

## Chapter II–16: *The Fire Festival*

As we have taken the talks of chieftaincy and history to their extent, we are going to enter the talk of how we Dagbamba follow the months and celebrate festivals. And the talk of festivals also joins the work of drumming. We the drummers of the Dagbamba beat drums mostly in the festival months, because it is in the festival months that we Dagbamba perform funerals, and we marry, and we give chieftaincy to people. And so in Dagbon here, the work drummers do in certain months is very great. Sometimes it will come to a festival time and the funerals will be many, and we have to divide each group into many groups so that they go to all the funeral houses. Weddings too, it is the same thing: we can receive cola from many different houses, and we will divide ourselves and go. And so there are some months which have got many things.

From the time when we began this work, I have been telling you that talks enter one another. When I talked to you about how we Dagbamba greet one another, I also told you that the talk of greetings enters the talk of festivals. How we greet one another in Dagbon is a big talk, and that is why I told you something about it from the beginning of this work. If I want, I could say that you could take the talk of greetings and place it inside the talk of festivals. Of you joined that talk there, it would fall nicely. And the talk of greetings also enters the talk of chieftaincy. And I think that, truly, as for the talk festivals, it should follow the talk of chiefs. The talk of chiefs should come first to that someone hearing it will understand the respect of festivals. And where there is a chief, you know, a drummer will be there. And so that is it.

Truly, as for the festivals, it is God who has put them down like that, because the festivals follow the months. Whether it is the Guinea Fowl festival, or Ramadan, or Konyuri Chuyu, or Damba, or Chimsi Chuyu, or the Fire Festival, it is all from God. And how a festival happens and it enters into chieftaincy talks, and the reason why they will say that, “Tomorrow is the festival”: the presence of the chief is going to make it strong. And the one that will make a drummer to be there, too, if it is taking it that tomorrow is going to be the festival, then a drummer has to go to a chief’s house today. This drummer who is going to the chief’s house to beat the drum will let people know that tomorrow is the festival. And the next day, a drummer will go there again and go and wake up Punyiysili. If somebody didn’t know that today is the festival, because of the drumming and praising, people will get to know.

If it is Chimsi Festival, in the night, you the drummers will go in the night and sit down and beat Samban’ luja. In the morning, the chief will come to the

mosque, and you the drummers will follow him there, and he will pray, and then you will follow him and lead him to his house. And if it is Konyuri Chuyu, too, you will beat Samban' luḡa, and daybreak, when the chief is going to pray again, he will ride a horse. He doesn't always ride a horse; sometimes he will only go and pray. But when they finish the prayers, he will sit on a horse. If his elders have horses, they will all ride and follow him. And all of you will follow. If it is the Guinea Fowl Festival, as for that one, you don't go to pray general prayers, and there is nothing like sitting to beat Samban' luḡa. The drummers will only come and wake up Punyiḡsili. If it is Damba, its work on the part of drumming is more than all of them, and I cannot count all of it here. And if it is Buyim, the Fire Festival too has no Samban' luḡa. You will wake up Punyiḡsili, and if you want, you will go around to houses. And when night time comes, the drummers will go to the chief's house, and it is the chief himself who will come out and light fire, and he will go a small distance, and the drummers will follow him. He will throw away the fire, and he will turn back again. And the drummers who will be following the young people and be beating, they are there. When day breaks, you will greet one another, "Our new year, May God send us to the next year's coming, and we will greet one another again." It is all because you have a white heart. That is the way it is. And all of these festivals are following the months.

In Dagbon, each month has got its name. In the olden days, we Dagbamba were only counting "today" and then "daybreak." Yesterday and another daybreak, we would count it "last two days." After tomorrow and not far, we would say, "three days." Even I can tell you that the Frafras still do not have words for calling the months. The only thing they say is "the moon comes and passes and the moon comes and stands." It is just because the Frafras did not get someone who could open their eyes and show them how to call the month's name and the day's name. And so how they are doing it is how we were doing it in the olden days. It was during the time of Naa Zanjina that we Dagbamba were able to get particular names for all the months, because it was Naa Zanjina who opened our eyes. And I can say that every tribe, if they are black and they are in Dagbon here, they are following us in all these things, and it is the Dagbamba who are leading them in the eye-opening.

The first month is Buyim, that is, "fire," and that month we celebrate the Buyim Festival, or the Fire Festival. After Buyim is Dambabilaa, and then it is Damba, when we celebrate the Damba Festival. After the Damba moon is Gaambanda, and the next one is Bandacheena, and the one following is Kpinibilaa. And the month which follows is Kpini; that is when we celebrate the Kpini Festival, or Guinea Fowl Festival, and we also call it the Food Festival. The one following is Noloribilaa, and after that is Nolori, the "mouth-tying" month;

that is the month of fasting — Ramadan. When the Ramadan moon dies, it is Konyuri Chuyu, the “water-drinking festival” month, and we celebrate the Water-Drinking Festival because the fasting is finished; and we also call it the Praying Festival. And those who are following the Arabs call it the Eid’ al-Fitr. The month following Konyuri Chuyu is Chimsibilaa, and the last month is Chimsi, and we pray to God and sacrifice animals to celebrate the Chimsi Festival, and that is the month when those who are going to pray at Mecca will go. That is twelve months, and the next one coming is the Buyim month again.

How it is, and how the Arabs also know it, we know that the twelve months is one year. And as our months follow the moon, the year is changing. It’s not like your months: your months don’t change. If you follow it, you will see that in our year, six of the months will fall on thirty days, and the other six will be twenty-nine days. And so if you measure our year and your year, our year will be short. As we follow the months and celebrate our festivals, sometimes it happens that we will be dancing Damba during the dry season, and other times we will be dancing Damba in the rainy season. The time I was at Voggo and I was having a little sense, they were farming corn just outside the house, and when the people were accompanying the Damba home, they pushed down and stepped on some of the corn. When we were dancing the Damba during the rainy season, and it came to fall in the dry season again, it took more than twenty to thirty years. And again, when I was young, it happened that we were dancing the Fire Festival, and the rain came and disturbed us, and we were throwing the fire and stepping on wet corn. And so all of it, it goes backwards and comes to meet again. This is how our festivals move. How I have seen it, it will be about thirty of your years for it to go round. As we are following the Arabs, our months are the same as theirs. When I went to Mecca, and we were at Medina, they told us that we hadn’t come during the cold season, and they told us that it changes. And so it’s the same at Mecca. It can’t come and our months will be different from the Arabs. The only thing is that they lead us by one day, because if their moon comes and stands today, they will count it as the first day; but for us, if the moon comes and stands today, we will count tomorrow as the first day of the moon. That is how it is, but the months are the same.

Buyim is the oldest of the months. The Fire Festival has got many talks, and it has more things than something like the Guinea Fowl Festival or the Chimsi Festival. We Dagbamba, if we are lucky to live from Fire Festival to Fire Festival, that is the end of the year and that is the beginning of the year, and so we say, “We have kept long.” With us Dagbamba, the Fire Festival is our New Year. I think it is the same thing on the part of the Arabs, because I hear from those who read the Holy Qur’an that the end of their year comes like the Buyim month. How we

drummers know the Fire Festival, it is from the maalams. The maalams have said that during the time of the Prophet Nuhu, there were many bad people. And God told the Prophet Nuhu that he should tell the people to pray. And Prophet Nuhu told the people that God told him to tell us to pray. And he did all he could, and they were not praying. And Prophet Nuhu told God, "I have tried all I can do, but they have refused that they will not pray." And when Prophet Nuhu told God that they have refused, God told him to get a boat. The matches with the picture of the canoe on the box, it was inside that type of thing that Prophet Nuhu was. And actually, that canoe was called the ark, the ark of Noah. And God told Prophet Nuhu to gather those who agreed to pray and put them inside the canoe. And he should gather animals and put them inside the canoe. And those who did not agree to pray, the Prophet Nuhu should leave them. And He God would show them sense. And God sent rain, and the rain became a sea, and the sea ate the whole world. And Prophet Nuhu and the people were inside the canoe on the water, and the water ran back, and Prophet Nuhu removed doves, and sent them to come and see whether the land was dry. And the doves came back and told Prophet Nuhu that the land was dry, and at that time the Prophet Nuhu took us from the sea to bring us to the land. And when they landed, they made fire. And they came out onto the land and thanked God, and they made food and they greeted one another. That was on the ninth day of the Fire Festival month. That is how the maalams have talked about it. And so the time the prophet Nuhu was there, when he got down from the boat, that was the ninth day of the Buyim festival, and the Muslims take it like that. And it is not only in Dagbon here that Muslims celebrate the Fire Festival.

And as I am telling you that our festivals come from the Arabs, I want you to look at this talk. I want to talk to you about the starting of our festivals. As the Muslim religion has come to us, it isn't all of us who are following it. Those we call the typical Dagbamba, they also have their gods they beg. And how we are celebrating our festivals, you will see that we are not completely holding them in a Muslim way. On the part of the Muslim side, the talks of how our festivals started is very, very deep on the part of the prophets. You yourself know that from the time of the Prophet Nuhu coming up to now, that time is very, very far. And truly, you know that we Dagbamba, what we have and what we do first began from the hands of the Arabs. And so we get something from the Arabs before we also get something of our own and mix it with that thing. I think that this Buyim was the first thing to come into Dagbon, and so it was the Fire Festival that came here before the other festivals.

But if you follow it, you will see that the Fire Festival is the traditional festival on the part of the typical Dagbamba, because we Muslims greet each other

“Our new year” at every festival, but the typical Dagbamba don’t look at the other months like that. They don’t strengthen the strength of any month more than Buyim. I think in my heart that the Fire Festival month is the first month in Dagbon. The rest of the moons which come and we celebrate the other festivals, it was Naa Zanjina who brought them. But if you look at how we celebrate the Fire Festival, you will think that in the olden days when the Muslim religion was not here, we were celebrating the Fire Festival, and it was the only festival we were celebrating. It was the time the Muslims came to Dagbon here that we got to know Damba, Chimsi, and the others. And so the Fire Festival is an old talk in Dagbon here. On the Fire Festival day, no one goes anywhere. Even the typical Dagbamba, they don’t refuse anything, but on that day, none of them goes to the farm, because the Fire Festival is a very big thing for them.

In the Fire Festival, on the ninth day, they take torches and throw fire into the bush. And after they throw the fire in the night, then the next day in the morning the maalams are going to open a talisman. The maalams are going to sit down, open this talisman, and tell what is going to happen in this very particular year, if there is going to be no birth, or much food. In the village of somebody like the Tolon-Naa or the Nanton-Naa, they all gather in the morning at the chief’s house and listen to what the maalams are coming to read out of the talisman. And it is another festival day, and I can say that now as we are sitting in Dagbon here, it is the biggest thing more than the throwing of the fire itself. And so truly, we know the Fire Festival to be standing on the part of the Muslim religion, but if you look at the Fire Festival, and you look at the work people are doing inside it, you see that the typical Dagbamba are very strong inside of it, and the typical Dagbamba do a lot of work during the Fire Festival month.

And so I want to talk to you about the starting of these festivals. Truly, I can say that as I am sitting, I don’t know how the Fire Festival started. I am telling you what I have heard on the Muslim part, and not on the Dagbamba side. Do you see the typical Dagbamba? At times they compare their things with those things that come from the Muslims. As for the person called a Dagbana, at times he will take somebody’s thing and take it to be his, and he will take something of his own and say that that is it. And so to me, to make things short, I understand the Fire Festival on the part of the Muslims, but the typical Dagbamba have some things that are different from the Muslim side, and that is what they take to celebrate it. There are people who understand it on the part of the Dagbamba, that it is from Naa Gbewaa. I have heard something about taking fire to look for a lost child, but I can tell you that drummers don’t talk about it like that. And so let’s take it that what I know about the typical Dagbamba is that they take the Fire Festival to be theirs, and they celebrate it, and they have some talks behind it. But I have not asked, and so I don’t know what it is.

I think you remember one time when we were talking to Nyologu Lun-Naa Issahaku, the mɔylo singer, and he told us he heard that the Fire Festival was there before the Muslims came. He said it hasn't got anything to do with Islam. It was there in the olden days. He said that even in Kumtili's time, it was there. And he said he heard a drummer say that the time Ɔirli killed Fɔyɔ, it was the last day before the Fire Festival that Fɔyɔ was killed. Some talk like that, you know already that it can happen that a drummer will add a detail like that to make his talk nice. And Issahaku also said that he didn't know whether or not the drummer who said that was only making the story nice, but he said that as far as what he knew, the part that the maalam play in the Fire Festival, when they read from their papers and they tie a talisman, he said that it was not there. As you have heard Issahaku's talk, you were also sitting with me when we asked Alhassan Kpema from Kumbungu and Sang Sampahi-Naa Ibrahim Alhassan, and they said that Buyim is from the Muslims, but the pagans have taken it to be theirs. And so you should know that the ideas of two different people will not be the same.

And so as for truth, it is just true. Something that you have not heard, if you want to use your imagination and talk about it, sometimes you will put lies inside. But if you really hear it and you want to talk, you can talk to your extent. How my brother Alhassan Kpema talked about it on the part of the Prophet Nuhu, you were with me in the room and you asked me this talk before we called him from outside. When we called him, and if I had been sitting outside, you might think that I told him to come and talk about the Muslim part. But I was inside with you, and you heard what he was saying: he also said that he hasn't heard anything about Buyim coming from the typical Dagbamba. And so the drummer whom Nyologu Lun-Naa mentioned, I don't see that his talk should be inside our talk of our customs, because it is not something that is important inside the talk of Buyim. It does not fit, and if you join it, it will mix up the talks. And so I am only taking it as an example. Truly, there are some people who only want to show that they know much about the Fire Festival or about drumming. But we drummers are not typical Dagbamba, and we don't mix with them all the time. If you go to the typical Dagbamba, maybe you would find out things that are different from what we have been talking. And so sometimes a typical Dagbamba may have some talk to tell you about the Fire Festival, and it won't be same as the talk of a maalam or a drummer. As it is, there is no quarrel about it. As for the Buyim Festival, truly, it comes from the Muslim religion, and the Dagbamba people understand that way.

And the way the typical Dagbamba collected it and took it that, as for them, if that day comes, it is a red eyes' day, and that is how they can enjoy it. They will repair their gods, and they will put their medicines on their waists and arms, and they will carry weapons and show their strength, that what they want to do, they

will do it. But I can say that any story about the Fire Festival and Naa Gbewaa's time, nobody has ever come to sit with me and talk about that. And I haven't heard that the tindanas or the typical Dagbamba were doing anything like that. I told you that even when the Dagbamba came here, the typical Dagbamba were beating Ɯem and going and repairing their gods. Even up to today, they are still doing it. But that way is different from the Fire Festival. I have never heard that they were doing anything with fire. And I haven't heard about any chief who brought fire into Dagbon. Before the white men came to Dagbon and electricity came here, if there is darkness and you are going, whether you are entering the bush or even whether you want to walk inside the town, you will tie grass and put fire on it and hold it up.

And so if you are going into this talk, you can find much thinking inside it. As for talk, that is how it is. If you are looking for a different talk from what you are holding, you will think two ways about it. And some people may tell you lies. That is why Dagbamba say that if you eat food in a house with a lot of witches, you will not know who killed you. You're eating here and you're eating there. If it happened that food kills you, and you die, you won't have anyone to accuse. And so this talk is like that. An old thing is already there, and you go to join it to another thing. You won't know which one is the right one. And so as for me, I'm standing at the point that the Fire Festival came from the Muslims on the part of Prophet Nuhu, and it came to us, and we also took it and put it inside our custom.

Do you see the Damba Festival? We celebrate the Damba Festival because it was on the Damba festival day that they gave birth to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. If you come to me and you ask, I will tell you that the Damba started from the Muslim's way. And it came here and the chiefs collected it to be theirs. And now there is something behind it on the part of chieftaincy. And I want you to take it into your hands and be asking maalams about the starting of the Damba Festival from the birthday of the Holy Prophet. There are even some maalams who don't take that to be true, and they will challenge it. And so even the maalams of Dagbon, at times there is something that is true, and they don't take it to be serious. But to me, the true starting of the Damba was from the Muslims. And so what you know about something depends on the one who is teaching you.

And so I'm telling you that as for the Buyim Festival, the typical Dagbamba take it to be theirs. If the Buyim Festival day comes, you will see that every typical Dagbamba is slaughtering chickens and making sacrifices. And when the day of the festival comes, you will see maalams opening their papers to see what is going to happen in that year. The throwing of the fire and the sacrifices to medicine, the typical Dagbamba take all that to be theirs, and so you can see that they have something to support their understanding of the festival. And their talk

behind it is also supporting them. And so the way the typical Dagbamba talk about it, there is no need to correct them or add something to their talk. The one who taught them is not the same as the one who taught me. It's like medicine. Maybe somebody will give you medicine and tell you its meaning, and somebody will give me and tell me another meaning. As it is, you have your medicine and I have my medicine: how are we going to quarrel? If somebody teaches you how to make your medicine, and if the one who gave me that medicine didn't teach me anything about it, maybe you will teach me how a Muslim is going to make it. And I will take it like that. And so this talk resembles that.

And what I have also heard: if you follow very well those who are staying here, you will get to know that when the Dagbamba came, in the olden days, or a very long time ago, maybe some of us knew something about the Muslim religion. Whatever happens, you might think that the time we got up from Gbamba and were coming here, since we are from the Hausa people, at least there may have been some people among us who knew something about the Muslim religion. But when things were changing, some people left being Muslims, but they still do some things in the Muslim way. I don't want to confuse you. Today, as I am drummer, some of my children are not playing the drum. Can I arrest anybody for that? And so if I give birth to a child, and the child refuses to pray, I can't do anything to the child. And so I am talking to you about what I know, but I can also say that no one can know whether or not the Dagbamba who came here might have known something about the Muslim religion. As it is, it is not an argument. We drummers know that it was Naa Zanjina who brought maalam from the Hausa land to teach us more about the Muslim religion, and that is why we say Naa Zanjina lit a lantern and opened the eyes of Dagbon. If the Muslim religion were already here, I don't think Naa Zanjina would have had to bring maalam from the Hausa land. And so to me, if you are going to holding a talk, it is good if the talk is something you have actually learned. And if it is on the part of what we have learned, when the Dagbamba first came, they were not many, and they were pagans, and the people they met were pagans who were following the buya, the gods. And if some of them were Muslim, they left the Muslim religion. And they came to mix with the ones we call the typical Dagbamba. In this our Dagbon, a Muslim will come out from the hands of a pagan, and a pagan will come out from the hands of a Muslim. This is how it is. I am not talking to what my heart wants. I can only tell you that this is how I understand it.

And so to me, the Buyim began from the time of the Prophet Nuhu, and in the olden days, when the Dagbamba collected it, they took it to be theirs. But the maalam haven't taken it like that. There are many towns, after they throw the fire, they go to the chief's house and pray. And all Dagbamba do the throwing of



the fire, and on the next day, the tenth day of the month, the maalams come and open their papers and read. If the maalams didn't know anything about the Fire Festival, they wouldn't be coming to do that. The maalams have said that if you go to any place where they are holding the Muslim religion, they have some things they do in the Buyim month. And so you should get to know that this thing touches the maalams. And so whatever the Dagbamba are doing touches the maalams, and it doesn't show that it's from the Dagbamba and not the maalams. And what I am showing you is that the ways of the Muslims and the Dagbamba touch one another. Sometimes something will come from the Muslims, and the Dagbamba will take it to be theirs, and they will add something of theirs to it. And they will take it like that to be celebrating it.

Look at the Guinea Fowl Festival and how we celebrate it. You know that the story behind the Guinea Fowl Festival is very clear on the part of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. But look at how we celebrate the Guinea Fowl Festival: you remove all the feathers of a guinea fowl, and you get a stick and start whipping it, and you will be telling the guinea fowl, "You! You refused to give water to God's child, the Holy Prophet Muhammad." And you will be whipping the guinea fowl and abusing it before you slaughter it. Do you think maalams do this? Maalams don't have anything or any work to do inside the Guinea Fowl Festival. But everybody, including the typical Dagbamba, knows that the Guinea Fowl Festival came from the Muslim religion.

I want you to use your sense and think. As you have been here when we are celebrating the Chimsi Festival, is it only Muslims who celebrate it? You see the Kambonsis beating their drums on festival days: are the festivals theirs? And again, since you have been coming to Ghana, and you have been staying in the South with the Ashantis and the Gas and the Ewes, you know that their strongest festival is Christmas. All the other things they are doing are just dances and playing, and they are not up to the Christmas. But they have their particular time for the Christmas, and they are celebrating it seriously. And I can tell you that there are many people here in the North who take it that it is the Ashantis who brought Christmas. But Christmas came from you the white people. Without the white people, the Ashantis, Gas and Ewes wouldn't know anything about Christmas.

And so to me, the prophet Nuhu was the one who started the Buyim Festival. I can say that because it is the maalams who know the years. As they know the years, they know the number of prophets who were in the world, and after throwing the fire, they will show the work each prophet did. And you already know that before the Muslim religion came here, the Dagbamba didn't even know how to count the months of the year. We have taken the Fire Festival

as the work of the local Dagbamba, but it is the maalams who brought it. The time the maalams entered Dagbon, it's a long time ago. And if not that, the Dagbamba went to the Hausa land and heard, and that time too is far. After the water which drowned the people of the prophet Nuhu, a new generation came again. And was that time not far from today? And so truly, if you take everything into your hands and weigh it, you will get to know that the time the prophet Nuhu was there is very far from the time Naa Gbewaa was there. And from Naa Gbewaa up to today is also far. If you say that the Buyim festival came from Naa Gbewaa, and it is different, you should also know that the Prophet Nuhu was there before Naa Gbewaa came. And there were people before the Prophet Nuhu also came out. Even in Dagbon here, if you see the gods of this our land, you will know that they also started long ago in the olden days, before the time of the Prophet Nuhu. And we the Dagbamba take them to be ours, and they do work for us. And so if somebody tells you that as he is doing something, it is his, you don't have to think that he is the actual person who started that thing. And so to me, the Buyim month is a very old month. And we drummers know the Buyim Festival because of the Muslim religion, and I believe that the Muslims brought it. Even if the local Dagbamba do the Buyim Festival, it is that they have seen it from the maalams. And so what I have heard is that the Buyim Festival comes on the part of the prophet Nuhu.

And truly, others have their ideas about how it started. And so how I am talking to you, I am talking to you on the part of what I know. I wasn't taught about the Buyim Festival on the part of the typical Dagbamba. I have heard someone talking about it, but I didn't mind it, and I can't sit down and tell you about it on their part. I can only tell you what I know on the part of the prophet Nuhu. And what someone says on the part of the typical Dagbamba, I cannot say that it is lies, because to him, I believe that it is true to him. It is good if you want to talk about something, you know what is holding that thing. If you go and you ask like that, and you get a true talk about it, you can take it to join this one. And if you don't go and ask, it doesn't matter. What I am telling you about the Prophet Nuhu, on the part of our drumming work, there is no argument about it. And if you want to find someone who knows about it on the part of the typical Dagbamba, then you can go and hear what he has to tell you. And I won't have any corrections to make inside his talk. We drummers haven't talked about anything on that side, and if we enter and change it, then it would be we who are making the mistake. I am not the only person who has sense. And somebody brings his sense, and I come to correct it, then it means that I haven't done the right thing. It is only on the part of drumming that I can know whether something is sitting correctly or it is twisted. If it is something that is inside our drumming, as for that, I can make corrections.

Do you see how we are beating our drumming? In the very, very deep and olden days, that was when our drumming started. It was long ago that drumming started. I told you that Naa Nyaysi gave birth to Bizuŋ, and Bizuŋ's mother died. And they sewed a drum for Bizuŋ. Any person who came to greet the Yaa-Naa got to know that the Yaa-Naa liked this child very much, and they were getting money and giving him, and any woman who cooked would also cut food for him, and the women would tell him to get the food and eat, and beat the drums so that they would hear it. That was what created all of us. And now, as we are taking this drumming to be ours, and we say that we are using it in praising chiefs, and we have many talks inside it: but are we the ones who created this drum?

Those of us who have asked, what we have heard is that it was a Guruma man who was first making this drum. The first time they were sewing a kind of drum called *giŋgayinyoyu*. And as for the one who brought the real luŋa, we have heard of a Guruma man, that he was the one carving the drum itself, and he carved the drum and we got to know how to carve it. We only knew of the *giŋgayinyoyu*: this was what they sewed and they were beating it. And some people say that when this Guruma man came, he carved the drum out of wood, and we got to know that it is wood we can use to carve a drum. Haven't I told you this? I want you to know that truly, there are many people who don't know anything about this. And I can tell you that there are many people who are sure that it was we who started the carving, too.

And so I want you to know that before you get something and take it to be yours, you will follow somebody to get it. If you bring the thing to your house, you can get something of your own to add to that thing and stand for it. There is nobody who ever creates his own thing unless he sees somebody doing something, and then he will take what he saw and go and create something different or something that looks like it. If he wants, he will say that he started it, or that it's for him.

I want to give you some examples. Do you see this Muslim wedding we call *amaliya*. It is for some people, and it is very serious to us. And now it is standing that it is for us. But those who haven't taken it yet don't know what it is. Do you see the Frafras? Today, the Frafras don't know what we call *amaliya*, the Muslim wedding. But in our Dagbon here, whether you have read the Holy Qur'an or you haven't read the Holy Qur'an, if you are someone who prays, you can do the Muslim wedding. But if you look at it, you can see that this Muslim wedding is only for those who have read the Holy Qur'an. They are the ones who are supposed to perform the wedding in that way. But now everyone who prays is taking it to be his.

And we have come to hold another habit again on the part of all the drumming we do for our dances. You see the Kusasis: they are not Dagbamba,

and they don't have their own lusi-beaters. But they do our playing, and some of us drummers are at their place and beating the drums and playing some playing they also collected there. And these Kusasis are dancing Damba, but they are not supposed to be dancing it because their starting didn't start with Damba. We know that the Kusasis came from the Mamprusis but their speech is different from the Mamprusis. If they had been talking the Mamprusi language, we would have said that they inherited their language from the Mamprusis, but they don't even speak Mamprule. But the dances we are dancing, and the way we are performing our funerals, the Kusasis have collected it and they are doing these things like us. But if you follow it into the inside of where we come from, you will see that we are not from the same place as them.

Today, how the Walas are, it is the same thing. All of the Walas know Damba, and they know what God has put down in the Muslim religion. All the dances we have been beating, Walas are also dancing them. And our mother's children are also over at their side and beating the drums there for them, too. But the Walas are not Dagbamba. A grandson of a Dagbamba chief doesn't eat chieftaincy there, and if a Dagbamba chief's grandson happened to eat a chieftaincy there, it was long, long ago. They are Naa Zokuli's people, but they didn't take our tradition in the olden days. The Walas and the Dagartis, they don't have their own lusi-beaters. It is Dagbamba who go there with drums to drum this lusa for them. And I am telling you that as for the Walas, if the Damba moon appears, they start dancing Damba and they will dance it to the end of the month before they stop. But you can see that they have taken it from us.

You can even see now that the Gonjas are enjoying the Damba Festival more than we Dagbamba, but it is we the Dagbamba who gave it to them. Dagbamba drummers go to the Gonja land to beat Damba for them. Do you see now? Damba is the best dance of the Gonjas. They have only heard it from us, but now if any Gonja is going to make a festival or a procession, you will see them beating Damba throughout. And so to them, Damba is their nicest music. Do you remember when the Head of State came to this Tamale? You saw the time the Yabonwura was going to greet the Head of State: they were beating Damba and following him. Did you see any other chief they were beating Damba and following? But these Gonjas don't have lusi-drummers. As I am talking, there are many tribes who are related to us Dagbamba, but we and the Gonjas don't have any relationship. Our grandfathers are not Gonjas, and their grandfathers are not Dagbamba. How we play with them now, it shows that we defeated them in war. As we are cool and we play with them, there is a proverb that says, "The one who is not strong always laughs at his abuse." If not that, we wouldn't have been playing with the Gonjas, because we fought them three times. And during the

third war we defeated them totally. But now we have turned to be something like playmates. And so it is because they are not strong; that is why they are laughing at their abuse. And they are taking our Damba and using it. Anything of the Gonjas, whether it is in the Damba month or not, they will be beating Damba. If you are eating a Gonja chieftaincy, and lunsidrummers are coming to beat, the only dance they beat is Damba. And so have they not taken it to be theirs? But today you should ask them, "Where did you get Damba from?" What are they going to say? They will tell you that they only got up and met it. They don't know where they heard it, not knowing that it is from us that they got it. They don't even have a drummer to beat it, unless a Dagbana.

And so what we have started, we the Dagbamba, those who are going to be behind us are going to take it into their hands. And I think that if we Dagbamba collected some tradition from some other people, we can also take it to be ours. And so on the part of this Fire Festival, the typical Dagbamba who are not Muslims, they will never say that the Fire Festival is for the Muslims. They have their own ideas. If you were able to ask the olden days' Dagbamba who have come and passed, I am sure that they would tell you the whole story about the Fire Festival and how they know it to their extent. But to me, what I think is that this Fire Festival, what we have and we drummers are crying about it, it first began in the hands of the Muslims. But now all the Dagbamba take it to be ours. If not because of us drummers, those of us who are very interested in asking to know where the Fire Festival began on the part of the Dagbamba and not the Muslims, no one would know. There are some Dagbamba you will ask about the Fire Festival, and they will tell you that the Dagbamba started the Fire Festival themselves. Maybe at that time, someone will be telling you that the Dagbamba started the Fire Festival, but he cannot tell exactly how it began. And if you started something and you don't know how you first started it, it means that you don't know anything about it. We the ones who are interested in asking, there is no day when we would forget something like that. If you ask, and you are shown something by your teacher or the one who is showing you, you have got that person who has showed you. And so I will take this talk and follow it on the part of how we Dagbamba celebrate the Fire Festival, and what is happening in Dagbon here during the Buyim month.

Truly, the Fire Festival month has got many things, and not only on the part of the Fire Festival. It is because the next month is Dambabilaa, and in Dambabilaa we don't perform funerals, and we don't marry women, and we don't get chieftaincy. If somebody dies in Chimsi or Chimsibilaa, we have to make the funeral in Buyim. If you are searching for a girl and you get the girl, when she is ripe they will say they must hurry and send the girl to the husband's house before

Dambabilaa. When the Buyim moon breaks, and after we finish shooting the fire, by two days time, someone can marry. If you get a chieftaincy, you will say you don't want to waste time and Dambabilaa will come.

If the Buyim moon comes out, it is nine days that we will be eating the Fire Festival. From the first day of the moon up to the ninth day, we will be enjoying the Fire Festival. The ninth day is the festival day, and nobody is in a hurry to do anything before that. In Dagbon here, those who know the meaning of the Buyim month, when the moon appears, they don't do anything until the maalam untie the talisman and the Fire Festival finishes. If you have a funeral, or a wedding, or anything, you will leave it until after the Fire Festival itself. If there may be somebody, if he wants, he will do these things, but somebody who is a Muslim and respects God will wait and will not do anything like that. It's not that it is forbidden. The reason is that nine days is not many days. If the moon comes out and reaches six days, and you know that what you were going to do, you can't finish it before the ninth day, then you can't do it. For example, if you are going to make a funeral, you will shave the heads, and then you put one week for the funeral. If the one week will come and fall on the ninth day, then those who are in a different towns won't come. Because of the new year, nobody comes out of his house and goes to another town. And one person cannot perform a funeral. And so as for funerals, there's no funeral in Dagbon when the Fire Festival moon first comes out. We stop performing the funerals, and they don't shave the heads. That is why people put it that they will wait until they finish the Fire Festival before they will do these things. But if you know your thing will not come to meet the fire, then it is not a fault, and you can do it. They will wait, and if they shoot the fire and finish, then the next day is the tenth day and after the tenth day, they start again. And so after the Fire Festival, at that time people have to hurry to do what they want. If they don't do it, and the Buyim month dies, then they have to wait until the Damba moon. As for that, that is the way it is. If they shoot the fire on Thursday and the next day is Friday, then they can shave the children and the grandchildren of the deceased and they can start performing the funeral onwards going to the end of the month. If it is that today there will be the Fire Festival, then when they finish shooting the Fire Festival, the only problem that will be existing in Dagbon will be that everybody will start to wake up their funeral to perform it and be free. And so what people will normally be involved in will be the funerals and nothing else. If there is a funeral, in two days time, they can shave the children of the dead person, and by five days to seven days, they will make the funeral.

And it can happen that it is on the ninth day of the moon that someone will get his chieftaincy. If you want to eat your chieftaincy before you celebrate the

Fire Festival, that one, there is no fault. Everyone and what he wants. Someone who is to be made a chief will say that he wants his chieftaincy during the Fire Festival time. It's not the big chiefs who eat their chieftaincies during the Buyim month. I'm not talking of the big chieftaincies like Savelugu or Tolon or Kumbungu or Voggo, but some of the small villages with their small chieftaincies. And so during the Fire Festival, the ones who are to be chiefs will go to the big villages which are holding them and collect their chieftaincies. Those who are getting their chieftaincies will go to the chief who is going to give their chieftaincies to them. Any small village, if it is under Savelugu or Yendi or Tolon or Nanton, the new chief will go to that town. In the morning the person will go, and drummers will follow. They will put the gown on the new chief, and the drummers will be beating 3em, and the Kambonsis will be shooting guns: *Boom!* If they make a chief, they will take him inside and show him to the big chief. If the chief is at somewhere, they will show him to the Wulana. And if the chief is not there and the Wulana is not there, they will show the new chief to the Paani, the senior wife of the chief. If something happens in a village and the chief is not there and the linguist is not there, they have to go and tell the Paani. If the chief is at somewhere, and the Wulana also is at somewhere, it is the Paani who does everything for the chief, and they will show the new chief to the Paani. And after they put the gown on him, the drummers will change from beating 3em and will start beating different dances, and they will bring the new chief out and go to greet other people. Drummers will be beating and following him, and he will be walking with his brothers, sisters, nephews, and other children. When they go and greet all the people, they will come back to the house, and they will make another dance again. Drummers are playing, goonji people are playing, and Simpa people too will come. By four o'clock, they will tell all the drummers and dancers that they should go to their houses and prepare for the Fire Festival. And this is happening on the ninth day of the Fire Festival moon.

And something too is happening with the typical Dagbamba. I told you that the typical Dagbamba are very strong inside the Fire Festival. If you are a real and typical Dagbamba, whether you are in a town or in a village, you will have some medicine within yourself, and in the Fire Festival month you have to make sacrifices for the medicine. At that time you will say you are going to repair the medicine. Any work on the part of the medicine, you will do it during that month; there is no other month for that. It is like the medicine that Alhaji Adam has given you. It is on the Fire Festival day that you will repair the medicine you ate. If the medicine has some roots or herbs from the bush, you have to go and search for all the roots. And you have to get a hen and slaughter it for the medicine. If you have nine or ten medicines, you have to give sacrifices for all of them, and you have to

remember all the names of the medicines and call the names. Because of that, in the Fire Festival month, a typical Dagbana has nothing to do with meat; he is only buying chickens. When he kills the chickens to sacrifice for his medicine, he has to cook the chickens by himself. Even if he has ten wives, he cannot give the chickens to a woman to cook; but if he has a son who is a bit grown, the son can cook the chickens. The woman will only cook the food and send it to her husband, because the husband has already cooked the chickens and the soup. And it shows that the medicine has come to a year, and so on that day, with the local Dagbamba, everyone is repairing his medicine.

On the Fire Festival day, small children will go and collect tall grasses, and they will tie them, six or more. In the evening, the child will go and give one to his uncle that he should take it and go collect the fire. The uncle will put shea butter, our local oil, on the tied grasses, and that is what he will use as a torch on the Fire Festival night. The child will go round to all his uncles and give them the tied grass for the Fire Festival night. It is our tradition that if you give the grass to your uncle, the next morning you will go and collect nine cowries, and now it has come to be nine pesewas. The child will go to the uncle to collect his pesewas, and he will come and share it among his brothers. If the uncle has got the means, he can give a hen to the child and say that the child will look after the hen so that when it gives birth to chickens, the child can be selling the chickens. Some people take it that they have more means for that, and they are able to give a goat or a sheep to their nephews. The uncle who is strong can even give a cow. If the animal is a female, and it is a hen, a goat, a sheep, or a cow, the nephews will care for it and it will be giving birth, and they will be selling the animal's children to get money and buy clothes. And a child will also go to his grandfather and say, "My grandfather, I have come to collect my grandson cowrie," and the old man will give it out. For the grandfather, it is one cowrie, but if the grandfather has got the means, he can also give a chicken, a goat, a sheep, or a cow. And our tradition shows that such animals give birth plenty. Even up to today, it is still there, and it still stands. And all this is happening in the month of the Fire Festival; we don't do it in any other month.

And again, on the day of the Fire Festival, from morning up to evening, the women will be cooking; that day the food you have been giving for the women to cook, you will give it plenty, because on that day we all share food and give to one another. If there are twenty houses in your area, on that day the women will cut twenty bowls. As you prepare the food and you give to every house, they too are going to prepare the food and give to you. If you share twenty bowls, twenty bowls too will come to your house. And we say that on the Fire Festival day, every dead person goes to his house, because the year has turned round to the new



year. And so after the women have prepared the food and put it in the bowls and you have finished eating, you will take small pieces and put them on all the side walls around your house. You will say, “I am putting this food on these walls, and may God bless me to last until next year, and I will eat and put more.” And we ask the meaning of putting the food on the walls, and those who are our elders say they are putting it for the dead people. And truly, this is what we grew up and met, and we too, when it’s daybreak, we have never seen part of the food taken away, and the food will be on the walls like that till it dries. And those who are our elders say that the dead people eat it but we don’t see.

In the evening, say by nine o’clock time, after eating the food and putting it on the walls, everybody will prepare and go to the chief’s house. Those who shoot the guns will be there: the Kambonsis will be there beating their iron bells, the *dawuli*, and they have also some very big horns from bush animals, and they will be blowing them. Drummers will come; *gunḡḡḡ* beaters will come. In the olden days, what the women used to wear to this festival was a piece of cloth they wrap round themselves like a skirt; we call it *mukuru*. And none of the men will wear *kurugu*, the big trousers. Some will put on only short pants like underpants we call *pietɔ*, others wear shorts we call *jenjenjmaa*, and some will wear *kpalannyirichoo*. I hope you know *kpalannyirichoo*. It’s a small piece of cloth like a triangle, and they tie it with strings, leaving their sides. It’s just common in the Upper Region. These are the types of dress people put on. And those of you who are going to make the Fire Festival, you will all have cutlasses. Those who will be having axes too will have them. And there is a certain long knife we call *takɔbu* — it’s almost like a spear — and people bring it and carry it along. And what is underneath holding these things, and what we sometimes see, is that anyone who has a quarrel with his friend, on that day if he meets him, the quarrel will widen.

When you get to the chief’s house, by that time the chief is inside. Outside, if there is a Lun-Naa, you will see him and his followers, and *gunḡḡḡ* beaters, and *yua*, the flute. Akarima is also there beating his timpana. If it is Yendi, Namo-Naa will be there. They will make a fire outside the chief’s house, and when the chief comes out, the chief drummer will beat *ʒɛm*. And at that time the chief will take his grass and put it into the fire and light it. By then all those who beat are beating, and the flute is blowing, and the bell is sounding; and those who are shooting guns are shooting. After the chief, the elders will come out and light theirs. Paani too will come out and light hers, and those wives following the Paani will also light theirs. As for the Paani and the other senior wives, they use corn stalks for their torches, and they use cotton to tie them, instead of using grass. When they light their fires, they will just be playing near to the chief’s house, and

when all the people have collected their fires, they will all go to some distance from the chief's house, with drummers beating, and the one blowing flute will also follow. Where the chief is going to throw the fire is not far from his house. When they get to the spot, the chief will say, "After I throw this fire, may God bless me to meet next year's festival." Then the chief will throw away his fire. And all the chief's followers will throw theirs. Then the chief will return to his house again. By that time, the Lun-Naa will not play the drum again; he will remove it and give to a child to take it to the house. He will leave it to the other drummers.

After the chief has finished throwing his fire, then the young men and women will also light theirs and continue, and the drummers follow them. In the olden days, every woman will remove the mukuru, the skirt. And those who have not yet taken to be married, they will remove the mukuru and leave only the beads, and the beads will be on their waists. The beads the women put on their waists are the ones we call *lima*: they are white beads. If you go to the riverside, you will find them. You just pick them and make a hole inside, and this is what the women wear as beads on the Fire Festival night. They don't want to use the type of beads we call *koofee*. That type of beads is the one the Yorubas were bringing here and selling: it is made of something like plastic, and it fears fire. So the women are afraid that if they use that type of beads on their waists on the Fire Festival day, the fire will catch it and it will burn them. They put on the *lima* because that type of bead is not afraid of fire. And there is a small cloth we call *taanchili* — Hausas call it *amoonsi* — and the women put it between their legs to cover their vaginas and tie it to the beads. And they leave their breasts open on their chests. Every man who sees them cannot stand. The women will mix with the men, and they will be waving the fire around above their heads. If not the olden days, it is now only some of the villages where you can see this type of dressing, and it is the young girls who are not married who like doing it.

And they will all take their fires and go into the bush with their fires, waving them and throwing them up and down. People will be running forward with the fire and coming back holding the fire. If it is a village, sometimes they will divide into groups, and one group will pass one way and the other group will pass another way to meet them. And the drummers and those playing flute will follow them. By that time the drummers are beating "*Dasambila nyu dam kuli, o yi tɔm pooi, ŋun' lab' doli.*" This *Dasambila* is the name of somebody: he was a trouble-maker, and he had a lot of medicine. The meaning of the drumming is that *Dasambila* has got drunk; if you shoot him with a gun or an arrow, you will not get him because of his medicine, and so you throw a club at him, you will get him. So this is one thing the drummers are beating and people are singing and enjoying the Fire Festival. And again, they sing and beat *Pan' dola yeliga, saasaabo*. The

meaning of Pan' dola yeliga is that the vagina is lying spread open on its back, and so it is there for sexing. The young women will be singing it. The drummers will be beating "Pan' dola yeliga," and the people will be responding and singing "Saasaabo!" And they will be dancing it, and they will be laughing. It is all inside Buyim. They have many funny songs. As for the Fire songs, you can't count them. They are not drumming songs. It is the young people who do it. When they are getting near to where they are going to throw the fire, they will start shouting. "Hee-e! Hee! Konkombas! Nanumbas! Kotokolis! Gonjas! Yeeee!" They count all the people the Dagbamba have defeated in wars. And they will continue again singing, "Dasambila nyu dam kuli" and "Pan' dola yeliga." And when they get to where they are going to throw the fire, they throw their torches on top of a tree. Everybody throws his torch on top of a tree, and the fires are burning.

And I can tell you that the Fire Festival has got bad things. I think that now things are a bit cool, but during the olden days, it was on the fire day that everyone would have revenge. When people are lighting their fires, I told you that they put shea butter on the grass to light it. On the fire day, if you have ever done something wrong to somebody, he will find you at the fire spot and put the melting shea butter on you, and it will burn you. When the people get to the tree, some of them can be under the tree, and some of the fires fall back from the tree. And it is there that people get wounds, because they don't see one another. As they throw the fire, it can burn somebody's back, and hurt somebody. And those who want to do bad to one another, when one sees his enemy, he will run and pass, and he will shake his torch above his enemy, and the hot oil will fall and burn him. And he will be running. If the one he burned is strong, it will only be that people will separate them, because the knives and cutlasses they brought, they will use them to cut one another. On that day there is bad like that. And so the young men and the young women, they become wild, and when they light the fire on the Fire Festival day, none of their eyes is down.

Because of all this, it is not everyone who goes to the fire spot. On the Fire Festival day, people like me, or anyone, you will try to find out from soothsayers whether any of your family will get bad luck at the fire spot. If it is true that there will be bad luck if they go, you will come to inform all your house people that none of them should go to the fire spot. And your way then is to tell your house people to come just outside your house and light their fire and throw it, and shout, "Naanin shee-e-e!" As for that, we grew up and heard it, but we didn't ask what is under it. And they will say again that the New Year, that they want to throw the fire again on the next year, and their children and their wives should all throw the fire next year. And so that is its meaning.

The people at the fire spot, when they finish throwing the fire, they will take 3em and be coming back again. The drummers are beating; everybody is dancing

and everybody is happy. It is three dances they beat. They will beat 3em, and they beat Baŋgumaŋa, and Pan' dola yeliga. They beat one, they change to another one, and they change to the other one. That is how they beat. And as they come, they come back to the chief's house. Everybody will rush to the chief's house. They will stand and shout, "Nanumbas, *hee-e!* Konkombas, *hee-e!* Kotokolis, *hee-e!* Gonjas, *hee-e!*" After they have counted all the names, they will start another 3em again, and they will be in front of the chief's house dancing 3em. They dance just in front of the chief's house. They don't dance around the chief's house. In Dagbon here, if you come to see them going around the chief's house, it means that the chief is dead. And so in front of the chief's house, they will make a very big dance there.

On that day, every maalam has given his friend what we call *walga*. This *walga* is medicine like a blessing. The maalam write some words on a slate, and they wash it and collect the water. You and your whole house will drink it, and you will take some and spread on your body. And it shows that it is a new year. They have sent *walga* to the chief's house, the chief will let them pour it into something, say, a big pot, and add water. When people are dancing in front of the chief's house, the chief will let his wives come out and take branches and be fetching it and throwing it on the people. It will be touching everybody, and it is the blessing mixture for the new year. When you finish dancing and beating at the chief's house, you will go to the Limam's house, and the Limam will do that to you again. When you leave the Limam's house, you go to the Kamo-Naa's house, and then to the Wulana's house. And when you come from the Wulana's house, that is where you end, and you will pass with 3em on your way home.

If they start the Fire Festival by ten o'clock, then by twelve o'clock or one o'clock in the night, they have finished with the fire and they have finished going round, and everybody will go to his house and remove his dress. Either your wife or your daughter will boil water for you, and you go and bathe. And you will say you are bathing the New Year's water, and may God bless you till next year and you will bathe the New Year's water again. By that time, the Kambonsis who followed you and they were shooting guns, they will go with Kamo-Naa to the chief's house, and they will put their own dance there. They will play Kambon-waa up till daybreak. This Kambon-waa, the dance of the Kambonsis: they beat the double-bell, the dawuli, and they use a small curved horn to beat it. They have drums, and the gun-shooters will be there. That is how they give respect to the chief on the Fire Festival day. And those who became chiefs during the Fire Festival, Simpa children will go to their houses and beat Simpa. And any chief who wants drummers can call them to come, and they will beat drums until daybreak. And that is how the Fire Festival is.

And if God agrees and it's daybreak, we go and we greet one another, "Our New Year." That is the tenth day of the Buyim moon, and we call it *Yuum Palli Dali*, New Year's Day. And we say that one year has gone round to meet another. On that day, if you don't greet your in-laws, or your mother's child, or your elders, they will take your fault. People even leave towns and go to greet one another, "As the year has gone round, I am going to greet so-and-so." If you don't do that, the fellow will say, "He is not greeting me; even the year has gone round and he did not greet me." And on that day, your nephews and your grandchildren, the ones who tied the grass for you, they will come and say, "My uncle" or "My grandfather, I have come to collect my cowries." And the chiefs will do the same thing to each other. If it is this town, you will see that the Banvim chief will come to the Gukpe-Naa, that he is his grandfather. And the Gukpe-Naa can give him a pound, and if he doesn't want worry, he can give him a female sheep, that he should take it home and leave it so that it will be bringing forth, and that is his grandson money. And some people, but not everybody, when the Buyim moon appears, they won't shave. Unless on the tenth day of the month, they will shave and say they are shaving *zab' bieri*, "bad hair." And it is *zab' bieri* that we also call the hair of a newborn baby.

And on that day, the day after throwing the fire, in the morning the Limam and his followers will go to the chief's house. And the chief drummer will also go to the chief's house, and he will be beating and gathering people. If it is Yendi, Grandfather Namoyu and his people will be at the chief's house; if it is Savelugu, Palo-Naa and his followers will be drumming; if it is Tamale, Toombihi and his followers will beat; if it is Nanton, Maachendi and his followers will drum; if it is Tolon, Lun-Naa and his back. On that day, drummers, elders, Kambonsis, everyone will gather at the chief's house. The village chiefs will also come. They all come just to greet the chief the New Year. As they come, the chief drummer will praise them, and as he praises them, they will give money. When the Limam comes, he has some prayers to say for the chief. There is a type of blessing or medicine a maalam can make by writing on papers, and we call it *sabli*. And so the maalam has two ways: there is the ink they wash called *walga* and there is papers. The prayers on the New Year's Day are these papers, and we call that day *sabli largibu dali*; it means the day of unfolding paper with Muslim writings. The Limam has got some papers, and what is written on them is the saying of God. At that time, the chief can slaughter a cow or a sheep, and the Limam will say that he is going to untie the papers, and he will look inside the papers and tell the chief what is going to happen during the year. If anything bad or anything good will happen, he will tell the chief. If it is that great people will die, he will tell the chief. If there will be many diseases, or if there will be hunger, or if rain will not

fall, he will tell the chief. If he tells the chief, he will also tell the chief the sacrifices to perform; and the chief will tell the people to give some money, say one cowrie, or one pesewa, or nowadays one cedi, and they will collect it and give to one person in their section of the town to give to the elders of the chief. And they will gather maalams to pray to God. If there was no rain, you'll see the rain will be falling; and if there were many diseases, you'll see that the diseases will decrease.

And so all this, they do it in the Buyim month, and there is no other month when they do it. It is all this we take to know that it is a New Year. And so we Dagbamba, our New Year is the Fire Festival. And we have separated the Buyim month because it is older than all the other months, and not only for Dagbamba, but also for people from other towns, Buyim is the oldest of all the months. And it is very, very strong. And that is what I know about it.

After Buyim, we have the Dambabilaa moon. In Dagbon here, everybody, every man, woman, and child knows that Dambabilaa is a bad month. I don't know about other tribes, but we Dagbamba give a lot of respect to the Dambabilaa moon. You have asked me about the ways of the Dagbamba, and I am telling you things about the Dagbamba too, and I don't want to tell you lies. In all the months, it is only Dambabilaa we know to be a bad month. We cannot rest until the Damba moon comes out. During Dambabilaa, we don't make weddings. If you wife gives birth and goes to her parents' house, you won't agree for them to bring her back that month. Even maalams, they don't forbid anything, but I have never seen maalams marrying during Dambabilaa. And we don't perform funerals. If someone dies and he is a big man or a chief, in that case we drummers can go and play while they bury him, but that is all. After burying him, we stop. They cannot perform the funeral during that month. As we drummers have been drumming everywhere during Buyim, during Dambabilaa we can only go to namings or to the market to play. How the Dambabilaa is to us Dagbamba, if you get anything bad during that month, it is waiting for you again. If you fall sick, you will die; it is only one-one of people who will get up when they are sick during the Dambabilaa month. If you are going to build a house and you are going to lay the foundation, you won't lay the foundation during that month. If it is that the house is completed, no one will enter it during that month. Some Dagbamba don't even travel during the Dambabilaa moon. But it is luck. Some people go out and don't come back, and others go and come back.

I have asked the maalams whether it was they who said the month is a bad month or whether we all grew up to meet it. There was one maalam I asked one time, and he said that the Dambabilaa month is only bad if the moon comes out on a Wednesday. "On that day," he said, "if a bird comes out of its nest, it will not go

back into it; how much more a human being?” And I asked, “Why is the Wednesday a bad day?” And he said, “It is not that Wednesday is a bad day, but that during Dambabilaa, Wednesday is a bad day.” He said that there was a maalam in a certain town who traveled on one of the Wednesdays, and he never got back to where he was staying; and he wrote down that people should be watchful of traveling during Dambabilaa. That time I made a mistake and I did not ask the man to tell me the name of that maalam, but he was a very heavy maalam. And I asked another maalam, and he said that it is only some days that are bad, but the Dagbamba take it that every day is bad because we don't know. That maalam said that they can show you some days in Dambabilaa when you should go out and search for money, and you will get it. And if you watch maalam, they don't wash their things on Wednesdays or Saturdays. And I heard a maalam talk that there was a poor man who prayed to God for money, and God gave him until the man could not count it. And the man prayed again that God should reduce it, and God said the man should wash his things on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The man washed like that, and his everything was finishing, and he asked God again, and God said that he should only wash on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Sundays, and Mondays. But as for the maalam, if a maalam dies during the Dambabilaa month, they make his funeral, because the maalam take it that it is God Who has put everything down. So on the part of maalam, that is what I know about it.

What we Dagbamba know about days is that the Wednesday before a new moon comes out is a bad day, and Saturday is also a bad day when it falls like that. As for Wednesday, it is not only in Dambabilaa alone, but every Wednesday. We take it that what you get on that day, you will be getting it again. It can be a good-luck day or a bad-luck day. If you get good luck or a gift on a Wednesday, you will be getting it again. If your wife brings forth, she will be bringing forth plenty. Any month apart from Dambabilaa, if you marry, they will bring your wife to your house in the evening on Wednesday or Saturday. Is it not good luck? And if your somebody dies on a Wednesday like that, whatever happens, getting to another Wednesday, someone from the house or the family will also die. If sickness catches somebody, if he doesn't die, then the sickness will worry him before it finishes. And so that day, no one wants any bad talk to get him. I don't know about the Hausas or the Gurunsis, and if you want to know about them, you can ask some of their old people, but we Dagbamba fear it. But we Dagbamba, when we are in the Dambabilaa month, we fear it. If some bad talk happens, it is going to increase. And this is how Buyim finishes and Dambabilaa also comes. After Dambabilaa, then the Damba moon comes, and as Dambabilaa is finished, we are happy. Everybody is happy. And again, when the Damba moon comes, it comes

to meet playing. Everyday, there is playing. And everyone likes playing. The Damba Festival is our big festival, and it has got a lot of talk on the part of our Muslim religion and on the part of all the Dagbamba, and it is different from the Fire Festival. And I think I will stop here, and tomorrow if God agrees, we will start the talk about the Damba Festival.