

GHANA ACCLAIMS QUEEN AND DUKE.

All doubts in Ghana were at an end; the Queen's visit was going to take place. From near and far, Ghanaians converged on the airport, hoping to be among the first to see the Royal lady of whom they had heard so much. Most of the tribal chiefs were there, and forty Paramount chiefs, with umbrellas to indicate, to the knowing, the degree of rank-importance. One apologetically explained that, as accommodation in Accra was limited, most of them had brought only one wife.

Drums accompanied the arrival of the aircraft. President and Mrs. Nkrumah arrived, with members of the government and other persons of importance. And what a majestic sight, when the giant Boeing taxied in.

No detail was omitted that stamped this as the most memorable occasion in the history of the airport. H.M. and the Duke of Edinburgh were here at last; 55 minutes late, indeed, but that was owing to the fog-postponed take-off at the London end.

As the Queen was escorted by the President, the Duke walked with Mrs. Fatiah Nkrumah, the Egyptian-born lady whom the President married four years ago. The Osagyefo, as Nkrumah loves to be called (the word means Reedemer) presented the Chiefs and others of note. Their obvious pleasure showed how keen the disappointment would have been if Her Majesty had not come to Ghana. It all seemed to illustrate the mystique of the Monarchy; for while Ghana insists on being a republic and makes it clear to the people that H.M. is not their Queen, all at the airport received her with as much enthusiasm as if she ruled over them by Divine right.

The Chiefs, and such followers as they allowed, made up a total of more than 3,000. Quite apart from the wives, already mentioned, some of them have more than fifty children. It's as well that most of them stayed at home.

When all the greetings and presentations were over the President and his guests began the six-mile drive to the Christiansborg Castle. The Duke rode with Madam Nkrumah. The route was lined by fully 350,000 people.

Next day there was a parade of the armed forces in the Queen's honour. Black Star Square cost the strained Ghanaian exchequer one million pounds to lay out, but the President needs such an arena when he addresses mass-meetings of his people. Hot for you, sir; what must it be for the visitors. But now all eyes were on the troops; British-trained and displaying that the highest military traditions were being followed in these days of independence. The army numbers 6,000; the national police 10,000. The pick of them lined up for inspection by the Queen and the President.

The Queen could well understand with what pride Nkrumah and his people look upon the army. Independent Ghana is a very young nation, only four years old. It was not proclaimed a republic until last year.

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This was a formal ceremony. On the following day came an informal one, the Surfboat Regatta, and the display of skill used in civil purposes. As Accra is without a harbour, ships have to anchor a mile out in the roads, and be loaded and unloaded by surfboat. Each has a helmsman and ten paddlers, and as they pack a ton and three-quarter of cargo, and the boat weighs 18 cwts, strength as well as skill is needed to fight the breakers. The regatta was seen by H.M. from a Mogul pavilion - a portable one, which will be much used during the tour. And here's that strength and skill we mentioned.

Naturally the people of Accra are very fond of the surfboats and the men who man them. Today they have one regret; when the huge artificial harbour at Tema (six miles away) is completed, the surfboats will be out of business. Perhaps that was one reason why the 1,000 men in the 115 boats taking part determined to put up a fine show. How well they earned their applause.

More of the real Ghana was seen at the Makola Market, an association of 80,000 members. Here the Queen met the people, indeed almost rubbed shoulders with them.

Every visitor to Accra wants to see the Mammies, the plump stallholders who realise that silence has no place in salesmanship. Anyway, it's all here; gay clothes, they have to be gay to sell in Ghana, spices, vegetables, and doubtless, detergents. Impossible here to be unaware of how warmhearted, vital, abounding with life, are the loveable people of Ghana.