

## Chapter II–23: *The Priests of the Land*

Today we will start the talk about the gods and shrines of Dagbon. In Dagbon here, the Muslims are there, and those who beg the gods [*buyli, buya*] are also there. These gods, we cannot take them and join them into the Muslim religion. As for them, they are older than the Muslim religion. The day man was made, that was the day the gods also came. It was God Who made them, and why God has let them be there, nobody can know. And so in Dagbon here, what we call the *buya* are the gods and shrines of this place. Why is it so? It was Naa Zanjina who brought Islam here, and Naa Zanjina also came and met the gods. Naa Gbewaa himself came and met the gods. And so, as for the gods, we all came and met them, because it was the first people who started with them. Even Islam itself, it came and met gods. I have been hearing that at Mecca, the Muslims are there, and those who beg the gods are also there, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad also came and met gods. And so I think that the gods are senior to the Muslim religion. And as for us in Dagbon here, we have just known the Muslim religion, and the gods were here long ago.

In Dagbon here, every town and village has got its god, and those who know the ways of the gods are there. The one we call *tindana*, he is called *tiŋa lana*. In Dagbani, *tiŋa* is the land, or the town. And so the *tindana* is the “one who holds the town.” He is for the town. In Dagbon, there is no town that has not got a *tindana*. A *tindana* has many names. The *tindana* is the *tiŋbia n-nye o*, that he is the town’s child. It means that no one becomes the *tindana* unless he is actually from that town. And the *tindana* is also the *buyalana*, that is, the holder of the *buyli*. It means that he is in charge of the god. And so a *tindana* has many different names, and if you come to Dagbon here and they say the *buyalana*’s house, you should know that it is the *tindana*’s house. The *tindana* is holding the town, and the *buyalana* is holding the town, too. As the *buyalana* is holding the god, he is holding the town, because if you are holding the god of a town, then you are holding what is in the town, too. And so the names *tindana* and *buyalana* are different, but he is one person.

The *tindanas* [*tindaannima*] have their ways, and they eat their chieftaincies and give one another. Every town has got the way its *tindana* becomes a *tindana*. In some towns in Dagbon here, if the *tindana* dies, it is his sister’s son who becomes the *tindana*. The mother’s house talks will catch the new *tindana*. And in some towns, if the *tindana* dies, it is his first-born son who will become the *tindana*. In some towns the *tindanas* are women. In some towns, if the *tindana* dies, it is his *pakpɔŋ*, his eldest daughter, who becomes the *tindana*, and she is a

tindana woman; if she dies, it is her son who becomes the tindana, and the tindana men and the tindana women change like that. Some towns have got different tindanas in different areas. Every town has got the way its tindanas become tindanas, and it all comes from the starting of the town. As the gods are different in different towns, the way the tindanas eat their chieftaincy is also different.

I want to separate it for you and you will know. The tindana chieftaincy moves inside a family, and how a family separates, that is how the tindana's line also separates. It is not the same as the Yendi chieftaincy, because the Yendi chieftaincy does not separate: as for Yendi, there is only one door. But there are some chieftaincies in Dagbon that move and separate. And so on the part of the tindanas, if I don't show you how they separate, you will think that it is only one way. But as they are different, their talks are many. You see a family: there is the father's house and the mother's house. That is two parts. If you want, you can say there is the father's father's house, the father's mother's house, the mother's father's house, and the mother's mother's house which add to make four parts. But it is the two that have strength in family talks. Anybody who talks will say "my father's house" or "my mother's house." It has become two. And how it separates, it shows that the other parts are there. How the tindana's chieftaincy follows the family, it is all coming from the way that particular town's tindana started.

In Dagbon, it is the father's house which is strong on the part of chieftaincy, and that is how it has come in most towns and the tindanas are men. If a tindana is there and he gives birth to boys, when he dies, they will take his senior son to become the tindana. That is the first one. As the tindana gave birth to boys, and when he was not there, his senior son ate, then when that son dies, it is his senior son who will also eat. And God can make it happen that this tindana does not give birth to boys: his brother's son can stand as his son and become the tindana. As it was one line, it can separate in two ways. If the tindana has given birth to a boy and this child is not grown, they cannot leave the tindana chieftaincy to be lying down. The tindana is holding the land. When a tindana dies, it won't take two months before they finish the whole funeral; they will make it quickly. As the tindana's son is small, he cannot eat the chieftaincy, and so they will give it to his brother's son. The small child the tindana gave birth to, when that child grows, he can eat the chieftaincy. It has become two lines. And if you follow it, it can separate again. Let's say a tindana man gives birth to a girl and the town shows that only a man will become the tindana. This girl will not get a way to eat the chieftaincy, but if she grows up and gives birth to children who are boys, her children have got a way to go and eat the chieftaincy. And it also has come that the child eating the chieftaincy is a woman's child. And so that is all one way, and

there is separation inside it. And so, according to our custom, if you have no children, your grandson can stand as your son. For example, if I give birth to two children and these two also give birth to children, if the two I have given birth to happen to die and the children they have given birth to are alive, they will stand in place of their fathers. Listen well. When anything that belongs to their fathers should come out, they can take it. If I am a tindana, on the part of the chieftaincy I am holding, if I come to die and none of my children are there, one of my grandchildren can sit on the skins.

And again, sometimes it can happen that a man has no brothers and he does not give birth to boys, but his sister is there giving birth to boys. They can take the chieftaincy and give it to the sister's son. In that case, it is the sister's son who has become the tindana. Or if this tindana did not give birth to children and his brothers did not give birth to children, and they come not to be there, as their sister's son is there, the tindana chieftaincy will catch him. When that one comes, then it is a nephew who has eaten. According to our families in Dagbon here, we call your brother's son your son, but your sister's son is your nephew. And so as this new tindana is not your brother's son, then it doesn't stand that he is your son; he is your nephew. If you think, you will see that this one resembles soothsayers, because soothsaying does not catch a soothsayer's own son; soothsaying catches the sister's son. If it doesn't catch the sister's son, it will catch the daughter's son. I have told you all about that, and this way is coming to resemble it. But the tindanas are different from the soothsayers. They are two talks. And so I am only showing you that they look alike on the part of how a sister's child can eat the tindana chieftaincy. In this town Tamale, when the tindana dies, it is his sister's son who becomes the tindana. And so that is another way, and it also shows that there are now two doors to the tindana chieftaincy, because if nephews get it, they won't refuse it. Formerly it was the tindana's children who ate it, and it has come to add that if the sister's child is also there, he can also eat it. And so it is father's house, mother's house. In Dagbon we have some chieftaincies which eat like that. Savelugu, Nanton, Mion, Karaga, and all the chieftaincies which are for the Yaa-Naa's children and grandchildren, they don't move through a woman's side, but I have told you that there are many chieftaincies that can be eaten by a woman's child, that is, a sister's child or a daughter's child.

And it can separate again and a woman herself will become a tindana. If it happens that a man is eating the tindana chieftaincy, and he is only giving birth to girls, and God has made it that if he dies, his own child is going to eat it, or if the town shows that the first child the tindana gives birth to will eat, and that child is a girl, then whatever happens, it is the woman who is going to eat. If it comes and this woman gives birth to a boy, it is this boy who will eat. And at that time it has

come to separate that if a tindana man dies, a tindana woman eats; and when the tindana woman dies, they change to a tindana man. It is at Katariga like that; I have seen it there. And there is a village under Singa called Toligu; they also have women tindanas there. And that is another way, and it shows that there are tindana women, and it also shows that there can be two doors to the tindana chieftaincy.

How does it come to be two doors? Let's say that I started the tindana chieftaincy, and I have no senior brother and no junior brother. It can happen like that. If I give birth to a baby girl, and this baby girl grows before I give birth to a boy, and the boy is still small when I die, then the chieftaincy is going to catch the girl. As the baby boy is still small, he doesn't know anything, and so it is good the chieftaincy is given to the girl instead of the boy. At that time, she will be eating the chieftaincy and also holding her baby brother. Whatever happens, if she gives birth to children or she doesn't give birth to children, when she dies, the chieftaincy will be given to her brother. By that time, hasn't it come to be two ways? And so this one is never an argument; it is just seeing with the eyes. As the man ate it and died, there was no man to take over because the man who is there is still a small boy. By all means they will give the chieftaincy to the woman, and as the small boy grows, he has no way to collect the chieftaincy unless the woman dies. If she dies, there is a way for this chieftaincy to be given to the boy. If this boy eats, and he gives birth to children, it is not that his pakpɔŋ is going to take over. His sister who was the tindana woman has also given birth to children who are girls. If this boy dies, the child of that woman will come and eat. Then it has become: a woman eats, a man eats.

How they will be eating if there are two doors like that, if I am a tindana and my children are there, it can be that when I die my child will sit down, and another tindana's child will come and eat. The time the other child eats and is going to make a sacrifice to the god, it is my child who will follow him to be cutting the heads off the chickens. If it is a woman who the tindana, then the man who is going to take over will be following her, and he will be killing the chickens. If the time comes that the woman dies and the man takes over, if this woman has given birth to her child, then her child who is a girl will be following the man to make the sacrifice. In our custom, a woman does not kill animals, and so the tindana woman's daughter who is going to eat the tindana chieftaincy when the tindana man dies, she will not be killing the animals; her brother will be following the tindana man and killing the animals for him. It will be like that until the tindana man dies and the woman takes over. It doesn't show that her brother who has been following the tindana to kill the chickens is going to take over. The town shows that when a tindana man dies, a tindana woman will take over, and that is how they will follow it.

As I am showing you this, there are certain chieftaincies which women eat and men also eat, but they are not on the tindana's way. The chief of Nakpanzoo is a woman, and if this woman chief dies, it is a man who is going to take over. The chief of Saasiyli is a woman, and when this chief dies, a man will take over. But it is the Yaa-Naa who gives these chieftaincies, and they are for Yaa-Naa's children. It is the daughters of Yaa-Naa who eat Saasiyli. The Nakpanzoo chief who just died: her name was Zara, and she was the daughter of Savelugu-Naa Bukari Kantampara. At Yimahigu, a Savelugu chief's daughter can eat the Yimahigu chieftaincy. I saw that, too. Yamahi-Naa Fajimah: she was the daughter of Savelugu-Naa Mahami, the one who went to fight the Zambarima war. He was the first-born of Naa Abilaaï Naybiëyu. His daughter Yamahi-Naa Fajimah went first to eat Nakpanzoo, and from there she went to Yimahigu. This Savelugu-Naa Mahami, one of his daughters also ate the chieftaincy of a village called Kuyalöyu; she was Kuyalöyu-Naa Samaata. And so I have seen Savelugu-Naa's daughters eat those chieftaincies. At Nakpanzoo, if a man eats and dies, a woman will come and eat. Yimahigu is also like that. And if the woman eats and dies, a man will come and eat. But this talk, it is not on the tindana's part, because they catch the tindanas in a different way. And so some things can look like one another but they are not the same. That is how it is.

And so the tindanas' talks are too many. Even there are other ways. At Kumbungu, there is a tindana woman and there is a tindana man. It is not that the man has to die before the woman sits. They are in different areas of the town: the tindana woman has her area, and the tindana man has his area. If the tindana woman dies, a woman is going to take over; if the man dies, a man is going to take over. And they are both there. In Kumbungu we have it like that. And so every town has got the way its tindanas become tindanas. I have separated them for you so that you will know, but the ones where women's children eat are different. Inside our Dagbon, it is not plenty. And inside towns, you will go to some town and see about six tindanas, and it will only be from one house where women's children eat it. And so if you want to take it in a simple way, you can know that in most of the towns, the tindana chieftaincy moves from father to son.

And so the tindanas are different from chiefs, because the tindanas follow their ways and their lines. But as for chieftaincy in Dagbon here, money can make someone a chief, and that person might not be the son of a chief. As for chieftaincy, you can get it in that way. And here too, if you go and give respect to a paramount chief, sometimes it can give you chieftaincy. So if it is "My father never became a chief," or "My father was never chief of this town," such a person can still become the chief of a town. But as for the tindanas, they don't do that. They follow "This is the son of a tindana," or "This is the nephew of a tindana," or "This is the daughter of a tindana." That is how they do their work.

And again, the tindana does not go out from the town. The tindana's line is there in the town, and so a tindana doesn't leave his town and go to another town again. Once they have made him a tindana, that is all. He doesn't want any other town or village. But a chief goes out. It is only some chiefs who don't go out, but a tindana never goes out. And so the tindana is not in the line of the chief, and it is the tindana and the chief who are holding the town. The tindana's work is to sacrifice to the god. If he is going to make a sacrifice, he goes to tell the chief that he is going to "make the land," and he will ask the chief, "And so, what do you have?" If the chief has money, he will give it. If the chief has chickens, he will give. That is all, and his hand is out of what the tindana is to do. Anything that has to do with the god, it is the tindana who does it.

And so you should know that as the tindana is there, then the chief is the stranger in the town. I want you to use your sense and know that the tindana is for the town. Didn't I tell you that the tindanas were here and we came and met them? And Naa Nyaysi fought a war and drove them away. Didn't I tell you that? I told you, and that is it. A long time ago, it was the tindanas who were the chiefs. It was strength that was more than them. That is why they have become commoners. Savelugu was sitting down, and the tindana of Savelugu was for Savelugu. Tolon was like that. Every town that was there, it was the tindana who was the chief. It was only the Yaa-Naa who was alone, and even the tindanas were inside the starting of Yendi. And so Yendi was for the commoners. That is why we don't talk about the starting of Yendi, because it has many talks inside it, and if you want to talk it and you don't stand well, you will not be there again. It was Naa Shitɔbu and Naa Nyaysi who turned Dagbon. It was Naa Shitɔbu who knew. He knew that he didn't want to remain alone. When a Yaa-Naa gave birth to a son, and he died, his son would eat Yendi, and there was not any talk again. Yendi has come to meet him. The tindana does not want Yendi, and the chief's son does not want to be tindana. But Naa Shitɔbu saw that there was no other chieftaincy his son would eat apart from Yendi, and he counted and saw that he had given birth to many children. And he told Naa Nyaysi, "Prepare for war and drive away the tindanas, and take your mother's children and your friends and put them in the towns." If Naa Shitɔbu had not told him to prepare for war, he would not have prepared. And Naa Nyaysi prepared and went. When he reached any town, if he saw the tindana, he would cut off his head. If the tindana heard about him, he would run away. And so Naa Nyaysi took his sons and put them in the towns, and he called the names of the towns. They were just towns, and they didn't have names. It was Naa Nyaysi who put these children in the towns and called the names of the towns. That is how it is. Before Naa Shitɔbu and Naa Nyaysi, the tindanas were for the towns.

And so we drummers know that the tindanas are older than the chiefs. Their ways don't enter one another, because a chief's son does not become a tindana. No matter how useless a chief's son is, he will never become a tindana. And no matter how fat a tindana grows, he will never become a chief. Their ways don't mix. But they sit together and consult one another as to what they will do and the town will be well. And it is the tindana who will consult the chief first, because the chief has no time. As the chief is not for the town, he doesn't care. Whether the town is nice or not nice, maybe when it's daybreak he will leave that town and go to another town. But as for the tindana, the town is his, and he wants his town to be nice. The tindana is holding the land, and the people who are on the land are his people, and they are all from the same town. And so the tindana will not follow someone and make his town bad. If he does that, the god will not leave him.

Truly, how a chief is, he is for the people. It is the chief who holds the people. If it is doing some work or collecting some money, it is the chief who will say it. If people quarrel, they will go to the chief's house. And formerly, if the white man wanted something done, it was the chief they would tell. If the Yaa-Naa's messenger comes to town, it is the chief he will see. If there are drummers in a town, they follow the chief; the tindana has no drummers. And in the old days, how a chief was, he could catch people and sell. But a tindana could not sell a person. He is for the town, and the town's people are his people; if he sells any person, the god will not leave him. If there is no chief in a town, and the tindana is the chief, if the town's people quarrel, they can go to the tindana's house for him to make the case well, but he has no way to take anything from them. Even if they send something and give to him, he will not take it. But as for the chief, when they send and give to him, he will eat.

And so the chief and the tindana, they respect one another. If it is actually the truth they want to follow, if it is not the Yaa-Naa's mouth and it is according to the ways of Dagbon, the tindana is for the town. But if it is the Yaa-Naa's mouth, the chief is over the tindana. In the old days, when the tindanas were holding the towns and there were no chiefs, at that time the tindanas used to show their strength. But here is the case: Naa Nyaysi defeated them, and now a tindana follows the Yaa-Naa. If a tindana is strong, it is not the same strength that the tindanas had long ago. As the chief is sitting in the tindana's town, it is that the Yaa-Naa has brought an elder to sit down so that they consult one another, and so it is good for the tindana to follow the Yaa-Naa's messenger. But we know that the tindana is older. A chief cannot make a town well, because a chief does not know its name; he doesn't know the name of the god. He is the son of a Yaa-Naa or the grandson of a Yaa-Naa, and he has come from another town to sit in the

town, and how will he know the name of the town? And so the chief is a stranger, and the chief respects the tindana. Sometimes a chief's eyes will not see the tindana: the tindana will go to the god and make a sacrifice, and the chief will die or become mad or become sick. And so if a chief comes to sit in a town, he will see the tindana so that they consult, and the town will be good, and the land will be cool.

As we are sitting in this town, when somebody comes from any town and he wants to know about this town, he can go to ask the Gukpe-Naa. And the Gukpe-Naa doesn't know. He will call the tindana and ask the tindana, and what the Gukpe-Naa doesn't know, the tindana will show him. Here is an example. There are some places in Tamale here where they don't build houses. Over behind Victory Cinema, you can see where there are many trees: some people have put down sand for about thirty years now and they cannot build, and if they build there, they cannot enter. It is because of the god, and the tindana knows what is inside it. But the Gukpe-Naa might want to give the land to some people to build. Someone might build and enter the house, and he will not last one year and he will die. And someone will also come and say, "As this man had died, I will enter the house," and he will also enter and die. When it is daybreak, will someone enter? No. Someone will build another house and enter, and every day he will have dreams that will not make him happy. Will he remain in the house? No. And someone again will enter into the house and become mad. It is these troubles that have made people leave their sand lying there. And so truly, the tindana is for the land, and the tindana is for the town, and it is the tindana's name which is senior before the Gukpe-Naa. That is how it is.

And so as I have said that the chief respects the tindana, it is because the tindana knows the talks that are inside the land. Even if they give birth to somebody in a town and he comes to eat chieftaincy and sit in that same town, if he wants to know the town, he will have to ask the tindana. Even if somebody is in another town and they go there to catch him to be the tindana, he will know the town better than the chief they have given birth to in the town. It is his father's and grandfather's land. The chief will give him respect. But if a chief sits in a town and does not respect the tindana, he will die just now, or he will enter madness, or he will get some sickness he would not have got, or his arm or leg will die. And so a tindana is his own chief. But a tindana does not catch people and bring a case against them, and he doesn't sell a person. The tindana's work is with the god.

Truly, the tindana chieftaincy is sweet for the tindana, because he eats some small things inside it. But they don't sell the tindana chieftaincy, and no one buys it. If not that, they would have been struggling for it, using their money to get it



and eat it. Our eyes have seen some tindanas give birth to children, and when the tindana dies, those who have a way to eat it will be struggling for it. But it is never possible. If you fight to eat it, you will die and leave it. And so you don't go to buy the tindana chieftaincy because they already know who is going to be the tindana. If the tindana dies and they are going to find a new tindana, it is that the chieftaincy catches someone. What is the catching? The chieftaincy of the tindana is in the hand, and I think you have been seeing that the tindana holds a donkey's tail. It is this donkey's tail that shows he is a tindana, and it is this tail they use to catch the tindana. Actually it is a wild donkey, the one we call *buntaana*, and it is bigger than a donkey but not as big as a horse. That is the tail they use to catch a tindana.

It is following in the tindana's way that when the tindana dies, soothsayers will gather and catch the one who will become the tindana. As the soothsaying is in the tindanas' way, the soothsayers just look for everybody to see, but they already know whom it will catch; and when they look, they won't catch a different person. It looks like how the Yaa-Naa is sitting, if he dies, the elders of Yendi and even everybody knows who is going to be the Yaa-Naa, but they will make soothsaying because it is following the way. As the tindana is there and he is sitting, he knows who is going to take over when he dies. If it is a woman's son who will get it, he knows which child is going to get it. Everybody knows. I myself sitting down, if this town's tindana dies, I know who is going to take over, and I am not a soothsayer. If the Dakpema dies, I know the one who is going to take over. The only time they really do the soothsaying is when there is an argument inside it, or if the one who is supposed to take over is sick or is also dead. At that time, soothsayers have to sit down and look to catch another one. But if not that, there is no talk inside it.

If it is the son of the tindana who is going to eat, the elders of the tindana will go to him. If the elders of the tindana find that the son is living somewhere else in another town, they will take the donkey tail and go to find him. If he is in Takoradi or Accra and he is doing some work and living there, they will go there. When Dagbon was sitting and there was truth inside it, if the son was even in London and the tindana chieftaincy caught him, something would happen to lead him home. If it is that the elders go to find him, when the elders get the new tindana, they don't just call him and tell him, "This tail has caught you to be the tindana." They go to where he is, and they stand in a circle around him, and they throw the tail at him. If he is sitting outside with people, they just throw it at him; and if he is sleeping, they put it on him and go away. When he gets up and sees the tail, he will take it and come home. It is by force. No one has ever found such a tail or had such a tail thrown at him and then left it. If the tindana chieftaincy

catches the nephew or the daughter or the grandson, it is the same thing they will do. In Tamale here, how they do it is that if the tindana dies, it is the Kakpaguyili tindana who will catch the new tindana. If it is this town's Dakpema who dies, the elders will go and give the tail to the Gukpe-Naa and tell him, "How we have made our soothsaying, this is the person it has caught, and we are bringing the tail for you to call him and give him the tail." And it is the Gukpe-Naa who will catch the new Dakpema. Sometimes it can happen that the soothsaying will catch someone and that fellow will not know anything about it. He can be at his farm, and they will just come and put it under his arm, and they will take him away. And it will only be crying, and that is the starting of his tindana chieftaincy.

And so, if it catches someone, then that person's way of living just changes at once. He will come and they will send him to a room. They will put him inside for seven days or sometimes three days. It's not that they lock him, but when they put him inside, he will not come out. Everything he has to do, he will do it inside the room. If he wants to ease himself, he cannot leave the house, and he will come out into the compound at night, and they will give him a small pot and he will ease into it. The reason why the elders put him into the room is that maybe the new tindana is a young person and he doesn't know much about the work of the tindanas. The elders have to sit with him and talk many talks with him. They will tell him what the tindana has to do during the sacrifices for the god. They will tell him, "This is what your grandfather was doing." And they will tell him, "If it comes to this time, this is what your father did." And, "If someone should come to you and say he is suffering from such-and-such a thing, this is how you have to go and beg the god." They will be showing him all this during the seven days or the three days.

If he becomes all right with all the showing they are showing him, and they are ready to make him a tindana, then they shave his hair. And we have something we use to make drink; we call it *kpeya*. They put guinea corn on the floor, sprinkle water on it and cover it with leaves. When it starts to bring forth, they remove the leaves and they grind it into a white powder. By then it has become *kpeya*, and when they shave the new tindana, they put the white powder on his head. They leave him like that until the market day. That day they will call drummers. They will get a strong person to carry the new tindana on his neck and go round the market, and we drummers will be following him and beating *ɛm*. Women and children will be crying, "Hey-hey" and following us to know what is happening. We play the drums and roam round the whole market and go to the house. And so if the tindana dies and they are going to make a new tindana, this is what we drummers do.

When they take the tindana to the market, if you are trading in the market and you don't pack your things away, they will take everything from you free.

Even the people who are not with the tindana will do it. Everybody will take anything in their way. They will take anything at all, free, and the case can never go to the police station. The police can never arrest anybody. Never. It shows that the one who holds the land is entering the market, and his strength has to overcome everything. He is for the land, and everything in the land is for him. Nobody should say he owns something again. That is how it is on that day. It is not the tindana alone: even a chief will not enter the market. If the chief enters the market, there will be fighting in the market. And so the day the tindana is going to enter the market, people who know about it will lock their stalls. If they come and your stall is locked, they won't break it. But if your things are outside, it is only your strength that will protect your things. If not that, they will collect all. That is the day they will show themselves, and that is how it is.

When the tindana becomes the tindana in his town, he doesn't become the tindana in any other town again. He will stay there until he dies. And so a tindana is different from a chief. But if you are following it, you will see that there are some chiefs who are tindanas. Why have I said that? The tindanas I have been talking of are the tindanas whom they go and catch, and these tindanas are there. But there are some chiefs who sacrifice to the god. And again, there are some chieftaincies which show that they catch a new chief. And again, there are some chiefs who don't go out from their towns. And there are some towns, when the chief dies, it is the son of a woman who becomes the chief. And so I can say that the way of the tindana has got many, many parts. And there are some towns where only the people of that town are made the chiefs there; other people from other places don't come to be chiefs there. And so we Dagbamba call such chiefs tindanas. As it is, if other people could come from other places to become chiefs, it would have shown that they are not tindanas. And so the chiefs in those towns are tindanas.

Which towns are they? At Gushegu, we have never seen anyone become Gushe-Naa apart from the people of Gushegu itself. It is the Gushe-Naa's children or nephews who become Gushe-Naa. At Kumbungu, we have never seen a person from another town become the Kumbun-Naa. It was only one son of one Yaa-Naa who became Kumbun-Naa; and as for that, I didn't see it, I heard it. And I think it will be more than four hundred years since that son of a Yaa-Naa became Kumbun-Naa. He was the son of Naa Zolgu, and he was called Zimbaa Pannyu' ma, and he didn't give birth to any son who could fight for the Kumbungu chieftaincy. Since then, no Yaa-Naa's son or nephew has ever become the Kumbungu chief. At Tolon too, it is only people from Tolon who become Tolon-Naa, and so the Tolon-Naa is a tindana. And these chiefs too, they don't go out to become the chiefs of other towns. In the way of chieftaincy, the chiefs move from

town to town, but the Gushe-Naa, the Kumbun-Naa, the Tolon-Naa, the Gukpe-Naa, none of them ever go out to another town, and so they are tindanas according to our custom. They are different from the tindanas who are holding the tails. And so we have many tindanas in Dagbon here, and some are chiefs and some are typical Dagbamba. When they catch a tindana, it is by force that he follows the way of the tindana, because the tindana way is already there for him. And so a chief who does not go out, and if he is really a person from the town, these two things show that the god that is there is the thing he has been doing. And so we call such a chief that he is from the town and he is for the town, and that is the tindana way.

But there are some chiefs who don't go out and they are not tindanas. At Yelizoli, Nanton, Sunson, the chiefs don't go out to eat any other chieftaincy. Their way looks like the way of the tindanas, but they are not tindanas. It is their strength that does not want them to go out, and we even say that someone who gets such a chieftaincy should show his strength and not look for Yendi again. These three chiefs I have called, and adding Gushegu, Tolon, Kumbungu, and Gukpeogu, they do everything the Yaa-Naa does. They shave the heads of their wives, and drummers play *Bimbiɛyu* and follow them. And so the Nanton-Naa, the Yelizolilana, and the Sunson-Naa don't go out, but it doesn't show that they are tindanas. They are the children of the Yaa-Naa, but they don't want Yendi. Naa Zanjina's father was Naa Tutuyri, and Naa Tutuyri's first-born was the Yelizolilana, and he was called Yelizolilana Gurumancheyu. When he became the chief of Yelizoli, he didn't go out again. He was sitting down when Naa Zanjina ate Yendi, and will someone sit down and his younger brother will eat Yendi and leave him? We can't call the chief of Nanton a tindana because the Yaa-Naa's children can become chiefs of Nanton. Many of them became chiefs there. Nanton-Naa Musa was Naa Zanjina's son, and Nanton-Naa Mahama Yindoo was Naa Ziblim Bandamda's son, and they didn't want Yendi. Nanton-Naa Dokoyu and Nanton-Naa Nyerga were children of Yaa-Naas, but they didn't go out. And again, Sunson-Naa Timaani was a son of Naa Tutuyri, and he sat down while his junior brother Naa Zanjina went and ate Yendi. And so these chiefs are sitting with their strength. It was only one Sunson-Naa who went out from Sunson and ate Karaga, but apart from that, I have never heard that the Sunson chief goes out. They don't go out, but they are children of the Yaa-Naa, and so they are strangers to the town, and they are not tindanas. And there are many towns where the chiefs don't go out, but they are not tindanas.

There are some chieftaincies again, and the children of women can eat them, but it doesn't show that they are tindanas. It cannot happen that the son of a chief's daughter will eat Mion, Savelugu, or Karaga, but the son of a Yaa-Naa's

sister has eaten Yelizoli. Yelizolilana Layfu, he is also called Yelizolilana Yidantoyma: his mother was Kpatu-Naa Shetu, and she was Naa Yakuba's sister. Her name in drumming is "Someone who loves family will not get people who love him." That was Yelizolilana Layfu's mother, and so he was a Yaa-Naa's nephew, and he ate nine chieftaincies before he came and sat at Yelizoli and remained there. As for Nanton, it was only one woman's son who ever became chief of Nanton. Nanton-Naa Mahama's mother was called Miriam, and she was the daughter of Nanton-Naa Braimah. Apart from that one, it is only Yaa-Naa's children and grandchildren and princes of Nanton who have come to eat the Nanton chieftaincy. At Diari the son of a woman can become the chief, and the chief of Diari does not go out. And I have already told you that there are some chieftaincies like Nakpanzoo where they have women chiefs who change with the men chiefs. But all of them, they are strangers to the town. Sometimes it will happen that a prince of one of these towns will eat the chieftaincy there, and as he was born in that town and he is from that town, it doesn't show that his starting was from the town. That is why I told you that things can look like one another, but they are not the same. If I don't open your eyes clearly about this, sometime you may say that these chiefs are tindanas, and someone may hear it and find my fault. And so that is how it is.

But as for the Gushe-Naa, Tolon-Naa, Kumbun-Naa, and Gukpe-Naa, I can say that truly they are tindanas. If you follow it, in these towns, the chief's sister's son calls the chief his *ɲahiba*, his uncle, and if the chief is not there and he has not given birth to a son, the nephew can take the skin. In Dagbon, it is not all skins that a nephew can sit on. At Gushegu, when the Gushe-Naa is not there and he has no son, his sister's child who is a boy can sit on his skins as the *Gboɲlana*, and when he sits on the skins, if he gets Gushegu, he will eat it. Gushe-Naa Amidu sat on the skins of his uncle Gushe-Naa Moro, and he was a nephew. And so the Gushegu people have that at their place. At Kumbungu, they also do it in that way, and in Tolon too they do it in that way. Have you seen? These towns are old towns, and the chiefs of those towns are from the town. As they are from the town and they eat their chieftaincies in that town, they are also for the land. Their everything resembles the tindanas. The starting of their chieftaincies is in the town, and they are never strangers to the town. That is why I told you that the tindana is senior to the chief, because even before the time of Naa Gbewaa, the tindanas were there.

As this town Tamale is sitting, I will tell you more about it, because formerly the tindana was the chief here. Now we have the Dakpema and the Gukpe-Naa, but if you want to know how this town actually started, it was the tindana who was for the town. Formerly this Tamale was only a village, and the

Gukpe-Naa was not here. The Gukpe-Naa was at Gukpeogu. Gukpeogu is a small village just near to Yendi, and the Gukpe-Naa was sitting there. The chiefs of this town were the tindana, the Wulshe-Naa, and the Choggo-Naa. And there were big chiefs sitting in the villages around here, the Banvimlana and the Nyankpalalana: these were the big chiefs; they had drummers, and they were children and grandchildren of Yaa-Naas. Even I think I told you that if you were from this Tamale village and you went to Choggo or Banvim or Lamashegu or Nyankpala, the chief there would just catch you and send you to Salaga to sell to the Ashantis. And the reason why they were doing this was that from Naa Zanjina's time, these chiefs were following the Muslim religion, and Tamale was a god town. Up to the time the white men came, there was no chief here, and the tindana had strength. He was holding the Dakpema. And so, if it is according to the way of this town, it is the tindana who is for the town.

And so as this town is sitting, the tindana is senior to the Dakpema. The meaning of Dakpema is "elder of the market," and the Dakpema is the market chief. And so, if you see the Dakpema going to sacrifice to the god, it is not that he is the tindana. The tindana and the Dakpema are separate. And how its way is, it is not every town that has a Dakpema. Yendi has no Dakpema. Nanton has no Dakpema. Truly, the Dakpemas are not many in Dagbon here. They have just started. But I have already told you that there is no town that has not got a tindana. The tindanas were here a long time before the Dakpemas came. Today if you look you will see that the Dakpema is a big chief in this town, but as this town is sitting, it is the tindana who begged and they gave the Dakpema to him.

I think it was during the time of Naa Yakuba that the Dakpema came to this town from another town, and it was about a hundred years ago, or a hundred and some years. If you count this present Dakpema with those who have died, it will be about twelve of them. But as for the tindanas, no one knows their number. The first Dakpema came from Kumbungu; it is a village under Kumbungu. In this town, there was no one watching the market. And the tindana went and saw the chief of Kumbungu and told him he wanted him to get someone to be looking after the market. They went to Kumbungu, and the Kumbun-Naa removed an old man. That old man was not doing any work; he was always sitting at one place. He was from Karaga Nangu and he came to Kumbungu and was staying with the Kumbungulana. The Kumbun-Naa gave him to the tindana of this town and told him to be watching the market, and the tindana took him and came home, and he left him in the market. When anyone brought things to the market, if it was yams, the Dakpema would remove about one yam. The children would follow him and hold calabashes: if it was millet, he would put his hand and take some; if it was beans, he would put his hand and take some. And he was looking after the market.

Those who were not afraid of him, those whose eyes were strong, they used to push him and shout at him. And he went and told the tindana, “As I have been going, others have been worrying me.” And the tindana removed one of his walking sticks. It was a forked walking stick, and the tindana gave it to him. And he removed one of his donkey tails and gave it to him. And he told him to hang the donkey tail on the walking stick. And he said, “When you hang this donkey tail on the walking stick and enter the market, you should knock it on the ground, and they will be afraid of you. They will say ‘*Aah!* The old man has gone for some medicine. We should fear him.’” When the Dakpema brought his walking stick and put it in front of any woman, you would see her running away. And he was taking his share, and they named him “Dakpema.”

That is the Dakpema of this town, and so the tindana is senior. When the Dakpema came, he had no house. He was sleeping in the tindana’s house, in the sitting hall. As the Dakpema is sitting today, you will see his house and know that it is a chief’s house. The Dakpema’s house is bigger than the tindana’s house. As for the tindana’s house, when you see it, you will not think it is a chief’s house. But when the Dakpema dies, if he dies today, they will take him to the tindana’s house and put him in the hall. They do it because from his starting he was sleeping in the tindana’s hall, and the first Dakpema who used to sleep in the hall died in the hall. And so it is good when any Dakpema dies that they send him to the tindana’s house and put him in the hall. Formerly they used to put him there until daybreak, but now they put him sometimes for only five minutes or ten minutes. But they do it, because they cannot stop. And so the tindana is senior to the Dakpema, and this is what I know about it. Everybody grew up and met the tindana in his town, but the Dakpema can come from another town to be in a town, because they can beg for him from another town to come and be watching the market.

If you follow it again, the Gukpe-Naa is the big chief in this town, and the Gukpe-Naa is a stranger in this town. But the Gukpe-Naa himself is also a tindana. Why have I said that? Because how the Gukpe-Naa is, they catch him, and as they catch him, he sacrifices to the god of his town. And again, the Gukpe-Naa doesn’t go out; once he becomes the Gukpe-Naa, he doesn’t move to become the chief in any other place. And so he is a tindana in his town. But Tamale is not his town. Tamale is his village. His town is at Yendi, and it’s just a small place called Gukpeogu. I am showing you the ways of the tindanas, and as it is, the Gukpe-Naa and the Dakpema are standing as the ones who are for this town. But when you follow it, you see that they are strangers, and it is the tindana who is senior to all of them. And that is how it is.

We even talk about how the chiefs are strangers in the *Samban’ luŋa*. When a chief comes to sit in a town, he will sacrifice to the god. As I have told

you that Naa Nyaysi defeated the tindanas, I also told you that it wasn't long before the chiefs brought the tindanas back to the towns because the chiefs didn't know how to perform the sacrifices to make the land fine. And so the tindana will be there in the town, and the chief will come to meet him. Every chief sacrifices to the god of his town, and it is there like that up till now. If you go to the Samban' luṅa, if you are watchful, you may hear the talk of Mionlana Mahami. His father was Mionlana Torgu, and Mionlana Torgu was a son of Naa Gungobli. Not all drummers beat it because not all drummers learn it, and it is not a force that it has to come inside the Samban' luṅa. If you beat it, it doesn't matter, and if you don't beat it, it doesn't spoil your Samban' luṅa.

At Mion I have been hearing that they have tindanas there at some villages of Mion, but I haven't seen it. And as Mion is also called Sambu, there is a buyli at Mion called *Saambuyli*. The animal of this god is a type of large turtle we call *meeṅa*. These animals are in water, but if the chief of Mion is going to die, they all come out, and the Mion townspeople will be meeting these things going about in the town. And the townspeople will know that either the chief is going to die or that these animals want a sacrifice to be made for them. This Saambuyli is only these animals; it doesn't do anything apart from what I've just told you. But when someone is made chief of Mion and he doesn't make sacrifice to the god, then he is not the chief. They will say, "He is not yet a chief, because he has not made sacrifices to the god." And the people of Mion will refuse such a person until he has sacrificed to the god. As they sacrifice to the god, there is a time for that; and so when you become a chief and the time doesn't come, you cannot make the sacrifice. Every day you will be quarreling with the people of Mion, until you sacrifice to the god.

As for the talk that is in the Samban' luṅa, I think you may know part of it because Kissmal told me that you heard some of it at the Dakpema's house some time ago. And so I will tell you more about it. Naa Gungobli gave birth to Mionlana Torgu, and Mionlana Torgu gave birth to Mionlana Mahami, and when he died, Mionlana Mahami became the chief of Mion, and the people and the elders of Mion said that they didn't like him. And the tindana of Mion was called Tindaan' 3ee, that is, Red Tindana. Tindaan' 3ee and the people of Mion got an old woman, that is, a witch, and they got a very big pot. The day when Mionlana Mahami said he was going to sacrifice to the god, the people of Mion took the old lady to where the sacrifice was to be performed, and they took the pot to cover her. And they told her that when the chief comes, she should say that the god, that is, Saambuyli doesn't want any sacrifice.

When it was getting to the time to sacrifice to the god, the chief told his elders, "We will go and sacrifice to the god," and the next day the chief took his



horse and the elders took their horses, and they saddled their horses and climbed on them. And they got a cow for sacrifice. The drummers also came out and started beating *Ɯem*, and they took the chief and his elders on the way to the god. When they got to where Tindaan' Ɯee and his people were standing, they saw Tindaan' Ɯee waving his hands at them. And the drummers stopped making noise. And the chief's elders said they should stop and they would listen to talk. Then they heard someone in the pot saying, "I don't want sacrifice." And the chief and the elders were surprised. They asked Tindaan' Ɯee, and he said, "I also came and heard this." And so the chief took his cow and went back to the house. The next day they went again, and the god said it didn't want sacrifice. It was there like that, and the chief didn't know that the tindana and the elders and the people had come together and taken the old lady and covered her with the pot because they didn't like the chief.

One day the chief assembled the people and slaughtered a cow. We have something we call *Ʒerayera*, and it is that they call the children to collect meat from the sacrifice. The children were running to collect the meat of the *Ʒerayera*, and one boy collected some and went and came back again. This boy was a child of one of the elders of Mion called Tincheli-Naa. And the chief's housechildren said, "Chief, he has already collected." Then the boy said, "They are telling lies; I have not collected," and the chief gave him and he went. Then he came back again, and that time no one told the chief. The chief recognized the boy, and he said, "You, boy, you are a fool. Why is it that you came and I gave you, and you went back and came and I gave you, and you are coming back?" And the boy told the chief, "You are also a fool. Why are you not a fool? If you are not a fool, have you ever heard a god talking?" Then the chief removed some of the meat and added it to him again. When the boy went home, the chief made a child follow him to know the boy's house.

When the chief had shared all the meat, he made the child go and call the boy. When the boy came, he told the chief, "I will show you what is inside your foolishness. I said you are a fool because the people of this town said they don't want you, and they took an old lady to the god and used a pot to cover her, and they told her that if you come, she should say you should not sacrifice to the god." And the chief said, "Is that it?" And the boy said, "Yes. If not that, since you grew up, have you ever heard a god talking? Or the chiefs who came before you, have you ever heard that any of them came to make sacrifice to the god, and the god refused? And you called me a fool, and that is why I am showing you what is inside foolishness. And so I am telling you that it is the people of this town who have sent an old woman there; it is not the god. And if you don't make your eyes hot, you will not be a chief. You should let your housepeople come out with

clubs, and you should go and kill the old woman and make the sacrifice to the god. And you should assemble your elders in three days' time and you will go."

And the chief called the drummers to beat the drum, and they told the people that in three days' time the chief will be going to sacrifice to the god. And the townspeople said, "What has the chief seen and he is saying he will sacrifice to the god? You went twice, and the god drove you away, and you are going again!" The chief's housechildren heard it and they went and told the chief, and the chief said, "It doesn't matter." The day came, and everybody put a saddle on his horse, and the drummers started playing *Ɯem*. And they took a cow. And the chief made his housechildren cut clubs, and they put the clubs on their shoulders, and they were going to the god. At that time, the townspeople said, "Why is it that we are going to sacrifice to the god and the chief's housechildren are carrying clubs?" And the chief's people kept on holding their clubs and dancing *Ɯem* and going. The chief told his housechildren, "If we go and they say we should not sacrifice, you should tell them that you have never heard a god talking, and that today you will break the pot and see what is inside it, and what will happen should happen. So we should go." And they were moving.

When they were getting near, they saw Tindaan' *Ɯee* waving his arms at them that they should stop and listen to talk. They heard someone in the pot saying again that the god does not want any sacrifice. And the chief stopped and said they should go and break the pot. At that time, Tindaan' *Ɯee* moved from the pot and gave them way. The chief's housechildren were running, and the old lady knew they were coming to break the pot, and she shouted, "Stop! Stop and I will talk! Stop and I will talk!" And they said, "If we break it and something will happen, we will break it. We will break it and see what is inside it." And the old woman said, "Fear God, and let me talk." And they stopped. Then the old woman came out and said, "Truly, I am not the one who said you should not make sacrifice to the god. It was Tindaan' *Ɯee*, he and the elders of Mion. They brought me and put me here and said that if you come I should drive you away, because if you are the chief of Mion and you don't make a sacrifice to this god, you are not a chief. They said that when your father was chief of this town, he was worrying them, and that if you also become the chief, you will also worry them. And that is why they said I should refuse you and you will run away, and if you run away, you will not be the chief."

Then Mionlana Mahami made them get a white cloth, and he gave it to the old woman. That same day he made them sacrifice to the god, and he became the Mionlana. And he said, "Anyone who becomes a chief of Mion, the townspeople should refuse him, as they refused me, unless he sacrifices to the god Saambuylī." And it is there up to now. Anyone who becomes Mionlana, they refuse him. They

sometimes refuse him for a year or more, unless he sacrifices to the god. I think the present Mionlana, when he became chief, they refused him for about two years. They did not even send him to the god, and they would not come to talk together; no one would send him to the god so that he will sacrifice to it and the people of Mion will like him. But now the chief has settled the matter with the people of Mion, and those who didn't want him now love him more than anything. And the one who hated him most, the chief has made him his Wulana. And that is how the god of Mion is, and it's called Saambuylı. And what I've just told you is in the Samban' luḡa.

Have you heard the talk? I have been telling you that a chief fears the god and that the chief is a stranger to the town. As the chief trusted the god and turned back, it shows that he didn't know. It was when the boy told him that the people had put an old woman to be talking that the chief was not afraid of it again. At that time he knew he was not going against the god. If he had thought that the god was really talking, he wouldn't have gone with clubs to break anything there. We all know that there are some things we call gods, but they don't talk; they only give signs. The god will only talk through the tindana, and it is the tindana who will stand and say it. No one has ever heard a god talk. If there is anything you want on the part of the god, it is through the tindana you will get it. That is why the boy asked the chief whether he has ever heard a god talking. But because this chief was a stranger to the town, he believed the god was talking, and he was thinking that he had done a bad thing. The chief's father had even eaten chieftaincy in that town, and with all that, the chief did not know the ways of the town. Anything on the part of the tindana and the god, the chief cannot know it. When they tell him anything, he follows it. That is how it is. And so a chief is a stranger in a town.

And so inside our Dagbon here, even when you see a chief who is a Muslim, you should also know that he sacrifices to the god. But we who are really following the Muslim religion don't join those who make the sacrifices to the gods, and we don't give our troubles to the gods. We know that the gods are there, but the gods are never God. And truly, the gods are doing work, but it cannot be compared to the work that God does. And so the tindanas have the same name as the soothsayers: "If he tells you, you shouldn't accept and you shouldn't refuse." A tindana can tell you something and you will just see it at once. And he will say some talks, and some will happen and some will not happen. Sometimes a woman who doesn't give birth will go to a god, and it will give her birth. And sometimes someone will go and the god will tell her it will give her a child, and when the woman gets back, she finds that she has just wasted her time. We all grew up and met the gods, and nobody can know why God let

something like the gods be. That is how God wants it. If everything the tindanas said were true all the time, then people would forget about the real God. As for God, there is nothing you can compare to him, and so those of us who pray to God have no time for the gods.

I have already told you that in Dagbon, the Muslims are there and those who sacrifice to the gods are there. Those who sacrifice to the gods are the ones we call the typical Dagbamba. And truly, to talk of the typical Dagbamba is a problem for me. I was born a drummer, and I told you that I have not stayed with them, and you have to stay with someone before you can know his ways. As I am a drummer, I have been telling you about drumming, and everyone knows what he knows at his own place. But I think that my eyes are open a bit, and so I can tell you something about the typical Dagbamba. And so tomorrow I will take it and talk as far as I know. I will show you the different gods and the work they do. Because there are many kinds of gods. There are some which are in the bush and some which are in the house. Some are trees. And some are stones. Some are snakes, and others are crocodiles. And even rain is one of them.