APINO...THE WARRIOR, THE CONQUEROR, THE GRASSROOT MAN
BY OSEI KYEIMENSAH-BONSAU, M.P. & MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. Akenten Appiah Menka is still looking over the next generation of Asanteman. In the lead up to the Presidential and General elections of 2016 when the need to put together a team to reinvigorate the patch up enterprise of the New Patriotic Party, he emerged as the natural leader. On his sick bed, a couple of months back, when we discussed the necessity to form a group to plan the socio-economic revival of his roots he held my hand and rustled: “Osei, count me in, I guess I should be alright the next few days. I believe I still have a few ideas to share.....” To share he could not; those ideas perhaps would be interred with him. To some of us his guidance will never be forgotten. In those days, the Founder of Apino Soap and King Soap (“a, ahendwa da so”) would be gone to work at 8a.m. and stay late. We knew when to catch up with him though. Exhausted on return, he still had time and patience for everybody. He went out of his way for everybody. Baafuor Akoto knew the person he was to bequeath us to when on a visit to him at the dusk of his own life he said to us in his rusty, weather-beaten voice: “I will soon be gone but I leave you in the hands of Appiah Menkah, I trust him and you can trust him”. The influence Apino had, none of us grasped until it was too late. He was an icon of complexity in simplicity; an icon of truth, a flower of
freedom that blossomed in the face of the rampaging forces of darkness in a revolutionary regime that sowed the seeds of discrimination, selectivity and hatred; the people against citizens; sons and daughters against parents; the youth against the elderly. It is why his trial by the regime for an alleged crime, for which many lawyers including Chiefs had been cited but which turned out to zero in on him alone, attracted so many sympathizers and well-wishers to what is now the Conference Hall of the Speaker of Parliament. Was his case the reality of the torture of and scorch-earth agenda against Asante that had been plotted by the master architects of our inglorious past?

He was incarcerated for a long time, but he kept his focus, his vision, and was not broken. He survived through the power of hope and resilience. He was a man of integrity, a man of truth; the truth of the value of justice with safe soul and noble goal. A warrior who conquered the poverty of Aboabugya to rub shoulders with the icons of society in the late sixties. The adventures of hunting for rats and grass cutters; catapulting birds, picking snails and cola nuts and harvesting mushrooms; and the easy joy of eating ampesi with kontomire and nyaadoa ground with eta in earthen wares; the fufu with palm nut soup and the cozy belches from rapid consumption in the leafy and raw environment could not hold him down. He left the cocoa farms to
Abuakwa State College, Kibi thence to United Kingdom returning as an Advocate.

That was how come he got counted among the 140 members of the Progress Party dominated Parliament of 1969 when the country's population was 8.5 million. He represented Afigya Kwabre even though in the primaries he lost out to J.C. Yeboah, a building contractor from Nkukua Buoho. J.C. died before the elections and Professor Busia pleaded with the constituency party to allow Mr. Appiah Menka to fill in having noticed a great potential in the latter.

In the blood and thunder days of the past, Generals Afrifa and Acheampong, two Ashanti former Heads of State had been tied to the stakes and shot. So too had Air Marshal Yaw Boakye whose village, Aduman, is not too far away from Aboabugya. There was panic and fear and Asante Youth was looking for leadership. We identified one: Apino. He did not disappoint. He proved the reality of our dreams: the intellectual who did not shed his grass root connect.... a resonance of hope. That is why we clung to him. He has been there for all since then, until he conquered death with an embrace, the warrior that he was. 

That is why we are here to shed tears with the family; with his beloved wife, Mrs. Rose Appiah Menkah knowing very well their tears would not be enough to ferry this truly great man to greater beyond. 'The River in
the sea', the autobiography of APINO tells the rest of the story from ground zero.

The man who does not grudge one, is identified by Professor Evans Atta Mills on Friday:

The other day, back from his admission at the hospital, he appeared to be reinventing himself; he had put on and sealed the emerging potholes and was his hearty self and cracking a few jokes, no longer the ponderous soul he was metamorphosing into. Subsequently, he carried himself to be at my coronation as a ceremonial chief.

Beholding him, tears swelled in my eyes.

A couple of months later he had lost so much weight again and was barely audible. In response to the jerks of the creaking bones he haplessly intoned: "Osei ayèden, oo!!" He was labouring on the road to Life after Life. Today he is no more.

So begone, begone APINO he who sacrificed enormously for the establishment of the Danquah-Busia Club which metamorphosed to the New Patriotic Party. You caused the resurrection of the Friday Club that financed and nurtured the infant Danquah-Busia Club. Did he receive commensurate recognition when the party assumed the reins of power between 2001 and 2008? That is a matter that chroniclers of contemporary history may want to interrogate. Was Apino bitter? He was human yet bore no grudges. He carried himself with equanimity until
the fall and rise again of his party...at last some recompense through his children.

Begone now, a fulfilled live you have lived...Your saviour is near, your relief has appeared. Whilst you wrestled we saw your occasional smile, with Christ in the vessel.....Begone Uncle Apino... the rest will be afforded by your Eternal Redeemer....Adieu!!!