ghana children at play

children songs and games

ivan annan

"THE NAMING OF THE CHILD"

SIDE 1

Band 1 TSE TSE KULE
(exercise song)

Band 2 TIMI TIMI NYAMALE
(counting game)

Band 3 PETE PETE
(play song)

Band 4 NAMO YELEAWUI — accident and aid
(Doctor song)

Band 5 ABAA EE
(the breath game)

Band 6 TAA TAA TEE
(child's song)

Band 7 JAMA
(The driver friend)

SIDE 2

Band 1 NUU KO HEH NYONTSELE MI
(man in the moon)

Band 2 N'SU FA MIO 'SU FA
(lullaby)

Band 3 OSIBI
(dance song)

Band 4 NAMO YE LEH AWUI # 2
(block game)

Band 5 SI SI MBOM
(fisherman's song0

Band 6 KWAA NI KWAA NI
(hide and seek)

Band 7 NYONTSE LE NE DZE
(moon song)

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

GHANA CHILDREN AT PLAY
Children's Songs and Games by Ivan Annan

INTRODUCTION by Dr. Amo Aku

Games constitute an integral part of traditional African life-style. There are different games for different age groups. There are games for old people, games for the young, and games for children. There are also games for women, for men, and games in which both sexes participate.

The incorporation of music into games is a way of encouraging the child to use the traditional African method of learning his musical skills through observation and active participation. While some of the song texts may be based on nonsense syllables, emphasizing only the rhythmic aspects of the game, others may be meaningful and didactic —teaching the child all that he needs to know about his responsibilities as an integral member of society. Like any other form of musical expression, such as story-telling, in traditional Africa, children's games are essentially a process of education as well as a medium through which the roles of the child are clearly defined; that is, his relationship to his community, peers, etc.

MY AFRICAN CHILDREN AT PLAY
by IVAN ANNAN

Play time among African children can be great fun; at the same time, it illustrates the constant contact with love, friendship, learning by games and many other interesting things. It is not entirely left with the children as the only participants; adult participation is also important, since it brings the two parties closer for moments of fun, as well as understanding the meaning the games and songs illustrate. The variations of words employed in this recording can be heard from children as one moves from one ethnic group to another, but the purpose and usage are often the same. As a multi-lingual society, it is difficult sometimes to find the exact words and meaning of one language to fit another language; but the learning experience and sheer joy one derives from a traditional game song is as beautiful as the game itself. Tonal quality is important, and with a little patience and careful listening, we shall achieve something worthy of doing, as we sing and play with my children at play time.
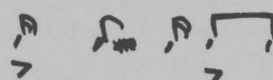
Translations

SONG #1

The text of this song is made up of nonsense syllables. The primary purpose here is for the group to respond to the rhythm of each phrase which, in terms of notation, is based on eighth notes, i.e., Tse Tse Ku Le
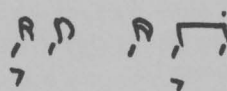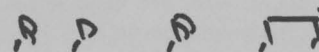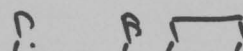
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Tse Tse Kofi Sa

Kofi Salanga

Langa Chi Langa

Kum Ade ne

Let us begin with a game of exercise. First we collect about ten people, then we form a circle. One of us will move into the middle of the circle to be our leader. We listen to the leader begin the song, Tse Tse Ku le, then we respond with the same song. We shall begin now with the tempo and the exercise in eight movements. Let us sing the whole song first, then we shall add the tempo and movements to it in the form of exercise.

Tse Tse Ku le (all repeat)
Tse Tse Kofi sa   "
Kofi Salanga   "
Langa chi langa   "
Kum Ade ne.

Our leader stands at ease, and we follow whatever he does, then we repeat what he has said.

Put hands on the shoulders and sing first song as we started. Stretch hands forward to sing the second part, bring hands back to shoulders at the third time, lift hands up as we get to four. Bring hands back to shoulders as one, stretch hands sideways as we count two, back to shoulders with three, hands down with four. Now we try the same song with different body movements. Stretch hands sideways to shoulder level as one, two swing hands forward, three lifts hands up, and four brings hands down at ease. Final

movements, hold your waist to one, bend forward with two, back to standing position at three, four sit on your heels bending knee.

SONG #2

Timi Timi Nyamaa Le
Nyamaa Le Moduah
Modua, Modua Saku atere te
Wo ya Ajenkuma Ke Osu Mankolen Koh

Timi Timi Nyamaa Le (nonsense syllables)
Nyamaa Le Moduah   "   "
Modua, Modua Saku atere te   "   "
    We are going to Ajenkuma and Osu Mankolen Koh

One back to standing position. Turn your body to the right at two, three swing your body to the left, four back to normal position and hands down. Is it not a lovely exercise? Yes, it is.

We can count and play with our feet in four as a group, and like the others, we select a leader to lead the game. Now we shall sit two side by side, facing our other two players. We shall first learn the song we are going to play with, before playing the game, right? Right.

"Timi Timi Nyamaa Le
Nyamaa Le Moduah
Moduah Moduah Saku atere te
Wo ya Ajenku ma Ke Osu Mankolen Koh."

Our leader counts with one hand in tempo, each knee, beginning with his knee from left to right; the leader stops with the end of the song holding the last knee. That knee is out of the game. We continue counting with the next immediate knee, get another knee out, until the last knee. The last knee is the winner, so we change leader now and continue, and continue.

SONG #3

(Call) Pete, Pete	Pete, Pete (nonsense syllables)
(Response) Senewa, de den de Senewa	Senewa, it is delicious Senewa
Wo na fre wo	Your mamma is calling for you
Wo si me be ye den	What does she want me for?
Wo si be didi	She is calling you to come for dinner
Eba na dziban na	What type of food?
Fufu 'na 'ben nkwan	Fufu and palm-nut soup
Pete, Pete	
Wo na fre wo	Your mamma is calling for you

"NAMO YE LEH AWUI" (WHO HURT...CALL THE DOCTOR)

It is funny writing about this particular one, because the doctor involved is my grand uncle of late, but nevertheless this is a good illustration of how topical, immediate and helpful play time can be to direct attention of the participants to learn about a doctor when hurt.

Now, we shall need a number of blocks (wooden blocks, small) for each person, and the idea is to pass the block from you to the next person on your right. This can easily be done if we sit down on very low stools or on the floor.

As usual, without music our life is dull so we must learn the song. Do we need a leader? YES.

Na mo Ye Le Awui...(leader)
Awui (all)
Na Mo Ye Le Awui (leader)
Awui. (all)
Aya tse doctor ee, A tse la aha mi ee
Doctor Bruce Eye mi tele ma
Agbene eye mi telema
Doctor Bruce eye mi telema.
Agbene eye mi telema.

The story about this can also be illustrated without loss of meaning, so this is it:

Who hurt, Jane or Jim (Repeat)
Let's call a doctor,
If we delay to call the doctor,
Doctor Bruce will charge more. (Repeat)

So time and again, we children remind ourselves at play time. First we sit in a low stool or on the floor, with our wooden block ready, we knock it down in front of the person on our right in tempo, so the blocks move through the circle. Make the tempo faster after the end of the song, until someone makes a mistake. That slow person is then removed from the game and we continue.

SONG #4

Already translated.

SONG #5

Abaa Ee...
Aya he shika odondo – She has bought gold and dondo
Aya he tama odondo ahey – She has bought tobacco and dondo
Abaa fa dondo ayee – Aba, take your dondo, Ayee

The above text is a classic example of a game song. It is made up of two languages – Ga and Akan. As indicated earlier, the primary importance is the rhythm of the text rather than the meaning.

If you wonder why we always form a circle, the answer is very simple – "The circle represents God's protection." So let's form another circle and see what we can do with our breath, holding a tone as long as we can, and see how beautiful this can be, as part of our game. We can use our names for this game, but here is an example of what we want to do. Let's have the circle first; one person comes into the circle again as our leader. When our leader cannot hold on any longer, he stops in front of one person. First the leader calls a name, and walks in front of us in the circle, so as an example, let's start with:

ABAA EE.............................
Breathless, we shall all respond with the chorus:
Aya he shika odondo,
Aya he tama odondo ahey
Abaa fa dondo ayee...

If we use the name of the next person, we call his or her name with the chorus, then our game continues.

Some African songs which children are very fond of can also be fun with you. I remember my young American friends, Kim Richardson and Sharon Spann, love to sing this particular song with me. Their expressions as they sing reminded me so much of my childhood days and the joy of sharing this song with my Lebanese and English little friends. Now that I am a little older, I want you, too, to sing with

me so I can also share your childhood, that beautiful lullaby all good children love, "N'su Fa Mio 'Su Fa."

SONG #6

Taa Taa Tee - Taa Taa Tee
Yee Yee Yee - Yee Yee Yee
Afi Aba - Afi is coming
Yaa Yaa John - Yaa Yaa.....

Games and play time among Africa children are also time to share the many responsibilities of their mother. In many instances, little girls enjoy playing the role of dear mother, sometimes wearing Mummy's shoes, hat and dresses, nursing their baby dolls, but we want to be good girls, to help Mummy as she works in the house. So we take little John or Alice, rocking John or Alice in our arms, and singing mumbling songs, very young children try to sing, often without words, but we add their names to the end so they know we are talking about them or playing with them. It's very simple and nice, so here we sing to little brother, sister or friend.

Taa Taa Tee,   Afi aba, Kaa to ama
Yee Yee Yee,   Yaa Yaa John (Alice).

Maybe if we sing this song and rock little Tom or Jane, we will be helping Mummy, and Tom or Jane will be sleeping. Wouldn't that be nice? Yes, it will be, so again and again we sing the same lullaby to see if our magic will work. "Jack, Where Are You? I have a surprise for you. " "I am here." Music and play time is like a child and his pet. A dog for the boy, and a cat for the girl. In Africa, where there are also cats and dogs, there are also Jacks and Jills. To hide and seek is fun just the same, whether it is played in Africa, England or America. But if we sing in an African language we will be learning old songs in new languages and that's the beauty of it all. So, Jack and Jill, ready?

SONG # 7

Jama - Already translated on tape.

SONG #8

Nuu Ko Yeh Nyontsele mi - There's a man in the moon
Nyontsele 'mi, Nyontsele mi - In the moon, in the
                    moon
Nuu ko yes Nyontsele mi - There's a man in the moon
N'atseo leh Ataa 'Dondo - He is called Ataa Dondo
Ni eyioh 'dondo - He plays the Dondo
N'atseo leh Ataa 'Dondo - And he is called Ataa Dondo

It is sometimes said that children love presents, but mostly good children are the ones who receive lasting presents. When we make promises like "I'll give you the moon, " it is true, but we cannot bring it down. It is true because all good children will love to own the moon. To this day, many adults wish upon the moon and stars, still believing it will bring luck. When I was a child, I always saw a man in the moon, who is in charge of all the presents, and any time I do a bad thing, I ask him to forgive me. There is a song dedicated to this man in the moon. How nice to sing to the man in the moon, shall we? Of course.

Nuu Ko yeh Nyontsele'mi (There is a man in the moon)
Nuu ko yeh nyontsele'mi, nyontsele'mi, nyontsele'mi
Nuu ko yeh nyontsele'mi, N'asteo leh Ataa 'Dondo
Ni eyioh 'dondo, Ni eyioh 'dondo
N'atseo leh Ataa 'dondo.

A simple melody, charming melody and a beautiful song, so let's sing again.

SONG #9

N'Su Fa Mio 'Su Fa - Translated on Tape
The River has caught me
The Little Child cries
The River has caught me

SONG #10

Osibi
Wo na re ko Alata ke dzi Gari
Osibi
Wogya re ko Alata ke dzi bombo

Osibi, osibi bombo
Your mamma is going to Alata (Nigeria) to get Gari
Osibi
Your daddy is going to Alata to get Gari
Osibi

SONG #11

Same as #4 - Already translated on tape.

SONG #12

Sisi mbom, ta bun mbom - On, on, the boat moves on
Eya ya dze wo ayaa - We work as a team
Eko enim ko ta bu na - Who want to move forward
Fan ko nitsiri - But the boat moves backward

SONG #13

Let's have one person stand up and put both hands over the eyes, then we shall hide. Each time he or she calls, we shall all reply in our hiding places. Now, the call is very simple and so is our response:

Kwaa Ni Kwaa Ni (call) - Blind play call
Moo Li Moo Li (respond, all) - Hiders respond
Nii Goeh Nye Tey (call) - Where are you (blind)
Wo Te Ablotsriri (respond) - We've gone abroad
Mii Ni Nye Yaa Fee (call) - What are you going to do?
Wo Yaa Shwek (respond) - We're going to play
Mii Ba ei (call) - I am coming
Yoo (respond and quiet) - All right.

Remember, the blindfold calls, and we in hiding respond, again. Whoever is caught in his or her hiding place, is our next blindfold. Isn't that exciting, to play in an African hide and seek. Marvelous.

SONG #14

Transportation is a necessity in all parts of the world, and children are very fond of buses and cars. A good driver or a friendly and careful driver is always a friend of children. Since children possess good memory and love the thrill of an enjoyable ride, they often create their own favourite image of drivers through their song and dance, and the song we are going to sing now is about a driver and their desire to travel only with him, come rain, come shine. Just a chorus, so we shall repeat:

Dza nke 'o te
Ma nu nu, Ma sha la   Ma Ye Nmaa, Nma Nu Nu
Janmah ee Dza Nke'Ote   Dzanma ee dza nke'ote.

SONG #15

Nyontsele ne dze - Under the bright moonlight
Wo ba Shweh - We shall play
Wo ba gbo - Till we are dead

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