

= Hermann Detzner =

Hermann Philipp Detzner (16 October 1882 ? 1 December 1970) was an officer in the German colonial security force (Schutztruppe) in Kamerun (Cameroon) and German New Guinea , as well as a surveyor , an engineer , an adventurer , and a writer .

In early 1914 , the German government sent Detzner to explore and chart the interior of Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland , the imperial protectorate on the island of New Guinea . When World War I broke out in Europe , he was well into the interior and without radio contact . He refused to surrender to Australian troops when they occupied German New Guinea , concealing himself in the jungle with a band of approximately 20 soldiers . For four years , Detzner and his troops provocatively marched through the bush , singing " Watch on the Rhine " and flying the German Imperial flag . He led at least one expedition from the Huon Peninsula to the north coast , and a second by a mountain route , to attempt an escape to the neutral Dutch colony to the west . He explored areas of the New Guinean interior formerly unseen by Europeans and surrendered in full dress uniform , flying the Imperial flag , to Australian forces in January 1919 .

Detzner received a hero 's welcome when he returned to Germany . He wrote a book about his adventures ? Four Years Among the Cannibals in the Interior of German New Guinea under the Imperial Flag , from 1914 until the Armistice ? that achieved notoriety in Great Britain and Germany , entered three printings , and was translated into French , English , Finnish and Swedish . He received a position in the Imperial Colonial Archives , and appeared frequently on the lecture circuit throughout the 1920s . In the late 1920s , scientific portions of his book were discredited . In 1932 , he admitted that he had mixed fact and fiction and , after that time , eschewed public life .

= = Family = =

Detzner was the son of a dentist , Johann Philipp Detzner (12 July 1846 ? 1907) and his wife , Wilhelmine Katharina Faber , in the city of Speyer , in the Bavarian Palatinate , a cultural , economic , and historical center on the Rhine River . His father received his degree from Heidelberg University and was licensed to practice by the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1867 ; Detzner 's father pioneered innovations in dental prosthetics . His large family included nine children . Hermann Detzner was trained as a topographer , surveyor , and an engineer , and received his promotion to Fahnrich in the 6 Infantry Regiment (Prussian) , 2nd Pioneer Battalion , in February 1902 . During World War I , military authorities transferred his commission to the 1st Bavarian Pioneer Battalion .

= = Early explorations = =

Hermann Detzner participated in a joint British @-@ German scientific and surveying expedition to Kamerun in 1908 and 1909 and again in 1912 ? 1913 . He and one Captain Nugent , Royal Artillery , identified and marked the frontiers of Kamerun and explored the Niger valley . Detzner later published a paper on the marking of the boundary .

Navigators charted the coastline of the northern and eastern portions of New Guinea in the early 17th century and , later in the century , British Admiralty navigators named the visible mountain ranges . Most German surveying efforts had focused on coastal regions and river basins , where Germans had established plantations , leaving the interior unexplored . In late 1913 , the Imperial Colonial office appointed Detzner to lead an expedition to survey the border between the British protectorate , called Papua , and the German territory , called Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland , and to survey and map the interior .

Detzner 's mission was also to be the first serious attempt to explore the unknown interior and to evaluate and describe its contents . The boundary between Papua and Kaiser Wilhelmsland had been broadly established by a joint British @-@ German expedition in 1909 , but the interior had not been mapped and the German colonial administration maintained that the boundary was imprecise . Since then , Papuan gold prospectors may have crossed into the German territory which , from the German perspective , made the accuracy of the border essential . Detzner had had experience in

joint operations in Kamerun in 1907 ? 08 and could be expected to understand the challenges faced by the previous commission ; he had a reputation as a methodical and precise engineer . Although small , he was tough and wiry , extremely focused and determined , and seemed like the right man for the job .

= = Adventures in New Guinea = =

In January 1914 , Detzner travelled to Rabaul on New Pomerania (now New Britain) . In February , he began his expedition into Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland . His survey immediately revealed inaccuracies in the 1909 joint survey ; by March , Detzner had concluded that the border corridor was already showing a discrepancy of more than 650 meters (2 @,@ 133 ft) from the 8 ° 0'S parallel . The discrepancy increased the further west he traveled , revealing a widening wedge in the boundary as it was agreed upon , and as it was marked . The discrepancy favored German interests .

He was well into the interior when , on 4 August 1914 , Britain declared war on Germany . As World War I spread to the Pacific , Australian troops invaded German New Guinea , taking the German barracks in Herbertshöhe (Kokopo) and forcing the defending German colonial troops to capitulate on 21 September after their defeat at Bita Paka . At the beginning of October , he was still unaware of the state of war that now existed between his country and the Commonwealth .

The several months following the outbreak of war found Detzner on border survey work with his sergeant , Konradt , 25 police and 45 carriers , two servants and an interpreter in the high country between Mt Chapman , the Ono River , and Mt Lawson , that is to say along the territorial boundary between Australian @-@ governed Papua and German New Guinea . Eventually he sighted people he named Rockpapua or " skirted Papuans " - these were Kamea people perhaps in the area south of Tekadu in the southernmost part of Morobe Province or the northern part of Gulf Province . On 11 November 1914 , one of the carriers , left with several others to rest at a temporary camp , arrived bearing a note from Frederick Chisholm , an Australian Patrol Officer , informing him of the state of war between Germany and Great Britain and requesting him to surrender at Nepa on the Lakekamu River , five days walk away .

= = = Four years in the unexplored interior of New Guinea = = =

Rather than comply , Detzner led his party , on a forced march north to the Markham Valley . His route is uncertain , but his description of a valley with steep grassy ravines entering from east and west may place the latter part of his journey in the Langimar Valley , through which flows a tributary of the Watut River . A clash with local people that he describes has been identified as having occurred at Rangama among with Middle Watut people . Once on the Watut itself , the party built rafts and floated downstream to the Markham .

His final destination was Sattelberg on the Huon peninsula . His second in command , Sergeant Konradt , who suffered from frequent bouts of malaria , and a German officer , were captured by the Australians by spring 1915 . Eventually , Detzner found his way to the vicinity of Lutheran mission at the Sattelberg , at a foggy , cool area at 800 meters (2 @,@ 625 ft) , above Finschhafen . The Sattelberg mission was one of the Neuendettelsau Mission Society enterprises established by the Old Lutheran missionary , Johann Flierl , in 1885 . This station , and additional mission stations in Heldbach , Simbang , Tami Islands , and Simbu , were an important evangelical presence in the Morobe Province . The missionaries had signed oaths of neutrality for the Australians , who allowed them to remain at their Stations and continue their work .

Once Detzner reached the vicinity of the Sattelberg Mission , nearby villagers in the Borrum valley housed him and his remaining men , which had dwindled to about 20 soldiers , plus four European officers and , on his behalf , the villagers sought assistance from the Sattelberg director , Christian Keyser , and another missionary , Otto Thiele . They reluctantly agreed to keep Detzner 's presence a secret . Among the villagers , Detzner established a base camp from which he could depart at short notice . The valley was relatively secure for him , and inaccessible for the Australians , but if

they ventured too close to his base , Detzner and his men would retreat into the mountainous Saruwaged , or , if necessary , further into the Finisterre mountains . These were rugged and remote locations , accessible to Detzner , who had the help of native guides , but which the Australians , who usually traveled in larger patrols , could not penetrate .

Detzner and his band stayed near the Sattelberg Mission for the remainder of the war . After the war , however , Detzner would claim he had roamed throughout the eastern jungles of the island , eluding Australian patrols and making little effort to hide . He said he flew the Imperial German flag (sewn from dyed loincloths) in villages throughout the bush , and marched his command through the jungle , loudly singing such patriotic German songs as " Watch on the Rhine " (Die Wacht am Rhein) and popular sentimental ballads like " The Linden Tree " (Der Lindenbaum) .

= = = Escape attempts = = =

Detzner may have made attempts to reach West New Guinea , which was then neutral Dutch New Guinea , but his claims to have been the first outsider to enter the Papua New Guinea highlands can be discounted . In 1915 , and again in 1917 , Detzner and some of his men tried to escape along the coast in two canoes . In 1917 , they reached the vicinity of Friedrich @-@ Wilhelmshafen , which today is Madang . There lay anchored the Australian ship , HMAS Una , which earlier had been the German imperial yacht , the SMS Komet , designated for use by the German governor of the colony . The ship blocked any further travel , and ended any notions they had of a water escape to Dutch New Guinea . On this escape attempt , Detzner also learned the Australians had orders to shoot him on sight . He made one further attempt to escape overland to Dutch New Guinea , but had to be carried back suffering from an internal hemorrhage . He spent the remainder of the time investigating the island 's inhabitants and its flora and fauna , particularly in the Huon peninsula and Huon gulf .

= = = Surrender = = =

In late November 1918 , Detzner received the news of the end of the war from a worker at the Sattelberg Mission Station . He wrote a letter to the Australian commander in Morobe in which he offered his capitulation . On 5 January 1919 , he surrendered at the Finschhafen District headquarters , marching with his remaining German troops in a column , and wearing his carefully preserved full @-@ dress uniform . He was brought to Rabaul , the Australian headquarters , and on 8 February 1919 , was transferred to Sydney aboard the Melusia ; after a brief internment in the prisoner of war camp at Holsworthy , he was repatriated to Germany .

= = Book and honours = =

On his arrival home , Detzner received a hero 's welcome . The press likened him to the successful commander of German East Africa , Major General Paul Emil von Lettow @-@ Vorbeck , who tied down British forces in Africa for the duration of the war . Detzner had been promoted to the rank of captain during the war ; upon his return , he was promoted to major . In that year , he wrote Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland , nach dem Stande der Forschung im Jahre 1919 , (Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland , According to the State of Research in the Year 1919) , which was widely read in scientific circles . The claim that the Geographical Society of Berlin honored him with the Nachtigal medal , named after the German explorer Gustav Nachtigal , in 1919 is false ; this misinformation may have been planted by Detzner himself . Nevertheless , the Geographic Society of Hamburg did award him their gold medal in 1921 , the University of Bonn granted him an honorary degree , and the military awarded him the Iron Cross (1st Class) . He received a position in the colonial administration 's archive in Berlin .

To satisfy the public curiosity about his adventures , Detzner wrote Four Years among the Cannibals , from 1914 to the Armistice , under the German Flag , in the Unexplored Interior of New Guinea . The book brought him fame in Germany and Britain , and he became a sought @-@ after

speaker on the lecture circuit . In the 1920s , in addition to several articles and two maps of New Guinea , Detzner published a memoir of his adventures in the Niger valley ? In the land of the Dju @-@ Dju : travel experiences in the eastern watershed of the Niger ? in 1923 , but it did not achieve the popularity of his previous work .

= = = Book reception = = =

Detzner 's book was wildly popular among the general population for its incredible tales of stubborn patriotism and its narratives describing the exotic locales of the lost imperial colonies . His descriptions touched a chord in the German imagination : one of their own had explored the colony , walked its paths , seen its mountains and valleys , and met its people . His vivid descriptions brought to life the images Germans had seen on postcards (such as the one to left) , newspapers , and in school books . Furthermore , he had defended Germany 's " place in the sun " when others had failed to do so . His book was translated into English , Finnish , Swedish and eventually French . (See below .)

In a speech at the Berlin Geographical Society in 1919 , Detzner claimed that the natives of New Guinea had opposed Australian domination and resisted a military recruitment that amounted to slavery , that even the English plantation holders wished to remain independent of Australia , and that the natives were collecting money to build a war memorial for the Germans . The report on Detzner 's speech , transmitted from a news agency in London , caused a small flutter in Australian government circles , but generally was dismissed ; an earlier report by the Australian judiciary had absolved the Australian force of improper recruiting or treatment of the New Guineans . An angry letter to the editor from another Australian source , who claimed to have been in service in Morobe from 1914 ? 1915 , received little attention .

In the scientific world , several of his descriptive passages generated excitement and curiosity . In early 1914 , he had been surveying a portion of the international boundary in the Upper Waria River between the German and British protectorates . By late September , he had passed into a different portion of the highlands , where the clay @-@ slate mountains changed into limestone highlands . In this geologic transition , he said , he also found a change in the ethnographic character of the population , whom he described as a " new " people . They were stocky , powerfully built , and long ? limbed ; they wore their hair in knots on the centre of their heads , which were otherwise shaven , and painted yellow and black lines across their chests . They also wore grass skirts , so he called them the skirted ones . They used bows and arrows , slings and stone axes . As he pushed west to Mount Joseph , Detzner claimed , he had found the southern hills of the central watershed cut by numerous rivers flowing north to south . He had surmised that there were no insurmountable obstacles between him and the Sepik river . In 1917 , he had travelled through the Ramu valley into the Bismarck range , northwest of the Kratke Mountains , and had continued on that route for 100 kilometres (62 mi) . He also described the presence of an indigenous variation of German , called Unserdeutsch (our German) , in several New Guinean dialects .

= = Controversy = =

In 1919 , after an account of Detzner 's speech in Berlin to the Geographical Society was published in Australia , an angry Australian wrote anonymously to the editor of The Argus , a Melbourne newspaper , and described what he claimed were Detzner 's lies . " There was no mystery about the disappearance of Captain Detzner and his party " , he claimed . The writer attributed Detzner 's success at staying ahead of the Australians to the perfidy of the German missionaries , who had agreed to remain neutral and in return for such agreement were allowed to continue their mission work . Detzner was a civilian [emphasis in the original] surveyor , the writer claimed , not a soldier and he survived on mission station rations supplied by public subscription from the German plantation owners . Furthermore , this writer asserted , Detzner 's movements were so well known to the district officer at Morobe that he was prevented from escaping ; they could have shot him several times , but did not . The writer dismissed Detzner 's claims about Australian recruitment of the

natives as " in keeping with his dozens of other lying statements in all cases endeavoring to belittle Englishmen or British officers , in every case pure fabrications and typical scurrilous Hun lies " .

While such criticism of Detzner 's adventures might have been dismissed as post @-@ bellum bellicosity , in 1929 , Detzner 's assertions came under more serious assault . Two of the German missionaries in the Finschhafen District , Christian Keyser (also spelled Kayser or Keysser) and Otto Thiele , claimed Detzner had not spent the war roaming the jungle , one step ahead of the Australians , but had been under the Mission 's protection the entire time . Keyser 's additional accusations were particularly specific : Detzner had appropriated his own scientific observations . Keyser 's claims carried some weight . He had published a dictionary of the Kâte language , and was a reliable expert on New Guinean dialects , and the German @-@ based creole languages that had arisen in New Guinea ; he was also a bona fide explorer and adventurer , having lived from 1899 to 1920 among the mountain peoples of the island . In 1913 , Keyser climbed the 4 @, @ 121 @-@ meter (13 @, @ 520 ft) Saruwaged Massif ; over the course of his 21 years in New Guinea , he had identified hundreds of new plant and animal species , and had maintained a regular correspondence with the German Geographical Society in Berlin . Ernst Mayr , a rising star in ornithology , had heard about Detzner from Australians on a research trip to New Guinea . In Germany , during a meeting with Keyser , they discussed Detzner 's claims , and Mayr lost no time in broadcasting the discrepancy to his scientific contacts in Europe and the United States .

More problematically , Detzner had no documentation of his findings . As he explained in his many speeches , although he had kept notebooks with drawings of plants , animals , maps , and people , and journals recounting his day ? to ? day experiences , some of his notebooks and journals had been destroyed by the Australians as they over ? ran his hiding places ; others , which he had buried to keep them from being destroyed , had rotted beyond repair in the jungle humidity . He implied that what remained of his notes had been confiscated when he surrendered . Detzner 's narrative also was rife with contradictions and omissions : Detzner named few villages or streams and stated that the valleys he discovered were thinly populated , whereas they actually contained large populations , at least by New Guinea standards . He also stated that the highest point in the range was 3 @, @ 600 meters (11 @, @ 800 ft) , a 1 @, @ 200 @-@ meter (3 @, @ 900 ft) miscalculation , which , for a mapmaker and a surveyor , needed to be explained .

Detzner made attempts to explain away specific ambiguities , contradictions , and errors . In 1915 , he said , he lost his surveying instruments while eluding an Australian patrol , which explained why many of his assertions were vague and inconclusive , and his calculations inaccurate . This was true , the Australians did find a box of Detzner 's equipment in the location where the missionary Johann Flierl 's oldest son , Wilhelm , had kept (or stored) his small canoe . Although Wilhelm denied helping Detzner and his men , the Australians arrested him . The event coincided with one of Detzner 's narrow escapes from Australian patrols in 1915 and was inadvertently corroborated in 1919 by the angry letter to The Argus 's editor . Some of Detzner 's assertions could be sustained through observable physical evidence : he had reportedly wasted to a mere 40 kilograms (88 lb) while roaming in the bush , which should not have happened , some supporters claimed , if he had indeed been under the protection of Keyser and Thiele . On the other hand , this weight loss could also have been due to his debilitating illness in 1917 .

Despite his explanations , the missionaries Thiele and Keyser , whose own autobiography appeared in 1929 , and the widely respected Mayr , who by this time had become the leader of the Whitney South Seas Expeditions , continued to challenge the bulk of Detzner 's scientific " discoveries " . Detzner 's position became increasingly untenable . In 1932 , he admitted that he had mixed fact and fiction in his book , explaining that he had never intended it to be taken as science , but rather at its face @-@ value , as the story of his adventurous years in the jungles of New Guinea . The following year , Detzner resigned from the prestigious Geographical Society of Berlin .

I wish to state that my book , Vier Jahre unter Kannibalen , contains a number of misrepresentations regarding my journeys in New Guinea . The book in question is a scientific report in part only ; it is primarily a fictional account of my experiences in New Guinea and owes its origin to the unusual circumstances prevailing in Germany at the time of my return . Some of the journeys I had actually undertaken are not described at all ; on the other hand it contains passages that do not

correspond with the facts .

After this , he withdrew entirely from public life , although he retained his position in the colonial archive . He lived in Schmargendorf , Berlin , on Auguste @-@ Viktoria @-@ Straße , and later became the director of the Carl @-@ Pfeffer Verlag , a publishing house in Heidelberg . He died there in 1970 , at the age of 88 .

= = Legacy = =

The ambiguous wording of Detzner 's resignation from the Geographical Society of Berlin ? the use of such phrases as contains misrepresentations , scientific report in part only , primarily fictional , unusual circumstances in Germany , and so on ? misled later scholars , many of whom remained unaware of the controversy surrounding his book . Consequently , his work continued to inform the geographical , linguistic , and anthropological investigations of New Guinean culture and geography well into the 1950s and 1960s , much to the dismay of Ernst Mayr , who had been instrumental in discrediting Detzner in the 1920s .

Since the mid ? 1970s , references to Four Years Among the Cannibals have continued to appear in studies on New Guinea . In the 1990s , Detzner 's work received some rehabilitation from ethnographer Terence Hays , who placed Detzner 's work in its contemporary context : Four Years Among the Cannibals , he wrote , " paved the way for me [to become an ethnographer] by creating romanticized images that served as a backdrop for more serious readings " . Since then , geographer Robert Linke has raised some important questions : " Why did Detzner resort to lies to embellish his wonderful story ? The unadorned truth would have been enough to establish him as one of the great figures in New Guinea history . " Detzner had remained at large for four years , as a fugitive in enemy @-@ held territory : surely , Linke concluded , this was an exceptional feat . No doubt the Australians could have made a more broadly organized attempt to capture him , and probably would have succeeded , but they did not make the effort ; they preferred instead the more convenient " shoot @-@ at @-@ sight " method . " It is impossible " , Linke wrote , " not to admire his [Detzner 's] sheer elan , his courage and tenacity . " In 2008 , Detzner 's book was retranslated , reprinted , and marketed as a modern translation of a rare and valuable book about the exploration of the New Guinean interior during World War I.

= = Detzner 's works = =

(German) " Kamerun @-@ Boundary : Die nigerische Grenze von Kamerun zwischen Yola und dem Cross @-@ Fluss " . Mitteilungen aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten . 26 : 13 , pp. 317 ? 338 .

(German) " Der Saruwaged und seine östlichen und südöstlichen Anschlussgebiete " . Kolonial Rundschau . Number 25 (1919) (Booklets , 8 , 9 , 10) pp. 209 ? 221 .

(German) " Kreuz- und Querzüge in Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland während des Weltkrieges : Februar 1914 bis November 1918 " . Mitteilungen aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten . Volume 32 (1919) , pp. 4 ? 19 .

(German) Kaiser @-@ Wilhelmsland , nach dem Stande der Forschung im Jahre 1919 , with Max Moisel , Map . Berlin [Mittler] , 1919 .

(German) Vier Jahre unter Kannibalen . Von 1914 bis zum Waffenstillstand unter deutscher Flagge im unerforschten Innern von Neuguinea , Scherl , Berlin , 1920 , 1921 .

(English) Four Years among the Cannibals , from 1914 to the Armistice under the German Flag in unexplored interior of New Guinea . Berlin , August Scherl , [1921] .

(Finnish) Neljä vuotta ihmissyöjien parissa : Saksan lipun suojassa Uuden @-@ Guinean tutkimattomissa sisäosissa 1914 ? 1918 . Porvoo , WSOY , 1925 .

(French) M?urs et coutumes des Papous : quatre ans chez les cannibales de Nouvelle @-@ Guinée (1914 ? 1918) Avec une carte . Paris , Payot , 1923 , 1935 .

(Swedish) Fyra år bland kannibaler . Ani Mari Nordman , trans . Helsingfors , Schildt , 1925 .

(English) Four Years Among the Cannibals ... Gisela Batt , (Trans .) , Pacific Press , Gold Coast ,

Australia , 2008 . (Retranslation and reprint) .

(German) " Medizinische und hygienische Streiflichter aus dem Innern von Neuguinea " . Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropen @-@ Hygiene , Pathologie und Therapie exotischer Krankheiten . 1921 , 25 (3) : pp. 67 ? 79 .

(German) Im Lande der Dju @-@ Dju . Reiseerlebnisse im östlichen Stromgebiet des Niger , Scherl , Berlin 1923 .

(German) " Stammesgemeinschaften im Zentralgebiet von Deutsch @-@ Neuguinea " . Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten , Volume 36 (1928) , pp. 112 ? 130 .

(German) " Unter Unbekannten Kannibalen " , Die Woche , 24 . 1 . 1925 , Nr. 4 .

(German) Die Kolonien unter Mandats Herrschaft . Berlin , Deutscher Wille , 1927 .

(German) Das " Zentralgebirge " Neuguineas im Gebiet der Wasserscheide zwischen Hüon- und Papua @-@ Golf . Map . Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten , Kt . 3 im 2 . Heft , Bd . XXXVI , 1928 .