

Chapter I-4: *Respect and the Dagbamba Way of Living Together*

Today we are going to talk about the character of Dagbamba and how Dagbamba live. Yesterday I told you that there is one talk that is strong on the part of all our talks. In our every talk, respect is inside. Respect is our big talk on the part of our living. We Dagbamba, we know how to give respect to people, and we know what is inside staying with people. And what I'm telling you shows that I'm talking about Dagbamba: their way of living is like this. The person who happens not to know our work, or our way of living: maybe he is only hearing the name of Dagbamba. Inside this book, if we come to talk the talks of drumming, if we are counting the names of chiefs, or we are showing the praises of the towns, somebody who takes it and reads will just be reading the names, and he won't know the Dagbamba way of living. But if he reads it and sees all these works, he will see that as for Dagbamba, this is the way they live. He won't say that Gurunsi people are doing this work. He won't say that Ashanti people are doing it. He's going to say that Dagbamba people are doing it. Is it not different? So this talk, all of it is inside our talks: it is the olden days' respect and this present day's respect that is still going on.

Truly, if I am going to talk about our way of living, the first talk is respect. All the talks that I am telling you, if you are watchful, you will see that respect is inside all of them. And respect is inside all the talks that are coming. That is why I'm telling you that our everything is respect. Custom is respect. Those who don't remember the old talks or the Dagbamba tradition, as they have not given respect to the old talks or the tradition, it is reducing their way of life. If it is chieftaincy, or drumming, or any talk on the part of custom: the talks are all standing on the feet of respect. You have to give respect inside them. If you don't give respect, you won't get chieftaincy to eat. This drumming that you are now inside, you gave respect: that is why you know it. If you didn't give respect, do you think you would know it? It is respect that has brought it. And it is respect again that will extend it, because respect has children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. You should watch. When you are at home, don't you get some people to add to yourself to beat drums? And is it all of them who know me? Do they know anyone in Dagbon here? It is you alone who knows us. As they are following you and drumming, are you holding children or not? And you are still going to give birth to even more children. What has brought that? It is respect. And so this is what I'm telling you.

If you are someone who gives respect in Dagbon here, you give respect to someone you know, and you give respect to someone you don't know. And you give respect to people who are chiefs and people who are maalam. And you give respect to a person who is more than you. And you give respect to a person who is of the age of your father. If the person is a woman and she is of the age of your mother, you give respect to her the same way you give respect to your mother. As you give respect to your brother, if you see somebody outside, you give him respect the way you give respect to your brother. You will give respect like that.

The respect you will give again is to your in-laws, and giving respect to your in-laws has two types. Your daughter is in their house, and you don't know the bad or the good your daughter is doing to them: that alone will make you fear your in-laws and give them respect. If you take your daughter and give her to someone, it is a heavy load you've given him, and so when you see him, you will give him respect. And it comes to show again that this giving respect, it is the wife who will give respect even more, and there are some women who give respect to their husbands so much that it looks as if the husband is the father and the mother. And the husband, too, as he has brought a woman to his house, he will give respect to her relatives, and the respect he gives them shows that he respects his wife, too. This is its way.

And so if I want to talk about respect, there is respect and respect; all the respects are plenty. But there is one that is first. As a Dagbana, if you are a man and you are growing up, the first respect you will learn is the respect to give to people in order to get a wife. That is the starting of respect. The first respect is the one you give to get a woman. If you want to collect all the respects, then the starting of respect comes from a woman. It is that respect which gives birth to all the rest of the respect. The way I am saying that all respect is coming from the woman, is it not a woman who gave birth to you? If your father didn't get your mother to give birth to you, would you have come out to find all you are doing now? Everything of yours, if you watch it, where has it come from? It comes from the respect your father was giving, and his getting a wife came out of that, before you yourself were given birth. And so all respect is sitting upon a woman and her husband. Or the way I'm talking, you don't see it like that? You have to give respect before you will get a woman, and you have to give respect to the woman, too. You have to give her respect. Even the Holy Prophet, from whom is he going to come? A woman.

And so all our respect, its first part is the respect to get a woman. That is how it is. This is our starting, and I think in my heart that it is inside most tribes, too. If you don't know how to give respect, then you can never get a woman. If you grow up to become matured, whatever happens, you have to find a woman.

And if you don't give respect, how will you get the woman? That is where the first part of respect starts. And again, if respect is not there, you can't get somebody to live with. It is respect that you will be giving, and when you finish getting a woman, then if you want to solve your problems, it is this same respect that you will give and your problems will be solved, and you will take it to be holding the woman. And what I'm telling you: if you watch inside every respect, you will come to see that the first thing inside is a woman. For example, the respect of strangers¹ is a big talk in Dagbon here. If a stranger comes to visit you, you will give respect to the stranger. As this woman is inside your house, it is the woman who will fetch water and give it to the stranger. If it is preparing of food for the stranger or preparing the room for the stranger to sleep or fetching water for the stranger to bathe, it is the woman who will do it. That is why I say that a woman is inside every respect.

And truly, respect has no end in Dagbon here. In every talk that is coming, respect is there. And so how I'm going to talk about it, I'm going to give you some examples, and I'm going to count some types of the respect inside our Dagbamba living. And I will start it on the part of living together with people. I have told you that we Dagbamba say that friendship is more than family. Our old Dagbamba tell a story. One time in Dagbon, three people were walking together, and every one of them was carrying his load. Nobody said that they should gather the three loads so that he alone would carry it. Everybody was carrying his own. And a person met them on the way, and he slapped the one who was in the front. The one who was next to the man in front didn't mind. Then the person slapped the second man, too, and the one next to the second man also didn't mind. And then the person slapped the last man too. And then they were all standing, and the person they met asked them, "Why is it that the three of you are traveling together, and everyone is carrying his own load, and you didn't gather all into one? And again, you see the way I slapped the one who was in front. The one in the center: did he mind? And when I slapped the one in the center, did the last man mind?" And then he asked them, "The three of you traveling together, what are your names?" And the one in front said, "As for me, my name is family."² And the one in the center said, "My name is friendship."³ And the one behind said, "My name is mingling."⁴ And then the person told them that they should bring all their loads together. And he said, "You the one in the front, take it and carry. You

1 sana: stranger; also, visitor or guest

2. doyim: family

3. simli: friendship

4. milgu: acquaintance, coming together; also, to be accustomed to, to be acquainted with

said your name is “family,” and so you are the youngest among all of them. And you in the middle, you are older, because it is friendship before someone will get a woman. And you the one who was last are the eldest, because it is coming together that will bring friendship, before the friendship will extend and bring family. And so you the one who called yourself “family,” you are the youngest, and so you should carry the load.” And they gathered the three loads and made the one in front to carry it. As for family, it is the youngest of the three. If you call yourself family, there is nothing you will do again and the family will extend. But if you have friendship with somebody, you will be together like that up to the time one will give a woman to the other, and it will extend the family. And as for coming together with people, and becoming used to one another, that is what will bring friendship and the widening of the family. And so living together with people, to us Dagbamba, how we sit with the people we stay with, it is stronger than even the family.

On the part of our living together, it is the work of respect. And it shows that respect is the work of patience, because all this, it is sweet and it is bitter. If you are someone who lives with people, if you don’t have patience, then your heart will always be getting up. And you know that when your heart gets up, it is bitter. But where there is patience, there is sweetness. As for patience, if you are patient and you don’t get what you want from it, then you haven’t kept patience up to the time it wants. This is its way. And so on the part of living together with people, our Dagbamba say that the teeth and the tongue quarrel. Or doesn’t it happen? It happens. You yourself know it. As the teeth and the tongue are living together, they quarrel. And as they quarrel, they are still living together. With us Dagbamba, when you are all staying at one place, you quarrel, and at the same time you talk. And this is strong inside our living: “Come and we’ll quarrel; come and we’ll sit; come and we’ll talk.” If you hear that a Dagbamba has quarreled with somebody, and he and that person do not talk, then they are not staying at the same place. But if they are staying at the same place, whatever happens, they will talk again. Why won’t they talk? If they don’t talk, people will say, “You people: your way of living is not good. Why is it that you are sitting at the same place and you have quarreled and there is no talking?” If there is still no talking, if there are old men staying in their area, those old men will make them talk. These old men will say some blessings and give them good thoughts, and they will talk. And people will say to these old men, “Oh! Your old age is good. These people were quarreling, and you have given them patience to talk. Your living is good.” Sitting in the same area with such old people finishes many talks. Let’s say that today, you are sitting and you get something bad which is very big. If it were

somewhere, the talk would go to the chief's house, but if you are sitting well with the people in your area, it can kill the bad talk.

And so the character we Dagbamba have in our way of living, it's bitter and it's sweet on the part of our friends and our families, and it is that we are making friendship stronger than family. As for friendship and staying with people, it is standing like that. You are useless; you are good: inside a family, they cannot remove you and throw you away. But as for friendship, you will always be looking for the good and trying to do what is good. Friendship can spoil. And so if you are sitting with someone and you come to quarrel, and it is mouth-arguing, whatever happens, you will not say all. You will talk your talk and leave it, and some will remain in your stomach. We Dagbamba say, "Shyness is a human being." What is shyness? It is shame: you don't want to do something that will let you be ashamed, so that you will be shy when you see your fellow person. And so Dagbamba say, "You cannot say all." If you quarrel with someone, and you talk all of the talk that is with you, that person will turn and abuse you, "If we were of the same family, you would not talk to me like that." And we Dagbamba fear that. If your friend should abuse you like that in Dagbani, your shame will be too much, and it will worry you. To us, we show that friendship is more than family. What you fear to say inside your family, on the part of saying it to your friends, you will fear it more than that. And so Dagbamba, on the part of our living together with people, it is very strong.

When you are sitting at one place with someone, whether you are of the same family or not, or he's a Gurunsi or a Hausa or a Mossi or a Yoruba or any tribe and he comes to sit at the same place with you, if one person does not sleep, then all of you don't sleep. If a Dagbana knows a person, and that person gets something bad, then it is the Dagbana's bad, too. We Dagbamba have that. If someone is sitting at the same place with you, if you have thoughts, you will know that his bad is your bad, and his good is your good. If it is that somebody is sick inside his house, everybody will go and greet him. And if someone gets good luck, and it is that a woman has given birth, whatever happens, everyone will go and greet. A Dagbana can refuse anything, but he will never refuse to go and greet people on the part of bringing forth. You can be quarreling with someone, and your wife will come to give birth: whatever happens, if his wife does not come to greet your wife, then he will come and greet you. And that day, you will talk. And so you and your fellow friend, you are the same person. If your fellow friend gets a bad thing, then it is you who gets it, and so if he gets a bad thing, you are involved. If he gets a good thing, you are also involved. Today, as we are sitting down now, we have gathered and we are all working in a group. And you are not of the same tribe as us. As we have gathered and we are sitting down, if

somebody from outside should come and knock any of us, if the fellow happens to knock you, none of us will sit down. If that fellow comes to knock Mustapha, will you John sit down to say that Mustapha is a Dagbana man and so you wouldn't bother to ask why the fellow has knocked him? No. And so that is how this our Dagbon is. We still have one mouth about that. That is how it is.

A Dagbana can go and sit in another town, and it is not a Dagbamba town. If he comes and people are going to greet him, they will greet him, "How are the people you are staying with?" If you hear them greet like that, you will know that what I am talking is a strong talk, because they don't know them and yet they are asking of them. That is why I am telling you that friendship is stronger than family. It is even inside this sitting together with people that you will become family. We are in the same area, and we don't know each other, and you have your daughter and I have my son: if our children want each other, shyness will let you give your daughter to my boy. If you refuse the one from your area, if you give your daughter to somebody else somewhere, when any bad talk comes, your whole area will have one mouth and leave you alone. If you are sitting someplace and your family is someplace else, if you give birth to your daughter and you are going to give her to her husband, there is no way for you to take your daughter to your family to give her to her husband's people: you will give your daughter to an old person in the area where you are staying, and he will give the girl to those people. And so sitting together with people is stronger than family. And this is standing in our Dagbon land, and we will get inside it and talk to the extent we can reach.

Truly, if you want to see an example of how we live on the part of staying with people, you can look at the way we eat food. In Dagbon here, we gather and eat, and truly, it's not only Dagbamba who gather and eat. Konkombas gather and eat; Mamprusis gather and eat. I think in my heart that we black people, if not all of us, then most of us gather and eat. But I am trying to show you the talk on the part of Dagbon, and to us, we gather and eat because if you don't gather and eat, people will come to say that you are not a good person. They will say that you are a bad person or a useless person, and they will say that you cannot hold people. If you are always eating alone, and you want something from somebody, he will not give it you. In Dagbon here, a person who eats food alone is not a person who can hold people. Every day, he will be decreasing, because when he goes outside, people will not give respect to him. If he gets trouble, they will say, "Oh, leave him. He has been eating food alone. Don't you see how he is? It is in his eating of food that you can know how he is, and you know it will come like that." It is a selfish person or a useless person who eats food alone. We have a word in our Dagbani, *bemlana*, and it means somebody who has something and he doesn't

want his friend to have it. The person we call *bemlana*, that is the person who eats alone. And we say that he is a useless person, and we say again that he is selfish. He always eats alone. Any time he wants to eat, instead of calling somebody to join him, he won't call anyone. That is the meaning of *bemlana*. If a person is eating food alone, it can show that he is not staying well with the people in his area. And so when a person eats food alone, it is a big talk in Dagbon here. It is not good if somebody eats food alone. And this is how it is.

This gathering and eating, we have all grown up and met it, and as we have met it, we also do it. When I say that we grew up and met something, do you know what I am saying? When you hear that you have come to meet something, it is your eye that has seen it. If your eye has not seen it, how can you say you've come to meet it? What you have heard, you have not seen it; and when you hear something, it's not all of it that works. But gathering and eating, we have all grown up and met it. And so gathering and eating is like something on the part of your mother, that is, you are all from the same house. Why do I say that? In Dagbon here, if you are born and you grow up, if it is that you are two or three children in the house, you will gather and eat. If you are only one child in the house, and you are going to eat, then you will gather and eat with children from the house that is near to you. And the one who gave birth to you, that is the same way it started with him too, and it is still like that. When a householder is sitting down, it can happen that he will be the only person of his size in his house. If his children are not there or his nephews are not there, he can get somebody who is in his area and who is also an old person, and these old men will gather at one of their houses, and the one at whose house they eat, he is the elder. When it is time for food, they will gather together at their sitting place outside that house, and women will bring the food to that house, outside, and the old men will sit down and eat the food.

As they are sitting together to eat the food, it shows that they have a lot of sense. When a person is alone in Dagbon here, our eyes don't become satisfied with him, and what we take to know that a person should not be alone is the way we gather and eat. On the part of gathering and eating, if you are friends and you gather and eat, you have become relatives. If you are of the same family, then it becomes more family. There is nothing as if you don't trust one another again. If you didn't trust one another, you would not gather and eat. If somebody eats together with his fellow friends, it shows that they have all given trust to one another. And this is how gathering and eating comes.

In the olden days, when we were growing up, there was something inside our way of living, and we called it *kpatabɔ*. About ten different houses' children would come, and you would all gather. Then you would go to one house, and they

would bring the food outside. When you finished all the food, then you would go to the next person's house: they would bring the food and you would eat. Then you would go to another place, and they would bring food for you to eat. The time we were eating like this, at that time I was just a very small child. As for the smallest children, they were staying in their houses to eat. But if you were grown a bit, and your eyes were open or you were becoming matured, you would go around like that and eat. But the way our fathers were eating at that time was that they would choose the eldest one among them, and they would all gather outside the eldest one's house. If they were five, all the five houses' food would be sent to outside there, and they would all eat. But as for us, every day we were walking around to the different houses and eating.

In Dagbon here, if you come to see a person eating alone, if it is a man or a woman, then maybe it is someone who is very, very old, and it shows that he doesn't know about himself again. As for that, they will be cutting his food for him alone, and he will be eating. But if it is somebody who is not very old like that, there will be many of them eating together. It can happen that a householder will be sitting down, and he and those people staying near him, they don't trust one another. As he has no trust in them, he can take one of his grandsons, and the old person will say, "My friend, I am going to be eating food with you." In Dagbon here, if you hear an old person call a child his friend, then it means the child is a grandson of his. If they make food and bring it outside, that child will eat with the old person. And it can happen that the grandchild is not around, and as the old man doesn't want to be eating alone, if he has small children, he will call one of them, maybe someone about four years old, and the child will be eating with him. It shows that he is eating with a human being. If an old person is eating food alone, it will be worrying him, because he and those people staying at the same place, he doesn't trust them, and there is nobody he can add to himself so that they will gather and eat. As it is worrying him, he will always be calling his grandchildren to come and eat with him. And if it happens that one day he is eating alone, it doesn't show that he is eating alone, but it only shows that he couldn't get somebody to add to himself and eat.

And the way we men gather and eat, that is how our wives also gather and eat. Among the women, if you have women in your house, and they are up to four, they will all eat inside one bowl. If they are six, they can separate the bowls, and three will eat from one bowl and three will eat from the other bowl. If the children in the house are many, they will also separate themselves like that. If they are six or eight, they will divide themselves and eat from two bowls. And so in Dagbon here, this is how we gather and eat.

And so if a person eats alone, it's a big talk in Dagbon here. In Dagbon here, it's only a chief who eats alone, but when he's eating, those who hold the food for him are there, and when he eats a little, he will leave it and give to them. And it does not show that he is eating alone. And it's just because they don't want a person to take his hand and eat with the chief, not because of anything, but because if you eat with a chief like that, you will also come to take yourself and say you are a chief. And so when a chief is going to eat, those who hold the food will be holding it, and when he eats a little, they will take it. It shows that the chief too does not eat alone. And so the eating of food, it has its differences.

And so we Dagbamba don't eat alone. Even if you go and get some medicine, and the medicine shows that you should eat it inside soup, you are not going to eat alone. When you gather with your friends to eat, and they bring the food, you will let them bring a different bowl and put the medicine inside. They will bring the food you are eating with your friends in one bowl, and you will eat the way you were already eating. And you will take some of the food, and push it in the soup, and then you will take it and put it in your medicine soup and eat. At that time, those you are eating with, they will know that you are eating medicine. If not that, it will show that it is a different soup that is sweet, and you don't want them to eat it. But as you have brought the medicine out for all of them to see, they will know that it is medicine. Their eyes have seen, and some of them have gone for medicine, too, and they won't take your fault. And so this gathering and eating, it shows many things on the part of how we live with people.

And respect, and the way we live with people, there is something else again, and it is another example of what I am talking about. We Dagbamba don't show ourselves over people. What is "showing oneself"? It is bluffing. Showing oneself is not more than that: you see a person and you don't know him; when he comes, you want to show yourself that you are more than him or you are proud on his part. We don't want that way of living. Anyone we live with, we don't demean that person. In Dagbon here, it is the chief's sons who would have said they would be showing themselves, but as we are sitting, the son of a Dagbamba chief doesn't even want to bring himself out into the open. It is somebody else who will bring that person out, and even you can know that person and you would like to bring him out into the open, and he will say he does not want it. Bringing yourself out into the open means that you are showing yourself. If it is dressing, even dressing can bring out that you are showing yourself, and it will show that you have brought it. Someone will wear some clothes and take himself around and be showing himself and bluffing. It is inside it that they will know he is showing himself, because someone will be wearing the same cloth and will not be showing himself. And so in Dagbon here, a person who is truly somebody is even

hiding. Dagbamba give their proverb that says, “A lizard hides and his head is showing out to the public.” Do you know a lizard? There is one type of lizard, and their head is a bit red: they shake their heads up and down. That is what we use to make the proverb. That is the reason why a prince who really belongs to chieftaincy doesn’t show himself. If he brings himself out, he will not get a chance to eat chieftaincy. That is why we say that, “A lizard hides and only the head shows.” Even a prince will hide himself. He won’t show that he is a prince, unless the time he gets the chance to eat chieftaincy. Any chief’s son who comes to show himself in Dagbon does not go forward; he goes back. That is how it is.

And so showing ourselves is not much in the way we live. Everything of ours is respect. If you come to see one of us showing himself, then he is nothing in Dagbon here. He is a weak Dagbana; his beginning was a weak beginning. Those whose starting is strong, their life is different from the ones who show themselves. If you bring yourself out to say that “I am somebody like this,” then others will get to know that you are nobody. Truly, there are people in Dagbon here who show themselves. Some of them are Dagbamba and some are not Dagbamba, but a real Dagbana does not show himself. If you see a Dagbana showing himself too much, if you follow him, then you will see that he is nobody. Nobody like what? He is a slave. Someone who is from the family of a slave will show himself more than a real Dagbana, because we real Dagbamba don’t know how to show ourselves. There are some people Dagbamba have bought long ago, and such a person comes, and he comes to get a family. His family will show themselves more than the family of the one who bought him. When we buy a slave, and he grows fat, he shows himself. Inside everything he is going to do, he will show himself. I think you also have it on your side, because there are some black people from America, and inside their family, they were slaves; when they come here, some of them show themselves more on us. I’m talking of some, not all. If you follow the ones who show themselves and the ones who don’t show themselves, you will see that the ones who show themselves are bluffing. And we Dagbamba, we don’t want that. That is how we live.

How we drummers are, if you see a gathering, and drummers are there, if we begin to praise them, it is at that place that people will know that this person is more than that person. Maybe you were showing yourself, and you started with slavery. And the way your fellow friends were seeing you, they were only taking it that you are also a Dagbana. But when we drummers get there, we are going to talk about people’s grandfathers. We will see someone and show him: your grandfather ate the Yendi chieftaincy and gave birth to your father; your father ate the Savelugu chieftaincy, or Karaga. That is how Yaa-Naa’s children eat chieftaincy. The one who has been hiding himself, the drummers will show him

that his beginning started like this, at Yendi, going to Karaga, going to Savelugu, or like that. The drummers will separate his grandfather's name, and he will come out and dance. When he finishes dancing, then the drummers, we have a way, and we will get to another person. If the people are twenty or more than that, and they are Dagbamba: all of them will follow one another and dance, and you the drummer are going to tell all of them, each one of them, where they belong to and their standing place. And the one who was bluffing, if he comes out to dance his dance, you the drummer will show that the first one's grandfather bought his grandfather, and so he is nothing. Or even if you are somebody, and how your starting was, when the drummers are beating, you are not thinking that there are people who are more than you, and you will come out and show yourself. When the drummers see you like that, we can use the drum to tell you that, "You don't have to show yourself; there are people who are more than you." If we separate it like that, those who know will understand that we have opened your anus to the public. And so we drummers used to say that inside drumming, we bring people together, and inside drumming, we tell people where they belong and there will be separation. In our talks, this is its way. Inside drumming, it is there like that. And so in Dagbon, we don't show ourselves much. We only know how to give respect.

On the part of our knowing things, too, we Dagbamba don't show ourselves. If you see someone showing himself on the part of his learning, at that time you will also see someone else come to show that that fellow's sense is just small. When we go to learn something, we don't show ourselves, and as we don't show ourselves much, it even helps us to know more things. You must give respect to learn something. If sense is there and you don't give respect, then what will you give? There is nothing. The one who has gone to learn also gave respect before he learned it. If you are going to learn from him, you will give him respect. If you are not going to learn from him, you will give him respect, because there may be a day when you want to get something from his sense-work. If you were not giving him respect, will you get what you want from him? You won't get. Our Dagbamba say that it is good you visit a dry well. Why do you visit a dry well or visit a dry pond? If you always go there when it is dry, you will one day go to visit it when it has water. If you don't visit it when it is dry, if a time comes when there is water in it, you won't know of it. Do you understand? If you don't give learning respect, and they stop learning, will you be able to do anything? And so we give respect to the one who knows, and we give respect to the one who learns, too. And so we Dagbamba and the people we live with, we don't show ourselves on each other; we only give respect to one another. And we have that even coming to talk of somebody we are not staying with, because we give respect to strangers.

Truly, I think in my heart that if you say that someone gives respect, it is inside his giving respect to strangers that you will know that truly, his sense on the part of respect is very great. And so the talk of strangers is another example I'm going to give you. In Dagbon here, the person we call a stranger has got his types. There is the stranger you don't know. Maybe this stranger is traveling, or he is coming to stay in your town for some time. Such a stranger is coming to meet you for the first time, and you don't know him. And again, there is the stranger you know. Such a stranger is coming from a different town to visit you, and even if he is your friend or your relative, we call such a person a stranger. As you are not staying together and you have not been seeing him, he is a stranger. And so a stranger and a visitor and someone who is coming to greet you from another town, we Dagbamba take them and group them to be the same thing. And when a stranger comes in Dagbon here, whether we know him or we don't know him, we will give him respect to the extent we can give. And I can say that even on the part of our living together with the people we stay with, a stranger has more respect.

Respect like what? You will get a stranger, and you don't know him. You will go and buy meat, and come and cook soup. You will give him water and he will bathe. You will give him a sleeping place, and he will sleep. And there will be laughter when we are sitting with him. Whether we know him or we don't know him, there will be no tying of the face. That is respect, and giving respect to a stranger is nicer than anything. And so it is good you get a stranger, and you respect that person. There is no one who knows the person he will gain from, and so you will even give respect to a stranger you don't know. And this alone is a big talk in Dagbon. Truly, strangers have a lot of talk in Dagbon, and the talk of strangers has no end. God says we should feed strangers, and we should look at strangers. A stranger gives blessings in this world and in the next world. And so we Dagbamba take a stranger to be a high thing, and we give respect to strangers. There are people in Dagbon here who always want strangers to be entering their houses. There are even people in Dagbon here who will cut food for a stranger even before they get a stranger. If a woman cooks food, when it's night, the man will let the woman cut one or two bowls and put down, just in case a stranger comes at any time, so that there will be food, and the stranger will have respect, and the man too will have respect. That is how our living is. It is there.

Truly, a Dagbamba man has no more happy day than the day he receives a visitor or a stranger. If you want to show yourself: it is when you get a visitor or a stranger. Then your heart is white. Whatever you have, what you eat, you will like the stranger to join you in eating. What you drink, you will like the visitor or stranger to join you in drinking. Where you sleep, you will like the stranger to

join you in sleeping in the same place. There are even some people in Dagbon, and how their living is: if you receive a stranger and you take him out to greet your fellow friends, if it happens the stranger comes out and his clothes are not good, then you the person from the town, you will tell him, “Let’s go back to the room.” If you have many clothes, then you will give him some of your clothes to wear, and you will take him around to greet your friends. All that is part of the white heart. He will be inside your house up to the time he will go, and he wouldn’t become fed up. This is what we do.

As I have come to talk about strangers and how we give respect even to strangers, I can tell you that in the whole Ghana, there is no tribe who knows the respect of strangers more than the Dagbamba. The way you will receive a stranger and care for him, it is Dagbamba custom work you are doing. This is the reason why I say Dagbamba and other tribes are not equal. That is why we separate ourselves from all other tribes. When we see a stranger, we take him to be our mother’s child. What you eat is what the stranger also eats; where you sleep is where the stranger must sleep. All that is inside our Dagbamba living; it is not separate. If you receive a stranger and you don’t entertain the stranger or give respect to the stranger, then you are not a proper Dagbana. In Dagbon here, if you see someone who will receive a stranger and he won’t care about the stranger, then you should ask the beginning of the fellow. You will see that his starting is not good. If we receive a stranger, then we are very concerned about the stranger.

If I have not seen anywhere, I have seen Ghana, and I know the South. In Dagbon here, when a stranger comes, he will sleep free. If he needs a room, he will get. If he is going to stay in that room for five days or a week, or even up to a month or more, he will sleep free. In the South, you cannot sleep like that, unless you know somebody. And sometimes, in the South, the one you know will have no place to sleep. If you go to meet him and he is sleeping with animals, you will also be there. But on the part of strangers in Dagbon here, it’s not hard. Here, if you get a stranger, whether you know him or you don’t know him, you will get a room and tell him, “Enter this room and sleep.” In Dagbon, we won’t allow him to sleep in the sitting hall. If there are young men in your house, you will tell them to pack themselves into one room and give a room to the stranger. And so in Dagbon here, if you are a stranger and you don’t have a room to sleep, it is also not a worry. And here too, feeding strangers doesn’t worry us. How is it going to worry us? The food you eat is what he is going to eat. If it is that you drink milk, that is what he is also going to drink.

And so we Dagbamba have this thing: if a stranger comes and a Dagbana has the means, everything the stranger wants, a Dagbana would like to do it for the stranger. It’s not because of anything. It’s just so that when the stranger goes

back to his home, he will praise the person he met in Dagbon. And Dagbamba have another thing: if a stranger comes, a Dagbana doesn't want the stranger to complain that it is because he is a stranger that this or that has happened in Dagbon here. It is only if there are no means, and the stranger wants something more than that, then in that case we don't have any talk inside it, because no one can do what somebody wants to the extent that fellow wants. But if the means are there, a Dagbana will try to get the stranger what he wants. We Dagbamba have that in our way of living.

And so when a stranger comes to you, you have to try your best on the part of the stranger. The visitor or the stranger has come to see how you are living. And the visitor or the stranger has come to give you some respect. And so in our Dagbon here, if somebody comes to tell you that he has come to see you, or he is a stranger, even if the fellow is a useless person, you should think that he has a backbone somewhere and strong people somewhere. He is coming and bringing his problem, and you the people who are going to receive him, the only reply you will give back to him will be that "We wouldn't want you to be ashamed, because if you are ashamed, it is going to affect all of us." And so, when the stranger arrives, after greeting him, you will ask, "Where is my friend from?" If his heart wants, he will say, "I am from such-and-such a town." And you will ask, "Where are you going?" He will say, "I have come to this town." And you will ask him, "What do you want?" If it is that he wants knowledge, he will tell you. And you will say, "What knowledge?" When he tells you, if it is that he is looking for a maalam, or a blacksmith, or a tailor, or a drummer, and such a fellow is in your town, you will tell the stranger, "The work you want, it is these people who do that work. I will send you there to greet." If it is a stranger who already knows the people of the town, nobody will have to take him to greet anybody. His name is: "He's from such-and-such a town and he has come. He has come again." He is not a stranger in that town. When such a stranger comes, he enters into his staying house.

But how it is, it separates, because a stranger can arrive and get into your hand, and he is looking for something difficult. It can happen that the stranger is looking for something, and you too, you have no means or you have no way to help him get what he's looking for. If the stranger has come for something, if he is truly a stranger and you don't know him, when you take the stranger to those people, they will ask you, "Do you know the stranger?" And you will say, "I don't know him. I was sitting down and he came and met me." Before the stranger will get the work he wants, sometimes it will be some days. Why is it so? You the householder do not know the stranger, and the stranger himself does not know the one he is coming to learn from. What will it bring? They won't have trust in one

another. If those you are greeting fear God, they will take the stranger. If they don't fear God, they will refuse him. They will refuse him because they don't know him. And those who don't fear God will say that when he enters their work to learn their knowledge, maybe there will be some things he will take and run away. And at that point, maybe you will take it that you are ashamed, but it rather comes to look as if you had no means to help the stranger. And so the way you receive the stranger and you hear his problem, that will let you know that whether you have the strength or the means to help him. And so all this is inside the talk of a stranger, too.

As I have told you about our Dagbamba villagers, I can add salt to my talk and tell you that the day that a villager gets a stranger is the day he will eat meat and be satisfied. As for our villagers, they have a promise about that. If a villager is sitting down, he doesn't know if he is going to get a stranger, but he is raising more guinea fowls and hens at the village. Although he is keeping all these animals, he can't just catch one of them and eat it without any reason. But if he gets a stranger, he will say that they should catch one guinea fowl and kill it to make the soup taste sweet for the stranger to eat. The villager can't say that he himself wants to eat the meat. When a stranger comes, that is the day they will eat meat in their house, and that is the day the villager will enjoy himself. And so in the villages, they are looking after these animals, but they can't eat them unless they get a stranger. That is how it is in Dagbon here.

And you know, in a small village, there is no slaughter house or butcher so that you just can go and get some meat and make something for the stranger. And how it is, if you get a visitor, you wouldn't like him to eat a soup that is not sweet. And so any time a villager receives a stranger, he will tell the children in the house, "You see these guinea fowls? Go and catch two or three, and bring them to the house, so that they will make soup for the stranger." Or: "Look, these three guinea fowls, catch them and bring them to the house. We will slaughter them and the visitor will eat better soup." And truly, even if the stranger is not going to sleep in that town, they will catch a live guinea fowl or a live chicken, and they will tie it, and they will add it to any food that is there -- say, yams or anything -- and they will give it to the stranger to take it back to where he is staying. The stranger has come to visit you in the village, but the stranger said he's not going to sleep in that town or village; and so just on the part of respect, you have to catch the bird, tie it, and get something and add, and give all to the stranger to take and go.

You know, to catch a guinea fowl is difficult. If the stranger is going to sleep in the village that night, if the sun is still there, they will get a bow and an arrow and use it to shoot the guinea fowl. And when they get the guinea fowl,

they will slaughter it, and they will use the guinea fowl to make soup for the visitor. And if the stranger arrives late and the sun is not there, they can't use the bow and arrow. We have a place where the guinea fowls sleep. We call it *napɔɣu*. It's like a small room in the house, but its door is on the outside. There is a stone we use to cover the mouth of the door. In the evening, when the guinea fowls come to sleep in their room, then the householder will send one of his children to go inside. When the child goes into the *napɔɣu*, they will use the stone to cover the child inside the *napɔɣu*. As for guinea fowls, they are very wild. If they don't cover the door-mouth, when the child goes inside and gets hold of one guinea fowl, if the *napɔɣu* mouth is open, all the other guinea fowls will run out. And so the time the child goes inside, then those of you who are outside will take something and cover the doorway. Then the householder will tell the child, "Catch one of the male guinea fowls." If the child gets hold of a male guinea fowl, then you people outside will hear the male guinea fowl cry, "*Pup-pup-pup! Che-che-che-che-che-che-che!*" You will know that it is a male guinea fowl. But if the child gets hold of a female guinea fowl, you won't hear much: then then you will call to the child and say, "Leave it! Change to another one and catch it." Then if he gets hold of another guinea fowl and you hear, "*Pup-pup-pup-pup! Che-che-che-che-che-che!*" then you will say, "Yes, that one is all right. You should come out; we are going to open the door for you." Then you will open the door and the child will come out, and you will close it again.

They will bring the guinea fowl and show it to the visitor, and you will tell the stranger, "This is what we have so that they will make soup for you to eat." And if it is following the custom of Dagbon, the visitor will say, "Oh, just today I have arrived, and I'm not yet settled, and now you are bringing me such a big thing for soup, to eat such a sweet thing." Then you the householder will say that, "I wouldn't want you to sleep in my house and eat soup that is not sweet." And you will say again, "You have passed by so many houses before you came to enter my house, and as you passed so many houses before you reached my house, I have to make sure that you eat better soup." And we Dagbamba, this is what we do. The way I'm talking to you, that is our Dagbani talk. It shows respect. And there are some strangers, too, if they come to you and they are alone, and you give them food, they will come into the compound of the house and ask that somebody should come and join him to eat. And all that is respect.

I'm talking to you about the standard that the villagers are holding. When a visitor comes and they are going to make soup or food for the visitor, the woman who is going to prepare the soup, and the women she is staying with, that day, they will cook a very delicious soup. And those who are friends with that woman, because they don't have visitors or strangers in the house, maybe that day they

won't cook meat in their house. Then you will see that the woman whose house the stranger has come will use the *cherga*, that is, the ladle, to take some of the soup, and she will add some of the meat and be sharing it to her fellow women. That day they are all going to take some of the soup with meat. And so they are going to eat some of the benefits of the stranger. And the householder, too, his friends will also come to that house and enjoy that meal. And all of them, the stranger hasn't gone to their house. How will they slaughter a guinea fowl? You will receive a stranger before you will slaughter a guinea fowl. Those who see that you slaughtered guinea fowl in your house will get to know that there is a stranger in your house, and they will be expecting that in the evening you will call them to join you for the food. The reason why the other men around that village will come and eat with the householder, and the woman will take the soup and give to her fellow women, it is just because maybe tomorrow, another house will get stranger, and they will give an animal to the stranger. The way the first housepeople have shared the food, the other housepeople are also going to do that to them. And so in our Dagbani way, this is how the villagers entertain one another. This is the way they give respect to one another, and we used to say that if you give respect to a stranger, then you give respect within your own selves.

In the village, this one guinea fowl is going to be shared to all of them. They have the particular way they will share the meat, and they won't forget of anyone. The guinea fowl has parts, and they will cut the guinea fowl and share the meat. The women have the part they will eat. Even if someone from a different house came to slaughter the guinea fowl, he has the part he will eat, and they will put soup in a bowl and add some of the food and the meat and send it to his house. The one who dressed the guinea fowl will also receive his part. As for the stranger, they will take the best part of the meat and send it to him. They are showing that they were not going to slaughter a guinea fowl, but because of him, they slaughtered it. If the stranger is someone who also knows our typical Dagbamba living, when he opens the bowl, he will take one part and send the rest of the meat back, and the housepeople will also share it again among themselves and their friends. In our Dagbani, we used to say that if you don't know how to cut a guinea fowl or chicken, you are somebody who is at a very bad position, because when you are cutting a dressed chicken or guinea fowl, you have to remember about all these things. Don't cut some part of the meat to add to another part. You will cut here and here, and separate this part, leaving some edges you shouldn't go beyond, and you will make sure that no meat from one part goes to another part. Sometimes if they ask you to cut the chicken or guinea fowl, and you cut it in a wrong way, particularly on the part of the women's share, when the women take it and look, if there are bad women in that house, they will say,

“When they slaughtered that guinea fowl or chicken, who was the one who cut it? This one: you cut it like this? How? What are we going to do with it?” If you don’t change your way of cutting the meat, if the woman are bad, then you should get ready. They will give you trouble. It is within Dagbamba.

And the child who will carry the food and send to the stranger, the stranger will give him some small money, and we call it *takubsi*. This *takubsi* shows that “I am being given a gift, and I’m happy with the gift. And so the one who brings me the gift should also take this.” If the child goes back inside the compound, he will show the money to the householder, and the householder will know that the way he prepared the food, the stranger appreciated it, and that is why he gave the *takubsi*. In the olden days, if they gave the *takubsi*, when the child brought it into the house, they used to say that that kind of money is a very heavy money. Old Dagbamba used to say that there is a blessing inside that kind of money, so we shouldn’t joke with that money. The householder would collect it and hide it some place in his room. If it is coins, if you want, you can take one and give it to the children or to the women who cooked the food; but if not that, you will keep it in a special place in your room. Anyone who knows our tradition or custom, even if he’s a stranger and he’s a different tribe, what I’m talking now and he has heard it: if he goes to enter Dagbon and he goes to greet someone he knows in Dagbon, and he is going back to his home town, and the one he has gone to greet takes food and sends some children to give it to him, then that fellow will say, “Even though I’m not a Dagbana, I know Dagbamba custom.” He will tell the children, “You wait. Come and collect this *takubsi*.” And the children too won’t refuse it; as for *takubsi*, you shouldn’t refuse it. They will collect it and say, “We thank God.” Then the stranger will tell the children, “If you go home, greet for me, that I’m happy.” This is Dagbani I’m talking to you, and so what I’m telling you, you should catch it very well.

With us Dagbamba, if you are sitting down and you get a stranger, even if you don’t know him, the moment the stranger comes, you will call a woman or a young boy who is near and say, “Go inside and bring water.” When they bring the water to him, and he drinks, he will put the water down. At that time, you will greet him. It is inside the greeting that you will know the stranger, and you will know where he comes from. At that time, you the householder will get up and go and tell the women that there is a stranger who has come to the house, and when they are cooking, they should cut his bowl. If you are in the town, maybe you will not have a hen or guinea fowl to slaughter for him, but as for food, you will give him. And when it’s night, they will cut his bowl. If he is someone who is going to sleep in your house for a week, that is how they will be cutting his bowl until he goes home. And those of us who are in the town, this is what we do. And if there

is a stranger staying in our area of the town, we will get a hen and give it to women to cook and put into food so that the food will be sweet. If there is no hen but there is a guinea fowl, we will slaughter it. If neither of them is in the house where the stranger has entered, if a butcher has killed meat, we will buy the meat plenty. If the meat is not there, there is fish. The typical Dagbamba buy dried fish, the big ones, and someone can have three or four in his room. When a stranger comes, if they want a hen or a guinea fowl or meat, but they don't have, it is this fish they will give to women to cook food. If it is a stranger they know, if the stranger has entered another house to sleep, if somebody wants, he will let them pound fufu,¹ and add the meat or fish, and he will let them send it to the house where the stranger has entered, and give it to the householder to give to his stranger. And this is the respect those of us in the town will give the stranger.

And truly, this talk I am giving to you, it shows that the person God loves, and God doesn't want that fellow to suffer some day to come, if that person receives a stranger, he will open his arms and receive him. Whether you know the stranger or you don't know the stranger, if the stranger happens to enter your house and tell you that "I'm coming to your house," and God loves you, then you have to open your arms and receive the stranger. You the one God loves, if God says that one day you shouldn't go to some place and suffer, then you have to receive the stranger. Why is it so? Inside our watching, we see that a stranger brings luck. A stranger will come to you and tell you some talk, and that talk will stand to be something, and you will have it. A stranger can come to you, and if you are someone who had no money, you will get money. It's not that the stranger is going to count money and give you. Maybe he has money, or he is somebody money follows; whatever happens, the money will come to attach to you. Sometimes you will do good to a stranger, and you didn't have a wife, and the stranger will let you get a wife. And so in Dagbon here, if you respect strangers, you are not going to remain useless. As you are in your town and you get a stranger, the work you do for the stranger is going to follow the stranger to another town and show the good work you have done. And as you are in your town, a stranger will bring eating of food to your house. Someone can be sleeping with hunger, and a stranger will come to meet him. He will go out and give money for food for the stranger, and it will not look as if he has been sleeping with hunger. His blessings are lying down for him. Maybe he has no one to cook food for him, but he has tried and given money somewhere to get food for this stranger to eat.

1 fufu: a starchy food, pounded in a large mortar, eaten with soup. The name fufu is Akan but has become generic in Ghana. Fufu in Dagbon is generally made from yams.

He has thought of the good blessings in receiving strangers. And so there are some people who are happy to spend all their money on strangers.

I can even tell you that in Dagbon here, if a stranger comes to your house today, and your wife brings forth a child and the child is a boy, there are people who will take the name of the stranger to call the boy. And if the child is a girl, and if there is health on the part of your wife and the child, there are Dagbamba who will say that the child will be the wife of the stranger, because the stranger has come and brought good luck. Inside our Dagbani, they will say that the stranger should cut the navel of the baby. And what is under it is that we Dagbamba say that a child is everybody's child. There is no Dagbana, man or woman, who will say that it is because of him that the child was brought forth. Bringing forth of children is from God and from good luck, and so the stranger has come and brought good luck, and that is why they will take the child and give to the stranger. And so in our Dagbani they say that it is the good luck of the stranger. For example, the way you are sitting down now, if you happen to arrive in my house today and a woman gives birth in my house today, and you are somebody who knows Dagbani, you will get any money you want and give it to the people in the house that this is the money you are using to cut the navel of the baby. When they cut the navel of the baby, it is standing that the child is your wife. If you go back to your home town, and you still remember that the day you arrived at such a house there was a baby girl being born there, you will say that "One time I went to visit my friend, and when I arrived there a child was born. The very day I arrived there, his wife gave birth to a baby girl, and I was able to cut the navel." You the stranger, this is the way you will talk. Even if you are greeting your friend, and the girl has not grown or become matured, and you die, if your children know about it, then your children will go there and be greeting. When the baby is matured, then they will take the girl and give her to one of your sons. And so that promise, they won't leave it to become useless. And if you the stranger have long life, and the baby girl becomes matured and reaches you in your life, everybody is going to take it that you came and cut the navel of the baby. When the girl is matured, they are going to bring her to you, and you are going to take her to be your wife. And if you don't want to take her as your wife, you will look among your sons and take the girl and give her to one of your sons. And you will tell your son that, "This is my promised wife. And so you should hold her very well. Don't let our promise get spoiled." As for that, truly, it is in our Dagbon, and people are doing it. That is how it is.

Because of all this, there are people in Dagbon who are always praying to God that God should send them a stranger. If you do good to strangers, then God will pay you back that good. If you receive a stranger and you do bad to him, if

the bad doesn't come back to you the one who did the bad to the stranger, then it will pay your children. And so the way you receive strangers can lead to good or bad on your part. If you get a stranger and you care about the stranger, one day it will do you good. Maybe you will travel to some town you don't know, and you will be looking for a house to stay. Because of the good you have been doing to strangers, you will get a house to stay, and you will get people who will help you. And so how we are living in this world, we human beings, we stay together and we also travel. As we are mingling like that, we Dagbamba take a stranger to be important. If you do good to strangers, it can sometimes happen that one day you will travel to some place and happen to meet the stranger you have received. Whatever happens, he is going to make you happy in that town. You don't know the day when you will also travel to his town. Even if you are not able to travel to where he lives, if he gets back to his town, he will tell many people that this was the sort of person who received him, and that will let your name spread to many places. If others come from that town, they will also be asking of you. All this will add to you. It shows that whenever a stranger comes to meet you, you have to give respect to that stranger, because if you don't travel, you don't know the day when your parents or relatives will be traveling to the stranger's town. And that is why someone who doesn't travel will be wanting to receive strangers.

Such a person will also be thinking of his children. In Dagbon here, we take it that if you do something bad, it is waiting for you; and if you do good, it is waiting for you. As I say that if you do bad, it is waiting for you, sometimes you will do something bad and within a few minutes you will see the result, and sometimes it will take some time before you will see it. It can happen that you yourself will not even see it, but your children will see it. You can sometimes see someone struggling to get money in this world, and he will struggle up to the time he dies but not get it. God will not let his suffering be useless, and God will give the money to his children. And so someone who likes receiving strangers, if he doesn't travel, at least he may be giving birth to children. And he has parents, too. Among his family, someone may happen to travel and arrive at a different town. They will ask, "Where do you come from, and from which house do you come?" And he will say, "I come from so-and-so's house." If that person's name is known, that he was the one who received the strangers who last came to him, those people in the town will also reply in the same way to his relative. And when that fellow is coming back to his home, many people will come to him, "As your father is good to strangers, get these yams and give to your father. Get this and give to your father. Get that and give to your father." He will carry all these things with him when he comes. And so, if you have no appetite for traveling but you like receiving strangers, there is nothing bad in it. We Dagbamba say, "If you beat a

dog, you are waiting for its owner.” And so the one who is not traveling will receive strangers because of his children. If his children travel, they will also be well received by others. That is how it is.

And this talk I am talking, on the part of the respect of strangers, it is also an example of the story I told you, that coming together, or mingling, is senior to friendship and family. It is all adding to the talk of our living together with people. All these talks are the same talk, and they fall into one another, but it is only that small things inside separate them. As I have followed them, I’m talking about our Dagbamba custom. All of it is respect, and the way of living together among people. And so the respect of strangers is inside it like that. As we Dagbamba have our proverbs, we say that a stranger is like the tongue. I have told you that the tongue is a good thing and a bad thing. If somebody asks you to name good meat, you have to name the tongue; and if somebody asks you to name bad meat, you have to name the tongue. A tongue is something good and something bad. That is the same thing with a stranger. As this stranger has just arrived in your house, whether he has bad in his stomach or good in his stomach, you too, you don’t know. He has come to you, and he has told you that he would like to be with you, and he has shown you his problem. Then you opened your arms and received him, but you don’t know him. Whether the stranger’s stomach is black, whether his stomach is white, you don’t know. Truly, the talk of strangers shows that your receiving of strangers can bring a good thing and a bad thing. A stranger is like that, and being a stranger is good, and at the same time it’s bad.

Truly, the talk of strangers is plenty in Dagbon here. And as I have been talking about how we Dagbamba live together with people, and I have come to talk about strangers, it seems that this talk is a bit long. There are many talks I want to tell you, because you are a stranger and you have come to enter Dagbon. And so there are some things you should know on the part of being a stranger and how a stranger should live. And as it is getting late, I think I will stop here, and tomorrow I will continue the talk, and we will follow it and see how far it will go.