

Hausa

The Hausa are a racially diverse but culturally homogeneous people group of northern Nigeria and south-central Niger. Hausas have long been famous for wide-ranging itinerant trading, and wealthy merchants share the highest social positions with the politically powerful and the learned.



Location

The Hausa people live in a large area of northern Nigeria and south-central Niger.

History

According to Hausa tradition, the Hausa people originated from the line of an exiled prince named Bayajida. Legend tells the story of a snake which allowed the residents of the village of Daura to drink water from the local well only one day per week. Bayajida killed the snake and in reward, was offered the hand of the Queen of Daura in marriage. Their seven sons became the founders of the seven states of Hausaland.

Historically organized into a group of feudal city-states, the Hausa were conquered from the fourteenth century on by a succession of West African kingdoms, among them the Mali, Songhai, Bornu and Fulani. Occasionally the Hausa attained enough power and unity to throw off foreign domination and to engage in local conquest and slave raiding themselves.

In the early twentieth century, with the Hausa on the verge of overthrowing the Fulani, the British invaded northern Nigeria. With their policy of indirect rule, the British supported the Fulani's political supremacy, and the Hausa-Fulani ruling coalition, still dominant in northern Nigeria, was reinforced. This coalition had its beginnings much earlier, because the Fulani governed by simply assuming the highest hereditary positions in the well-organized Hausa political system. Many of the ruling Fulani have become culturally and linguistically Hausa.

Culture

The Hausa festival of dances—where participants perform tricks and magic—has been practiced for as long as anyone can remember. The participants distribute kola nuts to one another as an invitation to the festival. Village drummers beat out the call of each young farmer, and the person whose beat is called will stand up, shout loudly, and recite his praise song. If he knows some tricks, he displays them to entertain onlookers. This celebration provides entertainment as it cements relationships between villages.

Hausa Society: Typical Hausa life is consumed with caring for family and making ends meet as the economy and government spiral into dire straits. Their major safety net is the immediate community and family whose approval is vital. Hausa society is extremely hierarchical, and all authority in large familial households lies in the hands of the eldest male member.

Government

Seven Hausa states comprise Hausaland. These states occasionally formed loose alliances, but were never strong enough to build an empire or even a nation. The Fulani came to rule all these states after conducting a holy war against the Hausa in 1804. This resulted in the political unification of the Hausa states. When the British assumed Nigeria as a colony, they allowed Fulani Emirs to remain as figurehead leaders of the Hausa states.

SIM Involvement

The founders of SIM went to Nigeria in 1893 with the expressed goal of reaching the Hausa people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, SIM was not able to establish a work among them until 1933 when missionaries came to the city of Kano. SIM now ministers among the Hausa in Nigeria and Niger through community health care, evangelism, and rural development. In Nigeria, SIM works closely with the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA).

Muslim beliefs as well as social pressures and persecution make it difficult for a Hausa person to leave Islam. The current political polarization between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria also make it difficult to accept Christ. Pray for spiritual breakthrough among Hausa Muslims.

Scripture Availability

The entire Bible was translated and published in the Hausa language in 1932. Since then, Bible portions have been translated in Braille and in Ajami, the Arabic script. But with a literacy rate of only 10% among the Hausa people, a need exists for creative ways to communicate. The Old and New Testaments are now available in recordings, films and visuals.

Urgent Prayer Need

Bingham Academy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, urgently needs a [French teacher](#) to join their staff team in August. Pray that God will provide the right person to meet this need.