To Hill Town.—Difficulties in surveying the river.—Jably.—Meanders in the river’s course.—Do Gwong.—Arrival and reception in Hill Town.—My residence.—The town and its surroundings.—The town fetishes.—CLARK as a judge.—A nightly feast.—JASSA, my housekeeper.—Hunting forays.—Contacts with native hunters.—Tax levied on game.—Trip to Schieffelinsville.—Fishing at Upper Blow Town.—Loss of my shotgun.—Return to Hill Town.—A night in Go Town.—The first Hippopotamus.—Trip to Bo Wong.—The second Hippopotamus.

At ten o’clock in the morning on the third of January I set out for Hill Town in CLARK’s canoe and one of ours. Chief CLARK had had the foresight of sending me an intelligent young Vey man named JIM as a guide. He could not only speak with my Vey people, who knew neither the Bassa nor the Du Queeah language,¹ but also understood English fairly well. I immediately started to survey the course of the river with the help of my compass and distance estimates, an activity that required my fullest attention and consumed all of my time due to the many bends and loops in the river. One might perhaps wonder why I didn’t calculate the distance covered

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¹ The latter is a dialect of the former and differs little from it.
on a particular stretch by means of the time it took to pass it. On such river journeys, which aren’t undertaken for the specific purpose of cartography, this is almost impossible because the speed of the canoe, even at a uniform beat of the paddles, is influenced by various factors in different ways. The first and foremost of these factors are the tides, which, as previously mentioned, make themselves felt for quite a ways upriver. If one sets out while the tide is coming in, progress will be very quick for as long as the water is rising appreciably. This will gradually slow down until finally, after about half an hour of high water, the tide will start to flow out again and a current that was favourable just a while before, will now become unfavourable, whereas the oarsmen’s strength will remain the same. Another factor is that, even where the tide is no longer felt, the fall of the river isn’t the same in all places; here and there one also gives the order to slow down or even to halt when something attracts one’s particular interest. Moreover, the men only rarely strike the paddles at a constant tempo for longer periods of time, but often strain themselves excessively for a while, followed by a period of a more leisurely pace. Based on a range of calculations I may assume that a canoe, under normal conditions, can easily cover 3 miles in one hour. However, under favourable conditions and a great exertion by the oarsmen, who can accomplish enormous feats when they are in a good mood, this distance can be twice as long, i.e., 6 miles per hour, or even faster.

At its confluence with the Junk, the Du Queah is some 100 M wide and maintains this width for as long as it winds through the Mangrove swamp. For quite a while one sees nothing but dreary Mangrove forest, and it isn’t until a bit further up, still in swampy area, that one finds extensive, impenetrable stands of Wine palms, whose giant fronds hang out over the water and completely hide the banks from sight. Only rarely does one see a lonely Pandanus, whereas the Junk River at the confluence with the Du Queah is bordered with such vast stands of this remarkable tree that they appear like a veritable wall. Here and there along the bank one encounters a group of the already mentioned characteristic Aroid plants with their large grass-green flowers with brown stripes. Numerous creeks, half hidden by bush, flow into the river from the left and right, but do not contribute much water, at least not in the dry season. Further up, the banks become higher and are then covered with high forest and partly also with large cassava farms.

\[2\] [Lasimorpha senegalensis, see Chapter V.]