

Dangash's Tende Ensemble

Ethnic group: Tuareg

Language (dialect): Tamasheq (Tayert)

Country: Niger

Recording date: March 31, 2016

Recording location: Tajajarat, Agadez, Niger

Total Recording time: 25:44

Technician: Brian Nowak

Group members:

Fatima Ahmed - chorus

Zeinabou Hamed - lead vocals on tracks 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8

Zeinaba Hamed - chorus

Fatima Boutale - chorus (on tende, left) [lead on track on 6 and 7]

Mohamed Illiassou - tende (mortar-drum)

Mariama Ahamed "Dangash" - group leader, chorus [lead on track 1]

Fatima Hamed - chorus (behind asakalabo)

Doujou Ahmed - chorus (against wall)

Rabi Mohamed - akasalabo (inverted calabash, floating on water)

Track names -- duration

1) Idugdugan - 1:51

2) Boulhou - 3:15

3) Eshel - 2:51

4) Iman n Kusen - 2:01

5) Abadaya - 2:52

6) Abarad n Emgir - 5:36

7) Tandaman - 3:33

8) Tezenut - 3:45

9) Interview - 2:55

Group introduction:

An outskirts neighborhood in the city of Agadez, Tajajarat can now be considered on transition to bring even a suburbs of Agadez. Amazingly, Dangash similarly maintains the village flavor and introduces professionalism to the desert Tende genre.

Agadez, now void of tourists due to security threats, has hosted local rebellions, and once had direct flights from France for Saharan tourism. Interest in the Tuareg culture from the tourist heyday from 2000-2005, connected people, and Dangash has had the opportunity to play in several European countries. Several songs played here at home represent a variety of tende styles, old and new, local and regional.

The ensemble features necessary elements including a strong lineup of backup response singers, a very important role that serves to sustain a melodic cycle as the lead vocals slip phrases in between the repeated choral response. Two women sit on pestles to maintain pressure on the attached goatskin, used over a mortar to create a drum. In most areas women play the Tende but in some areas men also play the Tende. Here, the rhythms are vibrantly brought to life with minimalist, yet significantly unfolding patterns.

Recording context:

Recorded at home with Harmattan dust in the air, Dangash was sick with a cold and only able to sing one song, less than she had planned. Having already managed the group and performance, her sister and friends stepped in to sing as they are more than competent lead singers in their own right, simply taking the response singing role to show respect for Dangash. The variety of three lead voices provides for a good example of Tende personalities and tonal and stylistic variations.

As explained in the interview, there are three kinds of Tende. All of the examples here are Tende for men dancers, except “Tandaman,” which is a Tende-n-Amnas, or Camel Tende. For tende for dancers, the women sing and clap, and the men dance, usually in a counter-clockwise circle and then turn to face the tende group individually or occasionally with a friend. The Camel Tende features a fantasia of men riding camels in a circle around a Tende group clumped into a group in the middle. The trot of the camels can coincide with the tempo making for true animal music magic.

The Tende-n-Goumatan, or Tende of the spirits, is a spiritual healing rite women perform on the outskirts of town or camp, when women sway to music, and spirits are exorcised from their bodies. It is a nighttime ritual.

Notes on Language Use:

Tende songs are both an archive of different tribunal repertoires and spontaneous creations. This collection deserves mention for its diversity and representation of a range of tende subject matter. The first song is an old standard and an appropriate opener to the style played, followed by “Boulhou,” or orphan, also from the older songs. “Eshel” refers to the 2009 inundation that swept away entire neighborhoods of Agadez.

“Iman-n-Kusen” is an old song about a woman’s reaction to her husband not returning home from his exode (temporary emigration

outside of the country) with the other men. Abadaya is a new song adapted from a lullaby sung as the baby is rhythmically thrown into the air and caught. "Abarad n Emgir" is an old song from the Kel Fedey federation of Tuaregs near Abalama about the bravery of warriors.

"Tandaman" is about a mother who had a beautiful daughter and refused to marry her to the boy she wants. "Tezenut" is called gourd and the gourd is a storage device used to keep milk or yoghurt. This song speaks of a poor jealous woman without animals, that saw a friend with animals go out to pasture. She sang about how the friend had no camels or cows or goats, just a gourd for milk with no milk, as if turning the situation around.

Diversity of songs in this format demonstrates the use of lyrics through the vehicle of a rural music genre. It creates links to incorporate current events, federation specific songs, and cultural events and advice that construct identity from a variety of contexts. All those references are without even diving deeply into the lyrics.