

Chapter II-21: *The Pilgrimage to Mecca*¹

Today we will begin and talk about the pilgrimage to Mecca. And to talk about it will take about two or maybe three days, because it has got a lot of talk. Truly, the going to Mecca is hard. It was a few years ago you said you would send me to Mecca, and you wrote my name to go. But I didn't go, and all our hearts were spoiled. And God made us have a long life and good health, and coming to the following year, by the power of God, I went to Mecca. And so I will take it and talk about how we in Ghana here go on the pilgrimage and all the things we do when we reach Saudi Arabia. It is good that a person who is following the Muslim religion goes to see the birthplace of our Holy Prophet. Such a person is called Alhaji; he is someone who has made the Hajj, the pilgrimage.

If someone is going to leave Ghana to go to Mecca, he needs to have a passport and he needs foreign money. You know that our Ghana money is useless: you cannot take it to another country and buy anything with it. And so if you want to travel to Mecca, you have to get your foreign money from the Bank of Ghana, and it is foreign money too that they will take to hire the plane that is going to

1 Currency note: From the time the Ghanaian cedi was introduced, Ghana suffered from a shortage of foreign exchange and an overvalued currency that was not accepted outside of Ghana. The government managed all foreign currency transactions and controlled all legitimate access to foreign currency. The devaluation of the cedi proceeded slowly in official trading, radically in black market trading. Eventually, at the end of the 1980s, the currency was allowed to float. Until then, for people using hard currency converted at the black market rate, prices and inflation were somewhat consistent with the world market, but because the government did not devalue the cedi, the actual value of the cedi, and by extension the actual cost of goods in hard currency, could only be known via the black market rate.

This project's field research in Ghana spanned the years 1970 through 1991. In 1971, the cedi was trading at 1.15 to the dollar officially and 1.50 unofficially. Major problems developed during the regime of I.K. Acheampong. In 1974 a dollar bought 1.80 cedis; in 1976, 2.80 cedis; in 1977, when much of the research took place, a dollar bought 4.00 to 4.50 cedis; in 1978, 7 cedis; in 1979, while the research continued, the figure was 12-14 cedis. By 1981, a dollar bought 38-40 cedis; in 1982, 75 cedis; in 1983, 130 cedis; by 1988, the number had risen to 200 to 300. The devaluation accelerated: in 1996, a dollar bought 1600 cedis; in 2000, a dollar bought more than 5000 cedis; in early 2001, a dollar was about 7500 cedis; by the middle of the decade, the dollar was nearly 10,000 cedis.

In 2007, a new version of cedi was introduced that was valued at a rate of 10,000 of the previous cedi demonination. Gradually, this new cedi has risen to roughly 1.50 to the dollar, and then 2 to the dollar. Some people still think about cedis in former terms, which would be around 15,000 to 20,000 of the cedis discussed in chapters posted in the early 2010s. To someone with knowledge of the turn-of-the-century cedi, the prices Alhaji Ibrahim gives will seem absurdly low, with things thirty years ago appearing to cost thousands of times less than current prices.

With regard to the high levels of both inflation and overvaluation, therefore, it is advisable to think about the cost of goods and services in hard currency terms such as dollars. The following inflation factors indicate the turn-of-the-millennium value of a dollar from the time period of this book: 5 in 1968, 4.5 in 1970, 3.6 in 1974, 3 in 1977, to 2.5 by 1979. For a rough calculation of cedi values, one can divide the black-market value of a dollar in cedis into the inflation factor. For example, in 1974, a dollar bought 1.80 cedis, and a 1974 dollar is worth about \$3.60 in 2001, so a 1974 cedi was worth about two 2001 dollars. By 1977, in 2001 terms, a cedi was worth about seventy-five cents.

The following currency exchange values can be applied to 1977 and 1978. 1977: US \$1=1.55 Ghanaian cedis official rate, 4-5 cedis floating black market rate. 1978: US \$1=2.75 cedis, official rate, approximately 7-10 cedis floating black market rate. Regarding other currencies discussed, US \$1=approximately 3 Saudi riyals; US \$1=approximately 200 CFA (French West African Francs). Also of note, under currency control regulations, during 1977 and 1978, Ghanaian currency exportation was limited to 20 cedis per person per trip.

carry you there. In Ghana here we have the Hajj agents, and they are the ones doing everything on the part of all this. All the money you pay, you will pay it to the agents. As they have fixed a price for the Hajj, it doesn't show that the price is the real amount you will spend. The first time I was supposed to go to Mecca [1977], the money we paid was one thousand eight hundred cedis. Apart from that money, they collected money again that they were going to use to make the passport. Up to the week before the Hajj, I didn't hear anything about the passport, and so apart from the money we paid the agent, I also tried to find a passport. I got a plane from Tamale here to Accra, and I went and prepared my passport. And when I returned to Tamale, they collected the passport from me that they were going to send it to Accra to have the government fix inside the amount of foreign money they would allow me to exchange. When they returned with this passport, they told me that the government did not allow any foreign exchange in the passport. And so the people went and left me. And our hearts were spoiled.

These agents in Ghana, the ones we pay our money to, they are not people who have been to school. But they are people whose eyes can see, and they have sense. What they do when they collect your money, they will take the money and deposit it in bank accounts. It is these bank accounts that the bank people will see and grant them loans, and the agents will use the loans to find for themselves. The agents do not care about us, the people who are going to Mecca. As it is, those who want to go are many, and the year I went, it was only one thousand five hundred people who went from Ghana. The government said that this number of people is what it can afford to give the foreign exchange to allow them to go. And so let's say that maybe two thousand or three thousand people will come and register with the same agent, and there are many agents, and from the whole Ghana, only one thousand five hundred people will go. Whatever happens, if it comes to the time of going, some people will go and leave the others. And you the one they don't want to go, the agents will twist things in your face. If they don't tell you that your passport is lost, they will tell you that your injection card is lost. Maybe you have paid one thousand eight hundred to them, as I last paid. And maybe they have collected about ten thousand or twenty thousand from someone. If they collect such an amount, they won't think about you the one who has paid one thousand eight hundred. Whatever happens, they will find the way to let you remain behind so that the one who has paid ten or twenty thousand will go. And so when they tell you that your passport is lost or something like that, if you have no sense, you may think that they like you and it is not their fault that you are remaining. But it is that they have got money from others. Some agents do this.

This is what they did to me the first year I tried to go. As they take some and leave others, if it were to have been put down in a way that "This person is the

first to register, and this person is second, and this one is third,” and they would take it to the one thousand five hundred people, they could even add some more people in case someone who registered first was not able to go; if it were to be that, then it wouldn't matter. But you book today, and you pay the money today, and getting to three or four months' time, another person will come and pay. And if it happens that the one who came after you goes and you remain behind, to you, what will you think? You will say that they have collected a lot of money from him, and they are allowing him to go and leave you. And so that is what some agents do, and they did that to me. And so truly, we the people going to the pilgrimage, no one can say “This is the actual amount of money for going to the Hajj.” The money you pay to the agent is supposed to pay for your fare for the plane and for the money they will give you for your food and sleeping places and other things when you arrive in Saudi Arabia. As for that, we never know exactly, and the agents will never tell us the truth. They want to get from us, and they are always cheating us.

Here is an example. The year after I remained behind, they called me and told me that I should get some money and add on top of the money you paid before because the amount for the pilgrimage had increased to four thousand four hundred cedis. And so I should add two thousand six hundred to the one thousand eight hundred I had already paid. And when I went to Mecca, I went with some people who had paid five thousand and some who had paid six thousand, and there were others who paid only three thousand four hundred. Each agent has got his own people, and so there are some agents who do the work because of God and others who don't do it because of God. And we cannot know how they are using the money or what we pay for the air fare or for our Saudi Arabian money. All the money we pay is supposed to be for these two things, and as we are all going and paying different amounts, you have to know the difference is on the part of the agents.

And so truly, anybody going to the pilgrimage is just somebody like a fool. If you want to go, whatever the agent says, you have to do it. You see this four thousand four hundred cedis we paid: there was some money inside it that was supposed to buy us our suitcases, a big one and a medium one. All the people from Ghana had to buy the same type of suitcase. If you saw the whole plane, all the suitcases were the same. The people from Nigeria had different ones from ours; the people from Senegal also had different ones. And the agents said no one could bring a different type of suitcase, and so it was by force that we had to buy these suitcases from the agents. Just before we were supposed to go, my agent called me and all the others who had booked with him. It was on a Saturday that he gathered all of us who were going to Mecca, and he used a speaker to talk to us

because we were many. He said that when they increased the fare and we paid the four thousand four hundred cedis, the money for our suitcases was included. And he said that the money he had collected before, he had sent it to the bank, and today those making the suitcases were coming to claim their money. And as it was on Saturday, he was calling us simply to collect the money for our suitcases, and so everyone should fear God and come and each pay three hundred cedis to him so that he would pay for the suitcases; and he said that on Monday he would go and take money from the bank to come back and pay everybody. And we all went and found money and came and paid it to him, and we took our suitcases to our homes.

As he had said we should come back on Monday and collect our money, that very Monday we all gathered at his house. He came and parked his car. He went into his room and came out again. He came toward us and didn't tell anybody anything. And no one asked him anything. The next day was Tuesday, and the next day was Wednesday, and nobody asked him anything. That Wednesday evening, he told us that everybody should get ready to leave for Mecca on Thursday, the next day. And he called everybody's name who was going, and everybody who was going received a card. And at that time, none of us was able to ask him about the double money we paid for the suitcases. How are we going to ask him? As for the problem of a hundred people, if you one person are going to take charge of it, you will come to face the problem on your own. Old Dagbamba say that if something is falling from the air, nobody knows whose head it's going to land on. Whether it is your head, my head or his head, we don't know; we will all be covering our heads. That was why nobody asked, and he didn't mind us either. On Thursday he brought a truck and called everybody's name that we should all go to the airport. And we went. It was in the afternoon. Some of us were thinking that if we got to the airport he would call us and give us back our money. But he didn't mind anybody. They only called our names to enter the plane. And when we went to Mecca and finished everything and came back, he wasn't telling us anything. He didn't open his mouth to say anything. And I asked one person, "The money that we paid for our suitcases, is it going to be useless?" And that person told me that a friend of his had gone and asked the agent, and the agent asked the fellow, "Have you gone to the Hajj?" And the fellow said he had gone. And the agent told him that he has already gone to Mecca, and there was no need to ask of things that were finished. And so the money was useless. This is the work our agents in Ghana here do.

And so, to go to the Hajj, if you are going, you are just like a slave to your agent. It is just like that. However your eyes are open, or whatever the strength you have, it is like that. If they tell you that you have sense or that you are strong, they are telling you lies. You will just become a slave or a useless thing to your

agent, unless you go and come back. If you go and satisfy yourself and come back, that is the time you will get back your strength. If you want, you can go to greet your agent; if you don't want, you will not greet him. Since I came back from Mecca, I have gone only once to greet my agent, and since then I have never gone to his house again. And he has been seeing me, but he can't ask me anything. Any time he sees me anywhere, he will be sitting waving his hand, "Alhaji, you are welcome home; Alhaji, you are welcome." That is all. He can't joke with me. He knows my anus, and I also know his anus. If he plays with me, I will open up his anus, because I know about the wickedness he did to me. But I don't want to talk and make it clear to him in the open, or my next problem might spoil: maybe one of my friends or relatives will also want to go, and so I won't open his anus, and my friends who are yet to go to Mecca will be safe. But to talk about it in this book is good. Those who haven't gone yet, if they get to hear about it, they will know all the problems inside. People who don't know will get up and say, "As for me, this is the amount I'm spending to go to the Mecca." But if you are going to Mecca, you can't just put down that this is money, you are using. If somebody is making preparations for the pilgrimage and he hears about it like this, then he will know what to do.

And again, you can't tell your friend who will be going about all that the agent is doing. As for the cheating, it doesn't stop, even at Mecca. If you don't have money, the Arabs won't mind you: they will leave you there and walk away. When you go there, too, there are many wonderful things there, and if you want to enter to see, you have to give something to the people watching the place before you can see it. If you don't give such a person something, he won't open the way for you to see. And so if you really have belief in you, and you are going, you have to forget about the cheating, because it is Mecca that you want. You want to go there because of God. You too, if they want to do something free for you, you won't accept it. You want to benefit from it, so you must bring something out. As you want to get the benefit of going to Mecca, if you don't get somebody to lead you to show you everything, then what is the use of your going? So if God permits, and you have good health and you have the means, then you will go. And the way people have talked about it, if you go to Mecca and there is good health inside you, and money too inside you, then the suffering will be small for you. The way they talk about it, if you go, even if you are not old, if you want people to carry you around, people will carry you and you won't get tired. And people who have money, some of them ride on camels. But if you are not strong and you don't have money too, then how can you see all the things you want to be seeing? You are only going to be lying at one place, and when the time comes, you will go home and say that you went to Mecca. And so if you are going to Mecca, you

need three things. You are a Muslim. You have health. You have money. That is the way you can go to Mecca. And so when they are cheating you, you don't have to look at the cheating. You are not going there to look at cheating. You are going because of God. And so if your friend wants to go, he will also go and see the problems that are inside going on the pilgrimage, and he will know what is there.

And so the work these agents are doing, sometimes you will be at their houses and you will see grown men crying. They are crying because they did not get a chance to go to the Hajj. And truly, it is because of many things that someone will cry. Your agent has eaten from you without a reason. As he has taken that thing, you have also made many other expenses, and you will be thinking about that. You will grind flour and get the food you will take with you, and you will buy everything you need to take with you, and all this is in addition to the money you have given to the agent. And if you happen not to go, what is it about? You have fallen into debt. And you are not going. It will seem as if you have put your hand into something where it could not go, but you have forced your hand inside, and when you want to remove it again, you are finding it difficult. All your relatives and your mother's children and your friends, too, all of them have come to say good-bye to you. And you have said you are going to Mecca and said good-bye to all of them. If you don't go, it is a shame. It will seem that you were telling them lies. It will be many days and you will not feel like coming out from your room. It was the fault of the agents, but when you look at all these things, it can lead you to cry. As for crying, it is just there like that.

And truly again, if you are going to the Hajj, it is crying. At any time you will see tears just falling from people's eyes; and there are others, too, crying from their hearts. A journey from here to Mecca is something that breaks hearts. Just on the part of expenses, apart from the expenses of going, if someone is leaving his house to go to Mecca, he has to provide for all his housepeople and family while he is gone, his wives and his children; he has calculate and give them the expenses to provide for all their eating and their needs while he is gone, so that they will be eating, and he will come back and meet everybody. It is a big problem. Some maalamas even say that if you are not able to get money to leave for your family, if you go like that, your Hajj is not there. If you don't have the money to give to your family, then don't go to the Mecca. Maalamas have been saying it. And again, someone who is going to Mecca, it is worries that will be worrying him. If you are going on the Hajj, you will be thinking of the people you are leaving behind: your wives, your children, your mother's children, your friends. You will be thinking that you are going to leave them and go to someplace you don't know. It is just like knowing about your death: whatever

happens, you will cry. If tears will not be falling from your eyes, then you will be crying from your heart. This is going to Mecca, and it is true. At times, someone will go on the Hajj and will not come back. There are many troubles inside the Hajj, and as for Mecca, death is nothing. And this is the idea we always keep in mind before going to the Hajj. God even says something about it in the Muslim teachings, that if you are going, you should share all your property. If you come back, it is good; if you don't come back, it is also good. And when you share your property to your people, you will tell them that either you will come back or you will not come back.

The reason why you do this is that you will face many dangerous problems at Mecca. For example, when you reach the mosque at Mecca, there is something like a room standing in the center, and that is the Kaaba. When you finish praying, you will run around the Kaaba seven times. And the people are many. However strong you are, if you happen to fall, you will not be able to stand up again. There is nobody. They are telling you lies. Truly, it is difficult to fall down, because if you are falling, you will fall on somebody's back and he will be pulling you along, and you will stand back up again. But if people happen to push you from the side and there is a gap, whatever happens, if you fall in that way, they will perform your funeral. And put that example aside. You will go to where they are throwing stones at Satan, and the people are many behind you and some will be throwing their stones, and some of those stones can easily knock you. If you ask anyone who has gone to Mecca, whether he is a black man or a white man, he will tell you that the problems there cannot be compared to anything. That place alone, on the way going there, you cannot know whether you will die there or not. And if you go to Medina, you have never seen coldness like that before, and there is heat too. If sickness comes to catch you at Medina, you will remain there. Somebody may become sick at Medina, and you will be sitting together talking, just as we are now, and the next moment you will see the fellow putting his head by the wall. He is dying just like that. If you die at Medina, your dead body will never become rotten; it will only become dry, and it will be like that for hundreds of years. If you reach Medina, you will only be praying to God for your life. And so these are some of the problems you will be facing when you go to the Hajj. You can be moving along with somebody and he will just die, and you will be walking and leaving him. Somebody will die in the crowd and you will be stepping on the dead body and passing. If somebody doesn't show you the dead body lying down, you may not even have a chance to see it. These are some of the reasons why you should share your property before you go, because you don't know whether you will die there or not. And if you are going, you will be thinking of all this and crying.

And so, the day they called my name that I was going, I told all my people. The following day, Thursday, we went to the house of my agent. There were many people there, and he would come out and be walking heavily on the ground, and everybody was confused, standing. And he came out and shouted on everybody that everybody should go home and that they should get ready and go to the airport. And we got up, all my mother's children – my relatives – and my wives, my children, my friends, and those who heard of my going, we all got up and went to the airport. At the airport, we were just lying down like that. As for that one, there was a lot of thinking inside, too. And it came to the time that they were calling names from a paper and lining everybody up. They called the names, and they called my name, Ibrahim Abdulai, and that I am inside the going. The time they said it, my heart was white, and I went forward with all the others and I stretched my hand to collect my passport. And all the names they were having on the paper, they called all and finished. And the agent took the lead and told everybody whose name he called to follow behind him. He was walking like a Yaa-Naa, step by step, and everybody was rushing at his back. I had put some money at my hip, two hundred and sixty cedis, and someone put his hand inside and removed the money. I didn't know. We were in a line, and if you had a load, they would weigh it and charge you. When they weighed my things, they put my flour and my suitcase on the scale and they said its money was seventy cedis. I put my hand in my pocket and I couldn't find the money, and I was standing. And they asked me, and I said, "They have stolen my money." And they said I should pick up my things and go.

And apart from that, they search you. As others have gone, they have told us that the money we get from the Bank of Ghana is not sufficient, and so we find foreign money to add to it. And you, John, had given me some American money, along with your mother and your father and your friend Suliman who has been writing me. And I also became wise, and I also looked for money. I changed Ghana money into French money from the money traders, and I added it to your money. And I looked for a plastic bag, and I tied all the money inside it. And I went and bought a rubber water bottle, and I opened it and put the money inside it, and I added water. Then I found rope, and I tied the water bottle and hung it over my shoulder. Any time it was anything, I would just open the bottle, take some of the water, wash my mouth, and spit it out; the people thought I was carrying water, and they didn't know there was something inside the bottle. The searches were two. The first was inside a small room, and when they were going to take me there, someone said, "It is his money they have stolen." And the man there said, "Oh-h-h. Collect your things and go." And I turned, and there was another room again, and the man there said they should bring me inside the room. I put my

things down and put the water under my arm, and I entered. The man used his hand to press around my waist and my back. And he asked me, “So, apart from the money they have stolen from you, don’t you have any foreign money?” And I said, “No, I don’t have any.” And he asked me, “Why were you carrying so much Ghanaian money to go to that far place?” And I said, “When I came and your people weighed my things, you said I should pay seventy cedis. And I heard that when you are coming back from Jidda and they weigh your things, they take Ghanaian money. That was why I was carrying the money along.” And he said, “It is true.” And he asked me again, “What is inside the water bottle?” And I said, “It is water. When I sip a little, it helps me to urinate.” And he said I should collect my things and go.

At that time, I saw a certain man called Alhassan who works at the airport – you know him – and I told him to tell my housepeople outside that they have stolen my money. And I collected two hundred cedis from somebody, and I told Alhassan to tell my people that when they go home they should get the money and pay. And I went and sat down with the others, and we were there. Those who had accompanied us to the airport, they were behind a fence, looking at us. And I went to the fence to farewell them, and when I shook hands with my brother Mumuni, he started crying. He didn’t know whether I would come back or not. The way he looked at my face and I also looked at him, I didn’t cry with tears in my eyes, but I was crying inside my heart. And so as for the Hajj, its everything is about death. But it is something good to us, too. By then the sun fell, and we were still there on the ground. We performed ablution and prayed Magarbi, the evening prayer. At that place, nobody will come and search you again, and I took my pocket knife and cut the bottom of the water bottle and removed my money and put it inside my hip. And they gathered all of us and they were calling our names and collecting our passports and then giving them back, and we were going and entering the plane. At that time, too, they were putting all our things in the plane.

When we entered the plane and sat down, two soldiers came with an agent who is one of our big men here in politics, and he is also an agent for the Hajj. And the soldiers said they were going to remove twenty people because they had no passports. And the agent said he was going to take them to Accra and give them passports. And the soldiers refused. He shouted at the soldiers, and the soldiers shouted at him, and it was going to become a quarrel. Then a soldier who was a major came inside the plane, and he said, “Quickly, you should remove the twenty people,” and the soldiers were pushing them out. And our hearts were spoiled. We were sitting far away inside the plane, and we thought they were going to remove all of us. That was when we asked, and they said they had no passports. But they had called their names from the papers to enter. All that is

coming from the money the agents are eating; they care less, and they won't arrange things properly. Why will you allow somebody to get on board a plane, and then later you will come and tell him again that he should drop down? As for Ghana people, we know how to cheat too much.

The plane flew at eight o'clock. The time we were going to fly, everybody's heart was spoiled. Some people even had water coming from their eyes. And the people we were going away and leaving, they were also crying. If you were looking at them, if your heart was not strong, you would also cry. What I have told you about the crying is true. Even if not that, just entering the plane, if you think, you will know why people share their property before going to Mecca. As you are flying, you are not on the ground. And as you are up, you will be thinking: will you fall or will you reach where you are going? And I believe in my heart that too many thoughts is sleep, because when we thought like that, when we were getting to Accra, we slept. And about nine o'clock the plane landed at Accra, and we woke up.

At that time we were just sitting in the plane. None of us came down, because they said they were going to search for twenty people to fill the plane, and so nobody should go out. And when they came and we left Accra, it was after midnight, getting to one o'clock. Those flying the plane told us we would be up about six hours, and the plane went up, and it was going *kpa-a, gbo-gbo-gbo, kpa-a-a!* And it was shaking us. A time would come and it would just go straight and be standing. And everybody was sleeping. When you sleep and you wake up, the plane will be going *br-br-br-up, br-up*. If you don't want to sleep, what will you do? You are just like a dead person. We came to a town and passed it. I don't know the name of the town, but the lights were like afternoon. And the one flying the plane told us the miles we had reached and the miles we were going. And the plane remained up, and it was going *gbo-o-o, gbo-o-o, gba-a-a-a-a-a*. And we were sleeping, and waking. You sit down, you lie back, you get up: that was what we were doing.

Truly, our hearts were very much spoiled about the flying. If you saw our things alone, it was something. And what of us? But when the plane took us and flew, it didn't look as if there was anything inside it. To us, we were like cotton, or paper. This was how it was. We thought and thought until we didn't know what to think about again. We didn't know whether we were dead or we were alive. And so we left it to God, and we were sleeping. When you sleep and sleep and you wake up, you will close your eyes again. You are sitting down, and you don't like where you are. And you cannot jump and get down. And so it was by force that we were in the plane. That was how it was to us. It was about five

hours from the time we left Accra, and we saw it was getting to daybreak. And by then we were not far from Jidda.

When we reached Jidda, the plane came down. The sun was already hot. When the plane landed, they said nobody should come down. We were sitting there, and some Arabs came in and looked at us. They sprinkled some things inside the plane, and it was like smoke. And we came out and entered a bus. They put about thirty people into a bus, and they took us to a big room. They did that until everybody had come out from the plane. And they started bringing our things. They put our things on a machine, and the things were following and coming until they reached the room where we were sitting. It was just like a big piece of iron, and the things were walking on it until they came and stood. There is no person carrying loads there. And so when all the things were in the room, an Arab said that everybody should take his things. There was a very, very long table, and there were clerks standing, many of them. When you take your things, you put everything on the table and open it. The clerk will collect your passport and look at it to see your picture and your injection card before he will call your name. If it is correct, you will stay; if it is not correct, you will follow the plane and go back home again. That was how they looked at our papers.

Then they made us open our things. If you open, there is somebody who will take his hand and put it into your things and be removing them and putting them down. And there is somebody else, if you open, he will just be telling you to close it again. You will take another thing and put it on top, and he will ask you, "What is that?" If it is food, he will tell you to take it. I had honey, two gallons, and I was pulling it on the floor of the room. And so I was standing by the table with my things on top, and I was pulling my things along on top and my honey along under the table. If they finish searching something, they take chalk and mark a cross on it, and then they go to another one. And I pulled my things like that until I went out. If you take everything and you are going, there is no talk again. I took the two gallons under my arm and took my box, and carried it. There is nobody to collect it and carry it for you. From that place and going, there is no chief, no commoner, no money man, no big man, no small boy: you are all the same. You will take your things and go out.

When you come out, you will just make yourself cool and be standing. If you have things to sell, it is there you will put them down. Someone tried to buy my honey for a hundred riyals, and I refused, that I wouldn't sell it for that price. And it is there you will search for a truck and the one who will take you and give you a place to sleep. When we came out of the room, it was about eleven-thirty in that town's time, and they were starting to call for the Friday afternoon prayer. By then, our mother's children who are studying there came and met us. They were

about twenty, or more, and they came and greeted us. As for them, they have become like Arabs, because they hear the language. They asked whether all the people had arrived, and they said they would collect us and put us into rooms. They searched for trucks, and the owner of a truck would charge, and they would be talking. These trucks are like busses that can take about twenty people, and they were charging ten riyals from each of us. When the owner of the truck collected our things, our boxes were ten riyals each, our flour and food, ten riyals; and he collected like that from all of us. And he took us and went and put us down with our things where we were going to sleep in Jidda, and showed us the toilet, and showed us where we were going to be bathing. If there are women with you, he will show the women where they will cook.

Then our mother's children who were studying there collected our passports. And they told us, "In this town, you don't roam unless you know. If you don't know and you roam, you will be lost." They told us that, but even if they hadn't told us, nobody would have roamed. You will see people – many, many people – and since you were given birth, you have never seen people like that. You will look at the airport and the planes, and it is just like the way a hen has her chicks: they are following one another like that. It doesn't reach half a minute and a plane will be taking off or landing. It's not that it will be going on and then stop. It's like that morning, afternoon, and evening, And the noise of the planes, nobody has ever heard that noise; everybody's ears were blocked. If you are standing and talking, you cannot hear one another's talk unless you come and stand very near to one another. And the trucks and busses, since you were born, you have never seen that many trucks and busses. Jidda is like that. And our mother's children, when they collected our passports and showed us our bathing place and the toilet, and showed the women where to fetch water, they told us about the way of life of the town. If you have money, if you are going to bathe, you let your friend hold your money; you will go and bathe, and he will be holding your money. When you finish bathing, you will collect his money while he will also go and bathe. If you take your money and enter the bathing room, thieves will climb on top and enter and meet you there and collect your money. This is what they told us.

And those of us who had money to change, they told us to take it and go and change it because if we got to Mecca, we wouldn't be able to change it there. As for the money we had paid for in Ghana, they didn't give it to us on that day. We had reached Jidda on Friday, and we didn't collect the money. Saturday and Sunday, too, we didn't collect. They paid us on the next day, Monday. When it was evening, they said they had removed the money for our food and lodging in Jidda, and we didn't know what that amount was, and they gave us two hundred

and fifty riyals each. That day, too, Monday, I went to the bank to change the American money you gave me, along with some American money my son Alhassan gave me, and they said people were giving them counterfeit American money and they wouldn't collect it. And I took it and went to the market. There was an Indian man there from whom I bought a *harami*, the white cloth you wear at Mecca; in Ghana here it was ninety cedis, and there I bought it for thirty riyals. And when I finished buying it, I asked him, "Won't you change my American money for me?" And he said I should bring it out. And I brought it out, and I added the French money I had, and somebody had given me some Japanese money, and I added that, too. He counted it, and he said if I agree, he would give me one thousand one hundred riyals, and if I don't agree, I should take it away. And I gave it to him. And I sold my honey in the town for one hundred and twenty riyals. And so the money I had with me when I added all was one thousand two hundred and twenty riyals in addition to the money I received at Jidda, two hundred and fifty riyals. But it wasn't only my money, because my wife gave me some of the cedis I used to buy French money, and I used it to buy some things and come and give to her. But truly, I had no problem with money over there. I had enough money, and I was even able to lend money to some people who were short of money.

And I can say that I suffered on the part of going to Mecca, but when I got there, I didn't face any problems. The people I was staying with, we used to gather and eat in one bowl, just as we are eating at home. And on the part of night-time sitting, we used to sit down outside together just as we used to sit at home. There was one Wangara woman who came from Sunyani, and she was living in a room opposite to me, and she said that she wanted to be cooking food for me. In the evenings, we would be lying outside, resting, and she would bring the food and put it down, and everybody would gather and eat. Sometimes we would eat and satisfy and then give it out to other people to eat. And so the foodstuffs I carried along, I couldn't use all, and when I was coming, I was giving it to people.

The day I changed my money, it was that evening, on Monday, when we finished praying Magarbi, the evening prayer, that we got up and left Jidda for Mecca. When we left Jidda to go to Mecca, we went in a big bus. We don't have the equal of such busses in Ghana. We were eighty-four people in one bus. In that bus, nobody disturbs his fellow; nobody touches you. And it was cool. It was just like the plane: you sat. And the roads, too, I don't know about other countries, but I haven't seen a road made like that. There was an ex-serviceman with us, and I asked him, "The time you went to India during the World War, were their roads like this?" And he said, "No. Maybe now they have changed, but I

have never seen anything like this.” I think that from Jidda to Mecca is a bit further than from Tamale to Yendi, and there are lights along the whole road. If you stop seeing the lights, then it will be only for about two or three miles, and you will enter lights again. There are no trees. If you see a tree, then it will be just a small tree standing alone. And the hills, too, I haven’t seen anything like that place. They are different, different types. There will be a hill that is only sand, and it will just go up. There will be a hill that is only stones on top of each other. It wasn’t long before we stopped and prayed, and then we took off again. As we were going, the driver was showing us all the things we were passing, and whenever he said something, we also responded and said it. And it wasn’t long and we reached Mecca.

The driver knew the house where we were going to stay. The one at whose house we stayed was called Moro. When we came to his house, it was about twelve o’clock in the night, and by the time we finished removing our things, it was getting to one o’clock. Nobody had got a room yet, and our things were outside. When you come, they will give everyone a chair, and you will sit down. The Arabs too will sit down. They will take a pipe to smoke tobacco. This smoking pipe is very tall, and it got some rubbers that they take and join to something like an engine. The tobacco is in that engine. They will all cross their legs, and they will be pulling the tobacco, *po-aa, po-aa, po-aa*. And everywhere: smoke. When they finish smoking, they don’t give you water. They will just greet you.

And by then they brought out a paper that said we should be brought there. And the houseowner said, “The room money is one hundred and thirty riyals each. If you agree, you should let them take your things into the house. And if you don’t agree, it is not a problem. If you know you will get another house to enter, you can go and search for that house.” And among all of us there, nobody had ever been to Mecca before. There was no agent with us. What were we going to say? We didn’t know Mecca, and so how could we change our house? We agreed. But our mother’s children who followed us, those of us who went together from this Tamale, when they arrived and the houseowner told them this, they refused. They and the Kumasi people said they wouldn’t agree. And they said that our mother’s children who were staying at Jidda had sold us. And they said, “Our mother’s children who are staying at Jidda have come to sell us to you, and we don’t agree. And why is it that those of you who came first agreed?” And the houseowner said, “If you will not agree, then nobody’s things should be here. Everybody should take his things and search for where he will go and stay. And those of you who said you have agreed, you should pay the money this night.” And we paid. And they collected all our passports. It was much later that night that all those people

who refused came back for the room again, because they didn't know anybody there and they couldn't get any sleeping place.

And truly, if you follow it, there were some people from Ghana taking others around to find sleeping places, and they were able to get their sleeping places for about sixty riyals. And others got theirs for eighty. Those Ghanaians who were supposed to be taking all the Ghanaians around were with some of the doctors and nurses who were with the Ghanaians, and so they couldn't come early. Only one agent from Ghana was there, and his people were Hausas. If you look at their case, they were the only people who were somehow different from us. Apart from that, everybody was paying the same thing. And we knew that we were going to pay something, because the money they removed from us at Jidda was only for the sleeping places at Jidda. According to what we had heard, the charge for the room at Mecca was to be one hundred riyals, but when we arrived there it was one hundred and thirty. It was the people from Ghana who were there who made the arrangements with the houseowners, and they also wanted to get some money; and so they told them to charge one hundred and thirty for each person so that the houseowners would give them the thirty riyals as agents.

When the houseowner collected the one hundred and thirty from us, we didn't have to pay anything again. When we went to Arafat, we used his busses and we didn't pay anything. At Arafat too, we didn't pay to rent anybody's tent. He had already put up his own tent. There was a water pipe there at Arafat and we were drinking the water; it was the work of the houseowner. Going from Arafat to Muzdalifah, we took his busses. If you are going from Muzdalifah to Mina, his busses will carry you. If you get up from Mina to go back to Mecca, you will use his busses. And if you are going from Mecca to Medina, it is his busses again. You are not going to pay anything. And so the money that we paid, the one hundred and thirty riyals, it was all from that. The only time we used our own money was to pay for our rooms at Medina. And those who paid sixty riyals always had to hire transportation. From Arafat to Muzdalifah, they can charge one person ten riyals; from Muzdalifah to Mina, ten riyals; from Mina to Mecca, ten riyals. And so it was like that.

By the time we paid our money to the houseowner, it was around two o'clock, and he called two young boys and told them that they should take us to the Mosque that night. And he told us that anybody who has money should put it inside his belt in front of himself. In the Mosque there are people who cut and remove money, and it's not good, and so everybody should put his money deep. And if we are going, everybody should put his hand on the shoulder of his neighbor. And the women should be holding our haramis – our cloths – but they shouldn't be pulling us. If we don't do it like that and enter there, we will later

count one another and find that we are not up to our number. And among us there were some old men and old women. And he told us that when we get to the Mosque, those who carry people and collect money are there. And so when we got to the Mosque, the young boys with us stood and searched for the ones who carry old people, and they charged twenty riyals each: an old woman, twenty riyals; an old man, twenty riyals. In our group there were six people who were old. And the child told those he had found, "When you finish carrying them round, bring them and put them here. Let them sit here, and we will come and meet them here. And you old people, too, if they carry you and bring you, nobody should take his leg and move anywhere. If anyone goes and gets lost, our hands are not in it." And then he told us, "Nobody should separate from his friend. When you are holding your friend, you should not allow somebody to come and pull and cut the hand away. And the entering of the Mosque doesn't want cool eyes, and it doesn't want gentleness, and it doesn't want slowness. As you take your hand to hold one another, then you have to tighten the other hand and be swinging it back, with force. This is what you do."

And you who are coming to make the pilgrimage, it is there that your pilgrimage will truly start, because you are going to visit all the places our Holy Prophet visited, and you are going to pray at all the places where he prayed. And so you are going to do all the things the Holy Prophet was doing, and if you don't do all of them, then your Hajj is not complete. And that is why when we reached Mecca, we went straight to the Mosque. When we got there it was after two o'clock in the night, and if you saw the people, you would say that maybe there is nobody at home in all of Mecca, that they are all at the Mosque. After our houseowner's child told us all those things, he took us and curved and entered inside the Mosque. The noise was just *br-um, br-um, br-um*. Inside the Mosque is the Kaaba, and it's like a small room. You have to go around the Kaaba seven times, and this going around the Kaaba is called *tawaf*. We went around it once, and we came and stood and prayed to God. It is there that you who are making the pilgrimage will start praying to God and begging for yourself and all of those whom you will be praying for. All the talks you will say, you will pray. And you John, I called out all your names: your name, your father, your mother, your friend Suliman, I called all their names. I called your father's name and your mother's name because you are the one who gave me the chance to go, and they were the ones who gave birth to you before you also came and gave me the chance. And I said that God should add more to what they have already got. And you and your friend Suliman, I said that God should make your mouths one. And I said that God should let us come one day and meet one another in good health, and we will be there again. This is how I was praying. And after you stand and pray,

you will take your hands and brush your face, and then you will go round the Kaaba again. You do that seven times.

And when we finished, we came and found our old people, and we moved to Safa and Marwah. And those who were carrying the old people collected twenty riyals each from them again. We go to the Hajj to perform what the Holy Prophet was doing, and at Safa and Marwah, there is some distance the Holy Prophet was running, and so when we got there, we were running. This Safa and Marwah are like small hills at the ends of something like a covered road just at the Mosque, a double road. You take the right hand side and you come to a hill in front of you, and you will curve and take the right hand side and go back again. And where you were passing, others will be coming. And there is some part of it where you will be running, but it's not a heavy running like a horse; you will just do some small running. There were signboards written in Arabic, and we followed some Arabs because they could read the signboards and they would know that at this point everybody should be running just a little bit and at this point everybody has to run fast. And so we were following all that. To do Safa and Marwah, you will go seven times before you finish there. And by then, if you have run round the Kaaba seven times and run Safa and Marwah seven times, then to God you are just like a small child. You have no fault to your fellow friend or to God. And when you come out from it, if you want, they will take scissors and cut your hair and beard, or you will let them shave you. As for that, it is only if you want; if you don't do it, it is not a fault.

And when we came back, we all gathered at one place, and we had our old people. And the boy asked us, "As you know one another, are all of you here?" We were seventy people when we entered, and we all came out. And then he started a song, and we were answering and going until we got home. It was four o'clock. Then he showed us where they had put our things, and we were collecting our things when we heard the call to prayer. We left our things and went and did the prayers before we came back. And by then he showed us our rooms. Some of us were put on the first floor, some on the second floor, some on the third, and he took me and some others to the top, on the sixth floor. We were five people in a large room. There was a fan; there was a toilet; there was a bath room. And this was the room where I was staying at Mecca.

We slept in Mecca for eleven days, and we were walking and going to different mosques to say our prayers. As for Mecca, if you sleep or if you lie down and get up, any time is just like daybreak because of the lights. And you will be seeing more people in the night than in the afternoon. In the afternoon, the sun beats people, and they don't walk around a lot. But in the night, everybody is roaming. What brings fear? It is darkness. But at Mecca, all the time, it is light.

Whether it's midnight or two o'clock or four o'clock, they don't mind. And so we too were also roaming at Mecca, and every day we were in the Mosque. Usually we were going there for the afternoon prayers, and we were running around the Kaaba. We had already done it, but as for that one, any time you feel like running around it, you can just go and take part. If you don't fear death, if you take it that it doesn't matter if you die there, you can continue running it throughout the time you are in Mecca. I've told you that if you die there, you will be just like a child before God. And I told you that death is nothing at Mecca. It is nothing strange. It's just a joke. If it is the running, people can just walk on you and kill you. Nobody can fall there and get up again. And the Kaaba too, there is something inside the Kaaba just like a hole, and it stands out like a breast; there is something inside the hole like a stone. You put your hand inside the breast and touch the stone and pray to God, and then put your mouth by your hand and suck from your hand and be praying. And at that place too, there is death. At times, someone can reach there and want to kiss the stone, and his head will get into the hole, and someone else will also be struggling to put his own head there. And at that point they will remain there.

And so afternoons we were going to the Mosque to pray, and we were running round the Kaaba. When we would come back to the point where we started, then we stood at that place and prayed to God about all of our problems. It was after about three days in Mecca that I was walking with one of my friends, Alhaji Osmanu, and we went to the Mosque in the afternoon to pray and to run round the Kaaba. And the money that was stolen from me in Tamale, God took it and paid it back. How? Truly, as for me, I never pick up money outside. If I happen to pick up money outside, if it is one cedi, then my five cedis will get lost. It's just like that on me. Sometimes I see money lying down and I won't take it; I will only call somebody and tell him to take it. But that afternoon, Alhaji Osmanu and I were running round the Kaaba, and I happened to see a hundred riyals lying on the ground. It was just in front of me. We were running and I was holding Alhaji Osmanu's harami, and I just bent down a little and picked it quickly. At that time somebody ran past and knocked me, and I ran into Alhaji Osmanu's back. He asked me what happened and I said, "Some people pushed me." The riyals were in my left hand, and we ran it to the end.

When we stopped, an Arab came up to me, the one who knocked me when I picked up the money. He told me I was very lucky; I could have died. And he said I should never do that again. Any time I'm running round the Kaaba, if my anything falls again, I should forget about it. And truly, at times we were running and we saw some people running naked. Naked! If you ask why, maybe that person didn't put a belt on his cloth or else his belt loosened, and the cloth was

dragging on the ground; if somebody steps on it, the cloth will fall. And he can't bend down to take it. And so at that place there is no shyness. This is what is happening there. As for Mecca, there is nothing to compare to it, unless the day the world will end. And when Alhaji Osmanu and I went from the Kaaba to do Safa and Marwah, I showed him the hundred riyals and told him that the time I ran into his back was the time I found it. And he also told me that I was very lucky. And at that time, somebody there told me, "That is your money. God likes you. That is your money God has given you here." And I kept the money separately waiting to see whether or not the other money I had would be lost in Mecca. The money was with me and I was spending the other money. I was holding it like that even up to the time we were leaving from Jidda. It was at Jidda that I spent it. And nothing of mine was lost. And at that time I came to believe that truly it was that God has taken the money to pay me back. All the hard entering I entered, all the places where you have to enter with strength and anything you have, we entered inside. And nothing of mine got lost. You see the money that was stolen at the airport was two hundred and sixty cedis, and if I were to change this hundred riyals into cedis, I would get three hundred cedis or more. And so it was at Mecca that God paid me back.

We were roaming in Mecca for eleven days, and it was on the eleventh day that we got up from Mecca to go to Arafat. As we Muslims go to Mecca, if you go to Mecca and you don't go to the mountain of Arafat, then it means that you didn't go to Mecca. You didn't do anything. And so if you go to Mecca, even if it happens that you are sick, you will let people carry you to the mountain of Arafat when it is time. The day we went to Arafat was a Thursday, and we got up very early in the morning. From Mecca to Arafat is not far. I don't think it is even up to the distance from Tamale to Savelugu. Whether you are walking or you are not walking, you will see the road full of cars and busses and trucks. You will see six different cars moving side by side on one road. There is no car coming to face them. They just follow one another closely. How they move, if it is the time we use to talk our talks for one day, if I were only coming from my place to your place, I wouldn't have reached here yet. And so the day of going to Arafat, some people just take their feet and walk. We sat in a bus; we left early in the morning and reached Arafat about three o'clock in the afternoon. That day's suffering was too much, not because of anything but the going. Our going was not really a going; we were just in the bus. And because you get up early in the morning, you will not get a chance to eat food, and this bus will not stop for you to get food to buy. There are no people selling food; even if the bus stops, you won't get anything to buy. The only things which were common everywhere were Coca-Cola, Fanta, and other soft drinks; but the bus was just moving.

When we arrived, we saw that the place is just a plain area; you can see up to the extent of your eyes. And the whole place is full of tents. Every houseowner has got his tents to put his strangers in, and they put electricity inside. They put them in rows, and they dig holes in the middle of the rows where you can shit: it's just a small hole, and they use a small tent to cover it. To go to this toilet and shit was another big problem, because at times many of you will come to shit. You may be ten people, and there is only one place. You will see that somebody will just squat down and use his hands to dig in the sand and ease himself there. Whether you are a man or a woman, there is no shyness. If you want to see the wonders of different penises, you have to go there; and if you want to see different vaginas, it is the same thing. The women don't mind us men, and we men, too, we don't mind them. That is how it is. If you feel shy, you cannot go to Mecca. And that was the place we slept when we reached Arafat.

On the next day in the morning, and I think it was our eleventh day or twelfth day there, our houseowner slaughtered six cows for us. And I can't know the quantity of rice he cooked for us. Since we arrived there, he wasn't giving us anything to eat. He wasn't even giving us water to drink, but he was only putting water into some big things where we could go and fetch and drink. The food we took from home was what we were cooking and eating. Even when going to Arafat, you have to carry your own food; you don't have to depend on your houseowner's food. And truly, we don't even regard their food, because their food is so light that if we eat it we can easily fall sick. And they don't have any food apart from rice, and it isn't all of us who like rice. But on the day of going to Arafat, your houseowner will kill animals and prepare food for you to eat. That is what he will be giving you as strangers. We were seventy people depending on one houseowner, and he slaughtered six cows for us. We were mixed with some white people, too, and he slaughtered some cows for them. The cows were not like cows from here; if you see any cow, its bigness is too much. And so some of us didn't eat the rice, but that day, everybody ate meat and was tired.

As I have told you that we Dagbamba kill sheep in the Chimsi month, if you see the animals they kill there, then you will know that truly, our going to Mecca is a poverty-going. My eyes saw; it's not that anybody told me. Do you know a camel? They brought camels to fill three rooms, and it was one person who bought them. He paid all the money and put them and said people should slaughter them, and he turned and left. And the sheep and cows are uncountable. When you come down from Arafat, the animals will be there in groups, and all of them are big, and someone will come and ask the price of an animal, and when they say the price, he will say that he will buy all of them. And he will pay and walk away. Whether they are slaughtered or they are not slaughtered, he doesn't

mind. He has already slaughtered them before God. You will see somebody kill a hundred cows, and he alone is the one who bought them. If you are somebody who eats meat, you will see the meat and you won't feel like eating. You will see the meat there and think that nobody likes meat. If you are going to slaughter an animal, you will stand on top of one they have already slaughtered to look and choose. And so at Mecca, what they do there, people here cannot do it. If you watch them at that place, or when they enter a store to buy things, you will know that our going is a poverty-going. This is how it is.

On the day of Arafat, early in the morning, our mother's children who are in Saudi Arabia studying, we and those children went and gathered at one place. They were giving us lectures and telling us about Arafat. This Arafat is a hill, and the place we gathered was not far from it. There were Dagbamba, children from Kumasi, and others from Ghana; we all gathered at one place. This Arafat too, it is another of the places where the Holy Prophet Muhammad was praying, and you know, when we go on the pilgrimage, all the work the Holy Prophet was doing and all the places he went when the pagans were disturbing him, we have to go to all those places. They told us that the time the pagans were running after the Holy Prophet, he came and climbed up another mountain near Arafat and passed through a hole, and they showed us that place. And so on the Arafat day, we were hearing more about all of these things. And that day too, the king of Saudi Arabia also came and talked. He was sitting and speaking through a speaker. And he said that as everybody has come, he is not mentioning anybody's name. He doesn't know that anybody has come, and he doesn't know that anybody hasn't come: he is only seeing everybody. And so nobody should come and go back home and be telling lies. And nobody should come and go home and defraud his fellow person. And nobody should come and go home and not want to be praying. And nobody should come and go back home and be drinking alcohol. And nobody should come and go home and allow people to be fighting. And nobody should come and go home and be fornicating or committing adultery. He talked about all of these things, and that was what he was preaching to all the people who came to Mecca. And all this is some of what we were hearing when we were at Arafat.

If your heart wants, you can go and climb the mountain. The Holy Prophet said that if you climb it or you don't climb it, it doesn't matter. You only have to be underneath the mountain. There are some foolish Arabs who climb up and stay there. And Yorubas always like to be climbing up on the hill because it is said that if you climb up on the mountain and shit there and come back, you will be getting money. And so any time you go there and you see a lot of black people on top of the mountain, then you should know that they are all Yorubas. As the plain is very wide, those on one side will be up on the mountain and those at the other side will

be sitting in their tents, and then when those first people are coming down, those at the other side will be going up. As for climbing Arafat, it is not difficult. The only suffering is from the sun, because at that place the sun's hotness is too much; it can't be compared to anything. If you climb up, you will be there praying, and getting to evening time, you will perform ablution and come down. And from there you will join transport to go to Muzdalifah and Mina.

When you go, you arrive first at Muzdalifah. That is the place you will stop, and you will pray the Magarbi prayers and the Ishai prayers, and it is the king of Saudi Arabia who will lead you in these prayers. And it is there too that many people used to pick up the stones to take to Mina and throw at Satan, but if you wait until you get to Mina, it doesn't matter. Some people used to sleep at Muzdalifah and arrive at Mina by the next daybreak. And others will continue on from Muzdalifah and arrive at Mina by one o'clock or two o'clock that night. As for us, we arrived in Mina that Thursday night, about twelve o'clock. And the next day was Friday, and we threw the stones at Satan.

How they have made the Satan at Mina, there are three statues standing, and we throw the stones at these statues. One is Satan, one is Satan's wife, and one is Satan's child. And each statue has got a wall around it, and there are two levels like a storied building for each statue. And so some people will be under throwing their stones, and some people will be climbing up and throwing their stones at the same statue. This is how they have built the statues. We throw seven stones. After throwing the seven stones at the first statue, you go and throw seven stones at the second, and then you go and throw seven stones at the third.

This throwing the stones is another dangerous thing at Mecca, and I have already told you something about it. On that day, whether you will be dead or you won't be dead, you won't know unless you finish throwing the stones. The danger is from us human beings disturbing one another. There is no chance for you to pass easily to the statues. It isn't that somebody is telling you not to pass or that police are telling you not to pass. All these thousands and thousands and thousands of people will be coming together and will block the way. Nobody can pass through. You will try to use strength to pass, and somebody else will also use strength and try to pass. Nobody is walking slowly. I told you that at Mecca you cannot use patient walking because somebody will be using strength walking and will knock you down, and you will remain there. And apart from that, you will get to the point where your strength can take you, and there is no chance and no way for you to pass to get close to the Satan to throw your stones. So you just have to stand at that place and throw your stones, and there are others behind you also throwing their stones. And so these thousands of people are throwing stones and knocking each others' heads. It isn't that throwing stones at each others' heads is

what they want. It is part of the Hajj and you are performing it, and that is how it is where they are throwing the stones.

The first day at Mina, you only throw stones at Satan, and that day when you finish throwing the stones, you leave your things at Mina and you go straight to Mecca. You and all these thousands and thousands of people, none of you has a way to go back to Mina: you will all go to Mecca. On that day, there is too much heavy suffering. When you reach Mecca, you don't go to your sleeping place; you go straight to the Kaaba, and you have to run around the Kaaba seven times. This running around the Kaaba is different from the running you do when you arrive. In this one we didn't have to run Safa and Marwah. When you finish this, you will go back to your sleeping place in Mecca. You will open your room, remove your harami – the white dress – and put it down. If you want, you will shave one another's heads. If you don't want to shave, you will get soap and water and bathe, and you will smear pomade on your skin and dress. By that time, since you arrived in Saudi Arabia, you haven't put a hat on your head, but by then if you want you can put on a hat.

When you bathe and dress yourself, on that very day you are going back to Mina. Truly, the tiredness you will get on that day cannot be compared to anything. Everybody will become tired. Even food, you don't have a chance to eat, unless you arrive back at Mina. That is the way you have to do it. There is tiredness, but you have to go. That is what you will do and God will bless you. The next day in the morning, you are going to throw the stones at the three statues, seven stones at each statue. When you finish, you will still stay at Mina, and the next morning you will go back and throw the stones the same way again. So that is three times, and we slept three nights at Mina. But if you want to do it in the best way, you will have to sleep at Mina four days in addition to the three you have already done. And truly, we didn't sleep there for the rest of the four days. If you finish throwing all your stones on the third day, you have a way, and that day, our houseowner from Mecca got his bus and packed all of us home.

And it is at Mina that we are supposed to perform a sacrifice. The time we are at Mina, that is the time when our people at home are also killing animals for the Chimsi festival. The killing of animals at Arafat was another sacrifice, but Mina is where they do the real slaughtering on the part of the Hajj; that is the one when we are also having our general prayers here. And so when we were at Mina, we were supposed to do that sacrifice, but because of our poverty we were not able to get animals to kill. If you are there and you have no means to buy an animal, then you have to fast for ten days. And so we did the fasting. But if you try to fast there, you will get trouble because of your tiredness. So we only fasted for three

days there, and when we came back home we finished the rest of the days. That was what we did.

When we arrived at Mecca, we slept, and the next day, our houseowner said we should go and good-bye the Kaaba. And we went and ran around it, but as for Safa and Marwah, we didn't have to go there again. When we returned, we didn't enter our rooms again. Before we went to the Kaaba, we had already packed all our things into the bus. And so the moment we arrived back from the Kaaba, we entered the bus, and they counted us into the bus. Eighty-four people, you will all enter one bus, and your loads will be on top. Where are you going? You are going to Medina. As you have gone to Mecca and Arafat and Muzdalifah and Mina, it is not until after you go to Medina that you will finish the Hajj. All the thousands and thousands of people coming for the pilgrimage will go there.

Truly, what I have been telling you about Mecca and Arafat and Mina, all these things are the big things in the pilgrimage. If you don't do all those things, people will never call you an Alhaji. You will have to go back again. But as for Medina, there is nobody who will go on the pilgrimage and say he is not going to Medina. Because of whom are you going on the pilgrimage? If you go on such a journey because of somebody, and you go to look at his work, won't you go to his own house? The Holy Prophet got up from Mecca to go to Medina, and it was at Medina that he died. He was buried at Medina, and everybody goes to see his grave. That is why we go there. And so if you go on the pilgrimage, there is no place for a plane to land except Jidda. There is only one road to Mecca, and whether you are a white man or a black man, everybody will first go to Jidda. If you happen to arrive early at Jidda and there is time, you can start by moving to Medina, and from Medina you will go to Mecca, and from there you will come back to Jidda and be resting until the times comes and you go back to your home town. But as we arrived at Jidda and the days were not many, we moved straight to Mecca and Arafat and Mina, because that is everything. And so it was from Mecca that we got up to go to Medina. To go from Mecca to Medina, if you start your journey in the afternoon, if your bus is running fast, then getting to tomorrow's seven o'clock in the morning you will be arriving at Medina. But if it is not fast, then your arrival will be by three or four o'clock in the afternoon. Sometimes it can happen that there will be many busses on the road, and you can't run fast. There is a town where you will stop and eat, and if you don't eat there, there is one other town where you will stop. And you won't eat again until Medina. You will sit in the bus and your feet will swell; if you drop down from the bus, you can't walk properly.

The time you arrive at the station, if you happen to know somebody, he will take you to his house. But if you don't know anyone, you will just be standing.

Those who are going around finding people to get sleeping places for them will come and ask you, “Have you got any houseowner to take care of you?” And you will say, “We don’t have any houseowner.” The one who asks you and you reply like that, he will take you to his house. As for Medina, the coldness there is too much. You will be lying down, and the coldness looks as if it is picking you up from the ground and throwing you to the side. When you get up from the house and you are going to the Mosque, your body will be shaking as if you are going to fly. If you spit, you spit will look as if you are spitting from your brains. But as for the white people, they used to go and sleep in the Mosque. They are used to the cold weather, and the heaviness of their blankets is too much, and so they don’t mind sleeping there. But those of us who went were sleeping in a room. There were five of us – I Alhaji Ibrahim, Alhaji Osmanu, Alhaji Ohenedjan, Alhaji Iddrisu, and Alhaji Muhammadu. It was we five who joined the same bus to Medina, and we were five in a room. There was one Zambarima man who also joined with us, he and three men. He had one wife with him, and we too had one wife with us. And so he added himself to us to make six, and our wife added to them to make five. When we were on the bus this Zambarima man asked us if we had any house to sleep, and we said, “We don’t know anybody. How much less will we have a sleeping place?” And he told us that this was his fourth time to come to Mecca, and he said that as for Medina, it is his home town and he has his sleeping place. When we agreed to follow him, some of us disagreed but they didn’t tell us. It was only I and Alhaji Osmanu who agreed.

The time we arrived at Medina and came down from the bus, we all got our loads and put them down. By that time, this Zambarima man’s houseowner came with his car and asked the Zambarima man to pack his things inside. He and his three people and his wife packed their things into the car, and he turned and asked us, “How is it? Are we not going? And I told Alhaji Osmanu that we should go. By then, Alhaji Iddrisu and the others were sitting down. And I told them, “How is it? Are we not going?” They were sitting down thinking that we are going to mislead them and put them in the bush. And this Zambarima man told them, “Follow me and we will go to my sleeping place, and if we go there and you see that the place is not good for you, then you can change to another place.” And they agreed and packed their things into the car, and the houseowner’s son drove us.

When we reached there, our houseowner’s son led us into the house to put us into a room, and he asked whether we want upstairs or downstairs. We said that we want the downstairs because we are tired of climbing the steps. And he said it is because of our old men that he is asking us about upstairs and downstairs, because he could see that some of us were too old to climb the steps. And he

asked the Zambarima man, “How many wives do you have?” And he said he had two wives because he counted our wife in addition to his own. And the houseowner’s son gave them their room. And he took nine of us and put us in a single room. That room was big. We all spread our mats on the floor, and we piled our things high against the wall. It was the houseowner’s son who was doing all this work. Up to midnight we didn’t see the houseowner himself, and we went to prayers. When we finished the prayers and came back, it was two o’clock in the morning, and we still didn’t see him. Up till daybreak we were not seeing him, and we still didn’t know how much he was charging us for the room. By that time, the rest of my friends were complaining that this was the reason why they didn’t want to follow us. And the Zambarima man heard this, and he got up and said to them that if the houseowner should come back and charge any amount and they don’t have money to pay, he himself will pay all; and so they shouldn’t let it worry them.

We just finished talking this when we heard our houseowner excuse himself at the door. The man was a Hausa man, and he was called Yakubu. He greeted us, and he said that we should forgive him. He told us that he slept at the station because he has three houses in Medina, and he was at the station trying to get strangers to put them in the three houses. And he said that this time was the only time for them to gain, and it was the very time for them to lose, too. And if you gain or you lose, then that is what you will be holding until the next year. And that was the reason why he was struggling to get strangers into his houses. After hearing this, the Zambarima man said, “Well, the only problem we have now is that you didn’t come early to tell us the charge we are to pay for the room.” And he replied to the Zambarima man, “Is this house not yours? As this house is yours, how am I going to charge you? Last year, how much did you pay?” And the Zambarima man told him that he should forget about asking him of last year, and he should just tell us the charge for the room. And the man said, “Truly, your charge is fifty riyals each.” And the Zambarima man told him that the money was too much, and he asked us how much we want to pay. We said, “We want to pay forty riyals each.” And he said we should pay that amount, and we paid. And he asked us if we were happy with that, and we said, “Yes.” And at that time, our people’s hearts became cool.

Then the houseowner brought out a car and said, “Do you want to go and find a car to take you to the grave of the Holy Prophet so that you will say some prayers there, or do you want to let me take you there with my car.” If we were going to find a car, it would cost us four riyals each, and one of our friends said we should let him take us there. And he called his son to come and drive us, and he asked his son how much he was charging. And the son said he would collect three

riyals each. And we begged him and said we would pay two riyals. And he said it didn't matter, we could pay that. So that was in addition to the charge for the room. And he asked us, "If you get to the graveyard, can you get somebody to be showing you that 'This is the grave of so-and-so, and that is the grave of so-and-so'? It is because of that you are going there." And we asked him, "If we are going to find such a person, how are we going to get him?" And he said we should go to the Mosque. When we got to the Mosque, we stood there, and he went and called somebody and told him that he should take us into the graveyard and show us the places so that we could pray. This man said he would collect two riyals from each of us. And we disagreed and said we could not pay that amount. That man just turned away and left us; he didn't even bother to look at us again. Then the son told us, "Pay one riyal each. I will take you inside. Anything you want, I will tell you, because I am a town boy." And we agreed. And so in addition to our other charges, that made seven riyals each. And all this we had to pay to our houseowner.

The grave of the Holy Prophet is inside the mosque, and when we entered inside, the son opened the room of the Holy Prophet's wife. We saw the bed inside, and we saw the cooking pans, and we saw some clothes hanging. The time the Holy Prophet Muhammad was alive with his wife, all these things were there. And we just turned to our left, and we saw the grave of the Holy Prophet. They don't allow anybody to enter there; they just open a window and you look through. As for that place, you can't say anything about that. And the coldness at that spot, you can't see any coldness like that. The son let us catch hold of one another's hand, facing the grave in front of us. There is a wall around the grave. People were many there, and we made our two women to come out and stand in front of us. All nine of us surrounded them, and they prayed till they were finished. If not that we had stood and held hands, people would have stepped on them and killed them. When they went back, four of us went forward while the rest still held hands, and after they finished then the rest also prayed like that. You will pray the Faatiya twice, and there is another verse you will pray twice. After praying to the Holy Prophet, we turned to the other side, and we saw the grave of Sheikh Abu Bakr, and we prayed to the grave. And we turned to the other side and saw the grave of Sheikh Umar and prayed there. And the next one was Sheikh Usman, and we prayed. And then the son took us to the sitting room of the Holy Prophet where he used to sit when he was alive and the voice of God would be coming to him, and we sat there and prayed. And then we came out.

The mosques that the Holy Prophet built in Medina are ten, and when we got up early in the morning, we would be going to all these mosques to say prayers. It was only bananas and dates we were eating. From there we would

move to another place. The Holy Prophet had a friend named Hamzah, and we went to say some prayers at his grave. It was pagans who killed him. His house was just by a mountain, and when they were taking him, the mountain also got up and was following them. These pagans became frightened, and they just threw him on the ground, and the mountain stopped at that spot. The followers of the Prophet came and buried him under that mountain. That mountain is very big, and wherever you are at Medina, if you look up, you will see that mountain. The Prophet built a mosque there, and some people said that the Prophet also used to sit there and pray to God. And there is also a big cemetery outside of Medina. It is as big as a town. And we also went there. And so all this was what we were doing when we were at Medina.

When we left Medina, we went back to Jidda. If you arrive at Jidda, then you sit down and wait for your plane to come for you. Sometimes your plane will come in three days' or four days' time, and you have to be waiting. As for us, we waited and our plane didn't come. Everybody's money got finished. Some people were selling their robes. Others were trying to turn themselves into load carriers. And others turned to be beggars. That was what was happening. Every day they told us that our plane would be coming, and the next day it didn't come. And we asked again, and they spoiled our hearts: they told us that the plane was not coming to collect us. We asked, "Why is the plane not coming?" And they said that Mecca people would not agree that a plane from Ghana should come and land there again. And we asked, "What brought it?" And they said that there was a debt which they didn't pay, and if a plane from Ghana comes there again, the Mecca people would catch it. And we were standing and we kept quiet because our hearts were spoiled. If you don't know a town and you are going to be in that town, it will spoil your heart. Apart from that, nobody had money. We used all of everybody's money. And some of our people were begging. And some were selling things: if you buy a something for one riyal and sell it for two riyals, you would get one riyal profit, and somebody could stand for one day and get five riyals profit. And this was what some of us were doing.

Truly, as for me, I didn't beg and I didn't trade. My food was still lasting up to Jidda. When I went to Mecca, my brother's wife was with me, and my flour and everything was with her; we were still carrying it up to Jidda. As for the food you carry, you don't buy anything again. You will even have dried fish along with you. And this was why I didn't beg or sell anything. And truly, I had bought two robes, and when I saw that it was becoming a bit hard on me, I sold one of them. There was an old man who went and begged and got money, and he wanted a robe. And I said I had two. And he said I should fear God and remove one and sell it to him. And I said, "What you have said, already I also wanted to sell it." And I sold

it to him. In three days' time, the money finished. There was one man who gave me ten riyals, and I didn't finish eating it. I was using it when they told us that the plane was coming to take us. And it was ten days we were at Jidda, and the plane came on the eleventh day. And so as for Jidda, it was hard on us. How can you go to someplace and finish your work there, and then come and lie down for ten days, doing nothing? And so it was hard on us.

The night before we came to Ghana, they said that anybody who did not have Ghana money, they wouldn't weigh his things. I went to a woman who was with us to borrow Ghana money, and she lent me sixty cedis. When they weighed my things, they charged me thirty cedis, and I paid. And they cut a small piece of paper and gave me and said that when I get back to Ghana, I should pay the amount they wrote on it. When they were going to weigh our things, we got in a very long line. From the time when we woke up in the morning and went to that place, before they finished weighing all our boxes, it was night. We didn't sleep again. When you lie down, all your heart looks at home. At three o'clock, they woke us up and said that everybody should go to the boarding area. It was there that we prayed the morning prayers. You will be standing in a line and holding the load that you didn't put in your boxes. And some people also had some things from their boxes and were carrying them. And we saw that some of our women looked as if they were giving birth at Jidda: they were hanging some things on their backs and also tying some things in front of their stomachs; they were carrying some and holding some. Getting to eleven o'clock in the morning, they said we should enter the plane. And when you went to enter the plane, if you are holding only one thing, you will enter. But if it was that you were hanging something and holding or carrying another, they would just remove the one and throw it away. You won't carry it home and you won't see it again. And so the women who were giving birth to children, they removed the children and threw them away. And those whose loads they removed were crying and weeping. This was what they did to us. It wasn't a joke. The things they took from you and threw away will never come to Ghana; they will never bring them. And what they said was that the loads we had put into the plane were too much, and so if we also put the things we were holding into it, it wouldn't be good, and that was why they collected the things and threw them away.

When we entered the plane, they didn't count us. They just made all of us enter at once. Some of us were sitting and some were standing. Inside a plane is not like a bus: you cannot enter and stand. When we finished entering, some of us sat down, and about eight people didn't get a sitting place. It was at that time they came in to count, and when they counted, they removed the eight people. The people they removed were crying. It was fearful. Their crying showed that their

things that they had weighed would be useless. We are going home and they are not there. When we get home, we will remove our things. But as they are not there, who will be there to remove their things? And all this made us stand for some time. By then it was around twelve o'clock, and the airplane people said that they would settle the matter, that they would go home and the next day they would come for these people, and they would look after their things, too. And they wrote everybody's name and took the paper and said they would find the people's boxes with their names. And they gave some paper to the people who were going to follow us. Before we got up and left there, it was about two o'clock.

The time we reached Accra, it was afternoon, the same day, and we stopped and Accra people got down. And we came to Tamale, and it was about four o'clock. And truly, there too our hearts were spoiled. They said that they had brought some soldiers from Sunyani, and that if anybody had brought anything, they would collect it. And you know most of us had brought some small things, and these soldiers came and were guarding us. By then the health inspectors came into the plane, and they looked and looked at us. Those of us who were not well, they sent them to the hospital. Those of us who were well, we were coming out one by one. And they separated us and we stood. All our people who came to welcome us, they were all standing behind the wire, looking at us in this town. By the time they removed our things from the plane, it was around five o'clock, and they put them down. And you will go, and you will show, "These are my things." As you have known your box, they will tell you to take it and bring it. And the soldiers will come and open it. They will be removing the things and putting them down and checking them. When they check and it comes up to the weight you were told to bring, they will put it back inside. What is left, they will take it and go and put on their table. It is not anything. They want money. They are not going to tell you and give you a receipt. You will go there, and they will say, "Pay a hundred cedis" and you will say you will pay fifty cedis, and they will tell you, "Pay seventy cedis." You will pay it to them before they will take your things and give you. And you will put it in your box and tie it.

And by that time you have exhausted yourself. As for Ghana, we have many thieves. You will suffer to go to Mecca, and you will come and people will start taking your things. If they want, they should also buy their tickets and go. But somebody will suffer to go there, and buy his things and come, and they will start to seize it. At Mecca, if you go to all the shops and buy everything in the shops, nobody will talk anything at Mecca airport. But the hard place is your own country, inside the Ghana airport. That is where you will see the bitterness of carrying things. The Ghana airport: the people at the airport are all thieves. When the white men were here, and people were going to Mecca, there was

nothing like that. It is when we became free that the thing started, and it looks as if there is no law in Ghana. I have already told you that Acheampong spoiled Ghana. Acheampong's soldiers spoiled everything. As for soldiers, everybody knows that they are bush people; they don't have to come to town. It's now that soldiers are inside the town. Why should a soldier come to a station or an airport? What do they want there? You have come safely from Mecca, and you want to pass, and you are in a hurry to go, but as for them, they are not in hurry to go anywhere. If they want to get something from you, you have to allow them to get it so that you will pass. Otherwise, they will find some mistake and let you sit down. As they are controlling the way, if you don't give them, they won't let you pass. They don't pity anybody. They will take people's money like that, and people will curse them. When they retire from that work, you will see them, old people walking about, and nobody will mind them up to the time they die. That is their suffering they will get because they have cheated people in the past.

And so that is something that is worrying me about Ghana people. The people who have been going to Mecca say that still, airport people are seizing their things. As for that one, it is just wickedness. Someone has paid his way to go. He has a passport, too. The government itself will bear him witness that he should go, and I also believe that if you don't solve all the problems of going, the government won't give you a way to go. So why should he bring his things, and they will tell him that they are removing these ones? As for me, the thing I know that police or soldiers can seize is a stolen thing. But somebody will try and get his way through everything, and will follow all the problems inside and finish everything, and go, and when he is coming and he buys something, they will collect it from him again. It is not fine that somebody should go to Mecca and on his way back, they will start stealing his things. And so if you look at it, it pains a lot. And so may God help us. And with all this, before we left the airport, it was eight o'clock. And we came to our houses. And this was how we came home.

When we came, our mother's children, and our brothers, and our fathers, and our junior brothers, and our children, and our wives, everybody's heart was white. And we too, our hearts were white because we had arrived. Everybody will come to greet you, and when they greet you, you will ask, "Are you well?" And they will say they are well. At that time, your heart will be white, but it will not be too white, because some talk can happen and they will take it and hide from you. As you have just arrived, they will not tell you. And so you will just be sitting down and your heart will be white a little bit and not a lot. Going to the next day, and getting to the night, if they don't tell you anything, then you will know that nothing has happened, and your heart will be *truly* white.

And by then, many people will be coming to greet you. And you have bought some small things for people. Maybe you brought some hats, and anybody who comes to greet you, you will remove one and give it to him. If you brought some prayer beads, you can give that. You wanted to give to everybody, but you could not get money to buy such things. And someone else you wanted to give something to, maybe you forgot and you didn't get his thing. And those of us who go to Mecca, there is some water they call zamzam water. This zamzam water is from a well just near to the Kaaba. Anyone who goes to Mecca will fetch some of this water and bring it home. At Mecca, they put it in a tin, like milk. And so when those who have gone arrive home, they will open it and mix it with water. We pour it in a bucket and fetch some water and add to it, and we get a cup and put it on top. Anyone who comes to greet you, if you were not able to get him any gift, you will fetch the cup and let him drink this zamzam water or put it on his body, and it will cool down the heart. If that fellow is coming from his house, he doesn't say he is coming to greet you and get something; he will say, "I am coming to greet so-and-so and drink zamzam water." And so anybody who drinks it can say that God should let him drink this water, and coming to the next year he should also get the chance of going to Mecca. And you will also say, "May God also send you there." And this is why anyone who goes to Mecca will fetch some of this water home, because if you go to Mecca and come home, even your enemy will come and greet you. He is coming because of himself so that God will give him the chance and he will also go to Mecca. It's just like when you are going, you will greet all your friends and enemies that they should take all your faults and forgive you. When you come home, they will also come to greet you. As they come, some come with food, say, yams, or rice balls, and some even give guinea fowls. There will be somebody who was not able to good-bye you before you left; he will come and give you three cedis or four cedis or what his heart wants. That money is what you will be using to give to your wives to cook, afternoon and night. They will cook like that for one week, because some of the strangers who come to you will come from other towns. They will say, "I will go and see our senior brother who has come home," or "Our junior brother has come home, and we should go and greet him 'Our good luck.'" They will all come to greet you like that, because if a person goes to Mecca and comes home, it is a very big good luck. The enterings you entered, it was inside war that you entered. And you have come out of the war. It is good luck. And so this is how our going to Mecca is, and this is how we went.

And so I can tell you that the going to Mecca is hard. And the going to Mecca is heartbreak. And I can tell you again that the going to Mecca is good. As I have gone, it has strengthened my belief. I saw how people there hold the

Muslim religion. And I saw the works of our Holy Prophet. As I have seen these things, it has added to my way of living. There are many people here who know much about the Muslim religion, but they haven't gone to Mecca to see. I haven't counted the time from when the Holy Prophet left this world up to the present time. But the maalams know it. If you go and look at the works the Holy Prophet did and put down, some of them look like just today. It is not anybody who has told me; it is my eye that has seen these wonders. They are there today and tomorrow. Anybody who goes there will look and see them. If I had not gone, would I have seen any of it? Truly, if a Muslim goes to Mecca, he will see something that will add to his religion. This one alone, if you go and look at it, it will add to your religion. And this Kaaba that we go around, they say that if you do any bad, even if you kill a person, when you go around the Kaaba seven times, you are just like a new child who was given birth today: he has no fault to God, and he has no fault to anybody. And if you go there and you say prayers too, it will add more to your belief. And this is how it is.

And so truly, the going to Mecca is not useless. They have shown us that prayers at Mecca do not remain useless. If you pray for somebody at Mecca and wish him good luck, whatever happens, God will take that good luck and pay it to him. As I prayed for you, your mother, your father, and your friends, maybe none of you are people who pray, and none of you will ever go there, but what I prayed there will make some good for you at home. If you pray for somebody who prays or who does not pray, as you have called his name there, he will get something. That is why when you are going, people come to you. Someone will say, "Get twenty pesewas: when you go, pray for me." That is why someone will give money before you go, and it will show that you have prayed for him at Mecca.

And it shows again that going to Mecca is not your own pocket. If you are someone who brings up a family, inside that, your family can send you to Mecca. Or inside your friendship way, your friend can send you to Mecca. If you are a Muslim, there is no gift that is more than someone telling you that he is sending you to Mecca. There's no gift that is more than that. As we are farming in Dagbon here, somebody will be praying for a tractor. But if I am sitting down as a Muslim, and you want to send me to Mecca, will I say I rather need a tractor? For what? What is a tractor? What about a ship? A full ship loaded with goods, I think going to Mecca is better than the ship and the goods. There is nothing that you will give to a Muslim and he will be happy more than sending him to Mecca. I believe that the one you love is the one you spend your money on. But I will tell you again that here, people send others to Mecca without asking anything from them, just as if they were performing a sacrifice. They have never done anything for one another, but someone will just say that he has money and he is afraid of

God, and he will take someone to Mecca free. Last year there was an Alhaji who was in Accra, and he telephoned here asking for five people to come and meet him in Accra and accompany him to Mecca and come back, that he would pay their fare and everything free. And these people never thought that this man would do that for them. So many things are happening in this way, and if something like that happens, there is nothing one can give as a gift to pay it back. The only thing you can do is pray for that person. In Dagbon here, during the Chimsi Festival, if you buy an animal for your friend to slaughter, you will get a gift from God. And so it is the same thing as someone who sends his friend to Mecca. If you are able to send your friend to Mecca, and he goes to say all the prayers at Mecca and ask for anything, when it comes time for God to give him what he asked for, God will divide it into two and give half to the one who went and half to the one who sent his friend. Even if you are a pagan and you are not a Muslim and you don't say any prayers, it is the same thing. This is what God said in the Holy Qur'an. And this is what happens in the Chimsi month on the part of performing sacrifices and begging for God's blessing.

And so if someone sends you to Mecca like that, it is good you say it. If you don't say it, God knows the lie you have talked. It was just the other day I was sitting outside my house and we talked of your matter. It was a woman who abused her friend. She came from Mecca and gave a gift to her friend, and her friend was annoyed and didn't collect it. And at that time the one who gave the gift said, "Can you get money to go to Mecca?" By then I was standing with a woman, and she said that the woman who abused her friend like that hadn't done well. And she said to me, "As you are sitting down, is it not John who sent you to Mecca?" And I said, "Yes. Is it not because of friendship? Was it my money I removed and went?" And she said, "Is that not it?" And I said, "As the woman abused her like that, she didn't do well." And so, on the part of your sending me to Mecca, anyone who hears it, it makes him sweet. My friends, my brothers, my fathers, the townspeople, when they hear it, it makes them sweet. And it shows that you have also gone.

In every way, you have gone to Mecca. When we were going, they said we should put our pictures on our boxes. When I started looking into my things, I came to see a picture that I had snapped with you, and I took it and put it on my box, and that box was with me in Jidda and Mecca and Medina and when I came home. It is still there. And so anywhere I took the box, you were there. One day we were at the Kaaba and we were sitting, and a man asked us the country we came from, and we said we are from Ghana. And he said he didn't know Ghana. And we said Nkrumah was our Prime Minister. And he nodded his head. And I turned and asked him if he was from America. He said, no, he was from Morocco.

And he asked me why I asked him that. And I said, “My friend is in America. He brought me here.” And I told him how I was living with you until you brought me here. And he said, “It is true.” And he said that you had done your promise and we should hold one another well, and it made him sweet. That was the talk I had with him. And how Mecca is, whenever you are sitting inside the Mosque, somebody will come near you and ask you, “Which town do you come from?” You will tell him, and he will ask you your name. When you show him your name, he will also show you his name. This is how they are. Some of them, too, when they see that you are black, when they are sitting near you, they can take a finger and rub your hand, and will look at the finger to see whether it is black or not black. This was what some of them were doing. When you go to the Mosque there and you are sitting down, you will like one another. This is how it is at Mecca. Quarrels don’t go forward. Truly, they also quarrel there and beat one another, and nobody will separate them; but when they quarrel, they shake one another’s hand and then they turn. How it is there, you will be seeing many people, and you will be talking to many people. And anyone I talked to about your sending me there, whether it was my mother’s child or not, it was sweet to him. And so I think that it is not only here: anybody who hears of this, he will like it. And so Mecca, it brings good talks. Anywhere you go and are beating drums, people will say, “Ah. That drummer, has he come again? He is Alhaji Ibrahim’s friend, and he helped him to go to Mecca.” As they have said this, has it not added to us? Even when we were going to enter the plane, when people were asking me, “Has your name appeared?” I said, “Yes. My name appeared. It is because of John. He made it and it is through him I am going.” And they said, “Yes, it’s true. It is good a person looks for a good friend.” And as they are talking like that, it adds to you and me, and it adds to all of us.

And if they are praising you, it is not praising that I am talking. Dagbamba have a proverb; they say, “Prayers know where to go.” Why do they say that? When we pray, we are not begging a human being: we call God’s name. God is not far from us; God is throughout the world. As God is near us, if you say some prayers for somebody, wherever he is, the prayers will reach him. Because of the good you have done to me, if I pray and mention your name, God will also give you some good. This is why I say that prayers can go to any place. No one will go to Mecca and pray, and the prayers will be nothing. People who have been there are always saying that. And because of the good that you have done, all my family and my friends here are praying for you, those who know you and those who don’t know you, when they sit down, they think about you. And when they pray, they pray to God that may God give you what you want. And so I want to tell you: never underrate anyone who loves you. As for love, there is no small

love. And if someone loves you too, don't think that he loves you just a little. The one who loves you, if he thinks of you, he will always have good thoughts. Whether he has seen you or he hasn't seen you, his heart is white to you. This is what our old people have been saying and we hear.

And so may God let us love ourselves, and He will give us long life and good health. Let me tell you. How our living together is now, there is no day that your family will forget of us or we will forget of you. Even if it happens that all of us sitting here now are dead, whatever happens, one day our grandchildren will talk about us. It's not even our children: it's our grandchildren who will get up one day and talk of all what you did for me. And your own grandchildren also will think of what I have also done for you. If a time comes when I am no more alive, the years can come and pass and be going. Forget about my children who saw me when I was going to Mecca. I'm talking about my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, those who have not seen me before I died. One day they will say, "We heard that our grandfather Ibrahim was an Alhaji, and it was a white man who sent our grandfather to Mecca. The white man was an American who came to work with our grandfather. But unfortunately, we never met our grandfather." And as you are now drumming, you have just left an old talk in your family, and some people will also come from your back to learn how to beat drums, whether they know me or they don't know me. When you last came from the States, you brought some broken drumskins, that I should use them to measure new drumheads as spare parts, and you showed them to me and said you have some people who follow you to play those drums you took home with you, and they have broken all. And so as you have come alone to learn drumming, now there are people following you to beat the drum. On your family's side, after your death, if your children also learn how to drum, one day they will sit down and tell their friends, "It was one Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai who taught our father how to play these drums. This is why now we have become drummers." What will bring all this? It is love. Love always extends. As I prayed for you at Mecca, every day I am praying for you. And the prayers we are praying are still going on.

And so we pray to God so that we should love ourselves, and He should give us long life, and we will be doing the work He says we should do. I have been hearing from maalams, that they say we should love ourselves before God will love us. The maalams have been telling us that. And we believe it too, and we have been seeing it. Have you seen? How people are praising you for what you have done, it shows that patience gets everything. And annoyance also makes you not get something. You have patience and I have patience, and this is why we have gathered and we are sitting here. We are not following "They have said." And so patience is more than anything. And if you will agree, I will call you a

name. And the name is “Patience gets everything.” It is a good name, and it is a bad name. Why have I said that? The children of patience, their names are not good. Patience’s child is a blind man. Patience’s child is someone who fears. Patience’s child is a deaf person. Are their names good? If you are going to take patience, and you say that your eyes will see, you cannot hold patience. If you want to take patience and say that you don’t fear, you cannot hold patience. If you want to hold patience and say you will hear everything, you will hear good and you will hear bad, and you cannot hold patience. Patience is: you hear something and say you haven’t heard it, and you see something and say you haven’t seen it, and something is coming and you fear it and you stop. The holding of patience is hard, but truly, we know that it is patience that gets.

And so truly, when you go to Mecca, thoughts will catch you. When you go and see all the things that are there, inside your heart, you will feel a bit sad. There were many people there, even some of the white people, they were seeing these things and they just started weeping. And when I saw it, it made me feel pity. And again, going to Mecca made my heart white. I was not somebody who could have seen it, apart from you. As I have gone to see it, it has made me happy and has added more to the way we are going to live together. As I am sitting, my going has added to me, and it has added to my living. The going to Mecca is white heart, and the going to Mecca is also pity. I went there and I looked and I saw the work of our Holy Prophet, and I heard the way they talked about his work. He was very strong, and it has come to stand like that. And I took it to look at myself. And I saw that every person, and anything that breathes, will die. If it were not that, the Prophet used to talk to God. And he was God’s friend again. He didn’t do any bad to God, and we hear that our Prophet didn’t do bad to any friend of his. He didn’t do wrong to anybody. Even they say that when he used to eat with his friends when he was small, if he cut a morsel of food and his friend took it, he never asked his friend anything. And he never took anybody’s food either. And God loved him, too. Inside our Holy Qur’an, God says that if we want to see paradise, we should follow the Holy Prophet. And God gave him power. All the people who were worrying him, the pagans, he was able to defeat all of them. And you will go to Mecca and look at the mountains, and you will know that God has done His work. But the Prophet used to go and the mountains would get up and follow him. It’s a big talk. And here is it: with all this, when the Prophet was dying, he knew he was going to die. God didn’t leave him in the world. God didn’t leave his death; He took him away. And all the works the Holy Prophet did, they are all there. If you come to look at it, what will you do? If you are a person who thinks, you will think that as he was strong and he came to die, maybe you too, as you are strong, maybe your strength is a weak strength. Look at

how God liked him. And he didn't do any wrong; he didn't make anybody's heart get up; he had power, and God gave him power; he knew how to pray to God, and when he prayed he would say that God should give him the chance so that all the people who will hear God's word will hear. But all of it, it was useless. And here is it: that person is not there again, and as he is not there, we all know that everybody will die. And you too, you will have yourself and you are showing yourself with your bluffing: you are showing yourself useless. You will go and see the grave of the Prophet. As the Prophet is not there, you see how his grave is lying. How will you look at yourself? You are going to look at yourself useless. You will look at yourself, and pity will catch you. Truly, when you go there and come, thoughts will catch you. If you are a person who has gone there, this is how it is. And when you see such things, when you come home and anybody does any wrong to you, you will receive the wrong and you will not give it back.

And so Mecca is good. As you are going, the thoughts that will catch you there are quite different from the thoughts here. Anything you see there, that is what you are going to hold. We haven't got the means, but if we had the means, Mecca is good for everyday. There are some people in this town who have gone there more than ten times. There is a woman and it was only this year she didn't go. She booked, and they said that as she has gone, she shouldn't go again. She cried, "Ah-h-h-h!" until she stopped. There are many old people, old men and old women, they go there and remain. They are sick, or they can't walk, and others are carrying them. They go to Mecca and remain there. They are not afraid of that. It is because of the talks you will go there and see. The Prophet did many works, and it is not all that you can see at once. And you are praying to God every day, and you know that if you pray at Mecca it will be good for you. And all the people you are praying for, it will be good for them too. As I have gone once, and if I think of all the suffering I suffered, I also don't mind to go there every day. It will add to my way of living.

As I have gone and come back, if my life has changed, it is not I who will say that it has changed. Sometimes, in my walking or in the way that I am living, sometimes when I am sitting with my friends and I want to say something, they will say that I shouldn't talk like that, that I have become an old man and a big man and a heavy man. Three days ago, some people were going to quarrel and we separated them and they refused, and I said that we should leave them and they will beat one another. And some of my friends said, "Why have you said that? Your mouth – the mouth that you have taken to tell them to stop and they have refused – if they beat one another, they will see what they will see because of the mouth that you have taken to talk. You are a heavy person. And so it is not good for you to say that they should beat one another." And they told me that I have

changed my way of living, and that I shouldn't hold what I used to hold and sit down. Truly, I had respect before I went to Mecca. But I have also seen, when I came home, some people who were not respecting me now give me respect. When I go to someplace, because of the Hajj, they give me respect. Sometimes I will go to the wedding houses where we beat drums, and when they bring food, they will ask, "Alhaji, can you eat here?" And I say, "It doesn't matter." But the first time, they never asked me that. And so it has added to me. As I have gone, my name has changed. I was Ibrahim, and now I have worn the gown of the Hajj, and I have added a new name, Alhaji. And it looks as if that new name has driven away my former name. To anyone who prays "Allahu Akubaru," it is a respectable name. That is the work of God. And so as I have gone, it has added to me. Even if a dog goes to Hajj and comes home, its name will change. Its name will still be called dog, but it will become heavy. And so the pilgrimage is not a joking thing. That is how Mecca is, and this is what I know about it.

And I think we have finished the talk of the Muslims in Dagbon here, and tomorrow, if God agrees, we will start the talk of the typical Dagbamba and how they beg the gods, and we will start it first on the part of the soothsayers.