

Chapter II–2: *How Drummers Search for Old Talks*

I have already talked to you about the way a young drummer gets up and learns drumming, and today I am going to add to that talk. And so I am going to talk about how drummers use their sense to search for knowledge. Yesterday I told you that our old talks in Dagbon are not something that we talk by heart. And it separates, because the talks about how Dagbon came out and stood are different from the talks about our Dagbamba chieftaincy. There are three things we are looking for. Number one is what started Dagbon, or what created the land of Dagbon. Apart from that, we want to know about each village or town that is included in Dagbon, and why Dagbamba are holding that town. That is number two. And again, we want to know the reason why we the Dagbamba have separated from other tribes. And so these three talks, I think they are the important talks that are good for our work. If we start like that, it will be good.

Yesterday I told you that the talks about the starting of Dagbon are in darkness. As I have heard about some parts of the books they have written about our Dagbon, I can say that they mixed things, and the way they took different talks has brought some confusion inside. What they have written is not falling. In the olden days, they were saying that you don't have to take your custom and show it to a different town's person. It is because you wouldn't know how he will go and use that talk, and later it will come back to stand on you. I have told you that from the old days and up to now, those who know the tradition fear these talks. They feared the white men, and they feared to show the secrets of our custom to outsiders. I'm not going to argue with what they wrote, but I can tell you that if you want truth, and it's not that you want what your heart wants, then you don't have to follow all the talks they have written in the books. Sometimes, people who don't know a talk want to raise the standard of the thing high. Among our talks, this place is confusing because it is a story. Those who have asked about it should know that it is a story: as drummers are beating a drum, is it inside drumming? Whether it is good or not good, it can be nice for you, but you won't know where they are standing.

And I told you before: every knowledge has a father. If you have your father's house, and somebody asks you an old talk, and you know it, you have to tell him: come to my house, to our father's house hall. The talk you are going to talk, you are going to pour libation to your dead fathers. If you are a small drummer in Dagbon, and if your father is not Lun-Naa, and they ask you a question, you can't go to your father's hall and talk it. If you just roam to Tamale and somebody asks you such a question, and you just sit down and talk it, then

who is your father in drumming? That way, is it falling? Was it somebody who taught you, or not somebody? And so anyone asking, if they just put him anywhere to talk, he should know that they are not going to tell him the truth. If he is watchful, he will know that the talk they give him, it won't stand at one place, and he will be struggling with it later.

I have been telling you that it is good if you ask somebody a question, and the fellow knows it, and he is able to tell you he knows it. And if he doesn't know it, he has to tell you he doesn't know it: that one is better than he should take you to go different-different ways. You will hear three people's talk, but no two of them say the same thing. Their tongues are different. Which tongue are you going to take to follow? I have talked to you about lies. It can happen that you will ask somebody a questions, and he doesn't want to say that he doesn't know it. Maybe he is feeling shy to tell you he doesn't know. And somebody will see that you are holding something in your hand. You show him what you want to know, and he doesn't know it, but because of what is in your hand, he will tell lies and collect it and eat. And again, there is someone who may have heard something but not know it well, but he will talk about it. He will mix things to add to the talk.

Here is an example. You can be walking on a road, then the road comes to mix you up, and you see somebody and ask him the correct road. The person will tell you, "When you are walking one this road, leave all the roads on your right-hand side and take the ones on your left." And you don't trust the person who talked to you, when you go a bit further, you will ask another one, and he say, "You go ahead, but forget the roads on your left-hand side, and take those on your right." And you will reach a point again and ask another one, and he too will tell you, "If you go, leave the left-hand roads, and leave the right-hand side; and follow the one in front of you." If they talk to you like that, you won't know where to pass again. They are standing here, standing there. And so if you are searching for a talk, and the talks have become three or four, you won't catch it. It has gone so many zigzag ways. You will be hearing it, and the thing will just be going around and around in your mind. How can you repair it?

If you keep on asking different people for different ideas, then you will get a lot of things that you wouldn't know what to catch. This man has given you his version. That man has given you his version. And I have given you my version. It will take you time to get what you want. Do you remember what our grandfather Namoyu told you: everyone with his teacher, and everyone with his father. What his father taught him, maybe our father taught us a different thing. All of us have not come from the same father. If you want to keep on asking people's views, you won't get the thing that you want correctly. Each one of us has our father's talk. Somebody won't leave what his father taught him, and then

come and take my father's own. And you will also not leave your father's words and go and collect someone's father's words. Dagbamba have a proverb: if you eat food in a house with a lot of witches, you won't know the one who killed you. That is why you should bring your heart to one place. Then you will see if you will get good luck in it. If you keep on asking questions, maybe you will throw some good ideas away, and take the bad ones. So I want your heart to lie down.

And I want to tell you what drumming doesn't want. If you have gone to learn something from someone, and he teaches you some work, then later you have collected that work and you send it to another man, to tell him, "Look, this is what my teacher taught me, and I want you to go through and find out whether what he told me is correct or not correct": it means you are not satisfied with what your first teacher taught you. That is why you are looking for a different teacher again. Or if you are going around and learning, or you take what someone has written, maybe you will go and meet someone else, and he will tell you a different thing. Then you will tell him, "But when I met my father Ibrahim, or this or that drummer, this is what he told me." It looks as if you have come to test his knowledge. One time I asked a maalam a question like that, and I was warned that I should not ask such a question. The maalam said that if you are coming to ask any learned person a question, ask him the question straight. Don't mention that you have already gone to somebody and this is what the fellow answered you. Learned people don't like that. Nobody is saying you shouldn't ask questions, but if you want to ask, there is a way. If you take one question to go round to ask several people, you will bring all their answers back and compare, and know the one you are going to take. But it is not good to sit in front of a learned person, ask him a question, and he will give you the answer, and then you will say, "This is what I already know." When you show him, what is the reply going to be? Is he going to tell you that the answer you are already holding is a lie, or not? And the way you are now showing him another different answer, do you mean to tell the one telling you now that his talk to you is a lie, or what? To me, this is the way I see the talks. It doesn't show that you should throw someone's talk away. But you have to know the way you are going to talk to learned people. And so you have to take sense and patience when you are searching for knowledge.

And again, in Dagbani, there is an old talk we used to talk, and it is older people who talk it and we also hear. At times, I have been telling you that some things in our custom, I grew up and met them. If an elderly Dagbana is talking to you, and he comes to say something about custom, and you ask him, he can tell you that as for him, he also grew up and met it. That is the end of it. You don't have to ask him anything again. It has no going forward. It has no going back. What I'm telling you, it is inside everyone. If you ask and ask, and the person tells

you that, “Me too, I met it,” then you have to stand there. And you too, if you want, anytime somebody asks you, you will also say that you grew up and met it. As for “We met it”: nobody can ever tell what is under it, or its meaning. And so there are some things in custom that are there like that.

And again, as I have told you that these talks are dangerous, someone can easily refuse to talk to you. One time I was sitting, and one of my friends came from Tolon, and I asked him to tell me about Naa Gbewaa’s starting from his childhood. And he told me that I was talking about bad luck, and he got up and left me. It’s not that he doesn’t know anything about Naa Gbewaa; he knows, but he cannot just talk about it. As he is a drummer, he cannot come to sit somewhere and just talk something about Naa Gbewaa and get up. And there is someone who doesn’t know a talk, or even someone who knows a talk, but he doesn’t want to tell you plainly that he won’t tell you. He will find some way to let you leave the talk. What he is going to tell you to get before he can tell you the talk you want, you yourself will go away and leave it. It is there like that. I have heard a drummer say that he cannot tell someone about some particular talk unless that person gets the milk of a *bambua* [duiker]. Do you know *bambua*? It’s a small antelope in the bush. It is not something in the house. As for bush animals, hunters will be looking for them, and they won’t find them. I myself have never seen one. If you see one, whether it has conceived or not, you won’t know. Are you going to set a trap and catch it and take the milk? Or what are you going to do? And so if you ask somebody a question, and if he tells you something like that, to go to the bush and bring a *bambua*, you will think that he doesn’t know the thing, but he just wants you to leave your question.

The way I see this talk, if somebody asks you something and you don’t know it, you should tell the person, “The question you asked me, I don’t know it.” That will cool the person’s heart more than if you don’t know it and you tell him that you know it. Dagbamba say that the one who refuses work is better than the one who spoils it. If you give work to someone, and he tells you that he has no time to do it, he is better than the one you will give it to, and he will tell you that he will do it, but he won’t do it or he won’t do it correctly. It often happens that you will ask somebody a question, and he will tell you that the question you asked him, he doesn’t know it, but he knows somebody who knows it, and he can direct you to that person. Inside drumming, it is standing firmly like that. If you ask drummers who are correct, and they don’t know, they will say it plainly: they don’t know the talk, but they can direct you to the person who he is holding all the facts about it. If they direct you like that, and you go to that other person and find out, and that person talks the truth to you, then you put it that the one who directed you to the right place is the one who showed you. As for me, when you ask me

something and I say, “I don’t know,” then it is true that I don’t know. And when I know something, I will tell you I know it. And that is how it is. If somebody doesn’t know something and he is going to do it, he is just going to do it with I-don’t-know doing. As for me, I’m standing on the point that if I talk the truth and sleep without food, that is better than tell a lie to eat and satisfy and sleep. As you are sitting down now, you have suffered a lot for us. It is not good that we should tell you something that is not standing. And so may God protect us from telling you what is not there. We are not all the same on the part of our knowledge. No one knows everything in drumming, and I am someone doesn’t want to talk and tell lies, and so if there is some particular talk I want to know, I ask someone who knows it to teach me.

How our drumming is, it is the same thing as how children go to school. The one who has reached primary school has no knowledge like the one who has reached secondary school. The one who goes to the secondary school, he is the same: his knowledge is not up to the one who has been to university. And the same thing applies to our drumming. Maybe there will be a drummer who will know about three or four sons of Naa Nyaysi, and another drummer will know the children up to about twenty. The drummer who knows three and the drummer who knows twenty: are they the same? As we are sitting down today, some people say that Naa Garba’s children were three hundred and thirty. Some people say that the children were one hundred and forty. Others say seventy. They don’t use a drum to count the children like that; they only use their mouths to talk it. As I am sitting, if you ask me, I can count the names of about twenty-five of Naa Garba’s children. If somebody at some place counts seventy children, if I don’t take time, I will say that the one who counted seventy children is a liar. But truly, he is not a liar: if there is someone who talks more than what you know, and you want to argue with it, you will bring confusion inside. The confusion is that the way somebody will ask and get to know, maybe it will be more than what you’ve asked. But I can tell you that if you go to Dagbon and call any drummer, put him down, and tell him to count three hundred children of Naa Garba, you can never get somebody. Three hundred children can be a whole village. Is he going to put a book down and be looking at the names and calling them, or what? I think it is only inside a book that you can put down and then call the names up to that number. Or do you think somebody can just use his head to call three hundred names? And so I don’t know anyone who can sit down and call names, one after the other, up to three hundred. Our grandfathers who were there when these chiefs were eating, and they were seeing them, they couldn’t even know all the children. What I have heard drummers say is that the most they have seen anyone count is

about sixty. And even if somebody counts like that, maybe you will think it is lies, but you the one who knows twenty or forty, you don't know.

And so everyone has the extent he has asked. Some people will ask and know five or ten children of Naa Garba. There are some who will ask and get to know twenty children. Some will ask and learn more, up to thirty children. Those who ask further can reach fifty. Those who ask beyond that will reach sixty and stop there. That is how it is: everyone and the point he will ask and reach and stop. The one who asks and knows only ten, we won't say that he is not a drummer; he is a drummer. The one who ask up to twenty, we can't say he is not a drummer; that is the end point of his knowledge. The one who will reach thirty, he too is a drummer. That is his extent. Those who reach forty, fifty, or sixty, it is the same. And those who know only a few, you cannot tell them that they don't know. As for wisdom, we only measure it. If somebody talks like that, the way you separate it is that you will follow the talks, and you will go inside and know the way they are falling. Somebody might talk about ten talks, and somebody will talk up to forty, and if you look inside, you will see there is more sense inside the one who talked ten, more than the one who talked up to forty. And this is how drumming talks are moving with us. Somebody is bigger than another, and so at the same time, if somebody is bigger than you, you are also bigger than somebody. You know, I can say that we drummers are small men, and we don't know much about our customs in our drumming. But I can say again that we drummers know a lot, because there are some people who don't know even a single story of this drumming. It is good when you ask somebody something, and he knows it. And what I know is that all talks have their ends. As for me, I will tell you what I know, but I will not tell you what I don't know, and so I have the end of my talks.

And truly, our drumming is too much. The talks of drumming have no end, and nobody learns all of drumming. If somebody is not in a town, and he wants to finish knowing that town, he will accompany it and leave it on the way. But somebody who is in that town, whatever happens, even if he doesn't know it, he will be used to it, because he is with it every day. He can never know it unless drummers of that town show him. Dagbamba people have a proverb: a stranger can never know the old guinea corn food. The way they call it is that if you are stranger, and you come to a town, and you enter into a house, and they prepare food and you eat, you won't know where the food came from. Whether the food the house owner prepared for you to eat was the guinea corn that he was keeping to make another farm the following year, or he took it from his own he was eating, or he went and bought it in the market. As for you, it's only the food you see and you eat. That is why Dagbamba say that a stranger can never know the old guinea corn food. The one from the town knows it, so that is it. Everybody knows his

town's talks. And so if it is on the part of how the towns like Gushegu, Kumbungu, Tolon, and Gukpeogu started, if a drummer from those towns is not able to talk it, then I think my grandfather Namo-Naa will also not be able to talk it. And if it is on the part of Yendi elders and how they stand, and how they stay in the chief's house, and how they started, it is good you learn it from a Yendi drummer. And so there are drummers who know how the land came out and stood. And such a drummer, if there is a town, he can tell the former name or the other name of that town before this present time. There are people who can talk much about such matters.

When I talked to you about the way a young drummer grows up and learns drumming, I told you that a drummer does not learn drumming in one town. A small drummer who wants to grow will go around to towns to learn from other drummers. If he has heard about a drummer in another town who is very learned, a small drummer can prepare himself and go to greet that person in his home town, and the small drummer will be lying there and asking him many questions. Even in the olden days, if you are the one who is going to find out, if you are strong, you have to be farming for the old drummer before you will be asking him what you want. You will turn to become his house farmer. As for wisdom, it is not a small thing. We say that you have to lower yourself down before you pick something up. If you want to search for wisdom, you have to reduce yourself, and take yourself to be a slave. But you want to get what you want, and it is that you want yourself. And so it is inside asking like that.

And in our drumming, the time we were young and we had no wives, that is the time we learned more in the drumming. And it is that you can only bend a fish when it is wet. If the fish becomes dry, can you bend it again? And now at this time, we are the dry fish. And if it happens that a drummer will become a householder, as for a householder, his problems are many, and his walking is too much. He cannot leave the problems of his house to travel to another town, or just go and sit with somebody for months. In that case, he can invite a learned drummer to stay in his house, and he will keep him there for some months, maybe three or four months, and someone can even keep the drummer in his house up to a year. As for wisdom, if you are searching for it, you can call somebody like that. At that time, if you are the householder, you will collect everything of his. His everything, all his household problems, you have to collect them. The way he will come and be by you to tell you everything you want to learn, and you will be feeding him, and you will be giving him money to be feeding his housepeople, too. If not that, if you go to him at his home town, that one is a little bit softer than if you are going to bring him to your own house. But in Dagbon here, if you take an old person to come to your house, you have to take his household problems. The

knowledge he's having, that is what you want to get. And so if you don't tighten your belt, you cannot call a person from his house like that. When he comes to sit down, it is not only one talk he is going to teach you. And so if you want to benefit from someone, you have to do something that will make him happy. Inside our drumming, it is inside like that. Plenty.

Do you remember the time I showed you how to beat Bangumaṇa? I asked you to kill a sheep, and I told you that we don't beat Bangumaṇa unless blood comes out. Why did I tell you to make the sacrifice? The talk of Bangumaṇa involves the chiefs who fought war, and there was killing. When you are going to beat it, you have to kill an animal. It is an old talk. With 3em and Bangumaṇa, it is there like that when you are learning the beating and the talk that is inside it. Any time somebody wants to beat Bangumaṇa, you have to do the work. This drumming work we are doing is on the part of our tradition, and so it is good we do it and follow the tradition. The time I told you to make the sacrifices for the beating of Bangumaṇa and 3em, you did it. And you have said that if any sacrifice is necessary for us to talk about something again, you will do it. We are all here to benefit, and we are not going to do something that will let us get into trouble. Do you remember when my brother Mumuni came to listen to the talks? The time he and I left here and reached the house, he told me that these talks look just as if somebody took a tape recorder to his father and taped the talks his father talked to him. He was talking about these talks we are talking. And so these talks are inside the tradition, and we should do it like that. If you sacrifice a sheep or a goat, it is because of the work you are doing, that you want the work to benefit you. And any work you do, you have to look to God. It comes from our tradition. And that is how a sacrifice is: you are looking at God. Don't you see that when I slaughter an animal and cut the meat, I give to children and give to old people. And if the one I give to is an old person, he will receive the meat and say "God should bless you." When I give to children, if the children just take the meat and don't say anything, it is a blessing before you. That is how it is. We cut the meat and give to people. That is how we learn our drumming on the part of our custom. And somebody who is following this drumming, even if it is somebody from America who follows you here, it is the same thing we are going to do to that fellow, the same sacrifice. That is how sacrifice is. And so if I am going to take our Dagbamba way of living and ask you to follow it with sacrifices, maybe it will come to look as if I am going to cheat you. Do you remember what I told you when we started these talks? I told you that if you go to look for wisdom, you shouldn't say that no one should cheat you. I told you that the time you come to know that someone is cheating you, if you say it, that is the time you can no longer get what you want from him.

And so what I am also saying is this: in Dagbon we have a proverb which says that the water the fish comes out from is the same water that cooks it. And so if you are a drummer who wants to learn more, the problem that you have, the answer is in your own skin. If you want something, it will come from your own skin. Everything you need is going to come from you. Do you understand this? And another proverb is that if you need a soothsayer, and the soothsayer is a cripple, you have to go and carry him to where you need him. I last told you that when I went to ask Namon-Naa Issahaku about 3em and Bangumana, I went with respect, and I took fish and other things to give to Namon-Naa to give to his wives, and I took some commodities to give to Namon-Naa. If it is a serious talk you want from Namon-Naa, or anyone, you can't just go without holding something. And so I don't want a person who does not open his hand and say what he wants. It is not good to be holding your fingers closed, without opening your hand. There are such people in Ghana, but as for us, we are trying to do our best. I can take you somewhere if you are holding your hand with your fingers closed, but you will never get what you want. But whenever you open it wide, then you can get what you want. Do you understand the proverb I have given you? I know you are an experienced person, and that is why I have given this proverb to you. I am sure that you know what I mean.

I have told you that drummers use proverbs to do work. That is why there are there. And there is another one in Dagbani: they say that the one who knows how to pet a rich man, he is the one who will inherit the rich man's property. I have told you that when we say riches or wealth, we don't mean money. And the proverb is not talking about clothes, or cows. It is wisdom. That is the property. If you want to benefit from an old person, it is wisdom you are looking for. The way you are searching for what he is holding, if you don't want to remove something, then you won't hear it. You have to take something small and give it to the one with wisdom, and he will be happy. All that is inside him, he will bring it out and show you. If he is sitting down, and you come and meet him to get what you want, how are you going to get it? If you are removing and giving to the people who have wisdom, and it sweetens them, the wisdom you get from them will be more than you were thinking. The way you give to them and they are eating, there are someone who will see the way you suffer, and he will take all that is inside his stomach and tell you. It is because of what you have been giving to him. That is why Dagbamba people say that the one who knows how to pet the wealthy person is the one who inherits him.

Inside our Dagbamba way of living, if you see me passing anywhere, you will also hear people say that I know what is proper. And as I know, I don't fear to say, "Get." If I have only threepence, I will take it and give. If the Tamale

market day comes, inside my house, the people there are plenty. This one comes to greet me. When he is getting up, I say, "Get this and go and enter the lorry." Another one comes and says, "So-and-so says I should come and greet you." And if I have threepence, I give him. And so when I go anywhere, I know what is proper. Truly, there are people who know what is proper more than I. But it is only that they are not able to think to give. That is why we say, "So-and-so is a greedy person" or "So-and-so is not a person." As for a dog, you will get a dog and put it down before they burn the bush. When you have the dog and put it down, and they come to burn the bush, you will just go, "Tsk-tsk-tsk," and the dog will get up, and it will find the thing that is running in the bush. It is because you have already put it down. If you have a dog, and you have put it down, when you call, "Pss-s-s," the dog will come. You will think that maybe you can call dogs, but you will call a dog and it won't come, unless the dog you have already put down. This is what is inside it.

Do you see Nyologu Lun-Naa Issahaku? He is blind, and now he is a moɣlo singer, but before he was blind he was a drummer. He is my senior brother; we are one family. It is the eye which is shy, and the eyes that are alive and cannot talk any talk, he can talk it. And so we fear him. His mouth is too much. Do you remember what he told you when he talked to you about the old talks? The time he finished, you gave him some money and told him that you were giving him this money to drink water on the way. And he said that he was not going to thank you, and he said, "A woman does not say 'Thank-you' to the one who screws her." Have you heard the meaning of the proverb? If you sleep with a woman, and she comes to you and says she is greeting you because of the sleeping together, you won't feel for her again. Have you not seen that before? And so "Thank-you for screwing me": that means you won't screw her again. And that is why Issahaku gave that proverb: when he said he was not thanking you, he was showing that any time you want to ask him about anything, you should see him. And so that is how our greetings move. Dagbamba say that if someone wakes you up in the night, you don't have to ask him, "Who are you?" As he has come to you when you were sleeping in the night, you should rather look at his mouth and listen to what he is going to tell you. And so the proverb Issahaku gave shows that as the relationship between us is strong, by all means he has to help me. And this is what we call shame, or shyness. We say that shyness is a human being. And what he is going to tell me is that if I am ashamed, he is also ashamed; and if I am happy, it is he again whose heart is also happy.

And so a drummer is an old person. And shame: if you put a person into too much shame, what he didn't want to tell you, he will tell you. And when he's going to tell you, he is going to say that every day you have been doing good to

him. And you have come to want something from him. If he is going to tell you that he doesn't know it or he doesn't want to tell you, it will be a shame or a disgrace to him. And so it is good if you know there is a drummer who knows something you want to learn, and you see somebody from his town, you will get something small and send him, "Get this thing and go and give that drummer, and tell him that when I get time, I will come and greet him."

And what I am saying: I am reminding you that if you are going to start some work tomorrow, then the work should start this evening. And so as you have been greeting our senior drummers, you should also be sending greetings to them at any time. Let them know that Lunzɛyɛ is here and that you are doing your work, and if you have a chance, you will come and greet him. Any time, if you are greeting Namo-Naa Issahaku, or Nanton Lun-Naa Iddrisu, or Palo-Naa Issa, they will be happy, and they will take your name high. They will say, "Oh! Lunzɛyɛ has come to Tamale, and he has sent someone to come and greet me. And he said that if he gets time, he will come. And if he doesn't get time, it's not a fault. And so God should bring him here." And at that time, anybody who hears this, it will make your name good. That is how it is. You have been seeing some of it. Any time you go to see any of them, whether in the morning or the evening, you have seen how they receive you and the kind of conversations you have with them. And again, those old people you want on the part of your drumming, they are also there. Alhaji Adam Mangulana, my senior brother Fusheni, my senior brother Mumuni: those three, it is good you greet them. And Lun-Zoo-Naa, he is my father, because as I am sitting in this town, he and Adam have become my fathers. They are all our elders, and when you greet them, it is good. And so Namo-Naa and these elders, we should be greeting them, and we should be going to them. This is what I want.

And truly, a person doesn't leave his house. Right now, as you are a drummer, it means that you and all of us are the same. And if you yourself just go to these old men, all of them, too, they know that you are with me. If you say you want proverbs, a proverb has come. "They don't cross over the legs of a householder to enter into the room." When you yourself go, it will show that you have crossed over my legs, and you are entering. But whatever happens, a child cannot go to an elder person and come back without getting anything. And so in this case, any time you feel like talking to any of these elders or visiting him, you can do it. And if he has anything to tell you, he will do it. As you have been here inside the drumming, anyone you approach is going to say that he has seen you and me together for some years now, and since the time he knew that you and I are friends, there were some people who were friends at that time and now they are no more friends. And so he knows that you and I are holding truth between us, and

so if he wants to enter into us, he will also hold the truth and enter into us. And on the part of the greetings, I am not saying that you have to be sending heavy amounts. If you quarrel with your friend and he pinches you with his finger, are you going to say, “We quarreled, and he pinched me with his finger”? And the tongue: can you count it inside fighting? You cannot count it like that, but it is inside fighting. And so if you give an elder something small, it doesn’t matter.

In Dagbon here, we don’t take rope and tie a person. We take a thread and tie him. If you tie him like that, you can pull him. But if you take a rope, maybe you will say that the rope is stronger than the thread: they are telling you lies; you cannot pull him. And so the meaning of this rope and this thread is that if you hear that someone has something and you are looking for it, and you go to him with thousands and thousands of cedis and say that you are going to claim that thing from him, you will not get it. That is on the part of the rope. If he gets to know what you are looking for with your thousands of cedis, he won’t give it to you. And the one that he has, and you are looking for it, you will pretend that you don’t want it, and you will just give a small gift like a pesewa, and you will let the distance between you and him to be far. And the reason why I said that the distance should be far is that you don’t let him see you; you will just have to be sending a messenger. And if you send this messenger up to the third time, however wicked or however greedy that person is, if you greet him in this way three times, he will never pull you back again or he will never disgrace you. And so what you will take for your greetings, you are not throwing it away.

And so the only thing to do on that part is to say, “If today is a market day, I can buy some cola or some salt or some other thing and send it to so-and-so. If he is smoking tobacco, I can give some to him.” If I happen to give him two or three times, and he hasn’t seen me when I am sending these things to him, if I send him a third time, he will ask the one bringing those things, “What does this man want from me that he has been giving me all these things?” And at that point, the one taking the things will say, “As for me, he didn’t tell me what he wants from you.” And at that point, the elder will say, “May God help, and the thing this man wants, I will be able to get it for him.” I myself, even if I am just asking on the part of the drum history, it is not good if someone who knows it comes to me and talks, and he gets up and goes away empty, and “Get this and drink water on the way” is not there. And inside our learning, I want you to know that you will be greeting or you will call somebody, and he will not show you what you want, and you will do that to somebody and he will show you.

And so we the drummers of Dagbon, and how we search for knowledge, all this is inside our asking and going to towns. We have talked on the part of our drumming. And the extent we have reached, it is good. And now we are coming

to enter the talks of the Samban' luṇa, and they are old talks, and they are the talks of our chiefs. And truly, if we were to start from Naa Shitɔbu or Naa Nyaysi, there are many drummers who can talk about that. But the talk of those before them, or the starting of Dagbon, they don't beat the talk of the far olden days at the Samban' luṇa because it is not for everyday talking, and they don't want it out in the open. They fear it. I have told you that if that talk is not inside our work, it won't spoil it. Dagbamba people say something: if you take a bow and an arrow and shoot into the air, and the arrow falls back to the ground without reaching the sky, don't say that you are weak. Even if a Dagbana doesn't know this talk, nobody can tell him that he's a weak Dagbana. And we who are drummers and we know chieftaincy, if any small drummer doesn't know it, nobody can blame him. Since I have come to my senses, I have never seen any drummer beating it inside Samban' luṇa. It has no use, and there are some bad things inside it. And so these talks and how we are going to talk about them, we shouldn't leave them standing on the way.

And so what I am telling you is this: if we are going to talk about these old talks, our talk should have a father. As you are here with me in the drumming, Savelugu is your father's house: Palo-Naa is there. And Nanton is your father's house: Nanton Lun-Naa is there. And as we have been going to greet our grandfather Namo-Naa, we have added another house, and that is Yendi. You have been going to Namɔyɔ for a long time, and you are not a stranger to him. You can go to Namo-Naa at any time. And Namo-Naa has some children who are also very learned, and they are also free with you. Those three: in all of Dagbon, they are our senior drummers on the part of knowledge. They have more knowledge, and they are the right people to talk these talks correctly. And so it is from among them that we are going to get these very old talks.

And as for you yourself, do you see Nanton? Nanton is now your house. Do you see Nanton Lun-Naa Iddrisu? As for this Nanton Lun-Naa, I can say that the drummers who are left in Dagbon here, I think that there were three drummers who were of the same age as Nanton Lun-Naa. They were the only old drummers. They were four, and one died a few years ago, and one died last year. Dimabi Lun-Naa and Tampion Sampahi-Naa are not there again, but Nanton Lun-Naa and Mangulana — Alhaji Adam — they are there. Those of us remaining are children. Among all the drummers in Dagbon here, they are the old drummers. And so what Nanton Lun-Naa knows, the drummers now don't know it. And what he knows is what he talks. As Nanton Lun-Naa is sitting down now, if he had wanted the name of Palo-Naa, he would have eaten it and left the one who is there now. But he said he would remain in Nanton, and he wouldn't go to Savelugu. As for Nanton Lun-Naa, he looks like a drinker but he does not drink. But if you sit by

him and you begin to joke with him in some rough way, you will see that he will at once start talking about olden, olden times. The time I last went to Nanton, I wasn't expecting to have any talk over there, but I happened to sit down with Nanton Lun-Naa, and all of a sudden he was talking some very, very interesting things to me. But I was so busy and people were crowding around, and I couldn't get a chance to note everything in my head, but I caught some small part of it.

Any time you get a chance and you go to greet Nanton Lun-Naa, you can ask him any question and see what he is going to talk. Any time if you see him and greet him and you get threepence for him, it is good. If you get a chance to ask him a question, just ask him as a short question. Don't go any further and ask for a general talk. Very old people like him have no time to say many things. He is very, very, very old. As we ourselves have been sitting down to talk for so much time, as he is very old, he cannot sit and talk like that. Unless he is going to beat the drum at the chief's house, at that time he can be talking much and you will be hearing. But if you come to ask him a long question, even if you are a drummer, he cannot find time to sit and tell you. Whatever happens, if he is going to tell you anything, he will leave some of it out. But if you want, any short question you have, you can ask him. And if you ask him and you stop at that point, it's all right. As for these old men, you don't know the time you can just prick them with your needle, and they will start vomiting out many things for you. But if it is that you go and you see him sitting with other people, you shouldn't ask him because he won't say it. And so I am only telling you that getting some of these talks like that is luck, and it will be your luck if you go and he is sitting and you get something from him. Dagbamba say that you should try to take a stone and throw it inside a well and hear the sound. Don't say that you won't take a stone and throw it inside a well to hear the sound. Maybe if you take a stone and throw it inside, you will hear a fine sound. As for asking like that, there is nothing wrong with it. That is how it is, and you yourself can also be asking. And that one will be adding to our talk.

As for Palo-Naa and grandfather Namo-Naa, Namo-Naa has already told us much about how our Dagbamba chieftaincy started, but there are some parts he did not reach. And what we have got from him is a lot, but it hasn't reached the point we want. Truly, if a problem comes to ride over you, you have to keep patient. As for this matter, if we don't have it yet, we shouldn't be in a hurry. When we went to Namo-Naa, and the talk he gave, he told us about a time he had talked about these very old talks about the beginning of Yendi. That was the time the government committee of inquiry into the Yendi chieftaincy was sitting [the Ollennu committee]. And so it is these chieftaincy talks again. Namo-Naa is on the side of Naa Mahamadu; he is not happy with Yakubu. And Namo-Naa said,

“Where I am, I have no chief. And my heart is not lying down.” And Namo-Naa told you about how his own father talked during the time of Yakubuḡee. And when his father talked it, all the talks he saw, and all the sufferings he had inside it, he saw it. And Namo-Naa also told you what happened to him when he himself talked about it. If our chieftaincy were to be made well, I believe that grandfather Namoyu would sing a song that among all Dagbamba, no matter how old you are, you have never heard it before. And even he wouldn’t mind to sing such a song and die, because as for a Dagbana, he doesn’t mind to do what his heart wants and he will die today. But to me, I think that what Namo-Naa talked to us, and what we have from him, it is good. And again, Savelugu is your house. And so it is also good we go to the house of Palo-Naa to finish the talks. And I will stop here, and tomorrow, if God agrees, I will continue.