

The Story of Zambalantɔŋ, Appellation of Kar-naa Bukali

Told by Dolsi-naa Abubakari Lunna, June 9, 1993

Edited by David Locke

DL

This is Wednesday, June 9, 1993 at 19 Sagamore Avenue. Abu and I are going to discuss the praise name Zambalantɔŋ. Can you tell us about Zambalantɔŋ, M-ba?

AL

I can tell you what I know. We play Zambalantɔŋ for a chief of Karaga who we call Kar-naa Bukali. He is a grandson of Naa Yakubu. He is a son of Kor-naa Mahami, who is a son of Naa Yakubu. I can tell you about his proverbs and rhythms, but we don't put all that on drumming. In Dagbon, the chief of Karaga is a very big title. When linsi count all the Yaa Naa's children, Kar-naa is the leader.

In our language, "tɔŋ" is "trap" and "zambalana" is "wicked person." When Bukali was old enough to be looking after himself, soothsayers told him that somebody was planning to do bad against him. He pretended not to know, but he prepared and waited for

something to come towards him. It happened that he went to some big man. That big man gave him a kparigo. The whole story about the big man giving the kparigo doesn't come to the drum, but it is the reason why Kar-naa Bukali got this name.

DL

What is a kparigo?

AL

Kparigo is what our kings wear. Our kings don't put on a biɲngmaa. A biɲngmaa is just for dancing, but we take kparigo and make a chief. I believe the English people call it "smock." When the big man gave him this kparigo, Bukali thought it might be dangerous, so he didn't wear it; he kept it. Later, the son of the person who gave it to Bukali came to greet him. Bukali offered the son the same kparigo as a gift. The son put it on. After he wore it, he got sick and died. Kar-naa Bukali said, "Oh! My soothsayers saw it. If I had worn it, I would be the one to die. I gave it back to my enemy's own son. Now he is dead and I am free."

Kar-naa Bukali asked his drummers, "A wicked man sets his trap. Who is he going to catch?" They told him, "He is going to catch his own son. Yes, a wicked man set his trap and caught his own son." We lunsu say it on our drums in our language, "Zambalantɔŋ bari gbago o bia." Drummers put this proverb into rhythm.

You know, our chiefs use proverbs to make their names. If the leading lunga wants to start Zambalantɔŋ he says, "Soli din viela nim' mali chenli dapala, Ninsalinima ko ti kalan' bandi, Ka Naawuni kpun kori o banɕhiliga dapala." Let me think of it. "Soli din viela nim' mali chenli dapala, Ninsalinima ko ti kalan' bandi, Ka Nawuni kpun kori o banɕhiliga dapala, Ashikuru dapala." His mother name is "Ashikuru" so you have to play, "Ashikur' dapala," and then say, " Zambalantɔŋ a la."

After the leading lunga plays, "Ashikur' dapala Zambalantɔŋ a la," then the answer comes, "N̄uni bari gbago o bia, n-bari gbago o bia, ŋuni bari gbago o bia." If you don't say, "N-bari gba," you can say, "N̄uni bari gbago o bia." The leading lunga plays the proverbs, ends with "Ashikur' dapala Zambalantɔŋ a la," and then the answer comes,

"N̄uni bari gbago o bia," or "N-bari gbago o bia." "Zambalant̄ɔŋ, the wicked man who set his trap has caught his own son." That is the talk of the drums.

The rhythms sound like this, "[lead lunga vocables for intro and first talk]," and then the answer comes, "[vocables and time beating]." When we play with many drummers, the lūŋsi may take "N-bari gbago o bia, dan den diyan dan" or the double one, "N̄uni bari gbago o bia, zan deyan den diyen dan," and the gūŋ-ḡɔŋ drummers take "N̄uni bari gbago o bia, ka ka kik kaka." When all the drums are playing, the lead lunga takes the same talk as the answer lūŋa and pronounces it. The answer lūŋa plays, "Bari gbago o bia," and the lead lunga also says, "N̄uni bari gbago o bia, ŋuni bari gbago o bia." The leading lunga is in between the other drums, "Ashikur' dapala, Zambalant̄ɔŋ a la, gran da zin, dan da zen de den den."

When I begin Zambalant̄ɔŋ, I play, "Nawuni situra layi k̄ɔbiga t̄ampieli n-dagari, Soli din viela nim' mali chenli, Ashikur' dapala, Ninsalinima ko ti kalan' bandi, Ka Nawuni kpun kori o baŋchiliga, Ashikur' dapala Zambalat̄ɔŋa la."

The lead lunga first plays for Kar-naa Bukali's father, Kor-naa Mahami. Put this on paper, "Nawuni situra layi kɔbiga tãpieli n-dagari." [DL writes.] The lead lunga plays that before joining it to "Soli din viela." Do you know "Nawuni"?

DL

Yes sir. "God."

AL

"Situra" means "clothes" or "dresses."

DL

Clothing. Thank you.

AL

In our tradition, the clothes we respect most are white. "Layi" means "get together," and "kɔbiga" means "hundred"; "layi kɔbiga " is "times hundred," or "get together to be

hundred." Then, you say "tampieli n-dagari." "Tampieli " is the white cloth, "the white cloth is more than all."

DL

Can you explain the proverb to me?

AL

"My clothes at home can be more than a hundred, but when I die, my family will cover me only with the white cloth." Of all your clothes, white will be your last.

DL

Why is God in the proverb?

AL

If you get a thousand cloths, we say it is only with God's help.

DL

So, we might put it, "If, by the grace of God, you gather a hundred cloths, the white cloth is more than all."

AL

"--the white cloth is greater than the rest." We have rhythm for this proverb. It is a horse rhythm for Kar-naa Bukali's father, Kor-naa Mahami. If we are going to play an appellation for him, this is what we play.

DL

So, it is not part of Zambalantɔŋ?

AL

It is part of Zambalantɔŋ! You have to play this one before you play Zambalantɔŋ because it is for the father.

DL

Right. You don't just start with the person.

AL

Then, you play, "Soli din viela nim' mali chenli." [DL and AL slowly write the Dagbani.]

"Soli din viela " means "good road." The drummer is saying, "The fine road will get people to follow it." He is not talking about a real road, but means to say, "A good family will get many people in it." When you play that on drum, it sounds, "[sings vocables], "Soli din viela nim' mali chenli dapala." "Dapala" means "son of."

Bukali's mother name is "Ashikuru," so the lead luŋa calls her after playing for the father.

"Nawuni situra laŋi kɔbiga tampiɛli n-dagari, Soli din viela nim' mali chenli dapala, Ashikur' dapala Zambalantɔŋ a la." I think you get it now.

DL

I am getting it.

AL

I haven't told you about the proverb, "Ninsalinima ko ti kalan' bandi, Ka Nawuni kpun kori o bançhiliga." It is the first appellation of Kar-naa Bukali. He got this praise before the proverb about the wicked man's trap. "Ninsalnima" is "people" and "ko ti" is "hammering." "Kalana" means someone who people think doesn't have a father or other big man to protect him. Like me. At this time of my life, I don't have anybody to order me because my father died and all my teachers died. Nobody can overthrow me any more; I am all by myself. So, people can call me "kalana," "a person who is on his own." When blacksmiths make something like a chain, we call it "bandi"; they put in on your legs and your arms so you can't walk. "Ka Nawuni" means, "and then God." "Kpun kori" means "already hammering." "God is already hammering the banchiliga" "Banchiliga" is a blacksmiths' tool. They make the mouth like a screwdriver. They put it on the iron, they beat it, and they cut the iron.

DL

We call it "chisel."

AL

The proverb is saying, "People want to put the bandi on the kalana because they think he has nobody to help him, but God is already aware and his chisel is cutting off the chains."

If somebody is thinking, "Now Abu has lost his father and teachers, I can do bad to him," he forgets that God is my father. Even before he thinks of doing bad, God is at my back to help me from the trouble.

DL

We were able to make a sentence for the proverb about the white cloth, "If with God's help you gather a hundred clothes, the white cloth is greater than the rest," but we don't have a clear way of saying this one in English. We have the parts, but I don't know how to put them together. Lets try to make it.

AL

"People are hammering the self-person's chain, but God already has the chisel to cut it."

Before they put the chain on him, God already is having the chisel.

DL

"People hammer a chain for the person they think is defenseless, but forget that God --"

AL

--already has the chisel to cut it." This proverb was Kar-naa Bukali's first appellation before Zambalantɔŋ came in.

You know, a lead luŋa player never starts with the person for whom you are playing.

Remember that when I started telling you about Zambalantɔŋ, I said, "Naa Yakubu's grandson, Kar-naa Bukali." For Kar-naa Bukali, you have to call the father [sings],

"Nawuni situra laɣi kɔbiga tampieli n-dagari, Soli din viela nim' mali chenli." You add,

"dapala," "son," because Kar-naa Bukali is son of Kor-naa Mahami. Then, you say that

he is his mother's son, "Ashikuru dapala," before you finally come to Kar-naa Bukali

himself, "Ninsalinima ko ti kalan' bandi, Ka Nawuni kpun kori o baŋchiliga." Then, you

say again, "Ashikuru dapala Zambalantɔŋa la," "Ashikuru's son Zambalantɔŋ." You can't

just say, "Zambalantɔŋa la." No. People won't feel happy.

If I am going to play Zambalantɔŋ on leading luja and I want to make it long for people to be happy, I will start from Naa Yakubu's father, Naa Andani Jenbariga. After Naa Andani Jenbariga, I will play Naa Yakubu's brothers, either Naa Kulunku or Savelugunaa Gulifili or Mion-lana Issa. I will have to play his two brothers before I play Naa Yakubu because they are all the grandfathers of Kar-naa Bukali. In Dagbon, your father's brothers are also your fathers. I can also go direct. I can play Naa Andani Jenbariga, then Naa Yakubu, then Kor-naa Mahami, and finally Kar-naa Bukali. From his great-grandfather, I come to his grandfather, and then I come to his father before the man himself. Then, everyone will think, "Yes--this man--he knows the music."

What if I am going to play for you? Yes! If I want people to know that I know your family, I will call your grandfather, and then your father, Larry. Before I call you, I have to talk about your senior sister, Nancy. After naming your sister, your senior sister, I will talk about your senior brother, Jim. Then, I will talk about you and after that I will say, "David's son, George." People will think, "Oh, this man knows the family." If I had started right from you and George, people would say, "But they say he is a good drummer!"

So, Zambalantɔŋ is for Kar'-naa Bukali. His father is Kor'-naa Mahami, and Kor-naa Mahami's father is Naa Yakubu. Kar-naa Bukali helped the British get their chance to sit in the northern side of Ghana.

DL

Kar-naa Bukali played a part in the coming of the British?

AL

Yes. When Naa Andani was our paramount chief, the British wanted to come into our land. Naa Andani fought them. He didn't allow them to stay in Dagbon. When Naa Andani died, Naa Alaasani was the chief of Karaga, what we call Kar-naa, and Bukali Zambalantɔŋ was the chief of Korli, what we call Kor-naa. The elders of Dagbon made the funeral of Naa Andani. Before the funeral for Naa Andani, everybody was thinking that Kar-naa Alaasani would be the next Yaa Naa.

On the Friday after the funeral, the regent of Naa Andani came out of the palace for the greetings. The regent's name was Tugu-lana Iyiri. He was the chief of Tugu when his father, Naa Andani, died. His name is Iyiri, so we call him Tugu-lan' Iyiri. Namo-naa was singing for him until he came to his place and sat down. The Kar-naa came to sit down and Namo-naa praised the Karaga skin, "[Dagbani]." He sat. Then, the Savelugu-naa was coming to sit down and Namo-naa said, "[Dagbani]." Savelugu-naa sat down. Then, the Mion-lana was walking to his place and Namo-naa said, "[Dagbani]."

When all the kingmakers were there, the regent of Naa Andani finished the greetings. He asked Namo-naa to come nearer to him. Tugu-lan' Iyiri said to him, "I want you to bless Kar-naa nicely for me," and Namo-naa said the same thing again. The regent said, "Can you bless Savelugu-naa also," and Namo-naa said the same thing. The regent said, "Bless Mion-lana for me," and Namo-naa said the same thing. Among these town praises, the blessing for Savelugu is sweet more than all. Savelugu's blessing means that the chief is a strong man with a strong people. Karaga's blessing means a person who doesn't want to do anything, and compares the chief to a village chief. The Mion blessing means a chief

who is always in darkness. After the Namo-naa had repeated these three town blessings, Tugu-lan' Iyiri went back into the palace.

The regent sent a messenger to call all the kingmakers--Gushe-naa, Tolon-naa, Kpati-naa, and others. He told them, "I want to become Savelugu-naa. Can you try to make Savelugu-naa the new Yaa Naa, so that I can be at Savelugu?"

DL

The regent said that?

AL

Yes. Tugu-lan' Iyiri wanted to put his own decision into our tradition. The kingmakers said, "We cannot do that. We have consulted the soothsayers. We have never seen that Savelugu-naa can be the next Yaa Naa. The person we see is Kar-naa. You can go to Karaga." You know, Karaga is bigger than Savelugu. The regent was pretending to want Savelugu because of the blessing, but really he wanted to show his own power. When the kingmakers said that they couldn't agree to his request, the regent told them, "Whether

you like it or not, make Savelugu-naa to be the next Yaa Naa. If you give it to another, I will fight the person." The kingmakers went away from him.

On the day they finished the funeral, the regent again told the kingmakers to chose the Savelugu-naa to be the next Yaa Naa. They said, "If you want to be chief, do it by yourself. Put whomever you like." The kingmakers didn't want to bring a fight into the tradition. They met together and decided to leave Yendi that night. Gushe-naa went to his home, Kpati-naa to his home, and Tolon-naa to his--all the eleven kingmakers left.

Some of them lived in Yendi, but they refused to go to the chief's palace. The kingmakers all went back to their homes without putting anyone to be the next Yaa Naa.

On the following day, Tugu-lan' Iyiri called for the Yaa Naa's drummers. Namo-naa wanted to refuse because the kingmakers didn't call him, but he had to obey the regent.

Namo-naa went to the palace. The regent told the Namo-naa, "I am going to put Savelugu-naa Dahimani to be chief." That was his name, Savelugu-naa Dahimani.

Namo-naa said, "I have never seen such a thing--a regent of Yaa Naa to select the chief!

I have never heard of that on drumming--not from my grandfathers, my fathers, or my teachers. This has never happened before." He went home.

Then, the regent called Savelugu-naa Dahimani to the palace. The regent gave him the walking stick of our Yaa Naa and said, "You are Yaa Naa. Make me Savelugu-naa."

You know, when a Yaa Naa dies, the regent keeps the walking stick until the new king is chosen. On the night the kingmakers catch the next paramount chief, they will take back the walking stick from the regent. So, Tugu-lan Iyiri gave the walking stick to Savelugu-naa Dahimani and then Savelugu-naa Dahimani put the regent to be chief of Savelugu.

Dagbon become zigzag--quiet. Everybody was feeling bad and was staying in their homes. Then, Kor-naa Bukali Zambalantɔŋ went to Naa Alaasani, who was Kar-naa Alaasani at that time, and told him, "Please, if we are just sitting down looking at this man, he is going to spoil our tradition. For me, I will fight him. But I don't want the people of Dagbon to say that we are fighting each other. I will find someone else who can fight him so that we can defeat him."

After Naa Andani had fought them the second time, the British had gone to a town we call Jerapa in the Upper Region. Kor-naa Bukali went there to meet the white people. He told them, "We have a problem with our regent. We want you to come and kill that man. We don't want you to catch him and put him into a cell. Kill him. Then, we will settle the matter ourselves. There won't be any trouble for you. No one will blame you. After we get our chief, we will allow you people to come to sit in our land." The British leader agreed. He gave him seven soldiers, seven soldiers, that is what my teaching father Namo-naa Issahaku told me. He sent seven soldiers to go with Kor-naa Bukali. They came into Dagbon--moving toward Yendi.

On the day Kor-naa Bukali and the British soldiers were coming to Yendi, the regent was going to his hometown, Tugu. From there he planned to go on to Savelugu. Tugu-lana Iyiri was sleeping at Singa. Kor-naa Bukali's party came to a town close to Singa called "Salankpang." From Salankpang to Singa is just about five miles. Kor-naa Bukali's spies told him that the regent was at Singa on his way home to Tugu. Kor-naa Bukali told the white soldiers, "Go meet Tugu-lan' Iyiri in Singa, but don't fight him in the town. If you

fight him inside Singa, you may kill many people." These soldiers said, "We won't kill anyone apart from the regent. We won't kill many people."

They got up at midnight and went to Singa. Bukali Zambalantɔŋ showed them the house where Tugu-lan' Iyiri was lodging. The British soldiers hid themselves into different places. One man climbed a tree near that house. Other men hid themselves in between the houses, what we call "lariga." Early in the morning, Tugu-lan' Iyiri came out to sit on his horse and go. As soon as he sat down on the horse, the man sitting in the tree happened to cough. The regent turned his head and he saw a white man with a gun. Quickly, another man also showed himself at his back--another man appeared to his left, and another man at his right. Tugu-lan' Iyiri came down from the horse. The man in the tree shot at him, but didn't get him. Before the regent could get into the house, the soldier at his back shot and hit him. Tugu-lan' Iyiri vanished with the bullet, and appeared inside the house. [AL laughs with pride at the power of Dagomba war medicine.] When he came out to fight, the soldiers shot him three times. They killed the regent of Naa Andani. The British soldiers didn't kill anybody apart from Tugu-lan' Iyiri.

When the people of Singa heard that white soldiers were shooting, they started running. Because they hadn't prepared for war, they ran. Some people started toward the bush and others started toward Yendi. The news reached Savelugu-naa Dahimani in Yendi that white people had killed Tugu-lana and were on their way. Then, he ran from the chief palace into the bush. He stayed in the bush for a long time without food or water, but he didn't want to come out and be killed. He stayed there and he died. Farmers found his body. They were afraid to announce it, thinking that people would say, "You killed him." They buried him secretly in the bush.

The white people came to Yendi. They asked, "Who is the leader of the Dagombas when a Yaa Naa dies? Who has to take care of the funeral?" People said, "Gushe-naa is the person." They said, "Call him." The elders of Yendi called for Gushe-naa. The British asked Gushe-naa, "We hear there is no paramount chief in Dagbon now. What happened so that you made the funeral of Naa Andani, but didn't choose a new Yaa Naa?" Gushe-naa said, "Yes, we made Naa Andani's funeral and did not choose our new chief. The regent caused a misunderstanding. We didn't want to bring out any palaver, so we went back to our homes." The British said, "Who is the regent?" Gushe-naa said, "Tugu-lana

Iyiri." They said, "Is it not the person we killed at Singa?" Gushe-naa said, "Yes, I hear that is the person." The British said, "Now what is the problem?" Gushe-naa said, "We have to get our next Yaa Naa."

Then, Gushe-naa called all the kingmakers--the chiefs who have to be present before we make our king. They came together and made Kar-naa Alaasani the new Yaa Naa.

When Naa Alaasani became Yaa Naa, the Karaga skin became available. To whom do you think Naa Alaasani gave the Karaga skin?

DL

The one who helped him get the Yendi skin.

AL

Uh huh! So, Bukali became Kar-naa. Then, the English people went back to Jerapa, prepared, and came to sit in Yendi. The last time you and I went to Yendi, I think you saw a lot of trees and British buildings.

DL

Right. You told me the British planted them.

AL

They planted those trees in Naa Alaasani's time. Kar-naa Bukali's name is very big in Dagbon because he helped our tradition not to spoil. We drummers respect him. His family is still in Karaga up till now. When he died, his second-born became the Kar-naa regent; when that man died his brother became Kar-naa; when he died one of Naa Alaasani's children became Kar-naa; when he died the grandson of this Bukali Zambalantɔŋ became Kar-naa. He is the chief of Karaga now. His name is Mahama.

DL

I am having trouble understanding the relations between the people in the story. Can you help me on that?

AL

The father of Bukali Zambalantɔŋ was Kor-naa Mahami. This Mahami was a brother to Naa Andani. Naa Abudu, who was the father of Naa Alaasani, also was their brother.

Abudu, Andani, and Mahami all had one father; they are children of Naa Yakubu. Each man wanted his own sons to be Yaa Naa or other senior chief in Dagbon. When Bukali was young, soothsayers had told him, "Your uncle Andani may try to kill you because he knows you will be strong one day." Yes, Bukali Zambalantɔŋ had reason to fear Naa Andani. Naa Andani knew that Bukali had strong power and would fight his sons one day.

When Kor-naa Mahami died, Bukali asked soothsayers, "Who killed my father?" The soothsayers saw that Naa Andani was involved. Kor-naa Mahami and Naa Andani had tried their power against each other; Kor-naa Mahami was dead. Bukali became the next Kor-naa. Instead of moving closer to Tugu-lan' Iyiri, Kor-naa Bukali began to make friends with Kar-naa Alaasani. Naa Andani understood that Kor-naa Bukali was remembering his father, Kor-naa Mahami, and was planning to try and punish Tugu-lan'

Iyiri and Mahama, his other son. Naa Andani tried medicine against Bukali, but couldn't succeed.

When Bukali "made one" with Alaasani, Naa Andani thought, "Oh, yes--I killed Bukali's father, so now he is giving himself to Alaasani, the son of my senior brother Abudu. They are grouping together to punish my children, especially my son Mahama." Naa Andani told his eldest son Tugu-lan' Iyiri, "Don't allow Kor-naa Bukali and Kar-naa Alaasani to become united." Already Naa Andani knew that when he died, Alaasani would become Yaa Naa. Naa Andani didn't want to die with his son Iyiri still only the chief of Tugu. Tugu is senior to Korli, but both are small chieftaincy titles. Naa Andani told Iyiri, "Bukali has become a friend-brother to Alaasani. I know Alaasani will become Yaa Naa, but you can't be move up to Karaga unless you fight Bukali. Will Alaasani pass behind his friend's back and give Karaga to you? He won't do it unless you fight." True, when Naa Andani died, Tugu-lana Iyiri said it, "I will fight. If the elders make Alaasani Yaa Naa, I will fight him."

When Naa Andani died and Tugu-lan' Iyiri became regent, he started the palaver about Savelugu-naa Dahimani so that he and Bukali would fight. Bukali also knew that the sons of Naa Andani were against him. That is why he made unity with Alaasani and quickly thought of the British. Bukali defeated Tugu-lan' Iyiri by using the British soldiers to kill him. Now, you see why when Bukali became Kar-naa, he said, "People think they can put chains on me because I am a kalana. But God is there with a chisel to cut those chains."

DL

Can I draw you back to the story of the poison smock? Can you put more detail on it because you told it very briefly at the beginning of this session. When did that happen? Who was involved? Help me remember the wicked man who tried to use the poison gown as a trap to kill Kar-naa Bukali. Who was the actual Zambalantɔŋ?

AL

[laughs] I knew you would be confused. The wicked man was Naa Mahama-kpema, Naa Andani's junior son. He became Yaa Naa after Naa Alaasani died. You remember

that when Naa Alaasani died, Naa Mahama-kpema's older brother, the regent Tugu-lana Iyiri, had tried to overtake everything. Bukali helped Alaasani become Yaa Naa and Alaasani chose him to be chief of Karaga. Kar-naa Bukali was still alive when Naa Alaasani died.

DL

But Mahama-kpema became Yaa Naa?

AL

Yes, because he is a son of a Yaa Naa, Naa Andani.

DL

After Iddi?

AL

After Iddi. To be a Yaa Naa, your father must die in Yendi; you must be a son of the Iyandi skin [Yendi]. Kar-naa Bukali couldn't be Yaa Naa because he was a grandson of

Naa Yakubu; his father had died as chief of Korli. When Naa Alaasani died, Bukali was still at Karaga. He became quiet. He knew that if he had put his name into the contest for the Yendi title, the elders would by all means say, "You are a grandson. Sit down!"

The kingmakers caught Mahama-kpema to sit on the Yendi skin as Yaa Naa. He was senior now. Naa Mahama-kpema was remembering the matters between Kar-naa Bukali, his brother, Tugu-lan' Iyiri, and his father, Naa Andani. He planned a way to get Kar-naa Bukali. Naa Mahama-kpema gave Kar-naa Bukali the kparigo smock to wear and die, so that he could make his own son to become Kar-naa. But long ago, Kar-naa Bukali's soothsayers had warned him of this dangerous gown. Kar-naa Bukali found a way to return it to Mahama-kpema's own son, Tampion-lana Sulley.

One year, it came to Damba festival. Naa Mahama-kpema son--his eldest living son, Tampion-lan' Sulley--said, "I will go to Kar-naa Bukali and do the Damba with him in Karaga." He went to celebrate Damba. Then, Kar-naa Bukali remembered the kparigo and thought to himself, "Let me see if what the soothsayers told me is true. Let me give the smock back to Naa Mahama-kpema's son, Tampion-lana Sulley." The Yaa Naa's son

was wearing the kparigo for the big day of celebration at the Damba festival, what we call "Naa Damba." Tampion-lana Sulley wore it and danced Damba. When they finished the Damba festival, Tampion-lan' Sulley told Kar-naa Bukali, "I will pass to Yendi and greet my father." Kar-naa Bukali said, "Greet him for me."

Tampion-lan' Sulley reached Yendi that very day. He was wearing the same gown when he went to greet his father, Naa Mahama-kpema. Immediately, the father said, "What!?" As soon as he saw the gown, he recognized it and asked, "Where did you get this kparigo?" The son said, "I went to Karaga for Damba and bakpema [senior brother] Kar-naa Bukali gave it to me." Naa Mahama-kpema said, "What? I have killed myself." That is what he said, "I kill myself." The son said, "Is anything wrong?" The father said, "Go quickly and remove it." Tampion-lan' Sulley went to his quarters and took off the gown. The father went to find medicine to remove the curse. He sent his servants to call for the son. When they reached his room, he couldn't walk anymore. He had fallen down. The Yaa Naa himself walked there and tried, tried, tried. His medicine couldn't help.

That night, Naa Mahama-kpema asked Tampion-lan' Sulley's people to take his son to Tampion. It is good for a man to die in the town where he is chief. In the night, they put him on his horse, but according to our lunsi talks he didn't reach Tampion. He died on the road. His people brought him into Tampion and they went back to Yendi to tell Naa Mahama-kpema, "Your son is dead."

The news went to Karaga. When Kar-naa Bukali heard that Naa Mahama-kpema's son had died, he said to drummers, "Zambalantɔŋ--wicked man trap. You set it and you have caught your own son." Then, the lunsi put it into drumming. I think now you get it.

DL

I see now. Mahama-kpema gave the smock to Kar-naa Bukali, remembering the matters of his father and his brother.

AL

When Naa Mahama-kpema offered him the kparigo, Kar-naa Bukali received it, but he never wore it. He was keeping it, waiting for the right time to turn the trap against Naa Mahama-kpema.

In Africa, once something bad happens inside a family, it will never die. If somebody kills your grandfather and you get to know who did it, you won't agree with that person. You will be free together, but your grandfather's death will still be in your heart, burning your heart. You will find something to spoil his family in return. That is what happened with these people. Bukali's father, Kor-naa Mahami, and Naa Andani had crossed against each other and Kor-naa Mahami had died. Bukali wanted to try for his family; that is why he and Alaasani became one together.

Wars come from small palavers, not any big thing. In Dagbon, this is the way our chiefs start fighting. This is why Tugu-lan' Iyiri asked for the blessings two times. The regent called Namo-naa and said, "Bless the chiefs. Kar-naa wants to be Yaa Naa, Savelugu-naa wants to be Yaa Naa, and Mion lana wants to be Yaa Naa. Bless them for me so that I

can decide which will be my chieftaincy after we get our new Yaa Naa." Namo-naa sang the blessings. Karaga is a big town, but we call Kar-naa "Tiŋkpana-naa, a "village chief," because of how the town started. For Savelugu, we say "Yubariga-naa, "chief of many people," a big place. For Mion-lana, we say, "Kusabi-naa," chief of dark things. The regent was acting like everyone would support him in choosing Savelugu because its blessing is sweetest. He said, "You have heard the blessings. I want to be Savelugu-naa." He was pretending. Then, the elders said, "We know that Savelugu-naa Dahimani is a son of Naa Yakubu and has the right to be Yaa Naa, but when we look into the future, we never see him. In fact, Mion-lana's stone follows Kar-naa--before Savelugu-naa. It will be bad if you give it to Savelugu-naa. There will be war." That was when the regent said, "Eh! You people fear the fight. If you don't give to Savelugu-naa, I am prepared for a fight. I will fight Kar-naa." Then, the kingmakers said, "We won't do it. You have found your palaver. Fight!"

All our appellations happen for a reason. Take Naa Alaasani's proverb, "Zim Taai Kulga," "Fish in the river." Alaasani wasn't the first son of Naa Abudu. Naa Andani wanted to be Yaa Naa after his senior brother Abudu. He didn't want Naa Abudu's eldest

son to pass over him and get it, so Naa Andani had a part in the death of the first son of Naa Abudu, Savelugu-naa Mahami. When Naa Andani became Yaa Naa, Naa Alaasani made himself cheap, like person who doesn't want anything. Even so, Naa Andani tried power against him, several times. He couldn't get him because Alaasani and Bukali were united, watching each other's back. If trouble was coming towards one of them, he would warn the other. When Naa Andani died, Tugu-lana Iyiri wanted to spoil Naa Alaasani's chance, but couldn't do it. He fought and died. Naa Alaasani became Yaa Naa. This is why he gave the proverb and said, "There are many fish in the river. Can the fisherman catch all?" He was saying, "Can the Andani family kill all the Abudu family?" That is why he said, "Zim taai kulga. Kuli pali nim' wɔlim jɛ?" [laughs] You see?

DL

Let me change the topic. We have talked about Zambalantɔŋ being a praise used when chiefs are horse riding. Do you use it at other times also or only for that occasion?

AL

At first, when Kar-naa Bukali gave this proverb to himself and drummers composed the rhythms, we played it for him whenever rode his horse. Lunsi played for him and he danced with the horse. The chief would sit on his horse, we played it, and then he moved out. Zambalantɔŋ drumming is very fast, but people started putting dancing on top. People have created steps on that rhythm. Now they are dancing it. Zambalantɔŋ is for horse dancing and people dance on it, too.

This is what is happening for all the appellations. At first, people didn't dance on many of the appellations, but now our youth want to create things. They can't create rhythms and proverbs, but they can create steps. If you see how the legs are moving when somebody is dancing to Zambalantɔŋ or Nantoo Nimdi, you will think that the fellow is a horse [laughs].

You know, if a young Dagomba drummer goes to his drum teacher for Zambalantɔŋ, he will teach only the rhythms. If you are good and sit close to your teacher, he will tell you, "Do you know the reason why Kar-naa Bukali put this appellation against his

name?" Or you can ask him, "Teacher, I want to know the reason why we play Zambalantōṅ for Kar-naa Bukali." If you are good, and the teacher loves you, he will explain.

END