

## **Mampong Traditional Council**

**March 19, 2006**

### **Present:**

Nana Asuako Peprah, Mampong Kronkohene

Nana Owusu Brempong Sarpong, Amaneehene (custodian of culture and customs)

Nana Afrifa Nsiah, Sumankwaahene

Kronkohene's regent (kotie bese me)

Prof: Well, I teach and research history. We are currently looking into religions. But we usually start with the history of a place [Mampong] and that would determine how we incorporate the rest.

Nana Kronkohene: thank you very much for coming. If you are really here to learn the history of Mampong, we will do our best to help.

Amaneehene: Nananom, I would first explain something to you. We are Bretuo people from Adanse Ayaase, Kodiekrom to be specific. From there we migrated to Bogyawe, then to Kodiekrom, then Odaso, that's where Amaniampong was born; then to Tarkwa Buoho. Then before we migrated to Mampong Akrofonso, Akuamoa Panin had a brother called Akuamoa Kumaa, when we reached a place near Efiduase; he branched off to Kwahu Abene. So to this day, it is Bretuo people who occupy the Abene stool. It was while we were staying at Akrofonso, Apankwananan, we saw them sojourning and when they identified themselves as Bretuo people, we considered them family. To date, Mamponghene calls Apaahene, "uncle."

In the olden days, every chief was head of his state. Then Okomfo Anokye suggested that we would be stronger if we came together. Because at that time Denkyira was really giving every state a hard time. We had to go to war. And it was during the planning that it was decided that Mamponghene should be the war general. Before the war, he was confined for 40 days, and then when Tweneboa Kodua of Kumawu died in the 40 days, they knew that they would be victorious. Because that was what the gods had predicted. And when we reached Kumasi, they all said "ei, ade kokyee sekyere ampa" because they had not used the real king in the war, his nephew stood in for him. They had used his nephew Boahen Anantuo. Osei Tutu and Akuamoa Panin went to the Akim war together. Osei Tutu disappeared in that war. At that time, Akuamoa vowed not to leave them orphans at the battlefield, so he fought to the bitter end. Since then, he also earned the title "Asanteman Nwisiahene" meaning king of orphans.

Prof: Nana, you said something about Tweneboa Kodua. Was he also confined for forty days?

Amaneehene: Yes, he was confined for forty days during which he neither ate nor drank anything. At the end of the forty days, he was dead. He was not beheaded. The gods had predicted that someone had to be confined and if that person survived, they would be defeated, but if he died within the forty days, they would be victorious. So Tweneboa Kodua sacrificed himself for that ordeal. Akuamoa Panin also died at the battlefield. But we tried and brought his body to Sekyere Akrofonso. He actually died on the way, at Juaben, and then his nephew Atakora Panin succeeded him. At that time, we had decided to move from Akrofonso and come to a strategic position to defend the northern frontier, which we did all the way to Atebubu. So

Atakora Panin moved us from there to Mampong. So he was the first Mamponghene, everyone before him was Sekyerehene.

Prof: So if the textbooks write that Boahen Amantuo was a Mamponghene, it is a mistake?

Amaneehene: Yes, that would be a mistake. He was not even Sekyerehene. He offered to fight for him, so whatever he did, he did on his behalf. When we were coming, in the olden days, it was the hunters who searched for the new settlement for us. Nana Akuamoah initiated the move, but it was the hunter Nana Anyinam who found the new place. In the olden days, it was the royals who led the search for settlements. When Anyinam found the place, he also came to meet another hunter called Tirimtwaa. In a conversation, Tirimtwaa told him everything about the place, and then Anyinam killed Tirimtwaa. When he killed him, he returned to Akrofonso and reported that he had found a place which would be a great state (Oman pon) in the future. Finally they moved from Akrofonso to Mampong in 1720 (there is documentation to support this).

Prof: You said something that the hunter, Anyinam, who killed Tirimtwaa, was also a royal.

Amaneehene: Yes, in the olden days, the royals served very well. Everyone was paranoid so only royals, family members could be trusted. As I was saying, they decided to move to Mampong. On their way, they couldn't find the place. They came upon a clearing called Daaman and thought they had found the place, but they were not sure. Then they saw a tree with indentations (bota) in it and they stayed while a group searched further. They named that place Botase. Then when the search party found the place and returned to Botase, they told them "woara ko se" meaning go and tell them yourself. So the search party left the people already at Botase and went to Akrofonso to tell them they had found the place. These became royal family lines and towns within Mampong – Botase, Anyinam and Woarakose.

Quest: When you were coming, did you come with any deity?

Kronkohene: We had a lot of deities. But the one you just went to, Mpra, we found it here.

Quest: History tells us that during the wandering in search of a better place to settle, groups relied on deities for guidance in finding better places, was it the same in your case?

Kronkohene: Yes. As I told you earlier we had a deity named Apekoo, who was very instrumental in our finding Mampong. He helped us kill Ntim Gyakari. He turned into a woman and played Oware with him. That was our most prominent deity when we were coming. When Mamponghene sits in state, the priest sits very close by.

When we settled here, there was a chief called Owusu Sekyere who was the son of Asantehene. They fought.

Amaneehene: Please let me explain that. That was in 1888 during the time when [Yaw] Atwereboanna and his nephew Prempeh I were fighting over the stool. Mamponghene Owusu Sekyere sided with Atwereboanna. So when Prempeh won, he decided to punish Owusu Sekyere and Mampong. We fought for a while and retreated to Atebubu. We were there until 1896 when

the British came and took Prempeh I away then Nana Owusu Sekyere returned. Then they wanted to bring education to Kumasi but Prempeh I and the Kumasi sub chiefs rejected it that they did not want any school in Asante. But Nana Owusu Sekyere told them that whatever they are rejecting, he would accept. So the first school was built in Mampong in 1896 before there was any built in Kumase. During that time when you finished p.6, you would go to Begoro for form standard 4-7. So school came here first in Asante before anywhere else.

When we arrived, we found out that Woraso was very big and fertile so we fought them. They had seventy seven districts and had a chief called ‘Ampofo a ote banwoma so’ [Ampofo who sits on an elephant hide] who was a leper. At that time every intersection had a gate with watchmen and all visitors would be asked of their mission. Any visitor to Woraso had to go and shake hands with this leper. We fought them for a long time. Apekoo [a deity] helped a lot. So did Akwasi a oda apem so [another deity], he is at the entrance of the town. During this war the Nintin Dikro (caretaker) found Ampofo and killed him and brought his banwoma (Elephant hide) to Mamponghene. The then Mamponghene decided that it would not be appropriate to elevate him to the level of Apaahene, but he gave him the Woraso Lands.

Then if you go to the east we call the town Sekuruwa. The Botase family played a major role so it was given to them.

Prof: In 1740 Asante went to the north and fought with the Gonjas and brought them under Asante. History tells us that Mampong played a major role so they were made overseers of the northern territory.

Amaneehene: Yes, the whole northern territory, we were given jurisdiction. To this day, the chief of Yendi called Mamponghene “Agya”, meaning father. We go to their festivals and do a lot with them. They are considered the sons of Mamponghene

Prof: In the 1740s when we defeated Gonjas and Dagombas, it brought the Moslems closer and that is when we started trading at Salaga in slaves with the Moslems.

Amaneehene: Yes, Salaga was a major slave trade center and it was under Mamponghene. The whole northern sector. If it had been the olden days, the Dagbon case [chieftaincy succession dispute current at the time of interview] would have been referred to him, because they are his children. They should have cried to him, and then he would have involved Otumfuo if he couldn’t settle it amicably. If we had pursued that route, it would have been settled a long time ago.

Kronkohene: There are some towns, which brought slaves to Mamponghene every year, and then he would send some to Asantehene. We also have some people who were captured during the wars and it shows how powerful Mamponghene was. Owusu Sekyere fought with Asantehene and fled to Atebubu. While in Atebubu, he sent word to Nkoranza hene that he was coming to fight him. Nkoranza retreated back and left Nkoranza. Then they surprised him while he was bathing. When word got to him that the battalion was coming, he vanished.

When they returned to Atebubu, the Mampong elders started wondering how to resolve their predicament – they had fled from their town because of war, and they have started fighting everybody. In the middle of the night, around 9:30pm they stole all the black stools and returned to Mampong.

Amaneehene: The silver stool was commanded from heaven so we do not play with it. During the war with Kumasi, we sent the silver stool to Kwahu Abene for safe keeping. Then about Nkoranza; Nkoranzahene also supported Atwereboanna so when Prempeh I tried to punish Owusu Sekyere for doing that, Mampong felt that Nkoranza should have come to help him to fight Kumase and since they didn't, he would punish them. He felt that they had conspired together. In the olden days, every family had a deity, and they predicted events. For example, we Sumankwaa people have Akuoko Tano. Sumankwaa also invoke Apekoo. Every family has its own deity, but the Mamponghene has Apekoo, Apeaa, and Ejura Konkroma.

Prof: Can anyone say anything about Nana Osei Kwame?

Amaneehene: Safo Kantanka's son. Abrafi, Owusu Brempong married Abrafi and had Konadu Yiadom [an Oyoko royal], who married Safo Kantanka and had Osei Kwame who later became Asantehene. That is why Mamponghene, Safo Kantanka gave Amanten to Konadu Yiadom as a gift to his wife. Yes, Osei Kwame is the son of a Mamponghene.

Prof: History tells us that Safo Kantanka had a lot of dealings with the Muslims. Can you tell us anything about that?

Amaneehene: Yes. The governor at Elmina, Safo Kantanka was the first person to take slaves as gifts to the governor.

Kronkohene: Safo Kantanka married not only Konadu Yiadom. He also married Kokofuhemaa, Bekwaihemaa, Juaben hema and others. He married all of the prominent ahemaa. That is why we still have Abrafi buried here at Abrafi mausoleum. We have guards and attendants assigned to her grave/tomb.

Prof: Osei Kwame. We are doing two things. We are looking at history and we are also looking at our understanding of power in Asante. Now we are in the 1760s when Osei Kwame was destooled for his association with Moslems. When he was coming to Manhyia he brought Muslims with him.

Amaneehene: I can explain that. You know that he was the son of Mamponghene and Mamponghene had a lot of Muslim influence so he took some with him. Because we were involved in sand divination and the extraordinary powers that the Muslims had. Mamponghene wanted them to protect his son. And they made very good predictions.

Prof: So did they cooperate with the deities in any way?

Sumankwaahene: Yes, I use all of them, but separately. I consult with both, but not together. Currently, we have people at Mamprugu who use sand divination to foretell events of the day. In the olden days, they did not rely on only one source for protection and predictions.

Prof: We also hear that some deity priests would start something, an amulet or talisman and ask that it be sent to a mallam for weaving.

Amaneehene: Yes. They did that. I met an ex-fetish priest who told me this. That sometimes a sick person would be brought to you for healing. What you do is give him a place to stay. Then at night, the deity would come and give you instructions on how to care for the particular ailment. And it always worked. He said that he worked for/with five deities; he started when he was very small. But when he got very old, his children forced him to go to church and abandon the deities. I returned from farm one afternoon and found him sitting alone so we started talking. He said there are no tricks, the priest must stay clean and the deity would always guide you. The only problem is that, deities have too many rules and they do not forgive, they punish easily and severely.

Kronko Asinanso (regent). Deities are old concepts. They have been around since time immemorial. It is in the bible. When Jacob was returning, the women [Rachel] stole the family deity [Genesis 31]. Then when Jacob slept on a rock and God communicated with him, that place was renamed Beth-el and the rock is considered sacred. So deities are very old. They have been around since the beginning of time.

Amaneehene: Deities as you call them in African religion, and Christianity and Muslims live in harmony in Ghana and help each other.

Prof: A lot of people say that deities are more honest and helpful. Times have changed and people therefore cannot openly admit their belief in traditional religion and deities because they want to be politically correct. Otumfuo's Sumankwaahene sums it up as "Kramo wo aduro, osofo nni aduro" meaning, the Kramo (Muslim) has powers, but the Christian priest doesn't. So what can you add to that or elaborate for us? Because what we see is a sort of cooperation between traditional religion and Moslem, but it seems that Christianity is excluded.

Sumankwaahene: Well, it is so because the Christians claim that they came to abolish traditional religions. But these are the Catholics, Methodists, etc who now flood the charismatic churches on days when they are not fellowshiping at their regular churches. The irony is that, these charismatic churches have and get all their powers or 'spiritual gifts' from the deities and Mallams. So wouldn't it be better to go straight to the shrines? Wouldn't that be easier? Isn't it the same? They are just hypocrites. They are kidding themselves; they are worshipping deities when they go to a charismatic church for predictions.

Kronko asinanso: I believe no one has ever seen God. But during the war periods, they consulted with deities a lot for predictions so that they can plan ahead better. There is nothing wrong with them, the deities. It was Christianity that polluted our minds against them. When they abolished all forms of human sacrifices, it was good because that practice had outlived its usefulness and we needed to rather focus on nation building. But prior to that, when Diko Pim

and Tweneboa Kodua offered themselves so that Asanteman would be saved, it was very critical and necessary. And that was accomplished. So when Christianity came, they preached against it. In the bible, when the Israelites were going from Egypt to Canaan, they were fighting and killing on their way. Now to compete with the prevailing religions, the fetish priests are also making false predictions which are making it very unattractive. Also, when I was young I use to hear the elders especially the women yell, “we just mention so and so name, we are not saying anything insulting or bad.” Because they believed that something would happen to them if they speak ill of anyone. They were very afraid of the rivers and the various deities. They did not lie, steal or do anything against anyone consciously. Now people just lie about everything and steal whatever they see because God would forgive them.

Prof: Can one be a chief without consulting with any deity?

Sumankwaahene: Not if you are a paramount chief. Because every paramount chief has a Sumankwaahene who coordinates all the affairs of deities. They also perform pacification and cleansing rituals which are dictates of deities, so it would be very difficult for a paramount chief to remove himself from deities. There are also some purification rites that are purely traditional religion.

Quest: Some chiefs acquire deities for protection, but that doesn't mean it came with the stool?

Amaneehene: Every stool has Sumankwaa, which means there is a deity. Every black stool has a deity attached to it.

Prof: Asantehene Kramo. They trace their roots to Mampong, so can you tell us anything about the Asante Kramo in Mampong, or this is an isolated incident or a mere coincidence.

Amaneehene: There was a man called Kwasi Nka who was staying in Kumasi. He had many Muslim friends. He gave one of his daughters to one of them in marriage. So there is a whole line of Asante Nkramo because they intermarried. They married into the Kramo Teaa family that is what links Otumfuo Kramo to Mampong.

Kronkohene: It was Nana Boakye who brought them to Mampong. But we currently have an Asante Nkramo population, though not very large. We have Zongo, but we have engulfed them. Some were sent to Ejura. Those are the people who were made Sumankwaahene. Before that, no Moslem had crossed Afram to the south. Afram was the boundary between Asante and the north.

Prof: so when we say someone has power, what does that mean, can a woman have power?

Amaneehene: Only a man can have power. In Asante, Otumfuo has the ultimate power, apart from God. I think another thing you would like to hear is women's power. Women have power, just at a different level.

Prof: So power is about control over people? Do deities have power?

Kronkohene: Power is actually relative. And women can have power. A woman in this household has power, but that power is overshadowed in the presence of Mamponghemaa, then her power is also overshadowed in the presence of Asantehene in Kumasi. Power is usually over people.

Amaneehene: The Sumankwaa stool is the main important stool in chieftaincy so it is very critical – for war, for protection and all other security things. So it is usually given to very discreet people because the life of the kingdom and the chief is in the hands of the Sumankwaa.

Prof: Thank you very much. We brought a few drinks for you to show our appreciation. We are very grateful for your time and patience. Thank you.