

Notes and News

International Seminar on Ethno-History in Africa

THE fourth of the Institute's series of International African Seminars, which have been organized with the aid of a grant made by the Ford Foundation, was held under the auspices of the University of Dakar in December last at the Ethnographical Museum of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire. The meetings were organized by M. R. Mauny, Director of the Section of Prehistoric Archaeology, IFAN, and Professor L. V. Thomas, Professor of Sociology in the University. Over fifteen specialist participants and a number of observers attended the ten days of the meetings. The former included research workers engaged in field studies in ethnography, archaeology, linguistics, and documentary research in Africa attached to various African universities and research institutes, together with others from institutions in Europe and America.

The discussions included sessions on the recovery and analysis of oral traditions and written documents, the use of linguistic evidence in studies of the development and inter-connexions among peoples, problems of dating and interpretation of cultural material from archaeological sites, methods of historical reconstruction concerning techniques, art forms, and changes in social organization. Further sessions were devoted to the consideration of wider problems concerning the pre-colonial history of various regions in Africa and finally of attitudes towards the study and understanding of various aspects of historical development in Africa among both scholars and the public.

The participants had prepared in advance a series of papers presenting significant aspects of their own researches and these provided a basis for the discussion of the topics considered.

Conclusions and recommendations of the seminar stressed the importance of drawing the attention of African governments to the urgency of collecting oral traditions. It was proposed that a register of all concerned with this field of study should be compiled and maintained, liaison being established through correspondents in Africa. The various African governments should be urged to encourage the provision of training and facilities for ethnographers and historians in this urgent field of study. It was recommended that African universities should be invited to include, if they did not already do so, the history of African peoples in their programme of higher education, and that universities outside Africa should give more prominence to the study of African history. In view of the limited facilities for exchange of information and delays in publication it was urged that scholars engaged in studies in African history should from time to time inform their colleagues of the scope and progress of their researches by means of multigraphed reports.

The papers presented to the Seminar, together with an introductory survey that will consider historical methods in African research and the analysis and interpretation of economic, political, and other aspects of African history as well as the position of the historian in modern Africa, are being prepared for early publication.

African Studies Association: Annual Meeting, 1961

THE Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association for 1961 was held in New York from 20 to 22 October. In addition to papers relating to the Congo, Ethiopia, South Africa, Portuguese Africa, the Central African Federation, French Africa, and Ghana, there were discussions on the following subjects: The role of American colleges and universities in