

Chokoe Katoo, Gbau¹

The Chokoe Katoo is responsible for providing the Royal House with yams and other items for the celebration of the New Yam festival.

The ancestral leader of the house was a man by the name of Choko Kwadwo. He was a member of the royal house in a town near Bole in Gonjaland. A time came when it was Choko Kwadwo's turn to be chief; however, he was passed over in favour of his nephew and deprived of the opportunity to take up the chieftancy. He became annoyed at this and decided to leave the town and move to a new place. Because his wives were all from different families, he left them behind. He was able to convince all his daughters and sons to accompany him however. He left Gonjaland and came down to the Banda area. Here he met the Bandahene Sie Dongi.* Choko Kwadwo related his story to the Bandahene and was given permission to stay in the area. The Paramount Chief gave Choko Kwadwo and his family a place to stay behind the Makala Mountain where they began to farm. After a time, they came to know the people at Makala and decided to move to Makala and join them. Choko Kwadwo and his family were good farmers and Kwadwo maintained a good friendship with the Omanhene who had befriended him.

There came a time when the Omanhene was making preparations for the Yam Festival but was unable to obtain yams from his own farm with which to perform the rites. He therefore sent word to his friend Choko Kwadwo whom he knew to be a good farmer to send yams, a new calabash and a new calabash spoon with which to perform the rites. Kwadwo didn't hesitate to provide the Omanhene with the things he had requested. The following year, he once again provided these things to the Omanhene for the New Yam festival. In the third year, Choko Kwadwo was not consulted prior to the New Yam festival since the Omanhene had the necessary items in his own farm. When the sacrifices were offered on the day of the festival, however, the offerings were repeatedly refused. It was ascertained that this was because the Omanhene's friend Choko had not supplied the yams. Someone was sent who related the problem to Choko Kwadwo and apologized to him. The family of Choko Kwadwo responded by providing the necessary items, and the sacrifices were accepted straight away. To this day the family still supplies the following: 4 new yams; 1 new earthenware cooking pot; 1 new earthenware woman's eating dish (*kpokpoo*); 1 new large calabash (*kɔɔngɔ*); and 1 new calabash spoon. These are sent to the palace by the head of the family the day before the New Yam festival is celebrated. In return, Choko Katoo is sent a thigh of the sheep sacrificed by the royal family during the New Yam rites.

Male Heads of Family

1. Choko Kojo
2. Siembo
3. Hanjo
4. Kofi Laho
5. Kwaku Jabaa
6. Siembo Kwabena (head in 1986)

Female Heads of Family

1. Hlembɔ Kɔtia
 2. Afua Chalb
 3. Nyimjininge
 4. Chambe
 5. Nyini Yaa
 6. Afua Bɔfi (head in 1986)
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* Sie Dongi was not, according to other sources, Bandahene. Rather, Sie Dongi was the head of the Ahenkro Royal House during the reign of Sahkyame Wurosa who was from the Kabruno family. Information derived from an interview with Tolɛɛ Kofi Dwuru III (Omanhene) and Nana Kofi Mensah (Gyasehene) on 1 August 1986.

Interview conducted 4 August 1986 with Afua Bɔfi (Female Head of house).

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

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