

Notes and News

Africa—Lowdermilk Project

IN view of the very serious situation resulting from the deterioration and destruction of land in Africa, largely owing to unskilful use of natural resources by native cultivators, the Agricultural Missions, Inc., of New York, in co-operation with the Secretary of State for Colonies in H.M. Government, and with British and American Missionary Societies in Africa, has arranged to make available for study and consultation the services of Dr. Walter C. Lowdermilk. Dr. Lowdermilk possesses exceptional qualifications in the fields of forestry and land use and conservation and has had wide experience in the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (of which he was Assistant Chief from 1933-47) and in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He has also acted as consultant for the French Government in North Africa and as adviser on soil conservation to the Chinese Government.

Dr. Lowdermilk is now in Africa and is proposing to visit Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland. He will consult with all those concerned, both official and unofficial bodies, as to methods of promoting, on the part of the African, an increased sense of responsibility for the wise use of his land; he will also be available, as may be requested, to Government agencies in a technical capacity, to carry out field studies, conferences, meetings for Africans, and such other activities as may be required in the different areas concerned.

Gift for Natal University

AN anonymous European donor has offered £100,000 to endow a chair of African (Bantu) studies at the University of Natal, to establish a library and museum, and provide for their maintenance. The offer, which is subject to certain conditions regarding a grant of land by the Durban municipality, will enable the University to plan the establishment of a major school or institute of African studies.

East Africa Inter-territorial Languages (Swahili) Committee

THE Committee's report on its activities for 1948 describes the reorganization consequent on its transfer to the authority of the East Africa High Commission. The Committee has been reduced from twenty-two to nine members, and will in future consist of persons expert in Swahili and kindred Bantu languages; it will act as the sole authority for Swahili for the purposes of literary publication. The staff of full-time readers at head-office has been increased and an additional reader has been appointed in England, to facilitate speedy production. Work has continued on the revision of the new standard Swahili-English and English-Swahili dictionaries, and on the production of an abridged edition. The organization of the Swahili Essay Competition and the Authorship Competition has been handed over to the East African Literature Bureau, but the adjudication of awards is still vested in the Committee. Satisfaction is recorded at the improvement in the general standard reached in the Essay competition. Contacts have been made with those interested in the co-ordination of Swahili outside the East African dependencies, for example in the Belgian Congo.

Sound Recording of African Languages

A LINGUISTIC project on a large scale is in preparation under the direction of IFAN Cameroun, with the assistance of the Office de la Recherche Scientifique Outre-mer and

the Centre National des Recherches. It is proposed to make systematic sound recordings of African languages, starting in the first instance with the languages of Cameroun français, and it is hoped by this means to secure phonetic material which will be of use to this Institute in connexion with the Handbook of African Languages on which work is now in progress. The material recorded will be based on certain questionnaires formulated by Dr. Tucker of the School of Oriental and African Studies. M. Nicolas, Directeur of IFAN Cameroun, has addressed a memorandum to the International African Institute describing the aims and scope of the project, the techniques and methods to be employed, and the procedure for presenting results. He suggests that similar enterprises might be undertaken by other organizations in other areas of Africa and the results collated.

Gramophone Records of African Music

THE Musée de l'Homme, Paris, has assembled a collection of records of African music prepared by M. C. Rouget, of the Département d'Éthnologie musicale, in collaboration with the Office de la Recherche Scientifique d'Outre-mer. The records comprise a selection of those made by M. A. Didier, of the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, during his expedition to the Congo area in 1946, and include examples of the music of twenty-three native peoples in the Lower Congo, Gabon, Oubangui-Chari, and of two pygmy tribes of the Lower Congo—in all 103 recordings representative of all types of African music: instrumental, both solo and orchestral, as well as vocal and choral specimens both with and without instrumental accompaniment. Certain ceremonial performances of the pygmies have been recorded in their entirety; one of these, which occupies eight records, reveals very clearly the architectural quality of this music, the motive of which is participation in a magical and religious cult.

All the recordings were made in the field and out-of-doors, but they are not inferior in quality to studio recordings and the characteristic tone quality of African music has been faithfully reproduced. The name and geographical location of the people concerned, as well as the instrumental or vocal character of the music, is indicated on each record.

The complete set of thirty-four records is available for sale at 15,000 francs (exclusive of packing and postage): only fifty sets have been made, and no records will be sold separately. Orders should be addressed to: Département d'Éthnologie musicale, Musée de l'Homme, Palais de Chaillot, Paris.

Organisme d'enquête pour l'étude anthropologique des populations indigènes de l'A.O.F.

AN account of the 'Mission Anthropologique' which has been at work from January 1946 to August 1948 in French West Africa, has been published by its director, Médecin Lt.-Colonel Léon Pales. The mission made a comprehensive study of the native populations of French West Africa, mainly from the point of view of nutrition and health. Within the range of its inquiries it included anthropometric, physiological, and biochemical studies, as well as psychological, pathological, and ethnological researches, and detailed analyses of food consumption and production, including nutritive values, preparation and conservation of food-stuffs.

The work of the mission was carried out in part by laboratory and documentary work, in part by tours in the field. Four separate tours were undertaken in Sénégal, Soudan occidental, Guinée occidentale, and Haute Volta—Côte d'Ivoire—Fouta Djallon. A great number of families and individuals, including school children and hospital patients, were examined, and reports on special aspects or particular sections of the work were published during the course of the investigation. Some of these have already been noticed in this *Journal* (xviii, 2 and 3, 1948).