

Kasakoa: Akan Idioms & Euphemisms

Source: adinkrasymbols.org

Being polite and indirect is a hallmark of Akan communication. [Proverbs](#) and kasakoa, that is, idiomatic expressions and euphemisms are an effective tool for achieving that.

Below is a collection of *kasakoa* spanning a wide range of situations including death, eating, impotence, menstruation, and others.

For each expression, we have the correct Twi orthography below the anglicized orthography which is included to aid searching as most keyboards do not have the Twi letters, 'ɛ' (pronounced like the 'e' in 'get') and 'ɔ' (pronounced like the 'o' in 'orange').

Below are the expressions with their literal and figurative meanings as well as other remarks in English.

List of Akan Idiomatic Expressions and Euphemisms

Expression	Literal meaning	Figurative meaning and comments
N'aso ye den N'aso yɛ den	His ear is hard	He is stubborn or disobedient. That is, he won't obey instructions from parents, teachers or a higher authority like the government or God.
Ne nsa ware Ne nsa ware	His hand is long	He is a thief
N'ano ye toro N'ano yɛ toro	His mouth is slippery	He cannot keep a secret
Twe n'aso Twe n'aso	Pull his ear	Punish him. Thus, the Twi word for "punishment" is "asotweɛ" (Asante) or "asotwe" (Akuapem)
Aban agye ne tuo Aban agye ne tuo	The government has seized his gun	He is impotent

Waka nkyene agu Waka nkyene agu	He has spilled salt	He has died
Wabu ne nsa Wabu ne nsa	She has broken her arm	She has menstruated
N'ani awu N'ani awu	His eye has died	He is ashamed or embarrassed. It can also mean he has been put to shame or he has been embarrassed.
Mia w'ani Mia w'ani	Squeeze your eyes shut	Do your best. The idea here is to give your all even despite the pain or difficulty. The pain may be so agonising as to make you groan and squeeze your eyes shut but press on regardless.
Ne bowere bu a, opam Ne bowere bu a, ɔpam	When his nail breaks away, he sews it back	He is stingy. The idea of this expression is that this person is so stingy that he cannot stand losing even trivial things like an overgrown nail.