

Chapter III-4: *Rice Farming*

Now we will start with the talk about rice. This rice farming is the most difficult of all, and as for rice farming, we have just started it. In the olden days, Dagbamba knew yams, guinea corn, millet, corn, beans, and bambara beans. Our forefathers didn't know rice. It is now the government says we should farm rice, so what are we going to do?

Truly, formerly, when I was a child at Voggo, I used to see them farming rice, but they were not farming it and selling. If they were farming it, they weren't farming it plenty. If they were going to farm rice, it was that they would take yams and plant them in a swampy place, where water is in the rainy season: if you want yams to grow quickly, you will plant them where there is water. And so in the olden days, if you farmed yams, it was rice you could sometimes sow among the yam mounds, and you would take a hoe and push dirt and cover it. If the rice grew, you like it; if it didn't grow, you didn't mind. When it grew, you, one man, you could cut it. When it was time for cutting, you would cut it and make an area and put it there for about three days, and then you would sit on the ground and take sticks and beat it. If your wife was there, she would come and remove the rice from the chaff: she would beat it and throw it in the air, and the wind would blow it and the rice would fall. And you and she would carry it home. As it was not plenty, sometimes she alone could carry it. And as you have farmed rice like that, you didn't even know that someone could sell rice. And at that time, they didn't have bags; they were putting rice into *kunchuŋ*, the big woven basket. It also has another name: *pupuru*. Someone would store rice in a *kunchuŋ* and it would be there for more than a year, and he wouldn't mind it. And so as for rice, Dagbamba didn't look at it to be something, and we didn't have time for it. We even gave rice a name, that, "If you eat rice, you can't cross a swampy area and go far." You couldn't eat rice and do work. That is why they said that. It is because rice doesn't keep long in the stomach, and again, it grows in water, and so its work won't even let you cross the place it grows. And the women didn't know how to cook it and it would be sweet. They were just cooking it in some easy way, and as it was not sweet, could it do work? And so we didn't mind rice, and those who farmed rice were not many. But nowadays they don't call that name again: if you eat it, you can cross the sea. Nowadays, if you are going to perform a funeral and you don't have rice, you won't be able to perform it. If you want even to make an outdooring, you should get some rice.

When our eyes were going to open in rice, it was after the war the British fought in Europe. The government agriculture people were showing us about bullock farming, corn, and other crops. They also brought some talks of rice, but nobody minded them. But truly, when Dagbamba got to know rice very well, when we knew rice was something that could do work and something we could sell, it was when Nkrumah came into power. When Nkrumah took the government, I don't know but I think it was about four years after he collected the government that he said that everybody should farm rice and sell. If you eat and become satisfied in your house, you will be selling, and there is no fault with that. When you don't eat and become satisfied, you cannot sell: it shows you didn't eat and leave some, and that is all. In Dagbon here, no one can find your fault if you sell food. Even when selling food started, there was no back-stealing in it, that is, nobody will find someone's fault. How are they going to find someone's fault? God has given me and hasn't given you, and I take my money to buy food and put it down, and the selling time has come. If you have money, buy; if you don't have, that is all. There is not any talk. Even on the part of God, it is not a fault. "Buy and put down and sell" is not a fault to God. What God doesn't like is if somebody buys something for ten cedis and says he will sell it for twenty, and you are coming to buy and you say that he should swear to God how much he bought it, and he says he bought it for fifteen cedis. God doesn't want that. But "I bought this for ten cedis and I'm going to sell it for forty cedis": it is not any fault on the part of God. If you want, buy; if you don't, leave it. This is how it is. And so this rice they are now farming, it was Nkrumah who brought it, and now they are farming it and selling it. Formerly Ghanaians didn't know how to farm rice and sell. And now, truly, we are farming rice.

If you want to farm rice, you go to see the chief of the village where you are going to farm. When you go you buy a calabash full of cola, and you get money and add to it [1970s: about twenty to thirty dollars]. And you get what we call the "cola of the elders," that is, another small amount of money [about four or five dollars]. And then you go to the village. The house you enter, the householder there is the one who will send you to the Wulana. When he sends you there, you take the cola of the elders and give to the Wulana; he is the one who will send you to the chief's house. And you hold the calabash full of cola and the money, and you tell him that you have come to see the chief so that the chief will give you an area to farm rice, and that he should send you to the chief's house. But the Wulana alone will not take you and go. The Wulana will call one of his elders, the Zoɣyuri-Naa, and if he doesn't call the Zoɣyuri-Naa, he will call the Kpanalana. He will add him, and you will go to greet the chief.

If you are getting to the chief's house, the Wulana will let you stand under a tree, and he will go inside and see the chief. If the chief is sitting down outside, he will go and see him first. When he finishes seeing him, he will come and squat, and say, "The chief calls you." And then you will go and greet. If it is someone like me, I am not a big farmer, but I am farming to my extent, and there are others who farm less than I. And so if it is I, the Wulana will say to the chief, "Your grandfather, the drummer Ibrahim, is greeting you, and he has come to beg you for an area to farm rice. And he has brought this cola to give you, to put in your kettle. And he has added this amount for you to give to your wives to buy fish." And the chief will collect the cola, and the elders will pour the cola into the kettle. And the chief will put his hand and remove some of the cola. If I am the one, he will say, "My grandfather Ibrahim, come and get cola." And I will get up to go and get it. I will collect it with my two hands open, and he will fetch it and put it into my hands. The cola will be plenty in my hands, and I will still hold it, put it in my mouth, and bite one of the cola. Whether you eat cola or you don't eat cola, if you are a Dagbana, you will know, and you will eat it by force. Then you will get up, and the chief will tell the Wulana, "I sit in the house and you are in the bush, and so anywhere you are going to take him and he will get a place to farm, you should take him and go, and cut for him." And so that is how it is. If the chief has land without any use to the chief, and nobody is using that place for something, the chief will welcome you like that. And then the Wulana will take you back to his home.

When you get to the Wulana's house, if it is that very day the Wulana wants you to go to the bush, he will tell you. Or if he has no time, he will tell you, "Go home and come on this day, and I will take you for you to go to get your farm." But if there is time, he will take you and go. When you get to the bush, actually, the Wulana doesn't know the place for rice; it is the farmer who knows. The Wulana is a farmer, but maybe he farms guinea corn and yams but not rice. The area for farming rice is different from the area for farming yams, guinea corn, or millet. He will send you to a swampy place, or a place where there will be water in the rainy season, and you are the one who knows where you are going to farm and the rice will do. When you get to a place that is good for you, you will say, "Let's stand here." And the Wulana will say, "You should look till you catch what your heart wants." You will enter the bush, and you will be going and looking. The one who has got sense, you will look and if there is a tree, you take a cutlass and cut it. And you move to the other side, take the cutlass and cut a tree again. And you will go to the spot you were standing first and you will cut another tree, and that time the area has become your area. This is how you cut the trees and

leave. If you have sense, this is how you will catch your farm; if you don't catch like this, and you just look, someone also will come and cut his on top of yours. As he has cut on top of yours, it has become the farm of other people: you cannot go behind and farm again, and you cannot go in front. But if you catch a plot like this, you have said you are going to farm, and you will be going. If you farm it for two years, then you will leave it and go and cut another part of the farm. If you get a place that has not been farmed before, if you have a good yield, sometimes you can farm there for three years before you will move to another place. This is what we do; we get a place to farm and we leave. If you leave an old farm like that, you will leave it for three years before you will go back to it. At that time, the rice can do well again.

Truly, if you want to farm in a particular village, maybe that village is good for rice farming. The way you will go for the land, maybe it is not you alone. It can happen that many people are going to come. Those who go know the amount of land they want. Some people will go and ask for a hundred acres, or more. Everybody will know the extent of land he can farm. And so truly, there is no fixed amount that you will give the chief. Someone who wants a lot of land, he will give more to greet the chief. All of you will go and greet the chief before he will cut land for you. And it is standing that if you farm rice like that, the time you will come to harvest the rice, the chief will take some bags from the rice you harvested. And the reason why rice farmers greet the chief with money is that as for rice farming, it's name is that you are going to farm it and sell. Whether you are making a big farm or you are only farming a small plot, it is still market rice. And so as you are going to use the land to farm and sell, the chief will not just give the land. But as for our traditional farming, it is different from those who farm rice. If you are someone who is farming to eat, you can ask the chief for land, and you are not looking for a muddy place, you can take red cola and greet him, that you want to benefit from the land. From the way you are greeting him, the chief will know that you are farming to eat, and so your greeting is different from the rice farmers.

When the rains fall, you will go and look for a tractor. If you have your own money, and it is not that the bank is going to farm for you, you will go and see the tractor owner, and say, "I have got farming. I have" — say — "thirty acres." And the tractor owner will charge you. When I started this rice farming, they were charging six cedis for one acre, and it came to fifty cedis an acre, and it came to 5,000 or 6,000 an acre. [The figures are at roughly ten-year intervals (1967-68, 1977-78, 1987-88); adjusted for inflation, the approximate costs are between \$20-30 in 2000 dollars.] If it is thirty acres, you will let them go and

plow for you. And you will take your money and pay. It will be one month, and you go and tell him you want the second harrowing. He will come and harrow it once. If it is thirty acres, you will sow fifteen bags of rice for seeds, and you will throw the rice and he will cover it again. And then you will turn back. As it is a new farm, if God likes you, you will not have to remove the weeds. Grass will not come into the farm until the rice grows. One year when we farmed, that was how we farmed.

If you are someone who has no money, you will write a letter to the bank. You say you want to farm but you don't have money, so you want help. It will be about one month and they will reply to your letter. You will go to the bank and they will ask you, "Have you got a plot?" And you will say, "Yes." Then the bank manager will get his people, because the bank has got agricultural assistants. They are not from the Ministry of Agriculture. As for the government people, when they go to your farm, they will dig the ground and take it and measure it: if it is rice soil, they will tell you; if it dries too quickly, they will tell you; if there is stone under the land, they will tell you. But the bank people don't know it like that. They will take you in a car, and you will go and show them your plot. They will be there with you in the farm for fifteen or thirty minutes, and they will stand and look. That is all. If you have been farming it a little, they will see; and if you have not farmed it, they will see. And so, if you are already farming it and you have not yet collected their money, the agricultural assistant who has come to see it, when he goes, he will write that if they help you, you are someone who will farm plenty, because look, they have not yet helped you and you have been farming. And the bank manager will sign his hand, and it will go to Accra. If you have farmed three or four acres, they have written it, and the Accra manager will say, "This man, we have not yet helped him, and he has farmed three or four acres." And the time you wrote your first application, if you said that you wanted, say, fifty acres, the manager will say they should give you thirty acres. And how it is here, some of the bank managers will collect part of the money from you before they will agree to give you the loan. If you borrow five thousand cedis, you will take three thousand and the manager and his people will take the rest. And let's say they are going to give you a loan of ten thousand: it is not ten thousand you will get; you will get about six thousand, and the four thousand will be to bribe the bank manager. And in this place, some do that.

When they give you like that, they will not take the money and put it in your hand. When you hire the tractor to plow the thirty acres, the bank manager will check his money and give you the money for the thirty acres and tell you to take it and go pay. If you have no rice seeds, they will give you the money to go and buy

the rice seeds. And when you are going to sow, they will count the laborers you will take, and when you finish sowing, they will give you money to pay the laborers. They will give you money again, and you will buy fertilizer. And you will take laborers again and go and throw the fertilizer.

If you don't have patience, the money they are giving you, if you take laborers, it won't be enough. You will get your own money and add. If you have farmed and finished, and grass comes to enter your farm, you will write a letter that you want to go and remove grass. They will calculate your acres and give you its money. They have not gone to the farm. If there is no bush, if you want, you will take the money and go and farm corn, say, three acres. They have not told you to farm corn; they have told you to farm rice: if they get to know that it is corn you have farmed, they will tell you that you have taken the money to farm corn, and you will not have credit again. And as you have your debt, at that time, they can force you to sell your things. But someone can farm rice and fire will burn it. If it is not that, the grass will kill it. If not that, he will farm late. If not that, he will farm and rain will not fall there, and the rice will not bring forth. All this, it is debt. And when you come to have debt, they will force you to pay it. But as you have farmed corn, if God agrees, you will get it, and you will go and be paying them little by little.

And so the work of rice is difficult. If the grass has come and entered your farm, you cannot take four women and do its work. Even ten women cannot do it, unless your rice is useless rice. It is now that we are farming and we don't get rain. If there was rain, you wouldn't have to weed your farm. When it rains and the water runs on it, that is what the rice wants. It is going to grow the way it likes. Nothing is going to disturb it. How will you go and repair it? But what makes us not to get is when we farm, we sow, and it doesn't rain. Grass follows when it doesn't rain. If it is raining bit by bit, the grass will grow faster than the rice. And the rice also needs water. This is why we don't get. I used to farm rice and get about two hundred or three hundred bags, and the area I had was not large. But for about three or four years now, I have been getting about fifty or sixty bags. If you go to my farm and you see it, you will say that I will get hundreds of bags out of it. And it would be true, too, if the rain were falling. And so the work of rice is difficult. When grass enters the farm, you will go with twenty women one day, and the next day you will go with twenty women again. They will be pulling out and removing the grass until they finish. And you will be paying them with the money you have borrowed from the bank; that is the money you will take and go and give them.

I have told you that typically, our women don't farm on the part of preparing the land and sowing, but they help with harvesting the crops. It was when townspeople started farming rice in the villages that they began to give village women money to help them in their farms. So these by-day laborers, it was rice farming that brought it. On the part of going to someone's farm, I'm not talking about the market-day farmers who go to one another's farms. As for Dagbamba in the olden days, if you farm and the farm is giving you trouble, or the harvesting is going to give you trouble, then you would just go to your sitting friends and tell them, and they would go into their houses and tell the women that if they are free, they should come to your farm and help you. When the day comes, the only thing you would do at the farm is to cook food so that everybody would eat. During that time, you were not giving a pesewa to anybody. And if day breaks and they were also facing problems in their farms, you would also go there. As for Dagbamba in the olden days, they didn't know by-day labor. It was village women who were doing by-day laboring first, and it came to both men and women. It even came to some women from the towns, like Tamale, Yendi or Savelugu. It was just because of money. It's not every house's women who go for by-day work. As my brother Mumuni is in Savelugu, his housewomen don't go. But there are others who go. The women had already been doing harvesting, and they do hard work, and so the rice farmers also wanted them to help in their farms. If there are some days when the women are not going to their own farms, then there are some days they will come and do by-day labor. If you are farming beans or groundnuts, they will take a share of the harvest, but if it is a rice farm, they won't take a share of the rice, but you will cook food for them to eat, and you will have the amount you pay them for a day [1980s: the cedi equivalent of about one dollar].

When the rice grows and cutting time is near, you will go and get cutting money to harvest the rice. You will count how you will pay the laborers. They will show you how much they will cut in one day. Formerly, not now, let's say you pay the laborers one cedi each a day, and you will take twenty of them, then you know the number of acres you have farmed and how many acres they will harvest in one day. If you don't follow it like this and count it well, you will get another debt inside harvesting, unless you yourself have money, or unless you have those who help you. And again, there can be somebody you will not pay. In our Dagbamba way of living, it shows that someone can come to help you and he doesn't want money and he doesn't want rice; it is because of your trouble that he has come to help you and remove you from it. And if you follow all this, you will see that your work is nice inside it.

When you finish cutting, the bank will give you money for beating. The beating alone is work. When they give you the beating money, you will make a large area. Someone whose rice is plenty will make an area as big as a house. You will put the rice down and leave some part of the area, and you will search for women to come and be removing the rice. They will beat it the same way they beat millet, but as for rice, they don't smear the animal feces on the ground; they will just clean the place. If you get thirty women, you will separate ten at one place, ten at another place, and ten at another place. They will all have long sticks. They will be taking some of the rice, putting it down, and beating it. They will be singing and throwing their sticks down on the rice — bip, bip! They cannot beat it all in one day. Sometimes they will reach a week, and sometimes it will be more than that. When they finish beating, you will let them sieve it. They will throw it into the air, and the rice will fall on one side and the chaff will fall on the other side. And you will be putting it into bags. And those who are sewing the bags are also there.

When they finish, you will pay them. You have paid them with money, and they will finish and you will pay them again. Let's say if they are ten women, you will take two bags and tell them they should get and share it with one another and cook food for their children. If they are thirty, you will group them ten-ten and be giving the two bags to each group. If it is your wives or the women from your house who come and all of you are working in the farm, if they are four, you can give each of them a bag. Sometimes you will give your wives two bags each. It is all from the way each person gives a gift. This is how you will give all of them. The ones who have charged you and collected your money, you cannot leave them alone. We Dagbamba don't do that. Other tribes don't care; they only know the money they have given. That is all. But a Dagbamba can see money and refuse it. It's not that he doesn't like money. No one refuses money, but he will refuse it. And as we Dagbamba are like that, this giving the rice is what you will do for the women who helped you. But what I am saying is that all this is from not having the means. If it is someone who has the means, as for him, it is the combine harvester that goes and farms for him. If the farm is big, say three hundred acres, it can reach a week. But if it is thirty acres, it is one day he will take to cut it and finish everything. He is cutting; he is beating; he is putting into bags.

When you finish getting your rice, you will give respect to those who also gave you respect and allowed you to farm. Even if you fall, and you only get twelve bags of rice, you can give the chief two bags; and you can remove one bag for the elders of the town; and if you have the women who helped you on the farm, you can group them and give two women one bag, and if the women are twelve,

that will be six bags. How much is left? By then you have fallen. Or if you get about fifty or sixty bags, the chief of the village where you farmed will collect five bags. As for the Wulana who sent you to your farm, if the chief takes five bags, then you won't give the Wulana. Even if the Wulana comes and says that the chief has sent him to collect the rice, you won't give it to him; you will take it to the chief himself. As the chief has collected five bags from you, whatever happens, he will give two bags to his elders. If he doesn't give them, he will not see the sweetness of his chieftaincy. There are some chiefs who will collect only two bags. If the chief says you should give him two bags, you will give the Wulana one bag. It is not the Wulana who will say you should give him. You will charge yourself. He was the one who took you to the bush, and someone who likes you is the one who will send you to a place where you will get something. And you know, if you get a gift and you forget where you got this gift from, then you are a useless person. That is why you give him. You are not someone who gets and you don't want another also to get. And if there is a tindana in the village where you are farming, and where the chief showed you to farm is the area of the tindana, you will give one bag to the tindana. You didn't see the tindana when you asked for the land, because our tradition shows that the chiefs defeated the tindanas, and so the chief is the one who will give you the land. But if you have sense, you will give the tindana. If you don't give him, the next year you will not see rain falling in that place. Even if it is raining and coming, when it comes to you area, it won't rain again. On the part of the tindana, if the chief collects five bags, if he has sense, he will give his elders two and give the tindana one, and he himself will hold two. And if the chief collects five bags and he doesn't give the tindana, you will take your sense and go and give the tindana. If not that, the tindana will go and sacrifice, and rain will not fall, or fire will be burning the rice, or the rice will grow but will not bring forth. And the tindana will say, "It doesn't matter. The chief should repair the land, and the rain will fall." And we have this inside our farming. And so if you give like that, by then, you the one farming, every day you will be getting. This is how we farm.

The time you were going to start cutting, the bank manager let some people come and look at the farm, but when you finish beating and sewing the bags, you won't go and report again. You don't want them to come and see what you have got. If you don't get, you go to report and tell them that they should come and see how your farm is. But if you get, you don't go. When the rice grows and they come and see, if it is plenty, if you don't pay your debt or you don't finish paying your debt, they will not give you money again. They know that the way your rice grew and brought forth, you will be able to pay and kill the debt and even leave

money remaining; if you don't pay all, they will tell you to take your money and go and farm, that they won't give you money again. Even if they give you, then the money they give will be small. They will only give you because they don't want the law to catch them, because the law says they should be helping farmers.

And what brings all this is that some farmers get, and they say they don't get. When the bank person comes to look at the farm, they will see him in the farm and bribe him. He will come back and write, "I went to this man's farm. There was no good rice." But the rice was good. Some people have done that and taken the money to buy their own tractors. It is not the bank that helps them to buy. The bank will only be following his debt. The one who goes and reports what he has got, when the bank people come and look, and they see that actually he has got, they know that he will sell his rice and come and pay his debt. They will say that they will give him a tractor, but they won't give him. The bank will take those who have not been paying and put them in his place. When he goes and sees the bank manager, and the manager does not eat from his hand, the manager will tell him, "I am waiting for those who have not yet paid to pay, and then I will get the money to buy a tractor for you." But if the bank manager eats from your hand, you are not going to wait for any talk. You pay the debt or you don't pay the debt: if the manager eats from your hand, he knows what he will do and you will get the tractor. If the manager is eating from your hand and there is a debt following you, the manager will say, "I think if I give you a tractor, you can farm and finish paying the debt. If we don't give you a tractor, we don't know what you will do to finish paying the debt." This is what the manager will write and send to Accra. And he will say that it is because you haven't got a tractor that you farmed late, after the rains, and so if you get the tractor, you will pay. That is how it is.

And if truly you didn't get, you will write a letter the time you are beating the rice, and say that your rice didn't do well this year. The bank will send people to come, and they will see the rice you have got. As they themselves have seen, they will write it, and the manager will tell you to try to pay the interest. This has happened to me. The year before we started this work, they gave me money for sixty acres. That included everything. And that year it didn't rain. As it didn't rain, my rice didn't bring forth. When I wrote to them, they came and saw it. They were standing, and they were just throwing their heads and saying, "Even if this rice had grown, it wouldn't have been good rice." It was something more than three acres that grew. And the one who wrote the report said that actually the rice didn't germinate, and he reported that it was about one acre that was somehow better. And the manager wrote a letter and said I should come and try to pay the

interest. And he said again that what I had cut, I should take it and keep it down as rice seeds, and that when farming time came again they would give me money to farm but they would not give me money to buy seeds. The rice that brought forth, I had thirty-eight bags. I went and told the bank manager that I had thirty-one bags, and he said I should remove ten bags and sell and pay the interest. Apart from that rice I sold to pay the interest, the chief collected one bag, and those who had come to help me, they collected money and I gave them three bags to add to it. I left twenty bags for the rice seeds. And I sold the remaining four bags to pay my outside debts. And I bought guinea corn and we are eating. And the next year they gave me money for sixty acres again.

Truly, as we have been farming rice, what has been putting us down are two things. The one that is in front is that we don't have tractors. The money the bank gives you, they show that the tractor is going to do double harrowing for you. The first one is the plowing, and the second one is when you are sowing the seeds and he will turn it under. But the tractor is not going to do the double harrowing. The one with the tractor is going to harrow once, and as he has farmed like that, he has not farmed it well. It is not going to be daybreak and the bush will get up. The money they have given you cannot do anything: you cannot take it and repair your farm. Even if you go to borrow your own money and add, it won't do anything. And what brings it is that the government has no tractors. The tractors are for the townspeople. The price the government shows they should charge for the double harrowing, and the bank gives the money for it, the tractor owner will not agree to collect that money and do double harrowing. For example, let's say the government says the charge should be fifty cedis an acre, and the tractor owner says he will do the double harrowing for seventy cedis an acre, what are you going to do? You cannot find money and add. And why is he going to do it for you? And so if your area is not nice and he comes to harrow it only once, it is bush that is coming.

Apart from that, let's say you have paid for the double harrowing. After the tractor comes to farm for you, it will go to farm for your neighbor. Someone with one tractor in the town can farm for about thirty people. They are all in different places. He has come and done the single harrowing for you, and so he has plowed all the grass under. It is not yet time for sowing, and so it is the second time when he is supposed to come for the actual harrowing. By that time the grass he has turned under will die and become like fertilizer, and as the rains are starting to fall, that is the time for sowing. But as it is raining, too, it is not raining in all areas. Sometimes it will fall first on one area. As he has farmed once for you, you will be following him and telling him that he should come and do the harrowing for

you, that the rain is going to collect on your farm. He will be answering that he is coming. He will tell you that he will farm for this person and that person before he will come to you. You will be sitting down and waiting for him, and he won't be coming. Every time you go to him, the tractor will be in another place again. And the time will keep running. As for these tractors owners, they can disappoint you. You have paid him already, plus the money for the harrowing. If you don't pay him, he won't farm. As the rains have started, maybe there is a small pool of water collecting at your farm. By the time he comes to you, maybe the way to your farm will be flooded. He cannot jump across. Even if it doesn't flood, he cannot enter your farm. If he tries to enter, his tires will be in the mud. And so he won't do the second harrowing. And he has eaten the money, too. The bank cannot do anything to him. The bank will also see that the water has collected your farm. But the bank doesn't know that the water has collected the farm because the tractor owner wants too much money. If he had farmed for ten people, he would have done everything for them. But he has farmed for thirty people.

And it can happen that he will come late, and the rain has stopped, and the rice will not do well. And so you have borrowed money to pay him, and you will be in debt. You haven't got the money you borrowed, and you haven't got food. You have fallen. If you are farming that type of farming and you don't have a tractor, you will only get a yield by luck. That is how it is. There are some people who started this commercial farming and gained, and there are some people who entered it, and they have had to sell their house to pay their debts. And so Dagbamba say: he has thrown away what he had in his hand, and he is following what he will get from his leg. You left your house to do this farming, and you took a loan, and you didn't get a good harvest. The house you had in your hand, they will come and collect it. At that time, you will only be following your legs to get. And so if you farm rice, you can farm and fall. And at times, you will rise. If you farm the next year, and the rain falls, you will get. There is a proverb: if you shoot an arrow far away, and you can't find it, will you shoot another arrow again? If you farm and you never gain anything, will you farm again? And so those who farm, at times they fall, and at times they rise.

And so all this is following those of us who haven't got tractors. Those of us who farm without tractors, everyday we are suffering. Before you will see someone without a tractor farm rice and succeed, its time is far. And so as we are farming rice, everyday we are eating trouble. This is its way. Those who have tractors, they don't want to farm for you so that you will also get any day, and this is their way, too. It is one problem and there are two problems inside it. We don't have tractors. It has happened to me that I have farmed rice and I was not be able

to sow anything because the whole place was flooded with water. Sometimes I will farm like that and not get a tractor to help me. If I say I will farm sixty acres, and I am able to sow only eight or ten acres out of the sixty, I am falling. If I am able to farm the whole sixty acres and then even to get a tractor too, the farming would not be a problem. This year how my farming is, it is because I have not got a tractor that the whole place is flooded with water. I hired a tractor, and then he went into someone's farm; when I came and called him, he said he was busy in someone's farm, and by the time he came, water had flooded the whole place. If I had tractor myself, I could have farmed the whole thing by myself. That is the problem with those who have not got tractors. I have been farming rice for many years now, and because I have not got a tractor, I am not going forward. But I know farming very well. If I get money, the first thing I will buy is a tractor, because if I get a tractor, all the other things will just be following it. If it were to come that I am able to farm about sixty acres and all the rice does well, then I would have profit from the farming. And the problem following it is that those who have the tractors don't do the double harrowing for us, and the grass will grow in the farm. It has brought us down. And if they farm once for us and they don't farm for us in time when the rains come, the water will collect the farm. If your farm is in a swampy place and they don't come when you want them to come and do it for you again, if rain falls quickly there, it will be flooded and you cannot enter it. It has brought us down again. And that is it.

But if the tractor does the double harrowing for you, and you throw the fertilizer the rice wants, then your farm will do. This fertilizer is another problem. There are two types you will throw. We have 15-15-15 [NPK: nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium], and we have ammonium sulphate. For each acre you will throw two bags of 15-15-15 and one bag of ammonium sulphate. The money for this fertilizer is from the money the bank has given you. They will remove it and give you to buy the fertilizer. But here is the case again: today as Ghana is sitting, the fertilizer is not there. And if it is there, the price they show you to buy the fertilizer, when you go to buy it, it will be more than that.

But all this, if you get the fertilizer and spread it like that, and the tractor does double harrowing for you, and there is no bush, and the rain is all right for it, then your rice can do well. The government agriculture people have told us that one acre will give thirty bags; if your rice doesn't do well, you will get twenty bags; if not that, fifteen bags. This is what the government agriculture people say, but I haven't seen it. I have not got like that in my farm. I have seen some farms of others, they get fifteen bags. And I have heard that others get what the agriculture people said in their farms. Those who have tractors get like that,

because they do the harrowing three times. He has his tractor: he will clear his land and it will look like the floor of this room, and you will not see even a single hole in it. And sometimes the government will give someone some type of rice that will yield very well, even if the rain is not much. But as for the rest of us, sometimes you will get seven or eight bags an acre. At times, you will see the rice do well in some part of the farm, and some part you will get small, and some part you won't get anything. The time I had thirty-eight bags, I think I had about twelve or thirteen bags an acre. That year I had it like that.

And so rice farming: now we farm rice a lot, but it has no use for us. From Nkrumah's time and coming to Busia's time, it was profitable. It used to rain at that time, and we were getting the tractors to farm for us. Those of us who were farming rice were not as many as we are now. That time if you wanted a tractor, you would get it. Now the number of tractors is uncountable but you can't get them. Acheampong also wanted the rice farming, but if you farmed during his time, you wouldn't get. Rain. We didn't know the time it would rain. For four years the rain didn't come at the correct time. You would hear that the rice of this town has grown, and the rice of that town hasn't grown because it didn't rain there. It is bush that has grown there. If the tractor had done double harrowing, as the rain was not falling, no one would mind, because the grass would not be growing. But if you have farmed in that place, you will look at your farm and see that there is rice and grass plenty, and you cannot use the money they have given you to weed it. It won't do. The rice is finished. Today-today, where I am farming, our plot is flooded. We cannot go there again. We first cut some branches and put them so that we could walk across to the farm, but now all the sticks have spoiled. Today they came to tell me that people who can swim are carrying salt across the pool to sell in the village there. Maybe it will take about three weeks for the water to go down before we will be able to go and see whether the rice will do or it will not do. We don't know. That is how it is. And all of it is not from anywhere: we don't have tractors. That is what has left us like this.

But if you have a tractor, you know what you are farming. A tractor owner can fall on his farm and farm it till the next day. There are trees? He will let a Caterpillar come and remove them for him. And he will step and make it smooth. Why won't he get? That is the profit of a tractor. Then he will take the tractor and be charging us on top. He will go to a village and farm ten acres in a day. And the villager doesn't know acres. The tractor owner will tell him he has farmed twenty acres and will charge the villager. And the villager will look at the ten acres and be happy. It's big. He will give the tractor owner the money, and he will go and bring yams, eggs, guinea fowls, and add. He will be very happy. What the tractor

owner gets, the chief of Yendi hasn't got it. The chief of Yendi cannot even dream of it.

The time Nkrumah came and brought these tractors, he brought them plenty. I heard some people say they were from Czechoslovakia. You couldn't count them. That time, the rice farmers were not many, and everybody had his tractor. Those who went first and were farming, I think the tractors were farming for them free. The government carried rice seeds and gave them. They were farming rice, and the government was buying it. That time the government was buying it for five cedis a bag. The government knew the profit that was inside it. You will search for your area, and the government will come and let the tractors farm for you, give you fertilizer, give you money for weeding. You don't know the talk that is inside it. They farmed it like that for about three or four years before we got to know that the government was farming for them free. And at that time the government showed that you could farm for six cedis an acre: four cedis for plowing, two cedis for harrowing. When we came and joined it, that was how we were farming.

It was not the bank that was giving us money. We had our own money for the farming. If you took sixty cedis, it was ten acres you would farm. The rice seeds were five cedis a bag from the government, but if it wasn't from the government, it was three cedis. It's not lies I'm telling you. I myself bought it like that. That was how we farmed when we started it. If we farmed like that, we didn't get government money. We were afraid of it. I have only joined the government money a few years ago. And at that time, those who were not afraid of the government money, they are now the big men, and we are following them. Some of them have six tractors each; they have three combines; they have Land Rovers. You will go to their houses and see many people there. And those of us who were fearing, or we came late, we have remained behind. As we now collect money to farm, we fall. Those who were not afraid are the people who are putting us down. They have the tractors, and they are putting us down. In this place, they hire tractors to people they know. If the bank says it will help you, they will go to the bank manager and say he should not help you because you are poor. And the bank manager will eat from their hand, and they will also be getting more to add to what they have already got. That is what is happening now. If you don't have, don't expect that you can go forward. I have told you that the one who is in charge of the money at the bank also needs money. If you write to ask for money, and he hasn't got something from your hand, he won't give you. But those who have will go and give the manager what he wants, and he will give them. He will even keep adding them more than what they asked for, because he has got

something from them to eat. He will say, “As for this man, I am sure he can pay back the debt.” Those people who go to take loans always talk and we hear. In this modern world, now you will use money to get money. You can’t use your empty hand to go and look for money. If you don’t have, then you will be a poor man. You don’t have: how do you get? That is how it is.

And so that was how we started farming rice and we are still inside it. From the time we started and it was six cedis a bag, it came to twelve cedis, then sixteen cedis, then twenty cedis, and it has been going up always. And then one year we farmed this rice and the government didn’t buy. If you had three cedis, you could buy a bag of rice. No one wanted it. And there was suffering inside it. And then there was a year when rice was fourteen cedis a bag, and a year when it was sixty cedis a bag, and the next year it was ninety cedis. Every year it is more and more. And so we don’t know where we are standing again. If you are doing this rice farming, and you have debt, the debt will be sitting on you. You will be farming it a little, and the debt will be reducing. Those who started it and they are now big, if they have to pay their debt today, it will finish them. Even if they sell all their people, they can’t finish paying it. But they don’t care. As the debt is following them, they will always get more money from the bank. Even if they don’t farm anything for ten years, the bank will be helping them, because they have credit. And what they are doing plenty, we are doing it a little.

Let’s say the debt I have and I am farming, as the plot is flooded, I cannot tell yet how the rice will do. We have weeded some of the farm; and what we have not repaired, if God lets the rain fall, maybe it will protect some of it. I cannot say it will pay the debt, but if it grows, maybe I will get eighty or ninety bags. I will remove twenty bags for my rice seeds, and I will use twenty bags to pay the interest. What is left, I will put it down. The time of cutting, let’s say that rice is selling for sixty cedis a bag. When it reaches four months, it will be eighty cedis; in six months, a hundred cedis. When rice is making money, I will sell it. Maybe it will reduce the debt. And so this is what we do.

And how we are, we fear and we are saying it. But there are others, and their debt is more than ours. And what we fear: Barclay’s Bank, Standard Bank, National Investment Bank. What we don’t fear: Agricultural Development Bank, Ghana Commercial Bank. As for them, if you follow it, they will come and tell you, “If you pay one cedi a day and you are paying, you will come and finish your debt.” And there is no fault in it. They are government banks: the government removed the money and gave them and said the money is for us so that we should farm. If you are farming and you fall, they themselves will come to see it, and they will see that the fault is not from you. They have no way to disturb you. But

these other banks are market children. We fear their interest. They are market children and they have come to search for themselves. They have their lawyers. If you get or you don't get, the interest has no end. They have a way to force you to sell your house and your everything, because they are market children. But as for the government banks, they don't do that. This is how it is.

And still the debt is worrying us. How will it not worry us? Even if you just knock against something and collect something from it, it will worry you. How much more will it worry you if somebody lends something to you? It worries us. We pray to God to go out from the debt. If rain falls, we will get and pay. Will someone get money and refuse to pay his debt? We would pay. We have seen some people borrow money until the bank says it won't lend the money again. But if someone has a way to talk to the manager, if only the debt is very big, and the manager gives him a tractor, by then whatever happens, he will go out from his debt. But if the manager doesn't like you, he will say they won't give you money again. And you won't know what you will do and pay. You will take the small money you get and be decreasing your debt little by little. And so those of us who are following the government banks, that one alone makes us fear.

And then added to that, we think that maybe if we don't get this year, then in the coming year we will get. Somebody will not get and he won't get bank money again. He will take the small thing he has got to decrease some of the debt, and leave some money, and he will go and farm rice again. Some of us do that. And some of us stay inside it and will be suffering like that. Why do we do that? If you farm rice and it grows once, you will be out of trouble. The sixty acres I farmed, if it grows well, the rice I will have will be getting to maybe one thousand bags. These thousand bags can pay all the debts and leave money. But what is making us fall is tractors, and rain. And so now if I'm going to farm, I will farm a little rice, and I will farm corn, and I will farm groundnuts. I will farm like that. It is the same money I will take and farm. That is how it is.

And so that is how rice farming started in Dagbon here. It was Nkrumah who brought it to Ghana. As we Dagbamba were farming, we were not farming rice. And now everybody knows it, and it has got a lot of work with us. Plenty! It was when we started it that our women didn't know how to cook it so that it would be sweet. And now I think we have about five ways of cooking it.

If you farm rice and you don't have guinea corn or corn, you should not disturb yourself. Don't say you will sell the rice and buy guinea corn. You will take your rice to the grinding mill and they will grind it, and they will come and make *sayim*, and it will be very sweet. That is one.

And again, if you bring rice, they will boil it and then dry it and take it to the grinding mill and remove the outside. And they will put the rice on fire and boil it. They will take the *sayvuyli*, the stick they use for sayim, and be stirring it. When it has become soft, they will get the small calabash we call *saybeyu*, and they will cut the rice inside it and turn it up and down till it becomes round. And we call it *siṅkaafa kpila*: rice balls. When it is a bit cool, they will put it with soup and we will eat. That is two.

And again, if they want, they can take rice to make porridge. They make it the way they make any porridge, and we call it *siṅkaafa kukɔyli*, rice porridge. That is three. And there is another one we call *siṅkaafa wali*. The rice is separated; it's not formed into balls. Hausas call it *siṅkaafa wasawasa*. It is cooked without stirring: that is boiled rice. They just put the rice on fire and boil it. You will buy groundnut paste, onions, pepper, and salt and fry it in oil. If you have the means, you will buy meat and add to it. Then you will fetch the rice into bowls and add the stew. This is the rice we have been eating. That is four.

And again, there is something we call *duyrijilli*, to cook everything together. We normally call it *dafaduka* like the Hausas, or *jollof* like the Ashantis. You will put oil in a pot, and add onions, and tomatoes, and pepper, and salt. You will put *dawadawa* inside. I told you that is the Hausa name for the seasoning we call *kpalgu* in Dagbani. If there is meat, you will put meat inside. If there is no meat, you will put fish. You can use any oil. If it is our Dagbamba shea butter, or groundnut oil, or palm oil, they all do the work. You will let this oil cook all and you will be stirring it. Then you will fetch water and put inside the pot. If the pot is big, you can fill it half-way with the water. Then you fetch the rice and put inside the pot so that the water will cover the rice, and you will get something and cover it. And you will leave it. Everything is inside. The water will enter the rice, and the oil will be following it and entering. All the sweetness will be entering inside. It will be there till it is boiled, and they will remove it. If they give you some to eat, you will be telling your townspeople about it. That is *dafaduka*, and that is the work rice does.

And so rice has got a lot of work in Dagbon here. And rice too is difficult. How I have talked today, I think it will do. And what is remaining and I will come and tell you is groundnuts. Because groundnuts too have got some talk. And after that, it will be left with *kpalgu* and shea nuts, because they also do a lot of work for us in Dagbon here.