HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE NORTHERN CAPE (2)
(According to the ‘big S’ periods in South African history, Prof. P. van Dyk, 2001)

UPPHEAVAL AND DISPLACEMENT

Arrival of the Trekboere (‘migrating farmers’)

- Some time after the establishment of a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope, a group of the Dutch farmers decided to move further east in search of land for cultivation and grazing.
- They brought guns and were skilled in the art of defense and/or attack.
- Unfortunately, they also carried diseases such as smallpox that impacted greatly on the Nama living in the north-western Cape.
- It was only in the 1750s, that they left this area with its resources and ventured into the more hasher region to the north.

The Karretjiemense (the ‘Cart people’)

Abstract: No Fixed Abode: the Poorest of the Poor and Elusive Identities in Rural South Africa. Author: de Jongh M. 2002.

The itinerant sheep-shearing Karretjie (donkey cart) People of the arid Great Karoo of South Africa are among the poorest of the poor. They represent a rural underclass. Although they trace descent from both the early Khoekhoen and San, there is no historical continuity between the present-day impoverished foragers and their pre-colonial nomadic forebears. The structural position of the Karretjie People, particularly their asymmetrical relationship with the wider community, was largely shaped by historical events. Their wandering lifestyle was a response to the expansion of commercial agriculture, especially the production of wool, in the region. Although several factors have recently started a trend toward sedentarism most Karretjie People are still confined to their temporary shelters on the verges of the country roads. They have no land, or even free access to any space or place. Although they have, for generations, rendered an important service to the agricultural economy of the sheep-farming Karoo, they have remained at best, largely socio-economically ‘invisible’ to the local population or, at worst, strangers in their own land. The recognition that they have received locally has often come in pejorative terms: Boesman (Bushman) or Hotnot (Hottentot). Nationally, ‘recognition’ came with their being arbitrarily categorised as ‘coloured’ within the apartheid system, but acknowledgement in terms of poverty relief initiatives from successive governments was either not forthcoming or has still to affect their lives significantly. The Karretjie People are not untouched by coloured and Khoesan identity politics. Opportunistically ‘discovered’ as citizens by the main political parties for the 1994 election, they have become increasingly sensitised to the realities of disempowerment and political manoeuvring. They have, however, not yet asserted themselves: although they are aware of their Khoesan roots, their self-perception is still ill-defined and their autochthonous status not explicitly articulated”.

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Module 3: Component 2: Historical Overview

The Langeberg Rebellion (1886)

- The rebellion was sparked when the British authorities ordered the shooting of cattle to prevent the spread of rinderpest.
- The Langberg campaign was launched to suppress any African opposition to the Colonial Government.
- The chiefs who led the rebellion were captured and imprisoned.
- One of them was the Bathlaping ‘Kgosi’ (chief) Galeshewe who was captured at Phokwane near Hartswater.

Great South African War (Anglo-Boer War II) and Unification

- The Northern Cape, although part of the Cape Colony at the time, was a part of the war.
- Kimberley, virtually on the Borders of the Free State and Transvaal, was besieged by the Boers in October 1899.
- Many of the minor and major battles of the war took place in the vicinity of Kimberley (within an approximate 120 km radius). (Also see Module 6, Component 2 – Battlefields and towns along the N12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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</table>
| Orange River Station (21 November 1899) | Located east of Hopetown.  
This was the point from where the British advanced to relieve Kimberley.  
Forts and look out posts were stationed along the hills.  
Methuen was ready to deploy his men on 21 November 1899. |
| Belmont (23 November 1899)       | The first battle in the Northern Cape took place between the Orange Free State Commandos and the Kimberley Relief column under Methuen at Thomas’s Farm.  
The British troops were camping here before attacking at dawn.  
The deployment of troops however was disorganised, allowing the Boers to fire on their attackers and swiftly move away. |
| Graspan /Enslin/RooiLaagte (25 November 1899) | After escaping from the British at Belmont, the Boers now joined General De la Rey’s burghers.  
They occupied the hills between Graspan and Enslin sideings.  
Methuen’s artillery shelled the Boers but failed to force the Boers’ to retreat.  
The British managed to seize the hills, despite heavy Boer fire. |
| Modder River /Twee Riviere (28 November 1899) | The Boers fired on the British from concealed trenches.  
Falling back from Graspan, the Boers set up a riverfront defence on the Modder River.  
The Boers also had artillery and machine guns (pom-poms) in place.  
Methuen and his troops marched right into the ambush.  
They were conspicuous in the open veld making them easy targets.  
Fortunately, for the British, a right flank attack proved successful and Rosemead village (today’s Ritchie) was captured.  
The Boers retreated to Spuyfontein. |
The decisive victory by the Boers over the Highland Brigade at Magersfontein (11 December 1899) was a crushing blow to the British Army. The besieged folk of Kimberley had to endure many more days of deprivation and danger before relief finally came on 15 February 1900.

This was the end of conventional warfare. The Boer guerrilla forces now roamed the entire Northern Cape region, with skirmishes between Boer and Brit being regular occurrences.

The Boers, because of their knowledge of the country, were very successful guerrilla fighters causing endless problems to the British.

| Carters Ridge (Lazaretskop) (28 November 1899) | • The battle was intended to divert the Boer’s attention from the advances of Methuen’s troops.  
• The Kimberley Garrison captured Carters’ farm and a Boer laager, but not the Boer’s weapons.  
• The mission was unsuccessful.  
• A Black Watch officer, Lt. Colonel Scott-Turner and 23 others were killed.  
• The action left 32 wounded. |
| Magersfontein (11 December 1899) | • After the Modder River Battle, the Boers’ new defence was the Magersfontein Hills.  
• The Boers were alerted of an advancing attack by British troops by sporadic mortar attacks.  
• Volunteers from Scandinavia, France and Austria also joined the ranks of the Boers.  
• At dawn, the advancing Highlands Brigade was caught up in fire on the open veld and suffered many casualties. |
| Koedoesberg Drift (5-8 February 1900) | • This was also an effort to divert attention from the advancing British troops from the east.  
• General MacDonald now lead the Highland Brigade marched to the Koedoesberg Drift along the Riet River.  
• General Christian de Wet’s men occupied Koedoesberg Hill.  
• There was no major fighting and few casualties on both sides, including British champion golfer, Lt. Freddie Tait.  
• The Highlanders now returned to Modder River and joined the troops marching from the east.  
• MacDonald’s mission was successful in distracting the Boers.  
• This gave General French’s cavalry the opportunity to march almost unopposed to relieve Kimberley (15 February 1899). |

### Concentration Camps for whites
- Hopetown
- Kimberley
- Norvaalspont

### Concentration Camps for blacks
- Kimberley
Cape rebels

Some 3,437 active Afrikaner rebels fought on the side of the Boer republics. They came from Kenhardt and a dozen more Northern Cape districts (then the Cape Colony). Several hundred of the so-called ‘traitors’ were caught and sentenced to death. In only 33 cases were the sentences carried out.

The war in Namaqualand and the West Coast

At the time of the outbreak of Great South African War (Anglo-Boer War II, 1899-1902), the West Coast was under the control of the British and was not affected by the war. However, towards the end of 1901, General Jan Smuts targeted the copper mines and invaded Namaqualand to establish an entry point to the Cape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Springbok</th>
<th>The town was besieged by the Boer Commando of General Jan Smuts.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leliefontein</td>
<td>During the Anglo-Boer War, the commando of another Boer General, Manie Maritz was involved in a major skirmish with Khoi clans who inhabited these parts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In 1902, Manie Maritz massacred members of the Mission Community that were suspected of being British sympathizers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gharies</td>
<td>A hill, located to the south of the town, is the site of the grave of a British officer. He died in the area as a result of serious fighting between the Boer forces under the command of General Manie Maritz and the British.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okiep</td>
<td>From 8 April to 3 May 1902 (Anglo-Boer War), Boer forces under the command of General Jan Smuts besieged Okiep.</td>
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<td>This was recorded as Smuts’ last engagement of the Anglo-Boer War.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>About 900 defenders, led by Colonel Shelton, most of them employees of the Cape Copper Company, built nine blockhouses. They successfully repulsed assaults by Smuts’ commando.</td>
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<td>The siege finally ended when the British forces granted General Smuts a safe conduct from Okiep to the peace negotiations at Vereeniging.</td>
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<td>This treaty terminated the war in the same month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middelpo and Nieuwoudtville area</td>
<td>The Boer Commandos, reinforced by rebels from the Cape Colony conducted widespread operations during the Anglo-Boer War. General Maritz was wounded at Middelpos.</td>
</tr>
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THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Rebellion (1914)

- The outbreak of the First World War also led to war between the Union of South Africa and German South-West Africa.
- Manie Maritz, a lieutenant colonel in the Union Forces and stationed in Calvinia, along with thousands of his men, left the Union’s Defense Force to join the Germans.
- The Boer General, JCG Kemp, also joined him later.
- Their occupation of Keimoes was partially a success.
- However, in 1915 an attack on Upington failed.
- At the end of January 1916, they surrendered as it became evident to them that the Rebellion had failed was crushed.

The Battle at Kakamas

- An invading German Army Commando under the command of Major Ritter, clashed with a large Union force led by Colonel J van Deventer, at Kakamas.
- The German’s tried to gain control of the two ponts on the River, which was necessary for an invasion south of the Orange.
- Their efforts however proved to be unsuccessful.

APARTHEID AND POST APARTHEID

The first township in the Northern Cape Province

Township Number two (later known as Galeshewe) at Kimberley was one of the first ‘locations’ in South Africa.

Sol Plaatje and South African political leaders such as ZK Matthews, Dr Arthur Letele, Robert Sobukwe, and former ANC President, the Reverend ZR Mahabane, are all associated with this township.

Prominent political leaders that emerged from the Province and their contributions in the struggle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sol Plaatje</th>
<th>(1876-1932)</th>
<th>FIRST SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SANNC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plaatje was not only an acclaimed writer, journalist, linguist and translator, but also the most prominent political leader in the Northern Cape in the early 1900s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For most of his life he was very involved in the in the struggle for the liberation of Africans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In 1913, he was one of the founding members of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC, later known as the ANC). The organization was established in Bloemfontein and he became its first General Secretary.</td>
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<td>He campaigned against the Land Act and discriminating legislation.</td>
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</table>
### On two occasions he was part of a delegation to Britain. There they met with several politicians, amongst them Lloyd George, re they were met British Prime Minister at the time.

#### Some of his achievements
- He was fluent in at least seven languages
- He wrote ‘Mhudi’, the first published English Novel by a black South African.
- He lived in Kimberley for the last few years of his life and was buried in the Wet End Cemetery.

### Although he was the only ANC president to be elected twice (1924-1927 and 1937-1940), his biography does not appear along with the others on the ANC website (www.anc.org.za).
- Not much is known about his life.
- The Frances Baard Official website stated that he resided in the Galeshewe Township (Kimberley).
- The following is an extract from a speech delivered by him in 1921. At the time he was the President of the ANC. It gives some indication as to the type of leader and visionary he was.

"According to the custom of the Bantu, only males who have not undergone the rights of circumcision are treated as youths or 'Amakwenkwe’ or 'Maqai' and, no matter how old they may be or how bearded they may be, or what number of children they may have; as a matter of fact they were not even allowed to marry wives until they have undergone this rite of formal initiation into manhood. While in this stage they have no say in affairs, domestic or national. "The black man in South Africa is treated in exactly the same manner. He is a 'political child', a political ‘Nkwenkwe’ or ‘Maqai’ or as the Sesuto saying is ‘Moshemanmpshelanloa leboea’ ('What is a boy, a mere dog to be cast away, hairs and all.' ) The poor black man is consequently reduced to a position of utter voicelessness and votelessness, hopelessness, powerlessness, helplessness, defencelessness, homelessness, landlessness, a condition of deepest humiliation and absolute dependency".

He also stated that South Africa "will never attain her noble ideal of peacefulness, happiness, prosperity, greatness and national unity....without the full and free cooperation of all the white and black races of the land and of all classes and conditions of men. Industrially, agriculturally and commercially we have been working together for the development of our common country. Let this policy of full co-operation be extended to our political system; let no race or class or creed be driven to such a condition of despair as it might be compelled to adopt the Gandhian policy of 'non-cooperation' - taxation without representation leads to this.

"And then when our common task in this county has been completed and the end of all this has fully come, we can look back and exclaim: 'All's well that ends well.'"
### Zachariah Keodirelang (ZK) Matthews (1901-1968)

One of SA’s most distinguished African intellectuals

He was born in the **Galeshewe township (Kimberley)**, son of Peter Matsielwa a Batswana mineworker who later opened a café. He was also cousin to Sol Plaatje. He became interested in politics as a result of his father and Plaatje’s influence.

**Political career and achievements**
- In 1923, he became the first African to obtain a B.A at a South African institution (Fort Hare University).
- In 1930, through private study, he became the first African to earn an LLB degree in South Africa. In the same year, he was admitted as an attorney to the Johannesburg Bar and the Transvaal division of the Supreme Court.
- He is seen as South Africa’s, and perhaps the continent’s most distinguished Africa intellectual of the late 1940s and 1950s.
- He used his position on the Natives Representative Council (NRC) to debate the position of the African. In 1953, he also propagated the idea for the Congress of the People.
- After the Freedom Charter was adopted in Kliptown (Soweto – 1955), he was among the 156 arrested and prosecuted in the famous Treason Trial. He was detained for six months during the 1960 State of Emergency.
- He played a major role at a crucial time in African political history, bridging the gap between the more militant younger members of the ANC and the older generation.
- After Botswana gained independence in 1966, he was given the opportunity to become Botswana’s ambassador to the United States.
- He died in Washington two years later and was laid to rest at Gaborone, Botswana.

### Dr Arthur Letele (1916-1966)

Treasurer-general of the ANC

- He was born in Maseru (Lesotho), the son of a school inspector and a mother of Xhosa decent.
- Shortly after his birth, the family immigrated to South Africa and settled in Ladybrand (Free State Province).
- He qualified as a medical doctor in 1946 and later married a Xhosa woman.

**Political career and achievements**
- In 1944, he joined the ANC Youth League. Four years later decided to move to **Kimberley**. He immediately became a member of the local branch of the ANC and was elected as treasurer.
- In 1952, he organised the Defiance Campaign against discriminatory laws.
- He was arrested and sentenced to ten days’ imprisonment or a £3 fine (R6-00) fine, which he refused to pay.
- This was to be the first of four jail terms that he had to serve.
- In October of the same year, he was arrested again on charges of inciting violence in Kimberley.
- He attended the Congress of the People’s meeting at Kliptown. He proposed the second clause of the charter namely “all men
shall be equal before the law”.
• In the same year he was elected the treasurer-general of the ANC.
• In 1960 he became one of the accused in the Rivonia Trial after burning his pass in public at Sharpeville (1960).
• When a State of Emergency was declared, he was arrested in Kimberley and was detained in various locations.
• In 1961, Letele went into exile in Lesotho. During this time he represented the ANC at several Conventions. He also visited a few countries to campaign for support for the struggle.
• On 20 December 1965, Letele committed suicide after suffering for several years from an incurable disease.
• In 2003 the South African Institute of Health Care Managers was name in Letele’s honour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frances &quot;MaBaard&quot; BAARD (1901-1997) ANC Women’s League organiser</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• She was born in Beaconsfield, Kimberley.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• She was the organiser of ANC Women’s League and arrested under the Suppression of Communism Act for her involvement with ANC activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In June 2001 the &quot;Diamantveld District Council&quot; was renamed Frances Baard District.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robert Sobukwe The ‘prof’ The first president of the PAC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• He was the first President of the Pan African Congress (PAC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 1960, he was arrested on charges of provocation after the Sharpeville incident where he led a protest of the pass laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He was sentenced to three years imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• His sentence was increased to another six years in solitary confinement on Robben Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Upon his release, he was sent to Kimberley and his movements were restricted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He later practiced law from an office in Royal Street (Kimberley) until his death in 1978.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A new political party emergences from the Northern Cape

The Khoisan Aboriginals and others movement’s (KAOM)

• The first San Party was launched in Uprising on 20 December 2008.
• Their leader, Rodney January claims that his party has the support of one-and-a-half million people - mainly soldiers from the region who served under the previous regime.
• The party is committed to the ‘empowerment of the San people, and to provide them with free water, electricity, and health care.’
Resources and further reading


Mahabane, ZR. THE ANC AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS 1923 TO 1993. A Seventy Year Survey. Document II (Extract from an address by the Rev Z R Mahabane, President of the ANC, to the National Congress held in 1921)


Zuma, J. Memorial lecture of human and people's rights delivered by ANC deputy president Jacob Zuma [UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND]. 10 DECEMBER 2007

Brochures and maps


Websites

www.anc.org

www.boerevryheid.co.za

www.whoswhosa.co.za

http://gis.deat.gov.za The Xhosa
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**Photos and visits**

ML Kruger (Makiti Guides & Tours).

*Compiled and researched by Maria Louise Kruger (2009)*