

Press Club Report 30.05.2014: Traditional Hausa Folk Tales

Tata Tambai explains the Hausa folk tales

This week, we wanted to talk about the history and purpose of the popular Hausa folk tales. In order to get more information about this topic, we asked an old woman in Gidan Najude called Tata Tambai. She told us that in most of the Hausa fairy tales, the main characters are Gizo and his wife Koki, and that these names are never given to real persons. She said that these folk tales were told among families and friends just to entertain people and make them happy. The stories of Gizo and Koki were normally told in the evening and at night hours during leisure time, at naming ceremonies, wedding ceremonies and other such occasions. She also said that this was mostly done in the olden days, when she was still young. Unfortunately, nowadays there is not enough time for people to gather at night like before, instead they are watching television or listening to radio or music.

Besides being entertaining, the stories also had a message they wanted to share: For example, they tried to show to people the benefits of hard work, that it is good to live peacefully and to be courageous in everything you do. Tata Tambai then also gave us a short example of an actual Gizo da Koki folk tale:



Gizo and the Cow



Once upon a time there was a man called Gizo and his wife called Koki. Gizo had a friend called Masho, who also had a wife. One day Koki went to Masho's house to fetch fire. When she reached there, she met him eating meat together with his wife. She greeted them and they gave her some of the meat. But Masho told her not to tell her husband Gizo where she got the meat. She collected the meat, fetched her fire, thanked them and went back home. When she got home, her husband Gizo asked her where she got the meat from. She answered him by saying that it was his friend Masho who gave her the meat, and that he told her not to tell him about it. Gizo angrily went to his friend's house and said to Masho: "So you have a way of getting meat and you refuse to inform me?" Then Masho said: "Gizo, you are a troublesome person. If I tell you where I am getting the meat for me and my family, I

know that you would not be careful enough while getting it for you and your own family. That's why I didn't tell you." So Gizo promised to Masho that he would be very careful. Masho then told Gizo that he got the meat from the inside of a very big and mighty cow. Whenever he wants to enter the inside of that big cow to fetch some meat he sings "Saniya-saniya open your vulva for me to enter". The cow then opens its vulva and he enters. So they went together to the cow. Masho showed Gizo how to sing the song, and they entered and fetched meat as much as they were able to carry. As they came out, Masho sang again: "Saniya-Saniya close your vulva". It closed, and they went back home successfully. Gizo was very happy because now there was no more eating food without meat. Then after some days, when Gizo's meat had finished, he decided to go back to the cow alone without informing his friend, so that he didn't have to share the meat with him. As he reached the cow, he sang just as his friend had taught him, and he entered the cow and fetched meat again. He fetched, fetched and fetched, as much as he could possibly carry. But as he tried to come out he had forgotten the song necessary to come out. He tried, tried and tried, but no matter what he did, it didn't work. So he had no choice and had to stay inside the cow for up to seven months. He was eating and drinking what the cow was eating and drinking. On the day of the slaughtering of the cow, Gizo was still inside it. As they were slaughtering it, his friend Masho happened to be together with the slaughtermen. He had found out that

Gizo was still inside the cow and talked to him. He told Gizo: "Enter the ruminant stomach and hide there if you don't want to be killed!" Gizo heard his friend's voice and did as he was told. As the cow was slaughtered the ruminant stomach was given to a boy to go and wash it. The boy collected it and used a sharp knife to open the stomach, and he poured the remaining dung on the ground, together with Gizo. When Gizo found himself on the ground he immediately got up and slapped the boy. He started abusing him: "Why did you pour the cow dung on my body? All my clothes and my body are spoiled, so what do you want me to do now?" So that's how Gizo came out of the cow, because he was too greedy and he didn't remember the song to come out of the cow. That's the end of this Gizo da Koki fold tale.