

Age of Marriage and Wedding Practices

Transcript in Twi:

Baaba (on right)

Pennante (on left)

Baaba: At what age na. Na woreka at what age a nkrɔfoɔ etaa ware and why a ɔmo taa ware at that age? And.. Wahu sɛ in some countries, nkrɔfoɔ tumi ware very young or very late sɛ ebi a woman 30 something na afei na waware. Do you think there's any problem sɛ ebi a girl 19 na waware anaa ?

Pennante: Sɛ the issue of girl child no it's being brought up often afei. Nti asɛ obiara pɛ sɛ ne ba bɛkɔ school anya a bit of education ansaa na wasettle down. They usually want to work and fend... be able to fend for themselves, get some little income before they get into marriage, before they settle down.

Baaba: Most people ɔmo ntie mma ɔmo mma mmaa nware at a young age...?

Pennante: Ooho. Efirisɛ hwan na obɛ hwɛ no?

Baaba: Right. That makes sense. Wohwɛ a, Ghana ha, is there a stigma attached to not being married anaa...?

Pennante: Yeah. People frown on it sɛ wonwareɛ a.

Baaba: Why do you think this is so? Anaa is it part of the culture anaa dɛn?

Pennante: It's not... normal for Ghanaians. It's not acceptable sɛ you didn't get married, wonnware.

Baaba: Nti is it...

Pennante: Our culture nso frown on it sɛ woyɛ Ghanaian baa a wonnware. Membisa me sɛ me menware!

Baaba: (laughs) Wohwɛ a aden na ɔmo frown on it? Tete no nɛ ɛte saa anaa?

Pennante: Se obiara pε se ne ba wo ba ma no. Ɔmope nana nana paa. Yes, they really cherish it. To be able to continue lineage no a they started no. Anye saa a you will break the chain.

Baaba: Nansei nso ase se nkrofoo bebree firi rural areas ebetena city and Ɔmobe ware Ɔmo bewo mma na Ɔmo aka Accra anaa Kumasi anaa wherever εna Ɔmo ntaa nkƆ Ɔmo village no and ebimo complaine se eye saa a people do not really see where they come from and that is very bad. Nti wohwe a personally eye a wotaa kƆ wo akurase anaa wonntaa nkƆ?

Pennante: Mennim baabi a makurase koraa wƆ. Na Ɔmoreka se εwƆ James Town na menkƆƆ hƆ mpo da.

Baaba: Do you think se it's important se wobε taa akƆ anaa enhyε daa nhia. Se woantena hƆ da nti... it's not that important but it's still where you come from. Nti wohwe a... is it, is it important?

Pennante: I think it's, it's εhia εhia se you know beebi a wofiri reba.

Baaba: Adεn? Why do you think it's important? Dεn na wobεnya afiri mu?

Pennante: Wonnya biribi ara nfiri mu but wobεhunu beebi a wofirieε, nkrofoƆ a ƆmowƆ hƆ no omo asitena mu se nia etiε. Like sεnia... you relate to them. Wobεnya ahunu se asem ba a wobεtumi akofre Ɔmo. Because yeyε Engagement, yeyε Outdooring, Ɔmo ara na Ɔmo bεhwe se Ɔmo bεkƆ na Ɔmo ahwe wo.

Baaba: Wobεtumi akasa kakra about... Wokaa Engagement εne Outdooring. Ghanaian Engagement εte sεn?

Pennante: Eye gye.

Baaba: Dεn saa na Ɔmoyε? Etese obi reye Engagement a... Se obi rebε engage wo a, what will happen?

Pennante: Wobε liste. Me maamemo bε liste nnoƆma a yεbεhia na nnipa no akƆƆ.

Baaba: NnoƆma bεn saa na Ɔmo taa liste?

Pennante: Schnapps ne ntoma ne ... Kyerεε nnoƆma a ne boƆ eye den. NnoƆma a Ɔbaa de behwe ne ho.

Baaba: Nti nnooma no omo de ba a hwan na omo de bema no? Omo de bema obaa no anaa ne family anaa...?

Pennante: Omo de bema obaa no. Obaa no na ewose ogye

Baaba: Nti omo liste wie a na omo de ama die orebeyε engagement and then what happens next?

Pennante: Omobeyε ayi... What do you call it? Omobɔ pono no ano. Omo abebɔ pono no ano.

Baaba: Eεε? Gas nso ye saa anaa Akans nkoa?

Pennante: Yeah. Every religion, omo ye. All the religions.

Baaba: O ok. Nti omo ba a na omo abebɔ pono no ano. Nti abusuafoɔ no nyina ara hyia a...

Pennante: Yeah. Abusuafoɔ no nyina ara beba. Both sides of the family no, omo beba atena ase. Na omo aye no gye.

Baaba: I see. Wedding no nso eyε a saa na etie w'ahunu? Traditional wedding no.

Pennante: Yeah.

Baaba: But most people nso omo wie a na omo aye church wedding no nso aka ho and etumi ye really expensive do you think it's a good thing se ebi a it's a special day nti you want to spend so much money? But sometimes ebinom ye saa ne akyir they get married na omo de ka ne ade and they have to solve that so...

Pennante: It's not so important se you can just go to the Registrar General...

Baaba: ...and get it registered but nkrɔfoɔ bebree omo pεεε nkrofoo hunu se oh, yewɔ sika we made a big wedding...

Pennante: Ghanafoɔ saa na omo tie but wo ara woreha wo ho. Wonim se sika yi wonni bi a, it's not really advisable to make it...

Baaba: Nti wo personally, you wouldn't go and borrow money from the bank...

Pennante: No. Oh, no. Diε mewɔ ara na me... Σε mereye nko ara diε a, diε mewɔ ara na mede beye.

Baaba: Do you think most people would make it big anaa most people ɔmo beye no kitiwa?

Pennante: Nkrofoɔ pe din nti most people, that's how they do it. ɔmoye no kesie na obiara aba na ɔmo anya biribi aka wɔ ho. Nkɔnkɔnsafoɔ no. ɔmo benya bi aka.

English Translation:

Baaba: You were talking about the age when most Ghanaians get married and why they do it. Well, in some countries, women who are older than 30 or as young as 19 get married. Do you think there's any problem with that?

Pennante: Well, the issue of the girl child is brought up often nowadays, and so everyone wants his/her child to go to school and to get some education before settling down. They usually want to work and fend . . . be able to fend for themselves, get some money before they get married, before they settle down.¹

Baaba: So most people won't let their daughters marry at a young age?

Pennante: No way. I mean, who would look after them if they did that?

Baaba: Right. That makes sense. Do you think there is a stigma attached to not being married in Ghana?

Pennante: Yeah. People frown on that.

Baaba: Why do you think this is so? Is it part of the culture or what?

Pennante: It's not . . . normal for Ghanaians. It's not acceptable if you don't get married.

Baaba: So is it

¹ Some years ago, the Ghanaian government started a campaign to educate the public on the importance of educating girls, and not only boys. Though this isn't a problem in the urban areas in Ghana, it's an issue in the rural areas.

Pennante: Our culture frowns on women who aren't married. Don't ask me if I'm not getting married!

Baaba: So why do you think this is so? Was that the case long ago?

Pennante: Well, every one wants grandchildren. People really dream of having grandchildren. Yes, they really dream of it. And they want that in order to be able to continue the lineage they started. Otherwise you break the chain.

Baaba: Another issue is people migrating from the rural areas to live in the city. They end up getting married and having kids and staying permanently in Accra or Kumasi or wherever, and then they hardly go to their villages. Some people complain about that, that people don't really know where they come from and that it's very bad. So, do you visit your village often?²

Pennante: I don't even know where my village is. My folks say that it's in James Town, but I've never been there.

Baaba: Do you think it's important to go there regularly? I mean, you never really lived there, so you could say it's not that important, but it's still where you come from. So, is it important?

Pennante: I think it's important. It's important that you know where you came from.

Baaba: Why? Why do you think it's important? What would you gain from that?

Pennante: Well, you won't really gain from it, but you'll see your roots and how the people from your hometown still live. You also see how you're related to them so that you can always get help from them if you need to. This is important, because if you're having an engagement or an outdoor, they would help you out.³

Baaba: Could you talk a bit about We mentioned engagement and outdoor. What is a Ghanaian engagement?

² Accra = capital of Ghana. Kumasi = second largest city in Ghana.

³ An engagement is a ceremony performed when a couple gets engaged. In some cases, it's also the traditional wedding. An "outdoor" is a ceremony whereby a newborn is named and introduced to the community.

Pennante: It's great.

Baaba: How exactly does one do it? I mean, if one's having an engagement, for example, if someone wanted to get engaged to you, what would happen?

Pennante: You would make a list. My mom and my family would make a list of things we would need, so that he can get them.

Baaba: What sort of things do people usually put on the list?

Pennante: Schnapps (an alcoholic drink), and clothes and . . . you know, expensive things . . . things that a woman can use.

Baaba: So who gets to keep all those things, the woman or her family?

Pennante: The woman, of course.

Baaba: So after the woman's family makes the list, what happens next?

Pennante: They have the . . . They knock on the door. They will knock on the door.⁴

Baaba: Really? Gas also do that? I thought it was only Akans who did it.⁵

Pennante: Yeah. All the religions do it.⁶

Baaba: Okay. So they knock on the door with all the family there . . . ?

Pennante: Yeah. All the family members gather there. Both families come for the ceremony and perform it nicely.

Baaba: I see. That's the same as the traditional wedding, right?

Pennante: Yeah.

⁴ Knocking on the door is a ritual performed at engagements where the man's family "knocks on the door" of the woman's house to ask for her hand in marriage.

⁵ Gas and Akans belong to different ethnic groups.

⁶ She probably meant regions/ethnic groups, and not religion.

Baaba: But most people also have a church wedding in addition to this, and this can be really expensive. Do you think it's a good thing? I mean you could argue that it's a special day, and so you want to spend a lot of money, but, on the other hand, sometimes people do that and get into all kinds of debt when they get married, and then they have to solve that, so . . .

Pennante: It's not that important; you can just go to the Registrar General . . .

Baaba: . . . get it [the marriage] registered but many people want others to see that they're rich enough to afford a big wedding

Pennante: Yeah, Ghanaians love to do that, but it's really not necessary. If you know you're not rich, it's not really advisable to make it

Baaba: So would you wouldn't personally go and borrow money from the bank

Pennante: No. Oh, no. I'll just make do with what I have. If I ever get married, I'll make do with what I have.

Baaba: So do you think most people would have a big wedding, or would they have a smaller one?

Pennante: Well, most people like to be noticed, so that's how they do it. They have a huge wedding so people can come and talk about it. You know, so the gossips can have something to talk about.

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