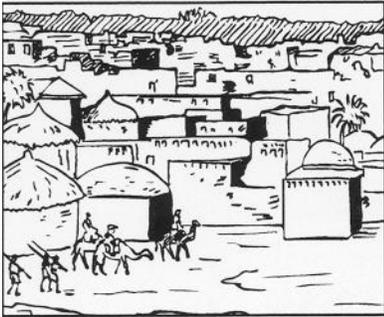


# Information about the Hausa-Fulani

**Directions:** Read the information about the Hausa-Fulani carefully. Then, use the information to brainstorm ideas for your spoke diagram. Make sure your spoke diagram contains visuals for each of the key aspects of life.



*Hausa-Fulani society was made up of two different cultures that gradually combined during the nineteenth century. This happened after the Islamic Fulani conquered the Hausa kingdom in 1821. Fulani conquerors intermarried with the Hausa, learning their language and culture. The Hausa-Fulani empire covered a large region and included both large urban centers and rural villages. The most powerful and richest people lived in the cities.*

## Location and Environment

The Hausa-Fulani lived in the north of present-day Nigeria and in what is now the country of Niger. Hausa-Fulani territory was mainly wooded savanna (plains) and grasslands. The savanna was warm throughout the year, with a rainy season during the summer. Parts of the savanna experienced more rainfall and so could support trees and grasses. On the outer, drier edges of the savanna, plant life was scarce.

## Shelter, Food, and Clothing

In the cities, wealthy state officials and merchants lived in large palaces and grand estates. Most Hausa-Fulani, however, lived in family homes made of sun-dried mud bricks. Each home contained various rooms. These rooms included a room for the male head-of-the-family, separate rooms for each of his wives and their children, a workshop, a cooking area, and a shelter for the family's animals. Each home also had a large reception room which opened out onto the street. From the zaure, the male family head greeted friends, received social calls, and conducted his business.

The Hausa-Fulani diet consisted of two main dishes: *tuwo*, a cooked grain, and *mia*, or stew. Tuwo was made of rice, sorghum or corn that was ground and then cooked to make it very soft (much like Cream of Wheat) and was served with sauce. Mia was usually made with tomatoes, vegetables (such as spinach or okra), and meat (beef, lamb, or goat). People without much money ate their mia without meat. Other common foods included steamed rice, sweet potatoes, yams, corn, groundnuts, and cakes made of sorghum or rice and dipped in honey.

Men and women of the Hausa-Fulani wore distinct clothing. The women's clothing was simpler than that of the men. Women wore a wraparound skirt, a blouse, a head-tie, and a shawl-like cloth that covered the head and the entire body. Men wore a greater variety of clothing. Typical male dress included loose or tight-fitting trousers, a

jumper, a gown, a turban, and sandals or slippers. Wealthier people had their clothing embroidered or made of different materials for variety. Local high officials, such as the chief *imam* (Islamic holy man), were allowed to wear special cloaks (robes).

## Political Organization



The Hausa-Fulani empire included urban city-states, rural villages, and conquered states. The king of Kano, the capital and the religious leader of Sokoto had political control over the different regions. Kings were descendents of the original Fulani warriors who had conquered the Hausa. The religious leaders were chosen by representatives from the four main Fulani clans in Kano, and the caliph.

The king was in charge of the men running each state. Many of these state officials were actually related to him. Each state office had its own rights, powers, and duties. For example, one office was in charge of military defense; another was in charge of taxes. Offices were given to people according to their

family background. This meant that the Fulani in the ruling families were able to become wealthy and powerful. Because much of their income was taken in taxes, the common people were often very poor.

## Family Structure

A common Hausa-Fulani family unit included a man, his wives, their children, the man's brothers, their wives and children, and one or two elderly family members. There might also be a servant or a slave of the family was rich enough. Among the brothers living in the home, the oldest brother or oldest male cousin was usually the official head of the family.

In accordance with Muslim law, most men married more than one woman, while women married only one man. This practice is called polygamy. When a man wanted to marry a woman, he proposed to her. If the woman was interested, the potential groom's family then sent two men to propose the marriage to her family. If the bride's family agreed, they could get married. The groom's family gathered gifts of household items for the bride. A wedding date was set once these gifts were delivered to the bride's home. After the marriage, a woman left her family and became part of her husband's family. This changed her life significantly. Before marriage, a woman had a lot of freedom. But once she got married, she had to obey her husband and often had to obey his older wives as well.

Hausa-Fulani children were expected to take on responsibilities in the family from a very young age. At age four or five, children performed simple tasks for their families, such as carrying items to sell at the market. As the children grew older, they were given more complicated tasks, such as tending sheep or helping with the farming. In the cities, many boys studied the Qur'an (Muslim holy text) in Islamic schools and were trained for jobs. However, childhood was a time of games and freedom for the Hausa-Fulani, since children were not yet considered to be full members of society. Children were mostly

educated by observing their elders and were expected to be respectful and obedient to adults. Age brought great honor and respect within Hausa-Fulani society. When a person became too old to work, he or she was cared for by his or her sons.

## Religion/Belief System

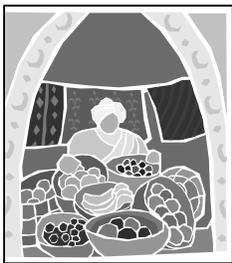
By the early 1800s, most Hausa-Fulani followed Islam. Their religious leader, called an *imam*, was in charge of important ceremonies such as baby namings, weddings, and funerals, as well as leading weekly prayers. Every Friday (Muslims' holy day), people of the village and surrounding countryside gathered at a mosque (place of worship) in the afternoon to pray. Other Muslim religious traditions included a belief in *Allah* (God) and his prophet Mohammed, praying five times a day, reading the Qur'an, following Muslim food laws, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca (the *hajj*).

Not every Hausa-Fulani person was Muslim. In rural areas, some still practiced traditional African religions. These traditions included a close connection with the animal and plant life of the savanna and the worship of *iskoki*, or spirits. The *iskoki* were believed to be everywhere . in the sky, the forest, the hills, the water, and even in cities.

## Economy

Hausa-Fulani farmed, raised animals, hunted, fished, and traded crafts to feed and support themselves. Men were responsible for most of the agricultural work, while women were responsible for a trade, childcare, and household tasks (cooking, hauling water, and gathering wood for fuel).

Agricultural work lasted only for six months of the year. Hausa-Fulani men cultivated cereals, root crops, legumes, fruits, cotton, indigo, palm oil, and vegetables. They changed or rotated their crops and used animal manure to keep the soil fertile. The rest of the year they spent doing various trades and handicrafts such as tool making, pottery, basket making, jewelry, and weaving. Hausa-Fulani men often formed trade associations, each with its own leader.



Women learned a trade of their choice. These trades included spinning yarn, preparing meals for sale, and selling grain. Each woman had complete control over all aspects of her chosen business, including the profits. Women were not expected to give their own money to the household. They could actually charge their husbands if the women had to assist with the farm work.

Open markets were held once or twice a week in Hausa-Fulani towns and villages. In rural areas, the day varied from village to village so that people could attend all of the nearby markets. Men brought the things they had made to sell in the markets. A wide variety of products were available, including both local and foreign items. Trade in the markets was done by bargaining, with the buyer and seller making offers and counter-offers until the two agreed upon a price.



cowrie shells ó so rare that they were used for money

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