

Chapter III–14: *How Children Live When They Are Young*

Yesterday I told you that we would talk about how children live with their parents and their fellow friends when they are young. And so if we are going to join this talk, I will start it and say that the time you give birth to your child and the mother goes to stay with her family and comes back, then the first thing you the father will be showing the child is all the many people in your family. And if the child grows a bit, you will be sharing this child with your brothers and sisters. This is how our children get to know the father's family, and if we die, they will stay in our family. Haven't you been seeing my brother Mumuni always coming here? As he has been coming to me, are my children seeing him? If I am not here, is there anybody who will have to tell them that this person is my brother? When a child comes to your house, he doesn't know that this person is his junior father, and you have to show him. He doesn't know that this is his senior father, and you will show him. The child doesn't know that this is his father's sister, and you will show him. Apart from the grandmother the child was with when the mother was in her parents' house, the child will not know his father's mother, unless you show him. All this, you will be showing the child.

And you will be feeding the child. A small child cannot eat the food a grown-up will eat. But as the child is growing, you will not be giving the food it was eating when it was young. A small child may be drinking only porridge. And some children, their only food will be milk which they put into porridge or into *fula*. Some too, rice is their only food. Others only eat yams. As for a child, a child can take one food like yams and be eating it for a year. And when a child comes to be ready to eat *sayim*, it is not you who will show the child. Truly, they show a child everything, but on the part of food, they don't show a child much. It's only if the child is like a fool, and he does not receive anything you show him, then at least you will try and be showing such a child about food.

And as for a small child, a child is not sensible. Only the eyes and ears are open. A child has no sense apart from the sense you will show him. So when a child is young, you will show him what is forbidden, and show him what is good. A child is like a fish, and when a fish is dry, you cannot bend it. A child is like that, so when the child is young, you will be telling him, "If you do this, you will become good," or "If you do this, it is not good," or "If you do this, you will die." A child can do something that will spoil something, and you will talk to the child. And if the father or the mother tells the child, "Don't do this," and the child does it, they can whip the child. You don't use the *barazim* to whip a child. You will

just take a piece of rope or a piece of dry corn stock or any small stick that is around, and you will use that to whip the child. When the child is whipped two or three times, the child will know that what he is doing is wrong, and he will stop doing it.

It is not everything that they will whip a child to know, because there are many ways of keeping children. A child does not want you to beat him too much when he's young. When he's young and you beat him and he becomes hardened, then you cannot keep him again. You are telling lies. What he was fearing was the beating, and you have beat him and he is used to it. What will he fear? And so, "If you do that, I'll beat you": that one is better than if you beat him. You cannot force a child, because a child is not a sheep that you will tie. You will hold him with the tongue. And you will hold him with the eyes. These eyes alone, you will take your eyes and look at the child. You will look at the child with the eyes that you have never taken to look at somebody, and the child will know that the look you have looked at him is a bad look, because you have never looked at him like that. And if the child were going to be a bad child, he will become good. If the child has done wrong, he will know that he has done wrong, and tomorrow he won't do it again. And you take your mouth and you open it, and if the child were going to become bad, he will become good. And when you take your mouth and you talk to him, you use your eyes too.

A child does not like shouting, and a child does not want you to keep quiet. This is how some people keep their child. As the keeping of a child is not too much shouting, there can be a day the child will do the work of something that needs shouting, and you will not shout on him. And another day he will do something that does not need shouting, and you will shout on him. You know that fear will enter him. He knew that you will shout on him, but you didn't shout on him. As for this, it will make his heart lie down. And this is how the keeping of children goes. It is not a matter of shouting or beating the child.

And again, you will hold a child with money. And you will hold a child with food. But just to be giving money to the child or giving the child food to eat, that is not it. My child Osmanu, he's four years old, and when it's daybreak and he says he has not eaten, he will eat a few cedis from me. And his mother, he will eat her more than that. Such a child, if he roams, he knows about money. He will be roaming and he will always be coming back for money. Sometimes you won't have money, and you tell the child you don't have. And someday too, you will have it and he will come, and you just tell him the money is not there. The money is there and you know you have got it, but the child doesn't know you have got it. As for the child, the name of the child is: "It is there." As the child is sure that it

is there, when you tell him it's not there, he will become surprised, and such a child, you can hold him. But if you have children and you only know "It is there; it is there," you cannot hold the children.

And so in Dagbon, it's not that we don't give them money for eating; we give them. It is inside it that the children learn how to live. There is somebody who does not give money to his children; when it's daybreak, he doesn't care what the children will eat, and the mother too is the same. They only know the night food. And if your child is a friend to these children, why are they friends? If you give money to your child, he will go out and buy something, and his friends who don't get from their fathers will be following him. As they are following your child, it's not because they are sensible that they are making friends; it is hunger that shows them the friends. The one whose father doesn't give him knows that when he is moving with his friend and his friend buys something, his friend will give him some and his stomach will be full. And so how children live, where there is no eating, you won't see them there. A child plays in the house where he always eats and is satisfied. When you go somewhere and you see children gathered, playing, if you look inside the children, you will see the one who is the leader among them. If you watch and look, you will come to see that they eat in his house.

Sometimes when they go outside and one of them buys food and they eat, one of them will say, "As we've eaten, getting to some time, my mother will cook, so get up and we will go home and eat again." And they will pull one another to their houses. Sometimes the children will not be calling their friends, and their mothers will be asking, "But where are your friends?" And sometimes too their mothers will refuse them from calling their friends and say, "Why is it that you don't go to their houses and eat?" And the women who don't want other children to come and eat, sometimes it makes them quarrel with their own children. Their own children will refuse to eat the food they cook because of what they say. It is in this that we get to know good children. Such children, they don't want to eat alone. And when they get annoyed and they refuse to eat, sometimes their mothers will say, "All right. Go out and call your friends who are crying because of you. You can go out and call your friends." And when they go out and call their friends, you will see that their hearts will be white with the food. And even if they cannot eat food much, you will see that they will be eating a lot because they are happy. And as their mothers didn't like it, it will make them like it, and when they put their children's food, they will put it plenty, because they know that their children have got friends who will come and help them to eat.

Such children can be about four years old. As they are still small, they don't have their own money. And they don't know anything about getting money if not that their father or mother gives them. And it is inside this the children take themselves to be more than one another in age. And when they become old, they can take it and be asking one another, "When we were children, you were eating from my hands." And the way children live, sometimes when they grow up and they become householders, they can take their daughters and give wives to one another. And if they don't give them as wives to one another, they can give them as wives to their friends' children. Or God will let money come inside them, and as they were friends when they were young, when they grow up and they are still friends, it will make them good. All this, we have seen it. That is why Dagbamba say, "Good thoughts, good thoughts: they do good works." And that is the work of children when they are small. And that is the way children live when they are small until they grow up.

And the child whom they don't give and he hasn't got a good friend, it can show a child stealing. And in Dagbon here, we don't keep our children in the house; we let them roam. Truly, there can be someone too who will not allow his children to go out. Their eating and everything will be inside the house. Such children, it is not that they are bad children. You have not gone out: where will you learn something bad? These children of four or five years, they will follow someone to his house, and their mothers don't want them to be following that child. But the children will still be following him. They are not yet sensible and they are following one another, and as there is no sense, it doesn't matter. And so we take it that if a child roams, he will learn how to live. If you allow your children to go out and they are with their friends, if God doesn't like you, some of them will be bad, but if God likes you, some of them will be good.

And how children live, it is inside their playing that you can know the children who will become good and the children who will be useless. Because when children gather, old people look at them, and inside the playing of the children, the children have talks. Inside their playing they can become chiefs and make one another chiefs. They can say, "This one is a chief, and this one is a rich man, and this one is a *Limam*, and this one is the *Kamo-Naa*, or the *Lun-Naa*." When they are playing, they choose all these people. And when they are playing, they can give someone a nickname, and they will forget the name his mother and father called him and call him by the nickname. And inside the watching of old people, when children give someone a weak or a useless nickname, the child will also become a weak person. And in our eyes, they can call somebody a rich man, and they will be calling him, "*Bundana, bundana*," a wealthy man, and if God

likes him, he will become a rich man. And they can call somebody a small-money man, or a poor person, and he will be having only small money. Somebody can call his fellow friend, "Chief," and it will come to stand that the child will eat chieftaincy. And somebody will say, "I am a maalam," and he will come to become a maalam. And somebody will say, "I'm Limam," and he will become Limam.

And again, when they gather and play, a little thing happens and someone will cry: that child will also be useless. They have a game, and someone bends and someone comes to ride him. If you watch them, the one they ride, he will never prosper. And the one who rides him, if you follow him, whatever happens, he is someone who can become a chief. When they are gathered and you see a child who is always bringing himself out, the one who doesn't fear, and he is their leader, that child will not go back again. It is the playing of children that shows all this, and old people watch them like that. And so a child, how he starts is how he ends. When he starts with good works, he will end with good works; when he starts with bad works, he will end with bad works. And this is how it is on the part of children and their life.

And again, inside the watching of old people, when children are playing, before they leave one another they will quarrel. People say that where children are gathered, whatever happens, when they are going to disperse, if there is no quarrel there, then you must know that some bad thing is lying there. If they don't fight, you will look inside the thing and some talk will follow it. Wherever the children are playing, there will be quarrels, and fighting will come inside. This is how children live: "Come let us fight; come let us play." And so if you bring forth many children and they are playing with the children of other houses, you shouldn't enter into their quarrels. If you enter, you become a fool. Someone will have his children and will get up and go to the farm and leave them. And another man too can get up and go to the farm and leave his children. Before they come, one man's child will take a stone and knock and break open the head of the other man's child. And the one whose child's head is broken, they will tell him not to enter into the talk of children, because all children are one. And he will say, "As for me, I will not agree. I will take my child to the chief's house." And the other man will say, "I will shave the head of your child and put some medicine, and the blood won't come out again." And the man will say again he won't agree, and he will take his child and put his child on his shoulder to go to the chief's house. And the child will sit on the shoulder of his father, and he will tell the one who used a stone to break his head, "Wait for me. My father will take me to the chief's house. And then I will come and we will play." And the father will put the child

down. If the man was not a fool, his talk shows that he is a fool. Because every child is everybody's child. That is why we say that when children are quarreling, you shouldn't enter into their talks, because if you enter their talks, you will come to stand alone. A child's fighting does not go far, and so if you are an old person, when children are quarreling, you separate them, and that is all. And so the talk of children is very difficult to take and talk. And what I have been seeing as I have been watching them, this is what I have been telling you.

And truly, children are wonderful, because they can talk and their talk will do some work. And when they meet and they bring some talk, they can bring some bad things. And it's not their fault. As for a child, once he has said it, it's finished. His talk can do work, but truly, a child doesn't know. It is God Who has given the talk to the children, but it's not that they are doing it; it is we who are working it. About six or seven years ago [1971], the children have brought a dance they call *Kpara ni Jansi*, or *Atikatika*. That dance has brought some mouth-arguing in Dagbon. This *Kpara ni Jansi*, since Dagbon started, no one knew it, and since we have grown up, we have never heard of it anywhere. And so when the children started it, no one knew it, because *Kpara ni Jansi* is not a dance of Dagbon. Dances that are Dagbamba dances, there is no one you will ask and he will say he doesn't know them. But this *Kpara ni Jansi*, there are many people whom you will ask and they will say they have never heard of it. It wasn't long after you came that the children started it, and *Kpara ni Jansi* collected all Tamale, and it spread to the villages. Any time they were dancing, the old people would say, "This dancing these children have brought is not good." And old Dagbamba say, "A talk that has never happened and you do it, you will see some talk that has never happened." This is how Dagbon is. And since the time they brought this dance, our Dagbon has not been good.

I can tell you that even as we beat our drums, sometimes a chief is not there again, and we continue to beat the name of the chief and we don't stop. If that chief's line is there, whatever happens, that chief's line will come out to the open. That is how it is. When the children started their playing and started beating their drums, that was the time the old people said it will bring some bad talks into Dagbon. And when they said that, we also saw it. It has been some years now, and Dagbon is not yet made good. When a wolf cries and a goat is lost, who has caught it? Is it not the wolf that has caught it? Or is that not it? And so we have seen in Dagbon here. If they say something is forbidden, unless you do it before you will see. What is forbidden, no one has ever seen it. And what is forbidden does not walk. It is only watching you will watch. When they talk about something, you only watch. And so when the old people said it is not good, and

the children did it, we have seen. Our Dagbon is spoiled; that is what we have seen. And so we can say that it is the work of the dance, because when they started it, formerly Dagbon was not like that. If it was spoiled, it was not spoiled more than today. Trouble does not come because of nothing, and if trouble wants to come, it goes to attach itself to something. What the old people showed is that this Kpara ni Jansi was a sign or an example.

Do you understand? I can tell you that every person will die. Someone who is sick will die; someone who is not sick will die. When God says that his death should come, he will die, and he will not just sit down and die without a reason. A car can hit somebody and he will die, and we will say, "It is the car that has hit and killed him." And somebody will knock and kill somebody, and we will say, "It is the fellow who has knocked and killed him." Someone will knock his leg on a stone and fall and die, and we will say, "He knocked his leg against a stone and fell and died." If it is this or it is that, it is God Who already killed him, because it is God Who has let him touch that thing, or it is God Who said he should do that thing and die. And it was the time Dagbon was going to spoil that Kpara ni Jansi came. And so it's just like the way that no one will remain in this world: every talk has got its meaning, and this Kpara ni Jansi, when the old people said it was bad, we didn't argue. No one had ever heard it, and the children started dancing it. In Dagbon here, when the old people say, "This thing is bad," then it is truly bad. And that is how it is.

This *Kpara ni Jansi: be ɣman' taba*, it means "Baboons and monkeys: they look like one another." We have heard that the children have seen the dance in the film shows in the cinema. It is the dance of another town, and the children take it that those who dance it in the cinema look like monkeys and baboons who are dancing. The children took it and they are also dancing it in Dagbon here. As for the songs they sing, it's not that I don't want to show you; it's only that I don't stand to look at them, much less to hear them sing. And so I don't know anything about it; I only hear them beating. As I am sitting here, it's not all dances I go to stand and look, because a dance you are not supposed to see, you don't go to look at it. If you want their songs, you can go there and see it and ask. But you should know that it is proverbs which a person takes to do work.

I have told you that Kpara ni Jansi started in this Tamale, because it is in this town that we have more film shows. When the Tamale children started it, they gave it to Yendi people. And Savelugu also collected it. And it started going round the small villages. Whenever you went to any village, you would see them sewing Kpara ni Jansi dresses. In some towns, when they beat the drums of Kpara ni Jansi, the chief of the town would stop it because he didn't like it. And now

they have stopped them from dancing it in the villages. And in Dagbon now, when there are some old men sitting down and they see the children dancing it, as they said it will not bring good, sometimes they drive the children away. As the old men stop the children from dancing it, there will be a time and the children will come and start it again. And the old people will stop them again. But in this Tamale, when someone is doing something, whether it's good or not, no one has control over the other. That is why I think it is still in this town. And if it is not quarrels, then it is quarrels — everyday.

Formerly, the dances children would play and we would look at them, they were Dagbamba dances. And the children still dance them, and the old people don't stop them. By the time children are about four or six years old, they can start learning *Baamaaya* or *Takai*. They take broken pieces of calabash or they pick up things and they beat the dance. *Damba* did not come from the children, but when the children play, they dance it. If they gather and they are boys, they can make one of them a chief, and they can bring *Damba*. They will be saying it with their mouths and they will dance. Or when children get up, they can bring *Jera*. If they are girls, they can bring *Tora*. And *Tora* has not come from children, but when they are playing, they dance it. And if it is that they are girls and they are dancing *Tora*, we come and look at them. And if it is boys who come and dance *Takai*, we look at them. And so *Takai* and *Tora* have not come because of children, and the children didn't start it, but the children play *Takai* and *Tora*. And as for the children, when they can speak and when they can hear the playing of any music, at that time even they already know *Baamaaya*. You already know that my son *Osmanu* is about four and a half years now, and when he's playing, he knows *Baamaaya*, and *Takai*, and *Naanigoo*, and *Jera*. And so children play all these dances, but they are not the dances of children.

Baamaaya and *Tuubaankpilli* were there as our music in the nights like that until they started *Gumbɛ*. And this *Gumbɛ*, we didn't know it. *Gumbɛ* is not for us Dagbamba, but we heard it from somewhere. The *Kotokoli* people and the *Chemba* people and the *Bassari* people, they knew *Gumbɛ*, and truly, it is the play of the *Kotokolis*, and they were the people who brought it here. It is this *Gumbɛ* they have turned into *Simpa*, and *Gumbɛ* is not here again. Just as *Tuubaankpilli* has no name and *Baamaaya* has a name, it is the same thing: *Gumbɛ* has no name and *Simpa* has name. And I can say that *Simpa* has just entered Dagbon, and it is about forty or forty-five years now, because when I was a small boy in the house, they were beating *Gumbɛ*. And so it was not long ago. The time I went to the South and I came back to Tamale, that was when I knew *Simpa*. When they were playing *Gumbɛ*, the small children would just go and look at how they play it, and

it was the children who started it. When this Gumbɛ would come to a town, it was the children who danced it. And it came to a time and the young boys about eight or nine years old collected it, and any time it was night and they played Gumbɛ, all the young boys and the young girls would go. And it came to a time and the older boys collected it from the young children, and they called it Simpa. The drum they used when they started Gumbɛ was the wooden *dalgu*, the one we used to beat before we beat *timpana*. And they came to use a drum we call *taamaale* which is a flat, square drum, and they beat it with the hand; that was what they took when Gumbɛ truly came to be inside Dagbon. How I saw it myself, when Gumbɛ came out, they copied everything from the Kotokoli people. And I think it is that type of drum that the Kotokolis still use. And the drums the Simpa boys now use are a bit tall and round, and blacksmiths make them from metal; we call them *dalbihi*, *dalgu* children. And so it is only now that they have added these metal drums and other things. And the boys beat the drums, and the boys and the girls sing, and the girls will come out and dance.

And in the olden days, what Dagbamba children also knew and wanted was *Amajiro*. They bend down and they jump and turn. And this *Amajiro* was also the music of the young boys and the young girls, and they were playing it. And when it's night in the villages, the children don't have anything to do. After eating, the young girls can come out and start dancing *Lua*. And I think I have told you much about this *Lua* and how they dance it in the Damba Festival. It is inside this *Lua* that they throw each other and they fall. As for *Lua*, the village girls know it best. And the young children, to dance all of these dances, that was their playing in the night.

If they are not playing in their village, the other thing our children always like doing in the night is that if there is music in another town which is about three or four miles away, they can go there. From the olden days up till now, if there is another village where there is some playing, sometimes these children will say, "Let's take our playing too and go and show to the chief of that village." When they go to the play, they go with their friends, and when they come home, all their houses are asleep. They have to knock the doors before the houses will open. But when they knock, there is fear, because they can knock and the whole village will get up. And it's not sweet. When it's daybreak, the old people in the village will say, "You people are not looking after your children well. They come home in the midnight. They will become bad children." So if these children come, everybody will catch the wall of his house and climb and enter into the house. And every village child has climbed a wall to enter a house. All of us, we have climbed the walls and entered our houses like that. And that was how the village living was.

And so the way the children started Gumbɛ, and it's just the same as how the children also started dancing this Kpara ni Jansi. That is why I have been saying that children can bring bad and children can bring good. And about three or four years ago, they have also started another dance, and they call it *Anakulyera*. And this *Anakulyera* collected the whole of Tamale. I have not asked them the meaning, but if you hear "*A na kul yera*" in Dagbani, it is "You are still saying." That is how everybody knows it in Dagbon, and now the children have come to put it inside things and they are dancing it. Does anyone know its meaning? They don't sing songs, but as for the beating, I know it to be Amajiro, and it is the beating of Amajiro the children have taken to dance their dance, and they call it *Anakulyera*. And as we know Amajiro, we have been beating it for the women to dance at wedding houses, and now the children have brought a new dance to it. And so it is children who made the dance. And I have told you that how a child starts is how he will end. If you want to see our Dagbon way of life, you watch the children, because it is the children who start it, and it is from the children we see it. That is why we say that it is from the children the dances come.

Children bring good things into a town. In Dagbon, you can hear children singing songs, and since you were born, you have never heard that song. And so the children can start something and it will come to stand as something for the old people. As it is the children who started Kpara ni Jansi, maybe a time will come when they grow, and it will become an old dance to them. As they have stopped dancing Kpara ni Jansi, maybe *Anakulyera* will still be there. Other children will grow up to meet it, and it will be an old dance. Since Dagbon started, no one knew *Anakulyera*, but when they started taking Amajiro to dance *Anakulyera*, no one said that it was bad and I haven't heard of any bad talks inside it. *Anakulyera* is different from Kpara ni Jansi. I can tell you that *Anakulyera* is a good dance, and it is better. We go with *Anakulyera* and with Tora and Takai and Baamaaya to other places and even to the South. But truly, if I want I can say that even *Anakulyera* is useless. They are both useless. But it is Kpara ni Jansi that has spoiled the playing. As for Kpara ni Jansi dancers, they have never called them to go to other towns. The playing we grew up and met, they were very, very many, but now, have you seen that the children don't always play them again? They have come to start useless playing like Kpara ni Jansi.

And truly, apart from the songs and dances I have counted, these small children have got many games they play when they gather, and to me, they are very much more interesting than *Anakulyera* or Kpara ni Jansi. What are they? They are *Biɛyyaaneeya*, *Tuutire*, *Saamiya Murga*, *Sibri Sibri*, *Kuraya Kuraya*, and many others. All of them, Dagbamba children play them, and every child knows

them. Biɛyɔaaneeya, Kuraya Kuraya and the others, we didn't hear any bad talk inside them. But when they brought this Kpara ni Jansi and Anakulyera, we have seen. The children all get up and meet playing, and all these types of playing I have counted, we all grew up and met them. And our forefathers met them. None of them is a stranger in Dagbon here. But Kpara ni Jansi and Anakulyera, they are strangers here. Have you seen? Even to the children, they are strangers. But there are many types of playing that are not strangers in Dagbon here, and I think that some of them are not strangers even in any town. I don't know about your place, but I will show you the types of playing our children have here.

In Dagbon here, any place children play, in the mornings or afternoons or evenings, they play Biɛyɔaaneeya, "Day has broken," and they also call it *Biɛyɔamooya*, "Day is reddened." Any Dagbana child who gets up, that is his play. This Biɛyɔaaneeya: one will go outside, and one will be in the room. And the one outside will ask "Biɛyɔaaneeya?" And he will say, "Day is not broken." And the child outside will ask like that about four times. His friend is looking for a hiding place; that is why he is telling him "Day is not broken." When he finishes hiding, he will say, "Yes, day has broken." And the other one outside will enter into the room. If it is inside the compound, or inside a room, he will start looking, and he will be looking, looking, looking, looking. If he comes to see his friend, he will say, "Are you not the one?" And they will laugh, "Ha, ha, ha, ha." And then the one he has caught will also go outside and will be asking like that. Somebody can be searching for someone and will not be able to find him. And to us Dagbamba, we say that they are showing one another sense in the hiding. And we also got up and met it. And so this Biɛyɔaaneeya, the child's friend runs and hides, and he will go and be looking for him and saying, "The day is breaking." And when he walks around and he sees him, then it is Biɛyɔaaneeya. That is its meaning. And how it is, there is somebody, and he will come and knock someone: *kpo!* And he will say, "Are you not the one lying down?" Somebody can take something and put it to cover himself, and you will come and step on him and not know that he is the one. And if you search for him and you become tired, and you come to see him, you will knock him with a fist. And the children will be doing all this and be laughing. This is how it is.

And one that is adding is a night play. It is Tuutire, and every child knows it. We have something called *tizuyu*; it is the thing you put on your head to carry a load, either some rolled grass or a rolled scarf. When the old people carry things from the bush and come and put this *tizuyu* down, the children will come and take it. And they will be running and hiding from one another. When you see your friend, you take it and throw it at him. When you hit him with it, then you have

caught him. He will come and press against a wall and you will ride him. And you will call “Tuutire,” and the others will come. And you will take the tizuyu and throw it up. The one who catches it will also come and ride the one you rode. If no one catches it and it falls on the ground, the one they were riding will run and take the tizuyu and follow the other children. And when he reaches someone too, he will throw it and hit the fellow. He has caught him. And this is what they will do till they go round one another. Sometimes the children will play it until midnight, and some of their people have locked their houses and left them outside, and the children will go and sleep in the houses of one another, or they will climb the walls and enter their houses. And Dagbamba children have that game.

And they have Saamiya Murga, “Remove the reed.” It is another game our Dagbamba children play. They take a grass reed from a broom and they gather round with the grass in the middle. The children will take their hands and press the ground, and say “*Saamiya murga, saa saa murga; saa saamiya murga, saa saa murga,*” that is, “Remove the weed; remove, remove the reed.” And one boy will run and come and remove the grass and run away. If they don’t catch him, he is free. If they catch him, they will be beating him with closed fists. Sometimes they will beat someone like that till he cries. But it is not fighting. It is a game children play. It’s not for grown-ups, but grown-ups look at them. Grown-ups watch them because grown-ups were also children.

Children play Sibri Sibri. Sibri is just a name for a girl, and Sibri Sibri is like a dance. The children come out and make a line, and they catch the waists of one another and will be going round. The one who is in front leading will say, “*Sibri, Sibri, Sibri; Sibri yaa yoo,*” and they will respond, “*Yaa Sibri.*” And they will let go of each other’s waists and run around and then catch the waist of one another again. And children play that one too, and grown-ups look at them because when they were children they were also playing it. And this Sibri Sibri, grown-ups dance it now. Sometimes when they go to weddings, they dance it.

And again, they will go and get stones that are as big as a fist, and they will sit down. They will sing “*Kuraya Kuraya, Kurjanjan,*” and they will be giving the stones to one another passing the stones round in the circle. And the one with two stones in front of him, if he takes one and is not able to pass it, they will close their fists and knock him. And it will be from him that they will start the game again. They can play like that for more than four hours.

And there are other games too. Children play *A daa lan daai ma, daam’ ka lan nya*, that is “You last pushed me; push me again and see.” They gather and then they push one another. When one pushes his friend, his friend too will push him. And he will say, “*A daa lan daai ma, daam’ ka lan nya.*” And they will be

pushing each other. And another thing children do is *Vooli*, and they will take a piece of rope, and some will catch hold of one end and others will hold the other end, and they will be pulling each other. That is another game our Dagbamba children play. And they also have *Salangbari*. They stand in a circle and put their arms around each other's waists, and then they run backwards until some of them fall down. And they will do it again. They have another game that they play, and they take sand and throw it behind them. And they will be singing, "*Nooparsima yayli*." It means that a hen has scratched the ground and scattered the groundnuts, and a hen's anus is like a groundnut. It is also a play that children were playing.

Truly, the games children play are many, and some of them, it is only at certain times that they play them. The boys and the girls in the village have something they do on the sixteenth day of the *Noloribila* moon, that is, the "small mouth-tying" moon — the month just before the Ramadan fast. In the night, about ten o'clock, all the small children come out, and each one will have either a ladle or a calabash. And they will be running to the place where water is, and be singing "*Ŋum mali cherga, ŋun chem kulga; jaa naa jee, ti chem kulga*." It means, "The one who has a ladle, he should take it to fetch water; let's go for water." And they will sing this song and go and fetch water and come. And the boys and girls will give water to their mothers. And it is this water their mothers will take to boil *dawadawa* they will use to cook during the fasting. The village children, that is another thing they do, and they take it to play Noloribila month.

And these plays, Kuraya Kuraya and the others, we haven't heard any bad talk inside them. It is only Kpara ni Jansi that is a useless play, and when they brought it, we have seen. It has spoiled the playing of children. But all the others I have counted are the playing of children, and when they gather, these are the games they play. And they will be playing and laughing. And when you yourself see it, you will also be laughing. And so these are the games and the dances children play in Dagbon. And as we are all sitting down, we have all played them.

And how children live, these young children, by the time they are four years old getting to five or six years, the parents can send them to school. If a woman gives birth and comes back to the husband's house, if God agrees and she gives birth again and the children are two, if the man is a Muslim, he will take the older child and give him to a maalam to be learning the Holy Qur'an. And the way small children learn the Holy Qur'an, it is from someone who has patience. This maalam does nothing for the children apart from teaching them the Holy Qur'an. Every morning, by seven o'clock, the children are in the Muslim school. Sometimes they read before they come home to eat and then go back to the school. And every maalam's child is in the Muslim school, but as for those who only pray

but cannot read, it is not all of their children who are in the school. Sometimes it is the child who will let his father send him to school. When a child grows and he is coming to get sense, maybe the father will not send him to school, and he will go and tell his father, "Send me to school." He has been seeing his friends going, and so if he too goes, it will make his heart white.

If you have many children, every child will want what he will learn. If they are girls or boys that you have given birth to, they will all show you what they want to learn. A child can say you should put him in the Arabic school. Another child can say, "Take me and I will go to school to learn English." Those who get to learn how to read Arabic or English, they will be about four or five years old. And there is a child who doesn't want school, and when he gets to about fifteen years, he will say, "I don't want this learning; take me and I will learn how to be a tailor."

And I can say that those who go to school have more sense than those who learn how to sew. And I can say that they are more foolish than those learning to sew. Why do I say that? It is where people are many that a person gets sense, and it is where there are many people that there is foolishness. If you want to get people who do bad and if you want to get people who know what is good, if you don't get them from those who attend the Arabic and English schools, you won't get them anywhere. And as a child is in the school and he is small, they are showing him sense. And what is in the Holy Qur'an, that is what they take to show him. Respect your father. If you do this to your mother or father, it's not good. Don't sit down and your father will call you, and you will hear him and you will not answer. Don't demean who your father is. Don't let your mother call you and you hear and you don't answer. Respect all your fellow fathers. Respect all your fellow mothers. As a child is in the school, they show him all this, how to grow up and hold himself and his parents. And what they are showing him, he will hear it.

But everybody cannot become one, and this is why I am saying that there is sense and there is foolishness. The child God has not made, if you want you can take all the sense of Dagbon and put it in front of him, he's still going to stand a fool. If the children are many and your own child is one God has not made, he will also be a fool. And if your child is wise, when he hears what they tell him about the people God has written of in the Holy Qur'an, then he will have sense. That is how the school is: there is sense and foolishness. And the way the child who goes to school is, it is in the school that his face will become hard, and it will not look as if he has a father and a mother. He doesn't look as if he has somebody, and it is only the time he's on holidays and he comes home that he will know that he has people. This is how the school child is.

And the children who are still small and they tell you they will go and learn tailoring or fitting [mechanical work], as for their getting and spending, they will never eat money and be satisfied. Everyday, they will be getting small money, and their work shows them how to eat money. If you are keeping them and they come to lose the work, if you don't take your time, they will come to steal. They are used to eating money, and you the father haven't got, and they are going to take their way of eating and come to put it on you. Whatever happens, they will come to do some work that is by the side of stealing. And whatever happens, you the one who has given birth to them, your name will be inside it. People will say, "This man's child."

So to me, I think that if you have your children, it's better that they should go to the school. And if your children are many, you should put them in both sides of schooling so that some of them will be reading Arabic and some of them will be reading English. It is in the schools that the children learn to live with one another. But when somebody goes to sit with a tailor or a fitter, he doesn't know the thing in his house. Inside tailoring or fitting, there is nothing like "Fear your father," or "Take another old man to be your father." There is nothing like that. That is why I am saying that when someone gives birth to his children, he should put them in the Arabic and English schools. The one who takes his children and sends them to the schools, they will not be roaming anywhere and learn bad, because they are always in the school. And it is another way of keeping children.

I myself, as I am sitting, I did not go to school, and I can't read or write. But as for sense on the part of this Dagbon, I am having it. And it's because I am from the village, and I was brought up in the village. And so if I want to take the talk of children and how they grow up, it is also good if I talk about how these children grow up in the villages, and how they suffer and how they get sense. Because the living style in the village is far different from that of the towns. And the village children too are different from the town children. And so to take it and talk, tomorrow I will start with the life of the young girls and the work they are doing when they are small and how their mothers and their aunts and their grandmothers train them up to the time they get husbands. And then I will take it and join it on the part of the village boys.