

Notes and News

Association of Social Anthropologists

THE Association was founded on 23 July 1946, in response to the general opinion among social anthropologists in Great Britain that the subject has reached a stage of development warranting the establishment of a professional organization. Its aims are: (1) to promote the study and teaching of social anthropology as a specialized branch of anthropology; (2) to represent the interests and maintain the professional standards of the subject; (3) to arrange periodic conferences of the members of the Association; and (4) to secure publication of researches under its auspices.

It is intended that a journal, *Annals of Social Anthropology*, be published as soon as arrangements can be made.

Membership of the Association is limited to persons holding, or having held, a teaching or research appointment in Social Anthropology, and is strictly by invitation of the Officers and Committee of the Association.

President: Prof. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. *Chairman and Hon. Secretary*: Prof. E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *Committee*: Prof. Raymond Firth, Prof. C. Daryll Forde, Dr. Meyer Fortes.

Christian Marriage of Africans

In the January number of *Africa* Mr. Martin Parr has clearly shown the complicated situation which exists in African territories with regard to legislation concerning the Christian marriage of Africans: the complexities are all the greater because the 'practically standardized ordinances' differ so materially in the different territories.

In his opening paragraph Mr. Parr states that in Britain no legal consequences follow from marriage in a church 'other than those which follow from marriage in a Registrar's office'. But the converse of this *does* follow, viz. that a marriage celebrated in a church *has* legal standing. This is what the Native Church in Nyasaland has sought to obtain, and not the complicated 'practically standardized ordinances'. One would like to know Mr. Parr's authority for stating that the request for legal standing for Christian marriages was 'strenuously opposed by the African Christians': it was the unanimous desire of the Synod of the (Native) Church of Central Africa (Presbyterian) that legislation be enacted to give legal standing to Christian marriages.

Early in the history of the missions in Nyasaland the necessity of raising the status of womanhood was recognized, and the desirability of Christian marriage was pressed upon those who had joined the Church and set foot on the Christian way of life; later it became possible to insist on Christian marriage for Christians—indeed, in the Church of Scotland Mission to the south of the protectorate the rule was adopted that Christian marriage must be only between Christians; but in the northern part of the protectorate the social situation did not admit of this rule being imposed, and Christian marriage continued to be celebrated even where only one party was Christian. Books of printed marriage certificates were prepared, with counterfoils, which were kept as records. These certificates were much prized—especially by the women, many of whom stood out for Christian marriage against the wishes of their relatives and their prospective husbands, often with much ultimate spiritual benefit to themselves, their husbands, and their homes.

In 1902 a Marriage Ordinance was enacted by the Nyasaland Government. This was definitely promoted for the legalizing of marriages contracted by Europeans within the Protectorate, and had European conditions in view; but it was legal for natives to be married

under it, and some have availed themselves of it with their eyes open and with complete understanding of what is involved. It was, however, not suitable for natives because:

1. The fees were too high.
2. Litigation was relegated to the High Court, which it was impossible for natives to attend on account of the distance and the high costs involved.
3. The penalties were too severe.
4. Inheritance was decided according to English law.

Missionaries continued to celebrate Christian marriages between natives in the old way, though technically liable under the above Ordinance to a penalty in respect of each marriage so celebrated.

After a conference between government officers and missionaries, an attempt was made in 1912 to meet this anomalous situation by an Act providing for the legal marriage of Christian natives by Christian rites. The missionaries loyally tried to carry out the provisions of this Act, but it was a much-overweighted ordinance; it was difficult for natives to understand; the whole procedure was very cumbrous; it decreed that inheritance was by English law; and the penalties were so severe that they were never imposed.

The Ordinance therefore became a dead letter, and another conference was arranged to discuss the matter, at which agreement was reached on a simple draft Bill providing adequate legislation for the regulation of marriages between Christian natives. For some reason, which has never been disclosed, this Bill was not enacted. Instead, in 1923 an Ordinance was passed providing merely for the registration by the Registrar-General of marriages celebrated between natives according to Christian rites. This Act contained a clause stating that 'This ceremony shall have no legal consequences whatever', on account of which it was held in the courts that such marriages had no legal status, and litigation arising out of them was settled on the basis of native law and custom. In consequence of this many Christian marriages were dissolved on frivolous grounds.

So much dissatisfaction was caused by this that the Synod of the Church of Central Africa (Presbyterian) raised the question again. Another conference was held in 1936, attended by representatives of the Government and of all the missions including the Roman Catholics—native Christians also being present. This conference considered proposals for legislation providing for the celebration of marriages between Christian natives according to Christian rites without interference with the usual preliminary customs observed by the various tribes, and without coercion of any individual, and reached a unanimous finding in favour of a parent ordinance giving legal status to Christian marriage, with provision for rules governing divorce drawn up by the head of each denomination and given legal sanction by the Governor in Council. These proposals were embodied in a draft Bill which was agreed on as the basis of legislation required. A penal clause was included imposing a maximum of one year's imprisonment for bigamy.

Nothing further was heard of this Bill, however. It appears that it was submitted to the legal authorities of the Colonial Office, and referred by them to the Conference of East African Governors—appearing on their agenda as 'provision for legislation governing divorce amongst Natives of the East African territories'—and that it was decided that the time was not ripe for such legislation: an apt finding, indeed, as there did not exist in Nyasaland any ordinance giving legal status to native Christian marriages, and therefore no provision for divorce was needed.

Among the rights of religious freedom which the International Missionary Conference at Tambaram in 1938 stated that the Church should claim was the right to have legal recognition for Christian marriage between natives. It seems extraordinary that in contiguous territories legal provision is made for such marriages, and that in Nyasaland an Act has been

passed giving legal status to marriages of Asiatics according to their several religious tenets, while thousands of native Christians, who are demanding legal status for their marriages, are denied this right.

The section on Africa in the Tambaram Report gives an excellent exposition of the meaning of Christian marriage, and of its incalculable value for the development of the spiritual life of the Church. At a time such as this when the Christian Church, with all the centuries of history and tradition behind it, is gravely concerned for the preservation of the sanctity of the marriage bond, it behoves us to support the Native Churches, younger in their experience, in their desire to reach the true spiritual strength and beauty of life under the inspiration of real Christian marriage.

(Communicated by William Y. Turner.)

Congo Swahili

A CONFERENCE of representatives of missions from the eastern half of Congo, together with the local secretary of the Bible Society, was held on 30–31 October 1946. The purpose of the conference was to consider the production of a common form of Swahili for use as a literary medium—and especially for translations of the Bible—throughout the area from Élisabethville to Aba. The conference was able to devise an agreed form, to be known as Congo Swahili, and to make plans for the translation of the New Testament. It passed a number of resolutions defining the orthographical and grammatical principles to be followed, enjoining their adoption by Swahili-speaking missions in the area, and providing for the revision of existing manuscripts and publications.

Conférence Coloniale Franco-Belge

UNE conférence coloniale franco-belge s'est ouvert le 27 janvier à Bruxelles. Elle devait examiner les méthodes d'administration dans les colonies françaises et au Congo Belge et établir les bases d'un échange permanent d'information entre les administrations métropolitaines et coloniales des deux pays.

Portugal: Training for the Colonial Service

THE 'Escola Superior Colonial' was founded in 1906 for the purpose of giving 'the instruction most generally considered as indispensable to Colonial Administrators'. The college has aimed at becoming the centre of training for colonial officers and the only institution where a general knowledge of colonial cultural questions can be acquired, though persons not destined for the colonial service have also been admitted as students. Recently reforms have been instituted, under which two entirely different courses will be included in the school's curriculum; one, practical and professional, for colonial officers and administrators, and another in which the knowledge of experts who have made specialized scientific studies of colonial questions will be systematized and made available to students. The second course will embrace such subjects as international colonial law, colonial history and administration, native institutions and economies, native literature, languages, and art.

*Cost of Living in Nigeria.*¹

THE Commission appointed to inquire into the cost of living in Nigeria published its report in October 1946. The report describes the method of conducting the inquiry; during the first stage, sessions were held at Lagos where statements were read by trades union and government representatives; later the Commissioner (Mr. Tudor Davies) and Mr. Dalley, the assessor, made a tour of the territory in order to acquaint themselves with local condi-

¹ *Inquiry into the Cost of Living and the Control of the Cost of Living in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria*, Col. No. 204, H.M.S.O., 1946, 3s. 6d.