ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Zarma Folktales of Niger
Amanda Cushman, translator
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Translated from the French, *Zarma Folktales of Niger* captures the essence of the oral tradition in English, retelling these West African stories of animals and the people who interact with them with clarity and humor. Readers of all ages will appreciate Cushman's easy-to-read translation (complete with thoughtful prologue and detailed glossary) that introduces the linguistic heritage of the Nigerian capital of Niami, where she lived as a college student.

Zarma social structure and wisdom about conflict and resolution are revealed through stories such as "The Hyena and the Hare" and "The Donkey and the Lion," tales of trickery and deceit that teach listeners to pay attention, analyze behavior, and beware of greed and chicanery. Lighthearted tales such as "The Fart Experts" and "The Three Heroes" keep audiences entertained with silly conquests full of theatrics. The darker side of human behavior and a lesson about parenting are explored in "The Famine," a story about a father who cheats his wife and children by not sharing millet with them during a time of drought. The dangers of politics and war are explored in "The Election of the Animal King," a tale that explains how the tortoise got its shell.

Those with an interest in African culture, poetry, and symbolism will appreciate Cushman's excellent volume, which packs in wisdom and insight for an impact that far outweighs its small size. This book showcases culture, values, and regional character in an engaging and highly recommended text.

Pamela Harris Kaiser