

Notes and News

Meeting of Linguistic Specialists, November 1956

AN international meeting of linguists, sponsored by CCTA/CSA, was held in London in November 1956 under the chairmanship of Professor Guthrie of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Linguists from Belgium, France, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Portugal, the Union of South Africa, and the United Kingdom attended, as well as observers from UNESCO and from the East African Institute of Social Research. The main task to which the meeting addressed itself was the implementation of recommendations made by the first Conference of the Inter-African Committee for Social Sciences held at Bukavu in August 1955 (see *Africa*, xxvi. 1, January 1956, pp. 75-76). The meeting accordingly discussed the formation, within the framework of the Inter-African Committee for Social Sciences, of an Inter-African Committee for Linguistics; a draft constitution was prepared and recommended for the approval of CCTA/CSA, in which the functions and membership of the proposed committee were defined; it was recommended that the Committee should meet once a year but that members should keep in close touch with each other in the intervals between meetings. It was further recommended that national and international organizations interested in linguistic research in Africa should be invited to participate in the work of the Committee as observers.

The meeting also recommended the appointment of a Committee for Traditional African Literature and nominated its members—Professor Burssens of Ghent to act as chairman. The aim of this Committee, which is to conduct its activities by correspondence, is to arrange for the publication of a collection of different types of traditional African literature in a French or English translation (in some cases with the original texts), with an introduction and notes where necessary. The recording of oral literature was also considered, and the Committee invited the co-operation of specialists and of those engaged in field work in Africa in assembling information and material.

Other recommendations made by the meeting concerned the reprinting or reproduction of works on African languages (see below, p. 189), the review of existing documentation for African languages (in which reference was made to the comprehensive bibliographical card catalogue in the possession of the International African Institute), and the review of the present state of research in the various fields of African linguistics.

A Pilot Scheme for Nomadic Betterment in the Somaliland Protectorate

UNTIL 1943 there was strong resistance on the part of the Somali to the idea of Government secular education. Now, although in urban and settled communities the demand for secular education is persistent, among the nomads who form the greater part of the population of the Protectorate resistance to secular education is still strong and is sometimes fostered by the local religious leaders (the *Wadads*). A pilot scheme has now been initiated by the Government with a view to providing some basic education for the nomadic peoples and, in particular, giving them some knowledge of the recent history of the Protectorate and of the improvements which the Government is trying to effect. In order to overcome mistrust of the Government's intentions, a small number of *Wadads*, who were already engaged in teaching in Koranic schools, were selected as instructors and given a three months' course of training. The programme consisted of the following: observation of methods of teaching the Koran used in Government schools; attending and devising simple talks on Islam as given to children in Government elementary schools; the teaching of simple arithmetic in

Arabic; the teaching of Arabic up to elementary school standard; local affairs: Protectorate history, soil erosion and protection of trees, the aims and work of various Government departments; first aid, including attendance at the local dispensary and the out-patients department of the nearest hospital.

After this first group of instructors have been working in the field for six months, they will be recalled and invited to report on the results of their work. If the scheme has been well received, it is hoped to train a larger number of instructors and not only to raise the standard of Arabic teaching but to add instruction on hygiene, veterinary work, &c.

Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, U.S.A.). Institute of African Affairs

AN Institute of African Affairs is being established at Duquesne University under the direction of the Rev. F. M. Philben, C.S.Sp., who has served for six years as a missionary in Africa. It is hoped to start some courses of African study in 1957 and to develop a full graduate programme within three or four years. The purpose of the new Institute is to stimulate serious thinking on African affairs and to provide trained personnel for government and industry. The Institute hopes eventually to offer graduate and some undergraduate courses, to sponsor African conferences, conduct student and teacher exchanges between Africa and America, and provide speakers expert in African subjects.

Professor Diedrich Westermann

FUNERAL ceremonies in memory of Diedrich Westermann were held in a number of places among the Ewe people on 16 September 1956. The Secretary of the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Togo, reporting the ceremony to the Norddeutsche Mission in Bremen (which had first sent Westermann as a missionary to Togoland), wrote: 'All the Christians, Protestants as well as Catholics, and even pagans, sent their greetings to the family of Westermann—the beloved and tireless benefactor of native culture and Ewe literature. The work he did for them will be cherished in the memory of the Ewe people from generation to generation for centuries to come' (E. Dammann, in *Le Monde non chrétien*, Dec. 1956).

A French Social Centre in Lagos

THE French Social Centre in Lagos is primarily a club for French subjects from Dahomey, Togo, Niger, Chad, Cameroons, and other territories of French Africa, who are resident in Nigeria. Classes in French are held twice a week for adults and children, the average attendance at these being about sixty. French newspapers and magazines are available to all members. Besides its social activities the Centre provides a temporary lodging for French subjects who are seeking to be repatriated. Rooms are available where persons without other resources in Lagos can stay till funds for their return journey have been sent to the French Consul from the territory to which they belong. Among those who, for one reason or another, are stranded in Lagos without money, a considerable number are herdsmen who have travelled on foot from Niger or Chad to bring their cattle to the Nigerian markets.

Religion and Social Change in Modern East Africa

A SEMINAR held at Makerere College in the spring term of 1956 discussed a number of problems arising from the impact of Christianity on East African peoples, missionary methods and teaching, the behaviour and outlook of African Christians in the past and today, and their relations with non-Christians. Revivalist movements and their relations with the organized churches were also discussed. Those participating in the seminar were students and lecturers of Makerere College and a report of the seminar has been circulated privately; it is understood, however, that one of the papers read will be published shortly.