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ZABLONG ZAKARIAH ABDALLAH

**THE LUNSI (DRUMMERS) OF DAGBON:
TRADITION AND CHANGE**



Editor:

DAVID LOCKE

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BY

ZABLONG ZAKARIAH ABDALLAH

EDITED BY DAVID LOCKE

LEGON

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Zablong Zakariah Abdallah

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this book to the loving memory of my late parents, Zablong Zakari Danaa (my father), and Madam Samata Zablong Zakari (my mother), and all family members both past and present of Lung' Naa Busagri lineage. The same dedication goes for my two wives, madam Mariama (Irene) Abdallah Zablong, Paulina Abdallah Zablong and their children.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PEOPLE AND THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

This Chapter gives a brief history of the *Dagbamba*. It also touches on their geographical location in Ghana, mentioning the names of some big towns they occupy and the population of the *Dagbamba* in general. This chapter also contains material about the recruitment and training of *Lunsi*, which is the focus of this thesis, as well as the methods applied in their selection and how they are trained, including where they are trained and who their trainers are.

The *Dagbamba* (Dagomba), who are of the *Zamfara* origin, are presently the largest ethnic group in Northern Ghana. They occupy a vast area of land situated administratively in the following districts; Eastern and Western *Dagbamba*, *Tolon-Kumbungu*, *Savelugu-Nanton*, *Gushiegu-Karaga*, and *Zabzugu-Tatale*. They inhabit important settlements such as *Mion*, *Karaga*, *Tamale*, *Yendi*, *Savelugu*, *Zabzugu*, *Gushiegu*, *Kumbungu* and *Sang*, to mention but few. The population of the *Dagbamba* in the year 2000 was estimated to be around 1.2 million (Alhassan, 2000). The *Dagbamba* are agriculturists who cultivate the following crops: yam, cassava, maize, millet, groundnut, beans and guinea-corn to mention but few. With regard to animal husbandry, they rear cattle, sheep, goats and poultry farming. However this does not mean to say that currently some of them are not in the business sector.

The *Dagbamba* consider their territory to be a powerful kingdom with a very rich cultural heritage, very significant for their social, cultural, economic and political development. They are excellent farmers, artisans and tradesmen, and have well-tested traditional methods of healing as well as elaborate traditional religious practices. In the past there were well-recognized modes of passing on traditional skills to the younger generations in the hope of perpetuating these skills (Oppong 1973). The chieftaincy institution of *Dagbon* which is seven hundred years old today, was a blessing centuries back, but now is proving to be a bane, as conflict between the rival gates for the *Yendi* skin continues unabated. In *Dagbon*, the Drummers (*Lunsi*) are court historians, musicians, geographers, consultants, advisers, judges, and chroniclers of the past and recorders of the present. They are also teachers, researchers, and carvers. The *Dagbamba* have preserved in their drum histories a rich historical narrative that is interwoven with myth, and records the origins, migrations, battles and genealogy of their royal rulers. In short *Lunsi* are traditional historians who keep the history of *Dagbon* to

memory, which is recited any time there is the need for it. *Lunsi*, as part of the heritage and survival of the society, not only use the historical narratives in uniting the people but also use them to let the chiefs know who they are. They also use the same historical narratives to tell who the heroes were in the past.

Lunsi are also transmitters of information, in the sense that whenever a dignitary is to pay a visit to a particular town or village, the chief, on receiving the information, gives it to the chief drummer (*Lunga Naa*). He then elects a young drummer to pass the message to the entire community through the drum. This is normally done in the evening when every member of the community is expected to be at home. The same thing happens if there is theft or they are to go hunting as a community. Their services are also needed whenever there is going to be the construction of roads or weeding of footpaths.

The *Lunsi* (Drummers) perform indispensable services for the chief on all state and politically significant occasions, as well as providing music for naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals and all other social gatherings. Their importance is partly reflected in the number of ranked titles they possess and the strict measures taken to ensure that a continual supply of the recruits to the profession is always available (Oppong 1973). A few of the titled drummers are as follows: *Namo Naa* (the overall chief drummer of *Dagbon*), *Zablong*, *Darikuga Naa*, *Malchendi*, *Toonbihi*, and *Palo Naa*. There is a kind of collaboration between the drummers and chiefs. This is not only because of kinship relations between them but they play several vital roles in the political organization of the kingdom. *Lunsi* are highly respected, especially by members of the royal families. The reasons for this phenomenon would be explained in detail in the coming chapters. They (the royals and every *Dagbana*) call them *N-yebe*, meaning my grandfather. This is in respect of *Bizun*, who was a prince and one of the early drummers. His father was *Naa Nyagse* (who was a *Yaa Naa*), but he became a *Lunga*. Because of this and other reasons the *Lunsi* are held in high esteem in *Dagbon*.

1. 2 The Problem

The general problem is that there is a reduction in care of the young by the older generations following societal changes, which are both natural and human induced. These changes have altered the very fabric of the *Dagbon* culture, including socialization hence the relegation of the significance of the institution of *Lunsi* to the background.

Modern trends are reducing the rate of recruitment and training of *Lunsi*. These include watching television, going to video centers, cinema halls, and

discos. Furthermore there are changes in the public or community's attitude toward *Lunsi*. People prefer attending these modern forms of entertainment to watching *Lunsi* performances, e.g. *Lunsarigu*¹. These new or modern forms of entertainment (television, cinema etc) are also distracting some of the recruits from their training. Population increase, which has led to the scarcity of land for farming, has also prompted the migration of the young drummers to the south in search of better opportunities. In addition the current loss of status of chieftaincy and the lack of proper care for *Lunsi* have made some young *Lunsi* shy away from the institution of *Lunsi*. It has also in one way or the other caused the migration of some drummers to the south.

Also changing is the way the society sees them and what is expected from them. On the other hand, I want to investigate how they see themselves and what they expect from the society. Apart from their being historians, musicians, entertainers, and so on, some people consider them to be beggars. However, this perception does is not true, in the sense that the token given to the drummers during performances is just for one to express his or her gratitude for a job well done. For the *Dagbamba* are of the belief that no individual can pay any drummer enough for the service rendered at any given time.

1.3 Objective and Methods

In this study my objective is to indicate why the rates of recruitment and training of *Lunsi* are declining. I am also interested to demonstrate the declining significance of *Lunsi*.

I also want to look at the overall impact of the decline of recruitment and training of *Lunsi* on the institution of *Lunsi*. Finally I hope to illustrate the impacts of the decline of the "culture of care" on the *Lunsi* in the *Dagomba* society.

This is an ethnographic study, based on cases. Among those interviewed were old and or chief drummers as well as young but talented and experienced drummers, in addition to new recruits and trainees. I have throughout drawn upon my own life time experience as a drummer in the service of Dagbon.

¹ *Lunsarigu* are the historical reviews that normally take place at the various palaces throughout Dagbon during the nights of the *Id-ul-Fitr* and *Id-ul-Adha* festivals.

1.4 My Own Case-Notes on Recruitment and Training as a *Lunga*: My Personal Experience. Childhood (Improvisation Period)

The period in my life I termed as improvisation period was my age from two to four years. That was the time I used a broken calabash as a drum, *Lung*. At the age of four, my father made a small *lung* (drum) for me, which I used to play any sound or rhythm with at will. At that age I played any thing at all and no correction was made. I was rather encouraged to play it hard. Between four and six years, with my small *lung*, I was made to start practicing with the older ones (my senior brothers) when ever there was a performance; performances like *Zega* (the traditional method of cementing, skidding the floor of rooms and the inner compound), funerals, durbars and even during festivals. I was first shown how to respond to calls by the lead appellate. At that age and time whenever I went off rhythm my experienced senior brothers called me to be on the time line with them, this was both verbally and through the drum. This was also a way of teaching me the drum language.

Unlike the *Akan* and other southern ethnic groups who use the drum bell (*dawuro*) to keep the drummers on the time line, we *Dagbamba* have ours in our mind. As such every Dagban' *Lunga* (drummer) keeps his time line, and so knows when he is on or off the time line. So as a young trainee it was the older ones who kept on correcting and guiding me till I became perfect with the responding or supporting aspect of *Dagbamba* drumming. This I took some years to get all types of responses, because all different dances have different responses. And I took years because it is only when there was a performance that I learnt it. One would realize that there are certain performances or dances that are performed on special occasions. Examples are the court music and the annual festivals. After the festival that particular performance does not take place again; an example is the drumming that goes with the historical narratives or review on the night prior to the two *Idi* (Muslim) festivals.

1.5 Introduction to the A.B.C of Dagbon Drum Poetry

Age six was the age at which I was introduced to what I termed the A.B.C. of Dagbon drum poetry. This drum poetry I am talking about is *Dakol nye bii ba yee Nam lana – Dakol n nye bia; o ba nyela Naawuni*. This means the bachelor is the junior in the African family setting, his father is God Almighty. *Pag' lan nye kpem ba yee Nam lana; pag ma o ban ye la Naawuni*. This also means that, the married man is older; his father is also God almighty. My trainer was my father. Every evening, before 6.00 p.m. I made sure I swept around the outer compound.

I gathered the rubbish and threw it away. Then I made ready the place where my father and I will take the lessons. My father recited a few portions and made me to repeat the same after him.

With the little knowledge I acquired in the A.B.C. of *Daghamba* drum poetry I used that during every market day to get some token amount and ingredients for my mother. These were special market days that follow weekends and public holidays. On such days, I went to the market center to perform solo or in duet. Whether it was duet or solo all I did was to play a rhythm, pause and sing my *Dakol nye bii ba*, moving from one place to the other. This was mostly around that part of the market women occupy. Some of them gave me money, others the ingredients they sell. These were ingredients like pepper, onions, salt, and fish and so on.

The *Dakol nye bii ba* as mentioned above, the teaching was in portions. Whenever I was taught a portion my trainer made sure I could recite that part off by heart without mistakes before more was added. I used four months to graduate at that level including the tenses and word formation. I moved on to the construction of sentences.

The construction here refers to my learning the drum poetry (drum names) and my ancestral genealogy, which took two months to complete. Since this training process was between my trainer and me, any time he traveled I practiced on my own till he returned. Apart from my performance on market days, to keep me on track and also to refresh my memory I also sang whenever I was on my way to the farm or on the farm working. It was after I was able to recite everything of the A.B.C. to Z that I was given the opportunity to pound the ingredients *Zeri tobu* at the *Yelzoli Lana's* palace (the chief of *Zabzugu's* residence) during the night of the *Id Fitr* festival. This was my first experience but very successful for a lot of people gave me presents, including some of the chief drummers. I gave all these to my father for those days at my age I did not need money for anything. All goods were prepared in our house. My clothing was provided by the old man. This was because I was the youngest ever to have made it that way. I was eight years by then. On that very night the oldest drummer by then *Lung' Naa Nassam* predicted by saying "*N-yeh Zablong, a bii nmou maa ni lei bangda sohi beigni*", literally meaning "my grandfather *Zablong*, your son will be a knowledgeable somebody tomorrow".

1.6 Introduction to *Nam* (Genealogy of the Yendi Skin)

On one faithful Friday night my teacher and father told me that in view of my progress in the learning process he would introduce me to *Nam* (the drum poetry and genealogy of the past up to the then *Yaa Naa*) by Monday. I was so much delighted that I prayed for Monday to come as early as possible. Finally Monday was at hand and I was introduced to *Nam* as was promised.

However the introduction began with *Naa Zangina*, who I initially considered to be the first *Yaa Naa*. Nevertheless, it was later during explanation and elaboration time that I was made to understand that it was during his reign that most development and great things took place. That was why the traditional historian thought it wise by using this arrangement in his honour. He made trade popular and introduced *Zanaaza* and *Takaba* in Dagbon. The *Zanaaza* is the preparation of food for those who bury the deceased person, and the *Takaba* is the confinement and later cleansing of the deceased's widow. This is to purify the widow and make her eligible for marriage to other men. Before his time widows were thought to have been dirty and could not go into marriage again. He introduced the walking stick for the blind in Dagbon. Oral tradition has it that before he became king any body found to be blind was locked up in a room till he died through suffocation, for such persons were considered a disgrace to the family. It was *Naa Zangina* who discarded that notion and said it was a natural disease and introduced the walking stick for the blind. The tradition says he ordered a gold walking stick, not just an ordinary one.

Initially I was taught his drum poetry, followed by the names of his children, from the first to the last child. This was done in batches, six names at a time, excluding their drum poetry. It was their birth names with the title of a particular village or town that the fellow had ascended to at the time of his death. I was made to keep on reciting each group till my trainer was satisfied that I did not pause to be corrected that he added another six.

When I finished with *Naa Zangina* I was taught *Naa Sigli*. The method my trainer used in teaching *Naa Zangina* was the same for *Naa Sigli* and subsequent kings that followed after. I went through them raw till later I was made to turn back for their histories, thus those who had been to war – preparation, venue, why that war was fought and against which ethnic group, during and after the battle all that transpired.

Having completed the historical narratives of *Naa Sigli* I moved on to *Zuu Jingli* after him I went on to *Naa Gariba* then on and on till I came to *Naa Abdulai* the third, the then *Yaa Naa*. These theoretical practices were in the night,

but during the weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) I helped my trainer on the farm. While farming I often chipped in to enquire about some of the things that I was taught the previous night. This was a way of keeping me on track. I was later handed over to *Jenkun Lung' Naa Zakari*, one of my senior brothers, as my permanent trainer. During deliberations on one such occasion on the farm, he lamented that I was such an inquisitive student who asked so many questions that made him be on his toes always.

1.7 Introduction to Appellation

It was during the weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) when I returned from farm, my trainer my trainer and I will take a *lung* each. Whatever he plays on the lung he instructs me to do the same. The main introduction here was “*Namogyilli mal kpiong pam*”, meaning the chieftaincy of *Namogu* is very powerful. The next after this was my ancestral drum poetry and genealogy on the *lung* (drum). Unlike the theory, this was not easy from the beginning. But later on the hand turned out to rather play some rhythms that were difficult to be translated verbally. I could not finish learning this till I moved to *Yendi* to continue with my formal education that my uncle *Dugu Lung' Naa Jakum* helped me through. It was after I finished with our ancestors that he introduced me to *Nam* (*Yendi* skin). During this training period whenever there was a performance I carried the drum of my trainer or that of any senior person if trainer was not part of the programme. At times I was made to carry two *Lunsi* (drums) of senior members depending on the number of trainees going to the performance.

1.8 Introduction to Gungon at Yendi

My arrival at *Yendi* was like something ordained by God. At that material moment I arrived the men who were playing the *gungon* were encountering problems because any time they got tired, there was nobody to relieve them. It was a golden opportunity that I made good use of. Whenever there was a performance, during the prelude I was made to play the *gungon*, and where I went wrong I was corrected immediately. Because *Naaya* (*Yendi*) is a big town and the traditional capital, there were more performances here than *Zabzugu*. This way I was able to pick up the rhythms very fast. Within some few days I had perfected the drumming and performing fully with the group anytime the old *Gungon* players were not available or got tired I took over. While I was learning the *gungon* I still concentrated also on the appellation. At the same period I was taught how to make *Lung* and *Gungon* heads. The first step was making the rings before how to use the treated goat skin to cover the ring, then cut it to size, before

using the string and locally made pin, for the sewing. The next step was fixing it back to the *lung* shell (wooden frame). After making the second head, the *lung* is put in the sun for the treated skin to get dry. I was finally shown how to make the strings and it's fixing to the *lung*. The training took me years but I am still in the learning process. My experiences about the general training processes and general knowledge of the *Lunsi* shall be dealt with in the coming pages and chapters.

My main aim is for people to get a clear understanding of the institution of Drummers in Dagbon. This study is designed to draw people's attention to the position of Drummers in *Dagbon*. I hope it would also create interest not only among *Dagbamba*, Northerners, or Ghanaians, but also to the world at large.

1.9 Literature Review

The literature review in this case is mainly Oppong's work especially her book titled *Growing up in Dagbon* (1973). In this said book the portion of interest and importance to this thesis is that part which deals with how one becomes a Drummer. And here I would like to quote her fully.

(p54 ff) In Dagbon the drummers, *Lunsi*, are the court historians and musicians, chroniclers of the past and recorders of the present. The drum they play is the closed hour-glass shaped drum, carved out of wood with skin membranes at both ends. It is comparable to the Ashanti *Donno* drum. They play an important part in all rituals involving royals including those performed at installation, naming and funeral ceremonies. The unbroken historical narrative and royal genealogy which they remember and recite is the charter of the political structure of the kingdom, and the story of the origins of the people, and as such is vital to the continuity of the traditional system. The task of learning this massive oral body of historical material is an arduous and pains taking one, requiring long hours of patient application and practice on the part of the teacher as well as the pupil. It is a case 'in which specific roles played later by particular individuals makes it imperative to ensure they have acquired the necessary techniques and knowledge' (*Nketia*, 1964). Not only must the young pupils learn to drum but they must begin to learn songs and later the narratives and genealogies, which are part of the tradition. The material is preserved intact and is kept fairly esoteric by the strongly sanctioned taboos against a drummer reciting the whole history at any one time. Sacrifices must be performed when long portions of the history are to be performed and drummers believe that

illness or death will pursue them if they reveal too much of the history to outsiders. At the same time sanctioned rules and restrictions, limiting and ensuring the continuity of recruitment, maintain the unbroken tradition over time.

The length of time taken to become a proficient drummer depends upon the ability of the individual pupil, while one boy may take ten years to learn the repertoire of songs, narratives and accompaniments, another may acquire it in two or three years. And of course individual talents vary, for while one pupil will have a retentive and accurate memory, another will be noted for his sweet singing voice. If a boy begins to learn as early as six or so he may be able to sing and play a number of songs by the time he is about eight and will then be able to practice playing in public at funerals, naming ceremonies or festivals. Learning is thought to be a very difficult process accompanied by ear-pinching and pulling and beating from the teacher. Wisdom is considered very hard to acquire. A typical teaching situation is for the teacher to recline in his entrance hall after supper in the evening, while the children gather round him, sitting and kneeling upon the floor. On one occasion witnessed the teacher was rhythmically massaged by his eight pupils. While they sang songs they rocked back and forth rubbing their teacher's legs and back as they sang (the massage being considered one mode of payment for tuition). The senior and most competent pupil sang the leading phrases which were repeated in unison by the rest, without drum accompaniment. After being specifically taught boys may find an opportunity to practice their songs when alone in the bush or on the farm. The teacher-pupil relationship may be that of real or classificatory elder/younger brother; father/son, mother's brother/adopted sister's son; or in some cases a drummer who is well known for his ability will have children other than close kin sent to him. Nor does the pupil necessarily live in the same house as his teacher. He may live in his father's brother's or mother's brother's house and go to a neighboring house owned by another relative to be taught.

The role of drummer, *Lunga*, in Dagbon may be placed in Nadel's category of 'recruitment roles,' as the child whose father is a drummer is compelled to assume the role at least in a nominal sense, while drummers' daughters, since they are not eligible to assume the role themselves, must give at least one of their offspring to replace them in the next generation. On the other hand strong sanctions also operate to prevent those unrelated to drummers from playing. Thus a drummer's sons stay at home to be taught by their father or are taught to play by a

brother or father's brother. It is considered unthinkable for a drummer's son to stay in his father's house and not learn to play. Should he object very violently to learning his father's profession, however then he may go to live elsewhere, escape by running away, and no evil should befall him so long as he always keeps his drum and plays it symbolically on Mondays and Fridays. But if a son learns when small and later goes south without taking his drum then it is said misfortune and even death will pursue him. Difficult as it is for drummers, when they grow up, it is still more difficult for a daughter's son to escape learning, for he must replace his mother. The particular child who is to represent his mother and siblings with his maternal kin is chosen by divination and then 'adopted' by his mother's brother or maternal grandfather as described above. Even on the day that a drummer's daughter is married her husband is told that one day one of their offspring will be claimed for this purpose. It is usually after a daughter has born one or two children that one is taken at the age of four or five, that is once he is considered capable of leaving his mother without suffering too much. Should a drummer's daughter only bear female children then she must send a daughter who will later be given in marriage to a drummer, or to another man on the understanding that one of her sons will be given to learn to play. Thus it is a strongly sanctioned rule that any drummer's daughter, wherever she is, must send a child back to the natal family, otherwise illness and death caused by the *Lun²tali* will visit her children, in the form of insanity, leprosy or other misfortune. After several such calamities occur the individual realizes through divination and dreams that he must fulfill his obligations. As several cases show, the inherited obligation may pass to the second and third generation of descendants of a drummer's daughter (cf. *Nketia*, 1964: 155). Once a man realizes that he should learn he might even be well over thirty (Oppong, 1969). Cases demonstrate plainly that it is actual descent from drummer ancestry which is the basis of the supernatural sanction, not social paternity. For even an illegitimate son of a drummer will be pursued by misfortune and illness if he never learns to play.

One effect of the mechanisms of recruitment, in this case compulsory 'adoption', is upon the composition and development of drummers' households. Thus in five drummers' compounds of which a census was taken there were found to be three times as many inmates related to the heads through daughters and sisters or through brothers and sons. A further function of this mechanism may be the patterns of preferred and

² Luntali is the tradition of Dagbamba drummers

actual marriages of drummers (see op. cit.). A tendency to endogamy may be partly due to the reluctance of other groups to marry drummers because of their over-riding control in the training of offspring, also drummers are notable of family marriage (taking a *Dogiri Paga*, family wife), the preferred form being cross-cousin marriage, which may have the result of binding adopted sisters' children more closely into the adopter's family."

Another researcher, in the person of Kinney who presented a research paper to the Institute of African Studies entitled "Drummers in Dagbon: The Role of The Drummer in The *Damba* Festival." The documentation was taken from two *Damba* Festivals, one year apart; in 1967 and 1968. In this write up she indicated that the role the African musician plays in relation to his chief is essentially one of mutual dependence. Sylvia illustrated how the musician depends upon the ceremonies and other obligations of the chief in order to fulfill his function as an artiste and to gain recognition for himself. This way the chief in turn, depends upon the reliability of the drummer (musician) to maintain the dignity both of himself and his subjects and the relevance of the traditions. She went on to state that the *Damba* festival is one of the most important occasions in which a drummer relates not only to the chief but the entire community at large. Kinney noted that the role of the *Lunga* drummer in the *Damba* festival is one of utmost importance and he must observe his obligations such that an orderly ceremony might be maintained. In order to illustrate the customary function of the drummer and his reciprocal action with other segments of the social group, here she used the ceremony of *Naa Damba* of the *Dagbamba* people.

Locke (1990) in his book entitled "*Drum Damba: Talking Drum Lessons*", talks about the narrative of his training in *Dagbamba* Drumming, *Lunsi* and *Luntali*, and the description of the *Damba* Festival. This book *Drum Damba* introduces two types of dance drumming associated with the festival, *Damba* and *Damba sochandi*. Here, Locke made mention that while the up-tempo *Damba* is hard-driving and joyous; the slower paced *Damba Sochandi* is smoothly elegant and refined. Locke considered this to be percussion music. He discussed the role of drummers in the *Dagbamba* way of life. He also gave an over view of the nature of the relationship of the *Dagbamba* drummer to his society, and the function of drumming in the social and political systems of Dagbon. In a nut shell Locke pointed out how he learnt to play the *Lung* and *Gungon* from *Abubakari Lunga*. Locke then put the rhythms into musical notes (symbols).

"African Rhythm and African Sensibility" is the title of a book written by Chernoff. In this book Chernoff talked about the research he conducted in Ghana

in 1970 and 1971.³ Chernoff had this to say about the African musician in general and drummer in particular, and I quote.

“In many African cultures, musicians are the acknowledged authorities on history and myth, and formerly in the great centralized kingdoms like Dahomey (Benin), and Ashanti, if a drummer made a mistake when drumming the names of the chief’s lineage, it could be a capital offence; among the Dagbamba, a chief will not go anywhere unless he is accompanied by a drummer to signify his status.”

He also stressed that in Africa, the drum is the symbol of the king and the voice of the ancestors and not the scepter. In this same volume, Chernoff noted that one feature which African musical traditions seem to have in common is the depth of their integration into the various patterns of social, economic and political life.

Nonetheless, in Dagbon (precisely Tamale), Chernoff learnt the drumming of the following dances: Damba, Takai, Bamaaya and Tora. His main focus here was on the supporting responses of the Lung and the Gungon. With the Ewe drumming, he learnt slow Agbekor, Borborbor and Agbadza. Here he learnt both supporting responses and master. In the nut shell, Chernoff noticed the style and values in African music. As a result he noted that a Westerner who understands the organizing principles of African music is prepared to relate to many of the artistic dimensions within which an African musician creates. The reason being that a traveler in even a very limited area of Africa may meet so many different kinds of marvelous musical situations and performers that he may feel his awareness is superficial. According to Chernoff, the music in different places would also feel different, for the interweaving of rhythms by various types of instruments and ensembles would produce music of quite distinct textures. In the case of values, Chernoff is of the view that the essential criteria for distinguishing excellence in African music are, as much ethical as aesthetic. He went further to say that African music must not become the subject of abstract and systematic discussions about morality and ethics, and people do not become analytical about

³ During the field research, he learnt drumming from the following drummers: Dagbamba drumming in Tamale from Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai, that of Ewe from Freeman Donkor of Tsiamé, Gideon Folie Alorwoye of Afiadenyigba and some few others. He also studied Highlife and other contemporary forms of conga drumming mainly from Seth Ankra and Daniel Banini both of Accra. In Haiti he studied “folklorique” with Joseph Thelus of Port-au-Prince. However he pointed out that his first African drumming teacher was Abraham Adzenyah of Winneba.

the fundamental social themes displayed in their music: the point is to participate in the appropriate way.

In Staniland's (1975) book, "The Lions of Dagbon: Political change in Northern Ghana", his interest is about the Yendi skin, and the succession disputes that has engulfed it from pre-colonial era, colonial, up to the early 70s. He also looked at the kingdom's natives response to the introduction of western education. Again it came out from his study the influences various governments from pre-independent to post-independence has on the chieftaincy institution of Dagbon, especially that of Yendi. It also came out clearly the role played by some members of the royal genealogies in this direction. Such people were the few who had some form of higher western type education and occupied certain sensitive positions at that time. For Staniland, his study was concerned with the political history of the Dagomba kingdom especially that of the last seventy years when the kingdom has been subordinated to governments, successively colonial and national. The purpose of his study was to examine the policies which the overlords of Dagbon had adopted in order to preserve, exploit, and assimilate the pre-colonial structure of authority and also to consider changes in local politics which have come about, at least partly, through the action of these external authorities. The concluding part of his work dealt with the origins and character of a major dispute within Dagbon, the conflict which has come to be known in Ghanaian politics as 'the Yendi skin dispute'.

1.10 The Focus

The focus here is on the recruitment and training of *Lunsi*. Here I pose two questions that need to be answered before one can go on to the main topic. The first is who is a *Lunga*? And secondly who is a recruit? The answer to the first question is anybody (male or female) who is born into the drum family. While the male is called *Lunga*, the female is called *Lunga-paga*. However, the answer to this is that every male child of a *Lunga* (Drummer) is a potential recruit. In other words every male child born into a drum family becomes a potential recruit. On the other hand the male child of a female drummer becomes a recruit through divination. I have treated this in detail in this very chapter immediately after *Zuguliem*.

The tradition of Dagbon is such that the female do not beat (play) the *Lung*. In the same way a female does not go to war and for no reason should a female be killed in battle in case she by accident should go to the battle field. According to the tradition of Dagbon *Lunsi* are even considered to be female. For this reason *Lunsi* are not killed in battle. These are some of the reasons why the female is not

permitted by custom and tradition of Dagbon to beat the *Lung*. It is against this background that one male child of the female *Lung* is trained in place of the mother. In Dagbon the normal practice among the *Lunsi* is that whenever a non-drummer is marrying a female *Lunga* the bride is made to understand that when they begin to produce children one male child will be given to the woman's family to be trained as a *Lunga*. However, if she happens to bear no male, a female is taken to be given to a *Lunga* for marriage in future with the hope that his children will automatically become *Lunsi*. This brings us to the question of Zuguliem, which in English means fostering and or adoption.

1.10.1 Fostering or Adoption

Throughout Africa in general and West Africa in particular, it is a common and socially accepted practice for parents to send their children to live with relatives in other households. Several economic motives have been suggested for these "fostering" arrangements. These include the demand for child labour; investment in human capital; child care; and income insurance, e.g. Ainsworth (1985). Let us begin by examining what is meant by fostering, and some difficulties in applying this term to the African situation. People other than their own parents rear children who are fostered. But only certain of the rights and duties of parentage are delegated to the foster parents, while the real parents or their representatives (e.g. the government) retaining the residue. Unlike adoption in which the adopting parents take on the full parental role, in the case of fostering, rights and duties towards the child are shared between real and foster parents (Goody, 1970).

Because of its origins in the Western Social Context, the term fostering has several culturally specific overtones, which must be shed before applying it to the West African situation. In the first place the term may imply that it is "normal" in either the ethical or statistical sense for children to be brought up by their "real" parent; and for a child to be reared by someone else is a deviation from this normal pattern. But the assumption that parents have exclusive claims to "their" children may be incorrect in many non-Western societies. When kinship bonds are strong, children may be thought of as belonging to the descent group or kindred generally rather than to the parents alone. Either the extended family as a whole, as in the traditional *Yoruba* compound (Marris, 1961, p. 56), or particular members of it as among the *Gonja* (Goody, 1970, pp.53-58), may have rights to participate in rearing them. As mentioned above, such "sharing" of responsibility is a characteristic feature of fostering. A special variation of this is found in matrilineal societies. Here the mother's brother (uncle) may have a stronger claim to a child than the father, as is seen in *Ashanti*. If then in a matrilineal society a

child is reared by the uncle, his or her proper guardian, is this the same as fostering in a society, which accepts parents as the proper guardian?

The claiming of rights in children is expressed in the institution of kinship fostering that is prevalent throughout Gonja but taking somewhat different forms in different parts of the country. The institutionalized pattern is for a daughter of the marriage to go to a father's sister (auntie) and a son to the mother's brother (uncle).

Fostering always means a change of residence. The fostered child sleeps in the room of the foster-parent (girls) or with the youths of the foster parents household (boys). Meals are provided by foster-parent and eaten with other children of that compound. It is in the domestic and subsistence economy of the foster home that the child participates increasingly as he matures. If he is still living in the same village as his parents, he will see them regularly and may spend some of his leisure with the play group of his early childhood. However, fostering frequently means moving to a new village as well as to a different household. In these cases the break with the natural family of orientation is more radical and their intervening distance emphasizes the dispersal of the sibling group. The proportion of cases in which fostering involves a move to a different village varies from one part of the country to another.

Esther Goody (1982) asks two questions about fostering. The first is do foster children go to paternal aunts, maternal uncles, and paternal grandmother the traditional foster-parent? Secondly, are they sent in the circumstances specified by the formal norm? The brief answer to the first is that among the Gonja foster-children go to a wider range of kin than is formally specified. With regards to the second question, they are however made often than the norm suggests by the grand parental generation.

However generally there are two main types of fostering; voluntary, and crisis fostering. Voluntary fostering according to the actor's model, is the situation where foster-parents ask for a particular child at birth and then when he is old enough to "have sense", he comes and collect him from the parents. In the case of the crisis, the foster child's parent's marriage might have been broken either by death or divorce. It seems the institution of fostering provides a charter, which can be employed in placing children at the time of the dispersal of the original family of orientation.

1.10.2 Dagomba Fostering and Adoption

Fostering and adoption are also widely practiced in Dagbon and were described four decades ago in a thesis by Christine Oppong (1965). She used the term “fostering” to refer to the institution through which parents temporarily hand over the responsibility for rearing their child to a relative. The child goes to live with the foster parent to serve and be trained by him or her. In this case there is no binding sanctions compelling him to go or stay with the foster parent and his relations with his true parents are in no way severed.

Meanwhile adoption is used to refer to the practice of *Zuguliem* common among drummers where by a child is ceremonially and ritually transferred from its parents to its adopted parents (who are maternal relatives) after being chosen by divination. In this case as Oppong stressed the child or his parents refuse the summons to go on the pain of death. The adopting parents retain some claims on the child throughout his life and he may continue to live with them till marriage or even after. Inheritances right from the father’s side are not affected. This practice is found in the case of *Lunsi* (drummers) and is called *Zuguliem*. *Zuguliem* is compulsory seizure of a child. The compulsion springs from the fact that it is sanctioned by illness, insanity and death.

Zuguliem is a situation where a drummer takes the sister’s son or the daughter’s as a recruit. Since only males are drummers a boy will be chosen, but if the sister or daughter has born only girls, a girl will be taken, who will later be given in marriage, on condition that at least one of her sons will become a drummer.

Here, *Bagyule*,⁴ sacrifice of chicken and libation to the ancestors is performed by the *Dogiri Kpema* (the head of the family or clan), the child is joining. This marks the ceremonial transfer of the child. If the child in question is a male, a *lung* (small drum) is provided during the ritual. This ritual so performed is meant for the ancestors to guide and protect the young recruit to acquire the requisite knowledge to become an experienced and talented drummer.

As mentioned earlier on, every male born into a drum family is a potential recruit, until he grows up and decides to drum or not to drum or practice the profession. Generally, all males who fall between the ages of six and eighteen years fall within the recruitment age. From the age of six the male child is given a small *lung* (drum) and whenever there is a performance he follows the older ones who teach him with the supporting aspect of drumming. The recruit also gets the

⁴ *Bagyule* is the sacrifice of chicken and the pouring of libation to the ancestors that marks the formal transfer of the recruit to his trainer.

chance to have practical experience of some of the performances while on the training. The recruitment period depends on the family size and the demands of society. So it can be an annual or biannual affair. The training of these recruits is both formal and informal. Informally as early as two to three years old the child from the drum family takes a broken calabash and plays any rhythm at all that comes to his mind. This way he is learning drumming the informal way. Formally, at the age of six the male child is given a small *lung* and made to follow the elders or grown-ups to practice whenever there is any performance in the village or town. This is the period he is taught the supporting drum. Then in the night before and after supper he is taught drum poetry, praise singing and oral traditions of the *Daghamba* people.

The training is continuous because there are different performances that require different drumming techniques. Even drumming at festivals varies markedly because of the differences in their significance and the different rhythms associated with the social occasions. In like manner, funerals and more so the performance at Mondays and Fridays also vary from those of durbars of chiefs. The trainers can be the parent (fathers) the guardian or anybody at all who is elected or instructed to take care of the training of the would-be *Lunga* in that particular household or such a family.

Training takes years because, apart from the responding or supporting drumming, drum-poetry, praise singing of the past and present *Yaa Nanima*, the trainee has to learn about the past and present history of his hometown or village. After acquiring the knowledge of these two, (thus learning the history of past and present *Yaa Nanima* and those of his home town or village) that is if the said *Lunga* is not from *Yendi*, every *Lunga* is duty bound, if he is to be versatile, to learn the history of other towns such as *Zabzugu*, *Gushiegu*, *Karaga*, *Mion*, *Savelugu*, *Kumbungu*, *Tolon*, *Tampion*, *Sang*, *Nanton*, *Nakpa-Kworli*, *Sunson* and so on. Appellation is also taught in its different forms during the training period. Appellation is the praises or drum poetry of a chief and or king or any *Dagbana* played on the *Lung* by the *Lunga*.

The period for training beginners ranges between ten and fifteen years, and that of professionals between twenty years to infinity. There is no cash payment or any fixed charge for any trainee to pay to a trainer. The trainees often work or help the trainer on his farm, if they do not live with and work for the trainer. All shares of proceeds realized by the trainee from performances are submitted to the trainer who takes part or all, if he so wishes. This shows the reverence for trainers and there is a strong bond between trainees and trainers. Hence even long after one has completed training as a *Lunga*, anytime he goes to a performance and the proceeds shared, he (the trainee) sends all that he is given to the trainer and the

trainer takes whatever he wishes and leaves the remaining for the trainee. Even if he decides to take all the money the trainee has no say. After taking his share, the teacher prays for God's guidance and protection for the student as the case may be.

Indeed, if for any reason the trainee per chance does some solo performance and still brings home the money to his trainer, the trainer can choose to take all or take some and leave the rest for him. If the trainer of the trainee is not the father of the trainee, the trainer after taking his share may take some of the money to the trainee's father. On the other hand, after taking his share he (the trainer) may advise the trainee to send the rest of his (trainee's) share to the father for blessing. In any case the father after taking his share will also pray for God's guidance and protection for the trainee.

Trainees are assessed through continuous assessment and by examination. The trainee is assessed after he has graduated from the support drumming and later through appellation and finally through final examination in drum-poetry, praise singing and the oral traditions. Here is the breakdown of what is just mentioned above.

*Zeri-tobu*⁵ (literally means the pounding of ingredients). This happens during the night to the day of any of the days that the traditional historians go to the palace for historical reviews. Historical reviews are historical events (e.g. wars fought by chiefs and or kings) of the past chiefs and kings and their genealogies that are recited during the nights of the two Iddis as well as during the enskinment of certain chiefs and the king. This performance is done for the chiefs and king who passed the night in the *Katini Duu*. Details of this can be found in chapter four. Before the main singer (historian) takes the floor, a small boy is made to sing or start the review. The review of the small boy is that termed *Zeri-tobu*. The final exam is when one is either to be a lead appellator⁶, lead praise singer⁷, or a lead historical reviewer⁸ during any of the Islamic festivals or social occasions such as *Damba* and *Bugum*.

⁵ Zeri-tobu is the first part of the historical review that is performed before the main historian takes the floor.

⁶ Lead appellator is one who leads the drummers who play the praises on the drum during performances.

⁷ Praise Singer is one who sings the praises as a soloist or with the group whenever they are performing.

⁸ Historical reviewer is the Lunga who recites the historical events of the past chiefs and kings during the nights of the two muslim festivals and also during the nights of the enskinment of certain chiefs and the king.

1.10.3 Recruitment and training

Having known who a *Lunga* is and more to the point what a potential recruit is, let us now look at how he is trained. As already mentioned, the age range of recruits is from six years on wards. However, with regard to professional *Lunsi*, the recruitment and training age ranges between eighteen and maturity.

The recruit, if he is staying with the trainer, has to tidy the outer compound known in *Dagbani* as *Sanbani*,⁹ every evening before supper. After which he immediately lays the mat or cow skin depending on the status of his trainer. This is normally around 5.45 p.m. there about. He then sits down and begins the singing practice, that is if he has started already. If not, he has to wait till the trainer is ready. When the trainer comes and takes his seat, the first words or sentence that is introduced is *Dakol' nye bii ba Nam lana. Pag' lan nye kpem ba Nam lana. Nwun mall' lan nwun dim ba Nam lana. Nwun kong lan nwun ziya ba Nam lana*. It's this introduction that I termed the A B C of *Lunsi*.

Dakol' nye bii ba Nam lana literally means in the *Daghamba* tradition, the bachelor is the junior, but his father is God Almighty.

Pag' lan nye kpem ba Nam lana. This means the married man is the senior, also his father is God Almighty.

Nwun mal' lan nwun dim ba Nam lana. Whoever has a father (or guardian) should eat, again his father is God.

Nwun kong lan nwun ziya ba Nam lana. On the other hand whoever has no father (guardian) must sit down or go hungry, yet his father is God.

The trainer teaches in bits of two, five or more depending on the brilliance of the trainee. By the trainer teaching in bits I mean the trainee is taught two, five or more praises or drum poetry at a time. When a trainee is taught some portion he keeps reciting it every evening and night before and after supper. The trainer keeps listening to the trainee and interrupts to correct him any time he makes a mistake. He continues this way until the trainee can recite that portion for days without a mistake. Then the trainer adds a new portion. He continues this way to the end of the first part of *Dakol' nye bii ba Nam lana*.

He is then introduced to *Nwun yel' ni wunni pa Naa*. It goes this way: *Nwun yel' ni pa o Wunni yul' Naa, nwun mi o tooni ka yul' nyenga. Ka bang ni Wunni sagi Naa Nam lana*. This means whoever disputes the supreme Kingship of God, should look in front of him and turn to look back, its then that he would admit the Kingship and greatness of the Almighty.

⁹ *Sanbani* is the outer compound of any house in Dagbon where the recruits undergo training especially during the dry season

Nwun yel' ni Wunni pa Naa, nwun zang shigban yini bang di tooni, bang di nyanga, ka bang ni Wunni sagi Naa Nam lana. Also whoever disputes the supremacy of God must take a piece of bee wax and try to identify the front and back of it, then he would realize that God is actually the King of Kings.

Nwun Wunni nam sagim lan bia, o tab diri ka odol' vehiri nmana. Literally meaning; who is this God who created the owner of food's child who licks his colleague's calabashes.

Nwun nye Wunni nam nin nwubri lan bia, o tab nwubri ka o dol' nmari koba. Also who is this God who created the hunter or one who eats a lot of meat's child, yet while his friends eat meat he goes about cracking bones. He goes on this way up to *Nwun nye Wunni nam salla, n nam sall' ni o nuhi tabli o bagri.* Who is this Almighty God who created man, created man with his arms and hands?

Nwun nye Wunni nam tia, n nam tia ni di vari tabli di wulla. Again who is He God who created or made the tree? He made the tree with its leaves and branches. It is when he finishes with this part that he is introduced to *Naa Nyagse*. For this brings him (the trainee) to the end of God's deeds and creation (handy work) as well as His praises.

He is now going to tackle man's actions and deeds. Below is the introduction to *Naa Nyagse*. *Man' baangi bii ku che Naa Wunni kum salla, salli pala Naa Wunni namdi baanga. Ni che la bela balim Shitobu dapal' Nyagse.* This means I, the son of the *Lunga* would not stop worshipping and praising God for man, because man cannot create the *Lunga*. The trainer and the trainee go on in this way and from here the trainee is taught *Naa Nyagse*, his children and how he killed the *Tindaanba* and enskinned in their stead his siblings and kindred. On this note *Bizun* is isolated and treated specially with his siblings as would be dealt with in chapter two.

After *Naa Nyagse* he is taught his (the trainee's) ancestors. It is when he would have finished with his ancestors that he is introduced to *Nam*¹⁰, kingship or chief ship. To be precise the *Yendi* skin, for that is the main root from which every chief in *Dagbon* can trace his lineage. With regard to *Nam* the King that they begin with is *Naa Zangina*. At this point in time, the trainee is normally taught the Kings and their siblings birth names, without adding the historical review. He is later brought back for the historical review. The trainee is taught the line of kings up to the *Yaa Naa* of his time of training.

¹⁰ *Nam* means either leadership, chiefship, or kingship.

For him to become a professional *Lunga* and versatile, he then learns the lineages of other skins apart from the *Yendi* one on his own. Whether a trainee comes from *Yendi* or not he is duty bound to learn the *Yendi* skin, for it is the only one used for the historical narratives or review, even in *Nanun*¹¹ (thus in the *Nanumba*¹² land). Mean while as the trainee is under taking this theoretical aspect, he does it along side the practical. Whenever there is a performance, he follows the senior drummers to such programmes. This is where he is taught the support drumming. Though there is no bell accompaniment in the *Dagbamba* drumming, they have the time line in mind. And whoever makes mistake or plays off beat it is detected. If it is an experienced *Lunga* who goes off, he quickly detects it and adjusts immediately. On the other hand if it is a young recruit, the senior *Lunsi* calls him back to order. They keep correcting him until he performs with them without mistakes.

As part of the practical training, he is also taught appellation. In order to under go this training, the trainer takes his Lung and orders the trainee too to take his. Whatever the trainer plays on his Lung, he instructs the trainee to play the same. The normal practice is that after the appellation of the poetry of a chief, next is his *Zuu*,¹³ first or eldest son, followed by another son, then his *Pakpong*,¹⁴ first or elder daughter. The rest of the children then follow in that order. The hand only holds the *Lung doli*,¹⁵ drum stick and keep hitting. All that he hits with the hand must be in the heart before it can flow through the hand. One not taught this way normally mixes the whole process up whenever he is appellating. Appellating is one being in the process of playing the drum poetry or praises on the *Lung*. So whenever any *Lunga* appellates, (appellates means one who does it always) the experienced and talented *Lunsi* hearing him gets to know the standard of the appellator from his performance.

1.10.4 The context

The recruits are trained in the outer compounds of their trainers and also at venues of performances. The theoretical training is what takes place at the compounds, while most of the practical training is done during performances. The theoretical training that takes place in the house can either be in the outer

¹¹ *Nanun*- the land area on which the Nanumba are settling.

¹² *Nanumba* is the tribe (the people)

¹³ *Zuu* – the first male child of a chief

¹⁴ *Pakpong* – the first female child of a chief

¹⁵ *Lung doli* – the stick the Lunga uses to play the Lung

compound, *Sambani* or in the main hall of the house, *Zong*.¹⁶ This depends on the time period of the year. If it is during dry season they make use of the outer compound *Sambani*. But if its in the rainy season, then the training takes place in the *Zong*. However apart from the two main venues mentioned, some forms of minor training do take place at the farm. This is usually in the form of questions and answers between the trainer and the trainee for clarifications and explanations to some previous lessons.

¹⁶ Zong is the main hall to any house in Dagbon

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINS, MYTHS AND GENEALOGIES

2.1 The Origin of Lunsì

This chapter is about the origin of *Lunsì*, the Myths¹⁷ and Stories and Genealogies. In this case I would try my best to trace the lineage of *Lunsì* to the first *Lunga*. Also the myths and stories of the *Lunsì* will not be left out. Again the genealogies shall be traced from the first *Lunga* to the current chief drummers, especially the *Namo Naa*. However, I would use this opportunity to include my lineage, which can be traced to the first *Lunga*.

Legend and oral tradition of Dagbon has it that *Bizun* was the first *Lunga*. His father was *Naa Nyagse* (1416-1432), as such he, *Bizun*¹⁸ was a prince. *Bizun* mother died when he was very young. During those days oral tradition tells us that whenever the king's wives were pounding yam fufu and each woman caught a piece of yam for her child, *Bizun* always picked up a broken calabash and began to drum. This was to remind his step-mothers of his presence. Many a time, one of the step mothers' would prompt her colleagues of *Bizun*'s presence. According to the traditions, *Bizun* at that time attended all errands in the palace. We are made to understand that it was during the rendering of one such service that he was instructed to recite the drum poetry, the introductory part which I termed the

¹⁷ According to the World Book Dictionary volume two, Myth (Mith) is:

- (a) A legend or story, usually one that attempts to account for some thing in nature. Most myths express a religious belief of a people and are of unknown origin.
- (b) Such stories collectively; mythology: the realm.
- (c) Any intended story.
- (d) A made-up person or thing.
- (e) A belief, opinion, or theory that is not based on fact or reality:
- (f) A story coming down from the past, which many people have believed.
- (g) Such stories as a group; the legends of certain peoples.

Legend applies particularly to a story associated with some period in the history of a people or nation, often containing an element of fact but sometimes wholly untrue. Legends are intended to glorify, especially a hero, saint, object or belief, and tell marvelous deeds he or she or it supposedly performed or cause to happen. Myth on the other hand applies particularly to a story connected with a religion of a primitive or early civilization. Myths are told about gods or superhuman beings and are intended to explain beliefs or rituals or some thing in nature (p.1196).

¹⁸ *Bizun* in *Dagbani* means *Bizuno*; in the African family context especially in Royal Homes like the *Yaa Naa*'s, *Bizuno* means a child who lost his or her mother.

A B C of *Lunsi* (Zablong, 2002). Just like how the Holy Prophet Mohammed was instructed to recite the opening verse of the Quran by God, so did *Bizun* receive the vision and instruction to recite “*Dakol n nye Bii ba Nam lana*”, meaning the Bachelor is junior in the African context, but his father is God.

Legend and myth of the institution of *Lunsi* has it that *Bizun* was sent. He walked for hours and covered several miles or kilometers as it were today until late in the night. It became very dark such that he could neither see far ahead nor back and there was a thunderstorm. At the same time he was hungry, tired and exhausted, and he began talking to himself. All of a sudden he heard a voice that commanded him to stop complaining, that at the end of every struggle and suffering is enjoyment. And that he with his siblings shall be honored and enjoy in the kingdom. Though he did not see the person commanding him, the voice from above intensified. He was finally asked to sing, *Dakol n nye Bii ba Nam lana, Pag’ lan n nye kpem ba Nam lana*, and so on. This means the Bachelor is the junior and the married person the senior in the African context. From that day on he continued receiving the poetry text after text. This was through vision and from his father and trainer (*Naa Nyagse*).

On his return from the trip his father realized that he was making advances in his new role and profession. Later on his father (*Naa Nyagse*) enquired of his future career. He opted for Drummer instead of being a chief. To buttress this point, there is this portion of *Bizun*’s praise songs that goes thus:

*N- yeb’ Bizun daa nye la Yoggu nabia, ka zan Yoggu
nim nam zan ti ba. N balindi nam zaawuni tabli beigu. Na
balma ku di ben shegu, Na balma ku kpe dooni. Nyeb daa
yell’ ni o yi kul balim Naa be nye she li o ni telge mihi telge
bandi Naa Gbewa yilli.*

This means; My great grandfather *Bizun* was a prince of Yendi. But forsooke the Yendi skin and became a Drummer, singing the praises and serving the king both day and night. With the hope that if he was not rewarded, he would be saved from the King’s ropes and chains. The ropes and chains here mean he would be saved from the king’s punishment, depending on the gravity of the sin or offence committed. Because according to oral tradition of Dagbon those were the days when criminals especially war captives were either tied with ropes or put in chains. A typical example was during the reign of *Yaa Naa Mahama* the first (also known as *Mahama Kpema*), a group of *Konkombas* attacked and killed *Zagbelli-Lan Zakari* (the then *Zagbelli* chief). When the news got to *Yendi*, “men” were sent and the criminals brought to *Naaya* (Yendi). Some of them were tied with ropes and others were put in chains. In this case those who were submissive were those in ropes, while the stubborn ones were in chains. The older he grew in age the more he gained experience. According to oral tradition,

Naa Nyagse was *Bizun*'s teacher for he (*Naa Nyagse*) taught him the genealogy of kings and *Tindaanba* before *Naa Nyagse*. The following were *Bizun*'s siblings:

Lunga Zeigu
Lunga Nmendi gando (sagim)
Nmeri muni kun yelshel
Ti zaa pan nme
Kpachin yen zolgu
Nyemo dapelgu
Dazuya lan wugsi nyegra
Banchira

The underlisted are also *Banchira*'s siblings.

Zuu Leli
Pakpong Bua
Pag' bi lan Tani
Kpagsikpagsi ti nye ba
Namo Naa Ashegu
Namo Naa Sugri
Namo Naa Maamani

2.2 The Myths and Stories

I, born as a *Lunga*, I can trace my lineage to *Bizun* through one of his children, *Banchira*. The same applies to every *Lunga* in Dagbon. During *Bizun*'s time, his practices and performances were restricted to the palace of *Naa Nyagse*. In Dagbon, before and up to some part of *Naa Nyagse*'s reign, the kingdom was mostly ruled and governed by the traditional land priests, "*Tindaanba*". So it was during the later part of his rule that he killed almost all the "*Tindaanba*" and enskinned in their place his biological children and kindred.

Below are names of some of the towns and villages where *Naa Nyagse* killed their *Tindaanba*.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <i>Zabzugu ni Yelzoli</i> | 11. <i>Didogge</i> | 21. <i>Gbulun</i> |
| 2. <i>Nakpa-Kworli</i> | 12. <i>Zoosali</i> | 22. <i>Vogu</i> |
| 3. <i>Salinkuga</i> | 13. <i>Diare</i> | 23. <i>Tibung</i> |
| 4. <i>Sabare</i> | 14. <i>Gushiegu</i> | 24. <i>Lungbung</i> |
| 5. <i>Kunkon</i> | 15. <i>Savelugu</i> | 25. <i>Gulkpegu</i> |
| 6. <i>Demon</i> | 16. <i>Dipali</i> | 26. <i>Nantong</i> |
| 7. <i>Mion</i> | 17. <i>Singa</i> | 27. <i>Tudjo</i> |
| 8. <i>Zakoli</i> | 18. <i>Dalung</i> | 28. <i>Tugu</i> |
| 9. <i>Pigu</i> | 19. <i>Kumbungu</i> | 29. <i>Galwie</i> |
| 10. <i>Nyibung</i> | 20. <i>Zangbalon</i> | 30. <i>Sang.</i> |

Naa Nyagse's conquest of Dagbon was in or about 1416A.D. After *Bizun's* death, he left behind his siblings including *Lunga Zeigu* and his brothers at *Diare*. At that time they were not popular. They became widely known and popular during *Naa Luro's* reign. This was after *Naa Luro* fought the *Kalagsi* and won the battle. One Dagbamba writer termed that era *Luntali pilgu*, the beginning or origin of *Lunsi*- (H. I. Abdulai, 1988). While another popular writer in the person of Tia Sulemana, (1973) termed the same period as *Lunsi palo yibu*, thus the period or time *Lunsi* came out from their hideout. Both are titles of books they wrote.

2.3 The Root Cause of *Naa Luro's* War against the *Kalagsi* (*Gonjas*).

It is a normal practice in Dagbon that, after a prince is enskinned or moved from a lower rank to a higher skin, his maternal family sends a delegation to pay him homage and seek to know about his welfare. In Dagbon, tradition demands that whenever a *Dagbana* receives a stranger he is duty bound to kill a fowl or guinea-fowl, whichever would be deemed appropriate and prepare him or her a nice meal. So after *Naa Luro* ascended to the *Yendi* skin his maternal family from *Nyamandu* visited him. *Naa Luro* gave yams to his most loved wife, *Koyib Naa* to prepare a sweet and palatable meal for his uncles. *Koyib Naa* collected the yams but dumped them at one corner of her room while working on her cotton thread (spinning the cotton). Having waited for sometime without seeing a sign of smoke, he sent one of his servants (*Naazo*) to go and see how far she had gone with the cooking. The *Naazo* returned to inform him, that; "she had done nothing with regard to the preparation of the food, that she is rather busy spinning her cotton".

The *Naazo* was instructed to go back and tell her to stop whatever she was doing immediately and prepare the food (yam fufu). *Koyib Naa* said she would not cook the food and was ready for any punishment. With this sort of reply, the King in the company of the *Naazo* out of annoyance caned *Koyib Naa*. *Koyib Naa* in reaction shouted and I quote: *A takahi kan zugu, bomla an' zi so gbandi zugu maa gballi shee. Di zan a takahi lee sagem dira*. This meant; "Do not make me your target of disgrace and disappointment, rather try to look for the grave of your predecessor whose seat you occupy today. And do not make food your focus and target too."

Naa Luro on hearing these provocative words could not sit, eat or drink. Oral tradition has it that the skins on which he sat, food, water and clothes became or seemed to contain thorns pinching him. In a nut shell all that she said meant he should locate the grave of his predecessor *Naa Darizeigu*. *Naa Darizeigu's*

maternal lineage were the *Kalagsis*, whom he waged war against and was killed in the process. It's against the tradition for a child to fight his maternal lineage, it means he or she is fighting the mother indirectly. For *Naa Luro* to visit the grave meant war, because the grave was located at a neutral ground, thus in the Gonja land to which he had no access. So he summoned all his subjects and announced to them his intention, thus his preparation for war against the *Kalagsi* (now *Zabagsi* meaning *Gonjas*). This was a war people never anticipated, for it proceeded in the rainy season and under normal circumstances the *Dagbamba* do not fight during that time of the year. Almost all his elders advised that he should wait till the dry season, which he rejected. Accordingly, during that time, as the grass was growing higher, so he was seriously preparing and putting finishing touches towards starting the war. Up to the time that the bush was at its height and could cover anybody, *Naa Luro* was fully prepared to strike.

He set off with his warriors until they got to a river called "*Beinibeini*", later termed "*Nam ka beimni*", meaning kingship does not maltreat, which was full to its banks. He saw a young fisherman with his boat or canoe on the water, and he sent for him. When he was asked his name, he said he was "*Mburidiba*", meaning victory. *Naa Luro* said he hoped with the help of the spirit of his name he would chalk victory over the *Kalagsi*. *Naa Luro* made his men construct a bridge over the river which immediately got dried up and some of the warriors rode their horses across the bridge to test the readiness for its use. When it was fully established that it was fully dried and ready for use, they rode their horses across river *Nam ka beim*, and went to the *Kalagsi* land and fought till victory was won. They killed them until they were few left who stood by trees, so *Naa Luro* ordered the warriors to stop. In *Dagbani* it means *zanbagli*, which was later termed *Zabagsi* to date meaning *Gonjas*. *Naa Luro* did not only conquer the Gonja but he also succeeded in seeing his predecessor's grave (the grave of *Naa Darizeigu*), and was poised to return to Dagbon, but he wanted a musician who would come and give him a drum name, narrate his genealogy and perform to his satisfaction before he arrived home. In a nutshell, he said he wanted a musician who could lead him to war and back, hence a war musician.

He instructed *Worrichin Naa zom zi beiri* (the chief of those who attend to and take care of the King's horses, called "the blind does not know bad") to get him a musician as mentioned above. He rode his horse and went and brought *Kikaa Lana* (a person who played an end-blown trumpet with a gourd affixed to the end). However on arrival he could only blow but not sing. *Naa Luro* rejected him, claiming he was a Monday and Friday type of musician. So *Worrichin Naa zom zi beiri* went again in search of a suitable musician and this time returned with *Wia/Yuu Lana* (someone who blows an end-blown notched flute), who also blew without singing. Again the King rejected him too with the same reason.

Worrichin Naa zom zi beiri sat on his horse and set off once more in search of a suitable musician and this time returned with *Sayelli Lana* (a gourd player). He also played the gourd without any song accompaniment. Again the King rejected him for yet still he was not the type of musician he wanted. Even though he was tired, he continued the search and came with the following musicians who were all rejected like the previous ones:

Dalgu Lana- one who played a wooden drum with one head

Akarima – the talking drum player

Banni Lana – the horn blower

Gungon Lana – the breketre (basedrum player)

Bindili Lana – the calabash drum player.

Zom zi beiri, having brought all these musicians who were all rejected on the same grounds, had no alternative but to continue the search. This time he was riding in tears as a result of tiredness and for fear of his own life because the King had warned that if he was not able to get him the right musician he stood to lose his life. In the thickest part of the forest he met a hunter, who questioned him about his mission and more so why he was in tears. He narrated to the hunter how the terrible warrior, *Naa Luro*, had fought the *Kalagsi* and having won the battle, instructed him to get him a musician who could sing both his ancestral praises and genealogy as well as drum for him before he could return to Dagbon. The hunter requested for kola nut and tobacco which *Zom zi beiri* provided. After he (the hunter) had bitten and chewed some of the kola and sniffed the tobacco, and had his full sight as well as senses, he told *Zom zi beiri* to go to *Diare* (in the Savelugu/ Nanton district of present day Ghana), where he would find *Bizun's* children. *Lunga Zeigu* and his brothers were there, who he believed could do the job to the King's satisfaction.

Worrichin Naa Zom Zi Beiri, wasted no time but rode as swiftly as possible to *Diare*, and summoned *Lunga Zeigu* and his brothers to *Naa Luro's* camp. On their arrival, as *Dagbamba* custom and tradition demanded, he made his wives prepare a nice, palatable meal for them. During those days the *Dagbamba* ate in large calabashes, so the food was given them in a number of such calabashes. The children could not control their emotions about the nice meal and demonstrated it by pulling and breaking their calabash. When this was brought to the notice of *Lunga Zeigu* and other senior drummers, they were shocked and afraid, because if they had finished serving the King before this incident it might have been different. Again here was a warrior King, who was still fuming at the delay in getting them, so how could they go to tell him that their children had broken his calabash.

They dressed themselves up, took their drums and headed towards his camp. On getting close to the camp, they all knelt down, while crawling, they began drumming with the lead praise singer not only singing his praises but that of his ancestors and their genealogies too, as well as apologizing for what the children had done. Again they also used this opportunity to thank him for the nice meal he provided them. The King was surprised and became excited by the way they crawled and performed. King *Luro* was satisfied and asked them to stop and tell him why the apology. After *Lunga Zhegu* explained it was all because his children so much enjoyed the meal and beyond that broke one of the calabashes. King *Luro* swore by his ancestors he had forgiven them and added that henceforth no *Daghana*, especially the royals, should never charge any drummer at any palace in Dagbon, no matter the “offence”. However, this does not give them an opportunity to misbehave themselves. *Naa Luro*’s undertaking has come to stay to date. After all was said and done he moved from there to *Yendi* with the drummers, other musicians and his victorious warriors. From that day on the *Lunsi* (Drummers), apart from being members of the royal lineage also acquired another prestige and dignity to themselves and the *Lunsi* Institution as a whole. Again it was and is still clear today from *Naa Luro*’s words that *Lunsi* are the only musicians of Dagbon who play dual roles. They are both Monday and Friday musicians and in war. In this case the superiority of *Lunsi* over all the other musicians at the *Yaa Naa*’s palace in particular and Dagbon in general cannot be disputed. This was made clear from *Naa Luro*’s time till today.

2.4 Genealogies

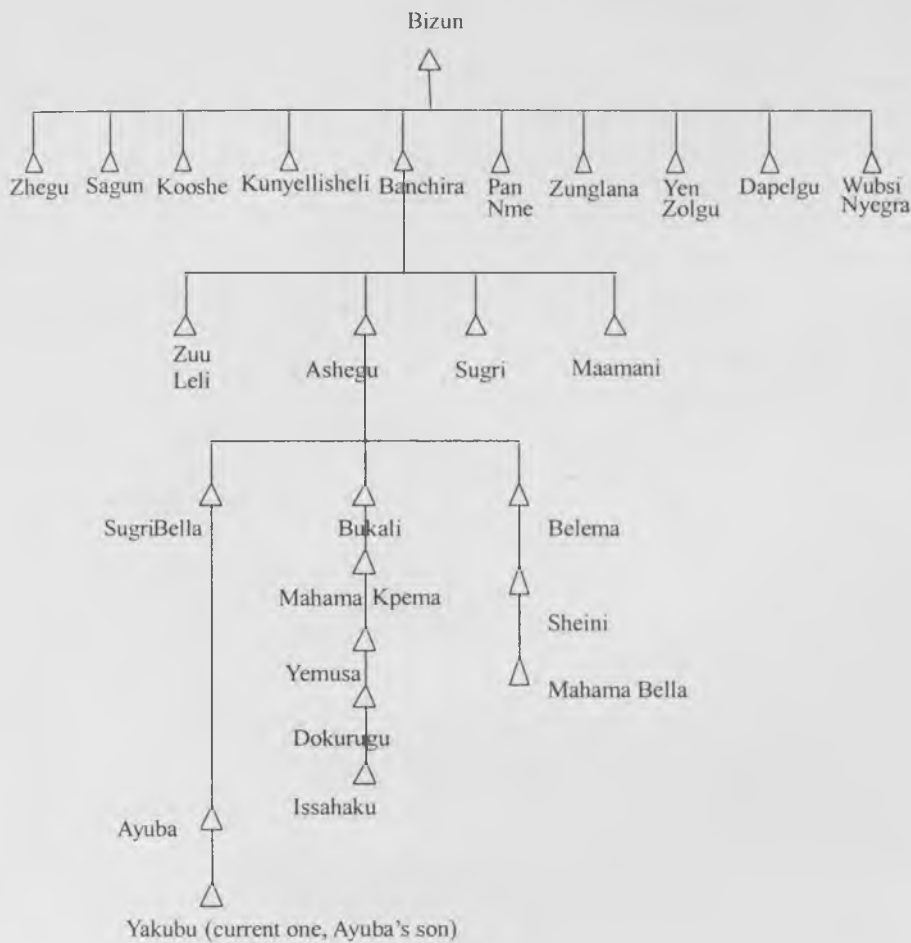
I have painstakingly categorized the genealogies of *Lunsi* here into three. However this does include all *Lunsi* lineages of Dagbon.

1. The genealogy of *Lunsi* from *Bizun* through the first *Namo Naa* to the current one.
2. The genealogy of *Namonanima* from the first to the present.
3. And my genealogy from *Bizun* through one of his son’s, *Banchira*.

2.4.1 The Genealogy of Lunsi from Bizun Through The First Namo Naa To The Current One.

1. *Bizun*
2. *Lunga Zhegu*
3. *Lunga Nmendi sagim(gando)*
4. *Lunga Nmen nwubbi yorna (kooshe)*
5. *Lunga Nmeri muni kun yelli sheli*
6. *Ti zaa pan nme*
7. *Zung Lana*
8. *Kpaachin yen zolgu*
9. *Nyemo Dapelgu*
10. *Dazuya wubsi Nyegra*
11. *Banchira*
12. *Zuu Leli*
13. *Namo Naa Ashegu*
14. *Namo Naa Sugri Kpemah*
15. *NamoNaa Maamani*
16. *Namo Naa Sugri Bella*
17. *Namo Naa Bukari*
18. *Namo Naa Belema (Dokurugu 1)*
19. *Namo Naa Mahama Kpemah*
20. *Namo Naa Sheini*
21. *Namo Naa Yemmusa*
22. *Namo Naa Mahama Bella*
23. *Namo Naa Dokurugu 2*
24. *Namo Naa Issahaku*
25. *Namo Naa Ayuba*
26. *Namo Naa Yakubu*

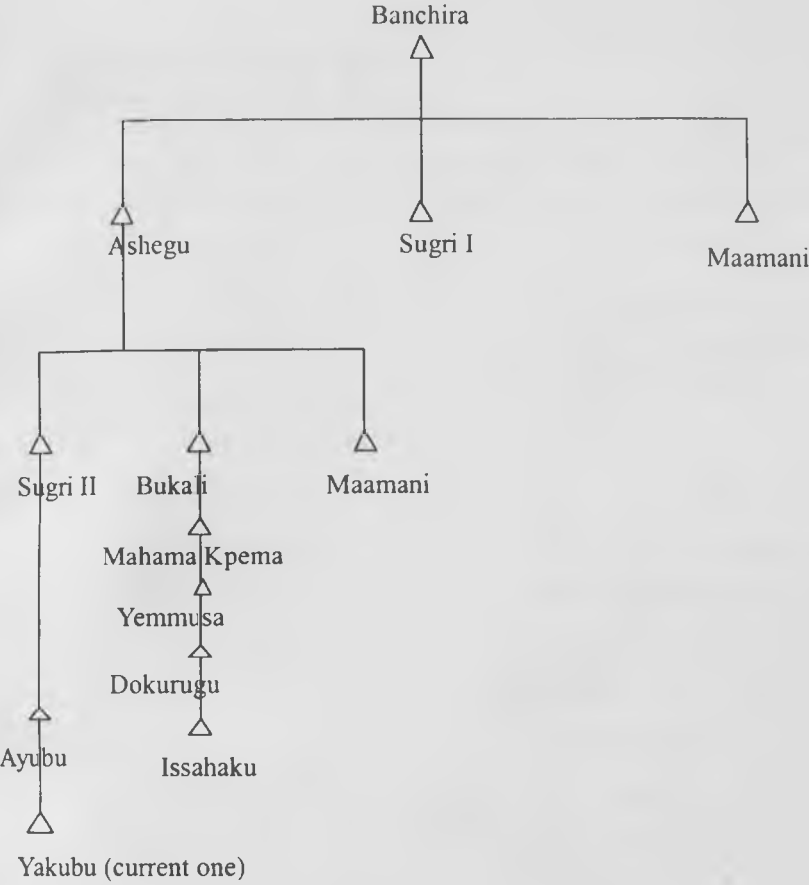
GENEALOGY OF LUNSI FROM BIZUN THROUGH THE FIRST NAMO NAA TO THE CURRENT ONE



2.4.2 THE GENEALOGY OF NAMONANIMA

1. *Namo Naa Ashegu*
2. *Namo Naa Sugri Kpemah*
3. *Namo Naa Maamani*
4. *Namo Naa Sugri Bella*
5. *Namo Naa Bukali*
6. *Namo Naa Belema (Dokurugu)*
7. *Namo Naa Mahama Kpemah*
8. *Namo Naa Sheini*
9. *Namo Naa Yemmusa*
10. *Namo Naa Mahama Bella*
11. *Namo Naa Dokurugu Bella*
12. *Namo Naa Issahaku*
13. *Namo Naa Ayuba*
14. *Namo Naa Yakubu*

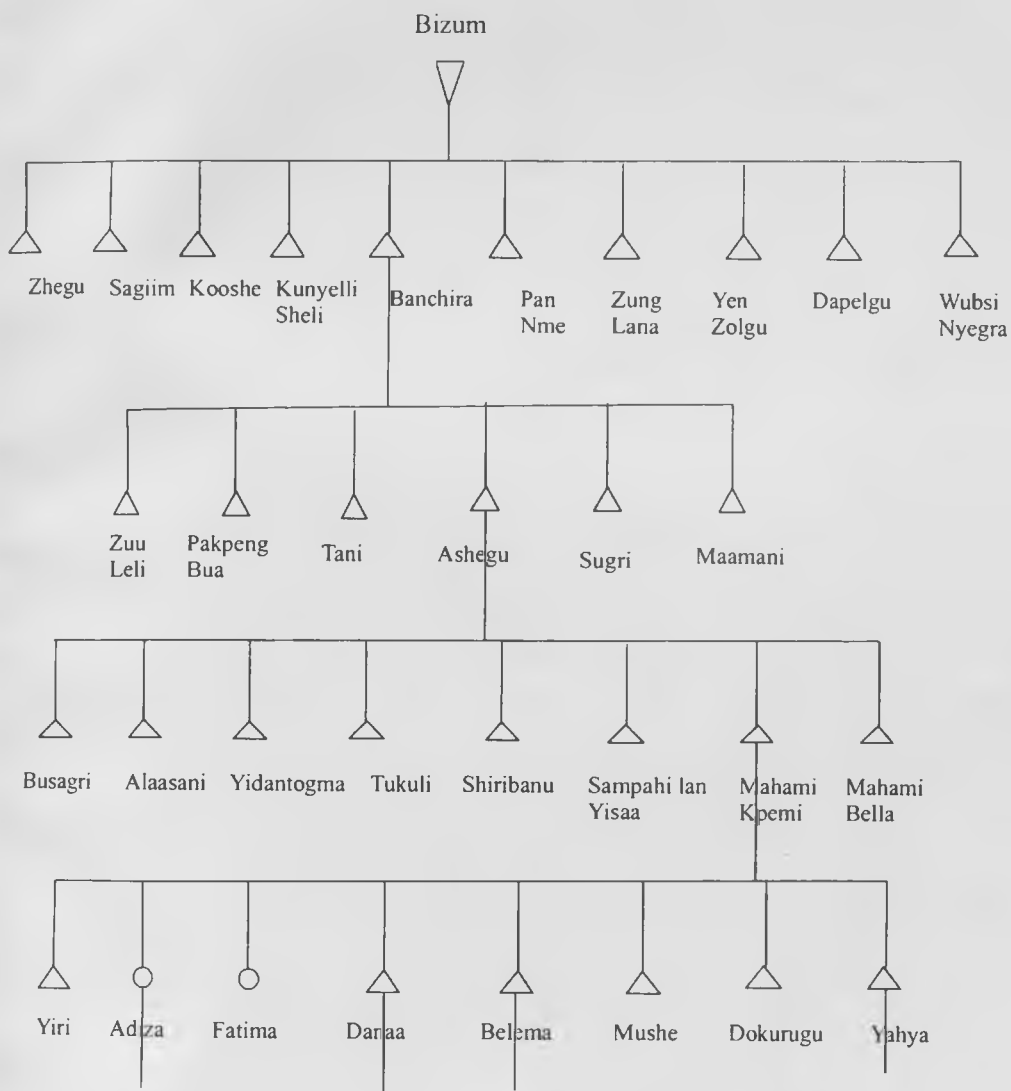
GENEALOGY OF NAMO NANIMA THROUGH BANCHIRA

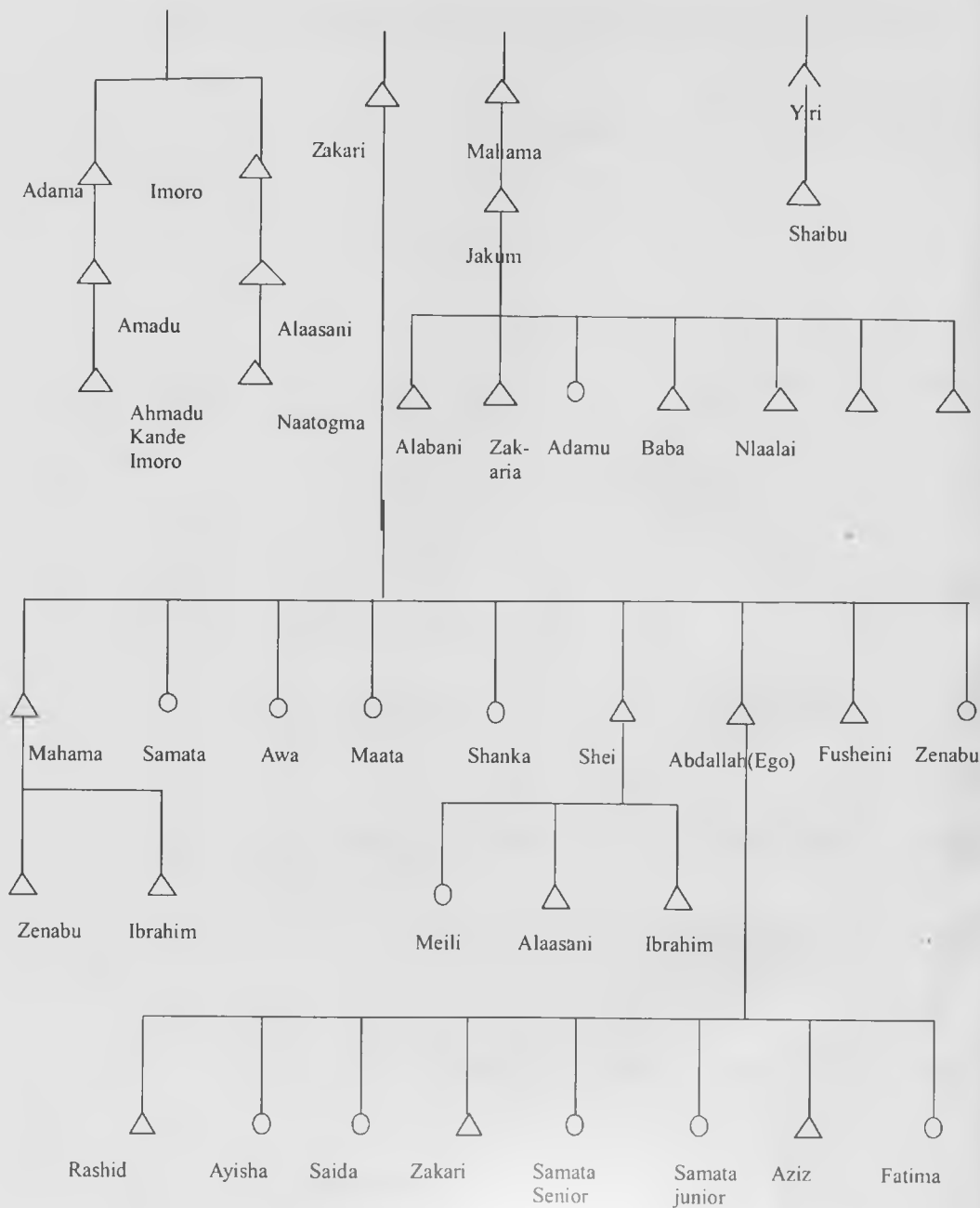


2.4.3 MY GENEALOGY FROM BIZUN THROUGH HIS SON BANCHIRA

1. *Bizun*
2. *Lunga Zhegu*
3. *Lunga Nmendi Sagim (Gando)*
4. *Lunga Nmen Nwuh yonna (kooshe)*
5. *Lunga Nmeri muni kun yelli sheli*
6. *Lunga Ti zaa pan Nme*
7. *Zung Lana*
8. *Kpaachin Yen Zolgu*
9. *Nyemo Dapelgu*
10. *Dazuya Wubsi Nyegra*
11. *Banchira*
12. *Zuu Leli*
13. *Pakpang Bua*
14. *Pag –be Lan Tani*
15. *Namo Naa Ashegu*
16. *Namo Naa Sugri Kpemah*
17. *Namo Naa Maamani*
18. *Lunga Naa Busagri*
19. *Lunga Naa Alaasani Kpemah*
20. *Lunga Naa Yidan-Togma*
21. *Lunga Naa Tukuli*
22. *Lunga Naa Shiribaru*
23. *Sampahi Lan Yisaa*
24. *Lunga Naa Mahami Kpemah*
25. *Lunga Naa Mahami Bella*
26. *Lunga Naa Belema*
27. *Lunga Naa Mushe*
28. *Lunga Naa Dokurugu*
29. *Pag-Be Lan Adisa*
30. *Pag-Be Lan Fatima*
31. *Lunga Naa Danaa*
32. *Sampahi Wulan Adama*
33. *Sampahi Lan Yahya*
34. *Lunga Naa Yakubu*
35. *Lunga Naa Alaasani*
36. *Nabiyong Bukali Kpemah*
37. *Nabiyong Bukali Bella*
38. *Lunga Naa Imoro*
39. *Zuu Adam*
40. *Nabiyong Simani*
41. *Nabiyong Issahaku*
42. *Nabiyong Mahama Banbangtaba*
43. *Zablong Zakali*
44. *Zablong Amadu*
45. *Tong Lunga Naa Imoro*
46. *Yelzoli Lunga Naa Yiri*
47. *Kworli Lunga Naa Alaasani*
48. *Kworli Lunga Naa Aduna*
49. *Vokpii Lunga Naa Yakubu*
50. *Yelzoli Sampahi Lan Mahama*
51. *Yelzoli Sampahi Lan Zakali*
52. *Kworli Lunga Naa Bukali*
53. *Kworli Sampahi Lan Naatogma*
54. *Kworli Taha Naa Shaibu*

MY GENEALOGY FROM BIZUN THROUGH HIS SON BANCHIRA





CHAPTER THREE

ROLES AND RELATIONS

3.1 Roles Played In the State

In this chapter I am going to describe the roles that the drummers play in Dagbon. During the two *Idis*, *Idi-Fitr* and *Idi-Adha* the Lunsu review the history (otherwise termed *Lungsarigu* or *Samban- Lunga*), also known as historical narratives. Also they play other important roles during the Fire and *Damba* festivals. Again they play very significant roles during enskinment of chiefs and Durbars of chiefs and the celebrations at chiefs courts which take place on (of) Monday and Friday (are no exception to the roles of Lunsu). We Lunsu classify the Institution into two main groups; *Kali* and *Daa Lung*.

Daa Lung literally translated means market drum. For a traditional historian like Zablong Zakariah Abdallah, it goes beyond that and so cuts across all the life cycle events of the Dagbamba people. This means from birth to death all performances that take place, except those that take place at the various palaces throughout Dagbon. *Daa Lung* are all types of performances of the *Lunsu* outside the palaces. These are performed anytime, anywhere at any moment for any *Dagbana* apart from chiefs. Such can be performed at market place and even in drinking bars (or *pito* houses as in the past). These types of performances employ praises and genealogies. All that I elaborated above come under the *Daa Lung* aspect. In this same chapter I shall be discussing their relations with the Yaa Naa and other chiefs as well as parts they play in the community at large.

On the other hand, *Kali Lung* are performances that take place at the palaces for the chiefs and or king wherever chiefs are found. *Kali Lung* employs praises, genealogies and historical reviews or narratives. These include the two *Idis*, *Idi-Fitr* and *Id-Adha* (during whose nights, *Lunsu* review the history of Dagbon), Fire and *Damba* festivals, enskinment and Durbar of chiefs, and the waking-up of the chiefs on the dawns of Mondays and Fridays followed by their celebration, during the later part of the day and so on. The main difference between *Kali Lung* and *Daa Lung* is that, *Kali Lung* makes to do with the praises, genealogies and historical narratives. While the latter employs only the praises and genealogies. In a nut shell, while the latter is performed at palaces and mostly for the chiefs, the former can be performed anywhere.

As mentioned in chapter one, *Lunsi* are court historians, musicians, geographers, consultants, advisers, judges, and chroniclers of the past and recorders of the present. Again they are teachers, researchers and carvers. The Dagbamba have preserved in their drum histories a rich historical narrative that is interwoven with myth, which records the origins migrations, battles and genealogy of their royal rulers. In short *Lunsi* are traditional historians who keep the history of Dagbon to memory, which is recited any time there is the need for. *Lunsi* as part of the heritage and survival of the society not only use the historical narratives in uniting the people but also uses it to let the chiefs know who they are. They also use the same historical narratives to tell who the heroes and the vanquished were in the past. *Lunsi* are also transmitters of information. Again *Lunsi* perform indispensable services for the chief on all state and politically significant occasions, as well as providing the music for naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals and all social gatherings.

As geographers, it's the *Lunsi* who know the geographical boundaries that exist among the villages and towns. They also know the number of villages and towns under any chief or paramountcy. Again it is the *Lunsi* who have it off hand the land boundaries of Dagbon. The Dagbamba are bordered to the north by the Mamprusi, the south by the Nanumba, the east the Republic of Togo and to the west by the Gonjas.

Lunsi are consultants and advisers. All princes and princesses consult and seek advice from old and or chief drummers. Even chiefs consults and seek advice from *Lunsi*, because they know the history and genealogy of every *Dagbana*. And the *Lunsi* always have this to say to any prince or princess who behaves in an "awkward" manner, "your father or your ancestors never behaved like this or that, so he or she should change for the betterment of his or her own future". This happens when a prince or princess seem not to show appreciation for whatever service rendered him or her. Here, they (*Lunsi*) do not only serve consultants and advisers but are educators. For they educate the princes and princesses of the roles and responsibilities in the community.

Lunsi are teachers because they teach and train the young ones with the hope that they take over from the old and or chief drummers. It is some of the *Lunsi* who carve the wooden drums. The carvers do not do it on commercial basis because it is only the *Lunsi* who order them. And one *Lung* shell can last as long as the *Lunga* can take good care of it. Another reason is that the Dagbamba custom and tradition does not permit non-drummers to join the *Lunsi* institution. However, this rule does not apply to *Lunsi* only; the same applies to other professions. Some few examples are *Akarima* (the talking drum player) *Kikaa*

(the horn blower), *Nakoha* (butcher), *Machele* (blacksmith) and *Wanzam* (barber).

3.2 Roles Played during Festivals

3.2.1 Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha

The night prior to either of the two *Idis*, the *Lunsi* drum and recite the historical narratives at the *Yaa Naa's* palace and other palaces throughout Dagbon. This type of performance is called *Lungsarigu* or *Samban Lung*. In this case the sort of historical narrative to review depends on the status of the king or chief. Also where the lead praise singer will begin is a determining factor. In any case, before this review, they (*Lunsi*) especially the old or and chief drummers normally meet the chief and his elders for discussion as to where to start. Thus which of the past kings should they begin with? It is from here that the chief or king can prepare himself. For there are certain sacrifices and pacifications that need be done, during and after the performance. For example a sheep or cow is usually slaughtered in order to pacify the Kings whose names were mentioned during the historical narratives. Then the following morning, the king or chief gives the lead praise singer a fowl (cock) or sheep for him to also use it to pacify his ancestors too. However, the sheep or cow slaughtered during that night's meat is used in preparing food mid way during that night for the *Lunsi*. Under normal circumstances no specific time period is given for such narratives. The time period depends on which of the past kings the lead singer began with. One such narratives is the one about *Naa Luro's* war with the *Kalagsis*, I made mention in chapter two. Such performances start after supper and normally end at dawn; 2.00a.m or 3.00 a.m on certain occasions and as far as to 4.00a.m or 5.00a.m on others.

From the King's or chief's palace the *Lunsi* move into town roaming from house to house. In each house they sing the praises and genealogy of the landlord or family head first. Followed by that of his *walgira*, his first wife and then other members of the family. They perform this way until the following morning when it is time for the *Idi* prayers that they stop and go for the prayers. If the village or town is big such that they could not finish, they either continue in the evening or the following morning.

3.2.2 Role during the Damba Festival

Damba is a Festival and a Dance. As a festival, it is used to commemorate the birth and naming ceremony of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Prophet Mohammed. When the *Damba* moon is sighted, the chief drummer instructs the young and some few old drummers to go to the chief's palace after each supper to do drum rehearsals for the *Damba* festival. This continues till the 10th morning of that month when the chief Imam of the town and his followers go to the chief's palace for the picking of pebbles and stones from rice provided by the chief. On this particular day, in the morning by 8.00a.m, the chief drummer and his entourage go to the palace. From that time on anybody who comes to the palace, drummers, the only people who own a shed especially at the *Yaa Naa*'s palace, drum and sing the praises and genealogy of each person that passes by. This trend continues until all elders, sub-chiefs and other minor chiefs have assembled before the King himself is brought out to sit in state for the *shinkaafa gahimbu* (the picking of pebbles and stones from the rice provided by the King), thus if the festival is to take place in *Yendi*. This rice is poured on a sheep or cow skin that is turned up side down. The chief Imam and his entourage sit around it, while singing Islamic songs (some verse of the Quran), they pick the pebbles and stones from the rice. They end when there are no or little signs of stones and pebbles in it. After this a cow the King provided is properly tied and placed at the center of the outer compound of the palace. Amidst drumming and singing the *Somo* and some of the Imam's entourage dance round the cow that is later slaughtered. They removed the King's share with the remaining shared amongst the elders and other chiefs. It is cooked the following morning with the rice, which is consumed before the morning *Damba*.

The *Damba* festival is divided into two parts. The first part that falls on the 11th of the *Damba* month is dedicated to one of the King's elders call *Somo*. Hence the name given to that part of the *Damba* Festival is *Somo Damba*. On that day in the morning as usual the *Lunsi* go to the palace as it was the previous day. But the difference here is that there is no picking of pebbles and stones from rice. Rather after the King has sat in state, the *Lunsi* begin to take the elders, sub-chiefs and chiefs one at a time to perform the *Damba* dance.

The *Somo* is taken first for that is his day. After him, the rest are taken in order of merit, thus according to their ranks and status. This performance continues this way until 12.00 noon then they stop for everybody to go back to their various homes for lunch and also to enable them say the 1.00 p.m prayers and take some rest before returning to the palace for the evening part of the festival. Everybody returns to the palace once again around 2.30 p.m, for the same performance to be repeated until 5.30 or 6.00p m there about that it ends for

people to go back home for supper and the two evening and night prayers. After this, they rest for sometime until around 9.00p.m then some of the people return to the palace for the night aspect of the festival. With regard to the night *Damba* most of the people do not patronize it, except a few elders with some of the chiefs and their drummers. During this time most of the young drummers have the option to do solo performances with any youth who need their services. Food sellers as well as buyers are extra careful for the youth (especially small children) are at liberty to fetch some of the food from either the seller or the buyer and run away with it. In this case it is not tantamount to stealing for it is part of the celebration. Again this continues till daybreak when everybody leaves the palace for home. This brings us to the end of the first part of *Damba* termed *Somo Damba*. Let me make it clear here that *the Damba* rehearsals always end on the 9th night. However there is a break from the 12th until the 16th that activity starts again.

On the 16th is *shinkaafa gahimbu*, the picking of pebbles and stones from rice for the second part of the *Damba* festival in honor of the chief or king. The same thing is repeated all over as was done during the first part. The following day 17th, is the second part of the *Damba* festival known as *Naa Damba*. Like in the first part of the festival, the same thing is repeated. Then comes the 18th known as the day for *Damba belkushi*, (meaning escorting *Damba* home).

However, this is not always compulsorily fixed on the 18th. As such a different date may be fixed, in case it's unanimously agreed upon on grounds that either everybody is tired or only the drummers or the elders. In Yendi it is taken home or escorted to *Yidan Baba's* house (the chief butcher of Yendi). One would realize the vital role the *Lunsi* play from the day *the Damba* moon is sited throughout the festival period to the last day.

3.2.3 Bugum Chuggu (Fire Festival)

The Fire Festival falls on the 9th day of the *Bugum* month. Early dawn of that day the *Lunsi* go to the chief or king's to drum and sing his praises just to remind him about the festival. From here they move on to the various houses of the elders. At each house they drum with the lead singer singing the praises and their genealogies, and keep on reminding each of them of the impending festival.

Later in the night of the same day after supper is the festival proper. After supper a fraction of the drummers and other members of the community get to the chief's palace for the celebration to begin. Here everybody waits patiently till the chief lights his torch from which the rest of the community light theirs.

However those who have not been able to make it to the palace wait at home till they hear a gun shot followed by drumming the war dance *zhem* by the *Lunsi*, which serves as a signal for every member of the village or town to also light his or her torch. This way they move in a procession through the principal streets of the town where they throw away the leftover torches. They would continue performing this war dance till they return to the palace for the elders who lead them to report back to the chief for their successful completion of the year's Fire Festival.

3.3 The Celebration of Mondays and Fridays

These two days celebrations came into being as a result of *Naa Sigli's* war with *Golingoling Kumpatia* at *Chirizan Sang*. *Golingoling Kumpatia* was a Gonja warrior who took the opportunity of the confusion created due to the struggle over power to conquer Dagbon. He began this expedition from the *Tolon/ Kumbungu* area and fought up to *Sang* where he remained and established his camp. This was after the chiefs of Dagbon had just returned from *Nalerigu* where they went for the *Nayiri* (the king of Mamprugu) to settle the dispute as to who to succeed *Naa Gungoble* who died around 1648. *Naa Zangina* was finally chosen with the understanding that *Naa Sigli* should takeover after his death. From *Nalerigu*, *Naa Sigli* went and settled at *Zulogu*. The battle between *Naa Sigli* and *Kumpatia* was around 1677 for oral history has it that *Naa Sigli* who by then had no skin title, was still fighting when *Naa Zangina* died. And *Naa Zangina* died around the date above, 1677.

During those days oral history has it that the day, date and venue for such battles were made known to both factions, so that they both selected men who could fight. Because it was not every man that went to war. This battle was fixed on a Friday. *Andan Sigli as Naa Sigli* was popularly known cautioned his chief drummer, *Lunga Naa Woblao Nyogu Kundari* to become a "dawn-cock", in order to wake him (*Naa Sigli*) up early for the fight. Else he would fight him instead of *Kumpatia*. This meant chief drummer *Woblao Nyogu Kundare* kept a wake that night and early at dawn he used his drum with praise singing, woke *Naa Sigli* for the titanic battle. Nevertheless, at this juncture there is the need for me to write a little about how *Naa Sigli* got to *Sang* from *Zulogu*.

When *Naa Sigli* heard of *Kumpatia's* war, he got himself dressed up and could not pass through the main exit of the big hall, *zong*. As a result he had the following praise song added to his praises;

Sing titali be kpe duu noli zang tiri gooni,

meaning the big clay pot that cannot pass through the main entrance, passes over the wall. Here *Naa Sigli* had this to say and I quote:

Zabag blaa bii pora ni manni Andan Sigli zan n yaa ti tuho lalla.

Literally meaning this *Gonja* slave chap is too small for me, *Andan Sigli* to go to fight direct, as a result with the men he set off he fought all villages and towns that stood in his way from *Zulogu* to *Sang*. On the agreed day and date for the battle, *Woblai Nyogu Kundare* did exactly as he was asked to, by waking *Naa Sigli* early enough to get himself ready for the fight. Since that day it became established that *Lunsi* should wake up the king and other chiefs at the dawn of Mondays and Fridays in commemoration of that day, followed by the victory celebration of that battle. The question one may ask is why and how come *Kumpatia* managed to fight up to *Sang*? The simple answer is that when they went to *Nalerigu* for the contest, all those contestants who were unsuccessful became angry. Most of them did not understand why one who initially had no interest could all of a sudden turn out to become the fellow they accompanied to chalk success. They expressed their anger when on their return he took the trouble to visit each of them, to congratulate and thank them for their support and cooperation at *Nalerigu*. He also used the opportunity wishing each of them the best of luck in all spheres of life, and prayed for God's guidance, good yield and prosperity throughout *Dagbon*. Yet all of them refused to heed to his call for calm and told him in plain words that how he managed to ascend to the throne, he should do the same to rule and govern alone. It was this news that *Kumpatia* capitalized on. It paid off in a way for him. This was why when he started the war everybody sat back claiming it was the responsibility of *Naa Zangina* to defend *Dagbon*. Any chief he sent a messenger to, the reply the messenger returned with was how he managed to become King he should do same to fight *Kumpatia*. This was why *Andan Sigli* was the only person who stood to the task and not only defended *Dagbon*, but also wiped away *Kumpatia* and his stubborn fighters.

3.4 Roles during Enskinment of Chiefs

There are three main types of enskinment of chiefs in *Dagbon*, especially at the *Gbewaa* palace.

1. Those who are enskinned by *Mba Dugu* (the *Yaa Naa*'s chief Linguist).
2. Chiefs enskined in the outer compound of the *Gbewaa* palace under a shed, call *Sampaa*, by the *Yaa Naa*

3. The third are those enskined in the sacred room *Katini Duu*, by the kingmakers. This category includes the *Yaa Naa*.

4.

In all three categories the *Yaa Naa* plays the key role, for the selection and provision of the *Kparibu* is done by him. In the case of one and two, they stand the chance to change, that is to progress upwards. This in effect means such chiefs can move from one junior skin to a senior one when the need arises. The need only arises when a senior chief passes away.

However, with regard to number three, according to the custom and tradition of Dagbon no chief enters the *Katini Duu* twice. This is an indication that all such chiefs are in their final lap and so cannot go any further. In all three cases the role of *Lunsi* is paramount. When a chief passes away all other chiefs who are eligible and have interest in the skin show it immediately. This is by way of adding *Kparibu* to the burial money, *Sogbu Ligri*. He then begins lobbying. Each of the contestants approaches the chief drummer with some kola nuts and money informing him of his interest in the vacant skin. The chief drummer after receiving it also tries to notify other old and or chief drummers of the same town or village, by giving them some of the kola and money. Whoever is finally given the skin kola, *Nam guli*, comes back to notify the chief drummer and the date fixed for his enskinment. The chief drummer accepts any gift he come with, with the assurance that he and his entourage shall be there to perform their role and duty. Again the chief drummer passes the message on to all other old and or chief drummers as he had done before.

On the day of enskinment of number one and two, the *Lunsi* get themselves ready at *Mba Dugu*'s house, if it is number one and at the *Gbewaa* Palace in case it is number two. In these two instances it can either be in the morning or evening. Whichever time is fixed, the *Lunsi* as usual get themselves in a suitable position, drum and sing the praises of any person who comes to the place. They continue this performance until it is time for the enskinment. Immediately the chief to be is helped to wear the *Kparibu*, the chief Linguist makes a pronouncement thrice. Each time he mentions the birth name of the chief to be, he adds the skin name and the name of the town or village that he is to rule.

The *Lunsi* immediately perform the thanksgiving and congratulation dance. Then at the end of it they change to the new chief's praises and genealogy. However they cannot end without singing the praises and genealogy of the chief of the palace where it is taking place. After the praises and genealogies are recited, a danceable tune is changed for the new chief to perform. Later some few people are invited to dance. This may last for some few minutes and stop. This is to allow some time for him to pay homage to the chief and also to receive a word

of advice from the chief and his elders. The new chief is then taken to his house if he is from Yendi. On the other hand if he is not he would be taken to his host's house. In either case the procession dance is used to send him to any of the residences. There full performance takes place after which the drummers return to their homes.

Nevertheless if it is number three the new chief has to pass that night in the *Katini Duu* at the *Gbewaa's* Palace. The *Lunsi* would have to do the historical review throughout that night. Then the following morning the *Lunsi* again go to the palace where he is brought out of the sacred room. Amidst drumming and praise singing he is taken to his house or host's. Here the sort of performance that is mentioned in one and two is done for him. However if the new chief is not a native of Yendi, on his return to his hometown, his chief drummer in consultation with him sets a day aside for another historical review. In all three cases the *Namo Naa* elects his representative to accompany the chief home, if he is not a native of *Yendi*.

3.5 Durbar of Chiefs

When there is going to be a durbar of chiefs, the *Lunsi* are given advance notice. This is to enable them have ample time to prepare and keep that day open. On that faithful day they go to the chief's house in full gear to deliver. After the chief is in full regalia and come out they (*Lunsi*) start drumming *Barigizali*. They later change to that of procession when they are set in to motion. Whether the chief is on foot, horse back or in a car, they continue drumming and singing to the durbar grounds.

On arrival there, they change to *Gingaani*. This depends on the rank of the chief because not all chiefs are entitled to that type of performance. Those that are not entitled to *Gingaani* have the option of *Gingaan' –Salli*. If the place set for the durbar is in the open, after all the chiefs are seated, the *Lunsi* drum and sing their praises one by one. They normally begin with the most senior to the lowest in rank. At the end of the function each chief drummer and his entourage perform for their chief till he reaches his residence. On the other hand if it is in a room, thus in the form of a meeting or a conference the *Lunsi* remain sitting out side. They drum and sing the praises of any chief on arrival till he enters the conference hall or room. After all the chiefs have entered they keep waiting till the end. The chiefs then come out one by one like how they came. Again each drummer follows his chief, drumming the procession dance for him to his residence.

3.6 Relations with the Yaa Naa and Chiefs

The *Yaa Naa* is the Overlord of Dagbon. *Yaa Naa* in *Dagbani* literally means African King of Power. Almost all the chiefs of Dagbon are enskined by him. Though he resides in Yendi the traditional capital he has full control over all the land in Dagbon. In Dagbon, if there were *no Lunsis*, there might not have existed to date the chieftaincy institution. This was clearly demonstrated by *Naa Luro*, after his battle against the Gonjas, as elaborated in chapter two. Again before and during *Naa Sigli's* battle with *Golingoling Kumpatia* is another evidence. Once more the roles the *Lunsi* play in the state, their relations with the *Yaa Naa* and other chiefs, as well as those they play in the community, attest to this fact.

The *Lunsi's* relationship with the *Yaa Naa* can be traced to the first *Lunga, Bizun*. *Bizun* was the biological son of *Naa Nyagse*, who was a *Yaa Naa*. For that matter *Bizun* was a prince, and so there is that kinship relations between the *Lunsi*, *Yaa Naa* and other chiefs. Due to this every Dagbana calls them *N-yeba* including the *Yaa Naa*. The reason being that every chief in Dagbon is either a son of a *Yaa Naa*, grandson, or great grandson and so on and so forth. The *Yaa Naa* consults the *Lunsi* on all matters that concerns the progress and development of the area. He also seeks advice from them before taking certain decisions. Again *Lunsi* play a vital role in the judicial system of the *Gbewaa* Palace and all other palaces across Dagbon. There is no difference in their relations with the *Yaa Naa* and other chiefs, except total cooperation and co-existence.

3.7 Parts Played in the Community At Large

Drummers play in the community on many occasions such as *Daa lung*, weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals, market place, construction of footpaths and roads, plastering of room and inner compound.

Daa Lung literal transliteration means market drum¹⁹. However, it goes beyond that. For a traditional historian like Zablong Zakariah Abdallah it cuts across all life cycle of Dagbamba. Thus from birth to death all performances that take place except that of *Kali*. *Daa Lung* is any performance by the *Lunsi* outside the palaces. This type can be performed anywhere, anytime and any moment for any Dagbana even at marketplace and drinking bars. When this particular type of performance praises and genealogies are employed no historical narrative is

¹⁹ *Daa Lung* literally means market drum

required. In a nut shell the main difference between *Kali Lung* and *Daa Lung* is that, *Kali Lung* employs praises, genealogies and historical narratives, while the latter make do with only praises and genealogies. Again while the former is performed at palaces, the latter is performed anywhere.

Whoever has this type of programme invites the *Lunsi* by sending someone with kola and some amount of money and informing them of the date. The money with the kola nut is normally sent to the chief drummer who in turn calls some old drummers to inform them about the programme. Under normal circumstance a chief drummer is not suppose to drum at such function. In the house where the function is to take place the *Lunsi*, after exchanging greetings, begin by drumming and singing the praises and genealogies of the landlord followed by that of other members of the household, including all married women. They then go on to the invited guests, here they deal with the men first. The reason being that at this particular moment the women would have been busy cooking for this festive occasion. This is not tantamount to gender bias anyway. It is after the women finish cooking that the *Lunsi* would turn to them. Like what was done for the men they perform their praises and genealogies one by one before they proceed to the general performance. With regard to the general performance solo dancing is done. In all cases the *Lunsi* are mindful of the fact that seniority counts a lot. That is whether they are performing the praises and genealogies or solo performances the lead praise singer with the lead drummer always begins with the most senior in any family. If for any reason they make a mistake by going to a junior person he quickly and immediately points to one who is their senior in that particular family. On the other hand, if the mistake is not corrected and they get to the most senior, his reaction is to drive them away. They accept their fault and quickly apologize.

3.7.1 Naming Ceremonies

The same procedure is used during naming ceremonies. Here too the naming ceremonies we see of late are not that sort of typical Dagbamba traditional type for there are lots of Islamic elements involved. What I mean by Islamic elements are the names given, prayers said, and at times the venue for the naming ceremony. A few examples of such Islamic names are *Mohammed*, *Abdul-Aziz*, *Hafiz*, *Hamza* and so on. These names are used many a time as against that of the ancestors. With regard the drumming the same procedure and method is used throughout.

3.7.2 Funerals

There are four types of funerals in *Dagbon*:

- Bii kuli* - the funeral of a child (a day old to 17 years old).
- Ninsaringa* - matured person (from 17 years to about 45 years old).
- Ninkurugu* - the funeral of an elderly person who does not occupy any skin, thus one who is not a chief.
- Naa* - a chief or King.

With regard to the first two no *Lunsi* performance takes place. It's the other two that the *Lunsi* play a vital role. However there are marked differences in the various funerals in Dagbon. For the child *Maasa* (specially treated corn dough) is used for his or her funeral. For that of the mature person, roasted cow skin or a sheep is appropriate. On the other hand, with the last two, one or more sheep with one cow or more cattle is used for the funeral. With regard to the last two, when any of them die a message is sent to the chief drummer concerning the death. He in turn passes the same message to the remaining drummers of the town or village. The drummers then gather at the chief drummer's house from where they move to the funeral grounds. On arrival they sit in the outer compound facing the house in which lies the dead body. Immediately the chief drummer unties his *Lung* and begins amppellating some of the praises and genealogy of the dead person. While doing this he also uses the *Lung* to ask the corpse what is wrong or what has happened and he or she is motionless. This is the beginning of the funeral dance called *Ku-Lung*. All these while the other drummers also untie their drums ready to support him. He gets to a point and then changes to call them into action. Here it is call and response till they finish. They now sit down awaiting the burial while the gravediggers are digging. After the corpse is brought out and the funeral prayer said over it the *Lunsi* again begin another funeral drumming until he or she is put into the grave. They repeat the same drumming that was played when he or she was still lying in the room. On the third day they return to the funeral house and position themselves as usual for the day. In this case mostly one lead praise singer and one lead drummer does the job. Thus while one is singing the other plays the drum. On the seventh day the same thing is repeated. The funeral is then put down for one or two years depending on the funeral type. It is normally a year for the third group and two years for the Chiefs and King. When the time is due the drummers are given advance notice and on the stipulated time and day they go to the house in question to repeat the first part of what they did during his or her death. This type of funerals is divided into two main parts; *Ku Bihi pennibu* (the day set aside for the shaving of the hair of the deceased family, especially the siblings). The second part termed *Benni Wuhubu*, comes on a week after the first. On both occasion the *Lunsi* perform throughout. After the first part the deceased family, especially the women invite the *Lunsi* to

play the *Tora* dance for them every night till the seventh night. For the seventh day is for the *Benni Wuhubu* and the night of that day is for *Nagbeigu* (a Dagbamba dance called ugly cow). Here a series of solo dances are performed throughout that night. Nonetheless, other group dances may be performed that same night depending on the status and rank of the deceased as well as the social and political standing of his or her siblings.

3.7.3 Market Days

On market days throughout Dagbon, Lunsi go to the market either in groups or singles. This way they drum and sing the praises of individuals at the market. The performance in this case is optional for the Lunsi. It's on such occasion that the small drummers also go in ones or in twos drumming and singing *Dakoli n nye bii ba nam lana*, what I termed the A B C of the Lunsi. They drum for women traders especially those who sell ingredients. At the end of the day they get money plus some ingredients that are given to their mothers.

During the construction of roads and footpaths the Lunsi perform as entertainers and to give the men motivation. However when any woman is going to plaster her room or inner compound she invites the Lunsi. This normally begins in the morning and can go on till evening depending on the size of the compound or number of room to deal with. Here the war dance, *Zhem* is played until the ending that they change to *Zolgu* (the drum praises of Naa Zolgu).

CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

4.1 Training: change over time

In this last chapter, I am going to look at training and how it has been changing over time, and the form it might have taken and why the change. In this same chapter socialization half a century back would be described as well as the experiences of the Middle aged (people whose age ranges from 36-65 years). Also I would throw light on the Lot of the Youth (people who fall within the age range of 18-35 years) and the Fate of the Children (these are people who will fall within the ages of 6-17 years).

Half a century or so ago, there was full focus and concentration on the training of *Lunsi*. Lots of reasons accounted for these. In the first place there were no modern forms of entertainment with their centers like we have today, such as Cinema halls, Video centers and nightclubs to mention but few. In the past there were not in existence information technologies such as Communication centers, Mobile phones, Computers and Internet cafes. They were either not there or not in an advanced stage as it is today. Moreover the population was not as dense as it is today.

There is a big difference between the recruitment and training half a century or so ago and the present. Some of the reasons for these differences are those mentioned above. Again there was not much freedom and more to the point there was no formal education. Parents therefore had full control of their children's movement. The children were made to stay at home to learn the drum poetry and oral traditions in the night before and after supper from the father or any guardian under whose care the child remained, or any body who knew the drum poetry and oral traditions and so instructed the child to do such.

Today it is not so, because most of those who have gone through some small formal (Western type) education almost always feel shy or look down on these traditional practices and do not want to touch the drums let alone learn to play them. And to some extent a large majority (both literate and illiterate) prefers to attend Cinema and Video centers, nightclubs and other entertainment centers instead of sitting at home to be taught the oral traditions and drum poetry. Furthermore, some of the children who in one way or the other have been able to

learn some “*Koranic Verses*” do not associate themselves with drumming, because of their religious beliefs or their understanding of modernity.

There is difference between the training practices of old and what pertains currently as mentioned earlier on. Most of the *Lunsi* who decide not to play the drum, either due to their religious affiliation or Western system of formal education, may engage in other professions. However, some of those who are interested in the institution may engage in training as *Lunsi* but do not want to follow some of the cultural practices of yesteryear. Such practices include farming for the trainer, and giving all the money one makes to the trainer after every performance. This makes it very difficult for many trainers to give of their best, as they are aware they no longer have benefits accruing from their efforts.

It has been said that the *Lunsi* hold the keys to the gates of Dagbon, in the sense that apart from being oral historians, genealogist and entertainers, they are judges, consultants, geographers, researchers, carvers (those who make the wooden frames of the drum), and advisers as elaborated in some of the previous chapters. They keep the oral history of every Dagbana but not only the royals. They are said to be judges because, if there is a misunderstanding or conflict over land or a skin, they are called on to provide their knowledge in the oral traditions, which is then used to help pass judgments. A typical example was when *Yaa Naa Abdulai Bella* was threatened with deskinning. It was my biological father, *Zablong Zakariah Danaa*, of blessed memory, in consultation with the then *Namo Naa Issahaku* who was called upon to unearth the truth. *Zablong Zakariah Danaa* recounted the beginning of the *Nam* up to that time in question, and he acted as an arbitrator in the matter. This means he started from the beginning of the *Yendi* skin to the time of *Naa Abudulai Bella*, the then *Yaa Naa*.

Due to the advancement in modern technology, and the introduction of certain religious beliefs and practices the institution is facing lots of problems. Westernization is another big problem to the *Lunsi* institution in Dagbon. The melodious voices of *Lunsi* were heard once in a while. This was only at the palaces and courts of chiefs and kings. But today with the assistance of tape-recorders, these sweet voices are recorded on tapes and played anytime anywhere. Some even sell tapes to make money while the poor drummer is at home struggling to make ends meet.

The first major problem is that the *Lunsi* are no longer taken care of as was done during the olden days. During those days the chief took care of *Lunsi*, like he was caring for his own family, as mentioned in chapter three. But of late the trend has changed, and so the *Lunsi* feed, clothe, and provide shelter for themselves. An increase in the population of *Lunsi* may also be a factor why the

chief can no longer care for the *Lunsi*. Though *Lunsi* are drummers, they farm too. But the general increase in population has adversely affected them, as availability of farmland has become a problem. This has resulted in low incomes from farming activities. As most of the aged *Lunsi* are dying and a large majority of the new generation of *Lunsi* is not ready to learn it, it may come to a time when the whole *Lunsi* establishment would be wiped out or have few survivors.

In Dagbon the royals and a few others outside the royal families don't play with the *Lunsi*. Only ignorant Dagbamba do not value the role of *Lunsi* and for such people the very mention of *Lunsi* invokes a notion of lazy, begging intruders. Such people often make remarks such as *Ka Lunga Mei!* literally meaning what worth is a Drummer. That is the exclamation of the ignorant who are unaware of the significant roles of *Lunsi* in Dagbon. The other source of history is historical sites where wars were fought before independence. Some of the few sites are *Sang*, *Adibo*, *Sabare*, *Yeni-dabari*, *Namkabiemni*, *Sakpegu*, and outside Ghana, *Basare* in the Republic of Togo and Bamako in Mali.

With the advent of civilization and later western (type) education, money and other forms of modernity that came in its trail, improvement in transport and information technology have had adverse effects on the training of *Lunsi* over time. This part will be treated in detail in the coming paragraphs. There also came a period in the history of Dagbon when there was competition among the court musicians of the *Gbewaa* palace in order to win the King's favours. This was especially so amongst the *Lunsi* and *Gonje*, during *Yaa Naa Abdulai Bella's* reign. That was during the late 50s and early 60s, which in a way was going to affect the training process of the youth. But the old and or chief drummers detected it and quickly put things back to normal. At this juncture I would like to ask three questions. The first question is who is a *Gonje*? Secondly, what is their origin or genesis? And thirdly what is their role and significance in relation to the chieftaincy institution in Dagbon? *Gonje* are single (one stringed) fiddle players. In short they are fiddlers. Secondly, it was *Naa Saa Lan Ziblim* who brought them to Dagbon from the then Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Faraguruma to be precise. This means every *Gonje* in Dagbon today must be able to trace his or her descent to the people of Fara-Guruma. Again this points to the fact that the *Gonje* belong to the Guruma ethnic group and as such it is a borrowed musical type into Dagbon. The answer to the third but last question is that they are Monday and Friday musicians as was seen in chapter two.

4.2 Socialization Half A Century Ago

The following text captures salient aspects of the drummer's training²⁰ It was carried out in *Zabzugu*. The first person I interviewed was my own senior brother *Shei Zablong Zakari*. There is an adage in *Daghani* that says, "*Sara yi tigla duu ka naan yinna Sambanni*". This literally translated means that, "anything good must first satisfy the family (household) before the leftover is sent outside".²¹

I had it cool with him and at a point it appeared he was in a trance (he got possessed) and the material flowed freely at will. At some point however he became a bit hesitant and full of pessimism because he thought documenting such materials will lead to the loss of value of *Lunsi*, thus making the institution something like a waste bag or toilet paper. To this I disagreed with him and made him understand that it would rather give it a broader outlook and create more market and jobs for *Lunsi*. In addition, documentation would add value and open the eyes of those ignorant about the process and significance of *Lunsi*. He stressed that without the institution of *Lunsi* then there is no "*Nam*" (leadership) in Dagbon. Explaining further to support his claim, *Nkpem Shei* mentioned that from the birth to the death of any *Daghana* every activity is linked with the tradition and culture. The custodian of these two important elements is *Lunsi*. Oral tradition has it that during the colonial era (before the advent of Islam and the coming of Europeans) *Lunsi* helped chiefs to sit on cases and pass judgments at the chiefs' Courts located in Palaces. Today the situation remains the same at the various palaces.

They mentioned that the role of *Lunsi* is many but varied. Apart from helping to pass judgment at the court of chiefs, they use their drums with praise singing to wake up chiefs on the dawns of Mondays and Fridays. The *Lunsi* also perform at the palaces during the annual festivals, durbar of chiefs and other social occasions where their services may be needed at the palace. Outside the palace, *Lunsi* also perform at naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals. According to *M Kpem Shei Z. Zakari*, the main reason why some of the youth of today are running away from the *Lunsi* institution is money. The youth of today are interested in making

²⁰ I conducted interviews with Dr. Osman Alhassan for the Institute of African Studies at Zabzugu in the Zabzugu/Tatale District of the Northern region from the 27th July- 18th August 2002. This resulted in an unpublished research work on the recruitment and training of *Lunsi*.

²¹ When the incident involving the death of the *Yaa Naa* in Yendi necessitated a change of place for the research, I thought it wise to conduct the research in my own hometown and place of birth –Zabzugu.

quick money. As such anything that does not yield quick monetary rewards does not instantly appeal to them.

He classified the institution of *Lunsi* into two major groups: firstly *Daa-Lung* and secondly *Kali Lung*. The *Daa Lung* (praises of all classes of people) is performed anytime and anywhere. *Kali Lung* (the real tradition) is performed solely for the king or chiefs at the palaces or anywhere the king or chief is present or going. The former is easy to learn and also easily rewarding for most of the youth. Thus the youth prefer the former to the latter, which is performed only at the palaces and takes time to grasp and more to the point less rewarding. *Kali Lung* comprise of the historical narratives or reviews during annual festivals such as *Konyuri Chuggu* (*Id-Fitr festival*), *Chimsi Chuggu* (*the Id-Ahda festival*), *Bugum Chuggu* (*Fire festival*) and *Kpinni febbu* (*the Guinea fowl festival*) and all other such performances that take place at the various palaces mentioned earlier on. For they even perform at the war front.

Lagban Lung' Naa Abukari Ziblim said it is due to the advancement in science and technology that is preventing the *Lungbihi* (young drummers) from learning and practicing. He mentioned that due to the operations of video and cinema houses some of the *Lungbihi* (young drummers) prefer viewing these films than staying at home after supper to study and rehearse narratives.

Some of those interviewed were of the view that Religion (particularly Islam) has contributed to the lukewarm attitude of some *Lungbihi* who shun their heritage. Others maintained that the attitude of some members of the royals and sections of the community makes them underrate this noble institution. For instance one drummer said it was very common to hear remarks such as, *Ka Lunga mei*, meaning *of what value is a Lunga!* He added that at times when some non-drummer community members are gathered under a shed or tree and a *Lunga* starts approaching them, one member of the gathering would whisper to the rest saying, *Bobli nim la yaa kan na*, literally meaning "here come those people fond of disturbing us". At the end of it all he said the gathering scatters or in the process of scattering before the *Lunga* gets there. This attitude arises from the fact that the said *Lunga* after greetings says some few praises prompting some of them to give out something (money). This attitude demoralizes both old and young drummers. For at times where such things happen and they go home they are compelled to discuss such things to the annoyance of their children. The children often become upset and question the appropriateness of doing things that are misunderstood to mean begging. They therefore have no incentive to practice a noble profession such as theirs only to the disgust of some people in society.

Nevertheless, some chiefs and elders interviewed were of the opinion that without the *Lunsi* there would have been no chieftaincy in Dagbon. If chieftaincy existed, it might not have the value and significance accorded it. One such chief in the person of *Yelzoli Vo-Naa Hamidu Shei* mentioned that for the value and respect he has for the institution, he sometimes cuts down the number of elders he is to travel with but increases the number of *Lunsi*: for the same trip. On certain occasions too he does cut down the number in order for the *Lunsi* to get enough space to drum in a moving vehicle. Left to him alone he always wants *Lunsi* to be with him anytime, any moment, and anywhere, except when he is in bed with his wife.

All *Lunsi* and *non-Lunsi* alike said chiefs and elders hold the same view, and added that it is only those who do not know the role and significance of *Lunsi* that disregard and pass unnecessary comments about *Lunsi*.

Fifty years ago, according to *Kworli Lung' Naa Abukari*, one of the most experienced and talented chief drummers in Dagbon today said drummers were in a class of their own. They were cared for by the chiefs. They were fed, clothed and given shelter. Chiefs gave their daughters to *Lunsi* for marriage. These donations were either during performances or after. A praise singer might perform to the admiration of a chief to the extent that he would give out his daughter or any unmarried female of the descent group for marriage or make a pledge, which must be fulfilled. The chief would in this case make a pledge when the female child was not readily available or not mature for marriage.

Some years back (half a century or so ago) when there was no means of vehicular transport, journeys were made on foot and horse back in Dagbon. Chiefs and chief drummers rode horses, while other members of the communities who could not afford horses walked on foot. Wherever the chief went the *Lunsi* accompanied him with their drums. This way they both drummed and sang whenever they were on trek or just one *Lunga* sang his praises while they walked on. In those days a chief could call on the chief drummer any time of the day or night to serve him. In these ways the chief drummer's farm activities were almost always disrupted. Chiefs those days had the vigor to call on *Lunsi* simply because during the harvest season, after the various villagers had harvested their farm produce and the chief's share sent to the palace, the chief in turn fetched some of the food for the chief drummer. On Mondays, Fridays and during festivals, when the villagers again sent some foodstuffs to the chief, he used to give part of it to the *Lunsi*. This was the way *Lunsi* were fed by chiefs, apart from whatever proceeds they got from performances. The chief also provided clothes to both the *Lunsi* and their wives. This was done at least once annually. It was also the

responsibility of the chief to provide shelter for his *Lunsi* which was done those days as mentioned earlier on.

To the entire community, half a century ago, *Lunsi* played vital roles as mentioned in chapter three. These roles can still be seen even today in weddings, naming ceremonies/outdooring, festivals, funerals and so on. *Lunsi* are principal actors in all these social functions and gatherings. During that period in time, when a chief was on trek the *Lunga* played dual roles. In the sense that apart from drumming and singing the praises of the chief in question and his genealogy, on entering a village or town they played another important role, spreading awareness that an important personality was passing. On leaving the outskirts of a town or village, one or two praise singers would sing praises in turns. Again they would call the family lineage and genealogy of the chief they were following. Many a time each of the two would pick a particular *Yaa Naa* of the past genealogy to praise.

However they once in a while turned to that of the chief they were traveling with as they sang his genealogy and praises and told him to be mindful of potholes. Also they added that he should mind his steps, because a chief or king is not supposed to walk like an ordinary person. They would continue performing this way, thus drumming as a group on approaching a town or village and turn to perform solo or duet when out of the town or village. When they were performing as a group, solo, or duet, every *Daghana* who understood the drum language on hearing the appellations easily and quickly knew the sort of person coming or passing. This depended on how far the air could carry the sound of the *Lung*. Once again any town or village they would pass through, they would switch and drum and sing that particular chief's praises and genealogy until they are out of the town or village in question. It would be there and then that the solo performer would take over once more. They performed this way until he arrives at his destination (the particular town or village he was travelling to). They drummed for him to alight from the horse back with the support and help of some of his subjects. Immediately he alighted, depending on his status or rank as a chief, his *Lunsi* would either change to play *Gingaansalli* or *Gingaani*. He would either sit in the outer compound, *Sambani* or in the main hall of the house, *Zong*, for such a performance to take place. The *Lunsi* would drum and sing his praises for thirty minutes to one hour or more depending on the particular *Yaa Naa*, of old the lead praise singer chose to begin with. Depending on the number of days they would spend there, the *Lunsi* would continue to perform their duties and roles whenever the need arose. The roles and duties of *Lunsi* can be put into two main groups: those that are fixed and known to them and the second are those that have no fixed dates and are not known to them.

A few of those duties and roles that are fixed and known to them are, the waking up of the chief, *Beigunaayo*, on the dawns of Mondays and Fridays and their celebrations during the latter part of the day. The nights for the Historical reviews, Festivals, *Gingaansalli*, *Gingaani*, *Bandamda* and so on. Some of them are unfixed and unknown until it happens and they are called upon. These are Weddings, Naming ceremonies/Outdoorings, Durbars of chiefs, Funerals and Treks.

Apart from these and others mentioned in the previous chapters, there are other forms that the *Lunsi* socialize in the communities and societies they live in. In the past and even to date every *Lunga* socializes in one way or the other with most of the professional groups, if not all as well as other members of the society. Such professionals and non professional groups of people like *Nakohinima* (Butchers), *Afanima* (Mallams), *Nabihi* (Princes), *Nabipuginsi* (Princesses), *Tinkpamba* (Elders of a town or village), *Machalnima* (Blacksmiths), and so on and so forth. During the same period *Lunga* or *Lunsi* had almost every thing “free”. Apart from the fact that chiefs cared for them those days, the Butchers gave them goat skins for making the heads of their drums free of charge. The blacksmiths also made *Peinkpahi* (metal pins with wooden heads or handles) for making the heads of their drums. In a nut shell half a century ago *Lunsi* enjoyed almost every thing in Dagbon free, except things they did not request or that were of no use to them.

On the chief’s return journey to his town or village, all that was done by the *Lunsi* during the previous journey was repeated all over again. It was after he entered his house that the *Lunsi* would end the performance, tie the drums and leave them in the *Sambani* and enter to bid him good bye. He would then express his appreciation for a job well executed by giving them some money. His message that accompanied the money was, “They should take this for porridge (*koko*) or to buy soap and wash their clothes”. The whole process of the chief giving them the money is termed *chebsibu* in *Daghani*. And this sign of people expressing their gratitude to the *Lunsi* is not restricted to the chiefs and royals but applies to every *Daghana* who engages them for his or her services. Nevertheless, invitations for some *Lunsi* performance are also done with kola nuts and cash. Whatever is given them after such performances, they also in turn express their sincere thanks and appreciation and go further to pray for God’s guidance and protection for such a person. Because of the nature of the *Lunsi* institution, they are trained to be humble, respectful, obedient, polite and honest. These and others that might not have been mentioned here are what I call the ingredients of socialization. The fact is *Lunsi* are supposed to be more sociable than any other person in Dagbon due to the nature of their institution. Again their dealings with people cut across age, sex and political authority.

4.3 Experiences of the Middle Aged (36-65 Years Old)

The middle aged have tasted life of thirty plus ago and all modern forms of information technology and for that matter modernity. These categories of *Lunsi* were trained through the old system. Those times and beyond were termed the Dark Age, *Zibsim saha*, in Dagbon history. During that time there was “fear”, respect for elders and honesty.

As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, because during that time lots of these modern forms of entertainment, western (type) of education and the so called world religions were either non existent or had little influence on the people of Dagbon in general and *Lunsi* in particular. In this case the middle aged like those *Lunsi* who lived half a century or more ago had almost the same experiences. They had the best type of training as *Lunsi*. They have also seen and tasted some of the benefits enjoyed for being a *Lunga*. Such benefits as already mentioned in this chapter include, care by the chief and other members of the royal lineages. Again free gifts and services were rendered them by the same group as mentioned above and the entire community at large. They went through the normal vigorous training process as tabulated in the first chapter. They did not only go through that training but served their trainers as the tradition and custom demanded of them in Dagbon. During those days trainees were severely punished or caned if he or they did not clean the *Sambani* and lay the mats or cow skin(s) for one evening without any tangible reason. No trainee could keep his share of the proceeds of any performance to himself.

Neither could he steal the performance proceeds during or after. Not even picking some of his share of the proceeds before sending the remainder to his trainer. It was and is still a taboo for any *Lunga* to steal the proceeds of performances, be it during or after such performances. For it is a strong belief amongst the *Lunsi* that any member who steals the proceeds of any performance will not attain greater heights or will not acquire the requisite knowledge to reach that level. If on the other hand one has acquired the knowledge already before indulging in such bad practice, all the knowledge he had acquired would evaporate into thin air before his death. And since the ambition of every *Lunga* was and is still to reach the top, they try as much as possible to avoid the temptation of such little thefts. Why do I say stealing the proceeds during and after performances? During performances, money is either given to the performer in his or her hands or placed on his or her forehead. In which case some of the money falls on the ground. Amongst the *Lunsi* during such performances some of the young ones are selected to do the picking of the money that falls on the ground, gather it and collect those in the hands of the dancer and send all to an old and/ or chief drummer, in charge of changing the money for both the dancers

and audience and also for safe keeping. After every performance, the money is taken to the *Lung' Naa's house* to be counted and given to him for safe keeping or any body so elected to act in that capacity. The money is either shared the following day, two or three days later depending on the type or nature of the occasion or function that is taking place or might have taken place. If it is Monday and Friday, a naming or outdooring, or wedding and so on, the proceeds are shared the same day after the performance. However, if it is a funeral or festival, the proceeds would be put down for one or more days depending on the number of days that such a programme would last.

The middle aged worked for and served their trainers (teachers) to the fullest. They worked on their farms when there was the need for. And gave all their share of the proceeds of performances to their trainers. Even when they did solo performances they sent all that they got to their trainers. Also they were of the belief that one needed to serve the old and elderly so that in his old age, he would also be served by somebody. They were trained how to process animals skins (goat and antelope) for making *Lungkugra*, *Lung-heads* and strings, *Lungdihi* (ropes that hold the two heads together). They in turn took over the task of processing these skins and working on their drums as well as that of their trainers. Like drummers of the past century, the middle aged enjoyed all privileges their predecessors had. They respected not only the old and elder *Lunsi* but also obeyed the rules and norms of the *Lunsi* institution to the fullest. Due to these reasons and many more their trainers gave them the best training. To buttress this point one of my paternal uncles in the person of the late *Dugu Lung' Naa Jakum* always had this to tell me;

“I am giving you the best of training such that wherever you go, you will not fall behind your fellow drummers for them to be fascinated by you”.

This implies that he does not want me to be playing the supporting responses wherever we are in future but rather a leading role.

Today apart from the old and or chief drummers, the middle aged are next in command. For they are the next group of drummers who can conveniently take over from the old generation of drummers, who are gradually dying one after the other. And this is why I would like to find the answers to the two questions I shall pose now. Who are the next group of drummers? Are they ready for the challenges and task ahead of them? The answer to the first question is the youth. While the reply to the second is that most of them are ready and have taken up the challenge and are doing their best for the task ahead. For they have studied and are still studying hard making sure they do not leave any thing to chance. Even though the middle aged have seen, tasted and experienced the modern trend

of events that has altered in a way the *Lunsi* institution, they have been able to hold on to their own to date. Had it not been their hard work and steadfastness, the *Lunsi* institution would have suffered heavy losses. However, the collaboration and cooperation between them and the old and or chief drummers must not be overlooked.

4.4 The Lot of the Youth (18-35 Years Old)

The youth according to *Kworli Lung' Naa Abukari* are the group of young drummers who have not seen, tasted or experienced what the middle aged and the old and or chief drummers had seen, tasted and experienced. Yet still some of them have managed one way or the other from what they have heard, seen and experienced to hold to the traditions, customs and norms of the institution of drummers. They, like the middle aged, have studied and are still studying to attain greater heights. Though some of them, due to increase in population, introduction to western (type) education, advancement in information technology, modern forms of entertainment and so on and so forth, have shied away from this noble profession and institution. *Kpem Shei* said;

“Religion (especially Islam), and money have also influenced some of the youth who did not only shy away but do not even like to touch the *Lung* with their hands. To such a group of people who are fewer in number, it is their religious belief systems that forbid them to touching the drum let alone playing it. The perception of some members of the public or communities toward *Lunsi* has influenced some of the youth to shy away from the institution of *Lunsi*”.

Increase in population not only of *Lunsi* but the *Dagbamba* in general has led to the scramble for farm land. This has caused some of the *Lunsi* to migrate to the southern part of the country to work in the cocoa farms or in search of greener pastures. Also this in a way has even made some of the youth change to other professions which to them seem attractive to the public. The same population increase led to the chiefs' inability to cater for *Lunsi* as of old. However most of the migrant *Lunsi* still maintain their profession as is seen in most of the southern cities and towns. Such cities and towns in the south where *Lunsi performance* has become commercial business include Kumasi, Ejura, Obuasi, Accra, Tema, Ashiaman and Sekondi-Takoradi to mention but few.

On the other hand a small proportion of some of the youth who have acquired the western (type) education tend to shy away from the *Lunsi* institution.

Kpem Shei lamented that, “for them the *Lunsi* institution is the preserve of their illiterate brothers who can neither read nor write”.

Again they feel too big because of their type or level of education to squat or kneel down in reverence to the chiefs, members of the royal families, popular and respectable personalities in the communities. He was quick to act by adding that I am a pace setter who has in my own small way tried to prove them wrong.

Modern forms of entertainment with their centres are scattered throughout Dagbon but to the detriment of their training. It has also in a way discouraged some members of the communities, especially the youth who patronize these centers instead of them attending *Lunsi* performances, especially *Lungsarigu*. For it is through such performances that they would have learnt a lot about Dagbon. That would have also served as a forum for them to brain storm about the customs, tradition, and past heroes of the kingdom. On the other hand all that they watch and listen to at these entertainment centres are the customs and perhaps traditions of some other people. These are in the form of cinema halls, disco, and video centres of late to mention but a few.

Information, communication, technology is currently on the agenda, with computer and mobile phones as the hall mark. Every one today wants to be computer literate at least, more so the youth. For apart from accessing information, they play games on these modern forms of information technology. Many a time even elderly people spend hours on their computers just playing games and nothing else. The same way the youth can sit behind a computer the whole day playing games.

Like western (type) education, some of the youth who have the *Quran* either in full or parts to memory also shy away from the *Lunsi* institution. As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, they shy away just because of their religious belief. To such a group of ignorant few, below are some questions I ask with the accompanying answers? In the first place is it the *Lunga* who is Satan? Secondly is it the *Lungkobli* (the wooden frame or shell) that is satanic or devilish? Or is it the animal (goat) skin that is used in covering the drum to produce the sound when beaten? The answer to the first is that the *Lunga* is a human being like anybody. The *Lungkobli* is one of those woods that are used in roofing rooms and even mosques and churches in which every Moslem or Christian goes to worship God. The answer to the third is that, if one that kills the goat (either through slaughtering or whatever means) has not committed a sin or offended God, how come someone, whom after you have eaten the goat meat, he put the skin to good use is accused of being satanic or devilish.

Last but not the least is the perception of some members of the public or communities toward *Lunsi*. These are those I termed the few “bad nuts” who are ignorant about the custom, traditions and norms of Dagbon. Such are a few non-members of the royal lineages, who hold no political position and are not even recognized in their communities. They do not know their own history and do not care to know. These are a group of people who do not even know why they are *Dagbamba*. According to *Laghan Lung*’ Naa Abukari, “These are the sort of people who whenever mention is made of the name *Lunga* even through conversation the exclamation they always make is, *Ka Lunga Mei*. Meaning, *of what worth is the drummer*, as mentioned earlier on in this chapter. Whenever any youth hears such exclamations he becomes infuriated, discouraged and begins to dissociate himself from the *Lunsi* institution. The more the youth hear such remarks if God does not intervene would always run away and would not want people to even call them *Lunsi*.

However, the affiliates of the so called world religions, especially Christianity and Islam, should not forget that such religions also contain some cultural and traditional practices of areas where they originated. So I do not see the reason why one would run away from his culture and tradition only to practice somebody else’s.

4.5 The Fate of the Children (6-17 Years Old)

The fate of the children is in a balance. And one can not for sure draw a conclusion as to how the scale will weigh, thus whether positive or negative. Though the children have seen and are seeing lots of changes due to modernity, all is not lost yet. In support of the above, I would like to use a portion of the praises of the current *Dakpem Lung*’ Naa Alhaji Baba that goes;

Dogrikpem ku naa Dangni, so yi kani so be ni.

This means a family head will never cease to exist in a family. If one is not there, there is another. Again this goes in a way to explain that though the old and talented *Lunsi* are dying gradually, there is no way the *Lunsi* institution will become extinct. Because there are always some members (who are in the majority) of every family who are practitioners of the profession. Even family heads always do their utmost best to keep the tradition going. No family head wants to take the blame that it was during his tenure that the family stopped practicing the tradition (ceased being *Lunsi*).

The children, unlike the youth, the middle aged and drummers of yesteryear have not tasted neither have they experienced most of the benefits enjoyed by the latter. They only heard of most of these as tales from the youth and middle aged. During those days, at performances *Lunsi* were at times given clothes, especially the praise singers, and the lead appellators.

Let me now look at the training of children today. There still exists the same recruitment process as was done for the youth, the middle aged, and those of half a century ago. Even though there might be some slight changes here and there, because we are all witnesses to the fact that culture is dynamic but not static. In the first place due to population increase, a trainer has to handle more trainees than what existed in the past. It is a fact that the handling of one or two trainees is not the same as three or more. In the same sense, the increase in population has affected the size of the outer compound, *Sambani*, yet some of the children are lazy in keeping it tidy. The large majority who perform their duties perfectly are given the best of training. These are those who undergo the full training as was done in the olden days as mentioned in chapter one of this Dissertation.

Nevertheless, I consider those who shy away from the *Lunsi* institution either due to modernity, religion, or any factor as a dropout. Simply because such people might have undergone some sort of training before making that move. For the normal practice is that from age six on wards the young *Lunga* has started under going the recruitment processes, thus both theory and practical. Most of these dropouts begin to exhibit some form of stubbornness between the ages of twelve and fifteen. In the past there were no dropouts in the *Lunsi* institution, because the determining factors as mentioned in this and other chapters were either not in existence or had no strong hold or influence on the life and culture of the *Lunsi*. However, this trend of *Lunsi* dropouts began with the youth, but with a lesser number.

CONCLUSION

From the forgone discussions one would agree with me that tradition has seen a lot of changes and innovation. This stems from the fact that the society of yesteryear is not the same as today's. In the same vein the society of half a century or so ago can not be the same as today. As a result throughout the first to the last chapter the difference is clear. This can be seen from the recruitment and training of *Lunsi* to the old and or chief drummers. The genesis of *Lunsi*, the Myths and Stories, Genealogies and roles they play in the state. Again their relations with the *Yaa Naa* and other chiefs have been dealt with, including the various parts they played in communities where they are found. Once more the sort of training that *Lunsi* undergo and the changes that have taken place over time is not left out. I have critically looked at socialization half a century ago and the experiences the middle aged have witnessed. I have also critically examined the position of the youth, as well as the fate of the children in the institution of *Lunsi*.

However, these changes and innovations have not taken place in a vacuum, for there are certain pull factors that affected them. Such pull factors are: Modernity, Information Technology, Transportation, Entertainment centres (cinema halls, disco-techs, video centres and so on), Computer labs and mobile phones. Religion (especially Islam and Christianity) has also some influence on the kingdom in general but the *Lunsi* institution in particular. In this case Islam played a major role in that direction. To some extent money has also some influence on the *Lunsi* institution. In this direction, some of the youth and the children have fallen prey to this. For this group, since the *Lunsi* institution is not for money making and they want to make quick money, they have to switch to a different occupation or profession to achieve their objective.

Finally, *Lunsi* need education and enlightenment with regard to their values and things they can do as an institution to broaden their outlook. They need material and financial support to keep things moving. Most of their works need to be documented and to be preserved for generations to come. If *Lunsi* are to be fully recognized and given the needed support from all quarters, I am sure the chieftaincy institution of Dagbon and Ghana would not have suffered the way it has.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Afa</i>	–	Mallam
<i>Afanima</i>	–	Mallams
<i>Akarima</i>	–	The talking drum (<i>Atumpan</i>) player
<i>Bann' Lana</i>	–	The horn blower
<i>Bindili Lana</i>	–	The calabash drum player
<i>Bizun</i>	–	The first Lunga
<i>Bua</i>	–	Goat
<i>Bugum chuggu</i>	–	The Fire Festival
<i>Chimsi-chuggu</i>	–	The <i>Id-ul-Adha</i> festival – Moslem festival associated with sacrifice and pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>Daa Lunga</i>	–	Drumming and praises of individuals or prominent people sub chiefs in the community. Often done in the market place or on festive occasions
<i>Dalgu lana</i>	–	One who plays a wooden drum with one head
<i>Duu</i>	–	Room
<i>Dundong</i>	–	Inner compound or perimeters of a house
<i>Gbewaa Palace</i>	–	The <i>Yaa Naa</i> 's residency/Palace
<i>Gungon Lana</i>	–	The bass drum player
<i>Kali Lunga</i>	–	Traditional drumming performed solely for the king or chiefs at the palaces or anywhere the king is present or going. Also, drumming and praise singing of the historical narratives/reviews during annual festivals such as <i>Damba</i> , <i>Bugum</i> , etc
<i>Kikaa</i>	–	End- blown trumpet with a gourd affixed to the
end		
<i>Konyuri-chuggu</i>	–	<i>Id-ul-Fitr</i> festival – Moslem festival associated with ending of fasting period.
<i>Kpinni-febbu</i>	–	The Guinea fowl festival
<i>Lunga</i>	–	Practicing drummer
<i>Lunsi</i>	–	Institution of drummers; drummers as a whole
<i>Lung</i>	–	Hour-glass-shaped drum (instrument)
<i>Lung'-Nannima</i>	–	Hierarchy of chief drummers

<i>Lunghih</i>	– Young and up-coming drummers or young practicing drummers
<i>Lungdoli</i>	– Stick used in playing the drum (Lung)
<i>Lungkobli</i>	– Wooden frame or shell of the drum
<i>Lunga-paga</i>	– Female drummer or drummer's wife
<i>Lung' Naa</i>	– Chief Drummer
<i>Lungdihi</i>	– Ropes or strings that hold the two drum heads together
<i>Maasa</i>	– Specially treated corn dough
<i>Machele</i>	– Blacksmith
<i>Machelnima</i>	– Blacksmiths
<i>Naa</i>	– Chief
<i>Naazo</i>	– The servant of a chief or king
<i>Nabihi</i>	– Princes
<i>Nabipuginga</i>	– Princess
<i>Nabipuginsi</i>	– Princesses
<i>Nabiya</i>	– Prince
<i>Nahu</i>	– Cow
<i>Nakoha</i>	– Butcher
<i>Nakohinima</i>	– Butchers
<i>Nakohi Naa</i>	– Chief Butcher
<i>Nanima</i>	– Chiefs
<i>Namo Naa</i>	– The over all chief drummer of Dagbon
<i>Namonanima</i>	– Plural for <i>Namo Naa</i>
<i>Napaga</i>	– The wife of a Chief or King
<i>Noo</i>	– Fowl
<i>Nologu</i>	– Cock
<i>Peinkpahi</i>	– Locally made metal pins with wooden heads or handles used in making the heads of <i>Lung</i>
<i>Sambani</i>	– The outer compound of a house
<i>Sampahi Naa</i>	– Assistant/Deputy Chief Drummer
<i>Tinkpamba</i>	– Elders of a town or a village
<i>Worrimachima</i>	– One who takes care of a horse
<i>Yaa Naa</i>	– King of Power also, also overlord of Dagbon A chief or king
<i>Yua/Wia</i>	– End-blown notched flute
<i>Yenni</i>	– The Yendi skin
<i>Yenni-Dabari</i>	– The remnants of old Yendi
<i>Zong</i>	– The main hall to any family house
<i>Zuguliem</i>	– Grandson of a drummer born to the daughter of the <i>Lunga</i> (drummer) in question.



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