

## **Makadan Sultan Aïr**

**Ethnic group:** Hausa (Abzinawa)

**Language (dialect):** Hausa (Abzinanci)

**Country:** Niger

**Recording date:** December 30, 2016

**Recording location:** Sultan's Palace, Agadez, Niger

**Total Recording time:** 14:34

**Technician:** Brian Nowak

### **Group Members:**

Lawa Mohamed Sarkin Makada – ganga (double-headed, barrel drum)  
Moussa Balla – ganga, praise-shouter for track with instruments  
Adamou Djibo Ousmane – Algaita reed, praise-shouter for track without instruments  
Aboubacar Hanna – Algaita  
Mamma Mohamed – ganga  
Mohamed Balla – ganga

Other court musicians not featured in this recording:

Gonda Aite – ganga

Saaley Moussa - ganga

Illia Tahirou - ganga

Bilali Niani - ganga

### **Track names -- duration**

1) Praises for the Sultans of Agadez – 7:42

2) Praises for the Sultans of Agadez – without instruments – 1:51

3) Interview with Adamou Djibo Ousmane – 2:32

4) Interview with Aboubacar Hanna – 2:29

### **Group Introduction:**

The griot is a well-known musician that also serves as a library and reference source, also consecrating events as official with their presence. For Sultan's court musicians in Niger, they accompany the Sultan and provide fanfare for all events related to the Sultan or the Sultan's palace. The musicians are casted with inheritance rites scrutinized keeping a tight-knit, carefully selected group of individuals from within the appropriate families. Too important to include apprenticeships at performance, court musicians are experienced and wizened by years of proximity to the palace and its affairs.

Extending these musicians immediate role in and around the palace or travelling with the Sultan, they also play at weddings associated with the Sultan's extended family. They are loved citywide as a musical institution of great importance, representing a historical, central leadership, in some communities, more important than the national government. When featured at weddings, women participants at a wedding as well as onlookers become inspired to dance to the rhythms of the *ganga* barrel-drums. Here, the rhythm and melody motivate celebration with a regal, uplifting tone that resonates in the adobe labyrinth of the old town neighborhoods disorienting anyone trying to locate the party by following the music.

**Recording Context:**

This recording took place days after the enthronement and the pride is apparent. In front of the newly plastered outside and renovated inside of the Sultan's Palace, the musicians demonstrate the lineage recital that leads the Sultan's procession. Important Sultans are named by shouting their names and attributes from this institution in the midst of many Tuareg confederates. The current Sultan now drives a 4x4 around, however his enthronement in December 2016 and the Palace's renovations as part of restoration funds from its dedication as a UNESCO's world heritage site, point to a strong tradition despite confronting the modern world. Special drums for the enthronement were staked into the ground while others were paraded on each side of three camels. Doorways in the palace were heightened for easier access, as originally they were low with cryptic passages to confuse possible invaders and force them to squat into a vulnerable position in order to enter into the interior areas of the palace as easy targets.