**1a) Typical Muslim Marriage among the Dagomba Ethnic Group in Ghana**

The Dagomba ethnic group, primarily located in the Northern Region of Ghana, follows a blend of traditional and Islamic practices in their marriage ceremonies. This process begins with the **Magariba**, a formal marriage proposal from the groom's family to the bride's family, often facilitated by an intermediary known as a **Wanzam**. This intermediary plays a crucial role in negotiations and communications between the two families.

Upon receiving consent from the bride's family, the next step is the **Sadaaki** or bride price. This bride price is agreed upon by both families and typically includes money, cloth, and other items of value. The payment of the Sadaaki is a significant aspect of the marriage process, symbolizing the groom’s commitment and financial readiness to support his wife.

Following the agreement on and payment of the Sadaaki, the marriage contract, or **Nikah**, is performed. Conducted by an Imam, the Nikah requires the consent of both the bride and groom. The ceremony involves the recitation of specific verses from the Quran and the signing of the marriage contract, which formalizes the union in accordance with Islamic law and traditions. The Nikah ceremony is attended by close family members and witnesses, reinforcing the legitimacy and sanctity of the marriage.

The final step in the marriage process is the **Walīmah**, or marriage feast, which serves as a public celebration of the newlywed couple. The Walīmah is attended by family, friends, and members of the community, marking the joyous occasion.

**Relevance of Marriage Feast (Walīmah) in a Muslim Marriage**

The **Walīmah** holds profound significance in a Muslim marriage for several reasons:

1. **Firstly, Religious Observance**: The Walīmah is an act of Sunnah, following the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet emphasized the importance of celebrating marriages, as seen in Hadiths like Sahih Bukhari 1905, where he encouraged holding a Walīmah after marriage. This makes the feast a religious obligation and a means of expressing gratitude to Allah for the blessing of marriage.
2. **Secondly, Social Function**: The Walīmah serves a crucial social role by bringing together the community to celebrate the union. It fosters social cohesion, strengthens community bonds, and promotes a sense of collective responsibility towards the newlywed couple. The gathering provides an opportunity for community members to offer their blessings, support, and advice to the couple.
3. **Thirdly, Public Declaration**: The Walīmah acts as a public declaration of the marriage, ensuring transparency and community recognition of the union. This public acknowledgment helps prevent disputes and misunderstandings regarding the marital status of the individuals involved, providing a clear record within the community.
4. **Fourthly, Hospitality and Generosity**: Hosting a Walīmah allows the couple and their families to demonstrate their hospitality and generosity. Sharing their joy and blessings with others, they embody the Islamic values of charity and kindness. The feast is a means of strengthening relationships and showing appreciation to those who have supported the couple.
5. **Finally, Cultural Integration**: In the context of the Dagomba ethnic group, the Walīmah also integrates traditional cultural elements with Islamic practices. This fusion enriches the marriage celebration, making it a comprehensive event that honors both religious and cultural heritage.

**References and Citations**

To enhance the credibility of the information provided, references to Islamic texts and scholarly articles on Dagomba traditions are essential. Some relevant sources include:

* Sahih Bukhari 1905 (Hadith on the importance of Walīmah)
* Scholarly articles on the Dagomba ethnic group and their cultural practices
* Quranic verses related to marriage (e.g., Quran 30:21 on the purpose of marriage)

**Comparative Perspective**

Including a brief comparison with Muslim marriage practices in other Ghanaian ethnic groups or regions would provide a broader perspective. For example, comparing the Dagomba practices with those of the Akan or Ewe Muslims could highlight both unique and shared elements, enriching the overall understanding of Islamic marriage traditions in Ghana.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Walīmah is an integral part of a Muslim marriage, with significant religious, social, and communal relevance. It fulfills a religious obligation, strengthens community bonds, ensures transparency, and showcases the values of hospitality and generosity. By integrating cultural elements, the Walīmah becomes a comprehensive celebration of marriage, honoring both Islamic and Dagomba traditions.