



# TIME TRAVEL

## SAN-KHOI TIME TRAVELS

for the region in the Cederberg and Olifantsrivierberg mountains, either side of the Olifants River, October 1410, before the arrival of the Europeans.  
(The Time Travels could be anything between 200-1487 AD)



## Background, relations between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists in the region

In the mountains either side of the river live /Xam speaking groups of hunter gatherers who move regularly between small shelters and caves, occasionally building small windbreaks of bushes in the open. They often move in family or two family groups during the winter when food is scarce and widely dispersed. Some on the western side of the river move toward the coast where they have relatives, although this means a risky trek across the sandy coastal plains where people with sheep and cattle are sometimes encountered.

These /Xam subsist by hunting occasional large game, snaring small steenbok, ambushing dassies that have strayed too far from their rocky homes, fishing in the river pools, collecting tortoises that they chance on and, most importantly, by gathering underground bulbs, corms and tubers. Work is shared but men do the large game hunting and women the bulk of the plant gathering.

These /Xam have mostly good but cautious relations with the sheep owners to the north and west, although they are very wary of any groups of pastoralist that they don't know well.

These pastoralists call themselves Grigiriqua, or Namaqua or Cochoqua and refer to the /Xam in derogatory terms as Sonqua which means bushpeople or even as Obiqua which means robbers. These strained relations reflect very different attitudes between the hunters and the pastoralists when it comes to the many sheep and the few cattle owned and grazed in the region. For the /Xam a stray sheep or cow means a good meal for many people, whereas for the Grigiriqua it is an insurance against bad times. Of course it could be eaten and will be one day when other meat is rare, but sheep and cows are needed to pay for wives and to gather together to show a man's wealth and power.

Hunters like the /Xam often travel a few miles away from their normal territory and steal a sheep or two from pastoralists who they don't normally interact with. This probably is the origin of their reputation as robbers. They sometimes camp with friendly pastoralists they know well, however, although they build their windbreaks near the edge of the kraals, keeping more or less to themselves. They visit with gifts of elephant ivory or ostrich eggshell beads that they can trade for a sheep or perhaps a broken pot. It sometimes happens that one of the pastoralist men offers to marry

one of the young /Xam girls and this result in the handing over of a cow or a few sheep. After these marriages there are relatives of hunters among the pastoralists, which help to build good relations. Hunter men never get to marry pastoralist girls, though, as their fathers always want them to marry other pastoralists to earn sheep and cattle to add to the father's wealth.

Relations around the Olifants River are, therefore, quite complicated and occasionally break out into disputes over stolen animals, the correct payment for a young girl, the appropriate exchange rate for a necklace of 100 beads or from outright raiding between pastoralist groups. Some of the leaders of larger groups, those usually with the most cattle, are called upon to arbitrate on these occasions, but not everyone accepts their decision. One recurrent argument is about who owes what to whom. The /Xam own very little of value to pastoralists and believe that the correct 'payment' for a wife is for the husband to go and work for his new in-laws, hunting and bringing in meat for them. Pastoralists have a more direct system whereby the husbands' family hands over an agreed number of sheep or cows for the wife, although there are always arguments when a marriage doesn't last. The actual marriage ceremony, however, is always great fun with lots of eating, drinking, singing and dancing.

Some years back, one group of pastoralists, the Grigiriqua, lost almost all of their sheep and cattle to raiding Cochoqua, who denied the charges and refused to give any animals back. This resulted in unusually close relations between the Grigiriqua and the /Xam as the pastoralists had to rely more on gathered foods for a while. They eventually managed to loan some sheep and cattle from the Namaqua to the north and within a decade or so had increased their herds and flocks back to the original sizes. They knew that the veld in the sandveld was not nearly as good for sheep and cattle herding as the plains to the south and north where Cochoqua and Namaqua lived.

The /Xam were always tempted to steal a good number of animals and move off substantially to the Karoo in the east where they were sure the pastoralists could not follow. On the rare occasion that a group tried this, the animals died of hunger or were quickly eaten by the /Xam who then had to return and take their chances with the angry Grigiriqua or Namaqua.





## Scenario, Elisabethfontein, a /Xam site visited by Namaqua people. Theme of the Time Travel: Living with differences

One of the Namaqua men who regularly graze his sheep and cattle in the Olifants River valley has made a few rare visits over the mountains in search of pasture. After some skirmishing and fighting with local /Xam he has met a young girl !nisa and her family and has asked !nisa's family permission to marry her. The /Xam are keen on this idea as it may well bring a regular supply of sheep and cattle meat into their camps from their new relatives. In addition they could find a good market for their ostrich eggshell beads, which the namaqua like but rarely make.

The Namaqua are particularly impressed with the paintings that !nisa's father, aunt and uncle have recently made in a nearby rock shelter. Although the Namaqua regularly applies paint to their bodies they never paint animals or people on shelter walls. But they make handprints.



### Roles

Some of the learners are /Xam, some are visiting Namaquas.

The adults are also divided into these two groups of people.

Wedding couple.

### Key questions/issues to discuss

Living with differences.

There are two ways of living –

Namaquas own property and accumulate their fortune; a society with leaders, where wealth and power is shown.

/Xam are living on what nature gives and have very little property, a more equal society, totally dependent on nature, friends and sharing of goods.

Can we live together in peace in spite of differences in language and ways of living? How do we overcome our suspicions? Is there even an advantage in compromising?

What is the next step for my group of people for better relations with the others? Is the wedding a good idea?

### Activities

Wedding preparations

Build a windbreak for the visitors

Make paint, make paintbrush, paint an eland frieze

(/Xam), handprint (Grigiriquas)

Try bow and arrows (/Xam), assegai (Grigiriquas)

Tracking (/Xam)

Make medicine

Prepare food

Make necklaces

Listening to stories

Trading of goods

Dancing

Make stone tools? (/Xam)

### Timeplan

09.00 Welcome of learners, read the landscape, repetition of scenario

Dress up, presentation of characters

Initiation, Namaquas arrive at the /Xam site, suspicions, trading,

listening to a story

10.00 Activities and discussions begin

12.00 Food, common discussion, trading

Agreement on a wedding

Dance

13.00 Ending ceremony, evaluation

13.30/14.00 Learners leave