



HAUSA FOLKLORE

MAALAM SHAIHU

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Hausa Folklore by Maalam Shaihu.

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A STORY ABOUT A HUNTER AND HIS SON

This tale is about a hunter (lit. a shooter) and a chief.

There was once a certain man who had no other work but hunting, both he and his son. One day (he) they went to the bush with his son. They did not find anything but a rat, and his son threw the rat away. But they became hungry (and) the father said, 'Roast our rat for me, (and) let us eat.' The boy said, 'Oh, but I have thrown it away.' The father said, '...' (cursing him), (and) the father lifted (his) axe and struck the boy; he fainted.

He (the father) went his way, (and) left him. The boy came round, he rose up, and went home by night. He found them asleep, so he entered the room and lifted his belongings. He took the road, (and) was going to a certain town. When he reached the town it was night; he entered into the town. Everyone was asleep. He proceeded into the middle of the town until he reached the chief's house. He entered until he was right in the house, (he was) naked, without clothes, without trousers, and he met the chief. The chief said, 'From where?' (And) he replied, 'From such and such a village.' And the chief said, 'Is it well with you?'

The boy said, 'Both I and my father went to the bush to walk and shoot. We did not find anything but one single rat, he gave (it) me to keep, I forgot it somewhere. When we became hungry, then he said, Bring the rat that we may roast it and eat. And I said, I have dropped it, I do not know where. Thereupon he became angry. He lifted his axe (and) struck me. I fainted. When evening came then I recovered (and) rose up, (and) came here.'

Now the chief had gone to war, and his son had been captured and killed. The chief had no male child. And the chief said, 'Now will you not keep a secret for me?' The boy said, 'What kind of a secret?' The chief said, 'I have no male child, when dawn comes I shall say you are my son, who was caught at the war, and that you ran away and came back.' The boy said, 'That is surely not difficult.'

(Then) the chief entered his room (and) took up his gun (and) fired it (it was) in the middle of the night. And 'the mother of the house' came out

(and) said, 'King, lion who causes fear, what is the gun you are firing in the night?' The chief said, 'So-and-so has returned.' Thereupon the mother of the house raised the sound of joy, and the town rose up, (and) they were asking, 'What had happened at the chief's house, (seeing that) they are firing a gun at this time of night?' (And) they said that the chief's son had come, he who had been caught at the war.' And they said, 'Indeed! indeed!'

When it was dawn the boy bathed (and) the chief gave him (gifts) goods (and) he came forth. (Among) the councillors some said, 'It is not his son.' Others said, 'It is his son.' Now one day the head-men joined their heads together, (and) said, 'Wait, and we shall see if it is (really) his son.' Then they added goods (presents) to those their children already had, (and) they put the saddles on the war-horses for them. (And) they (the children) mounted, (and the fathers) said to them, 'Go to the chief's house and call his son, and say you are going to take horse exercise.'

And they said, 'When you have gone and galloped and pulled up, you must dismount, (and) kill your horses, (and) come home.' (And) each one gave his son a sword (and) he slung it on his shoulder, (and) they came to the chief's house and called the boy. Now truly some tale-bearer has overheard, (and) he went and told the chief. The chief made similar preparation (horse, &c.) and put the things aside, (and) said, 'If the naked man can dance, much more can the man with the cloak.' The chief called the boy, (and) told him, (and) said, 'When you have gone, everything you see they have done, do you also do.' So the boys came, (and) called the son of the chief, (and) they set off.

As they went they galloped; then they dismounted (and) killed their horses. So the son of the chief he too galloped, pulled up, dismounted, (and) killed his horse. They went home. And the head-men said, 'It is a lie, to-morrow you go back.' When it was dawn they came (and) called him. The chief caused (his) body-guard to fasten the saddle on a great horse for him. They went off; as they went they galloped. Then they dismounted, (and) killed their horses. The chief's son also, when he had galloped, then he killed his horse, (and) they returned home. Then the sub-chiefs gave their sons slaves, beautiful maidens, (and) said, 'Take them to the midst of the bush (and) slaughter them.' The talebearer (again) went and informed the chief, and

the chief gave his son two female slaves, he said, 'Go, whatever you see they have done, do you do too.' They went to the bush. The sons of the headmen killed their female slaves (and) the chief's son also killed his, (and) they returned home. And they said, 'It is his son.' And so time went on, till one day the boy's father came; he was carrying his quiver slung. He met the councillors; he heard all he wished to know, (and) then passed on till (he came) before the chief.

He greeted them; the boy was sitting (by his side); and he said, 'Are you not going to get up that we may go and dig for our rats?'

The boy was silent. Then the chief rose up, (and) entered the house, (and) called them.

He said, 'Hunter, keep the secret for me, and whatever you wish I will give you.' The hunter refused. The chief entreated him.

The chief said, 'Everything in the world I will give you, one hundred of each.' But the hunter refused.

The chief said, 'Saddle up for me.' They saddled, they saddled (a horse) for the boy. The chief gave the boy a sword, (and) slung it across his shoulder. They went off to the bush. The chief halted (and) said to the boy, 'Either you kill me, (and) take these goods (horse, &c.), (and) give to your father, (and) return to the town, (and) enter into your (kingship) world, or you kill your father, (and) you and I will go back and live (as before).'

The boy was distracted, (not knowing what to do). Now if it were you, O white man, among them whom would you kill?

If you do not know whom you would kill, there it is.

Off with the rat's head.

And (the pair) did not see any one, till one day the lizard, who had been given the daughter of Baura for a wife, said he was going for a walk round the farms. He mounted his horse amid clapping and sounds of joy. They came (and) he said, 'Is Albarka at home?' Then he (Albarka) came out (and) saw him, then he ran back in haste to the house (and) said, 'Bring out water for my master's son.' But the wife said, 'Your master?' He replied, 'Yes.' 'You are infleed a slave?' He said,

'Yes.' Now she was pounding, then she put down the pestle. She was with child. Then she entered the bush.

That was the first person who went to the bush (became mad).

That is all.

Off with the rat's head.
