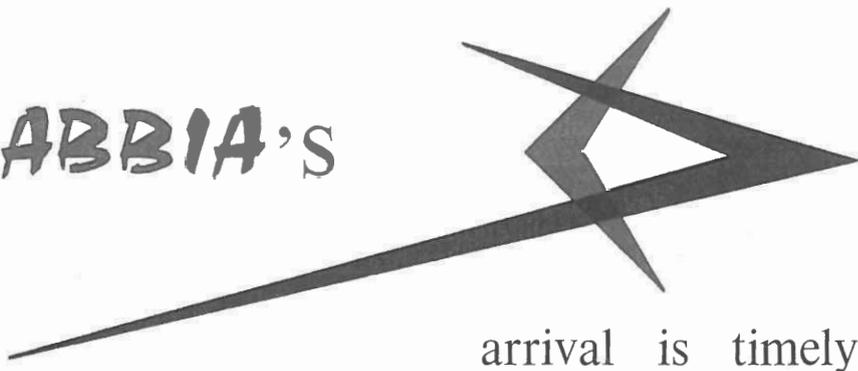


# ABBIA'S



arrival is timely

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by *The Hon. ETEKI-MBOUMOUA,*  
*Minister of National Education,*

Bernard Fonlon's article of introduction or presentation could have served as the only foreward to this review. In fact, he sets fort with unrelenting clarity the ambitions of *Abbia* and invests it with the noble mission of promoting the development of culture in Cameroon, of contributing to the Renaissance of Cameroon culture, to the Renaissance of African culture.

The Ministry of National Education, being responsible, by its very *raison d'être*, for culture, cannot remain indifferent to an initiative which intends to forge, for our times and for future generations, values of progress consonant with their *humanism* of life. What is more, the Ministry of National Education, not content with the role of a passive patron, wants to assume, to the full, its duty to be the active promoter of the cultural movement.

This appears to be the appropriate moment to affirm, with Roland Colin, that the State, especially in this period of change when Africa should discover anew and chart afresh her main course towards her destiny, that the State cannot assume its role of promoter of cultural dynamism unless those who enliven this cultural dynamism take it up with zest, as they would a primordial enterprise with the mission to effect a rebirth in themselves and in their people, an enterprise which should become cultural action committed to a purpose and not merely *art for art's sake* ; art for the sake of art is a motto with no meaning to an Africa, which must dedicate itself anew, in order to become itself.

Committed cultural action ? Let's be clear about it. My role here shall be to see to it that *Abbia*, or any other publication, for that matter, with a similar mission, does not degenerate, on the pretext of the freedom of cultural expression or on the pretext of commitment, into a platform for immoderate invective, or into a forum for propounding partisan points of view. There can be no culture worthy of the name without a progressive, serene, objective and consistent outlook.

Present-day language — not to speak of present-day preoccupations — appears to be crystallizing around an economic humanism which reduces the phenomenon of development to the acquisition of better social well-being by the use of technical progress. The words *development* and *planning* have become *leitmotive* for all sorts of adventure.

Seen from this point of view, culture appears to be needless and those who champion its cause are regarded as whippersnappers.

As a matter of fact, human life is a sum-total of relations, of values, of forces which it would be arbitrary and sterile to isolate, for study, into fragments of human activity, or into extremely incomplete episodes of its evolution. Saying this is affirming that it is necessary to link the cultural phenomenon closely with the period of development, to link it even with every phase of the entire process of development. It is imperative never to forget for once that the stream of economic and social evolution should ever coincide with that of the values of civilisation.

Integrated culture, therefore, committed culture as well. But which culture ?

It shall be the task of *Abbia* to extract an original substance from "the zone of heterogeneous acculturation between two cultures, the imported culture serving as the vehicle of technical progress, and the indigenous culture remaining quasi-stationary in the best of cases".

The civilisation of tomorrow, as President Senghor delights in saying, shall be a hybrid civilisation. Granted. But hybridness presupposes dualism ; and in the case of our culture, is it not greatly to be feared that the indigenous element, remaining unregenerated, and overpowered by the pull of a superior imported culture strong in its dynamism, might yield place gradually, inexorably, to foreign cultural values destructive of original civilisations ? In other words, *Abbia* shall strive to preserve the factors native to Cameroon and African culture, to give them a life of their own in the new technical, modernist order.

Let us agree with Roland Colin that "it is ineluctable for cultures to become hybrid, but this should not mean a mere interception of one diverted cultural current by another. The evolution shall remain wholesome to the degree in which a creative original tide shall persist in spite of its blending with later tributaries ; shall remain wholesome to the extent in which this mainstream shall continue to draw inspiration from the values of its parent fountainhead".

In cultural evolution, there is need to pass from the absolute into History while not relinquishing the absolute.

*Abbia* therefore shall have for first duty to put the essential traditional values in evidence, to promote knowledge of them and to restore them to their position of privilege ; it will then have as its next duty to help to

integrate these values smoothly into the new structures with a view to achieving, in the end, that synthesis, that symbiosis, which, far from being a cultural estrangement, is a rich restitution of dignity.

In this phase of our political evolution, the elite of the underprivileged world, the numerous Cameroon elite especially, should see to it that decolonisation, in terms of culture, should become a positive achievement. In this way, the African civilisation, *the civilisation of the spoken word, the civilisation of embodied expression*, will be in a position to convey, by the use of its *symbolism*, a message to modern civilisation, a civilisation which is disintegrating under the threat of a situation in which men, becoming more and more like robots, are being increasingly despoiled of their personality.

The present period is, and should be, for us, Africans, as meaningful as, or should I say, more intense than, the Renaissance in Europe.

*Abbia* has arrived in time to enliven this Renaissance.

Side by side with organizations already created, or about to be, for purposes of research, like the Federal Cultural and Linguistic Centre, side by side with organizations whose purpose is cultural action, like CAMSAC (the Cameroon section of the Society of African Culture) and C. C. A. (the Cameroon Cultural Association), *Abbia* has a role of first importance to play, namely, to salvage Negro-african cultural values, to propagate them, to blaze a trail for them onto the problems of great civilisations, to contribute to the humanist work of the creation "of a civilisation of the Universal which is the common patrimony of Men".

*Abbia* owes it to itself, to justify its name, that is, to win the wager, by fulfilling its sublime mission.



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