

History of the Lake Bosomtwe Communities

Introduction

Biodiversity is a crucial part of our daily lives and livelihoods because it provides the resources both present and future generations depend on to satisfy our needs. Many of the activities such as bush burning, shifting cultivation, sand winning, harvesting of fingerlings, use of unapproved fishing nets, and deforestation undertaken by communities living around Lake Bosomtwe have a detrimental impact on the biodiversity of the lake and the surrounding ecosystem, yet to date little has been done to check these damaging activities. They continue as a result of the communities' lack of awareness about their detrimental impacts. However, the bold step taken by Friends of the Earth-Ghana (FoE-Ghana) to educate the communities around the Lake about the negative environmental impacts of their activities is very positive. The livelihoods of all these villages depend on the lake, and if something is not done about the damaging activities, the future for both humans and wildlife will be bleak. It is an onerous task, but with the support of communities, chiefs and stakeholders, FoE-Ghana will have positive impacts that will enhance the development of the people within both local communities and the nation at large.

The destruction of biodiversity in and around the lake has had many negative impacts on local communities as well as on the environment. Hunters and poachers set fire to the bush in search of bush meat as a source of protein and an income. This has drastically reduced the populations of species like antelope, grass cutters, zebra and other species. People sometimes use chemicals such as DDT to kill fish in the lake, rivers and streams, destroying local habitats and poisoning the lake.

When the forests were at their best, they protected habitats of both the lake and its surroundings. These habitats were conducive to increasing populations of local wildlife species. However, lack of proper controls over which species can be caught has led to over-exploitation and destruction of the lake basin's biodiversity. Traditional taboos and norms that controlled levels of resource use are often now ignored to the detriment of the local environment.

Reptiles such as the monitor lizard, horned viper, African python, chameleon and puff adder were found around the catchment area of the lake, hence the naming of one of the villages as Kotrekrom meaning the den of lizards. However, the village is now devoid of such life.

Construction and development of settlements and roads have also contributed immensely to the destruction of biodiversity in and around the lake. Shifting cultivation has led to environmental degradation and habitat loss as farmers set fire to both the forests and the cleared lands. As a result, wildlife such as Pelican, Sunbird, Owl, Parrot, Crow, Vulture and Butterflies which could have attracted tourists for revenue can no longer be found in the lake area.

This research has examined the environmental impacts and also discusses how the people migrated from different places to settle around the lake, the social lives of the people and the economic activities of the communities.

ANKAASE. CONTACT PERSON: NANA KWESI ASARE – AGE 100 YEARS.

Ankaase is one of the communities around Lake Bosomtwe under the Amansie East District Assembly at Bekwai. The people are from Kokofu, also in the Amansie East District Assembly, with a population of a 1,050 people. It is under the Kokofu traditional council. The community is mixed with people from Akokofe, Apenkraa, Abooso Ahwiren, Beposo and Akyeremade. It is an important community with many scholars now in various ministries around Ghana. The people are predominantly fishermen who also produce small amounts of cocoa and cash crops to supplement their annual income. The community has a primary school and a Junior Secondary School.

Botwiwaa is the only shrine in the village. It was once a river with three major tributaries: the Bruma, the Nsamansuwa and the Afretakera which flowed throughout the year. The people worshipped the shrine and put their trust in it. The area used to be covered in thick forest which sustained the river and its tributaries but, as a result of the farming activities around it that resulted in loss of the forest, both the river and its tributaries have now dried up. The people now violate the norms of the shrine: menstruating women could not fetch water from the river, but violation of this norm has contributed to the river drying up.

Creatures like baboons, warthogs, lions, antelopes, anteaters, alligators, porcupines and hippopotami were once found in the thick forest. Varieties of butterfly and grasshoppers were once common along the banks of the lake. Birds, including the Eagle, owl, hawk, crow, vulture, sunbirds, parrot, and pelican, and snakes, like puff adder, python and mamba, were also found in the village but, due to the burning of the forest and destruction of their habitats, those creatures are no longer found there.

ADJAMAM. CONTACT PERSON: NANA YAA ATA AH – AGE 110 YEARS

Agyamam is under the Bosomtwe Atrial Klanswoman District Assembly. Like Ankaase, the people here have migrated from various communities. Traditionally, the people from Apenkraa are always selected as chiefs. Agyamam has a population of 200 and their main occupations include farming and fishing. The village has one Primary School and various Christian churches such as Pentecost and Methodist which sing praises to their God.

The village once had a fish sanctuary which, when filled with fish, always assured a bumper harvest for that year. However, the forest around it has been cleared for farming activities resulting in the loss of the sanctuary. The main tributary, the River Botwiwaa, and other small streams such as the Bruma and Nsamansuwa, which once supplied additional water to the lake, have now all dried up.

The Atakwame Shrine used to be worshipped and out-doored by the community of Adjamam to ensure protection of the people, but they no longer worship it.

Animals such as baboons, lions, gorillas, anteaters, porcupines, antelopes, hippopotami, and tortoises were found in the forest in the past. Birds including crows, vultures, owls, sunbirds, parrots, pelicans and eagles, snakes such as puff adders, python and mamba, and scorpions were also found there. But bush burning and other related factors have now destroyed their habitats. Mudfish and crabs were found in the lake, especially when the streams flooded.

KUNTENASE and OBBO. CONTACT PERSON: OP. ATTA KWESI – AGE: 140 YEARS

The village of Kuntense is under the Bosomtwe Atrial Klanswoman District Assembly which has its headquarters in that village. It is composed of people from various clans including Agona, Asona and Akuona, but the chief is always chosen from the Agona clan. The population is close to a thousand.

Kuntense has a shrine known as Taakwaku which protected the people in the past but, with the advent of Christianity, the shrine has been destroyed and the people no longer worship it.

The first chief of Obbo was Kwasi Braman, with his wife Adwoa Ayewa. The village is under the Kokofu traditional council headed by Nana Offe Akwasi Oko Gyeasuo II, the Omanaene of Kokofu. Commercial activities here were booming during the colonial era. Surrounding villages converged there for trading activities which attracted many Nigerians known as Lagocians who were involved in commercial trading activities in the village. The Methodist Church was the first to bring a primary school to the village which was headed by Mr. Ansah.

Obbo is a distance from the lakeside and fishermen have to walk about 50 metres to the lake for their fishing activities. There was once a thick forest along the waterfront which attracted animals such as the Bush Pig (Kokote), Tiger (Sebo), alligator and porcupine to the lakeside. However, the habitats of these animals have now been destroyed through bushfire and other related farming activities. Apoma and Akabre fish are some of the delicacies amongst the species found in the lake.

Women were banned from bathing in the lake during their menstrual period and this was strictly adhered to by the women in the village.

DETIESO. CONTACT PERSON YAW SARPONG, AGE: 72 YEARS

Detieso is under the Asaman Stool land in the Amansie East District of Ashanti. People have migrated there from various villages including Asumgya-Kokofu, Ahwiren, and Akyeremade-Gyapadu but it is the Ekuona Clan who rule the village. The first chief of the village was Nana Asuming during whose reign much development took place in the village. The family of Sagyagyako, the wife of the hunter who discovered the lake, live at Detieso.

The people in the village are predominantly fishermen who also undertake subsistence farming to supplement their income. The River Mosa was the only source of drinking water for the people but it has now dried up due to forest removal and unsustainable farming practices close to the river banks. This in turn has affected the water level of Lake Bosomtwe. The River Abrewa, which provided the village with water until more recently, has also dried up so they must now follow it upstream towards Dakabruso for water.

The people do not worship any idol. There are several churches in the village including Methodist, Catholic, Pentecost, and Assemblies of God.

Local taboos once existed: the villagers did not farm on Tuesdays and did not fish on Sundays. While these were being obeyed, the fish harvests were abundant. However, since these cultural norms have been ignored, the fish harvests have been declining.

PEPPIE 1. CONTACT PERSON: OP. KWASI NIMO, AGE: 76

Peppie I is another village around the lake, but most people have now moved from here to New Peppie (now called Mim). The contact person, Kwasi Nomi, is one of the oldest of the Peppie I elders. Clans in the village include the Agona and Ekuona, but the village is controlled by the Aduana clan. The people originally migrated there from Ampabame which is situated between Kokodei and Piase. The population is around a thousand, with about 400 being male and the remainder female.

There were originally three settlements, but transportation problems prompted some of them to abandon the village. Prominent chiefs include Nana Ntanasuo, Nana Atta Kofi, Nana Kwasi Obeng and Nana Kwaku Addae. The village enjoyed the greatest level of development under the rule of the latter chief, supported by Nana Akompi (Krontihene). Nana Owusu Gyamera, from the Aduana family, is the present chief and he is also making positive impacts in terms of development. The first primary school was opened by the Catholic mission in 1918, and most people are now Catholics.

The fetish-grove Ampontua was respected and out-doored by the people because it prevented communicable diseases from coming to the village.

The main sources of livelihood for the people are subsistence agriculture and fishing. The only source of drinking water for the community is Ebo Kesewaa. The forest close to the village was once inhabited with creatures like lions, tigers, alligators, monkeys, and antelopes. According to Nana Nimo, a hunter called Kwame Adusei killed a lion at the old town.

Different species of birds used to be found on the banks of the lake but they were harassed by Kwame Afram. Commonest among the birds were the Apokuo which used to inhabit a tree called Pokuoduase, found on the outskirts of the village.

During their leisure hours the people entertain themselves with Konkoma, Ntan, Adaka and Adowa. Abaadam is preferred during funeral celebrations.

NKOWI

The people of Nkowi come from Kuntanase, Asisiriwa and Yaase with the latter being the majority clan in the village. Nkowi stool is under the Yaasehene near Kuntanase under the Bosomtwe-Atwima Klanswoman District Assembly. The stool is Werepim Stool (Krontihene) and it is the Krontihene who installs and destools the chief of the village. The first chief of the village was Kwame Dwumaa, alias Kwasi Ntim. Nkowi has a population of 2,000 people and has a Junior Secondary School and a Roman Catholic Primary School which together have over 500 pupils.

The name of the village has changed – it was once called Kawereye – but the colonial government could not pronounce this so it has now become Nkowi. In times gone by, there was a route from Kumasi to Akim through the village. This name means ‘watchdog’ for the Ashanti kingdom and anything relating to security of Ashanti was reported to the Asantehene by the town’s people.

It is said that the chief of Yaase had some financial difficulties and mortgaged the village to Nana Boakye Yaw, but he could not pay it back. Consequently, at the moment both Yaasehene and Nana Boakye Yaw are claiming to have control over Nkowi. The issue is yet to be settled by the Asantehene.

Taa Kofi, the fetish grove, had spiritual control over the village. The people trusted in it that those who married without children would be helped to have children. People went to the fetish grove whenever the Ashantis were going to war. It had an interesting name: it was called ‘Kyereatete’ which meant that a fetish priest was performing rituals one day and a vulture landed on the roof of the fetish grove. The priest told the vulture not to move and so it was not able to move again. Taa Kofi is however not as powerful as it used to be due to the advent of Christianity in the village which has undermined the traditional beliefs and customs. The churches in the village are now Christian churches.

Some local taboos still remain: the people of the village do not farm on Tuesdays and Fridays.

There was once a large area of forest around the lake catchment area with various animals including tigers, lions, antelopes, and monkeys, and birds such as Atropoa (kingfisher) and Apokuo (bush turkey) which were common on the shore of the lake. Also common were vultures, crows, eagles, parrots, sunbirds, python, crocodiles, alligators, puff adder, monitor-lizard, mamba-mudfish and crabs but these have since disappeared due to habitat removal by bush burning and slash-and-burn agriculture.

The only sources of drinking water were the Aworoso and Bodaka, but these have now dried up as a result of forest destruction in the surrounding area.

The people used to entertain themselves in the past with Adowa (Abaadam) and Kete which was very popular when any of the royal family passed away. The young girls and boys also liked the Bosoo, and sometimes the Brass Band.

ATAFRAM. CONTACT PERSON: NANA BOADU, AGE: 90 YEARS

Atafram is a small village near Lake Bosomtwe under the Bosomtwe Atria Klanswoman District Assembly at Kuntanase. It has a total population of only 150 people and there is no school. Watafame is the real name of the village but this was

mispronounced by the colonialists. The stool name is Gyaawe stool (or Gyaawere Akonana). Clans present here include the Asona, Ekuona and Aduana, but it is the Agona Clan that controls the village. People have migrated there from Praso, Asaman, Boagyaa, Besease, and Asankare near Kokofu.

The village is highly respected by the Otumfour Palace after it fought the Ashantis during the rule of Nana Gyaaware, the then chief of Atafra. It is the only village around the lake which supplies fish to the Asantehene every forty days. The king of Ashanti spent the night at Atafra during the war with the Akims.

The people worshiped and out-doored the Tiwaa shrine which protected them in times of crisis. Only the fetish priest could go to the shrine to perform rituals at such times. There was a large rock called Bookofi at the shrine which was also sacred. The people were banned from going there on Fridays.

Downstream from the Botwiwaa shrine the community fetched water for home consumption. Along the bank of the lake were creatures like Alligators, Antelopes, Apekuo (Bush Turkey), Sun birds, King fishers, Crows, Owls, Hawks, Eagles, Porcupines, Antelopes, Anteaters, Leopards, and parrots. In the forests there used to be hippopotamus, gorilla, lion and baboon. The activities of farmers and hunters have impacted negatively on the forest as a habitat and these animals are no longer seen. Local taboos associated with the Botwiwaa shrine prevented people from eating rats, but this has since been violated. It is also taboo to farm on Tuesdays.

ANYINATIASE. CONTACT PERSON: ADU BRIMPONG, AGE:77 YEARS

Anyinatiase is another village at Lake Bosomtwe under the Bosomtwe Atrial Klanswoman District Assembly at Kuntanase Ashanti. The village belongs to the Agona Clan from Denkyira in the Central Region. The clan rebelled against the chief, Ntim Gyakari, of Denkyira and then migrated to settle at Daabaa with the chief linguist Obaa Nana, and served the Kokofu stool. The queen mother of Kokofu, Nana Ataa Brago, received them warmly. Sadly, an outbreak of influenza killed many of the people. The queen mother, following consultation with the Kumasi Oyokohene, managed to secure two plots of land near Lake Bosomtwe to resettle those attacked by the influenza. The plots – one at Onyinatetease and the other at Konkoma – had been given to the Oyokohene by Asamanehene during the war of discovery (Lake Bosomtwe). It was decided that some should be settled on each plot. The two fetish groves were brought with them from Denkyira. One called Doom and Dosoage, those coming to Onyinateatiase should come down with Dwomo and those going to Konkoma should relate to the Dosoago.

The village has a population of about 800. The main occupation for the community is fishing with some subsistence farming to subsidise their income. Vegetation is grassland with only a few trees. Animals once found along the banks of the lake included lion, zebra, antelope, porcupine and some beautiful birds. The people used to fetch water from the only river, the Obribo, but this has now dried up due to forest removal and farming activities along the catchment area.

The people entertain themselves with the brass band, and Abadam or Adowa is played during funeral celebrations.

ABRODWUM. CONTACT PERSON: NANA KWASI KYIE (ODIKRO), AGE: 75

The village of Abrodwum, with a population of around 250, is built on the Abogso stool land and traditionally belongs to the Aboosohene. While the present chief, Nana Kwasi Kyie, is from the Akuona Clan, the citizens come from various communities including Edwinase, Amankwadei, Onwi, and Akofofe, but the Akuona Clan is dominant. The first sub-chief, Odikro, of the village was Nana Kwaku Otoo. In the past, reliable rainfall resulted in the expansion of Lake Bosomtwe causing the villages to move their settlement three times. A pillar put in place by the Gold Coast Survey Department marking the site of the original village is now far away from the location of the present village.

Abrodwum has no school so the children attend at the nearby village of Adwafo. The village has various churches including Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Church of Christ and Pentecost.

When there is a bad Omen against Lake Bosomtwe, rituals are performed at a place called Asoneyeso where cows and sheep are slaughtered to pacify the gods. The great Abrodwum stone is also central to the spiritual activities on the lake and attracts more than 200 tourists to the village, although little is known about it. When there is a problem concerning the development of the lake, custom demands that a team from Otumfour's palace be served by the chief of Abrodwum.

Another tourist attraction that could be further developed is the Kowuankra Hill to the south-east of the village. Its importance lies in the traditional belief that before anyone from the lake's twenty-two communities can die and pass to the new world, they must first visit the Kowuankra Hill and bathe in the lake.

Animals such as monkeys, zebras, antelopes, and birds such as apokuo (bush turkey) have all disappeared as their habitats have been destroyed and the lake's environment damaged through excessive tree felling, bush burning and unsustainable farming practices.

BRODEKWANO. CONTACT PERSON: KOFI AMOATENG, 88 YEARS

Brodekwanano is another village within the Bosomtwe Atria Klanswoman District of Ashanti. Its original name was Bonekwanano, but again it was mispronounced by the British colonials and hence has now become Brodekwanano. Following the seventh battle between the people of Foase in the Asante Akim and the Asantehene, the Foase people decided to disperse because of the difficulties they faced. They were led by their queen mother, Pinanmang Kontomene, to settle near the River Bone, while the people from Piase near Kuntanase were led by their chief Deawuo to resettle further south near Pippie II (Pippie Kese) and Bonefuo. This close proximity to Bonefuo was so that if they suffered attack from their enemies, they could easily call on the Bone people for help. Their close relationship with the people from Piase meant it was easy for them to contact the Kuntanasehene through the Krontihene from Pippie II (Pinimo-Kwagyan). The chief of Kuntanase married the Bonehemaa, and a large strip of land was released to the Bone people and this is now called Brodekwanano.

The village is under the Kuntanase stool. People in the village have come from Apenkra, Piase, Abogoso, Krobo, Antoa and Akyeremade, with clans including Bretuo and Asona, but the Bretuo clan is always installed as chief of the village. The people of Brodekwanano share common land boundaries with Juaben, Ejisu and Pemenase. The first chief of Brodekwanano was Nana Kwaku Tawia who constructed the first story building before the Piase people arrived. Nana Kwaku Abenkro is always remembered as the development chief of Brodekwanano, due to his immense contribution towards the uplift of the village.

After the 1874 British war with Ashantis, the chief of Brodekwanano supported the British and was asked to occupy the Kuntanase stool but he rejected it because of the good relationship that had existed between both, and moreover the Kuntanasehene was his father.

The first senior school in the vicinity of the lake area was at Brodekwanano and was built by the Methodist mission.

The people have been actively involved in the fishing industry, and also cultivate cocoa, tomatoes, onions and shallots to subsidise their income. The only source of drinking water was the River Osa from the hills, but this has since dried up due to tree felling and farming on the hills.

The people worshiped the god Taa Kofi from Bankame, and their fetish priest, Yaw Mensah, assisted the village spiritually, especially during the 1874 war.

Wildlife found in the area included lions, tigers, porcupines, and birds including kingfishers (Atropoa). However, these creatures are no longer found in the area as a result of excessive hunting and poaching as well as the destruction of their habitats by farming and tree felling.

BANSO LAKESIDE. CONTACT PERSON NANA AUGUSTINE AGYEKUM, AGE: 87 YEARS

Banso is one of the communities around Lake Bosomtwe in the Amansie East District of Ashanti. The majority of the population come from Asaman near Kokofu, while the clans include Asona, Agona, Asakyere, Bretuo and others. The original village was submerged in 1903 when it moved to its present site. Traditionally, the people of Banso supplied fish to the chief of Asaman.

The people worshipped the Taa Kofi shrine as their divine protector. The only source of drinking water was the River Abrewa which is also regarded as the sacred mother of Lake Bosomtwe. However, the river has since dried up due to unsustainable farming methods and vegetation removal around the catchment area.

It was once taboo for fishermen to fish on Sundays because Kwasi Bosomtwe symbolized the birthday of the lake which is Sunday. However, this taboo is no longer respected by all fishermen and many believe this has had a negative impact on their fish catches. Other taboos include no farming on Tuesdays, a ban on washing cooking utensils in the lake, and menstruating women cannot fetch water or bathe in the lake. Anyone who violates these customs are sanctioned and must then pacify the gods.

APEW. CONTACT PERSON: NANA MENKA, AGE: 130 YEARS

According to Nana Menka, at 130 years old he is the oldest person in Apewu. The village is in the Amansie West District Assembly, under the Asaman traditional area. The people in the village are predominantly Asamang. Nana Kwarteng was the first chief of the village followed by Nana Agyei Twum.

The people in the village are hard-working cocoa farmers and skilful fishermen who, more recently, also cultivate coffee. Fishing was the most prosperous occupation of the people and some fishermen could earn huge sums of money a day. Apoma and Kabre fish were considered delicacies.

Apewu village had only one shrine called Apewu Kobi which, according to Nana Menka, supported the village spiritually. When there was an outbreak of disease, the chief pacified the gods by sacrificing a sheep and the outbreak ceased. The River Abrewa is a site for libation when there is a bad omen. Rituals are performed here, and offenders have sometimes been sanctioned.

Apewu was the first in the lake area to have a road passable with motorized vehicles and was built with help from communal village labour. The Presby Mission opened a school in the village in 1918 after the construction of the road in 1911.

According to Nana Menka, the village was once surrounded by thick forest with a variety of trees and reeds. Birds which were commonly found around the lake were Apokuo, Ntropoa, Paawaa, Subrukoko, and Okom, but poaching and farming has caused destruction of their habitats and a decline in their numbers. The forest also once harboured creatures like Kotoko (porcupine), monkeys, Afoo and alligators but, due to forest removal by farming, setting fire to the forest, and cutting trees for timber, their habitats have been destroyed and the animals are no longer found there.

ESAASE. CONTACT PERSON: OP. KWAME NYAMEKYE, AGE: 82

The village of Esaase derived its name from the Essa tree. The village, with a population of 900 people, historically belongs to the chief of Asaman, and its administration is under Amansie-East District at Bekwai.. The people in the village come from Akyeremade-Kokofu and settled at Essase more than 200 years ago. The first chief of the village was Nana Kwame Wora. According to the contact person, the wife (Sanyaagyako) of the hunter who discovered lake Bosomtwee comes from Esaase and her family can still be traced at the village. The rise in the level of the lake has caused the people to move the village three times before they settled at their current location. A sea plane landed at Esaase on 21st August, 1946, just after the Second World War.

The Ayowakesee shrine prevented bad omens in the village and the people regarded it as their second god both spiritually and traditionally. It is taboo to fish on Sundays because of the lake's name which is Kwasi Bosomtwe (alias Kowuoankra, nickname) and people were banned from farming on Tuesdays.

The main occupation of the people is fishing but they also produce crops such as cocoa and onions. Esaase once had a rest house, attracting both local and foreign tourists, but it was short-lived.

The forest zone attracted animals like lions, tigers and porcupines but their habitats have been destroyed through deforestation and farming and they are no longer seen in the area. Birds found in the area in the past included Akokofufuo, Asunoma, Paawa, Apokuo and Atropoa.

The only source of drinking water is Bofrimpong. According to the contact person, if a menstruating woman went in to fetch water, the river subsided instantly and when libation was poured by the priest Kofi Kobi, the waters returned to normal.

The Methodist Mission opened their first primary school in 1937 with Mr. Addison as the first teacher and Headteacher respectively.

PIPPIE II. CONTACT PERSON: PAUL AMOAKO ATTA, AGE: 63 YEARS

Pippie II is under the Bosomtwe Atria Klanswoman District Administration at Kuntanase – Ashanti. The village belongs to the Oyoko clan. The first chief of the village was Nana Kaedewete who, according to the people of the village, was the most triumphant chief who organized the people and united them for development.

According to the contact person, there was a caretaker chief at Pippie (then Ahwedie Agya) before the arrival of the Oyoko clan. The clan brought their stool, and Otumfour ordered the chief at Pippie I to release a portion of Oyoko clan land at a place called Attwidie Agya (now Peppie II) for settlement in the 16th Century. They made their second settlement around 17th Century and the third settlement just after the Second World War.

Fishing has always been an important activity but is banned on Sundays because of the lake's name. This sacred day was always observed by the fishermen which helped sustain the fishing industry in the village. The people also practice subsistence farming, producing crops such as okro, pepper, shallots, and plantain to supplement the fishing activities.

The first primary school was opened in 1945, but had only produced 300 scholars due to the high poverty rates in village. A feeder road to Pippie was opened in 1991 between Nkowi and Pippie I improving access between the lake's villages.

The Ampayoo family was the first to settle at Pippie II (Ahwedie Agua) before the arrival of the Oyoko clan and the family was in charge of the Tano Kwaku shrine. The shrine helped the people spiritually, and there was also a sanctuary called Tanokrom. The shrine gave spiritual help to women who had no issues with their husbands. Rituals were

performed at Tano Village when any omen occurred. The village, which also served as an animal sanctuary, protected the forest and, as such, people were not allowed to go there on certain days. The people no longer worship the Tanokrom as a result of Christianity becoming prominent which undermined beliefs in the old superstitions and customs.

The forest around the lake had large trees of Wawa, Oframo and Odum amongst others and this ensured a favorable climate with adequate rainfall in the village. Creatures like monkeys, porcupines, antelopes, lions and dwarfs existed in the area. Birds like vulture, okom, apitie, apokuo, atropoa, asansa, apatupre, and mammals like, alligator, mampam, were all found around the lakeside. However, the villages have encroached on their habitats with farming and forest removal so the animals are no longer seen.

ASISIRIWA. CONTACT PERSON: NANA KWAKU ASANTE, AGE: 99 YEARS

The name Asisiriwa was derived from the Sire Tree. The village is under the Bosomtwe Atwima-Klanswoman District Assembly at Kuntanase and has a population of some 2,500 people. Clans in the village are from Agona, Toa, Bretuo-Asona, Beposo, Kokofu, Juaso, and Adwumase. The people originally migrated from Denkyira in the Central Region to Kokofu during the reign of Nana Amisare, and then moved on to settle at Krom-Adwafo during the reign of Otuo Akenten. While at Krom-Adwafo, the people's only source of drinking water was poisoned, killing many people. This caused the community to move to Asisiriwa. Expansion of Lake Bosomtwe has caused this settlement to move three times from its original site. The first chief of the village was Kwabena Amoah. The village is now facing a chieftaincy dispute which has yet to be settled.

People worshipped the Taekofi fetish grove and this has assisted the villagers spiritually. It is believed to protect the community in times of war, and also from communicable diseases such as whooping cough and malaria. Most of the people still worship the god.

According to Nana Kwaku Asante, when they first settled at Asisiriwa the area was covered in thick forest including Mahogany, Mangrove and Wawa. Animals included lion, tiger, hippopotamus, antelope, zebra and porcupine. The forest also attracted birds like eagle, crow, hawk, and sunbirds. There was an occasion when one Madam Akua Addai was nearly killed by a lion in the forest, but the forest is now degraded and unable to support such diversity.

The people entertained themselves with dances such as Osikyi-Ntan, Konkoma, Abaadam or Adowa during funeral celebrations. The Adowa dance is the most popular.

ADWAFO. CONTACT PERSON: OP. KWABENA ODURO, AGE: 72 YEARS

Adwafo is a lakeside community under the Bosomtwe Atria Klanswoman District Assembly at Kuntanase and has a population of 1,500 people. Like other villages already described, the name was mispronounced, originally being called Adwanaaso (trading center).

The Yaase people traditionally dominate and control the village. Clans present in the village include Ekuona and Asona. People have moved there from various communities including Yaase, Petrensa, Kokofu, and Krom Adwafo. The stool name is Boadi stool and the first chief of the village was Nana Boadi. Prominent people who contributed to the village's development include Kwame Fante, Kwame Dapaa and Agya Adu.

The Methodist Mission was the first to establish a Church, followed by the Catholics and Anglicans. However it is the Anglican Church which is dominating.

The fetish grove is Gyaaboo which is believed to have helped the village in many ways. It assisted the people during the Ashanti's war with the Denkyiras, and the fetish priest removed bullets from those who sustained gunshot wounds. The fetish grove also attracted many people to visit Adwafo for spiritual treatment. With the advent of Christianity, the old traditional beliefs are not as strong as they once were.

It has been taboo for fishermen to use metal objects for fishing in the lake so they use Kotokuo (canned net) for fishing. This was very easy to obtain and less expensive. In times past, people were not allowed to farm very close to the lake. Other taboos include no farming on Tuesdays, no palm fruits can be seen in the village, and no fishing on Sundays due to the lake's name which means it was born spiritually on a Sunday.

The environment around the village once sustained a range of wildlife including antelope, lion, hippopotamus, mudfish and crabs, but these have since disappeared when their habitats were destroyed through forest removal, bush burning and unsustainable farming methods. The people there realize they have damaged the forest and the wider environment.

ABAASE. CONTACT PERSON: OP. KWADWO MENSAH, AGE: 90

Abaase is a village situated to the north-east of Lake Bosomtwe and has a population of around 600 people. The village is under the Bosomtwe Atria Klanswoman District at Kuntanase in the Ashanti region of Ghana and is sited on Abooso stool land. The village is ruled by the Asona Clan, and the first chief of the village was Nana Kwabena Britwum. The people have migrated from Onwi-Woarakese and Krom-Adwafo. The name Abaase is derived from a palm tree which the first people settled close to.

The village has a very important role in the purification of Lake Bosomtwe. Between Abrodwum and Abaase is a place called Asonepaso which is where libation is poured when there is a bad omen against the lake.

The people of Abaase are skilful fishermen who also undertake some subsistence farming. The land for farming is always bought from the chief of Abooso near Kokofu in the Amansie East District of Ashanti. The Ejisu Juaben District Assembly opened the first primary school in 1958 to cater for the educational needs of the villages.

Taa-Kwaku and Oboo were the only shrines in the village which the people have worshipped and out-doored in the past. They prevented communicable diseases from attacking the community, and men and women who had struggled for years without issues were assisted.

There was once a large area of forest close to the village with tree species including mahogany, wawa, and ofram, and close to the lake front were trees like mangrove (odwuma) which were used to construct fishing boats. Animals such as monkeys, antelopes, porcupines, alligators, lions, and bush pigs were common in the forest. Birds including sunbirds, pelicans, hawks, parrots, and owls could be found, while tortoises and various beautiful butterflies were common on the lakeside. However, tree felling and bush burning has resulted in the gradual disappearance of many of these species.

The people in the village entertained themselves with various activities including Kete, brass band, and Abaadam (Adowa) for the funeral celebrations.

ABONO LAKESIDE. CONTACT PERSON: NANA OTUO ANTWI BOASIAKO (ABONOHENE)

The first people to settle at Abono were the Aduana who migrated from Asumingya near Kokofu in the Ashanti region of Ghana, but other clans are also now represented in the village. The name Abono is derived from the River Obo which they settled near. The people owe their elegance to Nana Kuntanasehene. The Abonohene is the Nifahene of the Kuntanase traditional area. The first chief of the town was Nana Kra Funuma from the Aduana clan, but Nana Kofi Tumtuo has always been considered the development chief of the lake area. He was well recognized by the British

government which granted him a permit to purchase gun powder (Atuduro). The twenty-two communities around the lake traveled from their various destinations to attend communal labour at Abono because the village had the only route for travel to Kumasi.

The town has a population of 2,000, a third of whom are women. It has a primary school built in 1940 which is Roman Catholic, and a Junior Secondary School. Nana Kofi Tumtuo released land to the District Commission at Bekwai to build the first rest house in 1918. A sea plane landed on Lake Bosomtwe at Abono in 1946 after the Second World War II.

The people of Abono are mostly fishermen, but some also undertake subsistence farming, although it is taboo to farm on Tuesdays.

Tano Osereka is the fetish grove that the people of Abono still worship and sheep are slaughtered every Akwasidea festival. In the past, people out-doored the fetish priest who assisted them in spiritual and other diverse ways. People from other villages come to worship the fetish grove and usually present a sheep to pacify the god Ofosereka. The Akwasidae festival is always celebrated with drumming and dancing, and the Abonohene, Nana Otuo Antwi Boasiako II, pours libation.

As a result of unsustainable human activities such as forest removal for farming and fuelwood, the forest around the lake has been depleted. The habitats of creatures that were once abundant have been destroyed, resulting in their disappearance from the lake area. These included monkeys, alligators and other reptiles, antelopes and birds like apokuo, belebele, vulture and crows.

During leisure time, people entertain themselves with Kete, Abadam, Bosoe, Sikyi Konkoma and others. Abadam is popular because it is played during funeral festivals.

AMAKOM. CONTACT PERSON: OP. KWABENA ADU, AGE:90

Amakom, with a population of 1,200 people, is situated on the northern most part of the lake and is under the Bosomtwe Atrial Klanswoman District Assembly at Kuntanase in Ashanti. The people migrated here from Akokofe, Amankwadei, Abogso, Kokofu, Akyeremade and Krom-Adwafo near Yaase. The chief of Beposo released a portion of land to the immigrants for settlement. A number of clans are present in the village including Agona, Asene, Bretuo, Aduana and Okoona. The first chief of Amakom was Nana Kwame Abosi from Beposo.

The main occupation of the people is fishing, but they also subsidise their incomes with subsistence farming. They cultivate shallots, onions, tomatoes, and garden eggs and, more recently, cocoa which grows very well between the village and Nkwantapon. Despite the range of activities villagers are involved in, the livelihoods of all the communities around the lake are still highly dependent on fishing. Therefore something must be done to check fishing activities to ensure it becomes sustainable, otherwise poverty will become an acute problem for the people.

The Ministry of Mining has started prospecting for gold which would have a detrimental environmental impact on the lake if mining should commence there. The site for the proposed mining is very close to Adjamam, approximately 1.5km away from the lake.

Erosion is a very serious problem in this, as in most, of the lakeside communities. Rocks have been exposed and this is causing problems for the agricultural activities of the community. The village used to enjoy good levels of rainfall but the forest has since been degraded by farmers with a consequent negative impact on rainfall patterns. The nearby village of Ankaase recorded rainfall levels, which in January 1954 were 11.54" and June 1956 was 17.4". However, since 1973, the rainfall levels have been drastically reduced with no rain in January and only 0.83" in February 1973.

The forests and habitats have been damaged by tree felling and farming and so can no longer sustain the wildlife they once did. This included gorilla, anteater, porcupine, and baboon. The activities of poachers and hunters have also contributed to this species loss.

DOMPA. CONTACT PERSON: OP. YAW MENSAH – AGE: 85

Dompa, with a population of 1,400 people, lies to the south-east of Lake Bosomtwe. It is in the Amansie East District Assembly which has its headquarters at Bekwai. The clans represented in the community include Asona, Aduana, Bretuo and Oyokoo but they owe their traditional allegiance to the chief of Ahenien. The first chief of the village was Nana Amoah Owusu. The original settlers of Dompa came from Ahenien, but people have also migrated there from Ahwiren, Baogyaa and Kokofu. The Catholic Church opened the first primary school in 1920.

The village got the name Dompa after Dom which means crowd: for several weeks during the war between the Ashantis and the Akims, Okomfo Anokye saw a large crowd of people and hence it was given the name Dompa.

The people of Dompa worshiped and out-doored the Tegare Abusuana as their god and paid homage whenever there was a festival because, according to the people, the god brought peace and sanity to the town. It prevented animals from destroying farms, and paying homage to it ensured an abundance of fish in the lake. But with the advent of Christianity, the people no longer worship this god. Around 80 percent of the people there are now Christians.

The headwaters of the river Bokwankye, which was the only source of drinking water, has now dried up and the people have to travel long distances uphill to Tummiabu for water. The people are in desperate need of a new source of water for consumption.

The main occupation of the people is fishing but some also undertake some subsistence farming. However, after the people first settled on the lakeside, they soon began farming because they found the forest was very favourable for the production of crops such as shallots, plantain, cocoyam, pepper, onions, tomatoes, cassava and cocoa which subsidised their income.

The forest habitat sustained animals such as monkeys, antelopes, anteaters, porcupines, bush dogs, and bush pigs, and few people in the village used these animals as a source of food protein. Birds like hawk, parrot, pelican, crow and reptiles like alligator, Africa Python, Puff adder, Cobra, and Chameleon were also found in the vicinity. However, they have since all but disappeared as a result of forest removal and intensified farming practices which put pressure on the land and forests. The activities of poachers and hunters also contributed greatly to their disappearance.

During their leisure time in the past, the people entertained themselves with dances including Adaka-Abaadamu, (Adowa) Bosoe, Konkoma, and Kete. But the Adowa dance dominates, largely because the people enjoy this because it is also played during funeral celebrations.

HANTAASE. CONTACT PERSON: OP. KWADWO FORDJOUR, AGE: 86

The people of Hantaase migrated there from their hometown of Akora Bompe. It is believed that Asaman discovered the lake Bosomtwe. It is under Amansie East District Assembly at Bekwai. The chief, Nana Kwadwo Wee, owes allegiance to the Omanhene of Asaman near Kokofu.

Historically, the village is remembered because Okomfo Anokye left one of his sandals by the River Booban. In the past, people out-doored and worshipped this river which became spiritually strong and helped the villagers to overcome problems. But the River was cursed by Okomfo Anokye because, even though it was a small river, he could not find his

sandal. The villagers still worship the River Booban as their spiritual god. In the past, the shrine Brebedaa ensured the fishermen had a good harvest during August and September. The people in the village are predominantly fishermen and do some subsistence farming.

As in the other villages, deforestation has caused serious damage to the lake's environment. Damaging activities include farming and tree felling which have had negative impacts on the habitats of various creatures including tigers, lions, zebras, antelopes, porcupines, anteaters, monkeys, alligators and many bird species. There is now a bird sanctuary at Hantaase.