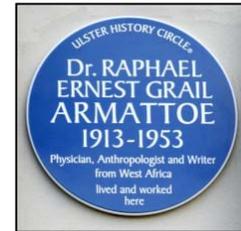


HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE



DR. RAPHAEL ERNEST GRAIL ARMATTOE (1913-1953)

Raphael Ernest Grail Armattoo was born in August 1913 to a prominent family of the Ewe people in Togoland, West Africa. He came to Europe at the age of 17 to continue his education. Armattoo studied in Germany, France and Britain; coming to Northern Ireland shortly after receiving a medical qualification in Edinburgh in 1938. Dr Armattoo spent over a decade working in Northern Ireland.

Besides practicing medicine in Derry, Raphael Armattoo made a unique contribution to the intellectual life of the city and he wrote articles for the Londonderry Sentinel as well as for academic

Armattoo wrote a book on The Golden Age Of West African Civilization and issued numerous pamphlets. He spoke at the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England and the Scientific and Cultural Conference for World Peace in New York in 1949. At both of these major conferences, Dr Armattoo called for independence of the African colonies.

In 1948 Dr. Armattoo, with a grant from the Wenner Gren Foundation for anthropology research returned to West Africa coming back to Derry half a year later to write up his reports, mainly studies of Ewe physical anthropology, especially charting the distribution of blood groups, a field of study that was just emerging at the time.

Towards the end of 1950 Armattoo and his family settled in Kumasi, in what is now Ghana, where he set up a medical clinic and research centre. There he wrote two books of poetry, *Between The Forest And The Sea* and *Deep Down In The Black Man's Mind*, which are of continuing interest to students of African literature.

After the First World War, the former German colony of Togoland was divided into two mandates, one under French and the other under British rule. As the Togoland mandates and the Gold Coast colony were moving towards independence, Armattoo called for British and French Togoland to be reunited as a single country, rather than British Togoland becoming part of Ghana, as it eventually did become. Armattoo became active in both the pre-independence Ghana Congress Party, in opposition to Kwame Nkrumah; and the Joint Togoland Congress.

Dr Armattoo travelled to New York in 1953 to address a United Nations commission on the 'Eweland question' and Togoland unification. On his way back to Kumasi, he visited the British Isles and Germany. Taken sick en route, Armattoo was treated in hospital in Hamburg, where he died on 21 December 1953.

Location of plaque: 7 Northland Road, Londonderry

[The Ulster History Circle erects blue plaques in public places throughout the province to commemorate people who have made a significant contribution to the community locally, regionally or in the wider world. Not all are well known and many have been forgotten in the place where they were born or worked.]