

Date 15 July 2008

Conversation with: Tano Oboase Chief Nana Baffour Amisare II.

Also Present were: Nana Adomako Akyeampong (Nifahene); Tano Komfo Oppong Kyekyeku; Linguist Nana Yaw Boadi; and Tour Guide Osei Tano Brempong.

Purpose of Visit: To conduct conversations as part of the TrustAfrica Religious Tolerance/Pluralism project.

Place(s) of Conversation. The main conversation took place at the Ahenfie (Chief's house) and was followed with a visit to the Tano Shrine room. The palace is just opposite from the Bosomfie where the Tano shrine and two others (Abohwim and Amoa) are housed.

Comments:

By previous arrangement, Nana and his elders have been informed of the interview and therefore they were ready by the time I arrived from Takyiman this morning. Dr. Akyeampong will be in class with his students from Harvard and thus I will be conducting the interview alone. I was taken to the palace by my guide Osei Tano Brempong who led the Harvard group for the tour of the Tano shrine outcrop. We have not been able to visit the Tano River source because we were told that visitors could not be allowed to the location after mid-day. I had plans to make the visit to the Riverside today prior to the conversation at the palace. It was disappointing when my guide asked that we go to the palace first because Nana wanted to see me first.

I will record my interviews today and take pictures. I was however not allowed to tape the pre-interview formalities. These included the initial greeting (shaking hands) of Nana and elders present; the guide introducing me to Nana and his elders; my presentation of a bottle of Schnapps, money to Nana, and the Obosomfo's performance of the libation; as well as the return of the greetings by Nana and his elders (the elders came to shake my hand, but Nana did not. He only welcomed me though his okyeame).

Formalities: I introduced myself and stated the purpose of the interviews to the elders present. I am David Owusu-Ansah and my research partner is Dr. Kwaku Akyeampong. We are both professors and teach overseas in America. Dr. Akyeampong teaches history at Harvard and I also teach history at James Madison University. We have heard of conflicts in Nigeria where Christians and Muslims clash, there are cases of civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Much of the investigated causes of these conflicts between Christians and Muslims stems from the lack of respect or lack of tolerance regarding faith and worship. But we see that Ghana does not experience these conflicts stemming from religious intolerance. Our research is funded by TrustAfrica with its head office in Dakar. Part of the work of Trust Africa is the engagement of scholars to do research from which information can be gathered and critically evaluated and from which governments and agencies might be advised on how to resolve conflict. I have worked on Muslim religion and in about 1984, I worked on Asante Nkramo at the palace in Kumase. I have also done work on Islamic education. Dr. Akyeampong has also done work at the palace on such topics as the history of Prempe I and his exile during the colonial period and how he became a Christian and still maintained his traditions as king. If this was possible, then there must be something in our cultural system that makes it possible for us to combine Abosomsom and other religious practices in a peaceful way. This is the reason why we are here to learn how our stools and abosom facilitate such religious tolerance. We have been working on this topic for the past weeks. We started in the Accra area when I visited Lartey at Akonnedi. Dr. Akyeampong has

visited Bosomtwe and on Monday of last week we went to Antoa and we are here today to learn from you and your elders about Tano. Therefore we have come in peace to learn from you so that our information for those who must know and make policy is better informed from the case studies in Ghana.

Nana Tanohene: Welcome. Yes, we have not had these bloody conflicts in our society because Christianity came to meet our stools and our abosom and also our ancestors (Nana nom) also welcomed the early missionaries in a cordial way. The introduction of Christianity was not like the way Muslims spread their religion. I know that Islam was introduced by force in their history but it was not like that in our community. Our ancestors and their religion embrace peace and they see their work as something that is controlled by Nyame. So if you were to ask our bosom for help, they will say that “if God allows me, then I will be able to be successful.” So our Abosom believe in God and this is our tradition. So I go to Church and yet I believe in the Bosom because the bosom tells me that it also believes in God so I see not conflict.

Q: So, Nana, what Church do you attend?

A: I am Catholic.

Q: So does the Catholic Church allow you to pour your libations?

A: Look, I go to Church and I pay my dues. The Church says “thou shall have no God besides me so say the Lord” and we know that the bosom believes in God and we believe in this one God. However, I do not attend the communion and in my heart I do not see and conflict or disagreement between serving the shrine and worshiping God at the Church because the bosom derives its power form God. So I am not concerned about what humans will tell me regarding the possible conflict between these two ways of serving God. I go to Church and nobody chases me out from worshiping there. And on the occasions when I perform our functions regarding the shrine they also come to join us.

Q: Does the priest come to your functions?

A: Of course. No priest comes to this town without coming to greet me.

Q: Does he come to greet you because you are the chief or because you have the shrine?

A: They come here because I am the chief, but they also know that I have the shrine.

Q: Nana, please tell me of the relations between abosom and stools. Do all stools have abosom?

A: Mostly all prominent stools have abosom attached to them. In the Asante nation, when we say that we are observing the Adaye, it means that we are performing rites to our stools and the King of Asante does the same but will he be prevented from going to Church because he visits his stools to perform these rituals?

Nana Adomako Akyeampong, Nifahene of Tanoboase who is chairman of the local Tanoboase development committee added a statement here: We Bono people, we are the people who God allowed to come from the ground first at Amoowi near Takyiman. There is also Nkroanza (the three old men) who have family relations to Kofi Kakari of Asante and therefore are related back in history to Nana Opoku Ware. History teaches us that long before the Asante wars against the Bono, we knew Tano. Tano is called Tano akora or Taakora. This is not to say that it is an old man (akokora) but rather that it has the tendency to correct (kora). So Tano corrects things that have gone wrong. So there are shrines like Brakune which can arrest people who are witches and may even kill them. But when you do something bad in the community and you admit your error and beg Tano, it can ask for forgiveness from the other shrines on your behalf. Tono therefore intercedes and corrects errors, hence the name “Taakora”. As we know from history, from the early centuries till the 16th, all the Akan people settled at Amoowi and we the Bono were the first to come from Amoowi. We are the first, or abono just like the first born is an “abono” birth or “Piasie”. We are the bono akyempim, yedua dua kwa. Just like planting corn, we were planted or our peoples populated the land. So when our people were coming from Amoowi and they arrived at the “grove” our mother Afua Akoma started to shake and the spirit of the bosom possessed her and she led the people to where the shrine was. The shrine identified itself as Tonoakora, he corrects things, and told them that the people will settle with him and he to protect them on condition that they do not hunt the animals in the immediate local because the animals protect the shrine. But the land can be cultivated except the immediate land around the location of the shrine. This is protected land and that land provides herbal medicine for the people. The people settled there under the rock till the population increased.

Nana Tanohene takes over the conversation to tell the history of the Tano town as follows: All Tano shrines originate from here hence this Tano at Tanoboase is called the Tano fu fuo (or white Tano). All other Tano subsidiary shrines originate from here. This Tono shrine does not kill people unless they have committed very serious offenses. But when you offend and you came here with repentance, you will be forgiven after the appropriate rites have been performed. This shows that Tano does not like war so when the Opoku Ware war was starting, the Tano shrine advised the Bono king not to engage in the war because he advised that Kotoko (Asante) and Bono were both Ékoona people and after all Asante had no intention to fight if the source of the crisis could be resolved peacefully. Tano counseled reconciliation but the Bonohene did not listen because other shrines told him that they could prepare the war for him successfully. Bono was defeated and the king took refuge in Gyaman.

When Opoku Ware arrived here, he heard that the Tano Shrine at Tanoboase had counseled reconciliation and so the Asantehene Opoku Ware asked Tano to protect him in the pursuit of the Bonohene to Gyaman and to fight Gyamanhene Adinkra. The shrine did so because it was pleased that the Asantehene had expressed faith in its spiritual counsel. The spirit of Tano itself went to Gyaman. At that time the shrine “lived” in the groove. As [Tano went to Gyaman, it sang the song:

Kronkron Tano (Holy Tano of pure soul)
Brafia Tano (Tano which has been brought home)
Mekra Nyame na maaba (I asked permission of God before I come)

This is proof that Tano recognizes God, and true to the promise to Asante, on Monday the fodwo [of the Akan ritual calendar) the Asantehene heard that Akindra of Gyaman was dead and Asante victory was assured. The people who had supported the opposition to Asante dispersed and in recognition of the role Tanoakro played in the expedition, the Asantehene honored the shrine with the Asante Mponponsua oath, he also brought the fontonfrom drum Gyaman to Tano as well as one of the stools of Gyaman (the hwedom stool) captured in the expedition, the Tano will also be forgiven the right to use without consequence the swearing of the Great oath of the Asantehene. The Tano shrine at Tanoboase was also elevated to head all the other Atano shrines in the land of Akan. It is thus the head bosom of all the shrines that derive their power from the Tano River. It is for this reason that the Asantehene in 1996 elevated the stool of Tanoboase to the status of a paramount chief. Thus, in terms of population and settlements, this village is a small place, but our stool is prominent in Asante affairs. That means that in the land of Asante when any priest of a Tano River shrine dies or a new one is being readied for the priesthood of a Tano shrine, that person must be brought here. In fact, there is one here at the moment being prepared for service of the Tano shrine. That person in training is from Bonwire in the Ashanti Region and she is being prepared to become priestess of Taa Kwame, the shrine at that town.

Q: Nana, can you explain further what a Tano komfo is? You have indicated that Tanoboase shrine is the Head of all Tano shrines so how does one distinguish between a Tano and other abosom?

A: All Tano bosom are in a “yaawa” the brass/silver pan. Also when the spirit of the shrine possesses the priest, it identifies itself as a Tano spirit. All Tano shrines primary not anti witchcraft shrines. Rather, they “correct things.” They can foresee evil and instruct what must be done to avert it; in the olden days the shrine even instructed people on sanitation issues asking for the cleaning and sweeping of the village in grand way to avert outbreak of diseases. This will be ritually done and we called it “si ban” or erecting a fence when eggs will be used for the ritual. That is to say that all Tano shrines engage only in the good and not in evil acts. This explains why the Tano shrine advised the Bonohene on reconciliation but he did not listen and this resulted in the capture of half of his land which the King of Asante gave to his son, Nkoranzahene and thus resulted in the break up of the Bono State. So today, the Tano remains the head of all Atano shrines and even some come from Bonduku to claim that they are Tano priests and we prepare them and send them off to perform their religious functions in their communities.

Q: If one says that they are possessed by Tano and they come here for training, what type of training do you provide for them?

A: The answer to the question was provided by the Tano okomfo (priest) present at the interview: The Tano River deity itself (through the art of procession of his Tanoboase priest) directs the collection of herbs and roots which are then prepared for the person to bathe and as this process continues, and the neophyte is directed to bathe at different locations. Then one day you will see that when he or she returns from the bathe, the person may not be speaking but having a “bodua” in the hand and you can see from his or her behavior that the spirit has possessed him. From that period on, the training intensifies. Some people take a short time for training others take over two years but it all depends on the capacity of the individuals to study.

We have a young girl here under training. Her mother accompanied her to stay here and during this long period of training. Whether man or woman, they must not have sexual relations with anyone. They should avoid things that cause spiritual filth to the deity. During this period also, the person will be strengthened through further herbal and spiritual education and he/she will be given further education regarding the priesthood. When the training is completed, the chief of your village will be invited to Tanoboase to the Abosomfie; also the abusua panin or head of the family from which the person who has been trained will be invited to attend the function. This is a great celebration. Then the graduating priest/priestess will be the start attraction. During the public possession, with bodua in hand, the performing priest will say things that will convince the elders and the chief of his or her village that this is indeed our deity that has possessed this or that person. They will speak to family history or secrets or even mention the names of certain ancestors of the stool in the past they the graduating priest under normal circumstance would never have know. These things convince the people that his is indeed a trained priest. This is public testimony of her training and priesthood.

Q: Does the invitation extended to the chief of the village of the neophyte indicate that he is the person to be serviced by the priest following the training?

A: Yes, that is why we said that every important stool has a bosom attached to it. During the period of the public performance, the graduating priest in the state of possession will make predictions for the coming year and if there are bad things predicted, the chief will ask what needs to be done to avert such calamitous conditions. Usually, the priest will require sacrifices to be made but he or she will not remove the signs of the events that were to take place so they people will know indeed that this was the even predicted.

Q: Nana, we have been talking about the history of the bosom (deity), but how about the stool of your stool as chief of this village?

A: Factually, the Tanoakora bosom was revealed to the ancestral Queen mother of this village and therefore the shrine is hers. But she soon realized that the services required of serving the shrine directly was something that a female could not do well because of the biological conditions of menstruation and other things. So, it was she (Nana Afua Ankoma I) who selected her son, Nana Fosu Adi Angoma to become the chief and custodian of the shrine. After his time, his younger brother Nana Amoa Kwaku became the next chief and custodian of the deity; he was succeeded by his son Nana Agyaa Abu, who was succeeded by his nephew Buasi Kwadwo, and so subsequent chiefs of the village will be custodians of the shrine. [The successor to the stool and therefore the custodianship to the deity is arranged in the Akan matrilineal way so we can have situations where the chief is the son of the queen mother or the son of her sister's]. This is the way that qualified me to become the chief. In fact, the current queen mother is my sister.

Q: So why do you now have an Obosofo if it is the chief who takes care of the deity?

A: In the olden days, it was the chief who carried the shrine during public affairs. But there has always been an obosofo in the company of the shrine. On very special occasions such as when

we attend to Otumfuo Asantehene, the shrine will be carried by the chief. But on ordinary occasions and for such functions, it is the obosofo who performs the functions.

Q: So is this the situation when in the company of Otumfuo, you the chief become the okomfo of Otumfuo. But in ordinary situations you will have your own okomfo?

A: Yes, but we will use the term bosomfo instead of okomfo. He, the obsomfo, carries the shrine but I the chief will be present and the queen mother must also be present because this is her deity which she has put in the care of the chief. So whenever the shrine is raised, either the chief or the queen mother must be present. If this is not the case, then the shrine cannot be raised. The Bosomfo carries the brass pan in which the deity resides. He has a special carrying pad (kahyire) which he puts on his head to carry the pan. The procedure is that it is the chief who takes the kahyire and gives it to the okyeame, and then the okyeame will give it to the obosomfo who then puts it on his head to carry the shrines. This is a ritual process because the okyeame uses this occasion to recite extensively things. We have special prayers and incantations to say as the kahyire is passed.

Q: Yesterday when we visited the Bosomfo, they took us to the shrine room with students, we could see the yaawa or pan of the deity, and some bottles of Schnapps, but the yaawa was situated on a raise and there were two afena (or swords) mounted in front of the shrine. Can you please explain this arrangement?

A: As for the afena, every chief had the sword and this that carried ahead of him and Taa akora as chief of the deities had its swords. The chief uses the sword also to swear and as a symbol of defending or fighting to protect the people. So every chief has afena. That is the sign of your power.

Q: So when the bosomfo carries the shrine, do they also remove the afena to accompany them?

A: No, that remains at the shrine room, but if it is an Adaye or an important function when the bosomfo is possessed and he dances, he can remove the swords and dance with them as remembrance of the defeat of enemies the deity helped to defeat such as in Gyaman or in the Ewe region. When Otumfuo went to war against the Hwa/Ewe people and he defeated them and brought many captive, some were sent to Tano as gift. They were here and some of them became family grand fathers. So Tano akora is sometimes called Nana Ko nim (the one who wins wars).

Q: We also saw in that room a smaller shrine (brass pan) which was situated just in front of the large Tano brass pan. What was that?

A: It is the same shrine. It was the deity that directed us to the things we used to create the smaller one so it has the same qualities as the big one. It is because the bigger yaawa is too heavy so we carry the smaller one most often but the bigger on very special occasions.

Q: So the smaller pan and its content is a replica of the big one.

A: Yes but in the olden days when Otumfuo came with very important concerns, the larger one was carried. But the smaller one behaves like an okyeame because when it is carried and the bosomfo begins to speak, he always turns to speak almost as if he is addressing the larger one so that the bosomfo will say what the deity wants him to say.

Q: So when do you carry the small one?

A: Oh, even today if someone comes for consultation, we can carry it. There are certain seven days in during the adaduanan (forty day calendar) that we do not disturb the shrine. In fact, during that time we do not even open the door to the shrine. But aside from these days, we can carry the shrine. If it is not a bad day we will carry it almost ever ready for consulting and everybody can come here.

Q: Does it mean that the Tanoakora shrine is for abisa/consultation?

A: Yes, he tells you to do this and that and other things that need to be done.

Q: If Tano allows consultation and assuming that somebody came here with some concerns and during the abisa process the Tano akora finds out that the problems for which the consultation is being done has offended another deity such as Anto Anyaman, can Tano on its own reverse the curse?

A: Yes, he can do that because he is Tano. But he will send you with his Okyeame to Antoa and he will direct that you take a sheep or some appropriate thing over to remove the curse at Antoa. Remember that the love among abosom is incredible strong. Look Aboa Kyra, a Tano god is a Bosom brafo and it can kill you very fast. This is a deity that the Bosomfo does not carry. The shrine is situated in the river itself. Over that location, the Tano Rive is very small and runs through a creek. When you go there, the bosomfo is on location and his okyeame will say things and then the deity will come in the river shrine. It is a brafo deity and you will see at its shrine knives and other related object. In the olden days, if you had a wife, for example, and you suspected her of not being faithful, you can take her there and the shrine will give the accused an egg and ask the person who is being accused to jump over the small stream that is so small that even a small child can cross. If you have indeed done wrong, it will not be possible for you to cross. So the children of the Tano River are many and they have many characters.

Q: When we came here yesterday, we saw another room at the Bosomfie that we were told contained another shrine. What is that shrine and what does it do?

A: There is the watchman of Tanoakora. It is called Abohwim.

Q: From where did it [Abohwim arrive?

A: It is from Serem (it was derived from the grassland area). It was one of our senior chiefs who went to the Northern Region to get this Abohwim. As we told you before, Tanoakora does not kill people but it corrects. So even if you are a witch and Tano meets you at night, it will not kill you but advise you to change your behavior. But a certain time came that some things were

going on that were not good. So he went to the Serem and got this shrine. As for abohwim immediately you offend, it catches you and if you and your family do not hurry up to come quickly to the Tano for it to be carried and ask for forgiveness, it will kill you. So as for the Abohvim, it was brought here specifically to take action against those who refused to listen to the Tano advice. The (Abohvim) takes action quickly.

Q: You said that Abohvim becomes the bodyguard for the big shrine (of Tanoakora) so was Tano fearful that another bosom might cause harm to it?

A: No, the big shrine does not kill people but there are some people refuse to listen even after you have advised them over and over again. Such persons, Tanoakora will then not longer ignore and it will allow Abohvim to act against them (kill them).

Q: You said that Tanoakora went to serem, to bring Abohvim. That means that Abohvim is not a Tano shrine so what type of bosom is it?

A: It is a suman (charm).

Q: What is the difference between a bosom (deity) and a suman (charms)?

A: Note that there cannot be any development without destruction. So the suman can cause destruction. The abosom are like Nyame nkoa (the servants of God), but if God were to punish allow all our sins, there would have been much destruction of humans. The abosom allows change of heart of those who offend but to ensure that the kindness and patience of the abosom is not taken for granted, that is why it brought the suman (Abohvim) to be attached. So Brakume and others are asuman to take action against those who might take action against evil doers. Brakune is just about four miles away from here. And they protect the chief by catching those who plan evil against him. So once they have been exposed and they have admitted their evil, they can be forgiven.

Q: sumankwahene, is he a bosomfo?

A: No, his is a stool position. He serves Otumfuo and he goes around to seek where the abosom are in the service of the Asante nation. In the olden days, the Nsumankwahene traveled the country to find out where all the abosom were and to inform the Otumfuo. As for the Tanoakora, when the King is performing the Adae, for example, he will come here to consult and when the Tano is carried, it may reveal things that will happen leading to the Adae. Rites will be performed and some of the Tano river water will be collected and taken to Otumfuo who will use it to “baptize” himself (or bathe) so that his soul is strengthened and make it possible to perform the Adae.

Q: Can you please tell me what the relationship between Tanoakora and Dente?

A: Krachi Dente is not a Tano. It is like the Abrafo shrine. It has a groove like Tano and people can go for abisa there. At times it is like nkoyaa (charms).

Q: So when the king (Otumfuo) needs help, he can go to Dente, and then come to Tano, and then to other shrines. Why does the king not just go to just one of the abosom?

A: Asanteman is big, and in this world only Jesus knew who was to betray him because Jesus was God. But as for humans, no matter what you do you will never become God. So you cannot just put your eye on open space. Dente protects the entire Krechi region, and Tano looks after and protect all the Bono space. So it is important that more of these shrines are consulted rather than just one.

Q: Does it mean that the abosom have their own territories and might know only things in that space?

A: Takora travels spiritually and it is mobile and can tell you things that happens long distance and it can tell you that something has happened to this royal of mine. Takora is a spirit?

Q: So does it mean that since it protects against evil and violence, the basic function of the abosom is peace and protection. You mentioned some of the things they protect against so as to maintain peace and among them was protecting against witches, and diseases, so other things can be listed in addition?

A: For example, this general elections (December 2008) that is about to take place, what the Tano can do is to pray for peace and conduct rituals known as “sumo” which is a rite which the queen mother sends a virgin to collect water and we pray and break eggs and conduct rituals. This will prevent violence in the society during the election. It has the ability to cool the hearts of hot tempered people and therefore when people are angered they will just talk but not engage in violence similar to that which happened in Serem (grassland area).

[Another elder interjected and added to the conversation] “Let me add,” he said. “Have you noticed that all the violence in Ghana happens a lot in the grassland region of the country? Akan people, because of our abosom we do not take cutlass and guns to engage in such actions because our abosom like peace.

Q: If peace is the purpose of the abosom, why is it that it is Christianity that has gain prominence and that the abosom(fo) have not made popular and public their nature?

A: That is not our tradition to evangelize like the people with bible in hand. But if one were to come to the bosom to seek help then the bosom will aid. In fact we cannot allow ourselves to be preaching because that is not the tradition of the abosom. As for the Tano, it likes peace. In the 1940s even one of the prohibitions was removed. The shrine did not allow nkrun ma (9th borns) to survive. When the 9th born came, it died and then your next child will be the 10th and that will survive but not the 9th. It was an akyiwadea of the Tano and that was prevented in any town that there was a Tano shrine. But one of the chiefs thought that it was time for change so he calls the elders and we preformed the rituals that removed that prohibition. I remember that they levied every house to contribute eggs, and also contributed fees which were used to buy a cow, and Tanoakora invited all its children (the other Tano shrines) and they all that were closer to this location came for those particular rituals to be performed to turn that prohibition. They

slaughtered the cow, cut it into pieces and used it for the rituals to turn prohibition. This allowed 9th children to survive for people except the bosomfo, the chief, and the queen mother. This shows you that the Tanoakora likes the wellbeing of the people and it does only good things.

Q: So why does the Tano not like 9th children?

A: Because it was its akyiwade (taboo) but it did not want to force it on its citizens. But the chief begged for ordinary people not to be burdened by this hence the ritual.

Q: How did the Christian religion come to this town that you the chief is a CATHOLIC.

A: In the mid 1940s, there was not school in this town I remember that in about 1945 when I was growing, Nana Kwabene Dwomo I who was chief of Tanoboase realized that the village was not progressing and there were no educated people here to the point that when people received letters, they have to take it to Takyiman to be read for them. But this stool at Tanoboase and the krontihene of Takyiman are brother so when our stool becomes vacant, the Takyiman krontihene will help the queen mother to select the next chief. This is the same when the Takyiman krontihene position becomes vacant the Tanoboasehene will fill it till the position is filled. So I remember that in the late 1930s into the early 1940s, Nana Kwabena Dwomo of Tanoboase was acting as regent for the Takyiman kronti stool and he lived there in the bigger town till a new king was selected. He was the one who returned and wanted progress for the town. It was he who opened a Post Office in this town so Post Office Box One became his box. He also contacted the missions for the school here. He contacted the Presbyterian Church which had opened a school at Tuabodom which is not far from here and asked them to open a school here. They told him that if he can raise money to pay for a teacher for one year the Presbyterian church will send him an instructor for a school. This he did and in 1946 the government opened a school here in the village. When the school was opened, a church was also attached to it.

The interesting thing was that the first teacher who was sent here was killed by Abohwim (the bosom brafo of Tanoakora)?

Q: Why was he killed by Abohwim?

A: The teacher was from Peki. Nana Dwomo I who was the chief was also a Cocoa Crooker for SAT--a cocoa purchasing company and the teacher thought that the chief has money. They teacher brought a man from Sierra Leone who he claimed could double the money of the chief for him. Nana had gone to receive money to purchase cocoa from framers and this teacher asked the Nana Dwomo to buy sheep and other things for a ritual for doubling his money in a box. The night when the money was to be given to the teacher, that was the very night that Abohwim struck him. So the teacher got sick and the church people came and prayed for him but he did not get well and the teacher started speaking the truth of his intention to dupe the chief. The church people did not say anything and in about three days, the teacher died. But the church and the school remained. But we all went to school and we believe that God is there so when it comes to my turn to inherit the stool we do not see any problem with it to go to school and be chief and attend to the shrine as well. The shrine tells me that there is God, and the Church tells me that there is God. So if you are a Christian and you tell me that I am wrong, then I do not

accept it. *In fact the teachings of the bosom are similar if not the same as that which the church teaches. We are taught not to sleep with someone's wife, do not steal, and when someone wrongs you go to the chief and get it resolved. Note that one does not kill unless they have thought evil thoughts about another so Nana can mediate conflict before it turns into murderous act.*

Q: So does it mean that the early Christians did not know that we followed the same rules?

A: But look at the teacher who has been brought here who Nana paid his salary and yet he held evil thoughts against the chief and attempted to dupe him. This shows that it is difficult to know the intentions of people even when they claim to be Christians. You see, now I go to the Presby Church.

Q: But when you go to Church doesn't the priest tell you that abosom som (worship of the shrines) is opposed by the Church?

A: I have not heard a Catholic priest ever speaking against my worship. But it is the modern Pentecostals that preach and condemn our practices. That does not worry me because they cannot judge me but God.

Q: So you are technically the chief bosomfo and yet you go to Church and then returns home to perform these duties. How do you reconcile the two?

A: I do not see any problem with that because the teachings are the same. When I go to Church I am told that "Thou shall not commit adultery" and my bosom also tells me not to commit adultery. So if I fake somebody's wife my bosom will tell me that what I have done is wrong. I am telling you it will ask me. The Church say, thus shall not kill but if I kill somebody his bosom or my bosom will kill me too so we don't do that. So I don't see any thing wrong with both religious teaching.

Q: How do you then explain the killing of the teacher from Peki who was killed for attempting to cheat Nana Dwomo?

A: We did not cause murder. He brought it upon himself by his actions.

Q: How about Islam, what are your thoughts on them?

A: As for Islam I do not know much about the religion. I don't know if they have some ten commandments or not. I have not gone to any Muslim to ask him to make medicine to kill anybody but I have heard that people go to Muslims to make such requests. This will indicate that their practice does not agree. I have not gone to any Muslim so I do not know whether this is true or not. What I know is that the teachings of the abosom to preserve life and that instructed by the Christian priests are the same.

Q: But didn't abohwim come from the North?

A: Yes, but it is not a Muslim. Rather, it is a suman (charm).

Q: So what do you do for abohwim as a suman?

A: It indicated to us what it eats. Even if you have a slave you will know its wants. It say, I don't like this, or I like this. You will not be able to see Abohwim standing here or there. It is a spirit and people will come here to say that they have been caught by Abohwim when I thought or planned to do this evil act. No body forces these people to tell us these. Abohwim has a priest but it is not carried like the Tano and therefore not require that a priest goes in training to perform for it. It just possesses the royal it likes or prefers. But I can also select a person from my family and we will let this person become the attendant and go through the basic rituals and then the spirit will take him. Abohwim does not speak it just acts like a soldier.

Q: If abohwim were to strike somebody like he did to the teacher. Couldn't Tano intervene to stop the death?

A: If Tano assesses the offense and sees it to be forgiving, then it can intervene and warns abohwim to cease that action and use the striking as a warning to others.

Q: Other than abohwim, is there another shrine at the Bosomfie?

A: Yes, there is Amoa. It acts as the houseboy. It spiritually travels around the domain of Tano and seeks what is happening and reports back to Tano. Tano can also send Amoa to act. Amoa eats anything--bread, groundnuts, plus a little drink. Amoa can tell you things from Accra right now and you will be surprise. Amoa can turn itself into human being and you can meet him as a person you do not know but he will tell you, oh you are having this people, go to Tano and you can get help. So when you come to Tano, the bosomfo will report to you that it was Tano who sent Amoa to come to advise you. And Tano can tell you not to tell him what you need because Amoa has reported everything. There was a time when one of our uncles, Kwaku Bonsu and other were coming to this town from Takyiman. They were walking and just about when they reached the outskirts of the town they met a man who they greeted but the man did not respond. So they greeted him again and he did not respond again. So Kwaku Bonsu started getting angry and said to the man who kept walking in the opposite direction thus: "ah, why do we greet you and you did not respond are we not people to you who do you think you are?" The man turned around and looked at them in anger. Just about that time one of the people in the Bonsu company told them to hurry home and stop the confrontation. Shortly after that, they were met by a runner who had been sent from the Tano bosom. He was sweating because he has been running since Amoa has reported to Tano the confrontation that was taking place. Upon arriving here they were hurried to the Tano shrine and they were told that the man who they met was already dead and on bed at the next village. He was very angry for his death and was on its way out of here. It was Tano bosom who sent Amoa to cover the mouth the man because had he responded to the confrontation, much evil would have come upon the three sons and royals of the Tano bosomfo. They were therefore instructed to find drinks to be given to Amoa for his work.

Also in 1928, an event happened when a wild animal (lion) was found on this land. It prevented people from going home and the hunters went looking for the animal but could not find it to kill

it. This was the time when there were many wild animals in this land. The bosom said that the person who was to kill the lion was not here yet. My uncle who was at Takyiman arrived but his mother wanted him to go back to Takyiman because she was afraid that the lion will kill him if he went to join the hunters. But my uncle wanted to join the hunters. So he was sent to the Tano shrine where he was made to perform some rites and then he went to join the hunters. They found the loin hidden in a thicket so they rattled it by ringing a bell. Immediately they did so, the lion jumped at them and my uncle shot at once into the mouth of the lion. The animal struggled with the gun till the other men arrested it, cut its feet, and tied it up. They were bringing it home but it died just at the outskirts of town. Immediately the bosomfo heard the gun shot, he immediately said to the women that the problem that the animal has caused the village was over. This shows you that the Tano bosom does only good. It does not kill by itself. That is why they attach to themselves asuman like abohwin that they would instruct to punish the few who act hideously. This is the reason why many stools search for additional asuman to be attached to their bosom because the abosom are more peaceful.

This means that the atano shrines are mostly peaceful and will not kill you, but they will close their eyes from other suman killing you because you have not listened to their warnings.

Q: Why will the deity close its eyes to you?

A: Even modern governments to the same. It is clear that governments like peace but if there is a citizen who causes troubles, what does governments do when it has police and soldiers? You are either arrested and imprisoned or at time even executed for the peace of the society.

Q: I am coming to the end of the conversation so if I finish and there are questions or issues you think I should have brought up, please talk about them. Now we talked about Tanoakora, and the town is called Tano Boase, and you said that you are brothers with the Krontihene of Takyiman.

A: Let me tell you something. Takyi Fri is one of our ancestral family members. He was a hunter who lived here at Tanoboase. In the olden days when people drummed it forced the animals to go deed into the forest, so he moved to Tuabodom, but as the village also grew and noise increased he moved to the Takyiman area to pursue his hunting. So the land belonged to him and it was the people of Bono Manso moved to the land that Takyi Fri had settled so he is the kronti because it was his land. Technically then the original Takyiman is Tanoboase since we hold the krontihene position in that town.

Q: Does this mean that Tanoboase is the elder town and Takyiman is its kronti?

A: Yes.

Q: What is its akwamu?

A: Oh, the Akwamu will belong to the Takyimanhene who also has his nifa and benkum, but the kronti is related to Tanoboase.

Q: So will Tanoboase also has a separate akwamu?

A: Oh yes and we have been elevated to a paramount chief. And because of the war and our part in it we are part of Asante. So you can talk about Asante islands in Bono and Tanoboase is one of them.

Q: How about Nkronza?

A: As for Nkronza it was already they were Asante people and they were the children of Asantehene Nana Kakari. So when we attend festival at Takyiman, the royal horn blower plays the tune “kotoko wo eye how, kotoko wo ye ehow” Kotoko (Asante) you are a pain! This is because all these lands belonged to Bono till Asante settled part of it or that the war caused relations with some of the land to change. As for the Nkronza horn, it is sounded thus “Agya na ede maame” “It is my father (agya Kakari) who gave it to me.”

Q: If Takyiman is Tanoboase Krontihene, why is it that Takyiman remains in Bono and Tanoboase is Asante land.\?

A: It is a political arrangement. Up till now, the king of Takyiman does not want to agree to this. Takyiman did not join the Asante confederacy and because the Takyiman and the Gyaman war.

Q: You said before that the abosom work together. But are there some abosom who do not work together?

A: Yes, some like “Ntoafo” are many. That which we call “ntoafo” are not place in a pan or yaawa. They are asuman. Some are made into drums but Tano is not like that. Ntoa shrines are abosom but others such as Tigare are a suman. Many of these northern (Serem) powers are asuman and they were originally used for hunting. So when northern hunters went hunting, some may even carry the suman with them on the back so the hunter can just shout at a wild animal like the lion and cause it to stop. So suman is what you use to go to war and bosom is what you “ask” or consult before you go to war. The consultation will tell you what to do when you are going to war. So when Otumfuo went to war in Gyaman, he was instructed not to kill the people so he did not kill many of the people and he brought some of them here and gave to the shrine here at Tanoboase as gifts. One of them became the wife of the chief. According to tradition my own mothers side were akodwa wife (stool wife) so part of my origins is Gyaman. This also means that every important stool has a special house from which it seeks wives.

Q: Please can I visit the abosom rooms today.

A: Oh yes today is Tuesday and you can take pictures.

Q: Yesterday when we came here, I could not take the picture because my camera did not cooperate. Anyway, I saw some objects that hang above the shrine in the Tano room. Can you explain them to me when we go there?

A: Oh yes. I heard that the students came yesterday and the bosomfo poured libation for them. He has the right to do so because even though I am the senior bosomfo (as chief) I have so many duties that I cannot be present all the time. So the bosomfo has been charged to represent me and he can do everything except that I must be present before he can carry the bosom. Or unless I knew that a visitor is arriving and that I would not be present but I can give orders for the bosom to be carried in such situations.

Q: Can I take picture at this palace location?

A: Yes, you can do that. Nana gather here and let's take the pictures. [The recording tape finished and I continued on the next. See Tano interview 2 for the end of this conversation]

Tano Interview # 2.

Q: Nana Is there anything that will help my understanding of Tano that I did not ask you?

A: No you have done well.

Q: Please Okyeame, let Nana know that we are very grateful for his time. As I told a friend of mine, anytime we read the Newspapers and we come across people saying that chieftaincy is not good and must be abolished, we realize how little we know of the institution. The politicians know that chiefs are there and they come to greet you but they never ask about the abosom, but if there are no abosom, then there are no stools and the work that the abosom do we do not know. We have gone to school but they did not have these things in it. We do hope that what we are learning from you will contribute to our knowledge. We thank you.

A: In this world when God created it he placed a certain faith in us and even Jesus when he went to pray with his disciples they saw some of the former prophets as Moses and other. The disciples requested that they should build shrines for Moses and others. Jesus said no. The Takyiman kyidohene at Krobo on the Wenchi road claims that he is going to stop making sacrifices to his ancestors because if their shrine were powerful it would not have been stolen by thieves. We disagree with him because the loss of one shrine does not mean the absence of spiritual powers. As he said, "a puppy is more important than a dead lion" so he will not perform the Adae yam festival and that he is going to be a Christian and he does not want to do the libation. Do you remember Komfo Dwamoa who died? He saw that Christianity was similar to the traditional African religion. He created the Afrikana church. You see that people could be Christians and never forgive others their faults but I cannot do so if you work with the shrine.

Tape #3

Q: Ago, can I bring my tape and camera? What are these stools and can I take pictures?

A: These are stools for the okyeame and this is for important visiting chiefs such as Otumfuo, and this is the stool for the chief the one we interviewed. This are stools in the waiting room that adjoins the bosom room.

At the shrine room, I was shown the stool that was brought from Gyaman and given to the shrine. The object hanging is a kahyire (carrying pad) which is used to carry the shrine. This is also a bow and arrow. This is also a necklace which Nana puts round his neck. This has become old but we could have restored it but it is too old to restore.

Thank you for Nana for allowing me in this room. But can I go to the shrine of Abohvim?

Let me see if it will allow me to take the pictures.

Oh, it did not work so I will stop and try it outside at the Amoa shrine.

Oh, yes it works.

Thank you very much Nanamon.