

a grammatical outline of the language and Dr. Fisch has also edited valuable texts. The latest contribution is a part-translation of *Peep of Day*, by Rev. Shirer of Yendi. This is of particular value because of its admirable phonetic accuracy, which will be appreciated by students of the language. Some of the phonetic distinctions observed can, however, be dispensed with in a practical script.

In the discussion the following principles were adopted: (a) to follow the suggestions laid down in the Institute Memorandum on Orthography, (b) to adapt the script closely to that of Fante and Twi, and (c) to make it simple.

Five 'new letters' are required, viz. *f*, *y*, *g*, *ε*, and *o*. Possibly *y* may be replaced by *g* since it occurs only in certain positions; experience will show whether this is feasible. It was agreed that *o* should not be used, although the sound expressed by this letter does occur, but that *e* should take its place. The language has, like Fante and Twi, two *i* and *u* sounds, both close and open. The open form of *i* and *u* will be written *e* and *o*, as is done in Fante and Twi. Following the method recently introduced in Twi it was suggested that nasal marks should not be used. Nasalized vowels are not frequent, and their distinction is of much less importance than in Twi or Fante.

It is hoped that the agreement reached will be a useful starting-point for a vernacular literature in this leading language of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. The vocabulary and grammatical outline which Mr. Blair proposes to publish will provide an illustration of the new script. The orthography as outlined above has also been adopted for Nzima, which means that all the written languages of the Gold Coast now use the same script. (*Communicated by* DR. E. L. RAPP.)

*Problems of Orthography in the Congo Belge—'De "Africa"-Spelling ende Kongoleesche Talen.'*

This article (28 pp.) by A. Burssens and G. van Bulck, S.J., which appeared in *Kongo Overzee* II, 2, December 1935, is actually a short phonetic manual applying the principles set out in the Institute's Memorandum on Orthography to the main Congo languages and follows on a previous article published in June of last year.

The writers review the conditions under which Congo languages have been written, when almost every mission and individual writer devised their own particular spelling for service and school books. In this way, for closely related languages, different letters have been used for the same sound, and one letter for different sounds, with the result that whoever has to deal with more than one language, whether he be native or European, is constantly in uncertainty as to the sound values of the letters. In those books where there is a clear indication of the values of the letters used, the difficulty is

not so great, but such explanation is not often found, and even then lack of linguistic training on the part of the writer sometimes detracts from the value of the work.

The 'Africa'-Spelling can offer a practical and scientific solution of these difficulties and undoubtedly brings the study of Congo languages, both at home and abroad, to a higher level.

For the purpose for which this examination is made, i.e. to produce a unified spelling which can be applied to a number of related languages, the writers have rightly confined themselves to the significant differences of sounds and have not entered into phonetic differences which may occur in the various dialects. A clear statement is made of what a 'phoneme' is (and there are useful footnotes referring to sources, as well as a bibliography) and the principles upon which different symbols should be used, with examples not only from Congo, but also from European languages, which make the point clear to the non-phonetic reader. A thorough investigation into the sounds occurring in these languages is felt to be necessary since an alphabet, based on phonology, cannot be constructed without a systematic phonetic examination. The writers also wisely point out that the philologist dealing with more than one linguistic system, who may need more detailed discrimination and more symbols—possibly with diacritic marks to indicate them—should not be considered. Nor does a background of historical spelling need to be reckoned with. The purpose to be kept in view is the construction of a scientific alphabet for the everyday use of natives and missionaries. A subsequent article is to appear showing from comparative texts how the orthographic principles set out here can be applied to various languages.

Then follows a careful description of all the sounds occurring in the Congo languages (and some outside the Congo) with numerous examples. The more unusual sounds such as labio-velars (*kʰ, gʷ*), implosives, clicks, ejectives, palatalized and velarized consonants are carefully described and illustrated. The writers have done a service to linguistic study in their analysis and explanations of Congo sounds and will have rendered a greater one to Africa if, from this, can be built up a useful and scientific orthography. We look forward to the application of these principles to individual languages in a subsequent number of *Kongo-Overzee*. (*Communicated by Dr. I. C. WARD.*)