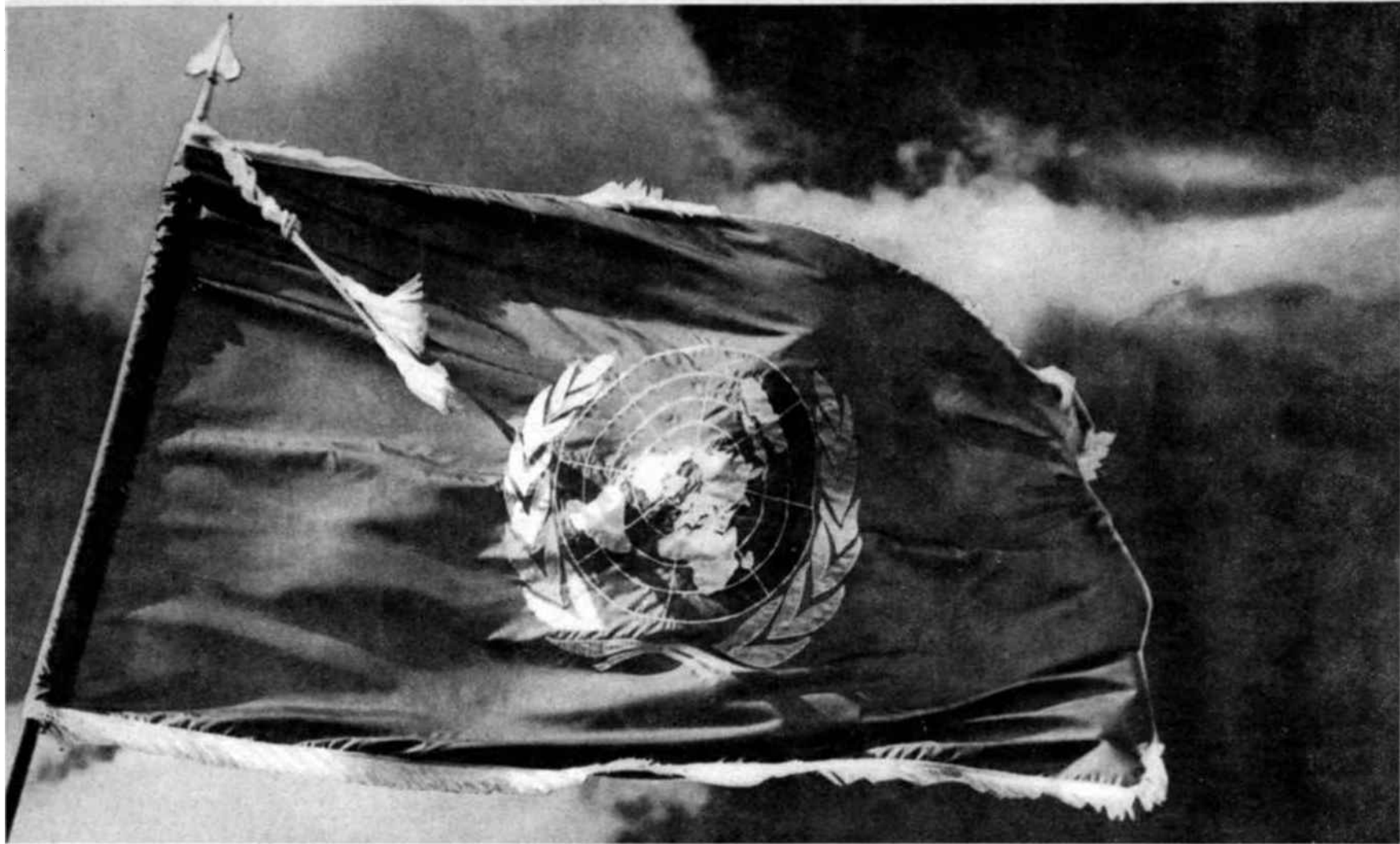


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 UNESCO

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION



United Nations Technical Assistance in Haiti. Travelling on a UN Fellowship, Mr. Milord (right) studied modern irrigation methods in France. Now he takes part in a major irrigation project which will give Haiti more land for cultivation. This tiny Caribbean republic is of special interest as a centre of the first comprehensive United Nations experiment in technical assistance for under-developed countries.

UNITED NATIONS DAY October 24, 1950

“There shall be peace”

“There shall be peace.” This has been decided. WE have decided it—we, the peoples of the United Nations, who constitute more than nine tenths of the people on the face of the earth.

For once, let us be impatient. Let us brush aside all the timidities, the hesitations of mere talk about the “hope” of men, women and children to have the chance to live in peace. It has been decided. There is more than talk and hope.

For, five years ago our DETERMINATION that there shall be peace was written — written not only in ink but large and clear enough in our faith and will to justify all the blood, sweat and tears that had gone before. Five years ago, we said in our Charter, the Charter of the United Nations, that we are: “DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” Now, five years later, the slogan for United Nations Day — for the generation of the United Nations, for the century of the United Nations — is:

“THERE SHALL BE PEACE.”

But peace is not merely an absence of war — a refuge for cowards, a cave for hermits, a playground for idlers — a kind of surrender in the face of the enemy.

Peace calls for heroes, who do more than hold their ground and rest on their fading laurels. It comes from the power, the courage, the intelligence of man, age-old weapons against the traditional enemies of men — war, famine, pestilence, ignorance.

This is the kind of peace we are building — we the peoples of the United Nations — five years after we signed the covenant we call the Charter.

And of the new weapons we are using, the new tools we are using, none is more important than the United Nations Programme for Technical Assistance. For this programme will help in a great task of peace — a difficult, yet entirely feasible task — nothing less than the remaking of the world — in which men, women and children may live in the reality of peace and with the sound hope for a better life.

United Nations Day messages from Mr. Trygve Lie, United Nations Secretary-General and M. Jaime Torres Bodet, Unesco's Director-General, are published in page 3 of this issue.

Reports on the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the role Unesco will play therein appear on pages 5, 6, 7 and 8.

THE KING OF THE BAMOUNS AND HIS ALPHABET

THE rich complexity of civilization in advanced countries is frequently advanced as an argument to demonstrate the basic superiority of the "white race" in character and intelligence. "Have the Negroes or the Indians produced a Plato, a Shakespeare, a Descartes, a Newton?" is the question which has greeted even the most convincing scientific evidence of the basically equal abilities of all branches of the human family. To compare such varied cultures in order to prove that the Negroes or Indians are congenitally inferior to the whites is a process of reasoning without value. The fundamental discoveries on which our whole civilization has been built—fire, weaving, pottery, agriculture, rearing of stock—were made by men whose skin pigmentation is today unknown, but whose stage of development was certainly far behind that of the peoples of Africa or Ame-

by
Dr. Alfred Metraux

writing and instructed his people in its use, should help ill-informed sceptics to overcome their doubts about the creative spirit of the Negro race. The details of the following story are taken from an article written for a scientific journal by the French scientist Maurice Delafosse.

In 1899, when the Germans occupied his kingdom, Njoya needed to communicate with his village chiefs and with those of his people attached to the German Command, but he did not want the Germans to know what was in his letters. He therefore decided to invent a writing that the Europeans could not understand. Calling together his head men, he explained his plan and asked their assistance in finding signs for each of the words of

thus creating a syllabic writing.

These signs acquired a purely phonetic and conventional value, instead of suggesting objects or ideas. For instance, a calabash (ka) was first shown by the drawing of a gourd; later this same but simplified drawing was used to signify the syllable "ka" which forms part of many words.

In a few years, Njoya had advanced from picture-writing to a phonetic system — achieving what the Egyptians accomplished, and then in a very imperfect fashion, only after centuries of stumbling efforts. For a time, King Njoya's system of writing remained half-pictorial, half-phonetic, yet all the while the syllabic side was nevertheless being perfected.

Five years later, the king, influenced this time by observations made in a missionary school, introduced a new reform by giving his system a purely alphabetic character.



Native kings, such as this West African ruler, must exercise judgement and statecraft of the same kind as heads of state in larger and more "advanced" countries, though the problems are different. But, men like these are little known to the world, chiefly for lack of Boswells. It was a native ruler, Njoya, King of the Bamouns, for example, who, with a superlative use of intelligence and initiative invented a form of picture writing, and within ten years transformed it into an efficient alphabet. The evolution of our own and similar alphabets took many centuries.

Extracts from the alphabet invented by King Njoya (development during eleven years)

Words or ideas represented by original signs	Meaning	1907	1911	1916	1918	Existing phonetic value
a	he	卅	𐀀	𐀁	𐀂	a
ben	a dance	𐀃	𐀄	𐀅	𐀆	b, bé
ncha	fish	𐀇	𐀈	𐀉	𐀊	ch, tch, cha
fom	king	𐀋	𐀌	𐀍	𐀎	f, fo
ngou	country	𐀏	𐀐	𐀑	𐀒	g, gou
li	adult	𐀓	𐀔	𐀕	𐀖	l, li
rou	brother	𐀗	𐀘	𐀙	𐀚	r, rou
intou	six	𐀛	𐀜	𐀝	𐀞	t, tou (6)

rica. One may even say, without wanting to sound paradoxical, that a savage living in an isolated region and provided with few cultural advantages, required far more genius to discover the bow or the boomerang than inventors today in their work to split the atom and to perfect the machines which are the pride of this modern age.

Each new discovery is the product of people engaged in simultaneous research, who frequently arrive at identical results at the same time. Laboratories and research workers collaborate so closely in this twentieth century that individual discoveries are becoming increasingly rare and difficult to achieve. The progress of our civilization indeed relies on this vast network of reciprocal contacts and on this collective research performed by teams of experts. To evolve a new technique from nothing, as one might say, is obviously a much slower and more difficult process.

The Unknown Heroes

CENTURIES ago, a poet sadly recalled the heroes who had died unknown, because there was no Homer at that time to record their valorous exploits for future generations. One could speculate on the number of great men who lived among the primitive races but of whom we know nothing simply because, lacking the written word, all remembrance of them has been lost. If we study ancient chronicles, missionary accounts, books of travel and works of modern ethnographers, we can discover an amazing gallery of talented men, even men of genius, among the so-called "inferior races", who have been so lightly dubbed "the white man's burden".

A man's accomplishments are limited by his cultural background. The story of King Njoya of the Bamouns, in the Cameroons, who invented, by himself, a system of

the local language.

The system of writing devised by the king in collaboration with his counsellors, began as a picture language in symbols, each sign representing either the drawing of a definite object or "the materialised shape evoked by an abstract idea". Each sign thus corresponded to a word, but without relation to the number of syllables in this word.

A Stroke Of Genius

SEVERAL years later, Njoya conceived an idea that was truly a stroke of genius. Words were no longer to be represented by drawings, but the same drawings were to represent groups of sounds,

He decided to keep only 80 of the 350 original signs, and those that represented the first ten numbers. He stipulated that "each of the alphabetic signs should represent one sound only, the numerical signs keeping, in addition, the value of figures".

Frankly speaking, this last step towards alphabetic writing was by no means perfect. The royal phonetician did not succeed in breaking entirely free from syllabism, so the phonetic value of the 80 signs was not always clearly shown. Aware of the faults in his system, he made several attempts to simplify it. In 1916, the year when his writing-method was the subject of the story here outlined, his system seemed well on the

way to becoming purely alphabetic. The signs bore less and less relation to primitive picture-symbols and became letters with increasingly simple outlines.

A Royal Teacher

ONCE having evolved a method of writing, this wise man launched a large-scale campaign to teach the alphabet to his people. He bought slates from the whites and personally taught pupils who, in turn, became teachers. The period of instruction over, the king continued to correspond with them and this interchange of letters kept alive their interest. By the middle of 1907, more than 600 of his subjects knew how to read and write. Njoya formed offices of administration, a public records department and a Registrar of receipts and expenses.

Attempts may be made to belittle the genius of Njoya by stating that he probably obtained the idea of writing from the Arabs or the whites. But this in no way detracts from the significance of his discovery. He may have known that the whites used written symbols to communicate with each other, but he certainly could have known nothing of the method. His own system originated out of his native intelligence and initiative. Let us also remember that cutting through time and tradition he achieved results in a few years that other sys-

tems of writing known to us today took centuries and even thousands of years to attain.

About the middle of the 19th century, another Negro, Momuru Doalu Bukere of the Vai tribe in Liberia, invented a system of writing which won a certain fame. Based on the pictorial writing used by his tribe, he gave a phonetic value to the signs. Today, thousands of natives still use this system invented by the "noble and modest" Momuru Doalu Bukere.

The story of King Njoya was deliberately chosen for this article because documents are available, and a study of them enables us to follow Njoya's line of reasoning. Many examples of talent, sometimes of genius, could have been cited among primitive tribes. A great deal could be said of the Maya Indians of Central America, who, entirely removed from outside influences, had already—between two and three thousand years ago—discovered the zero and given a positional value to figures.

The so-called "savage" or "barbarian" state does not originate from any congenital inability. It is simply one transitory form of culture among others, equally transitory. Neither primitive nor advanced civilizations have explored the full possibilities of mankind. One thing that seems certain, however, is the statement in the Declaration on Race published by Unesco, which affirms that: "the range of mental capacities in all ethnic groups is much the same."

SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE MODERN WORLD

THE development of social sciences during the last fifty years holds as rich a promise for mankind today as did natural sciences at the beginning of the last century. Man is alarmed by the bitterness and anguish which go with the transition from one form of civilization to another and demands to know if science can help him to understand the laws which govern the complex relationships between and within different societies and thus to control the great changes of our epoch.

The role of the social sciences within Unesco has been conceived to answer the specific aims upheld by the Organization. All activities must be specifically directed to serve the cause of peace within the international framework. To serve these two conditions has been the aim of the Department of Social Sciences.

It is now time to draw practical conclusions from research carried out over three years with the collaboration of scientific organizations and eminent specialists. The sum total of

this knowledge offers a rational basis for the recommendations that Unesco proposes to place before governments and non-governmental organizations anxious to preserve peace.

The programme, to be submitted to Unesco's Executive Board this month, marks a definite step forward. It is proposed that Unesco investigate the scientific methods and techniques which offer the best means for overcoming certain existing tensions.

Hundreds of governmental or private agencies in many countries are striving to abate racial prejudices and to fight the discriminatory measures which result from them. Sociologists and psychologists, for their part, suggest new ways by which the energies at present wasted in fruitless fighting can be directed to constructive ends. Groups and individuals continue their efforts in different directions without reference to the experiences of their neighbours. To make these methods more widely known, to assess their efficiency and encourage the use

of those which prove the best, is one of the tasks which falls to Unesco.

Social tensions are fed by wrong ideas based on irrational beliefs or outmoded scientific interpretations. The authority that its international character gives Unesco, enables it to undertake a campaign to put within the reach of the masses the results achieved by scientists in their study of racial problems and the effect of the discriminatory measures against minorities.

Unesco played an important part in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is, therefore, morally responsible to uphold and disseminate these rights which it helped to formulate. Unesco must fight racism and all forms of social discrimination, in conformity with the spirit and letter of its Constitution.

Unesco is making an important contribution to the United Nations broad programme of technical assistance to help economically under-developed countries to enjoy the benefits

of science and industry. Again it becomes the responsibility of the social sciences to bear in mind the human factor in the transition from one type of economy to another. Material development must harmonise with the cultural and social changes which will inevitably result. Unesco will play a useful role if it helps prevent a too sudden dislocation of cultures, with its aftermath of suffering and squandering of energy and goodwill.

It can be foreseen that, in a few years, new states will be added to the already large family of existing ones. These states will have to prepare, with as little delay as possible, a complex system of institutions, without which they cannot survive in the modern world. The adoption of entirely new organizations and procedures will provoke internal anguish and violent tensions. Unesco's experience in this field will perhaps be turned to good account by those states who accept the co-operation which will then be offered to them.