

## MY LIFE STORY

TOLD BY ABUBAKARI LUNNA TO DAVID LOCKE

EDITED BY DAVID LOCKE

### 1. CHILDHOOD

#### *1.1 ABUBAKARI LIVES WITH HIS MOTHER'S FATHER*

##### *"MY GRANDFATHER WANTED ME TO BE WITH THE CHIEFS"*

When I was a young child, my father was not in Dagbon. I was living with one of my father's teachers, his uncle, Lun-naa Neindoo. He was the drum chief at Woriboggo, a village near Tolon. My father had sent me to live with him while he was stationed in the South at Bibiani, the gold town. He worked nights as a security guard.

When I was 6 or 7, my mother's father, Tali-naa Alhassan took me from my uncle. My grandfather told my father that I was going to be his "shared child." In my tradition, when you give your daughter in marriage and luckily she brings forth children, the husband has to give one to the mother's family. According to this custom, my grandfather had the right to take me from Woriboggo Luna-naa Neindoo. He took me to his senior brother, a chief of Woriboggo at that time. So, I was living in the chief's house.

My grandfather didn't want me to drum. He said I didn't look like a drummer. Instead, he wanted me to be with the chiefs on my mother's side of the family and learn how we enskin our paramount chief. By all means, he wanted one member of the family to become chief of Tolon. If you don't learn certain things during your childhood, you can't be Tolon chief.

### ***1.2 ABUBAKARI IS ENROLLED IN SCHOOL***

#### ***"THEY WROTE MY NAME FOR SCHOOL"***

I was with my grandfather for four or five years when he enrolled me in school. At that time, the late Tolon-naa was going around telling all the chiefs in Dagbon that they should send children to school. He wanted Tolon to have its own primary school for the first time. Tolon-naa called upon my grandfather, Tali-naa, and told him that the government was instructing every chief to send children to school. He wanted to write my name in the school. My grandfather said, "Yes. You can write it." He wrote my name first but he didn't write my correct name. That chief was called Abudulai, so he wrote "Abubakari Abudulai." He wrote a second person, Napatiya Abudulai, his grandchild. He wrote one girl's name, Samata Abudulai, his uncle's child. And he wrote Yakubu Abudulai, his own child.

They took the four of us to Tolon, my mother's home. I lived with my mother's father. We started going to the school.

### ***1.3 ABUBAKARI'S FATHER REMOVES HIM FROM SCHOOL***

#### ***"MY FATHER VEXED"***

Luckily, in several weeks' time my father came from the South. At that time my father's station in Dagbon was at Woriboggo with his uncle and teacher, Lun-naa Neindoo. You know, when a man travels home, he brings clothes for his children. My father came in the night. In the morning, he came and greeted all the people, calling every child to collect his clothing. He called my name but his uncle told him, "Sorry. The boy's grandfather came and took him. He wanted Abubakari to be with the chiefs."

My father vexed. Early in the morning, he came on foot to Tolon; he didn't ride a bicycle. He arrived at the house when we were putting on our clothes for school. Napatiya ran in, "Abubakari, your father has come, oh." From inside my grandmother's room, I ran out to see my father. I saw him shouting at my grandfather. I stopped.

I heard my father tell my grandfather, "You cannot do me so. I am taking him home. If you don't like it, you should come and take back the boy's mother. I won't give him to you. I can give you another child, but not him. I want him to drum, not to be with the chiefs. There is no difference between drumming and chieftaincy. Through drumming, he will learn the cultural affairs of the chiefs." He wasn't going to allow me to stay there.

An old man, Mba Ziblim, was sitting with my grandfather. Mba Ziblim told my father, "Take patience. They have written your son's name in the school register and already he has started it."

My father said, "What?! Is there any teacher above me? I am also a teacher. How can a teacher give his child to another teacher for training in a different language?" My father shouted to me, "Get up, let's go home." He held my hand. I was happy because my father had come to take me. Despite the fact that I was a child, I was happy.

According to my father, if my grandfather had not sent me to school and had left me in the house, I would not be a drummer. It was only because my father became annoyed over my being in school that he came and took me.

People came to beg my father. My father said, "No. If Abubakari's grandfather won't agree, he should come and take the boy's mother." Lun-naa Neindoo said that there shouldn't be a fight. If they started fighting because of me, some people may do bad things to me, even kill me. If I were with him so near to Tolon, my grandfather wouldn't be happy. He advised my father to send me back to my grandfather. My father said, "No! I am not giving him back. If they can't give him up, I am taking Abubakari back to the South." So, my father spent one month and when he went to the South, he took me with him.

#### ***1.4 ABUBAKARI IS TAKEN TO THE SOUTH***

##### ***"MY FATHER TOOK ME WITH HIM"***

There my father started... He bought a small lungu for me. Unfortunately, at Bibiani my father didn't have time to teach me. He used to go the mines. Every night, he was working there; he was never at home. He was a security watchman at the place where they wash the gold. By the time before he finally returned home to Dagbon he was a foreman of the watchmen.

While I was staying with my father at Bibiani, I didn't do anything in drumming apart from the days when the lunga drummers went for outdoorings or weddings. I was a small boy and couldn't drum, so I would carry my father's lunga. When the money was falling down, I helped pick it up. I was with my father for more than 7 years at Bibiani. I didn't know anything in drumming.

One year when my father came back to Dagbon for the Damba Festival, he told my grandfather, Lun-naa Neindoo, that he didn't have time to teach me. If I were to continue being with him, I would become like one of those transport station boys--when somebody comes and drops his things from the lorry, you will carry it for the person and he will give you something; they call you "kayakaya" [carrier-carrier]. My father told my grandfather that he did not want me to be a "kayakaya." "If I keep Abubakari at Bibiani, it will be bad. His friends and brothers will go ahead of him. I want to leave him at home. I don't want him to be a Southern Boy."

## **2. LUN-NAA NEINDOO & LUN-NAA WOMBEI**

### ***2.1 ABUBAKARI LEARNS FROM LUN-NAA NEINDOO AT WORIBOGGO***

#### ***"I STARTED LEARNING THE TALK AND THE SINGING"***

It happened that my grandfather's brother--the Woriboggo chief--died. When we came to make the funeral, my father said I should stay at Woriboggo. So I sat down there with Lun-naa Neindoo. It was then that I started learning our drumming talks and the singing.

My father used to call Lun-naa Neindoo "Mbapira," which means "my junior father." Ihi Neindoo and my father's father are from one father like Ngolba's father but have different mothers. They are all sons of my grandfather, Abubakari. I used to call Lun-naa Neindoo "my grandfather"--it has kept long, I can't change it. My father told him that he wanted me to remain with him.

My grandfather, my mother's father, was the chief of Woriboggo. Grandfather Neindoo was his chief drummer, his Lun-naa. After my father left, whenever we would go to my mother's father house for drumming, my grandfather used to talk against my father. He used to tell the lunga drummers, "This boy--he is not a drummer, he is my son. He should be in my area. I gave my daughter [Abubakari's mother] to you lunga drummers and she has given birth... The fifth born or the sixth born or the seventh born should go to the mother's side." I am the sixth born in my

mother's side and because of that the chief had a right to claim me for my mother's house. But my father was forcing me to be a drummer.

When he would tell him that, Lun-naa Neindoo took it like play. He would reply, "I know that he is your child, but he is going to drum. There is no difference between drumming and your duty. You are a kingmaker; you are a son of a kingmaker. Many of the kingmakers learn from drummers, but drummers learn some of the Yendi story from the kingmakers. So you can learn something from him; your children can learn something from him. He should drum."

You see, a Tolon-naa is a kingmaker. Grandfather Neindoo was telling him that he, son of a kingmaker, is praying for me to become Tolon-naa. If I, Abubakari, learn from the drummers and at sometime, God permit, I become Tolon-naa, I can be a kingmaker at the same time I can be a drummer.

## ***2.2 ABUBAKARI LEARNS DAKOLI NYE BII BA***

### ***"GOD IS THE CREATOR"***

Lun-naa Neindoo started me with what we lunga drummers call "Dakoli Nye Bii Ba." Dakoli Nye Bii Ba is the beginning of drumming. You have to know how God created the world. In drumming, we have it, "God is the Creator. He can create a tree, he can create grass...everything. He can create a person." You drum all inside before you come and say, "A Creator, God, who created our grandfather, Bizung."

It is singing; we sing this one. If you come to Africa, Tamale, on every market day you will see young drummers going to the women in the market, drumming...singing. The elders have given Dakoli Nye Bii Ba to the young ones so that they can be practicing in the markets. Until they know that you are improving, before they start you with drumming stories and singing stories.

At that time, Tolon wasn't having a market--Woriboggo was having a big market. In the whole area, there was no market bigger than Woriboggo market. On every market day we, the young drummers, came together and drummed by ourselves. I would be with the others and somebody would say, "You sing before me." Another boy would say, "You drum before me." That is how I started showing myself.

The time my father was in the South, he came home every year for the Damba Festival. The second year when my father came, Lun-naa Neindoo told him that he wasn't feeling happy about me. "Every time his grandfather sees Abubakari, he gets annoyed." One day my father took me to my grandfather's house when he happened to be alone in his compound. My father asked him about me, "I want to know how do you think about Abubakari?" My grandfather said, "Though you, the boy's father, are forcing for him to be a drummer, I, his grandfather, still don't like it. I want him to be on the chiefs' side." He knew the way my character was coming, how I was proving myself--that is why he was forcing for me to come to the chiefs' side. He knew I would become somebody who can keep past stories--that is also why he was forcing to teach me the duties of a chief.

Then my father said, "OK. You don't want Abubakari to be a drummer. Your own son is with me at Bibiani. If the reason you don't want Abubakari to be a drummer is because you need a son, as soon as I go back, I will bring him to you. Then Abubakari can be a drummer." Then my grandfather said, "Oh. I am only joking."

### ***2.3 ABUBAKARI BECOMES POPULAR***

#### ***"THE WOMAN'S LEADER LIKED MY MATTERS TOO MUCH"***

At that time the Magaazhia, the women's leader, liked me...that Magaazhia liked my matters too much. She used to go to her stall every market day. When we young drummers went around and came to this Magaazhia, she would call me "m-mam." If a woman calls you "m-mam," she means "my friend," or "my boy friend." She would say, "Oh m-mam, come and sing for me." I would start singing and people would get together. Soon, the drumming elders began advising my teacher, "You have to take care of Abubakari. He is having good voice. Some one may try to make him useless."

### ***2.4 LUN-NAA NEINDOO CHARMS ABUBAKARI'S SINGING VOICE***

#### ***"I AM GOING TO TELL YOU WHY I CANNOT SING"***

Now I am going to tell you the reason why I do not like to sing. Drummers were telling my grandfather, Lun-naa Neindoo, "You have to take care of Abubakari. He is having a beautiful voice. People like him too much. If you are not careful, you are going to lose him." So, then and there, Lun-naa Neindoo charmed my voice because he didn't want people to spoil my life.

At times, your teacher can do you so. Later, when he sees that you have grown and can take care of yourself, he will return the voice back to you. He gave me a medicine to drink. It felt like something was holding my throat, like there was something in my throat and I couldn't feel it properly. But he wasn't able to return my voice back to me before he died. When Lun-naa died, I never knew what spoiled my voice.

My father heard of the funeral and came home. It was Ramadan time when they finished the funeral. After the Fasting, my father was to play Sambanluna [history-telling], to sit Sambanluna. He wanted me to start for him because he had heard that I had a good voice and was learning quickly.

Before a drummer goes to sing Sambanluna, you have to get a good man to start the story of how we became drummers: how our grandfather Bizung became a drummer, how he died and left his children, how the children behaved, how he left the drumming and we were not drumming, and how it came that our grandfather Lun-Zhegu returned back to be drumming and how everybody started drumming again. If you are going to take everything by yourself, you will be very tired.

My father said I should go and sing, "OK, tonight you go to chief's house." I told my father that I didn't have my voice. "For so many years now, if I try to sing...when I start, the beginning is good, but coming to the middle...it doesn't take 5-10 minutes before I lose my voice. Even when I speak, you won't hear me." My father said, "What?!"

Lun-naa Neindoo's first child Abudulai was there--I call him "junior father." My father asked him what happened. He recalled that people were liking me too much. My grandfather had seen that it was dangerous. Drummers are bad: somebody might spoil my life. Grandfather Neindoo decided to hold my voice until I had protection. The problem has come because he wasn't sick when he died. In case he was sick and he realized he might die--the things he was keeping--he could have remembered and said, "Oh, I have done this. Let me undo those charms. Maybe I will not get up."

Lun-naa Neindoo was very healthy the day he died, not sick at all. He got up in the morning...we all took our breakfast and on our way to the farm, he took us to the place where women get together and sell snacks. He bought plenty for us to eat. At the farm it didn't get one hour

before... Why, we had not even finished eating when a messenger told us to come quickly. Our grandfather had died!

Uncle Abudulai told my father everything he could. He didn't know the medicine, the name of the medicine. My father knew the name but he didn't know how--when you hold somebody's throat--how to make it come back to the person.

My father said to me, "Force! Do it anyway." So when we got to chief's house, I pretended not to sing. The chief was sitting and I spoke to the people, "Everybody knows that I have a good singing voice. But I am telling people that I can't sing with my voice today. I am going to talk the singing-talk. You should forget about my voice." So I drummed and talked the story for my father. My father was happy. He said, "Oh? So you are still here? You have started the chieftaincy matters before?" I said, "Yes." Then my father played.

## ***2.5 ABUBAKARI STUDIES WITH HIS FATHER***

### ***"MY FATHER WAS HARD"***

After my father gave the Sambanluna, the chief made him a drum chief. They made him second to the Lun-naa. After Lun-naa, there is Sampahi-naa--after Sampahi-naa, Taha-naa; they gave him Taha-naa. They gave Lun-naa to Sampahi-naa, they gave Sampahi-naa to Taha-naa, and they gave Taha-naa's title to my father. Now my father could not go back to Bibiani. He stayed at Woriboggo.

My father said, "Now I am going to work with you." I started learning with him. He began with Yendi skin affairs: how Dagbon started, how we traveled from Nigeria and came to Dagbon--traveled from Nigeria to Mali; traveled from Mali to northern Ivory Coast; from there we traveled through Ouagadougou and how finally we settled in Dagbon. And how we become drummers--at that time there were no drummers. How it happened that our grandfather Bizung made himself a drummer. He could see that I was pushing him, everyday. If he gave me one story today, the next day, when he asked me to do it, I did it correct.

So it was my father who started me seriously with our drumming history talks. I was with my father for a long time, more than five years, before my learning-father Ngolba came and asked for me. My father was hard; he gave me tough times. I faced difficulty with my father more

than Ngolba because of his way of teaching. My father would not beat the drum for you. He would only sing. You had to use your hand to do the same thing. If you couldn't do it, he would continue until you got it before adding another. My learning-father Ngolba--sometimes he would also just sing the rhythm for you, but if you were having difficulty getting it, he would take a drum and ask you to copy him.

***2.6 ABUBAKARI IS AT RISK FROM A JEALOUS DRUMMER  
"MY FATHER FEARED THIS MAN"***

At that time, the Lun-naa at Woriboggo was the very person my grandfather had feared and spoiled my voice. He was a bad person. He killed people like hunters kill animals. My father feared this man.

It came to the time of Fasting. You know, during Fasting time, every Sunday and Thursday nights the lunga drummers have to go to the palace and tell stories, play the Sambanluna. The Lun-naa has two weeks, the Sampahi-naa has one week, and the Taha-naa has one week. When it came to my father's week to go, my father called me and said, "You should go to the chief's

house today. I want to test you." He asked me to start with Naa Luro. "What you are able to say about Naa Luro, say it. Whether the chief gives you something or not, I will take care of that."

We went to the chief's palace after prayers. When I started the story of Naa Luro, this chief drummer wasn't there; he was at home. Then he came in. During the middle of Naa Luro's story--the place my father knew that I would be making people happy, laughing--suddenly I didn't know my left and right. I still had my voice but I couldn't say anything, couldn't remember anything. I kept repeating myself.

My father got up and shouted at me. Luckily, my uncle Abudulai was playing lunga for me. He took the lead in the story telling and I started following him. When I saw that I was getting myself, I jumped in front again. After we finished, my father said, "Your grandfather [the Lunnaa] is trying to spoil your voice. You can't be with me any more. If you are going finish your learning with me, it will be bad."

### **3. MBA NGOLBA**

#### ***3.1 NGOLBA BECOMES ABUBAKARI'S TEACHER***

##### ***"MY FATHER SENT ME TO MBA NGOLBA"***

So my father sent me to my teaching-father, Ngolba. From the time my father gave me to Ngolba, I was not at Woriboggo again. Ngolba was sitting at Gb'rimani--after you pass the Tolon market, that town is about nine miles on the left. He and my father were in one family, but not from one father. His father called my father's father "uncle." My father's grandfather's name is Abubakari. It is Abubakari who gave birth to Azima and Alidu; Azima was the father of Ngolba and Alidu was father of Wombie. They had different mothers: Azima's mother was different from the mother of my father's father Alidu. But their father was Abubakari.

Their old grandfather's name is the one I am carrying, Abubakari. You know, my father never called me "son" until he died; he always called me "grandfather." I acted like their grandfather; we always played like grandson and grandfather. Ngolba liked joking too much. When he was drumming, he would make people laugh. I used to copy him, act like him. Any time I was walking people started calling, "Ngolba, small Ngolba." And with my sweet hand and my quick memory, everyone liked me.

It is because of drumming we called him Ngolba. "Ngolba" means, "I fucked them." Every woman was happy on him. He had good voice, good hand--every part of drumming, he was having it. He was having the knowledge, too, and people liked him. He left his home name of Sabugu and called himself Ngolba.

In the same way, people left my father's name of Wombie and started calling him Lun-Karugu, "tough drummer." He left the "Wombie" because of his strong drumming, beautiful drumming, and strong knowledge. My father--he had body: he was tall and stout. When he played, people would say, "Ah! This strong drummer, he be drumming oh!" So they started calling him "Lun-Karugu"--"strong drummer," "tough drummer." That killed my father's name. Many people didn't know Wombie, they only knew Lun-Karugu. Those who knew the home name called him Wombie Lun-Karugu.

When he was young, my father didn't have a station at all. Chiefs were tossing him, young people in the towns--those who like playing--they were tossing him here and there. That is why they gave him "Lun-Karugu." It was because of his traveling that our grandfather, my mother's father, thought to make my father stay in one place. According to my father, he wasn't thinking

to marry when they forced him to...when they gave my mother to him. You see? Then some years after that, they made him chief, Taha-naa. When they make a drummer a chief, they have stopped him from playing for the young people.

How can the young people use a chief? We respect a chief too much. For example, take a good vocalist who also is a drum chief--if the chiefs are not there, the young people can enjoy his songs. They will give him money quickly and make him happy. But if the chiefs are around, the youth fear. He is only for the chiefs now. [laughs]

### ***3.2 ABUBAKARI TRAVELS AROUND DAGBON WITH NGOLBA "BECAUSE OF HIS DRUMMING WE NEVER SAT AT HOME"***

When they sent me to this Ngolba... Because of his drumming, he never sat at home: every day we went for drumming. The town people would invite him to come and help them with drumming. These people would hire him, "We are having a funeral on this day. Come and help us." I traveled with him, carrying his lungu. So, this my uncle, my teacher-uncle Ngolba, made me travel a lot to different stations in Dagbon. That was how people got to know me properly.

Before I went to him, I knew something in drumming so for him to continue with me was not hard. I only had to listen to his story and follow him. When we went to a place and he told stories, I would try to keep it in my mind. Later, when we were resting that night, I could ask him, "Oh, my uncle, I heard you say this. What happened and this thing be so?" There, he would start telling me something. If he was feeling tired, he would tell me, "Wait. I will tell you later." When we came back home, whether I could remember or not, he would call me and say, "You asked me this. This is this and this is this." That is how I continued my education with Mba Ngolba.

My teacher Ngolba took me to all parts of Dagbon. That is why today, any place I pass, people know me. He recognized that I had a good hand and a clear mind. In some towns, he would sing, leaving the drumming for me. I was very young to be drumming the deep history rhythms with that sort of sweet hand. People liked it and invited him whenever they had a performance. They invited him a lot because they knew that they could get a good hand and a good voice.

### ***3.3 ABUBAKARI GETS SPIRITUAL PROTECTION***

***"MY FATHER SAID, 'DRUMMERS ARE BAD'"***

My father was older than Ngolba and now he had become a drum chief. He called Ngolba and advised him. "I am not feeling happy about all the traveling you and Abubakari are doing.

Drummers are bad. Consider yourself--you are not strong. Find something to protect yourself.

Although you are a good drummer and your father was a strong person, before you are killed,

find protection. And protect Abubakari too."

To me, Father Ngolba--I can never forget him. Sometimes, when I was sitting at home, he would call me to get something to drink. I couldn't ask him, "Father, what is this?" If your father gives you something to drink, how do you ask? In Africa, you can't ask him--you have to drink it. Sometimes, he gave me incense, saying, "Before you go to your bed, put it into the fire." Since he was my learning-father, I had to do it. My Mba Ngolba did it for me several times.

### ***3.4 ABUBAKARI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER NGOLBA***

#### ***"HE LOVED ME"***

Another reason why I liked my teacher, my Father Ngolba, is despite that he was quick-tempered, he didn't get angry at. He loved me. He didn't take a single of his ideas and hide it

from me. Even if I asked him about something common that many drummers know, the thing that is left--he didn't hide it. He would tell me, "I have reserved something. If you bring all your knowledge out in public, some people with quick learning can just collect it."

The time I was with Mba Ngolba... In fact, I respected him like my father. During farming time I got up early in the morning and went straight to the farm. Unless I was sick, I wouldn't waste time at home until he got up. When he came, he met me already in the farm. If it was not farming time, on days we were not going for drumming, I would go to his door, kneel down and say good morning to him. Even if he had no instructions to give to me, I would stay there, not saying anything. I would be there. At last, he would ask me, "Do you want to go some place?" If I needed to do my own work or to travel, then I had a mouth to say, "Yes, I want to go to some village or some market." He might say, "Today I am having no assignment for you. You can go." Only then could I go.

I remember times my friends would be drumming someplace. Even though I wanted to go and drum with them, Ngolba could refuse and send me to a different place. I wouldn't like it but

because his was my teacher... Teachers can use you like...he can give you any laws your father can give to you. That is our Dagbamba respect to teachers.

So this man trained me like that. I started learning and it came that I got to know some of the rhythms--I can't say all the rhythms--some of what I know now. Later, when I was older and had left the North, I was on my own, not working for anybody apart from myself. Whenever I had some money, I gave some to friends going to our town in Dagbon, "If you go, give it to my father, Ngolba." Sometimes, when I was planning to go home after being in the South for six months or one year, I would make sure that I brought a new kparigu, a new smock. I would add a little money and say, "Father, I am for myself now. I have eaten and this is left for you." He would be very happy.

### ***3.5 MBA NGOLBA'S DISCIPLINE***

#### ***"I DID SO MANY THINGS AGAINST MY TEACHERS"***

Nobody will be good for his father always. Sometimes you will act good for your father, sometimes you will do something which your father will not like. I did so many things against my teachers and then turned back. They punished me on those things. The reason why my

Father Ngolba didn't beat me was that he was a person who liked play. But when he shouted at you, if you are not strong, you urinate [laughs]. When he is teaching you something and you are not able to get it, he will shout on you. If you don't take time, you will faint. For that one, I got it from Father Ngolba.

In fact, if I say I didn't suffer for my learning, I am telling lies. I suffered. People didn't beat me, but sometimes my teacher would make me cry and I had to be learning during the time I was crying. Father Ngolba didn't beat, but he would shout at you and abuse you on top. Even if you also have a quick temper, you couldn't leave him. You would have to hold it, shaking, crying, and doing the work. All these things, my teachers did them to me. I was good but if you sit down with my teachers, they will tell you some of my faults.

### ***3.6 THE DEATH OF MBA NGOLBA***

#### ***"I AM HAVING HIS LUNGA"***

Ngolba bore sons, but they died, leaving only two daughters. I am playing his lungu; his lungu [large-sized lungu] is in my room now. When he died, I wasn't close at hand. He died in the South, he didn't die in Dagbon.

The day...he wasn't sick. He had traveled to visit a friend in Ejura, a village in Ashanti. The friend asked Ngolba to help him harvest his farm before he returned to Dagbon. They had finished harvesting the food and were planning that on the next market day of Ejura, Ngolba would come and buy things to bring back to Dagbon. On the day before the market day, Ngolba said he was feeling stomach pain. This man tried hard to take a bicycle to find a taxi to bring Ngolba to a hospital. Before he came back to the village, he had died.

I was in Kumasi at the time. Before he died, Ngolba had told the people that it would be me, Abubakari, who would be coming to take his funeral home. He told them to call me in Kumasi before informing people in Dagbon. Ngolba's friend came in the taxi to Kumasi and told me, "Your father Ngolba wants to see you." So I saw my father's burial. I was there when we buried him.

You know, when an old drummer dies, we bury him with a drum. We put a small lungu, together with a stick, in the grave. Whenever my father went anywhere, he carried his lungu. He never traveled without his lungu. The man who was with Ngolba when he died told me, "Your

father said, 'Only bury me with this drum stick, this lunga stick--don't add my lunga to bury me. Give my lunga to Abubakari.' Your father said you shouldn't give his lunga to anybody. He said that in Dagbon, you should tell his junior brothers that same thing." I said thank you for that.

Luckily, people came from Dagbon three days after we buried him. Ngolba's friend helped us to take the funeral home. My father was there in Gb'rimani. We announced the funeral, we made the third day and the seventh day. The second brother to Ngolba came out. He called out all his brothers, he called my father, and he called all their family. "Because Ngolba didn't have a male child--only female--I want to tell you, Wombie Lun-Karugu, that Abubakari is regent of Ngolba. Despite that Ngolba was not a chief, Abubakari is his regent. Ngolba told me that if it happens he dies, Abubakari shouldn't say anything. Abubakari should carry on with his duties. He should take his whole inheritance. And Ngolba had nothing other than lunga."

These are some of the things in our culture. Some of our old people, they know the age they will die. When the time is coming near, they tell people, "In case I die and don't have mouth to talk, this is how to handle my affairs."

**3.7 ISSAHAKU NAMOGU ASKS FOR ABUBAKARI  
"HE WANTED A GOOD LUNGA MAN TO ACCOMPANY HIM"**

I think I was with Ngolba for more than ten years. It came to some time that my fourth teacher, Issahaku Namogu, wanted a good lungu man to accompany him. He is Namo-naa now; at that time he was called Issahaku Namogu since his late father had been Namo-naa. People liked his voice, but at times he would go to some place to sing and he would not be able to get a good drummer to back him. If you are a good vocalist, even if you know the history, you need a good hand man to back you. It will come to a place in the story where you will need reminding. And who is going to remind you?

Namo-naa went to my father and said he wanted to have me. My father said it was not his problem. "Already I have given him to my uncle, Woriboggo-Lun-naa Neindoo. When the uncle died, I took him by myself. No one came after him. Then I saw that he was too big to be with me. What he needed to be doing, I was not doing it. Abubakari needed to travel so that his knowledge would be up. I don't travel any more. I stopped the traveling because I am a drum chief. The chieftaincy won't allow me to be traveling. So I gave him to Ngolba. Now, you, Issahaku Namogu should go to Ngolba. You are junior to Ngolba. Go and know what to tell him. If Ngolba will allow it, then you can take Abubakari."

Issahaku Namogu didn't go by himself. He passed through one chief, the former police commissioner's father--B.A. Yakubu's father, Gushe-naa Yakubu. Gushe-naa Yakubu invited Ngolba for the Damba Festival. We went. At that time I wasn't married. When we went to the Damba Festival, Issahaku Namogu told me he wanted me to be with him. If I was feeling happy about it, he needed that agreement. You know, in drumming, if you stay in one area, you only know the knowledge of that area. I did not want to know one part of Dagbon. I wanted to know every part of Dagbon, so I said "Yes, I like it."

On the festival day, my father Ngolba was drumming at the palace. I wasn't there. I had gone to bring the town young men's leader to the Damba dancing field. The lunga drummers hadn't yet gone to the palace to bring the chief out. When the chief came out he stopped the drumming. He asked, "Ngolba, where is Lun-Zhegu?" At that time, they called me Lun-Zhegu, Red Drummer, because when I was young my skin was very white like white man's skin; because I was slim, some people called me Lun-Baliga, slim drummer. My teacher said, "The chief drummer of the town has sent him, because he is a young drummer, to bring the young men's chief." So Gushe-naa Yakubu said, "They should tell the young leader to come fast because without him, I am not

going to sit in the place. Put the pillow down. I will sit here and wait for him to come." There, my father felt happy because he was proud. He knew they were going to test him and see whether he had taught me properly or not.

The chief drummer told someone to leave the people and run, because the chief cannot be waiting like that. They sent a person to call me, so I started running. When I was near to the chief's house, I started drumming. My father heard my hand. He used his drum to tell the chief drummer I was coming: "Abu kam'na, Abu kam'na," "Abu is coming, Abu is coming."

The leader of the drumming stopped the drumming. He wanted the chief to hear my talk. I started praising the chief and entered into the field. That was the year I made my first marriage. I am sorry I did not have a child with that woman and so I left her. When I entered, the chief was very happy with my drumming. He stopped the music, went to the palace and brought out a woman named Samata. The woman came out. I was kneeling in front of him. First, he asked her, "Are you my own child?" She said, "Father." Three times he asked. Then he asked Samata, "I want to do you what I like. Can you agree? If I do you anything I like, can you agree?" She said, "Father." Three times. He said, "OK. After this drumming... I am giving you from now to

this young drummer. Do you like him?" She said, "Father, so far as you like him I like him."

So that was my first marriage, the same as how my father married my mother.

My teacher was very happy. With his lunga he said he was going to leave the drumming for me.

I took the leading part and started playing appellations from Damba. For each one, we played only three or four praises before I changed to another. At that time there was a drummer there in

Gushegu who was young like me. His name was Sumani; I am sorry he died. Father Ngolba

was playing with my friend Sumani. At last, I beat a rhythm that Sumani could not answer well.

Even if he could answer, he didn't know how to finish it. We call that one Yel'man'li Nye Zhia, an appellation of Naa Abudulai. It doesn't sound like Nagubiegu; it sounds a different tongue.

You have to be telling Naa Abudulai's story and the drummers will be answering. When I finished, Sumani took it but didn't know how to end it.

His father, the Gushe-Taha-naa, got vexed at me because I had put his child into shame. He left the place. That chief [Gushe-naa] also was a very bad chief, so he got to know. As soon as the man left the place, the chief realized everything. He called me, as if to give me money. He took a small horsetail whisk from his pocket together with money. Somebody wanted to go collect it

for me but Gushe-naa said, "No, call Abubakari." I cupped my hands to receive the things. He put them in my hands and closed my fingers over them. He knew that when I went back to the other drummers, I would put it into the communal kitty, so he asked me to put it into my pocket.

The drum chief tried everything [malicious charms] but couldn't succeed. He came back to the drumming. If I drummed one praise and brought it for the group to answer, he would kill it and start another. There my teacher also got vexed. He stopped the drumming. He told the people that he is not bluffing himself. There they got to kill my teacher Ngolba and not me. They didn't get me but they got my teacher. Ngolba said, "I have learned the thing. It is there for my hand. I am not bluffing, but if you bring yourself to challenge me, I will show you that I know the thing more than you. Gushe-Taha-naa should be careful. You can't face Abubakari, you cannot face him. Even me--Abu is my child, my student, but I cannot face him. You should be quiet."

After we finished the afternoon Damba, everybody went home to eat before we were to go back in the night. Namo-naa called me. We were staying in different houses. My father and I were lodging in the house of the leading drummer of Gushegu. Namo-naa was in Sampahi-naa's

house. So Namo-naa came and got me and we went to the chief's house. We went and made prayers at the Naa Zuu's.

I think you know what I mean? The chief's servants, those who take the chief's skins, they are with the chief at all times. The chief never sits alone. Whenever you go, three of them are sitting with the chief. Even when the chief is sleeping, they have to be there, unless the chief asks them to go to the next hall. They can't leave the house without the chief's permission.

#### **4. ISSAHAKU NAMOGU**

##### ***4.1 NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING ABUBAKARI'S TRANSFER TO ISSAHAKU NAMOGU***

##### ***"WE WENT AND MET THE CHIEF"***

We went and met the chief. He had taken off his robes and was taking air with those three people. You know, as drummers, when we go to chief's house, we don't have to take permission from anyone. We go direct, like a wife of the chief; if your wife is coming to your room, she needs no permission. Immediately upon entering, the chief took his hand like this to greet us. "Oh, N-yaba," he began. Every chief calls a drummer his grandfather whether you are a drum

chief or not. Namo-naa said, "Yes." We sat down and made the greeting. When we had finished the greetings, the chief asked the Naa Zuu to give him some privacy. They left us.

Namo-naa told the chief, "This is the young drummer I need. I have already told you and you have accepted it. How they came to the town, how they started--I think the boy will be happy with me. That is what I have come to tell you in the presence of the boy. If you have something to do for the boy to be happy with me, that is why I have brought him." The chief said, "In my presence nothing bad will happen, but I don't know my back. I want to tell you, Abubakari, that I will be very proud and happy if you come to live in Gushegu."

The chief asked me, "Are you worried?" I said, "I am not worried as far as you and Issahaku Namogu are concerned. If only my teacher Ngolba is happy, I will be happy. I want my old teacher to be feeling happy to release me to Issahaku Namogu. I don't want a quarrel between these two people, because if they are not happy with each other, my learning will be useless. I don't want to be useless someday. I want to be happy."

Gushe-naa said he would talk to my teacher. He asked Namo-naa to take me home and bring my teacher. When Namo-naa came home, he told my teacher, "The chief is free now. You can have a talk." When they went there, it wasn't long before they came back. Ngolba was very happy. He called me into the room. He said, "Abu, do you know something? I want your knowledge to be up. I don't want you to know half. I cannot tell you everything in Dagbon. I can only tell you the part I know, and that part, you already have it. You have to get more. I want to leave you here for two or three years, until you have gotten something from Gushegu. Then you can come back to me. Do you agree?"

I said, "No." I wanted to test his mind. I said "No. Whom am I going to be with in Gushegu? I don't know anybody in Gushegu." He said, "You know, Issahaku Namogu is a good drummer. It has happened that he is very happy on you, he wants you to be with him. I would like you to get something from him. When you get it, you will come back and tell me. What you get from him, I can get something from you. I will be very happy if you agree."

Ngolba agreed but I said, " I will not remain here now. I have to take you back home. You cannot come here and leave me and go. If they want, they should come to my home for me." I

still wanted to test his mind. He said, "This is nothing." But I said, "I carried your bag here.

You are going to sit on truck, but when you drop from the truck you have to walk a long distance to your house. If nobody is there, you will have to carry the bag yourself. I don't want to see that in my life; I don't want to do that to you. I don't want somebody to do it to me when I grow.

If you will permit me to take you back home so that later they can come for me, I will be happy."

He agreed. He called Namo-naa and told him what I had said. Namo-naa went and told the chief but Gushe-naa said, "No, Abubakari has to be here. He should know that I have given him a wife. The Damba Festival will finish on Sunday. Wednesday we are going to make the custom and bring his wife. He has to be there to receive his wife and do everything." The chief wanted to be near the girl so that he could see how she would act. If she didn't act well, he would take her and give me another one.

They came and told Ngolba. My teacher agreed but I told him, "No. If they like, they shouldn't give me the wife. I won't leave you." Finally, the chief agreed. "After the Damba Festival, we will make the custom. You can leave Gushegu for three days. You can take your wife away.

We will come and bring you here with your wife." I agreed. Because that was the time Gushe-naa had given me his daughter to marry, I think I would be somewhere 22 or 23 years old, but I don't know.

#### ***4.2 ABUBAKARI IS CHARMED BY A JEALOUS DRUMMER***

##### ***"I COULD NOT DRUM AT ALL"***

On the last day of the Damba Festival, the day we send Damba home, I was very weak! I didn't know what happened but I could not drum at all. My teacher Ngolba and Namo-naa were not happy. The chief was on the horse with happiness, but I could not drum. Asumani was drumming, bluffing. People were loving him, giving him money. We, the lunga drummers, were taking the Damba home, but I got vexed and went back home.

At home, I met the drum leader of the town. He hadn't gone to the festival. He said, "Why have you come back like this?" I said, "Grandfather, I cannot drum. It is useless for me to be following people like that. A good drummer like me--just following people like a dog. No, I can't do it."

He said, "Oh, sure? Are you sick?" I said, "I am not sick, but I am feeling that my body is very weak." He laughed and took me to the area of the house where he stayed. He had a pot in which he kept water. The water was too smelly--long time water [laughs]. He took the water, rubbed it on his hands, washed my hair and shook them to the ground--three times. "Oh my grandchild, I like you too much and I want you to be in this town. Go on drumming. Nothing will do you." I came out and followed them again.

Before I got to the field, I got my body OK, making like I was boozed. I said, "What is happening?" I started drumming and could see that I was getting myself. My teacher was drumming with Asumani. When Asumani finished drumming, my teacher was thinking that I would take it together with him. He turned back and saw me. He felt happy. Together we played to the end of the festival.

### ***4.3 ABUBAKARI DEFEATS ASUMANI IN PLAYING DRUM HISTORY "NOW YOU ARE FINISHED"***

The chief finished going around the town and mounted his horse again to go back home. Now we had to tell the story of the chiefs. Asumani took the lead, starting with the story of Gushegu.

Since I had never lived there before, I knew only some part of their chiefs, not all. He is from there and knew everything about them. Luckily, Issahaku Namogu took the drumming from all of us and transferred the topic back to Yendi. In my heart I said, "You can't tell the story of Gushegu; you must talk the story of Yendi. Asumani, you are finished [laughs]."

We started. Issahaku Namogu took the lead. He would start a rhythm and then leave it for the two of us to play. We would be playing, ah... He would wait until we had told the story of the chief, bringing his children and the background of people. When people were satisfied, then he would stop and start another. After this one, that one has to come. He came to one chief--at the beginning, Asumani was not able to defeat me, but when we came to the middle, Asumani was trying to challenge me.

There, you have to bring your knowledge. I had to bring Tolon. In my drumming, if I said this Yaa-naa was sitting at that time, I had to name which Tolon-naa and Gushe-naa were acting with him--in the lungu! I started Yendi, jumped it to Tolon and came to Gushegu. Finally, I would tell the present Gushegu chief that he should be happy--in the lungu! Those who could understand the drum language, they were shouting, "Hey." Asumani got confused.

Then Namo-naa came to Naa Gariba. Naa Gariba has a lot of stories. According to my teachers, Naa Gariba is having 139 children. Do you know why they say he has 139 children? They take his brothers' children and sisters' children, together with his children, and name them as his children. When we came to that point, hah, my father Ngolba was laughing. He took the singing from Namo-naa. He would sing and leave it, Namo-naa would take it--he would sing and leave it, Namo-naa would take it... People were very happy. The chief could not ride the horse. He was throwing himself as if to fall down. People said, "Please. If your father is singing, the chief will throw himself like that to his death."

I was next to my father and Namo-naa, with Asumani on the other side. We came close to the palace. We came to the point where we were to stop the story of Yendi and come to Gushegu. Asumani was feeling happy because he knew we were coming to play his town story. But because of my hand, he could not defeat me. I would listen to him... When he finished talking a story, I would take the same story and make it sweet for the people. People were happy, shouting, "Hey."

While Asumani played, my vocalist was singing. I listened to what my singer was saying and played the same thing on my lungu. Whenever Asumani brought a praise, I would take it and put something on top. He could not finish all; he had to shorten them to suit his hand. If he said one tongue, I made it three. There, people said, "Hey. How is it that this boy is like that? Is he from this town?"

Then we came to the chief's house. The chief came down. We had to play "Gingaani" [special music for certain chiefs]. As a drum leader of the town, his father had to be singing. Asumani took it from Naa Zangina. There, I remember... I said, "OK, I will not take it from far away, I will just start it from Naa Gariba." I took it from Naa Gariba, counting his children. You know, it was Naa Zangina who brought forth Naa Gariba. In the beginning, people thought he was going to beat me, but when he took it from Naa Zangina... Naa Zangina had 19 children and if you play Naa Zangina you have to play 19 talks. But I had started from Naa Gariba, and how I play Naa Gariba, he could not play it like that. If he tried to play Naa Gariba, people would not be happy. When Asumani was in the 17th child of Naa Zangina, his father raised his hand like this to stop the singing. We ended it, we finished.

The chief said, "I have an announcement to every person of Gushegu. From today going, people should take Abubakari as a drummer of Gushegu. Be with him like a person from Gushegu. I want to tell everybody of Gushegu, every princess, to take good care of him. It would be shameful if he comes to Gushegu and somebody does him bad. It would be a shame for us all. We should take him like our own child."

#### ***4.4 ABUBAKARI GOES TO LIVE IN GUSHEGU WITH ISSAHAKU NAMOGU "I WOULD CARRY NAMO-NAA'S LUNGA"***

I had gone to Gushegu with my third father, Ngolba. He had agreed to leave me with my fourth father, Namo-naa--at that time he wasn't Namo-naa, he was called Issahaku Namogu. I told my third father that he should agree for me to send his bag home. He agreed, they all agreed. I sent the bag home. The second week, Namo-naa himself came--I can't call him Issahaku Namogu because now he has become Namo-naa. He said I had kept long. He was thinking that I would be back in the next three days but I had spent a week. He spent a night with us. The following day, I went together with him to Gushegu.

When we lived in Gushegu, I went with Namo-naa everywhere he went to drum. I would carry his lungu and then we would go. Even if we were free at home, he would not allow me to go out with my friends. He always forced me to be with him whenever he was sitting alone.

#### ***4.5 ISSAHAKU NAMOGU BECOMES A ZOHI-LUN-NAA IN YENDI***

##### ***"IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU DIE WITH A NAME"***

One afternoon three drum elders came from Yendi. The next morning Sampahi-naa told Namo-naa that Zohi-Lun-naa, one of the Yendi drum chiefs, had died. When they called Namo-naa for the funeral, they would offer him that chieftaincy. Zohi is a place in Yendi. The Zohi-naa is leading the sub-chiefs under the Yaa-naa. Yaa-naa calls Zohi-naa brother; we call him Naa Bieli, brother of Yaa-naa.

Namo-naa told Sampahi-naa, "No, I don't want that chieftaincy. People will disturb me too much." Sampahi-naa advised him, "Do not fear. Be aware that if you miss out on this title now, you will never become Namo-naa. But if you take it, you will succeed."

On the following day when they left, Namo-naa called me and said, "I am the first son of a Namo-naa. Many drum chiefs at Yendi have died but they have never given me a chieftaincy title. But you haven't got one year in my hand and they are going to make me chief. Abu, I think this luck is because of you. I am going to ask you if you will agree. What do you think? Would you like me to be a chief?" I said, "Oh father, why not? If my father becomes a chief, I will be a prince. I will be very happy." He said, "What if I become a chief and they kill me." I said, "It doesn't matter. You die with a name." He agreed.

The next week they called him for the funeral. We went to greet Yaa-naa Mahima-Kpema. Yaa-naa told Zohi-naa to give his title to Issahaku Namogu. Before you can contest for Namogu, you must be a drum chief of Zohi-naa. If you don't come to Zohi-Lun-naa, they will not give you Namogu. Before you come to Zohi-Lun-naa you are supposed to have a small title. Zohi-naa has four chiefs, Lun-naa, Sampahi-naa, Taha-naa, and Iwo-naa. But my teacher was called by his own name, he wasn't having any title.

#### ***4.6 ISSAHAKU NAMOGU ASKS FOR ABUBAKARI'S OPINION***

***"HE LIKES YOU MORE THAN ANYONE"***

It was going to be a palaver. Three people were all fighting to become the Zohi-Lun-naa. When we went back home, my teacher started to fear. He called me again and asked my advice. I said, "OK, give me some time to go out and think. I will come back and tell you something." At that time, my father, Lun-naa Wombie, had come to Yendi. I went to the house where he was lodging and told him that my teacher was going to refuse. My father told me, "It is because of this that I have come. I knew that it would be a palaver and that Issahaku Namogu would refuse. If I tell him, he won't agree. But I know that if you tell him, he will accept it because Namo-naa likes you more than anyone. You must tell him not to refuse."

So I went to tell my teaching-father. Before I came back again, his wife came to me saying, "Your father wants you seriously." I went inside the room. "Oh father, what is happening?" He said, "They want me to come to the chief's house this afternoon. If I go, they will make me the chief. These people will trouble me." I told him, "You should give everything for God. God is the Creator. He knows good and He knows bad. Go. If they give it to you, take it. The chief who is saying that they should give it to you--one day you will take that place."

**4.7 ABUBAKARI DRUMS FOR THE YAA-NAA AND DRUM ELDERS OF YENDI  
"EVERYONE LOOKED AT ME"**

So he agreed. When we went to the chief's house, they gave him the chieftaincy. He said that I should greet, that I should play drum and thank the Yaa-naa on his behalf. That day, he made me worried because all the senior lunga drummers were there. I was still young to face things like that. My teaching-father--as soon as they made him Zohi-Lun-naa, he stood up. He told the chief, "I am not going to thank you myself. My own first child is going to thank you for what you have done." When he said, 'first child,' every person paid attention. He had taught many people before me, but I had come and taken his orders more than the first people. Everyone looked at me.

He called my name. He said, "Abubakari, are you around?" I said, "Father." When I said father, my right side started shaking. He shouted at me, "Get up! Whom do you fear? Come and do the thing." I came with my own lunga. He took my lunga from me and gave me his own lunga. He knelt like this. I kneeled by his right and my father himself came and kneeled on my left.

[Abubakari kneels down as he narrates the story.] I was there in the middle.

I started from Naa Zangina. When I started from Naa Zangina people started looking at each other; they thought that I would make mistakes. I played every chief--from Naa Zangina up to Naa Mahima-Kpema. After I played the praise of a Yaa-naa, I would play his first son's praise, saying, "The first son has given birth to the present Yaa-naa. He is your grandfather." For each chief, I told the present chief, "This is your grandfather. May God bless you." When I had started Naa Zangina, my teaching-father got up and put his hands inside his pockets. At that time we spent the same money as the British, British pounds. He put one pound note on my head, he put another second pound on my head. My father himself also got up and put one pound.

When I finished, in my drumming I said, "I am the fire-setter, not the cook. I am the water-carrier for my mother and father. Everyone should forget me and listen to the one who prepares the food." Then I called the other lunga drummers to answer. There, my father, the new Zohi-Lun-naa started singing. He was very happy that I had taken the lead because, at first, his heart was beating him. If he were to have started to sing at once, he wouldn't have had his correct voice. When I took it for long like that, he felt happy.

My teaching-father started from his grandfathers. He wanted to tell the chief that because of them, he is a drummer. Next, he wanted to tell about me before going back to take the chief's grandfathers. The Yaa-naa didn't know that my mother was a princess from Tolon. He sang: "Abubakari is a princess' child from Tolon. His mother is a kingmaker's daughter, a princess. Because of his father's drumming, they gave his mother to my father. Luckily, his mother bore him. He is not the only child, he is fourth among his mother's children. I am telling you that because of his father, Abubakari is doing his father's duty. If he came back to his mother's side, he is going to be a kingmaker."

The chief raised his hand and my teacher stopped. The chief thanked for the greeting. He called Namo-naa--at that time they called him Zohi-Lun-naa--to come for kola. He went. They called Taha-naa, my father; at that time he was Woriboggo Taha-naa. They called all the drum chiefs who had gathered. Then Yaa-naa called me, "Son of Zohi-Lun-naa who drummed for his teacher, come for kola." I refused. Zohi-Lun-naa got up again and went to collect the kola but Yaa-naa said no, he wanted me myself to come collect the kola. He knew that I would refuse. He was not giving me kola because of my father; he was giving me kola because of my mother.

So I stood up and went to collect the kola. I came back and gave it to my teacher. My teacher sent the kola to Namo-naa Simani.

***4.8 NAMO-NAA SIMANI ADVISES ISSAHAKU NAMOGU CONCERNING ABUBAKARI  
"THEN I HAD TWO TEACHERS AT YENDI"***

Namo-naa Simani was sitting there. He received the kola, took half and chewed it. He called me and gave me the other part. I had to chew it in front of him; I did it. Since that day... When we went back home, in the night Namo-naa Simani sent a message that my teacher should bring me to his house. He told my teacher to take care of me properly. "I am going to help you make him know what we call drumming. How he drummed--he surprised me. Even the old drummers, none of them can drum so that they never make mistake. He took his time, cool, drumming like he was not drumming. He never forgot anything. He did everything correctly in the presence of all these big drummers. The Zohi-Lun-naa should be careful. Take care of this boy properly. I want to know if anything goes wrong with him." He told me that every morning, no matter what I am doing, I should tell him "good morning;" every evening, after eating, I should give him "good evening" before I go back to my house. Then I had two teachers at Yendi.

Every Friday we had to go to the chief's house, the Yaa's-naa's palace. The Yaa-naa would come out, Namona would sing, and we would play Ginggaani, the chief's movement. Namona would ask me to play the leading lunga on Ginggaani. Two drummers in Zohi were feeling jealous of my teacher. My teacher said, "I know that these people will never get me, but you have to be careful what you eat." Since then I started holding myself from eating whenever we went out for drumming.

When they gave my teacher the title of Zohi-Lun-naa, he couldn't stay at Gushegu. We moved to Yendi. Namona Simani called his first son, Fusheini Namogu. Because he calls my father "father," I cannot call him father, I have to call him brother. He is much older than me, even he is older than my senior brother Seidu. He is still alive; we were in Accra together. So Namona called his son, Fusheini Namogu, and told him, "Now Zohi-Lun-naa is a chief. He can't travel much. You should take care of the boy. Anyplace you travel to sing, you should take him and let him accompany you. Go and talk to your senior brother, Zohi-Lun-naa." Fusheini Namogu went to my teacher. My teacher said, "Now I am in the chiefs' hands. If Abubakari is going to be with me, he is only going to know from the chief's area. He will not get free to drum and know himself. Whenever you are going, you tell me."

#### ***4.9 ABUBAKARI WAS A LUN-NAA***

##### ***"YOU WILL GET SOMEBODY WHO LOVES YOU"***

Every sub-chief has his drummers. Wherever a good drummer like me lives, you will get somebody who loves you, who will take you as his Lun-naa. Anytime you go to him, you will need help. That chief will have many people with him, so you have to gather other lunga drummers to you. But when the more important chief comes out, all of sub-chiefs don't have their drummers again. Their drummers have to be with chief until he goes back inside his palace.

When I was with Mba Ngolba, I was the Lun-naa of a chief of Tebogou. For any chieftaincy duty, he sent for me. During the Damba Festival, I would go to his palace and bring him to the public.

At the end of the day, I would take him to his house. When I got to Gushegu there was a sub-chief, Nakpie-naa, who called me his Lun-naa. Any function, he would let me know. When the Gushe-naa sent him to some place for a funeral and he had to ride horse, he used to send for me.

I would drum and follow him. When my father Issahaku Namogu became Zohi-Lun-naa and we came inside Yendi, a sub-chief in the Zohi area, Zohi-Kpanalana, called me his Lun-naa.

#### ***4.10 ABUBAKARI LEARNS THE EARLY HISTORY OF DAGBON***

##### ***"HE STARTED ME WITH TOHIZHEE"***

I had been learning drumming and rhythms and the meaning of drumming from all my teachers.

Then Namo-naa Simani started me with the story of Dagbon, on why we became Dagombas. He started me with the person we call Tohizhee. I was learning from both Zohi-Lun-naa and Namo-naa Simani. Whenever I learned a story from my teaching-father I would go to Brother Fusheini, "This is what my father has told me." He would say, "OK, let's go to my father." Then Namo-naa Simani would continue the story. So we would get from Namo-naa Simani and we would get from Zohi-Lun-naa. The lessons from both teachers all came together. At last we came to the ending of the story.

Zohi-Lun-naa took me to the ending for the first time. I went to consult Brother Fusheini. He said, "I have never been that far before. Let's go ask my father for more." At that time, Fusheini Namogu had a good voice and people loved his singing. He didn't want to ask about many things like that because then he would not get the chance to go out and perform. But now I had

asked for the story of our origins. He said, "You have asked a good thing, I have to learn it too.

Let us consult my father and see." So we went to his father Namo-naa Simani.

Namo-naa started laughing, "Oh Fusheini, I have just been looking at you. You have never asked me. If you don't want to know, then I won't teach you. I know, but you have to ask me before I will teach you. If you don't want the thing, how do I teach you?" My learning pressed Brother Fusheini to go through to a higher standard. I am not boasting when I say I can tell you the beginning of Dagbon up until the present. Only there are some parts we don't reveal without making the proper rituals.

Namo-naa Simani said, "Now you have asked me, so I will continue." He asked me, "What did your father Zohi-Lun-naa start you with?" I told him that he said, "Our grandfather is Tohizhee. He is from a part of Nigeria. We call those people Gombas." He said, "Yes. He has started you at the real point, the beginning of Dagbon."

#### ***4.11 STORY-TELLERS***

##### ***"OUR FATHERS LEARNED FROM THEM"***

In the olden days, the people who kept the news were called "Bangsi." They were there before us, the drummers. Our fathers learned from them, although these days they are not trying to keep their duties. We still have them but now we are more than them. Whenever a chief was enskinned, the storyteller would get his particulars. He would ask for the beginning of that chief and then add it to the old things.

For any new chief--the beginning of the chief, how he became a Yaa-naa, his mother's gate and his father's gate--he would ask it. "Wherefrom his mother? How did she become a Yaa-naa's wife? When the mother became a Yaa's-naa's wife, how many years before she got conceived? When she was able to give birth, what suffering did she get from the Naa's-naa's house?" That is what they do ask. When they get it, those storytellers and the drummers, they will keep it.

When a man gets to be Yaa-naa, he will ask the drummers to give him a proverb, as an appellation. The drummers will see to the old chiefs who suffered like him, or whose mother suffered like his mother, and give him a similar praise. That is what our people do and keep the story. That is how they have always done it.

One man, Mba Dokurigu, was still keeping the story. He died recently. He lived in a town in Dagbon we call Bangiyili, the story-keepers town. Now it has only three houses; last year, Alhassan-Kpema and I went there. When that man died three years ago, Namo-naa came from Yendi. We went to make the funeral. We drummed that day, oh--very bad. I didn't drum because I am something like his child; I learned from him. My senior brother at Kasuliyili brought a sheep. We killed it for his funeral.

When Namo-naa Simani finished with me on the story of Dagbon, he asked me to go to Mba Dokurigu. He said, "I am going to break here. Go to my friend Mba Dokurigu. He and I learned together from his father. Go and listen to him. If there is difference between me and him, you come back and tell me." I went and stayed with him for two months. Because I knew it before I went, I didn't find difficulty in his teaching. When I got to know that he was teaching me the same thing I went back home and told my teacher. He said, "OK, you can leave there."

#### ***4.12 ABUBAKARI LEARNS THE HISTORY OF GUSHEGU***

##### ***"YOU SHOULD FIND DRUMMING FOR LIVING"***

Now Namo-naa said, "I think now you can say something about our beginning. If somebody asks you about our Yendi, you can talk. It is left for you to ask of the elders who enskin the Yaa-naa. That is Gushegu and Tolon, they are the kingmakers. You are from Tolon so that will not be hard for you. I have to take you back to Gushegu. You should find drumming for living."

"Drumming for living" means that I should know people's grandfathers.

Before I left Tolon, my father had already told me what Tolon is. I told my teacher that as for Tolon, since it is my area, I already know much about it. He wanted me to tell him. I started on what my father had taught me. He said it was nice. So that day he told me, "OK, go back and learn the beginning of Gushegu."

If you are a good drummer and you know the history, you have to play Sambanluna. When he had taught me about Gushegu, he knew that no matter which chief asked me to play our Sambanluna, I could say it. Any chief you start from--you have to know the Gushe-naa who was acting with him at that time. Now I knew the history of Gushegu and Tolon, in addition to the Yaa-naa and the origin story. I was prepared to play Sambanluna everywhere.

## 5. SOUTH TO KUMASI

### *5.1 ABUBAKARI RUNS TO THE SOUTH THREE TIMES*

#### *"I WANT TO SEE HOW LIFE IS"*

When I finished learning the story of Gushegu from my father Namo-naa, Brother Fusheini and I went out from Yendi to parts of Dagbon, drumming. After a while I wanted to learn to keep myself, to see if I could hold myself. I said to myself, "Now I know the deep parts of the proper talk. I am able to do something on my own." In fact, any place we would go for drumming, every morning when I went out, people pointed fingers, "Oh, that is the drummer who was drumming yesterday." People I didn't know would be calling my name, greeting me. I knew that I was becoming somebody who people respected. Then I started fearing.

In our place, a good drummer has to be careful. If you don't get a person who will help you to protect your life, you have to make yourself useless or you have to run away from the people for sometime. I had come to that time but I couldn't tell my teacher that I was afraid and I couldn't refuse to drum. I decided to find a means to be away from them. Maybe I could find some protection by myself, or they might think of my case and help me.

I asked permission once from my teacher and he did not accept it. I went again, he didn't accept it. I went to Brother Fusheini, "Can you beg permission from my learning-father for me?" He went and talked to Namo-naa but still he said no. I got advice from Brother Fusheini, "If you keep trying to ask permission, he won't allow you. You should go by yourself, without permission. But when you go, don't forget the house. Remember the house and it will not be bad for you."

So I ran away. I left Yendi and came to Tamale. I spent only one night in Tamale. The next morning I took a lorry, crossed at Yeji, and went toward Kumasi. I didn't stop at Kumasi, I went through to Bibiani. When I got down to Bibiani... My teacher sent word to my father that I was not with him and he couldn't find me. He had heard some people say that I had run to the South.

My father vexed. He chased me to Bibiani and asked me why I left my teacher. I said, "It is not that my teacher is forcing me, or that he doesn't want to teach me. What I have learned so far, I think that it is something. I want to be alone, to be practicing by myself, to see how I am going to be." My father said, "No. You should go back and work for your teacher."

I agreed. We went. I followed him from Bibiani to Tamale. We had to sleep at Tamale and the next day he was to take me to Yendi. That very night I dodged my father--coming to the daybreak, early morning, I dodged him again. I went back to Bibiani.

He didn't follow me right away but in one week's time, he came. He talked to me and I agreed. I said, "I will not do it again. I beg for forgiveness." He took me. I followed him. When we came to Kumasi, he offered to buy things for me. I told him I needed nothing other than to see how life is.

He brought me up to Tamale and sent me back to my teacher. That night Namo-naa revealed the reason he did not want to give me permission: I was not his only student; at that time there were about five of us--his junior brother's two children were with him, together with two of his own children and me. Of all of them, I was senior. He said, "If I allow you to do that, tomorrow another man will go and soon the house will be empty. When you go, I shout. I will abuse you but only in my mouth, not in my heart. I will be talking in my mouth, but not in my heart. So you go. But don't forget home."

Namo-naa talked to my father. "I know the reason why Abubakari is running away. I also have done it. When people got to know that I am a good drummer, I made myself like a proper drinker. Every morning, I pretended to be boozed. Several times I have tried to get Abubakari to act like that but he wouldn't do it. Because of that, I am not annoyed. Let him go and learn how to live." The second week, I went to Woriboggo and talked to my father. My father said, "So far as your teacher will allow you, I agree."

## ***5.2 WHY NAMO-NAA AGREED TO ABUBAKARI'S GOING TO SOUTH "SOMEONE WILL SPOIL YOU"***

Have you seen that when my father followed me to the South to bring me back, Namona told him that he liked it? My teacher wanted me to learn how the world is. He didn't want me only to be in the North. Maybe he was thinking, "This boy's idea--I like it. I should release this boy to do what he likes. He will come back some time and be somebody." My father also thought about it and forgot it.

In our area of Africa, if you are a prince, you shouldn't show yourself too much to the people at the beginning of your career. If you bring yourself out freely to people, someone will spoil you.

You will never reach the place you want. The same for us drummers. If you are a good drummer and people get to know that you are a good drummer, you have to act as if you don't like yourself. Pretend you are useless so that people will never think hard on you.

This, my father, Namo-naa... His father had been Namo-naa, leading chief drummer of the whole Dagbon. He was the first son. Luckily, he learned the drumming and he had a good voice more than the father. People starting loving him even when the father was still alive. So he just made himself like a boozed man. From the time he got up each morning, whether he actually boozed or not, he made as if he was boozed. He would be talking to you like he is not normal, like he had forgot himself. Only we the children who learned from him, we knew what was happening. He was thinking, "If I leave myself natural, if I don't make myself useless, my competitors will go through my secrets and spoil my chance. Let me make myself like a booze man."

These are the things our people used to do. Now, we are in the modern. During their time...their lives were different than ours, the life we have met. When they were young, these our Moslems were not strong. Nowadays, if you make yourself like a drinks-man, many people won't respect

you. Namo-naa tested me many times. Any time we were to go out drumming, he would take drink from house. Sometimes he would send me to buy the drink. When I brought it, he would ask me to drink some. I would beg him, "Please father, I don't want to learn how to drink."

I was not supposed to leave my teachers and go far away. Because I couldn't make myself useless to be a drinker--that is why I left my teachers and went to the South. When my father brought me back, the Moslem thing came to Namo-naa's mind. When he got my character like that, he told my father to forget it. Because if I wasn't going to be away from the house--how he sees the way I am moving--many people would be jealous of me. There was another good boy with Namo-naa at that time, Idrissu. He was challenging me in learning and in the good hand. I got a chance to run away. Idrissu did not get that chance. They made him bad. He is no more. You remember I told you that they killed him. He died.

I just left the drumming in Dagbon and learned driving in Kumasi. I hoped that people who were thinking hard on me would say, "After all, this man is no more drumming. Maybe he will forget all the things he learned from his teachers." It helped me that I wasn't in the North for a long time after I had grown.

### ***5.3 FIRST STINT AS DRIVER'S MATE***

#### ***"I WANT TO LEARN YOUR WORK, DRIVING"***

When I went to the South the next time, I didn't go to Bibiani. I stopped at Kwadasu, near Kumasi. The fellow whose house I lived in, Kweku Asare, was an Ashanti man not a Dagomba man. He was an old driver. The time I was in Dagbon, he used to drive through Tamale. Every market day, we played drums. He knew me. When he saw me at Kwadasu with my Dagomba people, he took me to his house. I told him that I wanted to learn his work, driving. He said, "OK. I will teach you. I am having only one mate, so I will take you in addition."

So I went to this man and, luckily, it wasn't a full year before he was able to get a driving license for me. But not long afterwards I lost him: he died. Since I was new in driving, I couldn't work by myself. I moved to Kumasi and joined a band.

### ***5.4 ABUBAKARI JOINS A BAND***

#### ***"COME AND JOIN ME"***

I went to Kumasi and met one of my brothers--we say, "One of our brothers"--who had started playing in a local band, what we call Chil Buwa. They used guitar and four-corner drums. They

worked like a local band, traveling along together. The Nigerians in Ghana liked it too much.

This my brother was playing lunga inside that Chil Buwa. When I came to Kumasi, he saw me and said, "Come and join me so that we will be playing the Chil Buwa." At that time, I was still young. There were many, many women there inside. Many women--those who don't have husbands--we played for them. They danced.

When I started playing Chil Buwa, people went and told my father that I had left my wife and was with "gentra" people [prostitutes and pimps]. My father vexed again. He came and told me that if I didn't leave that thing, he would talk bad things against me. At that time, it didn't come into my ears at all: I didn't want to listen at all. I said, "OK. You can go. I will stop it." He went back to Tamale and I continued doing it.

Six months later, one of my uncles came to Kumasi. He met us on the route when I was playing this thing. Women had gotten around me, dancing happily. I didn't see him but he saw me.

After we closed, he greeted me as we were passing by. When he went to Dagbon he told my father, "If you don't take time, Abubakari will be lost."

My father vexed again. He came and told me, "If you don't leave it, I will speak bad words on you." He threatened to curse me by calling his grandfathers, "If I am a real son of yours, you should help me make Abubakari bad." When your father curses you like that, you will be working but not getting anything. You will suffer.

### ***5.5 ABUBAKARI JOINS DAGBAMBA DRUMMERS IN KUMASI***

#### ***"OUR MAIN WORK WAS DRUMMING"***

So, I left that thing and joined my lunga drummers in Kumasi. That is the time I met Baba Alhassan. We drummed together for some time, about three years. At that time Kumasi was just like the North is now: every Sunday had weddings and outdoorings

Our main work was drumming. We also we repaired Kumasi lunga drums and sold them. I was a shoemaker, too. If somebody's sandals broke, I would sew them for him. I knew how to sew talismans and waist belts. That was my main work at Kumasi.

## **5.6 BABA ALHASSAN**

### ***"I STARTED PLAYING GUNG-GONG SERIOUSLY"***

You know, we have something in Dagbon called Taachi, some proverbs with singing. We play it as a praise for the young town people. Gung-gong is more important there than lunga.

Sometimes they will use different languages, like Dendanchi or Hausa. I was learning how to play the Taachi with Father Ngolba but I wasn't yet good when I left him. I was forcing on lundaa [leading lunga] because my father was abusing me. Father Ngolba was a good singer on Taachi but wasn't good on gung-gong. It was in Kumasi that I learned proper Taachi. I played with a man we called Alhassan Kulikulga. He was a Dendawa. Those people--we Dagbamba learned gung-gong from them.

During my second year in the South, Brother Fusheini Namogu came to Kumasi. He was like my own teacher. I had gone to Kumasi before him, so he came to the place I was living. It came to the time when we finished Fasting and we were going around playing with my gung-gong teacher, Baba Alhassan. We went to a house where Fusheini Namogu knew the man's grandfather's Taachi, "Nun Shim Pala Jerigu." It means: "A person who talks a lot is not a mad man; a person who doesn't talk is not a foolish man." I think you get what I mean? There are people who want to be quiet; there are people who like to talk.

Baba Alhassan tried to play it in Dagbani, but he wasn't able to do it. Fusheini Namogu shouted on me, "Kai! Put your lunga down. Go and take the gung-gong." Fusheini played the praise in Dagbani on the lunga and I took it on gung-gong. Baba Alhassan followed and we played it together. When we finished and were going home, he called me and said, "Look, you are good on gung-gong like this? I didn't know." I said, "Yes." He said, "Anytime we are playing, I will teach you."

I started playing gung-gong seriously. Whenever we were drumming, Baba Alhassan would ask me to leave lunga and play gung-gong. When I was learning with my father before I went to Ngolba, whenever we went for drumming, I used to play gung-gong. My father always became annoyed; he didn't want me to be playing gung-gong. My father would abuse me, "Anytime we go, you want to play gung-gong. Why? Your friends are learning how to play lundaa and you are learning gung-gong." From there, sometimes I used to play the gung-gong but usually I played the lunga.

I was with Baba Alhassan when my uncle Fusheini Jablon came to Kumasi. Then we were together with Baba Alhassan. Because my lundaa had come out before, when we came to the dancing area, the other drummers wouldn't allow me to play gung-gong. They always wanted me to play lundaa. But when we came to the singing of Taachi, I would leave the lunga to play gung-gong. So I would be playing gung-gong--lundaa, gung-gong--lundaa, gung-gong--lundaa.

I lived together with Baba Alhassan in Kumasi for about seven years. The year I left Kumasi for Accra was the year Baba Alhassan died. I count him among my teachers because I took many of my gung-gong techniques from him. He was a Dendawa; they are the people who created gung-gong. In our tradition, no one teaches you gung-gong. You have to take your own brain...

I had learned gung-gong only a little before I went to him; I wasn't that good. But when I saw how he was playing the gung-gong, I liked it. Because I had a good hand, any rhythm he used his hand to make on gung-gong, I could copy him. When Baba Alhassan saw that my hand was trying to be good for him, he started taking me wherever he was going to play the drum. There, I got to copy how he used the left hand on chahira... He would say, "Ah, this boy. Many people

have been with me but they have not been able to play my styles like this. This boy just is trying to copy my styles." Because of that, he liked me.

If people were going to invite a group for drumming, he used to tell the chief drummer of Kumasi that he wanted to go with me. In their language, they have answering gung-gong. When he was playing the leading gung-gong, he would play, play, play to a point that needs an answer.

You had to answer him correctly. I used to answer him like his own people. Especially, they have a dance--they call it "Gaabiti," we call it "Ayiko" ["Zamanduniya" in Hausa]. For that dance, they take the leading gung-gong and speak. You know, the Dendawa people understand gung-gong; they listen to gung-gong more than lunga. When he took the gung-gong, you, the supporting gung-gong, had to answer him correctly or he couldn't speak.

Though Baba Alhassan didn't speak Dagbani, if I hadn't see him up until evening, the next morning I would walk to his house to see what was happening. Sometimes, if he had some housework, he used to call me. Those who needed the Nigerian drum repairing used to take their drums to him. I learned that work from him and because he was an old man, he used to give the job to me. I would do it and he would collect the money. So I helped him in that one.

***5.7 ABUBAKARI'S POSITION AMONG DRUMMERS IN KUMASI  
THE DRUMMERS THERE--NONE OF THEM COULD TEACH ME.***

In Kumasi I didn't have a teacher. The only thing I learned was Baba Alhassan's gung-gong styles. The drummers there--none of them could teach me. Some of them were lower than me, some of them were my equals. There were drummers who knew drumming but no one who I thought I should sit with and take his knowledge. I would say to myself, "If I go to this man, the same knowledge I am having, that is what I will receive from him. He doesn't know higher than me."

I knew more than many of the drummers. Even people used to learn from me when I was at Kumasi. The story--many of them learned it from me in Kumasi. Some came to my house in the night, asking me, "We have been hearing of this story, how did that start?" What I knew, I would tell them. During the time I was at Kumasi, sometimes if you came to my house, you would think that a big man was there, a grown person. Those who were older than me, came together...sitting, conversing on matters.

Some of the Kumasi drummers called me their drumming teacher. I remember three of them. I started these three people like how I started with my father Ngolba. Yakubu is the drumming chief at Emboashi, just near to Kumasi. Idrissu is at Tamale now. He doesn't have "keeping memory;" when you teach him something it is difficult for him to get it. But he started before all these people. Still, what he also knows now is not a small thing. He also knows a lot of drumming. The third is Korli Lun-naa.

This Korli Lun-naa had started in drumming but hadn't reached any place before his father died. His uncle had taken him. He wasn't happy with the uncle, so he ran away to South. So, he failed to know, he didn't know a lot about Dagbon. When I came to Kumasi and he saw that I knew the drumming... He was older than me, older even than my senior brother. He took me like his brother. The respect he gave me was more than I did to my teachers. I say that because he was older than me, but when we were sitting, if I tried to take something, he would just get up and pick it for me. He used to serve me as if I was older than him because he always wanted me to be happy so that he could get something from me. I started training him in the story of Yendi. He was able to know it like something.

When I was at Kumasi, I can say that the Lun-naa didn't know what I knew, though he was older than me. He didn't know the drumming I knew. There were old, old drummers at Kumasi.

Whenever it was the time for drumming--like after celebrating of our fasting--they used to push me to play the Sambanluna for our nation from the North. We used to do it there in the South.

Because the chief there is not a proper chief--more like headman--we wouldn't play the long story. We started the small ones so that we wouldn't disturb him with expenses for sacrifices.

The Kumasi people liked me. In fact, they made me a chief so that I wouldn't leave. All the young Dagombas there grouped together under what we call "Magaazhia," Queen Mother. They gathered all the ladies and young people together and made me a Queen Mother's chief drummer.

So I was sharing the Kumasi chieftaincy positions together with the Lun-naa.

### ***5.8 HOW DRUMMERS COME TO LIVE IN KUMASI***

#### ***"YOU MOVE AWAY BEFORE FACING DIFFICULTIES"***

Kumasi is something like a station. People who are passing along to Takoradi or Accra, any big town of South--it is Kumasi you have to drop before you go to any place. Our drummers don't like to go away from the cultural life of Dagbon unless something is troubling them at home.

My father was at Bibiani for the same reasons I left Dagbon: if you learn drumming very well and don't want people to trouble you, you move away before facing difficulties. Whether your father is there or not, you run away.

I remember two good lundaa players in Kumasi when I was living there, Abudulai and Alhassan. Alhassan was good; he had learned the drumming properly. The same reason I ran from home, he also ran the same way. Abudulai, the same thing. Abudulai was from Voggu; Alhassan was from Savelugu. People were supposed to say that I was from Tolon, but I had left from my teacher at Yendi. Another drummer from Yendi named Yakubu--good like me--had run to Kumasi before me. He had learned from Namo-naa's father. He ran away during Gold Coast time, when Namo-naa was at Gushegu. He was an old man, not a small man. All these men, they were high drummers.

### ***5.9 ABUBAKARI BECOMES A DRIVER'S MATE***

#### ***"I LEFT MY DRUMMERS AGAIN"***

I was in the Kumasi lunga drumming society for about three years. Then my uncle Mahama Zhee, the one who had told my father to come and check of me, came and talked to me.

Mahama Zhee called my father "brother;" they are in one grandfather but different fathers. He was a drummer who didn't know drumming. When he was young they took him to his mother's house like how my grandfather took me. His mother's father was just a farmer. This man, my uncle, didn't like farming so he ran away to the South. There he learned to drive.

He told me, "I hear that you have your driving license. Why not join me? My truck is big." At that time, he hauled firewood from Kumasi to Mali and Ouagadougou or salt to Ouagadougou. He told me that sometimes he drives alone. Since I had a license, if I would like to work with him... Businessmen liked my uncle because he knew the road and never wasted time. All the police on the road knew him. Many businessmen wanted him. There, I left drumming again.

I didn't seek permission from anybody. Abudulai, the good lundaa drummer, was my tight friend in Kumasi. He was the only person I told, "You know, I have learned driving. My uncle wants me to help him. I am going to do it." On the Sunday I left with my uncle, the drummers were supposed to divide themselves and go to work. They were waiting for me at the chief drummer's house. Abudulai came. His house was near the road and he usually waited for me so that we could walk together. The Kumasi Lun-naa was surprised not to see me with him. "Abudulai,

why? Where is Magaazhia Lun-naa?" Abudulai started laughing. The Lun-naa said, "As for you, any time I ask anything, you take it as a joke." He said, "Oh, Magaazhia Lun-naa is not in town. He traveled yesterday afternoon. His uncle has taken him to help in driving."

According to what he told me, the chief drummer said, "What!" Baba Alhassan also said, "What! How can a chief drummer leave? Who is going to take his duties?" When I came back, Abudulai told me that they had told the Magaazhia, "Your Lun-naa is no more drumming. He is a driver." They were annoyed and called me. I told them, "It is not that I am running from you. I want to do the driving work and see what will happen in the future. If you are having a big assignment, let me know before I am going to travel."

I was planning to be rich. Maybe I was thinking that driving would bring me money more than drumming. You know, the drumming money is just for living, it can't enable you to keep something for the future. I was thinking that if I put myself into driving, I would be somehow rich. That took my mind into driving.

When I started driving, at first I didn't forget drumming. Anytime I came into Kumasi and they were drumming, I used to go help them. But it came to a time when I didn't touch the drum at all. After I got to know the road and my uncle had become happy about me, he left the truck for me. I didn't have time to drum.

***5.10 ABUBAKARI BECOMES DRIVER'S MATE FOR HIS UNCLE  
"BECAUSE I WAS A NEW DRIVER, I ALWAYS WANTED THE FIRE"***

When my uncle came, I said, "Oh, I would like to do it." We started right away. He took me to Accra. When we came back to Kumasi, we didn't sleep. Since he was tired, he asked me if I could drive. I said, "Oh. I can drive." I took the truck--force, force, force--we got to the river, went across but didn't sleep there. We continued the journey on to Tamale. He said we should sleep at Tamale but I wasn't tired. Because I was a new driver, I always wanted the fire. I said, "Let's find something and eat so that we continue the journey."

That was the first day I got to know Ouagadougou. So, we keep on, keep on, keep on and came to Bolga. From Bolga, 19 miles--we got to Navrongo; 12 miles--we were at the border. Then

my uncle had to drive to Ouagadougou because he was having the international license. We had taken two days from Accra to Ouagadougou. He was very, very happy.

As soon as they unloaded that salt, they loaded us with cows bound to Kumasi. My uncle said we should rest and go the next day. I said, "Look. Lets go. You take it to the border. I will drive up to Kumasi." From Ougadougou to Paga is about 90 miles, its not far. When we crossed the border, I took it again. We got back to Kumasi by midnight of the same day. When you arrive with cows in Kumasi, you have to go to the slaughterhouse. The car owner was inside the car. We dropped him at the house where my uncle was lodging. I took the truck to the slaughterhouse. We slept in the truck. Early in the morning, they started coming to take the cows.

Businessmen came and said, "Where is this truck driver?" I said, "He is at home." Two people said they wanted the truck to take their firewood, another said he wanted a truck to take salt. I said, "You should wait. He will come." After they unloaded the cows, I took the truck to the place where they washed it. Because I was there to do that work, my uncle didn't come that day at all. I was approached by one businessman who told me, "Your uncle says that he is tired but

doesn't know if you can drive. If you will take my firewood, I will make you nice." At that time, if somebody gave you 100 pounds--at that time we used pounds--it was a lot of money. I said, "OK. I will try. Though I am tired, I will try." I left the truck at the washing station, went home and told my uncle. He said that the fellow had come. "Are you trying to go again." I said, "Yes." He said, "OK. After washing, take the car. Go and load."

I slept while they were washing the truck. After they finished, the second mate took the truck to the timber line. They started loading when I was sleeping. At 6:00 PM I took the truck to Tarzan station, filled up with petrol, and went to my uncle. He said, "Let's sleep. Tomorrow morning we go." I sat for a while and then said, "Lets go now." He prepared and we went.

My uncle's car owner was very, very happy because he saw that his truck was going-come, going-come. He started to make my uncle Mahama Zhee nice, my uncle also made me nice. So I brought my wife to Kumasi. My uncle's family was at Tamale. We could get food from his wives in Tamale and from my wife in Kumasi. Oh, I was driving that truck eh!

***5.11 LUN-NAA WOMBIE TALKS WITH ABUBAKARI'S UNCLE ABOUT DRIVING  
"MY FATHER LOVED DRUMMING"***

When I was driving with my uncle, my father wasn't happy. My father loved drumming. How he made me suffer and learn drumming--he didn't want me to forget it, to misuse my knowledge.

He didn't call on me directly. He called Mahama Zhee and told him to advise me to go back to drumming. My uncle said he would talk to me. I asked him, "How do you think about it?" He said, "I will talk to my brother next time we pass through Tamale."

We passed though Tamale three times before we stopped and slept. On that occasion my father had also traveled to Tamale. He didn't know of us, and we also didn't know of him. I was sleeping when my uncle came in the morning and said, "As I was just coming, I passed through the family house. Your father is there. Go greet him."

So I went and greeted him. He said he wanted to have a word with me. I told him, "In fact, we are about to go. If it is a long talk, I am begging you to make it short." He said that it was not any long talk. "What I want to tell you is this: I talked to my brother to advise you to leave the driving, but I haven't heard anything."

I said, "As for this one, it is between you and your brother. I can't refuse your orders and I can't refuse his orders. In the tradition of our culture, if you die, he has the right to give me orders.

Even while you are alive, he can order me. He asked me to accompany him. I have seen that the driving work is helping. Since I started with him, see the things I have been sending to you!

Have you ever seen things like that from me before?"

He said, "Despite that you are sending these things to me, I am not happy with the driving. I want you to be drumming. That will make me happy more than the things you send to me." I went and talked to my uncle. He vexed. He said, "Go with the truck. I won't go. I will go back to the house. In the night I will meet him."

That day, we hadn't loaded Ouagadougou things, we loaded for Bolga. So I went and dropped the things at Bolga and then went to Bawku and loaded sheep. In three days I came to Tamale and met my uncle. He said, "I talked to my brother. He vexed but he understood me. I told him that it was I who asked you to drive. You didn't bring yourself to drive. Now their farming is not good. I wanted you to be able to help them. Look at the food we bought for them last year:

in case you had not been driving, could you have gotten money to help them? Finally, your father agreed. He didn't say anything against your driving."

When I was driving, I bought lots of things for my teachers at home. Whenever I got to Tamale, I used to go to our public house, our family house, and leave the things, "You, take this thing to my father, take this to Father Ngolba, take this to Namo-naa, take this to Mba Dokurigu." I used to buy things from the South they liked. As for my teacher Namo-naa, he liked European tobacco. Even up until now, he is still smoking a pipe. At that time they sold that thing at Kumasi more than at Tamale. I used to buy pipe tobacco for him every time I was going from Kumasi.

### ***5.12 ABUBAKARI RETURNS TO DRUMMING WORK***

#### ***"THAT IS THE DAY I LEFT DRIVING"***

Every year when we finish the Fasting, we make something like a festival. On that day, everybody is happy and we drum around. The lunga drummers were playing for the Zongo chief at the mosque. My uncle and I came to watch. That is the day I left the driving again. Two men, Abudulai and Alhassan, were drumming. Abudulai was good on lunga, but I knew more

than what he was trying to do in drumming. They were drumming Gingaani, the chief's moving music. I saw how he started to count the beginning of the chiefs of Yendi. I...tsk... I looked at myself, "So, upon all my suffering learning of my drumming, is my life going to be on driving. Ah! How can I leave all this enjoyment? And something just came to my mind, "Even some day, you will be driving and get accident and die like that [laughs]."

The next day we went to Tamale. When we got there, my uncle told me that they were making the funeral of his friend's father. He wanted to go to Ouagadougou but that was the funeral day. He suggested that we should stop in the afternoon. They could make the afternoon and evening performances. Early morning, we would go.

### ***5.13 ABUBAKARI FACES DIFFICULTY IN DRUMMING***

#### ***"THAT DAY I GOT MY MISTAKE"***

In the afternoon we went to the performance. My drummers asked me to drum so I got a lunga from one of them. Tsk. I started drumming but I was not getting myself proper, trying to face a lot of difficulty in my hand and my remembering. I didn't drum too much but I got tired and sat down. I said, "Uh oh." We finished that. One old drummer told me, "Abubakari, I see that now

your drumming is changing because you have left it for a long time. The more you leave your drumming, the more your knowledge also will leave you. You see, you were facing difficulty."

Then I said, "Oh, tsk, I am not going to drive again." There, that day, I got my mistake.

I told my uncle, "Look, I am fixing to leave the driving. If I don't leave it, the driving will trouble me." My uncle said, "No. You don't have to leave it." So, we went.

It was coming to the Damba Festival. Every year during the Damba Festival, Dagombas who have been staying in the South get together in Kumasi. You know, Kumasi is in the middle of the nation so we get together there to celebrate as we do at home. During those days, I had told the Kumasi drummers that I wanted to be drumming. Any time that I had not gone with the truck, I told them to call me for outdoorings and weddings. They called me to the festival.

We were drumming. This my lover chief, B.A. Yakubu--he wasn't having some big post, he was just a police inspector at that time--came to the festival. He knew my drumming when I was at their town, Gushegu. I had taken my drum--I was having my own drum at Kumasi--and started drumming, tsk, facing a lot of difficulty.

After we finished drumming B.A. Yakubu talked to me, "Look. The time my father was Gushe-naa, you were there with Namo-naa. My father and I loved your drumming. People have been telling me that driving is trying to spoil your drumming. Why did you, a drummer prince like you, leave drumming? A good drummer like you going to be a truck driver! How much are they paying you when you are driving?"

I said, "I don't have my own pay but I am getting money. My uncle is the senior driver of the truck. When we take things inside the car, he shares the money with me. Sometimes, the car owner gives me some money on top. At times I make money more than my master because he doesn't always go on the tour. Those whose things I have taken feel happy to give me money on my own and give money for my uncle, too. When I take that money to him, he shares it with me again. I tell him, 'They have given me mine before giving to you,' but he says 'No. You suffered and drove. I didn't go for the tour.' So, I am happy on that. I think that is big."

He said, "No. This is not big. Now, I want you to get your own pay. I want you to be getting money and, at the same time, to be continuing your drumming. I want to take you to Accra. A

while ago people there asked me to find a Dagomba man to train their group in Dagbamba drumming and dance. So, I am going to take you to Accra, if you would like to go." I said, "Oh, I will think of it."

***5.14 BROTHER FUSHEINI COMES FROM ACCRA TO TALK TO ABUBAKARI  
"ABUBAKARI IS MY CHILD"***

B.A. Yakubu left for Accra. As soon as he came back to Accra, he called Brother Fusheini. At that time, Brother Fusheini had run away to Accra because the house was disturbing him. B.A. Yakubu loved Brother Fusheini but didn't know that we knew each other. He called him and told him, "When I went to the Kumasi Damba Festival, I met a young drummer, whom I knew from Gushegu. I like the boy too much. I want to bring him to teach drumming and dance at the Accra Arts Council. He can also be drumming with you, Brother Fusheini."

When Brother Fusheini heard my name, he said, "Oh, Abubakari is my child! When he came from Gushegu to Yendi, I traveled with Abubakari. He is my child. If you tell Abubakari to leave Kumasi and come be with me here, he is not going to worry. He will come."

This man sent Brother Fusheini to Kumasi. When he came to my house, he couldn't meet me.

My wife said, "He went three days ago. If they don't come today, maybe tomorrow or tomorrow next." He slept in my room and, luckily, the next night we came.

### ***5.15 ABUBAKARI STOPS DRIVING***

#### ***"THAT NIGHT DRIVING WENT FROM MY MIND"***

I came to the house at midnight and knocked at my wife's window to let me in. I was having my own room, my wife was having her room. My wife opened for me and said. "You have a stranger in your room." I said, "What? Is it a man?" She said, "Yes from Accra, your senior brother, Fusheini." That day we couldn't sleep.

That night driving went from my mind completely. Immediately after he finished the greeting, Brother Fusheini started the talk. "I was in the house. The Police Inspector Yakubu came. He didn't know that I knew you. He wants to bring you to Accra and find our drumming work for you. He is the same person who found the work for Idrissu at Legon, who introduced Idrissu to Professor Nketia and Professor Opoku."

B.A. Yakubu was a policeman, an ex-service man. The man is a prince, he knows something about culture. Our first president, Kwame Nkrumah, liked him. During the time he was police commissioner he was supporting Kwame Nkrumah's government, CPP. So whenever they were doing any cultural occasions, they used to push him there. Many people knew him.

When Brother Fusheini told me this, my mind just changed at once. I said, "Oh, if I'm not going to be working and you are there, I can still continue my drumming with you. I will like it." He said, "Thursday we are going to make the funeral of a big man who died at Accra. It is coming in three days time. I want you to come." I said, "I will do it." He said, "I am going. Whether I saw you or didn't see you, I was planning to go tomorrow morning. How I have seen you, tomorrow morning I will go." We talked up until daybreak.

In the morning I took Brother Fusheini to greet my uncle. I told him what Brother Fusheini had come and told me. He said, "OK. Even though, I don't know anything in drumming, I would like you to continue, but it will pain me when you leave me." I said, "I think I should leave the driving and continue the drumming." He said, "OK, I will be happy. I will not vex."

## **6. TO ACCRA**

### ***6.1 GRAND WELCOME AMONG THE DAGOMBAS OF ACCRA***

#### ***"WE ARE IN DAGBON NOW"***

I was supposed to go to Accra the next day, Wednesday, but I never travel on Wednesdays. I started at 5:00 AM early on Thursday morning and got to Accra before 9:00. People directed me to Nima. They took me to Brother Fusheini's house but he had left for the drumming ground. The wife was in the house. He had told her that in case I came, she should bring me to the place he had gone. Many Dagombas were together there drumming seriously around 10:00 AM.

Oh, when I came to the people... Entering inside the drum circle with my lungu, B.A. Yakubu saw me. He was very, very happy. He ran towards me and held me like his wife. He stopped the drumming and started introducing me to the important Dagombas of Accra. When I started the drumming, people became happy. They said, "Now we have got another person like Fusheini. We are in Dagbon now."

After the performance B.A. Yakubu wanted to take me to stay with him at his house but Brother Fusheini didn't agree. "No. As soon as Abubakari said he would be coming on Thursday, I found a room for him. There is a room in my house where he can stay. My drummers and I pay

for it to use in case visitors come who need a place to sleep. Now, that room is for him. We will have to find another room for our strangers." B.A. Yakubu agreed.

On the next day, Friday, we went and finished the funeral. On Saturday Brother Fusheini took me to B.A. Yakubu's house. He made something like a party for us. We ate! As for drink...at that time I didn't know how to drink, but Brother Fusheini--for him, he liked beer. I drank one bottle of beer and got boozed. B.A. Yakubu brought us home in his car. I even don't know what time we got to the house.

## ***6.2 ABUBAKARI IS INTERVIEWED AT THE ARTS CENTER***

### ***"I AM A FULL DRUMMER"***

The next Monday, the man took me to the Arts Center and introduced me to our first regional cultural organizer, Lawyer Dansumane. He was the important person I met in the Arts Council before Miss Amegatcher, Saka Aquaye and others. They interviewed me in front of him. That day I used my way of talking that makes people laugh.

"Are you a drummer?" I said, "Yes. I am a full drummer." He said, "What does 'full drummer' mean?" I said [laughing], "I can't even tell you which grandfather started drumming in my family. Its a long time! If I am going to count my grandfathers, I will get them more than forty before I come to my father.

They said, "OK. We know that you are a full drummer. Can you dance?" Then I said, "I am a drummer who loves dance. I know dance. I am a full dancer. I even know the dance which doesn't concern drummers at all--Baamaaya." There, the man felt happy. He said, "What! The one in which the dancers shake their waists?" I said, "Yes." He said, "It is because of this dance that I want a person to teach the group." I said, "Oh, I can do it."

They wanted a person who was a good player on lunga and gung-gong and at the same time could dance the steps. Brother Fusheini was supposed to go to Legon but he could only sing. Like my father Namo-naa, Brother Fusheini was a vocalist: he didn't play lundaa and he didn't learn how to play gung-gong. As for the dancing rhythms, somebody will play the lundaa and he will play the answer. He knows the rhythms but can't lead because he doesn't have a sweet hand.

We have lot of drummers like that in Dagbon. That is the reason Brother Fusheini did not work at Legon or the Arts Council.

The difference between Brother Fusheini and me... It is like what I always tell my students:

"When you drum with a show of enjoyment, your drumming comes out and you also get feeling for the dancers." He didn't learn that from his childhood. Even he is a drummer who can't dance. He is a complete full drummer, but if you play the rhythms and he starts to enjoy them, he can't dance. He doesn't know dance steps. Also, he doesn't know how to play gung-gong on dance rhythms.

My people respect me. I used to tell my own people that I am a full drummer--you can't bluff me. My gung-gong players can't bluff me; if you bluff me, I will take the gung-gong from you and play more than you. My lundaa players can't bluff me; they know that I know what I know on lundaa. Lets say we come for singing side: my voice is spoiled but my singers still can't bluff me. I know the way to use my voice so that it will be nice.

### **6.3 YAKUBU'S GOOD LUCK**

#### ***"I NOW KNOW THAT ABUBAKARI IS MY LOVER DRUMMER"***

After the interview they asked me to go home. B.A. Yakubu left me there and went to work. On that very day he received a promotion. From his office, he came straight to our house and told Brother Fusheini, "I now know that Abubakari is my lover wife, eh, my lover drummer. I wasn't thinking for D.S.P. I had not interviewed for that post but when I went to my office, I met a letter saying that from today I am D.S.P." He came to the house with happiness because he got a promotion. From D.S.P., they didn't give him A.S.P.--they jumped him to Superintendent. From Superintendent, they promoted him to Assistant Police Commissioner, and from Assistant Police Commissioner he got Commissioner. This is the man who arranged for me to be interviewed at the Arts Council.

### **6.4 ABUBAKARI LEARNS THE DRUMMING OF SOUTHERN ETHNIC GROUPS**

#### ***"IN AFRICA WE DON'T LEARN TRIBAL RHYTHMS FROM EACH OTHER"***

I joined Arts Council group in 1968. Being with them gave me lots of research. When I came to the Arts Council, I saw that there are other things in life, not only my drumming. I met people teaching Akan drumming and I met people teaching Ewe drumming. I said, "Oh, so this is going

to be my work? I have to continue my learning from here also." So I started learning from the Akans and Ewes how to play their drums.

What gave me difficulty... I was not able to know many parts of the Ewe drumming because at the time I was learning, I could not speak English correctly. I was speaking Hausa and Akan. For the Akan drums, I understood what they said. But the Ewe teachers only talked to us in Gã or English. My hand could play the rhythms but didn't know the drum talks. I can't write. I didn't force myself to go into deep.

When I was in Kumasi, I saw the Asante people drumming but I didn't put my mind into it. Sometimes when we were drumming at a funeral, the Asante people would be playing their Asante Adowa or Kete or Osikyì. I didn't pay attention because I knew I wouldn't play with them. In Africa, we don't learn tribal rhythms from each other.

I didn't learn that type of thing until I got to the Arts Council. When I was in the Arts Council group, I didn't want to be a one-way drummer. I realized that if the group traveled abroad, they would select people to go. That made me force myself to learn Southern drums.

On my first day, I just sat watching C.K. Ganyo, Mr. Ayensu, and Auntie Comfort teach the dancers. On the second day, I was sitting the same way when Mr. Ayittey called me to his office. He spoke to me in English but I couldn't understand, so he called Mr. Ayensu. He told Mr. Ayensu in English and Mr. Ayensu told me in Akan. "Anytime they are doing something, you also should put yourself into it." Then I went and sat down with the drummers.

They played and I listened. I didn't take interest in any drumming--only the bell came in to my mind. I sat down with the man who was playing the bell and started knocking my leg. After that, I went straight to Mr. Ayensu and Mr. Anaglo to say that I would like to learn their rhythms. Mr. Anaglo said, "OK, we will start."

Early in the morning before class, Mr. Anaglo took me away just near the outside stage. I started by learning how to play the bell. From bell, I learned the rattle. From rattle, I got to know the kaganu and then jumped to the kidi. Auntie Comfort--that woman helped me a lot on bell and rattle whenever I was free. She didn't understand Twi or English, only Ewe and Gã. She helped me to learn Gã quickly because she couldn't speak Twi.

The first dance I started learning was Yewe. The Yewe we were playing then is different from they are playing now. We changed the Yewe rhythms three times. We had old rhythms of Adzogbo--I started learning that one also. As soon as I got to know those rhythms, Godwin [Godwin Agbeli] came back from his research tour in Togo with new rhythms. I started learning that one also. I can play the Arts Council version of Adzogbo and some of the Yewe patterns.

#### **6.5 MR. AYITTEY**

##### ***"SINCE THAT DAY HE FELT LOVE TOWARDS ME"***

During my third week at the Arts Center, Mr. Ayithey tried teaching me to play kaganu. He got annoyed! He played the bell and asked me to come in. "Gon gon gogon gon gon gogon\gon gogon gon gon go"--he said I should get it from the "gogon" but I couldn't get it for a long time. He was playing another kaganu while Mr. Anaglo was playing bell for us. He entered, but I would be playing mistakes for a long time before I would come together with him. Then asked me to play alone. I got the bell but didn't know how to come in on kaganu. He got mad and threw his kaganu against my leg. I fell down. He was very, very sorry.

He went to his office. He called Mr. Ayensu to say that they should take me in a car to the hospital. I said, "No. It isn't cut. Only the bone is paining me. I have some traditional medicine at home. I will go and use that." They went and brought some lineament. C.K. rubbed my leg with lineament and they wrapped it with bandages. When I went home I took the bandages off and put that "broken leg" medicine.

The next day Mr. Ayithey came to my house in the early morning to see how I was doing. He came after I had left my house to take trotro to the office. Brother Fusheini told him that he had just walked me to the trotro station. Mr. Ayithey quickly drove downtown and met me in Tema station. I was walking by the roadside when I saw him. He said, "Oh. I have just come from your house." I heard, "I came from your house" in English but I didn't know how to respond. He opened the door for me. I sat inside and he took me to the office. He asked Mr. Ayensu to tell me that if I was still having pains I should go home. I said, "No, I want to be here." Since that day Mr. Ayithey has felt love toward me. But sometimes when he was feeling mad he didn't like me [laughs].

**6.6 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DRUMMING**  
**"YOU HAVE TO START WITH THE TALKING"**

As for the Southerners, their learning is different from our learning. In some of our learning, you start from the talking before they take you to the drumming but Southerners start from the drumming. A difference between our drums and their drums--we use the hand together with the body. When you put lungu into your hand, you have to use your body to squeeze it. The tone of the lungu has to come from the squeezing. That makes the learning of our drumming a bit harder than the Southern drums.

I felt difficulty in teaching in the Folkloric Company. Sometimes the group members didn't take it seriously. They were grown people...working...being paid by the government. If they did it or didn't do it, the pay was there. At the Folkloric Company sometimes when you start teaching, a person will make you get annoyed so that he will be free. The friends want to learn, but he doesn't want to. When your heart comes, you will say, "OK, break." You go out and leave them to be free. I saw it!

When they don't take it seriously, you can't just force. You can't get annoyed at someone who wants to take the thing from you. In Africa, that is what we believe. The person who wants the

thing from you has to get enjoyment of your teaching before you will be able to teach him more.

If a student doesn't ask a master, how can a master teach?

I used to tell them, "You are not making we, the drumming and dance teachers, bad--you are making yourselves bad. When we start to teach, you bluff." If you are teaching somebody who doesn't pay attention to you, how can you feel like teaching the person? "If you don't want to take it, then I won't give it." In Africa, we take it like that.

## **6.7 AFADINA ATSIKPA**

### ***"HE LOVED THE THING"***

Some people were good. Among all the dancers in the Folkloric group, Afadina [Afadina Atsikpa] was the best--in every dance!--because he liked the thing. The way Afadina learned--he disturbed you the teacher; he asked you for help. Say you are sitting during break, doing nothing. Afadina comes, "I beg you, can you teach me these steps?" If you are sitting and somebody comes to ask you, "Can you help me?" you have to help the fellow. That helped Afadina to know the dances in Folkloric. Up until now, he is the leading dancer. Adzogbo,

Atsiagbekor, Northern dances, all the Southern dances--Afadina is leading. The boy loved the thing. That made us all like him.

### ***6.8 NORTHERN DANCES IN REPERTORY***

#### ***"WE PLAY IT CORRECT, ONLY WE MAKE IT SHORT"***

I taught Northern dances just the way we do them at home, only sometimes we made them short.

C.K. used to do it. Dancing "on stage" was different from dancing "on floor." When we danced on floor--when somebody hired the group for a funeral performance--we did it traditionally. But for a stage performance, sometimes we played the Takai itself for four minutes and then change it. When we had to make it in the original way, sometimes I played Takai more than 15 minutes before changing to Ngunda Nyuli. Sometimes it takes more than one hour to finish Takai with its brothers. But on stage it used to take eight or ten minutes to go through all the rhythms.

It depended on the time given for the whole performance. Sometimes they gave us time--two hours--and in this two hours we had to do about six dances. During practice C.K. would time it and then say, "Now the timing is in your hands. You have to make it to suit the time."

The life of the dance wasn't changed. But if you prolong the drumming... In Dagbon some of our old dancers have to dance a long time before they get what I call "sugar." When they are getting tired, they start making their bluffing so that you will see their better techniques. The steps haven't changed, the rhythms also haven't changed. We play it correct, only we shorten it.

Even in my own Takai group in Tamale these days, when we are making something like a durbar and we give the dancers a short time, they complain, "We don't get our feelings at the start and then you shorten up on us. We can only give the basic steps at the beginning but just when it is time for us to put the sugar, you change the rhythm. We start with the basic steps again, but coming to the time for us to feel happy--when we are getting enjoyment from the drumming--you change it again."

## **7. BACK TO THE NORTH**

### ***7.1 LUN-NAA WOMBIE ATTAINS OLD AGE***

#### ***"HE DIDN'T DRUM IN PUBLIC"***

I joined the Folkloric Company in 1968 and left it in 1978. My leaving Accra was because of my father. My father had stopped drumming for 15 years before he died. He no longer

drummed at the chief's house or funerals. The reason is that he had a lot of children, those he had taught drumming. Some of them are still in the village. Also, my brothers--they also know something in the drumming.

My father was a chief of drummers at the town of Kasuliyili. Anything the chief needed from the lunga drummers of the area, he would send to him. Then my father would call the drum elders, Sampahi-naa, Taha-naa, Iwo-naa: "Chief says tomorrow or tomorrow-next--this is what is happening." That finishes his duty. The person who was second to my father, the Sampahi-naa at Kasuliyili--my father taught him drumming when he was young. His duty was to take everything from my father. Sampahi-naa would say, "Taha-naa, you take the children and go and take the chief." Or if they are going for a funeral, "You, Taha-naa do this. I will also do this."

When the drummers were playing at the chief's house, if my father felt like going, he could go, but if he didn't feel like going, he could stay in the house. The chief wouldn't bother him because his people were doing the duties. That is the custom in our area. Say are a good drummer, you become a chief and you get old age, those to whom you taught the drumming and the town

drummers under you--they respect you--they won't allow you to drum again. Despite the fact that you can drum, you can't drum.

The main thing they need from you is this: if somebody still needs advice on drumming, they pay you a visit during the night. They say, "Old Man, yesterday I was sleeping and thinking on this story." Or, "We went for drumming and I saw my brothers playing this praise..." Or, "I want to know of this." If he is feeling happy toward you, he helps you. Some people won't teach again when they grow older, but some people do teach.

As for my father--he still was with the younger people, but he didn't drum in public. We, his children, advanced him to that stage because we were up. We could do what he could do. How was he going to suffer...drumming...bringing himself to the public like that?

## ***7.2 LUN-NAA WOMBIE GREETES ABUBAKARI RUDELY***

### ***"I COULD SEE THAT HE WASN'T HAPPY"***

In 1978 we went to Tamale to have a regional arts festival. Since I was in Dagbon, I went to say hello to my father. He was out when I got to the house. As he approached the house, children

told him that I was waiting inside but he paid them no mind. He came and sat in his sitting place. I came out and greeted him, but he didn't answer me in the usual way. I could see that he wasn't happy.

I also didn't feel happy. Usually my father and I played like child and grandfather because I am having his grandfather's name. If I had been away from him, we would start playing before the greeting. That didn't happen this time. I started like that and he didn't bother with me until I came and kneeled down. It was in the afternoon--I said, "Anenwula," he said "Naa." He didn't ask me how is your family or how is your work. He just said, "Naa." I was kneeling down but he even didn't tell me "Gaafara" ["Please be seated"]. All this meant that he was not happy with me.

Another elderly man, Taha-naa Dajia, was with my father. I was kneeling down until that old man told him, "Give him 'gaafara' to get up." Then he said, "Oh, gaafara." I stood up went straight to the house. I was very mad about the way my father had greeted me. I went right to my mother and talked to her about the way and manner my father had answered me. "I felt like

he wasn't happy on me. Did you hear him say anything about me before I came?" My mother said, "No." I left my mother.

My senior brother Alhassan has his own house there in Kasuliyili. I went to him about the way my father had answered my greeting. "Have you heard anything? Has Father told you something about me." He said, "No, I haven't heard anything." My brother gave me the idea to go and see my father's friend, Afa Issifu, one of the important Muslims in the town. "Maybe if you talk to him--whether he knows something or doesn't know something--he will come to our father."

The next morning I went and greeted Afa Issifu. He said, "I heard that you have come." I told him the way my father answered me yesterday. "I was thinking that he would call me in the night to talk but he didn't. I am not happy. I have to go back to Tamale because I came to work. That is why I have come to inform you. Do you know something between me and my father? If you don't know, could you go to my father and ask him if I have done wrong? I don't know what is wrong."

That man said, "Oh, your father always praises you in front of me. He has never said anything bad about you before. I will come to your house. Is your father home?" I said, "Yes, he was preparing to go to farm when I left." He asked me to tell my father that he wanted to see him, but I said, "I don't want my father to know that I talked to you." I wanted him to take his own way.

When I went home, I told one of my nephews to ask my father to wait. "If he asks, tell him that you had gone to his friend's house." My father was about to leave. He stopped. The boy said, "This morning when I was delivering sugar to your friend, he asked me to greet you and tell you that he wants to see you." It didn't take time for this man to come. My father has a living compound--so they went there. They were there ah...and then that man sent for me. I came out.

### ***7.3 THE REASON IS GIVEN THROUGH PROVERBS***

#### ***"GREEN LEAVES ARE TURNING BROWN"***

The man said, "Let me give you a short proverb. You plant a seed. The seed germinates and a tree starts growing, how are you thinking about that tree?" I was sitting; I didn't answer. He said, "Rain falls and the tree brings green leaves, but then you see that those green leaves are

turning brown. How are you thinking about that tree?" I said, "Oh, surely that tree is going to fall down. When green leaves change to brown, by all means the tree will fall down."

He said, "OK. You could see that yesterday your father wasn't happy." I said, "Yes, I could see so." He said, "I wasn't here yesterday, but when I entered the house--seeing you sitting outside-- I knew that you were not happy. Greeting your father, I could see that he was not happy. I asked him if something had gone wrong."

"Your father told me that when you first went to the South, he didn't like it. But after a while, he got to know that you wanted to be somebody some day. He feels that you have gotten yourself out from the first trouble. He was strong then but now he has grown back. He doesn't want to die if you are still in the South. He wants you to be at home before he dies. He is thinking that if he tells you to leave Accra and come back home, you won't agree. So it doesn't make him feel happy."

#### ***7.4 ABUBAKARI DECIDES TO RETURN HOME TO NORTH***

***"YOU NEED MY SERVICES"***

I asked my father, "Is that the whole problem?" He said, "Yes." "Is that the whole problem between me and you?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What you have told me, I have heard it. This is a small thing. I realize that you are now grown. You need my service, so, I am no more going to Accra. But I came to do a job. Allow me to be with my people. After I serve them, I will write them that I am no more going to Accra. Then I will find a way to go and bring my wife and my things."

That was November 1978. My father felt happy. He didn't go again to the farm. He said he had wanted to be away from me because he was 'too thinking'. If he didn't see me, he wouldn't feel anything. But now he would like to be with me until the time I need to leave.

I had traveled to Kasuliyili with Salifu, a lunga friend. When I told him of this talk, he was very, very happy. He had wanted to tell me that one day my father had come to him in Tamale and told him, "How are you thinking of your friend? Let him come back home because I am grown and I don't know the day I am going to die. I don't want to die when Abubakari is in Accra." My friend said, "If you don't want to go, I will help you to live in Tamale." I thanked him.

**7.5 ABUBAKARI EXPLAINS HIS DECISION TO THE ARTS COUNCIL**  
**"I HAVE TO DO WHAT THE CULTURE SAYS"**

We went back to Tamale. The next day we had to start the festival. We spent one week and finished it. Miss Amegatcher was there. I brought this thing to our Director at Tamale. I told him what my father had told me. "According to our tradition, a person like me should have returned home long ago. I didn't do it. Old Man waited but now he has called me. If I also want to be like him some day, I have to serve him. If I don't do this, the time will come when I also will call somebody and he will refuse. I don't want that to happen in my life. I am doing the cultural work--as a cultural man, I have to do what my culture says."

Then Miss Amegatcher said, "What! Abu, you can't leave. I won't agree." I said, "I don't want the office to pay me anything. Now I can't work. So far as my father has told me this, I can't live in Accra. My mind has just changed." She said, "OK. You wait. I will think about it."

The next day I was supposed to go with the van to Accra but coming to the evening, I went to the hotel and sent all my things to my family house. Miss Amegatcher came back to the hotel, Catering Rest House, and asked of me. C.K. Hunter, our stage manager, and Mr. Aliba, our electrician, told her that when I had come from office they could see from my face that I wasn't

happy. I looked as if I had quarreled with somebody. They asked me. I said, "Nothing like that has happened but my father has told me something so I am not happy. I want to go and stay with him for some time. That is why I have packed my things off to my family house."

As for Miss Amegatcher, I like the woman because she respects the tradition. Before the Folkloric Company had come to Tamale, C.K., Aliba, Mr. Natey, our carpenter, and I had gone ahead to help the Regional office build the stage and prepare the program. We had spent three weeks before she came. As soon as she came, she asked me, "Oh Abu, can I see your parents." I said, "Yes." So I took her to my uncle's house. She greeted him and then we came back. I told her, "My father himself is at a village together with my mother. For them, you can't see them, unless we finish the festival."

This woman was very unhappy. She went straight to M.O. Banford, Director of the Arts Council (Northern Region). He was a mixed tribe--his father was a Russian, the mother was a Northerner. He was born and raised in Tamale; he died last year. He spoke Dagbani like a Dagomba and he studied the people. He told Miss Amegatcher, "How I sees Abubakari's

attitude... A proper cultural man can't refuse his father's orders. There is nothing we can do to make him agree to stay working with the Arts Council."

#### ***7.6 ABUBAKARI IS TRANSFERRED TO TAMALE ARTS CENTER***

##### ***"ANYTIME WE NEED HIS SERVICES, WE CAN CALL HIM***

Miss Amegatcher didn't want me to leave the work like that because she knew that the government was planning certain benefits for the workers. She knew that I had suffered long with the Folkloric group and shouldn't leave with empty hands like that. She wanted Banford to help her arrange my transfer to Tamale. Any time they needed me, I could come to Accra. The director said they should ask if I would agree. He called me and I said, "For me, I have no say. I have to go back and see my father." Miss Amegatcher said, "OK. I am leaving tomorrow. This is between you and Director, but please, Abu, I don't want you to leave the Arts Council. Stay, if you like the work. But if you don't like the work, then..."

I said, "I like the work. If I didn't like it, I wouldn't still be with you. I would have quit long time, but I love the job." She said, "OK, I am leaving. Whatever happens come and tell

Director. I am giving you your annual leave to spend with your family. Coming to the end of the leave--whatever is happening, you should let us know."

The next day, we took her to the airport. The next day, I went back to Kasuliyili for two weeks.

I didn't ask my father for anything. Finally, he went to his friend. The friend called on me,

"Yesterday your father came here. He was very happy. He is thinking seriously about something now. He thought that you would ask him about it, but you haven't said anything. So he has asked me to talk to you. You left your wife and children in Accra. You have told him that you are no more going to Accra. What about your family?"

I told his friend, "I don't collect my pay at Tamale; I get it in Accra. I asked Miss Amegatcher to post my pay to Tamale. When my pay comes, I will send some money to my wife. She will pack my things and they can bring everything home."

Then the friend was very happy. When he told my father, he was also happy. He said, "I am happy. I don't want you to wait to get your pay. I will give you money. Anytime you want to go to Accra and bring your family, go. How much do you need?" I told him, "I don't want to

collect money from you." Then I got up. Thinking that I was annoyed, my father reported our talk to the friend. The friend said, "Maybe Abubakari is feeling not to collect money from you. It looks as if he got annoyed." My father gave the friend 1000 cedis to give to me to go to Accra and try to bring my family.

### ***7.7 ABUBAKARI BRINGS HIS FAMILY TO NORTH***

#### ***"YOU SHOULD LIVE IN TAMALE"***

I had a talk with my father before I went to Accra. He said, "Now I have seen that you have accepted what I like. I know that you have stayed in the city for a long time. You need not stay in the village now. I agree for you to stay in Tamale. From Kasuliyili to Tamale is not far; anytime I want you--night or day--I can send for you. I also can call upon you. You should live in Tamale."

I came back and told Director Banford. He prepared the papers and I took them to Miss Amegatcher in Accra. Sharp...Miss Amegatcher signed the paper for my transfer to the Northern Regional Arts Council. Then they asked me if I would need a car to pack my things. I said,

"Yes, my things are many. Together with my four family members, we make five." I booked transport for my family. We got to Tamale.

When I went back to Tamale with my family, we stayed in the village for some time. Coming to the week for me to start my work, I told my father, "True, you agreed for me to live in Tamale. Because of that I arranged my transfer. My Arts Council people still want my services. I told them that I can still work. I am going to start work at Tamale." He said, "No matter."

And true, they gave me an office at the Arts Center as a transfer. I started working. The very month I reported, that was the very month my father died.

### ***7.8 LUN-NAA WOMBIE FALLS SICK***

#### ***"SINCE I WAS BORN, MY FATHER NEVER COMPLAINED OF SICKNESS"***

I hadn't even arranged accommodation for my family when my father fell sick. Since I was born, my father never complained of sickness. "Oh, I am feeling headache"--that was my father's only complaint. But that day...

It was a Friday. I told my Tamale people that I was going to greet my father Namo-naa at Yendi.

I left in the morning, went to Yendi, greeted him and came back Friday night. I went into my room. In my house at Tamale, I had an outside door. I was sleeping, not knowing that my family in Kasuliyili that morning had sent word to me and my brother Zachariah that my father had fallen sick.

Zachariah had come in his car to find me in the Tamale house. I had traveled to Yendi, so that afternoon Zachariah took his taxi to Kasuliyili. They were there up until 8:00 in the night.

Zachariah saw that it was very serious. He couldn't leave my father there in the village, so he brought him straight. Before they got to Tamale it was dark...late...10:00 PM. By that time I had come back but didn't know about my father.

### ***7.9 LUN-NAA WOMBIE IS ADMITTED TO TAMALE HOSPITAL "HE IS SERIOUSLY SICK"***

Zachariah took my father to the Tamale hospital. The doctors agreed to take him. After they admitted him Zachariah came back to my house. I was in the room but nobody knew. He told

the house people that whenever I came they should tell me about our father: he is seriously sick and is in the hospital; I should go immediately.

No one knew I was there in the house. The Yendi road is not good; the truck had shook me and I was very tired. I was in my room but I couldn't sleep. I said, "Oh. Let me go and take a bath. Maybe it will help me sleep." Around 11:00 PM I came out with a bucket. All the women said, "Oh, you are back." I said, "I've been back a long time. I came before 9:00." They said, "What!" Then they brought the story.

I dropped the bucket and rushed to my brother's house. The wife told me that he had gone back to the hospital. I went there. They hadn't got a proper doctor to take care of my father yet. My father was in the emergency room. A person who is serious--they keep him there for some time before they get him a bed. So I came...my brother was very serious.

#### ***7.10 ABUBAKARI VISITS FATHER IN HOSPITAL***

***"MY STOMACH IS PAINING ME"***

When I went to my father, he didn't look sick. I said, "Old Man, what is happening?" He said, "My stomach is paining me. I can't breathe and I can't sit." He was having what you call hernia. He said, "I am waiting for you people to bring the doctor and hear what he is going to say."

I knew one doctor at Tamale. I asked my brother, "Did you call Doctor Dari?" He said, "Oh, I didn't." I said, "OK. Let's find him." My friend, Abudulai Wonzam, who had taken me on his "moto" to the hospital, took me. When we came to doctor Dadi's house, he was just coming out--somewhere 12:00 midnight--to go check his patients at the hospital.

He said, "Abubakari, what has happened?" I brought the matter. He said, "Oh, yes. I had a call about an old man. Is he a chief drummer from some village?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Is that your real father? True?" I said, "Yes, that's my real father." He said, "OK, then let's go." As soon as we got to the hospital, Doctor Dari went to him. He looked at him and said, "Give me a form." He wrote it and they gave my father a bed on the third floor.

At 2:00 PM, Dr. Dari said, "You should go home. I am going to operate on your father. That thing--if I don't take it out, he can't breathe." That night was Friday night. He had to inject him

and give him tablets so that all the things would come to one place so that he could remove it.

The thing had separated in his body.

We went home. When we came the next morning, Old Man was nice. He could get up and walk, sit down by himself. He even told us, "They should let me go home," but the doctor said, "Let me take it." So Tuesday they took it. He was in the hospital for 14 days. He was in the hospital Friday night, Saturday, Sunday, Monday...Tuesday--they took the thing. He was in hospital another nine days after that.

I was sitting with my father one afternoon. Doctor Dari came and told us, "Now I feel Old Man is nice. He is OK. Today is Sunday. Maybe tomorrow I will let you people take him home."

### ***7.11 THE FINAL NIGHT***

I sat with my father that Sunday evening. Around 8:00 PM one of my uncles came to the hospital and sat down with Old Man...talk, talk, talk, talk. When he was leaving, Old Man came downstairs with him; they talked ah... I was there together with Alhassan and my sister who died, Martha. When my father was in the hospital, we would exchange being with him--if this

man sleeps at the hospital today, tomorrow he goes home and the next man sleeps. At the time he was admitted, they had taken a pint of my blood. The doctor said I should get proper rest, I shouldn't sleep at the hospital.

My father could see that it was coming to 11:00. He said, "I was hearing... Do you think that I don't hear your nyama-nyama English? I hear some of it, only I can't talk. You are not going to sleep here. That doctor said you shouldn't be troubling yourself. You should be sleeping properly so that you can get your blood back. What are you here for? Only Martha and Alhassan is going to sleep here. And you are also here? How is the time now?" I said, "It is 11:30." He said, "Go home."

## ***7.12 LAST INSTRUCTIONS***

### ***"ARE YOU A MAN?"***

My father had a big bracelet on his wrist. It was on my hand when I was about to come here but I left it at home because it was too big. As I was about to go, my father called me back. Martha and Alhassan were in the next room, sleeping. Lun-naa Wombie called me. He took that bracelet from his hand and said, "Put this one on your hand for me to see." It went on with no

problem. He said, "OK. Keep it for me. Any time I need it, I will ask you for it. The thing is heavy on my hand, but I don't want to take it off let it be lying down."

Tsk, something came to my mind. I know some of our old men--if their time is getting near, they do certain things like that. So I asked him, "Old Man, is anything wrong with you?" He put his head like this. I took the bracelet and put in on my hand. I said, "Tell me why you gave it to me?" He took his finger and tapped my leg.

My father said, "Hey, Abu are you a man?" [laughs, cries] "Abu are you a man?" I said, "Yes." "OK. You remember that I told you I didn't want you to be in Accra? People have told me that this is my time to leave you people. And I don't know--either today, or tomorrow, or tomorrow next--I don't know. This bracelet, I think it is good for you because, of all my children, you are most serious about my work. And people are serious on you. I am giving it to you and I'm going to tell you things you have to use for that bracelet. I was thinking to tell you tomorrow morning but when you turned to go the thing came to my heart, 'If you don't tell Abu now...what the soothsayers are telling you--do you know the day you are going to die?' I want you to keep it.

"I don't want you to cry. If I die, I don't want you to cry. Think of my death, think of my burial.

Don't cry. Don't make yourself like a woman. I know it will pain you when I leave you, but let

me go into my grave properly. Make sure you see to how they put me down, how they do

everything. That is why I wanted you to be around before I leave you. I don't want you to be

crying because I have died and left you."

### ***7.13 ABUBAKARI HAS PREMONITION***

#### ***"I COULDN'T STAY AND I COULDN'T GO"***

I couldn't stay and I couldn't go. I went downstairs but in a little while I came back. My sister

asked me, "Why? You said you were going?" I said, "I will be going." So when I went to take

my bicycle, one of my ideas came, "What if you leave and your father dies?" I was there and Dr.

Dari came. Every night, between midnight and 2:00 AM, he went to the hospital to check the

people he was treating. He said, "What! Abubakari, are you still around here? Go home and

sleep. What is wrong with you?" He saw from my face that I wasn't happy. He asked,

"Anything wrong with Old Man?" I said, "No, nothing."

I went with him back to Old Man. The doctor talked to him. "Did you take your tabs?" He said, "Yes." "How did you take it?" My father himself--because he can speak Twi and Hausa, and this man speaks these languages--he told him the way he took it. Then the doctor left him to visit other patients. My father was feeling to urinate. He himself got up. During the time he was in the hospital he went to bathroom on his own, bathed himself, did all these things by himself. So... When Dr. Dari came back, he said to me, "It is too late to go with bicycle. Let me give you a lift. Tomorrow, you can come and take your bicycle." So, this Doctor Dari took me to my room in Ababu.

#### ***7.14 LUN-NAA WOMBIE DIES***

##### ***"OLD MAN LEFT US...LEFT US JUST LIKE THAT"***

Around 3:00 AM Old Man [pause], Old Man left...left us just like that.

I was at home [crying]. My brother Alhassan and my sister Martha knocked on my door and called my name. I answered, "Who are those?" I heard my sister's voice. I said, "What! What is happening?" They said, "Oh. You get up." I got up. I opened my door. She was like a man, but my brother was bringing tears like a woman. I said, "Why, Alhassan?" Then Martha started,

"After you left, we were there when one of the nurses came to us and took Alhassan to see Old Man. We went. Old Man was lying down like he was sleeping. And, you know, he can't talk."

### ***7.15 ABUBAKARI TAKES CHARGE***

#### ***"HE ONLY WANTS US TO THINK OF HIS BURIAL"***

I told them, "OK. Old Man told me that he doesn't want us to be crying. He only wants us to think of his burial. We must plan for his burial." We were there inside Tamale in the middle of the night. I went and knocked at the house of my rich friend, Yaya Iddi. He answered, I told him the story, he got up. He asked me, "What do you want me to do?" I told him, "As a chief...my father was a chief. We can't bury him here. If we wait until tomorrow, people will be seeing him, see us bringing him to the house. I want us to do everything this time, before day breaks. People hear that my father has died and is at home." He said, "OK. My car is there, but my driver is not around. How I see your condition--you can't drive. I myself will drive. Lets go to the doctor."

We picked up my sister and went to the doctor's home. When we knocked on the door, the doctor came out. The hospital people hadn't rung him before we got there. I told him. He said,

"What! Can you tell me this? I just took you home." I said, "Yes. Not forty minutes after you left me, my sister and my brother came..." I started the story they told me. He called the hospital; they said yes. This man was crying like a woman.

Then he got up. He said he wouldn't release my father to us because the thing worrying my father--he had taken it. He knew of nothing more that was going to take my father's life. How could my father just die like that? In the morning he wanted to see what killed my father.

I said he should forget it. "You can't bring him back to life. Whether you see or not, it is going to be useless. The man has gone and you can't bring him back. What I don't want people to see concerning my father--I don't want them to see me carrying my father's dead body home."

The doctor helped us take my father's body from the hospital. We drove in my friend's car to the village.

#### ***7.16 THEY TAKE THE CORPSE TO KASULIYILI***

***"WE WALKED LIKE SOLDIERS"***

Luckily, we got to Kasuliyili at 5:15 AM. My mother had left the house and gone to the mosque.

We walked like soldiers. Coming to my father's house, we opened the door. We took Old Man just like we made magic. We sent him through to his room and laid him down.

Before he had got up, I went and knocked at my junior brother Alidu's door. "What has happened?" I said, "Nothing. Old Man has sent us to do something in the house." Suhiyini also came out--he is he is after Alidu, different mother--"Why bro? What happened?" I say, "Nothing. Old Man said we should come and do something."

The second of my father's wives--the woman who was second after my mother--she saw us going to my father's area carrying something like a person. She said--all of them called me "n-yaba" because my father called me grandfather--she said, "Oh n-yaba, what is the matter?" I said, "Doctor asked us to bring Old Man home. You know he can't walk properly and he felt like sleeping. We don't want anybody to go there and disturb him." She said, "Can I prepare something for him now?" I said, "Wait until I bring tea." She said, "OK," and went back to her room.

**7.17 THE NEWS SPREADS****"I WAS CRYING LIKE SOMETHING"**

Then we went to that my father's friend. It is this man who brought the funeral out. He followed us to my father's room, he saw my father lying down, and started crying. He couldn't stand it.

He cried like a woman. It made me also...I brought tears. I was crying like something. When we came to my father's house he stopped crying when I told him, "OK. I was thinking that you were going to help me bury my father, but now, how you are crying, what can you do?" Then he said, "OK."

Then we went to my uncle, Sampahi-naa. I knocked and entered. He was washing his face. He said, "Eh Abu? Why early morning like that? Anything wrong?" I said, "No. We have brought Old Man home." He said, "Is anything wrong with Old Man?" I said, "No."

As soon as I had said no, that old man, my father's friend, started crying again, "Jeeee Ooohi Ooohi." Then my uncle said, "Why? Abu, so my brother has died!" I said, "Oh, you go and see your brother." Then he also threw that towel and he ran. They came to the house and they made announcement. Everybody cried like a child.

Finally we stopped. We packed everything and left the room free. We planned how to put my father down. So, we buried Old Man.

### ***7.18 ABUBAKARI LEAVES THE ARTS COUNCIL WORK***

#### ***"AT LEAST I WILL HAVE MY OWN PLOT OF LAND"***

After we buried Old Man, I sat down, thinking, "So, this old man he was about to leave me. That is why he wanted me to return back from Accra to Tamale." There, one idea from my heart was telling me, "Now you have to leave the work and take care of the family." But at other times my heart told me, "If you leave that work, can you live with no steady pay?"

So I stayed on with the Art Council until three years ago. The Art Council brought papers out that if you have had long service they will give you a benefit upon your leaving. I said, "Oh, now I have to think of myself. I have to leave and get that small benefit so that I can buy a plot of land. Even if I can't build on it right away, at least I will know that I have my own plot. I can make a house in the local fashion for my family.

That is the reason why I left the government service and went back to my own tradition, which is farming and drumming. I didn't leave the Arts Council because I didn't like the job. I worked until I felt, "At this time, if I am still working, I am cheating myself because the pay cannot allow me to take good full care of my people." But up until now--despite that I left the work--the people at the office call for my services. They do call me for assignments. The current Director, Von Salifu, calls me if he needs my help.

**END OF DOCUMENT**