

## Accompong Maroons Continue Traditional Celebrations

Hundreds of persons flocked the Maroon town, Accompong, St. Elizabeth, on Wednesday (January 6) for the annual heritage celebrations, characterised by the usual traditional dances, music, rituals, feast, speeches and the blowing of the Abeng.

The date marks the anniversary of the birth of Cudjoe (Kojo), the most powerful and important Maroon leader of the 18th century, whose successful exploits against the British forces led to the signing of a peace treaty at Accompong, ending hostilities between the two sides. Colonel of the Accompong Town Maroons, Inspector Ferron Williams, noted that this year marks the 272nd anniversary of the signing of the Peace Treaty, which was achieved, "after over 80 years of guerrilla warfare" successfully staged against the British army. He said that Maroon ancestors, such as Cudjoe, and his siblings, Nanny, Jamaica's only National Heroine, Johnny, Accompong, after whom the town was named, and Cuffie, fought hard and shed blood for the Maroon's freedom. Colonel Williams said that, as a people, the Maroons have made steady progress and are moving to ensure that their history and culture is preserved. "Over the next few months, we are going to ensure that our history and culture will be restored and preserved," he said. He added that proceeds from Wednesday's event will be used to establish a Scholarship Fund for the students obtaining the highest score in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) and the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) from the Accompong Primary and Junior High School. Colonel Williams said that the community is a peaceful one and that, "we will not encourage violence or harbour criminals among our beautiful hills of the Cockpit Country". Public Defender, Earl Witter, in his capacity as Guest Speaker, urged the Maroons not to accept any change of sovereignty, but to ensure that their rights to sovereignty are protected under the Property Rights provision of the Charter of Rights. "I urged the communities of Accompong Town and of Moore Town and of Charles Town and of Scotts Hall, not to accept the change of sovereignty but to move now to ensure the Property Rights provision of the Charter of Rights, Section 15, and you will only be able to do that if you are unified at the time of the resistance," he said. He called upon the Maroon communities to organize themselves by putting in place a system of governance that will regulate their affairs and attract attention and respect for them.