

Interview with Kwabena Buor, Abusua Panin (head of family) of Boahen Amantuo Abusua Mampong, April 23rd, 2006

Interview by Emmanuel Akyeampong with Rebecca Tandoh

Opanin: we fought with Denkyira and left. We first stopped at Akrofrom, then we stopped at Jakobu, then we went to Amoaso, then to Atekyem. At that time Kumasi was Kwaman. When we got there we asked him for a place to stay. He showed us a place near a river. It was there that Denkyera hene sent people to ask us to return. Nana decided that he had come too far so he can't return, so they named the place Ahensan, but we never returned. Then there was a Dormaa chief, he waged war against Obiri Yeboah. At that time Dormaa hene was staying at Kwadaso. They fought and my grandfather Kwaakye was sent to help, he died, then Nana Boahen Amantuo went and he was able to kill him. So Dormaa was defeated and they were made soul cleansers for Asantehene.

After that we heard that they were organizing to bring all Asantes together. Then Denkyira hene, assigned Asantehene the role of firewood collector, then Mamponghene was assigned the role of supplying "baha", the equivalent of toilet paper.

Then Asantehene was sent a message that he should send his favorite wife to Denkyira hene, and Mamponghene was ordered to bring a huge amount of money and slaves. Then Asanteman decided they would not comply. Asanteman sent a messenger called Brebre to tell Denkyirahene that they couldn't comply and he was killed. Then Denkyirahene sent Amanee to come and tell them that they better comply and they also killed him. That is when they coined the phrase, "Brebre amma a, Amanee nso mma." Meaning if Brebre doesn't come, Amanee won't come.

So they started preparing for war. It was planned at Juaben and there is a river called Hiakahyire, it was in this river that all the rituals were performed. To this day, you cannot cross the river with kahyire. It was that war that Mamponghene was the general (Saahene) and defeated Denkyira. For that Mampong was made nifahene and was given the silver stool. So we had defeated Dormaa and Denkyira. In all our ancestors fought seven times- Dormaa, Denkyira, Akyem, Apaa (Fante), Anomabu (Fante), Atebubu, Techiman. It was Amaniampong that fought with Techiman. It was Boahen Amantuo who fought the Dormaa and Denkyira wars. Nana Atakora Panin fought the Fante wars. The last war was the Techiman war. It was by Nana Amaniampong, but he was a very small boy. Asantehene insisted that he lead the war, so we took him. He was on a stool as they fought and they moved it forward. This was during the reign of Nana Opoku Ware I.

Prof: you said that before the Denkyira war, you stayed at Juaben.

Opanin Buor: well, before any war, they would camp somewhere to plan and strategize. For the Denkyira war, they camped and strategized at Juaben.

Prof: during this planning do you also ask the deities for any help?

Op. Buor: Well, it is part of it. Before Christianity came, all we knew was our deities and no one planned anything without them. Every household had their own deity, and the community had some, then the state had some for war and other things. For example, this is Mprah fie, the house of Mprah, the first and foremost deity of the Mampong stool. To date Mamponghene brings drinks

here for libation every Akwasidae. Then the Mampong stool also has Atoku, Appeaa, Ponkroma, Obuo, Nkwanta Tano. They would consult with all these and all their advice would be considered.

Prof: you talked about the wars but you did not mention the war with Gonja or Dagomba.

Op. Buor: well, I did not because I thought we should narrow it to the more relevant issues. I usually don't tell anyone else's history. That is not ethical. I will tell you something. We have anwan kotoko (roaming kotoko) which is Dagomba, and Nzema kotoko. It happens like that because in wartime, when a chief comes to help you, he becomes your brother and they earn the title of kotoko.

Prof: can you tell us something about Mpra.

Op. Buor: Mpra is a chief deity of Mamponghene. Mamponghene does not do anything without consulting with Mpra. So this house is very important. When a new chief of Mampong is enstooled, when all are seated and they ask for the new chief to be presented, he first stops at this house, Mprafie, before he goes to face the town and the elders.

On our way here we also stopped at Efigya, that is where Efiduase people are currently residing. It was from there that we went to Akrofonso. Akrofonso was not spacious for us so Mamponghene sent his hunter and Mpra to come here and look for a larger and better place for all of us. It was Nyinam who came here and killed Owusu Koko who was already here. And Mpra was placed at the place where Owusu Koko was killed. When Nyinam returned to Akrofonso he reported back to Nana Mamponghene that the land that he had found was huge and fertile and big enough to contain the whole state. So he was instructed to "pon" the whole state "Oman, and that became Mampong.

Prof: Can you tell us something about Osei Kwame, who became Asantehene. Was he not from Mampong? Or was he Safo Kantanka's son.

Op. Buor: No. Safo Kantanka's son? In our culture we have something; we have Bretuo, Asona, Aduana etc. these clans, none can cross and occupy any stool from another clan. So if anyone told you that Osei Kwame came from Mampong a Bretuo stool, to occupy the golden stool, an oyoko stool, that is a lie. I can name my child after you and your name would flourish. On the other hand, a Mamponghene could marry an Asante royal and an Asantehene can marry a Mampong royal. We are matrilineal, not patrilineal. It may well be a god child or a name sake.

Prof: I understand all that. But Osei Kwame's father was from Mampong.

Op. Buor: Yes. His mother was a royal from the Oyoko clan. For example, Nana Kwaku Dua, married a Mampong royal and had a son that he named Kwaku Dua who later became a Mamponghene. But that was by virtue that his mother was a Mampong Bretuo royal.

Prof: I understand. I asked because I wanted to understand the Muslim link.

Op. Buor: we were here when the northerners came here. When they arrived we already had the Sokoto people, Hausa people and so on. They usually sojourned through our land en route to the

south. Our forefathers use to host them nicely and after a while they started staying for longer periods. But there are people that we bought outright as slaves.

Prof: I ask because when Osei Kwame was enstooled as Asantehene, he was soon destooled because they were afraid of the Muslim influence.

Op.buor: Well, I cannot talk about that, you have to go to Kumasi and find that out. There was someone going through Kumasi who impregnated an Asante royal. He was pursued and killed and his son later became Asantehene Osei Kwame. Then the problem ensued and they decided that if the father was a northerner and had been killed, then he shouldn't be allowed to sit on the stool. That is what happened. They beheaded the man who impregnated her. It was a taboo, even ordinary Asantes were being killed, let alone a foreigner.

Quest: Nana, does Mpra has a priest?

Op buor: no, not right now. But if you need something you can request and if you see any results, then you come and thank him.

Quest: Mamponghene, you told us that there are many deities that support the stool. Do they work with the Muslims?

Op Buor: no. the Moslems use sand divination and we don't do that. We do not cooperate in any way. In these modern times, there are many false prophets who are performing miracles. When I was growing up, I saw only Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans. We use to go to church and worship quietly. But now, they are so noisy, you can't even understand church any more. Can you believe that some Muslims have gone into the bible, studied it and are preaching by comparative analysis? Then we have some people who use all kinds of powers to do sand divination for money.

Prof: in this project we have visited the Asantehene Kramo who sent us to Nana Badu, Mpra Abusua Panin, who is his aunt, so there must be a link.

Op buor: Asantehene Kramo. If anyone tells you about the Kramo it is true. The Asantes use them to predict and perform certain rituals especially for protection.

Quest: Nana, whose house is that, where we met before?

Op. Buor: Nana Boahen Amantuo. He was Nana Boahen, then when he started conquering towns, they added the title "Amantuo". But there are many royal households apart from Boahen Amantuo's house. There are many. We have Wiredu, Baabire, Kodiekrom, Botase. And Botase is Anyinam and Mpra. Tenafo cannot be enstooled (even though there are royals) they narrated a history that did not fit into the agreed upon records, and they were banished from the stool. It was about Nana Asiama Guahyia. This was during the reign of Nana Abunyewa in 1939 at Manhyia in front of Prempeh II. Something happened at Mampong and it was ordered that all royals from that line should be killed. Some husbands fled with their wives and children. Many, many years later some surfaced and contested for the stool. Asanteman sat on this case for 37 times. Finally, when Prempeh II passed

the judgment, he said that though they could not succeed in killing everyone from that line, the family is still tabooed. I was there, I sat in this case too.

During the reign of Prempeh II, I was an attendant who accompanied Nana Abunyewa to Manhyia. So this whole Mampong kingdom I know everyone who should serve Mamponghe.

Prof: In Akan, when we say power, we think of power over people. So when the colonial powers came and abolished slavery- power over people, how did we perceive power after that?

Op buor: we use to revere, respect and worship our stools and chieftaincy. We responded and did a lot out of fear. Then Nkrumah came, independence came and everyone lost respect for everyone and everything. Maybe we didn't exercise enough patience for Nkrumah to finish what he started so we didn't really see what he was trying to do. For example, the Akosombo dam, the Tema harbor, expansion of Legon, Korle Bu Hospital, Cape Coast University, Komfo Anokye Hospital then UST, then built JOB 600, then started building roads like the Nkrumah circle. When he reached that level, there was something lacking. Because Busia knew a lot about traditional governance, and Nkrumah knew a lot about modern western governance. They should have collaborated, but they didn't. People had respect for elders. You could enter any place and just say the chief is calling you and people just left everything and went to the palace because they were afraid of summons from the palace. These days, people frown on summons, in fact, they will not just ignore you, they would actually insult the chief. Busia, who knew a lot about chieftaincy should have worked to preserve it, but he drained it of the last drop of respect left in it.

Prof: so how did Muslims come to be from Mpra fie?

Op. buor: No. during Nkrumah's time when people could go anywhere, people actually did. So that is probably how some entered this Mpra house. Well, I think that would be all. My name is Opanin Kwabena Buor, Boahen Amantuo Abobono - Head of Family- ex-Abakomahene of Mampong.