

Once Upon a Prinzenstein

Agoo! Agoo! Agoo!

Agoo! Shall always remain at the gate

To usher in '*Ame*' - the flesh and blood.

We have heard stories of old and new.

We have seen the memory of concrete, wood and iron chains

That leave voices crawling on the forlorn walls of identity

With its might sapped into the salty depths of the sea.

We have heard.

**Agoo- the Ewe expression to seek permission before entering a house*

**Ame- the Ewe word for humans*

Now! We have heard also the little tales;

Tales that make us think of timeless times

Of yesterdays and tomorrows.

Of the famous slave barracks of De Souza

Whose name like the blood of an innocent man has stained the little town of Keta

To be called *Blekusu*

And erased any idea of knowing the native name.

"Barracks De Souza"

Your native name is foreign to our tongues

So we call you *Blekusu!*

**Blekusu - A town near Keta*

Then we stand at the shores of Keta in times we have lost count of,

When we were scared to sands by the gigantic canoes

As never before seen by us fisher folks.

The boats slide towards us,

The strangers step on our shores,

The shouts:

"Hold the boats to jerk!"

And we find a new strength to pull our nets today as we chant:

"Ahootiboje! Ahootiboje!"

Hold the boats to jerk! - Ahootiboje!

In unity lies strength.

**Ahootiboje - A shout of encouragement by fishermen during fishing*

It is Agbotadua Kamasa who said:

"There is power in learning the past."

But are we not so engrossed in rushing for the future?

Come and see!

Come and see the images left in the thoughts of people

By Fort Prinzenstein at the trade center of Anlo

Come and hear!

Come and hear the whispers of the influence of Fort Prinzenstein on this strong culture from

Hogbe.

Time spirals and the stories are revealed to the chosen.

**Hogbe - A place where Ewes migrated from*

The table was set in the presence of enemies

Rice was served and eaten by *garfo* the fork

The Portuguese were said to just pass through but see

The Anlo eat rice today with *gaflo* the fork.

Did they have the fork before Prinzenstein was birthed?

Again *garfo* was foreign to the native tongue

So *garfo* is now *gaflo* when rice is served

In the presence of family.

**Garfo-Portuguese word for fork*

**Gaflo- Ewe word for fork*

And

They missed their loved ones while serving country in Keta

Protected by their great Prinzenstein.

So the ships brought letters, mails

And the lips kept asking for their mails

But did the hosts not take 'mail' to refer to the ships?

Remember this

When you hear the children of the hosts call out

"*Meli!*" "*Meli!*" When a ship docks.

**Meli- Ewe word for ship*

May we not end our songs without a feast.

A toast to the sea, the Fort and the people!

Bring the '*sodabi*,' our local gin

And let us drink our fears away.

Prinzenstein seats among us

But he have been swept away like it's memories

Deep into the marrows of decayed fish.

Remember when the British arrived

And ran out of drinks?

Remember the exclamation: "So is that what it is?"

The drink was strong - "*Akpeteshie*."

The hosts offered their guests their drink.

"So is that what it is?" - "So that it be." - "*Sodabi*."

The transforming power of the tongue.

**Sodabi- A local gin also called *Akpeteshie*

Agoo! Agoo! Agoo!

The hunter does not tell all.

Let the rest be saved for anther day

For,

Agoo will always remain at the gate

To usher in "*Ame*" the flesh and blood.

~Kwami Sedanu

SOURCES

Agbotadua Kamasa, Keta- Historian and Clan Head

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Tornyeava Selorm, Keta - Teacher

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Marco Aurelio. "Dash me more palaver: Portuguese words in Ghana." *Daily Graphic*, Accra, v. 149393, p. 16 – 16, 02 abr. 2005.

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