

Notes and News

Note on the Introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia

EZANA, the greatest of the kings who reigned over Aksum, was the author of the monumental inscriptions written in Greek, Sabaeen, and Ge'ez, and found in Aksum.

The most important event during Ezana's reign was the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Aksumite kingdom. Ezana himself became a Christian, as clearly appears from his inscriptions, some of which were written before and some after the adoption of Christianity; the former—apart from indications in the text itself—still show the solar disk and the lunar crescent, whereas the latter make room for the cross.

In the year 356 the Emperor Constantius sent a letter to Ezana and Zezana, who are no doubt identical with the 'Ezana and She'azana of the Greek, Sabaeen, and Ethiopic inscriptions.

The Ethiopian king lists tell us that Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia during the reign of the kings 'Abrēha and 'Aṣbēha, members of the Solomonic line (Bruce, *Travels*, i. 502; Salt, *Voyage*, p. 461). Bruce's list is based on that kept in the monastery of Debra Libanos, whereas Salt collected his 'from the best authorities in the country' (p. 457). The relevant passage in the Synaxarium reads: '... wabaṣiḥo (Frumentius) bēhēra 'ag'āzi 'ama mangēštomu la 'Abrēha wa 'Aṣbēha. . . .'

There appears to be an irreconcilable discrepancy here which causes Budge (*History of Ethiopia*, i. 243) to say '... 'Abreha and 'Asbeha . . . were certainly not *de facto* kings of Abyssinia for . . . it was 'Ezana who proclaimed Christianity the religion of Abyssinia . . . '.

A similar view is taken by Conti Rossini (*Storia d'Etioṗia*, p. 154): '... La menzione di Abreha ed Atsbeha dev' essere opera del traduttore del Sinassario per conciliare quest' ultimo con locali tradizioni che si studieranno a suo luogo. . . .'

These opinions have received the blessing of all scholars interested in this problem, and 'Abreha and 'Aṣbēha have been dismissed as purely legendary figures derived from Abyssinian traditions of no historical value or due to an interpolation by the compiler or translator of the king lists. Indigenous traditions have to give way where documentary, i.e. epigraphic, evidence, the reliability of which cannot be doubted, exists.

It is, however, well known that many Ethiopian kings adopted a rather more picturesque name either at their coronation or on some other suitable occasion, the last and best-known example being that of Tafari, who assumed the name of Haile Selassie. The same was no doubt the case with Ezana and Zezana, who either adopted the names 'Abreha and 'Aṣbēha in the later years of their reign or received them after death *in majorem gloriam*. This explanation seems to be borne out by the meaning of

'Abreha = the one who made light,

'Aṣbēha = the one who brought about the morning,

both obviously referring to the introduction of Christianity. This event is generally referred to in Ethiopian literature in terms of 'light' and 'morning'; cf. Abba Salama (Frumentius, the Syrian monk, who was responsible for introducing Christianity into Aksum) who receives the standing epithet of *Kaṣāṣē bērhān* 'revealer of the light'.

We know that Ezana and Zezana, as well as 'Abreha and 'Aṣbēha, were brother kings, reigning together; moreover, the similarity between the two names in each of the pairs suggests a play on words. Thus there is no reason to doubt the Ethiopian version of the

king lists: Ezana and Zezana are the same persons as 'Abreha and 'Aşbeha. In this way epigraphic evidence and indigenous tradition find mutual confirmation.

(Communicated by E. Ullendorff)

Use of Films in Mass Education and Colonial Development

Two of the leading organizations in Great Britain concerned with educational and documentary films have recently initiated large-scale projects of research into the problems and potentialities of the use of films in Mass Education and in Colonial Development. Both organizations will pay particular attention to the needs and problems of African territories.

The Scientific Film Association, which is well known for the important work it has done during the last five years in promoting the production and the use of scientific films in Great Britain, is concentrating on the problem of Mass Education. The S.F.A. International Committee has begun by establishing a liaison with the Fundamental Education section of U.N.E.S.C.O. and has also invited African students studying education and science in this country to co-operate in the research project. The collection of all available information is well in hand, and it is hoped shortly to produce a series of reading lists and information statements to form the basis for further work. The Committee will be considerably assisted in its investigation by the close connexions which it has with the International Scientific Film Association, to which are affiliated scientific film movements all over the world.

The other organization working on this question is the newly formed British Documentary, a body which is broadly representative of the documentary film industry as a whole, embracing as it does all those associated in any aspect of the production and distribution of this type of film. The Working Party on Films and Colonial Development set up by British Documentary has outlined a scheme of work covering almost every aspect of the subject. Surveys are to be prepared on the following topics: the policy of individual powers responsible for undeveloped or colonial territories; Censorship Regulations in Colonial Areas; Commercial Cinemas in Colonial Areas; Methods of Production of Films for Colonial Areas; the Financing of Films for Colonial Areas; Distribution and Use of Films; the Training of Native Technicians and Projectionists; Films Relating to Colonial Areas; Analysis of Audience Groups on a Cultural and Ethnological Basis; Recommendations on Subjects for Films; Psychological Problems; Economic and Social Problems.

Both organizations will work closely together in order to avoid duplication of effort, and it is hoped that that this co-operation will lead, at a later stage, to a common working party. It is certain that the efforts of British Documentary and the Scientific Film Association will help to advance understanding of the use of film as a medium for the development of colonial peoples, and that the surveys proposed will contribute towards the solution of the great problems which these two bodies have undertaken to study.

(Communicated by H. G. A. Hughes)

A New Technique in Grammatical Studies

SOME years ago Father Wanger, the Zuluist, made a plea, which has been echoed in many quarters, that the grammar of a Bantu language should be written from the Bantu point of view and not pressed into the frame of Indo-European languages. The Rev. E. W. Price has made this his aim in his study of Ngombe,¹ the northernmost of the central Bantu languages. Abandoning the traditional terminology, Mr. Price has adapted the technique developed at the School of Oriental and African Studies by Dr. Malcolm Guthrie.

¹ *Ngombe Grammar*, by E. W. Price, foreword by Professor Ida C. Ward. Duplicated. Pp. 88.