

Notes and News

Recensement de la Population en Afrique Occidentale Française.

Le Gouvernement Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française vient de faire procéder au recensement de la population en s'efforçant d'obtenir des chiffres aussi exacts que possible, en dépit de la difficulté qu'offre la dispersion des groupements humains dans certaines régions.

En 1926 une opération analogue avait fourni un chiffre de 13,541,611 habitants. Il y a en 1934 14.432.021 indigènes recensés, soit une augmentation de 890.410 habitants.

D'autre part en 1926 la population européenne s'élevait dans la fédération à 13,399 habitants. Il y en a aujourd'hui 24.719, dont 17.631 Français et 7.088 étrangers et Libano-Syriens.

Au 31 décembre 1934, les principales villes de la Fédération étaient:

Dakar	76.149	habitants,	dont	10.250	européens.
Saint-Louis	30.818	„	„	986	„
Kaolack	44.235	„	„	618	„
Porto-Novo	24.256	„	„	70	„
Bamako	21.238	„	„	843	„
Abidjan	16.430	„	„	1.109	„

Viennent ensuite 10 agglomérations de 15.000 à 10.000 habitants et 14 villes de 10.000 à 5.000 habitants. (*Communiqué par M. LE PROFESSEUR H. LABOURET.*)

Basic Elements of Nilotic Civilization.

IN the *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, vol. lxxv, pp. 86-127, Fräulein M. Schmidl discusses the provenience of some cultural features of Nilotic peoples. As far as we know, the Upper Nile region has always been inhabited since very early times, and it is therefore not surprising that up to to-day the people should own cultural possessions which point back to those times. Thus Fräulein Schmidl tries to trace the manufacturing of ostrich-egg beads, and the painting of the body with ochre and haematite, back into the Capsien. Still more distinct is, according to the author, an influence of the ancient Libyans, the so-called Tehenu. Traces of almost all the known customs and usages of this people are to be found among Nilotic tribes or their neighbours, for example the wearing of phallus-pockets and animal-tails by men, and of artificial phalli by women, the fighting with sticks, the erection of rock tumuli and dolmens, institutions pointing to mother-right, a preferential position of women and in connection with it farm-work by men, the high significance of agriculture together with

a religious cattle-cult, rain-charm, ancestor-worship, a cult of trees, and others. Since also archaeological data indicate that tribes akin to pre-dynastic Egyptians lived as far south as the Sudan and only later penetrated into northern regions, the countries of the Upper Nile may be regarded as a home of this group of peoples. This theory is supported by the fact that a civilization similar to that of the Tehenu is also found in the Eastern Horn (Punt). The Nilotic pole-cult (burial-pole) may be mentioned as a witness of this influence.

In comparatively recent times Nilotic tribes borrowed political institutions and views similar to those of Sennaar and Abyssinia. As such Fräulein Schmidl mentions the idea of the sacred kingdom, marriage in the royal family between brother and sister, the high position of the king's mother, the killing of princes.

These elements, and particularly those of the Tehenu period, exist, however, not in the Upper Nile region only, but have, like many features of the Capsien civilization, found a large distribution. The similarities in the material and mental culture between present-day Africa and ancient Egypt may find their explanation in this common basis.

Land Tenure among the Ibo of Nigeria.

This brief note on land tenure among the Ibo of Nigeria may be of interest, as there is a good deal of confusion on the subject of land tenure in West Africa, due partly to the preconception among many Europeans that all native lands are 'communal', and partly to the fact that native custom is not static but varies according to conditions and modifies itself when necessary.

The various types of land in Iboland may be classified as follows: (a) Lands which are sacred or taboo, (b) virgin forest, (c) farmland held in common by the members of a village, kindred, or extended-family, (d) individual holdings.

The first class of lands includes sacred groves surrounding the shrines of public cults (such as *Ale*, the earth deity, and *Ekwesu*, the spirit of evil). It also includes the taboo lands or 'evil bush' known as *aja ofia*. In both these cases the ownership is regarded as vested in deities or spirits and no one would normally attempt or be allowed to use any fraction of it for farming purposes. It is a sign of the times, however, that cases have occurred in crowded areas of individuals clearing a patch of extensive taboo land in order to plant yams, being prepared to take the risk of being killed by spirits. If a farmer is bold enough to take this step (without interference from the elders) and farms for two years in succession without suffering misfortune, he becomes the owner of the land, which henceforth ceases to be regarded as taboo.

The next type of land is the virgin forest which has remained unused for farming purposes because nobody has required it or because the village had