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Ama Terra Pearson

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CHILDREN'S PLAY SONGS
A MEANS OF EDUCATION IN AKAN CULTURE

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COLLEGE SEMESTER ABROAD, GHANA
SPRING 1994
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ABSTRACT

In this study I examine the play songs of children in several Akan communities. I have collected and transcribed songs from Adonkrono in the East region and Ashim/Mozano from the Central region and described the actions which accompany the songs.

In the text of this paper, I discuss the movements and the texts of the songs. I discuss the ways in which they reflect the culture and their educational value to the children who take part in these activities. Through this analysis I hope to show some of the ways in which the play songs both reflect the culture and educate the children in this culture. Thus, I hope to convince my readers that these songs play an important role in the Akan culture are essential for this community.

METHODOLOGY

The two sites in which I chose to conduct my research were chosen in part as a result of personal contacts. I was first introduced to Mozano through our academic program. I chose to return to this site after making several connections there with students from the music school as well as a teacher at the music school who became one of my advisors, Kodzo Willie. Mozano seemed to be an appropriate site given that there was both a music school where I could observe formal instruction of music as well as a rural setting in which to observe and take part in spontaneous music in its natural setting.

I chose to split my research between two sites so that I would have variety of contexts and thus acquire a better idea of what aspect of the songs and their setting were specific to that area and which were common to other villages. When I discussed my intentions with Kodzo Willie he suggested that I spend time at Adankrono as my second site. One of his friends, Kodwo Okai, was both from Adankrono and had just last year studied children's songs there. Thus, Adankrono could offer me both personal connections that would allow me more access to the culture, and the assurance that there would be children ready to share their play songs with me.

To collect and record my data I took photographs, recorded on cassette, participated in the activities, and transcribed, translated and learned the songs with help from some of the children and members of the community. I have also supplemented these activities with formal and informal interviews to give me a more solid foundation to direct and hold up my own analysis.

Due to my lack of a video recorder, photographs and audio cassette recordings were the next closest forms of representation to allow me to share my experiences with others. I wanted to take part in the activities so that I could experience them for myself as best I could, while also realizing that my experiences of them was inherently different from that of the children who had grown up with them and among the culture of which they were a part. I wanted to avoid the tendency to observe these activities from afar and

without actually experiencing them. I also wanted to be able to actively take my experiences with me into the rest of my life so that I am able to share my experiences with others.

While I was able to learn some songs by heart, it was different to remember the words given my lack of fluency in both Twi and Fanti. Another difficulty was the lack of time which I was allotted, especially after the already short time I had planned was reduced even more due to my sickness. I would have liked to have time to go back to the sites for follow-up questions which arose as I experienced and faced new issues later in my research.

For my analysis of the data I referred in part to the pieces of analysis which I picked up from people at the sites, both in formal and informal interviews. I also spent several days after my site experiences talking with and searching for more clues of analysis from Ko Nimo, my other advisor. I also used observations and knowledge I had gained through the semester in Ghana as well as several books and articles.

INTRODUCTION

Every culture has some form of education for its youth. Through this educational process the children acquire skills which will help them function in their society. In many societies, especially those with a strong oral tradition, music plays an important role in this process. It is an effective vehicle through which to impart knowledge on the children and help in their overall development. A common form that this takes is that of song and especially songs of play and games.

The traditional culture of the Akan people is one which is abundant with children's play songs. In many Akan villages where these songs are still plentiful they serve an important role in the educational process of the children. However, many of these communities are drifting from these traditional activities with the arrival of western influences. Some of the strongest distractions away from these traditional activities come from the installation of electricity and with it television, films, and music from cassettes. As children are lured by these attractions, the traditional play songs are placed in jeopardy.

My interest in these songs comes from my desire to learn, first-hand, the role that they play in the educational process of the children. I hope that as a result of my research is not only satisfy my own desires to learn, but also encourage the continuity of this wonderful tradition of play and thus of the culture of which they are a part.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PLAY

The lessons of the physical activities which accompany these children's songs play an important role in the child's development. They teach the children skills which are useful in their successful functioning in society. Given that so much of their work throughout their life involves physical exercise and labor, a fit body is an essential aspect of their overall development. Through the activities of these play songs the children exercise their bodies in such a way that stimulates growth both physically and mentally. They learn skills of coordination, physical endurance, flexibility and skills which directly prepare them for specific activities in their lives.

Some of the activities are not physically strenuous, but still play an important role in the children's training. The following games involve activities which teach the child skills of coordination. One such game is that of rock passing (fig fig.1 in Appendix I, and songs 1 and 2 in Appendix II). The passing of the rock is a steady rhythm teaches the children both hand-eye coordination and tests their reflexes and grabbing skills. As the pace quickens, the reflexes must be especially alert so as not to disrupt the rhythm and end in a crushed hand. Both "Kuturuku" (song 11) and "Atatratui" (song 13) test the children's coordination skills and alertness. These are both games of piling hands on top of each other. In "Kuturuku" the hand must be properly folded into a fist with the thumb under the fingers. The children must not be too hasty to put their fist on the pile or they might forget to properly fold their hand. During "Atatratui" the hand must match palm to palm and back to back. The participants must pay close attention to the pile of hands and to the people around them who may also be rushing to place their hand in the pile at the same time, thus causing the other child to place his/her hand in the wrong position. This tests their alertness and ability to quickly change the direction of their hand.

Other songs that involve skills of coordination are those songs that are accompanied by slapping their hands together, such as "Ayii bam" (song 4), "Pra pra" (song 14), and "Hena ne Bontoni" (song 15). Rather than the competitive games mentioned above where children are either eliminated or beaten if they do not perform

correctly, the coordination involved in these songs is purely for their pleasure. However, it is still important that their movements are correct or it will disrupt the song. The motions of “Ayii Bam” are very similar to many such games in other parts of the world. There was a similar game in Darko which sung about Robert Mensah, the football goalkeeper and there are many such hand-clapping games in the United States. Girls seem to find great pleasure in these plays. Such games allow the children to show off their speed of coordination. It also allows for individual connections with their friends as they work together to race through the game without fault. “Pra Pra” and “Hena ne Bontoni” both share the same accompaniment of clapping and hand-slapping. The hand rhythms serve as accompaniment to the songs whose words are more important and complex than those of “Ayii Bam.” Thus, it is important that the rhythm stays steady and without mistakes.

The rhythm her consists of triplets and duplets which often contrast with the rhythm of the song. Thus, this syncopated rhythm is also learned and tested. In this activity the children practice coordinating a rhythm with the hands that contrasts with the rhythm which the sing, and are thus trained in the rhythmic practice of triplets against duplets that is so common in African music.

The “Apatampa” dance (see fig. 9) also involves complex coordination of body movements with the singing. Not only do the hands and feet move to separate rhythms, the rhythms of the songs often contrast with both of the body movements. Thus, the complex rhythms of African music are implanted in the children early and they learn to coordinate their body to keep the contrasting rhythms with different limbs.

“Apatampa” and other plays with rigorous activity also help to build the children physical endurance and stamina. These plays include “Me koo me jolly” (song 5) where the children throw someone in the air who then rushes back to her or his friends’ arms (see fig. 4-6). When the children take part in these activities for hours at a time they go through extensive physical exercise. The strain of it, however, becomes disguised by the enjoyment of the play and singing.

Some of the games help the children become flexible and then allow them to display their abilities for everyone else. The dance of song 3 is an example of such a play. As the children bend down and then stand up while shaking their hips, they show flexibility to everyone around. Many of the other plays involve similar movements, and especially common are movements of the hips and chest. Some examples of these include “Kor Beba” (song 29), “Ama Pra He” (song 30) and “Shia e” (song 31). Also during “Me Kunu Kwame” (song 6) from Adankrono and “Manoa Me Mo Fitafita” (song 8) children are able to display their flexibility and dancing ability as they come to the center of the circle to dance in their own style (see fig. 13). The young children who take part in these activities enjoy shaking their hips, often very rigorously even though they may not be away of the sexual implications. But when the older girls take part they seem to be calling the boys to them, sensuously moving their hips with an expression of experience (see fig. 10-12). This also serves to teach the young girls how to move their hips for their future lovers. The game goes with “Me ko me jolly” (song 5, see fig. 4-6) also serves to show each other their physical development. As the girls throw themselves back into everyone’s arms they display to them their weight. Kwabena Omane Agyekum explains that it is desirable to show that you have gained weight to a solid, mature figure. This game is also used as an excuse not the older boys to grab onto the older girls. When they sung this in Adankrono it was only song where the older boys who had been standing around eagerly jumped in to demonstrate it as the oldest girls fell back into their arms for them to throw (see fig. 5 and 6). Much of the young people’s lives are spent divided along gender lines in their respective work areas and so this is a rare opportunity for them to get close to members of the opposite sex. There are also games which emphasize specific skills that are necessary in their proper functioning in society. One such games is that of “Kahyire” (song 10, see fig. 8) where the children’s ability of rolling their piling-load pad is tested. These pads are used every day throughout much of their work as they carry water, loads from the farm, or other such objects. It is thus essential that the children know how to properly roll their “kahyire” an this game is a true test of their ability. If someone’s “kayire” is not rolled evenly it upsets the balance of the pile and cause them all to fall, exposing the child’s fault. All these actins tech the children many essential skills that will enable them to successfully function is their

society. The activities lessons of rhythm, coordination, physical fitness, flexibility, and specific skills that will be necessary throughout their lives.

SONG TEXTS

It is clear from the examples above that the physical acts of the songs have much to offer the children in their education. Yet to grasp a more complete understanding of the lessons expressed and learned through these songs we must also look at the texts themselves, for they too play an important role in the education of the children. Among the songs that I have collected are expressions of the values of the culture including those related to family, ways of speaking, and relations between the sexes. The songs also provide lessons in such things as counting and days of the week. There are expressions of the sentiments of people within the culture.

“Song texts are a reflection of the culture of which they are a part .”¹ Therefore, every text could be analyzed for its reflection of the culture. Some texts, however, stand out for presenting especially important or vivid representations. The following song (song 24 in the appendix) expresses several important aspects of the culture. Throughout this section I present the English for the sake of analysis. However, please refer to the true Twi and Fanti texts in the appendix.

Nana, pour libation on the ground
There is water in the road, Nana
There is mud in the road, Nana
Nana Dankor, pour libation on the ground
Adwen (mudfish) must be bent and pegged with stick.

This song expresses several issues that are important aspects of the culture. The first is the pouring of libation. It is done to commune with the ancestor gods. Even in the village of Adankrono where Christianity is a very important part of society, this ritual is performed before every consumption of a “hot” drink of Schnapps or the locally made Akpeteshie. Any new visitor to Nana, the chief, is expected to bring a bottle of one of these hot drinks. Libation is then poured as part of an extensive ritual to recognize the visitor, Nana, and his elders, and to commune with the ancestors.

¹ Merriam, A. P. The Anthology of Music, (Evanston. 196), 207.

The text uses proverbs to refer to the uncertainties of life. Down the road of life, one never knows where it will be deep or slippery with dangers and accidents. Thus, we must prepare for the future as an Adwen fish must be prepared for eating by bending and pegging with a stick.

Proverbial speech is an important part of traditional Akan culture. Some other songs which include proverbial speech are “Bayere” (song 16), “Edua bi” (song 33) which I will soon discuss, and “Apatampa wa ayer” (song 34). Rather than say one’s message directly, it is regarded much more highly to speak through the indirect language of proverbs. If someone is not capable of speaking in this manner, he will be looked down upon by the wise elders of the town. Proverbial speech is so important that everything said to and from Nana is translated into proverbs by Nana’s Okyeame. Direct speech would be seen as too harsh and vulgar and lacking eloquence. As lyrics of songs, proverbs also allow for various interpretations depending on the situation in which they are sung.

“Pra Pra” (song 14) is another song which seeks to ask the spirits for help by offering them a drink. In this song, it is the spirit of the river which is addressed.

Pra Pra take a drink.
Father Pra Pra take a drink.
If you help me menstruate, I will give you a hen.
If I become pregnant, I will give you a sheep.
If I will bear a child, I will give you a human being.
My statement is not long, but what I see I tell.
What should I do?

The river Pra Pra is asked to help the woman bear a child. The bringing forth of children is one of the most highly prized duties of an Akan woman. If a woman is barren and unable to produce a child she is likely to face much scrutiny and suspicion from those around her. The song following “Pra Pra”, “Hena ne bontuni” (song 15), also speaks of this fear of being barren. The emphasis on bearing children comes out of the strong emphasis in Akan on having a large family. Benefits of having many children are that children often represent labor force and thus many children allows for many hands to

help with the family work, whether on their farm, in the house or elsewhere. Having many children ensures that in old age the parents will have many people to look after them. Another issue is that there is a high mortality rate among children in Ghana. Thus, a greater number of births assures that some children remain alive after these deaths.

The importance of the family is also expressed in the following two songs (songs 23 and 33 respectively), this time with the emphasis on the elder relatives.

Long kingdom of the dead,
If you go inform me.
My people died in my house.
I have no one to look after me.
I am lonely, I am aimless.
The family has gathered for you to tell them you are going.
I am aimless

A tree that does not grow is from a mountain.
I am with a family with no uncle.
With no grandmother.
A tree that does not grow is from a mountain.
If they go and you do not go,
A tree that does not grow is from a mountain.

These songs express sadness and fear of losing members of one's family. The first song expresses feelings of loneliness and aimlessness as a result of deaths in the house. The second song gives the analogy of a tree on a mountain which is unable to grow tall and strong without being nurtured. The tree is left exposed from the top of a mountain as the narrator is left exposed without her/his relatives to care for her/him from the top of the family pyramid.

Connection to the family, especially to the mother, is extremely important in Akan culture. In fact, it is believed that when a person's mother passes away she/he has no family. There are also two different words to express the state of being an orphan. "Agyanka" is used for someone who has lost one parent and "awiasaa" is used for someone who has lost both parents.² Thus, the fact that there are two words reserved to

² Dr. Daniel Amponsah (Ko Nimo), Interview by author, tape recording #1, interviewee's residence, University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, 29 April 1994.

express this situation displays the severity of loss which is left when the unity of the family is disrupted.

Another song which speaks on the subject of unity is the Adowa song, “Priue” (song 36), only this song talks not directly of the unity of family but of the unity of Ghana.

For the broom, if you take one strand of broomstick it easily breaks:

But if there are many, you cannot break it.

Ghana, let us have unity.

It is good if we all join together.

We are walking on sandals for display...

By mentioning “Ghana” the text displays that the song was either recently created or it has been altered since the formation of the independent country of Ghana in 1957. I am interested in the analogy of the broom which I believe is a traditional proverb. It is used here as a symbol of national unity, calling together the many people of Ghana. Perhaps it is referring to the overthrow of the colonialist government and the union of many different ethnic groups coming together to stand up against their oppressive government. This song could be categorized as an historical song since it displays the event of Ghana’s independence but the broomstick analysis can be seen as coming from the traditional Akan culture which not only is laced with proverbial speech, but also places emphasis on working together as a community, both the community of the family and that of the broader community of a village environment.

In addition to the family network of blood relations, there are many songs which speak to the subject of marriage relationships, especially situations of polygamous marriages and rivalries between the wives. Such situations have acted as the source for texts that can be used to cast insults. Nketia explains, “Sometimes what cannot be said in speech can be said in song: someone who wishes to complain or cast insults may find it more effective to do so in song than in speech.”³

³ Nketia, J.H. Kwabena, The Music of Africa, London, Victor Gollancs Ltd., 1975, 204.

A common object of such insult passing is a woman's husband. In the homes that I encountered in these villages the men seem to take the dominating role. Such a situation, as well as one of a polygamous marriage where the wives must share the husband, are primed for feeling of anger from many wives. And in the style of Akan proverbial speech, where feelings are expressed indirectly, a song is a perfect medium for expression of such feeling. These songs may be sung at any time as a woman goes about her daily chores. The songs that are sung simply for entertainment without regard for their meanings, thus camouflaging the song of insult, which is at times sung without any insult intended. But if an insult is meant, the target is likely to know it is aimed at him or her. They could also be sung while cradling a child so that if the singer was accused of casting an insult, she could claim that she was innocently singing to the child. But still, the insult would have been felt.⁴ The following song can be used to cast insults in this way, although it is often enjoyed simply for its musical elements: (song 27)

Kwame, Kwame, my husband, Kwame is hopeless.
You bought Kente for my rival
For me you bought mourning cloth
When I saw it and mentioned it,
She said that I was ungrateful

I have collected two versions of this song, one of each of my sites. It was the only common song heard sung in both places. This demonstrates that it is a popular song and thus probably the sentiment which it expresses is widespread as well.

Another song expressing rivalries caused by a polygamous relationship follows:(song 26)

Three women who have married
One asks me to build a building
One asks me to buy cloth
One wants her own child.

Ko Nimo's interpretation of this song is that it is to warn young boys of the dangers of marrying many wives. Each wife is likely to make her own demands and therefore, it is advisable to only marry one. Ko Nimo said that these lyrics were probably

⁴ Tanoa, Abena. Interview by author, Adankrono, Ghana. 21 May 1994.

written within this century when sentiments against polygamous marriage became more common. The text for song 16 is also one which expresses hard feelings:

If the yam is broken, it is due to the supporting stick.
If the rain stops, it is due to the sky.
Smock hanging on shoulders.
Afua Nimo spoke in proverbs.
The man expelled the meaning.
Eii, Akosombo, eii,
We all know how to do that.
Master Kodwo, your blood is so good,
We thank you, royal person.
We cannot buy a handkerchief to tie our stomachs,
Oo ayee, oo ayee, every day.

During my interview with Abena Tanoa she explained that this song was the song that was most common to sing in order to cast an insult. She said it is sung by spouses who complain about their partner not taking good enough care of them.⁵ Again, the language is in proverbs.

On the other side of the rivalry issue is the following song which boasts of taking someone's husband away. (song 7)

Food and relations of the sexes are both themes which are common throughout many of these songs. The following song tells of willing a boy's attention through sweet cooking. (song 8)

I have cooked sweet rice,
I have sweetly prepared stew.
To whom will I give it?
I will give it to Kofi,
Kofi, Kofi, Kofi is right over there!

Other songs mention food as well: (song 1, 4, 17, 19, and 21)

“Fatima Karkuro” mentions not being able to get the food because of lack of money. This brings in the element of poverty and hunger, potential fears, especially during the dry season. Food seems to be very important in Akan culture. At both of my

⁵ Ibid.

sites food was the most abundant gift that I received and as a guest, I was encouraged to eat far more meals than I needed for basic sustenance. Food can represent wealth, healthy living, fight against famine, and security. It seems as though many of the songs have words of food thrown in, seemingly unrelated to the rest of the text, or in some cases, where most of the rest of the text has meaningless words.

Another topic which is common throughout many of these songs is that of relations between the sexes, often serving to find partners of the opposite sex. The following song invites the boys to come choose their girls: (song 17)

We are enough for our game
If your (person) is here, come take her away.

Such invitation is especially meaningful since many of the movements that go with the songs are of shaking their hips and chest in ways that demand attention from the boys (see fig.11 and 12).

The next three songs allow the girls to call out the names of boys in which they may have interest. (song 9, 8, and 5) The girls do not, of course, need to say their actual boyfriends' name every time. Some turns they may throw out a name without it having any particular attachment to anyone they know. But these games give them the opportunity to mention someone's name if they have found interest in him. Again, this displays elements similar to the indirect subtleties of Akan proverbs and culture. Similar to the songs used to cast insults, a particular person is not always in mind, but it is likely that if it is directed to a particular person, he or she will know.

The last song is also used to impart knowledge of the children's parents' names. It serves to distinguish their parents from everyone else with whom they live, especially uncles and aunts who they may call "Papa" and "Mame", as is the practice of extended families. The song also ensures that the children know the actual names of their parents, enforcing on them the importance of a name in Akan culture. Some names identify the clan, region, and totem, and therefore someone who meets them for the first time an

instantly know these parts of the person's background and thus, will know the appropriate way to address them, and what the person's taboos may be.⁶ The names are so important that there is an entire ceremony around the event of naming.

Before this ceremony the person goes by the name which is determined by the day on which she or he was born. There is also a song which reflects this and makes sure that the children all learn everyone's day name. (song 3)

Everyone born on (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday....) squat. La, la, la...
Everyone born on (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday....) squat. La, la, la...

This song also teaches the younger children the days of the week. Another song which teaches a direct lesson is song 29 which includes counting to ten.

One will come for me as a gift
The adulteress has come
1 na 2, na 3, na 4, na 5, na 6, na 7, na 8, na 9, na 10
One has come for me as a gift.

Probably many of the children taking part in this activity already know how to count well beyond ten, since the song talks about an adulteress and involves contracting the chest and throwing the hips in a sexual manner. But the smaller children who may be either taking part or observing from nearby are given an opportunity to learn to count.

Both songs 2 and 30 include social lessons:
The crab entered the hole with its lover
If the stone hits you do not cry...

Ama sweep here.
I have swept.
Lay the mat.
I have laid.
Sleep on it.
I have slept.
Throw your waist.
I have thrown it.

⁶ Dr. Daniel Amponsah (Ko Nimo), informal interview by author, University of Science and Technology Guesthouse, Accra, Ghana, 10 May 1994.

Okoto (song 2) in addition to introducing the crab, also warns children not to cry over such a small incident and getting hit by a rock, thus telling them to be brave. The second song, "Ama sweep here", teaches the girls some of the duties of a good wife. She is expected to be obedient according to this song. But the girls do not seem to be thrown into an oppressed role here. They all smile and enjoy taking part in this, almost as though they were making fun of the situation.

These text clearly display many elements of Akan culture. They address issues of cultural beliefs and practices which are essential to impart on the child. The text include information on the necessities to prepare for life's future difficulties, to bare many children, to maintain solid family structure, and to unite together for strength. They also express the importance of food and a person's names and allow the children opportunities to show their inclinations for each other. Through inclusion of these issues and many others, the songs provide an important base for the education of the children.

CONCLUSION

The physical activities and the texts of the play songs each serve important roles in the educational process of the children. The activities help to strengthen the children's body by providing them with movements which develop their coordination, muscles, endurance, flexibility and specific skills which they will need during their chores of life. They also serve as events to display their skills to those around them. The texts express to the children values of how they should perceive, interpret, respond, and interact with their environment. Through these lessons the children are able to become accepted members of their culture and society.

These play songs thus serve an important role in the educational process of the Akan children. The areas in which they educate the children are areas which are essential to their lives, as the songs evolved from, reflect, and ensure the continuity of their culture.

Given the tremendously important role that these songs play, my hope is that they will be allowed to continue to flourish in many Akan communities. As enticing options such as television, video, and cassettes arrive in many Akan communities, I hope that the importance of these play song will be realized and this valuable tradition will be shared with many generations to come.

APPENDIX I:

PHOTOGRAPHS

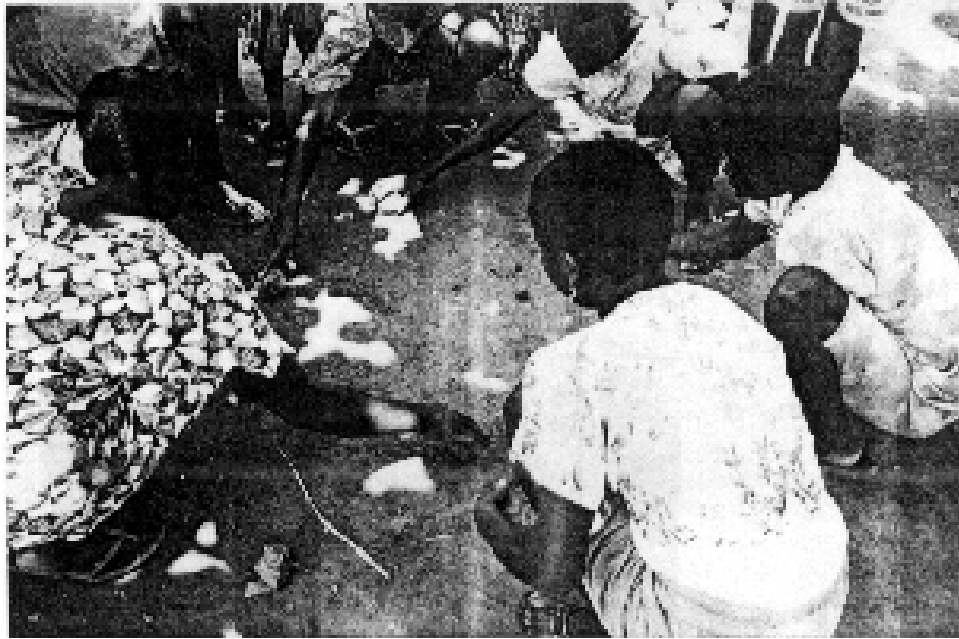


Fig. 1: *Girls playing the rock-passing game which is accompanied by songs #1 and #2*



Fig. 2: *Girls dancing to the birthday song (#3)*



Fig. 3: *The older girls show off their skills at the hand-slapping game. (accompanied by song # 4) as the young children stand by.*



Fig. 4: *A girl throws herself back into her friends arms as they sing “san Daako dendente” (song #5)*



Fig. 5 and 6: *Young men who have eagerly rushed in to demonstrate, throw the eldest girl as they sing “San Daako dendende” (song # 5)*





Fig. 7: *Two girls hold a bridge as others dance around them in a circle and they all sing song # 9.*

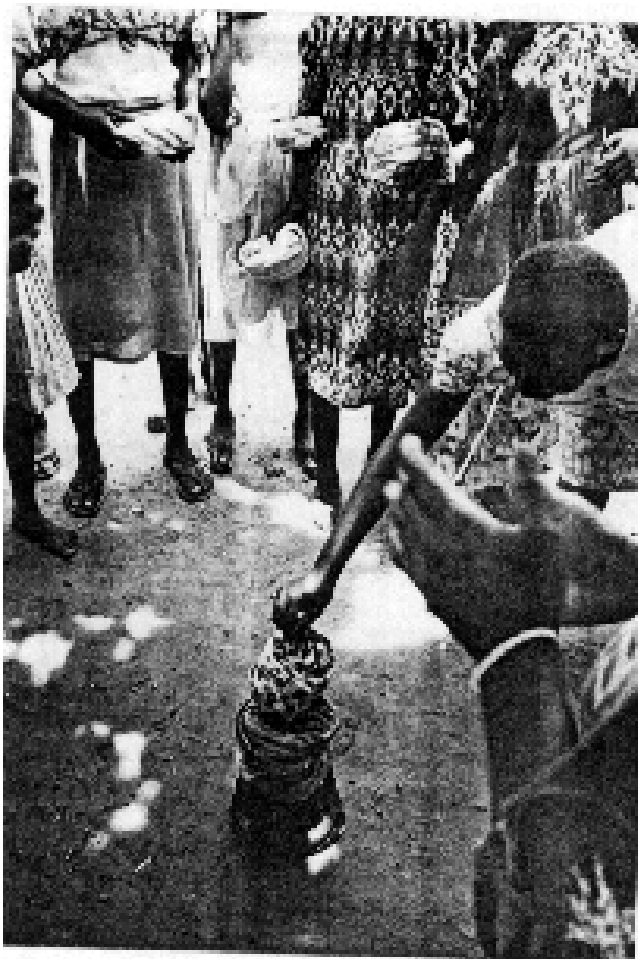


Fig. 8: *A girl carefully places her 'kahyire' on the pile as others prepare theirs and sing song #10*



Fig. 9: *Girls dance Apatempa*



Fig. 10: *Three girls (including the author) move their chests and waists in the center of the circle as everyone sings Song # 19*



Fig. 11 and 12: *Girls display their flexibility at the center of the circle as others sing and clap.*





Fig. 13: Two young girls show their dance moves in the center of the circle.

APPENDIX II:

SONG TEXTS AND MOVEMENTS

SONGS FROM ADANKRONO (Twi)

1.

Fatima krakuro meye den na manya bi madi?
Minni sika meye den na manya bi madi
Taku, Taku meye den na manya bi madi?
Minni sika meye den na manya bi madi?

Fatima's krakuro, how can I get some to eat?
I do not have money, how can I get some?
Taku, Taku, how can I get some?
I do not have any money, how can I get some?

2.

O o okoto
O o okoto
Wawura nebon mu oo
Wawura nebon mu oo
One ne jolly ne Eko*

Eboo si wo nsa a nsuo ayee
Ehoo si wo nsa a nsuo ayee
Agyare bo nkomo
Kwame Agyare bo nkomo
Agyare bo nkomo
Kwame Agyare bo nkomo

* Variation: (Ye de gari na ekye)

The crab
Crawls into the hole
With its lover.*

If the stone hits you do not cry.
Agyare is talking
Kwame Agyare is talking.

* Variation (It is caught with Gari)

Both “Fatima Krakuro” and “Okoto” are sung as accompaniments to the rock-passing game (see fig. 1). Children squat in a circle with a rock in front of each of them. Once the song starts, they pass the rock to the person to their right in rhythm to the song. They place the rock in time with the strong beat of the song and retrieve the rock on the weaker beat (see Appendix II). As they sing, their pace becomes faster and faster until someone accidentally disrupts the pattern, unable to grab and place the rock in time. At this point they stop the song and that person from the circle and his/her rock is removed. This process is continued until one victorious person remains.

3.

Obiara ye wo no (Kwesiada)
Koto, koto.
Obiara ye wo no (Kwesiada)*
Koto, koto.
La la la la la la la
La la la la la la la
La laa laa la

* Kwesiada in turn becomes: Edwoada, Ebenada, Wukuada, Yawoada, Fiada, and Memeneda.

Obiara ye wo no (Kwesiada)
Sore, sore.
La la . . .

Everyone born on (Sunday)
Squat, squat.
Everyone born on (Sunday)*
Squat, squat.
La la . . .

* Sunday in turn becomes: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Everyone born on (Sunday)
Stand, stand.
Everyone born on (Sunday)
Stand, stand.
La la . . .

The children stand in a circle clapping as they sing. When they reach “la la la . . .” everyone who was born on the respective day puts his/her hands on his/her hips and moves them from side squatting, they continue singing the verse to tell everyone to stand and the respective people rise as they again bend their waist from side to side. (see fig. 2)

4a.

Ayii bam,
Anaa bam,
Enene bam,
Enene bam, ne bam ne bam.
Na mese Nana Kwodwo,
Na mese Nana Kwodwo, Nana Kwodwo Nana Kwodwo.

Yefiri Atabrabam, Atabrabam, Atabrabam.
Eye misa fe,
Eye misa fe, misa fe, misa fe.
Konko tinapa,
Konko tinapa, tinapa, tinapa
Ene abenkwan,
Ene abenkwan, abenkwan, abenkwan

Ayi bam,
Anaa bam,
Enene bam . .
I say Nana Kodwo . . .
It is misafe . . .
Canned tinapa (fish)
Palm nut soup . . .

4b

Ayii bam,
Anaa bam,
Na mese Nana Kwodwo . . .
Me koo m'afuom . . .
Kotee nyadewa . .
Obi agye me nsam . . .
Menye den mpo ni o . . .

Ayii bam,
Anaa bam . . .
Enene bam . . .
I say Nana Kwodwo . . .
I went to my farm . . .
I harvested garden eggs . . .
Someone has taken them from me . . .

This verse is sung by a pair of people standing facing each other as they hit their hands together. The pattern which they use to hit hands follows, consistent with the verses of the text. (see fig. 3)

Sr C
Sl C
B H C
B H C, H C, H C
B H C
B H C, H C, HC

...

S = hands slide over partner's toward themselves with the palms touching

Sr = S with right hand on top, left on bottom

Sl = S with left hand on top, right on bottom

C = each person claps her hands together

B = the partners hit the back of their left hands together

H = partners slap right hands together, hitting their palms

5

Me koo me jolly dan mu.

Odenekawa miaa.

Me se, wiiwiiwi!

Ose poopopo.

Enne wo bete anisuo nne.

Saa Daako dendende.

Wo mame de sen?

Saa Daako dendende.

O de _____ .

Saa Daako dendende.

Wo papa de sen?

Saa Daako dendende.

O de _____ .

Saa Daako dendende.

Wo mpona de sen?

Saa Daako dendende.

O de _____ .

Saa Daako dendende.

I went to my lover's room.

He wooed me with his ring.

I exclaimed, Wiiwiiwi!

Ha said, Poopopo,

Today you will cry

Daako is happy.

What is your mother's name?

Daako is happy.

She is _____ (mother's name)

Daako is happy.
What is your father's name?
Daako is happy.
He is _____ (father's name)
Daako is happy.
What is your boyfriend's name?
Daako is happy.
He is _____ (boyfriend's)
Daako is happy.

Participants stand in a semi-circle with one person facing out in front of them. The person in the center falls back into everyone's arms at the beginning of each line of verse. She is then thrown up into the air in front of them and must hurry back to throw herself into their arms again on the strong beat, falling back on different people each time. (see fig. 4-6)

6

Kwame, Kwame, me kunu Kwame, osansani.
Kwame, Kwame, me kunu Kwame, osansani.
W'ato kente ama me kora, w'ato brisi afura me.
W'ato kente ama me kora, w'ato brisi afura me.
Me hunuie o, mekoka ye o, maye korafo boniaye
Me hunuie o, mekoka ye o, maye korafo boniaye.

Kwame, Kwame, my husband, Kwame, is hopeless.
You bought kente for my rival, you bought brisi (mourning cloth) for me.
I saw this, I spoke of it, you said that I was ungrateful.

7

Na me dee eben? _____ (4x)
Me de (ahoofe)* agye obi kunu ee.
Na me dee eben?

* ahoofe can be replaced with sika or nkwanpa

As for me, what?
Through (beauty)* I have taken someone's husband from her.
As for me, what?

* beauty can be replaced with money or better soup

8

M'noa me mo fitafita

M'aye m'abomu dokodoko.
Mede rekoma hwan ni?
Mede rekoma (Kofi)
(Kofi, Kofi), se na (Kofi) hye na ha ara.

Any name can be used in place of Kofi)

I have cooked white rice.
I have sweetly prepared stew.
To whom am I giving it?
I am giving it to (Kofi)
(Kofi, Kofi), Kofi is right over there.

As the children sing these three songs (6-8) they stand in a circle and clap their hands together in rhythm. During songs 6 and 8 they usually clap a constant rhythm on every beat. During song 7 their clapping rhythm is usually two quick claps and two beats of rest. But the children are free to change their clapping throughout the songs. They all take turns singing the song by themselves as a call and then everyone else responds. Sometimes girls will come to the center of the circle to dance.

9

S: Kwame ei
C: Adende
S: Kwame ei
C: Adende
S: Begye asikiresam
C: Adende adende nsa si gyam'
Adente adende nsa si gyam'

Talking:

B: Asibene
c: Soldier
B: Mpona de sen?
c: _____

(S=solo, C=chorus, B=bridge holders, c=person caught by bridge).

S: Kwame ei
C: Adende (expression of joy)
S: Come for your granulated sugar
C: The hands fell in the fire
The hands fell in the fire
(There was no sugar)

Talking:

B: Flirt

c: Soldier

B: What is your boyfriend's name?

c: _____

Two of the oldest girls stand clasping one of each of their hands together above their head, forming a bridge. The rest of the girls hold hands in a circle around one of the bridge holders. As they sing, they skip around, passing under the arm bridge. On the last word of the song the bridge falls and catches whoever is underneath by holding the top of her head. This girl must respond to the questions and tell them her boyfriend's name. (see fig. 7)

10

Call: Kahyire

Respond: Yerebo

C: Kahyire

R: Yerebo

... (Repeat until all have piled)

C: Kahyire

R: Yereyi...

Call: Kahyire (piling load pad)

Response: We are rolling

...

C: Kahyire

R: We are picking up

As this is chanted the participants gather in a circle rolling their load pad and then taking turns piling them in a single pile. If everyone successfully piles their pads without causing the pile to fall, they change the singing to "Ye reyi" and pick their pads up in turn by grabbing them in their teeth. (see fig. 8)

11

C: Kuturuku Agyekum

R: Sa Agyekum

C: Kutiruku Agyekum

R: Saa Agyekum

...(Repeat until all fists are in a pile)

C: Hwete, hwete, hwete

C: Agyekum's fist

R: Saa Agyemum

...

C: Disperse

The caller starts the pile by place his fist out in the center of the cluster of people. Everyone else then piles their fists on top making sure that their thumbs are tucked inside their fingers. They disperse with “hwete” when everyone’s fists have been piled. But if someone puts her/his fist in without folding it properly, the round ends and that person is beaten by everyone else.

12

C: Yemfa aboo

R: Yerefa

C: Yemfa aboo

R: Yerefa

...(repeat many times)

C: Obiara mfa ne boo mmra

C: We do not take stones

R: We take stones

...

C: Everyone come and show your stones.

As the children chant “Ye mfa abo” and “Ye refa” everyone but the leader pretends to pick up stones and place them in their shirt or dress. When the leader says, “Obiara mfa ne bo mmra”, everyone must open their clothes to show if they have any stones. If someone does have a stone, he/she is beaten by everyone else.

13

C: Atatratui

R: Ebam

C: Atatratui

R: Ebam

...(repeat many times)

C: Hwete, hwete, hwete (disperse)

C: W’ati oo (he/she has done it wrong)

The leader starts the pile by placing his or her hand in the center and saying, “Atatratui”. Everyone then responds with “bam” as someone else hurries to place her/his hand on top, matching palm to palm and back of hand to back of hand. If someone places his/her hand incorrectly, whoever notices it will yell out, “W’ati oo” and that person will be beaten. If everyone successfully piles their hands then the leader calls out, “Hwete, hwete, hwete”, and they all disperse their hands.

14

Pra Pra gye nsanom

Agya nsuo pra pra gye nsanom

Pra Pra gye nsanom
Agya nsuo pra pra gye nsanom
Meye bra mma wakoko
Menyinsen mamaw odwan
Dakye a mewo onipa ei
Enye masem na eware
Na nea mehu ara na meka e
Meye den ni meye den ni

Pra Pra take a drink
Father river Pra Pra take a drink
Pra Pra take a drink
Father river Pra Pra take a drink
If you help me to menstruate, I will give you a hen.
If I become pregnant, I will give you a sheep.
If I bear a child, I will give you a human being.
My statement is not long, but what I see I tell.
What should I do?

15

Hena ne bontoni?
Hena ne bontoni?
Kogyaa aware bontoni
Sumiye redi agoro mase kente redi agoro
Sumiye redi agoro mase kente redi agoro
Sumiye nnye wo dea Nana Amoa dea
Nana rentwa ntadee okramonia reko abisa
Moma ano
Ayikoo, yaayei
Afua ei enowaa
Afua fofie krohinko na eye wode
Afua ei enowaa
Afua fofie krohinko na eye wode

Who is the barren
Nana rentwa ntadee okramonia reko abisa
Moma ano
Ayikoo, yaayei
Afua ei enowaa
Afua Fofie krohinko na eye wode
Afua ei enowaa
Afua Fofie krohinko na eye wode

Who is the barren?
Who is the barren?
If I divorce you, you are still barren.

The pillow is playing games.
My in-laws kente is playing games.
The pillow is not yours, it is Nana Amoa's
Nana will not make clothes
The Muslim is going to consult an oracle.
Well done.
Well done.
Afua nowaa,
Afua Fofie, you delight in gossip.
Afua nowaa
Afua Fofie, you delight in gossip.

Songs 14 and 15 were sung by several women standing in a circle. As they sang, they clapped their hands together in the following pattern so that 1, 2, and 3 compose a triplet and 4 and 5 form a duple.

1. R: Hit neighbor's hands with right hand on top, left hand on bottom.
2. L: Hit neighbor's hands with left hand on top, right hand on bottom.
3. C: Clap
4. P: Hit neighbor's hands with fingers pointing upwards.
5. C: Clap

16

Bayere bubu na efiri epam.
Nsuo nso gyae na efiri soro.
Batakari a osi akonkon.
Afua Nimo a obuu ne ebe.
Onyansni a okyeree n'asee
Eii Akosombo eii,
Yen nyina yenim yo oo
Masta Kodwo wo mogyaa
Na eye daase ahenewa
Meduku yento na yede atwa yeyam.
Oo ayee, oo aye daa.
Oo ayee, oo ayee daa.

If the yam is broken, it is due to the supporting stick.
If the rain stops, it is due to the sky.
Smock hanging on the shoulders.
Afua Nimo spoke in proverbs.
The wise man explained the meaning
Eii Akosombo eii (an expression of shock)
We all know how to do that.
Master Kodwo, your blood is so good.
We thank you royal person.

We cannot buy a handkerchief to tie our stomach.
Oo ayee, oo ayee every day.
Oo ayee, oo ayee every day.

MMOGUO – STORY INTERLUDES:

17

Call (from the audience) : Kotodwe bo nkatee.
Storyteller: Epee edwaa

C: The knee cracks the groundnut
St: Epee edwaa (sound of cracking)

18

Call (from the audience): Akora so wo bodua mu.
Storyteller: Maso mu.

C: Old man hold the bodua still.
St: I have held it still

(bodua is an object made from cows tail. It is used by a fetish priest when he/she dances and he/she stops waving it when he stops dancing)

19

Call (from the audience): Basi ntonkom.
Response (from the audience): Nyaadewa.
Storyteller: Mafuomu nyaadewa.
Response: (from the audience) : Bisa ntonkom nyaadewa.
St: Mafuomu nyaadewa.
R: Bisa ntonkom nyaadewa.
... (repeat until interrupted)
C: Abrabra
R: Yoo

C: Ask about my pepper.
R: Garden eggs
St: My farm of garden eggs
R: Ask about my pepper and garden eggs.

...

C: Abrabra (an expression to call people's attention)
R: O.K.

20

C: Agya akoro mmoguo
R: Mommo no mmoguo
C: Yaa mmoguo

R: Mommo no mmoguo
C: Abrabra
R: Yoo

C: Blow off the old man.
R: Do not listen to him.
C: Blow him off.
R: Do not listen to him.
C: Abrabra
R: O.K.

21

C: Yewoe woe a.
R: Eye boodee.

C: We pound and pound.
R: It remains plantain.

(Enough said. It remains the same no matter what is done to it)

The mmoguo (literally, “brush aside”) are songs which re associated with stories. They are sung interspersed throughout the stories and serve to liven up the audience. They also allow the storyteller time to collect his thought for the rest of the story. Songs 17 and 18 are used to ask permission to interrupt the story for a song, 19 and 20 are the actual songs, and 21 is used to end a song to allow for the continuation of the story.

SONGS FROM ASHIM/MOSANO (Fanti)

APATAMPA

22

Daakye miwo meba bi
Meba no so barima
M’aka neti mu yomo
Mayi netiko kahyia
Medi no ekosi nkwantaso
Obi to no bias no se
Maame hena neba ni.
Sesta Esi neba ni.
One bena ne wo no?
One Gyanwa na wo no?
Gyanwa, Gyanwa, da akye bewo abrofo mba.

In the future I will bear a child
My child will be a son.

I will dye his hair.
I will make the back of his hair pink.
I will take him to the junction.
If someone comes and asks,
“Maame, who’s son is this?”
“It is sister Esi’s son”.
“Who is the father?”
“Gyanwa is the father”.
Gyanwa, Gyanwa, in the future you will bear white children.

23

Samanadze waree,
Iye koa kira me.
Samanadze waree,
Iye koa kira me.
Owu esi me fie ho mennyi ogyefo biara.
Manye egyanka ba.
Manyi ne nam mu oo
Ebusua nyina abo ngua oo
Manyi ne nam mu oo
Ebusua nyina abo ngua oo
Manyi ne nam mu oo

Long kingdom of the dead,
If you go, inform me.
Many people died in my house
I am an orphaned child.
I am aimless.
The family has gathered for you to tell them you are going.
I am aimless.
The family has gathered for you to tell them you are going.
I am aimless.

24

Nana-e fa nsa gu daadze-o.
Nana-e fa nsa gu daadze-o, Nana-e.
Okwan na yereko nsu wo mu-o, Nana-e.
Okwan na yereko atekye wo mu-o, Nana-e.
Nana Donkor fa nsa gu daadze-o
Adwen wopon ana woasina.

Nana, pour libation on the ground.
Nana, pour libation on the ground.
There is water in the road, Nana
There is mud in the road, Nana.
Nana Donkor, pour libation on the ground.

Adwen (mud fish) must be bent and pegged with a stick.

25

Awulee beye dea ben.

Awulee beye dea ben.

Ka kyerem se menin tamba bo.

Ka kyerem se menim tamba bo.

Ka kyerem maame se menim tamba bo.

Enyimi boyi ee beyem dea ben.

Enyimi boyi ee beyem dea ben.

Obi nkohwe Kodwo ne papa

Call: Ewule baa yenndze

Response: La la la la laa la la

C: Ewule baa yenndze

R: La la la la la laa la la

C: Nntumu nkotow

R: Daa bi

C: Nntumu nkotow

R: Daa bi

C: Yea sre sisi

R: Akokoa dompe

C: Sre sisi

R: Akokoa dompe

What will you do to me, Lady?

What will you do to me, Lady?

You told me that I do not know how to put on cloth

You told me that I do not know how to put on cloth

You told my mother that I do not know how to put on cloth

S: Bend your waist

R: No

S: Try to borrow a waist

R: A little bone

26

Mbaa baasa wa wa

You told me that I do not know how to put on cloth

You told my mother that I do not know how to put on cloth

S: Bend your waist

R: No

S: Try to borrow a waist

R: A little bone

26

Mbaa baasa wa ware-o
Mbaa baasa wa ware-o
Obaako se mensi dan mma n'
Obaako se monto tam mma n'
Obaako se ohwehwe n'eyafun ba.
Obaako se mensi dan mma n'
Obaako se monto tam mma n'
Obaako se ohwehwe n'eyafun ba.

Three women married
One asks me to build a building
One asks me to buy cloth
One wants her own biological child.

27

Akoto kente ama mokora,
Akoto bresee ema ami.
Akoto kente ama mokora,
Akoto bresee ama ami
Mehunu yo mekeke yo
M'aye otsiafo bonyi aye.
Mekunu Kwame, Kwame,
Kwame onyimpa gyangyan,
Mekunu Kwame, Kwame, Kwame osanse ni.

You have bought kente for my rival.
You have bought bresee (mourning cloth) for me.
You have bought kente for my rival
You have bought bresee for me.
I saw and I asked,
I have become nothing to you.
My husband Kwame, Kwame
My hopeless husband, Kwame.
Kwame, Kwame, my husband, Kwame is hopeless.

The above songs (22-27) are all sung while dancing Apatampa (see fig. 9) This involves clapping, stepping and slapping their thighs in the following pattern as they move counter clockwise in a circle.

Hands: R L C

Feet: l r l r

R: Right hand slaps right thigh from as left hand slaps left thigh from back.

C: Clap hands together

l: Small step back with left foot

r : Small step back with right foot
l: Heavy hop onto left foot as right left kicks out to the side.
r: Step forward on right foot as turning to face the center of the circle

28

Ya ara yeso egur.
Se wodze wo m' a befa n' ko.
Ya ara yeso egur.
Yeso egur ma ye bor do.

We are enough for our game.
If yours (your person) is in, come take her away.
We are enough for our game.
We are too much for the game.

The children stand in a circle holding hands. They move their arms in a forward circular motion. As their hands reach the back of their circular motion the children's knees bend slightly and then straighten them and bring their waist back as their arm come forward. Each person in the circle takes her turn (moving around in a counter clockwise direction) to sing through the song alone to be answered by everyone else singing it as a response. Some children choose to sing the second version or to make up their own variation.

29

Kor beba ebeyim seraka!
Kor beba edwaman woaba oo
Kor beba ebayim na
Ekor, na ebien, na baasa, na anan, na enum, na esuon, na awotwe, na akron, na du oo
Kor beba ebeyim seraka!

One will come for me as a gift.
The adulteress has come.
One will come for me
One and two and three and four and five and six and seven and eight and nine and ten.
One will come for me as a gift.

At the beginning of the song one of the girls, or sometime several girls, comes to the center of the circle. As they start the counting she bends down either on her knees or by kneeling on the ground. With each beat she contracts and then thrusts her chest and hips. She then stands up in time to swing her hips around and thrust them forward on the last beat as she contracts her chest and throws her arm forward. (see fig. 10)

30

C: Ama pra hee.
R: Mapra hee.

C: Sew kata.
R: Masew kata.
C: Da so
R: Mada so
C: Boni gyen gure.
R: Ma boni gyen gure.
 Boni gyen gure. Ma boni gyen gure,
 Boni gyen gure. Ma boni gyen, gyen, gyen, gyen, gyen.

C: Ama, come sweep here.
R: I have swept
C: Lay the mat
R: I have laid
C: Sleep on it.
R: I have slept.
C: Throw your waist
R: I have thrown it...

One girl at a time comes to the center of the circle. As they sing each of the responses she gestures as if she was obeying the order. When they start singing, “Boni gyan gure...” she puts one hand on her waist and moves it in circles. As with the previous song, she ends on the last beat with a strong contraction and throws the arm forward. (see fig. 11 and 12)/

31

Ashio ohee, daben na moko oo
Ashio ohee , daben na moko oo
Ashio ahofe
Ayaa shele mashio ohee
Ashio ahofe
Ayaa shele mashio ohee
Shia ee
Shia koo
Shia ee
Shia koo
Obi na obi na alata shia e, shia e,
Shia koo, shia koo,
Shia e, shia e,
Shia ko, shia ko.

Shake yourself. When will I have my turn?
Beautiful shaking
Shake, I will shake you.
Shake and shake...

As they sing, “Shia ee”, the girl who comes to the center puts her arms out in front of her and shakes her hips. With, “Shia ko”, she shakes as she leans forward. As they sing, “Obi na...”, she shakes her waist her waist while pivoting around one foot.

32

Yea abaa amananaa na year aba oo
Yea abaa amananaa na year aba oo
Woma hen egua a ya'ara yenntsena do oo.
Woma hen nsu-a ya-ara yennom-o
Woma hen nsu-a ya-ara yennom-o
Yea-aba amananaa na yeaba yerebedzi
Agor akyere hom
Yerebedzi agor o
Yerebedzi agor o
Yerebedzi agor o
Agor akyere hom.

Nana yema hom astena ase.
Nana yema hom astena ase.
Ohene Kodwo ee, hendze yefir dze bokoo.
Nana yema hom atsena ase o.

We have come, now we have come
If you give us a chair, we will not sit.
If you give us water, we will not drink.
We have come, now we have come to display for you.
We are displaying
We are displaying for you.

Nana have a seat.
King Kodwo, from the place we came, all is well
Nana have a seat.

32A

A'yaa bowumo adze ee!
A'yaa bowumo adze ee!
Wosisi abu?
Wosisi abu?
Obanyin kotoban ku ee
Obanyin kotoban ku ee
Wu wu bi na wugyae nee
Woara hwehwe mu ee!

Bend your waist when you dance,
Is your waist broken?
Flirtatious man,

You had someone and you left her.
Look at us and come for one.

33

C: Ebusua bi a yeebo menyì owofò
Menyì onana-oo
R: Edua bi a akyer yen anna ofir nkukuudo
C: Wokoo na annko bia
R: Edua bi a akye yen anna ofir nkukuudo
(repeat with everyone singing all words)
C: I am in a family with no uncle,
With no Grandmother
R: A tree that does not grow is from a mountain.
C: If they go and you do not go,
R: A tree that does not grow is from a mountain.

34

Apatampa w'ayer da mpoano
Aya da mpoano—
Se meanya m'abre—
Se meanya m'abre—
Besen kogyam mame
Nkoyi mame nkoyi eninsuo wawaa
Wawaa da mpoano—
Se meanya m'abre—

Apatampa, your drum is at the sea side
Your drum is at the sea side.
If I am tired,
If I am tired,
Come see me off to take the drum.
Tears flowing
Flowing by the sea side
I am tired.

35

Nana Omanhen woana na onye wose?
Hwe ne ntoma ofra yaa woana na onye nese.
Hwe ne mpaboa a ohyea woana na onye nese
Nana Omanhen woana na onye ne se?
Nana Omanhen w'adawur ma
Nana Omanhen w'adawur ma.
W'adawur ma w'adawur ma nana-e.
Se yehyia wo a yekotowaa yebesa wo de
Nana wo mpoo mu-e

Who is like Nana?
Look at the cloth he is wearing.
Look at the sandals he is wearing.
Who is like Nana?
Nana, your excellence.
Your excellence, Nana.
When we meet you we kneel before thee.
We ask about your health.

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Priye woho yi,
Priye woho yi,
Woyi baako a na ebu-o
Wokabom a ennbu-o Ghana man ye.
Nya ye baako a na eye.
Ye nam mpaboa so.
Ye nan mpaboa so
Yedi agoro
Agoro yenie (Sesta Terra) nti na yebae-e
Agoro yenie buo buo buo...

For the broom,
If you take one strand of broomstick it breaks
But if you use many, they cannot be broken
We should all join together.
We are walking on sandals for display.
We have come to display for (Sister Terra)
Displaying, buo buo buo...

APPENDIX III

MUSICAL NOTATION OF SONGS

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