

## **HISTORY & BACKGROUND of the KHOISAN DISPOSSESSION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

*Important note when reading: Place names provided in this accounting are the present day names, to facilitate easier understanding by our readers.*

### **PART 1 Pre-Colonial History**

The First People, the Khoi, inhabited Southern Africa for no less than the past 100,000 years. The archaeological records indicate that this occupation of the territories could be closer to 750,000 years. The Khoi presence is evident in the archaeological records and in oral traditions.

The Khoi-San are the First People of South Africa. Historically, into great antiquity, they were widespread across Southern Africa but with the migrations into their North-Eastern territories by the Black Bantu-speaking people, they largely withdrew into the western and southern areas of Southern Africa, to what is now known as the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape, and parts of Namibia, Botswana, Free State and Lesotho.

Knowledge of the Khoi-San inhabitants of the region prior to the written records started in 1488 are derived from oral records, traditions, archaeological evidence (dating back several hundred thousand years), fossils, rock glyphs, stone edifices, and from the rock art endemic across the Southern African territories.



*Driekopseiland rock etchings >5,000 years old*



*Blombos Cave assegai heads, 70,000 B C*



*The rock engraving site of Driekopseiland, west of Kimberley in the Northern Cape, is distinctively situated on glaciated basement rock in the bed of the Riet River, and has a wealth of over 3500 engravings, preponderantly of geometric images.*

At the time of the arrival of the first European ships at the Cape in 1488, the Khoi and San nations were the only occupants of all the territories south of the Orange River, and west of the Fish River.

The history of the Nguni / Black migration from Central Africa along the border of Nigeria and Cameroon, which began in around 1,000 AD and continued in waves moving down from the Great Lakes area until the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as more recent waves arising from refugees fleeing violence and destitution in Zimbabwe, is set out under History of South Africa (documents). These groups of Bantu-speaking migrants are not the indigenous people of South Africa.

1488 Marks the arrival of the first Portuguese ships and their naming it the Cape of Storms.

The Khoi-San knew the Cape of Storms as //Hui !Gaeb, meaning "where clouds gather."

Bartholomeu Dias arrived in 1488 at the Cape after sailing south along the west coast of Africa. His expedition was sent by King John II of Portugal in 1481 to build a fort at Accra, Ghana. Dias then continued his journey southwards, landing variously in Angola and Walvis Bay, Namibia. During this voyage, strong winds blew him thousands of kilometres off course, and he sailed around the southern tip of Africa – past Cape Point. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1488, he landed in Mossel Bay then proceeded to explore further up the coast to the mouth of the Great Fish River, before turning back to Mossel Bay. He erected a stone cross to mark their presence, then erected another on his way back to Portugal at Cape Maclear, west of Cape Point. King John II later renamed the Cape of Storms as the Cape of Good Hope.

1497 The next recorded sighting of the Cape was by Vasco da Gama in 1497. He was searching for a route that would provide access to Asia for Europe. Da Gama was exploring a shipping path around Africa in order to avoid the Ottoman Empire's control of the Mediterranean. The Ottoman warships aggressively controlled trade shipping routes to the East, cutting Western Europe off from this lucrative supply-line of goods.

1503 A Portuguese admiral, nobleman and explorer, Antonio de Saldanha, left Lisbon with a squad of three ships in May 1503. Through poor navigation, storms and mishaps, he ended up sailing alone into Table Bay, becoming the first European to set anchor and foot in what is now Cape Town. They were lost. They went ashore and made the first recorded ascent of Table Mountain, from where he was able to identify the tip of the Cape (Cape Point). He named the area Tabo da caba (Table of the Cape). The Khoi historically called the mountain Hoeri 'kwaggo (sea mountain). The Khoi encountered these Portuguese seafarers refreshing themselves at the Khoikhoi watering holes at the foot of Table Mountain, and after a vigorous skirmish with much bloodshed, the Portuguese set sail.

1510 The Battle of Gorinhaiqua: 1<sup>st</sup> March 1510. South Africa's first major war of resistance.

Francisco D'Almeida, a much-feared colonial military commander, served as the viceroy to the Portuguese State of India from 1505 to 1509. Upon his successor taking over he sailed back to the Iberian Peninsula from India, with a fleet of three ships – Garcia, Belèm and Santa Cruz. In late February he dropped anchor near the Cape of Good Hope to replenish water. D'Almeida had a reputation of being an over-zealous and brutal commander, leaving destroyed, burned and pillaged villages in his wake. He left a path of destruction and broken communities in both Egypt and India.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1510, D'Almeida and his men traded with Khoikhoi who lived in the area. Despite the obnoxious and aggressive attitude of the Portuguese, by all accounts these initial trades were cordial and both sides were satisfied. The Khoikhoi received iron in exchange for cattle. This cordiality came to an abrupt end when 12 of the Portuguese sailors invaded the Khoikhoi village and attempted to steal a number of cattle. The angry Khoena Khoikhoi villagers gave a fellow named Gonçalo Homen a thrashing when he tried to trick the Khoena in a trade, after which they chased the pillaging sailors back to their ships in disgrace.

Upon reaching the safety of their ships the sailors begged D’Almeida to take revenge upon the villagers who had merely been defending their cattle. Even though D’Almeida admitted that his men were most likely to blame for what had occurred he led a party of 150 men armed with swords, lances and crossbows to enact an unwarranted revenge. The Portuguese travelled up the Liesbeeck River and came upon the ancient Gorinhaiqua kraal situated at Oude Molen.

When they reached the village the Portuguese raiders, led by D’Almeida, abducted a number of women and children and stole cattle. With all their superior armour and weaponry, their sheer stupidity in terms of tactics resulted in D’Almeida and his 11 officers and 52 soldiers losing their lives. Several primary factors played decisive roles in the outcome of this war: firstly, the hostility, disdain and arrogance of the Portuguese failed to account for the ingenuity and battle strategy of the Khoena Khoikhoi, and the determined resistance of the local Khoikhoi to anything that resembled exploitation and unwarranted aggression.

In this Battle of Goringhaiqua, approximately 170 Khoikhoi warriors fought the raiding Portuguese soldiers with stones and assegais. Using their cattle as shields and using spears for attacking, they routed the raiders killing 64 of the insurgents, including D’Almeida and 11 of his captains. Unwittingly, the Khoikhoi had disposed of a notorious tyrant, and changed the course of history. They also impacted on future war strategy in Europe. When historians evaluated the military encounter of the battle, they recognised the application of the Goringhaiqua battle leadership style (now called the Principles of War), which included the use of spearmen (in infantry style) together with oxen (like modern-style armour, battle tanks). The Khoikhoi strategy included fighting at a time and place of their own choosing, avoiding the open beach, utilising familiar terrain, and attacking with maximum violence and speed but keeping up the momentum of the attack. Stated simply, D’Almeida was “out-Generalled” by the Khoikhoi.

The Portuguese subsequently lost interest in the Cape.

The area fell out of regular contact with the Europeans until the Dutch arrived in 1652 to set up a provisions station for their ships. This left the Khoikhoi largely undisturbed for almost 140 years.

- 1632 A crew of Dutch sailors attempted to steal cattle without paying the owners – the Khoikhoi. Twenty-three of the sailors were killed in the skirmish with ensued.
- 1647 The *Haarlem*, a Dutch ship, was wrecked in Table Bay on the 25 March 1647 on its way back to Europe. Two Dutch ships harboured in Table Bay took on board most of the crew and passengers, and 40 others were taken to Europe aboard two English ships. The remaining 60 men stayed to salvage the valuable cargo which was on board the *Haarlem*. The 60 men were led by Leendert Janssen (a junior merchant). The men first encountered some beachcombers, and after 5 months some pastoralists came into the area and traded cattle and sheep for items from the shipwreck. In 1648, twelve Europe-bound Dutch ships took the 60 healthy men on board, plus the cargo they had salvaged and stocks of food, and continued on to the Netherlands. Leendert Janssen and Nicolaas Proot (one of the 60 shipwrecked men) wrote a report speaking of the peaceful inhabitants at the Cape, and the possibilities of profiting from supplying food to passing ships, seals, whales and fishing. The good survival of the crew convinced the Dutch East India Company that it was safe enough, and the land sufficiently fertile, to justify building a permanent supply station at the Cape.
- 1651 The Dutch East India Company decided to set up a refreshment station at the Cape, as a result of the report by Janssen and Proot.
- 1652 The Dutch East India Company (VOC) contracted Jan van Riebeeck and his crews to establish a provisions station at the Cape, for refreshing and stocking ships travelling to and from Asia. Van Riebeeck’s party of three ships arrived in the Cape in 1652 and set up shelters, and laid out gardens

and orchards. The settlers bartered peacefully with the indigenous people, the Khoikhoi, for their sheep and cattle. Forests were planted in Hout Bay and on the slopes of Table Mountain, to provide timber for ships and houses.

In his contract, Jan van Riebeeck was instructed to take possession of land suitable for vegetable and fruit cultivation. He was also instructed not to harm the local inhabitants or their cattle, but to try to win their friendship.

He was likewise instructed to welcome all nations, except for the Portuguese, to trade and occupy land beyond the Dutch East India Company's boundaries.

The Dutch gave their own names to the Khoi nations that they encountered, calling the pastoralists "Hottentots", the subsistence shell-fishers "Strandlopers", and the hunter-gatherers "Bushmen".

1654 The VOC began shipping the first wave of Malasian immigrants from Asia to the Cape Colony. These Malays were banished from their homelands by the Dutch Batavian High Court for various infringements of Dutch Law. These immigrants became the basis of the "Cape Coloured" and "Cape Malay" population in the Western Cape, who also over time intermarried with the indigenous Khoi. The Malays brought with them their own religion, Islam. The largest territorial expansion occurred in 1657, when farms were granted by the VOC to a few servants in an attempt to increase food production. The first slaves were brought to the Cape from Java and Madagascar in the following year to work on the farms.

The first of a long series of border conflicts between the inhabitants in the European-controlled area and the indigenous Khoi began in 1658 when settlers clashed with the Khoi, who realised that they were slowly losing their territory to the invaders.

1655 Van Riebeeck planted the first vines in the Cape.

1656 The Dutch began appropriating the prime farm land lying along the Liesbeeck River. The Khoikhoi retaliated with cattle raids.

1657 The VOC issued the first permits to free nine Dutch company servants to farm along the Liesbeeck River.

1657 More slaves are imported from Batavia and Madagascar, as the first white farmers get the land ready for agriculture.

1659 The first wine is produced in the Cape. The first battle ensues between the Dutch colonists and the Khoikhoi.

A Dutch soldier goes missing, and is found dead at the base of Lion Mountain, with injuries indicating that he had been devoured by a lion.

1664 Kratoa was the first Khoikhoi woman to appear in European records of the Cape as an individual personality. She was closely related to Oedaso, chief of the Cochoqua Khoikhoi. Kratoa joined Van Riebeeck's household at the Dutch fort, at the age of 12. She learned to speak fluent Dutch and Portuguese, and acted as an interpreter for the Dutch for most of her life. She converted to Christianity, and married a Danish surgeon, Pieter van Meerhoff. They had three children together. Meerhoff later died on an expedition to Madagascar.

1666 Building work began on the Castle of Good Hope, and is the first permanent European fortification in the area. The new castle replaced the previous wooden fort built by Van Riebeeck and his men. Finally completed in 1679, the castle is the oldest occupied building in South Africa.

1671 Second war between the Dutch colonists and the Khoikhoi.

1674 Kratoa died, and was given a Christian burial.

1679 Simon van der Stel arrived in the Cape to replace Van Riebeeck as governor. Van der Stel founded the Cape wine industry by bringing many grape vines with him on his ships. He also promoted territorial expansion in the Cape Colony. The Castle of Good Hope was completed. Stellenbosch was founded.

- 1685 The Cape Colony reports a surplus in most foods produced in the territory. The VOC started advocating a substantial emigration drive from Europe, by offering free passage to the Cape. Slaves were granted the right to buy their freedom.
- 1688 The first non-Dutch immigrants, the Huguenots, arrived. Having fled from persecution by Catholic France, they were given free passage by the VOC from the Netherlands to Cape Town. The Huguenots brought important experience in wine production to the Cape, greatly bolstering the industry. The VOC controlled all trade in the Cape from 1652, outlawing all private enterprise, until they were defeated by the British in 1754. The British immediately announced the beginning of free trade.
- 1713 **The first smallpox epidemic devastates the Khoikhoi community.** A Dutch ship arrived at the Cape from India with many sailors aboard who were stricken with the fatal disease. The dirty clothing and linen from the ship was taken ashore for washing. The smallpox-contaminated water from the washing polluted the drinking water supplying the settlers. This resulted in the disease wreaking havoc amongst the indigenous, slave and colonist populations of the Cape Peninsula as well as the adjacent interior. By May 1713, the disease had reached epidemic proportions to the extent that the dead could no longer be buried in coffins as there was a shortage of wood. Farming came to a standstill and emergency food had to be brought in from Batavia. At the end of the outbreak, over a quarter of the colonist and 50% of the slave populations had died. The Khoikhoi had far less resistance to the disease than the colonists, so were hit very hard. The disease was foreign to the Khoikhoi, so they had no recourse to traditional medicines to help fight the disease. The Khoikhoi perceived that the colonisers were the source of the disease, so they fled the peninsula with all their possessions in the hope of escaping the disease. Those that escaped into the outlying areas, were killed by other Khoikhoi who were panicked by the disease. Fewer than 10% of the Cape Peninsula Khoikhoi survived the epidemic. In the chaos, entire clans were annihilated and clan names were lost. Survivors lost their leaders, and the Khoikhoi became known by the derogatory name "Hottentots".

After the smallpox epidemic decimated most of the Cape flats and surrounding countryside Khoikhoi clans, what remained of their economic strength after colonisation was further eroded when the settler farmers moved into areas previously inhabited the Khoi, and started a new existence for themselves on the Khoi lands, with the aid of the Cape government.

- 1714 Surviving Khoi come to Cape Town from the Piketberg region, to request the appointment of new captains to replace the four that died. The Khoi report that scarcely one out of ten members of their society survived. The total number of the Khoi and San population surviving was not clearly quantified because the majority lived in outlying rural areas and appear to have escaped the ravages due to their traditional lifestyles. There are some records which show their good survival in their isolated kraals far from Cape Town. The Khoikhoi also understood the value of quarantine. A reasonable estimate presented in the record, is that it was unlikely that the smallpox killed more than 30% of the total Khoi population.

The Khoi appear to have remained free from infectious diseases for the rest of the century, but were not able to regain their economic strength because their land was increasingly taken from them by the white farmers and stock rearers far into the interior of the Cape Colony. This loss of grazing land forced the transition of the Khoi from pastoralists to farm labourers, in a condition comparable to bondage, with the consequent deterioration of their social and economic status.

- 1736 A small group of white hunters are killed by the Xhosa, after having ridden as far as the Keiskama River.
- 1754 By 1754, the total population of the Cape settlement (excluding the indigenous Khoi) was 5,510 Europeans and 6,729 slaves. The Khoi greatly outnumbered the invaders and settlers, but mainly inhabited the territories north and north-east of Cape Town up to the Orange River, and East up to the Great Fish River.