

THE STUDY OF KANURI TRADITIONAL ATTIRE, KULWU IN MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE

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Abstract

The Kanuri people are an African ethnic group living largely in the lands of the former Kanem and Bornu Empires in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The Kanuri are the dominant ethnic group of Borno province in north-eastern Nigeria with over 3 million people in Borno emirate. The major division of the province and the Kanuri home land, has a history as a political entity that stretches back at least 1,100 years. The Kanuri are sedentary hoe agriculturalist, although almost all of the men practice some other occupations as well. The economy is complex, with commerce, transportation and construction constituting the other main elements of the private business sector. The art of making Kulwu is also considered a noble trade passed on from generations. One important and interesting aspect of Kanem Bornu culture is the traditional dresses. Kanuri, one of the most conservative ethnic groups in Nigeria wear (Kulwu) long, roomy garment with cap. The garment depicts the adherence to cultural beliefs and attachment to the Kanem Bornu tradition. The importance of Kulwu Kanuri traditional attire in Kanem Bornu tradition can never be over emphasized. The Kulwu garment depicts respect for the culture and custom of the great Kanem Bornu tradition. It is in view of these traditional norms that the paper attempted to understand the importance of Kanuri traditional attire with special reference to Kulwu.

Introduction

Maiduguri is the capital city of Borno State in the northeastern part of Nigeria. It lies in the Sudan Sahel transition zone, located between latitude 11° 5'N and longitude 13° 06'E with a land mass of 550-kilometer square. The study covers areas which include Arinmari in Shehuri South; Gangamari in Limanti Area, Shuwari IV/Pompomari in Bolori I, Zajiri, Gidan Dambe, State Low-cost Estate, Herwa Peace Estate and Ngarannam in Bolori II of Maiduguri Metropolis.

The Kanuri people are an African ethnic group living largely in the lands of the former Kanem- Bornu empires in south eastern Niger, north eastern Nigeria, northern Cameroun and southern Kanem in Chad. They are the dominant ethnic group found in Borno and Yobe States in the northeastern geo-political zone of Nigeria. The Kanuri once had a strong influence on surrounding peoples, which include the Budum of lake chad, the Mandara and Kotoko or Marghi who live southeast of the Kanuri, the marghi of the Damboa district, the Babur in the hills south of the Kanuri, the Bolewa located southwest of the Kanuri and the Bade of Gashuwa, within the

Kanuri territory. All of these groups have acquired various aspects of Kanuri culture.

Before the advent of manufactured textiles, the Kanuri people made garments traditionally by hand. The garment depicts respect for the culture and custom of the great Kanem Borno tradition. These and some other issues will be discussed in this paper.

Historical Context

Cotton spinning is an age-old traditional hand work of drawing out strands of fiber to make a yarn, subsequent process of refinement is what manufacturers call wet spinning which entails boiling the cotton with coal ash and potash. It is dried and then further beaten with wood to soften it, the cotton is piled into sacks and distributed to various destinations. In Gangamari, a neighborhood in Shehuri North, mostly traditional conservative Kanuri settings engaged in spinning cotton or *Kantal* as it is called in Kanuri language, working tirelessly for hours to make perfectly spun cotton used for embroidery for the *Kulwu*.

The term *Kulwu* has been described by many scholars as a gown (Bulakarima, 2003). Others are of the view that the term *Kulwu* is a robe (Sheriff 2004:87). Others studies posit that the word *Kulwu* is derived from the word *K3lowun*, which literary means shroud. They believe that as death comes without notification the Kanuri man is always readily prepared for it and as such, he is in his *k3lowun* (*Kulwu* gown), so in the event that he dies in any circumstances where a shroud could not be found or easily obtained, he could then be buried in his *Kulwu*. As most of the Kanuri people are caravan traders, they may likely encounter such predicaments, on their journey and the *Kulwu* attire could solve the problem. It is also viewed as a robe or shroud consisting of trouser, a long sleeve undershirt and an open stitched sleeveless gown atop it.

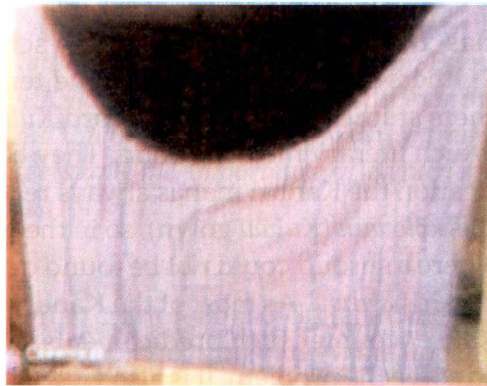
A voluminous and heavily embroidered piece, the *Kulwu* worn by men is one of the most sought-after items at Arinmari and Gangamari in Shehuri north in Maiduguri. The fabrics come in different prices depending on the social and financial status of the wearer. The more expensive the *Kulwu* the higher the status of the individual wearing it and also, it depicts cultural belief and one's attachment to the great Kanem-Borno tradition. The art of making this Kanuri traditional robe is also considered a noble trade passed on from generation to generation.

The traditional attire is mostly worn during important occasion of the village District Heads, Emirs and *Shehus*. The Kanuri is considered properly dressed when he is completely dressed in his *Kulwu* attire. There is strong

contention among the Kanuri people that when one wears western dress it exposes the parts of the body and is considered tighter and smaller compared to the *Kulwu* Kanuri garments. According to Mallam Kole Usman of Bulabulin Ngarannam in Bolori II of Maiduguri, anyone who is not completely dressed in his *Kulwu* is regarded deviant and not trustworthy in Kanuri society. A dress is much more than what meets the eye, it reflects a great number of elements that make up an attire, identity and history. Also, it conveys perceptions and information about Kanuri people. Their appearance or how they dress can also command or earn respect. It tells more about the diversity, beauty and solidarity of Kanuri people.

Types of *Kulwu*

There are various types of *Kulwu* that are worn depending on the occasion, event or celebration. Sheriff (2004) classifies as many as thirty different types of Kanuri attires for males and other eight for the females. However, this study is not concerned with female garments but specifically focuses on *Kulwu* male garment as enumerated below.



Kulwu Tawuski

A type of *Kulwu* with round neck and two pockets in front of the gown is worn by all men.



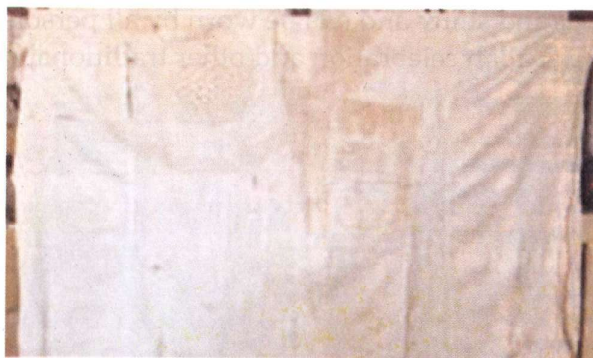
Kulwu Dawungasho

This type derived its origin from the style of dyeing. It is dyed to resemble the two-colour shape of the neck of a stork. It is also worn by all men.



Kulwu Kajibe

A handmade garment with strips of *gawaa*. It is heavy, very strong and worn on special traditional occasions/events and festivals



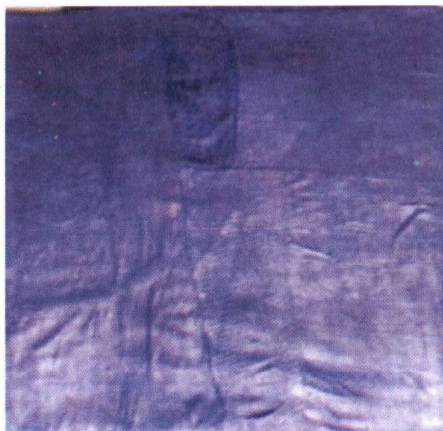
Kulwu Gawaaye

This gown is made with *Gaawa* stripes and are worn on traditional and social occasions.



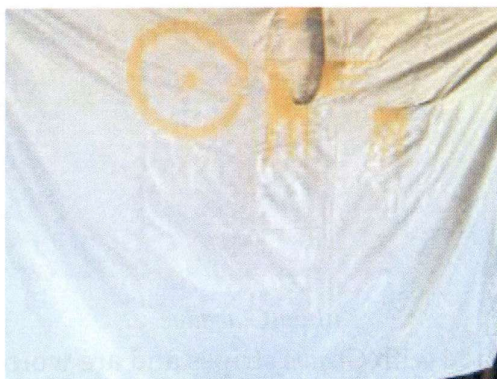
Kulwu tiloaindi dawu

A double gown with a single neck, worn especially on turbaning day and other traditional occasions/events.



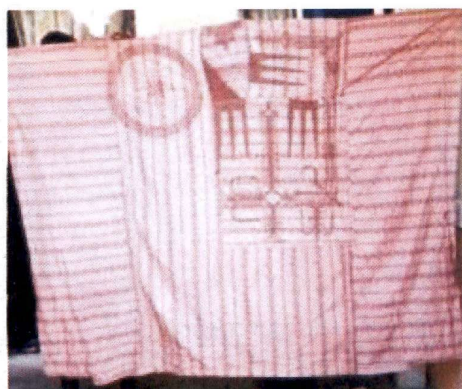
Kulwu Kororopy

The gown is black and shiny and can be worn by all persons especially during the *Mauled* Sallah celebration and other traditional occasions



Kulwu Korkorra

This type derived its name from the embroidery and is being worn by all persons.



Kulwu Trturah

This type derived its name from traditional embroidery and is worn by all persons for all occasions/events

Some Prominent Kanuri Men in Kulwu



Recommendations

By way of suggestion or recommendation, the Kanuri traditional institutions should as a matter of importance protect the traditional attires from being mocked or ridiculed by those who do not know or understand their importance. It is also vital to preserve and conserve them at all cost for

future generations. In addition, to promote the *Kulwu* Kanuri traditional gown, there is every need for leaders such as Governors, National Assembly Members, Ministers and the state Assembly members among other paramount personalities from the region to wear them or buy from those who protect this heritage as this will also draw people's attention to the prestige of the *Kulwu* Kanuri traditionally made clothing.

Conclusion

From the literature reviewed, it is concluded that the first objective of clothing was not only to provide protection and warmth, but has to do with communicating our identity and social status to others. Therefore, it serves as a mirror of the culture of the people in any society, symbolizing the practices of the society, bounded by the same territorial geographic location sharing the same cultural norms and values.

As a result of the great importance attached to Kanuri traditional attire the study indicates significant growing acceptance of *Kulwu* clothing among Kanuri people of different age groups. It is not a surprise, however, that Kanuri people have used *Kulwu* clothing to communicate status, commemorate significant occasions, events and demonstrate solidarity and the preservation of the culture for centuries. The importance of *Kulwu* clothing cannot be over-emphasized, as they represent Kanem Borno norms and values.

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Informants

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	DATE OF INTERVIEW	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1.	Bamala Arinma	56	Dying	8 th Feb, 22	Arinmari
2.	Mallam Abba Arinma	35	Dying	8 th Feb, 22	Arinmari
3.	Kazalla Mbursa	40	Public Servant	8 th Feb, 22	Shehuri
4.	Hajja Kaltum Zanna	45	House wife	8 th Feb, 22	Shehuri
5.	Yagana Damburam	56	Farming	8 th Feb, 22	Talwari
6.	Amina Kachalla Ali	55	House wife	8 th Feb, 22	Shehuri North
7.	Aita Kagu	49	Civil servant	8 th Feb, 22	Arinmari
8.	Abba Umar	41	Civil servant	11 th Feb, 22	Abbari Abbafariye
9.	Ibrahim Abba	45	Islamic Cleric	11 th Feb, 22	Limanti
10.	Mustafa Ahmad	66	Business Man	11 th Feb, 22	Limanti
11.	Abdullahi Goni Umar	36	Islamic Cleric	11 th Feb, 22	Limanti
12.	Kolle Mallam Usman	58	Civil Servant	15 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
13.	Mallam Bunu Sheriff	55	Islamic Cleric	15 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
14.	Wakil Baba Sugu Kuwata	55	Village Head	15 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
15.	Bako Alhaji Muazu	34	Tricycle Driver	15 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
16.	Modu Sheriff	43	Islamic Cleric	15 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
17.	Kanmbar Waziri	39	Applicant	15 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
18.	Goni Sheriff Modu	47	Islamic Cleric	16 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
19.	Porto Adam	50	Civil Servant	16 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
20.	Mala Fugu Talba	45	Civil Servant	16 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
21.	Modu Mallam Umara	51	Civil servant	16 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
22.	Isa Liman Kaumi	56	Civil Servant	16 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
23.	Alhaji Hassan Umar	33	Civil Servant	16 th Feb, 22	Ngarannam
24.	Mallam Usman Buklama	48	Business/ Applicant	16 th Feb, 22	Zajiri
25.	Ibrahim Baba Musami	74	Pensioner	16 th Feb, 22	Zajiri

26.	Sainna Goni Sala	70	Islamic Cleric	16 th Feb, 22	Zajiri
27.	Baba Goni M. Bukar	53	Islamic Cleric	18 th Feb, 22	Shuwari IV
28.	Mallam Laminu Kutta	55	Islamic Cleric	18 th Feb, 22	Shuwari IV
29.	Abba Gana Wamiri	65	Driver	18 th Feb, 22	Shuwari IV
30.	Modu Kutta	58	Civil servant	18 th Feb, 22	Suwari IV
31.	Alhaji Bulama Kambar	69	Pensioner	18 th Feb, 22	Suwari IV
32.	Mallam Modu Umara	77	Pensioner	18 th Feb, 22	Suwari IV
33.	Baba Mustapha Kuru	72	Farmer	18 th Feb, 22	Suwari IV
34.	Sainna Goni La'Ari	67	Islamic Cleric	18 th Feb, 22	Suwari IV
35.	Baba Manna Bukar	68	Pensioner	19 th Feb, 22	Maiduwuri
36.	Alhj. Abba Kanumbu	67	Pensioner	19 th Feb, 22	State Low-cost
37.	Alhaji Mustapha M. Gonibe	67	Farmer	19 th Feb, 22	State Low-cost
38.	Baba Sulaiman	86	Farmer	19 th Feb, 22	State Low-cost
39.	Kurmi Modu	71	Pensioner	19 th Feb, 22	State Low-cost
40.	Karda Modu	30	Civil Servant	19 th Feb, 22	Pompomari
41.	Sainna Mallam Modu	45	Islamic Cleric	19 th Feb, 22	Pompomari
42.	Hussaini Kachalla	66	Pensioner	19 th Feb, 22	Pompomari
43.	Modu Mustapha M. Bayeri	65	Pensioner	19 th Feb, 22	Bolori I
44.	Bukar Alibe	45	Journalist	19 th Feb, 22	Bolori I
45.	Babagana Hassan	34	Civil servant	19 th Feb, 22	Herwa Peace
46.	Goni Modu Kauye	50	Islamic Cleric	20 th Feb, 22	Damboa Road
47.	Bukar Zanna	66	Pensioner	20 th Feb, 22	Gidan Dambe
48.	Ali Kachalla	67	Trader	20 th Feb, 22	Gidan Dambe
49.	Kaka Bulama Mustapha	65	Farmer	20 th Feb, 22	Gidan Dambe
50.	Mallam Mohammed Bunu	68	Farmer	20 th Feb, 22	Gidan Dambe