

# THE HISTORY OF ZIAVITUTUI COFFEE

“**Ziavitutui**” is a unique coffee brand with special processing method that is unique to the people of Ziavi traditional area in the Volta Region of Ghana. This is the origin of the name ‘Ziavitutui’ Coffee (literally meaning, coffee grinded typical by the people of Ziavi).

Ziavitutui coffee is unique due to its aromatic and tasty flavour, superior to other coffee brands produced locally in Ghana. The coffee is carefully prepared using the historic and traditional formula developed over the years by the people of Ziavi. The coffee beans are hand-picked from plantations located on the high altitudes at mountainous areas of Volta Region of Ghana.

Ziavi traditional area is located in the Ho Municipality. The area can be found in the North-Western part of Ho, the Regional Capital of the Volta Region. The first town (Ziavi Dzogbe) is about five kilometres away from Ho which is about ten minutes’ drive from Ho. The towns are located in a valley surrounded by hills. It is this topographical layout that made coffee one of the prominent agricultural crops in the area. As coffee plants are known to thrive well at higher altitudes and are therefore often cultivated on slopes or on mountainous areas, the area was found suitable for the cultivation of the crop.

In the 1960’s and 70’s when coffee production in Ghana was prosperous, Ziavi was very instrumental in its cultivation. The people were not only coffee farmers but they developed a local industry for its processing. Unlike many newly introduced cash or industrial crops that were produced and harvested mainly for the export market or to other processing factories, coffee was production was different. This is in the sense that the local producers developed the taste for its consumption and through simple processing techniques, coffee consumption became very common among the people.

There were no formal processing factories, as a result all coffee producing areas including Ziavi developed their own methods of processing the beans for local consumption as well as commercial purpose. This was where the innovative culinary skills of the people of Ziavi had the upper hand. There was an indigenous recipe developed for processing coffee in Ziavi that distinguished it from coffee processed from other areas. The qualities that set *Ziavitutui* apart are; its aroma, its true dark-brown coffee colour, taste and the texture of the grinded coffee. To get all these qualities in a single processed coffee demands a highly technical skills that coffee processors at Ziavi discovered and have kept over the years and passed on to the current generation.

Oral history had it that when processed coffee mainly grounded into powder were brought from all other places to the market, buyers looked for those from Ziavi first. If *Ziavitutui* was not finished in the market, buyers will not buy any other coffee. That also brought supply contracts to some of the processors mostly women who supplied some institutions, industries and the military; such as Juapong Textile Limited, Volta Barracks and several schools in and outside the Region. After sometime other processors of coffee from other areas got fed-up as they were not able to compete favourably in the market space, hence gave up coffee processing leaving Ziavi to become the centre of quality coffee processing.

Research has also shown that micro-climate and soil plays major roles in the flavor profile of coffee in addition to the method of processing adopted. Ziavi may have been enjoying locational advantage in this judging from the topography of the area being a hilly place.

Oral history also had it that, in the late 19th Century some Germans were resident on *Galenkuitodzi*, the hills overlooking Ho township. These Germans brought various crops that they grew in their surroundings. The crops introduced included coffee which cultivated and processed for their own use and for export. Due to the proximity of Ziavi to the settlements of the Germans, some citizens of Ziavi were employed to provide labour and other services on the farms while the Germans played supervisory and monitory roles. Through this association, the people of Ziavi picked the art and the techniques involved in coffee cultivation and its processing based on the Germans procedure.

When the Germans eventually left, the skills in coffee cultivation and its processing acquired by the people of Ziavi was put into practice. This lifted the name of the community into prominence due to the quality of their coffee, which was known as '*Ziavitutui*'. The meaning of the name '*Ziavitutui*' is; coffee grinded by the people of Ziavi. This remains the name of the high quality, locally processed coffee produced by the people of Ziavi across the then Gold Coast and persevered up to today.

From the mid-1980s the coffee industry in the area and most parts of Ghana had gone down. These collapse was due to the famous 1983 wild fires that destroyed most of the coffee farms in the country. Furthermore, the withdrawal of Ghana COCOBOD from marketing coffee demotivated farmers as they no longer had ready markets for their produce. Nevertheless, some of the processors continued to travel to faraway places as far as Togo to buy the coffee beans for processing. This practice continued until the time that coffee beans became generally scarce as farmers were no longer going into its production, hence the collapse of the coffee industry in the area. Nevertheless, the knowledge and the skills of the coffee processing were preserved by the processors most of whom are deceased. Occasionally, some individuals look for few coffee beans for processing as a result the knowledge is passed on to the younger generation.

Today only few of the earlier generation processors are still alive. Some of these people were consulted to help in documenting the processes of getting the original *Ziavitutui* recipe in order to perpetuate and modernize the brand. Some of the youth from the traditional area were trained to acquire the skill to support the rebranding processes.

With the Government's current initiative in revamping coffee production in the country, the youths of Ziavi traditional area and its environs have taken up the challenge and are going into the cultivating of the crop currently. Revamping the processing of *Ziavitutui* coffee will create Market avenue for the coffee farmers. Additionally, this will also add value to the local coffee beans.

As an agricultural economist and value chain specialist with over thirty years' experience in agriculture and food processing, who is also a native of Ziavi, I deemed it necessary to take up the challenge to reactivate the *Ziavitutui* coffee industry by getting the original recipe to satisfy the unquenchable desires

of coffee lovers. Furthermore to re-brand the product to both local and international acceptable standards.

Efforts began by researching more into the coffee processing, some coffee farming communities were identified where coffee farmers were registered to serve as the source of supply of raw materials.

Currently, Ziavitutui coffee has been approved and registered by Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority (FDA).

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