



Burkino Faso Cloth

Burkina Faso, also known by its shortened name, Burkina – is a landlocked country in west Africa. It is surrounded by six countries: Mali to the north, Niger to the east, Benin to the southeast, Togo and Ghana to the south, and Côte d'Ivoire to the southwest.

The two major weaving peoples in the region are the *Dafing* and the *Yarsé*.

Burkina Faso has a rich textile history. Sadly in more recent years it has struggled against competition from cheap imports and the second-hand clothing industry. Spinners, dyers and weavers whose skills are passed down through generations could once rely on demand for elaborate *bou-bous* (gowns) from Kings, Queens and musicians of the Mossi Empire. Less elaborate designs serviced local communities and in some areas of West Africa strip cloths were even used as currency.

Today there is some local demand for ceremonial cloths, such as the *faso-fani*, which is given by a groom to his wife, marking the transition from girl to married woman. Other weavers sell poorer-quality cloths using imported synthetic threads to the less discerning eyes of the tourists. However, the industry has been so diluted by more affordable imports that many weavers have given up their trade altogether. This sadly breaks the chain of passing the skill from generation to generation and the fear is that these skills may soon be lost forever.

This particular strip of genuine Burkino Faso has been woven by hand into this long narrow strip on a horizontal, narrow-warp loom. You will see that it is slightly thicker than machine woven cloth. These narrow strips are then sewn together to make a larger finished cloth to make smocks, jackets, hats, and other apparel. Traditionally the weaving is done by the men. The dying of cloth is done by women who also market the cloth.

