On the Savanna

A Diary of a Journey in Cameroon

Marie Pauline Thorbecke

1914

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The author’s colonial viewpoints and historical terminology are retained as documentary evidence; they do not represent the views of the present-day publisher.

All 263 page positions correspond to the French PDF. Original photographs, drawings and map are preserved; lettering within historical images is unchanged.

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Oil palms on the savanna.

On the Savanna

Diary of a Journey in Cameroon

By Marie Pauline Thorbecke

With 16 plates and illustrations in the text, from the author's drawings and photographs, together with a general map of the region traversed.

Berlin, 1914

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To my companion in life and travel.

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Note on the Translation

The French edition used as the source for this English reading translation translates Marie Pauline Thorbecke's text, published in Berlin in 1914 under the title Auf der Savanne. Tagebuch einer Kamerunreise. It includes the diary, its preface, the dedication, the contents, the lists and captions of illustrations, the map, and the publisher's advertisements contained in the digitized copy.

Place names and personal names follow the original edition. The author's vocabulary and judgments are preserved in their historical sense. The notes in the German edition are translated along with the text; remarks added to this translation are expressly identified as such.

The references in the contents refer to the pages of the German book. The original German pagination is repeated at the bottom of the relevant pages of this English translation, so that the corresponding passage can be located. The page numbers at the lower right follow the French PDF. The photographic plates have their own numbers. Blank pages and duplicate photographs of the same plates are not reproduced.

Amounts are retained in marks and pfennigs. In the text, the German pound corresponds to 500 grams and the German hundredweight to 50 kilograms. Pidgin expressions were rendered in French in the source translation and are rendered here in English; their original explanations are also translated.

Translator's note: on page 116, the entry for June 5 bears the year 1913 in the original, although it appears in the middle of the 1912 diary. This probable misprint is retained and marked [sic].

Note to the present English reading edition

Preface

During a scientific expedition into the interior of Cameroon, bearing the name “research expedition of the German Colonial Society,” I accompanied my husband, Dr. Franz Thorbecke, from the autumn of 1911 until early 1913 as the expedition's painter, and also took part in all its other work. Dr. Leo Waibel was our traveling companion, unfortunately for only a short time. The expedition's tasks were the geographical and economic exploration of the Tikar and Wute regions, and the gathering of an ethnological collection from the territories through which we passed.

During the journey, I wrote letters in diary form and sent them home.

If I venture to offer these letters to the public, it is from a desire to win new friends for this burning country, which grew dear to me during fifteen months of work. Cameroon has a bad reputation; its climate is thought very unhealthy, and it is still considered an adventurous undertaking for a woman to accompany her husband there, especially when she cannot remain on the coast but must follow him inland. Yet the country is truly better than its reputation. During our long wanderings, I came to know many regions where life is as healthy as it can be in the tropics, where the great

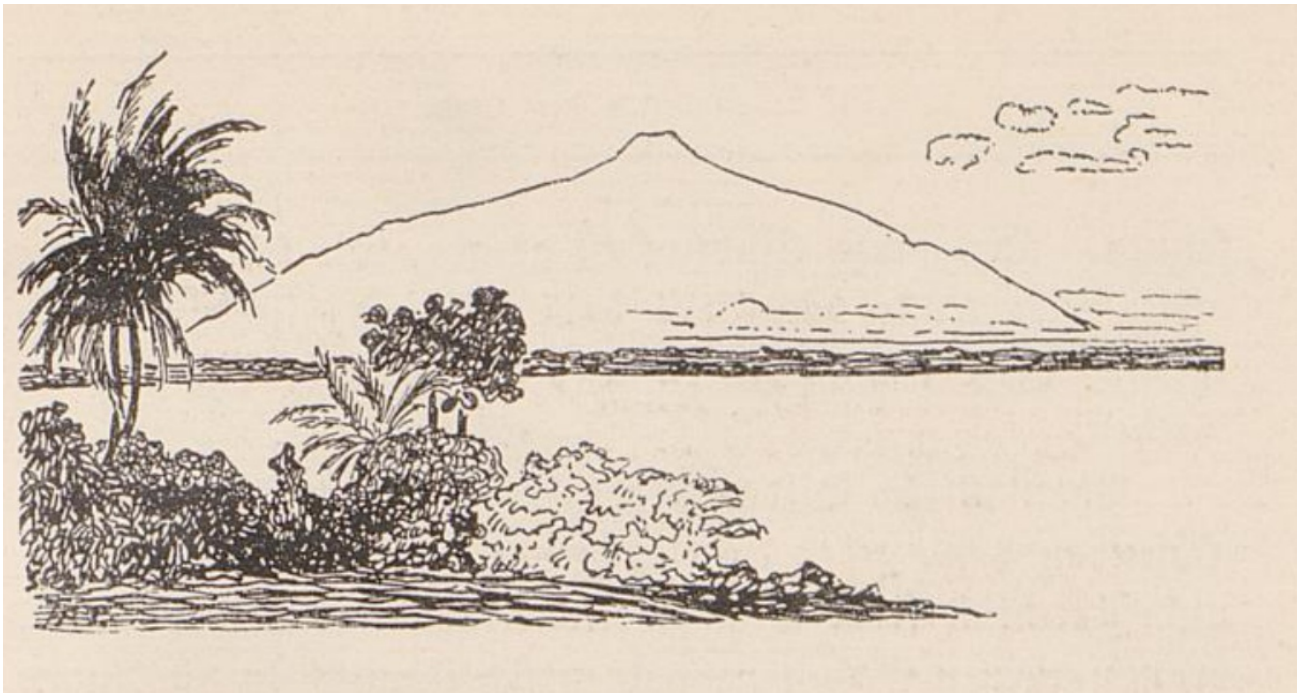
altitudes and dry air strip the climate of everything oppressive and stifling, where cool, clear nights continually restore the body and preserve the resilience of the nerves. German women can live there without risking their health, and it would be a good thing if their numbers increased. They find many tasks to perform there, for the men's lives are not always easy, and a woman can offer much help. But they also find beauty and interest in the changing aspects of the landscape, in the simple life of the natives, so foreign to our own, and above all in daily contact with a magnificent and primeval nature.

If I succeed in winning new friends for Cameroon and helping to dispel prejudice, these pages will have achieved their purpose.

Heidelberg, autumn 1913.

Marie Pauline Thorbecke.

Preface



Mount Cameroon

Duala, November 19, 1911

Here we really are, arrived at last, and all the bustle, the terrible rush of the last weeks before our departure, lies far behind us; the long crossing has intervened like a beneficial, soothing break. The first week of the voyage, as far as the Canaries, probably forms a little chapter of its own on every crossing to Africa: storms in the North Sea and the Channel, delight in the ever brighter sunshine and the ever purer blue of the sea, while the old impressions of Europe fade through contact with the many passengers traveling to these happy islands for pleasure or to recover their health. Then a few days, during which nothing is visible around the ship's comfortable little world but gray-blue water and gray-blue air, detach us from them in turn; and one afternoon, far away on the horizon, the African continent comes into sight. Beneath the fierce sun that weighs like lead on the silvery sea, smooth as silk, a low, dark fringe emerges above the water; it gradually rises into two flattened hills, which fall steeply to the sea on the south. The white foam of the breakers beats against them; a few bushes and trees can also be distinguished, to which Cape Verde owes

its name. The overall impression corresponds exactly to my idea of such an African coast: solitary, bare, and moving in the immense simplicity of its lines and colors.

Fantastic pictures follow one another as soon as one lands at one of the ports; the luminous red of the soil and the indescribably intense blue of the loose clothing on the dark, bronze-colored figures seem literally to burn themselves into the eyes. Then the monotonous voyage resumes in oppressive heat. The ship constantly keeps only a few kilometers from shore; one soon loses the sensation of an ocean crossing and feels instead the vast, crushing uniformity of this country. To know how fast our ship is traveling and yet always to see the same thing, morning and evening, beneath the burning sun or in the downpours of a tornado, always the same coast, uniformly high, uniformly green, with its strip of brilliant yellow sand and its thin line of white surf above the blue water: this gives some idea of the gigantic dimensions of this continent.

And now we are ashore. I am sitting on the hotel's veranda, at the top of the Joss plateau, about ten meters high and dropping steeply to the beach. Before me I see a little patch of lawn, then several papaya trees, whose enormous leaves form a round crown growing directly from the thick, sap-filled trunk, a few graceful, slightly curved coconut palms, and small shrubs with fiery red flowers amid vigorous green. Beyond, below me, lie the yellow beach, the jetty, white houses, and the mirror-smooth bay, whose opposite shore

First Impressions of the Tropics

is fringed with thick mangrove thickets. Everything burns and trembles beneath the leaden sun; from time to time a light breath comes from the sea, but most blacks and whites have withdrawn into their houses; the beach, which this morning rang with a large fish and vegetable market, is almost entirely deserted. The horizon is now ringed on every side by masses of cloud that completely conceal the great Mount Cameroon. Last evening it appeared to us in grand and startling beauty. Shortly before sunset, above the golden-green foreground of palms and papayas, the blue-green water and dark mangroves, it rose in pure shades of rosy violet against the bright greenish-yellow sky: a picture whose delicately glowing colors recalled Japanese representations of Fuji-Yama. Mount Cameroon is, however, less steep, much broader, and more massive. Seen from Duala, it appears as a mighty, flattened, almost symmetrical cone; in the slightly curving line of its profile one can distinguish two plateaus rising gently to the next, steeper slope; the summit is truncated: a gigantic mountain, more than 4,000 meters high, of perfectly pure volcanic form.

Duala is a large, well-kept town. The first settlers established themselves where the high Joss plateau, formerly inhabited by the Bell Negroes, rises above the mangrove forest of the low-lying coast; from there the town gradually spread along the shore. On the opposite bank, in close connection with it, the small settlement of Bonaberi has developed, the starting point of the railway we shall take into the interior.

Without doubt, many port towns on the West African coast

Duala

enjoy a finer setting than Duala; but, despite the mountains and forests surrounding them, they are often, within, nothing but hot and desolate heaps of stone. Duala, by contrast, has the air of a pleasant garden city. In a long, widely spaced row, white houses with pale gray or red roofs and broad verandas overlook the beach along the bay; several paths climb steeply from the beach to the Joss plateau and enter the town. Everywhere gardens stretch between the houses, with delightful, gently curving coconut palms, upright oil palms, light green banana and papaya trees, enormous bushy mango trees whose shape and the deep green of their leaves make me compare them above all to our horse chestnuts, as well as lawns and flowering shrubs. Rows of trees have been planted along the streets, the roads are well maintained; and one is quite astonished still to find, here and there, between the European houses, large or small, elegant or simple but always inviting, a maze of low, half-ruined native huts put together from poles and brown mats.

Duala has a surprising number of trading houses and shops—even a pharmacy, as the very latest novelty, something taken entirely for granted in Europe—and almost none of these businesses specializes. One can buy everything everywhere: sausages, canned fruit and flour, clothes, shoes, cooking utensils, trunks, and colored postcards; only a few merchants have begun displaying these very different wares in separate rooms. We have supplemented our expedition equipment in many ways, and I believe we could have obtained a great many more things here just as well as at home, especially provisions

Duala

—but that would take time, and we are glad to be able to reach the interior and begin work as quickly as possible.

We left the ship five days ago and are staying in the town's only hotel. The memory of home and the ship is still very vivid; so, despite truly good food, the arrangements at this inn seem rather primitive to us. I am convinced that a somewhat more elegant hotel could also survive in a town like Duala.

I have seen that a tropical house can be very pretty and pleasant to live in without any particular luxury, when we were entertained in three homes over the last few days. True, they generally consist of only two rooms, each about 24 square meters; there are also a kitchen, a storeroom, and the boys' quarters. But the real living space is the large veranda, which sometimes runs around the entire house. The one we saw at a small evening reception was really very beautiful and enormous: the laid table, a sideboard, a charming tea corner with rattan furniture, a desk, and a few cupboards seemed almost lost in it. Everything was painted in light colors, airy, welcoming, and wonderfully cool.

From all I have seen and heard during these few days, the white women who live in such sensibly designed houses do very well in Duala, despite the coastal climate's bad reputation. One of them told me that she had lived continuously for more than two years in the settlements along the Cameroon coast and had had her first child there; neither she nor her little boy had ever suffered from malaria. It is true that, like probably

A European House

the very great majority of Europeans in Duala, she strictly observes regular quinine prophylaxis. Keeping a comfortable home and a good table no longer presents any particular difficulties in Duala. Certainly, every housewife probably has her stock of all kinds of supplies, which she manages herself, as our grandmothers once did; but whenever something runs short, the food shops can supply it, or one of the great steamers that call here almost every week and always sell some of their fresh provisions kept in cold storage. The railway brings slaughter cattle from the interior, the Negroes bring fish to market almost daily, ice can be obtained from an ice machine in town or aboard a steamer; and, since very few women need to do any housework themselves, their task is essentially to direct the black servants intelligently and skillfully and supervise them constantly. That does indeed seem absolutely essential, and the servant question occupies even more space here than among housewives in Germany.

Naturally, this question is also of the greatest importance to us; we must try to find the best possible staff, for once we are on the road and in the interior, it will no longer be possible to find a new cook or washerman. So far we have hired only one boy, Jsono, a lad from Jaunde about fourteen years old, who expressly asked to be allowed to work for the Missis. He has already been in a lady's service and even knows how to fasten a dress. He may be rather stupid; but, in any case, he is very eager, and especially anxious to keep fetching clean water for

White Women in Duala

washing. I doubt, however, that this will continue once we are “in the bush.” Last night he accompanied us to a reception, according to African custom. He walked ahead lighting our way with a large lantern, then sat and fell asleep with other boys on our hosts' doorstep, until he led us back through the dark town to the hotel at night, staggering with fatigue.

I am myself surprised to have grown so accustomed aboard ship to the sight of Negroes that these black figures no longer seem at all foreign to me. Every steamer takes aboard a number of Negroes in Monrovia to carry out the loading work in the furnace of the African ports. But far more than those dirty, noisy people, it was always the rowers coming from shore and guiding the small cargo boats through the breakers who interested me. What a splendid sight those naked, dark-brown bodies are, wearing at most a narrow loincloth, out there in the open air, in the sunlight, standing out against the blue water in powerful, living motion! All are admirably built, some slender and tall, others stocky, with giants' muscles; not one is fat or decrepit. Hard labor has shaped their bodies so magnificently that they resemble a group of gleaming bronzes in motion. The less clothing the Negro wears, the more beautiful he is. Once I had seen the naked rowers, I could no longer bear the ship's laborers, whether Kru or Wheyboys. Those dirty jerseys, torn trousers, and shapeless caps reveal only the ugly, ape-like head, whereas in the naked man,

The Negroes

the beauty of the body makes one entirely forget the unsightly head. I react strangely to these two appearances. When I see a clothed black man, I mentally call him a “Negro”; if I find him very disagreeable, a “Nigger”; but before the unclothed child of nature it is always our good old German word “Moor” that comes to mind. Those utterly black, naked fellows, with their woolly heads and gleaming teeth, perhaps still a necklace around their necks, are indeed the “Moors” of old travel accounts, copper engravings, and picture books. Is it not a pity that we have forgotten our German word to adopt the Portuguese one?

In Duala one finds only “Negroes,” or the still worse sort. We shall probably not meet “Moors” again until we reach the interior.

Our baggage was safely landed and transported directly from the steamer to the railway at Bonaberi by lighter; each of us took only the most essential belongings to Duala. We escaped the meticulous customs examination of every package thanks to the packing lists and suppliers' invoices we were able to produce.

Everywhere we have been received very kindly; the customs authorities, the shipping company, the railway company, and the trading houses are accommodating and helpful. Unfortunately, the government has informed us that in the interior we shall not be able to lodge at the administrative and military posts but must make our camp outside, so as not to disturb the running of the stations. We still have no idea how we shall manage during the main rainy season; at worst we shall build ourselves Negro huts, for the tent alone scarcely affords sufficient protection against the heavy

Pleasures and Difficulties

downpours. Our request for the permanent assignment of one or two police soldiers has also been rejected. Well, then, we shall have to see how to manage without them; we are not afraid that we shall fail to cope.

Nkongsamba, November 24, 1911

Camp life! We are admittedly living in the railway lodging house, but it consists only of bare walls, a roof, and a veranda, scarcely larger than the tent; in every other respect this is already true expedition life. We rummage through and turn out trunks and crates to get everything ready for the march. This morning a caravan of sixty porters, accompanied by six head porters and an interpreter from the station, set off; it is carrying about two-fifths of our baggage ahead to Dschang.

When they arrived yesterday evening, a cheerful, colorful scene unfolded in front of our house. All these dark, almost naked fellows—seventy-one in all—were drawn up in a long line, divided into teams under their leaders; first the sick were removed and sent home, despite their resistance, with a “Go away!” Then the question of “chop” was settled; “chop” means food, and it is said to be the most important word on an African journey. Naturally, all sixty-six men declared that they had nothing; but Franz made each of them open his raffia bag, his “bush luggage,” and it turned out that, of the sixty-six, only twenty-eight had nothing or not enough and needed to receive a measure of rice each. They set up their porters' camp a short distance from our house and lit large fires in the middle of the broad square; afterward we saw them passing back and forth before them like shadows,

Camp Life

from one open shed to another. Later they began singing and dancing as well, but after that tiring day of packing we were too weary to go and join them. When we went to bed at half past nine, the fires were still burning; we left the door of our room open and, as we fell asleep, heard the strange rhythm of short sequences of notes endlessly repeated. Outside, on the veranda, the dog “Tiger” and the boys slept amid the crates, wood wool, and sacking.

This morning sixty loads were assembled, which we had weighed and repacked yesterday; a porter's load must weigh only twenty-five to thirty kilos and must also balance well on the head. The sixty loads were laid out in a long row; behind each package a porter squatted. Naturally, each tried to obtain the lightest or smallest; at first there was a noisy quarrel, because the big, strong fellows pushed the weaker ones away from the small loads and passed them the heaviest ones.

Once this matter too had been settled as fairly as possible, the caravan set off: a head porter with his long stick in front, then the whole procession behind him, always one behind another, each holding his load on his head with his arms raised high; and finally Franz, my husband, on horseback. Today he rode up to the station, two hours away, to discuss the next steps with the head of the post. One of the gentlemen from the trading posts here lent him the horse.

Waibel[1] and I, meanwhile, continued putting things in order here;

[1] Dr. Waibel, our traveling companion.

Camp Life

later I made sketches. He is packing and labeling collected plants, as well as all sorts of beetles, spiders, wasps, and flies that he caught near the lamp last evening and shut in his potassium cyanide jar. Behind the house, the cook and washerman are busy with the boys, after all of them went to wash in the nearby stream. I believe we really have found good employees in the cook and washerman. Both are people from Togo, who enjoy a reputation on the west coast for particular competence and loyalty. The cook is slim and tall, with very finely shaped, almost well-groomed hands, whose impeccably clean nails pleased me at first sight; the washerman is solid and stocky, his black face constantly lit by a broad laugh; the gleam of his teeth rivals the white of his spotlessly clean clothes. In accordance with their dignity, these two men are addressed by their titles, not their names; and, fortunately, both seem able to work well with the most rudimentary means.

Last evening the cook made excellent bread, using an empty tin kerosene can placed over a smoldering fire as an oven; inside it, on a few little stones, he had set another empty metal tin containing the bread dough. The washerman is now ironing a wash of about seventy pieces on the small expedition table, heating his irons over a wood fire between four stones. What he turns out is impeccable.

The two boys, Jsono and “Adam Dry Season” (“drytime,” pronounced “Dreidam”), are still rough diamonds. Jsono is the stupider; but Dreidam is decidedly cunning, and if, on the one hand, it is with truly

Our Black Servants

devilish delight and skill that he catches “little creatures” for Waibel's insect collection, on the other we caught him appropriating one of our rock bags as a traveling bag and filling it with a dirty shirt and a tin of rancid hair pomade. I have entrusted the two boys with two of Franz's old white jackets to serve as uniforms, so that they look somewhat presentable as they stand around our table morning and evening, carrying every aluminum plate and every spoon with extraordinary importance and slowness.

Today they are taking care not to put their thumbs in the dishes and not to throw anything on the table, for since last evening we have engaged a third boy, already somewhat older, who seems to want to seize the position of head boy through his greater skill. I would be quite satisfied with that; I should no longer have to attend to every detail and could leave it to Djimbe to show the two younger ones how to do everything.

The railway journey through the primeval forest passed before me like a dream; I feel as though I only awoke here, on these heights where, at nearly nine hundred meters above sea level, we have escaped the damp, stifling atmosphere of the coast and the dense forest. This Manenguba plateau is magnificent. The steep, jagged Elengum chain, in the Manenguba massif, which rises more than another thousand meters above the plateau, appears every morning above light sheets of mist, directly in front of our house's veranda; and one has only to turn one's head to glimpse the enormous bulk of Nlonako, almost as high. The undulating plateau stretching between

Our Black Servants

them is covered with vigorous grasses that seem tinged red when in flower. Small dark groups of tall broadleaf trees and thick undergrowth are scattered across it, then draw together into forests on the mountain slopes. Everywhere there are palms; standing alone or gathered in open groves, their slender trunks, topped with round, swaying crowns, rise above the grass.

It is certainly hot, but the air is dry, and all these days we have been able to work almost without interruption on our preparations for departure without excessive fatigue. Since our men do not yet know all the crates and bundles, we have not merely given orders and instructions: all three of us have really pitched in and done actual physical work. Yet everything has gone very well; one was no hotter than at home in summer. I think I could not possibly have managed that in the hothouse atmosphere of Duala.

The nights are wonderfully cool here, and fortunately our brief stay on the coast has not yet made us fussy: we find this coolness pleasant and do not shiver like “old Africans.”

There are already four settlers on the Manenguba plateau who, with little money, have established small farms and employ a few black laborers in their fields. Most grow food for the railway or plantation workers and for the porters; they are said to be doing well. One is married and lives here with his family; a trading-post manager in Nkongsamba also has a young wife. And I must admit that, if I had the choice between Duala and the

The Climate of the Highlands; German Settlers

terminus of the Northern Railway, I would infinitely prefer the plateau, with its fresh, dry air and cool nights. One would certainly have to forgo the comforts of the coastal town; but is a good climate not more precious?

Sanschu, November 30, 1911

We already have three days' marching behind us and are living in the third of the rest houses along the main road. We have set up our beds and trunks in the two bedrooms and are sitting on the veranda, beneath the widely overhanging roof. These rest houses always have room for several Europeans and, despite all their simplicity—bare walls woven from mats or built of earth, a beaten-earth floor, a few small ventilation openings for windows, a wide-open door, and overhead a roof of matting—they are nonetheless an admirable institution. One need not even unpack one's tent, and is spared the labor of erecting poles and walls. Beside the Europeans' house are buildings capable of sheltering several hundred porters, as well as a kitchen, quarters for the boys, and a stable.

Today's stopping place, Sanschu, is already about two hundred meters above the base of the Manenguba plateau, on the ascent toward the grassy highlands of Cameroon's interior. From the square before the house, which stands like a bastion on the mountainside, one looks back toward the Manenguba plateau from which we have come. Close at hand stretches the so-called Mbo plain, a gently undulating plateau we have crossed over the past three days. To right and left, the steep, deeply dissected mountains of the ascent to the inland plateau frame the view. At our feet stretch

The First Days on the March

forests of oil palms which, precisely here, form almost pure stands, without other trees and with almost no undergrowth. The country is so rich and fertile that the village chief has just provided food without the slightest difficulty for our hundred and ten men and for four hundred other porters we encountered, apparently even more than was needed. And parties as numerous as these pass here several times a week without any shortage arising.

Our marches have been short; we want first to grow used to walking before covering greater distances. On the morning of our departure from Nkongsamba, we bought a horse for three hundred and fifty marks, a pretty bay mare; now we take turns riding.

Of course, getting everything running still takes effort at the beginning and gives rise to difficulties. Until a caravan like this has settled into its routine, there are continual “palavers”; no load suits anyone, and every quarter of an hour one finds a few porters beside the road declaring that they cannot or will not go any farther. The threat of having them given “twenty-five strokes” at the station and the promise of a “dash”[1] at the stopping place get them moving again. On arrival in camp, the “food palaver” takes center stage. We generally buy provisions from the village chiefs or the black caretakers of the rest houses; then, with the help of the five head porters, a little pile for each man is laid out on the ground. For the moment, only the whip keeps the men from throwing themselves like animals upon their food to seize as much as possible before the distribution is finished. In the morning too, at

[1] A present or tip.

The Caravan

departure, things often become wild; they fight and scratch like madmen for the light loads, then howl like ill-bred children when these are taken away. I had to strike a few men's fingers hard with my tins because they tried to snatch the half-empty crates from my hands as I was filling them. Every evening sick men come forward, claiming to suffer from terrible internal pains and asking to be sent back. One or two did indeed have a slight fever. Then the traveling medicine chest is brought out and medicines administered: remedies for dysentery, quinine, and antipyrine. Since all this tastes bad, the sick men were cured the next day.

Dschang, December 4, 1911

The first part of our approach march is behind us. At Dschang station we paid and dismissed our porters; we now intend to stay here for a week. The head of Dschang station, Lieutenant Rausch, has administered the district for years; we want to obtain from him all the information needed for the journey to Bana and Bangante. After these six days of marching, we are also very glad to be able to rest a little. Although the distances we covered were never very great, about fourteen to twenty kilometers, they always took us four to six hours, with stops, photographs, measurements, and observations. And in the mornings we never managed to leave before seven because of all the trouble the porters gave us, truly little better than wild animals; so it was often two o'clock, or even later, when we reached camp.

The Porters

We have passed through true wonders and, since Sanschu, seen so many new and surprising things that my head is spinning.

We had to climb a steep slope to the high range bordering Cameroon's inland plateau and separating it from the coast and the intermediate level of the Manenguba region: the range that for so long impeded the subjugation of the country and today places such extraordinary difficulties in the way of opening it up with railways and roads.

During a scorching march on the first day we climbed more than three hundred meters; but the road, built with the greatest care and ascending the mountainside in many zigzags, was magnificent. There were endless oil palms, forming entire forests here, great broadleaf trees, and dense, tangled bushes; among them, flowers and numerous little mountain streams leaping over slabs of rock and spreading wonderful freshness around them. On one side the mountain dropped abruptly and we looked into the treetops; on the other it rose steeply: everywhere a sea of green in the most varied shades. Here and there the fiery red strip of the road and the pale, whitish-gray trunks and branches of the trees shone out from it.

That red soil! It is, in truth, my greatest surprise. In all my dreams of Africa I had never imagined that the roads would be red. And as fiery a red as a good, honest brick at home. That luminous ribbon running through the landscape heightens all the other colors; the green of the trees becomes deeper

The Ascent to the Inland Highlands

and fuller, the sky a more intense blue; one understands how strong all the colors are, since they can bear being beside this red.

The higher we climbed, the lower the forest became; gradually it disappeared entirely, giving way to dense grass of medium height. The military post of Mbo stands on just such a bare, grassy height. It is usually enveloped in fog, which also hid every view of the plain from us. Banks of cold, damp mist soon drove us indoors after sunset, whereas until now we had always spent the cool evenings, the best part of the day, outside. There we sat, dressed in loden and sweaters, and still almost cold, for at fifteen hundred meters the temperature drops very quickly in the evening. We imagined ourselves in an Alpine hut when, by the faint lamplight, sitting at the narrow expedition table, we devoured our evening meal—a large pot of “chicken and rice”—with a ravenous hunger we had not yet experienced in the tropics.

Our boys' teeth were chattering up there; we had to open one of the bundles of barter goods already and give each of them a magnificent red blanket, in which they now parade as proud as kings.

The road from Mbo to Fossongwenschem led us through the most splendid mountain forest, which begins only above the grassy region. Gigantic trees with spreading crowns are completely laden with lichens, some pale gray, others brownish yellow, floating like veils among the branches. Climbing plants wind around the trunks and have completely overrun some trees; thick undergrowth about a meter and a half high covers the ground. From Mbo we climbed another two hundred meters or so; and the higher we went,

On the Heights

the more beautiful it became. On the ridges, the forest gave way to grass; there, in splendid weather, we looked out over steep, jagged mountains, deep valleys, and endless forest. Oil palms had long since disappeared from among the broadleaf trees; only rarely did one glimpse a small clump of date palms, and, as we climbed, there were ever more tree ferns, reaching up to four meters in height.

After crossing the pass, we found still more gigantic broadleaf trees, tree ferns, and lichens; broad, spreading crowns rested on mighty, gnarled trunks. There was no longer any opening to the view anywhere; the air was still, without the slightest movement; one felt oneself in the midst of a wild, solitary forest stretching for days in every direction. Then, all at once, almost as though cut off cleanly, the forest that a moment before had been so dense and impenetrable ended. Gently rounded mountains, entirely clothed in grass, unfolded before our eyes; fields climbed the slopes of the lower hills. The soil, which toward the end of the forested range had become gray and sandy, was now red again, and increasingly fiery as we advanced through the hilly country. And grass as far as the eye could see! A cool wind passed over it, bending it and raising it again like a wheatfield at home; it stretched endlessly, a dull yellow, beneath the shimmering heat of the midday sun. In the narrow gorges deeply cut by streams grew dense thickets of raffia palms, from which the natives obtain their palm wine, “mimbo.” In the fields we saw malabo, a large tuber; potatoes and plantains grew around the huts, whose appearance here is quite different from what we had seen until then.

The Grasslands

On the coast, in the Mbo plain, and in the steep mountain range, the huts are tiny and low, built of palm mats and topped with a shallow-pitched gable roof. Their long side always faces the road, and that is where the entrance is; often the gable ends are pressed tightly together, forming a long dark-brown row beneath the light-colored banana trees. Here and there similar huts also cling to the sheer mountainsides. Here, on the heights of the grasslands, the natives' houses first surprise one by their height. The square body of the building is already distinctly taller than it is wide; above it sits a massive, high roof, pyramidal with rounded corners, projecting far beyond the walls and looking almost like a great hat dispensing shade. It is covered with thick masses of dry grass.

The rest station at Fossongwenschem was built entirely in the local native style; the rooms of the Europeans' house seemed extraordinarily high to us. The walls were made from the sturdy ribs of raffia leaves, tied together and plastered with fiery red clay. The widely overhanging roof was supported by separate posts and formed a narrow veranda all around the house. It stood on a gently sloping little hill; before it stretched a long square of well-packed earth, bordered to right and left by ten little red huts for the porters, cook, and boys. The lower stable building closed the bottom side of the enclosure. Seen from the open central room of our house, it all looked like a German farmyard; but the red walls, pointed roofs, and, above all, the blacks who, in the falling evening,

The Grasslands

moved about there as though on a deep and neatly framed stage reminded us that we were in Africa. Over the porters' houses we could see the mountains surrounding us, almost all similarly gentle and rounded; a vista opened between them: into the remotest distance, the same picture of gentle mountain lines covered with grass.

The villagers came and stared at us; the porters sent emissaries asking for salt as extra pay for this long march; the boys had fought and wounded each other with sharp objects, and their wounds had to be dressed. Night had come before we realized it.

In the open grasslands, one can see the place one is heading for from afar; but then the path still goes around six mountains, descends deeply, and climbs again several times, so that in the end one thinks one will never arrive. On the other hand, it is all the more beautiful early in the morning. Then it is wonderfully cool, heavy dew clings to grass and trees, the wind blows, and one follows the winding red road with lively pleasure. Here in Dschang we are about fourteen hundred meters above sea level; the landscape has gradually changed: there are no longer isolated, rounded summits but long lines of heights spreading broadly, separated by shallow valleys. From the rest house, on a hillside a few hundred meters from the station, we have all this before us; in clear weather the sheer walls of the Bambuto mountains appear in the distance.

Today we have already had many black visitors. In the valley at our feet, strictly separated from the village of the local inhabitants of Dschang, there is a settlement

The Grasslands

of the Hausa, that people of itinerant merchants who, coming from far away in the north, travel from country to country, and whom we meet here for the first time. Scarcely had we settled into the rest house when the chief of the local Hausa, the “Madugo,” sent us a few eggs and a little basket of multicolored woven straw as a welcoming present, naturally expecting a corresponding gift in return. His messenger learned from our people that we would certainly be glad to buy another horse or two, since a single horse for three travelers must give a rather poor impression here in the highlands, where horses are common; judging by the great number of our loads, our boys decidedly consider us immensely rich.

So the Madugo came to the rest house very early today to negotiate over a horse, accompanied by a crowd of his people. They truly looked noble: tall, slender, very lean bodies, with small heads around which they had wound enormous turbans made from white cotton cloth twisted into thick rolls. Their cheeks and necks were completely wrapped as well; only the eyes, nose, and mouth showed, black as pitch in that white frame, the features fine and sharply drawn despite a prominent jaw. Their whole bodies, down to their feet, were enveloped in pleated garments, open at the chest and very prettily adorned with yellowish embroidery. Metal rings jingled on their slender fingers and ankles; some also wore broad leather sandals of fine and skillful workmanship. The horse—a sturdy, very light chestnut with a broad blaze—was brought forward. In a single leap the Madugo sprang from the ground onto the unsaddled animal, seized the reins, and set it

The Hausa

galloping along the road, first one way and then the other. He was splendid to see as he swept past in his flowing white garments, urging the horse into a gallop with great blows delivered from above. Then the bargaining began: he asked three hundred marks, we offered a hundred; he praised his horse and we disparaged it; finally the matter was put off until the next day. This will probably continue for a week until we agree. Meanwhile, we are making all sorts of small deals with him and the other Hausa. They bring up entire loads of mats, straw dishes, decorated gourds, weapons, clothing, and leather goods, and prove tireless although we buy little; for farther inland we shall certainly find all these objects better and cheaper.

Emissaries from the native chiefs have also come to bring presents and offer objects for sale. Here they already know the value of money very well, and also know that the European collector pays dearly for fine pieces. But eighty marks for a recently made embroidered dance mask still seems rather expensive to us. We begin with smaller objects: knives with carved handles and chased blades, raffia bags and caps, for which we give colorful printed cottons, tobacco, mirrors, and spoons. When several deals are being negotiated at once—for each lasts a good while with all this back-and-forth—the black fellows mock one another, each disparaging the other's wares to enhance his own.

Incidentally, each messenger first asked for the expedition's dog, Tiger, for his chief,

Barter

probably to eat. A bargaining scene of this kind must be quite amusing to watch: we in deck chairs before our house, under the overhanging roof; the blacks on the ground facing us, arms and legs crossed, scratching themselves from time to time. The boy Djimbe goes back and forth between us, lengths of colored cotton over his arm, praising their merits in the most extraordinary English: “You no think this cloth worth ten times this bush knife? This cloth be very very strong, he have fine colors. Massa give you cloth, you give knife! You be stupid savage, you no know cloth worth ten times knife? If you no want, go away, Massa no want see you more. He go buy other knife from other man for penny.”[1] When this has lasted a quarter of an hour, the Negro says, “Yes, me want,”[2] and the bargain is struck. Throughout all these scenes, half our expedition baggage is spread around us: all the boots are in the sun, the bedding hangs on a rope; tins, instruments, and papers are scattered everywhere, and multicolored wonders spill out of the loads of barter goods.

Dschang, December 9

Franz rode off very early today to visit, under Lieutenant Rausch's guidance, the station's large livestock farm at

[1] “Do you not think this cloth is worth ten times the bush knife? The cloth is strong and has fine colors. The gentleman gives you the cloth, you give the knife. You are a stupid savage; do you not know that the cloth is worth ten times the knife? If you do not want it, go away, the gentleman does not want to see you anymore. He will buy another knife from another man for a penny.”

[2] “Yes, I want to.”

Barter

Djutitza. Meanwhile, Waibel and I are packing all sorts of things, some to be sent ahead to Bamum, others to go back to the coast: ethnographic objects. We have already assembled a collection of eighty-two items, including some very fine pieces, especially two old bead-embroidered dance masks that are slipped over the head; they bear a horrible grimacing face sewn in cloth and two stiff, beaded elephants' ears, with long embroidered strips extending down the front and back. For the larger one, we paid fifteen marks in cash and a six-and-a-half-meter length of blue printed cloth; for the smaller, only a length of that cloth and a red blanket. We own a whole series of knives with carved handles and chased blades, as well as a dozen fine spears. Through barter with the Hausa we acquired bows, quivers filled with arrows, fine gourds, raffia bags, and mats.

I am now looking for a thick, sausage-shaped necklace covered in red beads and cowries, which, together with a very thin cord around the hips, constitutes the women's entire clothing; so far, without success. I have stopped a good fifteen women passing this way and had an interpreter ask whether they would sell their necklaces; I offered money, cloth, tobacco, umbrellas, salt: none will part with hers. “Something of God lives inside,”[1] the interpreter told me. It is probably some sort of marriage charm, for I have not yet seen this necklace on young girls. When I asked whether I could obtain one from a dead woman, gestures made me understand that the necklaces accompany the deceased into their graves.

[1] “There is something divine in it.”

Barter

Our domestic staff has been increased by a true Moor, admittedly a very small one: “Ntong,” whom we picked up along the road. He is a sturdy little fellow of about eight, laughing continually and dressed only in a tiny apron. He is to help with waiting at table, packing, and cleaning; it is astonishing how completely independent a little black creature of that age is. Today, happy and proud, with a bag on his back containing tinned meat, fruit, and chocolate, he ran behind Franz, the horse, and the horse boy. He knows the fifteen-kilometer route and will certainly manage very well. It is amusing to see how the military school at the station makes its influence felt. If one asks the little rascal something, he stands to attention, hands at the seams of nonexistent trousers, and answers in a military tone, “Janoss”—he cannot pronounce “Jawohl,” “Yes, sir.”

Housekeeping continues to run fairly well here at the rest house; one must simply not judge it by our ideas of order at home: after all, that is not why one went on an expedition. Three days ago we bought a sheep weighing twenty-five kilos for fifteen marks and slaughtered it. Since then we have been living ceaselessly on mutton, as previously on chickens: boiled, roasted, pickled in vinegar, in steaks, in every imaginable form. The liver, legs, and back are for us; the men devoured everything else, entrails included. I tried sterilizing some of the boiled and roast meat; it has kept well.

But otherwise there are many unexpected difficulties. The bank in Duala had assured us that every station

Provisioning the Expedition

in the interior accepted its checks in payment; yet the stations are not authorized to do so, and here in Dschang we can obtain nothing with checks: neither porters, firewood, nor provisions. We have already had to pay Dschang station in cash for the porters who brought us here from Bare. So here we are with a book full of checks and several thousand marks in the bank in Duala, unable to use them. The few hundred marks remaining to us will scarcely suffice for the march from Bana to Bamum, for a porter tax was introduced in the colony a fortnight ago: for every porter supplied by the station whom we keep for three to ten days, we must pay one mark in tax; for each one we keep longer, three marks. With a hundred and sixty porters, that amounts to considerable sums, especially in such a cash situation.

Dschang, December 10

The climate is wonderful here on the heights. So far it has never been oppressively hot; a light, cool breeze is always blowing and the nights are almost cold, so that one wraps oneself in thick woolen blankets and then sleeps deeply and dreamlessly. There is no trace here of the stifling nights on the coast.

I did indeed obtain the much-desired woman's necklace. Djimbe went from house to house in a more distant village asking for firewood, which is very scarce and relatively expensive here; and in passing he let drop that we would pay very well for such an object. A hideous, one-eyed fellow came at nightfall, showed the necklace, and asked twelve marks for it. By making him wait two and a half hours, we

Money Worries

eventually obtained it for four marks and a red blanket worth ninety pfennigs.

The horse business is settled as well, admittedly in the negative; but in the meantime it gave us much more worry. On the advice of a gentleman at the station, we had bought the animal after endless bargaining with the Hausa. They came three times a day, and it was impossible to get rid of them in less than an hour and a half. Bargaining is a real pleasure to them; they simply do not understand when one tells them one has no time, that they must let the animal go at such and such a price or leave. “Let us trade, Massa, let us trade!” Then came the most naive attempts to obtain a high price through flattery: “You be big, big Massa, me be little boy for you. Me like you much, much, you be big, big.” At last the horse was ours for two hundred and fifty marks. But after two days in the stable with good food, it suddenly became completely lame, and numerous little sores appeared on its legs. When Franz demanded that he take the animal back and return the money, the Hausa Madugo merely laughed in our faces: the deal was done, and the money had long since been sent to Bamum. But the station came to our aid and, willing or not, the black rogue plunged his hand deep into his great pocket and brought out, intact, all the rolls of coins Franz had given him three days before.

From here we shall go to Bana, then by way of Bangante to Bamum, where we have already sent ahead the greater half of our baggage. Forty loads have also gone to Bana, so that we shall take only thirty-five with us and will certainly have little

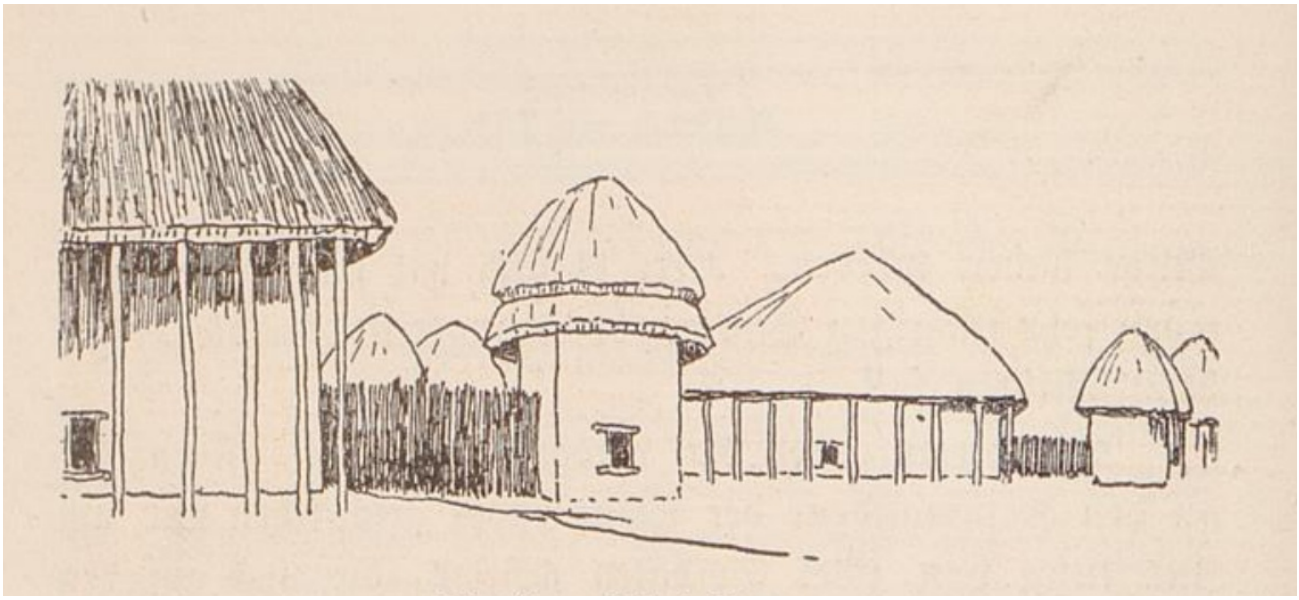
Horse Trading

trouble with so small a caravan. Mr. Rausch has also assigned us a very capable station messenger to supervise the porters.

We owe him much good advice as well. Franz has written to the commander of the colonial troops asking for two soldiers to be assigned to accompany us on our marches through the military districts, that is, Dschang, Bamenda, and later Banjo.

The day after tomorrow, we set off.

Departure from Dschang



The chief's compound in Bana.

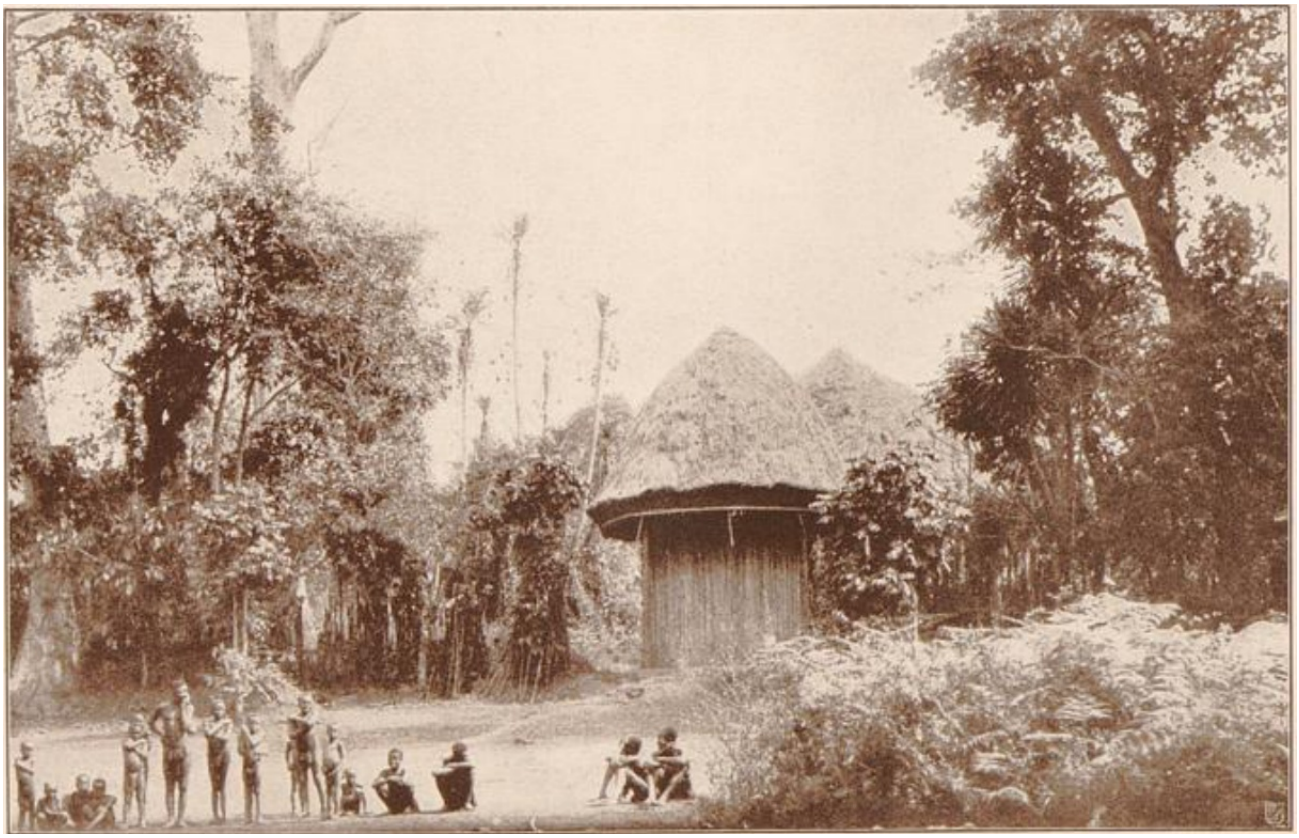
Bana, December 17, 1911

We have reached the end of the great constructed road and, with it, the last fine rest house. From now on it will be bush paths and life in the tent. Yesterday afternoon we had tents put up here as a trial; it was difficult, but it was done. The space inside is certainly small, but the area beneath the open awning is relatively spacious. There is room to sit, work, and store a great deal of baggage.

Willing or not, we must remain here for some time, for there is nowhere in the interior where one can obtain money in exchange for a check. We have written to the bank on the coast asking for a fairly large sum to be sent here; we are now waiting for it. Meanwhile, we are once again enjoying wholeheartedly the comforts of the rest house and the kindness of the commander of the local military post.

The road from Dschang to here rose and fell, through groves of oil palms in broad hollows and, especially on the last day, through a remarkably cultivated country where the compounds are widely scattered.

The people of Bana do not live in clustered villages like the forest Negroes, but, according to



Village in the Bana district.

the custom of the grasslands, each man has built his compound apart, separate from the others: one larger house for the man and several smaller ones for the women. All the houses have a square plan; the walls, assembled from palm ribs tied together, are entirely plastered with red laterite. They are generally taller than they are wide, and the door, the house's only opening, is set about half a meter above the ground. Some houses are tiny; there are some only two meters square, with a door one meter high and half a meter wide. All have a high, pointed roof, projecting far on every side and covered with thick masses of grass. These houses sometimes resemble great mushrooms beneath the immense, pale-green leaves of the plantains that surround every compound in little groves.

The dracaena plays a great part in the fences; every field is enclosed, sometimes by old, much-branched trees, sometimes by young cuttings linked together with cross-poles. At times our path ran constantly along such fences, as in a district of gardens at home.

We saw almost no one: everybody fled. A few times we caught sight of people in the distance among the tall grasses; but they immediately threw themselves down and vanished completely. When they could no longer escape, they crouched on the ground with fearful gestures and clapped their hands. They are still all very shy here, and so afraid of the station that none will come to offer us ethnographic objects, even though we are staying a few minutes away from it. The great Sunday market had just

Dwellings in the Grasslands

been held up behind the station. Around an open square sat two hundred women and men, each with a large bunch of plantains or a heap of potatoes before them, at fifteen or twenty pfennigs apiece. An order from the station forbids anyone to bring more or less, to prevent bargaining with the soldiers, and especially with the soldiers' rather disagreeable wives, which sometimes leads to the greatest uproar. The market thus proceeds rather tediously: each buyer chooses what he likes, throws down fifteen pfennigs, and carries off his purchase; each seller stays motionless beside his goods and waits for the fifteen pfennigs that are sure to come. We took a few photographs and soon went home.

But afterward we went to the compound of the chief of Bana, the Fona, and I was quite overwhelmed by the surprising impression it made. Even from afar one sees the cluster of houses: a tangle of small roofs dominated by three or four large ones. A stream plunging over a high, abrupt waterfall seems to form the boundary; beyond it begin dense palisades made from the cut trunks of young palms, driven into the ground tight against one another and securely lashed together with thick strips of raffia. Because the trunks are of unequal height and almost black, these fences take on an unsettling appearance, their dark poles standing out against the sky in a confused, restless outline. The path follows them for a long time, then suddenly and quite unexpectedly opens onto a vast square of well-packed earth. On its western side stands a large, tall house whose walls are entirely

At the Chief of Bana's

built of fine, slender palm poles, without any coating of earth. The high roof is supported all around by straight, freestanding trunks, which the smaller houses lack. In the middle of the wall is the door, the only opening, framed on all sides by thick pieces of timber.

The Fona came to meet us through this door and declared himself willing to show us his compound. First we remained on the great square, where a market is held every eight days—the Negro of the grasslands divides time into eight-day weeks. Its southern and northern sides are bordered by several earthen houses with red walls and conical roofs, each linked to the next by high palisades. A few openings are cut high up in the fences; broad ladders made from great trunks lead to them, and everywhere children's and women's heads could be seen peeping out. We asked the Fona how many children he had: “Me no know, plenty there”;[1] how many wives? “Plenty.”

On the eastern side of the square begins a broad avenue lined with closely planted trees clipped into hedges. Many small houses hide behind these hedges; the entrance to one of these women's towns consists of a gatehouse with marvelously carved posts. These carvings, executed with great care and certainly already very old, represent human figures: men carrying weapons or dance insignia, women, one of whom holds a child in her arms; all are very naturalistic, although naively conceived. The inner faces of the posts bear ornaments of stylized animals, work of a character probably older still.

[1] “I do not know; there are many.”

At the Chief of Bana's

At the end of the avenue, in the middle of a grassy square, stands the drum house, whose walls are formed from widely interlaced palm poles, giving the impression of a coarse-meshed net. Inside rests a great drum, which only the chief himself beats on solemn occasions. It is carved from a single gigantic tree trunk in the shape of a cow; the head, with its long horns curving backward, is very well made and realistic, the body admittedly far too massive and shapeless, but the thighs are clearly defined. The drum must measure a meter high and two to three meters long; it is an old and precious piece that testifies to the artistic skill of the people of Bana.

After seeing everything outside, we entered the compound.

The door of the great house forms the main entrance; but the house seems to be merely a kind of ceremonial building, for a long, dark corridor runs through its center, with separate living quarters on either side. On emerging, one finds oneself in a narrow courtyard surrounded by red earthen huts; high mat fences stretch from one to the next, fitted with tiny sliding doors of palm poles. The houses too have narrow, low doors, but each is framed by the same massive beams. Then began a walk through an endless, incomprehensible maze of little courtyards, passages, and corners. Most of the houses are absolutely identical in size and shape; only now and then does one stand out through carved doorframes, a strange double roof, or posts supporting a roof that

The Great Drum

projects very widely. We went ever farther, without asking whether this suited the chief, slipped through tiny doors from one courtyard to another, looked inside the houses, and finally reached the Fona's own courtyard, situated in the center of this whole maze. Here the mat wall was crowned by a special little roof; to right and left, guardhouses with open loggias bordered the square. The Fona's house was medium-sized and had roof supports, but otherwise no particular ornament.

The interior, as in many other houses, consisted of a single central room with a passage running around it; no daylight penetrates it at all. A small wood fire burns on the floor, its smoke irritating the eyes. By its light one sees a low platform of palm poles against the wall: the bed; besides that, a European garden chair and, in a corner, an enameled water jug. That is all the furnishing of the royal dwelling.

For anyone accustomed to seeing Negroes, the chief of Bana is uncommonly handsome: tall and slender, with a narrow face and a straight nose. On his head he wears a cotton skullcap whose white ground is covered with dense, multicolored embroidery; his upper body is bare, and one can make out fine tattooing on his chest; a broad, colored loincloth, passed between his thighs, reaches to his knees. He is said to be a very capable chief; he certainly gives an impression of greater intelligence than most other Negroes. A certain greed for the products of our civilization is quite understandable, considering how short a time he has known European things.

The Compound

Bana, December 24, 1911

A true Christmas atmosphere has settled over us. Toward evening, when I opened the Christmas parcel sent from home, I found candles and silver threads among all sorts of cakes. I immediately sent the boys to fetch some long fronds from a palm tree. We decorated the pillars of the house with them and fastened one particularly fine frond to the veranda wall so that it projected diagonally into the room. Then we placed the candles, hung the silver threads, and lit our Christmas tree. And it was a real Christmas in the cool, starry brightness of the tropics.

December 27, 1911

The “play,” a great dance festival, is the high point of the Negro's life. It is at once a religious service, wild ecstasy, and exuberant entertainment. A trusted man of the chief, a Tschinda, came to fetch us: the play was to begin at three o'clock, when the sun burns most fiercely.

On the great square before the palace, usually always deserted, everything was in a fever of activity. One could already hear the drums from afar and, on approaching, the singing: to our ears, merely “ho-ho, ho-ho, ho-ho,” always descending a fourth, with brief chromatic rises between.

As we enter the square, the dance gets under way. Two drums resound in the middle. One, entirely wooden, rests on the ground and is struck with sticks; the other, tall and slender, has an oxhide stretched across its upper opening. The drummer holds it upright between his knees and strikes it with his

Christmas

palms. All around is a broad circle of men, a good two hundred, moving slowly around the drummers, their faces turned in the direction of their progress rather than toward the center. They stand very close to one another, sometimes almost pressed together; and all these many naked bodies are traversed by the strangest tremors. They do not walk: they make very short, jerky hops, knees bent, very fast and timed to the beat of the drums. The upper body is inclined slightly forward, the forearms raised in front; shoulders, back, and chest are shaken by frantic, convulsive movements. Thus the circle turns, slowly as a whole, while each link in the long chain moves wildly. The monotonous song resounds without interruption, sometimes broken by brief handclaps and piercing cries. The dance leader rushes about the whole extent of the circle; he performs strange steps, suddenly leaps to one side and then the other, here and there, in long, half-turning strides, like a beautiful, supple wild beast; he makes brief signs to the dancers, who turn toward him and twitch their shoulders and chest muscles faster and more violently than before. After a few minutes the leader is exhausted; he returns to the line and another leaps forward. The dance continues in this way for a quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour, always in a circle around the drums. From time to time the melodies of the song change, the drummers take turns, a short pause occurs. At last the Fona himself takes his place among the dancers: unquestionably the handsomest of his people, tall, slender, every muscle of his

Dance and Play

body developed to perfection, more imposing and mature, at his thirty-five years or so, than all the young men, younger and fresher than the old men, better groomed and taller than all the others. At first he follows the circle; then he leaps into the center to lead the dance, greeted by his people's shrill, prolonged cries. And he truly dances like their king: head thrown back, eyes half closed, every muscle in his face tense, as though in ecstasy, yet with such dignity that he seems to be performing a sacred act. He darts from one side of the circle to the other in gliding leaps, but his jumps retain a calm quality; he stands there, limbs quivering, shoulders and chest shaken by a furious rhythmic movement, but his face remains grave; and he performs different movements and steps from his people—perhaps the dance reserved for the king. Several times he rushes into the circle and then takes his place in the line again, while the crowd's frenzy steadily grows. Every body gleams with sweat, breathing becomes labored, red sand whirls up and envelops everything in a fiery mist. The smell of dust and sweat is strong.

Then the king leaves the line and walks toward the palace with an indifferent air; the dance slows, the drum falls silent, and in a few moments everyone has dispersed. At sunset the vast square is lonely and deserted as on other days.

Bangante, January 1, 1912

Every morning, dry grass burns on all the heights. The natives set it alight early, evidently

The Chief Dances

calculating carefully and making use of the wind, which admittedly comes from the east every day here at this season. The whole air is filled with white smoke and haze, no distant view is visible, and one walks literally through fire. Here and there black areas stretch over the heights, bordered by a fringe of red flames licking at the grass; and even from far away one hears the crackling of the fire rapidly devouring the tall yellow grasses. When the path runs beside one of these burning places, one walks through thick clouds of smoke; the flames sometimes reach nearly a man's height, the crackling drowns all conversation, and tremendous heat pours out. Whole flocks of large birds of prey hover above the blaze and now and then swoop down to seize a lizard, a snake, or some other small animal.

Everywhere old furrows appear beneath the burned grass; the people cultivate their fields on the steep mountainsides up to seventeen or eighteen hundred meters, while their compounds lie at the bottom of the valleys. Since they do not know about manuring, they must occasionally leave their fields fallow to allow the soil to recover; vigorous grass immediately grows and rapidly covers the whole surface. They can only get rid of it by burning it when, after several years, they want to make fields there again; perhaps they also have some vague idea of the fertilizing effect of ash. In the valley bottoms and on the undulating plain, most of the land is cultivated and little lies fallow; but on the heights of the steep mountains the fields are scattered among the resting land.

We went right around the Batscha mountains and crossed their foothills, climbing high and steeply three times,

Bush Fires

then descending three times; the horse had to be led with great care, and riding it was out of the question. Then we crossed a broad depression with wide valleys and long, flattened ridges, always skirting the foot of the mountains, whose strange chains, rising quite abruptly and without transition from the plain, invited work and exploration. But unfortunately we had to pass on: the itinerary required it.

One always feels that the place one has just reached is more beautiful than all the previous ones. And certainly they are all incredibly different. Here the great marketplace stands at the top of a broad ridge; the red earth is well packed, and beneath the branches of three old trees one glimpses the vast, undulating expanse, entirely covered in yellow grass. Our tents stand a little below the summit, sheltered from the wind, on a broad lane bordered by fences; behind them hide the women's houses and the chief's compound. The height shuts off every distant view; even the lower part of the tree trunks is hidden from us, and all the life unfolding on the square—the women going about with their carrying baskets, the men with their weapons, gourds, and loads, the children playing at imitating the adults' dances—stands out for us against the pale-blue sky. Those fantastic black silhouettes moving up there create the effect of a stage scene.

Now it is true expedition life: in the morning, at five, the alarm rings in the tent; one of us, from bed, reaches for the whistle whose shrill sound calls the boys. One soon arrives, lights the lantern, for it is still pitch-dark, and we dress in haste. The lads practically snatch the bed from beneath

Camp at Bangante

one's body and tie it up; linen, mosquito boots, and anything else still lying about are crammed into trunks and bags. Already outside, the seventy-five porters are sitting in a long line watching for their loads. With two soldiers, everything now goes impeccably; they never again rush forward to seize the lightest packages.

We eat breakfast half standing, while the soldiers and head porters dismantle the tents and the cook is already waiting impatiently to pack the dishes into his crates. When everything is ready and each porter is squatting behind his load, the leaders take the ropes of the sheep and goats we are bringing; the command rings out, “Loads up!” and within seconds the procession is moving. One soldier walks in front, the other brings up the rear; the caravan then advances so fast that we remain far behind: they always reach their destination several hours before us. Earlier still arrive the women and boys who accompany the soldiers everywhere; they leave before daybreak to prepare everything for their masters.

After taking solemn leave of the chief, we too set out. Waibel walks faster and generally draws ahead of us quite early. Each of us has a few men along to carry the equipment needed for work on the road: barometer, cameras, geological hammers, plant press, butterfly net, painting materials, and so on. In addition, a porter always walks close to us with the “big pot”: this is a large insulated cooker that I use here as an “icebox,” so that we have a refreshing lunch on the way. At first I tried taking hot food in it; but I found that, once

Life on the March

shaken about, it tasted awful. However, since the pot maintains any temperature, I now have a cold milk or fruit pudding put into it in the evening; it always stays cool and really is the best refreshment on the road. In the morning we agree on the time at which whoever is ahead will wait for the others, then we pause for half an hour to eat lunch.

When we reach camp between noon and four, we quickly eat something hot again: pea-paste soup, pancakes, or even just coffee or cocoa. The real meal takes place only in the evening, around seven, when it is dark and nothing else can be undertaken anyway. Depending on what needs doing on arrival or how tired we are, we bathe as soon as we arrive, or only later, before dinner or before going to bed, in the large, shallow traveling bath.

New Year's night was cool, only fourteen degrees Celsius, and heavy dew fell. The roof of our tent was streaming outside, and on the inner face of the flysheet, which also forms the veranda, water droplets crowded together; all the trunks were wet and the tent pegs loosened by the weight of water. The body of the tent itself stands beneath this protective roof; when the front wall is lowered and closed, no damp gets in.

At midnight we welcomed the new year with sparkling wine and toasted the success of the expedition and our work. May this year 1912 be kind to us!

On the bank of the Nun, January 4, 1912

After a scorching march over heights and through ravines, across yellow or burned savanna where the small, bare,

Camp Life

stunted trees stand white among the black remains of the grasses, we still had to cross a river in the afternoon in a long and difficult operation.

I had imagined a suspension bridge of this sort to be rather more harmless. It hangs high between the trees, like a great hammock over the fifty-meter-wide river, entirely knotted from lianas and held by long ropes of lianas. The bottom of this bridge is five centimeters wide, uneven and slippery; to right and left runs a high railing that spreads outward toward the top, so that one can just grasp it with both hands. Between the railing and the bottom, regularly knotted ties are arranged at fifty-centimeter intervals; lengthwise, another two or three long ropes run parallel to the bottom, thus forming a very coarse-meshed net. A cyclopean ladder of rough trunks climbs into the tree to the bridge; then the white man, far clumsier in his shoes than the barefoot Negro, must cross cautiously, slowly, step by step, holding a railing in each hand and carefully placing his feet on the crossings, so as always to have the bottom of the bridge between the heel and the forepart of the sole. The Negro places his feet straight, grips with his toes, and quickly carries the heaviest loads across, tied onto his back. In the middle, the bridge sways strongly from side to side; one must not look down for long, otherwise the sliding and flowing water makes one dizzy. One must quickly learn to place one's feet correctly without looking at them, and it is better to look straight ahead.

We crossed quickly and without difficulty, although I frankly admit that at the first steps my

The First Suspension Bridge

heart was pounding. The greatest difficulty came from the horse and dog, which naturally could not use the bridge. A rope secured on the Bangante bank had to be carefully passed to the other side—fortunately the two clotheslines were just long enough. Its end was passed around the horse's neck; Franz quickly fired several more shots into the water to drive away any crocodiles. Then the groom led the animal into the water, and it swam across very well. We did the same with the dog Tiger; but I believe he would have swum without a rope too if we had let him enter at the same time as the horse, which he loves above everything. As soon as the horse was in the water, he was determined to follow it.

Getting the loads across took four hours, for the bridge could carry no more than two men at a time. Our interpreter, whom I had showered with a fine present only the day before yesterday, even stubbornly refused to walk just in front of or behind me, so fearful was he for his precious life. Yet he had no scruples about sending two porters together with a heavy double load. Naturally, the bridge held, although a few cross-ties broke in the middle.

Here, on the bank of the Nun, we are living in the open countryside; the first town in Bamum is still three hours away. A few abandoned, half-collapsed Hausa huts serve as kitchen and shelter for the soldiers and boys. The tents are pitched amid tall yellow grass that blocks every view; only on the heights behind us do the flames of bush fires rise in broad, fiery bands. Fortunately, there is no burning on this side. The porters lit their cooking fires in cleared places in the grass and prepared the

The First Suspension Bridge



Suspension bridge.

food they had brought. Franz threatened them terribly: if they did not watch the fire, each would first receive a beating from the soldiers, and then he would shoot them himself. Now all the fires are out, the little boys have crawled under the tent's flysheet, and we are going to bed.

Basset, January 8, 1912

We have already been four days in the fabulous country of Bamum, perhaps the country of the most intelligent Negroes in Cameroon, where milk and honey truly flow for the European. One is treated like a god walking in human disguise. Sultan Njoja has had enormous rest houses built everywhere along the road and has installed a “Dji” in each, who respectfully brings everything one could wish for. If our porters tried to eat in a single day everything brought for them, they would die of it. On arrival we find baskets of chickens, pots of maize flour, and great bunches of the most magnificent bananas waiting for us; the Dji and his attendants greet us with such deference that only prostration is lacking. A special envoy from Njoja has even come as far as Basset to meet us.

It makes one's heart bleed not to be able to stay here four weeks, not because of the quality of the accommodation, but because of the gigantic, enchanting volcanic massif of Bapit, at whose foot we are camped. Yesterday toward evening, Franz and Waibel went out again to one of the many isolated little crater mountains in the foreland and returned beside themselves with enthusiasm. The country here resembles a map of the Moon, crater ring after crater ring; everywhere fresh black lava, and, wherever it has broken down, luxuriant gardens.

In the Country of Bamum

This morning at four, the two of them set off to climb the highest point of Bapit. They have about a thousand meters to ascend; it will be tiring, for they want to be back before dark. Thirty porters accompany them to open the way; fortunately, all the grass above burned recently. But I fear they will not have much of a view, certainly not as far as the Tikar mountains; the haze is too dense at this season.

Today is the great washday in camp. Each boy received soap and set off with his loincloths and little shirts to the stream, where clothes and people alike are being soaped and rinsed. They are now returning little by little, their black skin shining with cleanliness. I have done a little drawing, writing, sewing, and mending. A true day of rest now and then does me good; for on marching days it is I, after all, who have the most to do in the evening at our stopping place and am the last to be able to sit down quietly. Sometimes the cook and boys, who of course cannot read, cannot find the right tins in the crates; sometimes one asks for soap, another for salt; and above all, the many wounds to wash and dress take time and are very tiring. There has not yet been a single marching day when I have not treated at least three half-severed toes in the evening and dressed a few suppurating ulcers. These are tasks that simply cannot be entrusted to the boys and that need to be done carefully. In compensation, I have the least to do during the march.

Fumban, January 13, 1912

For two days one travels through the steppe. Bapit, whose foot we skirt for several hours, fades

A Day of Rest

farther and farther away; fields and gardens come to an end. Once the great swamp forest in the broad depression has also been left behind, one walks only through grass. Kuti, the overnight stop, is probably the only wooded oasis. The government is establishing experimental cotton plantations there.

The terrain becomes hillier, rises about a hundred meters, and the landscape grows ever more deserted and desolate. Hills and lines of heights, one behind another, all covered with yellow grass and largely blackened by fire.

“Fumban,” the groom suddenly says as we reach a height, pointing ahead of us.

Beyond the blackened steppe, we see in the distance a kind of wall following a ridge, disappearing into the valley, continuing over the next height, and stretching far to either side; great dracaenas with grotesque branches accompany it. By a narrow path we cross a ditch, then a high rampart behind it; the whole vast expanse is covered with hundreds of deep, narrow, steep-sided pits, making approach to the town almost impossible; the path winds in zigzags among them. On drawing closer, one sees that the thick earthen walls have loopholes and projecting bastions at regular intervals, and are further protected by a second ditch. But the fortifications have great gaps; here and there the wall has collapsed, nowhere are scouts or gatekeepers visible; the town wall lies utterly dead in this deserted country.

But once the gate is reached, a cheerful, welcoming scene suddenly opens before one's eyes: a hilly country planted and green as a garden; little groves of

Toward a Great African Town

palms, kola trees, thick banana groves, and broad streets planted with avenues of tall trees and bordered by green hedges, or narrow paths between hedges leading from one compound to another. Twenty thousand people live together here within the town walls: poorer people, who own a little field and a few huts, and rich nobles, whose fine double-roofed house stands at the far end of a large courtyard bordered along its two long sides by the women's houses. Such a compound is always surrounded by tall trees or banana plantations; the fields of potatoes, yams, cassava, maize, and sorghum are clean and carefully tended.

Every house has a high pyramidal grass roof, beneath which runs a frieze of black and white bundles of grass representing animals and ornaments. A row of thick trunks supports the roof outside, for the walls, simply assembled from raffia stems tied together and coated in red earth, cannot support the heavy masses of grass.

In the shade of the trees, on the red ground between the red houses, little naked children can be seen scurrying on all fours; a man sits smoking a long brass pipe, women carry great gourds. We follow the broad street running some distance from the wall. Hundreds of people are on their way; they carry baskets and loads or drive livestock to the great market on the chief's square. All wear the loose, pleated garments of the Hausa, or their short sleeveless shirts falling like broad stoles over the shoulders; no European clothing is seen among the people of Bamum. The women are either naked or wrapped in large cloths tied beneath the armpits,

Fumban

which bind and drape them closely. One sometimes sees people of surprising beauty and height, scarcely possessing the type of face we call Negroid: curved noses, narrow cheeks, yet all deep brown, almost black.

The closer we come to the chief's square, the more tightly packed the compounds and houses become; in the end there are real streets, narrow and shaded as in Italy. This is the town of the chief's women, where each wife occupies a house alone. Then the chief's immense palace stands by itself on a vast square. A multitude of separate square houses are built tight against one another; the pointed roofs are connected in saddle shapes, thus forming a continuous rectangular complex. The short side, with four great entrance doors, has only carved posts as roof supports; a few gigantic drums can be made out in the dark entrance passages. We stop in the square and, after a few minutes, a procession of men in brilliant garments emerges from one of the doors; it parts, and the chief comes toward us to greet us. He wears a richly embroidered Hausa costume and a white turban; this admirably suits his powerful body and large head.

The first impression, which each subsequent meeting only reinforces, is of a man full of life and exceptionally gifted. That one forms this judgment at first sight is all the more remarkable because his features have something fixed about them, for one eye is almost blind and moves little. I now feel as though I have known this Njoja for a long time. During the three days we have spent here, he has visited us twice,

The Chief's Palace

and we spent an entire morning in his palace. Each time we liked him better.

He is perhaps thirty-two and came to power very young. Having avenged his slain father during a campaign against the Bansso, in which he fought alongside a company of the colonial troops, all his efforts are directed toward advancing his Bamum people economically and technically. At first he embarked on the foolish course of indiscriminately imitating every European institution he had seen; and it is easy to understand that he did not always learn the noblest culture from the whites settled in Bamum. Military things in particular had captivated him: for years he wore European clothes, especially uniforms, dressed his Bamum people in soldiers' jackets, had them practice the parade step, and more or less considered himself a brother of the German emperor. Later, however, the government no longer wanted the troop of Bamum soldiers; Njoja also gradually understood that by indiscriminately aping European costumes and institutions he was merely making himself and his people ridiculous. He has adopted Hausa dress entirely, which is certainly richer and more splendid than the old Bamum costume. And he has his men practice equestrian games like those he learned among the Fulani.

The fear that, with this costume and these cavalry exercises, he will gradually drift toward Mohammedanism seems scarcely justified to me. On the contrary, in the four years since Franz's first visit, the Hausa settlement has shrunk considerably, and its prestige has declined accordingly. And

Njoja, Educator of His People



Njoja.

everything Njoja has introduced into his country in the way of genuine achievements of civilization is entirely due to German influence.

The most remarkable thing is undoubtedly that he has invented a script of his own which, as a syllabic script, probably suits the Bamum language far better than ours could. At first he taught it to his people himself; now he has trained teachers and built a large, handsome school, a room with rows of benches; the half-grown boys, especially his sons, receive regular instruction there. He also sends many of them to the Basel Mission, which has a station here, to learn German and, above all, trades.

I believe Njoja is gifted above all in technical matters; he wants his Bamum people to learn to make as many things as possible themselves so that they will no longer need to buy from foreigners. His latest, truly astonishing achievement is the construction of a European house. He saw from the missionaries that a brick house, with a frame of beams and proper windows and doors, was more durable and therefore, despite the higher cost of construction, cheaper than Bamum houses, which really last only three or four years and then have to be completely rebuilt. He had bricks fired; the beams and boards, made from the hard, heavy timber of his forests, were sawn by Bamum people. He built a fine, proper roof frame, an interior staircase with a fretwork balustrade, solid doors and windows in sturdy frames; the roof is covered with sheet-metal tiles. And the whole house is prettier and in better taste than any European house I have yet seen in

Njoja, educator of his people

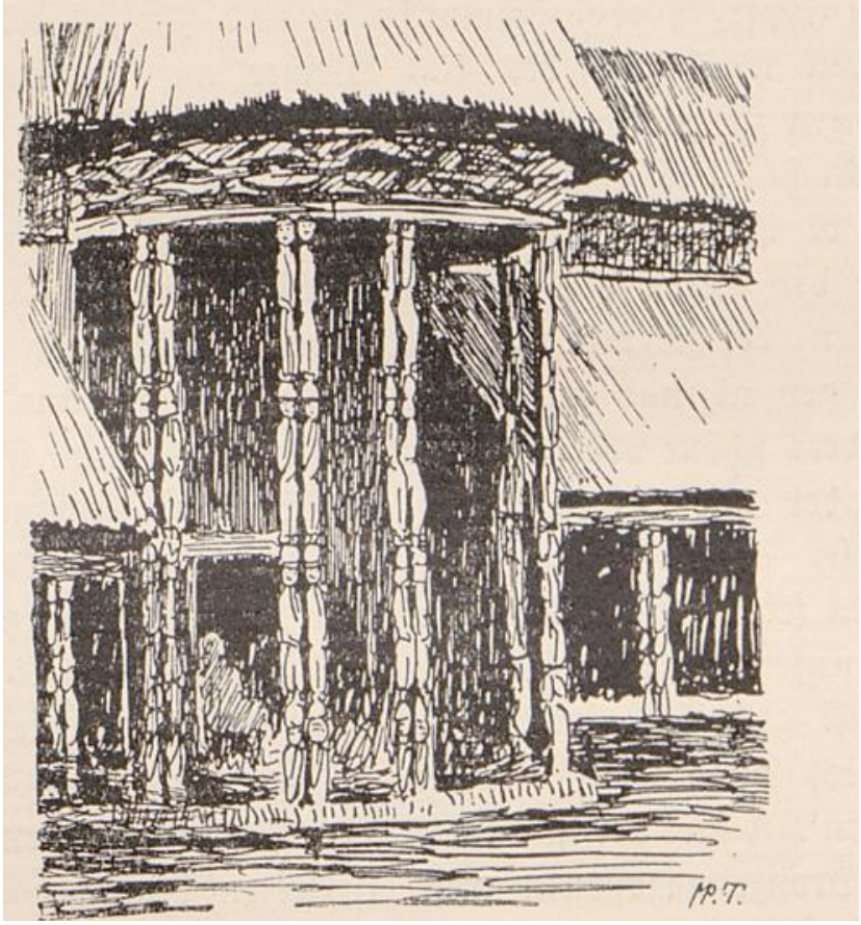
the interior. The rooms for the women and the young serving boys are, according to the custom of the country, steeped in dark half-light; open fires burn on round hearths, and the utensils are rudimentary. But Njoja’s own furniture is quite European. All the tables, chairs, and cupboards are made by Bamum workmen. His greatest pride is that his people have learned all this and done it themselves, that they can now also sew and embroider his clothes. He would like nothing around him that comes from other people: only Bamum work, Bamum work.

Of the hundreds of women Njoja possesses—he himself gives their number as four hundred and fifty, but I am convinced there are many more—twenty to thirty generally stay in the chief’s palace, while the others remain in their women’s town. The domestic life of this black prince is illustrated by the arrangement of his bedroom, which he proudly showed us. Besides two enormous iron tropical beds, whose mosquito-net posts are decorated with Bamum emblems, there are two camp beds for two further companions.

The European-style house is, moreover, incorporated into the rest of the palace in such a way that it cannot be seen from outside and does nothing to disturb the overall impression.

The immense building is truly noble and of princely beauty. Inside, spacious courtyards lie between the lofty, dark halls and the gloomy corridors, black as night. The sun shines pleasantly into them; an open gallery, its roof supported by carved columns, runs all around; in the middle, trees shade old gray gravestones. This is where the chief receives his visitors and administers justice.

The harem



When he visits a European, he comes with Oriental pomp: a runner precedes him, playing a bowed string instrument and praising the great Njoja, the greatest prince in Cameroon; then he follows on horseback, with his companions on either side, all dressed in brilliantly colored Hausa costumes.

But when he sits with us, drinking coffee and smoking, after a few moments I forget that I have a Negro before me. His manners are so natural and easy, while retaining a noble reserve, so entirely free of curiosity and covetousness toward European objects, that one soon speaks to him simply as one human being to another. As he expresses himself well in pidgin English, mutual understanding is also easy.

Reception hall in the chief’s compound at Bamum.

Njoja visiting the European

Fumban, January 16, 1912

Our house is a veritable museum; we have acquired fabulous treasures by barter, chiefly from women who literally stormed the house when they realized that we would give them money, tobacco, cloth, perfume, and mirrors for their pots, baskets, jewelry, and pipes. There were a good three to four hundred women at once; they all shouted together, held out their objects to us, broke the veranda railing; and finally, finding that things were not moving fast enough, they grew so unruly that we shut the doors of the house and let the dog loose, and he quickly drove them away with furious barking.

Now a few still come from time to time, for we buy only particularly beautiful or old objects. Today, business with Njoja himself also began to get under way; not directly—he is far too distinguished for that—but through one of his leading Tschindas. He sent us things that exceed our wildest expectations. We had been made to fear that we would find nothing old or valuable left, that everything had been taken away. And now we have pipes a meter long in our house, with the most beautiful cast-bronze, chased stems adorned with human heads in relief, or stems embroidered with beads; very old bronze and beadwork dance masks, worn on the head like helmets; bronze bells, carved buffalo horns: we stand amid all this in wonder. Of the pipe with the heads, the Tschinda told us that no white man had ever seen it and that Njoja was letting us have it only because he had known Franz for so long and was his friend.

One of our greatest and most pleasant surprises in

Handicrafts

Bamum was the queen mother, the foremost woman at court. In Cameroon, people generally say that she is monstrously fat and, moreover, ‘a shrew.’ We found a woman who is certainly very stout, which her ample Hausa garment conceals almost entirely, but whose face is so young and, for a Negress, so beautiful that at first we thought we were looking at a sister of Njoja’s. She too gives the impression of quite exceptional intelligence combined with great strength of will. For ten years she ruled on behalf of her underage son, and she remains his chief adviser today. I can well imagine that she surpasses her son in diplomatic skill. She seems to have stepped out of the Roman imperial age: a powerful, proud woman, certainly capable of terrible cruelty, but also of enchanting graciousness.

There is an almost tender friendship between her and me. I won her heart quite by chance: having learned that she had no children left except Njoja, I had her told that it was better to have a single child who had become a great king than many who would achieve nothing. She rose, held out her hand to me, and said that she thanked me for those words. Since then our friendship has been sealed.

Yesterday she had lunch with us and Njoja; from what I heard, it was the first time she had accepted anything in Europeans’ homes. On such occasions Njoja is the perfect guest; he eats as impeccably as one could expect of any European, drinks cautiously and moderately, and the conversation never flags. ‘Na,’ meaning ‘mother,’ still had a little difficulty using her knife and fork; and when

The Na

she likes something, she swallows it quickly and has Njoja say that she would like some more. At the end, as they were leaving, both solemnly thanked us for the invitation and the good meal. Na has also sold us quantities of ethnographic objects for cloth and beads. It was a real pleasure to watch her choose, to observe her delight in the beautiful colors and her very definite taste: I like this, I do not like that.

We have come to Bamum at a favorable time, the season of festivities. Besides the equestrian games held every week on the main market day, when the horses gallop and rear like mad things, great dances are being prepared. Njoja has brought many ancient and venerable dance figures out of his treasures; a thin old man with iron-gray hair is rehearsing an almost forgotten Bamum play; in the mornings drums and singing can be heard in the palace.

On Sunday there was a great women’s dance of a kind that even Europeans who have been in Bamum for years had never seen before. Thousands of women, all those within the enclosure of Fumban, gathered in the square between the chief’s palace and the wives’ houses. Each held a rattle and a horse’s tail attached to a stick embroidered with beads; they formed a broad circle, bending their bodies in time, shaking their rattles, all looking toward the open space in the center of the vast circle. Small groups of women moved to and fro there with tiny steps, swaying and automatically raising and lowering an arm to the rhythm of the drums, which were crowded together at the side. Men wearing grass ruffs and wooden masks that hid their faces

Festivities in Bamum



Women’s town at Bamum.

Plate 5

danced like men possessed from one end of the square to the other, with the same bounding, quivering movements we had seen at Bana. When the largest of these figures approached one side of the circle, a long, shrill cry rose from every woman’s throat; we soon realized that Njoja himself was concealed beneath this mask. Na, seated beside us, rose at one point and danced toward her son; she bowed deeply while he struck her gently on the shoulders, then placed her palms against his; at this sight all the women were seized by the wildest ecstasy. Its strangest expression was that some of them blew their noses toward the king.

Palm wine flowed freely. As Njoja later told us, he had provided a thousand calabashes, each holding about four liters. Slaves brought them and emptied the mimbo into large black earthenware vessels; the women came to dip out wine with their cups, which they carried in prettily woven bags or bags sewn from monkey skin, and they drank, drank, drank. The dance lasted from two in the afternoon until six the following morning; then the mimbo ran out.

It is impossible to describe the spectacle of all those women, so many of them dancing, all dressed in the most brilliant cloths, all wearing the Fulani’s tall, pointed hairstyle, adorned with necklaces, bracelets, and bead embroidery. One was as if bewitched; entirely caught up in the rhythm of the drums and rattles oneself, one swayed gently with them, watching as though in a dream as this multicolored witches’ sabbath ran wild.

Bamum is, moreover, the Paris of Cameroon. All our people are in seventh heaven, for

The women’s dance

there is not only food and palm wine in abundance, but amorous adventure as well. Everything is perfectly arranged for those staying here only temporarily and for poor men who have no wife of their own. The women who can be hired for a time live in long buildings—Njoja's former barracks—and in exchange for their free lodging must groom and feed Njoja's horses. All our grown men have their woman here; the price: 'two shillings for two weeks, and food.'

Bamum, January 28, 1912

The day after tomorrow we leave here. We hate to go: Bamum is so marvelous, and we had now grown accustomed to it.

We are buying more horses here; we have definitely acquired a nice young Fulani stallion for one hundred and forty marks and six meters of red velvet. We have a Lakka horse on trial, which is really a very heavily built pony; if it proves suitable, we shall keep it, and then all three of us will have mounts.

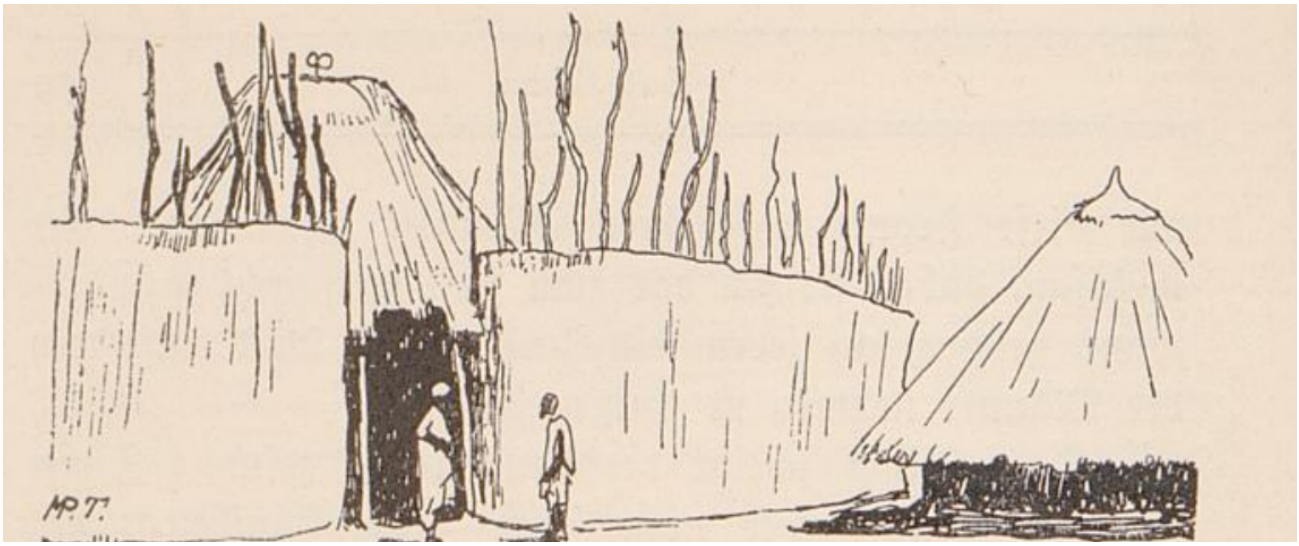
Have I mentioned, by the way, that here in Bamum, ten days' journey from the coast, there are white women at the mission and at one of the trading posts, some of whom have lived here for years? I asked them to tell me about their lives and the running of their households; what they describe recalls the days of our great-grandmothers, when absolutely everything was made at home. With a large domestic staff—here mainly men and boys, rarely girls—they run the household, cultivate the kitchen garden, keep chickens and a few head of cattle; at home they bake bread, slaughter animals, and preserve fruit and vegetables. And how

White women in Bamum

all these women work together with their husbands! Together they built their house, sometimes still very rudimentary; they take an active part in every branch of the men’s professional work.

The climate seems relatively healthy; there are few fevers. Anyone who has not already brought tropical diseases with them should be able to live here without risking life or health. One of the missionaries’ wives acts as doctor to the white settlers of Bamum—and indeed to the blacks as well—and when anyone falls ill she is tireless in her care and visits. If only there were a qualified doctor here in Bamum too, rather than four days’ journey away at Bamenda, one could call Fumban an ideal place for a European to live.

The climate



Tikar compound.

Ngambe, February 2, 1912

In three forced marches we covered the distance from Bamum to Ngambe. The crossing of the Mbam, one hundred and twenty meters wide, was made in a large dugout canoe, at night by moonlight; a soldier slept beside the loads on the opposite bank, and we followed at five in the morning with the beds and the last trunks. Besides, we had very poor porters: old men, half-grown boys, many with diseased feet; and almost nothing to eat for these one hundred and seventy men! We ourselves would not have made the journey so quickly without the horses. The Lakka pony has admittedly not yet been ridden, but the three of us took turns on the other two; in any case, it is pleasanter to walk for a few hours in between. When one spends the whole day in the saddle, one is completely stiff by evening.

We even did the entire first stage on foot; for scarcely has one left the rampart of Fumban when the road becomes unbelievably bad. Always down, down, steeply, along narrow, eroded paths, through streams whose beds are slabs of granite as smooth as mirrors, then along a slope so precipitous that the men had to

climb down cautiously, and the horses reached the bottom with their bones intact only by a kind of miracle. At last one comes into a broad, steep-sided valley with a stream running through it; here one reaches the Fontab rest house. The next day the path is very good, and one can remain in the saddle throughout; only three or four times must one dismount where the path crosses a distinct, steep step in the terrain or passes through deeply cut streams. The Fontab valley gradually widens; the mountains grow lower, a vast grassy expanse stretches over the valley floor, and a stream describes endless meanders through it. We cross it several times on little bridges woven from slender branches and resting on stakes driven into the ground. At last the mountains cease altogether to the north; to the south they accompany us a little longer, rising abruptly and without transition from the plain. The surface itself undulates gently; flattened ridges and broad valleys extend as far as the eye can see: we are in the Mbam depression. The nearer we draw to the river, the denser the gallery forests along the streams become, and the taller the elephant grass grows on the plain. Djipute is our last stopping place in Bamum country; the Mbam forms its eastern boundary.

It is a magnificent river which, even now in the dry season, flows broad and majestic between thick forests. One descends its high banks and enters the canoe; the loads are carried over a submerged sandbank through knee-deep water and are taken aboard only at the edge of the deeper channel. Broad stone slabs and banks of white sand rise from the water; there are said to be many crocodiles here.

The Mbam depression

The forest on both banks is extraordinarily dense and, in its heavy luxuriance, reminds us of the primeval forest of the coast, although now, during the dry season, many dried leaves and withered twigs are visible. The path is narrow and very winding; branches intertwine above it. The rider must usually remain half bent over to avoid striking them or being caught by the hair in the branches like Absalom; for here in the forest one can indulge in the pleasure of riding without a hat. Once again we find gigantic primeval-forest trees with silvery-gray bark, and climbing plants without end, so tightly intertwined that everything forms a compact tangle of branches beneath the green canopy of leaves. Even in the morning the forest is already humid and hot, for since Bamum we have descended five hundred meters and are now only seven hundred meters above sea level.

On the left bank of the Mbam, the forest extends for a width of two hours’ walking. When we reached its edge, we halted the horses and looked out over vast, rolling grasslands, everywhere threaded with strips of forest whose green stood out against the dead yellow grass. The forest follows every hollow; it clearly marks the courses of the waters, mostly marshy and gently sloping. In the distance a few low, isolated mountains can be seen. The air is gray and hazy, the sky entirely covered with clouds; but a light breeze moves over the grass, so that the heat is not oppressive. During the march we constantly have to pass through gallery forests, and each time we breathe freely again on emerging onto the steppe. The soil is a pale red laterite in which nothing of the rock can any longer be distinguished; fragments of rock lie at the foot of the isolated mountains, and higher up we see enormous boulders.

Tikar country

The first settlement we reached on the Tikar side held a great surprise for us: no more of the tall houses with pointed roofs of the Dschang district and Bamum, no grass frieze, no supporting posts. The huts resembled broad, low beehives, circular in plan; their framework consisted of poles planted in the ground around a central post, tied together at the top, and the whole thing completely covered with grass. The door was merely a low hole, above which the grass projected like a little awning. The Tikar may have borrowed this method of building from the Hausa, whose houses at any rate bear a great resemblance to them; but the other two types of houses we saw in the following villages also differ so radically from those of the western grasslands that one has the impression that for centuries the Mbam must have formed an absolute boundary between the peoples here.

The main type is the round hut with a conical roof, whose low earthen walls are built in a cylinder around the central post. The roof is pointed; its poles are attached all around to the wall framework with cords and tied together at the summit. It is covered with grass; a kind of double helmet made of a sturdy grass mat is set on top, with the central post projecting through it like a short spike. In the earthen plaster of the walls, on either side of the door, one often finds crude ornaments—triangles, lozenges, flattened arches—picked out in some color.

The Tikar house has two outside doors facing each other and, inside, two communicating rooms. They are not, however, the same size: one takes up about two-thirds of the house; the partitions run like radii to the central post. The

The Tikar house

smaller room is the bedroom; a bed frame of palm poles and a small hearth in the middle constitute its entire furnishings. In the larger room, the grinding stone on which maize or millet is crushed with smaller stones seems to be the most important household utensil. The hearth stands against the curve of the outer wall, with a wooden frame above it for smoking meat; calabashes hang on the wall, large earthenware pots stand on low clay benches, and little earthen seats are provided outside and inside beside the door; everything is wonderfully clean and tidy. Each house stands on a small earthen platform to keep water from entering during the rainy season.

Another type of house, which unmarried young men customarily build, is rectangular with a gabled roof. The door is set in the gable; a few thick trunks support this wall, and the framework of poles is likewise covered with earth. In the villages the soil was generally a light grayish yellow; thus all the houses are pale yellow beneath gray grass roofs. Among the light-green banana leaves, against the dark green of the forest trees, the whole looks inviting.

The reception in Ngambe, where Franz had met with the greatest difficulties four years before, was very friendly. The chief, dressed in a Hausa costume, wearing a very strange chinpiece made entirely of pointed beadwork and a blue-and-white chief’s cap, came with a large retinue and declared himself willing, after some thought, to supply porters for the onward journey. But I still distrust him: he does not make a pleasant impression, and I think it possible that we may yet have some palavers with him.

In Ngambe

Ngambe, February 9, 1912

Tomorrow morning we leave again. To our great joy, soldiers and an interpreter arrived for us from Joko last night. The station supplied them at our request; this is a great help in pitching the tents, negotiating with chiefs, finding provisions, and supervising the caravan. The expedition will split up here for several weeks, perhaps several months. Waibel is going south, we north; and now begins the route-surveying work by which we intend first to establish a map of our region.

Here in Ngambe we have spent much time going around the houses, photographing, drawing, asking questions, and taking notes. Yesterday we watched a woman potter who, before our eyes, shaped a pot in a quarter of an hour using only her hands, two pieces of wood, and a fragment of calabash rind. With the thumb of one hand, in the palm of the other, she pressed the clay, rolled into coils, together in a spiral, so flatly and evenly that scarcely a join showed; at the same time she gave it the proper pot shape, then turned a rim outward, smoothed the finished object, and decorated it with a pattern by rolling a small cylindrical piece of wood cut with notches over its curve.

There really are many things very, very different here from Dschang and Bamum, beginning with the climate. In Dschang, at an altitude of thirteen or fourteen hundred meters, we were cold in the evenings; Bamum is ideal, never too hot or too cool; here it is very hot. The four hundred and fifty meters’ difference in altitude between Bamum, at eleven hundred and eighty meters, and here is distinctly felt. Franz is measuring thirty-two degrees in the air at this moment, and in the sun

At the potter’s

it is scarcely bearable. Looking more closely, one finds among the animals and plants certain elements that recall the primeval lowland forest: parrots, weaverbirds, papaya trees with melon-like fruit, which are not native to the high plateaus of Dschang and Bamum.

In the mornings the weather is generally very gray; all the little round houses, trees, and mat fences are then mere silhouettes in the white mist, which clears only between ten and eleven to make way for the scorching sun. But even when it beats down from a cloudless sky in the afternoon, all the colors retain something muted in the shimmering hot air.

Njua, February 14, 1912

Three exhausting but magnificent days lie behind us. The route surveying has now begun, the work by which we truly intend to make this country our own. Franz carries out the topographic surveys with a compass and a watch; I draw mountain profiles and landscape sketches, take rock samples, and collect plants. The cheerful conversations of the journey here have ceased; we are fully engaged in the tasks for which we have longed so long.

Near Ngambe there is still much forest. The path was narrow and low; on horseback our feet caught in the undergrowth, our knees struck tree trunks, and hats and hair alike snagged on creepers and branches.

On the first day we stopped at Umo, one of the many settlements recently established in Tikar country. Formerly, during the wars with Tibati, the Tikar lived in large fortified towns, often several thousand people together, protected by ramparts and ditches. Now that the

Work on the march

Germans have brought peace, they are settling once again, according to their old custom, in small, isolated villages on fertile land.

A notable thus goes off with his wives and a few families of ‘common people,’ who stand in a kind of servile dependence on him. His grown sons take wives, a sister or younger brother accompanies him, and little by little a settlement forms. Fields of maize, cassava, sweet potatoes, and plantains spread across the magnificent soil of the primeval forest; such a family village rests like a small fertile island amid the almost impenetrable tangle of the forest.

On the second day our caravan had marched farther than Franz had ordered, because on the way the men had been told that a larger settlement was not far off. As we move far more slowly than the porters, it was getting later and later. We crossed endless savannas, now and then a dense gallery forest; the sun was sinking, we sent men ahead to look for the camp, and we were just considering how to make a bed out of the saddles and horse blankets so as to camp under the stars—for night was falling quickly and I was too tired to go on much longer—when we saw a light in the distance, approaching rapidly: the head porter and a boy with a lantern, running to meet us. A quarter of an hour later we had the camp, the tent, water for washing, supper, and the joyfully welcomed beds.

Yesterday we had before us all day the marvelous Njua massif, at whose foot we

A family village

arrived in the afternoon. An inselberg! This block truly rises like an island from the gentle waves of the sea of grass, falling away steeply on every side. From a distance its upper surface seems almost level; a few slightly higher summits rise above it. The nearer one comes, the more clearly one sees, of course, that it is nevertheless a differentiated massif; one sees a depression cutting through it, ranges overlapping one another. Only the impression of that abrupt, unmediated rise and that uniform height remains. And above one sees walls of bare rock and steep cliffs, grassy slopes rising from the base, and dense forest in the ravines. We have taken several compass bearings on the massif, drawn and photographed it, and now intend to climb it from here. The view from the summit must be magnificent! The only unpleasant thing at present is the mist that forms every morning around seven and generally drifts up and down until half past ten. Visibility is best early in the morning and in the afternoon; we shall therefore probably have to stay up there overnight.

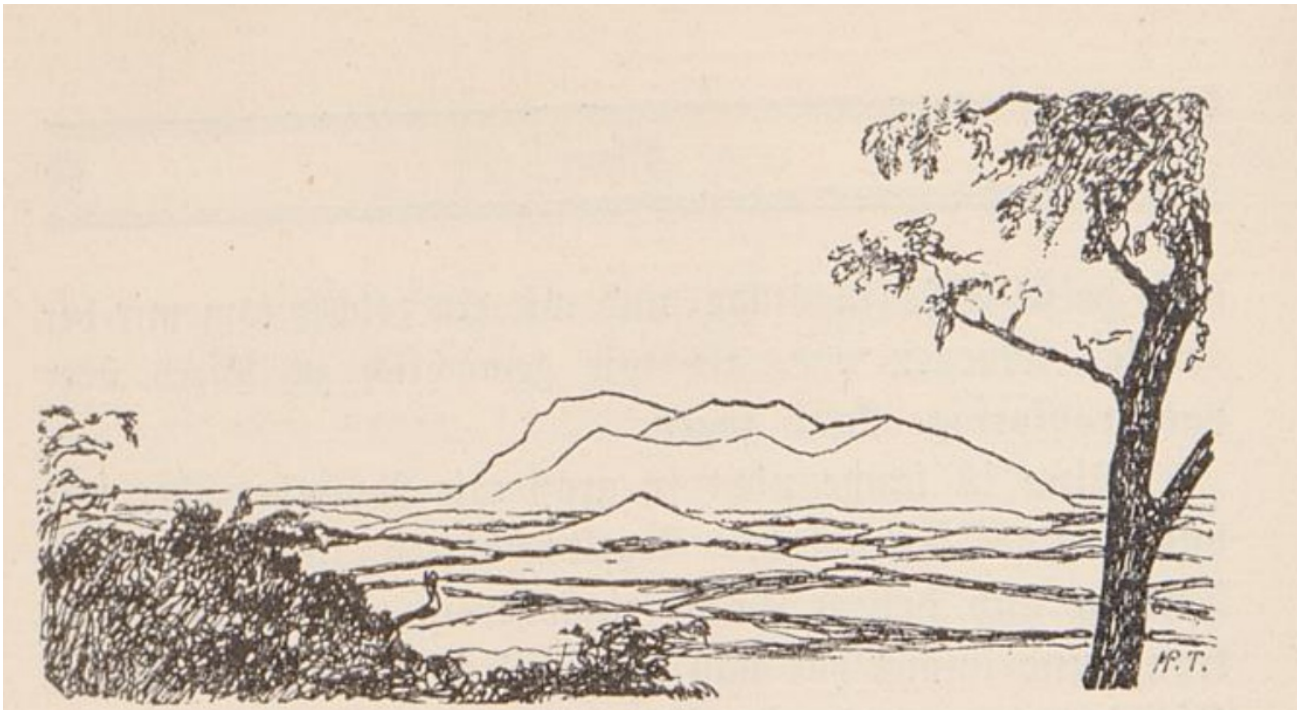
The savanna was enchantingly beautiful. Near the chief’s settlement, the people burned the grass quite some time ago; the gigantic, hard, half-charred stalks that previously hindered us so much and made us black as pitch into the bargain have broken and decomposed. Everywhere young, bright-green grass has sprung up, and thousands of colorful flowers with small, clustered flower heads blossom among it. The innumerable little stunted trees scattered through the grass now offer a delightful sight; delicate pinnate leaves and umbels and entire chains of pale-pink bell-shaped flowers hang like veils among the branches. There are also

The Njua inselberg

warm spring days in Germany, and yesterday morning reminded me of one of them as we rode quietly through this cheerfully colored country.

Njua is nowhere near as large as Ngambe, but it is very pretty and welcoming. The huts with conical roofs stand among fields and tall grass, surrounded by a dense ring of forest; and one always has the splendid massif before one’s eyes. The people—tall, imposing men dressed in Fulani fashion and graceful women with slender figures and supple movements—remain very reserved as yet.

Njua



Njua massif.

Njua, February 22, 1912

Encrusted with dirt, filthy, covered with dust, sweat, and soot, hungry and dead tired, but happy, we came down from the mountains yesterday afternoon. We spent three days up there, and it was magnificent to enter a little into the beauty and secrets of this wonderful massif.

All the practical arrangements for this mountain excursion were truly reduced to the bare essentials, and that alone was already a pleasure. After the scorching, steep ascent to the northern part of the mountain, directly above the village of Njua, and two detailed plane-table surveys on the two highest summits, with photographs, drawings, and measurements, we ate our meal—a cold chicken and a thick semolina porridge, with hot tea, properly prepared by the cook and served by the boys—on the ground, on a spread-out Hausa mat. Then we slipped into a woolen blanket and a sleeping bag beneath the tiny tent made from two pieces of sailcloth, two lengths of fabric, and a few branches. The dog Tiger, on the blanket between us, immediately fell asleep; we watched a little longer as the fifteen men who

had climbed with us divided into groups according to their origins around our tent, each beside a large fire on which the millet flour they had brought was cooking. The fires burned all night to protect them from the cold—seven degrees Celsius—and the leopards.

The next day we set out early and crossed the massif's interior plateau toward the broad central range, whose four peaks rise abruptly above a deep valley. The caravan went ahead toward the little wood pointed out from the heights, beside which the camp was to be established; we moved more slowly, occupied with topographical surveys, plant collecting, and observations, along a path that often rose and fell through stretches of burned grass and marshy stream ravines.

Yet the people of Njua had assured us that they never went up into the heights. But we found paths toward which the guide always eagerly headed, because it was difficult to walk through the half-burned grass; we also discovered that people from Njua had established a plantation on the eastern slope of the massif, and watched our Njua man secretly and hurriedly cutting into trees in the little marshy woods beside the water to look for rubber. These people know their mountain perfectly well and had only wanted to discourage us because they did not wish to reveal their safe refuge, which no stranger to the country had entered before us.

Shortly before reaching the campsite, we were horrified to see flames shooting up all around the little wood and spreading through the yellow grass, which had not yet burned there. The men had been too lazy to cut the grass to pitch the tent and had simply set fire to everything. Now the whole grassy expanse was burning as far as the

First ascent of Njua

summits; there was no question of getting through, and we had no choice but to wait a few hours in the burned savanna, black as coal, until the grass had been consumed. Of course, the air became so filled with thick smoke that we soon abandoned hope of seeing the distant mountains; flakes of black soot flew through the air, and little whirlwinds lifted the ash and covered everything with it.

Around four o’clock we were finally able to set out again and, unhindered by the grass, also very quickly reached the westernmost summit, which we had seen from below, from our observation point the previous day, and several times along our route. Gigantic blocks of granite, breaking up into enormous scales or rising sheer along their fissures, form the abrupt edge of the plateau here and rise considerably above it. In the air filled with smoke and ash, one could only just make out the mountains on the other side of the broad valley. Even so, we were pleased with the ascent, for from the last, easternmost summit we had a tolerable overall view of the eastern slope of the massif and the opening of the valley that entirely separates a high range from the compact bulk of the remaining mountains. That day too: a bush meal, a bush camp, and deep, sound sleep.

The next morning the air had cleared sufficiently for us at least to photograph the mighty rock formations individually; distant views and photographs of the entire massif were certainly still out of the question.

Then we descended without a path along a small, steeply sloping side valley toward the main one. Where we had to cross

On the heights of Njua

deep, steeply cut stream ravines, there stood veritable forests of grasses through which one could scarcely force a passage; elsewhere the ground was muddy and marshy. Losing half the nails from one’s mountain boots while clambering over the rocks in the good stretches was the least of the discomforts. But we nevertheless managed to get through and were able to work.

Around four o’clock we had to descend as quickly as possible to cross the pathless slopes covered in grass and forest while it was still daylight. At first everything went wonderfully: it was steep, certainly, but one went down as though on a staircase, from one granite boulder to another, clearly visible among the short grass. Then suddenly the grass grew taller and taller, without the slightest trace of a path, without a single stone visible any longer; our four men cautiously forced their way through. Half walking, half sliding on the smooth, flattened stalks, we held on to the grasses on either side, their stems as thick as a thumb and their tips meeting far above our heads. Under our feet they crackled like breaking glass; clouds of dust and a damp, suffocating heat surrounded us.

We descended like this for almost an hour, then reached the forest’s edge. Scarcely were we all out of the grasses when the matches the boys had brought were already being struck; a little bundle of grass was held to them, and within seconds a gigantic blaze flared up the mountain, following the way we had come and continuing to spread southward with the wind. At dusk the villagers saw the fire and sent a man to meet us, who led us through the forest, across freshly cleared patches covered with trunks

Descent through the forest of grass

and branches, then through streams and plantations, to the tent. The fire burned on the mountain all night; we could distinctly hear its crackling down in the valley, and the village square was brightly lit.

At the foot of the Tsimklong, February 27, 1912.

For five days we have once more been traveling through the country, this time along paths no white person has yet traveled, toward mountains whose names are unknown and through regions reputed to be almost deserted and uninhabited. Yet a dense network of paths covers the whole country; very close to one another are settlements of the Umo type, where a notable lives with his family and a few workers. On this admirably fertile, deeply weathered soil, he grows cassava, millet, maize, and a great deal of cotton, raises chickens and goats, and catches quantities of fine, large fish in the innumerable streams. Naturally, no chief reveals the existence of his own settlements, preferring to tell the questioner about those of his neighbors. As we travel through the territories of Njua, Lomonji, and Bengbeng, each gradually informs us about the villages and riches of the others. We ourselves saw people spinning cotton at Njua; we also took along tufts of raw cotton and thread, together with a spindle. I believe that many of the Hausa cloths worn by the Tikar are woven from this cotton, that the Hausa merchants who travel everywhere buy their raw material here and do not bring it all from the distant north.

We have seen wonderful mountains; the steep mountain of Lomonji, mentioned in books,

In unknown country

is only a small, flattened thing beside the Wawue and Tsimklong, through which our route to Bengbeng passes. From Lomonji and Wawue we also had distant views. The finest was yesterday evening from the summit of Wawue: to our great surprise, without expecting it in the least, we saw the Mbam tracing immense meanders across the vast plain. The sandbanks shone yellow toward us, and we could watch people wading across the water. In the dry season, busy traffic uses these fords to reach the other bank, in the country of Jakong, which is still only a nameless blank patch on the map. We saw, drew, and photographed great massifs about 1,400 m high; we were able to establish the names of certain mountains and, shortly before sunset, we also caught sight of the mountains of Banjo far in the distance, whose position is known.

Seen from above, the great plain between Njua and Ngambe has a peculiar appearance: the yellowish ground, covered with very short green grass and low trees with pale foliage, is threaded with innumerable dark-green gallery forests, filling every hollow with their inextricable windings. Most striking are the many short arms branching off from each green strip, reaching into the expanse of yellow grass and then stopping abruptly halfway up the ridge. Once we slipped into one of them and saw that these were springheads: at their bottom, rainy-season water gushes from the decomposed ground and has gradually formed a deep, steep-sided gorge. Over time, such a gorge cuts farther and farther upstream, the springheads meet, the watercourses

Gallery forests in the savanna

change, and thus, on this plain that seems eternally unchanged, everything is in continual transformation.

Today, unfortunately, the haze is very thick; we are at the foot of Mount Tsimklong and tell ourselves that there is absolutely no point in climbing it, since one can scarcely see beyond 200 m. The weather is very peculiar here: scorching heat by day, with no distant view, and clear, icy nights; last night we had 3.5°C. For us this change is certainly very good and healthy, but I often pity our blacks: they shiver miserably through the night. Today they even have to sleep under the stars, through the stupidity or laziness of their own head porter. There is indeed a small settlement up there on the mountain, but the guide, who probably thought the climb too much trouble, concealed it from us and brought us all down here into the savanna to spend the night. There is nothing to eat either, unless we can manage to get something from Bengbeng. It is a large settlement where one can probably obtain food for fifty people without notice; on the small isolated farms that is impossible: it must be ordered the day before. For our boys we have brought millet cakes and chickens from the last settlement; now the Tikar must see for themselves how to find food in their own country.

Nkang, March 6, 1912.

At last we are on the move again; our stay at Bengbeng lasted longer than we had planned, for a rather vexing reason. Franz had a large chigoe flea in one foot, that most troublesome of all Cameroon’s scourges, which had caused him no pain and thus

Camping in the bush

had been able to grow entirely undisturbed. The horse boy had extracted it, and Franz had thoroughly disinfected the spot himself; but suddenly, during the night, his foot swelled enormously. I treated it and made an incision, and Franz is now sufficiently recovered to put on a fairly roomy boot and ride.

But we made good use of these days of enforced rest in Bengbeng: we assembled an ethnological collection amounting to several porter loads, chiefly very fine pottery, for which this place is famous throughout Tikar country; we recorded the language, songs, and instrumental music on the phonograph, painted, drew, and tried to unravel the secret of these people’s cotton.

And then we enjoyed this rest with all our hearts, since it was unavoidable. To be able to live quietly again for a few days and contemplate at leisure the strange activity around us was truly lovely. The finest thing was the nights, of which one sees practically nothing during days of marching and work, for one always goes to bed with the chickens and is, besides, dead tired.

When, after the blood-red sunsets, the full moon appeared, orange at first, then shedding an increasingly green light as it rose, the broad village square encircled by palms came to life. The drums were brought out and the dances began. In Tikar country they are more varied and reveal their meaning more clearly than in Dschang and among the Bamum. First, as there, the men dance alone in a circle around the drums, quickly and briskly, often turning and jumping, accompanied by singing in which even our ears can detect a short melody. Then the women arrive, enter the circle, join their voices

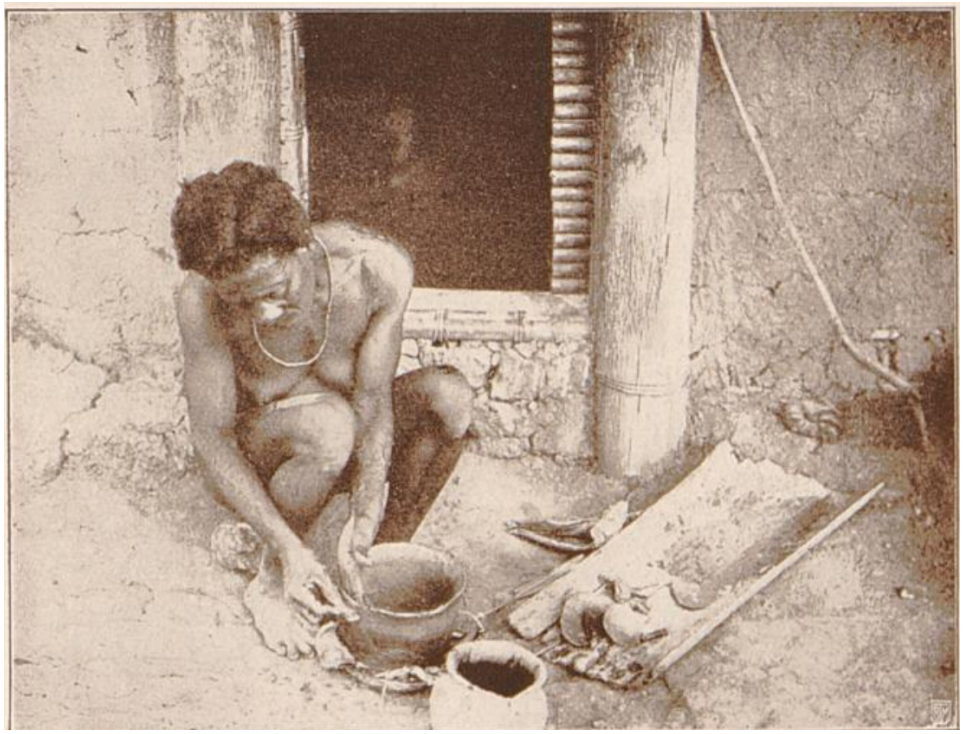
Days of rest

with the others, and suddenly two long lines form, the men on one side, the women on the other; the drum beats a new rhythm, and the singing takes on another character, wilder and more excited. A man leaps forward, spins around, hops, shakes his rattle, and sings before a woman who suddenly steps out of the line herself and dances once in a circle around him. Then all the men begin to move, the women come toward them; the couples stand very close together, face to face, and dance forward and backward, forward and backward. From time to time a man touches a woman’s breast, and she quickly draws away. And the singing is a call and a courtship, an answer to that call, then another flight. A pause, and the dance begins again in a different rhythm; this time it is the women who invite, always with the most supple and graceful dance movements, which never have anything offensive or shocking about them, despite the unveiled frankness of the entire game.

After an hour everyone disperses; the villagers, men and women, disappear into the huts. We are preparing to go to sleep when the light, delicate quivering of a plucked string instrument is heard beside the tent. The five young men from Ngambe who have joined us once more dance their magic game, or djudju game, among themselves, which no woman is allowed to see. One sits on the ground and tirelessly picks out the short, rhythmic melody; it sounds like a little piece from ‘The Well-Tempered Clavier’ played on a spinet. The other four stand before him, hopping and leaping, twisting their arms and legs, and looking at the moon. From time to time a little breathless laugh; otherwise, no

Dances in the moonlight





Tikar gatehouse.

Tikar woman potter.

Plate 6

sound except the gentle quivering of the little instrument…

We were indeed able to record the music and the words of the songs on the phonograph, and the scenes in the morning, when, after all sorts of encouragement, people sang into the horn and then immediately heard their own voices, were very comical; but the delightful scenes of dancing cannot be captured: one can only preserve their memory.

Moschingbe, March 11, 1912.

Today I let Franz climb Mount Baga alone; I am staying down below in camp and resting. These last days have been too mad. One of the horses has been ill since Bengbeng. And the bad state of Franz’s foot made it absolutely essential that he ride on the good stretches of path where riding was possible, that is, on the long, scorching grassy ridges; the incredibly bad and difficult paths through the forests were already almost too exhausting for him. So I walked for several days, never finding it excessive; only yesterday, toward noon, did I truly reach the end of my strength. I am therefore keeping this whole day for recovering and resting.

I have really had enough of the forest, through which we have traveled so much lately. Dragging oneself along the Hausa rubber paths, continually stumbling, seeing nothing, and at the same time having constantly to go in every direction by the worst detours: in the long run it makes one quite dizzy. The only interesting thing in these last two days has been discovering that this region of Tikar country is extremely populous: every half hour a village, a small isolated settlement, and really

Minor difficulties

often occupied by Bamum refugees: notables who have something to fear from Njoja, and many slaves who come to settle here in Tikar country, where slavery no longer exists, as humble but freer people. The chief of Ngambe seems happy to welcome them; in exchange for the refuge he grants them, however, they must often serve as porters when men are demanded of the chief. One of his brothers lives in this region and assigns every refugee a place to live.

Our Tikar boys told us today that the completely dry season should have ended four weeks ago. Usually it always rains from time to time at this season, and the people, who have prepared all their fields for sowing, are waiting for rain; but it still does not come. It is our fault! The sling thermometer, which is set in motion at every halt and on every ascent, whirling through the air at full speed on the end of its short string, is a powerful magical instrument with which the white man holds back the rain so that the riches in his crates and chests will not spoil.

We hastened to dispel this belief; we showed them the thermometer and explained how it worked. If the drought really should last exceptionally long this year and people began to fear for their food, things could become unpleasant, even threatening, if they suspected us of causing this unfavorable weather.

Tomorrow evening we intend to be back in Ngambe and meet Waibel there. Then we shall travel south together toward the Ndomme massif, which we shall approach in two separate groups, simultaneously from the south and the north.

The thermometer as a charm against rain

If only it would finally rain! The heat is murderous and the gray-yellow sky trembles in the haze.

Mongong, March 19, 1912.

Everything has changed, everything, everything: the sky, the air, and our own plans.

Yesterday we arrived late in camp, very tired from a long journey and much work, but intending to sleep just one night here in this poor little village and climb the first step of the Ndomme massif the very next morning. But we found Waibel, who had arrived three hours before us, in a very sorry state. He has developed genuine dysentery; it is admittedly not severe and is unaccompanied by pain, but otherwise it shows all the unmistakable signs of this tropical disease, the most dangerous and prolonged of all.

This upsets all our plans. Waibel must stay in bed, will be unable to work in the field for several weeks, and will still have to take care of himself for some time afterward. There can no longer be any question of exploring the Ndomme mountains simultaneously from north and south. Naturally, he is the one most saddened by it, and there is nothing to do but encourage and reassure him.

We shall probably arrange things as follows: Franz will go alone into the mountains and also go to Linde to fetch the loads Waibel left there. Meanwhile, I shall nurse the patient here for as long as he must remain in bed. Fortunately, it really does seem to be only a very mild case.

We had just recovered from our first fright and settled our traveling companion as comfortably as haste permitted, when our thoughts were suddenly

Our traveling companion falls ill

absorbed by something altogether different. In the east a black wall had slowly risen into the sky and formed a flattened arc above the horizon; its edge took on a pallid red hue in the gathering darkness, and an ominous yellowish light shone from behind it. We just had time to put the things under cover beneath the veranda awning and call the porters and boys, and then the storm broke. First in the form of a violent wind, which drove whole waves of red sand straight against the front of our tent and in an instant covered beds, trunks, and clothes with it. Then the wind caught the taut sides of the tent and the great sunshade, swelling the broad strips of fabric like sails. Three or four black figures hung from each of the tent’s twenty-four ropes, holding them down with their full body weight. The soldier, the interpreter, the boys, and we ourselves supported the three poles and held back the inner walls; yet our little house shook and swayed as if the tempest meant to carry it off despite all our efforts. The canvas cracked and flapped like a sail being tacked on the water; the flying sand almost blinded us, crept into our noses, ears, and clothes, and yet we must not release the piece of tent we held: we had to endure it all as best we could.

Added to this were incessant flashes of lightning and thunderclaps, a blaze that continually flared up and died away, a powerful, unbroken rumbling. At last drops of rain fell, scattered, large, and heavy, and suddenly the water poured down in broad sheets, so that within moments the entire village square was flooded. In the ditch dug all around

Tornado

the tent, it drained away, so that at least we were spared that. For half an hour the rain rattled down amid thunder and lightning that lit the black night with a harsh blue glare—exactly as in the theater in ‘The Flying Dutchman’ or ‘Der Freischütz’—then the wind stopped, the rain eased, the black guardians disappeared silently and hurriedly into the huts beside their fires, and our boys appeared in the tent, dripping wet, with full soup plates, carefully covered.

In the early morning the wind returned; the whistle sounded in the twilight that was only just beginning to gray, and in the blink of an eye all the men were there again, each in his place. This time it passed quickly: a few strong gusts, then calm returned, and one could peacefully go back to sleep while morning dawned, dark and veiled in clouds.

But little by little the sky cleared. We persuaded Waibel, who had left his tent in Linde, to leave his village hut and come under the veranda of our tent, where he can lie in the shade but in the open air, wrapped in blankets. And together we admired the veils of cloud rising one after another before the most splendid panorama we have yet seen: to the south, the long, straight range of the Ndomme mountains, which, with their flattened ridges, broad valley openings, and few isolated summits set upon the upper plateau, recall the Black Forest; but here everything is covered in grass, with only a little forest in the valleys. And from northeast to northwest, the vast crown of island mountains among which we have traveled these past weeks. The most

A clear, distant view

wonderful and splendid is Njua, which, higher than the Ndomme massif, truly rises like a fairy-tale island, sheer above the blue haze of the plain, and which, from this side hitherto unknown to us, seemed more beautiful than ever. Then comes the long range: Lomonji, Wawue, Tsimklong, Bengbeng, Nkang, the Bandum, Bassa, Baga, Bambondju, lined up beside one another, all separated by broad openings through which one sees the infinite plain merge into the sky. All almost the same height, alike in many respects, and yet each so characteristic, so unique and recognizable in form, that at first glance one greeted them all as familiar old friends.

We hurried up a little hill behind the village and worked there until three o’clock, in heavy, humid heat, but with admirably clear air, an extensive view, and the sight of delightful white and pale-gray clouds in the blue sky.

And at this very moment, half past seven, here is the same uproar again as last night: a wild storm and torrents upon torrents of water, followed by damp, almost cold night air.

Mongong, March 22, 1912.

Franz has left; I have stayed with Waibel at our fresh-air sanatorium of Mongong. It is truly like a summer resort at home, at the foot of the Deister or east of the Black Forest: such fresh, wonderful air, wooded, rolling country, and the most extraordinary cloud architecture in a pale-blue sky. Everything is most beautiful in the morning. A thick mist then fills all the hollows; especially at the foot of the Ndomme massif and Njua it rolls in

Franz leaves for the mountains

heavy banks, while the mountains rise above it, dark blue, almost hard, in the clear, luminous air. Later, little white clouds float above the mountains, continually changing, continually driven slowly by the breeze; and we, who for months had seen only a uniformly hazy atmosphere, contemplate these formations in the heavens with surprise, as something entirely new. The afternoons too are beautiful and never too hot; Franz and I really enjoyed these three days of rest and recovered from Ngambe's dreadful heat.

Waibel is doing tolerably well. He lies very quietly on his camp bed under the tent veranda, reads newspapers, magazines, or one of my books, sleeps at times, dozes while looking outside—I hope he does not brood too much. From time to time we talk about the people here, about the landscape; conversations about the future or the illness do not arise. Every evening, when a tornado approaches, he is quickly carried into his hut, and then I faithfully set about holding down our tent with my blacks. Sometimes the storm passes overhead, sometimes heavy showers fall, and almost every night we have to go out and withstand a small tempest while holding the tent poles.

Our people are happy that it is finally raining and they no longer need fear a 'great hunger.' The villagers now have much work; the first seeds are being put into the fields already prepared, and then will come the good season of abundance when, in the rain, everything grows and thrives incredibly. The squashes sown three days ago already stand 5 cm above the ground and bear two leaves; after two weeks they can be cooked and eaten as

Waibel and I remain in Mongong

a vegetable; after two months the fruits are ripe. Another vegetable reaches a meter in height three weeks after sowing and bears green fruits that are cooked. Sweet potatoes require two to three months from planting to maturity, maize four to five months. And people often plant different species in the same field at short intervals; since one grows tall and the other stays low, they can live very well side by side.

Clearing the forest and steppe is hard work, especially considering that a field on forest soil yields crops for only five years, and on steppe soil for only two, after which it must lie fallow for several years; but in return for this labor the earth truly bears fruit a hundredfold, and with a speed known at home only in fairy tales.

For the moment, people depend entirely on their stores; the maize and millet grains harvested at the beginning of the dry season now constitute almost all their food; there are probably also a few cassava roots and a few macabo tubers left.

Last night a whole troop went out to catch a particularly prized delicacy, a kind of winged ant. At this season they come out of the ground; the day before yesterday, where a few had appeared, a small circular wall was built and branches laid over it to prevent their escape. At night they are all smoked out, caught in masses, and devoured—alive and raw! ‘Real meat, really very good.’[1] Only the civilized people from Togo turn away with a shudder.

1 ‘Genuine meat, very good.’

The first produce of the fields

March 23, evening.

After a morning shower, the day became cold and ugly: the sun behind heavy gray clouds, wind, very damp air; I put on a woolen jacket, and even so I was still cold. Now, at eight in the evening, I am comfortably settled beside the lamp in a small room of the bush house, and I intend to dine here indoors; outside in the tent it is simply too cold for me.

I have begun painting a series of copies of the colored ornaments with which the Tikar decorate the entrances to their houses. In doing so I have made a very singular discovery, which occupies my thoughts greatly and which I continue to explore: the Negroes of Cameroon, at least those I have seen, that is, the inhabitants of Dschang, Bana, Bamum country, and Tikar country, have only three coloring materials: white, red, and black. White comes from fine wood ash, red from redwood, black from charcoal. And all the tribes use these three colors, either to paint their bodies or to embellish further their wood carvings and clay ornaments. And all of them, in their very different languages, have only three expressions for the whole range of colors: white, red, black.

For green, yellow, blue, brown, and gray, there is no word. But the three existing words have become collective terms: ‘red’ means red, yellow, and light brown—an association easy to understand; ‘white’ denotes white and any very pale color; but ‘black’ includes, besides black, dark gray, and dark brown, also blue and green, however brilliant they may be. One can hardly suppose that the Negro, by conscious or unconscious abstraction, places the three related tones of red, yellow, and

Coloring materials and concepts of color among the Negroes

brown under a single word; classifying all the other colors, so unlike one another, under ‘black’ would in any case contradict such a mental act. I believe the matter can scarcely be explained otherwise than by supposing that originally they neither observed nor noticed at all the colors of nature around them; only with the pleasure of painting with a bright substance did the concept of color enter the language. Only colors available in the form of coloring materials received names; everything else, as recognition of colors in surrounding nature subsequently develops, is assigned to one of the three concepts by a very rough comparison.

Even when the Negro speaks pidgin English, he uses only these three terms for colors; the boys call our brown shoes red and our cornflower-blue cotton cloths black.

At present I am learning about these things from a young man from Ngambe named ‘Mbo.’ When we marched from Ngambe to Njua, he served as our guide and then joined us; in the course of these six weeks he has proved the most capable and the best of all our men. Mbo can do any kind of work, is ready for anything, eager to learn something new, and always radiantly cheerful. His slender, youthful figure and his clean clothes, which he sewed himself—a pair of short white trousers and a red Hausa shirt—further reinforce this pleasant impression. He is one of the ‘good finds’ we made in choosing our people, just like Ndanke, the son of the chief of Bangante, who has now been with us for three months and has developed from a young savage into our most careful and

Coloring materials and concepts of color among the Negroes

cleanest boy. He has just left for the mountains with Franz, as his sole personal servant, and will certainly perform his task wonderfully.

Today the soldier pursued a wounded buffalo in vain, and everyone had already been so delighted at the prospect, for food is becoming very scarce here. All those people from the surrounding area who brought fufu, fish, and cassava during the first two days have not returned, despite their promises and despite generous payment. Mbo walked three hours from here and finally returned, luckily, with a basket of millet flour and a basket of cassava. That was just enough.

I have now deployed all my powers of persuasion, promises and threats, to induce the chief of Mongong to supply us with something every day. He finally declared himself willing to deliver millet flour and maize flour for three days. Even with the best will in the world he could not give more, or he would not have enough left for himself. If other people bring something, we can keep the flour, which lasts for several days, and excuse the man of Mongong from making his delivery for a day. Cooked fufu does not keep even ten hours. I am a little worried about provisions; when the Negro must suffer hunger, even the boy who is ordinarily the most dependable and faithful becomes insubordinate and recalcitrant. For myself, I still have a small stock of chickens that will last until Franz returns and we leave. For Waibel, only milk and rice can be considered for the moment.

The insect plague is now dreadful; the tiny sandflies, fine as dust, literally devour you, and my hands are all swollen from their bites; large

Worries about provisions

flies and wasps buzz everywhere, and flying ants land in every dish, on every plate. Fortunately there are few mosquitoes, and the mosquito net protects one from them at night, when they chiefly bite.

Mongong, March 28, 1912.

A great day of celebration and joy today! Last evening, three hours from here in the bush, the soldier shot two of those enormous river hogs that live out there in the dense swamp forest. A man from Mongong who had shown him the way triumphantly brought the two tails as proof of his announcement. All our people went to fetch the magnificent game; I had never seen some of them run so lightly before! But time passed, it grew later and later, and no one returned. I had had my deck chair, a table, and the lamp set up outdoors in the wonderful mildness of the night; a Tikar boy squatted on the ground beside me and showed me how they calculate and count on their fingers. I kept asking questions, and learned with boundless astonishment that the Tikar know numbers and numerical concepts up to the hundreds of thousands, all in the decimal system. If I know the words for tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands, I can combine them with the words for the numbers 1 to 9 to form all the numbers up to 900,000; I can thus express the number 999,999—with the help of my notebook, I can actually do it. And if there are still more? Then the Tikar says: ‘I do not know beyond that.’[1]

My head was burning from these black arts of arithmetic, and I had not noticed that meanwhile

1 ‘I do not know any more.’

Counting and calculating among the Tikar

midnight had arrived. I was just about to give up waiting for the spoils of the hunt and go to bed when Mbo arrived, panting from running at full speed: ‘The two pigs are too much for us, we cannot carry them. I have come to get another twelve men to carry them, to bring them here. For the female we need four men to carry her and four to take their place; for the male, which is much bigger than the female, six men to carry him and another six to take their place. Let me tell the chiefs of this village and the other little village to give us men.’[1] All this poured out between gasps and laughter, while he continually licked his brown lips with his light-red tongue, delighted at the thought of the wonderful ‘meat.’[2] So the village chief was summoned by drum, a messenger was sent to the neighboring village, and then the caravan set off again at a run into the moonlit night, veiled with clouds.

Only toward morning did they bring in their loads, all aching and exhausted by the enormous weight. I estimate the male at four German hundredweights (200 kg), the female at three German hundredweights (150 kg); the whole morning went by in skinning, gutting, and cutting up the black pachyderms. The two villages that had helped each went away with a ‘belly’—all the entrails, which are eaten with immense pleasure—and

1 ‘The two pigs are too heavy for us; we cannot carry them. I have come to get twelve more men to bring them here. For the female, four men are needed to carry and four to relieve them; for the male—he is much bigger still than the female—six men to carry and six to relieve them. Let me tell the chiefs of this village and the other little village to provide these men.’

2 ‘Meet,’ formed by blending meat and beef!

The spoils of the hunt

a piece of ribs; each of our people received three to four pounds (1.5 to 2 kg) of boneless meat, as well as a daily ration of fufu flour; they therefore have ample food for today and tomorrow. The quantities of meat remaining are now being smoked by Mbo in the Tikar manner. The meat is cut into long, narrow strips, laid on a framework of poles, and dried for several days over a good fire. It should then keep for weeks, even months.

Yesterday afternoon a messenger brought me a long letter from Franz. He has endured exhausting days and the worst and most difficult paths he has ever encountered in Africa. Fortunately, he found all the loads safe in Linde. He is making the return journey by a new path around the western foot of the Ndomme massif, hitherto unknown; it will probably take him six days.

We have also just learned that a great meeting of princes is taking place on the Mbam. Njoja and his retinue, including one of his favorite wives, a daughter of the chief of Ngambe, are coming from Bamum country to the right bank of the river in all their splendor and pomp, with music and more than a hundred horses; at the same time, the chief of Ngambe is going to the left bank. Great festivities and equestrian games are to be held there. Nor will an African form of courtly service be lacking. Does that not sound straight out of the Middle Ages?

And now a message is about to fall like a thunderbolt into the midst of it all: the post at Joko, representing the twentieth century, is having it carried to the chief of Ngambe by a messenger who passed through here yesterday. He must set out immediately and present himself before the head of the post. And when a

A meeting of African princes

chief is summoned in this way, it is, in most cases, ‘on a serious matter.’[1] The king of Ngambe will leave the banks of the Mbam in the greatest agitation, and I imagine that Njoja will feel humiliated.

Mongong, April 2, 1912.

Franz returned yesterday at noon, tired, dirty, in rags, but healthy, well, and very pleased with everything he had seen. It was a great, joyous celebration. We had decorated the tent with garlands and a splendidly multicolored ‘Welcome’; in the kitchen everything the poultry yard and the provision boxes could supply had been boiled and roasted, and the genuine joy of all the people at the return of the ‘great Massa’ was very beautiful to see.

We are now making plans for the next few days, for fortunately Waibel has recovered enough to be carried in a hammock. Today we are unpacking, putting things in order, and resting in between; tomorrow Mbo will go to Ngambe to fetch the porters dismissed a fortnight ago. We then intend to make our way slowly to Joko along the main road, going into the mountains whenever possible.

Bambu, April 6, 1912.

At the foot of the Ndomme massif, that ‘rugged, wild, inaccessible’ massif, as the books call it. And yet it looks so bright, so welcoming! Young green grass covers every slope, new foliage adorns the trees standing singly or in small woods in the meadows.

1 Meaning: ‘on a dark business.’

Franz returns

The forms of the massif are gentle compared with what we saw near Njua. It is not even very high, or at least does not give that impression from here. The edge of the massif, cut by broad valley mouths and depressions into separate ridges and isolated mountains, must rise 200 to 300 m above the Joko road. If one climbs, as we did today, one of the mountains at the edge, where one discovers at close range immense rock faces of coarse-grained, feldspar-rich granite, one can survey the massif's vast, gently undulating upper surface, above which a few higher summits rise.

Seen in the dry season, with its great stretches of yellow grass or grass blackened by fire, this vast mountainous country must certainly convey an impression of desolation and sadness. Now the whole world around us seems transformed. During the warm days that followed the first rains, a garment of brilliant green spread as if by magic over the country; a bright, youthful summer smiles at us, and the clear air brought by the recent strong tornadoes is delightfully refreshing.

We had to contend with all sorts of difficulties before managing to settle here. The chief of Ngambe, who is now on his way to Joko, refused us the town's porters, and fortunately we were able to recruit thirty men along the road, who must now make the round trip three times to bring all the baggage and the patient in his hammock. Moreover, this noble personage has stirred up the people settled along the road against us so that they will give us nothing to eat; and he sent word to us through one of our soldiers whom he met along the way

The Ndomme

that we were requested to continue on our way soon, otherwise we would ruin his country by eating our way through it.

But the unfriendly reception the subchief of Bambu had given us soon improved. Today, during our ascent, undertaken in fact for topographical work, Franz shot a large antelope with a single well-placed bullet, after pursuing it for several hours, on his belly and on all fours through the grass and over the rocks. Ndanke and Mbo, who had crept up with him on the stalk, performed veritable dances of joy around the ‘meat,’ and then men were fetched from the village to carry down the colossally heavy animal. The common waterbuck is about the size of a cow, but naturally more slender and longer-legged.

It is impossible to describe the wild, ravenous enthusiasm with which ten men pulled and cut at the animal to remove the skin as quickly as possible and proceed to divide the meat. In the light of lanterns and the lightning of an approaching tornado, it was an unsettling scene.

But a few days ago, just before we left Mongong, we saw a similar scene, much wilder still: the two soldiers had shot a buffalo, a solitary animal driven out of its herd, which they had stalked in a clearing. Characteristic of the discipline of these black soldiers: when they were close enough to the animal, they fired together at the older man’s command, ‘Take aim—fire!’ so that they did not even know whose bullet had hit. The older man then

Antelope hunting

went toward the wounded animal; when it seemed about to charge him, he shouted again to the other, who was better placed, ‘Take aim—fire!’ and the buffalo collapsed, hit in the shoulder. The severed tail once again arrived in camp as a message of victory, and since bringing the whole animal to the village was unthinkable, everyone set off to cut it up out there in the forest. It was already night. We accompanied them by lantern light.

When we reached the clearing, two bright fires burned on either side of the dead colossus, and the people were already at work. The hide, which was not fine, was not removed; they merely gutted and butchered the animal. I would not have believed such insane, sensual reveling in blood possible. I shall never forget how our boy Ndanke, ordinarily so clean, became a savage again here: with joyful bursts of laughter he scooped handfuls of blood from the belly of the dead beast; then he stood with both feet in a large puddle of coagulated blood, continually raising and lowering his spread toes so that the thick, black-red mass welled up between them. A taut smile stretched his mouth; his white teeth gleamed like a thin strip in his dark face, and his blinking eyes were half closed. Behind him one could see Djimbe, his hands raised high, swinging the axe to sever the buffalo’s head from its body; a few big black fellows, silhouetted against the fire, pulled at a hind leg that the stable boy had expertly cut free; and on the right and left, half in shadow, the two soldiers, rifles at their feet, motionless, watched only to ensure

The dead buffalo

that nothing disappeared from the masses of meat piled at their feet. The fire cast trembling, jagged lights and shadows over the scene; in the background the great forest trees rose, solemn and silent, against the dark night sky.

Bambu, April 9, 1912.

Yesterday we actually climbed up there onto the massif. The ascent is, after all, steeper and higher than one imagined from below. We had therefore lingered quite a while in the valley beside the beautiful waterfalls and the curious meanders of a broad stream, and had to climb the slope in the humid midday heat. But up above, the view was wonderfully beautiful and quite different from what we had imagined beforehand. Rolling expanses covered in grass and cut by wooded valleys spread out on all sides; yet it was not really what I call a ‘mountain massif,’ but rather an immense plateau already deeply dissected by valleys, which seems to extend infinitely in every direction.

What we had hitherto taken for the northern edge of Ndomme is merely the boundary of a small, slightly elevated part of this entire vast upland. In the distance, a step could be clearly distinguished encircling the lower plain, from which Njua in turn rises to such a tremendous height. Far to the south lie the mountains above Linde, which Franz has already seen and which still beckon me to future work. The view recalled a painting by Segantini: the expanse in the foreground, the steep peaks in the distance, the bright-green grass in front and, behind, the bare rocks bathed in pink light.

On the heights of Ndomme

Above, a sky rich in clouds, always shifting, cast blue shadows over the undulations of the land.

Bambu, April 16, 1912.

Franz has been stricken in his turn. On the evening of the 10th, he too developed dysentery, milder even than Waibel’s and entirely without pain, but a little more persistent: for four days the unmistakable symptoms; since then, steady improvement without any relapse, even since he has been allowed a little solid food. Let us hope it continues this way. Fortunately, he himself has never lost either confidence or good humor, thereby making this vexing business easier to bear for both him and me.

But food is a real worry. During his convalescence, Waibel ate almost all the rice supply. It is uncertain whether the two sacks of rice we ordered from Jabassi will ever arrive. We have sent messengers to Joko to ask for rice there; let us hope they bring some back. Rice would also be very desirable for Waibel’s continuing recovery, and ultimately for me as well, for I have been struggling for three weeks with a stubborn gastric catarrh. For such things one is terribly helpless here; and the impossibility of quickly obtaining what one needs is perhaps, compared with the dangers of the climate, almost the worst evil of this country.

Naturally, we have stayed put here in Bambu; we have had a few days of insane heat and one cold, rainy day. Waibel has occupied himself with his collections, I with my ethnological inquiries. If there is no

Franz falls ill with dysentery

relapse, Franz will soon have recovered sufficiently for us to continue on our way; now he is the one who will have to remain in the hammock, and Waibel will do the topographical surveys. With short stages interspersed with rest days, everything will go very well.

This transition period between drought and rain, whose day-to-day weather seems almost normal to us Europeans—now cold, now hot, here rain and wind, there scorching sun—is considered by the natives here to be the season of sickness; and there is indeed plenty of it in our caravan.

All three of us think Franz was infected by little Ntong, who likewise reported dysentery; but he had probably already had it for several days and passed it to Franz while making his bed or serving him. Several porters have also had to be dismissed because of dysentery; it is a veritable epidemic in our caravan. If only I remain healthy now!

Our cook is a real treasure in this time of illness. He once stayed at Suellaba, the convalescent station on the coast, mainly frequented by dysentery patients, and knows all the culinary secrets of the dysentery diet. That Franz should have taken only milk for four days and still remained alive seems utterly incredible to the other Negroes. ‘Nothing but water! A black man would die on that!’[1]

April 17, 1912.

Last night I danced the polka with the brindled dog because a large sack of rice had arrived from Joko. I can now

1 ‘Nothing but water! A black man would die from it!’

Franz falls ill with dysentery

begin a proper course of treatment for Franz; he improves every day and tolerates the rice very well. Waibel made topographical surveys along the road today, but it tires him greatly; he will not yet be able to make long marches.

April 21.

It agreed with him so little that he suffered a relapse. For the moment, therefore, this kind of work is out of the question for both Franz and Waibel. I must see what I can do to ensure that this stretch of road is surveyed all the same. The day before yesterday I already took a sighting and made a map sketch from a viewpoint beside the road; I shall probably also manage to continue the topographical survey of it. Now I must be brave and take charge of the expedition. If only I remain healthy, I shall succeed.

Jakong, May 5, 1912.

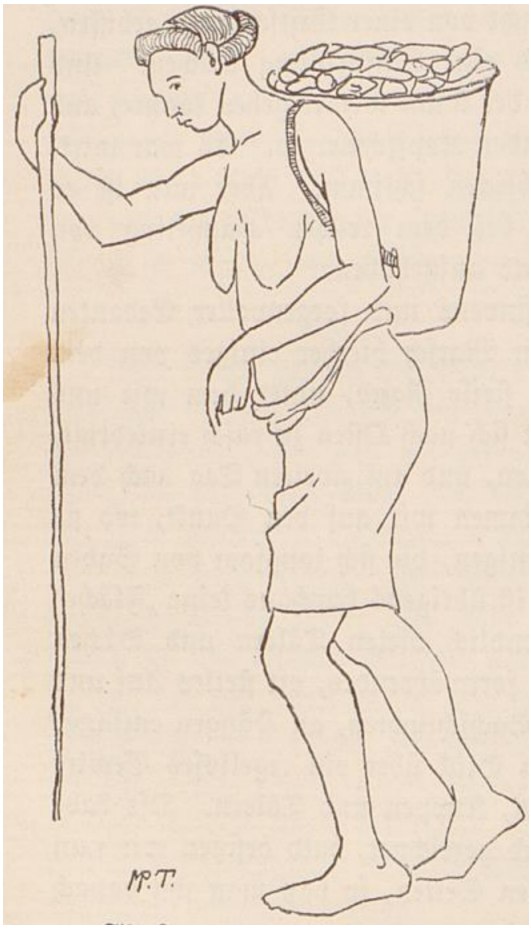
Yesterday we celebrated Franz’s recovery; three whole weeks have passed since the last signs of the illness without the slightest relapse. So one can indeed speak of recovery and—with every imaginable precaution—gradually resume the life of the healthy. To keep him company, we are celebrating my recovery at the same time. I have had—quite unnecessarily—a stupid bout of malaria that seemed never to end, beginning on April 22 and ending only yesterday. The fever never rose very high, but it never stopped either. Fortunately, during the first few days the mornings were always entirely free of fever, so that I could still make topographical surveys as best I could while we advanced in very short stages.

Illness and worries

Once, Franz and I had to stop for a few days and send Waibel on ahead, for he had suffered another serious relapse; he had himself carried to Joko in three long stages, finally to complete his recovery properly at the post. His boy and our Djimbe also had dysentery and were sent with him to the hospital in Joko. And Ndanke developed a slight beginning of pneumonia; one of the porters was bitten during the night by a poisonous snake, and I had to make an incision and give an injection. In the midst of all this, Franz could barely begin to walk again, and I had fever and furious headaches. At times it was truly trying. But fortunately it is over, and we are being splendidly received by the rich chief of Jakong.

Despite our poor condition and anxious thoughts, we nevertheless saw something of Ndomme on the march here. The steep rim at whose foot we had been at Bambu rapidly fell away to the east, while the lower step rose; on the second day after leaving Bambu we reached the place where they meet in a surface sloping gently from south to north. Besides, it is no longer a flat ‘surface’ at all, but terrain furrowed by an infinity of valleys and streams; the path is nothing but a continual ascent and descent, often steep, crossing ridges, passing through stream gorges, running along slopes, and from every height the view opens onto a disorderly tangle of isolated crests, summits, and valleys. I have often seen and drawn Njua; we shall soon have its profile from every side, so that one could almost model it from these drawings.

Illness and worries



All day here in Jakong, one sees women coming and going along the broad village street, lined on both sides with mat fences. Often they do so merely for pleasure, chatting and laughing; then they wear large, multicolored cotton cloths, passed under their arms and knotted over the chest so as to wrap closely around their usually slender bodies.

But when they go to work in the fields to fetch vegetables and young grain, to fish, or to collect wood, they carry the basket on their bare backs; at most they have tied a narrow cloth around their hips and thighs; very often a tiny apron with cotton fringes, hanging from a cord around the hips, is their only clothing. But their hair is always prettily arranged, gleaming with palm oil and built up into ingenious constructions that can be achieved only with actual supporting hairpieces.

Tikar woman returning from the fields.

Tikar women

The men sell the women the hair they shave from their heads.

The lives of these black women interest me greatly. I have asked many questions about them—unfortunately always through an interpreter, for none of them understands even a word of pidgin English. The picture I have formed is quite agreeable, and it seems that the Tikar woman is considerably better off than the Negress living west of the Mbam. Here she is not the beast of burden compelled to perform all the hard field labor and live in complete dependence; there is not even any actual buying of women, as among the Bamum, in Dschang, and on the coast, where several hundred marks are often paid for a woman.

The young girl grows up in her mother’s house, where she is taught all household tasks. With her friends she goes to the fields, fishing, and dancing, and each tells the others what she knows about men and married life. Once grown—at about fourteen or fifteen—she enjoys complete freedom and may associate with young men; if she has a child, this in no way diminishes her worth or standing. Sooner or later every girl marries; the idea of an unmarried woman is entirely inconceivable to the Negro, for ‘that is what she is made for, after all.’

A man who wishes to marry her speaks to her father or brother and, if he consents, gives him a few meters of cloth, salt, and palm oil, worth twenty to forty marks. But if the girl subsequently does not agree, these gifts are returned. Only

The young girl

when she has been promised to a man from childhood can she no longer refuse later. But if the man courting a girl is very poor and she loves him nevertheless, the gift to the parents can even be omitted altogether; at most he helps for a time in her father’s field. It is also customary after the marriage for the young husband to work for two days with his friends in his father-in-law’s field.

The wedding day brings no celebration; the mother takes her daughter to the husband’s house and leaves her there. But after two days the young woman returns to her parents and asks them now to prepare the wedding feast. Chickens and goats are then killed, things are boiled and roasted, enormous quantities of millet beer are brewed, and everything is carried to the young husband’s parents, where the two families and all the friends have a great feast. For the young woman now belongs to the husband’s family. After two weeks, the newlyweds themselves entertain all their friends at their home; only millet beer is served, with nothing to eat.

One of the most beautiful and delicate marriage customs I have ever heard of requires the bride’s best friend to accompany her to her new home in order to spare her all household work during these first days of married life. When she leaves, the husband gives her a little cloth or palm oil and thanks her warmly.

Then the duties of the mistress of the house begin. The hut must be kept clean, and three meals are prepared every day with great care. The Tikar is a gourmet and demands, with his large ball of flour cooked in water, at least a spicy sauce or

Marriage

vegetables; he likes fish cooked with spices and oil better still, and above all, naturally, meat, which nevertheless remains rare. Every Tikar woman grows a whole range of different vegetables and seasoning plants in her field, each used according to particular recipes.

But she has a fairly easy life; she does not have to do the hard work of hoeing the fields, which is the men’s business; at most she helps with the sowing. And during the great millet harvest, the lighter share of the work also falls to her. She fetches from the field herself what she needs each day for the household; she also brings back firewood from the trees her husband fells in the forest, which she splits as soon as they are dry and leaves to dry further in the house.

When a man has only one wife, they live together in a hut, eat their meals together, and live entirely in accordance with our conception of marriage. And this case is by no means rare. If there are several wives in a compound, the husband and each of his wives have a hut of their own; the wives then take turns cooking for the husband.

One of a young woman’s first duties is to learn to assist at childbirth. There are no exceptions: each must be instructed by the village midwife so that, if necessary, she can help a sister or friend with whom she might be living alone in a farming hamlet. During the last weeks before a child is born, women take care of themselves and do no strenuous work; they do not fetch wood, carry water, or kneel before the grinding stone to reduce grain to flour. Most often a sister of the husband then takes over all these tasks

The young mistress of the house



for them, or else the husband’s mother, for the child is, in all circumstances, a member of the husband’s family; the work required for this birth therefore also falls to his relatives. In the immense majority of cases, births go well; the mother remains in bed for a few days and resumes her household tasks only gradually.

During the years that follow, she belongs entirely to her child, for she nurses it for about three years, and throughout this period husband and wife live apart. If the husband has only this wife, he often secretly takes a mistress; but the women are very jealous: often, in fury, they leave their husband to return to their parents, and the man can do little about it. But often it is also the women—especially when the husband has many—who are unfaithful, and quarrels, beatings, and separations for such reasons are not rare. In all circumstances, however, the children belong to the father, and this undoubtedly restrains many mothers from divorcing, for they all love their children tenderly.

If a woman leaves her husband, for whatever reason, she takes her

Tikar woman with a child.

Family life

personal possessions, everything she brought as household articles at the time of the marriage and everything she received as gifts during it. She is always welcome at her parents' home, and usually she soon remarries.

Nor does a widow ever remain alone. Her husband's brother takes her into his compound, or a grown son provides for her. The distress of an abandoned, elderly, or poor woman does not exist among these so-called savages…

The day before we reached Jakong, we received a large package of letters and newspapers, the mail that left home on March 9; it took six weeks to reach us. At home one cannot possibly imagine what great celebrations these mail days are in the wilderness's solitude. For days afterward, all one's thoughts keep returning to them. The letters are almost learned by heart, the newspapers studied from the first line to the last. Each begins by reading alone, then we read everything aloud to one another, and all conversations revolve around this news.

Since all three of us have been ill, Franz asked the head of the Joko post to take us in for a while to recover, if there was room—even though we had been forbidden to lodge at the posts; but in such a case one simply takes the risk. An exceedingly kind reply arrived at once from Joko: we would be welcome at any time, there was plenty of room, they would be happy to help us, and we would be no trouble at all.

Joko, May 12, 1912.

At last we are in Joko! Later than we thought, and after many difficult days. And like a

Letters from home

deliverance, like a homecoming—that is how it felt to me yesterday; tears still come to my eyes with emotion. Everything around us is so incredibly changed. We are in an immense whitewashed room, very high and well ventilated. Large windows—real windows, with glass—let us look southeast over the Wute town of Joko and the edge of the Ndomme massif, far into the flat Wute plain; to the southwest, they look onto the post's clean, gleaming-white courtyard, with its pretty buildings clothed in climbing plants and the tall yellow-brick tower, from which one must be able to see almost to infinity. The black, white, and red flag with the eagle flies cheerfully above this bright scene; in the courtyard one sees soldiers in red caps going about their business, dogs squabbling, and a large, comical spur-winged goose advancing solemnly.

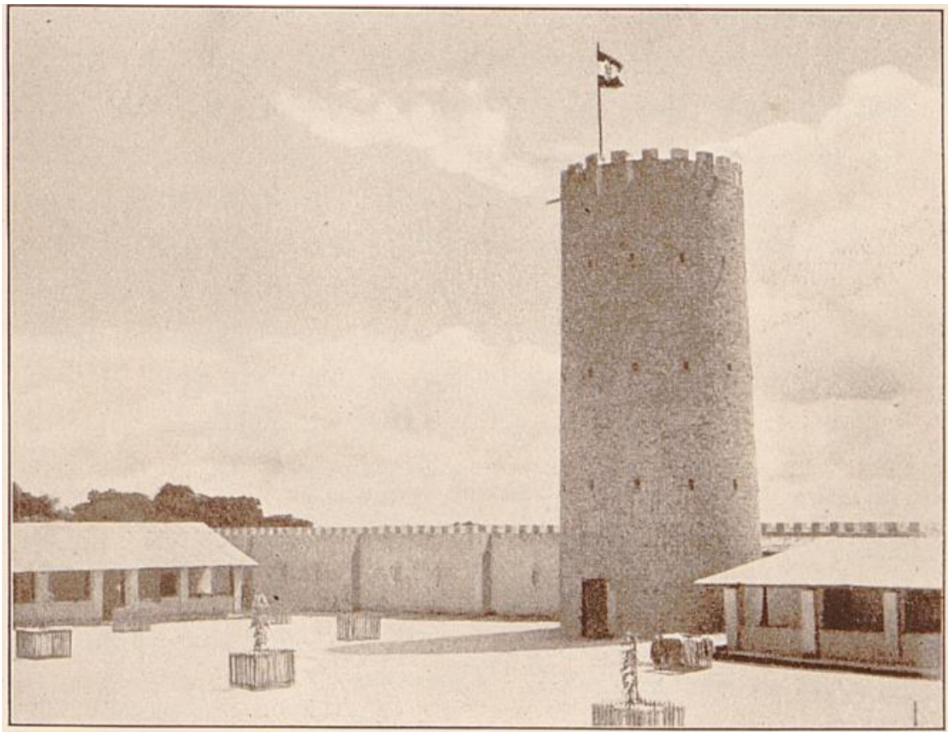
Our rooms—we have two—are on the upper floor of one of the great corner towers. How strange, after so many months of wandering, of living in a primitive, bare rest house or a narrow tent, to find oneself now in a proper house, with a wooden floor, windowpanes, and real furniture. It still seems like a dream to me.

And flowers, German garden flowers, set on the heavy, solid wooden table, welcomed us! One can only keep giving thanks for all the warm kindness surrounding us.

Police sergeant Müller is currently acting head of the post. He too was informed from the coast of our arrival and of the fact that, for a prolonged stay, we should not lodge at the post. But he considers that, given

Arrival in Joko





Antelope hunting.

Joko post.

Plate 7

the establishment’s ample size, there can be no question of our presence interfering with the work of the post; and when the district administrator from Jaunde, under whose authority Joko falls, comes here in the next few days, he intends to discuss the matter with him.

Whatever the outcome, for the moment we are under shelter, so that all three of us can recover completely. That is the most immediate and necessary task, and there is no need yet to think farther ahead. How good it is that here in the interior, far from the already over-refined life of the coast, every white person is simply the brother of the next, that each helps the other without too many questions or scruples, and that a warm, simple humanity prevails here…

Our march yesterday was exhausting—twenty-four kilometers, twenty of which I surveyed topographically—but also wonderful. The forest, which entirely covers vast areas in the territory of Jakong, broke up again as we left that very well-watered country. Isolated, rounded summits, some with flanks covered in immense bare slabs of granite, and vast grassy expanses dominated the landscape. Forest stretched only through the deep valleys; elsewhere there was grass everywhere, bright green and tall, scattered with small trees with pale foliage. The path winds in endless switchbacks and loops to stay as nearly as possible at the same altitude and avoid the many gorges.

And then suddenly we saw, very, very far away, the post of Joko—the white wall crowned with battlements, the short, massive corner buildings, and the tall tower! I raised my arms and cried out with joy at the sight! Admittedly, there were then

A warm welcome

still hours to go while the path described a great arc.

A few pretty villages lie beside the road, inhabited chiefly by Wute who, for one reason or another, were settled here after the wars against the Wute. It is the same solemn scene of welcome each time. The chief, the German Empire’s document of protection in his hand, comes to meet us beyond the stream in the gorge on whose slope the village always stands, accompanied by his interpreter and five to ten other men; each time it is a solemn, richly colored procession. The ample blue-and-white Hausa garments, with their green, red, or blue embroidery, always look grand despite their tears and dirt, and the tall black fellows wear them with fabulous dignity. All bow deeply in greeting, and then one must stop in the village; one sits in the shade of a tree or an overhanging roof on the folding chair one has brought, beside the chief, who likewise always has a European chair as his throne. His people squat on the ground around him, then the ‘gifts of honor’ are placed at our feet: eggs, one or two chickens, and fufu for the men accompanying us. There follows a short, friendly conversation about the organization of the village and fields, the number of inhabitants, and especially also the number of women and children, which, however, offers no very bright prospects for the future of the Tikar and Wute.

It almost seems that the population is constantly declining and that the system of polygamy bears a large share of the responsibility. A chief, even one already elderly, has fifty to

Welcome in the Negro villages

a hundred wives, largely all very young, and only one or two children! And among the notables with ten to thirty wives, the proportion is scarcely better.

Joko, May 18, 1912.

Eight days of the most divine laziness, the most delicious rest. From time to time, a tiny bit of work in between, as though for amusement and to savor idleness all the more afterward; otherwise sleeping—much and long—eating—much and well—strolling, chatting, and reading.

But already the desire for action is waking vigorously. This week we intend to make a few small excursions from the post; early next week we want to set out again for more substantial work, once the planned Whitsun festivities are over: a morning ride, lunch at our place, target shooting and coffee in the little pleasure pavilion on a nearby hill, dinner at Mr. Müller’s, and a morning-after breakfast at the trader Colin’s. As we have just read with pleasure in the weather log of the Joko post, the weather is generally relatively favorable from the last days of May until well into July; in June it rains even less than in April and May, and we intend to make full use of this good period.

Waibel is still doing rather poorly. Five days ago he suffered another relapse. For the moment there is absolutely no end in sight. He does collect all sorts of things, but it remains very sad for him. Franz is wonderfully well. Of all the people at the post, he is actually the one who looks healthiest; none is so nicely

Rest at the post

tanned as he is. I too am wonderfully well; the fever has disappeared completely, and I am once again capable of undertaking anything.

We first intend to continue working in the Joko administrative area, in Wute country, then toward Tibati. It is doubtful whether we shall cross the border into the Banjo administrative area. The commander of the colonial protection troops recently informed us that, after discussing the matter with the acting governor, he was withdrawing his order to supply us with soldiers. And working without an escort of soldiers is made more difficult by the thousand obstacles the natives then immediately create. On the other hand, the district administrator of Jaunde, who spent a few days here, invited us to regard the Joko post as our headquarters, our base, and our residence for as long as we wished.

His presence is naturally an event for Joko; the post is covered in garlands, flags, and pennants; the soldiers form a guard of honor at attention before the great gate, with an unheard-of iron rigidity. Through the rear entrance to the courtyard pours the magnificent, multicolored crowd of Joko people who have come to greet the ‘great governor,’ as well as the Hausa, who must not be absent either. Then they all departed again with drums, trumpets, and piercing cries, the chief on horseback, surrounded by six companions driving away the flies with Hausa fans. Those fans are another thing whose sight flashes through one like lightning: it is the ancient Egyptian form, the semicircle fringed with feathers, mounted on a shaft. What infinite unity in this Africa, across immense stretches of time and space!

A festive day

The glimpse we have here of life at an inland post is very interesting. How useful a head of post, if he is capable and enjoys the work, can be to the colony's future development through his practical labors! The gleaming-white fortress of the post stands on its rounded hill, encircled by ravines deeply cut by water, amid carefully cultivated fields. Besides the local crops, maize, millet, and sweet potatoes, whose cultivation goes without saying, trials have been made with peanuts, Florida clover, and African upland rice, so far with excellent results. Next farming season they are to plow with oxen. The Europeans' kitchen garden supplies every imaginable good thing: beans, peas, tomatoes, kohlrabi, radishes, cabbages, and lettuces. Trials in growing oil palms and rubber trees have only just begun; the most interesting point is that they are not being undertaken by the post alone, but that all the chiefs must participate and are checked from time to time. Each receives his allotment of rice, peanuts, and palm nuts to sow; when an official passes through the settlement, he examines the condition of the fields. And every chief must establish small rubber plantations here and there.

Rainfall is also recorded daily at the post; if temperature observations were added, its work would be complete. In the morning, the head of the post holds 'palavers' in his office: the disputing parties appear before him and justice is administered. Or offenders are brought before him, and from time to time blows are dealt out. At this

Life at an inland post

moment, one of the principal tasks is issuing itinerant trading permits to Hausa merchants, each of whom must pay twenty marks a year. Since April 1, more than three thousand marks have thus been paid into the station treasury.

There is a large, evidently very wealthy Hausa settlement here, and the men of the police force—twenty, I believe—as well as the station messengers, with their enormous retinues of women and boys, are all customers of the Hausa merchants. Every morning an ox is slaughtered in the Hausa town; cooked food is sold there, and mats, straw plates, baskets, leather goods and cloth are offered for sale: everything finds a buyer. For the lazy people who do not feel like going into the forest or savanna themselves, the Hausa even offer firewood and large bundles of grass for sale—a bundle of some twenty to thirty kilograms of grass for ten pfennigs. The Wute Negroes of Joko, who make a rather poor impression, have likewise acquired the habit of buying as much as possible from the Hausa to make their lives as comfortable as possible.

The Hausa town is very orderly and very clean. At the center of the whole settlement stands the mosque, the “Kaaba,” a tall building with a grass roof and clay ornaments; adjoining it is the chief’s compound, with two or three similar tall buildings, prettily decorated inside and out, surrounded by a few small grass huts. Then, along the broad streets, compound follows compound. Above the mat fences, the low round huts, shaped like beehives and covered with grass, barely protrude; life takes place chiefly in the

The Hausa Village

street: here people weave, sew and spin, and above all they continually carry heavy loads from one place to another. It is also in the street that all the marvels for sale are displayed, in bowls, on straw plates, hanging from poles. For the rainy season there is even a kind of open market hall: a rectangular roof resting on posts, about twenty meters long and five wide. And the Hausa have immediately adopted one practice from the station’s operations that I had never yet seen among any black people: they manure their fields.

As everywhere, the Hausa here own many little gray-white donkeys; here indeed is an animal that suits the Hausa: exceptionally frugal, ready to carry the heaviest loads, but slow—slow. A Hausa covers no more than ten kilometers a day at most, and a little donkey cannot do more either. If more is asked of it, it lies down and dies. That is why the donkey, so cheap and so undemanding, cannot be used for Europeans’ transport either.

May 29, 1912.

The day before yesterday our comrade left us. And I fear we shall not see him again until we are in Europe. He is too ill to be left any longer without a doctor; his dysentery seems to be becoming chronic. It was very hard to let the companion with whom we have lived and worked for seven months, sharing all the good and the bad, leave in this way. Only the thought that it was not yet too late helped us recognize this separation as the only right and possible decision.

He himself left full of confidence; the fact that we

Parting from Our Traveling Companion

were letting him travel alone gave him, in his own eyes, the certainty that his condition was not too serious: he knows very well that we would never abandon him.

We must now begin by putting everything back in order. The last few unsettled days, the luggage to prepare for Waibel, the allocation of the men and his departure have thrown our affairs into terrible disorder; that must be remedied first of all. Then we want to work in the surrounding area, making marches of two or three days into the interior at most: work that was to have fallen to Waibel. Later will come the most necessary task, the southern foot of the Ndomme.

An entirely new allocation is now essential, of money, time, strength and tasks. The two of us must accomplish what had been planned for three.

June 5, 1913 [sic].

A rainy day of the first order. We must now grow accustomed to seeing fine, clear and pleasantly cool days alternate with gray, endless rain. But being so comfortably settled here in a solid house, writing, studying maps and travel accounts, attending to photographs, putting our things in order and mending them—all this makes even such a day quite pleasant and useful. Our life is becoming so European again; I am curious to see how we shall find the tent next week.

Yesterday evening we took a walk with the station commander that felt like strolling at home between farm and fields. First past the stables, then through the kitchen garden, where we stopped in admiration before beds of all the marvels of our gardens,

New Plans

then along the path between the potatoes and the clover fields, to the long sheds of the brickyard at the bottom of the valley and the edge of the forest, where, from a shooting platform perched in an enormous, thick-trunked tree, one can shoot the game that comes out into the fields in the evening. With all this came conversations about laying out strawberry beds, feeding cattle dry fodder, and now and then a slightly irritated word about some professional annoyance: it is impossible to say how incredibly German, rural and familiar it all was. The gigantic, grotesque, angular silhouettes of a few half-bare kapok trees, outlined against the moonlit sky, were suddenly so African that one stopped before them almost in alarm.

These last few days we dismissed our little boy Ntong. The life of this Negro boy in the white man’s household is a study in itself, a tragic study. He was one of those black people who, during their stay with a European, develop increasingly in the wrong direction, although they are treated exactly like others who turn out splendidly, and even though one gives them more attention and care, nurses them and helps them. When one thinks of the little animal that this pretty little black fellow really was at first in Dschang—that playful, laughing, stuffing little animal—and then of the ill-mannered, lazy and greedy rascal who deliberately did everything wrong so that nothing more would be entrusted to him, who could not utter three words without lying, and who, only when a reward was in sight, suddenly knew how to work flawlessly and show a friendly face; and when finally one sees the wretched little skeleton who has perhaps only just escaped death,

Little Ntong

and yet with whom there is nothing else to do but turn him out and send him back to his country at the next opportunity—then it truly seems a tragedy in which one has oneself played a part without being able to prevent the unhappy ending.

It is indeed directly to Ntong that Franz owes his dysentery. The boy had already been ill for several days and concealed it, probably because there was antelope meat, which of course would have been forbidden to a sick person. He was then carried in a hammock, like Franz and Waibel; he lived on rice and milk as they did, and was nursed as well as it was possible to nurse him. This did not prevent him from concealing a second attack of dysentery when we were at Jakong, where there were many good things to eat; but he immediately declared himself ill again at the moment of departure, to be sure of getting his hammock back.

Here in Joko he spent two weeks on our veranda in the sunshine; he was fed rice and meat and so pampered that it aroused the dissatisfaction and envy of all the other boys. Then traces of dysentery were discovered again, without its being possible to identify the sufferer; everyone denied it, the matter remained unexplained, but I am now firmly convinced that it was Ntong. Shortly afterward he had convulsions and was admitted to the hospital; the black medical orderly and our boy Djimbe took turns staying beside him, sometimes watching over him at night, and our cook prepared his food. Two days after the convulsions, he sent us word in the morning that he was hungry and wanted food—yet the previous day he had received three meals! Half an hour later a second, thoroughly impudent message

Little Ntong

asked us whether he was to get nothing today. Djimbe goes to see him: “Ntong, your rice in chicken broth is on the fire, and you will have tea with sugar too; wait another quarter of an hour and it will be ready.” When he brings him the meal a quarter of an hour later, Ntong has disappeared; and when he comes to tell us this, Ndanke comes running breathlessly from the village: “I have just seen Ntong in the Hausa village; he is buying food.”[1] He is seized down below and brought back here; he stands with a stubborn, dull-witted face, his roasted ears of maize in his hand. Then he begins making excuses: he had gone to wash by the water, and a Hausa had given him the maize there—a Hausa! Eventually it is discovered that he approached another boy and said: “My master gives me nothing to eat, I am going to starve; lend me half a groschen so that I can buy myself something.”

We asked the station commander what should be done, and he answered as we had: “Turn him out immediately, for the boy cannot be kept in the hospital and he is a constant danger to whites and blacks at the station.” So his money was paid to him; sitting on the steps with a greedy face, he counted his fifty-pfennig pieces. For the moment he has been entrusted to a Hausa, pending the next departure of a messenger for Bamenda, who is to take him back to his country. Will he reach it alive? I do not know. But I know that we can do nothing more and that we are powerless in the face of such obstinate incomprehension. We can say with a clear conscience that we have done our duty.

1 “I have just seen Ntong in the Hausa village; he is buying food.”

Little Ntong

If only one could see inside such a black head and understand how everything appears there! Does he really believe that the white man, with his demands for cleanliness, truthfulness and diligence, is so wicked, so unreasonable and at the same time so rich that a true Negro simply must lie to him, deceive him and exploit him as much as possible? Or is it all merely half-animal instinct, without any reflection, dictated by the moment? One would be just as bad as the other…

A lively friendship has developed with the station's Hausa-language interpreter, a Fulani from Yola named Adigu. He acts as our intermediary in buying Hausa and Fulani objects; since he himself always receives a little present when we buy cheaply, he really does look after our interests. He must be a political criminal by Fulani standards: he fled Yola with his mother, brother, sister, wife and sister-in-law, and found refuge here as the station interpreter. Naturally the Hausa do not regard him, a Fulani, as one of their own and do not help him. He therefore lived here in rather miserable circumstances for a long time. Then he negotiated some very good horse purchases for the gentlemen at the station; he received five marks as a reward on one occasion and ten on another, and with a fortune of perhaps fifty to seventy marks, immense for a black man, he quickly rose in the world.

We visited him yesterday and were surprised by the shining cleanliness of his entire property. He told us that he had learned the value of cleanliness, so contrary to all the Hausa's inclinations, as a child when he had been a boy to a German officer.

Adigu

In the gatehouse of his compound he has opened a tailor’s workshop; four men sit there sewing and embroidering the short little Hausa shirts and the long pleated garments, which are bought and worn not only by the inhabitants of the Hausa settlement but also by the people of Joko; Adigu himself only does the cutting. Through the gatehouse one enters the spacious compound enclosed by a mat fence, where the kitchen and the houses of his wife, sister-in-law and mother stand, surrounded by little plantings of maize and papaya trees. In an inner courtyard is the hut of the master of the house himself. In the middle is a couch covered with mats; at night the bed is made up on the floor beside the fire, on a sort of clay platform. All around, against the walls, stand or hang multicolored baskets containing all his possessions.

We were allowed to see everything, and Adigu answered all our questions; in the end all three of us were squatting on the ground—Franz and I have learned to do so admirably—absorbed in pious and admiring contemplation of Adigu’s greatest treasure: a collection of Arabic magical formulas inherited from his father. As a child he himself attended an Arabic school in Yola; he learned to read and write Arabic, and this inheritance has now made him the owner and custodian of the most wonderful charms. The large sheet of white paper in the magic book is divided into many compartments; each bears, in Arabic letters traced in black and red ink, a magical formula possessing healing power against illness, losses and evil thoughts; others bear drawings of sabers, chains, fetters and instruments of torture: their magic protects against these horrors. But the most

A Visit to Adigu

remarkable thing is the way the magical prescription is applied: the formula or magical sign is painted on carefully waxed wooden tablets; the ink is then washed off and the water, which now contains the magic, is drunk. Thus the believer takes the magical word into his body and is thereby protected.

Adigu himself has drunk all the charms; he firmly believes in his luck and success, and this confidence enables him to dare and undertake things. He had land assigned to him by the station and grows maize on it; he asked for banana and papaya plants, which he planted around his fields, and then sells all this to the station and to the lazy Negroes. One wishes him success; he is intelligent and hardworking, and seems more honest than the other Hausa, those cunning rogues.

Woingbe, June 8, 1912.

Here we are, the two of us on the road again at last, for the first time. At last! It is now eight weeks since Franz fell ill; much precious time has been lost. And yet how fortunate that he is simply well again and able to work! We were blissfully happy as we set off, the caravan of porters ahead, ourselves on horseback behind, the brindled dog capering with delight.

We are making a short excursion in the vicinity of Joko to gain a better understanding of the eastern edge of the Ndomme, and now, as during the previous months of work, we once again have our evening outside the tent. The setting sun is behind us; the hills before us, the pale savannas and the deep-green forests are bathed in its golden radiance. The sky has delicate colors; the air is light and cool, yet warm, as on a delightful summer evening at home.

Back at Work

We have made good marches, longer than we had expected; we constantly had to climb up and down, and then cross, or rather wade through, numerous streams, now greatly swollen by the rainy season. As the banks are generally very steep or marshy, one cannot cross the water on horseback; then, as though nothing else were possible, a black man takes one on his back. This now seems quite natural to me, however comical I found it at first. During the first few days the water level was still manageable; but toward the end, after a heavy downpour, the streams were so deep that their strongly flowing water came up to the men’s waists. Then we sat enthroned on the shoulders of our black porters. With the horses the affair was far more difficult. Twice the mare fell backward into the water while trying to climb a vertical bank.

The whole country is wonderfully fertile, especially the hollows between the ranges of hills. Fields of maize and millet seem to stretch endlessly, all so fresh now, with their widely spaced, brilliantly green, large-leaved stalks. Small farming villages are scattered among them; some are inhabited only at sowing and harvest time, and everything belongs to the chief of Joko. Our porters and boys almost ate themselves to death on the quantities of fufu cakes brought from all these villages to the place where we sleep.

Joko, June 10, 1912.

This morning our brindled dog died very quickly and quite unexpectedly. So we have lost our four-legged companion too. This is very, very painful for us. Yesterday afternoon he was no longer as lively

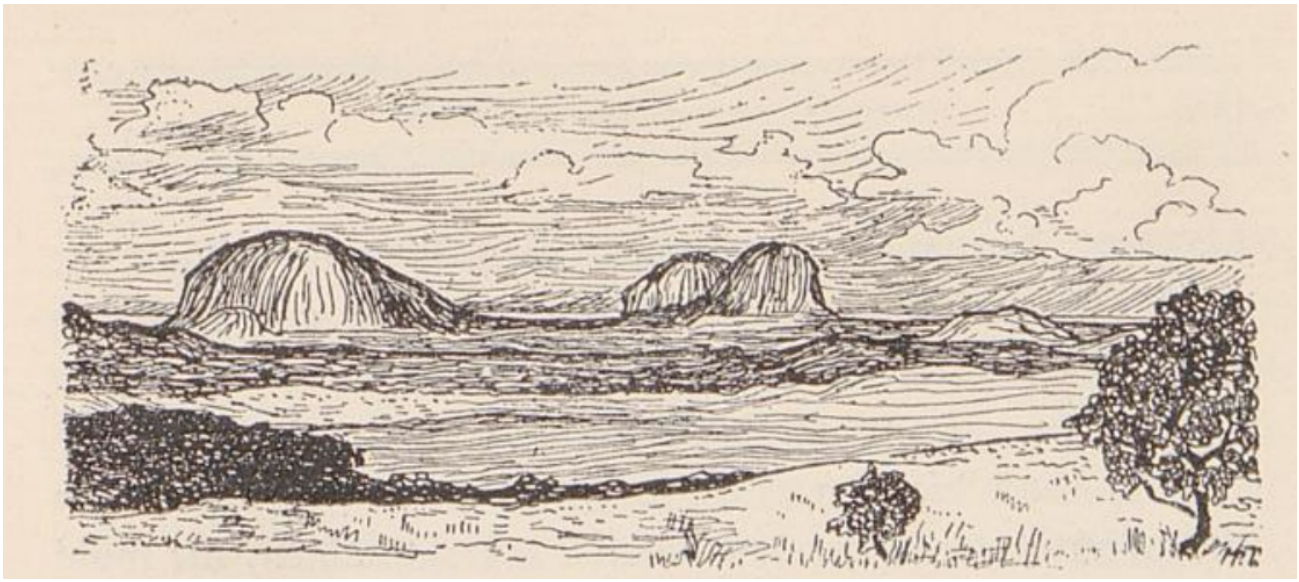
Watercourses during the Rainy Season

as before. During the night he came beside Franz's bed, nudged him with his muzzle, then collapsed exhausted next to him; after a while he slipped outside. Toward morning we heard him crying loudly and pitifully, as a human being cries. He lay on the veranda, rearing up and writhing in pain. We tried everything imaginable to help him; perhaps we were able to ease his suffering a little, but suddenly he was dead.

How we shall miss that faithful, cheerful fellow, day after day! From the morning, when he woke us by thrusting his muzzle right into our faces; during every walk and every march, when he frolicked around us; at every halt, when he had to show his tricks to the villagers and furiously hurled himself at any village dogs that came too close to the tent; until evening, when he settled with a contented growl under the head of my camp bed, to bark softly at the slightest noise during the night. His eagerness to give his paw, his leaps up against us, his delight in every tasty morsel: we shall miss it all.

Because the brindled dog had been such a good friend to us, Franz and I each threw three handfuls of earth onto him as he lay in his grave. The black men opened their eyes wide and said: "We do that too for a brother or a friend." And each of them scooped three handfuls from the heap of loose earth and threw them down before they filled in the grave. Is this custom, then, so universally human? So ancient?

Our Dog "Tiger"



Rocky Mountains in the Wute Plain.

Njinga, June 16, 1912.

The tower at Joko station has been very useful to us. From there one has an unobstructed view of the ridges, the edge of the mountain mass and the vast Wute plain; we have spent many days working there in the hours before sunset, when the distant view is clearest. We always saw, far away in the flat lowlands, a crown of curious mountain blocks lined up in a long row before the foot of the Ndomme. Bare rock, glowing a luminous pink in the declining sun, rose above the green grass; the walls were steep, vertical, even overhanging in places, but nowhere were there sharp ridges or points. The rock walls seemed round and smooth, and must have been several hundred meters high.

We set out to examine these blocks a little more closely, this time by the Jaunde road, so magnificently laid out, so broadly built and so well maintained that it could stand comparison honorably anywhere in Europe. Ditches run along both sides and keep it free of water even during the rainy season; beyond them a wide strip has also been cleared of grass on either side. Trees with dense foliage have been planted there; their shade is intended to prevent

the grass from encroaching on the road again. The road crosses the slope of the Ndomme proper in enormous bends that unwind like a bright red ribbon through the luminous green of the savannas. Afterward it must admittedly climb and descend continually, for the plain, which seems as flat as a plate from above, is in fact cut by deep ravines, twenty to thirty meters deep and generally with very steep sides. And each of these gorges is filled with the most luxuriant forest, overflowing with fullness and sap in this rainy season.

At very short distances from one another lie the villages, almost all forcibly settled along the road. But, unlike the road from Joko to Ngambe, traveled by countless Hausa, life on the Jaunde road is almost entirely confined to the movements of the administration and the trading posts. In two days we met five large caravans.

Until now I had entirely failed to understand the need to draw all the inhabitants to the road in this way and almost completely depopulate the rest of the country. Being able to lay hands more easily on every recalcitrant petty village chief did not seem to me sufficient reason. But I now see that this measure also serves an educational purpose for the Negroes themselves. Formerly, when they lived “in the bush,” each the enemy of all the others, and scarcely ever left their patch of land, they grew only the produce necessary for their own consumption, certainly not three extra baskets of millet. Here beside the road they learn to produce food beyond their needs, for they are obliged to sell passing caravans what they require to live; and in

Villages on the Jaunde Road

particular, the traveling Hausa buys something in every village, if only an ear of maize. The lazy Negroes thereby become more industrious; they earn money and advance economically, albeit slowly. Here on the Jaunde road they have already understood this very well, and we must now constantly prevent too much food from being brought to us, for which the villagers naturally want to be well paid.

Whether such complete depopulation of vast regions is necessary for this education is, however, something I continue to doubt. Why must they all come to the roadside? And so close to one another? Would half not suffice, spaced then at somewhat greater distances?

The rock blocks are tremendous giants. One of them stands beside the road, and the village where we are staying is at its foot. When we approached the mountain from the north, it presented its steepest side to us; once at its foot one truly stands breathless, seized with astonishment. From a marshy plain as flat as a table, smooth walls two to three hundred meters high suddenly shoot up almost vertically, covered in greenish-white lichens, between which the weathering rock appears in long blackish bands where the water flows during the rainy season. Not a step, not a projection, not a water channel or even a crack in the rock; the block stands there as though polished, in the shape of a hemisphere. A few small patches of grass cling to the highest parts, and a few low bushes can be seen above.

To the south the stone hemisphere extends into a section that, at first seen foreshortened, resembles a long, low back of smooth rock. But if

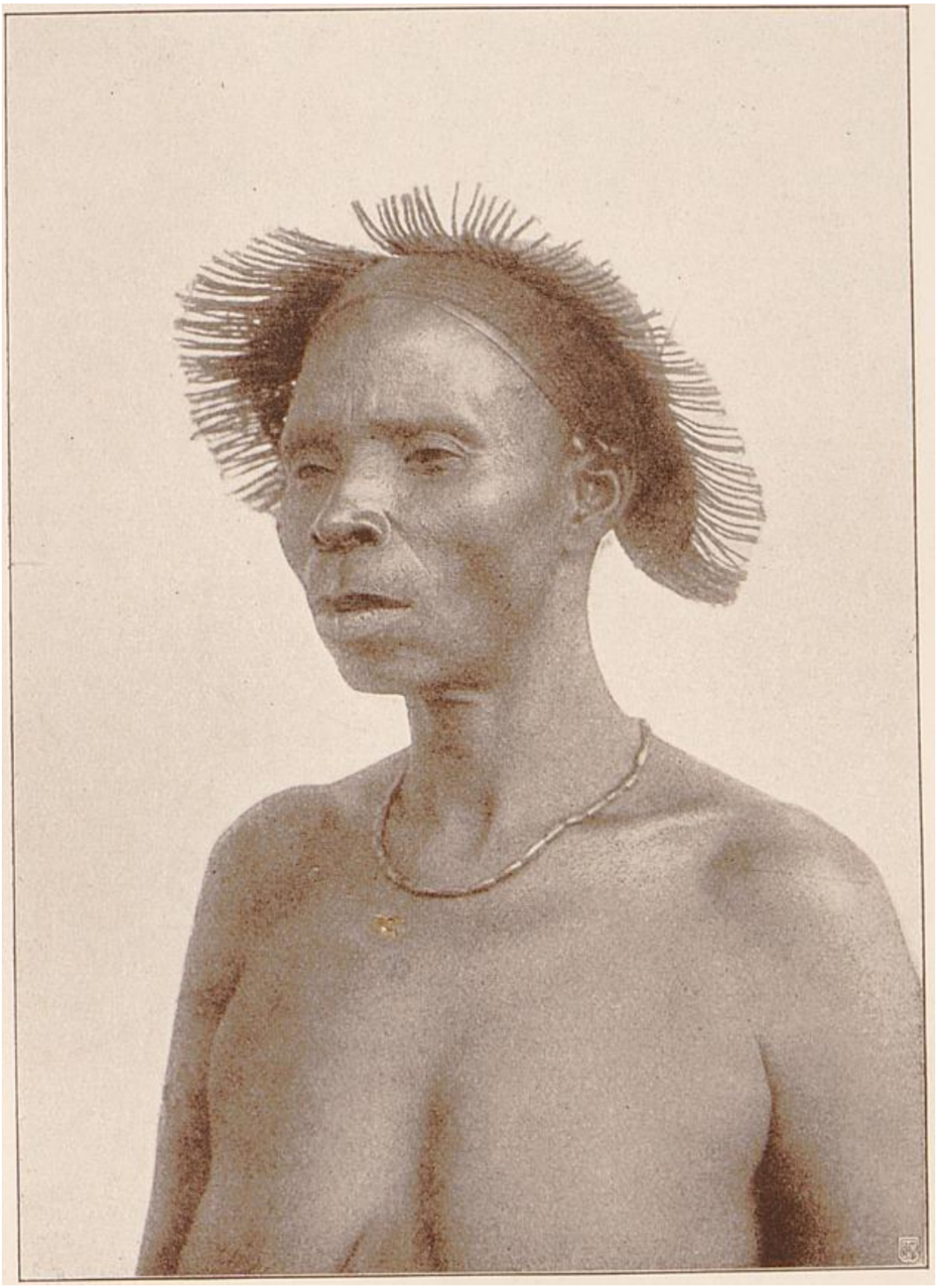
A Rocky Mountain in the Wute Plain

one follows its foot—the road does us the favor of circling almost three-quarters of the mountain at very close quarters—one soon sees that this back consists of three further blocks, all still joined together as though by narrow bridges. At the foot of the southernmost lies the village of Njinga, separated from the rock walls only by the broad road lined with plantain trees. A herd of goats once escaped from the village and now roams on the mountain, always in the neighborhood of the village but never within reach of capture.

The villagers use the rock slabs that are somewhat less inclined in certain places as threshing floors. Entirely naked women sit on the warm stone, beating the millet grains from the stalks with sticks; others cut cassava roots and dry them in the fierce heat that comes from above and also radiates from below; some even grind their fufu outdoors on this immense millstone instead of doing so in their stifling huts. The most astonishing spectacle was a woman who, seated directly on the greenish-white lichens, was pounding red wood between her spread legs. In both hands she held a heavy stone, which she brought down again and again on the red fragments; the red dust swirled up and clung to her dark, sweat-streaming skin, so that this woman, no longer at all young or well formed, sat enthroned there in the sunshine on the bare rocks like a blood-red witch.

When we climbed together early the following morning, it was much easier than I had expected. The sky was overcast, so the enormous steep slope did not give us too much trouble. Nowadays I make things easier for myself.

At the Foot of Fui



Wute Woman.

Plate 8

Where the climb over the rocks is steep, I give a man my hand and let myself be half pulled upward. For this I choose a black man wearing as little clothing as possible, for with them dirt and bad smells reside only in their clothes; their bodies themselves are generally wonderfully clean.

Mist clung to the mountain, because the night’s rain had not fallen heavily enough, and even during the day the air did not become as clear as it had been the day before. Yet we still had a magnificent view along the whole immense Ndomme range, whose appearance is much grander from the south than from the northern side. A tremendous rock wall rises vertically above the plain; in places the summit of the massif is wild and jagged, elsewhere it resembles a smooth surface. Above all, we gained the impression that we still have much work ahead if we are to master these walls and towers. Down in the Wute plain, from which we shall always have to set out on this task, it is terribly hot; in this rainy season the air of this marshy country is very oppressive. The sun stings as never before; at only seven hundred meters above sea level, we are also lower than anywhere else during our journey.

Up there on the rocky mountain of Fui the air was cool and windy; we spent some time lying on our backs in the shade of a small, stunted flowering tree, dozing blissfully in the open air. Then we examined the mountain carefully; it must measure perhaps two kilometers long and one and a half kilometers wide. Up there are small beginnings of peat bogs; in a thin layer of weathered rock, in shallow hollows that may be formed by the detachment of thin flakes of rock all around,

Ascent of Fui

mosses first grow; water accumulates there, and after a time fine short stems appear, quite different from the usual enormous tropical grass. Then taller grasses also appear, and when one walks there, peaty water runs over one’s feet; with every heavier shower it streams down the rock walls.

The men who had climbed with us very quickly obtained clear drinking water from the bog. The layer of peaty humus, scarcely a handbreadth thick, was detached from the smooth rock beneath over a radius of one meter, and the grass sods were piled into a small dam at right angles to the flow. The sand and mud settled to the bottom; the impounded water collected, transparent and clear over the coarse-grained granite.

In a few places the humus layer had already thickened somewhat. Where it becomes marshy, little groves of trees with large flowers grow; where the water had an outlet, small gnarled trees adapted to drought. Over most of the surface the rock is exposed, everywhere covered with the pale lichens. We stayed on the height until shortly before sunset; it was already almost dark when we cautiously slid down the last smooth slabs.

Below, quite a crowd awaited us; they had all watched our descent and escorted us back to the village in a solemn procession. They were people from the surrounding settlements who, doubtless alerted by rumor that this “white man” always offered tobacco, mirrors or pomade as gifts in addition to payment for food, had brought prodigious quantities of fufu, chickens, eggs, maize and millet. We are living in abundance.

On the Summit

Joko, June 25, 1912.

One may make whatever plans one likes: here in Africa things always turn out a little differently. The porters with whom we wanted to reach the southern edge of the Ndomme did not come, and we must wait before leaving. Perhaps it was just as well, for it rained all day on Saturday and Sunday, and on Monday, the day planned for departure, it poured; the march would have been unpleasant. Today, on the other hand, there is sunshine and wind, so all this dampness will dry quickly; tomorrow, in all likelihood, we shall have the finest African traveling weather.

Yesterday and today we went through and sorted the rock collections of the last few months; here are another three fine porter-loads, and the black men stand astonished before them. It must seem mad to them, too, to see us carefully collecting pieces of granite and gneiss, wrapping them in paper with their labels, packing them carefully so that they will not crumble, and then dragging them across the country and even all the way to Germany. But they have mastered wonderfully the technique of hammering off and packing specimens. Indeed, in time each of our men has learned his particular duties well. The skill with which the boy in charge of plants picks the flowers, presses them, continually moves them and judges whether they are dry enough to be put in the alcohol chest always surprises me. Our treasure Mbo sets up the plane table and levels it with the spirit level better than Franz and I can manage.

Little by little, a few men who joined us as porters in Bamum country have also risen to these more honorable duties.

Our Men at Work

They are very comical characters. We took them on when we left Bana shortly after Christmas; they carried loads for us as far as Bamum country, and there declared that they wanted to work for us permanently. Thus Haong and Wanschi stayed; each had also brought a “boy” of thirteen to fifteen, who carried his fabulous possessions and cooked for him, in return for which he gave him a share of his food. Although these four men have now been traveling with us for almost six months, their knowledge of pidgin English remains very slight; Ndanke, who comes from their neighboring country, has to interpret when they want to tell us something. How they manage here among the Tikar and Wute when, for instance, they go to market and bargain is entirely obscure to me: any understanding through language is absolutely impossible.

At first they looked after and transported our goats and chickens; now Wanschi has been promoted to photographic assistant: he knows every object and hands it to me correctly. Haong, who still prefers to go naked and who, in his roughness and clumsy strength, is always afraid of breaking something and therefore moves his heavy limbs with laughable caution, is allowed to help put up the beds and rummage among the kitchen boxes. Both love us beyond all measure. They grin from ear to ear as soon as they catch sight of us; and I believe that if we ordered them to smash the skull of the Joko station commander and then demolish the station tower, they would set to work without a second’s thought, with a friendly smile and without a word. One of their “boys” has meanwhile passed into the possession of the stable boy,

Haong and Wanschi

has had to work hard for him, and from tomorrow will be my stable boy. As I now ride the rather unruly little stallion, no stable boy has lasted long. This one knows the animal and is not afraid of it.

When we travel along the main road, where I have few surveys to make, my Tikar boys have to tell me stories. They do it wonderfully, for all of them heard their fathers tell stories in childhood. I already have a whole collection. The prettiest will be related here. Let us call it “The Greedy Dog.”

A lioness went into a cave in the mountain and gave birth to four cubs. When the cubs grew and had teeth, they hurt the lioness while suckling; so she was afraid of her cubs. She therefore went into the bush, caught an antelope and brought it to the cave; but she did not go near: she threw it to the cubs from a distance, calling out that they should all eat some. The cubs ate the antelope. In the evening the lioness went back into the bush, caught a pig, brought it to the cave and threw it from a distance. The cubs ate the pig. The next day the lioness caught a waterbuck, brought it to her cubs and threw it from a distance; the cubs ate the waterbuck and drank its blood. In the evening she caught another animal and threw it to her cubs. She did this every day, and the cubs ate meat twice a day.

One day a dog was walking through the forest. He was very hungry, for he had not eaten for a long time. Then he saw the path the lioness had made by her daily journeys back and forth. He thought: “I shall follow this path;

The Tale of the Greedy Dog

perhaps I shall find something to eat there.” He reached the cave, where the four young lions were; they saw him, came out of the cave and wanted to eat him.

The dog said: “Do not eat me, I am your brother.” “How can you be our brother? We do not know you,” said the four young lions. “Yet I am your brother, I am the firstborn; your mother gave birth to me before she gave birth to you.” “We shall see whether you are our brother; if you can eat meat and drink blood, then you are our brother.” In the evening the lioness brought an animal and threw it from a distance. The cubs dragged the animal into the cave and said to the dog: “Eat.” The dog ate half the animal and drank its blood. Then the young lions said: “Yes, you really are our brother, you are the firstborn. What is your name?” The dog said: “My name is Everybody.”

When the lioness came in the evening, the dog said: “Now listen to what she calls out, whom the meat is for.” The lioness threw the animal and called: “For everybody!” “You see she knows my name; this food is for me,” said the dog, and he ate the animal all by himself. The following morning the lioness again brought meat and called: “For everybody!” The dog again ate it all by himself. From then on it was like this every day. The lioness always called: “For everybody!” and the dog ate everything. The young lions became very thin and ill.

One day, as the lioness was coming to the cave, one young lion ran to meet her and called: “Mother, Mother, why are you letting your children starve?” But the lioness thought the cub wanted to suckle; she became frightened and ran away. During the night one of the cubs died.

The Tale of the Greedy Dog

When the lioness came the following morning, a cub was waiting beside the path and called: “Mother, we are dying. Last night one of your children died; today or tomorrow we shall all die.” Hearing this, the lioness stopped and said: “How can you die? I bring you meat twice a day.” The cub replied: “Mother, you always give the meat to your firstborn, our brother.” The lioness said: “I have no firstborn; I have given birth to no one but you.” The cub then told her about the dog Everybody and how he ate all the meat every day because the lioness always called: “For everybody!” Then the lioness said: “I shall kill that wicked dog.”

But when the dog had seen the lioness stop and talk to her cub, he had fled into the forest. The lioness ran after him to catch and kill him. The dog came to a field that belonged to the leopard. He called to him: “Help me, the lioness wants to eat me.” But when the leopard heard this, he threw down his hoe and ran away too; meanwhile the lioness followed the dog’s trail. The dog reached another field, which belonged to the chameleon. “Help me, the lioness wants to eat me.” “Yes, I shall help you,” said the chameleon. “Oh, thank you so much,” said the dog. The chameleon: “Yes, I shall kill the lioness.” The dog: “Oh, thank you so much, I shall pay you well.” “Hide,” said the chameleon, and he turned a basket over the dog; then he placed a spear and a saber in the fire up to the wood, so that no one could see the metal.

The lioness arrived and asked: “Have you seen the dog?”

The Tale of the Greedy Dog

The chameleon replied: “Am I the dog’s slave, that you ask me where he is? Here I am king. And what are you doing in my field? Go away, and first erase the prints of your great paws, with which you are ruining my whole field.” The lioness said: “I think you have lost your mind; you must die!” She tried to seize the chameleon, but he held his spear out to her. She leaped onto it, fell into the fire and was badly burned; the chameleon then took the saber and finished her off.

The dog came out from under his basket and said to the chameleon: “Oh, thank you so much; what can I do for you? I am poor and cannot pay you anything, but I can work for you.” The chameleon replied: “I am small and weak, you are strong; you can go into the forest and fetch firewood so that I can dry this lion’s meat.” “No,” said the dog, “it is better if I take the meat into the forest and dry it there; there is no wind in the forest and the fire burns more quietly.” “Yes,” said the chameleon. The dog and the chameleon cut the lioness into pieces; the dog carried the meat into the forest and dried it over the fire.

Once he ate some of this meat. It tasted sweet in his mouth, and he thought: “It is better if I eat this lion meat all by myself.” He took a piece of meat, rubbed it with the bitter juice of a plant, brought it to the chameleon and said: “No one can eat this meat, it is too bitter; the lioness was a wicked beast, that is why this meat is so bitter.” The chameleon ate some and said: “Yes, it is too bitter, but I shall go with you into the forest and try once

The Tale of the Greedy Dog

more.” But the dog had already rubbed a second piece of meat with the juice; he gave it to the chameleon when they were in the forest near the place where the meat was drying. The chameleon ate it and said: “Yes, it really is too bitter; whoever eats this must die,” and then went home. But the dog hid the lion meat, and every day after working in the chameleon’s field he went to eat some.

After a time, however, the birds came to the chameleon and told him: “The dog is deceiving you; the lion meat is very good, he eats some every day.”

Then the chameleon said to his wife: “When the dog comes back, quickly make a fufu cake, cook our little ones inside it and give it to the dog to eat.” When the dog returned from the forest, the chameleon hid, and his wife prepared a fufu cake in which she put her little ones. When the dog reached the house, the wife called: “Come in, my husband is not here, but he told me to give you fufu if you came.” The dog opened his great mouth and swallowed the whole cake in one gulp, without chewing it. Then the chameleon arrived and said: “Now I ask you: did you make the lion meat bitter for me and then eat it yourself?” “No, certainly not,” said the dog. “Do not lie; if you lie, may the lion meat begin to cry out in your belly! I put a medicine in the fufu that does not agree with lion meat.” The dog said: “No, I have not eaten any lion meat.” Then the chameleon tapped the dog’s belly and called: “Can you hear me?” Then the little ones heard

The Tale of the Greedy Dog

their father’s voice; they began to cry out and pinch and bite the dog from within.

Then the dog gave loud cries and said: “Yes, I made the lion meat bitter for you because I wanted to eat it myself.” The chameleon called to his little ones: “Come out!” Then all the little ones came quietly out through the rear. But the dog bolted and ran into the forest…

Ngadde, July 4, 1912.

On the eve of our departure an immense, heavy bank of blue-black clouds was coming from the east. During the night rain fell in torrents; the water even penetrated the corrugated-iron roof of our solid house. And when we got up early in the morning, the dark cloud was sweeping across the sky again, returning from the west. There was still light only in the east; the yellow-red glow of the rising sun broke through in bands between the cloud banks. A heavy sea of white mist lay over the Wute plain. It looked ominous. After an hour the mists below had begun to move; they climbed the valleys toward our height and in an instant enveloped everything in their thick, damp coils. One could scarcely make out the last, very near ridge of the massif; there was no longer any hint of the plain, and the world seemed to end behind the first Wute huts. Never had I felt so strongly that such a departure is always a journey into uncertainty; with a slight shudder one wondered what favorable or hostile fate might await us behind that white curtain.

So far everything has been quite cheering; we are already good friends with the mountain. We have now climbed it three times.

Gloomy Weather

Mountains that at first seemed to us like distant shadowy backdrops have now acquired form and names; some that looked so gigantic from below when one stood very close before them have proved, viewed from above, to be only tiny preliminary steps; up there stretch mountain undulations of which one suspects nothing from the plain, always one behind another. The road runs immediately along the foot of the Ndomme massif. In an endless succession, mighty rock fortresses rise close together, connected by ridges on whose somewhat sloping sides humus can still cling and dark, dense forests rise.

As planned, we climbed the rim of the massif after our first day's march. Gigantic rocky bastions stand there, sheer above a low, marshy river plain; we climbed one of the intermediate, more sloping inclines, though it was still much too steep for forest to develop. The soldier went ahead of us with ten men to clear the path. One could only climb in zigzags, and even then had to cling to the strong tufts of grass. At the top the forest was dense; the bastions with their precipitous sides also consisted at their summits solely of smooth rock slabs, where the detachment of rounded flakes had hollowed out shallow depressions, as on Fui. After the night's rain these were all full of water; antelopes had drunk there shortly before. Short grass grew in every crack in the rock, tracing narrow light-green bands across the gray surface.

Then we walked for hours through the forest of the plateau to a high grass-covered summit that offered an unobstructed, magnificent view in every direction. To the north the massif unfolds before

On the Southern Rim of the Ndomme

us in endless ranges, entirely covered with black-green forests; only a few patches of pale grass or round, bare, whitish rocky mountains gleam among them. The farther west one goes, the higher the massif seems to rise; mountains of the same shape as the rock blocks in the plain stand up there on the broad wooded backs. And it is precisely near these peaks, we now learn, that a path is said to cross the massif to Jakong. If that is true and the path is reasonably passable, we shall take it at any cost; nothing better could happen to us.

The Wute here, on this little-used road, remain very difficult to approach. The times when they defended themselves first against attacks by the great chief Ngilla, then against the whites, are not so very distant. Then, whenever an enemy approached, they took refuge on the steep mountain; they still enjoy telling how they rolled blocks of rock down from the heights. At night provisions were brought up by hidden paths, and thus they never succumbed to any enemy. In 1905 an officer attempted to storm Linde, the capital of a powerful Wute tribe on the southwestern rim of the Ndomme; he was carried dying to Joko, his head shattered by a shot.

On July 1 we climbed the massif again. The ascent was steep, and in the dense forest we continually heard the roar of a torrent plunging toward the valley in wonderful cascades over immense granite slabs. Just below the summit there was still a small village with luxuriant maize fields. And when we stood on the height, we saw clouds of smoke rising everywhere in the massif: in the plantations they are burning the dry maize stalks from the

The Wute



In the Ndomme.

Plate 9

first harvest to make room for the second sowing of maize or the sowing of millet. And where there are fields there are also villages; the chief, somewhat displeased, had to give us a few of their names. The notion that the Ndomme massif is uninhabited is therefore a pious legend. Why should it be, after all? Up there in the immense forests, the soil consists of deep black humus that looks richer and more fertile than that of the plain. Our people are currently feasting on young maize, which they roast over the fire before nibbling it from the cob. The maize plants, two months old and beginning to turn yellow, rise well above twice a man’s height; the ears measure thirty centimeters, and two harvests a year can be taken from the same field.

From the mountain I saw for the first time the distant Ngutte mountains, which make an utterly fantastic impression. On a broad base with steep sides overlooking the plain rest several peaks: three broad and jagged, three high and pointed like needles. Clouds moved among them, enveloping first one summit, then another; only once, for a brief instant, did they leave the whole fabulous structure clear. We too were among moving clouds. Drizzle, sunshine and heavy showers alternated. One could clearly see the clouds, with their vertical bands of rain, cross the sky from east to west, enveloping and then releasing one range after another.

Today the road was long and showers caught us by surprise; but it offered us views and opportunities for work as never before. The entire precipitous rim of the massif lay before us; many things that, seen from above, had seemed confused and

View from the Rim of the Ndomme

incomprehensible unfolded as we passed with such clarity and logic that we grew ever more pleased, despite the heat and an unpleasantly slippery road that made riding impossible.

On the way, during our midday halt, Dukan, the chief of Linde, caught up with us; he was returning from Joko, very satisfied at having been able to clear himself of an accusation there. When this great chief travels through the country, one hears from far off the drums that are beaten continuously in a strongly marked rhythm. Two small black-white-red flags, of which he is particularly proud, are carried before him; a trumpeter walks behind him and sounds his instrument on arrival in every village. He himself rides a handsome gray horse, and when he wears Hausa dress this tall, slender man of about twenty-five looks very fine, despite his somewhat languid and weary expression. But during his recent stay in Ngilla, where he was visiting his old father Ngutte, he acquired European clothes, and not even a sensible khaki suit: a gray-black woolen jacket and trousers in which he looks ridiculous. A little mauve felt hat and soldier’s boots complete this fine picture.

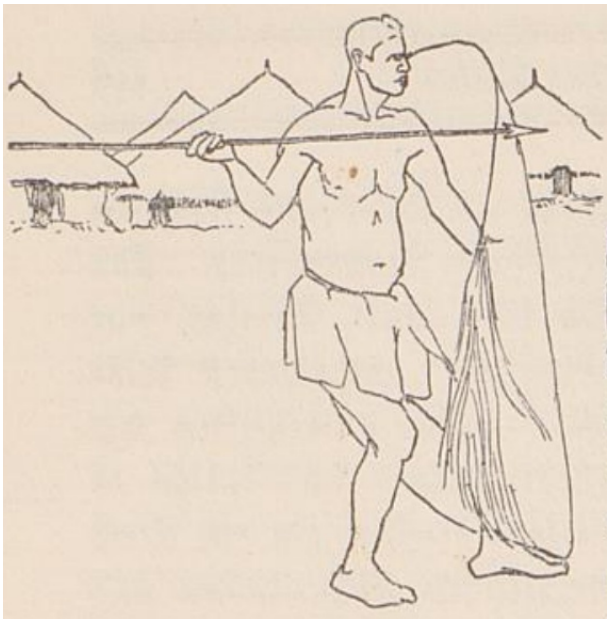
He intended to spend the night in the village where we had met; after the greetings he disappeared for a while, then returned wearing a long, yellowish-white European shirt and the inevitable little felt hat. He settled beside us on a bed-bench under the roof of the open mimbo house; his entire retinue squatted on the ground around him, his favorite boy knelt beside him and immediately began scratching him all over, without the slightest embarrassment. From time to time Dukan gave a brief

Dukan, Chief of Linde

instruction; the boy then moved a little and continued his light, diligent scratching elsewhere. And, following his example, the whole retinue scratched, with the sole difference that each attended to his own body. What a peculiar sound! Meanwhile we held a very cultured conversation; Dukan understands pidgin and speaks a little. Just as we were leaving, a woman was bringing him his midday meal: an enormous fufu cake and three roast chickens!

Our stopping places are often only small settlements with a few huts. We truly descend upon them like a conquering garrison, with our caravan of forty-five people and our needs for luggage and cooking space. In fact the whole village population, six to ten people, ends up withdrawing for the night to the nearest farming huts. One feels a little cruel, but nothing can be done about it; and after all, one pays the people a price unheard of by their standards, with the usual cash rate and a rich selection of our trade goods: knives, pipes, spoons, combs, matches, pomades and tobacco. So far we have left faces beaming with joy in every village.

Lodging in Small Villages



Linde, July 13, 1912.

In Linde I am learning to esteem the Wute. In Joko they were really only a rather degenerate society; here something of their old original strength has still been preserved. It becomes increasingly clear that all the culture the Wute have had and still possess relates to hunting, fighting and war; the more opportunities and incentives for practicing these diminish, as in the shadow of Joko station, the more their distinctive character and culture also decline. There are already no more war games in Joko; here in Linde, among the Wute tribe that resisted the white man longest and most bravely, they are still the greatest celebrations.

By midday some of the population are standing expectantly in the village square, from which we have had our tent removed for today; around three o’clock the great drum begins calling the men to the combat game. In the palaver house, raised above the square, rests the immense wooden slit drum, carved from a single piece. The old gray-bearded drummer stands behind it on the raised bench that runs around the open house supported by posts; with two white sticks made from the soft yet firm wood of the banana trunk, he beats the call to the games of war and weapons that every Wute knows. At intervals of several minutes the signal is repeated, and already young and old men can be seen coming from every direction,

Wute Warrior.

crossing the village square to go to the chief’s house, where the weapons are kept.

Then the chief arrives in solemn procession; here in the village he wears only the loose and picturesque Hausa garments, and is accompanied by fifty men. He takes his place in the palaver house on his raised clay seat, which stands above the balustrade; his retinue sits all around on the low bench or squats on the floor. The palaver house, which must be ten meters in diameter, offers ample room for everyone.

Then drums are heard again, and from one of the narrow lanes between the huts emerges the procession of warriors, preceded by five men carrying round drums, similar to ours, beaten with a curved stick. Next come the armed men; their torsos are bare, and some wear a piece of the old bark cloth, gray-brown or dyed red, as a loincloth. On their left arms they carry the immense buffalo shield, which reaches from their ankles almost to their eyes; the hand holds several spears, one of which, with three long, sharp points, is a particularly honorable insignia. They take their places side by side along the shorter, lower side of the sloping square, shield to shield, so that only their feet and the tops of their heads can be seen, and above these the spearheads raised on smooth shafts of dark-brown wood. Almost all the shields are made from the hides of the dangerous red buffalo; each is adorned with two long, thick horsetails. Then they step out of the line one after another, brandish shield and spears, leap high in the air and circle the square in wild bounds while the horsetails billow and stream, with

The Wute War Games

dancing movements and pantomimes of combat, spear thrusts, throws, forward rushes and retreats. When a man resumes his place in the line, his companions greet him with handshakes and congratulations.

When the chief leaves the palaver house and takes up his shield and spears to join the game, the shrill cries that always greet him break out; and as he advances in swift bounds, the whole company rushes after him, shields raised and spears brandished. The horsetails stream, the spears clash together. The sight makes one’s heart pound.

And now the women too begin to move. With a peculiar gesture representing a headlong flight—their hands hold their breasts, and their legs are flung high behind them—they accompany the warriors to encourage and excite them. When they retreat, they do so in small steps, always exactly to the rhythm of the drums, to which even the wildest movements conform perfectly. When the chief has finished his dance, all the men rush toward him to obtain a handshake; then the individual displays begin again. The collective advance of the whole line is repeated only when the chief enters the scene. Under the considerable exertion—for the shields are very heavy, and it is no small matter to leap with them and swing them high above one’s head—they are soon panting, and sweat runs over their whole bodies; but they always return to the attack and fire themselves, as well as all the spectators, with enthusiasm through their war game.

The spears are wonderfully fine and careful workmanship, with their

The Wute War Games

chased sockets and razor-sharp points; the handles of the thick shields are plaited from strong twisted cords of antelope leather. Nothing broken, torn or worn out is to be seen. One senses the love with which the old weapons of war are preserved.

But all this today is only half memory, half theater; it no longer has anything to do with life. All these young men, the companions of the young chief, no longer know much about the days of war.

But hunting! It is still the same today as it was in the past, and one of the finest sights we have seen was the hunters setting out on an expedition. During the night wild pigs had devastated a cassava field; from early morning the dogs—the small African breed that resembles the greyhound—were racing about the village square behind the chief’s keeper of the dogs, with a great jingling of bells and the high-pitched, half-whining barking peculiar to the dogs here. Shortly afterward Dukan came to the tent to tell us he was going hunting. He had taken off his heavy, pleated Hausa garments; clad only in a dark-blue loincloth, his slender body with its wonderfully harmonious proportions offered a splendid sight. And that whole supple, sinewy body quivered with hunting ardor. A naked boy carried his bow, almost as tall as a man, with its twisted leather string skillfully attached, as well as his long reed arrows with sharp iron points. Fifteen young boys, all as naked, healthy and slender as the chief, followed him, each armed like him with bow and arrows; like a band of light-footed animals, the whole horde descended with a swift, springy stride into the dense marshy forest. The

The Hunt

sun had just risen; fine mists veiled it lightly, and its faint radiance rested on all those dark, supple bodies before they disappeared into the forest.

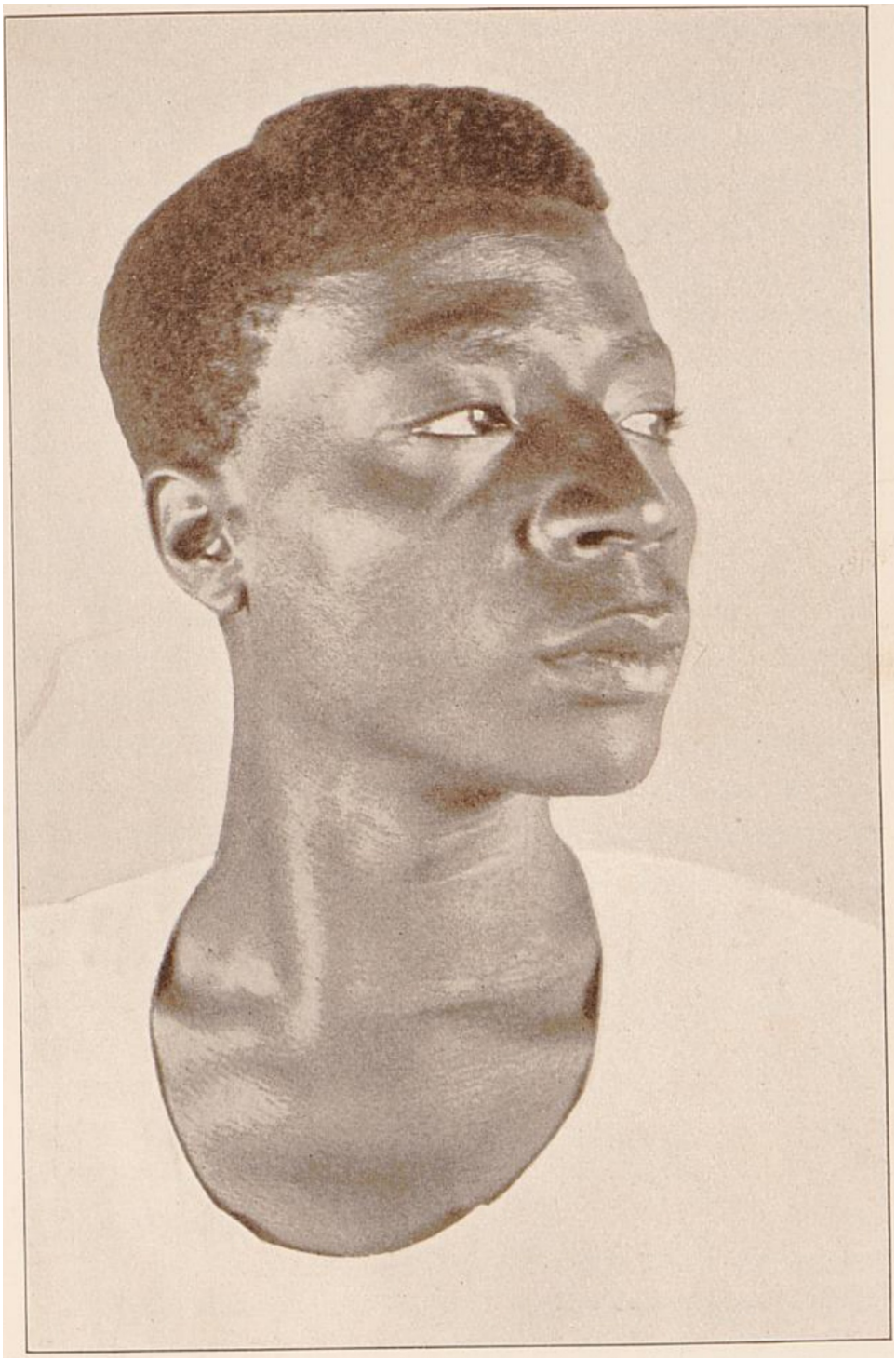
Memories awoke in me of the images I had formed as a child of Homeric heroes and the Greek gods with their passion for hunting. And truly, Homer’s models could not have been more beautiful than those wonderful bronze figures.

That the wild pigs had long since fled was a disappointment to the hunters; for us it could not erase that splendid impression.

We are now as good friends with Dukan as we have ever been with any black prince. He visits us several times a day, smokes a cigarette that I must light for him, and exchanges objects with us. He has already bargained a whole chest of trade goods out of us; in return we have obtained drums, shields, spears, bows with their hand-drawing devices and protective leather wristguards, as well as many charming small objects. He overwhelms us with pineapples, and never have we been supplied with chickens or eggs so eagerly or in such quantities as here. The other day he taught us to shoot with a bow; he was quite astonished that I quickly understood how to hold the string and arrow, and then draw. This has evidently greatly strengthened his friendship and trust in us. Games of Indians from my childhood, this is how you serve me here!

We once climbed the massif by the Ngambe road, which Franz had taken from Mongong nearly four months ago. Some supplementary work remained to be done, for Franz had then had to flee before an enormous tornado. And this time we had

Friendship with Dukan



Young Wute Warrior.

Plate 10

wonderful weather. Admittedly we had to endure two showers, but one is now quite accustomed to that; it scarcely bothers one anymore. And now one welcomes as good fortune the nights when rain falls in torrents, for then one may hope the following day will be clear. Sometimes it is nevertheless a little too much. One evening, around nine o’clock, a terrible storm broke while we happened to be sitting in an empty hut developing photographs. The wind immediately tore the roof, and the rain came in. I crouched under an umbrella to protect the photographic plate holders as much as possible, while Franz ran outside to fetch men to help us.

Outside he discovered an even greater disaster: a mudflow had invaded the tent. It had come down the sloping village square, in the middle of which the tent stands, filled the protective ditch in an instant and, overflowing it, rushed inside. Moreover the wind had torn tent pegs from the ground, ropes had snapped, and the tent was on the point of collapsing. It took us half the night to get more or less everything under cover and restore order. And the next day, as well as the following night, it continued to rain obstinately; it was impossible to dry all the soaked belongings. We sat there, rather dejected amid this excess of moisture, almost cursing travel during the rainy season. But when the sunshine and that wonderful clarity returned afterward, the dark thoughts quickly fled.

Longwe, July 16, 1912.

If we wished to regard our task solely as mapping the country and studying the structure and forms of the mountains, we should have to consider this

The Miseries of the Rainy Season

day wasted. But if we are also to bring back reasonably trustworthy accounts of the people and the history of the tribes, it is one of the most fruitful days we have experienced. We are both breathless, partly from the wealth of what we have heard, partly from the effort required to search continually for the right thread and find it again amid all these tangled accounts. A hundred times one loses one’s way; one must always start the questions again from the beginning.

We left Linde yesterday, returning by the same road by which we had arrived, to reach the beginning of the path that crosses the massif. But first we want to climb again from Longwe onto the highest and steepest part of the mountain rim, which rises here like a castle with battlements and towers above the light-green plain, flat as a table. And Dukan was burning with the desire to show us the old sites of his father’s great battles. He had come very early in the morning, with little flags, drums, trumpets and a large retinue. But it poured, rained and drizzled without stopping from morning until night. So we stayed with him in the tent, drinking tea and coffee, eating bread with honey, buttered bread, rice and fruit, smoking and asking questions, always questions.

Until now great confusion prevailed precisely concerning the Wute tribe of Linde and its relations with another mysterious people, the “Ngaundere.” The first white man in this country, Morgen, had helped the chiefs Ngutte and Ngilla in a battle against the “Ngaundere”; Dominik mentions this battle in one of his books as having been fought against the “Ngandelle.” What we had heard in the country so far only increased

From the History of the Wute People

this confusion still further. But today's tireless questioning has nevertheless made things clear. A picture unfolded before us: continual wars among the closest relatives, population movements into the very recent past, mixtures of peoples. Perhaps in ten years, when the eyewitnesses and custodians of tradition are dead, it will never again be possible to recover the historical sequence of all this.

The people's memory reaches back to old Ngutte, the first chief. With a powerful Wute tribe he lived a little south of Joko, at the foot and then on top of the largest of the bare rock blocks, Kukuni, which we always saw so splendidly from the Joko tower. As was to be expected, he was the enemy of the Wute of Joko and those of the Djerem; he paid tribute to the lamido of Tibati to satisfy him and thus keep him at a distance, but he had never been defeated by him in battle. When the latter's advance from the north became too troublesome, he withdrew westward to the boundary of his territory and built his fortified town at Mböngang, a village that still exists today at the foot of the Ndomme. There he lived according to the customs of the Wute princes until a buffalo killed him while hunting.

His eldest son Ngutte, who succeeded him in power, left his father's dwelling and went farther west, doubtless still out of fear of the Fulani. He built his town exactly here, where we now are, on the site of present-day Longwe, at the foot and on the flank of the steep rocky massif.

But his younger brother Gomtschä, whose haughty and indomitable spirit would tolerate no superior,

From the History of the Wute People

advanced south from Mböngang with a band of Wute. Irresistibly the human wave spread across the endless savanna, exterminating part of the Fuk tribe that lived there, enslaving another part and dispersing the rest eastward and westward. Gomtschä settled in Ndumba, the chief center of the Fuk, and adopted the chiefly name used there, “Ngilla,” by which he is known to all Cameroonians. There he ruled as an absolute tyrant, venerated like a god, and extended his power as far as the Sanaga. Soon he came into conflict with his brother Ngutte, who doubtless regarded the neighboring territories to the west as his reserved slave-hunting grounds. For years brother fought brother.

Meanwhile, however, another man had risen to a power that must have been an abomination and a thorn in the side to the two nobly born brothers. Ngadde, Ngutte’s brother by the same mother but the son of the Fuk chief of Ndumba killed by Gomtschä, had taken refuge with Ngutte and asked him for protection and help. The latter could not restore his country to him, but advised him to establish a new kingdom farther west among the Bati, Balom and Njanti, perhaps in the hope that this troublesome half-brother would meet his end there. But Ngadde was brave, and fortune smiled on him. Through very hard fighting that cost many of his men their lives, he succeeded in seizing the base of the isolated, steep massif that bears on the maps, without any real reason, the name “Ngutte massif,” and which the people here call the “Jangba mountains.” There he built a fortified town with rampart and ditch, subjugated

From the History of the Wute People

the Balom and Njanti settled there, or drove them west beyond the Mbam.

But in the end he was seized by delusions of grandeur: he invaded Ngutte’s country, abducted inhabitants, burned villages and fields, and behaved as though he were the equal of Ngutte and Ngilla. That was enough to reconcile the two hostile brothers. Morgen gives a very vivid description of the negotiations, the long preparations for the campaign and the battle itself. Morgen with his armed porters, Ngilla and Ngutte besieged the town, stormed it, were repulsed, resumed the siege and the firing; and while Morgen withdrew, Ngutte and Ngilla took the stronghold.

Ngadde had been shot in the foot; shortly afterward he died from his wound. His son Tina came to Ngutte, submitted unconditionally and was installed by him as a subordinate chief at the foot of the Jangba massif. But he soon became guilty of acts of insubordination; Ngutte campaigned against him, destroyed his town and settled there himself. Tina fled north and placed himself under the protection of the lamido of Tibati, who was then encamped on campaign before Ngambe.

Meanwhile other white men were arriving in Wute country, chiefly officers from Jaunde. Ngilla died; a brother succeeded him under the name Ngilla II and followed entirely in his predecessor’s footsteps in inhuman cruelty, tyranny and slave raids. Dominik visited him, also fired on his town and inflicted enormous losses on the man considered invincible. Then he went to Ngutte on the Mbam, made friends with him and tried to turn him away from slave hunting; and that old fox listened with a knowing air, agreed to everything and made

From the History of the Wute People

the finest promises. But when Ngilla’s power became uncertain because the whites were again threatening that incorrigible man, Ngutte quietly left the Mbam with his whole retinue and returned to his old Linde. Very near his former dwelling, at the most impregnable point of the massif, at the foot of the rock fortress pierced by a thousand caves, he rebuilt his town.

There he gathered around him all that remained in Wute country of unsubdued warriors thirsting for freedom; the cruel, wild and impetuous Wute character found its last refuge with him. And the free men of the mountain rim laughed in their impregnable rock fortresses at the white enemies as they had previously laughed at the black ones. They all finally submitted after old Ngutte had voluntarily presented himself to Captain Dominik, formerly his friend. To every other white man he had offered a refusal accompanied by contemptuous laughter.

But Dominik sent a young Wute girl as intermediary, and she succeeded in convincing the stubborn man that in the long run the white man would nevertheless be victorious, and that he could submit to no better man than this one. So he came of his own accord and lived for years in Jaunde, in semi-captivity, on a small property of his own. After Dominik’s death he was allowed to return to Wute country, but not to his former domain: to Ndumba, where one of his nephews is chief. There he now lives, old, fat and ponderous, in good friendship with the missionaries; he eats his fufu, drinks mimbo and watches this Wute people, once so proud and so celebrated, decline, dwindle and perhaps gradually die out.

From the History of the Wute People

But in the eyes of his people Dukan will not truly be the reigning chief until Ngutte is dead. He will then receive the chiefly name Ngutte; to seek to bear it now would bring him death.

Let us return to Tina, Ngadde's son, who had taken refuge with the lamido of Tibati. When this hero saw his protector captured by the whites, who had arrived in great force, he forced his way into his compound, carried off many women, stole everything he could lay hands on and fled to Joko. He now resides some distance from the station with his former Fuk followers and acts the great chief. His thirst for vengeance against all the Wute of Ngutte's lineage has not been quenched; Dukan still describes him today as his most implacable enemy.

Was all that not worth a day?

Mangong, July 21, 1912.

We have followed the new path, hitherto unknown, and tomorrow shall reach the main road that leads from Ngambe to Joko by way of Jakong. From the Wute plain we entered the massif through a narrow forest gorge where wonderful waterfalls thundered; only toward evening did we reach the steep ascent to the plateau, where the cool wind swept across the expanse and the familiar peaks of east and west greeted us.

Then we climbed one of the rocky mountains set upon the surface of the massif. It was a hard scramble after an endless march through marshy ground; but up there it was also magnificent beyond measure! The whole vast mountain country and the distant island mountains of the Ngambe plain spread out before us like a map, only

Crossing the Ndomme

for brief moments between heavy showers, admittedly, but still long enough to observe the picture carefully and imprint it on one’s memory: the flattened grassy ridges with forests between them, the smooth, round rock caps of every slightly higher elevation, the few but distinct valley openings that a larger river has already carved in its upper course. Toward the east the massif becomes much more wooded; here in this part, the grassy ridges still predominate by far.

As soon as one reaches the height, one is again among the Tikar, who are true mountain people. Originally many of their small villages were scattered across the plateau, wherever the soil near the dark forest was best and deepest. Now one finds only ruins and fields overgrown with weeds. All the inhabitants are brought to the main roads and settled a few kilometers apart. Often the soil there is stony and poor; they become neither more prosperous nor happier as a result. Is this necessary? I cannot understand it.

In many respects the Negroes are nevertheless a stupid people! At yesterday’s stopping place there was much food left over, packed in baskets under the tent awning. The men were to take it with them today, as always when something remains. But because it was cassava, which is not much liked, and because we had left ahead of the caravan and therefore could not supervise, the porters simply refused to carry the baskets. The head porter lacked sufficient authority, the soldier evidently paid no attention; in short, the cassava, which would have sufficed for more than thirty men, was left behind. The people

Among the Tikar Again

had imagined that we would march today as far as the main road, where there are numerous plantations and food is easily found; but we stopped earlier in a small village in the middle of the massif, situated at the foot of a mountain offering an excellent viewpoint. Franz and I did not even enter the village and camp at first: we stayed up on our hill for three hours, working.

Meanwhile soldier, policeman, boys and porters sat a few minutes away from us in the village, whose inhabitants had told them on arrival that with the best will in the world they could supply food for no more than fifteen men; they looked up at us with hopeful eyes. There would have been ample time to fetch the food left behind or to send someone to the main road to bring something back. But this entire black company thought that the white man would somehow arrange for food to fall from the sky and for everyone to eat his fill.

When we came down, there was great consternation. It was too late to go back, and the fifteen fufu cakes and a few ears of maize were naturally insufficient for fifty hungry mouths. The refractory porters who had refused to carry the cassava received nothing in the distribution. But anyone who thinks that, when invited to hand over the ringleaders for punishment, they would denounce with vindictive joy those who had brought this hunger upon them is gravely mistaken. Tribal feeling is far too strong for that. They all prefer to go hungry rather than let a countryman be punished before the eyes of the “people from the grass country”—inhabitants of the Grassland beyond the Mbam—and the Wute.

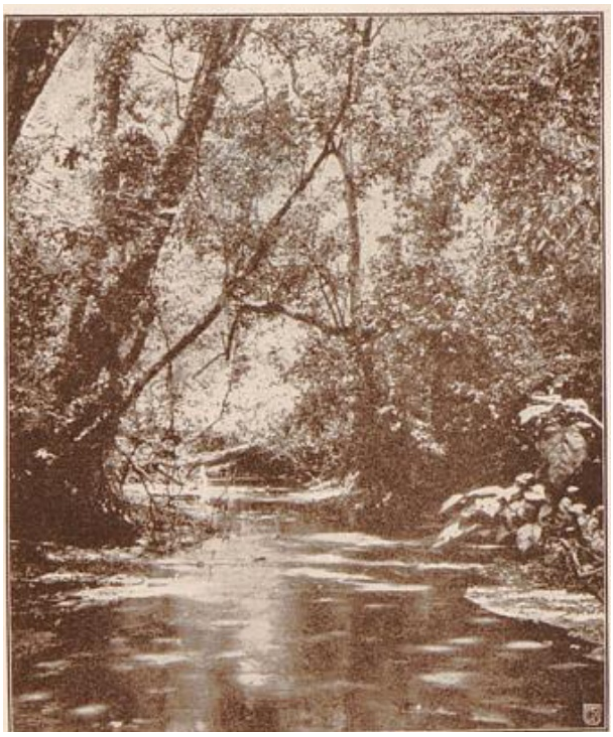
The Stupidity of the Negroes

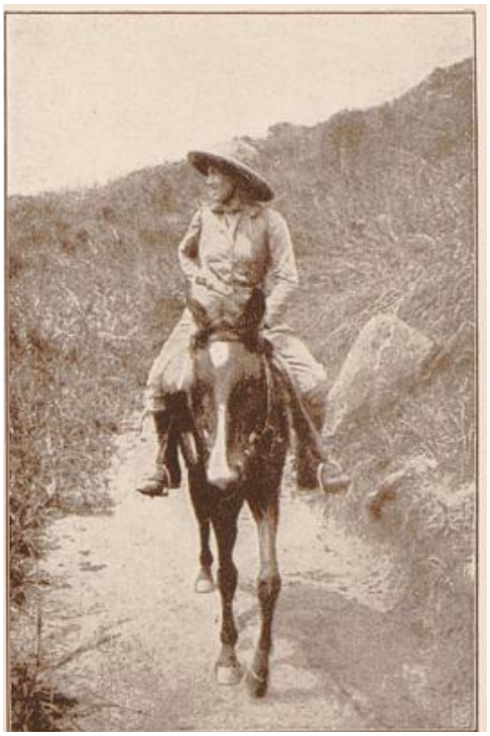
Sami, August 11, 1912.

Traveling on foot is nevertheless the finest thing of all! I know nothing comparable to the joy of seeing, of grasping something hitherto unknown or not understood. And every village, every stopping place differs from all the previous ones; yet everywhere we find our green canvas house, where every object fits exactly into its place, where everything today is as it was yesterday, so that one always feels at home. Of the four blessings granted to the Arab by Allah in the “West-Eastern Divan,” we continually savor this one: “a tent that one moves, so as to dwell everywhere.”

We had to wait five days for porters in Joko, five magnificent dry days with clear distant views. When at last they were ready one midday, we prepared to leave at breakneck speed and set off northward on the Tibati road. During the first days the landscape was always the same: a plateau a thousand meters above sea level, into which the winding courses of streams had cut deep valleys. The savanna lost more and more of its trees; scarcely anything but tall, pale grass grew on the ridges, the forests bordering the watercourses became poorer, sometimes reduced to a few bushes, and often the grass reached the water’s edge. The landscape seemed monotonous to us, and grand in its monotony. A few times we glimpsed familiar peaks or groups of mountains to the south and west; but nowhere could one discern any lowering of the plateau, which stretched far to the east, west and north, always at the same altitude. Very pretty, well-kept villages stood beside the road, entirely surrounded by a belt of ripening maize fields,

The Joy of Traveling





In the Gallery Forest.

In the Savanna.

Plate 11

and everywhere we were received with great friendliness and consideration, for no white person had passed this way for a long time. Bridges had been rebuilt for us and paths cleared: we traveled like princes.

Toward the end of the third day’s march, the landscape changed abruptly: the savanna trees grew closer together, the gallery forests widened, and a small wood even climbed up to the crest; then, suddenly, a surprising and quite unexpected view: a vast flat-bottomed depression opened at our feet, opening broadly eastward onto the Wute plain; on the other side of this depression the plateau rose again in a steep slope, extending far east, almost to the Djerem. The Meke-Bangere, a large tributary of the Djerem, and its powerful tributaries have carved this deep indentation, at least twenty kilometers wide, into the eastern edge of the Ndomme—that eastern edge whose course had always been a burning question for us. Yesterday we crossed the southern part of this depression, which, as one discovers while walking, is dotted all over with small rises; only from above did it appear flat and level.

Naturally, after the fine dry days during which we had to wait in Joko, less favorable ones followed: it rains again every day, sometimes several times; but it is still far from being as terrible as in the Wute plain and on the southern slope of the mountains; the southerly winds discharge their rain there before passing over here onto the plateau; only the rarer northerly winds bring rain. In any case we are very happy to have undertaken this march after all. We would certainly have been consumed with impatience in Joko had we stayed there in this relatively fine weather.

The Meke Depression

Dogo, August 15, 1912

We cannot resist. Tibati is so near, the only large Fulani town within the boundaries of our region of exploration, and moreover a point whose latitude is known; the weather, despite yesterday's beginning of the "rain moon," is still tolerable; we have three weeks' provisions in the kitchen loads: how could we turn back? And even if in the end we have to return to Joko in pouring rain, what does it matter!

So yesterday morning we quickly made our decision and sent Mbo, the head porter, back to Joko with three men to fetch the remainder of our most valuable barter goods intended for the lamido of Tibati, as well as tobacco, mirrors, spoons, combs and other trinkets for the Hausa and Baia. We crossed the Meke-Bangere, which separates the districts of Joko and Banjo, by canoe, and are now in the territory of the sultan of Tibati. Messengers from his principal subordinate chief, a Wute settled beside the river, have already gone ahead to announce our arrival.

As we observed yesterday and the day before, Islam extends precisely as far as Fulani rule. All the Wute living here along the road from Joko to Tibati north of the boundary river are outwardly Mohammedans by order of the lamido of Tibati. One hears them reciting their suras and, in the evening, chanting their invocations to Allah while bowing. "They do Allah like the Hausa,"[1] our boys say with a snicker: being from the Grasslands, they never take the Hausa quite seriously and find it dreadfully ridiculous that a "real bushman" should imitate their antics.

1 "They do Allah like the Hausa people."

On the Way to Tibati



We are traveling once more over savanna ridges nine hundred to a thousand meters high, and when the sun shines toward midday in this rainy season, the heat becomes appalling. The chatter of the black boys accompanying one then ceases altogether; one hears only the dry impact of the horses' hooves on the hard laterite path, the creaking of saddles and the light tread of the Negroes' bare feet; no other sound; only rarely does a breath of air pass through the grass, which grows increasingly short as we advance northward. At such hours the trees seem quite dead, for for three weeks now, throughout the savanna, their foliage has first been turning a very dark green, then gradually browning, and suddenly, here and there, leaves dry up completely and fall; twigs, branches, whole trees stand bare, now that it rains every day! But immediately pale young shoots appear, some trees already have new leaves, and thus all the foliage of the savanna renews itself, although the first has lasted only five months.

Almost every hour we meet small Hausa caravans, a merchant traveling with five or six

Hausa Woman Carrying Wood.

The Midday Heat

slaves and a band of heavily laden women, yet always well adorned and beaming with gaiety, who continue calling “a good journey to Tibati” to us for a long time. A particularly rich man owns a few donkeys, or even a horse. Sometimes only two people travel together, each carrying his bundle of merchandise on his head in the long, narrow Hausa basket, with his sleeping mat rolled up. A Hausa never travels alone.

We have passed whole herds of cattle, the largest of which numbered fifty head. And what cattle! All large, handsome humped oxen, light brown, dark brown or gray-white, some with the almost straight horns spreading widely out to the sides of the Fulani breed, others with the strongly curved horns of the Bororo cattle, which surpass the former in size. All of them go to Joko and disappear into the Hausa village, where an ox is slaughtered every day. But before dawn caravans also leave there for the south, chiefly for Dengdeng, and also for Jaunde, where enormous prices are paid for cattle.

Tibati, August 20, 1912

A new world. Separated from the country of the Tikar and Wute by vast, almost uninhabited savannas, the world of the Fulani begins here: the distance between masters and servants makes itself felt more distinctly than among any other black people, and an ancient culture goes hand in hand with the unscrupulous destruction and extermination of human beings, even entire peoples.

They must once have ravaged these regions in an inhuman fashion, these noble equestrian peoples for whom work in the fields was a slave’s task, the fruits of which they simply appropriated by violence; they peacefully grazed their immense herds on

Hausa Caravans

the vast savannas, hunted and galloped at full speed on their horses and, to make them strong and brave, fed them the flesh of executed slaves. We are often told this here.

Now all this is only a shadow of the past, and yet an infinite charm emanates from it, captivating one completely. In a plain several leagues wide stretches the new town, built on the ruins of the old. Treeless marshy meadows covered with light-green grass of medium height extend between the drier savannas, where grazing animals have trampled and torn out the sparse, coarse grass, and where the trees are stunted and disheveled. Mighty solitary trees with broad crowns, or dense, massive groups, stand here and there, dark above the green marsh grass; far away a band of black forest, steep blue mountain ranges to the northwest and northeast; and over this whole picture, the very image of spaciousness and plain, the great sky in which enormous black storm clouds with white crests rise, discharge themselves and then drift away.

Thus the town lies in the midst of this immense expanse, a swarming mass of compounds among slow, winding waters, among the green crowns of young trees to which the mat fences are fastened, and the broad pale leaves of banana plants. A deep ditch surrounds it; great trees grow on the old rampart, but of the solid red-clay wall only the remains of the gate tower survive: all the rest has collapsed and vanished. Extensive maize fields stretch in front of the ditch; women continually go there with large baskets to break off the ripe ears.

Among the Fulani

As we approached along the bare road, now fiery red again, driven by the violent wind of a storm rising black into the sky, two envoys of the lamido came to meet us: tall, heavy-limbed men dressed in ample blue-black garments and wearing tall cloth caps that made them appear taller still. They greeted us with deep, silent bows and told our interpreter in low voices that the lamido had waited a long time for us, but at the sight of the imminent storm had returned home; they had already sent messengers to alert him, but would we please excuse him if he arrived a minute late now. Yet he was there. In front of the rest house near the town gate stood a group of horsemen, and a large crowd surrounded the whole compound. As in a theater, it opened and withdrew to both sides.

The lamido came to meet us on foot: a tall, slender figure in a flowing pale-blue garment, his head, neck and most of his face tightly wrapped in the white turban and litham, so that only a narrow strip of dark skin with his two velvety black eyes could be seen. He held out his hand to us while the crowd all around bowed deeply and accompanied the greeting with cries of praise. Then a brief conversation took place through the interpreter on the dark veranda of the rest house; finally we graciously granted him permission to return home. A servant kneels and takes him on his shoulders; from there he transfers to his horse, covered with countless ornaments, and the procession returns to the town with solemn slowness,

The Lamido’s Welcome

with drums and singers, fans and an immense golden-yellow parasol, amid resounding cries of praise and horses rearing high.

We settled as quickly as possible, as best we could, in the very rickety and half-ruined rest house. Richthofen is right to say that anyone who cannot transform a stable into a pleasant living room in an hour does not deserve to set off on an exploratory journey. And with our hungry porters we waited for food, for by then it was nearly six o'clock. The lamido had assigned us a "seriki" to whom we were to turn in all questions of food, for whites as well as blacks. The actual keeper of the rest house had sent word that he was very ill and could not come.

At last, when it was almost dark, the long-awaited food arrived: three hundred portions! Fortunately it was only raw maize flour of the finest quality and could therefore be kept. Great joy among all our people. The flour is distributed, everyone receives his measured portion, and they go away delighted.

An hour passes; then the head porter, the policeman and the interpreter arrive, all crestfallen. They had gone to the seriki to ask him for cooking pots, such as villagers everywhere lend to porters, since a caravan cannot drag these heavy, fragile earthenware utensils along with it. But the seriki had declared that this did not concern him: he was responsible for providing food, and obtaining pots was no part of his work. So we sent the men to the sick gadima of the rest house. A woman there told them that the sick man had forgotten to order the pots from the man in charge of pots, and that they must go there themselves. But Kofi, the man in charge of pots,

The Comedy of the Cooking Pots

refused, since he had received no order from the gadima; he sat without a word, as though he neither saw nor heard our men. They returned utterly despairing.

That was a little too much for us. “Bring the sick gadima here,” the policeman was ordered; a few minutes later he was brought back, perched on a servant’s back. In a very short time everything was settled, for we began by inquiring about his illness, promised him medicine, and then asked for pots for our men. They arrived immediately; at last quiet reigned in the porters’ houses and we could go to bed.

And yet all those cries and palavers had served no purpose! For in the end, during that night not one of our people cooked or ate a single gram of fufu: they had no vegetables to accompany it, and without vegetables, they claimed, one cannot eat fufu! The whole story seems to me as characteristic, as typical of the Negro as anything one could imagine.

The next morning we visited the lamido. The road runs straight through half the town; handsome, clean compounds enclosed by carefully plaited mat fences line the red street; narrow lanes branch off, every little patch of ground is cultivated, and whole crowds are heading for the market held daily from morning until evening in the great square before the lamido’s compound. This had a very pleasant surprise in store for us: no slavish imitation of Europe, nothing excessively large and then left to decay; everything is of moderate dimensions, but built with extraordinary care and impeccably maintained. The fence of prettily plaited mats is at least four meters high; the red-clay gatehouse

The Comedy of the Cooking Pots

is roofed with the finest, softest grass, sown for this purpose for the lamido alone, which on drying does not turn gray like other grasses but golden yellow. Inside, the walls are decorated with clay ornaments and the floor sprinkled with white sand.

Next comes the guard courtyard, where the bodyguard is stationed, framed by the rear of the gatehouse, two lower side buildings and a second tall entrance building giving access to the women’s town. A good hundred women’s houses are crowded together here, all identical in appearance and arrangement; surrounded by a clay wall, the lamido’s inner courtyard occupies the center of this women’s court; he awaits us in a veranda-like projection.

This time his face is uncovered: soft, delicate features and a somewhat dreamy expression accord well with the quiet, harmonious voice we had heard through the cloths the day before. Solemn speeches of greeting are translated by the interpreters squatting on the ground while we sit opposite the lamido on a raffia bench. Then comes the presentation of our gift: a musical alarm clock, truly pretty and working well, which makes an extraordinary impression. The rest of our visit, about an hour, is spent winding, demonstrating and explaining the musical mechanism; since then, every few hours, a messenger from the lamido brings the clock back to us with the request that we make it sing again.

On the way back we also took a turn through the market, where one really finds everything a black person needs; we too make purchases there, so as not to use up our kitchen provisions too quickly

Visiting the Lamido

and to be able to remain here longer. Today we thus ate an entirely African meal: beef roasted in beef tallow and a kind of root tasting much like potatoes, followed by bananas. For a long time now honey has replaced sugar for us; we make bread from maize or millet flour; milk can be obtained from the lamido, and we have just bought butter from the Bororo herdsmen. Lemons make even weak tea tasty; cucumber leaves make an excellent spinach-like vegetable; maize flour can be used to prepare pancakes, puddings and croquettes; chickens and eggs can be bought every day. And everything is very cheap: two pounds of butter, twenty bananas and a heap of tubers sufficient for four meals cost us one mark altogether.

Trade with the Hausa, who here do not live in a separate village but mixed among the Fulani, has also begun in the usual fashion: by throwing them out headfirst. Every time they think they are dealing with a complete fool and ask thirty marks for something that can be bought for five. Then one throws their object at their heads and puts them out, with orders not to show themselves for three days. From this they recognize that they are not dealing with a “greenhorn” and bow and scrape all the more. This morning one of the men of the royal guard came to us, a filthy, repulsive fellow, who for an hour praised us as the greatest, noblest and most eminent of all white people, whom Allah must shower with heaven’s blessings; he prostrated himself before us on the ground and covered his head with earth. And all this for a tin spoon! Allah’s blessing is cheap here.

An African Menu

Unfortunately we are here at an unfavorable time. It is now Islam’s holy month, during which there is neither singing nor dancing. The fasting rules are even so strict that no one may eat anything or even drink a sip of water while the sun is in the sky. And in the morning prayers begin at five; the lamido and all the faithful observe them scrupulously.

Tibati, August 28, 1912

Fulani in Tibati? They are apes of Fulani! Whatever genuine Fulani blood ever came to Tibati has mingled, has been lost in the immense current of Negro blood. The foreign, light-skinned master race that came from the north, bringing all the Negroes to heel and enslaving them, has been absorbed by its own servants. To pass themselves off as Fulani, these Negro people wear Fulani costume as an outward appearance; they wear Islam as a superficial varnish, without any intimate connection to their character as a people. And even the last feature a people usually retains, its language, they have almost lost; it remains in use in court ceremonial, but very few people understand it.

It was only by sheer chance that we discovered the error under which we had labored until then. We wanted to make a phonographic recording of the Fulani language and had asked the lamido, without further specification, to have someone speak into the apparatus. Then, when entering the necessary details on the cylinder box, we happened to say in a half-questioning tone to our Wute interpreter: “So, Fulani language, spoken by the…” “No, Mbum language,” replied good Kischim. Then,

Apes of Fulani

we questioned and investigated tirelessly for two days until we understood clearly.

The owners of this country, which was called “Drum” or “Tiba,” were formerly pure-blooded Wute, whose language differs in no respect from that of the people of Joko and Linde. Even today they form a considerable proportion of the inhabitants and seem to enjoy particular esteem: the two highest offices the lamido can confer, that of mayor of the capital and that of captain of the bodyguard—also responsible for all negotiations with Europeans—are in the hands of Wute who speak Wute among themselves and whose children learn the Wute language first. Whatever their outward pretensions to passing themselves off as Fulani, they nevertheless end by acknowledging: “In our house we are Wute.”

Five generations of rulers ago—perhaps less long-lived than ordinary mortals—Fulani broke in among this purely Wute population, coming from Samba near Aola. Until the establishment of the German Residency of Adamaua, the Samba region still belonged to the sultan of Tibati. The invading Fulani made themselves masters of the Wute without a fight; they brought horses and cattle, built the town, whose name they changed to “Tibati,” and constructed a rampart and ditch.

For a reason that is not entirely clear, they received a strong influx of members of the great Negro tribe of the Mbum, established east of Ngaumdere, some of whom fled from the lamido of Ngaumdere to join Tibati. A particularly powerful ruler is then said to have imposed boundaries on his two neighbors, Banjo and Ngaumdere, when he

Some Pages from the History of Tibati

felt stronger than they were: the Mbam on the Banjo side, the mountains on the Ngaumdere side, which transferred still more Mbum from Ngaumdere’s territory to Tibati. Then, during a later war against Ngaumdere, the people of Tibati captured and brought back many Mbum. Thus the proportion of this people gradually increased, and its language eventually became absolutely dominant. Everyone speaks and understands Mbum; one person also speaks Wute, another Fulani, a third both languages, but the common language, the language of the market, is Mbum.

There is no doubt that a very extensive mixture of the three peoples has taken place over the years, even if the people are reluctant to admit it. But there are scarcely any pure-blooded Fulani settled here anymore. A distant relative of the chief, from Aola, who lives here from time to time, is one of the few true Fulani in Tibati. The contrast between this Alim Garga’s noble, narrow head, his fine, curved aquiline nose, deep-set eyes and sternly drawn mouth, and the broad skulls of those who call themselves Fulani despite their prominent cheekbones, fleshy noses and thick lips, is so striking that it dispels all doubts. We have also met Bororo here, those eternally wandering nomads and herdsmen; they are not Negroes but Hamites like the Fulani; their pale reddish skin, long, scarcely frizzy hair and narrow noses make the Negro character of the people of Tibati so plainly evident that it is absolutely impossible to believe that the purity of the local Fulani stock has been preserved. Certainly the Mbum element is overwhelmingly predominant, and when one looks at those who call themselves “true Mbum,”

Fulani and Mbum

those extraordinarily tall and strong men, the tallest we have seen in Cameroon, some of them true giants, one readily believes that it was they who fought all those victorious wars.

Among the Tikar and Wute the Mbum have a reputation as formidable warriors; but I now also remember that in all their accounts they always spoke only of the wars of Tibati, never of Fulani wars. It seems indisputable to me that only the advance of German rule put an end to a gradual but certain Fulanization of the Negro of the Cameroon Grasslands, for the violent Fulani on horseback is precisely every Negro’s ideal. Before our eyes we still see the half-Fulanization of Bamum continuing, and I am certain that only his practical sense of reality prevents Njoja from passing himself off as a Fulani.

As gratifying and rapidly obtained as these results of our work are, the success of our collecting efforts is correspondingly slight. The people make fools of us, with the noble lamido at their head; they bring us their broken objects, which they would otherwise throw away, and ask extravagant sums for them, or promise us a piece we are seeking and then keep us waiting four, five, six days! Sometimes bluntness or the threat of leaving the following day is effective. Thus, by this means, we have just obtained a set of old and entirely authentic riding equipment: a saddle with bows covered in cattle hide, with its plaited leather girth and its stirrups and knee bosses cast in bronze by the lost-wax method, a broad leather breastplate with bronze studs, a leather neck ornament, a severe iron bridle bit and reins artistically plaited from fine

Bartering with the Lamido

strips of black leather, as well as a richly quilted saddlecloth of white Hausa cloth padded with cotton. It cost us two pieces of velvet, but it is also truly very beautiful.

Yet we covet another piece in vain: a man in the lamido’s retinue wears an iron mail shirt and coif so heavy that I have difficulty lifting them, both made of iron links so fine that they fit the body, neck and head perfectly. The Fulani are said to possess other such iron horsemen’s armor in the interior of Africa; but I cannot shake the impression that what we have here is simply the shirt and coif of slain crusaders or Saracens, which traveled across Africa with Islam and are preserved here as great objects of honor. The type of linking in the short-sleeved mail shirt, the shape of the coif, which descends over the nape and falls vertically on either side of the face to the collarbones, are exactly the same as those one can see in the Berlin Arsenal and the Swiss National Museum, and which doubtless also exist in many other collections of arms. Until someone shows me the place where the Fulani still make mail shirts today, I shall never believe that here and there an absolutely identical technique was arrived at independently.

We are thinking of the return journey. One must part some day. It is with heavy hearts that we tear ourselves away from these places, for there would still be much to do, but we must leave, otherwise the rains will trap us here so completely that it will no longer be possible to get through. All kinds of work await us in Joko and must be

The Mail Shirt

completed: finishing our ethnographic investigations, sorting and cataloging the collections, all tasks for which time is already growing very short. Finally we must also return to Joko simply because all our essential provisions and household supplies are exhausted or nearing their end. For a long time we have had no more flour, sugar, fruit or vegetables, and everything we have eaten over the last eight days comes from here, from Tibati. But now the tea, coffee and cocoa are almost exhausted too; we have no more soap; we already have to buy salt from the Hausa at two marks a pound, and the kerosene will not last much longer either. So there is nothing for it: we must leave. On September 1 we shall say farewell to our little rickety but so comfortable house and return in five long stages. It will doubtless be a wet journey: rain above, mud below; but the solid, dry house in Joko calls to us.

Joko, September 12, 1912

So this was Africa! In the heart of a dark, rain-veiled night I am suddenly wrenched from deep and peaceful sleep by something dreadful happening to my head. I realize that I am screaming at the top of my lungs, and behind my ear I feel a terrible weight, a furious pain. I put my hand there; there is something heavy, something of iron, it will not come away, it is stuck in my head! “Franz, my head, Franz, my head!” He leaps out of bed. “Something iron is stuck in my head!” I hear him give a cry, call for help, and I keep begging him: “Pull it out, pull it out!” He lifts the mosquito net, grasps the object, a wrench that makes me think my whole

Nighttime Attack

scalp is going to be torn off, another—thank God, it is out. A spear, a shining, sharp spear, whose point has no cutting edge, fashioned like a long, thick nail with tiny cutting barbs! A spear was stuck in my head! And I am still alive, I am still alive! My heart beats, I breathe, my thoughts are perfectly clear, the pain has almost vanished! Yes, I live; I have not lost it, my dear, wonderful, happy life!

And then all our people are there, a light comes on, the hurricane lamp flickers; while Franz examines the wound, cuts away hair, disinfects and washes off the blood, finding that the spear has glanced off the petrous part of the temporal bone and penetrated a good ten centimeters between bone and skin, our black men rush into the villagers' four wretched huts to arrest all the inhabitants. For they all, like us, know exactly who threw that spear: the chief of Djidda, this wretched little village. And we also know why. On the outward journey to Tibati we had needed three replacement porters; every village had willingly supplied the men, who were relieved after one day. The chief of Djidda, too, had immediately agreed when on our arrival we had asked him—not demanded!—for three porters. But on the morning of departure he refused to supply the men; we no longer had a soldier with us, since we could not take the one from Joko into the Banjo district. Departure for a very long stage was delayed by more than an hour; the chief grew increasingly insolent and finally laughed loudly and mockingly in Franz's face, before our boys and porters. He then received a

Life at Stake

a slap, and less than three minutes later the porters were there. This was the revenge none of us had thought of. He had even told our people who were following us that, in the matter of the porters, he had behaved badly toward the Massa who had paid him so well and showered him with gifts. No doubt he had said this only to lull all suspicion on our part; during those fourteen days, that old fellow with his monkey-like face had brooded over his revenge and cleaned and sharpened his spear. Naturally, it was intended for Franz: the attacker simply mistook his victim.

And if the spear did not strike as it was meant to, we owe this to such a sequence of small, particular events that it seems a miracle: heavy rain clouds covered the sky and prevented the moon from shining through; there was no lantern burning in the tent; the tables, chairs, and trunks were arranged on the tent veranda in such a way that no one could come within two meters of the beds; moreover, the thick, tightly stretched mosquito net prevented the thrower from clearly distinguishing the sleeper's position and, through its slight elasticity, may have deflected the spear a little; I was lying on my side, so that the blow struck the solid rock of the temporal bone rather than the less resistant skull; a chair stood at the head of the bed, and the shaft rested on its back, so it could not tip downward and tear away the scalp. If just one of these circumstances had been absent, the death of one of us would have been certain.

And now? We pass through the most appalling dangers and come away with scarcely more than a scratch. Is it not like a miracle?

Saved as if by a Miracle

Naturally, the chief of Djidda knew nothing, had never even seen such a spear, although it was the typical Tibati spear that people use to harpoon fish. But in the eyes of the Negroes, the absolute proof of his guilt was that, ten minutes after the attack, all the women had fled the chief's house, whereas in every other hut in the village they had been found with the men and arrested. Our porters immediately organized a guard, seized the spears that had been found, and the chiefs took the rifles; thus a living wall formed around the tent, to face any possible further attackers.

Yet everything remained quiet. Franz put a bandage around my head; in the middle of the night the cook killed a chicken and made me some broth; then, little by little, day began to break. At dawn two messengers ran off: one toward Tibati, with a letter for the station at Banjo, which the lamido subsequently had forwarded by a horseman; the other toward Joko, to ask for soldiers and provisions, for we had almost nothing left to eat. The first day passed rather painfully; my head and neck were swollen and stiff; but it was touching and kind to see each of the boys and porters come to shake my hand and explain in a long speech how sorry he was about this “bad business.” In the evening Franz was just about to organize another guard when the watch fire, which the people had lit of their own accord, was already blazing; the chiefs presented themselves and asked for spears and rifles; they had arranged everything themselves, and two men patrolled around the tent all night, calling to each other,

Our People's Devotion

as they had heard it done at Joko, every quarter of an hour: “Sentry!”—“Present!” though it sounded more like “Health!”—“Hey!”

In the middle of this night so little favored by sleep, calls and the trampling of horses suddenly rang out. The seriki dukari[1] arrived with four other dignitaries from Tibati, on sweat-covered horses, and thirty men on foot, to protect us and capture the villagers. Had Franz not restrained them, they would immediately have beaten old Djidda to death. Until nearly morning there was nothing in our tent but questions, discussions, and interrogations; the villagers were finally handed over to the seriki, for him to deliver them to the station at Banjo. Toward noon, once again, distant shouting, drums, and bells: the lamido was coming with forty horsemen and a hundred men on foot; and now colorful, lively activity began all around us. In an instant countless little new grass huts sprang up; around the house where the lamido intended to stay, the customary enclosure of grass mats was erected, and the great double iron bell, the ancient sign of a war expedition, was hung upon it. Men brought basket after basket of ripe maize and chickens from Djidda's fields; the wives of the lamido and the dignitaries arrived from the town carrying heavy back-baskets in which they lugged cooking pots, milk, butter, and maize flour; soon it all took on the appearance of a cheerful bivouac.

The lamido himself, to be sure, was not in a particularly cheerful mood; he was deeply afraid that the station at Banjo would hold him responsible for the attack, and once again asked for a written statement certifying that he

1 “Captain of the personal guard.”

The Lamido Hurries to Our Aid

bore no guilt for it. Naturally, everyone wanted to hear the story for himself, everyone wanted to speak to me and say hello, everyone wanted to hold the spear to which hair and shreds of skin still clung, everyone wanted to see the hole in the mosquito net and, preferably, the wound as well. And all of this sprang from such real concern, such sincere sympathy, that it was impossible to turn them away. From a distance we then watched the great judicial hearing the lamido held beneath a generously shady tree. He too concluded that only the chief of Djidda could have been responsible for the attack; for him too the strongest proof was the flight of the women, whom in the meantime he had had his men capture in the fields.

Early the following morning he left again with his entire retinue, took the prisoners with him, and left us only the seriki dukari and ten men to look after our needs. The hardest thing was obtaining food, for ourselves as well as for our people: the people from Tibati had devoured all the chickens and eggs, plundered the maize fields extensively, and the seriki's retinue cheerfully continued its pillaging. Provisions had to be fetched from distant villages; we were glad when the lamido sent meat, maize flour, and eggs for us from the town, for we simply had nothing left to eat.

On the afternoon of the very day on which the lamido had departed in the morning, calls and drums suddenly sounded from the south, and a long procession spread out among the scattered trees of the savanna: three chiefs from the Joko district were coming with a hundred men, each armed to the teeth with six spears, a bow, a knife, and a saber, to help us in the supposed

Black Friends

war against the lamido, or against the Fulani, or God knows who else: “Before the station chief arrives, you will have been dead a long time; so we had better come and help you, or at least see the place where you died.” Of course, the desire to steal and plunder also played a part, and we constantly had to restrain it.

On the fifth day I had recovered sufficiently for us to set out again. The deck chair was converted into a carrying chair, which four men hoisted onto their shoulders, and in this way I returned to Joko splendidly, without the slightest discomfort. We have now been back in our beautiful, bright house for two days; we were welcomed like the prodigal son, and whenever I show myself outside I must shake black hands offering me congratulations. Last night the bandage slipped off by itself from the small, almost healed entry wound. Over the long track of the wound there is admittedly still a little swelling, but it no longer hurts at all; I feel so well and lively again that I am already thinking about when I shall be able to put on my pith helmet for the first time and go riding.

We came “home” just before the gates closed. The “great moon of rains” began yesterday, and it lives up to its name: yesterday through the force and violence of the downpour; today through the duration of this pattering rain. We are making our rooms comfortable again; we now have wicker furniture woven by the station workers; all sorts of colorful ethnographic objects and a few of my studies and sketches make the room welcoming, though otherwise it would be rather bare. We must stay here until mid-October: we shall not be able to get through before then, and besides, it is pleasant here and perfectly bearable.

Return to Joko

Joko, September 23, 1912

We become increasingly convinced that, beside the railway question, the question of doctors is the most urgent in Cameroon. We have calculated that nearly ten government stations have no doctor. On the coast, admittedly, they are crowded together; in some places where the administrative doctor, military doctor, and railway doctor are all together, there are three in the same place, a place better provided with sanitary facilities and enjoying better health conditions than all the others. It is true that many Europeans live there too. Where the country remains under military administration, and is therefore considered to be in a state of war, there are doctors. Every company of the protection force has its own, necessary, certainly, for the rare battles, and who during the long periods of peace tends the few white settlers and traders, and vaccinates, treats, and operates on the Blacks. Where the rule of the protection force gives way to the blessings of peaceful civilian administration, the doctor disappears as well; in the pacified regions, officials, settlers, and traders may die and perish. Just consider: the immense Jaunde district, which, with its subdivisions of Joko, Dengdeng, and Akonolinga, must be as large as Bavaria, has at this moment absolutely no doctor, since the protection force departed for New Cameroon; Bare has none, Johann-Albrechts-Höhe has none, Jabassi has none, Ossidinge has none, Molundu has none; in short, we counted about ten.

Many of the white men we have met here in the interior live with black women. And can one blame them when they say: “We cannot bring a white woman here,

The Question of Doctors in Cameroon

into regions where it takes weeks to reach a doctor and where our work obliges us to remain for two, three, even four years at a stretch; we shall always manage somehow or other, but exposing a woman to these dangers is too great a responsibility for us; we should like to, but…” And even if some perhaps merely talk this way without really meaning it, so long as they can give this reason, no one has the right to utter the slightest reproach against them. All reproaches, all responsibility fall upon those who deprive them of a doctor.

Fortunately, we no longer need a doctor: the wound on my head has healed; only, as soon as the sun comes out I am still confined to the house, because I cannot wear a pith helmet and, in general, the heat still easily makes me dizzy; my head cannot yet bear the effort of painting either. But apart from that, no ill consequences of the injury make themselves felt, and these minor troubles will soon disappear too.

Thus we are living very quietly at present within our four walls, all our thoughts turned toward the past or toward our inner life. The news of the death of our dear father in Heidelberg has taken us wholly back to our homeland and our own memories; it is a blessing that no urgent work, no outside demand forces us to turn our thoughts away from them. We can surrender ourselves entirely to the silence such a loss asks of us.

The rain is setting in; sometimes torrents of water fall all night; sometimes the heavy

Thoughts Turned toward Home

clouds do not arrive until after midnight, with lightning and thunder, and the fine rain then lasts until about noon; on other days a very brief, furious shower falls every half hour, and out there above the Wute plain the separate showers can be seen standing between heaven and earth like thick gray columns, sometimes five side by side, divided by short intervals. It is often very cold and misty; Franz has a cold, and sometimes the windows have to be shut at night because the mist enters the room in curls of white smoke. But when the weather becomes dry and clear, the clarity of the air and the range of the view are such as we have never experienced before. Then the clouds form mighty banks above the horizon, and one can see far, very far beneath them. Mountains beyond the Djerem, which as late as June we still searched for through binoculars in clear hours, now often appear to the naked eye in sharp silhouettes against the eastern sky.

We are immersed in writing work; at present we have the station's population lists, which we are copying, amusing ourselves as we do so at how well the chiefs know how to “hide their people in the bush.”[1] The chief of Ngambe, for instance, has not declared a single man from all the villages we found in the northern Tikar country and at the western foot of the Ndomme; the chief of Lomonji claims to possess this one village alone, but he has villages, oil-palm groves, and fields along a direct route to Banjo that was hitherto entirely unknown. Here, in the immediate vicinity of the station, no one knows the beautiful villages at the foot of Mount Baschu, which is nevertheless only a

1 “Hide the people in the bush.”

At the Height of the Rainy Season

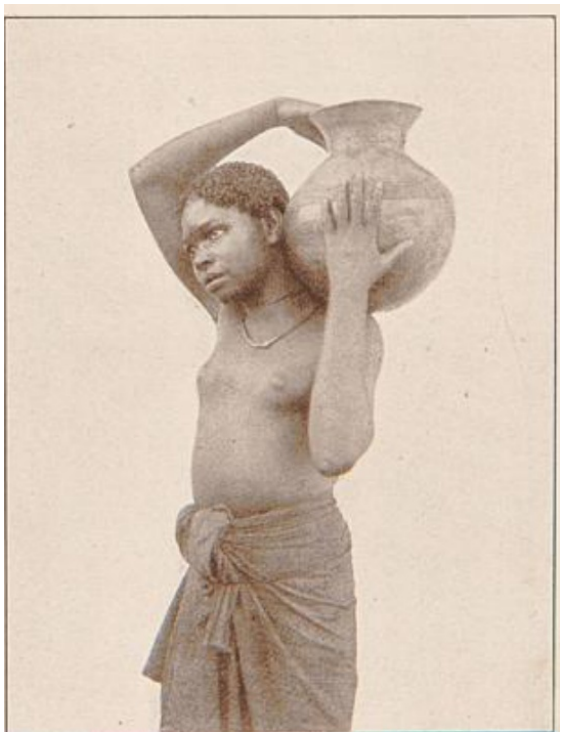
day's march away. And we can demonstrate the same thing everywhere.

But this work also reveals other, less pleasant facts when we speak with the Blacks about the state of their population. The wars with Tibati and a dreadful smallpox epidemic that raged here several years ago have transformed once densely populated regions into this country with, all things considered, so few inhabitants. I want to give one example among many: the small village of Mongong, where we stayed when Waibel first fell ill, now numbers, taking together the two villages of Old and New Mongong, five minutes apart, sixteen men, twenty women, and eight children. Yet formerly there was an independent chief here with a large population. When hostilities began between the lamido of Tibati and Ngambe, which until then had voluntarily submitted and paid tribute, a military alliance was concluded between Ngambe and Mongong, and Mongong came to Ngambe's aid with a force of two hundred shield bearers. This count does not even include the archers and riflemen, equal in number, who fight behind the spear-armed shield bearers.

The fighting was so dangerous and deadly for the Tikar because, with their spears, arrows, and few bush guns, they had to rely entirely on their courage, skill, and the actual accuracy of their blows. The people of Tibati, by contrast, possessed poisoned arrows of the kind the Hausa make; an arrow shot from afar on horseback brought certain death to the wounded man from the slightest scratch, since he knew no antidote.

War and Smallpox in Tikar Country





Tikar man with a child.

Tikar girl.

Plate 12

After the end of the Tibati war, according to our people, who must then have been about five years old, the male population had declined by half; but it was reportedly still far larger than it is today.

Then, scarcely had the horror of war faded when the far more terrible smallpox epidemic arrived, from which inhabitants died by entire villages. People say: “In one village there were a hundred men, women, and children; afterward only three men remained.” According to accounts repeatedly confirmed, it was chiefly women and children who died; the men fled into the bush and lived by hunting. The relatively small proportion of women in Tikar country confirms this. And a large share of these few women are in the chiefs' harems! Our people nevertheless assert with the utmost certainty that, since the great vaccination campaign, the population has already increased slightly and continues to grow, though slowly. It may happen that in a village, over the course of a year—counted from the beginning of one rainy season to the beginning of the next—as many people die as are born; but most often births reportedly exceed deaths by a small number, while mortality never surpasses the number of births unless a bad disease breaks out. The one now considered most dangerous is dysentery, which still appears here and there in epidemic form.

Joko, October 4, 1912

Today the fifth act of an African drama began here, or rather the last chapter of a crime novel. Its hero is a black clerk at the station

On the Question of Population

of Joko, Abanda; he comes from Tina, near Joko; a former station chief educated and trained him, and since he was then the only person at the station who really knew the entire district—being a native of the country, he knew every chief and every village—he had gradually become indispensable. For six months he had been traveling through the country to take a census of the population. He had left Joko a modest boy. Two days' march from here we had already met him on horseback, accompanied by twelve men and six women; and in recent weeks complaints, grievances, and cries for help had come from all sides, at first in a trickle and then in a torrent. He had ravaged the country like a bandit; his extortions from chiefs and Hausa traders were beyond counting. When the station chief heard the first stories, he sent a policeman to recall him. But Abanda must by then have been at the height of his delusions of grandeur, for the messenger returned without him and reported that he was traveling through the country like a great chief, with twenty porters and twelve women, a drum, and three trumpets; he sent word to the station chief that he first had to go to Wutschaba and buy himself a horse, after which he might come.

A soldier immediately set out after him, charged with bringing him back a prisoner with his entire retinue. Abanda offered him twenty marks if he would let him escape; the idea of resisting this solitary man in a red cap did not occur to him, although he had more than twenty followers at his disposal. The soldier took the money in silence, but did not let him escape; he scrupulously handed over the gold coin

An African Crime Novel

at the station. The promise to obtain the most beautiful young woman in Tina for him did no good either; perhaps he acted in this matter as he had with the money.

When the procession of prisoners climbed up to the station, the soldier played a truly excellent joke: he arranged Abanda's arrival like that of a great chief. The drummer and wind players had to march in front, sounding their music; next came the hero Abanda, with two policemen who had been assigned to him and were just as thievish as he was; then the band of porters, each fully laden with cloth, salt, and kola, all stolen and extorted goods; finally the women, each magnificently adorned and dressed in cotton, even velvet. But the participants in this festive parade were tied in pairs by a rope stretched from one neck to another; most were people from Tina who had accompanied their great fellow countryman on his plundering expedition. His face was quite green. And now he has gone down into the ravine with the group of other prisoners for the daily evening water-carrying duty, the captives' iron collar around his neck, linked by a chain to some other criminal. Perhaps he will wear this chain all his life; I hope so.

Immediately after him, our friend Dukan, the chief of Linde, entered prison. Slave trading! For him I should be sorry. He is a likable fellow. Only yesterday he was sitting in our house, beaming over tea and cigarettes, although he already knew what palaver awaited him today; and just now, when he crossed the courtyard on his way to prison, perhaps thus taking leave forever of his dignity as

Dukan's Downfall

chief, his face remained calm and impassive. And who came out of the office behind him, triumphant, with an expression of devilish glee, in the company of the other witnesses? The chief of Tina! I am certain he had been watching Dukan for years to bring him down, that he was behind the accusation. Now at last he has exacted the vengeance of his lineage and avenged his father's downfall and death.

Joko, October 21, 1912

I declare myself cured. I no longer feel anything of my injury; I can wear the pith helmet, go out in the sun, draw, and paint. Soon we mean to set off again for new work on the road, as soon as the waters of the great rainy season have receded a little and the enormous thunderstorms, currently occurring every day, have abated. The dry season is rapidly approaching; the extraordinary clarity of distant views is becoming increasingly veiled, the air is already sometimes quite hazy, and yesterday we saw the columns of smoke from the first grass fires.

The Djidda affair is bogged down. The station at Banjo has released the chief we accused of attempted murder and his villagers, since nothing could be proved against them. Suspicion now falls on a man from Ngaumdere who had abducted a woman from Joko; the lamido had detained them both and asked us to take the woman back to Joko under the escort of his own men. The man had escaped. He is said to have thrown the spear, either to take revenge on Franz, whom he may have taken for the chief of the Joko station, or

Recovered

to free the woman in the confusion. But no trace of this alleged culprit can be found.

We find this interpretation hard to believe. At bottom, though, it can be all the same to us! We came out alive, and whether or not the perpetrator is hanged changes nothing about that happy outcome. Whether the prestige of German rule will suffer because such an act remains unavenged is another question; an attempt to murder a white person may henceforth be regarded in this region as a relatively safe undertaking.

Whoever threw the spear, we are firmly convinced of one thing: it would never have happened if we had had a soldier with us. All the Blacks are much too afraid of them. Franz has therefore once again asked the government for a permanent escort soldier.

Since our months of work have enabled us to gain our people's trust, I am beginning, very slowly and cautiously, to question them about their religious ideas; they speak of them quite willingly. And I am truly astonished to see what lofty moral concepts this natural people, as primitive as the Tikar are, possesses. They certainly believe in nature spirits, and there is also a certain ancestor worship: in mortal danger, the spirit of one's dead father or chief is invoked. But all this takes second place before the Tikar's one supreme god, whom they suppose to dwell in the waters of the Kim, the greatest river in their country. At night he walks invisibly through the fields and adds nine grains to every grain sown by the industrious farmer.

Who Is the Culprit?

But the deeper meaning of this belief—that the god living in the water represents fertility itself—entirely escapes the young boys who tell me of it; nor do they regard the god's grains as raindrops, although I do not doubt that this was the original idea. When one wishes to offer something to the god, one pours out a cup of millet beer while invoking him; he demands no other sacrifices.

Every afternoon, as the sun declines, the god walks invisibly through the villages; he enters some house, sits down on the clay seat beside the door, and listens to what people say. For this reason, at that hour every house must be clean and perfectly tidy; no more sweeping or cleaning is done. If someone has a request to make of the god—a good harvest, his protection during a journey, recovery from an illness, or fertility—he sits beside the fire at sunset and states his wishes aloud, so as to ask for nothing evil. At that hour the god listens. If one has no particular wish, one does not trouble him further. I asked: “And if the god gives you everything you need, do you thank him too?” “How do I thank him? I do nothing wrong; that way he sees that I love him.”

What better thing, then, do we want to teach these people? They have so lofty a morality that one can feel nothing but admiration for it! And if they do not always act accordingly, well, if one wanted to judge the perfection of the Christian religion by the deeds of Christian peoples, what verdict would one reach?

Belief in God and Ideas of Justice among the Tikar

I also very much like the Tikar conception of theft. Above all, it is adapted to the character of the Negro and takes account of the realities of life: stealing is forbidden, stealing is not good, one must not do it. But if one is hungry and one's neighbor has food, or if one sees an object one likes immensely, it is ultimately quite understandable to take it, although one ought not to. However, if suspicion falls on the perpetrator and the chief, who is also the supreme judge, summons him and asks, “Did you steal this?”, he must confess. If he does so immediately and frankly, he receives no punishment; he must only return what he stole or repay its value. But if he denies it and is afterward proved guilty of the theft, he receives the second most severe punishment: the chief sells him to the Hausa as a slave.

Since the coming of German rule, this severe punishment, but one perfectly just in the Negroes' minds for the cowardly, lying thief, is of course no longer possible. Now he goes to the station prison for six months at most, where he is fed three times a day, and better than he is accustomed to. Certainly the sight of prisoners at work, an iron collar around their necks and a long, thin chain carried between each pair, is not pleasant. But how else can one prevent them from escaping as soon as they are out in the open? And if they are kept continually locked up, they are certain to die within a short time. For the wealthy notable who does no work at home and now finds himself separated from his wives as well, captivity is undoubtedly a punishment; for the poor man, “government food” is something

Belief in God and Ideas of Justice among the Tikar

quite desirable. By comparison, these prisoners are better off than the criminals in our prisons, and all the more so than those in our penitentiaries.

Of course, the ideas of the Tikar also include many things that cannot please us; thus trial by ordeal plays a major role, especially in matters of murder, sorcery, and theft. In the forest there grows a tree whose bark, when pounded, mixed with water, and drunk, immediately makes one vomit or die. The innocent person throws up the drink; the guilty one dies. And this judgment is not carried out only on the chief's orders: the accused who knows himself innocent runs into the forest himself, brings back the bark, pounds it, and drinks it before the eyes of his accuser. He cannot take some other bark, for then vomiting would not occur, and the judge would know the accused had tried to cheat. One of the boys claims to have drunk this magic potion himself to clear himself of a suspicion of theft; he is ready at any moment to submit to the ordeal again to prove that he was not the one who threw the spear at me.

Recently a case was brought here before the Joko station: a Tikar accused another man of having killed his wife by sorcery. The accused voluntarily took the drink to prove his innocence and died at once. Our people are convinced that he was indeed guilty and had merely tried to turn the ordeal in his favor by means of another spell. But the ordeal is stronger: nothing can prevail against it.

Trial by Ordeal



Tikar people.

Plate 13

Joko, November 2, 1912

We have prepared for our departure and are going out to new work in the open country. We intend to set off from Jakong, cross the broad northern plateau of the Ndomme as far as Njua, so as to see our great mountain from the east as well, then make our way to Ditam by forced marches across the whole of Tikar country, partly along routes Waibel surveyed before, and finally reach the “Ngutte Mountains” or “Jangba,” those high, pointed summits that have been calling to us for so long. Then we shall cross the Mbam and, by way of Bamum and Dschang, reach the coast and return home. It is more than a year since we left our homeland; the time at our disposal is drawing to an end.

A week of intense work lies behind us. Packing the hundreds of ethnographic objects, skulls, skins, and animals cost us many drops of sweat. But everything is now ready, so that on the coast all that remains will be to fasten slats around the packages: no load will have to be repacked. The enormous baskets made from the split stalks of palm fronds, most of them over a meter and a half high, have proved excellent packing containers. Well wedged in dry grass, the potbellied earthenware pots, drums, buffalo shields, and musical instruments are held immovably inside. And yet baskets and grass are as light as a feather; we have only two packages that exceed the weight of a porter's load and must be carried by two men using a pole.

In the midst of all this work and disorder came the greatest days of festivity Joko had known for a long time: the station chief had summoned the chiefs of his district to a great assembly. They were to be there on the day

Preparations for New Work

of the full moon; but several kept us waiting, and those who were punctual remained here, with their entire retinues of men and women, at their representatives' compounds. Nearly every chief does indeed have a notable of his people in Joko who maintains a compound where the chief can stay; he is probably also charged with informing his master of everything that happens in Joko.

Thus every morning they came one after another with their whole retinues, drums, and wind instruments to pay a morning visit first to the station's all-powerful interpreter and then to the station chief. Finally, all those who knew us also called on us, each to receive a picture of the emperor and tobacco as gifts. In the afternoon these gentlemen, the chiefs, visited one another. The village was nothing but rolling drums, whistles, and incessant calls; everyone showed off his horses, made them gallop and rear before the others, and displayed on himself and his tschindas the most magnificent multicolored garments. The Hausa profited from this gathering: they could scarcely supply enough meat for the visitors.

When everyone had finally arrived, the assembly was scheduled. The interpreter proved a brilliant stage director: he organized a procession that would have done credit to any theater. At its head were himself and the station's black clerk, then the groups one after another. The musicians made a great noise before their chief, who, on horseback in his richest costume and with his head held proudly high, led his following of tschindas, nobles, women, and servants. Princes great and small followed one another;

Festive Days in Joko

the most imposing came last: the chief of Ngambe, followed by eight men on horseback and an immense crowd.

They drew up on the station's parade ground in a vast semicircle, the Tikar on the right and the Wute on the left, all beating drums and blowing horns until one's ears rang. The station chief, Mr. Müller, passed along their ranks and shook hands with each chief; then the crowned heads and their great men were invited to dismount and form a smaller circle, and the speech for which the assembly had been summoned began:

“In future you must no longer, by systematic burning, drive large quantities of game into a square of grass, then set it alight and kill all the animals at once by fire or weapons; otherwise, before long, there will be no game at all left in the country. Everyone may hunt as much as he wishes, with spear, bow, snares, and pits; but hunting by fire is henceforth forbidden.”

“Take care of all the oil palms, and let every chief plant many palm nuts: he will then have plenty of palm oil and become rich.”

“Resume cotton growing, sow more every year, for the railway may soon reach this country, and you will then be able to sell cotton as you sell rubber today. You know yourselves that rubber has become scarce; later, selling cotton will enable you to earn just as much money.”[1]

“You chiefs must not take all the women for yourselves; otherwise, most of the women remain childless and

1 This exhortation was made at our suggestion.

The Assembly of Chiefs

your people dwindles more and more, so that the government will finally have to bring other peoples here and give them the land. Give every man a wife, so that they may have children and your people may increase.” The chiefs look very foolish; our boys beam.

“Keep a better watch over your wives, so that they do not run about so much and become ill as a result; if they do so despite this, beat them vigorously. The station will hold no palaver against any man for that.” Enthusiastic approval from the chiefs!

“When tax notices arrive from the station, that does not mean the chief must pay all the taxes, to the point of perhaps having to sell his horse for it. Every man capable of working must pay his own six marks in tax; let him offer himself as a porter at the trading post or seek other work. There is enough work! Let him hand the money to the chief. If a man refuses to work, let the chief simply bring him to the station: I shall give him work until he has earned six marks.” The chiefs beam; their retinues maintain a dismayed silence.

“And now go home, summon all your people, and repeat to them what I have just told you…”

To right and left the sentences were translated into Tikar and Wute; then the whole crowd quickly dispersed. But in the afternoon, and again the next day and the day after that, everyone came back to the station with his particular petitions, questions, and wishes. The entire station courtyard was full of seated people.

Now at last they have all left again, each after paying his farewell

Speech to the Chiefs

visits, and Joko can breathe again. Today the police sergeant left. The day after tomorrow we shall set out; those remaining say Joko will become very quiet. The parting is painful to us.

Belang, November 9, 1912

We had imagined the route from Jakong across the Ndomme plateau and down into the plain where Njua lies to be so simple. And now difficulties stand before us such as we have never yet encountered. A quarter of an hour beyond Jakong, the first halt: the horses could not cross the marsh formed by the Ekie overflowing its banks. After hours, it was finally managed; then came an appalling path, almost as terrible as during the crossing of the Ndomme from the Wute plain. And at the end of the day, we lost a horse, the young stallion, while crossing the rushing Kim: heart failure. It is not so much the loss of this dear animal, which naturally also affects me greatly, that distresses me, as the additional difficulties we must now expect in our work on the road. It will scarcely be possible to stay together, to work together; Franz will have to do many things alone with which I could otherwise help him. And the exertion will be so much greater for both of us, even if we take turns riding.

Fortunately, the financial loss is not too heavy for the expedition's funds. We can calmly forgo any profit from selling the horses, since the day before yesterday we received a telegram from the governor informing us that the expedition will in future no longer have to pay tax on porters. An order has also reached the Joko station by telegraph to assign us a permanent escort

Rushing Rivers, Bad Paths

soldier. How well we are being looked after now! It is true that a misfortune first had to happen.

Yesterday evening, in complete darkness, we arrived at Jakong's last little village, both so exhausted that it was impossible for us to continue today; so we stayed a day. In the morning we went back to the Kim, which forces its way in two branches through a wild rocky landscape. It was what we least expected to find here: these mighty domes and slabs of bare granite, and between them the roaring, rushing water. The narrower branch, which is nevertheless a good fifteen meters wide, plunges at one point between rocky shelves into a gorge no more than three meters wide, in a furious whirlpool and at mad speed. The bridge, whose bad condition the villagers had tried to conceal with grass, passes directly above this maelstrom. A magnificent, sturdy suspension bridge spans the great Kim; it could easily support several people, and its weaving is so tight that crossing it was a pleasure.

Tomorrow we shall camp in the savanna. It was very difficult to gather enough food in the little villages we left behind for our caravan of fifty people: first for our stay here, and then, even more so, for the camp in the bush. Who will carry the baskets full of flour there is yet another question, still unresolved.

The day after tomorrow we ought to reach a recently established little village belonging to Njua, but where there is as yet absolutely no “food.” Let us hope the chief of Njua sends something to eat there.

Ngambe, November 21, 1912

According to our original plan, we should be arriving in Ditam today. And we are still held up in

The Kim

Ngambe. Franz has a fever; today is already the fourth day, and it is probably malaria. Fortunately, we have a tolerable rest house here, although it is not quite rainproof; one can lie down and move about so much better in it than in the cramped tent. The missionaries at the Baptist station are helping us very kindly.

With the chief of Ngambe, who once caused us so much trouble, we are now of one heart and soul. As he had promised us at Joko, he dug up two complete Tikar skeletons for us, cleaned them, and under cover of darkness brought them mysteriously wrapped in baskets to the rest house. We also obtained magnificent old bronze objects for which we had bargained in vain eight months ago. A substantial bracelet delights us particularly: cast by the lost-wax process, it bears on an openwork ground a pointed projection adorned with buffalo heads in relief. The delicacy of the modeling and the perfection of the casting are astonishing; today, no one in this country can do as much any longer.

During our last brief stay in Njua, we watched one of the few brass casters still existing in Tikar country at work, the best in the whole country: he fashioned in wax the models that were then cast in this “lost mold.” On our arrival the artist—for that is indeed how he is regarded—was squatting beside his house in the shade of a banana plant, on the antelope skin considered the only seat worthy of any great work. On a mat lay a clay core shaped like the inner cavity of a pipe; beside it lay long yellow-green strands that we at first took for blades of grass. Beneath

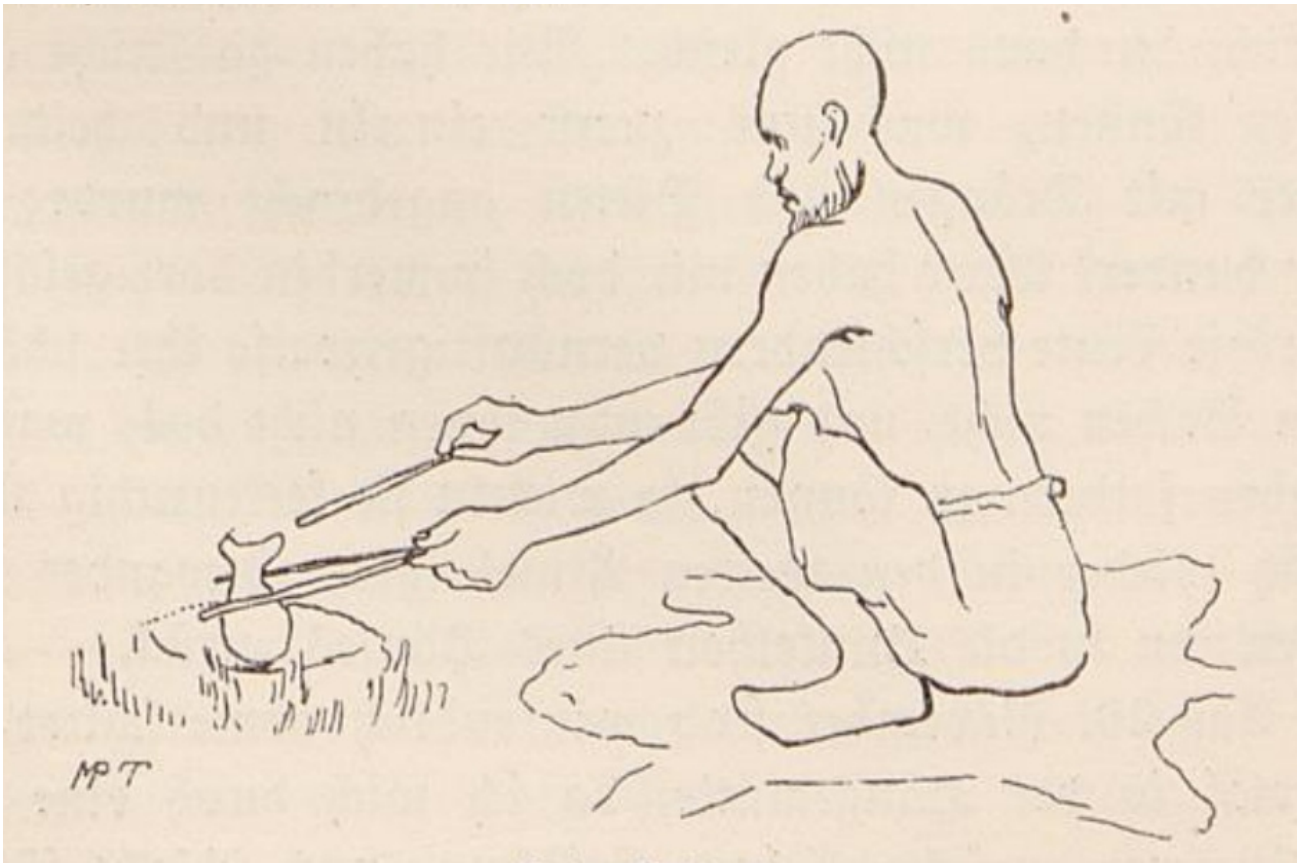
An Unwelcome Delay

his fingers, which he continually moistened with warm water, the old man was rolling another of these strands on an upturned calabash shell. Looking more closely, we realized that in this way he was rolling threads of fine, pliable wax. A few thin triangular sheets of wax, the size of the palm of a hand, also lay ready beside him.

The wax is separated from the honey by boiling; it is then placed on a perforated earthenware shard set over a pot; glowing coals are placed on top: it melts and drips through the holes into the pot beneath, after which it is given the desired shape by kneading it with warm water. Before our eyes the master then applied a sheet of wax heated over the fire around the fired clay core, smoothed and scraped it with a small, narrow wooden spatula, and then covered the whole with ornaments made of fine wax threads: scrolls, plaits, simple spirals; everything was twisted and shaped freehand and stuck onto the smooth wax surface with palm oil. The wax model must harden for a day, after which casting can take place.

The metal, hammered into little pieces, is placed in a small pot of very hard-fired clay; the wax model of the pipe is entirely surrounded with clay kneaded with a little horse dung; the vessel containing the metal and the pipe mold are joined together, then wrapped together in another thick layer of clay. With the metal vessel below and the pipe above, the whole is placed in a very hot charcoal fire, fanned by bellows made of clay and banana leaves. When the metal is molten, the wax too has melted and escaped into the surrounding clay, made porous by the burning of the

Brass Casting



horse dung. The caster then removes the mold from the fire with moistened wooden tongs and turns it over. The metal flows into the hollow impression of the pipe; as soon as the clay casing has been cooled a little with water, it is broken open. It is wonderfully pretty to see the shining metal emerge from the mold, and the caster's feverish excitement is quite understandable.

Unfortunately, the Tikar no longer have the pure metal they worked in former times. They then bought it in ingots from the Hausa, who brought it from far away in the north; but it was expensive. Today they take European bronze wherever they can find it: cartridge cases, locks, hinges; it is not supple or pure enough for such delicate work. The casting becomes rough in places, the ornamentation blurs; probably this European metal does not achieve sufficient fluidity in the charcoal fire. It is a pity. For the art of modeling is the same as in the old pieces.

At the brass casting.

Brass Casting

Ditam, November 29, 1912

At last we have arrived safely in Ditam, after having to remain an entire week in Ngambe: scarcely had Franz's fever fortunately passed when it seized me in turn. And yet we had both followed the quinine prophylaxis with the greatest care and conscientiousness!

But our prolonged stay there had its good side. We discovered and brought to light true treasures of the ancient Tikar bronze-working art: tobacco pipes, bracelets, bells, all objects hidden in old men's houses that had not seen daylight for years, perhaps decades. I find the bells particularly beautiful: ten to twenty centimeters high, they display the noblest shapes; some are pointed like bishops' miters, others shaped like our old church bells; all are decorated with typical Tikar motifs, and each differs from the others, with an inexhaustible richness of basic forms and ornaments. Among the fifty we saw, we found only two matching pairs, and even these were merely similar, by no means identical. We could not buy everything that was brought to us, at first piece by piece and secretly, then with insistence and pleas; nevertheless, we left a few hundred marks there, for the people are wise enough not to sell their beautiful old objects cheaply; if they are not given what they think they can ask, they wrap their treasure again with the greatest composure in the broad sleeve of their garment and carry it back into the darkness of their house.

On November 26 we finally set out again; this time I was in the hammock, for I still felt unwell from a chill left by the malaria.

Ancient Bronze Treasures

I must admit that on the first day I saw absolutely nothing; the slightly jerky swaying of this mode of transport made me quite dazed, and at times I simply fell asleep. The eight men who took turns carried me through every obstacle, uphill and down, as though it were nothing. At steep and difficult passages, all eight grasped me like a parcel and in this way carried me across the deepest ravines. On the second and third days I had become somewhat accustomed to it; but this swing in which one lies down is unpleasant all the same: everything looks distorted, half blurred, and one sees much less even than when walking, or especially when riding.

From Waibel, who had crossed this region while working slowly, we already knew we would pass through extensive forests; his descriptions made us thoroughly familiar with the forest, with its infinitely dense tangle of undergrowth and the gigantic trunks of the great trees raising their crowns broadly and freely into the sky; the forests of northern Tikar country can in no way be compared with it. But one thing surprised us enormously: the abundance of oil palms, which increased from hour to hour. In the densest forest, in the open bush, often even in the savanna, oil palms everywhere; tall trees whose slender trunks bore their round crowns high in the air; short, broad trees, grouped like bushes; very young ones, scarcely visible in the thickness of the undergrowth. There must be thousands upon thousands here, and the Ditam region in particular is a veritable garden of oil palms. The people here are wise enough to draw only a little palm wine; they make palm oil, of which they sell large quantities.

Oil Palms in the Tikar Forest

We also found cotton in abundance, and here in Ditam cloth is still woven from it. Along the route are many small settlements belonging to notables who, only two years ago, all lived in the chief's village; each, in founding his new little village, planted cotton bushes as a natural and necessary thing alongside cassava, plantains, potatoes, millet, and maize: one for spinning and weaving, another for selling to the Hausa.

Today we are staying here; I remain in the village and tend my sore throat; Franz has just ridden off to survey in advance a stretch of the route toward the Jangba Mountains with their jagged, grotesque outlines, which we should finally reach in a few days.

Yesterday we met a missionary here with whom we spent the evening, engaging in long discussions about how to treat and educate the Negro. I cannot understand how someone who has now known the Negro for some time can believe it possible to accustom him to voluntary work through mere exhortations, and even condemn the government's making people work at the station in payment of their tax: this, he said, was forced labor, which could have only bad consequences; and by what right, moreover, did the German government demand work and taxes from the Blacks in their own country? He was very surprised when we pointed out how much these people owe to the German administration for the security of their lives and their rights; in the end he had to concede that, in exchange, a payment of six marks a year or an equivalent amount of labor was not excessive.

The Education of the Negro

Just think of the state of this country only fifteen years ago! The hordes of Tibati roamed everywhere, plundering and murdering; the population, starving and afflicted with smallpox and dysentery, remained behind its ramparts and ditches; every trip out to a field beyond them, to hunt, or to fish put one's life in danger. And even within one's own tribe, no one was safe from suddenly being seized by the chief and sold to the Hausa or, as here in Ditam, fattened and then eaten. Added to this, to the east and south, were the incessant slave hunts of the Wute and, among the people themselves, murders, killings, and poisonings over all manner of quarrels about women. And now? The slightest theft must be brought before the station and is punished there; as far as I know, during the last five years no murder or killing has gone unpunished throughout the district. There is no more war, everyone is vaccinated against smallpox, and they can obtain remedies for dysentery and other diseases at the station at any time. One need only remind the Blacks from time to time of all these benefits of the German government.

The Benefits of the German Administration



Njanti Mountains.

Lunda, December 3, 1912

I myself find it hard to believe that yesterday we were up there, on one of the highest rock towers, and certainly the steepest, of the Jangba Mountains, which we shall henceforth call the “Njanti Mountains,” after their inhabitants, the Mendjanti. “Jangba” is the name of the corner pillar we climbed, at the northeastern end of the entire massif.

From Ditam we had searched in vain along the southeastern horizon for the sharp peaks we had seen from Linde. The thick haze already covering the whole country again prevented any distant view. Indeed, it is once more the height of the dry season, with sunrises and sunsets in a murky red and yellow haze, mists at the foot of the mountains, and opaque, shimmering air. Two weeks ago, in Ngambe, we had our last rain. Toward the end of our first day's march, which still led us through forests of oil palms, we suddenly caught sight of the fantastic lines of the mountains, gigantic and yet like mere shadows in the yellow haze: a long, serrated chain, dominated in the west and east by immense corner towers.

The eastern one in particular constantly drew the eye; for its bold, graceful shape I know no comparison other than the Matterhorn, although naturally one must not think of its height. Halfway up, one could clearly distinguish the mountain base upon which the separate pinnacles appeared to stand. The pale granite shone pink through the yellow air; the grassy slopes leaned against it as though beneath blue veils, and the strips and expanses of dark forest appeared like deep, soft folds. Before it stretched an endless plain, crossed by few watercourses; even the forest had no water. But, to our surprise, above the yellow grass we saw countless borassus palms: old trees bearing their fan-shaped crowns on immense trunks, and hundreds of young ones whose powerful fan-shaped leaves, larger than a wagon wheel, sprang directly from the ground on short stalks. From a millet field ravaged by buffalo, very near our first stopping place, we had an unobstructed view of the whole massif; everywhere else, the tall grass or still taller grain blocked our view so completely that only the summits rose above it. We worked at our observation point until nightfall, and even as we fell asleep our heads were still full of feverish, impatient thoughts.

The next morning, again nothing, absolutely nothing. We were as though wrapped in damp cotton wool in an impenetrable fog, and trudged heavily through the wet grass, no longer sensing direction or destination. Then, around noon, once again came a breathtaking surprise: the fog suddenly rose lightly in small wisps of cloud, and the steep, luminous tower of Jangba stood almost above us. We insistently asked the inhabitants of the

Toward the Njanti Mountains

next village whether one could climb it and by which way. “During the war against Ngutte, we fled to the other side of the Mbam; at that time Njanti lived up there; we are Bati from the plain, we know nothing.” At the next village, the same answer. We were therefore all the more surprised to learn at our stopping place that the chief had already sent men up there to clear the path to the height where his old village had stood. Our disappointment was great when the soldier we had sent after them returned to tell us: one could indeed climb as far as the old village, but beyond that there was no way of continuing; one stood before the high, vertical rock wall we could see above us from the tent. We were very sad, for what use could merely the height of the base be to us?

Quite incidentally and without ulterior motive, we sent a little tobacco to the very old chief, who had long ago passed his rank and duties on to his son; at the same moment a man from a neighboring village, doubtless a long-standing enemy, confided most secretly to the soldier: “The young chief and all his people are lying to you; up there are good things to eat, and they often go to fetch them.” Then, behind the young chief's back, secret negotiations began with the village elders; by evening matters had reached the point where one of them declared: “Yes, there is a path to the highest point. We pick sweet fruits from the trees there and catch the big flies that taste so good; I know the path, and I am willing to guide you.”

The next day the young chief himself had resigned himself to his fate and climbed the mountain with us, at first along a good, much-used path through dense forest.

The Secret of Jangba

Immense boulders lay everywhere; we were ascending a scree cone formed from the debris of the steep wall. A great many oil palms grew in the forest, which also explained the good path. After an hour and a half of steady climbing, we reached the height of the base—about a thousand meters—and found, among countless palms, the ruins of the old village.

From there it really seemed impossible to continue: before us rose the white wall, scored with thousands of narrow grooves, so steep as to be almost overhanging. But the guide turned aside; in what was scarcely more than a fissure somewhat widened by erosion, we climbed for a few minutes along the precipitous slope, carefully setting one foot before the other and holding on to the grass growing in the crack. Soon the tower showed a less steep side, up which a wooded ravine ran. At the same time, however, we discovered the eastern face of the entire massif, its bare white rock walls rising vertically above the mist-drowned plain. Then the ascent resumed; our ten men now hacked and tore a way through the thick brush with knives and bare hands; it was hard work. We reached a small projection of bare rock and caught sight of the village, the tent; our people, overcome with joy, waved their shirts and shouted down below. Then came the last steep climb, through short grass over immense rocks. And at last we were up, at the very top! The whole mountain country was spread out like a map; we could distinguish shallow, basin-shaped valleys between sharp ridges, and the summits all around the perimeter; only one, the farthest to the northwest, seemed higher still than ours, which reached almost fourteen hundred meters. A wonderfully cool wind

Scaling the Mountain

passed through the airy crowns of the low trees with broadly spreading branches that had grown in the fissures of the rock. For a while we sat, simply happy and a little tired, gazing at the rugged terrain at our feet.

Then there was no shortage of work, and we were only just finishing when, at three o'clock, we had to think of descending. Below, two great chiefs were waiting for us: the chief of Gion, a Wute, and the chief of Goro, a Bati named Ndenge. Franz has known him since the time when he was a soldier and noncommissioned officer. He has offered to guide us over the next few days and shows pride in being able to show us his country and explain it to us.

Messee, December 7, 1912

We have completed two-thirds of the circuit around this entire fabulous massif and are approaching the Mbam. The day before yesterday we climbed for the second time, onto the southernmost sharp peak, by an ascent almost more difficult still, over slipping ground, scree, and smooth grass where the foot found no hold. Most of the time we had to advance on all fours. To make matters worse, we also had thick fog during the climb. The guide, who could not find his own way, first led me, since I was in front, onto two secondary summits from which I had to descend part of the way before continuing toward the main summit.

Up there we were above the banks of fog that covered the entire plain as well as the base of the massif until noon. Only the summit ridges emerged, themselves still obscured from time to time by the passing damp veils, which also enveloped us completely for a few minutes. From there we could clearly see the old town of Ngaundere or Ngandelle, known from Morgen's descriptions,

A Circuit of the Massif

before which he fought as an ally of Ngilla and Ngutte, and where he was even wounded. It truly occupied an almost impregnable position, and it is hard to believe that the attackers could even have reached that mountain height. Only one ravine leads there, admittedly covered in forest so dense that the defenders could not roll stones down it. On our descent we crossed one of these densely wooded ravines whose tangle concealed hundreds of oil palms.

In these regions there is a colorful mixture of peoples, brought about by the Wute wars. Formerly the Njanti were the true inhabitants of the mountains; the Bati and Fuk lived in the plain between the eastern foot of the massif and the Sanaga, the Balom immediately beside the Mbam. All have now been mixed together and scattered, and a few Wute villages are still dispersed among them, having remained here even after the establishment of German rule. Only the Bati have regrouped fairly well over the past three years under their chief Ndenge.

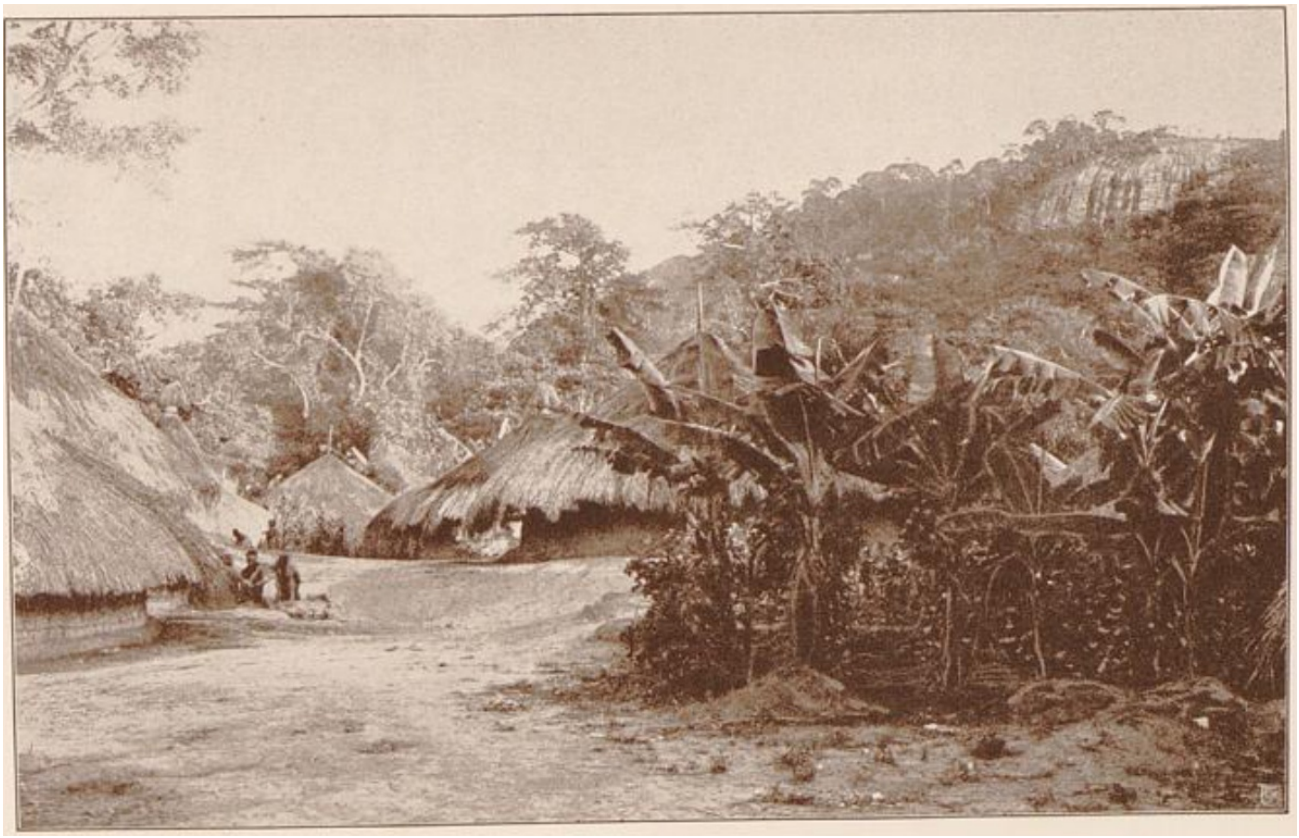
His father, a small independent chief, had been killed by Ngutte; the boy had grown up in captivity. Very early he understood that only the white man, with his power greater than that of the Wute, could help him. He became a soldier, corporal, noncommissioned officer, and independent post commander, always with this single thought: if I distinguish myself, if I prove that I can be relied upon, the whites will believe me and later give me back my country and my people. He served eight years in the protection force, then presented his case and actually achieved his aim.

A Mixture of Peoples

It is a pleasure to deal with this Negro, who does the greatest credit to the education he received from German officers. He does not, like Njoja, possess a mind so exceptional for a Negro; but he has tenacious energy, calm and clear reason, and manners always modest, yet assured. In any case he makes a pleasant contrast with certain products of the missions. In answer to my questions about the apparently so rapidly diminishing numbers of the Wute, he told me that they had always been few in number, scarcely more in former times than today. Their great superiority and their victorious march through all the Sanaga lowlands are explained by the fact that a large group was always united under a supreme chief, whereas all the others—Bati, Njanti, Fuk, and Balom—lived without ties or organization. The Wute could easily take the villages one after another, because no member of the same people, no neighboring village, came to the aid of those attacked. And all those subjugated had to serve in war; thus a single Wute commanded as many as a hundred warriors of another tribe, and the most recently subjected were sent to the front rank with this threat: “If you do not show courage, but take flight, we who stand behind you will kill every one of you without exception.” This bore fruit. With such prospects, one preferred, after all, to march against the designated enemy, with whom one might perhaps save one's life.

This also explains the immense Wute armies, sometimes two thousand warriors strong, which Morgen and Dominik saw and described. Very few of them were true Wute. Ndenge says: “Even today, despite all those among us who have been killed or sold, we Bati are much more numerous than the Wute; and formerly we were

The Bati Chief Ndenge



Wute village.

Plate 14

more numerous still; but the Wute subjugated us all because we did not unite to defend ourselves.”

Until our crossing of the Mbam, Ndenge will remain the steward of our journey, and no better one could be imagined. Here, among the somewhat quarrelsome Balom, it is very pleasant to have in him an intermediary whom they know and respect. For no reason the villagers strike our boys and porters, and naturally an appalling uproar follows. The feeling of having a soldier with us is now very comforting to me in the evening as I fall asleep.

I would nevertheless like to mention that Ndenge, who knows the Fulani and Tibati very well from having lived for many years in Banjo, told us the other day with a laugh: “I really do not believe that old Djidda, who has already received more than one slap in his life, threw the spear; and I believe the story of the man from Ngaumdere even less. Remember that a lamido named Abo was living in Tibati, deposed by the Germans and kept in a sort of captivity. He tried to have you murdered by a trusted man, because he knew that the present lamido, Hamasamwu, would then be deposed, and he hoped in this way to regain power. That eluded him. But six weeks later Hamasamwu died suddenly, with symptoms resembling those of poisoning. And immediately Abo was proclaimed lamido. I am convinced that he is responsible both for the throwing of the spear and for Hamasamwu's death; he is known as a man who will shrink from no murder.” Can one believe that, in questions of Negro psychology, the Negro is the most perceptive? His interpretation does not seem so implausible.

A Suspicion

In the Pygmy village, December 10, 1912

So these remnants of an earlier humanity still exist here too. They have hidden not only in the immense primeval forests of southern Cameroon, but also in the almost inaccessible forests on the summits of this massif. Yesterday already, in the Balom village of Djinga, we were told that the best guides for our last mountain excursion, on mighty Jandjom, would be the “small people” who had once lived up there on the summit but now lived at the foot of the massif, in a farming village, as subjects of the chief of Njansa. Naturally we were very eager, and on our arrival our first question concerned the “small people.” We had prepared ourselves for a dreadful sight of misshapen beings with enormous heads; thus we were pleasantly surprised to find in these Pygmies human beings who were certainly very small but perfectly proportioned, although they can in no way lay claim to the Negro beauty that is now so familiar to us and seems a matter of course. There is something twisted and emaciated about their narrow little bodies: the belly protrudes, the small of the back is too hollow, the arms and legs are thin and weak; yet they have well-formed feet and hands, with slender, tapering fingers. The neck is short, the head broad and round, and in some of them the flattened nose has something simian about it. But the figure as a whole is so well proportioned that at first glance one does not feel so strongly the impression of their astonishing smallness.

In this village there are five men, an old grandmother, two women, and six children. Their chief, the oldest among them, has three children by one of the women.

We Discover Dwarfs

In other settlements, all around the foot of the massif, several more of these dwarfs are said to live in small groups.

According to the old woman, mother of the two young women and whose memories naturally go back the farthest, the “small people” formerly lived in caves hollowed out by erosion in the granite of the massif; they fed on berries, roots, palm nuts, and above all the fruits of the hunt; the men appear to be excellent archers: they handle their great, powerful bows very skillfully and adopt a very particular position of the hand and fingers that filled our Wute and Tikar, and even the Bati, with the greatest astonishment. Their hardwood arrowheads are extremely sharp and barbed.

Formerly, they cooked their food in small pits dug in the earth; at our request, they demonstrated this for us. First a few very large, sturdy leaves are laid in the pit, twenty centimeters deep; then the food and water are put in, and everything is covered with another leaf. A lattice of freshly cut branches and a second covering of leaves support the layer of earth that covers the pit. A fire is lit on top, and after some time one hears bubbling and cooking in the hole. When the noise gradually dies away, the water has evaporated and the food is cooked; it is taken out and eaten.

The father of the present chief of Njansa, who lived at the foot of the massif, climbed the mountain, probably fleeing the Tikar of Ditam or the first Wute; there he found the Pygmies and took them away with him. In captivity they learned to build houses and cultivate the land; they had children down below,

The Pygmies' Way of Life

and that is why, according to the people of Njansa, they no longer run away. They now live alone in a small village, strictly separated from the other Negroes, and grow millet, maize, potatoes, and even cotton, like all the inhabitants of this country. In the eyes of their neighbors, the Pygmies are considered particularly intelligent, almost sorcerers. Are they not the only ones whom old Ngutte neither drove beyond the Mbam nor captured? “They possess a charm that makes them look like tree trunks; any tall man walks right past them without seeing them.” And the great men come to them to have them prepare effective remedies and charms for love and fertility.

We measured these little beings against our tent poles: the tallest of the men is one hundred and fifty centimeters, the shortest one hundred and forty; the women are no smaller. We photographed them from every angle and made them tell us everything they still know of their tribe; it is very little. But we may count ourselves lucky merely to have learned of their existence, by pure chance.

Unfortunately, these Pygmies claim to have forgotten their old language; they say they know only that they once possessed one and now speak Jandjom, a dialect of Balom. But the Bati and Balom say that, in the lamentations they make for their dead, they use a language that they do not understand, and keep these songs and ceremonies jealously secret. Ah, the dead! If only we could find one to bring a skull home! We promised treasures to the dwarfs, as well as to the Bati and Balom,

The Forgotten Language

if they obtained one for us. But their unanimous reply is: “It is impossible; when one of them dies, the members of his tribe carry the dead person to the highest summit of Jandjom and, from there, throw him into a deep and inaccessible ravine.” Franz climbed that summit and saw that no path leads into the cleft between two rock towers.

Djinga, December 12, 1912

The last evening east of the Mbam. It is already quite dark, but Franz has not yet returned from the river, as far as which he wanted to make surveys this afternoon, so that we can move quickly tomorrow morning. On the other side, the work ends, for otherwise we would not reach Bamum and the coast soon enough. Then there will be nothing but the homeward march, as fast as possible.

A strange feeling, to know that the work in this country is now truly over; over only, I dare not say complete: I am still too keenly aware of so many shortcomings, I know so many things that could still be done to achieve true completion. But one thing is good: nothing is lacking that absolutely must still be done; and the journey of the last few weeks has contributed greatly to that. Now something else begins, a task I believe to be more difficult and laborious. We must examine, arrange, check, and compare the great heap of building materials we have gathered in a certain disorder; then we shall have to build.

For ten and a half months we have been working in “our country”; it has become so familiar to us, everything here seems so natural, that we find it hard to

Farewell to the Work

imagine how, at the time when we crossed the Mbam, we traveled through these places with strangers' eyes, how everything seemed so empty to us, like the very image of a bad map beneath which one can imagine everything and nothing. How the empty spaces have now filled up for us! From the poor lines of a map and confused accounts has emerged for us a colorful country, above which the sky varies between night and day, haze and clarity, oppressive heat, raging storm, or mild, cloudy coolness; a country that changes its garments, passing from scorched black and yellow through shimmering pink to green that grows ever deeper, bluer, and finally browner. We know all its mountains with their forests and rocks, its living rivers, the people bound to its soil, and everything they draw from it and fashion from it. We can hardly believe that everyone at home does not have the same vivid picture of our country.

Kumojascha rest house, December 18, 1912

We have decided to take all the difficulties, all the fatigues of this forced march home on their cheerful and comic side. For otherwise we should not get through it. Paths that are called the “main road” and yet are only a few decimeters wide, run over stumps and stones, and are overgrown with tall, cutting grass; almost impassable streams roaring over rocks; sick porters left along the way; difficulties obtaining food; and all the while the constant awareness that we must hurry, hurry, so as to pack properly on the coast the collections left in Bamum and everything else we are bringing back, while still arriving in time for the steamer.

A Hurried Return

If we now stay healthy, we shall manage it; otherwise… But we were able to bring our work beyond the Mbam to a successful conclusion, and for that one can certainly impose a little hardship on oneself.

To begin with, we could not get across the river. Our last horse would certainly have drowned, for the crossing lay between rocks at the foot of a waterfall, and the ferryman admitted he had never yet taken a horse across. We therefore first had to march upstream for a day to find a better crossing. Even there it was still difficult enough, and we thought the horse lost, for in their eagerness to paddle, the ferrymen constantly splashed water over the head of the animal swimming beside the boat.

The porter question also caused fresh difficulties: we needed four more, because we wanted to have our head porter Mbo, who had fallen ill, carried. The village chief was quite willing to provide them; but scarcely had he said a word to his people when we suddenly saw the whole population flee in every direction, swift as the wind. He sat enthroned in majestic solitude on his raffia bed in the middle of the village square. Three of our men then spent hours hunting through the millet fields with him until they had caught four men who, now that they are embarked on the adventure, are proving excellent and very willing porters.

On the western bank of the Mbam, we encountered new difficulties! There was no way to obtain porters, we did not have enough to eat, and the people claimed that the path we wanted to take no longer existed, that it was impassable and uninhabited. In truth, it had simply not been

Difficulty upon Difficulty

cleared of its tall grass, and the chief was lying to make us take another, cleared path that would have forced a three-day detour upon us. We nevertheless followed the route we had chosen, resuming in places that desperate struggle against tall grass through which one can pass only on foot. On the first day we arrived at a charming little village whose five houses stood in a semicircle beneath the widely spreading branches of an immense tree with a pale trunk and yellow leaves. The people were friendly and helpful; they had never before received a white person in their village. Soon campfires crackled all around our tent, for our caravan, which numbers seventy-five people including the followers of the porters, boys, soldier, and chiefs, could naturally not fit into the five tiny dome-roofed houses.

Seen from outside, the forest now appears splendidly beautiful. For the great, powerful trees, always supplied by groundwater, it is not the beginning of the rains but the beginning of the dry season that marks renewal. Everywhere now young shoots are emerging, not green like those of the undergrowth and savanna trees after the first rain, but fiery red, pale yellow, rust-colored, soft gray: the reflection of the sun's colored rays. On the dark, deep-green background of the old, densely leafed forest, this rests like a luminous, multicolored veil. The grass is pale yellow, hard and brittle; today we crossed the first expanse blackened by fire. Everything reminds us of the march from Dschang to Bana and Bangangte. That was a year ago now.

Until yesterday afternoon we had constantly been traveling through lower country, at only seven hundred meters' elevation; on the last day,

The Multicolored Forest

we were still among isolated, open granite mountains that the Bamum plateau has sent far ahead. All the depressions, broad, flat, and often marshy, are dotted with small, very dense oil-palm groves; but in this low-lying region, where raffia palms are rare, they must provide much palm wine besides oil, which considerably reduces their economic value: all the fruit bunches dry up on the tapped tree. The country nevertheless seems sparsely populated, at least near the path.

But this morning came the ascent to the plateau, a steep slope of about two hundred meters. At the top we reached a broad, strongly undulating expanse; immense granite blocks protruded among the half-burned grasses; the path continued to rise gently, so that soon we were at over a thousand meters. And suddenly volcanic rock appeared, the deep-red weathered basalt soil, and with it the dwellings. Everywhere on the heights, now quite uniform and straight, one sees the plantain groves around the red, dome-roofed houses, the fields of maize and sweet potatoes, and a few isolated tall oil palms. At exactly one long day's march from the capital stands the first country estate of a “dji,” a great man of the country.

Although we had fond memories of Bamum and all its grand buildings, the immense house made a striking impression of princely beauty: before its mighty red walls, a good six meters high, stood a freestanding gallery of bare white trunks supporting the roof; an animal frieze, skillfully made from bundles of black and white grass, rose to almost a man's height, and two domed roofs crowned the whole. The two rows of women's houses, clean and lower,

Toward the Bamum Plateau

completed the picture to right and left. No other group of dwellings in Cameroon is so perfect, so noble, and so picturesquely arranged as such a dji's compound. Our Tikar, most of whom did not yet know Bamum, were utterly petrified. Speechless, they stood before what seemed to them a fairy-tale palace; only after a few minutes did the cry of admiration of every Negro emerge, short and staccato: “Ah, ah, ah!”

And those fields all around! Cultivated expanses so vast and continuous we have scarcely seen east of the Mbam, except near Tibati, where each person cultivates his own little field. Here, as at home, it is in the countryside, on large and small farms, that food for the great town is produced; for in Fumban twenty thousand people want to eat every day, and the fields and plantain groves within the town limits are far from sufficient. The immense markets, where thousands of people gather twice a week, provide for exchange. Familiar as this may seem to us Europeans, I nevertheless feel there is something unhealthy about these conditions for Africa; and indeed, the concentration of such a large part of the population in one place is merely a remnant of the wars waged against the Fulani for generations.

Fumban, December 20, 1912

Bamum truly crowns everything! Once again we are as though spellbound by the indescribable charm of this town, great and full of life through the strength and will of the Negroes alone, and which thus produces such a complete impression of unity and cohesion. Here, the Negro chief is the prince and master

A Dji's Compound

of the country; the white man is a highly honored guest, no more and no less.

From the point of view of this unity, it is fortunate that the agricultural station at Kuti lies a day's march from here, and that the official who represents the German government in Bamum there also comes here only on visits of a few days. The military station at Bamenda is five days' march away. So much the better! For soldiers drilling, their often insolent bearing, the vermin of soldiers' wives and boys would be intolerable here.

Njoja has once again had surprises in store for us; the ever-alert mind of this remarkable Negro continually creates something new and thus encourages the many inhabitants around him to imitate him. Recently he established small livestock farms all around the outskirts of the town, near the ditch, where various animals are raised and tended with an attention quite unheard of among natives. Here, a yard where only chickens are raised; another for goats; one for sheep; one for pigs. He has, however, abandoned his earlier attempts at cattle breeding, which had little success because the Bamum know little of this branch of animal husbandry. He entrusted his herd to the agricultural station at Kuti so that his herdsmen could learn there how to care for cattle.

And his latest real achievement is the creation of a large weaving and dyeing workshop of his own. “I do not want my people sitting here doing nothing and drinking mimbo; I teach them to work.”

Yesterday, immediately after our arrival, Franz went to see

New Surprises in Fumban

Njoja; toward evening the chief paid me a visit; the hour spent conversing with this truly intelligent and distinguished man was once again a real pleasure. We now also have confirmation from his own lips that his ancestors came here from the Tikar town of Bamkin, accompanied by very few people; that they made themselves masters of the inhabitants of the country and, after two generations, adopted their language and their way of building houses; on the other hand, they brought cotton growing, weaving, and the art of bronze casting from Tikar country, which they raised here to ever greater perfection. Thus even here, in darkest Africa, the fact is confirmed that the blending of two well-developed cultures leads to the highest achievement, the finest flowering.

Bamengang, December 26, 1912

Bamum is behind us, with its colorful splendor and ever-new impressions. I shall never forget the last day, when Njoja showed us his weaving workshop: in a large open hall stand two long rows of a good fifty of those small, primitive looms, where threads are stretched between a few sticks and raised or lowered by another stick so as to cross. Bent forward over their work, the weavers move the little sticks and pass their spindles slowly and carefully from one side to the other, to form patterns with the white and colored threads, all of which Njoja has designed himself. Each weaver spends seven months apprenticed to the chief, who has almost reinvented the loom and the weaving technique forgotten by the Bamum. Everything the pupil produces during this time belongs to Njoja. Then he returns to his village and works on his own

Weaving in Bamum



Bamum weaving workshop.

Plate 15

account. As among the Hausa, the woven cloth consists of strips ten centimeters wide, which are then sewn together to form large pieces. To see Njoja walking through the weaving hall, his intelligent head above his powerful figure draped in the ample Hausa costume, to hear him address a word to each worker, praise, reprimand, order one to stretch his threads tighter, send another off to wash his hands, kindly acknowledge a third's faultless execution of a difficult pattern: it was truly wonderful.

He is now constructing deep dye pits; one is finished; if the blue indigo dyeing succeeds in it, he will have several others dug for five other dyes he knows how to make. “Why should my people wear cloth from the trading post and the Hausa, when they can make it themselves? Cotton grows here, and soon we shall know how to give it colors as beautiful as those of the cloth brought by the white man.”

Last year he established a new country estate of two hundred hectares. Five hundred workers cleared and cultivate the fields, and Njoja—pays these workers in cash! A Negro chief who pays his farm workers! It seems so incredible that I should certainly doubt it if I had not learned it from an absolutely reliable source. For the past fortnight, trade using the miserable cowries, a hundred of which counted as ten pfennigs, has been forbidden at the great Bamum market; the market tschindas confiscate them mercilessly. To replace them, Njoja has had sacks of copper coins brought in and established an exchange office in his palace

A Modern Negro Prince

where everyone can exchange his silver and nickel money for these small coins. And the cowries? “My people take them to those fools in the bush of Bansso and Babessi; they exchange them for sheep and goats, paying very generously so that everyone will accept the cowries.”

If the railway is extended as far as Bamum, he is quite willing to provide many workers, provided it reaches his country quickly and he no longer has to supply so many porters. For the porter question is truly serious for Bamum, and causes Njoja much trouble. The men simply throw their loads onto the path and run off in whole groups. It is almost a miracle that we have come this far. We have already had to leave the tent behind—since there are rest houses here, that causes no real difficulty—and all the reserve porters are carrying full loads. Even so, this would not suffice if each stopping place did not supply a few additional men.

But at bottom one cannot blame the porters very much for running away: the stages fixed by the station are very long, and the food provided at the rest houses is scarce and bad. Where are the enormous steaming loaves of fufu, the dishes of vegetables, fish, even meat, from the country east of the Mbam, and especially Tikar country? Here one is given raw sweet potatoes or cooking bananas, without even wood to roast them: after the march, the tired men must go and find it themselves! And for each of these miserable daily rations, sometimes consisting of only eight to ten cooking bananas or three pounds of potatoes, twenty pfennigs are demanded.

Despite their enormous length and

Poor Food Supplies

the great exertions they required, our marches have been magnificent! On the first day we reached Kuti, the government's experimental agricultural station, by noon, where experiments are chiefly conducted on cotton. Its director showed us all the installations, which have developed well in a year. The station now has ninety hectares under cultivation; seven are sown with cotton of many different varieties, at different seasons; the rest bears other plants, for it was quickly discovered that previously cultivated land is more favorable to cotton than virgin soil. For each crop, careful trials are carried out with different methods of fertilization, different sowing dates, cultivation on ridges, in beds, and on level ground. It was truly a pleasure to see how work is done here, and the afternoon and evening spent with the gentlemen of the experimental station were wonderful.

Then came a long march toward the Nun, the boundary of Bamum. The path led us between the fabulous volcanic formations of Bapit and Nkogam, whose shapes, so abrupt as a whole yet so gentle and flowing in their finer lines, almost overwhelmed us with their beauty after the granite massifs of such a different character east of the Mbam. Crossing the Nun on very original boat-shaped raffia rafts took a great deal of time, for our caravan now numbers more than a hundred people.

The route between the Nun and Bagam is entirely deserted; just one village of recalcitrant people from Galim, forcibly settled there, lies along the broadly cleared road; everywhere else there are only gentle undulations as far as the eye can see, covered in gray-yellow grass, strongly winding streams almost entirely without a fringe of trees

The Cotton Experimental Station at Kuti

or raffia thickets, and a few pointed summits above the uniform height of the ridges; the soil is basaltic, dark red, and covered with a thick layer of fine dust that rises in clouds, gets into eyes, nose, and mouth, and which we have never found in regions with granite subsoil.

After this grand but sad solitude, the Bagam region was a revelation. As far as the eye can see, the country is a fertile, cultivated garden. Field follows field, each enclosed by a hedge of living trees; immense banana plantations stretch out; every hollow is filled with the gray-blue of raffia thickets; and everywhere houses, more houses, thousands no doubt! Since then it has continued in this way: always one richly cultivated region beside another. At most the path once passes through grass for a quarter of an hour; then the fields, trees, and numerous little huts are back again. It is the most densely inhabited and cultivated country we have seen. The soil is so well used that the people have given up burning the grass to avoid destroying their fields; they dig it in with hoes and thus make the soil more productive than it could ever become through the addition of ashes. The villagers are almost naked. A small loincloth on the men, with a saber or a dagger-knife, makes up their entire clothing. The women wear only a string around their hips. All are prettily painted with redwood.

Tomorrow we shall reach Dschang, where a hundred and twenty porters await us to continue the march immediately. On the last day of 1912 we shall reach the railway at Nkongsamba.

Rich Gardens after the Deserted Steppe





The author.

Caravan of porters.

Plate 16

Melong rest house, December 30, 1912

The last evening of the expedition, the last rest house, for the last time the fires and fantastic dances of our porters. The rich Dschang country, where the administration accomplishes great things; the jagged mountains bordering the plateau, with their roaring waterfalls, their black-green forest, and their immense rock formations; the descent and the Mbo grass plain, flat as a table: all this lies behind us. Behind us too are the enormous marches by which we covered this long distance. Tomorrow at noon the expedition will be over when we reach the railway.

Today we are once again living in the mat-covered African house, and, in farewell, this country shows itself to us in all its splendor. Since leaving the level surface of the Mbo plain, where the shallowly incised watercourses flow slowly at little depth, and reaching the ends of the Manenguba lava flows, we have walked through a palm forest, now open, now closed. I did not remember it this way from our outward march a year ago: those thousands upon thousands of tall, slender trunks bearing round, waving crowns; as far as the eye reaches the palm landscape extends. Tall yellowish grass, or dense, tangled undergrowth with impenetrable masses of leaves, fills its depths. The palm itself dominates everything and asserts its presence. Behind it rises, all light and vaporous, the mighty silhouette of Manenguba.

Duala, January 7, 1913

Can anyone at home even imagine the effect when people who have wandered for more than thirteen months in the wilderness suddenly see, in the middle of a

The Last Evening of the Expedition

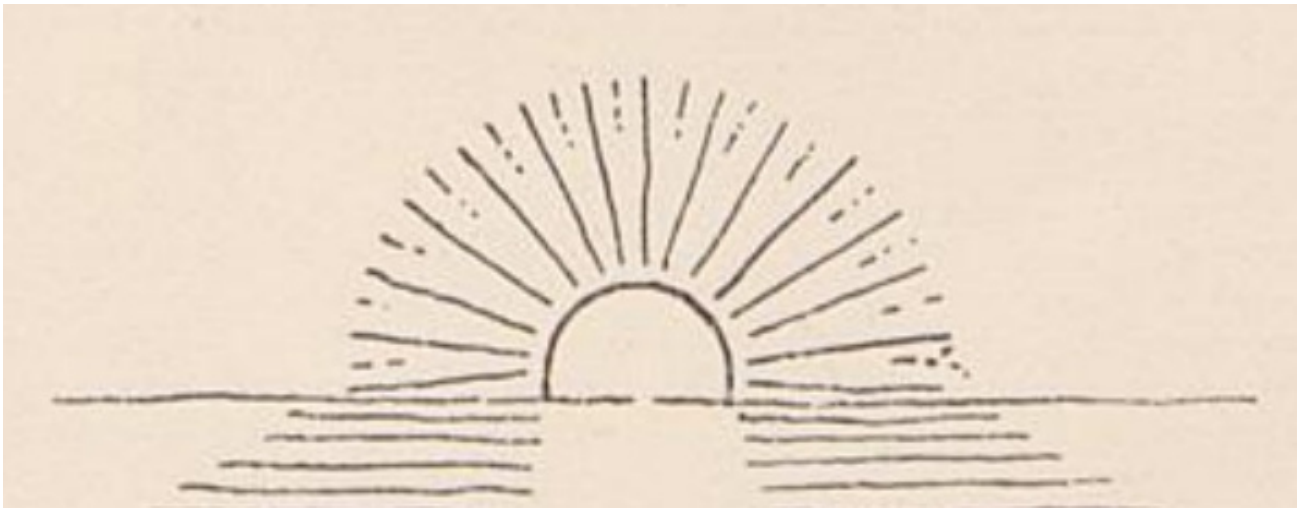
Negro village, a large sign painted white with a black inscription, exactly as in old Germany, in a pleasure garden where coffee is served, on which one can read in fine large letters: “To the Station”! How we laughed and laughed! It was irresistibly comic, that sign among the little mat houses, the palms, and the banana plants. And then the railway, the telegraph, the telephone, and four black railway employees speaking German, who offered us a serenade in the evening in the hope of a tip: “Germany, Germany above all”! The best part was watching our people when the train arrived. First that curious joy, then astonishment that takes their breath away entirely, and finally this observation: “The German is a dangerous thing.”[1]

Traveling by railway is strange when one has done nothing but walk for so long; in the passing landscape, one sees everything so clearly, without incidental details, because one thing develops so quickly and logically out of another. But this requires extremely sustained attention; if one thinks of something else even for a brief moment, one quickly loses the thread, and while still trying to recall one link, the next has already passed unnoticed. How clearly, though, one saw and felt during this descent the gradual slipping into ever heavier, darker primeval forest, into ever-increasing humid heat! Afterward, the broad expanse of the Mungo seemed cool and pleasant beneath the afternoon sea breeze.

The European comforts of Duala seem unheard-of to us savages from the bush. How large and magnificently furnished the houses are! People are so elegantly dressed,

1 “The German is a dangerous thing.”

“To the Station”



so civilized in their conversation! Tables are laid as in princes' houses, with china, glasses, several knives and forks; and food and drinks cooled with ice! With our expedition habits, we feel shamefully uncouth amid all this culture.

And yet! Now that I know the free and wonderful life in the wilderness, I would not want to live here on the Europeanized coast. Of Africa one has here only the unpleasant sides: the dreadful heat, the danger of malaria, housing and food conditions poor in comparison with Germany. What is beautiful about it—the freedom of life in the great outdoors, the daily observation of new and interesting things—is missing here. In exchange, one enjoys all the bad sides of a small town at home. One must forgo intellectual stimulation, true culture. Now that I know the great freedom of traveling on foot, I must either remain in Europe or go right out into the wilderness.

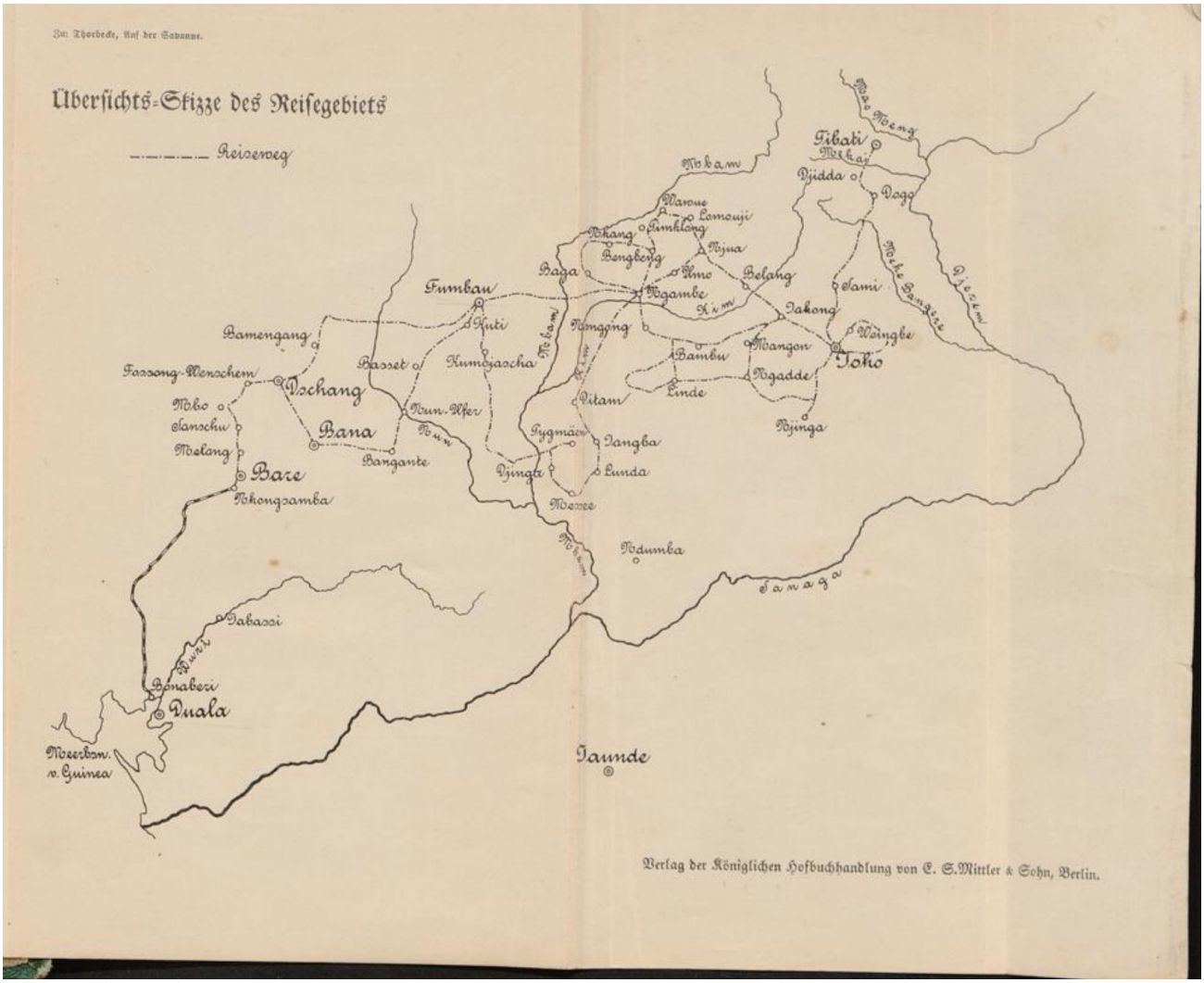
On the high seas, January 17, 1913

The fresh, vigorous trade wind has caught us; although sky and sea are gray and leaden in the harmattan haze, the stifling, oppressive heaviness has vanished. And with it we have also overcome the pain that bidding farewell to the hot, ardent country had caused us. Now we are moving toward a new life.

Our ship advances powerfully; the miles slip beneath us. It is beautiful, wonderfully beautiful, this feeling of coming closer to home with every hour.

Farewell

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Overview Sketch of the Region Traveled

Map accompanying Thorbecke, In the Savanna.

Place names and watercourse names retain their original spelling on the map. The descriptive labels translate as follows:

Label on the map | English translation

Reiseweg | Travel route, indicated by the mixed dashed line

Nun-Ufer | Bank of the Nun

Pygmäen | Pygmies

Meerbus. v. Guinea | Gulf of Guinea

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Map

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