

Encountering the Animal Kingdom: The Origin of Modern Zoo in Nigeria (Posted on Facebook on 04/14/2019)

At the center of Delesolu Compound in Oje (Ibadan) is an enclosure housing a crocodile who is at least eighty years old (see photo below). We know this crocodile is over eighty years of age because he was brought to the compound before my father (Baba onipako) was born. We know Baba onipako was born in 1939 because “Ogun Yitila” (Hitler’s war) broke out that year. The shock of the Second World War reverberated across the world, shaping how individuals and groups remember and tell their own stories.

Wildlife domestication is an integral component of humans’ dominance over nature. Before modern zoo came into existence in Nigeria, wild animal domestication found expression in religious and spiritual life of communities that saw nonhuman creatures as part of cosmology. Animals helped humans to unlock the mystery of life or gain access to narratives and ideas beyond the reach of the “ordinary” eyes. Precolonial culture of wildlife domestication fitted into indigenous conception of nature conservation and of family, community, and lineage histories. To understand animal behavior (ethology) is to unmask why humans act in certain ways.

The secularization of wildlife domestication started with the consolidation of Islam and Christianity. It also found expression in the obsession of some Europeans who kept wild animals, such as leopard, as pet. From the 1910s, Lagos newspapers carried stories on how pet leopards of Europeans escaped from their captivity to maul “law-abiding” people. But the credit for Nigeria’s first zoo goes to W.H. Biney, a Black businessman and boxing promoter from the Gold Coast (Ghana), who made Nigeria his home. Founded around the mid-1930s, Biney zoo, like its counterparts across the world, provided humans with a leisurely access to nature. Biney’s animals became “modern” colonial subjects as well as performers and legitimizers of modernity.

Today, my family compound is popular in Ibadan, not because of its human inhabitants, but for its nonhuman creature—the crocodile. Anyone familiar with the politics of Yoruba Islam would understand the consistent attempt by the leadership of the compound to secularize the crocodile. Yet, few people would agree that the crocodile does not have power to shape human spiritual life. Every day, she receives gift of live chicken from people who are convinced that their wishes for success in private life and business can materialize by feeding the nonhuman creature.

News Notes & Comments

WE feel we must again refer to the incident of the leopard which broke loose in town on the 13th March last. Here is a government with departments created ostensibly for the protection of life and property an important branch of one of these departments proving itself so efete by its laches as to leave the impression that it is not in existence. In the matter of this leopard affair we do not hesitate to say that the Detective Department of the police should be indicted for aiding and abetting crime, for the following reasons; the leopard was loose at Olowogbowo, the Detectives being Natives know or ought to know that it could not belong to a Native; there was a steamer due to leave Lagos Roads the day after the leopard incident; and yet they did nothing but allow the man who brought such a brute into town, to escape.

Some time ago a dead body was found at Ebute Mota with the head completely severed from the trunk and taken away, which circumstance, in our opinion, points to murder, but up to now we have not heard of anything approaching a discovery of the murderer. We know of instances where thefts were committed in houses and owners reported to the Police with intimation as to who were the possible thieves; but instead of discovery of the stolen goods or arrests being made nothing further has been heard in very many instances.

Since writing the above we learn that investigations are being made to discover the owner of the leopard, and we ask to what good? Supposing now any of the Europeans lying at Olowogbowo should come forward and own up to the fact that the leopard was brought to his factory or business premises by Mr. So and so and it got loose and created the damage it did and that Mr. So and so left for Europe on such and





Biney's Zoo

Inside white square walled fence like
block heaps upon ground
Is the Biney's zoo that holds in thrall
the cage bird:
And the porcupine, heavy shelled tor-
toise, and hound,
And horned antelope, ostrich with neck
like the gourd;
And the smart guinea-pig, the bush-
cat, and bush-pig,
And the anthropoid ape that is old as
is big.

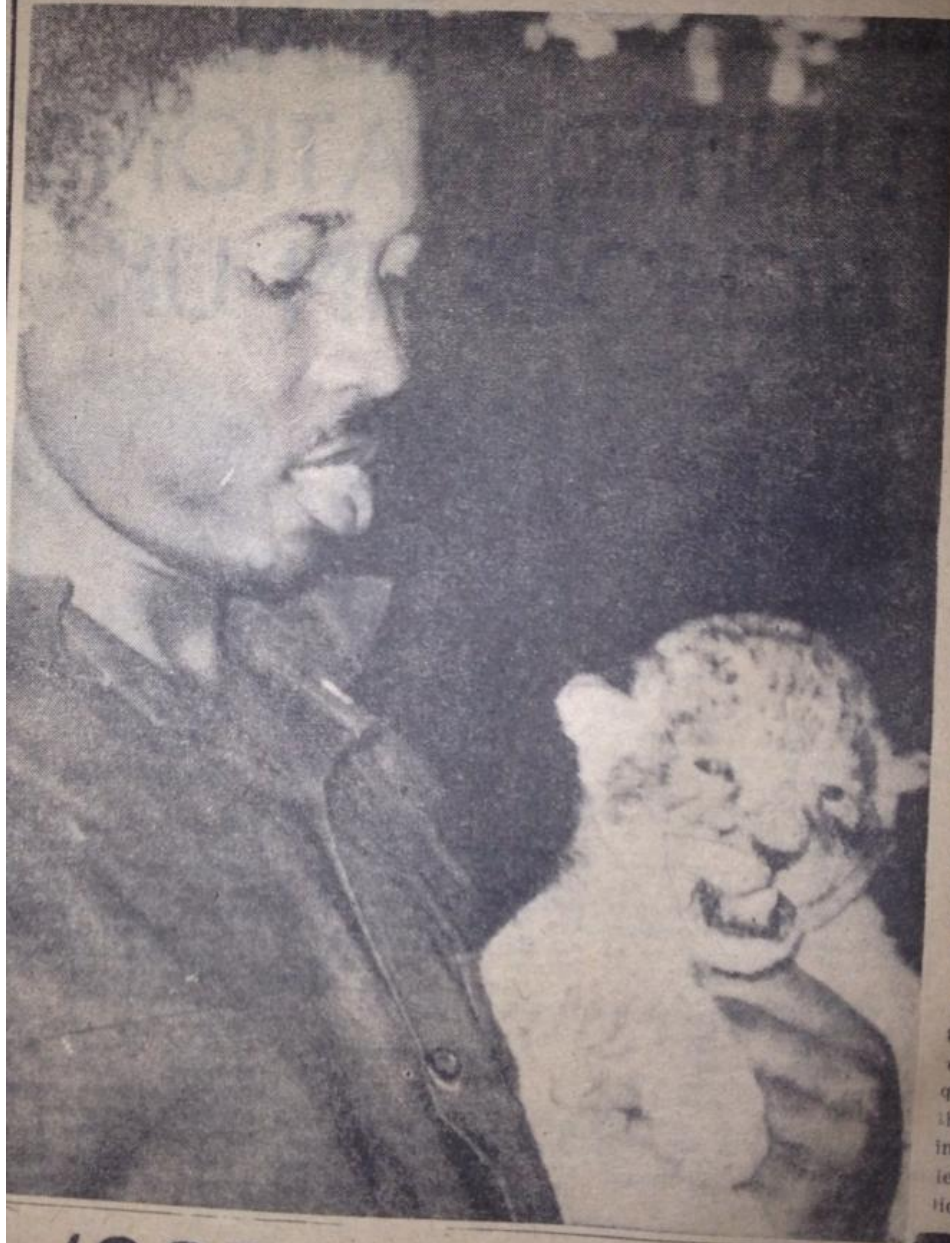
While above the head under the cano-
pied heaven
Are bunch ripe fruits of mango tree
with the green foliage,
Spreading like the Chief's large um-
brella, uneven,
And protecting the flowers in the row
as of lineage,
That forth blossom sweet multiple
colours with odour,
Or illumine the paths as of many a
corridor.

For here we trace the likeness of
Garden of Eden.
Where did congregate various and
tall beauteous trees;
And the shrubs, and the plants, and
the flowers with the pollen,
And all the kinds of beasts, and of
birds and of bees;
And the parents Eve, Adam, who
made love of creation
They admired, and for which they
both gave approbation.

M. O. OKOGIE.

Lagos, Nigeria.

Three lions are born at



UI

ZOO

ON July 30, three lion cubs were born at the University of Ibadan zoo. This is believed to be the first time that lions are bred in captivity in Nigeria.

The cubs, one male and two females, were born to the pair of lions that have been in the zoo for some time.

The male was donated by Leipzig Zoological Garden, East Germany, and arrived in Ibadan on June 8, 1968. The female was presented by the Marquess of Bath from his "Safari Park" at Longleat in the south of England.

The cubs weighed between 31 lbs 6 oz and 41 lbs soon after birth and were moved into a quiet, dark place with their mother the following morning. Pictured left, one of the young lions.



Lion Worth £1,000 Due Lagos Soon

An African Lion, six-feet tall, and estimated to cost about £1,000, is expected to arrive from the Northern Region for Chief W. H. Biney at the end of this month.

The lion which would be the "father" of all various animals in the Biney Zoo at Suru Lere is understood to have been tamed and would be christened as soon as it arrived.

A special iron cage is being constructed in the Zoological Garden to harbour the lion.

The Biney Zoo already consists of various types of animals including three big tigers, two gorillas, crocodiles, and a number of birds.

All the animals in the Zoo are fed with specially prepared diets.

The biggest of the gorillas "John" lives on peculiar food, tea and bread.

He smokes cigarettes and drinks alcohol.

Lion Worth £1,000 Due Lagos Soon

An African Lion, six-feet tall, and estimated to cost about £1,000, is expected to arrive from the Northern Region for Chief W. H. Biney at the end of this month.

The lion which would be the "father" of all various animals in the Biney Zoo at Suru Lere is understood to have been tamed and would be christened as soon as it arrived.

A special iron cage is being constructed in the Zoological Garden to harbour the lion.

The Biney Zoo already consists of various types of animals including three big tigers, two gorillas, crocodiles, and a number of birds.

All the animals in the Zoo are fed with specially prepared diets.

The biggest of the gorillas "John" lives on peculiar food, tea and bread.

He smokes cigarettes and drinks alcohol.

Biney's Zoo

Inside white square walled fence like
block heaps upon ground
Is the Biney's zoo that holds in thrall
the cage bird:

And the porcupine, heavy shelled tor-
toise, and hound,

And horned antelope, ostrich with neck
like the gourd;

And the smart guinea-pig, the bush-
cat, and bush-pig,

And the anthropoid ape that is old as
is big.

While above the head under the cano-
pied heaven

Are bunch ripe fruits of mango tree
with the green foliage,

Spreading like the Chief's large um-
brella, uneven,

And protecting the flowers in the row
as of lineage,

That forth blossom sweet multiple
colours with odour,

Or illumine the paths as of many a
corridor.

For here we trace the likeness of
Garden of Eden.

Where did congregate various and
tall beauteous trees;

And the shrubs, and the plants, and
the flowers with the pollen,

And all the kinds of beasts, and of
birds and of bees;

And the parents Eve, Adam, who
made love of creation

They admired, and for which they
both gave approbation.

M. O. OKOGBA.

Lagos, Nigeria.

Pet Leopard Kills African And Injures Four Europeans In Jos

JOS.— A pet leopard kept by a Health Department worker killed one African and injured two others and four Europeans, when it managed to leave its cage recently.

Later, after several hours of hard work and grim adventure, it was shot down.

Mr J. Vaughan, the Assistant District Officer in charge of Jos Town, was informed of the events and together with three missionaries who had also heard of them went to a rocky hill, armed with rifles, to kill the beast.

An African who had followed the leopard showed them where it was crouching in a deep hole in the rocks — a hole that had two or more outlets in different directions.

The animal was just visible to a man lying down, and the ADO took aim with his rifle, lying down in the only place from which it could be seen, and fired.

The leopard growled fiercely and dashed out of the hole on the other side of the rock, came charging round the rock and leaped on the ADO before he could get up and before the others could fire at it.

The man and the leopard lay struggling on the ground too close together to enable the others to shoot, and it would have gone hard for the ADO had not one of the missionaries, Mr Nicholls of the SIM, jumped forward and struck the leopard a blow with his fist, and kicked it hard.

He dragged the leopard off and kicked it away from him, but not without receiving severe lacerations on his shoulder and leg from its claws, and having his hand badly bitten.

The ADO had been badly clawed on his shoulder and back.

The leopard dashed back into the hole, unhurt, and the other two missionaries realised that they alone could

do little, and that the two wounded men had to be taken to hospital.

This they did, and reported the matter to the police.

The Senior Superintendent of Police then collected two European policemen, a District Officer, another Assistant District Officer, and the Engineer Posts and Telegraphs, who all went to the spot, armed with rifles and guns.

The Senior Superintendent of Police arranged a real drive.

Nearly thirty Europeans, armed with rifles and bayonets, shot-guns and revolvers, met at the Provincial Office at five and by twenty to six were posted round the rocky hill.

A few went up the hill, each man with a rifle being accompanied by a couple of men with shot-guns, and the business of getting the leopard out of its hole started.

Shots were unavailing to move the beast, and eventually a brave African climbed up on to the top of the rocks, from which a small hole, too small for the leopard to come out of, led down to the leopard's lair.

He tried to reach it with a spear, but it was not long enough.

Then he was given a long bamboo with which he was able to touch the leopard and to prod it into activity.

It again left the hole and came straight at Mr Sharland of the UAC.

Mr Sharland fired quickly and the beast swerved aside and leaped on an African Police Corporal who was beside him, and knocked him down.

Just as the leopard was about to maul the man, Mr J. B. Bell, D.O., Jos Division, shot it with his rifle, and the leopard lay still across the African who had been knocked out with a blow as his head fell on the rocks.

News Notes & Comments

WE feel we must again refer to the incident of the leopard which broke loose in town on the 13th March last. Here is a government with departments created ostensibly for the protection of life and property an important branch of one of these departments proving itself so efete by its laches as to leave the impression that it is not in existence. In the matter of this leopard affair we do not hesitate to say that the Detective Department of the police should be indicted for aiding and abetting crime, for the following reasons: the leopard was loose at Olowogbowo, the Detectives being Natives know or ought to know that it could not belong to a Native; there was a steamer due to leave Lagos Roads the day after the leopard incident; and yet they did nothing but allow the man who brought such a brute into town, to escape.

Some time ago a dead body was found at Ebute Mota with the head completely severed from the trunk and taken away, which circumstance, in our opinion, points to murder, but up to now we have not heard of anything approaching a discovery of the murderer. We know of instances where thefts were committed in houses and owners reported to the Police with intimation as to who were the possible thieves; but instead of discovery of the stolen goods or arrests being made nothing further has been heard in very many instances.

Since writing the above we learn that investigations are being made to discover the owner of the leopard, and we ask to what good? Supposing now any of the Europeans living at Olowogbowo should come forward and own up to the fact that the leopard was brought to his factory or business premises by Mr. So and so and it got loose and created the damage it did and that Mr. So and so left for Europe on such and

Pet Leopard Kills African And Injures Four Europeans In Jos

JOS.— A pet leopard kept by a Health Department worker killed one African and injured two others and four Europeans, when it managed to leave its cage recently.

Later, after several hours of hard work and grim adventure, it was shot down.

Mr J. Vaughan, the Assistant District Officer in charge of Jos Town, was informed of the events and together with three missionaries who had also heard of them went to a rocky hill, armed with rifles, to kill the beast.

An African who had followed the leopard showed them where it was crouching in a deep hole in the rocks — a hole that had two or more outlets in different directions.

The animal was just visible to a man lying down, and the ADO took aim with his rifle, lying down in the only place from which it could be seen, and fired.

The leopard growled fiercely and dashed out of the hole on the other side of the rock, came charging round the rock and leaped on the ADO before he could get up and before the others could fire at it.

The man and the leopard lay struggling on the ground too close together to enable the others to shoot, and it would have gone hard for the ADO had not one of the missionaries, Mr Nicholls of the SIM, jumped forward and struck the leopard a blow with his fist, and kicked it hard.

He dragged the leopard off and kicked it away from him, but not without receiving severe lacerations on his shoulder and leg from its claws, and having his hand badly bitten.

The ADO had been badly clawed on his shoulder and back.

The leopard dashed back into the hole, unhurt, and the other two missionaries realised that they alone could

do little, and that the two wounded men had to be taken to hospital.

This they did, and reported the matter to the police.

The Senior Superintendent of Police then collected two European policemen, a District Officer, another Assistant District Officer, and the Engineer Posts and Telegraphs, who all went to the spot, armed with rifles and guns.

The Senior Superintendent of Police arranged a real drive.

Nearly thirty Europeans, armed with rifles and bayonets, shot-guns and revolvers, met at the Provincial Office at five and by twenty to six were posted round the rocky hill.

A few went up the hill, each man with a rifle being accompanied by a couple of men with shot-guns, and the business of getting the leopard out of its hole started.

Shots were unavailing to move the beast, and eventually a brave African climbed up on to the top of the rocks, from which a small hole, too small for the leopard to come out of, led down to the leopard's lair.

He tried to reach it with a spear, but it was not long enough.

Then he was given a long bamboo with which he was able to touch the leopard and to prod it into activity.

It again left the hole and came straight at Mr Sharland of the UAC

Mr Sharland fired quickly and the beast swerved aside and leaped on an African Police Corporal who was beside him, and knocked him down.

Just as the leopard was about to maul the man, Mr J. B. Bell, D.O., Jos Division, shot it with his rifle, and the leopard lay still across the African who had been knocked out with a blow as his head fell on the rocks.

