



Embroidered Wrapper of the Wodaabe People

This wonderful vintage wrapper comes from the Wodaabe people, also known as pastoral Fulani or Bororo. The Wodaabe are nomadic herders who live in northern Nigeria and Southwestern Niger. They are famous traders who travel across West African countries Western Africa selling and buying various products.

The Wodaabe are well-known for their body adornment and their annual festival "Yaake" which is a kind of beauty contest that involves young men. "Yaake" festival is an occasion for young men to display their beauty, their charm, their virility and their personality. It is characterised by a series of dances called "gerewol" . They wear elaborate tunics such as the one pictured overleaf and paint their faces in make-up, turbans and elaborate hairstyles, jewellery and leather amulets in order to become attractive and desirable to young girls. At the end, a jury composed of three young women will select the best dancer and adorned man.

The Wodaabe decorative wrappers and tunics are extremely beautiful and are considered valuable objects. They are made for young men by their girlfriends out of woven cotton. The weaver combines a tie-dye technique and embroidery on a single textile. The background textile comprises of thin strips of woven fabric sewn together to make a larger piece.

The cotton thread is dyed in blue with stripes of colours - white green and red are very popular - and the designs are then hand embroidered onto the cloth. Yellow, red, green, and orange are the most preferred colours for the embroidery which is done using a tiny chain stitch.

The designs may vary from one tunic and wrapper to another but they are always asymmetric, abstract or geometric. Such textiles are very rare to find and would stand out in any collection.

