

<sup>1</sup>District Commissioner's Office

West Nile District

Arua, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1949

Dear Capt. Pitman,

During a recent leave at Kabale I spent a couple of days of Mt. Sabinio. I thought it might be of interest to you if I mentioned the movement of gorillas in the Bufumbira area of the Mugahinga and Sabinio volcanoes, having visited that region on three occasions this year.

On a visit in January a band of gorillas was very much in evidence by continuous 'barking', fresh droppings and uprooting of bamboo on the Mugahinga-Sabinio saddle. During an ascent in February of the north-eastern slopes, I heard a gorilla 'bark' just below the 10,000 foot mark and found droppings up to that height.

A few days ago, on August 8<sup>th</sup>, when climbing the volcano by the same route, I was surprised to find numerous droppings, about a day old, well above the 10,000 foot line. It appeared as if my route to the summit of Sabinio was already known to these denizens of its slopes. This particular route which entails crossing over Rutari peak (about 11,000 feet) is quite steep.

This peak, subject to bitterly cold winds, is connected to the main Sabinio range by a ridge which is reached after descending from Rutari for a couple of hundred feet. In places, the ridge is narrow and also steep with, at certain points, sheer drops of 200-300 feet. There is no great difficulty in traversing the ridge but care has got to be exercised, especially after a heavy fall of rain. From Rutari peak to the summit via the ridge takes about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour. A number of droppings were in evidence all the way down to the ridge, across and up again on the far side (in places where a human being has to scramble and make use of his hands) to within about 150 feet of the summit, at about 11,800 feet. Here the 'trail' followed a convenient ridge downwards, presumably to the bamboos of Ruanda-Urundi.

This movement from one side of the volcano to the other may or may not be of interest but, what struck me more than anything was the gorillas' endurance and capabilities as a hill climber and scrambler. This, of course, may be well known, hence, I apologise for relating facts which may be really of no interest.

Having become quite tired myself on this last trip, in particularly filthy weather, I could not fail to admire the endurance of the few gorillas a day ahead of me (who probably crossed in good weather), feeling, as a result, that you too might be interested in their mountaineering activities.

Yours, etc., R C Lanning – Provincial Administration

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<sup>1</sup> Natural History Museum, UK, Pitman Papers, C82-84