

Respondent: ID#8035

Interviewer: Christopher

Date: 7 July, 1999

District: Balaka

I found the respondent grading green tobacco, *i.e.*, removing the green leaf from the midrib. We greeted one another and I told him that I had come earlier and heard he had gone to the *dambo* (marsh) to harvest tobacco. I asked him if he was so busy that I should come for a chat at another time. He said he could spare some time and since there were children and a friend around, we went behind his house. I then told him that I was waiting for my friends and he said he had seen the vehicle go by. I told him I just wanted to chat with him and learn some of the cultural values when children are born. He started explaining that when a child is born the only thing which he knows or has heard is that the man is told not to sleep with his wife, and if one does so he can die. I asked him, "a person can die, why?" And he said a person dies because the woman is still "hot" and she "hasn't cooled down" since she has given birth I asked him how long it takes for the man to wait, and he said it's around nine months. I asked him, surprised, "nine months?" and he said yes, nine months. I told him that in my village in N the duration is almost six months, but people there even fail to wait and he said he himself manages since in the nine months he usually goes to the lake to do *ganyu* (temporary job pulling nets) until the nine months elapses, so he avoids the woman in that way. I asked him if people around do control themselves within the nine months, if they do not move around with other women. He said, "Let me tell you, my friend, I myself fail to control myself and I always sleep with other women". He explained that nine months at the lake is too long and he cannot manage to stay without sleeping with a woman. He said he thinks it is better to sleep with other women during this nine months, since he avoids the wife. "If I can be putting up there with her then I can wake up at night and do her". We laughed, and he said that's why he thinks it's better to go out with other women. I asked him when he first went to the lake, because his wife had a small kid, and he said he came back in November (1998) but for the past two years he has been doing temporary work at the lake and was just coming to see his wife at times. Now he is involved in tobacco growing (small scale). I then asked him what other cultural values were practiced apart from this tradition, since traditions differ from place to place, and I asked him if he also grew green maize, since I had seen it there. He said he got it from his *dambo* and would cook some for me as long as I told him when I would come again. I told him I might come but couldn't promise. He then said, "Brother, I'll ask like this, what is this all about?" I said that was a very wise question and I told him that research is for the purpose of knowing and learning. It was difficult to chat with all the young men in the village but I had chosen to chat with him to represent his friends. "Oho, now I see," he said, and I explained that we are not the Government Of Malawi as some people say but from the University of Malawi. We then bid goodbye.