

NOTES AND NEWS

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING. The Ninth Meeting of the Executive Council was held in Paris from May 27th–29th in the Council Chamber of the Société de Géographie, kindly placed at the disposal of the Institute by the Society.

The Session was presided over by the Chairman, the Rt. Hon. Lord Lugard, and the following members attended: Colonel Derendinger, Rev. Father H. Dubois, Professor de Jonghe, Professor Lévy-Bruhl, Mr. J. H. Oldham, Sir E. Denison Ross, Rev. Father Schmidt, Professor Seligman, Rev. E. W. Smith, Professor R. Thurnwald, Major van Düring (attending as observer), Professor H. Labouret (Director), Professor Dr. D. Westermann (Director), Mr. Hanns Vischer (Secretary-General), Miss D. G. Brackett (Secretary). The delegates were welcomed by M. Charcot, President, and M. Grandidier, Secretary-General of the Société de Géographie, and the Session was opened by M. Joseph, Directeur des Affaires Politiques, on behalf of the Minister of the Colonies. The members of the Council were entertained at an official luncheon offered by the Minister for the Colonies, M. Paul Reynaud, when officials and others specially interested in colonial problems were present; on that occasion Professor H. Labouret gave an interesting account of the aims of the Institute and described what had been accomplished in the carrying out of the programme of work outlined at the constituting meeting held in London five years ago.

The delegates were later conducted round the African sections of the International Colonial Exhibition at Vincennes by a member of the organizing committee.

The Chairman announced that the Rockefeller Foundation had generously promised grants to the funds of the Institute for a period of five years, which would enable the Council to start on the programme of continuous research which lack of funds had hitherto made impossible. The Rockefeller Foundation had appropriated a maximum of £10,000 per annum, of which £5,000 was an outright grant, the remaining £5,000 being given on the basis of £1 for every £2 raised from other sources. The Council placed on record their appreciation and gratitude for the generous assistance given by the Rockefeller Foundation and requested that their thanks should be conveyed to the Trustees. The Council devoted the greater part of the meeting to a detailed discussion of the research which should be undertaken and the ways in which the money should be applied, and it was agreed that after further consultation with the members by correspondence a final programme should be laid before the Council at its next meeting in October.

A summary of the proceedings of the meeting will appear in the next issue, together with a list of new members approved by the Council.

SOME RECENT VERNACULAR BOOKS IN AKAN, EWE, AND GA. A very considerable number of books has been published in these three languages during the last year. As the languages are closely related to each other and the new script is used in all these books, a short collective review of a few of them may be of interest.

1. *Akan*. a. *Fante*. Kwaku Ananse nye ne mfefo hon Nkwadaasem (The Pranks of Kwaku Ananse and his friends). Stories collected by D. I. Blair and L. O. Deakin, 55 pp. The Atlantis Press, London and Cape Coast. G. R. Acquah, *Comprehensive Fante Reader I*, 18 pp., *Mbrantse na mbabaawa*, 10 pp. Books in Fante are not nearly so numerous as in Twi, and every addition to the existing Fante library is therefore all the more welcome. The author of the two little primers or readers is an African, who has published several other books in his language. The primers are practical and will do good service, although of course with a content of 18 pages even a primer cannot be very comprehensive.

The book by Blair and Deakin is excellent, one of those very few African books which are not intended for use in church and school, but for general reading. The stories are partly African and partly European, but all of them well told in good Fante and in an agreeable, lively style; and they are all interesting. The value of the book is greatly enhanced by the delightful drawings by Miss Deakin. The printing is remarkably clear, on good paper. Any African will enjoy reading such a book.

b. *Twi*. New books in the Twi dialect will be found in the Bibliography in *Africa*, iv, 1, and in that of the present number. Those published by the Basel Mission are all of them new editions of older books, one having had as many as nine, others seven, six, and five editions, an eloquent proof of the extent to which vernacular education has been carried on by this mission, and of the popularity these books enjoy. Although the authors are Europeans, they show a complete mastery of the language. The books published by the Catholic Mission are intended for Boem and Krachi, where Twi seems to become the literary language in the territory of the smaller vernaculars spoken there. On the other hand it is to be noted that the native priest Dogli has published several very useful books in one of these languages, viz. Lelemi.

2. *Ewe*. In Ewe also a number of carefully prepared primers and readers have been edited by the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missions. Of the new edition of the Bible the New Testament and Psalms have been printed, and the whole Bible is soon to follow. Rev. Paul Wiegräbe's little book, *Ɔutinyawo tso Kofi yuti*, is of a similar character to the *Kwaku Ananse* in Fante. It contains beautiful drawings by C. S. Dey, an Ewe teacher. An Ewe man, E. Paku, is also the author of *Fransegbe srɔ̃gbale na Eweawo* (Bremen 1930). This is a practical grammar with exercises, written in Ewe for Ewe people who want to learn the French language, and is a very remarkable accomplishment. The author not only knows French well, but shows also an ability to

represent in his own vernacular and in a simple and practical way the grammar of a European language. The grammatical terminology of Ewe has been standardized for a number of years; Paku not only uses it with apparent easiness, but also forms new terms where he needs them.

3. *Ga*. In *Ga* two remarkable books have been published: *Ga Grammar Notes and Exercises* by M. B. Wilkie, and *New Ga Primer*, Part II (London, Oxford University Press). Mrs. Wilkie's book is intended 'for ordinary use by *Ga* teachers or others who wish to be able to explain the different parts of their own language, or by foreigners who wish to know something about *Ga*.' The aim first mentioned is put into the foreground, so that Europeans who start to learn the language will have some difficulty in understanding certain sections of the book. But all those who have some knowledge of the language, whether Europeans or *Ga* scholars, will find it a great help and a trustworthy guide to the richness of this well-developed language. Mrs. Wilkie has grasped the true genius of the language, its idiom and its beauty; she presents it very clearly, and, what is of special value, illustrates every rule she gives by numerous and well selected examples. The orthography is that adopted in 1927; it is to be highly appreciated that Mrs. Wilkie realizes the importance of intonation, and has marked the tones in many individual instances and throughout the conjugation of the verb. The author herself modestly says that her book is 'necessarily incomplete' and 'has no claim to be scholarly or scientific'. This may be true in a certain technical sense, so far as a few grammatical details are concerned, but these do not detract from the value of the book, not only for people who want to learn the language, but also for those who study it from a scientific point of view. The first *Ga Grammar* was published as early as 1858 by the Rev I. Zimmermann of the Basel Mission, and is not only out of print but also altogether out of date. All friends of West African languages will be grateful to Mrs. Wilkie for having supplied this want in such a masterly way.

Two *New Ga Primers* (Part I and II), together with a third part which is a *Teachers' Handbook*, by C. P. Moir, have been published by the Oxford University Press. The primers may be regarded as models, both on account of the method used and the pedagogical principles on which they are based, as also in regard to the format, the size of letters used, the good strong paper. Last but not least must be mentioned the delightful and really African illustrations, which have been drawn by Sam. C. Oko, also an African. The *Teachers' Handbook* explains the new script and gives very valuable instructions on the teaching of reading.

One would like to be able to give a copy of each of these books to those who are doubtful about the new script. A comparison with the old forms of the letters would easily show which of the two are the better. Ewe with its complicated sound system uses no less than seven new letters, and yet the script is simple, can be easily read, and is without diacritical marks except

the signs for nasalized vowels, which, however, have been reduced to a minimum.

Nasalized vowels are in many West African languages so frequent that in writing they almost become an annoyance. Care should therefore be taken to write them only where they are really necessary. Whenever a nasalized vowel is preceded or followed by a nasal consonant, the nasal mark need not be written, except where it is used for purposes of distinction. This simplifying rule has not always been followed in the Fante, Twi, and Ga books mentioned above. Quite a number of words might just as well have been written without the nasal mark. The same is true of vowel length, which should be expressed only when it is essential, i.e. when two otherwise identical words are distinguished by one having a short and the other a long vowel. This is of special importance in Ga, where long vowels are frequent and where vowel length has also a grammatical function, so that it is necessary to have two different markings for it. Here the length mark should be dropped wherever it is possible, that is to say, in most of those cases where length has not a grammatical meaning.

It is encouraging to see that several of the books have been written by Africans (Acquaah, Dogli, Paku; the author of another book recently published in Ewe is an Ewe woman: H. Baeta, Dada Mercy Baeta). There are many Africans to-day who are perfectly capable of writing books in their own language; they only need guidance and encouragement, and this should be given them much more than has been done till now. If they are to have an indigenous literature which is the expression of the African mind, obviously the Africans themselves must produce it; the European cannot do it, he can only help in making the first steps. And for the educated Africans themselves it is much better that they should show their patriotism and honour their language by developing it and by using it in writing—in other words, by doing the actual work—than to criticize the European ways of handling their language. Criticism alone is not creative, it is a barren thing.

BOOKS FOR AFRICA. In Vol. iii, p. 114, we informed our readers of the formation of an International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa. The Committee now publishes a Quarterly Bulletin, *Books for Africa*,¹ which is edited by the Secretary, Miss M. Wrong. The aim of the Committee and the Bulletin is to give information, advice, and help in all questions relating to Christian literature for Africans, both in vernaculars and in European languages. Of the plans under consideration, which are discussed in the Bulletin, the following are of particular interest. It is intended to publish a 'magazine for African villages', to appear every two months. This will be illustrated and will be a simple periodical (eight pages quarto) of Christian character in English, and possibly also in French and Portuguese, adapted

¹ Edinburgh House, 2 Eaton Gate, London S.W. 1. Subscription 2s. a year.

to the capacity of Africans with an elementary education. The contents will include a religious article, a short article on some event of importance in the world outside Africa, an article on hygiene, one on village life, an article of interest to the village teacher, biography and folklore, or a story, some wise sayings, and illustrations. Editors of vernacular journals will be permitted to translate articles from the magazine and to use the illustrations. Another plan is to publish biographies of Africans, which again may be translated into vernaculars. A life of Dr. Aggrey, specially adapted for Africa, is already in preparation, and material for lives of other eminent Africans have been offered for publication. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge is asking for material in English for a series of African Life Stories which will, after publication, be available for translation into African languages.

An article in no. 2 of the Bulletin deals with Journals for Teachers and gives an account of some of such journals published for various areas of Africa. Another article, on illustrated manuscript books, draws attention to the difficulty, often met with, of obtaining editions of vernacular books for small language areas. Reference is made to a Vernacular Reader in Ewe published by P. Wiegräbe, which has been recommended by the Director of Education of the Gold Coast as an example of the kind of manuscript book teachers might prepare for children in their schools.

Recent literature for Africans, both in European and African languages, is reviewed, and no. 2 of the Bulletin contains a special bibliography of French books.

The Committee will also help in providing and exchanging blocks for book illustrations, cards, hygiene posters, and similar objects for instruction.

The activity of the Committee has already given a fresh impulse to the production of literature for Africans, and it has met with a warm response from missionary quarters in Europe, America, and Africa. It is generally felt that in this most important branch of missionary work much labour can be saved and much more than hitherto can be done by co-operation and interchange, and there is every prospect that the Committee will become a very effective centre for a united effort in promoting African education.

All linguistic questions which come before the Committee will be referred to the Institute, and since the formation of the Committee there has been constant communication between the two organizations.

CRÉATION D'UN PRIX ANNUEL INDIGÈNE EN AFRIQUE OCCIDENTALE FRANÇAISE. Par arrêté en date du 30 Janvier 1931, le Gouverneur Général Brévié vient de créer des prix pouvant être partagés et d'un montant total de 3,000 *frs.* destinés à récompenser les travaux d'ordre scientifique et documentaire rédigés par des indigènes originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française. Chaque année un Jury spécial examinera et jugera ces études qui

pourront porter sur l'histoire, l'ethnologie, le folklore, les langues indigènes, la géographie et l'histoire naturelle.

Cette initiative est extrêmement intéressante, elle montre la tendance actuelle à associer de plus en plus les indigènes aux savants européens pour l'étude de leur pays. Bien que l'arrêté en question ne le mentionne pas la langue employée pour la présentation de ces travaux sera le français.

VERNACULAR PERIODICALS, No. 6. *Mia Xolõ* (Our Friend.) Ewe; Togoland. (Information supplied by Rev. Paul Wiegäbe.)

Mia Xolõ is the monthly Catholic paper in Togo which corresponds to *Ijutifafa na mi*, the organ of the Protestant Church. It is also printed in Lome and there are about 800 copies of each issue. It has now appeared for over twelve years. The paper often contains pictures and is extraordinarily cheap considering how good it is. The first issue for 1930 was a special number.

Mia Xolõ is exclusively a Church paper, and as such serves to communicate notices from the clergy. Although there are contributions from natives, the greater part of the contents is written by Europeans. Thanks to European editorship, the paper fulfils to the smallest details its avowed purpose of being an organ of the Church.

Some of the frequently recurring headings are: Suggestions for prayer (formation of a native clergy, Armenian persecutions, Bolshevist danger, influence of drink, unity of the Church); pastoral letters (warnings to the young, notices of meetings, explanation of papal or other Church ordinances, New Year's letter); reports of work (journeys of mission workers, reports of native teachers on their parishes and schools, small incidents); news from different parts of the world (under this heading are reported, in English or French, various events in the life of the Catholic Church); answers to questions, i.e. discussion of problems of Catholic ethics and dogma; list of the different markets held in the country.

There are also other kinds of articles, e.g. explanation of a biblical parable, discussion between a bishop and a native about the value of the paper and the disinclination to read it, peaceful settlement between the Vatican and the Quirinal, and so on. Thus the journal attempts to give the newly converted Christian some part in the life of the great Church which he has just entered as well as strengthening him in the Catholic faith.

The paper is printed in Ewe except for a few notices in the Anecho dialect and the reports in French and English mentioned under heading 4, but the orthography occasionally differs from that used in *Ijutifafa na mi*.

SOCIÉTÉ DES AFRICANISTES. La Société des Africanistes qui vient de se fonder à Paris sous la présidence du général Gouraud, se propose de publier dans un Bulletin trimestriel des études d'ethnologie et de linguistique

africaines, ainsi que des notes bibliographiques. Son organisation, son fonctionnement et ses activités sont semblables en tous points à ceux de la Société bien connue des Américanistes de Paris dont un des animateurs les plus qualifiés a été depuis de longues années le Dr. Rivet.

Les préoccupations de la nouvelle Société semblent être uniquement d'ordre scientifique, elle ne paraît pas devoir porter son attention sur les problèmes pratiques de colonisation.

MUSIK DES ORIENTS. Eine Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der Musik des Orients hat sich mit dem Sitz in Berlin gebildet. Ihre Ziele sind Unterstützung und Ausrüstung von Forschungsreisen, die Erfassung der Praxis des Orients und anderer aussereuropäischer Gebiete mit den exaktesten Methoden (phonographische Registrierung usw.) und ihre wissenschaftliche Auswertung. Letztere soll erfolgen in Gestalt von Vorträgen und von Publikationen, die zwanglos erscheinen werden. Die Gesellschaft wird auch afrikanische Musik in den Bereich ihrer Forschung ziehen. 1. Vorsitzender ist Prof. Dr. J. Wolf, dem Vorstand gehört auch der unseren Lesern bekannte Prof. Dr. E. v. Hornbostel an.