

Notes and News

Royal Anthropological Institute: Centenary Meeting

THE Royal Anthropological Institute celebrated its centenary on October 30th by holding a special conference which lasted throughout the day. The new President, Professor Hutton, opened the proceedings with a call for further anthropological teaching in the schools and Universities of this country. Sir John Myres followed with an account of the development of the Institute from its first foundation as the Ethnological Society in 1843. Lord Hailey was the guest of honour and gave the principal address of the day on 'The role of anthropology in colonial development'. In the later session of the conference, specialists in the different branches of science that have remained grouped together at the Royal Anthropological Institute, discussed the future development of their particular subjects. For this purpose Dr. Morant was the spokesman of the physical anthropologists, Professor Gordon Childe of the archaeologists, Dr. R. Sayce of the technologists, and Dr. Raymond Firth of the social anthropologists. The conference had the unexpected pleasure of welcoming Field-Marshal Smuts to the meeting, with his archaeologist son, Captain J. Smuts.

The centenary celebration was also in a very real sense an event in the life of the International African Institute because of the public testimony given, not only to its own work, but to the movement it has stood for. When Professor Malinowski first published an article on 'Practical Anthropology' in Vol. 11, No. 1, of this Journal, in January 1929, with the encouragement of Dr. J. H. Oldham, then a member of the Institute's Executive Council and shortly afterwards to become its Administrative Director, the practical possibilities of the application of anthropological knowledge in the sphere of colonial administration and education had hardly been seriously explored. The anthropologists of the day tended to seek areas where the natives were relatively speaking 'untouched' by civilization, for their field studies, rather than those where change was taking place at a rapid rate. The research initiated by the International African Institute in 1931 was directed, on the contrary, to the study of the changes introduced into African society by contact with Europeans. Fourteen Fellows of the Institute were all engaged on studies of this kind, and this Journal has from the first given much of its space to the discussion of problems of applied anthropology. The influence of this type of study on the whole development of academic anthropology has been enormous. Lecture courses on 'culture contact' began to appear on the syllabuses of Universities in this country and in South Africa and a very lively interest in the study of the present economic and social development of both rural and urban societies in Africa is now evident in anthropological circles. It would not be true to say that the Institute initiated this movement. Rivers contributed brilliant hypotheses to the study of culture contact; Bartlett contributed to the question from the psychological point of view; American anthropologists have also developed their own approach to problems of 'acculturation'. Yet it remained for the International African Institute to undertake the practical task of organizing a big scheme of field research on the study of culture contact in African society. It thus acted as the spearhead of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Lord Hailey made special reference to the work of Fellows of this Institute in the course of his address, and other speakers fully accepted the fact that the Royal Anthropological Institute would, in the future, direct its attention more and more to the study of changing communities and to general sociological and economic problems. The future development of the two Institutes is obviously closely linked.

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