



Fig.019 An old native man sitting with his wife in front of their hut. The man is wearing a medal that the colonial authorities have given to him so that they can better control the nomadic bands of the forest. Yet these band want nothing to do with chiefs and pay no attention to the chosen man.

Chieftdom Among the Natives of Higher Africa

Natives have chiefs that are "only too conscious of the limits" of their power. There is "no point" for them in "giving orders, as nobody would heed them". Their authority is limited to give "instructions to strike camp". In the family the authority of the father "is recognized by the children, as long as they" are young (Schebesta 1933). Generally, natives "dislike and avoid personal authority" and conceive responsibility "as communal". Ultimately it is the forest to be "the chief, the lawgiver, the leader, and the final arbitrator" (Turnbull 1961). And even "elders have no pomp or despotic privilege. They are just old folks whose experience and knowledge are respected by the younger generation" (Hallet 1973). Even when the colonial authorities started assigning medals to elect an elder as the absolute ruler of his tribe, natives "pay as little attention to him as to it" paying no heed to "the overlordship of chiefs" (Schebesta 1933). Blacks too are unable to maintain "control" over the natives. The latter only have "to take a few steps" to be in the forest and the former dislikes going inside it "except when absolutely necessary" (Turnbull 1961). Also, natives are "far too proud to put up" with "a state of slavery". And they are always ready to defend themselves "with arms if necessary" (Schebesta 1933).