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COSMO PIETERSE:
NARRATOR

This week the two different disciplines of customary law on the one hand, and chemical engineering on the other. But our short reports on each of these fields pinpoint a common, necessary value required in serious academic work in the university world, in the "third world", in Africa. And that value is usefulness. A study of the practice of Customary Land Law in the Ghanaian Courts during the last 100 years need not be the arid, airy academic exercise it sounds to be; it can be aimed at futhering domestic justice: applied, it could lessen the difficulties of many homes. Nor need students of a new course in chemical engineering become mere "new" professionals: they could, after qualifying, contribute to national progress. But the reports speak for themselves. Within their differences. So, first to the University of Legon in Ghana where Dr. Gordon Woodman, is a lecturer in the Law Faculty. He has concluded initial, though extensive research into the use of Customary Land Law in the Ghanaian Courts. Our reporter at Legon, Christine Oppong, therefore, first asked Dr. Woodman what he had aimed at doing:

DR. WOODMAN:

I've tried to look at all the cases decided by the Courts, or most of them, in the past 100 years on the Customary Land Law. Tried to analyse them, and extract from them, the principals which the Courts seem to be following in deciding these cases, so as to give an indication of the principals which have been followed, and probably will be followed, in the near future, in deciding this type of case.

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Dr. Gordon Woodman on the aims and methods of recent research into Customary Land Law as applied in the Law Courts of Ghana. This research had dug chiefly in the records of court proceedings; only where certain types of cases had not been decided by the Courts, the works of sociologists were read as supplementary sources. Christine Oppong next asked Dr. Woodman about the changes revealed in Ghanaian Customary Land Law, by the survey of the last 100 years.

DR. WOODMAN:

There've been a great number of changes, and it would take a long time to list them all. It's interesting that Customary Law has shown itself very virile in adapting to the new conditions that have come about in Ghana, possibly one could mention one or two points. One finds that nowadays a great deal of property is held by individuals, whereas, in the past it would very often have been invested in groups, families, stools and corporate persons like that. This has required a number of adaptations in the Customary Law. For example, it's been necessary to develop, virtually from scratch, an entire system of inheritance, inheritance of private property that is. Because in the old days when property was held mainly by families, there was no problem of the owner dying. Nowadays when property is held by individuals it's necessary to have a law of inheritance to decide what happens to the property when he dies. And the Customary Law has developed and adapted and found principals to meet this type of problem.

Then again, there are now devices like written documents. In the old system of Customary Law writing was not known and was not made use of. Nowadays documents are used, people are used to using them, even in Customary Law situations, and Customary Law has adapted to formulate rules as to when documents should be used, what their significance is, who should execute them, and so on.

CHRISTINE OPPONG: To what kinds of practical use might your work be put?

DR. WOODMAN:

I hope that it may be of some use, firstly, to the legal profession in indicating to members of the profession what are the principals which the Courts have followed so far. A Lawyer for example, who is advising a client whether to go to Court or not, needs to be able to tell him what the probable decision will be, and if one knows what decisions have been given in the past, then that may be of assistance.

Then on a wider basis, I think the work might be made use of by those who are interested in evaluating the law as applied in the Courts, and possibly in changing it. If, for example, the Legislator decides that the system of land-tenure may be in need of reform, then it would be useful to know as a starting point, what are the principles enforced by the Courts now, before setting out to change them.

CHRISTINE OPPONG:

What are some of the kinds of reforms you envisage might occur in the near future?

DR. WOODMAN:

It's very difficult to predict what changes the Legislator might decide to make. There are various policies, many of them conflicting, struggling for acceptance, I think: the preservation of Chieftancy, the reduction in the influence of the Chief's, changes in the system of inheritance, and suchlike. I think that if the development is left to the Courts one can see certain lines of evolution which will probably be continued. For example, the Courts over the past ten years have started to work out principles which will provide for the maintenance of widows and children when the husband or father dies leaving property. This has just started to develop, and one could anticipate that if the Courts are left to develop this, they would develop it along certain lines. But what the Legislator would decide to do I don't know, this is more a matter of political choice, and it is difficult to anticipate.

CHRISTINE OPPONG: Would you like to say a little about the matrilineal system of inheritance current amongst a large part of the Ghanaian population which would show how important your last comment was about the status of widows and orphans.

DR. WOODMAN: The Courts have established, and they follow this principal quite clearly, I don't think there is much chance of them departing from the principle in theory, that among the Akan peoples, and perhaps certain others, when a person dies his property is inherited by his matrilineal family - a group consisting of matrilineal relatives. This was the traditional system in the Courts that accepted it, and they continue to apply it today. This means of course, in the case of a man, his children and his wives do not belong to the group that initially inherits. But I understand that this has come under a lot of criticism and the desirability of it has been hotly debated over the past few decades. It's in this connection, I think, that this development by the Courts is particularly interesting. The Courts are now saying that the matrilineal family must use this property to look after the widow or widows and children of the deceased man. If this develops much further then a situation may be reached where the entire property is being used for the benefit of the widows and children. So by a rather round-about way, the system of matrilineal inheritance would have been quite radically altered to be a different type of inheritance.

COSMO PIETERSE: Dr. Gordon Woodman, Lecturer in Law at Legon, Ghana, talking to Christine Oppong. And a tangible result of Dr. Woodman's research is a book, which he hopes will be published during this year.

Next, on to Ife, in Nigeria. Recently we reported on a relatively young department at Ife University, the Department of Chemical Engineering. Senior Lecturer in the department, Dr. Bayo Sanni, now speaks to our

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reporter in Ife, Akin Euba, about some more aspects of this new venture which started in 1968.

The course in Chemical Engineering at Ife lasts for four years. In its initial year, the course had taken eighteen students, all of whom have proceeded to the second year. Dr. Sanni himself has described the state of industry in Nigeria as unfortunately weak. Much industrial produce has to be imported. This background of industrial under-development prompted Akin Euba's next question to Dr. Sanni.

AKIN EUBA:

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria recently announced a four year development plan, which includes projects for a chemical industry, an iron and steel industry and a fertiliser industry. Why are these industries of major importance to Nigeria at this time?

DR. SANNI:

One can start first by talking about the iron and steel industry. Iron and steel industry, in fact, forms the back-bone of the economic progress of any country, because no matter what you want to do, you need steel. This is, in fact, why we were in trouble during the last Civil War, because we had to import all the things we needed, all the machinery we needed had to be imported. Because we haven't got an iron and steel industry we cannot manufacture anything in this country. If we want to manufacture automobiles or cars, we have to import the parts before we can manufacture them, but if we could get this steel made in Nigeria we could make so many things.

There have been arguments that maybe we haven't got the marketing in Nigeria now for an iron and steel industry, because iron and steel industry is a very very heavy industry, it requires a large sum of money, and also, you cannot have a small iron and steel industry. Most iron and steel industries are very big and, therefore, you have to have a market for it. What I would say for this, is that there are so many countries in Africa,

DR. SANNI:
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our neighbouring countries in West Africa that haven't got an iron and steel industry, they import the steel and we think that we would be able to manufacture it here in Nigeria and be able to then send it abroad.

Then the next one is the fertiliser industry. Nigeria is an agricultural country; the type of agriculture our fore fathers have been doing is not competitive enough, ~~it is not economical enough,~~ we have to do the modern agriculture, and to do this we need fertilisers. We are very lucky in Africa, our lands are fertile, but with time we will probably find this land will be no longer fertile. What we'll have to do is to use fertiliser and, therefore, in fact, the fertiliser industry as far as I am concerned, should be the first priority in this country.

Apart from the fertiliser industry there are other industries that would be an off-shoot of this fertiliser industry. So once you start a fertiliser industry you have other small industries which would come in and, in fact, would be the start of the industrialisation of this country.

AKIN EUBA:

What can Ife do to contribute to the realization of Nigeria's four year development plan?

DR. SANNI:

Ife can do a lot and, in fact, has started doing a lot. It is the first time in the history of Nigeria where the university starts thinking about the local people; start thinking of what would be the usefulness of our education; start thinking of the society as a whole when they are actually preparing a curriculum. I think this is the first time it has ever happened in this country. In fact, at Ife now, in the Faculty of Technology, which has just been set up, we are thinking of starting to manufacture certain things like, canning our tomatoes, fruit juice and, in fact, having some plants here in the university, whereby, we can encourage local people to come in and test whatever things they

DR SANNI:
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have to test so that, in fact, this will help them to start very small businesses here and there. This is the way we are helping the four year plan - called the four year development plan - which is for the whole society, and this is apart from just increasing the capacity to earn. Apart from that what we want to increase in the country is the education and we think the University of Ife is serving this. The position of the University of Ife, where it is situated, is a very good place because we are really right in the rural arwa, and we have been able to go right into ^{the} rural area whereby we can actually talk to the people, tell them of the things we find in our research, in the Faculty of Technology, and probably put this to use immediately. We feel that whatever we do here in the Faculty of Technology should be related to our society.

COMSO PIETERSE:..

Dr. Bayo Sanni on the relationship between the university and the local population, and the need for a relatedness between a technology and the society it should serve. And finally, in the connection, Akin Euba asked Dr. Sanni about one of the Department of Chemical Engineering research projects. Research in the field of natural gas - why are they doing it?

DR. SANNI;

So far we are only planning this because this is a very young department, it is only two years old, we have very few members of staff. We have been thinking about this, we know we have gas now in the country, in fact, a million cubic feet is being burnt, and we just thought, that rather than waste this we might be able to get chemicals out of it. I mean this is nothing new related to the modern world. So we don't see why we can't do this in the country. But right now we thought that when we get more staff in the department we might be able to develop research in this field, and we know, in fact, it will work, we know we can get support for it, and we know that the University of Ife is very interested in this too. The university staff are very enthusiastic

DR. SANNI:
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about this and we hope that when we have more staff we will start on this field.

AKIN EUBA:

Can you tell me what kind of chemicals might be useful to the country you hope to get from natural gas, or aren't you able to say this at this stage?

DR. SANNI:

Oh well, this is well know, ethylene, propylene, in fact, these things are things that we import in the country and, apart from using them as chemicals, as they are, in fact, it is known that most of the things, things like nylon and coal, this is where they come from. This is not a direct thing you get the gas, and then make nylon. But when you get the gas you make a product out of it and you use this to make nylon. Even from natural gas there are some countries, developed countries, where you in fact get protein out of it. And knowing that Africa is deficient in protein, if we can use this, it would be very very useful to us.

There is one point though I would like to make; to start on this industry you need a lot of money and know-how, and this is where our chemical engineering department comes in. We need the chemical engineers when we develop this process, we need chemical engineers to run them, and we are, in fact, planning to do research at the same time, as getting the man-power ready, and this is really going to help the country.

COSMO PIETERSE:

Dr. Sanni of the Department of Chemical Engineering, Ife University to conclude this University Report. And so, from me, Cosmo Pieterse, without for once raising a single question, it's goodbye for now.