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**Ghana at Fifty: A Review of Ghana's Official History
through Postage Stamps**

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On March 6, 2007, Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, celebrated her 50th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule. Just as it was 50 years ago, the celebrations were not limited to Ghana; it was a landmark commemoration of Pan-African identity and a reiteration of African and African diaspora aspirations. The international dimensions of memorializing Ghana's independence has a lot to do with the fact that Ghana was the first colony south of the Sahara to gain independence, thereby providing hope to other colonized peoples. Above all, the electric and charismatic personality of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of Ghana's liberation struggle had enormous impact on students and other leaders of the African liberation struggles. The government in 1957 budgeted £600,000 for the celebrations. A number of memorabilia were made to commemorate the event, but the cluster of tiny yet potent commemorative postage stamps generated social and political commentary in Ghana and beyond. Thus, through the dynamics of postage stamps, one is able to uncover a very fascinating period in Ghana's modern history.

The British set up their first post office in the modern sense in the Gold Coast in 1853 at Cape Coast. Compulsory payment between the United Kingdom and the Gold Coast was introduced in March 1860, and by 1873 service was established in towns such as Elmina and Keta. The headquarters of the postal service was moved to Accra in 1877, following the transfer of the seat of the colonial administration to Accra; and the Gold Coast joined the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1879.¹ The first stamps issued by the British for the colony in 1875 depicted Queen Victoria in blue (1p), red violet (4p), and orange (6p) (Gold Coast; Scott 1-3; **fig. 1**). However, the last British issued stamps appeared from 1952 to 56 (Ghana -overprint; Scott. 5-13). These were; ½d, *Position Of Gold Coast*, which was from a sketch by the post office draughtsman of the map of West Africa showing Ghana; 1d, photograph of *Christianborg Castle*, the seat of government, taken by the West African Photographic Service; 1½d, *Emblem of the Joint Provincial Council*, drawn by B. A. Johnston of Axim representing a stool (traditional symbol of chief's office) and three state swords symbolic of the three provinces of Eastern, Western, and

¹ Edward B. Proud, *The Postal History of the Gold Coast*. Heathfield: Postal History Publication Co. 1995.

Central of the Gold Coast; 2d, *Talking Drums*, which was a sketch by B. A. Abban of the post office from a photograph by Moses M. A. Ziorkley of Accra; 2½d, *Northern Territory Mounted Constabulary*, a product of West Africa Photographic Service; 3d, *Manganese Mine* was a reproduction of the photograph of Nsuta mines by R. Gee; 4d, the sacred *Lake Bosomtwe* from a photograph of the West African Photographic Service. The rest were; 6d, *Cocoa Farmer*, came from the photograph by P. B. Redmayne, advertising manager of Messrs. Cadbury Bros. of Bournville, which he took of a farmer in Koforidua; 1sh, *Breaking Cocoa Pods*, was the reproduction of the sketch of C. K. L. Gomez of Tamale; the West African Frontier Force taking part in the annual ceremony of the Queen's birthday was represented in *Trooping The Colour*, 2sh, from a photograph by the West Africa Photographic Service; 5sh, *Surfboats* was also based on the photograph of P. B. Redmayne; and 10sh, *Forest*, was also from another photograph of Moses M. A. Ziorkley.² In sum, the above stamps represented geography, political and economic realities of the Gold Coast (**fig. 2**).

Modern Ghana issued its first stamp as an independent nation in 1957. The decision to commemorate Ghana's independence with postage stamps was beset with controversy. Critics of the Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, were vehemently opposed when it was announced in the *Daily Graphic*, (2/16/57) that:

All current issues of Gold Coast stamps will be withdrawn from circulation after the close of business on March 5, reliable sources disclosed. Special stamps of different denominations, commemorating the achievement of independence, will be issued on March 6. The commemorative issue will comprise stamps in 2d, 2½d, 4d, and 1s 3d denominations. There will be all together 22 millions of all four denominations. That is about four stamps for each member of Ghana's populations. Each will bear the head of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister of Ghana. A commemorative folder, containing a set of those four denominations will be on sale as from March 6 at 2s 6d each. The 2d stamp is red in colour, the 2½d green, the 4d brown, and the 1s 3d blue. They are intended to be in circulation for at least one year. Then, it is likely that new stamps will

² "An Issue is Born", *Gibbon's Stamp Monthly* (October 1956): 15-18 and (November 1956): 27-29.

be issued. With the commemorative stamps will be issued six millions of what is termed “overprinted stamps” of various denominations. The word “Gold Coast” will remain on stamps in this issue. Over each of them will be printed the words “Ghana Independence March 6, 1957.” And the denominations in this batch are ½d, 1d, 1½d, 3d, 6d, 1/-, 2/-, and 10/-. The purpose is to let “Gold Coast”, the present name of the country, linger in people’s minds for a while. Thousands of airletter forms have also been “overprinted” in a similar manner.

The first person to react against the independence commemorative issue was Dr. K. A. Busia, the leader of the main opposition party, the National Liberation Movement (NLM). In a protest cablegram to the Colonial Secretary, copied to the Prime Minister, Dr. Busia argued that his party and other opposition parties in parliament were opposed to the stamps because it was the “first of its kind in the British Commonwealth and the first step towards dictatorship” besides they also thought it was disrespectful to the Queen who was still the head of state of independent Ghana. It was a “breach of faith”; he insisted, for Dr. Nkrumah, who had acknowledged Her Majesty as Head of Independent Ghana in the United Kingdom White Paper (*Daily Graphic*, 2/21/57). It is ironic that the opposition party of a newly independent country preferred the image of their colonial oppressors. The opposition’s disdain for Dr. Nkrumah’s party, the Convention People’s Party (CPP), and its achievements at independence was further illustrated by how the NLM displayed the new tricolor (red, gold, and green) Ghana flag. In NLM strongholds, the flag was flown upside down; green on top; and in CPP regions, it was flown the right way, with red on top.

The opposition parties’ fears were further exacerbated when it was rumored that the new currency for Ghana would have the image and superscription of Dr. Nkrumah. The NLM authored a bill in parliament that declared that Queen Elizabeth was the Queen of Ghana. Dr. Nkrumah’s government initially denied the allegations; however, he responded to his critics on the removal of the Queen’s head from Ghana’s currency in an article in the London newspaper, the *Daily Sketch*. While acknowledging that the opposition was calling him a pocket dictator for the plans to remove the Queen’s head from the currency,

to place his image on the postage stamps, to erect his statue in Accra, and to move into the castle, the seat of government for the Queen's representative, he wanted the Queen and the British people to know that his cabinet had made all these decisions because many Ghanaians were illiterate. They had to be shown through signs that they were really independent. When the ordinary Ghanaians bought stamps, they would see his picture – an African like themselves – and they would say: “Look here is our leader on the stamps. We are truly a free people!” He was sure the Queen would understand that many of his people still did not believe that they were truly independent. Some of them even expected the Queen to come and crown him (*Daily Graphic*, 6/21/57).

The NLM accused Dr. Nkrumah of insulting the intelligence of the people of Ghana as if they were animals to be spoken to through signs by claiming that they would not understand independence unless his portrait was put on stamps and coins. Likewise, the Northern People's Party (NPP) described the government's moves as dictatorial and would resist them to the bitter end. The Ga People's Association (Ga Shifimo Kpee) in their protest statement pointed out that, besides the insult to Ghanaians, Dr. Nkrumah had conducted his seven-year political campaign for independence not by signs but in English. An opposition motion in parliament demanding that the decision about placing Nkrumah's image on the coins not be implemented until the people were consulted in a referendum was defeated. Nonetheless, the relentless antagonism to placing Nkrumah on the currency had prevented the government from issuing the new currency until 1965. Naturally, the new currency with Nkrumah's image was commemorated in postage stamps (Ghana, Scott 212-226; **fig. 3**).

Ghana's independence stamps (Ghana, Scott 1-4; **fig. 4**) were designed by Kofi Antubam (1922-64). He was one of the most prolific and politically conscious artists of his time. A precocious artist, he painted and sculpted as a child and gained formal training when his work was observed by missionaries and government officials. Governor Gordon Guggisberg of the Gold Coast (1919-27) discovered his work when he visited Kofi Antubam's school and was introduced by the principal. To test his skills, the governor requested that Kofi Antubam sculpt his bust in clay, a project he duly executed to the

admiration of everyone. This achievement secured a scholarship for Kofi Antubam to attend Achimota College, the premier higher education institution in the Gold Coast. He later obtained another merit based scholarship to be trained at Goldsmiths College in the UK, where he was exposed to international art circles through his contacts and exhibitions in Europe. Upon return to the Gold Coast, Kofi Antubam taught at various institutions but finally ended up at his alma mater, Achimota College.³

Kofi Antubam claimed that he was contacted as early as 1955 to design stamps for Ghana's independence but his ideas were not accepted until independence. The stamps (Ghana, Scott 1-4) depicted a map of Africa, the bust of Kwame Nkrumah, an African map with Ghana inset, and an eagle (referred to in Scott catalogue as a palm-nut vulture). Kofi Antubam claimed that the symbol of the eagle was from the inspirational words of his African teacher, Dr. Kweggir Aggrey of Achimota College, who inspired a generation of Africa leaders with the words; "African Eagle, lift thy wings and fly." His explanation of the symbolism of the eagle is best captured in this anti-colonial diatribe from his book, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture*:

"An irreparable blow is being struck on the very core of the unfounded established conceptions of the African having no right to own and exist in his own country as a free being, worthy of the title lord of his own land, where and when necessary. Yes; the eagle that was mistaken for a chicken, stolen into captivity, banged into a morbid pit of the fate of darkness, has woken up. Yes, accepting its lot in pious humility, it decided to fall asleep. And, it slept and slept. But as it happens, even in the pitch-darkness of the process of a deep sleep, natural growth does go on. So, the eagle's chicken-like beak, claws, and feathers grew bigger and stronger in its sleep. And, so woken up by the pinch of the shackles of captivity, and finding itself still in a pit of darkness even in the broad daylight of the twentieth century, it summoned courage to itself. And, snatching a torch of freedom from its master, it took its wings and flew, perhaps never to be caught

³ Vieta, K. T., *The Flagbearers of Ghana*, Ena Publications, Accra, 1999.

again. And now the slogan everywhere in Africa is either, “freedom,” “independent” or “self-government now.”⁴

The last sentence reflects the pan-Africanist ideas of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, ideals Kofi Antubam would propagated in his works. Postage stamps are probably his least known works. His diverse creations for Ghana include: the state chair (Ghana, Scott 300 A 74; **fig. 5**); interior carvings of the Parliament house; Ghana Mace (Ghana, Scott 288 A 74; **fig. 6**), murals, covers design of several books, etc. Other stamps that he designed were: UN Trusteeship (Ghana, Scott 70 A 20; **fig. 7**) and the Fertility stamp- Akuababere (Ghana, Scott 44 A 12; **fig. 8**), the latter happened to be his favorite stamp. Others he recommended or had been part of are Ghana, Scott 48 A 13a and 53 A 16a.

It is worth noting that Kofi Antubam did not have a catholic view of stamp design as most collectors and artists. Recognizing the fact that stamps are a “marvelous means of transmitting ideas to vast numbers of people, educating them” he insisted that ideas should be expressed through “symbolisms.” For him, art that is merely representative is vulgar because photographs would have been more appropriate. He also abhorred the depiction of animals and birds on stamps because such reproductions were not art and that stamps should remain “art.”⁵

Ghana’s independence from Britain provided business opportunities for many international companies, genuine and unscrupulous. One of the business companies that dealt with Ghana was owned by Manfred R. Lehmann (1922-97). He was born in Sweden and migrated to the United State in 1940, where he earned degrees from Harvard University, the University of Chicago, and John Hopkins. A passionate Zionist he was noted for his interest in biblical archaeology, and was a founding member of American Academic Alliance for Israel. He is credited with several scholarly publications and newspaper articles. He was also the director of the family’s international business, Lehman Trading Company which was involved in fishing, telecommunications, aviation,

⁴ Kofi Antubam, *Ghana’s Heritage of Culture* (Koehler & Amelang, Leipzig, 1963), 219.

⁵ Unclassified document, Ghana Post, Accra, Ghana (Apparently interview report was written by Manfred Lehmann during Kofi Antubam’s visit to the United States in 1962.

and philately, which had been founded in 1904 by his parents. According to his widow, Mrs. Sara Anne Lehmann, her husband had an acute understanding of international issues and had predicted the independence of the Gold Coast and the business opportunities that it would provide for their company.⁶ It was not surprising therefore, that Manfred Lehmann founded in 1957 the Ghana Philatelic Agency (GPA) in New York despite the fact that he had no prior experience in philately.

Competition for Ghana's philately business was fierce. It was fought between dealers as well as the media both in Ghana at the highest level of government, and in the US and UK. Before independence, Ghana (Gold Coast) stamps were distributed by Crown Agents in London and Washington D.C. To the surprise and chagrin of stamp dealers and collectors, the distribution of Ghana's stamps were entrusted to a new agency – Ghana Philatelic Agency (GPA) headed by Manfred Lehmann. It was predicted that Ghana stamps would rival in demand and profitability those of the new state of Israel and the United Nations. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's papers in the Ghana National Archives show that the main rival of Lehman for Ghana philatelic business was Jacques Minkus (APS Hall of Fame – the merchant prince of stamp collecting), who was represented by Marguerite Cartwright, a journalist and anthropologist, and an acquaintance of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. She wrote to Nkrumah complaining bitterly that she could not understand how Lehmann had obtained the contract for the sole distribution of Ghana's stamps. In her stern letter to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, she stated:

“I am writing this because I have never known you to betray my confidence, and I want you to get this information before it falls into the hands of your political enemies. The stamp matter, in my opinion, is serious. We explained to Gbedemah before independence how stamps could make good will and profit for the country. I had hoped he would place it in the hands of this guy Minkus, who had made millions for Israel (a harder job), and who was widely respected in stamp circles and in the U. S. Gov't. and I know that, because of his reputation, he would not dare to do anything too shady. I don't know how this guy Lehman managed the

⁶ Personal Communication with Mrs. Sara Anne Lehmann, 2/27/06.

unfortunate stamp deal, who he made it with in Ghana, how much kick-back was made or promised to whom, but I have been to the experts, and the advice is that you get out of it as fast as you can".⁷

To support her argument she included a copy of *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* editorial of January 13, 1958: "You Are Not Ghana Believe This!!!" Cartwright underlined sections of this publication and commented on them in such terms as "SHAMEFUL" and "IMPORTANT TO GHANA." Cartwright alleged further that Lehman had contacted Minkus to give him Ghana's philatelic business for a large sum of money because he could get the exclusive world agency rights, to which Minkus had responded, "Who are you?" She admitted that she got most of the information from Minkus; however, her own investigations supported Minkus' allegations that Lehmann was "unknown and distrusted."

This affair provides an insight into the business dealings of the newly independent country because Cartwright had other business proposals for Nkrumah. She wanted to recommend a public relations firm to handle Ghana's affairs in the US but she was equally aware that it was a job other people were "battling to get." To show that she had connections in high places, she included a letter she had received from Vice President Nixon regarding the Sudan.

In an editorial in *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* (1/3/58), George W. Linn condemned the agreement between Lehmann and the Ghana government in the strongest possible terms: "It is an unethical arrangement that should be condemned. The hobby of stamp collecting should be kept clean. When it becomes a racket it is time to protest and no dealer can afford to become part of such a racket." Linn attacked the arrangement whereby GPA bought stamps from the Ghana government at 25% discount below face value in addition to being credited with 25% of the face value of stamps sold overseas by the government. Linn was equally concerned about the advisory role of GPA on the design and quantity of Ghana stamps that were issued. A case in point was the Black Star Line (Ghana, Scott 14

⁷ Letter from Marguerite Cartwright to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana National Archives, SC/BAA/162)

A2; **fig. 9**)⁸ issue, which Linn alleged was highly influenced by Lehmann and was printed by E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. of Philadelphia, a company stamp collectors wished had never printed stamps. Besides it was the first time that a Commonwealth country printed stamps in the United States. Finally, the editorial surmised that if the issues were limited and the plates and remainders were destroyed when an issue was withdrawn then Ghana stamps could turn out to be a good investment.

The Ghana Philatelic Agency responded to the allegations. Manfred Lehmann had been shown the editorial by one of the editors of *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* before it was published, but he was not allowed to write his response until the January 27, 1958 issue of the newspaper. He enumerated some of the difficulties faced by a young nation like Ghana in satisfying the demands of the philatelic community, and it was in response to the initial chaos and confusion that the government of Ghana “decided that its philatelic matters should be handled by an organization run in a businesslike, alert manner, placed in the center of the philatelic trade.” He admitted that he was not a stamp dealer and had no “axe to grind” with anyone. While denying most of the allegations, he stated categorically that “Our job is to collect philatelic suggestions and recommendations and pass them on to the Ministry, as well as to serve the stamp dealers around the world with efficient, economical and fast service.” While stating his business and academic credentials, Lehmann reassured the stamp community that the number of stamps announced would not be exceeded, the plates would be destroyed and official destruction certificates issued, and that the announced withdrawal dates would be kept.

Article 2 of the agreement between Ghana and GPA stipulated that “The AGENT (GPA) shall have the right to publicize his agency, the right to advertise the sale of Ghanaian stamps, and the right to organize exhibitions and similar expositions of stamps in any manner subject to the prior approval of the PRINCIPAL.” Subsequently, the peculiar position of the Ghana Philatelic Agency in the stamp community made news about

⁸ Mrs. Lehmann claims that her late husband was instrumental in putting together the Black Star Shipping Line deal for Ghana because he was friends with the Norwegian representative at the UN who arranged for the ships and his connections with Israeli financiers who bankrolled the deal (Personal Communication, 2/7/06).

Ghana stamps one of the hottest items in some of the major philatelic newspapers: *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, *Mekeel's Weekly*, *Western Stamp Collector*, *The American Philatelist*, etc. New issues such as the Black Star Shipping Line and All Africa Peoples's Conferences were copiously advertised in the philatelic newspapers. These stamps were described in detail, the date and quantity, as well as the date of withdrawal were given. The extent of the advertisements and of the promotion of Ghana stamps led some philatelic experts to warn collectors and dealers to be leery of the hype. David Torres, writing in *The American Philatelist* (August 1959, vol. 72, No. 11), reminded philatelists on the earlier cautionary words of reputable British philatelists on Ghana stamps because the extreme publicity was "just another speculative maneuver designed to empty their billfolds with its 'gaudy stickers' for which there was no legitimate postal need." Apparently, the name of Ghana appeared at least fifteen times in the June 6, 1959, issue of a leading American philatelic paper. Lehmann had connections with many of the editors and writers for philatelic papers. A case in point occurred during the first anniversary celebration of Ghana independence in New York on March 6, 1958. Lehmann invited Henry Goodkind, the editor of the *Collectors Club* publications (who chaired of the function), Ernest A. Kehr, philatelic editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* feature contributors Frank and Walter A. Warner, and editor Carl P. Rueth among others.⁹

In spite of this network of philatelic reporters, the GPA was embarrassed when stamps were not withdrawn as scheduled and spurious explanations had to be provided. A case in point was the non-withdrawal of the remainder of the independence issues. The opposition party (NLM) in Ghana was the first to protest. It claimed that parliament had agreed that the stamps were to be withdrawn three months after independence; however, as of June, they were still in circulation. Mr. Krobo Edusei, the Minister of Communication responded that £167,620 worth of stamps were originally printed with the intention that they would be in circulation for twelve months, but at the end of the three months; £105,000 worth of stamps were left and he was not going to withdraw them from circulation because he did not wish to "burn £105,000 of public funds." The non-

⁹ "Ghana First Anniversary Observed In New York" *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, (March 24, 1958): 8.

reproduction of stamps after withdrawal had been another key issue raised by Linn's editorial. To meet this requirement, the GPA made public the destruction of Ghana plates in the newspapers. Thus, of all the countries in the world only Ghana was featured in the philatelic papers with reports and photographs of the destruction of plates and the signing of the certificates of destruction. The names of witnesses and representatives were duly listed to erase any lingering doubts. Despite the assurances, *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* continued to receive complaints, and the editor was obliged to issue a blunt statement in his editorial of February 16, 1958: "If You Don't Like It, Leave It." He castigated dealers and collectors for the predicament because they knew that the agencies were "boosting" the new countries, and collectors and dealers should "quit bellyaching" and collect something else.

In fulfilling its mission, the GPA in addition to the newspaper announcements, produced the *Information Bulletin* on Ghana, which was distributed all over the USA. The bulletin contained general information on the country as well as philatelic news. It discussed the history of Ghana, its peoples, resources, art and culture, development projects undertaken by the new government, etc. Obviously, philately dominated the news. It was also evident that Ghana Philatelic Agency (GPA) was a family business. Photographs of Manfred, his wife Anne, and son James performing various philatelic duties were displayed in the bulletins. Any visits to Ghana Philatelic Agency by Ministers from Ghana or the Ghana mission in New York or Washington, DC were eagerly documented either in the bulletin or the philatelic newspapers. To demonstrate his connections in high places and legitimize his position, Manfred or Anne presented Ghana new issues and first day covers to Vice President Nixon, General James H. Doolittle, the United Nations, etc.

Perhaps, Ghana Philatelic Agency's crowning public relations coup was achieved during Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's official visit in 1958 to the United States (Ghana, Scott 28-31 A1; **fig. 10**) at the invitation of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Dr. Nkrumah presented President Eisenhower with a special album containing blocks of four of the recent Ghana Airways series and the set of four stamps overprinted to commemorate his visit to the United States and Canada. Manfred Lehmann also arranged for Dr. Nkrumah to visit on

July 26, 1958 the National Philatelic Museum in Philadelphia, where he mounted a Ghana exhibit of Gold Coast and Ghana stamps, covers, photographs, and handicrafts (*Western Stamp Collector*, 8/30/58 and *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* 8/11/58). *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* reporter Ernest A. Kehr referred to the event as "fifteen minutes of bedlam, pandemonium and turmoil." Originally, the plan was to have a reception for 150 people in the museum at 4:00pm but by 3:00pm the police had to block the streets for several blocks as the crowd was estimated to be between 15 and 20,000. Kehr reported the presence of "local Masonic lodge members in silk toppers, church groups, Negroes in West African costumes, bands and even "Philadelphia Negro Muslims." *The Philadelphia Enquirer* (7/27/58) reported that as "the party [then] moved to the National Philatelic Museum at 2043 N. Broad St., where Dr. Nkrumah opened an exhibit on Ghana postage stamps. It was here that he was given an ear-splitting reception from more than 6,000 well-wishers who blocked traffic on Broad St. and Diamond St. where they clamored to get close to the Prime Minister."

It was a befitting recognition for Dr. Nkrumah whose visit was viewed as the homecoming of a "favorite son". Dr. Nkrumah obtained his higher degrees from Lincoln University and the University of Philadelphia. *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* reported that several stamp dealers did brisk business, even though no facilities had been provided, selling Ghana stamps and covers from satchels. In a record 23 minutes, one dealer completely sold all his stamps and covers. Dr. Nkrumah's personal interest in postage stamps never waned; however, it is amazing that Ghana Post Office never seemed to meet the stamp requirements of the Prime Minister and he continuously requested commemoratives and covers directly from GPA. Letters demonstrate that at times Lehmann had to purchase past issues on the open market to send to Dr. Nkrumah, who regularly wrote back to express his appreciation.

Based on its success with Ghana stamps, GPA subsequently represented other independent African countries, starting with Togo, etc. As GPA did business with more African countries, Ghana noticed a reduction in its philatelic sales and concluded that GPA had spread itself too thin and did not concentrate anymore on Ghana's stamps and

covers. There were several unsuccessful attempts to abrogate the contract with the GPA. The GPA is now called Inter-Governmental Philatelic Cooperation. Mr. Lehmann sold the company to Mr. Sam Malamud in 1969. In spite of minor revision in the contract and disagreements from time to time GPA/IGPC continues to represent Ghana's philatelic interests and many African countries till today.

Under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's CPP government, Ghana post featured prominently the party's economic, social, and international programs. Stamps issued depicted Ghana Airways, Black Star Shipping Line, Tema Harbour and township, panAfrican programs such as All African People's Conference, African Freedom Day, Organization of African Unity, West African Football Union, and United Nations projects, etc. When Dr. Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup in 1966, the National Liberation Council military regime which ruled Ghana from 1966-1969 issued pertinent stamps to mark their first anniversary in power (Scott 273 A 72; **fig. 11**), but the second anniversary was commemorated with a stamp depicting a military convoy victory parade (Scott, 319 A 81; **fig. 12**) and a portrait of the assassinated coup leader, Lt. Gen. E. K. Kotoka (Scott, 327 A 83; **fig. 13**). Before handing over to a civilian regime, Dr. Nkrumah's foes will honor his political nemesis Dr. J. B. Danquah in an International Human Rights Year issue alongside with Dr. Martin Luther King in 1969 (Scott, 348 A 88; **fig. 14**). The transition to civilian (Progress Party – Dr. Busia) rule was marked by stamps of soldiers and Dr. Busia, the opening of parliament house, a quote from Dr. Busia and a symbol of unity (Scott, 398 – 401 A 960; **fig. 15**). Dr. Busia's government had a short lifespan; he was overthrown by Gen. Kutu Acheampong in 1972. This government was not known for significant philatelic issues but some of its landmark programs to be immortalized in stamps were when Ghana "Drives Right" and "Goes Metric" (**fig. 16**). There are documents at the Ghana post archives that show that Gen. Acheampong's government had plans to issue a gold leaf commemorative of the general and another on the unpopular UNIGOV but events had overtaken him as he was overthrown in a palace coup. The next military regime in 1979 (June 4-September 24), Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), did not live any philatelic imprint. However, when they handed over to the new civilian government of Peoples National Party (PNP) with links

to Nkrumah's Conventional Peoples Party (CPP), in a conciliatory move, they chose to honor all national heroes in a 1980 series – John Mensah Sabah, J. B. Danquah, J. E. K. Aggrey, Kwame Nkrumah, and G. E. Grant (**fig. 17**). The Peoples National Party government suffered the same fate as previous civilian governments and would therefore be replaced by the Peoples National Defense Council (PNDC) of Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings on December 31, 1981. He later transformed himself to a civilian ruler in 1992 under the National Democratic Congress (NDC). During the two decades of PNDC/NDC government, stamps were issued on a variety of topics; flora and fauna, sports, religion, arts and culture, international personalities, in solidarity of freedom struggle in Namibia and South Africa, etc. It was also a period that saw the introduction of Disney characters (Mickey and Friends, Pocahontas, etc.) and stars (Sylvester Stallone, Lucille Ball, Elvis Presley, etc.).

Sycophancy in the public sphere took a dramatic turn in 1998 during the 40th anniversary celebration of Ghana's independence. The Stamp Advisory Committee had decided to issue a stamp of President Rawlings without consulting with his office. However, when he saw the stamps after they were issued, it was reported that he became so furious and ordered that all the stamps were destroyed immediately¹⁰. On the contrary, President Kuffour of the National Peoples Party (NPP), an offshoot of the National Liberation Movement (NLM), which took over from the NDC in 2000 appeared in a stamp behind Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary General when he received the Nobel Peace Prize (Scott, 2356 A 452; **fig. 18**). And in another twist of history, it was the NPP government that would celebrate the golden jubilee of Ghana's independence in 2007. While acknowledging the contributions of Dr. Nkrumah and others to the liberation of Ghana during the celebrations, the much anticipated commemorative stamps were a major disappointment for philatelists. There was the 50th anniversary logo (**fig. 19**), minerals, buildings, cocoa kente, private airlines, botanical garden, famous personalities (**fig. 20**), etc. One expected the reissue of the first independence stamps and institutions that were inaugurated at Ghana's independence but unfortunately this was a government that will

¹⁰ I'm desperately looking for one of these extremely rare stamps and may locate it by conference time.

not dwell much on the achievements of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, hence the philatelic public received a slanted imagery of 50 years of Ghana's independence.

To conclude, in the past 50 years Ghana has issued over 2,500 stamps which reflect the public view of the government to its citizens and the rest of the world. These stamps are the mirror that reflects the cultural, economic and political policy as well as solidarity with international causes. They are symbols of nationhood, achievements, progress in industry, agriculture, education, health, transitions, etc. Thus, stamps constitute a useful source for historians and art historians of Africa to assess the modern official histories. This will be timely because every African country issued their first postage stamps at independence and a majority these countries will celebrate their golden jubilee in 2010. Hopefully, scholars will understand the propaganda value of postage stamps so as to become advisors to stamp advisory committees in their various countries instead of leaving the decision in the hands of government griots.



Fig. 1 - Queen Victoria in Purple.



Fig. 2 - Last British stamps at independence with overprint "Ghana Independence 1957".



Fig. 3 - Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's image on coin stamps



Fig. 4 - Ghana Independence Stamps



Fig. 5 - State Chair



Fig. 6 - Ghana Mace



Fig. 7 - UN Trusteeship



Fig. 8 - Fertility Stamp - Akwababere



Fig. 9 - Black Star Line



Fig. 10 - Overprint – Prime Minister's Visit



Fig. 11 – NLC First Anniversary



Fig. 12 – NLC Victory Parade



Fig. 13 – Lt. Gen. E. K. Kotoka



Fig. 14 – Dr. J. B. Danquah and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Fig. 15 – Transition to Civilian Rule



Fig. 16 – Ghana Goes Metric



Fig. 17 – Past Great Sons of Ghana

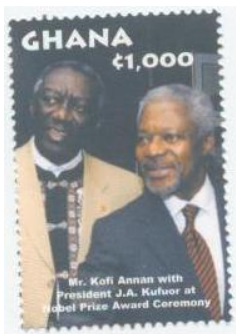


Fig. 18 – Kofi Annan and President Kuffour.



Fig. 19 – 50th Anniversary Logo.



Fig. 20 – Famous Personalities.