

Mexico City embodying proposals for the promotion of researches in non-European areas. As an international organization, this Institute will welcome an opportunity to contribute to such developments in the African field.

The Language of the Pygmies

It has been commonly supposed that the Pygmies of Central Africa have now no language of their own but speak that of their 'patrons' or of the peoples with whom they live 'in symbiosis'. Father Trilles, on the contrary, was inclined to believe that the Pygmies in Gabon and southern Cameroons, whom he studied, have—or at least have had—a language of their own. Father Hulstaert, in his article in this number, shows pretty conclusively that the Pygmoid people in his area of Belgian Congo have adopted, with some variations, the speech of their patrons. Sir H. H. Johnston published in his book *The Uganda Protectorate* the vocabularies of several languages collected in the north-eastern region of Belgian Congo. One of these is Mbuba, spoken by a non-Pygmy people, and another 'Bambute' spoken by Pygmies. He was struck by the close similarity of these two lists of words and seems to have reached the conclusion that 'Bambute' is a dialect of Mbuba and adopted by the Pygmies. He also gives a short vocabulary of Lese. From the scanty material available it appears that these three forms of speech are very much alike, as can be seen in the words for 'two': Mbuba *agbe*; 'Bambute' *e'be*; Lese *ekpe*. What Sir Harry named 'Bambute' and Archdeacon Lloyd 'Lumbuti' is called 'Efe' by Father Schebesta. Of the people who speak it he says: they are 'by far the most numerous and purest tribe of pygmies and have, it would appear, retained their original language up to the present day'. He is inclined to believe that 'Efe' is a pygmy language by origin which was adopted by the Mamvu, the Balese, and the Bambuba who had penetrated into the eastern district'; and further that Efe is probably 'the very language which was formerly spoken by all Ituri pygmies before the negro tribes penetrated into the Forest'. Father Schebesta is therefore diametrically opposed to Sir H. H. Johnston in this matter of the relation of Efe to Mbuba; the one holding that Mbuba and others have borrowed from the Efe, the other that Efe has borrowed from them.

Prompted by reading Father Hulstaert's article we were minded to ask Professor De Jonghe whether he had any further light to throw upon the Efe-Mbuba-Lese problem; and in reply he has kindly sent us the following note:

'Personnellement, j'ai toujours été très sceptique au sujet de l'hypothèse que l'Efe serait la langue originelle des Pygmées d'Afrique, ou plutôt de l'hypothèse du P. Schebesta que la langue originelle des Pygmées-Bushmen aurait dû être proche du soudanais. Cette hypothèse est hardie. Jusqu'ici le P. Schebesta n'a pas publié le matériel linguistique qui devrait venir confirmer son hypothèse.

'Les faits connus peuvent être résumés comme suit: Schebesta a constaté qu'à côté des langues véhiculaires, les pygmées de l'Ituri ont une langue spéciale qu'ils parlent entre eux dans leurs campements; et il distingue trois groupes parmi ces langues spéciales:

1. Les pygmées qui vivent en symbiose avec les Mombutu, Mamvu, Balese et Bambuba, parlent entre eux l'*Efe*;
2. Les *Bambuti* qui vivent en symbiose avec les Babira, Bakumu, Babali, Bandaka, Barumbi, Mabudu, parlent entre eux le *Kibira*;
3. Les *Aka* qui vivent en symbiose avec les Wangelima, Babeyru, Balika et Medji, ont comme langue de campement le *Medje*. C'est sur ces faits constatés que le P. Schebesta se livre à des interprétations et à des hypothèses subtiles.

'Le *Kibira* et le *Medje* sont éliminés, à juste titre, comme langues pygmées originelles possibles. Il reste l'*Efe*. On pourrait supposer que l'Efe serait la langue des Soudanais Mombutu, Mamvu, Balese, Bambuba (peuples de la savane, apparentés aux Balendu, Logo,

Moru, Madi), auxquels les pygmées l'auraient empruntée. Il n'y a entre la langue de ces peuplades et l'Efe que des différences dialectales de peu d'importance.

'Schebesta écarte l'hypothèse que les pygmées auraient emprunté leur langue de campement aux envahisseurs soudanais. Il soutient au contraire que les Soudanais ont perdu leur langue en empruntant celle des pygmées. Pour rendre plausible un phénomène aussi extraordinaire, Schebesta propose l'explication suivante: la cause de cette assimilation rapide se trouve peut-être dans le fait que la langue originelle des pygmées était apparentée au dialecte Lese-Mamvu, de sorte que le mélange intensif qui se produisit rapidement, produisit d'une part la langue Lese et d'autre part l'Efe, qui se présentent comme deux dialectes voisins. D'où la conclusion que la langue originelle des Pygmées-Bushmen devrait être proche du soudanais.

'Hypothèses hardies et subtiles, que des enquêtes ultérieures confirmeront ou infirmeront.'

'Christian Marriage'

THE REV. DR. W. Y. TURNER writes as follows:

'Allow me to thank Mr. Parr for his courteous reply in the current issue of *Africa* to my note on "Christian Marriage of Africans"—especially for his explanation about the Blantyre Native Association, which opens up the question as to whether the opinions expressed by that body are relevant to the discussion.

'For the elucidation of my remark about Christian Marriage, the meaning of which has eluded Mr. Parr, I might refer him to the seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians, or again to the Tambaram Conference Report, pp. 157-8. Africans readily understand the term.

'I agree with Mr. Parr that clear definition of terms is necessary in such a discussion as this: such definition is needed not only for the term "Christian Marriage", but for the term "Christian" itself as used in the article in the January number. Perhaps I ought to state what I understand by "Christian Marriage". I would put it thus—Christian marriage is a contract between two individuals freely entered into in the sight of God and in the presence of competent witnesses, in the full understanding that it leads to Christian wedlock in a life-long, monogamous, equal partnership.

'Mr. Parr says, "I cannot believe that any African is denied legal status for his marriage." The following case may be cited: After due publication of banns, with the full consent of all parties, a marriage was celebrated in church. The parties signed the Government Register in the presence of witnesses, who also signed; the counterfoil (i.e. the Marriage Certificate), also duly signed by principals and witnesses, was given to the couple; and a copy on the appropriate Government schedule was sent to the Registrar-General, who duly registered it. In the course of subsequent litigation, the man produced his Marriage Certificate in court, and was told by the Magistrate, "That is no marriage". When asked some time later what the Registrar-General had registered if that was no marriage, the Magistrate said it was difficult to say, but he based his finding on a clause in the ordinance (referred to by me in the July issue).

'I like Mr. Parr's statement that "a marriage can become a 'Christian Marriage' if the parties have the intention . . .". My only difference with that is that, given that intention, it *is* a Christian Marriage; and in the marriage service the parties are encouraged to seek God's grace and power, which by faith are operative within them to bring their intention to full fruition in Christian matrimony.'