

The Story of Dikala, Dance-Drumming for Blacksmiths

Told by Dolsi-naa Abubakari Lunna, March 7, 2002

Edited by David Locke

DL

Dolsi-naa Abubakari Lunna and David Locke are here at 19 Sagamore Avenue in Medford once again doing research on Dagomba music and culture. I believe it is Thursday, March 8, 2002.

AL

I think it is the 7th because last Friday was the 1st.

DL

Dolsi-naa, as you know, I have been interested in the way that you, the lumsi of Dagbon, have special types of drumming for the different jobs that Dagomba people do. You have been kind enough to tell us about the butchers and I understand that you have music that

you play for blacksmiths in Dagbon. So today, please tell us the story of the blacksmiths and something about the music that you play for them.

AL

There were blacksmiths in the North for a long, long time before they came under the orders of our chiefs. Blacksmiths were there even before we started Dagbon. They lived in families the way the Gonjas did before we, the Dagbamba, entered the land of Dagbon. They lived like the tendamba [land god priests] who were there before our father Nyayysi came and conquered the place. During the olden days, the blacksmiths were on their own. They were the people who gave us things like spears, things like knives, and things like the hoes that we use for farming. If you wanted one of these things, you went to a blacksmith; they would make it and sell it to you. That was how it was before the blacksmiths came under the chiefs of Dagbon.

It came to a time when one of our chiefs made war against the Gonjas. He fought and killed a lot of people. After that war, there were no blacksmiths around the Dagomba lands any more. The blacksmiths had been friends with the Gonjas because both of them

lived in the land before we came in. Our Yaa Naa killed many of the blacksmiths--so many that it was like there were no blacksmiths. The Yaa Naa killed many Gonja people, too, but then they also killed him. I am talking about Naa Darizɛyɛ; he is the Dagomba paramount chief whom the Gonjas killed. When the Gonjas killed Naa Darizɛyɛ, it took us Dagbamba many years to get a new paramount chief. Finally, one man became chief after him. That chief went to fight the Gonjas again because they had killed our chief.

I am telling you about Naa Luro. He is the person who came forward to say that he wanted to be chief. The kingmakers of Dagbon enskinned him. Naa Luro was proud to have become Yaa Naa. One day, he received a messenger from his mother's home. The messenger told Naa Luro that his mother was coming to greet him because he had the good luck to become Yaa Naa. The mother's town people came. They did a dance that made Naa Luro happy. He called for Goyibga, his loving wife, his serving wife. You know, every Yaa Naa has one wife who always takes care of his food and his water. Naa Luro called Goyibga and said, "I trust you. You are very good to me in the way you prepare my things. I want you to cook food for my mother's family." Naa Luro killed a sheep and prepared the meat for Goyibga to cook.

On that day, Satan came to Goyibga. She started acting annoyed at Yaa Naa. Goyibga received the meat, but just put it down and refused to cook. Some drummers say that she sat spinning cotton; and other drummers say that she sat using her chewing stick. Early in the morning, the dancers were near to the end of their all-night performance. The Yaa Naa asked one of the Naazoo servants, "Can you go and find out if they have prepared the dancers' food?" The Naazoo went. There was no one in the cooking yard. All the women were in their rooms. Because the cooking job had been given to Goyibga, the servant had to go to her room. Goyibga was just sitting there. Nothing was prepared. The Naazoo saw that the meat was not cooked at all and said, "Oh! Our chief says that I should come and see if you have cooked. Is the food ready?" Right there, Satan took Goyibga.

Goyibga couldn't be bothered with the chief's Naazoo. She didn't tell the servant, "I have cooked," or "I didn't cook." She just sat in silence. The servant asked her three times. She gave him no reply. So, the Naazoo went back to the Yaa Naa's palace and sat with the chief. The chief said, "How? Didn't I send you? I sent you! Now you are back, but

you don't tell me anything!" The Naazoo said, "I went. I entered the kitchen yard. There was nothing. I went to Goyibga room. She was sitting chewing her stick. Three times I asked her about the food. She didn't mind me. Now I don't know what to tell you."

Day was breaking. Naa Luro got vexed. He stood up and walked with his Naazoo to Goyibga's room. The Yaa Naa saw the meat for himself and said, "What?! I gave you a job. Have you refused to do it?" Goyibga didn't even look at the chief's face. Naa Luro asked her, "Is it not you that I am talking to?" When Goyibga didn't even bother to notice him, Naa Luro became really angry. He asked his servant--we lunsu call him Namo-yuu, "Namo-yuu, can you whip her for me?" He would never do it himself because in our country the Yaa Naa never slaps or canes anybody. If the Yaa Naa uses something on you, then you have to be killed. So, the Namo-yuu took a whip we call "barazim" and he struck Goyibga once. Yaa Naa said, "Add her one." Namo-yuu whipped her again. Yaa Naa said, "Add her another one." Namo-yuu gave it to her.

Then, Goyibga stood up and said, "You! Don't become too proud. You don't need to be too proud. A chief has died. We were without a chief for a long time and then they made

you Yaa Naa. The chief who died, do you know where he died? Do you know where his grave is? Before you can call yourself 'chief,' you must go and see where Naa Darizɛyɛ died. If not for his death, would you have become Yaa Naa? Go and see his grave before you become proud. Don't put your worries on me. Leave me in peace."

Then, our Yaa Naa became so weak! The matter Goyibga told him was hard. A man had died before Luro became Yaa Naa. Some people killed him! How did they bury him?

Did they bury him the way a Yaa Naa should be buried? Did he even have a grave?

Goyibga had said, "You don't know the grave of Naa Darizɛyɛ, but now you are bluffing!" You can see why Naa Luro became weak.

Naa Luro went out. He went to his sampahi [outdoor shaded place for sitting] and sat quietly. After his mother's people left, he called all the elders of Dagbon and said, "I am going to follow my son to the Gonja land." He was calling the chief who had died "my son" because a Yaa Naa never calls anybody by his real name; the Yaa Naa only uses titles like "junior-father" or "son." Naa Luro said, "My son, whom the Gonjas killed, I am going to see your grave before I come back here."

Then, the elders of Dagbon told Naa Luro, "A father never chases after a son. It is a son who chases the father. If the father travels for long time, it is the son who has to go find him and bring him home. The father never goes to look for the son." Naa Luro only said, "Oh." He didn't reply. After the elders had said that to him, they all left. They knew that Naa Luro was trying to put them into trouble. That is why they went away and left him alone.

The Yaa Naa sat there thinking for some time and then came out. He discovered that a sheep had brought forth a new baby. Naa Luro took the lamb into his bedroom to keep it apart from its mother. He didn't want the mother to see its baby. After Naa Luro had hidden the lamb, the mother sheep started running around. She ran inside the house, ran outside--crying. Then, Naa Luro nodded his head.

Naa Luro called for the drummer we call "Akarima"--he plays the atumpan drums--and told him to summon the elders back to the palace. Akarima did it. They came. Naa Luro sat with them without saying anything. The sheep didn't bother about the people; it just

kept on jumping around them, looking for her child, crying, "Maa maa." Finally one of the elders shouted at the sheep, "What is troubling you? Don't you see us sitting here? Why are you jumping over people?" Another elder said, "Maybe she is trying to find her baby." At that point the Yaa Naa spoke, "Ah hah! You people! Everybody in the world says that a sheep is a foolish animal. This sheep has lost her lamb. She is looking for her child. I too have lost a son. When I told you that I wanted to look for him, you all advised me not to go. You people are telling lies! I will go. Prepare and let's go."

It was drying season when we Dagbamba started preparing for the campaign against the Gonjas, but it was rainy season before Naa Luro's army was ready to move. Every place was full of grass. Some elders advised him to wait, but Naa Luro said, "This is my time. I will never stop now." Naa Luro and his warriors started on the journey to the Gonja land. They reached a river called "Yilinga." The Yilinga was so full of water that the Dagbamba couldn't even see its edge. The walk from where the high grass started to the river's edge was as far as from this house to the traffic light on the corner. Naa Luro stopped and asked, "How can we cross?" One of his leaders told him, "Before we will be able to cross, we need to find the gbandari people." Gbandari are people in Dagbon who

do things like fishing and hunting; they know how to make things. They could build a bridge for Naa Luro and his army. Naa Luro called for the gbandari. If I call all the names it will delay my story because there were ten of them.

DL

If you are performing Sambanluṅa do you play all their names?

AL

Yes, I have to call all of them.

When the gbandari were there, Naa Luro told them, "I want to cross this river and go to the Gonja's land. I want to see my son's grave. This river is full of water. A Yaa Naa never goes into water. My warriors also cannot walk in water. We want to cross on a bridge. Can you people put a bridge over this river?" The leader of the gbandari told him, "Yes, we can put a bridge on the Yilinga, but we don't have good tools. We don't have kpansi [heavy machetes] and we don't have cutlasses."

Then, Naa Luro asked his warriors if they had cutlasses. They had them and kpansi too.

The gbandari took them, but said, "The trees we are going to use to make the bridge are too strong for these tools. They are not sharp enough to cut the wood." We call those trees "gbanzalensi." You can put that wood in the ground for more than twenty years and it will not rot. I used gbanzalensi branches to make the shade and benches where people sit outside my house. That sampahi is now more than ten years old, but I have never changed the wood.

Naa Luro said to his leaders, "So, our cutlasses are not sharp? How can we make them sharp?" The elders told him, "You have to look for the blacksmith families. Blacksmiths must come to sharpen our cutlasses so that we can cut the wood for your bridge." When he heard this, the Yaa Naa looked around. No blacksmiths. In all of Dagbon there were no blacksmiths because the chiefs had been killing them. To escape this killing, the blacksmiths had run to different lands. Naa Luro asked, "How do you people suggest we get blacksmiths?" Someone among the warriors said, "My lord, can you send somebody to Gambaga in the Mamprussi's land? I have heard of a man named Faamoro." Faamoro became the first blacksmith chief in Dagbon.

DL

Wasn't the Mamprussi kingdom in a different direction? The Dagbamba were moving toward the Gonja land.

AL

Yes. Gambaga was toward their back. Gambaga is in back of Diari and they were moving in front of Diari.

So, Naa Luro sent somebody. The person found Faamoro and said, "The chief of Dagbon, Naa Luro, has ordered me to come and call you to him." You know, during that time even if you had done nothing wrong and were just in your house minding your own business, when you heard that the Yaa Naa was calling you, you would be worried. You would have good thinking and you would have bad thinking, "What did I do? What is the chief going to do to me?" Faamoro sent for his brothers and children. He gathered them all and said, "I was here at home. I saw a horse rider with the spear of Naa Luro.

The chief has sent this messenger to call me. Prepare! We are going to answer the chief's call."

You know, the thing the Southerners call "firikiwa" we Dagbamba call "fiensi" [iron castanets]. The adawuro that Southerners use for Ashanti Adowa, we call it "yaasi" [boat-shaped iron bells]. The instrument the blacksmiths use for Dikala, we call it "sabaani." [iron cymbal-like clappers].

Faamoro took his family back into Dagbon to Naa Luro's camp. When they had come before the chief, the servants of Naa Luro started greeted them. The blacksmiths did not answer with words. They answered with fiensi, "jo, jo, jo, jo, jo." They used their iron things to talk for them. When the greetings were finished, the blacksmiths stopped their beating. Then, Yaa Naa asked them, "Who is your leader? Who is Faamoro?"

Faamoro stood up. Naa Luro said, "I did not call you in a bad mood. There is nothing wrong. I want to cross the Yilinga, but look at the water! I can't be waiting here until the water dries before I cross. I have asked the gbandari to build a bridge, but they say that

their cutlasses are not sharp. This is why I have called you. Sharpen the tools so that these workers can give me a bridge. Then, I will cross into the Gonja land." Then, Faamoro also spoke, "Oh, I did not know why you called me. I did not bring zuḡuri [bellows]." A zuḡuri is what blacksmiths use, "phew-phew-phew," to heat up their fire. Faamoro said, "I don't have zuḡuri. Also, I did not know you would put me to work so I didn't bring any iron here." Naa Luro thought for a moment and spoke, "I will get you iron and I will get you zuḡuri."

Naa Luro gave Faamoro nine goats, saying, "Kill the goats, eat the meat, and use the skins to make zuḡuri." Then, Naa Luro sent people to the bush, "Go and bring koḡibiali." Koḡibiali is black gravel that our grandfathers used for iron before we met Europeans. They went and brought back the koḡibiali. In Dagbon there is a tree we call "lanjeḡa." Naa Luro commanded, "Cut lanjeḡa wood. Burn it to make charcoal." So, they used goatskins to make zuḡuri and burned lanjeḡa to make charcoal. With the charcoal they melted the gravel into iron. Faamoro and his family made new cutlasses and new kpansi and gave them to Naa Luro. Then, Naa Luro called the gbandari, "Are these not your spears? Are these not your cutlasses?" They said, "That is so." The Yaa

Naa said, "OK, now do your work." The gbandari started building the bridge over the Yilinga River.

Some of the workers wanted to run away. There was a hunchback among the chief's servants, those people we call "Naazoo." One evening, this hunchback heard the gbandari talking, "Now the chief has got us. What we need to do is to run from here. We have to escape." The hunchback went and told the Yaa Naa, "These people, your gbandari, they are planning to run from the work you have given to them. Let men dig deep holes. Every day after the gbandari close from work, let them finish eating and then put them into the holes. Put sand up to their necks and leave them. The next day bring them out. They will do the work quickly." Naa Luro said, "I hear. I will do as you suggest."

The chief told his men, "Dig eleven holes." The gbandari were ten in number, so you see, he wanted one for the hunchback! [laughs] So, they started making the holes, straight holes. The chief was watching them work; the hunchback person was following him. When they came to the end of the row, the hunchback saw the eleventh hole and

said to himself, "What! Is this man, my chief, going to put me in a hole too?" [laughs]

The next day after work, Naa Luro asked warriors to put all ten gbandari people into the holes. Then, they came for the hunchback. The hunchback said to Naa Luro, "Look! Are you putting me in also?" The Yaa Naa said, "Yes, I want you to hear more and tell me." [laughs] Naa Luro put eleven people into holes.

Then, Naa Luro asked Faamoro, "Now give me spears and give me arrows." Faamoro and his family went to their work side and started that work. By the time the bridge was ready, they had made plenty. The gbandari cut wood. They took grass and the clay we use for making pots. They covered the wood so that when people passed on it, they would never be in water. When the bridge was finished, Naa Luro and his army crossed into the Gonja land. Naa Luro was able to go and kill the enemy who had killed Naa Darizɛyu. Naa Luro killed Kalosidegia.

Now I am going to bring the linsi of Dagbon into this story of Dikala. At that time,, the linsi were not with the chiefs. Some time before, a palaver had come between the linsi and the chiefs. We linsi were refusing to do our work. The linsi had left the chiefs and

had settled in their own town close to Diari. When Naa Luro returned from the war, he wanted to celebrate in happiness. He told his servant, "I have done what I set out to do. Now I am proud. How can I get somebody who can praise me? I need that to finish the war." But nothing could make him happy because there were no lunsɩ drummers. Bizuŋ had died. The only luŋa drummer was Bizuŋ's son, Lunzɛyu, who was in the drummers' village with his family.

Naa Luro began looking for musicians who could praise him and make him feel proud.

The servant, the one called "Namo-yuu," was sent out to search for a praise musician who could please his chief. First, he tried a player of the yua flute. He brought a yua drummer in front of Naa Luro. The Yaa Naa asked him to do what he could do. The yua player put the flute into his mouth and started playing, "zii zii zii zii, zii zii zii zii." He was not telling Naa Luro anything. The Yaa Naa said, "You are a drummer, but you are not one who can take a chief to war."

Then, Naa Luro sent the Namo-yuu to bring the people who beat what we call "batani."

The batani drum was our forefathers' guŋ-gɔŋ drum. We Dagbamba borrowed the guŋ-

gɔŋ drums that we play now from a tribe in Togo. Before that, our old drummers used the batani drums. They played with two sticks like the person you saw on guŋ-gɔŋ at the Damba Festival in Tolon in 1976.

DL

Yes. We saw it last night on the video you brought from Africa.

AL

Yes, Yaku-bila was using two sticks.

The Namo-yuu quickly went and found a batani drummer. Naa Luro asked him, "Are you a drummer?" The man said, "Yes." The Yaa Naa said, "Then, drum for me." He put the guŋ-gɔŋ in front of him. He took up his right stick and he took up his left stick, "twei--twei--twei twei twei chick-a-twei twei twei chick-a-twei." Naa Luro said, "No. You are not the one I am looking for. You are a drummer who can play for me in the Damba Festival, but you can't drum for me to go to war. You can't make me happy to fight."

Then, Naa Luro sent for the Akarima. The Namo-yuu went and brought him. The Akarima came and did his work, but Naa Luro said, "No. You are a Monday drummer, a Friday drummer, but you can't give me what I am looking for." [The chief receives homage on those days of the week.]

Now the Namo-yuu didn't know who again he could find to please his lord. He had forgotten about Bizuj's family! The servant walked out into the bush. He was alone-- crying and talking to himself about Naa Luro, "This chief! I think he is finding a way to kill me. Where am I going to get another drummer? All the drummers I know I have brought, but you say that you don't like them and order me, 'Go and bring another.' Where am I going to get the drummer whom you like? I will go back to you with empty hands. Kill me if you want. Kill me so that I will be free."

Luckily, the Namo-yuu met an old man who had come to the bush looking for food for his baby chicks. The old man asked, "Namo-yuu, why are you crying and talking to yourself like this?" The Namo-yuu said, "My problem is our bad chief who has caused

the death of so many people. I want to say to him, 'You found your war. Look at the suffering we have had. We went to the Gonja's land and fought for you. You were able to conquer. Now do you want to kill me also?' Naa Luro says that I must find a drummer for him. I have brought all the drummers I know. He rejected all of them." Then, that old man said, " Oh, but you forgot Bizun's family! Lunzeyu and his family are in Yoyu. Go there. Bring Bizun's son, Lunzeyu, to Naa Luro."

The Namo-yuu went to Yoyu. Our grandfather, Lunzeyu, said exactly what Faamoro had said, "A call from the Yaa Naa can either be good or bad." Lunzeyu gathered his family. His brothers all had titles. Lunzeyu called for Lun-naa, he called for Sampahi-naa, he called for Lunzo-naa, he called for Tahinaa, he called for Iwo-naa, he called for Dolsinaa, he called for Dobihi-naa, and he called for Bizun Paya Gbanbuwa who was the female regent [the first-born female child of Bizun]. When all these drummer chiefs were present, Lunzeyu said, "Lets go and listen to why Naa Luro has sent for us." They all prepared and then they went to Naa Luro's court.

As they approached the palace Lunzɛyɛ took up his luɔa and said, "[Dagbani]." Lunzɛyɛ was praising two towns, Pupoli and Sampimu. Pupoli is the town of Naa Luro's grandmother and grandfather. In Sampimu, Naa Luro had more family on his mother's side. Naa Luro understood the luɔa's meaning. He wondered, "This drummer! I have never met Lunzɛyɛ and his people so how can they know my mother's history and call her family praises like that? He never met my parents. How does he know my mother's home?" Then, Naa Luro said to Lunzɛyɛ, "N-yaba [my grandfather], stop. You are the drummer I want! But before we talk, I know that you have walked from far away. Stop drumming. Let my people prepare food. After you eat, I will say why I have sent for you. I will ask you to do something for me."

Naa Luro ordered a sheep to be killed. They made the meat ready and prepared a nice soup. While Lunzɛyɛ and his family were eating, small children from the chief's household sat close by them. As you have seen for yourself, in Africa when we eat, we don't finish all the food. The elders must give some to children. So, when Lunzɛyɛ's family had eaten to their satisfaction, they left food for the children. Because the soup was very sweet, the children fought over it and broke the calabash bowl. During the

olden days, if the chief sent food to you and you did not return the calabash bowl, they would cut off your head!

Then, Lunzɛyɛ told his brothers, "When the messenger came to us, I told you that a call from the Yaa Naa might bring trouble to our house. It has come! The children broke the calabash and now my head is going to be cut off. Let's go to the palace right away. I will tell Naa Luro what happened." Lunzɛyɛ took his people to the chief and said,

"[Dagbani]." What Lunzɛyɛ said was this, "Grandson of the people of Nyemandu, grandson of the people of Pupoli, you sent for me. You prepared food for me that was very sweet. I ate and reserved some of it for the children. The children broke your calabash. Rather than wait for you to send for me, I have brought myself to you."

Then, Naa Luro said, "As for you, Lunzɛyɛ, any chief who tries to punish the family of Bizun should himself be punished. God himself should punish that chief." Because of Naa Luro's curse, many chiefs in Dagbon don't punish drummers. If a drummer does something wrong to another fellow, he will be sent to the chief's palace. To the drummer the chief will say, "You have done bad," but he will also talk to the other fellow, "This

drummer has done wrong, but because of my house, I can't punish him. You must forgive him."

Then, Naa Luro told Lunzɛyɛ why he had sent for him, "I want praise. I want a drumming name. Can you drum a name for me so that I can enter Bayli with pride."

"Bayli" means "Iyandi" [Yendi], the home of the Yaa Naa. Lunzɛyɛ said, "You have so many names already. Your name is [Dagbani]." Lunzɛyɛ told Naa Luro, "Your name is,

'A child who plays with a lion will get hurt. Let him do it and die so that those watching will know never to play with such a dangerous animal." Naa Luro was so happy. He told

Lunzɛyɛ, "You are the drummer I want!" Right then, the drumming we call

"Baŋgumaŋga" started. [Baŋgumaŋga is a very prestigious drumming composition.]

Lunzɛyɛ didn't stop until he had finished Baŋgumaŋga.

Then, Faamoro stood up with his family. He approached the chief to seek permission to

go back to Gambaga. Naa Luro said, "No! I won't agree for you to go. I will take you

all to my home. Faamoro, you will be my blacksmith. Your family will stay together

with my royal family as the blacksmiths of the Dagbamba." Our drum-father, Lunzɛyɛ,

was watching Faamoro's face and could see that Faamoro didn't look happy. Here it is, the moment we started Dikala. This is why blacksmiths claim Dikala to be their music.

You see, if a chief gives you orders and you refuse, he can have you killed. Lunzɛyɔ told

Faamoro, "[Sings Dagbani meaning of leading and answering luŋa parts, see below].

Lunzɛyɔ was saying, "A chief's order--if you refuse it, the chief will kill you. If you

refuse the chief's order, he will kill you." The leading luŋa says, "[sings leading luŋa part

in Dagbani and then vocables, see below]." You see? The answer luŋa follows, "[sings

answering luŋa part in Dagbani and vocables]."

Lead Luŋa	Ŋuni sayirisi naa noli ŋuni nin kani	If you refuse the Naa's order, you are no more.
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Answer Luŋa	Ŋuni sayirisi ku gbaa o ku	Whomever refuses will be caught and killed.
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Guŋ-gɔŋ	To ŋuni sayirisi ku gbaa o ku	Yes, whomever refuses will be caught and killed.
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Faamoro and his people took up their sabaani and put its sound inside the drumming, "jigiri ji, di jigiji jigi." Do you see why we Dagbamba say that Dikala is for our blacksmiths? That is the story of Dikala. On the very day Dikala started, Bangumanga also was created.

Because of how it started, drummers did not play Dikala just freely. They only beat Dikala if something important was happening, like a big man's death or the enskinment of a new chief. They played Dikala whenever the blacksmiths enskinned a new So-naa; So-naa is the chieftaincy of blacksmiths, their Yaa Naa. For a long, long time drummers would play Dikala only for blacksmiths. But many people liked Dikala because the rhythm is very sweet. After some time had passed, they started playing it more often.

You know, the joking friends of the blacksmiths are the butchers. If a butcher's funeral needed to be done, the blacksmiths would take their sabaani--go and play. If the blacksmiths were having a funeral, the butchers also would send for lunsi drummers--go and dance Nakohi-waa [butchers' dance]. We lunsi play Nakohi-waa for our nakohi [butchers] and we play Dikala for our machele [blacksmiths].

So, this is why Dikala started. The Dikala sound is, "Chief gave order. Chief gave his order." That is the leading drummer's talk. Then, the answer luja drums will say, "Anybody who refuses will be killed. Anybody who refuse will be killed." That is the talk in Dikala.

DL

Thank you for that story.

AL

Your welcome. You see, I could have given it to you in a very short way, "Chief gives his order. All who refuse should be killed," but cutting it short suggests that I don't know the history. What I have told you today, you will not get from most drummers. If you go to many of the drummers in Dagbon, they will say you, "I don't know how Dikala started. I don't know where it came from."

Some people say Dikala comes from Hausa land. Some people say it comes from Dagbon. Some people say it comes from Mampurugu. No! The blacksmiths ran from Dagbon because there was so much fighting. Because blacksmiths were the people who made the war things, people attacked them. Our chiefs said, "Let's kill the blacksmiths. If we kill them, our enemy won't have any war equipment." So, the blacksmiths ran to Gambaga. During the olden days, to get from Diari to Gambaga took many days of walking. It was far and there were no towns along the way where you could sleep. Before you got there, you would suffer.

So, now you have heard the story of Dikala. You know what our ancestors did and how Naa Luro brought the blacksmiths back into Dagbon.

DL

Was it for many generations that the blacksmiths were not in Dagomba area?

AL

So many! That was the time we were starting our kingdom of Dagbon. It was even before Naa Nyaysi, the one who made our chieftaincy sweet. When Naa Nyaysi came into the land and met the blacksmiths, they were living in separate families. Every community had its blacksmith. No chief had "orders on them," as we say in Dagbon. Things changed after the Gonjas killed Naa Darizɛyu. When they killed our Yaa Naa, everybody became fed up. The warriors said, "These people, the blacksmiths, are making the things that kill people. Let's kill the blacksmiths so that they won't make those weapons anymore." Then, the blacksmiths started leaving Dagbon. They ran from the killing.

My teachers told me that after Naa Darizɛyu's death, we Dagbamba didn't have a paramount chief for twenty to thirty years. Without a Yaa Naa, we didn't have control over our land. The Gonjas started using us in any way they liked. Then, Naa Luro said, "I will be chief," and the kingmakers appointed him to be Yaa Naa. Let me tell you, if you are a drummer who needs to convince a Dagomba chief to organize Sambanluja, tell him you will perform the story of Naa Luro. Everybody will be happy to hear his story because it is Naa Luro who started Bangumanja. There was no Bangumanja before Naa

Luro. If any drummer tells you that there was Baᅅgumaᅅga before Naa Luro, tell him, "I don't trust." Listen to Naa Luro's name, "[sings Dagbani of leading luᅅa]." You see, "[sings vocables and Dagbani of leading luᅅa in Baᅅgumaᅅga for Naa Luro]." The words mean, "Let the lion catch the child. Those who are watching from behind will see. Tomorrow, they won't do it." That is Naa Luro's name. Wait! We have two Baᅅgumaᅅgas. In Sambanluᅅa, when you play the history of Naa Zanjina and come to Naa Siᅅli, you play Baᅅgumaᅅga also. For Naa Siᅅli we also say, "[sings vocables of leading luᅅa in Baᅅgumaᅅga for Naa Siᅅli]. Naa Siᅅli's drummer said, "[sings Dagbani of leading luᅅa in Baᅅgumaᅅga for Naa Siᅅli]." These are the two chiefs who have Baᅅgumaᅅga. In Sambanluᅅa, you can start telling the history of Dagbon from Tohi-ᅅe. Tohi-ᅅe has a story, but his story is not played on our drums. You can talk the story, but you have nothing to drum with it.

DL

Were there many chiefs from Naa Nyaysi to the chief before Naa Luro [Naa Dariᅅeyu]?

AL

After Naa Nyaysi? So, many!

DL

And during that time were there blacksmiths in the land?

AL

That is what I am telling you. They were like the tendamba.

DL

History books say that in the land of Timbuktu and Wagadugu, before the chiefs became strong, the blacksmith's clan was very important. In the way the society was organized, the blacksmiths and the tendamba were leading. Then, the chiefs came, fought with them, and took control. From listening to the Dikala story, I am thinking that it was like that in Dagbon.

AL

Yes, the same thing happened in Dagbon. You know, it was the tendamba whom Naa Nyayysi killed. The chiefs who had their own names before Nyayysi were from Karaga, Suson, Guwa--no, it was during Nyayysi's time that the chiefs of those towns got their names.

DL

I want to ask you something. After Naa Luro took Faamoro to be his chief blacksmith, did the way the blacksmiths live change? Did they still make sacrifices for their gods in the way they did before they came under the chiefs? Did they keep their customs and ways of doing things?

AL

Yes, they kept their customs, but many things changed in Dagbon during Naa Zanjina's time. Before Naa Zanjina, when Dagbamba marked the year's first harvest with a New Yam Festival, the blacksmiths and the tendamba sacrificed many things. During the time of our old ancestors, if somebody was going to sacrifice to the things he believed, he had

to call all his friends, call all his brothers, all his family, and say, "This is the day for me to make sacrifices to my gods." People talked like that--"their gods." Many people would come together. They sang, they drummed, they did the sacrifices, and they ate before going back to their homes. Then, Naa Zanjina cleared our Dagbon from those customs. People still sacrificed, but they didn't do it like during the olden days. Even today, I sacrifice, but I don't do it in public. I don't gather people.

After Naa Zanjina made Dagbon a Muslim country, the blacksmiths didn't do big sacrifices. The Dagbamba stopped worshipping like that. Naa Zanjina said, "Lets stop choosing so many gods. Let's follow one god so that our country can be at peace."

Immediately after he became Yaa Naa, Naa Zanjina moved to a town called Sabali. Sabali was the first place where a Muslim man came to live in Dagbon. Naa Zanjina went there to pray. While he was there, the Gonja leader, Kalosidegia, rose against Dagbon. You see, Naa Zanjina had gotten the paramount chieftaincy when he was very young. He had jumped ahead of about seven older brothers, including some with different fathers. Each brother had tried to become Yaa Naa. Each one tried to find

friends among the big sub-chiefs, but Naa Zanjina was very wise and he was picked. We lunsɩ always say that Naa Zanjina was the first "politician chief" in Dagbon. Naa Zanjina starting bribing the kingmakers, you see?

DL

You know, last year you told me this story. I have listened closely to the words you spoke last year.

AL

Naa Zanjina made our place to be free. The people who brought mosques into Dagbon were Hausas and Wangaras. At first, the Wangaras and Hausas were only in one area, but because Naa Zangina welcomed them into Dagbon, they started moving to many places. In Ghana, the Muslim religion started in North before it went to any other place.

When Zanjina became Yaa Naa he told the Dagbamba, "Our fathers used spears and cutlasses to make our towns safe. I don't want to use weapons. I am going to Sabali. I will enter the mosque and pray for our country to be at peace. Join me." Each brother

said to him, "I am not going there. I am not with you anymore." The elder brothers were still vexed that their younger brother was chief. Kalosidegia heard that news, so he started to take back the land we Dagbamba had captured from the Gonjas.

Naa Zanjina heard this news and sent for the brothers. The senior brother told him. "I won't come. You used your wisdom to become chief instead of me. Now take that same sense and figure out how to defend our country." All the brothers told him that. That was when Naa Zanjina called for Naa Siyli's help. This is part of the story of Dɔyɔ Maŋgli and Dɔyɔ Tulli. It was the son of Naa Siyli who brought Dɔyɔ [a drummed praise name in slow and fast tempi]. Naa Siyli captured Yemusa's mother in this war between Dagbon and Gonja.

DL

At last night's drum practice you reminded us that Yemusa had a Dagomba father and a Gonja mother. That was part of the reason a palaver started over the drumming name Dɔyɔ Maŋgli.

I am sorry to ask this because I probably should know the answer, but I am asking it anyway. Did this story of the blacksmiths happen before or after the butchers' story?

AL

Blacksmith is before butcher.

DL

Did the story of Naa Luro and Faamoro come before the story of the Hausa butcher?

AL

No, the butchers' family started during Naa Dimani, who is Naa Luro's senior brother.

But in our custom, we take blacksmiths as senior because they make knives. Without blacksmiths--no butchers. We had blacksmiths in Dagbon before Naa Dimani, before the Hausa butcher man came to Dagbon.

DL

I see. Nakohi-waa came before Dikala, but there were always blacksmiths in Dagbon.

Even when Naa Nyaysi was killing the tendamba, he had spears and arrows.

AL

Right. It was blacksmiths who made them.

DL

Did the Dagbamba bring those weapons from Pusiga where they had been before coming into the land of Dagbon? Did some blacksmiths support Naa Nyaysi, or did he force them to make weapons for his warriors?

AL

It was just like I told you earlier. The blacksmiths were already living on the land. If you wanted some iron things, you went to them. They took what you agreed to give them and they made what you wanted. At that time,, they were the only people who knew how to make iron. Many people got to know that the blacksmiths used black stones to make iron from Naa Luro. Naa Luro showed his knowledge when Faamoro told him, "We have no way to make iron here." Naa Luro said, "Oh, I know about that. I can give you what you need to make iron." When he ordered people to bring black stones, Faamoro said, "Who has told this man our secret?"

DL

Another question--Does the name "Faamoro" meaning something? Does "faa" mean something and "moro" mean something else? Or is "Faamoro" one word?

AL

I think it is one name, "Faamoro." We linsi only know that Faamoro is the name the blacksmith's father had given him. After the war Naa Luro said to Faamoro, "A sɔ naa,"

and gave Faamoro a chief's skin to sit on. Naa Luro said to him, "You helped the chief. You helped me do this fight." After a long time, people changed those words into a name, "So-naa." That is the blacksmiths' chief.

DL

In Dagbon now, do blacksmiths have their own chieftaincy system like the lunsu?

AL

No. Every town with a blacksmith family has one chief, So-naa. They don't have different chiefs other than So-naa. Go to our big towns. In Yendi, you will get Yeli So-naa; in Karaga, you get Karaga So-naa; in Tolon, you get Tolon So-naa; or in Gushegu, you get Gushegu So-naa. Blacksmiths don't have any other chieftaincy titles.

DL

I am going to ask one more thing and then we will take a break. These days in Dagbon are the people who play Dikala members of a group, like the way there is a Takai

society? Or is Dikala more like Nakohi-waa? Does there need to be a group to do

Dikala?

AL

No, Dikala doesn't have a group. You know, we play Dikala for the warriors of Dagbon.

Because the blacksmiths helped a chief in war, we linsi play the blacksmith dance when anyone from a warrior family dies. Dikala is a title we give for all those people who help chiefs in battle. People in the Tolon-naa's family are warriors; those at Kumbungu-naa's side are warriors; and those at Diari-lana's side are warriors. Those people can ask us to play Dikala for them.

DL

And who plays Dikala? Is it linsi who play it?

AL

Yes, linsi.

DL

But what about the special Dikala instruments?

AL

The sabaani? It is only blacksmiths who play them. Let me give you an example. On the videocassette I have brought this year, you will see a butcher's funeral. If a butcher dies and they plan for Dikala, people from the funeral house don't send for the blacksmiths. The blacksmiths go by themselves because they are friends. They played sabaani at my mother's funeral, but I had to send for blacksmiths. I told them, "I want to play Dikala tomorrow night. Can you people help?" Blacksmiths came. This is how we play Dikala. If you are playing Dikala and you want the sabaani to be there, you have to go to the blacksmith's leader and tell him, "I am planning for Dikala at the funeral I am making. If you can help, I will be happy." At my brother's funeral in Kasuliyili, I took blacksmiths from Tamale. Oh, that night nobody slept in Kasuliyili because many people had never seen sabaani before.

DL

Do the lunsu and blacksmiths always play Dikala for a long time like at an all-night wake keeping? Dikala isn't music that you play for one person's dance and then change to another dance music for the next person, is it?

AL

As a leading luṅa drummer, you can play Dikala like that and the other drummers will answer. You can play Nakohi-waa and the sabaani players will answer you. Even if you play Naybieyu, they will answer you.

DL

I think I get it. The sabaani gives the music a blacksmith flavor

AL

The sabaani follows the guṅ-gṅ. When you are playing Damba, guṅ-gṅ says, 'ka kakaka ki' and sabaani says, "cha chikacha chi"

DL

[telephone rings] OK, let this telephone call be our break.

END