

Notes and News

The Second International African Seminar at Lovanium University, Leopoldville

THE Second International African Seminar, in the series which is being organized by the Institute with the aid of a grant from the Ford Foundation, was held at Lovanium University, Leopoldville, from 3 to 12 January 1960, under the chairmanship of Professor Daniel Biebuyck, head of the Anthropology Department of Lovanium University. It was attended by eighteen participants and eight observers—twenty from various territories in tropical Africa, three from the United States, and three from Europe.

The subject of the Seminar was ' Land rights and land use, with reference to the technical, economic, and administrative factors, and social effects under traditional and changing conditions in tropical Africa '.

The Seminar was opened by His Excellency the Governor General, who expressed the satisfaction of the Administration of the Belgian Congo not only that a Seminar on this important subject, which brought together specialists from so many areas, was being held, but also that it was providing an opportunity for specialists from other territories to learn something of the problems and studies involved in rural development in the Congo.

A series of sessions, each introduced by a participant in the Seminar, with special reference to the data and approaches presented in the series of papers which participants had contributed in advance, was held on the following topics: the variety of land-holding systems in their historical perspective; descent and residence as factors affecting the principles and form of African land-tenure systems; sociological factors affecting the character of land rights; the definition and analysis of rights of use and control of land; the relation of land tenure systems to political organization; economic factors involved in the determination of land rights; the character and effects of ritual and mystical values associated with land; the effects of the development of external markets on African agrarian systems; the effect of technical advances in modifying land rights; juridical and social consequences of development of private property in land; general juridical problems raised by the varying nature and content of African agrarian systems.

The papers contributed, together with an introductory survey summarizing the discussion on the various topics, will be prepared for publication, under the editorship of Professor Biebuyck, to provide a more widely available record of the work of this Seminar.

During the period of the meetings, the participants were welcomed at receptions given by the Governor General, by Monseigneur Gillon, Rector of Lovanium University, and by the British Consul General. Visits were arranged to some of the communes of Leopoldville to meet newly elected Burgomasters and their staffs, to the Service des Terres of the Administration, to a rural area of intensive market gardening on the outskirts of Leopoldville, and to the Musée de la Vie indigène. The Director of the Institute was invited to give a public address on the development of social and cultural research in tropical Africa at the University, which was attended by students, staff, and visitors from Leopoldville. A special showing of the film ' Lords of the Forest ' was also arranged.

It is hoped that the Third Seminar will be held at the end of this year or early in 1961 at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, under the chairmanship of Professor Clyde Mitchell. It will be concerned with the study of the role of religion in Africa past and present.