

JOWINI ABAISA

Memorial for a freedom fighter



Memorial for Jowini Abaisa
(Photo: André R.M. Pakosie, 2001)

By: André R.M. Pakosie

Right behind Kwaku's statue located in Paramaribo (the capital city of Suriname) on the corner of Dr. Sophie Redmondstraat and Zwartenhovenbrugstraat is a memorial dedicated to the Maroon trade union leader, Jowini Keti Abaisa, also known as Ronald Jowini. He was a union leader. The union of Jowini represented the workers of the

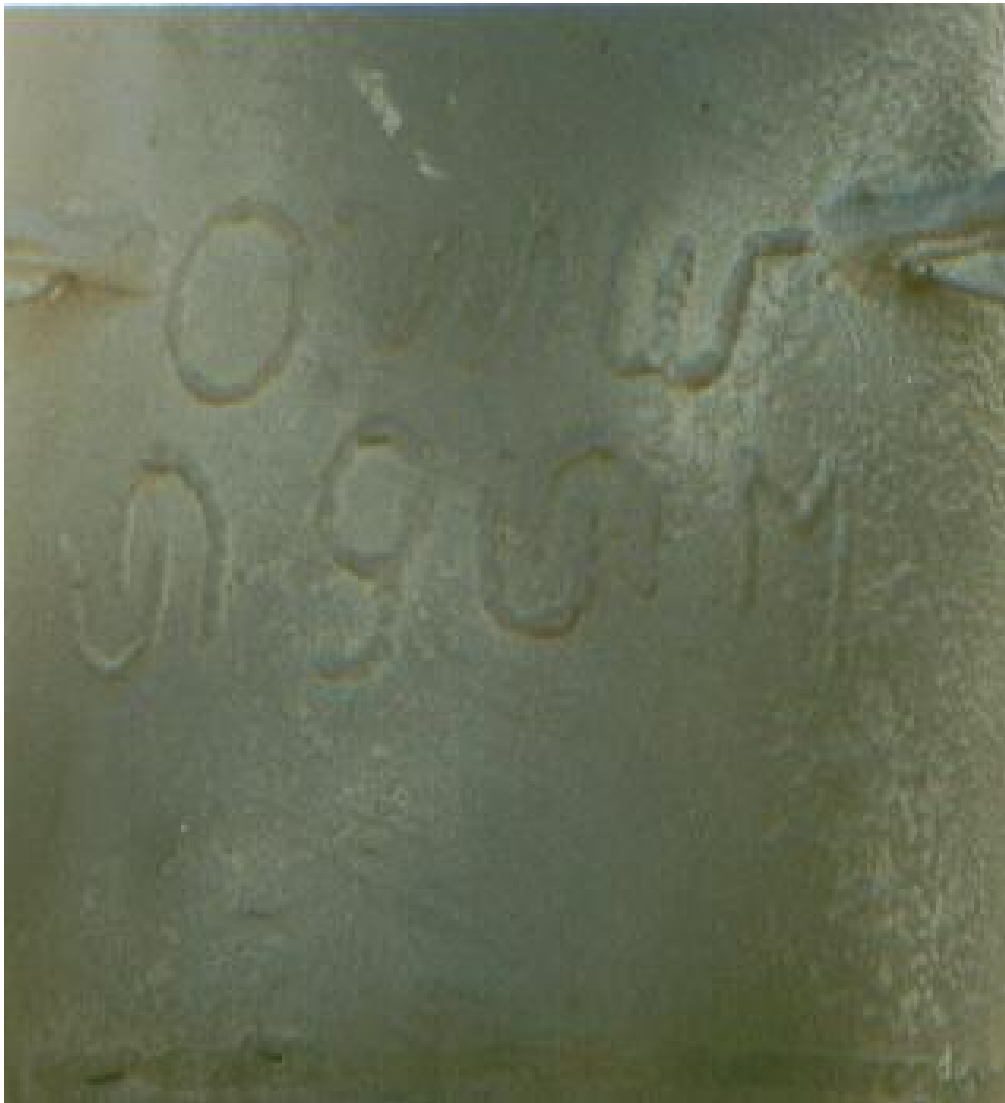
department of Geology and Mining (Geologische Mijnbouwkundige Dienst) of the Ministry of Development (Ministerie van Opbouw), currently Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, where many Maroons worked. On February 27, 1973, Jowini Abaisa led a protest demonstration to the center of Paramaribo in the direction of that ministry. This protest march was a support to the general strike threatened to paralyze the Suriname economy. While the strikers were marching to the ministry, the police opened, according to the instruction of the Sedney administration, without any consideration, fire on them, and Abaisa was brutally killed. A regional outrage and sorrow at murder Jowini Abaisa.



Parts of the poem of Dobru, written on the memorial (Photo: André R.M. Pakosie, 2001)

Blacks are killing their own blacks," was one of the headline texts in a newspaper. The late Dobru (Robin Raveles), a famous poet and writer dedicated a poem to the fallen leader, part of the text is written on the memorial: 'Abaisa Jowini, joe broedoe ben Ion fu wasi Sranangron, 27-2-73' (Abaisa Jowini, Your blood flowed to purify Suriname 's ground, 27-2-'73).

Jack Pinas, a former leader of the union CLO (Centrale van Landsdienaren Organisatie) drafted the memorial for Jowini Abaisa and the company, Doorson's Constructiebedrijf, located at the Nieuw Weergevondenweg in Paramaribo constructed the memorial.



The Kumanti text in Afaka script 'Odun m'sigasiye', I'm prepared to die for freedom", is written by André R.M. Pakosie.

The Maroon historian, André Pakosie added a phrase in the sacred Kumanti language on the memorial written in Afaka, an Ndyuka syllabic script, referring to what Abaisa once said on a meeting: "Odunm'sigasiye, I'm prepared to die for freedom".

Komisi Santé a popular Maroon singer of the 1970's who was one of the brothers in arms of Abaisa during the strike, made a song to honour Abaisa:

Yowini Abaisa

Oho, o yeah, oh yes I do it
Oh Yowini, I still remember those days
I have so much sorrow everyday
Oh, Yowini
When we went to strike, we where looking for money to be able to live
But it caused your death Yowini
Yowini
The day we met in the ABO building, you said to me, Komisi
that when we will return to our villages during Yalimofu¹
I must contact you because you want to discuss something with me, oh,
Yowini
But, Yowini, until now Yalimofu is not in sight yet?
I have so much sorrow everyday
Yowini
The day we went on the street for the protest march
Someone advised us not to go
But you said something Yowini, you said: "Even if I may die I am not
afraid
because in the past the blood of our own black people flowed also on this
soil to purify it from all oppression
Thus if I have to undergo the same, to ensure our freedom, I am ready to
go".
You died indeed, Yowini
Yowini I have so much sorrow, so much sorrow everyday
Oh Yowini
One day at home, I turned the radio on
I heard a man said something
The man his name is Dobru Raveles
He said something
He said loudly "Yowini, you will win Abaisa!
You will win the battle we are fighting now"
Now, we have won the battle
But if you have something to eat Yowini that is what I do not know
If you have something to drink or eat where you are now
Yowini that is what I do not know
Oh, Yowini you died but with tears in my eyes, I sing this song for you
Oh C.LO, oh ABO, oh, Yowini
Goodbye Yowini. Rest in peace

¹ Yalimofu is the period between Bedaki, 25th December and January 1st. In this period the Ndyuka from the Tapanahoni who live in different places on the coast returned to their villages for the New Year celebration)

THE ORIGINAL TEXT IN SRANAN TONGO:

YOWINI ABAISA

Oho, o yeh, oh yes I do it
O Yowini, mi e membee den dei
Mi e sali o, every day
O Yowini, di un be e staak mi boi
u be e suku moni fu nyan
Na en mu tyai dede gi yu m' boi
O Yowini!
A dei di wi miti mi boi Yowini, te na A.B.O.
Neen yu taki gi mi boi Komi,
te yalimofu e kon te u go a Tapusei
da m' mu kon na yu o
meke i gi mi wan toli m' boi Yowini
O, Yowini, ma te leki nou nou
yalimofu a doo ete no m' Yowini boi o?
Mi e sali o, every day
O Yowini, a dei di u go waka m' boi, a sitaati, Yowini
Den man taki gi wi m' Yowini boi
u no musu fu waka Yowini
Ma toku yu taki wan toli no m' boi Yowini
Yu taki: awasi yu dede gbe, toku yu n' a toobi no m' boi
Bika san ede, wi baakaman buulu be kai a doti kaba
wasi Saanan golon pai fu na a doti kaba
dan awasi yu dede baka, da noti fu dati ye m' boi
Toku yu dede Yowini
Yowini mi e sali o, mi e sali o, every day
O Yowini
a wan dei mi sidon na osu m' boi
neen mi opo a radio
Mi yee wan mineli e taki wan toli
Wan mineli den kai Dobru Raveles
A mineli taki wan toli
A bali: Yowini, yu o wini Abaisa!
Yu musu wini na a feti di wi e feti nou m' boi
Ma te leki nou nou u wini na feti no m' boi
Ma san y' e nyan Yowini a dati mi a sabi m' boi
San y' e diingi di y' go anda, san y' e nyan
Yowini a dati mi a sabi m' boi
Ma Yowini awasi yu dede gbe m' boi e
Nanga wataa a mi ain, toku mi e bali na poku ya m' boi e
No C.L.O., no no C.L.O. No no no A.B.O.
No, no, no Yowini, No no no Yowini
Golon mu koo gi yu