

## THE HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF KWASO

*Asuo Kwao, w'ato me aa sabi nom*

*Asuo Kwao, obi nhwee yen nsuo yi da*

### Indigenous cultural practices of Kwaso

Traditional systems of beliefs, taboos, myths, proverbs and songs have over the centuries played major roles in the management and conservation of most of the forests and water bodies within the Kwaso traditional communities.

Some of the beliefs in the village are as follows:

1. Forests were believed to be the dwelling places for dwarfs (*mmoatia*), devilish spirit (*Sasabonsam*), and other deities, who protect the entire community from calamity. There are sacred/taboo fetish worship days (*da bone*) like Awukudae, Kuudapaakuo, Fofie. On such days entry into the forest and farming activities are totally forbidden. Offenders face the anger of the deities which upset the harmony of the community until costly sacrifices are offered. The absence of humans in the forest on such days allows the forest ecosystem to rest from human activities. This possibly has contributed to the continuous existence and richness of the forests.
2. The rivers are carefully protected from farming activities, washing of clothes, and other forms of pollution through cultural practices that restrict entry into the watershed area of the forest. By this, the water resources are conserved and the community has access to quality water throughout the year
3. **Asuo Kwao** is considered a 'mother' and pre-eminent of all Kwaso water bodies. It is predominantly a well but flows out as a stream; always flooded

and never dries up as in the song (*Kwao ee, oboa oo Kwao ee ... obi nhwee yen nsuo yi da ...*). A stipulation which is common knowledge is that the immediate surroundings of the stream of **Asuo Kwao** be left fertile without any farming and human activities. As such on Fridays no one fetches water or play near the **Asuo Kwao**.

4. The Ashantis ancient tradition regard menstruating girls and women as ritually unclean. During this period, they are tabooed to fetch or wash in/near **Asuo Kwao**.
5. The largest and longest river is **Bankro**. It is a taboo to farm near or fetch water from the river on Tuesdays.
6. Fishing and consumption of the sacred fish in the **Anunkunsua** stream is forbidden. Other rivers and streams in the Kwaso communities include: **Daa, Tefia, Amampansu, Awaasu, Mpatapono (Mpaapono)**.

To avoid in increasing rate of deforestation, destruction of water bodies, and disasters inflicted by the gods such as prolonged drought and loss of soil fertility, it is important for community leaders to recognize various cultural practices and traditional beliefs as very useful tools and integrate them into current village activities.