



## Time Travel, Battle of Kraaipan 1899

### Goal

Awareness of an important event in South African history, from the local community and Barolong people point of view.

Reflect on issues of fight or negotiate and the importance of understanding and agreements.

Promote the Time Travel method

### Facts

#### The Barolong

This region is the home of the Barolong people. They have lived in the area long before the Europeans came. After the Great Trek life changed. They became dependent on the Boers. When gold was discovered in Transvaal many became labourers in the mines. The chiefs of the Barolong tried to maintain their status and have a dialogue with the Boers. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century their traditions and influence were threatened.

#### The South African war (Anglo-Boer war)

The South African war (11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902) was fought between the British Empire and two Boer states, the South African Republic (Republic of Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. Immigration of *uitlanders* (foreigners), mainly English-speaking men from Britain, came to the Boer region in search of fortune and employment. This resulted in the number of uitlanders in the Transvaal potentially exceeding the number of Boers. Britain's had expansionist ideas and there were disputes over uitlander political and economic rights. As tensions escalated, political manoeuvrings and negotiations attempted to reach compromise on the issues of the rights of the uitlanders, control of the gold mining industry, and Britain's desire to incorporate the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into a federation under British control. Given the British origins of the majority of uitlanders and the ongoing influx of new uitlanders into Johannesburg, the Boers recognised that granting full voting rights to the uitlanders would eventually result in the loss of ethnic Boer control in the South African Republic.

On September 27 1899, The June 1899 negotiations in Bloemfontein failed, and in September 1899 British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain demanded full voting rights and representation for the uitlanders residing in the Transvaal. The Boer republics introduced general mobilization. Paul Kruger, the President of the South African Republic, issued an ultimatum on 9 October 1899, giving the British government 48 hours to withdraw all their troops from the borders of both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, The British government rejected the South African Republic's ultimatum, resulting in the South African Republic and Orange Free State declaring war on Britain.

The Battle of Kraaipan was the first engagement of the Second Anglo-Boer War, fought at Kraaipan, South Africa on 12 October 1899. That night 800 men of the Potchefstroom and Lichtenburg commandos under General Koos de la Rey attacked and captured the British garrison and railway siding at Kraaipan between Vryburg and Mafeking.

Under the orders of Cronjé the Mafeking railway and telegraph lines were cut on the same day. The armoured train, "Mosquito", carrying two 7-pounder cannons, rifles, ammunition and supplies was derailed and after a five-hour fight the British surrendered the next morning. The cannons, rifles, ammunition, supplies and prisoners were taken.

The Barolong people were used in the war on both sides, in the beginning as servants, cooks, taking care of wounded, of horses, wagons etc but later several were also armed and involved in the fights. Much of the land and villages were destroyed in the war.

### **Scenario, October 9 1899 in Kraaipan**

There have been negotiations for months between the British and the Boers, but no result. The Barolong are worried. Will the negotiations fail? That means war and destruction.

Today the Boer General Koos de la Rey has decided to set up a military camp, and to do it immediately. Everybody who is around in the local villages have to help, men and women.

We must prepare for war, he says.

All the manual labour is done by the locals. They have to set up tents, make fireplaces, make more bullets, cook food, prepare medicine. And at the same time as they work, they discuss quietly with worried voices. What will happen to us and our families if there is a war? Do we all have to go to war? Will we survive? And what will happen to our homes? Do we ever have a chance to retain our traditions and our way of live? The Barolong chief try to have a dialogue with the Boers and the use of the land and of his people in the war.

It's a hectic day. Officers are shouting and giving orders. Is seems a day for definitive decisions, continue the talks or go to war? The Barolong are concerned. Can we influence the situation at all or what can we do?

### **Roles**

Men and women from the Barolong tribe

The Barolong chief

A few Boer officers (Coetzee)

Everybody keeps their age and gender

### **Key questions**

Fight or negotiate

Do we want the negotiations to continue until there is an agreement?

What happens with us (Barolong), our families and our land, if the war starts?

Can we still keep our traditions in the future?

## **Activities**

Set up a camp

- Set up tents – *Thulas, Mosako, Scouts*  
Make a structure for the laer
- Drilling of soldiers– *Thabiso, Evelyn*  
Clean the place, make a fireplace
- Mend uniforms – *Victoria, Boithomelo, Lesego*
- Make medicine – *Andy, Brian*

Talks with the local chief – *Ras Mpho*

Barolong song/ dance – *Performance group*

In future Time Travels, make food

## **Time Plan**

08.30 Set up the site

10.00 The Time Travel method, introduction

The start of the South African (Anglo-Boer) war, historical background

10.30 Roles, rules, characters, name tags

10.45 Time Travel Kraaipan 1899 starts, initiation

The officers give instructions

Activities and discussions

11.45 The ultimatum, response

12.15 Time Travel ends

Reflections

20 September 2018

Bridging Ages team

Mosako Lekgetho, Kraaipan museum

## **The ultimatum**

Paul Kruger, the President of the Südafrikanische Republik

*I have given the British government 48 hours to withdraw all their troops from the borders of both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. If they refuse, the Transvaal and our allies the Orange Free State, will declare war on the British government.*

*End of negotiations*

*This is an ultimatum!*

9 October 1899,