

Translation: Jasmin Günther

Zittau i/S, Bruederstrasse 3, 2nd March 1906

To the honorable Count Linden!

President of the Württemberg Association for Commercial Geography

Director of the Museum of Ethnology Stuttgart

Dear Lord

Please forgive me for most respectfully asking Your Grace about the whereabouts of the sovereign, royal Christmas present that I have been longing for so eagerly and which you have confidentially announced in your honorable letter.

It seems as if this highly personal matter has to suffer the same fate as the collection of ethnographic objects from the Philippines that has been sent to Your Grace and your Museum of Ethnology some time ago.

Your Grace has indeed drawn my attention to the fact that such matter of delicacy typically takes six weeks and that I may have to wait until I can experience the joy of calling a royal decoration, which Your Grace has so kindly suggested, my own.

The experience we gained from the mysteriously missing boxes and from another case where my patience has been tried for almost half a year by waiting, in my homeland of Saxony, for the permission to accept and wear foreign decorations and medals I have received in the past, until the case has been solved as requested within one week after I have made inquiries about it. On this basis, I suspect that a reminder is needed here as well in order to clarify this puzzling absence that is makes my parents and I feel uncomfortable.

I completely understand that I may create an unpleasant state of affairs to Your Grace, but I have confidence in your fine and diplomatic sense of tact and sophisticated adroitness so as to find a solution – something that, for obvious reasons, is impossible to me – to this problem.

I truly hope that fate will be swifter and more gracious than with the ominous boxes last year. Your Grace will understand how uncomfortable I am with having to bother you over such a minor collection. On the other hand, I feel obliged to thank Your Grace for your interest in my person and my collections.

Mr. Emil S. Fischer has promised me that he will gather a fine collection for your museum during his stay in China and send it to Your Grace.

I have a dear friend in Paris, who was once supposed to go on an extensive study trip [also for the purpose of collecting] to all French colonies with me on the orders of the “Conseil d’administration de l’office colonial du Ministere des Colonies”. Because I was sent to the Philippines by the American Ministry of War in order to organize the Philippine exhibition for the World’s Fair in St. Louis, my friend, Mr. Charles Noufflard, *Sécrétaire général des Colonies*, former *Chef du service commercial de l’office colonial* and previously *Sécrétaire de l’union colonial*, had to undertake the journey by himself, which was, unfortunately, soon interrupted due to a typhoid illness. After his recovery, he

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was sent to French Congo as *Sécrétaire* general and was appointed governor of the French colony Gabon after twenty months of service. As such, he is currently – until July and on leave – situated in Paris just to return after this period of time. Mr. Noufflard is the son of an eminently respectable industrialist in Rouen and Paris. His mother is the daughter of an English artist, who has been ennobled by Queen Victoria. He himself has had – besides a thorough, multifaceted and refined French upbringing – an exquisite English education and lived in Germany for quite some time. His sister is married to a grandson of former American President, General Grant, while his sister-in-law married into the Roosevelt family. Mr. Noufflard knows the French Somali Coast, French India, Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin, Madagascar, Réunion, Congo and Gabon from first-hand.

I am sure that Your Grace is able to motivate him to give a talk in French or English to your Association of Commercial Geography, if you wish for it, and this may offer an occasion for you two to come to an agreement about French ethnographic collections.

I am available to Your Grace at all times. Most respectfully,

Gustav Niederlein