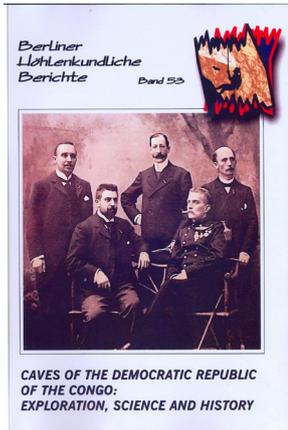


Jean G. Shaw

Caves of the Democratic Republic of the Congo: exploration, science and history

Berliner Höhlenkundliche Berichte, Band 53. ISSN 1617-8572, 152 pp.

A4, 11 b/w and colour illustrations, paper cover, available from the publisher Michael Laumanns, Unter den Eichen 4c, D-15834 Rangdorf, Germany at the cost of € 25.00, 15 GBP or 20 USD, including postage.



Up to now we were accustomed to excellent books produced by Trevor Shaw, but today we have the pleasant surprise of another book, this time written by Trevor's wife Jean. The quality of this book is as high as usual and perhaps, better since the amount of work necessary to achieve the result is very great.

In fact the organization of a bibliography of the caves of the Democratic Republic of the Congo implies incredible difficulties. With respect to the challenge of tracing the original publications, which is common to everyone involved in the preparation of a bibliography, Mrs. Jean Trevor had to solve the problem of determining cave names, which frequently were similar but not exactly the same and as she writes: a few had changed to the vernacular since the end of Belgian rule. Anyone who has ever dealt with cave names, knows how difficult it is to unravel the problem of slightly different names, which can refer to the same cave but, in other instances, indicate entirely different caves.

If this were a problem in our country where the language is the same, in the case of Congo's caves the names would first be transliterated from local dialects into a western language and then, eventually, reported into English. In conclusion the Author had to develop a special ability to find the right way among a number of different possibilities: this fact would already be a good reason for great praise.

The provincial divisions of Congo are taken into account: Katanga, Kasai Occidental and Oriental, Kivu, Bandundu, Kongo Central, Equateur and Region Orientale. For each of these divisions, a detailed description of karst and geology, archaeology, fauna, etc. is given and the caves are described with itinerary and many remarks from the original literature.

Such a publication supplies in a single paper an incredible number of different papers spread over many places and times. Therefore it is an extremely valuable source of information for anyone interested in the caves of the Congo.

Also, on behalf of many speleologists from many different countries I feel particularly happy with this new contribution by the famous "firm" Shaw & Co. and recommend such a book to anyone interested in African speleology.

Arrigo A. Cigna