

Ga Naming ceremony – Ade Sawyerr

I have borrowed liberally from the excellent book OMANYE ABA by A. Amartey

The GaDangme outdooring – kpodziemo ceremony places a new born child within the family and relations. It provides the opportunity for the family to welcome the child into the community.

It is held exactly a week after the child is born – it is essentially an 8 day ceremony and can only be held on the day of the week that the child is born and on no other day. You do not outdoor a child born on Tuesday on a Saturday for the sake of convenience. It has to be held on a Tuesday if the child is born on Tuesday or a Sunday if the child is born on a Saturday!

It is held at dawn before the sun rises, it is not about presenting a child to the sun it is about the welcoming the child at dawn – the dawn and in days gone by it was the dew that forms into water that is used for the ceremony often collected from the roof. The Ga phrase for an invitation to and outdooring is – **a tsebo bo no** – you are being called onto the dew.

It is usually held in the house of the paternal grandparent where all the family have access to and the grandparents are the most important personalities. The parents do not need to attend. It helps if they do.

The child is taken from the home of the mother early and transported to the house of the grandparent; this is usually done by an uncle of the child though the maternal family plays an integral role and are seated deep in yard of the house.

The ceremony has 16 parts and some are abridged for simplicity or compacted for purposes of convenience.

Four main people take part in the ceremony. The paternal grandfather, and two otsiame and the god father or mother depending on the gender of the child.

It is often times an all day ceremony, though it has to end by 6 pm as custom demands.

It is assumed that this is the first time the child is leaving the house after birth.

Order of the ceremony

1	Daatuu	Presentation of drinks
2	Shidzornor/gbeglemor	Ground blessing and asking for permission
3	Kponorgmei	Out dooring
4	Dzormor	Blessing
5	Daawoo	Refreshments
6	Gbeiwoo	Naming
7	Nikee	Gifts
8	Nikwemor	Accounting for the gifts
9	Samor. Shitee, Shidaa	Thanksgiving drinks
10	Yeigbewoo	Parting gifts for women's side
11	Ngmeidaa shishifortemor	Draining off the corn drink
12	Kposamo	Rubbing of hands
13	Daadaimo	Finishing the hard drink
14	Shidaa	Vote of thanks
15	Gbebimor ke gbetsornor	Directions for parting
16	Henorwormor	Rising

1 Presentation of drinks.

The paternal otsiame starts by presenting the drinks from the paternal grandparents to the maternal grandparents.

Agoo, fathers and mothers. Have not heard what the old man of the child are saying, they are saying that they have their **two** bottles of gin to help with the dribbling of the stranger that has come to us.

The maternal side it that acknowledges receipt. **eshe**

The maternal otsiame presents a pot of **nmedan**.

This time the old woman is the person who is mentioned. Again there is acknowledgement from the paternal side.

2 House blessing and asking of permission.

One gin bottle is opened and the paternal grandfather blesses the house. The libation is poured at the four corners of the house.

Agoo, niimei and naamei, today we are presenting the new addition to the family to tsotsobi, the last star, have some of this drink so that you

bless the land for us so that the stranger respects the earth. we know you may still be around and hope that we have not disturbed your sleep, please be mindful that what we are doing is something of glory so we ask for your blessing.

After the hard drink is used, water is also used at the same spot –
na nye aflame ni shwe no.

3 Outdooring.

The child is taken naked and given to the surrogate godfather or mother. The godparent holds the child up to the skies and puts them down on the ground. This happens three times. The person says these words.

Agoo fathers and mothers, what is today? Today is Monday, the Monday of the fathers and the Monday of the mothers. Today we are here to show this stranger to tsotsobi – to outdoor the child. A Gadangme child is circumspect to the extent that they only speak when the wind blows, you see no evil, you speak no evil, you do not tell lies and you do not steal, you have to work so that you can eat, respect your father and your mother.

The third time the child is left on the ground. The person steps over the child three times and gently uses the leg to touch the child's leg saying to the child to take after their character. The person then sprinkles cold water on the child till the child starts crying and then dips corn wine into the child's mouth with the saying that GaDangme children eat corn so have your first taste. It is significant that the person chosen must be a family member on paternal side with exemplary character for the child to follow. The water sprinkled on the child is to bless the child and the reason why we wait for the child to cry is that they have heard us and accepted to be one of us. The child is then given taken to the mother and need not be part of the rest of the ceremony

4 Blessing.

This is done three times by the grandfather or head of household on the paternal and the maternal and by the paternal otsiame. The blessing is done in the form of a libation with some variations. The words are essentially.

Agoo fathers and mothers
Strike let there be glory
May our stools be thick, may our brooms be thick
We meet in a circle
If we dig a well may we find water and if we drink may our joints be calmed
The stranger that has come amongst us,

May brightness be in front of them and the darkness behind
Long life to the father and to the mother
May he come to show respect to the word so that we relatives will be able to assist him
A Gadangme child is circumspect before they speak
You do not say everything you see
No telling of lies, no stealing
Respect your father and your mother
May she come and work and share with the family so that if she needs help the family can borrow to support them
May he live to see other siblings
May he come with black and go with white
And if there is someone with an evil mind about what is happening, Do we bless them? NO,
May they die of this evil

5 Refreshments.

The corn drink that is used for the blessing is now available for everyone to drink and other refreshments that are available are served to all. As custom dictates serving of drinks to male from paternal side before males from maternal side and then females from paternal side and then females from maternal side.

6 Naming

The otsiame go to the head and household who tells them the name of the child and gives them the second bottle of gin that is the naming drink. They pour some of the drink and announce to all the name of the child.

Agoo is the other otsiame there? Have you heard what the oldman has said, the old man says that the stranger that has come to join us now has a name, he is no longer called the stranger or it, or her or kwe.

The child is called Tettey and the child's nick name is Saashi.

The drink is poured and individually given to all assembled. With each person the name is given to them and then they drink with the saying.

May he come and respect the earth.

Gadangme children are named after their grandparents on the paternal side so there are two sets of names

The name given to the child is significant because the name places the child in the family. Gadangme have different types of names.

There are

Lineage names – determined by the division, quarter and house – ABE, ADO, AFO, AMA, AMAA, ASHI, AYI,BOI, KWATE, LAMI, LATE, NETE, OBLI, OKAI, TETE, YAOTE

Seniority names – first, second, third – TETTTEY, TETTEH, KWEI MENSAH, LAYEANAN, BOI ANUM, ASHAI NSIAH, ASHONG, BOTWE, AKRONG, BADU, ODIKO

Day names – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

Special names, for twins, orphans etc

Most people are named after their grandparents and the names are provided by the lineage. The grandfather provides the name. If a child is named directly after a living grandparent, the child's name is usually not called and another is substituted.

Explaining this will probably take a whole lecture.

Most of the sabla or nick names are of Twi extraction

7 Nikee Gifts

The gifts are an acknowledgement that the whole clan shows commitment towards the upkeep of the child till the child is able to start working.

The gifts start from the grandparents on the male side

The grand parents from the female side

Older grand uncles and aunts,

Uncles and aunts

Friends of the father and the mother

Agoo fathers and mothers

Is the otsiame there

Otsiame responds

Have you heard what Ataa Bokete and wife aunti ahinae from bortianor are saying? They are saying that they have lived with the mother of the child, they are friends but have now turned family with the birth of this child. They have to be in on the farm today but they just cannot stay away. They need to see the child and have come all the way to witness this event. They do not have much, but there is no way they can live with themselves if they do not come. So today they have come and with their own 10 guineas. They ask that the money is specifically used to buy shea butter to put on the back of the child to seal off any pores that are exposed during this harmattan period.

So what do we tell them

The response is

We thank them very much

When people start working, it is customary as part of the practice to share their first pay. My was in 1966 and I earned 11 cedis which I gave to my mother who duly distributed it amongst my uncles and aunties

8 Accounting for the gifts

The keeloi or otsiame go with appointed people to count the amounts donated. this is usually given to the couple. It is divided into three. The woman takes two thirds if the ceremony is for any reason held at her fathers house. Normally the man takes the two thirds or more. If he is not married to the woman he gives the bulk to the woman it becomes what we call sune shishi = something put under the pillow as a reward for the nine months that she carried the child and the dangers inherent in childbirth.

The total amount collected is never announced to all.

9 Thanksgiving drinks

drinks are provided to the men from the paternal side

10 Parting gifts for women

Gifts are provided to the women from the maternal side

soft drinks 12 bottles 6 if unmarried

beer 4 bottles 2 IF UNMARRIED

wine 2 BOTTLES 1 if unmarried

Money 1 shilling sixpence if unmarried

11 Draining off the corn drink

Performed by the otsiame from both the male and female sides.

They have to drink all that is left of the nmeda and finish it off. The

significance of this is that the ceremony is closely coming to an end.

There is the blessing of the child once again

12 Rubbing of hands –

The kposamo action involves rubbing of palms and bringing the hands over the shoulders three times, left right and then left.

The otsiame tells all assembled that the old man will say a few words

Agoo, strike let glory surround us

Let us look after it

If we pour the water on ourselves may our joints be calmed

Let the child stay

The intriguing issue is that this is said mainly in twi.

Kotoko minsheso

Owia akose

Bedzina, bedina

13 Finishing of the hard drink

They then embrace each other telling all that the work that they have been asked to do is at an end.

The otsiame embrace and then each says

Noko fioo le ni

Onukpai le keha mile edze miden

the other congratulates him and says

Oku nsa mo

This signifies the beginning of the end of the ceremony

14 Vote of thanks

It is the old man who provides the vote of thanks.

Ago fathers and mothers – le the child come and stay

Let the another child come and meet this child and let the child respect the earth

Thanks very much and if the cock crows tomorrow morning let it be a reminder that we are thanking you for attending this ceremony

15 Directions for parting

from maternal otsiame

is the otsiame there? Have you heard what the old lady is saying? She says that we are ready to leave so we are looking at the oldman to show us the way

from paternal

is otsiame there. Have you heard what the oldman is saying? He is saying that if you go towards this direction you will probably end up in the toilets and where no one who does not leave in this house should wander, but if you do towards the opposite direction you are well on your way home

16 Rising

from Nuumo

Agoo tswa, tswa tswa omanyaba tswa tswa omanyaba
tswa ornanye aba

Ataamei ke Awomei Mini eshwe wo woo wole wohewoi ano

Three times