

Nassirou Laminou

Ethnic group: Hausa (Damagarawa)

Language (dialect): Hausa (Damagaranci)

Country: Niger

Recording date: December 16, 2016

Recording location: Agadez, Niger

Total Recording time: 18:20

Technician: Brian Nowak

Group Members:

Nassirou Laminou - Gurmi (two-string, long-neck lute)

Issa Sani - Kalangu (talking-drum) and Koolo (knee-strap tension drum)

Amadou Issa Musik - Kalangu

Track names -- duration

1) Allah Amari Ndunya, Hankuri Da Dangana - 6:34

2) Allah Mai Bada Tuo Makaho - 6:17

3) Nassirou Laminou interview - 5:29

Group Introduction:

Nassirou represents the next generation of skilled professionals in the Hausa *gurmi* tradition. Not old enough to have gained significant status, his casual playing and direct vocals point to a specific style. His confident lyrics call through the strumming of the high-pitched strings that fade in-and-out like waves. From South of Zinder, the village of Dadin Sarki is on the road to Matameye, the major town on the Zinder road South towards Nigeria. The exceptional *kalangu* accompaniment also presents the group as hypnotically tight, allowing Nassirou the rhythmic structure to interject his lyrics and praises.

Recording Context:

The *gurmi* genre has a wide spectrum. From local bars, that may feel like a hush-don't-tell location, to praise-shouting important people in the community and even government, the focus is always on the lyrics. This recording sets Nassirou apart from the fixed-in-place bar minstrel, a regular at a drinking spot. In bars, an un-accompanied *gurmi* player often wanders among clusters of seats entertaining groups of friends and other drinkers, either at an inside bar or a spacious outside bar, one with tables and chairs comfortably spaced to provide the feeling of having one's own space. This recording is at the extreme end of the spectrum, the rare occasion of the Sultan of Agadez's enthronement.

Nassirou, Issa and Amadou's presence at this significant event represented the youngest independent group of musicians, travelling a

full days drive to participate in the enthronement festivities and pay homage to Nigerien traditional and government leaders. Their journey followed those of many of the officials and VIPs throughout the country that gathered for this large, infrequent traditional enthronement. As a three-person ensemble with portable instruments, they easily weaved their way through the procession of leaders that filed in the eave of the ceremony. In expensive 4x4 vehicles and shiny white pick-up trucks, they each brought at least one cow to offer to the Sultan. As they step out of their cars musicians from all over mostly Hausa country, struggle to fit in the procession, following a cluster of VIPs into the welcoming house, and of course, back to their cars some even trailing them out of the palace grounds.

The location of this recording took place on the far-stretches of the Abbala neighborhood, a sort of outskirts squatting area for the extreme poor. The makeshift huts are not even suitable for life in the rough countryside; it's dire urban poverty. The neighborhood is also as close as you can get to the hippodrome horse-racing area, and part of the festivities features horses that have also travelled far, many with prize winning histories up to \$6,000 in the world's poorest country. The horse featured in the second track, known as Trois N, has won the grand prize five times and was preparing to race in the next couple of hours.

In small huts, as seen in the picture, poorer residents of Agadez's outskirts hosted some visitors and provided a logical place for the horses to stay with space and away from the stresses of the city. Nassirou puts on his best blue boubou, bonnet, sunglasses and gifted *albaye*, a sign of his presence in Agadez. This traditional *albaye*, a Tuareg man's money-holder worn around the neck, is a cheap version reminiscent of Agadez's 2000-2007 tourist hey-day from that encouraged both high quality and low-quality artisanal products to liquidate to anyone. As a praise shouter constantly defining himself in the present situation, Nassirou hangs the *albaye* as if pinpointing himself of a map, while referring to Agadez and Trois N while singing.

Is this Nassiru Maigurmi? EC Yes.