## Kafono Katoo, Banda-Ahenkro<sup>1</sup>

Kafono Katoo is one of the seven founding families of Banda-Ahenkro. The Kafono family came to Banda from a place known as Gbεlε or Gbεεnlε Nyambie. Gbεεnlε Nyambie was a place with a mountain and a gold pit with plenty of gold. The pit took the shape of three stones with a hole in the center. The people of Gbεlε spoke Nafaanra, but it differed from the Nafanra spoken by the people today. Although the people had a leader at Gbεlε, they served no paramount chief. There came a time when the Asantes contacted the people at Gbεlε, wanting gold. The people of Gbεlε sent the Asante messenger back without any gold; however, they feared Asante reprisals. They therefore left f Gbεlε or the small village of Wela, inhabited then, as now, by Mo people. The man who led them from to Wela was named Pε Koshia, the first head of the Kafono family.

The people stayed at Wela for some time, but when the Mo learned of their interaction with the Asantes, the Mo people told the Gbɛlɛ people that they feared attack by the Asantes so long as the Gbɛlɛ remained with them. They were told to find their own place to settle. From Gbɛlɛ, the people had seen the Banda range of hills—so they decided to go and settle beyond those mountains so that the Asantes would not be able to trace them. Upon reaching the vicinity of Ahenkro, they came upon the Nafana. The first people they met were the Krontihene Siepe\* and some of his family hunting bush pig. They stopped the Gbɛlɛ people and asked them of their mission, after which they decided to take the Gbɛlɛ people home. At this time the Gbɛlɛ people outnumbered the Nafana for this was before some of the seven families had come to join them. The Gbɛlɛ were allotted a place to live which was called "Kafɔnɔ" or "new town"—located near the present town of Kanka.

After a time, the paramount chief at Ahenkro began to be concerned because there were so many Gbɛlɛ people. They were troublesome and there was quarreling between the children of Kafənə and Ahenkro. The chief and his elders decided to get rid of the head of the Kafənə family. They fixed a date for a large community meeting to discuss community matters. Before the meeting, which took place at Gbankəə, near the present Kanka, they dug a deep hole which they covered over with an animal skin and sand. A stool was placed on top of this, and the head of the Kafənə family was directed to sit there. The man, Pɛ Kəshia, fell into the hole and hot pito was poured in on top of him. There he died.

After this, the family decided to leave the area and to go back where they had come from. The first group set off and departed for Wela, where their descendants still live. A second group stayed in Ahenkro with Yeli Wulo, wife of Pɛ Kəshia, who was too old to walk back to their former place. A third group set off to leave but at Kanka, the Muslims begged them to stay. The Muslims advised them that the Nafanas had moved here because of war and now the Kafənə were leaving because of a quarrel--but there was war everywhere. They counseled the Gbɛlɛ to bury their differences and remain. The Muslims acted as intermediaries between the Kafənə and Nafana, and subsequently helped the third group put up their houses at Gbao where they were to settle.

The Kafono family provides the paramount chief's body guard and executioner. They provide the sword bearer at the royal palace. In war, the sword bearer would take lead of the chief. In the event that the paramount chief died, the sword bearer guards the body along with the Krontihene and the Gyasehene. As executioner, the swordbearer was responsible for killing those people designated to accompany the paramount chief in death. It is the sword bearer who leads the corpse of the paramount chief to the burial site and is responsible for punishing any offenses at the burial site. The executioner is also responsible for dealing with individuals who have been identified as witches.

The position of executioner came to rest with the Kafono family because of the bravery of an ancestor. During the reign of the paramount chief Gyara, a man (name unknown) had an affair with the Chief's wife and took her away to a town in the north. When the paramount chief learned of this violation, he chose some men to go and pursue the offending couple. The man who led the chase was Ofori from the house of Kafono. Prior to leaving for the north, Ofori performed some rites at his fetish so that the adulterers could not hide from him. Upon reaching the town to which the couple had fled, Ofori encountered the adulterer in the street and killed him straight away. When the chief of this town learned of the killing, he confronted Ofori as to why he had killed someone without informing the chief. Ofori countered that he had done his duty—that he had followed his orders. The chief, upon hearing Ofori's story, agreed with his actions. Both the man and the woman were killed and their heads taken back to the Paramount Chief of Banda. The chief and his elders congratulated Ofori and conferred upon him the title of executioner and it has remained the duty of the Kafono family ever since.

[A second version of the above story was related by other members of the Kafono family, as follows].

There was a former head of the Kafono family named  $P\epsilon$  Fori. During his time, a man named Donkosi had an affair with the wife of the chief. He was a very strong man, and when the Chief discovered the affair, he devised an elaborate plan to catch Donkosi. The man was asked to go and help catch a cow from the kraal. Donkosi went with the other youths from town. Donkosi entered the Kraal and caught the cow by the leg. As the other youths looked on, Donkosi struggled with the cow until he began to look tired. At this point, the youths jumped into the Kraal to try and catch Donkosi. Donkosi let go of the cow and sprang out of the kraal. He ran away from town and went to the village of Senyon.

Tolee was looking for someone brave enough to trace the man Donkosi. Pe Fori had acquired a reputation as a brave man during the war with the Bouna people when he killed many people and carried away most of the heads. He was also the owner of a very powerful fetish (called Twa) that was appeared by the blood of human beings. Ofori had acquired the fetish from another man and, upon seeing the man off from the village, Pe Fori killed him. Due to his reputation, Tolee came to Pe Fori to pursue the man Donkosi.

Ofori, after accepting the mission, went with his people to Senyon. Upon arriving there, they went to the house of the fetish priest. The man sympathized with the story of  $P\epsilon$  Fori and took him to the head of the village. Upon hearing Ofori's story, the chief of Senyon was sympathetic and together they devised a plan to capture Donkosi. They convened a meeting of the youth of the town.  $P\epsilon$  Fori was concealed in the room where the meeting was to be held behind a raffia screen. He was able to see everything that took place. Donkosi arrived and took a seat. At a prearranged signal, all the youth jumped on Donkosi and restrained him.  $P\epsilon$  Fori came out and cut off Donkosi's head. At this point, the woman who had fled to Senyon with Donkosi returned from fetching water. Upon hearing what had happened, the woman began insulting all those who had aided in the arrest of her husband.  $P\epsilon$  Fori proceeded to cut off her head as well. He then butchered the couple and took out their hearts. He thanked his host and the people of the town, and asked permission to leave. The day he returned to Ahenkro was a day of jubilation. On account of his actions in Bouna, with the fetish priest and in capturing Donkosi, the Omanhene made  $P\epsilon$  Fori his executioner.

[For another version of the Pe Fori story, see the history of Gbeenlee Katoo]

## Male Heads of Family & Swordbearers:

- 1. Pε Koshia
- 2. Tolee Wuljo
- 3. Wulombor Kentu
- 4. Pembor Amo (time of regent Sie

Dongi)

- 5. Hanyaa
- 6. Kwadwo Fojoo Mindie
- 7. Kofi Kawude
- 8. Kupo Aboateaa
- 9. Yaw Fori (title holder in 1986).

## Female Heads of Family:

- 1. Yeli Wolo
- 2. Penpenni
- 3. Nyinda
- 4. Teele Nyini
- 5. Chambε Zika
- 6. Kuulo Lo Adwua
- 7. Akua Gbope
- 8. Ya Kosua
- 9. Abena Gbope
- 10. Yelin Yuno

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The information recorded here was derived from interviews held on: 23 July 1986 with Kupo Aboateaa (Bamuhene; Boonfien Dunu) and Yaw Fori (Boonfien Yiifun); 29 July 1986 with Yaw Fori and Gabriel Amoako; and 5 August 1986 with Yelinyuno (female head) and Mapeni.

Interviews by Dr. Ann B. Stahl and Mr. James Anane.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The content of this work remains the intellectual property of the family who shared their knowledge. This information may be cited but may not be used for commercial purposes. To cite this work:

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