

Chapter I–15: *Proverbs and Praise-Names*

As I have talked about how a drum is sounded, today I am going to talk about how we use a drum in praising, and how we praise our elders and people also praise us. I have told you that we drummers are very, very sensible. And I think in my heart that it is because of our sense that people respect drummers in Dagbon here. We show our sense in many ways, because it is we drummers who will use a proverb to give someone a name, and we will take that name to beat a dance. And so today I am going to talk to you about how we use our sense in beating drums, and I'm going to start it by talking about proverbs. I have already told you that it is proverbs that a person takes to do work, and today I'm going to tell you more about it.

As a proverb is, a proverb is talk. A proverb is talk, and if there is no proverb, there is no talk. I think that when they started the world, they started proverbs too. We all grew up and met them. There are proverbs in every tribe, not only in Dagbon or in some tribes. Proverbs are with everybody. And so there are many types of proverbs. There are some proverbs that come as sense, and you can sit with somebody who cuts proverbs to get sense. And there are some proverbs that search for trouble. A fool doesn't understand proverbs, but if they cut you a proverb and you don't hear it, if you have sense you can go and ask somebody.

In Dagbon here, a person who cuts a proverb will not show you what is under it. That is its meaning, what is behind the giving of the proverb. He is giving the proverb because he wants the proverb to do work. It is you who will take your sense to know it. If you are not able to know the talk he has talked, then you must hold it, and you will go and ask somebody, "I sat with this fellow and he cut me a proverb, and I didn't know it." He will say, "What is it?" And you will tell him. And he will say, "Oh-h, he has told you this." If it is bad, he will say, "The proverb he cut you: he is waiting for you. That is why he cut the proverb. If you will fear him, then fear him." Or sometimes he will tell you, "The proverb that fellow cut you, he wants to give you a gift, and so follow him." It comes like that. And so it is a proverb that brings someone's work: if you didn't know it, you will know it.

For example, I want to ask you a question. If a river is dry, is it a shame to God or a shame to the river? If you know that it is God who is ashamed, then I am happy. There is a proverb which says, "If the river is dry, it is a shame to God." It is God Who makes the river, and it is God Who has given the water to the river, and if the water in the river is dry, who is going to give it water again? Is it not

God Who will give it? And so if the water finishes, it is a shame to God and not the river, because God made it. And so if God gives a gift, and the gift finishes, if God has got a gift again, he will give and add. If you know all this, maybe you will still find it difficult to know what is under the proverb, If someone cuts this proverb for you, that is the end of his talk, and he is not going to show you what is under it. If you want, you should think. And you can be asking. Maybe you will come to know its meaning.

I'm going to open your eyes. As you are asking me about things that you don't know, you also believe that I know the things you are asking for. And so if I don't tell you what I know, and you don't get the what you want from me, the shame would come to me. You have been able to ask. Why is it that I have not been able to tell you? And that is an example that looks like this proverb: if a river is dry, it does not feel ashamed; only God will feel ashamed. That is the meaning of it. If you don't know something, and you ask somebody who knows, and the person doesn't tell you, you are not ashamed; the one who doesn't tell you is the one who is going to be ashamed. And so the one who asked but he didn't know, he looks like the river. But if you ask someone and he doesn't know, as for that, the proverb doesn't go to him; it only attaches to the one who knows and doesn't want to tell you. At times, you will ask somebody who doesn't know, and he will tell you, "I don't know, but I will show you the person who knows something about it." Inside our talks, it happens like that. That is how it is.

In our Dagbamba way, when someone gives a proverb and talks about what is under it, then it is not a proverb he has given. When you say a proverb to someone, you will not talk its meaning. If you want to talk its meaning, then you should just tell him; you shouldn't give him a proverb. As you have given him a proverb, if he has got thoughts, he will know. And if his thoughts are not able to let him know, he can ask some people, and they will tell him why you have said it, that its meaning is that or that. That is how it is.

These proverbs, why do we say them? If you are going to do something bad, they will cut you a proverb, and inside the proverb you will know that you are going to do bad. Someone will say, "It doesn't matter": it matters." It is two talks he has talked. Somebody will say that something doesn't matter, and it will become a matter. And someone will say that something doesn't matter, and it's true that it doesn't matter.

Someone will tell you, "People are asking about you." I have been telling you this proverb already. Maybe they are asking about you because they like you. And sometimes they are asking about you, and they don't like you. They can be asking about somebody, and it is that he has done some bad thing. If they are

talking about him in some town or some area, others will come and say, “Who is that fellow? We will know him.” It is because of his bad works that they are going to know him. As it is, they are asking about him. And there is somebody who is doing good works, and he is fit to be a person, and they will go to some area and say, “Oh, as for this person, he’s a good person; he is always doing good works for people.” As you John have been coming here and as you are doing good, some people come to ask about you, “Oh, Alhaji, has your friend not come?” And I will say, “Who?” “Your friend the white man.” And I will say, “Oh, he hasn’t come.” “We are hearing his name, that he is a good person. They say you are holding each other well.” They are asking about you, and it’s because you have been doing good. If you are doing bad, they will ask, “Alhaji, has your friend not come?” “Who?” And they will say, “Your useless white man.” And I will say, “He hasn’t come.” And they will say, “Leave him.” As it is, they have asked about you. And so “People are asking about you”: is it not a proverb? Yes, it’s a proverb. That’s why we Dagbamba have showed that their asking of you doesn’t mean that they like you. That is how the proverbs are. A proverb is two talks: good and bad.

As I am telling this to you, I don’t know whether you will get it and know it as well as I. I cannot know. I only want to tell you this because in Dagbon here and among the Dagbamba and the Muslims of Dagbon, if you do somebody a good thing, all of Dagbon will get to hear of it. If you do something good to somebody, everybody in the town will hear of it, but it is not that you yourself are going to tell people. If you tell them, they will hear of it; if you don’t tell them, they will hear of it. The good you do for someone, you yourself know that it is good for that person, and that is why you do it for him. In the village where I farm, you have never been there, but all the people there know of you, and they know that you have been helping me. They think that the way you and I are staying together is very good, and any time I go there, they always ask of you and say that I should greet you. And so this proverb looks like that. But I want you to know sometimes people tell me that I shouldn’t be teaching you. I told you that someone came here and bought drums to take to the States, and he was asking about your learning of drumming, and he told me that I should charge you heavily for teaching you. And this proverb looks like that, too. That is the meaning of “People are asking of you.”

And so a proverb is not a straightforward talk. If you don’t have patience, you cannot understand proverbs. They have said, “If your house goat dies, it is not you who is going to skin it.” It is not a goat they have talked about. What they are saying is that if a talk in your house should come and stand, whether it is a good

talk or a bad talk, it is not that you will just do it. How it comes, it is not you alone who will do it; it is many who will do it. If you get a bad talk in your house, you will get people to help you solve that talk. And if you get a good talk in your house, there will be people who will come to help you in seeing the good thing. If a bad talk has come to somebody, and when you go to his house, you only see him sitting down alone, and nobody has come to sit with him and mourn with him or pity him, it shows that he doesn't live with people. And the proverbs shows that the one who lives with people, if any bad talk comes to him, it is people who will come and remove him from the trouble. Have you seen? As it is, they have talked about a goat, but it is not a goat they have talked about.

They have said again, "It is because of a live goat that they bury a dead goat." As it is, what have they said? It's not because of a goat that they have said it. It is a proverb. It means that it is because of bad that someone will do good. In the olden days, they used to put it that it is because of a live hunchback that they bury a dead hunchback. If you say that such-and-such a person is not a good person, tomorrow somebody who is a good person will come. And so because of the good person who will come later, that is why you will solve the problem of the bad person for him to pass, and the good one too will come. But nowadays people use the goat to talk it. That is the meaning of it. It is a proverb, and if you don't hear proverbs and you don't understand, you will just take it that they are talking about what they have called.

They say again that "How is your market' is not friendship." Someone will go to the market, and any time he is coming home, he buys things to give his housechildren and wives. When he is arriving, they greet him, "*N'a daa? N'a daa?*": How is the market? And if somebody goes to the market, and does a bad thing inside the market, his friends will go home to say that such a person went to the market and did a bad thing inside the market. And people will open their ears and be waiting for him to come home, and when he comes, they will greet him, "How is your market? How is your market?" They want to hear the bad thing he did. And so when you are coming from some place, and they are greeting you, "Welcome, welcome," it doesn't necessarily mean that they are welcoming you from your journey. They want to hear the bad thing you did there, and at the same time, it also means you haven't done anything bad, but they are welcoming you to see what good thing you have brought for them. And these two things, how has it come? And so "*N'a daa*" is not friendship. Some of it is friendship, and some of it too is not friendship.

And they say again that "When you are stealing somebody's back, you should look at your back." What have they said? If you are going to gossip about

somebody, it is good you look behind and see whether he's coming. If you don't do that and he catches you, you will talk and be tired. You are saying, "So-and-so is not a person. So-and-so is not a person." If you were seeing his face, you wouldn't say that. He will be just behind you and say, "How is it that I am not a person?" What are you going to say? You are going to tell lies until you are tired. And so it's a proverb. If you are going to gossip about me to somebody, maybe he will tell me about you in your absence.

They say, "If many of you gather to bury shea nuts, if you go to remove them, it is good that many of you go." Have you seen? If you go alone to dig and remove them, it means that you have gone behind them. If you gather to talk some talk, you have caught that talk and put it down. Whether it's good or it's bad, when that thing is going to come, it is good that you all gather to be inside it. If not that, you have gone behind the backs of one another. That is why they say, "If you gather and bury shea nuts, it is good you gather again to remove them." If it is good, you have all seen; if it is not good, you have seen it. But if you go and remove it alone, or if it is the good ones you have taken to eat, and left the bad ones, is your friend there? If he comes to say that you have taken the good ones and left the bad ones, can you argue? And so it is a proverb.

And so a proverb is one talk, but it has many talks. That is why someone who cuts you a proverb will not tell you the meaning of the proverb. And as we like proverbs, it is good. Someone has heard with his ears, and he has seen with his eyes, and he is talking. A fool is not a blind person. If I am riding a bicycle coming, and you see me, and you have seen that as I am coming I am going to knock you, and you don't mind, I will also take the bicycle and knock you, because you are not blind. And so if you cut somebody a proverb, you don't show him again. If you show him, it is only that you want him to know that you don't want to do him something bad. If you cut a proverb for somebody, truly, you want him to know. But if you cut somebody a proverb and he knows, you don't mind him, and if he doesn't know, you don't mind him either. This is how proverbs go. Somebody can talk some talk to you, and it won't make you sweet. Or maybe you want to talk some talk to somebody, but you don't want to open your mouth and say it. You just don't want to call the name of the thing you want to talk to him. When you cut him a proverb, if he is also somebody who can hear proverbs, you are not the one who will tell him about the thing. His own sense will tell him.

Maybe you want to beg something from somebody, and you want it plenty. If he's somebody who will give you, if you tell him to give plenty, he will give you plenty, and if you don't tell him to give plenty, he will give you just a little. A Dagbana will take it to tell someone, "Don't bury me and leave the legs." Have

you seen? If you bury a dead person and leave the legs, you haven't finished burying him. If someone tells you that, it shows that you have promised to do something for him, and you should finish doing all of it. Or again, maybe it shows that as you are giving him a gift, or as you have given him a gift, it's not enough, and so you should give him and he will benefit from it. That is how it is.

And so proverbs make talk sweet. A proverb is a short talk, but sometimes the talk of a minute can be more than the talk of an hour. And so proverbs add more to talks. That is how proverbs go, and sense comes in. It is sense that gives proverbs. If you tell somebody, "Don't bury a person and leave the legs; bury him completely," he will understand you. As he understands you that you have showed him to give you plenty, he will give you the gift plenty, but you haven't told him, "Give me this gift and let it be plenty." As you have told him with a proverb, he will take his sense and understand it, and he will know that you have shown him sense. And so proverbs add sense to our talks. Sometimes a proverb like that will help you get more. And sometimes it will make you not to get, because you will tell him like that, and he will say, "As it is, my gift is not up to that, and so I will leave it." Has the proverb refused you or it hasn't refused you? It has refused. If he should ask you, you can say, "It doesn't matter. Give it to me." But if he doesn't ask and he thinks in his heart like that, it's finished. And that is how it is.

Proverbs add to our way of living, and they add sense, and they give us long thoughts. That is how it is on our part. Every person wants long thoughts. You yourself sitting, it is long thoughts you want: that's why you are sitting down. If it were not long thoughts you wanted, you wouldn't have asked for these talks we are talking. It is long thoughts that have brought you here, and these long thoughts mean that you are going to get something and put it behind you. This talk you are doing, you are searching to get it and put it down for those following you. If you think that you are just searching to put it down for yourself, you are deceiving yourself. You are getting it: you are getting it for those behind you. If it is that, then it will do. Every person thinks of bad and thinks of good. God should give us the good. As for the bad, if it comes to you, it comes to you by surprise. It will happen and a person will start some good work, and it's coming, and it will not reach the end, and he will not be there — he will be dead. Somebody will come and join it. Is it that he the one who is dead has searched for the thing for himself? Or was he searching for it as a short thing? No. God says that a person should think long thoughts and put them down for those behind. Can't you see that it's nice? If it were not that, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad was not there, would we remember him? Don't we remember him

every day? We talk his talks, and it looks as if he is still there. It was the long thoughts he thought and put down for us. If he hadn't done that, when he was not there, it would have finished. And so long thoughts are good. Everybody wants long thoughts. And that is the way of proverbs.

How proverbs have come, we see that proverbs add to us. A proverb adds to our way of living because it shows someone sense. This is how proverbs are. A proverb can make your name go far, and your name will be inside that land on the part of good things. They will say, "Oh, as for this person, if you go to him, you will hear the sense you have never heard." Someone who likes you will say that. Somebody who doesn't like you will say, "Oh, he is there cutting proverbs and abusing people." But the one who likes you will see that he will come to you and get sense that has got benefit, and the sense is more than the abusing of people. Inside the sense, he will get to know a good way of living.

Let's say you want to do some bad work, and they see your fault and cut you a proverb. You will take it and see your own fault. At that time, you will stop what you were going to do, and it will be good. This is one of the benefits of proverbs. It has come again: an argument will fall somewhere, and a proverb will kill the argument. People will be quarreling, and you will come and enter their middle, and they won't mind you, and you will cut a proverb. They will say, "Didn't you hear the proverb he has cut?" It can let the quarrel die. Why is it so? A proverb is sense, and as you have cut the proverb, they will think, and they will be looking for sense. Will they quarrel again? If they don't leave the quarrel, it is that they don't hear proverbs. Something will come and stand, and it is that you are going to share it. Because of a proverb, if you were going to do it badly, you will do it well. Some talk will happen, and as you were going to steal your friend's back, you will stop. That is the work of a proverb. You will want to insult somebody, and he will cut a proverb, and the proverb will kill it. These are the benefits of proverbs.

And so I can say that proverbs are for everybody, and I can say that proverbs are for the person who has sense. Proverbs are for somebody who has heard, and he is holding what he heard. If you hear and you don't hold it, it is useless. If you sit with old people, you will be hearing proverbs, but it is not that proverbs are for old people. You can be very old, but if you haven't heard anything, and you haven't sat with old people, and you haven't sat with people who have sense, then you are not an old person. That is why Dagbamba say, "A white horse is not an old horse." If your beard is white but you have no sense, then you are not an old person. It is someone with sense who cuts proverbs, and someone with sense will hear.

But I can say that there is no one who has proverbs more than a drummer. In every tribe, it is like that. It can happen that somebody will want to talk, and he will say, “Drummers are singing their songs, and they say this.” When someone is going to say a proverb, he will say that it was the drummers who said it. It’s not because of anything. If you come to see a person having a lot of sense, you should know that it is worry he has taken to get the sense. There are different kinds of worrying. To be an orphan is a worry. If you are small and your father dies and leaves you, it is worrying you. Your mother dies and leaves you: it is worrying you. You will take your eyes and look, and be looking. Maybe when your father was there, or your mother was there, what they were going to do to you, they wouldn’t do you like that. As they don’t do that, whom do they fear? Your father and mother. It is only a few people who don’t have a father, because if your father dies, his brother will take you to be his child. But if your mother dies, as for that, there is no one who will be the same as your mother. And so, if your father or your mother is not there, that alone can let you get sense. As we drummers have many proverbs, it is because our grandfather was worrying. I told you and I want you to know that our drumming started with sadness. What is the sadness? Our grandfather Bizuj was an orphan. Bizuj was only a little boy when his mother died, and he was there like that. Whatever happens, as for a person, he will inherit his grandfather. This is how it is, and it is God Who brought it down to us. Any trouble a person gets, it is God Who gives it. It is God Who makes somebody a fool, and it is God Who makes somebody a sense-person. And so it is God Who showed us our sense, and it has gone to lie on the part of our grandfather I have talked about. If a child doesn’t see bitter, he will not get sense. And so when we are going to do any work, we start it with sadness. And our sadness is rather happiness to people. That is how it is and we drummers have sense, and we have proverbs. And as it is, it adds to our drumming.

How do proverbs add to our drumming? It is proverbs we use to praise people. These praises are names, and the names are proverbs. Drummers don’t call names like Fusheni or Ibrahim or Alhassan or John or Adam. They don’t call names like that. They give people names in the form of proverbs. I told you that in the olden days, Dagbamba used to give people names by looking for signs or comparing a person to something that happened, but these praise-names don’t follow a sign or something like that. The praise-name is a proverb that shows something about a person and what that person said or did. And so we use our sense to call these names on people. For example, we call “*Naawuni zalgu*,” that is, what God has put down. That is a name for Naa Alaasani. Its meaning is: God has commanded and put something down, and what will you say? You will say,

“It will do.” And so what God has said will stand. That is a name, and it’s a proverb. How wisdom is, everyone has wisdom to his extent. Today, someone will say something, and somebody will take it to call a name. Someone will say something that will fall into someone’s heart, and that fellow will take it as his name. Or someone will say something which is very sweet, and drummers will take it and praise the fellow. Someone will do something, and drummers will take it and praise the fellow.

As you are called “John,” if I decide to give you another name in the drum language, you will know it. I can be at the road side and beat your name, and when you hear the sound, you will know that you are the one I am calling. When you hear that, then you have to know that they are calling you. It is the name that will let people know you. Do you see the skin of the sheep you killed to learn Baŋgumaŋa? You also know that you have some relation to Lunzɛyɛ and the work he did for Naa Luro when Baŋgumaŋa was first beaten. But if people just see the skin, they can never know what it means. Some people may know that you have come to learn a drum and they have asked you to kill a sheep, and you killed a sheep; and some people too will think that maybe someone has given you a drum. So this is how they are going to be thinking, but they can’t know the inside details of the skin you are holding, unless someone also calls you Lunzɛyɛ.

Let me give you some examples of the names drummers use to praise people. There is a proverb: *A kpee yi da ka di bier’ a, feere ni*. If your neighbor buys something and it pains you, you should also go and buy yours; it’s in the store. It’s a proverb, but drummers beat it as a name. It is someone who said it, and someone has taken it to call a name. Any person who wants it can have that name. You sitting down now, if you want it, you can tell drummers that that is your name. And it will show that the way you have come to learn the drumming and the way of living of the Dagbamba, if you go home, and somebody takes it that it pains him that you got this thing, and he hasn’t got it, then he can also come to Dagbon and get it. That is the meaning of it.

We say: *Jergu zi ni yɛla tayra*. A fool doesn’t know that things change. Someone can take it as a name. Namo-Naa Issahaku, that is one of his names. It is a talk, but someone has taken it as a name because he has seen that it will be good for him. A fool doesn’t know that things change, but things change. If someone takes it that what we know today, it will be like that tomorrow, then that fellow is a fool. That proverb will be sweet for somebody, and he will take it as a name. The reason why Namo-Naa uses that name is: if something is worrying you, a foolish person will think that the way it’s worrying you, it will continue like that. But the one with sense will know that as the thing is worrying you today,

maybe by tomorrow you will be all right. And so *Jergu zi ni yela tayra*: a foolish person doesn't know that things change, but a sensible person knows that things change. It's not because of any particular problem that Namo-Naa has that name. There are many types of problems. And he is not the only person using the name; there are other people using that name. That is the way it is.

As I Ibrahim am sitting, my names are many. *Ninsal' ni zayisi sheli, ka Naawuni pihi m-maanda*: that is my name, and its meaning is "What a human being refuses, God will take it and make it well." *Jergu ka so; ŋmen' o ka a nya*. "A fool has no one; beat him and you will see": that is my name. *Bundana layi nandan' zori, Naawuni ti kalana pini*: "A rich man befriends a poor man; God gives a gift to one who does not have." *Be yi ye' ni a ku niŋ sheli, sheli m-bi paag'a*: "If they say you cannot do anything, something has not come to you," and so if something comes to you, you will do it. These are my names, and there are others. I have chosen them for myself. As I am a drummer, I call my own names, and it is a long time ago that I called these names.

All these names, we say them and we also beat them with the drum. It is the mouth that talks, but the drum too can beat and talk. What the mouth shows, the hand also shows it. The hand also knows, and the drum will change and show the mouth, "Say this," and the mouth will say it. The drum can talk, and the mouth will not talk. Once you are a drummer, you can say anything in Dagbani at any time you want to say something. If I want, if somebody is passing by, I can talk on the drum that I want to send him that he should go and get me water to drink, and I can just shut my mouth and use the drum to say, "Get me some water to drink." But if I always beat like that, some people will be annoyed and say that we are just going to disturb them. And so the mind is thinking but the mouth is shut. But it is true that you can use the drum to send somebody, or to talk to somebody, and he will hear. You are not going to open your mouth. You are going to use the drum stick on the drum to tell him what you want to say. And at the same time, it isn't everybody who can know. That is the way it is. And so singing is there, but it is good for the drum to beat. No matter how sweet soup is, if you don't take some salt and add it, the soup is going to be a useless soup.

On the part of how we talk Dagbani talks on the drum, we learn it. As we have been beating for people and they have been giving us money, that is how we used to do it. You have been with me and some people were passing by, and I was praising them and they were just throwing money to me. I just call a person by his forefather's or grandfather's names, his uncle's name, or something like that, and the name shows that person and what he has done, and so the names are like that. When we talk, there are different ways on the drum. There is no single way on it.

And many people understand it. But it isn't everybody who can hear. There are some people, even their names, you will use the drum to call their name with the drum, but they will never know that you are calling their name. But the one who can hear the drum talk, if he's walking, and he passes you the drummer, and you beat the drum to call him, you will see him turn his head.

The names we beat, sometimes there are different ways of beating them. A drummer will beat the first one, come to the second one and change and beat it again. Someone will call a name, and as he has called that name, he will not know all that is inside it. The drummer will know how it will go and fall inside the drumming. The drummer can beat that name on the drum. When the drummer is beating it, those who are beating and following will be beating. The one who is beating the lundaa or the one who is singing, they will know the name better than the others who are only beating and answering. Those two are just the same: one is beating the name, changing the ways, and the other one is singing it. Since I was a small boy, I have seen many people learn how to beat a drum, but to beat a drum and sing is hard for them. Some people can beat very well, but they have to stop beating even to talk. Since I was small boy, when people beat and sang, I followed them little by little. But for all of this, if you don't have the heart for it, and if you are not clever, you can't sing it.

And so our drumming is not about just anything. We don't sing unless the song has meaning. If someone is singing and you don't understand the song, it means that the fellow is just crying in the song, without saying words. But inside the calling of names, we call names and beat the drum. If you don't call a name, you cannot beat: we don't beat a drum on somebody unless we beat a name, and every name has got what is under it, its meaning. What the drum has beaten, there is nobody except a drummer who can beat a talk and say more about what it is. Why have I said that? It is the drum you will be beating when you call the name, and you will be giving its meaning. And so it separates, because there is beating and knowing the words you are saying with the drum, and there is beating and knowing the meaning of what you beat. You the drummer will know both. If somebody opens his mouth to say something, he knows the words he says, and he knows what is under it. Have you ever seen somebody who says something and he doesn't know the meaning of it? And so the drummer beating, he knows the words and he knows the meaning. This is what I want you to know.

The way we drummers beat, those who are sitting down watching us beating the drum, let's say that what you beat and a proverb are the same. The way you have beaten the drum, those sitting down and watching have heard you beating the drum, but they don't know what you are saying. It's just that their asking is not up

to where you have asked. And those sitting and watching, if there is an somebody old nearby, they will call, “Oh, my father, what the drummer beat, I didn’t hear anything from it.” They want to know; that is why they are asking. If they ask you the drummer, you can tell them with your mouth, “The way I beat, this is the way I beat it.” If you talk to someone like that, he will get to know. As for you, you know it, both in the mouth and in the drum. You the drummer, you know it already, because you can’t beat something without knowing it. And somebody also sitting somewhere would like to know it, but he hasn’t asked. If he asks you, then you can tell him. This is how it is.

And so people have to learn how to hear the talks of the drumming. Everyone will learn to his extent. Even the chiefs, not all of them will hear you. If a chief is sitting and he cannot hear drum language, then to us, he is not a chief. But truly, there are some chiefs, too, if you use the drum to talk, they don’t hear. But if you use your mouth, then they will hear. And so it isn’t all chiefs who can hear how the drum is talking. You will beat it on the drum, and you open your mouth to talk it again. In a little time, he will also know the drum. If he is always watching the way you beat before you sing, then he will come to understand what you are saying even when you use only the drum without using your mouth. And so it is true that not all the chiefs understand the drumming. Chiefs like Tolon-Naa Yakubu or Nanton-Naa Alaasani, such chiefs, when they were growing up, they were trained, and so when drummers are beating drums, they hear the thing directly. And also, they gave themselves to drummers when they were young, before they ate the chieftaincy.

And so the chiefs also learn it. How do they learn it? If you happen to see a chief’s son hearing the talks of drums, if he is a prince who has not eaten chieftaincy, he will take an old drummer to be his father. The way he will be greeting this old drummer, the old drummer will be teaching this prince the talks of drumming, and prince will be hearing. Sometimes, the prince will know a young drummer whose eyes are open, and he will befriend him. Then he will be finding time to go and be sitting with the young drummer. The small drummer will start to teach this prince his drumming way. Such a prince, if he happens to eat chieftaincy, any time a drummer will come and beat a drum, he will hear.

But the time the prince is going to start learning it, he has to beg the drummer. As for the prince, he is not a drummer: he can’t come to a drummer and just say, “Hey, you drummer, show me this thing.” If a prince wants to know something about the old talks of his line, there is a way for him to beg the drummer. As he has befriended you the drummer, at first he won’t tell you that this thing is what he wants to learn from you. He will make friends with you and

be very nice with you, and he will be getting you some things. And one day he will tell you, “My grandfather, I want you to show me an old thing.” You will be friends like that for a long time before you will say, “All right, I will begin showing the old thing.” As for the old talks, they are many, and you will start, one by one, showing him the beginning part of his line. The time you will be giving him these talks, it will be only the two of you, and God. And the prince will also collect the talks and be holding them. The way the prince is asking, maybe one day he will be a chief, or he won’t be a chief: he wouldn’t know. He has to learn it before. The day God will give him chieftaincy, that is the time a drummer will beat and he will hear all that the drummer beats.

And so a prince has to beg a drummer. You a prince will only befriend one old drummer or any young drummer who knows it, and you will be meeting him in his house. He will put you down and teach you. It is night time. You will go to the drummer; it isn’t that any other drummer will be telling you. If you ask and get to know more, you will not tell anybody that this is what you have learned. You won’t say that. As you have gone to your friend in the night time, and you have sat quietly to learn it, and you don’t talk it openly, how can anybody know that you learned it? You won’t see a group of drummers sitting and then go to them to listen. You will never do that. The thing you will learn, you will keep it in your mind.

And so the princes don’t learn it in public. But they know it. They learn it from somebody, but if they have not eaten any chieftaincy yet, even if you ask them anything about their line, they will tell you that they don’t know. If a prince starts to talk about something like that, then he won’t grow again: he won’t get chieftaincy. Whenever he sits with anybody, he wouldn’t show anything for anyone to know that he knows what the drummers are talking about. I have told you that inside our Dagbani we used to give a proverb, that, “A lizard hides and the head is red.” There is a type of lizard that has a red head. That lizard will be hiding, but you will see the head, red like that, moving. This proverb isn’t everyone’s talk. A chief’s son who has not yet grown, if he wants to grow up and get a chieftaincy to eat, he won’t bring all his body out for everybody to see. That is an example of it. How can you be thinking of getting a chieftaincy, and you will learn more about that chieftaincy, and then when you are with elders, you will show yourself that you know much about that chieftaincy? If you talk like that among elders and they hear, then it means you are showing that you are more than the present chief who is sitting. There is no way for that. The elders will take it that there is no need for you to eat chieftaincy, since you are already showing yourself that you know more about it. At that time, you can’t do anything again. And so a prince doesn’t want to show that he knows much about the drumming.

Such princes who have learned drumming talks, if they happen to eat chieftaincy, a drummer who hasn't learned much in drumming will fear to beat a drum in front of them. Sometimes you will come in front of him and be beating and counting the chiefs, and if you are going to jump over a certain chief, then when you beat like that, you will hear him saying, "Oh, my grandfather, it seems somebody like this was there before that one." At that time, you have to go back inside your talk. Imagine a chief asking you to return again, you a drummer! It looks as if somebody knows something already, and you are coming to stand in front of him to tell him the thing he knows. Whether you are going to talk and forget some, or jump over some, or you are going to talk more details: the chiefs who have asked and they know a lot, many of us drummers fear to beat in front of them.

But as for the chiefs, they are not the same. The one who has asked and the one who didn't ask are not equal. Sometimes you will see drummers beating in front of a chief, and there are elders sitting by him. These elders know the drumming more than the chief, and when we the drummers are beating, the elders are translating it to the chief. As for that kind of chiefs, they only took money and used it to get the chieftaincy. They don't know how the thing is. This is the reason why sometimes there are elders sitting by them when drummers are beating. But as for the chief who knows drumming, if a drummer is going to jump over some talk, he will call you, "My grandfather, there is somebody before." That is the way it is. Some of these modern princes, maybe they don't have a friend who is a drummer, or they don't bow down to a drummer before they get a chance to eat chieftaincy. And again, there can be a prince who only knows that if a chieftaincy falls, then he will go to the Yaa-Naa and Yaa-Naa will give it to him so that he will go to that town. As he has got the town from Yaa-Naa, is he expecting Yaa-Naa to show him the drumming, too? That is the way it is. People like Nanton-Naa Alaasani and Tolon-Naa Yakubu, they know it already; as for them, they stayed with elder drummers before. If a drummer comes in front of such a chief to beat, it will be sweet to him: you will see him nodding his head, because what he knew already, that is the same thing you are talking to him. So this is how it is.

There is something I would have wanted you to learn in this drumming, and you didn't follow what I was expecting. What is that? You would ask, "As you are teaching me all the songs and the beating, I would like you also to teach me the beating which has got proverbs." I would beat and show you the drumming, and I would tell you the meaning of it. It is good a drummer should learn all this. A drummer cannot be beating and not know what happened when all these proverbs

came into the drumming. If you hear any type of drumming somewhere, if you are interested, you should ask me and I will tell you the meaning. Sometimes too I will take a drum and beat a song and tell you the meaning. It will be good if you beat the drum and understand the meanings of the proverbs. And so you should find the time when you will be asking this. What happened and they were beating this song? What happened and they were dancing this dance? And we would tell you. My brother Mumuni at Savelugu recently told me that it will be good if I let you understand all the meanings of the drum language. If you get it, it would mean a lot, because what we are drumming would be something that could be written down.

Nowadays when people gather at a funeral house or a wedding house, most of the dances they dance are names. But there are many names we beat or sing, and nobody dances. In our drumming, sometimes we beat the drums, and the beating is only a name and not a dance. As we beat the drums, it's just that the sound of the drums is talking, and we have Dagbani talks and Hausa talks. And all the talks are proverbs, and they have got something inside them or under them. It is good for somebody to ask for this. That is the necessary thing a person should ask for if he is learning drumming. I told you that we used to beat what we call *Taachi*:¹ that is the names we were using to praise people when they gathered to dance any dance, but it was separate from dances. I am going to count some of them for you, and I will count them on the part of Dagbani and on the part of Hausa. And those I am going to count are all names, but they are not dances.

We beat this song on the drum: "If your fellow person is crying and you are laughing, tomorrow you too will cry." We beat it in Dagbani and we beat it in Hausa. The Dagbani is: *A kpee yi kumdi ka a lara, a gba sa ni kum biɛɣu*; and the Hausa is: *N danwanka yi naa kuuka ka naa dalia, goobe kee ma kaa kuuka*. We beat this in Dagbani: *Zama kulga banɓmi siyibu n-gari loybu*. It means that if you come to cross a river where there are oyster shells, it is better to be careful how you walk in the water than to divert your way. These shells are inside the river, and if you are coming to enter into the river, and you just walk into the river the same way you were walking on the ground, your feet will be cut. If you enter into the river, you have to be stepping coolly, because you can't see through the water. Where you say you will pass, these shells are there. That is *Zama kulga*: the thing that cuts is like a knife; if you don't take time, it will cut your feet. And we also beat it in Hausa.

Truly, our Dagbani talks are more than our Hausa talks. In Dagbani, we beat: *A noli yaɣiya, a bukaata?* It means your mouth talks too much, and so what

1. Hausa: taake

is the use of you? It is Dagbani, and we beat it on the drum. And we also beat: *Be je ma mi ŋmo m-pa ma*. It means they hate me and told lies about me. We beat: *Be yi ye' ni a ku niŋ sheli; sheli m-bi paag'a*. They say you cannot do anything; something has not come to you. I have told you that this is my name. It means that somebody may say that you are not able to do something, but it's only that you didn't have a chance to do it: if something comes to you, you will be able to do it. We beat: "*N'a daa*" *pa la simli*. I have also told you this. You know how we greet people, "Welcome from the market." The meaning of the proverb is that "Welcome from the market" does not mean friendship. And so if someone greets you, it doesn't mean the person likes you. You don't know what is in the heart of someone who greets you. I also told you: *A kpee yi da ka di bier' a, a mi nyin' da di be feere ni*. It means if your friend buys something and it pains you, you should also buy it: it is in the store. And so what someone is doing, if you also want to do it, you should try to get it: it is there. We beat: *Zom' yela n-gari be ni niŋ a bo*. It's also Dagbani, and it means to fear trouble is better than to say, "What can they do to me?" We beat: *Soyu ka yiŋa ka dundɔŋ tari*. A broom is not in the house, and the compound is dirty. The meaning of this when we beat it in our drumming is that if there is no woman in a house, then the house is not a good house. And we often beat: *Jenkuno yi nya sheli ka zaŋ soyi, baa ŋun' yi nya li sokam wumdimi*. What a cat sees and hides, if a dog sees it, everyone will hear of it. A cat doesn't bark, so if a cat sees something, it won't bark for anybody to hear; it will only be lying down. And all that it will see will be inside its stomach. But a dog, he's coming to announce it outside, by barking. And somebody will beat this proverb or sing it as *baa ŋun' yi nya o ŋmer moli*: what a cat will see and keep quiet, if a dog sees it, he will come and beat it outside. They are both one; there is no difference, and we beat both of them. I told you that there are different ways on the drum. As the two talks are the same, no one can challenge you. If you are holding your trouble, and you don't come outside and talk about the trouble, nobody will hear of it. We beat: *Kom do chichi, ko' biɛyu m-bala*. Water that lies still is bad water. And so people should be afraid of it. Somebody who is quiet all the time and doesn't talk, he is a person whom people should be afraid of. All these proverbs are names. People call them and we beat them on the drum. All of them, we beat them.

We also beat the drum and talk in the Hausa language. We beat: *Abura kafu beeshika laami*. That is Hausa, and it means someone who has horns cannot enter a hole. We beat in Hausa: *Yitaache fadama bee sooro lua*. It means a tree that stands in mud doesn't fear water. We beat: *Yeda Allah yaafi yedan koowa*. That is Hausa language, and it means believing in God is better than believing in

somebody. We beat: *Yaayaa kuda kan yi da duusi, shee laasa*. What can ants do to a stone?: only lick it. It's Hausa language and we beat it.

And so how proverbs enter inside drumming, it is from our starting, and again, it is inside the names we are calling. Someone's name can be a proverb. If you don't know it, can you beat the drum? As the name has entered drumming, it has made that fellow well. If you call yourself a good name, it will give you something you are not expecting. Naa Zanjina called his name and ate Yendi. That is an example. Behind that, Naa Zayli said, "Different talks spoil a town; gather-and-say will repair a town." That is his name. The talk that will talk and repair a way of living, will you leave it? No. This is why we drummers like saying proverbs. It adds to our living, and adds to the names we call for people. Those who don't call names, they will come and be hearing, and the names will be entering them with sweetness. And they will know the way of Dagbani on the part of drumming.

And again, there are some names or proverbs someone can call in the drumming, and the name will come and eat him. "It will eat him" doesn't mean that he's going to die. It's just that it is not a name that can take him forward. If he's staying with drummers, the drummers will tell him that the name he has given to himself will let him go back, and if he doesn't forget about that name, he won't go forward. It is not common, but it is inside drumming. And the drummer will search for a good name for him. And so this also makes us drummers to search for names for some people. That is the way it is. A chief can call a name for himself, and the name will be a bad name: we know how we are going to say it and it will become good. We will call a name that will make him benefit. If not that, God will say, "You should call a name for him," and a drummer will give a name that will let that chief go forward. The talk you will take and make somebody well, it is good you learn it.

And so how our drumming is: we see a child and we talk to him the talks about his grandfather. His grandfather called the name and put it down. It is a proverb or it's not a proverb: he has put it down for those behind him. If somebody gets a talk and puts it down for his back, you the person who talks old talks, it is good you see that fellow's grandchild and tell him that talk. The child will know that his grandfather searched for it and put it down for him. As we praise people, we remind them. There is somebody who doesn't know the line of his grandfather. He doesn't know whether his grandfather is from the house of Naa Siyli or Naa Garba or Naa Ziblim Bandamda or Naa Ziblim Kulunku or Naa Andani Jengbarga. He doesn't know. We the drummers show him. It was his grandfather who called a name, and we drummers, when we see somebody's child,

if the fellow is small or not small, we praise him with that name. Someone can be old and not know his grandfather's house. A drummer will take old talks and talk to him and show him how his grandfather came. If this drummer doesn't tell him, or if his grandfather didn't get that name to put down, how will he know about his line? He cannot know. And so the proverbs and the talks that we talk on the part of people, it makes people happy. It is that their grandparents have searched and put it down for them, and we are reminding them. This is what brought it, and that is how its way is.

And so the proverbs are old talks, and proverbs are with everybody. It is not that proverbs are in this Dagbon only with us drummers. It is not like that. Proverbs are with everybody. And truly, proverbs are inside our drumming, and proverbs add to our drumming. If we want, we can say that proverbs have come from inside our drumming. But it isn't that proverbs are with us drummers alone. Proverbs are with everybody. And that is how we are holding proverbs in Dagbon here.

When we were drumming one time, you came and asked so-and-so's name and so-and-so's name, and you were asking me how I knew all their names. The details of drumming are many, and what I'm telling you shows what is inside it. I have told you that in Dagbon here, when a patient person is sitting, he wants to hear of his grandfathers from a drummer. When we see somebody and call him by his grandfathers' names, we can also call the fellow by his uncles' names. If somebody has uncles, his uncles have also taken their names which drummers will use to call the fellow. You can have a family of about a hundred people, and their great-grandfather only called one name. As he has called this name, even if he has been dead for a hundred years, when we see any of his grandchildren or great-grandchildren, we call the fellow by that name. Someone can call his name and his name will be lost in the family; inside it, it shows that he has not given birth to many children. But if he has given birth and we see the children or grandchildren, his name will not be lost in Dagbon here. As you John have come here from another town, if you call a name and you give birth to children here, whether you are alive or not alive, whenever we drummers see any of your children, the name you called is the name we will use to call the child. When we see your grandchild, it is the same name we will use to praise him. They will know that we are calling them by your name. Even if your child or grandchild doesn't know, we will say, "It was your grandfather who called that name." We drummers have been saying that to people.

Any time you see a drummer in Dagbon here, if he's really a drummer, he knows the talk of people's families. How a family is, it is like a tree standing

outside with many branches. How a tree lives and dies, that is how a family moves. Some part of the tree can become dry, and some part of it can be wet and growing. Some part of it is thick, and the branches are many; and another part of the tree will not have many branches. That is how a family is.

And I want you to know that in Dagbon here, when you see anyone who speaks the Dagbani language, that fellow is from the chief's line. His grandfathers were holding the fire and coming, and the fire died, and they have become commoners. And so in Dagbon here, every Dagbana is a chief's grandson, and every Dagbana is a commoner. Inside every commoner is the strength of chieftaincy, and the strength of chieftaincy is the commoner. And so we follow the chieftaincy to know someone's line.

And what I am showing you is this: if you are eating a chieftaincy in Dagbon here, it doesn't show that your child is going to eat your chieftaincy. As I have been counting the Yaa-Naas, there are some of them who gave birth to children and none of the children ate Yendi. And so at that point, the chieftaincy line has separated, and we don't count these children inside Yendi. It isn't that their grandfathers were not chiefs. They were chiefs. But these children have separated, and their part of the family line has become commoners. And we say that their door to chieftaincy has closed, or we say that their fire has died. But we don't deny that their grandfathers were chiefs: it's just that the line has separated, and they have become commoners.

All Dagbamba people, there is nobody who can say that as for him, he has no relationship with the Yendi chief, the Yaa-Naa. That is why we Dagbamba used to say that the end of strength is to be a commoner. Maybe your grandfather was a chief, and your father's brother ate the chieftaincy, but your father was not able to eat. How somebody gives birth to children, some of the children will eat chieftaincy, and others won't get a chance to eat. And so when those people give birth to their children, the children become commoners. There is not any Dagbana who will say that his grandfather didn't eat Yendi chieftaincy. That is why when we are going to praise somebody, we say, "Your grandfather so-and-so ate Yendi." That is it. Even the typical Dagbamba, those we call *Dagban' sabli*, black Dagbamba, their grandfathers ate Yendi. Inside drumming, that is the family of Naa Niŋmitooni. Naa Zolgu's son Niŋmitooni: that is his family. Some of them went and settled in the land of the Mamprusi chief, and the Mamprugulana is holding them. If a drummer goes to that place, he takes that Yaa-Naa to praise them. Now we call them black Dagbamba, but they started in chieftaincy. That is how it is.

I'm going to open your eyes. I told you that when Dagbon started, Naa Nyaysi was going around killing the tindanas and putting the Dagbamba as chiefs of the towns. Those people who followed him and he gave chieftaincy to them, we call all of them as children of Naa Nyaysi. It's not that Naa Nyaysi actually gave birth to all of them, but as they followed him to a war, we will call them his children. And if you were somebody whom Naa Nyaysi gave a place to be a chief, and you were not an actual child of Naa Nyaysi, if you gave birth to children, we drummers are going to call them Naa Nyaysi's grandchildren. Inside our drumming, they didn't teach us that we should tell them that their father was not in the chieftaincy, just the same as Naa Nyaysi. We don't show that. And so the women you marry and give birth to children, these children are also related to Naa Nyaysi.

Listen well. If you are a prince, and you marry a commoner's daughter and give birth to children, the children are coming into the chieftaincy family. As for a prince, it doesn't necessarily show that a prince will marry a princess: a prince can take a commoner and bring her children into the chieftaincy. If a chief's child is there, and he comes to marry the daughter of a commoner, those children will come into the chieftaincy line. Some of them will also eat chieftaincy. Why not? Are they not a chief's children? In Dagbon here, it is the man who claims the child. The woman was in her house, and you went to bring her to your house. If you give birth to children with that woman, when you the chief are not there again, the child can come to sit in your position. So that is the way it is.

And so you should look: the time of Naa Nyaysi is very, very far. We have all come to mix. Those who were there, and they were not inside chieftaincy, by now their children have all come to mix inside the chieftaincy. And so we have mixed, and we have separated, too. That is how chieftaincy moves. Someone's door will die, and another one's door will open. But it's not that we take Naa Nyaysi to praise them or that we count them as children of Naa Nyaysi. You see Naa Mahamadu sitting down now, if they are going to call him, they say "Naa Nyaysi bia," Naa Nyaysi's child. He is sitting at the place of Naa Nyaysi. Inside drumming, they will be counting all the chiefs of Yendi and they will be saying that his father is all those former chiefs. There is nothing wrong with that. That is his starting. That is one family. And as it is one family, it has separated. I told you that we drummers are the grandchildren of Bizun, and Bizun was the real child of Naa Nyaysi. Inside drumming, we can say that Bizun gave birth to this Namo-Naa sitting down, and every drummer is a child of Namo-Naa. It is because all of us, that is the way we started. And so the talk has entered and mixed, and it has separated again. As the Dagbamba are many, the ways inside chieftaincy are also many, and it is we drummers who know the talks inside it. That is it.

Look again: on my mother's side, I am from Naa Siyli's line, and in Naa Siyli's line, there is no one eating Yendi again. But it was Naa Siyli who saved Dagbon, because the Gonjas wanted to take us and make us slaves, and my grandfather Naa Siyli killed them and made us free. And we are no longer inside the Yendi chieftaincy in Dagbon. That is why I say that the strength of chieftaincy is the commoner. It would have been good if we were holding the door and eating chieftaincy up till now, because it is we who have freed the Yendi line. And it would have been good if anything happened to the Yendi line, they would take it and say, "Give it to Naa Siyli's line, the people of Naa Siyli's line." But it has not come like that. And haven't we become commoners on my mother's side? This is how it is.

And so in Dagbon, everybody is a chief's grandchild. If someone is not a chief, he will show himself on the part of chieftaincy. An ex-serviceman does not keep away from the barracks. Every Dagbana, if he wants to bluff and show himself, he makes it look like chieftaincy, because it was his grandfather who did it and put it down for him. Naa Mahami gave birth to Naa Zoli, and Naa Zoli ate Yendi but his children didn't eat Yendi. Are they chief's children or not? As they are chief's children, won't they show themselves? And their children, won't they show that their grandfather was a chief? This is how we Dagbamba show ourselves. Naa Abdulai's first-born was Savelugu-Naa Mahami, and Savelugu-Naa Mahami didn't become the Yaa-Naa: but won't his children show that their grandfather was the Yaa-Naa? This is how it is. Everybody is a chief's grandchild. In Dagbon here, when you follow every person, there is no one who is a commoner. Even as I am drummer, if you follow me, you will see that as I am sitting down, I am the child of a chief, because my grandfathers were Yaa-Naas. Everybody is a chief's grandchild.

As everybody is a chief's grandchild, we drummers are the ones who follow it. If you are a drummer, when you see somebody, you will take his grandfathers to praise him. You don't praise that person himself. As you praise him with his grandfathers, you will be adding to him. Adding to him like what? A person can be there and not know all his grandfathers. He will know his father and maybe he will know some of his grandfathers. Our drumming shows that when you want to praise someone, you start with his grandfathers and not his father. Naa Abila Bila who died, if we want to praise him, we say that his grandfather was Naa Yakuba. And Naa Yakuba's grandfathers are many. If we want to praise Naa Yakuba, we can say his grandfather Naa Garba, because it was Naa Garba who brought forth Naa Yakuba's father. If someone knew that Naa Yakuba was his grandfather, and we come to praise him with Naa Garba, maybe he didn't know Naa Yakuba's

father: if you want, you can praise him with Naa Andani Jɛngbarga. If we praise him like that, we have reminded him, and we have added to him. He will say, “Oh, I only knew that my grandfather was Naa Yakuba, and I didn’t know all these grandfathers.” If he comes to hear something about any of them, will he be interested or not? He will listen to the old talks about the great people in the olden days, and he will say, “Yes. That is my grandfather they are talking about.” And so we drummers show a person his family line, and we add to his respect. This is what we drummers do. As I am sitting down, I have told you that I am from Naa Siɣli on my mother’s side. And if a drummer is going to praise me, and he is going to praise my mother’s house, if he knows much, he can also follow my mother’s side and call me by my grandfather Zoggolana Dasana. If the drummer wants, maybe he will call me with the name of Zugulana Ali or Singlana Aduna or Dalunlana Blemah. If I only knew Singlana Aduna, and that was all I knew, has the drummer added to me or not? If we drummers were not in Dagbon here, by now the family would have been dead.

As everybody is a chief’s grandchild, we follow the lines of the chiefs to know someone’s family, and we take names of the chief to praise a person. If you are praising a commoner, you are taking the praise-name of a chief to praise the commoner. That is what we drummers do. All the chiefs have their lines. Naa Siɣli has got his line. Naa Andani Jɛngbarga has got his line. Naa Garba has got his line. Naa Zayli has his line. Naa Mahami, Naa Ziblim Bandamda, Naa Kulunku, Naa Simaani, they all have their lines. If you want to take a chief’s line and you follow it, you will see that if not the whole line, then some part of them have become commoners. As a person is there, you will follow him back and praise him that he is from such-and-such a chief’s line. Another person is there, and you will take another line and praise him. Some people know their line, and others don’t know, and others will know only part. If you know that someone is from Naa Garba’s line, you also know that he is from Naa Zanjina’s line because it is Naa Zanjina who gave birth to Naa Garba. And it is Naa Tutuyri who gave birth to Naa Zanjina. You can know it in that way. Some people know it because their fathers and grandfathers tell them about it. As chiefs bring forth children, is it that all of them become chiefs? Some of them don’t get even a small chieftaincy to eat. But they too bring forth children, and as they are bringing forth, they know that their grandfather was Naa Zanjina or Naa Garba. And others don’t know. And if they know part, they won’t know all. And even if they know all, it is still the drummer who will bring their grandfather’s name out for everybody to know. This is its way.

This is our work, and we praise people and they give us money. How we take it and show people, someone who doesn't know will know, and we will add to someone who knows. This is how we praise. If you praise someone like that, and you count his grandfathers to add to him, will he be happy or not? If he has money in his pocket, he will bring it out and give you. If you are that person, won't you be happy? You didn't know your grandfather, and someone has come to show you your grandfather. You didn't tell him to show you, but he has shown you and it is true. Maybe if you went to ask your father, your father would not know; if you ask your mother, she would say she doesn't know. Someone has just come to meet you and show you your grandfather: even if you don't have a lot of money in your pocket, won't you give at least some of it to him? This is why people give us drummers money.

How Dagbon is, everyone has got the extent of his family. And every drummer has got the extent of his knowledge. As I am sitting, I am in Tamale, but my town is Savelugu because my grandfathers were in Savelugu. If I want to count them, they are many. My grandfathers and great-grandfathers were given birth at Savelugu, and they gave birth to my father at Savelugu. They gave birth to me at Voggo, but if I am following the way, I will say that Savelugu is my town. The reason why they gave birth to me at Voggo is that my father moved from Savelugu and stayed at Voggo. When Savelugu-Naa Bukari Kantampara became chief of Voggo, he took my father there. My father followed him to Voggo, and when Kantampara left Voggo to eat Savelugu, my father remained at Voggo. Those who are my brothers and sisters, it was at Voggo that our father saw our mothers and gave birth to us. And so we know that our father came from Savelugu and gave birth to us at Voggo. When our children are going to say where they are from, they will say, "Our father's house is from Voggo, but our grandfather's house is from Savelugu." That is how the family moves. The children I give birth to in this town, when they grow and give birth to children, my children's children will get up and say, "They gave birth to our fathers in this Tamale, and this town is our town. But our grandfather was from Voggo." They are talking about me. When these children ask, they will tell them that their grandfather's father was from Savelugu. That is how the family goes.

As I am here now, there are some drummers who will know only my father. They don't know my father's father or my great-grandfathers. If such a drummer is going to praise me, he will call my father's name from Savelugu. And there will be somebody who will know more than that. It all comes from asking. That is why I have been telling you that drumming talks don't finish. Someone will know one of my grandfathers; someone will know two; someone, three; someone, six;

someone, ten. No one knows everything in drumming, but some know more than others. It is just like schooling. Someone will reach middle school and say he has finished schooling. Someone will finish secondary school and say he has finished. Someone will go to the university and say he has finished. Drumming is like that. We are just following one another with our learning.

And as drummers take my grandfathers and praise me, it is also drummers who will praise my grandchildren and let them know about me. If they know, when they see my grandchildren, they will take my father's name and praise them, and they will come to me myself and praise them. And those children will get to know more about their family and the sort of people their grandfathers were. If the drummers like, they will take my mother's side and praise my grandchildren. I told you that my mother's house is not drummers. It is my father's house who are drummers: my father's mother's house is drummers. But my mother's house is not drummers. My mother's great-grandfather is Naa Siyli. It was Naa Siyli who gave birth to our grandfather, my mother's father. And so a drummer can take Naa Siyli's name and praise me, and a drummer can take Naa Siyli's name and praise my grandchildren. And so drummers know how our great-grandfathers started, and that is its way.

And as we are talking about our grandfathers and great-grandfathers, it will come to enter into chieftaincy. I have already told you that when you are saying something about drumming, everything ends in chieftaincy. We drummers started in chieftaincy, and whatever happens, you will talk about drumming and come into chieftaincy. And so here it is again. It is in chieftaincy that we drummers have strength, and it is in drumming that a chief has strength. As people have been interfering in chieftaincy talks, it is our talks. We have never brought ourselves into chieftaincy talks and heard someone ask, "Is it your look-out?" We are in it. Whether a drummer can beat a drum very well or not much, he is in it. Everything of ours goes along with chieftaincy, and that is how it is. A chief and a drummer: they are one people. What has given birth to a chief, that has also given birth to a drummer. As for us, we drummers and the chiefs are just like a calabash and its lid. Have you seen? Every chief has his drummer so that if he goes to any place, the drummer will walk with him and be praising him. It is the chief who eats chieftaincy and says to the drummer, "Call a name for me." And it is we who call his name. And so when a chief is there, we call a name for him. When a chief eats chieftaincy, and there is no drummer, then he is not a chief. Nobody will know that he is a chief. And we call the names so that one day we will remember and talk.

How it is, in our Dagbon, before you will know what is behind any chief, you have to learn our old talks, our history. And our history, too, we don't know books. We learn it in our hearts. If you don't have the heart for it, they will teach you for many years and you won't know it. You will be forgetting. You can't look into a book and know that this one said this and that one said that. You have to remember it. As for praising the chief, the drummer will start with the chief's grandfathers before him and come to his children. When the drummer finishes the talks of one chief, he starts another one again. Maybe a drummer will start with one chief, and up to the next morning, he won't finish all the talks of that one chief. We drummers know all of it. I can even say that the time you white men came to this Ghana, we drummers know the day. And drummers know the chief you came and met.

Let me give you an example. This calling of names, you will see it plenty at a funeral house. If your wife's father dies or your wife's mother dies, you will go to perform the funeral. You will all get chairs and sit down like the way you sit down at a wedding house, and the drummers will be coming and praising you. When they are praising you, they will praise your grandfathers and finish, and come to praise your father and finish, and if they don't know you, you will tell them to beat your name, and tell them, "My name is so-and-so." That is how we call the names.

When you see people standing or sitting at a funeral house or a wedding house, you will see a drummer go and begin to sing these names to somebody. Sometimes the drummer beats the name on the drum. The drummer is singing or beating and calling the names of that fellow's grandfathers who are dead. Sometimes the drummer will call about six names of the grandfathers. When we go to a wedding house and the women are there, when a woman knows that it is her grandfather's name the drummer is calling, sometimes it is sweet to her; she will start laughing, and at that time she will come out and start dancing. All the money she has brought, if she is not watching, she will give all of it out to the drummers. Someone will be there, and you will call her grandfather's name or father's name, and she will start weeping, and you will run away and leave her. And again, if you are somebody who is a Dagbana man, and drummers have asked to know your grandfathers, they will take the name of one of the grandfathers and what he did and use it to praise you. If your grandfather killed somebody before in a war, and he was very brave, whatever happens, the drummers will use that name to call you, just to make you excited and happy, to let you know that you come from a great family. That is how they call the names in proverbs, and the proverb stands for something that has happened in the your family.

I can tell you that there was one chief they were praising with the drum, and this chief had gone for war before, and the chief himself came out for the war with a cutlass and a spear and a bow and arrow. And when he fought the war, the way he killed people with the cutlass, he was just slicing off the heads of people. And one time drummers came and praised a certain man with that chief's name showing all that the grandfather did in the war. And when they were praising this man, he got up, all of a sudden, and he took a cutlass and just killed his horse. He sliced it into pieces, just to show the thing that happened in his family before he came to take over. He killed the horse. His horse! It is war talks that brought it. There is somebody whose grandfather has been to war and did great things, but as for him, he hasn't got a war to go and do the same things as his grandfather. He doesn't mind to kill a horse like that, whether his own horse or somebody's horse or his own horse. He will kill it. That is how it is.

That is what we do when people are sitting down or standing at a gathering. If there is a gathering, if it is a funeral or a wedding or a festival, it is there that we drummers will be beating drums and praising people, and it is there that people will get to know their families and others will also know how these people are. If it is a funeral house and they have formed their circle to dance, or if it is a festival like the Damba Festival, as they are sitting, you will see a drummer go to a person and beat and sing that fellow's praise. At that time the person will come out and dance. If it is a man or a woman, he will dance about one or two dances, and inside it, you will see that fellow's friends and relatives get up from their sitting places, and they will come out into the circle and press money onto the forehead or into the hands of the one dancing. As they are giving the money like that, the money will be falling down, and small boys will be collecting it. The one dancing is not going to keep the money. It is we drummers who are for the money. We are showing the person his respect. And those who are giving, they are showing that the one dancing is someone who has people.

When we beat drums for somebody to dance, it is at a place where many people gather. They have gathered there just to help one another. How are they helping one another? It is because of helping one another and also helping the family that they gather. Those who have called the drummers have given some money already, but the people at the gathering also give money while the drummers are beating. And so if someone is dancing, and they come and press money onto the forehead, they want the drummers to get the money. It adds to the funeral and makes it nice. Let's take it that somebody is going to his father-in-law's funeral. If you are going to perform your father-in-law's funeral, your brothers will follow you, and your friends too will follow you. As they follow you

to the funeral place, they are coming to help in anything that is concerned with the funeral. If they come and spend money like that, you will be happy, and your wife too will be happy. And if day breaks and your friends also get the same trouble, they will go around and tell all their friends, and you will group again and go to the next funeral. That is why we say that we help one another. That is what is under it. Have you seen? They don't give the money directly to the drummers because if they give it to the drummers, nobody will see the help they have brought to the funeral. But if someone is dancing, if you go and press money on the forehead, then people standing and watching will see that when you came to the funeral, this is what you did. So it shows that people will see the amount you have spent there. That is how it is.

And again, when you are in the public like that, it is not only because of the gathering or the people that you will give the money to the drummer. The drummer has talked about your grandfather, and you also know about your grandfather. Or you don't know, but you trust what the drummer is talking is true. And so some people don't know, and we show them. That's why they give. As we have gathered and are sitting down now, if somebody comes and sits here and talks about your father, and you give him money, is it because of us you are giving him money or because he talked something true about your father? It is because of his talk. That is why, if a drummer praises somebody, it's not because of the others who are sitting by, but because they are talking something true about his father. At that time the talk is sweet to you. If somebody tells you something, and the thing he talks makes you happy, you are also going to find a way to do something that will make the person who talked to you happy. That is why, when we drummers praise somebody, they give us money.

And so at a gathering place, those who are dancing and those who are watching, they are all happy. This is what we do at a gathering. If you go to a funeral house, this is what you will see. If it is a wedding, it is the same. If it is a festival, it is the same. The way you are here, if things go very well and you finish the work you are doing, and you send it America and other places, and many people are excited about it, they will praise it very well. Later on, if you are no more there, if your child happens to come to Ghana, and we the drummers have heard that this is your child, if we want to praise him with the drum to dance, we will start beating, "It was your father who came to Ghana, and did this work and that work." And again, apart from your work, we can look at your wisdom, your feelings or your thoughts, and we can praise you with the drum, and we will take that name to praise your child. You know, he will be happy to jump into the circle to dance.

Someone will be there, and you will not call the name of the father or grandfather, and the friends standing there will say, “Does it mean that this person has no forefathers?” We last went to a wedding house, and we were sitting down when Nyohinilana Pakpəŋ came there. Do you know what is a “pakpəŋ”? The pakpəŋ is a person’s eldest daughter, and so this woman was the eldest daughter of the chief of Nyohini. It’s a village near Tamale, and now it has even come to be inside Tamale. When this woman came, we didn’t know her. And one woman came and said, “Nyohinilana Pakpəŋ is sitting there, and she asked whether you don’t know her.” And at that time we didn’t even know the woman’s name, but we knew her father’s name and her grandfather’s name. We stood there and changed our beating, and we saw this woman coming out. And she came and gave out papers — money — and made us beat for her to dance.

And so it is good like that. You may go to a gathering and you will be sitting down, and the drummers will not see you, or maybe they will see you but they don’t know you. And you too are somebody who doesn’t want to sit at a place and hide yourself. You have to tell the drummers. If you tell the drummers and we get to know you, the next time, if we see you at some place, we will know you. And sometimes you yourself will not tell the drummers. Somebody will know you, and he will call one of the drummers and point to you, “The person there, don’t you people know him?” And the drummer will say “Truly, we don’t know him.” Then the fellow will say that you are so-and-so’s child. Then you will see the drummer beat and come to you. And you will also feel happy. It is inside drumming.

And so it is at the gathering place you have to show yourself and people will know you. This showing yourself I’m talking about, it’s not that you are showing yourself on somebody. If there is an gathering and you go there, and the drummers don’t know you, if you show yourself to the drummers and they beat, the next time they see you, they will know who you are. And it won’t be that you will open your mouth and talk. As you have come to the gathering, as the drummers are beating, maybe you are interested in dancing. Somebody who knows you will talk to the drummers. It isn’t that you yourself will have to go to tell the drummers. If it is a woman who knows you, she will go and tell the drummers. And if your fellow friends know you, they will go and tell the drummers. This is the way it is. And so that type of showing yourself, it’s not bad. That one is not anything. You only want people to know who you are. That is all. That is how it is.

That is how it is. It is when people gather and meet that everyone wants the others to know that he or she had a father or grandfather. And it is at a gathering

place that people know that one person is stronger than another. Someone's grandfather was a common person, and someone's grandfather was a chief and father was a chief. Someone's grandfather was a chief, and someone's father was a chief's son but did not become a chief. Someone's father was an elder of a chief. We take the names of their forefathers and praise them, and it is there that they get to know one another and their standing places on the part of the families. It is at the gathering place that we will show you that you are greater than some other people, and others too are greater than you, as far as the family is concerned.

And when we come together and sing and drum, we also open their anuses, too. Someone will be in town and will be walking about. You will see him and think he is a chief's son. A woman will be walking about and you will think that she is a daughter of a chief. It is at the gathering place that people will know that the fellow is not somebody. It is not anyone apart from us drummers who let them know that, because we know their grandfathers and who they were. If someone's grandfather was a chief's son, we know. If the grandfather was a commoner, we know. If he was an elder, we know. If her friend sees her and thinks she's the daughter of a chief, when they meet and sit together, you the drummer will show that her grandfather was a commoner, and her father was a commoner and gave birth to her a commoner, too. We will call the name of her grandfather, and someone sitting by her will say, "Ah! So she is a commoner walking about in town like that!"

Someone else can be in the town walking quietly, and the father is a chief. It is at the gathering place that you show that her father is a chief. Her fellow friends sitting by her will say, "So as this person has been walking about coolly in town like that, she is the daughter of a chief." We Dagbamba even have a proverb about that. You know, some of our Dagbamba princesses wear beads around their waists, and so we say, *Nyirkɔyulana m-mali o limli, so bi deera*: "If a woman has no buttocks but has beads, someone who has got buttocks cannot collect the beads from her." It's a proverb, but someone can take it to be a name. Someone may be useless but be the son or daughter of a chief, and you who are a commoner cannot collect that chieftaincy from the fellow. That is its meaning. And so as people come together, someone doesn't know that this person is this and that person is that, and it is at the gathering place that they get to know one another. In the olden days, Dagbamba had no wise men apart from drummers. We were the ones who brought people together.

Up to now in Dagbon, as we drummers are there, we show everybody his or her standing place, and we even show that this fellow is related to that fellow. How do we show them the relationship? Let's say you are sitting down, and

Kissmal is sitting down, and you are both Dagbamba. Maybe you are from the same family, but you don't know that you are related. Maybe you are at a wedding house or a funeral house. Let's say your grandfather was a chief of Savelugu and he was called Alhassan. We will take Savelugu-Naa Alhassan's name to praise Kissmal, and we will take Savelugu-Naa Alhassan's name to praise John. As we drummers have praised you like that, if you have thoughts, you John will know that you are from the same family as Kissmal. Have the drummers not brought the family together?

As you are sitting down, maybe you are staying in Accra, and maybe you have relatives who are from somewhere far. You have heard of their names, but you don't know them. God will make a gathering to come, and all of you will go there, you and your relatives you didn't know. When we drummers open our mouths, we are coming to say, "Such-and-such a fellow from this place, a relative to so-and-so." Whatever happens, you will come to know your relatives. As it is, if you didn't know, have you not now known? This is how we show one another. This is how we are. And so it is inside the gathering, when we drummers are beating, people will get to know themselves, and someone will know that he is related to such-and-such a person.

On the part of calling names, someone can be there, and he wants you to praise him, but he doesn't know how to tell you to praise him. You will think and give him some song or proverb that will make him happy. Some of the names, the drummer will make them up himself, and some of them the drummer will learn from his forefathers. Someone might not know how to call a name, or he will be shy to call a name for himself. Such a fellow will come to the drummers to call a name for him. All the names we have been calling, all of them have talks, because they are all proverbs. And it is drummers who know the talks. Someone will call a name and will not know what is inside it. It is just like writing: you can say one thing and it will mean a lot of things. And I've have told you that someone can call a name, and it will spoil his work. Someone will call a name and the name will not fit him or suit him. And someone will call a name and it will look as if the name is bigger than him. Someone will call a name and it will not be nice, and the drummer will change it and call a good name. And so it is sense which calls a name. It is when people are calling names that drummers see the foolishness of people. And it is there too that we see the wisdom of people.

And so it is our sense which we take to do all this, and leaving the dances that we ourselves bring from the names we give to people. Someone will call a name, and when we beat it, that name will become a dance. If sense were not there, we would not call a name and it will become a dance, or we would not take

a proverb to call a name. It is all from us drummers, because it is we who call names for people. And that is why I am saying that our sense even surprises us. Sometimes a chief will come and he will not be able to call a name, and he will say the drummers should call a name for him. If not that, he will call a name and it won't be sweet, and we drummers will repair it and give him a good name.

When we are going to call a name for a chief, we look at how he became chief and what he did before he got to eat his chieftaincy. We will call a name to look like that. You see Naa Mahamadu sitting in Yendi while Yakubu is eating the chieftaincy: if there is life, it will not be long and he will get his chieftaincy back again. We the drummers have called a name for him: *Ninsal' ηun κση yevili, ηun nku tooi nin sheli*, that is "The person who doesn't have life is the one who cannot do something." We call this name for him, and we have prepared it and put it down. That is how it is. And we call him again, *Suylo mal' nyori, sul' ka sheli*, that is, "Patience gets everything, but annoyance gets nothing." And even a commoner can call a name, because as we call you Lunzeyu, we also have given you that name, *Suylo mal' nyori, sul' ka sheli*. And so it is we drummers who bring the names for the chiefs and for the commoners. That is how it is. And because this sense is there plenty, that is why the dances are plenty. I can tell you that in this Dagbon, there is no Dagbana who has more sense than a drummer. If they tell you that somebody knows more than a drummer, they are deceiving you. It is because of our sense that we do all this, and we learn the talks and the drumming and the dances of other people too. We have interest in it, and the sense is there, and the sense is doing work. That is how it is.

And so as we take proverbs to call the names, it enters into our beating for dancing. And every chief has got a name, and we beat it for him. Naa Mahama Kpema's name is "Be yoli yelgu": do you know what it means? *Be yoli yelgu ka sheli kani*: "They are late, and nothing is there." It is a name, and people dance it. And so it is a proverb that has come as a name and come again on the part of dancing. Has it not added to our drumming? If it were not nice, would it come like that? And it helps us, too. As we drummers call these names for a chief, if his heart wants, he can dance it. If he wants his grandfather's name, he will call his grandfather's name and dance it. And that is what we do on the part of our dancing. And so the dances people dance at a gathering place, many of them are names.

And so we drummers are the ones who call the names and praise people. Whether someone is a chief or a commoner, he can tell you to call a name for him. And so the names of people are many, and the dances too are many. And I can say that we drummers, it all shows our sense inside it, and that sense is not a useless

sense or a small sense. And what we have talked, we have not yet finished all of it. But tomorrow is medicine, and so I will think and I will know the talk we are going to push and put inside it. And so I think that we will stop here, and tomorrow I will tell you more about the names we take to dance, and how it helps us in our living.