

Notes and News

L'Institut d'Études Centrafricaines

L'INSTITUT est l'organisme local des recherches scientifiques en Afrique Équatoriale Française. Ses objectifs généraux sont:

Susciter et co-ordonner les travaux scientifiques de toute nature se rapportant à l'Afrique Centrale; procéder à la constitution d'archives, de bibliothèques et de collections scientifiques; assurer la publication des études et des travaux scientifiques.

Plusieurs travaux ont déjà été réalisés dans les champs d'océanographie, d'entomologie médicale, de biologie végétale, de préhistoire, d'ethnologie musicale. En outre l'Institut a organisé les études de géographie humaine, en particulier en matière des problèmes démographiques au Gabon et au Moyen-Congo; l'exode rural et les problèmes posés par le développement des centres urbains; la fixation au sol, et l'organisation d'un paysannat dans la vallée du Niari (Moyen-Congo). La section de sociologie et psychologie sociale, qui fait suite à l'ancien Centre des Études Ethnologiques créé par Félix Éboué, a organisé des enquêtes sur les populations détribalisées de Poto-Poto et Bacongo et sur les tribus Balali-Bassoundi. Un programme d'urgence a été établi: (a) Étude des transformations de l'organisation sociale et leurs incidences politiques. (b) Réorganisation du village, du canton en tenant compte des indications sociologiques et économiques. (c) Les centres urbains: niveau de vie, classes sociales, vie politique. (d) Enquêtes psychologiques (voir p. 4).

L'Institut d'Études Centrafricaines est en relation avec les Instituts similaires des autres territoires (I.F.A.N., Institut de Recherches de Madagascar, Institut Inter-colonial de Recherches d'Adiopodoumé). La centralisation s'effectue à Paris, au niveau de l'Office de la Recherche Scientifique Outre-Mer.

Inquiry into African Marriage

THE Rev. Lyndon Harries, one of the team of investigators engaged on this inquiry under the direction of the International African Institute and the International Missionary Council, has recently returned from East and Central Africa where he has been having useful discussions with a number of mission experts on points relevant to the inquiry. At Livingstone, in addition to conferences with the Roman Catholic Bishop and with the Swiss Missionaries, he was able to study the archives at the Church Missionary Society Headquarters as well as material in the files of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. At Salisbury he discussed with the Minister for Native Affairs the recent Native Marriages Bill, and also had an opportunity of hearing the views of various missionary bodies regarding the Bill. At Nairobi he addressed a meeting of the heads of missions on the scope and progress of the inquiry. In Mombasa he was able to meet the Most Reverend Archbishop Mathew, who has already shown a keen interest in the inquiry and has been active in making available information concerning the practice of Roman Catholic missions with regard to African marriages. Facilities are being provided under this research scheme for Mr. Lyndon Harries to visit the United States to consult records of Missionary organizations and confer with American experts.

Prohibition of Polygamy in the Belgian Congo

AN important step has recently been taken in relation to African marriage in the Belgian Congo by the publication of a Decree, bearing the date 4 April 1950, aimed at the suppression of polygamy.

It is enacted that, with effect from 1 January 1951, no person shall be capable of contracting a valid customary marriage during the subsistence of a previous marriage. Any union contracted in breach of this provision, and any agreement for such a marriage, will be void and of no effect—subject, however, to certain qualifications with regard to the position of children and of parties who may have contracted such a union in good faith. Any existing polygamists who fail to establish their status as such before 1 January 1951 (in accordance with a procedure to be prescribed) will, in the absence of proof to the contrary, be presumed to have contracted their polygamous marriages after that date (i.e. such marriages will be treated as void).

Subject to certain safeguards in respect of existing residents, polygamists and their wives will, with effect from 1 July 1950, be debarred from residing in certain kinds of localities, such as urban and non-tribal areas; and provision is made for the future extension of these restrictions. The last-named provision (i.e. that which imposes restrictions on the place of residence) will be enforceable in the native courts (when appropriately constituted, as specified in the Decree) by means of fine, imprisonment, expulsion orders, &c. No criminal sanctions are attached, however, to the provision which forbids the contracting of a polygamous marriage.

ARTHUR PHILLIPS

A form of Polyandry among the Lele of the Belgian Congo

MISS MARY TEW, who was awarded a Fellowship of the International African Institute to carry out field researches on the social structure of the matrilineal peoples in the Western Belgian Congo, gave a preliminary report on some aspects of her results at a joint meeting of the International African Institute and the Royal Anthropological Institute on Tuesday, 13 June 1950. The full text of Miss Tew's paper will be published in an early number of *Africa*.

Africanization of the Gold Coast Public Service

A SELECT Committee of the Gold Coast Legislative Council, consisting of the Colonial Secretary and seven unofficial members, six of whom were Africans, was appointed in April 1949 to recommend methods of recruiting and training suitable local candidates for admission to senior posts within the Service. The Committee's report was published early in 1950 as a Sessional Paper and was debated in the session February–March 1950. The Report may be divided into two parts, one relating to the historical background and progress up to date, the second containing an outline of the existing problem with the committee's recommendations. The two most significant measures so far adopted by the Gold Coast Government in carrying out the policy of Africanization have been the development of the Scholarship Scheme for higher education and the establishment, in September 1948, of the Interim Public Service Commission. Under the scholarship scheme, 626 Gold Coast candidates have been selected for scholarships, the cost having been borne in part by the Gold Coast Government, in part by grants from Development and Welfare funds and in part by a special grant devoted to training Colonial students for higher grades of the public service. A total of 221 (increased to 276 by 28 February) locally recruited senior officers have been appointed. The Report does not attempt to provide a rigid plan for Africanization, but puts forward a number of recommendations including the establishment of a Statutory Public Service Commission with functions outside the control of the Legislature, to advise on all matters of appointment, training, discipline, and conditions of service; the appointment of a full-time 'Commissioner for Africanization'; and the review of the whole structure of the Civil Service by an expert from outside the Gold Coast.