

## Notes and News

### *The Fifth International West African Conference*

THE fifth biennial meeting of the International West African Conference of field sciences (CIAO) was held at Abidjan in the Ivory Coast from 7 to 19 December 1953, with the assistance of the Government of French West Africa and under the joint auspices of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) and the Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes Tropicales (IDERT) of the Office de la Recherche Scientifique Outre-mer.

Some forty participants from French, British, Portuguese, and Spanish territories in Africa were invited and the Conference was organized in four sections devoted respectively to Zoology, Botany, Geology and Geography, and Ethnology and Sociology. The last two sections devoted one day to joint sessions for the presentation of papers and discussion on subjects of common interest. Following the sessions held during the first week the Conference formed itself into two field parties for scientific tours through the Ivory Coast. The arrangements were in the hands of M. J. L. Tournier, Director of the Centrifan, Abidjan, and Professor Mangenot, Professor of Biology at the Sorbonne and Director of IDERT at Adjopodoumé near Abidjan. The participants, who were the guests of the Government, were most appreciative of the generous hospitality, the excellent facilities, and the unfailing helpfulness of the organizers and the French authorities.

The Conference was opened by the Acting-Governor, M. Dubie, who also contributed a paper to the section of Ethnology and Sociology on the roles of Islam and Christianity among the Bamum of the northern French Cameroons.

In the section of Ethnology and Sociology under the presidency of Professor Daryll Forde, Director of the International African Institute, and the secretaryship of M. B. Holas, Ethnologist of the Centrifan, Abidjan, a number of valuable papers were contributed on the subjects announced in advance as major topics (see *Africa*, April 1952) and valuable exchanges of information and ideas resulted from the discussions.

In a session devoted to West African Art and Archaeology Mr. Bernard Fagg, Assistant Director of Antiquities, Nigeria, reported on the method and results of the archaeological excavations carried out under his direction in and around the Yoruba town of Ife during recent years, and opened a discussion on the stylistic problems concerning the prehistoric portrait art of the Yoruba and neighbouring peoples.

In sessions concerned with social changes under modern economic conditions, Mr. Morton Williams of the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan, analysed the adaptation of Yoruba chiefdoms to changed economic and political conditions over the past 50 years. M. l'Administrateur Hepp outlined the results of an intensive study of the traditional and modern roles of the local chiefs (*lamido*) among the Fula in the north of the French Cameroons and neighbouring territories. M. J.-P. Lebeuf, ethno-sociologist attached to the African regional office of the World Health Organization at Brazzaville, presented the results of a comparative study by M. Nicolas on the effects of environmental and economic conditions on the contrasted developments of the ports of St. Louis (Senegal) and Douala (Cameroons). M. Brasseur of the Centrifan, Bamako, analysed factors involved in the decline of the Niger city of Djenné from a former position of considerable cultural and commercial importance. M. l'Inspecteur Général Gayet presented a study of the ethnic, economic, and other social conditions in the communities established in the irrigation areas of the Niger Bend under the direction of the Office du Niger. Mr. Porter of Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, gave an account of the problems of adaptation affecting the popula-

tions of the mining settlements in Sierra Leone. Sr. Lopez Guinea reported on the economic evolution of Spanish Guinea (Rio Muni). M. l'Administrateur Domissy described the incipient changes in customary law with regard to family organization, land rights, and inheritance associated with the development of personal rights in cash-crop plantations among the matrilineal Adjoukrou in the south Ivory Coast. Dr. Djessou presented an analysis of the social role of the assembly house (*case à palabre*) in the Tabou area of the Ivory Coast near the Liberian border. M. Amon d'Aby and M. Köbben contributed independent studies of the matrilineal system among the Agni of the south-east Ivory Coast, both of which brought out the stresses and modifications to which it is increasingly subject with the development of cocoa plantations and the growth of substantial personal incomes.

In the session devoted to technical, economic, and other aspects of the indigenous fisheries of West Africa and the possibilities for their modernization and development Mr. O. E. Symes, Chief Fisheries Officer, Nigeria, reported on technical advances already achieved in canoe-fishing methods and on the need for socio-economic studies of the changes occurring or required in the organization of fisheries and fish marketing. Professor J. W. Williams, of the University College of the Gold Coast, reported on and analysed the results of a recent economic study by Miss Lawson on the sea fisheries of the Gold Coast. The social implications of the reorganization of preserving and marketing methods required by prospective increases in catches and growing demand were explored in a lively discussion.

It is intended to include summaries of all the papers in the Report of the Conference which is now in preparation; meanwhile inquiries concerning their availability for consultation or publication elsewhere should be addressed to M. B. Holas, Centrifan, B.P. 398, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, A.O.F.

Like previous meetings of the CIAO the Abidjan Conference afforded a most valuable opportunity to establish personal contacts through informal discussions among research workers and others from different West African territories. The wide range of interests represented in the fields of ethnology and sociology and the keen interest taken in the papers and discussions promised well for the further development of the inter-territorial relations thus established.

Arising from the discussions in the section of Ethnology and Sociology the following resolutions were submitted to the Conference and adopted at its plenary session on 11 December:

I. Le Vème CIAO, considérant les rapports présentés et discutés sur la rapide évolution sociale et économique des tribus côtières de l'Ouest Africain, émet le vœu :

Que des consultations et des comparaisons soient poursuivies parmi les spécialistes européens et aussi africains sur l'évolution et l'adaptation des coutumes locales, notamment en ce qui concerne les règles de succession matrilineaire et le développement des économies complexes dans les plantations intensives des autochtones.

II. Le Vème CIAO, considérant les conclusions des rapports présentés sur l'extension des pêcheries maritimes ouest-africaines,

Signale aux pouvoirs publics l'urgence de rapprochements et de mises au point en vue d'intensifier les procédés de pêche et de préparation des poissons de mer, frais, salés, séchés ou fumés, qui apporteront un appoint nécessaire pour améliorer et diversifier l'alimentation des populations africaines.

Following the first week of sessions for the presentation and discussion of papers, most of the participants in the section of Ethnology and Sociology joined the field party which traversed the Ivory Coast in a north-westerly direction via Gagnoa and Man to reach the hill research station of IFAN at the foot of Nimba Mountain in French Guinea, for three days of study in that vicinity. During the journey and at Nimba there were opportunities for visits to the settlements, farms, and plantations of a number of distinct ethnic groups, notably the

Ebrié, Adjoudrou, Dido, Guerzé, and Kono. Several aspects of the political organization, economy, and ritual of the Kono, including demonstrations of the masked dances that accompany tribal initiation, were studied at Nimba.

The very arduous task of organizing, provisioning, and guiding this field party was undertaken by M. J. L. Tournier with the assistance of M. B. Holas, and deep gratitude was expressed for their tireless labours, kindness, and good humour.

An illustrated guide to the Ivory Coast, prepared in connexion with the Conference, provided concise surveys of its geography, resources, ethnology, economic development, and administration. It is hoped to make this available for more general distribution, and inquiries should be addressed to M. J. L. Tournier, Directeur, Centrifan, B.P. 398, Abidjan.

Owing to last-minute difficulties of time-table and transport the intended Portuguese participants in the Conference were unable to arrive. But their representatives on the Permanent Committee transmitted an invitation for the next meeting of the Conference to be held in December 1955 in a Portuguese territory, probably at San Tomé.

The Conference at its final session recorded its deep appreciation of the generosity of the French authorities and of the labours of M. Tournier, Professor Mangenot and their colleagues in organizing the meeting and ensuring its success.

DARYLL FORDE

### *African History Conference*

A CONFERENCE on African History was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies from 7 to 9 July 1953, under the chairmanship of Professor C. H. Philips, Head of the Department of History at the School. Among those who attended were representatives of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN), of the Musée du Congo Belge, members of the staffs of the African university colleges, and historians and archaeologists from universities in the United Kingdom.

The Conference was occupied with the two themes of oral tradition and historical archaeology, and with the practical problems arising from the development of these studies in Africa. Surveys of oral tradition in East, Central, and West Africa were used to show what conclusions about the movements of peoples and about chronology could be drawn from them at the present stage, and archaeologists described the progress of research into the problems of historical archaeology. It was clear from the discussions that both oral tradition and archaeology should make their contributions to such investigations as, for instance, the Uganda earthworks at Bigo and Ntusi.

Sir Mortimer Wheeler addressed the Conference on the organization of archaeological studies in Africa, and the Conference concluded with the passing of a number of resolutions urging the preservation of sites, monuments, and documents essential for reconstructing the outlines of African history. Attention was drawn to the need for expert and effective revision of existing Ordinances for preserving sites and monuments, and for the formation of adequately staffed departments of antiquities and record offices. As an immediate step, it was proposed that a School of History and Archaeology in East Africa should be established, which could act as a field training centre for students. The Kenya Government had undertaken to make Fort Jesus at Mombasa available for such a purpose.

In the concluding discussions, members expressed the hope that the Conference might meet at three- or four-yearly intervals.

Communicated by R. A. HAMILTON

### *The Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society*

THE Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society was founded in 1952 in order to promote the study of history and, in particular, of the history of the Gold Coast and adjacent West