Daboya Indigo Cloth

Daboya indigo cloth (locally referred to as fugu) is weaved in the village of Daboya in northern Ghana and is their main export. It is made using 100% cotton which is usually indigo and white, occasionally with an accent colour.

This genuine hand woven cloth, slightly thicker than machine woven cloth, is woven by hand into long narrow strips which are then sewn together to make a larger finished cloth to make smocks, jackets, hats, and other apparel.

Traditionally women prepare the raw cotton and spin it into thread and men do all of the dyeing, weaving, and sewing. The unbleached cotton threads are wound into hanks, before repeated dipping into the indigo vats which is made using the dye from the indigo leaf. The whole process is very time consuming and each strip is the result of hours of work. In Daboya all of the boys aspire to becoming weavers when they grow up.

Once the thread is dyed and dry the village weavers take over, combining Indigo and white threads (sometimes with the occasional red for accent) to weave 60 metre long strips of cloth. The finished strips are then taken to the markets of northern Ghana, most notably Bolgatanga, where they are purchased by tailors to create the traditional man's smock.

Simple working smocks of Indigo and white are still quite common in Ghana, but more elaborate ceremonial smocks which feature embroidery are getting harder to find.

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1. The cotton is spun by women onto a spindle made from clay found near the river.
2. An indigo dye pot is prepared with ashes of mordant to fix the dye onto the fabric, some acid & indigo leaves. It is left to ferment for several days before using. The pit is usually 6-7 feet deep!
3. The indigo dipped cotton is made into skeins and hung to dry.
4. Daboya indigo cloth is weaved by hand on a loom.
5. The strips are sewn together and made into apparel such as this stunning example on the left.