

## **Chapter II–26: *Drummers' Medicines***

Today we will continue the talk about medicine. I have told you that I don't want medicine, and truly, I have no appetite to eat medicine, but I will tell you about some of the medicines that drummers have in Dagbon here. Many people take it that drummers have got a lot of medicine, and truly, drummers have got it. And again, some drummers are also wizards, and they go out in the night and knock witches with the sticks. Somebody can grow up, and the father will give medicine to him, and somebody too can go around to ask for medicine. Drummers who are not able to get medicine from inside themselves, they get medicine from other people outside. Sometimes they will go to a medicine man and sometimes they will go to a drummer, because some drummers who have medicine have been giving others medicine for drumming.

As you are sitting, I can tell you that the medicine that Alhaji Adam has done for you is from the beginning of their family. This medicine comes from their family since long ago, and this medicine stands for the whole family. And this medicine too, the one who can do it for other people is the one who is elder. At present, Alhaji Adam is the elder, so he can do it; that is why he has done it for you. And if Alhaji Adam dies, the one who is behind Alhaji Adam, if Alhaji Adam has taught him this medicine he has been doing, then he has to continue doing it.

As you are sitting, too, the medicine Alhaji Adam has given you, Alhaji Adam has shown you the meaning of it. As you know the name of the medicine and you know the sorts of plants you brought him from the bush, and you know the meaning of the chicken used in killing for it, and you know the sort of prayers in making it: you yourself can make it for someone. Yes, that is how it is, and there is no talk. If only you can find all the plants he brought from the bush, and the sort of chicken and the plants and all the things he used together in making it, you can make it for someone. And if you are going to make it for someone, you have to mention the name of the one who gave it to you inside, the one who gave it to you that he should help you to give this to the other person to work for him too. This is how the medicine was introduced to the whole family. And so I don't have anything to say about the medicine Alhaji Adam gave you. I asked you to go to Alhaji Adam for this medicine, and as Adam has given you this medicine, you should continue to use it. If Alhaji Adam has given you the medicine and you don't put it on, it is over to you. But I told you that Alhaji Adam is our elder, and as Adam has given it, it should always be on your arm. If you are not putting it on, perhaps you may think it is useless for you, and that is the case. No one can

force anyone to put something on. But I think that it is good that you also trust it. And I know that it's true because your friend Sulemana in America has written to me that you have made it for him and that it works for him. This one that you have, I don't have to tell you much about it, because it is with you, and the person with the medicine is the one who knows the medicine, and so you will even know what is inside it more than I. As Alhaji Adam showed you all of its names, and as you know what is inside it, then you can also make it for somebody. That is how medicine is.

On the part of having medicine, if someone comes to you for it, you don't give the medicine for free, even to your best friend, but it's not that you have a fixed charge. Let me give you an example, and it looks like the talk of our drumming and the sacrifices we drummers make, but there are some differences inside it. The time we were looking for the old talks of Dagbon, I told you that if some work wants something big, you can get something small to stand for the big thing. Do you remember that? And do you remember some time ago that you asked me that if you are going to teach someone how to beat *Baŋgumaja*, can you ask the person to slaughter a sheep? Do you remember you asked me? And I said yes, if you ask the person to buy the sheep for you to kill, it doesn't matter. Did I not tell you that? And if not that, then the person has to do something for you.

The time I showed you *Baŋgumaja*, and I asked you to buy a sheep, and if it was that you couldn't go and find the sheep yourself, then you should hand the money to me and say, "This is the money for the sheep." You can never ask me again whether I bought the sheep or not when you have handed everything to me. It shows that you have given the money for the sheep, so everything in it is left with me. This is how medicine is moving. As you asked me to buy the sheep, it is not good for me to collect the money without buying the sheep. If the time you gave the money for the sheep, I had refused to buy the sheep, then maybe at least I could spend the money for three days or so. But as I bought the sheep, there was a day that we all would eat it, and the next day we all ate again. Maybe the day after that we would have nothing of the sleep left to eat again, but it had got a name that we slaughtered a sheep. Alhaji Adam was roaming in town, and he came to the house and found the leg of the sheep you sent him, and he came and asked about the meat and asked who brought it, and I explained all this to him. Then he asked me the reason why I slaughtered the sheep, and I said that I had shown you this drumming and I asked you to buy a sheep to be killed. And he said what I have done is good, that he wants the relationship between you and me to get better.

It is not something to play with. If I needed money and you gave the money to me, and I refused to buy the sheep and I had the money in my pocket, I would not have given the money back to you. But on your part, the money you gave me

would still be standing for the sheep. But if you gave me the money for the sheep and I put it in my pocket, without finding the sheep, the one teaching you *luŋa* at the time, Alhassan Abukari, would not have known that you had given me the money to buy the sheep. And as I bought the sheep, you will get the meat. And as I got the sheep, and we gave meat to Alhassan to take it to Alhassan Abukari's father, Lun-Zoo-Naa Abukari, when they took it there, he was also very surprised. Then he also asked about the meat, and then Alhassan explained it to him and he said, oh, what I have done is very good. I am not joking with you. If you had just given me the money, I would have not have shared it with them at all. But there are some sorts of money which you see and then refuse to spend. The time we were finding the old talks of Dagbon, and you gave the money for sacrifices to Nyolugu Lun-Naa Issahaku and to Alhassan Kpema, then the sacrifice is standing on your part. You didn't have to ask them to show you the animals or whether they actually killed the animals; you only had to ask them if the money reached and if the sacrifice was all right. At that point, all the talks or the problems that were inside it were with them. As you have given the money and said that you are making the sacrifice, nothing is going to follow you again. And on their part, if they don't fear fear, and they used the money, it is over to them, and you have no way to ask them.

And so the time you also want to show someone how to be beating *Baŋgumaŋa*, you don't have to collect money from him: you have to tell the person to buy a sheep so that you will also kill the sheep. Then if the person says he has no money to buy the sheep, and this is what he has to give you, then you have to know whether or not you will receive it, or if there is something you can sacrifice in place of the sheep. But you don't have a particular amount to charge a person, because I didn't change you that "This is the money for the sheep." Sometimes it will happen that a medicine man will tell you to get a particular type of animal. But I just said that you have to buy a sheep, and I didn't say that the sheep has to be a big one or a small one. Whatever a sheep is costing, that is the amount. And if you had given me the money just to buy the sheep, and I was looking for the sheep but I could not get one to buy at the time, then I would tell you "John, this is the money. I was not able to get the sheep." You would ask, "My father, we didn't get the sheep, so how will you charge me? How much are you going to charge me as you were unable to get the sheep?" At that time I would hand the money back to you, and then I would have told you, "Oh, any amount at all you have, you can give me. There is no particular charge you have to pay." And I would tell you that as there is no charge, you should buy *maha* and share it to children and old people as a sacrifice. That is the same thing you would do with medicine. Listen.

On the part of medicine, medicine doesn't show itself. If you get medicine from somebody, you don't have to be showing people that you have got medicine. When we told you to get medicine for your drumming, and you got it, it was correct for you to show those of us who sent you and who are you elders that what we told you to do, you have also done it. But if you alone have received the medicine from somebody, say, if your father has some medicine and he gives it to you, you won't be going outside to show people. But the sacrifice is still there, because the medicine has what it wants. And if you are giving medicine to somebody, you shouldn't go against the medicine when you give it. And you the one who has the medicine, you know what is inside it. The time Alhaji Adam gave you the medicine, did he charge you? He didn't charge you, but you used sense and gave him something, and what you gave him, he also didn't refuse it. That is how all of them are doing. Some people have medicine and they are charging people heavily. Truly, if you are staying with somebody and you want to give something to that fellow, you don't have to be charging him heavily. But I have told you that friendship or brotherhood does not collect medicine for free. The name of the medicine shows that at least the one collecting the medicine will pay or make a sacrifice for it, or else he has demeaned the medicine. He is the one who is going to hold it, and he is looking for it because it is going to help him. And so those who have medicine, they know what they did before they got it, and they know the talk that is inside it.

And so I will tell you about the medicines drummers have and I don't have but I know about, and also about the ones I have heard they have. Drummers have medicines to give good things to one another and medicines to give bad things to one another. Even if I myself don't have medicine, I think that most drummers have medicine. Many people fear drummers because drummers have so much medicine, and I don't think that drummers could live in this Dagbon here without medicine. You cannot know it, but any time we drummers go to funeral houses, that is the place where people can easily eat food and die. Whenever they cook food and put something bad inside, and they send it to drummers, the moment they bring the food, we sit down and clear it all, and nothing happens to us. A drum itself is medicine: it is medicine that is like custom. If a drum is in your armpit, it can protect you. When you have put a drum in your armpit, if they bring a bad food and you eat it, nothing will happen to you. And so as for drummers, medicine is always with us.

Truly, I can say that drummers have more medicine which will give somebody a bad thing. Not drummers alone, and not Dagbon alone, but in this world, there are people you can hear about who will like to hear bad news about their fellow friend. There is someone, just to hear that you have died, he will put

medicine into drink and give it to you, and you will drink and die. And so in this Dagbon, some people have medicine to protect themselves against bad medicines in foods. They protect themselves by eating another medicine, and if someone puts medicine in food and gives it to them, after they eat it, they will vomit all of it out. Someone can have that medicine in his stomach, and someone can carry it. Someone can have medicine like a small piece of cola, and if he goes out and eats something bad, when he gets to the house he will get the medicine and rub a small piece of it on a stone and put it on his tongue, and he will vomit. In your country, I don't think anyone will give you something bad to eat like that, but we do that here, and people have medicine to protect themselves. You yourself, the right type of medicine for you is the one which Alhaji Adam has given you to let your wrist be quick in beating the drum. That is the good medicine, the white medicine.

Alhaji Adam can be an example of a drummer who has medicine, because as for Alhaji Adam, there are many medicines with him. He has the typical Dagbamba medicines, and he has maalam's medicines. As I don't have medicine, it is only that my talks and Alhaji Adam's talks are different. As for him, he has been riding maalams: he is sitting on their backs, and they are behind doing these things for him. I know that he has been giving you medicines because he likes you. If he does not give some medicine to someone who asks, he will say that he hasn't got the medicine, but truly, it is just that he does not want to give it to that person. As for medicine, I believe he has got it, and I will tell you something about him from the time my eyes opened to see him. From the time I was a child and I grew up and met him, he was with his friends, and he was older than them. And all those younger than him, all of them died. I'm not telling you that those of his friends who died didn't have medicine. What I am saying is that here, if you last for many years, and all your senior brothers and junior brothers die and leave you alone, sometimes someone will make a medicine to kill your arm and your leg or a medicine to let you become a mad person. None of these things has attacked Alhaji Adam, and so I believe that if he didn't have medicine, by now his arm and leg would have been killed by other people, or he would have become a mad person. And I think that among all old drummers in Dagbon, if you are talking to them and you come to call the name of Alhaji Adam, they will say that he is blessed by God to last so many years.

When I was growing up, I used to hear a lot about Alhaji Adam and his friends, and my brother Mumuni at Savelugu has also told me more about them. The time you came here, I think that from Tamale here to Karaga to Yendi and other places, among all the old drummers, only two may have been older than Alhaji Adam. If they called someone that "this man is a drummer and he is

Dagbana and he is an old man,” then if not Alhaji Adam, then it was Tampion Sampahi-Naa or Dimabi Lun-Naa. Even if you went to these two people and you began to say something about Alhaji Adam, they would say, “Oh! As for him, he is an old man. We were young when he and his friends were already beating drums.” And now even those two are no more there. The day I grew up to see Alhaji Adam for the first time, it was the funeral day of the Choggo-Naa. Alhaji Adam was riding a horse: if you saw him at that time, he was more than a chief, and people were even saying that about him. Some people praised him and they liked him, and others praised him and hated him in their hearts. We Dagbamba have a proverb, “*Dim pa taali*”; *taali n-nye li*: it means, “It doesn’t matter”: it matters.” Something which you don’t take to be anything is sometimes something. What I am telling you about Alhaji Adam is not present-day talks; it is a long time, more than forty years ago. The funeral I am talking of, when I saw Alhaji Adam riding a horse, since that chief died, four chiefs have eaten Choggo. Those chiefs, it’s not that they didn’t last; some of them reached twelve years or fifteen years before they died. And so I would like to tell you that any time you see somebody like Alhaji Adam and he has grown up to such an age, and the time he was young, he was great by name, and up to now he is still alive and nothing is worrying him, then you should know that God is protecting him with some medicine which he has within himself.

All of Alhaji Adam’s friends, all the great people he was staying with in the olden days, whether they had medicine or they didn’t have medicine, most of them have died, and only a few of them are left. The present Savelugu Palo-Naa is a friend of Alhaji Adam. Any time Alhaji Adam goes to Savelugu, he sleeps in Palo-Naa’s house. If you go to see the Palo-Naa himself now, he is very, very weak. It looks as if it is not he, but if you saw him during the olden days, you would know he is someone great. Alhaji Adam had another friend at Kumbungu called Ibrahim Lumbila, and Alhaji Adam even gave him a wife, and the wife gave birth to children before she died. That man was also having medicine, but he didn’t last and he died. Alhaji Adam’s good friend at Yendi was Zohe-Taha-Naa, and he also died. I knew another friend of Alhaji Adam’s who was called Koforidua, but he died. His name was Mumuni, but he was born at Koforidua and they called him Koforidua. He was Alhaji Adam’s relative, and he was his friend, too. It was *nantoo*, anthrax, that killed him, and you know, someone can make medicine to send this *nantoo* to catch someone. It is a boil which comes out from the body and kills a person: the boil will be inside your body, and you have to die before it will come out. His life was just like Alhaji Adam’s. Anywhere they were going, that man would ride a horse, and people were praising him. And he was also another person with many types of medicines.

I can be a witness that at one time that Alhaji Adam's friend Koforidua was having a very strong medicine called *warizuyu*, horsehead. People fear that medicine very much. I saw it in his room. That medicine is the head of a dead horse. If a horse has died, they will cut the head and put it down until all of it will rot. When it is finished rotting, you have to remove the brain and the eyes and the flesh, all of it; but you don't break the bones or the joints. You leave the white bones and the teeth. If you have this horsehead medicine, you have to bring all the bones of the head of the horse inside your room. If you have an enemy or someone you don't like, you go to cut grass and bring it for the head. If you put the grass by the head and you go out, if you come back even in a minute, you will not see the grass again. The head will eat it, and at that time you will know that you will defeat your enemy. This friend of Alhaji Adam's had that medicine, and he had even more medicine, but he died; he didn't last long like Alhaji Adam. And so what I know about Alhaji Adam is that he is having many different medicines within himself. Otherwise they would have killed him.

Truly, I myself have not seen them kill a drummer with medicine, but I have heard that they kill drummers like that. Sometimes a drummer will go to beat the *Samban' luja*, and they will tie him with *kabre*, and he will die. We have seen such things, and it is true. There is a drummer in this town called Issa, and I think you know him. He is the son of Maachendi at Nanton. He is a small boy, and he can beat the drum very well. He had a senior brother called Iddrisu, and his brother also used to play the drum like that, and he could sing, too. It wasn't daybreak and they killed him. They killed him at Nanton. That is why this boy, Issa, is here; he doesn't want to stay in Nanton. As for this, I have heard it, and Nanton is my town, but I was not at Nanton when Issa's brother died. I only heard that Iddrisu was dead, and people said he was killed. Everybody thinks he was killed. When he was young, the way he was beating the drum, it was very, very strong. The time they killed his brother, Issa was not in his sense; but he grew up to hear that they killed his brother. And the way Issa has started, it shows that they can also kill him the same way. Why will they kill him? It is because some of us drummers don't like one another. It is jealousy. You have your child and I have my child, and what your child is doing, my child cannot do that. Someone might not fear God and will kill another man's child. That is how it is.

And you can see many types of medicine on Issa's waist, and I think he is eating those medicines to protect himself so that no one can kill him. As Issa is now, it is not only in this town that he is staying. He is also at Savelugu, and as he is sitting there, he is with chiefs, and the chiefs have given him medicines to protect himself so that he will not die. Issa's father is also someone with medicine, and I think that maybe his father has also given him. But here is the

case: as Issa's father had medicine, there was someone too who had more medicine, because someone without more medicine could not have killed his son. The medicines that Issa's father has are what he will give Issa, and it is only medicine that the father can give him. It is not that they can catch someone. If someone kills your child with medicine, you cannot go and catch the person and say. "You! You have killed my child." If a witch kills, they can let soothsayers look and catch the woman, and they will drive such a woman from that town, but we have never heard of them catching a man who kills with medicine. We know that men also kill. Some people say that it is even men who kill more than women. But men use medicine to help the town. What we see here is that a man will fight for the town, but a woman will use medicine to break the town. A woman eats medicine to kill young boys, and kill young girls, and they drive away such a woman. But if you hear that they have driven a man away for using medicine to kill people, then he is very, very strong man, and he has been killing people openly.

Apart from jealousy, what will let them kill a drummer easily is a case with a drumming chieftaincy. Sometimes we see a drummer being made a chief drummer not because he is the one for the chieftaincy, but because the chief likes him and gives it to him. A drummer can also have medicine that will let them give him a drumming chieftaincy. He will eat it like that even though he is not the right person for the chieftaincy. At that time, the other drummer who was the right one for the chieftaincy will not let him reach the next day. It will not be daybreak and the one who was made chief will die, and it is the one who was for the chieftaincy who killed him. As for this, it is not anything. It is there today and tomorrow.

What I am telling you on the part of the drumming chieftaincies, I don't see the killing in Tamale. That is the reason why I have been telling you that our town here is not the same as other towns. This town is everybody's town. But Yendi, Nanton, Kumbungu, Diari, Savelugu, Karaga, Mion, Demon, Korli, Yelizoli — all of them, they are chiefs' towns. As for Tamale here, the one who has strength is a chief in this town. If you are in this town, if you are not among those of us who have grown from chiefs' towns and come here, you don't know any talk. You don't know what is inside chieftaincy talks. There are drummers in this town who are older than I, and they cannot answer any question on the part of chieftaincy. They are beating drums, but they don't know chieftaincy talks. My senior brother Sheni is like that: he can beat a drum nicely and he can sing Hausa songs very well, but he doesn't know the inside of these talks I am talking. There are many drummers like that. But I have asked and asked, and others too have appetite in it and come to my house, and I ask them and they tell me. What I'm telling you is

this: where there is a chieftaincy, there is a drumming chieftaincy there, too. And if it is not in Tamale here, it is in all the other towns that they kill like that.

Truly, drummers have got many medicines to do bad to one another. Someone can tie his friend with kabré, and his friend will die. Someone will put medicine in food to kill his friend. Drummers have a medicine called *muhili* to protect themselves against that: if someone gives you food which is not good and you eat it and your stomach is disturbing you, they will give you muhili to eat and you will vomit all the bad food out. There is another medicine called *bi tɔro kaŋkparambi*. If they go to a funeral house and there is a child or a young boy among them, if that child's eyes are hard or he has too much pride, sometimes they will bring food and the child will be removing the meat and eating it quickly. They will give him *bi tɔro kaŋkparambi*, and when he eats the meat it will stand in his throat. As the meat is standing like that, it cannot come out and it cannot enter his stomach. Sometimes it makes him cough until he coughs blood. If they want, they can treat him, and if they don't want, they will let him cough and it will not be daybreak and he will die. And those who are left will get sense.

There is another medicine drummers have when they go to a funeral house. If they have slaughtered a cow or a sheep, there are some people who will struggle to collect the head from the drummers. They are the people who dig graves: they are called *kasiyirba*. And I think I have told you something about them and their way, and they have a lot of medicine. If there are no drummers where a funeral animal is slaughtered, then the head is given to the grave diggers. What the grave diggers have is that after someone dies and they bury him, on the third day they go back to close the hole; then any animal which is killed, the grave diggers are to get the head, and the drummers have no interest in that. When the day comes to shave the heads of the dead body's children, and they kill a sheep, the drummers are to get the head. Sometimes the grave diggers will not agree that the head is for the drummers and will say that they should get the head. If there is mouth-arguing, others will agree with the grave diggers. A drummer has got a way if he wants, and he will refuse the head and let them give the head of the cow or the sheep to the grave diggers. If the drummer becomes annoyed, he has medicine for that, and the medicine is in different ways. When the grave diggers take the head home and cook it, the drummer will make the meat not be cooked: the water will boil, but how the head was, that is how it will be. Another way will let frogs be crying inside the soup. There is even another one, and a drummer will get nantoo — anthrax — and put it inside the food, and the grave diggers will eat it and die. Drummers have that one, too. It's not one medicine that drummers have: these are all some of the medicines I hear drummers have.

And drummers have the tying medicine, kabré. Let's say that a drummer comes from another town, and he is too proud of the drummers from his town.

Sometimes they kill such a drummer. If they don't want to kill him, they will let him go to a drumming place and not be able to sing. Whatever he knows, when he opens his mouth to sing, he will be like a dumb person. They have that medicine, and as for that one, I have seen it in this Tamale here. Let's say a drummer comes from another town; sometimes it is the townspeople who want that drummer from the other town because when he sings, it's sweet and it makes them happy. Maybe they will go to the chief and say, "Chief, we want you to call this drummer from this town. We hear that when he beats, it is always very sweet." The chief will agree. And you know, in our festivals, different drummers like Lun-Naa and Sampahi-Naa have their days to beat. The day this stranger comes, let's say Lun-Naa is supposed to beat, and if this drummer enters Lun-Naa's house and he knows how to beg, he will beat the Samban' luŋa and no one will do anything to him. But sometimes someone will come and not enter Lun-Naa's house.

Sometimes someone will come and he will go to the house of the people who called him. Maybe he takes it that it is the townspeople who like him, and when they bring him, he does not go to buy his respect from the other drummers. When it's night and he goes to beat the Samban' luŋa, he will not be able to beat it. Sometimes someone will not last fifteen minutes and sickness will catch him, and they will take him to the house. Getting to daybreak, sometimes he has died. Sometimes someone will come to beat, and they will tie him with the kabre, and he will not be able to open his mouth and sing.

As for tying the drummer with kabre, I have seen it. It was during the time of Gukpe-Naa Alhassan, and a drummer came from Yendi to beat the Samban' luŋa. He was the Duyu Lun-Naa. You know that the Gukpe-Naa comes from the Duyu chieftaincy to eat Gukpeogu. It was the Gukpe-Naa who brought Duyu Lun-Naa, and the Gukpe-Naa didn't tell the Gukpeogu Lun-Naa. The Lun-Naa was staying at Kanvili, a village about four miles from here. The day of the Samban' luŋa, all the Gukpeogu drummers gathered in this town, and we also gathered with them and went to the Gukpe-Naa's house. When we reached the chief's house, we saw Duyu Lun-Naa with his drum, and he was beating. We all sat down and kept quiet. He was beating until he changed his style, and we beat our drums and answered him. And you know, when a drummer is going to beat Samban' luŋa, he usually starts by talking about his family. Duyu Lun-Naa took a tail — I think the tail was a donkey's tail — and he waved it. And he shouted that his father had given birth to him as a drummer. And he said again, what he was going to sing, it was not that he went somewhere and heard it: it was his father who told him. When he said all this, it wasn't five minutes and he couldn't open his mouth again. As for this, my eyes saw it. No one told me this. It was the Gukpeogu Lun-Naa who had tied him with kabre. The chief took the Lun-Naa

into his room and told him, "As I have brought this stranger and I have not told you, I have done bad." And the chief begged Lun-Naa that he should remove him from shame. Then the Lun-Naa asked the chief, "What talk is it?" And the chief said, "The drummer is going to drum and he cannot sing." And the Lun-Naa said, "I am not the one. As for that, I don't know what is inside it." The chief could not do anything. The Duyu Lun-Naa went back and sat down, and it was the Lun-Zoo-Naa who beat the Samban' luja. They beat the drums until daybreak, and the Duyu Lun-Naa couldn't open his mouth unless to eat food. That was all. As for this, my eyes have seen it. And so I have heard that they kill drummers but I have not seen. I have told you what my eyes have seen, and as for the killing, I have heard it. And truly, it is true. That is how it is.

These bad medicines or black medicines are there, and they are different from the medicines which you have. As for what you have, it only shows you how to beat the drum, and it is not bad medicine. If your hand is not turning fast in beating, medicine can help your hand to be turning well. When you have it, even if you cannot beat, it can make your heart white, and it will make you eat the sweetness of beating the drum, and so it will help you. The one Alhaji Adam gave to you first is a strong medicine for drummers here. What you have is part of it, and you know its name. The medicine you have is a type of that medicine, and its general name is what we call *zambaya*. Zambaya is a cat, a bush cat. Don't you see that a cat is a very quick animal? And don't you see that the hand of a cat is very soft and loose. You know, when a cat is lying down or sleeping, if a rat falls in front of it, the cat will catch it. Before you even see, the cat will just take its hand and catch the rat, and it's just because the cat is very, very fast. Even if the cat is sleeping, if something happens and the cat wakes up, the hand looks as if it has vanished, and when you see it again, it will hold whatever has awakened it. This is how it is. And so if you have the cat medicine, it will also make your hand very fast, and make your wrist very soft. The medicine has different types. The names are different but they all work one work. If you have been given part of it and your eyes are not yet satisfied with it, they will give you another one. The last one is called *zambay' nuchee*, the cat's hand. If they are going to make that one for you, they add the forearm of a cat. They will get all the roots and plants for the medicine and soak them in a calabash. Whether they use a chicken for this medicine or what type of chicken they use, I don't know. It is only the person with the medicine who knows. But when they soak all the roots in the calabash, they will put the forearm of a cat into the water. Every daybreak, when you wake up from your sleep, you will wash your arm with the water. Every morning you have to be washing your arm, and when you continue the washing and you are also beating the drum, you will be very surprised to see that your hand and arm

will become very fast. And at the same time it helps you to gain from your drumming. If your hand is stiff, you can't be receiving things. But if your hand is soft, it can do something. And so this medicine is there with drummers, and we call it cat's hand. And it is not only drummers who have it; they are not the only ones who want to be quick. The goalkeepers for football teams also use the medicine.

We have another medicine that drummers use called *gajdu*. It means to bring the others low, to lead out of many, or to be higher than others. If a drummer has *gajdu* on his arm, any time drummers are playing and he comes to enter them, people will only hear the sound of his drum, and the rest of the drummers will cool down. Whatever the other drummers do, their sound will not go beyond his. Any time drummers are beating and someone with *gajdu* comes to beat with them, everyone will be looking at the one with *gajdu* and stop looking at the others. That is the way of *gajdu* and that is the work we drummers use *gajdu* for. If you have *gajdu*, it shows that you will not make any mistake; any time you are beating a drum, you are beating correctly, and that is why all the people will be looking at you. Even if you make a mistake, the mistake will be sweet or nice, and no one will know that you are making a mistake. I think Alhaji Adam has given you *balgiri*, and it is part of that one, too, for your playing and the pressing of the strings. Haven't you seen its work? We were beating the drums before you came here, and any time you come and take a drum and start beating, what always happens there? Do they look at you or not? They are looking at you because of two things. Some of them are looking at you because you are a white man and you are beating the drum. Others look at you because you have *gajdu*, and your drumming is nice. And so you know how to beat and you have *gajdu*, too. You have it and you are using it to do the work it wants, and many people look at you.

I think *gajdu* is the eldest among all the drummers' medicines. If you want, you can say that all the medicines to be playing nicely are a part of it. I think that the *zambaja* and the *balgiri* you have are part of *gajdu*. That is why we call it *gajdu*, that is, to be higher than all others. If you have *gajdu*, wherever you go, people will be talking of you, saying this is so, that is so. It's not that you only put it on when you are to drum: you can use it anywhere, and people will be looking at you. Whether they like you or they don't like you, they will be looking at you and wondering, and you will be getting what you want. That is the work of the medicine. And so it is not because of drumming alone that people eat *gajdu*. It has many types. Sometimes people will gather, and a young person will come inside, and his respect will be more than the elders. That is how it is.

The one who gave you *gajdu*, Alhaji Adam, when he was a young boy, whenever he would travel to any town or village, you would hear people saying,

“Adam Lumbila has come! Adam Lumbila has come!” He seemed like a chief. If you had a girlfriend in that village, on that day, you no longer had a girlfriend. Whether you loved the girl or you didn’t love the girl, she wouldn’t stay with you again until Alhaji Adam was gone from the town. And so gañdu is not a medicine that is useless or weak. If you get it and you know how to beat the drum very well, wherever you go, people will be loving you. Alhaji Adam himself told me that sometimes when he went to a town, it might happen that four or five women would just come to tell him that they want him to marry them. And he never had interest in marrying them. As for Alhaji Adam, the love he was having when he went to other towns, it was very great. If not because of medicine, I don’t think people would have loved him like that when he was young. And so the medicines he used to have are many.

There is another medicine we call *be yum’ ma*, that is, they should like me. I believe Alhaji Adam also had that. If you eat *be yum’ ma*, anywhere you are, people will like you. Even your enemies and those who hate you, they will all like you; even if they do not want, the medicine will make them like you. It is a medicine for anybody. The typical Dagbamba have it, the maalams also have it, and drummers also eat it. And so if a drummer eats it, it doesn’t matter. The maalams’ one is the strongest one. Any person can eat it if he wants people to like him, and you know, everybody wants people to like him. And that is how *be yum’ ma* medicine is, and so it is something like gañdu. And we drummers have another one again like gañdu and *be yum’ ma*, and we call it *pay’ di duyi*, that is, women should not cook. As for that one, I have heard people talking about it, and it is a medicine which drummers eat. If a drummer has this medicine and he is beating a drum anywhere and a woman is cooking, that woman will not be able to cook again; she will leave the cooking and go to see what is happening. And you know, something that will make a woman get up and leave her cooking is not a weak thing. And so that is how *pay’ di duyi* is.

And so these are some of the medicines which drummers have for beating the drums. Gañdu is standing as the eldest, because if you have it, whether you know how to beat or you don’t know, whenever you are beating, people will like it and be looking at you. You know that you do work so that people will be looking at you. You don’t do work so that people will not look at you. If your work is very good, and people are not looking at you, it shows that your work is not good. If you are a drummer and you listen to other drummers, you will see that sometimes someone will know how to beat the drum but he will have a fault in pressing the strings. Sometimes there will be a fault from his way of beating. Sometimes someone standing far away will hear the sound of the drum and it will be good, but you the one beating will not hear it like that. And so a drummer can

be there: he doesn't know how to sing or maybe he doesn't know how to beat the drum. He can go and look for the medicine which will let him sing very well, or if he wants, he can go to eat zambaja or gaṇdu. If God likes him, he will be able to sing very well and to be beating the drum correctly.

To beat a drum very well, the way is from the left wrist and how you press the drum, because the whole arm doesn't hold the drum. When someone is beating the drum, it is not the arm but the wrist which is holding it. That is why if you have gaṇdu and you are beating the drum, it will sound nice. But as for the cat medicine, it is standing for quickness on the part of the right hand, because it is the right hand that holds the stick and beats. If you have the cat medicine and you are beating, your hand in beating will be very quick, and at the same time you can learn any playing quickly. But if your hand is very quick already, you shouldn't eat cat medicine, because if you do that, it will come to a time when you will play and go over. In our group we have somebody like that. He is called Abdulai, and he is from a village near here called Chajni. He ate the cat medicine, and his hand was already quick, and so he added the cat medicine to the quickness of his hand: when he is playing the drum, you will not feel it. You will only see that his hand is turning quickly, but you won't hear the sound of the drumming because sometimes when you beat a drum too fast, the sound will reduce.

And so that is another reason why I don't eat medicine, because the beating I am beating now, my hand is already quick and my beating is all right. I have inherited it from my family. I don't go to eat medicine. The way I am able to play the drum, that is how my father was playing, and my grandfather and forefathers were playing like that. All the sacrifices of the medicines have been performed by my great-grandfathers. All this is because our great-great-grandfathers in the olden days were eating the cat medicine, and what they ate has come to spread among our whole family. Drumming is inside the family, and so it is an inheritance. My son Fatawu, if I want him to play the drum, I can show him how to beat the drum correctly, and he won't eat any medicine. I think you have seen it yourself: whenever Fatawu is going to beat the *gungɔŋ*, he is not strong but he can beat it well and nicely. If you are somebody who knows much about your work, and you are also gaining much from your work, if you give birth to many children, at least one of them will come out to be like you. In our house at Savelugu, if they give birth to a child today and the child grows up, he will know how to beat the drum and will not use any medicine. And if you want to show the child how to beat the drum, it will not worry you. And so in our family, that is how it is: we won't eat medicine again. If any of us gives birth to a child, the child will know how to beat the drum.

I think that there are many drummers in Dagbon who are beating the drum and are not using medicine. The house where you sleep when you go to Karaga,

the people in that house are playing the drum as if they are using medicine, but they don't use medicine. The reason why I say they beat drums like people who have medicine is that if you see people beating drums the way they beat, you will be sure that they have eaten medicine. They play very nicely. The one you go around with there, Mohamadu, he is a very good drummer, and he knows how to beat a drum very well, but I know that he has never tried to eat medicine. And so there are some people who are beating the drums, and the way they beat, they get it from their forefathers; it's not that they go to eat it. Their beating a drum very well doesn't show that they eat medicine; they only have medicine to protect themselves.

And so drummers have medicines for many things. The one who wants will go and find a medicine to help him in beating the drum. Drummers even have medicine which they can put in their bodies so that they will not become tired or fed up with beating the drum. I think that this medicine is a kind of root which they dig up and boil in water, and the medicine will enter the water. Some type of this medicine will let them go and bathe with the water. There are some which they will drink. Some, they will wash their hands in it. I hear that drummers eat this type of medicine. A drummer with this kind of medicine can get up and be beating from morning to evening.

And there is another strong medicine which drummers have apart from gandu and the zambanja, and it is for singing. We call it *teeli*; and the meaning of *teeli* is "remembering." This medicine is a powder which you have to be eating all the time. The people who eat this *teeli* are the ones who usually sing the Samban' luja. If someone eats remembering medicine and puts a drum in his armpit and starts beating or singing, he will never forget anything. And as he is singing and remembering all that he wants, he will also be remembering more things.

This remembering medicine is made from the throats of different animals. We have a certain kind of bird we call *ymaanchee*. It's in the bush. If this bird gets up in the morning, it can cry from morning to night and not get tired. We get this bird and remove the throat. There is another animal we call *timchibra*. It digs in the ground and goes inside; it is about the size of a finger, and it's white. It has many legs but it hasn't got hair like a caterpillar. We get it and remove its throat. If you want to catch it, when you see its hole, you can put water inside, or you can take a small stick and push it inside the hole, and the animal will catch the stick and you will pull it out. What is added to that is a leopard's throat. If you want to eat remembering, the one making the medicine for you will tell you to go and get the throats of these animals. To get these things is not difficult. They are common here. Hausa people used to sell them. Or if you want, you can go and ask hunters and they will get them for you. If the hunters get such an animal's

throat, they usually keep it, and it will become very, very dry. Even if you go to look for a leopard's throat that is ten years old, a hunter can get it for you, and he will cut a small piece of it and give you. When you get these things, you will go to a crossroad which many people usually use. When you are coming to this crossroad, if you see a leaf or a piece of wood or anything on the crossroad, you have to get it.

When you get all these things you will take them to the one who is going to make the medicine for you. He will put all of them down and go and find some more things to add to them, and he will pound all into a powder. When you go and get this kind of medicine, the one with the medicine will ask you to bring only part of the medicine, and he will add the rest. Sometimes, he will only tell you to go and find an antelope's horn, or if not that, he will tell you to get a small round gourd which we call *paragachia*; he will put the medicine inside. After you get what he tells you to get, you don't have to sit with him to make the medicine. You just come back to your house. He will find all the things which the medicine needs, and he will make the medicine. If the medicine wants a goat or a white cock or a small chicken, whether red or black, he has to find it and make everything for you. Later on he will ask you, and you will give him some money for all that. When he finishes making the medicine, he will call you and give it to you, and he will tell you the name of the medicine and how you have to call the medicine any time you eat it. Then you will call the medicine, and he will hand it to you.

How you will call it, if you sit down and you are going to beat the Samban' luja, you will call all the names of the things inside the medicine. You will say "ŋmaanchee should run and help me," and "Timchibra should run and help me," and "The crossroads should run and help me." If you want, you can say, "The voice of the leopard should wake up every animal in the bush." All that is in the medicine, you will call the names. There is another bird we call *kulŋaj*; it's a type of crane and it cries in the bush. Some people with teeli will add the throat of that bird because it has got a voice, and they will say it should come and help them. These five things — ŋmaanchee, timchibra, kulŋaj, leopard, crossroads — that is what some people get for this medicine. There are other people who get the throats of a crane, a guinea fowl, and a cock, and they use them to eat the teeli medicine. Everybody has the way he eats medicine, and every medicine has different ways inside it. And so if you are going to beat the Samban' luja, you will open the horn or the gourd and pour some of the powder into your hand and eat it and call all the names before you go to the chief's house. When you go and sit down, you will never forget anything in the singing or the beating. You know that someone who beats the Samban' luja has to have a good memory and

remember many, many things, and so, this teeli is a medicine drummers have for that. Not all drummers have it, but some of them have it. But it also has something: if you get this medicine and you are not going to beat the Samban' luja and you are not going to sing, if you just eat it by heart without a reason, you will come out and be talking without sense, just walking in the town and talking like a mad person.

And so this is what I have for you today on the part of the medicine's which we drummers eat in Dagbon. Some of them are there for drummers; and some of them are for anyone, and drummers also eat them. And I think that I have talked to my extent on the part of the medicines that drummers use in Dagbon here.