

HISTORY & BACKGROUND of the KHOISAN DISPOSSESSION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

PART 2 Cape Colony from 1755 up to The Great Trek in 1836

- 1755 **The second smallpox epidemic strikes the Colony** in 1755 and hit the Cape Settlements very hard. Over 2,000 white settlers and slaves were killed by the disease. It ravaged the Cape Hottentot tribes, and this annihilation together with the pressure of the fast expanding settlement, largely destroyed the tribal life of the Hottentots of the 18th Century. Many Hottentot tribes were wiped out. Their numbers were reduced so much that their tribal organisation disintegrated and survivors were gradually taken into service as labourers, especially herdsmen by the local farmers. The rural Khoikhoi appear to have evaded the second smallpox epidemic.
- 1767 **The third smallpox epidemic strikes the Colony**, hitting the remnants of the Hottentots as well as the Bantu in the eastern territories. The rural Khoi and the San appear to have escaped this third smallpox epidemic.
- 1779 The First Cape Frontier War ensues between the colonist soldiers and the AmaXhosa.
- 1793 The Second Cape Frontier War ensues.
- 1795 Britain takes control of the Cape for the first time.
- 1798 The Zeekoe River is officially recognised as the boundary of the Cape by Governor Van Plettenberg.
- 1799 1799 to 1802: Third Cape Frontier War ensues. The KhoiSan rise up in an unsuccessful but protracted rebellion in the Eastern districts of the Cape Colony, in what became known as the Third War of Dispossession between the KhoiSan and the colonial authorities.
- 1800 Ndlambe of the AmaXhosa nation migrates across the Fish River and attempt to settle in an area from which the Dutch colonial administration had driven them out of on several previous occasions
- 1802 Under the terms of a peace agreement between Britain and France, the Cape was returned to the Dutch in 1802.
- 1803 A peace settlement is reached between the Dutch Batavian government and the Khoisan after the parties fought over the issues of land and livestock raids.
- 1804 A large group of Khoikhoi, deserting slaves, San, people of mixed ancestry and some who had problems integrating into the Cape colonial society, trek from the Cape and settle at Klaarwater north of the Orange River. They are called "Basters" by the colonial authorities but name themselves Griqua, a name which has its possible origins in an old Khoikhoi clan name, the Guriqua.



Cape Colony map at 1806

- 1805 Khoi runners are employed to deliver letters from Cape Town to drostdies (magistrates) in various districts of the Colony.
- 1806 The war resumed between the Dutch and Britain, and the British returned their garrison to the Cape after defeating the Dutch forces at the Battle of Blaauwberg in 1806.
- 1807 Promulgation of the Abolition of Slave Trade Act in Britain. Britain bans slave trading which includes the importation of slaves to the Cape. However, ownership of slaves is still legal.
- 1809 The Hottentot Proclamation (1809): The Vagrancy and Pass Laws, or the Caledon Code. This was the first in a series of laws that sought to restrict the rights of the Khoi in the Cape Colony. This decree was passed on the 1st November 1809 as part of a longstanding process to enslave the indigenous Khoi people in their own land. It was established to help the Boers control the mobility of the labour force. "Hottentot" was a pejorative term used to describe the Khoi people.

The Caledon Code was implemented during a time when the British public was openly against slavery, and parliament had abolished the slave trade. The application of the Caledon Code was to give the appearance of being somewhat different to the previous slave laws, but had a similar effect on the afflicted Khoi through a system of "apprenticeship". The eastern and north-eastern districts of the Cape Colony were most affected by the Declaration since most of the Khoi population was based in these areas.

The Khoi were forced to declare a fixed "place of abode" and were not permitted to move between one place and another without a valid pass and written permission. They could not travel freely (as they had done for thousands of years) and they required a passport if they were found outside of their stipulated area. This prevented them moving away from farms in which they worked as slaves unless their passes were signed by their employers.

- 1810 Shaka is appointed chief of the army of the AmaMthethwa.
- 1811 The Fourth War of Dispossession of the AmaXhosa takes place from 1811 to 1812, in which brutal battles ensue with the British Command engaging in indiscriminate shooting of women and other civilians, the intentional destruction of crops, and forced the AmaXhosa out of the Zuurveld. Women and children are killed, even though the colonial authorities knew that the AmaXhosa only attack men who are regarded as soldiers, while women are not. The AmaXhosa also never attack missionaries.
- 1812 Cape Colony: The Apprentice Ordinance is promulgated which gives any white farmer the right to apprentice the children of his labourers for a period of ten years from the age of eight.
- 1812 to 1813: Cape Colony "Circuit Commissions" are instituted in an attempt to provide the Khoi and coloured employees with legal protection with regard to their labour. Many charges made by the labourers against their employers cannot be substantiated. However, the Commissions uncover the violence and inhumanity endemic to the system of master-servant relationship arising from slavery.
- The public "Black Circuit" court hearings do achieve some success in convicting the worst offenders of ill-treatment of their employees. The circuit courts and the support they enjoy from missionaries lead to tensions between the white settlers on the one hand, and their servants, labourers and missionaries on the other.
- 1813 The Griqua at Klaarwater create the beginnings of a political state. The head of state is a Kaptyn Adam Kok II, and Barends Barends is elected as Provisie Kaptyn.
- 1814 The war between France and England ended in 1814 with a British victory. The Cape becomes a Crown Colony. Cape Governor, Sir John Cradock, changes the system of land tenure from leasehold to freehold for white farmers. Prior to this period, farmers paid little for the land nor made major developments as they recognised that they did not own the land. This measure was introduced to allow a denser population of white people on the eastern border to act as a buffer against the AmaXhosa.

1815 At the onset of British rule, the Cape Colony encompassed 260,000 km² and was populated by about 26,720 people of European descent, the majority being of Dutch origin, a quarter were of German origin and one sixth descended from the French Huguenots. There were also around 30,000 slaves owned by the settlers, who had been shipped in to the Cape from Asia and Madagascar, and around 17,000 indigenous Khoisan. The British authorities were opposed to the Boers' ownership of slaves, as well as their unduly harsh treatment of the indigenous people.

The colonial army crushes the Slachter's Nek Rebellion of white farmers who rebelled against the perceived British favour of the Black population.

Shaka assumes supreme power over the AmaZulu.

1818 The Fifth War of Dispossession takes place as a result of Governor Somerset invading AmaXhosa territory and lifting 23,000 head of cattle belonging to Ndlambe who had been accused of stock theft. The AmaXhosa respond by launching an attack with 6,000 warriors on Grahamstown.

1819 Ndlambe inflicts defeat over British ally Ngqika's forces at Amalinde. Colonial forces then heavily defeat Ndlambe's forces when he takes the battle to Grahamstown. The alliance between Ngqika and the Cape government is destroyed when Governor Somerset appropriates the land between the Fish and Keiskamma Rivers. The land was to serve as a buffer between the Colony and the AmaXhosa. The Cape government declares the Keiskamma River to be its eastern border.

1820 Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal: The rise of the Amazulu kingdom continues the already violent dispersal of neighbouring political entities competing with each other and with the British and Boer colonisers for land and resources. This extremely troubled period in South Africa's history resulted in the forced dispersal or migration as thousands of people became refugees. The fleeing political groups engage in armed skirmishes for land with kingdoms and chiefdoms which they encounter during their flight. This conflict and forced migrations continue for a number of years because of the increasing pressure on the various communities that populated the region as colonisers move in, and the colonisers and resident political entities fight each other for the dwindling resources. This phenomenon is seen as a direct result of increasing population numbers and the quest for power and resources.

Cape Colony: Approximately 5,000 British settlers arrive in Algoa Bay in the Eastern Cape to increase the size of the white settler population. On their arrival, these settlers are informed that they are to act as a civilian defence force against the indigenous people on whose land they have been settled. They are allocated land in the Zuurveld next to the Fish River.

Port Elizabeth is founded.

The missionaries of the London Missionary Society play a significant role in forming the Griqua state. However, with the arrival of the authoritarian Robert Moffat, the role of the missionaries leads to internal strife in the Griqua community. Adam Kok II and his followers leave Griquatown for the area of the Riet River. Andries Waterboer is elected as the new leader of the Grikwas.

1822 A large group of Griqua leave their community and join up with groups of Koranna people. Together they eke out their existence by raiding cattle and attacking various communities along the Orange and the Vaal Rivers, causing increased instability in the region. These bands of roving Khoi survivors are called "Bergenaars".

The London Missionary Society under Dr Phillip, establish a mission station for the San at Phillipolis.

AmaNgwana cross the Drakensberg and enter the Caledon River valley. AmaMfengu refugees of the upheavals called the Difaqane, settle in the Eastern Cape.

1823 The Cape government introduces a series of "ameliorative" laws which attempt to improve the relationship between slave owner and slave by determining the nature of punishment that slave owners would be allowed to mete out, regulating working hours, and the provision of food and clothes for slaves. The legislation outlaws public flogging, especially of female slaves.

1825 Cape Colony: An uprising of slave and Khoi labourers against their owners takes place in the Worcester district. Slaves are increasingly demanding the vindication of their rights in terms of the amelioration legislation of 1823.

The Cape colonial frontier is extended northwards to the Orange River. Adam Kok II is elected Kaptyn of the Griquas in the Riet River as well as of the “Bergenaars”.

Landdrost Andries Stockenstroom begins issuing temporary permits allowing white farmers to graze their livestock north of the Orange River, but they are not allowed to trade or erect buildings. This changes later in the decade as farmers stop asking for permission and simply inform the magistrate.

1826 The Cape Colonial government approves the election of Adam Kok II. Due to internal strife, Adam Kok II resigns a few months later. He is succeeded by Cornelius Kok II.

1826 Led by Dr John Phillip, who continually worked against the discriminatory treatment of the indigenous Khoi people, British missionaries protested the Hottentot Proclamation. Even when he was back in Britain from 1826 to 1828, Phillip fought for the emancipation of the Khoi.

Cape parliament passes Ordinance 19, which provides for the appointment of a Guardian of Slaves to ensure that slave owners adhere to the extent of punishment that they are allowed to mete out to their slaves. Slaves could lodge complaints of violations of the “ameliorative” legislation to the Guardian of Slaves or his assistants, who were required to investigate the accusations and take action against the perpetrators.

Ordinance 19 also provided for slaves to have their freedom bought for them by their families. Slave owners rise up in arms against Ordinance 19.

1828 Passing of Ordinance 50 (1828). The Cape governor declared that all native inhabitants (except slaves) were to have the rights of citizens, in respect of security and property ownership, on parity with the settlers. This Ordinance did nothing however to reverse the dispossession of land and rights which was inflicted on the Khoi and San peoples by the Colonial masters before 1828. This KhoiSan dispossession remains unresolved even now in 2018, despite 25 years of ANC “rule”.

The declaration had the effect of further alienating the colony’s Dutch population. Boer resentment of successive British administrations continued to grow throughout the late 1820’s and early 1830’s, especially with the official imposition of the English language. English replaced Dutch as the language used in the Cape judicial system, putting the Boers at a disadvantage as most spoke little or no English at all.

Policy decisions taken in London meant that the Boer farmers were no longer allowed to expand their farms and grazing areas at the expense of the indigenous population with impunity. Ordinance 50 of 1828 granted Khoikhoi and Coloureds, the traditional servants and slaves of the Boer farmers not only the freedom to seek work, but also to own land. This leads to a shortage of labour for Boer farmers. In addition Ordinance 50 put all “free inhabitants” of the Colony on equal political footing before the law. This political act is unacceptable to the Boers who regard Blacks as uncivilised heathen and therefore inferior to Whites. Finally, the gradual introduction of a cash economy means that also Boer farmers have to engage in surplus farming in order to get cash. Boer farmers had been accustomed to a bartering economy.

Passing of Ordinance 49 (1828). This ordinance required the Black Bantu-speaking people who wanted to travel into the Cape Colony for the sole purposes of seeking work, to carry proper contracts and passes. This laid the foundation for the notorious Black pass laws of the 20th Century.

1829 The vagrancy and pass laws which had been passed in 1809 were repealed in 1829. Thus, the Khoi (Hottentots) in theory became equal with Europeans, in practice however they were still dispossessed of their land and rights.

The Cape Town Legislative Council was established. The population of Cape Town stood at 20,016 people, of which 10,560 were European.

The fertile land in the basin of the Kat River in the Cape is granted to 250 Khoikhoi and coloured families. This Kat River area is regarded as a strategic buffer zone in the struggle between the AmaXhosa and the colonial government along the eastern border of the Cape Colony. The Khoi settlers were provided arms despite objections by the white settlers in the region. The Khoi settlement soon develops into a self-sufficient farming community supported by much missionary activity, a phenomenon which further irritates the white farmers because it means that the well-organised self-sustaining Khoi settlers of the Kat River could not be hired as underpaid labourers on their farms.

In the face of attacks by the British colonial authorities, the Rharhabe and Gcaleka polities reconcile and establish peace between them in order to ward off colonial aggression as a combined force.

The British Parliament passes an emancipation decree, the Abolition Act, which abolishes the system of slavery, but which writes a kind of indentured labour system, called “apprenticeship” into the legislation. This is to ensure that the slave-based economies of the British Empire do not collapse as a result of the end of slavery.

1831 Smallpox explodes amongst the Griquas, exterminating up to 80% of the tribe.

1834 Great Britain abolishes slavery in all of its colonies. Slaves were finally emancipated in 1834. This led to the establishment of the Bo-Kaap by a Muslim community after being freed.

This Act amplified the alienation of the Boers. All 35,745 slaves registered with the Cape governor were to be freed and given rights on par with other citizens, although their masters could retain them as apprentices until 1838. Many Boers, especially those involved in grain and wine production, were highly dependent on slaves, and their farming output was directly correlated to the number of slaves they owned. Compensation was offered by the British government, but with the stipulation that payment had to be made in London, and none of the Boers possessed the funds to make the trip.

AmaXhosa chiefdoms invade the Cape Colony in an attempt to regain the eastern border lands that the Government had expropriated from them in previous wars. A massive herd of over 200,000 livestock was seized by the Xhosa fighters, and 450 farms were destroyed.

1834 Sixth War of Dispossession, in which the Governor, D’urban, sends in colonial troops to effect a devastation of the invading AmaXhosa. The target of the destruction was not just the armed warriors, but entire villages and all their crops and food supplies. With the AmaXhosa defeated and stripped of their means of production and existence, the Governor annexes their land between the Kei and the Keiskamma Rivers.

1834 Boer reconnaissance expeditions in 1834 and 1835 reported that Natal south of the Tugela, and the central Highveld on either side of the Vaal River were fertile and largely uninhabited. This apparent vacancy may have been a consequence of migration due to the warring forays of the Ndebele and the Zulu warriors who were aggressively engaged in increasing their territories and driving away smaller Bantu tribes. The Bantu may have moved temporarily into other areas to avoid facing slaughter and pillaging by the bands of warriors.

1836 The Great Trek begins.

Around 6,000 Dutch families (about 20% of the Cape Colony’s total population, excluding the Khoi), for various reasons, packed up their households, personal belongings, tools, arms and livestock, and left for the North-East in wagons drawn by oxen, to seek new territories and aspire to their national mission of self-determination.