

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST OF THE HIGHLANDS

I LEFT Kabri in the early morning of Wednesday, 18th June (T. 61°, B. 24.58), with a strong east wind blowing. The road was in a northerly direction, and we descended the ridges very gradually until, after an hour and a half, we came into the valley a thousand feet below Kabri. It was half a mile wide, with a stream ten yards wide flowing to the left in full flood, and too deep to be walked through.

There was a village on the far side, and two or three old men came with raphia fronds, and after an hour had constructed a bridge strong enough for us to pass over. There were a few Hausa traders there also, who must have been glad to meet me, or they would have had a long wait till the water went down. In an hour, however, it had fallen over a foot, but the ground was very swampy beyond.

On the other side there was a high and steep hillside to climb. Here some mushroom-like ant-hills showed themselves, which I had not yet seen on the road, and we also came to another defensive trench. By now we had meandered greatly, and, though it was nearly four hours from the start, Kabri did not seem more than two and a half to three miles off over the valley in a straight line.

A few minutes later we were on a hill-top (B. 24.74), and the direction of Kuma was marked by a pair of trees, bearing due north magnetic. The middle of the Sabri range was 87°, and the Gotel mountains (a certain peak) 58°. We next passed the village of Belekerker, with a rest-camp. All about were bare hills with many red ravines, some filling with a little forest. Then there was a branch of the Okari to be crossed, which I was



Building a temporary bridge between Kabri and Titong.



Some followers of Hama Joda.

told again joins the river of the same name, Makari, near Yang at some lower spot, and we reached Titong in five hours (B. 24.92).

This town is buried in vegetation, and we passed round it to the rest-camp on a bare hill beyond.

Here I received a big present of butter from the Fula Chief, Jauro Hama Joda, who resides at a village beyond Kuma.

The Chief Ngebana—or, rather, his linguist—gave me a lot of information. They began by saying the Mambila were all one, but later modified it by saying only Kabri, Titong, and Kuma talked the same. They said they moved here from Benerkel, as they pronounced that place, when that village got too small for them, and had previously been at another place a little farther off. Their previous history was that they had always been in this country. Mambila is not a name of their own. Like Kaka, it was given them by the Fulbe. They themselves only use the name of each country. The language, I found, differed considerably from that of Ngokh.

There are no country cattle, and never had been, only sheep and goats. What cattle there are were brought by the Fulbe. There is no cotton grown nor spun. The earthenware pots come from other parts of the Mambila country. Also there is no iron. They specialize in corn, which they exchange at the markets for manufactured goods. There is maize and guinea-corn, and a small red grain also which looks like benniseed. There are no ground-nuts.

The elder men here all have a heavy growth of beard, and in appearance differ from the Wokude people. Low, sloping foreheads seem common, and a ruffianly aspect.

I had to hear a palaver. The market is at no great distance. It long belonged to the present chief's father; then it was usurped by a neighbouring headman, but Major Glasson had recently given it back to the present chief. A certain big man named Barap, whom, I gathered, was an unsatisfactory character, and looked it, and who had been in prison, had tried to "chop" the market. Apparently he had once succeeded in obtaining a temporary possession of it. I told them Major Glasson's order must be obeyed. If Barap had any complaint he could make

it when Major Glasson came again. I further said the market was for the good of all men. It was not for the big people only, and the big people must not humbug it.

When I left Titong next day (T. 62°, B. 24.98) there was a dense mist, which lasted a long time, but I gathered it was all bare grassland, as it had been at Titong. At a swamp in a depression there were some tree-ferns, but neither timber nor raphia. There was a herd of cattle of mixed colours, showing that they belonged to the settled Fulbe and not to the nomad Bororo. On the rise beyond were the "pair" of trees I had seen beyond Titong, and which now proved to be four in all. Then the rest-house of Kuma showed up due north, with a small forest patch to the right, which indicated the village.

From a bare hill there was a clear view to the Sabri Mountains, but Gotel was obscured. In half an hour more there was a hill ahead on which was a crowd of many-coloured horsemen. This was the party of the Fula Chief, Hama Joda, who had come to meet me with drums and fifes, and after salutations had been exchanged, preceded me very slowly to the rest-house which was a mile on. We had a short conversation, and after I had taken some photographs he went off to his own town.

A little later there arrived the Mambila Chief of Kuma. He had been to Gashaka to take his tax money, and came hurrying back to receive me. He himself was mounted, but no one else. After we had exchanged salutations he went home, and in the distance I could see his people come out of the town to meet him with their shields and spears and in full ceremonial war dress. I sent Suli at once to say I wanted to see some of them, and they came, some with head-dresses and with large shields in which a semi-circle is cut out top and bottom so they can put their heads over. They fixed up a sham fight, attacking Suli, who defended himself with his Hausa sword, the warriors trying all the time to spear him. The shields are woven of fibre, and can be used either way up.

As for the dress of the men, it was merely a piece of blue cloth between the legs; but instead of any rag serving, some care was exercised to give it a thickened edge. Bead necklaces were worn. The chief himself was in Hausa robes.

The "presents" that poured in were excessive, for they had to be returned by larger presents. The butter especially was vast in quantity, and to the entire satisfaction of my following, for, of course, it was far in excess of my personal requirements.

It was market day—one in every ten days—and was held on the grass just behind the rest-house; which, incidentally, though it was interesting to see the people go by, gave me no privacy, for they walked on both sides of my hut. There were Mambila, Fula women, and Hausa men, etc., present; but it was practically only a food market, and was over by noon. The Mambila ladies, when in full dress, hang a freshly plucked bunch of leaves in front and behind.

In talking to the Mambila Chief in the evening, he denied that his people were ever called Mambila by the Fulbe. They are not Mambila, and have always called themselves Torbe, and do still. It would have been useless to query that Fula plural termination "be" in the name, so I left it. They have long been settled in the country, and have no record of a previous habitat. They intermarry freely with the Titong. They had no cattle before the Fulbe came, only sheep and goats. Their chiefs have always been different from those of Titong.

As to their customs: in burial, bodies of both men and women alike, and the chief also, are buried in a niche off the grave. The body sits up and the niche is closed with mats, etc. This is done at the back of the house. The head is not cut off, but the belly is opened and examined. Camwood dust is put on the body. There is none growing in the country, but it is imported via Titong. Stones are preserved to represent the deceased's head, and food is poured on them. The chief's "heads" are preserved in a medicine house. It was suggested that there were four there, but there was much doubt about it. The father of the present chief was killed by the Fulbe.

In marrying, wives can be taken from the same town. Head-money consists of hoes, and goats also are given. Formerly spears were given, but they said this was no longer done, though a subsequent statement seemed to contradict it. They said that formerly the suitor arrived with a spear in one hand and a fowl in the other. Then on a second and final visit he arrived with a

hoe and a goat ; and this was said still to be the procedure.

The Mambila there seldom have more than two wives, and commonly only one. I did not see many children, and was led to gather the infantile death-rate is big. Neither goat's nor cow's milk is given to children.

There seemed to be a difference here in the naming of twins. The father does it, and there are not fixed names.

As regards language, the numerals differ very slightly from those at Titong, but the names of the days of the week are quite different. They said they had not adopted the Mohammedan seven-day week yet, in spite of Fula influence.

I could not pass through without a complaint being brought. One Bonso complained that the Fula cows had eaten or destroyed all the corn in his farm. The small boy in charge of the animals had gone to sleep at midday, and the cattle passed over the farm. I asked the Mambila Chief why he did not take the matter up with the Fula Chief, to whom apparently the cattle belonged personally. He said he had complained on previous occasions till he was tired. Apparently, as the country has been put under Fula rulers there is no redress against them as they themselves are the court of appeal.

A feature of Kuma was a stoutly built middle-aged man who was crazy and wandered round the rest-house compound, eternally searching the ground for something. He was quite well nourished, and was apparently not so far demented as to reject all clothing whatever, for he had a small piece of clothing hanging down in front.

The following morning at 5.15 the readings were—thermometer, 64° ; barometer, 24.67. There are two roads from Kuma to Gashaka, one direct via Namba and Sangerepa, and a longer one, which I took, and which is the main road. I was told the short road was very bad and difficult, and there was no accommodation in the villages. Further, Hama Joda seemed so disappointed I did not want to visit his own village and travel on the road he had had cleared, and on which he had put the rest-houses in order, that I agreed to go.

It is only an hour and forty minutes to Jalingo in an easterly direction over bare country, and we kept generally to one level.

There was a dense mist, so nothing could be seen ; further, not knowing how short was the march, I was too soon, and was asked to come slowly, as the reception party was not ready. Hama Joda eventually turned up with a great crowd of followers operating a big drum and many wind instruments. He made a great show, and throughout spared no pains to see that I was comfortable and had all I wanted.

The Fula town is quite new, only about three years old, and is either called Hama Joda or Jalingo.

In meeting such a man as Hama Joda, whatever his shortcomings, one felt at once one was dealing with a man of a different calibre from the ordinary inhabitants of the country. One could talk to him more naturally, and the conversation would not be entirely one of asking questions. He is a man new to the country, and had perhaps aggressive views. He gave me to understand, and Suli had told me so earlier, that he was the big chief of all the country, and all the Mambila had been given to him. I did not gather even he owed authority to Gashaka. When I got to Gashaka I found it slightly different, and that Hama Joda had put his ambitions into practice. He was merely a man taken by Gashaka and sent south to act as chief over his own countrymen only. Later Major Glasson gave him four small Mambila villages as his own. All his claims to further authority were not recognized by Gashaka, who was distinctly annoyed with him. However, all this came out later.

Several small Mambila Chiefs came to see me, and were all introduced one by one by Hama Joda. There were seven or eight of them, and apparently they recognized they were in his hands.

Hama Joda is a brown man, and before he dropped his chin cover I thought he was quite young ; but when I saw his beard, it had grey hairs in it.

He brought a brother and nephew to introduce to me, and mentioned his mother, so I said I should be pleased to see her. She came with a sister in the afternoon, and at first sight seemed extraordinarily young. She said it was forty years since she had borne her son. This would make the old lady about sixty, for there was apparently an elder brother, since Hama Joda had said

the nephew he brought was the son of an elder brother, though, of course, it might have only been a half-brother. The old lady said she was a Kuma woman, and had been born there, and as a small girl had been captured by the Fulbe and taken to Banyo. She was now no longer a pagan woman, but quite Fula in all her ways, and had perfect manners.

There was much bad feeling between the Chief of Kuma and Hama Joda. Kuma would have nothing to do with Hama Joda, and resisted all the latter's pretensions. He took his tax money himself direct to Gashaka, but Hama Joda claimed he should pay it through him. He had just come back from Gashaka, where he had been to pay the money, when he met me. Hama Joda naturally wanted to get rid of such a thorn in his flesh, and in the evening, when the other Mambila Chiefs were introduced, I was told that the Kuma people had not any further use for Yipso (the Chief of Kuma), and asked for his brother Kumaso, an elderly man and seemingly quite a nonentity, in his place. Kumaso was there himself. I said it was nothing to do with me, and they must hold the matter over for Major Glasson.

The man whose farm the cattle had trodden down had followed me here and complained to Hama Joda. So I asked the latter about it. He said it was not known whose cattle had eaten the corn—the man had said it was Hama Joda's own—and further, he had been told not to make a farm near the road.

It is a contest between pastoral and agricultural rights which is exemplified in such a case. Unfortunately for the agriculturist, the pastoralists under the present policy of the Northern Nigerian administration have the right to decide in this matter, being placed over the agriculturists. Of course, I could do nothing in the matter, and the man whose farm produce had been trampled down or eaten would just have to grin and bear it. I gave, however, an account of it later to Major Glasson.

It was all open country here. The Sabri Mountains, the highest northern peak of which bore 140°, was now clearly visible, and consist mostly of bare rock with some grass. There is "salt" water near it, so it is a place of resort for cattle. The right end of Gotel bore 75°.

The "band" played in the town quite a long time in the

evening. There is a new type of water-pot here. They are large and globular, with a large mouth and small lip.

I wanted to go on next day alone, as I hate a crowd, but Hama Joda would not hear of it. However, I told him and his party to keep away, and he was only able to ascertain a few times on the march to Dunderi that I was still alive. Besides, he and his party were on horses and had to follow the main track, while I followed the carriers by a direct route across country. We descended into a valley of no great depth after leaving Jalingo, where we crossed three streams going to the right, but which I presume joined other water which eventually found its way out north. After that it was an undulating, bare plateau for most of the way. There were a few trees scattered singly over the landscape, and a little forest along the valley bottoms, and our direction was generally east by north. The red wash-outs in the hillsides, which had been a feature of the landscape, had now ceased. At about two and a half hours out we came to a farm, and there were a few others scattered about in the distance, but otherwise the country was uninhabited. Later we began to draw nearer to Gotel, and Sabri slipped away to the right as we passed its northern spurs. Dunderi rest-house showed up on a hill, but it meant much meandering to get to it, for the track was on the ridges, and there were several steep valleys to be gone round. Eventually, after five hours on the road, we reached the camp (B. 24.87). There was only the house for Europeans, a big round house with mat walls which had not long been erected, a few beehive huts for the boys and carriers; and Hama Joda had a camp out of sight in a wooded valley below. The camp is called Dunderi, from a small conspicuous hill a mile to the west-north-west. All the food had to be brought here from Jalingo or the farms we passed, but Hama Joda intended making a permanent settlement of people near here, he said.

We were now at the end of the highlands. The undulating ground had ceased, and it was all rugged country. Below to the north was a great plain—over a thousand feet down, I guessed from the top—and to the east was Gotel, a solid, rugged block of rock. Behind us and to the west was the smooth, undulating grassland we had just passed over.

I think Hama Joda was disappointed I had not stuck to the partly cleared road he had been making, but it was too long. The horses tried to follow me, but got badly hung up at the deep narrow streams, and stuck in the mud. It showed how horses hamper a man in going across country, and I could see the reason for the wonderful meanderings of the road, for a Fula man hates going on foot. The latter half of the road was a faint track in the grass, and, getting behind the carriers and guide once when they disappeared over a hill, I missed the way completely.

I picked up a couple of hours before Dunderi a flat stone artefact, about eight inches long, which seemed to be a hoe. It had been roughly hacked or pecked into shape.

Hama Joda had quite a lot of food ready here, and I gave him some stores—tea, biscuits, golden syrup, and candles. He would have liked some kerosene, but I only had a couple of bottles of it left. I regretted parting with my stores, as I was still doubtful how long I should be before I could replenish; but the piles of food he brought required some special recompense, and he was pleased to have them. It made him feel civilized, and different from the pagan chiefs.

There was a good variety of flowering plants in this upland region. I noted raphia, tree-ferns, white arum lilies, *Lissochilus* orchids, an orchid like the English early purple, a yellow coreopsis, a blue "cornflower," and a plant, very common, with a cluster of white flowers. The holes of foxes or some other burrowing animal were very common, but I saw none of them.

In the afternoon we had a deluge of rain, and the hut was porous and cold. Next morning the readings were—thermometer, 61°; barometer, 24.69.

Here I said good-bye to Hama Joda, and had a discussion with him on the lie of the road, which he was quite intelligent about. Altogether he was a very intelligent man, but as I went further I found his brother chiefs were not fond of him, and I heard more of him.

We now left the high plateau for good. There was a narrow path leading steeply down the sharp top of a ridge. The headwaters of the Gashaka River began on our right, and went down as a torrent with falls and cascades tumbling over white boulders

in the ravine below. Our descent, too, was precipitous in places, and how loaded carriers would get up, except with the smallest of loads, I scarcely saw. After an hour and a half, when we crossed the rocky bed of the Gashaka river, now ten yards wide, the aneroid had registered a fall of 2,050 feet. A little less than a mile on, Dunderi hill bore 218°.

Two and a half hours from leaving we came to a broad cattle track crossing our narrow track. On the way down I had early seen its easy gradient going up the hill two miles to the left, and I could not understand why the rest-house should not be on it instead of at Dunderi. When I reached Sabere I found the reason was a difference of opinion between the chief there and Hama Joda as to the line the main road should take. By the cattle road one can pass to Titong, avoiding Jalingo and Kuma, in one day. This is the same old palaver, dating back hundreds—indeed, thousands—of years, leaving trunk roads to the local people when they ought to be in the hands of the central administration. The Romans took the trunk roads out of the hands of the local authorities, and King Belin of Britain in the third or fourth century B.C. is reputed to have done the same.

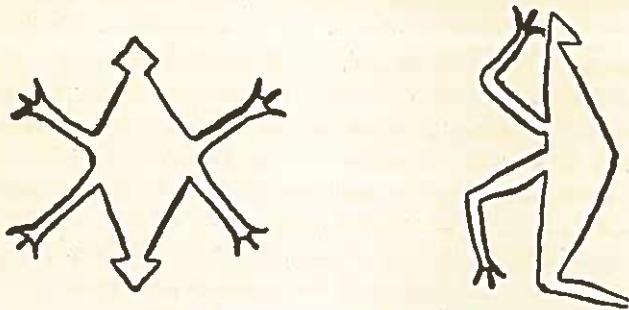
We were now almost in a different world. There were high mountains on both sides of us, instead of our being on the top. We were also in real Savannah forest, or the dry region forest, which grows in the long grass, the annual burning of which the trees withstand. This is in distinction with the wet or coast forest, which admits no grass within it and goes down at once before fire. Guinea-grain plants have reappeared; there are elephant grass and screw pine along the streams, also the dwarf shrub with the big tuber which burns so fiercely in the fire.

In four and a half hours we had reached the rest-house at Sabere. A short-cut had been made through a corn field, which I thought quite wrong, but a Fula Chief is indifferent to the views of his pagan subjects or slaves. Sabere, which is the name on the German maps, is also called Jauro Haman, after the present chief.

The valley here is a broad expanse, broken up by the Gashaka river and its affluents, the Mai Sabere, Maio Kurngal, Maio Gotel, and others. Maio, shortened to Mai, is the Fula for a

river. In the hills round are many wooded ravines. The concave bends seemed to have forest which at a distance looked like the coast forest, and on the convex outer bends was dense Savannah forest. There is a forest patch close to the rest-house with monkeys in it, and in the farms are bushfowl and guinea-fowl. The town is half a mile from the rest-house.

On the outer wall of my house were some mural paintings in white clay lined with red and black. Some were pure geometrical figures, but others seemed to be animals and human beings made to fit geometrical ideas, and I failed to identify them.



WALL DRAWINGS AT SABERE

This town is a colony of Banyo. It was built twenty-two years ago (say 1901) by the present man's father, and he came with him. The country was then entirely uninhabited, and not even the Bororo came here. This is supported by the fact that the timber on the hills and in the valley is fairly intact. Cattle and their herdsmen are very destructive to trees. Up the middle of the valley, where the cattle pass now, the trees are very much thinner.

The Bororo Chief, Ardo Bodel (Ardo=a small chief), brought some milk and butter. He and his people were much upset. The Chief of Gashaka is on the road tax collecting, which the Bororo do not like. They said their cattle were dying by being detained for the counting, but the chief here said it was rubbish.

Jauro Haman brought me pineapples, which I had not seen for ages, and bananas, together with the usual butter, fowls and eggs. I gave him a tin of tea and golden syrup. Tea is greatly

appreciated by the Fula Chiefs, who seldom see it. Unfortunately, my sugar was so low I could not spare any.

This is the description of the "Fula" guide who came with me from Dunderi. Thin-featured, very slim and very black, thus showing how the mixture with blacks may in some cases change the complexion, but leaves the physique more or less intact. It may not always be so, for many so-called Fula chiefs, by much intermixing, have become pure negro, the Fula strain having been swamped. It is difficult to prove into such a subject without data going back many generations, and to compare the results with a cross with Europeans. In any case, a small percentage of either European or Fula blood acts as a great stimulus to the negro race. This guide bore as armament three spears, apparently never used, with ornamental marks made by fire, and the points were covered with a leather cap. He also had a long bow made of a single piece of wood as usual, and a good supply of arrows in a quiver with a leather tassel attached. His dress was a blue gown.

There was rain in the afternoon and night, and at 5 a.m. the readings were—thermometer, 72°; barometer, 26.90.

Our general direction was north-west down the valley, and the road was little more than a track. I recorded twenty-eight streams practically all going to the left as we were following the east side of the valley. There was thick bush, as yesterday, and all the streams almost were fringed with thick growth; and screw pines, some bearing their pineapple-like fruit, were very common. Two of the streams were big. The Gamgam, about two and a half hours out, was thirty yards wide. Leopard and hyena tracks were very common. There is a good deal of quartz, and a few ant-hills dotted about.

Just beyond the Mangiti, the Chief of Gashaka, who is the official District Head of all this country, met me. He wanted to know why I had not got a horse, and a black one was run along for me to come in by. He had, as a matter of fact, sent along a horse some time previously. Where it had got to I did not know, but it had gone lame. We passed the abandoned site of the old German rest-house, for after leaving Jauro Haman we had come on the main road. At noon, after a tiring march of six hours nearly, I reached the rest-house of Yakuba.

There are a number of baobab trees about this town, indicating that it is of some age, and a fan-palm also showed itself. Guinea-fowl and bush-fowl were common.

On the top of the mountain range on the right of the valley there projects a rocky pinnacle like a slightly bent finger. This bore 358° from the rest-house, and after leaving Gashaka I saw it again to the north, till it became an old friend.

A couple of hours before reaching Yakuba I picked up a neolithic axehead, rather worn; and on the high ground near Dunderi, the previous day, I found a thin oval stone which had been roughly pecked into shape.

On Sunday, the 24th, I came into Gashaka. At 6 a.m. the readings were thermometer 76°, barometer 28.04, so I was down to normal levels again. Gashaka said he would come along with me, and leave the tax collecting to a mallam and others. I think he was only too glad of an excuse. He has come along with a very small retinue, and makes less show than Hama Joda. I started ahead of him. During the march I noted twenty-seven streams, all going to the left. Among the bigger ones were Mai Chichal, Bagashi, and the Gamgam. At about four hours from the start, farms began in the valley, and on our left was the Gamgam, going with us. This we followed for three-quarters of an hour, and then we crossed it. It was about forty yards wide here, and when I crossed two feet deep, but the heavy rain during the morning brought it up, so that a canoe was put on in the afternoon. There was a horse there for me to ride over on, but its mouth was bleeding, and I would have nothing to do with it, and a man carried me over. I was told by Suli that the horse had been foolish enough to oppose its bit, and so its mouth was hurt. On one march a party of horses I was following left a trail of blood on the road. I told Suli to tell the owner that this horse ought to rest for a month.

Over the river the town is on the flat ground ahead, and the rest-house up a hill about 200 feet above the river (B. 28.48). The march was a little short of five hours.

The chief arrived an hour after me. I had left Suli at the river to salute him.

CHAPTER XIV

GASHAKA

THE town of Gashaka stands on a plain where numerous mountain valleys debouch and where the Gamgam river meets the Gashaka river, the height here being about 1,240 feet above the sea. After I had crossed the latter near its source it bore away to the west, and has now come down again on the other side of the mountain ridge named Ndjim on the map. From the elevated site of the rest-house, of which the only defect, like most other rest-houses, was its darkness, there were very fine views to the rugged mountains all round. The view up the cultivated valley down which I had come was especially fine at sunset. The pinnacle rock above Yakuba was conspicuous, and bore 110°.

At the foot of the small plateau is the market-place, and the town is mostly in the angle between the rivers. There was never a great attendance at the market, but Hausa men used to sit there all day, waiting patiently for somebody to come and buy their imported cloths and other goods; and the town is not large.

The chief's house, on the east side of the square, consists of a number of houses in a large square wall, the wall, as usual, being thatched to keep the rain from washing it down. A few of the houses inside were square. The mosque is an oblong building with four lines of wooden posts. It has a mud wall, and the grass roof is of considerable height. The Alkali's court is a well-built rectangular house with a grass roof. The prison, also in the square, is a small mud building with a mud wall all round. The half-dozen prisoners, in accordance with the approved European custom, were out weeding the square.

There was a good deal of rain while I was here. The corn