

Gbɛɛnlɛ Katoo, Gbao¹

Gbɛɛnlɛ Katoo derives from a place called "Gbɛɛnlɛ Nyambie" which is in the shape of three cooking stones with a hole in the middle. This hole is full of gold. It is located to the east of Gbao. The family originated from this hole, and is completely separate from the Kakala people (i.e. the Nafana from Kakala in Côte d'Ivoire).

In time, the Asantes learned of the gold in the Nyambie and started making plans to invade the area. Learning of this, the Gbɛɛnlɛ people sent out spies to explore a new site for resettlement. During this expedition, they came across some hunters digging out the hole of a bush pig. They claimed to have come from the Kronti family of Ahenkro. The Gbɛɛnlɛ envoys presented their problem to these hunters and the hunters took them home. The Kronti then took them to the Bandahene. Nana Bandahene and his people were very happy to meet some other people speaking Nafaanra. Upon hearing their sad story about the planned invasion of Gbɛɛnlɛ Nyambie by the Asantes, Nana received them as his guests and allocated them a site for resettlement that was known as Gbankɔɔ.

The Gbɛɛnlɛ family continued to grow bigger and bigger, and intermarriage between them and the Kakala Nafanas took place. Unfortunately, there came a time when the powers of Nana Bandahene were being abused by the Gbɛɛnlɛ family head. This was despite the close friendship that existed with some of the Gbɛɛnlɛ leaders, specifically Kwabena Lagaa or Okun Brafour. Okun Brafour was a brave leader who fought heroically in the defense of the Kakala Nafanas in a war between them and the Gbanyaa Gonjas. Though the Nafaana suffered, the Okun Brafour was able to fight and capture the leader of the Gonjas. He was therefore nicknamed "Okum Brafo." Later on, however, the Bandahene, who was at that time Sakyi, detected their disrespectful manner and devised a plan to do away with all the Gbɛɛnlɛ people. The Chief of Banda made his men dig a big hole at the present site of Gbankɔɔ. They then covered the hole with sticks and sand and planted grass on top. The Chief of Banda then convened a meeting of all the chiefs, with the intent that all the Gbɛɛnlɛ family was to be buried alive. Fortunately, the messenger of the Bandahene secretly passed on this plan to the Gbɛɛnlɛ family. As a result, they refused to take a seat at the place allocated to them at the meeting. This act confused the Kakala family and they had no alternative but to postpone the meeting to another day.

After this meeting, the Gbɛɛnlɛ family decided to flee to another land. On the third day following the meeting, the Gbɛɛnlɛ family packed and fled to their present settlement at Weila near New Longoro. Because of intermarriage, some relatives stayed behind at Gbao and Samianko (Ahenkro), who constitute the Gbuni and Kafɔnɔ families respectively. Kofi Asemphasah is head of the Gbao family.

Part II. Brafour family

The Brafour is a segment of the Kafɔnɔ family who live in Ahenkro. They emerged as the Brafour family as a result of brave deeds done for the Bandahene.

It was formerly the case that if anyone became intimate with the Chief's wives, the individual would be captured alive and a stick placed between his jaws. He would then be placed in the sun to die. There was a very tall, fearsome man by the name of Donkosi who ventured intimacy with one of the Chief's wives. People learned of this and worked to devise ways in which to arrest the man and put him to death.

One of the schemes to catch Donkosi involved asking Donkosi to go and help catch a cow at the kraal to be sacrificed to one of the Chief's gods. Donkosi and some of the young and strong men of the town went to the kraal to catch the cow. When they reached the kraal, Donkosi jumped in and took hold of the cow by the two hind legs. The cow struggled and struggled until Donkosi looked tired. The group of young men then jumped on him; however, Donkosi shook himself and threw the young men off into the cow dung. Donkosi immediately fled to Gonjaland and stayed with the priest at the shrine of Senyon Kupo.

Some time passed before the Banda got word that Donkosi was with Senyon Kupo. The chief therefore looked for someone to go and get Donkosi in Gonjaland. A man from the Kafɔnɔ family named Pɛ Ofori accepted. It took more than two weeks for Pɛ Ofori to prepare himself for the journey. He traveled to Senyon Kupo and on arrival there went to the linguist of the town. He exchanged greetings with the linguist and told him of his mission. The linguist in turn sent him to the chief of the town. On hearing the awful news about Donkosi, the chief sent word to Senyon Kupo to release the man to the representative of Nana Bandahene. Senyon Kupo sympathized with Nana Bandahene and decided to release Donkosi upon payment of a live cock and a goat. When these requirements were met, they decided that a meeting of the whole town should be convened at the house of Senyon Kupo. Under this pretext, Donkosi could be arrested with the assistance of the townsmen.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Ofori, with his sword, was hidden in a room with a grass door so that he could see outside. When the meeting began, Ofori was able to see everybody, including Donkosi. The linguist had already planned to come in last as a signal to Ofori to take action. When the linguist arrived, and the house was full of strong young men, Ofori was to take action. Immediately after Ofori came out, the young men grabbed Donkosi. His persistent struggle was in vain, and at last Donkosi was tied with his hands behind his back. Ofori took off his knife and cut off the head of Donkosi. His wife (who was the wife of Nana Bandahene) was also there with him. She was out for water at the time of the meeting. This courageous lady, on hearing the sad news of Donkosi, made her way to the house where her husband had been slaughtered. With the praises of her deceased husband on her lips, she also had her head cut off and her heart taken out. The heart was used to make three medicines, two of which are presently used by the Brafour

family of Kafɔnɔ Katoo.

[For another version of the Pɛ Ofori sotry, see history of Kafɔnɔ Katoo, Banda-Ahenkro]

Jakari Fetish

A fetish in the possession of the Gbɛenlɛ Katoo is the Jakari Fetish. The Jakari Fetish is protector of the town and was acquired by Tolɛ Kofi Asempasah who is presently head of the Gbɛenlɛ Katoo at Gbao. One day there was a Fulani herdsman escorting his herd from the north towards the south. On reaching Gbao, he was attacked by a guinea worm. Kofi Asempasah helped this Fulani man by taking him home, treating the guinea worm and providing him food and accommodation. The Fulani man felt much refreshed after this hospitality and wanted to reward Kofi Asempasah. The Fulani man therefore put together something made of horn and porcupine quills and taught Kofi Asempasah how to maintain it. He told him that the fetish would protect him and the town from witchcraft and would heal sickness. Initiation into the fetish is accomplished by providing a chicken and a bottle of akpeteshi. A soup is prepared into which is mixed powdered charcoal from a particular type of tree. The initiate eats the soup as well as a wing and thigh from the chicken.

The Jakari Fetish hates a woman who commits adultery as well as those who bewitch others or who swear by Jakari. If you are caught in any of these acts by the fetish, you must provide 400 cedis in cash, one goat, three fowls and a bottle of akpeteshi. A woman experiencing her menstrual period is not allowed to enter the shrine of the fetish. Neither can one enter the shrine if one is dressed in a dark cloth or sandals. Violation of these prohibitions requires a bottle of akpeteshi to purify the shrine.

An annual festival is held for members of the fetish. They come together to give thanks by offering animals or donating money to the founder. All fetish priests in the area are invited to pray for prosperity and to predict misfortune. If an impending misfortune is revealed, the necessary sacrifices are offered in order to avert the misfortune. The festival is opened by the sacrifice of a cow or goat, a sheep and three cocks. Formerly, the festival lasted one week but now [1986] lasts only three days because of financial constraints.

If the fetish reveals and kills a witch, the family of the witch provides the following items for the purification of the fetish: 1 goat; 3 fowls; 3 bottles of akpeteshi; and the deceased person's cloth. Individuals defended by the fetish will provide 1 goat, one fowl and a bottle of akpeteshi as a thanksgiving sacrifice.

Male Heads of Family

1. Sie Kalo
2. Dimɔɔn
3. Dafa
4. Shiegbanda
5. Kwabena Ladjaa
6. Mumuni Kwadwo
7. Gazari
8. Yaw Nyuu
9. Han Kofi
10. Kwabena Manje
11. Kofi Asempasah

Female Heads of Family

1. Dgunyɔɔri
2. Yatuatenten
3. Yajininge Jɛje
4. Mapenyi
5. Nyijo
6. Yatu mba
7. Yajo Gɔŋgo
8. Lelɔ Kosua
9. Abena Nganichaa
10. Abena Kuma
11. Nyuajo
12. Donkor Gutio

Interviews conducted on 16 November 1982 during Ann Stahl's first visit to the Banda area and supplemented by information collected on 4 August and 8 August 1986 from Kofi Asempasah (Family Head). Kofi Asempasah was exceptional for his memories of family history. Some information was also provided by Pɛh Kwame and Donkor Gbutue.

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

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