



South Africa: The First Man, the Last Nation (UNIVERSAL HISTORY)

R. W. Johnson

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Africa is the cradle of mankind and the first traces of modern man come from South Africa. But the country has also experienced waves of inward migration from the earliest times, and the turmoil and wars that accompany them. Dutch settlers landed at Table Bay in 1652. In the young colony inter-racial marriages were common but the segregationist trend was soon clear. Also clear was the relentless move north and east by the colonists - by the intrepid trekker would become the iconic figure of white South Africa. The 19th century saw the rise of several African states, notably the Zulus under their leader Shaka; the Great Trek of 1834-38; the Zulu wars; the discovery of diamonds and then gold. And then in 1899 the Boer War, with its bitter aftermath. After 1918 Afrikaner nationalism began to gather momentum and in 1948 apartheid became official policy. These were the years of Dr Verwoerd and John Vorster, the high noon of apartheid. But soon the ANC had its own momentum. After Sharpeville came the Rivonia trial, the Soweto uprising, the death of Steve Biko and the United Democratic Front. But it was economic problems and the end of the Cold War which finally finished apartheid and released Nelson Mandela in 1990. Since 1994 crime, unemployment and inequality have flourished alongside the callousness of Thabo Mbeki's regime - thwarting the delivery of anti-Aids drugs when over five million (mainly black) South Africans are HIV-positive. The author delivers frank and devastating judgements both on the apartheid years and government by the new ANC elite. For this is a country that still awaits a government who will govern for the whole nation.



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