

## Chapter I–18: *Baamaaya, Jera, Yori, Bila and Other Dances of Dagbon*

As we have many dances in Dagbon, there are some of our dances which we don't dance unless something happens, and these dances are different from the ones I have been talking about. Different like what? These dances are not like Naanigoo or Nantoo Nimdi or Dam' Duu or Naybieyu or 3im Taai Kurugu. Those dances are the names of chiefs, and people have taken them to dance. Naanigoo is Naa Andani's name; 3im Taai Kurugu is Naa Alaasani's name; Naa Yakuba is called Nantoo Nimdi; and Naa Abdulai is Naybieyu. They are the names of chiefs, and they are just near. Long ago we didn't have such dances. When the chiefs were there, that was when the names came to be there, and those who are just near, they are the ones who called names and we are dancing the dances of those names. But there are some dances I will talk about, and I think in my heart that they will be older than these dances I have just counted. And again, it is only some people who dance them, and the time they are dancing, it is not one person alone who dances the dance. Many of them will come and make a circle, and the drummers will be inside the circle beating for them to dance. It is not that somebody will come out and say, "Beat this for me and I will dance." And so there are some dances in Dagbon which we don't dance by heart. Which dances are they? Baamaaya is there. Takai is there. Tora is there. Jera is there. Yori is there. Bila is there. Dimbu is there. Nyindoyu is there. And today I will tell you something about them.

The way it is, everybody knows that we Dagbamba have many dances. As I am coming to talk about more of these dances, I want you know that how I am separating the talks for you, there are two ways of our talks. How we have started, we started with us the drummers first, that is, those who beat. And when we have come to the end of that section, when we talked about the drummers, then we have been talking about some of the dances we beat. If we Dagbamba are going to show ourselves on the part of our dances, or we are going to talk about our dances, it is the Takai that comes first. After Takai, the next one is Baamaaya. And the third one is Tora. That is three. As we are sitting in Ghana, everybody knows that, truly, these dances are inside Dagbon. And then we take Damba: that is on the part of us the Dagbamba. And when we finish Damba, there are the dances of the chief's names: we will beat Naybieyu, we will beat Naanigoo, we beat 3im Taai Kurugu, we beat Ijum Biε N-Kpaŋ and Dam' Duu and the others. These are all chief's dances. There are many different dances in our beating of the drums. When we get up and go to beat Takai and finish, that is the time many of the

different dances will also come out. When the dancers dance Takai, and they finish, at that time the individual chiefs' dances will be danced.

The next one following is Jera. Jera is something that we call an addition in Dagbon, because as for Jera, we don't dance it any time we want. We think within ourselves that it is something of an addition. It is only in some particular towns. How Jera is, we will never celebrate any festival and dance Jera. It is only if a very old or big person dies before we dance Jera. And truly, as we have been calling the Jera dancers to come and beat or dance, you can have control over somebody and ask him to do something and he can refuse it. And so Jera comes to look like the drum history, the Samban' luṇa. When it falls, then it comes. But if it doesn't fall, then it will never come. Somebody can be in Dagbon, or in some part of Dagbon, for a long time, and he wouldn't know that there's something like Samban' luṇa. It's just because he's not on the side of the chieftaincy. It is the chieftaincy side that is the drum history. This drum history, if not that something is forcing, or a festival, we don't beat Samban' luṇa any time. Jera is like that, and it is adding.

I think that this is the way they follow each other. I'm going to give you two different talks. If it is the way that we do our music, there is Takai, Baamaaya, Tɔra. This is how they follow each other. And this Damba, we the young men, sometimes we take it to be our last, and then leaving Naybieyu and other dances to come. But if we are going to take it on the part of what is beautiful and good to see on the part of our dancing in Dagbon, I can say that you can take Takai first, then you take Damba, and then you take Baamaaya.

And if it is following the side of our chieftaincy, to follow it, there is another one that is adding and is important, and I can even say that is something that is more important. That is Gingaani. That is what we when the chief comes out. If you go to the town and you haven't seen the chief of that town, it means you haven't been to that town. When we go to the chief's house and the chief is coming out, the drummers are behind him. When he is coming out, it is the elders who come out first. And the talking drums, the *timpana*, they are also standing outside of chief's house. And it is the talking drums, the *timpana*, that will talk for you the people to know that the chief is coming out. At that time too, the chief of the gun shooters, the Kamo-Naa, he and his followers will come and be following with their guns. And the Kamo-Naa will be in front, followed by his people, with the guns on their backs, and they will be beating their bells and come and sit down. And the goonji people are there, playing and showing that the chief is coming out. And by the time we the drummers start to beat the drums, that means our eyes have seen something, and so it is: I the drummer, my eyes have seen the

chief coming so I will start beating my drum. And the Gingaani, in the drum, it means that the chief should be careful of the way he walks, and he should walk slowly. And the chief will be following the beating, and lifting his legs one after the other. So they say the chief is walking Gingaani. That is the walking of a chief, the movement of the chief, with the legs, walking gently. That is what they call Gingaani. And so when we see the chief first, it is the Gingaani we start with. And so this Gingaani which we beat for the chief is very important too, and it shows that such-and-such a chief is coming out.

These ones are the very necessary ones to talk about inside the book. And these are the ones my mind has just thought about in the meantime, and I am finding the way to talk and group them. And I'm sure there are some other ways again. But if you want to talk about something that is very good, you have to talk about it gradually: if you rush through, maybe you'll forget about the important ones. And so if you are counting the dances of Dagbon, how we think about it among ourselves, it is necessary that Takai comes first. And Damba should be second. Are you hearing? And Baamaaya will come third. And Tɔra will come fourth. And then you count the chieftaincy dances. And then the next one should be Jera, and you will add it. As for Jera, I think in my heart that it is an old dance, and what is adding to it are Yori and Bila and Dimbu and Nyindɔyu. As for me, what my eye opened on, in Dagbon, are Jera and these dances I have just now counted: they are old things. And again, there are some people we call Jinwarba, and they also have their dance, but I think I will leave their talk and come and join it later, because their talk enters the talk of soothsayers and those who see.

And so to follow it, if you are talking about our drumming and you are standing on the part of chieftaincy, then its way is: when you count Damba, then you add Gingaani and follow it with the Samban' luŋa, the drum history. But I have told you that Gingaani is not like a dance, and it is on the part of the chiefs. And as for the drum history, it has a lot of talk, and we have to give it its own place in the book. Damba too has got its own place. And as we have finished the talk about praise-names and the chiefs' dances, we are going to leave some of the talks of the chiefs' dances, and today we are going to talk about these other dances I have counted for you. And as I am leading the Takai drummers in this town, Takai has got a lot of talk, and so I think I will leave it until tomorrow, and I will join Tɔra to its talks because Takai and Tɔra are following one another.

But I can tell you that as for Baamaaya, Takai, Tɔra, and Jera, everybody knows them. Even children beat and dance them, and we look at them, and the old people don't stop them. By the time a Dagbana child is about six years old, he can start learning Baamaaya or Takai. Children take broken pieces of calabash, or

they pick up things, and they beat the dance. Or when children get up and play, they can bring Jera. If the children are girls, they can bring Tɔra. Tɔra has not come from children, but when they are playing, they dance it. It's now that you always see young girls dancing it, but women like it, too. They will be dancing it and laughing. And if it is that they are girls and they are dancing Tɔra, we come and look at them, and if it is boys who come and dance Takai, we also look at them.

Tɔra and Takai are moving in one line. How the small boys start dancing Takai, that is how the small girls start dancing Tɔra. When children are small and they gather and sit, they will get up and say, "Let's dance Tɔra," or "Lets dance Takai." They will clap their hands and start singing, *Saɣsi zani ka niɲ kpɛm' zuɣu, kpai! Dim pa taali*: "Turn and knock an old person on the head, *kpai!* It doesn't matter." And the others will sing, *Saɣsi zani ka niɲ bii zuɣu, kpai! Dim pa taali*: "Turn and knock a young person on the head, *kpai!* It doesn't matter." And they will beat and dance it. Takai and Tɔra have not come because of children, and the children didn't start it. But the children dance Takai and Tɔra. And as for the children, when they can speak and when they can hear the beating of any music, at that time even they already know Baamaaya. As we are sitting, my son Osmanu is about four and a half years now, and when he's playing, he knows Baamaaya, and Takai, and Naanigoo, and Jera. And so even children dance all these dances, but they are not the dances of children.

Baamaaya is a Dagbamba dance, and as for Baamaaya, every Dagbana knows it. Baamaaya has come to show that when an elderly woman is dead, they should go and dance Baamaaya. And it has come to show that when an elderly man is dead, they should go and dance Baamaaya. And it has come to stand that if there is to be a festival tomorrow, they should go and dance Baamaaya this night. And they will dance it until the next morning. Today as we are sitting, this is how we know Baamaaya. Today when they dance Baamaaya, it is a funeral day or a festival day, but formerly, Baamaaya was the music of Dagbon in the night. When I was a small boy growing up in the village, the music they were beating in the nights in the village, and I knew it, they would dance Baamaaya. It wasn't a funeral day, and it wasn't a festival day. At that time, anywhere they were beating it, the village boys would eat their night food and go to the dance. And even the girls too used to go. And at that time they were lighting our local lamps, the ones they used to make with clay. Sometimes they would light four of the very big ones and put them in four places where they gathered. It was not the day of a funeral or a festival, and it was not anything that was making them dance. We just used to dance Baamaaya in the night after we ate. We would gather and we didn't know

what to do, and we couldn't be sitting quietly as if somebody had died. We danced it to enjoy ourselves, but today, if you know how to dance Baamaaya well, you can take it anywhere, to a chief's house or a rich man's house, or a funeral house. Nowadays, that is where you will see Baamaaya. The time we were young, we were not going to funeral houses to dance Baamaaya. We were just dancing it for life, but it wasn't every day that we danced it.

What brought Baamaaya? How we drummers know Baamaaya, Baamaaya comes from mosquitoes and how they bite us at night. In the rainy season, when it is the time of many mosquitoes, you will dance Baamaaya. When you finish eating and you enter the room, the mosquitoes are inside. When you are outside, it's the same thing. Because the mosquitoes used to trouble us, we couldn't sleep. And you will hear people say, "Let's dance Baamaaya." Someone will take a drum, and you will hear the gungon coming out: *kwom kwa, kwom kwa, kwom kwa kwom kwom*. And the drum would be beating *za dan dan, za dan dan, za dan dan, za dan dan*. That was how they used to beat. As we are sitting, if you watch the way they dance Baamaaya, Baamaaya is a dance for men; women don't dance Baamaaya, but the men wear skirts when they dance it. They tie bangles around their waists. And they will take cloths to tie on their necks, and part of the cloth will hang and be rolling on the legs. And they will be holding fans and fanning themselves. They will make a line, and they will be going round, twisting their waists. How the dance of Baamaaya is, if you are dancing it, mosquitoes cannot get you and bite you. You are fanning yourself, and shaking your waist, and making noise: how will mosquitoes get you? During my time, and the way we were dancing it, that was our idea. And as Baamaaya dancers come out and crowd together, and they are dancing, you see that the mosquitoes are not able to get them. And then when they dance and shake their bodies like that, getting to a very long time, say one or two o'clock, you will see that they will become very tired and feel sleepy, and they just go inside their rooms, and they fall down exhausted — bye! That is sleep. As you are tired and you are sleeping, even if a mosquito is biting you — *o-ho!* — you don't care. You don't even notice it. You will just sleep. It is the tiredness of the dance that will let you sleep without hearing the mosquitoes. It is when there is no sleep that there is a mosquito. And when they come out to dance Baamaaya, you will see that all the small children will come. And the very small children who are about five or six years will be standing aside and wrestling and jumping around, and their hearts will be very white. And you will see that some of the small children will be lying at one side sleeping. Sometimes they would dance Baamaaya until two o'clock in the night. The time of the mosquitoes, the villagers don't sleep early. In our time, whenever there

were a lot of mosquitoes, then we would say we should go outside and set up a dance so that we will pass the time before we sleep. In Dagbon, this is how Baamaaya started.

I will show you the meaning of Baamaaya. The way we know Baamaaya and beat it, that is not what they are beating now. What the old people talked and I heard, that is what I'm going to tell you. The way old people talked about it, they talked it like a story. One time there was hunger, and when the hunger came, when they went to the market, they didn't get things to buy. It was like that up to the time there was abundance of food, and there was food at the market. On the market day, they went, and as they had not been getting food to buy, they saw food and they bought. That day they said, "We thank God! As for today, our market is cool. Now the market is cool." That is *Daamaaya*: the market is cool. This is what the old people talked and I heard. That is what they brought inside the dance. And so this is how they were saying it in the olden days. This is what older people talk about Baamaaya, that it was Daamaaya. In Dagbani, *baa* is a swampy place, so when they call Baamaaya, it is saying that the swamp is cool. And so now they have turned the name.

And in the olden days, the way they were dancing it was very different from the way they dance it today. What people now call Baamaaya, formerly its name was Tuubaanƙpilli, and Daamaaya was also different. It is this dance Tuubaanƙpilli that they have now called Baamaaya. And the reason why they are calling it Baamaaya is just that our Daamaaya died, and they formed Tuubaanƙpilli. And because they heard that we were dancing Daamaaya, they wanted to give Tuubaanƙpilli an older name. By that time, Daamaaya was not there again, and they didn't know it, and they called it as Baamaaya. Even today in Dagbon, if you go and call the Baamaaya group as Tuubaanƙpilli, they will say, no, that they are not Tuubaanƙpilli; they are Baamaaya. Have you seen? And so if somebody talks like that to us who are older, then we also correct him, "Then if they are not Tuubaanƙpilli, they are also not Baamaaya, but rather Daamaaya." And they always answer to us that this is how they also grew up and met it, called Baamaaya. And is that not some of the talks that are lies I have been telling you about? I have separated it for you, and now you have got it correct. The old Baamaaya was there, and we called it Daamaaya.

And so Baamaaya, its original name is Daamaaya, but they have come to call it Baamaaya. If you call this Daamaaya, an old person who knew it at that time will ask you, "How did you manage to know the name?" At this time, everyone is calling it Baamaaya. If you come to call it to an old person as Daamaaya, he will know that you have actually searched for that dance. You will

ask many people, and they will be surprised that you know that name. If you ask any elderly people, they will also tell you that the one who told you this is an old person. So what I'm talking to you, too, I have a father for that. I don't talk something if I don't have somebody who taught me about it. And our fathers too were very, very old around that time, because our own father who gave birth to us was also born around Naa Yakuba's time. And so during our fathers' time, the talks they gave us, if somebody from this time wants to challenge you about it, you can easily disgrace him: your father was not my father's size; maybe what my father has seen, your father hasn't seen it. That is how it is. And I grew up and met my father too. The talk he gave to me, that is what I'm giving to you.

This Daamaaya I am talking to you about, that is what I grew up and met. I know how they beat the drum inside it, and I know how they used to dance it too. But truly, as for Daamaaya, it wasn't in many places; it wasn't in all Dagbamba towns. Even I can say it wasn't common, but it was there. But when Tuubaankpilli came out, I think if you went into every corner in Dagbon, you would see it. When Tuubaankpilli came out as a new thing, then Daamaaya died. And so as for Tuubaankpilli, it has just started: when it came out for the very first time, they named it Tuubaankpilli. Do you know Tuubaankpilli? It is a type of food. They grind beans and mix with water, and form balls and fry it. That is Tuubaankpilli. My brother Mumuni was already matured and searching for girls when Tuubaankpilli came. I was just a small boy. But when Tuubaankpilli came out, it was already carrying its own name, Tuubaankpilli, and the *gunḡḡ* was beating, "*Tuubaankpilli, Tuubaankpilli, Tuubaankpilli.*" And so when Tuubaankpilli came, Daamaaya died, and they took Tuubaankpilli to place it as Daamaaya, and Tuubaankpilli came to carry that name, too. As Tuubaankpilli carried that name, they took the Tuubaankpilli to stand as the olden days one. But I want you to know that the olden days Baamaaya was there before this time's Tuubaankpilli too came. And any child who grows up, if he didn't see Daamaaya, he will take Tuubaankpilli to be that one. And so people are just taking it that Tuubaankpilli is Daamaaya. But you should know that Daamaaya was there before Tuubaankpilli came out, and Daamaaya died, and Tuubaankpilli is now standing. What the older people have told us, that is what I'm telling you.

I know how they beat Daamaaya and I know how they sang its songs, and I know how they danced it. At that time, they were dancing Daamaaya and stepping sideways. And they were holding scarves. They used to dance it with young women. As for our time, we used to *golse*; we used to bluff inside it. That time, you would see the young girls put powder on their faces, and dress nicely, and come there. The women didn't go in between the men, but they had their line,

joining the men's line. They were not facing one another. It is now that Baamaaya is danced only by men, but in our time, the women used to have their part to play in the dance. As they gathered, the men and the women would be going around in their lines, but they didn't close the circle. And the way they dance Tuubaan̄kpilli now, they were not dancing it like that. In Tuubaan̄kpilli, the drummers were in the center, and the women too were at one side.

How they were dancing Daamaaya in our time, they were wearing the type of trousers we call *jenjemi*, the trousers to your foot. If you had very good trousers, that night you would wear it and come to the dancing place. We were not wearing skirts like they wear now. If you had a jumper, you could wear it. And you would get a hat to wear. You would be dancing with the arms swinging front and back. And the drummers used to be in the center. That is how it was. At that time, when they gathered and they were going to dance Daamaaya, the moment they started beating, you will go inside without anything in your hands, and stand only with your arm swinging. But before you realize, you will see your girlfriend come to stand at your back and hang her scarf on your neck. And you will take her scarf and be swinging it and fanning yourself. Then the girlfriends used to be proud about their boyfriends, dancing. If you saw the dance, you would enjoy it.

When Tuubaan̄kpilli also came out, the way they were dancing it first, they were wearing these triangular shorts like *pieto*; we call it *kpalannyirichoo*, and they tie it with string to cover their fronts. That was what they used to wear. They would take the thing and tie it around their waists. And it came to the time they got to know that they could sew the *mukuru*, the skirt, and wear it, but it was a long time before they started wearing the skirt. What they were wearing, even shorts are more than that. It is this modern time that their eye opened and they started wearing skirts to cover themselves to their knees. And so when Tuubaan̄kpilli came out, because they used to wear the *kpalannyirichoo* or the *pieto*, the older people were calling it *Gbinfini-waa*: naked or ragged dance. You could look at them just like that. It was the Tuubaan̄kpilli people too who started tying the metal shakers on their legs, the *chaylaa*. Before that time, the only dance that they used the *chaylaa* was Jera. I don't know whether they copied Jera people to wear the *chaylaa*. It doesn't matter. It may be so. A person can't just get up and have wisdom, unless you see somebody having some, and then you can copy it. It doesn't matter.

And so Daamaaya was there, and Tuubaan̄kpilli came and followed it. They were different. The way they dressed and how they danced, the two were different. And the beating, too, inside Daamaaya, the way the *gun̄gun̄* used to sound, people watched the beat of the *gun̄gun̄* and said, *Dagbon Dagbon saȳsi zan̄*



*kpe*: Dagbon, stand here. When we were dancing and the sound of the drums was coming out and people were hearing it, they took it to mean like that. And the way we used to shake our bodies and move, it was looking as if it was the same thing they were thinking about.

And the songs of Daamaaya were different, too. The song that was inside Daamaaya as an old song was: *Kulpal' mal bem di dii bamdi chichaysala*. That was the song they were singing when I was a small boy. The meaning of it is: the fisherman is wicked, then how much more the seine that catches the fish? This *chichaysala* was something we used to weave like a basket, and you could go and peg it in the river so that when the fish were passing, the basket would trap them. Then the fisherman would come and put his hand inside and remove them. We were singing this song inside Daamaaya. And so the meaning of Daamaaya was "If you say that the person who catches fish is bad, what of the basket that catches the fish?" That is the reply of the fishermen. The one who catches the fish is using the basket to catch the fish, not that he is using his hands; and so it is the basket that kills the fish. This is the song which the Daamaaya dancers sang. Have you seen the talk? It looks like this modern time's talk, and it is falling into your matter, too. It's like these modern soldiers and the types of guns they have: is it the soldiers who are bad or the guns that are bad? And so that is the sense under it. It is an old thing inside Daamaaya.

And so in the olden days, older people didn't like it too much, because when we were singing our Daamaaya songs, we used to bring some proverbs inside that were something like gossiping. We used to sing and abuse people. If we hear anything about you, we will put you into a song. If somebody was a thief, or he did something wrong, when we came out to dance Daamaaya, then we would call that person's name and sing the song. When we went to dance, we would bring his name inside the Daamaaya. And so if it is in a town, will it be all right? That was why some of the chiefs didn't like it. This is the way we met it. And so it looked the same as this Atikatika the children have been dancing today. They also abuse people in their songs. Every generation has got stubborn children like that, who will come and be doing something like that. That's why chiefs at that time, many of them didn't want to hear anything about it at all. If you formed Daamaaya in a town where the chief didn't like it, any time you came out to dance, they would come and start chasing you people away, telling you that you shouldn't dance it. So we only danced it at places where no chief was against it. But the chiefs who liked it, how we used to start it, we would select one person from among us the young men, and we would come and start it from his house. Then we would take the drums and beat like that, to go to the chief's house. Sometimes

in the night, you would see the chief bring a chair outside, and sit down and watch us. That was on the part of the chiefs who liked it. Sometimes they would take it to places like the chief's house, and sometimes if the chief liked it, they could take it to a funeral house, too, but truly, as for Daamaaya, we were dancing it for life, to enjoy ourselves.

And so after ours, Tuubaankpilli came out with its own name, Tuubaankpilli. That is what they call Baamaaya today. And so you should separate this modern one from the real Daamaaya. Daamaaya is no more there, and they don't sing its songs again. Inside Tuubaankpilli's songs, they were singing *Saligi Naa diri kantɔŋ*. Do you know *kantɔŋ*? It is a seasoning they make like a ball, round and black, and they put it into soup to make it sweet and fit for every chief to eat. And so the meaning of "Saligi Naa diri kantɔŋ" is, "The one who is close to the chief eats kantɔŋ soup." And they mixed another one and added it, and that is *Waache so korata*. It's Hausa, and it means, "Who likes the tax collector?" These are Tuubaankpilli songs. As for us, we were not beating these ones. These are two of the songs they mixed and said it is Baamaaya, but it is not the same as how we drummers knew the olden days Daamaaya. Today too, sometimes they also add other dances inside it, too. It is just recently that they have tried to put some other things inside. Sometimes they add Nyayboli, and sometimes they add *Ɔjum Mali Kpiɔŋ*. The meaning of Nyayboli is: the chief called his wife and she didn't come; she has flat buttocks. And the meaning of *Ɔjum Mali Kpiɔŋ* is: the one who has strength is the one with the truth.

It is now that they have turned Baamaaya and taken these dances to enter into Baamaaya, and taken Nyayboli to enter into Baamaaya, but formerly it was not there like that. If I beat the Daamaaya *gunɔŋ* for you to hear the real beat of Baamaaya, then you will know. As I am saying this, it is only one-one of the young people whom you will ask, "How were they beating Baamaaya?" and the fellow will know. Truly, as for those who usually beat Baamaaya *gunɔŋ*, drumming is not their work. They are just doing it, and in their learning, no one is teaching them how to learn drumming. Sometimes we real drummers go and help them beat Baamaaya, and if you want to know that the beating of Baamaaya is from us to them, you should ask those who are beating it what is its real name: they will not be able to tell you. And so I'm telling you: you can ask somebody who dances Baamaaya, and he won't know it. We are the drummers and we know the dances that follow us. And the way the Baamaaya dance started, in Dagbon, we the drummers know it.

It wasn't long ago and I heard somebody who is educated saying that they dance Baamaaya to make rain fall. It's lies. That is not our Dagbamba tradition.

The one who talked that just wanted to make his talk interesting. But look: if it was last year, we needed the rains very badly, but we didn't get rain. And I think that the Baamaaya people could have danced a thousand dances, but the rains wouldn't come. And so it's a lie. I have gone inside to talk to you about something, and only an old person, or somebody who has asked, will also know about it. What you have is going to take many people by surprise. If you get people telling you all sorts of things about your work, they only want you to throw it away and they will go and pick it for themselves. And so don't follow those liars. If somebody comes to tell you something, I want you to know that even the owner of the dance doesn't know it. And so it is only sometimes that we drummers beat Baamaaya, but we know it better than those who usually beat it. When they are beating, it is not as interesting as when a true drummer is beating it. It is not all dances I go to look at. Baamaaya is stronger than I am; that is why I look at it. I say it is stronger than me because when Dagbamba gather, and we drummers are beating, Baamaaya is also there, and that is why I look at it. And so that is the talk I can give you on the part of Baamaaya.

As for Jera, we all grew up and met it. They don't dance Jera for nothing. If not a funeral house, they won't call Jera people unless someone like the Arts Council is going to have a competition. Jera shows that they should go and dance it when a chief dies. If an old woman is dead, they should go and dance Jera. If a person who becomes very old dies, they can go and dance it. If it is not something that happens, I have never seen those who dance Jera go and dance it in a town. They will never just get up and say, "Let's go and dance Jera." If a chief is going to some town to perform a funeral, if there are Jera people in his town, he can send them to the funeral town to dance. If there is a person who dances Jera and his in-law dies, when he is going to perform the funeral, he can take the Jera people there and they will go and dance it. This is the way of the Jera dancers, and we all grew up and met them.

As for Jera people, they have some particular towns for them. If it is Baamaaya, if you go anywhere in Dagbon, it is there. And Takai too, it is everywhere in Dagbon. Tora is everywhere in Dagbon. But you cannot see Jera to be like that. Jera is not something that is all over the place. They have the towns where they dance it. Dagbon: in Nanton-Naa's land, they have it. If a new Nanton-Naa eats the chieftaincy, in the village where they are dancing Jera, they will bring it to Nanton and dance it for him to see. The time I was at Nanton, I saw that they brought it there like that. The place we went to see Jera, at Changnayili: Nanton-Naa is the one holding that village. They have Jera there. But have you seen Jera in Tamale? No. Tolon? No. The towns I have heard: I

haven't seen the Mion Jera people, but I heard that at Mion, they have Jera there. There is a village called Jimli on the way to Yendi. It is the Tijo-Naa who holds that village. There is a Jera group at Jimli. There will be some other places too, but the Changnayili one is the one I have been seeing. And so it's not all Dagbon towns where you can see Jera. They don't dance it as they dance Takai, for life.

And the reason why Jera is not in many towns is that the way they dance Jera, they dance it with medicine. When you see them, you can see that they wear many waist bands and medicines, and they even put some in their necks. Everything they carry on their bodies is medicine. That is why Jera is not widely danced in Dagbon. If you want to enter into Jera and dance it, you have to prepare yourself before you can enter into it. It moves inside families. In Dagbon, if you are not from the Jera family, and you want to dance Jera, you have to follow the people who dance it, and they will give you some of the medicine they have, before you will be dancing it. They prepare you well before you can join them. That is how they are. So that is the way it is. They use a lot of medicine to dance it. It is an old dance, and that is how they started it.

Inside it, there is a medicine that someone will use to tie another person and make him weak: we call it *kabrɛ*. They can tie one another with the *kabrɛ* when they are dancing it so that no one will dance better than his friend, and someone will tie his friend who is singing so that his friend will not sing better than he. They can tie one another with *kabrɛ*, and this is how it is. And so Jera is a very interesting and wonderful dance, but because of all these medicines, people don't want to enter inside it to dance it. When they are going to dance Takai, have you heard that they tie one another with *kabrɛ*? And inside Tɔra, do they bring *kabrɛ* inside? In Baamaaya, have you heard that they tie one another? No. But why is it that if they are going to dance Jera, they tie one another? You have to know that, as for Jera, they dance it with wickedness. If you want to learn it, you have to attach yourself to those who dance it. The thing the dancer already put in his own body, he will give you some to eat before you can also come into it. So that is the way it is.

Apart from that, the way they dance it, if you are not one of them, and you just enter into them to dance it for life, and if their leg come to step on your leg, and it is not from their white heart, then you will get troubles. We hear that if somebody who dances Jera kicks your leg, if the leg steps on yours, it is only a Jera dancer who will be able to treat you. If not he who can treat you, you will never get somebody who can treat you. In the olden days, we heard that if you enter into Jera, or even if you come to look at them when they are dancing, if you don't stand well and their leg touches yours, you will cough up to the time you

will die. And we also heard that when they are going to dance it, as women used to chew chewing sticks, they can't come to watch the dance and be chewing chewing sticks. The Jera dancers' medicine doesn't like it, and they have a medicine for that. So that is how it is. When we were children, this is what they told us. In Jera, they are showing their medicines when they dance it. You see the *chaylaa* they wear on their legs? It is a very heavy thing. If you are not strong and you tie it on your legs, you will find it difficult to move yourself to dance. You will just become tired quickly. But as they belong to that dance, it's not a problem for them. They have strength, and they want to show their strength. And so to compare Jera to Takai, for example, Takai is a very beautiful dance, and it's not something where you show your strength. But in Jera, when they are dancing it, they use medicine. That is how it is.

How they beat, they beat *gunḡonḡ*, and their *gunḡonḡ* are different from our *gunḡonḡ*. Their *gunḡonḡ* are just small ones, and they pull the skin very tight. They have someone to beat the drum, and as they beat the *gunḡonḡ*, he is the only drummer, and he beats along with the *gunḡonḡ* and they dance. Those who beat the Jera *gunḡonḡ*, they are not from inside drumming, but a drummer can know how to beat it. It's like Baamaaya: they have people who beat their *gunḡonḡ* who may not be drummers, but drummers can beat the Baamaaya *gunḡonḡ*. And so the one beating Jera *gunḡonḡ* is not from anywhere. He is one of the people who dance it. He is just one of the dancers who will decide to learn how to beat the *gunḡonḡ*, and he will be beating it. He is just a typical Dagbana. But the one who beats the drum inside Jera is not different from us. We the drummers, some of us go to beat it. Any Dagbana drummer can beat it, and it's not that you have to be one of the Jera people before you beat it. The one beating the drum, he puts something we call *luḡ-bansi* on his hand; it's a small piece of metal with some small rings in it, and it sounds like a rattle. We also call it *saḡsaḡ*: the way it shakes, that is why they call it like that. It is blacksmiths who make it. Sometimes Baamaaya drummers wear it, and the Kambonsi drummers also wear it. As for the dancers, we have something we call *feḡa*: it is a castenet made of metal, and it is also blacksmiths who make it. They hold these and knock them when they are dancing. And they wear scarves when they dance Jera. That is how they started.

And when they are beating, those who sing are there, and they sing their songs. They don't sing on the part of the chiefs. They only sing the songs that will make people laugh. Or they will sing proverbs. When they start, there is one who will be leading to sing, and he talks a lot of things, and the others will be responding. They will be greeting the chief, singing that they have collected a gift from the chief, and so they are greeting the chief. And they will sing proverbs,

one after the other. A poor man has no friend. If a river dries up, it is only God who will be ashamed. If somebody is not in the house and his thing is going to spoil, the one who fears God will make it well. Any good thing will not lack somebody to buy it. This is how they will be singing. Whatever the one singing wants, he will add it into the song. And so their songs are proverbs. This is how it is. There is no talk that is forbidden inside Jera. And so Jera is there, and if you see them coming to dance Jera, you will be happy, because how they dress and dance, it is very interesting.

Inside our drumming again, there is a dance we call Yori, and we don't beat it by heart. This Yori is the dance of women who are on the side of chieftaincy. If some big talk doesn't happen on the part of chieftaincy and women, they don't dance it. It is for the daughters of Yaa-Naas, the women who become chiefs, that is, the Gundo-Naa and her followers: that is their dance, and it is from chieftaincy. The Gundo-Naa is a chief who is from the Yaa-Naa, and she is a woman. When they make a new Yaa-Naa and the Gundo-Naa comes to greet him, it is this Yori they beat. If somebody dies and the Gundo-Naa goes to the shaving of the heads, it is this Yori they beat, and they dance it. The Yori they dance for a new Yaa-Naa, if the Gundo-Naa and her followers are going to dance it, they get clubs and cudgels, our olden-days cudgels that we all got up and met. The cudgels they hold, we call them *yoojangbehi*, "yoo walking sticks." When the new Yaa-Naa comes out and they are going to greet him, they cover the clubs inside something and carry them, and when they get near to the chief's house, they put the clubs down and every woman will take one. The Gundo-Naa will wear a cloth, and then she will wear a smock on top, and she will put on a hat that covers her ears. Every daughter of a Yaa-Naa will take a club, and sometimes there will be a hundred clubs, and each woman will have one. The drummers will be in front, and we will start beating Yori, and the women will be dancing and raising the clubs up. There are no songs inside it, and those who dance don't sing. Even the drummers don't sing. Only the drummers will be beating, and *gunḡoḡ* will be knocking. This is how Yori is, and it has got respect.

A person can be there until he becomes old, and he will not see this type of beating at the chief's house. This Yori, we beat its beating at a funeral house, when they are shaving the heads of the funeral children. But the Yori we beat at funeral houses on the shaving-the-heads day is different, and it's not sweet like the one at the Yaa-Naa's house. They call the two of them Yori, and the beating is the same, but they are not the same. As for the Yendi one, if they are dancing it, nobody else can join, unless you are among them. In the Yendi one, if any woman comes to join them in the dance, the first thing she will do is to collect one of the

clubs or sticks. If the woman comes out and collects the stick they are holding to dance, then the princesses will get to know that, “Yes, this woman, she is one of us. She is our daughter.” That is what will make them know that the woman belongs to them. And so the way they dance it at Yendi, and the women there are more than a thousand, if you are not one of them, you can’t just join them for life. It’s a fearful dance. That is the way it is.

If not these talks I have counted, Yori does not go outside to any other gathering. It is a dance of Dagbamba, and it is hard. As for it, if you are going to teach it to somebody, there are some things inside it, and you have to do its work. If you don’t do its work and you beat it, it will turn around and knock you. And so if you are a stranger and you want to beat it, whatever you do, it will worry you. The one who is going to beat it and show you will not beat it a lot, because if he beats it plenty, people will blame him. The work that you will take and show somebody, and they will blame the two of you, is it nice? As they are blaming you, it’s not sweet. As you have been learning our dances, I think that it is only once that I told you that this Yori is a dance, but I don’t think I have ever told you what I’m saying now. But it’s a Dagbamba dance, and it’s the dance of women chiefs.

As for Bila, it is not often they dance it. Bila, too, they don’t beat it for nothing. They call the Bila dancers to come to towns to dance, but it is only some towns. Somebody can be in this Dagbon until he dies, and he will never see Bila. The chiefs who die and the Bila dancers dance at their funeral, these chiefs are there. It is not all chiefs. And it is not all towns that have Bila dancers. There is Bila for this town, but it is not at this town. It is at Gulkpeogu, the Gulkpe-Naa’s town, because as the Gulkpe-Naa is sitting in this town, his real town is near Yendi. Gulkpeogu is just a few miles from Yendi. That is where Bila is. If it is that the Gulkpe-Naa is not there, that is, if he dies, they will come and dance Bila. Savelugu too has Bila, at Tuuteliyili. It’s one of Savelugu-Naa’s villages. It’s not far from Savelugu, about two miles, going toward Yiwɔyɔ. Now as Savelugu is developing, it’s even getting near to the place. They have Bila too. And we have Bila at Karaga, and it is at Gushegu, and Mion, and Yendi. These are the towns I know where they dance Bila. If the chief of any of those towns is not there, they will come and dance Bila. That is why I said that someone can be there and come to be old, and he will never see Bila. They have never brought it to his town, and he too has not gone to where they dance it. That is how Bila is.

The Bila dancers don’t have their own drummers, but they have their *gunɔnɔnɔn*. We drummers sometimes beat to help them; if they are going to dance, sometimes they come and give drummers money to come and help them.





don't have time for it. No one enters it. As for them, when they are doing their something, you don't have to interfere. Maybe if you go there, because you are a white man, maybe they won't mind you. But if it's a black man, he won't want to enter into troubles. If you take yourself there and enter, if you have some trouble, then who gave it to you? Truly, Bila is a bad dance, and even it is not all Dagbamba who know about Bila. And Nyindɔyɔ is also like that, but Bila is worse than Nyindɔyɔ. As for the Bila dancer, he can easily kill somebody, and they will take the fellow and go and bury him. That is all. Even if the fellow will not die, he will faint. And so to us, the Bila dancers are bad people, and we don't like their talk. But they are Dagbamba: they are the people we call *Dagban' sabli*, black Dagbamba. Who are they? Anyone who gets up and he doesn't pray, and his work is that he has appetite for medicine. If he is going to do bad to a human being, inside his heart, he has no pity. Anything that his heart asks him to do, he will do it. They are those we call black Dagbamba. But truly, they are Dagbamba. If you a drummer want to praise him, you will know how to praise him. But because of their medicine and their wickedness, we call them black Dagbamba. Inside their hearts, everything is black. They don't fear God. They don't have any thoughts apart from, "Let's kill this fellow." And so we don't like the talks of the Bila people.

And the beating of it, we don't even like the beating of Bila. Sometimes someone will tell us to beat it, but we don't like beating it. Those who dance Bila are there. And where they dance it is also there. But since you came here, have you been seeing it? It is not often they dance it. They don't beat it for nothing. This is how Bila is. They don't dance it by heart, and children don't dance it. Bila and Nyindɔyɔ are bad dances in Dagbon. These two dances, they are bad dances. And so we don't joke with them. As for Bila and Nyindɔyɔ, we don't even count them into dancing. From the time the white men came and started calling us to come and dance our Dagbamba dances, I have never heard that they asked the people who dance Bila to come and dance. And I have never heard that they called the Nyindɔyɔ or Dimbu dancers.

And so as for Nyindɔyɔ and Dimbu, they are also like that, but we know them to be at Gushegu. I haven't seen Dimbu, but I have heard that the Gulkpeogu at Yendi side has Dimbu, too. They are not in Tamale here, not at all. If it is that, say, the Karaga chief dies, they can also take it and go there. It is not all times that they dance them. If a person does not die, they will not come out and dance. As for Nyindɔyɔ, I've seen it. How Nyindɔyɔ is, those who dance it don't have any talk. When they are going to dance it, they have their songs, but no drums, and there is no gunɔŋ. They will take the hoes that we use to farm, the

flat ones, and be knocking them to one another. And they will make a line and be knocking the hoes and singing songs, and dancing what their heart wants. And they know the song they sing. Nobody else knows it. That is how Nyindɔyɔ is. But as for Dimbu, it is very strong, and it has got many forbidden things inside. Forbidden things like what? People do bad things, and Dimbu doesn't want that, and so they don't like dancing Dimbu when there are many people around. It's not even like a dance. They don't dance it in the open like Nyindɔyɔ. They dance it at midnight. And they don't want children seeing it. When they dance it, a woman does not wail. If they are dancing it and you wail, you will die. That is how Dimbu dances. Didn't I tell you that there are some things in our drumming which a person will not take and show somebody. Dimbu is like that. They don't want everybody to see its dancing. It is only some of the chiefs who have it. If not a chief's funeral on the part of the chiefs who have it, the gunḡon of Dimbu will not cry. And so that is my talk on Bila, Nyindɔyɔ and Dimbu.

And again, the barbers have also got their dance, and it is not something we drummers beat. Those who shave people, they are those we call barbers. As for the barbers, they are Muslims, but they also know the talk of their starting, and so this dance is following their custom. And I think it is an old thing with them. But if not that a barber is dead, no one can dance it. It is called Gbɔŋ-waa. And so I have to separate it for you. It isn't that we don't beat drums at a barber's funeral. We beat. But when it reaches the time for their song, then we stop. If they sing their song and finish and they get up, and they want the drummers to praise them, we can praise them. But the time they will be singing, nobody will put his hand inside. That is the way it is. As for that one, nobody's matter goes into it. If a barber dies, we will beat drums, but if they are singing their songs, nobody will put his hand inside. And so it is the barbers who sing its songs. If a barber is not dead and a young barber sings its songs, or if a woman from the barbers' line sings its songs, then it means a barber will die. We all got up and met it, and no one dances it if a barber has not died. They have never thought of it. And so it resembles Dimbu or Bila, because if not that something happens, they won't dance it.

At times it will take you more than ten or twenty years and you won't hear that song. They don't take it as something they do for life. They put it that if a barber dies, if it is night time, they gather and sit. It isn't all barber children who know how to sing it. The old barber women and the old barber men, they know how to sing it. And the one who will die and they will sing it, if they make his funeral and finish, you won't hear somebody walking about singing that song. They don't sing it like that. Even in their barber way, if something comes on

somebody who is a barber and his mind starts reflecting on that song, then they will all fear, because they will know that one of them will die. That is how it is. And so it is only at a funeral house of a barber that they sing it, and it is because of the dead body that they are singing it. And so drummers don't beat it. Why should we beat it? But when the barbers sing it, then they can dance it. The one who wants, he can dance; and if he doesn't dance, then it is also what he wants. As for the dance, they don't take it to anybody's house. They don't take it to a chief's house. And they don't take it to any funeral to dance. The barber who died, his house: that is where they dance it. That is the end of it.

And so the talk of these dances like Dimbu and Bila is quite different from the talk of Takai. Takai is the dance of young men, not old people. Truly, Takai started a long time ago, and we all grew up and met it like that. You can beat Takai for a naming or a wedding or a funeral; you can beat it after the Ramadan fast; if someone is made a chief, he can let them beat Takai; if someone is just happy, he can call them to dance Takai. But Dimbu and the others, they will not be at all the places I have counted. When any festival is going on, they only know that they have to make some sacrifices to their gods. They don't take their dance to enter the festival. If it is the Damba festival, you won't see a Jinwarba take part in dancing Damba, and you won't see that they bring Bila or Dimbu there. They don't do that. This is how it is.

But I want to tell you that even as a dance like Dimbu is there, as it is not in my town, I don't know much about it. It's at Gushegu, and these Gushegu people, we don't count them much into Dagbamba. Those tribes who are at that side have entered and mixed with one another, and it is not all of them who are Dagbamba. And all of their dances too can enter one another. And I think that some of these dances have come like that. As we are here, we beat the Mamprusi dance, but we are not Mamprusis. We beat Simpa and Gumbɛ, and they are not our dances; it is the Bassaris and the Chembas and the Kotokolis who are for those dances. But we have collected them. And so I think we have collected some of our dances because we have mixed with others. As for Jera and Baamaaya, they have not come from anyone apart from Dagbamba, and I can say that because they are here at our side of Dagbon. But Bila, Nyindɔyɔ, Dimbu: they are from Yendi side. Truly, they are all Dagbamba towns, and we know that they are all Dagbamba dances. But this place is here, and Yendi side is there, and we don't know all the talks of their dances. We only know that such a dance is their dance.

Even up to the time of Naa Andani, the Yaa-Naa's strength was not coming here. The Savelugu chief was this place's Yaa-Naa. He would gather all the chiefs who are from this side, and if a chieftaincy fell here and they were looking

for it, they would come and greet him. And Savelugu-Naa would just send one messenger to go and greet the Yaa-Naa and say, “This chieftaincy has fallen here, and so you should give it to this fellow.” The Yaa-Naa would agree, and that was all. It is now that it has turned. After Naa Andani died and Naa Alaasani collected Yendi and ate, it was still standing like that, and it started to turn. And Naa Alaasani died, and at that time the Germans had left, and the English were here, and the English took their strength and reached Yendi. When some trouble happened at Yendi, they would bring it to this town. When Naa Alaasani died and Naa Abudu Setan’ Kuyli was given the chieftaincy, he was given his chieftaincy in this town before they took him home and performed the chieftaincy things. And so it was Naa Abudu who came, and this place and Yendi became one. This is how it was. And so the dances they have there, we don’t ask much about them. They are all Dagbamba dances, and if you are going to see them, it is in this Dagbon that you will see them. But if you want to know more about them, you have to ask someone from that side. I myself don’t know all their talks. That is how it is. They too, they don’t know all our talks. This Baamaaya, if you see a child dancing, it is Baamaaya he will dance before he learns to dance any other dance. But I can say that it has just gone to Yendi side. It’s not up to ten or fifteen years that they have come to know Baamaaya. And that is how it is.

And so there are a lot of things inside drumming, and no one can know all of them. That is why I told you that I can only talk to my extent: I cannot talk all the talks of this place. Our drumming work is sense work, and no one can know all knowledge. But I think that what I have given you today, it shows that if we drummers didn’t have a lot of sense, we couldn’t be doing this work. So if it happens that you ask me something and I say “I don’t know,” then I don’t know it. If your eyes have not seen something, and you say you have seen it, it’s not good. And if I have only heard, I will tell you plainly that I have heard. As for knowledge, everyone cuts the extent he can. You can’t know everything. The world’s talks are many. Nobody will be walking on the back of the world to say that he knows everything. If anyone tells you that, he is a liar. Everybody will know the part he can know. If you are able to get a little knowledge, and that is what you can carry, then you have to hold it well, and it will be solving your problems. What you are holding, somebody is also somewhere looking for it, and he hasn’t got it. And so the knowledge that we are able to get, we are thanking God for that.

And on the part of our knowledge, I think that apart from all this, there is another thing again, and that is how we Dagbamba drummers beat the dances of other tribes. How we catch the dances of other people, that one too is sense. And

again, it is from our hands and wrists. If you look at all the people who beat a drum, you will not see anyone whose wrist is soft like our wrists. Even the Yorubas: they can beat a drum very well, but we can beat the dance of the Yorubas and they cannot beat our dance. It is two Yoruba dances we beat for them to dance, but they don't know even one of our dances. And so it's from our hands and wrists. As the Ashantis are there, we beat and praise them. We praise them, "*Asante kɔtɔkɔ; wokum apem a, apem beba,*" that is, "If you kill a thousand Ashantis, a thousand will come." We beat it inside the drum, and the Ashantis hear it. There is another one we beat for Ashanti women. When an Ashanti girl is going to have her first menstruation, they shave all her hair, and she will stand in the middle of the woman, and we will beat the drum around the women. When I was in Kumasi, how we were calling it, we called it *Aberewa konkonsa*, that is, an old woman gossip. At that time you will see the women dancing, and when we beat it, it's very interesting to them. But the Ashantis cannot beat our beating. The Ashanti people have got lunyi drums like the Dagbamba people, and we also have got the timpana drums from the Ashantis. As for the luŋa, we are the people who showed the Ashantis how to make that kind of drum; they are not the people who showed us how to make it. If it is on the part of Nigerians, Dagbamba drummers can beat Yoruba drumming, and we can beat Hausa drumming. How they beat, we can also beat. Mamprusis too, it is the same; Kotokolis too, the same; and Gonja people too, the same. Dagbamba can beat all of them. These Mossis, and Zambarimas, Chembas, Bassaris: Dagbamba can beat their drumming. But all of them, they can never beat a single drumming of the Dagbamba. None of these tribes can do it, but we Dagbamba have got the sense to pick drum-beating easily from other people. And if God agrees and we have the time, I will also talk about all this.

Why do I go to listen to drummers of the other tribes? I myself have tried, and I am always going to learn the beating of other tribes, because Dagbamba can meet together, and there will be a Mossi man there, and he will want you to beat the drum for him. That is why we are going around to learn all this. Otherwise, if you are not going around to learn this, and a Mossi man appears to say that he wants his home town's drumming to dance, how can you be able to beat? If you cannot beat any dance for him to dance, is it sweet? But when you beat his town's dance, and he comes out to dance, he will be happy, and everybody who sees it will be happy. Have you not added to him? You have added. That is why we have been going around to learn. And again, that is why some people see you John learning the beating, and they take it that you are going to beat it for somebody in States and profit from that.

And I think our learning is also from our hearts, that our hearts can catch many talks. Our sense has come to enter everything about the Dagbamba, and it has separated itself. Even the Muslim religion: it is in Dagbon here that we have Muslims more than the South, and we have added to our sense from that, too. And so I think that we have got a lot of sense to catch many dances on the part of our beating. When our eye sees something, we are going to catch it and add it to ourselves. It is only the white man's dance that we have not yet caught, and it is because we have not seen it. If we see it, we will be able to beat it. We haven't got their drums, but if we had their drums, we could beat their dances. This is how it is. As for the white men's drums, we only see that since the time they were here and holding us, the soldiers have drums. And we don't mind the soldiers' drums, because their drums don't do anything. If you are not a soldier or a policeman, there is no day you will be called to dance the dance of the soldiers or the police. If you don't have time for something, will you mind that work? And so we don't count it into dancing. But if we were to see the white men's dance, we could beat it for them to dance. This is how it is. We drummers have got a lot of sense.

And tomorrow, we will continue this talk about our Dagbamba dances, and I will talk about Takai and Tɔra. These two dances have got a lot of talk in Dagbon, and so we will take it and see how far it goes.