

Bissao Conference

THE second session of the International Conference of West Africanists (C.I.A.O.) was held at Bissao, Portuguese Guinea, from 8 to 17 December last, through the courtesy of the Governor of Portuguese Guinea, H.E. Sarmiento Rodrigues, and the Portuguese authorities. The Conference was, as before, organized in three sections, devoted respectively to physical, biological, and human studies. About thirty delegates in all from Portugal, Portuguese Guinea, French West Africa, Great Britain, the Gambia, Spain, and the Spanish dependencies attended the Conference. A wide range of papers was submitted, and the majority were read and discussed.

Of outstanding interest were a number of communications on Paleolithic industries in Portuguese Guinea; new discoveries and interpretations concerning early exploration and colonization in West Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; a preliminary report of the results of an intensive nutrition study being carried out in a Mandinka community in the Gambia, and studies of the ethnology and social organization of hitherto little-known peoples of Portuguese Guinea. The last have been stimulated by the recent establishment of a research centre at Bissao under the direction of Lt. A. Teixeira da Mota; this research centre has already published a number of ethnographical studies and is hoping to be able to organize more intensive researches in the near future.

The Portuguese Committee is arranging for the publication of a complete record of this Conference, and the Permanent Secretary, Professor Th. Monod, announced that the full report of the first Conference held at Dakar in 1945 was in the press and would appear shortly.

The Portuguese authorities provided facilities for a lengthy excursion through the northern and western parts of Portuguese Guinea, during which visits were made to Balanta, Papel, and Bijagos as well as to Mandinka and Fula communities.

The Conference expressed its warm gratitude to the Portuguese authorities and in particular to the Governor of Portuguese Guinea, who took a close personal interest in the Conference, and contributed a notable review of social and economic development in Portuguese Guinea. He attended many of its sessions, and availed himself of the opportunity of personal discussions with the delegates from the various countries.

On the recommendation of the Permanent Committee, the Conference proposed that the following should be included among the subjects discussed at the next Conference:

- (a) Soil erosion and deterioration: causes and remedies.
- (b) Origin and distribution of laterites.
- (c) Problems of denudation (penplanation) in Africa.
- (d) The role of marine and riverine resources in West African economy.
- (e) Flora and fauna of West Africa: problems of development and distribution.
- (f) Standards of living and their relation to physical, technical, and social conditions.
- (g) History of the cultures of the Western Sudan.
- (h) Problems of large-scale agricultural development.
- (i) The role of indigenous institutions in the maintenance of social cohesion.
- (j) The human geography of urban development in West Africa.
- (k) Land tenure: the effects of colonial development.

Among other recommendations of the Conference were the following:

That the Republic of Liberia should at the earliest possible opportunity participate in the common effort by collaborating in the next conference and in the International Committee.

That, in order to ensure that the preparation of the proposed International West African Atlas should be carried out on an international basis, the C.I.A.O. accepts the proposal of IFAN that the role of International Committee for the Atlas be assumed by the Permanent

Committee of the C.I.A.O., and that responsibility for the secretariat of the Committee be undertaken by the section of Geography of IFAN.

That the Conference considers necessary, not only an increased production of maps and population censuses for West Africa, but also the adoption of such a standardized system of procedure as may be most suitable from the point of view of scientific accuracy and of the purposes in view.

That the widest publicity be given to the proposal of Lt. Teixeira da Mota concerning a revision of the orthography of place-names in West Africa, and that Governments and competent authorities be invited to consider the corrections formulated.

That, in order to advance knowledge of early navigation on the West coasts of Africa, excavations should be systematically undertaken by the Departments of Antiquities of the countries concerned, in the coastal islands and favourable sites at the mouths of rivers south of the Atlas mountains.

That studies concerned with the effects of contacts between different cultures be developed in accordance with an extensive and systematic scheme, the results obtained in each area being examined and compared with those of other areas at subsequent meetings of C.I.A.O.

The Conference also expressed the hope that it might be possible for the next meeting to be held in a British West African territory. Since the Bissao meeting the Government of Nigeria and the British Colonial Office have agreed in principle to invite the third Conference to meet in Nigeria, and negotiations to that effect are in progress.

Further information concerning the C.I.A.O. can be obtained from its Permanent Secretary, Professor Th. Monod, Director, Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, Dakar, French West Africa; and with regard to the Bissao meeting from Professor A. A. Mendes Correia, 88 Junqueira, Lisbon, Portugal.

The International African Institute will be happy to give members any further information in its possession, and announcements with regard to the third Conference will be published in *Africa* as soon as they are available.

DARYLL FORDE

Migrant Labour and Tribal Life

PROFESSOR SCHAPERA writes: In his review of my book, *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life* (*Africa*, April 1948, pp. 143 ff.), Mr. A. Sandilands correctly describes Table XI as 'very inaccurate', but his comment, as it stands, suggests that I am responsible for the inaccuracy. In fact, had he read more carefully the paragraphs immediately preceding and following the Table, he would have seen it stated explicitly (*a*) that the figures given in the Table are derived primarily from returns submitted by district officers about the distribution of Native manpower, both in Bechuanaland and elsewhere, and (*b*) that owing to the methods of collection and sampling employed, especially in the Ngwato Reserve, those figures 'cannot be accepted unreservedly' (*op. cit.*, p. 35). My own estimates are given in Table XII (pp. 36 ff.), which also includes 'the correct figures . . . of the territory's war-effort' that Mr. Sandilands implies I have omitted.