

Notes and News

West African Institute of Social and Economic Research

THE Institute's fifth Annual Conference held at the University College, Ibadan, from 15-21 March 1956, was concentrated mainly on the theme 'Means of Social and Economic Control'. This topic was treated from the point of view of labour migration and resettlement schemes in papers by M. Hauser (French Sudan), Mr. Baldwin (Dept. of Agriculture, Nigeria), Mr. Niculescu (University College of the Gold Coast), as well as in a general discussion. Professor Margaret Read presented a paper on 'Education and Social Control'; Dr. Audrey Richards described the study of leadership in two East African tribes, conducted by the East African Institute of Social Research; Mr. Sutherland (Ministry of Housing, Gold Coast) discussed housing and town planning as an instrument of social control. Other papers dealt with 'Labour employment on Gold Coast Cocoa-farms' (Miss Polly Hill), 'Environment and Land Use in the Gold Coast' (Mr. H. P. White), 'The Gold Coast building industry' (Mr. E. R. Rado), and 'Local Government in Accra' (Mrs. A. I. Acquah). Linguistic topics were considered in a paper on 'Problems in Linguistic Anthropology' (Mr. Roger Westcott).

Mr. H. J. Uldall presented the Report of the Linguistic Survey Committee which had been appointed at the 1955 conference to consider the organization of research into West African languages. The Committee recommended that the work of the Linguistic Survey should be of two kinds: (a) research and publication of material which is of interest chiefly to linguists; (b) research undertaken at the request of or in collaboration with representatives of other disciplines, notably anthropology and history. It was further decided that the Survey could best be undertaken by the existing Institutions of Higher Learning in West Africa, and the co-operation of IFAN, the University College of the Gold Coast, the University College, Ibadan, and Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, was invited in the setting up of a Council to prepare a detailed plan and finally to direct the Survey. Professor Greenberg was invited to become Chairman of the Council. Meetings of this Council were held during the 1956 Conference, with Mr. Uldall in the chair, when a memorandum presented by M. Houis (IFAN) was considered and every aspect of the proposed Survey was discussed. The decisions of the Council have been embodied in a memorandum which, if approved by Professor Greenberg, will be circulated to a wider public and will form the basis of an appeal for funds.

It is announced that the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, as an inter-territorial organization, is being wound up. It is being replaced, for the Gold Coast, by the Economic Research Unit directed by Professor J. W. Williams (University College). Plans are being made for a successor to carry out social and economic research in Nigeria. It is hoped, however, that arrangements can be made for the series of conferences organized by WAISER, which have proved to be most useful, to be continued.

The Art of Ife

A RECENT publication of the Nigerian Museum, Lagos,¹ gives an account, illustrated by 17 plates, of the remarkable brass and terra-cotta heads discovered in and around Ife in

¹ Obtainable from the Nigerian Department of Antiquities, The Museum, Lagos, and the Crown Agents for Oversea Administrations, London. Price 1s.

south-west Nigeria. The discovery in 1910, by the German archaeologist Leo Frobenius, of several terra-cotta heads and one remarkable brass head aroused great interest, but wide recognition of the quality and importance of the art came only after the unexpected discovery in 1938 of a collection of brass heads shallowly buried in the ground in the middle of the town. The age and origin of the art of Ife is a mystery as yet unsolved, and numerous theories of its derivation from the Etruscans of Italy about 1500 B.C., from Egypt, Persia, India, or Nubia have been put forward. Some support has been given to the tradition connecting it with the migration into West Africa of a people whose leader, Kisra, established a ruling dynasty at Ife. None of these suggestions is, however, generally accepted. The metal of which the brass heads are made (copper and zinc) also raises problems. Moreover their style is unlike that of traditional West African art as it is known today. The heads appear to be portraits, entirely naturalistic in treatment, though the modelling of eyes and ears is somewhat stylized. Various traditional and historical reasons suggest that the metal heads were made not earlier than the 8th century.

The terra-cotta heads are identical in style, which suggests that they were made during the same period and by the same artists. While only twenty brass heads have been discovered, there is a fairly large number of terra-cotta heads, as well as figurines and fragments of torsos. Excavations are being carried out at Ife, as well as in the Plateau, Benue, and Zaria provinces, the results of which suggest that a developed terra-cotta technique existed in Nigeria long before the supposed date of the Ife work.

The plates in this small publication, four of which are in colour, give excellent reproductions of the most notable brass and terra-cotta heads.

Musique religieuse dans le Vicariat Apostolique de Coquilhatville (Congo Belge)

THE January 1956 number of *Aequatoria* (published in Coquilhatville, editor G. Hulstaert, M.S.C.) is devoted to the subject of religious music, whether composed by Africans or by Europeans using traditional African idioms. It includes an essay on religious music by Paul Jans, M.S.C., together with texts of vernacular songs (accompanied by a French translation) and the musical scores of settings composed for vernacular words by three priests of the Sacred Heart Mission, and also a Mass by A. Walschap, M.S.C., and a bibliography of works on African music. Father Jans, in his essay, discusses the Gregorian Chant—the official music of the Catholic Church—and points out that it can be performed and appreciated by Europeans only after training; African choirs, after similar training, are equally capable of singing such chants. He himself, after a considerable study of indigenous African music recorded in a number of areas of the Belgian Congo, initiated the writing of religious music ‘for Africans’, using indigenous melodies and motives collected for him by Africans. Father Walschap, a travelling missionary attached in succession to the missions at Boende, Flandria, Bamanya, and Bolima, also composed a great number of musical pieces based on songs and dance rhythms collected in the course of his travels. He was particularly impressed by the dances of the Ekonda which inspired him with the desire to devise a musical drama based on the fall of man, the promise of salvation, the birth of the Saviour and the redemption of man; he did not, however, live to carry out his plan. Father Jans, Father Walschap, and Father De Knop worked together, studying and recording African music, adapting it and teaching it to children and adults, who received it with enthusiasm. Writing of purely indigenous music, Father Jans points out that its survival is threatened, particularly in the towns, by the influence of modern European and American music which is becoming increasingly popular, but he suggests that the Church can foster and preserve an appreciation of the traditional music of Africa by teaching it and by encouraging its adaptation and evolution.