

Chapter III–17: *How Dagbamba Marry*

Today I'm going to talk about how to find a wife in our tradition here. And inside it, there are differences, because the typical Dagbamba are there and the Muslims are also there. And I will start it on the part of the Dagbamba, and I will also tell you how I got my wives. And truly, we drummers don't suffer to get wives. I have already told you how they gave my mother to my father. During the olden days, we drummers didn't use a lot of money to get a wife. Even now, to get a wife is somehow easy for us. The woman likes you; the parents like you: how will you suffer or spend much? Something which doesn't want you is the thing you will spend a lot to get. When my mother's father gave her to my father, he knew that my mother liked my father and would be happy to marry him: that is why he gave her to him. If her father knew that she didn't want him, he wouldn't have given her to my father. It was not difficult. This is how it is with us drummers, and it is just because of our respect and our good way of living.

Yesterday I told you that when a boy grows up, his father will look for a wife for him. And again, sometimes a boy will want a wife, and it is that he will use his own sense to look for the woman. Sometimes the boy's father will not get the woman for him, and the boy will see an elderly person, and he will always greet the old man. How does he greet him? This boy might be a very good farmer. When he farms and he gets, say, yams, and he is coming home, he will bring some yams to the old man. Sometimes when he goes to the farm and he's coming home, when it is cold, he will cut some wood and bring it and give to the old man to make fire. That is what he will be doing. We have some grass we call kayli. It grows in swampy areas, and we use it to weave doors. This boy can go to the bush and cut it and come and weave the door. He can give it to the old man and say that he should take it and give to his mother to place on the door of the small children. This is what he does, and he will be doing it until the man will ask him, "What do you want from me?" And the boy will say, "It is not because of anything. I have only seen that you are like my father. That is why I am greeting you."

The old man will sit down and nod his head and say, "Oh! What this boy is doing to me, he is putting me into shame. I will put him into a house." The meaning of "putting him into a house" is that he will give him a wife. At that time, the old man will tell the boy to go and get his elders, and the boy will go and tell his father, "I have been greeting this man in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and he says I should come and call you." And the father will get up and go. When he goes, the old man will tell him, "My child has been greeting me a

lot, and he has been putting me into shame. That is why I want to put him into a house. And so I want to give so-and-so girl to you, and you will give her to him to be fetching water for him to drink.” The reason he says she will be fetching water is from our custom. We call a new wife, or the junior wife, as the water-fetcher, Komlana. If you come from outside, or if you get a stranger, in our custom she will bring water to for you or for the stranger to drink. And so when the father of the boy hears this talk from the old man, the father will go home and ask his child, “Is this what you have done? What you have done is very sweet for me, because I had no money to get a wife for you. And so what you have done is very sweet for all of us.” And he will get his elders and they will go, and the old man and his people will give the girl to them, and they will also go and give the girl to the boy. And so in Dagbon here, some children use their own sense to get wives.

Sometimes you may want an old woman’s daughter. If you are like some people, you will go to the bush and cut firewood. And it is because you want the daughter that you will be cutting firewood and giving it to the old lady. One day she will call you and say, “Why are you giving me firewood all the time? What do you want from me?” And you will say, “I am not after anything. I am just giving you.” And the old lady will say, “All right. You have been giving me firewood all the time, and I have nothing to give you. And I don’t have medicine to give you. And I have asked you, and you said you don’t need anything. Then what do you want from me?” In about one week, you will go to the farm and get some yams and bring them to the old lady. And again, during the olden days we were not using the modern wooden doors; we were using woven doors. If you see that the old lady’s door is not fine, you can go to the bush, cut some grass, and use it to weave a door and bring it to the old lady. At that time, the old lady will tell you that when you get to your house, you should call your father to come and see her.

When you get to the house, you will tell your father, “My grandmother over there is calling you.” And your father will ask, “Where is she?” And you will direct him to the house the old lady is in. If your father goes to greet this old lady, she will tell everything to him. She will say, “I am here all the time, and your son has always been cutting firewood for me and giving me many other things. And I don’t know what he wants from me, and I have nothing to give him. And so I am giving you my daughter to go and give to him so that she will be fetching water for him to drink.” And then your father will leave for the house.

When your father gets home, if he has a brother or a senior brother or an uncle, he will also tell him, “I was called by a certain old lady, and she told me that our son has always been giving her many things. And so when I went to the old lady, she has given me a daughter to give to our son.” And then they will say, “We have to find some cola.” And they will get cola, and then get twenty

pesewas, and then get a white cock, and then some pito in a gourd. And they will get some yams and tie them. Your father is not going to go to the old lady again. He has to find some friends to carry all these things to that old lady. One person will carry the yams, and another will carry the pito, and they will gather everything and go. They won't go straight to the old lady herself. They will find some friends of the old lady to lead them to the old lady's house. When they get there, they will tell the old lady, "You have given a wife to our son. That is why we have come to greet you. And so get this white cock and slaughter it to make your heart white as the cock is white. And then drink this pito and be happy, too. And get this yam to make fufu for your whole house to eat." And when the old lady's housepeople have eaten the fufu, they will all know that they have given their daughter to somebody who will be able to feed her. And the next day, the old lady will share the cola among her sitting friends, the friends she always sits with, that they should "go and give this cola to this person and this person, that I am giving my daughter to a man, and this is the cola he gave me that I am giving." And by then, everybody will know that they have given their daughter to a husband.

And so that is it: if you want to marry a woman in Dagbon here, you have to be respecting the people who are holding the woman. You have to be respecting the father and the mother of that woman, and sometimes you will not even see the woman herself, but only the father and the mother. And this respect you are giving them is like what? You have to be going to the father's house to be saying "good morning," "good afternoon," and "good evening". If the father is someone who smokes, you can buy either cigarettes or tobacco for him. Or if the father is somebody who chews cola nuts, you buy cola nuts for him. After this, the next one will be that whenever you are going there, you will go with twenty pesewas. From this twenty pesewas, it will go to ten shillings, and from ten shillings, it will go to two cedis. And the time you are giving this respect by greeting the father with all these things, he will ask you, "What do you want from me?" And you will say, "I have just seen you to be somebody like my father. That is why I am greeting you." And when he hears this, he will say, "All right. It doesn't matter. God will never put me into shame."

I myself, as I am sitting, I have seen this. My father was living with an old woman. Any time it was daybreak, my father would go to the old woman's house, and they would sit down and converse. At that time, I was still very young. I was about fifteen years old when my father died, but when I was young, I used to see my father go to the old woman's house every day. And it happened that this woman fell sick. Any time I went to the farm, I searched for some small pieces of wood we call tigbirgu; that's the stumps of trees. I used to get a basket of this

wood and bring it home to the woman to make fire. This was what I was doing for the woman, and my father was greeting her. I was always bringing her firewood, and my father was always greeting this woman, up until the time that my father died. When my father died, I didn't stop greeting this woman, and a few years later this woman also died.

When she died, she left her daughter, and her daughter was also an elderly woman. As my father always used to greet her mother and I used to get firewood for her mother, she knew of it. And one day she told me that I should call my senior brother Mumuni for her. At that time, I had left Voggo and moved to Nanton, and I went and called Mumuni. And she told my brother, "Truly, when they say an old person doesn't die, it doesn't mean anything. If there is a person with sense in a family, and the elder person of the family dies, it shows that the elder person has not died. And here it is: when my mother was living, Ibrahim's father used to greet her every day, and Ibrahim himself used to greet her by bringing firewood for her every day. And now my mother is not there, and Ibrahim's father is also not there. And I am still living, and you Mumuni, you are also living, and Ibrahim is living. And I have also given birth, and my children too have given birth to granddaughters and grandsons. And so I will give Fati to you, and you will give her to Ibrahim." And she gave Fati to me. And at that time I was about twenty years old, and during our time, we used to fear women, and somebody of eighteen or twenty or twenty-two years could not go after a woman, and he could not even play with a woman. And I told my brother I could not keep a woman, and I was second to Alhassan's father, Abdul-Rahaman, and so they should give the woman to Alhassan's father. And they gave Fati to Alhassan's father, and Alhassan's father was following them till they took Fati to his house. Fati has got about six children now. And this was how I used my sense to get a wife, and I gave her to my brother.

And so in Dagbon here, a small boy can get a wife for an older person, and an older person can get a wife for a younger person. You know my brother Sumaani. He was here when you first came, but now he is in the South, in Kumasi. I got a wife for Sumaani. After I sat in Kumasi, I came back to Tamale, and within a year I had a wife. When I had that wife, it wasn't three months and two other woman fell and said, "Unless you." The time I came to Tamale here, the women wanted me just like that, and so when I was going to get women, I had three of them within a year. And I said, "I will have two, and I will give one to Sumaani."

How did I get three wives in a year? One was Marta, the mother of Fatawu; she has died. Another was Gurumpaya; she gave birth to three children. Fatawu's mother was my friend at Kintampo. When I was in Kintampo drumming, that was

the time they used to catch soldiers. They brought Fatawu's mother there, and she used to play the rattle with the goonjis. I befriended her there, and then she came back to Tamale. How did I befriend Marta? In Dagbon here, when you want to befriend a girl, you will get some money and give her. And so Marta, it was a shilling I gave her at Kintampo, and that was what I used to befriend her. If she has no husband, and God says that she is your wife, you will get her. This is what we do in Dagbon. Everyone has his way of marrying. Someone will give the friendship money and get a woman, and others don't do that. Sometimes someone will see a girl and like her, and he will only befriend the girl through the father and mother, and it will be they who give the girl to him. And someone will befriend the girl and at the same time go to see the father and mother, too. That is how it is.

I was in Kintampo until I left for Kumasi, and I later left Kumasi and came back to Dagbon here. At that time, Fatawu's mother was given to a man at Nalerigu, and when I came home, I didn't see her. I saw Gurumpaya, and I befriended her. And I also saw Ayishetu, and I befriended her. When I befriended all of them, Gurumpaya told me that she loved me, and so I should go to her people. And Gurumpaya's father had died a long time before, and so I went and greeted Gurumpaya's mother. And the mother said, "As it is, you can even take her, and then later on come to greet us." And Ayishetu's mother also called me and said I should marry Ayishetu because she was very much in love with me. It was not long when Fatawu's mother ran away from Nalerigu and came to Tamale where the goonjis were staying. She had heard of me, and that was why she came here, and when she came, she came straight to my house. She told me the same thing that Gurumpaya had told me. And she was my first friend.

And I sat down quietly. I didn't know how to catch it. According to our custom, one person does not marry two wives within a year. And so I went and consulted an elderly man. And I asked the old man, "If you have three women loving you within a year, what do you do?" And he told me, "Truly, if you have the means, you can marry two women within a year. But you cannot marry three women within a year." And I went and asked a maalam, and the maalam said, "The reason why the Dagbamba don't marry two in a year: there is nothing wrong, but it is only if you are not strong and you take one, then when you take the other, you will be weak." And I said, "It doesn't matter."

The only work I was doing at that time apart from playing the drums was that I was painting the iron hats of soldiers who had returned from the war. And truly, I was getting a lot of money from that work. I used to buy different types of paint from the market — yellow, green, white, blue — every color was there. I could go and buy a hat for twenty pesewas, and after painting it, I could sell it for

two cedis or at least one cedi and fifty. And it was a lot of money in those days. And so I told the maalam, “It doesn’t matter. Strength is there.”

And I went to the goonjis’ area, and I asked of Fatawu’s mother, and they told me that she had already been given to somebody and so they could not give her to me, but they said if I wanted to take her, I could take her. Do you see how we drummers marry? When we marry, they don’t get anything from you. Even if you collect somebody’s wife, they don’t do anything to you. And so I took Marta, Fatawu’s mother, first. I went with my elders and greeted her housepeople, and they agreed. The time we greeted them, the only thing her housepeople asked me was, “What is your way?” According to our custom, when they want to ask such a thing, they ask the name of the one who is holding you. And my brother Adam — Mangulana — said, “He is my brother,” and our father Alhassan Lumbila the old man said, “He is my brother’s son. And so he has come home to me. I am for him.” And they asked for the one who was holding me at Nanton, and my brother said that Nanton Lun-Naa is for me at Nanton. And the woman’s housepeople said, “It that is so, then everything is on the correct road.” And they gave the woman to our father to give to Adam to give to me.

When I married Fatawu’s mother, after three months, Gurumpaya said that she would not marry anyone unless she marries me. And as I asked the maalams, and they said that if I had strength I could marry her, I went and greeted her housepeople. And her housepeople also asked my way of life. And they told them that, “It is just now that he has been given a wife. If he were a useless man, they wouldn’t have given the wife to him.” And within three months they gave Gurumpaya to me.

And Ayishetu too was waiting for me to marry her. And I asked my brother Sumaani, “Do you want a wife?” And he said, “Yes.” I took Sumaani to the Tishigu area of this Tamale to greet Ayishetu’s relatives in their house. When we went, I said, “I want to give Ayishetu to my brother here.” And Ayishetu’s mother said, “As an elder man gets a wife to give to a younger man, so too a younger man can get a wife to give to an elder man. And if it is good, it is you. And if it is bad, it is you.” And Ayishetu didn’t refuse. And they gave Ayishetu to my brother Sumaani. When she came, she gave birth to Mahamadu and Harruna, and they died. And she gave birth to Zuweratu and Fati, and Fati has now given birth to three children.

Within three months, my senior wife was pregnant, and in nine months she gave birth to my senior son Abdulai. It was on a Saturday, and it was the twenty-seventh day of the Chimsi month. And I think it was in 1949. And the second woman gave birth in 1951. She gave birth to Zuwera, and Zuwera is now a grown woman, and she has brought forth three children. If I had not had a good

character, I would not have got my wives. And so if you are human being and you get up, you should have good character.

This is what I did and had my wives. And truly, the two of them are no more with me: one of them died and the other one left me. At present I have three wives again, and I married them in the same way, too. And so as for us drummers, we don't marry with difficulty. Sometimes we don't even go to befriend a woman, but she will come and marry you. If you think I am telling lies, there are other drummers, and you should ask them whether it sometimes happens that a drummer will not go after a girl but the girl will run and come and marry him. They will tell you that it is very common. And so this is how I had my wives. Someone will get up and greet the relatives of a girl for a very long time, but he will not get the girl. Sometimes the girl will be given to him, but the girl will refuse him. Sometimes they will say that he is a useless person and they will not give the girl to him. But as for me, I have a good name. When I go to search for someone's daughter, they don't refuse me.

My son Alhassan is now up to about thirty years, and he has got a wife and given birth to children. He used my name to get the wife. When he went to search for the girl, they asked him, "Who is your father?" And he said it was I. Even if Alhassan were to have been a useless person, because of me he has been given a wife and he has given birth to a son. And so a person's good name gives him something and gives his people something. And so in Dagbon here, this is how we search for our women.

Sometimes if you don't meet me in the house, it is because somebody will be looking for a girl and will ask me to follow him to the father of the girl. Last Thursday you were sitting with me when a stranger from Bimbila came. Did you see him? He came to me because of a girl. That fellow saw the girl and told her he likes her, and the girl also said she likes him, and she told him to see her father. The father is living in Tamale, and he is my friend. And this man is in Bimbila, but his brother there is also my friend. And so the man told his brother that the girl has told him to go to see her father, but he doesn't know who can lead him to the father's house. And his brother said, "As for that, I have got a friend called Ibrahim in Tamale. And so you can go to him and tell him that I said he should lead you to the father of the girl." And he came to me. When he arrived at my house, I sent somebody to tell the father that I was coming with a stranger, and I took him there. And the father of the girl told me, "Yes. I know you Ibrahim to be a good person, and you know good people, too. And because it is you who is leading them to look for the girl, I have to agree. I know very well that you will not pull me into thorns. And so tomorrow you should come to me, and I will also gather my people around." The next day the man from Bimbila came to me with

twenty pounds, and a full bowl of cola, and four cedis for the maalam for the prayers they would make. That was the day you and I went to Yendi, and I had wanted us to go earlier, but because of this matter we went late. You know Alhaji Shahadu, the maalam you always greet: that morning, I put him at my back to go and greet the girl's father. When we went, the father agreed. Only one person was not there, and they said we should wait for that person. While we were waiting, I told the father, "I have got a friend whom I am going to accompany to Yendi, and if I continue waiting here, we will be late." And the father said, "As for that, you can leave. Even if you didn't come yourself, and you only sent people to carry your name to me, I would agree." And you and I went to Yendi, and when we came back, everything was all right.

In Dagbon, as we are sitting, if you are given a wife, you get a calabash full of cola, and if you have been greeting her housepeople, formerly you would get about ten cedis. If you haven't been greeting them, it would be about forty cedis and the cola. Then you get the maalam who will pray and get about two cedis to give them. When you do all this, the housepeople will know that they have not given their daughter uselessly. And I also did all that when they gave my first wife to me.

And the girl they have given to you, if at that time she is just a child, she will be staying with her mother or her grandmother in the house until the time she is grown up. Truly, in the olden days, to get a wife was very hard. You had to be begging the mother and father of the child until the child would grow. Sometimes you will be giving money to a certain man, and he will not even have a girl to give you. If it happens like that, then he has to send to his sister or his uncle or his brother to give him a girl so that he will also give the girl to you. It is just because he is in shame. His sister or his relative will give him a girl, and he will call the father of the one greeting him, and he will say, "I am going to give my child to your son, and so I would like you to call your sitting friends to come to me. And I will give my daughter to them to give to your bachelor, and she will be fetching water for him to be drinking." The father will call all his sitting friends and tell them, "Tomorrow everybody must get ready and go to such-and-such person's house and get a wife for my son."

The day they will go, they have to buy a hundred pieces of cola. In the old days, when they bought this cola, they would add twenty pesewas on top. And they would get a full pot of pito, and a white cock. They would add all this together to give it to the father of the girl. When these people arrive at the girl's father's house, they will say, "You have called us to come for your daughter, and we have come today." They will give what they have brought to the father, and he will receive it and tell them, "I have given this daughter to you to give her to your son, and she will be fetching water for your son to be drinking."

When the father says that, they will say, “We have also agreed. And we greet you.” After they have given all the things they have brought, they will call a maalam to come and say some prayers. If there is no maalam in the village, they will send back to their village and bring a maalam from there. After the prayers, the maalam will say, “Yes, today I have come to sit and bear witness that you are giving your daughter to this man’s son. And may God bless you and bless them all. And may God let them have good children.” And by then, they will go back to their village, and when they get there, they will tell the father of the boy, “Yes, we have gone, and the father of the girl accepted. And so the girl is now for your son.”

When they go and greet like that, as the girl has been given to the bachelor, she is still in her father’s house. It will take about four days, and the boy’s people will send another fifty pieces of cola and add twenty pesewas and greet the girl’s father again. As for this modern time, the amount of money has changed, but I am going to talk on the part of the olden-days giving. As everything has changed, the giving cola and money is still there, and it is only that the amount of money has changed. If the girl is matured, then the husband has to decide on the day he wants them to bring her to his house. But if the girl is not yet matured, she will continue to live with her father and mother until she has matured. If she is still in her father’s house, whenever there is a day of general prayers, when it is time for the Eid’ Festival, the praying festival after the month of Ramadan, or in the Chimsi Festival, the husband will have to go to the girl’s father or mother with a guinea fowl and some yams. He will have to be sending the guinea fowl and yams every time of general prayers, up to the time when the girl is matured. All the other festivals, too — Buyim, Damba, and Kpini — if he has the means, he will be sending these things.

If anyone in the family of the girl dies, the husband has to perform the funeral. If the one who dies is a woman, if it was the olden days, he had to go with four pesewas, but it came to a time he had to go with fourteen pesewas. If it was a man who died, he had to go with thirteen pesewas, but in the very olden days it was three pesewas. If the man was a chief, it was thirty-three pesewas. If it was a matured woman, it was forty-four pesewas. If it was the grandmother or grandfather of the girl or an uncle of the girl, he had to attend with funeral with one pound, and give it to the wife to sacrifice for the death. If it was a mother or a father of the girl, he had to go with a sheep and a half-piece of cloth, and some people added one cedi twenty pesewas and twelve pieces of cola. That is it if anyone in the family of the girl dies. He is showing that he is the husband of the girl. But the girl is still living in her parents’ house and not yet at her husband’s house.

By the time the girl is up to the age of getting menstruation, her mother will know that her daughter is now at the time of marriage. Her father's housepeople will send somebody to tell the boy's father, "I am giving my daughter to your son, and this is the day I have fixed to give her to him." Usually, they used to fix either a Wednesday or a Saturday; these two days are the days we get our wives in the traditional way. If they don't send her to your house on a Wednesday, then it might be on a Saturday. The reason why they do this is that if you are lucky on these two days, you will get more good luck, and if you have bad luck, you will keep on getting bad luck. And a marriage is good luck. That is how these two days are. It is still there, and today and tomorrow, it is still happening like that.

When the day comes for them to send the girl to the husband's house, they will get a calabash with a lid, and they will get a white cloth woven by the local weavers. They will add the cloth to the calabash and give it to a little girl. And they will get a boy about the age of Kissmal, about eighteen or twenty years or so. In the evening time, the father of the girl will ask the young boy and the little girl to send the wife to her husband's house. It is the little girl who is going to carry the calabash, and that calabash is the one the wife is going to use to fetch water for her husband, because in Dagbon, when the father is giving out the girl, he will say, "Get this child and give to this bachelor, and she will be fetching water for him to drink." The little girl carrying the calabash will hold it on her side. And the boy who is going to take the wife to her husband's house will hold a walking stick. The little girl carrying the calabash and the cloth will lead, and the boy will follow with the wife they are sending to the husband's house. The way they walk, the boy will be beside her or behind her. Sometimes when they tell the girl that they are sending her to her husband, she will try to run away, and whenever the girl is refusing to go, the boy will beat her with the walking stick, and she will follow the right way to her husband's house. And so when they send her, she will not be walking straightforward. She will just be walking side by side, and it means that she is not willing to go. Even though in her heart, she loves the husband, she will be walking like that. It's an old talk. It shows that you are used to enjoying your father's house and now you are moving to another house. And the boy holding the walking stick will be telling the girl, "If you don't walk correctly on the way, or if you try to move away, I will beat you with the walking stick." If you the husband stay in the same town as the wife, they will usually send the girl by six-thirty in the evening. If you stay far away, they will send your wife so that she will arrive at least by seven o'clock. When they reach your house, the boy sending the girl will greet, and he will tell your father, "Such-and-such a person has sent me to bring this wife for you to give to your son, and she will be fetching water for your son to be drinking." And at that time they will bring water for the strangers to drink.

The time they arrive to put her in the house, they will go first to tell the father of the husband. By then they will ask the new wife and the little girl carrying the calabash and the cloth to enter a room. When they first send a wife to her husband's house in Dagbon here, they don't put her in the husband's room. The father will call his senior wife to come and take the girl to her room. She will stay there and be fetching water into the pot of the senior wife. On that evening the husband's father will get a hen, and as he is sitting, he will call the young boy who has brought the girl for his son, and say, "Get this hen and send it back inside the house for cooking soup." The boy will hold the hen and say, "May God bless all of us," and they will slaughter the hen. Someone who has the means will let them prepare fufu, and someone without means will make sayim. And they will cook, and they will eat. By that time, the new wife is feeling shy; she cannot eat. If she eats, in our traditional way, we blame her.

When day breaks, they will get cola again, twelve cola, and they will add twenty pesewas and give it to the young boy who brought the wife and say, "This is your safe journey," and the boy and the little girl will go back. When they reach home, they will greet the father of the girl and tell him, "As we have sent the girl to her husband's house, this is what they have given us as our safe journey." The father of the girl will receive it and take five pesewas and give it to the boy, and give two-and-a-half pesewas to the little girl. The remaining money will be changed into two-and-a-half pesewas, one pesewa, one-half pesewa, and they will share it in the house among those who have given witness that they have given the girl to a husband, and the father of the girl will share the cola among his sitting friends. And at that time, everything is finished. This is how we used to marry our wives in the traditional way.

If you marry a girl like that, when the girl comes to your house, you take her and give to your father's senior wife, and you tell her, "Get this child, and she will be sweeping for you." If your father is not there, they will take the girl to your senior brother's wife's room. After about three or four days, you will go to the market and get a hen, and you will give it to your father or senior brother and tell him to kill it so that the soup will be sweet, and your new wife will cook. If you don't do this to the woman, then she is not your wife. It is even in our custom that sometimes if you don't do this, your wife will run away. You will follow her to her house, and her housepeople will say, "She has run away because you have not killed a hen for her." And what it means is that you have not welcomed her. And after you have killed the hen and she cooks, then she becomes your wife. As she was living in the room of your father's senior wife, that night your father's wife will take the girl, and they will send her to your room, and on that night you the husband and your wife will have sex.

And truly, we Dagbamba have many ways of how a person gets a wife. As for the Muslims, their way is different from the typical Dagbamba. The time I talked to you about the Muslim religion, I think I have told you something about the Muslim wedding. The Muslim wedding is called *amaliya*, and the new wife, too, is also called the *amaliya*. It is from the Hausa language. As for the Muslim wedding, I think you have seen it because we have been beating drums at the wedding houses. The typical Dagbamba I have told you about, drummers don't go to the wedding house and beat drums. As for the Muslim wedding, how they tie it is different. And so I will take its talk and go.

If a Muslim sees a girl and likes her, and the girl also likes him, he will go and greet the girl's parents. They will tell him, "My daughter's *sadaachi* is such-and-such an amount." Do you know *sadaachi*? It is also Hausa, and it is how we call the money we use to search for a wife. In the olden days, he would pay the *sadaachi* on the day of the tying, but now some people pay it before. When he pays the amount, he has no *sadaachi* to pay again, but the only thing that remains is for him to collect the *leefe*. This *leefe* is six full pieces of cloth — twelve yards each — and adding six scarves, six veils, and sandals, a pillow, a bucket, a kettle, a mat, and some different kinds of soap. When he gets all of this, he will put some money on top and send it all to the girl's father's house. This last money is what they will use to cook on the day of the wedding when they bring the girl to the husband's house. The day they are going to tie the wedding, the girl's husband will get two hens and a bowl full of rice, and a bowl of millet. If there is sugar, he will get about four packages and add it. He will send all of it to the girl's father's house. The rice is what they will use to cook the day after the wedding, and the girl's housepeople will eat and send some to the husband's house. And the millet will be used in making porridge, and they will add something we call *kanwa*, that is, saltpeter, to make what we call *kanwa kukɔyli*, that is, porridge thickened with *kanwa*. And what I am saying, you have been seeing it because you have been going to wedding houses. This is what Muslims do when they are having weddings.

As for the *sadaachi*, the *sadaachi* does not have a fixed amount. It depends on the man you are going to ask for the woman. Sometime you will go to some place and find things easy, and another time, you will go some place and find things high. And so you can't really say that such-and-such is the amount that is supposed to be the *sadaachi*. There are some people too who don't have the *sadaachi*. Sometimes the man has seen the girl and loves her, and she too loves him. She will say, "Go and greet my father." When he goes to greet, he might go on a Friday and give the father some small money, and on a Monday, he will give some small money again. Someone can be doing this until the amount is more

than someone else's sadaachi, and someone will only have given a small amount. He will be doing it, and the father of the girl will say, "Making the wedding has got a lot of problems, and so you should stop giving me money, and go and get her leefɛ." And he will get the leefɛ. Sometimes someone will only get the leefɛ to be four pieces of cloth, four veils, four scarves, a bucket, a mat, a pillow, and a kettle; and he will send it to the girl's house and add just a small amount of money like five or ten pounds. On the day they tie the wedding, they will give the man a debt to pay; when he was greeting the father, he didn't give much, and that is why they want to collect it now.

When they are going to fix a day for the wedding, women from the husband's house will go to the woman's house in the night, and they will join women from the woman's house. They will get what we call *zabla*, that is, henna. It's a leaf that they gather and dry and grind into a powder. Some women put it on their feet. The women from your house will go to the wife's house, and they will take a small amount of the *zabla* to mix with water and make something like a paste, and they will throw it at her. After they throw the *zabla*, then the next day, they will tie the wedding.

As we have been going to wedding houses to beat drums on Sundays, it is not standing on Sunday alone. If you will say only Sunday, then it is Tamale talks you are talking. The reason they usually make it on Sunday is that they want the drumming. And it shows that on Sunday, nobody goes anywhere. Everybody is at home. That is why they are very strong on Sunday. Taking it that Tamale is like a European town, you see that on Sunday, nobody go to work. At first, it was happening like that in Kumasi, but now it has come to Tamale. And so Sunday is the day everybody is free. That is the day you will see weddings. Even the women selling in the market, on that day, they won't go to market. And the young men, too, who are doing the white man's work, on that day there is no work for them. That is why now they are very strong on Sunday. If you don't put it on that day, and you put it on any other day, you won't see many people there. You will see people, but you are just going to see a few. So that is how it is. But it is not standing on Sunday alone. Any day the husband wants, that will be the day. And some people also fix it that they will make it on Wednesday. If they throw the *zabla* on Wednesday, then Thursday they will tie the wedding. If they throw the *zabla* on Saturday, then they will tie the wedding on Sunday, and that day they will bathe the *amaliya* and send her to the husband. It all depends on how the husband wants the thing to happen.

How they tie the wedding, the husband will find some people to go to the woman's father in the morning, say at about nine to ten. There is no fixed number of people who will go. Sometimes they can reach about twenty people, and

sometimes they are more than that. When they reach the girl's father's house, and this girl's father, too, will gather all of his sitting friends. And they will call maalam, and the maalam will come and sit down. And the father of the girl will say that he is giving his daughter to this person. In the olden days, it was at that place that they will call the sadaachi. They will say that such-and-such a person is giving this his daughter to such-and-such an old man to give to his son, and this is the son's name. They will ask three times, all the people sitting down, has anybody witnessed it? They will have to respond three times. And they will turn to ask the father of the woman: how much is he going to collect as the sadaachi? And that he will mention any amount he wants. Then the husband's housepeople will say that they are begging. The price the father mentions, he know that they will beg him, and so if they beg him, and it comes to the point he likes, he will tell them that, yes, he has agreed. And they will ask the people representing the husband, "Are you going to pay it right here or some day to come?" And if there is money in the pocket of the husband's friends, and they will also open their mouths to say, "We won't go home and pay another day. We will pay it here." And he will put his hand into his pocket, bring out money, and pay the sadaachi there. The maalam will collect it, check it, and give it to the girl's father. So now they will say that everything is finished. It's left with the tying. Then the maalam will come and say that they should say the prayer for the Holy Prophet, and everybody will raise up his hands and they pray. And the maalam will say, "May God let them sit peacefully together." And they will say, "The sweetness of a marriage is food, and so may God let them get enough food to eat, and give them health, and give them clothes to wear, and give them children who will be good for them, and the children will follow the path of the Holy Prophet Muhammad." This is what they will be saying, and they will be praying. So they will pray and pray finish. Then the people from the husband's house will get up and go home. So this is how they tie the amaliya.

And when they fixed the day for the wedding, they shared cola to their friends and relatives, all their mother's children. And they will send cola to drummers to come and beat drums for the women to dance at the wedding house. The husband's housepeople will send cola to drummers, and the woman's housepeople will also send cola to drummers. Both houses will have drummers there. As for the wedding house dance, it's not for men. It is for the women who have come. The amaliya herself will be inside the house. From the time they throw the zabla, she won't come outside until the time they will be sending her to her husband's house. And so after they tie the wedding, they will bring out food for the people to eat, and we will beat any dance the women want. If it is Naybiyu or Kulnoli or Zamanduniya or any dance, we will beat it. And

sometimes goonji players will also come, and the women will dance. As the wedding is finished, everybody is happy, and it is left with enjoyment.

And as for the girl, she will still be in her parents' house while they tie the amaliya. Then in the night, when they finish eating the night food, they will bathe the girl in her father's house. They will get the very best soap, and lavender, and a sponge and water, and they will be pouring the water on her, and bathing her from the head downwards. Then they will dress her and take her to the house of the husband. When they are sending her, the women will follow plenty, and they will be singing. Sometimes about three woman will take the amaliya first to go, and the others will gather and be singing and going there. When they bring the amaliya to the husband's house, they call the father of the husband and give the woman to him. They don't give her to the husband; they give her to the father. That night, as they have finished tying the amaliya, they will give him his wife. And so what is next? The man has to know what to do. Dagbamba have a proverb: if you give somebody a wife, you don't have to tell him to sleep with her. And so that is it.

And so this is the way Muslims marry in Dagbon here, and that is how the wedding separates. In the Muslim way, they make amaliya, and it is different from the typical Dagbamba way. The next day, someone who has the means can slaughter a sheep to cook food just for the house to eat, and by all means he will add fowls. Other people only buy fowls. And those who have brought the woman will sleep in that house, and in the morning, they will eat and go. And every Dagbana has what we call *takubsi*. If you get a messenger or someone who brings you a gift, when that person is going back, you won't let them go empty-handed. You will give that person something to hold in the hand when they return to their house.

And truly, there are many ways we marry here. As for chiefs, in the olden days in Dagbon here, the chiefs were not using money to find wives. Even if a chief took money and gave it to the father of the girl he wanted to marry, the father would not accept the money. If he accepted the money, it would not be good, because a commoner cannot spend a chief's money. As for chiefs, they have many ways of getting wives. If a chief eats chieftaincy, he will give a wife to the Gboɲlana of the one whose chieftaincy he inherited. It seems that I have told you that even the time a chief is still a prince, people will be giving him wives. A typical Dagbana cannot become a chief's son, but his daughter can let his grandchild be a chief's son. How is it so? A chief can marry a Dagbana's daughter and bring forth a child. If not now that everything has changed, the chiefs were marrying the daughters of typical Dagbamba plenty. And again, in the olden days, if a daughter did a bad thing to her father, say, she refused a husband,

the father could just give her to the chief. Even up to now, someone can have a bad daughter, and he can just swear and give her to a chief. The chief will take her, and she will become a chief's wife.

And again, when a chief became a chief, he could just catch women. Let's say the chief was sitting in his house, and a woman or girl was just passing by. Whether the woman had a husband or not, the chief's wives would just come out and call the one they wanted, and if they called the woman and sent her into the house, that was all. Whether she had a husband or not, she had become the chief's wife. The chief would just send the Wulana to tell the woman's father that he saw her and he has caught her. The father would have no way to talk. Maybe he would say, "The girl has already got a husband." And the Wulana would say, "An elephant has stepped on a trap." When an elephant steps on a trap, the whole thing spoils. And so the husband would only say, "This woman cannot enter the chief's house and then I will collect her back. I am too small to do that." But with us drummers, it was not like that. If the chief caught a woman, and they said, "She is so-and-so drummer's wife," the chief would release the woman. Even if the girl was a drummer's daughter, the chief would give her up, unless the drummer himself said he liked it and he was giving his daughter to the chief. And somebody would like it because the daughter the chief has caught, if she gives birth, the child will be the son of a chief. But inside our drumming tradition, a chief doesn't catch our daughters or our wives. Even some drummers used to catch wives like that, too. Whether the girl had a husband or not, the chief would say, "I have given this child to my drummer," and that was all. That was how they were treating us when Dagbon was there and we were following the chiefs. But now it isn't there again, and even the chiefs don't catch their wives again.

In Dagbon here, the chiefs always hold chieftaincy with strength, but now they have stopped catching women. Nowadays when a chief is going to get a wife, he goes through the same ways we also do to get our wives. When he doesn't do it in that way, he won't get. No one will swear and give his daughter to a chief again. No one will say, "I swear that I have given this woman to this chief." The chief will have to go and greet the father of the woman. If it is a funeral of an in-law, the funeral that commoner will come and perform the funeral with twenty or a hundred cedis, the chief will only give twelve shillings, and that is all. They will say, "The chief has sent something," and what the chief sent is more important than what the commoner has brought. This is how our chiefs get their wives. And so that is how we find our wives in Dagbon.

If your daughter marries in Dagbon here, after the wedding, you will call your daughter and tell her, "As you are now in your husband's house, you have to respect your husband, respect your husband's father, your husband's mother, and

your husband's brothers, too. Don't let him tell you 'Take this thing for me,' and you will tell him 'Hmm!' If you do that to him, and you give birth to a child, the child will not prosper. Don't roam by heart without your husband knowing it. It is good when you are going out, you come out and tell your husband, and your husband will know of it. If you are roaming by heart and your husband doesn't know of it, they will be abusing you, and they will abuse you and it will come to touch your husband. Why will affect your husband? They will say, 'Look at how so-and-so has let his wife to be roaming about!'" These are some of the things you will tell your daughter before you let her go.

If it is that your son is going to take a wife, you will call him and tell him, "You have to stop looking at things. What is looking at things? As you have got a wife, you should forget about outside women. And God should let you and your wife give birth, and the children will prosper. When you get a pesewa, you should take half a pesewa and give it to your wife. And there is no sleeping for you again. If you used to lie down without doing any work, now since you are two, you must try and do work. And as you used to talk much and say that your eyes are open, now you cannot talk much. And as you used to sit down every day with a white heart, now you have many things to think of. And as you were a small boy, now you are an old man. This is how it is for you now." This is what you will tell your son. And that is how it is, and that is what we tell our children when they marry.

And in Dagbon here, sometimes marrying a wife could bring a case that would go before the chief. There could be someone, if he marries a girl in a traditional Dagbamba way, and she has never married before, and they have just sent her from her father's house, if he sees that no one has ever had sex with the girl, then he will get twelve large cola and send them to the girl's parents. It shows that the girl is truly matured, and no one has ever sexed her, and it is a high respect. If it happens that after sexing her, he sees that someone has had sex with her before, it is not that he will refuse her. If he wants, he will buy six cola nuts and break them into pieces and send them to the girl's parents to show that the wife is half a wife and not a complete wife. He will do that if she was small when he married her, and so she was a married woman when she was living with her parents until she matured, but she went outside and someone had sex with her. And the parents will know what the broken cola nuts show. It was there like that with the typical Dagbamba in the olden days, but this time, we don't do it. Among Muslims, it is not there. Muslims don't put strength in it. It is not good for you to sleep with a woman, and people will know what has come of it. If you send cola like that as an abuse, it also means that you have opened your anus to others. So it is not on the way of marriage. The typical Dagbamba, when their eyes were not

opened, they were doing that. This time, if you do something like that, the parents will come and collect their child. And even the girl herself will not stay; she will go.

But in the olden days, it sometimes could happen that someone would refuse his wife because of this, and he would send her back to her parents' house. When a girl has been spoiled in this way, and she is sent back to her parents, the father would call the girl and ask her, "Who has ever sexed you?" Sometime the girl would refuse to tell. At that time, if the father wants, he could send her to the chief's house. Sometimes the father would swear to God and give her to the chief, and he would send her and say, "My daughter has refused to tell me who sexed her, and so I have given her to you." The chief would receive the girl, and there is nothing behind it again: she has become a chief's wife.

If somebody refused his wife and sent her back to her parents' house, sometimes the parents would force the girl to show them the one who sexed her. And when she showed the person to them, they would send him to the chief's house, and it would be a case for the chief. They would give him a debt, and he would pay the chief and pay the husband of the girl all the money the husband spent on her when marrying her. If he could not pay, they would sell him and pay the debt. And if he or his family was able to pay all this and finish, then they would send the girl back to her husband's house.

Truly, if a wife comes to her husband's house like that, it is only a few men who will talk. As for adultery, if a woman is in her husband's house and you have sex with her, you will have a debt to pay, but that one is quite different from when they give a wife to someone and the woman is not yet in her husband's house, and someone sexes her. If such a woman is caught, the husband can easily lose the woman. If he makes noise, the woman will say, "Already I didn't love you, and that is why I went for someone to sex me." If it comes like that, and the woman refuses her husband, sometimes the one who sexed the woman will have to pay back all the expenses the husband made, and as he has paid the money, he will also keep the wife. The girl will refuse to go back to her husband's house, and her reason for refusing to go is that the husband has sold her. As he has let them send her to the chief's house, and he has collected his money back, then it shows that he has sold her. She will say that she will not go back to him again. And at the same time, he has shown in the public that he has bought her with money, and it means that if she goes back to his house, then she is a slave. This is the kind of thoughts most girls will have in their minds. And at that point, they will have nothing to say to the girl again. It could also happen like that. But if a woman is in her husband's house and you sex her, then you will be given a debt to pay, and you will pay it and the wife will remain in her husband's house.

Sometimes in the olden days, if a girl refused like that, then would give her sister to replace her. Before they would find one of her sisters to replace her, it would all come from you, the man. If they are going to refund your money to you, and you say you don't want the money, then you could say, "Oh, this one is not your only daughter." You the man could talk to the father that if God said that he will give you a woman, then he will give you. And so in the olden days, it was there like that, and they would find one of her sisters and give you. Even if you are not lucky to have a long life to see it, then maybe inside your house, they would make sure they would replace that woman to give to someone in your house. It was just because you refused to collect back your money. That is what they would take to know that you are good person. But if you said that because the woman refused, they should bring back your money, and if they found your money to give back for you, then as for you and them, you wouldn't have any greetings between you again. So that is how it is.

And sometimes, if a girl was living in her parents' house, and she went out for someone to sex her, the girl might refuse to name that person. It would happen that the father would come with his daughter and say that the chief should tie her with ropes so that she will tell the one who has sexed her. They are not going to tie her at the chief's house; they would send her to the Wulana's house because this is work for the Wulana. The Wulana would tie the girl, and he would get a whip and whip her. Sometimes he would whip her twelve times, and whatever happened, when she received these lashes, she would tell the one who sexed her. Sometimes she would call the names of people who only befriended her but never sexed her. She might name twelve men, and if you think about it, you will know that at least half of the names are nonsense. It is only because of the lashes that her heart would break, and she would call the name of anyone who ever said, "I like you. Get this twenty pesewas," or "I like you. Get this five pesewas." She would call the names of all these people, but they never tried to sex her.

The Wulana would let his people search for them and call them, and he would bring all these people to the chief's house. They would call them one by one, and the chief would fix amounts for them to pay. If you were called like that, it was your words at the chief's house that would find the amount you were going to pay. If you didn't talk well, then you would find yourself in trouble because your charge would be more. If you talked well, your charge would be less. It could happen that someone would come and talk, and his words would show that they should lay him on a table and whip him before he would pay his amount. Someone would come and they would charge him three cedis, and he would not have it, and they would send him to a rich person and get the three cedis. And someone who has sense would come and speak in the public, and they would not

charge him. Such a person would say, “Truly, I have been giving the girl twenty pesewas, twenty pesewas, not because of anything, but just because she is like my sister, and I feel for how she is sitting. That is why I have been giving her, not because of anything.” Sometimes the chief and his elders would decide that, “Yes, it is true. As for a young girl, this is what happens with them. And so he has nothing to pay.” And they would get all of them one by one, and some would be free and others would be in trouble.

All the time they are asking these questions, the girl was tied down, and after the questions, they would untie her and ask her, “Will you go back to your husband’s house or not?” Sometimes she would say, “Yes. I will go back.” And they would ask the husband, “Do you want your wife, or you don’t want her again?” Sometimes it happened that the husband would say, “I don’t want a wife so many people have sexed.” If he said that, the girl’s father would take his daughter back to his house. But if the husband wanted the girl, then he would take his wife to his house.

And so in Dagbon here, it sometimes happens that if you go to greet somebody for his daughter, and the person agrees to give his daughter to you, it will take some time before you will get your wife in your house. Sometimes some other people from somewhere will also come for the girl, and the father of the girl will not agree for them because he has already agreed for you. And sometimes they will decide to come in the night and steal the girl away. If this girl is stolen away from the village, they can send the people who came to steal the girl to the chief’s house. If the person who was after the girl is caught, he will know that his case is different from the others. We call him a thief. He has stolen a wife. The girl’s father will go to the chief and swear on the father of the chief, and he will bring the case. The man they caught will have to pay three cedis thirty pesewas and a sheep that very day. The next day they will judge the case, and that day the charge will be five pounds. This is olden days money I’m talking about, when there was not much money. In the modern days, the charge could be one hundred or two hundred pounds and even a cow. It happens now in some of the villages. And they will collect the money and the girl and give her to the right person.

Nowadays if they get all this amount at the chief’s house, sometimes the one who has stolen the girl will go and report them at the government court. It is the court judges who will judge it, and they will turn it and say that if you pay for something, it is good you have that thing. And the government court will collect the girl and give her back to the person who stole her. And so this is how the government court is spoiling our custom. In our custom in Dagbon here, we say that if the man is charged this amount and the cow, if his fellow friend sees it, tomorrow none of them will do that again. When we were charging them in that way, the troubles of these things were less.

Sometimes if they steal a girl, maybe the girl has also agreed to run away; they will hide her in a room for about one month. At that time, the one who stole the girl will go to see somebody in a high position at the court and tell him, "I like this girl, and the girl likes me, but her father has refused to give her to me. He has given her to another person. And so I have stolen the girl." He has talked this just because if they bring a case, he has already told the court about it. In the olden days, such a person could go and tell the chief. The chief would ask him to get some cola and some money and bring it, and when the chief received the cola, he would send the Wulana to go to the father of the girl. The Wulana would tell the father, "The chief has sent me to give you this cola. His grandson has got your daughter, and his name is such-and-such, and so his grandson has taken the girl." It's not that the boy is truly a grandson of the chief, but in Dagbon here, everybody is the chief's family. Whether or not the boy knows the chief, the chief will say that the boy is his grandson. If it came like that, whatever happens, the father would not refuse to allow the girl to stay with that boy. If he refused, it would show that he has refused the chief. If he was not happy, he would only refuse the cola and the money, and give it back to the Wulana to give the chief and tell him, "As the chief is for the food and the soup, the chief is also holding me and my daughter, and so there is no need of sending me cola." When the Wulana had gone, the father would call the one he had given his daughter to, and tell him, "Have you heard that the one who stole the girl went to see the chief? And the chief has told me that he has agreed for the girl to stay with him. I don't want you to interrupt in the case. If you interrupt, the case is your case. But as for me, I have accepted." These are the words the father of the girl will say. If it happened that the whole case was sent to the chief, if the father or if the one who had the girl first before the other person tried to complain to the chief, he would never win. The chief would show that, "This girl doesn't want the one she was given to. This is the one she wants." And it would stand. Sometimes it could happen like that.

I myself, as I am sitting, sometimes somebody will steal someone's daughter, and ask me to go to beg the father of the girl. Whenever I am going, I carry cola and some money to the father. And I tell him, "This boy has asked me to come and greet you, just because he took your daughter, and so I am coming to beg you." This is the sort of matter people bring to me to help them solve. And so something on the part of drumming and something on the part of marrying, they call me to arrange things. If they want to take drummers to Bolgatanga or Salaga or any other place, and it is that they want drummers to beat for a wedding or any gathering, they come to me because I have the strength to send drummers. These are some of the works I roam in town to do.

And all of this talk, when we were for ourselves, we were following our custom and we knew one another's respect. But now the government courts have

spoiled our custom. Now there is no chief because a chief cannot judge a case again. And there is no fear; no one is afraid of another. Nowadays if you have enough money, whatever you want to do, you can do it. It is the money that will do the work for you because there is no respect for the chiefs. If things are judged at the court, the judges and the lawyers don't know what is happening in the town or what brought the case. They are just sitting in their offices. They will try to judge the case while none of the them has ever seen what happened, and so they will be telling lies in the court. Sometimes you will have the right, and the lawyers will collect it from you and give it to the one who has not got the right. Sometimes the father of the girl will say the correct thing at the court, and the judge or the lawyer will say that he is saying the wrong thing. But the lawyer didn't see what happened. All this is lies. The lawyers and the judges are telling lies, and they spoil our custom. We were the ones who were judging our cases in a good way.

And so here is the example I have just told you about. If I am looking for a girl and I am respecting the father of the girl, and the father of the girl gives her to me, and you are also living somewhere and you come from your village to steal the girl away, if you are caught and sent to the chief's house, you will be charged a hundred pounds and a cow. And they will give the girl back to me. If you pay this amount, you will be very annoyed, because you have paid the amount and you are not getting the girl again. If you are released from the chief's house, you will go to the government court and raise your voice there. The court people will say, "Something you have paid for, you have to possess that thing." They will say that you have paid me back all the expenses I made on the girl, and now I am holding the girl, but you are the right person to hold the girl. And the girls they used to send to the chief's house, they are also those who nowadays send things to the government courts. When the girl gets to the court, she will tell the judge that her father gave her to a man, and she didn't want the man. She will say that she went and chose the one she wants, and the father sent the man she wants to the chief's house and they charged him this amount. And now they are giving her back to the one she doesn't want. And so she wants the court to judge the case.

And so now, what the government courts have told us is that whenever we give birth to girls, we should not get men for the girls, but rather we should allow them to make their choice to marry. This is what they have told us at the court. And so today, a chief cannot charge someone who has stolen a girl and taken her to another village or someone sexed somebody's wife. Even if they send a girl to the chief's house, the chief will say that he cannot judge it because if he judges it, they will send it to the government court after. If it comes like that and he judges it, they will send the chief himself to the court, and the court people will tell the

chief that he has not judged the case well. The money that the chief collected from the man, the chief will have to pay it. And the government judges will warn the chief that he should never judge such a case again. And so at present in Dagbon here, women cases are not judged at the chief's house again, unless in the government court. But during the olden days, everything was judged at the chief's house.

But for about twenty years now, we don't judge cases at the chief's house, only at the government court. That is why no one is afraid of anything again. When the chiefs were judging the cases, we were more than one another. And we feared each other, too. But now we are all the same. Whenever you do something, you all go to the court. As we are sitting now, if something happens between you and me, and I brought the trouble and you are the right person, and we go to the court, if I have more money than you, they will jail you. And so the judges and the lawyers are not doing the work well. They will just be looking at us in the court and saying that you must be jailed. And so this has spoiled our custom.

In the past, we Dagbamba were standing that no one should cheat the other. We were standing that a person should save his fellow person. And we were standing that what a bad person has done, if you punish him for that, tomorrow no one will do that again. But now someone will say, "I have got money; I will do what I want, whether it is forbidden or not." Someone will say, "The one who has ever done that, what has happened to him? If I also do the same thing, as I have got money, nothing will happen to me." At present, in Dagbon here, we are just calling the chiefs "chiefs," but chieftaincy is not acting. That is how we are now living.

But if it is on the part of our custom, we were giving small girls to their husbands before they were matured because in the olden days, there were not many women. It sometimes happened in those days that a boy would get up and grow to have a white beard and never have a wife. That is why I have told you if a child is given birth, and the child is a boy, if he is growing up, he has to go to somebody who has a wife, and he will be greeting the man and his wife just in case they give birth to a girl to that maybe they will give the girl to him. When he is going to greet the man, the man will ask, "Giving respect shows many things. What do you want from me? Are you after medicine or are you after a wife?" The boy will tell him, "I am greeting you not because of anything, but because of a wife." As it is, sometimes the married man has not yet even given birth to a girl. If he gives birth to a girl, what will happen? He will give this child to the boy who was respecting him. This was our custom in Dagbon here, and this was why we were giving these small girls to their husbands before they were matured.

As it was like that in the olden days, as things changed and our eyes were opening, it came to a time that we got to know something from the Holy Qur'an that we are reading, that it is not good for anybody to force his daughter to marry a husband. Our tradition shows that in the olden days, if you have a daughter and you don't give her to a husband, it shows that you are not holding the daughter. Even when we got more sense from the Holy Qur'an, we were still doing that. If you were a boy and you were matured, you would have to wait until the time somebody gave his daughter to you. When the white people came to introduce education here, and our children's eyes opened more, some of them were trying to do the white man's way of marrying, and they were telling people in the town that no one should force his daughter to marry a husband. But there are still some typical Dagbamba in certain villages, if you go to build a white man's school there, they will not allow you. They are still holding the old way, looking for a girl and waiting for her to grow up. But we who live in the town, as we read more of the Holy Qur'an, we know that it is not good to force a girl to marry. But the typical Dagbamba in the villages are still doing it.

During the olden days, in this our Dagbon land, if you gave your daughter to someone and the girl refused, you had some words you would say which would let your daughter die, not at once, but in time. I think in my heart that there are some people who are still doing that, but nowadays many people would fear to say these words. If you don't want to kill your daughter, you will just drive her away from the house. And you will tell her that when you die, you don't want her to come to the house and perform your funeral. Even if her mother dies, she is never to step into your house. And so at that time, you have removed her from your family. You will tell all your brothers, sisters, parents, uncles, and relatives that you have removed this daughter from your family, and she should never visit any of them. And so, if your daughter refuses to accept what you have decided for her, maybe she will turn into a prostitute girl or a mad person. This was what was happening in the olden days. And it still happens in Dagbon here.

If you have a daughter and someone comes to search for her to marry, when it was in the olden days, the only thing you would do was catch the girl and give her to him. But we also know that if someone comes in search of your daughter, you will also call her and ask her, "Such-and-such a fellow has come in search of you. What is between you?" The girl might tell you, "I know about him. I have told him to come." And you will ask, "Do you love him?" If she says, "Yes, I love him," then you will tell her, "It is nice," and that is all: you will give her to him. But truly, I can also say that most of the girls also like it when their fathers get husbands for them. Those who don't like it are the ones who go outside and let others sex them before they are sent to their husbands. That is it. And so some of them like it and others don't like it.

Even now, a small girl can say, “My father, I would like to marry this man, and so I don’t want you to give me to any other person, unless this man.” The father has to give her to him. Somebody again will come and look for a girl, and greet the father, and the father will agree and the girl will also agree. But it can also happen that somebody will meet a girl and say to the girl that, “I want to marry you,” and the two of them will be talking, and it will take some time before the girl will direct the man to go and see her father. When he goes to greet the father, the father will say, “No. I am not giving my daughter to you.” It can happen like that.

What brings it? We are looking at the family of the boy. During the olden days, we were giving our daughters in a way that: “This family, they are not thieves, and so I will get a boy from that family and give my daughter to that family.” Someone will say, “This family, they are not slaves; I will give my daughter to that family.” And truly, it can also happen that the grandfather of the slave is an important person, let’s say an elder of Yendi; I have already told you that many of them are slaves, and in that case, some people won’t refuse giving their daughter to the slave. And again, someone will say, “This family, they are never hungry in their houses, and they are always satisfied with their food; I will send my child there.” We were giving our daughters in that way, and even still some people are giving their daughters like that. They are looking at the family of the boy. Sometimes someone gives his daughter to a rich man just because of the money, and others give their daughters to money men because they want people to talk about them that they’ve given their daughter to rich men. And sometimes a rich person will like a poor person’s daughter, and if the father gets to know that this man is a rich person, he will refuse to give his daughter to him; he will say that he doesn’t want a day to come when they will quarrel and the rich person will abuse his daughter that she is from a poor family. There are some families, and they will never agree to give their daughter to a rich man. And there are others who want their daughters to marry a rich person. And so there are many ways inside how a person gets a wife, and all of this is still happening here.

And so our custom shows that we should choose a husbands for our daughters. If government says the girls themselves should be choosing, it spoils the custom. Why won’t it spoil the custom? Somebody is respecting you, and you also respect the fellow. If you have your child, is it not somebody you like whom you can give her to? The person you are going to give her to, you know the person, and you know the character of the person. That is why you are giving her. And you also know that the person you are giving your daughter to can hold her as well as you. But the one the girl just decides to go and marry, you don’t know that person. If it goes to court, the government people can easily support a person who

is stealing. The one the court is supporting, your heart is not white with him. And so somebody is going to hold your child, and you are not happy about it, and it is government law that he is going to take to hold her. Is it government who has given birth to your child for you? Or was it government who has found her mother for you? And so that is why they spoil it.

When Dagbamba were holding their own custom, the woman could say that she doesn't want a particular man, and they would follow her up to the time she would agree. She has nowhere to go. All the fathers's family would refuse the daughter, and she had no place to go and enter. By all means, it would get to the point she would agree. And so it is the white men who spoiled it. The time I started looking for the girl's mother, government didn't know about it. You didn't help me to give birth to the child, but now what your heart wants is what is going to stand? And so it's true that government has spoiled the custom.

It is this government law that has come and made everybody's eyes open for them to know that they should look for their own happiness. This time, as for the girls, we don't know the type of girls we are bringing forth. Sometimes a man will come and see you the father about your daughter, and later you will call the girl and ask her, "Did you direct this man?" She will say "Yes." But the day they are going to make this wedding, she will not agree. It is common. Some of the girls have been disgracing their parents like that. Sometimes she herself will say that she wants a man, and later she will say that she doesn't want him. And so we don't know what she wants, and we don't know what she doesn't want. It is there like that this time, and it just common. If you follow today's children, they will put you into trouble.

In the olden days, the Dagbamba were choosing the men to be giving their daughters. And when the Muslim religion came to show that it is not good to force your daughter to marry a man, then that was when the eye of Dagbon was opening. And it is the white man who came and let everybody know that it is not good to force. In the olden days, sometimes could give a woman to a man, and the woman would not see the face of the man up to the day they would bring her to the husband's house. The day they will send her to the husband's house, that is the day she will see the face of the man. And we didn't hear that a girl complained that she didn't know the man before, so why are they sending her to him. And so the olden days talks, it was just standing that it was custom with strength. What they wanted was what they did. And so when our eyes were opening, and we got to know how God was asking us to live, then this talk also came. The girls want to change their life in the world, and they have asked to look for their own husbands. And I'm telling you that many of them will bring a man to their show you, and then change to another man, and then choose another one again. What will you do?

And so the white man's way of living is different from our way of living here, and you can't take your way of living and compare it to ours. The way we are in this world, we have different, different types of families. The way we live in Dagbon, we live in lines. Maybe you don't want your family to go and enter into a certain kind of family or line. Sometimes you won't want your daughter to cross to that side. If she is forcing to go and enter that place, will you be happy? That is it. That is why we Dagbamba refuse that. I have just said it. Maybe in some families, they are thieves. And someone whose family was slaves, a Dagbana will not give his daughter to him. You don't want your daughter to go and give birth there, and later when they are counting your family, they will go and count slaves inside. And again, in the olden days, there were some people who will eat and eat, and they would never get satisfied; they were suffering every time. Even to get a cloth and wear or a dress to wear, it was a problem. And Dagbamba were watching such people. In the olden days, no Dagbana man would want to give his daughter to somebody, and one day the daughter would come from the husband's house to the father to ask for food. If she came back to the father and complained that in her husband's house, they do not have enough food, and so the father should give her some food, they didn't like it. And so in the olden days, if an old person gives you his daughter, it showed that because you have been able to feed him, you will also be able to feed his daughter. And it won't be daybreak, after giving you his daughter, the daughter again comes back to him to ask of food: where is the place for him to rest now? And those who were thieves, if you give your daughter to the family of thieves, when they give birth to children, your daughter's children will be thieves. And aren't the children of your daughter becoming some of your family or not? It means when they are counting the thief's family, they will include your family. And so that is why, if your daughter should go and make her own choice of a man, when she comes and you look into it, you can refuse it. That is what is under what I'm telling you.

And so the typical Dagbamba: when they gave their daughter to a man, and the daughter refused to go, and she took someone the father didn't want, he could easily remove that child from the family. He would go around and tell the whole family that when he dies, he doesn't want the daughter to be at his funeral. And that one, it was a bad talk in Dagbon. If the child wanted a long life, she would have to leave the man. And some people used to swear that she won't germinate, or even think of bearing fruit. Do you see the meaning? It means that she will never conceive, or even think about giving birth. That is inside Dagbani. And if they talk to your daughter like that, and she too disagrees, she can stay with the man for years and she will never conceive. And he is going to talk to the girl and also swear that, unless that daughter is not part of his blood. And that means that

unless he was not the one who married her mother and gave birth to her. And so if it was really true, if she didn't leave her man, she would stay with the man without a child up to the time she became old. And so these typical Dagbamba, they had it. That is the way it is.

And so this is the talk of how we Dagbamba get our wives. And I think that tomorrow I will talk about the men who grow up and they do not have wives, and I will join it to talk of the women who have no husband.