The Land of the Ekoi, Southern Nigeria: Discussion

Author(s): A. B. Rendle, S. F. Harmer, John Parkinson, Colonel Close and P. A. Talbot

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 6 (Dec., 1910), pp. 654-657

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1776837>

Accessed: 20-05-2016 01:05 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Geographical Journal*

some hill, in the course of one of those frequent journeys necessary for the maintenance of law and order, or when one stands at the theodolite, a prey to the million and one sandflies and mosquitoes, which seem determined to leave no pin-point space of face or hands unmarked. The thunderstorms here, too, are among the worst in the world, and the rainfall, according to carefully taken meteorological observations, shows about 150 inches in the year. The thermometric observations unfortunately were brought to an abrupt end, as the maximum and minimum thermometer was struck by lightning.

Altogether, though Government has done wonders as regards improved drainage, etc., many years and an enormous expenditure will be necessary before the country can become habitable for white men, for more than short terms of service. Even on the strongest, the strain of the climate begins to tell severely after a year.

The PRESIDENT (before the papers): Our first paper to-night is by Major Whitlock of the Royal Engineers. Major Whitlock has had great experience in boundary work in West Africa, the journey he is going to describe to-night being his third expedition. As British Commissioner for the delimitation of the boundary between English and German spheres of influence, which runs from the Cross river to Yola, he had to pass through a great deal of country which had never before been traversed by a white man, and this he will describe to us to-night.

The PRESIDENT (before Mr. Talbot's paper): The next paper deals with a district not far from that which we have just heard about, but somewhat nearer the sea. Mr. Talbot has also had great experience in West Africa. After leaving Oxford, he was employed in connection with the Liberian boundary. After that he took part in the Alexander-Gosling expedition, surveying up to Lake Chad. On returning home he took the Diploma of our Society, and we therefore look on him as one of our pupils. Since then he has been employed in the Government service in Southern Nigeria, which has given him an opportunity of studying a little-known district, and of it he has made ample use both with regard to its topography, its inhabitants, its flora, and its fauna.

Dr. A. B. RENDLE: I listened with very great pleasure to Mr. Talbot's paper on Southern Nigeria. My special interest in the paper is botanical, and I should like, if I may, to congratulate Mr. Talbot and Mrs. Talbot on their success in collecting in this wonderful fertile region. Mr. Talbot's slides have given us some idea of the luxuriance of the vegetation. It is evidently a botanist's paradise, and a look at the beautiful drawings which Mrs. Talbot has made will bring that home to us still more. Of course, this portion of Southern Nigeria is, botanically speaking, a piece of the Cameroons. The Germans have been doing some excellent botanical work in the Cameroons. It has proved a wonderfully rich region; they have brought home many new and interesting plants, and we are extremely glad to find that Mr. Talbot is beginning to do the same from Southern Nigeria. It is a little unfortunate that some of his specimens came to grief, but from those that remain, and from the very beautiful drawings, we can see that we have here a rich botanical province, and we shall look forward eagerly to the next expedition which Mr. Talbot has in view, and hope that when he comes home again he will bring back a still richer botanical harvest.

Dr. S. F. HARMER: I have much pleasure in saying a word or two with regard to the zoological collections. It is very refreshing to those of us who live in the

atmosphere of a museum to have brought home to us some indication of the mode of life of animals which we can hardly guess from the inspection of their dried skins. The time has gone by when it was possible for a man to bring home a collection from a new part of the world, with the expectation that every specimen he obtained might belong to a new species. The surface of the world has now been too well explored zoologically for that. But Mr. Talbot has succeeded in getting together a very interesting collection, which he has been so kind as to present to the Natural History Museum. Among the more interesting specimens of mammals there is a new species of *Galago*, which is an animal belonging to the Lemuroidea. It has a special interest, I think, for the Royal Geographical Society, as theories of a far-reaching nature have been made to depend upon the present geographical distribution of the lemurs. They have their headquarters in Madagascar; but they occur in the East Indian region and in Africa, particularly in the forest regions of West Africa. In South Africa one of the species of *Galago* is known as the "Bush Baby," from the noises which it makes in the bush.

Mr. Talbot's collection further contains two species of the interesting genus *Anomalurus*—"flying" squirrels which have a parachute-like extension of the skin, by which they can glide from one tree to another. There are also one or two small mice and forms of mongoose, and other interesting mammals. Among the birds there is a rare species of Weaver-bird, which has some interest for us because Mr. Talbot has just told us that these birds have a special sanctity to the inhabitants of the district. There is always a certain charm about animals which are larger than anything that has been known before, and I am glad to be able to inform you that one of the specially interesting animals brought back is an extremely large specimen of millipede, which appears to surpass the previous records. Most of us are familiar with the small forms of this group which we have in this country, and are prepared to admire a millipede which is nearly a foot in length! I believe the actual specimen is on exhibition here to-night. There is one point in Mr. Talbot's remarks with which I venture to disagree, although perhaps this remark would have come more properly from Dr. Rendle. Mr. Talbot alluded to "so small a matter as a botany collection," and I imagine he would have extended that remark to zoological collections as well. I venture to think that the exploration of the flora and fauna of a country is at least as important as any other object, and I believe that if all travellers who have Mr. Talbot's opportunities were to make equally good use of them, and to bring back specimens as he has done, the interests of zoological science would be greatly advanced.

MR. JOHN PARKINSON: It is some time since I was in the Ekoi country, and one of the things that struck me very much is the great change that has taken place in such a comparatively short time as seven years. In 1903 there were no rest-houses except one at Uwet. The roads were not like those Mr. Talbot described and illustrated by the very excellent photographs he has shown to-night; when I was there only bush tracks, often rough and overgrown, existed. One or two points about which I should like to ask Mr. Talbot have occurred to me, and the first is concerning the origin of the Ekoi. I was at some pains to form a small vocabulary of the language, and I compared the words it contained with their counterparts in Efik, and various dialects of Efik, and I found there was an absolute difference between them. Perhaps had I gone far enough into the subject I might have traced some relationship more or less important; but as it was, even in the commonest things the words were entirely different. I believe Mr. Talbot said something about migrating over the Kamerun frontier. I should like to know more about that. Mr. Talbot told us a good deal about the society called Egbo, but said nothing about the society called Idiong. I thought when I was in that country

that Idiong was a secret society perhaps still older than that of Egbo, and was under the impression that Egbo originated in the Calabar district and spread north, being gradually dispersed over the hill country. No doubt, Egbo, as we know it, is a very mutilated thing, shorn of many of its barbaric rites and ordinances, now differing greatly from its original form. Mr. Talbot mentioned something about totemism. I think, in connection with this, that the belief in the existence of a bush-soul is of interest. When I was in Calabar, I was told that a man having a "leopard-bush soul," i.e. a soul or spiritual counterpart resident in a particular leopard inhabiting a particular district, only married a "leopard bush-soul" woman. This is to me very interesting, and I would most gladly welcome any additional information, for I am sure that as European civilization spreads—and it spreads with an astonishing rapidity—the clearness of the native beliefs will become blurred and at last lost. The importance of collecting details as soon as possible cannot be overestimated.

Colonel CLOSE: First of all, I think it is perfectly certain that we ought not to have two important papers like these on one evening. Dealing first with Major Whitlock's paper, the commission which he was in charge of, so far as the British side is concerned, was a very important Commission, for several reasons. First of all, it passed through an unknown tract of country; secondly, it was certain that the commissioners would meet with opposition—that is why they were given such large escorts when they got down to the south; then the third and most important point is that it is the last of the West African Commissions. We have to-night got to the very end of that great series of boundary commissions which have been going on for the last twenty years. Any future boundary commissions will be matters of small rectification of frontier along existing boundaries. Major Whitlock's commission carried out its work admirably, and I am sure it must be a satisfaction to all of us to know that Major Whitlock and Captain von Stephani found it so easy to work together. We have had no less than eight Anglo-German boundary commissions at work, and not in one single case has there been any difficulty; the officers of both parties have got on admirably together always. As regards the other region, I was out there fifteen years ago, and I notice a considerable difference in the spelling of the names. Fifteen years ago the only people who knew anything about Oban were the missionaries. The traders and the officials in those days rarely went inland: Oban is quite a short distance from Calabar. A small expedition was sent in 1895, and approximately fixed its position.

The PRESIDENT: I am quite sure I am echoing the sentiment of every one here present when I say how pleasant it is to hear Major Whitlock speak of the way in which the Germans came to our assistance in a time of danger. It is quite obvious from the paper that it is an admirable bit of work which Major Whitlock has performed, and I cannot but feel a certain sorrow that no more boundaries remain to be surveyed, because this seems to be an excellent method of obtaining really good triangulation work in Africa. As to Mr. Talbot, he has given us an extraordinarily picturesque account of a very picturesque country. He is going back to Nigeria, where much remains to be done. I hope he will be again accompanied by Mrs. Talbot, and she will give us some more admirable drawings of the flowers of the district. I am sure I may, in your name, give a hearty vote of thanks to both the lecturers, each of whom ought to have had an evening to himself had it been possible.

Mr. TALBOT: With regard to what Mr. Parkinson said, the Ekoi themselves have no traditions about their origin, but, so far as I can make out, they must have come down from an open country, probably somewhere in the Sudan. As to the question of Egbo societies, the Ekoi stoutly protest that they originated the clubs

themselves. Of course, one can never believe what they say without confirmation, but the folk-lore also seemed to point to this fact. Idiong, the practice of divination, struck me as being quite subsidiary to the other forms of religion, but it is very difficult to find out much about their exact relations. As regards Colonel Close's remarks about the spelling of names, for instance, Ekkonnanakku, perhaps I may be allowed to say that I took very great trouble to spell every word according to the rules of the Geographical Society, but it is quite possible that the natives have put on an extra syllable lately, as they are accustomed to do that sort of thing.

THE BURIAL OF OLYMPIA.*

A STUDY IN CLIMATE AND HISTORY.

By ELLSWORTH HUNTINGTON.

CAN this be Greece? we asked ourselves. Can it be that Attica is so utterly barren? The waves of a sparkling sea lapped against a beachless shore of pale grey limestone, as treeless and bare as the Pyramids. At the top of the cliffs there stood out, white and clear against the cloudless sky, an exquisite group of marble columns, a ruined shrine of the God of the Sea. It was Sunium, the outpost of Attica eastward. Near it we passed bare islands, and a bay where a full-winged sail-boat had left the cliffs astern and was coasting along a pebbly beach backed by a slope of brown fields, darkly dotted with olives up to the foot of inhospitable naked hills. This, we told ourselves, is more typical than Sunium, for here we have the tree of Minerva, and one of the bays which made the old Greeks masters of the sea. A few hours later we came within sight of Athens. When we had picked out Mount Lycabettus, and below it the Acropolis with its wealth of columns, we knew that this was the real Greece of the gods and heroes. Yet we were not satisfied, either then or later. The modern Piræus is ugly; the drive to the capital, past little wine-shops, big factories, and discouraged, dusty gardens, is tiresome; and the Athens of to-day does not differ notably from a hundred other modern European cities.

Only the Acropolis and its environs are satisfying. Among the crooked streets at the northern base of the famous hill the uninspiring vistas of the modern city are relieved by bits of real antiquity preserved in stone, or are varied by tantalizing hints of the real life of the people. There in mid-September almost every block was enlivened by women in wrappers bickering with pedlars, whose droop-eared donkeys bore paniers full of green things from the country, or of beautiful grapes, some big and blue, some round and green, and others small, plump, rosy, like the fingers of a child. The Acropolis itself is as fascinating as one's dreams. The scenery seaward is charming, in its mixture of smooth water and irregular islands and mountains; but landward the view is

* Research Department, May 26, 1910.