

Chapter III-3: *The Work of Guinea Corn and Other Crops*

I have talked about the work of yams in Dagbon, and the one following yams is guinea corn. And I think that, truly, guinea corn is our important food apart from yams. Some people don't like corn, and others don't want millet. They rely always on guinea corn. Guinea corn has got a lot of work in Dagbon here, and it helps us a lot. And so we will start with guinea corn, and we will talk about the work guinea corn does, and I'm going to count the work guinea corn does.

Guinea corn is what our women take to grind, and when they grind it, they make *sayim*, and it is our everyday food. This *sayim* is what the Hausas call *tuwon zafi*, or T-Zed. It means any hot food, but it has come to stand for the food a woman makes from flour. To make this *sayim* is hard work. When a woman is going to make it, she puts a big pot on fire and puts water inside the pot. When the water is hot, she fetches about one handful of the guinea corn flour and sprinkles it inside the pot. Getting to five minutes, she will fetch the flour plenty and put it into another pot with cold water. This is a pot we call *lakorgu*, and she keeps it beside her. She will put her hand inside and stir the flour and water, and she will be pouring it into the pot which is on the fire. And it will settle down inside the cooking pot, and getting to some few minutes, it will be boiling, and it will become like porridge inside the pot. And we call it *sayduyu kukoyli*, cooking-pot porridge. Then she will get a long stick we call *sayvuyli*: it is this stick she will use to stir the *sayim*. As she is stirring, she doesn't stand up; she gets a stool and sits. Then she will take some of the hot porridge-water from the pot on the fire and put it into the pot beside her, and she will leave some on the fire. And she will take the *sayvuyli* in her left hand and be stirring it, and she will take her right hand and be fetching more of the dry flour that was there before and she didn't mix it, and she will be spreading it inside the *sayim*. This is what she will be doing and stirring. She will fetch all the flour and put it inside the pot on the fire, and you will see that the food in the pot will become a bit hard, and then she will be fetching the porridge-water from the pot beside her and be putting it into the pot on fire, and you will see that the *sayim* becomes nice and soft and smooth.

And they will assemble bowls for her. And she will take a small calabash with a long neck; we call it *saybenyuhirgu*, and she will use it to cut the *sayim* and put it into bowls. In someone's house, there can be three bowls; in another house, ten bowls; and in another, twelve bowls. She will cut *sayim* and fill the bowls until she finishes all, and they will cover them and set them aside.

The woman who cooked the sayim has also cooked the soup. If it is fresh, wet okro she is going to cook to make soup, it is from their farming that they have got the okro. She puts water on fire, and when it is hot she puts the okro inside and covers it. When it is boiled she will remove the okro and put it into the clay bowl we call *laa*. She takes our local ladle, the one we call *cherga*, and she will press the okro and stir it until it is all mixed. By the time she starts stirring the okro, she has already ground pepper and ground *kpalgu*, and she will mix the pepper and *kpalgu* into the water she took the okro from. And she will also pound fish and put it to one side. When the pot is boiling, she will put the okro inside. She will be stirring with the ladle. And she will take salt and put it inside the soup. In a few minutes she will take the ladle and fetch some of the soup and put it into her left palm to taste it. We call it that she is going to “clean the soup,” but it means she is tasting it. If there is not enough salt, she will add more. If the salt is all right, she will pour the fish inside the soup, but this time she doesn’t stir it. When it is boiling again, she will stir it once and remove it from the fire. She will be fetching soup and putting it on top of the sayim in the bowls, and when she finishes, and the wind blows it a little, it is ready.

It is the householder’s food they will take first. They get a bowl of water for him to wash his hand, and they take it along with the food. It is now that they put food into a bowl, but formerly they used to put it into a calabash. We have something we call *kalnli*: it is woven from grass into a ring, and they would put it down as a support for the calabash of food. But now we use bowls. After they have served the householder, by then everyone will be taking his food. And this is what guinea corn does first. There are some people in Dagbon, this is their food every day. And so guinea corn, its first work is sayim.

And it is guinea corn we use to make *kpaakulo*, and it is something that helps people. When you don’t have food and you eat *kpaakulo*, you will be satisfied. And there are some people who eat *kpaakulo* and it is their everyday food, because it is sweet for them. To make *kpaakulo*, you can either use guinea corn, corn, or millet, and you grind it into flour. They don’t mix them; they use them separately. I am showing you on the part of guinea corn, but if it is millet or corn, they will make it in the same way. You take the flour and add water and mix it, and you leave it. If you put it down in the morning, by evening time it will be a bit sour. If you put it in a cool place, it will not become sour, so you put it where there is sun, and in a few hours it can become sour. Then you make a fire, and you put oil in a cooking pan on the fire. You add salt to the guinea corn. There are some people who add pepper, but actually you don’t put pepper in *kpaakulo*. When the oil is hot, you take a little of the *kpaakulo* and put it in the oil. It doesn’t

go under the oil; it is just on top of it, and it will start to expand. The oil enters it, and getting to two or three minutes, you will see that the part which is in the oil will become brown. You take a small long stick and turn it, and the white part goes under and the brown part comes up. In a few minutes, the oil will catch all of it, and then you remove it. If your pan is wide, you can cook twenty of them at the same time. This is how they make it, and they make it and sell. They can also use beans to make it, and they do it the same way. And this kpaakulo, sometimes they mix it with bananas or ripe plaintain and it becomes sweet. But it is now that they are using bananas and plaintain. We didn't know it like that. It is the southern people who have been using bananas to mix with kpaakulo, and as it has come, everybody does it, and we also do it here. But if not that, as for this our Dagbon land, we didn't sow bananas, so where would we get bananas to add to it? So truly, this kpaakulo, we make it with the guinea corn or corn or millet alone. This is how it is.

But this kpaakulo they are now frying, it was the Ashantis who brought it here. Our Dagbamba kpaakulo is called *chabala*, and during the olden days, it was this chabala they were frying in the market. They used guinea corn to make it, and it was the same as how they make kpaakulo: they put it in water and put it down to become sour, and they added salt and pepper to fry it. They had a type of pan they used to fry it, and it would become flat. And so formerly kpaakulo was known as chabala. It was eye-opening that brought kpaakulo here. When people traveled to the south, they saw the Ashantis using plaintains to make it. The ripe plaintains are very soft and sweet, and the Ashantis were peeling them and smashing them in a mortar and taking small balls of it to fry in oil. They called it kpaakulo, and we didn't know it in Dagbon here. And how it came, we also thought that if we used guinea corn, we could make something like it, and we tried that, and now it has become our food.

And guinea corn again, they will use it in making porridge. Nowadays they can also use corn, but if they don't have corn, they will use guinea corn. The time I was a child and coming into my sense, and in the olden days, no one knew *koko*, the Hausa porridge, but we knew *kukɔyli*, our Dagbamba porridge.

This same guinea corn, if they were going to cook porridge, they would get what we call *kpeya*, and it is another work of guinea corn. In the olden days, this *kpeya* was our sugar. and even up to now, some people still use it as sugar. If they were going to make *kpeya*, they will sweep a room and then fetch guinea corn and spread it inside, and then they will sprinkle water on it and take *tanboro* leaves and put on top. In three days' to one week's time, you will see that the guinea corn will start bringing forth. It will be lying in the room, and when the leaves

come out to about an inch, they will remove the leaves and collect the guinea corn, take it outside and spread it to dry. Getting to two or three days, if the sun is there, it will all dry. When it dries like that, they remove it, and the dried guinea corn with the new plant coming out of it, they will grind it all together. When they grind it, we call it *kpeya*. It is very sweet, and in the olden days, they would take it and add to the porridge, and we called it *kpeya kukɔyli*.

And they also take guinea corn and make what we call *kukɔnyina*, that is, porridge with teeth. If they want to make porridge with teeth, they put the guinea corn in a mortar and pound it. As they are pounding, they will be putting a little water and pounding. Some of the guinea corn will break, and some will not break. They don't break all. Then they get a sieve and sieve it; the part that is falling is flour, and what remains in the sieve is the teeth. That same day they will put the teeth in water, and they will take the flour and get some *sayim* and add it and mix, and they will add a little water and put it down. When day breaks, they will put a pot on fire and they will pour the teeth inside the pot. To make porridge with teeth is difficult, because the teeth must be very well boiled. By then, the flour and the *sayim* they mixed, as they have kept it till daybreak, it has become sour. They will add more water and mix all of it and pour it into the teeth and stir: the water and the flour will become porridge and the teeth will be there. It has become porridge with teeth.

And guinea corn again, they give it to farmers in the morning. They get the guinea corn and pound it in the mortar, but they don't pound it too much. And they get something we call *pɔŋ*: it is woven from grass, and it is like a flat pan. They put the guinea corn in this *pɔŋ*, and they will use it to separate the guinea corn from the flour. They will take the guinea corn and wash it with water, and it will not look like how it was when they brought it. They will put it in a pot on fire, and add salt and add pepper. Getting to one and a half hours, it will be boiled. They will get oil and cooked onion and mix them, and they will add it to the guinea corn. It will boil and cook, just like rice. We call it *kaduyra*, boiled guinea corn. And they will carry it to the farm. And this is another work of guinea corn in Dagbon, and they have been giving it to farmers to eat.

And there is something else again, and it is a big talk in Dagbon. We use guinea corn for alms and sacrifices. If there is a funeral, they put the guinea corn on a *pɔŋ*, and they will also put money, for alms. The guinea corn they use for these alms is called *maha*: it is round and they fry it. We got it from the Hausas, and the Hausas call it *massa*, and so we even call it by the same name. Anywhere there are Muslims, especially in this Africa, they know the use of *maha*. From Dagbon here up to the Hausa land, we take it to do the same work, and so our Holy Prophet knows about it, because we use it as alms.

If they are going to make maha, it is like kpaakulo, but they use a different type of pan to make it. Have you ever watched people play *wari*? It's a game, and many people play it, not only in Dagbon here. They have a board with some holes dug out, and they have some stones in the holes and they pick the stones up and move them about and collect other stones. The pan they fry this maha in is like a wari board, and they make it out of clay. We call it *mahalaa*. If you are going to be frying maha, and you know the size of your coalpot or cooking place, you will get this mahalaa to fit it. Somebody can use one with five holes, or seven or ten; someone who will be making maha to sell will have one with twenty holes. They make maha the same way they make kpaakulo: they put it in water to let it become sour, and then they fry it. But because of the mahalaa, the maha is very round and stiff. When they mix kpaakulo, it is just like porridge, and when they take a ladle to put it into then oil, it spreads and becomes flat and wide. But as for maha, the moment they put it into the hole, it extends up, and it becomes something like a ball, and it is somehow heavy. And so maha has a different taste. And there are two types of maha: the one for alms has not got salt in it, but the one they sell for people to eat has got salt like kpaakulo.

The reasons why they are frying this maha are two: if not where they are going to perform a funeral, then it is on a Friday. I'm talking of the one who is making it for alms; the one who makes it with salt to sell can make it at any time. The one who fries maha for alms, if today is Thursday, in the night after she has finished eating, and even up till ten o'clock, people can come to her to tell her that they need a lot of maha to fill three or four very large pans. If she knows she is going to make maha, then on Thursday after finishing the night food, she will start making the maha. That day, she will not sleep till daybreak. Sometimes if she alone is doing it, she will sleep, and getting to three o'clock in the night, when the cocks crow, she will get up and start. By the morning, she will finish, and they will send the maha to the one who came and ordered it. If there is any remaining, she will give some to her daughters to carry, and they will be roaming in the town selling. And as we also perform funerals on Mondays, if it is Sunday in the night, then it is the same thing, and going to tomorrow's Monday, it is the same three o'clock she will get up to start frying it. If it is any day there is a funeral, and someone comes to order the maha, she will make it. And a woman who is doing this work knows the days she can sell it, and she knows the amount she will fry, so if someone comes to ask for more, she will join it to what she has been frying already.

And the work this maha does, I have told you that they put this maha on a *pon* for blessings and alms at funeral houses. And again, they will show

somebody to give this maha as alms, and I think you have also done that. Sometimes you may go to somebody to look into a matter for you. If it is a maalam or if it is a soothsayer, sometimes he can tell you that you should go and find forty pieces of maha, or a hundred pieces. And he will say that you should take it and give it as alms. Sometimes you will add a small amount of money on top. Sometimes he will tell you that when you give the alms, you can give it to anybody, or any maalam, or sometimes even that you should just come out from your house and start calling children to come. If you have a hundred pieces, you will just share it one-one to a hundred children. Sometimes he will tell you to get seven pieces, or seventy, or seventeen, or even a single piece. Sometimes you will go to an anthill and put it there for the ants to eat. Sometimes you will get three pieces of maha, or twenty, and get fresh cow's milk and put the maha and put it into the milk, and take it and give it to an old person as alms. Or maybe you should get fresh milk and get about thirty pieces of maha and squeeze it into the milk, and call children to come and drink. At times you can pour honey into the milk, and give it to children to drink. And so maha has got many uses in Dagbon here, and it does a lot of work for us. Even a typical Dagbana can sometimes go to a maalam, and the maalam will tell him to go and get maha for alms. And so it is guinea corn which does all that. If there is no guinea corn, we can use millet or corn to make it, but it is the guinea corn which brought it. And if you say that it is guinea corn which brought maha, then you have to say that it is oil, too, because without oil you cannot make maha. And that is how it is.

And again, this guinea corn has got a lot of work in Dagbon, because they use it to brew *pito*. Not only in Dagbon here, but in Kumasi, in Accra, in all of Ghana, it is guinea corn they use to brew *pito*. It is the Ashantis who know it as *pito*. As for us, we know it as *dam*, that is, drink. If you give a Dagbana man Schnapps, he will say “dam.” If you give him any type of spirits, it is “dam.” Even if you give him Coca-cola, he will say it is dam but only it is sweet. And so we don't know drinks with many names; we only know drink with one name — dam. And as for *pito*, its talk is plenty, and its work is hard. And it is women who brew it; I have never seen a Dagbana man brew *pito*.

When they want to brew *pito*, they will get *kpeya*, what I told you was our local sugar in the olden days. They still use this *kpeya* to make *pito*. Nowadays, sometimes they put *kpeya* into bags and send it to Accra, Takoradi, or Kumasi, and sell it to those who are making *pito* there. Even Bolgatanga people sometimes come here to buy it; they also know how to make it, but they don't want its work. This *kpeya*, when they get it, they will send it to a grinding mill, or they will put it on *neli*, our local Dagbamba grinding stone. When there were no grinding mills, this *neli* was our grinding mill.

When they finish grinding the *kpeya*, they will get very big pots. No other type of Dagbamba pot resembles the pito pot, and it is just that the pito pot is very big. Even the southerners have not got such pots; when they are going to brew pito, they use very large barrels. In Dagbon here, they put water inside the pots, and then they fetch the ground *kpeya* and mix it with water and stir it, and they will put it into the pito pots and they will put fire. And all this, they call it that “We are brewing pito today.” The brewing of pito eats three days. It is two days they will cook it on fire, but it is on the third day that it becomes food and they take it to drink. And it is pito that wastes firewood more than any other thing. Nothing wastes firewood like pito because they boil it for a very long time. If it is in the afternoon that they put it into the pot, it will be in the evening time they will remove it from the pot. You will see that the pito has used all the firewood that was lying down. Then they will remove the pito and take it inside and put it into some big pots that were standing, and they will cover it. As it was hot, getting to daybreak you will see that it has become cold. We call it *dakahili*, raw pito, and it is very sweet. Even if you don’t drink pito or any strong drink, if you drink this *dakahili*, nothing will happen to you.

Then they will get something we call *tee*. It is a sieve, and it is woven like a hat. They will take the *tee* and put it on top of the pito pot, and they will be fetching the pito and putting it on the *tee*, and it will be entering the pot. And when they finish sieving all the drink, what is left we call *dabisi*. Those who have horses, those who have sheep, those who have hens, they come to collect it, and they give it to their animals to eat. As for the pito they have sieved into the pots, they will cook it again. The fire they made the day before, they will make the same fire again, and they call it, “Today we are going to finish boiling the pito.” And if the drink became sweet too quickly, they will sieve it and boil it in the morning. And if it didn’t become sweet, they will wait for it to become sour before they sieve it. And so if it was sweet and they put it on fire at eight o’clock in the morning, then going to two o’clock they will remove it from the fire. They will fetch it and put it into the pots that are there inside. And at this time they don’t cover it again. Getting to the evening or the night, when it has become cool, they will get something we call *dalohili*, that is, “put it inside the drink.” They weave it, and it is woven in the same way they weave a fan, but it’s woven like a small basket. What I use in making the ring for the head of my drums, that is what they use to weave it. They put this *dalohili* inside the pito, and it is this same *dalohili* that they have been putting inside their pito all the time. When they have put it inside, getting to two o’clock in the night, you will see some white foam coming out on top and falling from the pots, and we call it that “the drink has

cried.” If it doesn’t foam like that, then there is no drink. It will be just something sweet. But when it foams, it is bitter and it is also sweet. And that is pito. And as it foams and the foam falls, they will get pans and put under it. When the foam falls into the pans, it becomes hard, and they will dry it and collect it and put it aside. Any time they don’t have this dalohili, this dried foam is what they will take and sprinkle inside the pito they are brewing, and it will also start foaming. The drink will cry until the next day, and when it has finished crying, it has been three days.

At that time, the pito drinkers will come. As for pito, it has no use except for someone who wants trouble. You cannot drink pito and be satisfied. Everything you eat, you will become satisfied, but pito cannot satisfy. But those who come to taste the drink, they are the ones who know that the pito is good. And so it has a use to those who like it. And those who brew it and sell it, it has use to them. Some of them own their own houses and are selling pito. If you want to be brewing pito, and it is that you don’t have a house, you will get your house from a traditional Dagbana man. If you try to get your house from someone who doesn’t drink, like a maalam, he will not agree.

And our Dagbamba way of living is there in the drinking house. When you come and sit down, they will fetch a little pito in a calabash and come and give you. It is about a cup full, and they will say, “My in-law, you should get *dalama*,” that is, you should get “pito to taste.” You will get it and put it to your mouth and sip. Then you hold the calabash, and you will be looking inside it. And then you will drink the pito and put the calabash down. And they will ask, “Is it good?” You will say, “Woman, your drink is good.” And you will tell them to fetch the pito and sell it to you. And they will ask, “Do you want fifty pesewas’ worth or one cedi’s worth or what?” Then you will see the money you have got, and if you have your cedi, you will let them bring a cedi’s worth. They will put it in a small pot, and you will be filling your calabash and drinking. If it is that you have come with some people, then you can put down five cedis or whatever money, and they will bring calabashes and give you. And everybody will start fetching the pito and drinking.

It is at the pito house that you can see drunkards. One will sit down and be nodding his head. There is nothing; no one has talked: he is nodding his head. He is telling lies. And he will fetch again and drink, and he will be nodding again. Then you will see that he will take his hand and be waving it around in front of himself. Those he is sitting with, as he has bought the drink plenty, he will have some of his type among them, and they will also be nodding. And someone will be drinking and then he will open his eyes wide and be looking up. And then he

will look down. And then the one who was waving his finger and the one who is looking up and down, one of them will say, “My friend, don’t tell lies! What are you doing?!” You will see that a quarrel will come there. Then you will see that the one who has bought it for them, he will say, “Tomorrow I will not do that.” And the one who was looking up and down, his drinking was cheap today, and you will see that his eyes will cool down, because he is thinking of tomorrow.

When someone drinks and insults you, it is that he already wants to insult you; and the one who drinks and quarrels, as for him, he already wanted quarrels. As for people like them, they have been beating them in the pito houses. And so in our Dagbon, when someone drinks and insults you, you beat him. Don’t leave him. When you get him, you beat him. If you leave him, he will become useless; but when you knock him once today, tomorrow he will not drink and insult someone. Even if he is going to insult, he will not come to your place and say it. And so, as for us, we know the drunkards. But others fear drunkards. And this is how pito is.

And drunkards, too, someone can drink and when he is well drunk, he cannot say anything. When someone drinks pito plenty, he can sit down and be sleeping. As for him, he is drunk. And another person can drink and be drunk; he will be sitting down and he doesn’t tell anything to anyone. He doesn’t find trouble with others. He will get up and be going to his house. And there will be about ten roads to his house. You will see him going: he takes one road for a few steps, and then he takes another road. Then he goes to the other side again. Then you see that he goes straight. Then you see him coming back again. You see him going to the right again. As for him, he is well drunk, and he doesn’t want trouble. When you are talking to him, you will see him shaking his head. And this is the work of drink.

And again, there is someone who doesn’t have a pesewa to buy pito, but when it’s daybreak he will drink pito and be satisfied. When he comes and sits down, they will bring him the dalama, the pito for him to taste. He will finish it, and he will be sitting down coolly. And the owner of the pito will be looking into his eyes. As he is sitting, he will take his hand and be pressing his pocket, and he will still be sitting down. And he will say to the owner of the pito, “My in-law, let me go out and urinate and come.” That is all. He will not come back again; he is going to another place. When he goes there too, he is a stranger again: he will say that they should bring dalama, and they will give him the pito to taste. If he goes to four pito houses, he has got what he wants. And such a person, you will see that he will be going out and just shouting. As for his type, we call them “useless drunkards.” They don’t have any use in drinking. When such a person is going

around tasting like that, and they get to know him in one section of town, he will change to another section. And such people are plenty, drinking like that.

But those who drink, they say that pito gives them some benefit. Someone will say that when he is sitting down and he is thinking, he will go and drink pito. When he drinks it, there is nothing worrying him again. And others too say that when you sit down and drink, sense comes into your heart. And so to them, it gives them good. But as for our local Dagbamba, those who are villagers, when they come to town on market days and they go to the pito house, they drink plenty. Plenty! As for them, they don't get pito in the village, unless there is a funeral, and so when they get it, they don't know bad pito. They don't know, "This pito is good; this pito is not good." As for them, when they see pito, that is all: they start drinking. When you meet them at a drinking place, you will laugh at them until you lie flat. Some of them drink and sleep in the pito house. Someone too will drink and urinate on himself. Someone can drink, and he will not know the meaning of shyness again. When you see him walking outside, he will just remove his penis and start urinating as he is walking along. Someone too can drink and a woman will come in, and he will just catch hold of the woman try to climb on her. And he doesn't care. Those old prostitute women around Victory Cinema, the ones who are so cheap, someone will drink and go to climb on them in the afternoon. And others too will take something into the pito house and be drinking, and when they come out, they will forget about it and leave it there. As for our local Dagbamba, they don't care. And other people will follow them into the drinking houses and remove their money from their pockets. The one who drinks and is drunk, he doesn't know about himself again. When he comes out and is passing, he will be coming as if he wants to knock himself against you. And that is how our local Dagbamba are. As you have been sitting with me sometimes on the market days, you have been seeing them, the ones I have been talking about, the ones with many roads. And that is the work of pito, and it is the work of guinea corn.

In this Dagbon, the place where they can drink more than anywhere is Tolon. It's only now that they have stopped a bit, but it hasn't been long. As for Tolon people, they can drink! At the drinking places in Tolon, in the market, the local Dagbamba can drink and sleep there. They won't know anything about themselves again. Some will drink and shit on themselves, and they won't mind. Some will ride horses to the market and drink, and they will leave the horses there and walk home, and say, "That long-mouth! If that long-mouth does not come home, I don't mind!"

As for our Dagbamba villagers, they are the ones who drink more. How a villager lives, if the villager has children, and the children are enough for him, when it is daybreak, he will use his walking stick and hold it across his waist, and if from the village to the town is not up to ten miles, he will walk to the town. When he comes to the town, he has no place to go apart from going straight to the pito house. At the pito house, he is going to meet his fellow villagers. That is where their talks start, and their talks start with showing themselves on one another. When they finish drinking, and the pito has turned their faces, by that time you will see a villager sitting by his fellow friend and saying, “My friend! Get away! What do you think you are? What do you have at home? As for me, I am more than you: I have twelve children. They’ve gone to my farm; that is why I am in town, drinking. And so I don’t want anything. I wouldn’t do farming. When it is daybreak, I am just roaming in town drinking my pito. And what about you?”

And his friend will reply, “As you like coming to town all the time to drink, forcing your children to do farming, do you get enough food to eat? You have been doing your farming every year, and there is no rain to fall on your farm. And you come here to drink because you have children and you have the time to drink. You are trying to abuse me. As for us, at our village, we eat and leave food in our bowls.” That is how they will be boasting to one another.

If it is not that, where the villager goes is where he hears that they are performing a funeral. When he is going to the funeral, he is going with two ideas. He is not going to the funeral just because he wants to perform the funeral. Sometimes a villager will attend a funeral and he doesn’t know anybody at the funeral house. He goes with the idea that if he goes there, he will get free pito to drink. Or if they kill animals at the funeral house, he will get meat to eat, or he will buy meat cheap and take it home for his wife to cook so that they will eat it. If not that, it is only on a festival day or the day when a stranger comes to meet them that they will eat meat. And truly, if not the pito house, the place where you will see many drunkards is at a funeral house.

And so drink is a big thing in Dagbon. Sometimes they will want to perform a funeral and the food will not be plenty, and it is drink which will do the work. At a village funeral, sometimes they will cook the food plenty, and you will see it just standing there. Those eating the food are only those who don’t drink, and the women, and the children. Anyone else who comes to the funeral has come because of drink. If the time for performing funerals comes, the elder of a funeral house will call old women from the family who will cook the pito, and he will let his wives measure a basketful of guinea corn for each of them. His wives will take

the guinea corn and put it on the ground and beat it, and they will throw it in the air for the bad part to blow away; when they finish, they will bring it and put it down. Then the elder of the funeral will measure guinea corn for all the old women, and say, "Everybody should take this home, and in such-and-such month, all of you should gather. We will shave the funeral children, and on such-and-such day, we will put down the final funeral. On that day, I want everybody's house to have drink for drinking. If you are coming from a different town, you should get a house where you will stay and cook the pito." That is how he is going to share the guinea corn to the old women. If they are twenty or thirty, he will give guinea corn to all of them, and on the funeral day, all of them will cook pito.

If they cook it like that, the drink is not going to remain useless. There will be a lot of pito at the funeral house, and they will drink it and be drunk. How it is in Dagbon here, our villagers go to funerals because of drink. Someone will come to a funeral house and give small money to the elder of the funeral, and say that "This is the funeral money I am greeting you with." At that time, the pito is sitting in large calabashes, and they will fetch it into a gourd and take a small calabash and give it to somebody from the funeral house to take and give him. The one who carries it will put the gourd and the calabash in front of him and sit down; he will use his left hand to pull the gourd forward and pour the pito into the calabash, and he will drink first before he gives it to the one they sent him to give it to. And then the one who has come to the funeral will also drink, and he will say, "Truly, it's a woman who has cooked this pito." And the one who carried the pito will fetch from the gourd and drink again, and then he will give it to another person sitting there. If there are four or five people there, that is how he is going to pour for all of them until the drink is finished. They will drink until the drink is finished and they are all lying on the ground, and they will lie like that till night. Some will be vomiting. Someone will be going and talking by heart. Someone will be singing. And if they drink and leave some remaining, if they drink and are satisfied and go home, those at home who did not go to the funeral will ask, "Have you left some? Has the old one remained?" If they say, "There is some," then those at home will say, "We will go and look for it." That is how they are also going to drink, and sometimes they will also drink and sleep there. And in Dagbon here, this is how some Dagbamba are, some of us, and that is how it is at funeral houses in the villages. And it's still there. It's there today and tomorrow. And so guinea corn does a lot of work at the funeral house in Dagbon here.

After guinea corn, what is next is millet. And I can say that to some people, millet is better than guinea corn. Some people use millet to make sacrifices, and it

repairs their old thing which they call *Tilo*. For the typical Dagbamba, Tilo is a medicine for their houses and their families. They put it in the room of a woman who is an elder woman. In a family, someone can get trouble and they will say, “It is the Tilo which has made him get that trouble.” Then he can come and sacrifice to it, and his head will get good luck. That is how Tilo is. It is just like *Jebuni*, but *Jebuni* is a pot, and Tilo is a calabash. They put feathers inside it, feathers of a hen and guinea fowls. As for Tilo, it doesn’t come outside; it is just in the room of the old woman. But the *Jebuni* is with the householder himself.

When they are going to make sacrifices to repair Tilo, it is millet they use, and they take millet and make pito. When they are making pito, they do to the millet the same thing they do to the guinea corn, and we call it, “They are going to brew Tilo pito.” The women who are going to repair Tilo, they put millet in water, and it starts to bring forth, and then they dry it and grind it, and they boil it. The old woman who is for the Tilo, and those in the house, and if strangers have come, it is this millet pito they will fetch and give them to drink, and say, “Tilo pito.” But as for the millet pito, it is not everybody who likes it, because it is not everybody who has the Tilo. And so when they want to brew Tilo pito, they just brew a little, because they just want to make the sacrifice. The Tilo shows that they should brew it, and if they brew it today, they won’t brew it until the coming year again. And so they don’t brew millet pito the same as those who sell guinea corn pito brew it. They just brew a small pot which they will put on the fire. As for it, if it cries, it doesn’t matter; if it doesn’t cry, it doesn’t matter. They just want to do it and be out from their trouble.

And so millet pito doesn’t truly stand in the talk of drink. It is not all who drink it, but because they call it drink, we call it drink. Even they can brew it, and drunkards will be there and will refuse it. It’s a drink, but it doesn’t resemble drink, and they only use it for the sacrifice. You can even ask someone and he will say he has never heard of millet pito. The southern people too don’t know that there is millet pito. The only ones I don’t know about are the Frafras, because the gods our typical Dagbamba have, they also have them. In all of Ghana, it is guinea corn they use to make pito for drink. And what I want you to do is, if you are writing and you come to the part on millet, you can say that they use millet to make the sacrifice but that it is not our drink. If you write it in that way, they will know that you have entered Dagbon and you know all the ways of Dagbamba. That is why I am showing you.

Truly, guinea corn pito is the one every person who drinks knows. Those of us who are blacks and in Ghana, that is how we know it, and even the Mossis use guinea corn to make pito. But if they don’t have guinea corn, they can use corn to

make pito. If they use corn, not everyone likes it, because when some people drink it, they have headaches, and their bodies become hot and pain them; and when they urinate, it is red like the urine of a horse. So when you see them use corn to brew pito, it is because the guinea corn was not plenty in that year. They can even use corn to make pito, and it will stand for one month because people don't want it. Something you will eat and you will not be well, will you mind it? When guinea corn is there, no one will mind corn. But when you write, you can say that they can use corn or millet or guinea corn to brew pito, but it is the guinea corn which is strong in it. And it is just like how we call pito "drink", and then there is gin, too, and there is beer, and there is Schnapps, and there is whiskey, and it is all drink. All of the different types of pito, we call them pito. But there is strength and strength in all, and they are different. And that is why I'm showing you and separating them. That is how it is.

And I think that here in the north of Ghana, we Dagbamba are the people who cook pito plenty. In the Upper Region, at Wa, Tumu, Nandom, Bawku, Bolgatanga, Navrongo, Paga, Pusiga, and even getting to the Konkomba area, they all cook pito, but they don't cook it as much as we Dagbamba do. I have already told you the reason, and it is that we are the real farmers. As for the people in the towns I have called, it is hunger that is going to kill them. If they farm, they will only be farming around their houses, and that is all. They will farm guinea corn and get it and be eating, and still they will have hunger. Every year they have hunger, and if they see guinea corn when the hunger comes, they will not take it and cook pito. If they have enough food, that is the time they will cook pito. But in Dagbon here, whatever happens, our Dagbamba will cook pito. If this person farms guinea corn and it doesn't do well, another person will farm it and it will do. They will take it and cook pito. And so if people from the Upper Region get drink, then it is here they have come to get it. As for Dagbon, we don't stop cooking pito. Even if there is hunger, we will cook pito. And so we are the pito cookers.

And so we come back to the work of millet, and as for millet, they also use it to make sayim. There is someone who doesn't like guinea corn, but he likes millet. As I have showed you how they make sayim, I don't think I have to show you again, because they make it in the same way. And they also use millet to make kpaakulo.

And again, we have a type of food we call *fula*, and they use millet to make it. I think that you know *fula* because it's not only in Dagbon here that people eat *fula*. When they want to make *fula*, first they pound the millet and then they grind it, and they put it into cold water and mix it, and make it round into balls. Then

they put water on the fire, and they will be cutting it and putting it into the pot. It will not be twenty or thirty minutes and they will remove it. They will put it into a mortar and pound it until it becomes like *fufu*, and they remove it and cut it into small balls, put it into a calabash and roll it around until it becomes very nice and round. Then they get flour and cover it. And this is what we call fula. If you go and buy it, and you want to eat it, you put it in a bowl and add water, and you mash it and mix it. If you will drink it like that, you drink it like that. If you have milk you will fetch some and add. If you have sugar, you will put some inside. And again, if you want, we have some things we put into soup; one of them is like a long, bent pepper and we call it *naanzunyuuṅa*, and another is called *kanaafiri*: you can add them to fula when you pound it, and it will have a very nice scent. And if you drink fula, it is food. And it is the work of millet.

Truly, if you don't have millet, you can use rice to make fula. But it is only millet that is very good for fula. It was only millet that we Dagbamba were using to make fula in the olden days. During that time, there was no sugar, and we used to farm sweet potatoes in the yam mounds. When it comes out and they remove it, they would peel it and dry it, and they would pound it and sieve it. They could add this sweet potato flour to the fula flour and put it in water. When they boiled it and pounded it and made fula, you could eat it like that, and the sweetness would be there.

I think in my heart that we Dagbamba first saw fula from the Hausas — a long time ago, not just now. I say that the Hausas brought fula to Dagbon because there are some Hausas whose food is only fula. They can pound fula and it will last them three days and will not be spoiled. And so fula is a chosen food for the Hausas, and it also has some part in Islam, because if a Muslim is dead, if he is truly a Muslim, his people will make a lot of fula and be sharing it to people. And as fula is a chosen food for the Muslims, too, and as it is from the Hausas that we got Islam, I think that we also got fula from them.

And we use millet to make something we call *yaankanda*. When the early rains come, and when the farmer is in the farm and there are no yams for him to roast, his wife will fetch some of the millet and grind it. She will squeeze it and put it in hot water on fire, and it will be boiled. When it is well boiled, she will remove it from the fire, and she will get oil, pepper, and salt, and mix it. If it is mashed like that, it is *yaankanda*. Or if she makes it round and puts it into bowls, we call it *yama*. If you are a farmer and you eat it, you will see that strength will come, and you will have the strength to farm. And it is the work of millet.

After millet is corn, and corn, too, we use it for porridge and we use it for *sayim*. Some people don't like guinea corn and some people don't like millet:

they take corn to make sayim. But it's not everyone who likes corn sayim. It is now that some people are eating it, but formerly we knew corn as just for porridge or for porridge with teeth. Truly, corn is first before guinea corn in making the porridge with teeth. And again, I have said that if they don't have guinea corn, it is corn they will use to make drink. And again, some people roast it or boil it and eat it as it is. And this is what we know in our Dagbon. Accra people use corn in making their food they call *kenkey*, and some of them are here selling. But in our Dagbon here, if not because of poverty, someone will be here until he dies and will not eat kenkey. And so as for us, what we know about corn is that you sow corn, and when it's matured, you pick it and roast it in the farm; or you collect the corn and sell to women, and they will boil it and carry round to sell. Formerly in Dagbon here, they were not even eating corn as food. In the olden days, they were making porridge with it. Yams and guinea corn, that was what Dagbamba were eating. Even millet, they had no time for it; they were not even making porridge with it. It is now that corn has become food, and we eat it plenty. And this is what corn does in Dagbon.

And so, if you follow our Dagbamba farming, our strength lies on yams, and next is guinea corn and millet. And what is important again are bambara beans, cowpeas and beans, and they have got a lot of use for us. All the types of beans we farm here, some of them are under the ground and some are on top, but they all grow the same way: they spread on the ground and make their leaves. It is only bambara beans we sow in the yam mounds because it doesn't spread too much; but the others will enter the yams. There is a type of bean we call *adua*, and as for that one, I think it was brought here from another place, because its only work is that they boil it and we eat it; if it had come from Dagbon here, we would have more uses for it. But as for the others, they have a lot of work to do in Dagbon, and any of them can do it. And I will just talk on the part of bambara beans, but if you want, you can use this talk for the others.

When you sow bambara beans and it comes up, you harvest it and bring it home. You will put it into what we call *kunchuŋ*; it is a big woven basket and it stands up to a person's chest. You will store the bambara beans inside *kunchuŋ*. And again, we have our local storage room which we call *kambɔŋ*; it is built either as a room or as woven reeds. In any village, anyone who is a farmer, if you go to his house you will see it. Someone who really farms, when you go to his house, you will see about six of them. And so when you harvest the bambara beans, you will store it, and as you have it, when the rain falls on the ground, when you don't have yams, it is bambara beans you will fetch. You will give it to women and they will grind it. If you want them to cook it alone, they will put salt, pepper, and oil.

When they cook it like that and you the farmer eat it, it will keep long in your stomach. When you farm a little bit, thirst will catch you, and you will drink water and your stomach will become hard. And so bambara beans help a farmer a lot. The only thing it has got is that it makes you flatulate.

If you don't want them to cook the bambara beans like that, you say they should make *gabli* for you to eat. They grind the bambara beans and they add water, and the women take their hands and turn it. They put a pot on fire, and they cut some with their hand and put into the pot. You will see that it becomes round and a bit hard. They will grind pepper, and add salt and oil. If you are a farmer or you are not a farmer, when you take three or four of the balls and eat, you will want water to drink. When you drink water, your stomach will become big. And so *gabli* helps you in your work, and if you eat it and have strength, you will do the work you want.

And if you want again, they will make what we call *tuubaani*. They will grind it, and you will let them get leaves. They will put a pot with water on fire. They will put the bambara beans inside the leaves and put it into the pot. In a very short time, it will be cooked. And they will spread salt, pepper, and oil for you to eat with the *tuubaani*. When you get about three or four, and you eat, you will know.

And if you want again, women will grind the beans, and they will take them and make *kooshe*. The way they make it is the same as how they make *kpaakulo* from guinea corn. They will fry it in oil. And when you eat it, you won't need food again. In the olden days, we used to call it *yona*. If you had ten cowries, that was one *pesewa*; you could buy about ten of the *kooshe*, and you could not eat all of it. And again, when you farm bambara beans and you store it, the time you don't have yams, you will remove the beans and give to women, and they will beat and sieve the beans and cook them. When they cook them, they will add salt, pepper, and oil, and you will eat. And I think that beans increase the stomach more than any other food, and beans too let you go to toilet well. And so bambara beans and beans have got a lot of work in Dagbon here. But what I am saying, it is if you don't have yams. If you have yams, and you farm bambara beans, you won't mind the bambara beans. You will be selling them, and as you are selling, your farm will be increasing. And it is some of the profit of farming.

Today I have talked much, and so I think we will stop here. And if God agrees and it's daybreak, I will continue the talk of farming, and I will talk about how we Dagbamba farm rice, and the work rice does for us. And I think that I will take one full day to talk about it, because rice has got a lot of talk in our Dagbon.