

BO DURBAR
(FAREWELL TO AFRICA)

The Queen saw something of the essential Africa, of the past which is still a cherished memory, in the parade of the Chiefdoms in the Bo Durbar. To these gay folks Her Majesty was "Mrs. Queen", wearing to their great delight a tiara. For their part, they went all out to show that they were subjects worth any Monarch's having. Paramount Chief Hindowa heads the Badjia Chiefdom. He was carried in a hammock, as befits his rank.

Each Chiefdom has its own Devil; well camouflaged and nowadays always good for a laugh. In the past - and not so long ago at that, the devils were believed to have terrifying powers.

Fifteen Paramount chiefs made up the total of the Bo Region. An additional 36 represented other areas. The general effect was that in Sierra Leone everybody enjoys life; most of all perhaps, those devils. In costumes like that, how can they help it.

Pausing at the dais one Paramount chief advanced to pay his respects to the Queen - rather as one ruler to another. Then, a word with the Duke. Each chief was presented with a commemorative medallion.

In the years of Sierra Leone's independence the authority of the Paramount chiefs is no more than nominal; and the Devils have lost their terror. Most of Africa, while making a peaceful transition into the mid-twentieth century, is not forgetting the old way of life, as the Bo Durbar reminded everyone who saw it, or took part.

Boo!!

At Kenema the life of rural Sierra Leone was portrayed at the Royal Show, with particular stress upon activities of the Eastern Province. There was evidence here that the country is not one long round of Durbars; also that Western influence has pervaded even village life.

No stopping those young fellows is there? Yes, there is. They want to see Mrs. Queen, like all the rest. Note: family life isn't interrupted by the hair-do.

Up country the men love a gamble. They've got an exciting game of their own, better than a home-made Bingo session. The aim is to knock the other chap's top off the mat.

There seems to be an idea in this. Perhaps some enterprising manufacturer could market a version for selling in Britain.

BO DURBAR (2)

A bit too late for the Christmas trade, unfortunately. Something more serious: The Alluvial Diamond workings at Hangha. The export of diamonds is amongst the most valuable of Sierra Leone.

Some of the largest diamonds ever known have been found in Sierra Leone. Naturally, as an independent state, the country is doing everything possible to expand this industry.

Precious stones, as they are washed from the soil, now shown to the Queen, are of course considerably less precious than they will be when cut as either gems or industrial diamonds.

Elaborate machinery is quite unnecessary for many of the processes. The world outside is hungry for all the diamonds the country can produce. And as Sierra Leone is by no means a rich nation the government is determined to develop every possible asset.

Port Loko provided some light entertainment after that brief visit to the diamond workings. It took the form of traditional dancing, for which the people have an inherited love. Wherever the Queen has been in West Africa, such dances have been enthusiastically performed.

The Susu girls are an organisation formed to preserve the ancient customs of the country.

Back in Freetown, the capital, the Queen and the Duke attended a State Banquet in the gardens of the Paramount Hotel; another of the sharp contrasts, of which the West African tour has afforded so many. That distinguished statesman, the Prime Minister of Sierra Leone, Sir Milton Margai, made a gracious speech of thanks to Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh, remarking upon the value of their visit to his country and saying how much pleasure the Royal presence had given to all.

In reply the Queen thanked Sir Milton, and the people generally, for making the visit so very pleasant. She and the Duke wished well to Sierra Leone.

Next day Her Majesty and the Duke went to the Prime Minister's Lodge, where a garden party in the Queen's honour was given by Sir Milton Margai. This was almost the last chance for many people to see and speak to Her Majesty before the royal departure from the country.

BO DURBAR (3)

As so often during the Queen's reign the Duke of Edinburgh has given her invaluable support throughout the West African tour. Her Majesty herself, young in years but now much experienced in Commonwealth travel, added one more to the long list of unforgettable impressions she makes unfailingly on all her tours.

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