

A Drummer's Testament

Introduction part 9

Testament: The Eulogy of Alhaji Mumuni

By the late 1980s, I had drafted all the talks and reviewed more than half of them with Alhaji Ibrahim. I was preparing to return to Dagbon for our final consultations when, on March 16, 1988, that great man died, and this book indeed became his testament, as some day it shall also be for me. Death is so strange. In Dagbani, there is a word for “to die,” but a dead person is described as “not there.” When someone dies, they say, “*O kani*”: he or she is not there. Everywhere in the world, people deal in various ways with a dead body and its residues left behind — people, things, purposes, meaning. And yet through it all, what is strange is that a person who was just there is now just no longer there. That person is gone, and those who remain continue in life. My friendship with Alhaji Ibrahim was the foundation of this still unfinished work, and at the time I did not fully know the extent of that relationship, and so when Alhaji Ibrahim was not there, of course I had reason to worry. I wrote to express my grief to my Dagbamba elders and friends and to express my hope and commitment that we would continue the work and hold firmly to the same truth that Alhaji Ibrahim had held to support him in his life.

“Alhaji Ibrahim was open and friendly to everyone, whether Dagbamba or outsiders, and he gave respect to any human being who also gave respect to others. He took the whole world to be his home, and he was interested and curious about everything in it. He also tried to help me feel that Dagbon was my home, and he tried to teach me all the things he thought were important to know about the Dagbamba way of living. He wanted our work to stand for our friendship and the way we were able to live together. He thought of the children and grandchildren of Dagbon, and he also wanted those children to know what it means to be a Dagbana. He thought of the children and grandchildren of other places, too, because he was sure that Dagbamba culture and Dagbamba drumming have an important place in the world and in the history of humanity. He had the patience to play his part in increasing the respect of Dagbon throughout the world. He did not live to see the end of our work, but he believed it would reach its extent. Alhaji Ibrahim knew that the tradition of Dagbon had brought out great people to the world, and when those people died and no one knew what to do again, he knew that the Dagbamba tradition had found other people to replace them. He told me that ‘A learned person does not die,’ and that his name was:

‘Wisdom has no end.’ As he is not there again, it will be good if we who remain will finish the work in the same way we started it, together, with patience and sharing and laughter. That will prove that Alhaji Ibrahim’s belief was really true, because he knew that the tradition would still live with others when he had finished playing his part and was no more there, and that the tradition will still live with others even when we who are now living go on to follow him. When none of us is here again, our work will remain.”

When I wrote to my elders in Dagbon like that, they also replied to me that they had already been holding the work Alhaji had been doing, and they would continue holding it: for anything I needed or any question I had, they are there. I returned to Dagbon and helped perform the final funeral observances for Alhaji Ibrahim. Kissmal, Ben, Mustapha, and I gathered to finish the work with the drummer I thought best to help us, Alhaji Ibrahim’s older brother, our “senior father,” Alhaji Mumuni Abdulai. I have mentioned that Alhaji Mumuni had listened in on several of our sessions, but from the beginning he had always been involved in Alhaji Ibrahim’s consultations with his elders. Whenever we had met, the only words coming from Alhaji Mumuni’s mouth were prayers and blessings for the friendship between Alhaji Ibrahim and me and for the work. Alhaji Mumuni and Alhaji Ibrahim had the same father and the same mother, and they were very close. At the time we sat together, Alhaji Mumuni had aged into in his late eighties and was very slight, but he was strong and in full control of his faculties.

When we first sat together, I talked to Alhaji Mumuni at length. I told him that when Alhaji died, my family and friends had asked me how I would finish the work I had been doing with Alhaji, and I had told them about Alhaji’s brother, and that I had no doubts about him. And I told Alhaji Mumuni that I wasn’t looking at any other drummer. If there was someone who knows more than he, it didn’t matter to me. He was Alhaji’s older brother and respected brother, and I had seen that he was very patient. He and I were the closest people to Alhaji, and I knew that he was the right person to finish the work with me. Anything that Alhaji had told me that I might have misunderstood and any further questions I had, whether he Alhaji Mumuni knew or he didn’t know, that was where the work was going to reach its extent, and whatever extent we reached was going to be the extent of the work. That was my decision: because of the trust between him and Alhaji, I was also giving all my trust to him, and through that trust, we would be able to do the work. Beyond that, I told Alhaji Mumuni that Alhaji had talked and done his best for many years, and it was a promise that Alhaji should also hear the book when I wrote it. I said I wasn’t going to take the work and just do what my heart wanted with it. And as Alhaji was not there again, I had come to fulfill my promise with

Alhaji, and it was good that I read it to Alhaji's senior brother, so that he would receive the promise and also stand as a witness.

We put Alhaji Ibrahim's photo in the room where we sat and read through those chapter drafts that Alhaji Ibrahim had not had a chance to hear. It was a heavy time. During the first days when we were going through early chapters, we were both sad and happy to hear Alhaji Ibrahim's words again. As we worked, we often paused to take stock, and we talked many times about the loss of Alhaji Ibrahim and what it meant to us and to the work we were doing. Addressing my concerns about finishing the work, Alhaji Mumuni also replied to me at length. What he said has relevance to many points in this introduction, particularly to show how Alhaji Ibrahim's life was supported within a vital cultural environment of people committed to their tradition of knowledge:

Right now, as we are sitting down, Alhaji is at the place where the truth is, and we are at the place where there are lies. I know that you don't like lies. And me too, I don't like lies. And my mother's child who talked before me, he too, he didn't like lies. That is how the two of us were trained. How Alhaji was, even if he wanted to open his mouth to tell a lie, he just couldn't say it: God would only let him tell you the truth. And so it was the real truth Alhaji talked to you. The one who gave birth to Alhaji gave birth to him at the right time, when there was nothing like telling lies. And he used the truth to train him. During our time, we suffered for our elders. We suffered a lot. All those who were holding Alhaji from the time he was very young, it was truth they used to hold him. Alhaji always stayed close to elderly people, and he softened himself to them. That is why Alhaji knew all these things. That is why you should hold Alhaji's talks properly, because what his tongue mentioned to you, he actually searched for it.

You, John, sitting down now, when you called me to come and talk, what would have been your big worry? Your worry would have been that I have not sat down with you for a long time to be doing this work. This is only my first time. Maybe still you are not sure of yourself. But I think that since I came here at your call, you have seen that if there is life and good health within us, we will be doing this work until we finish. And if you are watchful, you can easily know that the way you want the work to be, as the way my brother talked to you, you will get it like that, and it will be sweet for you. The time Alhaji was teaching you all these things, was I always present? No. And the time Alhaji was talking to you, it was not that he would talk to you and the same day he also come to me and tell me, "My brother, this is the way I talked to John and the point I reached." But the way you and I are sitting down directly now, if you are watching my talks, it looks as if Alhaji was sitting me down by his side while he was talking these talks to you. Or

what I am saying, am I telling lies? And so I want to tell you: all that Alhaji already told you, it is true. That is why when I am listening to it, I nod my head and I agree with it. If you hadn't even seen Alhaji, and it was I whom you saw, it would be the same talk I would have given to you.

Since the day we started this work up to today, we are now nineteen days inside it. And what you have been talking and I have heard, when I go to lie down, I think about it, and I don't see anything going in a zigzag way. Unless, of course, you don't believe me, but if it were to be I alone, I would easily stop you at this point and tell you, "Look, don't do anything. From what I've heard, the rest of the talks, don't read them to my hearing again. Don't check what Alhaji talked to you with anybody again. Whatever you want to do with the talks, do it. I can guarantee it." If you have talked something and I have added some talk to it, have I ever said that the talk is not true? Everything you have been reading to me is true. And what is true, if you look at something that is true, what repair can you do to it again? What Alhaji talked, I believe that if you show it to anybody and ask him to add anything inside, he will only say that what he has heard is enough; he can't add anything again. But it doesn't matter. If bathing does not add anything to a human being, then it will not reduce anything. If you keep on bathing and bathing and bathing, if it does not make you cleaner, then it won't make you dirty either. But if it was left to me alone, I would say that if I bathe once, it is all right. As for truth, it's always true.

And so we should only pray that may God help us in this work so that we will benefit from it. Alhaji talked truth to you. And so what he already talked, I cannot argue with any of it. It is only if he talked and didn't finish his talk, then I will repair it to stand well. As for talk, if you talk something and let it lean against the wall, it's not fine. You should talk about something and separate it one by one by one, so that anybody who goes into it will know exactly what you are talking about. Have you heard? If you tell somebody a proverb and the fellow doesn't understand what the proverb means, and he doesn't care to ask what the proverb means, and you too don't care about telling him what it means, then your talk is just leaning against the wall. It's better if you talk something to somebody, then he will look at your face, and you will tell him exactly what you mean by that. At times, too, somebody will give you a proverb that will strike your mind, and you will ask him to explain what the proverb means, and he will tell you that he doesn't know it but he only heard people saying it, and he also took it to tell somebody. Such people, we say that their mouth is sweet, but they don't know anything. And so if you give somebody a proverb and he doesn't understand, and you tell him what it means, then you have given him a full talk. If you break it like that, somebody with sense will know why you told him that proverb. If the fellow still can't understand it, then he's a foolish person. That is how it is.

And so how we are inside this work, I can tell you that if a person is serious about the work he is doing, he will lie down and be thinking about how the work is going to be, and what additional thing he will do to make it well. If God creates a person and takes His sense to put into the person, then if that person lies down and sleeps in the night, God will give him an idea through the heart about tomorrow's work. The person will lie down and be thinking like that until the sleep will just take him. And when he is lying down sleeping, it is God who knows what He will do to the human being to guide him to know the way of his work tomorrow. If God blesses you that way so that you should be doing well in the work you are doing, then tomorrow if you get up and you want to do that work, it will look as if you already know the thing. If you hadn't thought about it already in your heart, if you come and they ask you about it, you wouldn't know what to say. But God already put it into your heart. As God has blessed you like that, if they call you and ask you about it, and you start to talk about it, it will seem as if you are looking into a paper and saying it. That is how we drummers are. But as you John are sitting, had it not been that you were writing all the talks Alhaji was giving you, in addition to the ones I myself am giving you, if he just sat down here and talked to you, could you remember all and talk about it? No. But as for us drummers, you know how our work is. We don't know the way God created us. We know that if there is something we really want to know, then we will go and lie down and think about it; tomorrow, when we wake up, if somebody asks about it, the thing will just be coming out. But all this, it is not every human being who does that. Only those God loves, and those whom God put at a particular place, they know how to do things like this. And we such people, we see it when we go and lie down and sleep.

And so you should let your heart lie down. I am already inside this work. I am deep inside it. What Alhaji talked to you, it would happen at times that maybe he reached some point and you would ask him certain additional questions, and if he was not able to answer them, he used to come to me and tell me plainly, "John asked me this question, and I was not able to tell him. And so you should give the information to me, then I will give it him, so that I will make sure he gets the truth." And so what Alhaji was telling you and I have heard it to this point, it is within my eyes. It is something already known to me, and there is no difference inside. None of it has gone a different road. May God help us to finish the rest. And if you read something and I don't know about it, then it means that he learned it somewhere, but not from me, because there are many people inside this work, apart from me. That is why I am going to be listening, taking my time, and adding any small or necessary thing. And if he talked and leaned his talk against the wall, I will break it and separate it. And any time you ask me a question and I talk up to the extent I know, then I will tell you that that is my extent.

The way this talk is coming, we don't know whether after this one is finished, there will be an additional thing. I can't tell. That alone will let us pray for long life, and if God permits, the things that I know already, I will be going and asking of them again. And what I don't know, I will also go and ask of it to add its talk to the talks I know. It is just because of the questions you ask me. And what I don't want: I don't like lies; I will not talk about the thing I don't know. If you ask me something, and I don't know it, I will tell you at that moment that I don't know it. And if God permits, I will ask and I will come to know it and talk it to you. All that I know, I will tell you. And what I know, from my childhood to the time I am sitting down now, when I tell you, you will take it anywhere, and nobody will be able to argue with me. That is why, if you ask me anything, and it is what I haven't seen, I will tell you that, "Truly, I have not seen it," because I don't want lies to go inside this book. Dagbamba have a proverb they say: "What your eye sees can easily get up and go. How much more what you will hear?" Sometimes your eyes will see something, and what your eye sees, you don't trust it. What your ears hear, will you trust it? And so hearing: I don't take it to do work. And so I am praying to God that may God prevent me from telling you a lie.

Apart from that, I am not the only person you know in Dagbon. All the elders of Alhaji in the drumming, those who were living from the time you first came to Dagbon, Alhaji showed you to all of them, and they all know you. And those who are still there, they always talk about you. You see Nanton Lun-Naa. He is there. He is an elderly person, and he is there. Palo-Naa too is there at Savelugu. Our grandfather Namo-Naa is there at Yendi. You have done good things to all of them, and you did all that just because of Alhaji. All of them told me that Alhaji's death pained them very much, but it pained them more because of you and how you have lost Alhaji. They all know that you were the closest person to Alhaji. Every time I see them, they ask of you. Alhaji showed you to us, and that means he has brought you to the house and shown you to the housepeople. All that is from friendship, and it has brought family. Friendship is older than family. I can tell you that now, as for me and you and my whole family, we are one blood. If it is on the part of Savelugu, that is your house. Nanton, that is your house. Yendi, that is your house. Voggo, that is your house. And so my only strong talk to you is that if you are not sure of yourself, you should be sure of yourself. The truth you brought and came and met Alhaji, he also took the truth to hold you. How Alhaji was brought up, and they took the truth to train him, if you are born and you use the truth, it will be there. What Alhaji told you was true. And now that Alhaji is not there, as for me, I am here. Our grandfather Namo-Naa is there. Palo-Naa is there. Nanton Lun-Naa is there. If there is something I don't

know, those who are our elders are also there, and we can go and ask them and see.

And I think you have been seeing something. You have been with us for a long time, and the way we are staying with you, it is always happiness and never annoyance. You see the questions you are asking us: don't think we will become fed up with you any day. The questions you are asking us, they will also let our knowledge to extend. If God says our knowledge should extend, your work will help it to extend. What brings knowledge is asking. If your type had been coming here, by now our knowledge would have been more than what we even know now. Our children who are in school, they should have been people who would also learn things like that. But because of their schooling, they have ignored all these things. And you are from somewhere, but you have come to find out all these things. So it is through you that our Dagbamba children will also be learning to know more about our customs. If not you, they wouldn't know these things. And so as you are asking, you are somebody who will rather come and help us. Your talk is like when somebody is sleeping and you come to tap the fellow to wake up. As the fellow is awakened, the work he was doing, he will go and look for it. And so the talks you are asking, if we have long lives, and you have life, all the questions you are asking us inside our work and we say we only know to our extent, we will go and search for more knowledge and know its ways. Our drumming is like how they read in school. Nobody will read and finish. You only learn to your extent. That is the same way drumming is. Even our elders sitting down, even Palo-Naa and Namo-Naa and Nanton Lun-Naa, all of them are still learning. And so I want you to know that Alhaji actually went deeply to tell you so many things. He talked much about Dagbon. He talked about our drumming and came to talk about how our way of living is in Dagbon. These talks, some are on the part of drumming and some are not on the part of drumming at all. It is not only drumming Alhaji talked to you. You are holding the drumming. And it is drumming that brought you here. But now you have gone into Dagbon, all. All these talks that you are holding in your hand, all of the talks of Dagbon are inside.

And you too, you traveled across drummers before you reached Alhaji. There are some drummers who can talk about what they know about drumming, but as far as our living is concerned, they don't know about it well. Even with the drumming, sometimes someone will talk to you and just talk what his heart wants, because he hasn't learned it from any elder. And if they don't teach you something, you just can't take your own head to guess and say what something is. Truly, you can easily get many people in Dagbon who can talk to you, but this talk that Alhaji gave to you, they can't talk it. And so you don't have to listen to many people's talks. The one who knows: that is the one you want. As for that, we

Dagbamba say that a blind person is not older than the one who leads him. And so when you ask, it's never too much, unless when you ask too much and you come to meet a liar: he will not tell you, "I don't know." Maybe someone does not know much about the customs and traditions of Dagbon. If you don't know something, there is no harm in saying, "I don't know." Everybody knows to his extent. Don't say that you can talk about everything. If anybody tells you that he knows everything you are asking, then you should know that he's a liar. "I don't know": it is not that you are a weak person or a useless person. If somebody doesn't know about something, and you are asking him about that thing, if he talks, he is only coming to spoil it. He doesn't know it. And you are asking him. He will come and put something inside to spoil the whole thing. But if he is able to tell you honestly that he doesn't know what you are asking, and so he cannot say anything about it, that is better than to come inside and spoil it.

That is why when you ask me about something, if I don't know it, I tell you I don't know it. If I know it, I will say it. My brother didn't like lies, and me too, I don't like lies. The talks my brother talked to you, that is what we have learned from the time we were children and up to now. But through the way you came and how you are holding the drumming, and through your asking, Alhaji also went and asked to know more and more again. And so you have increased Alhaji's knowledge. And it's just because if someone is going to teach a child something, and the child doesn't learn it well, people are going to abuse the teacher. Any blame that comes, the teacher is going to receive it. When you came and you were asking so many questions, Alhaji didn't want to feel ashamed, and so because of your asking, he searched for many things. If a child asks an old person to talk some talk, it is because the child doesn't know, and he has called you that you should come and tell him. You will sit down for a long time with the child. If the child is not able to catch the sense you the old person has, it is not the child who is going to be ashamed: the old person is going to be ashamed. So I am begging God that anytime you ask me a question, and I know it, I will tell you and you will also see it yourself. It means that God will not disgrace us. And so this book, I don't want a day to come when you will open it to people, and they will see some talk inside that is not correct. They will ask you, "Who told you that?" And you will say, "My father Alhaji Ibrahim told me," or, "My father Alhaji Mumuni told me." And they will say, "It's a useless talk." That one talk, it will spoil the whole thing. So that is why I want to make sure that whatever you are reading to me from the book is what I know, because I don't want to hear any bad name about the book.

When you wrote to me before you came here, you told me that you want me, Mumuni, to sit and listen to Alhaji's talks. And so if you are reading for my

hearing, if I see that something is not standing well, then I will tell you that it is not standing well. And if there is something to add that will brighten what he talked to you before, I will add it. And sometimes too, some confusion can come because of the tongue. As for our Dagbani, many Dagbamba are there, and when they are going to mention something, sometimes there is a little difficulty in mentioning it the right way. In the calling of names, too, there are differences. Apart from that, there are some small differences in Dagbani; we who are staying at this side of Dagbon and those staying at Yendi side, there are some small differences in our tongues. If someone calls something for you once, and he just gives you an idea of it, and you too you don't try to pronounce it or write it down at that time, you can easily make a mistake. Someone who knows about it very well can show you that what you are trying to pronounce, there is a mistake in it or it has different ways. Or he will say, "Inside Dagbani, typically, this is the way it should be." Or if they talked and you didn't hear it well, he will say again, "As for this word, it is not the modern word and he didn't change it; this is what they meant." All this, we have been seeing it within ourselves. It is just common in Dagbon. That is how it is. And so if Alhaji talked and you didn't hear it well, I will correct it. If you get it like that, then you can repair it and put it well. Or if there is something that needs explaining, I will make it clear for you. And at that time, we will repair all the talks, and they will all be following one another.

And so may God help us. This book, I don't want somebody to read it and see something inside and it will be a lie. And so may God lead us not to go by a different road from the way we started. How Alhaji is dead, as I have come here, whatever I'm going to say, I have to mention his name, that because he is my mother's child and he's not there, I am taking over his work. In Dagbani, there is a proverb that says that if we gather as a family to lift a heavy load, we won't get tired, and we can carry it. The reason why I say this is because now Alhaji has put the load down. And now I'm coming to carry it. Is it not the load I'm carrying now? From the way we have started and I'm listening, I have got to know that the way my mother's child talked, if God agrees, I will also talk it like that. And this means that it is the same talk of Alhaji still going on. And how Alhaji is dead but I am alive, as I am seeing you now, it is very good for me. What is very good on the part of the friendship is that I will give you what you want, in addition to what Alhaji already talked to you. You were asking Alhaji some big questions, and Alhaji also forced himself to show you all the questions you were asking. As Alhaji is not there, and now I am here and you are asking me, I have to tell you all that I know. I don't have to deny you. Because of you, I'm here. That is friendship, and that is what brought me here. And how Alhaji died, and now I am alive, what is going to be necessary for this work, may God help me so that I will bring it out for you.

As far as my brother is concerned, I have been telling you since we started that the talks my brother Alhaji talked inside this book, you have to hold them well. This talk my brother gave you is a big talk. If you talk the talk inside this book to many Dagbamba children, they will be surprised. If you ask any Dagbana, maybe he will tell you that he knows something about it, but to talk about it will be difficult for him. Or if you show it to somebody to add anything inside it, he will only say that what he heard is enough; he can't add anything again. And I am telling you that the way Alhaji is not there now, there is nobody who can talk this. What I am telling you now, I know it. I know today's drum children. In Dagbon, there is not any young drummer who can talk Alhaji's talk. That is why I am telling you: if not a drum child who has put his heart down and asked elderly people, they don't know it. And it is not even all elderly people: it is not somebody with white hair who is an elderly person. If your hair is white and you didn't ask, they will ask you yesterday's talks, and you will be sitting down looking. And so it is someone who has asked and who knows: that is an elderly person. And so truly, Alhaji heard the talks of the elders, and he was also an elderly person.

And as I'm sitting and you are reading to me, all the talks you are mentioning, don't you see that I am just nodding my head? I knew about them already. But I didn't know all that Alhaji told you. I was thinking I knew the extent of Alhaji's knowledge in the drumming. There are many people who didn't know that Alhaji knew all these things. But since we started this work, on the part of the talks I have been hearing, I now know that Alhaji went farther than I thought. Alhaji went deeply to explain more things to you, and I think that if you hadn't come here, maybe Alhaji wouldn't have learned all those things. But truly, inside drumming, Alhaji was very close to elders. And so you came and brought this problem to Alhaji, and Alhaji was able to solve it.

As for Alhaji, he was carrying three things inside drumming. He took three sides. He was beating *gungɔŋ*, and he had respect in it. And he beat *luŋa*, and he had respect in it. And he sang, and he had respect for that one, too. If you want to see drummers to whom God gives all these three things, they will only be a few. As for Alhaji, God created him as a good-luck person. As for luck, it is within everybody's head. And truly, many people loved Alhaji. If you are born, and you use truth, it will be there. That is why Alhaji used to tell you that if you have good character, it will give you chieftaincy, or it will give you respect that is like chieftaincy. As Alhaji was sitting, he didn't want a drumming chieftaincy, but as he was sitting, he was a chief. He was holding the drummers. And all that was from the gifts God gave him. When Alhaji was alive and he was holding everybody together like that, you were seeing everything yourself. Every time you

would come to his house, you would see people gathered outside his room. And you should look again. The time you first came, was it Alhaji who called you to come and learn this thing? Alhaji was sitting in his house, and you came to him. If it was drummers, Alhaji came to Tamale and settled there with drummers, and those drummers were already in Tamale before Alhaji came and settled there. And when you came, you didn't ask of anyone. You only said you wanted drummers, and they brought you to Alhaji. They didn't send you to any other person.

And the reason why Alhaji was holding the drummers in Tamale is that Alhaji was intelligent and he knew many things in the drumming, and he had belief in the drumming. The time you were staying with Alhaji, any time you went to him, you would see drummers sitting outside Alhaji's house. If they came from the farm, or if they came from their workplace, they would gather there. And every Sunday, if there were weddings, when you came outside Alhaji's door, what did you see? You would see many, many drummers there. If they came, they would only be sitting down, sitting down, until he would come and group them: "This group, go to this place; this group, go to this place." Sometimes I would travel from Savelugu and come to see them spread outside there. If Alhaji was still inside the room, then some of them would be shouting, "Alhaji, you haven't grouped us. So how can we move? Group us, then everybody will know where to go." Then Alhaji would come and say, "Ah! But you people, every day we are doing this; you know how it is. You can share yourselves and go to the wedding houses." They would say, "No! Unless you yourself come and share us." At times, if it happened that five weddings were in town, he would sit down and know how to group them for the five wedding places. Even I myself, when I would come, he would share the groups to the wedding houses, and after sharing, he would take me and add into some group and ask me to take a drum and follow. And we would all go. Getting to one o'clock, we would all come back. We would come and pour down all the money. If we the drummers were up to fifty or a hundred or even more, Alhaji could sit down and know how to share the money to those who went to beat the drum, and those older drummers who were at home, he would send money to them. Then he would share everything like that, to everybody, and there was no argument. If another Sunday came again, and there were weddings, or if it was that there were funerals, it was the same thing.

And again, I can say that it's now that more people know his importance and the truth he was holding. How I am at Savelugu, if I travel from Savelugu to Tamale, and I am coming just at the roadside, truly, I always feel sad. When I am getting near to his house, at times tears will start in my eyes. The drumming: everything has now scattered in Tamale. The way drummers would gather outside Alhaji's house, and how Alhaji is no more alive, if you come and look outside his

door there, you won't see even two drums there. And are the drummers not still around? Why don't they come to gather there again? As he has died, has he died with all of them? Everybody is scattered in Tamale. Nobody like Alhaji is there to hold them, and nobody gathers there again. There is nobody who can come out plainly to say that he can stand in the position of Alhaji to hold them. The character Alhaji was having, and the sense, they don't have it. Now everybody is living individually, and now they know that it was Alhaji who was holding them together. Now that your father is not there, the drummers are in different groups, and nothing is happening like bringing everybody together. As we are sitting down now, that is how it is in Tamale.

Truly, Alhaji had a lot of respect in drumming. And anywhere Alhaji went, the way God created him, he had respect. That is the way it is. And truly, there are some human beings, when they see somebody like that, they are jealous. And I am telling you today, and I want you to know: the way we human beings are, there is jealousy within our hearts. If you don't struggle with it and defeat it, you will never be free. Truly, inside our drumming, there is jealousy. The way God liked Alhaji and what He gave to Alhaji, some people want it but they don't have it. And so some of the people who were following Alhaji, they were jealous of him. And you too, how you and Alhaji were friends, they were jealous of you because of what you were getting from him. And now, what you and Alhaji talked, his own children don't know anything about it. And the small drummers who were around Alhaji, they were the right people to know it. It was because of the way you were respecting Alhaji, and how you were serious about learning, that is why Alhaji gave all his knowledge to you. But the time Alhaji was alive, nobody could have come to him and asked him, "What exactly are you doing with John?" And as Alhaji is dead, now everybody believes that the knowledge Alhaji was having, you have it. They believe that you have it. And what Alhaji knew, they don't know it. But they will never agree to come and sit by you the way you were with Alhaji so that they will also learn more about what Alhaji was telling you. The way you were learning from Alhaji, that is how we also learned from our elders. And today, somebody like me myself sitting down, if someone will not agree to sit with me in that way, I too, I won't release the knowledge I have to him. The character Alhaji was having, that is the same thing I am also holding.

And it will not be until you are able to release something out to their seeing or hearing before people will get to know that truly, you have got to know so many things about Alhaji and the drumming. And some of the small drummers, if they hear what you have read to me so far, it will increase their jealousy. And so this book, if you bring it to Dagbon, and you read it out to the hearing of Dagbon, you will disgrace many people. The people who can't talk it as Alhaji did, some

of them may start to complain, “Why is it that Alhaji talked all these talks to you?” Someone who talks like that, it is jealousy. Anywhere there is something that is going to be good for a human being, or anywhere there is wealth, there is jealousy. If you are doing some work that will benefit you, somebody will come and try to discourage you inside it, so that you will leave it. Such a person only wants you to throw this work away, and tomorrow he will come and collect it and get a name out of it. And so don’t be surprised if some people criticize you or blame you because of this work. Or somebody might criticize Alhaji that he talked all these talks to you, or somebody who is feeling big in his shoes might bluff himself and try to argue with Alhaji’s talks. All that is lies. It is jealousy. In that case, if it happens, it is within those who think like that. Somebody like that, if anybody wants to open his mouth and demean Alhaji, he is demeaning himself. If somebody comes to disturb you like that, you should exercise patience and you should look at God. And the only thing you should do is that you should ask the person, “How people used to gather outside Alhaji’s room, is it that Alhaji went around to everybody’s houses and put rope in their noses and was pulling them to his house by force?” Alhaji wasn’t using ropes and pulling them.

It was respect. Alhaji had a lot of respect. Truly, I know that as you are coming from a far place, you can’t carry many people. But the next time you are coming, if you are able to bring your hometown people, when you arrive in Dagbon and you are walking, they will know that if you are someone small over there, here you are big. If you bring people like that, when they come here, they will be surprised to see you in that way. They will say, “Oh! Is this how John is in Dagbon here?” This drumming that you have learned here, all drummers in Dagbon know you: some have heard about you, and some know you personally. And the reason why you also get this kind of respect is that the respect Alhaji was having, some of it is transferred to you. How it is now: Nanton, Savelugu, Yendi, Tamale, Kumbungu, Tolon, Karaga, and going to Gushegu, all the drummers there know you. If you alone go anywhere without anybody, they will open their arms and collect you. Everybody will say, “This is Alhaji’s child, the one he was showing drumming to.” And so the respect inside drumming, you can’t compare it to anything.

And so I want to tell you that what God has written, it is already lying down. That is what is between you and Alhaji. You should think in your own heart: Alhaji didn’t know anything about you, but God promised that by all means, he would meet you, and God promised that before you will die, you will see somebody called Alhaji Ibrahim. And didn’t you get to know him and he too get to know you? And so what Alhaji showed you and all that Alhaji took for you, you should never suspect that you won’t benefit from it. And so you should make

your heart lie down. Those who taught Alhaji, they prayed for Alhaji. That is why when you came to Tamale, God made you to go and see Alhaji and not any other drummers. And you came and joined him. And the friendship between you and Alhaji was very strong, up to the time that you saw that you have lost Alhaji. And you didn't throw away the love of Alhaji. It is the love of Alhaji that is still in your heart. And my mother's child too is under the ground now. But his love is still in your heart. That is what brought me here. And so as for friendship, it is something that always goes forward.

How friendship is, if you are holding it well, it always increases. Any day when you are sitting down and you see your friend, all your heart will be white. When you see him, you don't know what you are going to do for him; you will be running here and there. Anything that you have, you want to give it to your friend. And if you are sitting down, and somebody from somewhere comes to you and bows down before you, and he explains himself to you that he wants to learn the work you are doing, then you will make friends with such a person, and you will show the person everything inside the work, and all that you have learned in your own life. And so when you came, all the talks that Alhaji had learned from his elders, he gave them to you. That is why this book is very big. You have asked deeply. As for that, you don't have to fear about it. It will only show that you have really learned, and it is truth you are holding. Truth is like when you are sitting on the ground: you can't be sitting on the ground and fall down again. As for you, I can say that you are sitting on truth, and so what you are holding now, people will trust you. If anybody challenges you, tell the fellow that he should go and bring his work or his talks about the same thing. If the fellow brings his own, then you can look. If he has gone more deeply than you, everybody will see. And if yours is deep, they will also see. As for knowledge, it is not equal. Anyone who comes here and he is trying to do the same work you are doing, he is only going to be standing on your shoulders.

The way I am talking to you, I want to give you an example. Inside chieftaincy there is something. In our custom, how the chiefs call their names, it is we drummers who praise them and call the names for them. One chief will call about ten names for himself, and I will beat a drum and come to that particular chief. We the drummers, those who ask very well, we will try to know all these ten names. The one who doesn't ask, maybe he will know about two or three names, or five. He can use what he knows and be beating, and it is not a fault. Everyone has the extent of his knowledge. But you the one who has asked: you will get to know that that particular chief has ten names. And apart from that, you will ask to know that that particular chief gave birth to many children, and you will get to know all the children. If the chief gave birth to forty children, you will

know all, the males and the females. And these children, you will ask again to know all their names in drumming and how to praise them. You will ask and know all. Then you will also ask again, “How did that chief find women and give birth to all these children?” Then every child of that chief, you will also find out the mother’s side, and who gave birth to that woman, and how the chief was able to search and find that woman, and marry her and gave birth to that child. And these princes, maybe many of them were able to eat chieftaincy. The chieftaincies they ate, you will get to know all. And you will get to know that this town where that prince was eating, these are the praises and the names of that town. And any of these princes who was sitting in a town and giving chieftaincy to the villages that were under him, you will know the praise-names of all those villages. And those children the chief gave birth to and they didn’t get a chance to eat any chieftaincy, and you will also know how to count all of them. It’s one chief I’m talking about. If I am a drummer and I know all this, I can use it to praise that chief. And so if I am going to talk, and somebody is going to write, is the book going to be big or small? The one who has got to know only two, and he also talks and writes a book: comparing it to mine, will it be the same? That is why your book is big. That is how learning is.

And so let’s pray for long life. As for me, the only thing I can tell you that this book you are writing, I am telling you honestly that one day you will be somebody important to many people in Dagbon. And it pains me that Alhaji is not alive, because he was able to learn all these things, and he gave all his knowledge to you, and now he is not going to be here to see how the thing is going to benefit you, and benefit Dagbon. At that time, maybe I also will not be there. But that is the time you will get to know that what you have in your book is a very big talk. And so the sweetness inside it will be the time you get it out for everybody to see. If your father in America whom I am praying for happens to see it before he dies, it will be very sweet for him, too. I would like him to see that you have done great work before his death. And at that time his heart will be white, and you too, your heart will be white. And I myself sitting down here, I too, I will be happy that the work you have done is good. And I too, with Alhaji lying under the ground, our hearts will be white about it. I am saying this because a human being does not die fully. If God wants, with his power, he can show Alhaji lying under the ground that I am here doing the work. Truly, by the grace of God, God will take it and show him. We don’t see him, but truly, as we are sitting here and we are just talking about it, God will take it and show him. That is how it is.

Since Alhaji went away, as for me, anytime I pray, and any prayers that I pray, I always say some prayers for him, because of how he put down this work for me to come and do it. Today, if you are sitting down and your brother is doing

something, and it happens that he is not there again, you have to go to that place where he was sitting; and that time, you have to have faith. As for you who was sitting down and you are now coming to take your brother's place, you also don't know where your life is. And the one you are going to talk to, he too doesn't know where his life is. And God too, He likes the way we are suspecting ourselves, so that this thing somebody wants today, I must make sure I talk it today, because I don't know: maybe tomorrow I am going to die. At that time, God will be happy with us human beings, that we know that He God is in possession of our lives. That is why we always pray for good health and long life. And I want you to know that it is standing that any Muslim who is going to do something, he will only pray to God.

All that Alhaji told you, and all that you also have said about the work and how Alhaji died, it is all the will of God. The way we are human beings sitting down, that is just how our life is. When you get up from here to go into your room, the next day, whether you will wake up or you won't wake up, only God knows. That is why, if you start some work with truth, and you want it to go further, you don't have to have trust in lies. And so that is why, when we are doing something, it is better we do it with truth. The way I don't want lies, it is not because of a human being but because of God: if I should tell a lie and I die, God will ask me, and me too, I know that whatever happens, I have to die. As for our life, and the way God creates us, it is not an old person who will die first. He God creates us: everybody has the limit of his life. When the end of the life comes, there is nothing to stop it. And that is what maalam call the will of God. If the will of God comes, nothing will stop it. The way you have been talking about how you are missing Alhaji, then what about me myself, sitting here? And so, because it is God who made that thing to happen, we don't have to argue over it. If somebody creates you and sends you to some place, the next day he can say, "I want you back to the place I created you." He creates you to your father and your mother, and your father and mother will be sitting down, and your brothers will be sitting down, and God will say, "I want you. I want you today. I want you at such-and-such an hour." You, your brothers, your mother and your father cannot stop it. They will be sitting down like that, and God will call you back. That is the way it is, because you the one talking, if He God wants to take you, he can take you.

So everyday, when we keep on following this talk, especially about my brother, I used to feel sad about it. Somebody like your mother's child or your best friend, if these two people die and leave you behind, there is no day you will forget about them, up to the time you too will also die. Everyday, their matter will be inside your heart, and most of all, on the day somebody will start to talk about

them. Up to the time you will also go, that is how it is. And so we Muslims, what is with us, every time: if you pray, you will pray *Qul-huwallahu* and *Fatiya* and *Salatil Fatihim*, and then you will send the prayers to him. When Alhaji was not well, everywhere we searched, they always told us that the sickness that was holding him would not kill him. And he was treated and came, and if you happened to be there to see him, you would never think that he will die. Everybody who saw him was happy, and everybody was holding a strong heart. But the end of the life came. And so the best knowledge is with God. What is hidden is with God, and what is in the plain place is with God. And so we have to put it down that it was God who created him, and He is the One who has taken him too.

And as for me, every time I pray, since the time I heard that you wanted me, when I pray, I send my prayers to Alhaji, that you want me to finish the work. And so if he has anything to do with me, to let the work go the way he wants it, it is left to God. All my prayers go to him, and the way he will answer to me too is left with God. One time I asked one maalam, that if our people die and we pray to them: is it there like that? And the maalam told me that the way we pray and talk to them, that is the same way they also pray and talk to us; the way we people in this world, we are alive and we are praying to our dead bodies, that is the same way that dead bodies also pray for us, and guide us. So this is what I am standing on. The way we have been talking about my brother, and we continue talking about him, it is melting my heart. So if your heart is melting like that, you can't control yourself; whatever happens, you will cry. As for the power of God, and what God can do, if you continue following it, you will talk it and talk it, and it will get to the point that you don't believe in the powers of God. So you should only talk a little; then you leave it.

There is a saying that, "A maalam who is a fool, if he prays to God, God receives his prayers but he doesn't know." Why do I say so? We Muslims, and how we are, when you called me, I prayed to God that the work that I am coming to do, we should start the work with health. And the day we started the work I prayed to God for all of us, that may God let us start with health and end with health. Those of us here, if one of us falls sick, then the work will not go on. If you fall sick, that means this work is going to stop. And if I fall sick, the work will stop. If any one of us is sick, then all of us are sick. And God has helped us and God prevented sickness from catching us, and we have been doing this work up till today. When we pray like that, and we are doing the work without any problem, has God accepted our prayers or he hasn't accepted it? As for me, I don't do any work without praying to God. I start in the name of God, and I finish in the name of God. That is why I said that a maalam who is a fool, if he says

prayers, God accepts his prayers, but he wouldn't know. When we were going to start this work, we prayed to God, and God has accepted our prayers. That is why I am always thanking God for helping us to do this work. And so what we have to pray is that we should let our hearts lie down coolly, and we should pray for long life to finish this work well, and we will be praying to God from now until anytime this work is finished.

As for me, my prayers are on the part of you, because of this work. I'm praying we should have life and good health, because they are everything: if you have life and you have good health, then all the work you are doing, even if it is small, by the grace of God, it will become big. And I am praying that we will finish the work the way you want it, and it will be sweet. And you too, if you take it to wherever you want to take it, you will be proud of it, because you came here and you got the truth, and people will get to know that you have traveled, and you have brought wisdom back home. And at that time, you will be happy, and we too we will be happy here. Truly, I am thanking God that I am here and I am doing the work all right. And so our everything on the part of this work, we should give it to God.

Apart from that, how Alhaji is not alive now, we his mother's children, if there is life within us and you, what you were using to hold Alhaji, you will take it and hold us, and it will hold our children too. And the way you, John, kept patient, and we talked to you and you heard us, may God let you benefit from the work you are doing. This work that we showed you, and the patience that you had in holding old men: we are your old men, and you have also held us. Even right now, I don't know the way you are going to hold me until the end of my life. Maybe we will hold ourselves until all of us have died. And those whom you also teach how to drum or how to do anything about what you have learned from us, may God also bring one of them in future to hold you the way you are holding us. As now you have taken us to be your father, by all means, if this work is continued, one day someone will also take you to be his father. As I have told you that, by all means, one day somebody will also be helping you the way you are helping us. The way you are holding us, may Almighty God also bring someone to keep you the way you are holding us. And so God should bless all the work that you are doing, and give us long life, and health. And may God let us benefit from the work. And we will enjoy in this work until the end of our lives. As for truth, truth never ends badly. Never. That is its way.

And what I know: nobody ever goes to search for wisdom for himself alone. By all means, you have to share it with somebody. All that you are doing, you are not doing it for yourself. What you are learning, you are going to share it with people, so that those people will know what is happening here and they can

also take some sense out of it. I know that if you go to show people, they will also go through it, and maybe they will see some wisdom inside that they can take and it will help them in their lives. And I want to tell you that, “A child who has ears can listen to an old man’s talk.” Any kind of child who listens to the talks of an old person is a child who can benefit from old men. The way you were asking Alhaji, and he was talking up to the time he died, Alhaji knew this. That’s why he was talking to you. And by the power of God, he died. And the way he died, you too you knew that if you search for me, I will also do some work on it. Is it just because I am Alhaji’s senior brother that you called me? Or was it because you thought I could do the work? You knew that as for Alhaji and me, they trained us together, and what they used to train us, that is what both of us are also holding.

That is the way of wisdom. And so the way you are asking, you are not asking for yourself alone. Even if your children don’t benefit from it, maybe you have your sitting friends, and they will be interested. You will teach them, and they will also know that the sense you got, they can take the sense and the sense will go round. This is why we used to say that sense has children. And its way: it is not a woman you will marry and give birth to a child. The way of knowledge: if you are having it, different houses’ children will come to you and get the benefit of that sense from you. If they come and ask you and you tell them, then the child has turned to be your child. And tomorrow another one comes, and the child is yours again. I will show you something. How is it that a white-skin person is calling a black-skin person his father? As I am sitting down, now, are my skin and your skin the same? Alhaji, too, was it the same? Then why do you call us your father? Was it any of our wives who gave birth to you? What brought about that? It is learning and sense. This is the way we used to ask questions, and that is why we say that sense can give birth to children. And so the way you are learning it, when you get home, even if your children don’t ask you anything, but some different housechildren come to ask you, at that time all those different children will turn to be your children. And even those children, if their children also happen to ask them and they tell them, then those children will be your grandchildren. Sense has children and grandchildren. So this is how sense or knowledge is.

As a human being, if you have your child, you will talk to your child, and one day the talk will help the child. Somebody can be holding some money or any thing, and he will give it to his child, and that too is help. But to me, I think that if you give a thing to somebody, it can finish. As for talk, it doesn’t finish. Our father who brought us forth, he died about fifty years ago. If he had given me money, by now the money would have finished. If he had given me cloth or any type of thing, by now it would have finished. But all the talk he told me is still

working. And the children I am bringing forth, I have also given them the same talk. It shows that they have inherited their grandfather. When I sit down and say, “My father told me this,” they want to know how their grandfather was. They will say, “We didn’t know our grandfather. It would have been good to meet our grandfather.” And so what Alhaji learned and he handed over to you, if you also go to teach others, then it shows that you the one sitting down, you are the child of Alhaji. And those you also go and teach, they will be the grandchildren of Alhaji. That is why we are giving you this talk. What we tell you, you will hear, and then you will hold it so that you will give it to your children and our grandchildren.

That is how wisdom goes, because wisdom has also got grandchildren and children. How Alhaji was teaching you, if he was showing something to you up to the end, Alhaji would tell you that, “The way I have taught you, I have given you the way. If somebody asks you, you too, you can give it to him.” And so your father has given you the way, that what he has told you, you can share it with your friends. If you do that, it will be good for all of us. What was between you and Alhaji is always going to be increasing. You came alone and met Alhaji and learned this drumming, but I’m telling you that a time to come, you will not be able to count the number of people who will learn how to drum through you. And so what we are doing now can never vanish. We will vanish and leave what we are doing now to be there.

And so may God help us. If God permits and we finish this work, as I am sitting, I believe that what you are doing, some people are going to get some sense inside it, and they will follow you. The reason why they will find sense is because all that is inside this book, there is sense that they can hold. Why do I say that? Something will be within you, but you weren’t seeing it before. If you don’t know it, and you are going around in the world, something may happen to you on the way, and you will just be going; you will think that it is nothing, but it is something. Sometimes something will be very simple, but you just can’t understand it. You’ll think about it for a long time, and you won’t know it. But when they show you its meaning, it looks like something that is just standing right in front of your eyes. As for that, it is happening all the time on the part of proverbs. On the part of proverbs, there are some people who don’t understand proverbs. As they are going around in the world, it may happen that they will come across something that resembles a proverb and they won’t know what it means. The people who have understood the proverbs, if they have already seen that proverb, when they go to meet it somewhere, they will know that, “Yes, this is what they talked and now I’m seeing it.” If you get to know it like that, it means you have gained that kind of sense. And so the way I will show you and you will see it, if you are also able to use it to do something, will you doubt it again?

It is good, when you are learning something, every time you should put your mind on it, so that if it comes to the point they call you to talk it, then you will be able to talk it freely. Sometimes you will see a child who has been to school, either Arabic school or English school, and his sense is not much. The time they will call him to come and read something, he will be reading, and when he comes to a certain word, he won't know how to pronounce it. You will see him slapping his leg. He is trying to know the word he has come across, but he doesn't know, and the idea is not there. And again, there might be somebody who can read a book but cannot understand what is inside it or how to understand that very thing he is reading about. If you give him something to read, he can say all that is in the paper. But if you ask him what it means, he doesn't know it. And so if someone only knows how to read, and he knows how the words can stand, but he cannot demonstrate it by pointing to human beings or things for somebody to see, then it is not wisdom or knowledge. At that time, you the one who has wisdom or knowledge about it, you will explain it to him. And so someone who asks, if you are able to give him an example, he will see that the example is within him, and at that time he will get to understand it on the part of himself. That is how it is. That is why, when Alhaji showed you something or gave you a proverb, then he would show you what it means. And that is why sometimes when you ask me something, I will take what is in front of you and show you. That is how my brother talked to you, and that is the same way I also talk. If you were not understanding something Alhaji told you, or if there is something that needs explaining, then I will make it clear. And I too, I have asked, and I am older than Alhaji. That is it. All that you are reading here and I am hearing it, it is all something that is going to repair this book and make it fine. And so what you didn't know, I will show it to you, and then you will see it yourself. It is good if it will come like that. If someone can understand what is underneath all the talks of Alhaji, it's good. And so this work, may God help us to finish it well, and it will benefit all of us. And may God let this work go far, and it will benefit those who will be following us.

And you should take a look: the way you were before, and the way you got to know Alhaji and how you became friends; you should make a comparison to see whether there is a difference. If there is a difference, or if you benefited, you know it. As you are sitting down here, I don't know your home town, and I don't know the way you were before. And so in this matter, I can't just say anything. But I know that as for my brother, he benefited. Truly, Alhaji benefited. But as for you, if there is a difference, or whether you benefited or you didn't gain anything, I don't know: only you will know. That is how it is, and this is what I have for you.