

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BOER REPUBLICS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The Boers established independent republics in the interior of South Africa during and after the great trek.

These republics included Natal, Orange Free State and later Transvaal.

However, these Boer republics were annexed by the British who kept on following them even up to the interior.

### SUMMARY

REPUBLIC	YEAR OF ANNEXATION	ANNEXED BY
Natal/ Natalia	1843	British
Orange Free State	1848	British
Transvaal	1851-1877	British

### THE ORIGIN / FOUNDATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF NATAL

1. The republic of Natal was founded by Piet Retief's group after 1838.
2. In 1838, the Trekkers met the Zulu leader (Dingane) and tried to negotiate for land.
3. Upon the above Trekker's request, Dingane told the Trekkers under Piet – Retief to first bring back the Zulu cattle stolen by the Tlokwa chief Sekonyela.
4. Piet-Retief tricked Sekonyela and secured the cattle from Sekonyela, Dingane became suspicious because of the quickness of Retief.
5. But still Dingane did not trust the white men, he was worried and uneasy of their arms, he clearly knew and learnt of how whites had over thrown African chiefs.
6. So, Dingane organized a beer party where he called Piet Retief and some of his sympathizers and thereafter, they were all murdered.
7. Pretorius the new Boer leader managed to revenge and defeated the Zulu at the battle of Blood

River.

8. The Boers therefore took full possession of Zulu land and captured thousands of Zulu cattle.
9. Dingane was later forced to give away the whole of southern Natal to the Boers.
10. Pretorius later armed Dingane's brother Mpande to over throw him.
11. Mpande became the new Zulu leader and defeated Dingane was killed by the Swazi
12. By September 1839, the trekkers formed a council (Volks Rand) of 24 members based at Pietermaritzburg.
13. The volksraad served as a court of appeal and electing a president whenever they met.
14. Pretorius however remained the general commander.
15. Pietermaritzburg remained as the capital of the Natal republic formed by Boers.
16. The Natal republic was however too short lived mainly due to the British determination to annex it.
17. In 1843, poor natal was annexed by the British and it was incorporated in the cape colony as one of its provinces.
18. Meanwhile, the Boers who were unhappy about British rule fled to other areas.

#### ***REASONS WHY THE BOERS ESTABLISHED THE REPUBLIC OF NATAL***

- The Boer victory of 1838 at Blood River cleared the Boer occupation of the area.
- The good reports from the spies that enough land existed around the Natal.
- Piet Retief's leadership was very essential because he led the Boers into Natal.
- Pretorius's courage and role, he led the Boers into war after the death of Piet Retief.
- The great Mfecane had laid bare many pieces of land in the area thus attracting the Boers.
- The strong determination of the Boers to be free from any more British influence.
- The existence of collaborating Zulu like Mpande further lifted the Boer spirit of staying in the area.
- Natal had fertile soils that could facilitate Boers farming.

- The pastures of Natal were good for Boer animals thus settling there.
- The Boers wanted to have access to a port and thereby compete favorably.
- The climate in the area suited the Boer pastoral nature.
- Dingane's unpopularity meant that the Boer would not be met with unified Zulu resistance.
- Dingane's unfaithfulness provided the Boers with the much needed excuses.
- The coastline of Natal would provide chances for profitable trade to the Boers than the land locked interior.
- The need to have true independence made the Boers to create the Natal republic.

#### **WHY THE BRITISH ANNEXED NATAL IN 1843.**

- The annexation seemed to be the best way of dealing with the unrest on the Eastern frontier of the cape.
- The British never wished the Boers to live as an independent political organization.
- Traders had started flocking (using) the part of Durban, this made port Natal to compete with Cape Town commercially, this led to annexation of Natal.
- The British presence at Durban was threatened politically by natal.
- There was a serious need by the British to bring Boers of natal back under British control.
- Britain / British asserted /claimed that Natal was too poor to sustain its own government.
- There was a fear that may be the Boers would gang up with powerful African leaders against the British.
- The British claimed to have received reports that Boers were enslaving the Africans again.
- British strongly wished to use natal as a Centre for extending their imperialism elsewhere.
- British strongly referred to the Boers as part of their subjects and with such a belief, it's no wonder Natal was annexed.
- The fertile soils along Natal must have enticed /interested the British to annex Transvaal.

- Rumors that Natal was rich in minerals quickly attracted the British to annex it 1843.
- The sea route to India which was too crucial and important for British commerce was not safe as long as Boers occupied it.
- The Boer's administration was quickly weakening and disintegrating which provided a fertile ground for the British to take over Natal.
- The British could hardly allow a rival European power to establish an independent republic near to them.
- The Boers lacked the financial muscle to administer an independent province by then (poor treasury).
- British reasoned that the Boers were too weak militarily to protect themselves against the Africans.
- The British wanted to benefit from the fertile soils of Natal.
- The British wanted to prevent extension of racism into the interior.
- The efforts of the colonial secretary by then Lord Stanley who never trusted the Boers because of their corrupt and evil government.
- The Boers' displacements of the Pondo under chief Faku off from their land between Umzimkulu and Umzimkulu annoyed the British.

#### ***EFFECTS OF BRITISH ANNEXATION OF NATAL 1843.***

- The Boer republic came to an end and the Boers lost independence.
- Natal became part of British cape colony.
- Many Boers left Natal and settled in other areas.
- The British were forced to extend their rule to O.F.S and Transvaal.
- It led to clashes between the migrating Boers and Africans.
- It led to depopulation of Africans and Boers during wars between them.
- Africans lost land to the Boers because the Boers resorted to attacking Africans for more land.

- The Boers also lost their land to the British.
- Property was destroyed of both Africans and the Boers leading to poverty.
- Wars between the Boers and the British became inevitable.
- The enmity between the Boers and British was intensified.
- Africans were displaced as Boers were looking for land after losing Natal.
- The annexation led to the establishment of Natal sugar plantations.
- Led to signing of treaties like the Sand River and Bloemfontein between the British and Boers.
- The treaties signed gave the Boer republics of Orange Free State and Transvaal their independence.
- Boer racial segregation was spread into the interior.

### **THE FOUNDATION OF THE BOER REPUBLIC OF ORANGE FREE STATE**

The republic was founded by the Boer trekkers who were under Portigijeter's group.

It was established between Rivers Vaal and Orange.

The Orange Free State was at first known as Orange River colony.

Orange River colony had only been formed after defeating the poor Ndebele under Mzilikazi and these people were sent as far as Limpopo River.

After Portigijeter and Maritz had expelled Mzilikazi, they set up a capital called Winberg in honor of their victory.

By 1843, Napier had fully met with Mosheshe and thereafter, fixed the Southern boundary of Orange River.

In 1844, a constitution was drafted and parliamentary institutions were established.

Portigijeter played a very big role in the constitution making and remained a commander of Orange Free State.

However later, the colony was annexed by Sir Harry Smith the British governor in February 1848.

Pretorius who had led some Boers from Natal to Orange Free State tried to resist the British but

was defeated in the Boomplaates battle of August 1848.

In 1849, the warden line was drawn by the British separating Boer land from the Basuto to prevent Boer Basuto conflicts.

However, Mosheshe of the Basuto continued attacking the British and the Basuto in Orange River colony and on many occasions defeated the whites.

Following the defeat of the whites, the British believed that their continued control of the Boers was becoming too expensive.

The Boers then approached the new British Officer Sir George Cathcart and requested for independence in 1852.

By 1852, the British had fully given the Boers north of the Vaal River the right of self-government.

In 1854, the Bloemfontein convention was signed and gave the Boers full independence.

The Orange River colony after now became known as the Orange Free State.

Josous Hoffman became the first president in 1855, and was after replaced by Jacob Boshoff.

### ***REASONS FOR BRITISH OCCUPATION OF ORANGE FREE STATE BY 1848.***

1. The 1848 meeting between the new cape governor Harry Smith and the Boers on one hand and by Mosheshe on the other.
2. The Boer-Basuto conflicts had proved hard to be stopped thus the British put all hope of ending it in the annexation.
3. The need to protect the weakened Boers as result of many Basuto attacks.
4. Boers also hope that British annexation apart from preserving their stolen land from Africans would grant them more land.
5. The failure of Napier to create lasting peace in the area convinced the British colonial office to opt for annexation.
6. The British need to protect the Africans like their allies the Moroka.
7. The Basuto king had also on many occasions requested for British protection from the Boers.

8. The British policy of following the Boer Trekkers and need to stop them from Trekking.
9. The British still regarded the Boers as their subjects, since their power extended to the Limpopo valley.
10. The increased Boer nationalism threatened the British.
11. The continued Anglo-Boer hatred and Rivalry made the British so uncomfortable with having independent Boers.
12. The occupation of Natal made the British to use it as a base to extend their rule in the interior.
13. The Basuto-Boers wars were also endangering the Cape security.
14. The need to protect their white brothers made the British to annex OFS.
15. Some British missionaries wanted to stop the increased Boer mistreatment of Africans
16. The rumor of minerals around the Orange Free State made the British to occupy the area.
17. Mosheshe's failure to agree with Adam Kook one of the Griqua leaders on their boundaries with the Boers led to the annexation.

### ***THE FORMATION OF THE BOER REPUBLIC OF TRANSVAAL.***

The republic was formed by the Boer Trekkers who had been under various leaders.

As the British ended their interference in the Boer colony of Orange Free State, the Boers established the South African republic of Transvaal.

At first, the republic was erected near the banks of Limpopo River but later established beyond Vaal River thus named Transvaal.

Marthinus Wessels Pretorius, the sons of Andries Pretorius became its first president in 1858.

The founders of Transvaal were militant hard-line trekkers.

The Boers in this area regarded themselves as political refugees.

Celliers stole land from Chief Makwena and this land was between Vaal and Vet Rivers.

More land was stolen from Ndebele after serious fighting and displacing them further in Zimbabwe.

The Boers also fought for leadership among Pretorius, Celliers and Maritz.

Four commanders were elected to act as supreme leaders and included Pretorius and William Jourbert.

Later Celliers and Maritz drew up a constitution to govern the Boers.

Even towns were formed which included Potchefstroom which was the first modern city in Transvaal, Ohrisgstad, Lydenberg and Schoemansdal.

All these four towns had been established by Portigieter when he was trying to move to Maputo i.e. wherever he rested a capital was formed.

The Boers also formed a parliamentary council with judicial powers.

In November 1851, the British annexed the area and a British Officer called Owen came to sort out administrative problems in Transvaal.

In 1852, the Sand river Convention was signed which gave the Boers independence.

However the four towns sprang into separate independent towns that spent 10 years quarreling with each other.

Later, agreement was reached upon and the four towns merged as one strong republic known as Transvaal.

Pretorius became the first president and later Burghers who was replaced by War like Paul Kruger.

## **PROBLEMS FACED BY THE BOERS IN THEIR NEW REPUBLICS.**

1. Problems were political, social and economic



2. The British followed up the Boers a lot which was too discouraging and disappointing.
3. Lack of funds to develop the newly acquired republics.
4. British rivalry and competition to the Boers.
5. Serious African attacks who were resisting the Boers e.g. Ndebele, Basuto etc. which made life too uneasy.
6. Cattle raids from the Africans that increased insecurity in the region e.g. from Mosheshe
7. Poor transport and communication within the region at the time.
8. Quarrels amongst the Boers themselves e.g. between Celliers and Maritz.
9. British interference e.g. in 1851 a British officer Owen involved in politics of Transvaal
10. Had weak and inexperienced administrators e.g. Transvaal was founded by mere militant hardliners who were not good administrators.
11. Suffered from insecurity especially from Africans e.g. Mosheshe kept on attacking them.
12. Sometimes lost their independence to the British e.g. in 1843 natal was annexed by British forces.
13. Land problems i.e. land conflicts from Africans.
14. Lost lives in African raids and British wars like in the Battle of Boomplaates
15. Disunity within the Boers in their new republics e.g. the four towns of Transvaal spent almost 10 years quarreling.
16. Lack of a dependable source of fire arms as they had to buy guns always from the British who were at times their rivals.
17. Boers were not trusted by the Africans they found living in the republics e.g. Dingane of Zulu never trusted Boers. etc.

## **ROLE OF GREAT TREK LEADERS**

### **A) PIET RETIEF ( 1780-1838)**

- ✓ He was born as Pieter Mauritz Retief on 12, November 1780 to Mr. Jacobus Retief.
- ✓ He grew up struggling like any other frontier boy on the eastern margins of the cape.

- ✓ He got responsibility of commanding a section of Boers who took it upon themselves to protect themselves from the dangerous Xhosa raids during Kaffir wars.
- ✓ He was at the fore front of leading the discounted Boers to confront the unpopular British Leaders.
- ✓ It was him who wrote the unpopular Boer manifesto that laid bare their problems with the British cape government.
- ✓ He started his trek in 2 wagons and later joined a party of more than twenty wagons.
- ✓ He was elected as a new leader of the united Laagers when the many Boer trekkers met at River Vet.
- ✓ He tried to unit the Boers and solves their leadership problems before they headed east.
- ✓ He established a camp near Drankensberg and later led a group that investigated the area of Natal.
- ✓ He therefore led the Boers Trekkers into Natal which was the land of the Zulu.
- ✓ He requested land from chief Dingane to avoid direct conflict with him.
- ✓ He led the Boers into returning Dingane's 7000 cows stolen by Tlokwa chief Sekonyera.
- ✓ He later the Boers to the beer party organized by Dingane from where he was killed.
- ✓ The remains of the Boers under Retief were then donated to the wild animals, he was 57 years old when he was killed.
- ✓ After the establishment of Natal as a Boer republic, the town of Piet Maritzberg was named in his honor.

### ***B) ANDRIES PRETORIUS ( 1798-1853)***

- His full names were Andries Wilhelmus Jacobus Pretorius and was born on 27<sup>th</sup> November in 1789 in the cape colony.
- He was active in planning the Boers Great Trek and participated in the trekking out of the cape.
- He led the fearful, panicky and terrified Boers in Natal after the murder of Piet

### Retief.

- He was appointed as a commander general for the first time in the area of Natal.
- He organized around 500 Boer commandoes into an effective laager system that proved effective to face the Zulu at Ncome battle.
- He led Boers into making a vow or covenant that if God gave them victory over the Zulu, they would praise Him for ever.
- He defeated the Zulu at the blood river battle in 1838 and forced Dingane to give land to the Boers.
- He successfully commanded and defended the new Boer republic of Natal from 1838 up to 1843.
- He led around 400 Boers to help Mpande to defeat Dingane thus leading to downfall of Dingane and his exile in Swaziland.
- He defended Natal's independence in 1842 by driving the British commander before smith came to annex it.
- He successfully negotiated with the British in 1842 to cease hostility towards the Boers.
- He later led Boers who had stayed in Natal to go to British cape and convince them to stop allowing more Africans into Natal.
- He participated in the formation of all the 3 Boer republics i.e. Natal, Orange Free State and alter Transvaal.
- He confronted the British in 1848 at the battle of Boomplaates when they came to annex Orange Free State.
- After his defeat he led some Boers into Transvaal and played a key role in the establishment of a republic in that area.
- He was also made a commandant General by Boers in Transvaal who lived in the city of Potchefstroom
- He died in 1853 and was buried at Magaliesberg.
- In 1855 the town of Pretoria was named after him to honor his great memory.

***SUMMARY OF REASONS OF BRITISH ANNEXATION OF BOER REPUBLICS***

***(FRED BI PASS HOPE)***

F-Fertile soils

R-Rumors of minerals in the area

E-Enmity and mistrust between the tow for long

D-Discourage further Boer migration into the interior.

B-Boer nationalism was a threat to the British

I-Imperialism of the British

P-Poverty /bankruptcy of Boers

A-African enslavement to stop

S-Subjects of British i.e. the Boers.

S-Stop Boers from stealing African Land

H-Habit of British to follow Boers

O-Open up trade links in interior

P-Protect Boers from African attacks

E-End insecurities in the interior.