

GHANA STRING FIGURES *

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Few people may realise that the making of figures and the working of tricks with string or twine are among the most widely distributed games in the world. A few quite simple figures have long been known in England, and may have been introduced to Europe by sailors and other travellers. However, among more distant peoples there are experts who can construct a large number of very complicated figures. These include the Eskimo in the far North, most of the tribes of North American Indians, the Aborigines of Australia, the Maoris of New Zealand, the inhabitants of the islands of the South Seas, Central and East Africa, and last but not least, Nigeria, Ghana and other places in West Africa.

Nothing is known about the origin of this kind of game, and there is no explanation for its world-wide distribution. Were these figures "invented" by one people and then disseminated to others? Or, on the other hand, were they thought of by many widely scattered tribes and developed independently? Evidence can be called to support either of these conflicting theories. Some figures, including one described as "Hausa drum" (see below), and some of the tricks, are known by many different groups of "artists in string". On the other hand, each group may have its own peculiar mode of constructing them: an example from Ghana, called "Ashante loops", seems not to be known elsewhere. Some figures, especially those of the Australian aborigines and the Eskimos, are amazingly intricate, involving a dozen or more stages in their construction. Often, the final figure is worked to illustrate a story.

DISTRIBUTION IN WEST AFRICA

This has not been fully mapped out. A number of figures from Nigeria have been described in *The Nigerian Field*, two papers giving over twenty Yoruba constructions and a third paper for the Mambila area (Haddon & Treleaven, 1936a, b; Schneider, 1955). The most important, if not the only, account for Ghana is given by Griffith (1925). He described accurately about thirty figures, some of which are intricate. These were shown to him by pupils, mostly Fantes and Ashantes, at the Survey School. Only twelve of the figures were included among more than forty that I obtained in Sefwi and Ashante. This gives a total of at least sixty for the Akan country, although there are quite certainly many more

* This account is an expanded version of an article in *The Teachers' Journal* [published in the Gold Coast, now Ghana], Vol.IX No.3, 53-61 (1937). Notes on additional figures are provided by the author, from material collected between 1935 and 1937.

to be recorded. Enquiries among members of almost all tribes of the Northern Territories were fruitless; not a single person seemed even to have heard of them. One Hausa boy, brought up in Ashante, knew and showed me four figures to which he gave Hausa names, one of which was "Fulani tent", but there was good reason to believe that they had been learned in Ashante and then renamed. I was told by several Ewe people that string games were known in their country, but they could remember none. It seems probable that these games were known mainly by the people of the forest belt and coast.

It is perhaps impossible to obtain exact information about their antiquity; it is certain that many were known a generation ago [i.e. before about 1910]. Two figures were found with the names "Basel Mission bell" and "Aeroplane", the latter being a unique construction and quite graphic.* The Basel Mission had, of course, been working in Ghana for many years and the figure could be quite old; but one would like to know whether it was a recent invention, or an old one renamed. Both these figures were seen only once, and neither of them was described from any other region, and therefore may be fairly recent. However, it is possible that they are known elsewhere by older names.

NAMES FOR STRING FIGURES

The commonest name applied generally to string figures of any sort was *nyansapɔ*, meaning "wise (man's) knot"; although this was also the name of a particular figure (see below). The making of string figures was sometimes described as *nhama gorɔ*, but this was probably a literal description of what the making of figures seems to be to onlookers. When a tangle occurred, all the onlookers exclaimed *abɔpɔ*, meaning perhaps "it has made a knot"; however, this again was the name of a particular figure in which a knot is tied and then dissolved, by clapping the hands and drawing them apart. It was of interest that no mention of string figures was found in Christaller's Akan Dictionary, which is very comprehensive and a mine of information on most subjects; nor was any reference found in Rattray's books, or in other books dealing with the customs of the Ghana peoples. This was not surprising, for these figures seem only to be shown to Europeans when specially asked for, and I had been in Ghana for about 6 months before I observed the first example, although I had been making enquiries all that time. Once, when passing through a village, I saw a boy sitting down making figures, but that is the only occasion on which I have seen string figures being made without first asking for them, although I spent most of my time trekking.

It seemed that these games were being forgotten. In 1936, my District was eastern Ashante, stretching from Adansi in the south to Kumawu and the Agogo States in the north. Inquiries in most towns and villages visited while on trek were answered with: "Our fathers knew many

* But see "Pair of scissors" in Haddon & Treleaven (1936a) No. 11. [Ed.]

different figures, we are too busy to remember such things; perhaps there is an old man or a boy in the town who knows some". If such a person was found we then had a contest, each trying to outdo the other. Very often men would remember parts of figures, often without their names. I came across a few people who were really experts: in particular I remember one small boy at Kumawu, who stood looking very solemn and not saying a word, while he very rapidly demonstrated about six excellent figures that were new to me. In the same area there was also an old goldsmith who knew a great number of complex figures; unfortunately I could not stay to learn them or write them down, and several of them I have not seen since.

FIGURES KNOWN IN GHANA

Within Ghana, some figures seemed to be known from certain localities only; others were widely known under one name and were made in one way; some, again, while having one name and the same final form were produced in different ways; others had the same form but entirely different meanings in different areas. Some examples will show what is meant. A figure described from Rhodesia as "Framework for a hut" consisted of four long loops leading from one hand to a short loop held in the other. In Sefwi, it is known as "Eight ropes", meaning a tree with a number of stilt roots. In the scarp region, on the edge of open country where elephant was found, the figure was held rather differently, with a single loop much longer than the others, and was called "Elephant's tail".

A figure called *Donno* (Ashante) or *Dondo* (Akan) meaning "Hausa drum" was perhaps the best known of all. It was seen in many different places, and was always given this name, even by people unable to make it themselves. Three entirely different constructions were noted in Ghana -- one on the feet and two on the hands. All three constructions were different from figures described for other countries.

There was a most interesting figure which was always called *kɔkɔba*. A *kɔkɔba* is a small mongoose which is said to lie on the ground and protrude certain anal glands; these look like worms which birds come to try to eat, and are choked in the attempt. The birds are then eaten by the *kɔkɔba*. Two varieties of the figure were known, one on the whole hand, and one on the first finger and thumb only, and both were supposed to show the choking action of the *kɔkɔba*. This legend of the *kɔkɔba* is also recorded in Uganda.

There seems little reason for supposing that these figures ever had any deeper meaning than they have at present, or that they were ever anything but an amusement. An intricate one, for which two people are needed, was associated with a short recitation which is said line by line as the figure is worked. This concerns Ananse, the spider, but no objection is made to making this figure and reciting the figures by day, which is not the case with the *Anansesem* [= spider stories] proper.

Figures collected by the writer can be divided easily into five classes, according to the things they represent, as follows:-

1. **Animals** -- Bongo skin, Crocodile's head, Elephant's tail and heel, Spider, Tortoise's back. (About 10 figures.)
2. **Plants** -- "Canes along the River Pra", "Eight ropes", "Groundnuts" There are only 4 figures in this class, which is surprising when one considers the importance that plants, both wild and cultivated, play in the life of Ghanaians.
3. **Objects** -- Aeroplane, Basel Mission bell, Canoe, Drum, Hammock, Fulani tent, Net, Palanquin. (About 10 figures.)
4. **Tricks** -- most of these are without specific names, but include "Hanging rope", "Wise man's knot". (About 10 figures)
5. **To illustrate stories** -- such as "Father's dogs fighting for a bone", "An unkind man's fufu pestle" -- the latter is facetious and represents a big stick with a small base, implying that the man pounded only enough fufu for himself. (About 5 figures.)

DESCRIPTIONS OF FIGURES

Until the general technique has been mastered and the special terminology learned, it is very difficult to construct a figure from a written description. Initially, it is hard enough, and very humiliating, to copy a figure that a diminutive boy can make with his eyes closed! The technical terms generally used in the literature are the following:-

- the part of a string lying across the palm of the hand is the **palmar**;
- the part lying across the back of the hand is the **dorsal**;
- anything on the thumb side of the hand is the **radial**;
- anything on the little finger side is the **ulnar**.

Since a string passing round a finger or fingers forms a loop, each loop is composed of a radial string and an ulnar string. Of two loops on the same finger -- the loop nearer the palm of the hand is the **proximal**; and the loop nearer the finger tip is the **distal**.

These six adjectives, palmar and dorsal, radial and ulnar, proximal and distal, together with the names of the parts of the hands, fingers, wrists etc., enable us to describe exactly the relative place of every string in a figure held on the hands.

1. *Pre* or "Ananse's farm". [*Pre* is an idiophone.]

The construction is too complex to be described here, but the general form is shown in Fig.1. The figure, with which a verse is associated, is first constructed by two people; then they squat and hold it close to the ground, each in both hands. With each line of verse, in which all the onlookers join, the figure is, as it were, turned inside out. Finally, it is laid on the ground and opened out to its original form. In Sefwi and Adansi, four versions were collected, all similar though varying in detail, and in some cases not known with certainty. Two of these are given. A much shorter form, known by some boys at Kumasi is almost entirely different. The words have been freely translated into English. They have been corrected into standard Twi (see Acknowledgements).

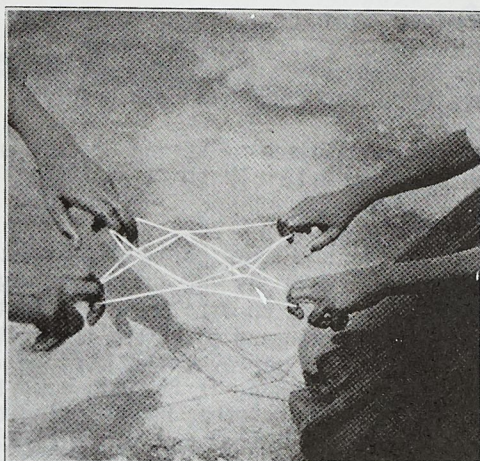


Fig.1. Ananse's farm.

Verses recorded at Brofoyedru, Adansi:

- I. *Yekɔɔ hwae afuom ?*
Yekɔɔ Ananse afuom.
ɔmaa yee dee ?
ɔmaa yee adwe baako.
Anso yee tɔ.
Anso yee noa.
Woma yemmisa hwae ?
Abisa da see ?
Abisa da bɔre.
Bɔre ara ne bɔre.
Owuo wu a yensie no.
Yennsie no see?
Yesie no bre ooo.
- To whose farm did we go ?
 We went to Ananse's farm.
 What did he give us ?
 He gave us one palm nut.
 It was not enough for us to roast.
 Nor to boil.
 Whom shall we consult ?
 Is it worth asking the oracle ?
 The oracle is like a viper. *
 The viper is always a viper.
 If it is so dead, we must bury it.
 How is it to be buried ?
 We must bury it solemnly.
 * i.e. the viper is lethargic.

II. [First four lines -- as above.]

- Adwe noa ɔde maa yee.*
Anso yee tɔ.
Anso yee noa.
Yenkɔ ebisa so.
Ebisa ato di bee ?
Ato kromfoɔbi a ɔfae.
Kromfoɔ a ɔfae, fiẽ.
Sekae tɔ a etɔ kunkuro.
Kukuo tehwe a egye dwedwerede.
ɔbaa tuo gye sao.
ɔbarima tuo gye purom-purom.
Baako taa to.
- The nut that he gave us
 Was not enough to roast,
 Nor enough to boil.
 Let us go and consult a fetish.
 What does the fetish say ?
 The verdict is that a thief took it.
 Hi, a thief.
 A knife drops and goes "kunkoro".
 A pot falls with a crash.
 A woman's gun goes "sao".
 Men's guns go "bang bang".
 One for a finish up.

2. *Ananse hama* -- Spider string.

This is merely the first part of *Pre* started on the toe; it gives a picture of a sort of spider with long palps. It does not seem to be connected with the big figure and is always made and shown independently.

For the following figures a piece of string or cord about 7 feet (2 metres) long is needed, and should be fairly thick and flexible.

3a. *Nyansapɔ* -- Wise man's knot.

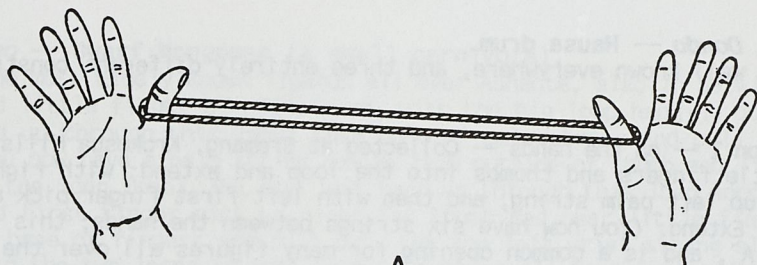
Well known throughout Sefwi and many parts of Ashante. (Fig.2, 3 A-D). Put thumbs upwards into the loop of string; carry the right hand in a clockwise direction round the left hand. Pick up with the right little finger, by bringing it towards you, the two strings hanging down from the left thumb. Draw the hands apart. Bring the left little finger over the strings coming from the right little finger, and pick up by hooking it towards you, the two strings coming from the right thumb. Repeat with the other hand, taking the strings from underneath. Pull over the hand the two strings now on the back of the left hand (thus tying the knot) and draw the hands apart. Clap the hands, release the little fingers, draw the hands apart and the knot has vanished.



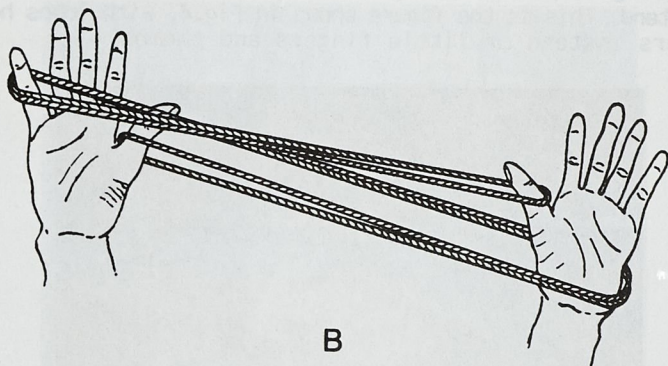
Fig.2. Wise man's knot.

3b. *epɔbɔ* -- variant of "Wise man's knot".

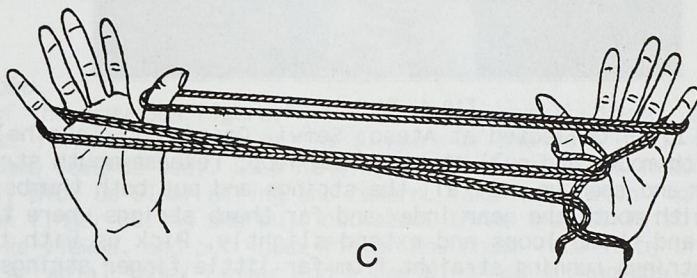
Known at several places in Western Province, and also at Kumawu. It is merely the previous figure turned round 180° though people do not seem to connect them. Put the mid fingers into the loop; bring right hand anti-clockwise around left hand. Pick up with right thumb the strings going from left mid-finger to back of hand, by putting thumb away from you. Pick up corresponding strings with left thumb, bringing thumb towards you. Bring left wrist string over hand and extend slightly. Release thumb to untie figure.



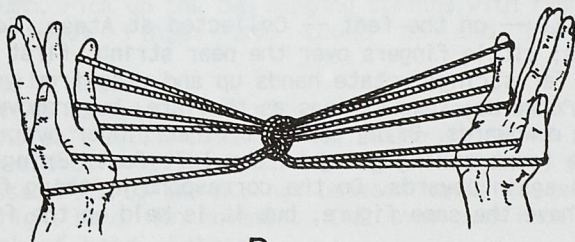
A



B



C



D

Fig.3 A-D. Stages in construction of Nyansapo (wise man's knot).

4. Donno or Dondo -- Hausa drum.

This is very well known everywhere, and three entirely different constructions are used.

Construction I -- on the hands -- Collected at Bremang, Krokusua Hills, Sefwi. Put the little fingers and thumbs into the loop and extend; with right first finger pick up left palm string, and then with left first finger pick up right palm string. Extend. (You now have six strings between the hands; this is known as "Opening A", and is a common opening for many figures all over the world.) Put mid fingers from above into the thumb loops, lifting these off the thumbs, and return. Bring near strings of little fingers under far mid-finger strings, and place them on farther side of little fingers. (Do right hand and then left). Lift the far (original) little finger strings. Release the loops on the first fingers and extend. This is the figure shown in Fig.4, with loops held by little and mid-fingers instead of little fingers and thumbs.



Fig.4. Hausa drum.

Construction II -- Collected at Ateso, Sefwi. Opening A. Take hold of near thumb string with mouth and pull it to a long loop; release mouth string. Swing this down under and then up over all the strings and put both thumbs into this loop. Pick up with mouth the near index and far thumb strings where they cross. Release index and thumb loops and extend slightly. Pick up with thumbs the corresponding strings running straight from far little finger strings to mouth. Release mouth and extend.

Construction III -- on the feet -- Collected at Ateso, Sefwi. Loop is held tight by big toes; little fingers over the near string; first fingers under near string and over far string; rotate hands up and away from you, bringing first fingers pointing upwards; keep strings as they are, but remove the first fingers and replace them downwards. Bring the left first finger over from the front and hook with it the front string going to the left foot. Bring it up through, so that the palm is again upwards. Do the corresponding thing for the right hand. Extend. You now have the same figure, but it is held on the first and the little fingers.

5. *Kɔkɔbo* -- Dwarf Mongoose (a small carnivore).

One of the most widely known figures all over Ashante, also in Sefwi. Loop over thumb and little finger of right hand, with the big loop hanging down. Put the left hand up through this loop; take hold of palm string and pull through the loop. (You now have a palm string coming from outside of thumb and little finger and over the long loop). Put the left hand up through this long loop; with left thumb and first finger pick up right far thumb and near little finger strings near the base of fingers and pull out. Let the left wrist string slip over the hand. Hold the two loops in left hand by putting all four fingers through them. You now have the figure shown in Fig.5. Work it by moving the hands a little.

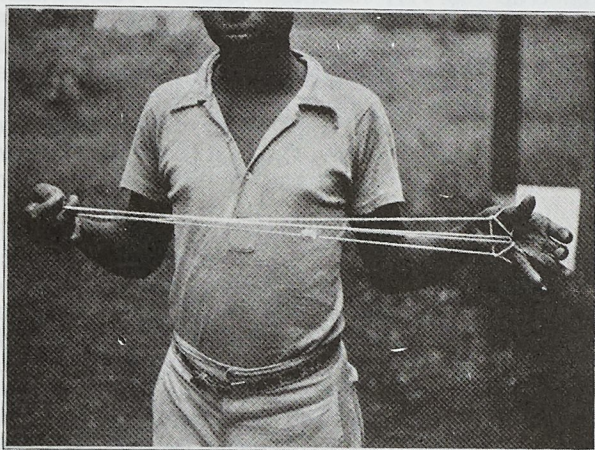


Fig.5. *Kɔkɔbo*

6. *Akɔkɔbo*.

A variant of the previous figure, which is also generally known, but not so well as the first form. It is made on the fingers of the left hand. Left hand held upright, thumb towards body. Loop hanging down palmarly from index finger; thumb over radial, pick up ulnar string and return. Take hold, with right hand, of the dorsal index finger string and pull out about three inches. Twist this loop 180° clockwise, as viewed, and put index finger and thumb into it by bringing it over the thumb. A radial index finger and a radial thumb string now hang down. Pick up former with thumb and then lift latter over thumb to become a hanging string on ulnar side of thumb. Pick up the two hanging strings with right hand and hold taut. Bend left index finger and thumb to and from each other.

7. *Tenene* -- Animal's path.

The derivation is from *tene*, to creep along. At Bremang in Sefwi it is called "Path between two holes". *Ankaa dwea si tia*, *Aburo si tia* -- A lemon tree at one end of the town and corn at the other. This was a meaning given at Kumawu. Loop over both wrists. Pick up two strings between hands and put between first and mid fingers of right hand. Twi movement. Lift over each hand the corresponding strings on back of hand. Extend.

8. *ehyee* -- Canoe.

Sefwi. Right hand into loop, there being a short dorsal string and a long palmar loop. Throw this long palmar loop to back of hand, the radial string passing between first and mid finger and ulnar string between mid and ring fingers. Pick up from below the ulnar palmar string with thumb, and the radial palmar string with little finger (strings now cross in front at back of mid-finger and at wrist). Pick up, with left hand, the strings crossing at base of mid-finger and pull out. Release left hand. Put left hand through this loop, and pull out palmar strings crossing on right wrist. Release. Put left hand from below into the big double loop so pulled out. Take off, from above with left mid-finger, the right mid-finger loop. Work by raising and lowering fingers of left hand.

9. *Dadefiri* -- Iron trap (Sefwi). *Kwaenteefidie* -- Trap on main road. [Alternatively may be called *Kwantafidie* -- trap at road junction.]

Opening A. Take hold of ulnar little finger string mid-way between hands, with mouth; extend over all strings pulling the loops off the little fingers. Rotate hands away from you, catching with each thumb the corresponding string running from index finger to mouth, and allowing the original thumb loops to slip off. Extend. Operator now tells someone to put their hand in the centre; the thumbs are released and hands drawn apart, thus catching the hand.

10. "Throwing a spear". Seen once in Sefwi; indigenous name not known.

11. *Seēhama* (Twi) -- Hangman's rope.

This is widely known in the Western Provinces and all Ashante. Loop round the neck, long loop hanging in front. Carry the right hand string over to left and round neck. Take up right string with right hand, and left string with left hand. Bring right hand round in a clockwise direction to make a loop which is then gripped by both hands. Lift this loop over head, the portion where the strings cross going to back. Release hands. Take hold of strings in front and pull off.

12. *Atena* (Twi), *Atintan* (Sefwi) -- Net.

For this figure the string should be 8-9 feet (2½ m) long. Opening A with mid-fingers; transfer thumb loops to index fingers. Rotate left hand so that back of hand is towards body. Pull up index finger loop slightly; put right thumb and index finger through it from distal side and pick up mid-finger string. Pull out a little. In same way pick up little finger string through this and pull out a little. Bring this loop round to palm at same time rotating left hand again and bringing palm to face body. Through this loop pick up and pull out radial little finger string. Through this loop the ulnar mid-finger string; through this loop the radial mid-finger string. Similarly the ulnar and radial index finger strings. Put thumb into resulting loop. Do same for right hand.

13. *Apakae* -- Chief's palanquin. [Although an eastern word, Ghanaians would use it to describe this conveyance.] *Stima* -- a launch [literal derivation from "steamer", but launch is what Ghanaians would understand it to mean.] (Kwamianua town, Sefwi District.)

Opening A with mid-fingers. Ulnar little finger string brought under all strings by mouth, and hands put into it from below. Release little fingers. Take up with left index finger and thumb, the far thumb and near mid-finger strings, and remove from these fingers. Put these double loops (so taken off) over the little

finger and thumb, i.e. near thumb and far mid-finger strings become far little finger strings, and far thumb and near mid-finger strings become near thumb strings. Repeat for left hand. Take off one loop at right thumb; twist twice anti-clockwise around mid-finger of same hand. Repeat with same string on the other hand. Right hand: remove thumb loop; take this string over and return it under all three far strings (2 little finger and 1 wrist strings) replacing it on the thumb without twisting it. Repeat for left hand. Slip wrist string over the hand. Extend, and display with palms facing.

14. *Apakae* — Chief's palanquin (Ashante); "Ant box" (Sefwi) (meaning obscure). Opening as Haddon (1930) p.130. Pick up with mouth the two strings going direct diagonally, where they cross (i.e. left distal radial and left proximal ulnar strings) and not turning in middle of figure. Put between index and mid-fingers of right hand. Two loops. Right thumb over radial string; pick up both palmar strings. Repeat for left hand. Bend hands inwards through all the strings; wrist strings over the hands; separate hands and display by pointing downwards.

15. "Hammock" (Kumawu & Befoso). This is described by Haddon (1930) p.127, where it is called *Aguanini komuna* (goat's beard). [*Odwanini abɔdwese* means goat's beard; meaning of *komuna* is not known.] Opening A, with mid-fingers.

16. "Framework of a hut". "Eight ropes" (Western Provinces) (from a tree having many stilt roots). *esono dua* — Elephant's tail (Manpong District). Hold horizontally with the double string much longer than the bunch of strings.

17. *esono nanti* — Elephant's heel.

Position 1 on right hand: long loop hanging down. Pick up with left index finger and thumb, the right palmar string. Give this string an anti-clockwise twist and put the loop so formed over the right mid-finger. Pass the radial right (near) thumb string round the front of the front [?] and right round, so that it becomes a radial wrist string. Pick up with left hand the strings crossing at base of right mid-finger and pull out; release left hand. Put left hand from distal side through the two loops so formed; take up with left hand the two strings in front of the right wrist and pull out.

18. *Owuratete* — Old man (Sefwi). *Kyere wadae wie* — It is not hard, but people can't do it (Ashante). [Literally: finish your teaching.]

String held between right and left hands about 6 inches (15 cm) apart, palms away from body. With right thumb press string towards you slightly; bring right index finger towards you and upwards, pushing up the string midway between the two thumbs. With left index finger hook away from you the string between right index finger and thumb. With right thumb now push up and hold against index finger the string that it has been holding down. The operator now asks someone to put his finger through the centre hole; release right index finger; separate hands and the other person's finger is not caught (see Fig.6).

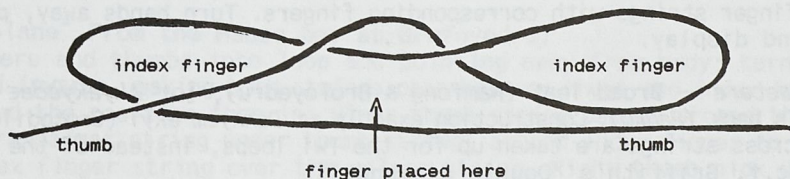


Fig.6.

19. *Pire* *ƙƙ nsuo owia ƙƙƙ ƙƙ* [When this animal went to fetch water, the sun came down] (Ashante Akim).

Make *owuratete* (old man) extending and taking the long hanging loop on the thumbs. Mid-fingers under ulnar index finger strings, over radial index finger strings; pick up ulnar thumb strings on back of finger; taking off thumb loops, return under ulnar index finger strings. Thumbs over radial index finger strings and pick up ulnar index & radial mid-finger strings; with left ulnar mid-finger string put one twist round this finger. Repeat for right hand. This figure is worked by having hands half facing and half away from you, and alternately raising and depressing the thumbs: the first tightens the two strings picked up by them, the second pushes down and tightens the radial index finger string. As each movement is made, one word of the song is sung.

20. *Denkyem ti* -- Crocodile's head, (or [*Denkyem ekyi* -- crocodile's] back). Seen at Befoso, Kumawu; and at Brofoyedru. Put the string over the left wrist, with equal loops hanging each side. Put the right hand from the right through the loops; bring hands to the normal position facing each other. Pick up the two parallel strings and make Twi loops between index and mid-fingers of the right hand. Bring wrist strings over the hand; display by pushing down with thumb the radial index finger strings; holding up with little fingers the ulnar mid finger strings. Rotate hands away from you.

21. *Nkatee* -- Groundnut (Kumawu). Seen at Befoso.

This is the same as *Denkyem ti* (Crocodile's head) except that the string is caught up twice by mid-finger (or not). The string stretching directly from thumb to thumb is picked up in the centre by the teeth, from the far side, and is brought back over the top of the other strings. With right hand take up from distal side the left string going to teeth; bring left hand up beside right hand to take up the right string going to teeth, and release teeth. Keep strings on wrist and display. *Oburoni nkowu abansoro* (Let the European go and die upstairs). Displaying with palms facing away, pick up with teeth in the middle, the string running directly between the little fingers. Pick up and release, as above. Work with palms facing, by rotating wrists inward and outward. *Mmepɔ adwuma: yetwe a obi nnhwe obi to* (Hill work: when we work let nobody look at the other man's bottom). Pick up in the centre, the two strings across the middle, and do Twi loops on right hand, picking up the far loops. Wrist strings over hand. Display by picking up with mid-fingers and pushing down with thumb. *Kumase dwa* (Kumasi market, with a big market shed on each side).

22. *Jkyem ekyi apɛa* -- The spotted back of a leopard. [*Jkyem* is not recognised; leopard is *ɔsebɔ*.]

Make *Denkyem ti* (Crocodile's head). Take up cross strings right in the centre of the figure and do Twi loops between index finger and mid-finger of right hand, and pick up proximal portions with corresponding left fingers; extend. Each thumb bent away from you over two strings and pick up four strings. Catch up ring finger strings with corresponding fingers. Turn hands away, push down thumbs and display.

23. *Ahahaetere* -- Broad leaf (Mamfong & Brofoyedru); [or *Akyekyedee ekyi* --] tortoise's back (*Banko*). Construction exactly as *Denkyem ekyi* (Crocodile's back) but the cross strings are taken up for the Twi loops, instead of the parallel loops. [c.f. Griffith's "Double diamonds"].

Put the figure down and take away the left hand; then pick up again by left first and mid-fingers, into the two central triangles and extend. Display with little fingers and thumb; not held with any fingers but with all the strings tight it is *ɔbaa pa tam* (Good woman's loin cloth). Gripped with little finger and thumbs to give two parallel strings and two hanging down it is *ɔbaa bɔne tam* (Bad woman's loin cloth); (this is somewhat obscene). Right index and mid-fingers into corresponding loops on left hand from distal side and take off left hand. Display with thumbs and little fingers; it is now *nkwadaa baanae pere kasee* (Four boys struggle for a bone).

24. *Akyekyedee ekyi* -- Tortoise's back (Befoso).

[Continue from the previous figure.]

Display; with teeth pick up from far side the lower straight string and return over top of figure. Take up left string to mouth with the right hand, from below; then right string similarly; release teeth. Pick up with teeth (directly) the top straight string in figure and take off with hands as above. Take up the double string in centre and make Twi loops on right hand, picking up proximal loops with index and mid-fingers. Wrist strings over hands; display the figure with hands pointing away. The same movements, but with the mouth string taken up differently gives *Mampong dwa* (Mampong market).

25. "Basel Mission Bell" (Kumawu).

This is constructed exactly as *agwanini komuna* (Goat's beard) described by Haddon (1930, p.127) [*odwanini ab dwese*] but the main movement is not repeated exactly; instead of "repeat" read: pick up with thumb, the radial ring finger and ulnar mid-finger strings. Display by catching up the far string with ring fingers and rotating hands away from body.

26. *Krokotuso ne krayanso* (Kumawu & Western provinces). [Twi words not known; should be a local name, for a village or area?]

This is the same as given by Haddon (1930) p.135, and by Griffith (1925).

27. *Laga* -- Hammock (Hausa).

Collected at Brofoyedru from Hausa boy; appears to have been learned in Ashante and renamed. It is identical with "a bridge" in Haddon & Treleaven (1936a, No.7). Opening A with mid fingers. The thumbs under all strings into little finger loop from distal side; bring back under strings allowing little finger strings to slip off. Display by rotating hands inwards to face downwards.

28. *Bukkar Fulani* -- Fulani tent [hut] (Hausa). From Hausa boy at Brofoyedru.

First position with strings crossed, then opening A. Second person then puts his hand in from the distal side, takes hold of left radial thumb to right ulnar little finger and left ulnar little finger to right radial thumb [strings] where they cross, and pulls them out to a distance of about 6-8 inches (15 cm) beyond the finger tips.

29. "Aeroplane" From the Hausa boy at Brofoyedru.

Index fingers and thumbs into loop and pointing away from body; turn hands upwards and inwards, making both strings pass between thumb and index fingers. On each hand the position then is: ulnar thumb string passes around thumb to become short palmar string under thumb string; around index finger to become radial index finger string over the palmar string. Right thumb pick up left

palmar string on radial side of thumb string. Right index finger pick up left palmar string on ulnar side of index finger string. Extend. Left index finger and thumb together pick up from proximal side the right palmar string between right ulnar thumb and radial index finger strings. Extend. Bend each thumb and index finger inwards over one string to point away from body, allowing other strings to slip off (see Fig.7). Seen by a Goya boy at Walwe, who said he had invented it.

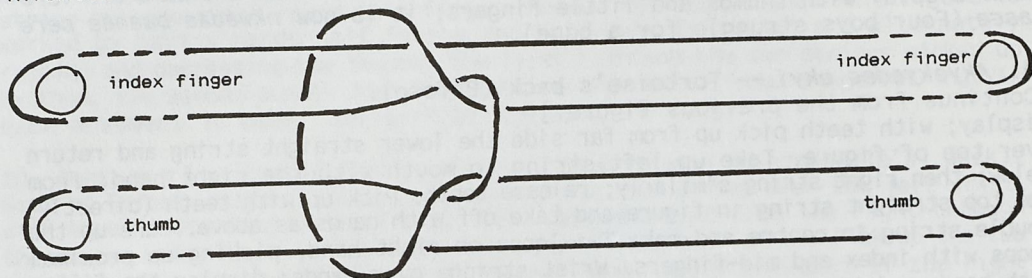


Fig.7.

30. *Ayanfo wɔaduruo* -- Unkind [mean] man's fufu mortar.

Tetefo wɔaduruo -- Ancestor's fufu mortar [by extension, an old/poor mortar.] The string (doubled in the usual way) under the left thigh and up on each side, each side loop being equal in length. Put right hand loop through left hand loop, without twisting either; put right hand loop to left side, left hand loop to right side. Across the thigh there are now 4 strings which will be called 1, 2, 3, and 4, beginning at the distal end. In the centre, on top, lift 2 over 1, and 3 over 4. Take hold of 1 with right hand and of 4 with left hand. Pull up. This is now supposed to represent a small fufu mortar (pestle ?) with which one can pound only enough fufu for one person.

31. "Lizard twist" (Brofoyedru).

At Ologu called *ɔbɔ sane*; the meaning is obscure but said to be "You start something and it comes to nothing".

32. "Canes along the River Pra" (various places).

See Griffith (1925) No.3 and Haddon (1930).

33. *Yafunu mu mma ne kwae neema* (Tebiso) -- [The children from your stomach and things from the forest.]

Murray opening (of the ulnar strings, the right upper to left lower string with nearest). Thumbs over lower near index string; with left, pick up upper and with right, pick up lower ulnar index string. Little fingers pick up far index strings not picked up by thumb. Mid fingers bend over two strings, and pick up lower near index strings. Take off left mid-finger loop; twist completely in clockwise direction and replace. Right mid-finger loop ditto, anti-clockwise. Push down with thumb the string immediately in front of it, releasing thumb and little finger strings, and display.

34. *Turɔm enwoma* -- Bongo skin (Banko, Ashante-Akim).

Index, mid and ring fingers of each hand into loop; extend. With right hand pick up dorsal loop on left hand and bring over to form ulnar little finger and

radial thumb strings. Put right hand into loop taken off left hand, and let it become right wrist string. Repeat for right hand. With left index finger and thumb take hold of right little finger and thumb loop and lift off keeping them separate; rotate right hand away from body, so twisting the wrist loop anti-clockwise. Replace thumb and little finger loops. Repeat for left hand turning hand outwards and twisting string clockwise. Pick up right radial thumb string and place it on ulnar side of little finger. Pick up right ulnar little finger string and bring it over to radial side of thumb. Repeat for left hand. There is now a wrist string on each hand and two more strings crossing on the back of each hand. Pick up each little finger and thumb string and give one twist round corresponding finger. Bring each wrist string over the hand and put it in "first position" on same hand. Turn hand inwards and display with backs of hands facing (all fingers and thumbs into the \cap subtended by each palm).

35. "Chief going to Kumasi".

See Griffith (1925) No.14.

Navaho opening (index fingers and thumbs into figure of 8). Each thumb over ulnar thumb and radial index finger strings, and pick up ulnar index finger string. Each mid-finger over radial index finger string and pick up ulnar thumb string. Rotate hand away from body, pressing down with each thumb the part of ulnar index finger string immediately in front of it, thus letting the thumb loops all slip off. The figure is kept fairly loose and joggled.

This figure may be identical with one found in other places (e.g. Obogu) and called *Pire kœ* but I am not certain that they are the same. (cf. No.19).

36. "Yam thief". *Ntama sanee* -- Unpicking a piece of cloth (Obogu).

Also seen in several places where it was not named (e.g. Keta).
When constructing the figure, the long loop is held by the toe.

37. *Ɔwɔ̃ foro adobe* -- The snake climbing a *Raphia* palm.

See Griffith (1925) No.10.

38. A trick, no name is given to it.

Very common. Loop hanging down palmarly from left mid-finger. Left thumb over radial string and pick up ulnar string. Pick up radial thumb string in right hand and carry round the front of left hand and right round (anti-clockwise). Hold left mid-finger in mouth and pull off the string.
A similar trick is done on the leg, dependent or reversed twist.

39. "Double barrel" (Bomfa).

First position on right hand. Take up palmar string, draw out a little, twist 180° anti-clockwise to make loop and put this over right mid-finger. Pull out together the two strings crossing at base of right mid-finger. Pull out palmar string through the double loop. Through this loop again pull out double string. Put left hand from proximal side into this double loop. Put left mid-finger from distal side into right mid-finger loop, take it off and return. Keeping this loop in position bend down left mid-finger, so that it has three strings on either side of it; carry it towards right hand and up, thus picking up a string (the original right palmar wrist string. Holding hands apart fairly tight, allow first the distal, then the proximal, left mid-finger string to slip off. These they call the two discharges.

40. "First, first" (Bomfa)

Double loop over left wrist; right hand twice into ulnar loop from ulnar side, first on distal and then on proximal side. Left hand remains free when hands are separated and string is now on right wrist.

41. *Otuo* -- Gun (Pra River).

Double the loop, put both hands into it; extend. Hold both right hand loops on backs of four fingers (not thumb). Left hand proximal loop around wrist; distal as for right hand loops. With rotating movement of left hand (away from body) bring fingers down and through between loops, and then up, thus putting a twist in distal loop. Same for right hand, rotating away from body putting twist on double loop of right hand. Display by arching back the left hand and tightening the two parallel strings on wrists. Repeat twists on both hands; display again.

42. *Akorafoɔ nkɔmɔ* or *nkɔmɔ* (Pra River) -- [two co-wives talk].

Double loop around neck. Left thumb into these loops from below and extend; rotate hand 180° so that left thumb now points downwards. Bring left thumb over top of left hand, put in distal left thumb string; take off and return. Rotate left hand back to original position; put left little finger into right thumb loop from proximal side, and take off. Put right thumb through little finger loop from distal side, hooking ulnar thumb string, and return. Release left little finger and display by holding out taut with the thumbs.

43. *Gyae me to, gyae me nsa* -- Let go my bottom, let go my hand (Befoso). Hands into loop, ulnar string under radial string; make single Twi loop with it on right index finger, picking up proximal loop with left index finger. Wrist loops on to corresponding mid-fingers. Display by wagging right mid-finger.

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