

## **Chapter I-7: *How Dagbamba Send Messengers***

As we have been talking about the way of living of Dagbamba, we are going to continue with it, and today I'm going to add salt to the talk. This talk is the talk about how we send messengers to go and greet for us. And the reason why I am going to show you this talk is because it falls into the talk of our way of living. In Dagbon here, if you want to go and greet somebody, it is not always that you yourself will be the person who goes to greet. It often happens that you will send a messenger. Your messenger will go and do everything for you, and you yourself will not go. And again, if you want something from somebody, you will send a messenger. It is Dagbon custom that the way we send messengers, it is something that repairs problems. And so this talk falls inside the talk about our way of living, that is, the character of Dagbamba and the respect we give to those we stay with and to those we don't know. I told you that the talk of how we get women and give birth to children is the foundation of all respect. All these talks enter one another, and I can say that the sending of people, too, it also gives birth to all respects. How these talks follow one another like that, it is good if I gather them and talk them with examples, and they will be in front of our talks. Anyone who reads it like that will get to know that if you are holding respect, you will come to get something you were not expecting to get. If you don't give respect, you will not get what you want. So as for me, to cut it short for you, the way I will put it is that all living is standing on respect. Living without respect is not living. And so this talk comes to join the talk of how we stay together with people so that we can see how our living is. This talk comes to join with it because inside our living, this is what helps us to get wives and many other things. And so the way I'm talking to you about our living, this is how our custom is moving.

These talks I am talking to you, they show that you are a stranger and you have come and entered into some people known as Dagbamba, and I am telling you the way that makes people to call them that name. Anyone who is going to read this book should know that the book is about the talks of Dagbon. And anyone who reads will know that the way people call us Dagbamba, these are the ways we used to pass and it helps us in living. This is why I am teaching you this talk, so that you should add it into the talk of our Dagbamba way of living. If somebody comes to read it, and the person will get to know that as for this tribe, this is what they are holding and it is helping their living. At that time, it will be separate from the custom of your people at your home. It is good if somebody tells you, "This is I, and this is who I am. And again, I will show you my name

and the way I got my name, too. And again, this is the work I do, and this is the respect in it.” This is what I am telling you. That is the way it is. And so what we are talking now, you are asking about our custom, and you are leaving your town’s custom to find out our custom.

And so today we are going to join the talk of greetings and talk about how we Dagbamba send messengers. And I’ll start it with an example. If it is that you are looking for a wife, in Dagbon here, and you have befriended a woman, it can happen that this woman tells you that you should “come to find her in her house.” What she has told you is that you should come to ask her family to give her to you to marry. When she tells you to come to her house, you don’t go yourself. You have to send somebody. If the woman is in a different town, you have to send somebody who is your friend, and your friend will be going with your elder. If your elder is an old person or a chief, your friend will not go with that person himself. Your friend can go with that person’s mouth, and so he will take your elder’s name and go. And so your friend is the one who will go and talk for you at the woman’s house.

You will call your friend and say, “My friend, this our wife, they said we should come and greet them.” You don’t say, “My friend, go and ask for my wife.” If you say that, he will say, “All right. It’s your wife, so you have to go yourself.” You have to say, “our wife.” And so you will say, “My friend, they said we should come and ask for our wife, and my father said I should look for somebody who is to go there, and so let’s go to my father, and he will tell you what to go and say.” As your friend is taking the mouth of your elder, it shows that the time he is going, your father will tell him what he will go and say there. If it is that your father is no more there, and your grandfather or your senior brother is there, your grandfather or your senior brother is the one who will talk to your friend. And so your friend will go with the mouth of your elder. When your elder sends your friend to the parents of the woman, your friend will go and meet the woman’s father and tell him, “My grandfather has sent me to come and greet you, that he is looking for your daughter to give to his grandson.”

And we Dagbamba, we say, “If you are going to send someone to do some work for you, you should send the one with sense and not the one who can walk.” This sending with sense is the way our sending of messengers moves. If it is not finding a woman, say, if it is something that has happened, like a funeral house, you send the one with sense, too. When he goes there, you will be sure that he will go and talk what you have sent him to say, and that what you’ve given him to give to the funeral will be given so that your name will not be out of the funeral house. And so if you are there and you have many friends, it isn’t that all of your

friends will be sensible, and it isn't that all of your friends are your best friends. You have to choose your best friend, or your brother, or the friend who has sense, and send him. Sometimes you will send a friend whose sense is not plenty, and he will go and spoil everything. But if you choose the one who has sense, he will go and add his sense and make the thing good more than you were expecting it to be.

As you have sent your friend to go and look for the woman for you, if they give the woman to you, it's left with you to get all the things you will use to marry her. In our Muslim way, you will have to buy many things before they will send the woman to your house. And the time you are getting all these things, it is your friend again who will be going to greet the woman and the parents of the woman. He will be going to greet them on festival days, and on Fridays, and at any time. If something happens at the woman's house, you the husband won't go; you have to send your friend. If there is to be a naming of a newborn child at the woman's house, and they send cola to you to inform you, you can go, but you must go with your friend. You will tell him and say, "Our wife's people have sent us cola for a naming." If you don't tell him in that way, he will come to say that he went and looked and found for you, and something happened and you didn't tell him; you just went secretly to do what you wanted, and so he is removing his hands from you. And so it is your friend who will be representing you all the time at your wife's house.

If you come to see that you are worrying your friend too much, you can tell him that if he has no time to go, he should allow you to send some of your junior brothers to go and do the things. And if you start sending your junior brothers there, it will also add to you, and your junior brothers will also be gaining some sense from it. If your junior brother goes and talks foolishly, they will talk sensibly to him. And if it comes to the time when they are going to send the woman to your house, they will never give her to you the husband without the presence of your friend. Even I can tell you that when they are going to give out the woman, you the husband won't go there. Your brothers and your other friends are going to go there with the friend you sent, and they are going to receive the woman and bring her to your house. And all this, on the part of finding a woman and marrying her, it is your friend or your messenger who is going to be doing all of it for you.

And so in Dagbon here, the ways to make things well are many. And there are many ways to send a messenger. And the reason why we send messengers to greet for us is because it gives respect. I have been telling you how we Dagbamba give respect, and I told you that in this Ghana, I don't think that there is any tribe that knows how to give respect more than we Dagbamba. If you go straight to

someone and meet him, sometimes the person will tell you that you don't respect him. If you are going to someone, and you know that the person you are going to is older than you or more than you, if you just go straightforward to that person, it means you don't respect him. You have to go to somebody again who is older than you so that he will lead you to that person. And it only means that you have given him respect. And at the same time, it shows that you the one who has sent the messenger has also got respect, because you are someone who stays with people. If not that, how would you get a messenger?

Let me give you an example on the part of chiefs. If a commoner wants to go and meet the chief, he has to get somebody to lead him to the chief's house. Even if you a commoner are going to send a messenger to a chief, you have to send the messenger with a gift to show that you are giving respect to the chieftaincy. As for that, it's a big talk in Dagbon. To go to a chief, you can't go there for nothing; you have to go and meet an elder. The elder can go to the chief by himself any time he wants. A drummer can go to a chief alone. A barber can go to the chief alone. I told you that the Limam is the leader of the maalamas in the town: he can go to the chief alone. These people can enter the chief's house, but even it sometimes happens that they cannot go to the chief unless people take them inside. Truly, if you are used to a house and you want to do something there, you can just go and enter that house, and there is no need for you to send somebody. I have already told you that we drummers don't go to somebody to lead us to the chief's house; we just enter. But still it sometimes happens that a drummer wants something from the chief, and he will get somebody to lead him to the chief.

And so in Dagbon here, you don't go to the chief without a reason. And when you talk to the chief, you don't talk to him directly. Even if the chief is just sitting there, you will talk to an elder and that elder will speak to the chief. Or you will stand up and talk to the public, and the chief will hear, and the elder will also talk to the chief. Maybe you will go and you will talk too loudly or too quickly or too foolishly, and it's not good for someone to talk like that to the chief. That is why the elder will receive it before the chief. And this is how it is.

Sometimes you will sit in you house and say something, and what you said will do work in your house. Or if there is something disturbing you, you will sit down and think over it, and you will have an idea of what you are going to say. And you think that it is a good talk you are going to talk, not knowing that it is foolishness. If they were to allow everybody to come and enter the chief's house and talk, without somebody to lead them inside, then the one who is going to go and talk foolishness will go. At that time, the fellow will be in trouble because of what he has said to the chief. And so it is better you go and meet somebody and

tell him what you are thinking, and he will tell you whether it is good or bad. If we were not to be exchanging ideas before going to the chief's house, then chieftaincy would not be there. If there were no one to lead us to the chief, then chieftaincy would not be there. You would just be going to meet your fellow friend and not the chief, as if the person you are going to meet is just a common person like you, so there is no need to get somebody to lead you or to hear what you are going to talk. And so this talk of messengers is standing on the part of respect. Don't you see that it is in the respect that you will get to know that somebody has something or is important? If not that, no one would have been respecting the other. We would just be like that, moving and pushing each other all the time. And so this is how it is.

And I'm going to add some salt to this talk. Do you see a prince? If the chief has got a child, and the child is looking for a small village chieftaincy to eat, he has to go and meet elders outside so that they will bring him to greet his own father. However tall the child is, however rich he is, and even if he is already eating a chieftaincy, he cannot just go to his father without somebody to lead him. He will be outside and send people to his father, and they will come back to him and tell him what his father has said. And when they go again the next time, they will go with him. And so if the prince wants to talk with his father about something important like that, he can't just go inside; he sends messengers, and everybody sees it.

How our Dagbon chieftaincy moves, one chief is more than another chief, and it is the big chief who will give the chieftaincies of the villages he is holding. If a small chief dies, then we say that that chieftaincy has fallen, and anyone who wants that chieftaincy will be looking for it from the big chief. Even if a prince is going to looking for such a chieftaincy, he doesn't go to look for it himself: he sends messengers to greet the chief who is controlling the chieftaincy the prince is looking for, and the prince will send the messenger whom the chief will regard to be somebody. Sometimes, whatever happens, you wouldn't get something, but if you get a very strong messenger and you send him, you may get it. If the person who has what I am looking for is more than I am, then maybe he won't agree for me, and so if I get a messenger who is more than I am or even more than the one I am sending him to, then maybe I will get it. That is why the prince will look for a very strong messenger. As for that one, it is standing on everybody's head. Sometimes you will send somebody who is more than you. And you too, somebody who will be more than you will also send you. And again, this is what we call respect. If a prince is sending a messenger to look for a chieftaincy for him, it is in this sending that the prince will know whether or not he will get the

chieftaincy. The day the messenger arrives in the town will be when he will know whether his traveling is going to be good or bad. Dagbamba say, “Get and taste: that is when you will know whether you will be satisfied.” And so the messenger won’t know if his greetings will go forward unless he reaches the town.

And so the sending of messengers, it doesn’t mind however you are. I can even say that they send chiefs. Sometimes something very bad will happen to somebody in a town, and there is no way for him to remove himself from the trouble. The only way is for the chief to represent him. If something like that happens to you, you will just run to the chief’s house and tell the chief, “Chief, as for this problem, if you don’t put your hand inside, it cannot be well.” If the chief likes people, he will just get up and go and represent you and do it for you. It means you have sent the chief. If the chief has no way to go, he will send a child to go, and this child will be going with the mouth of the chief, and it’s also something. Sometimes somebody will want to show himself on the part of doing good works at his wife’s parent’s house, and he will go and put the mouth of the chief there. If the chief has no chance to go, he can send his elders. And when these elders go, all the people will be talking in the compound that their in-law has sent chief’s people to come. And if the chief himself should go, they will say, “Oh! As for our in-law, his messengers are very strong and respectable. There is a chief among them.”

And so we send messengers and we get people to accompany us because it gives respect, and again, it adds respect. If you decide to be doing things by yourself, let’s say, if it’s on the part of wife talks, and you are just doing it, and if anything happens and you go to your in-laws alone without anyone to accompany you, the respect that will be coming out from your wife’s parents will not come out to you again. The people at the woman’s house will think that you are some kind of useless person, just because you are always alone. You have no people. Every time you are coming, you come alone, all the time alone. It means you don’t have people holding you, and you don’t stay with people. You are only one person on earth. It means that there is no way for any of them to give you respect, and so your going is just useless. That is why you should always go with people, somebody like your brother or your friend or your witness, so that they will know that truly, you are inside people. The one who will go as your messenger is going to give you a kind of standard, and his going will give you respect in the woman’s house. This is the way it is. Even a useless person, if he wants to go to his in-laws, he will get somebody to accompany him. When they go there, his in-laws will say that he is not a useless person. And he comes back home, his friend will go away and he will be alone, because truly he’s a useless person. But where he

goes with people, they will not agree that he's useless. It is only when he returns to his house that he will turn to become a useless man again. And so this is how it is.

And so a messenger is a witness for your way of living. I can even tell you that if you are going to look for a woman and you go alone, then you will never get the woman. In Dagbon here, when you are going to look for a woman, they always watch you. You have never sent somebody, and you have never come there with somebody: that alone can let the parents of the woman refuse to give you the woman. The one holding the woman will say that as you are a useless person, he won't take his daughter and throw her away. And so inside Dagbon, this is the custom. If you always come alone to find a woman from somebody, and they give you that woman, it will mean that when you collect the woman finish, you and that woman are going to live alone. At that time you won't know anybody again. This is the meaning of it. But if you add people to yourself and they are good people, it will help you to get the woman. Then the woman's parents will know that when you take her and go, you will be living with people. That is why anybody who is sensible will add somebody to himself to search for a woman, and the two of you will be going. And the time the woman will come and enter into your hand, if the woman's housepeople have something to do, you will send this same friend there. If something happens in the woman's house and you send your friend there, they will trust him. They will say that already, before you got that woman into your hand, you were coming with this friend. And so this is why we do that.

And again, we go to places with people to have a witness, so that in case anything should happen, we have the person who accompanied us. Here is an example. If your wife has given birth, in Dagbon here, she will go and stay with her parents until the child walks. As she has gone to stay in her parents' house, if it comes to the time when you want your wife back again, you have to go to beg for her. You will get your friends to accompany you. If you go alone, and you give something to the parents, and you take your wife, maybe a day will come when they will tell you that you have never given them anything. And you will have no witness. If you go with your friend, and you are two, if you give a gift, your friend has seen it. If a day comes when your in-laws are going to find your fault, you can call your friend. If not that, they will put you into shame. They will let you stand in the public and they will ask you, "What have you ever given us? And when? And who is the witness?" And that is another reason why you will always try to get someone to add to yourself when you go to places. But truly, the way you go to find a woman with a witness, it doesn't necessarily mean that you

only want a witness to see what you are doing or the way you are going to take the woman. It is not that you don't trust the woman, either. It is just because of you yourself, because it means that your way of living is good. And so on the part of finding our wives, the sending of people is inside it in every way. It is with the men, and it is with the women. The woman you have been searching for, if she also needs something from you, since the marriage has not yet taken place, she too will also send her friends to come to you. And she will get somebody she trusts to be sending to you. She will never come by herself to tell you, "Give me this thing." She also wants to let you know that she too has people. And so it is inside women and inside men.

And sometimes you will send a messenger to do something on the part of your wife, and your messenger will also have to go to get another messenger to add to himself. Maybe your messenger will go to meet another person, and that fellow will lead the messenger to the one you have sent him to. Have they not become two? For example, sometimes we send messengers to attend a funeral and perform it for us. If it is a funeral at the house of your wife's parents, and your wife has given birth and is still staying at her parents' house, you have to send somebody to go, and you will send your friend, the one you sent when you were looking for your wife. He will go and help perform the funeral for you. You will send him with many things and a lot of money to go and perform the funeral. The person your friend went and met when he was looking for your wife for you, that is the person he is going to go and meet first, and that person will bring him to the elder of the funeral. If the funeral is at your wife's parent's house, and your friend just goes straight to the elders of the funeral to give what you have sent, they will send him back to go and get the one who was helping him find the woman for you so that they come together. They will say, "Why is it that if you are coming to perform such a funeral, and you didn't go to see the person who helped you to get that woman, and you are coming direct?" As they have done that, they have showed that he was acting foolishly and they have corrected him. Dagbamba people have a proverb: they say that the ladder you climb to look at something far away, that is the same ladder you have to use to come down. And if they want, they will give him that proverb, "How is it that you have climbed one ladder and you are using a different ladder to descend? You came and saw this man, and he took you to see something, and now there is something to be repaired at that place. And now you have come to enter a different house, leaving the house you entered first." If your messenger goes directly to the funeral elders like that, he has gone astray, and they will send him back. And so that is the ladder: they want to show him that he should go and climb that same ladder. And as he was at fault, he will

go back to add that person to himself before entering the funeral. And the person they sent him to will correct him again and say, “Why is it that the time you were looking for the woman, I was helping you to find the woman, and now there is a funeral, and you don’t come to tell me so that we go together? You only went straight and left me.”

Sometimes there will be something, and they will be sending you as a messenger to somebody who is very much annoyed. If you do wrong to somebody, you won’t be able to go to that person. Or if you get to him, it is likely that he will not understand you. You have to ask in the town to know the person he feels shy of, and then you will go and meet that fellow so that he will lead you to that man. The one who leads you will talk to him, and he will understand you and forget about everything. And that is also why I say that sometimes you can know that you will not be able to get something if you go yourself, but if you get a good messenger, you will get it. For example, what is very bad in Dagbon here is if you are looking for a woman and you start greeting the woman’s father, and the father has not yet sent the girl to your house, but you just go and take her away. By all means, the father will be very, very, very annoyed. As you have stolen his daughter, you already know that you cannot let the father even see you; if he sees you anywhere, maybe he will even harm you. You have to get somebody you trust to go and beg the father for you, and your messenger will also go and get somebody from the father’s town or area to add to himself, and the two of them will go to greet the father and cool him down. If your messenger goes like that, maybe the father will understand and forgive you and say, “Oh, if not because of you two old men, I wouldn’t have agreed to give my daughter to this boy again. But because of you, I’ll leave everything aside, and I have agreed.”

As I am sitting, people often send me to a messenger in cases. Sometimes, if someone quarrels with another, the one who caused the trouble will come to me so that I will go to beg the other one to forgive him for the wrong he has done. For example, sometimes someone might send his child to school, and the child will complete the school and be working with the government, and every month he has some amount which he will remove from his pay and give to his father. If it comes to a time when the boy cannot afford that amount again, he will come to me to go and tell the father, “Truly, his reason for not giving you the same amount is that he has many problems, and it’s not that he is just reducing the money.” If I go, the father will agree, “Yes. As for you, I know you to be a truthful person.” And so these are the things people call me to do.

Sometimes somebody will quarrel with his wife, and the wife will come to tell me, “I have had a quarrel with my husband, and he has driven me away from

the house. And as I have left the house, it isn't that I don't love him. And so I have come to ask you to see my husband and beg him for me. As you are a respectful man, he will agree so that I will go back." If I am to go and apologize for the wife, I will ask her, "What brought the quarreling?" She will tell me all before I go to the husband, and if I go to the husband, he will ask me, "What has she told you?" I will tell him what she told me, and the husband will say, "She has told you the truth about what brought the quarrel. And as you have used your foot to walk from your house to my house, and you are older than me, then I have to agree to let her come back. But if you go, warn her about what she has been doing." And so the husband will agree, that he has given her fault to her, and he is forgiving her, and she will be happy to come back. And again, it can happen that a husband will quarrel with his wife and the woman will run away to her parents, and it is the fault of the man. If the husband still loves the woman, he will know that if he doesn't send messengers to apologize, the woman won't come back. He will find people to go and beg her so that her heart will cool down. And so it is with the women and it is with the men.

If you and your wife quarrel like that and she leaves you and goes to her parents, if you know that the fault comes from you and you are going to send messengers, then you will send your brothers or your friends or some elders. When they go, they have to go directly to the father of the woman. Then the father will also call the woman to come and sit down and hear the apology that you the husband are sending. He will explain to his daughter, "This is the apology your husband is sending. And as for me, I have agreed, and you too, you should agree, because he has accepted that the fault is from him. So go back to him. As you have seen that your husband has sent messengers, to apologize, you should forgive all the bad he has done to you." Then you will hear the woman also complaining in front of the father, that as for her, she didn't say that she doesn't love you; all the fault came from you, but as for her, she still loves you. Then the father will say that, "Yes, I know it is your man who caused it, but still, you too, you have to forgive him and forget it, and I will send you back." At that time, your messengers will return back, and the father will get some people to take his daughter and send her back to you the husband. And so this is our custom, the way it is holding.

And so all this, these are some of the things I am doing when you come and you don't meet me in my house. Truly, if there weren't any messengers, we wouldn't have been listening to one another's talks. And sending of messengers, it doesn't come on only one person. You can send somebody, and that person can also send you. As for that one, you will send a messenger, and when he goes and

comes back, he will also tell you that he has wanted to send a messenger, and as you have sent him already, you will also have to go and represent him. And it even happens that you will send somebody today, and that person will also be sending you on the same day. We see that happening in Dagbon here. You will be sending somebody today to go and perform a funeral for you somewhere while you are at another place performing a funeral for your messenger. In Dagbani, we used to say, “Collect my child; collect my work.” It shows that we are going to solve the problems of one another. If I say “Hold my child for me,” then you tell me that I should hold your work and do it for you. If you send me and I refuse, if I send you, will you go? And so collect my child, collect my work: this is how we solve our problems. And it is friends and friends who do this, and brothers and brothers, and parents and parents, and this kind of sending of messengers is better than any other way of living. And our Dagbamba have another proverb that I have told you: “‘You fall and I fall’: that is what makes the playing of the dogs nice.” That is how it is. And so if you are my friend and you are sending me as a messenger today, I can simply tell you, “Oh, I also have a place to send somebody. And so if it won’t disturb you, you will go there, and I will also go to your place.” And the place I was supposed to go, if my messenger or somebody from my family goes, it doesn’t matter. And we see this happening in Dagbon here.

The friend you have been sending, if his father dies or his mother dies, there is a way for you yourself to turn and send yourself as a messenger. If you don’t go, it will show your friend that you don’t respect him. If you don’t have the chance to go, the one you have to send to represent you at that place is your best wife, the wife you love the most, and your friend knows about it. You will send somebody like that, because if it is that you just send your child to your friend’s father’s funeral, as for that one, in Dagbon here, we don’t regard it. Even in our custom, it shows your friend that you are boasting to him with children. But if it is that you are going there and your children want to follow you, then it doesn’t matter. But if you have your best wife, and you send such a woman to your friend’s father’s funeral, it doesn’t look as if you are not there. Your friend and his other friends will say, “Is that the wife he doesn’t ever want to disturb? Oi! My friend has seen my respect. He has sent his best wife to the funeral.”

When the woman gets to the funeral house, she is going to be sleeping there. She won’t come back home. She will be sleeping there with your friend’s sisters and wives. And when the woman gets there, she is going to stand firmly, and she will be doing all the work to help all the women in the house. She is going to carry water with your friend’s sisters and wives, and she will be cooking with them. In Dagbani we say that they will tie waistbands, strongly, and do proper

work there. They will do that thing, and do everything of the funeral up to the time they make the prayers and finish the funeral. Then your friend will call your wife and say, "Oh, today we have finished, and so you can go." And inside our Dagbon, the way your friend is going to release your wife to come back home, he will get some money for her and say that she should take it and buy soap, and that when she gets home, she should wash her dress. And your friend's sisters who were also at the funeral place, they will also say, "This our friend's wife, she has suffered a lot." This one will say, "Collect this"; that one will say "Collect this." And if your friend wants, if it is the time for yams, he will get yams, that she should put it inside her bowls and carry it home. Even sometimes if there is meat, they will add meat for her: "If you go home, cook it for your children to eat." That is the kind of respect they will be giving her. And so when they finish everything of the funeral, your friend will send her home. And the way you sent your wife and the way she was when she was there, you the husband, your heart is going to be very white. Your friend's sisters and wives were all seeing your wife there, and they will be talking, "When our father died, that our friend, it was his wife he sent to come. And we were inside this yard, cooking all the food for the funeral up to the time the funeral finished." And if you want to see it in this way in Dagbon here, it is also there like that.

And again, it also happens that somebody will be a messenger for many people, but he has not got somebody to send. It also comes like that, often, and it is only because everybody has his luck. Somebody can be there making things well for others, and they will be using him as a messenger because he is good at it. As he is doing good for others, when he stands, no one will do it for him. It's isn't that they don't like him; it's just from his luck. And so wherever you see the people who are always able to exchange sending one another as messengers, it's not all that common. It cannot be, but it would have been better if it were always in that way. But all people are not equal, and not everyone has the same sense. That is why I have said that they send the one with sense, not the one who can walk. You don't send a messenger who doesn't know anything about you. Someone who doesn't know is going to go and stand in foolishness. If you send such a person and he goes, he is going to do, "I don't know," and by that time, your thing has spoiled. And so we send messengers to make things well. You don't send your enemy to do something good for you. You send your friend, or your relative, and you send someone with sense. And so sending of messengers has got a lot of talks. There are problems inside and there are no problems inside: you have to know the person to send. If you are going to send someone, and you have trust, there are no problems.

Even as I have said that the person who has no sense is not good to be sent as a messenger, sometimes they send such a fellow. If you want to know that truly, somebody has no sense, it is in taking him to be a messenger that you will know it. You will send him and he will go and sit foolishly, and you will get to know that it's true that he is a fool. And you will remove him from ever being your messenger again. And if it happens that you send him and he goes to talk sensibly, and all that you sent him for, he does it correctly, even if he was a fool, then he is not a fool again. It can happen that you will send a sensible person and he will go and talk foolishly, and so a sensible person has turned to be a fool, and by then, you will remove him from being a messenger. And so inside sending messengers, there are many things. And all this is inside the talk of how we send messengers.

Truly, the ways of sending people are many in Dagbon here. In Dagbon here, we also send women to make things well for us. A woman you send can go and meet a man to lead her to where you are sending her. In the sending of women, we send our sisters. If you have a wife who hears when you speak, she is good for you to send. As for your mother, you can't send your mother, but if you are someone who does good to your mother, if your mother wants, she can go. If you send messengers somewhere and your mother decides to add herself to them, it will only give respect to you the one who has sent them. People will say, "He has a lot of respect, and his messengers are big people. Look at how he has sent messengers, and at the same time, his mother included herself with them." As for your father, you can't send your father. If you want to send your father, you don't have to go straightforward and tell him, "I want you to go to this place and do this for me." You will go to him and say something to let him have pity for you, and you will say, "Oh, as for this going, if my father were to have been included, I would have been happy." If your father has sense, he will know that you want him to go but you don't want to tell him to go. As for sending your father and mother, there is no place to send them except the funeral houses of your women. But as for your sisters, you can just send your sister, "Go and attend this funeral at my wife so-and-so's house. If you go to that town, these are the people you have to meet before they can send you to the funeral house." If it is that your grandmother is still alive, you can send your grandmother to go with your sisters to perform the funeral for you.

And truly, in Dagbon here, the strongest messengers are those we send to funerals. As for Dagbon, it isn't all funerals you will go. There will be a funeral, and your leg is not there: it means you don't have to go there. On the part of funerals, sometimes there is some going which is not good for you, unless you

send a messenger. Sometimes you can go yourself, and sometimes you will send messengers. Why is it that you won't go to someplace yourself? At a funeral house, say at the house of your wife's parents, sometimes someone may be looking for you at that place to do something bad to you. There will somebody who is your enemy. You know, a human being doesn't live without enemies. In every tribe, don't you see that there are good people and bad people? Wherever human beings gather, there will be good, and there will be hatred and jealousy. Not everybody will be good and not everybody will be bad. And inside our Dagbani, we say that if somebody doesn't know you, he won't do you any bad; it is the one who knows you who does you bad. That is how it is. That is why, when we started these talks, I gave you a proverb: "They are asking of you." If people are asking of you, it doesn't mean that they like you. And so you should know about that. It is the talks of Dagbon you want, and this is one of them, and if you don't regard it, you will suffer. As for that, it's with everybody. You can add this talk and put it into its standing place. That is why we say that, "They are asking of you."

And many of Dagbon funerals, some people take them to join it to that thing. As your enemy has been planning to do something bad against you, maybe he couldn't get the way, but at a funeral house's gathering place, if you are there, he will be able to get you. A funeral house might be the only place where that person can get a chance to do bad to you. At a funeral house, someone can easily put something into food and give you, and so if you go there, your enemies will get you. To protect yourself, you can send somebody so that you will be sitting at home. It's not that going there is forbidden to you. If you know that you can go there and nothing will happen to you, then you go. But I can tell you that it sometimes happens in Dagbon here that your wife's father will die, and you will be at her father's house performing the funeral while your wife is at your own house. She will not go to the funeral house. As it is, it was because of her that you got to know her father, and now you are performing her father's funeral, and she is not there. Before she can go to the funeral house, you have to find out from soothsayers and see whether she will get some harm at the funeral house either from the food or from anything. If you search and they tell you, "Don't go," and you don't go, it is better. The one who was going to do you bad will go and be waiting there, thinking that you will come. If you don't go, what is he going to do? And so I can tell you that in Dagbon, some people go to soothsayers before attending any funeral.

As for this talk, I have seen it with my naked eyes on the funeral day of my uncle. My sister was at Bolgatanga. She was our mother's brother's child. And

she had got a lot of means. In addition to her, her senior mothers and her senior sisters were there. Some of them loved her. And some of them hated her: just because of what she was getting, it pained them. When the funeral day came and we were going to perform the funeral, the funeral was at Dalun, and she also came here and we were going together to Dalun. And in Dagbon here, for a woman to get many enemies, it will be when she starts wearing gold necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. And on the funeral day, we have something we do called showing the riches, and everybody will gather. The day they were going to show the riches, she went there, and all her neck, her ears, and her hands were all gold. She had it. When her mothers and senior sisters saw all this, they started to become annoyed at her. The next day, after showing the riches, the senior son of the dead person will come out, and the funeral children will be following the senior son and be going around greeting people, and drummers will be beating and following them. This was what we were doing. We were just walking like that, and my sister stepped on a piece of bone. She was wearing slippers, and the bone went through the slippers to catch her foot. She didn't mind anything; she just squatted down and pulled out the bone and threw it away. There was blood coming out of that place, and they got a rag and tied it, and we started walking again greeting people.

We finished greeting people, and in the night we also finished eating, and we heard crying in the house. That crying cannot be compared to any human crying. She was crying, and taking her leg and knocking it on the ground. And she was calling the names of her senior sister and senior mother, and saying that they were coming to kill her. She was crying like that at midnight, and many medicine men in that town all gathered with their means, and they gave all their help, but nothing happened. She was just crying. And there was nothing again: at that time, she became a mad person, and she was mad for about five years, up to the time she died. She died at my brother Mumuni's house at Savelugu. The madness was so strong that she was just removing her clothes and throwing them away and walking on the street naked. And they decided to catch her and hold her down, and they used iron rods and bent them around her hands. And the madness was not from anywhere; it was just inside her walking. That is why I said that there are some places where you don't have to go; you have to send somebody, and if that fellow goes, nothing will catch him. And so sending of messengers is something that is on everybody.

Sending of messengers can even save people from death. Sometimes you will send a messenger to a different town, and when he goes there, he is a stranger, and they won't know anything about him. As he is sitting there, maybe the people there will sit down to talk about someone in his town, that they want to do bad to

him, and maybe they want to kill him. If the messenger hears it, when he comes back to his town, he will send his trusted child or, if he wants, he himself will go to tell the person, “At this town, such-and-such people are grouped against you, and this is what they want to do.” If he sends his child, it means that he himself has gone. And if the child tells that person, he will hear the talk and hold himself well, and he won’t release himself for those people at that town to get him easily. And by then, his life is safe. And it came from the sending of messengers.

And again, sending of messengers can bring luck. Sometimes you might be sent as a messenger to a town, and when you go there, you hear them talking that they are going to give a human being to someone at your town, that is, they are going to give him a wife. They don’t know that you know the person, or they wouldn’t be talking about him. But if they talk and you listen, you will come back and send your child to go and tell that fellow, “So-and-so people from this town are going to do this kind of good to you. And so you should be ready so that whenever it comes to you, you won’t be surprised.”

And so the talks of sending messengers are many. If there weren’t any messengers, there wouldn’t be any buying, and there wouldn’t be any selling either. You can send somebody to the market to buy something for you, and you will send the right person and he will buy the right thing. And those he is buying from, some people have also sent them to sell it. As for that, this is what we see all the time. You can be sending your children to trade for you. If you have given birth to children, and you have trained them very well, you can be sending them to do all these certain things for you. If you are going to send someone to buy something for you, you only have to know the messenger who will go and not buy the wrong thing. And if somebody goes and buys a better thing for you, and you sell it and get profit, you can share it with him. If it is the first time for the one you are sending to go and buy that thing, you have to get somebody who knows that place already, and you will let the new one follow the old one, and the one who has been going will take him there to buy everything so that the next time, he can go by himself and get the right things. And so sometimes you will send two people, and it looks as if it is one, but you know in your heart that they are two.

Here is an example. As you John are here, let’s say we want to send somebody to your town, and we are not sending the messenger to you but for something in your town, and by that time you are here and you are going to go back to your town. We don’t let our messenger go; we have to let our messenger wait until you are going, and we will tell him to accompany you and go. When you go, if there is a way, he will stay in your house while he is getting the things he is looking for. It looks as if we are sending one person, but in our hearts, we

will be thinking that we have sent two people, and it's true, because if he goes to buy the things he wants, you have to lead him to buy all those things. When he buys and it's good or it's bad, when he comes back, it is your name that we will call. If he brings something good, we will say, "As for John, he has done well. They have bought their things well." If it's not good, we will say, "Oh! As for John, he hasn't done well at all. How is it that we've sent a messenger to his town to buy, and he himself is there, and look at what they've bought?" Maybe you were thinking that we have sent only the messenger, and you were not included, not knowing that we included you without saying it. And truly, we were rather thinking that you are the only one we were sending. If we had not thought that, we wouldn't have been calling your name first when the messenger arrived with the things.

And so when we send messengers, we send messengers whom we trust. And it is your sending that shows that you trust him. As for the friend you send to look for a woman for you, if it is something on the part of money, you have to trust him and let him do it for you, if only he agrees to do it. And it can happen that you will send someone to go and borrow money for you, and you tell him the amount of money you want to borrow, and he will go and borrow more than that. When he is coming back to you, he will go and put his own somewhere and give you the amount you wanted. The time you are going to pay it back, you will pay the amount, and the one who lent you will say that the amount has not reached, and he will tell you, "This is what your messenger last borrowed." At that time, you don't have to say anything. You only have to pay back the amount he has shown. You believed the messenger you sent, and whether it is a lie or it is true, you have to pay the one who lent you the money. As you are paying it, it means that you believe your messenger, because you were the one who sent him.

Sometimes you will take your wife and send her to borrow money. The person you send her to should know that she is your wife, the one who knows much of your secrets. If you have a wife who has not yet given birth to your own child, there is no way for you to send such a woman. If you want, if you have a child, you can send your child if that person knows that this is your child who knows your secrets and you know his secrets. And truly, sending somebody to borrow money for you is very difficult. Sometimes it will happen that you will send somebody to borrow money for you, and when you are to pay it back, you have to send that same messenger, and maybe that messenger is not around. When the messenger went and borrowed the money, they showed the day when the money would be paid back. If the messenger who borrowed the money is not around, the day will come, and you will only be waiting with your clenched teeth to meet the one who lent you the money.

And so the sending of messengers is just like that: everywhere, you can meet them and send them. This is how we live together in Dagbon here. In the olden days, you would go to the bush and cut the sticks for roofing the house and pack them down, and you would just walk home and send people to go and carry the sticks for you. It was another way of sending people. Or if you moved from one town to another town, you would move to the new town and simply group some people and tell them that you want people to go and carry your things from your former town to your new place, and they would go. That was another way of sending people.

And it is not that it is only people from the place you know that you will send. If you travel to a different town in Dagbon here, and you need to send a messenger, you will get someone easily. Let's say you have gone to buy something, and when you reach the place, they tell you that there is another way to buy the thing, and you don't want somebody to go there first and buy and leave you. The house where you are staying, you will only tell the householder that he should give you a child you can send in front of you. Even if the child is at the farm, the householder will send someone to go and call him, and the child will come and you will send him. If there is no child in the house, the householder will send his own wife. If the women are not there or they cannot go, the householder himself will go and do it for you. It's because you are a stranger.

If something is worrying you and you want to go to someplace to see a *tindana*,<sup>1</sup> you have to get a messenger to lead you. In our Dagbon, the chiefs are holding the towns, but we say that the tindanas are holding the land. During the olden days, the tindanas were the chiefs. It was Naa Nyaysi who beat and drove all of them away. But however useless or weak a work is, a goat will be afraid of it. And this is how it is with the tindanas. You will not go directly to a tindana, but you will have to get somebody from the tindana's town to lead you. If you are going to a tindana who is in a different town, when you reach the town where the tindana is, you will only ask the houseowner where you are staying to get a messenger to lead you to the tindana. If you don't know anybody in that town, you can go to see an elder of the chief, and the elder will lead you to the chief so that the chief will send a child to accompany you to the tindana. And this is standing in Dagbon here.

And so sending people, it is just like that. If you want something from somebody, it is good you send a messenger to represent you and greet. If you are lucky, you will get a good messenger to send, and it will help you get what you

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1. *tindana*: priest or custodian of a local or town shrine; from *tiŋa lana*, "holder" of "the town" or "the land"

want. If you want something from a maalam, you will try to send a messenger whom you believe, and he will get good things from the maalam for you. If you want something from a chief, you will get a messenger to accompany you. If you are searching for a woman, you will send people. If there are some places where it is not good for you yourself to go, you will send a messenger. If you quarrel with someone, you can send a messenger to repair it. If it is greetings, you can send a messenger or get a messenger to accompany you. Whatever you do, it is good that you go along with people. Sending of messengers gives respect, and it adds respect to you, because it shows that you are inside people. And all this, it will add to you in your living. This is how the talk of messengers is. And so sending messengers doesn't mind who you are, unless for the one who has no luck to get good messengers. And this is the talk I have for you today.