

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

Nyawaa Katoo is one of the seven founding families of Banda-Ahenkro and holds the position of Krontihene. Nyawaa Katoo and Sie Lɔngɔ Katoo (Royal Family) originated from the same house in Kakala, the town in Côte d'Ivoire from which the Nafaana derive. Formerly, Nyawaa Katoo supplied chiefs in rotation with Sie Lɔngɔ Katoo. It was during the time of Pehzoo, a chief from Nyawaa Katoo, that the Nyawaa family came to be excluded from consideration for the chieftancy. The queen mother during the reign of Pehzoo was Chambe Bɔɔfien. She was ill with jaundice and was isolated at Kabruno. At this time there was no settlement at Kabruno. She was given a number of young girls to serve her during her confinement. At the time of the millet harvest, these young women, approximately 12 in number, were sent out to farm to beat the millet. They went and beat the millet until sunset. By that time it was too late to carry the millet home, so they covered it over using some very large baskets until they could return next day to collect it. They then returned home. Next morning they returned to collect the millet and discovered a woman hiding under one of the large baskets. They asked where she had come from, but she spoke a language that they did not understand. They packed the millet in the baskets and brought the woman home with them.

Upon reaching home, the girls informed the queen mother regarding what had taken place. Chambe Bɔɔfien could speak Mo and was able to understand the woman. Bɔɔfien sent the woman, named Yaa or Yayrɔ to the Paramount Chief. The Paramount Chief (Pehzoo) decided to send her back to Bɔɔfien to serve her.

In one week's time, the brother of the woman also came to the Banda area. His name was Kpɔfɔmbɛ which means "bring it to me" in the Mo language. He came from the village named Tla in the Mo area. Bɔɔfien served as an interpreter for the paramount chief, who asked Kpɔfɔmbɛ of his mission. He replied that his sister was said to have caused the death of someone and was to be killed, so she ran away. Kpɔfɔmbɛ had been accused of shielding her, so the people wanted to kill him too. He therefore ran away as well. Yaa was brought to him to see if he could identify her and he said that that was indeed his sister. The Paramount Chief then asked him to take his sister from this place, but Kpɔfɔmbɛ begged to be allowed to stay here with his sister, pleading that if they were to go back to their own place, it would surely result in their deaths. The paramount chief consented that Yaa could go and stay with Bɔɔfien and serve her, while Kpɔfɔmbɛ stayed at the palace attending Pehzoo. The man Kpɔfɔmbɛ became known as Petele as his name was too hard to pronounce.

Petele proved to be a great hunter and provided most of the meat in the palace. By the time Pehzoo came to be very old, he is reported to have said "This brave man can really keep this house, so in case you lack a brave man to take charge of the house, this man should be given a chance." Upon Pehzoo's death, the elders talked it over and concluded that, since it was a time of war, and chiefs must always lead in war, that a brave man was required to fill the position of chief. They agreed, therefore, that Petele should take charge of the royal house and hence sit on the stool.

Since it was a chief from the Krontihene side of the family that gave someone from outside the royal house the opportunity to sit on the stool, it was taken that they gave up their right to provide paramount chiefs. Hence, from the time of Pehzoo, there have been no paramount chiefs from this family. It was said "Since you have given such a chance to a slave, it should be the end of your chance at the stool." Since Nyawaa Katoo was, however, part of the Royal House, they had to be given some role in affairs. They were thus regarded as head of the town, known in those days as Katoo Lopom ("head of the house").

Chambe Bɔɔfiɛn acquired her name because of her reputation for killing any young girl who became pregnant before the customary rites of *Manaa Ndiom* (female puberty rites) had been performed.

#### Male Heads of Family:

1. Pehzoo
2. Pɛ Kɔshia
3. Kwabena Lɛɛndo
4. Pɛ Nango
5. Kwaku Ble
6. Dabla
7. Kwasi Wullombo (Krontihene in 1986)

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Interview held on 2 August, 1986 with Nana Kwasi Wullumbo (Krontihene), Kwaku Mori (Regent) and Sie Kwadwo.

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

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