

## Chapter II–24: *Gods and Shrines*

Yesterday I told you that the gods of Dagbon are different, and there are many of them. Every town has got its god, and even with the typical Dagbamba, every house has got its god. And there are certain gods which help people with their problems. Whether it is sickness that is worrying you or you want wealth or you want children or you are quarreling with someone, there are some gods you can go to and your problem will finish. And so today I will continue and talk about some of the gods we have here and the work they do. And I will talk first about the gods that are in a family, and I will join it to talk about the gods of the land that people go and beg and the gods that are in some of the towns. As for the gods that people go and beg, some of them are very strong, and so I will only talk about the ones that people's eyes have seen that they are true, and everyone goes to beg them. And in Dagbon, this is an old talk on the part of the typical Dagbamba and their way of living. And these talks I am talking, I am not talking to you what I want, and I am not talking to you what you want. I am talking to you what my eyes have seen and what my ears have heard. And so I am telling you now so that you will hear: if anyone tells you any talk about Dagbon, and he is not a drummer and he is not a *tindana*, he will talk to you and the talk will leave him standing on the way. He will talk and it will make your mouth sweet, but I am talking to you on the eyes of the talk. That is how it is.

The typical Dagbamba have gods in their families. It is inside every family. If people say, "This is a family," then these gods are inside. If you have been watching well, you have seen that on some of the typical Dagbamba have something on the top of their house walls. They have something they put there, and you will see feathers of chickens and dried blood there. In Dagbon here, you can see such things outside the houses of some people, and some are inside the room. That is where the family medicine is, and so it is a shrine, and we call it *bayyuli*. These housegods are not gods like the god of a town. They are many. There is one called *Jebuni*: it is inside a family. There is one called *Tilo*: it is inside a family. There is one called *Wuni*: it is inside a family. There is one we call *Wumbee*, that is, god's child. In our Dagbani, we call God "*wuni*," and we call a child "*bia*," and so *Wumbee* is god's child. *Wumbee* is a name for many people in Dagbon. Naa Nyaysi's real name was *Wumbee*. Naa Gungobli too, his name was *Wumbee*. These are the names of *Wumbee*. Don't you see that these talks are old? All of these gods are inside Dagbon. This *Wumbee* is also in the Frafra land, but they don't call it *Wumbee*. They call it *bayyuli*, and when they

sacrifice to it, they say they are going to repair pregnancy. And so these gods, it is the gods of the land that gave birth to all of them. The gods brought forth Wuni, and they made Tilo, and all of them are the children of the gods. And so the gods of the land are older than the housegods, and it is like how the gods were here before the Muslim religion came. It's just that the talk of the housegods is not long, and that is why I am putting it first. If not that, in Dagbon here, an old person walks and a child will be behind. And so Tilo, Jɛbuni, Wuni, and Wumbee are not older than the gods.

The ones on the outside of the house are the ones we call Wumbee or Wuni, and those are the names of the bayyuli, and Tilo or Jɛbuni are inside the room. And so the bayyuli is standing as the god of the house. In our Dagbani, bayyuli means to stand quietly or secretly and watch. And so the typical Dagbamba take it that the dead people in their family are looking at the family. And it is this bayyuli where they make their sacrifices. The typical Dagbamba make sacrifices to it any time they have a talk that is happening inside the family, and it is a goat they usually use to make the sacrifice. They never use a sheep; only a goat. All the local gods of Dagbon prefer goats to sheep. And so the goat is more important than the sheep to the typical Dagbamba.

Truly, from the starting of Dagbon, it was the goat that had value more than the sheep. And the chicken was more important than the guinea fowl. It is the time that the Muslim religion came here that we began giving respect to the sheep, but the typical Dagbamba who don't pray, they take the goat to be more important than the sheep. Their reason is that they make their sacrifices with goats. It is a goat the typical Dagbamba take to make a sacrifice if they give birth to twins. It is a goat they use to make sacrifice to the gods. They have a house medicine called Jɛbuni, and the time of this medicine is when the new yams come out. A typical Dagbamba will say that he is going to eat new yams and repair his house medicine. He will go to the farm and dig yams and come home, get a goat and put it on top of the yams, get a cat and add, and he will kill the goat and cat and use the yams to make food for the Jɛbuni.

It is not all Dagbamba who have a house shrine. If someone is going to have it, it will be the head of the family, and the whole family will come to sacrifice to it there. The one standing behind the Dakpema's house, that is where the owner of the house buried his family medicine. Some people build it like a wall: if you come inside the compound, you will look and you will see it. Other people have it in their rooms. Some are pots. Some are calabashes. Other people build it like an anthill, and they will be slaughtering hens and putting the blood and the feathers on top. The Wumbee is somehow bigger; that is the one they

build like a wall. Someone who is not up to building that one can go and find a tortoise shell, and get sand from a place where ants are, and come and take the sand and mold it and put it on the tortoise shell. The people who do it like that are there. Somebody's housegod will eat a white hen, and he will get a white hen and slaughter it, put the blood on the sand and stick feathers to it. As he is not able to build a wall, it has stood as his god. If he were dreaming and seeing dead people in his dreams, he won't see them again. If he wasn't getting what he wants, he will get. When they give any sacrifice, then we Dagbamba say they are repairing the god. And so it is not one way in Dagbon here: every town has got its way, and every family has got its way.

Did you hear me call the name Jɛbuni? It is even inside my family. This Jɛbuni is a pot. The time when I used to go and consult soothsayers, they were telling me that my father's house Jɛbuni is making me not to get money. And I would say, "As for me, I don't repair the gods." And they would say, "Then your getting will be slippery." And I would say, "It doesn't matter. I don't want to enter into it. I cannot gather with God and then gather with somebody else again." What I was telling you about soothsayers, it is the same thing. Someone will repair his shrine and take the name of God to call and add, and he will say "God should give him good sleep." Why is he adding the name of God? We Muslims, when we pray, we don't call the names of any god to add to God's name. God has said we should meet with Him and not gather with any other. If we are going to call anybody's name, it will only be the name of the Holy Prophet. And there are many people who will say that it is Satan who brought the gods, but those who are sacrificing to the gods take it that their grandfathers were doing it and so they will also do it.

Those who are not Muslims are the ones who repair the gods of the land, and they are the ones who repair Jɛbuni, Tilo, Wuni, and Wumbee. It is all one, but they are separate and the names are different. That is how is. This Wuni was the first god before the Muslim religion came. I can say that anything that has to do with the gods is older than the Muslim religion. They are inside every family, and not only in Dagbon or among black people alone. I have heard people say that when the Prophet Ibrahim came, he broke the gods. His grandfather was a tindana: he was holding the gods, and some of them were pots. One day Prophet Ibrahim's grandfather went to the farm, and Prophet Ibrahim took a club and began knocking and breaking the pots. He broke all of them. His grandfather came back and said, "*Oi!* Ibrahim! What has broken these things like this?" And Prophet Ibrahim said, "I was just sitting down and I saw this god run and knock that god, and then another one ran and knocked the other one, and they

started knocking one another until they were all broke. My grandfather, do they talk? If they talk, ask them and hear what happened.” And his grandfather was standing. And so when the Muslim religion started, it was Prophet Ibrahim who broke the gods, because when Prophet Muhammad came out, all the gods were broken: they were scattered and had become small. Even with all that, at Mecca side, they had a lot of gods, and I think that they all came to Dagbon here. Nothing happens there that does not come here, because all of us, black man, white man: our grandfather is one. Adam and Hawa: they have brought every talk. It is inside them that the gods started, and inside them that the tindanas started. The soothsayers come from there, and the *jinwarba* come from there. It is these two people who made all of us. And that is how it is.

Any of these gods that is in a family is standing as the old thing or the old talk that is in that family. The typical Dagbamba take it that when they are begging it, they are begging their dead people. When they are going to repair the Wuni, they call the names of the dead people who have died. The one who is in front will say, “My grandfather so-and-so, this is your water I am giving you.” He will pour the water on the ground. And he will say, “My grandmother so-and-so, give me good sleep to sleep.” He will call all those he knows; those he doesn’t know and they have told him about, he will call all those names too. He will start with the one who put the shrine down first before he will call the name of any other person who died inside the family. Maybe Wuni is not there, but Wumbee is there. Everybody will call the name of his dead person who started it and put it down for the family. Then he will kill hens. Some of the shrines eat ten hens, some five, some three or four. If he doesn’t have ten hens and he gives only two or four hens, it will worry him. He will come and clap his empty hands and say, “My grandfather, I am giving you empty hands, and you should give me good sleep to sleep, and you should let me get what I want. If I finish getting, I will come and give you such-and-such.” Somebody can do that and get what he wants, and he will come and pay the debt. Inside every family, it was somebody who started it and put it down for them. If not that, if this were not an old talk, would anyone be doing it? If a person does work and does not get any benefit, will he do it again? And so truly, it works for them, and those who do it are many in Dagbon here.

And it is that they inherit it. This Tilo: it is a calabash, and it is a woman in the family who will have it, an elder woman. Men also do the work of Tilo, but no man has ever had Tilo. It is like how a woman tindana is, because a man does some of her work. If the woman who has Tilo dies, they will look for another woman in the family who is following her on the part of being old, and Tilo will

move to her house. Any child who is in the family, if he gets some bad talk and goes to consult a soothsayer, maybe the soothsayer will tell him, “Tilo says that you get and eat, and you don’t give him. That is why you are not getting what you want.” Or he will say, “Tilo says that you have forgotten of him, and that is why your children are dying.” When this fellow hears that, he will tell the family so that they will repair it for him. He can go and meet the woman who is looking after Tilo, and she will agree and they will go to repair it. And so Tilo, Jɛbuni, Wumbee, and Wuni, they are all one but they are separate. It is all an old talk on the part of someone who started it in a family.

Somebody can be there, and he is dreaming dreams. He will not know where he dreamed and went. He will see some people he doesn’t know. The old typical Dagbamba have said and put it down that he is seeing his dead people. They say that the dead people will come and stand outside the door of his room and be looking at him. He will be seeing them in his dream unless he goes to repair his housegod. I myself, I have been with some people, and they died. Sometimes I dream and I see them. As for that, it’s common. We who are Muslims say that it is God Who brings that, and we have a prayer to pray and not see them again. The typical Dagbamba don’t pray like that. Their begging is to these housegods, and so they beg to their dead people. As we Muslims have put it down that it is God who helps, we don’t say that anybody helps us apart from God. And the typical Dagbamba have put it that their dead people help them, and their housegod helps them, and the gods of the land help them. Even those who have left all of that and come to pray Muslim prayers, they also knew that these gods were helping them. The family where this Wuni or Wumbee is standing, they also know that when they beg it, it helps them. It is not a talk. It helps them. We Muslims knock our heads on the ground and pray, and the Christians also show that they pray to God, but they don’t knock their heads. We all beg to God, and it helps us. And so for the typical Dagbamba too, that is how it is.

As it is, it is different from the way we make sacrifices at the *Samban’ luja* place. As they talk about the dead chiefs, they are calling names, and it does not look at the part of the gods. It is only that they fear some dead people, but it is not all dead people they fear. If someone fears a dead person, it is that he has done some bad thing to him. A chief can make medicine to let another chief die soon so that he will come and eat. Someone will make someone become weak while he will have health. If that fellow dies, it is fear you will fear. Someone can die like that and come and tell you, “The things you have done to me, I am waiting for you.” Some chiefs have asked some chiefs like that, and even a commoner, if you do your fellow friend like that, he can be dying and tell you, “As I am going, you

will also follow my steps. The bad you have done to me, come and we will go. Get up and we will go.” Inside your sleep, he can come and tell you like that, and it is for everybody, not only for chiefs. It’s common. But if you take it to look at the family gods, it is not the same. These gods are standing as an old talk that has been put down for the family, and so the typical Dagbamba take it that they should be doing the sacrifices because their grandfathers have done it and left it for them. They are doing it because it helps them.

And so someone can be there: he doesn’t sleep, and he will be dreaming and dreaming. If he is a typical Dagbana, he will go to a soothsayer, and the soothsayer will tell him that his mother’s house Wumbee wants repairing, or his father’s house Wumbee wants repairing, that is, he should sacrifice to it. The soothsayer will tell him, “If you don’t go to repair it, you will not get sleep to sleep.” Somebody will be there and his work is trading: he will get money and the money will not stand in his hands; it will just go out from his hands. They will tell him to go and repair Wumbee. Somebody too will be there and he has no wife: they will tell him to go and repair Wumbee. Somebody will be there and he has no child: they will tell him it is because he has not gone to repair his mother’s house Wumbee, or his father’s house Wumbee, and that is why he has not got a child. Somebody will repair it and will get what he wants, and somebody will repair it and not get what he wants. Somebody will repair it and the dreams will leave him. It is an old talk inside Dagbon.

If it is not that they are going to beg the god to remove them from a problem, whatever happens, they will repair the god every year. As the gods are different, some people will harvest new yams before they go and repair it. Other people harvest millet before they go and repair it. Every year they are going to take part of it and give it to the god. And so that is how the time is coming every year for them to repair the god. As for the every-year repairing, it is there for the gods of a town and the gods in a family. Even medicine, someone with medicine will repair all his medicines every year. If it is a god of a town, it is the tindana who will repair it. If it is a family shrine, the one repairing it will be the elder person in the family who looks after it. Some people will cook our local drink called *pito* before they repair the god, and it is guinea corn they use to make *pito*. It is the person with means who will cook drink, and someone without the means, if he has his hens, he will cut them. But as for Tilo, you cannot repair it unless you use millet to prepare *pito* and repair it. And on the part of animals, some people take chickens, and others take goats, and some others use sheep. When the Yaa-Naa is going to repair a god, he will kill a cow. The gods of Yendi are big gods, because everything of the Yaa-Naa’s is big. How God made the Yaa-Naa so

that his talks are heavy, even if he eats a small medicine, the medicine will become big. God has said that everything of the Yaa-Naa should be big, and so any god that the Yaa-Naa's hands are on is a big one. That is why I have been telling you that the gods are different. Everybody grows up to meet different gods, and there are different ways of repairing the gods. How you have seen your grandfathers doing it, that is how you are also going to do it. Our strong talks in Dagbon are millet and yams, and guinea corn is added, and that is what they take to make the sacrifice. As for corn, we are now also using it for food, and it has just come here, but even I can say that there are some people who use it to repair their gods. That is the talk I have about it.

What is coming to join the talk of the housegods is the talk of the gods that are in towns. I have told you that every town has got its god, and some of the gods are stronger than others. There are some towns that have many gods. If you don't sit in a town, or you haven't asked, you can't know all the gods in the town. You can only know some of them, and there are some that everybody knows. As the townspeople repair their god and it helps them, some of the gods are standing that anyone can go and beg them. The gods that people go and beg, some of them are very strong, and I will start with the ones that people's eyes have seen that they are true, and everyone goes to beg them. Yesterday I told you that some are in the rain, and some are crocodiles, and some are trees, and some are different animals. All of them, it is the tindanas who are holding them. And the talk of the gods is with each god and its way. As we came and met them, they stand the same way our grandfathers met them. There are some gods, if you go against them, they won't mind. If you refuse the god and say you don't trust it, it will leave you free. And there are some, if you go against them, they won't leave you. There are some we don't play with at all. It's like the way we human beings are. There can be someone, when you play with him, it will become a quarrel. There is someone again, if you play with him, he won't mind, and it doesn't mean that he is not strong. It is all coming from the way God has made the gods and the way each god is.

The god which is in the rain is at Pong Tamale, and it is a very big thing in Dagbon here. They don't play with it. If somebody has stolen something from you and you want to find out and get the person, you go to Pong Tamale. If you go, the tindana will ask you to get a white chicken, and he will cut off the head of the chicken. Then the tindana will say, "My grandfather, this man has come to me that he has lost his thing, and so I am coming to meet you to find it for him. And the one who took it, I must see the person. And if the person refuses to bring it back, then you my grandfather, you should try and find the person for me." Then the tindana will tell you to go home.

If you get to your house, it will not even reach daybreak, and clouds and thunder will form in the sky. If the thief knows that you the owner of the thing have gone to Pong Tamale, then he will go and replace the thing. Everybody fears the Pong Tamale god. Sometimes someone will go to Pong Tamale, and when he gets back, he will meet his lost thing in his room. If God blesses the thief and he puts the thing back, then he is safe from death. At that time you the one who went to Pong Tamale and asked for the rain, you will go back to the tindana and tell him, “My father, I went to the house and met my things again. And so, what can I do with those things?” The tindana will get a boy and send him to bring the things. If it is clothes or anything, he will bring all to Pong Tamale. Then the tindana will get some special water and say some prayers and pour the water on the things, and he will ask you the owner to pick some of the things for him the tindana. If you pick only one thing from among the things, it doesn’t matter. The tindana doesn’t want the things, but he will take part. Then he will tell you to take your things to your home. And the thief is safe.

If it happens that you go to Pong Tamale and ask the tindana to call the rain, and you come to the house and meet your thing, if you just keep it, then you will also be in trouble. If you don’t go back to tell the tindana that you met your thing, then the rain will come and kill you. It is lightning that will kill you. But if you tell the tindana and he does all the things, nothing will happen to you. And if the thief who stole your thing refuses to bring it back, if you go to Pong Tamale and the tindana calls the rain, then before you get to the house, the rain will form, and the thief will be killed by the rain. It is still happening here. If you ask any Dagbana at all, he will tell you. Pong Tamale is there like that, and it is what we call god.

In Dagbon here, too, we have something. If someone dies, sometimes people say that another person ate him. If they go to soothsayers and find out it is an old woman, a witch, who ate him, and if they ask her and she refuses, then they can take her to Pong Tamale. If you do the work of killing somebody and they take you there, the tindana will put some medicine and give you to drink. That will be all: he will ask you to go to your house. If it is really you who killed that person, you will also die, within one month’s time. But you know, if a town is far, there is another town which is far beyond that town. As the tindana will be killing the witches all the time, the witches will also want to be killing people. And they don’t want the tindana to kill them. And so, according to what people have been talking about them, they have some medicine to put small pots in their stomachs: when they go to Pong Tamale and the tindana gives them medicine, they drink, and all the water with the medicine will go into the pot; and when they get home,

they vomit the pot and pour the medicine away. And some people believe they do that. Some people believe that witches have small pots in their stomachs because sometimes it happens that somebody kills somebody and goes to the tindana at Pong Tamale and drinks the medicine, but she doesn't die. And this killing of witches is another work of the Pong Tamale god. And it is still there up to now.

If rain kills somebody and we don't find something on his chest, then we know that a witch was trying to catch him and couldn't, and so the witch went to ask the god to kill the person. It can even happen like that. A witch can go to the god and give the god what it wants. She and the god hear the talks of one another, and so she also knows what the gods wants. She will ask the god to stand behind her so that she will kill such-and-such a person, and nobody will hear it. Even the tindana will not know. When the witch goes out in the night, does she tell the tindana? She can do some talk on the part of the god and not go to ask the tindana. And does a bad person tell you that he is bad? If a witch is going to do a bad thing and she tells somebody, then she is not a witch. She will do what her work is, and nobody will know. She will go in the night and make a sacrifice to the god. If there is somebody in the town she wants to kill, and that fellow is too strong, or he has too much medicine, a witch can follow his ways and not know what to do about him. If a witch wants, she can beg and give him to the god, and the god will kill him. We have that here. And that is how the gods are. If they send a witch to the god, the god will kill her. And the witches also beg the gods. It's not Pong Tamale alone: I am talking of any strong god.

There is another god called *Naawuni*. That one is a crocodile, and it is a very big one. It is in a river — the water we drink from the pipes is from the river — and this river is for the people of Singa and the people of Dalun. And I think that every god, they play with every god, but as for the god we call Naawuni, they don't play with it. If you like, if you want to see Naawuni, you will see it. If we go to the tindana, he will kill some chickens for Naawuni and it will come out of the river. I have not gone there to see it myself, but I have heard a lot about Naawuni from my grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and I am still hearing more. Naawuni is there, and it does not play at all. It doesn't waste time: when you do anything wrong and they send you there, it will immediately bring you out.

In the olden days Naawuni was killing many people. If you should steal another person's thing, whether you travel or you don't travel, it will happen to you one day that you will travel and cross that river. If the person you stole from has said, "My thing is lost; my grandfather Naawuni will find it for me," if he has said that, you cannot cross. This river is crossed by boat, and if you are a thief and you join the boat, the boatman will take you and other people in the boat. When

you get to the middle of the river, you will see the crocodile Naawuni appear in the river. It is a very big one. The boatman will stop the boat and ask everyone to open his mouth and say the talks that are with him or her: “If there is anyone in this boat who has done something bad, the fellow should say it.” Then everyone will say what he or she has done. Someone will get up and say, “I have never stolen anything before.” Another person will also get up and say, “Since I was born, I never stole.” All the people in the boat will have to say something about themselves. If they don’t do that, Naawuni will not go back inside the river; it will just remain on top until it hears what all the people say. If they talk, and if there is still a thief among them, Naawuni will not go inside. And the boatman will tell them, “You should say the truth; if not, we shall all remain here.” And the thief will still refuse to say, “Yes, I have stolen something.” The thief will also say, “I have never stolen.” And at that time Naawuni will let them pass, but it will come right up again and pick the thief from the boat and take him into the water. That is all. That was what was happening all the time during the olden days. And so they said that Naawuni has been killing people too much, and nowadays they don’t have much to do with it.

We Dagbamba have a proverb which says, “It is not everything one tells a boatman.” This proverb has got Naawuni’s talks inside. A thief entered the boat to cross the river, and the crocodile came out and would not let boat cross. The boatman told everybody to talk, and everybody was talking. At that time the thief asked, “Does the boat go back?” The boatman said, “Yes,” and the thief said, “Then let’s go back.” They went back and came out and stood, and the thief said, “It is not everything that one tells a boatman.” Have you heard? He has said that he will not open his anus for everybody in the boat to know that he has stolen, and so he will go home and will not try to cross. As he has not said it, he is going back to where he came, and the crocodile cannot catch him again. If he tries to cross, it wouldn’t do: Naawuni would get him. And he doesn’t want to open his mouth and say that he has stolen. When he talks like this, some will know that he is a thief, and some will not know. That is what I have told you about proverbs, that they have two ways of talking, because they can beat a proverb and someone will not know what they are saying. And so this proverb is an old talk that they take to talk. Let’s say that we are gathered here and some talk comes, and I say, “Everybody should speak the truth!” If it comes to meet you, you can say, “It is not all talks they take to talk to a boatman,” and you will walk out. As you have said that, someone will not know what has happened and you said that and left. But someone who hears proverbs will know, and such a person will know to suspect you. And so Naawuni’s talks are inside this proverb. And so it is not everything that you tell a boatman.

I have told you that Naawuni is for the people of Dalun and Singa, and I myself sitting, my forefathers are from those towns, and so I also belong to Naawuni. Zugulana Dasana gave birth to Zugulana Ali, and Zugulana Ali gave birth to Singlana Aduna, and Singlana Aduna gave birth to Dalunlana Blemah, and he gave birth to my mother's father Sulemana, and he gave birth to my mother Kasuwa, and she gave birth to me. And so Naawuni is our grandfather. The people from those towns don't pay to cross the river. As we are sitting now, let's say that I get up and go to Singa, and I want to take a boat across the river. If they collect money from me, the boat will refuse to go. The canoe man will say, "What talk is with you people? Is there a thief in your midst? Or is it that a townsman paid money?" If truly there is no thief among you, and it is that you are a townsman, then you will say, "Truly, I am from Dalun" or "I am from Singa." And he will ask, "Have you paid it with white heart or not" If you say you paid with white heart, the boat will go. And if you say you are not happy with paying the money because you are from that town, then they will give back your money to you, and the boat will go. This is what will happen if I go there.

Nowadays if someone is stealing in a house in Tamale here or in Savelugu or in Kumbungu or in any town, they don't go to cry to Naawuni. The whole house buys chickens; everybody in the house will get his chicken. If your thing is missing in a house, you just come out into the compound and make a complaint to the whole house that the one who has stolen your thing should come out. If everyone refuses that no one took it, then you will tell all of them to buy chickens. If there are eight or ten or twelve people in the house, they will all have to get chickens. When they buy their chickens, you will all go together to Naawuni. When you get there, you call the tindana to come out, and you say why you are there. The tindana will separate the people into twos, and he will kill two people's chickens at a time and throw them into the river. If the thief is inside these two people, the crocodile will come out from the river and catch the chicken. And if the tindana kills two chickens and the crocodile doesn't catch any of them, the tindana will kill another two until he gets to the thief. Whatever happens, if the thief is among the people, the crocodile will catch his chicken. And so when the tindana is throwing the chickens into the river, you have to be looking at the chickens; if you see that your chicken is not in the water, then you should know that you are the thief. When Naawuni catches a chicken, there is no mouth-arguing again. If your chicken is caught by the crocodile, the tindana will ask you, "Do you agree that you are the thief?" If you agree, he will ask you, "When you get to your house, will you pay the amount?" And you will say, "Yes." You won't refuse because then the tindana will let you join the boat, and as Naawuni

has said that you are the thief, you know that the crocodile will come and pick you from the boat. And so the earlier the better: you will say, “If we reach the house, I will pay the amount.” And if you get to the house, you will pay the owner. Nowadays this is what is happening where Naawuni is.

But during the olden days, the only way was the boat, and many people were being killed by the crocodile. The crocodile would just come out from the river and pick the person into the water, and they would never even find the dead body. It’s only now they are using the chickens, and truly, Naawuni is still killing people, but not as much as formerly. I have seen it myself. I was sitting down and I saw four people going to that place, and when they were returning I saw three people. One was out. And I asked them, and they said, “He is in the river. Naawuni has caught him.”

If you go there and you don’t talk well, it can catch you. If somebody takes something and gives it to somebody, and that fellow takes it to buy food for you to eat, it can catch you. Even Pong Tamale can kill like that. It is not long talks. If you know how to talk, you will say, “My grandfather, as we have come, truly I am not a thief. If it is somebody who has stolen and taken it to buy food for me to eat, my grandfather, separate it for me. If it is somebody who has stolen and I have followed his footprints, you should separate it for me.” Even the one whose thing was stolen will talk like that, because someone can steal in a house and take it to buy food for the whole house, and they will eat. And so the one who has made the complaint will say, “My grandfather, as my thing is lost, if it is somebody who has stolen and bought food for me to eat, and I didn’t know, you should separate it for me.” If he doesn’t talk like that, the god will catch him. That is how it is.

And it’s not stealing alone that is a case for Naawuni. If somebody comes to borrow your money or something from you and doesn’t want to pay you back, you will ask him several times and be fed up. It sometimes happens here that someone might come to you and borrow money, and when you continue asking him about the money, he will one day tell you that he has never come to you to borrow any amount. A person who tells you that is someone who doesn’t fear God, and such a person, they can take him to Naawuni. The owner of the money and the borrower both have to go to Naawuni to see the truth. When they go, they have to kill chickens first, and if there is still mouth-arguing, then they join the boat. And that is the work of the Naawuni god.

Naawuni also judges cases of witchcraft. If you are a witch and you kill a child or anybody, and if they find out from soothsayers that you are the one, and you refuse, then they can take you to Naawuni. During the old days, if it was true that somebody is a witch, and she refused and they put her in the boat, Naawuni

would just come and knock over the boat and take away the witch. Nowadays they use chickens. If the mother of the dead child finds out that it is such-and-such a witch who has killed her child, and the witch refuses, then the mother will buy a chicken and the witch will also buy a chicken. They will both go to Naawuni, and the mother of the child will hold her chicken and say, “My grandfather Naawuni, I am coming to you because my child is dead, and I want to find out whether there is someone’s hand in the blood of my child, or whether it is God who killed my child. If it is someone’s hand in the blood of my child, then catch that person for me. And if it is God who killed my child, then let the chickens lie on the water.” Then they will kill the chickens. If it is God who killed the child, you will see both the chickens floating on the water. But if it is the witch, one of the chickens will disappear. At that time, there is no refusing again. Truly, it is just annoying because the child you are asking about has already died, and so it is just useless. But we are still sending witches to Naawuni. Formerly we were letting the witches joint the boat, and Naawuni would come and kill them, but that stopped some years ago, and now we go and kill the chickens. If someone’s chicken disappears and we know that the person is a witch, we know what to do with witches. If the witch is a woman, and we find out and get her, if she has her husband in the same house as the mother of the dead child, then they have to drive the witch away from the house. If her husband says he will not allow his wife to go, then the husband has to follow her. And this is also what Naawuni is doing.

The two gods I have just shown you, Pong Tamale and Naawuni, they don’t give a person money, and they don’t give someone a child. But there is another god called *Yabyili*. The place where you have been visiting near Tongo in the Talensi land, that is what we call Yabyili. It means “the grandfather’s house,” and the tindana who is in charge of the god is called *Yaba*, or grandfather. Yabyili is a very strong god. If you have a wife and your wife is not giving birth to children, you can take your wife to Yabyili and beg for a child. And truly, people have been going to Yabyili from all regions of Ghana, and if you go there you will see many Ashantis and Ewes and southern people. If you want to go to Yabyili to ask for a child for your wife, you don’t go straight to the tindana. If you have a house for your sleeping place, you go to the householder to tell him that this is what brought you here, “and so I want you to lead me to the Yaba to ask for a child for my wife.” If you don’t know anyone at that place, you can ask the chief to find someone to lead you. During the olden days, if you wanted to go to Yabyili, you didn’t have to spend a lot of money. At that time, you know, they didn’t have much food there, and so the only thing you would carry there is a bowl of salt and

three or four bowls of guinea corn. If you got there, you would give the salt to the householder in whose house you were sleeping, and you would give the guinea corn to the Yaba. Formerly they would go in groups. Thirty or forty people would group together and go with different problems.

The reason why you get someone to lead you to the tindana is just a custom. It's not Yabyili alone. In Dagbon here, if you want something from someone who has a name, you cannot just go to him. Let me give you an example. As we have been going to the Tolon chief, I am somebody from the Tolon chief's house. He knows me, but I won't go to him without meeting somebody first. When we go there, they know very well that Tolon-Naa knows us, but do they not stop us and say they will go and call some people? In our Dagbon here, and in all this north, that is our way of living. And so if you go to Yabyili, you will go and meet somebody to take you and tell the tindana. If you go to Pong Tamale or Naawuni, you are going to meet somebody to take you and go to the tindana. And so at all of this place, it's all like that. If you just go like that to meet him, it shows that you haven't given him respect because it shows that he is not living with anybody. That is why you go to meet people first. This is the way of our greetings.

As for Yabyili, I have seen the work of Yabyili myself. I was in my sense when my mother went there. At that time, if people from Voggo wanted to go to Yabyili, they would take four or five days to reach there. At that time, my mother was not well. Many different sicknesses were worrying her, and the strong sickness was eye-sickness. Sometimes her eyes were open, but getting to a year's time, her eyes would close; in another year's time, her eyes would open. Those people who had been to the Yabyili came to her and told her, "If you take your sickness to Yabyili, you will be treated." At that time I was in my sense, and I saw all this. They told my mother to buy salt and guinea corn, and my mother prepared and bought all this and went to join some people who were going there. When they went, my mother explained the reason why she came to her householder, and she asked the householder to take her to the Yaba. And when they went, the Yaba told her, "Truly, as for your eye sickness, it is a white man who will treat it, not I. The only thing I the Yaba will do for you is to show you the true person who will treat your eyes for you." No one had ever told my mother to approach a white man. And so when my mother came from the Yabyili to Voggo, she prepared again and left Voggo for Tamale. They operated on her eyes, and her eyes were open. After they cut her eyes and the eyes opened, from that time it was about twenty or twenty-five years before she died. And so it was the Yaba who showed her where to get the right medicine.

And again, I know somebody who has a wife and the wife was not giving birth to children. He took his wife there, and when they came back his wife began giving birth to children. As for that, it is just easy work for Yabyili. If a woman goes there and comes back and gives birth, if it is a baby girl, we call that baby *Yapaya*, that is “grandfather’s wife,” and if it is a baby boy, we call him *Yabdoo*, that is, “grandfather’s man.” By calling the child *Yapaya* or *Yabdoo*, it shows that it is Yabyili who got the child for her. And again, if you are looking for money or wealth and you are not getting it, then maybe there is something within you spoiling your way to get the wealth, and if you go to the Yaba, he will make things all right for you. Sometimes someone will go and come back and he will be getting all that he needs, and sometimes someone will go and will not get. And again, sometimes you will be falling sick all the time, and you will go to the Yabyili, and when you get there, the Yaba will tell you that it is such-and-such a person who is putting the sickness on you. The Yaba will show the person to you, and you will come home and find the person. You will say, “Why are you worrying me by putting sickness on me all the time?” If the person is a woman and she disagrees, then her husband can take her to the Yaba. And the Yaba will tell her to her face, “You are worrying this person by putting sickness on him, and if you don’t leave the fellow, I the Yaba, I will catch you myself.” If the Yaba says this to anybody who is worrying another person, she will be afraid and leave the person free. All this is the work of the Yabyili god. If not these modern days, Yabyili was the strong god for us Dagbamba. And I can say that it is still a very strong god.

And it is not for us Dagbamba alone: Yabyili is strong for every tribe. I am talking about the Dagbamba and the Dagbamba gods, and I am showing you that some of the gods we have here are in other towns. Yabyili is in the Talensi land, and the tindana is a Talensi. Dagbamba go there, and I haven’t asked but I have even heard that Yabyili has some talk on the part of every Yaa-Naa. There is a god at Yapei, and we Dagbamba go there, but Yapei is in the Gonja land, and the tindana there is a Gonja. And I want to tell you and you will know: it is not “This is my tribe’s god” or “This is not my tribe’s god.” Anybody of any tribe can go to a god. You don’t say “This is my tribe’s god.” You yourself know it. You go to Yabyili, and are you a Talensi? Isn’t America far from Tongo? When you went, was it not wonderful? That is why you went. Didn’t you see any talk of it? Did it do work for you or it didn’t do work for you? It did work. That is how it is and people go to see the gods. If it is a true god, it is there for everyone.

And so these are the true and strong gods I am telling you about, and they have been there for a very long time. There is no talk. If there is any talk, Pong

Tamale is not far, Naawuni is not far, Yabyili is not far. Take the talk and go and see. I have told you that the gods were there before the Muslim religion came, and the gods are there today and tomorrow. It is the gods that are true that I am taking to talk and show you. If not that, there are so many gods that no one can even count them.

I want to give you an example. There was a god that started about fifteen years ago; it was in the Konkomba land. It was called *Naabuyli*. At that time it was very difficult to get transport to any place, but if you went there, you would see about twenty trucks and busses. It was the Konkombas who brought and were holding the god. If anybody went there and talked the talk that was worrying him, they would give him something to drink. If it was money you wanted or a child you wanted, you would drink it in the drink they gave you, and that would let you get what you wanted. People were going and paying and talking their talks, and people of Dagbon went there plenty. As they were going, it added many talks to Dagbon because it spoiled Dagbon. What was happening was that young women of about twenty to thirty years were going there and drinking so that when they got home they could see the old women who were witches. These young women were catching the witches themselves, and they would gather and beat the old woman. Sometimes they would beat somebody as if they were going to kill the person. And they were taking the witches to the god, and the god was making them drink some medicine, and some of them were dying there. And some of them were not dying, and people were saying that is was the medicine I told you about on the part of the Pong Tamale god, that the medicine was entering small pots in their stomachs and that they were coming home and vomiting it and throwing it away. And people said they were doing that.

There was a woman at Kalariga, the village near to the Tamale hospital. She had a daughter called Amina. Amina's mother was one of the women who was beaten by two of those women who were going to the god. At that time, Amina's boyfriend was a policemen, and she was friends to all the police. When she saw how these women had beaten her mother, she went and reported them at the police station, and the police went and caught the women and locked them in a room. And the police asked them why, and they said, "She eats." And the police took the law and asked them, "How did she eat? Did she take a knife to cut somebody? Or did she put medicine into food for somebody to eat and die?" And they said, "No." And the police said, "Then why?" And they said, "It is the god that has told us that she is eating people." On that day, the police brought transport and told the two women, "Go inside!" and took them straight to Naabuyli, and they arrested the tindana himself and took all the medicines and the

pots and took them to the Court. At that time, there was a Court. The Superintendent of Police at that time was a Builsa man called Issa, and he asked the tindana, "How do you know that this woman is killing people?" The tindana was sitting down; he didn't open his mouth. That same day, they broke all the pots of the god, and there was no talk again. The god died. We haven't heard anything about it ever again. The only thing we heard was that it was a medicine which these Konkombas went and ate at the Ewe land, and so it was only medicine. And so you can hear of many different gods, but they are not the same. The ones I am showing you are the real gods, and no one takes his mouth to argue with them. Pong Tamale, Naawuni, Yabyili: no one has ever argued with them.

After Yabyili we have another one which is also very strong. It is called *Bunnyamaashe*, and it is at Yapei. As it is very near, many people have been going there. Whatever you want, if you go there, you will hear something about it from the god. And I can also stand as a witness for that god, because some time ago I have seen something, and I think at that time you were here. You know the wives I have got now, and you know the one who has been with me for more than eleven years now, and she never gave birth to a child. Since she has grown up, she never gave birth to a single child. She was divorced by other men before I married her, and the men who divorced her, they all tried their best for her to give birth to a child, but they never got luck. When I married her, too, truly, I also tried my best. I approached maalam for help, and I have not found things easy for her to give birth. Just four months ago, she told me that her mother was taking one of her sisters who was also not giving birth to *Bunnyamaashe*. And so she said, "I would like to follow them there, so that if I go, I will ask to know why I am not giving birth to children."

As for *Bunnyamaashe*, a woman cannot go there by herself. She must be accompanied by her husband or her husband's brother. When my wife said she wanted to go there, I said, "I cannot go there. As I am praying, I don't have to go to a god." And so I called my brother Imoro to accompany her there. My wife went and bought a chicken for herself, and her sister also bought her a chicken. When they had their chickens, they all went to *Bunnyamaashe*, and they reached there in the evening. And that place too is like the other gods; you don't go to the tindana unless you get someone to lead you. Early in the morning the next day, they went to make their complaint to the one who would take them to the god, and they went to the tindana and said it again. The tindana said, "Yes. As for me, I have nothing to do. The only thing I can say and you will also see is that I don't find things by myself alone. If I kill your chicken, how it will jump about on the ground, that will show what will happen to you."

When the tindana said this, he killed my wife's chicken and threw it on the ground. The chicken was going round, flying up and down on the ground, and it came and lay on its back. Then the tindana said to my wife, "Since you were born, you said you don't want dirt. And giving birth to a child is also dirt because whatever happens, the child will ease himself on you sometimes. If you don't want dirt, how can you give birth to a child? As you said you don't want dirt, that is the reason why God also said He will not give you a child. And that is what the shaking and jumping of the chicken says." And as the tindana said she would never conceive, she came home and told me, and my brother who led her there also came to tell me and her mother, too. And then my wife came and told me, "Now I know my position. And so don't worry yourself or suffer for me to give birth to a child." And what I'm telling you, the day she was telling me this, it was a very, very heavy thing in my house. And that is the work of the god.

Apart from that, there is another god called *Lansa*. It is at a place called Chito in the Gonja land, on the road to Salaga. I have not been there, but people go there and tell me that the Lansa god is like a room. The door of the room is very small, and if you are going into the room, you have to walk backwards. There too they go to ask for children, and many people, countless, have been going there all the time. If you go and ask for a child and you come to give birth, when the child is brought forth, whether it's a boy or a girl, you will call the child Lansa.

There is another god in the Gonja land. The town is called Chema and the god is also called *Chema*. It is also on the Salaga road. Many people go there, and they also go because of a child. Some people go there and they get a chance to give birth to children. Sometimes somebody might be sick, and if he gets there, it will show him how to get the roots of trees or any other thing to use as medicine and be treated. If you are looking for money and you are not getting it, you can go there. Or if it is that somebody is after you because he is your enemy, you can take the problem there. As for the Chema god, the tindana in charge looks into every problem only in the night, after eating the night food. And people go there on Thursdays; if they don't go on the Thursday, they have to wait for another Thursday again. When they go, everybody will carry his chicken, and twenty pesewas, and salt. In the olden days it was twenty pesewas, but now as everything has increased, it has also increased. Sometimes people carry cola too. When they reach there, they give the salt to the householder at their sleeping place. They arrive in the late afternoon, and whoever you are and whatever your problem, you have to make your complaint to the householder to take you to the tindana.

When you go to the tindana, the tindana will receive the twenty pesewas before he looks into your problem. Sometimes he may look and see that to find out about your problem from the god, the god doesn't need any chicken, and he will return your chicken to you. You know, there are many people who will go to a god and just give the tindana the money to buy whatever animal the god wants. Sometimes you may want to get a goat, and you won't know what type of goat to get, whether a white one or a brown one or a black one, and so it is better if you give the tindana money to buy whatever animal the god needs. If you give the tindana the money, he will be happy, and he himself will get the animal. If he doesn't get the animal, it is between him and the god, and as you have given the money, your sacrifice is standing. Maybe the tindana will just tell you to get some rice or millet or guinea corn or other things and combine them and give it as a sacrifice. Some people too get milk and then they grind millet or guinea corn and make what we call *maha*. This *maha* is a kind of food, and they will add it to cow milk and just give it to somebody as alms. Nowadays too, if you can't get cow milk, you can use tinned milk. The tindana sometimes tells people to give *maha* and they do it, and what they need, they get it. And other people's problems are solved by the killing of chickens. That is how the gods are, and that is how the Chema god is working, too.

At Tolon we have another god called *Jaagbo*. The *Jaagbo* god is a snake. As for *Jaagbo*, I have seen its works and what it is doing over there. *Jaagbo* is living a little bit away from Tolon, and where it is, the place is just like a well. The well is covered with very many trees crowded together, and the trees still cover the well. I don't think there is anybody who can cut down any of the trees there, because people say that if you try to cut any of the trees there, you will die. So I know the place where the *Jaagbo* sleeps, but I only passed by and I didn't go to see it myself so that I could describe it well. If you are not among those who are in charge of the god, you have no right to go there; you can only pass by and you cannot reach the actual place.

Whenever the Tolon chief is about to die, *Jaagbo* will come out from the well and come into the town. Any time people see it roaming in the town of Tolon, they know that something bad is going to happen. And truly, the *Jaagbo's* coming to town can mean two things. If it is not the chief who is going to die, then maybe a big person in the town is going to die. And again, sometimes it may be a time for the people of Tolon to go and give it a sacrifice, and if the *Jaagbo* has waited and they are not coming, then it has to come to the town.

If it comes to the time for the people to make the sacrifice, they will get many chickens and goats. *Jaagbo* used to cause the rain to fall. And so if it is the

rainy season and the rain stops for some time, the crops will be drying at the farms; the people will go with the chickens and goats and give them to Jaagbo, and after giving the sacrifice, the people will see that the rain is coming. When they want to make the sacrifice, they go to Jaagbo and kill all the animals and leave them on the ground. Jaagbo will come out from the well and take one of the animals and go back into the well again. And so when they kill the animals, they don't go anywhere; they just stand there until Jaagbo comes out to take one. The people don't know what happens to the chicken or the goat. The animals are many, and they just have to kill all of them and leave them on the ground, and then they wait for Jaagbo to come out and pick the one it wants. It will pick only one, and the rest of the animals will be roasted and eaten by the children and by the people who came to make the sacrifice. If it happens that they kill all the animals and Jaagbo refuses to come out and take one, then the people know that as it has refused them, and some bad thing will happen.

And again, as there are those people who go to beg the gods for children, this problem is just easy for Jaagbo. If you are a woman and you go and ask for a child, you don't have to do many things. You just kill a chicken and leave it by the well. If the Jaagbo comes out and takes the chicken, then you know that when you get back to the house, you will start giving birth to children. And if you go to ask for a child and it gives you, whether the child is a boy or a girl, you have to call the child Jaagbo. And so, anybody at all whom you see called Jaagbo, you should know that the person is from that god at Tolon.

These places where someone can go and beg for a child, if that person goes and gives birth to a child from the god, there are some things the father and the mother won't do to the child. They don't beat such a child, and they don't shout at or talk useless talks to such a child, and the child will have the name of the god unless the child becomes a big person and wants to change his own name. It is not that the god will fight for the child, or it would have made it that the child won't die. It is only that as the father and mother have begged for the child, they have to respect the child. Somebody from another house can beat the child and the god won't mind, but the father and mother won't do that. I have seen Yabyili give someone a child, and the mother knocked the child and the child became sick. When the woman took the child to Yabyili, Yabyili said, "I gave you the child, but did I tell you to beat the child?" I have seen some Dagbamba get a child and go and beg Yabyili, "This child, if I forget and I beat the child, you shouldn't do any talk to me." If you don't beg like that, and you beat the child, sometimes Yabyili will let a scorpion sting you. As for that, we have been seeing it.

And you know Tampion, where we go to buy the carved drums; they have a god they call *Zeyibu*. It is also standing for someone who is suffering to get a child. And again, a prince who is looking for a chieftaincy can go and make a sacrifice there, and sometimes he will get the chieftaincy. The Tampion god is a monitor lizard, the one we call *wua*. It is a very, very big lizard. It resembles a crocodile, but it hasn't got long teeth or a big mouth. It lives in water, but sometimes hunters can get it in the bush, too. It has small eyes and a small nose, and its skin is rough. You see the fiddle the *goonji* people play: it is the skin of this lizard they use to cover the calabash when they make the fiddle. And so this lizard is the god of Tampion, and Tampion people are forbidden to kill it. They don't even eat it. If you are not from Tampion and you kill this lizard there, you can go to another place to cook it and eat it, but the people from Tampion, if they even kill it, they will get trouble. The person who is in charge of this god is called the Guma-Naa. He is the tindana for this god. There is a village called Gumani near Tampion, and actually, Tampion and Gumani are the same town, but there is a kind of division between them.

As the god is, it is one lizard, but when the year comes and the people are going to make the sacrifice, they go to meet at least six or seven of these lizards lying on a rocky stone, and there will be a very big one in the middle of all of them. When the people go and meet the big lizard, they kill chickens and goats for it. If it is not the time for sacrifice, sometimes the lizards will come to the town. You will be coming across them all the time, and they will be walking around anywhere in the town. If these lizards are in the town, it stands on only two people: either the Guma-Naa or the Tampionlana is going to die. It is the Guma-Naa who will know what is going to happen. If it is the Tampionlana who is going to die, the movements of the lizards will show; and if it is that the Guma-Naa is going to die, their movements will show. And so the Tampion god is there like that. If you are looking for chieftaincy, you go to Guma-Naa, and Guma-Naa will show you how to make the sacrifice so that the god will help and you will have what you want. If you are looking for a child and you go, Guma-Naa will tell you the number of chickens and the kind of chickens you have to buy to make the sacrifice, and if you give birth with help from the god, you will call the child *Zeyibu*.

As the Tampion god is a lizard, Tampion has also got another god which is bees. There are many of them, and they can be looking at any part of the village, but they are staying behind the market. And truly, the bees are very, very, very dangerous. If you come to the Tampion market and you hold a paper and pen to write to tax the women in the market, the bees won't agree, and these bees will kill

you in the market. I think you have seen in Tamale here, there are people from the District Council giving tax tickets to the traders in the market, but in Tampion they don't do it. Since the olden days up to today, the local council there does not tax the market traders. Not long ago, they said that it was a lie, and they sent some people to go and give the tax tickets at the Tampion market. When those people went, before they had given tickets to three women, the bees attacked them in the market, and they were sent to the hospital with serious wounds on their faces and everywhere. As for the bees at Tampion, it is not something to ask somebody, "Have you ever seen it?" The bees are just common everywhere, and we have been seeing them. And so that is how Tampion is, and it has those two gods: one is Zeyibu and the other is the bees.

At Yendi too, they have many gods, and *Gurugua* is one of them, and it is in Yendi itself. And they have a god called *Pabo*. This Pabo is a hyena and it stays by a water place. The place is like a river that doesn't run, and it is something like a well. If you have been watching any time we go to Yendi, we meet some water on the way by the roadside, and the water comes from Pabo. As for the hyena, we don't see it; we only hear its voice. If the Yaa-Naa is going to die, it is the hyena who will first tell the people with its crying. If the Yaa-Naa is going to die, in the night the hyena will go to the roadsides and cry. It will stand on the road from Yendi to Tamale and cry toward Tamale, then move to another junction and cry toward Gushegu, move to another junction and cry toward Bimbila, and then move to another and cry toward Yelizoli. When it cries, everybody will hear it and know that it is telling people of the death of the Yaa-Naa. And the Yaa-Naa doesn't drink water from that place. The hyena is still there to this day, and we all know the work of the Yendi god.

As for Yendi talks, they are too many, because the Yaa-Naa begs many gods. I told you already that the chiefs are not all that strong in the Muslim religion, and it comes from their starting. There is a town called Bagli which is beyond Karaga. A long time ago, when Dagbon started, the Yaa-Naas were sitting there. I don't know for sure whether or not it is a god or medicine at that place, but we have heard that any Yaa-Naa who dies will go there. The time a Yaa-Naa is going to die, you will hear drummers beating and beating throughout the town in the night, and the beating will be the death drumming we beat at funeral houses, and *Bimbiyu*. You will hear the drumming but you will not see the drummers. Those who are beating are those who are already dead. There is a river there, and there is a house by the river. There is a room in the middle of the house, and that is where the dead people come and enter. If a Yaa-Naa dies, he will come and be in that room. Even if a Yaa-Naa is going to die next month, they will know it

there already because they will be hearing the drumming. When a Yaa-Naa dies, he doesn't die at once, and if he is in his house when he dies, you won't see him again. A Yaa-Naa can die, and it will be up to some months and he will still be living. He has entered the room. They beat drums and come, and go into the river and come out and enter the room, and then they are quiet again. If you stand against the wall of that house, you will hear someone say "Don't touch me." That is a dead person talking. That is how it is there. If you go to that town, they will show you what the town wants and what it does not want. And no child of a Yaa-Naa will go there; he won't even pass by. If he is not dead and he goes there today, tomorrow he will be dead. And if it is a chief who didn't eat his chieftaincy in the right way, he cannot go there. And I have heard again that if dead chiefs blame a chief who is trying to come, they will refuse his entering the room, and he will remain in the river. This room is there today and tomorrow at Bagli, and if you are in that town and you hear the drums beating in the night, whatever happens, when it's daybreak you will hear them say that the Yaa-Naa has died.

The Yaa-Naas have got another strong god at Galiwe. That god is called *Kpala*. It is there for the Galiwe chief and the Yaa-Naa. When a Yaa-Naa eats chieftaincy, if he doesn't go to sacrifice to *Kpala*, his chieftaincy is not there. It was Naa Garba's mother who went there and gave birth to Naa Garba. She was called Laamihi. They took her to sacrifice to *Kpala* and she came and gave birth to him and many others. It has come to stand that when Yaa-Naas eat, they should go and make a sacrifice there. This *Kpala* is like a small tree. At that place, if it is not yet time to make the sacrifice to the god, they cannot burn the bush for farming. If somebody goes and burns it, then when the trees that remain are going to bring forth new leaves, that fellow will die. It is like that up till now. And so *Kpala* is strong, and they don't burn the bush around there unless they have made the god well. There is another town like that called Taha; it's just near here. These two towns, they don't burn the bush until they have sacrificed to the god. Even if they have finished the sacrifice, when they are going to burn the bush, they catch a live gecko lizard, the one we call *langalinga*, and they get cotton or grass and tie it to the tail. Then they put fire to the lizard's tail and push the lizard into the bush, and all the bush will burn, and they will say that the gecko has burned its grandfather's bush. Have you seen? It is not that somebody has come and burned the bush. This is what they do at those two places.

In Tamale here, the gods are many; I don't even know all their names. I have already told you that in the olden days this town was a town of the gods and not a Muslim town. And so there are many gods and they all have tindanas. There is an area of town called Chañni, by the old cemetery; they have a tindana there.

There is a village near here called Tuutingli, and the Tuutingli tindana is even senior to the Tamale tindana. There is a god he goes to make the sacrifice to. As for the Tamale tindana, we call him *buyalana*, and there is a god called *Gurugbaya*, and he sacrifices to it with Muslim alms. They say the god's friend is a maalam, and so the tindana goes to it with milk, maha, a white cock, and a white sheep. That god is standing for rain or any problems in the town; it is near to the Chief Commissioner's residence.

And in Tamale here, another god is trees, and it is called *Kpalanga*. Kpalanga is a place where *kpalga* trees are. As for it, I have seen everything of it myself, because it is just near my house over by the Victory Cinema. You see the trees there where the car mechanics are working, no one can cut any of those trees. I told you that some people have put sand there because they want to build houses, but they cannot cut down the trees. Some time ago a white man wanted to build a cinema house there, and the government people gave the land to him, but the people in charge of the god refused. Their leader is the Dakpema, the market chief. He said he would not give the land to the white man. The white man who first came and started building the cinema hall did not even see the beginning of it; he ran away from Tamale and went to Wa. They stopped work for about one year's time, and no one tried to build again. Later, the white man's younger brother came, and he went straight to the Dakpema. The Dakpema told him that if he wanted to build, he would have to buy some chickens so that he the Dakpema would go and beg the god. And the white man didn't argue; he went and bought the chickens for the Dakpema. The Dakpema killed the chickens as sacrifice to beg the god before they were able to build the cinema. I think that white man who built it is no more in this world. Another one came, and he is still there. Every year they have to give a sacrifice, and they kill chickens and goats for the god.

When I was a young boy and I first came to Tamale here, one time they were making the sacrifice and I went there to see them kill the chickens and goats and roast them. When they were going to make the sacrifice, Dakpema put on a leopard skin. The reason why Dakpema put on a leopard skin is that during the old days, the god was a leopard and was staying among the trees. When they wanted to make the sacrifice, the leopard would come out from the trees. And as things happened and Tamale changed to a town, I think the leopard ran away; but any time they make the sacrifice, Dakpema has to put on a leopard skin, and his elders follow him. When they come to make the sacrifice, Dakpema will get up and say some words before they kill the chickens and the goats. And the one who actually kills the chickens and the goats is the one who will succeed the Dakpema if the Dakpema is dead. As for the sacrifice, every year I have been seeing it,

because when they are going, they pass just by my door. They still do it every year. If the rain stops, they can go and give the sacrifice, and the rain will start again. If there is any trouble in the town, or there are many thieves or many diseases disturbing the people in the town, the Dakpema will go to the god with chickens and goats to make the sacrifice, and the god will solve the problems of the town. And that is how this town is: the tindana repairs Gurugbaya, and the Dakpema repairs Kpalanga.

And those are the ways of the gods and how I know about them. And there are still more, because every village and every town has got its god. At Sang, the god is called *Tambo*, and there are people who are named Tambo because their mothers were taken to this god before they gave birth to them. Yesterday I told you about *Saambuyl*, the god of Mion. So what I have told you are just some of the gods. These gods are just some of the ones I know, and among all those I have talked to you, there are important ones, because the gods are more than one another in strength. Which are they? Naawuni is one of them; it is a very important one. As for the Naawuni god, we don't play with it. If you do something and you tell lies that you have not done it, and you go to the Naawuni, it is just a minute's work for the god. The Naawuni doesn't waste time. Before you step one foot into the water, you are gone, finished: it will take you out. And I've seen it, and it is never a lie. And even it can happen that if a witch wants to kill someone and cannot do it, she can give the person to the Naawuni, and Naawuni will remove that person. As for the Naawuni, it is never a joke, and we give it respect. And I also told you about Pong Tamale. It is a big god. Even to this day we still respect it, and it doesn't play with any of us. If someone has stolen your something and you go to inform the tindana at Pong Tamale, when he performs the sacrifice, it will not take long and you will see clouds in the sky and rain coming. The lightning will come to the thief's room and burn it, and kill him. And the rain will go and bring whatever he stole from where he put it, and leave it on his chest. If you find the dead body, you will find what he has stolen. If rain kills somebody and we don't find anything on his chest, then we know that a witch was trying to catch him and couldn't, and so the witch went to get Pong Tamale to kill the person. And apart from these two, I also told you something about Yabyili; it is a very strong god. And Jaagbo too, it is also important. And Kpala and Pabo and all the gods that are for the Yaa-Naa, they are also strong. But there are three. Have you seen Pong Tamale? Have you seen Naawuni? Have you seen Yabyili? These three are more than any other god. As everything has changed, they haven't changed. There are some gods in some places which were very strong in the olden days, and as things have changed, they are not strong again.

And so the gods are stronger than one another. And all these things, we have them in Dagbon here.