

it may simplify matters for the European, but how can native culture be developed if it is deprived of its most important means of expression?

Christianity, on the other hand, 'is for the present and the long future the best available kind of spiritual diet we can offer to the primitive peoples'. Its ethical teaching, intellectual content, and emotional values are to be appreciated as the best educational means in giving the native new life-values. The reproaches sometimes brought against Christianized natives Mr. Williams dismisses as sheer prejudice. 'The faults attributed to mission training are rather the results of sophistication by intercourse with Europeans and the opportunities and temptations which it offers.'

Migrant Labour in Southern Africa.

The problems that arise out of the dependence of the large centres of employment in Southern Africa on a shifting labour force drawn from native areas many thousand miles distant have been discussed in the last few months from a number of different points of view. The Report of a Nyasaland Commission appointed in June 1935 to study the effects of mass emigration on labour from that territory is introduced in terms such as are rarely found in an official publication. 'Something must be done at once', the Commission urges, 'to remedy a state of affairs which, viewed from any standpoint, constitutes a flagrant breach of the ideal of trusteeship of native races.' Recruiting for employment abroad was not permitted in Nyasaland from 1909 to 1934, and individual emigration was in theory controlled by a pass system intended to restrict the numbers leaving the territory. In fact the percentage of adult males estimated to be absent from their homes is over 50 in some districts of the Northern Province and in Mzimba attains 65. From 25 to 30 per cent. of these never return—and native language calls them by a special name, *machona*, 'the lost ones'. The absence of alternative sources of money revenue has created a situation here as serious as anywhere in Africa. In the north of Nyasaland native production is almost non-existent, and in some areas there is insufficient land, or the soil is too poor, for its development to be possible. Local employers cannot offer wages which would compete with those earned in the territories farther south, and many prefer to employ immigrants from Portuguese East Africa on the ground that the labourer with no local ties works better.

The strongest pressure to emigrate comes from the hut and poll tax, which is levied on plural wives and adult unmarried women as well as on males. But the change in the material standard of native life is also important. A man is expected to provide his dependents with cloth, blankets, and other imported goods, to pay school fees for his children, and the bride-price is now normally paid in cash. The love of travel for its own sake accounts for some emigration of young men, but this does not in itself lead to the prolonged or permanent absence the social results of which are so disastrous.

The effect on family life is most serious. The absent father soon ceases to send money home, and his wife has to fall back on her own resources—beer-brewing and prostitution—to obtain necessities such as medicine for her children, while it becomes a point of honour to pay her hut tax and so show that she is not deserted. The break-down of native rules of sexual morality, the increase of divorce, the practice of deserting a wife but returning when her adultery gives a claim for damages, are developments with which the student of African sociology is familiar. It is interesting that the experiences of the emigrants in labour centres are not found to have led to an increase of crime on their return.

The Commission proposes the introduction of a recruiting system under strict supervision, coupled with a rigid quota system based on the percentages recommended by the Congo Labour Commission but covering both convenanted and uncontracted labour, and the institution of a Labour Department responsible for its enforcement; a change from the present hut and poll tax to a graduated tax on males only; the encouragement of cotton cultivation, of European tobacco plantations, and of prospecting. It is proposed that revenues received from other territories as the result of Labour Agreements to be concluded should be paid into a Native Trust Fund for agricultural and medical services and for the repatriation of unemployed natives or others who have difficulty in returning home.

Meanwhile the native labourer in the Union is becoming as protectionist as the European. In an article in the *South African Journal of Economics* Miss Sheila van der Horst shows that the cumulative restrictions on all other forms of employment for natives have created a glut of labour in mining and agriculture, the only occupations left open to them. Yet the mines continue to recruit labour from farther and farther north. The result is described by a Departmental Committee on labour in the Native Territories as 'an outcry . . . to the effect that the mines were neglecting the Union labour supply'. One remedy proposed is that the mines should recruit 'semi-fit' labour from the Union for work 'where conditions are favourable' rather than healthy foreign labour; another that preference should be given to mine rejects in employment on public works in the Native Territories. (*Communicated by* DR. L. P. MAIR.)

Orthography of Dagomba (Dagbane).

Some little time ago a meeting took place to discuss the question of a practical orthography for the Dagomba language. Professor Westermann, Mr. H. A. Blair, and Dr. E. L. Rapp (Basel Mission) were present, and complete agreement was reached as to the way in which the language should be written.

Previous studies on Dagomba have been published by Dr. R. Fisch of the Basel Mission and by I. A. S. Okraku, an African. They have each written