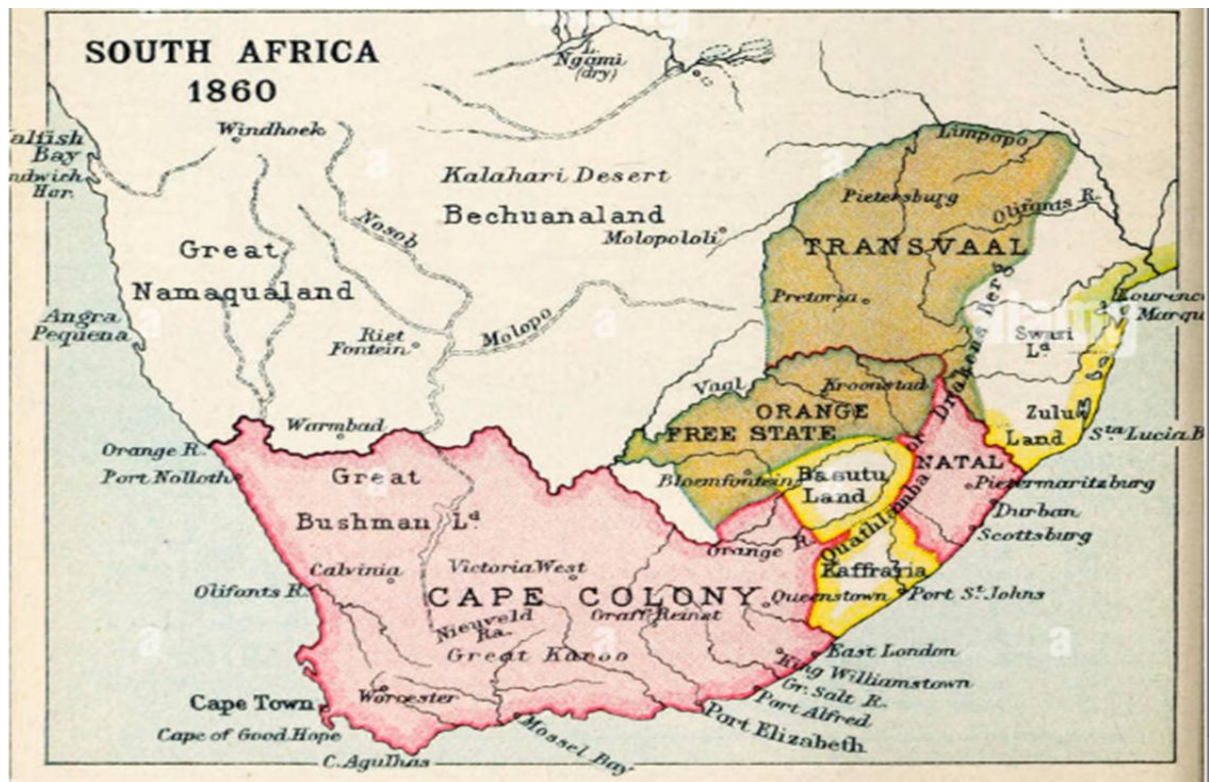
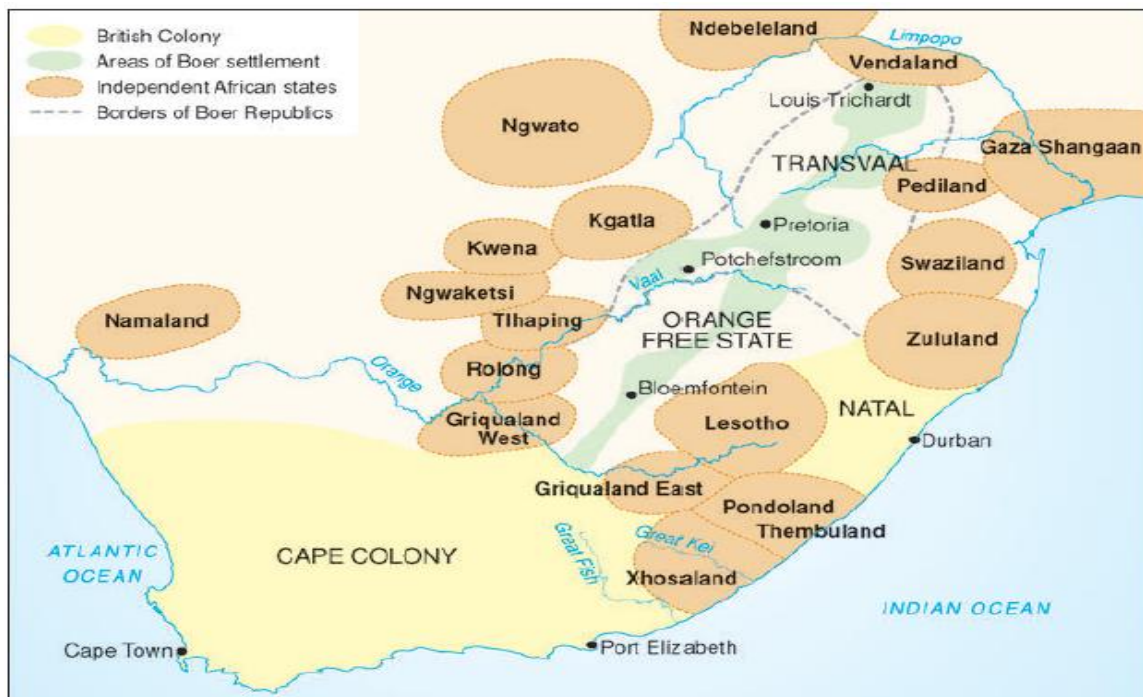


SOUTHERN AFRICA BEFORE 1860



In the 1860s, the country South Africa did not exist.

- For most of the 19th century almost all people in South Africa lived off the land.
- They farmed for themselves and their families made nearly everything they needed.
- There was also trade between groups. African farming societies had traded with one another for many centuries.
- From the 15th century when the first Europeans arrived in South Africa, Africans had also traded with Europeans.
- There were many scattered communities in southern Africa. Some of these communities were independent.
- Others were controlled by colonists – either by the British, or the Boers, who were descendants of the Dutch.
- Groups of Trekkers (Boer) went to the Transvaal and Orange Free State as part of the Great Trek in the late 1830s.
- They struggled to hold onto the land they had colonised as the independent African kingdoms were still very powerful.
- The British controlled the colonies of the Cape and Natal.
- Many African kingdoms still remained independent.



This map shows southern Africa in 1860.

Indentured/contract labour from India

What Was Indentured Labour?

Indentured Labour: A system where workers signed a contract to work for a fixed period (usually five years), often under harsh conditions. [studocu.com]

Contract: The formal agreement specifying the rules, wages, and duties of the labourer.

Free Passage: Promise of a paid return trip to India after completing the contract.

Passenger Indians: Free Indian immigrants who arrived later (from 1867 onwards), not as indentured labourers

Why Indentured Labour Was Introduced

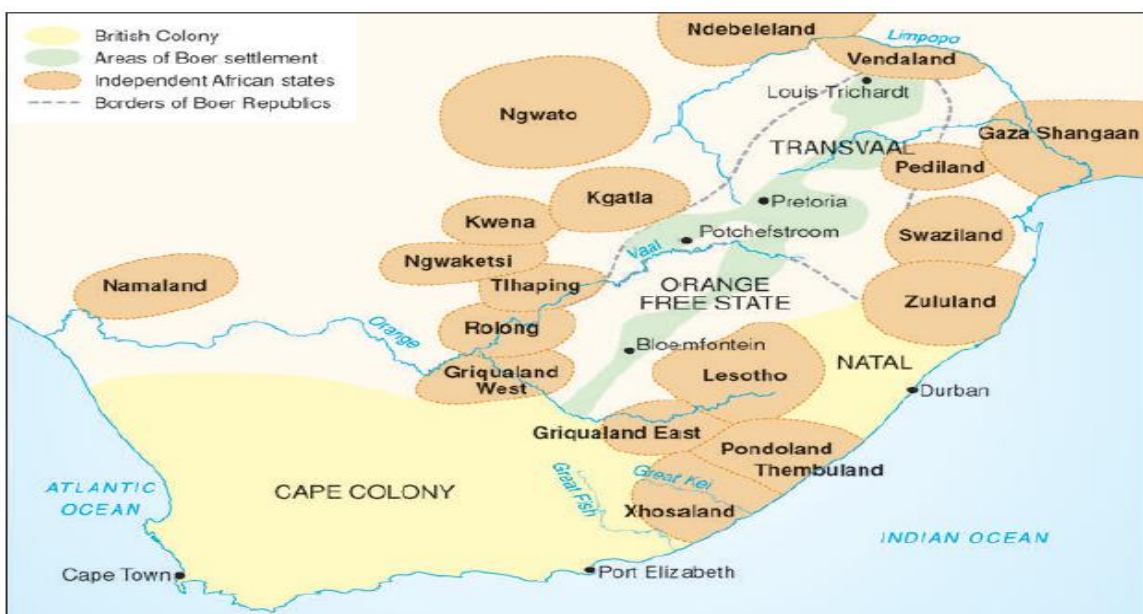
- When the sugar industry developed in Natal around 1860, colonial authorities needed a stable labour force.
- Local Zulu men did not want to work in agricultural field labour, as this was traditionally women's work.
- To fill this gap, the first group of Indian indentured labourers arrived in Natal in 1860.
- Indians arrived in South Africa from 1860 onwards. The first 342 Indians arrived on board the Truro Madras, followed by Belvedere from Calcutta.
- They were transported as indentured labourers to work on the sugar plantations of the Natal colony.

- The indentured labourers were given a monthly stipend (wages) of two British pounds.
- They were also entitled to provisions and healthcare.
- At the end of the initial three – year contract the indentured labourers were given free passage back to India.
- Although most of them worked on sugar plantations, some also worked as coal miners and railway construction workers



sahistory.org.za

British colony of Natal



This map shows southern Africa in 1860.

- The British took over Natal as a colony in 1843.
- The soil and warm climate in Natal was good for growing sugar cane.
- Sugar was in great demand in Britain and other parts of the world.
- Sugar was used to sweeten drinks and food.
- In the 1850s some British farmers from the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius arrived in Natal to grow sugar cane

India as a British Colony

- India was not a united country, but a collection of many states. Gradually Britain took control of more and more states.
- From early in the 18th century, the British East India Company controlled the trading ports of Madras and Calcutta (Kolkata) in India.
- In 1784, by means of the India Act, the British government took over
- direct control of the Indian land ruled by the British East India Company.
- In 1858, all these states together became known as the colony of 'British India' and Queen Victoria of Britain became 'Empress of India'.

Reasons why Indian labour was imported

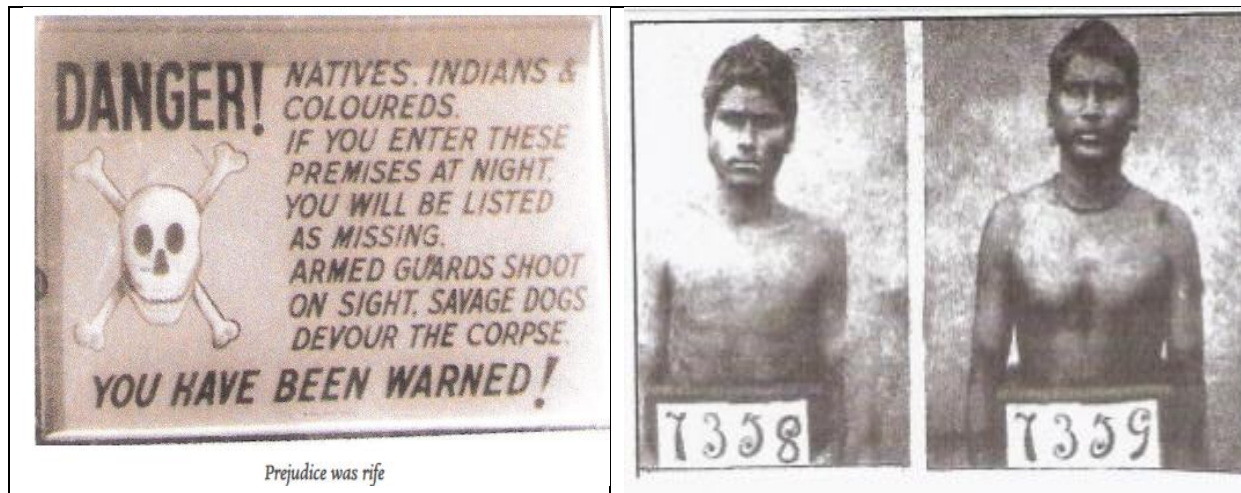
- Sugar cane grew wild in Natal long before white settlers arrived.
- When the colonised Natal, they decided to start sugar cane plantations to make sugar cane growing commercially viable.
- This was because there was a great demand for sugar in Britain. However, sugar cane cultivation needs lots of labour, but people in the Zulu Kingdom, which was still independent, were unwilling to provide labour.
- This was because they were economically self – sufficient and they refused to adopt the servile position of labourers.
- Servile = having the qualities of a slave. • As a result, the British turned to their Indian colony to solve their labour shortage.
- In 1860 the SS Truro arrived in Durban harbour with over 300 Indians on board.
- Over the next 500 years, 150 000 more indentured Indians arrived, as well as numerous free “passenger Indians”.
- These indentured and “passenger” Indians formed the foundation of what would become the largest Indian community outside of India.

The demand for sugar in Britain

- Sugar cane originally comes from India and south-east Asia.
- Spanish explorers took sugar cane to the Caribbean in the 16th century.
- Sugar was introduced to Britain when Britain became involved in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Until the 18th century, honey was used to sweeten food and most Britons had never tasted sugar.
- Most people love the sweet taste of sugar.

- Sugar became widely used in drinks such as tea, coffee and cocoa (chocolate) which were also introduced into Britain by overseas trade.
- Sugar was in great demand in Britain and Europe because it improved the taste of many foods.

Conditions of indentured Indians labourers



- At first, the plantation workers erected their own shacks and were able to cultivate small patches of the surrounding ground for their own use – if they were not exhausted by the day's work.
- Later, however, planters were obliged to provide accommodation, building barracks of corrugated iron, mud, or stone, in which the workers led a cramped and uncomfortable existence without any privacy.
- A lean-to shed, generally without a chimney, was used for cooking the rations of rice, mealie-meal and ghee.
- Although families were not supposed to be split up, many were.
- **Ghee = a type of butter**
- Employers of more than 20 Indians were supposed to provide elementary hospitals; however, this went mostly unobserved.
- There was a hospital at the receiving depot but the conditions that were bad.
- Patients were all placed together – men, women and children – regardless of whether or not they were suffering from infectious diseases.
- Laterines were four holes in the ground, and there were neither water basins nor baths. • Corpses were laid out in the in the open.
- By 1885 only three plantations had set up sick rooms, and these were worse than those at the depot.

Working conditions of indentured Indian labourers



- Before dawn every day, the sirdar (foreman) rang a bell to wake the workers.
- After an unappetising breakfast of cold porridge, workers marched to the fields to begin work as the sun rose
- They worked, planting, digging, breaking new soil, cutting, harvesting, carrying, building, until the sun set.
- Workers had a brief break for lunch, which was a repeat of breakfast.
- It was dark by the time they reached their homes, where they managed another brief meal before falling into an exhausted sleep. Sundays were supposed to be free, but few planters observed this.
- Each worker was given about 250 grams of dried fish each week – this was only a luxury.
- There were only a few barracks that had toilets.
- Analysis of samples of water used for drinking revealed them to be quite unsafe for use, yet there was no alternative water supply.

Passenger Indians after 1869

- Passenger Indians constituted another wave of Indians coming into Natal.
- The phrase “passenger” is used to differentiate the status of these Indians from the indentured ones.
- The primary difference is that a passenger Indian paid for his or her own voyage to Natal.
- Their movement to Natal was freely chosen and not bound to any labour contract once in Natal.

- A number of passenger Indians were from merchant backgrounds and business opportunities in Natal caused them to emigrate.
- These people invited them to Natal to come help to set up businesses.

Emigrate = leave one's own country in order to settle permanently in another.

Immigrate = Come to live permanently in a foreign country.

Activity

Multiple Choice (Choose the correct answer)

1. Why did the Natal colonial authorities import labourers from India in 1860?
 - A. Local Zulu men demanded high wages
 - B. The sugar industry needed labour and Zulu men did not do agricultural field work
 - C. There were not enough farms in Natal
 - D. Indian workers were already living in Natal
2. What is indentured labour?
 - A. Free trade between India and Natal
 - B. A type of military service
 - C. A contract system where workers agree to work for a fixed period
 - D. A system where workers are paid in land
3. What was free passage?
 - A. A holiday trip for labourers
 - B. A promise of a paid return trip to India after completing a contract
 - C. Money given to start a business
 - D. A shipping fee charged to labourers
4. Who were Passenger Indians?
 - A. Indentured workers
 - B. Soldiers from India
 - C. Free Indian immigrants who arrived after 1867
 - D. Sugar plantation owners

Short Questions

5. Name two reasons why Zulu men did not work on sugar plantations in Natal.
6. In which year did the first group of Indian indentured labourers arrive in Natal?
7. List two challenges indentured labourers faced while working on plantations.
8. Explain what a contract meant for an indentured labourer.

Source-Based Questions

Study the excerpt below (based on historical accounts):

“When the sugar industry expanded in Natal around 1860, local Zulu men did not want to work in the fields because it was traditionally women’s work. The colonial government recruited labourers from India, and the first group arrived in 1860.”
[studocu.com]

- 9.1 According to the source, why did Zulu men not want to work on sugar plantations?
- 9.2 What solution did the colonial government implement?
- 9.3 From which country were labourers brought?
- 9.4 Why was the year 1860 important?