

Notes and News

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African Studies Association of the U.K.: Symposium on Islam in Northern Africa, 14 September 1971

THIS symposium, organized by Professor P. M. Holt of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, from whom further information can be obtained, comprised two sessions on various aspects of (1) the history of Islamicization and (2) modernization. Six papers were presented and discussed at each of the sessions, in which about 100 scholars participated.

Association of Africanists in Germany: Third Annual Conference (see also Africa, xli, April 1971, p. 157)

THE third annual conference of the Association of Africanists in Germany (Vereinigung von Afrikanisten in Deutschland, VAD) was held from 17 to 20 July 1971 at the new anthropological institute of the Steyer Mission, St. Augustin, near Bonn. Some fifty Africanists from the Federal Republic, European countries, and Africa presented papers and discussed the subject of 'Ethnic Minorities and National Integration'. The subject chosen reflects the association's endeavour to break down the traditional barriers between the various Africanist disciplines and to promote studies that have a direct link with present-day Africa and relevance for future development. The association hopes that by co-operating with foreign, and particularly African, scholars their members will be able to further African studies. The association's annual meetings and general assemblies are open to guests and the reports of the annual general meeting will later be made available in book form.

As in former years, representatives of various Africanist disciplines took part in the discussion. Some dealt with the topic from a theoretical point of view, using empirical data only to confirm their theories, others provided descriptions and explanations of the situation of certain minorities in Africa. According to Manfred Hinz of the University of Mainz, the reasons for present-day frictions and strife are not to be sought in cultural, linguistic, or religious differences between the various ethnic groups in any nation, but rather in economic differences which force smaller groups within the African national communities to maintain or to improve their social positions and to take counter-measures against other groups oppressing them. He cited the case of Indians in East Africa. Bernd Zimmermann (Munich University) claimed that the term 'minority' was of little help in understanding or explaining the African situation: on the one hand there is often no majority which forms a sharp and well-definable contrast with a minority, on the other hand the term is too inaccurate since it has also been used to denote conflicts between different ethnic groups as tribalistic; friction between different ethnic groups in African national states is caused rather by economic difficulties and by administrative repression than by ethnic differences. Wilhelm Möhlig (University of Cologne) confirmed this view in his paper on the language situation in East Africa, especially in Tanzania and Kenya. His recent field research had shown that the elevation of the Swahili language to the level of a national language had not so far caused any discrimination or minority problems and the linguistic diversity in Africa, which forced the national states to agree on a common language, had not led to the kind of conflicts feared earlier.

Brigitta Hennen-Benzing (Mainz University) offered a paper on the problem of minorities with reference to a social theory of inequality, rejecting Dahrendorf's views on the origin of social inequality.

Several working groups discussed in detail the problems raised by the case studies offered to the meeting. Apart from Möhlig's paper, already mentioned, the participants discussed a paper by Gerhard Grohs (Free University, Berlin) who had studied the role which Europeans play as guest workers in East Africa. The diverging tendencies of assimilation and self-identification in the former kingdoms of Buganda and Toro were discussed by Jürgen Jensen (Hamburg University). Elhanan Hagolani (Hamburg) delivered a paper on the problems of integrating ethnic minorities in the Ivory Coast and showed how the independent Ivory Coast had inherited its policy of national integration from the French colonization, insisting on the national use of the French language, prohibiting the wearing of national dress by civil servants to erase ethnic distinctions, and attempting to abolish economic inequalities between the various regions of the country by distributing development projects among them. Ebow Mensah, a Ghanaian sociologist working in Germany, contributed a topical paper, dealing with the deportation of African foreigners from Ghana. He, too, showed that their economic situation determined their position as minorities in Ghana.

This third annual meeting of Africanists in Germany has provided a further example of how useful interdisciplinary research work can be, although it cannot be denied that it is often very difficult to find a common theoretical basis from which to start.

Bi-Centenary of the Birth of Mungo Park

THIS was celebrated at the University of Edinburgh on 11 September 1971 by an open forum, which included addresses by Professor Christopher Fyfe on Mungo Park in the Perspective of African Exploration, and by Mr. Tony Kirk-Greene on The Land of Mungo Park. It was followed by an excursion to Selkirk to visit the special exhibition of relics of Mungo Park's explorations.

Conference of Directors of Economic and Social Research Institutes in Africa

THE first Conference of Directors of Economic and Social Research Institutes in Africa was held in October 1964 and the second in February 1967. At its third Conference, held in Nairobi in February 1971, it was decided to create a permanent Secretariat for CODESRIA, charged with archival, research recording, co-ordinating and dissemination functions. For this purpose the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) was designated as the official CODESRIA Depository Centre and a Standing Committee elected (Chairman: Dr. H. M. A. Onitiri, NISER, Ibadan) and charged with the task of furthering the objectives of CODESRIA on a continuing basis.

CODESRIA's main objective is to group all research institutions, centres, and University departments in Africa into a permanent organization with a view to effective co-ordination of social science research in the fields of economics, sociology and anthropology, political science, and psychology. At present eighty-six research centres in thirty-eight African countries are actively involved in CODESRIA's activities.

The Centre is now ready to supply data on research projects, completed, under way, or planned since 1967. A bilingual (English/French) *African Development Research Annual* is to be published every year from 1972 and a bilingual *Quarterly Journal of African Development* is also planned to incorporate fundamental research results originating from participating institutes and centres.

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