

Oral Traditions on The Origin of The Tano-Dumase Traditional State and The Kusi Boadum Royal Dynasty

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Abstract—A considerable number of African traditional states were founded by migrants who had been displaced by turbulent political situations mostly characterized by wars. Some also were founded by hunters through hunting expeditions while others sprang up from voluntary settlement in vacant places. Again, a number of African traditional states emerged from a cluster of several migrant populations of diverse origins and identities. In most cases, the first settled population produced the ruling dynasty for the entire state. The latter entrants were not denied political space in the governance of the state but were absorbed into it and given specific roles to play. When wars of state expansion became a necessity both the first settlers and the late arrivals constituted the people's militia and fought together to acquire extra territories while defending the original ones. Accordingly, territorial spaces were apportioned to the clans or tribes that constituted the whole traditional state. This work discusses the migration history and political structure of the Tano-Dumase state during the precolonial era. It also focuses on economic activities, and religion.

Pioneering the migration and stool history of Tano-Dumase, I relied primarily on oral traditions sourced from knowledgeable informants to reconstruct the history. Admittedly, oral tradition is not an absolute perfect tool of historical enquiry because it suffers from feedback which refers to an invented tradition to glorify one's past. In sourcing the data, I encountered the problem of feedback as some of the informants were caught in the web of trying to over-glorify their past through invention of traditions. But I was able to control the feedbacks and distortions by consulting several informants and carefully cross-checking their evidences.

In spite of its weaknesses, oral evidence is still relevant in the reconstruction of African past because most African histories are in oral forms. Published works relevant to this work were also used. In this work evidence has been provided that the Tano-Dumase traditional state was made up of a cluster of different Akan matrilineal clans who did not trace their origin from a common ancestor. It has also been found out that Tano-Dumase was founded by Asona migrants from Saaman-Tamfoe led by Kusi Boadum, who inaugurated the Kusi

Boadum Royal Dynasty, and ruled as the first King of the state. Effective administration and state security required checks and balances; consequently, Kusi, the founder of the state later inducted in addition two more dynasties to alternatively rule Tano-Dumase. Other clans that came later were also integrated into the political system to control regional powers.

It is my hope that this work will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about how traditional states of Africa originated. It will also equip our understanding of the relevance of oral traditions in the reconstruction of the African past.

***Index Terms*—Oral traditions, Origin, Tano-Dumase, Kusi Boadum dynasty**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Tano-Dumase traditional state is located in the Ashanti Region of Ghana and more precisely in the Sekyere South district of which capital is Agona. The Sekyere South District is bordered by the Ejura-Sekyere Domase district, Manpon Municipal, Sekyere East, Kwabere East, and Afigya Kwabere districts. Tano-Dumase is one of the towns that encircles Agona and it is located at a place of about 41.9km from Kumasi via Kumasi-Mampon Road. The founders of the state were members of the Asona clan of Saaman-Tamfoe, a town located in the Akyem traditional state of the Republic of Ghana. A version of their traditional account relates that a section of the Asona clan migrated from Saaman-Tamfoe as a result of the turbulent political situations and wars associated with them in the area. Having settled in several places during the migration expedition, the Asona fugitives eventually settled in their present location where they carved out the Tano-Dumase state of which first king was Kusi Boadum. Kusi was also noted in the local traditions to have led the migration from their place of origin to their present home probably in the 17th century. Later, other such Akan clans as the Asene, Bretuo, Aduana and the Oyoko made influxes into the Tano-Dumase country. The newcomers were integrated into the political organization of the state and played specific roles ascribed to them in the government.

This work discusses how the Tano-Dumase state was founded and how the Kusi Boadum Royal Dynasty, emerged as the first ruling class of the state. As stated earlier, I relied mainly on oral traditions collected from knowledgeable informants to do this work. However, a few published works were used to coat the information when it became necessary. My extensive use of oral tradition is in consonance with the methodology used in constructing African history. For this reason, Vancina opines that oral sources are inevitable in the construction of African history because most of African traditions are in oral forms.¹ According to Armstrong, linguistics is a form of oral tradition that stands at the central point of communication.² Nurse justifies the relevance of oral tradition for reconstructing African history and says that linguistics has close affinity to

¹ Jan Vancina, "Once Upon a Time, Oral Tradition as History in Africa", *Daedalus*, Spring, 1971, vol. 100, no. 2, pp. 442-468, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024011>

² Robert, G., Armstrong, "The Role of Linguistics in African Studies", *Phylon*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1964), pp. 135-145, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/273646>.

oral tradition because historical and comparative linguistics has long been one area that historians can explore to reconstruct the origins of people. Languages are oral forms of communication that can be classified to know their inter-connections. Linguists use innovations that have occurred in peoples' languages to trace their origins.³ Melvin also contends that oral history is part of the work of a growing number of scholars working on oral histories in the UK, USA and other areas of the Western World.⁴ The African historian who collects oral traditions, who records their testimonies about the past has in that alone produced fully sufficient history. Curtin adds that oral sources are brand new body of data waiting in great volume to open vast areas of African history that were before obscure. Oral narration of pastness are cultural phenomena which may interest scholars in many disciplines including philosophy, psychology and the growing studies of performance arts. Living memories might nevertheless preserve information about the past. This is how Tonkin informs us about the relevance of oral tradition in the reconstruction of African past.⁵ According to Henige written sources once existed in oral forms. He provides evidence from coastal Fante states of Ahanta where colonial documents were distorted during the indirect rule period, therefore historical distortions or feedbacks should not be limited to oral traditions. Therefore, it will be a misplacement of truth and fairness to argue that oral traditions are not relevant in historical reconstruction in the modern era.⁶ Finnigan contents that oral traditions are inevitable in African historical reconstruction. However, she claims that one way of avoiding feedback is being chary of taking the accounts literalistic ally.⁷

II. THE RISE OF THE TANO-DUMASE STATE

The Tano-Dumase people were members of the Asona clan. According to local traditions the Asona traced their origin to Adanse-Akrofrom. They dispersed across the forest region of Ghana as a result of incessant wars in the Adanse country. Some spread to Ejisu under the leadership of Dikopim. Dwamena Akenten led one section of the Asona to Offinso, while Ofori Panin led one group to settle at Kyebi in the Akyem country. A section of the Asona of Ejisu dispersed and fled to such places as Tano-Dumase, Abrakaso, Domeabra and Bonwire.⁸

Traditions of Tano-Dumase relate that the founders of the Tano-Dumase traditional state were members of the Asona clan who migrated from Saaman-Tamfoe in the Akyem country under the leadership of Kusi Boadum (mostly shortened as Kusi Boadu) and other leading members of his

³ Derek Nurse, 'The Contribution of Linguistics to the Study of History' *Journal of African History*, vol.18, No.3, (1997), pp.359-391.

⁴ Philip, D. Curtin, 'Oral Traditions and African History', *Journal of Folklore Institute*, 1969, Vol.6 no.2/3, pp.137-155, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/38141>

⁵ Elizabeth Tonkin, 'Investigating Oral Tradition', *The Journal of African History*, 1986, Vol.27 No.2, pp.203-213. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/181133>.

⁶ David P. Henige, 'Problem of Feedback in Oral Tradition: Four Examples from the Fante Coastland', *The Journal of African History*, 1973, Vol.14, No.2, pp.223-235. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/18446>

⁷ Ruth Finnegan, 'A Note on Oral Tradition and Historical Evidence', *History and Theory* (1970) Vol.9, No.2, pp.195-201. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2504126>

⁸ *Ibid*,

maternal family. These included his maternal brothers by the names of Ketekyew, Yaw Kusi and Baabu Acheamfour.⁹ The four brothers were accompanied by such maternal sisters as Poa Yiadom and Ninkyi Saaben.¹⁰ What occasioned the migration of this section of the Asona clan from their original home? Accessible evidence revealed that incessant armed conflicts in the Akyem country were among the principal causative factors that inspired the migration probably in the last decade of the 17th century. Carrying their male and female stools,¹¹ the migrants sojourned momentarily at Ejisu. Later, they proceeded to Bofoyeduru in the country of the Kona people where they met another section of the Asona clan. The Saaman Tamfoe migrants stationed in the region of the Kobire River in the eastern portion of Kona-Akrofo area. In this place, the Asona fugitives suffered juvenile and infantile mortality which they believed was caused by the activities of the river-deities particularly the deity of the River Kobire. Grippled by terror, they decided to change site. On one occasion, a member of the Asona migrants by the name of Amoako Adu, a hunter discovered an Odum tree that was located in the region of the Abrumadai River. The people were terrified by the torments of river-deity; consequently, they surged forward searching for a habitable place. A section of the Asona fugitives left the Kobire area and carved out the Anyinasu settlement named after the Anyinasu River. A dog which accompanied them died after eating some fish that was fetched from the river. Being suspicious, they moved a little further and discovered the Kumkum River. One of the dogs that accompanied them survived after eating some fish fetched from the river. The people became hopeful that the river would provide them potable water and aquatic food. Kusi Boadum, the king and leader of the Asona migrants confided in Queen Poa Yiadom. The two agreed to settle their retinue of clan members under an Odum tree. They pitched a permanent settlement there and named it Odumase., which meant under an Odum tree¹². But why was the state later called Tano-Dumase? Traditions further relate that on one occasion, a woman went to fetch water from the Kumkum River and discovered a brass pan that contained some strange shiny pebbles.¹³ Okomfo Anokye was consulted and he revealed to them that a deity of the Tano River dwelt in the pan; consequently, they were admonished by Anokye's oracle to keep the pan and venerate the Tano deity, its content for their spiritual defense. The deity became indispensable in the lives of the people.¹⁴ People from nearby settlements who came to seek spiritual protection from the deity referred to Odumase as the state of the Tano deity, hence the word Tano was used to prefix Odumase. Accordingly, the state was rename Tano-Dumase. Informants related that the Tano-Dumase state was later integrated into the Ejisu traditional state. Why? Traditions relate that Ejisu and Ofinso fought hotly in the Asante and Bono Manso war

⁹ Information obtained from Nana Kofi Oduro at Tano- Dumase on the 20th of June, 2024.

¹⁰ Information obtained from Opanin Kwabena Poku at Tano -Dumase on the 21st of June 2024.

¹¹ The male stool was a symbol of office of the chief, while the female stool stood for the queen office.

¹² Odumase means ‘‘under the Odum tree’’

¹³ Information obtained from Obaapanin Yaa Anokyewaa at Kobedi, a suburb of Chiraa near Sunyani.

¹⁴ The deity possessed Serwaa, the lady that discovered the pebble-laden brass pan. She was put under the service of Okomfo Anokye to train as a fetish priestess. Serwaa became a powerful priestess who could dance on top of an Odum or Onyina tree. This earned him the title Obaa a Oforo Onyina. The deity possessed Serwaa on such taboo days as Fodwo, Akwasidae and Krudapaakuo,

(1723) during the reign of the Asantehene Opoku Ware I. When Asante emerged victorious, Ofinsohene was given for his post war trophy a stretch of land which he named “*mmoa nni nkopem* .”¹⁵ Another version of the traditions relate that it was Osei Tutu I who rewarded the Ofinsohene Wiafe Akenten I with that stretch of land for fighting bravely to expel the Dormaa who then lived in Suntreso, now a suburb of Kumasi. It is probable that the Mmoaninko festival of Offinso originated from this incidence. Ejisuhene requested that for his war trophy all the Asona people in the region be put under his dominion. In response to the Ejisuhene’s request, the Asantehene put the Asona towns of Bonwire, Anyinasu, Abrakaso, Bepoase and Tano-Dumase under the Ejisuhene. Henceforth, those states lost their sovereignty and became sub-servient to Ejisu. In their exodus expedition, the Asona migrants initially sojourned to other members of the Asona clan who had carved out the Bonwire and Amoadampan states. The Saaman Tamfoe migrants left a section of their entourage behind at Bonwire and Amoadampan while a great number of them went and carved out the Tano-Dumase state.¹⁶

III. THE ASONA CLAN OF TANOSO

Traditions relate that a section of the Asona of Kusi Boadum’s dynasty lived at Tanoso near Techiman in the Bono East region of Ghana. How did they deflect from Tano-Dumase to Tanoso? According to my interviewees, a family member by the name of Owusuaa consulted the Ateakosa deity of Tanoso to cure her of bareness. She got married to a man at Tanoso and bore him two female children namely Owusuaa and Nana Serwaa. The former was put to the service of the Atiakosa deity while the latter was taken to Tano-Dumase. Owusuaa grew up at Tanoso, had a successful marriage and blessed with children. Her genealogy at Tanoso is today referred to as the Akwangya people¹⁷.

IV. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF TANO-DUMASE

Having successfully established the Tano-Dumase state, the Asona officialized the male stool and the female stool they carried along to symbolize political power. The male stool was named after Kusi Boadum, the first king hence the Kusi Boadum Stool. The pioneer ruling dynasty was also named after Kusi Boadum. A section of the Asona of Amoadampa and Afomaso who later made an influx into the Tano-Dumase country were given a stake in the political administration of the state. Henceforth, legitimacy to occupy the Kusi Boadum Stool became a shared privilege among three gates which were christened the Asona Kusi Boadum, the Asona Amoadampan and the Asona Afomaso ruling dynasties. Occupation of the male stool was observed in a rotatory fashion among

¹⁵ *Mmoa nni nkopem* literally means “a wider stretch of land the extent to which animals could graze”

¹⁶ Information obtained from Nana Yaa Owusua Serwaa Ampem, Tanosohemaa at Abotatia near Kronom, Kumasi.

¹⁷ Information obtained from Obaa Panin Ama Kuma, affectionately called Susana Adai, a royal of the Asona clan at Tanoso on the 24th of April, 2024. Owusuwaa begot two daughters namely Adwoa Adai and Akosua Serwaa. The former brought forth two female children called Adwoa Adomaa and Nsonoamoa.

the three dynasties. There was also an Asonahene who was the head of all members of the Asona clan. He was elected from only the Asona Kusi Boadum Royal lineage.¹⁸ However, a tradition was invented which made the occupation of the queen's stool a restricted privilege of the Asona Kusi Boadum dynasty. Queens who occupied the Kusi Boadum Stool remembered in the traditions were Poa Yiadom, Ninkyi Saaben and Akosua Serwaa. Kings that the Asona Kusi Boadum Royal lineage produced were: Yaw Antori, Baayim, Kwabena Dwoben, Gyima Ankoana, Ketekyew, Baabu Achemfour, and Adu Kwame. The latest litigated with the people of Kona about the land they occupied. When Adu Kwame emerged victorious in the land suit, he distributed the land among the Asona, Ekona, Aduana, Bretuo, Agona and Oyoko clans that constituted the Tano-Dumase state.¹⁹

Kings produced by the Asona Amoadampan Royal lineage remembered in the traditions were: Owusu Ansah, Appia, Kwadwo Fodjour and Ketekyew II. The Asona Afomaso Royal Lineage also produced Kofi Darkwa and Appia. Traditions mentioned Afia Nikra and Yaa Akyiaa as members of the Asona Afomaso Royal who occupied the female stool in contravention of the people's constitutional custom. Nana Kofi Oduro relates that royals of Kusi Boadum's lineage were by tradition eligible to occupy the Ejisu stool. He contended that when Nana Gyikopim of Ejisu died, Nana Gyima from Tano-Dumase became the regent till Aboagye Agyei was enstooled as the permanent king.²⁰ Kwabena Antwi Boasiako also affirmed the dynastic relationship between Tano-Dumase people and Ejisu people.²¹

V. BOUNDARY NEIGHBOURS

At the peak of its dexterity and political prowess, the Tano-Dumase traditional state shared boundaries with Kona to the South at the Adoosu River; to the north with Agona at the Kumkum River area; to the east with Boforoyeduru at Adoosuagya area and to the west with Abrakaso on the Offin River.²²

Later, several Akan groups flowed into Tano-Dumase. These groups were not only assimilated and integrated into the autochthonous population but also were given a material stake in the government. The Asene occupied the Gyaase division, the Aduana took the Kyidom; the Asona occupied the Nifa division; the Ekona clan also occupied the Akwamu division while the Bretuo took the Akyeamehene. Other Akan clans migrated into the Tano-Dumase traditional state either to escape wars or find opportunities there.

¹⁸ Information obtained from Opanin Kwabena Poku at Tano-Dumase on the 30th of June, 2024.

¹⁹ Information obtained from Opanin Kwabena Poku, at Tano-Dumase on 30th day of June, 2024.

²⁰ Information obtained from Nana Kofi Duro on the 30th of June, 2024.

²¹ Information obtained from Kwabena Antwi Boasiako on the 30th of June 2024.

²² Ibid

VI. THE ASENE MIGRATION

A section of the Asene clan of Agona and Afomaso led by Ampontua migrated and settled at Tano-Dumase. What occasioned the migration? Tomfour relates that his ancestors who once lived in Agona had a conflict with the Agona chief; consequently, they escaped to Afomaso. One group left Afomaso and headed towards Tano-Dumase. The Asene were integrated into the political organization. Nana Baabu, the King of Tano-Domase created the Gyaase stool for the Asene clan with Ampontua Panyin as the first occupant. Other occupants were: Yaw Mensa, Yaw Afrifa, Kwasi Boateng and Ampontua Kumah. The latter died on the stool but his stool was not blackened to legitimize his office. Among the Akan, the Gyaase segment of the ruling class were according to the constitutional custom regarded as ‘wives’ of the king because they engaged in such domestic services as cooking for the king. On account of their domestic engagement, they were given the title of ohene yere, the wife of the king.²³

In the Gyaase division of the government, it was the Ampontua family line that had legitimacy of ascension to the Gyaase stool. Gyaase tradition relates that some members of the Asene of Tano-Dumase were related to Okomfo Anokye, the fetish priest who lived at Agona.²⁴ Available evidence relates that Ampontua Panin, who once became the Gyasehene of Tano-Boase was Okomfo Anokye’s nephew. Others relatives of Anokye remembered in the tradition were: Yaw Mensah, Yaw Nnipa Antwi, Agya Attah, Adwoa Pokuaa, Afia Adantamu, Omenaa and Abena Amponfi.

Another batch of the Asene migrated from Amakom and Agona to join their kinsmen at Tano-Dumase. But according to their traditional constitution and custom, occupation of the Gyaase stool was an exclusive right and privilege of Ampontua’s family line. One group of the Asene clan under the leadership of Yaw Afrifa and Kwasi Boateng journeyed to the Wenchi country in the present Bono East region of Ghana.

VII. THE ADUANA AND BRETUO MIGRATION

The Aduana and Bretuo versions of the local traditions assert that a section of the Aduana clan migrated from Ofinso and settled in the Tano-Dumase country. Like the Asene, the Aduana and the Bretuo clans were integrated into the Tano-Dumase traditional state and occupied established offices in the government.

VIII. THE OYOKO AND EKONA MIGRATION

Sections of the Oyoko and Ekona clans also trooped into the Tano-Domase country. All of these groups were attracted to the place as a result of the spiritual activities of the Tano deity.

²³ This title affirmed their domestic credentials because in traditional Akan society, domestic chores were done mainly by women.

²⁴ Information obtained from Nana Kwasi Boaten, an Asene royal at Tano-Dumase on 30th June, 2024.

IX. RELIGION AND TABOOS

The people of the Tano-Dumase traditional state were very religious. Gyekye contends that in all undertakings of the Africans, religion plays an important role. Being it cultivation, sowing harvesting eating, travelling, marriage, outdooing, funeral etc. religion is seen at work. But each African community had its own system of religious beliefs and practices.²⁵

In puberty rights, religion is not down-played.²⁶ Adjaye claims that ritual practices are compatible with the African's way of life.²⁷ Odotei contends that in such social institutions as festivals, religious practices are inevitable and the deities and the ancestors are at the center of such religious practices.²⁸ Religion played a dominant role in the foundation of the Tano-Dumase traditional state. The Tano cult of Tano-Dumase was associated with the Tano River The location of the town followed the dictates of the Tano cult. It was for this reason why the name Tano that referred to the cult prefixed Odumase. In the traditional Tano-Dumase society, the Tano deity was venerated as a state god. It was consulted by the rulers whenever they wanted to embark on wars of expansion or migration and resettlement elsewhere. It was believed that the deity protected their lives and so failure to observe its rituals and taboos could inflict calamity on the people. Although the rivers Kobire, and Kumkum were all deified, and worshipped, the Tano River was considered the most powerful of all the deities. People travelled afar even to this day to consult it. Another river-God worthy to mention here was the Anyinasu deity. Rearing of goats at Tano-Dumase was tabooed because it was believed that the Tano deity disliked goats. Certain days were also tabooed because it was believed that on those days the deities became active in people lives. Days tabooed and set apart for the veneration of the deities were: Akwasidae, Sunday; Wukudae, Wednesday; and Fofie Friday

X. CONCLUSION

In this work, I have chronicled a history of origin and the foundation the Tano-Dumase traditional state and the creation of the Kusi Boadum royal dynasty. The work has revealed that the people of the Tano-Domase traditional state migrated from Saaman-Tamfoe in the Akyem area of the present-day Eastern region of Ghana. The Asona group settled in some places until they came to their final destination probably in the seventeenth century. Other such Akan clans as the Asene, Bretuo Oyoko and Aduana probably wanting to escape war or find opportunities elsewhere migrated into the Tano-Dumase country. The Asona migrants established a government of an Akan model with Kusi Boadum as the first King. To consolidate the state, King Kusi Boadum assimilated members of the other clans into the state's political structure to play roles specifically

²⁵ Kwame Gyekye, *Africa Cultural Values and Introduction*, (Accra, Sankofa 1996) pp.14.

²⁶ Peter Sarpong, *Girls Nubility Rites in Ashanti* (Tema Ghana Publish 1977),pp.ix

²⁷ Joseph K.Adjaye ,''Rituals Post Modernity and Development' '*Transactions of Historical Society in Ghana*,New Series, No.6, University of Ghana, 2002,1-17.

²⁸ Irene K. Odotei," Festivals in Ghana: Continuity Transformation and Politicization of Tradition ", *Transaction of Historical Society, new series*,2002,17-34

ascribed to them. Religiosity of the people couldn't be overemphasized. The Tano cult was the most senior deity of the state. The people's belief in deities was rooted in their world view; consequently, such taboos as not rearing picks was outlawed by the rulers of the state. The research has revealed the origin of the Mmoaninko festival of the Offinso traditional state. Besides, the reason for which Bonwire, Abakaso, Anyinasu, Beposo and Tano-Dumase lost their sovereignty to Ejuso.

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