

The Bieber Family's Fascination with Africa

Klaus BIEBER

Friedrich Julius Bieber (1873–1924)

This story starts on Christmas Eve 1881 in Vienna, Austria. Friedrich Julius, called Fritzl, was just over eight years old when his father presented him with his Christmas gift. It was a book, *Quer durch Africa* (*Across Africa*), describing the travels of Gerhard Rohlfs through the Sahara and Verney Cameron in East Africa. Interestingly, Ethiopia is mentioned only once in this book. However, it aroused Fritzl's interest in Africa – he just wanted to see the continent. In later years he wrote in the book, 'Received from Papa at Christmas 1881. Perhaps a foreboding of my future destiny'. His intention was to study at university. Unfortunately, when Fritzl was just thirteen, a rather small, slim boy, his father died. There was no money for Fritzl to study, so his mother secured him an apprenticeship in a shoemaker's shop.

But Fritzl still wanted to travel to Africa. And in 1890, with his mother's permission, he started his journey. By train and by foot he reached Triest and Fiume/Rijeka on the Adriatic Sea. But getting to Africa proved impossible and he returned to Vienna. He decided to try another route and in November the same year he left Vienna again. This time he went along the River Danube to the Black Sea, often helping in the kitchens of the ships that carried him along the river. He crossed the Black Sea and reached Istanbul in Turkey but again could find no way to reach Africa and in July 1891 Fritzl had to return to Vienna on foot.

Back in Vienna, he found a job as a sales assistant in a bookshop (Fig. 1). This gave him the opportunity to find books about Africa and learn about the land of his dreams. One of the books he read was *Rei-*



Fig. 1: F.J. Bieber when he worked in a bookshop.
On the back of the picture he has written:
'For Freedom and Humanity'
Friedrich Bieber, Africa Candidate



Fig. 2: Bieber and his wife Berta

In 1892 F. J. Bieber made his first journey to Africa. He had started to hold public lectures about Africa and particularly about Ethiopia. This brought him into contact with two retired army officers, Alexander Varges and Albert Ragg, who took Bieber on an expedition as an expert on Africa. The intention was to travel to the Sudan and to free the Austrian Rudolf Slatin, one of several Europeans captured by the Mahdi. The three actually got as far as Eritrea, then an Italian colony. But the Italian authorities got wind of their intentions and did not allow them to cross the border into Ethiopia. They had to return to Austria.

Back in Vienna, Bieber found employment as an official in the statistical section of the Austrian Ministry of Trade and he remained there until his retirement in 1923. He started to give public lectures again in Vienna and the surrounding cities in Lower Austria. Not only did he talk about his journeys, but he also spoke more about the possibilities

se durch Kusch und Habesch ('Journey through Kusch and Habesch'), by Eduard Freiherr von Callot. Callot was an Austrian ex-army officer who arrived in Egypt in 1831 and was appointed Colonel in the Egyptian army by Sultan Mehmed Ali who then sent him as special envoy to Habesch. Bieber would later publish the book in 1923 in Leo Frobenius' 'Afrikanisches Heldentum'. He wrote in the introduction: 'More than thirty years ago this booklet fell into my hands and gave my yearning for Africa a target – the Highlands of Ethiopia'.



Fig. 3: The Lion's Gate at Harer, 1904

of trade between Austria (the only European power without colonies) and Ethiopia (the only independent country in Africa).

On 6 March 1901 Bieber married Berta Pilik (Fig. 2). Their first son, Friedrich, was born in December 1901 and their second son, Otto, in July 1906. In 1904 the family moved to Auhofstrasse 144 in Ober St. Veit, where they lived until 1939. Friedrich Julius was away from home often and for long periods but he was always very attached to his wife and whenever possible he sent letters and postcards to her.

In 1904, Bieber was successful in his efforts to promote trade between Ethiopia and Austria. Under the leadership of the Hungarian businessman Arnold Szél, about seventy companies financed a journey to Ethiopia by Leopold Morgenstern, a director in Szél's company, and Friedrich Julius Bieber. Bieber was given six months leave of absence with pay, which suggests some official interest, and they departed Vienna on 26 January 1904.



Fig. 4: Emperor Minilik II. and Retinue, 1904

Bieber and Morgenstern travelled by ship to Aden then on to Djibouti where they took the train to Direh Dawa, then the end of the Ethiopian railway. After a visit to Harer (Fig. 3) they organised a caravan that took them to Addis Ababa, where they arrived on 29 March 1904. In Vienna, Bieber had already been in contact with Alfred Ilg, Minister of State for Emperor Minilik II. On the day of their arrival in Addis Ababa, they paid a visit to Mr. Ilg, who proved to be very supportive and helpful. A couple of weeks later, on 12 April 1904, Bieber and Morgenstern had an audience with Emperor Minilik II (Fig. 4). The Emperor liked them straight away and was particularly impressed by Bieber, who could talk a bit of Amharic (which he had taught himself in Vienna).

The Austrians brought to Ethiopia thirty-six wooden crates of gifts and samples, which they began to distribute. Emperor Minilik II in-



Fig. 5: The Star of Ethiopia (3rd class)

spected the gifts several times and was very interested in the idea of establishing a branch of Szél's company. The Austrians were invited to take part in a *Geber* at the *Gibi* (large banquet given by the Emperor at his Palace). By May, Ilg had already handed Bieber and Morgenstern orders from the Emperor totaling 17,000 francs along with a Letter of Establishment for Szél's company. On 28 May 1904, Bieber and Morgenstern were honoured by receiving the insignia of the Order of the Star of the Kingdom of Ethiopia, 3rd Class (Fig. 5).

On 6 June 1904, the Austrians left Addis Ababa. Bieber was, of course, very happy and excited to have been able to visit the land of his dreams – Ethiopia. But he was relieved that he was returning to Austria and would soon see his wife and child.

Back in Vienna, Bieber handed the government a draft of a Treaty of Trade and Friendship between Austria and Ethiopia. It was agreed that



Fig. 6: The Austrian Trade Mission at dinner in Addis Ababa, 1905



Fig. 7: Dergo in Ipfallanko, 1905 (at extreme left sits F.J. Bieber)



Fig. 8: The German Embassy in Addis Ababa, 1905

an official mission would be sent to Ethiopia. The mission left Vienna on 2 January 1905, led by Ludwig Ritter von Hoehnel, commander of the cruiser 'Panther', on which most of the delegation would travel. Among the members of the mission was Baron von Mylius, who wanted to establish plantations and trade in Ethiopia. Friedrich Julius Bieber joined the mission as an expert on Ethiopia and as interpreter, as he was now quite fluent in Amharic.

The mission travelled by sea to Djibouti and from there by special train to Direh Dawa. After a visit to Harer, where they were received by *Ras* Makonnen, the journey to Addis Ababa by caravan started. Because of problems with their helpers, the caravan had to stop unexpectedly in a small village. While there, they met *Lij* Tafari, the young son of *Ras* Makonnen, who would go on to become Emperor Haylé Sellasé I.



Fig. 9: F.J. Bieber with Ethiopian Nobles, 1905

On 9 March 1905, the Austrians arrived in Addis Ababa and were given a great reception. They were lodged in the summer palace of *Ras* Wolde Giorgis and met many dignitaries and old friends of Bieber (Fig. 6, Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9). On 13 March 1905, Hoehnel was received in private audience by Emperor Mīnilik II and handed over the draft of the Treaty. The next day, in a great ceremony, honours and gifts from the Emperor of Austria were handed over. Bieber wrote in his diary: 'The work of many years has been rewarded in these few hours, today's happenings are exclusively my making, my ideas have laid the foundations ...' (the German original of the diary is kept at the Austrian National Library in Vienna).

On 21 March, the Treaty of Trade and Friendship was signed solemnly and two days later the mission departed from Addis Ababa. Bieber remained behind with the intention of travelling to Keffa. Baron Mylius decided to join him, hoping to practice his considerable hunting skills and bag himself an elephant. On 1 April 1905, they had an



Fig. 10: King Abba Jiffar and Genne Luniti, 1905 (with Baron von Mylius)

audience with Emperor Minilik and presented him with their gifts. The Emperor happily gave them permission to travel to Keffa and to hunt all game, but specified they could only hunt one elephant.

On 19 April, Bieber's caravan departed for Keffa. The Emperor had given a letter of safe conduct and *Ras Wolde Giorgis*, who was very interested in their journey, had provided an attendant to accompany them. The caravan consisted of forty men, three horses, six riding mules and twenty-four animals to carry loads. They travelled through Nonno, Limmu and Ennarea to Djimma, where they paid several visits to King Abba Djiffar (Fig. 10).

On 7 June, Bieber and Mylius reached the River Godjeb. Having crossed the river, they reached Keffa, where they were to remain for just under a month. They visited many places, including the towns of Bonga, Andracha (Fig. 11), Shaada, the emperors' graves on the Sosha



Fig. 11: Sanctuary of Heqo in Andracha, 1905

Hills and Sharada. Bieber had by then learned the Keffa language. He wrote near continuously in his diary, recording not only what was happening, but also many of the stories about their country and its history told by old Keffechos. He also produced many photographs, no mean feat at a time when cameras were rather cumbersome machines. In addition, he prepared maps of their journey and the landscape. The amount of work he did during this rather short stay in Keffa is astonishing and the result was his two-volume, 1,000-page work on Keffa. Bieber also collected as many objects as he could from local people, most of whom are very nice and friendly to him. His collection totals more than 500 items and includes household items, clothing, finery, weapons and tools. The objects are described in detail, with many photographs and drawings, in Volume I of F. J. Bieber's work *Kaffa*. The objects are now kept at the World Museum in Vienna and at the District Museum in Vienna-Hietzing.

The Austrians returned through Konta, Kulla, Jimma and Nonno to Addis Ababa, where they arrived on 12 August 1905. They met once

more with Emperor Mīnilik, who continued to show great interest, and met Alfred Ilg and other friends. On 3 September they finally left Addis Ababa and returned safely to Vienna.

Back in Vienna, Bieber continued his work in the Trade Statistical Section. In September 1907 an Ethiopian delegation spent about one week in Vienna. Unfortunately the Austrian authorities were rather slow in dealing with the results of the Mission's 1905 journey and in the end were overtaken by World War I. Baron von Mylius returned to Ethiopia, but was unsuccessful in his plantation project; he fared better in Nicaragua, where he went subsequently.

But Bieber wanted to visit Ethiopia again and he departed Vienna on 1 February 1909. In Suez he was joined by an industrialist called Mr. Emil G. Pick and the two men arrived in Addis Ababa on 16 March. Bieber was surprised by how much the capital had changed in such a short time. Many new buildings had sprung up, the *Gibi* was hardly recognisable due to reconstruction and additions. The population of the city had doubled to about 100,000 inhabitants. Bieber met many old friends and was quickly granted an audience with Emperor Mīnilik. The Emperor was sick and had aged, but his eyes were clear and his mind unimpaired. The Austrians explained that they wanted to travel to Gambella on the Baro River and from there move on to the Sudan. Without hesitation, Mīnilik approved this plan and arranged a Letter of Safe Conduct for their journey.

On 22 April 1909, the expedition through the western parts of Ethiopia to the Nile started. Bieber was particularly anxious to 'get to know the old Ennarea, the North of the highland of Keffa, then the areas which are probably the original home of the people of Keffa, the Gonga or Keffecho, the country below Habesh, the country on the Blue and White Nile and Meroe, the old Kush'. On the way they ascended the Sukuela (Suqualla) Volcano, crossed the watershed of the Awash and the Blue Nile and crossed the Turkur Mountains. On 24 May they reached Gambella and took a steamer to Khartoum before taking the train to Port Said. Emil Pick continued his journey around the world while Bieber returned by steamer to Triest in Austria.

Back in Vienna, Bieber took up his work at the Trade Statistical Section again and, of course, he continued his scientific work. He had been a



Fig. 12: F.J. Bieber in 1921 (painting by Prof. Oskar Rainer)

prolific writer since his youth and consequently published many articles and papers in geographic magazines about his travels and about Ethiopia.

In 1914 Bieber planned another expedition to the Sudan, but his plans were frustrated by the start of World War I. Because of his ill-health (on the way to the Nile in 1909 he had caught Malaria which at the time was untreatable) he was not drafted into the army. He continued to work on his two-volume book about Keffa: *Kaffa – ein altkuschitisches Volkstum in Inner-Afrika* ('Kaffa – An ancient Cushitic people in Central Africa'), published in 1920 and 1923. Each volume has more than 500 pages, with many drawings, pictures and photographs.

At the end of January 1923, Bieber permanently retired due to his medical condition. However, he planned a new expedition to Africa. For some time he had been in contact with Leo Frobenius in Munich. He visited Munich several times and in the summer of 1923 he was appointed as a corresponding member of the Cultural-Morphological Institute. Bieber wanted to travel to the Sudan with Leo Frobenius in 1924. However, he took another journey, as his son Otto would later write. On 3 March 1924, at the age of fifty-one, Friedrich Julius Bieber died at home in Vienna. A very rich, exciting and unusual life had come to an end (Fig. 12).¹

Otto Bieber (1906–1988)

Friedrich Julius and Berta Bieber had two sons: Friedrich, born in 1901, and Otto, born in 1906. Interestingly, Friedrich had hardly any interest in Africa, but Otto was from the start very excited about his father's work and about the continent.

Whenever Friedrich Julius Bieber was in Vienna and had time, he would take his wife and sons on Sunday walks through the Vienna woods (Fig. 13). During these walks he told his family about his travels in Africa, especially Ethiopia and Keffa and his son, Otto, soon developed his own passion for Africa. When Friedrich Julius died, Otto was not yet eighteen years old. It was not possible for him to study, so he started as an office apprentice at D. Gestetner Company, a British manufacturer of duplicating machines, which had a branch in Vienna. Later he became a salesman for the company and was soon the most

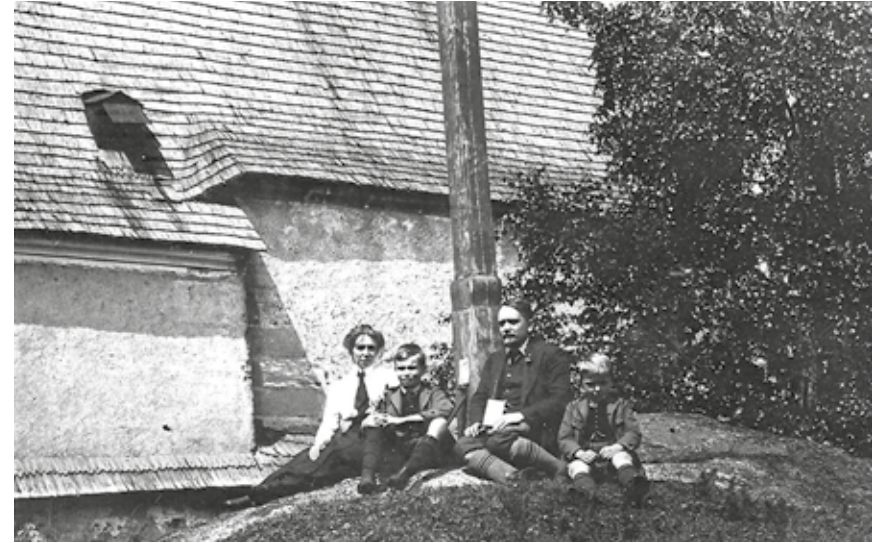


Fig. 13: F.J. Bieber and his family in the Vienna Woods

successful one. In 1934 he married Maria Schauburger and in 1936 he left Gestetner and started his own company, importing duplicating machines from Germany and selling these in Austria. He continued this work throughout his life until his retirement.

But Otto was consumed by a love of Africa. In 1929 and 1934, on the fifth and tenth anniversaries of the death of his father, he held press conferences and gave lectures on the radio about the life and work of Friedrich Julius Bieber. In 1936, he planned and organised the very successful 'Kaffi Tatitino' exhibition at the Hagenbund in Vienna. (Fig. 14). In 1944, on the twentieth anniversary of his father's death, he gave many public lectures and wrote a series of ten articles in a weekly magazine in Vienna on the subject of: 'Kaffa, das Reich des Kaisergottes (Kaffa, realm of the Emperor God)'. When the Second World War threatened to reach Vienna, with the help of the Vienna Museum of Ethnology Otto managed to transfer his father's ethnological collection and his scientific works to Spitz, a town on the River Danube about seventy kilometres from Vienna. He also sent his family (mother Berta, wife Maria, son Klaus) to Spitz.



Fig. 14: Exhibition 'Kaffi Tatino' at the Hagenbund, Vienna, 1936 (Otto Bieber, Berta Bieber, Friedrich Bieber jun.)

When World War II ended in 1945, Otto Bieber was in Vienna but his family and the collection were still in Spitz. Otto was very worried about the conditions there and, in the absence of a telephone connection, decided to go by bicycle from Vienna to Spitz. On the way he was stopped by officers from the Russian army, which had by then occupied Lower Austria. At the end of the war, Otto had been in contact with the Austrian Resistance Movement and, before going on his trip, he had asked his friends there to give him a letter of recommendation. This he showed to the Russian soldiers who had stopped him. They looked at the letter briefly, shook their heads and arrested Otto believing him to be a spy. He became a prisoner of war, and passed through several camps before ending up in one in Romania.

There, he was ordered to attend a meeting with three Russian officers. They asked him to explain why he had been arrested. So he told them



Fig. 15: Otto Bieber in Bardai, Tibesti, with his guide Senussi



Fig. 16: Emperor Haylé Sellasé I visiting the Keffa Exhibition, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, November 1954 (on the right: Otto Bieber)

about his father's Africa collection at Spitz, and that he had been worried about conditions there. At this meeting another prisoner of war, a young German, was acting as interpreter. When Otto spoke about his father, this interpreter told him to be quiet. He explained something to the Russians and left. After a short time he returned holding a newspaper cutting in his hands. He spoke again briefly to the Russians, showed the cutting to Otto and told him to explain what was written in the article. It was one of the articles Otto had written in 1944 about his father and Keffa. Of course Otto could explain the contents of this article and the German explained this to the Russians. It was obvious to them that Otto Bieber had been telling the truth and Otto was released and sent back to Vienna. The German had fortuitously received the article in the last letter he had received from his wife before becoming a prisoner of war. Without it, who knows what might have become of Otto. There and then, Otto Bieber made up his mind to write a book about the life and work of his father. This he did and the book was



Fig. 17: 80th Birthday of Otto Bieber, with his wife Maria and a friend 17th July, 1986



Fig. 18: The Africa Room in the apartment of Otto Bieber, Vienna

published in Vienna in 1948 with the title *Geheimnisvolles Kaffa – im Reich der letzten Kaiser-Goetter* ('Mysterious Kaffa – in the realm of the last Emperor Gods').

Later in 1945, again with the help of the Museum of Ethnology, the Bieber collection and Otto's family were transferred back to their apartment in Ober St. Veit. In 1946 the greater part of the collection was loaned to the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna, and was later sold.

Otto Bieber continued to work in his own company and to deliver lectures and write articles about his father and Keffa. But above all, he wanted to travel to Africa himself. He had several ideas and projects, but they could not be realised. In 1953 he met Prof. Hans Weis, a geographer who desperately wanted to visit Tibesti, an area in the east of the Sahara. They decided to do the expedition together and were joined by Andreas Kronenberg, a student of ethnology. Otto Bieber financed the journey, which left at the end of 1953 and returned after three months (Fig. 15). Otto was so fascinated by the people of Tibesti and the extraordinary landscape, where 3,000 metre-high mountains seem to rise straight up from the desert floor, that making a movie about the area became a must for him. A year later a film team of three financed by Otto left Vienna, although Otto was unable to join them because of work commitments. The team returned after four months with 10,00 metres of movie material (36 mm, black and white), audio recordings and many photographs. A one-hour movie was produced with the title *Im Namen Allah's* ('In the Name of Allah') and made public in 1958.

In 1954 Emperor Haylé Sellasé I visited Europe. He came to Vienna in November and was shown the Bieber/Keffa Exhibition at the Museum of Ethnology (Fig. 16). Otto Bieber was present during this visit. While being shown around, the Emperor asked: 'Does anyone know what happened to the Crown of Keffa?' Otto Bieber answered: 'The Crown of Keffa is the property of the Ilg family and is kept in a bank safe in Zurich'. The Emperor cut short his programme and went to Zurich immediately. There he negotiated with Mrs Ilg and her two sons; Alfred Ilg having died nearly twenty years before. He received the crown from them and took it back to Addis Ababa, where it is now on show at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.



Fig. 19: Klaus Bieber in Liberia, 1960

In 1955, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sellasé's accession to the throne, there were great celebrations in Ethiopia. A large trade exhibition, at which European countries had pavilions, was also organised. Otto Bieber was able to convince the Chamber of Commerce to organise an Austrian Pavilion and he flew into Addis Ababa as a member of the Austrian delegation. It was, of course, great for him to visit Ethiopia, the land of his father's dreams. Because Otto Bieber was so involved with Africa, he had many visitors at his home with the same interest and gained the nickname 'Africa-Bieber' (Fig. 17).

Klaus Bieber (born 1940)

I am the last in the Bieber family and I am the only one who became a certified African, but more of this later. I was born in Vienna in 1940 but from my early childhood Africa was all around me. Because my grandmother Berta, Friedrich Julius's widow, was staying with us,

there was no separate bedroom for me. Instead, for about eight years, I slept on a small couch in the Africa Room (Fig. 18). I remember I had to remove a leopard skin from the couch when I went to bed. Around me were the library and objects and pictures from Ethiopia. Soon my father allowed me to join him whenever he had visitors connected to Africa. And, like his father before him, on Sundays my father would take me and my mother on walks through the Vienna Woods, where he told us about Africa. Thus, I was under continuous 'African influence'.

In the 1950s my father met Dr Franz Sitter, a biologist. Sitter then travelled to West Africa where he spent one and a half years in the French colonies and Liberia. After his return to Vienna he gave public lectures about his experiences. I had just done my final high-school exams but needed some more exams to be able to study ethnology. So I had some free time to sell tickets to Dr Sitter's lectures at the Universi-

ty of Vienna. This is how I got to know him. At one of Sitter's lectures was an Austrian living in Kenya and making a living by exporting live animals. After the lecture he asked Dr Sitter whether he would like to go to Liberia to catch pigmy hippopotami. Sitter agreed straight away and was looking for someone to go with him. My father offered me, his son, Klaus. And Klaus agreed, of course.

On 12 May 1959, Dr Sitter and I left Vienna for Liberia. It was planned that we would stay there no longer than two years. In my case it got a bit longer, nearly fifty years. We had with us a second-hand jeep and a small two-seater boat with an outboard engine. By ship we travelled to Monrovia in Liberia and had planned to go to the Cestos River, right in the middle of dense forest. Unfortunately the jeep developed serious engine problems and we could not use it. We still had the small motorboat. Therefore we decided to go to the West of Liberia, to



Fig. 20: Klaus Bieber in conversation with President Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone, 2003 (on the right: Ambassador Dr. H. Keller)



Fig. 21: Otto, Maria and Klaus Bieber visiting Paramount Chief Gbatekaka in Joru near Kenema, 1968



Fig. 22: Inauguration of Biosphere Reserves, Keffa, Ethiopia, March 22, 2011 (handing over of works of F.J. Bieber)

Cape Mount Province. There, near Sierra Leone, lies Fisherman's Lake, which is fed by several creeks. With our boat we could use these creeks as roads. We spent about six months in the forest there and caught two pigmy hippos. Unfortunately the transportation to Monrovia was very difficult, and we lost them both (Fig. 19).

Just at this time Dr Salk developed a vaccine against polyomyelitis. Monkeys, obtained from Indian, were usually used for Salk's work. However, we got to know that in Sierra Leone, near the border with Liberia, the people were able to catch monkeys. So we gave up catching pigmy hippos in Liberia, went by canoe over the River Mano, which forms the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone, and after several months ended up in the village of Joru, about twenty miles from Kene-ma, capital of the Eastern Province. In Joru resided a Paramount Chief, a lady, who was very helpful to us. We were able to buy and export live monkeys and lived in Joru for about two years. We were in Joru when Sierra Leone gained its independence on 27 April 1961. Therefore later I used to call myself 'a colonial relic'.

In 1963 we moved to the capital of Sierra Leone, Freetown, and started a poultry farm in a suburb of the city. Soon this place became too small for us and we moved to Rokel, a village seventeen miles from Freetown, where we bought nearly 100 acres of land and built our own farm. We had about 25,000 chickens, a hatchery, pigs and cattle. We also grew bananas and maize and still exported animals.

At this time the Government of Sierra Leone wanted to bring tourists to the country. Therefore on the beach near Freetown – an extremely beautiful six-mile-long stretch of sand – a 150-bed tourist hotel was built. Through a series of coincidences we became the operators of the hotel, which we opened in 1971. I became managing director of Cape Sierra Hotel. We succeeded in interesting tour operators in England and also in Austria, and from the second year onwards our hotel was fully booked throughout the year. To provide more security for Austrian tourists, I became Honorary Consul of Austria to Sierra Leone in 1973 and remained in that position for thirty-five years (Fig. 20).

In 1974 Emperor Haylé Sellasé paid a visit to West Africa and also spent a few days in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He attended a State Ban-



Fig. 23: March 2011: Two Grandsons meet – Ato Girma (Gaaki Sharochi Taatoo) and Klaus Bieber (Friedrich Julius Bieber)



Fig. 24: District Museum Hietzing – Visit by Participants of a Conference on Ethiopia, September 2013 (middle: Dr. Dorothea McEwan)

quet at the Cape Sierra Hotel and I met him briefly. Through a coincidence I had been able to shake hands with him in 1954, when he visited the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna. I still remember his look, which appeared to me to be very wise.

In 1975 I resigned from the hotel and from the partnership with Dr Sitter and became an independent businessman. Until 1990 I was in charge of a factory producing poultry and pig feeds, then I was involved in imports and exports. In 1989 I applied for citizenship of Sierra Leone. In the process, I had to see the secretary to the President. He remarked to me: 'You are one of us and should have done this a long time ago'. So it was quite easy and I became a certified African with dual citizenship.

On a personal level I was extremely fortunate. At Christmas in 1970 I met a very kind and wonderful African lady and we remained to-

gether until her death in 2006. Because she was an important personality she wanted to keep our relationship secret and of course I respected her wish. Together we made frequent trips to my parents in Austria, to England and to Italy. And my parents visited Sierra Leone every year for Christmas and New Year (Fig. 21).

For ten years from 1992, Sierra Leone was affected by civil war and this of course greatly affected the economy. After the death of my lady partner, I decided to return to Austria. On 1 November 2008 I arrived in Vienna. I now live here as a pensioner with my Viennese wife whom I very unexpectedly met in the house of the former Austrian ambassador responsible for Sierra Leone.

I am very anxious to maintain the memory of my grandfather, without whose life and work I would never have been able to live such a wonderful life in Africa. I am a voluntary assistant working on the Bieber Archives at the District Museum in Vienna–Hietzing, which bought the remaining items of the Keffa collection. Rather unexpectedly, I was able to visit Keffa in Ethiopia twice in 2011. In this year, UNESCO declared parts of the highland forests in Keffa, the original home of coffee, as World Biosphere Reserves. I participated in the inauguration ceremony on 22 March 2011 (Fig. 22, Fig. 23), where, as part of the celebrations, a street in Bonga, Keffa, was named Friedrich Julius Bieber Avenue.

In September 2013, I participated in the International Conference of Art and Architecture in Ethiopia organised by Dr Dorothea McEwan in Vienna (Fig. 24). And in September 2014, Dr Sayuri Yoshida visited Vienna. She is a young anthropologist from Japan, who has been researching in Keffa since 2004, and she has spent a total of thirty-two months in Ethiopia.

As can be seen, I have left Africa, but I am very much still part of it.²

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Fig. 17: 80th Birthday of Otto Bieber, with his wife Maria and a friend 17th July, 1986

- Fig. 18: The Africa Room in the apartment of Otto Bieber, Vienna
Fig. 19: Klaus Bieber in Liberia, 1960
Fig. 20: Klaus Bieber in conversation with President Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone, 2003 (on the right: Ambassador Dr. H. Keller)
Fig. 21: Otto, Maria and Klaus Bieber visiting Paramount Chief Gbatekaka in Joru near Kenema, 1968
Fig. 22: Inauguration of Biosphere Reserves, Keffa, Ethiopia, March 22, 2011 (handing over of works of F.J. Bieber)
Fig. 23: March 2011: Two Grandsons meet – Ato Girma (Gaaki Sharochi Taatoo) and Klaus Bieber (Friedrich Julius Bieber)
Fig. 24: District Museum Hietzing – Visit by Participants of a Conference on Ethiopia, September 2013 (middle: Dr. Dorothea McEwan)

Endnotes

- 1 The description of Friedrich Julius Bieber's life is based on the work by Holzapfel 2012.
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