

PHOTO ESSAY ON TRADITIONAL AFRICAN ATTIRES

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1. KANZU

Kanzus are white or cream African traditional clothing worn by men in the African Great Lakes region. This includes Burundians, Congolese, Ethiopians, Kenyans, Malawians, Rwandans, Tanzanians, and Ugandans.

- The English call it Tunic, and the Arab, Thawb. It is especially popular in Uganda, where men wear it to weddings and festivals. “Men of culture” wear the Kanzu to give them an aura of authority and sophistication



2. KENTE

Kente is a unisex traditional African clothing that finds its history among the Ashanti and Ewe people of Ghana. It is made out of cloth strips of silk and/or cotton, designed to fit the cloth's patterns.

- Despite technological advancements, native Ashantis still weave their Kente clothes by hand. Historically, Ghanaian royalties wore the fabric in a toga-like fashion. However, today, because of the popularity of Kente patterns, Kente print has become widely popular in Asia and the West.



3. THE SHUKA

Shuka is traditional African clothing that belongs to the Maasai people of Tanzania and Kenya. Popularly called the 'African Blanket', it is often red with black stripes. Before the colonization of Tanzania and Kenya by the Scottish, high-ranking community members wore Shuka as a traditional garment.

- Today, it is also gaining traction as urban wear. Workers wear a variant of this traditional clothing to their places of work. Previously, only the Maasai originally wore Shuka



4. BOUBOU

The Boubou is a classic, stylish, and functional Senegalese robe worn by men and women all over Africa. Sewn from one piece of fabric, it is usually about 150cm wide and varying lengths depending on the wearer's height and preference.

Also, there is the more elegant grand Boubou which employs 300 cm-long fabrics and reaches to the ankles. Traditionally, designers make boubous by folding the fabric in half, cutting out a neck opening, and sewing up the sides halfway up to make flowing sleeves along the sides.

- For women, the neck is rounded and large. Men, on the other hand, have theirs long and V-shaped. Women that want to try out the boubou African traditional clothing



5. IRO ATI BUBA

Iro and Buba (popularly called Iro ati Buba) are native to Yoruba women of Nigeria. The original version of the dress features five pieces. There is the Iro, a large wrapper tied to fit around the waist.

Buba is a loose blouse worn on the upper part of the body. Gele is a head tie which Nigerian women are globally famous for. The Pele is a short fabric tied on top of the Iro around the waist.

- The Iborun is a scarf that drapes over the left shoulder. However, trendsetters are doing away with the Pele and Iborun, replacing the traditional Aso Oke with other fabrics such as lace, cotton, or chiffon.



6. HABESHA KEMIS

The Habesha Kemis is African traditional clothing belonging to the Habesha women of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Habesha Kemis is usually a robe that stretches from the neck to the ankles.

- Ethiopian and Eritrean women rock it for formal events and vacations. Nowadays, it comes in various forms including short- or long-sleeves. It typically comes in grey, beige or white shades and is sewn from cotton fabric



7. DJELLABA

Jillaba or Djellaba is a long, loose-fitting unisex robe. It is usually full-sleeved and worn also in the Maghreb region of North Africa. Traditionally, the main material for designing djellabas is wool. However, these days lightweight cotton djellabas have become trendy.

- Djellabas often sweep the ground. However, lightweight variants are often slimmer and shorter. Men wear light-colored Djellabas along with an Arab fez hat and babouche footwear for religious festivals and other occasions.



8. DASHIKI

- Dashiki is African traditional clothing indigenous to the Ewe people of Ghana. They are also colorful garments that cover the upper part of the body. Dashiki is a Unisex loose-fitting shirt, long or full-sleeved, with an embroidered V-shaped collar.
- They also come in many colors and forms. Most times, Ghanaians wear Dashikis with drawstring pants for formal and informal occasions. Although once common in Ghana and a few West African nations, Africans and Blacks in the West now wear them



9. ISIDWABA

Isidwaba is a popular dress among the Zulus. Otherwise known as Isikhakha, Isidwaba is a traditional skirt worn by betrothed or married women in Southern Africa. It is usually made from genuine leather which could either be cowhide or goatskin.

The lady adorns it with colorful mat-like fabric. Since the 19th century when it came into existence, Isidwaba has maintained its form and design among the Zulus. Traditionally, fathers of brides give out Isidwabas to their daughters from the cow the bride gets during her coming-of-age ceremony.

- Subsequently, she has to wear the skirt on the day of her marriage



10. ISIAGU

The Isiagu finds its roots among the Igbo people of South-East Nigeria. 'Isiagu' literally translates to 'the head of a leopard'. However, it will surprise you to see that the cloth has the head of a lion.

Well, the lion is taking over the totem reserved for the leopard. The Isiagu marries a silk fabric with the head of a lion emblazoned in a definite pattern. It is a long, loose-fitting top usually worn over a pair of black trousers or knitted wrappers tied around the waist.

- Interestingly, the Isiagu is also a status symbol among Igbo men. They wear it for formal occasions such as coronations, traditional meetings, and funerals of Chiefs.



11. TOGHU/ATOUGHU

- The Toghu or Atoghu is a traditional outfit that is popular among the Bamileke people of North-Western Cameroon. In the past, only men and women of royalty wore the Toghu as a sign of traditional superiority over the commoner. It is also a traditional attire suite for investitures, traditional coronations, and other festivals.
- In terms of design, Toghu is embroidered with colorful patterns. It is made of black velvety fabric.

