

Nana Kofi Antwi Boasiako Genfi I Pinkyendomkohene
Nurom Suame, Ksi February 26th 2006

Prof: Nana we have come to chat with you about some aspects of history. We are working on a project about religious tolerance in Asante. We are looking at how traditional religion, Christianity and Islam work together in Asante. Prevailing notions of religion are dominated by Islam and Christianity to the point that our traditional religion seems forgotten sometimes. These days one has to visit places like Manhyia or chat with traditional leaders to ascertain its existence. So with this we would learn more about indigenous religions in Asante. I am also working on another project on the cultural history of Asante. I would like to study and learn Asante history from a different perspective. I would like to study it from the outside about how people have viewed themselves in the context of Asante's history. So the two projects overlap so as we chat we may cover some aspects, then we would ask questions. Nana I would like you to tell us about your stool, its origin and how you fit into the Suame.

Nana Genfi: Welcome. My stool is the Pinkyendomko stool. In the olden days the Pinkyendomko was the one person who signals to the king that the troop is ready for war, and then from time to time, I would update the king on the progress of the war. If I go and don't return then it means bad news. Our ancestors were very intelligent, you know. My ancestors came from Nsodua (Adanse). From there they went to Akwamu, they went with their deity Tee Mpem and that was where the Pinkyendomko stool was created for him. History tells us that he was very controversial, so they had to flee from Akwamu, so they came to Atebubu. That is where my great grandfather died. But my great grandmother continued with the rest to Offinso and asked Nana Offinsohene for shelter. They were directed to Offinso because we are also from the Asona clan. He gave us a place to settle and they named it Ayensua Fufuom. At that time, Opemsou Osei Tutu and Okomfo Anokye had already established Asanteman so they asked Offinsohene if they could go and serve Asantehene. He directed them to Okye Komfuo (Komfo Anokye). At that time, he was staying near Wesley College; I've forgotten the name of the place.

So Anokye took us and brought us to A-Lang here then he **spit** there to mark the spot where he had 'planted' us and it germinated a chewing stick. So he named the place Atwima Amanso. And there was a river by the name Akomunsu. Then they built the royal mausoleum at Breman. There was a rock here where they would stop and sharpen their knives so they called the place Sebuoso. This place was called Ahyerensua when Okomfo Anokye brought us here. Then Asantehene allowed us to maintain our stool and title we brought from Akwamu, Pinkyendomko. So we had our stool when we came.

So our stool is not an "abodie" (created), it is an "agudie stool. Asantehene also created a stool for us, the Anonomsahene stool after the Gyaman war. That was Nana Osei Bonsu.

Before the Gyaman war, Nana Bonsu was looking for a brave man and my grandmother had a very brave son called Dwoben Diatuo. So Asantehene asked him to serve him a drink and if he returned victorious he would create a stool for him. He returned victorious and created the Anonomsa stool for him. Infact he created two stools on that same day – Nnibi and Anonomsa.

So we were the first to settle here before the rest of the Gyaase people moved here. It was not created to be put under this stool, it is separate.

Anonomsa is always present when Asantehene goes to Akrafieso. I am also always present. But that is not my duty; my main duty is to guard Ohene. I am always there with Manwere. It was not always like that. We went to Hwa war (Nana Antwi Gyakyi). Asantehene ordered Buabasa to send troops to come and support Antwi Gyakyi at Hwa. So when they arrived they realized that Antwi had defeated someone named Asiako, the strongest opponent. When news reached Kumasi that Antwi had defeated Asiako, it became part of his name "Antwi -bo-asiako. That was when the Nkonson stool was also created. Buabasa escorted the prisoners to Kumasi assisted by Nkonson (because they used shackles). But because Buabasa escorted them to Kumasi, they always call on him first before they see Asantehene. When Prempeh I was deported, my grandfather was in the group, but he didn't make it to Seychelles. Then when Prempeh I returned we had enstooled a foreigner due to lack of heirs. That was when a man called Sarkodie was enstooled. He is the one who sold the land to A-Lang; there are records at the Manhyia Archives that substantiate this story. In 1944 when there was a dispute between the Anonomsahene and Apagyahene about boundaries at Samanhene's residence, Pinkyendomkohene was a witness and he introduced himself as Asantehene safohene. Anonomsahene has since changed some of the records but I have the original ones. In our division (Gyaase), we have Gyaasewa. When Buabasa is not present, I am in charge. Then Nkonson follows. But as I said earlier, my grandfather served a bit differently and that has changed the power dynamics. My grandfather was the one who took the golden axe to the British to signal the end of human sacrifices in Asante. In exchange, he was given a British flag and a double-edged sword with a dove sign embossed on it. It was called 'eto wo akyiri a, efa'. And a pistol called 'akodiawuo'. Then Asantehene told him to keep them and display them when there is a durbar.

We are the inner circle of Asantehene's palace- Sanaa, Abenase, Deebuoso, Manwere etc. we are always there. When they returned from the Akyem war, Asantehene gave my grandfather Apakan (a palanquin). Then they went and thanked him with palm wine, sheep etc. In the olden days I use to have drums, palanquin and all kinds of regalia at my palace, associated with my stool, but they are all lost. Basically, that's what I know about my stool. When I was enstooled, I realized that my ancestors did not leave any historical records. So I read and also did some research. Then I also got some facts from Wilks' book, "Asante in the nineteenth century".

Now if you come to Nnurom, Nana Durowaa was my paternal grandmother.

It is said that after the death of Okomfo Anokye, Asantehene needed to continue where Anokye left off. So he summoned all the fetish priests and priestesses so that he could choose a successor for Anokye.

My grandmother was Denkyirahene's traditional priestess who predicted that the Denkyirahene would be killed. The Denkyirahene asked her to reverse that misfortune but she said that was impossible. She heard that she was going to be killed so she fled. First to Akyem Asiakwa. From Asiakwa they came to Asante when Ohene was having the durbar for the priest and priestesses to choose Anokye's successor. They first settled them at Dwuma Akyi. Every traditional priestess and priest performed something unique. Nana Durowaa performed the most distinctive act so the

Sumankwaa was created for her. There are a lot of things missing from our history. It may be because we have no more wars. In the olden days, when Ohene moved, there were two lines, left and right, and then Sumankwaa would be in the middle in front of Ohene. That is to protect Ohene and we moved left and right, not straight so that we could spot any hostilities. Ohene (Otumfuo) had his army (tuntufo) on his both sides and behind us. So if you look at the diagram my ancestors left for us, that is what you will see.

I think yesterday we had a little discussion about Nokye Komfo (Komfo Anokye). The little that I know was relayed to me by the mother of Nana Akwasi Agyeman (Otumfuo's cousin). She told me that, she was going to tell me something that is never discussed in Asante's history. But I should never forget. She said that the traditional priest, Nokye came from an area in the Volta region (Ayibge or haban akyi – behind the forest, Hwamanmu). He lived in Awukugwa. He married there and for some reason he was expelled from there. So he cursed the townswomen. That was when Opemso Osei Tutu had reached there from Akwamu. He was traveling with a very large crowd. So someone advised them to bring Nokye with them and they agreed to do so because of his extraordinary powers. He was from Hwa rather, not Awukugwa as many people believe and his name was Nokye Komfo which later evolved to Anokye Komfo then currently reversed to be Komfo Anokye. So I asked her how she found out. And she said Prempeh II told them. She told me a lot of things but I did not consider them important.

Prof: Between 1937 and 1946 Prempeh II commissioned a committee of five to write a comprehensive history of Asante. They did but never published it. Efforts were made to transcribe it and it had reached about 470 pages when I last checked. It will eventually be edited and published.

Nana Genfi: So do you find these accounts accurate?

Prof: I would have to check them again now that I am hearing this.

Nana Genfi: It saddens me when I hear people saying negative things about the Ayibge people, because during the wars, we left a lot of men there to marry and bear children among them. That is why we have a bunch of Asante names among them. Worawora, Peki, etc. we have those towns here. Just like the Kwahu people. It is 'ko awu' people, which has been adulterated as Kwahu. We went to many places. For example, in Ivory Coast the Bawore chief is also called Nana Osei Tutu Ababio. When Opoku Ware died, we hosted them when they came. The family of **Houphet Boigney** was originally from Nsuta. They are Adako people. It is said that a long time ago, during a succession dispute, Opoku Ware I killed his cousin. The vulnerable ones from that line escaped, fearing further persecution. When they reached the river on their way to the Ivory Coast, the banks were flooded. After some consultation with the river deity, it is said that it demanded a child to be sacrificed. One of the women with the youngest offspring offered her baby and the river receded and they were able to cross, that is how and why they call themselves Bawore (from the words *me ba awu* or *Ba awu*) He said they didn't know. **Houphet Boigney** (the former President of Ivory Coast) told them before he died. He married into that family and had been told by his mother and some relatives he met when he came to the Ivory Coast. He was from Nsuta but they were directly from Kumasi Oyoko family. They told me that they have a lot of money in Ivory Coast and would like to bring it home. Our leaders know this but I think they

are being cautious because sometimes it is better to leave people like that alone. We have a saying that when a lost royal is found, if you suspect that he might cause some problems, you host him as a guest instead of making him feel at home. His story may be true or false. So you cautiously host them hospitably without rolling out all the family secrets. He could be a thief, for all we know. Else he would turn around one day and wreak havoc on you. I think you should verify these things. I do not claim to be authoritative on this subject.

Ques: You mentioned Nana Durowaa as your paternal ancestress. Can you tell us a little more about her?

Nana Genfi: Nana Durowaa was a very strong assertive (Pabene) traditional priestess. She was my great grandfather's mother. That is on my paternal (father's) side. The little that I know is that they are only left with three women from the whole line. So it was my father's lineage that used to occupy the Sumankwaa stool. If the current Sumankwaahene would tell you the truth, when my father was alive, he used to seek permission from my father whenever he needed land or anything from Suame. So he was very paranoid about my father because he always suspected that my father wanted to destool him. It was so serious that when my father died he refused to pay tribute, saying that they may not want to hear what he had to say about my father. So the fact is that, the Sumankwaa stool was created for my grandmother Nana Durowaa, even though she was a woman. They are all from Denkyira, including our current president J.A. Kuffour's family (Apagya). They all were settled at Daabaa then we migrated to Dwumakyi and then Suame. But I can't sit here and trace the origin of anyone else's stool; you will have to talk to them. But Nana Durowaa was very strong spiritually and otherwise. She was a well known and much consulted herbalist. Suame consists of many little towns but mine is the largest community. We settled here first then Nana Osei Kwadwo (okoawia) tried to put all of them here so that they would be within his reach whenever he needed any of the gyase people such as the drummer groups, Sanaa, debuoso Suame, tunto etc. Asantehene got the land from Tafohene and settled all these people. I have a copy of the original map showing our boundaries with Tafo.

Prof: So now it appears that your maternal line and your paternal line have merged somehow right?

Nana Genfi: It seems so but there is a clear difference. My maternal line is the Pinkyendomko stool which I currently occupy and my father's line is the Nurom (Sumankwaa). We share a boundary right over there. After that wall is Pinkyendomko.

Ques: For a moment it was very confusing, as though Pinkyendomko is a Mmammadwa (paternal stool). So you are occupying the Pinkyendomko stool through your mother's line and you are in this house (Nnurom Hotel) because you inherited your father's assets as his first born son?

Nana Genfi: Exactly. If I inherited my father's stool, it would be Sumankwaa.

Prof: So is Sumankwaa a Mmammadwa?

Nana Genfi: Well, you can say that. It was supposed to be an Adehyedwa (through maternal/blood line but over the years it has changed to Mmaamma (paternal) stool. The shift occurred when there was no heir apparent and an incumbent trained his son who later succeeded him. At one time they asked my father's family for a successor and they did not bother because they were all educated, and then it went to another family paternally. Quite recently they wanted it back, but they realized they have somewhat lost it. This Sumankwaahene tried to create a stool for their house but they were advised not to accept it because the stool was originally created for them, so to accept it would mean to forget the real stool. So if you hear Asabre and Domfe, it is the paternal ones, not from the real maternal stool line.

Ques: We are also collecting stool histories. I would recommend that these are documented properly.

Nana Genfi: I'm sure that my father's brothers have the documents. One of them is a lawyer who has a passion for document preservation. I am very sure he has all the papers.

***3 audio**

Prof: Third recording of one day. We would like to talk about religion –Traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

Nana Genfi: Religion. I would tackle each one separately. Let's start with our traditional religion. We pour libation and worship things. Our ancestors poured libation for various reasons. Rocks and stones do not sin. They do not wrong anyone. Our ancestors would take clean innocent water and pour libation on clean innocent rock. They believed that before you can appear before God, you had to use innocence in your pleading, hence water on rock.

Now do you realize that all the biblical names are also dominant in the Muslim religion? There is a slight difference. I think the difference is in the teaching. In the Old Testament, they used animals to make sacrifices but they never gave details. For example, they say that God created only Adam and Eve. It is just not possible. Because when Cain killed Abel, they say that he fled to the east of Eden and got married, who lived there? Let's ask ourselves, who was there? They had sex. You see, the head of the penis looks like an apple. I have argued this out with ministers and clergymen. The bible doesn't spell too much out. The bible uses a lot of metaphors and we must put them in the proper context. In the six and seven books of Moses, they talk about Asantes coming down from Israel through Mesopotamia but don't say where they end. It goes to say that we have some things in common. Our language can be likened to the Hebrew Language. It shows that our ancestors used animals in sacrifices because they are feeble and innocent. So if you look at those traditions, they felt that the deities were innocent mediums.

Now I would relate our traditional religion to the Christian religion. Jesus Christ was black. I know someone who has seen the original icon in the German vault. The reason why Jesus was not accepted was his color, his blackness. When Jesus was praying he knelt down and touched the ground with his forehead. Mohammed did not condemn Jesus, he just added to what Jesus was saying. Mohammed was violent. He was violent because he felt he was bringing the good

news and wanted to be accepted by any means necessary. Jesus did something similar when he went to the temple in Jerusalem.

That is the root of all the conflicts. All Hispanics were Muslims, they just changed over time. It is the same God we serve and all these religions are related. Komfo Anokye was created for us to show us that there is a greater power somewhere. Mohammed was created for another part of the world to prove the same. Then Jesus was created to prove the same in another part of the world. We are all the same. A white heart can be transplanted in a black man and vice-versa. It's just our physical characteristics that set us apart, but at the end of the day we have more in common than we would ever care to believe. That is my view of all the religions. You may have your own perspective, but that is mine.

Prof: Well, I am interested in yours, not mine.

Nana Genfi: The difference is in the way we choose to understand God. All the religions are very similar just variations in doctrine and interpretation. For example, the three of us would have a different interpretation and analysis of this discussion tomorrow. The Quran was written by different people, so they would add their own analyses. There is nothing wrong with any religion just lack of understanding and misinterpretation. That is why we have to be respectful and tolerant of all the other religions. Bishop Sarpong has successfully fused traditional religion and Catholicism and it has worked and made a lot more Catholics feel included. The clergy and priests these days denounce other's religion, that is not right. Deep down, I prefer the Muslim religion to any other religion. Because look at the number of times they pray. To me, that is the true essence of worshiping God. Even the bible says we should continue to pray and worship, but how many times do Christians do that? Because the Muslims are close to Arabs, some behaviors have transcended the religion. No Muslim wants to kill anyone. You see, lack of education breeds most of these misunderstandings and bad behavior simulations. The Muslims do what they do because they have copied Arab behaviors. Look at what Osama Bin Laden did. Now it looks like all Muslims are bad people. And look at the hardship that it has brought onto the whole world. It has propelled poverty to another level unheard of in history. It is all due to lack of education. Truly educated Muslims do not subscribe to any of those bad things. If you meet a real Muslim, it is a lovely religion. We lack certain things such as dedication and devotion to God and they lack a certain education that would really make them the true worshippers of God that they incline to be. I don't know how our ancestors worshipped god. I believe you have to hit your head somehow somewhere to show your reverence to God as they do in Judaism but it is not found in Christianity. Well, the Catholics kneel a lot but that is about it. But we just kneel and touch our forehead with our hand. But Jesus knelt and touched the ground with his forehead. That is my view, you may not like it. Do you know that there was an Asantehene who wanted to convert all into Muslims?

Ques: Nana, do you have any relationship with Asantehene's Imam.

Nana Genfi: The only relationship we have is the fact that we played football together. The reason why Ohene included them was because it was perceived that they have some spiritual powers. So they were attached to Sumankwaa; that is what the relationship is about. He chants

the Quran and helps give alms. They were also settled here because of their special services to Asantehene through Sumankwaa.

Prof: Nana, thank you very much for an interesting chat. Thank you very much for your time.