

COLONIAL OFFICE

Native Administration
in the
British African
Territories

by

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Part III. West Africa:
Nigeria, Gold Coast,
Sierra Leone,
Gambia



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PREFACE TO PART I

IN 1941, following on journeys undertaken in 1939 and 1940, I wrote a Report on the working of the systems of local rule in Africa which was issued for official use under the title of "NATIVE ADMINISTRATION AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN BRITISH TROPICAL AFRICA." It was suggested in 1947 that I should bring that Report up to date by including a reference to the considerable number of changes which had taken place in the interval since it was written. But a journey undertaken by me in the latter half of 1947 and in the first half of 1948 convinced me that it would not be adequate merely to revise the Report in this manner. The scope of the enquiries made by me in 1939 and 1940 had been restricted by the existence of War conditions; the material was incomplete in respect of certain of the territories; and the changes made in the interval had in some cases involved issues not merely of practice but of policy.

The present Report has therefore been drawn up on a different basis. It is more limited in scope, in that it is confined to matters relating directly to the agencies employed for administrative purposes in local rule, including the creation of institutions of local government, and it refers only indirectly to political or constitutional developments. It is on the other hand more comprehensive, in so far that it embodies a detailed statement of the working of the system adopted in each of the Provincial units comprised in the ten Colonial territories concerned. It gives detailed information on the same scale regarding the procedure for the administration of justice through the native tribunals, and examines the evidence available of changes in the African law and custom which regulates the system of landholding.

The present survey is being issued in four Parts. The first deals with the East African territories, Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika; the second with Zanzibar and the two Central African territories, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia; the third deals with the West African territories, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. The problems of a general nature which emerge as the result of the survey are discussed in a final Chapter, issued separately as Part IV. The facts and figures embodied in the survey are in the main those elicited by the local enquiries made in 1947 and 1948, but account has also been taken of any later information that has come to hand at the time of going to Press early in 1950. This has led to some irregularity in the dating of the material, but where so large a number of territories are concerned and local changes are so continuous, it is difficult to achieve uniformity in this respect.

In presenting this considerable volume of factual material, the primary consideration has been to meet the need felt by officers of the African Administrations for information regarding the practice followed in areas other than those with which they are personally acquainted. The development of a viable procedure of local administration involves a continuous process of adjustment to conditions which are not merely of very great diversity, but are being constantly modified in response to social and economic changes. It is here that the experience gained in other areas can be of value; and perhaps the outside observer can render greater service by the systematic collation of

information than by seeking to formulate principles or by offering counsel to those who are actually responsible for taking action. And it is pertinent to add here, that the range of matters with which the information thus provided deals is of more intimate concern to a very large proportion of the African population than is the course of political development or constitutional change.

I am indebted to the Governors of the Colonial territories and to the numerous officers who not only extended their hospitality to me in the course of my enquiries in 1947 and 1948, but have given me the most generous assistance in assembling the material on which this survey is based. I am much indebted also to Mr. A. H. Cox, C.M.G., who accompanied me throughout my journeys and gave me valuable help in collecting and arranging this material. In spite of the assistance I have received from many quarters, it is inevitable that a work involving so much detail should contain many errors, but for them I must take the sole responsibility, and I must add also that any opinions which may be expressed are not those either of the Colonial Governments or the Colonial Office. I am solely responsible for them.

HAILEY

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