

# Overview of south africa and lesotho



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Human beings are distinguished from others by having different cultures and ways of seeing and living life. In this written work we are going to make an effort to get closer to the character of two countries which belong to the African continent; which is the cradle of humanity, and the oldest inhabited territory on Earth. These countries are South Africa and Lesotho.

Through the research work we expect to encourage interest in learning not only the culture of these two countries but also their geography, weather, history, education, style of life, economy, religion and literature. We will develop them as separable sections on the general characteristics of these countries. The first topic that we manage is the geographic aspects of these countries that comprise the physical features, and then we decided to express how the people of these countries lived and perceived life. History will encompass the period from the first inhabitants of what is known as South Africa and Lesotho until the arrival of the Europeans colonizers, as well as the changes that have been generated in the two countries following the abolition of slavery and racial problems that made these people raised their voices and fought against any form of discrimination.

Finally, we refer to literature and the influence on its societies. In advance, we would like to thank the opportunity that has given us to meet the plurality understood as diversity and multiculturalism as a harmonious relationship between different cultures. At the same time, it is good to note that the achievement of this work has the support of the First Political Secretary of the South African Embassy in Venezuela "Solomzi Mhlana", which supplies us information about the country. We can start our small tour

about South Africa and Lesotho, which are constituted by people who share a common ancestry that goes back about 2000 years old.

Moreover, they have differences that make them unique. Geographically, the Republic of South Africa occupies the Southern tip of the continent of Africa. Its jagged northern border is shared by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Mozambique, and it completely surrounds Lesotho. On the western side is the Atlantic Ocean and on the Eastern and Southern sides the Indian Ocean. (See appendix “ C-1”) Its main feature is a high central plateau that covers much of the country and sweeps up toward the north, surrounded by a mountain bulwark dividing it from the mostly narrow coastal plain to the east, the south, and the southwest, with a gradual falling off from the high plateau toward the west.

There are few major rivers and even the biggest, the Orange, may be reduced to a trickle by frequent drought (Holt-Biddle, 2007, p. 4). In addition, South Africa is a medium-sized country, with a total land area of slightly more than 1. 2-million square kilometers, making it roughly the same size as Niger, Angola, Mali and Colombia. South Africa measures some 1 600km from north to south, and roughly the same from east to west. This country has three capitals: Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Pretoria.

However, none of them are the most important city of this country; the largest and most important city is Johannesburg, the economic heartland of the country. (South Africa info, 2010)In this country, there are 11 official languages that the Constitution recognizes, but it is IsiZulu the mother tongue of 23, 8% of the population according to Census 2001. Moreover,

English it is only the mother tongue of 8, 2% of the population, despite this, it is the language most widely understood, and the second language of the majority of South Africans. (Burger, 2007, p. 2). South Africa's location in the Southern Hemisphere obviously makes its seasons the reverse of those in the Northern Hemisphere, so the height of the South African summer is December/January, and midwinter is June/July.

The climate is generally moderate as well as the country is geographically described as a semiarid zone with an average annual rainfall of less than 20 inches (around 500 mm) the world average is about 33 inches (around 850 mm). The central plateau has hot summers and cold, dry winters, while the coastal belt tends to be more temperate. Furthermore, the southwestern Cape has a decidedly Mediterranean climate with winter rainfall, allowing for grape, olive, and deciduous fruit industries. In addition, snow falls on the high mountains in winter (Holt-Biddle, 2007, p.

6). Despite being a country located in Africa, this country has not only warm temperatures, but also a climate that can be very cold, with temperatures below zero. It's difficult to present a unified picture of everyday life in South Africa. Many middle-class and wealthy families live in heavily secured homes and spend their leisure time in equally fortified shopping centers.

At the same time, life is very different for the millions of South Africans and immigrants from across the borders, who live in poverty. Tiny matchbox houses are home to large extended families, and health facilities are not uniformly available. Unfortunately, funerals are becoming one of the most common gatherings in South Africa, as well as in Lesotho and Swaziland, and

on weekends cemeteries are routinely crowded with mourners. Many of those who are dying are youths, and people spend their time attending the funerals of one relative after the next. (Bainbridge, 2009, p.

52) On this same book, it was also stated in the following lines that “ sometimes the only survivors from an entire family are the eldest children, who were born before their parents became infected. Despite the prevalence, there’s still a heavy stigma attached to HIV-AIDS. Many people are ashamed to admit that a relative died of AIDS, and family members will often tell you that their loved one passed away from tuberculosis or the flu.” Overall, life in South Africa is uneven because the wealthy have better facilities while the poor lack the economic stability, health and safety. As a result, diseases like AIDS are wiping out the majority of the population that does not have the resources to survive.

“ Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

” (United for Human Rights, 2010). In South Africa, The Bills of rights, contained in the Constitution, 1996, stipulates that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education and further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must progressively make available and accessible. Besides, South Africa’s National Qualifications Framework (NQF) recognizes three broad bands of education: General

Education and Training, Further Education and Training, and Higher Education and Training. School life spans 13 years or grades, from grade 0, otherwise known as grade R or “reception year”, through to grade 12 or “matric” – the year of matriculation. General Education and Training runs from grade 0 to grade 9. Under the South African Schools Act of 1996, education is compulsory for all South Africans from the age of seven (grade 1) to age 15, or the completion of grade 9.

General Education and Training also includes Adult Basic Education and Training. Moreover, South African has about 4, 7 million illiterate people (who have never been to school) and another 4, 9 million adults who are functionally illiterate to varying degrees (having dropped out of school before Grade 7), according to Statistics South Africa’s Census 2001 (Burger, 2007, p. 2) Many young people leave school early not only due to economic problems but also in order to support their parents to care for and maintain the whole family. The Republic of South Africa has an administrative division of 9 provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North-West, Western Cape. In addition, the constitution of this nation was signed by the President Mandela on 10 December 1996; and entered into effect on 4 February 1997.

Moreover, the actual president is Jacob Zuma (since 9 May 2009) and the legislative branch is integrated by a bicameral Parliament consisting of the National Council of Provinces (90 seats; 10 members elected by each of the nine provincial legislatures for five-year terms; has special powers to protect regional interests, including the safeguarding of cultural and linguistic traditions among ethnic minorities) and the National Assembly (400 seats;

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members elected by popular vote under a system of proportional and the Judicial branch is integrated by a: Constitutional Court; a Supreme Court of Appeals; a High Court and a Magistrate Court (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). Almost 80% of South Africa's population follows the Christian faith. Other major religious groups are the Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. In spite of that, there is a minority of South Africa's population that does not belong to any of the major religions, but regard themselves as traditionalists of no specific religious affiliation. In addition, The Constitution guarantees freedom of worship and the official policy is one of non-interference in religious practices (Burger, 2007, p.

2). Because of this, religious beliefs should be respected because in this country there is a large multi-ethnic black culture in major cities as well as Africans in rural areas who are reluctant to abandon their traditional culture. For that reason, tolerance, freedom of conscience to express their religious tendencies either alone or in community should exist. South Africa is the economic powerhouse of Africa, leading the continent in industrial output and mineral production and generating a large proportion of Africa's electricity. In addition, the country has abundant natural resources, well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy and transport sectors, a stock exchange ranked among the top 20 in the world, and a modern infrastructure supporting efficient distribution of goods throughout the southern African region.

Moreover, the banking regulations rank with the best in the world, and the sector has long been rated among the top 10 globally. This country it is also the gateway to other African markets since has a significant role in supplying

energy, relief aid, transport, communications and investment on the continent (South Africa Info, 2010). Besides, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its 2007 annual country assessment, noted that South Africa's economy was "undergoing its longest expansion on record, and in recent years has experienced elevated growth in an environment of rapid credit expansion, booming asset prices, strengthening public finances, and rising international reserves financed by large capital inflows." At the same time, the IMF expressed concerns about the country's current account deficit and inflation rate. The IMF report also identified the long-standing issue of unemployment as one of the biggest challenges to economic growth in the country, along with poverty, large wealth disparities and a high incidence of HIV/Aids (South Africa Info, 2010). Perhaps, this country have some resources and it is one of the most important countries of Africa in the economical aspect; but South Africa still struggling with widespread poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and rising violent crime.

To begin with, the first inhabitants of South Africa have lived there for about thousands of years. Among the earliest inhabitants of this land, the San and the Khoekhoe (the Bushmen and Hottentots of early European terminology) were the oldest indigenous peoples of South Africa. Besides, at around the same time, Bantu-speaking agro pastoralists began arriving in southern Africa, bringing with them an iron-age culture and domesticated crops (Burger, 2007, p. 30). The early colonial period In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias, a Portuguese navigator, became the first European to round the Cape of Good Hope (so named by King John II of Portugal).



However, Portuguese sailors did not settle in South Africa and Lesotho. The first European settlement at the Cape was made in 1652 under Jan van Riebeeck on behalf of the Dutch East India Company, they imported slaves from West Africa, Madagascar, and the East Indies, and because of the scarcity of European women, mixed marriages took place, eventually producing the Cape Coloured people (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2009). Furthermore, by the mid-1700, the Asian slaves were concentrated in the towns, where they formed an artisan class while, slaves of African descent were found more often on the farms of outlying districts. In the 1820s, the innovative leader Shaka established sway over a considerable area of South-east Africa and brought much chiefdom under his domination.

At the same time, a process of cultural change was set in motion, not least by commercial and missionary activity. In contrast to the Khoisan, the black farmers were, by and large, immune to European diseases. For this and other reasons, they were to greatly outnumber the whites in the population of white-ruled South Africa, and were able to preserve important features of their culture. (Burger, 2007, p.

31). The British colonial era In 1795, The British occupied the Cape as a strategic base against the French, controlling the sea route to the East. After a brief reversion to the Dutch in the course of the Napoleonic wars, it was retaken in 1806 and kept by Britain in the post-war settlement of territorial claims. The Protestant missionaries brought to the Cape evangelicalism.

They were convinced that indigenous people could be fully assimilated into European Christian culture once the shackles of oppression had been

removed. The most important representative of the mission movement in South Africa was Dr John Philip, who established an Ordinance 50 of 1828, which guaranteed equal civil rights for “ people of color” within the colony and freed them from legal discrimination. The slaves were subject to a four-year period of “ apprenticeship” with their former owners, on the grounds that they must be prepared for freedom, which came on 1 December 1838 (Burger, 2007, p. 31). By the mid-1800s, a large numbers of the original colonists, the Boers, were greatly extending white occupation beyond the Cape’s borders to the north, in the movement that became known as the Great Trek, in the mid-1830s (Burger, 2007, p.

32-33). The mineral revolutionAlluvial diamonds were discovered on the Vaal River in the late 1860s. The subsequent discovery of dry deposits at what became the city of Kimberley drew tens of thousands of people, black and white, to the first great industrial hub in Africa, and the largest diamond deposit in the world. The mineral discoveries had a major impact on linking the interior to the coastal ports revolutionized transportation and energized agriculture.

The fact that the mineral discoveries coincided with a new era of imperialism and the scramble for Africa brought imperial power and influence to bear in southern Africa as never before. In 1877, the South African Republic (Transvaal) was annexed by Britain. Boer resistance led to British withdrawal in 1881, but not before the Pedi (northern Sotho) state, which fell within the republic’s borders, had been subjugated. Africans could be denied basic rights if the fiction could be maintained that they did not belong in “ white South Africa”, but to “ tribal societies” from which they came to service the “

white man's needs" Where black families secured a toehold in the urban areas local authorities confined them to segregated " locations" (Burger, 2007, p. 33-34). The Anglo-Boer/Soth African War (October 1899-May 1902)The war that followed the mineral revolution was mainly a white man's war.

In its first phase, the Boer forces took the initiative, besieging the frontier towns of Mafeking and Kimberley in the Northern Cape, and Ladysmith in northern Natal. Some colonial Boers rebelled, however, in sympathy with the republics. But, after a large expeditionary force under lords Roberts and Kitchener arrived, the British advance was rapid. Kruger fled the Transvaal shortly before Pretoria fell in June 1900.

The formal conquest of the two Boer republics was followed by a prolonged guerilla campaign. Small, mobile groups of Boers denied the imperial forces their victory, by disrupting rail links and supply lines. The British were at a disadvantage, owing to their lack of familiarity with the terrain and the Boers' superior skills as horsemen and sharpshooters. The British responded with scorched-earth policy (Burger, 2007, p.

34-35). The impact of the Anglo-Boer/South African War as a seminal influence on the development of Afrikaner nationalist politics became apparent in subsequent years. The Boer leaders most notably Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and JBM Hertzog played a dominant role in the country's politics for the next half century. Defeated Afrikaners through the education system and numerical swamping through British immigration were abandoned as impractical, the British looked to the Afrikaners as collaborators in securing

imperial political and economic interests. During 1907 and 1908, the two former Boer republics were granted self-government but, crucially, with a whites-only franchise.

Despite promises to the contrary, black interests were sacrificed in the interest of white nation-building across the white language divided. The National Convention drew up a constitution and the four colonies became an independent dominion called the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910 (Burger, 2007, p. 34-35). Segregation and Apartheid According to the Encyclopedia Britannica “ Segregation is the practice of restricting people to certain circumscribed areas of residence or to separate institutions (e. g, school, churches) and facilities (parks, playgrounds, restaurants, restrooms) on the basis of race or alleged race.” While “ Apartheid” is an official policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in the Republic of South Africa, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against nonwhites.

In South Africa the principles of segregationist thinking were laid down in a 1905 report by the South African Native Affairs Commission and continued to evolve in response to these economic, social and political pressures. In keeping with its recommendations, the first union government enacted the seminal Natives Land Act in 1913. Administrative and legal dualism reinforced the division between white citizen and black non-citizen, a dispensation personified by the governor-general who, as “ supreme chief” over the country’s African majority, was empowered to rule them by administrative fiat and decree. The government also regularized the job color bar, reserving skilled work for whites and denying African workers the right to organize.

Legislation, which was consolidated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923, entrenched urban segregation and controlled African mobility by means of pass laws. The pass laws were intended to enmesh Africans in a web of coercion designed to force them into labour and keep them there under conditions and at wage levels that suited white employers, and to deny them any bargaining power. In 1924, a pact government under Hertzog, comprising Afrikaners nationalists and representatives of immigrant labour, ousted the Smuts regime. The pact was based on a common suspicion of the dominance of mining capital, and a determination to protect the interest of white labour by intensifying discrimination against blacks (Burger, 2007, p. 35-37)After the Second World War in 1948, the National Party, with its ideology of apartheid that brought an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the segregationist policies of previous governments, won the general elections.

The changed was marked by the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1943, fostering the leadership of figures such as Anton Lembede, AP Mda, Nelson Mandela (See appendix “ B-1”), Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, who were to inspire the struggle for decades to come. In 1961, the NP Government under Prime Minister HF Verwoerd declared South Africa a republic, after winning a whites-only referendum on the issue. A new currency, the Rand, and a new flag, anthem and coat of arms were formally introduced. South Africa, having become a republic, had to apply for continued membership of the Commonwealth. (Burger, 2007, p. 37-38)Moreover, for the first time, the colored people, who had always been subjected to informal discrimination, were brought within the ambit of discriminatory laws.

In the mid-1950s, government took the drastic step of overriding an entrenched clause in the 1910 Constitution of the Union so as to be able to remove coloured voters from the common voters' roll. It also enforced residential segregation, expropriating homes where necessary and policing massive forced removals into colored " group areas." Their policy, which they termed " separate development", divided the African population into artificial ethnic " nations", each with its own " homeland" and the prospect of " independence" supposedly in keeping with trends elsewhere on the continent (Burger, 2007, p. 38).