

Interview with Bongo Naba on the Constitution of Bongo state.

The Bongo Naba (chief) was interviewed with his Kana (chief spokesman) in his porch at Bongo town in the Upper East Region of Ghana, on 27 June 2000. The interview was conducted by Ephraim Avea Nsoh (university student). Also present were M.E. Kropp Dakubu, Samuel A. Atintono, Paulina Tindana, (both university students) and several elders of the Bongo Naba including his Kana or chief spokesman. Material in [ .] is explanatory.

Ephraim: Linguist, what we want to talk about in our meeting is we want to know in chieftaincy, how do you do it? in our tradition.

Kana: (to everyone) You hear?

Naba: [gives Bongo foundation myth] Originally, there was a person from the bush who was roaming about and then he reached this land and saw that it was good for him to settle down. So then he went to Nalerigu. In going he arrived at a river and women were there fetching water for him and he drank, and went up to greet the chief and said he saw a land there and it was good, and he wanted to settle. But Busansi people were there and he did not know what to do. The chief said when the children came back from the river he should show him which one he wanted and choose. And they came, and he showed him and chose. He said he saw a grown child and begged water and they refused, but this small child gave him water, and he thinks she has sense and will follow him so that they can look at the land. And the name of this child – he saw her at the river – because of that Asigekulega [“went down to the river”], and the people of the chief’s house said he should take her. [They] gave him the child and he took her home. And they told him, when he arrives he should fetch fire. He should climb to the top of the trees and set fire and shoot a gun and the people will hear and run away so he can settle in the place, and he indeed reached the place and did this, shot the gun and the people scattered and he took over the land.

Then he looked around and got to where a [kind of] snake [boosenjo] lay on stones, and he said that was the land and they called Abongo, Abongo, that is the meaning. His woman gave birth to our ancestors, that is Asikulega. Among the woman’s children is Awubego. He returned to Gambaga and got chieftaincy and came home to settle and rule the Bongo people. The people spread out, due to migration they are everywhere. As a result of this, Awubego too now said he is owner of the land. Since he is the land owner [tindaana] he cannot keep the chieftaincy. A grown-up child of Asikulega went up and they fetched fir and performed the ceremony, with feasting, and if you have a chance you kill an animal for the feasting and celebration.

Ephraim: OK. We want to ask something more, which is, how it started is what the chief just finished saying, but we want to know how they install a chief now. What do they do to install him?

Naba: [installation of the Bongo Naba] How they would install a chief, the royals would go up together [to Nalerigu] to say that their father is lost [dead]. That they are searching [for him]. Then he [Nalerigu Na] says that he [their lost chief] has come home, and they should sit down so that they give

them water to drink and they will tell them. And they sit down so they give them the water and they drink and then he [Nalerigu Na] says they should sleep and rest until tomorrow, so that he can give them a day. When I was coming I had the cow, I had sheep, I had fowls, I had this to give to someone who took and gave it to him [Nalerigu Na]. He will consult to know who fits the chieftaincy.

After they do that and then if he chooses and there is no argument, then we all get up and follow the chief home. He [new chief] when he arrives must go to Awubego's children [clan] who is the landowner [tindaana], and he also performs the chieftaincy for him before he comes home to his house to stay and be Bongo Naba. Because of that if the [Nalerigu] chief says that he will install you he gives you the red hat [fez] and white trouser and white smock, so you go home. He gives you sandals too and you wear them and go home to Agamolega's [the name of the present Bongo Naba ie. his own name] house.

Ephraim: What do they normally do before they give you all these things you mentioned?

Bongo Naba: They will have to consult to determine who is suitable to be the chief. He [Nalerigu chief] with his elders will sit in the chief's reception room (like this one here) and they will sit and call all the royal elders of Bongo so they consult and this one is selected. Therefore he says they should follow him back, so that he should control the land. That is how they do it. Thus they all agree together that yes, they will follow him home, that he should control the land. Now they get up and put him on their shoulders and carry him to his [local host's] house where he gets down...

Ephraim: If you have just been installed do you just go home or will you still wait there for a couple of days? When you are coming home do you stop somewhere or just come straight home?

Bongo Naba: If he installs you thus you sleep and then you bring a cow so that he kills it and seats you on the skin, like this one. He does that and gives you the skin and you return to your host's place. From there the day that the skin dries, you go back to take leave of him and then he prays for you, how you would be able to control the land. Then if you and your people set out you still stop on the way, and stay there so that the people of the land come together to meet you, and then you also tell your people what happened. So you are arriving and they should collect their person [the 'lost' chief that they set out to find]. If they refuse they should allow you to go back there. And they also will say that they are yours, so you enter and they take you to the tindaana's house to sacrifice to the god. There they again kill a cow at the landowner's house.. they sit you down [on the skin].. they also say that. When they finish saying that the land owner will also say, I tell your gate [family line] and your grandchild you will not set foot in his house here. This is your last [visit]. As I sit here I don't know the land owner's house. The way of chieftaincy is like that. Then they go home to your house, and you sit down and then they make the foundation of your reception room and complete these things.

Ephraim: Naa, you know that what we are saying, we don't know these things well. If we leave out something it would bother us, like, if you go [to Nalerigu] and are coming back do you still follow the same route back, or do you come back by a different route or what do you do while en route coming?

Bongo Naba: When you come out from the [Nalerigu] chief's house and go home the place that you will stay over night, you sleep there. They look after you. Then you go on the way, reaching Kayong, Beo [villages in the Bongo district], sleep there, get up very early and the Bongo people now meet you on the road and escort you home. When you reach the land-owner's house they can perform the rituals for you. You come home to this house. If you get there and the sun has set so they can't perform your rites for you then unless you sleep and the day dawns before they perform for you, and now they bring you here to your house.

Ephraim: If you stop [at Beo] is it because of tiredness or are there some rituals that you perform there?

Bongo Naba: Bongo Naba: It is usually tiredness, because of tiredness, but the rituals are in our Bongo here.

Ephraim: Are there no rituals you will perform while on the road?

Bongo Naba: While on your way, if you see a shrine, and it agrees to help you win the chieftaincy, OK, for that you would stop there [on your way back, to thank it, eg. with a cow]

Ephraim: Naa, we also want to ask, in some places it is required that before you can be chief for that place, you should have been a chief before, to be able to be a paramount chief. Is it like that in Bongo here?

Bongo Naba: (eligibility for Bongo chieftaincy)

We had something like that. Up to now, in the past they appointed Balungo [Naba] as a Bongo royal elder [to represent Bongo Naba in Balungo], and he sits there [in Balungo]. Beo [Naba] will be appointed a Bongo elder and he is chief in Beo. Again Soe acts as a Bongo elder and sits as a chief at Soe. If the Bongo chief should die and they, also Goom [one of the five Zorkor villages] have the strength, if the Bongo chief should die and they are strong enough they will all contest the chieftaincy. If they don't have it [strength, wealth] they will not go for it.

Ephraim: Have such people ever been given the chieftaincy in our land here?

Bongo Naba: They have not yet been installed. They qualify for the chieftaincy but they have not yet installed them.

Ephraim: Naa, but what we also want to know is, as you have shown us some of the ceremonies or rituals you perform during the installation at your place there, we would like to know some of the ceremonies especially those that are not forbidden to us [secret], that you will tell us some small things,

how they will perform them there before you are installed to come here. We are not just saying things we don't know but if it is not beyond our knowing can you tell us?

Bongo chief: There isn't anything. The [Nalerigu] chief consults his soothsayer and medicine people about who should be installed. He [Nalerigu] only gives you permission to come after he has finished that, and you come so he chooses you as chief. But he won't tell you that he has consulted and that is how it is.

Spokesman: (on naming the chief)

They say they will install the chief, and it is now that they get to know that it is this person who gets it. Now they choose the person and he sits, they choose him, raise him to sit right in front of the entrance to the chief's reception room. Then they take the long white smock, the red hat or fez. Then he [representative of the Nalerigu chief] puts the clothes on him, puts the fez on his head, puts sandals on him. So now he is chief. They [new chief's people] collect him. When they finish they now ululate. The women around him ululate then they proclaim his appellations and when they finish they carry him shoulder high. They [Nalerigu people] say take your chief, and the chief's people now lift him up onto their shoulders and take him to his house, the host's house. He will sit there and you follow. And they [Nalerigu people] send [Nalerigu] elders. And the elders greet him. Then he [new chief] announces his name, as chief of the land. And when they finish the [Nalerigu] people go back.

Ephraim: Do they give the name there?

Spokesman: They give the name there.

Ephraim: But will there be sacrificing there [at Nalerigu] too?

Spokesman: Yes they sacrifice there.

Ephraim: Do you offer sacrifice before the chief is installed or after?

Spokesman: He [Nalerigu] installs the chief and then sacrifices. The sacrifice is the cow [brought by Bongo] that he will kill. OK that one, when he [Nalerigu] kills it he pegs out the skin (like this one, with a tail) and now gives it to him [Bongo Naba] and he removes it. If the sun sets they [Bongo people] go to say good-bye [to Nalerigu chief] and they bid good-bye and he [Nalerigu] allows him [Bongo] to leave and they carry the skin home [to Bongo]. And when they are returning the [Bongo] chief follows the same route that he took before, he still follows the same going back.

Ephraim: Now will you go by car or on foot?

Spokesman: They went on foot and still have to come back on foot.

Ephraim: You went and came on foot?

Spokesman: The chief came on foot through the hills to there and went home through Beo the same.

Ephraim: Naa, what she [MEKD] asked is, as she compared to the Dagomba [system], .. is there a place, unless you are chief of that place that you can now become chief here. It is like, you compare Balungo or Soe area, unless you become eg. chief of Soe before you can be chief here.

Bongo chief: They started to do it like that, but they have never done it and if they die, I who sit here still install them. If I also die and they are capable they can go [to Nalerigu]. But they have never, the Nayire people have never given them the chieftaincy yet. But they are also Bongo royals. They themselves have been given chieftaincy, they now fear this place and they don't come. Even once. [ie. the lower chiefs must respect the one who installed them, so they don't come there unless called.]

Ephraim: It is like, as we are here, Bongo chief is there, and he also has his chiefs and they are there too, are they all your junior chiefs or is there seniority among them? If they are there thus, and there is seniority what are their roles? For example, I have heard that Namo chief is the senior of the chiefs. Why? Maybe there are others who rank below, so if you yourself know them indicate which is the work of each. If I am not there this one is supposed to do this, that is what we want to know.

Bongo chief: He [Namo] is just the senior. Namo is the senior, and the Bongo chief installs him. OK, but if we [Bongo chief] die he has nothing to do. He just comes to greet the funeral. He doesn't have anything he has to do there, to perform. But he has the chieftaincy at Namo. He can also nominate some people as Kambon chiefs and they also follow him. But he has nothing to do with our Bongo chieftaincy and they can't come to do anything here.

Ephraim: What other chiefs are under you besides Namo?

Bongo chief: Yes Dua.

Ephraim: Who else again?

Bongo chief: Sambolego.

Ephraim: Who installs Kambon chiefs?

Bongo chief: They also do.

Ephraim: What do Kambon chiefs do?

Bongo chief: They are their sub-chiefs that they install.

Ephraim: What do they do?

Bongo chief: Their job is, if he [Namo] wants something he tells him [Kambon] and he does it for him.

Ephraim: From olden days to now is that all they do or is there something else?

Bongo chief: When they [Kambon] have been installed their job is to help him do any work well so it is good.<sup>1</sup>

Ephraim: Does everywhere have its Kambon chief?

Bongo chief: every place has it. If you are chief then you have a junior chief too, and you do the work together. Like poll tax, they are the people they choose to go around collingting from people's houses to give to the paramount chief.

Ephraim: Can Kambon chiefs hear cases?

Bongo chief: If it is a cln case he can hear it. If it is not a clan case he takes it to the chief. If the chief can't settle it he brings it to me.

Ephraim: If you go someplace and are not around who can perform your roles?

Bongo chief: For example, if I go somewhere the chief spokesman can stay behind and do my work for me. He and the Tarongo chief/companion, they stay to work. If it is a big case he can call sub-chiefs and tell them about it and they work on it for me.

(Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Bongo chief: just like we are conversing?)

Ephraim: Do you choose your chief spokesman according to his clan or how?

Bongo chief: (on chief spokesman)

It is not according to clans. That is how it started and they did it and he is the spokesman, he is the companion.<sup>2</sup> If you become chief such people are there already. If there is none and there is a member of their family who can do it you give it to him.

Ephraim: your spokesman, if he doesn't work to your liking can you dismiss him without problem?

Bongo chief: How can he cause a problem? I choose him, if I don't want him, if he isn't working as I like, and I change him is this a problem?

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Bongo chief: they [elders] are in charge of their clans and if there is anything and I call them and they come and we discuss it.

Ephraim: who will choose them [elders]?

Bongo chief: I will select them and they are the elders in addition to the chiefs they already have there, the chief of this place, of that place, we follow that [process], to call them so their people choose a good person who can keep them in order.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bongo was not being precise. If somebody refused to answer a summons they would look for the Kambon naba of that clan to arrest him. Or, Kambon chiefs may organize weeding the chief's farm, house building, communal labour. Usually young and active, whereas the head of the *yizuo* is generally old.

<sup>2</sup> *Kana* and *tadaana* here the same.

Ephraim: Not for all chiefs?

Bongo chief: No, our area has a chief and there is a chief of Zaasi and a chief of Wiri, Kuyelego here doesn't have a chief but they [Bongo] only gave them the Kambon chief so they too have a chief. There are many.

Ephraim: Has Gurego area got a chief?

Bongo: Gurego has.

Ephraim: When you were talking you mentioned the issue of the case, the landownership, you normally arrive there and you perform ceremonies, now we want to know, you and the landowner, the difference in your work, how is it different. What does he do and what do you do?

Bongo: (the chief and the tindaana)

The work of the landowner is that, I, as he is the landowner, if any god wants something it requests it through me. I now look for the things and call the landowner and he comes here to perform the sacrifice for me.

Ephraim: Is there no other case than this?

Bongo: There is nothing apart from the god.

Ephraim: But your land, if someone wants to migrate and settle here, what does he do?

Bongo: My land here, if a person wants to move house [to another part of the land] the landowner gives him so that he can build his house and stay. But not everyone [only the landowner] can offer the place to somebody to stay.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Bongo: No, I can't know.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Bongo: The chief also is involved in that case.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Bongo: But our landowner cannot forbid a burial.

Spokesman/elder: I say that it exists here. The landowner, if the person dies they will come here and inform the chief that so-and-so is dead. He also needs a grave. The chief can tell them to go and dig. But landowner cannot stop them, saying no no. But if they dig the grave and they kill an animal [at the graveside]<sup>3</sup> they send the skin and blood to the landowner's house.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: No

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: When they have dug and buried, the landowner owns everything.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: The landowners of Guresi land, they have more authority [than in Bongo].

Ephraim: But if I compare...

---

<sup>3</sup> Not always done.

Spokesman: Yes he can, he who owns all the land, the Bongo chief can tell a person, like a person from Namo or Soe does something to the chief that is not good, and [the person] dies, he has the right to say they shouldn't bury him on his land, the chief can tell him that.

Ephraim: Anything else on the chief's work?

Spokesman: (installation of a tindana)

No, the chief's work is just, if the landowner dies it is Chief who will install him. He [new landowner] will come here and the chief installs him. A fez is put on him, and a black smock *karebo*.

Ephraim: Is it the chief who installs him?

Spokesman: It is the chief who installs him. The chief too, when he goes to Nalerigu to be installed and is coming, he will stop at his landowner's house and he seats him [chief] on the stone. On the chieftaincy stone. Now they feed him [chief] flour water as they do for a bride, and they pass it around her.<sup>4</sup> We [chief and entourage] are not drinking water. He [chief] is coming home and he doesn't drink water on the way, that is how it is until they get there [landowner's] and they do this ceremony. And now he drinks water and now they kill a cow again there and then he goes to his house.

Ephraim: I want to know too, the types of case that they [sub-chiefs] bring to you to hear. Maybe some cases have arrived here and they brought them to this house?

Spokesman: (cases in the chief's court)

Like if you married a wife and somebody seizes your wife and marries her and you go to your in-law's house saying that you want your wife back. He [in-law] should collect your wife for you, so he goes to the person's place to tell him this wife is this person's wife, I gave her to this person and collected the animals. He should give her back and I will give her [to her husband] and the person refuses, then he [in-law] has to come to the chief's place to summons him. We also will call him and he says yes, he actually married the person's wife. You have to give the wife back to her husband. If the wife doesn't want to come but runs back we tell the new man to pay back the cows to the first.

Ephraim: Any more?

Spokesman: What there is again, is, if you fight you can come, if you are a family you come and the chief settles it for you. The chief brings your house together and says don't do this. That this is not good, go back and control yourselves. If you are fighting over farm land you still have to come to the chief's place here. He will send so we go to look at the land and decide who owns it. We can take the land and give it to that person. If we see there are arguments over the land and the chief tells you to leave and you won't leave, he can take the land and let it lie [fallow] for animals to graze on, because they are two fighting [over it]. If he gives it to one, arguments will arise, that is why he can take the land and leave it [lie] there.

---

<sup>4</sup> Reference to a marriage ritual, in which small amounts of pito or flour water which has been brought by the new husband is fed to each of the bride's parents with the cupped hand, as is done with small children, by an elderly member of the bride's family. It is also passed in a calabash around the body and under a leg. Unless this is done the parents-in-law cannot partake of any gifts from the son-in-law.



Ephraim: Nothing else?

Spokesman: Nothing else. Only woman marriage, that is if you have sex with somebody's wife they bring it here, so the chief can investigate whether you actually did it, and they charge you and you take an animal so they purify the adultery so the woman can enter her husband's place.

Ephraim: If they want to hear a case who will sit on it?

Spokesman: I sit here and some elders that were mentioned and Companion (*tadaana*). I am the one who "collects the talking", also companion, also elders and those we mentioned, we sit down together on the case. If we realize that this one is in the right and the others agree we decide in his favour.

Ephraim: If they are not there, how can you deal with the case?

Spokesman: Even if the elders are not all there it is enough if I and he [Bongo chief] hear the case, only he alone cannot, but if we are two or three we can hear it.

Ephraim: But if someone refuses to obey you what do you do to him?

Spokesman: If he does not agree to obey, and we see that he is stronger than us we can leave him to go to court and he goes. But if he wants to embarrass us and has the resources we can let the police come to arrest him.

Ephraim: If it were the olden days how would you do it?

Spokesman: If it were the old days, in the olden days by this time he would be stretched out in front of the court and beaten with canes. If he says he will pay a cow, you beat him again and then when he says he will pay [another] cow you beat him again so he says "I pay a cow". They just did that [till they were satisfied]. But they don't do that any more, so people are pampered.

Ephraim: These days have you had any hearing of a case in which a person brought a case here?

Spokesman: These days we don't really have cases. At this time there is hunger. The cases aren't really there.

Ephraim: Do they really have to have [be rich] before bringing a case?

Spokesman: You know that if you don't get something to eat, if you get money, do you take it to buy food or do you take it to litigate trivial cases? Yes, that is why there aren't any.

Ephraim: Do you remember any cases that have been discussed here?

Spokesman: We remember the cases. We discussed wife cases here. We also settled the wife cases and gave them back their wife.

Ephraim: Where did she come from?

Spokesman: She came from Soe here.

Ephraim: But you haven't been hearing cases from other places here?

Spokesman: They come.

Ephraim: Who are they?

Spokesman: Namo people brought farm cases here, we tried to settle it but we couldn't so they took it to court. Now they are in court.

Ephraim: But you and the Ziim people? [village near Bongo]

Spokesman: As for the Ziim people, they married their wife from here, and paid their cows and their sheep, and the woman came back [from Ziim] and married someone here and he took her to Kumasi. And they [Ziim people] came and summonsed. Chief allowed them and they went and brought the wife from Kumasi. And the wife said she didn't want him [Ziim man] because she didn't get anything to eat. She didn't get anything, and said he should leave her alone to go look for some husband who can provide for her, instead of going back there. She won't go home, that is why we said OK, the wife has rejected you, it is [not] us who rejected you. The [traditional] law doesn't say we should force someone for someone. And he [Bongo chief] allowed him [to collect his cows] and he collected his cows.

Ephraim: But you never got a case from Ve a or Bolga?

An elder: There was a Bolga lady married here whom they came here about. The wife wasn't doing well at her husband's place here in Bongo. And they sent back the wife, and our in-laws came from Bolga about it, saying the girl's things were at her husband's place, 6 bundles of cloth. We gave them to her and she took them home, but we told her that the child that she has, she knows that when her husband finds the cow he will take the child. And she said yes and went home. And her husband found the cow and took it there to collect the child and the in-law said [some of] her things still remained, and her child [daughter] went home 3 months ago today. She treated the child in hospital at ₵7 [at that time ₵70,000]. He has to pay it before he collects his child. The man too said he wouldn't understand that. He won't come here since I [Bongo Naba] collected her things for her and she took them home and now he should come to collect his child. She came again to me talking useless talk. He [husband] won't agree. And the in-laws too say she [mother-in-law] knows about his cow and collected his cow. This child is still there and we still have the case.

Ephraim: If you have the case is the Bolga chief involved?

Elder: We also went up to the Bolga chief.

Ephraim: Is it like you have finished?

Elder: We have finished with our part.

Ephraim: I and my people, what we discussed again is that we want to know from you yourself and your spokesman, your intentions, your ideas. Like you are installed as chief, everything in addition – even if you can tell us, as you have been enskinned as chief, what particular issue is your main thought?

Bongo: I have now been chief for seven years, eight years come Christmas. On my enskinment day I gave my name, The Big Stone that Cannot Be Moved, and also, Bongo Baby's Spear-grass Turned into

a Spear. And Nalerigu Naba also named a name, that I am Bongo Rubbish Dump Does Not Refuse Things.<sup>5</sup> Anything you send to the refuse dump you can pour and leave there.

Ephraim: But as a chief, what are your ideas about chieftaincy?

Spokesman: As he is sitting, if he becomes chief and comes home, he lies and thinks what he will do so that he and his people and this Bongo become one. All should have one voice, so they can rule the land and it would bring happiness. And the land increases. This is what he thinks.

Ephraim: but what I want to ask again, is like for example, the chief, like if I say the government changes, then it lies down and thinks, those things that it did, some are good, some are not good, like we are now standing here and saying if I were the chief these things which were done, it is because I am chief and it is good, I am chief and did this and it is good, did that and it is not good.

Spokesman: Since we got the chieftaincy, when the government changed we saw something good in the land. Can we say we didn't see it? Is there anything bad in the land? No, we see good in the land. What wasn't done here was done. It is OK.

Ephraim: You [spokesman] should now tell us who you are.

Spokesman: My function is, he chose me to sit by him. So if there is some case and the chief is getting angry about our case I can tell him he should be patient. I plead and he accepts. What again I consider, if there is a case that is difficult we can consult together and say, as it is we can't solve it, we tell them to take it elsewhere since we can't do it. Again, if we see we can consult and agree and settle with the people amicably, but they don't agree with us, that is all we can do. So that is what I have.

Ephraim: What else is there in the installation of minor chiefs?

Spokesman: For the installation of minor chiefs, the minor chiefs will come here and they too, like what he said about at Nalerigu. If a minor chief dies and [his people] comes here he [Bongo] greets him [them] and says that, the same, their elder is not there and they have followed him. He [Bongo Naba] also tells them that he [the dead] has come home, and they go back to their host house to rest and what is also there he will tell them, and they will rest. At day break they come back to greet [Bongo chief]. And he also says as you said, your father is in the room. And they see what they will do. They and the [Bongo] chief now converse. And you say I have brought the sheep, or the cow, to collect my father's rages. And he [Bongo] sleeps on the land [investigates carefully] to see the kind of person the people will respect in the land, and there will be no dispute, and he will be able to control his people. And he [Bongo] says oh, the chieftaincy is for him. He will install him as chief and he [new chief] will go back to rule the land.

Ephraim: Do you perform the same ceremonies [as in Nalerigu]?

---

<sup>5</sup> That is, he is or should be tolerant and patient. There was considerable strife over his installation.

Spokesman: We do the same thing. We will do the same. We take the cloth the same and cap. We put the white hat and smock on him, and the person who puts it on him takes the hat and puts it on him and there is ululation and they say take your chief and go. That is what they do. At daybreak he too [new chief], we are not the same as Nalerigu. Our junior chiefs and some people – only the Dua chief and Namoo chief, they bring cow to kill. But the others get a sheep to peg out the skin for them.

Ephraim: But what I now ... Your name, you didn't mention it.

Spokesman: My name is Termite-doesn't-suck-iron.

Ephraim: A junior chief, what would he do that you have to remove him?

Spokesman: Junior chief? If a junior chief steals, if any chief at all steals. If you are chief and steal they remove you. If again you are a chief and have sex with somebody's wife they also remove you.

Ephraim: Anything else? These are the important ones.

Spokesman: That is what is important.

Ephraim: If the chief goes about fighting people?

Spokesman: How can a chief even cause trouble ["enter people's market"]? If he is an evil person, causing trouble, should they allow him?, Yes, they have to remove him.

Ephraim: But when the Bongo chief dies, will the junior chief or the spokesman take over?

Spokesman: (Regency)

Nalerigu [people], if the Bongo Naba dies they come here and kill a cow and they sit down. That day they will take his [deceased chief's] elder son and make him regen ["skin owner"]. He now changes to look after the land. He has the right to hear cases for the time they have given him, a year. If Bongo Naba dies it takes a year for them to go up to Nalerigu and install a chief. They can come and enskin a regent and he takes care of the land as chief, looking after the land, waiting for that day. We too, Bongo, if a junior chief dies we can also do that, go install a regent and he too looks after the land, and waits for when they install the chief.

Ephraim: The regent, what do they do to make him regent?

Spokesman: They will catch the animal, if it were our land here, if we go they will catch the sheep and we kill it and peg out the skin, call the elders, all the royals and the entire community. They come and sit and seat him on the skin and now it is he who is chief of the land looking after the land, the chief looking after the land until the time when they go for the chieftaincy. It is when they install a chief that he will rest. If he too wants to become chief, the day when they go for it he takes the skin he sits on, attaches and wears it and we call the regent, regent.

Ephraim: Can the regent become a chief?

Spokesman: Oh yes, if he has the [financial] ability he can.

Ephraim: But his skin?

Spokesman: Oh, when they have installed the chief they grab the skin and tear it up and where can they see it again? If they install a chief they will grab the skin and tear it up.

Ephraim: But those people who also want to contend for the chieftaincy, especially those who are not the regent, and those who are qualified royals, what role do they play in the installation of the regent?

Spokesman: (More on junior chiefs' installation)

They are there and we install the regent together. But at a funeral, if we went to greet like if a junior chief dies the Bongo chief will buy a bowl of salt, buy kola too, take a gun and we go to greet. The gun cries, it is like it is his [Bongo] crying for his son [dead chief]. If the royals come here to look for the chieftaincy, we take the calabash from there, fetch salt and give them, take kola too and share it with them all. If you are not a royal you won't get any. There they will tell you, saying this one is not eligible for the chieftaincy, that one is eligible. There we will get to know you, those who are qualified. When four or five of their people are left [we will ask] they say do those people qualify? Yes, all the people of the land say these are royals, there is no argument. That day we will know that those who come up here are actually royals. But if one is not eligible and goes they will not agree that he gets any [salt and kola].

Ephraim: Many thanks. We also want to know the chieftaincy things [regalia], you called all those things, and the long gown, you called everything. If certain things are left out that are necessary or things for making the chief you can tell, like the skin that you said, you make a skin and they seat [the chief] and everything.

Spokesman: Just what we do here, if you have taken the hat and long gown, then you have installed him and the people take their chief and go. Chieftaincy is, or what I told you, if they can go they also name their name. Elders [of Bongo] will stand here to go greet him where he goes to sit [at his host's], and he names his name, and we come back and tell the chief [Bongo] that this is the name he gave. [Bongo] chief also gives him his name and now they take him home to his host. He will stay there and at daybreak he takes a sheep or he brings a cow for him [Bongo] to kill and they seat him on the skin and he asks permission to go home.

Ephraim: But you don't give him things?

Spokesman: He will now go to buy his things himself. The long gown that we gave him is the only one that he wears. If he wears it home he will bring it back, he doesn't take it to keep. The cloth he also brings back and we keep it. Only the hat is his chieftaincy thing, but the cloth he brings back here, to wait for the next one to be installed.

Ephraim: Does he pay for the hat or not?

Spokesman: He pays, why not? We are giving him the hat and he isn't paying? If you say you will marry a wife you don't pay for the cloth?

Ephraim: You also pay.

Spokesman: Yes, the one who puts it on him collects his money.

Ephraim: When you are going somewhere and the chief dresses up, is what he wears chieftaincy property or he buys them himself?

Spokesman: It is the person himself, who is now chief who buys his chieftaincy clothes, but will you give them to him?? The chief just installed, he who now goes home, is he not chief? Now he is buying his things. He will wear them in public and they know that he is chief. If you don't have any but come out naked they know it is a poor chief.

Ephraim: But I am still investigation the thing, like among these chieftaincy things, is there anything else? Is there anything required, like the Asante have a stool or they have a sword, or does the chieftaincy not have things concerning a god?

Spokesman: I already mentioned the thing, the red burnoose is for a paramount chief, not everyone has a burnoose. That too, it is yourself buys it, no one will buy it for you.

Ephraim: Is it not one of your cultural things?

Spokesman: He who is the paramount chief, on Fire Festival day, like he said the fire, that day he will wear cloth [long gown] and red burnoose and we escort him to sit here.

Ephraim: Is it compulsory that he gets it?

Spokesman: He must get it. He is a paramount chief and doesn't have it?

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: On a big public occasion, he must wear it, here in Bongo, if we say we are going to a big public occasion, he must appear in it.

Ephraim: If the chief is going will he wear many things or he will wear that alone?

Spokesman: If the chief is coming he wears the nice things that he has. If there are junior chiefs they cannot wear the red burnoose to the chief's place. But they also wear their [other] things.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: When they install him he wears the red burnoose and wears it until he gets back home. No one gives it to you. If he has already bought and kept one but they have not yet installed him, they bring it to him there [Nalerigu] and he wears it all the way home.

Ephraim: Now we want to know what is the chieftaincy taboo.

Spokesman: (taboos)

What we have observed is forbidden is, when he is installed as Bongo chief, his foot must not touch the ground. If his legs get down on the land the land dies. If he is walking, only in the inner [woman's] courtyard can he go barefoot but the soil, or if he is travelling to somewhere and his footwear breaks, he must stay there. He just stays there and doesn't move again until they bring back footwear for him.

Ephraim: Anything else?

Spokesman: Nothing else.

Ephraim: But weeding?

Spokesman: Weeding is, he sits he doesn't work. He can't take anything in his hand like this. If he should hold something and it pierced him, that is taboo also.

Ephraim: What again? Nothing left?

Spokesman: I have finished. I said the taboos. We have already discussed them. I also discussed that the chief doesn't want a person's wife, the chief also doesn't steal. These are all that they don't do.'

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Elder: If he kills someone he is not chief, for example if he kills someone and they see he is not fit and he kills someone or he kills him they must remove him.

Ephraim: But if the person is a thief?

Elder: If he is a thief and they kill him he is still [chief].

Ephraim: ... but give your name.

Elder: My name is Atule, Atule Angmata Anaabiisi (clan)

(exchange not recorded)

(end of tape track 1)

Spokesman: It is that if you [he] already have gone there [to senior chief], is it not his father? If he returns he can go to greet. But he is chief and that is his father's house. If he gets there he must take off his hat (fez), but we who are weak [common people], we cover [our heads], but he takes off his hat before the [Nalerigu] chief until he [Bongo] arises to go back inside, then he puts it on.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: Yes, we can wear (a hat). But he cannot.

Ephraim: But if you are at a big public function?

Spokesman: If we are at a big public function, he [Bongo] can go to greet him [Nalerigu], remove his hat and greet him. When he goes back to his seat he puts his thing on. But the red burnoose, he wears that too but he does not wear it in front of him [Nalerigu]. He sits at his place. But if they wear it over the head like this he does not wear it like that [ie. he cannot wear it with the hood over his head]. He can put it [hood] down.

Ephraim: (1<sup>st</sup> bit not transcribed) Can he tell the [Bongo] chief to do something for him?

Spokesman: If your father calls to say come here do this for me or something is worrying me and I want if you have an animal or something like that, he can do this for him.

Ephraim: He can occasionally say that?

Spokesman: Yes he can say that, that this matter worries me and they go to tell Bongo Naba and he helps him. If he says it is a cow case and he has one he gives it. If he doesn't have any but has something else he gives it.

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: Ah, ah, haven't you been born? If you get home and your father asks for something do you refuse it?

Ephraim: (not transcribed)

Spokesman: Oh yes, that's it. If he says he will sacrifice for our benefit, we live together. If he says that will you refuse? Hmm, it is not by force. It is something good, that my son [does].

Ephraim: And it is like that, if he says bring this to me, you must take it.

Spokesman: Yes!

Ephraim: Anything still like that?

Spokesman: If there is something he wants and he knows that Namo (chief), if he tells him he can get it, he can tell him and he brings it here for him.

Ephraim: But they have their various clans, if you see that one clan is not giving respect or it is not giving the chief respect can you say he shouldn't come to contest for the chieftaincy?

Spokesman: Are you talking about the royals or the Kambon chiefs? If it is the royals that do not respect the chief, the chief of your land will bring him and say that he [offender] does not get along with him [chief].

Ephraim: Like those who qualify for chieftaincy. If one of them does not give the Bongo Naba respect. Can he say he can't come to contest for the chieftaincy?

Kana: He doesn't give him respect? He [Bongo] is just quiet but watches him. Won't the chieftaincy day arrive? He himself [offender] from fear will now know. He didn't give him respect, now the chieftaincy has come and he wants to contest. It is there that he will now know. What will he tell him? Yes, if you have a child [daughter] and somebody wants her and he didn't give, didn't mind you and now sees your child who is grown, now says he wants her. Will he beg you or will you beg him?

(end of tape)



