

Najamba (aka Bondu) texts 2005-1 and 2005-2
 recorded in 2005 in Adia village
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text 2005-1a.01

X: Some people have come to us, let's receive (= welcome) them. It's to Adia [focus] that they have come. It was we [focus] who were here. We are sitting and speaking at the place of the schoolhouse of Adia. Ah, they have come to us, (however) as for us, the thing that we know is small, but they have asked us to speak some words to them. The words that they asked (us) to speak, whether the country (territory) has become sweet (= good) for us (or) the country has been ruined (= become bad) for us.

The talk of an elder does not exist (= is disregarded), if it's after a child's (= young person's) talk nowadays.¹ If they tell (= ask) an elder to speak, he will speak the talk (= words), (but) his talk won't be accepted. (If) a child speaks, where he goes (with it) too, it's a small (= limited) talk.

Something good has come (= happened) to us (younger people), (while) something not good has come to an elder. May God give us peace. Let's do our best (to get by). Let's do our best in the studying. One who does not study (= go to school), the thing that he knows is small.

Nowadays each elder, one has acted as though (= considers that) he doesn't know anything. One who has not studied, what he knows is little. That's why one has acted as though the elders don't know (anything). (But) an elder who knows something, there is not (anyone) like him.

A young child, however (much) he has studied, he hasn't seen what the elder has seen, he can't speak what the elder speaks.

But, schooling nowadays in the country is abundant. The talk of an elder, it isn't (real) talk (in the view of young people), each child nowadays among us, we (just) go around. Let's do our best. We and our elders, let's do our best. Let's protect (= take care of) the elders.

From when Adia came and settled in the past ("yesterday") until today, Najamba (community) has left (= ceased to practice) what it was in the past, what we (= young people) used to hear about.

When Najamba (people) sat down (for a meeting) at a shed (palaver house), they say (= it is said) that they used to speak the truth at the shed. The truth, as for us nowadays, we don't see (it). They say (= it is said), child's talking didn't go in (= wasn't taken seriously). Nowadays child's talking, that [focus] is what exists.

¹ The point is that in a rapidly modernizing world, young people don't pay much attention to the words of elders.

When a child has said some talk (= words), if it happens that the child's talking is followed (= accepted), he (= child) too, how (then) will the talking stop (= end up)? There is nothing that he knows, there is nothing that he has seen. Asking someone to speak who does not know (anything). If one asks a blind man to lead someone (by the arm), he doesn't go.

If that has happened, if we have done our best (to get by), like (the way) we were in the past, let's remain like that. If they have called the families to the ancient palaver shed, the people (= men) of the families, the notable people (= men), talk for (= in the name of) God, speaking (that) talk was rightful (practice).

In the past we found (it) like that. Najamba (people) came (first) to Djoni. It was an (extended) family [focus] that they made. Each person (= man) went and settled (to found) a family. Even today, we have not gone out of (= ceased) going away (to find work). We are (still) there (= doing that).

At Adia, it was a family [focus] that we made. Every word that is spoken, an elder [focus] ought to speak (it). Today, we children (= young people), it's we [focus] who sit and speak the words.

We will instruct an elder to speak. If he too speaks some words, (maybe) it will not stand (= be acceptable). If we too speak, if it doesn't stand (= isn't accepted), let's make it so that it stands (= is accepted) like that.

That [focus] is what will go in front the most (= is best). That same thing is best in the rear too. Something that is not good, yes, (something) that does not go— (something) that does not go in front, a bad thing, if you-Sg put it in front, it won't be good in front, and it won't be good in the rear.

So if it happens like that there, the good (thing), (the one) that goes forward, that good thing, let's follow that. If we follow that, that [focus] is what will be best for us. If we follow that, that [focus] is what is best behind us (and that [focus] is what is best in front of us.

Hey, So-and-so, you-Sg must do the work.² If you-Sg have done the work, it is good to listen to (it) in the ear(s). If you-Sg have done the work, it is good to look at.

So-and-so, you-Sg have done what you found (= learned from elders). If it bothered you-Sg, you didn't find anything good. If you have found something good, if you say that you have found something and done (it), if the one who has spoken is not more pleased, you-Sg (= a listener) will not be (any) more pleased (than him).³ In (= among) you-Pl, who is more (pleased), it's a (subject for) debate.

All right, it has come (back) to that today. (As for) marriages, if in the past we went and got wood for (prospective) in-laws, if we went and got wood for the family, the families looked at each other (= had a discussion), (and) they said (= it was said) that they used to do the work.⁴

Today, there is no going and getting wood in (= among) families, each person has become his own person (= works for himself). There is no going and getting wood in (= among) families.

² Lit. "work the work."

³ Implies that both you and the interlocutor are pleased with what you have done.

⁴ Small but carefully bound bundles of firewood were offered by a male suitor (and his friends) to the parents of a girl he hoped to marry.

The father used to give instructions, (now) there is no instruction-giving father. If the father does not give instructions in a proper (valid) way, the one who gives (instructions), he alone, he too has given instructions to himself. How can that turn out well?

He doesn't know where to go, he doesn't know where to come. But if he has looked, God— if we get by, may God give us a good mind.

What we found (= inherited), what we said, and what we heard formerly in the family, let us not leave (= abandon) following it! Any person who follows that (path) like that, he certainly does not slide in the road.

In the past, the talk of an elder was followed (= obeyed). Whether you-Pl were two men, (or) whether you-Pl were three men, even the way you-Pl are now (= numerous), close cousins, even if there are (several) people, a single person (= you), when we the family have sat down, (to discuss:) how (= what) will you-Pl do now? (you'll say:) (as for) us, let's do like this.

Now (suppose) we are four people, (or) five people. People will go out (from their individual homes), and move over and go into the house (saying): So-and-So, I need you-Sg. I need you-Sg (another addressee). You-Pl have left the other people and have gone into the house. What you have gone out and said isn't known.

If furthermore you-Pl have no (mutual) understanding among you agemates, (you) know, as for you people—, as for the (other) people, they are unaware (of it). If you-Pl have gone out saying good words, the people are unaware, (and) likewise if you have gone out saying bad ones (= words), the people for their part are unaware.

Thus, among the crowd, even if it's (something) good that you-Pl speak among the crowd, one (= some) person will reject it, (saying) it's not good words. If that happens, let's do our best. May God have us experience (something) good.

Hey, let's do our best. One who does his best [focus] is the one who gets (something), whether in (= by) schooling, or in another work (= activity).

Today some people have come here, now, they ask us questions of (= about) a lot of trees.⁵ They have asked us questions of (= about) wild animals. (About) our millet farming, they have asked us questions of worms.⁶ They have asked us questions of beetles. They have asked us questions of herbs (plants). They have asked us questions of trees.

There are (e.g. species) in our country anyway, we don't know (some), we do know (some). The fact that we do not know (some), what made (= caused) that? The lack of schooling (= writing) [focus] made that.

If there had been schooling, if in the past you had found (it) in writing(s), if you saw (it) and didn't know it, (and) you didn't know (its) name, that wouldn't have happened.

Nowadays, if we see (it), we don't know (= recognize) it, (and) we don't know its name either. What has made (= caused) that? Lack of education, that [focus] is what made it.

⁵ The linguist and his assistants had collected names of plants.

⁶ I.e. larvae that infest millet crops.

Because (among) all things, there is no thing that does not have a name. (Even if) I don't know it, (the possibility) that the thing does not have a name, that (lacking a name) doesn't happen (= is impossible).

If we do our best, let's supervise (watch over) the children (going to) school. Let's supervise the teacher and the pupil. Someone who accepts the supervision, someone to whom God has given the (correct) path, (then) he has gotten the (correct) path.

On the other hand, (someone) to whom He (= God) has not given (= shown) the path, it doesn't matter if he been educated, it doesn't matter if he hasn't been educated. If God hasn't given the path to the fellow, those words, as for the place (= situation), in this (situation) this (fellow) has no power.

If that happens (= is so), yes now, the trees that they have asked us (about), and the beetles that they have asked us (about), and the wild animals that they have asked us (about), and the plants that they asked us (about), it (= questioning) began (= has been going on) since yesterday, today that questioning [focus] is what we are (still) in.

Even today we went into the bush (outback) and walked around now,⁷ and we have come back. (Of) the trees, they didn't tell us (that) this (i.e. disease) [focus] is what it (tree) treats, not did they tell us (that) this [focus] is what a person makes (from it).

But when they (i.e. whites) themselves have gotten (knowledge), when they get the (esoteric) knowledge to make (e.g. medicines), if they inform us, we want (that).

That which makes (= helps) a person, and that which ruins a person, if we have gotten that, us--. we want that too.

Having done our best, let's ask. If you-Pl know them (= whites), may they not neglect (= delay) to tell us (the information)!

The way the person (= linguist) got up (= came from) as far away as there (= overseas) solely in order to look for things, the knowledge has come here, there is something useful.

The reason (= objective) that has brought him, we don't know (but) he knows. The reason that has brought him, may he give (= explain) it to us, (then) it will please us (= we will be happy), it will make (= help) us. A person whom it has encountered in good health, it makes the person well. May God put us in what is good.

⁷ Showing plants and collecting specimens.

If that has happened, what I said earlier about marriage, if there are two or three men in a family, each one will not be given his own (separate) right to speak (= authority). In the family, (as for) you-Pl, the way we found (= inherited) it, you-Pl will have a discussion among yourselves, (and decide): “So-and-So, it’s your-Sg right to speak.”⁸

The responsibility, if it is what is (in) your heart, you will speak of what is in your heart, (then) the (other) person is given the responsibility. If you have given the responsibility of what is not in your heart to a person, you’ll say that you have found (it) in the family, (but) you didn’t find (it) in the family. That which you have truly put in your heart, you didn’t find (it) in the family.

“The solution, how (= what) will we do? Let’s do thus!” That (custom) [focus] is what we found in the family. But what this (person) has in the heart, it isn’t what used to be found in the family. You are here, (but) what you have in your heart is somewhere else. You are here, (but) what you have in your mind is with another person.

If that has happened, if we have found (it) in the family, you-Pl, which (= what) is in your-Pl heart? As for us in the family, this [focus] is in our heart. Hey, each person, if this [focus] is (in) his heart, what will make this well? This [focus] will make (it) well. Let’s follow (= adopt) what is well-made (= good).

“Well, So-and-So, it’s your responsibility.” At that point, he for his part has gotten (= assumed) the responsibility. Even if someone (else) comes to him in the middle of the night, he does not fail to speak.⁹ If he (= the other person) comes to him at mid-day, he does not lose (his ability) to speak. He can go somewhere else, if it (= issue) arises, he will stand up (and deal with it).

If on the other hand he looks (= evaluates) and if it isn’t going on the (right) path, (he says:) “I’ll come back, I have heard (what you said). I will see (= deliberate with) my people (= kin).” The person who has come to him can say (that) he too will see his (own) people.¹⁰

If you tell someone that you will see your (own) people, if in speaking you say “okay,” (you) say: yes, you are seeking an idea (= deliberating). When you have said that you will see your (own) people, you seek an idea (= deliberate). Because (saying) “before you see your people, tell me (your answer)!” does not exist.

(He) says: “all right, it is (= will be) seeking an idea.” Seeking an idea (= deliberating) is very much (about having) a colleague. Your person, when you have looked for your colleague, and you have seen (= found) him, (and) when you are going to think (it) over by yourself, if you have stopped in speaking, if the person has brought you (a case), if you have not gotten an understanding of the words, if you (then) say that you will see your person (= kinsman, for further discussion), he (= the one presenting his case) will get up and go away.

⁸ I.e. as head of the household.

⁹ He (the person who carries responsibility for the household) is not at a loss for words when a case is presented to him.

¹⁰ Lit. “he too will see my people.” Logophoric use of 1Sg.

You have reflected by yourself and you say (= think): “As for (what) So-and-So has brought to you, if it’s true (valid), as for that, the place (situation) has unsettled me. Is this done well (= good) for me now, or is it not done well?”

When your heart has made the judgement, (or rather) if your heart hasn’t given you the judgement, you can ask someone. Let it happen that it is your close cousin and you, let it happen that it is your father and you, or let it happen that it is your child and you, (or) even it is your wife and you.

If you-Pl have asked each other, if you have acquired an understanding (of the case), (with) the understanding that you have acquired, when the person (who brought the case) comes back later, you won’t fail to speak.

“So-and-So, he has (achieved) a sound judgement.” He has been given sound judgement. There is no one person who has sound judgement (by himself), except one who follows the good (thing), he is the one who has sound judgement.

(If) you speak and give to the person (something) that is not in your heart, the person will go taking that with him. If he for his part has gone taking that with him, (if) you have spoken that which is not in your heart, he knows that, then he goes away taking that. The day when he turns around and comes back, he won’t find it (= solution) with you (= in your presence) now.

How does it stop? It stops (= ends) with nonhumanness (not being considered a normal person). It (= nonhumanness) definitely used to not be found in the family. The fellow has his by himself (independently of the family). (As for) the thing that they used to find in the family, justice¹¹ [focus] is what we found.

A person, even if he follows the words of his child (= son), the responsibility (= authority) is his. Even if it happens that he follows the words of his wife, the responsibility is his.

The person who will leave (somewhere) to come (here), the person of the family, the person who will come, it’s him (= man with responsibility) [focus] that he will come and find and observe.

“What has happened to you?” “This has happened to me; as for me now, this [focus] is your matter that has brought me to you.” “All right, if this [focus] is the matter that has brought you to me, as for that (matter), let’s do thus! Let’s remove (the problem) thus! It is proper in this. That [focus] is what we will follow (= adopt).”

Many jobs (= projects) come to us nowadays. The elders say “hey! (= watch out!)” The “hey!” doesn’t enter into our ears, be it in (= regarding) marriage, be it in name-giving (*baptême*). Many jobs, it (= work) has indeed come in to us nowadays (= May God catch (= protect) us because of (= from) them (= jobs, i.e. from too much work).

Earnings have become few for us. Expenses (e.g. for rituals) are abundant for us. If we have few earnings, and (if) expenses are abundant, where will we stay (= where will that leave us)? A place to stay (= live in) is difficult (to get).

¹¹ Lit. “being straight.”

It doesn't happen (= is impossible) that every person have (wealth), (or) that the place (= height) that a tall person has reached, (that) a short (person) reach it.

Y: It isn't done well (= good).

Z: Will he (= short person) be wrung (= stretched),¹² or is it the counterpart (= tall person) [focus] who will bend? If he bends, the counterpart (= tall person) will suffer. If they pull this one (= short person) and make him reach there (= that height), he too will suffer.

The suffering, where (= how) was it lifted? That the people all try to be equal, that [focus] is what has brought the suffering. For all the people to be equal doesn't close (= is impossible). In the past there was none (of that).

Those (people) who didn't reach (= equal) each other in the past, even today (= nowadays) they don't reach each other. Even if one person (= mother) gave birth to you-Pl from one (= the same) belly, (as for) persons who are better than each other (= unequal in wealth), God has put them one above the other.

If they say (= talk about) a wedding here, (let's say) you-Sg have been looking for a woman. You get the woman (= fiancée), you go to gather (a bundle of) firewood, you bring (the firewood) into the family (= household of the in-laws), now as for you, you have delivered every promised offering.

When they tell you: "So-and-so, hey, go gather (a bundle of) firewood!" and you have gathered (the) firewood, you have delivered the promised offering. If you go after a person (= prospective parent-in-law) for a field,¹³ when you have brought (a bundle of) firewood of (= for) the field, if he says "I have given (it) to you," as for you, you have delivered the promised offering.

"So-and-so, how (was it) there yesterday?" (reply:) "Yes, he got (the field)." As for you, you have got a place (= position) to catch (of the bride). "Today, go gather (a bundle of) firewood!" The father of a child cannot say (that). "Go gather (a bundle of) firewood!" A child's—, a girl's father cannot say (that), (and) a boy's father cannot say (that).

What has made (= caused) that? Every person, the listening to someone else [focus] is what made it.

[pause]

Y: That and traveling (for work).¹⁴

X: Nowadays, traveling (for work), it has entered (= started to happen with) women. And with men, but we for our part found that (= that was traditional). However, the traveling of the women (for work), it has begun nowadays. It's definitely a new (type of) work.

¹² I.e., like the intestine of a butchered animal that is squeezed (and stretched) with a pulling motion, to remove its contents.

¹³ The groom-to-be (fiancé) traditionally brought a bundle of firewood to his prospective parents-in-law at intervals of one year or longer to renew his vows. In exchange, the prospective in-laws gave the future son-in-law the use of a portion of their field on which to grow crops for himself.

¹⁴ Lit. "run-exit-VblN." Refers to the common practice of leaving the village to travel to a distant city or country to seek one's fortune (local French *en exode*). May be seasonal (between agricultural seasons) or for years at a time.

Name-giving(s).¹⁵ Nowadays this work (= activity) too, we always found (= inherited) name-giving(s). I myself, the wherewithal (= expenses) of name-givings, nowadays in (= among) us there is nobody who knows. But many jobs, (modern jobs) that are carried out here, we ourselves (don't want) the wherewithall (= expense). If that happens, if we do our best, may God give us good thoughts.

If (mutual) understanding comes in (= is established), (as for) (mutual) understanding, even if a hard thing (= crisis) comes to you-Sg, between you-Sg and your neighbor, if you-Pl are in a state of mutual understanding, you will not suffer. Because if you-Sg take one side (of a load), (and) he takes one (= the other) side, any time you-Pl meet each other, if you-Pl help (= work together), it will rise (= be lifted).

You, yours is for you. Me, mine is for me. It's yours, (if) it happens that you (will) carry it alone (by yourself), if it (= load) is a lot, it will be spilled for you.¹⁶ If it falls, for whom has it fallen? The falling has happened for both of you-Pl.

As for you, you will say "it's So-and-so." The people for their part will say, "it's you-Pl." If the people say, "it's you," the falling then, (it's) for each of you.

As for (what happened) in the past, in name-giving (ceremonies), it used to be kola nuts.¹⁷ If you had a (livestock) animal, an animal used to be slaughtered. We ourselves, we found (= inherited) that (= practice of slaughtering). For its part, that (= slaughtering) didn't use to happen (before Islam). That came because of God and (Islamic) religion. But it (= life) wasn't as hard as nowadays.

If you slaughtered the animal, you had kola nuts, you gave (them) to the imam, the imam— when the Muslims had gathered and performed the blessing, when they distributed and chewed the kola nuts, everyone got up and dispersed (= went home), he followed (= did) his work. That [focus] is how it was.

Nowadays, it has come in that way. The kola nuts, one year, when it (= kola) had become hard (to get) here, he (= imam) said they could perform name-givings with dates too, (whereupon) the dates came in (= were included), they came in while we observed (= in our memory).¹⁸ As for us, the kola nuts [focus] are what we found (= inherited).

After they (= kola) came in (= were combined with) dates, kola nuts for their part became cheap again. Now there are kola nuts, (and) there are dates. While we observed (= in our memory), as it (= situation) remained in that, they began to cook meals, they began to make coffee.

The elders said "let's abandon (making meals and coffee)!" They said, "it has become (too) big." They prohibited ("caused to abandon") it. A person— (thinking) "I will eat" is pleasing. When the load comes on you (= on your head), (even) if it is difficult (for you), if someone (else) has done it, if you will eat (at his expense), it's pleasant for you. Everyone has followed (= done) that.

¹⁵ Public naming ceremony (*baptême*) one week after a birth.

¹⁶ Ethical dative (person affected).

¹⁷ Kola nuts are given to villagers who assemble for a child's naming ceremony.

¹⁸ i.e., we witnessed the first use of dates.

Nowadays, a wedding (= marrying women) and a child's name-giving, (now that) both have come and become equal (in cost), which (of them) is bigger (= more expensive) is a (subject for) debate.

If a woman (= your wife) has given birth, the word will be sent to all of your kin group, it (= your kin) will come. If on the other hand you don't send (the word), it (= your kin) will denounce you. That didn't happen in the past.

If they say that a woman has given birth, (one will ask) has she come out all right? (another will say) she has come out all right,¹⁹ praise the Lord, God has put (it) in the (woman's) hand, may God raise it with a blessing! Amen! May God raise it in front of us!

The words have stopped (= that's all there is to say). But: "So-and-so has given birth." "When did she give birth?" "When is the name-giving?" "We haven't heard her messege (= invitation)." The day of the name-giving, when you-Sg get up in the morning, ...

Y: ... the entire kinship group will be told.

X: ... you will pass by (from house to house) and tell the entire kinship group. You'll go gather firewood, you'll get up and go, in the case of (= if you are) a man. A woman too will get up and go, in mid-day or in the afternoon. As for (the case that) someone goes to a name-giving in the afternoon, he isn't (really) going to the name-giving (ceremony),²⁰ rather food [focus] is what takes (= attracts) him (there).

If it's (for) the name-giving (ceremony), you will go in the early morning. We'll go to the house and sit (there) all day, we'll eat meals, we'll drink coffee, hey, the various little things that they make have no limit (= are innumerable).

Everyone, welcoming something (like) a large crowd, the food of (= for) a single day, what you used to eat in two or three months, they'll eat in one day. One person is not capable of that. He goes into (= sought) a debt, or he goes and does something else and brings (it).

When we have eaten them (= meals): "may God protect (the child) for us!" All right, if you think about the trouble (= expenses), it's difficult (= expensive) for you. In a name-giving, the honor of "you ("I") go to us (= crowd) with (our) blessing of the name-giving" is pleasing to you.

That now, how (= what) shall we do? What will we do²¹ and (= in order to) go out (with) our heads (= survive)? What will we do so that it improves for us? May God give us that peace (= welfare).

All right, in the past if you got a woman (= wife), the woman--, when you (= man) gathered firewood, when they told the (groom's) group of comrades the woman—, the day (= wedding day), when they did the wedding ceremony,²² it used to come (= happen) like that.

¹⁹ Lit. "she got her head (=herself)." Indicates that the birth went well (baby and mother alive and well).

²⁰ The ceremony itself is held in the morning.

²¹ Lit. "if we do how, ..."

²² The initial ceremony at the home of the bride's father, before the bride is moved to the groom's house.

Nowadays, when they pronounce (“take”) the name of wedding ceremony, (it’s for) seven days. Since “the wedding ceremony, it’s tomorrow, or it’s the day after tomorrow,”²³ the people come, they begin to assemble, until it takes (= wedding begins). Before she goes out (of the house) with greetings (ending a week of seclusion), there (= husband’s house) the people go in and go out.

Nowadays, it’s a large crowd. The people who are in one village nowadays, even three or four villages of the past combined didn’t go out (= equal) (anything) like that. They have more stimulants than in the past.

That woman (I was talking about), when you marry her, whether the woman has emerged from seclusion (after the marriage) or hasn’t emerged, if she runs away, (it’s) poof! She doesn’t go to her father’s house, she goes running to another area (region).

Your foot doesn’t (= can’t) go and arrive there, (and) your money doesn’t take (= deliver) you there. When will (you and your wife) you-Pl encounter each other?

Y: The wealth (= brideprice and gifts) has been wasted.

X: The wealth has been wasted, (and) what was (expected) to be gained didn’t happen.

The father (of the bride) for his part, he says (= considers) that he has done the work of his honor.²⁴ (The other side says:) “(the work of) honor has definitely not been done.” They didn’t tell you (= husband) to make (her) good (as a wife). He (= husband) knows that he can’t make (her) good by himself either. In that (situation), how shall we stand (= what shall we do)? May God give us that strength.

Because if it rains all over in the land, one person is pleased; he doesn’t (=cannot) remove (= change) that. One (other) person is unhappy. It’s that, yes, he doesn’t remove (= change) that.

If God gives us peace (= welfare), God, if it (= a problem) comes to any person, may he be able to support it, may God help him find (a way).

Beyond (= other than) the blessings, these things that come now, hey, it doesn’t please me, they won’t do it. Whether it’s in my house, or in my village, they won’t do that thing. Nowadays, even if an elder has spoken, it doesn’t stand (= hold).

Even if young people are not pleased, they (= young people) will say “the elder (decides).” The elder will begin. It’s the truth, (but) it doesn’t go (isn’t accepted). The thing²⁵ has come to the (whole) land. That [focus] is how it is. All right, (in) that too, may God give us peace. Nowadays, one thing after another, every thing that has come, let’s do our best in (= with) the blessing.

Beyond (= other than) the blessing,²⁶ (it’s) the blessing and your work. It’s the blessing and your work. Beyond (= other than) that, I don’t know another thing, any (other) thing that will get us out nowadays.

²³ I.e. visitors arrive one or two days before the bǎngàl ceremony (and may remain throughout the wedding week).

²⁴ I.e. he has fulfilled his obligations.

²⁵ Lit. “owner,” here as a reference-tracking device.

²⁶ Lit. “behind [if it’s blessing].”

(If) you too have spoken words with your comrade, don't think that it stands (= holds). (If) you too have spoken words with your wife, don't think that it will stand (= hold).

If God has provided you-Sg with your own health, (and) if you-Sg have followed (= observed) your blessing and your work, (and) if it happens that your-Sg comrade has followed (= supported) you in that, (then) your-Pl work is one (= the same). If your-Sg comrade has not followed you in that, (then) he too will have taken his (own) path.

Having assembled, (collective) work too, these days, now, it has become difficult indeed, for us. As for (in) the past, work in the house, if a woman did the work, it belonged to the man. If a man did the work, it belonged to the man. If a child did the work, it belonged to the man. One single person (= man) used to be in charge of all those (things).

Nowadays, each person, what(-ever) he has worked (= made) by himself, what(-ever) has been found in the house, we appropriate (for ourselves). Yes, never mind bringing and adding something else. In the place where (things) are appropriated, (any-)one who has not gotten (something) to appropriate for himself, he for his part, how will he stop (= end up)? As for him, he has remained (= been left) outside.

It isn't (possible) that everyone gets and takes for himself. Because good luck (= fortune), the fortunes of (children, even of) the same mother and the same father are not the same.

Some people, whatever he (a person) has done, God has made it for him. Some (other) people, even though he has done good (things), what he does wrong (= wastes) and what he does well is equal parts.

But if you-Pl the community are together, for the sake of all of you, (as for) his (action), he too won't know (= realize) what is ruined. He will do the right thing for him and go.

But careful! If we do our best in the family, let's stop (= end up) in (something) like the position that one ought to (be in). From (the issue) concerning marriage, to (the issue) concerning (co-) existence. If we stand on (= practice) the work that one ought (to do), may God have us go straight to what is right. May God have us go straight to what is done well also.

In the past, in the rainy-season farming, the work that used to be done, we did (them). The activities²⁷ that they used to do, we have abandoned (them).²⁸ (As for) the abandonment, it was on (account of) the animist idols that we abandoned (them), and (on account of) unlocking of mouths (= disputes) [focus] that they were abandoned.

How (is that)? We don't know. Because in the village, as for (in) the past, yes, what one was supposed to do behind (= at the edge of) the village, it used to be done (thus), (and) what one was supposed to do inside the village, it used to be done at the open space.²⁹

²⁷ I.e. ritual practices.

²⁸ lit. "abandon and pour (out)."

²⁹ An open space inside or at the edge of a village used for ceremonies.

Likewise, nowadays— Likewise, (in the past) what each person was supposed to do in his home, it used to be done, (but) nowadays all those (things) have been abandoned. The reason (= motive) for which those (things) were abandoned, what made (= caused) it?

One cannot say that one doesn't have (possessions). Because the work that you perform within your own capabilities, if you are equal to it (= work), it will be equal (= appropriate) for you. May God give us that wisdom.

In the past too, sacrifices, things that we used to have [focus], it was idols (= fetishes). Anything that you have decided to be a bad thing, (the opinion) that it is a bad thing has stood (= become firm). (Conversely,) if you happen to think that it is good, (the opinion) that it is good will definitely stand (= be firm) for you. May God put us in (= lead us to) the good.

If we do our best (with) the standing of the family, let's do our best. In the past, in the rainy-season work, having performed the good work that each person found with (= learned from) his father, (we thought) let's do our best with that blessing to gain (= produce) (something).

Let's do our best with that. If this (= a given) rainy season [focus] is deficient (in rain) for us, (then) all the plans (= hopes) are finished for us. A man can't listen to the words of a woman, a woman can't listen to the words of a man. A child and his father have no words (that matter).

Suppose that it (= accusation) has come that you-Sg don't work (in the fields). A field that you all used to farm in the past, when you have completed the farming, if (the accusation) that you don't work has come, (then) God hasn't had us go straight to what is good. The gain (= production) [focus] has become small.

(For) every field that you-Pl worked in the past, we-Pl completed the farming, but basically nothing was gained. Where (= how) did it arise, (that) you-Pl did the work?

Now, after you had gotten up here, if you went down to Douentza, on every side, in certain places if a person came, he didn't surprisingly catch hold of you (you wouldn't know he was there); in certain (other) places you didn't (= couldn't) see (the person),³⁰ if the twilight was dense (= dark).

Today, for a person (= you) to lie low (discreetly unseen) in this (= such-and-such a) spot so as to squat and urinate, you will get up from here (= the village) (and go) all the way to Douentza, there is no such spot.³¹ They have made it entirely into fields.

Furthermore, where a hand doesn't reach (= where one cannot farm) in the bush, there are no (remaining) good spots (for) a field there in this (area), in this bush (= outback). There is no (good) place where we have not (already) planted a field. But in all those (fields), it didn't do us much good.³² How has it happened that it didn't do us much good in all those (fields)?

We say that rainfall [focus] is what is absent. In the past too, there used to be times when the rainfall was absent. Nowadays, it's what? We the population ("crowd") have definitely increased ("become many"). The population, thank God, we the population have increased.

³⁰ i.e. because there used to be tall vegetation on the track from Adia to Douentza.

³¹ There is no longer any tall vegetation to allow one to urinate in private.

³² Lit. "it didn't reach us."

Even now, may He (= God) add further to (our numbers) rapidly. If we do our best in a good plan (for life), let's follow the good plan. May God have us go straight into that.

(In) every job that you do, learn your work and do (it). If you don't perform your work after first learning it,³³ (then as for) the work, to see its profit (= recognize its importance) is difficult.

At your place, if you are (so) destined, you will not see a profit of (= from) it. But you learn and perform (the work). Because, if it has reached here, if you know its boundaries, when you arrive there, **xxxx**.

After you have seen the boundary, you have (nonetheless) worked until you have piled up some more on top (exceeding the boundary), and you have done badly.³⁴ <...> That is ruined. You have worked, (but) you have done badly.

The amount of a thing, if it goes past the (normal) quantity, if it fills up now, it will overflow. What (liquid) is spilled, will it not be ruined (wasted)? Among us, some jobs, nowadays it goes like that.

If we can't manage to begin (at the place) where one should begin, if we begin by going past where we should (be), we will work and pile up (jobs) on top nowadays too. We won't leave (= stop) (at the place) where one should leave, rather we too have gone beyond (the boundary).

We have done the work, (but) it has been a waste. May God make us begin where one should (begin), (and) may God make us leave (= stop) where one should leave.

If you go to the pond to draw water with a water jar, upon seeing the water, you will draw the water and put it into the jar. The jar doesn't take (= hold) more than (the capacity of) its interior. As for what you have brought (= jar), it doesn't take more than its interior.

(If) you keep putting (water) in, if you don't leave (= stop) when you see that it is full, (then) everything (= all the water) you have put in will then spill back out.

Y: It will spill. There is no benefit.

X: Is there any benefit?

Y: There is none.

X: Weariness [focus] is what you have. May God not make us do that. Everything that we will do, if we do our best, if we learn (the work), let's do it! We should learn. If we learn before we go into the work, if the learning has proceeded forward, if you have gone into work (after learning), (then) it will be good for you.

May God have us go straight to what is good. May God have us go straight to what is good. Let's do our best.

³³ Lit. "[knowing the work] if you don't do it." The negation is expressed morphologically on the final inflected verb but has logical scope over the 'know' clause.

³⁴ Lit. "ruin(-ed) and poured out."

(As for) the rainy season, in the past, the old people said, (hey) you, if the fruit of Sclerocarya tree [focus] has appeared, hey you, don't be afraid to put (= plant) the (millet) seeds in the ground! The fruit of Sclerocarya tree, if you have seen its unripe red form, don't be afraid to put the (millet) seeds in the ground!

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Within three days, hey you, don't fail to go to your field! They (= old people) said: (within) three days, (if) you go to your field, even if you do not work (= plant the seeds), because your feet have gone into your field, the benefit (= blessing) will go into it.

Your fellow (if he has done this within three days), in the rainy season, even if the patch of field is no good, (in spite of) the rainy season being no good, it shouldn't cause your spirits to be ruined.

Every single thing, every thing wants (= needs) its owner. A livestock animal wants its owner. An animal too—, An owner too wants (= needs) an animal. A field wants (= needs) its owner. The field, an owner too wants (= needs) the field. The two (mutual) needs, it's they [focus] that meet (to do) the work. It comes to a good result.

If you have heard that So-and-So doesn't like me, the benefit [focus] is small. You could benefit (= help him), (but) you didn't benefit (help him). You won't have (the situation that) he loves³⁵ you.

Y: Your father bore (= sired) you and raised you, (but) he doesn't love you (now).

X: If you say (= realize) that he doesn't love you, if you say that your father who bore (= sired) you doesn't love you, it's his benefit— (or rather) yours [focus] that hasn't been gotten.

Y: It's the good result [focus] that is small.

X: Because what is it? Since (you were) in the blood, since (you were) in the flesh (of your mother). If they take out the person (= baby) for its part at birth, it is definitely flesh.

Having given you food and drink, having given you food and drink, having let (you) urinate and defecate on the mother, until (you) having been raised (= nourished), having become your own person, (for you to then say) "I don't want to benefit (= help) him or her (= parents)," rather you want to benefit another person.

Y: Your-Sg shoes and his shoes are not (= cannot be) separated.

X: Your-Sg shoes, yes, and your old man's (= father's) shoes are not separated. If people look at³⁶ you-Pl over there at a distance, (they say) "there the people (e.g. you and your father) are!" This person (= one or the other of you) from among them (= you and your father) cannot be separated (= distinguished) as being older (than the other).

³⁵ 'loves/likes/wants/needs' (very general term).

³⁶ lit. "look and send".

But after all that,³⁷ if there is not even a hole (= an iota) that he (= your father) has seen (= received) from you, he cannot love you.

Among (livestock) animals, if they have taken out a favorite animal,³⁸ the favorite animal will follow you, it will go into the house. It will follow you and go everywhere.

What made (= caused) that? Among the animals, it (= favorite animal) has benefited you the most. It has seen (= received) your benefit (= good treatment). For that reason, only it has followed you.

If you went in order to touch any other (livestock) animals, they kicked you and ran away, or if you came up next to them, they ran away. When you go, if it (= an animal) follows you, (it's because) it has seen your benefit (= good treatment) more (than others have).

But though you have all of them (as) your animals, although you have all of them (as) your animals, this one (= the favorite) will follow you (and) this (such-and-such other) one does not follow you. What made (caused) that? It's good treatment.

Y: It's good treatment (and) blessedness

Z: Good treatment (and) blessedness [focus] is what made that. Any thing whose blessedness you have eaten,³⁹ that blessedness will follow the fellow. If the fellow did not eat (= receive) blessedness at your place, he will not follow you.

Hah, the fields, the animals, we and our elders, that [focus] is how it is for us too. If we do our best, how (= what) will we do?

“Good morning, So-and-so.” When you get up in the morning, (you say): “Good morning, So-and-so.” “And hello to you!” “Did you spend the night (well)?” “(Yes) I spent the night (well).”

And when you have spent the afternoon-- Ah, when you have eaten the evening meal, having spent the afternoon, (you say:) “Good evening, So-and-so!” (And) hello to you!” “Did you spend the afternoon (well)?” “(Yes) I spent the afternoon (well).” “Well, may we spend the night in peace!” “All right, may God have us spend the night well.”

It is (giving) a blessing. It's (giving) a blessing among your close kin. In the morning too, you say good morning to him: “So-and-so, good morning!” “(And) hello to you!” “Did you spend the night (well)?” “(Yes) I spent the night (well).”

When you get up and go out, (an elder says) a blessing: “may God give a good day!” “Amen!” “Today, where will you-Pl go?” “Today we are going this way.”

“Well, come-2Pl (back) in peace! Go at first light (5 AM)! Work is in the morning. Without the early morning (work), there is no afternoon (work). There is no afternoon (work), rather the morning. But when you-Pl go, stand-2Pl (= act) like this, stand-2Pl like this!” “All right.”

³⁷ Lit. ‘in the share of all that’.

³⁸ Young herders often have a favorite sheep or goat of their own that they feed and treat well from birth.

³⁹ Possessor relative (as spoken here). However, one should perhaps emend to ‘anyone who eats blessedness at your place’, cf. the parallel negative clause just below.

When you-Pl have gotten up and said: if the people are next to (= with) each other, words (may) go across each other (without connecting), be it (between) a woman and a man, (or) be it two people with the same mother (= siblings), words (may) go across each other.

(Or) be it that he has heard (and) he has asked you-Pl, or be it that you-Pl came and one (of you) has spoken with him. One should follow what he has said.

All right, when you-Sg have gone out to the field, one or two (harsh words) going beyond beyond “let’s work in the field,” if you-Sg have seen that one or two (harsh words) have come, it’s the sorceror of (= thing that ruins) work. There is no sorceror of work.

One who gets into squabbles about “let’s work!”, in the field, going beyond “let’s work!”, one who gets into a new squabble, if they say that he is the sorceror of work in the field, it’s he [focus] who is the sorceror of work.

We are not capable (of doing it). As for us, we cannot do anything beyond that. If they say that it’s the sorceror or work, it’s he.

Y: He’s the sorceror of the family, indeed.

X: Let’s do (it). All right. Let him say “all right” to the man, (and) let him say “all right” to the woman. Do the things that you are capable of. When you are capable of it, if you don’t neglect, you-Pl will get the blessedness. If it’s little by little [focus] that you-Pl have spent all day until the evening doing farm work, you will get the blessedness.

This one (of two people) has been working and doing his utmost within his limitations, the other has slackened his hand (= has not worked hard). Isn’t “let’s work!” good? If they have worked, you like (it).

Who will work in order to give (the gain) to you? It’s yourself [focus] who will work in order to give to you. If you squabble with one who says “let’s work!”, how (is it)? Who doesn’t want to get? Who doesn’t want to give?

If you (offer to) give something to a person, there is nobody who does not accept (it). There is nobody who does not want to get. Where does getting and giving arise (= begin)? It arises in work.

It arises in work. At the place for work, you say that you don’t want that (work), (but) they say, “let’s work!” You have made a squabble of (= about) that. How will it remain (= develop)? You have ruined (it).⁴⁰

“All right.” If a big one (= older person) says, “let’s work!” (say:) “All right!” If a little one says: “Hey the big one, let’s work!” (say:) “All right!” If another person tells you, “Work!” (say:) “All right!” “Work and give (something) to him! Don’t work at my place! Work on your own! (If) you have worked, what is gained is here.

⁴⁰ Lit. “ruin and pour (out).”

Today, throughout the land, man and woman, small and big (= young and old), all of us, we went out and ran to the bush (= fields). Each person does his work. One who works (= produces) a little and one who works a lot, they all work.

What (we) gain is definitely there. It (= gain) is not gotten without working. One (lazy) person doesn't like it, (that) "let's go to work at the (normal) time!" A person (who says) "let's work!", there is nobody whom he (= lazy man) dislikes more.

It (= gain) is furthermore not gotten without working. How would one remain (= continue)? It's difficult to remain. May God give us peace. Well, any person (who says) "Let's do our best and work!", may every one do his best.

In (regard to) "let's work!" let's not squabble. If your younger sibling (= brother) tells you, "let's work!" say "all right!" If your older sibling tells you, "let's work!" say "all right!" You too, don't neglect (be forgetful of) "let's work!" We remind each other.

There is also no working and conversing (= no conversing during work). Without the early morning (work), there is no afternoon (work). You are going out to work, (but) you are (still) in the house, until the sun is well up (mid-morning). (For) lunch, yes, the women have gotten up (to draw) water two or three times, (while) perhaps you are (still) at home. The man is (still) at home.

When you have (finally) gone (to the field), before you've gotten (= finished shaping) a (single) mound of earth, lunch has come. All right, (someone) saying "he has not worked," you-Sg will squabble with her (= wife).

(Various people will say:) "we don't help her gather firewood." "You didn't help her draw water." "All that, that work, it's piled-up (= extra) work on her."

Nowadays, when the rainy season comes down (= begins), when weariness (= suffering) has beset the women, may God give us peace. The (women) who go running to their (personal) fields, that [focus] is (their) rest.

As for us (= men), even if (just) a little, when we sit down and pray, we rest. As for them (= women), even when they drink cream of millet (as a quick snack), they have no chance to sit down.

They (= women) come and in some cases (it isn't clear) whether she (= a woman) drinks standing up, or whether they (= women) squat and drink. Either they sit down and drink, or they drink standing up. In all that, there is nothing that can be recognized.⁴¹

We have leaned over and gone (along) and made (merely) two small mounds (in the field), when they (= women) have come. It is (=was) a squabble. Our hearts (= we) got angry.

⁴¹ I.e. they drink the cream of millet so quickly, it's difficult to see whether they have sat down.

Squabbling is easy (= common) with one who is weary. Squabbling also, if you-Sg will squabble about “let’s work!”, if you-Sg have squabbled in a normal (= ordinary) way, (then) you-Pl will find the (common) path.

If you don’t squabble in a normal (= ordinary) way, ...

Y: If you haven’t hit yourself (first), you can’t handle (another) person.

Z: Yes.

Y: The Dogon said, when a person is satisfied (= well-fed), he will whip himself (first) and then whip someone (else).⁴²

Z: Yes, (then) he will whip someone (else). You haven’t done that. You see how you are, (but you say that) the (other) person hasn’t done (e.g. work). “Now I have sat down, I don’t have time.”

If you haven’t squabbled with him, if you have squabbled with him in a normal way while you are working, the (other) fellow is not allowed to squabble. If we do our best, let’s do our best to look (for) the (proper) path. May God give us that also.

There is nothing in the world that equals rainy-season farming. It is in front ⁴³(= best) indeed. There is no (other) work that is in front of (= better than) rainy-season farming.

If you are in the bush (= fields), rainy-season farming is in front indeed. If you are at home (= in the village) too, rainy-season farming is in front indeed.

But (there are) three types of work in the world, three types of work. The three types of work, they always go in front. They always go in front. The three types of work, which ones are they? Farming, and commerce, and herding, these three, it’s them [focus] that we have found (= learned from elders).

Those three, if you put your effort into them one by one, you will do well.⁴⁴ But, farming is weariness (= tiring), herding is weariness, (and) yes, commerce is weariness. Commerce, commerce has elegance,⁴⁵ it has (some) rest, but it isn’t every person’s work.

But for all those (things), the mother (= source), it is knowledge. The mother of all of them is knowledge. If you will do farming, get knowledge (= learn)! If you will do herding, get knowledge! If you will do commerce, get knowledge!

If you have gotten knowledge, every work that you perform with that knowledge, your work will not slide (= go bad) quickly. Why is that? Rainy season (work), such-and-such a day, in such-and-such a place, such-and-such a time, (on) such-and-such a day, **the work that I have done** in this month; this work had turned out well for me.

If you have had a chance to write them (times and places), in the future⁴⁶ too it’s that day [focus] that will come. The rainy season does not abandon (= change) its time (of year).

⁴² Proverb. The point is that a well-off person should be generous to others.

⁴³ i.e. the most important thing, cf. *front and center*.

⁴⁴ lit. “your head will go past.”

⁴⁵ The word suggests a well-dressed, swaggering dandy.

⁴⁶ Lit. “tomorrow.”

If tomorrow's (= next year's) time has come, you take your notebook (= schedule) (saying): "I do that job (on) a certain day, the path (= guideline) has already gone out with me. So, today (= this year) I will look (= try) to work it."

If you have written and left it in the notebook (= schedule), even if your great-grandson comes, he will find (= inherit) it. So, that knowledge goes in front. (They) tell you-Pl to work and eat.

As for the knowledge, it belongs to you alone. Knowledge belongs to one person alone, indeed. But you can give (it) to a thousand persons at one time, while it isn't used up for you. You can give (it) to two thousand persons at one time, while it isn't used up for you.

Commerce isn't able to do that. Farming isn't able to do that. Herding isn't able to do that. Give to a person—, they (= people) all get equal (parts).

You, what you have given has not diminished what you have.⁴⁷ What you have given has not diminished what you have, even a little. What is it? Knowledge [focus] is what has done that. Knowledge [focus] is what has done that.

This one now can tell all of us here in ten years the limit (= full extent) of what he knows. Probably there is nothing that is diminished for him. "If I get something" doesn't do it. Farming isn't able to do that. Herding isn't able to do that. Commerce isn't able to do that.

The younger sibling of knowledge, the work (= activity) of elegance, it's commerce, yes, it's commerce. If you do (= engage in) commerce, dirtiness does not rub off on you. You have a name (= are well-known). Even if you don't have money, (they'll think) you have money, it's the thought (of) money for you.

Money is good (= sweet). Money is good, and (finding) anything like it is difficult. Nowadays, everybody goes around running after it. A man goes around running after it, a woman goes around running after it, a child goes around running after it, a father goes around running after it, all of us go around running after it.

One who does work of (= for) money (= commerce), if he has (= gets) some, he has the most admiration among the people. Even if he doesn't have (any), he has the most admiration among the people. He is clean. He has spent the day doing his work.

He is well-fed, and he has (his) rest. But he too says (= claims) "I am tired". When he goes to the place of the farmer and says "I too am tired," what will the other (= the farmer) say? He (= merchant) has mocked the other (= farmer). If you look (= consider), he has mocked the other.

⁴⁷ Lit. "has not been diminished for you."

The sun hasn't beat down hard on you (= merchant). (In) one day, (it's) various things. Without (your) getting tired, there is definitely nothing that you get. But (you say) you are the most tired (= work the hardest). (You) go up to the farmer (and say) "I the merchant am (the most) tired." The merchant has mocked the farmer.

A farmer. (suppose) a herder goes to a farmer (and says:) "I work the most (= hardest)." He has mocked the farmer. The chief is who? Among them all, the mother (= most essential) is the farmer.

Among all of them, there is no-one who is as unable as he (= farmer) (to say) "here, take (this)!"⁴⁸ Likewise, there is no-one who progresses less at work than he (= farmer).⁴⁹ But it's he (= farmer) [focus] who is the mother (= most essential). If they say (= speak of) the head (= chief) of (types of) work of (= in) the entire world, farming [focus] is the head (= chief) of (types of) work.

Yes, if that happens, let's do our best with the head (= farming) also, when its time comes, because it comes at one time. It comes at one time, but anyone who has not left (= ceased) observing (the calendar), there is no situation where the time has passed him by.

Because (the work) you have done alone, it won't be enough to live on ("eat") for three years. Although work has a profit—. A (livestock) animal now, if you have accumulated two or three animals, you keep taking them to pasture.

If that has turned out well for you, (all the way) from here (= Adia) to Mopti, your name (= reputation) will reach. (All the way) from here (= Adia) to Bamako, your name will reach.

Farming doesn't get that (name). The limit (= outer bound) of the (popular) recognition of the power (= value) of farming, it's (confined) in your-Pl village, within the circumference of your village. If you have gotten a name (= reputation), your name is there (in the village).

Y: Thank God, (for) that too.

X: Thank God, (for) that too. You can lodge (= host) your visitor who has come to you, (and) you can accompany one who goes away from you (= from your place).

That other one (= herder) likewise, the herder for his part, he goes around running. If you (= farmer) have said (= noticed) that he (= herder) was here today, don't go out and measure (yourself), yes, against him (= herder),⁵⁰ (or) you (= farmer) will spend the night in the bush (= fields).⁵¹

"I had seen a herder over there. I will go to him, I will take his measure (= observe him) at night, I will go to that place." If it's on that basis [focus] that you have gone to the herder, you (will) have spent the night in the bush (= fields).

⁴⁸ The farmer has nothing to offer a visitor, except at harvest time.

⁴⁹ Lit. "one who doesn't expand (= progress), there is nobody like him."

⁵⁰ I.e. don't assume that the herder will still be in the same place. *dàgá-ndí* 'measure; take the measure of (observe and evaluate); compare evaluatively (X and Y)'.⁵¹

⁵¹ Farmers have to be wary of herders who let their livestock into cultivated fields during the growing season.

Today, if you have gone on that (basis), and you have encountered him (= herder), definitely go (home) early!⁵² Go to him in such a way that you can arrive at (= get back to) the village before nightfall). If you have gone to him (= herder) and have found where he was, stay there (with the herder)! Having stayed there and taken his measure, go!

But (let's say) you have spent all day, and (dark) night falls. (The place) where you are going over there is a deserted area (= wilderness). Where (the hell) will you go in? As for him (= herder), he has gone on his way. You can't blame him (= herder), and you can't blame yourself. Now, where will the blame go down (= fall)? You will just blame yourself.

Y: As for him (= herder), he has just done his work.

X: As for him (= herder), he has just done his work. With millet farming, there is none of that. If it isn't good for you (= herder) here today, a herder **will go** running elsewhere, it will be good for him in that place.

When he goes to that (new) place, if it turns out that the place that he got up (= left) from is better for him than that (new place), he can come back (to it) quickly today. The same day, he can come back (to it) quickly today.

Farming cannot do (= does not allow) that. As for the rainy season that you have farmed, if it is good (= productive), as for you, you are there that year. If it isn't good, as for you, you are there that year. Now, this year, there is nothing to do but get up (and look for) another plan.

As for that "I will come back to that (field) and turn over (the earth) and fix it," in farming, in rainy-season farming, there is none of that.

Commerce for its part, when you go into this (= such-and-such a) market, if it happens that they buy more from you there (in another market) than here (in this market), you will go (there). If it happens that they bought more from you back here in the place you left than in that (new) place, you return (here). All this you can do in the (= a) single month.

As for farming, if you put (= start) farming, as for you, if you have just put it, that year will happen⁵³ for you. Hey, if you have gained (a good harvest), it has happened. If you have failed to get (it) also, it has happened.

As for that, now, you will catch (= wait for) another year again, afterwards. That day— (or rather) in (= for) that year, that work again is **stopped**. For that, the prestige (= recognized importance) of farming is (confined) within your village. Yes, the prestige of farming is (confined) within your village. It hasn't passed on to another village.

But if you do your best there, (even) if it's in your village [focus] that you do your best, you'll do all right.⁵⁴ You can welcome a visitor, (or) you can accompany a visitor (traveling elsewhere), praise God. Anyone who comes can find you.

⁵² In the past a farmer would normally return to his village by twilight (because of wild animals and other nocturnal perils).

⁵³ Lit. "pass," cf. English *come to pass*.

⁵⁴ Lit. "your head will pass."

A stone—. Commerce, a merchant, having negotiated prices, if it happens that over there (= another market) is better for him (= merchant) than this market, he will leave (here) and go running (to there) and say: he will go to another place until the (lunar) month ends, (or) for two months, perhaps without coming back here, he may remain there working.

Y: He's (like) the wind.

X: He will go (from market to market) like the wind. You here now, if you say (intend) that you will go there following him, you will perhaps not find him there. He (regularly) goes running to another place.

The herder and the merchant, both of them, their situation goes together (= is similar).

Y: It's one (= the same) (kind of) work.

X: Their work and their situation(s), as for them, it goes together. If that happens, for all those (things), the mother (= chief) that will gather (them) and put (them) together is knowledge. After knowledge, it's farming. If farming [focus] is what you get, if you are also able to welcome a visitor, you also have a blanket.⁵⁵

Concerning a blanket, there is no front (edge), there is no back (edge). There is no "over here (on one side) is the underside" (or) "over here (the flip side) is the top," concerning a blanket.⁵⁶ (Whichever) side you pass (by), as for you, when your legs are kicked out and put (under the blanket), when it has covered you, it's finished.

Y: You-Sg can cover (them).

X: If it's a boubou (outer garment), it's (= it has) one side (= is not reversible). Anywhere else behind (= other than) the area (in the boubou) where they have cut open the neck (= collar), (if) you also put (it) upside-down there, it (= boubou) isn't (= can't be) put on. Pants too are (like) that.

As for a blanket, having turned (= shifted) the part (= edge of the blanket) where you had stretched out your legs, you can pass (= shift) it toward the (= your) head, (and) if you turn (= shift) (the part) where (= under which) you had laid down your head, you can pass (= shift) it toward the (= your) feet. Nobody will say, hey you, (that) you have changed (sides).

Farming is (like) a boubou. In those (other occupations), a fellow creeps along (evasively), (thinking) I will work (= do) something else, (but) it isn't (= can't be) reversed. Yes, it isn't reversed. All these (evasive actions) just go around and around (in no clear direction). But farming doesn't (just) go around and around.

You (= farmer) now, doing your best, whether you can do your best (at) what helps it (= work), (or) whether you cannot do your best (at) what helps it, it's finished.

May God have us do our best (at) what helps it. May God let us be able to begin early (at) the beginning. May God have us do the goodness (= good work) of that intelligence.

⁵⁵ 'Blanket' is used metaphorically here.

⁵⁶ I.e. the sides and edges of a blanket are interchangeable.

All right, if we begin (at) the beginning, it goes forward, that which we found (= inherited) yesterday (= in the past), yesterday we used to do the work of ruining, we used to do the work of rainfall.⁵⁷

Let us not neglect them! Who can maintain them? (Only) one who began yesterday (= in the past) [focus] can maintain them. (Only) one who began yesterday (= in the past) [focus] can maintain them.

One who did not begin (in the past) cannot maintain (them). If we do our best, let's do our best in these (things). May God put us in the good. May God put us in what is done well. May God fortify us (with) each other's (= mutual) strength (to work together).

All those (jobs), all the work. The head (= most important job) [focus] is what is followed. (In) those (things) too, mutual understanding [focus] is what will be followed. If you-Sg go into mutual agreement, you (will) have given thanks to God in the work. May God put us in what is done well. Let's do our best.

They too⁵⁸ have come. (As of) today, they have been here for how many days? Seeking (information) brought them, and gaining (something) brought them. One person (will ask), that work that they are doing, what good will that do?

A person who works knows (his work). One who asks (about) trees and one who asks (about), whatchamacallit, plants, and one who asks about wild animals, and one who asks about grubs, and one who asks about beetles.

Do I know all these, to write them (= their names) down in a notebook, and take them (around)?⁵⁹ What he is seeking there, it's there (in his notebook). You who do not know, as for you, you don't know.

Y: All those (things), it follows (from) the knowledge that you have said.

X: All those (things), it's knowledge [focus] that they follow (from). At the time when he worked on them, if he was able to set them down (= finish with them), then his work was well-done. May God put us in what is done well.

Is it (= cassette) finished? If it isn't finished, please tell us. If it isn't finished, we'll talk some more.⁶⁰ May God have us go straight to what is done well. May God be patient (= forgiving) with us.

⁵⁷ Animist rites to damage fields or to induce rain to fall.

⁵⁸ i.e. the linguist and his assistants.

⁵⁹ Rhetorical question.

⁶⁰ Lit. "talk and add."

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speakers: X = Dimbe Gaba (female), Y = Moktar Tembo (male)

X: Is it (=recording) not being begun now? Well, in God's name. My people (= kinsmen), excuse me.⁶¹ What we found (= inherited) from our fathers and our mothers. We found (=were born among) our fathers and our mothers. As for what there was formerly in Dogon country, we used to eat meals, we used to drink cream of millet, we used to drink milk, our mothers and our fathers used to take good care of us.

Our fathers had cows and goats, they (= family members) followed each other (= lived together). They had very good understanding among each other (= got along well). Nowadays, this does not exist. Formerly, our fathers watched carefully over their children in tranquility.

If a father watched over his child, the child would follow (=obey) his father. But nowadays, the child hasn't followed the father, and the father hasn't followed the child. What is (the reason for) that? The country (= world) is ruined. The country has become ruined to this extent.

(As for) the ruining of the country, what is (the reason for) that? It's the fact that rain [focus] doesn't fall. Now the good times⁶² do not exist. If the good times do not exist, will there be (mutual) understanding? Will you get (mutual) understanding in (=from) a hungry person? A weary person, will something good come out of his mouth?

It's not (from) lack of wanting. A person (=adult) not loving his child, a child not loving his mother. But a child is more important than his mother. When you have a crying young baby, the day when it becomes nasty with you (= cries a lot), you have no choice but to follow (=obey) him. If you have been working, you will leave (=give up) the work. You will sit (=stay home), you will console (= pacify) it.

The child [focus] has done that. The child, if it weren't for (your) heart, you would knock (=throw) it down violently, it would die. If it has died, for its part, it 's he [focus] who has come; for your part, (in) your weariness, it's you [focus] who will be sorry. All right.

Y: A child is good.

X: A child is very good. Formerly, our elders, they did (=used) fetishes (idols). Nowadays there are none. Formerly, they brewed millet beer. Nowadays there is none. Formerly, they got up and—, they went and found Najamba.⁶³ In all of Najamba, where is it? It's at Dioni (village).

Having gone there, telling (others) to exchange (views), sitting and making all the things (= disputes) finish, killing (= cutting down) tall grass stems (to cover the sacred objects), sitting there, debating, going to Dioni, (and finally) the banging of the Hogon's stick (at the end of the meeting).

⁶¹ Excuse spoken by a woman speaking to a group of men.

⁶² Prosperity, especially seasonally after good rains.

⁶³ i.e., went to the village of Dioni to have a large-scale animist ceremony (before the farming season).

We used to do everything. Saying (let's do) the harvest dance,⁶⁴ making lots of millet beer, saying (=on account of) the idols, taking everything out (from storage), (they would) spend the day dancing and spend the night dancing.

There used to be good times (=prosperity) among us. We found (=experienced) the good times in the hand(s) of some of our elders.⁶⁵ We too used to do it.

Well, what was the thing that made us (=led us to) leave all that? It wasn't stubbornness. It wasn't being (too) rich. Hunger is what did (this) among us. Hunger (= hungry people) never followed each other. They will have no mutual understanding. (Any) thing that a hungry person has done is bad.

But nowadays hardship (=high cost of living) has come into our country. The hardship that has come, it's because of the fact that we don't like each other (=don't get along). It's not that we don't like each other because of the overpopulation among us. It's not (from) gaining too much suddenly, nor anything else.

If the country has become hard, every person will be selfish, everyone will look out for for himself. You are looking out for yourself, you certainly won't love your child. After that, there is nothing else that is among us.

But what we found (=experienced) formerly, today also, one single wrap (woman's garment), one hundred of us women used to put on one single wrap. We nowadays, if you take hold of a garment of (even) your first cousin, (whose mothers are) of the same mother and the same father, and you put it on, you will be denigrated (= gossiped about), (saying) you are impoverished.

All right, formerly—. (Or they'll say:) you don't work, you are poor. They will denigrate you. You and I, (we are of) one mother. Now if you go out, (they'll say): Y (man's name) will say (to X's husband), don't you see? X (name of woman who has gone out) is very shiftless (good-for-nothing)." Eh.

Y: God didn't give everyone the (same) character.

X: It's definitely not X's shiftlessness. It's you-Sg [focus] who are involved in humiliating X. All right, I too, if you-Sg have gone out, don't you see? As for Y, all these pals (agemates) of his do like that (to him). These pals of his have prospered.

It's God's giving. It has arisen in (=due to) God. We have left (=abandoned) all these (things). The fact that we have rejected God, God is repaying us for that.⁶⁶

If you-Sg are excessively bad, prosperity will not come to your village. If you are are not respectful (to your elders), you won't get respect (from others). If you haven't covered (= been protective of) a person, they will not cover you. God doesn't like humiliation (of people).

⁶⁴ lit. "rainy-season dance." It was formerly performed at the beginning of the harvest.

⁶⁵ Some people held onto their animist ritual objects, while others discarded or sold them (under the influence of Islam).

⁶⁶ Lit. "is repaying that credit among us."

What has descended on us nowadays, it's humiliation. The humiliation does not benefit us. May God protect us. God definitely doesn't protect us for nothing. If you-Sg don't remain the way one ought to, by God, let's remain the way one ought to.

If you have followed your child, if you have held (= watched over) your wife, may your wife too hold you. (If) there is no mother and there is no father, your husband is your father. If your husband has blessed you, it (= blessing) will take hold.

As for us, formerly we and our elders saw (= experienced) like that. Formerly, our elders, this covering (e.g. blanket), (like) this (blanket) that covers me now, when night would fall, when they had taken it off and given it, we would cover ourselves with it. When they had gotten up in the morning, they would wrap it around themselves, they would go outside.

Nowadays, your child, the clothes have been filled (= stuffed) into a trunk, the (other) clothes have been laid out (on the ground), the (other) clothes have been hung on the wall of the house. Hunger is killing you, (and) you don't watch over your husband.

One day your husband will go outside with (= having drunk) plain water.⁶⁷ Will you and someone who has gone outside with plain water (be able to) get along? There will be no mutual understanding (= good relations). All right, when the man's heart is ruined (= he is unhappy), if he has taken a woman (= gotten married), the woman doesn't respect him. She is nasty.

Saying (= thinking) that she is nasty, you have discarded (= divorced) her. She is nasty, (and) you have discarded her, then you have taken (= married) a crazy woman (as a new wife) now. You have definitely added to that misfortune for yourself. The bitterness has never left you. That person (= man) has added to his bitterness.

But, may God receive us in that predicament. May God keep us away from what is bigger than us (= calamity). If we do our best, if we head for (there) where our elders were in the past, Almighty God has much. If you are deferential (= obedient) to your father, God will cover (= protect) you.

Y: Your child will be deferential to you.

X: Your child—. If you are deferential to your father, your child will be deferential to you. If you are deferential to your mother, your child will be deferential to you. If you leave (= treat) your mother and your father as your own (true) parents,⁶⁸ your wife will be deferential to you. When you now have gone nowadays and found (= met with) your parent, if I find now that you are insulting (= being disrespectful to) your parent, if (seeing this) I (= your friend) hit (= slap) your parent on the side of the face, is it impossible?

Y: Definitely, you (the child of the parent) have given (= initiated) the hitting.

X: You have given (= initiated) the hitting. He didn't protect yours (= your parent). If now you have taken yours (= your parent) and put him in the market, don't the people look at him?

Y: It is that way.

⁶⁷ i.e. without any breakfast.

⁶⁸ sá:rà: 'parent' applies to one's actual mother and father, and is extendible to their younger same-sex siblings.

X: Formerly, the people used to go crazy. If they went crazy, they (= others) treated them, it (= craziness) went away. There is the hand of a human, (and) there is the hand of God.⁶⁹ God has done (= is responsible for) that which is in the hand of God. What has come out of the hand of a human and has been produced (by the human) is not the same⁷⁰ as God's.

But God likes (= tolerates) an evil-doer. The fact that He likes an evil-doer, what is (the reason for) it? It's punishment in the future ("tomorrow"). In the Hereafter (= Afterworld), a great punishment will follow him. Indeed, we heard that in (= from) our elders' mouth(s). We found (= experienced) our fathers and mothers.

Our father said: hey you, in speech there is definitely something that is bigger than (what comes from) your mouth; in food there is something that is bigger than (what you put in) your mouth. He said: if you have gone out to the bush and gotten some food, having eaten what is possible (= fits) in your mouth, that which is not possible (= does not fit) in your mouth you must bring and give to your parents.

Nowadays, your parent is lying down in the house, (while) you have gone out to the bush, you have roasted your sizzling fatty meat and eaten it (out in the bush), and you haven't given (any) to your parent, and you haven't given (any) to a single (= any) wife of yours or to a single child of yours.

Well, is there a (parental) blessing here?

Y: There is none.

X: Like that—, if we were (= behaved) like that (i.e. in the old way), prosperity will remain in this land of ours.

Y: Tomorrow the debts—.

X: If you have done good (deeds), may God repay you (for) what you have done. If you are angry (=evil),⁷¹ you have not done good (deeds). (Please) continue your talk!

Y: If these (behaviors) [focus] are what we have followed, God will bring down (= provide) prosperity for us. But if we have not followed these (behaviors), suffering will not lag behind us.

We have suffered, we have been hungry. There is no talking (= discussing among ourselves), there is no good work. But may God cover (= remove) that for us. If we follow Him (= God), He will definitely cover (= protect) us. If we don't follow Him, He will not cover us.

Looking at us, our elders, (garments of) yellow bogola dye (from *Anogeissus* tree), what women wore, ugh!⁷² Men, they used to wear this (too). Cowhide shoes, they used to wear them, (of) cowhide. Nowadays, if you have your wife wear cowhide (shoes), will it **turn out well** for you?

⁶⁹ I.e. some crazy people are cured by human intervention, others only by God.

⁷⁰ Lit. "what... and what ... are not one."

⁷¹ lit. "your heart has defecated."

⁷² 'Ugh!' expresses the attitude of today's women to old-fashioned bogola clothing (colored with vegetable dyes).

All right, (formerly) not everyone could get cowhide. By God, if you saw someone wear cowhide (shoes), he was rich, (it was as though) he was wearing a living one (= cow).⁷³

Y: Exactly. Formerly like that [focus] is how it was.

X: Plastic shoes now, what good was it?⁷⁴ Was it not plastic? What was it for?⁷⁵

Y: It would melt.

X: Well, that [focus] was a herder's share. But if you wore cow(-hide) shoes, (it was as though) you were wearing a (whole) cow. Definitely not everyone could get it, It's what we call "patas monkey's chance."⁷⁶ May God make our end (= destiny) good.

But it has been truly difficult on us. In the thing(s) that we saw formerly, there is not even a single thing that we (still) see nowadays, other than in the aftermath of troubles: (people) dying young⁷⁷ and bad diseases. Furthermore, when we catch a disease, we cannot treat ourselves (medically). (They say:) arise and get old! You are dead.

In the place(s) where they used to treat (sick people), now they don't treat (people). One person doesn't know anything, (but) he claims to be a healer. Has he (= sick person) gone out and walked around? The sick person doesn't know whether (= that) God is there. He (= sick person) will follow him (= healer). He (= healer) will fleece⁷⁸ him, (he will) eat (him), totally. He will die.

All right, in Dioni (village), at Go,⁷⁹ they treat (the sick). There used to be praying to (animist) God. We don't go to Go (any longer). It was (also) at Lamordé, (but) we don't go. It was at Dindari, (but) we don't go. It was at Adia, (but) we don't go. It was at Gundapari, (but) we don't go. It was at Ogoyeri, (but) we don't go. It was at Dembeli, (but) we don't go. It was at Tabako, (but) we don't go. We don't go to Mougi.

Najamba (country) went and bounded itself there in the Dèbéré area. We have left (= ceased practicing) all that. We have taken out (= adopted) our religion (= Islam). In adopting our religion, there is nothing (=no benefit) that we have seen. If I find that you have one hundred cows today, if I come (back) in a couple of days, the cow is (just) one.

Y: They have finished (= died off).

X: Formerly, that single (woman's) wrap definitely served us well. Since—

Y [overlapping]: That—. Excuse me (for interrupting). We have turned away from that (= old customs). It will remain like we want (it). I will do something bad, I will do something short⁸⁰ too, even if it's not good I will do it too.

⁷³ I.e., one who wore cowhide shoes was displaying his wealth (in cattle).

⁷⁴ Lit. "what will it become?"

⁷⁵ Lit. "what is it following?"

⁷⁶ Monkeys accidentally happen on food.

⁷⁷ lit. "unripe death."

⁷⁸ lit. "hit" (using a Fulfulde borrowing).

⁷⁹ A secret place with an underground spring.

⁸⁰ i.e. on a whim, without much reflection.

Formerly, if you-Sg did the bad thing, the fetish (= idol) would show you immediately. Likewise, if you did the good thing, it would show you immediately. Well, nowadays, whether it pleases or doesn't please someone, I will do (it). I will remain (= live) as I please.

God too, in this (base) world, doesn't take out (a person) and show you at all that So-and-So is an evil-doer. (If) you have done a certain type of evil, He (= God) will bring down a catastrophe in the land, perhaps as for you, you don't care.⁸¹ You're (still) doing it (= evil).

Formerly, the fetish, if you did (something), it would show you immediately. Nowadays, we have said (it's) praying (= Islamic worship), (but) we haven't followed (= been consistent with) the praying either. There is no candor.⁸²

Trickery, and swindling, and stealing, and let's-take-what-is-not-ours, because those (things) [focus] are what have us nowadays. Have you not seen that we will remain (= live) as we want? It is what made us leave the fetish.

But continue your talking.

X: Well, this place is not worthwhile. You have given your child (= daughter) to a man (as his wife). Perhaps (= let's say) you have given your child to the man. As for us, as for the elders that we found (= grew up with), if now my father took me (a woman) and gave me (as wife) to a person—, to a man, (then) if the man saw my father, he would show shame.⁸³ If the man saw my mother, he would show shame.

All right, the man, having taken (= married) your child, if you-Sg gave (her) to a man, if (then) that man did not show shame to you, (it suggested that) it was not the case that the woman was good (well-behaved at home). By God, if the woman was good, if you (= husband) came across your father-in-law (on a path), you would treat your father-in-law royally.⁸⁴

If you did not treat your father-in-law royally, (it suggested that) your child was not in (= doing) good work (at home). You have given your child (to him). Your child having gotten up in the morning, (you [= her mother] say): “Hey So-and-So (= husband), the man, good morning!” (Husband:) “Good morning to you!” (Mother:) “Me indeed, give me So-and-so (= your wife)!” (Husband:) “Where is she going?” (Mother:) “I want to send her to such-and-such a place.” (Husband:) “Yes? All right.”

If he has given (his wife) to you with his permission, he has permitted (= authorized) you. If he hasn't permitted you, you have shut up. But nowadays if you (= her mother) get up, if she the woman gets up, she will get up (and go) entirely on her own business. (Husband:) “Where have you gone?” (Wife:) “I went to my mother.” (or:) “Where have you gone?” “I went to my father.”

⁸¹ lit. “your business doesn't exist.”

⁸² Lit., “heart-cleanness.” One who has a “clean heart” speaks what is in his heart (= what he/she really believes or cares about) rather than concealing or disguising it. Opposite is *kèndà-nì:ndú* ‘heart-dirtiness’.

⁸³ Refers to (respectful) deference to a parent-in-law.

⁸⁴ E.g, crouching obsequiously to greet him.

Well, God didn't say that. Formerly, they followed (e.g. obeyed) each other. If you were going to send (your child) to the market, (even) before market (day) had come, you would request (his permission), and he for his part would permit (= authorize) you. If he didn't permit (you), on the other hand, there was no forcing (him).

Formerly, if your wife did something bad, they used to beat your wife. Nowadays, if you beat your wife, some nosy person won't leave you in peace. The whole country will be (people calling out) "Ho!" The person has never seen you, (but) he says "Ha! So-and-so is bad." You have never brought me (= had trouble with me), (but you say) "So-and-so is bad." Formerly there was none (of that). As for us, we found our mothers and our fathers, there was none (of that).

But nowadays, that (new behavior) has dawned. This place has destroyed us. We did not realize it. (If) we had (an opportunity) to go back, we would escape. (But) if we do not go back now, prosperity won't come to us. But I mostly would like (to have) the prosperity of former times. May God give us the prosperity of former times.

Y: Nowadays, if you have borne a child, they don't let you beat the child, never mind (beat) the woman. It's you [focus] who gave birth to⁸⁵ the child. Why is that? Because if you say, me now if I get up like that, if my child has done something bad to me, if I have (then) picked up a branch (for whipping), (they'll say:) "No! So-and-so!" Everyone is like that.

Let's get together and ruin (= change) the situation where everyone is like that. Because I cannot scold mine (= child). If you scold yours, yours will be prepared (= taught) and will surpass me (in life). As for that, let's ruin (= change) that. (That) everyone is like that, it isn't good.

Why is that? Because each village has its character (= behavior, rules).⁸⁶ Each household has its character. Each person has his character. They say, it was like that in the past. Nowadays, we have all learned one (= the same) behavior. Let's get together and ruin (= change) that.

Continue your talk.

X: Nowadays—. Formerly, you-Sg were (of) one (= the same) mother and (of) one (= the same) father, if you had nothing, as for your full sibling,⁸⁷ he (or she) was (always) your full sibling. All right now, Y [vocative], (let's say) you and I are full siblings. If I don't have a (certain) thing, you will go and become friends with a rich man.⁸⁸

The rich man is (= becomes) your father, (and) the rich man is your mother. You don't love your (real) mother, (and) you don't love your father. You don't love your wife, (and) your own child.

Ah! (Let's say) you-Sg and I are full siblings. "Oh Y [vocative], give me this child of yours, I will send him/her to this (= such-and-such) place." If I say (that), you will say that you won't give (him/her) to me.

⁸⁵ Here in the sense '(man) sire (child)'.

⁸⁶ Lit. "a village and its nature."

⁸⁷ Lit. "your mother-one-father-one."

⁸⁸ Lit. "pull down friendship."

Suppose that we two are full siblings. If the rich man comes, if he says “Y [vocative], give me this child of yours, I will send him/her to this place,” (you’ll say) he should take (him/her).

Y: Indeed. It isn’t even worth that. At my place, if he (= rich one) has said we should do this thing, I will call my child and tell (him/her) to go and do this.

X: Well, perhaps he asked (requested of) you and didn’t get (anything)—

Y: If I go, my full sibling (sister), (I’ll) say, she is extremely bad. “You cannot help a person in anything, (yet) you can afford (to have) a child. It benefited the child, because we raised the child together. Because as for the child, it is the child of everyone (= all of us). (Suppose) a person will have (= bear or sire) a child and will die leaving the child (behind), in whose hand(s) will you (= the person) leave it (= child)?

X: You’ll leave it (= child) for your people (= kin).

Y: If you also leave it for the rich man that you have thought of, he (= rich man) will say that it (= child) is a slave. What will he (= rich man) say? If he has raised it (= child).

X: By God, it is his slave.

Y: Yes. But your housemates (e.g. siblings) who were born together, having one mother and one father, if you have raised a child, you cannot (say) that he is a slave, can you?

X: The elders said, friendship has become pleasing (= precious). Friendship is pleasing, to the point that it’s hard (to find) anything like that. Perhaps he has nothing to eat, he has no woman (= wife), his mother and his father are gone, he’s an orphan. His friend is a very rich man. He (= orphan) having done that, (they said) all right. We heard that from the mouth(s) of our elders.

The field (of one) was the next field over (from the other’s). When his (= rich man’s) wife had cooked a meal and had come, he said, “Woman!” She told him to call his friend (the orphan). She asked: had he called him? (No) he hadn’t called (him), he said. She said, all right.

When he had laid down his daba (hoe), and had gone up into a tree, he said (= called out) “Hoy!” (He replied:) “Hoy!” “Come, let’s eat a meal!” The other one (= orphan) too went up into a tree, the orphan, (and said) that, as for him, hey, he was full (= not hungry). When he (= orphan) had said that, before they had come and put their hands (in the bowl), (sound of running), he came. When he came, they would eat the meal.⁸⁹

They kept doing that (every day), until (they) had come and done the farm work. Without (anyone) hearing (= knowing) about that,⁹⁰ they did the harvest. Then, the day when they went (back) into the houses (= village), they did the post-harvest celebration. (Chief:) “it’s like this, you Muslims who are here.” “Yes,” they (= villagers) said.

⁸⁹ The orphan would loudly imply (to other villagers) that he could feed himself, then would eat (secretly) with his rich friend and the latter’s wife.

⁹⁰ Lit. “without the mouth going up.”

(The rich man) said, “So-and-so (= name of orphan) is my slave.” (Others asked:) “So-and-so is your slave? Where did the slavehood arise?” (Rich man:) Lunch after lunch, all during the rainy (= farming) season until now, he (= orphan) has spent the whole rainy season eating his (= rich man’s) meal(s); when his (= rich man’s) wife had cooked the food, it was together [focus] that we ate that meal.” He (= orphan) said, “Is that so?” He (rich man) said: “yes.” He (= orphan) said, “please.”

They (= villagers) asked: was it meals, or what? He said, that’s it. (By virtue of) the fact that he act that meal, he (= orphan) was his slave. They told him (= orphan) to pay. He said, all right. They asked him (= rich man), hey, was his finished?⁹¹ He said, it was finished. They asked him, hey, was his (talk) finished? He said, yes. They said, all right.

He (= orphan) said: hey you people, all those people who were there together (= in nearby fields), he said. They said, yes? (Orphan) said, what he used to call out to So-and-so (= rich man), did they not use to hear (it)? They said, they used to hear (it). He (= orphan) asked: did he (= rich man) not use to call? They said: he used to call. He (= orphan) asked, was his (= rich man’s) (talk) finished? He (= rich man) said, yes.

He (= orphan) said, all right, hey Muslims who were neighbors for him, when he (= rich man) called him (= orphan), had they (= neighbors) not heard him (= orphan) say “I am full (not hungry) (for) the meal.” They said, by God, they had heard.

They asked (the rich man), hey, was it a meal, or what (that made the orphan a slave)? He (= rich man) said, it was a meal. They said: when you called him, he used to say he was full (= not hungry), and he didn’t eat your meal.

In that (way), his (= orphan’s) path was good. That [focus] is how he escaped. But (as for) you, (in view of) how friendship is good, don’t leave your poor father. You, (in view of) how friendship is good, follow (= stay with)—don’t leave your poor cousin. Tomorrow, early in the morning, a cousin, it’s blood (= kinship), it (= kinship) doesn’t leave each other.

Your words. When you have eaten your meal(s) in secret (= alone), your words, (they said) hey, don’t eat— (or rather) don’t speak your words in secret (= alone). Well, as for us, that [focus] is how we heard it from the mouth(s) of our elders. But nowadays, it’s only (between) two rich people, the one from behind (= pauper) doesn’t go in (= is not included). Well, may God keep us from the harm of that.

The land has become bad for us. (Actually) the land hadn’t become bad, we [focus] have become bad. The people said, the world (of the living) isn’t like (it was) formerly, it isn’t like (it was) formerly. (But) it was like (it was) formerly. It is we [focus] who have changed.

Ever since we have seen the sun, the sun rises here (pointing to east), (and) the sun sets over there (pointing to west). Has the sun gone away from (= moved) (the place) where it used to rise?

Y: (No) it hasn’t gone away.

⁹¹ Lit. “go down”.

- X: Has it gone away from (= moved) (the place) where it sets?
 Y: (No) it hasn't gone away.
 X: We haven't found this day (= these times)?
 Y: (Yes) we have found (it).
 X: (The same way) as we found (it), we will leave it (behind) as well and go. We have ruined (wasted) ours (= our world). We found (= inherited) it, we will leave it and go.
 Y: The moon and the sun, ...
 X: (Did you say) the moon and the sun?
 Y: ... Indeed they exist.
 X: They exist, even nowadays. Night and day, they exist even nowadays.
 Y: Each person, in his time. (As for) them, they all—. What little imagery they (= elders) found for us, their own existed. If ours does not remain, (it's because) we did (it to) ours. Truly God didn't do it to us. God didn't do that. (It's) a thing that God didn't bring (= do), that we alone put (= brought). What (things) God didn't create for us, we will look for (= try to make). It doesn't go in (= doesn't work) for us, unless God too has given it to you.
 X: As for you, just don't (try to) bring Him down.
 Y: Your lying doesn't give you (anything), your conniving talk doesn't give you (anything), your betrayal doesn't give you (anything), and your gossiping doesn't give you (anything). (Regarding) what (things) you have taken there from God and come (with), you didn't take (things) that were like what you ought to take. If you take⁹² what you ought to take, by God, tomorrow it's your downfall.⁹³
 Y: As we heard formerly, they said that a man and a woman, their property did not remain separate. If the man (= husband) grew some cotton, when they picked the cotton, when they gave (it) to the women, when the women spun the cotton, when they (= women) put (it) in the hand of the man, when they gathered it all, when they bought an animal, it belonged to the man.
 They picked up (= supported) each other. A man (had) one pair of pants, a woman likewise it was just that one wrap. In every house, if there was one good boubou (garment), anyone who was an (adult) man, he would dress up elegantly with that (same boubou).
 Among women too, they, among (their) female matrilineal relatives, (if there was) a single wrap, (and) if there was a single nice boubou (robe), they all⁹⁴ used to go into the village with them (= garments), they said. We heard that. The boys don't support you.
 X: Those words are the truth. Those words indeed are the truth. But (as for) the people, one person, the (= his) body is (just) one, the mouth is (just) one, the speech is (just) one, and the joint is one. But these (body etc.) are here. These are five (in number).⁹⁵

⁹² Emend to 'do not take'.

⁹³ Lit.: "it's falling and you."

⁹⁴ i.e. any one of them, on different occasions.

⁹⁵ Actually the speaker had listed four items.

In the same way that these are not equal, people are not equal. If people have not become equal like that, it's too bad but we too are not equal. It (= population) will never be equal. Never, since God made the Creation, has it (= population) become equal, and it won't become equal. It hasn't (ever) become equal, just like the fact that it won't become equal.

One who is better (= richer) than you-Sg, if you leave him where he is better than you; your pal (of same age), if you leave him where he is your pal; then, you, while you watch (him) he is born, he will emerge (succeed), he is indeed better (= richer) than you.

There is indeed one who is better (= richer) than you. He is better than you. (Regarding) the basis for his superiority over you, it isn't (trying to) make someone feel bad. In the world, one is simply saved (= gets by).

All right. Formerly, the people did among each other, in the street, if you came across your comrade(s) (of same age), they were feeding you a (sorcerer's) potion, (or) they were stabbing and killing you with knives, (or) they were cursing you by a fetish and killing you. All these (things) they used to be doing.

All right, nowadays, in this same way that we carry (on the head) a load that is bigger than us, there was none (of that) formerly. All right, formerly, if they killed each other's children, they were told to go to Nga and speak. Curses would be made. When they did the post-harvest feast, (then) they were told to speak there. Curses were made.

All right, nowadays, you go into your house, you go into the interior of your house, (and) something that you have done, either a trouble-maker or a crooked person will carry it and fling it down in a place where we have no power.

Y: If you go outside, you'll find people talking (about you).

X: If you go outside, everyone (is going) "ha! You think you have left (= stopped planting) at your father's place(s)."⁹⁶ Before you go away from that, it (= gossip) is all around outside.

Well, you take it (= words), you are throwing yourself into a burden that you can't manage. You don't have any pants, you don't have any shoes, you don't have any boubou (garment), you don't have a father, (yet) you go to a place where you have no power, and you criticise (= gossip about) me (there). Did that help you?

"I went." What (= money) you were supposed to go and deposit there (to initiate a police proceeding against someone), you buy your grain and give it to your child, you buy your grain and give it to your wife.

Formerly, (there was) a single garment, it was the (woman's) wrap. You (= mother) would get up and spend the whole day carrying the child (on your back). You would come at night, and that (same) garment [focus] was what you would cover the older infant with. You would cover (them) up, and you bring yourself out all right (= avoid gossip).⁹⁷

⁹⁶ I.e., you believe that you are planting up to but not beyond the boundaries of the field you inherited, just as your father did.

⁹⁷ lit. "(you) got your head past."

Y: They came out all right too.⁹⁸

X: All of them came out all right. Okay, we remained (like that) for a long time. We used to see fragmentarily. (Even) what we used to see fragmentarily (in the past) has come and vanished for us. That is all gone. There is nothing that we have gotten. (With) what little you have gotten, you don't (= can't) eat or drink. You will take it and give it to someone who is better (= richer) than you? If you say (= intend) to be equal to one who you are not (actually) equal to, it's your misfortune.

Well, only that has come to us nowadays.

Y: That [focus] is a bothersome problem.

X: That thing has bothered us. We haven't seen (= gotten) any benefit in (= from) it. Both morning and afternoon, nothing but bothersome problems. God—, God definitely didn't bring (the problems) to us. As for us, we have become the trouble-makers for ourselves. It's we [focus] who destroy each other.

Before we recognize that, we have become rags (= old and worn-out). Your sick person is lying (in bed), and you can't treat him (medically). If you slap someone who is better (= richer) than you, you pay millions. Your sick person is lying (in bed), and you can't treat him (medically). In looking for words (= stirring up trouble), you'll go and pay 1000 francs. What good did it do you?

Y: It didn't help.

X: A trouble-maker didn't help. But a trouble-marker put the squeeze on us. He won't help us, other than troubling us.⁹⁹ But as for God, God, He took a good look (at the trouble-maker). If He hasn't cursed us, He hasn't blessed us.

All right, one who does bad work (= deeds)—, if you do bad work to your father and your mother, if God wills, if he hasn't cursed you, he (also) hasn't blessed you. It isn't (cause for) weeping (out loud), sob-sob-sob, (but) weeping is in the heart. It isn't (cause for) weeping (out loud), sob-sob, (but) weeping is in the heart.¹⁰⁰

“So-and-So, I like (love) you!” It isn't worth¹⁰¹ shouting (that). If it's in your heart, people will see (that). “So-and-So, I don't like you!” It isn't worth speaking (that). If it is in your heart, it will be seen in your work (= actions). For us, it is something empty. Instead, if I just let So-and-So (whom I don't like) go out, (saying) let him go out and walk around (on his own)! (Then) he doesn't walk around. May God give us the peace of that.

Y: May God make the child fortunate. Well, now, that which is among us young people, now, if you-Sg get up and go to the city, as for you, you eat something good, you drink something good, and you sleep on something good. (Meanwhile), potash water [focus] is what your father here (in the village) is drinking.

⁹⁸ lit. “their heads got past.”

⁹⁹ Lit. “except our weariness.”

¹⁰⁰ It's best to suffer in silence.

¹⁰¹ Lit. “it hasn't gone out” (after a chained verb ‘shout’).

You have obtained ten riyals (= 50 francs CFA), that is a too much. (Or say) it's five riyals (= 25 francs), just a little, that you have obtained. If you give it (= money) to him (= your father), (he'll say) "by God, my child (= son) has given me this thing, may God do the same for him!" It (= blessing) will be accepted (by God).

Because the holy men have said, hey (you). Whether I go to a holy man, or I go to a sekoudio (type of holy man). (But) the first blessing, it's (from) your father and your mother.

Well, now, your child, he eats good thing(s), he is in a car, he is on a motorcycle. (Meanwhile) you (= the parent) don't have any shoes. He doesn't even greet you. Do you not curse him?

X: You cursed him.

Y: Well, the Dogon (say) a curse has never fallen on the land (= been inactivated). It (= curse) doesn't come down on an ordinary land. It (= curse) will reach (= catch up to) him. If your kinsman has blessed you, it will reach (you), if you think (about it), and (likewise) if he has cursed you, it will reach (you).

Well, now what is with us nowadays, now you are here beside your kinsmen at the house. As for you, you are suffering all (forms of) suffering. He (= your father) sends you, you do farming, you do everything. As for him (= one working in distant city), he walks around however he likes. He remains there for a long time, then the day when he comes (back), if they don't replaster this house, will it stand (= be accepted)?

X: Never, it will not stand.

Y: An animal, if they (= herders) haven't taken (it) to pasture, it won't remain. If they don't cultivate millet, there will be nothing to eat. When you do all that, another man (not of your immediate family) will be relieved of his disappointment. Because the one who escapes his disappointment is the one who is at home.