

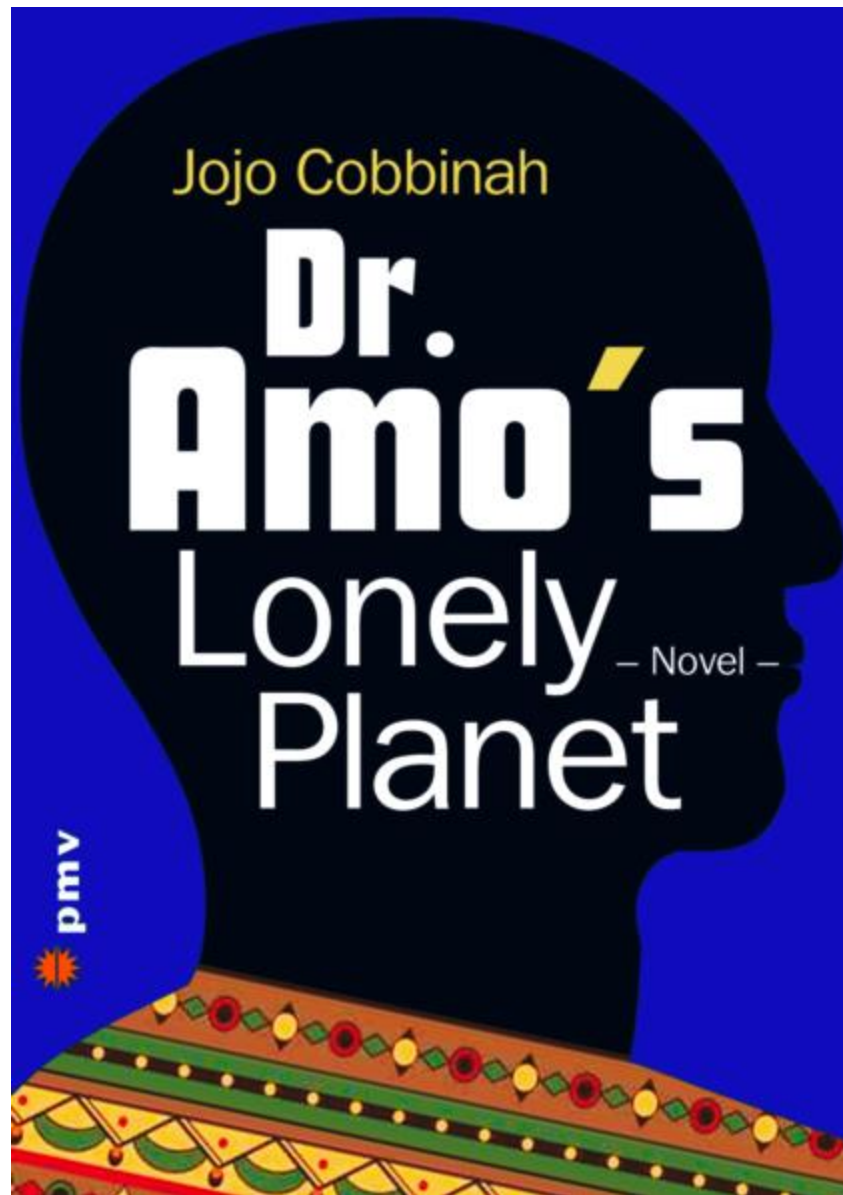
Jojo Cobbinah

# Dr. Amo's Lonely Planet

— Novel —

pmv





# Dr. Amo's Lonely Planet

## Introduction

*1706. The Dutch West India Company donates an African child to the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel. The little slave soon impresses his patrons with his extraordinary intelligence. Sponsored by them, the young African studies philosophy, medicine and law and finally receives doctorate degrees at the Universities of Wittenberg and Halle. Lecturing in Halle and Jena, he becomes one of the most articulate political philosophers of his time in the German-speaking world.*

*Dr. Anton Wilhelm Amo's good fortunes end when scientists "discover" black people as the long-sought missing link between man and beast. When he then falls in love with a white woman, he is made an object of public ridicule.*

*What happens after that is part of the dramatic reconstruction of a true life story highlighting the fundamental dilemma that has accompanied African immigrants in the white world ever since Prince Henry The Navigator's men penetrated the shroud surrounding Africa on the eve of the Age of Discoveries.*

## Impressum

Jojo Cobbinah

**Dr. Amo's Lonely Planet**

Novel

Unabridged edition

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## Prologue

*To all the victims of the Slave  
Trade:*

*The millions who survived*

*The millions who lost their  
loved ones*

*The millions dead.*



*Unless Nyankopon nods  
consent*

*No storm can blow my wawa  
down*

*Only He can see in the  
darkness*

*Where we came from, where  
we go.*

## **This whole thing began a long time ago.**

When religious zealots from the Arabian Peninsula crossed the Red Sea to bring a new religion to the vast region lying to the west of Arabia, a land they called Afrikia. Their message was simple: Believe or die. Africans who met them had to decide quickly. Faced with the glistening swords of these determined warriors, millions of fear-stricken Africans across the sprawling land mass of arid plains, verdant valleys, wind-swept plateau, craggy mountains and fertile oases, converted instantly to the new religion. They wanted to save their lives.

Only the Akans, a little-known group of people tucked away in the south-western precincts of the great Sahara, decided to find an alternative to the dilemma. Except for one reason, they would have readily converted to Islam. This reason was what they abhorred above everything else in their lives: the prospect of losing honour. The new religion required people to clean their anuses with sand or water. This, the Akans would not do. In their culture, a man who put his hands to his anus ceased to be a man. So when the hordes of Almoravid riders from Morocco finally reached the Akans within the borders of the ancient empire of Gana in the twelfth century, the first people to pack their belongings and leave for good were the proud Akans, who had vowed never to surrender their freedom to anyone. Abandoning their God-given homeland to seek a new one in the depths of the tropical forests to the south became their only alternative. What they wanted was a place the roughriders could not reach with their horses, a place where the Akans could escape the dictates and constraints of a religion and culture they considered absolutely repugnant.

The Akans marched through unknown territories, fought wars of survival and succeeded in preserving their language and culture. In the end, they created a new country for themselves, far away from their original home. Since those days, they have had a proverb in their language which says:

*Disgrace does not befit a person  
of Akan origin.*

*– Aninguase mfata 'Kaniba.*

All of this happened at a time when the rest of the world was not watching, long before the first Europeans arrived on the West African coast of Guinea. They, and all the others who have since tried to breach the honour of these people, have been taken aback by the tenacity with which the Akans have always rallied together to defend it.

# **Part I**



Kramo

*I went by smocks embroidered  
with fine silk.*

*I thought who wears it sells  
good talismans.*

*I least suspected smocks on  
charlatans.*

**Francis Kayper-Mensah,  
»Adinkra Poems«**

## **I-01: Nana Yankey's Dream**

»Is there any country of the white people that is ready to enter an alliance with us on our conditions?« King Yankey kept asking his councillors during their weekly meetings.



None of the councillors knew an answer, but the King was quite convinced that there must be such a country. His conviction had been nurtured by recent strange developments. Those days, no night passed by without the King dreaming about just that possibility.

In his dreams, he was the centre of attraction of a big wedding ceremony during which he got married to a woman with pure white skin. After the wedding, the many relatives of the white woman formed a circle around him, and each of them shook his hand and gave him a tight hug. Since he had never had anything to do with white people, the dream frightened him and had been occupying his thoughts for a while. What significance did such a dream have?

Discreet as he was, Nana Kwamenla Yankey did not disclose his strange dream to anybody at first. When he had almost forgotten it, the dream came back again with full force.

»I wish I could interpret this strange dream,« he said after telling his wife about it one morning.

»Do you think there's any special message behind it?« he asked her with a wrinkled forehead after describing his experiences.

»What a strange question!« she replied, looking him straight in the face and shaking her head in disbelief.

»This is nothing for ordinary people to interpret. The dream can only mean one of two things. It's either the herald of good things to come or it announces the beginning of events that will have serious implications for our country. Don't waste time thinking about it. Discuss the whole thing with your councillors and consult Nana

Egyambra, our great oracle. But do it quickly,« she advised with a worried face.

»You're right, my dear. I shouldn't have asked what is so obvious. Of course, I'll immediately consult Amakye Doku, our Chief Priest in Egyambra. He's the only living being who can communicate with the gods and the ancestors. This is truly a case for them to look into.«

Nana Kwamenla Yankey was the Omanhene, the King of Evaluê.

He ruled this little Kingdom on the Gold Coast of West Africa at the end of the 17th century. But for a sticky little problem, Evaluê would have probably been one of the happiest places on earth, if it had not been the type of country white people liked – a country full of shimmering gold and thick, precious diamonds. After heavy rains, it was not a rare feat to collect gold nuggets from the ground. Or to wash gold dust from the countless streams and rivulets that criss-crossed the land.

Here, the earth itself was very rich. The many big and small rivers, the streams and lagoons all teemed with fish. The forests were full of rare hardwoods. The soil was verdant and fertile. Spices and fruits of all kinds grew: black pepper, malagueta, chili, paprika, ginger, wild cloves, nutmeg, groundnuts, tiger nuts, pawpaw, oranges, watermelons and a whole lot of other magnificent crops.

That was why more than a century before the rest of Europe came to know about the existence of Evaluê, the Portuguese had claimed this land for themselves. Ten years after landing here in 1482, they had begun to build formidable fortifications on the coast to prevent others

from encroaching on 'their' area. The huge cannons they had once posted there to prevent so-called interlopers were still in place and could be admired by anybody who cared to do so. From their other colonies in America and Asia the Portuguese had introduced assorted peppers, rice, maize, yam, cassava, bananas, pineapples, mangoes, tomatoes, tobacco, sugar cane and a lot more, which they had successfully cultivated in Africa. Many of these were still thriving on Evaluê's rich soils, bringing relative prosperity to the Kingdom.

But it was not for agriculture that the Portuguese had started building forts along the West-African Coast. Finding gold in a country full of natural resources had spurred them to export the precious metal to Europe. The natural wealth of the land and its new products had all added to its attraction for other pale-faced aliens from hardly-known places with strange names like Denmark, Sweden, France, Britain, The Netherlands and what have you. Now they were all determined to travel long distances, fight storms and risk shipwreck in order to reach the Gold Coast.

Evaluê had one big problem.

It was nestled between two Dutch-controlled bastions and constantly had to fear for the freedom of its inhabitants. Fort Battensteyn, belonging to the Dutch, was located in Butre to the east and was just two walking days away. Fort Santo Antonio, the other Dutch stronghold in Axim to the west, lay three walking days from Pokesu, the capital of Evaluê.

Dutch Santo Antonio?

Yes, the Dutch had occupied Santo Antonio a hundred years earlier, after chasing out the original occupants, the Portuguese, who had built it over a century and a half previously. Taking it over by force, the Dutch had not bothered to change the fort's name. A fact that did not seem to worry anybody in Axim, Pokesu or Holland.

With Pokesu and Axim, Evaluê possessed two important ports, both hotly coveted by the Europeans. Already, the French, owning two forts, and the British, with about twelve, were pressing Nana Kwamenla Yankey for alliances and special rights. The King knew that if he did not react positively, his country would soon be invaded by one of the »friends« who usually came with one hand open and the other clenched into a fist.

The Omanhene opted for a policy of neutrality with all his immediate and distant neighbours. His greatest hope, in fact his sole wish, was to keep the peace in his Kingdom and increase the welfare of his people through peaceful interaction with all countries. This he wanted to do by safeguarding the lucrative trade that had been going on for many years between his country and the white people coming from many places around the world. Among these were the businesslike Dutch, the obstinate British and the haphazard French.

The name Gold Coast, a rough translation of 'mina d'ouro,' had been given to this strip of African coastline by the Portuguese. On their arrival here in 1471, they had claimed that the land they thought to have just discovered belonged to them. And all that simply because they had been the first white people to have reached it.

People here normally laughed at such absurd ideas and would have done so in this case, too, had it not been for the earnestness with which the Portuguese had taken up the issue. The Portuguese had believed in their idea of having discovered land so strongly that they had actively prevented all other people from even putting a footstep on the territories they had considered to be their property.

This state of affairs would have remained so for a long time, had it not been for the highly motivated Dutch, who came generations later to drive the Portuguese out of their strongholds in West Africa. The luckiest of the Portuguese, escaping the deadly Dutch assaults, sailed farther off to the west and south-west of the same coast. There again, they occupied other people's lands and tried their luck at finding what they had lost on the Gold Coast – gold. This is how the Portuguese ended up settling down in N'zadia N'kong, which later came to be called the Congo, Benguela and Lobito, today called Angola.

Because of Evaluê's nagging problem, Nana Yankey did not sleep well. In fact, he was plagued with nightmares. The proximity of the Dutch to his Kingdom and the covetousness of some of Evaluê's powerful and belligerent neighbours were among the root causes of his sleepless nights.

Not even in return for military advantage did Nana Yankey want to become a vassal of the Dutch and their local ally, Asante. He feared losing his independence. At a time when everybody else was making efforts to secure strong allies in times of war, little Evaluê had been cheeky enough to rebuff all advances. Its single-minded leaders were only interested in continuing their tradition of trading with everybody.

Nana Yankey had five major reasons for his political stance. Firstly, he abhorred war. Secondly, he wanted to preserve the peace at all cost. Thirdly, he detested the trade in slaves. Fourthly, Evaluê's independence had to be safeguarded. Lastly, he was convinced that peace was the necessary prerequisite for profitable trade.

All the attempts to avoid alliances of any sort had been made for those reasons. In his view, the slave trade brought only chaos to those African nations that participated in it. He wanted none of it and is prepared to do anything to prevent his people from becoming victims of undertakings that brought profits only to the foreigners who indulge in them. His current wary attitude had been born out of experience won by dealing with white people for a long time.

»They've always come to cart off valuable goods in exchange for things ordinary human beings here don't need,« stated the King. »The white people who come here do so to acquire as much gold and to collect as many slaves as possible. All they give in return is plenty of alcohol, gunpowder, guns, glass beads, iron and cotton products. They call this kind of lopsided exchange 'trade', but a lot of people here have realised in the meantime that it's just another name they use for stealing the real things that matter. For, indeed, what can anybody in his right mind do with brandy and glass pearls? Especially in exchange for gold, ivory and people?« he frequently asked his councillors. Whenever King Yankey sat to discuss topics of national interest, he often put this question to his critics, quite a few of whom wanted to get rich quickly:

»If the slave trade were not profitable for them, the white people, would they travel all the way to our land to

participate in it?«

»Very unlikely,« a councillor had once remarked.

»What I'd like to know: Would we eat grass if these people didn't come here with pearls, alcohol and gunpowder?«

None of King Yankey's critics ever provided any good answers to such questions. But honestly speaking, who could really answer such difficult questions? Of late, however, more and more people here had been asking themselves these questions. Many were in no mood to continue being the fools of ruffians and rogues coming from abroad. There was a reason for that.

Not long ago, the Omanhene of Butre had signed an agreement to trade unconditionally with the Dutch merchants of Elmina. When the Dutch had then stationed soldiers in Butre and appointed a sort of governor to take charge of the garrison, they had used their powerful weapons to establish their own rule and dictate to the inhabitants. When the Butre people had rebelled against Dutch bullying, the white people had simply sailed further up the coast to the Kingdom of Egyaa close to Anomabo and imported several hundreds of people for resettlement in Butre.

Of course, the new arrivals had been armed by the Dutch and charged with seeing to it that the Butre people did not revolt. The 'treaty of cooperation' that Butre had then signed with the Dutch had made the village suddenly become the enemy of all those who had a score to settle with the fat-headed cheese sellers, as the British here call the Dutch. At the cost of his throne, the Butrehene was forced to support whatever policies the Dutch,

owning already 17 forts on the Gold Coast, adopted for this area.

Peaceful Butre, now a loyal and staunch ally of the treacherous Dutch, had become an enemy of the British, the French, the Danes and the Swedes in no time. Now Butre had a Dutch commander living in Fort Battensteyn, a stone fortress perched high over the little town. The commander had not as yet shown any interest in the welfare of the Butre people. At least, he had done nothing to underscore the supposed interest the Dutch claimed to have had before gaining actual military control.

Since this episode, King Yankey was even more convinced that all alliances were bad. They solved one problem and lead to another.

»A proverb in our language says:

Only the fool lets someone step on his testicles twice.

I, Nana Kwamenla Yankey, son of Amenlema, will never put my testicles on the anvil for irresponsible people to hammer on. By any means possible, I'm determined not to let Evaluê suffer Butre's fate. Therefore, I say: No compromising alliances!«

The worry lines on Nana Yankey's face were becoming more visible each day.

To him, life under subjugation was the most terrible thing that could happen to any people. Alone the idea of being forced to obey other people's laws, live foreign cultures, worship unfamiliar gods, pay unjustified tribute and possibly speak strange tongues; these prospects were simply unacceptable!



And Nana Yankey's thoughts were not born out of unfounded fear. The Asante Kingdom, the new major power on the western seaboard, had succeeded in extending its territory with staunch Dutch support and was now threatening to overrun the British-held territories to the east of Evaluê. The least the Kingdom of Evaluê and its leaders wanted was trouble within and without its borders. If the leadership and people of Evaluê did not want to be overrun and ruled by their powerful neighbours, quick solutions had to be found.

What made the situation so difficult was that neutrality had also not brought any advantages to Evaluê. On the contrary. Evaluê was isolated and an object of constant threats from powerful Asante and its most prominent ally, the Dutch.

Nana Yankey and his elders were aware of the precarious state into which they had manoeuvred their Kingdom. Evaluê needed a powerful ally, but one with different motives and aims. An ally ready to do serious but clean trade in gold, ivory, metal and spices. but excluding the exchange of human beings.

Yes. That episode with the Omanhene of Butre and his fundamental blunder with the Dutch were still on the mind of the wise King. The Omanhene of Butre had trusted the foreigners blindly and not bothered to consult the gods about his encounter with the white people. The Dutch had ultimately deceived him and the gods revenged the neglect by not heeding the prayers of those people when they dearly needed help.

Nana Yankey was too clever to repeat such a mistake. Before beginning any such adventure, he was determined to ensure that no tricks are involved. He

made up his mind to consult the Oracle of Egyambra and sacrifice to its powerful deity. This deity could do what humans could not do. He was convinced that somewhere on earth, there had to be a country ready to do what he was looking for. He was sure to find that country with the help of the oracle.

## **I-02: Pokesu**

Pokesu, Evaluê's capital, lay about three stonethrows down from Amanforo Hill, on the land side. Pokesu was the capital not because it was the biggest or most beautiful place in Evaluê, but because all the kings of the Kingdom had always lived here.

On sunny days, the town's quaint mud houses with their thatched roofs and front porches sprawled out in the sun like pieces of wood on a checker board.

The people of Evaluê lived well on the natural resources that god had given them. When it rained, the harvest was abundant. Harvesting maize two times a year was normal. Rice could be easily cultivated after the heavy rains, groundnuts thrived on the sandy but firm soil and throughout the year there was plenty of work for all to do.

The sea also brought in a lot of fish. During the lean period from November to June, however, the fish in the ocean took a pause and seemed to disappear. At such times, it was normal to spend days on end at sea, only to return home empty-handed.

»God has a hand in it,« said the Chief Priest. He had once explained the deeper meaning behind what happened to worshippers at the shrine: »The Almighty God in the skies, Onyame, is clever enough not to give all the fish to man at one time. He takes the fish back to the depths of the ocean to await another period of harvesting. This is a time of testing. When people lead exemplary lives, they are rewarded with a bumper harvest. If they offend their gods and do not live by the tenets of their ancestors, the fish stay away and trouble inevitably comes.«

When babies were born, sheep were slaughtered for the big feast that followed. When a person died, he or she was buried amidst an elaborate funeral ceremony lasting several days. And when calamity struck, the people consulted their gods and rendered sacrifices to them in fervent pleas for normalcy to return. Everybody tried to respect the ancestors and to follow the established rules. The same rules that Amakye Doku now watched over as the representative of the gods.

During the lean period, most fishermen simply stayed at home. At this time they withdrew their heavy canoes from the glaring sun and stored them in shady huts for protection. Other chores like repairing roofs or making additions to existing buildings to accommodate relatives, new wives or more children became the main occupation.

It was also at that time that most farmers took to clearing the ground to make way for planting all the vital food crops that sustain life. A few of them planted new palm trees, tended the young ones, tapped the old palms for wine, enjoyed the greater part of it with friends and distilled the rest into akpeteshie, palm gin.

Akpeteshie was a useful product to exchange for other goods. The powerful stuff made men brave; it cleared their mind of confusion and also cured diseases like rheumatism and diverse fevers. Taken in reasonable quantities, it even helped to make men's sinews supple so that they could please their women over and over again in the lush nights of the rainy season, when the untiring gnats illuminated the air with their transient fires and the insolent monkeys punctuated the sombre nights with loud hoots during copulation.

Women here did not participate in the drinking business. And they were also not simple-minded enough to believe what their husbands claimed about the usefulness of akpeteshie.

»It's just a trick they use to drink without second thoughts,« they said to each other and broke into giggles when going to the stream to fetch water in the mornings. But the women were careful not to say this openly. They knew perfectly well that this would upset their husbands and probably make them impotent. After all, they also used to say: The hen also knows when daylight is about to break, but lets the cock do the crowing. No hen had lost a single feather by not challenging a cock at this. If men wanted to believe that akpeteshie was a love potion, they should continue consuming it. That is, if it helped them to keep their mental balance. Was there not another proverb saying: A child that does not let its mother sleep does not sleep either? Frankly speaking, why should women spend sleepless nights bothering themselves about things that did not concern them?

## **I-03: The Priest of Egyambra**

The village of Egyambra lay to the west of Pokesu.

By boat it took a day to get there if paddling through the River Nyan which ran parallel to the sea in westerly direction. On foot people normally walked the distance in two days. One just had to follow the contours of the coastline. That was the longer route. The usual footpath through the mangroves was shorter but more dangerous. These days, according to unsubstantiated rumours, human robbers were often in the woods, ready to pounce on lonely or unwary travellers.

There were many gods in the area east of Ankobra, but Nana Egyambra was the greatest of them all. He was a benevolent but vengeful god, who came to the aid of his people in times of adversity.

Like the holy man he was, Amakye Doku was permanently dedicated to the service of his gods and people. He led a life full of adversity. Priesthood meant that he had long broken with his family and renounced a lot of the things that made life enjoyable: alcohol, women, children, family, good food and luxury. Priests were supposed to concentrate on their work, so they did not marry and beget children. Since sexual intercourse of any kind diminished a holy man's spiritual powers, none of it was allowed. At least nobody in the whole of Evaluê knew of anything to the contrary.

Priests were also well versed in the curing of diseases and ailments. Therefore, priesthood also meant long

years of practical training to find out which herbs had medicinal qualities. No alcohol, no red meat, no fish, no dance, no conversation, no other occupation apart from serving the deity. Therefore, Amakye Doku partook only of the food his totem ate. And though his vocation did not allow him to plant, fish or earn money, Amakye Doku took his duties seriously and made it a personal point to safeguard peace and bring prosperity to his community.

The citizens of Evaluê revered and feared him for his supernatural powers. The entire community saw to it that he was properly housed, clothed and fed. In accordance with belief and custom, bad luck befell a community that neglected the messenger of the gods. Evaluê wanted none of that and took good care of Amakye Doku.

## **I-04: Colonial ambitions**

Friedrich Wilhelm, Grand Elector of Brandenburg, was a man full of ambition. He was convinced that God had a plan for him. If what he dreamt about was really the will of God, then he wanted to do everything in his might to fulfil the divine contract. Widely-travelled, his great interest in maritime affairs had given him a cosmopolitan perspective. Having lived in Holland in his youth, he has imbibed a lot of seafaring tradition there and even married Luise-Henriette of Orania, a lady of Dutch ancestry. Growing up to see rival royal houses become powerful affluent states through international trade, he had resolved to let his sizeable but feeble territory embark on a similar project and become a powerful and rich country – the land flowing with milk and honey.

As a fervent Calvinist, he was convinced that God was on his side. His reign had already seen many changes. Succeeding his father as Elector in the thick of the Thirty Years War at the age of 20, the young man had steered his country through protracted war and come out among the most successful. The Peace of Westphalia, signed eight years into his reign in 1648, had greatly increased the size of Brandenburg, now a country spanning much of Central Europe.

This extensive territory needed to be pacified and stabilised with strong-handed rule. For years now, he had been quite successful at it. He had strengthened his standing army by about 16,000 more men and initiated an era of peace, even defeating France and Sweden, two of his greatest adversaries, in the years between 1672 and 1678.

Since then, he had also reformed local administration, established treasury offices throughout his Kingdom, intensified agriculture, and resettled about 20,000 Huguenot refugees in the district around his hunting grounds in Potsdam. Originally, these had been highly talented artisans from France, forced into exile by King Louis XIV for their religious convictions at the end of the seventeenth century. These thankful Frenchmen had infused new blood into Brandenburg's economic life. The happy Elector was now taxing their work to good advantage.

Still, Brandenburg lagged behind Holland and France in economic might. In spite of all the successes, the past wars had ravaged huge expanses of Brandenburg. Lawlessness had been rampant and the frequent famines that invariably followed the wars had threatened to kill more people than the wars themselves had done. Only

thanks to a mixture of divine will, determination, firmness and obstinacy had it been possible for the new ruler to establish order throughout the realm. His coffers had been empty and he still needed money badly. Plenty of it, no matter where it came from. And this was why Friedrich Wilhelm's dream kept coming back.

Had Great Britain not succeeded in gaining the upper hand in international trade during Cromwell's reign? Were such small countries as Portugal and The Netherlands not successful on the high seas? Sweden, Denmark and France - were they not also progressing? Were all of them not good examples of what could be achieved?

Yes, they all had lucrative claims in West Africa and were trading profitably in gold, ivory, spices, and slaves. Why couldn't Brandenburg do the same thing? Africa would be the stepping-stone to Brandenburg's success. God had pointed the way in the many dreams to him. He would make everything possible. Brandenburg, he vowed, would become the land of milk and honey!

## **I-05: The Oracle has spoken**

As if he knew of the delegation's arrival, Amakye Doku was already sitting in front of his shrine when Nana Yankey and his elders arrived from Pokesu. Judging by the way he was clothed, it was obvious that the Chief Priest had prepared himself for a séance with the gods this morning. His entire body was glistening with white clay, his loins only covered with a strip of calico. Cleansing the body of all human blemish was one of the indispensable steps for a successful séance.



»To all the people coming to our holy shrine today, I say akwaaba! You have come on an important mission and you'll not go back empty-handed,« he formally announced, not shaking hands with all present, as custom demanded. Priests lose their powers if they do that. »Please take your seats and let me know what has brought you to me today,« he continued dryly without wasting words.

When the guests had taken their seats, the King's spokesman got up to address the assembly.

»Nana, we've come in peace. We need your advice. As our ancestors say: Two antelopes walk together so that they can mutually lick their eyes clear of dirt. So if we have come, then only to share our thoughts with you and to enquire about the disposition of our gods,« he announced.

»Wea, wea,« responded those present in approval.

»Recent events have blurred our vision to some extent. Our honourable King has been experiencing strange things for some time now. On several occasions, he has dreamed of celebrating a wedding with a white woman. In the dream, the woman comes to the celebration with a lot of relatives who insist on hugging him. And when they do, they hug him so tightly that he almost suffocates every time. We have been speculating on the meaning of all this. And that is the reason for our presence here today.«

The King's spokesman finished speaking and sat down. Nobody else spoke, utter silence reigned. Amakye Doku, who had sat listening to the rendition, did not move any part of his body. His eyes were open but had an empty

look, as if gazing into a hole. Perched on a low stool, lost to himself; his body was tense. And as it turned out, he was already in a trance.

After what seemed to be infinity, he began to speak slowly in a strange voice, with his eyes still closed. Those familiar with the ceremony knew this was normal.

»I can see a big red bird flying over the sea towards Evaluê. It is the Santrokofi bird. People dressed in white are riding on the wings of this bird,« he announced.

When the Chief Priest opened his eyes again, he was sweating and looked tired, as if he had worked in the sun for a whole day. His assistant, whom nobody had noticed till now, quickly wrapped another piece of calico around his shoulders and shoved a piece of cola nut into his mouth without uttering a word.

After another long period of meditation, during which everybody in the group examined his own mind for an interpretation of what had been said, Amakye Doku looked up and spoke.

»What does Nana Egyambra say?« he asked with some interest.

Because the Priest pronounces the oracle in a trance, he never knows personally what the message is, and he never gives a verdict. It's the gods themselves who give a clear message. Again, the King's spokesman was the first to speak.

»A big Santrokofi, red in colour and with people clad in white riding on its wings, is flying towards our country,« he summed up in his erudite manner.

»That's the message the gods have sent to us. As the saying goes: You do not speak to a clever child in simple sentences. You give him proverbs to interpret. Now, it's your duty to interpret the dream,« the holy man said tersely.

»Wea, wea.«

»You all know what kind of a bird the Santrokofi is?« asked the Priest.

»Wea, wea.«

»If you capture it and bring it to your house, it brings you bad luck. If you let it depart, it departs with your good fortunes,« he added to show the current predicament in which King Yankey and his people were now in.

»So what choice do we have?« asked King Yankey with some anxiety.

»My son,« replied the Priest, clearing his throat while continuing with a shaky voice. »Nana Eyambra has spoken. It's now up to you to do your duty. Go home and think about the whole question carefully. Then take your decision and abide by it. If you succeed, come back to praise and sacrifice to our good god. If you choose misfortune, blame yourself for whatever happens. You have a responsibility to yourself, to this country and to all her people. The gods have spoken. Now it is the turn for good men to do their duty. Go in peace.«

Saying this, Amakye Doku stood up and left the shrine without adding another word or looking at any of the guests.

## **I-06: Greed Takes its Course**

The Grand Elector of Brandenburg began his colonial adventures in earnest in the summer of 1682. That was the year he began to seriously fulfil what he considered to be God's will. His first task was to find a capable person to organise the Africa project. Good and experienced people of the sort required by Brandenburg were rare and expensive. The ambitious project would only get off the ground if dedicated people were found to deliver loyal service. After all, Brandenburg had no all-weather ports and possessed only a modicum of experience in maritime affairs. People with expertise could only be hired from other maritime nations.

Following the decision to go into international trade, the Grand Elector started a vigorous recruitment campaign, writing countless letters to monarchs and trading companies throughout Europe in the search for qualified administrators. That was not all. Other pressing problems waited for solutions. A headquarters had to be found for the impending trade activities, investors contacted, extra capital raised, ships ordered and equipped, seamen and soldiers hired for service in the Brandenburg mercantile fleet.

The frantic efforts finally began to bear fruit, when the Elector managed to secure the services of Benjamin Raule, a Huguenot maritime officer from Dunkirk. Sought was a man with seafaring experience. Mijnheer Raule was indeed an exceptional and clever person, a man who did not only dream about his future. He had worked with Dutch and French slaving companies for a long time and had gained valuable practical experience in the trade.

In his application letters to the Great Elector, he had added copies of concrete calculations made on the subject. In one of these letters he concluded with interesting remarks that impressed the Elector:

»Who knows how many millions the Dutch West Indian Company has raked in from the slave trade? One slave bought in West Africa for 45 Guilders is sold in the West Indies for 210 Guilders. No other commodity brings more profit. Everybody knows that the trade in slaves is the best source of wealth. Take the Spaniards for example. They obtain a lot of wealth from their West Indian possessions; wealth produced from the labour of African slaves. I'm convinced that active participation in the slave trade will quickly fill the empty coffers of Brandenburg with plenty of gold in no time,« wrote Raule with conviction.

The Elector of Brandenburg needed no further encouragement in the face of such powerful arguments. After searching his soul and finding no cogent reason against his plans, he finally made up his mind. It was doubtful whether the black-skinned people from Africa were really human beings capable of securing God's benevolent grace like other normal people. And if both Catholic Portugal and Spain as well as Protestant Denmark and Sweden countries found no religious constraints preventing them from participating in the trade, if the Calvinist Dutch had no compunctions whatsoever about selling people, what reason was there to prevent a Brandenburg Calvinist from doing the same?

»The man is right. His arguments only serve to strengthen my determination to forge ahead with plans. I have no doubt about our success,« he concluded.

Benjamin Raule formally assumed responsibility as General Director of Brandenburg's maritime operations in the early spring of 1681. The African project demanded some hurry and the Elector pressed for the quick implementation of all plans. There was little time to lose.

Raule had not bluffed with his claims. With his help, Brandenburg quickly won the cooperation of the Frisian port of Emden, which henceforth became Brandenburg's official entrepôt for all its shipping activities with the outside world. Emden's location in the far west of the North Sea was far from mainland Brandenburg, but it was ice-free in winter and better suited to international trade than the allied Prussian ports in the Baltic. On Raule's recommendation, the 'Brandenburgisch-Afrikanischen Compagnie' with himself at its helm, was established and charged with overseeing the trade to come. Still at his behest, the first naval expedition in the history of Brandenburg was prepared for dispatch to the West African coast. Just in case enough slaves were bought in West Africa, Raule made sure these could be marketed in the Virgin Islands by securing a lease on the island of St. Thomas, where the Danes were in charge.

The Elector of Brandenburg cheered on his men to action.

»In the name of our great royal house, we empower you to enter into agreement with any Africans who want to cooperate with us and have anything to sell. We empower you to sign treaties of friendship, wherever this is necessary. Above all, we order you not to return home empty-handed. God is with us.«

In the summer of 1681, the 'Churprinz' and 'the Morian,' two big ships commandeered by the Dane und Dutch