potgieter felt it best to remain in Transvaal, since Britain might annex Natal, which would mean that the Voortrekkers would once again be under British rule. Maritz, Cilliers and Retief did not share his fears and decided to move to Natal. Piet Uys was not quite sure where his trek should be heading.

When the Voortrekkers arrived in Natal, the greater part of Natal was under the control of Dingane. Retief attempted to buy land from Dingane who promised to sell it if the Voortrekkers agreed to recover the cattle which had been stolen by Sikonyela. When Retief and his people brought back the stolen cattle, they signed a contract with Dingane. Later that day, however, Dingane’s people killed 67 of the Voortrekkers, including Retief. Dingane’s soldiers then went to the laagers (camps) of the Voortrekkers and killed many more, including women and children. The Zulus also drove off the bulk of the Voortrekkers’ cattle.

In April 1838, Uys and Potgieter retaliated by launching a counterattack against the Zulus. They were defeated by the Zulus at Italeni. The Zulus attacked again on 13 August and in December 1838, the last remaining Voortrekker leader, Maritz, died. As the Voortrekkers needed a new leader, they sent for Andries Pretorius. Pretorius acted as their leader in the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838 when they defeated the Zulu army. Dingane fled, after setting fire to his kraal. At Kwa Maritane, the skeletons of Retief and his men were found, together with a satchel containing the treaty between Dingane and the Voortrekkers. The Voortrekkers were now the owners of the land between the Drakensberg Mountains, from the Tugela River to the Umzimvubu River and the sea.

Dingane was finally defeated by Mpande who became the new paramount chief of the Zulus. The Voortrekkers now felt safer and on 14 February 1840, Andries Pretorius proclaimed Natal a Voortrekker Republic, the Republic of Natal. They formed a government and Pietermaritzburg was chosen as the new capital.

The Republic of Natal existed for only 5 years until the governor of the Cape, Sir George Napier, sent Sir Harry Smith and his men to annex Natal. A struggle followed, during which the British suffered a number of casualties and lost two of their cannon. Dick King (a legend in South African history) escaped on horseback, and astonishingly, it took him only six days to reach Grahamstown. The British sent reinforcements and the Voortrekkers were forced to retreat to Pietermaritzburg. On 12 May 1843, Natal became a British colony and most of the Voortrekkers chose to return to the Free State and the Transvaal.
Voortrekker settlement in the Transvaal

After being attacked, the Voortrekkers in the Transvaal moved back to Thaba Nchu under the leadership of Andries Potgieter. In two attacks against Mzilikazi, one a counter-attack and the second a precautionary attack, the Matabele were defeated and Potgieter and his followers thought it safe to remain in Transvaal. Soon after, Potgieter gave in to pressure and moved to Natal, but soon returned to the Transvaal where he founded the town of Potchefstroom. He proclaimed the district as the Republic of Winburg-Potchefstroom. From here, the Voortrekkers moved to Marico and Rustenburg.

Potgieter and his people wanted to move as far away from the Cape as possible and in the process, other towns such as Ohrigstad and Lydenburg were founded. Many of the Voortrekkers returned to the Republic of Winburg-Potchefstroom after the annexation of Natal by the British. Conflict arose between Potgieter and another group and Potgieter moved even further north and founded the town of Schoemansdal. Some of the Voortrekkers who had fled to northern Natal after the British occupation, asked to be incorporated into the ZAR (the South African Republic) as the Transvaal had been named. In order to do this, the land on which the town of Utrecht was founded the following year, had to be bought from Mpande.

Britain did not recognise the independence of Transvaal, but made no attempt at annexation. The reason for its inactivity was the hostile attitude of certain black tribes towards Britain and also the fact that war was looming in Europe. On 17 January 1852, the Sand River Convention was signed between Britain and the Transvaal Republic. It was the first time that Britain had acknowledged the independence of a Voortrekker Republic.
Voortrekker Settlement in the Orange Free State

The Trekboers moved into the area that would come to be known as the Free State, as early as the 17th and 18th centuries. At the start of the 19th century there were already different groups present in the area. Some of these groups were the Basotho (under leadership of Moshweshwe), the Griqua (under Adam Kok), the Batlokwa, the Bataung and the Barolong. The area that became known as Trans Orangia was situated between the Orange and the Vet Rivers. Many of the Trekboers settled in the Phillippolis area, where Adam Kok rented land to them. The Trekboers considered themselves British subjects but, when the Voortrekkers passed through the area, some Trekboers joined them while others chose to remain.

When the Potgieter trek arrived at Thaba Nchu in 1836, Potgieter made an arrangement with Makwana, chief of the Bataung, that, in exchange for cattle and protection against Mzilikazi, Potgieter would be given land in an area between the Vet and Vaaal Rivers. This area became known as Winburg. When Retief arrived, it was decided that the Trekkers should move to Natal. Potgieter eventually agreed, but he moved back to Winburg after his defeat at Italeni by Dingane. He later also founded Potchefstroom, a town next to the Mooi River. Potgieter linked the towns of Winburg and Potchefstroom by declaring the Winburg-Potchefstroom Republic.

The Vet River divided the area between the Vaaal River and the Orange River. The southern part became known as Trans-Orangia and the Northern area formed part of the Winburg-Potchefstroom Republic.

Jan Mocke and Jan Kok were the leaders of the Voortrekkers who lived in the vicinity of the Vet River. After the annexation of Natal, their numbers increased because many people who were not prepared to submit to British rule moved back to the area. In Trans-Orangia, however, the Trekboers, under the leadership of Machiel Oberholzer, wished to remain under British authority. Oberholzer therefore informed the judge at Colesberg of the plans of the upper region to establish a republic. Without consulting the British government, the judge immediately annexed the area but the British government would not ratify the annexation.
When Sir Harry Smith became governor of the Cape Colony in 1847, he wanted to annex the territory as far as the Vaal River. He informed the British government that the majority of the people living in the area strongly supported such an annexation, which was not true. However, Smith went ahead and annexed the area up to the Vaal River and called it the Orange River Sovereignty. The citizens of Winburg revolted but were defeated at Boomplaats by Smith’s soldiers. Potgieter was outlawed and magistrates were appointed in the districts of Bloemfontein, Winburg and the Vaal River.

The Battle of Boomplaats disturbed the British government because it cost a lot of money and proved that many of the inhabitants were opposed to the annexation. The Basotho under Moshweshwe were one of the dissatisfied groups and in 1854 they defeated a British armed force sent to punish them for their raids.

The British government was of the opinion that since the independence of Transvaal had been recognised in 1852, there was no reason why the same could not be done for the Orange Free State. When the Basotho defeated another British force in the area of Berea, Britain decided to officially recognise the Republic of the Orange Free State.

On 23 February 1854, the Bloemfontein Convention was signed and the area between the Vaal and Orange Rivers officially became the Republic of the Orange Free State.
THE DISCOVERY OF DIAMONDS AND GOLD

With the discovery of diamonds in the 19th century, urbanisation started in earnest in South Africa. People came from all over the world to stake their claims in the diamond fields. In 1867, diamonds were discovered at Hopetown and in 1871, more diamonds were discovered in the vicinity of the present-day Kimberley. A company, “De Beers Consolidated Mines” was established under the leadership of Cecil John Rhodes. This company went from strength to strength and is still in existence today. More towns, such as Koffiefontein and Jagersfontein, started up as a result of a concentration of diamond diggers in certain areas. When gold was discovered in the eastern Transvaal (Pilgrim’s Rest and the Mac-Mac Waterfalls) a similar process took place. New towns were established to accommodate the huge influx of people. Mining magnates such as Cecil John Rhodes and Barney Barnato, who both had interests in the diamond industry, also became involved in the mining of gold. The wealth they had accumulated at Kimberley was used to establish large mining companies.

In 1886, farms such as Elandsfontein, Turffontein and Roodepoort were proclaimed public diggings. These diggings later became well-known suburbs of Johannesburg.

Johannesburg was officially established on 4 October 1886, and by 1893 there were 14 suburbs in the new town. By 1896, the city of Johannesburg had a total population of more than 100 000 of which a third was made up of foreigners. President Kruger appointed a magistrate to see to legal matters and a Health Committee controlled the town until 1897. This committee had a difficult task, as inadequate water supplies and the lack of a sewerage system contributed to poor health conditions.

There were many other problems too. Many farmers, who came to seek their fortune in Johannesburg after a severe drought had driven them off their farms, became even poorer as the divide between rich and poor increased. A group of people, the so-called “Poor Whites,” lived in shacks and depended on welfare organisations to support them. The black people, who had left their traditional homes, had similar problems. Many of them became detribalised and struggled to adjust because of the differences between their traditional culture and the European culture. The Transvalers with their Christian, conservative views also found it difficult to adjust to a lifestyle that was, in their view, immoral.
Towards the end of the 19th century, problems once again arose between Britain and the Transvaal. In 1895, some British imperialists such as Rhodes organised the Jameson Raid (an attempt to make the Transvaal a British colony). Although the raid did not succeed, it severely damaged the economy of the Witwatersrand.

An employment problem was created when many of the labourers left in an attempt to get out of the way of the troubles. The foreigners either returned overseas or fled to the two British colonies, Natal and the Cape. The black people returned to their traditional homes and many of the Transvalers left to take part in the Anglo-Boer War. The mines were left without virtually any workers. Lord Milner, the new governor of the Transvaal, was anxious to get the gold mines back into production again and decided to recruit workers from Mozambique. In 1904, Milner also started importing labourers from China. By 1907, there were more than 50,000 Chinese in the country.

When the Conservative Party took over in Britain, it was decided that the Transvaal and the Free State should once again be granted self-government. The Chinese were then repatriated and workers were once again recruited from all over Southern Africa.