

Chapter I-12: *Drummers and Other Musicians of Dagbon*

Today I am going to continue the talk about drumming, and I will talk more about how we drummers are and also about the strength our drumming has in Dagbon here. And so the talk we were talking yesterday, this talk joins it and follows, and I will start on the part of the names we drummers have. The name of a drummer in Dagbon is *Baana*, that is, musician, those who sing or those who beat things. There are many people who sing and beat things in Dagbon, and today we are going to talk about them. And as I have joined this talk, the talk separates again, because we drummers have more respect than all of them. And so we are inside the talks of drumming, and I will join this one here, because this talk and what we were talking yesterday, the difference between them is not anything big.

How our Dagbon is, everyone is standing at his own place in Dagbon. In our way of living, a drummer has more respect than a butcher. A drummer has more respect than a blacksmith, or a barber, or a soothsayer. We are at our place, and they are also at their place. In Dagbon here, a butcher doesn't become chief of Yendi, and a butcher doesn't beat the drum. And a drummer too will not become a butcher. A barber will not be a drummer, and a drummer will not be a barber. A blacksmith will not beat the drum, and a drummer will not become a blacksmith. Everyone is at his place in Dagbon here. We don't enter one another's work. We don't do our work because of "My friend is doing it; I will also do it." You will not see anyone drumming unless he is born a drummer in the drummer's line. And the chiefs too don't enter it. A Yaa-Naa's child will never beat a drum, and the chieftaincy that can be given to the child of a Yaa-Naa cannot be given to a drummer. And the child of Namo-Naa will not go to become the chief of Yendi: he will be in the drumming. Whether he is big, he has money, he is strong, whatever happens, he is a drummer. And so if you want to praise somebody, you have to take his own name to praise him.

How our work is in Dagbon here, as they call us drummers, there are many ways people call us. And so I'm going to start this talk by showing you some of the names people call us drummers. It is not praise-names I'm showing you. I want to show you the character of our work. The name of a drummer is *Baana*, "singer," because as we sing when we drum, they call us like that. And again, others call us "noise-makers," that we make noise. And the name is from the noise we make, and it is also a part of our work. On Mondays and Fridays, we drummers have work to do at the chief's house. On Mondays and Fridays, early in the morning about four o'clock getting to five o'clock, we go to beat for the chief.

Sometimes as you are lying down, you will hear the noise from the chief's house. And someone will be sleeping and will wake up. And people will say, "Yesterday we were sleeping and the people who make noise came and made noise and woke us up." And so they call us "noise-makers." This chief-waking we do, we beat something we call *Punyiysili*, that is, to beat songs and wake somebody up, and so the meaning of *Punyiysili* is that you are going to open your mouth to the chief to say what is worrying you. And we also call it *Bieyunaayo*. The meaning of *Bieyunaayo* is that you are saying that day is breaking. And its name again is *Naa-Nyebu*, chief waking. We call *Punyiysili* a chief's dance even though the chief doesn't dance. But on Mondays and Fridays, we Dagbamba go and greet the chief. And the townspeople and the elders, too, if there is any talk in the town, or if it is anything they are going to bring to the chief, they also go and greet the chief on those days. And so there is a way in our drumming way that we should also go to the chief's house on Monday and Friday to greet him, and as the chief is sleeping when the drummers come, a drummer will shout and the chief will wake up. As we are doing it Mondays and Fridays, it is eight times a month.

When we go, we go with small drummers who are learning to drum, and it is there that these children get to know how to use their wrists to beat the drum and they also get to know its songs. When we go, if there is a drummer who is learning how to sing, we will let him sing because maybe he will feel shy to sing in the day time. We drummers will beat drums after him for the chief to wake up. When it is early morning and it is a bit dark, whether the small drummer's voice is nice or not nice, he will sing; he will learn it until he knows it, and when he grows up, he will know the work of drumming. He won't feel shy again, and if he takes his head to anyplace, it won't fail him. And how this *Punyiysili* is, the chief doesn't dance, and sometimes when we go early in the morning like that, he doesn't even come out from his house. But if you are a drummer and you don't learn its songs, then you are not a drummer. And so it is good when they wake you early in the morning, and you use your hand to rub your eyes, and you go to sing. And if you do that, one day you will remember and say, "Oh, they used to wake me to go and sing so-and-so's songs for that chief." As everything has changed, this *Punyiysili* has not changed. As we have left everything, we still go to wake the chiefs on Mondays and Fridays. And so because of that, some people call us that we are "the people who make noise."

And when it is eight or nine o'clock, when people are coming to greet the chief, we go back to the chief's house. If you are about ten people when you reach the chief's house, no matter how full of people the place is, whether it is the hall or the compound or it is outside, it is your leader who will take you straight to the right-hand side of where the chief is sitting. And you will all clap your hands and

greet him, and your leader will clap his hands and say to the chief, “Son of a lion, son of a lion, son of a lion.” The drummer calls the chief the son of a lion because the chief lies on the skins of a lion and a leopard, and any child the chief gives birth to, we call that child a lion’s son, too. When the chief drummer calls the chief like that, the chief will also call the chief drummer and say, “Come and get cola.” The drummer will collect the cola and continue sitting at the chief’s right-hand side. And his reason for sitting at the chief’s right is that any time the chief removes anything from his pocket, the one who sits at his right-hand side is receiving it. And that is our appetite at the chief’s house.

The Punyiysili does not end, because we will do it throughout the year, unless the chief doesn’t have it, because then the drummers also don’t have it. The chiefs who observe Fridays in Dagbon here are there, and it is not all chiefs who observe it. And so Friday drumming is also there. We Muslims call Friday *Zumma*, and it is like your Sunday. It is on Fridays that Muslims gather together to pray, and on that day, drummers can sometimes beat as if it is the Damba Festival. On that day, drummers can beat any dance they want, and they will beat until about twelve o’clock noon; by that time, people will want to be going home and dressing for the prayers. And so we have this in Dagbon. The Gukpe-Naa sometimes beats the Zumma dance. The Nanton-Naa, the Tolon-Naa, the Karaga-Naa, the Mionlana, the Sunson-Naa: they all sometimes have it, and there are some others, too. But it is not all chiefs who have it. As for Monday, the drummers only go to wake the chief and beat Punyiysili, but as for Friday, we call it “the day of the white heart.” As we have left everything, on Mondays and Fridays we still go to wake the chiefs.

And they call us again, “People who cause quarrels.” Sometimes you will sing for someone, and he will do something he wouldn’t have done. Maybe someone’s grandfather went to a war, and it could be that the fellow’s father didn’t go to war. You will take your drum and say, “Your grandfather went for a war. As you are sitting down, do you think you can also go for a war?” When you say this to the son of a chief, if he is someone with bad heart, he will tell you that he is someone who can go to war. He will say, “I can go. It is because my grandfather had people who were standing by him. But the people I have, they are useless.” And you will see that the people following him will get up and quarrel with him. And by that time we have made them quarrel. And so we are trouble-causers, because we make people to quarrel.

Sometimes it can happen too that a chief will go for a war. In the olden days when they wanted to go to war, they would go with soldiers and drummers. The work of these drummers was just to be beating the drums with some talks on the drums, and the chief would be encouraging the soldiers to fight. And so when

a drummer followed a chief to war, the chief would be sitting down telling the soldiers to fight, and the drummer would be beating the drum behind the chief. We even have some words we say when a chief is frightened and wants to run away, and we say these words and the chief will not be able to run away. And if it happened that they killed all the soldiers, then the drummer would use the drum to insult the chief. The drum would talk and say, "If I were the chief, I would have fought and won this war. But it is unfortunate that I am not the chief. You are the chief. And you are not able to win the war." Sometimes the chief would get up and kill the drummer before he would go to fight and die there. Sometimes, the drummer would ride a horse beating a drum and singing, and the chief would also ride, and the drummer would follow him to the fighting place. And if the chief was killed, the drummer too was also killed. That is how our way of living is. We drummers follow chiefs. When there is a war, you have to follow your chief, and when the chief dies, you also die. It can even happen that a drummer will talk, and a chief will go to war. If a chief is boasting that he is somebody strong, a drummer can use the drum to beat and sing, that, "You have been boasting, but such-and-such a person, the place he went, have you been able to go there?" At that time, the chief will get ready, and he will tell people to arm themselves, and he will go to that place. If somebody goes to war like that, is it because of himself or because of the drummer? It is inside drumming like that, but it doesn't show that a drummer should talk like that. If you have your chief, you don't want him to go and die. And if you talk like that and the chief is going, then you the drummer will follow. If the chief dies there, then you too will remain there. And so the talk you a drummer can talk, it is not always something you will take to do work every day.

And again, they call us "women." We are called women because we don't have anyone among ourselves who takes our troubles for us. As we are sitting down, anywhere we go and we see that the place is sweet for us, we stay there. And when the place is not sweet for us again, we run away from that place. Our grandfathers were like that. From the olden days up to now, any time a drummer was staying with a chief and the chief was not doing good to him, he left for another chief. He would tell him, "The world is full of many troubles, and you are not the only person." And so he left for another town. Because of that, we are called women. As for a woman, if you marry her and it's good, you will be staying with her; and if it's not good, she goes to another place. That is how we also are. Anywhere we see that is good for us, we run there. Because of that, a drummer has no permanent place. If you see a drummer leaving this Tamale to follow a chief and stay in Yendi, his grandfather might have come from Tamale and not Yendi. But if he stays in Yendi and he wants, Yendi can become his town.

And his children will also be going around looking for their chiefs. That is how our way of life is.

And so we drummers, as we are called women, the chiefs and others even call us “chief’s wives.” If we see any chief or any son of a chief, we even call him “my husband,” and he also calls us “my wife.” It is an old thing, and it is not a joke. And so we drummers are the chief’s wives. That is why we drummers enter the chief’s house without seeing somebody first. How can you go and call someone to take you to enter your husband’s house? A chief cannot even be annoyed at a drummer because we are just like a husband and wife. If you get annoyed with your wife, whatever happens, you will talk to her in some time: if you don’t talk to her, she will talk to you. If you still refuse to talk to your wife, a day will come and you will need something from her. And so if you are a chief, and you refuse to talk to us drummers, you will some day need something from us, and by that time you will talk to us. And so we drummers are like that, and we have strength in the chief’s house.

Yesterday I told you that if Namonaa and Yaa-Naa quarrel, it is a big talk in Dagbon, and I showed you that Namonaa can swear some words on the chief, and Yaa-Naa will beg Namonaa. A chief’s wife is the drummer, and I have told you already: the tongue and the teeth, they quarrel. As a husband and wife are together, whatever happens, anything at all may cause trouble between the two of you. And in our living, it shows that if you enter into an offense to your wife or your husband, you have to send people to go and beg. And so how we drummers stay with the chiefs, if we also enter into the offense of the chief, say, if Namonaa enters the offense of the chief, and Yaa-Naa swears, the way Namonaa would have sworn and Yaa-Naa will fear, if Yaa-Naa also swears that one on Namonaa, Namonaa is also afraid of it, and Namonaa will beg Yaa-Naa.

At that time Namonaa will gather those who are drummers, all of us, that we should go and beg the chief. And every drummer will get up. And every woman drummer, any women who comes from the drumming, she will also get up. You cannot count the drummers. You will go to the chief’s house, and you will take all the elders, too. That day, no elder will remain at home. All will gather at the chief’s house. And the princes too will come out. And the chief’s wives too who are inside the palace, except of course the chief’s wife who cannot walk outside, they will all come out. The chief’s wives and the women drummers, all of them will be there, and you cannot know their number. The one who is putting on a veil will remove the veil; the one putting on a scarf will remove the scarf. And the women drummers will remove their veils and scarves. If the chief’s wives are a hundred, all of them will come out from the chief’s house. And when you drummers reach outside the chief’s house, you will remove your hats, and you will

kneel down. And the chief's wives who have come outside, they will all go behind Namo-Naa and kneel down.

At that time, you will be some distance away from the chief's house, and you will be kneeling on the ground. And you will be beating Tiŋ' kurli: *gbiri-biri-biri-birip, tah, tah, gbiri-biri-biri-birip*. That is Tiŋ' kurli, and that is the way you will be beating. You will be using your knees to walk on the ground, facing the chief's house, walking with your knees, little by little, getting up and kneeling down again, beating the drum. If you use your knees to walk a bit, then at a point you will stop. If you do that about three times, then Yaa-Naa will remove one of his elders, and send him to come and call you the drummers, that you should come nearer. At that time, you will all stand up. Every drummer will stand up, and you will go near to the chief, just like from here to across the room. And you will kneel down again, and the head of the drummers will start praising the chief. And Yaa-Naa will tell his elders to tell you, "You people should stop noise," and then he will tell you that as for the offense, he has forgotten of it today and he has forgotten of it tomorrow. He will tell you that he has buried the offense, and the offense is dead in the sky, too. At that time, as you were beating Tiŋ' kurli, you will stop it. And one drummer will start, and he will beat the drum and call the names of the chief's people. And the drummer will be praising the chief like that. If it was my grandfather Namoyu singing, then the time the chief will forgive, at that time my grandfather Namoyu will remove his drum, and another drummer will come to the front and praise the Yaa-Naa. The time he is praising Yaa-Naa, and the time the chief too says he has forgiven, then the chief's wives will take their veils and scarves, and the drummer women will put on their scarves. And all you drummers, you will put on your hats, and you will praise the chief and finish.

The time you finish praising the chief, and the reason why I say we are people who are respected: you the drummer, I told you that if the chief enters into trouble with you the drummer, and you forgive him, he will give you all the necessary things that you should collect and your heart will cool down; the same way, even if we enter into trouble with him and he forgives us, we are not the ones who are going to find something and give to the chief. It is the chief again who is going to find some things, and he will say they should collect the things and give to his grandfather, and if he takes it home, he should give it as food for the house. If the chief wants, he will find a gown again, and say they should give it to his grandfather, that he should collect and cover himself from the cold. This is the way it is. And so if a woman enters into trouble with her husband, she will send messengers to go and beg. And if a man enters into trouble with the woman, the man also has to send people or messengers to go and beg. So this is the way Namoyu and Yaa-Naa quarrel. Or what I've talked to you, have a man and his wife has never quarreled before? That is how it is.

And again, in our drumming, others call us *Nabalima*, that “we beg the chief.” If you beg the chief, you will be freed from trouble, and freed from chains or rope. Why do I say we are freed from chains or rope? In the olden days when the chiefs were holding us in Dagbon here, if a drummer did something bad, he was left free, just because he was a drummer. Because of that, they say that a drummer has no rope in the chief’s house, and it shows that in the olden days, a chief could not sell a drummer. That is why they say a drummer has no rope in the chief’s house. And so our standing place is very high in Dagbon here. No one can even bring a charge against a drummer at the chief’s house. If you are a drummer and you have sex with somebody’s wife, that fellow cannot charge you. You the drummer will only gather your fellow drummers and tell them, “This is the bad I have done to that fellow, and so I want all of us to go and beg him and apologize.” If you are going to that fellow’s house to beg him, you will carry your drums along. One drummer will start with a song, and you will be beating and singing. And you will be kneeling and walking on your knees, and that fellow will be in his room. What you will be singing and beating with your drums will make him forget his annoyance. However annoyed he is, he will forget of it. He is not the only person a drummer has ever done that to; it started a long time ago. And so drumming can kill a lot of things. A case that will let them charge somebody thousands of cedis, drumming can kill it. And even in Dagbon here, if you are not a drummer and you do something bad to somebody, you will ask a drummer to go and beg for you and apologize. And it is just because drumming has got a lot of respect.

Apart from drummers, there are many other types of playing in Dagbon, and I don’t think that you can compare any of them to drumming. It is one name they call: *Baąa*. *Baąa*: it shows those who play music, those who beat or sing, and there are many people who play music in Dagbon here. That is why I told you that this talk joins our yesterday’s talk, and it separates again. These things they play, I don’t think that they are even inside our Dagbon custom because they have come from other towns. But as we have taken them to be ours, they are there like that, and you will even ask some people and they will tell you that we Dagbamba are the ones who started them. But we drummers are stronger than all of them in our playing.

If you go to a big chief’s house, you will see the two drums we call *timpana*. The one who beats them is called *Akarima*. It is *Akarima* who beats the *timpana* and announces things at the chief’s house. These *timpana*, we got them from the Ashantis. Truly, it was Naa Ziblim Bandamda who befriended the Ashantis, and the Ashantis gave him the *timpana*. And he said he didn’t know how the *timpana* were beaten, and they gave him an Ashanti. When the Ashanti came, he was given

a child, and he was beating for the child to watch. It was not long when this child learned how to beat the timpana, and when he had learned, the Ashanti man went home. And so when the timpana are beaten, the drumming is in Ashanti, and if an Ashanti is standing nearby, he understands the talk. And a Dagbana might be there and not understand it. But Dagbamba have called some of their names inside the timpana drumming, and part of the drumming is in Dagbani. And so the timpana have just started; they came from the Ashantis. They aren't an old thing with us, but they are an old thing for the Ashantis. And the Dagbamba towns that have timpana are there, and it isn't all towns. And again, it isn't all chiefs who have the timpana. And so the timpana they beat at the Yaa-Naa's house, it is the Asantehene who has given him the right to be beating them. We and the Ashantis are like a broken calabash that is divided into two--one part and the other part. In the olden days there was an argument between us, but now we are friends, and when the Akarima is beating the timpana, the timpana will say, "If you kill a thousand Dagbamba, a thousand will come; if you kill a thousand Ashantis, a thousand will come." *Anua kɔtɔkɔ, Asante kɔtɔkɔ; wokum apem a, apem beba.* This *Anua* is Dagbamba. And so we and the Ashantis, this is our relationship with them.

Some people say that it was the time of Naa Bimbiɛyɛ that they brought the Akarima here. If you listen to the talks of Naa Bimbiɛyɛ, you will hear how Naa Bimbiɛyɛ became chief: Naa Bimbiɛyɛ was a very ugly man, and when his father's sisters put the chieftaincy things on him to see whether he would look nice if he got Yendi, he just took the things and went outside. And drummers sing that it was Akarima who saw him and started beating, and everybody knew. And Namo-Naa took his drum and beat, *Bimbiɛyɛ yi palo, ku lan lab' sɔyi*: "An ugly thing that has come out will not go back again." And if you look at the talk, the drummers are showing that Akarima was there. And so some people say that Akarima first came during the time of Naa Bimbiɛyɛ. But what I know is that Akarima came during the time of Naa Ziblim Bandamda. When Naa Bimbiɛyɛ died, Naa Garba ate Yendi; and when Naa Garba died, Naa Saa became the chief; and when Naa Saa was not there again, it was Naa Ziblim Bandamda who took over. And it was during the time of Naa Ziblim Bandamda that Akarima came to everybody. You know, what the Yaa-Naa starts and is doing, it will come that some people will also do it, and now big chiefs are also having the timpana.

But I think in my heart that as for drummers, a new talk will come and drummers will take it to be an old thing. This is how our old talks are moving. That is why you will sometimes hear a drummer sing about Naa Bimbiɛyɛ and call the name of Akarima, but Akarima was not there by that time. If you follow it again, when drummers talk about how Naa Luro went to war with the Gonjas,

when they are calling the names of people who beat, they count Akarima. But Naa Luro's talks don't enter the Ashantis. Even after Naa Luro, there were six chiefs who ate Yendi before Naa Bimbiɛyɛ came out.

If you follow it again, there is a chief we call Naa Dalgu, and when Naa Dalgu died, there were seven chiefs who ate Yendi before Naa Luro came and ate. And so his time is far. This Naa Dalgu, there is a type of drum they took to call that name. His real name is Naa Daturli. There is a drum we call *dalgu*. This *dalgu* is a long drum something like a timpana drum, and it is round. It's also like the type of drum the modern children use to beat Simpa. Long ago, if the chief was sitting, and some trouble happened, the chief would say they should come out and beat the *dalgu*. And so it was this *dalgu* that they took to call that name: Naa Dalgu is a name for Naa Daturli. And even in the time of Naa Daturli, they were beating these drums, but what they were beating was not the same as the timpana. This Akarima: the one who beats the timpana is the one called Akarima. The one who beats the *dalgu*, they call him *dal' ɲmɛra*, *dalgu*-beater. That is how it is.

I have been telling you that drumming talks are difficult. If you don't take time, you will always be confused. And according to my thinking, what brings confusion in drumming are names. And so I want to tell you the reason why they are using the name of Akarima to call something during the time of Naa Luro and the time of Naa Bimbiɛyɛ, but there was nothing like Akarima then. Why is it that somebody will talk it, and it is not a fault? How something begins within the chieftaincy, if it starts in today's chieftaincy, you can take it to go back and put it on those who were there before. Those people who are eating chieftaincy now, they are Naa Luro's grandchildren. And your grandson can also find something for you. Naa Ziblim Bandamda is also Naa Luro's grandchild, and so don't think that Naa Luro and Naa Ziblim Bandamda are far apart. That is how they have added it. Our grandfathers who beat it like that, they didn't search inside to look. The way they are calling Akarima in Naa Luro's time, we all grow up and hear that this is how Naa Luro's talk is. It is this time's thing that they have taken to add to that one, and no drummer or any person has ever searched to see that what they have been saying is a lie. And so today's Akarima, they take the name to join to that one, the *dal' ɲmɛra*. If you also go and join it like that, nobody can say that you are a liar.

How it is in our drumming, what has never happened, if you talk about it and put it inside, then it's not good. But if it happens once, and you count it ten times, nobody will say that it is a lie. That is how it is in our drumming. And so what I'm telling you, you should take that one to work. If you are beating a drum and talking old talks, you don't have to explain that it was during Naa Ziblim Bandamda's time that Akarima started, and that there was no Akarima during Naa

Luro's time. You will just say that Akarima beat. It is our grandfathers who talked like that to reach us, and no drummer has searched and removed it out. So what they have told you, as you are their child, you have to hold it. And that is the same way, if you also write it, nobody in Dagbon will find your fault. That is what I can tell you.

And so what I know about it, during Naa Luro's time, Naa Luro didn't have Akarima. Akarima was not yet out. It was dalgu they were beating. But because in this time there is Akarima, then they will take that person beating dalgu during Naa Luro's time to be Akarima, and they will give him that name. They are taking the respect of Akarima and putting it back, but it's not that the two are sharing any respect. They are having the same respect. Naa Ziblim Bandamda's time, the one who was beating the timpana was having his own respect. And the time of Naa Luro, the one beating the dalgu was having his own respect, too. And it shows that the respect of the dal' ḡmera is the same respect that they give to Akarima: it is their work that shows it. And so if you go home and you want people to understand you and not ask you many questions, you should let the people understand that the one who was beating the dalgu in Naa Luro's time, his position or standing place, if you want to talk about him now, he is Akarima. If you write it like that, you should show the reason why we call the name of the one who was beating it during Naa Luro's time as Akarima: it is because when timpana was brought here, the work the timpana was doing at the chief's house is the same work as that one in Naa Luro's time. That's why we also call him Akarima. In the olden days, if anything happened at the chief's house, it was this dal' ḡmera they would look for. But today, if anything happens at the chief's house, they rather look for Akarima. They can't send people around to call everybody. They still use drums. And so any town where there is a timpana, if the chief wants to gather his nearby villages, he will only tell Akarima, "Use the drum and gather all the villages to come." Then Akarima will come out and beat it.

And so the dal' ḡmera of that time, the drummers are calling him Akarima just because of the work he was doing at the chief's house. Today, if you call Akarima as dal' ḡmera, nobody will know, just because of this present Akarima. It's not that they don't know the dalgu. But since you have started coming to Dagbon here, have you ever seen a chief sitting down, and dalgu is behind him? At Yendi: do you see somebody beating dalgu? Savelugu: do you see somebody beating it? Karaga: do you see somebody beating it? No. It is only timpana. So what you see is what you use to describe it. As you have been in Dagbon, if you go back to your home town, and somebody asks you about Akarima, is it not the one beating the timpana you will talk about? Why won't you mention the one beating dalgu? It is because now, the dalgu has no work to do. And so in the

olden days, somebody like Akarima was doing that work, but this time, another person is doing it with a different thing. The dalgu they were beating in the olden days is not the same as the timpana today's Akarima is beating. That is why today, if you call Akarima, nobody will take it that you are talking about the one who beats dalgu. You can find out easily. If you come to Dagbon, and you say that you want to go to the house of Akarima, you will see whether they will send you to the house of somebody who beats dalgu or somebody who beats timpana.

I'm talking about all this because what was happening in the olden days, not all of it is in this present day. Our custom: they have cut some and thrown it away, and they have changed some. This is the reason why I have been telling you that inside our drumming, there are hidden things. That is why drumming talks are difficult. And so I want you to know, if you look at the people in the olden days, the way they were living, and you compare it to our way of living now, you will see that many things are different. It is not everything of theirs you have to talk about, and that is why we step on some of it. Our grandfather Namoyu has also been saying it. There are some things that we can easily talk about, and then other things, sometimes they say we should remove them, because we don't do them again. Those which are good to us, or we use them to work, we talk about them; those which have no use, we step on them and pass. However many some talks are, if they are different, whatever happens, one will be heavier or more important than another. You have to choose which one you want, and if you see that the one which is lighter has no use, you throw it away. If you add it to the good ones, then you will spoil all of them. That is why we used to step some of the talks. We only take the talks that can work or that can do something for us. We don't take the talks that cannot do anything for us; we leave them.

And so inside our talk, I am separating it for you that in the olden days, the dal' nɛra was there, and he was the one who beat the dalgu whenever the chief wanted to gather the villages around to talk to them. During that time, as there was no Akarima, the dalgu is what they would use to beat and neighboring villages will hear and come. But today, if something happens and they are going to announce it, it is Akarima who will beat the timpana, and not dalgu. Now dalgu has no work to do because timpana came. And so such a person in the olden days, they call them by the name of the people who play the timpana--Akarima. When they brought the timpana here to Dagbon, after they trained the one who was to be beating the timpana for the chief, they named him Akarima. That name is shared back to the one in Naa Luro's time who was beating the dalgu. He was called dal' nɛra, but now they have come to call him Akarima. You should take a look at the two things together. The one playing the timpana is the one we call Akarima, and the one beating the dalgu is the one we call dal' nɛra, dalgu-beater. And so

if it is that you want to show it, you have to show it that the dal' ḡmera is different from Akarima. If you want, when you write, you should separate the dalgu-beater from Akarima. The time of the dalgu, there was nothing like Akarima. And the time the timpana came to Dagbon, that is the time we have Akarima. And so it's just that if you are going to write it, I don't want anyone to find your fault. If you want to write it, you should say during Naa Luro's time, there was nothing like timpana, and there was somebody who beat dalgu. That dalgu-beater, up to the time of Naa Ziblim Bandamda, he is also called Akarima. And if a drummer is singing Naa Luro or Naa Bimbiɛyɛ and he comes to call Akarima, you don't have to misunderstand. There is no fault.

And so somebody who doesn't know, it is only asking you have to ask, and you will know. The time you hear the name of Naa Dalgu, maybe you won't know that he is also the same as Naa Daturli. That's why I was telling you that it is these names that can cause confusion inside our drumming talks. Maybe you will think that it is two people they have talked about. But if you ask, maybe you will get to know it. And you will ask again, and you will know that it is because of this dalgu that we call him by that name. At that time too, you will see that he has two names. And you will ask again to know what sense is under that name they have given him to add to his real name.

Let me add you salt. You know, in the olden days, Dagbamba had no names like the names we have today. Before Naa Zanjina came, they had no Muslim names, and they would only take you and compare you to something. It was around Naa Zanjina's time that there was light, and we got to know the Muslim naming. Someone who is praying, or following the Muslim religion, he will go to maalams, and they will look and find a name for the child. If not that, the day somebody was born, this was how they were calling their names, and there are some names that show the day the child was born. For example, Thursday is Alaamihi: if a women gives birth to a child, they can call the child Laamihi. Friday is Alizumma, or Zumma, and a child can be called Azima. If they like, when they give birth to a child who is a girl, they can call her Azimpaya; if the child is a boy, they can call him Azindoo. It means the child was born on Friday. And all the days are like that. And again, our old people have something, too. When there were no maalams, we didn't know the Muslim naming. Someone will give birth to a child, and will go to soothsayers and find out, and the soothsayer will tell him that the child is inheriting the grandfather. He will take the name of that grandfather who died and give it to the child. Again, there are some gods in Dagbon, and someone can give birth to a child and use the name of the god to call it. They can call somebody Jɛbuni; it's the name of a god, and there are many others. And so from the olden days, when you gave birth to a child, anything that is sweet to you, you can take it and give to the child.

Or apart from that, they would just show some talk and it would look like a proverb, and they would take it and call somebody. Do you see Naa Nyaysi? Do you know that he has another name? His name is Wumbee. It means “God’s child.” Naa Nyaysi’s real name is Wumbee, and Nyaysi is his praise. The name Nyaysi shows something like bright and dazzling, as if you held a mirror to the sun. And so every name has its praise. And Naa Gungobli: he is also Wumbee, but I only know his name to be Wumbee and that the Gungobli is something they added to the name. I haven’t asked to know the meaning. But I know that in the olden days, the name that they would call you, they would take you and compare you to something. This was how they were calling their names.

I told you that our grandfather Bizun, his name shows that he was a child alone. Our grandfather Namo-Naa Lelbaa: his name shows that if a bachelor makes a farm close to a place where there is water, then after he finishes the farming work, he will drink water from that same place, and he will bathe and wash his everything there, too. And so he will make good use of the water place. Naa Tutuyri means the pots or the calabashes they use to put medicine inside, and the medicine has finished, leaving empty medicine pots or calabashes. Naa Zokuli means that if your friend dies, you won’t shave your hair. How we to shave our heads for funerals, it is your mother or your father who will die before you will shave your head. If not somebody who is truly your family, you don’t shave your head. If your friend dies, you won’t shave your head. And so if your friend accompanies you to perform your father’s or mother’s funeral, they will shave you, but they won’t shave your friend. Your friend will still have his hair and be sitting down at the funeral. Do you see Naa Zayli? That is Naa Daazayli; it is the same thing. There is a tree was call dawadawa. Dawadawa is Hausa; in Dagbani we call it doo tree. This Zayli comes from the dawadawa tree when the fruits are bearing. We use those fruits to make seasoning for soup. When the fruits become long and group together, in a town or village, people will be watching it, and if a monkey wants to eat it, he cannot take it because of the people. So how the fruits are hanging like that, and a monkey cannot get it, that is what we call daazayli. That is Naa Daazayli, and we say Naa Zayli, the combined fruits of the dawadawa.

As for these names I have called, I haven’t asked to know all that is under them, or the reason why these people had those names. And there are some names, too, I myself don’t even know the meanings. I am only showing you that in our Dagbani, from the olden days, they used to give names to people by comparing them to things. If not that, they would look for a sign, and they would show the talk, and it is not something that the person did. And some of them, someone who asks can also learn something about them in our drumming. But

they are different from the praise-names we beat, because we have to call the praise, and the praise doesn't follow a sign or something like that. And so this is an olden days talk I'm giving you.

Naa Niŋmitooni: that is "doing forward." How does someone come to have that name? In Dagbon here, if a chief has many wives, they don't all cook for the chief unless they have given birth. Sometimes, before the woman will get her own cooking, she will give birth more than once or twice. Naa Niŋmitooni was Naa Zolgu's child. Naa Niŋmitooni's mother, her chieftaincy name was Naapay' Gaasinaba. That was her chief's wife's title. When a woman gets a pregnancy, her parents will get dawadawa, pepper, salt, all the cooking ingredients and give to her, and she will bring it all to the chief's house. Naa Niŋmitooni's mother carried the pregnancy for a long time before going to her parents for the cooking ingredients. And the day Naa Niŋmitooni's mother was going to cook for the first time, that was the day she also gave birth to him. The time this woman went to the parents and brought all these ingredients, they were getting ready to make the food, and they came outside and told the chief that the woman had given birth to a baby boy. Then the chief said that the cooking of the woman is going forward. She was coming to cook, and she was giving birth, too. And so Chief's Wife Gaasinaba's cooking was going forward. That is the meaning of Niŋmitooni. They took it to call Niŋmitooni, and a time came when he ate the Yendi chieftaincy.

Do you see Naa Siyli? He was Naa Zayli's child. This *siyli* is the first thin rains of the rainy season. Rain will come, and it will stop before rain comes again. That is siyli rain. They will go and make the farm and sow it, and the next rain that comes will make the seeds germinate. When the rain came, Naa Zayli told elders, and the chief's wives, and the boys who look after the horses, and those who follow the chief: they should come out and they should go for the siyli sowing. At that time, Naa Siyli's mother was pregnant. His mother's chief's house chieftaincy was Naapay' Gulgolana, Chief's Wife Gulgolana, and her name was Ziŋnaa. All the chief's wives went to the farm, and all the boys who look after the horses, and the chief's friends, and the elders: they all went. And Gulgolana didn't go. And the chief himself took a horse and went to the farm, and when he got to the farm, he came down from the horse and was resting under a tree. Those who were making the holes to put the seeds inside were there, and those who were covering the holes were following.

And how the jealousy of women is, when the women were sowing and coming, if they came and reached the place where the chief was sitting, they would say, "Does it mean that pregnant women don't eat?" They wanted to talk like that so that the chief would hear and get to know that Gulgolana didn't come. And the

chief heard. When the women turned and went again, and they got back again to where the chief was sitting, they were saying, “We all in the house have been to the farm. We wonder whether pregnant women eat or not.” The third time they came and said this, the chief asked, “Is Gulgolana not here, and you people are sowing?” And they said, “Yes, she hasn’t come.” There are some people we call *Naazoonima*, the chief’s friends. They are his messengers, the one he sends. And the chief told his friend, the *Naazoo*, that he should take the horse, go back to the house and tell Gulgolana that she should come to the farm just now and sow the seeds. And that is it not pregnant women who eat plenty? The time the *Naazoo* reached home, he saw that Gulgolana was struggling with the stomach. And the *Naazoo* waited, it wasn’t long that the woman whistled three times, and it showed that Gulgolana had given birth to a male child. The very day they were at the farm, the day the *siyli* rain sowing fell, that was the day she delivered. And the *Naazoo* took the horse back to the farm, and told the chief, “Chief, how I reached home, I reached home and found that Gulgolana was struggling, and I waited, and I heard the woman whistle three times, that she delivered a baby boy. That’s why I have returned to the farm to tell you. Gulgolana has given birth to a male child.”

And *Naa Zayli* got up and went home. When he came, he went inside and looked at the child. The way old people talk about it, the child Gulgolana gave birth to, the chief went and saw that iron spurs were hanging, and there were nine knives around his waist. And there was a hoe hanging on the shoulder. And the whip they use to whip a horse when riding, it was in the hand. And *Naa Zayli* said that the child has no name, and his name is *Siyli*. They went for the *siyli* sowing, and they gave birth to him. And so his name is *Siyli*. And when the day for shaving the baby’s head came, and they shaved the head, then they gave him the name *Andani*. That is *Naa Siyli*’s name, *Andaan’ Siyli*. And we drummers, we call him *Zayli dapala Andani*: *Zayli*’s child *Andani*. He is *Siyli*. And drummers again say that people who have food crops, corn or any type of food, they should hide it somewhere for tomorrow. They should put it down and hide it just because of the day of *siyli* rains, and then they will bring it out. It was the time of the *siyli* rains that they went to the farm, and *Naa Siyli*’s mother gave birth to him. This is what old drummers told me and I know about it. That is why I am telling you that if they saw a small sign before a child was given birth, they could use that thing to name him. That was how it was.

And so the chief who brought the *dalgu*, we call him *Naa Dalgu*, and this *Naa Dalgu* is *Naa Daturli*. The *dalgu* I’m talking about, that is the same thing they use to call him, because he was using it. During his time, it was *dalgu* they were using as *timpana*. His time is far. During the time of *Naa Dalgu*, *Akarima* was not there, and what was there was the *dalgu*. *Naa Dalgu* put it down that if he went to

the farm or went somewhere and they wanted him, they should beat this dalgu and he would know and come home. And so if you follow the old talks, this type of drum was there. We have about three or four types, and there were two they were using, a big one called *dal' nyan* and a small one called *dal' laa*. And so I think in my heart that this is how the timpana started. And I think that it was the one who was beating this dalgu that they call Akarima, and I think that as for the Akarima and the timpana, they came during the time of Naa Ziblim Bandamda.

Apart from the timpana, there is the *goonji*, the fiddle. It's a calabash they make like a box, and they take the skin of a monitor lizard--we call it *wua*--to cover it, and they will put the hair of a horse tail and stretch it on a stick, and they will use a bow with horse tail hair to play it. As for the goonji, it has just started. In Dagbon here we don't count the goonji players into people like drummers, blacksmiths, and butchers. It is now that goonji is sweet, but formerly we didn't have time for them. As for the goonji, if not now, in the olden days the goonji was not there. But as for now, the goonji person is somebody. People like the goonji. When there is a wedding, goonjis are inside it. If it is a funeral, they are there. If it is a naming, they are inside. Every play we beat, goonji is inside it, and this is how its way is. But as for the goonji, it is not like a drum. Even as we are sitting in Dagbon, there are some people who don't know goonji. There are some places in the South, when the goonji comes out to play, they will not know how to dance it.

If it is goonji, we drummers have more respect than the goonji players. If they want people who beat for dancing in Dagbon here, it is we drummers they want. In Dagbon here, no one beats a type of beating that is more important than the drummers' beating. It is because the goonji has just started. It was the Guruma people who brought it and gave it to the Mamprusis, and the Mamprusis collected it, and the Dagbamba also collected it. And truly, as for Dagbamba, something that has no tradition, they don't respect it very much. It was during the time of Naa Ziblim Kulunku that goonji started, and you know that from Naa Ziblim Kulunku up to now is not too long. I think maybe it will be about two hundred years. And so the goonji is not old. That is why Dagbamba don't respect the goonji too much. And so the goonji players, they know Naa Kulunku, and not even all of them know it.

On the part of singing, the sense of the goonji has not reached the sense of the drum. There are two types of songs we sing. The drummers sing in Hausa and sing in Dagbani, and the goonji player also sings in Hausa and Dagbani, but it is not the same. It's not because I am drummer that I say this, but the goonji player is not the equal of a drummer. The songs we drummers sing are different. We drummers sing chiefs' songs, but a goonji has never played the Samban' luja, that

is, the drum history. It is we drummers who beat the Samban' luṇa. We know how Dagbon started, and we know what chieftaincy is in Dagbon. But the goonji player does not know it. How will he know it? He didn't start with chieftaincy. And so a goonji player is nothing to us drummers, and a goonji player cannot bluff himself to a drummer. We know how he started, and how will he show us? If you are doing some work, you must hold what you know about the work. A goonji cannot know the grandfathers of a person, and so their playing of Hausa songs is more than their playing of Dagbani. And we drummers play in Dagbani more than in Hausa. But I can say that we drummers sing better in Hausa than the goonjis and we sing better in Dagbani as well.

We call the goonji person *vulunvuuna*, like a mud wasp. How the way of life of a mud wasp is, it does not give birth to children, but you will see that if it gets a place to come and build its nest, it will fly outside, and if it gets any other insects, it will kill them and come and put them inside its nest, and leave them there. It shows that the ones it has brought have become its children. The goonji people are like that. When they go and take somebody's something, they take it to show that it's for them. The goonji people play the goonji, there is a gourd rattle called *zaabia*, and it is a goonji child who will shake it: a goonji player will be there, and his child will not be from anywhere; if he has no child, any child who wants to run and come and enter the playing of the *zaabia*, that child becomes his child and will grow up to play the goonji. If a goonji marries any woman, he will show the woman how to shake the rattle. And so a goonji player has no beginning; God can turn a child to become a goonji child. As for the goonji, you can go and learn it without following a family door. The goonji is like that.

And so the goonji players are from Guruma: they are from some place and they have come here, and so we don't count them into our custom. If you are counting someone in Dagbani, and the fellow is not a Dagbana, it won't do. And so the timpana started during the time of Naa Ziblim Bandamda, and the goonji also started during Naa Ziblim Kulunku's time. Because of that, we drummers are senior to them. The timpana and the goonji have not come from the bone of a chief. The timpana came from the Ashantis, and the goonji came from the Guruma land. These Gurumas, today we have some of them around Chereponi and in Togo, but from the olden days they were in Upper Volta, toward the Zambarima land in Niger. The time the Dagbamba came here, they started from the Hausa land, and they were fighting and coming, and they reached the Guruma land before coming here to this Dagbon. We met the Gurumas there in the olden days. When these Gurumas came from there, the first place they stayed was in the Mamprusi land, and they married Mamprusi women and brought forth children, and they were playing the goonji. As these children were Mamprusis, a time came when

the Mamprusis were playing goonji. And so we drummers know that the goonji players are Gurumas, but those who don't know say that they are Mamprusis. You will not see a true Dagbana playing the goonji. Those who play it came here from the Mamprusi land, and it was during the time of Naa Kulunku that they came. The wives they brought with them were bringing forth, and their children were marrying Dagbamba women and bringing forth. And so now they have become Dagbamba, but their starting is in Guruma and Mamprusi. And so the timpana and the goonji are strangers in our midst, and they are not with us according to our custom.

I want you to be watching our way of living and listening to what I tell you. If you watch very well, you will see that what I tell you is true. When a chief is coming out, we drummers go there and we beat, and the goonji players are there playing, and the Akarima is also there playing the timpana. If it is a Dagbamba chief's house, whether Tolon, Savelugu, Nanton, Yendi, Gushegu, Yelizoli, when the chief is coming out, you will see drummers playing and goonji players playing. After the chief is seated, the goonji does not play again. Timpana will only be sounded a few times again, and Akarima won't be beating much. It is only the drummers who will be beating, and the drummers will beat to their extent. As they are beating, it shows that they are counting and praising the grandfathers of the chief. As for the timpana, whom is he going to count? And the goonji, does he know the chief's grandfathers? And so we drummers are stronger than all of them in our beating.

Apart from that, there is the *jenjili*. As for *jenjili*, it's not all of Dagbon that knows about it. *Jenjili* has never danced its own dance, and people have never said, "We are going to hear *jenjili*." How we know *jenjili*, it is for the old people in Dagbon. There are two sticks they can use to make it: *ɲɔɣu* and *zanguriɲ*. Someone will get this type of stick. Then he will get a thin wire and wrap it around the end of the stick, and he will bend the stick as if he is going to make a bow, and he will take the wire and tie it and tighten it. Then he will get a small gourd, and cut one side of it; he will put one or two holes on the other side of the gourd and tie it to the middle of the bent stick, and the open part will be away from the bow. He will put some small pieces of wood to adjust it and make it strong. When he holds it, he will put the gourd against his chest, and the bent part of the bow will be toward him. This is how he plays it: he will be using his fingers on the wire, and he will be moving the gourd against his chest, and you will hear the sound vibrating inside the gourd.

If the old man comes from the farm and he is tired, he will take the *jenjili* and be playing, and his playing will remove him from his tiredness. If his small grandchildren are there, they will come out and stand and be dancing to it. It looks

as if it is a dance, but no one has ever said, “I am very happy with this jenjili: I will take it to another house and play it.” He will only play the jenjili inside his own house, and his grandchildren will be watching. This is how we know jenjili. And there are many towns where you will go and the people will not know this jenjili. But I can tell you that my brother Mumuni was playing jenjili when he was young, and he was using the zanguriŋ stick to make it. When he was going to play, he only tied a cloth around his waist, and he left his chest like that and placed the gourd against his chest, and he would be playing and turning the gourd.

It is only now that they have taken jenjili and put it into types of playing. In this Tamale, there are two people playing jenjili who are well-known and they have been playing it on the national radio: Yakubu Silmindoo and Fuseini Tia. We have been going around with Fuseini Tia on a regional basis in Ghana to display. He is in this town. The way they have been giving good reports about us, that’s the same way they give good reports about the jenjili man. Now it is standing as if it is something like a customary thing, but it is not like that. Jenjili has no grandfather; it has no grandmother; it has no father; it has no son. Jenjili is not something you can talk about and it will look as if it has long talks. It is a type of playing that has no beginning, and there is no work inside it. And it isn’t that I don’t like jenjili: even the one who plays jenjili, if he is going to talk about it, he will talk as I have talked. If not that, he will talk because he wants to make his name good and because there is no one who wants the thing he sells to be common. This is the way of jenjili. And so this jenjili is just something like an addition to us in Dagbon here. Truly, I don’t know whether they brought jenjili from some town or whether it is our own heart that let us make it and play it. And it’s just that nobody ever talked to me that, “I saw it in this town, and I believe it is from that town and came to your place.” In Dagbon here, we know that goonji started in the Guruma land, but jenjili, we don’t know that jenjili started from such-and-such a town and came to our Dagbon.

Truly, it is this Tamale where they have started playing jenjili and going around to houses. In the villages they don’t play it like that. But here, during the Ramadan month, you will see jenjili players going round in the early morning and waking people who are sleeping. It is the maalams who are to be doing that: when our eyes opened in this town, in the Ramadan month you would hear maalams going round preaching in the houses where the people are waking up and cooking their morning food. Now that money has come and everyone wants money, everyone’s eyes have opened for eating money, and those who play jenjili have put it down that it is a work for jenjili. They go around and play for the women, and they will be getting money. And again, they have come to add it to the harvest time, when the people are sitting in the compound in the evening

removing the kernels from the corn or removing any type of food. People will be telling stories so that no one will feel sleepy. And nowadays the jenjili player will also come round and play, and it's just as if someone is working and you are coming to help him. Formerly we didn't see jenjili inside this work, but because of money, this is its way now. And that is how jenjili is.

And so as for jenjili, it is only for when you are happy; if you are doing something, you can invite them. But jenjili is not an old thing, so when we are talking about our custom, we don't add jenjili inside. But for any kind of playing, if you want the jenjili person, you can get him and he can play it for you. But the one beating or playing the jenjili can't tell you that, "My grandfather so-so-and-so played it and left it for me; that is why I am also playing it." It has no family; it has no grandfather, no grandmother. If you ask the one playing jenjili, he will tell you that it is his heart that wants and he is playing it. So it not on our custom way. That is the way of jenjili.

As for jenjili, they only sing funny stories or songs that will cause laughter, for people to laugh. They can sing some stories that give advice, and they can gossip, too, and because of that, the songs can attract people and make them excited. It's just for playing, or joking. And we drummers won't sing like that. What the jenjili sings is not inside our old talks in Dagbon. The songs of jenjili are not something to be talked about. If you don't do what you are supposed to do, then what you are supposed to do will come and pass you by. If you are doing different work, by the time you will turn around, your proper work will go away and leave you. And so if I talk much about jenjili in this book, I can tell you that if somebody sees it, that fellow can even blame me. It has no work in our custom. You should just put it inside the book that it is one of the plays, for entertainment. We don't take it seriously. Or if you want, you should throw its talk away, and we will talk about better things. That is all.

And again, there is the *mɔylo*. As for the *mɔylo*, its talk is the same thing as the talk of jenjili. There are two types: there is *mɔylo*, and there is a smaller one called *kuntunji*. How you make it, you will take something like a small box and make holes on each end. You will get a stick and put it through the holes. You will get a wire and tie it along the stick, and get another small stick and put it in the middle to cross it. The *mɔylo* has two wires, and *kuntunji* has one wire. Then you get a rope to tie each end of the long stick and put it around your neck, and you'll be using your fingers to pluck the wires. If you want, you will get a small bone and use it to pluck the wires. You will take you left hand to be pressing the wire on the stick. At that time, whatever song your heart wants, you can be singing it. That is all. It's not that the *mɔylo* singer is like a drummer. As for the *kuntunji*, if you follow it, the white man's name has come inside, because

the tin container the white man used to put fish inside, it is the empty one they use to make kuntunji.

My brother Mumuni was also playing kuntunji when he was young. It's a long time ago. He made it himself; no one made it for him. When he was young, that was what he liked best. And so he could make it, and he could play it. Its playing too is only what your heart wants, and so there is nothing inside it. Mumuni was also playing mɔylo and jenjili. But he threw it all away. It is not our father's work, and it is not our grandfather's work, and so it is not something that worries us. This is the way these things are standing, and they don't add into our old talks.

But as for the mɔylo, I think that it is chief's sons--*naa bihi*--who play it. One time I went to Kari-Naa Ziblim's house: I saw mɔylo hanging there, not only one, a number of them in the hall. At Savelugu, there was a prince who was a brother of Nanton-Naa Issa; his name was also Issa, and so because Nanton-Naa Issa was senior, he was called Naabi Issabila, that is chief's son, or Prince, Small Issa. Savelugu-Naa Bukari Kantampara: that was his son. Any time you would see him walking, he would be playing mɔylo. And so when he was a prince and he was playing it, I got to know that chief's sons used to play it. And the time I went to Karaga and I saw it there too, then I was thinking that this thing belongs to princes. So this is why I'm saying that chief's children used to play it. That is how it is.

But I know of a drummer who plays the mɔylo. He is my senior brother, and he is blind, and the two of us beat the same drum. As he is a drummer, already you know that we are commoners but we come from chieftaincy. They won't call a drummer a chief's son, but we all know that we are one. And so nobody has ever said anything about that. That is why I am saying that if you are going to play the mɔylo, at least you should be within that group. Apart from that, I haven't seen anybody else playing mɔylo in Dagbon. If it is there like that, then it just means that I haven't seen it. The talks of mɔylo are different from the talks of jenjili. Any person can learn jenjili and play it, but if a jenjili man tries to use the talks of jenjili to sing mɔylo songs, it won't do. This drummer I'm telling you about, his name is Issahaku, and he is the chief of drummers at Nyologu; it's near Tampion. Nyologu Lun-Naa Issahaku comes to Tamale and he also goes to Accra, and they make his records. When he was young, he learned many types of playing, and he also learned this mɔylo, and he has taken drumming songs to sing on it. The songs he used to sing when he is beating the drum are the same songs he sings in playing the mɔylo. If Issahaku is invited to go to any place, he always carries the mɔylo and a drum, and he will hang the drum on the shoulder here, and mɔylo will be hanging there. If you want him to beat the drum, then he beats; if

you want the mɔylo, then he will play the mɔylo. As he is sitting, it is only a few drummers who can challenge him on the part of knowledge, because he has learned a lot about the ways of drumming. And so he is a true mɔylo player. And some of the talks he has talked, I have heard them, and they are inside my talks.

But I can say that the mɔylo too is not even inside our book. It is not inside our Dagbamba playing, because we have never heard anyone say, “We are going to the mɔylo dance.” We have never heard in our Dagbani, “Let’s search for mɔylo.” And I have never seen that a chief will do his work, and they will say, “The mɔylo has not yet come. Let’s wait for him.” The mɔylo play is not something somebody will say he is going to. It has no dance. It is only listening. You will listen and laugh, or you will listen and hear the talks. And so the mɔylo is not inside our talks. No one has ever said, “It was the mɔylo that said this, and the chief did this work.” I have never heard it. But a drummer can say something, and a chief will go to war. As for the mɔylo and the goonji and the jenjili, they have never done that. And so we don’t say that they are the equal of drummers.

And so I am very happy that I am a drummer. I know drumming to the extent that I know it. I don’t say that I know it more than everyone, because if there is somebody, there will be somebody who is more than him. But what I know, I’m happy with it. As I am a drummer and I know about the work, it’s good for me. The drumming has helped me a lot. If somebody is happy, he or she can call me to his house so that I will beat. What he has, he will give me, and anything he gives me, it will help me. And so as I know how to beat like this, I am happy. To me, as I am sitting, to be a drummer is better than to be a chief. It is because of us drummers that somebody becomes a chief. I want to tell you, if not because of us, no chief would become a chief. Someone can be there and say he is a chief, but if we drummers are not there, his chieftaincy is not chieftaincy. If a chief is passing here, you will not know that a chief is passing. But if drummers are beating and passing here, you will just get up and ask, “What are these drummers beating? Oh-h, they are following a chief.” It is we who show that there is a chief. We and the chiefs play with each other. A chief has never asked a drummer, “Who are you?” or “What are you?” If he asks that of a drummer, then he has asked himself, because it is we who know him. A chief doesn’t know himself. And so I know, as I am a drummer, I like it better than to be a chief.

And so when you are doing some work, you have to make sure that you know the work very well. That is why we are also doing our best. And you look: these drums, these lunsɔ we are beating, it is we Dagbamba drummers who are beating them more than anyone. The Gonjas don’t have lunsɔ-drummers; it is we Dagbamba who drum for them. When the Mamprusis started, they had no drummers; it was we Dagbamba who went there and became their drummers. The

Nanumbas don't have drummers; we Dagbamba are their drummers. The Walas don't have drummers; it is we Dagbamba who are their drummers. Why is it so? It is our truth which is making it so. It isn't only Dagbamba who are drummers or who have this type of drum. As we are not the only drummers, why is it that we are doing it? It is because we have more respect. All these tribes I have counted, it is we the Dagbamba drummers who drum for them. We have respect: that is why they call us. As we have people in Dagbon here beating dances like Baamaaya and Jera and Atikatika, their playing is never the same as ours. The Yabonwura is the paramount chief of the Gonjas: you will never see the Yabonwura sending a messenger to call Atikatika or Baamaaya. The Mamprusi chief will not send and say he wants Baamaaya people. You will not have the Bimbila chief sending for Baamaaya or Jera people. The Asantehene will not send for Baamaaya. As for drumming, it has nothing to be compared to. All the other things or the music I have counted, we don't have anybody who will say that if one of them is not there, it is something serious to him. That is the reason why I say we drummers are in front of all of them. It is because we drummers have respect. We are the people they feel can mix and fit into people.

It is our Dagbamba drummers in Kumasi who go to drum for the Ashanti chief. Every forty days the Ashantis have a festival they call Aday, and the Asantehene does not come out except on the Aday day. When that day comes, our drummers go and follow the Asantehene. They beat Ginggaani and follow the Asantehene; this Ginggaani is the same dance they beat when the Yaa-Naa comes out. If they want, they will beat Bandamda or Bimbieyu. Truly, as for Ashantis, they have respect for chieftaincy. When my brother Mumuni was in Kumasi, Yaa-Naa sent messengers to a funeral at the house of the Asantehene, and the drummers accompanied them. Mumuni told me that the drummers took Bandamda and beat it for the Asantehene. And the Asantehene stood and talked, and he told everybody to be quiet. And he said that the talk the drummers were beating, he wasn't able to understand it, but he believed that they were talking something big. It was only that he didn't understand it, but he was thanking God for the singing they were singing. And they were beating Bandamda and following the Asantehene. And the Asantehene stood again, and talked. And he said how Yaa-Naa's messengers took drummers and performed the funeral, the work they had done, then his back, those who will follow after his death, it is they who will come to talk about Dagbamba, and not him. And he said that it is now he has got to know Ashantis and Dagbamba, they are one. And so he was thanking God for that. And so he was showing that the work the drummers did was something big for him. And so as for us drummers, if we go anywhere, we have respect. If Asantehene is sitting down, and somebody just comes into his house

with a drum hanging under the armpit, Asantehene will say that, “*Dondowura*,” that is, lumsi-drummer. And the drummer will beat, *Asante kɔtɔkɔ, wokum apem a, apem beba*: If you will a thousand Ashantis, a thousand will come. And then Asantehene will say, *Eye! Ampa!*: “That’s it. It’s true.”

And so what I’m telling you is not a joke. If you are drummer and you go anywhere, you will get respect. We are people to be respected. If somebody demeans a drummer, and it isn’t that the drummer demeaned himself, then if that person were somebody, he will never be somebody again. As for truth, it is standing that it is true. Our drum: no other sounding thing can compare itself to the drum. Anything that sounds, our drum is more than it; anything that comes is following us. That is how it is. That is under my today’s talk. Anything they beat to make music, if it is not a drum, we call it a play, and we don’t add it to our thing. That is how it is.

And so our drumming is never weak. In Dagbon here if you go to someplace where there are a lot of types of playing and we drummers are not there, it means that the playing is a weak one. There is no play that has respect more than drumming. I can say that drumming is respect, because we drummers are the ones who know the praises of people. If there are no drummers at someplace, then you should know that whatever they are doing there, it is not a serious thing. That is why I am telling you that if you are doing work, you should let people know that it is actually work you are doing. If our work were lies, it would not have extended to this point and still be keeping strong. I have already told you that lies are like urine: when you urinate, it starts and goes far; and when it is ending, it finishes in front of you. And so our work is not lies. And I think you also know that our work is not lies work.

And tomorrow we will continue with the talk about drumming. And truly, it will be good if I tell you something about these very drums and how we play them. And so, if God agrees, tomorrow I will come and talk about the sense we Dagbamba use to make our drums.