

### Chapter III–20: *How Dagbamba Feed Their Families*

[See the Currency Note for help understanding costs discussed in this chapter.]

The talk we were holding yesterday, we will take it and join, and I will tell you how the commoners of Dagbon feed their wives. As I have talked about the chiefs and the maalams and the rich men, I haven't talked more about the commoners, and I haven't talked about the commoners' commoners.

We the commoners of Dagbon, we are so many. The one who is called a commoner, who is he? In our Dagbani, a commoner is a "*tarima*," and the real meaning of *tarima* is "he has no eyes," and it shows that a commoner has no eyes because he sits without entering himself into troubles. And so a person who is not the son of a chief is a commoner — *tarima*. Someone who has no money or no wealth is a commoner — *tarima*. If you are sitting without anything heavy in your hand, you are a commoner. And a blind person is the real person we call *tarima*. And a cripple too is a commoner. And the biggest of the commoners is the person with sickness, because when he is sick, he doesn't want anything, and no one wants him, either. In Dagbon, all these types of people are there, and they are the people we call commoners.

Truly, someone who is sick, if you want to find a wife for him, he will not agree. The woman will not agree, and the man himself will not agree. Such a fellow, we call him a complete *tarima*. But sometimes it can happen in Dagbon here that someone without eyes can get a woman to marry, and the woman will not be blind. If you are a blind person and your way of living is good in your village or town, sometimes someone will pity you and give his daughter to you. If you see a blind person having a very beautiful wife, what should come into your mind is that if this blind person is not rich, then maybe his people are rich. You should know that there is something behind him, helping him. If this blind person has strong people helping him, they can use their money to get a wife for him. If it is his brothers, when they go to find a woman for the blind person, they won't hide anything from the woman. They will tell her, "We are coming to find you for our brother who is blind. Will you agree?" If the woman refuses, they will leave her; and if the woman agrees, they will find her and give her to the brother.

Or again, somebody may be disturbed by something like impotence. Sometimes, impotent people marry. Your penis is dead: can you marry? Sometimes someone may not agree that he is impotent. There is no front, but he will marry. He is deceiving himself. But sometimes you will see somebody who is old and impotent, and his brothers and sisters, nephews, children and grandchildren are staying with him. Maybe he hasn't got a wife to be cooking

food for them to eat. Because of that, he will marry a wife so that she will be in the house cooking for his nephews and other children, and they will be eating. As for that, up to this day we still have people like that in Dagbon here.

What I'm telling you today, and it joins to what I told you yesterday, it shows that a person who holds women in Dagbon here is someone who can feed the women. As I have said that there are different types of commoners, there can be somebody who has health, and he has got wives and children, and he is feeding them. And he comes to become the last of the commoners, and as for that, it is from God. God gives him sickness, and as for sickness, it has many types. Leprosy is a sickness. When you are blind, it is a sickness. There is somebody whose leg and arm are dead; it's sickness, too. As for such a person, he has become God's commoner. If God should let such a sickness catch a person, and he has wives and he has children who are not yet grown, then those people who fear God will feed this man and his wives and children, afternoon and night. It is alms. Such a person, you cannot compare it to someone who has a wife and says, "Get this and buy salt," or "Get this and buy okra." It is a gift, and what his hand touches is what the woman will take to cook. The husband hasn't got anything; it is people who give him. Whether it is all right for cooking or it's not all right, the woman has to take it to cook.

And so as for this, he is the very last of the commoners, and you cannot take it to compare it to anything. There is nothing like: "This is the amount I will give my wife to buy food," or "When it's daybreak, this is what I'll give my people as food." There is nothing like that. When it's daybreak, the man will roam about to see what he can get. If he has, say, two wives, these women will be roaming about. And the children too, when it's daybreak, they will be roaming. All this roaming about is just because they want to go and get something, and come and put in their mouths. Sometimes, for the last of the commoners, if he has a wife and the woman doesn't trust in God, she will go away and leave her husband. There is no food. There are no clothes. And she doesn't know what to do. Won't she run and leave her husband?

And again, there is somebody who does not have anything to do. He is only sitting down, and when it's daybreak, what God gives him is what he eats. Such a person has no use, but sometimes he will have a wife. It is as if God has just taken two people and joined them together. If God joins them like that, and the man has no money, maybe the woman will not see his fault, because what the man does and eats is the same thing the woman does and eats. Any time the man gives the woman money to cook, it makes her surprised. He had not been getting, but now he has been able to get something and give her. Sometimes if such a man and woman give birth, the children come to gain, and it is because of the suffering of

the mother and the father. As we are sitting down, we have seen such children of poor people. The parents cannot even get money to buy food for the children. They cannot buy clothes for themselves or the children. It's not that they don't want to, but only that the money is not there. Sometimes such people put their children in Arabic schools, and the children become maalams. Sometimes they put them in English schools, and the children get big standing places. If God gives the father and mother long life, the children will turn and make the father and mother live like human beings. I have seen a poor man who gave birth to children, and the children rose up and got luck. They took their father to Mecca, and they took their mother to Mecca. They came a built a house and put their parents inside. When the man was poor, for him to get anything to eat was hard, but his children grew up and got money and made their mother and father rich. And so sometimes, the children of commoners gain. But truly, for a poor person to feed his wife and children, it comes from God.

But as for those who are sick or are poor or have no work, it is not that they are starving in Dagbon here. None of them starve. Someone will starve only if he refuses his parents or his family. But if your family or your people are there, they won't leave you. At least one out of the family will always come to get you something to eat for the day. If you are not sick but you are poor and you have no work to do, you will be living as those who are sick. All your problems will be overcoming you because you can't do anything, and you don't have your own means. But there are people who will always give to you, and you will eat. Finding a woman will come to you, and you won't have a pesewa to go and find one, but as for feeding, there will always be people to feed you. Even these clothes, in the family there will be some people who will be giving you clothes to wear. For the family to find a woman and give you will be very difficult, and truly, it cannot happen. But if you yourself go out and find your own woman, then someone in the family will be feeding you and the wife as well. And so we have such people in Dagbon here.

But on the part of a commoner who is rich, or a commoner who is not rich and he is not poor, he will give money to his wife to prepare food. Today as we are sitting, there are rich people in Dagbon. If it is daybreak and you go to such a rich person's house, you will see a bag full of corn in the house, and guinea corn — a full bag — in the house. It will be in the man's room. We have a calabash we call *zaymerɲmani*: it is a calabash we use for measuring. You know we call a calabash *ɲmani*, and this *zaya* is a measure or an amount of food for one day. If a bag of corn is there, the man will bring out the calabash and measure it twice for each of his wives up to one month. If the wives are two or three, when the man brings the corn out, he will open the bag and measure it correctly for each of his

wives. If some of the corn remains, he will measure some again and add it in case a stranger should arrive in the house. These women will go into their rooms and keep the remaining corn their husband measured in a different place, and if a stranger arrives, they will fetch that one and add it to cook food. Sometimes in a rich man's house, there are very many people, and one bag of corn can only reach one week. Such a rich man, if he is going to share corn or guinea corn among his wives, it is not one bag he will open, but many. And there is someone, too, he will keep the corn and the guinea corn in his room, and if it is daybreak and the woman who has cooking is going to go to the market, she will come into the husband's room and bend down and greet, and he will fetch corn or guinea corn for her to go to the grinding mill and grind it.

Truly, there are some people who will only tell the wife, "Go inside and fetch." But the typical Dagbamba, they won't allow their wives to do that. Some of them just don't want to leave the custom. If the wife comes into the room, he has to get up and measure the food for her. Someone with sense will know how they have been eating in the house, and he will measure and add some for strangers. The maalams say that God also shows that we should measure like that, but we don't follow it. Some Dagbamba will only sit down and watch the wife fetch before they close the door. But the typical Dagbamba don't want to leave the room. They say that as for a woman, you shouldn't believe her completely. Sometimes the corn will be there plenty, and because it's there like that, the women will be fetching more and going outside and selling it to get money for themselves. That is what some of them do. And so there is no one who has ever known everything about a woman. The time you will get to know everything about a woman, by that time you will be dead. A man can only to his extent, but he won't know it to the end. If he says he knows woman, he is deceiving himself. It is these women who give birth to us, and they have sense more than us, and so we have to fear them. That is why a typical Dagbana puts the corn down and calls all the women and measures for them, and every woman will hold her corn in her room for her cooking days.

Truly, the taking of many wives comes from how you are going to feed them. Someone who is not rich and not poor, maybe such a commoner has, say, four wives. Someone who has four wives like that, maybe it is because of his respect that he got the four wives, and again, there are some commoners who farm a lot. As such a person is farming, he's not a rich man and he's not a poor man, but his farming shows that he can hold four wives and their children. If he is in a village, when it's daybreak, he doesn't give his wives money for soup. Everything is in his farming. If his wives have given birth to children, he can take some of his children to be farming vegetables for soup. When these children farm, say, okra or

pepper, the women will go and remove and dry it and then divide it among themselves. As this man or his children have farmed these things, they have not farmed just a little. When the women go and pick the pepper or the okra, they share it in large numbers, and every woman may have half a sack each. They can put it down and it will last a year. And if it is *kpalgu* — *dawadawa* — this man will be selling some of the things from his farm to get money, and he will take some of the money and give to the women when it's time to buy the *kpalgu* seeds. They will cook it and make the *kpalgu* and share it and put it down, and they will be cooking it for a year.

The reason this food will last is because it is not always that they cook. They cook and give one another. The one who cooks today, she will come from the market and cook the night food. The next day she will cook for the afternoon and the night, and the next day she will cook for the afternoon. She has cooked two days, and the cooking has caught her four times. As they cook and receive one another, if one wife is cooking today, the others are just resting. They don't do anything. They will sit down and the one cooking will cook, and they will all eat. If it comes to the turn of another, she will also cook for the two days, and the others will be resting. She will cook and they will all eat, and it will go around like that. And so a common man who is farming, his wives cook four times. The man and his people are always bending down in the farm, and that is why she cooks like that. When she cooks the afternoon food, she will send it to the farm.

But feeding your wives doesn't show that you have to be farming. There are those who don't farm, and they have a lot of wives. Someone will be there, and he is not farming, and the stomachs of his people are not knocking air: every day is eating. But he doesn't farm. And I can tell you that someone can be farming, and he doesn't want anyone to benefit from his farming. We have seen it plenty in Dagbon here. Someone can be farming, and his housepeople don't eat and satisfy. He is just farming to take and sell, and he will even come to buy food. And someone will farm, and it is that he and his people are eating that food. And so it is what the heart wants, and how someone gets the means: this is what will let someone feed many wives. This is how it is. It is not all people who farm and eat. What your heart wants, that is what you do. And it can be that you will do everything and you haven't farmed.

Someone who doesn't farm, it may be that he is sitting in the market selling or sewing things. He is a market child: he buys and sells. He will buy food and put it down. If the new food comes out, if it is corn or guinea corn, someone with money can buy a hundred bags and put it down. Someone will buy fifty bags and put it down. He doesn't want his people's stomachs to knock the air. He is feeding them. He doesn't want air to go into their stomachs. Inside his family, if

there is somebody who hasn't got, he can remove some of the food and give to that person. This is how it is. Such people, too, the way they hold their wives is different. With us Dagbamba, it is the work we do that shows the women we take. If you know you cannot hold four wives, you won't take four wives. If it is two women you will take, it is two women you will take; and if it is one, it is one. Those who sit in the market, some of them have two wives, and it is their work that shows they should have two wives. And some of them, they get money from the market, and they also eat in the market. As for them, they don't care for the house food unless in the night. And someone will have many children helping him, and he will see that if he is going to buy food and eat and buy for the children to eat too, it will be too costly. And so he will let his wives cook, and the way they cook will be the same as the farmer's wives, four times in two days. And so the commoners of Dagbon, this is their way.

If someone is going to buy food, how a man will give his wife money for cooking, the day a woman is to cook, she will go to the market to buy soup-leaves and meat to cook the soup along with the food, whether yams or *sayim* or rice. Truly, when I want to give you an example about money, I just don't know how I am going to put it down. In Ghana today, how the inflation is, in one year, it jumps so much that you just can't imagine what is going to happen. Every day it's increasing. Today's money is not money. It's useless. For example, from the time you came to Ghana, a tin of mackerel costs more than a hundred times what it was then. Not long ago, you could buy vegetables for a pesewa, and a full basket of soup-leaf like *salinvɔɣu* would be less than two cedis. Now you can see women buy a basket for hundreds of cedis, and two cedis won't even fill your hand. You know the furniture in my son Alhassan's room: one year after he bought it, a friend of his went to buy the very same furniture for three times the amount. It wasn't long ago I plastered the rooms and the floor of the house where I'm staying, but one year later you couldn't do the same work with four times that amount. What I used to finish the plastering of all the rooms can maybe build a single naked room, and there won't be furniture or anything inside. The money that a few years ago you could take and buy clothes for twenty children cannot dress even a single child. This is how it is. We don't know where we stand. The cedi is now nothing. Today as we are sitting, you can have money in your pocket and think it is a lot of money, and truly, some time ago that money was a great amount of money. You will think that you are going to solve all your problems. But in three days you won't see anything in your pocket again. And so today, truly if I'm talking and saying something is costing an amount of cedis, by the time I finish talking, sometimes I will go to the market and see it costing more than that. By tomorrow it will come to something different again. Everything is

spoiled. Money is not money. And so when you are writing these talks, and I come to talk of money, you should find the way you are going to repair it.

And so let's take it that we are going to compare, and let's say that there is a person who has shared the corn or guinea corn and will give his wife twenty cedis to cook for the night. As he has shared the food from his room, this money is only for the vegetables and the soup. The time you could take twenty cedis to the market is not here again, but let's just take it as an example. [In US dollars at the time, the amount for the example might be 3 to 5 dollars.] If it is twenty cedis, everything is included inside this twenty cedis. The money for the meat and the vegetables is included, and even the firewood the woman will use for the cooking will come out of the twenty cedis. That is the extent of some people. There are other people with money, if their wives are going to the market, they give them about forty cedis. As for the one who gives twenty cedis, his wives will always be adding their own money to the twenty cedis, and spending it to buy more things. If she uses only the cedis the husband gave, the meat she will buy is not meat. The firewood she will buy cannot even cook soup. If it is soup-leaves like okra, a woman can spend to buy okra, and if there are many people in the house, the okra cannot do anything. As for someone who has money, and he has gathered people, if he is giving twenty cedis for cooking, then everyday all the women in the house will be suffering. They will be adding their own money to buy all the things for cooking. And even the man too will be suffering.

Suffering like what? Such a person with money, if he doesn't fear God, his giving of twenty cedis will let the children in the house want to steal. In Dagbon here, a child will eat from the mother's hand up to the time he grows up and eats from the father's hand. I don't know about your people, but that is how our children are here. The time a child is two to three or four years old, everything for the child will be coming from the mother and not the father. If the child's clothes are torn, it is the mother who will buy clothes for the child to wear. The father will not buy anything for the child when the child is young. And so if a mother gets the cooking money, she will put some down to be buying things for her children. And here it is: the woman is going to the market and there is no money remaining, and even the money she is getting from trading or any other work, she is adding it to the husband's cooking money. What will it bring? The child will begin stealing. That stealing is coming from the father and the way he gives money to the mother to prepare food.

As for the poor people in Dagbon here, their children don't steal. Dagbamba say, "The meat you have taken from your father's pot, that is the one you will eat." Can you eat the meat that isn't there? And so as for a poor person, the child already knows that his parents are poor, but the child of a useless rich

person knows by all means that his father has got money and doesn't want to give him. The child's mind will be that he will go and steal and his father will pay. Who would like people to abuse his child that the child is a thief? But there are some people who have money, and they know that if they take the money and follow a good way, it will bring good to them; but they refuse. They will be walking around using the money by heart. There can be a money man who won't feed his people. Sometimes he takes his money to a drinking place, and he will be sitting down buying drink for his friends. He will gather many people and buy drink for them, and they will all get drunk. But his real people at home are not drinkers. There can be a rich person who won't feed his people, but he will be using the money outside running after women. If he finds a woman, and the woman is someone he should give two cedis, he will give her twenty cedis. He will be wasting money like that. Is all this the right way to live? A child will grow up and know that his father has money but doesn't want to give it to the family. When such a child steals, the father will pay. And so as the father didn't give the child something straightforward, he has given it indirectly.

But as for the child of a poor person, in Dagbon here such children don't steal. You are sitting down and you don't have a pesewa, and your child gets to know that truly you don't have anything. How will he go out and do bad things? He won't do that, because I have already told you that the meat that is in your father's pot is the meat you eat. The child knows that his father hasn't got anything, so if he goes out and steals, he is going to bring trouble for his father because the father has no money to pay. If not that the father is going to get trouble, then the child will be in trouble because the father cannot go and pay and collect him. And so the child knows that he is going to suffer the trouble that is inside the bad thing he does. I can tell you that in Dagbon here, sometimes someone with money is not feeding his children and his people, and his child will go out and bring a debt, and the father will say that he will not pay. There will be somebody somewhere who will respect the father and will come and pay for the child even though the father has refused. The fellow will say, "Oh, how can this rich man's child be caught and have to suffer like this?" He will pay and collect the child for the father. But as for the child of a poor person or a commoner, nobody will pay. And so if a person with a lot of money doesn't respect himself and spends his money foolishly without feeding his family, then his child also won't respect him. But if a person knows that he is poor but he respects himself, then his child will respect him. If you know your father is not a money man, you have to respect him by not bringing trouble for him. That is how it is in Dagbon here.

And so a money man who wants his children to be well, on the part of the example, he will give forty or even fifty cedis to his wives to prepare food for only

one day's cooking. Whatever happens, the woman will go to the market and buy all the necessary things and leave some of the money remaining. Tomorrow when the woman is going to the market, he will give the same amount. This woman will spend and leave about ten cedis and put it down. As she is suffering in making trade to get money, she will add this money to the trading money, and keep it all down so that if she gives birth to a child and the child is growing, she can use this money to buy things for the child. And so a man who gives his wives forty or fifty cedis or even more to prepare food for the house to eat, he is the one we call a money man. It shows that as he has many people in his house, he is feeding all of them, and all the things that his housepeople want, there is no suffering on the part of any of them. Everybody will eat and be satisfied in the house.

And so the holding of women, it can also be compared to the way we hold our children. If you have gathered people in your house, then at least the amount you give for food must be enough for the whole house to eat. Someone who is not rich and not poor, maybe his extent is that when it's daybreak, he will give his wife fifteen cedis. If there are not many people in his house, he knows that the fifteen cedis will be all right for them. As for him, he fears God. And every time and any time, the whole house will be standing at his back, because they are always all right. But a person who cannot get fifteen cedis and can only give ten cedis, if he has many people in his house, then he is not afraid of God. Sometimes he will know that the money he is giving will not reach to prepare food for the whole house, and as the wife is suffering to make trading, she will get her money and add it. And such a man, he will talk and nobody will hear him, and even on the part of his religious way, to God, his way of living is not nice.

And so in our way of living, on the part of cooking money, it is standing that the man should add money for the ingredients and add money to send the corn to the grinding mill. Everything that is going to be added and the food will be cooked, the man is supposed to give it, and the woman is to collect it from him. They have been saying it, and we have been hearing it. But as we are sitting today, there are some men who only know to give corn for the woman to cook. Such a man, if he just gives the corn, he will not add money for vegetables or other ingredients. He won't give money to mill the corn. He won't add for firewood. If they are buying water in the house, he won't add money for water. The man will be sitting down and the woman will come and put the food down for the man to eat. What the woman does to gather all these things, he doesn't know. As for him, he just sees the food and he's eating. He only knows that he bought a bag of corn and put it in the house for them to be eating. It is the woman who will know how to manage the corn up to the time it will be food and everybody will eat. And so at this time we are sitting, there are many men who only know that they will

give corn to the woman, and whatever she is going to do to prepare the food for eating, they don't care. And the woman also won't ask. And so many women who are in a man's house, they work harder than the man.

And so there are many different ways of living, but if you follow it, they become two. As I have said that someone can be a rich man, there is somebody who has money and he's a good person, and there is somebody who has money and he's a useless person. The good person who is rich, as for him, you cannot say anything about his talk. We Dagbamba say that when a gourd is full, you don't shake it. As for the good person who is rich, when it's daybreak he will do everything for his people, and no one will ask him anything. As for his wives and children, nothing worries them. Let's say the Ramadan festival is coming: he can go and buy material to sew new clothes for all his children. If his children are about twenty, he can spend a thousand cedis on them to do this. When it's daybreak, his children will gather round him, and he will give some ten pesewas, some twenty pesewas, some forty pesewas. You cannot count the money a rich man gives. When the children come and he gives them money, they will take it and spend it to buy food for themselves and their friends to eat. Then they will come back again, and he will ask them, "Do you want money?" and they will say, "Yes." And he will give them again. As for the rich man whom God has put him down and has told him to look at his people, this is what he does. No one has to say anything; he is inside everything. Even his friends, if they cannot get enough to eat, he will buy for them to eat. I know a rich man in town here who has about six houses with people inside, and he is the one who is feeding all of them. It is not that they are his relatives; it is only that he is staying in the same area with them. As he is feeding them, it is God who says he should feed them. And such rich people, they are the people whom God says they should be rich.

And so someone who has money in Dagbon here, if you compare it to the way we hold our people, the person we call rich in Dagbon here is someone who has got people. There are some people who have money but they cannot hold people. Some of them don't even want to have people with them. Such a person does not want anyone to eat anything of his. People gathered to come and eat, and he didn't want them to eat. What will they do? They will run away and leave him. Such a person, we don't say that he is the owner of his money. The owner of the money is there: when this man dies, the owner of the money will collect his thing. And so the rich person who is useless, it shows that the money is not his money. As the money is not his, to take it and give to somebody pains him. Even he himself, to buy food for himself to eat disturbs him.

Such a money man cannot keep people. He is the one whose children will become bad boys. When it comes to dressing his children, he puts it in the hands

of their mothers. All the money for the children is with the mothers. When the children come to the father and say, “We want money,” he will say, “Go away and leave me! If I were as useless as you are useless, do you think I would have money now? Go away! Go to your mother!” And the child will go to the mother. His clothes come from the mother. His spending money comes from the mother. But these women, too, it is not all of them who have got money. Someone cannot have many wives and they will all be rich. There will be some wives who will be poor. And so a child can go to the mother, and the mother will not give him what he needs. The child hasn’t got it: what will he do? He is going to become a bad boy, and a bad boy becomes a thief. If all the women were equal, it wouldn’t come to that. But as we are sitting, that is why some of the children of a useless rich man also become useless.

As for a useless rich man, the only money that will enter between him and his wives will be the money for food alone, and even that will not be enough. When he gives money to his wives to buy food, they will come and tell him, “We went and bought this, say okra or pepper, and the money was not enough,” and he will ask them, “How much have you bought the thing?” Even when he gives the money, he will show the price of the things, and he doesn’t know it, either. It means that he doesn’t want to give. In Dagbon here, if it is following the traditional way, we don’t do that. You don’t ask your wife the prices of what she buys in the market. The rich person who is good, if his wives come and tell him the money was short, he will only ask the amount and then get it for them.

And so in Dagbon here, money has got a lot of talks. That is why I am saying that the person who is rich is the one who has people. What is the meaning? He has patience: that is why he has people. From among these people, too, even if he himself cannot feed them, if God helps him, there are some who will grow up and get money and give him to feed the others. God will help some of them get money, and they will be giving it to the man to help those remaining. And it means that it is the man who is getting the money. And so in Dagbon here, it is someone with people who is a rich man. And the person with money but no people, we don’t call him a rich man; we say that he is a money man, or we say that he has wealth. Wealth finishes but people do not finish. In Dagbon here, someone who has got wealth does not bluff someone who has got people. The one who has wealth follows the one who has got people. And the one who has got people follows the chief, because the land is for the chief, and if the land is cool, he will sit down. And the chief too is following the maalams. And the maalams will take all their matters and give to God. This is what we know on how our people live. And this is how it is.

Yesterday, when I told you how a chief holds his wives, I didn’t tell you how a chief gives to his wives to prepare food, and so I will join it to this talk. As

for a chief, if the chief fetches guinea corn or yams or rice to give to his wives, that is all. And any time there is meat in the chief's house cooking pot, it is the chief who bought it. But all the things for soup, the chief didn't give money to buy them. In our Dagbamba soup, the important things are only the pepper, the salt, the kpalgu, and the fish. In Dagbon here, these are the only strong things we know without which soup cannot be prepared. But when the chief fetches guinea corn and gives to his wives, he does not give them money for any of these things.

I have told you that the chief's wives' way of living is different, and this talk is inside it. In the village where the chief stays, among those villagers who are farming, whatever happens there will be somebody who sows okra in the farm or somebody who sows *bira*, or somebody who sows a leaf we call *salinɔɣu*, and all these are things we use for soup. And it is in these people's farms that the chief's wives get what they need to cook. Just because their husband is the chief of that village, any time they will just go to other people's farms and start picking these things. If the pepper is ready in the farms, the chief's wives will go and pick it. Sometimes they will pick it in large amounts and bring it to the house, spread it in the compound, dry it, and store it in their rooms. Okra too, when it is in the bush, it is wet; they will pick it and bring it, cut it and spread it in the compound. When it dries, they will store it in containers in their rooms. As for the kpalgu, when the time for kpalgu comes, people will go and remove the seeds from the trees and come and give to the chief, and the chief will call all his wives and share it among them. They will go and get firewood and cook the seeds and prepare the kpalgu for themselves. They will make it into big balls and put in their rooms, and they will be cutting it bit by bit when it comes to their cooking days. And so the chief doesn't give money for these things.

If it is salt, it is the same. As for salt, it is not from the farms; it is from the market. We have the one who watches the market: he is the *Daalana*, the market owner; in this Tamale and in some towns, we call him the *Dakpema*, the market elder. There is a person we call *Daasaha*: he is the one who collects things in the market for the *Daalana*. This *Daasaha* will bring salt to the chief. And actually, he will go into the market and collect just a little of all the things sold in the market and bring everything to the chief's house. The chief will divide it and give to his wives, and if they are going to cook, they use it. And so this is why the chief gives only the guinea corn and the meat and nothing else.

But truly, it is not all chiefs who do that nowadays. The ones who do it are there. The Nanton chief, apart from the guinea corn and the meat, he gives nothing else. The Karaga chief will give only the meat and the guinea corn, and that is all. Gushe-Naa is the same. Sunson-Naa is the same. Almost half of the chiefs do that. But as for the chief in Tamale, he will give money: his wife cannot

go to somebody's farm. If one of the chief's wives goes to somebody's farm, that person will just catch her and beat her, or he will let them arrest the wife and send her to court. The court will pull the wife's ear and tell her that she's a thief, that if a person is not there you cannot enter his farm, and that you can't do that and show your chieftaincy. But these chiefs I have called — Nanton, Karaga, Gushegu, and Sunson, and many other people too — they are still doing that, and no one can arrest anyone. But as Yendi is now sitting, it is a big town, and even the Yaa-Naa gives money. Some time ago, he was not giving money. His wives were not going to other people's farms, but there were some particular people who used to bring all the things for soup to the chief's house. Who were these people? The chief's sisters would bring all the cooking things, and also the parents of the chief's wives would bring all these things and give to their daughters in the chief's house. But nowadays it's not working.

If you follow it, you will see that what brought it about is the way of life in the towns. There is eye-open in the towns, but in the villages they are still following the old talks of our forefathers. As I told you that this town's chief gives money, it is the same thing in the towns and villages around here. In Sagnerigu, Banvim, Lamashegu, Savelugu, the chiefs all give money. If one of their wives goes to pick something in somebody's farm, she will be arrested. But if not that, no one would give money. In our tradition, there are some things that if we try to perform them in these modern days, they will arrest us and put us in jail. And so if we are in a village and the village is turning into a town, we leave some of the customs and traditions. If not that, formerly the white man would arrest us and lock us in a room, and it's still like that in the government courts. And so that is how the chiefs feed their wives and children according to our tradition nowadays. Those chiefs living in the big towns give money, but the rest of them don't give money because they are following the old ways.

How the chief's wives will cook is the same as how the common farmers' wives cook. When it's daybreak, the food they prepared in the night and ate, some of it will be left over along with some of the soup. The women will take the cooking pot and put it on the fire, and they will wash all the sayim and put it into the cooking pot along with the soup. When it's hot, they will remove it and be cutting it and the soup and giving it to the small children who are about five, six, and seven years old. This is what these children will eat before they go to the farm or they go to cut grass for the horses. The chief's child has no work apart from going to the farm or going to cut grass for the horses. And when they go to the farm, when it's getting to time for the noon food, the children who will fetch the food to the farm are there, and they will come from the farm and take the food back to the farm. And so this is how the chiefs hold their wives and children on the part of cooking and eating.

And a farmer who is a commoner, when it's daybreak, the children in his house eat the old food the same way the chief's children eat the old food. When they eat it and go to the farm, they will roast yams and eat. Getting to some time, too, food will come from the house to meet them again. As they are farming, their stomachs are big, and they won't eat and be satisfied. If it is a rich man who is truly a rich man, when it's daybreak he will let his wives make porridge. There is a kind of porridge which makes a child satisfied, and we call it "porridge with teeth," and they will take each child's bowl and put porridge, and the children will drink and be satisfied. In a rich man's house in a village, this is what they do, and when the children finish drinking the porridge, they have nowhere to go apart from the farm. And when it's time, the children who are to collect the food will come home and take it back to the farm. And so the common farmers in the villages, this is the way they eat and keep their children.

A person who is a common man and he is not in a village, and he has people, when it's daybreak, all the children will gather and he will share money to them. There are those who eat ten pesewas each, those who eat twenty pesewas, and those who eat forty pesewas. He will give to them like that, and they will take it and go out. When it is getting to noon, the women will cook food for the children and the man, too. And a common man who is the last of the common men, the one who has nothing to do, it is only what God gives him that he takes. When it's daybreak, his children won't sit down and look at their father's face. If they look at their father's face, there is no giving to give. The mother too won't give. Where is it? The father and mother are fighting for themselves. If they get something, they can give the children, but if they don't get, they have nothing to give. And so these children will go out and try for themselves. It shows that they are old men, because there is suffering on all of them. And such children can grow up and get work and help their mothers and fathers. They got up, and they were in suffering, and you know that someone who suffers does not become useless. And so this is how the commoners and the last of the commoners eat.

And truly, it is only that God doesn't want to disgrace us or that we always pray to God not to be disgraced. The amount of money we normally spend each day to feed the whole house is a big problem for us. Our families have many people, and we are still giving birth to children because we love giving birth to children. And here is the case: we have no money to feed them, yet we give birth to them. Today, one bowl of guinea corn or corn is five cedis [1978: 5 cedis; 1981: 40 cedis], and in some houses they will eat three bowls of sayim every day. If you spend on the guinea corn or the corn, maybe there will be no money for the soup. If you add and spend for guinea corn, soup, firewood, and everything you use to cook, it will be a lot of money. And so what we do is we balance it. You

will one day get money and buy a full bag of corn or guinea corn and keep it down to be sharing to your wives, and then you will be giving them money for soup. And again, your wife too will be adding her own money. There is no woman you will give money to cook soup, and the money will be enough. If they tell you that, they are deceiving you. Whatever happens, your wife will take her money and add to yours. And apart from that, you will be borrowing from them. And so we spend a lot of money, but as we are balancing it, we don't always see how much money it is.

The money you are giving for cooking, you will only give money to the one who is cooking on that day and not to all the wives. If you have put down two days for each of them to be cooking, and if you have the means, you can give her the whole two days' money. But if you haven't got the means for that, the day she's going to start her two days' cooking, you will give her for one day's cooking and she will cook and you will eat. When day breaks, if you get, you will give her again. But if you don't have any means on that day, you will just tell her. You know that as for a wife, if you marry a woman, it means that she is your mother's child. The secrets between you and your wife, even your mother will not know it. How much less your father or your brother? The stomach of the woman will be paining for you the husband more than your mother's, and your stomach will be paining more for the woman than for your own mother. And so the day you don't have any means, you will just call the woman with cooking and tell her, "Today I have no money. If you have your own money, you can spend it, and if I get money, I will pay you back." And even if this woman says she has no money, you can call the next wife to her and ask her to lend you money. If there is money, she will give you, and you will give the other wife. And so this is how we sometimes get the money to feed our families. I'm not saying that if you have no money and you ask your wife to get her own money and cook, you don't have to pay her. If you get money, you have to pay it back to your wife. If you don't pay, there is no husbandship in your marriage.

Where do the women get the money? They are trading. If you just walk out from here and enter the street, you will see women on the roadside frying yams or *kpaakulo* or selling groundnuts, bananas, and other things. If you go to the market, you will see them selling cloth and cooking oil and yams and onions and many, many things. This is where they get the money. And there is some talk inside it. If you marry a woman who has already left the houses of some men, then she was already trading, and going to one week she will be going to the market. But if you marry a woman in the Muslim way and she comes to your house as a wife, she won't do anything for about four months or six months. By that time, you will try to get some money to give to her, and you will tell her to get the

money and be trading so that she will be getting small and eating. When you want her to go to the market, sometimes she will want to know the thing she will trade in, and sometimes she herself will know, and you will get its money. The things we sell are many, and there are some things which need a lot of money and others which don't need much money. A woman can say, "I want to sit in the market, and buy corn and buy sacks, and sell." As for that, its starting money is plenty: you can give her four hundred cedis, or if you want, you give her two hundred cedis [in late 1970s dollars, \$50-100]. And there is someone again who will say she wants to buy vegetables and be selling. As for that, the money is not much: you can give her an amount to get at least a full basket. How we are talking about food money in this talk, the amount would be about fifty cedis. She will take it and be trading. And the profit she gets from the trading, she will be taking that to spend. If you give her money to buy soup, and it's not enough, she can take some of the money she gets from her trading and add it to the money you gave. And if she is somebody who can trade, inside her trading she will get money and buy clothes. And there are some women who trade and get money and even buy houses.

And the reason why we marry our wives and they cannot trade for some time is that when you take a wife who has not come from the houses of other men, she doesn't know anything about your house. She is a child, and as for the child that someone gives you, she fears you. If she is coming on a way and she sees you first, she will take another way. She is in your house, but if she wants to ask you for some money or any other thing, she won't come herself; she will send a friend of hers to you. And here it is: a person doesn't come to you to sit down and talk; will she know anything about your house? As for a wife who is old, the one who has left the houses of other men, she was coming to you before she married her, and she will already know everything about you. You yourself will be showing her; she will always be beside you, and you will show her everything in your house.

And so when you bring a newly married wife to your house, she doesn't do anything, and you will let her sit in the house for some months so that the other women in the house will show her all the things she has to know about the house before you will know what kind of trading she will do. When you take such a woman for the first few months, before she does anything, you will do everything for her. When it's daybreak, you will give her, say, some few cedis for food. Even if the women are many in the house and they are going to cook, you will hide and give her this money. You give her because she is newly married and she's not yet trading, and when it's daybreak, any sweet thing or small thing she wants to buy, she can get it. She will be sitting down and you will be giving her, and when

she enters trading, at that time she will be taking what she gets from the trading to spend, and she will be helping you, too.

But when this woman is newly married and she comes to your house, if you already have women in your house, they are the ones who will be showing her everything. She will be following those women in front of her, and they will be telling her, “This is your husband’s senior brother,” and “This is your husband’s junior brother,” and “This is your husband’s uncle,” and “This is your husband’s sister.” They will show her how to respect all these people. If not that, this stranger cannot know who these people are. And you know, every person in the house has his bowl of food, and we usually combine three people for each bowl, or sometimes four or two people. As for the very small children, sometimes we will group them to be five or six and then let them eat from one bowl. And those in front of her will tell her, “This is so-and-so’s bowl,” and “This is so-and-so’s bowl.” And they will tell her, “If you want to take the food, take so-and-so’s food first,” and “If you want to fetch the soup, put it in this way.” And so how we feed our people and how your wives cut everybody’s food, those who are already with you will be showing her all this. And as for cooking, they will show her the ways of cooking. As she is a child, she doesn’t know anything, and they will even show her how to put salt in the soup; if not that, she will just fetch everything and put it inside, and you can’t eat it. Even if she already knows a little bit about cooking, those in front will make sure she knows it well.

If you yourself are a child, and they bring your newly married wife to your house, then it is the senior women in the house who will be showing her. Or let’s put it in the way that you are a householder and you have a child who is a boy, and he grows up to the age of, say, twenty-five or thirty years. If he gets a wife, he will give her to you, and you will give her to your wife. Your son’s wife will be fetching water to put in your wife’s room. The day your wife’s cooking day will come, it is his wife who will be at the kitchen. If it is taking corn to the grinding mill to grind, it is your son’s wife who will take it. If your wife is someone who sits in the market or sits somewhere to sell things, when your son’s wife goes to the grinding mill and comes, she is the one who will get the pot and put water inside it. If by that time she knows how to prepare soup, she will prepare it and put it down. By then your wife will come back from her selling, and your son’s wife will put the pot for preparing the sayim. The only thing your wife will do is to get up and look at the pot. If the water is not enough, she will tell this girl to add more water. When the water is boiling, she will tell her to take some of the flour and mix it into the water, and she will tell her to take some of the flour and put it into a small pot, stir it and pour into the big pot, and we call it “preparing the pot.” When this girl has prepared the pot, you will see that the water in the pot has

become like porridge. And then your wife will come and take the rest of the flour and be sprinkling it inside the pot for the girl, and the girl will use a stirring stick and be stirring the sayim. When she finishes preparing the sayim, she will collect the bowls and put them down, and she will take a small calabash and be cutting the food and putting inside the bowls. It is your wife who will be showing her, “Cut and put here; cut and put there.” When the girl finishes, the woman will help her put down the bowls, and the girl will get the soup. It is not this girl who will put the soup into the bowls; it is the older woman. There are different bowls, and sometimes they just take the soup and put it on top of the food; and sometimes they will put the soup by itself into small bowls. And so all this is more of what your wife will be showing the girl, and she will teach her like this for some months before she will know everything in the house and will start trading. And if you are somebody with many children and they are all married, when these newly married girls come to your house, you will be separating the girls for your wives to be teaching them. And this is how it is in Dagbon here, the way we get our wives and the way we keep them.

Those of your children who are staying with you in the house, none of them will give money for cooking. It is you the father who will share the food from your room and who will give money for cooking. Actually, if they get money and they help you, it doesn't matter. But in our living, it is you who will give money for the cooking. It is because if you give money to your wives to cook, and you have your children and they also give money to their wives to cook, then we don't say that you are keeping people. If they are cooking like that, and you keep quiet and you look at them, it shows that you cannot hold people. And outside people will be abusing you.

What I was saying yesterday that some people marry with the ring, when you have such people, they and their wives don't want your food. If there are six people in your house like that, they all have their wives and they all cook with their own pots and they will be eating by themselves. It is only one-one of them who will pity you and cook and cut some of the food for you to eat. They are the people we say they kill families. You gave birth to him, and he's eating food and you are sitting down. He doesn't care about you. If you ask him, he will say, “That is how white men eat.” You white people, is that how you eat? You, John, sitting down, can you have a wife and give her money to cook, and you come and you will be eating with her, and your mother and your father will be sitting down? Do you do that? In Dagbon here, that is how some of the useless children do. But there are also some of them who are educated and their stomachs cry for their mothers and fathers.

And so in Dagbon, how we live with our wives, it has got many talks. And truly, if it is on the part of Islam, I have already told you that the way God told us

to keep our wives, the woman is to be in a room and the man will be outside. There are some Muslims who have a wife, and the wife does not go out of the house. If such a woman brings forth, the man is the one who will go to the market to buy things for the child. If this woman is selling something, it is inside the compound that people will come to buy it, and when her child comes to grow a little, it is her child who will be selling it. The woman does not even have a way to come outside and go to the market; on the part of buying food, it is the man who will dress and go to the market and buy for the woman to cook. If not that, it is her child who will go and buy things and come and give to the mother. This is the way God said we should hold our wives, and there are some people here who follow that way. But I can say that if it is that we are following the Muslim way, then we Dagbamba are not serious. In Dagbon here, our women are trading, and it helps us and it helps them.

Truly, how we marry our wives in Dagbon here, and how we give them money and live with them on the part of cooking and food, it is a big talk. And I can say that it is a serious and important talk on the part of a husband and wife and how they live together. And tomorrow I will join it and tell you of the other work that a husband does for his wife and a wife does for her husband, and how we stay together in our houses.