Chapter 2
The Development of a Colonial Slave Society
by Wayne Dooling

What were the turning points in southern Africa before colonialism?

There can be little doubt that the imposition of European colonial rule in southern Africa was one of the great turning points in the history of the region. This is not to say that the colonial period was the only, or even the most important, turning point. The societies of southern Africa were by no means unchanging before contact with Europeans. Archaeologists have identified significant earlier turning points.

One of the most important of these was the transition from hunting and gathering societies to agricultural societies where people produced their food. In the latter case, people either herded livestock such as cattle, sheep or goats, or grew crops such as millet and maize, or they combined herding and agriculture to varying degrees.

Such varied forms of subsistence usually coincided with specific forms of technology. People who acquired their food through hunting and gathering tended to fashion their tools from stone (hence archaeologists use the term Stone Age to refer to such peoples). Those who herded and planted crops tended to employ iron technology (thus the use of the term Iron Age). Indeed, the adoption of iron and the expansion of food production are very closely related. One of the uses to which iron was put was the manufacture of stronger implements such as hoes and axes, which allowed for the easier clearing of fields.

egalitarian – based on the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities; similar in wealth and status
wrought – (old form of past tense of work) made in a specific way; (of metals shaped by hammering)
disintegrate – fall apart, crumble

The transition from hunting and gathering to food production resulted in widespread changes to the political and social systems of the societies affected. Whereas hunter-gatherer communities had to place strict limits on their numbers, food-producing societies could allow larger populations. Compared to hunter-gatherer societies, food-producing communities were less egalitarian, as certain groups and individuals were able to gain greater access to essential resources. The most important of these resources was livestock, for the ownership of livestock allowed individuals to attract large followings. It is clear, therefore, that long before Europeans stumbled into southern Africa, the societies of the region had undergone significant change.

Nor were the societies of southern Africa isolated. Indeed, changes such as the ones described above prompted African societies to seek contact with societies from which they were far removed. For example, the susceptibility of the Zimbabwean highveld to periodic droughts and famine caused the people of the region to look outwards for economic security. Thus, the Iron Age peoples of the Zimbabwe interior turned to trade. Extensive mining and hunting operations made possible the export of gold and elephant tusks to the east coast of Africa. Cloth was an important import. From the East African coast, exports were carried to the Asian subcontinent. In this way, the peoples of pre-colonial southern Africa were linked to trading networks of truly global proportions.

How did contact with Europeans change southern African societies?

The changes wrought to African societies by the imposition of European colonial rule were of a qualitatively different kind. It was the speed with which change occurred that set the colonial era apart from earlier periods. Whereas the changes described above took place over centuries, the onset of European colonial rule led to the rapid transformation of societies. Of course, not all societies were equally transformed. Some could resist the forces of colonial intrusion for extended periods. Others, however, such as the Khoikhoi communities of the south-western Cape, disintegrated within a
matter of decades.

It is important to distinguish between different phases of African contact with Europe. Initially, Europeans had little interest in establishing political control over the societies with which they came into contact. Nor did they have the economic and military means to do so. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese first set off on their voyages of exploration down Africa's Atlantic coast, they were not solely interested in putting in place the necessary infrastructure for the smooth running of trade. Thus they established limited political relations with African rulers through signing treaties. To this day, the African coast remains dotted with forts built by Europeans, from which they ran their trading operations.

Colonial contact was a two-way process, however, and Africans were far from helpless victims in the initial encounter. Colonial contact was not simply a matter of Europeans imposing themselves upon African societies. For their part, African rulers saw many benefits to be had from maintaining relations with Europeans. For a considerable period of time they engaged with Europeans voluntarily and largely on their own terms.

By and large, the African societies with which Europeans came into contact were demographically fragile. The prevalence of diseases such as malaria and sleeping sickness made large parts of the African continent particularly inhospitable for human and animal habitation. As a consequence, one of the driving forces behind these societies was the need to increase population numbers and for individuals to build large followings. Most importantly, trade with Europeans gave African rulers access to a crucial aspect of European technology, namely, firearms. More than anything else, those who had ownership and control over firearms were able to gather around themselves larger and larger groups of people. In short, the ownership of firearms could be turned into status and political power.

Sadly, however, the article of trade in which Europeans showed the greatest interest, and which Africans were prepared to sacrifice, was slaves. The Atlantic slave trade stands as the centre of the long history of European contact with Africa. This was the era of the African Diaspora, an all-embracing term historians have used to describe the consequences of the slave trade. Estimates of the number of slaves transported from their African homes to European colonial possessions in the Americas range from nine to fifteen million people. Although a great deal of violence accompanied the trade in slaves, the sheer scale of operations necessarily involved a high degree of organisation, on the part of both Europeans and Africans. In other words, the Atlantic slave trade could not have taken place without the cooperation, or complicity, of many Africans.

As the number of those transported increased, African societies could not avoid being deeply transformed — 400 years of slave trading took their toll. Of course, not all African societies were equally affected, but countries such as Angola and Senegal suffered heavily. The most important consequences of the Atlantic slave trade were demographic, economic and political. There can be no doubt that the Atlantic slave trade greatly retarded African demographic development, a fact that was to have lasting consequences for the history of the continent. At best, African populations remained stagnant. The export of the most economically active men and women led to the disintegration of entire societies. The trade in slaves also led to new political formations. In some cases, as people sought protection from the violence and warfare that went with the slave trade, large centralised states came into being.

How did colonialism develop in the Western Cape?

Once Europeans established political control over the African societies with which they came into contact, change took place even more rapidly. In South Africa this process was initiated in 1652 when the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), a great merchant corporation with its headquarters in Amsterdam, established a permanent settlement at Table Bay. The Dutch marked their permanence by building a five-pointed stone castle on the shores of the bay, a structure that continues to dominate the city centre of Cape Town today. From within the walls of the Castle, the VOC administered and governed the expanding colony. At first, the Dutch were primarily concerned with supplying their ships with fresh produce as they rounded the Cape en route to the spice-producing islands of the Indonesian archipelago where the Dutch had their most important colonial interests.

The establishment of the Dutch settlement at Table Bay gave birth to an entirely new society. It grew out of the interaction and conflict that took place between the cultures of indigenous Africans, immigrant Europeans and imported slaves. The Europeans who settled at the Cape came from societies that were commercial in orientation and Protestant in outlook. They came into contact with people largely untouched by these influences, and they imported slaves about whose cultures they knew little or nothing.

Two features stand out about the colonial society that grew up in South Africa: (a) it quickly developed into a settler society, and (b) it also became a slave society. The VOC unwittingly allowed the Cape to develop into a settler colony when they decided to provide some of their own servants with plots of land close to the port of what came to be called Cape Town. It was hoped that these “free burghers” would be able to provision passing ships with fresh produce.

Over time, those Europeans who migrated to the Cape and made it their permanent home came to dominate the social and economic institutions of the colony. Europeans constituted a large percentage of the total population of the colony. The Cape's temperate and disease-free environment
permitted a healthy European population that grew rapidly. This was in contrast to other parts of Africa or colonial settlements such as the Caribbean island of Jamaica, where European populations initially struggled to sustain themselves.

Why did the Cape Colony turn into a colonial slave society?

It soon became apparent that, if the free burghers were to be successful as agricultural producers, they would need access to large amounts of labour. The indigenous peoples with whom the Dutch first came into contact, the Khoikhoi, had been settled in the region for at least a thousand years before the Dutch arrived; they were an unwilling labour force. The Khoikhoi were a pastoral people; as long as they had their lands, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, they could not be pressed into service for the Dutch settlers. The settlers practised a form of settled agriculture that came into direct conflict with the pastoral economy of the Khoikhoi, which involved regular and structured seasonal migration.

Thus, as the Dutch settlement expanded, independent Khoikhoi communities were placed under unbearable pressure. Within 50 years of the establishment of the Dutch settlement, the indigenous communities near Table Bay, despite heroic struggles on their part, had been dispossessed of their lands and their independent means of existence had come to an end. Individual Khoikhoi men and women became incorporated into colonial society as low-status servants. Beyond the mountains of Table Valley, communities of Khoisan (as the Khoikhoi and the indigenous hunter-gatherer San are collectively called) survived until the end of the eighteenth century, but there can be little doubt that for the indigenous populations of the Cape the arrival of the Dutch settlers proved to be a major turning point.

The Dutch settlers were forced to look elsewhere for their labour needs. In 1658, the year after the first free burghers had been granted their plots of land, the first slaves were imported into South Africa, specifically for agricultural work. Slaves were brought from trading posts in the Indian Ocean that included Mozambique, Madagascar, Indonesia, India and Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka). Thus, unlike the societies of West Africa, South Africa became an importer rather than an exporter of slaves. In this way, the Cape became a colonial slave society born out of European overseas expansion.

Very soon, the number of slaves exceeded the numbers of settlers. Between 1720 and 1790 slave numbers increased from 2,500 to 14,500. At the time of the final ending of slavery in 1838 the slave population stood at around 38,000. However, unlike the European population, which was able to double in number with each generation through natural increase, the harsh living conditions of the Cape’s slave population meant that their numbers could only be sustained through continued importation. Between 1652 and the ending of the slave trade in 1807 about 60,000 slaves were imported into the Colony.

Thus the Cape became not just a society in which some people were slaves, but a fully-fledged slave society. In slave societies, the institution of slavery touched all aspects of life. Slavery was central to the social, economic and legal institutions of Cape society. As the boundaries of the Cape Colony expanded beyond the immediate vicinity of Table Bay, slaves were put to work on the wine and wheat farms of the south-western Cape. Quite simply, the colonial economy could not function without the use of slave labour. Slave-ownership was widespread. Although most of the
European settlers of the south-western Cape owned fewer than ten slaves, almost all owned at least some slaves.

The most important social feature of slave societies is that they were polarised between people who were slaves and those who were not. Slaves were also defined by their race. Although the VOC did not institute a codified form of racial classification, the fact is that slaves were black and slave owners were white. There were a few slaves who had been freed — they were called "free black" — and who had managed to acquire slaves of their own, but these black slave owners were a tiny minority of the slave-owning population. Thus, colonial South Africa was from the very start a society structured along racial lines, in which black people occupied a subordinate position.

Slavery was fully supported by the Roman-Dutch legal system that the VOC brought to the Cape. In terms of Roman-Dutch law, slaves were defined, first and foremost, as property. This form of slavery, known as chattel slavery, meant that one human being was the legal belonging of another human being. Slaves could be bought and sold, bequeathed or used as security for loans. Because slaves were kept in a state of slavery against their will, the slave owners and the VOC needed a system of laws to ensure that slaves were kept in their subordinate position; in other words, the law needed to guarantee that slaves remained slaves. Thus, according to law, slaves could be severely punished for acts such as running away or failing to obey their owners’ orders. Slaves were most commonly whipped for such transgressions. For attacking the persons of their owners, slaves could be put to death.

How could slaves limit the power of slavery?

The single largest limitation that the slave owners faced was that they were compelled to acknowledge that their slaves were not merely property, but also human beings, with human values, desires and emotions. On farms and households in the Cape, slaves and slave owners lived very near each other and came into daily contact. The culture that grew out of these regular interactions was one of domination, but it was also one that was based on acknowledging the humanity of the other party. From the very first day when a slave was acquired by a settler and given a new name, slaves and owners struggled to see how much each could impose their will on the other.

We see this clearly in the records of the trial of the slave, Reijnier, a runaway who was caught and tried 22 years later. In the first few decades of the eighteenth century, he lived in the district of Drakenstein in the south-western Cape. Reijnier, who had come from Madagascar, was the property of the free burgher, Matthijs Krugel. On Krugel’s farm, Simonsvallei, Reijnier had built a long-standing relationship with Manika, a female slave who had been imported from India. They had a number of children together, including a daughter named Sabina.

It is clear that Manika and Reijnier’s situation was unusual in the context of the Cape, for few slaves were able to build and sustain such long-standing relationships. Since the colonists preferred to import male rather than female slaves, the slave population suffered from great sexual imbalance: until the end of the eighteenth century male slaves outnumbered female slaves by as much as four to one, although this ratio could vary significantly from district to district. The children born to Manika were born into slavery, for slave women passed the status of slavery onto their children. Manika’s children would have been among only a small proportion of slaves who were born at the Cape in the course of the eighteenth century. As we...
mentioned earlier, the slave population grew as a result of continued importation.

We can only speculate as to the nature of the relationship that existed between Reijnier and Manika and the kind of life they would have been able to lead. Since they came from such different places of origin, they would probably have communicated with each other in a type of pidgin. Their owners would have spoken to them in Dutch. Out of this mixture of languages grew Afrikaans, and the slaves contributed their share to the development of this language.

It is clear that Reijnier and Manika's owners, Krugel and his wife, whom they would have called Mijnheer and Mevrouw, dominated their lives. Their roles as parents were greatly inhibited by their status as slaves. For some reason, Krugel's wife had taken to regularly beating Reijnier and Manika's daughter, Sabina. Possibly this was a result of sexual jealousy, or perhaps Sabina did not perform her duties to the satisfaction of Mevrouw Krugel. As parents, Reijnier and Manika had little control over the maltreatment that Sabina suffered and which they were forced to witness. It is a sad testimony to his lack of power that Reijnier, in an attempt to put an end to the abuse of his daughter, was prepared to ask Krugel to sell Sabina and thus be separated from her, possibly for life.

However, to say that Reijnier lacked power is not to say that he was absolutely powerless. There were clear limits to the level of domination that slave owners could exercise over their slaves. On one occasion, on a Saturday in a year around 1737, Mevrouw Krugel had gone too far in her maltreatment of Sabina. She had clearly overstepped the boundaries that maintained the delicate balance of power between masters and slaves. On this occasion Krugel's wife stripped Sabina naked, tied her to a post and beat her mercilessly with a sjambok. Afterwards, to accentuate the pain, she rubbed salt into the wounds, a tactic commonly employed by Cape slave owners. The event obviously scared Manika deeply because she could tell the story clearly when she appeared before the law courts 22 years later. When Reijnier returned to the homestead after having worked in the fields, he did not hesitate to vent his anger at the maltreatment of his daughter. His wife, Manika, was the unfortunate victim of his wrath. These were human actions and emotions, not the actions of people who could be defined simply as property.

By now, Krugel and his wife had lost control over the slaves on Simonsville. In an attempt to restore his authority, Krugel beat all the slaves on the farm. This was to no avail, for, as Manika testified, Reijnier turned on his master and assaulted him, although she did not witness the assault herself. As a consequence, Reijnier had to flee the farm.

The mountains and valleys of the south-western Cape provided many hiding places for slaves who had deserted their owners. For more than two decades Reijnier lived in the mountains around the Berg River as a drooster, as runaway slaves were called. For all this time Krugel was without the labour of his slave. Reijnier had turned out to be a poor investment. It seemed that Krugel and his wife could not control their slaves. Under such circumstances, slave owners often resorted to physical violence to maintain control over their labour force. But if such violence was allowed to spiral out of control, it could be counter-productive. By his actions, Reijnier had shown the limitations of the use of slave labour in a colonial society.

What was the impact of runaway slaves on the Cape slave society?

Reijnier was one of many slave runaways. He never ventured too far from the settler farms, and it is probably this that led to his eventual capture. Manika may not have been entirely truthful when she testified that she had not seen

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**Pidgin** – a grammatically simplified form of a language with elements taken from local languages, used for communication between people not sharing a common language

**Sjambok** – a long stiff whip originally made of rhinoceros hide
It became clear to the colonial authorities at the Cape, especially after the British took over political power from the Dutch, that the use of slave labour had severe limitations. Two minor rebellions of slaves in 1808 and 1825, in which a number of white settlers were killed, made the continued use of slave labour even less appealing. Moreover, by the second decade of the nineteenth century the use of slave labour was no longer as profitable as it had been in earlier decades. Thus, when the British government finally ended slavery in 1838, the Cape ceased to be a slave society. It remained a colonial society, but the ending of slavery was another turning point of major significance in the history of South Africa.

What was the impact of colonialism on African societies in the interior?

So far our discussion has been confined to the colonial society of the southwestern Cape. It should be remembered that the Colony expanded its boundaries to the north and east almost as soon as the first free burghers took possession of plots of land. We noted earlier that the settler population grew rapidly in numbers. One of the consequences of this growth was a never-ending appetite for land on the part of the white settlers.

The process of expansion, of course, involved the conquest and dispossession of the indigenous Khoisan population. As early as 1690 the first settlers had moved across the Hottentots Holland Mountains. By 1770 the Colony had expanded as far east as the Fish River, where expansion was halted for a long time due to fierce resistance by the Xhosa. By the 1820s white farmers had begun to settle north of the Gariep (Orange River). In the 1830s the number of white settlers leaving the Cape Colony increased dramatically, as a downturn in the Cape economy prompted them to look elsewhere for economic opportunities. They were also particularly unhappy with what they perceived to be British intervention in the relations between masters and servants. As a consequence of the Great Trek, this exodus of settlers later became known, colonial politics intersected with developments in African societies to a far greater extent than had previously been the case.

From the 1820s in particular, the African societies of southern Africa experienced a great deal of turmoil, violence and instability. Historians are by no means agreed on the origins of these changes. However, they are related to increased raids for goods such as ivory and slaves by bands that existed

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**Maroon** – Originally, this was the name of a group of black people descended from runaway slaves and living in Suriname and the West Indies. When slaves began to run away from the Cape Colony, the Dutch settlers applied the same name to them. The verb maroon means to abandon someone alone in an inaccessible place, especially an island.
on the margins of the Cape Colony, and to the changes that occurred within African societies as a result of ecological changes in the natural environment. One of the most important consequences of this instability was the rise of powerful new African states, the most notable of which was the Zulu kingdom under Shaka.

Another powerful state that came into existence was the kingdom of Lesotho. This state owed its existence to the considerable skills of its founder, Moshoeshoe. Moshoeshoe’s greatest gifts were his political and diplomatic skills, even though he had never become literate. First, he had succeeded in bringing large numbers of African followers into his kingdom. By 1848 his followers, who came to be known as the Basotho, were said to number approximately 80,000 people. Second, Moshoeshoe skilfully negotiated a path for Lesotho between the British colonial state and the Boers (as the migrant settlers from the Cape Colony became known) who had founded the Orange Free State north of the Gariep.

A significant part of Moshoeshoe’s diplomatic skills emerged from military triumph. The British were defeated in battle at Berea when they went to war against the Basotho at the end of 1852. But Moshoeshoe’s greatest victory was a diplomatic one. He sought to bring about peace, not the continuation of war. In a letter to the commander of the British forces written in December 1852, Moshoeshoe sued for peace. Most importantly, he allowed the British to retreat with their honour intact. The Basotho, for their part, retained their independence. Thus, through a combination of military and diplomatic skill, Moshoeshoe had shown the limitations of mid-nineteenth-century British colonialism in southern Africa.

What was the role of missionaries in the colonial process?

Moshoeshoe had concluded the peace treaty at Berea in close consultation with Eugène Casalis, a representative of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS). One cannot separate colonial rule from the presence of Christian missionaries in southern Africa. The missionaries of the PEMS had been deeply involved in Basotho affairs. Although Moshoeshoe himself never converted to Christianity, he had maintained extensive contact with the missionaries of the PEMS and regularly attended their Sunday services.

It is perhaps in the interactions between Africans and European Christian missionaries that we can see the ironies of European rule most clearly. The presence of the French missionaries did not leave Moshoeshoe’s kingdom untouched; it resulted in significant changes to cultural practices. For instance, Moshoeshoe put an end to circumcision practices for his own sons and those of his immediate followers. Under the influence of missionaries, he also allowed two of his wives to be separated from him by divorce. This was of major significance, for polygamy was an institution central to many African societies. Thus, although there were limitations to how much change European missionaries could bring to African societies, the fact that they initiated major transformations in cultural practices is undeniable.

In 1858, the Boers and the Basotho were again at war. Neither side emerged as a clear victor, but the Boers had destroyed the PEMS mission at Morija. When the fighting was over, Moshoeshoe again sought a diplomatic solution. He sent a letter to the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir George Grey, in which he laid out the history of the region as he saw it. He made particular mention of the destruction of PEMS property during the war of 1858. Most importantly, Moshoeshoe warned of the dangers and ravages of war.

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**polygamy** – the practice or custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time.

In southern African societies, the word is usually understood to mean having more than one wife at the same time.
Conclusion

Colonial rule in southern Africa had brought new societies into existence, and profoundly transformed those societies that had existed before. But colonialism had its limitations. The case of the Basotho shows that African societies did not accept colonial values and institutions wholesale. Nor did they reject them out of hand. The fertile lands of the Caledon River Valley served to feed much of the population north of the Gariep, and it was these lands that were at the root of the conflict between the Basotho and the Boers. The Basotho grew rich off trade in foodstuffs; they were able to acquire European goods such as firearms, horses and guns. Ironically, it was through the acquisition of these goods that they were able to resist European intrusion for as long as they did. Furthermore, their contact with missionaries suggested a degree of openness to European ideas that further enabled Africans to negotiate with Europeans as equals and so delay the processes of colonial conquest.

References
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landrost - chief administrator of a district; magistrate
Chapter 3

What is Your Name, Age, and Whose Slave are You?

by Rayda Jacobs

In 1652, three ships belonging to the Dutch East India Company — the Vereenigde Oost-Indisch Compagnie (VOC) — sailed into Table Bay. The young commander, Jan van Riebeeck, was eager to establish a refreshment station for passing ships. Although Europeans had visited the Cape before, 1652 was the year in which they took permanent possession of the Cape peninsula. The indigenous people at the time were Khoi pastoralists and San hunter-gatherers.

The VOC needed cattle. Initially, they bartered for them and for other food. The Khoi and San, however, refused to labour for the settlers, and slaves were imported from outside the Cape.

The first group of slaves arrived in the ship Amersfoort in March 1658. By the time the Amersfoort slaves reached their destination, so many had died at sea that only 170 were left alive, of whom many were very ill. The majority of the slaves were young boys and girls, and it was felt that they would not be of much use for the next four or five years.

A second group — 228 in number — arrived in the Hasselt in May 1658. By 1717 there were 523 privately-owned slaves in the colony. In the same year the rulers of the VOC in the Netherlands questioned whether slavery should continue. A VOC Council member, D.M. Pasques de Chavannes, wanted slavery to end and be replaced with immigrant labour from Europe. Another Council member argued against it; he did not believe that labourers from overseas would be any better or more useful than slaves. His thinking was that it did not cost very much to feed and clothe a slave, so slaves would be less expensive to maintain. Two other VOC members argued that slaves were more easily controlled. As a result, the VOC continued to import slaves to the Cape. By 1795, when VOC rule ended, there were 16,839 privately-owned slaves at the Cape. By the time slavery ended in 1834, there were 36,274 slaves.

What was it like to be a slave in the Cape Colony?

Many of the slaves came from Madagascar, some from Mozambique, the East African coast, India and the islands of the East Indies such as Sumatra, Java, the Celebes, Ternate and Timor. They had been snatched away from family, friends and their familiar environment, and become the property of strangers. They were purchased and transported, treated as commodities, not allowed to marry, and had no rights to their own children. They could cohabit but not marry. They could not possess property. They could not choose their employers or what work they would perform. Their production and reproduction was controlled. Children born to slaves were also slaves. The cycle repeated itself.

Slaves could not even keep their own names. They were stripped of the names they were born with and given new ones. New names often showed the origin of the slave — for example, Abraham van Malabar, Mej van Bengal, Willem van der Caab. This last name indicated that the slave was born in the Cape. Calendar names were also given, such as February, April and September. Then there were the classical names, often after an emperor or some mythical figure — Alexander, Hector, Titus, Hannibal. Old Testament names like Adam, Moses, Abraham and David were also given. Some slaves were named after an owner, or after the one who had fathered the child.
What was the nature of slavery?

Slavery, an extreme form of involuntary labour, was based on violence. The very act of enslavement involved some form of cruelty. Subsequently, the life of a slave was marked either by the threat of violence or actual violence. The Cape colonial slave society was no different. For slaves on the frontier, violence was the norm, while owners who lived around the port might have used violence less often to exercise the same control. In the Company Lodge, the mostly male slaves were controlled through what some scholars regard as a military system of control. Regardless of the form of control, however, violence was still essential to the creation and maintenance of the slave condition.

Others were given nicknames such as Dikbeen, Pasop, Fortuijn. These names were very demeaning and designed to keep the slave in his place. The life of a slave was one of servitude and uncertainty. A slave could be sold many times over. A female slave named China was sold for 15 silver rupees in India in 1768 when she was 9 or 10 years old. She was renamed Rosa, and sold four more times before she finally became the property of an owner at the Cape in 1775. Often families were purposely split up and sold to different owners; some parents never saw their children again. This was very hard for the slaves. In many cases, when the owner died, the slaves were inherited by the owner’s children.

Little is known about the personal lives of slaves — who they were, how they had come to be in the Cape, their real feelings about their subservient positions and the white masters who owned them. No one was interested in the life of a slave. Writers and visitors to the Cape who did write something about them mostly described their appearance or their work. They did not speak to the slaves and ask them about their lives. There are no personal accounts by the slaves themselves, except for Katie Jacobs, a former slave who at age 96 was interviewed by a journalist in 1910.

Artists at the time preferred to paint landscapes rather than people, and there are few pictures of slaves.

A kitchen girl or a wet nurse working inside the house might have a better life or better conditions than someone working outside in the fields. On the other hand, those who did not relish being under the feet of the master’s wife might have preferred outside duty under an overseer. The wife, as we will later see, was someone to be reckoned with. Her treatment of female slaves depended very much on the looks and age of the slave girl.

Nevertheless, there are clues from other sources. Many slaves were charged with committing crimes and brought to trial. Court records are a good way to catch a glimpse into the lives of some slaves. There are details of the crime, of other slaves, of the owner and his family, of living conditions, and a sense of the time in which they lived. But trial records have their limitations. Interrogation is stressful. A slave in court was either there as a witness or on trial, defending himself. The courthouse was not the best environment for accurate information, or even for obtaining all of the facts.

How did slaves respond to their status?

Slavery was a cruel and violent system. Did the slaves ever retaliate?

In spite of the seemingly unlimited power of slave owners, slaves did not entirely accept their condition. They resisted their enslavement in various ways.

Throughout the Dutch period at the Cape, no major rebellions took place. Two small-scale uprisings did take place, however. The first happened in 1808 when two slaves persuaded 300 farm slaves from the Koeberg region to march to Cape Town and demand their freedom. The second took place in 1825 on a remote farm in the Bolkeveld, when a number of slaves led by Galant van der Caab killed the farmer and some members of his family.

These events marked an important change. Unlike the slave, Reijnier (see Chapter 2) and many of his counterparts, who had chosen to run away, these slaves remained in the Cape and demanded their rights. We know from the quotation at the beginning of this chapter about the reasons that Galant van der Caab and other slaves revolted. Rather than slavery itself, they complained about ill treatment by their master and his failure to provide them with food and clothes.

The reasons there were no larger rebellions included the difficulty of planning without being detected, the dispersal of slaves throughout the colony, and the differences in the languages spoken by the slaves. The minor revolts referred to above never amounted to much, as the details were betrayed at the last minute by fellow slaves. Nor was the rarity of rebellions unique to the Cape slave society. In general, open rebellion has not been the most common form of resistance to slave conditions, or other forms of domination and oppression for that matter.

Other than outright rebellion, though, there were other and more common forms of resistance to slavery. They included setting fire to the crops and property of slave owners, as well as physical attacks on owners and overseers. In other instances, slaves protested their conditions by stealing from the masters or by committing suicide and thereby denying the master the use of their labour. Resistance might also be in the form of breaking farm equipment. Food poisoning of masters was an important form of resistance among domestic slaves.

Running away was the most common form of resistance. It is recorded that, as early as March 1655, a slave from Madagascar escaped and was never recaptured. In return for tobacco, the Khoi sometimes brought back
the escapees. In this case, however, promises of a large amount of tobacco and some copper did not convince the Khoi to search for the escaped slave. Although in some instances slave escapes were statements against slavery in general, often they were related to specific events such as too much work or excessive punishment.

Some escaped slaves were not very lucky. They were recaptured and faced a variety of punishments for running away. Indeed, running away carried huge risks for escapees. Fugitives had to contend with the hot pursuit of those who sought to claim the rewards placed on their heads. Death was also a distinct possibility, not only because the environment to which they ran was unfamiliar, but also because the land was dry and inhospitable and offered little to survive on. On the whole, however, only a minority of slaves, under certain conditions, braved the risks of running away.

As runaways, slaves had several difficult choices to make in order to survive. One option was to leave the Cape entirely and join with other groups living on the boundaries of the colonial society. As the colony expanded, runaway slaves became part of a group of fugitives who for one reason or another were on the run from the colony. Cases of slaves stowing away on ships to faraway destinations were not uncommon.

In other instances, runaway slaves created maroon communities of their own at the edge of the colony, though never escaping entirely. (See Chapter 2 for a definition of maroon.) Probably one of the most well-known communities was established at Hangklip in the early nineteenth century. Here, the fugitives lived inside a cave to which there were only two openings, both of them difficult to reach. One of them was almost inaccessible, as the entrance was surrounded with rocks and the tide washed into it. The community lived off what they could find in the sea, and were well acquainted with weather conditions and low and high tides, which would give them the best times to enter or leave the cave. Boats approached from time to time, and the maroons were sometimes joined by sailors and explorers who might have brought provisions with them. In order to survive, however, they were still somewhat dependent on the slave colonial society and were therefore never completely cut off from it. Protected by the inaccessibility of the cave, this maroon community survived for over a century until the formal abolition of slavery.

What can records of slave trials tell us?

The trial of recaptured slave, Reijnier, in 1749 provides important insights into various aspects of the slave condition and resistance at the Cape.

The trial record tells us several things. It speaks first of a relationship between two people, Reijnier and Manika. We know that they had children, but that they were not married. Slaves in the Cape were not officially allowed to marry until 1823. It must also be remembered that slaves were given no Christian instruction. In the few cases where Christian education was given, it was confined to two commandments — thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not kill. Slave couples had to be Christian to be married. Slaves also

abscond — to leave hurriedly and secretly to escape from custody or arrest

Author's Note — Hangklip

In 1996, doing research for The Slave Book, my brother and I made several trips to the Hangklip area to see if we could locate the cave to which the slaves had escaped. We spoke to many people in neighbouring areas, looking for descendants of the slaves and old families.

On our third visit to Hangklip, spending much time walking through the bush and down rocks, we came again to the flat rocks high above the sea. We had visited there before and never found anything. This time, we heard the sound of rushing water. Looking intently where the sound was coming from, we found an open split between two rocks, with a round boulder positioned over it. We looked down; saw water about twenty feet below. The boulder was secure enough for a rope tied around it and for someone to be lowered down. We ascertained that at certain times of the month, the tide would be low enough to reveal the shore and that we might be able to walk there.

There is an eerie beauty that hangs about the bushes and vegetation at Hangklip. Whether or not this is the spot where the fugitives had stowed away and disentangled from the sight of their pursuers, it is easy, especially on an overcast day with drifting fog, to imagine a group of horsemen who had just turned up to find nothing but silence.
had to have their owner's permission to marry.

Manika's testimony speaks about the cruel treatment of her daughter, Sabina, by the slave owner's wife. According to Manika, the beatings happened without provocation. Why? Was Krugel's wife jealous of the young girl? Could she have caught the eye of the master?

We also know from Reijnier's name that he was from Madagascar, an import to the Cape. As a slave he was someone else's possession and, like most slaves at the Cape, had few rights. But he was also a father whose daughter had been violently assaulted. Whether he spent time at the Hangklip maroon community and moved with the local gangs is unknown. We do know that he hid and lived in the mountains past the Berg River. We also know that he managed to evade his pursuers for 22 years — no small feat for a slave. All this suggests that, in spite of the best efforts by slave masters to regard slaves as their property, slaves like Reijnier and others kept reminding them that they were also human.

**Did men's and women's experiences of slavery differ?**

Cruel mistreatment of young female slaves by owners' wives was not unusual. A master's wife often considered a young female slave, especially if she was of mixed-race parentage or fair-skinned, as a threat to her position. Frequently, the result was beatings and abuse of the slave.

The brutal death of the young slave woman at the hands of a Stellenbosch farmer's wife raises the general issue of sexual relations between slaves and the non-slave, white population of the Cape. (See box on page 49). The past is peppered with liaisons between slave owners — both male and female — and their slaves.

Take the case of Maria Mouton, who had an affair with her slave, Titus of Benga, in 1774. Although this had happened with Maria's consent, Titus was severely punished. By crossing both the slavery and racial boundaries of the colonial society, Titus was sentenced by the Cape Court to be impaled in public.

Scholars of the Cape colonial slave society have shown that European settlers, while punished, were not dealt with as harshly for the same sexual crimes. There is no known case of a European being sentenced to either death or banishment for rape or sexual relations with slaves.

The case of Jan van Batavia and Mrs Bruel is a good example of the racialised colonial slave society. Jan had reportedly had sex with a white girl. He was severely flogged with a sjambok and then banished to Mauritius. In addition to the flogging and banishment, he was to remain chained for 20 years. In contrast, Mrs Bruel, who had been a willing participant and had equally committed an offence by having sex across the colour line, had not faced a criminal proceeding. Instead, she was admonished by the church and was not allowed to partake of the communion. In her case, the affair was considered to be no more than an indiscretion.

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control?

The Cape came under British control in 1806. Laws were passed in London in 1807 to end the slave trade, although it was still legal to own slaves. By the 1820s, under the "amelioration laws" there was a move towards improving conditions for slaves. Laws were passed limiting the number of hours a slave should work. They also set out the amount of clothing and food that slave owners had to provide. Slaves were allowed to marry, and owners were forbidden to sell young children separately from their mothers. Slaves were given the right to buy their own freedom. Some slaves were also given a basic education. The punishment of slaves was controlled by new laws, and slaves were encouraged to report any abuse of these laws to an official Guardian of Slaves, appointed in 1826 (renamed the Protector of Slaves in 1830). The Guardian worked with assistants in the rural areas to make sure that the laws were obeyed. These laws, however, came too late for a slave like Reijnier. Nor can we know whether the laws worked as well as they were meant to do.

Conclusion

Today, we still see the lingering effects of slavery. Slavery brought together people from diverse backgrounds in an intimate setting. Slaves came from different parts of the world, from different cultures and with different identities. In the home of the settler, master and slave became acquainted with one another. They came to know one another's ways, one another's beliefs and one another's languages. The slaves were the cooks, the seamstresses and the artisans. Today we have a cuisine, an architecture, a music, a poetic language. Many early Afrikaans writings were found in the Arabic script of the slaves.

This legacy also gave rise to the false identity of the Afrikaners, a term that indicates someone who is "locally born". In the early nineteenth century this term was used for slaves born of European fathers and slave mothers. The term "Afrikaner" should actually mean everyone born into Cape society, however unpopular that proposition may at first appear.

References

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Chapter 2
Imperialism and the Union in South Africa
by Timothy Keegan

The nineteenth century, leading up to the unification of South Africa in 1910, saw the making of the country that we know today. The major themes in this process were:

- the drawing together of the various societies and communities of southern Africa into a single, unified, economic and ultimately political order;
- the growth of an infrastructure based on towns, industries, railways and seaports;
- the massive increase in the mobility of people, as long-distance migration in search of work began; and
- the huge cultural and material changes in people’s lives in which these developments resulted.

One way of understanding these developments is by seeing them as resulting from a process of globalisation. The nineteenth century was the high point of the era of European imperialism — the expansion of European power across the globe in pursuit of markets, investment opportunities and places where Europeans could settle. South Africa attracted Europeans because of its temperate climate, its economic opportunities and most importantly because of its huge mineral riches. The discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1886) brought large numbers of immigrants and large quantities of investment capital into the country. Economic development and international trade grew greatly as a result. The mineral discoveries also intensified the system of labour migration, of drawing young African men (and, on a smaller scale, women) out of their homesteads and villages to service the hunger for labour that economic development caused.

Up to the time of the mineral discoveries, white-rulled societies (British colonies and Boer republics) lived side-by-side with independent African states and chiefdoms. Settlers had always wanted land and labour from the indigenous African people. They had gone to great lengths to gain control over both. Indigenous people were forced into servile positions, as workers on their farms and in their homes and businesses. However, the settlers did not have the power, or the need, to conquer and rule over the larger, more organised African societies and to strip them of their independence. It is probably true to say that the great majority of the African people of South Africa did not live under direct white rule by 1870. Black and white societies parcelled out the land, often fighting one another over land and cattle and labour, sometimes forming alliances with one another, but always dependent on one another for trade. Everything changed with the beginning of the "mineral revolution". A more aggressive stage in the history of white supremacy was the result.

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globalisation — international integration, especially in terms of world trade, financial markets and communication technology. This is often associated with the dominance of the world’s wealthy countries.
What were the first effects of the mineral revolution?

The diamond rush that began in the late 1860s in and around the new city of Kimberley started processes that had a profound effect on the subcontinent as a whole. The mobilisation of labour needed for the mines, railways and all the new urban developments of the 1870s was on a new scale. Young men walked vast distances to reach the diamond fields to earn wages. Sometimes they were sent by chiefs to get hold of firearms to aid in the defence of their societies. Others went to earn money to buy cattle. Some African peoples (such as the Tswana and Southern Sotho) benefited by supplying the diamond fields with grain crops and meat, fodder for horses and firewood for fuel. So, at first, many Africans profited from opportunities presented by the colonial economy.

At the same time, however, colonial authorities were developing the institutions of coercion and control that became so central to the exercise of racial domination in the industrial age. At Kimberley, the institution of the closed compound was introduced, where workers were subjected to round-the-clock supervision and surveillance. The pass laws, which dated from the earliest colonial days, were developed as instruments of control. Later, they were used to keep unwanted people out of towns as well as to keep them under the tight control of their employers.

There was now a direct incentive for colonial authorities to assert control over African societies — to try to ensure a constant supply of workers for colonial needs. The 1870s saw a concerted attempt to undermine the independence of African states and chiefdoms in various parts of southern Africa, to reduce them to a state of subjection and to strip them of the means to resist white men’s wishes. So the 1870s was a decade of imperial activism and military intervention in southern Africa. This coincided with the start of the “Scramble for Africa”. This policy of conquest and annexation was very much in evidence in southern Africa, where the discovery of diamonds and gold, and the resulting need for labour and agricultural produce to feed new urban populations, provided the main incentive.

What was the impact of the discovery of diamonds?

The full extent of imperial activism in southern Africa in the 1870s was felt by independent African societies. It could be argued that the origins of present-day South Africa lay in the wars of the 1870s, which undermined the independence of African societies as never before. Basutoland (present-day Lesotho) under King Mosheshoe had already been defeated by the Orange Free State Republic in a war that was mainly about control of the rich farmlands of the Caledon River valley. The British then annexed the kingdom and handed it over to the Cape Colony. After a war of resistance against the Cape’s disarmament policy, known as the Gun War, Britain took control of it again as a British colony, after which it was ruled directly from Britain. So Lesotho’s present-day status as an independent kingdom resulted directly from the Basotho people’s fierce resistance to the government of the Cape.

During the 1870s, the rule of Cape colonial magistrates was extended through most of the chiefdoms of the Southern Nguni (known as the Transkeian Territories). Only the Mpondo retained their independence, until they were also incorporated in the Cape in 1894.

The most spectacular military resistance was that of the mighty Zulu
Transvaal, which, being a white state, was granted more respect than the African states that had been conquered. During their rule in the Transvaal, the British had defeated the Northern Sotho (the Pedi kingdom), the strongest African state within the borders that the republic had claimed for itself, which until then had resisted the Boer armies. The failed annexation of the Transvaal (1877-81) was to be followed in 1899-1902 by the much more fiercely fought and dramatic war against the Boer republics.

It is important to note that the main military power in southern Africa at the time was Britain. The local white governments in the colonies (Cape and Natal) and in the republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State) did not have the power by themselves to take on African states and permanently subdue them. The British wanted to see the establishment of a stronger, self-governing, white-ruled South Africa to which it could hand over the responsibility for governing the country as a whole, including the black states. To this end, already in the 1870s, they were trying to get the British colonies and Boer republics to unite and create a local white state that could be relied on to serve the imperial interests of Britain. This was the so-called "confederation scheme". It came to nothing at the time, mainly because of Boer resistance. It was not until the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 that Boer resistance to British imperialism was finally broken, and with it the final obstacle to unification, which came eventually in 1910, when modern South Africa was born.

Once the process of incorporation of African states under white rule had begun, it continued until there were no independent African people left. The Tswana people of the Northern Cape (present-day Northwest province) and Bechuaneland (present-day Botswana) came under British rule in 1885. The former became part of the Cape Colony, and the latter a separate British protectorate. Britain kept control of Botswana in order to keep control of the "road to the north", to prevent expansion by the Transvaal republic and to forestall German ambitions in central Africa after Germany had set up its own colony in Namibia to the west. The area to the north, modern-day Zimbabwe, was regarded as potentially rich in gold, and the British did not want anybody else getting there before they did. The last African people in South Africa to be conquered (in 1898) were the Venda in the far north of the Transvaal (present-day Limpopo province) under Chief Mphephu.

Magistrates, tax collectors, traders and labour recruiters all arrived with colonial rule; together they began to undermine the old order. As Africans turned more and more to labour migrancy, homesteads and villages were robbed of the labour of their young men. But this did not happen all at once, or in all areas to the same extent. We should also remember that many African people became small-scale commercial farmers, investing in new crops, in ploughs and trek oxen and sheep, and also in ox wagons for transport. For a time, many Africans as well as whites benefited from South Africa's economic development. For a time, South Africa's growing towns
depended on African farmers for their food. But this was not to last. Government policies were based on the assumption that in South Africa white people were to be the producers and black people the workers.

What did white rule mean for Africans?

Africans' experiences of white rule varied. From the 1830s, Xhosa-speaking peoples to the west of the Kei River had been incorporated into the Cape Colony. In keeping with nineteenth-century British liberal beliefs, which downplayed racial differences and stressed the level of "civilisation" of the individual, a policy of assimilation was followed. In theory, this meant full citizenship rights, including the right to vote, for all those who fulfilled certain qualifications, such as income and educational tests. This approach became known as the "Cape liberal tradition". This tradition embodied important principles of non-racialism and equal treatment, although in practice such beliefs were probably not very widespread among white colonists. Certainly, the reality of white domination was never threatened. This liberal tradition assumed the superiority of European culture and ways of doing things.

As more and more Africans, particularly those in the Transkei Territories, were incorporated in the Cape, liberal principles became weaker. By the end of the century, Africans were increasingly discriminated against. In the second half of the nineteenth century, scientific racism — the theory that Africans were naturally inferior to Europeans — was becoming more dominant in the European world. In Britain, it displaced the now unfashionable view that black individuals could, with education, achieve complete equality with whites. While in the early nineteenth century many people in Europe and America fought for the liberation of black people from slavery and oppression, by the end of the century the dominant view among whites was that the races were unequal by their very nature. So the liberal tradition in the Cape Colony, which many members of the black elite valued greatly, was already in decline by the end of the century. White colonists increasingly resented black men participating in elections. (Women, black and white, did not have the right to vote at all at that time.)

In contrast to the Cape liberal tradition was the republican tradition, based on stark racial exclusion, in which no racial equality was possible. In the Transvaal and Orange Free State republics, only white people were ever considered to be citizens. Africans had no rights at all. In addition, those who became subject to white rule as labourers were usually stripped of all rights to land of their own.

The Natal Colony was similar to the republics in not recognising any equality, but it did set aside land for Africans to live on. Natal incorporated many small chiefdoms that had fallen under the Zulu King Shaka's rule at the height of his power in earlier days. From the 1850s they were settled in reserves under chiefs (often appointed by white officials), and were ruled under their own customary law. The fact that Natal did not follow the policies of its sister colony in the Cape was partly due to the much weaker position of its white inhabitants, in terms of numbers and of security.

So, when the larger African states were subjected to the policies of the segregationist policy that emerged as the policy for the country as a whole in the twentieth century drew from the different traditions. It followed the example of setting aside reserves — what later became known as the "homelands" or "Bantustans". Eventually the reserves were to make up some 13% of South Africa's land area. Within the white areas, increasingly the republican tradition of "baaskap" (white supremacy) prevailed. The Cape's liberal tradition survived as an ideal for some whites, and for many blacks who benefited from it. However, whites increasingly rejected it in favour of the segregationist policy, which rested on unbridgeable differences between the races and the way they were treated.

In the homelands, Africans were forced to live on communal land under the authority of chiefs, with their own codified customary law. From there, they were encouraged or forced to migrate into so-called white South Africa to sell their labour.

It is interesting to reflect that the liberal, integrationist policy of the Cape required Africans to assimilate to European culture and turn their backs on their traditional ways and beliefs. Segregationist policy — or apartheid as it became known — rejected the very idea of a common society for black and white, and recognised and reinforced "tradition" as a means of emphasising the differences between the races. Today most of us would argue that all people can and should join together in a common society, but one which allows people to embrace and celebrate their differences as well as what they share in common.

What were the economic and social impacts of the discovery of gold?

Even more important than the discovery of diamonds was the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand just south of Pretoria in 1886. The new city of Johannesburg sprang up in the middle of the biggest gold fields ever found in the world. A lot of the money made out of diamonds was now invested in buying up gold claims, and a new flood of investment arrived from Europe. The richest deposits were very deep underground, and the deep-level mines required large investment and tens of thousands of workers to dig the precious metal out of the ground. At first it was not realised just how rich the deposits were, until by 1893 new technologies became available to extract the gold ore from deep in the earth.

Railways, which had already reached Kimberley from the Cape by 1885,
were now built more rapidly than before. The first railway from the Cape reached Johannesburg in 1892, followed by lines from Delagoa Bay (now Maputo) and Durban. Railways revolutionised transport, which previously had depended on slow ox wagons. They gave a huge boost to trade, and made transporting people and goods much easier and faster.

The high costs involved made the gold mining companies especially determined to keep the price of African labour as low as possible. The companies joined together to share recruiting expenses in the rural areas, eventually forming large organisations whose job it was to ensure a steady supply of labour to the mines. They also co-operated to ensure that wage rates were kept low, and to ensure that competition between them for labour did not push wages up. The migrant labour system enabled the companies to keep their wages low by ensuring that workers never became fully urbanised, but maintained their homes in the rural areas, where their families supposedly lived from farming rather than wages. The pass laws were used to ensure that Africans could not stay permanently in the urban areas. More and more African people came to experience migrancy as a central part of their lives.

Eventually, in the twentieth century, rural homesteads and villages often consisted of old people, women and children for much of the year, as men of working age went to the towns to earn wages. Moreover, labour migrancy bound the whole subcontinent together into a single economic system, based on the activities of traders and recruiters — often the same people were both — who used debt to force young men into wage labour far away from their homes. Southern Mozambique, for example, became a very important source of labour for the gold mines, with the full cooperation of the Portuguese authorities there, who also benefited from the system.

At the same time, the skilled work on the mines was reserved for immigrant white miners from Britain, Australia and elsewhere, who brought with them traditions of trade unionism. Their unions were able to keep the skilled work as a monopoly for white men, a system that from early on became law. This became known as the job colour bar, or job reservation. No black man could hope to become a skilled worker, no matter how long he worked in the mines.

As more and more Afrikanders from the farms joined the mines, the situation often arose that black men knew far more about mining than the whites, but the white men were always regarded as being skilled and the black men as unskilled. They were paid accordingly. Thus, the institutions we associate with apartheid were developed on the gold mines, even more than on the diamond mines.

What were the political effects of the discovery of gold?

The gold fields shifted the economic centre of the country to the Transvaal Republic, where the gold had been found. This was a situation that the mining companies and the British government could not tolerate for long. The Transvaal government of President Paul Kruger was not always sympathetic to the needs of the mining industry. It raised the costs of the industry through a system of industrial monopolies to its friends, for example in railway construction and the manufacture of dynamite. British domination in the region could never be secure as long as the Transvaal was independent and unsympathetic to Britain.

A new development was the seizure of the territory north of the Limpopo River. White settlers took up large stretches of land in Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). This happened after the Ndebele King Lobengula had been pressured into signing a treaty with the representatives of the British South Africa Company, granting them rights in his territory. In 1889 the British government had given this private company, headed by Cecil Rhodes, a charter to administer the new territory on behalf of the British Crown.

Rhodes was a very wealthy man whose De Beers Company had by 1888 established control over the whole diamond industry. In 1890, Rhodes used his influence to become Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, making him by
far the most powerful man in the region. He and his backers in Britain thought that the seizure of Rhodesia from its Ndebele and Shona inhabitants would open up new gold fields that they believed were to be found there. They also hoped that it would surround and isolate the Boer government in the Transvaal, and force them to accept British terms.

Rhodes' role was an example of sub-imperialism. The British were content to allow Rhodes, using his local power base, to bring about the unified white-rulled South African state, including the Boer republics, that could be entrusted with maintaining the dominance of Britain in the region. Rhodes fell from power when, in an attempt to take control of the Transvaal Republic, he sent a military force under L.S. Jameson into the Transvaal at the end of 1895. The attempted coup failed and its leaders were arrested. Rhodes was forced to resign, in disgrace as Prime Minister of the Cape. Methods that were used to overthrow African rulers were not seen as acceptable when aimed at a white-rulled country, which now had strong friends in the world, such as Germany.

However, important people in Britain and South Africa were still determined to end the independence of the Boer republics. If there was to be a war, it was important that the Boer government be made to look as if they were responsible. In 1897 Alfred Milner was sent as British High Commissioner, the highest local representative of the British government. He forced a conflict with the Transvaal. He used the grievances of the British workers on the goldfields, who were denied the right to vote in the Transvaal, in order to create a crisis. In 1899 war broke out after the Kruger government ignored British demands.

The Anglo-Boer War was a war between British imperialism and Boer republicanism over control of South Africa's destiny and its mineral wealth. The British had massive military superiority, and thought the war would be over quickly. In fact, it lasted more than two and a half years, due to the Boer guerrilla tactics. The British had no answer to these tactics except to lay waste the Boer farms and herd all living on them, black as well as white, into concentration camps.

It was a quarrel in which black South Africans were not supposed to have any part. However, black South Africans did play a role — as participants on both sides, as scouts, transport workers and even as armed fighters. Many thousands of Africans who lived on the farms of the republics were herded into concentration camps where many died from illness and hunger. Many others profited by supplying the military forces with foodstuffs, livestock and fuel. Some believed the British propaganda that the war was intended to liberate black people from oppression, and backed the imperial cause for that reason. They were to be greatly disappointed.

In fact, after the long and very costly war was over, the British abandoned the cause of black rights, as they were determined to win the Boers over to the idea of a united white nation. In the Treaty of Vereeniging which ended

sub-imperialism - the use of local forces to serve imperial purposes
the war, the question of the rights of black people was left to a future white government to decide. There was no room for black demands in a country that was meant to serve white people.

After the war, the fate of South Africa lay in the hands of Lord Milner and his administrators, mostly men he brought from Britain who were loyal to the imperial cause. They were determined to make South Africa English-speaking by flooding the country with British immigrants, and by anglicising the Boers — the Dutch or Afrikaners as they were now increasingly known. This strategy did not work, and from 1905 a new British government tried a friendlier approach to the Afrikaners. A group of white South Africans — Afrikaners and English-speaking — from the Transvaal and the Cape, particularly Jan Smuts and J.X. Merriman, took the lead in pushing for unification of the four colonies into a proposed Union of South Africa. After the former republics were given self-government in 1906-1907, with only whites allowed to vote, a National Convention with representatives of all four white governments met in 1908-1909. They drew up a constitution for the Union, which was established on 31 May 1910.

What role did Africans play in shaping their history?

Black people were never just victims, to be pushed around at the whim of white men. Africans were able to some degree to shape the way they were drawn into the new economic and political system. To look at Africans’ own active role in the making of modern South Africa is not to downplay the harshness of white supremacy, but to recognise that Africans shaped their own history, too.

The role of Africans as producers of foodstuffs for the early towns and cities cannot be underestimated. Overcrowding in the reserves due to land loss elsewhere gradually ate away at rural productivity. Despite this, in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, an African peasantry thrived, in some areas more than others. On white-owned farmland, the African tenants were successful small-scale farmers, handing over a share of their crop to white landlords as rent. These black sharecroppers were often more successful than the debt-ridden whites, who clung to the land only with the help of the black tenants on whom they depended, despite the attempts of white governments both before and after Union to make such practices illegal.

Often our picture of white domination in South African history hides the extent to which whites depended on blacks for their survival, and the hidden ways in which blacks managed to use the system to their own advantage.

In the political realm, these years saw the rise of black protest politics. We can distinguish between “primary” and “secondary” resistance. Primary resistance was the armed resistance of African societies under their chiefs against white aggression, conquest, and the loss of their land and independence. Secondary resistance was the politics of the new educated elites — graduates of mission schools, teachers, journalists, ministers and office workers — who led the new nationalist organisations. In practice, the difference between the two was not always clear. “Old” and “new” elites, the chiefs and the educated men, often co-operated and worked together. Chiefs were sometimes themselves educated men. The last major uprising of the chiefs was Bambatha’s rebellion in Natal in 1906-1907, sparked by a new tax imposed on African men by the colonial government. The Zulu King Dinuzulu was accused of being behind the uprising, and was prosecuted and sent into exile. The rebellion was in defence of a traditional patriarchal order, but for young men it was also a rebellion against the old order.

The new political leaders — men like J.T. Javu from the Eastern Cape, Sol Plaatje of Kimberley and John Dube of Natal — found themselves in a difficult position. All three of these men were closely associated with the earliest African-language newspapers. They had little mass support — after all, literacy was rare at the time — and depended on petitions, personal contacts with white officials and friendly persuasion to try to get white people to listen to them. A high point of their early campaigns was the delegation to London in 1909 to protest against the constitution adopted for the new Union of South Africa. Their faith in the good intentions of the British government proved to be misplaced. They never made radical demands, but tried to gain admission to the political process for the privileged few. They did not directly challenge white supremacy, but tried to soften its impact. Their main concerns were with preserving and extending the vote that they had enjoyed in the Cape Colony, and with access to land for their people. They were sometimes prepared to make compromises with segregation. However, they were operating in a very different world, in which their choices were very limited, and the idea of overthrowing the white state was unthinkable.

The early political elite also started developing a philosophy of African nationalism, a belief in African self-reliance, with a history and worldview separate from that of Europeans. They organised themselves to further their own interests. The earliest political organisations emerged in the Eastern Cape, the area with the longest contact with the colonial world. In the early twentieth century, though, such organisations sprang up in the other parts of the country as well, culminating in the founding of the South African Native National Congress (later renamed the African National Congress) in 1912. Some Africans were already travelling to the United States to study, and were bringing back ideas of self-improvement through education. Dube was one, founding the Ohlange Institute on his return, Pan-Africanism was also a philosophy that they brought back with them — the belief in the unity of the African peoples, both in Africa and in America. The emergence of the Ethiopian churches from the 1890s, led by men who rebelled against their restricted and subordinate role in the white-led churches, reflected these beliefs.

What forms of conflict were there besides racial ones?

The black-white divide was not the only division in South African history. There were class divisions as well. Not all Africans faced dispossession and
impovery. Some chiefs who chose to collaborate found their position strengthened under white rule. In the same way, not all white people were equally privileged; there were white victims, too. Many Afrikaners, who had no other home than South Africa, became poor as they lost access to their land and were forced into wage labour in the towns and cities. As agriculture became more intensive and a new breed of white entrepreneur landowners — people who lived in towns and did not have much time for the “poor whites” — bought up the land, the old rural Boer economy collapsed. Like many Africans, these Afrikaners had few skills and little education. Many lost their land because of debt, or because of an inability to adapt to a capitalist world demanding more productivity on the land. They could not compete in the new capitalist economy.

White poverty was a major problem facing white governments, especially after the Anglo-Boer War. The big difference was that white poverty was regarded as a problem that had to be solved, and black poverty was regarded as a natural condition that whites did not have to worry about. The Afrikaner experience of economic dispossession and defeat in war caused a backlash that took the form of Afrikaner nationalism, which eventually was to take over the government of the country as a whole.

Divisions between employers and white trade unions also caused much conflict. The worst strikes in these years were those by the white workers on the gold mines. White mineworkers objected to attempts by the mining companies to reduce costs by reducing the number of white miners. One example of resistance was the great strike of 1907; another was the even bigger one of 1922. Black workers were not allowed to organise, and were kept under close control in the compounds. Some brave early labour activists and socialists realised that the interests of black and white workers were the same, and that they should act together. Most white trade unionists, though, put white interests ahead of black interests, and fought for a better deal for white workers at the expense of the black workers.

In all this, the single biggest gap so far is surely the women, who so often are hidden from history. How did industrial development, urbanisation and the massive rise of wage labour affect them? When men migrated, the burden of keeping the rural economy, tending the crops and ensuring that food was produced fell on the women as never before. In practice, they often became family heads. Many women moved to town themselves, for all sorts of reasons. African women in towns lived very difficult lives, as they were usually rebelling against male dominance in their home societies. Their economic activities (such as beer brewing) were often illegal. In new urban areas such as Johannesburg, most domestic servants at first were men (“houseboys” they were called by whites), as black women were not seen as belonging in town. Afrikaner women, on the other hand, moved to town with their menfolk and often found work that was denied to black women. In the long run, the more permanent urbanisation of white families helped them become more fully part of the urban economy, unlike Africans who were never allowed to see themselves as having rights to family life in town.

Conclusion

It seems that there are many different people whose history needs to be told, white as well as black, rich as well as poor, powerful as well as powerless. So, whose history is the correct one? Everyone’s history is valid. There is no single historical truth, but many different stories that must be told and listened to. The more historical voices we hear, the better.

References
8 Dr Timothy Keegan is a graduate of the University of Cape Town and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has worked at the Universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and the Western Cape. He is the author of books on the rural history of the highveld in the era of industrialisation, as well as the nineteenth-century Cape Colony. He has written widely for academic journals in South Africa and overseas. Dr Keegan is now a full-time writer.
Chapter 3

The Socio-economic Impact of the Mineral Revolution on South African Society

by Drusela Numvulo Yekela

This chapter will examine the various causes of the mineral revolution and how it impacted on societies in southern Africa. The influences include the following:

- personal, because they may have originated with human ambitions;
- material, because they may have been dictated by a human desire for wealth;
- physical, because they may have been motivated by "people's" perceived sense of superiority;
- philosophical, because they may have related to human thought processes and outlook on life; and
- environmental, because they may have had something to do with geographical factors and the way they impacted on societal activities.

Reflection on these influences presents the reader with a visual image of the South African "people's" interaction and involvement with their diversified state. Because these causes are different, they tend to exhibit both connectedness and disjointedness. Both of these features in turn result in a single and common visible outcome — the shaping of the history of South Africa with all its twists and turns.

Against this background it should be understandable why and how the discovery of minerals — unique in its own historical context — was an important turning point in the history of South Africa. The reasons were various. It brought world attention to the country, and thus made South Africa a subject and a player in international history. It tampered with and tempered the life patterns of all South Africans in unprecedented ways. This was visible in the extent to which the mineral revolution radically affected the lives of all those involved. None more so than black South Africans. Their socio-economic power was taken from them in a very systematic way. Those who perceived themselves as superior because they had money and could make more — the owners of the means of production — had power and a platform from which to carve the destinies of others.

This chapter, therefore, seeks to analyse and unpack the momentous event which led to the birth in South Africa of this amazing industry.

The mineral wealth of South Africa can be roughly classified into four categories:

- precious minerals (gold, diamonds, silver);
- metallic minerals (copper, chrome, iron ore, manganese, tin);
- non-metallic minerals (coal, asbestos, limestone, phosphates); and
- other, relatively insignificant, minerals.

This chapter focuses mostly on the first category, although non-precious minerals are discussed briefly.

What happened when diamonds were discovered in the Northern Cape?

South Africa was experiencing a financial depression at the time. The majority of its people were actively occupied with agricultural and pastoral farming. They had accepted the struggle for survival, but were inhibited by their lack of technical knowledge and resistance to innovation. Neither were...
Sir Philip Wodehouse, the Cape Governor, remarked in a letter to Lord Kimberley:

As a matter of right, the native tribes are fairly entitled to that tract of country in which, for the present, the diamonds appear to be chiefly found.


The town of Kimberley was named after John Wodehouse, Earl of Kimberley, who at the time was the British Colonial Secretary.

Kimberley was a city of hustle and bustle at that time:

Fortune hunters of all kinds arrived... many from the slums of Europe. It was not unusual for as many as thirty wagon-loads to arrive in one day, and at New Rush there was a collection of 40,000 people, all living under tents or corrugated iron, amid heaps of gravel, clouds of dust, and a variety of smells. The dust of the dry diggings is to be classed with plague, pestilence and famine... the price of necessaries was high, and water cost three pence a bucket... [In Rhodes's own words] the place looked like an immense number of ant-heaps covered with black ants, as thick as can be, the latter represented by human beings. Many of the diggers, however, were dressed in corduroy, ... high-booted, bare as to arms and breast, with hair of any length, girl with a butcher's knife on a belt of leather.

a political feud between Afrikaner and British statesmen. The Afrikaner approach appeared to be informed by a desire for a fair share, with both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State republics laying claim to parts of the diamond fields. The British also claimed them for their own, but their approach seemed to be motivated more by a desire to absorb everything. British colonial officials in London and in Cape Town skillfully guided Waterboer into seeking British protection. Richard Southey, the Cape Colonial Secretary, went to the extent of putting pressure on colonial newspaper editors and arranging for petitions to be signed by colonial merchants in favour of annexation. At the same time, Lieutenant-General Hay commissioned a magistrate to exercise authority in the digging area.

The annexation of Waterboer's land as a Crown Colony in October 1877 marked the beginning of the end of Waterboer's chiefly status. Land gave the followers of a chief a sense of security, and its loss bred in them a sense of inferiority. The discovery of minerals in Waterboer's country, by attracting fortune seekers, injected a new cosmopolitan and international culture into the Griqua community, as the diamond seekers came from many parts of the world. There sprang up many classes which were determined by colour and wealth, both at the workplace and in the after-work situation.

What happened to Waterboer's people, who had been living in the region long before diamonds were discovered? They lost the land, the precious stones found on it and their chiefdom. Above all, the fabric of their society was torn. Part of their pastoral land was taken over by Orange Free State farmers. When their claims were ignored and dismissed, they sold the rest of their land and made a living as best as they could in whatever jobs they could find.

African labourers needed cash to pay the government's taxes and to buy consumer goods. In the early days of mining, the workforce came from the Mengu, the Ngqika (ka Rharhabe) and the Khoi cluster; they tended to be migrants who worked for short periods. They were part of the input and yet were turned into passive participants!

The decline of the vigour and enthusiasm which was characteristic of the initial phases of mining is reflected in the sudden change of activity around the Kimberley mine. Colesberg Kopje, the hill where diamonds had originally been discovered, disappeared. A huge hole appeared in its place, its size constantly increasing.

The mining process consisted of various phases. Carried away by the prospect of great fortune, men paid little attention to their health or anything else. Kimberley gave the world its first glimpse of racial discrimination in the mining industry. Black workers were kept like beasts in compounds so that diamond theft could be controlled. Their health was not of primary importance to those that employed them. White miners, though, could not be forced into such compounds — they could always go elsewhere if they were too badly treated.

Discrimination against people on the basis of colour became apparent early on. At the time of the first diggings, the digging community included all people of South Africa — black, Khoi and white. In time, the white diggers became jealous of the black claimholders and blamed them for whatever went wrong. There were incidents of violence against those who were not white. This state of affairs eventually persuaded Sir Henry Barkly, in his capacity as British Commissioner of Griqualand West, to proclaim that blacks and Khoi could no longer be claim holders; they could only be wage workers.

The diamond mining industry attracted men with money, and they became richer. This industry produced a unique class of mining magnates. This provided the capital needed later for the gold-mining industry. Cecil

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"An early ad, which hung on a wall, noted total success in the S. African diamond industry. It emphasized the fact that the diamond industry was a 'happy and free enterprise'."
John Rhodes was one of these mine owners. For him, the diamond-mining industry provided a springboard for further capitalistic ventures. His life is a history of amassing fortune, of British imperial initiatives, of the interaction of wealth and politics in South Africa, of labour history and thus the history of African society. In his lifetime he saw the proletarianisation of the indigenous population and the institutionalisation of migrant labour.

What was the impact of the gold discoveries and of large-scale mining?

Gold had been mined by Africans for hundreds of years. In 1872, some reef and alluvial gold was found in the Lydenburg district and the Barberton area. The arrival of prospectors and the subsequent development of the town of Barberton near the rich Sheba mine hints at the socio-economic implications of the discovery of gold.

Persistent prospecting led to the discovery of gold at Langlaagte in 1886, west of what is now Johannesburg. In July of the same year, samples of gold-bearing reef were found at Kimberley. The richness of the sample prompted J.B. Robinson, a mining speculator, to travel straight to the Rand where he bought Langlaagte Farm. Robinson headed the rush of wealthy mine operators northward. He was soon followed by Cecil John Rhodes, Barney Barnato, Alfred Beit, Hans Sauer, C.B. Rudd, Julius Porges and others. These mining magnates — often called Randlords — acquired farms for very little, and made huge profits from them. From the very beginning, mining on the Witwatersrand was a predominantly capitalist venture for joint-stock companies.

The Langlaagte mine lay deep in the Transvaal, known to be the poorest and most backward of all the provinces, administratively incompetent, and lacking both the infrastructure and the material means to develop itself. Therefore, there was a need for scientific expertise, superior technical skills and administrative know-how. Specialist engineering services were also needed for deep-level mining.

Certainly economic development was due to diamond mining, but it was through the opening of the Rand goldfields that it was accelerated. It is important, however, for the reader to keep in mind that economic development is not a process which breeds contentment — technical, economic and a wide range of other factors affect the social and cultural fabric of society. The more the society becomes industrialised and urbanised, the more family relations, working relations and community relations change.

To be able to elaborate on the above statement, it is necessary to examine the methods of operation adopted by the mine owners, their

proletarianise — to turn into a member of the working class
institutionalise — to establish as normal in an organisation or culture
Deep-level mining started on the Witwatersrand, the richest and mine owners moved into gold mining. They brought with them capable capital and experience of mining. They also brought ideas to control mine workers in order to increase production.


...from the reserves in their youth and shipped back in their ear, the migrant labourers spare the mining industry a whole range of costs, the burden of which is shifted to the poverty-stricken ones. All that is produced over and above what is required to be a bare living for the migrant workers goes to the mine owners' coffers. The migrant labourers from the reserves provide the town's power without having a right to social benefits that are due to them. The reserves are where that capitalism prefers not to assume — those of security for the migrant workers. The extreme destitution of the life in the reserves was brought about by this situation.


Objectives and the systems they put in place to secure good financial returns. They started mining companies and invited other investors from overseas to invest in their companies as major shareholders. They did not want to lose control of gold, and their interests were looked after by the Chamber of Mines, an association they had formed in 1887.

Gold was an extremely valuable metal. It was the basis of the world's monetary system and it was also prized for jewellery. The Rand mines were the largest ever discovered anywhere in the world and represented a much greater store of wealth than even the diamond fields. The mine owners exercised considerable political power, and subsidised the government in various ways because they needed its co-operation to provide sympathetic policing and anti-worker laws.

In this context, it was important to create a regular labour supply and to channel it to the mining centres. To induce men to go to work on the mines, the government introduced various taxes which were payable in cash. Migrant labourers helped to build the economy and prosperity of South Africa by their contribution to the gold-mining industry.

Migrant labourers were neither here nor there. At work, where they spent most of their time, they were treated as sojourners whose only purpose was to market their labour to provide comfort for the townspeople. Compounds enabled mine owners to keep wages low. The capitalists were only too happy to have a workforce without the full cost of supporting workers and their families in town. The mine owners were not concerned about the domestic life of migrant labourers; nor were they interested in increasing the purchasing power of their workforce. At home, migrant workers were strangers to their families. Worse still, the household had the responsibility of shouldering the social costs of caring for the children and giving them what education they could.

Fathers were often regarded as strangers by their children. Sons were compelled by tax demands to join their fathers as soon as they became 18. They were appalled by the extramarital unions their fathers had entered. The mothers, too, complained that to their husbands they were just old-age providers or even hospitalis. While these remarks are truthful, the reader must be aware that the situation was beyond the control of the migrants — it was the plan of their employers to use the strength of the workers' active years. From an employer's point of view, labour was cheap when the least possible amount was contributed to the subsistence and upkeep of the labourer.

In the short term, the fragmentation of family life was a factor in the breakdown of marriages. The long-term effect was the decay of moral fibre among the children.

Another social evil of the migrant labour system was the exposure of labourers and their families at home to all sorts of diseases. These were caused either by lack of resources, or the unhealthy living conditions of black miners, or over-indulgence in social activities. Tuberculosis became common among migrants.

The formation of new associations was another source of problems for the migrant workers. They readily became clients of African women who sold liquor and in turn attracted women in large numbers to their districts. Some of these women were only interested in invading their wallets.

An offshoot of the gold-mining industry was coal mining, which developed as a result of the need for power in the Transvaal and Natal. In time, coal became a major economic activity. It supplied fuel to the railways and electric power stations, and in ever-increasing quantities to a variety of chemical industries. The proximity to the Rand of great quantities of good, cheap coal — first mined at Boksburg and later at Witbank — was an added advantage. Mining of copper, manganese and chrome for export also assumed significance.

Conclusion

The gold-mining industry has been a powerful influence in changing the outlook of Africans and orienting them towards modern society. Huddling
migrant labourers in the compounds helped to bind fellow sufferers; and to dissolve tribal and ethnic isolation. A new language, Fanakalo, developed to assist communication, ironically enough between black and white as well.

By introducing the African to the world of modern industry, with its wealth of concepts like punctuality, modern machinery and large-scale organisation and subjecting him to modern ideas of diet, health and hygiene, the mining industry helped shape a new individual and behind him a new society.

As a result of the intermittent character of their employment, the migrant labour system failed Africans by depriving them of opportunities to acquire skills. This meant that they could barely survive in their later lives since they were "jacks of all trades and masters of none."

The most obvious effect of gold, diamond and coal mining can be seen in the tremendous growth of African migrant labour, the rapid break-up of the tribal system, and the emergence of a poor-white class. While unskilled African migrants received a fraction of the wage of a skilled white worker, semi-skilled whites could barely survive on an unskilled wage. Cheap African migrant labour was available in large quantities. This was an important factor in the early and rapid development of the Rand gold mines. By making capital in the mining industry, African labourers put South Africa on the world map. However, the reserves were deprived of a vital factor — men. The prolonged absence of males resulted in the break-up of family life and the decline of agriculture.

Those of the southern African chieftdoms which were not annexed by 1878 soon would be. The Pedi, Venda, Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Tsonga and others were eventually all brought down by British troops. Loss of land and the migrant labour system greatly helped the assault on chieftainship. The latter institution is still, after changing faces so many times, struggling to be what it was prior to colonial assault.

Even though the mining revolution produced an individual with a different outlook on life and a new sense of values, it also produced the segregationist system. South African authorities lacked the wisdom to complement the "cultural pluralism" that existed in the initial phases of the mining industry.

References
9 Drusela Yekela holds a Master's degree from Rhodes University; her research examined the interaction of colonial authorities, traditional healers and missionaries. She has also researched and written about Eastern Cape women in the United Democratic Front, and the Xhosa expulsion from the Zuurveld in 1812. Mrs Yekela is presently teaching history at the University of Fort Hare, and is researching the Thembu chieftainship for the period 1910-1990.