

There has been no need for the arbitrary selection of one dialect as the dominant one, and the aim has been only to remove the artificial hindrances which prevent such natural mingling. That which goes on in every town and industrial centre where natives from the different speech-areas flock together will, it is believed, happen equally with the written language now that one orthography has made it possible. In the corners of the country, where all the people use for the most part one or other of the various dialects, it is hoped that these dialects will retain all their old life and vigour, and that each in turn will contribute of its best to the formation of a general literary language for all the Shona-speaking people.

It would not be right to end these notes without saying, what has already appeared implicitly in its place, that the progress of the reform in this country owes a very great deal to the enlightened and hearty support that the Government of the country has given to the work. It could neither have been so thorough nor so successful without that constant support.

(Communicated by FATHER BERTRAM H. BARNES, C.R.)

'Les Langues communes au Congo Belge'

Under this title Professor Ed. de Jonghe, who is a member of the Council of the Institute, has published in *Congo* (November 1933) a most instructive study on the language policy in the Belgian Congo. For a number of years the Belgian administration has been definitely in favour of using the vernacular languages for educational purposes. 'In colonies where the white colonists will always remain a small minority against a vast native population, it is not good policy—and some colonials do not hesitate in saying it is not permissible—that the mother country should impose its own language out of mere consideration of national prestige, in opposition to all rules of sound educational principles which establish that the true progress of civilization can be brought about only through the medium of vernacular languages.'

Consequently, the 'Commission d'Enseignement de 1922' says that the medium for primary instruction shall be the local language, and, if this is not sufficiently known or important, the nearest and best understood literary language, or, in a given case, the common language (*lingua franca*) of that region. The Commission did not object to the teaching of the elements of a European language in the higher classes of certain central and in secondary schools. 'But we insist on this point: The study of a European language should be limited to an *élite* which alone is capable of really assimilating it.' This *élite* will have to form the linguistic link between the natives and the civilization of the mother country. But it is essential that it should for this reason remain in close contact with the native population; its primary task will be 'to transmit the benefits of our civilization to the masses. It will have to create a native literature. If the activities of this *élite* are to be deep

and lasting it is important that the study of the mother tongue should be carried on (in higher education) along with the other branches of instruction, and that at no stage of his education the student should lose the habit of expressing himself with ease and fluently in his mother tongue.' In the advanced stages of higher education—and this is also true for the training of native priests—French (in certain cases also Latin) will be the medium of instruction, but M. de Jonghe insists that here also the vernacular should have its place and should be made an object of study.

But which are the vernaculars to be used in education? About two hundred languages and dialects are spoken in the Congo, and it is obvious that not all these can become literary. A number of them have been reduced to writing, mostly by missionaries, and possess the beginnings of a literature. Many, if not all, of these will for an indefinite time continue to exist. But their number is too large and the radius of most of them too small to serve as common languages. For this latter purpose four languages have been proposed: (1) Swahili, or, as it is locally called, Kingwana, between the Ituri and the Katanga border, and in the west as far as the Lualaba; (2) Lingala¹ between Stanley Pool and the Stanley Falls and up to the Nile region; (3) Kongo in the lower Congo, its influence reaches to the Kasai; and (4) Luba in the southern Congo between Sankuru and Zambesi. All these languages show a tendency to expand and possess a literature. But it will be necessary to standardize them, that is to say, to evolve one officially recognized literary form for each one of them. 'The Government should without delay take the initiative in appointing committees in which the administration, Catholic and Protestant Missions and perhaps also trade, should be represented.' The task of the committees would be to produce a uniform orthography, to fix the rules of the grammar, and to establish a model vocabulary. 'When the languages have thus been standardized, they should be imposed on the central schools of their region and be taught in the preparatory colonial courses in Europe.' But 'the spread of the standardized common languages must not be tantamount to a suppression of already existing literary languages, nor even of as yet non-literary languages spoken by an important population and showing a will to survive. The common language will be superimposed on the other languages, but it must not replace them all and everywhere.'

The four languages proposed are undoubtedly the most important ones in the Colony. Although Lingala is largely a mixed and in its present form a young language, it is sufficiently developed to be used for literary purposes¹ and its choice as a lingua franca is justified. All the four languages are Bantu, and the question may arise whether in the north-eastern section, where Sudanic languages are spoken, a member of this family, perhaps Zande, might

¹ See *Africa*, vii, no. 2, p. 220, where the same language is called Bangala.

not be included. But such questions can only be answered by intimate local knowledge.

The proposal itself and the principles on which it is based are sound; this bold and almost unique attempt to solve the language problem of such a vast region deserves every encouragement.

But M. de Jonghe goes even farther, and is of opinion that it would be better to push forward to the predominance of one of the four languages and to adopt it as the official native language of the whole Colony; and after an examination of the merits of the four he comes to the conclusion that in the competition, Luba seems to have most chances of success. Here we do not follow the author. The establishment of four (or five) common languages would mean a great success, it would meet the existing need and would in every way be more natural and more in agreement with actual conditions than the introduction of one language only.

Note on an Investigation of the Batciga.

The writer has recently returned from a year's stay among the Batciga, in the Kigezi district of Uganda. This is a tribe which has been overlooked completely in ethnological literature. They live in the western part of the lake region of East Africa, between Ruanda and Ankole. But their culture offers as sharp a contrast to that of their neighbours as does this bare, steep, mountain country to the rolling grass plains adjacent to them.

Among the Batciga there is no ruling, racially distinct, upper class. We find among them many basic similarities and even identities with the better known cultures which have such a class, but in every field we find aspects which are fundamentally different. It is hoped that this investigation of what is perhaps a unique situation may help to shed light on the complicated problems of culture history in this region and the more general theoretical ones of cultural change.

To the Mutciga peasant, a cow is but live stock, greater in value than his flocks, and therefore more significant economically; but surrounded with none of the familiar ceremonies and taboos. He is an extreme individualist. The clans are autonomous and even within them there is no strongly centralized authority. In religion we may note typical patterns—ancestor-worship, a cult of less personal spirits, a paraphernalia of diviners and shamans. But all are very much less richly developed, and lack legendary amplification. There is also a spirit which is superior in power to the others and has a priesthood. This is informal and unorganized, but has certain semi-political prerogatives, which seem to be modelled after those of the Watussi chiefs of Ruanda. The situation is similar in the realm of material culture. The Batciga practise most of the techniques of their neighbours, but have absolutely no art, decorative or abstract.