UNESCO ACTIVITIES RELATED TO FOLKLORE

Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo

(Continued from the last issue)

Fellowships

In 1951, UNESCO offered to member states the possibility of requesting fellowships for research in the field of folk music. Canada was the only country interested, and Mrs. Margaret McTaggart was awarded a fellowship to travel in the United States and the United Kingdom; she studied and recorded, for the National Museum of Canada, Indian music and English songs.

In 1956, one of the composers who received the UNESCO fellowship for creative artists — Mr. Rolf Looser, of Switzerland — traveled in the Balkan countries and the Middle East for comparative studies of folk music. Mr. Looser recorded many valuable documents.

In a general way, fellows of UNESCO, or its experts on mission, have shown interest in folklore by undertaking, on their own initiative, independent research, and by calling the attention of the Secretariat to existing problems or to unexplored treasures in that field.

Activities on the National Level

Through what is called the Participation Programme, the UNESCO Secretariat is authorized to assist member states, at their request, in the setting up of certain projects. Investigation and preservation of artistic and musical traditions is one of the items to which the Participation Programme can be extended in 1961 and 1962, and several countries have already asked for financial assistance in order to buy equipment, to receive experts, or to send their students out to be trained in methods of folklore research. Morocco, for instance, will undertake, within the framework of this Programme, a project designed to collect and to preserve the ancient traditions of Andalusian music still alive in that country.

Some of the National Commissions of UNESCO, on the other hand, considered that activities in the field of folklore were worthy of their endeavors; assisted or not by UNESCO, they undertook programs in which folklore had a role to play. The activities in this field of the Brazilian Commission, the so-called Brazilian Institute for Education, Science, and Culture, must be emphasized; the Institute created a National Folklore Commission that, among other undertakings, promoted various National Congresses and the important International Congress, held in São Paulo from August 16 to 22, 1954. For that Congress, the UNESCO Secretariat prepared two Reports: UNESCO and International Co-operation in the Field of Folklore, and Traditional Culture and Fundamental Education.

The Spanish National Commission gives its patronage to the Round Table organized each year at Valencia by the Spanish Committee on Educational and Cultural Films (CIDALC). That of 1961, held from January 25 to 27, was devoted to the art film in the preservation and development of folk art and music. UNESCO contributed with a Report commissioned to Andrés Martín.

The activities reported on in this article do not include those more immediately relating to other kindred subjects but still keeping undeniable connections with folklore. The project concerning the maintenance and evolution of traditional cultures, in which the Madras (India) Institute of Traditional Cultures is participating, or the work of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and the International Sociological Association exemplify this type of project. So does the publication, by UNESCO, in the series Documentation in Social Sciences, of an International Bibliography of Sociology and an International Bibliography of Social and Cultural Anthropology in which folklore has a large place. Dictionaries of general social terms in English, French, and Spanish are being prepared under the auspices of UNESCO; some items belonging to the vocabulary of folklore will appear in those dictionaries, whose principal editors are Professor Kolb (U.S.A.) and Professor Roger Bastide (France).

As we have seen, partially on its own initiative, but to a larger extent through the intermediary of specialized international organizations, or the national bodies associated with its National Commissions, UNESCO has made a contribution towards the improvement of co-operation among folklore specialists and towards comparative research related to that branch of the humanistic studies. That contribution is certainly significant, although it is not so extensive as some of our colleagues would like it to be.

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