

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8860

Alhaji Garbo Leko and his GOGÉ music

acc. by the GOGÉ, percussions, drums and singers

RECORDED IN NIGERIA BY RANDALL F. GRASS



M
1831
H376
G214
A397
1976

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8860

TAPE: side one

1. "Kida Rawa" (Dance music): Instrumental improvisation of the type used for dance performances

TAPE: side two

1. "Wurin Allah Muka Nema" (We want to be with God)
2. "Alhaji Inuwa Mai Main Gyada A Kano (a praise song to Alh. Inuwa, a seller of groundnut oil at Kano)
3. "Sarkin Mallamai Garba Kaita (praise song to a chief Mallam [teacher])
4. "Alhaji Bella gogo Katsina" (a praise song to the person named)
5. "Ali Mai Sai da Mai Shell-BP" (a praose song to Ali, a petrol seller)

Recorded April 11, 1976 at Radio-Television Kaduna studios

Special thanks to Ed Tomasiewicz for translation and special help

Thanks to Mohammed Jallo and his staff at Radio-Television Kaduna

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CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.



Alhaji Garbo Leko and his GOGÉ music

acc. by the GOGÉ, percussions, drums and singers

RECORDED IN NIGERIA BY RANDALL F. GRASS

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FW 8860

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Alhaji Garba Leo and his GOGUE music

acc. by the GOGUE, percussions, drums and singers

RECORDED IN NIGERIA BY RANDALL F. GRASS



Contents: Two reels of tape

Reel No. 1: "Kida Rawa" (Dance Music) 20 minutes
(Instrumental)

Reel No. 2: #1- "Wurin Allah Muki Nema" (six minutes)
#2- "Alhaji Inuwa Mai Main" Gyada A Kano
(five minutes)
#3- "Sarkin Mallamai Garba Kaita"
(five minutes)
all w/vocals #4- "Alhaji Bellagogo Katsina"
(five minutes)
#5- "Ali mai sai da mai Shell-BP"
(six minutes)

Recorded at Radio-Television Kaduna Studios, Commercial
Division April 11, 1976 Kaduna, Nigeria.

Supervision: Randall F. Grass

Special Thanks to Ed Tomasiviescz for translations and
timely help.

Thanks to Mohammed Jallo for permission to use RTK studios
and to the commercial staff for friendly assistance.

Notes:

Reel No. 2 #1: means "At the place of God, we pray."

#2: is a praise song to "Alh. Inuwa owner of
groundnuts at Kano."

#3: is a praise song to a chief ("Sarki")

#4: is a praise song to the person named.

#5: is a praise song to Ali, of Shell-BP.

The times listed are not exact—unfortunately I have mis-
placed the notes I made...but anyway you may wish to cut
some of the songs shorter.

This music is the music of Alhaji Garba Leo, the foremost
goge musician in Nigeria (and probably all of Africa). The
goge is a one-stringed bowed instrument with a sounding
chamber made from a gourd and string made of horsehair. It
is played by Hausa and Fulani peoples of the West African
savannah, particularly in Northern Nigeria, Niger and Chad.
It is to this Savannah area that such blues scholars as Paul
Oliver have traced rhythm patterns and scales found in Afro-
American blues. These tones and patterns are evident in
goge-music.

Garba Leo has been playing goge for thirty years and is a virtuoso who earns a good living from his music, which though traditional, is the living popular music of Hausa speaking people. He has performed in Dahomey, Chad and Niger as well as his regular base in Northern Nigeria. The music often sounds like free jazz whereas during the vocal numbers it is more similar to blues. But throughout, Garba Leo's playing rivals the best jazz and blues soloists.

Typically he is accompanied by three drummers, playing kalangui ("talking" drums), a drummer playing a small, ordinary drum, two calabash percussionists, and six singers. Vocal music is marked by call-and-response exchanges between the singers and Garba Leo's goge riffs. The goge riffs follow the tonal patterns of the Hausa language and so have a verbal as well as musical meaning. A Hausa speaker can tell what the drummers or goge is saying. So the singers simply sing what Garba Leo has "said" on his goge. There is a high degree of improvisation on the part of both vocalists and musicians—much of the lyric content is improvised praise singing. Alhaji Leo also has a troupe of six dancers (three men and three women) who perform traditional dances—the music during the dancing has little vocalizing but is marked by free improvisation between Garba Leo and the drummers.

This recording will interest anyone who likes free wheeling improvisation and may even appeal to those rock fans who appreciate the heavy guitar of Hendrix et. al. Alh. Leo can play music as heavy as any of them.

Randall F. Grass

A PERFORMANCE BY GARBA LEO

On the night of performance by Garba Leo in Kano, you will likely find Alh. Leo seated on a mat outside the Niger Club. He will sit conversing with friends and well-wishers, take some food, and sometimes drink magani (local "medicine" for strength).

Around ten o'clock, he will enter the club and have some drinks at a table. Some of his drummers and a student of goge will be playing in a tentative way, as if flexing musical muscles. People in the club will be sitting and drinking,

greeting friends and sometimes doing little spontaneous jig-like dance steps in the large open space of the open-air club. The shrill sound of the amplified goge is like a call to the faithful as the initiatory tunes are played. By ten-thirty, Alh. Leo himself will begin to play with all his musicians, the drummers, calabash players, singers clustered around him, his student at his immediate left with his own instrument. The music has little momentum as yet—he will stop in the middle of songs to smoke, drink or be greeted (people will bow before him according to their status in Hausa society). He begins to improvise praise songs as the singers praise people in the audience. Some of his supporters will dance in the middle of the open area and then rush over to sing in front of the person being praised. This person is expected to contribute money to keep the music going. Anyone who contributes money will have music played for him—whether the contribution is 20 kobo (30 cents) or ten Naira (\$15.). As soon as money is contributed the supporter will rush in mock haste to the musicians—waving the money high in the air—seize the microphone from the singers and stop the music. He will shout into the microphone, telling Alh. Leo who has contributed, how much, and why. Then the musicians explode into action after a short invocatory phrase from Garba Leo.

As the contributions become more frequent, the music becomes more intense. By 2:00 AM, the contributions are dwindling. There is a short break and then the six dancers appear, sometimes in stage uniforms, sometimes in ordinary clothing, with bright cloths, headties and waist sashes on the women. The music begins in a medium tempo and the dancers (men and women in separate groups) begin to walk rhythmically in a big circle. Little-by-little, the dancers begin adding movements—turns, twists, undulations—which increase as the music develops. After some time, the male dancers begin leaping high into the air and making fast turns while the women begin to vibrate their bodies and shake their hips as they skip around the circle. By now the musicians are playing hard, the drummers' eyes wide with excitement, and Garba Leo, lost in a kind of dreamy trance, rocking back and forth in his chair, trading progressively faster, higher, more complex licks with his student. The rhythm becomes climactic and some of the dancers are literally rolling on the ground, shaking, with the musicians sweating and playing hard and fast. Then suddenly its over as the music stops and the spell is broken.