

Chapter II–22: *Soothsayers and Diviners*

Today we are going to talk about soothsayers [*baya, bayisi*]. As for the soothsayers, they are many in Dagbon. Their talk is not a long talk, but it is interesting, because it is an old talk. And as we are talking about what Dagbamba believe, and coming to talk about the typical Dagbamba and their gods and their medicine, it will be good if we start it with the soothsayers. And I want to tell you that truly, to talk of the typical Dagbamba is a problem for me, because I haven't stayed with them, and it is not unless you stay with people that you can know their ways. As I am a drummer, I have been telling you about drumming. As for knowledge, knowledge is: everyone and what he knows at his place. But as I have shown you about those who are following the Muslim religion, you should know that there are many Dagbamba who are not Muslims. And as my eyes are open, I can tell you something about the typical Dagbamba and how they beg the gods and make their medicines, and I can also talk about soothsayers, as far as I know.

As you have been seeing soothsayers with their soothsaying bags, it is that the soothsaying has been catching them to become soothsayers, and it catches them in different ways. But truly, soothsaying comes from the mother's house. If your mother's brother, that is, your uncle, is a soothsayer, the bag can come to you. And so when a soothsayer dies, it from his sister's sons that they will catch another soothsayer. When a soothsayer dies, and after the funeral is performed, they will say that the bag will catch one of his nephews, and they will gather all the soothsayers and consult. An elder of them will get up and say, "My grandson died," or "My son died." And he will say again, "As he has died, he has left something old. He was holding an old thing, and it will be good if someone gets the old thing to hold so that our bodies will be cool." The one they are going to catch will not know that he is the one; he can be on his farm or he can be working in some town. They will put stones to represent all the nephews, and they will say, "This man: this is his name, and this is his stone. That man: this is his name, and this is his stone." That is how they put the stones. The soothsayers will be about four, and they will separate and be consulting their things. When they catch one, the others will say, "As for them, they don't see well: they should get some people, too." They will get another four, and they will also separate and look. As the soothsayers are many, they will all look into it until they finish. If it is one stone that they all catch, they will all know that it is that person whom the bag is catching. Sometimes it happens that it will not catch any of the boys, but it comes

to catch a girl. It means that the child this girl has is the one they will give the bag to. And that is how soothsaying moves.

So soothsaying moves through the mother's house, but I told you that it catches people in different ways, and I have also seen it from the father's side. Someone can go to the bush and kill an animal, and the soothsaying bag will follow him. The bushbuck [*sankpaliŋ*] has got its soothsayer's bag, and the hyena too has got its soothsayer's bag. The bushbuck is bigger than an antelope, and it has some white marks; it was a bushbuck skin I last used to make strings for your drum. It is a bad thing in the bush, and it has got a bag. Someone can kill it, and it will follow him that he should get a bag. Someone can kill a bushbuck and he will not keep long; he will die. And his children will consult a soothsayer, and the soothsayer will tell them that their father has at one time killed a bushbuck, and if none of them takes up the skin of a bushbuck, then they will also die. They will prepare and get the skin of a bushbuck, and one among them will become a soothsayer.

The hyena, too, it is not one person who kills it in Dagbon. If you kill it alone, your eyes will see the result; even if you kill it alone, you will get a way to get people and say all of you killed it. They don't kill a hyena with a gun because it is not food; but sometimes when they see it, they beat and kill it with sticks because sometimes it can come to a house and enter the room where they keep animals. And so if you used a stick to kill it, you will get many sticks to put on top of it, and you will say all of you killed it. If it is a trap that caught it and you knock and kill it, then you say it is the trap that killed it. And that time the bag cannot catch anyone again. But if you come out and say you killed it alone, then your whole family will be inheriting the bag. We say they are drinking the bag, and they will drink it until the family becomes weak, because it will not leave them. Every day it will be killing them, and if they don't know, it will kill them until they will be finishing. And that is the way of soothsaying.

Sometimes it will happen in this way, and all the children will refuse the bag. They won't get any child who will be willing to take the soothsaying bag and become a soothsayer. If they refuse like that, another person will die. They will look again, and see, and if it is the same bag which is killing them, an elder of the family will gather them. He will tell them, "If you don't take time, our family will finish. All our family will die. This old thing is in the family, and you are all refusing to take it, and it will finish the family." By then the children will take the talk to be serious, and they will gather themselves to choose who should take the bag. This is what they do, but at times the bag will come to a family like that, and they won't find out. Sometimes they have no appetite for soothsayers, and they

won't get a soothsayer to look for them. By then you will see that it will be killing them. And so, apart from the mother's side, soothsaying can come from the father's side if the father should kill a bushbuck or a hyena, and in that case the bag will follow his children. But we don't take them to be real soothsayers, because it shows that the bag is from the bush. As for the bag that is in the family, that is the true one I'm talking to you about.

And truly, no one can refuse the soothsaying bag. Someone can leave the bag and die. Even a maalam, if he is the nephew of a soothsayer, and if the bag catches him and he says that because he is a maalam he will refuse, whatever happens, he will die. And so even a maalam will collect the bag, and then he will go and hang it in his room, and if he does that, it won't kill him.

Let me add you something here. Do you see that this talk about soothsayers resembles some of the talk about drumming? This drum we are holding, it is our old thing, and the soothsayer's bag is his old thing. If you are a drummer and you give birth to a woman, whatever happens, one of the children this woman gives birth to must become a drummer. If none of them take up the drum, then they will be dying, or madness will be following them. And again, do you see the butchers? As the butcher has got a knife, that is what he uses to cut meat. As they are calling him a butcher, it is because he is selling the meat. If it is only a knife, it is a knife I am also holding, and do they call me a butcher? They call him a butcher because he is selling the meat he cuts. That is his old thing. Do you see a barber? The barber is also holding a knife, and if it were not for the shaving of the head, they wouldn't call him a barber. And so a barber's old thing is the knife he is holding, and the knife is in the bag he carries. As for old talks, I have told you that there are some talks in our drumming which we fear. Our old talks are very strong, and we don't joke with them; that is why we make sacrifices when we talk some of them. If you follow it, you will see that ours is even stronger than the soothsayers' talks, because if we are talking, anyone who is even just listening is inside. And so our old talk resembles the soothsayer's talk, because the talk that doesn't finish, if you do it, it is something that is going to be standing and waiting for you. And that is also something on the part of soothsayers, and that is how it is. Soothsaying is an old thing in Dagbon.

I think that when chieftaincy started, soothsaying also was there. The reason I say that is because when they want to catch a chief, they go to see soothsayers. And I think that soothsayers are strong inside chieftaincy, because if they were not strong, they would not be catching chiefs. And so I think that when chieftaincy started in this Dagbon, soothsaying also started. Nyolugu Lun-Naa Issahaku told me one time that the soothsayers were from the Busanga land, on the

way going to Ouagadougou, and the time our Dagbamba chieftaincy started, the time of Naa 3irli and Naa Shitobu, that was the time they came here. But I think that the talk of soothsayers is also with the typical Dagbamba. And what I am saying is that I don't think that soothsayers started inside chieftaincy on the part of family. I told you that anyone who is a Dagbana or anyone who speaks Dagbani is the grandson of a Yaa-Naa. But I have not heard that the soothsayers started inside chieftaincy. How the butchers started with Naa Dimani, or how the drummers started with Naa Nyaysi's son Bizun, I haven't heard any talk like that on the part of soothsayers. If a chief should marry a soothsayer's daughter, and the woman gives birth to a boy, that child will stand as a chief's son. If not that, the child of a soothsayer only stands as a soothsayer's child. But the soothsaying bag is an old thing in Dagbon.

When a soothsayer dies, and they consult and catch the new soothsayer, when they are going to put the bag on him, the soothsayers gather. They get a hundred hens and a male goat, and they make food in a hundred bowls. They will eat and leave some, because if they don't eat and leave some, the new soothsayer will not see other people's matters. And they will get a woman soothsayer to add to him. The women soothsayers do not see, but the day they catch the new soothsayer, they will catch a woman to add to him. Then they get pepper, and they grind it and put it in water. Then they put the pepper into his nose. That is when they will know who is a good soothsayer, because sometimes they will put pepper in someone's nose and he will die. At that point, they will know that the bag has not come to him. And it is foolishness, too, because by that time, he is already dead. The woman, too, it is the same thing they do to her. Then they make her sit on a chair, and the man will also sit on a chair. They cut a long stick and fix it between them, and they put a very old bag on it. They put calabashes on their heads like caps, and they dance around the two of them. As they dance, it is only songs they sing; they don't beat anything. They sing, "*Bay' bila di malimali ti paai tom.*" They are singing about when they were putting the pepper in his nose, and it means, "The small soothsayer has eaten sweet things and has come to meet the bitter thing." At that time they will be dancing around them. Then they will slaughter the male goat, and they will remove the skin and make a bag out of it. That is the bag the soothsayer will carry on his arm.

They have the soothsayer chief, the *Bay' Naa*. He will take the small soothsayer into the room and show him how to see. If not the chief, then it will be an elder soothsayer. When they are going to see, they get a ring of tied grass which we call *kalnli*, and they put a calabash on it. The things they have in the bag are many. They have cowrie shells, money, sticks, pieces of iron, all in small

pieces. And they have small white stones from the river bank; we call them *nyolinsi*. They get all these things and mix them together. When a soothsayer is going to look and see, he throws them inside the calabash and see how they fall. Sometimes he will pour the things and collect them back again. When he looks inside, he uses the quill of a porcupine. He doesn't use his finger. And so the senior soothsayer will be teaching him. He will say that the new soothsayer is going to ask for the health of the town. And he will say again, "His mother consulted and left it for him." The senior soothsayer says this because the bag has come from his mother's house; it shows that he will not see his friend's seeing but he will also try to see. And the senior soothsayer will say again that he should choose good things and leave bad things. And the senior soothsayer will be taking the soothsaying things one by one and throwing them into the calabash, telling him, "When you are looking and this one comes, it means this; if it is that one which comes, you must know it means that." That is how he will be showing him. He can teach him in that way for many days. All the things in the bag have names, and there are about three hundred of them; we call them *baybihi*, soothsayer's children. Sometimes they will test the small soothsayer: they get something and hide it, and they tell him to find it. It is from his bag that he will find it, and if he finds it, then they will know that truly he can see. And if he is not able to get the thing or the person who has hidden it, it means the senior soothsayer did not teach him well, and they will send him back to the senior soothsayer to teach him again. And so that is how the soothsaying starts.

The soothsayers are many in Dagbon. No one can count them. There are some in every area, and they don't stay at one place. But as they are there, it is not all of them who see well. All of them cannot be the same, because wisdom is not the same. Some soothsayers are there, and they have no use. Someone who has no use is one who wants people to see him, and the soothsayers who cannot see well are even the ones who show themselves: the least thing, he will hang his bag and want people to know he is a soothsayer. When he dies, his sister's children will inherit the bag, and maybe one of them will see. And so there are soothsayers and there are soothsayers. As for those who see true things, they don't joke. And the people who go to them are many. There are soothsayers I can send you to: you will go to their houses and see about twenty bicycles standing. Some people get up very early and go, and in the evening, the soothsayer will still be with people in his room.

You can be sick, and no one will be able to treat you. If you go to a soothsayer, the soothsayer will tell you the person who will be able to treat you. If you have a case that is in darkness, and you want to make sure, you go to the

soothsayer's house and you talk. But it's not that you tell him: you don't let anyone hear it; you say it in your heart; you say it in the money you are going to give him, and you put the money into the calabash with the cowries, the stones, the pieces of iron and sticks, and the other things. You can say in your heart, "I have been sick for a very long time, and I have not been able to treat it. I would like you to tell me how I will treat it." If the soothsayer is someone who sees, he will see all that you have said. He can take about ten or twenty minutes and see all that is there.

In the olden days, when they were using cowrie shells for money, you could take a cowrie shell and go and consult a soothsayer, and then it came to five cowries. When the white men came, it was half a pesewa, and people were consulting soothsayers. And it came to a pesewa, to threepence, sixpence, ten pesewas, a cedi, and now it is still increasing. But the soothsayer will not tell you "Bring this amount" or "Bring that amount." You yourself, you will know how much you will give him, because things have changed, and it is you who will give him one cedi or two cedis or five cedis if you want. This is how they consult soothsayers. Some soothsayers farm, but a soothsayer's farm is not far. Sometimes he will even be in his farm and someone will come to him, and he will put down his hoe and come. Even if a soothsayer is just passing by, I can call him and say, "Soothsayer, look into this for me." He has no way to turn away. It is by force that he should stop. If he should refuse and go home, he will get trouble. The soothsaying bag will not leave him: somebody will go home and a scorpion will sting him, or he will go home and be sick. This is how it is, and even up till now, it is there like that. And so no one will go to a soothsayer, and the soothsayer will refuse. He can only tell you, "The day is heavy." If it is a market day and many people are walking, he is seeing their troubles; he is not seeing your trouble. If it is a Friday, it is a heavy day, and he is seeing heavy things. In that case, you will find another time.

And so a soothsayer who sees very well has no time for farming. If not now that things have changed, it wasn't long ago that you could use ten pesewas to buy yams, and it would feed the four of us here, and we would even eat and leave some. And during that time, a soothsayer would just get up and about ten people would come and consult him, and he would get ten pesewas from each of them. And so if a soothsayer is doing his work, he can get up one day and ten people will consult him, and he will collect from each of them. Apart from that, he will tell someone something, and the fellow will go and see the truth, and he will come back and give the soothsayer two cedis or four cedis or ten cedis, or even more, sometimes a lot. But we drummers, if you are a drummer, a soothsayer will not

collect money from you. As you are drumming, you are also holding an old thing, so he will not charge you; he will only tell you to get him cola, and if the cola is not there, you can say, “Get ten pesewas and buy cola.” It doesn’t matter.

And truly, the people who go to soothsayers are there. Formerly I used to go but now I don’t go. The one who gives trust to God has no time for soothsayers, because he knows that it is God who makes everything. As I am telling you about soothsayers, you should know that it is those who don’t have trust in God who go to soothsayers. Someone can be sitting down and his body will not make him sweet; it will be as if he is not feeling fine. Or he is dreaming and his dreams are worrying him. If he goes to a soothsayer, whatever happens, the soothsayer will tell him what is making him not to be happy. The soothsayer can tell him to make a sacrifice, and the fellow will make the sacrifice. Someone can make the sacrifice, and as he was always sick or he was not sleeping, he will now become well. As it is, if anything happens again, will he go to the soothsayer or not? Or you have your children, and you give birth and they die, and you don’t know what is killing them. Someone can go to a soothsayer, and the soothsayer will tell him, “Such and such an old lady, a witch, is going to catch you. Go and beg with this and that, and you will defeat her.” The fellow will go and beg in that way and be free. And someone too can go and the soothsayer will tell him that an old lady has caught him and he will not get up again. He can ask, “Have I got any sacrifice?” And the soothsayer will say, “There is no sacrifice.” The soothsayer can say that, and the fellow will come home and die. To that fellow’s people, what the soothsayer told him was true. And the soothsayer will tell someone he will die, and the fellow will come home and will not die. And so what a soothsayer talks, some of it is truth, and some of it is lies. A soothsayer can be there and his children will be dying one after the other. If he were able to see, would anything be catching his children like that? As the soothsayer is there, his children also die. Many of them!

And so as for the soothsayers, they have a name in Dagbon here: *Ŋum pa nir’ yelgu, di deei, di zaɣsi*. It means “Someone who is not a person, when he talks, don’t accept it and don’t refuse it.” When he tells you something, you just say, “Yes.” That is the way of the soothsayers. This name — *Ŋum pa nir’ yelgu, di deei, di zaɣsi* — it has many different ways. It is not only soothsayers who have that name. It is a heavy proverb in Dagbon here. There are some people who don’t always tell the truth, but it is also not all days that someone will tell lies. If somebody who is a liar comes to tell you something, there are some days when you shouldn’t refuse it. If you continue refusing what he tells you, maybe one day you will refuse the truth. That is the meaning of the name.

As I have told you that I don't go to soothsayers, it is not long since I left going to them. And truly, I trust them and I believe them, because when I was going to them to consult about my problems, they were telling me the truth. But I came to see that when the soothsayer is going to look, he will call the name of God, and he will ask God, "This daybreak, what is on the earth?" At that point I saw that if I am going to soothsayers, and as I am someone who prays, then I am not standing at one place. Why do I say that? The soothsayer trusts his seeing, and that is why he calls himself a soothsayer, but he is coming to add God to his work. And so everything that anyone does is coming back to God, and we Muslims know that apart from God, there is no one leading. If I am going to trust in God, I don't have to take soothsayers seriously. But the typical Dagbamba, those who are standing by themselves, they think that the soothsayers are more than God. But even those of us who don't go to soothsayers, we don't find the fault of a soothsayer. There is someone who trusts soothsayers, and if you say they are useless, then you and that fellow cannot stay together. And that is why we say that what a soothsayer tells you, don't accept it and don't refuse it.

Apart from that, and why I don't go to soothsayers, I have seen that soothsayers can make people quarrel. Let me give you an example. Let's say that I have an argument with you, and I go and consult a soothsayer. Maybe the soothsayer will tell me that I should fear you, that if I don't fear you, you will kill me. What he has said, sometimes it may be true, and sometimes it may be lies. If the soothsayer tells you to fear someone whom you have never argued with, as for that, we usually take it that if you follow it step-by-step, you will come to see that it is true that the fellow doesn't like you. And as for the person you argued with, sometimes it is also true that he is thinking about doing you bad. But we also know that the person you stay with is the person you quarrel with. If you and I are friends, sometimes something will come and you will be annoyed, and you go home. I am also annoyed, and I go to a soothsayer. When he looks, he says, "Oh, you must be afraid of your friend John. You know that Americans don't joke. He will kill you." He has put fear between us, and if we follow it, you will see that our friendship will spoil. But maybe as we are annoyed with one another, it is not something that will last. The way people stay together, if they quarrel, they will come to talk again. You quarrel with someone you stay with, because how are you going to quarrel with someone you don't stay with? But if you go to a soothsayer, sometimes he will separate you and your friend.

And so a soothsayer will tell you the truth today, and tomorrow he will tell you a lie. The one he tells you tomorrow, if you are going to take it and consider it in staying with people, you won't be able to stay with anybody. And so we

Dagbamba say that if a soothsayer tells you something, you should also soothsay in your heart. Then you will take your own sense to add to the soothsayer's talk, and you will judge it. When you go to a soothsayer to consult, when you come back home, you have to be thinking in your heart about what he told you. If you soothsay in your heart, sometimes you won't see anything of what the soothsayer has told you. If you don't see it, how will you mind it? But if you don't soothsay in your heart, and you just follow the talk of soothsayers and you keep everything the soothsayers say, it won't do. At that point, who are you? You will be left alone. And so what the soothsayer tells you, don't accept it and don't refuse it. He will tell you and you will say, "Yes," and in your heart you will say, "If my eye sees." As for the one your eye sees, that one is true. But if you don't see anything, it is a lie, and if you are continuing to take to be true, it means you are now becoming a liar. And so what a soothsayer tells you, you have to look at it in your heart. If you take it straightforward to do work, how will it be sweet? And that is the meaning of "Someone who is not a person, what he talks, don't accept it and don't refuse it." And that is what I know about soothsayers.

And this talk, if we are going to follow it, it shows that the soothsayers are not the only people who look in Dagbon. As we are here in Dagbon, we ourselves are separated into many groups. As we are sitting, there are drummers, butchers, blacksmiths, barbers. We have chiefs and we have commoners. We have *tindanas*, and there are some people who drink and do not pray to God, and they sacrifice to the gods. And there are some people who joined the Muslim religion when it came here, and there are differences inside them. That is why I told you that even on the part of those who are following the Muslim religion, we have maalams and we have people who pray. And so some people are soothsayers, and there are others who also look. Some people look at cowries, and some look into powder, and some look into sand. The ones who look into the sand are on the Muslim side. And so there are some maalams who look and see. And there are others who look into fire; they are called *jinwarba* [singular: *jinwara*]. And there are some *jinwarba* who look into water and see, and there are also some other people too who see in water.

These *jinwarba* are Dagbamba, but they also have their group. They have some spirits we call *jina*, and the *jinwarba* see them. As for the *jinwarba*, their work is fire, and they dance the Jina dance in fire. But truly, it is not during the Buyim Festival that they dance. The reason why I say that their work is fire is that we have some firewood in the bush which we call *dazuli*. When the new yams come out, these *jinwarba* go to the bush and get some *dazuli* firewood. The wood of this tree is very hard. This is the wood they use to cook the yams and eat, and

that is their yam festival. When they make the fire, they can look into this fire and see many things, and they tell people. They will sit around the fire, and people from other villages will be coming to them to find out what is happening with their problems or what is going to happen in the future. They can give a shilling or any small money, and the jinwarba look into the fire and tell the fellow. And some people travel from very far away just to come and see all this. And it will come to a time when the jinwarba will get up and step into the fire and be moving around in the fire, and the fire will not burn them, and they say it is because they have performed their yam festival. If you are lucky, sometime you will get a chance to see it. I myself have not seen them walking in the fire, but I have heard. The fire is a very large one. They spread the wood and make a very big fire, and they just walk inside it.

And these jinwarba are a part of us Dagbamba. They don't have particular villages or towns. Anywhere you see Dagbamba, they are also around that place. If they are not in a particular town, they are in some villages around there. The way soothsayers are in Dagbon, that is the same way jinwarba are there. I know some of them at a village called Zujum; it's not far from here. There are some at Savelugu, some at Voggo, some at Yiwogu. There are some at Kushebo, and sometimes they gather and say they are going to dance the Jina dance at that place. And I think that at Katariga too, some of them are there. Truly, I think that there are many towns and villages in Dagbon here where they are there, but I don't know all the places.

As for the jinwarba, and how one enters it, its starting is like madness. You become like a mad person, and you are seeing dwarfs. These dwarfs are the starting of jina madness. It is the jinwarba themselves who will know that the madness is a jina madness. The jina madness only catches the jina people. It doesn't catch anyone apart from those in the jinwarba's line. And this one, too, how it moves resembles what I have been telling you about our old talks in the family. As it catches a jinwara's child, it is following the father's line, and the children are jinwarba, but if they don't follow it, it won't worry them. But if a man marries a jinwara woman, even if he is a maalam, whatever happens, one of the children has to be a jinwara. The mother's house talks will catch on one of them. If it comes to fall on a boy, they will take him to the Jina, and if it comes to fall on a girl, they will take the girl to enter into the Jina. It is mother's side talks that eat a child. That is how it is.

And so if the jina madness catches such a person, then they will know the talk that is inside it. As we are sitting in this room, if we were all Dagbamba, we all know one another's line. If such a thing should attack me, I will know myself

that it is the jina because I am from the jina line. And people outside will even know it, too. But it's not that the jinwarba don't mix. They can marry one another, and if they don't marry one another and they marry someone who is not one of them, that person also becomes part of them. For example, if you John give birth to a child in Ghana, they are going to call that child an American. The child will be half-half, but for us here, the man is for the child. In Dagbon here, if you take a woman and she brings forth a child, even if you don't mind the child and the woman, one day the child will come to your house. They will be abusing him that he has no father, and at that time, the child will ask the mother, "Who was my father," and the mother will answer, "So-and-so." And the child will come to you. And so when they get one another, they can marry; and if they don't get one another, they marry from outside. And if they marry outside, it adds to their jina line. This is what I know.

If the jina madness catches a person, the jinwarba will make medicine, and as the madness was making that fellow's body hot, the medicine will cool it. When they make the medicine, the madness is no more doing its work, but the dwarfs are still with the person. And so it is these dwarfs who have brought jina. It's not that the jinwarba are from some place: it is just the dwarfs who make them do as if they are mad.

As for this particular talk, I myself have seen it. There was a man called Baybila, and he had these dwarfs. Sometimes when it was night, we would go to his house. Sometimes we would see the thatched roof opened, and the dwarfs had put meat inside the room to give to Baybila. We heard the dwarfs talk, but we didn't see them. One time they said they were coming from Kintampo, and they were in the hills. Any time we were sitting and the dwarfs were coming, Baybila would be in the room, and he would take a cloth and cover himself, and the dwarfs would just come through the thatched roof with force — *bup!* When they entered, as we were sitting down, they would greet us, and we would hear their voices but we wouldn't see them. Their voices resemble when you are holding a telephone and talking with someone in Accra. That is how their voices are. These dwarfs are with the jinwarba.

And so the jinwarba are just old madmen, and they have treated them but the dwarfs have not run away. The dwarfs are with them, and they have all come together to become the *jinwara*. It is the dwarfs who tell the jinwarba what will happen, and the jinwarba also tell people, and it is true. And I think that as the jinwarba have been dancing in the fire, it is the dwarfs who quench the fire when the jinwarba dance, and it is only that people don't see it. This is what Namo-Naa told me about the jinwarba, and it isn't that they are separate

people from us Dagbamba. It is only old men and women they have treated for madness, and they have become well. And Namon-Naa said that it started with a certain chief they treated and he became well. I think he started Jina in Dagbon, and they are dancing Jina. This is what Namon-Naa also told me about the jinwarba. And so every jinwara is an old mad person.

The day that they are going to show someone the jina spirits so that he will become a jinwara, they will say that there are some men that the tindana chieftaincy catches, and that is how it is with them the jinwarba. And there are some women too the tindana chieftaincy catches, and that is how it is with them. As we have tindana men and tindana women, we also have jinwara men and jinwara women. And so a jina spirit catches both men and women, and when it is coming, it comes in the form of madness. It doesn't catch all Dagbamba. Everybody has got his ways. As we are drummers, no one enters into our trouble. And so the jina catches people in the jinwarba's line. If the jina is going to catch somebody, even if he is in the South, it catches him in the form of madness. When it happens to somebody in the South, and it starts, all his mind will be that he should come home. If he has money, he will come home; if he has no money; he will come home. Sometimes someone who has no money will be coming, and he will die on the way. As it is doing as if it is madness, it does as if some things are moving with him and bringing him home. And the jina doesn't catch only one person. It can catch one person from one area, catch another person from another area, and so they will group them about six or ten. As they are now many, they can do the work for them.

And its work shows that they should go and bring dazuli from the bush, and when they bring the wood, they should use it for making the fire. If they are going to show the new jinwarba the spirits, that is the day they are going to eat yams, and that is the day they will also make the fire. And they will do their dance. They do it once in a year. When we are sitting and eating our new yams, they don't eat yams at that time. Sometimes we will be eating yams for a very long time before they will come to eat their yams. And they dance it and follow how they eat their yams. Sometimes I see them go, and the rain will come and drive them away. They will go back to their houses and dance the next day.

If they are going to dance their dance, even thirty miles away, all of them from the whole area will meet there. And when they go there, they will cook food and eat. And it is not only twenty or thirty or fifty people. Truly, I have not gone there, and you might ask me, "If you have not gone there, how do you know how many they are?" But as I sit outside and I see them passing, I know that they are many. As for them, when they are going, they don't hide. Their dress is just like a

black dress, and again, they have some calabashes which they put cowries around, and again, they have some tails which they put around their necks. As for the men, they wear what we call *biŋŋmaa*; it is a type of smock, and it is very, very dirty, and it has a lot of medicine on it. Truly, we don't know whether they bury the smocks or what they do, but their dress doesn't look like anything else. I don't know whether they have another dress to wear if they go to dance, because I have never gone to their dance, but this is the dress I see them wearing any time they pass. And this is what I know. Sometimes we sit down and see them passing, and we also know them from their walking sticks that they hold. Their walking sticks are black, and they use cowries to cover them. And I think that it is inside the cowries and the walking sticks that they have all their secrets. When they take the small jinwarba around the fire, they make the walking sticks for them, and it shows that they are also part of the jinwarba now.

When they make the fire and dance, some of them go into in the fire and go out again. It is not all of them who go into the fire; it is only those who are old in it. As for them, when they walk in the fire, it doesn't look as if they are walking in fire. And when the fire is burning, when it spreads up, some of the older jinwarba will look at the flames and see certain things, and they will say it and it will be true. As they make the fire and enter it, some people go there just to look at them and see it. And when any bad man comes to stand there, the jinwarba will see that bad man. And if it is a bad woman, too, they will see her. And they will talk about the bad person. Sometimes you may go and stand there, and they will say that there is someone there who has been caught by an old lady in the house, that is, by a witch. And sometimes they say, in so-and-so's house, they are going to catch someone. They look into the fire and see all this.

And apart from that, the only thing they do is dance and sing around the fire. I don't know their songs. I have never gone to see them, but some people who have gone to see them have come to tell me. But when the time comes, they have their playing and their dance. The type of drum they use is a broken clay pot, and they use a skin to sew it, and they play on it. It is called *jinduyu*. If they start beating this drum, and a jinwara hears the sound, he will get up and go. And I think that they only play it when they are going to dance, because if not that, then I would have heard children playing it outside. And so I think that when they play it on that day, then that is all: they don't play it again. Even we drummers, there are certain places where we drum, and no one will hear of it outside, unless that thing happens again and we go to beat its drumming again. I think that they have also got that type of playing, and if not on that day, they don't play it. And I think that they don't teach it to anyone. It's like our drumming that we drum when

someone dies and we are going to beat drums outside the dead person's house: we don't teach anyone how to play it. After we play it at the funeral house, we won't play it again unless there is another funeral house. And so I think that their play is like that, too: the day they are going to play, they go and play, and that's all. If not that, children would have been playing it outside and singing its songs. And I have even heard that if you are not one of them, and you remember one of their songs, then if you don't get trouble, someone in your family will get trouble. I have heard people say that, but I have not seen it. And I have not heard their songs, either. And so in Dagbon here, there are many things which people do only on particular days. When they finish doing it on that day, unless another day comes before they will do it again. As we are sitting down, there are such things within us. We have this within the drummers, too. And this is my talk on what I know about their dance.

But I can say that it is not only on the days they dance that they do their work. A man or a woman jinwara can come across someone, and if there is something bad going to happen to that fellow, the jinwara can tell him. I even have a friend who is a jinwara, and I go to him. Sometimes my child may fall sick, and I will go to him, and he will get some herbs and give to me. And I will come and give the herbs to the child, and the child will become well. And one time, when I wanted to marry, there was some talk, and I went to him, and he told me to make some sacrifices; and I had the woman, and we gave birth to a child. That friend of mine is still there, and any time they want to go for their dance, I think he is also one of their big men. I have never asked him how they dance and what they do: even we don't ask such things. I have never gone to where they dance, and I haven't asked my friend anything about them because you can't ask about it. I only know that they call it Jina, and I don't know if it came from some other place or not. That is all that I know. If you fear someone, how can you ask that fellow how he works? I think that every Dagbana fears the jinwarba. There are some places, even now, when some people see a jinwara, they run away. And so if you fear someone, you cannot ask him about his work. And you can only know if you ask him.

And so in Dagbon here, we fear the jinwarba. We fear them because when they see someone's secret, they say it. They can see you standing in the public, and they will bring your secrets out and everybody will hear. Because of that many people don't like them. Someone goes to see a soothsayer in order to find out what is behind his secrets. But the jinwarba don't know how to hold secrets. And so we say that they reveal someone's anus. And they help people, too. If someone wants to do bad to his friend, when they see it, they say it. When they

are going to say it, they don't call you aside: they say it in front of people. And they have saved you or revealed your anus for people to hear. And this is what I know about the jinwarba, and this is what I know about the way of the jinwarba. As for them, they are typical Dagbamba, true ones. They are not Muslims at all. It's only now that things are changing, but formerly if they were coming, people who saw them ran away. And as I have said that I have never gone to watch their dance, but when they are going to dance it, many people go to watch them. And as for the jinwarba themselves and what they are doing, I think it helps them because every year they dance. If you are doing work today and it doesn't help you, will you do that work tomorrow? And so those who are there, it helps them. It helps them to have more medicine and to know more talks. But it's only that I have never seen one of them being a money person.

And that is the work of the jinwarba. They don't have any work to do on the part of the tindanas and the gods. I have not heard anything like that. They are like people with medicine, and again, they are like soothsayers, but I can say that they are more than soothsayers because their work is more than that of soothsayers. As for a soothsayer, you will sit with him before he will tell you things. He cannot just come and meet you somewhere and tell you things about yourself. And the soothsayers don't make fire, and the soothsayers cannot come and stand and see the flames and tell you things. But as for a jinwara, even when a lantern flame is burning and he sees it, he can say things from it. And the reason why I can tell you this, even though I have never gone to see it, is that I knew one jinwara woman who had nothing in her room apart from a lantern. If you went to her, she would just light the lantern and look at the flame and start telling you things. And others too fetch water and put it down in a calabash, and they look into the water and talk. A soothsayer doesn't do that. The soothsayer has things, and he pours them on the ground, and he will use a calabash and throw cowries. This is what a soothsayer does, and this is how it is. And so I think that a jinwara is more than a soothsayer on the part of us here. I think so. And if you want, all the people who see, you can group all of them to be one.

And I think that we will stop here, and tomorrow if God agrees, we will meet and I will start the talk about the gods of Dagbon and the part they play for the typical Dagbamba. And I will start it on the part of the tindanas. The tindanas are different from soothsayers, and their talk is different.