

Kabruno History¹

[The history recorded below was shared many years after the 1986 Family History Project and after long negotiations with Kabruno elders in the aftermath of a long-standing chieftaincy dispute. The history was relayed in two sessions, the first on July 11, 2001 in the presence of eleven elders and three young Assemblymen. Present among these elders was Nana Millah, former Banda paramount chief under the stool name of Kofi Dwuru III. The second interview took place on July 17 in the presence of five of the same elders and two additional men from Kabruno who resided in Accra and Kumasi as well as two Muslim elders from a neighbouring community. The history was relayed by the Kabruno linguist.]

July 11, 2001 interview:

The Nafana people came from Kakala in what is today Côte d'Ivoire near the town of Korhogo. Before they left that place, the chieftaincy had been between two lines of the same family. On the death of the reigning chief, it was the custom that his wife should go to the chief of the other line of the family. The first Nafana man on the stool there was Sie Kanga. When that chief died, the wife was supposed to go along with the stool to the other side, but the family refused and the families fought among themselves. This dispute was the cause of the people's departure from the original place and their move toward this area. They came to a river on the way (the Komoe River in Côte d'Ivoire). When they got to the river, there was a canoe, but the condition for being able to cross on the canoe was that they must offer a human being—and more specifically a woman—as sacrifice. Before the people left Kakala they had a patrilineal system of inheritance: sons inherited from their fathers. When it came to the demand of the sacrifice of a woman, the chief decided to give his daughter, but the girl's mother refused, and so he had to offer his niece. Since that day, the people changed to a matrilineal system in which no son can inherit from his father and instead a nephew inherits from his uncle.

After that the people came to Tampi in Côte d'Ivoire where they all settled. Sie Kanga gave one family a leader, who took his people to Sampa where they settled. Sie Kanga led the rest of the people to settle at a Kataa that is located in Kabruno. When Sie Kanga died, Peteli took over; he was Sie Kanga's nephew. For the purposes of hunting, most of the people left here and settled other places and this divided the Nafana people.

A time of war followed and the people had to fight. People came together to drive away their enemies. At the end of the war all the Nafana people were here. They later left to establish other villages—to Bongase, Sabiye, Nyire, Wewa and so on. It is for this reason that if an important person dies, they have to be buried here (for example, queen mothers and chiefs). Royal family members are buried on the kataa (old place) known as Gboko Kataa.

When the Nafana came the Mo people were here and the Nafanas fought them away. Makala people pioneered settlement and then fought the Mos away.

[A question about Wurache and her people prompted the following]: Makala people came as part of their people. Their chief saw smoke and went out to see its source. He found the fire and put it out by quenching it. Wurache came and asked why he had put out her fire. They settled their differences and it was on the basis of seeing her fire on the land that people have concluded that Wurache was on the land first.

July 17, 2001 interview

[much of the following narrated from a script, read in Nafaanra by Kwadjo Fordjour, a resident of Kumasi and member of the family from which the last Kabruno chief hailed]:

Peteli, the Kabruno peoples' ancestor, was the first person on the Kabruno side to be enstooled. He is known as a hunter, but he was not an ordinary hunter. He was a group-leader and a fighter.

The Kabruno and Ahenkro people are one family. At Kakala they were part of one royal family and continued to be so here. The position of chief rotated between the families, with Peteli the first enstooled on the Kabruno side, after which the stool returned to the Ahenkro side.

When the people first got to this land, there were Mo people occupying the land and Peteli had to fight them away to get a place to settle. This was his first achievement when he got here. He was the first person to unite the Nafanas when they came to this side.

After Petele, the stool went to Ahenkro. When that person died, the stool came back to Kabruno and was occupied by Wuludwo (also known as Wurosa). Wurosa led the Nafana in the first Asante-Banda war. During that war, the Nafana were able to fight and defend themselves, and withstood the Asante for some time. But the Asante came in numbers, and when the Nafana saw that to win would be difficult, they moved into the hills, to the cave known as Selekpɔɔ which means/implies a 'big family'. When the people climbed the hills and got to the top, they pushed big stones down on the Asante. When the Asantes saw the rocks coming, they left and stayed at Jukpa on the Dorbour side of the mountains.

During the time that the Nafanas were in the cave, they used divine means to find the Asante. They would go in the night and attack Asante spiritually. This kept the Asante from being able to sleep. This spiritual harassment went on for some time, but the Asante did not give up. So the Banda people sought a means of reconciling with Asante. However, it was difficult to get someone to go and sit down with the Asante since so many people were being killed. At the same time, there was hunger in the cave and children were dying of famine. So a delegate was chosen to go and smoke a pipe. Pe Koshia from Bongase volunteered to go and talk to the Asante. When Pe Koshia went, he wasn't bold enough to let the Asante know that he was Nafana, so he told them that he was Kulango and that he had heard of the conflict and had come to negotiate between the two. Pe Koshia succeeded with his initiative. The Asantes understood him and arranged for a time to meet to settle the dispute. He went back to his people and informed them how he had tricked the Asante and engaged in peaceful negotiations. The people came down from the mountains and signed a peace treaty not to shed blood.

After the treaty the Nafana and the Asante became related. Later on the Asante were at war with the Fante and they came and invited the Nafana to help. In this war the Nafana were led by Wurosa. The war was fought in the Central Region at Abakrampa. Because at that time the Nafana were united, they could supply 4000 men to fight. Wurosa took 707 men with guns to fight the Fante. Of the 707 men who went to fight the Fante war, only 7 returned.

During these days—after they returned from the war with the Fantes—the people were using horses for their chiefs. They had no palanquin. After their success in the Fante war, the Asante supplied them with a palanquin, swords, a trumpet, talking drums and a stool. They gave Wurosa a title—*Kantamantu*—which in Twi meant ‘vowed and never violated it’. Before the Fante war when the Nafanas went to Kumasi they stayed at Adum. But afterwards, Asantehene Osei Bonsu asked them not to stop at Adum and gave them a place to stay at Bantama [in Kumasi]. They still stay at that place today.

The Nafana were rewarded with many things by Asante after the Fante war. In addition to those listed above, they were rewarded with a stool that was sent to the sister of Wuludwo, by name Akwia Dapaa. She was enstooled as the first Queen mother. Akwia Dapaa was the only woman to fight in the war. Out of love for her brother she went with him and when things got tough had to fight alongside him. This marks the beginning of the queenship among the Nafana.

After Wurosa, the stool went to Ahenkro. Then Hah Chambi was the next to reign. During the reign of Hah Chambi, Asante and Gyaman were at war. The Nafanas and the Asante were related and so the Nafanas were compelled to go to war to help Asante. Asante and the Nafana succeeded and the war ended at the Chen River. Here Adinkra, the Chief of Gyaman, was killed by the Asantes and the Nafanas. Also under Hah Chambi, the Asante and Denkyiras were at war. At the end of every year Asante had to send a big pot of gold to Denkyira as tribute. Asante decided to resist and asked the Nafana to help. It was a very difficult war but one that succeeded.

After the war with Denkyira, the Nafana came back. But because the Nafana had helped Asante, the Kulango attacked them. The Nafana sought the help of Asante who fought the Kulangos away. Asante also fought against the Nkoranzas during the the time of Hah Chambi. The Nafanas aided Asante and they had success because the Nkoranzas were not so many.

After the Nkoranza war, Hah Chambi went to stay at Akumadan where he lived to the age of 107. After Hah Chambi, the stool went back to the Ahenkro side. Sielongo became chief and was chief when the Europeans first came.

The Europeans renamed the place known as “Samianku” as “Ahenkro” (main place). Samianku was the name of a particular grass that had been common at the place now known as Ahenkro. The name of Kabruno comes from the word *kabru* (fever) because it was the place where people came for treatment when they suffered from fever.

Sielongo reigned for a long time. He was succeeded by Kwasi Sinapim who died as an old man in 1935. He was succeeded by Kofi Dwuru II who reigned from 1936-1977.

[Asked about the relationship between the Nafana and the Ligbi, the elders relayed the following]: The Muslims of the area were originally known as Ligbi. They were together with the Nafana at Kalala and lived in a whole series of villages. Kanka people were originally at Mande [present day Mali]; however, famine drove them out and they were forced to wander about. This was at the time that the Nafana group was leaving Kakala. Sie Kange, the Nafana leader, decided to take these people along because their group was small. The Kanka people were thus the first Muslims that the Nafana met. Later they met another group, one from Begho. These were the Sase people who were speaking the same language as the Kanka people. When the Kanka people were coming, they had a rod or staff called 'Masatogo'. Because they all came together from Kakala, they took each other as brothers from time immemorial.

Interview conducted by Dr. Ann B. Stahl and Mr. Enoch Mensah.

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