

**March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Brodekoano (suburb of Kuntanase near Lake Bosomtwe)**

**Respondents:**

**Nana Akosua Asiah Sekina Boakyewaa**  
**Nana Akosua Amankwaa – Sekina’s first child,**  
**Nana Kwadwo Nimo – Kuntanase Gyasewahene**  
**Nana Abenaa Serwa – Kuntanase Hema**  
**Nana Kwame Akyeampomg – Brodekoano Hene**  
**Nana Boateng - grandchild**  
**Yakubu Kramo – great grandson**  
**Amma Konadu – grandchild**  
**Alhaji Ibrahim – grandson in law**  
**Ayuba Somana – great grandson**  
**Ibrahim Ofori – son in law**  
**Musa Kofi Anane – son**  
**Somana Ntim – 9<sup>th</sup> born**  
**Latif Agyei – grandson**

**Interview conducted by Emmanuel Akyeampong and Rebecca Tandoh**

**Prof:** Today is March 19<sup>th</sup> 2006. We are at Brodekoano to visit Nana Akosua Asiah Sekina Boakyewaa who is an Ahmadiya Muslim with her children and grandchildren.

We are researching how the various religions in Africa or Ghana interact and live in harmony while in many places there seems to be so much conflict. I would like Maame Sekina to tell us about her religion and how it has evolved to the present day. To help me understand how you worship God. So Sekina you can start.

**Sekina:** I would like the children to speak for me.

**Nana Akyeampong:** No. we would like you to speak for yourself. How it [Ahmadiya Islam] came to this place, how it evolved. How come we have been here all these years without conflict of any kind with any other group or religion? We would also like to hear that from you, so you should speak yourself, just try.

**Sekina:** We have twelve children my husband and I. we had just moved to Apemenase and there was a white man preaching in the village.

**Prof:** I understand that before he came, there were Muslims in Asante so what did he say so differently that convinced you?

**Musa Anane:** What happened was that. There were Muslims here you were right. But there was a particular man called Hakim from Pakistan who brought Islam (Ahmadiya movement) to Asante, specifically Apemenase. He started going around with the Apemenase locals in search of converts. They went to the old town and our fathers before us converted, it was Opanin Issaka,

Dauda, Abdullah, Kwame Dum (Somana). It was they that started at Brodekoano and it has continued to date.

**Prof:** So there were Muslims here [Asante], they just didn't go around preaching and converting people?

**Ans:** Yes, they just stayed in Kumasi and its environs.

**Prof:** Nana, can you tell us about how you converted. Was it on your own, your parents or other associates?

**Sekina:** It was my husband who took me.

**Prof:** So there are other Muslim groups besides Ahmadiya. Do you do things with them?

**Ans:** We do not do anything with them because of the difference in our doctrines. It is prophesied that when the holy one comes we should embrace him. The other Muslim groups claim by their doctrine that he has not come yet. That person was Ahmad, they claim he has not come yet and we Ahmadiya claim that he has come already. Because of that disagreement we cannot do anything together. This is the only difference. But we do things with them.

**Prof:** We understand that Asantehene has his own kramo. So the Muslims here, do you have anything to do with the Kuntanase chief?

**Ans:** We do not have any problem with the chief here. We obey all laws, rules and regulations in this town. We always consult with Nana on all matters.

**Prof:** I see that you have your own little mosque on the corner.

**Ibrahim Ofori:** What I know is that when Islam came here, it was difficult because the doctrine and the principles were very difficult for most of us to follow. But through the preaching those of us who listened realized that it was good. There were some very good virtues in it so we got closer and we converted to Islam, but as Ahmadiya. It emphasizes love so we get along with the Christians, the teachings also tell you about togetherness, getting along with one another, cleanliness, because God is very clean. So it really tells us apart from others. Ahmadiya always think of development that is why we have a lot of schools.

**Prof:** So your children's education. Do you prefer them to go to Islamic schools?

**Ans:** We allow our children to attend regular schools then we find other ways to get them Islamic education. For example at the Ahmadiya institution in Kumasi, you find children from all kinds of religious backgrounds.

**Prof:** so do you have any Islamic school in this area for your children?

**Ans:** not really. We only have a mosque, then after praying together, the members and the family gather to teach and discuss the Quran and some related principles.

**Prof:** You mentioned Suleiman Dauda etc. [first generation of Ahmadiya converts.] The faith has since grown a bit. Can you please tell us about how far it has spread or expanded in this community at least?

**Ans:** Yes. We have grown quite a bit. As mother said at the beginning, it was a very small community. For example, I was a Roman Catholic. I attended Catholic school in Kuntanase and graduated in 1960. At that time Papa Adam preached to me until I understood and converted. Then I picked up and also started preaching. When I moved back to Brodekoano I continued to preach until now. Now we have over 60 members in our family alone and over 500 members in this community.

**Prof:** So you were the first member of your family to be converted?

**Ans:** Yes

**Prof:** What was so different from the Catholic doctrine?

**Ans:** Well, as I said I was a Catholic and I taught at the Methodist primary school. I was also a catechist for the Catholic Church. But as I said earlier, when Papa Adam started preaching to me, I ignored it for a long time until I was dismissed as a pupil teacher. But when I started farming I got closer to some of the Muslims and they would preach and they would ask me to read their bible for them because I could read. In those days, transportation was scarce so we would be trapped together all day waiting for a car and that is when I started really reading their teachings not just for them but for myself to understand. Then I started realizing the disparities between Christianity and Islam. For example Christians sing a lot when they are praying, but the Quran forbids that because it says “one must pray in absolute concentration”. Also it says that when Jesus went to pray he touched his forehead on the ground, but when Christians pray they sit on chairs. Which makes one wonder who they are following. There are a lot of things that made me question many aspects of Christianity so I converted.

**Prof:** So in this house do you marry only Muslims? How do you choose your spouses? Could Sekina explain that for us?

**Sekina:** In this house, you can marry anyone. If you are able to convert her then you do. But we do not force anyone to be a Muslim.

**Ans:** When I was a Catholic my wife was a Methodist. When I converted in 1965 I asked my father in law if he would allow her daughter to also convert. He agreed and my wife obliged and to this day we are both Ahmadiya with most of our children. All of our children all free to choose their religion so some have followed us and some have also converted to other religions.

**Musa Anane:** Before I was converted I was a Methodist and my wife was a Catholic. When we married we travelled. It was in our travels that we met some Ahmadiya and they preached very

well. The Ahmadiya preached and explained the bible better so in 1966 I registered as a Muslim. Then I came to tell my wife. She told me that she would have to come back to Brodekoano and get permission from her father. In 1967 she came home and told her father, and her father advised her to follow her husband. Thank God most of our children are still Muslims.

**Sekina's 9<sup>th</sup> born:** In this family this is how it is. My mother's first born (my oldest brother) Yusif married Papa Abdullah's daughter and all their children are still Muslim. The second born married Papa Issaka's daughter, all their children are Muslims. My brother Ibrahim married Maame Hawa's daughter, thank god all their children are still Muslims. Then my brother Yaya married a Christian who converted after marriage to my brother. Then Amadu married a Christian who later converted. Then when it was time for me to get married, Papa Osmanu gave me his daughter. It is only my oldest sister who is still a Catholic. We still do everything together especially during Ramadan. My mother had twelve children, only two are women and only one non-Ahmadiya. But it is our children who have some problems with the religion. Some have swayed back and forth to other religions.

Our father died in this religion. Sekina was an only child. On her last birthday we counted over four hundred and sixty descendants but not all of them could come.

**Prof:** Could you tell me something about your father? Then I would like your sister to tell us about why she chose to remain a Christian in an almost all-Muslim family, and then I would like to know your perceptions of "Asante Kramo".

**Ans:** When my father died I was very young. But I remember he was a very good herbalist and he was also into traditional religion. Then my sister Zenabu got sick and after trying everything he knew he realized that only God can help and he decided to search for God. So he started listening to Papa Ayuba and converted. My father's name was Kofi Hweasemakyi and took the name Ayuba when he converted. When he died the community gave him a very dignified burial at Apemenase.

We get along with all kinds of groups during Ramadan, most Christians come to join us to feast, and we do not discriminate against anyone.

**Prof:** Please give it to your sister to tell us about her religion, Catholicism, and how it fits into all of this.

**Sekina's oldest daughter:** Well, what I can tell you is that. I have been a Catholic all my life. When my parents decided to become Muslims, they did not belong to any denomination; I was a Catholic then already. My name is Akosua Amankwaa or Akosua Afre. They wandered a lot. They went to Kankamea deity etc. then they got tired and decided to seek God and found him in Islam.

**Yaya Boateng:** Well, when we were born our parents were in it already. So we continued and now my generation, we study the Quran and Arabic so that we can take it further. We suspect that was why some of our brothers left the religion because they did not understand what they were being told because of the language barrier. I married a Catholic and she later converted.

**Prof:** You must have given her some pressure?

**Yaya:** No, no pressure. You use persuasion because pressure can undermine the relationship and cause some problems including divorce. As Abraham said, you do not follow anyone to worship anyone or anything except God. If you are asked to follow to worship God, you do not need to know which God because there is only one. So we Moslems we don't care which God you worship, so long as it is God. So my wife can be a Christian, it is the same God.

**Becky:** I picked Sekina [for an interview] because I heard that she died and woke up again. And there were some Arabic inscriptions in her palms.

**Sekina:** When I woke up there was something written in my left palm. It is true. But no one could read it. Infact I didn't show it to anyone for a while. We were in Hiakobo, about forty years ago.

**Prof:** So if you had been there you would have read the Arabic and recorded it for history.

**Sekina:** I couldn't do anything. I heard a voice saying Sekina, Sekina; it is not your time yet. So I got up got my butta (kettle), washed and started preaching. And I have been here since.

**Becky:** In the course of this research we have interacted with many Muslim groups, what appears common among Muslims is spiritual healing. Do the Ahmadiya do the same?

**Ans:** Islam, the Quran tells us that the prophet said that Islam will split into 32 but only one group would make it to heaven. So they asked the prophet so which group would make it then. And the prophet said the group whose teachings would be in accordance with the Quran. So truly Muslims have split in many ways but Ahmadiya is different. All these violence and conflicts you will not find it among Ahmadiya. The prophet said that after his death, there would be confusion and disintegration, and then a saviour would come to redeem and rebuild the religion. Therefore in the prophecy he outlines what would happen and how we would know that the saviour and redeemer has come. That is what tells us that the *mahdi* has come and he started Ahmadiya.

**Nana Akyeampong:** Old man, I think you are dragging the question too far. The question is, do you perform spiritual healings?

**Ans:** No we do not. That is what sets us apart. We recite the same things when we pray, slaughter an animal etc but the laws say that we should not tell fortune or make predictions because then you are the same as the fetish priest of a deity.

I know a lot of Muslims who do that but Ahmadiya do not do that.

**Ques:** Do you have any other Muslim groups here at Brodekoano?

**Ans:** Yes, but they are visitors. But when they come, while they are here they use our mosque and we live in harmony.

**Prof:** The other Muslim groups, do they see you as just another “Asante Kramo” or very different. How do other Muslims see you?

**Ans:** I think they see us as a Muslim group with harmony

**Prof:** Why did your wife need her father’s approval to follow you to conversion?

**Ans:** My father in law was into traditional religion and all his siblings were Muslims so she felt very uneasy thinking her father might suspect that other members of his family had persuaded her.

**Prof:** Can you tell us about your mosque. How and when did it begin, who uses it and who funds it?

**Ans:** We use to be at a place called Adadam, right on the edge of Lake Bosomtwe. It was too close to the lake and we were afraid that one day the lake would sweep us away so we moved up here. We have been here for quite sometime and for the longest time we worshipped at someone’s house (Papa Sumeila) so we decided to build a mosque and that is where we are. We recently decided to renovate it because it used to leak when it rains. So we have done some work and we are still doing some work as you can see

**Ans 2:** what I want to add is that we first build a mosque at Fahiakobo and then when we moved here the town couldn’t give us a visible plot.

**Prof:** Gentleman, you haven’t said anything. I heard you are not a Muslim.

**Ayuba:** I am a Muslim, I just don’t practice it as well as I use to. I came to meet my grandparents at Fahiakobo. We had a mosque there but we had to move here. When we moved here, we used to meet and pray at Agya Sumeila’s house. When his children left the religion they practically threw us out overnight.

So we use bamboo and palm branches to build a skeletal structure which we used for a while. Then the chief gave us some land which wound up in conflict because someone did not want to release the land to Muslims. But the chief and his elders stood firmly behind us and today it is securely ours. So we started it and sustained it for a long time before the congregation got to this size.

**Prof:** Nana Sekina. I think we have taken enough of your time and I would like to thank you and your family for your patience and kindness. I would like to thank all of you. As you know in research we may remember something and would like to come back for further discussion. And sometimes we would like to just visit to see how you are doing. May God continue to bless your family and your mosque. Thank you very much.