

Dear Gloria,

I'm working in a project that has as starting point a fact: An African gentleman who called himself the Prince, lived in my hometown (Porto Alegre, South of Brazil), from the early days of the twentieth century until the year of 1935, when he died.

It is known here some spots about him, as:

1 - He used to say that he was part of the Royal Family of Benin, overthrown by the British in 1897.

2 - In Brazil, he adopted the name of Custódio Joaquim de Almeida.

3- It seems, he used the English as his communication language.

4 - He was considered as a healthy man, in times when Afro-Brazilians were very poor, living massively in slums. And more than an assumption, he acted as a rich person, so much that he could afford the ownership of racing horses at the local Jockey Club -- a place where then Afro-Brazilians were not admitted.

5 - People used to say, as well, that each month, until he died, he collected at the local branch of Bank of London, a pension in Sterling Pounds.

6 - Since I know quite sure, today, which the Oba overthrown, Ovonramwen, was exiled to Calabar (Nigeria), and he died there in 1914; and more, since the gentleman that lived here died in 1935, for sure, Mr. Custódio Joaquim de Almeida was not the overthrown Oba . Then, who was he? Will he be a brother or a son of Ovonramwen, which left Calabar and moved to Brazil, and was rewarded with a pension for life? (Do you know that during the nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries there were regular ship lines between Bahia -- Brazil -- and West Coast of Africa?)

Since you have participated in the query in the Internet about this question, please know that my e-mail address keep on receiving information from many people (just two days, and 8 answers were collected). I may promise to you, if you have interest in this issue, to keep you informed about it.

Nevertheless, concerning the writing of an article for your magazine, I would like to share with you the following question:

As you may see, I may write in English with no spelling errors. But my thinking is in Portuguese, which is Brazil's official idiom. I have a guess that my writing may have phrases in a wording that may not match with educated English. This I must share with you: the confirmation if I'm right or wrong. Depending on your statement, yes I may cooperate with your magazine.

No matter how you will react to it, be sure that I am glad that you have answered the query

The picture I'm enclosing to this letter depicts the man who used to call himself the Prince of Benin.

Best regards,

José Luiz Pereira da Costa

I am Afro-Brazilian, I was in my youth a news editor, I'm lawyer, and a former professor.