

Institut Français d'Afrique Noire

IN January 1948 IFAN celebrated the tenth anniversary of its foundation, and a special number of *Notes Africaines*, the organ of the Institut, includes tributes to the work of the Institut from numerous scholars and scientists, and an account by Professor Th. Monod, the Director, of progress and development during the past ten years. 'Le 14 juillet, quand je débarquais à Dakar pour y appeler à la vie un organisme encore théorique, de quoi disposais-je? D'un collaborateur africain, H. Adandé, de quelques pièces vides dans un immeuble . . . et d'un arrêté administratif créant, sur le papier, l'Institut.' During this short time, thanks to the energy and devotion of its Director and in spite of innumerable difficulties, the Institut has progressed steadily, has established itself as a centre of research in many different fields, and has, moreover, given birth to a number of *centres locaux* in French West Africa, Cameroun, Togo, and French Somaliland. IFAN also initiated the 'Conférence Internationale des Africanistes de l'Ouest' and organized the first meeting held at Dakar in 1945. The list of researches which the Institut has carried out and participated in, is an impressive one, and the account of its publications is no less so. Professor Monod, in his editorial, expresses his thanks to numerous collaborators and friends and especially to M. Albert Charton, the real founder of the Institut, 'qui n'a cessé de conserver à l'IFAN une sollicitude sans doute naturelle de la part d'un père, mais qui nous demeure précieuse'.

Islam in Dahomey

DAHOMÉY has hitherto been one of the West African countries least affected by Islam. To-day there are signs of a small but growing movement towards the religion of the Prophet. Not the least interesting feature of this movement is the effort of justification and propaganda, conducted by some of the younger literate members of the community. Their attempted adaptation of Islam to modern needs is a noteworthy instance of culture-contact.

In April 1945 there appeared, in French, the first number of a quarterly bulletin entitled *Islam-Dahomey*, with the explanatory sub-title of *Bulletin trimestriel de liaison et de documentation de l'Association culturelle et d'entre-aide dite 'Jeunesse Musulmane Franco-Dahoméenne'*. This was published under the patronage of the Imam of Porto Novo, and edited and printed by a well-known Muhammadan printer of Brazilian origin, Da Silva. The Association which it represents was founded in the same year, and had as first president M. Serpos Tidjani, an employé of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire in Dahomey.

The Bulletin is addressed to all Muslims, male and female, and to any others interested in Islam. It is emphasized that the Association represents no party; it is not an extremist group or a coterie. Nor is it a political club: 'We shall remain in the middle of the road marked out by French legality.' The Governor of the colony having approved the statutes of the Association, the members are exhorted to 'make *no public demonstration* without having previously informed the local Administration'.

The programme of the Association is fellowship on Sundays, prayer at the great mosque on Fridays, mutual help in the event of marriages, baptisms, and bereavements; recreations such as the theatre (European and native), music, a travelling library in French and Arabic, sports, scouting. There are exhortations to pious works, support of the Muhammadan school in the capital by providing bursaries and a boarding establishment. The necessity for self-help is stressed: 'We must not wait for everything from the Government: private initiative has realized fine things among our Christian brothers.'

The most striking side of *Islam-Dahomey* is the manifest attempt to conciliate Christian and educated opinion, and even to copy Christian method and spirit. This new propaganda of Islam has nothing of the old fanaticism, which is explicitly renounced. It is Islam aware