

## TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY HAUSA DRESS CULTURE IN KANO MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL, KANO STATE

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### Introduction

In Northern Nigeria, Hausa people occupy the strategic areas of traditional and contemporary industrial development. Hence, woven loom is one of their major sources of income due to the trans-Saharan trade between North Africa and Nigeria especially Kano state. Therefore, hand weaving and production of indigo-dyed cloth in Kano and surrounding towns progressed drastically (Fee, 2000).

Traditional and contemporary Hausa dress culture are means of displaying status, power, prestige, spiritual disposition, and material wealth in the society. It is usually expressed by a combination of visual images and written inscription which provide ways of communicating public and personal messages about health, sexual relations, religion and politics where voicing sometimes may not be possible (Spring, 2000). In Kano Municipal Area Council especially where men, women and children are working as cloth dyers, tailors, embroiders, traders, cloth beaters, draught men, and weavers are movers and shakers of Hausa dress culture while elders and religious leaders determine the turn of modern fashion.

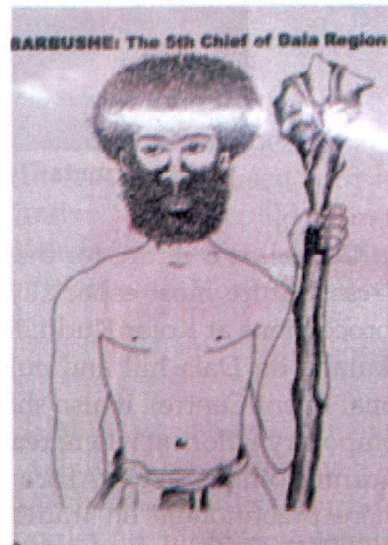
The basic raw materials of traditional and contemporary Hausa dress culture in Kano are derived from cotton stripe, wild silk, leaves of palm raffia and baobab fiber. Vividly, Nupe traditional embroidery skills from Bida Emirate of Niger state play essential roles in traditional hand embroidering (Dinkin gargajiya) in Kano. This research work will take a cursory look at Pre and Post Islamic Hausa dress culture, Hausa royal dress code and present fashionable dresses within Kano Municipal Area Council as the core metropolitan Local Government in Kano state. It will also look at materials, equipment and fashion places/areas, and offers recommendations for the preservation and promotion of traditional and contemporary Hausa dress culture for posterity.

### Kano Municipal Area Council

This Municipal Area Council is one of the 44 Local Governments in Kano state. It is located within the confine city of Kano state. It shares boarder with four metropolitan Local Government Areas such as Dala, Gwale, Fagge and Nasarawa respectively. Kano Municipal Area Council has a total area of 17km<sup>2</sup> (7sq ml) and 13 wards with a population of 365,525 as at the 2006 census. The core original inhabitants of Kano state are located within Municipal Area Council and its environs. Such areas are Kutumbawa, Dala, Unguwar Dala, Jakara, Aisami, Dogon Nama, Makafin Dala, Soron Dinki

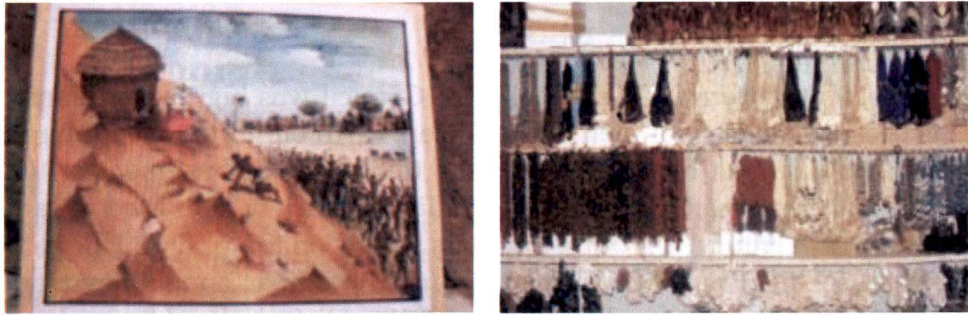
and others.

The settlement pattern in Municipal Area Council was highly traditional; this is because majority of their shelters were earth buildings even though modern modification had taken over the trend. The arrangement of the quarters and clusters are typical Hausa traditional society. This is because at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> Century, a group of hunters settled on top of Dala Hill with Bargushe as Chief Priest, worshipping Tumbirbira. In an annual devotion, they encircle the shrine nude... (Musa, 2010). Historically, Hausa dress culture in municipal Area Council started with the use of dried animal skins to 999 AD when Bagauda son of Bawo and grandson of Bayajidda from Daura Emirate took the political control of Kano, and traditional loom technology (vertical and horizontal) was introduced. This period marked the beginning of cloth wearing in Kano Municipal Area Council especially around Dala hill and other five ancient hill settlements (Gigirya, Magwan, Panisau, Santolo and Gwauran Dutse).



Dress culture of the Chief Priest Baragushe and Kanau - The Founder of Present Kano State (Source: HCB)

Similarly, Municipal Area council has a number of traditional woven cloth industries, such as Karofin Sudawa, Karofin Zage and Kofarmata dye-pit centres, which were established in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. It also had famous ancient Kurmi market established in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. It serves as a selling point of traditional Hausa and Fulani clothes till today. The market is a Centre of African crafts and products, ranging from metals, textiles, leather works and others. Indeed, the market is open daily from as early as 6:30am and closes around 6:00pm (KTGB, 2000).

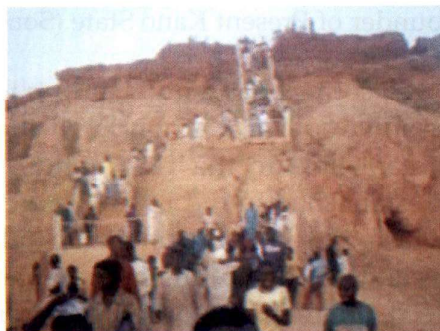


Tumburbira worshipping before 999AD Ornaments stall at Kurmi market  
(Source: GMM Artistic Impression)



Kofarmata Dye-pit Centre.

The Area Council is a centre for displaying traditional and contemporary Hausa dress culture most especially in annual festivities like great Kano Durbar processions at Kofar Kudu, Maukibi (from Qadiyya house to Dala hill), Takutaha on Dala hill and cultural dress shows at Gidan Makama (Traditional Event Centre). It also shares border with Fagge (famous centre for contemporary tailoring where real Hausa dress culture is nurtured). The largest Kurmi cloth market in Africa and the ancient dye pit centre at Kofar mata where practitioners on traditional dyeing display their exceptional artistry and skills are located close to the Municipal Area Council.



Dala hill during Maukili Religious Festival

### Pre-Islamic Dress Culture

The pre-Islamic era varies from continent to continent and region to region. In Municipal Area Council of Kano State, Islam was introduced and fully practiced in 11<sup>th</sup> Century by Wangarawa people from present day Borno state, even though Islam was in existence in the area due to Trans-Sahara trade especially with North Africa. The core inhabitants of Municipal Area Council were Hausa people. Their mode of dresses started from the use of animal skins, *lage* and *yarshara* (See Glossary).

#### a. Hausa Female Dress Culture

The early pre-Islamic female Hausa dress culture in Hausa land started by using animal skin to cover their private parts. They used cowries and beads to decorate animal skin for aesthetic value. Hausa female dress communicated age, gender, occupation, ethnicity, power, and religious commitment for everyday living. It can also be regarded as celebratory, ceremonial, and ritual occasions. Their traditional dress differed from one house to another.

The traditional female Hausa dress before Islam was highly exceptional in terms of beauty, elegance, style, decency, cosmetic appeal, magnificent carriage and total or partial covering of the body. They used body or facial marks to attract their fiancé. These decorative patterns could be in form of lizard, motifs, fantastic drawing and other marks for easy identity. They wore expensive cloth due to their association with North Africa through Trans Sahara trade

#### b. Male Dress Culture.

Male traditional dress culture in pre-Islamic era shows perseverance, heroism, status, power, material wealth and exposure. Before the advent of traditional weaving technology, they wore charms, amulets, corroded hair style, walking with stick and simple armulet for protection against wild animals.



Dress culture of early men of Kano (Source: HCB)

The advent of traditional weaving technology using cotton in 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century changed the dress culture of Hausa men. He started using vertical loom in weaving cloth to cover his body. He wrapped weaved cloth on his body and tied the edge on his shoulder. His correct manner of holding stick continued. He also wore cap against the hot sun. The Kings in Hausa land in pre-Islamic era used tanned skin of an ox to cover their bodies which differentiated them from other members of the community that used ordinary dried animal skin (leather as cloth) (NMK, 2015).



Hausa Traditional Vertical Loom.



Weaving Materials

#### Cloth Weaving Before Islamic Period

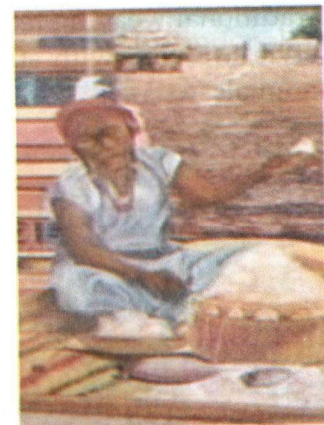
The advent of strip weaving technology in Africa probably invented by the Tellem people of Mali changed the dress culture of Hausa people to a large extent. Trans-Saharan trade route made the present Area Council to advance into traditional looms (Horizontal and Vertical) rapidly. Women, men and children working as cotton growers, spinners, and weavers were part of the celebrated systems of traditional textile production in the Pre-Islamic Era (Renne, 2018). Traditional cloth sewing continued with round open neck which is opened side by side. The trends progressed with different shapes of neck styles, large open sleeves and later short sleeves.



Traditional Artistic impression of Hausa Dress Culture



Real Hausa Dress Outfit



Cotton Spinning

### Post-Islamic Hausa Dress Culture

In Northern Nigeria, particularly in Kano, Islam and decent Hausa dress culture are historically connected. This is because Islam had been in existence before 11<sup>th</sup> Century to date and it encourages modest appearance. Islam accepted beautiful Hausa mode of dressing and prescribed new style of dress, particularly turbans, scarf and veils which clearly distinguished them from non-Muslim. In the Quran, clothing is mentioned 15 times, for instance, Chapter 7:26 says; "O children of Adam, we have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornments... The most famous Hausa cloth *Babbar riga* (big Gown or *Agbada*) probably originated from Mali in 12<sup>th</sup> Century (Tukur, 2022). It was highly accepted and adopted as Hausa Islamic dress culture.

### Contemporary Hausa Dress Culture

The contemporary Hausa culture is the current and fashionable dressing for both women and men. These include; big gowns, caftans, caps, trousers, wrappers, veils, scarf and others hybrid Hausa dresses. For instance, elderly men wear big gowns with turbans, middle age men wear caftans with caps, and youth wear normal kaftans and different types of caps; while women wear scarfs, veils, *jallabiyya*, head ties and other ornaments.

#### a. Male Mode of Dressing

The Hausa men dressing style is highly exceptional. This is because; elderly men are fashionable and decent in traditional and modern dresses. They normally wear big gown, caps (Zannabakar) and fine shoes (mostly sandals). Hausa youth wear big gown as ceremonial dress while caftans (tazarce and fitted jamfa), caps and sandals are regarded as casual dress code. Dress acculturation has minimum influence on the youth. Expensive Zabuni, Al hamza, Rawani, Jabba, sun glasses and wrist watches are the fashionable accessories in the area.



Yarshara



Zubuni



Alkwabba



Rawani



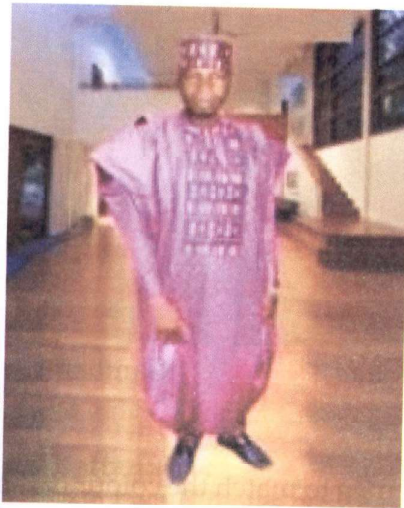
Jabba

### ii. Hausa Garment (Babbar Riga)

Hausa garment (*Babbar riga*) is wide sleeved robe worn by men in Hausa communities. It probably originated from Mali in North Africa. Hausa people accepted and adopted it as traditional dress code. It came into Kano through Trans Sahara trade. It is a fashionable and decent dress worn by Hausa people in celebrations, festivals and other contemporary occasions. The style of embroidery determines the name of the *Babbar riga*. For instance, Hausa garment has over 50 different names (styles), such names are; *Askabiyu, Sace, Gare, Aganiya, Wundiya, Tokare, Girken Nupe, Sukadubu, 'Yar madaka, Askatara, 'Yar tambutu, Mai Muridi, Uwar, Wudil, etc.*



Hausa Traditional Garments



Babbar riga



Askabiyu



Garment Weavers.

#### ii. Trouser (*Wando*)

Hausa pair of trousers, be it traditional or contemporary is free flowing robes attire worn under kaftan or inner cloth (*Jamfa*) of big garment. The pair of trousers is loose at the top and in middle, yet snug in the leg to match the top cloth. Trouser (*Wando*) is being embroidered at down (leg mouth) to match the designs of the either the kaftan or garment. Their association with other culture has added different patterns of trousers to the existing ones. Indeed, Municipal Area Council communities have different traditional and modern trousers, such as; *Buje, Gobe da buki, Golo-gola, Kofe, Wudidi, Kahon Barewa, Kwarjalle, Kafi shanu wuya, Doma, Kamun kafa, Dan itori, Fanjama, Bulus, Tsala, Buwara, Tokare, jitama, Tarabisiyya, Dan itori, Gambari and others* (Asiru, 2018).



Bulus Trouser



Wando kamun Kafa



Gambari

### iii. Caps

Best of Hausa tradition cap (*Hula*) is worn by men to match the colour of the outfit. *Hula* could either be a hand woven or machine designed with different colours of thread. *Hula* displays cultural significance, prestige symbol of wealth status of the wearer in the community. *Hula* is not only worn by Hausa people to protect themselves from sunlight, but to earn dignity and respect from the public. The association of Hausa people with other tribes brought different colours and names of Hausa caps. Varieties of *Hula* (caps) are worn every day. Some popular caps are; *Habar kada*, *Bakwala*, *Zanna (s)*, *Damanga*, *Suka dubu*, *Haririya*, *Yarbichi*, *'Yar Saudi*, *Zita*, *Ba matsala*, *Sallau Musa*, *F.T.F*, *Sabo bakin Zuwo*, *Salisu Bahari*, *Gali Nabba*, *Iya Kwandeshin*, *Kwankwasiyya(s)* and others (Asiru, 2018).



Kwankwasiyya cap



Covid-19 Cap



Cap Weaver



Zanna Cap



Different Types of Cap

**iv. Kaftan style**

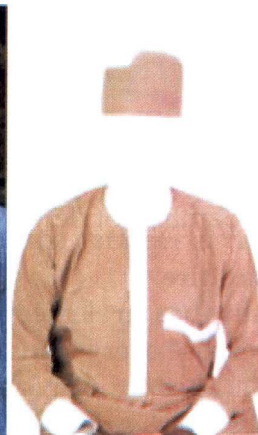
Dressing well creates positive impression. Kaftan is men's long native dress that flows to the knee or ankle with long sleeves. Hausa Kaftans are fashionable with latest styles for the aged, adult, young and children. It can be decorated with colourful embroidery at the front (neck), pocket and sleeves. Varieties of Hausa Kaftan in the area are; *Siliyya, Mai Dafi, Zulaika, Pakistan, 'Yar Salo, Tazarce, Sak, Boda, Bagobira, Mai falmaran, Akorikura, Mai guru* and others.



Tazarce



Yar Fagge Kaftan



Modern Kaftan



Short Kaftan

**b. Female Hausa Mode of Dressing**

Female Hausa traditional attires are elegant, decent and fashionable that cover their body properly especially in public. Their cultural and modern dresses distinguish the married, widows and young ladies from one another. What makes Hausa female outfit prominent is the use of beautiful, authentic jewellery, body adornments and facial paint art. Female Hausa traditional and contemporary attires include; matched-colourful head tie, fitted dresses and long dresses (*Jallabiyyah*). The materials and embroidery depict vividly their economic status and privilege in the community.

### i. Head Tie

Head tie in Municipal Area Council is a female cloth that covers the head only. It is a well-known Hausa dress culture for women not to expose their hair in the public, and when Islam came to Hausa land, Hausa people accepted the tradition. Wearing of head tie has varied styles and names, such as; Ture kaga tsiya, Aisha Bahari, Sambisa style, *Gwaggwaro*, *A tsikari duniya*, *Maryam Abacha* and others.



Aisha Sambisa Style.



Turai YarAdua Style

### ii. Female Hausa attire

Hausa female attire has an element of traditional and contemporary fashion trends. This is because every Hausa female outfit has a fraction of tradition. The styles are attractive, convenient, bright, stylistic and comfortable. Female Hausa attire has some key features that distinguish them from the ones in other tribes. Such common features are; Ankara style, Lace comfort style, Floral pattern, Mermaid style, Flounced sleeves, Modest cut, Pantsuit style and Manties fashions. Other female attires are; *Tallafeni*, *Mai hannu*, *Zazu*, *Bazai*, *Mudikare*, *Yarhofi*, *Agwaja*, *Kante*, *Jaromi*, *Kwalsha*, *Yar kwanja*, *Cikomaroko*, *Tar tsuke*, *Duniya hannun dama*, *Halfbuba*, *Shoki* and others (Asiru, 2018).



Traditional Hausa Female Attires

**iii. Wrapper Dress (Zani)**

Wrapper clothing is worn by female today. It has been a good tradition for women to teach their daughters how to wear Hausa traditional wrappers. It attracts self-discipline, respect and dignity in the community and among the female folk. Hausa wrappers come in various forms, such as; *Zani dan Dori*, *Falle daya*, *Yanka ukku* (three pieces), *Yanka shidda* (six pieces), *Mai surfani*, *Awilo*, *Mai Tattara* and others.

**iv. Female Veil (Gyale/Mayafi)**

Female veil is a piece of cloth that covers head and some parts of the face. Veil has a long history both in Islam and Christianity. It is a Hausa dress culture that distinguishes between the married, widow and unmarried females. The Hausa tradition demands that teenagers should be encouraged to wear veil as part of their outfit. It also shows respect, sense of responsibility and integrity of women in the society. In Kano, the varieties of veil differ, such as; *Aisha Buhari*, *Atsokani sharia* and *Hajjajau*.



Veil for Married Hausa woman



Veil for Widow or Unmarried Hausa female

**vii. Abaya**

Abaya or after dress is an Arabic origin wears. It came into Kano through association or trade with North Africa, Arabian Peninsula and Middle East. It usually comes in different colours but black *Abaya* is the most prominent

ones. It is a loose garment worn by all categories of women. The Holy Qur'an attributed the use of Abaya to all Muslim women in Chapter 33; 59, "O Prophet, tell your wives and the daughters, and the believing women to cover themselves with a loose garment, they will be recognized and no harm will come to them." Till this day, the wearing of Abaya becomes the fashion of city women.



Abaya

#### vii. Skirts

In Hausa communities, skirts are female apparels that cover her from the waist downwards. It is also the lower part of dress or a separate outer blouse. Skirt has been worn in the Area Council by female, since prehistoric period, from the top to the lower part of their bodies. Hausa contemporary tailors initiated varieties of female skirts, such as; *Yanka shida* (six pieces), *Awilo*, *Harfin "A"* ("A" shape), *Mai Soket*, *Mai Tsagar baya*, *Mara ciki* to mentioned but few.

#### Hausa Ritual Dresses

In Hausa land especially in the Area Council, *Hausawa* have special dress code for spiritual festivities and deity worships. The traditional dresses are unique, attractive and convey message to the general public. Spiritual dress codes are applicable to any sex within the circle. The spiritual activities are Bori, Boka, Tsafi (superstition) and others rituals.

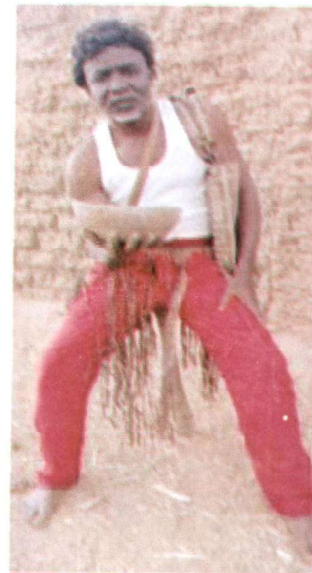
Bori and Bokanci are the traditional Hausa systems of healings and dealing with black spirits or jinn. Bori has twelve (12) dress cultural codes which represent each spirit. Such black jinn spirits are; *Babule*, *yar fulani*, *Mai dawa*, *Dan mama*, *Gwamna bataliya*, *Falaka*, *Beleriya Dadu*, *Mai yaki* and others. The ritual systems of Bori and Bokanci are still surviving in Hausa land till today.



Boka dress



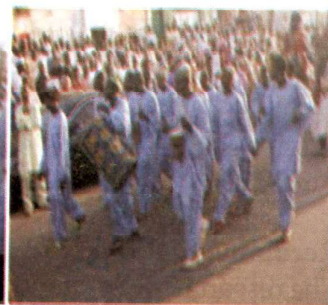
Babule Dress



Gwabna Bataliya

#### Hausa Entertainment Dresses

The Municipal Area Council is a centre for Hausa traditional entertainments. This can vividly be proved during Sallah festivities at *Kofar Kudu* and *Gidan Makama Museum Cultural Square*. The cultural dress attire displayed by traditional entertainers allow people to recognize their troupes' activities and functions. The entertainer troupes and their clear-cut cultural dress codes are; *Yan bindiga*, *Koroso* troupes, Emir's trumpet troupes, *Yan baka*, *Yan kacakaura* and others. In general, the main objective of the entertainers is to make people laugh and happy.



Dress Culture of *Yan Bindiga* Traditional Hunters

Farmers' Drummers

#### Royal Cultural Dress Code

Traditional Rulers in Hausa land are the promoters and preservers of Hausa dress culture to the world. Kano Emirate council is located in the heart of Municipal Area Council. It is well known for striking cultural dress code which includes a long jacket, trousers, ostrich feather shoes (*Fikini*), Dabo's

hat and knife, twin spares (*Tagwayen masu*), two horns-turban, golden sword (*Takobin Dabo*), with a veil-like cloth (*Amawali*), which could cover his face. The Kano Hausa royal garments are sometimes made by hand woven materials, cotton, and raw silk material made and sown in Nigeria.



Complete Royal Traditional Attires

#### Impact of Western Culture on Hausa Traditional Dress Culture

According to Arowolo (2010), colonialism, slave trade and missionaries are the bastion of Western civilization and culture in Africa. The impacts of Western culture on Hausa traditional dress culture could be summarised as;

1. Low patronage of Hausa traditional cloth
2. Introduction of modern textiles industries.
3. Declining of cotton production by farmers.
4. Youths regard traditional Hausa fashion as aged people dress code.
5. Lack of government support on traditional cloth industries.
6. Commercial and private financial institutions are not giving soft loans to traditional weavers.
7. Lack of Union for Traditional Hausa textile industries.

#### Recommendations

The research recommends the following six points;

1. Museum as custodian of culture should keep organizing Hausa dress fashion parade competition.
2. Government should make traditional dressing as office dress code
3. Traditional weavers and dyers should form a union to guide them in their activities
4. Commercial Banks and financial Institutions should give soft and regular loans to traditional cloth weavers.

5. Traditional raw materials should be made available to weavers and dyers

**Summary**

Hausa traditional dress culture is one of the most respectable dressing styles in Africa. It shows power, prestige, economic value and status in the community. The research investigated the pre and post Islamic Hausa dress culture in Kano Municipal Area Council. It traced the traditional weaving and dyeing industries with aim the of promoting them. The research work deeply narrated the contemporary Hausa dress culture in the area under study. It offered useful suggestions on how to promote, preserve and transmit traditional Hausa dress culture to the next generation. It also served as a reference point for researchers and guide to tourists, as well as a source of revenue to government.

S/NO.	TERM	MEANING
1.	Babbar riga	Loose robe with wide sleeves
2.	Saki	Hand woven black and white cloth
3.	Dinkin Gargajiya	Traditional Hausa embroidery
4.	Yar shara	Hausa short Kaftan with open side by side
5.	Wando kamun kafa	Fitted pantaloons
6.	Abaya	Female cape cloth
7.	Wando	Trouser
8.	Tsamiya	Locally produced thread of wild silk
9.	Rawani	Turban
10.	Kirken Nupe	Big garment with large pocket and embroidery
11.	Askabiyu	Large embroidery of two knife on big garment
12.	Alkyabba	Burnous
13.	Lage	Throwing a cloth round the body and over a shoulder
14.	Saki	Traditional weaved cloth either in black or white colour
15.	Soron dinki	Name of the ward in municipal area council
16.	Zubuni	Short jacket
17.	Fallen Zani	Two yards of wrapper
18.	Fikini	Ostrich leather shoes
19.	Amawali	Round veil like-cloth
20.	Yan Bindiga	Traditional hunters
21.	Jallabiya	Female long gown
22.	Tagwayen masu	Twice spears
23.	Boka	Soothsayer or Native doctor
24.	Bori	A form of devil – possession or Sorcery

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**List of Informants**

S/N	NAME	AGE	Place of Interview	Occupation	Tribe	Date
1	Alh. Isa Alanguburo	48	Emir's road	Caps seller	Babarbare	26-1-2022
2	Alh. Inuwa Bello	55	Makwarari	Hand Embroider	Hausa	28-1-2021
3	Mal. Umar Ado	50	Kurmi market	Cloth seller	Hausa	20-1-2022
4	Alh. Nuha Dogarai	51	Dogarai	Royal Guards Tailor	Hausa	22-1-2022
5	Alh. Abubakar Y.	41	Kano Printing Press	Printer	Hausa	25-1-2022
6	Alh. Abdullahi H.	58	Kurmi market	Sarkin Kasuwa	Hausa	26-1-2022
7	Dikko Idris	47	Riminkebe	Civil servant (Historian)	Hausa	26-1-2022
8	Dr. Planner Jikan Auta	46	Faroruwa	Soothsayer	Hausa	27-1-2022
9	Haj Rukayya M.	36	U/gini	Designer	Hausa	28-1-2022
10	Isma 'l Isa	35	Fagge	Ladies' Tailor	Hausa	28-1-2022
11	Mal Kamilu T.	53	HCB	Artist	Hausa	01-2-2022
12	Mal. Ado Inuwa	60	Fage	Tailor	Hausa	03 -2-2022
13	Mal. Hassan B.	50	Municipal	Local Historian	Hausa	03-2-2022
14	Mal. Adamu d.	57	HCB	Curator	Hausa	03-2-2022
15	Mal. Husaina D.	40	Makafin Dala	House wife	Hausa	04-2-2022
16	Nasiru Sani	40	Emir's road	Historian	Hausa	20-2-2022