

The Birth of two Cultural Associations :

and

CAMSAC

- THE CAMEROON CULTURAL ASSOCIATION "
- THE CAMEROON CULTURAL SOCIETY "

The month of September is a milestone for all those who are interested in culture in this country, because it has witnessed within a week's interval, the birth of two Cultural Associations. Firstly, "The Cameroon Cultural Association" (A.C.C.), and secondly, "The Cameroon Cultural Society" (CAMSAC). The object of these two Associations is naturally the same but the manner by which their by-laws respectively define this object, enables us to mark a distinction in the concept which inspired the activities of the one and the other. For the A.C.C. by-laws stipulate : " It has been created a Cameroon Cultural Association whose aim is to promote the development of Cultural activities in Cameroon." For the CAMSAC, "The aim is to preserve, to develop and to diffuse the wealth of the national cultural heritage ; to awaken the conscience and the spirit of the public to the necessity to assert the African Cultural personality in its particular aspects of Cameroon Civilisation."

At first sight, the ACC's action seems more direct and practical, less speculative, and more popular. The aspect "Culture for the masses" and "Cultural popularisation" become clearer and more evident when we read the programme presented by these associations : film strips, intensive use of audiovisual material, creation of specialised education centres (literary, scientific, amateur photography, painters, sculptors, etc.) ; public libraries ; organised visits in car ; etc. The first film show organised by the association took place on Tuesday, 9th October, 1962 at the French Cultural Centre. It was a documented documentary film. The introductory account in English and in French was presented by Dr Bernard Fonlon. Prior to this, Mr. Foalem-Fotso, president of the Association recalled to the audience, the aims and activities of the ACC. The audience astonishingly great for an inaugural meeting was mostly made up of young men and women from the public which the association, in fact aims at. For we know that culture is not the monopoly of the privileged few, but of the masses and the general public. This is indeed true of our countries which have very limited means of reaching the public in the cultural field. The second Association, the CAMSAC seems at first sight more "intellectual".

The context of their aims recalled above is at the same time more structural and more general, that is to say it is not a purely Cameroon Association, precisely, the CAMSAC constitutes the Cameroon National Section of an international organization of world repute : "The Society of African Culture" (S.A.C.), whose national branches are found in the United States of America, in Ivory Coast, in Senegal, in Haiti, in Nigeria, in Ghana and in Kenya. The headquarters of the S.A.C. is in Paris and its activities are practically mixed up with those of the review "Presence Africaine" its organ. It can be seen from this, that the programme followed by the CAMSAC destined it to project the Cameroon culture outside our frontiers by organising the participation of our country to the different cultural manifestations of the black world (the Festival of African Art in Dakar in 1963). Inversely, it makes Cameroon more sensitive to the different shades of thought in the Negro African World. This Pan-Africanist trend will certainly not prevent the CAMSAC to participate in educational projects launched out for the Cameroon masses.

But whatever orientation is followed by these organizations, one thing is certain, and this is, there will be no duplication, no rivalry between them, since their spheres of action marvellously complete each other. In reality, in the present stage of development of our country, we do not have enough associations of this nature for mass education. After all, most of the members of the one are also found in the other. That is why Mr. Benjamin Matip, who is

CHRONIQUES

Secretary-General of the CAMSAC is at the same time Vice-President of the ACC, and why Dr. Fonlon who holds the office of Assistant Secretary-General of the CAMSAC, is also Vice-President of the ACC, etc. Besides, these two organizations are already collaborating in their own fields such as the present Cameroon Cultural Review or in public Cultural Occasions, such as conferences, expositions, theatre and cinema presentations, radio programmes, etc.

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