

Mai Gizo Bilan

Ethnic group: Hausa

Language (dialect): Hausa (Dogaranci)

Country: Niger

Recording date: March 28, 2016

Recording location: Toudou neighborhood, Agadez, Niger

Total Recording time: 35:51

Technician: Brian Nowak

Group members:

Mai Gizo Bilan – goge (spike-fiddle)

Oumarou Douka – kwarya (calabash)

Issa Boube - kwarya (calabash)

Track names -- duration

1) Mai Gizo – fiddle and calabash (including Dosa, Waandu ‘Souley Baba,’ Harakoy Dikko, Mahamane Surgu, and Malo Cirey) – 21:08

2) Mai Gizo – fiddle solo (including Fatio Nya, Dan Mamma (Arne), Adama, Zakoma, Commandant Mugu and Zataw) – 11:22

3) Mai Gizo interview – 3:21

Group introduction:

In the ancient trans-Saharan caravan market town of Agadez, few *goge* players remain in the Hausa tradition of Bori spirit possession. Mai Gizo Bilan, has a strong arm for the fiddle bow and doesn't play to simply fool around.

Mai Gizo is not from Agadez, but from Malbaza. His first trip to the area was North of Agadez to the uranium mining Saharan town of Arlit for Sarkin Issa'a wedding. He spent three months there. After returning to Malbaza, he would go every Friday to Sarkin Dagara, the chief's residence, to play the fiddle. He later moved from Malbaza to Agadez where he had found that one of the two remaining *goge* players had died. The second native player has also died now leaving Mai Gizo as the only of *goge* player of his generation having spent the most time playing in Agadez.

Recording context:

Under a spirit hangar in the middle of a peripheral neighborhood, this typical group shares songs during a day relaxing with no ceremonial context. Even at a real ceremony, passers-by and motorcycles continue on with their lives, moving around the group or crowd as seen in background here.

The calabash playing here is what is not typical to a large ceremony. To create a different sound for sharing the songs directly, the calabash players used their bare hands on the calabash. This removes one of the three sounds used when playing with sticks, the roll, and maintains the palm and the fingers, identical in design to the sticks that are wrapped in a finger-like manner [see Halarou Alou in the Hausa section on this page for a great example]. The quieter style of calabash as played with Mai Gizo for this recording is also used for more spontaneous, private, and indoor ceremonies.

Notes on Language Use:

For the solo *goge*, despite the seasonal cold, that seems to grip so many, Mai Gizo forces out words from a deeper, sicker place, adding to the quality and intensity of the vocals that interject the fiddle's song. This crying out nature can move from pleading to demanding during a ceremony, and enjoyably comes with a deeply devoted effort to belting out to the fullest extent for whatever it may bring you.

The octave vocal jump with certain singers and ensembles, here with the older calabash singer, leads to a tonal intensity that assures a protrusion and shock value even without belting out the notes, although belting them out helps. It alters the mindset, demanding attentiveness, shrieking with possession symbolism.