

## Greetings from Ghana #37

I will see your culture. And raise you two eyebrows

About the time I think I have gotten used to Ghanaian culture and there will be few if no surprises left, I run into things I would have never considered.

On the pleasant surprise side, Ghanaians have proverbs. I guess every culture does, but here it takes on a whole new element. Proverbs are often similar. In Latin you might say: *"Verbum sat sapienti est."* In English you would say, *"A word to the wise is enough."* In Twi (chee), the proverb is: *"Obanyansofoo yebu no be, yennka no asem"* which literally translates to, *"The wise is spoken to in proverbs, not plain language."*

Ghanaians have a dislike of direct confrontation and direct language. One way to say things but not have it appear as strongly is to do it through proverbs. In the U.S. if someone asks us about whether they should chance something we would say, *"Nothing ventured. Nothing gained."* Ghanaians say: *"Anomaa antu a, obua da."* ("If a bird does not fly, it goes to bed hungry.")

Now imagine a conversation with two Ghanaians, each trying to make a point by using indirect language and you have Abebuo, the highly prized ability to argue by using proverbs. Two contestants spar back and forth with proverbs until one is bested. To give you just a flavor of it, to be proper one might counter a statement: *"Kwaterakwa se obema wo ntoma a tie ne din."* Literally: *"If a naked man promises you a cloth, listen to his name."* Naked people have no clothes and the naked man cannot give what he does not have. So much nicer than saying, *"He's a liar."*

How many proverbs can you name? Stanford University has a publication of 3600 Ghanaian proverbs. You begin to see how knowledge of proverbs can be considered an admired trait. And considering my limited knowledge now and what I can imagine myself learning in the future, if I am ever challenged by someone with even a smidgen of that knowledge . . . I'll just concede.



NPP Presidential Primary: Some NPP delegates confirm receiving money to vote for candidates

The national election will be held next year and the current political party had their convention to decide their candidates. The TV news reported that the four contenders met with the 1500-and-some delegates. The current Vice-President gave each of them an envelope with 400 cedis (\$33.62). The second contender gave each an envelope with 300 cedis (\$25.22). The national organization, The New Patriot's Party, (NPP) gave each an envelope with 75 cedis (\$6.30). Some delegates complained to the cameraman that they had heard of some delegates

getting 1000 to 1500 cedis, but they shrugged their shoulders and said they would take what they could get.

According to the people interviewed, the money given was not enough to sway their allegiance from their chosen candidate, but the Vice-President won the position of the party's candidate for president.

In other news, having gotten the \$3Billion dollar bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilize their government, the NPP touted their resourcefulness to correct Ghana's economic woes. It was announced this week that the government is asking the Cocoa Board to give them \$400,000,000 so they can make a payment to the IMF.

The government is having a problem getting natural gas from the east side of the country to the west side of the country to the electrical power generation companies. The power companies are saying that they will start rolling blackouts to cover the lack of fuel. They say they will stay at full power if the government's Ministry of Mines and Power pays their back bills. The Ministry set up agreements with independent providers and agreed to pay them a set amount even if the providers did not provide that level of power. So on a regular day-to-day the government is obligated to pay for power they are not getting.

Couple this with the Electric Company of Ghana - the government run subsidy - has just recently started demanding that hospitals, colleges, and government institutions start paying their overdue bills, many in the millions of dollars and you begin to see the morass of lies and explanations before the public.

When considering Ghana and the government, one can think of the president's promise to a community in the north to give them a bridge for a culvert to replace the one lane span currently there. And they delivered. All of the pieces. And stacked them on the side of the road. Where they have been since. But hey, a promise made is a promise kept.



I would hate for them to provide a recreation area complete with trampoline.