

Second Report of the NPS Press Club, March 2013: The Man Najude

Founding father of Unguwar Najude

Najude was the founding father of the village that is today known as Unguwar Najude, which was named after him. A long time ago, he left his own area and came to this place where he decided to settle down and build his house. The village has been growing ever since that time, and now the fourth and fifth generations of his descendants are living in Unguwar Najude. To honor his legacy, and for the coming generations in the village of Najude to know about their history, we, the members of NPS Press Club, have decided to talk to some of the children of Najude who are still alive in order to gather information about his life and write it down. And we even travelled to the village of Kauru to talk to Kyauta, the last living brother of Najude in order to interview him. He is believed to be 97 years old by the time of compiling this report (March 2013).

Parents and siblings

The parents of Najude came from Kano. His mother was called Ganye, and his father was called Mairana. But Najude was born in Gazaru, a place in the present day Makarfi Local Government Area of Kaduna State. His brothers were Kutama, Danmarka, Safe, Yawa, Ladi, Tsakani and the last born Kyauta, all from the same mother. The family migrated from Gazara to Auchan close to Gidan Kofa in Auchan district of the Ikara Local Government Area where they spent eight years. From there they migrated again to start a new settlement in Dan Mairana near Kuya. From here they disintegrated into various houses in different locations. These houses are today known as

1. Gidan Najude (Unguwar Najude)
2. Gidan Kutama
3. Gidan Dan Marka a Kasar Kweri Yadiya
4. Gidan Kyauta a Kauru
5. Gidan Umaru Kadage Kauru

The family was separated not because of conflict but because of the steady increase in population and the need for additional farm land to feed them. The present day settlement of Unguwar Najude developed from the initial Gidan Najude. It is said that this place did not have any inhabitants for over 80 years before the arrival of Najude and his family. As of that time the place was full of wild animals, so people always moved through this place in groups, never alone. Najude and his family were the first people to cultivate the land here, turning bush into farmland.

The life of Najude

Najude was a farmer who reared animals such as sheep and cultivated crops such as gyada (groundnut), auduga (cotton), dawa (guinea corn), gero (millet) and masara (maize). He was married to three wives know as 'Yar Samako, Rantai-Talatua and Laraba, with whom he had up to 25 children. Some of them were Umaru, Tasallah, Ango, Dala, Kano, Jummai, Hakama, Asabe and Mate. Ango is the only surviving son living in Najude today. Najude was a peace loving person, and he did not like violence. His favorite food was fura, tuwo da nama dambu, pete da danwarke and gauda. He liked to drink kunu and buru kutu. During the time of Najude, there were two markets where he could trade his goods, the market of Paki and the market of Auchan. He and his family sold their farm produce such as cotton in these markets. They had to trek there by foot because there were no modern means of transportation. Sometimes they used donkeys to carry the crops for them. They sold their crops in bags known as algarala. Their king during that time was called Harillu Sarkin Auchan, who ruled the district for over 57 years.

The advent of Christianity

Before the advent of Christianity, these people were traditional believers who worshipped their local gods. They got in contact with Christianity only some 30 years ago, through missionaries from England. In the beginning, Najude opposed their teachings and preferred his own ways. He told his children not to listen to the missionaries, because he did not want them to become Christians. But later on he gave them his blessing to join the new faith. He wished them well and told them that this was a result of modernization. But Najude himself stayed true to his own beliefs and the religion of his forefathers. He died as a pagan, not as a Christian or a Muslim.

Kyauta, the last living brother of Najude

It is said that Najude reached a very old age of 95 years, although this can not be verified. Because by the time Najude was born, people did not write down the date of births, and birth certificates were unheard of. So we have to assume that Najude did not know his true age throughout his life. As of today, there is only one of his brothers who is still alive: Kyauta, who lives in Kauru. During our research for this report, we travelled there to meet him and interview him. It was Ango, the only living son of Najude who still lives in the village today, who came along with us and introduced us to him. We were very lucky to meet Kaura in good health, and he was able to sit down with us and answer all our questions. So most of the information about the story of Najude came from him. He is now believed to be 97 years old himself. In the picture on the right, he can be seen drinking kunu



during the interview with some of the press club reporters. In the pictures at the end of this report, you can see our journey to Kaura and the family of Kyauta. With him, the last person of the generation of the founding fathers of Najude and other villages will be gone forever. He was very happy that we came to see him in order to write about the story of the migrations of his family. In the following two chapters, we are going to talk about the traditional Hausa culture and some customs, as they were normally practiced during the time of Najude and even today.

Traditional Funeral Rites in Hausa Culture

Normally, when a person of old age dies we will first of all send messages of their death to the extended family, to relations, neighbors and friends. It is expected that all those who are informed will come immediately to gather in the house of the deceased. The death of an old person is always received with joy and happiness because such a person is believed to have spent a good number of years on earth. Therefore, the life of the dead person must be celebrated, as he or she has a good number of heirs to continue the family lineage. As soon as our family members and relatives come to the house the burial arrangements start.

First, the grave is measured according to the height and size of the deceased. The location of the grave is either inside or outside the compound of the dead person. After measuring the grave we get the youths to dig the grave to a considerable depth. The grave is dug in two steps or layers: The first layer is locally measured and dug wider, while the second layer is dug inside the area of the first layer and is therefore smaller and narrower. This kind of grave is locally called *ya'aduwa*, meaning big and small or senior and junior. When the grave is finally prepared the dead body is washed, locally embalmed and wrapped in a white yard. It is then carried inside a locally made carrier called *makara* by only old people to the side of the grave. Here, the corpse is placed directly into the narrow second layer, facing the direction where the sun rises. The body is then covered with specially arranged pieces of a broken earthen pot to the level of the first stage of the grave. A special mat called *tabarmar kaba* is then placed on top. Next is the returning of the earth dug from the grave. Here, the soil is returned according to the stages of the grave: The earth dug from the second stage is returned first, followed by the earth of the first layer. The grave is not to be cemented, because the idea or the use of cement has not reached us until recently and is not in accordance with the local customs to use it for graves. Therefore, we normally arrange broken stones round the grave for easy identification and to locate the site of the grave.

When the dead body has finally been laid to rest some people will go back home while others, such as close relations, neighbors and friends, will return to the compound of the deceased in order to receive greetings from sympathizers. Another phase of the funeral rite is the pounding of a special kind of millet locally called *gyero* and the slaughtering of goats by relations and friends of the family. The millet (*gyero*) is first of all washed and trashed and then pounded into powder. A little water is added and also some locally made sugar called *mazarkwela* or *rowandoki*. This is then moulded into small shapes and then shared to the people to eat. The water is considered vital and therefore it is taken to the new grave and poured on top of it. It is believed the deceased will be drinking this water while in the grave, and it serves as the only gift the relations, neighbors and friends can offer to the dead person at this moment. After eating the pounded millet everyone will say a farewell greeting to the deceased, for example *May God accept You*, or *May God Have Mercy*, etc. Those who are willing to give money will do so as a gift to the relations of the dead person and such money is normally used to prepare food for the mourners.

Those members of the family who brought their goats will have them slaughtered. The slaughtered goats will be skinned and cut into large pieces. Normally some special parts like the head, the limbs, the skin and one part of the front lap is given to the person who brought the goat. After this, the remaining meat is collected together and roasted on specially prepared fire. According to customs, the meat must not be cooked or fried but it should be roasted, no matter the quantity. After roasting the meat it will be brought before the guests and shared amongst them according to seniority. The elders are given pure flesh, the boneless parts, then the youths, women and children are given their meat which can be eaten there or carried home. After this, food is cooked and served to the people to eat. Locally brewed beer will be brought for whoever desires to drink, and is kept on an open place for easy access. All cannot be said without mentioning the most entertaining part of the festivity: Drumming, singing and dancing. Normally a group of special drummers are invited from anywhere among our tribe. Drumming normally begins late evening or early night, between 6 to 8pm, after the people have finished taking their evening meals. Dancing starts immediately and lasts till day break. The dancers form a circle pattern, and the dance is tense when done backward but less tense when it is done forward. The dance mostly involves married women and youth, both boys and girls. Some special kinds of songs called *jede* are sung there. These songs are about bravery, endurance, agility and the ability to dance for a long period of time. For example, one of these songs is called *Sai Gari Ya Waye Bature* (Till Dawn, White Man)! So dancing must continue no matter the situation. Nobody is allowed to sleep and in case somebody is found sleeping, water is usually poured on the person to wake them up. Note here that these dances are to glorify old age in general. The direct children of the deceased are not allowed to join the dance. The drumming and dancing is expected to last for three days. The drums used during this occasion are called *dindifa* and are made up of specially carved hollow wood and goat skin. These drums are of different sizes in order to produce different sounds that will go together with any kind of song and the different types of dance. Since the drums are tall ones, they are kept on the ground and the drummers stand upright while beating them. They use specially designed sticks for beating the drums.

After this, there is another event called *arba'in* (fourty days). A few days before the event, invitations are sent orally to all those who are concerned. On the day of the *arba'in*, the children of the deceased will provide goat meat, food and locally brewed beer to the invitees to eat and drink. Food and drink will be served according to seniority. There is drumming and dancing again throughout the day. People from far and near, well wishers, friends and neighbors are expected to join the festivity. The nature of dancing is again similar to the one done on the burial day but lasts for only a day. There are again donations, which always consist of money. Those donations are shared to beggars who happen to be around. The property of the dead person like clothes and shoes will be shared into three equal parts. One part each is given to the beggars, the children of the deceased and to the people who bathed the corpse.

Traditional Wedding Ceremony

Before the wedding can take place, the parents of the boy will go and meet the parents of the girl, and they will buy cola nuts and other presents for them. They will greet and together they will choose the day the wedding will take place. The relatives of the boy will come to his house and donate money to the boy's father in order to help him build a new room for the girl. If the money is much he will even use it to pay the bride price. In the old days, the wedding festivities used to last for about seven days. But nowadays due to the high population and the many weddings taking place everywhere, they last only 3 days. It is the middle day which people observe mostly, as this is the actual wedding day. The relatives of the girl's parents will arrive a day before the wedding to prepare food and make all the necessary arrangements. Oh the wedding day the groom and his relatives dress nicely and go to the bride's house for the wedding. The elders of the boy's family meet the family of the bride to seek for the girl and they give her to them. The girl's family charges them the bride price and they pay it there instantly. The pastor or imam prays and blesses the marriage. The relatives of the groom and the bride and all the invited guests then come back to the groom's house to start the ceremony there, which will last for the whole night. On the next day before departure, there is a general refreshment before the relative of the bride will depart. The bride will then stay back in the house of the boy's family and has now become a part of it. She also adopts the name of her new husband.

Some traditional superstitious beliefs of the Hausa culture

Here are some examples of superstitious beliefs in the Hausa culture: It is believed that if you say something out loud, whether good or bad, it will result in actually happening. It is believed that if you dream of being barbed, you will be poor. If your palm is itching, you will get money. And when you walk early and come across a blind man, you will be rich.

Pictures of the press club's journey to Kaura



Pictures from top left to bottom right:

- 1) Press club chairman Mr Aniah and Ango, the son of Najude, on the way to Kaura
- 2) Arrival in Kaura
- 3) Baba Kyauta, the last surviving brother of Najude, comes to receive the visitors
- 4) During the interview, he is joined by his sons
- 5) The wife of Kyauta in front of the village
- 6) The old man and some of his grandchildren