

# Reactions to the Visit of Samson Dido, of Cameroon, to Germany (1886)

## Abstract

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Germans encountered Blacks on German soil in various contexts. As other documents and images in this section suggest, most Germans did so when they visited a *Völkerschau*, an “ethnological exhibition” or display of (non-white) peoples. (The term is can be alternatively translated as “human zoo.”) Still other Blacks and Africans arrived in Germany on their own or in small groups, as described in these reports chronicling the visit of Cameroonian Prince Samson Dido.

## Source

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### SOURCE TEXTS

#### A. From Heinrich Leutemann’s Account of the Life of Animal Merchant Carl Hagenbeck

[...] With wives and children, though without animals, and with a very attractive collection of African products, “Prince Dido from Didotauwn” [sic] came to Germany in 1886 at H’s instigation, along with some other blacks from Cameroon, which since 1885 is referred to all over Germany as a German African colonial acquisition. Attractive, at times herculean figures of flawless blackness, they too could not fail to cause a sensation, particularly as evidence of the spectacle offered by those who are now no more than semi-savage. At any rate the “Prince” with his top hat, his European tailcoat and the loincloth round his otherwise naked legs was a very amusing image of the semi-savage Neger, which in the end he himself must have recognized, because in Leipzig he finally put trousers on. [...]

Source of English translation: [by Robbie Aitken]: Black Central Europe website:

<https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1850-1914/reactions-to-the-visit-of-samson-dido-to-germany-1886/>

Source of original German text: Heinrich Leutemann, *Lebensbeschreibung des Thierhändlers Carl Hagenbeck*. Hamburg: Selbstverlag Carl Hagenbeck, 1887, pp. 67–68.

#### B. From the *Leipziger Tageblatt* (August 15, 1886)

Tomorrow, Monday, towards evening a strange guest is making a festive entrance into our town: Prince Dido from the land of Cameroon with his two wives and his whole entourage. From the outset it should be remarked that what we have here is not one of those exotic guests who stray our way from time to time in order to be stared at. No, the lineage of Prince Dido is completely beyond question, he is in fact a prince in the new German imperial territory and is a near blood relation to the very King Bell who is so popular here and throughout Germany. This Duala Prince has come to us in order to get to know this country, whose greatness and power people are already talking about on the Dark Continent. He wants to make contact with the people who are rightly being called his imperial brothers [*Reichsbrüder*] and he will return to his homeland with much to report about all he has seen and experienced in Germany. In this way Prince Dido has a cultural mission to fulfil, whose meaning and significance has also been recognised in Berlin, because here this exotic guest was ceremonially received and welcomed by the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of the German Empire.

Source of English translation: [by Robbie Aitken]: Black Central Europe website:

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Source of original German text: *Leipziger Tageblatt*, no. 227, August 15, 1886, p. 4617. Available online at: <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/305012/17/>

### **C. From the *Leipziger Tageblatt* (August 17, 1886)**

Prince Dido from Cameroon arrived here at half past five on the Berlin Railway and was greeted by the Director of the Zoological Gardens Herr Prinkert. Accompanied by Herr Prinkert the brown-skinned Prince took his place alongside his two wives and his son in a spectacular carriage drawn by four horses with an outrider; the entourage as well as representatives of Hagenbeck and the African agent sat in the two following carriages. [...] Naturally, the journey to the Zoological Gardens was the object of great public interest.

Source of English translation: [by Robbie Aitken]: Black Central Europe website: <https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1850-1914/reactions-to-the-visit-of-samson-dido-to-germany-1886/>

Source of original German text: *Leipziger Tageblatt*, no. 229, August 17, 1886, p. 4647. Available online at: <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/305008/13/>

### **D. From the *Leipziger Tageblatt* (August 24, 1886)**

Early Monday afternoon the brown Prince Dido of Didotown visited the hat making factory of Herr Haugl, supplier to the court, here in the Rosenthalgasse. Herr Haugl, who personally took the Prince on a tour of his establishment, provided the latter with an in-depth introduction to art of hat making. The production of a piece of felt awakened great interest in the Cameroonian chief. Herr Haugl inserted a packet of wool into one side of the machine, and a piece of felt came out the other side. The fulling room and the finishing workshop also caught the excited attention of the Prince. As a memento Herr Haugl honoured his guest with the gift of a collapsible top hat, a type of headgear which we understand has not yet been introduced in Cameroon. Through his interpreter the Prince thanked Herr Haugl for this kind gesture and amid the delighted shouts of the waiting crowd, who in the meantime had gathered out front, the Prince left for a visit to one of the larger local printing houses.

Source of English translation: [by Robbie Aitken]: Black Central Europe website: <https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1850-1914/reactions-to-the-visit-of-samson-dido-to-germany-1886/>

Source of original German text: *Leipziger Tageblatt*, no. 236, August 24, 1886, p. 4773. Available online at: <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/305016/13/>

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