

Chapter I-1: *The Benefits of Friendship*

I'm going to start by giving you a proverb: "A child has gone out and brought something that you don't know." How it is with our Dagbani proverbs, when you are going to give a proverb to somebody whose eyes are not open inside proverbs, then you can give that person a story. And so this is an old talk in Dagbon.

A man went to the bush and he saw a dwarf. And he befriended the dwarf.

The dwarf said, "Why have you come to befriend me? Many people come here, and they don't see me. But you have forced yourself and we have seen one another. And you say you want to befriend me."

The man said, "As for those people who come, you don't allow them to see you; that is why they don't befriend you. But since the two of us have seen one another, we will be friends. That is why I have befriended you."

And the dwarf told him, "It doesn't matter. I have elders. I will go home and tell them."

Then the dwarf left, and the man too went home. He went to his house and he was sitting down, and he told a friend of his, "I went to the bush and I saw something which resembled a human being but it was not a full human being. And I befriended him."

And the friend said, "If you go to the bush, try to bring him home, and we will know him."

And when the dwarf went home, he consulted his elders: "I was at my work when a man came and befriended me. Many people have been coming there but they have not been able to see me. But this man was able to see me, and he said that since he was able to see me, we will befriend one another."

And his elders told him, "Tomorrow if you go, try to bring the man and we will know him."

The next day the man got up early. He went to the place he had met the dwarf, but he didn't see him. He cut some branches and put them where the dwarf was sitting, and he hid himself. It was not long before the dwarf was coming. As he was coming, he was singing. He was singing that his people had told him to bring the wonderful man so that they will know him, and that he was coming to bring the wonderful man to the house. And when he arrived at his sitting place, he saw leaves lying down. Before long the man came out, and the dwarf said, "Did you hear the song I was singing? Let's go home."

And the man said, "I heard it. But my elders have also told me to bring you and they will know you. When you came, did you see leaves lying down or not?"

And the dwarf said he saw the leaves. And the man asked the dwarf, “What do you think it means?”

And the dwarf said, “Maybe the leaves were here before I came from my house.”

And the man said, “Since I came before you, you will follow me. I was the first to befriend you, so you should follow me.”

The dwarf said, “I didn’t want you to be the first person to tell me, and that was why I was singing the song. If I follow you to your home, the people there will laugh at me. The way I look, I don’t look like you. By all means, if you take me to your home, people will laugh at me.”

And the man said, “When they are laughing at you, look at me. You shouldn’t mind anybody, but just look at my face. I am taking you along.”

So the dwarf followed the man. When they were getting to the man’s house, the man knew that people would laugh at them. He told the dwarf to sit down and that he would come back for him. And he went to his area and said, “My friend is coming, and I don’t want anyone to laugh at him. If he is handsome or he is not handsome, I don’t want anyone to laugh at him.”

Then the man went to the dwarf and he took the dwarf to his house. All the people assembled and greeted the dwarf. And among the people there was a blind man who greeted the dwarf. And there was also a man with a hunchback. And when the hunchback saw the dwarf, he laughed.

It was when the man took the dwarf inside his house that the dwarf told the man that he had some medicine to treat people and that the man should bring sick people to him. The ones who came were the blind man and the hunchback, and they said they wanted medicine from the dwarf. The dwarf said it was all right, he would treat both of them. He took the blind man into a room, and he put medicine on him and used a rag to cover his eyes. In three days he removed the rag, and the blind man’s eyes were open. Then the dwarf went and brought the hunchback into the room. The dwarf let the hunchback stay in the room, and when it was three days, the dwarf brought another hunchback man to add to him. And the dwarf told him, “As for your sickness, there is no one treating it, unless they add to it.”

Why have I told you this story? This story I have told you, it will be very good for you to start the book with it. As for the story I have talked, it is not that you alone will see it with your eyes. Why do I say this? If you take this story to any part of the world and talk about it, those who are listening, or those who are interested in listening, when you talk about this and they hear, they are going to know that truly, it is true, and they will also know that truly, this was what we started our work with. And you yourself, you will also come to look back and see how we were doing the work. You will see how the beginning was, and if God

agrees and we talk and finish, when you are coming to see the end again, this story will push down all the talks that we have made. And so it will be very good if you are going to give these talks to anybody, you will tell him that this is how you are going to begin the talks, and this story is the thing that will be standing for the talks. And when you are talking, he will be seeing it. And so this story is an old talk in Dagbon. It will be good if it stands in front of all the talks we will make, because it is a very, very good talk.

What I have told you in this story, you should think in your heart and see whether some of it is becoming true or not. Haven't you seen anything of that sort? You should know that as we are staying with you in Dagbon, there is laughter. And there is gossiping. Some people are gossiping about us, saying, "These people are useless; they are going to befriend a white man. As they are following this white man, they are not going to achieve anything. Will you follow a white man and achieve what you want?" And maybe your people at home will be saying, "John has gone to mix himself with black men. Will someone follow those people and achieve what he wants?"

And so on the part of the story I have told you, and how it is in Dagbon here: taking you yourself to be a dwarf, and the two of us have met and become friends, I have taken you to the house and shown you to the elders, and I am teaching you drumming. How you are here with me, if others are laughing at you, you should be looking at me. Dagbamba say that if a child goes to the bush and finds benefit, he will bring it home. And so I was roaming and I saw you, and I have brought you home to my elders. The sense we have got, and you want it, we won't hide it from you. We won't hide anything from you.

And again, I don't know your town, but I think that maybe somebody at that side who doesn't know Dagbon will take it that we Dagbamba are rather the dwarfs. Whether there is sense within us that can benefit a human being, they don't know. And so the talk we are talking, if you take it home and show it to your people, if they happen to laugh at us or demean us, it is over to them. At that time, we will also be looking at you. And so this talk is within every human being and the way God will let different people come together.

Today as we are sitting, we have not gone to your town, but you have come to join yourself with us. And now you are here staying with us and we are staying with you, in this Dagbon, and others are laughing and gossiping about us. I can tell you that. As you have come and befriended me, and I am teaching you drumming, if you don't achieve what you want, whom are they going to laugh at? Do you know? They are not going to laugh at you alone. They are going to laugh at us. And we should not let them laugh at us. We should not let them laugh at us at all.

What makes people see the foolishness of someone? Do you know? If you want to achieve something, and you don't achieve it, they don't see your foolishness. But if you want to achieve something and you achieve it, then those who have not achieved it will call you a fool. You've come to Ghana and you are staying here in Dagbon, and it is your wish that has brought you here. And as it is your wish that has brought you here, anywhere you go they are calling you a fool. They say, "Look, this white man is foolish. What does he want here?" You go and you sit in certain places in which you are not supposed to sit. What has made it so? It is your wish that has made it so. And it is in your wish that people are going to see your foolishness. And you are also going to see the foolishness of others.

As people are saying that you are a fool, you also know that you have a purpose. That is why you're doing what you're doing. If you want something, you have to reduce yourself in order to get that thing. It isn't that you are a foolish person: it is because of your wish that you have reduced yourself. I think you have some patience in you, because when you came you brought yourself into a group. And I think that anywhere you go, you take yourself into a group of people. Any time I hear of you, I hear that you are going to learn such-and-such a thing. I hear that John is in such a town doing this, John is in such a town doing that. And because you are mixing with people, no one can prevent you from achieving your purpose, and that is why you are going to benefit from what you are doing.

And so I am telling you that the intention you have in your heart, that is what is going to hold you in this world and in the next world. If you think good thoughts and do good works, you are going to achieve good, and if you think bad thoughts and do bad, you are going to achieve bad. God even says that if you think bad of somebody, even if you don't do the bad, God will write bad for you. And if you think good of somebody and you don't do it, God will write good for you. And so if you are holding good in your heart, that is what you are going to get and that is how you are going to end. It can even happen that you will come to get some benefit that you were not expecting to get, and you didn't think that there was this kind of benefit in what you were doing.

I think in my heart that it is this drumming which has brought you from your country to this place. I can tell you that there are a lot of talks inside drumming, and there is a lot of benefit in this drumming. You haven't told me whether this drumming is benefiting you or not, but as it is benefiting us here, I think it is going to benefit you, too. Here, if you are a drummer and you learn it with all your strength, there is no day it won't benefit you. Even if you learn it and go and put your drum in a room, it will benefit you some day at least. And so

you should know that what you wish, there is no one who can discourage you from that wish. Why am I telling you that? Because in what your heart wishes, your blame is small. As I'm here with you, it is because my heart is telling me to come here. You should think in your heart that my heart wants me to work with you. And I want you to wish that we work together, too. Those of us who are staying with you will teach you as far as we know, and according to our wisdom. We will not let them laugh at you. And we will not let them laugh at us.

We have a proverb in our Dagbani that says, "If the basket is not ashamed, then the thief is not ashamed." It is a thick proverb, and I am going to show you a story inside it. One time there was hunger, and a thief and his brothers decided to steal yams from someone's farm. The brothers went and sat with the farmer, and the thief went to the man's farm and began collecting the yams in a basket. At that time, the son of the farmer yams was coming from the bush, and he saw someone removing the yams from his father's farm. The son didn't mind the one removing the yams, and he came home. When he came, he met his father sitting with the brothers of the thief. He told his father, and the old man got up to rush to the farm. As they were going, it was even the brothers who were leading, and the owner of the yams was following. And when they came near the farm, the owner called, "Who is in the yam farm?" And by then the thief took the basket and ran, and people were chasing him. The time they were chasing him, he turned the basket and poured down what he had stolen. And they caught him, and when they were taking him home, he used the empty basket to cover his face. And when they reached home, they asked him why he was covering his face, and he threw the basket down, and he said, "If the basket is not ashamed, then the thief is also not ashamed."

Do you know what he was talking about? He was talking about his brothers. And he said many things. The proverb showed that he got the basket from somebody before he went to do his work, and he showed that the people who arrested him were the ones who had given him the basket and told him to go and steal. And so the meaning is that if you are doing something with somebody, if you respect yourself, you don't have to say, "That person, I have nothing to do with that person." And so we should not put one another into shame.

And truly, this proverb has different ways. On your part, as you have come to learn drumming, and we are teaching you, you should not let our friendship spoil. On the part of the friendship, you should know that with us, there is a way for a friend to inherit his fellow friend. There are some talks you will talk to your friend and you won't tell your child, and it will happen that you will not be alive again, and your child will be looking for those talks, and the only place for the child to find out will be from your friend. And so you should know and be sure:

what I have learned and I am teaching you, I will make sure that you get the correct thing. And your people at home, if they let your work spoil and they are not ashamed of that, then we who are teaching you are also not ashamed. We who are sitting here with you, if we are put into shame, then we will also be the same as the thief. And again, the proverb has to do with what I have learned, and I am transferring it to you, and you are taking it to your country. How you've put your mind to learn the drumming, if we don't teach you well and you don't learn it properly, then if we are not ashamed, then you too should not feel ashamed. If I don't teach you well, then when those who are laughing at us or criticizing us open their mouths to gossip, it is I who is going to receive it.

And so these talks I'm giving you today, I'm talking about myself, to you. As you have come here, you have come here to learn. You have come to learn how to beat our drums, and you snap our pictures, and you and we go all around our Dagbon. Whatever happens, your people at home will see our pictures. And they will tell you to come here again, and when you come, you will meet us. As you have been coming, if we are not able to get you what you came for, what do you think you will say? Or if we refuse to tell you what you want, what will you say when you get back home? You will be in shame. And your people at home will also say, "Oh, John has been going to these people all along! Well, it is their shame." And we too, we will also say, "We are in shame." And so, as you have come here to our Dagbon, if we also help you, it will be better. When you talk of us, you will say, "Yes, this is the type of people I met, and this is the type of wisdom they had."

Do you remember the first time you came here? At that time I was not sitting with you in the mornings, and when you used to play the drum in the morning, my son Alaasan and also Lun Zoo-Naa's son Alaasan Abukari would be playing the other drums, and you would be following them. You wanted to learn many dances, and your time to leave was also coming. One morning you became annoyed at the two Alaasans, when I was not there, because you did not think that they were trying to help you force the work. When you came to me that afternoon, we had a very long talk about how you were becoming confused and about how you were not having patience with the work. I gave you more advice inside that talk. Do you remember? Do you remember the advice that I gave you? As for that conversation, I have not forgotten it. As for that time, I can remember it well. I told you that you must be patient to learn this drumming, and you should not be unhappy with what you have been able to learn.

And what I told you from the first is this: a person's intention is within the heart, and whatever intentions you have within your heart are going to be what you achieve. Your worst thoughts are within your heart, and your best thoughts

are also within your heart. If you have bad intentions, you are going to achieve bad, but if you have good intentions, your achievements are going to be good. Your heart can get up and let you do wrong, and it is the same heart that will later tell you that you have done wrong, and your heart will let you go and beg the person you have done wrong to. And so if you want to have a good way of living, you should know that the only things you hold in this world to keep you going are your intentions within your heart.

And I told you that you should know one thing: if you open your mouth to speak, whether you are telling lies, it is within your heart; or if you are telling the truth, it is also within your heart. And no one can know except you yourself. You have all that within your heart. If you are telling lies, then you yourself know that you are telling lies. But if you are speaking the truth, then you know again that you are speaking the truth. And so it is your intentions in your heart that will keep you going in this world. The thing I want to tell you all the time is that anything you do that is good, you will be holding it. And if you do something bad, you will keep on holding that. That was what I told you at that time, and I am also telling you now.

And I gave you some advice that we are the right people ever to be unhappy with you, and if we are unhappy, you are rather the right person to beg us. The first time you came and you first greeted me, I saw you as a human being, and I liked you. That was all. I just saw you as a person interested in drumming, coming to learn drumming, just coming to seek the general idea of drumming and then go. And I took you to be a good person. A good person always befriends a good person. If you are a bad person and you go to befriend a good person, then whatever happens, by and by, you will become a good person. And so I wanted for you to be close to us and free with us. And so the first time you came, we did not know the character of one another. Truly, I had not taught anyone who is a foreigner except you. The only thing was that sometimes foreigners would come and say, "Drum, and I will tape," and I would drum, and they would tape and go. That was all. That was how I was doing it, and I was charging people, and they taped and went away. The first time that you came, I didn't think that you were going to beat the drum the way you are beating, and you came to beat more than even you expected. But the time I saw that you were serious was the time when you were going home, and you told me that I should try to get some talks before you came back. That was why I also did my best to go to learn more. All this I have told you already: it was not that at that time I was just annoyed with you.

There was a reason why I told you from the first that you should never be annoyed with us, and that you are always the right person to beg us. When you go to someplace and you need something from somebody, you should pretend as if

you don't know anything, and you should take yourself to be a fool, and then you will get what you want. If you have come to learn some work from somebody, no matter how you are, you have to train yourself to be a small boy so that your master can say anything that he wants to you. Look at where you are sitting here, right here now: maybe at your house you don't sit on this type of chair. But just because you want something from me, look at where you are sitting today. And so a lion from London, if he comes to the Northern Region here, he should take himself to be a cat. That is what I have, and I'm telling you.

And again, the reason why I was saying these things is that we Dagbamba have a promise that if we know you, then it is for sure that we know you. There is no time when we shall say that we don't know you again. If it comes to a time when we say we don't know you, then the problem has come from you: any talk that will let us say we don't know you again is from you. You see, I always remember the talks we have had and the things I have told you, because I am always interested that you should do your best. As you have come to me, you should know anything that you want to be able to do with the drum, and I have to be guiding you with it. And I will be adding to you. And truly, anybody at all who is going to read our book will know that when you came to Ghana you found a good friend like me in your work.

The drummer who is the chief of all the drummers in Dagbon is *Namo-Naa*, and every drummer calls *Namo-Naa* his grandfather. And some of these talks, I had them from *Namo-Naa* himself, and he said that I should talk them to you. When I told you that patience gets everything but annoyance will let you go where you don't want to go, all of it was also told to me by my grandfather *Namo-Naa*. And again, it was *Namo-Naa* who told me to ask you that if someone asks you to go to a strange place and get a fine meat or an important meat from the meat of a cow, which one would you choose? If they slaughter a cow, and someone asks you to choose the important two meats in the cow, you should choose the heart and the tongue. These are the good meats, and these are the bad meats. These two are the important meats. Why is it so? It is the heart which is the human being, and it is the tongue that does the work of the heart. How a human being is, if these two meats are spoiled, then all parts of a human being's body will also spoil. And if they are well, then all your body is well. When day breaks, the tongue tells the heart, "My friend, the day has broken, so be patient and be at one place. Sit well. If you don't sit well, and you spoil, we all spoil." When day breaks, all parts of a human body look at the heart. What my grandfather *Namo-Naa* told me, and I also told you, that is the real truth, that you should exercise patience, and you should have a good heart and a good tongue and know how to talk.

Maybe in the past, you didn't know that the heart and the tongue are the human being, but today you know. The heart and the tongue, they can let you to do something that is good, and they can also let you to do something that is bad. Without the tongue, you can't speak; without the heart you can't think, or you can't make any decision. The heart can think what is good and think what is bad, and the tongue can speak what is good and speak what is bad. And so if you want to get something good from a human being, then you have to watch the tongue. Something that you utter from your mouth, that will let you gain something and that will let you lose something. This is why I have been telling you from the first that the words that will come out from your mouth, it is the same words that can destroy you. Namon-Naa has told me much about the heart and the tongue, that they are the bad things and the good things.

The heart and the tongue, they are the most important things for the human being. If you don't know something, and you want to ask and find it out, if you don't get the heart, and you don't get the tongue, how will you get it? It is because of the thing you want that you traveled all the way to some place. And so however your heart is, you have to bring yourself down, and you have to reduce yourself to the one you are going to learn from. And then he too, he will bring all that is inside him and give you. And you will know it and benefit from it. It is the heart that will do all this.

It was Namon-Naa again who told me to tell you that the eyes can sleep, but the heart will not sleep. If a person is sleeping and dreaming, it is the heart that sees. And so the heart is the eyes. If a person is sitting, and it comes to a time when he becomes a blind person, his heart still knows where he can walk; if that blind person goes out, he knows the way to his house, and he knows the way to his room, and he knows how he can step inside his room. His heart is showing him. And again, the heart can sleep while the eyes are open. It can be so, because sometimes somebody can be speaking to you while you just open your eyes to him, but you are not listening to him. If I meet you outside, I can be looking at you, and my eyes have seen you, but my heart is not on you: my heart is looking at somewhere, and I can just come and pass you without greeting you, and you will be surprised. It is just that my heart is not looking at you. And so it is the heart that sees first before the eyes.

Truly, the heart is what is doing everything for human beings. It is the one that is doing bad and good, it decides to do this or do that. The eyes cannot decide for a human being. Namon-Naa told me all this, and about how to be careful in the world, how to stay with people, how to be respectable to people, and other talks, and these talks are some of the instructions I have been giving you in the drumming.

And so in our drumming, there is some relation between our drumming and the way of living we hold. The first time you came to learn the drum, if you were watching, when you came and sat down and then we came into an agreement, did you know that I could have refused to teach you the drumming? Take that as an example. With the money you had and with all your coming from America, and even though America is a far place, with all the work you would have been doing here, I could have refused all that, and I would not have taught you how to drum. But I considered one thing to teach you: respect. If you want to have a good way of living and you want to get respect, you also have to give respect.

As you are here now, everyone has come to tell me that I am the one you are living with here, and I am the only person you know here. As people have been saying that you and I are friends, if it comes to a time when they say that you and I are no longer friends, would it be good? It would not be good. If it is truth that begins friendship, then the friendship will not be left on the way. If it is lies that begin friendship, then the time the light will come into it, and if it is not that one of you dies, then it is the lies that will spoil the friendship. A time will come and you will be looking at one another's face and saying: "You see this man: at one time he was my friend, but now we don't talk to one another." And that one shows that the friendship started with lies. Nobody will ever be your true friend and later tell you he doesn't like you. If the truth is there, everything goes forward, and those who follow you will come and benefit from it. That is how it is.

I have a history for you: a future history, that is, a time-to-come talk. You and I are friends at present. As you have come here to learn drumming, you will take it back to your country. All the time we are remaining friends. And as you are living in the world, too, probably you will have a wife to be giving birth to children. And I have also got a wife to be giving birth to children. And it would come to a time when you are very old and I am very old, and it would come unfortunately to my death. By then, your children also know that you are a drummer. They will pick a day to come to Ghana. Maybe as you have left some history down that you have come to Tamale to learn drumming and other things, and this is the sort of person you met in Tamale who taught you the drumming, your children will read through your history about the time you came to Ghana, and they will say, "Oh, by now our father is old, so let us go back to Ghana and find the one who taught our father drumming." And when they come to Ghana, they will come straight to this Tamale here, and they will not meet me, and they will hear that I am no more there. And they will meet my children and explain to my children what they are about, and they will tell my children how they have heard about their father from their own father too, that they have come to see their

father's friend. Is it nice? Is it expanding the whole friendship or it is decreasing the whole friendship? It is expanding the friendship.

That is the reason why we don't promise and fail people. That is why I am living with you peacefully. I don't want to do you something bad so that you will be annoyed. If you go to a person to greet him, you come and greet this person, and if you are leaving from the person to your place and the person could not say goodbye to you, is it good? It is not good. If we are not patient to hold you, then you must be patient to hold us, and if you are not patient to stay with us, then we must be patient to stay with you. As you come to learn the drumming, whether it will make you rich, or it will make you happy, or it will take you to some place, or it will not take you to any other place, we don't know. Only you know, and that is why you have come to learn it. You know what you want to do with the drumming. And so I want for you and me, when it comes to the time when we are to separate from each other, or by the time you are old and I am also old, or by the time I am no more there, then it must be goodbye and not annoyance. That is how we Dagbamba are, how our character is, to be living with others.

And now, you have been with me for a long time, and everybody knows that we have been staying together nicely. The character you have brought to Dagbon, we the townspeople have seen it. And so you don't have to say that nobody knows you here. You have seen how our friendship has extended. The first time you went home and came back, the time when we were starting to talk more about the way of drumming in our Dagbon, you were living in Alhaji Iddi's house. As you were living there, it was because of whom you were living in that house? It was because of me. But was I here when they gave the room to you? When they handed the room to you and gave you the keys and everything for you to stay in it, was I around? The time when they handed the keys to you, I was not included. The time you arrived, you came to us to tell Alaasan that you had not got a place at the rest house, and so you were struggling for a place to sleep. At that time, I knew nothing about where you were sleeping. I was out, and I came back. Alhaji Iddi calls me as his uncle, and Iddi came to me and said, "My uncle, your friend has come, but he has not got a place to sleep, and so I have given him a room in my house. As he is your friend, and he has no place to sleep, we are supposed to give him a place to sleep. So I've given a room to him." That was how Iddi came to me and talked. By then I asked Iddi, "Are you hiring the room to my friend?" And he said no, he was not hiring the room to you to live there, that you can stay there, and any time at all, when you are leaving, you can give him something or you can just go and not give him something, and it doesn't matter. And then Iddi told me that your food and the water for you to be bathing, all of it would be in his

hands. And Iddi said that he told Alaasan to tell you that everything you need, your food, your bathing, you have to tell him, Iddi. This is friendship.

I want you to know that everywhere you go in this Dagbon, wherever Dagbamba are living, they send to inform me about what you are doing. Wherever you go, people are chasing you. They can pick you out easily. As you are all the time beating the drum, during market days when they are passing by, they are just looking at you, and they can remember you any time. Whatever village you have been to, they also know you very well, and they know that you are from me; and so everything that you need, they have to give you. And it is just because of me that they will give you like that. They won't tell you about all this, but they will always send to tell me. And so truly, I want you to know that the Dagbamba are happy with you. The Dagbamba are very happy about how you are beating the drum. They take it that I am a patient person to show you how to drum, and they know that I am somebody who is holding close to our drumming way. If it had been somebody else teaching you, maybe they would take it that he has nothing to do, and that is why he is showing you how to drum. But I have got a lot of respect in drumming, and I am showing you the respect of drumming. Even those drummers I am sitting with, some of them are forcing you to play, and when they are going around to drum, they want you to be included, and when you follow them and go, they won't let you leave because they want you to learn. And I can tell you that those who are my friends, and all of my elders in this drumming, every one of them is happy about the work we are doing. Among our Dagbamba proverbs there is one which says that an elderly person will never be in the house, and they will spread the corn in the yard and rain will beat it. And Dagbamba say again that the place they love you, that is where you go and start pushing down things. If you go there and start pushing down things, they only laugh. But the place they don't like you, even if you go there and do a good thing there, it is a bad thing to them. And I am praying that may God let us work and then for you to succeed in anything that you want to get in the north of Ghana here.

As you have come to the north, if you are not happy in the north, then you cannot stay here. I am praying that you will enjoy this town and maybe you will stay here forever. Whatever you get here, you will get it because of us. You left your country and you said that you were coming because of us, and so if you meet bad luck, you meet it because of us, and if you meet good luck, you meet it because of us. And when you come here and meet something that is good, it is good for all of us. As it is because of us that you have got good luck, we are only wishing that when you leave here, you will be healthy, and we will also have health. And I am also praying to God that if you get what you want and go home, you will also arrive home safely to meet your brothers and fathers at home. And

so the way you sit and talk to me, I'm happy. And the way I also sit and talk to you, I'm also happy. If you swallow my talks into your stomach, and I also swallow what you tell me, it will be good for all of us. As for the hand, when it gets something, it won't refuse to give it to the mouth. May God help all of us to achieve what we want. Any work at all you want to do, you have to give trust in God, and so we pray to God that he should help us to have one mouth among ourselves to do the work successfully. If we do that, God will never disgrace us.

You have been with me as a friend for a long time. And truly, I'm coming to realize that the relationship between you and me, it is God who put it down. At first, I thought I was alone, and now I have come to realize I am with you, and what is good for you is also good for me. From this place to America is very far. And you have been able to come, and you have come here because of me. If our friendship were not good, would you have been coming back all the time? You wouldn't have come. And so as you are coming, I am very, very happy about it. Whatever you are looking for, by the grace of God, we will be able to get it for you. And so I'm very, very happy; truly, it is very sweet for me. And so may God give all of us long life. I'm talking the truth to you. This talk is the foundation of our work. If you are coming to build a room, and you don't make a good foundation, can you put up the building? And so the talk that I am giving you now, I'm taking it to be the foundation of the whole thing. If the foundation is strong, then what you put on top will stand. Truly, I am happy that you have come back, and we are going to start this work. And so how I am talking to you, I am just reminding you about what I talked to you in the past, that our friendship has come to a point where we are able to sit together, and I will take the talks of drumming and show them to you.

Truly, as for our Dagbamba drumming and how we are holding it in Dagbon here, I want you to know that as for salt, you don't need to praise salt, because everybody knows that salt is good. Seeing is believing. In Dagbon here, that is how drumming is. But if you want to gain anything in this world, you have to show the sort of work that you can do. And if you don't gain anything, it also comes from the sort of work that you do. And so if you are doing some work and that work is only in your house, no one will praise you. But look: you are doing work, and it happens that you have come out with the work, and someone has come to see the sort of work that you are doing, and he feels that it's very good, and he invites some people to come and also see the sort of work that you are doing. It means that truly, what you are doing is very good on the part of your work. And you too, you have come from far away, and you have called us that we should come and do something for you on the part of our drumming. What we say, you agree to it, and what you also say, we also agree with you. If we don't

agree with you, that is what God does not want. It would mean that we have cheated you. But I have seen all of your problems and our problems to be the same.

And so we agree with you. But on the part of this book, you are going to show us what we are to do and our work will be nice. If you don't do that, and you alone are doing your part, our hands will not be inside. Whatever be your aim or your belief that you can do it or you cannot do it, it doesn't matter. Don't do the thing and come and say, "I have done the work and it's not good." It is you who knows this work of writing; you will be telling us. That is the very necessary part of it. And it is good. As for a group talk, this one will bring his idea, the other one will bring his idea, and you will make comparison to see how everything is going to work out. It is the best way for us. And it will be good if we follow it like that. That is how it is. The one who gives you the medicine for your sickness, has he not bought the sickness? He has bought it. This is the way it is. And so the way we are starting with this work, truly, it is making me feel happy that everything is going to be all right. It's very nice that this work has come, and the way we are coming to put it up is nice.

And so what is necessary? It is good that we start our talks, and I'm going to talk Dagbamba talks to you and I'm going to talk the talks of drumming. And I want to tell you that if you want to plan for the morning, you have to start planning in the evening for the next day's morning. As for a dance that dances all night, you have to dance it coolly. There is no need to be in haste. You have to start slowly, slowly, until you reach the full time of the dance, or else you can't get to even a few hours and you will be tired. If you have something big inside the room and you want to carry it outside, you have to go outside and ask somebody to help you carry it. If you try to carry it in the room, you can't go through the door. You will unpack it and get the things and take them outside before you can put them all on your head. And so we will pack the things together, and we will carry them. And God should help us to carry the work. This is a big talk inside our work. The way I am talking, it looks like party politics. I am not playing politics with you. I am only telling you the truth. If you are coming to set up a party for the government, and you don't come out to make a campaign, how can you win the election? Nobody will know about you. If you are going to war, and you haven't yet fought the war, they cannot yet give you a name for what you did in the war. When they count those who have done great things in the war, they won't mention your name. And again, when someone dies, you don't leave the dead person in the house and go to another house to cry. And so what I am telling you is this: the thing that is worrying you is what you look after; you don't look into any other matter.

As I am sitting, I am a drummer. And I want you to know that truly, it is someone's work that holds him. When I was given birth as a drummer at Voggo, they showed me in our drumming that it isn't every son of a paramount chief who becomes a paramount chief. And they showed me that a Nanumba has never been a paramount chief of the Dagbamba, but the son of a Dagbamba paramount chief has become the chief of the Nanumbas. His name was *Ijmantambu*. And they showed me again that a Mamprusi has never been a paramount chief of the Dagbamba, but the son of a Dagbamba paramount chief has become the chief of the Mamprusis. The son of a Dagbamba chief who became the chief of the Mamprusis was called *Tohigu*, and his praise-name is *Yeltabli gari kpani*. The meaning of that name is "It is better that they throw spears at you than they tell lies about you." It was inside my drumming that I learned this. And so I am telling you that our drumming is a serious thing in Dagbon here. We don't joke with it. It is drummers who know our tradition. And the talks of drumming that I will take and talk to you, some of them are hidden, and some of them are forbidden.

Here, after the *Ramadan* fast, drummers in a town go to the chief's house and drum until daybreak. When they go there, the chief has to slaughter a cow, and he will give a white gown and a white hat to the drummer who is in front of the drummers, and the chief will give money, too. But it is the chief who holds the drummers and has power over them. Why do you think he gives gifts and money? He gives because the drummer has told him a lot of hidden things that were laid down in the past. The chief is not a drummer, and he doesn't know all these things. If the chief doesn't give the drummer all these things, then either the chief or the drummer will be in trouble: what is forbidden does not walk; it is waiting. And so this work we drummers are working, it is not a joke. And because of all this, we are always afraid to talk details about many things. Some of the talks of drumming, before you will even open your mouth to talk about them, there are some sacrifices you will make. As I am a drummer, I know the tradition and the custom, but if you are a drummer, and if there is a charge or a sacrifice before you can tell this thing or that thing to an outsider who is not from the tribe, and you want to tell him to buy animals and do all the things, he will probably say that you want to cheat him.

Namo-Naa is the chief of all the drummers in Dagbon, and when we went to Yendi to greet Namon-Naa, do you remember what he told you? He told you that drumming adds respect to everything in Dagbon here. Drumming is a big thing in our chieftaincy, and without drummers, chieftaincy has no respect. The chief respects the drummer, and the drummer respects the chief. It is an exchange of respect: whatever the chief pushes to you, you will also push it to him. The chief

has no way to force a drummer to do anything, and no one has ever sold a drummer, and no one has ever brought a charge against a drummer at the chief's court. We drummers started in chieftaincy, and so drumming is not a slavery thing: drumming is a chieftaincy thing.

And Namo-Naa told you that everyone in Dagbon respects drumming. Drumming adds respect to a respectable person. And any woman who has wealth or has respect, drumming adds to her. When the *Damba* moon appears, drumming adds respect to the Damba Festival. If the moon appears for the Ramadan fast, it is drumming that adds respect to it, and when the Ramadan moon dies and we celebrate the Praying Festival, it is drumming that adds respect to the prayers. If it is the Fire Festival, it is drummers who will start it. In a wedding house or a funeral house, it is drumming that adds respect again. And what Namo-Naa told you is this: without drumming, no one in Dagbon can show himself to be somebody. And so this drumming is our work, and our eyes are strong in it. No one is forcing us to do it. We are doing it for ourselves. Without drumming, there would be no respect in Dagbon. And so drumming is a big thing.

And so what you and I are doing, it is something serious. If people outside were to know all of what I am telling you, they would abuse me. In these modern times, there is no trust in anybody. Even if you gave me thousands of cedis, it would not be worth the abuse they would throw on me. That is why I said that it is better they throw spears at you than they tell lies about you. If you like, you should go to the chief of this town and ask him to give you one of his drummers to talk to you about the ways of Dagbon. When that drummer comes, he won't tell you anything. If you offer him thousands of cedis, he will say, "I am not ready to tell you anything about our tradition which you can take back to your country." Someone from outside who doesn't know about our work, this is what he will say. And what I am talking to you, if you take it and tell such a drummer, he will say, "Oi! Who has taught you this? He has shown our culture." If our talks get out like that, people will be coming to me and telling me not to teach you again. They will even try to stop me from teaching you, and they are going to blame me for the plain fact that I am telling you something about our culture which you will take to your country. Already you know that there are people here who are telling me this. But there are others who say I should teach you.

I'm not playing politics with you. I want you to know that it is my heart that is telling me to work with you. As you have come, I am happy with what I have been telling you. And I will be happy to tell you all that I know. All the money you can give me has nothing to do with this, because after all, money finishes. I just want you to be happy so that we will do something that will let people say, "Oh, those people, in fact, their friendship is truly friendship." Truly,

my friends and I are always praying for you to overcome all your problems, and it is just because you are my best friend. That is why they are praying for you in your work. And so today I am talking to you about friendship. If there are some Dagbamba who will say I have done bad by showing you the traditions of Dagbon, I don't care. Not everybody can like a person. As I have been watching you all along, truly, I see that you are someone who has patience. How you have come to follow me and learn drumming, you have come to suffer the same suffering I suffer. And the work we are doing, I can see that you want it. You came and you came back and came back, and if you didn't want it, by now you would have run away.

And so I want you to know that I am not someone who follows "They have said." There are people in town here who are abusing me, saying that I am selling our tradition. If I were to be following what they say, I would not teach you anything. Everyday it would be hearsay. If I heard something outside, I would come and ask you, and you would be surprised. You would say, "Ah! Who has told this man such a thing?" At that time, you wouldn't see your work again. But you have come from far away. And I am sitting with my wisdom in my house. And so I want to tell you that Dagbamba say, "If they call you a monkey, you should let your tail be long." As they are calling you a fool, you should make yourself a fool. Our Dagbamba say again, "Two wise men cannot sit together, but a wise man and a foolish man can gather." If you go to look for wisdom, you shouldn't say you hear too much. If you say that, you won't get what you want. And if you say you see too much, you won't get what you want. And you shouldn't say that no one will cheat you. There is no one in this world who doesn't cheat. What you want to happen, if you want it to be, then you must be cheated at least a little bit before you get it. The time you come to know that someone is cheating you, if you say it, that is the time you can no longer get what you want from him. And so when you see that people are cheating you, you shouldn't say that they are cheating you. If you want to gain, you should pretend, and you should make yourself deaf and blind, and make yourself a fool, and I will be cheating you. If you do that, then I will not listen to hearsay. If I listen to "They have said," it will spoil our friendship. If you say you are too wise, and I also listen to hearsay, our friendship will break. Have you ever watched dogs playing? When you watch dogs playing, you will see that one will fall one way and get up, and the other will fall the other way and get up. One will jump and the other will fall, and you will see one trying to kill the other. In a moment the other will jump and the one will fall. And so Dagbamba say, "Fall here and fall there: that makes the playing of dogs to be nice." Without "I fall and you fall," dogs cannot play.

And now we are coming to talk all the talks about our Dagbon custom and our tradition here. And how am I going to talk all this? I have to think and know how I am going to plan the talks. When I get home and sit down and think, I will know the better talks to be bringing to you. As you have asked me to come and we will start this work, I have come and started with proverbs. And how I have talked, I think it has fallen well. Sometimes somebody can sit down and tell you a story about something that has never happened or tell you some talk about something that nobody has heard about before, and there will be nothing deep underneath it. As he has talked and told you a story, the story does not hold sense. To us, we even say that the story is a deceiving talk, or lies. But how proverbs are, they can even enter stories, and there will be truth inside. As I have told you a story about a dwarf, we have been hearing about dwarfs but none of us has seen a dwarf: but there are some things that happen the same way as that, and that is why that talk is standing. If you ask any elderly Dagbana, he will tell you that as for the dwarf's story, there is a lot of evidence supporting it. And so if somebody gives a proverb to talk something, he can bring that story to make you understand what he is talking about. And if you ask any typical Dagbana, he will tell you that he knows something about it, unless of course, someone who doesn't know much about the customs and traditions of Dagbon. And so it's not a lie; it comes under truth.

And how I am separating this talk for you, you should know that if I want to talk about true things, and if I want to talk and it will be true, then I have to talk proverbs. In Dagbon here, it is proverbs a person takes to do work. And so if I want our work to be the work of truth, I will have to start with proverbs. Truly, we have many proverbs in our Dagbani, and proverbs have meanings, and so I think that proverbs will be good for our work. Proverbs will make our work move forward. I don't know if you are really someone who can hear proverbs or whether you will find it difficult if I am giving you proverbs. I want you to know that it is proverbs that hold truth more than anything, but as for the truth of proverbs, no one explains it. If somebody gives you a proverb and you don't understand, you don't have to ask the meaning of the proverb. You have to get a time to sit and think so that you will know why that person has given that proverb to you. And so I will start and we will see. And because we are starting, how I have taken it, I am giving you examples. I will say a proverb and explain it, and you will be listening. And so I want to tell you some Dagbamba proverbs to add to our today's talk.

We have a proverb that says, "People have been asking of you." Do you know its meaning? It has two meanings. Someone can ask of you with a good intention, and someone can ask of you with a bad intention. Someone can ask of

you that they need you for good, and someone can ask of you that they need you for bad. And so when you hear, “People are asking of you,” you should know that it can be good or bad. And we say again, “What will let a hyena and a monkey meet?” That is a praise-name of one of the Savelugu chiefs. He was *Savelugu-Naa Shiru*; that is how we call *Seidu* in Dagbani. He was a son of *Naa Siyli*. Do you know the meaning of it? In Dagbon here, a hyena does not walk in the daytime; it walks at night. And a monkey does not walk in the night, and so it will not meet with a hyena. And the reason why I’m telling you this proverb is that you are a white man and I am a black man. And what has brought us together now? We have come together because we want it that way. If we didn’t want it, we wouldn’t have come together. That is why I’m telling you, “What will let a hyena and a monkey meet?” A hyena doesn’t walk in the day and a monkey doesn’t walk in the night, but when they have a purpose, they can come together, not to fight but because they want it. And Dagbamba have another proverb that says “If you have a benefit in something bad, you can find the way to separate the benefit from the bad thing.” Then it will become a good thing to you.

As I am saying these proverbs and showing their meanings, do you understand what I am telling you? I am telling you why we are all in a group. It could be that you should fear me and I should fear you, but now we are together and we don’t fear one another. What has brought us together? That is the meaning of the proverbs. I was telling you that if someone should ask of you, he could ask of you for a good thing or a bad thing. Can you remember the first time you came? You came and you asked, and you said you wanted those who beat the drum. When they brought you to me, it could have been that you wanted to do bad, but today you are benefiting from me because you asked of me. And if there was something bad inside it, you have separated the good thing from the bad. And we Dagbamba say again, “When they put a lion among sheep, the lion will become a sheep.” There are two ways a lion can be put among sheep: either the lion is forced to mix with the sheep, or the lion wants it so. It is just like how we blacks and whites mix. Formerly, some of the whites used to come here because they were forced to come, and some of them used to come here because they wanted to come. And when we come together, don’t we fear one another? There is fear. There are still some places here where you will go and you will see people running away, saying “The white man is coming! The white man is coming!” But we are here and we are sitting together, and there is no fear. And as there was fear, when we stay together, don’t we become one? Are we not one now? We are one now, and we are benefiting from one another.

And we say, “Friendship has no end,” and we say again, “Friendship increases.” Today, my brothers, my uncles, my nephews, my children, and my

grandchildren, all of them, when they see you, they all like you because when they see you they see a friend. And my relatives who don't know you, if they see you today, they will say, "This is the man our father is teaching how to play the drum." They will have interest in you. And I too, if I follow you to America, your people will have interest in me, whether they know me or not. Truly, if you go to any place here and beat a drum, and people see you drumming, they will say, "This is what Ibrahim has taught this man, and now he's doing it." And if it is that any of my relatives or any drummers who have passed under me are there, the moment you start and you begin to beat any dance, whether *Takai* or *Damba* or *Baamaaya*, they will know that it is I who taught you how to play. They will greet you, and maybe you didn't know them. But when they show themselves to you, hasn't it added to the friendship? It has added. And even up to the time when I am no more there and you are no more there, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will remember that their grandfather had a friend and his friend was such-and-such a person. If they come together, won't they greet one another very well? They will greet. What has brought that? It is friendship. Everything has an end, but friendship has no end.

And we say again, "Friendship brings family." Inside our drumming, we got to know that one time there was a chief who used that as a praise-name. Do you know where Gbulun is? It's between Tolon and Kumbungu. There is a small village under Gbulun called Jizaa; and that chief was Gbulun Jizaa-Naa Abudu. We heard of him, but we didn't meet him. He was praised with "Friendship brings family." With us Dagbamba, if you have a friend you like very much, you don't mind taking your daughter and giving her to your friend, and it's just the same as if you have given your whole heart to your friend. And when you give your daughter to your friend, and he either marries her himself or he gives her to his son to marry, what have you become? You have become family. And so friendship is senior to birth, and it is friendship that brings birth. It is through friendship you will give your child to a man and he will bring forth children with her, and by then you have become family.

And it is through friendship that you will teach your friend sense, and the sense you give to your friend, your child will see it. As your child has been seeing, he knows that this fellow is his father's friend. If it happens that you die, if your child has sense, he will say, "This talk that was with our father, we don't know it. But our father trusted his friend. If we go to ask his friend, we will hear it." And so if a person dies, and it comes to the time that the children want to know something about their father, they have to go and find their father's closest friend. And so the children have to give respect and be with their father's friend the same way they were with their father. At that time, maybe the friend will tell

them, “Truly, I know something like this about your father.” And so a child will take his father’s friend to be his father, and that friend will also take the child to be his son. We have seen this happening here. Don’t you have such things at your home? I think so.

And so friendship brings family, and I can even say that friendship is sweeter than family. If you want to follow it again, you should take your eyes and look at the friendship between a husband and wife. They were not born together, but a woman and a husband love each other more than they love a child or the father or the mother. The conversation you have with your wife in your room, you will never tell it to anyone. Your wife will love you more than your mother or your father loves you. What makes it so? Were you all brought forth on the same day? It is friendship.

In Dagbon here, our drumming tradition is something that moves inside our families, and so as I am teaching you, if it is according to the way of the tradition, how we are staying now and you are following me, it looks like family. As you have come here, have you got a relative here? Even as there are white men here, can you get a white man who is from the same town as you? And are you not here with us? As we are here, are we not staying as a family? But I want you to know that in Dagbon here, friendship is senior to family, and friendship is more than family. If you want to befriend someone, you don’t necessarily befriend a relative. And how work is, you don’t work with your family just because of family. You don’t do work with the same person with whom you were given birth just because you were given birth with him. It is watching you will watch: you have to watch the person you work with. If I am going to take my father’s son, my mother’s son, and my own son to work together, we are not going to benefit from the work. That is how work is. And so friendship: the friendship between us, and how we have tried to come together and stay as one, that is more than anything.

And so I want you to try, and you should think in your heart things that I have not yet told you, and you should think that I am telling you those things. Why is it so? Sometimes you might be with someone in a friendship way. Your friend might sometimes think to tell you something, and you already know it. You know it not because of anything. It’s just that he has given all of himself to you. As he is giving himself freely to you, it is good for you to think and give yourself to him. And by then, he will know that the good thoughts he has got in his heart, they are the very thoughts in your heart, too. And so the talks I have talked to you already, I think in my heart that to you yourself, they are good. And the talks I have yet to talk to you, they are also good. That is why I am telling you that what you are thinking in your heart about the talks I am talking, it should be good thoughts, and it will come to enter my thoughts. I am saying this because this

drumming of ours, we have seen that it is good, and we know it. And you are also good. And if you follow it like this, you will see that our work will benefit you. Our Dagbamba say, “Good thoughts, good thoughts: they do good work.”

Why is it so? If you come to this work and you don't have good thoughts in your heart, you are going to learn it very badly. And if I also don't have good in my heart, when we do any work together, it won't be good. If we want to do the work together without patience, and we do the work with bad heart, we are not going to achieve any good work. And so if you bring any bad heart or any bad character when you are learning these talks, it will be good that I cool myself. And if I try to bring any bad heart talks, you should also be patient and cool yourself. Just some days ago, the first time you asked me to come and talk to you, I didn't come. The next day you asked me again, and I didn't come. As I didn't come, you were still coming to me to greet me every day. How is it that you have been learning something from someone, and the fellow didn't come to you twice, and you are still coming to him? If I am going to call you something, what will I call you? I will call you a fool. And you will be thinking that you are following me because your heart wants you to follow me. But I have not called you a fool. And I have not shown any bad character to you. I have only told you I will come. And now you actually see me coming. What makes it so? It is the same wish of the heart. It is our wishes that have come together. And so it will be good if we do work and I go home, even if the work is small, it will be good for you. And here is the case: I have disappointed you and you didn't blame me. If I talk to you and my talks come to disappoint you, you should take patience and take your good heart, and the good that is inside my talks, you should remove it from the bad. And if you bring good heart like that, even if the work is small, it will be good for you, and it will help you.

Truly, I think in my heart that what we are doing will benefit us. To me, this drumming work has been benefiting me. How could it not benefit me? It was through drumming that my father married my mother and gave birth to me. It is through this drumming that I have worked and I have got wives. I myself was a bachelor, and I came to have wives. I have been married to seven women, and I divorced three of them, and one of them died, and now I have three wives. It was the respect of drumming that let me get these wives. I can tell you that women praise us drummers that we have respect. When a woman is going to sing, she says, “I want to marry a drummer; a drummer is a respectable person.” That is how we started, and that is how our respect is. And it is through this drumming that people have befriended me. Ashantis have befriended me. Frafras and Kasenas and all the people we call Gurunsis have befriended me. White men have befriended me. And the black men who have befriended me have no end; you

cannot count them. If drumming had not been good, do you think they would have befriended me?

And so I am telling you that it is a great work that you have got. And it is a hard work that you have got. Drumming is like a lion that is lying down and you have come to hold it. As you are holding the lion, you would not like to let it go. You won't want to let it go because you will be thinking that if you let it go, it will catch you. And as you are holding it, too, you are afraid. You don't know that as you are holding it, truly, that is better than letting it go. And so drumming is like that. It has got a lot of things. If you learn it and you don't learn it well, you are not going to benefit. But if you learn it well, you won't want to let it go again. There is no day when you will want to put it down and leave it. This is what God has taught me, and I will show you. And so you, too, you should also try. If you try and you can follow only a little of what I am saying, it will help you.

And what I want: it is good when you come to learn something, and there is someone behind you learning it too. When you come and see us drumming for a Takai dance, you see small children playing and you see old men playing. As we have big men's graves in the cemetery, we have small boys' graves. Why do I say that? If you are doing something in this world, you don't want what you are doing to die off. But as for a human being, a human being doesn't know today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow. And so you should find a way to take what you are doing and teach it to others. It would be good that as you have come here, the next time you would come with some young people. They would say, "Oh! When John is going, we will also go, and see, and learn what he is doing." By then you will see that you will be happy. And we will also be happy. But our happiness is not going to be as much as your happiness. Why is it so? A single finger cannot lift a stone. But when the fingers group together, they can pick up a stone. If you are going to learn something and it is something that you will learn into details, it is good when someone learns it with you. A person should not go to look for wisdom alone.

And so if you come the next time, it will be good if you come along with someone. Or if you achieve what you want and you go home, you should get someone to follow you in the work. And that fellow should be as patient as you, and as foolish as you, and as blind as you, and as deaf as you. If you come again, you should come along with him. If you bring that fellow here and you all learn, when you get home, if you forget something, he can remind you; if he forgets something, you can remind him. You can ask your friend, "When we went to learn this thing, and that thing happened, what did our teacher say about it? I have forgotten." And your friend will tell you, "Oh, this is the way he talked about it." And again, there is shyness: sometimes if you are alone and you forget, you will

feel shy to go back and ask your teacher again. If you are two, you won't feel shy to ask your friend, and it will be sweet for you. That is the benefit of being two together. Truly, it will even be better if you bring more than one person. If you have three people coming to learn something and you have one person coming to learn, which is going to be better to do the work? The three people, if they come and are taught, they can understand it faster and better than the one person. If you are alone and you are not clever, you will not learn much. If you forget something, you have truly forgotten it. But if you are three, and two are clever, they will remind the one who is not clever. And if one of them forgets something, the others will remind him. But if you are alone, when you've forgotten, then you've forgotten all. As you've forgotten, what are you going to do? Whom are you going to ask? All your suffering will have become useless. And so it is good, if you are going to do work, you do it in a group. There is benefit in a group. In Dagbani, we used to say that one person cannot do something that will be nice. It is togetherness that is nice.

It is good if you are going to do work, you go there yourself first. As you have entered into it once, then you go to enter it a second time. And by then you should have sense: you should say, "Ah! This thing I'm learning, it seems I'm now getting it. I should get someone to follow me and see how it is." Our Dagbamba say that a single person does not see witch-fire. If there is witch-fire in the trees and you see it, you have to call your friend so that he will also see it. If you tell your friend what you have seen, it is better if your friend also comes and sees for himself. If you were talking lies, he will see it; and if you were talking truth, he will see it. And so if you get someone to follow you and travel here, it will be very sweet. All that you have told him about what we are showing you, he will see it. It was his ear that heard, and it will come to his eye that has seen. Eye-seeing and ear-hearing: which is more than the other? Eye-seeing is better than ear-hearing.

When someone follows you and learns what you have learned, then your work is not going to die any day. Even if you yourself die tomorrow, those you have taught will be there holding all the wisdom that is in the work. And even if you like, you can send that fellow to come in your place while you remain behind to be teaching others who are there. Why would you do that? Maybe you will die and not be there again, and those you are teaching have not yet got what you are teaching them. No one there can teach them as you have been teaching them. If you cook food and you give the best part to someone to eat, no matter how he eats it, it will not be sweet for him. Why is it so? He has not cooked it. That is why our Dagbamba say, "Those who have come first are lucky, and those who are behind should think." As you were the first to come to me, what you have learned

from me, no one else coming to me is going to learn more than you. I can tell you that in the whole of America, you have fifty states, and there was no one learning this drumming before you came. The first time you came and went back, you came a second time and went back, and you came a third time. The first time is the time you benefited most, because the first time is bringing all the later ones. If you had not come the first time, none of the other times would have followed. If you are coming again, and you come with someone, do you think that fellow can know all that I have taught you? And so anyone who follows you here, he will also think. When he comes to enter this work, and he sees for himself how this drumming is, he will eat and fall inside the soup. And if he thought that our drumming is not a serious thing, by then he will know. And when that fellow comes and learns, and he adds himself to us here, it is not going to add to us alone: it is going to add to you, and it is going to extend your work. And so if you get to your country, you should try to get a friend and come along with him here. If you do that, it will add to all of us.

As I am telling you this, you yourself already know that we have got a lot of things in our drumming. In this Dagbon, no matter how big you are, where a drummer will go, you cannot go there. If a chief is going to a town, and you are a drummer following him to that town, where the chief is entering is where you are also entering. If only you put your drum in your armpit, you will enter. But some of the chief's followers will not enter because they don't have drums. And as we travel and go to places, sometimes we go and enter where educated people cannot enter. And anywhere we are, those who are Dagbamba will want us to know that they are Dagbamba. Anywhere we go, people like us — men, women and children. When we go to places, you will see a lot of women having interest in us, and you will see small children running around and saying, "The drummers are in! The drummers are in!" Even before we get to a place, it is the children and the women who will bring themselves to us and meet us on the way coming. We drummers have a lot of respect with people, and it is just because of our drumming and the way our grandfathers lived.

As you yourself are here, everybody knows you because of your drumming. Don't you see that some of these small children, they don't even know you but they call you by your name? It is because you play the drum. Whenever they see you playing the *gungɔŋ* or the drum, they like it. How do they come to know you? You will be beating a drum somewhere, and they will gather. And one of them will say, "Hey! Who is this man?" And one will answer, "It's Mr. John! He has been in town for a long time, and it's through Alhaji Ibrahim that he learned this drum." And so at that time the first one has known your name. The next time you are passing, he says, "Hey, Mr. John! How are you?" Then a small child sitting

by him will say, “Do you know him?” And he doesn’t know you, but he will say “Yes, I know him! Very well! He is a drummer!” “Is that so?” “Yes! How he can drum!” Then the next time, that one will also see you and say, “Hey Mr. John, how are you?” Then you will say “Fine.” And that is how they all have come to know you because of your drumming. That is the respect of drumming you have been seeing.

And so this work we are doing, you shouldn’t let it be useless. You should find a way to add people to yourself. If you bring somebody or you send somebody, it will be good. If you have a child and the child has been going out and coming back alone, and there has never been any single child following him back to the house, then you only have one child. But if your child goes out and comes back to the house with a friend, then at that point you have to know that you have two children. And so if you are writing, and your writing comes to reach others and they hear what you say, it will be good. And if they also follow your steps and come here, it will be good. But if you don’t add others to your work, then it will be a useless work, and it will not benefit you. Wisdom is in a group, and I have seen that a group is good. I know this, and that’s why I’m telling you something about it. With us Dagbamba, we blame a person who has something and doesn’t want his friend to have it. If you look for wisdom and you get it, and you don’t want anyone to know it, what have you become? You have become a selfish person. If you are going home, are you going to lock yourself in a room or are you going to go outside and teach people? Sometimes I think that maybe you will lock yourself in a room to write it, and that is because you come here alone. As you are moving alone, maybe you are coming to learn alone. And so don’t get wisdom and lock yourself into a room.

And so I am reminding you: when you came first, you came alone; and now you see that you want your work to extend. And this work of my talking has now come. And so hold this our work well. Maybe your people at home have seen that it is helping you, and they also see that it is interesting. By all means, some of them will be following you to learn it and see what is inside drumming. At that time I will realize that anything that I am teaching you, you are putting it into practice. And those who follow you, they should also think. How our drumming is, and how we take it to live with people, you should know that if you want to do work in front of people, you shouldn’t tie your face. You should be laughing and smiling, and you will get them. You can’t take hot water to cook somebody, but you can take cold water and cook somebody very easily. And so those who are behind you, when they come, even if they don’t know how to laugh, you should tell them to open their mouth and we will see their teeth. This is what we want. You should tell them to look at how you are. When you pass anywhere, people

say, “John, John, John!” You are always smiling and laughing. This is the way we want.

And if it happens that someone comes to follow you, and he does not have good heart and he does not have good character, it doesn't matter. You will show your work to him, and you will come to see that he is not good. It doesn't matter. It won't spoil your work. You can be walking and holding your money, and it will fall into some shit along the road: if you remove it and take water and wash it and make it fine and take it along, and no one is going to know, it doesn't matter. You can still use that money to get what you want, and you can still give it to someone to let him get what he wants. That is your wealth. You don't have to say that because it has fallen into shit, you won't put your hand there; if you leave it inside, you have lost it. And so you shouldn't be discouraged. It is patience which has helped you up to now, and it is patience you should be holding if you want to benefit from this work. Patience gets everything.

And so I want to tell you today and you will know that to do good is very, very good. If you do something bad and it comes out plainly, then anything good you want to do will not work again. If they say, “Someone's bad work has sent away his good work,” then it means that truly that person is a bad person. If not that, how can bad works send away good works? But if you come and you do good, then if you do bad, the good you did will cover the bad. You yourself, the first time you came and my son Alaasan was teaching you how to beat the *gungon*, sometimes you used to have small quarrels with him. And I saw that you were never annoyed. If someone is annoyed, if you are not wise, you will not know, but if you are wise and someone is annoyed, you will know. And I saw that any time some quarrel came between you and Alaasan, you were never annoyed. If it was something that was going to be difficult inside your work, you would just come to me and tell me about it. And I was always surprised that you still wanted the work. Truly, if a stranger is not a bad person, then the townsman cannot be annoyed with a stranger. The problem you were having with Alaasan, you didn't keep it in your heart. You just forgot about it. And I also forgot about it. I just took it that you were someone with patience. Truly, patience is in the heart. If you hear people saying that someone has patience, it means he has got good character. And what is character? Character too is the heart. If you had not had good in your heart toward the work or if you didn't have good in your heart toward us, you wouldn't have learned drumming, because we wouldn't have had time for you. And when you came the second time, and the third time, it showed that truly, you were having a good heart toward us, and that was your good character you were showing us. That is why you are enjoying now. Because of

good character, if you come here as a stranger, you can live nicely here without any problem.

And so if you are a human being and you get up, you should hold good character. It is inside good character that you will get benefits in this world and in the next world, too. If you hold good character, it is inside this good character you will get to know people. If you have good character, it is inside it you will get money. If you are a chief's son and you have good character, it is inside it that you will get chieftaincy. If you have good character, what you would not get, you will get it. Even if you don't want something, because of your good character someone will take it and give it to you. Maybe it's not that you don't want it. We can't get all that we want. But maybe you didn't know about something or you didn't think that you could get such a thing, and someone will give it to you. It will seem that you don't want it, but he will give it to you. That is how it is, and I am sure you have been seeing it in the world. It is from God. Sometimes you will not have the idea of giving something to someone, and the fellow will also not have the idea that you will give him anything. Because of the good work or good character of that fellow, you may sometimes sit down and say, "Oh, this fellow is doing good to me. Let me give him something." And then you will get something which that fellow will not expect, and you will give it to him. It isn't anything which brings this. It is good character.

If you have good character, those you do good to will be praising you because of your good work. If you have good character and you do something good in Tamale here, it can travel to Accra or Kumasi. How? Maybe a Kumasi person will come to you and you will do him good; when he goes home to talk about it, maybe there will be an Accra man sitting by him. This Accra man doesn't know you; he only hears your name. When he also goes home, he will say, "Oh, they are talking good of such-and-such a person." If you are a chief's son and you have good character, if some chieftaincy falls, maybe you won't be looking for that chieftaincy, but they will give it to you because they have been hearing of your good character. And you will also take your good character and your good way of living and hold people. But if you don't have good character, they won't give you the chieftaincy; because if you get the chieftaincy, the whole town will spoil. And so it is good character which holds everything.

It is good character that brings people together in a group. But without good character, you cannot be in a group. You will be coming, and they will ask, "This fellow: who is he?" And if you are coming and someone should ask like that, before his question falls other people will say, "Oh, let him come. Let him come. He is a good person." Because of your good character, those who say you shouldn't enter will be few. Your good character has driven away all the bad heart

they were having toward you. But even if you have money to fill a room, if you don't have good character, they will say, "Run away and leave this man. He has got money but he has got a bad character. Run away and leave him."

And so you John, if you had no good character and I had no good character, we would not have been sitting as we are sitting now. Maybe when you first came to Ghana you knew some people, and today you don't talk with them again. As you are not talking with them, maybe what you want is not with them; and if you want something and it's not with someone, how do you go to talk with that person? But sometimes you may want something from someone and the fellow has it, but he has got a bad character. His bad character will prevent you from getting it from him. Does it not happen? It happens. If you take your good character to come and search for it from him, he will take his bad character to send you away. And will you be enjoying anything? You won't enjoy. Only good character will get you what you want. When you have good character and he has good character too, whatever happens, you will get it.

When we drummers want to start drumming at the chief's house, to talk about the old talks of Dagbon, the first thing we beat and say is, *Namɔy' yili mali kpicoŋ, kpam!*: the house of the drummers has strength, plenty! And then we start with *Dakoli n-nye bia*, and we beat: a bachelor is a child, and a married man is the elder.¹ It is not inside the beating for dances; it is for the chief's house. And when we are actually going to teach a child to drum, this is the first thing we teach him. That is how we start when we are going to drum. And in *Dakoli n-nye bia*, we add and beat: the one who has an elder to hold him will eat; the one without someone will not eat.² And we say again that when someone says that God is not there, he should look in front of him and look behind him, and know: it means that he should look at his parents and grandparents and look at his children and grandchildren. And we beat and say again that it is God who takes one town's chief and makes him another town's slave: maybe you are prince in your town, and we will take you to be a slave here. And we say again that it is God who makes a small house grow into a big house, and God turns a big house into a small house. And we say again that God makes a bachelor a married man, and makes a married man a bachelor. Do you see? This is how we drummers start with our singing and drumming at the chief's house. That is *Dakoli n-nye bia*. We show that God starts everything, and so if we are starting, we praise God. We say these proverbs, and we sound the drum and answer, *kon-kon-kon-kon: shirla Namlana*; "That is it, the Chief of chiefs." That is how we start when we are going to do our

1. *Dakoli n-nye bia, ka payalana n-nye kpema.*

2. *ŋum' mal' lana, ŋun di, mbayee namlana; ŋun ka lana, ŋun' di di.*

work, and that is how our grandfathers also beat the drum. And so if we have a child, and we are going to teach the child to drum, it is these proverbs we show the child first. And so these proverbs are standing as the foundation of our drumming. And these proverbs and these old talks we beat at the chief's house, they join together, and we call it *Tiŋ' kurli*, that it is talking about an old place, or an old thing and how it began. When I was given birth as a drummer, all this is what I also learned and started drumming.

I was given birth during the time of Naa Abudu, and from that time up to now, I have done a lot of work with what I have learned. And the work I am doing, I am telling you something about that work. There is a proverb we beat inside chieftaincy praises; it is a praise-name for *Naa Andani Jɛŋbarga*, *Naa Yakuba's* father. We say that if God agrees and the Holy Prophet agrees, God should make the wall to be nice, and our elders will lean against the wall, and we the children will thank God. And in Dagbani we say again, "An exhausted old man, just leaning against the wall, is better than an old man who dies." That is how we pray, that an old man, even if he cannot do anything, then may God let him lean against better walls, and we will meet him and hear something. This is the talk I have brought for you. Is it good? All this I have talked today will be in front of our talks, and behind our talks, and inside our talks. And so I think I will stop here, and if God agrees and we see tomorrow, I will also come and continue my talks.