

Chapter II-27: *Diseases and Medicine*

As I have talked to you about medicine, I have been telling you more about the types of medicine that the typical Dagbamba have, and these medicines are somehow standing on the part of belief. I have told you that the medicines are many. The type of medicine that Mangulana gave you for your drumming, and the type of medicine that will treat sickness, it is all one word: *tim*. And so we have medicines that do good and medicines that do bad and medicines that treat people. And as for medicine, anyone who wants can eat it. If you don't want medicine, you leave it. And so today I am going to talk about the medicines that treat people. Let's say you are not well, and you go to a medicine man, and he gives you medicine; you go and eat the medicine and become well. This is the type of medicine we want. And this is the type of medicine man the maalams want. And some maalams go to get medicine to treat people. I have told you that I have even heard maalams saying that if you are sitting in a town and there is no medicine man in that town, you should leave that town. They are talking about the medicine that treats people. The medicine man who has that medicine, is he not a doctor? He is just like a doctor.

This talk: no one wants to sit down and talk about sickness and death. It is only if something is happening before you have to sit down and think about that. We fear it. And so let me tell you the reason why human beings are afraid of sickness. Maybe you are sitting down, and you don't think of death, and you don't mention the name of God. If sickness catches you, and you lie on the ground, if you have not been thinking about death in your life, on that day you will think of death. If you know that you don't believe that there is God, the day that you are not able to sleep, you will remember that there is something called death, and you will call God's name. Why is it that you will remember such things? It is because of the sickness that attacked you. That is why you remember about death. And so the second thing to death is sickness. If tomorrow is a market day, then today we will say, "After today, tomorrow is a market day." And so today is the second day to market day. And death: sickness is the second to death. If you are sick, you will know that if you are not able to be well, you are going to die. That is how it is. If you are seriously sick, you will be thinking: will I reach tomorrow or will I not reach tomorrow? That is sickness. And so human beings are not afraid of death, but human beings are afraid of sickness. Have you heard? What I am saying is that no one can sit down and pray, "God, don't kill me; don't kill me." No one can be praying for that. There are some people who are brought forth, if

God loves them, they will never fall sick. The day that person falls sick, maybe that will be the day he will die. We have people like that. Such a person, if he is sick, before people get to know, he is already gone. And anyone who is living on this earth is afraid of death. And that is why we pray that God should protect us from sickness.

And so the sicknesses we have in Dagbon, maybe in your home town, your people don't know them. Maybe the sickness is there, and it's only that your medicines are different from ours. How we look for trees and leaves to make medicine, you also find such things, but you use machines to make tablets. We put the medicine on fire, or boil it, and we will bathe with it or drink some, or we sometimes eat it. And so it is good you put this talk inside our talks. As you have traveled here and learned the customs of Dagbon, if you know the sicknesses that are within Dagbamba, it shows that you have been with Dagbamba, and you know how they live and what they do. And so you don't have to leave it behind. If you add it, it will show that you are actually someone who knows Dagbon.

Our maalamas say that God likes a person who has medicine to cure people. And they say that a person who has medicine to harm people is a bad person, and God doesn't want it. A person who eats such medicine, you should be afraid of him. The medicine man we don't want, and the maalamas don't want, that is someone who makes medicine and someone dies or someone gets trouble or someone becomes mad or someone's arm or leg dies. We have those medicines here. There is medicine that can make someone get rashes we call *gbani*: the fellow will get scratching and get sores all over his body, and it will not finish. We have these bad medicines here. And again, there is someone with medicine: they will throw this *gbani* at someone, and the medicine man will treat the fellow, and he will send it back to the one who first used it. This is the type of medicine man we want. The medicine that frees people is what we call "medicine." But the one that gives trouble, it's not true medicine. And leaving again, there are some people who have the anthrax, that is, they have its medicine, and they push the anthrax on people. As a town is sitting, there can be an area where there are witches, and the witches can get this anthrax and put it in that area, and it will be killing people. If you put water in the yard, and it passes, something like smoke falls in the water, and if a person takes it to drink, it is something that can kill a person. That is how it is. The sickness somebody throws at a person, it is not inside the talk of sickness, and again, it is sickness, because anthrax is also there.

Do you see leprosy? Leprosy can make someone's mouth turn. And leaving again, there will be somebody and he can say some insult to somebody who has medicine, and the mouth will turn. And again, somebody will be there,

and he has sown yams or corn in his farm, and he will put some medicine to protect the farm. And such medicine, we call it *gingalanyuyu*: they are curved snails, and they are in the bush; Ashantis eat them plenty. It is these things they get and make medicines to protect their farms in the bush. And if a person doesn't know and comes and takes such food to come and eat, his mouth will turn. But Dagbamba have its medicine. And the mouth will come to stand correctly again. And Dagbamba have again: if a person abuses somebody, and his leg and arm will die. They have their medicines and they treat them. Somebody too will not be able to treat it, and he will be there like that until he dies. This is how it is.

And leaving again, Dagbamba have food, and they put medicine inside the food and give it to a fellow person. If the fellow has not got its medicine, when he eats it, his stomach swells. And we say, "They have eaten him," or they have poisoned him. If the fellow has its medicine, like *muhili*, he can rub it and lick it, and it can make him have feces, and he can go and bend down, and the sickness will go out from his body. Somebody can vomit, and it will go out from his body. And like that, if he doesn't see it in time, and it enters too much in his bone, it makes his body swell, and every part of his body will be swelling. That is death. And so food, the food that makes people's stomach to grow fat, that is, poisoning: in this Dagbon, somebody's stomach can be big, and it is that they have given him bad food, that is, they have poisoned him, and it is that he has no threepence. Can he treat himself? And as for that, it is plenty in Dagbon here.

And apart from that, witches can catch somebody and kill the fellow, and his time was not yet up. And medicine men have tails, and the tails are medicine. They will call the fellow three times, and whip the fellow. If it is that a witch was going to eat his life, he will get up and sit, and he will be well, and he will show the medicine man the person who was going to eat his life. But if the medicines of the witches are more than they medicines of the medicine man, the witches will kill the fellow. In Dagbon we have that.

And in Dagbon we have a big talk, but others don't count it into talks. In this our Dagbon sitting, if you meet with a woman, that is, you sex a woman, the time your water is coming and the woman's water too is coming, at that time, if the man coughs or the woman coughs, if you get up, you will search for medicine to eat. If not that, you are going to cough like that until you die. It is in Dagbon, and we call it *pay'kohinga*, "woman coughing." It has got its medicine.

The typical Dagbamba, if a sickness like that kills a person, Dagbamba don't bury him with a cloth. They use grass to cover him. Or if a woman has pregnancy and dies with the pregnancy, that is how they bury her. I'm talking of those Dagbamba who are in the bush. That is how they bury them. If a person

coughs and dies, and it is Dagbamba, as for them, they bury him with a cloth, but they don't inherit him: it is the *kasiyirba*, those who dig graves, who will collect his things. And so those who swell and die, it is the gravediggers who take their things. Or the pregnant woman who dies with her stomach, the *kasiyirba* will take her dresses and her bowls. If they give the things to her housepeople, and if this is inside a family, it kills the family. And they won't know. Dagbamba have its medicine, and they will take it and put it inside the family. They will make the medicine and it won't kill them. We have that.

This poisoning I am talking about, may God protect any human being from such sickness. It is a bad talk in Dagbon. If a woman has pregnancy and she dies, it is a bad talk in Dagbon. We say that she fought and died, because when she is going to give birth, she is going to war. And so may God prevent such things. If they poison you, it is a bad talk. This pay'kohinga is a bad talk. May God protect us. As there is medicine, it can happen that they will poison someone, and the poison has entered the person, and he will eat medicine, and the medicine won't work. Or sometimes all of the poison will not come out, and some will remain. Our Dagbamba have a proverb that says, "Don't hold my hand' is better than 'Let go of my hand.'" Have you heard? If you hadn't eaten the food, it would have been better. And so all people in Dagbon are praying to God to prevent such sickness. Food is a human being. And there are foods that a human being will not eat. There is someone, if they bring him food, he won't eat it. And there is someone who has medicine that if they bring him food with poison, he will see it before you get near him. There is someone, if you are bringing the food, the food will fall from your hand. If there are many people sitting down, they will know that you were bringing bad food. There are people who have that sort of medicine. But we pray to God to prevent such troubles. That is: "Don't hold my hand" is better than "Let go of my hand."

And so sickness: there are many types of sickness. And every type of sickness has its medicine, and every medicine has the one who owns it. And so someone with medicine is a very important person in Dagbon here. And today I am not going to talk about the person who has bad medicine. I am going to talk about the medicine man who has medicine to treat people. Truly, in Dagbon here, I can say that such a medicine man has more strength than a tindana or a soothsayer. The soothsayer goes to the medicine man, and the tindana also goes to the medicine man. And so the true medicine man is more than the others. As for a medicine man, there is no doubt about him. And so the medicine man is there, and he is more than the soothsayer. Someone can be sick and no one can treat him, and if he goes to a soothsayer, maybe the soothsayer will be able to tell him the

person who can treat his sickness, whether that person is a black man or a brown man or a white man or is in a different town. The soothsayer will look and see, and he will open the eyes of the one who has the problem. But it is the medicine man who will treat him.

And so today I will talk about some of the sicknesses we have in Dagbon here, and how they treat them. Truly, sickness has no end. As a human being has different parts, that is how sicknesses also are. And if you count some of the sicknesses, by all means, you will leave some out. You will just count what you have seen and what your heart thinks about. But there is no sickness that they don't know its medicine. If they say that this sickness has no medicine, then it is not a sickness, and the sickness is not there. And so I have seen that every sickness has its medicine in Dagbon. They have different medicines for different sicknesses. The people we call medicine people, it's not that every medicine man has medicine for everything. The people who treat sicknesses have these medicines, and you can hear about a medicine man from here to Yendi, and you will go and bring him. Some of them have studied herbs and trees. And some too get medicine from their grandfathers. And somebody can take his strong eyes and go and search for medicine, and eat it. This is how it is.

When we got up, our old people said that in the olden days, Dagbamba had their way of finding trees that can treat diseases. What we heard from our grandfathers was that they would go to the bush, and if they saw some kind of wonderful tree, they would ask the tree, "What kind of diseases do you treat?" And the tree would talk, and they would know. And they would ask another one. And the Mossi people, too, when they were coming here, they also showed Dagbamba people how to find herbs or trees in the bush to treat some diseases. There are medicines or herbs for the waist, for the chest, for stomach, and hernia, and toothache, and hemorrhoids, and headache. You cannot count them. Dagbamba know all the trees that will do the work. In the olden days, when they got to know the tree, they would break a part of it and come and put it down in the house. Any time someone wanted to look for that tree, they would show him that stick. That is how Dagbamba were doing it. And other people from other tribes also came and taught them the ways they were doing it. That is how it is.

Most of the medicine men in Dagbon, they get their medicine from their grandfathers. Apart from the medicine someone collects from his grandfather, he will also go to others and collect. Maybe the medicine he collected from his grandfather is only one medicine. If he wants to be somebody who cures others, he can go to other medicine men and eat other medicines and add. There are some people who eat it like that. If you are interested in it, you will be taught. For

example, if you go to eat a type of medicine, the one who is going to show you will describe the plant or the tree for you. He will ask you to go to the bush and bring it. Through that, you will get to know many of the trees. That is why many people know the names of trees. But there are some people who have never been to the bush to search for herbs. Someone like that is just looking at a tree standing. He has nothing to do with the trees. And so there are many Dagbamba children, if you see a tree and you ask them, "What tree is this?": they won't know it.

I don't know the custom at your side. It is standing that everyone has to take the talks of his place to work. In Dagbon, there are even some people with medicine, and they don't want others to know that they have medicine. He won't come out and announce to people that he knows a particular herb that can treat this kind of a disease. Maybe that is the custom of your place. As for us black people, it is not within us. But it isn't that if people come to ask about which particular tree can treat some particular disease, nobody will tell them. But there is a way you have to follow. If you hear that there is an elderly person or a medicine man, there is a way you will follow and he will release the medicine to you. The way you are learning the drumming, it is the same. You have to sit at the medicine man's foot, and he will tell you the trees, and you will be writing them down. That is the way Dagbamba people are.

As for the talk of medicine, it is secret. In our custom, medicines are strong. The place you get medicine, they don't collect money from you. If a medicine man goes and pound it into powder and put it down, and you use money to buy it, the medicine will not be strong again. So this is the way you do it. The medicine man who has the medicine to treat people, he won't be holding it. If you gather it and put it down, it shows that you are selling it to people. There are some old Dagbamba who have some particular medicine, and you will go to them and ask them for it, and they will tell you that they don't have it. As he is telling you that he is not someone who has such medicine, you have to continue begging him before he will agree. And so how would he go and get all of the things and be keeping them in his house? That is how it is.

If you are sick, you will go to look for a person to treat you. If you go there, and he treats you, and you come back, at that time you will know that this person has medicine that can cure that sickness. Apart from that, there is no asking. As for medicine, you only have to know the sort of medicine you want, and you will go and get it. No one will know the medicine you have eaten. When the medicine man went for the medicine, you were not there. No one will know how a maalam went to get medicine. Even if your son eats medicine, he won't tell you. If you go to a hospital, do you ask a doctor how he managed to become a doctor?

In Dagbon, when the white men were not here, it was the black people who were treating us. They were standing in the place of the doctors. Now, if a woman is going to give birth, they rush her to the hospital, but we have that in Dagbon some time ago. But formerly, if you were sick and you went to a medicine man, you could not ask the medicine man, “How did you get your medicine?” If you did that, the medicine man would ask you, “Did I call you here? The way you are asking me these questions, if you don’t want the medicine, you can go home with your sickness.” At that time, what would you do? And so let me tell you. There is not any medicine man who will cure you, and you will want to find out how he came by the medicine. That one is not there.

Every sickness has the tree they use to treat it, and the old Dagbamba know it. When you get to the medicine man with the sickness you are suffering from, the medicine man will show you to go to the bush and choose some particular trees. The trees you gather to treat that sickness, they have their own names. The elders who know the names of those trees from long ago, they will tell you to go and bring them. It isn’t any tree you are going to find. You are going to search for the tree for your sickness. If your sickness is serious and you yourself cannot go, you will find somebody and tell him the name of the tree they asked you to find. Maybe among the people in your house, nobody knows that tree. If you have nobody in your house who can help you, you can ask a friend.

And so there is some medicine you will eat. There is one you will cut into pieces, and put it into a pan on fire, and burn it like charcoal. And your wife will grind it and put it into soup for you to be eating. And sometimes, you will put the powdered medicine into your nose. And there is another one, you will put it into a pot of water and boil, and you will take it off the fire, kneel down over it and cover yourself with a cloth, and the vapor will enter your body. After that you will take the hot water and bathe, and press all you body. And so if you are taking the medicine, the sickness inside you will go out of you.

As we have medicine for every sickness, it is not that medicine can treat every sickness. Somebody will become sick, and the medicine is there, and that person will die. And I can say that if death were not there, then this world would not have been good. How will it be good? You can imagine the number of people that we are now. As we are many in this world now, are our noses not smelling at one another? And so those who have medicine, they treat people who have life. If you have no life, they cannot treat you. Every sickness has its medicine, and the medicine follows the sickness: “This is the real medicine that I have treated him with. If it comes to anything at all, he will be well.” If it is true, and the medicine treats a person, maybe God said that if this man is sick, that medicine man will

treat him. When God is going to create, what we heard is that everybody gets up. We heard it from maalams that in the Holy Qur'an, when God is going to create everybody, each of us has said, "This is what I am going to do before I come back; this is what is going to happen to me and I will die; this is what I am going to do before I die; somebody is going to use something in cutting me and I will die; a lorry is going to fall down and I will die; I will be walking and I will fall down and die; a witch is going to eat me." The day God created you, it is that day you choose what is going to kill you. The maalams have been saying that a human being cannot kill a human being. They have been saying that it is because of what you said. And as you are going now, you have already said where you are going to die. It is not where you are born that is the place you are supposed to die. They said that even if they are going to create somebody, maybe they travel to some town and take the sand and take it back before they create him. The sand of the town they take to create him, he has to go back there to die. Even as you are sitting down here, the day you were born, that was the day you picked the work you are doing now; you said you are going to do this work. You don't know. But it is not strange to God.

As we are talking, I am going to take an example and give you. Sometimes you will want to give somebody a gift and will not give him. And the gift will still be with you. And you are not quarreling with the fellow. And so this is the example. As for medicine, they will take medicine and treat somebody, and he will be well. And they will take medicine and treat somebody, and he will die. And so where you enter the river, that is where the crocodile catches you. If this is water here, and I have been entering here, and there is always no crocodile here, one day a crocodile will come to lie here. And you say that this is where you have always been entering. *Kapawu!* He has caught you! And so the medicine that treats somebody and he will be well, it can treat somebody and he will die. It is all from how God made everybody. This is how it is. They treat people and they become well, many! And so the people who have medicine are there. And there are medicines, and they treat people. And so everybody and what his medicine is, and everybody with his end of sickness, and everybody with the medicine that will take him back to his house. This is what I know. And so sicknesses are many in Dagbon here, and some sicknesses look like one another, but they are not the same. There are some sicknesses that we got up and met, and there are some that have come and entered Dagbon. And every sickness has got its medicines.

Do you see leprosy? Even lepers have their medicine. As for leprosy, we call it *koŋa*. They treat lepers. All the sicknesses have their medicines. Because if leprosy catches somebody, they treat him. And it is not a doctor. The blacks,

they treat it. Sometimes it will not yet cut somebody's hands, and they will treat him. Maachendi at Nanton, he has got its medicines. And it is not any talk. I am not saying that is leprosy is the only disease in Dagbon. Leprosy can catch somebody and turn the mouth. And someone's mouth can turn, and it is not leprosy that made it turn. You know, somebody will not know all the diseases in Dagbon. There is some sickness that will make somebody's body to be shaking. And somebody will be walking, and saliva will be coming out of his mouth. And somebody will be going and he has a hump on his back. And somebody will be there, and the hump has not come out, but he will bend himself and be walking because he cannot straighten himself. And they can treat such people to become well. And they can treat somebody, and he will not be well. There is somebody, too, the waist and the legs will die. He will be sitting down, and you will come and meet him and think that he is a well human being. He will be sitting down and talking, and if you don't know him and you come to meet him sitting down and talking, you will think he is well, not knowing that the waist and the legs are dead, and he cannot walk.

I have heard them say the way leprosy catches a person, but I haven't seen. I have only seen when leprosy catches somebody. But they say that when leprosy catches somebody, if he is going to find his wife, somebody's wife can be in menstruation, and it is not yet finished, and he is always sleeping with this woman. Here is white water; here is red water. As it is not yet finished, he will be doing until it comes to bring forth a family. If it makes a child, whatever happens, leprosy will catch that child. We have heard that, but I have not seen it, and I have never seen somebody going, and they say, "This is what he did and he caught leprosy." And what I have also heard: if you sleep with a leper in a room, don't let him get up early before you to go out. If he gets up, he takes the leprosy to put down. And you the one who has just got up, it will catch you. I hear that. And I have heard again that when a leper is sexing a woman, and as there is somebody who catches diseases easily, and he is sexing her, the leprosy can join. And so I think that leprosy is a contact disease because I haven't seen that such-and-such a fellow did something and caught leprosy.

What brings sickness? The medicine people say that there is a sickness that makes many sicknesses in a person's body, and they call it *kpaɣa*. This *kpaɣa*: it is pain or swelling. And they say again that if there is no *kpaɣa* in a person's body, that fellow too is not there. If they are going to make a human being, they make him and the *kpaɣa* the same day. Our old people said that this *kpaɣa* is within the sperm, and it is the sperm that God takes to create. And so our old people said that they give birth to you with *kpaɣa*, and everyone has it to his

extent. And the medicine people say that it is this kpayā which has made all the diseases in a human being's body. And as for kpayā, it has different types. If you see a person treating his sickness, and it's a bit better, you will also see somebody, and there will be many sicknesses in his body. Somebody and his head, somebody and his stomach, somebody and his skin, somebody and his whole body: everything is paining him, and he doesn't know the sickness that is having him. And the medicine man who is boiled, he will treat him with kpayā. This kpayā: that is what he is going to take and it will make him better.

These people who have kpayā medicine, they are different, because everybody has got his kpayā medicine. Even my brother Mumuni, our father's medicine is there, and he has it, and it is kpayā medicine. And I also use it to treat some people. And leaving the medicines of some other people, as I am sitting down, if kpayā is worrying somebody, I will treat him and there will not be any talk. How our kpayā medicine is, there are five roots, and the person will go to the bush and find them. And he will come and peel off some and leave part, and add the leaves, and boil it, and then he will be putting his body over the pot and covering himself with a cloth, and the smoke will be entering him. And he will fetch some and drink. And I will let him pound the medicine and squeeze it, and put it in the sun, and it will be dry. And he will be removing it bit by bit and putting it into soup and eating.

Kpayā can catch somebody's waist, and he cannot get up. It will come and catch somebody's back. It will come and catch somebody's neck. You will be sitting down, and when you are going to get up, your side will be turned. If not that, it will come and lie on your hip, and you will find it difficult to walk. Inside the body of a human being: somebody can put himself over the medicine like that, and it will melt and enter into his body, and at that time he will get himself again. He will be treated.

And this is the work of kpayā. It is a round thing. There is some of it that comes out of a person, and we call it *poli*, that is, hernia. That is the children of kpayā: they come to a person, and this hernia comes. And the doctors can remove it: they operate and remove it. Somebody's will come and lie at the side of somebody's stomach: the doctor can remove it. Somebody's will come and lie at the middle rib of his chest, and it will become a round ball. And some too will lay behind the neck and become big; it grows. Some can lay on your arm here, and you will come to see it growing. And it will be there, and then you will see that it runs away. It goes around. That is how the kpayā works. It is a sickness. Somebody can do its medicine and give to a person, and it will cool itself and lie down. And this kpayā that comes out as hernia, it doesn't worry a person like the one that is hidden and doesn't come out. And so this hernia, we don't fear it.

But the *kpayā* that is small, and it is against the penis, as for that, it can kill a person. It can catch a person and kill the fellow in one day. Or he will be walking, and it will come to pull him, and he will bend down and will not be able to get up. Somebody can die there. That is the *kpayā* we call *firkpi*. That is another name: the *kpayā* that kills, we call it *firkpi*. And they also call it *bilipi*: struggle and die. And if not that, we Dagbamba call it *zombolikparba*, and the meaning of *zombolikparba* is: “Run and call the farmers.” Have you seen how our Dagbani has come? What it shows is that if something worries a person, and farmers are in the farm, whatever happens, as your heart has spoiled, you will run to the farm. That is how Dagbani is. If I talk it to you, will you know what it is? We say “run and call the farmers,” but it is sickness we are talking about.

There is a stomach sickness we call *sompuyli*. This *sompuyli* catches women more. If a man’s stomach is paining him, it is this *kpayā*, but as for a woman, it is *sompuyli*. And if it catches her, it collects her birth. If you lie with her, the sperm doesn’t go; it will fall out. It is *sompuyli*. It closes her front, her vagina, and it will be pricking her womb. And Dagbamba have its medicine. They can do the medicine for a woman: there is a small pot they will put on fire, and they will boil the herbs, and she will be squatting over the pot and covering herself with a cloth. At that time the smoke of the medicine will be entering the lower parts of her body. And she will pound some of the medicine and be eating. And if you make it for a woman, and God collects the wishes of the woman, it will not reach a month and the woman will make pregnancy, because she will get health. And it was the *sompuyli* that was going to prevent the birth. As for that, when it moves, it melts and enters her body. And some go out. If it finishes from the body, that is birth. And if it is with the woman, too, the woman cannot grow fat. Even she cannot eat. And this sickness, they have its medicine.

Malaria is what we call *kpayāzeyu*, that is, red *kpayā*. We didn’t know that mosquitoes cause malaria, but now we know. When a mosquito bites you, when you get up the next day, your body does not untie, and you are weak. We didn’t know it like that. But now we know that it is the mosquito that brings the sickness. But the villagers don’t know. This is how it is. This malaria is fever. It lies in a person’s eyes, and all his bones will be dead, that is, weak, and food is not sweet in his mouth. And as for that, it is red *kpayā*. It can kill a person. Dagbamba have its medicine. They will let him drink and urinate all. If God has said that the medicine should treat someone, they can let him drink it and he will urinate all. And some too, they make him drink the medicine, and nothing will happen.

Kpayapielga, that is, gonorrhea, we have it here, plenty. If it catches somebody, it pains the waist. It catches the eyes. It does all that. And Dagbamba have its medicines. It can catch somebody, and they will give him the medicine, and he will go to toilet until evening. And he will be easing, and will come to ease white, and will come to ease red, and come to ease white again. And at that time, you will see that he is removing the sickness. And all this is here, and they treat it. Women catch it from men, and men catch it from women. We know that. And leaving that, we have heard that there is somebody too, and he will be there and not get a woman for about a year. When he comes to have sex with a woman, gonorrhea can catch him. We have heard that somebody will be there, and if he goes to have sex with a woman, those who watch, if a woman has gonorrhea when he meets with her, he will know. But those who don't watch, when he uses the woman, getting to the next day or evening, the gonorrhea will start him. People have been saying it, but I haven't seen it myself. Such a person doesn't have medicine. Some types of sense can be more than medicine. And how gonorrhea is, and they have got medicine for it. They do it, and somebody will be going to the toilet until it finishes and leaves him. Somebody will urinate it away. And they can give the medicine to somebody, and he will not be well. This is how it is.

There is another sickness we call *yoyu*, and it kills people here. This *yoyu*, there is one that is full, and there is one that is a shooting thing like a boil. If it is coming to somebody and it is going to kill him, he doesn't see it. Somebody's will come inside the armpit. Somebody's will come inside the nose. Somebody's will come inside the head. Somebody's will come in his front. If it is coming to a person, it will be doing as if it's a joke. Some can come out just a little bit. And then somebody, when he is going to bathe, it will break. If it breaks, it goes into his body. That time, before they will know, he is dead. But if they know, they will make medicine and he will eat, and at that time it will come out. And if it comes out, they will take some medicine and rub it around, leaving the head of the thing, and you will see that it will rise. And at that time they will know what it is. If God likes a person, it won't kill him. There is another one that is going inside the stomach, and it hasn't come out in the body. Before he sees it, his body will be boiled, and he doesn't know how to catch it. We call that *yomuni*, a full *yoyu*. As for that, it can kill somebody just now. But Dagbamba have its medicine, and if they watch, they can treat it. It is a bad sickness. May God protect us. Most of the time, if it kills somebody, when it is inside the person, they won't see it. It is when they are bathing the dead body before they will see it. It doesn't want hot water, or injection. Those who know it say that if you go for injection, day won't break for you. And they say, don't let this sickness catch somebody, and the

person will be struggling, and somebody will bring the idea to send him to hospital. The doctors there know nothing apart from cutting the thing, and when they cut it, the person will die. And so when it catches somebody and elders get to know it, they will never allow him to be taken to hospital. So if the person has a long life, they will take it to follow the Dagbamba way. There are some people who will get it, and it will be inside the skin, and there are elders who have medicine who will come and put the medicine on him, and the yoyu will come out.

There is a sickness we call *dirgu*, and *dirgu* does many works, and it has got many sicknesses. But it has got its medicine, and people who have the medicine say that it is *dirgu* that lets people have sores on their bodies, and it has got headache, and it has got eye-sickness, and it has got sickness on the part from the waist to the penis, and the penis will not work again. And it is because of this *dirgu* that there is blindness in Dagbon. And this *dirgu* kills somebody's penis. And it gives a person headaches. And so the one who has *dirgu* medicine, if somebody's penis should die, and it is *dirgu* that has killed the penis, they will get its medicine. They will give it to him, and he will put it in the nostrils, and when he sneezes, the penis will shake. At that time, they will know that it is *dirgu* that has killed the penis. They can treat him with the *dirgu* medicine, and it will make the penis get up. And if it *dirgu* again that has made his eyes to be blind, inside the sneezing, if he takes the medicine and puts it in the nose, it goes to come out from his forehead. And if the eyes were going to be blind, you will see that the eyes will be opening, and he will be seeing. And at that time they will know that it was *dirgu* that had made him blind. And again, if it was the *dirgu* that has made him to have sores, you will see that they will make the medicine for him, and the medicine is herbs, and they will take the herbs and boil them to make the medicine. When they boil it and it is well-boiled, the medicine man will let the fellow fetch some and drink, and the fellow will take a cloth and cover himself, and he will take himself and be over the herbs that are boiling, and the cloth will be covering him, and the smoke will be entering him. If it is *dirgu* which has made him to have the sores, when he gets up, getting to the next day, if it was that the sores were running water, you will see that the sores will be dried. And you will see that the medicine they boiled, they will get the part that is remaining under the water, and they will grind it and rub it, and they will paste some on the sores, and they will let him be eating some of it. If it is *dirgu*, it will not be long and the sores will dry. And it is just like when they prick somebody with a needle and the sores die. And so this *dirgu*, this one sickness, it does all that.

As for yaws, we call it *jaya*. Now it has decreased in Dagbon here, because I don't see it. But yaws was plenty, and it even caught me. Before my eyes

opened, yaws caught me. Our mother was sick, and they came and took her to Moglaa, and at that time yaws was all over Moglaa. I was very small, and she carried me with her, along with Abdul-Rahaman. Our mother caught yaws, and from her, it went to me and Abdul-Rahaman. And we didn't have its medicine apart from its catching you and they get a sponge. If they are going to bathe you, they will boil the water, and it will be hot. As the sores are on your body, people will catch you and hold you, and they will take the sponge and be rubbing the sores. They will be rubbing it like that until blood comes out. And then water will be coming. And then they will turn the other side. You see this corn cob, the one they have removed the corn from, they used to use it to rub the sores. And the way they were rubbing it, they put it in fire, and they would peel it, and it would become rough. When they take it and touch your sore once: you won't want them to touch it again. That was what they also did to me. If it was not the corn cob, some people would take a knife and scratch the skin, to make it rough. And some people would take a broken pot to scratch it. They would scratch it until the blood would be coming and the water too would be coming. In the olden days, if someone had yaws and they were going to scrub his body, as we are sitting here, everybody in this place would hear him crying.

And this yaws, as it catches people, everybody has the way of his yaws, because somebody's yaws can make many sores, and you will see his knee, and there will be about four sores, and four sores on his ankle, and his wrist will have four, and his back will have, and his right arm will also have. As for that, they can rub somebody and he will become weak. And somebody can have it on his wrist; somebody can have it on his knee; somebody can have it on his ankle. I had it on my wrist, my elbows, my knee, and behind my knee. They were about six or seven. And they did that to me. There is some grasses in the bush; they are leaves and they call it *barkpandaa*. That is what they go to find, and they grind it, and they take it and put on fire. And then get a hen feather. And they will take the medicine and put it on the sores. This is what they do. They can do that to somebody, and it won't reach two months. This was what they were doing to me. If they do that, and the sores don't die, the English people had some medicine. They called it bluestone, and we called it *brustrom*. I put it in my sores from morning, and I cried like that until six in the night. If they put our medicine, and the sores don't finish, they used to put this bluestone in my sores. If God likes somebody, they can put the bluestone, and the sores will finish. When yaws was going to decrease in Dagbon here, it was the white men who came and they were using injections. That was when it decreased in Dagbon here. When my eyes have seen yaws, I think it will be about twenty-five or thirty-five years, and my

eyes have not seen it with anybody. I think it is still in some places, but as for me, my eyes haven't seen it again. This is what I know.

And again, there is *nantoo*, that is, anthrax. This anthrax works in a person's body. It can be in a person's eye, and the eye will be big. That is anthrax. Some people have its medicine, and it is mixed herbs. If they give the medicine to him, and he washes the eyes, sometimes it will be better. And some too will spoil the eyes. And this is how anthrax is, and it was killing people plenty. If it kills an animal, a goat, sheep or cow, if it kills the animal, it will spread in its body, and if they don't know and they eat it, it can kill half the town. And those who have life, they will run diarrhoea. Someone can run diarrhoea like that and be well, and some too will die. It is there like that. And some too have their medicines, and they have its herbs, and they will put it in water. When it comes to the hot season, and the sun is stronger than anything, that is the time of anthrax. This is how it is. And so some have its herbs, and when the time comes, they will put it in water and put it down. And as anthrax is sitting, if it passes in the bush, you can be going, and you will see trees that have become dry, and they are standing, or you will come and see the leaves, and they are dry and standing. And as the anthrax is flying, there is something that falls on the ground, like smoke, and it falls on the grass and kills it. And so an animal can eat it and die. That is how it is.

And then leaving *kpilimpihi*, that is, epilepsy. How epilepsy is, God can make it for somebody. Somebody can do, and they will do him. They are two sicknesses. The sickness a person gets up with, or grows up with, it shows that they will not be able to treat him. But if it is somebody who has done it to a person, they can treat him to be well. And so epilepsy has got many types. If somebody is going to fall sick with it, if it catches somebody, he can stand here and cry, and you will be at the house and you will hear it. And somebody too will be coming, and will come and fall, and white saliva will cover the mouth. And somebody's will not like a gathering, and he will be standing in people, and he will just fall down. And in Dagbon here, they have their medicines. If it is not God Who has made him like that, they will treat him, and he will be well. This is how it is.

We have tuberculosis, that is, *kohim pielli*, white coughing. We have woman coughing, and we have the white coughing, but as for the white coughing, it is not the woman who coughs on somebody. Such a person will cough until he becomes white, that is, he will grow lean. And all his body will come to be like bones. Somebody can cough blood. If it is going to kill a person, the day he will cough, it is where he is going to cough that he will die. And they have its

medicine. They can treat somebody, and he will be well. And they will treat somebody, and he won't be well. In the olden days, it was there plenty, and up to now, we have it. That is how it is.

As for cholera, we call it *tira ka nyera*, that is, vomiting and easing. If it is going to catch a person, it starts with the stomach, and it will take and start him with going to the toilet small-small, and it will be making him to feel cold. When it is going to start, if he is going to shit, he will vomit. If he is vomiting, he will be easing again. This is how it is. How they treat it, they can treat somebody and he will be well. And if the shitting should stop, then the vomiting also will decrease. And so they treat it like that.

There is *doyu*, convulsions. It is there plenty. In our Dagbon, that is the sickness that is worrying children. Even at this time we are sitting now, it is still the same. As for convulsions, it doesn't like the rain falling. It can kill a child just by closing and opening the eye. But they have its medicine. If it falls on a child, that is, if it attacks a child, all the hands and legs are turned and shaking. And the body will be cold. And the eyes will just be looking, and the child will not see you. It can do that to a child and kill the child. And they will treat a child and he will be well. And here a child can be up to six years, and the convulsions will still be getting him. And I have seen a child who is seven or eight years, and the convulsions had him. They have its medicine, and if God likes a child, they will treat the child and he will become well.

We have some sickness we call *kpante*. This *kpante* is two: there is the *kpante kuuŋa*, that is dry *kpante*. It makes you weak or lean; a child does not become fat. He is becoming dry. And there is *kpante mahili*, wet *kpante*. As for that, the child will be easing, and you will see that the body is swollen and shiny. We call it *kpante*: the child is easing. And they can treat it. And this is how I know about it. And a child will be easing like that, and we call it *tahanyelga*. It is inside the intestines of the child. When he eats any food, the food cannot lie inside the body, and it becomes feces. And it is as if the stomach has become sores. It can kill a child. All these, we have got their medicines. That is how it is.

There is a sickness we call *muliŋmee*. It was Konkombas who knew it, and it was not in Dagbon, but now it has come here. If that sickness catches you, you will get sores in your anus. That sickness has killed a lot of people. My brother Mumuni, it killed three of his children. It can catch you whether you are young or old. They treat it with medicine and hot water in the anus. Some people feel shy to treat it because they don't want someone to see their anus. Because of that, this sickness has a nickname, "feel shy and die."

And leaving again, a child can be easing like that, and you see that there are *kpariyuri*, that is, worms, in the stomach. They also call it *kpariwawu*, like a snake, because the worm moves like a snake when it comes out. They can give a child medicine, and the child will ease all the worms away. If not that, the child will be easing until it dies.

There is sickness that can catch somebody, and the legs will be swollen and paining him, and it is not a worm. We call it *zigora*. A human being's blood can come together and lie at one place, and if it comes like that, we call it *zigora*. You will be feeling pains in your bones. Dagbamba have got its medicine. At times, where the swelling collects, they will cut it. That can treat somebody like that and he will become well. At times, if it comes to somebody, it can come and sleep on his hip, and he will be limping. We have that type of sickness here, and we have its medicine.

And again, when we urinate blood, there is a worm we call *saranyuwa*. If it is boiled in a person's bone too much, it can kill him. That is schistosomiasis. If he kneels down here to urinate urine, he will crawl up to the bathroom. It is worrying him. But they have its medicine. They can treat somebody, and he will be well. And they will treat somebody, and he will not be well. That is how it is.

And again, there is one that has the nickname elephant leg. We call it *napoɲtimtimli*. We also call it *wobnapoɲ*. It is also a worm. There are people who have its medicine. But there are other people who have been treated for a long time, and they cannot get a correct medicine for it. They die with that sickness. The leg is always swollen, and big.

And what we know again is something we call *napompuli*, that is, leg-stomach, and people with medicine say that it is a living thing. It's a worm, and it enters on the foot. It is different from guinea worm. And they can put this medicine inside somebody's leg-stomach, and cut and remove it, and it won't do anything to him again. And as they have said, I also have seen, because it is with me. This my leg: when it comes out, when I want rest, unless I get a needle and get a razor blade, and I will be cutting it until it goes under. When I cut it and it goes under, there is something going, and I will be cutting and following it. When I reach it, it pains, and I cannot cut again. And when I cut like that, I get breathing, and I get rest. And when it is there, and the hole comes to fill up again, it pains me again. And so some have its medicine, and they will take the medicine and put inside it, and they will cut and remove it. But as for me, I fear fear; that is why I didn't do it.

As for guinea worm, that is, *nyerfu*, it is a very bad sickness. Someone can say that we don't count it into diseases in Dagbon here, because inside our

greetings, if guinea worm catches somebody, when they greet and ask about him, they will say “He is well but he is lying down with guinea worm.” Have they counted it into sicknesses? That is why someone can say that we don’t count it into anything. But it is paining in the body. And it gives somebody a scar. And so it’s sickness. It is only inside our greetings that it is not sickness. This is how it is. And so when guinea worm catches a person in Dagbon here, if they greet and ask, if somebody goes to a town and they say, “Oh, how is this fellow?”, they will say, “Oh, he is fine, but he has got guinea worm.” And as it is, have they counted it into sicknesses? But has he got health? He cannot eat. His mouth is not sweet. He cannot get up and roam. You cannot sleep. Guinea worm cooks your body. It will catch your leg and you cannot stand for a month. You will be sitting down and you won’t be able to straighten your leg. It can happen that you will become well, your leg will remain like that. We know that inside greetings, they will say you are fine, but they have forgotten that guinea worm can kill. Fuseini Jɛblin the gunḡḡḡ beater, the sickness that caused his death started with guinea worm. May he rest in peace. And so it is a bad sickness. You are suffering. If guinea worm catches you, and you hear someone saying that you are well but you have been attacked by guinea worm, you will become annoyed.

We ourselves, we know that this guinea worm is inside the water. And leaving the one that God has made, because somebody can be in a town with bad water, and the guinea worm will not get him. Somebody will be in Tamale here, and he will not go anywhere, and will you say that he has drunk bad water? And guinea worm will be catching him until he is fed up with his nose. We ourselves have seen them in water, and we have seen them again when we are digging a hole. You will see the guinea worm. You will see him like a thread, a white one, and as you have seen it in the ground, it can rain, and some will be inside water, and you don’t know and you will drink it. Whatever happens, it will give birth to children inside your body. And so we know that. Those which are in the water and they catch people, they are there. And leaving the one which God has made and put inside people’s bodies. This is where we make the guinea worm to stand.

If a guinea worm catches somebody, it is very strong. If it catches a person, it can make him lean. And it can catch somebody’s knee and it can bend the knee. It can catch somebody’s ankle and bend the vein in the ankle, and it will spoil the ankle, and the person will be walking with the leg raised. But it has got its medicines. And how its medicine comes, it is luck. You can take medicine and treat somebody’s guinea worm, and he will be well, and it won’t be long and he will remove the guinea worm. Somebody too can come and treat somebody with guinea worm, and it won’t come out. Somebody can bring his medicine and come

and put it, and the guinea worm will be growing, and the body will be swelling. Somebody can give someone the guinea worm medicine, and treat him, and show him what the medicine does not want. For example, someone will say that the medicine doesn't want you to eat some type of food. And so: if they give you guinea worm medicine and they tell you what the medicine doesn't want you to eat, and you refuse and eat it, and the guinea worm comes again, what will you do? As for guinea worm medicine, it is just guessing. As I am sitting down, I don't eat hen eggs, unless I don't know. But if I just even see a hen egg, I will get guinea worm. It was medicine they gave me. There is some soup we call *tukari*: I don't eat it. That is the work of the guinea worm medicine. I don't eat the type of vegetable we call *bira*; it grows when the rain falls. I don't eat it apart from the one that has been planted. The one that has been planted is the one I eat. These are what I don't eat, and it is because of the guinea worm medicine they gave me. If I eat it, I will get guinea worm, and it will even come into my tongue. And so guinea worms have medicines like that. But the one they gave me, you can take it and treat somebody, and he won't be well.

And truly, anything I have seen that has got life more than the guinea worm is very strong. If the guinea worm gets a person and starts to come out, they will catch it and pull it, and get something like a thread and tie it so that it won't go back inside your body, and it will reach one week, and the guinea worm will not be dying. Sometimes it will cut itself away and go back inside the body. If it goes back inside your body, it will cause more problems. You can put hot water on it, and it is useless. Unless the time comes when the guinea worm is going to die. And so as for the guinea worm, we put it that it has no medicine, and it has medicine. You can say that it has no medicine, and somebody will bring his medicine and it will do work. And so this guinea worm worries us plenty in Dagbon here. And the white man too hasn't got its medicine. In Dagbon here, somebody can give you medicine to protect you from guinea worm, and the guinea worm will never catch you until you go out from this world. Unless you go against what the medicine doesn't want. This is how the work of guinea worm is.

And again, as for snakes, they kill people plenty! A snake can bite somebody, and the blood will be coming out from the body. They can take somebody to the hospital, and he will be lying on the ground, and the blood will be coming out, because he cannot lie on anything. All that he is going to lie on will become bloody. Somebody can come like that, and he won't die. Somebody will come and die. And so snakebite kills people here. The puff adder is a big snake; it is cool and has patience. There is a viper. There is the cobra that spits. These are some of the dangerous snakes here. If a dangerous snake bites you, and

God is not on your side, you will die. We know the snakes live in the bush, but it is God who knows where a snake will bite you. You can even get a snake in your bedroom to bite you, and you won't know how it got there. It is only God who knows where a snake will get you.

We have medicine for snakebite. Even as you are sitting down, the one after me, Abdul-Rahaman, when our father died, he had it. They were two. There is the Mossi one, and he ate it from the Mossis, and then leaving the Dagbamba one. If a snake bites a person, if it is the Dagbamba one, he will remove his things in the bush, everything of his, and take his hands and cover his penis, and come home. And our Dagbamba one, they will go and get the herbs and come, and cook it, and then take the medicine: it is inside a horn, and they will pour it in water, and he will drink. It is a black medicine. And they will take some and put in oil, and where the snake has bitten, they will take their hands and make a line, and make another line across. And then let them boil hot water. The medicine they have brought, that is what they have put on the fire. And they cut some grass, and the leaves called *taaṇa* leaves, from the shea tree, and they will put him on the *taaṇa* leaves and then make some fire by him. When the bathing of the water comes, they will take the water and pour it into a calabash, and somebody will be holding it like this, and they will take him and bring him to the bathroom, and take a broom and be knocking the water, and it will be touching the fellow. And he will be turning his back, and they will be knocking him. He will take his hands and cover his front. Someone's medicine is three days. My father's was one week. And they will be giving him the medicine to be eating. When it is night time, they will take stones and put in fire, take a rag and put inside oil, and we will taking it and touching the hot stone and be pressing his leg. If God likes somebody, they will do that, and it will not make his leg swell. And the snakebite won't do any bad to him. In seven days, they will shave his hair, with hens, and then bring him out. And he will get some dress and wear it, and hold a tail and be roaming. And he will reach about three weeks, and at that time he will get himself again. And somebody too will remain on the leaves, and as we say he has remained, it is that he has died on the leaves. And it is these leaves they will take to bury him. They won't bury him with a dress.

And leaving again, our father had another one, the Mossi one. The Mossi one was also in a *yilgu*, a horn. If a snake gets somebody in the farm, he will cut where the snake has bitten him, and take the medicine and paste on it. And they will give the medicine to him, and he will lick it three times. He is not going to remove his dress again. They are not going to put the hot water on him, too. If it is good for somebody, it will not let his leg swell. It won't look as if something

has ever bitten him. These were what my father had. But now the medicine is with Abdul-Rahaman. If a snake bites somebody, he treats the fellow. And this is how we treat snakebite in this place. The Mossis have many medicines for snakebite, and truly, as for the snake medicine, nobody has it more than the Mossis. As for the Mossis, they can give you some medicine, and it is like a *gurum*. Do you know *gurum*? It is a thing like a belt or waistband we put around our waist. And someone can have it, and it will be with him. If he comes and a snake comes to pass, you know where a snake passes it makes a line, if the man with the medicine comes to pass across the line, the snake will die. And some have this medicine, and a snake will bite him, and it won't do anything to him. This is how it is.

In Dagbon here, sicknesses like jaundice were not there plenty. Why do I say they were not plenty? To us, as we are gathering with one another now, that is why the sicknesses are many, and we don't know them. Some sickness can catch somebody in Dagbon here, and nobody will know the way of the sickness. And what we were taking to know the sickness, when we got up, the sicknesses our elders knew, that was what we also know. But now some sicknesses have entered Dagbon, and we don't know the sicknesses, and that is why we say that it has come from someplace. And so jaundice had no name in our Dagbani, and that is why I say we don't know it. I can say that we don't have its name, but it has been killing people here. Your friend Afa Simaa at Savelugu, it killed him. And what I have said is true. As people have gathered, that is why many sickness have come, and we don't know them.

And all these sicknesses are worrying people in Dagbon here. And among them, this coughing has got strength in Dagbon here. This *dɔɣu*, the convulsions, it has also got strength, and it is killing children. And blindness too is there: *dirgu* can make you blind, but there is blindness, too. And so these sicknesses, they are strong, very strong. And as we have medicines for sickness, all medicines are not the same. And so truly, if some people can come from somewhere and try to help us with these sicknesses, it will be good.