International Conference on Co-operation in Africa

A CONFERENCE to discuss means of co-ordinating the work of technical experts in Africa south of the Sahara, was held in Paris in January. It was attended by representatives of the Belgian, French, Portuguese, South African, Southern Rhodesian and United Kingdom governments, and was the latest of a series of conferences which have been held in Paris, London, Brussels, and Lisbon during the last four years. This international co-operation has resulted in the establishment of a number of joint bureaux to deal with problems such as sleeping-sickness, rinderpest, soil erosion, and the spread of plant pests and diseases.

Mass Education Bulletin[1]

The first number of a periodical review of mass education was issued in December 1949 by the Mass Education Clearing House, London. The Colonial Office Mass Education (Community Development) Committee and the Colonial Department of the University of London Institute of Education have collaborated to establish a clearing house and bulletin, with the aim of gathering up the experience of all who have worked on various schemes of mass literacy, community development, and fundamental education in various parts of the world, and sharing the fruits among all who wish to do such work in future. The *Bulletin* will give accounts of such schemes and describe in detail the techniques used. The first number includes an editorial by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and a survey of Mass Education in British African colonies. A similar clearing house and bulletin have been established by U.N.E.S.C.O., and the two organizations will work in close collaboration.

The Bamangwato

THE Ngwato tribe, whose chieftainship is again in dispute, are, with a population of about 110,000, the largest of the eight tribes in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Their Reserve, in the north-east part of the country, about 40,000 square miles in extent, contains much waterless land and the bulk of the population live in the fertile eastern strip on both sides of the Bulawayo–Mafeking railway. The tribal cpaital, Serowe, has some 25,000 inhabitants, but there are many outlying settlements of less than 100 people each. There are about three head of cattle and three more of small stock per head of the population. The low rainfall, about 15 inches a year, necessitates dispersal of cattle and fields. Adolescent boys tend the cattle at isolated posts throughout the year, while the rest of the population scatter from November to June to live near their fields of sorghum and maize. Animals and crops provide food, but cereals are imported every year from Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa. Trade goods, such as clothes and blankets, also come from the Union. Some cattle are sold but the principal source of money income is migrant labour in the Union, and estimates for 1938–40 give 26 per cent. of all adult males as away from home. About 400 Europeans live in the Reserve, the men working as administrators, missionaries, railway employees, traders and blacksmiths. There are no Indians.

The Ngwato proper, descendants of the founder of the tribe, who almost all live at Serowe, make up only one-fifth of the population. The rest of the chiefdom comprises about sixteen communities of different ethnic origin, who have joined the tribe by conquest, voluntary submission, in flight from an invading enemy, or by secession from other tribes. Some, like the Ngwato themselves, belong to the Tswana (Western Sotho) cluster of Bantu-speakers. Others belong to the Northern Sotho cluster or to clusters centred on Southern Rhodesia, North-western Rhodesia and South-West Africa. There are about 10,000 Sarwa Bushmen. All have enjoyed a great deal of cultural autonomy and have their own hereditary

[1] *Mass Education Bulletin*, vol. i, No. 1, Dec. 1949. Mass Education Clearing House, Colonial Department, University of London Institute of Education, Malet Street, London, W.C. 1. Pp. 19.

leaders. Membership of the tribe is patrilineal, but they are not endogamous and many of the leaders are linked by marriage to the Ngwato royal line.

The basic non-exogamous residential unit, the ward, contains family groups centred on most of the men and a few of the women of a patrilineage of four to six generations' depth. It may also contain dependent family groups not necessarily related but usually of the same ethnic community as the dominant group. There are about 235 wards, 113 of them being at the capital. The remainder either form isolated hamlets or are grouped into villages. There are about 170 villages, varying in size from under 100 people to about 2,000.

There are eight districts—territorial divisions based on geographical convenience and on the ethnic homogeneity of the wards they contain. Each district has a resident Ngwato governor and an Ngwato ward-head representing it at the capital. The grouping of wards into four sections cuts across this district organization, so that there are wards of different ethnic and district affiliations in the same section. Each section has some of its wards at the capital, built there in the area allocated to the section.

Ngwato nobles, descendants of former chiefs, fall into two categories. Those descended from the father's father's father of the present chief do not participate actively in the sectional organization, but all others do so, and the senior noble ward-head in this category is, in each section, one of its judges. The other section judge is the Ngwato commoner head of the ward round which the section was originally formed. In outlying districts the hierarchy of tribunals for settling disputes is as follows: those presided over by the head of the family group, ward-head, village head, leader of the ethnic community, district governor respectively. At the capital, disputes pass from Ngwato ward-heads to the section judges, and from non-Ngwato ward-heads to the leader of the ethnic community and thence to the section judges. All disputes can eventually be referred to the Chief. All hearings, at whatever level, are held in public and any tribesman can take part in the discussion of the case. The chieftainship, like every other headship in the society, is hereditary in the male line, passing normally to the eldest son. The Chief is assisted by advisers, whom he selects informally from among his brothers, father's brothers, headmen of important wards and other devoted personal friends. He calls meetings of headmen to discuss public issues, while affairs of major importance are discussed at meetings of all tribesmen.

In the past chiefs loaned cattled to commoners on whose loyalty they could then depend, for within the royal house there have been many factions. Sekgoma I, after ousting his elder brother from the throne (1835), was himself ousted (1872) by his own son Kgama III, the first Christian chief. Kgama quarrelled with and banished a brother and two half-brothers. His heir Segkoma II also had designs on the throne and was banished for twenty years. Kgama relied for support on his daughter's husband Ratshosa. When Segkoma returned and succeeded Kgama on the latter's death (1923) he was persuaded to banish Phethu, son of one of Kgama's banished half-brothers. Segkoma II died in 1926 and his heir Seretse was too young to take up the chieftainship. Segkoma's brother Tshekedi became regent, and Phethu, who had been pardoned, encouraged him to act against the Ratshosa group. They retaliated by attempting to kill Tshekedi, and were imprisoned and banished. Later there was an attempt to claim the chieftainship for an illegitimate son of Segkoma, a petition by several nobles against Tshekedi's rule, and an open breach between Tshekedi and a noble family descended from another half-brother of Kgama III.[1]

[1] See also the following studies by Professor I. Schapera: (*a*) 'The Political Organization of the Ngwato of Bechuanaland Protectorate', in M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 56–82; (*b*) *Native Land Tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*, Alice, Lovedale Press, 1943; (*c*) *Tribal Legislation among the Tswana of Bechuanaland Protectorate. A study in the Mechanism of Culture Change* (London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, No. 9), London, Lund Humphries, 1943; (*d*) *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life: A study of Conditions in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*, London, Oxford University Press, 1947.