

# ***Christ in the Jungle. A Missionary Film from Cameroon*** **(1931)**

## **Abstract**

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This clip from the 1931 documentary *Christus im Urwald* [Christ in the Jungle] depicted the work of German-Catholic missionaries among the Limba people along the Sanaga River in the former German colony of Cameroon in west-central Africa. The filmmaker Berthold Kromer—himself a member of the Catholic Congregation of the Holy Spirit, known as the Spiritans—wrote, edited, and produced this work. In it, he showed the many good works that missionary brothers and sisters engaged in, such as caring for orphans, teaching school children, offering cooking classes to area women, and leading a daily “*Turnstunde*” (hourlong gymnastics instruction) that included marching and military drills. All of these efforts furthered the larger aim of converting the people and forging a new generation of indigenous clerics. As the film’s concluding section declared, the missionaries sought to spread the message of Christ “even across the African jungle and its inhabitants.” Catholic and Protestant organizations from Germany already had nearly a half-century history of such missionary work in Africa, primarily in regions that the country controlled as colonies prior to 1918. Many missionaries returned after the war, even though Article 118 of the Versailles Treaty stipulated that Germany lose all of its overseas colonies. France and Great Britain divided its former colony of Cameroon [*Kamerun*], for instance, with France governing the portion in which these German missionaries operated in 1931. Producers often used films like this one to raise funds and generate public support for their missionary work. At the same time, such movies nursed nostalgic feelings for the lost empire while simultaneously appealing to audiences’ desires to see exotic fauna, arresting landscapes, and unfamiliar customs and cultural practices.

## **Source**

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A missionary film from Cameroon.

[credits]

Cameroon is a wonderful tropical country with its dusky mountain forests...

[map of Cameroon]

It is said of our Savior: “He went through the land as a benefactor.” The same applies to the missionary sisters.

In her, Christ the Good Samaritan is resurrected.

Missionary sisters care for the youngest, the orphans.

The school plays a very important role in the conversion of a people. It leads the youth to Christ.

School-age youths at work building their school.

Gymnastics lesson.

An important task for the fledgling African Church is the training of a native clergy.

Christ's priesthood is not only a privilege of the white race.

In the small seminar: instruction.

Morning toilette.

A few images from the seminary: singing lessons.

Well-deserved rest after rigorous studies.

Those evil chiggers!

The local teachers and catechists are the stalwart helpers to the missionaries.

All these missionaries, priests and lay people, Europeans and Africans, are Christ's heralds and pioneers.

They all work towards the one great goal: that Christ may also become king of the African jungle and its

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inhabitants.

Source: *Christus im Urwald*, dir. Bethold Kromer, Kopp-Filmwerke, 1931. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv  
Filmwerk ID: 335 <https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/video/335/640940>

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