

Chapter III–19: *Why Dagbamba Marry Many Wives*

As we have talked about how Dagbamba marry, I think today we will start with the family on the part of how a family stays together in a house. And I will talk about it on the part of how a man has many wives, giving birth to many children, how he manages to feed the children and the wives, how he lives with the wives, and how each of the wives goes to enter his room. As we have talked about the family, I don't think what I am going to start now will enter what I've talked already.

How we live in our houses with our wives, and the marrying of many wives, to talk about it will take some days. And so how I will start this talk, I will start it on the part of why we Dagbamba marry many wives, and I will join it to talk on the part of the chiefs, because in the past, the chiefs were the only people who married many wives. It was the rich people who followed, and it came down to the common people who knew they could feed the wives. And the maalam, too, they marry up to what the Muslim religion has put down. This is how I am going to start.

Truly, this marrying of many wives has got a lot of talk in Dagbon here, and unless we get inside and follow it before someone can know all its talk. As I have talked to you about the way of living of a bachelor, truly, I can say that now, as Dagbon is sitting, if we see someone with only one wife, we say that he is a bachelor, and we say that he doesn't know what is inside marriage. Your people, the white people, you look and you say that marrying many wives is not good, and you don't like it. But it is our way of living here, and that is how we marry and live with our wives and children. Our way of living in Dagbon here is different from your way of living, and you cannot take your way of living and compare it to our way of living here.

We Dagbamba marry many women not because of any one thing. It has many talks. If you are grown up to a man, and you say that you are a householder, it is good that you have three or four wives. If you say that you are a householder, you should know that a woman is the house. I say a woman is the house because you can be as heavy as anything, but if you don't have a wife, you are not a person. In Dagbon here, this is what we say. If you say you are going to hold only one wife, if she should travel, that is all. Is she there? If she gives birth, that is all. I told you that when a Dagbana woman gives birth, she will take the child and go to her parents' house until the child walks. And you still have people in your house. As there is no woman, will it work? It can't.

Apart from that, it is not only the people in your house, because we get strangers, and strangers are a big talk in Dagbon here. Somebody will come from another town to greet you. He comes: the woman is not there. Can a man cook food for his fellow man to eat? It won't work. If you have a friend who comes from another town to visit you, he is coming to see how your house is. As he has come to see your house, he has come to see the women and how you live with them. This is why we take many women. If you say you are equal to a man, and you take two women, if one should travel and the other one falls sick, is there a woman again? But if they are three, whatever happens, if one travels and one falls sick, one will remain. Whatever happens, if you get a stranger, you will not be disgraced. And so we also take many wives because we receive strangers.

And so if you have no wife in Dagbon here, you are not a person. Even if you have money, and your money can do any work in this world, if you have no wife, no one minds you in Dagbon. People will say, "That is useless money. Have you seen him having a wife?" You can be a very big chief and be sitting in a big chieftaincy; if you have, say, only five or six wives, people don't have trust in you. They will say, "Leave him. He's a useless chief. Do you see anyone who wants him?" But if you are a useless chief and you have many wives, they will say, "Oh, he is a good chief, because if you go to his house, you will see many women." If you are a rich man and the women are there, people will say, "Oh, truly, he's a rich man. If you go to his house and you see the women, you will know." Even if you are a very good man and you have no wife, they will say, "As he is a good man, does he have a wife?" But if you are a good man and you have women, they will say, "Truly, he's a good man. Go to his house and see the women."

I have told you that in our Dagbamba living, somebody who is not a child, and sickness is not worrying him, if he has no wife, we call him a useless person. As Kissmal is sitting here with us, he is more than twenty years old, but we still call him a child. If he should add ten years to his age and he doesn't have a wife, people will ask him why he never wanted a wife; but they won't find his fault because maybe he never had a chance to marry. But someone who has been married, if he separates from his wives, and he is not married again in a few years, he is the one we call a useless person, and we call him a person who doesn't want to give birth to children. It is good for a person to marry a wife and be giving birth to children, and the wife will be with him and cooking for him and his brothers and parents and children to be eating. A person who is up to that age and does not want marriage, we call him that he is truly a useless person.

But as I have said that we Dagbamba don't marry only one wife, it doesn't mean that there are no people with one wife. They are there. Our fathers, it was

only one wife they had. In their time, there was suffering. Plenty! To get food and eat, that alone was worrying them. We have heard our fathers talk, and they talked about hunger. And we heard our fathers say that long ago, they used to wear only a small piece of cloth we call *kpalannyirichoo*: it was something like a triangle, and they tied it around themselves so that the triangle covered their front. It was cotton they made into threads to weave this small piece of cloth, and it was only somebody with strength who could have this type of cloth. And a woman, too, this triangle was what a woman would use and be roaming in the afternoon. In the night, a woman who could get would wear an *amoonsi*: it's just a small piece of cloth she would put between her legs and wrap around the beads she wears on her waist. This is what the women used to do long ago. And a man would take the triangle and wear it to the farm, and he would remove it and put it on a tree. He had nothing to wear: he would just be farming like that, and you would see the testes swinging. When he was ready to come home, he would take the triangle and wear it. And when he was coming home, those who could not get a triangle, when they saw him, they would look on him as a big man.

And so for our fathers to get even this small cloth was a worry for them: how much more to get a woman? In the olden days, to get a wife was very, very difficult. You could even have a wife, and someone who had more strength than you, someone like a chief or a money man, could just come and collect her and leave you. No one would mind you, and it would only be your medicine that could interfere. As for us Dagbamba, no one was for us: long ago, no one had power over his friend. Only the chief had his people. And as some people had only one wife in those days, there was no adultery. You don't see women roaming, and so how can you commit adultery? And in the olden days, too, if you went and chased somebody's wife, they would take you to the chief's house, and they would give you a debt. If you had no money to pay, they could take you and sell you to someone. It was there like that. If you could not pay, sometimes they would whip you with the *barazim* — forty lashes. If it was a prince, or a child of the town like a *tindana's* child, or a *Kambonsi* housechild, the chief could not put down a debt for someone like that, and they would tell him, "You cannot have a debt at the chief's house, but if we leave this fault for you, when day breaks, you will do what is more than that. And so we will pull your ears." As for such people, they whipped them. Sometimes they would whip someone and he would die. And no one could ask, and no one could talk.

During the olden days, by the time someone would get a wife, maybe by that time he was an old man. If you hear anyone talk about the olden days and how they managed to marry and give birth, you should know that they were old people,

and they lasted before they died. How we are able to get women at an early age, they were not able to get like that. During their time, a man could stay, and he would be dreaming of sexing women and pouring sperm on his leg. During that time too, somebody might reach a very old age and they wouldn't even have circumcised him yet. Sometimes they would have to force an old person and put him down, and many people would hold him before they circumcised him. And at other times they would leave people uncircumcised like that. And sometimes somebody would be there up to the time he would be growing a beard, and he would not have a wife.

My own father, the time he married and gave birth to us, he was grown. I also heard from him that during his time, it was very difficult to get a woman. When my father started looking for my mother, she was just a small girl. He started respecting the parents of my mother, up to the time she grew, and he came and married our mother. And so at that time, if you wanted a woman, you had to start seeing the parents when the baby girl was very small. If you put one elder in your mind that this elder will give birth to a daughter you will marry, sometimes you would wait for him and wait for him, and all the children he would be giving birth to would be males. You wouldn't have someone to marry, until maybe the man you were respecting gave birth to a girl, before you would get a wife. When I was given birth, my eye opened and I saw people with beards who did not have wives. You could enter a house, and you would see five or six young men, and the householder was the only person with a wife. I don't know why there were not more women in the olden days, but we grew up and met it like that. It was the power of God. That was how it was. And it wasn't that some people were marrying more than one woman. In the olden days the only ones who had more wives were the chiefs, but they never had more than five or ten wives. But now the women are more than the men. Today one chief can have forty wives. And others have more than that. The Kari-Naa who has last died, Kari-Naa Adam, they said he had a hundred wives. But in the olden days, before someone could get a wife, truly, he would suffer a lot. There were some people who were not useless, but they died without getting wives. And so I believe that some of our grandfathers were old before they could marry. As for that, I can't talk much about it, but the time my father was there, I saw it, and so I believe that our grandfathers also suffered the same way. That is how it is.

And so those who were lasting very long on earth, they were the ones who would get wives to marry. There were two things. First, if you were not close to chieftaincy, you would not get a wife. If you were related to a chief, you could use force to take a wife. Somebody would have his daughter and you would use force

to collect her, and the father would only say, “If not because of the chief, I would have collected my daughter, but because of the chief, it’s all right.” And again, there were not many women. As the getting of women was hard, it was because there were not many women. If you ask any Dagbana, he will tell you that in the olden days, there were not many women. That was the reason why they were not able to get women at an early age.

As I am saying that in the olden days there were not many people, in my thinking, I think that Dagbamba wanted fighting too much, and that was why there were not many women. It’s not that they were killing the women; the men too were not many. I’m thinking in my thoughts that as they were fighting, they didn’t mind the women. If you are always out fighting, how will your wife give birth? Someone would be going to fight and be old before he got a wife. Sometimes someone would go to war and not come back. And someone would go to war and come back and not know where his women are again. The fighting has come to climb on him, and he has come out from his house. When he comes out, he cannot stand and look for his wife. Our Dagbamba say, “It’s cool for the monkey; that is why it puts its child on its back.” Have you seen? If you attack the monkey, it will throw the child and run away. And so what I’m telling you, if you ask anyone, he will tell you that it’s true. In Dagbon here, the men were more than the women. But in the olden days, whether the women were starving or getting lost, I don’t know.

And so truly, I don’t know why the women were not many in the olden days. What I am telling you is that it’s not because of anything. Old Dagbamba say you cannot take the cheeks and the temple and add them together. Today somebody is there, and he has two women, and there is birth. Somebody will have four wives, and two will be giving birth and two will not be giving birth. Somebody will have a wife, and this woman will be bringing forth only girls. Somebody will be giving birth only to boys. Some will give birth to three and stop. Some will give birth to six and stop. If they are giving birth, and it is only boys they are giving birth to, you know that the women will be less. And that is how it is in Dagbon here, and it’s not because of anything. And so I think in my heart that it comes from how our Dagbamba women give birth, and they were giving birth to boys more than girls. It’s only now that there are many women in Dagbon, and-in Tamale here you will see many women. And in the olden days, all this is why our fathers were finding it difficult to get a woman to marry.

But to us now in these modern times, even one wife is not enough. There is no one who will say that one wife is enough. If you have only one wife, it makes you do bad things. Today if you have one wife and she travels or gives birth, there

are many women roaming outside. If you want somebody's wife, she will agree, and you will sleep with her. And there are some women outside, they don't even mind to catch hold of a tree and bend themselves so that you will have sex. But it is not good. Even to God, it is not good. But to those who don't know, to them it's good. Those who have one wife and they sleep with many women outside, we say they don't have one wife. They have many wives, because such a person, when his heart tells him to sex so many vaginas, he will sex them. And so it is not one wife he has.

If you have one wife, and she travels, and let's say you are a man who has an appetite for eating: whatever happens, before your throat cools, you will go to your friend's house and eat. And there are some men who do not control their fronts. Do you know what is "the front?" It is his penis. In the night the big man gets up and stands. As he is standing up, what does he want? He wants food. And the man hasn't got food to give it. What will happen? He will go and enter the troubles of others. And if he enters the troubles of others, what will happen? It will bring bad things. It will bring trouble into this world. And it will bring trouble into the next world, because God says He does not like adultery: you shouldn't go after somebody's wife; you shouldn't chase another woman; you should have only your wife. But your wife travels, or your wife gives birth and goes to her father's house. What will it bring? That is why we don't have only one wife. But the one who knows that he can pray to God, and that he can hold his front and hold his throat, if he has one wife, it doesn't matter.

To us, the way we look at a person with one wife, we see that it is difficult. We look at him and we say, "He hasn't got anything yet." And we say again, "He doesn't know what we call manhood." And we say again, "He doesn't know how to hold women." It is like riding a horse: you take a big iron and put it in the mouth, and you will be forcing it. That is how we look at people with only one wife. A person with one wife doesn't even know whether the woman truly likes him or not. As for him, every day he will say his wife likes him. Every day, when the woman gets something, she will say, "My husband"; when the man gets something, he will say, "My wife." But if you have one wife who has kept long with you, then get two: get another one and add to her, and you will see what is inside it. She will grind pepper and put it inside soup. She will take rock salt and put it inside without grinding it. She won't pound the *kpalgu*; she will just put whole pieces of it inside the soup. She will cook soup for you like that, and you will know that you have added somebody to her. I'm not talking about a woman who has just come to your house: she won't do that. I am talking about a woman who has kept long with you, and you two are sweet together. When you search for

a woman to add to her, she will do work and you will know. If you don't try for yourself, she can even kill you. She knows that what you were doing to her and what she was holding, when you bring her rival, the sweetness of it will not come to her again. She will do the talk that won't make you sweet. This is how it is.

And so to us, we see that if somebody has one wife, he doesn't know what is inside having women. And if a woman is also alone with her husband, she doesn't know what is inside having a husband. Today, if your wives are two, you cannot give only one of them a gift and leave the other; you have to give both of them. But if you have one and you get something small, you can give it to her and it will be enough for her. As she is alone, if you give her money for cooking and the money is small, she won't say anything. But if you add a wife to her, when you give the same money you used to give and she was not talking, you will hear talk. She will say, "I will not sit down, and you will go and bring a fool from another house to come and cheat me. If it is eye-opening, we are all wise now. And so as for me, I will not agree again." And so it is when you have many women that you know what is in women and in men. And it is good for you to know that.

Truly, in Dagbon here, if you see somebody having one wife, it is pains you will see. He has pains because it is not what his heart wants. Even a poor man will not agree that one wife is enough for him. If he is a poor man and he knows he cannot feed two wives, he feels the pains. He will say, "If God had given me money, I would have taken many wives." There can be a wife who is doing everything for the man, but inside it, there can be a wife who will put medicine inside food for her husband to eat so that he will not think of any other woman apart from her.

And sometimes it just happens that the woman is stronger than the man; that is why he cannot get another woman to add to her. There is a wife who will just stand up on her husband with her way of living, and the husband cannot turn. In Dagbon here, we will see him and say, "He is not holding his wife; it is the wife who is holding him." And so apart from a poor man, then it is a useless man who has one wife, and he has a useless woman for a wife, too. Such a man cannot get another wife again. If he sees a woman and he wants her, they will say, "Oh, as for him, what his wife says is what he follows, so don't throw your child away." Even if somebody is going to take his daughter and give to him, others will say, "You are going to throw away your child. How his wife is, can any other person enter with her? If you take your child and throw her away, our hands are not in it." And so even if this useless man is able to get another woman to add to his useless wife, he will get another useless woman. That is how it is. And so a poor

man and a useless man, they are the people who have one wife in Dagbon here. And as for the poor man, it is not his wish. And such people, they have one wife each.

Apart from that, there are some people who say they have inherited the white man. They have done their wedding in the Christian way, with their ring-weddings. As for those who have married with the ring, we don't even count them among Dagbamba. We say, "They kill the family." If a person takes a woman in that way and he dies, it is the woman who will inherit everything from him; and if she dies, he will inherit her. When he married her with rings, they wrote it down that if the man should die, the woman will take everything. But he had people, too. Has he killed the family or has he not killed the family? To us, we call him a family-killer. The man's people knew the woman because of the man. And the woman's people knew the man because of their daughter. If the man is not there, they will come to collect the things and leave the man's people. Will anyone greet anyone again? And is it not in greeting that we know there is family? If you have a family and they don't greet you, it is not a family. If there is something and you don't gather together to do it, is it a family? If such a thing should enter a family, the family will not be good again. The children too will get up and take the same way. Will it be good? No.

Here it is: maybe the man had wives already and gave birth to children, and he left the women he had and the children he had, and he has done the marriage with the ring. And today he is not there. For us Dagbamba, if it is according to our custom, when the man is not there and his children are small, his brothers will come to collect his children and eat his property. And to follow it, if some of these children are grown, they will take the property and add their younger brothers and sisters and their mothers, and they will all group into one house, and they will be feeding them. But the one who has married with the ring has driven away all the other women and children. Will he die and the children will know that their father had some property? It is only the woman he married with the ring who will know that he had property. And will this woman one day say that she had cowives who had children? And if she has given birth to children with the man, will these children think that they have brothers and sisters somewhere? That is why we say that the marriage with rings kills the family.

And so if you see somebody having one wife in Dagbon here, he is sitting down and it is worries that are worrying him. If somebody has one wife, it is not his wish. If it is not the poor man we have talked about, then it is a useless man or somebody who has married with the ring. And truly, where you will see people with one wife is in the villages. To get a wife in the village is difficult. In a

village, they will give birth to a girl today, and while she is still growing in her house, she will already have a husband. And as for these women in the town here, they won't marry a villager. Even some of the village chiefs have only one wife. The chief won't have much money, and he will be having one wife. And so in Dagbon here, having one wife is common in the villages. Whatever happens, unless a villager is a rich man who is in that village, he will have the one wife. In a village, the getting is hard, and the women are not many.

In our Dagbon here, this is what we have been seeing, and truly, I think in my heart that the men are more than the women. It is only in this Tamale that women are many, and it is just that people have left the villages to come to the big town. They run and come here because they want eye-opening. And those who stay in the villages, where are they going to get? There are some places you will go and see many bachelors: the women are not many in that town. Even if someone in a village has money, and he goes to a town to bring a woman, she will not agree to sit there. As I am sitting in Tamale, my town is Nanton now, and it is Savelugu and Voggo, too. This town's woman will not enter there. If you see women without husbands in Tamale here, you will see many bachelors in Nanton. In some places in Dagbon here, if you give birth to a baby girl, before the child comes to reach ten years, maybe three or four men will be looking for her; if you don't give her to someone, they will come to find your fault. The town where I am farming now, a young girl of about ten years will not be sitting down without a husband. She has not gone to the husband's house, but she has a husband. People struggle to look for the girl, and whatever happens, the father will give her to someone. It is the work of: the women are not there. But in Tamale there are girls who are up to twenty years and they don't have husbands. You will give birth to your child and beg God to let someone come and look for her. But in the villages, somebody can be respecting somebody so that just in case that fellow gives birth to a girl, he will give her to him. It's not only Dagbamba. Those staying in villages have suffering on the part of getting women. And I think in my heart how I have seen it in Dagbon here, that is how it is in the villages. In those places, the men are more than the women. You will enter one house and count ten boys who are up to the age of having a wife, and they haven't got even one. And I have already told you that it's not because of anything. It's just from how the women are giving birth.

As for a village man, he has many things to worry him on the part of women. We even say that in a village, when a village woman gives birth, the man also gives birth. His wife has given birth and gone to her parents' house. How is he going to get her? And he won't get another woman in his village. Unless he

comes to the town and finds a prostitute, he won't get a woman. And so when his wife gives birth, he also gives birth. In Dagbon here, these are the ways, and that is why we don't have one wife. Truly, that is what we say now, but if it was in the olden days, it was only the chiefs who had more than one wife. It is only now that we are following it, but its starting was with the chiefs. And as I have told you a little bit about how the chiefs get their wives, I will take this talk and join it and add to it, and I will talk about how the chiefs marry many wives and how they stay with their wives.

When a prince is a child and growing up, he will be sitting in a town, and that town is not his father's town, but that is where he will begin getting wives. The town where the prince is sitting and growing up, that is where he gets his respect. When his father himself gave birth to many children, at that time his father too was a prince. At that time, too, the commoners would look at him and know that in some time to come he would be somebody, and they were giving their daughters to him. And so if a commoner gives birth to a daughter, he can give the daughter to a prince. It's not because he is a prince that people give their daughters to him, but because they know he has been giving respect. If you are a prince and you take yourself high and you don't respect commoners, no one will respect you. And so a prince is living and giving respect to commoners, and that is why the commoners give their daughters to him. Before a prince will get a chieftaincy to eat, sometimes he will have about twelve wives. Before he gets his twelve wives, it is because of his respect to the commoners. The respect gives him the twelve wives, and it shows that he is somebody who is fit for chieftaincy. Dagbamba have a proverb that if a lizard doesn't take his hand to press his rib-bone to see how strong it is, it will never fall into water. Do you understand? If the lizard doesn't know it can get out of the water, then it won't enter into it. The meaning is that if you know you cannot hold many wives, you won't go and search for them. And so truly, it is not just because someone is a prince that he will get many wives. It is a prince who has the means. Even the chiefs who have many wives, they have the means.

As for a chief's wives, two of them have titles that show that they are senior to the others. At Yendi, many of the wives have titles, and they also have it at Tolon and Gushegu, and they are like women chiefs, but I'm talking on the part of most of the chiefs. How it is with them, the first wife is called the *Paani*. And the second wife is called the *Paampaya*. Those two wives have titles, and the ones following are just called chief's wives, except for the last wife. The wife who is the last wife will become the *Komlana*, the water-fetcher: if the chief is traveling or going to greet a festival, she will be in front of the chief, carrying water, and the

chief will be walking. Truly, inside our custom, it doesn't show that the one carrying water when the chief comes out is his wife. The chief can let his sister carry water. If the chief's sister is very nice, she can carry the water, or a junior wife who is very nice can sometimes carry the water. And so the last of the wives is called the Komlana, but her title doesn't show that she will be carrying the water. Even a commoner has a Komlana, but a commoner does not take his wife to carry water when he goes out; only a chief or a tindana do that. If you want to show it and it will be correct, then you should show that among the wives, the one who is last is the Komlana.

How the chiefs get their wives, sometimes a chief will have twelve or fifteen wives before he even eats any chieftaincy. Not all princes have this many wives, but the good princes, the ones who will eat chieftaincy, they will get wives like that. Nowadays there are some chiefs who have about fifty wives. There are other chiefs too who have sixty wives. The chief who has fifty or sixty wives is the chief who is rich. There are women who will come and marry the chief just because of his money. The chief's money is just there for everybody, and some women will be thinking about that and want to marry the chief. And other women will want to marry the chief because they want their children to be chiefs. And another woman will want to marry the chief because she wants the people in the village to call her the chief's wife. Another woman too will want to marry the chief because she wants her friends to be afraid of her in that she is the chief's wife.

And apart from all that, there are others who will give their daughters to him by force. Somebody will give his daughter to a man and the girl will refuse; the father can swear, "As you have refused, I am giving you to this chief." A chief can also get wives like that, too. And again, if a chief eats and goes to a town, his wives can also be catching some women for the chief. How do they catch them? If they come to the town and they see a woman who has no husband, and her character is good, the Paani will let them just catch her and bring her into the house, and she will become the chief's wife. Apart from that again, if a chief's wife has not given birth, sometimes one of her sisters will take one of her own daughters and give to her so that she will be helping the chief's wife. Such girls or women, we call them *napay' zuli*, that is, "chief's wives' tails." They follow behind, and they have no place to sit on their own. If you hear someone in Dagbon say, "*napay' zuli*," they are the ones the fellow is talking about. As for such a girl, as she is a woman and she is there, the chief can take her and she will also become a chief's small wife. It is inside chieftaincy. And so all this is how a chief gathers many wives.

And the chief will still be adding more wives. As soon as the chief arrives in the village, the Kamo-Naa will give him a wife. The Kamo-Naa will be the first person to give the chief a wife. After the Kamo-Naa, if the Wulana has daughters, the Wulana will also give one of his daughters to the chief. If the Kamo-Naa's daughter comes to the chief's house, and nobody gives the chief a wife again, then she will become the Komlana because she is the youngest. But if the Kamo-Naa's daughter comes, and somebody like the Wulana gives the chief another wife again, then that wife will be the Komlana because she has come last. And so the chief will be getting more wives to add to those he already has. It's not that the chief wants the woman. It is these people who will bring out their names, to say that, "As this chief has come, I have given my daughter to him, to be fetching water for him to drink." At that time, the chief will know that those who are holding the village are the ones who are giving him the wives, and the chief's heart will be whitened. These new wives will be grouped into the rooms with the other wives. It's good when you bring someone to your house that you give her to a senior woman to show her all the things she needs to know, and she becomes the roomchild of the senior wife. If the chief has twelve wives and they are grouped into six rooms, the daughter the Kamo-Naa gave will go and enter the room of the *waljira*, the senior wife. And the chief's *waljira* is the Paani, and so she will stay in the Paani's room; they will be three in that room, and the Paani will have two roomchildren. And the daughter the Wulana gave will enter the room of the Paampaya.

And so when the chief gets his chieftaincy and goes to the town, he and his wives go into the chief's house. Let's say the chief has twelve wives and there are six rooms in the woman's side of the house: he will divide the wives into two groups of six each. The wives will group into twos and stay in the six rooms, and all of them will be in those six rooms. The Paani is the first wife, and she will go into the first room. The one following the Paani, the Paampaya, will go into the second room. And so the following room will be for the third wife. When the first six wives have entered the six rooms, then the following one will go into the Paani's room, and she will be the Paani's roomchild. The Paampaya too will also get her roomchild. And each of the other four will get her roomchild. That is how they will be grouped in the six rooms.

How do the wives get their rooms? How our custom is in Dagbon here, when you have a wife and you go and search for another wife and bring her, you will let the junior wife go and be in your first wife's room. She will give birth twice before you will give her her own room. Have you seen? Whether you are a commoner or a money man or a chief, that is how you will do. The time this

woman gets her room, that is the time we say she has got cooking, and there is some talk inside it. In Dagbon here, if they come to say that a woman has cooking, it shows that she has given birth twice, or at least once. When she gives birth and goes to her father's house, and if she is coming back to your house, they will send her with food and vegetables for soup, and we call it that: "They are gathering her cooking." As she has come home, the husband will get a sheep or a goat for her. If it is a big chief, he will get a cow. The man will slaughter the animal and she will cook. When day breaks, he will kill a hen or a guinea fowl, and he will get fish or buy butcher's meat and add, and the meat will be plenty. This woman will cook, and they will give food to half the town and say, "So-and-so has come home to cook food." And everybody will know that this woman has got cooking. She has given birth and has gone to the parents, and now she has come back again. When she comes to the house, she will be cooking and she and the children and the husband will be eating. At that time, she has also become somebody with children, and so she can't come to the house and be sitting down and her fellow women will be cooking for her children.

I am going to separate this talk for you. On the part of the Muslims, I told you that when they marry, the sadaachi, they have to buy many things for the new amaliya. That is the leafe. They say that if you are going to marry, you have to marry a room first before you marry a woman. The day they bring the woman, she is not going to be in your room. She has to be in her own room. And so on the Muslim way, you have to find a room and put it down. When she arrives, then she will enter into that room. You yourself, you have been seeing how they carry the leafe. They carry all these pans and bowls and cupboard and trunks and baskets and bags and tables. Whose room are they going to put it? Can she take all these things to stay with somebody in the room? And so it is the husband who has to find a room and put it down. If the husband has got wives already, they are going to continue being in their rooms, and he will find the amaliya another room.

And again, as for the Muslims, I told you that on the wedding day, the sayim they prepare at the girl's house shows that the girl has started cooking. The food all the woman gather at her house and cook represents her first day of cooking for you. And so when she comes to your house, she has to be cooking. When one woman cooks today, then tomorrow this one cooks, and another day that one cooks, it will rotate like that and come to her, and she will also cook. If they are cooking two days each, or three days each, when it comes to her turn, she also joins the rotation to cook. That is the way a Muslim wedding is. Sometimes if the amaliya is very young, she can go to the husband's mother's room, or if the husband's mother is not there, to the husband's senior wife, and that woman will

receive her into her room and take care of her in the house. Sometimes when they send an amaliya like that, she will stay without cooking for forty days. After that, they will put her into her own room. She will be meeting her husband during that time, but she doesn't cook on her own. She will follow the older woman to cook. And so the amaliya will be cooking, but it is not her own cooking. Some people make it like that for forty days, and some people make it that if the amaliya comes today, then tomorrow she is cooking. And so that is another way, and it is on the part of the Muslims.

But as for the typical Dagbana way, the wife they send with the calabash with the lid, even if she's going to stay five years before giving birth, she will not cook until she gives birth. And even sometimes she will give birth two or three times without cooking. And so this talk is on the part of the typical Dagbamba. She is going to continue living in her husband's mother's room or with the senior woman. But at night time, she will go and sleep with the husband in his room. Those who take the calabash with the lid to send the girl, that is how they are. Even up to today, they are still like that. It is there with the commoner, and it is there with the chief. But it's not everybody who does it. Sometimes a woman will come with her foods to cook, and the husband will say that she should just cook. It doesn't matter. But it is this cooking that shows that the woman has given birth, and at that time they will get a room for her. So this is how it separates.

If it is on the way of chieftaincy, sometimes a chief will eat chieftaincy in a town and they will give him about six wives when he comes. If they all come, they can't all have their rooms, and so they have to follow the older women. They will be there like that until they give birth about two times, and then the chief will separate them and give them rooms. As the wives are many, they will still be two-two or three-three in a room. It can happen that the Paani's room will have five or six roomchildren, and it doesn't matter. If the Paani has a good heart, the chief can give her like that. Even the chief's housechildren, if they come to take wives, they can also give them to the Paani. It's all there like that.

How these women stay together in the rooms, the roomchild will do everything for the senior wife. The roomchild hasn't got her own cooking, but it's not that she doesn't cook. If there is a roomchild in the room of the Paani, it is the roomchild who will do the cooking for the Paani, but we don't call it that it is her cooking. She cannot even say she is cooking. It's only when this woman gives birth that she will get her cooking. At that time, if the rooms are not many, the chief will let some of his villagers come and build more rooms. Even if he needs forty rooms, they will come and build them. But if there is no place for them to build new rooms again, it can happen that two women with cooking will be in the

same room. As the Gulkpe-Naa's house is sitting in this town, there is no place to build, and it can be that two or three women with cooking will be in one room, and it is not a fault in our custom. They will have their days for cooking, and they will cook like that.

And as the chief has gathered many wives, it stands that the wives will be cooking two days each, and they give the cooking to one another. And having many wives, on the part of sleeping with the husband, it can give trouble to the husband. And so with us Dagbamba, we have put it that the wife who cooks, she will sleep with the man. It's not good for a wife to cook for you to eat this night, and you will jump from her to sleep with her fellow woman. Let's say that a wife cooks food for you and you don't want to sleep with her, and you leave her, and it is her last day of cooking before another wife collects the cooking. And you want to sleep with the one who didn't cook your food, and her turn is even coming to the next day. Whatever happens, it will bring trouble to you the husband. Even such a husband will not keep long on earth. If you have many wives and you jump on some and leave the remaining ones, those others will think that you are not minding them and you don't like them. Any bad thing they can find, they can easily put it into the food they are cooking for you to eat. And so the husband who is wise will sleep with the wife who cooks, and he won't find trouble on the part of sleeping with his wives. Even on the part of God, that is how God Himself put it down.

And on the part of the chief and his cooking, if he is going to give money for food, the Paani will be the first woman to cook. Today, if the chief gives the Paani money to cook, tomorrow the Paani will cook again. The day she cooks, that night she will go into the chief's room and sleep with the chief. The next day, if she cooks, she will again go to the chief's room to sleep. The next day, the next wife, the Paampaya, will receive the cooking; and she will also cook two days, and she will sleep with the chief the two days. If there are twelve wives, each of the twelve wives is supposed to cook for two days. But as they are in six rooms, it will move down the six rooms. And with the chiefs, the roomchildren do not have their own cooking. And so it is not all the chief's wives who go to his room. In twelve days it will come to the end, and then it will come back to the Paani's room again. The day the Paani cooks again, if she is someone who fears God, she will allow her roomchild staying with her to go and sleep with the chief. If not that, there is no way for the roomchild to go and sleep with the chief. And if the Paani doesn't fear God, she herself will go and sleep with the chief again. Even the chief may love the roomchild, but he cannot call her, and he cannot go behind the Paani and call her roomchild. If the Paampaya collects the cooking, and if she too

is not afraid of God, she will continue going to the chief's room, and she will not take and give it to her roomchild. And the roomchild who is following her cannot go into the chief's room.

If the chief wants to get any of his junior wives and have sex with them, he has a way. Sometimes in the afternoon, the chief will call the Paani and tell her that he wants water, and so she should bring water for him. As the Paani is, she will not fetch the water herself; she has to tell her roomchild to fetch water for the chief. If this child takes the water to the chief's room, it is not water that the chief wants. He wants what he wants. The chief will put the water down and get hold of the woman and have sex with her. After the sex, she will go out. And by then, the Paani doesn't know what is happening. And so this is how the chief hides and has sex with some of his wives, because not all of them have cooking and go into his room.

The ones who are not cooking, if the chief sometimes calls them and has sex with them, it can happen that sometimes they get pregnant. And let's say that one who has her own cooking gets pregnant and one who is not cooking also gets pregnant. And you know, they will not both get pregnant on the same day. One's pregnancy will stand, let's say, last week or last month, and within a few days, the other will be pregnant. If God agrees, and the one without cooking gives birth to a child, and she gives birth first, no one can come out and say that she has given birth to a child. In our living, we say that she does not sleep in the chief's room. And so who sexed her to give her pregnancy? Unless the woman who has the way to enter the chief's room gives birth, we cannot talk about it. Even if the chief sees it himself, he cannot do anything. And no one will come out and tell him. Giving birth to children is a woman's matter. When a woman gives birth, it is a woman who gets the child from her. A man does not receive a child. The woman who receives a child is a midwife, and we call her that "she helps give birth." What she does is that when a woman is suffering to give birth, they will call her and tell her to come and see a pregnant woman eating suffering, and when she comes to help the pregnant woman give birth, the only thing she does is to receive the child and put it on the floor. She is from a different house, and she has no way to send somebody to go out and tell the chief that a child has been given birth.

As it is standing like that, the midwife will tell the Paani. Paani is the senior woman in the house, and she is the only one who has the way to let somebody tell the chief. If Paani doesn't tell the chief, there is nobody again. And so if the woman without cooking gives birth first, and the woman with cooking gives birth going to three months or some time, then that second child will be the elder child. The one without cooking hid and entered the chief's room; no one knew about her

entering the chief's room. And so if the woman with cooking gives birth second, they will go and announce her child first before they will announce the birth of the other woman's child; and in Dagbon here the child of the one who cooks will be the elder child.

This "get food and cook," on the part of chieftaincy, if a woman gives birth to a child and goes out from a chief's house leaving the child there, if she didn't have her cooking, whatever happens, this child will not eat chieftaincy. Even if it was the Paani, and this child is the first-born of the chief, if the woman didn't have her cooking, if the chief dies, they will refuse to let that child sit on the skins. They will say that his mother didn't cook. In the chieftaincy way, this is how it is.

And I can say that the chief's wives also go out and have sex. But if you see one of the chief's wives going out like that, and you go to say it, if you are not strong, you are going to fall. The chief's wives will make one mouth and say that you are the one chasing them, not anyone else. And so sometimes someone will go to say this, and it will turn around and eat him. A chief's wife also has a way, if she doesn't like a man, she can tell lies on that man. When she says the man is chasing her, that is all. They will put down a debt for him. If not that, the chief's wives have no place where they get firewood apart from people's farms. If they want vegetables, they only go to people's farms. And no one can talk. If someone tries to prevent them, they will say the fellow was trying to sex them in the farm. As for those who have sex with the chief's wives, if such a fellow is caught, sometimes they will judge the case and let him pay a debt: a sheep and some money on top, and they will whip him twelve lashes. It was in the olden days that we have heard that they used to kill such a person. Now they don't do it, and I myself have never seen it. When I was at Voggo, I saw someone lashed, and when I was at Nanton, I also saw someone lashed. I think it was not all the chiefs who could kill a person for that. It was only the Yaa-Naa who had the strength to do that. And that is the way of living of the chiefs' wives.

If the chief has thirty wives, maybe only fifteen of them will be cooking. These fifteen women will all have their rooms and roomchildren, and only these fifteen will be going into the chief's room. The other fifteen don't have their own cooking, and the time they will also get a free heart to rest will be the time the chief is getting more wives to add to them. The chief will increase the number of wives in a room to three-three, and then he will take some of the first ones and get new rooms for them to enter. If the chief still wants women and he has to get new rooms for his old women, then some of those roomchildren will get rooms from among the old rooms. And by that time, they will be old people in the house. And this is how the chiefs hold their wives on the part of cooking and sleeping.

Apart from the chiefs, those who followed the chiefs on the part of having many wives were the money men. Today, if you are not a chief and you are somebody with money, you will marry many woman. You will gather women because you know that you can feed them. As they are many, they will give birth to many children, and you must know that you can feed all of them. If you can't feed them, it will be a worrying talk for you. But as you have the money, people will give women to you just because of your money, or just because you respect people. Sometimes a person will start gathering wives, and he hasn't much money; but as he is getting money, he will be getting more wives. By the time he is very rich, he will have twelve or fifteen wives. If he has them like that, he will get a room for each of them. And all of them, they will all be cooking, and they will all be entering his room. It is a forced thing that he will give money to each of the wives to cook food. If the husband wants, he can let each of them cook twice — two days. And as for these woman, if one of them gives birth to a child, there is nothing inside it: no one can hide anything about it. It is his money which brought the women, and they will be afraid to hide it: if he hears of that, he can drive any of them out. And so a rich person can gather many wives, like a chief, but there are differences in how the wives live.

As for the maalam, their way is also different. God said a maalam can marry up to four wives. If a maalam should marry more than four wives, on the Day of Judgment, God will punish him. And those of us who are holding the Muslim religion very well, we also marry only up to four wives. But as I have said that it is four wives for the maalam, I am talking of maalam who know they can feed all the wives. If a maalam cannot feed many wives, he will marry only one. If he knows that his strength is more than one wife, he can marry two. If his strength is more than that, he can marry three or up to four wives. And this is how the maalam also marry more than one wife. A maalam's wife is called *amaliya*, or married woman. If the man comes to add another, then the senior wife becomes the *waljira*, and the younger one, if they are two, becomes the *amaliya*, because you cannot take the two of them and call them *amaliya*. The *amaliya* is last. If the man adds another, then it is the new one who is called the *amaliya*, and the second one becomes the next *waljira*. And it looks like our Dagbon living, because this new wife I have just taken, she is my *amaliya* and she is my *Komlana*. This is how our custom is: she is last. And so those who follow the Muslim religion marry up to four wives.

And a person who is not a Muslim, and he's a commoner or a typical Dagbamba, if he knows he can marry four wives, and he will be feeding them well, and there will not be any suffering, as for that, it doesn't matter. Sometimes

you will find a commoner who is not rich, but he has the means to feed many wives. Sometimes you will see a commoner who is a good farmer, and he is given respect in his town or village; he may marry up to six or eight wives. He is a commoner, but maybe people are helping him to feed all his wives. Sometimes his children are there and they are grown; if they want, they can help their father to get wives to be looking after the whole house. And so a commoner can marry up to his extent. Sometimes he will marry four, sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes one. And what I am telling you is this: it all comes from whether he is able to feed the wives. And I think that this talk about the commoners of Dagbon and how they feed their wives, if I am going to enter inside it, it is also a long talk. And today I have talked long, and so we will leave it until tomorrow.