

German and Portuguese colonial ambitions as mirrored in early pictorial documents from the Kavango area

Andreas E. Eckl

Introduction

Five Bantu tribes were settled along the Kavango River which, after a bilateral agreement between the colonial powers in 1886, formed the border between Portuguese Angola and German South West Africa: Kwangali, Mbunza, Gciriku, Sambyu and Mbukushu. The distinguishing character of these groups lay not so much in their culture, language or history, as in their autonomous political organisations on the basis of clearly delimited territories. They were ruled by a *Hompa*, or *Fumu*, who was chosen from a royal dynasty and reigned for life.

Only very few photographs, dating from the earliest days of the colonisation of Namibia, allow us a glimpse into the past of the Kavango area of today. Photography was a costly, complicated, technically demanding medium of representation and poorly suited to travel in Africa. The plates and films had to be brought from Europe, stored at cool temperatures, and could as a rule only be processed back in Europe. Yet these problems still do not adequately explain the scarcity of material from the Kavango area, especially compared with other parts of the erstwhile German South West Africa. Precisely because photography was a demanding medium, it was used to document only what was felt to be especially important or significant. Thus, the small number of photographs is also an index of the relatively marginal interest taken in that area within the colonial discourse.¹ This was mainly due to the Kavango being a peripheral area far north of the Protectorate, and its small population of between 7 000 and 8 000 which, until 1909, was settled exclusively on the Portuguese side of the river.² Moreover, the area was not easily accessible, and promised little in the way of profitable extraction of natural resources. Neither integration into the colonial economy of German South West Africa nor development of the land for settlement by white farmers was thought feasible because of its remoteness and unwholesome climate. The actual economic worth of the area was seen as negligible, and interest in it was correspondingly minimal. Thus, the political efforts of the German colonial administration were aimed primarily at overcoming its isolation from the centre of the Protectorate, and so to make the areas bordering the river accessible to colonial measures.³

On the one hand, the handful of photographs bears witness to the marginal significance of the Kavango area in the context of German South West Africa; on the other, they document a number of aspects which were felt to be significant within the area. The photographs were taken by Europeans; their subjects are African. They exemplify European ways of seeing Africans and, thus, permit conclusions to be drawn regarding the photographers' colonial self-understanding through their choice of motifs

¹ More photographs were certainly taken than still exist. Those that are known have usually been reproduced in publications. Naturally, the same criteria governed the selection of images for publication as had been applied in taking the original images. Portuguese, German and English spellings of ethnonyms had not been codified at the time when the sources used for this article were generated; this is reflected in this article. For example *Kandjimi* = *Kandjimbi* = *Kanyemi*, and *Kubango* = *Okavango*.

² BArchB-R 1001/1784: 61, Volkmann, *Bericht über eine Reise nach Andara am Okavango*, Grootfontein, 1.10.1903.

³ For an extensive study on the German colonial policy with regard to the region bordering the Kavango, see Andreas E. Eckl, "Konfrontation und Kooperation am Kavango (Nord-Namibia) von 1891 bis 1921", unpubl. dissertation, Cologne, University of Cologne, 2003.

and the presentation of the material. Photographs (literally, "light-written" images) are not accidental productions. Beyond serving purposes of illustration, they also convey – just like written texts – specific witness and messages which need to be deconstructed in order that the images may be fully 'read' and interpreted as historical sources. Pictorial documents, therefore, require internal and external analysis as sources. Treated and used in this way, photographic images can attain a value for a region and its inhabitants as historical sources, which goes far beyond their mere representational and illustrative interest.

The pictures reproduced below are confined to examples from the Kwangali, Gciriku and Mbukushu communities. They do not form a random selection, but represent the priorities set by the colonial photographers themselves. An important factor determining the colonial evaluation of individual cultural communities was the military-geographical location of their traditional territory. Thus, it was the position of the entrance to the then Caprivi "Strip" that bordered on the three territories claimed by the rival colonial powers Portugal, England and Germany that caused the German colonial administrators to focus intensely on the Mbukushu people. Only when the north bank of the Kavango River was occupied by the Portuguese and the main fort Cuangar established in Kwangali territory did the centre of interest for the German political administration move correspondingly. Thus, First Lieutenant Fischer could then refer to the Kwangali as the mightiest tribe along the Kavango.⁴ By contrast, the Mbunza people were regarded as insignificant – as may be inferred from the fact that First Lieutenant Zawada subsumed them under the descriptive title *Owakwangari*, and 'allowed' them no autonomous status.⁵

This colonial political perspective may explain why German officials appear to have photographed only Kwangali and Mbukushu subjects, whereas the Gciriku were photographed by German Catholic missionaries who had founded their first permanent station along the Kavango among them. There are no express photographic records of the Mbunza dating from the early colonial days, and none of the Sambyu who, in 1909, were forced to leave their settlements along the river and seek refuge in the Angolan hinterland. Another reason for the absence of photographic portraits of Mbunza and Sambyu *Hompa* may be sought in the fact that the colonial officials found the modes of governance of these two communities difficult to understand. Since at least 1880, the *Hompa* of the Mbunza had been Kapango, described in 1890 by the Portuguese officer Paiva Couceiro as a very old woman.⁶ The date of her death is not known; according to First Lieutenant Volkmann she had died three years prior to his visit in 1901, leaving three sons: Hausiku, Nampadi and Karupu.⁷ Her successor was her eldest son Hausiku, but Nampadi and Karupu were also very influential politically. After Hausiku's death, Nampadi succeeded him as *Hompa*. Hausiku's date of death is also not known, but it must lie between 1901 and 1903.⁸ *Hompa* Karupu seized the title by force by killing Nampadi in 1909 with the support of Kandjimi Hauwanga, a junior *Hompa* of the Kwangali.⁹ *Hompa* Karupu died on 16 October 1923.¹⁰

Until 1874, Kandimba reigned as *Hompa* of the Sambyu. After her death the title was shared by her sons Mbambangandu, Chiabe and Kanyetu, with Mbambangandu occupying the senior position. The youngest son, Kanyetu, was murdered at *Hompa* Nyangana's instigation in 1894; *Hompa* Mbambangandu died

4 NAN-ZBU VII.h, Fischer, no date, translation AE.

5 NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4. (Vol. 3): 158 B, Zawada, *Der Okawango von der portugiesischen Grenze bis Oshoffue. Die Okawangari und ihr Land*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909: "On this part of the Okawango live the Okwangari, consisting of the western tribe of the Kuangari and the eastern tribe of the Bunja". (translation AE).

6 Henrique de Paiva Couceiro, *Relatorio de Viagem entre Bailundo e as Terras do Mucusso*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1892: 142. The report by Henrique de Paiva Couceiro is one of the earliest documents of a journey through the whole region around the Okavango River. No photographs are reproduced in his book.

7 NAN-BGR F.9.b, Volkmann – Kaiserlicher Gouverneur, Grootfontein, 8.7.1901. According to Leutwein, who was citing Volkmann, Kapanga had died two years prior to Volkmann's visit, cf. Theodor Leutwein, *Elf Jahre Gouverneur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Berlin, Mittler, 1906: 183.

8 NAN-BGR F.9.b, Volkmann – Kaiserlicher Gouverneur, Grootfontein, 8.7.1901. The Mbunza *Hompa* in 1903 was Nampadi. Two years earlier Hausiku was still alive. Volkmann reported the following in 1901: "Three sons reign at present, who live an hour away from each other" (translation AE).

9 Josef Wüst, "Der erste Gründungsversuch der katholischen Mission am Okawango 1903", unpubl. manuscript, 1941: 2; Romanus Kampungu, "Okavango marriage customs investigated in the light of ecclesiastical legislation", unpubl. dissertation, Rom, Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana de Propaganda Fide, 1965: 222; Axel Fleisch/Wilhelm J.G. Möhlig, *The Kavango peoples in the past. Local historiographies from Northern Namibia*, Köln, R. Köppe, 2002: 291f.

10 NAN-SWAA A 460/19, Vol. 1, Dickmann – Secretary for SWA, Kuring-Kuru, 19.10.1923.

in exile in 1912, after the flight of the Sambyu from the Portuguese. He was succeeded in 1915 by Ndango, who died at the end of November 1925.¹¹

Kwangali photographs

No photographs exist of the first European travellers, hunters and adventurers – such as Frederick Green, Charles J. Andersson, Aurel Schulz or Henrique de Paiva Couceiro – whose travels had, from the middle of the 19th century onwards, brought them to the shores of the Kavango.¹² The first photograph (Photo 1) was taken by the explorer H. Baum, a member of an expedition sponsored by the German Committee for the Colonial Economy to determine the economic potential of southern Angola. The photograph was taken at the end of November, and is the oldest known portrait of a Kavango *Hompa*. It shows the Kwangali royal family, with *Hompa* Himarwa in the centre, one of his wives to his right, and his nephew Kandjimi Hauwanga to his left.¹³

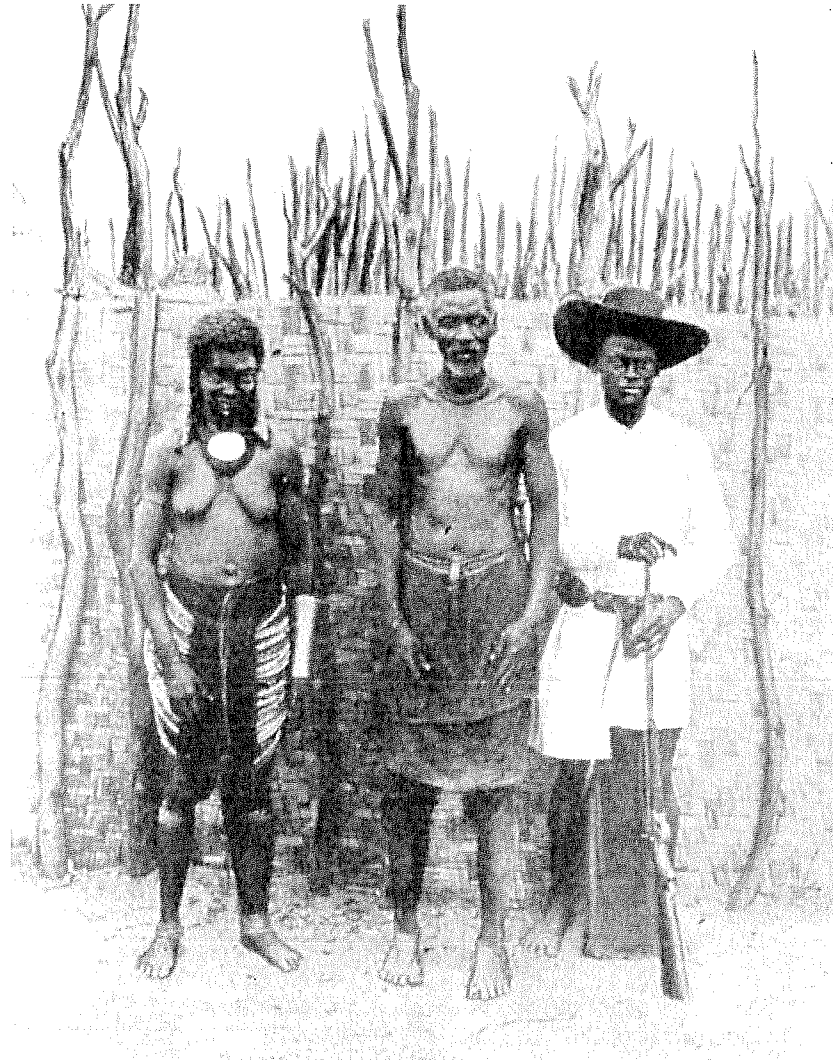


Photo 1: "Königsfamilie der Kuangari" ("The Kwangali/Kwangari royal family").
(H. Baum, *Kunene-Sambesi-Expedition*, Berlin, Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee, 1903: 68)

11 Fleisch/Möhlig, *Kavango*: 144f, 163; NAN-SWAA A 460/19, Vol. 1, Carr – Native Commissioner Windhoek, 3.1.1926. Maria Fisch, "History of the female chiefs of the Shambyu tribe (Kavangoland)", *Namibia Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, Journal* 47/1999: 113.

12 Charles J. Andersson, *The Okavango River: A narrative of travel, exploration, and adventure*, London, Hurst & Blackett, 1861; Frederick Green, "Narrative of an expedition to the north-west of Lake Ngami", *Eastern Province monthly magazine*, 1/1857: 252-257, 316-323, 385-392, 533-543, 595-601, 661-669; Aurel Schulz, "Erforschung der Chobe- und Cubango-Flüsse", *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, XII/1885: 378-387; de Paiva Couceiro, *Relatorio*; for a review of early colonial European travellers along the Okavango River, see also Gordon D. Gibson, "General features", in Gordon D. Gibson/Thomas J. Larson/Cecilia R. McGurk (eds.), *The Kavango peoples*, Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1981: 24f.

13 Himarwa was the Kwangali *Hompa* since 1886 (Kampungu, *Okavango*: 342). The date of his death is unknown. He is mentioned for the last time in a report in July 1917 (NAN-ADM 243/3, Military Magistrate Grootfontein – Secretary for the Protectorate, Grootfontein, 25.7.1917, Vol. 2). See also Josef Gotthardt, *Auf zum Okavango*, Hünfeld, Maria Immaculata, 1927: 22: "He may be about 80 years of age, is small of stature and nearly blind ... He has a harem of eleven wives". (translation AE)

The scene is formally posed; it has not occurred in a natural context, but has clearly been deliberately planned and arranged in this manner. The royal family is presented in a row, like a photographic trophy. It has not only been focused by the camera, but has also become the target of future colonial measures, which Baum formulated as follows: "The Kuangari must without doubt be subjugated or expelled if the land along the Kubango [Kavango] is to be made accessible to German or Portuguese colonisation".¹⁴ Whereas *Hompa* Himarwa and his wife are wearing traditional garb (the shell signalling that she is a member of the royal family), Kandjimi displays his power and dignity by presenting himself with a rifle and wearing European clothes. This costume had been given to him by the expedition: "The younger Chief of the Kuangari was presented by us with a suit tailored in Paris, a wide-brimmed hat and a pair of shoes".¹⁵ Surprisingly enough, it was not the actual *Hompa*, Himarwa, who had been singled out for the gift but the very youthful heir apparent, Kandjimi, whom Baum already characterises as "the younger Chief". This shows a forward-looking attempt to gain influence on the future ruler; *Hompa* Himarwa was already considered too old and frail to count as a significant factor in colonial relations.

In this photograph *Hompa* Himarwa and his nephew Kandjimi present to us, side by side, the precolonial and colonial Africa, the latter signified by the rifle and the European dress. Such 'civilisation goods' were an important means of colonial infiltration. The first German colonial official to visit the Kwangali people in the year 1901 was the District Officer of Grootfontein, First Lieutenant Richard Volkmann, who notes the following in his report: "... they have long ago become used to commerce with whites and lament that the former great trading expeditions to them have ceased. A wish for missionaries was also frequently uttered".¹⁶

The desire for access to European trading goods was an important motivating factor when *Hompa* Himarwa consented to the founding of a mission station in 1902. However, when five Catholic evangelists arrived in 1903, his expectation that a supply of Europeans goods would thus be assured was unsatisfied, and the missionaries were summarily expelled. Volkmann put the blame on Kandjimi Hauwanga: "Himarua's change of mind is probably primarily connected to the return of a junior Chief, Kanyemi. [...] He is the real Chief, Himarua playing a wholly subsidiary role".¹⁷ On his own initiative, and without consulting the colonial administration, Volkmann launched a punitive action against *Hompa* Himarwa, during which his residence on the Portuguese side of the river was put under fire for a whole day. There is, however, no photographic record of either the ill-fated founding of the mission station, nor of the subsequent punitive action.

After an interval of several years, in 1908 another colonial official, First Lieutenant Fischer, visited the Kwangali. This meeting incidentally throws light on the practical importance of the body of colonial photographs of African rulers. Not least as a result of the colonial wars, the Kwangali were suspicious

14 Baum, *Kunene*: 66 (translation AE).

15 Ibid.: *Kunene*: 66 (translation AE).

16 NAN-BGR F.9.b, Volkmann – Kaiserliches Gouvernement, [Bericht] über eine Dienstreise in den nördlichen Teil des Distrikts, Grootfontein, 22.7.1901 (translation AE).

17 BArchB-R 1001/1784: 2, Volkmann – Gouvernement, Okahandya, 2.5.1903 (translation AE).

and showed considerable caution. Since there were no photographs in existence (the portrait group taken by Baum and published in 1903, was evidently not known to Fischer), it was possible for them to hoodwink Fischer with regard to the person of the *Hompa*. The negotiations were conducted with a certain Kandjimi, since – according to Fischer – “Himarua, a 70-year-old man, is only nominally in charge, the actual ruler being his slightly younger brother Kandjimbi”.¹⁸ However, Kandjimbi was not the brother but the nephew of *Hompa* Himarwa, and decidedly not “slightly younger” than an old man. In actual fact, another person had impersonated Kandjimi.¹⁹

A radical change overtook the colonial situation along the Kavango in mid-1909, when the Portuguese unexpectedly embarked on the erection of five forts along the river. At the beginning of 1908 João de Almeida had been appointed Governor of the southern Angolan district of Huila. On 1 August an expeditionary force of well over 500 men – 277 of them African soldiers – reached the territory of the Kwangali, and immediately launched the construction of a fort.²⁰ Within a mere two months a series of military posts was being established in the territory of each of the five Kavango tribes, each in the immediate vicinity of the respective *Hompa*'s residence. In a report published in 1912 de Almeida also documented these events photographically. Photo 2 shows work on Fort Cuangar.



Photo 2: “Trabalhos de fortificação no pôsto militar do Cuangar”
 (“Fortification work on the Cuangar military post”).
 (João de Almeida, *Sul d'Angola. Relatório de um Governo de Distrito (1908-1910)*,
 Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca Agência Geral das Colónias, Lisboa, 1912: 185)

18 NAN-BGR F.9.b, Fischer, *Bericht über eine vom 1. bis 28.12.1908 ausgeführte Erkundung des Gebietes zwischen Omuramba ua Ovambo und Okawango*, Namutoni, 15.1.1909, (translation AE).

19 A councillor of the *Hompa* by the name of Nakanjomba had identified himself as Kandjimi, cf. NAN-ZBU I.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 156f, Zawada, *Bericht über die Verhandlungen mit den Owakwangari*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909.

20 René Pélassier, “Campagnes militaires au Sud-Angola (1885-1915)”, *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 33/IX/1969: 91. The contingent comprised 16 officers, 19 non-commissioned officers, 166 European and 277 African troopers, as well as 60 auxiliaries.

A military presence as superior as that of the Portuguese was in no danger of being challenged by the Kwangali, and de Almeida could afford to indulge himself by building the fort without prior negotiation. Moreover, because of the manpower at his disposal in the expeditionary force, he was able to complete the work in a very short time, without having to call on help from the Kwangali. As the picture strongly suggests, none of the Kwangali took part in the construction work.

With the occupation of the Portuguese bank, the European colonial power struggle entered a new dynamic phase. The arrival of the Portuguese changed the Kavango area into a border between three rival colonising agents, and had a decisive impact on the options and strategies not only of the rulers in the area, but also on those of the German colonial power. The occupation by the Portuguese with their rigid and ruthless colonial politics was the first serious threat to the autonomy of the Kavango rulers and the self-determining lifestyle of the Kavango people. The majority of them reacted very swiftly by abandoning their homesteads and relocating to the opposite German side of the river.²¹ The German colonial power, on its part, reacted to the challenge presented by the Portuguese forts by establishing a police station in Kuring-Kuru, opposite Fort Cuangar, in June 1910. Photo 3 shows builders at work on Kuring-Kuru towards the end of 1910.

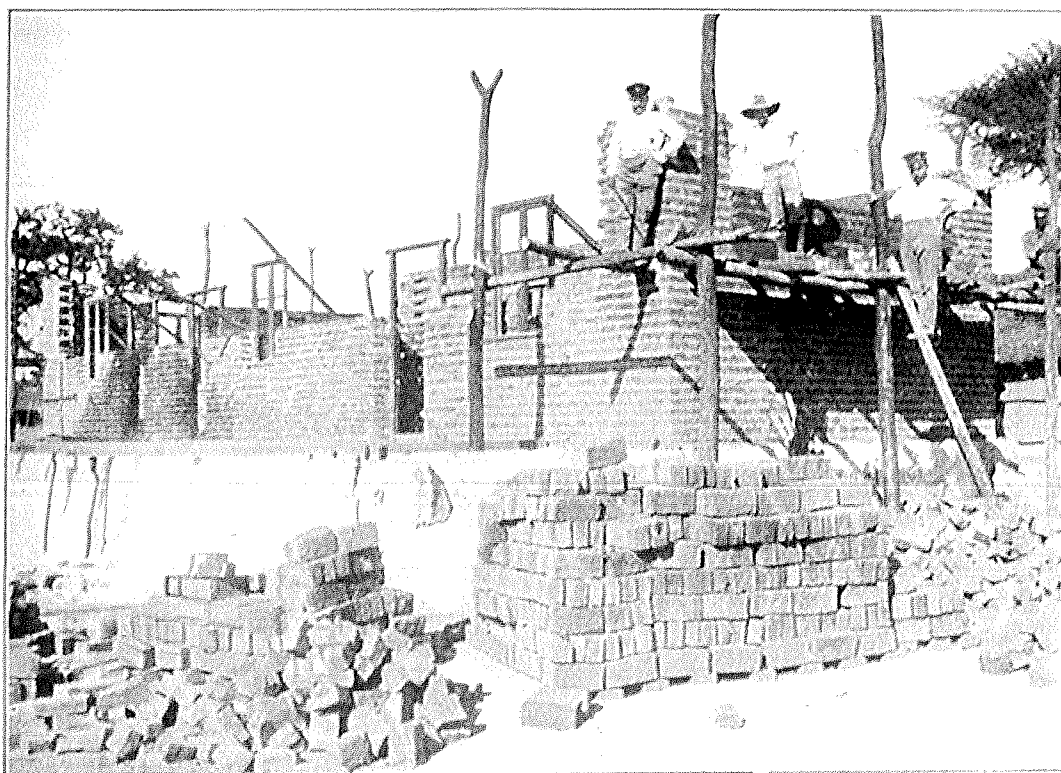


Photo 3: "Station Kuring-Kuru im Bau" ("Kuring-Kuru station under construction").
 (Hans Rafalski, *Vom Niemandsland zum Ordnungsstaat. Geschichte der ehemaligen Kaiserlichen Landespolizei für Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Berlin, E. Wernitz, 1930: 151)

21 João de Almeida, *Sul d'Angola. Relatório de um Governo de Distrito (1908-1910)*, Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca Agência Geral das Colónias, Lisboa, 1912: 189ff; NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 204f; Zawada, *Bericht über die Portugiesen am Okawango und die Verhandlungen mit ihnen* [am Okawango], 2.12.1909; BArchB-R 1001/2184: 26 B; Zawada, *Bericht über den Verlauf der Okawango-Expedition November 09, Namutoni, 12.12.1909*. Because of the suspected murder of European travellers, the Portuguese were planning punitive action against the Sambyu, which was also supported by the German colonial administration. The Sambyu, therefore, were barred from crossing to the right bank of the river, and saw themselves compelled to retreat into the Angolan interior beyond the reach of the Portuguese colonial forces.

Against this background of competitive manoeuvres in the interest of national prestige, the police station was intended to assert and confirm the German claim to colonial power vis-à-vis the Portuguese – but not against the Kavango population. To effectively pursue the latter, the German colonial administration lacked both the political will and a sufficiency of financial and human resources. How ineffectual the police station actually was is shown most clearly by the fact that the Kavango area continued to be classified after 1910 as falling outside the Police Zone and, thus, outside the reach of the colonial administration. A fresh assessment of the situation a year later concluded that there was no justification for the existence of the police station at all; however, it was not abandoned by the colonial administration for the sole reason that there were misgivings about a loss of face.²²

The very limited potential of a show of colonial might by the garrison of the police station becomes clear from Photo 3, which shows three German police officers (a fourth one is taking the picture) and, in the background, an African auxiliary, all pausing briefly in their task of laying bricks. In fact, the garrison of the station at no point numbered more than five German police officers and twice as many African auxiliaries.²³ Just as at Fort Cuangar, no Kwangali labour appears to have been employed in the building and fitting of Kuring-Kuru. Yet there had been high hopes of support from the local inhabitants once construction commenced. In his report, Baron von Hirschberg, leader of the expedition, describes the people living along the Kavango River as generally very willing to work, and lays particular stress on the contribution to be made by the Kwangali to the construction of the station. He goes on to report that several locals had arrived on the first day already, wanting to work for food rations alone.²⁴ In order to have some shelter as soon as possible, the garrison had enlisted some labourers and paid for them personally.²⁵ Yet the hope of cheap and willing African labour was not fulfilled. The building work had to be done by the policemen themselves.²⁶ In this respect Photo 3 faithfully renders the significance of the police station, and at the same time affords a glimpse of their actual duty: primarily the construction of station buildings. This labour was by no means confined to the first few months. A second massive brick complex, also built by the garrison, was only completed in early 1914. In addition, accommodation for the African auxiliaries was also provided.²⁷

The Portuguese colonial occupation of the north bank of the Kavango in 1909 resulted in an increased interest in the conditions prevailing in the area, which is reflected in a series of photographs taken at that time. Photo 4 was taken by de Almeida in August 1909, that is, nearly ten years after Baum took his picture.

22 BArchB-R 1001/2184: 109 f, Seitz – Reichs-Kolonialamt, Windhuk, 19.3.1911.

23 Hans Rafalski, *Vom Niemandsland zum Ordnungsstaat. Geschichte der ehemaligen Kaiserlichen Landespolizei für Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Berlin, E. Wernitz, 1930: 139, 150.

24 NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 20 B, von Hirschberg, *Bericht über die Expedition nach dem Okavango*, Waterberg, 14.9.1910 (translation AE).

25 *Ibid.*: 28 (translation AE).

26 Their disappointment can be sensed in the memoirs of Police Sergeant Ostermann, who refers to the fading of these hopes twice: "As well as the policing and administrative tasks proper, there was the fitting of the station to attend to, with its multitude of minor and heavy demands, many of them exacting and time-consuming. Even the materials for the masonry work had to be procured and manufactured by the officers themselves. There were not enough rocks; air-dried mud bricks, which are often used in this country, were not suitable as the first rains would have washed the walls away. Bricks had to be fired in a kiln and lime procured. This required first constructing kilns for lime and bricks. Trees had to be felled and trimmed. And all these tasks had to be performed by the officials themselves". (Rafalski, *Niemandsland*: 150, translation and emphasis AE).

27 *Ibid.*: 150.

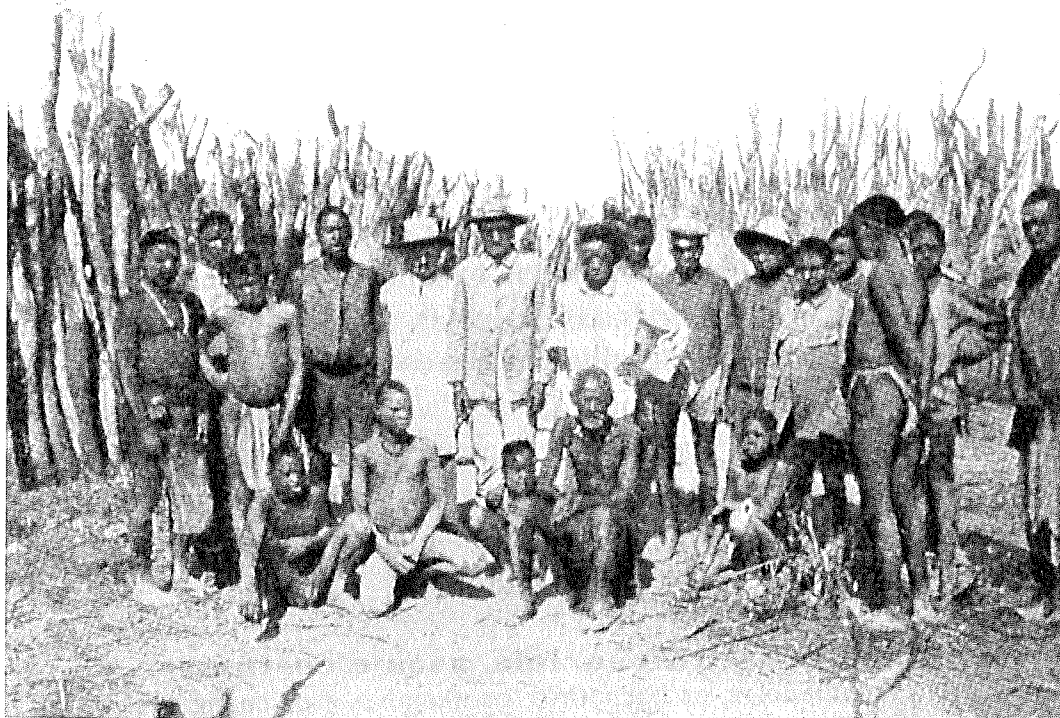


Photo 4: "O soba Amalua do Cuangar" ("The Chief Amálua from Cuangar").
(De Almeida, *Sul d'Angola*: 377)

Like Baum's group portrait, it depicts the ruling elite of the Kwangali surrounding *Hompa* Himarwa, to whom the title of the photograph refers. He is flanked on his left by Kandjimi in evidently the same outfit in which he had posed ten years before; next to him are two men in white, about whom nothing further is known, but who must be assumed from their dress and prominence in the picture to have been influential and prosperous. Here, however, the ruling elite is not posed in isolation, but accompanied by a larger group. That is, the image shows more than the title suggests: it presents the viewer with a glimpse of the ruler among his people, and differs in this respect from that offered by Baum. Where Baum presented the elite as a target of projected colonial conquest, de Almeida shows them after the colonial occupation of the Kwangali territory had been successfully accomplished. His photograph, thus, portrays African inhabitants of a newly incorporated colonial territory.²⁸

Photo 4 stands in pronounced contrast to another picture taken at the same time by the District Commander of Namutoni, First Lieutenant Zawada, who led an expedition to the Kwangali people in mid-1909. The aim of this expedition was, Zawada writes, to find "a good way to the Okawango, well supplied with water points, so that relations could be established with the Kwangali people and possibly a treaty concluded".²⁹

28 This reading of the image is confirmed by a passage in de Almeida's text which describes the colonial annexation: "On 1 August in the morning we finally reached Cuangar, and found a suitable site for this fort nearby. The garrison immediately disembarked in marching formation and carrying a flag, which was immediately raised by the Adjutant with all due formality, so that the fort could be built in good order. Cuangar had been seized. Work on the fort commenced on the same day. After a while the old Chief Amálua appeared with his retinue to welcome us, followed by his heir apparent, Auanga. After an exchange of gifts, they expressed satisfaction with our occupation of the land and declared themselves loyal subjects of the Portuguese Government. In the evening we called on them at the compound, where there was much feasting and dancing". (De Almeida, *Sul d'Angola*: 188, translation AE).

29 NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 166, Zawada, *Bericht über den Verlauf der Expedition an den Okawango*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909.

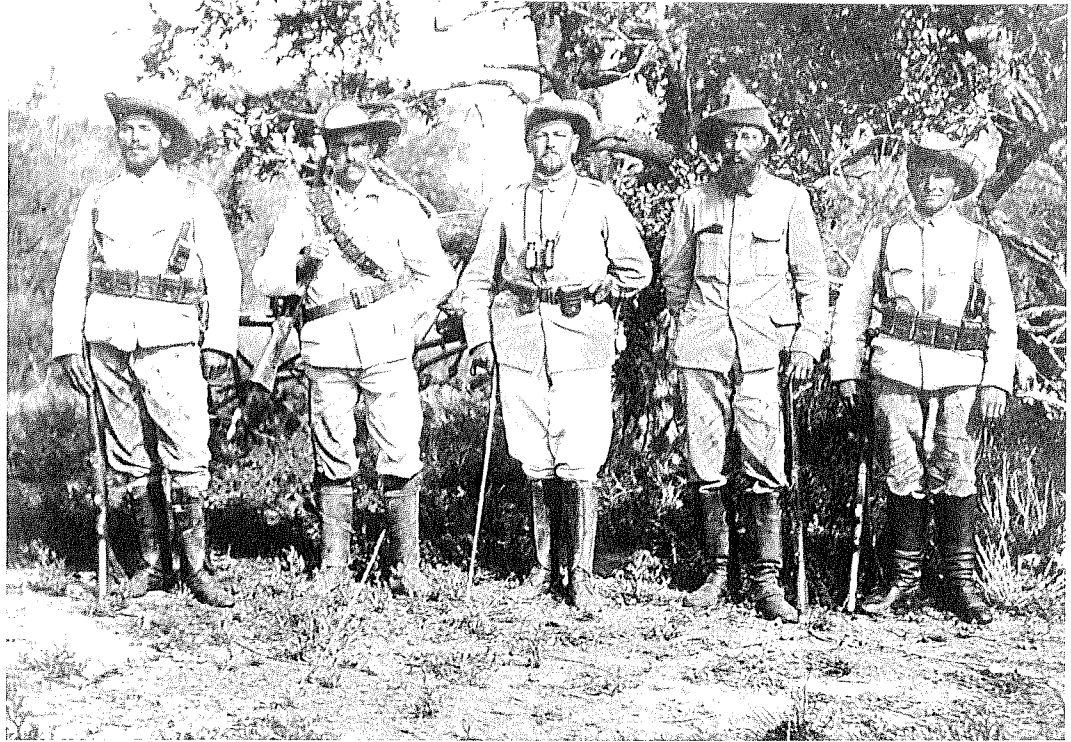


Photo 5: "Members of the Zawada Expedition to the Okavango".³⁰
(NAN, Photo Archives, 5964, BGR F.9.b.)

Photo 5 shows the members of the expedition. They were District Commander Zawada (centre), Police Officer Linser, an unnamed cavalryman and Lance Corporal, and Dieterichs, who had joined Zawada as an interpreter.³¹ Ernst Dieterichs, who is easily identified as the one without a cartridge belt and uniform hat, had, together with one Walter Conradi, in December 1909 signed a purchase agreement regarding Farm Nordeck along the Kavango, and had stayed there. Dieterichs died of malaria in the middle of 1910, and Conradi abandoned the farm soon afterwards.³²

Photo 5 affords an interesting glimpse into the ways in which such missions might be understood by their participants. A trip from Namutoni to the Kavango River was no simple undertaking, considering the distance, the difficult terrain and a thirst phase of 180 km without water. The explorers present themselves duly equipped and mentally prepared, their chests looped with rifle and cartridge belt, their trousers secured in boots or puttees. As the expedition leader, Zawada is posed at the centre, field glasses around his neck, gazing squarely at the camera. That such undertakings could hardly be approached differently, but can nevertheless be handled with quite a different kind of colonial self-image, will emerge from Photo 12 below.

When Zawada and his party arrived at the Kavango River at the beginning of August 1909, they unexpectedly came upon the Portuguese military expedition led by de Almeida. The plans regarding the signing of a protection treaty gained even more significance in the light of the area's occupation by the Portuguese. As his negotiating partner Zawada chose Kandjimi Hauwanga, "who exercises supreme

³⁰ The legend was not written by Zawada himself, but appears to have been added later upon the photograph's accession to the Archive.

³¹ NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 166 Bf, Zawada, *Bericht über Verlauf der Expedition an den Okavango*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909.

³² NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 19f, von Hirschberg, *Bericht über die Expedition nach dem Okavango*, Waterberg, 14.9.1910.

authority over all the Owakwangari on behalf of the old and superannuated Himarua".³³ A first meeting took place immediately upon arrival at the residence of Kandjimi Hauwanga. During the second discussion on the following day, Zawada was given permission to take a number of photographs – something "which is usually only grudgingly allowed by these people".³⁴ Photo 6 shows this occasion.

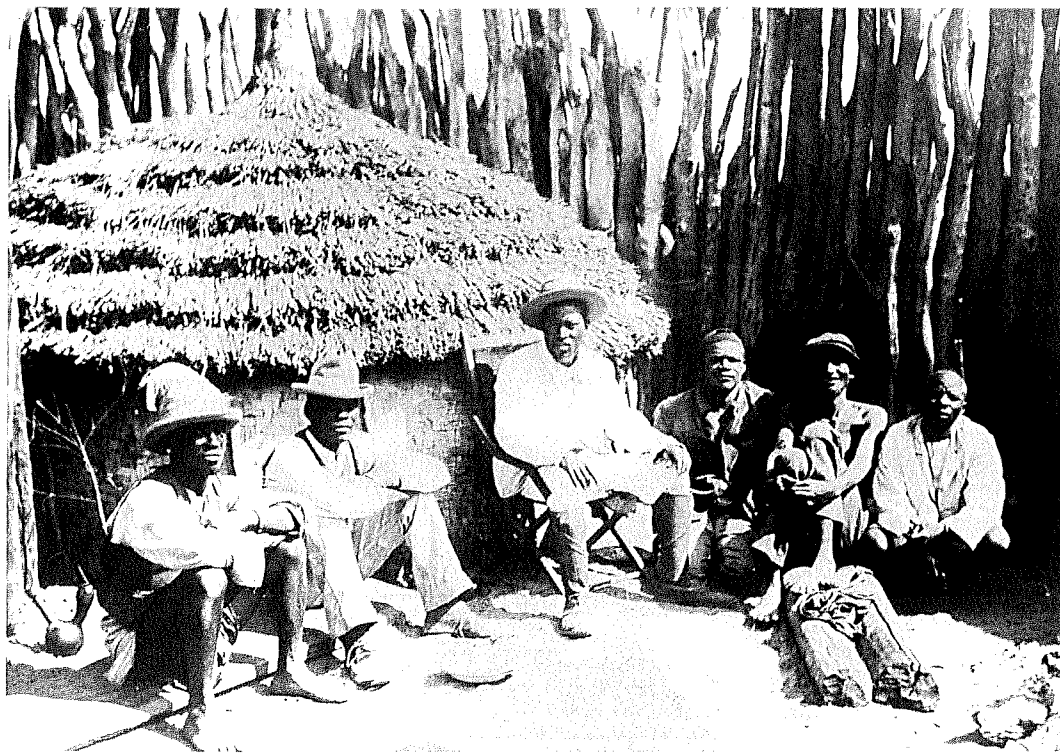


Photo 6: "Kandjimi in seinem Beratungshof" ("Kandjimi in his council garth").
(NAN, Photo Archives, 5970, BGR F.9.b.)

This is the first image which shows Kandjimi not decontextualised but fully inhabiting his actual position of power and authority as a ruler, while the "superannuated" *Hompa* Himarwa is marginalised by being excluded from the photograph. Kandjimi is not 'exhibited' (in the full sense of the word) as in the photographs by Baum and de Almeida, but is elevated above his councillors on a chair, in a representation of a sovereign at the centre of his power, the council garth. Zawada writes the following of Kandjimi, who was seen as a fully equal partner in the negotiations: "Kandjimi is a spotlessly clean, intelligent man of around 30 years of age, who knows exactly what he wants. He is the absolute ruler and proprietor of the entire land".³⁵ Zawada arrived at this conclusion during the negotiations regarding the protection treaty, in which he could not deflect Kandjimi Hauwanga from having the property rights of the Kwangali over a precisely delimited territory contractually fixed. Hence, this protection treaty, signed on 17 December 1909, was later not ratified by the Imperial Colonial Office.

There is a third photograph of Kandjimi Hauwanga dating from this time. It is drawn from a book published in 1927 by Karl Angebauer under the title *Ovambo. 15 Jahre unter Kaffern, Buschleuten und Bezirksamtännern*. Angebauer was one of those restless spirits who sojourned briefly along the Kavango in order to hunt, but above all to trade.³⁶

33 NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 168, Zawada, *Bericht über Verlauf der Expedition an den Okavango*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909 (translation AE).

34 *Ibid.*: 155 B (translation AE). As this was Zawada's first sojourn on the Kavango, the comment is presumably based on the experiences reported by other German officials.

35 NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 159, Zawada, *Der Okavango von der portugiesischen Grenze bis Oshoffue. Die Owakwangari und ihr Land*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909 (translation AE).

36 Shortly after he had taken up his post as District Officer in Grootfontein, von Zastrow wrote the following to the colonial administration: "Since my arrival here, most of the questions which have been directed at me concern the northern part of the district, the area on the Okavango. As the Government probably is aware, there is great pressure among the people here towards those lands, where it is believed great riches are to be reaped. Since the district here favours steady progress, it is precisely the *restless spirits* that are eager to reach that area". (NAN-ZBU VII.h, von Zastrow – Gouvernement, Grootfontein, 16.2.1910: 32, translation and emphasis AE). This image is particularly revealing in its documentation that, contrary to a widely-held assumption, the German colonial administration never declared the Kavango area, as distinct from so-called Ovamboland and the Caprivi Strip, a prohibited zone. The main reason for this probably was that the actual extent of civil colonial activities in the Kavango area made such a proclamation, however strongly advised in some quarters, of little urgency, if not downright redundant.



Photo 7: "Kuangarihauptling Kanjime, links von ihm Kamanja, genannt Langhals"³⁷
 ("Kwangali Chief [Kandjimi], to his left Kamanja, called 'Long-neck'").
 (Karl Angebauer, *Ovambo. 15 Jahre unter Kaffern, Buschleuten und Bezirksamtmännern*, Berlin, A. Scherl, 1927:81)

Only a small number of the photographs published in Angebauer's book were taken by him. There is no annotation to Photo 7 indicating who actually took it; but in all likelihood it is part of the same series of exposures which were also used to illustrate Zawada's report. Like Photo 6, this one is taken in Kandjimi Hauwanga's council garth. The outward appearance of Angebauer (front right in the picture) is eloquent of his lifestyle on the Kavango, far from 'civilisation'. The person behind Angebauer, like him a trader or adventurer, cannot be identified. Zawada probably had an image like this in mind when he remarked in his report on the situation of traders on the Kavango: "Nevertheless, there is no need for him to haunt the native huts, perhaps even to have a drink with the blacks, and in every sense of the word to 'go native'. I came to meet all sorts of different types on the Kavango this time".³⁸

Particularly significant in this picture is the positioning of Kandjimi Hauwanga and Zawada (left in the picture). If it is part of the series taken by Zawada, it comes as no surprise that he did not include it in his report. Whereas Photo 6 shows him as an equal partner to the negotiations, this image no longer permits any doubt as to the actual power relationship between Kandjimi and Zawada. Kandjimi, positioned in the centre, sits elevated on a chair; Zawada, to one side, has to content himself with a seat on a wooden plank at Kandjimi's feet. Moreover, Kandjimi wears a relaxed, even amused expression, whereas Zawada looks glumly at the camera. This image clearly could not have met with his approval.

37 BArchB-R 1001/2183: 199f. Kamandja had been co-signatory, together with one Nakangombe, of the protection treaty concluded between Zawada and Kandjimi Hauwanga on 17 December 1909.

38 NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 131, Zawada, *Bericht über Händler am Okawango und im Amboland*, Namutoni, 9.9.1909 (translation AE).

Gciriku photographs

No photographs taken by German colonial officials among the Gciriku people have survived.³⁹ Apart from the relatively negligible strategic significance, from a military-geographical point of view, of the Gciriku territory, a further reason for this paucity of images may be sought in the fact that *Hompa* Nyangana was notorious as a brutal and despotic ruler who had reputedly murdered white travellers. This attitude changed only when *Hompa* Nyangana began to make a determined effort to improve his image in German colonial circles – partly, but not only, in connection with the Portuguese occupation. Only in this way could he and his people count on the possibility of fleeing from Portuguese aggression into German territory. The most effective guarantee of protection consisted in accepting a missionary settlement. Thus, at the expressed request and formal petitioning of the *Hompa*, and after several failed attempts and the loss of five lives, the first permanent mission station along the Kavango was founded by the Oblate missionaries in 1910. The rare photographs taken over many years among the Gciriku were the work of missionaries. In selecting the subjects they were motivated by the same considerations as the colonial officials before them: they photographed and recorded motifs, events and persons that mattered from their point of view.

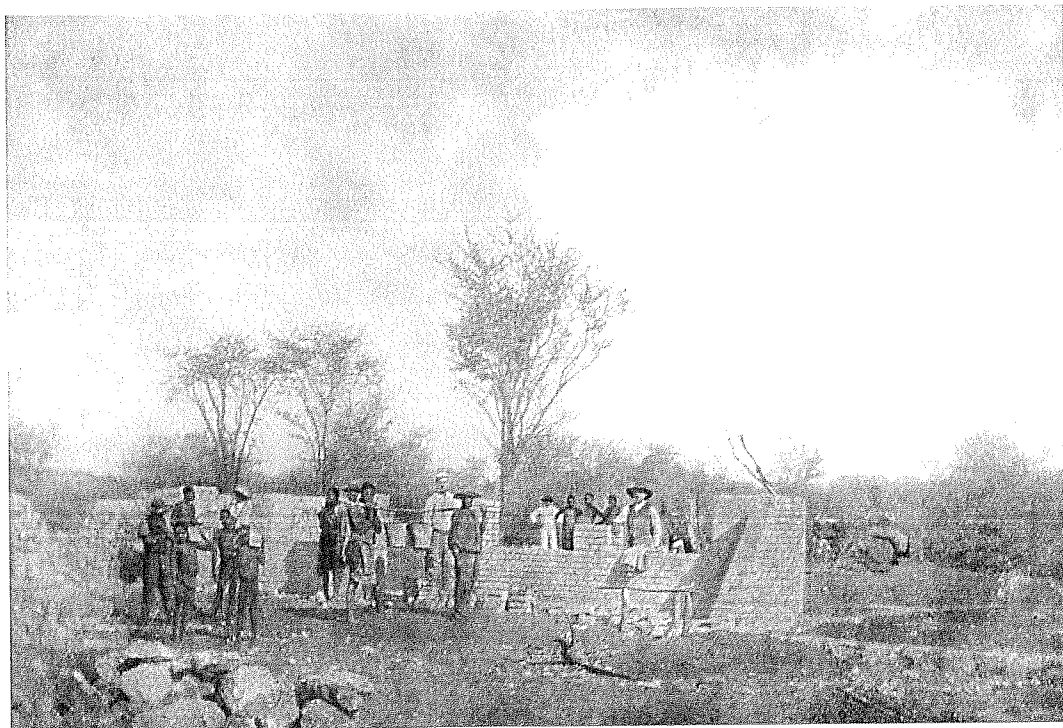


Photo 8: "Beim Bau der Missionsstation am Okavango" ("Building the mission station on the Okavango").
(*Maria Immaculata*, 11/XVIII/1911: 495)

Photo 8 shows work in progress on the construction of the Nyangana mission house. The *Hompa* had left the selection of a suitable site to the missionaries themselves. The founding expedition, led by Father Josef Gotthardt, consisted of August Bierfert and Lay Brothers Georg Ruß, Johannes Rau and Konrad Heckmann, who would direct the building work. A comparison with the photographs taken during the erection

39 NAN-ZBU I.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 18-29, von Hirschberg, *Bericht über die Expedition nach dem Okavango*, Waterberg, 14.9.1910. Von Hirschberg's report on his founding expedition to Kuring-Kuru and subsequent tour of the area up to *Hompa* Nyangana's residence contains references to at least 30 photographs. Most of these document the road to Kuring-Kuru and the Okavango River. The images referred to, none of which appears to have depicted *Hompa* Nyangana or his son Mbambo, have unfortunately been lost.

of the Portuguese Fort Cuangar (Photo 2) and the German police station Kuring-Kuru (Photo 3) immediately reveals one significant difference: Fort Cuangar had been built without consultation with the *Hompa* and without participation by the local population; the police station at Kuring-Kuru was built with the permission of the *Hompa*, and at least initially with some support from the locals; while Photo 8 evidences the full support of the local community, showing the importance of the mission for the Gciriku people. The Mission was founded at the express request of the *Hompa*, and the local population was fully involved in the work on the building from the outset. So the photograph shows children carrying stones and adults lugging buckets, presumably filled with clay.⁴⁰

In the foreground, dressed in a light suit (cf. Photos 9 and 10) is *Hompa* Nyangana's eldest son, Mbambo, who can be detected rather than clearly discerned. Mbambo was deeply involved in the establishment of the station and its development. Not only had he acted as go-between in the early negotiations between the Mission and *Hompa* Nyangana, but he also supported the missionaries in many ways after they had settled in. Father Gotthardt remembers him as "the actual soul and support of the mission".⁴¹ It was Mbambo who backed the founding of the mission, and his position in the photo metaphorically bears out his importance for the enterprise. Mbambo's special function is equally emphasised in Photo 10.

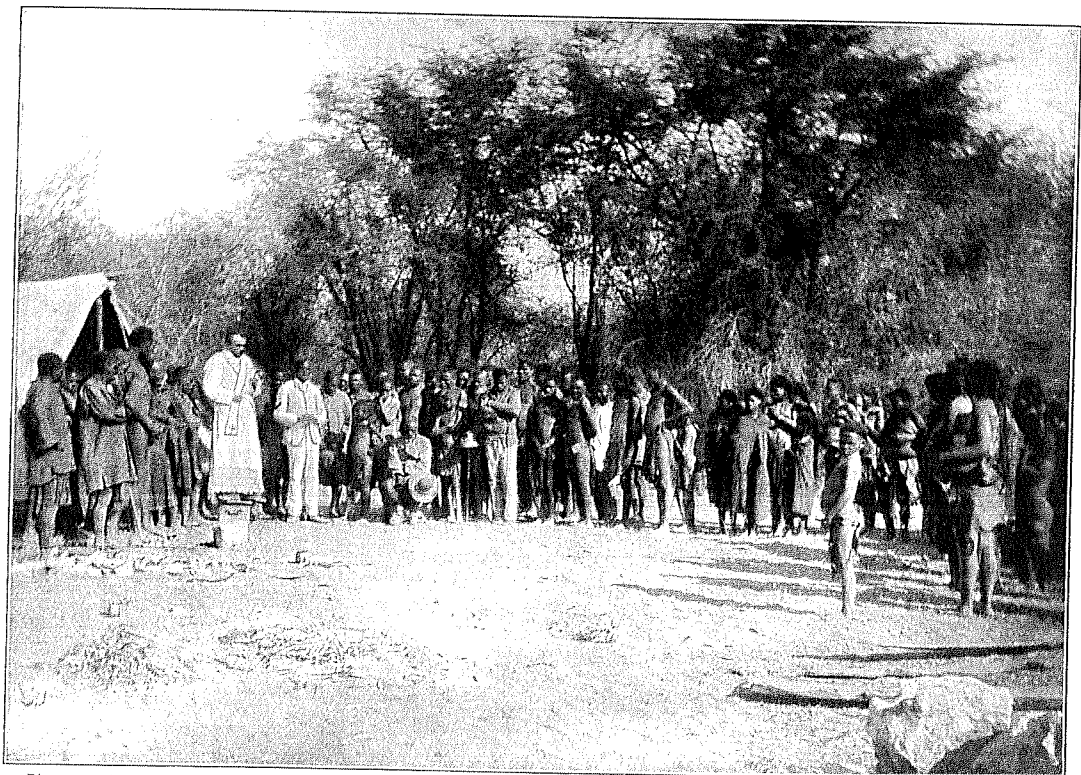


Photo 9: "P. Bierfert O.M.I. hält Unterricht am Sonntag nach dem Gottesdienst (Herz-Jesu-Mission am Okavango). Links von ihm steht der Dolmetscher Mbambo, der Sohn des Kapitäns Nyangana, der unter den Zuhörern sitzt und eifrig der Predigt lauscht" ("Fr Bierfert O.M.I. offers religious instruction on Sunday after the service – Sacred Heart Mission at the Okavango. To his left stands Mbambo, *Hompa* Nyangana's son, the interpreter. *Hompa* Nyangana sits among the congregation, eagerly listening to the sermon").
(*Maria Immaculata*, 11/XVIII/1911: 497)

40 Josef Gotthardt, *Codex Historicus Nyangana*: 6: "There followed a period of strenuous effort which was, however, made less burdensome as there prevailed a mood of general goodwill, and the people, particularly the Chief and his son, showed the most positive attitudes, being ever at the ready to assist whenever their help was requested". (translation AE) In a similar vein Father Gotthardt reports the following to the Apostolic Prefect: "That the people are nevertheless imbued with goodwill may be inferred from the fact that the women repeatedly collected grass for the roof of the church, while the men plaited a number of large, beautiful mats which we will use for the ceiling. They did this after I had explained to them one Sunday that they should also offer a contribution to the building of the house and the church". (Quoted in Eugen Klaeyle, "Die Mission Okavango", *Maria Immaculata*, 11/XVIII/1911: 494f, translation AE).

41 Gotthardt, *Codex*: 17 (translation AE).

Photo 9 was taken shortly after the arrival of the missionaries in May 1910. Their primary objective was to convert the population to the Christian faith. The significance of this goal determines the emphasis in one of the first pictures taken. Its legend reflects an important point: communication with the Gciriku was possible only via Mbambo's translations. The Herero language served as the metalanguage, presumably because a number of linguistic descriptions of Herero by Rhenish missionaries were already in existence. The lack of linguistic competence may have been one of the reasons for the ineffectuality of the Sunday teaching depicted in Photo 9, an occasion which Father Bierfert recalls in detail in a review of 25 years of endeavour on the Kavango:

Because we had no church building as yet, Holy Mass was performed in a tent, and the sermon delivered under a big tree. Consequently, attention in the latter was very patchy, especially as it was constantly interrupted by children crying and dogs barking. Nearly every native had a dog with him, and it can readily be imagined what happened when this mob of dogs fell upon each other – especially when the mission dogs joined in the brawl. Any dog that was bitten immediately sought protection from its master under the tree, and it did not take long for the entire battle to flare up afresh between the legs of the congregation. The men became embroiled in it, and the women simply went off. The effect of the sermon was nil.⁴²

The prospects of success for the evangelisation of the Kavango population were initially estimated with great optimism. Father Bierfert thought at the time that, within ten years, a large part of the population would be converted to the Christian faith.⁴³ Such was his expectation because the area was so far free of colonial influence.⁴⁴ Yet it would soon become apparent that this assessment had been anything but realistic. It was above all the sudden death of Mbambo which dealt the mission a fearful blow. Mbambo died on 24 February 1912 of pneumonia, or so it was initially thought; later rumours among the missionaries suggested that he had been poisoned because of his friendship with the Mission, thus elevating him to the status of a martyr.⁴⁵

Photo 10 is the only existing clear image of Mbambo. The picture shows Mbambo with his father, Nyangana, who had been *Hompa* of the Gciriku ever since about 1866, and reigned until his death on 23 December 1924.⁴⁶ Like Photo 9, this picture was taken soon after the arrival of the missionaries. As the first Kavango ruler who had accepted missionaries, Nyangana is accorded a prominent role in Mission histories. In an obituary Father Bierfert praised the "noble and paternal character" of the *Hompa* who had always ensured "positive relations with the Mission".⁴⁷ Over the years this photograph has been reproduced several times in the Mission's monthly mouthpiece, the *Maria Immaculata*, as well as in the *Missionsecho*, the monthly magazine published by the Benedictine missionary nuns who became active along the Kavango after 1922.

In contrast to the pictures taken of *Hompa* Himarwa and Kandjimi Hauwanga, this is a true portrait. It was taken from a relatively close range. Since cameras at that time had no zoom function as yet, images still recorded the physical distance between the photographer and his subject; and this distance encourages conclusions about the relationship between the two. In this case, the physical closeness

42 August Bierfert, *25 Jahre bei den Wadiriku am Okawango*, Hünfeld, Verlag der Oblaten, 1938: 74 (translation AE).

43 See Apostolisches Vikariat (eds.), *Geschichte der Katholischen Mission in Südwestafrika 1896-1946. Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen der katholischen Mission in Südwestafrika*, Windhoek, Meinert, 1946: 77.

44 AEW Nyangana Briefe und Akten I, August Bierfert – Präfekt Klaeyle, Windhuk, 5.12.1912: "The people along the Okavango have so far been spared certain evil influences of the whites. ... The outlook for a genuine conversion among the Okavango population groups could, therefore, not be more favourable. At present it is still easy to prevail upon these people who confront us free of prejudice, with complete openness of mind". (translation AE)

45 Gotthardt, *Codex*: 17; Gotthardt, *Okawango*: 94; Bierfert, *25 Jahre*: 13.

46 John Mutorwa, *The establishment of the Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission Station during the reign of Hompa (Chief) Nyangana: An historical inquiry*, Windhoek, Gamsberg Macmillan, 1996: 45; August Bierfert, "Thomas Nyangana", *Monatsblätter der Oblaten der Unbefleckten Jungfrau Maria*, 8/XXXIII/1925: 214.

47 Ibid.: 215f (translation AE).



Photo 10: "Häuptling Nyangana vom Okavango und sein Sohn Mbambo"
 ("Chief Nyangana from the Okavango River and his son, Mbambo").
 (*Maria Immaculata*, 7/XIX/1912: 317)

bespeaks trust and goodwill between *Hompa* Nyangana, Mbambo and the missionary photographer. There is another difference to Photos 1 and 4: Nyangana and Mbambo are posed neither in isolation from (Photo 1) nor surrounded by (Photo 4) their subjects. The image places the two in the foreground, yet preserves the connection to the Gciriku people who are posed, at a distance of several metres, as a background to Nyangana and Mbambo. The work of the missionaries was directed at the entire Gciriku community, yet the traditional authorities were of vital importance to their success. Another difference to the earlier photographs may be noted: other than Kandjimi, for instance, Mbambo has taken off his hat and holds it in his hands. This detail, too, made the image ideal for the purpose which it came to serve again and again: it was a greeting to Catholics at home, that is, the readers of Mission publications who were expected to support the Kavango Mission with donations.

As far as I know, there is only one other picture of *Hompa* Nyangana, Photo 11, which shows, reading from left to right, Constable Schneider, *Hompa* Nyangana, Father Gotthardt and Sergeant Henke. It was presumably taken during a major *Schutztruppe* expedition to the Kavango in August/September 1911, which had been undertaken to investigate a rumour – false, as it turned out – of an attack on an expedition led by the Imperial Resident in the Caprivi, von Frankenberg.



Photo 11: "Am Okavango. Vor der runden Schutzhütte der Häuptlingswerft" ("At the Okavango. In front of the circular guardroom of the *Hompa's* compound"). (*Maria Immaculata*, 11/XXI/1914: 495)

Because of his grim reputation, German colonial officials as well as missionaries had always avoided contact with *Hompa* Nyangana. Proof of his notoriety can be found in a remark by Father Gotthardt who reacted to the assumption, even before the matter had been investigated, that the Frankenberg expedition had been set upon and murdered by "Nyangana elements", with the following remonstrance: "Probably the phrase 'by Nyangana elements' signifies no more than that it has become habitual here to blame everything that goes wrong in the area on that presumed villain without further examination. Yet in this case the man is decidedly superior to his reputation".⁴⁸ With the establishment of the mission station the character of *Hompa* Nyangana in German colonial circles improved radically. First Lieutenant von Hirschberg, the first colonial official to visit Nyangana after he had relocated to the German side of the river, characterised him as follows: "Nyangana must be in his late 50s or 60 years old. His bearing is energetic, yet composed and deliberate – one is tempted to say dignified; all in all one has the impression that he is the unconditional lord, and fully exercises his authority".⁴⁹

The picture documents the success of Nyangana's bid to improve his image by welcoming the Mission. It is the first and only image showing the *Hompa* in the company of German colonial officials. The positioning of the participants at this event symbolically mirrors the existing relationships of colonial interest and power. *Hompa* Nyangana forms the centre of interest and of the composition. Immediately next to him is Father Gotthardt, the intermediary in all contacts between the colonial administration and *Hompa* Nyangana, who acted as the interpreter on this and other similar occasions. German colonial officials flank *Hompa* Nyangana on both sides, strongly suggesting in this the colonial claim to control over not only the *Hompa*, but also the activities of the Mission.

48 Josef Gotthardt, "Kleinere Nachrichten. Okavangomissi Afrika", *Maria Immaculata*, 2/XXIX/1911: 84 (translation A)

49 NAN-ZBU I.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 22, von Hirschberg, *Ber. über die Expedition nach dem Okavango*, Waterbe 14.9.1910 (translation AE).

Mbukushu photographs

The Mbukushu people had, from the outset, focused the interest of the German colonialists along the Kavango. Even the first exploration of the area in 1891 by the then Governor of GSWA, Curt von François, included the territory inhabited by Mbukushu. Presumably, von François encountered the Mbukushu *Fumu*, Dimbu I, or Andara, about whom, however, he merely made the following note in a single sentence: "The most important is the Chief of Andara, an ingrained skinflint but excellent farmer".⁵⁰ There are no photographs showing *Fumu* Andara, the commencement date of whose reign is not known.⁵¹ After his death around 1895 the Mbukushu tribe split. *Fumu* Andara had already appointed Diyeve II as his successor, bypassing Mukoya, who, by laws of succession, was the heir. Mukoya did not accept the arrangement; he moved to Angola with his followers, but continued to claim supremacy over all the Mbukushu, whose territory of occupation thereafter stretched over three colonial dependencies. Nevertheless, the *Fumu* of the Mbukushu settlements in German and British colonial territories was Diyeve II until his death in September 1915.⁵²

In the beginning of 1909 Major Streitwolf had arrived in the Eastern Caprivi as the first Imperial Resident.⁵³ On 30 August that year he set out on a two-and-a-half-month exploration through the Caprivi to *Fumu* Diyeve II, to investigate the possibility of an overland connection between his station, Schuckmannsburg, and the other parts of German South West Africa. In Chapters 11 and 12 of his book on the Caprivi Strip he published an account of these travels. Photo 12 shows Streitwolf during his expedition, displaying a self-image wholly different from that of Zawada (cf. Photo 5).



Photo 12: "Streitwolf im Lager von Gumtschu" ("Streitwolf in the camp at Gumtschu"). (NAN, Photo Archives, 6638)

50 Curt von François, "Bericht von Hauptmann C. v. François über seine Reise nach dem Okavango-Fluß", *Mitteilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten* 4/1891: 208 (translation AE).

51 Whereas Larson gives the beginning of his reign as 1850 (Thomas J. Larson, "The Mbukushu", in Gibson/Larson/McGurk (eds.), *Kavango*: 216), Wüst estimates his rule as having lasted 30 years, which would give the date as 1865 (cf. Josef Wüst, "Wie die Häuptlinge der Wambukuschu an die 'Regenmacherei' kamen", *Monatsblätter der Oblaten der Unbefleckten Jungfrau Maria*, 12/XXXII/1935: 371).

52 BArchB-R 1001/2184: 129 Bf, Streitwolf, *Das Deutsche Okavangogebiet, seine Bevölkerung und seine Verwaltung*, Grootfontein, 1.2.1911; Josef Wüst, "Erste Erkundungsreise der hochw. Patres Krist und Lauer nach dem Okavango (1907)", unpubl. manuscript, 1941: 30, 98; Wüst, "Ereignisse und eigene Erlebnisse auf den Missionsstationen Nyangana und Andara", unpubl. manuscript, 1934: 37. See also Kurt Streitwolf, *Der Caprivizipfel*, Berlin, W. Süßerott, 1911: 192.

53 Streitwolf, *Caprivizipfel*: 56ff.

The external conditions surrounding Streitwolf's 1909 expedition were in no way more favourable than those encountered by Zawada on his expedition to the Kavango in the same year. The men had to hack their way through tangled vegetation and unfamiliar terrain, and had to contend with shortages of water and provisions. Yet the contrast offered by Photos 5 and 12 could not be more striking: whereas Zawada presents himself as armed for a contest with nature, Streitwolf envisions himself in the posture of lord of his domain. The image in Photo 12 documents colonial appropriation of a space: showing Streitwolf in shorts and with rolled-up shirtsleeves, pipe in hand at a well-appointed coffee table, the picture reduces the surrounding wilderness from adversary to mere backdrop. Such an image was useless as colonial propaganda, and may have been taken merely to indulge Streitwolf's ego. Streitwolf himself may have considered the picture too self-indulgent to share with a wider public; it was in any case not published in his report of the expedition. Nor did the next image, Photo 13, find a place in his book.

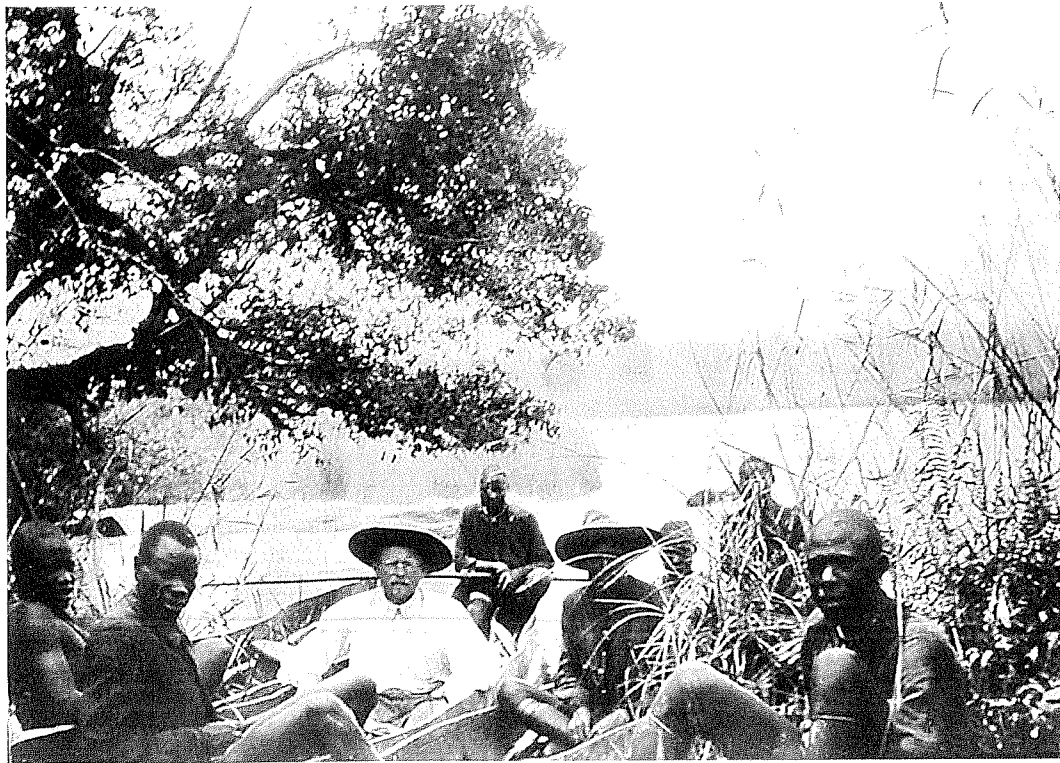


Photo 13: "Fahrt zu den Popafällen" – ("Trip to Popa Falls").
(NAN, Photo Archives, 6643)

On 23 September 1909 Streitwolf arrived at Diyeve II's residence, the destination of his trip, where he sojourned for seven days. During this stay, Streitwolf and Diyeve II went on a day trip to Popa Falls, 22 km downriver, each in his own canoe. Again, this photo is of no public interest: it is a private souvenir of a river picnic. Yet it is unusual in that the two, Major Streitwolf and *Fumu* Diyeve II, appear as social equals, even though the angle chosen favours Streitwolf. Unusual for a colonial official, too, is that

Streitwolf left himself wholly in the hands of Diyeve II and his oarsmen during this trip, thus surrendering all possibility of controlling the situation. This is all the more remarkable since the canoe trip was by no means without its dangers. Streitwolf was simply following his rule, "The less one can control a situation, the more confidently one should bear oneself with the blacks".⁵⁴

The only picture of *Fumu* Diyeve II which Streitwolf included in his book and, thus, regarded as suitable for a broader colonial public, is Photo 14.



Photo 14: "Libebe (sitzend), Häuptling der Mambukushu" ("Libebe (seated), Chief of the Mbukushu"). (Kurt Streitwolf, *Der Caprivizipfel*, Berlin, W. Süsserott, 1911: 176)

The photograph shows Diyeve II among, presumably, his family. His importance is conveyed not only by his central position, but also by his being seated on a chair which is readily recognisable as Streitwolf's (cf. Photo 12), which Streitwolf must have made available for the photograph. Altogether the posing of the image speaks eloquently of the pains taken to present Diyeve II as a dignified ruler. In this it corresponds to the verbal image Streitwolf painted in his report.⁵⁵

Like other colonial officials before him, Streitwolf also argued for a permanent presence of the colonial power in the Kavango area: "I think it is high time that we do something on the Kavango. I would regard it as advantageous to establish a station at Libebe".⁵⁶ For Streitwolf himself, such a station would have been of considerable significance as it would have established the connection between him as Resident at Schuckmannsburg and the central administration of German South West Africa, which was urgently needed for the communication and regular provision of supplies. The colonial administration in Windhoek and the

⁵⁴ NAN-Accession 536: 19B, Streitwolf, *Bericht über meine Reise zu Libebe am Okavango*, Sesheke, 13.11.1909 (translation AE). This is what he writes about the trip: "It was an extraordinarily interesting journey, full of thrilling moments. Like an arrow we shot through rapid after rapid, the waves foaming beneath us and frequently soaking us through. Admirable were the dexterity with which the Mbukushu avoided every rock and their knowledge of every submerged obstacle". (translation AE)

⁵⁵ NAN-Accession 536: 20Bf, Streitwolf: "Libebe is a slender man of medium height, about 35-40 years of age. The high, domed brow, the finely cut nose and lips and the keen gaze bespeak high intelligence. His dignified bearing and the small hands and feet immediately suggest that here is a man of noble lineage. Yet his rather shabby jacket and hat, the absence of a shirt, trousers or boots, betray the thinness of the public purse". (translation AE) See St. Hill Gibbons' account, who had met the *Fumu* in 1899: "About 35 years of age, prepossessing in appearance, of quiet demeanour and good address, Lebebe is vastly superior to the rascally crew that surrounds him". (A. St. Hill Gibbons, *Africa from south to north through Marotseland*. 2 Vol., London/New York, J. Lane, 1904, I: 216).

⁵⁶ NAN-Accession 536: 25B, Streitwolf (translation AE). Similarly, Zawada towards the end of 1909 demanded "a strong presence in the area at Andara, and that this should be associated, robustly and dominantly, with Andara". (NAN-ZBU J.XIII.b.4 (Vol. 3): 185, Zawada, *Bericht über notwendige Besatzungen am Okavango*, Am Okavango, 22.11.1909, translation AE).

Government in Berlin would certainly be all the more readily convinced of the necessity of establishing their influence if they were dealing with a ruler of stature. With his remark about the thinness of the public purse Streitwolf already hints at the manner in which influence might be brought to bear on Diyeve II. Nor was this a new idea. Already by the end of 1902, First Lieutenant Eggers, then Deputy District Officer in Grootfontein, had suggested a similar strategy:

We will probably find a suitable personality to place at the centre of an autonomous political system under our influence, in the person of the successor to Andara ... Approaches would have to be made to this Chief who could then, like Liwanika, be morally and materially elevated to a position of mighty authority, through whom a German-directed system of native tribes could oppose the English one of Liwanika.⁵⁷

A contrast to Streitwolf's image of Diyeve II is offered by a photograph of the *Fumu* taken by de Almeida at the same time.

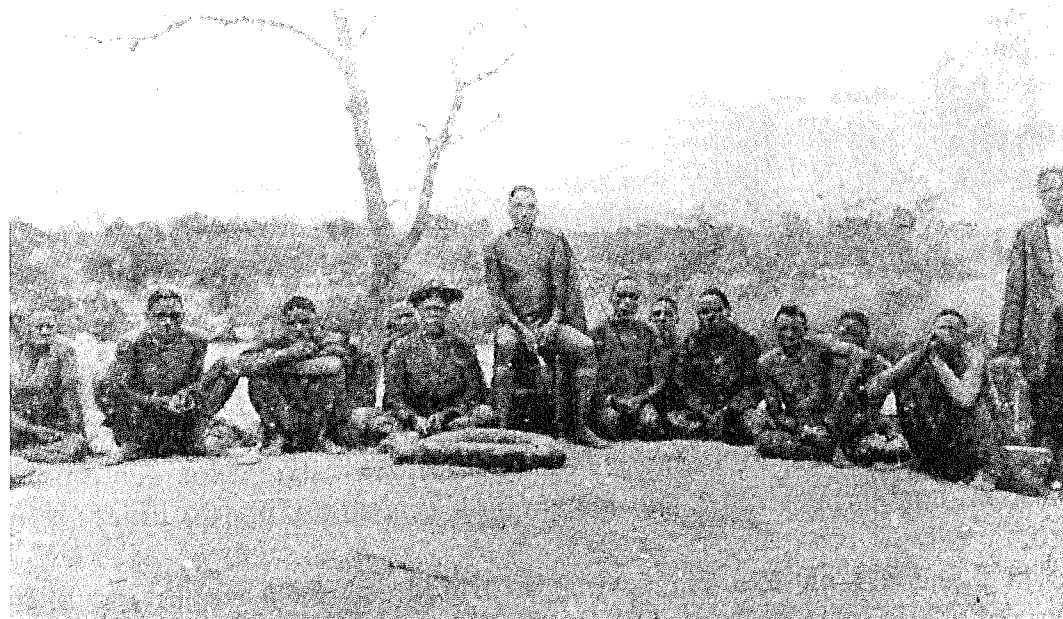


Photo 15: "O soba Libele e a sua côrte – Mucusso" ("Chief Libele with his royal household"). (De Almeida, *Sul d'Angola*: 384)

Only a few days after Streitwolf had left Diyeve II on 1 October 1909, the Portuguese colonial troops arrived. Twice Diyeve II despatched messengers to Streitwolf, asking him to return, but Streitwolf misjudged the situation as not requiring his support, supposing the Portuguese contingent to consist merely of traders.⁵⁸ Since his provisions were almost exhausted, he decided to continue his return journey to Schuckmannsburg. Diyeve II, still expecting Streitwolf to turn up again, at first met the Portuguese invaders with considerable self-assurance as an autonomous sovereign. Offended that the Portuguese had not made the customary courtesy call, he let them know that he would not tolerate anyone cutting wood or hunting on his land, unless they had first called on him with gifts.⁵⁹ When the Portuguese began to build the fort regardless, *Fumu* Diyeve II even threatened hostilities.⁶⁰

57 BArchB-R 1001/1784: 16f, Eggers, *Ueber die Notwendigkeit einer politischen Okavango-Expedition*, [n.d.; end of 1902] (translation AE). Lewanika was the Barotse ruler of the Lozi kingdom in British Bechuanaland (Botswana today). See also Fleisch/Möhlig, *Kavango*: 22-24; Maria Fisch, *Der Caprivizipfel während der deutschen Zeit 1890-1914*, Köln, R. Köppe, 1996: 68-71.

58 That Streitwolf had not even remotely anticipated such an eventuality shows once again how much of a surprise the Portuguese action on the Kavango posed for the German colonial power. Later, Streitwolf would recall it as follows: "If I had had the slightest inkling what was happening on the Okavango, I would of course have turned back". (ibid.: 210, translation AE)

59 De Almeida, *Sul d'Angola*: 203.

60 Ibid.: 204. "The *Fumu* treated some of the wives of the soldiers badly, and rushed at them when they came to the settlement to buy provisions; he threatened that he would, if they returned, throw them in the river. And he made it understood that he had called all his people together and had filled his weapons with five rounds each, although ours only contained a single one". (translation AE)

Once Diyeve II realised that he could not count on the support of the German colonial power, his attitude to the Portuguese underwent a radical change. De Almeida reports:

Not a single black person emerged from the residence to visit our campsite. After three days, the *Fumu* – although we had sent no one for him – became friendly and asked for brandy. We gave him some. In the afternoon we sent an officer to the residence to offer him our greetings and present him with a small gift consisting of clothing and a few other small articles; yet he said he could not return our call since he was ill. The man was incredibly gratified and ready to offer us any assistance which we might require.⁶¹

Photo 15 was taken in this context. In contrast to the picture taken by Streitwolf, it does not present a worthy dignitary as the subject of colonial political hopes, but rather suggests a disempowered ruler who is no longer approached with due respect, but whose land has been summarily appropriated by the Portuguese colonial empire. Diyeve II again occupies a chair, but this time not to underline his dignity but merely to render him identifiable as the *Fumu*. He is bereft of all symbols of status which might differentiate him from his companions; his hat and jacket have disappeared. The abject physical posture of the men surrounding him also clearly reveals their subjection to the military might of the Portuguese. In the picture posed by Streitwolf they surrounded the *Fumu* standing at a respectful distance; in de Almeida's version they have been posed squatting. There is a further contrast: Streitwolf took his picture in the *Fumu*'s residence, showing him as occupying the very centre of his sphere of power. De Almeida's picture has been posed in the open veld, beyond any context that might suggest a *Fumu*'s authority, bereft of all protection against colonial intrusion or violation of privacy, such as was offered by the palisade surrounding his residence. In this respect Photo 16 is significant.



Photo 16: "Libebe's Dorf auf der Okavango-Insel Tahoe" ("Libebe's village on the Okavango island, Tahoe").
(Streitwolf, *Caprivizipfel*: 176)

⁶¹ Ibid.: 204 (translation AE).

Photo 16 is the second and last photograph concerning the Mbukushu people published in Streitwolf's book. It shows the compound and residence of *Fumu* Diyeve II on Tahoe Island in the Kavango River. One of the concerns during any reconnaissance trip by a German colonial official to the Kavango was always the identification of possible obstructions and fortifications if a military operation in the territory were to be undertaken. Apart from notes on the kind and numbers of weapons, and the number of fit adult men that might be deployed, there was always a special interest in the design and security arrangements of the residences. These were customarily surrounded by palisades consisting of saplings rammed into the earth close together – as may be seen in Photos 1, 4, 6 and 11. They served, firstly, as protection against animal predators, but it was this fortification that had in 1903 protected *Hompa* Himarwa against serious harm during First Lieutenant Volkmann's attack, with rifles and pistols, from the opposite bank of the river.

A mere two months after his first expedition Zawada was back at the Kavango. During this sojourn he demonstrated to the Kavango people the penetrating force of machine-gun fire by shooting at a palisade similar to the ones used to protect Kavango compounds, which had been specially built for the exhibition.⁶² Thus, it had been made clear that, after they had resettled on the German side of the river and escaped the Portuguese colonial occupation, the fortification of their compounds and residences would offer no protection against the German colonial force. In the case of *Fumu* Diyeve II the situation was somewhat different. As Photo 16 shows, his compound was inadequately palisaded, and there had never been any need to improve on the existing provision. Immediately upon his accession to power *Fumu* Diyeve II had moved his compound from the Sibanana Island, where his predecessor Dimbu I, or Andara, had lived, to Tahoe – precisely because it was relatively safe against hostile transgression.⁶³ The island was surrounded by rapids which were difficult to navigate. The *Fumu's* residence, thus, presented a problem. In 1903 Volkmann had called it a "robber's castle" in an "impregnable island terrain".⁶⁴ Against this background, the political significance of Photo 16 – which offers the first representation of Diyeve II's "robber's castle" – from the colonial point of view becomes obvious. The picture was taken from a high rock overlooking the compound, which we meet in a description by Major Viktor Franke, who spent a few days with Diyeve II towards the end of 1906.⁶⁵

There is one last image of Diyeve II which should be discussed here because it shows an important aspect of the *Fumu's* political attitude towards the Germans. In contrast to Kandjimi Hauwanga and *Hompa* Nyangana, Diyeve II maintained ambivalence in his attitude towards the German colonial administration and the Mission throughout his rule. Diyeve II found himself in a dilemma: his sovereignty and autonomy were threatened both by his rival, *Fumu* Mukoya, and by the Tawana, who also claimed paramountcy

62 Zawada reports as follows on the demonstration: "Each gun fired 500 rounds at 200 m. The targets behind the palisades were shattered or at least struck by several bullets. Some of the trunks forming the palisade were pierced, and a large number of bullets had found a passage between the poles and had ricocheted to some effect. The result visibly impressed the natives. They would not leave the target area, and could for a long time thereafter be heard excitedly discussing what they had seen". (BArchB-R 1001/2184: 25B, Zawada, *Bericht über den Verlauf der Okawango-Expedition November 09*, Namutoni, 12.12.1909, translation AE). Before the shooting demonstration Kandjimi had expressed the opinion "that the targets behind the palisade would probably not be hit" (*ibid.*, translation AE). A similar demonstration was arranged for the Mbunza *Hompa* Karupu, about whose reaction Zawada reports: "Here the shooting excited quite remarkable glee. Karupu and his men did not calm down all morning, and surrounded the machine-gun with expressions of undisguised amazement". (*ibid.*: 27B, translation AE)

63 Josef Wüst, "Cathol. Mission Andara, Caprivizipfel, S.W. Afrika", unpubl. manuscript, 1932: 25ff.

64 BArchB-R 1001/1784: 60, Volkmann, *Bericht über eine Reise nach Andara am Okawango*, Grootfontein, 1.10.1903 (translation AE). The actual reason for moving the residence was a raid by *Hompa* Nyangana, which Volkmann did not want to admit as the reason "allegedly because he had been fired at and robbed by Nyangana, a *Hompa* who lived about 90 km upstream, but perhaps really because he wished to remove himself from the reach of the law, with which he, like all the rulers in the Okavango Valley, was not infrequently at odds". (translation AE)

65 NAN-BGR F.9.b, Franke, *Bericht über eine Expedition nach dem Okawango*, 20.11.1906: "Several men offered to apprise the *Fumu* of my arrival. I was to climb a high rock opposite the compound of Libebe, so that 'the great *Fumu*' could inspect me and so believe the messengers. I did as they bade me, but did not myself glimpse the ruler in turn". (translation AE) Despite his self-display, Franke could not prevail on the *Fumu* to call on him in his camp, but in the end was forced to let himself be ferried across to the *Fumu's* residence.

among the Mbukushu population, and gave expression to this claim by forcibly collecting tribute and taxes. The thought that he might rid himself of this harassment with the support of the German colonial administration and the Mission must have come to Diyeve II; yet it must also have been clear to him that autonomy would come at a high price, and would, at least for some time, entail new dependence. That would explain his duplicitous conduct.

In 1907 Diyeve II had renewed an agreement with the Catholic missionaries, which they had entered into as early as 1903, regarding the founding of a mission station. When the missionaries finally commenced construction in 1908, he on the one hand assured them of his full support, and on the other put intolerable difficulties in their way. Under such pressure the missionaries at length ceased to believe that their enterprise could prosper, and abandoned it in July 1909.⁶⁶ After they had departed, Diyeve II transferred his hopes to the German colonial power. This is the background against which Photo 17 is to be interpreted.

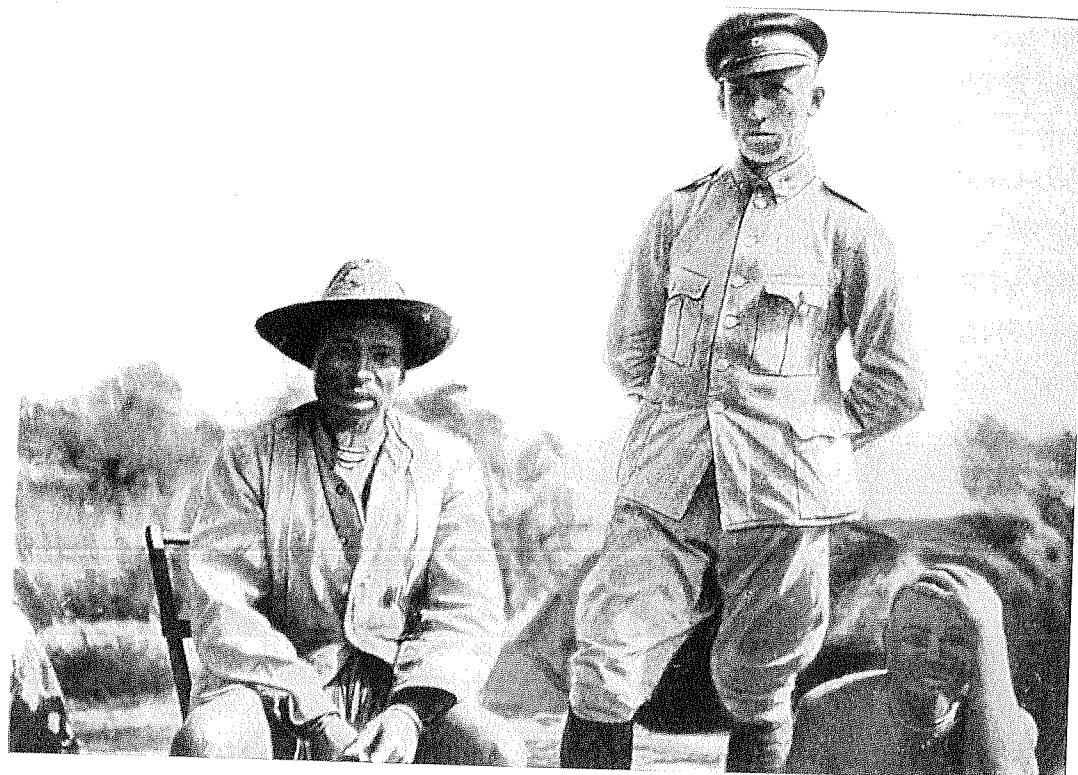


Photo 17: "Der Regenmacher-König Libebe und Hupel"
("The 'Rainmaker King', Libebe, and Hupel"). (Rafalski, *Niemandsländ*: 172)

It shows *Fumu* Diyeve II with German Police Sergeant Hupel. During a visit in July 1911 from the new Imperial Resident of the Caprivi Strip, von Frankenberg, Diyeve had uttered an urgent desire for help against the transgressions of the Tawana, and had in writing petitioned for a protection treaty. Von Frankenberg thereupon left Police Sergeant Hupel behind with Diyeve II as a "stationary patrol".⁶⁷ The

⁶⁶ Gotthardt, *Okavango*: 32 ff.

⁶⁷ BArchB-R 1001/1808: 194, von Frankenberg –
Gouvernement, Libebe, 16.7.1911 (translation AE).

relative positioning of the main actors in this image is unusual: whereas the *Fumu* is seated, Police Sergeant Hupel remains standing, which makes the power relationship between the two very clear. The ambivalent attitude which the *Fumu* had shown towards the missionaries is repeated in the relationship to Hupel. No report by Hupel himself about his experiences with Diyeve II during the former's sojourn has survived. His stay is, however, illuminated by an Austrian geographer, Franz Seiner, who visited the Kavango area in the middle of 1911. From 10 August he spent several days with Diyeve II, where he had the opportunity to observe Hupel and Diyeve II together. His account led Governor Seitz to remark as follows later: "Seiner's description shows how mistaken von Frankenberg had been in his opinion of Libebe".⁶⁸

Seiner mentioned several incidents involving Hupel and Diyeve II; for instance, the *Fumu* summoned Hupel and Seiner by messenger to report to him for greetings. Seiner would have complied in the interest of his work, but "the Sergeant indignantly declined, letting him know in return that he must be mad to expect whites to present themselves for greeting kaffirs". The *Fumu's* response was in kind: "Libebe was the lord of the entire area and as such forbade us, unless further permission is sought, to travel on his canals". That again was not acceptable to the Sergeant, who retorted that "he would teach the *Fumu* a lesson showing that he, the Sergeant, was the true master of the place, and would prove to him that the land was ruled by the white not the black man".⁶⁹ As soon as Governor Seitz heard of this, and even before he had had a report from the Sergeant, he cancelled Hupel's patrol for thwith.⁷⁰ After Hupel had left and the establishment of a police station, so urgently desired by the *Fumu*, had come to nothing, Diyeve II petitioned the Mission to resume its endeavours. Thus, the second Catholic Kavango Mission Station was finally founded in Andara in 1913, giving the Mission, ten years after its first venture among the Kwangali, two permanent outposts in the region.

Conclusion

Photographs are without question an important historiographical source. Understood and interpreted as pictorial documents conveying specific information and messages, they offer insights into the past of a region and its inhabitants which far exceed their merely illustrative function. The picture that "paints a thousand words" comes into its own in the African colonial context. Precisely because photography was a costly and technically demanding procedure, such images cannot be regarded as casual productions. They were invariably taken after a conscious decision and with a specific intention by the photographer: to serve as arguments in the colonial discourse at several levels which become apparent in the private character of the images, in their utilisation in internal administrative reports and, finally, in their marketing in publications.

68 BArchB-R 1001/1809: 7, Gouverneur – Staatssekretär des Reichs-Kolonialamtes, Windhuk, 29.9.1911. Seiner had reported on Hupel's situation as follows: "According to his remarks, the police station at Libebe was in a sorry state, having very few provisions left at its disposal, very few goods for barter and no cash at all. It was situated on an island and had not a single boat, thus being entirely dependent on the goodwill of Libebe, who treated the Sergeant now cordially, now with hostility". (BArchB-R 1001/1809: 15, Seiner – Gouverneur, Schampura am Okawango, 30.8.1911, translation AE). Von Frankenberg later justified the abandonment of Police Sergeant Hupel with the following argument: "Of course, w I never would have left Hupel on this, after all, rather exposed post, had I had even the slightest suspicion that the mood among the natives was not favourable to the cause". (BArchB-R 1001/2185: 99, von Frankenberg, *Bericht über die Reise nach dem Okawango vom 5.6. bis 24.8.1911*, Schuckmannsburg, 29.8.1911, translation AE).

69 BArchB-R 1001/1809: 15ff, Seiner – Gouverneur, Schampura am Okawango, 30.8.1911 (translation AE).

70 BArchB-R 1001/2185: 71f, Gouverneur – Staatssekretär des Reichs-Kolonialamtes, Windhuk, 4.9.1911.

The number of available photographic documents alone is a significant indicator of the importance given to a region and its inhabitants within this discourse. The small number of images depicting the communities along the Kavango River correlates with its marginal political and economic significance within the total ambit of German South West Africa, while, at the same time, it documents the situation outside the sphere under actual control by the German colonial administration. In contrast to the Portuguese policy, full assertion of colonial power along the Kavango River was never realised, nor even seriously attempted by the Germans. Until the termination of German colonial rule in 1915, the Kavango remained a region which, although officially within the borders of German South West Africa, never came under effective colonial rule or control. Contrary to the Portuguese forts, the establishment of a police station at Kuring-Kuru in 1910 was a mere symbolic gesture which entailed no practical political consequences.

The interpretation of colonial photographs needs to be undertaken against this background. In the pictures taken by German colonial officials and travellers, the rulers of the Kavango are presented, primarily, as targets of colonising ambitions. A different message is communicated in the photographs taken by de Almeida, which document the colonial occupation of the Portuguese side of the river. They show the rulers of the Kavango primarily as vassals, decontextualised and bereft of all attributes of power or esteem. A large part of the population fled to the German side of the river in order to escape taxation, forced labour and other indignities imposed by the Portuguese colonial administration. To accomplish this, *Hompa* Nyangana had to court the patronage of the Mission; thus, the only preserved photographs of the Gciriku were taken by missionaries. This bears testimony to their good relations with the Gciriku population, as well as *Hompa* Nyangana and his son Mbambo. In contrast to the German colonial administration, the Mission had striven from the outset to exercise an influence in the Kavango area, the goal of which was the transformation of everyday life in the spirit of the Christian-European world view and its values. According to their central importance, these objectives, too, found expression in photographic images.

However persuasively photographs are used to support arguments in the colonial discourse, they nevertheless do not only reflect colonial interests and strategies; they also lend themselves to projects aiming to deconstruct the photographer's understanding of himself, his role within the colonial space and its inhabitants, and his attitude towards his photographic subject. Apart from his selection of the subject and the distance at which he positions himself, the posing of his human subjects is deeply significant. According to the photographer's intention and his actual, or perhaps merely fantasised, relationship of power to the subject, the Kavango rulers have been presented as equal negotiating partners, as dignified potentates, or as conquered colonial subordinates. Of primary importance to

the design and the implicit evidence which it is intended to convey is the positioning of the persons photographed: their props, surroundings and background, as well as the posture they have been asked to assume.

In this respect, the photographs show pronounced differences. The Kavango have variously been portrayed standing, seated or squatting; isolated or surrounded by their family or trusted familiars; exposed to intrusive colonial scrutiny in an open space or at the centre of their power; with or without the attributes of their dignity and might. The interpretation of a photograph will be further influenced by taking into account whether colonial officials, missionaries or adventurers permitted themselves to be photographed grouped with Africans, or whether such images were avoided. To take this thought further: in such deconstructive analyses of the colonial situation, even those photographs which were never taken are significant.