

Chapter II-8: *How Chiefs Judge Cases*

As we have been talking about our chiefs, today we will talk about how the chief separates the talks that can spoil a town, that is, how we Dagbamba judge our cases at the chief's house, and how today it is spoiled. It was the chiefs who used to judge the cases of bad people, and so this talk joins to the talk of the chiefs and their work. Before the government courts came out, a chief used to judge cases in front of his house, outside, and even now, there are some cases that the chiefs judge like that. The chief will sit with his elders, and the people will gather, and they will judge the case there.

And so today we are going to talk about bad people. In the olden days, in Dagbon here, if somebody did something bad, we would send that fellow to the chief's house. There are many types of bad people. In the olden days, and as Dagbon is sitting now, if somebody goes after somebody's wife, he is inside bad people. If somebody fights with his friend, he is inside bad people. When a person takes a knife and cuts and kills somebody, he is a bad person. And if someone steals, or borrows money and doesn't pay it back, he is inside bad people. A witch is a bad person. A thief is a bad person. Any bad person like that, in the olden days, they would send him to the chief's house.

If there was a case against you, and it wasn't that they caught you the time you were doing the bad thing, the one who would take you to the chief's house was one of the *naazonima*, the chief's friends. I told you that the *naazonima* are the elders who sit in front of the chief. As for the *naazoo*, he was just like a policeman. If you were sitting down and you came to see a *naazoo* in your house, fear would catch you. Even the Wulana himself fears the *naazoo*. Even the chief's son fears the *naazoo*. The chief's wife fears the *naazoo*. Everybody fears him because he is like the police, and so the *naazoo* is a very big person. The *naazonima* used to carry the type of long knife we call *takɔbu*, and some of them used to hang it on their shoulders, and there was a pouch where the knife was. They used a red cloth to weave it, but somebody's could be made of skin. And when they took you to the chief's house, they would tie you to the *daantalga*: that is the post that supports the roof in the chief's sitting hall. I have heard that in the olden days, they were tying people to the chief's horse tether in front of his house. If someone says that, I cannot argue. But when we got up, we didn't see them tying bad people to the chief's horse tether. How they tie, and when I got up and saw it: they were tying to the *daantalga*. If not that, they would keep you in the Wulana's house. You would be there up to the time that the chief would eat the case.

What is “eating the case”? When they sent somebody to the chief’s house, they had no talk except, “Make him pay money.” In the olden days we didn’t have prisons, and we didn’t have handcuffs. We would send a bad person to the chief’s house and make him pay money. In the olden days, if you went after somebody’s wife, they would collect five pounds from you, and a goat. When you fought with your friend, and if it was that you knocked and broke open his head, they would get twelve shillings. And if you fought and killed somebody, it was five pounds. In those days, this five pounds was a big talk. Even if you were a very rich person, you couldn’t get a hundred pounds; it would be too much for you to get. Ten pounds was big money. And so if somebody did a bad thing and they caught him and took him to the chief’s house, and if he was not a mad person, it was money they would get from him. And if he could not get the money, they would sell him.

How did they sell a person? If you did a bad thing, and you could not pay the debt, somebody would pay it for you. And it stood that the fellow had bought you. You would go to his house and work for him. Sometimes you would be there five years. It was not that your people did not have the money to pay for you; it was because of your bad-doing that they would leave you there to work for the person who bought you. And so if you did a bad thing, even if your people had money, they could leave you there. Your staying in that person’s house was our Dagbamba prison. When it’s early morning and people are going to the farm, you are already at the farm. And everybody will farm and go home, and you will still be at the farm. You will not come home before evening. And as for your food, you will not eat and be satisfied.

And a person who buys a bad person in Dagbon here, he is also wicked: he has got money and his eyes are strong. When you get to his house, you will meet your friends, your fellow bad people. There you cannot do your bad things again. You can be in the house of the person who buys you, and you can die there, and there will be no talk. If you are very bad, and you do something bad, they will beat you, and you can die from the beating. It was there like that in Dagbon. That was all. If you died at the house of the person who bought you, by all means your people would come and pay back the money before they would bury you. That was its way.

The ways they used to eat cases and buy a bad person were different, and it was the bad thing you did which would show how they would buy you. When you quarreled or when you knocked and broke someone’s head, it was different from when you killed someone. And if it was not that you killed somebody, but maybe that you went after and had sex with somebody’s wife, that one was also different. Or again, when chieftaincy was there, if boys took a young girl and ran away, and

they went and caught her and brought her, and she didn't want to show the one who took her, they would send her to the chief's house. The chief would let them tie her with a rope, and tie her hands against the daantalga. At that time, she would call the name of the one who ran away with her. And sometimes they would say she should call the names of all the boys who were going after her. She could call about six people or twelve people. And the chief will call them and charge all of them a hundred cowries each. As for that, it was there in Dagbon. It is not long ago. When the chiefs stopped judging this type of case is not more than thirty or twenty-five years.

Let me give you an example. Let's say that somebody has given his daughter to someone, and the girl is still in her father's house before they come to marry her. If you have sex with her and they catch you and take you to the chief's house, maybe the chief will charge you sixteen shillings and a sheep or a goat. This amount is just a debt that is put down as the starting of the case, and it will come from the mouth of the girl's father. He will say, "Chief, I swear to you today that I want you to sue this man because he has had sex with my daughter, and you should use the money for your cola and the sheep to sacrifice for your forefathers before we get into the case." And you will have to get all that.

You will not go back to your house again. They will take you to the Wulana's house. The next day the girl's father and also your relatives will go there, and the Wulana will take you and all of them back to the chief's house again. The first asking the chief will ask you is, "Do you know that the thing you have done is a bad thing in Dagbon?" And you will say, "Yes." And at that time the father of the one who was to be the girl's husband will sit down and count the amount all the money his son spent on the girl, and you will have to pay it. In the olden days, the money to marry would be maybe five shillings or ten shillings or one pound. And sometimes the chief will tell you to pay that debt just there, and maybe you will not be able to pay it. If your family also does not have the money, your father will send you to somebody who can pay it, and you will remain with the money man, doing his work for him.

When you are in that man's house, you will be farming, but this farming work will not stand for the money your father got from him to pay the chief. Your father will have to pay back the money. If it will take one year, it is over to your father; and the money man will not hand you back until your father brings the money. In Dagbon here, sometimes it could happen that you would be the age of Kissmal, about twenty years old, and be taken to a money man, and you would still be working for him up to the time you had a full beard because your father could not pay back the money. Sometimes you could be bought by a money man and no

one in your family could pay him back. If it continued like that and you were growing old at the money man's house, maybe your mother's side or your father's side would sit together and say, "None of us has the money to pay back and collect our son, and so it will be good if we all give together and go and collect him. If not that, he will turn into a slave." They will sit down and contribute the money to go and pay the money man before they will collect you. And the money man will say that he agrees and that the work you have done for him is enough, and so they should take you back. And by then you will be a proper human being.

And so the buying of people has got different ways, because there are many types of bad people. Somebody who borrows is not a bad person. He wants good things, and that is why he is borrowing. But sometimes the person he borrows from will give him a day to pay the money back, and he will not be able to pay it. At that time he has become a bad person to the one he borrowed from. They can send him to the chief's house. If he cannot get money and pay, he will also become a slave because they will send him to work for somebody who will pay for him. How such a case is, maybe you have borrowed money to farm corn and sell, but the corn did not grow. The money owner will still be asking you for the money. Someone can be asking like that, and it will bring trouble. If it doesn't bring trouble, the money owner can bring the trouble and send the talk to the chief's house. The chief will ask, "What has brought it?" And you will all talk to the chief. If it is that you cannot pay because the corn has not grown, the chief will tell the money owner to be patient, and he himself say, "I the chief will collect the money and give you" or "I will collect the food and give you." And they will leave you, because you are not a bad person.

Sometimes you will borrow money to buy things and sell. As you want profit, you are going somewhere to buy the things, say, at fifteen shillings each and come and sell them for one pound each. But when you buy the things like that and come, the thing is selling for fourteen shillings each. This one can also come to something bad, and it will go to the chief's house. The chief will separate the talk. The chief will ask the money owner, "Will you be eating patience and let him pay you little by little? Or what do you have to say?" And the owner of the money will show. If he doesn't want something bad for you, he will tell the chief he will be patient while you are paying back little by little until the debt finishes. And if he wants bad he will tell the chief, "I will not agree. It's cheating. He should pay me my money." At that time you have become a bad person to the money owner. But truly, you are not a bad person. By then the chief will say, "As for this, I don't know how I will catch it." And he will tell you, "You know the way you will follow and get his money and give it to him." Inside your family

they may have some cows, and they can sell a cow and give you to pay the money owner, because you are not somebody like a bad person. It is the money owner who has brought a bad talk.

If you haven't got money, and your family also hasn't got anything, you yourself can say that you will go to the house of somebody who will pay for you. You will tell the money owner, "Will you agree, and I will come and work for you? And you will be counting it." As for this, it's not something like slavery, because it's just that you are going to work and pay your debt. Sometimes the money owner will say, "As for me, I will not let you come and work for me. But if you know the one who can hold you, then I will agree." And somebody will collect you, and at the end of every year when the year goes round, that fellow will take food and give to the money owner until the debt finishes. It is not money he will give, but if it is corn or guinea corn you have farmed that year, that is what he will take from your farming. Somebody can give four full calabashes of guinea corn at the end of each year. If you farm twice in a year, and if the food grows, you can divide it. As you are in your house, you will take, say, half and feed yourself, and take half and give, and it will pay your debt.

And there can be somebody who does something bad and cannot get money to pay. If he has family, they can say, "Won't you catch one of your nephews or sons or grandsons and sell?" You could catch one of them and go and sell to somebody. But as for that, it is not selling. In Dagbon here, according to our custom, no one catches his child and sells. If debt should catch you, you can take one of your nephews or sons or grandsons and deposit the child. It's not selling. You yourself know that you have not sold. But in Dagbon here, if someone is put down as a deposit, people say, "They sold him," and they say, "He is a slave." But truly, it doesn't show that. It looks like selling, and it looks as if he has become a slave, and some say that. But you can say that you have put him as a deposit. If someone gets a bad talk or gets a debt from the chief's house, he can deposit his child with the person who pays the debt, and when he gets the money and pays, he will go and collect back his child. And so in Dagbon here, when debt comes, we don't sell family.

And so on the part of our selling a person, there were differences, and as for slavery, there were different types. Someone will bring you to me and ask for, say, five shillings to go and pay a debt. And if he gets the five shillings again, he will pay and collect you back. If he is not able to pay, then he cannot take you. That one is different, and it is like borrowing. Some people who wanted chieftaincy even sold their relatives to rich men to get money and look for the chieftaincy. We called it *talma*, and as it has stopped, it is not up to ten or fifteen years.

And again, truly, what we had here was that they used to catch some people and sell them. If you were stronger than someone, you could catch the fellow and sell him. Even a chief's son, if he is standing on the road, he has become food for somebody who is stronger than he is. The one catching the prince doesn't know that he is catching a chief's son. Have you heard the talk? As you John are sitting, if you are a prince in your town, we don't know, and we don't mind. That is why they say, "The place where no one knows you is the place where they take you to be a slave." That was how it was. But as for family, if you get a debt, you can take your child to someone and ask the money to go and pay the debt, and you will leave your child; when you get the money, you will pay and collect your child back. But if you are not able to get the money, you cannot take your child.

When the child gets to the house of the person who bought him, if there is suffering inside that house, sometimes he will run away. If he runs, he won't go to the house from which he was sold. He will go to a different house where his people will not hear anything about him. And the person he was sold to will come to your house and say, "As for your selling, the one you gave me has run away. I want my money." If you have somebody else, you can give him. And if you don't have anybody, it will be by force that you will get the money and give him. That was how it was in Dagbon here. Some of them used to run. In the olden days, someone could not run to any part of Dagbon where they wouldn't see him. They would hear about him. But it would not be good for them to go and bring him. He has refused. If somebody says he has refused, can you catch him and put him inside a tree trunk? And so they would leave him and search for another person. But others would not run away. Truly, in the olden days, to run to any place was difficult. If you ran to someplace where they don't know you, it was this real catch-and-sell that was waiting for you.

As for the South, no one could run to the South. If somebody got up from this place and went to Salaga, then he has reached his south. A place like Savelugu, it would be a year and the people who went from Savelugu to the South would not be three or five. That was all. No one could go. What were you going to do in the South? If you were going to buy, say, cola, you would take something like *kpalgu* or shea butter and go. When you went, you would walk for about two months. Those who could walk fast, it would be about a month and ten days. Those who could not walk fast, they would walk for two months. If you were going, you would go in a group. The people of this town would remove, say, three people, and would come and join three people from another town. You would become about eight or ten people. As you were all going and carrying your loads, you were all holding cutlasses. You could be walking, and lions would come out

on the road. They want to catch you and eat. If you were not strong, the lions would catch you. And in the South, too, there were people whose eyes were open, and they could also catch you. They could even catch all of you. They would take you and go and sell to the Ashantis, and the Ashantis would cut your heads and make sacrifices to their cola trees. This was how it was, and this was why people feared going to the South, and they couldn't run away and go there.

And so, in the olden days, if somebody did a bad thing and it went to the chief's house, they would charge him money. And those days, if he didn't have the money, they would take him and sell him to someone. He would be farming for that fellow until his people would come to get the money and go and pay for him so that he would become a good person again. If they couldn't get the money, he would be there farming for that person until the person came to have pity for him. Someone could farm for somebody like that for three years. And someone could be a young man when they sold him, and he would come to mature into a man and still be farming there and still not be able to get the money to pay. And so, how they would buy a person and he would pay, there were differences. If he was somebody who did good works for the man who bought him, the man could leave him to become free, and he would become a good person again. If you were sold to someone and you did good works, sometimes that person would even give you a wife, and if the debt finished, you would even stay in that house. As for that, it's true. They did that a lot. If the place was sweet for someone, he would be there. But it is not all Dagbamba who would like to remain in such houses. And if he paid his debt, by that time, if he wanted, he could go. In Dagbon here, we had all this in the olden days.

And we have something else in Dagbon here. It is a whip we call *barazim*. There is somebody, when they send him to the chief's house, the chief cannot eat a penny of his. If it is somebody who is really from that town, the chief does not eat his money. Somebody who is the son of a *tindana*, if he is supposed to pay money to the chief, the chief will not collect it. They will whip him with the *barazim*. If he is the son of a former chief who has died, or if he himself is a chief, and he is a bad person, they will whip him. In the olden days, what they were using to make this *barazim* was the penis of a bush cow. When they kill it and bring it, they remove the penis. It can be as long as an arm. They will put it in the sun and it will dry. Then they will put it inside water, or they will take it and bury it at a wet place; and it will become soft. They will take a knife and cut it into strips. That was our whip in the olden days. But as for now, they use the skin of a *koyu*, a roan antelope. It is about the size of a horse, and they take part of the skin and cut it into long strips. And this is the *barazim*, our local whip.

And so there are some bad people they will whip. There can be somebody who goes to cheat somebody: “Give me money and I will go and search for something and come and give you.” He is a bad person. He hasn’t got the thing, and as you want it, you think he has got it. Such a person and a thief are on the same side. And as for stealing, when somebody steals and they send him to the chief’s house, there is the whip. They will whip him twelve times. When they are going to whip him, they will tie his hands with rope and tie him to the daantalga, the post that supports the roof in the hall. And they will remove his clothes. If he is from that town and they know him, maybe they will leave his underpants. When they whip him the twelve times, they will also let him pay money. If he hasn’t got money, they will also send him to the house of somebody who will pay for him. He will be working there, and it will be a long time before his people go to pay for him. As for somebody who has money and can pay, sometimes it will not be daybreak and he will steal again. And we got up and our fathers said that some time ago, the time we were not there, they would burn his hands in fire. Our fathers said they could do that to somebody and the hands would be burnt. As his hands were burnt, could he steal again? As for us here, it was like that, and that was the way of the chiefs.

There can be a thief and they cannot stop him from stealing. When they sell him and it’s daybreak, he steals again. They will sell him and become tired, and they will talk the truth to him and become tired. As for him, he has no medicine apart from an arrow. They will hide in the night and shoot him with an arrow. It will be daybreak and you will not see him again. If you wait for him and you don’t see him, you don’t search for him. When it is up to four days or a week, then it has all finished. That is all. Or if it the chief’s son who is stealing, the chief has no way to eat his money. If you catch him and send him to the chief’s house, it’s useless. The owner of the thing he stole will be afraid to collect money from the son of a chief or from the son of the tindana of his town. And so as for such bad people, too, they shoot them. The people he steals from are the ones who shoot him, and others will be roaming and come to see him lying down dead. And there is no talk to talk again. In those days there were no police, and so they would go and tell the chief. And the chief would say they should get their hoes and bury him. That was all.

And so the talk about bad people in Dagbon, it is a bad talk. And as there are many types of bad people, it is the women in Dagbon who are bad more than the men. The bad women in Dagbon here are more than the bad men. If it is a woman who kills people, if she is a witch, they wouldn’t sell her; they will drive her from the town. Truly, in Dagbon here, there are some gods that kill witches,

and sometimes they can send a witch to one of these gods. There is a very strong one near Singa called Naawuni, and this Naawuni has been killing witches. Truly, this Naawuni has got a lot of talk, but today I am talking on the part of the chief's house court: they can catch a witch, and if they want, they will send her to the chief's house.

As for a witch, they had some ways to do to know if a woman was killing people. If you have your wife or your sister in your house, and she is an old woman, and if there are young men in the house, this old woman can catch one of them and eat his life. Inside it, when the young man is going to die, he can call the name of the woman, "My aunt so-and-so is killing me." If any woman is killing him, he can call the name. If he does that, the woman will not agree. She doesn't want people to say that she is a bad woman. When this young man finishes dying, they will send her to the chief's house. And she will become food for the chief.

When the chief asks what is wrong, they will say, "Such-and-such a person was dying and he called the name of this woman." Sometimes the woman will say that she is the one who killed him. At that time you will hear the chief say that her people should pay a debt and the old woman should leave the town. And sometimes she will say, "Truly, I am not the only person who killed him." Before she leaves the town, she will call the names of all the people who added themselves to her to kill the young man. Someone will call the names of four other women, and someone will call three names. They will call all these women and gather them at the chief's house. If they don't also deny, the chief will ask them, "What happened and you killed the young man?" And they will say, "Truly, we begged him for something. As new yams have been coming out, we told him that when he goes to the farm he should bring us yams. And he didn't give us. And we saw that he had the yams, and we said, 'It is because he is there that he has got yams. If he is not there, will he have yams?'" If it is the time of new groundnuts or guinea corn or corn, they can do that too. And by then you will hear the chief tell the people of the witches, "You will buy your people, that is, the witches. You will buy them for five pounds each. And if you don't buy them, we know what we will do to them." Those who have money, they buy their people. And they will remove them from that town. They have become bad people in that town. If they remove them, they can go to the towns of their brothers, or their grandsons.

There is town just near Yendi which we call Gnaani. That is the town of witches. Any old woman who eats people, if there is no one for her, she goes to Gnaani. The chief of this Gnaani is also somebody who is a bad person. When he collects the witches and makes them sit in the town, everyone will have her own

room. Every witch has her room, and her house is only one room. They cannot gather in one house, and they cannot gather in one room. If someone's people like her, they can build the house with two rooms, and they will be sending guinea corn or corn to her. And the chief of Gnaani has his medicine and the town has the thing that is forbidden. Anyone who goes to that town, her medicine is dead. If you kill somebody, that day you too will die. It's not that anybody kills you. That is the forbidden thing of the town, because the town forbids a bad person. Even in this Tamale here, we have an area called Gnaani, just like the town near Yendi. That area is behind where the old army barracks were, just by where the Hausas live. That area is full of old women, and they have made them sit there. All the witches of Tamale here are at that area.

If an old woman eats someone and they send her to the chief's house, sometimes she will not agree that she has killed. Or sometimes a witch will call the names of her fellow friends who added themselves to her to kill, and those women will deny. The chief will let them bring those who don't agree that they killed the young man. If they send such a witch to the chief's house, the chief will say they should put her finger inside a type of hoe which we call *soyu*. This *soyu*, you can remove the metal hoe part and fix it back again. They will get it, and they will take the hand of one of the women and take her finger and put it inside the hoe part just at the neck of the hoe where the stick joins the metal hoeing part. When they put the finger inside there, they will hold her hand and take the stick of the hoe and raise it up and pull it. When they do that, it will break the finger. Sometimes they will do that to someone and she will shit. This was what was happening to the witches in the olden days. And there, she will agree that she is the one who killed the young person. If she is the only one who killed that young person, she will say she is the only one, and if they were many, she will call all their names. If she finishes calling the names, they will remove her hand from the hoe. They can do this at the chief's house and not at the house of any other person. If not the chief, no one can do that. The chief will come out with his elders and the people who brought the witch, and they will do that to the witch. And those whose names she called, when they also come, whatever happens, they will also agree that they killed the young person. As for them, the chief will also let them pay a debt before they are removed from that town. They have become bad people. If some of them have given birth to children, and the children are a bit grown, and the children like them, these children can take their mothers and go with them and change towns and build houses. And they will be there with their mothers. It can happen this way in Dagbon.

If it is that the witches still refuse, and they will not talk, there is another way. The chief will say that people should carry and bring the dead body from the room. And the chief will call all the women who are in the house of the dead body, and all the women who are staying in that area. They will all come out into the compound, and everyone will separate and stand. By that time, the chief will let people cut and bring sticks from a *gaa* tree, about four long sticks. They will take ropes and tie the sticks so that it will be like a frame or a bed. And they will take the dead body and put him on top of the frame. They won't bathe him; they will just take the cloth he was using when he was alive and use it to cover him, and they will take him and bring him outside the room. They will get four people to catch the sticks on either side of the frame, two people in front and two people behind. These four people will put the frame on their shoulders, and take the dead body and stand. They will be facing front, and the dead body's feet will be behind.

Then the father of the dead body, or the family head, will come and say — if the dead body was called Nindoo — he will say, “Nindoo, today we want you to get the person who does not like you. And if the one who doesn't like you is a man or a woman, you should search for the one, and if it is the wish of God, enter the room.” At that time you will see the legs of the dead body shaking, and as they have put him on their shoulders, he will be taking them and going. The legs will be shaking, and he will be taking them round. I have seen it. It is not that somebody told me. I saw it at Voggo, and the time I saw it, if I want I will say it's about forty-five years now. They will take the dead body to search for the one who does not like him, and he will be taking them round. The women will be standing separately from one another, and the men too will be standing. Everybody will stand quietly. The dead body will take them and go round, and go round the whole place, and the legs will be shaking. When the dead body should reach the people who have put their hands in his blood, those who have killed him, you'll see that he will be coming fast. The people who are holding him don't know where they are going; they are just walking. He is on their shoulders, and the legs are at the back, pulling them. When he reaches the people who have put their hands in his blood, whatever happens, the people carrying him will not be able to go anywhere again. If they want to go, the legs will pull them and stand.

At that time, they will be removing the women, all those the dead body has stopped at their place. You will see all these women remove the scarves on their heads and take and tie them round their waists. And every woman will pass by him and will open her mouth and say, “Nindoo, if I have put my hand in your blood, you should catch me. And if I'm not the one, then you should search for

the one who does not like you.” When they are saying that, he will be there in the middle, shaking the legs. When a woman says that and is passing by the legs, if the dead body does not knock her with the legs, she will pass by and stand somewhere. And so, as the legs are shaking, the women will all start on one side and will be passing by the legs and saying that. When it comes to the one who has put her hands in his blood, even while she is talking, the dead body will be raising the legs, and before she finishes talking, the legs will whip and knock her. And my eyes have seen that.

If the legs knock her, you will see that the chief’s elders who are standing there will take her at that place and go to the chief’s house. She will not go back to enter her room again. If she has a child, or a grandson, it is there they will also take the child and add to her. When they take them to the chief’s house, she will be kneeling down there, and the grandson will also kneel. The chief will be standing in front of them. And you will see an elder of the chief, the Zoꝝyuri-Naa, take the barazim and put it on his shoulders, and he will be standing just by the side of the woman. The chief will say, “My aunt, what has happened?” And the woman will say, “I have not done anything.” At that time the Zoꝝyuri-Naa will take the whip and whip her ears. And the chief will say, “My aunt, is that the work of you alone?” And she will say, “Chief, I am not the only person.” And the chief will say, “You and who?” And the woman will say, “Ah! I cannot say it.” And the Zoꝝyuri-Naa will take his whip and whip her, and she will say, “Stop and let me say.” And the Zoꝝyuri-Naa will put the whip on his shoulder again. And she will say, “I and such-and-such person.” And they will ask again, “And who?” And she will say, “That’s all.” And the Zoꝝyuri-Naa will take the whip up. And she will say, “Let me talk. This person too was there.” She will call all the names. Someone will call four names like that, and someone will call three names, and someone will call one name. When she is kneeling down there, that is where she will call all the names.

Then the chief will send and call all the people she named, and they will come. And the chief will say, “I the chief and you people, we are too big for this town. And so this town is not big enough for me and you. You should search for your town.” And he will tell the witches’ people, “You should pay such-and-such an amount of money, and you should take your people and search for a town.” Those who have money will pay. Those who don’t have can beg the chief, and he will decrease the money; if he has said five pounds, he will tell them to pay two pounds ten shillings. And you will see that the witches’ relatives will gather and contribute and come and pay the chief. And the witches’ grandsons will enter the witches’ rooms and collect their things. None of the women will enter her room

again. Such a woman, she has said farewell to her room. If she has grandchildren, she will take them and change her town. And if this woman's people don't pay, they will also remove them from the town. They will remove the witch and all her people from the town, and this bad person and those following her will get up and go. We have this in Dagbon here. And if it happens that a witch has not got people in that town, when they send her to the chief's house, the chief will say they will remove her from the town, and they should accompany her and leave her on the way. And what is leave her on the way? It is not good. They can throw stones and kill her, and leave her like that. And this is how it is.

And so, some women in Dagbon here are bad people, and I can say that they are bad more than anything. There can be a man who is a witch, but really, it is the women who are witches. And on the part of killing people, it is the women who do it more than the men. A man's medicine does not come out into the open the way a woman's medicine comes out. And apart from that, a man will not kill a person for nothing: before a man kills someone, everyone will know that it is this person who has killed himself before that man came to kill him. This is why a man's talk will not go to the chiefs' house in the same way as a woman's talk. As for a man, if they want, they can sell him. But as for a woman, she hides and kills, and so as for a witch, we fear her, and we remove her. If someone dies and it is that his life has been eaten by witches, we have what we will do to the one who has killed him. If the dead person calls the name or doesn't call the name, ways are there. Even if it is a small child who dies like that, it is a soothsayer they will go to, and if it is that someone has killed the child, the soothsayer will see. The soothsayer may say, "It is the mother's house that has killed the child." They will get stones and call the names of all the women from the mother's house. The soothsayer will look at the stones and catch, and when he catches like that, they will send the woman to the chief's house. And the way they sent the witch and her people from the town when the young person or grown-up died, that is the same way they will also do it when a small child dies. This is how it is in Dagbon here with bad people.

And so, you go and chase somebody's wife, they can send you to the chief's house. You enter somebody's farm and dig his yams, it can send you to the chief's house. You knock and break somebody's head, they can send you to the chief's house. If somebody kills a person, it will go to the chief's house. That was how it was, but today it is not standing. What I have talked today, I'm talking about the olden days. What I told you about witches, today if you do that, you won't sleep in your house. Today they are holding law, and they are holding the way of the white man. If you say an old woman has killed, you have to be holding something

that is poison, and you will tell go and lies about the poison while you are holding it. You can say that this is the poison the old woman has poured into soup for that person to eat and die. If it is that, and you go to the court, then you will hold more truth than the old woman. If they say that it is lies you are talking, you will say that they should take the poison and give it to her, and she will also drink and see. It's not even you who will say it; it is the lawyer who will say that the woman should drink it because she is saying that she is not the one and that is not it. And the lawyer will say that you cannot lie about somebody because of nothing. Today we have it like that.

If you don't see her pour the poison like that, and it is just that the person was going to die and called her name, you will just stop. It won't go to the chief's house. Today, someone whose eyes are open, if you drive away his mother, he will send you to the court. If you are not able to show the talk that made the old woman kill the child, then you yourself will leave the old woman and enter the prison. And it's just as if a porcupine has hurt you and you want to knock it. If you knock the porcupine, you will get more pain to add. That is it. This old woman has eaten the child, and you are taking her to the chief's house, and you will enter prison. Your child has died and you have got pain, and now you have also got trouble. And so, as for this, now they don't send witches to the chief's house.

But there are some places in Dagbon still, a child will know that his mother eats people. If they catch his mother, he doesn't care. If they send her to the chief's house and drive her away, he doesn't care. Or there will be a woman who has not given birth to a child but she has got brothers, and her brothers will know that she is someone who eats people, and if she is sent to the chief's house and they drive her away, her brothers will agree. But there will be someone who knows that his mother eats people, and they will drive away his mother, and he will not agree and will send them all including the chief to the court. And so nowadays we don't send our bad people to the chief's house again.

Truly, if they were to give the chiefs their courts again, it would be good, and I can say again that it will not be good. If they give the courts to the chiefs, the chiefs will do bad things. In these modern times, some of the chiefs will do bad things because they will take strength and enter it, and they are not going to let the law work. Today we have come to the time of law: nobody should cheat somebody. And the chief's house court is cheating. You see the truth: you cannot say it. That is strength. Some of our nowadays chiefs will even tell you, "All right. You have got the truth. What of strength?" The truth you were holding, you cannot say it. And what will you do?

And so nowadays, truly, we have more bad people. As for the bad people now, you can't count them. In the olden days, the people in Dagbon here were not many, and we were not entering into the towns of one another. But we had our bad people here then, and we are still having them, and now others have come to add themselves to them. Some are from the South, and they come and are bad people here. Some come from Nigeria, and they are bad people. Some come from Togo, and some are from Upper Volta, and they are bad people. And some come from England, and some are from America, and some come from Germany, and some are Chinese. And they come and they are bad people here. And so here it is: can we defeat them? In the olden days, we had people who could collect a bad person. Now we don't have people to collect somebody. The amount of money which we were using to buy a person in the olden days, someone will put it in his pocket and spend and finish it in one day. And you cannot buy and collect somebody again. And if you send somebody to prison, he will go and be eating the food he likes. And he will be resting. When he comes out from the prison, the thing you didn't want him to do is what he will do again. And this way: can it finish the bad people? If an old woman kills somebody, you cannot put her finger in the hoe as they used to do in the olden days. If you do that now, even if you are a chief, they will put you the chief inside the prison. And as a person has died, you cannot make them carry the dead person. And the chief's house cannot call somebody and whip him with the barazim again. Won't the bad people still be there? What is it going to bring? And so as for all this, it will just add to the bad people, and the bad people will be increasing. When we were not many, we had them. And now we are many and we still have them. And others have come from other towns to add to those we already have. And this is how it is. But formerly, it was the chiefs who judged the cases of the bad people of the town. And that was also the chief's work on the part of holding the town.