

Chapter III–12: *How a Child is Given Birth*

Yesterday I told you that the talk of children has many talks, and today I'm going to join it and continue, and I will tell you how a child is given birth in Dagbon here, and how we Dagbamba look after the child when the child is young. It is a long talk, because it also separates into many talks. And I am going to start it with the typical Dagbamba, and we will take it and go, and I will be separating them.

When a woman is pregnant, she gives birth in nine months. Some women give birth in eight months and some in seven months and some in more than nine months. But it is seven months, eight months and nine months which we know because that is what we usually see. They give birth like that. Our people say that an eight-months-born child cannot build his own house, and even if he builds, he will not stay inside it but will only rent it to people. I have heard people say that, but I haven't seen it.

With the typical local Dagbamba, when a woman is pregnant, they don't say that she is pregnant. According to our custom, if you call someone a pregnant woman, they will ask you, "Is she your wife? Are you the one who made her pregnant?" Maybe it is a young girl and she fears the stomach. Not now, but formerly a young girl could be pregnant for about three months and not know she's pregnant. When a woman does not menstruate for a month, she will know that she's pregnant. But a young girl has not seen it before, and she doesn't know anything about it. In the olden days, a young girl didn't know about these things, and a woman will not agree to talk about it. It is because what is coming is not something that is going back, and if they talk about it, it will go to the child. And so they don't just say it like that. If you come to tell a young girl that she has got a stomach, it will bring a quarrel. And so if a woman is pregnant, there is something they do before everybody will know that she's pregnant. When they do this thing and they call her a pregnant woman, there will not be any quarrel in it.

If you are a typical Dagbana, if your wife is pregnant in your house, and it is that she has never given birth, when her stomach is four months, you will let a maalam write a talisman, what we call *sabli*. When he finishes making it, he will give it to your sister, one who is older than the girl. When your wife finishes eating in the night, your sister will take the talisman and hang it on your wife to wear on her neck. Before tying the talisman, some people too will ask a maalam for the type of medicine we call *walga*, and the maalam will write on a board, and then they will wash the writing and will give it your wife to drink. When they tie the talisman, they use black thread to put it on the neck, and there are other people

who tie it around the waist. And your sister will tell her, “You were a child; now you have become a grown woman.” It is because she is pregnant. When it’s daybreak, the next day, you will send cola and tell your wife’s father and mother that, “We have given your daughter a talisman, and her stomach is four months today.” That is the time the girl’s parents and all the people in her house will get to know that their daughter has conceived. Giving the talisman is what going to show everybody that she is pregnant. That is the evidence. In our custom way, that is how it is. And then getting to six months, your sister, the woman who hung the talisman, she will come and collect foodstuffs and take fish and prepare food, and some people slaughter a fowl. She will put the food inside a calabash for the pregnant woman to eat. And when she cuts the pregnant woman’s bowl like that, we say *Ti ba la o ŋmani*, that we have put her calabash. In Dagbon, they do this for a young girl, not for all women. That is the custom, and they gave birth to us, and we all grew up and met it.. And you know, the talk that we came and met, we can’t search too much into it to remove it. That is how the way.

And this sister who gave her the talisman, if your wife brings forth a baby girl, and if it happens that it comes to the time and this child is going to be shared in the family, they will give the girl to this sister to look after her, and the child will be calling her “*Pirba*,” that is, “Aunt.” And from the time your wife gets this talisman, then everybody can call her a pregnant woman. From that time, too, the pregnant woman’s mother will be coming to the husband’s house with her friends or her other daughters to cook food, and they will eat. That is what the typical Dagbamba do, and even some of those who pray, they do it. But if it is a maalam’s wife, they don’t do that. When a maalam’s wife is pregnant, they will be calling her a pregnant woman, and it is not forbidden to them. As for the maalam, you already know that they don’t do all the things that the typical Dagbamba do.

When a woman is pregnant for nine months and comes to bring forth, on that day, the time she is struggling, they will call a midwife and they will tell her that she should come and see a pregnant woman struggle. This midwife is a woman who is a bit old, and she knows the way of birth. The time the pregnant woman is suffering, laboring, they send to call the midwife from her house, and she comes. If she looks at the pregnant woman and it is not yet time for her to bring forth, she will tell the pregnant woman to continue struggling, and then the midwife will go home. When it is a bit hot, they will go and call her again. The birth has not yet come. They give the midwife a mat and she will spread it on the ground, and she will let the pregnant woman kneel on it. We have something at the corner of the room like a small hole; that is where we bathe if we are inside, and we call it *duumbilga*. It is at this *duumbilga* that the pregnant woman is

kneeling. And they will put a cloth around her chest, and it comes down to her waist. And the midwife will be telling the woman to grunt, “*Ugh!!*” It’s like when you go to the toilet and you want it to come out, you grunt. And as the pregnant woman is suffering, there is something we call *chahincheyu*; it is like water. When the *chahincheyu* has not yet come, there is no birth yet; but when it comes, then birth has come. And as the pregnant woman is grunting, someone can grunt three times, or four times, and you will see the child also coming out. And this midwife will be receiving the child, and she will take her hand and protect the head of the child. When the child has come out, the midwife will collect the child and put it down on the ground, and raise the child’s arms up. When the child raises the arms, there is a way for the child to cry; if the child does not cry, it will have short life.

Truly, giving birth is difficult, and giving birth and receiving a child is a woman’s work. Even as I am talking about it, I am surprised, because what I’m showing you now, I can tell you that there is no Dagbana man who will talk about this. But sometimes a woman will be struggling to give birth, and she will be suffering all the way, and there won’t be any woman to come and help her. I have heard that there are certain men who have medicine to receive a baby, and if such a man is around, he can go and help her and put the baby down. But truly, I have not seen a man receiving a baby before. Maalams have also got some medicine, and if your wife has a stomach, and you don’t want her to find it difficult when she is going to give birth, you can go and consult such a maalam. He will look and find a very strong name of God, and he will write it and wash it, and your wife will be drinking it up to the time she is going to give birth. When the time comes, she won’t face any difficulties, and she won’t go to the hospital. And there are other people, they will be quiet up until the time the birth is coming. The birth can come, say, in the morning, and the woman will struggle up till the afternoon. If the birth starts to come, you the man can go and tell a maalam, and he will write something for you, and you will come and give it to your wife to drink: within thirty minutes she will give birth to the baby. It is also there like that.

Sometimes it can happen that a woman is going to give birth in a house, and there is nobody around to receive the child. At times the woman herself can receive the baby and put the baby down, and I myself have seen that. Fatawu’s mother, the one who died, early in the morning she gave birth. She was inside the bath room to wash her front to come out and perform ablution to pray. The time she was in the bath room, the birth came at once. I saw it myself. When she was going to give birth, I ran to call our old mother who was nearby to come and help her. That woman was a midwife. Before she came, my wife went inside the room and received the baby herself and put the baby down. And so I have seen it like

that. Any woman whose eyes are dry can do that, but the one whose eyes are not dry cannot do that. And so there are some women, God has made them that they won't face any difficulties when they are going to give birth. Fatawu's mother gave birth nine times in my house. Three of the children died, and six are left. She never went to the hospital when she gave birth to any of those nine children, and she never gave birth and somebody heard her cries. Sometimes when she started struggling to give birth, they would send for a midwife, and before the midwife would come, the baby was already on the floor. That is how it is.

And so in Dagbon here, receiving a baby is a woman's work. If there is no midwife around, you the husband have to try to find a woman to come and receive the baby. It's just that you don't want to receive the baby because you don't want to see what is happening. Giving birth doesn't want a man. The man who has sense, if a woman is giving birth, he won't go there to see. You are not a doctor, and you don't have any medicine to help. There is no way for you to go there, unless it comes by force. As for force, there is no medicine for it. Force like what? If it happens that you are taking the woman to a hospital in a car, and the baby comes, and it has come like that, it is not a fault. Even if there is a fault, God will forgive it. But a man, your eyes can be dry like anything, and if you are there when your wife is giving birth, your penis won't be with you again: it will become like a finger nail. You last told me that your senior brother in the States was there with his wife when she gave birth, and that many people at your place go together with their wives to give birth. But to us, even if you don't follow your wife to where she will be giving birth, it is still true that you have given birth together. You don't have to watch, because the time your wife is suffering, your heart will not lie down again. Your heart will be telling you that how the giving birth is worrying her, maybe she is going to die. And you don't know. And do you think that where there is death, such a place is good? That is how it is. It's not until you hear that she has given birth to the baby all right, at that time you will be happy. And so if you are not in the room when she comes to give birth, it's the same thing.

And so it is a woman who will come to receive the child and put it down. When she puts the child down, there is something we call *tolana*, that is, the afterbirth. In our Dagbani, the afterbirth has many names. Its name again is *yoli*, and again we call it *zoli*, and we call it *naa*. A human being or an animal is never born without the afterbirth. Anything they say that "it gives birth," then it has got the afterbirth. And so, when the afterbirth has not come, then there is no white heart yet. It is not that the woman has not given birth; it means that she has not finished giving birth. When the woman brings forth with the afterbirth, and the child falls like that, then there is something at the navel of the child that is like a

piece of meat which joins the navel to the afterbirth. It's soft and it looks like intestines. They take a piece of broken pot and place it by the thing that joins the navel to the afterbirth, and they take a knife and cut it. They leave only a small part, the length of a finger, attached to the navel. There are some seasonings we use for cooking, *kanaafiri* and *musuulo*; *kanaafiri* is cloves, and this *musuulo* is hot like pepper and they use it in stew and sometimes they mix it with porridge. This *musuulo* is in the market, and the Hausas sell it. And truly, they use this *musuulo* to do many works. They take it and add to cola and eat it. And you can be searching for some medicine, and they will tell you to get *musuulo* and add it to the medicine and pound it. If it is *fula*, you can take this *musuulo* and add it and grind it together. If you want to make *dura* — it's a type of medicine they make and put with a shilling coin — you will add *musuulo*. It's not a powder. They are like small-small seeds, like guava seeds, that they pound. That is how it is. They mix this *kanaafiri* and *musuulo* with shea butter and spread it on the navel of the child. By that time, if it is a baby boy, the midwife will yell three times, and if it is a baby girl, she will yell four times. And she will tell the women to go out and tell the householder that they have got good luck. If it is that the father of the child is a young man, they tell the young man's father. If the young man has his own house, then they will tell him himself. And then they will take the broken pot with the afterbirth, and they will put cotton on top of it, and take a small broken piece of pot and cover it. They will take it to outside the house to where they bathe, and they will dig and bury it there. If the bathroom is cemented, they will take it outside behind the house and bury it there against the wall of the house. And then they will come back. And that day, there is a soup we call *naanzubee*; it is a light peppery soup. They will cook it and they will eat. And they will send someone to tell the woman's mother and father.

The day the child is born, they will get a midwife to come to be bathing the new child. Everyday they bathe the child three times with hot water, in the morning, the afternoon and the evening. The day of the birth, the type of bathing they give that day has no equal. The woman who is going to bathe this child, on the day she gets the child, that is the day the child's dirt will go out or will not go out. The way the child has come out, the whole body will be as if it is covered with oil. And they will boil water, and they will get a type of soap we call *kulkula*. And the woman will smear the soap on the child and wash it, smear and wash it, smear and wash it: three times. Inside the ears, inside the nose, inside the armpit, inside the front, they will take something and clean all of it. On that day, no dirt will remain on the child. If she bathes the child and any dirt remains, it won't leave the child again: when that child grows and such a person passes you, whether or not there is sweat on that person, the person's smell is different. And it comes from the bathing. That is how it is.

If the mother is still a young woman, and she has never given birth to a child, when she brings forth, they will get a woman whose heart is cool and who has got a child in her hands. She comes to let the new child suck her breast. And there are some women, and we call them that “they make someone drink milk.” They will call such a woman, and she will come and catch the young mother’s breast and be milking her breast into a calabash. And she will pour it away. And they will get cow milk, and they will get millet and grind it and add it to the milk. There is a kind of grass we call *ɲmam-ma bihili*; when you cut it, you will see something like milk coming out. They will grind it and add. And the one who is making people drink milk, she will let the child’s mother drink it. And the woman can say that she will get a hen, and they will get the hen and give it to her. If the child is a baby boy, the woman will get three pesewas; if it is a baby girl, she will get four pesewas. Getting to the next day or two days, you will see that good milk will come to the mother, and the child will be sucking the mother. And as for this, it can happen that a woman who has already given birth, when she comes to give birth, there will be no milk with her for a few days. And if they watch and see this, they will let her be drinking milk, and another woman will come to be letting the child suck her breast up to the time the mother gets milk. And so a woman who has never given birth or one who has given birth three or four times, if she has no milk, they do this for her. If a woman has milk, they don’t make her drink, but as for the first milk, they will milk it away until the next day will come, and the child will drink it. All this, they do it when a woman gives birth.

The day the woman gave birth and they sent to tell her parents, when the woman’s parents hear that their daughter has given birth, her father’s housepeople will go to the market and get foodstuffs. All the types of things we use in making soup, anything we call soup, they put all these things inside a big calabash. They get groundnut paste, salt, pepper, *kpalgu*, and anything to make the soup taste nice. The only ones that are not there are okra and also a leaf we call *salinvɔɣu*. When it is evening, they will send or bring all this to the house where the woman has given birth. They will be cooking for her for a week until they name the child, because it is one week after the birth that they will perform the naming of the child. We who are following the Islamic religion call it *suuna*. And the typical Dagbamba just say, “Today I’m going to shave my child’s head” or “Today I’m going to call my child’s name.” It is on that day that they will shave the child, and if the child is a boy, they will circumcise the penis. And after they have shaved the child, they give the child a name.

The typical Dagbamba get the child’s name from soothsayers. From the day of the birth going to three or four days, sometimes one week, the navel will fall. If the father is a typical Dagbana, when the navel falls, he will send and consult a

soothsayer to know the child's name. Up to that time the child has no name apart from *Saandoo* — male stranger — if it is a boy, and *Saampaya* if it is a girl — female stranger. I have already talked to you about strangers, and there are many types of strangers. A stranger is somebody you don't know or somebody who is in some town, and again, even if somebody is your good friend and he's in the same town, if you have not seen each other for long and he comes to visit you, he's a stranger. This is how it is. And so we call the newborn child a stranger because you didn't know of it, and it is God who brought it. We say we have got a stranger who has been brought by God. Isn't it a person whom we don't know that we call a stranger? When the stomach was big, did anyone know what was inside the stomach?

And when they consult the soothsayer, they will know whom the child will inherit, and they will call the child by that name. A child can inherit the father's father, or someone will inherit the father's grandfather or great-grandfather. If the new child is a girl, the child can inherit the father's mother or the father's grandmother or great-grandmother. And what we often see is that the child inherits his fourth grandfather on his father's side. And in our tradition, we say that the grandfather has come back. If the child is a girl, they give her the name of her father's grandmother and say that it is the grandmother who has come back. This is what the typical Dagbamba do. And they will say, "He has inherited the grandfather or the grandmother." A child inherits like that, from the father's side, because a woman is not for the child in Dagbon.

Truly, it can happen that a child will inherit on his mother's side. The soothsayer will tell the one who is coming whether it is the man's father or the mother's father the child is going to inherit, but it is unusual that a child will get the name from the woman's side. You know, how a family moves, maybe some names in your wife's parent's house are inside of your house, too. And you the husband, too, inside of your house, there will be some name that will also be at your wife's parents' house. And so as for a child, there is nothing stopping the child from inheriting the mother's side, but it is not very common. But it is the soothsayer who will show the one whom the child has inherited, and if they search and get to know that the child has inherited on the mother's side, they will call the child by that name.

With our typical Dagbamba, if it is a boy, the name can be *Dawuni*, or *Nayi*, or *Tidoo*, or *Naparo*, or *Danaa*, or *Wumbero*. If it is a girl, she may be called *Payawuni*, or *Payanaa*, or *Tipaya*, or *Napari*, or *Sibri*, or *Neempaya*. Those who are not Muslims, or those who don't name in the Muslim way, they still call children by these names. And so these are some of the names a child can have, and there are many more, and there is no end to them.

If the child is a typical Dagbana and he has inherited the grandfather, and let's say his is called Wumbee, his father cannot call him "Wumbee." His father will call him, "My grandfather." His father's brother cannot call him "Wumbee;" he will call him "My grandfather." He has inherited his grandfather. If they are going to do any talk about the old, old days, something like sacrificing to the *bayyuli*, they will call this child and he will sit down. And they will tell him, "My grandfather, pour this water first before we pour" or "My grandfather, pour this water first because you are the owner of this house." He has inherited, and they inherit like that.

And truly, it is the heart which gives the name to a child. My father's name is Abdulai. When I was going to give birth to my child, and the child's mother was having pregnancy, I said that if the child is a boy, I will call him my father's name. And this woman had not yet given birth and I went to a soothsayer. The soothsayer told me, "Your wife will give birth to a baby boy. If she doesn't give birth to a boy, she will give birth to a child with a big navel. But if she gives birth to a boy, take your father's name and give to him." And so what I was thinking, didn't it also come? I had said that I will call the child by my father's name, and the soothsayer also came to tell me that. And so a soothsayer will talk, and in your heart you will also know the name you want to give your child, the name of your father or your grandfather. My child Osmanu: the one who gave birth to my father, that was his name. Have you seen? It's all from your heart. And it's also from your going to soothsayers and they tell you, "If you give birth to your child, give so-and-so's name to the child." This is how we give the child a name.

On the day they consult the soothsayer, the soothsayer will show them the number of hens they will take and kill when they shave the child's head and name the child. Sometimes the soothsayer shows up to four hens, and some will show a goat inside it. And the father will get the hens or the goat. When it's daybreak, they will do the naming of the child, and they will shave the head of the child. If the child is a boy, on that day they will circumcise the penis, and it is barbers who do it. They will call the name, and they will prepare food, and they will share it in the area, and people will come and greet. It is a happy day, and sometimes they will call drummers to come and beat for them, and they will dance. This is what happens when we name a child.

Let me add you salt. As for the barbers in Dagbon, truly, they have work on the part of a child. When someone is not circumcised, it is this barber we call, and he will come and cut the penis. And it is the barber who will put medicine on him. If the child is small, if the barber cuts the penis, it is shea butter he puts on the child until the sore finishes. Nowadays, too, some of the barbers will cut a child's penis and put penicillin. But in the olden days, the only medicine they put was

kpakahili, raw shea butter, and they took the feather of a hen to put shea butter where they cut. Getting to a week, the sore would finish. There can be a child, too, they will not cut his penis when he is small. Someone will be about five years when they will cut his penis; someone will be eight years. The barber will take the medicine and give to you the father. If the barber cuts the penis, it is three days you will wash it. After the third day, when you wash it, you will be watching it. And if the child is about eight years, when you wash it for one and a half weeks, the sore will finish. This is one of the works of the barber. If it is a naming, when the barber cuts the child's penis, you can give him twelve shillings. And if you slaughter a sheep, the barber is for one front leg. This is what *Yidan' Gunu* has on the part of cutting the penis.

The barber again, when you bring forth your child, it is the barber who will cut the marks we have got on our faces, the short straight lines. The one who has three marks, it is the barber who cuts it; the one who has four marks, it is the barber who cuts it. There are some people, when they bring forth a child, if the child has a big navel, the barber will make three lines on the stomach, four times around the navel with three lines each. That is the work of the barber again. In Dagbon here, too, there are women who have marks on their chests and backs; it is the barber who cuts it.

These marks are different types. There are some marks that look like Frafra marks, and we call them the same as we call the Hausas: *jengberi*. It has got a lot of small lines, and Dagbamba also make this type of marks on their faces. If you go to Karaga, the Karaga people have got some marks we call *kalanahili*: it is also like *jengberi*, but they cut them in short lines and come down their faces. It is the barber who cuts these marks. And so we have got three marks, four marks, and the type which is just short-short ones, and you see that type more around Karaga. The people of this town, they give four marks; the people of Larabanga, they give three marks. And then there is the *jengberi*, the one with a lot of lines on the face like the Frafra marks, that is there. This is what I know.

As for these marks, they can show something about the family. In the olden days, someone would not want his line to die, and so he would cut the marks. If we see someone with the marks of *jengberi*, we take him to be from the family of Savelugu-Naa Mahami. And there are some marks that will show something about the person who has them. We have one on the face we call *kpihiginintam*, that is, the tears of an orphan. It is like two marks with a line across. If you are bringing forth and the children are always dying, then when you bring forth a child, they will give these marks. That is why we call them the tears of an orphan.

There is one we call *tapalli*: it is one mark and it doesn't go down so much. When a child dies today, and you bring forth and the child dies again, and

you bring forth and he dies again, if you bring forth again, we call the child *gurundoo*, or Gurunsi person: you will let them give the child two marks, like a Gurunsi, because it is the Gurunsi who have two marks. This is how it is. As for the two marks they give and call the child *gurundoo*, they give it because there is some worry that has made them give the two marks. The father wants to do it so that he will get a human being, and the human being will stand for him. He has been bringing forth, and they have been dying. And so he should change the town of the child to a different town. That is the *gurundoo*, and they give the child the two marks we call *tapalli*. As for the *gurundoo*, it means that when he is given birth, it is a Gurunsi man who will come and buy him, and they will take the child outside. And they will go to the house where there is a Gurunsi and tell him, “Come and buy a slave.” If there is no Gurunsi, it is a Dagbana who will come and say, “I have bought my Gurunsi; I have bought a slave.” And at that time, the child will stand, and he will remain in life. You will see such a child and know that the brothers and sisters were dying. And it is the barber who gives him the two marks. This is how it is.

But now some people just give these marks because, “This man has got it, and I have seen, and so I will also cut” or “As this man has got these marks, it is nice, and so I will also go and get the marks.” This is the reason why some people cut the marks. But as for the person who has got one mark, we say that he is cutting it “for life,” that is, just because it looks good. This is how it is. And so that is why some of the marks don’t show anything. As for the marks, when the barbers cut them, they don’t use medicine. The only thing I know is that when they cut a child, they will put some pomade, and that is all. But as for a grown person, when they give him the marks, they will grind charcoal and powder his face with it, and the blood will still be coming out. That is all. When they put the charcoal and it enters inside the marks, getting to daybreak and he bathes, that is all. The sores will be there, but they will not become big sores. This is how it is, and the marks will be like small lines. And this is the work of the barber in Dagbon.

In Dagbon here, when a woman gives birth, and after the naming day of the child, she goes with the child to stay in her family house. A woman will stay at her father’s house up until the time the child walks. The day the woman’s parents come for the name of the child, after naming the child, they will tell the man’s people, “Your wife’s father said that if we come and they finish calling the name, we should beg for his friend that we will take him home so that we will bathe him for some days. And so we want to beg for our daughter and the child.” If the woman’s father and mother are living in that town, they will take her and the child and go home that night. If they are not from that town, they will take some millet

or guinea corn and put it inside the big calabash in which they brought the foodstuffs, and they will take cotton and spread it on top, and they will cover it with a cloth. They will take the new child and put the child on top of the cloth, and they will take the cover of the calabash and cover the child, and they leave a hole for air to come. And they will take the child and the mother and go. Sometimes someone will go to a soothsayer and look, and the soothsayer will say that the child should not go anywhere. If someone hears this, he will tell his wife's family that his child cannot go, and it is not any talk. And if someone doesn't look, and they take the woman and the child, it is also not any talk. That is what we came and met.

When they arrive at their house, they take the child and enter a room. Inside this room, they will take a *zana* mat — it's like a woven screen — and hang it like a curtain; and hot water and charcoal and a coalpot will always be standing in the room. In all Dagbon here, not only in the villages, when they bring forth a child, the room will never be empty of fire. It's because the woman who has just given birth doesn't want cold, and the child too is like that. If it is not in the hospital, that is, if it is with us, that is what we have all come to meet.

And they will get a midwife who is in also that area or that town to come and be bathing the child. The mother who has not given birth to a child before does not know how to bathe the child. It can happen that they will take a child to the mother's house and the mother herself will be bathing the child: if the woman has given birth about three times, after they have named the child, she can bathe it. Such a woman can bathe the child on her own. But if they haven't named the child, the mother won't bathe it. The one bathing the child is a woman who has patience. If the child has a flat nose when it is small, the woman who comes to bathe the child will take the cloth she is wearing and use it to catch the nose of the child and pull it up a bit. If the child's head is not all that round, she will be pressing it and it will be all right. If the child has bent arms, when she bathes the child, she will be pressing the arms little by little, and they will straighten. If the legs are curved, inside the bathing the legs will straighten. She will be pressing all a little at a time. And so Dagbamba do all that. If the child has curved ears, when this woman wants to put the child down, she will open the curved ear and then put the child on the ear. When she puts the child down for some time, she will turn the child again. As the child is still small, when she is doing that you will see that the ears will stand all right. We do this to our children in Dagbon. And Ashantis, too, don't you see that their children have flat heads at the top? When the Ashantis are bathing their children, they press on the top part of their heads. As for Dagbamba, we just get the arms and legs and press and make everything well. And as this woman is bathing the child, she puts hot water on the front of the

child. If it is a baby boy, she will be putting the hot water on the navel and the penis; if it is a baby girl, she will open the vagina and wash it there. If they don't put the water like that, if the child becomes big, it will be urinating when it sleeps or at any time. But if she puts the hot water, when the child grows a bit, it will not be urinating like that. She will be bathing the child for about two months, until the child grows a bit, and at that time, if the child's mother is there, the mother will be bathing the child, and it is not the midwife who will bathe the child again.

And we Dagbamba have some things on the part of a woman and giving birth to children. When a woman is a pregnant woman, as she used to sleep with her husband and have sex, she can still be doing that. It can come from the woman. There can be a woman who becomes pregnant and will always want to be sleeping with her husband. If the man also wants that, then they will be sleeping together for the nine months up to the time she gives birth. And there can be a woman who is pregnant up to, say, three months, and she will not have time for a man again. And there are some men, too, when a woman is pregnant, they will not sleep with her again. Some will stop like that at five months, six months, seven months or eight months. And if it is a woman who is a pregnant woman and who always wants penis, if her husband doesn't want to give it to her, or if they sleep together and he doesn't touch her, then every day she will be quarreling with her husband or her cowives, and the house will always be noisy.

And if a pregnant woman goes to sleep with a man outside, we have some talk again. This is the work of a useless woman I'm showing you. If she goes outside to a man who is not her husband, and this other man sleeps with her, then we say that she has added to the pregnancy. Whatever happens, and no matter how she hides it, when she is going to bring forth, she will call the name of the man. If she doesn't call the name of the man, if she hides it, she will die. Where she is kneeling down to give birth, that is where she will die. That is what we have all got up and met, and it is not a lie. It is not good for the child, and it is that the child shows that it doesn't want dirt, that, "Such-and-such a man has put his dirt on me." And so it is the child who makes the woman call the name of the person. The mother of the child doesn't want to call the name, but if she doesn't call it, she will die there. It is not any talk in Dagbon here: it is there today and tomorrow.

But some people who do it have got medicine for it. If the man from outside who has used the woman gets this medicine and gives her, she will be eating it when she is getting near to giving birth. If she has sense, she can approach the outside man and say, "Truly, I was pregnant, three months, when I came to sleep with you." And the man will get the medicine for her to be eating. When she gives birth, nothing will worry her and she will not find it difficult. But

if there is no medicine, she will call the man's name, or she will die. If she is too shy to call the name, she will die. And in Dagbon here it is a very big thing which is waiting for us, and it is there.

And this talk separates again, because let's say that a woman is in her husband's house, and she finishes her menstruation and washes herself. That day she goes to sleep with a man outside, and if God says that the stomach should enter her, then it will enter, and that is all. If the husband is sleeping with her, it's useless. And if she is going to give birth, she won't call anybody's name. It's only if the husband sleeps with her to add, if she goes to the outside man to sleep with him again, she will come to call the name. And so she won't go to that man again. And the child is a bastard child, and the husband won't know. How will the husband know? The husband is sleeping with her, and when she gets a stomach, he will just say that it is his stomach, not knowing that it is somebody from outside. As for that, it's different from when you sleep with your wife and she becomes pregnant and she goes outside. The day God puts it down that she should become pregnant, and you meet her, if the pregnancy is coming, it will come. If it reaches three or four days, and she goes out and sleeps with somebody, when she is going to give birth, she will call the name of the outside person. It is the husband's child. But if it's not the husband's child, she won't call.

Or even sometimes, if the woman has just come to the husband's house and she was pregnant the time she came, in Dagbon here, there are some men who will refuse the woman and refuse the child, too. Someone will say that the woman should take her bastard child and go and give to the owner of it child. And so sometimes men refuse their wives because of this, but it's only a few men who do that. Somebody who wants his wife, he won't even want to talk, and somebody will hear of it. If people come to talk of it, the man won't want to hear it. And so if it comes like that, the man will say it is his child, but when the man is not there again, the child will not inherit him. This is how it is. And again, let's say the woman is a young girl and they have given her to the husband, but she hasn't come to his house yet. And outside people take her and give her a stomach. If it reaches two months or three months time, and they bring her to the husband's house, truly, if he is someone who watches, he will know that she is pregnant. He can ask her, "You have got pregnancy. Who has given you the pregnancy?" If she refuses to talk, and he still wants her, he will keep quiet. And if she talks, if he wants, he will say that they should take her to her house, and when she gives birth, they should give the child to the man, but he wants his wife. It's also there.

And a woman who gives birth and goes to her father's house, she will be there until the child walks well, and it can even be up to two years, or if the child grows quickly, one year six months. If she is a woman who wants penis, within

some time she will want to sleep with her husband. If a woman gives birth and takes the child to her house, and a different man should have sex with her before she comes back to her husband's house, when she comes back and her husband sexes her, the child can die. If a woman gives birth and goes to her house, and when the time has not yet come for her to go back to her husband's house, if she goes to sleep with another man, as for that one, there is no question. When they bring her home and she sleeps with her husband, the child will die. Even if the child has grown and is walking, he will die. Unless the woman gets its medicine and eats, she will bring forth children and they will not last. They will all die. We say *O yeɣla o bia zuɣu*, that "She has crossed over her child's head." And this one has happened to me with one of my wives, and I separated from her because of it. But if she has its medicine, the children will not die. It has its medicine, but the medicine does not always work. And so having sex with somebody's wife after she has just given birth is a very serious thing here. It gives our children trouble.

And if the woman does not go outside for someone to sex her, and she is a woman who wants penis, it is trouble on the part of the husband, too. If it is one year and six months and the man has not yet slept with the woman, it is always quarreling — always. She will take the man and start it, and take it and join to her cowives. And if this man is a useless man, and the child is not yet grown, he will have sex with the woman and she will become pregnant again. And if she's pregnant and the child who is not yet grown sucks her milk, it enters his bones, and the child will become weak. You will see white matter coming out from the child's eyes. And you will see that the child's hands and legs will be swollen. And you will see the child's stomach bulging out. And it shows that the man wants the woman and the woman wants the man, and it's not yet time. This man and woman will sleep together and the child will become weak, and sometimes it kills children. When it kills the child, they abuse the woman, and they abuse the man, too. And so by that time, he has got trouble inside his house, and trouble outside his house, because they are abusing him. But if it is up to two years, by then the child will not have time for the mother's milk. By then, every food, he eats it. And so there will not be any question of the man having sex with the woman.

As for you white people, I think that if your wife gives birth today, by the next day or the third day, if you want, you will sleep with her again. And I have heard that the Arabs too are like that. And it's because not all of the children suck the mother's breast. And I think it will come like that in Dagbon, too. I have seen a woman give birth to a child, and go and buy milk and put it down, and she was putting the milk into a bottle and the child was sucking the bottle. If not that, she

will take milk powder and mix it with water and stir it, and pour it into a bottle, and the child will be sucking. And all this, if you are doing it, and you and the woman sleep together, there is no talk inside it. It's only that we send our wives to their parent's house so that she will not become pregnant again while the child is still sucking her breast. You know, a dog and meat cannot gather at one place. Whatever happens, the dog will get the scent of the meat. If the dog gets the scent, and the meat is sweet to him, what will happen? The dog will eat the meat. And so that is why we let our wives go far and leave us.

And again, if it happens that a woman gives birth and the child dies, the woman will go to her father's house. If the dead child was a girl, she goes for four months, and if it is a boy who dies, she goes for three months. If it is not yet up to the time and she comes back to the man, if she sleeps with the man and she gives birth to another child again, whatever happens, the child will also die. If it is not a miscarriage, then she will give birth and the child will die. If she does that ten times, the children will all die. We call it *biekoba*. We Dagbamba have this on the part of birth and our women.

And how a child grows, when a woman goes with the child to her father's house, when the child is two months going to three months, they will make the child sit. They will sit the child down and they will take the legs to protect the child if it falls forward. And they get cloths or pillows and put by the sides and back and front of the child. These cloths are from the father. The time the mother was pregnant, if the father's cloth or his shirt is torn, she will take it and wash it and then hide it. When she brings forth she will take these rags and put them for the child to lie down. When they make the child sit down, they will make the hands press in front of the child. And a child will fall to the sides or the back, and the cloths or the pillows will support him. And a child can fall to the front, and the cloths or pillows will protect his mouth, and they will put him back. By the time the child is four months, the child can know how to sit. And four months too, a child who is fast can be learning how to crawl. In learning to crawl, the child will take the knees and be pulling them little by little. A child can be sitting back and using the knees as if he's going to crawl. A child can do that for ten or twenty days. From the twenty days going, the legs will show the child that the legs can crawl. From six months, you will see that the child will be crawling. A child can crawl for two months. By that time, when the child sees anything, it will want to press the hands on it and get up. If it's a chair they have put down, the child can press it and get up and stand. Or when the child crawls and comes to meet the wall, it can press it and get up and stand. When the child crawls and stands up, it cannot move the legs, but it can be standing. Getting to ten or twenty days again, you will see that the child can press against the wall and be walking and going.

When the child is like that, it can be standing like where Kissmal is sitting just here, and somebody will say, “Come here,” and the child will pull the leg and then pull the other leg and then fall. And he will make the child get up and stand again. And you will see that the child will be moving the legs little by little again. From nine months going to ten months or eleven months, the child will be walking a bit.

The time the child starts crawling, it can get the upper teeth. The child will get one, and before you see, the lower one will come out too. Sometimes, before the child knows how to crawl, you will see that the child has about three or four teeth. And the time the child gets up to walk, it can have about six or eight teeth. Sometimes a child will crawl and walk and will not get the back teeth, but as for the front ones, they will all come out.

And there are some children, when the child is small, the child cries too much. Inside this crying, sometimes they say they should look upon the child: they will go and see a soothsayer. And the small child will say that it wants *baŋgari*. It is the soothsayer who looks and sees that the child says it. This *baŋgari* is mixed metal: we have copper — red metal — and silver. They take the metal and join and twist it, and they put it in the hand of the child like a bracelet. Sometimes they will do that and the child will stop crying. And another child can say he wants *nintua*; it is a ring. And another child can say he wants *baŋgari* like a ring; it is also mixed metal, and we call it *nintugari*. The child has not got a hand that can wear the ring, so they will take it and tie it and hang it around the neck of the child. And you will see that the child will stop crying. I think that if you have been looking, you have been seeing it, because it’s just common. And if a child doesn’t want to walk, we call such a child *gbargu*, that is, a lame person; but the child is not lame. And such a child, they can make *baŋgari* for him, and the child will get up and walk. Sometimes the soothsayer will say that the child wants a kind of shirt we call *kpaankɔbga*. It’s a type of woven cloth. They will go and buy the cloth and sew a small smock and put it on the child, and you will see that the child will get up and walk. And this is how the child will be worrying the father and the mother until it knows how to walk.

The time the child knows how to walk, that is the time the woman will go back to her husband’s house. The father will go and buy cow forelegs, three of them if the child is a boy, and four of them if the child is a girl. When he buys the forelegs, he will buy a mat, and buy a *kpaankɔbga* pillow, and add four or eight cedis to it. He will send all these things to his wife’s father’s house. The cowlegs he sends, they cook it, and they take the money he added to buy food and add to the cow forelegs when they cook. And the mat and the pillow, that is the sleeping thing for the mother and the child. And at that time, it will show that the man’s child has come out into the open; the child has become somebody. If the child is

someone who is fast, by one year and six months, the child will know how to walk well. And the child can even open the mouth and talk. And there will be nothing again; there will be no talk with the child. At that time the man will send and beg for his wife. And you know us black people. If you go and beg for your wife, it is not in that month they will bring her back to your house. It can be up to three or four or five months before they will bring her. They will say, “Um-m-m. How long has this child walked? And you just want your child?” And the man will be sending people and begging for his wife.

And so in Dagbon here, when your wife gives birth, she will be at her parent’s house until the child walks. And it doesn’t show that it is nine months, ten months or a year. If a child turns quickly, they can go and beg for the child. And they will beg for some months again. And it can happen that the child will be there and be the gbargu or lame child I’ve talked about. Such a child can talk but cannot walk, and it will be up to three years. And by then, the man will go and beg for his wife and child, and they will come to his house, and he will be doing what he can for the child. It’s better than leaving his wife to sit there. And so when our wives give birth, they don’t stay with us, and we go and beg for them, and this is how it is. And when they bring a wife to the man’s house, she cooks food, and they will eat. And it will show that at this time the woman has become the man’s wife again and the man too has become the woman’s husband.

Truly, to talk of children is difficult, because in Dagbon there are differences, and as for those who are following the Islamic religion, when a maalam takes a wife and the wife gives birth, it is different. And those who are not maalam but they pray, it is also different. I already told you that when a maalam’s wife is a pregnant woman, they don’t give her the talisman, and they don’t cut her food for her. When a maalam’s wife is a pregnant woman, they will be calling her a pregnant woman, and it’s not forbidden. If it is that a maalam’s wife gives birth, the day she gives birth, they also have a midwife. What I have said about how the midwife gets the child, that is also how she gets the child from a maalam’s wife. When they get the child and put it down, the man comes to say the prayers. He says prayers three times in the child’s right ear. And then he will say prayers in the left ear, too, three times. Whether it’s a girl or a boy, that is what Muslims do.

When he says the prayers in the child’s ear, there too he will call the name of the child. When he calls the name in the ear, the child will get up and hear the name, and they won’t call the child and the child will not hear. When the child grows up, it will never forget the name. And God also shows again that it’s not good if somebody dies and has not got a name. If you don’t call the name of the child on the day of its birth, if it dies and the naming day has not yet come, is it

sweet? Even if maalam give birth to a child, and the child comes out as a dead child, they will take the child and put it down and call the name of the child before they bury it. They won't call the name into the child's ear, but they will call the name, because nobody can die and have no name. But the typical Dagbamba don't know that.

And the way the typical Dagbamba go to see the soothsayers and the gods, the Muslims don't do that. It is dirt to the Muslims. If you don't do some work and somebody does that work, you look at it as dirty work. But the way the Muslims give names to their children, if you look at it, it comes to look like the way the local Dagbamba consult the soothsayers before they give the names, because all the names are in the Holy Qur'an, and they are Arabic names of those who have passed. There are some who were bad people, and all their names are in the Holy Qur'an. And some were poor people and some were rich people. And some of them, in their bodies they had strength. And there were some too who were great people; one person could stand in a town and do the work of a hundred people. And some were very good maalam and some were very intelligent. And some of them too had patience. And some were chasers of women. And some too were people who were sick. And some too were always fighting. And some too were only people. All of them, their names are in the Holy Qur'an.

And so Muslims, those who pray but cannot read, when your wife brings forth, you will go and ask a maalam who has sense. When you ask him, he will go and take the Holy Qur'an and bring it outside and be looking into the Holy Qur'an. It is the day the woman gives birth that they will take to name the child, because all the days and names are in the Holy Qur'an. The maalam will look at the names of the people who have passed, and as you don't know whether the child will be good or bad, the maalam will choose names of people who were good and give them to you. As every day has its names, he will choose about four names and show you the work all those people were doing. And you the father, you will think in your heart and choose one of the names that will be good for the child, and it is the name you choose that they will take to call the child. I'm talking about those of us who pray. We are the people who go to ask. But those who have read, they can just call the names of the child into the ear on the day the child is given birth. That is the way Muslim birth goes.

And so the maalam, as they are looking into the day's name, they don't say they are looking to take a dead person's name like your great-grandfather's name or great-grandmother's name. And you the one having the child, if they happen to call your grandfather's name, then you can say that it was your grandfather's name, and so you can turn to say that the child has taken your grandfather. But as for the typical Dagbamba, they have made it to stand that if

they give birth to a child, they will go to a soothsayer to find the name. And when the soothsayer calls a name of one of his great-grandfathers or great-grandmothers, they will give it to the child and say that the child has taken the grandfather or grandmother.

And truly, however old a person is, if he wants to follow the Islamic religion and take a Muslim name, the maalams will come and sit together and look for a name, just as they do for the newborn child. And they will sit together and call the name. And so, it's not that someone will just call a name. If you are living with somebody, you shouldn't bring some sort of lying into your living together. If you want to give someone a name, you have to consult to get a name that will be good for the person.

As for the Muslims, they don't call names like Dawuni or Naparo. If the child is a boy, they can call *Ibrahim*, *Iddrisu*, *Abubakari*, or *Mahamadu*. If the child is a girl, they can call *Amina*, *Fati*, *Ayishetu*, *Mimunatu*, *Azima*, *Fuseina*, or *Lahiri*. These are Muslim names, and there is no end to them. And so after the prayers, Muslims can call the name into the child's ear before the naming day comes. When the child is one week, the man buys cola, and he will share it in the evening and say that tomorrow he's going to call the name of the child. Now that cola is very expensive, some people buy a kind of sweet we call black-and-white, and they share it. And some people too print papers to make invitation cards. A few years ago, people started doing that. And if they print the papers and buy the black-and-white, they will still buy a small amount of cola, because somebody will be there, and you will give him the black-and-white and he will say he doesn't know it. And you will give him the papers, and he will tell you that he is not a white man. And so they will buy a small amount of cola to give to such a person. The time my son Alhassan was going to name his child, he gave me cola that I should share it with my friends and elders, and he gave papers to his friends.

And when it's daybreak, everybody will gather at the house, and maalams too will gather, and they will sit down together to name the child. When the maalams sit down, the man will write the name of the child on a paper and give it to the maalams and say, "This is the name I want to call my child." They will call the name and they will gather and sit. When they call the name, they will shout it and enter the house, and everybody will know that it is the name of the child. If they give you cola that they are going to do the naming, then if you come, if you are able to get any small amount of money, you will give it and say, "This is your naming." And the man too will get up. He will give cotton and guinea corn to the maalams to take home. If he wants to give the maalams some money, he will give it. And then the barber will come and shave the head of the child. After shaving the head, if the child's penis was not cut, they will cut it on that day. And if the

child wants some marks on the face, you will see that they will give the child the marks. As for Muslims, they don't kill hens. But sheep, they will slaughter. And rice and everything, they will cook it.

And after naming the child, then the wife's parents will also come and beg for the child, and they will take the child home. When it's daybreak, the father will get money and send and say they should see how the wife and her people and the child arrived safely to the house. And a Muslim too, if he is going to leave the wife, every month he will give her money for eating, and so when it's the end of the month, he will send money to the wife. And a Muslim doesn't go to consult soothsayers. And when it's time for the woman to come back to the man's house, he doesn't buy the cow forelegs. Sometimes a child can start walking in nine months or ten months. When the child is walking, the man can send and beg for his wife. And when they beg, the wife's family will also send her to her husband's house. These Muslims, there is nothing they will do again. The day they bring her, that is the day the husband and wife sleep together.

But there are some men who will not have sex with their wives on that day, and it is some women who make men not sleep with them. A woman can go to her family house and she will jump over the child and have sex somewhere with someone who is not her husband. As she has come back to your house, maybe that outside man who slept with her has made her pregnant. When she comes and she does not pass menses, and you sleep with her, when she is pregnant you will think that it is your stomach. But it is for the man who slept with her outside. And so according to some men, when they bring your wife, she will be in your house for about a month before you can have sex with her. And this is what some Muslims do. And some of our typical Dagbamba also do that. Those who suspect their wives, and they have sense, they will do that.

And so giving birth to children, in Dagbon here, it's hard. And how I have talked it, it is a full talk. And it's good when you have a full talk and you separate it. And truly, when I was talking the talks, I was separating them. And as I talk and show you all this, it's good. And what I've talked is also something that is going forward, and so tomorrow is also medicine. If God agrees, tomorrow I will continue the talk of how a child is given birth and comes to stay with its parents, and I will talk about some of the differences in some of the children we give birth to in Dagbon here, and the suffering the parents will face in holding such children.