





Research Articles

Ethiopian Traditional Clothing: Impacts on Global Fashion, Marketing Strategies, and Emerging Perspectives in Fashion Tourism

Alhayat G. Temesgen^{1,2*} , Jörg Kaufmann² , Holger Cebulla

¹*Wollo University, Kombolcha Institute of Technology, Kombolcha, Ethiopia*

²*Chemnitz University of Technology, Chemnitz, Germany*

KEYWORDS

traditional cloth
socio-cultural influence
intangible heritage
social identity
green economy
tourism

ABSTRACT

Ethiopia is home to more than 80 ethnolinguistic groups, each distinguished by its own language, cultural practices, and unique traditional attire. Hand weaving and indigenous crafts represent significant non-agricultural sources of livelihood and cultural expression within the country. This study investigates the role of Ethiopian indigenous clothing, particularly hand-woven shema textiles and tibeb embroidery, in influencing global fashion trends, branding strategies, and cultural tourism development. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, the study integrates academic and industry perspectives through interviews, social media content analysis, and case studies of Ethiopian designers, including those from the diaspora. The research further examines traditional dress practices, ornamentation, and prescribed attire for men and women across diverse ethnic communities. The findings reveal three principal contributions of Ethiopian traditional clothing to contemporary fashion and tourism: (1) preservation of sustainable weaving practices and safeguarding of cultural heritage; (2) stimulation of innovative design development that contributes to global fashion discourse; and (3) promotion of experiential cultural tourism through direct interaction between weaving communities and visitors. Effective marketing strategies identified include heritage-based storytelling, strategic engagement of diaspora influencers, collaborative partnerships between designers and traditional artisans, and transparent communication of supply chain narratives to consumers. Despite its growing recognition, the study also highlights critical challenges, notably the risks of cultural appropriation, insufficient protection of communal intellectual property rights, and inequitable economic benefits for local artisans. Addressing these issues requires the establishment of frameworks that ensure fair value distribution, support educational tourism initiatives, and protect cultural assets from exploitation. Ultimately, this research positions Ethiopian traditional dress as a model of sustainable fashion and cultural authenticity, with the potential to enhance its global recognition within the fashion tourism industry.

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Alhayat G. Temesgen; Wollo University, Kombolcha Institute of Technology, Kombolcha, Ethiopia ; Email: alhayat@kiot.edu.et

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 2 October 2025 | Revised: 21 October 2025 | Accepted: 23 October 2025 | Published Online: 25 October 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65773/ssia.1.1.53>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Explorer Press Ltd. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Ethiopian traditional clothing represents a deeply rooted cultural expression shaped by centuries of social, environmental, and spiritual influences. While clothing initially served a functional purpose of bodily protection, its evolution has transformed it into a powerful medium of cultural identity, communicating social status, belief systems, regional affiliation, and historical continuity [1-3]. In Ethiopia, traditional attire remains a vibrant and enduring symbol of national and ethnic identity, distinguished by elaborate hand weaving, intricate embroidery, and symbolic ornamentation that continue to be prominently worn during religious ceremonies, cultural festivals, and significant life events [3,4].






Scholars have emphasized that traditional garments and handcrafted textiles function as repositories of intangible cultural heritage, embodying accumulated knowledge, technical skill, creativity, and intergenerational transmission of cultural values [4-6]. The diversity of Ethiopia's ethnic groups and ecological zones further contributes to the stylistic variations observed in traditional dress. For instance, lightweight cotton garments predominate in the lowlands, while heavier handwoven textiles and layered wraps are customary in the highland regions, reflecting adaptive responses to climate and lifestyle [7]. Moreover, Ethiopian Orthodox Christian practices assign symbolic meanings to specific colors, motifs, and patterns, reinforcing the spiritual dimension of clothing within ritual contexts [8-10]. Traditional Ethiopian handwoven textiles, primarily produced using cotton, are manufactured through indigenous handloom techniques utilizing 'dir' (warp), 'mag' (weft), and 'tilet' (decorative thread) as illustrated in Figure 1. These textiles are broadly classified into six major categories: Shema, Habesha Kemis, Tibeb, Netela, Gabi, and Kuta, all derived from Amharic terminology. Despite their cultural richness and symbolic value, the traditional textile sector faces persistent challenges, including limited policy support, weak intellectual property protection, informal market structures, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to global markets [8-10]. These constraints threaten both the sustainability of traditional practices and the equitable economic participation of artisans.



Figure 1. Handloom and Traditional cloth manufacturing.

Ethiopian traditional handwoven clothing, mostly made from cotton, can be categorized into about six main types: 'Shema,' 'Habesha Kemis,' 'Tibeb,' 'Netela,' 'Gabi,' and 'Kuta'. The traditional Ethiopian clothing classifications are all referred to by names originating from the Amharic tongue (language). Because of global fashion development, these traditional cloth categorizations might increase to include a combination of the previously mentioned classes [8-10]. A detailed description of the traditional clothes in Ethiopia is summarized in Table 1. The informal nature of businesses, insufficient government policy and legislative support, inadequate protection of intellectual property rights, absence of appropriate digital and physical infrastructure, as well as the challenges with mobility, are some major constraints to the development of Ethiopian traditional cloth sectors, which were like those reported [8-10].

Table 1. Commonly Worn Types of Ethiopian Traditional Clothes [5,8-10].

Name of the Ethiopian Traditional cloth	Elucidation	Cloth Photo	Description
Shemma(Shema) (Amharic: ሽማ)	-A light, cotton wrap, like a shawl or robe, is used to cover the body and head, and folks, both men and women, often wear it.		-Shemma's adaptable nature and comfortable feel, stemming from its delicate construction, allow it to be worn casually or for more formal events.
Kuta (Amharic: ኩታ)	-A garment, like a netela, worn by men.		-The Kuta, a thin, gauzy wrap crafted from hand-spun cotton, is mainly worn by males. It's commonly used in hotter seasons as a more breathable substitute for the thicker Gabi.
Gabi (Amharic: ጋብ)	-It's like a warm, substantial wrap, often rectangular, that folks, especially the Amhara people and religious figures, like to bundle up in when it gets chilly.		-Mostly worn by older people
Netela (Amharic: ኔቴላ)	-A shawl, often worn during religious ceremonies and by both men and women.		-Men or women often wear a Netela, a cotton wrap, for everyday use and special events
Habesha Kemis (Amharic: ሐበሻ ቀመሽ)	-A long, light-colored dress, typically reaching the ankles and frequently adorned with detailed needlework, is commonly worn by women, particularly in the mountainous regions of Ethiopia and Eritrea.		-A dress worn by women
Tibeb (Amharic: ተፀፅ)	-Elaborate, ornamental trims on clothes, frequently showcase religious symbols or intricate designs.		-Decorative woven or embroidered designs, a key characteristic of Ethiopian traditional clothing called Tibeb, are a striking element of Habesha kemis (women's dresses).
Mekenet (Amharic: ሙቀት)	-Meqenet, sometimes written Mekenet, is a customary band or girdle, frequently crafted from cotton fabric, worn by women, especially in the Amhara area.		-The mekenet, worn at the waist, can tighten a dress or other clothing items, acting as both an adornment and a practical feature.
Shash(Sashes) (Amharic: ሻሻ)	-Ethiopian sashes, frequently incorporated into traditional garments such as the Habesha kemis, have varied uses, acting as both embellishments and practical accessories. They function as waistbands or head coverings, provide warmth as wraps, and add ornamentation to outfits or special occasions like		-Ethiopian sashes, frequently incorporated into traditional garments such as the Habesha kemis, have varied uses, acting as both embellishments and practical accessories. They function as waistbands or head coverings, provide warmth as wraps, and add

Name of the Ethiopian Traditional cloth	Elucidation	Cloth Photo	Description
	weddings. They are also often used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.		ornamentation to outfits or special occasions like weddings. It is commonly used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Although existing studies have documented the aesthetic and cultural importance of Ethiopian traditional clothing, there remains a noticeable gap in critically examining its evolving role within contemporary socio-cultural landscapes, particularly in relation to modernization, fashion tourism, and sustainable economic development. Limited research has explored how traditional clothing operates simultaneously as a cultural symbol, economic resource, and identity marker in the context of global fashion influence and tourism dynamics.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by investigating the traditional and cultural values of Ethiopian clothing and its role as a socio-cultural signifier of identity. Specifically, it examines the interaction between traditional handcrafting practices and modern influences, focusing on their implications for cultural preservation, economic benefits, ethical considerations, and societal values within Ethiopian tourism. By situating traditional clothing within broader discussions of heritage sustainability and modernization, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of its contemporary relevance and transformative potential.

2. Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Ethiopian Traditional Clothing

Clothing has historically evolved from a basic protective necessity into a complex cultural system through which societies articulate identity, status, memory, and worldview. From the perspective of cultural identity theory, dress operates as a symbolic language that communicates belonging, distinction, and continuity within and across communities. Similarly, fashion theory views clothing as a dynamic social construct shaped by power relations, globalization, and aesthetic negotiation, while heritage studies conceptualizes traditional dress as a tangible manifestation of intangible heritage, embodying collective knowledge, historical narratives, and cultural continuity. These frameworks provide an essential analytical lens for understanding Ethiopian traditional clothing not merely as aesthetic artefacts, but as socio-cultural systems embedded in historical and contemporary transformations.

2.1 Global Traditional Clothing and Fashion Industries: A Comparative Perspective

Traditional clothing across the world reflects deeply rooted cultural values shaped by geography, spirituality, politics, and social structures. Garments such as the West African dashiki, Scottish kilt, Japanese kimono, Indian sari, and Ethiopian Habesha dress exemplify how clothing functions as a marker of identity while simultaneously undergoing reinterpretation in the global fashion industry. However, globalization has transformed traditional attire into transnational commodities, often stripped of their original meanings and recontextualized through commercial fashion systems [11-15]. From a critical standpoint, while global fashion has increasingly borrowed from traditional aesthetics, this process raises questions of cultural appropriation, authenticity, and unequal power dynamics. Unlike many global garments that have been heavily commodified and diluted, Ethiopian traditional clothing maintains a distinct symbolic integrity due to its continued use in religious, cultural, and social rituals. This resilience reflects a strong connection between dress and identity, positioning Ethiopian clothing as a site of cultural resistance against homogenizing global fashion trends [15,16].











Furthermore, unlike mass-produced global fashion, Ethiopian traditional clothing maintains localized production systems rooted in indigenous craftsmanship [16]. This positions it uniquely within the discourse of

sustainable fashion, as it aligns more closely with slow fashion principles, ethical production, and heritage preservation, distinguishing it from rapidly commercialized global traditional garments [17,18].

2.2 Traditional Cloth in Ethiopia: Historical Continuity and Cultural Specificity

Ethiopia has long functioned as a historical center for textile production in East Africa, with cotton weaving deeply embedded in its socio-cultural fabric. Scholars suggest that the earliest domestication of cotton may have occurred within the Ethiopian highlands, reinforcing the long-standing relationship between textile production and livelihood systems [19]. The gendered division of labor, where women spin and men weave, reflects broader socio-cultural structures and reinforces the notion that clothing production itself is a culturally regulated process. Garments such as the Habesha Kemis, Gabi, Netela, Shema, and Tibeb embody not only aesthetic values but also historical continuity, spiritual symbolism, and ethnic identity [20,21]. These garments operate within what heritage scholars define as "living heritage", cultural practices that evolve while retaining core traditional meanings. Unlike many global fashion forms that prioritize trend-based consumption, Ethiopian traditional dress retains its ritual function, especially in Orthodox Christian contexts where color, embroidery, and design patterns communicate sacred meanings. However, despite its cultural depth, Ethiopian traditional clothing remains underrepresented in scholarly discourse. Existing studies largely focus on descriptive documentation rather than critical analysis of its socio-economic, identity-forming, and political implications [22]. This absence limits a holistic understanding of how Ethiopian attire functions as both a heritage system and a contemporary socio-economic resource [19-22]. Ethiopian traditional attire, as illustrated in Table 2, reflects Ethiopian distinct traditions, values, and religions as well as our origins.

Table 2. Categories of Ethiopian Traditional Clothes based on the Region (place) of origin

Place of origin	Traditional Clothes		Description	Reference
	Men Cloth	Women cloth		
Gonder Traditional cloth			The way someone dresses can reveal a lot about their origins and cultural background.	Source: Google.com
Gojjam Traditional cloth			A person's cultural background and origins can be inferred from their clothing choices.	Source: Google.com
Agew (Awi) Traditional cloth			A person's cultural background and origins can be inferred from their clothing choices.	Source: Google.com
Wollo-Raya Traditional cloth			Clothing styles provide information about a person's cultural background and where they come from.	Source: Google.com
Silti Traditional cloth			The way someone dresses can reveal a lot about their origins and cultural background.	Source: Google.com

Place of origin	Traditional Clothes		Description	Reference
	Men Cloth	Women cloth		
Tigray Traditional cloth			Clothing styles provide information about a person's cultural background and where they come from.	Source: Google.com
Oromo Traditional cloth			Styles of dress reveal details about a person's origins and cultural background.	Source: Google.com
Bale Oromo Traditional cloth			Clothing styles provide information about a person's cultural background and where they come from.	Source: Google.com
Guji-Oromo Traditional cloth			Clothing styles provide information about a person's cultural background and where they come from.	Source: Google.com
Harari Traditional cloth			Styles of dress reveal details about a person's origins and cultural background.	Source: Google.com
Sidama Traditional cloth			Clothing styles provide information about a person's cultural background and where they come from.	Source: Google.com
Wolaita Traditional cloth			Clothing styles provide information about a person's cultural background and where they come from.	Source: Google.com
Argobba Traditional cloth			The way someone dresses can reveal a lot about their origins and cultural background.	Source: Google.com

2.3 Socio-Cultural Values and Identity Construction

From a cultural identity perspective, traditional clothing functions as a visual articulation of collective memory and social position. It signals belonging, reinforces group boundaries, and strengthens communal bonds during ceremonies, religious observances, and social gatherings. Ethiopian garments, through colors, motifs, and embroidery, communicate narratives about ancestry, social roles, and communal status, transforming clothing into a performative expression of identity. Symbolism embedded within traditional attire

also serves as a communicative system that transmits cultural knowledge across generations. Patterns, threads, and motifs are not merely decorative but carry encoded meanings linked to mythology, spirituality, and social hierarchy. This aligns with heritage theory that positions clothing as a repository of intangible cultural knowledge [23-26].

Cultural Identity and Heritage: A tangible representation of a culture's uniqueness and a connection to its past is found in traditional attire. Clothing serves as an outward representation of a group's unique identity, particularly as global fashion becomes more standardized [25,26]. It allows people to relate to their ancestors, origins, and shared history while also demonstrating their background. In many cultures, a person's clothing can indicate their role, status, and relationship with others [25,26]. For example, a person's marital status, marital status, or social class can be determined by specific colors, patterns, or objects [25,26].

Symbolic Meanings and Beliefs: Colors, shapes, and patterns can represent mythical figures, historical events, or spiritual concepts, so traditional clothing often has great symbolic meaning [25-28]. Each component frequently has a specific meaning associated with folklore, cultural narratives, or religious beliefs. For example, Lao fabrics' serpent pattern represents a mythical animal and appears on a wide range of objects throughout a person's life, from baby blankets to wedding gowns [25-28].

Social Structure, Hierarchy and Preservation of Tradition: By passing down traditional patterns, practices, and meanings from one generation to the next, traditional clothing plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity [29-33]. It gives people a chance to connect with their heritage and express that they belong to a particular group [29-33]. In a community, woven traditional attire can promote unity and solidarity. Cultural ties and a sense of collective identity are reinforced when people wear the same attire during celebrations, observances, or other ceremonies [29-33]. In many societies, traditional dress can represent a person's social status, way of life, or role and duties within the group [29-33]. Maintaining cultural knowledge and skills is also aided by the artistry and skill required to create traditional attire. This is evident the constant production and wearing of these garments, societies can maintain their cultural memory and traditions. During ceremonies, celebrations, or other significant occasions, this is demonstrated using particular attire, embroidery or accessories [29-33]. Critically, however, modern influences and globalization pose challenges to these traditional meanings. The increasing exposure to global fashion risks reducing traditional attire to aesthetic commodities rather than cultural artefacts, thereby weakening its symbolic depth and eroding its social function. For example, specific social classes or people taking part in specific rituals may be assigned specific motifs, colors, or materials [29-33].

2.4. Traditional Clothing as Competitive Cultural Capital in Fashion

Within contemporary fashion discourse, traditional attire can be understood as a form of cultural capital, offering competitive advantages such as uniqueness, authenticity, and sustainability. While modern fashion prioritizes speed and mass production, traditional Ethiopian attire embodies slow fashion principles that emphasize craftsmanship, ethical production, and environmental responsibility. Nevertheless, this competitive advantage is constrained by structural challenges including weak market integration, limited policy protection, intellectual property vulnerabilities, and lack of infrastructural support. While traditional clothing contributes to tourism, local employment, and cultural branding, its integration into the global fashion economy often remains unequal, with artisans receiving limited economic returns [35-38]. Traditional attire not only provides opportunities for innovative and sustainable fashion designs, but it also helps to preserve cultural heritage, build community relationships, and draw tourists [35-38]. In the fashion industry, heritage clothing can also provide competitive advantages by utilizing distinctive aesthetics, cultural identity, and eco-friendly practices. It also has difficulties keeping up manufacturing efficiency and adjusting to rapidly changing fashion trends [35-38]. From a critical economic standpoint, the commercialization of traditional clothing must be approached cautiously to avoid exploitation and cultural dilution. Fashion enterprises that engage in heritage-based design

should pursue models that support fair trade, preserve authenticity, and ensure sustainable economic benefits for weaving communities [35-38].

Despite the extensive descriptive documentation of Ethiopian traditional clothing, there remains a significant gap in studies that critically examine its role as a socio-cultural, economic, and identity-forming system within the context of globalization and modernity. Existing scholarship inadequately connects Ethiopian traditional clothing to broader theoretical discussions in cultural identity, fashion globalization, and heritage sustainability. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by critically analysing Ethiopian traditional clothing through interdisciplinary theoretical lenses, examining its evolving significance in relation to identity construction, sustainable fashion, and cultural tourism. By situating Ethiopian attire within global and local contexts, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional clothing can function as both cultural heritage and economic resource in a rapidly globalizing world.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. The Research Site (Case study)

Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups have cultivated a rich array of artistic and textile traditions, with each major region, Oromia, Tigray, Amhara, Siltie, and the southern areas, producing distinctive styles of traditional clothing that reflect local identities, social values, and cultural heritage. For this study, the research focused on handwoven garments sourced from Shiromieda, Saris Abo, and Guellele markets in Addis Ababa, selected through purposive sampling. These locations were chosen because they function as central marketplaces and aggregation hubs for traditional clothing artisans from multiple regions, providing access to a representative cross-section of Ethiopian weaving traditions. By engaging with local weavers, sellers, and artisans operating in these sites, the study captures both the regional specificities of traditional garments and the common practices shared across communities, enabling a comprehensive understanding of Ethiopia's textile diversity. The urban setting of Addis Ababa also facilitates the practical aspects of data collection while maintaining strong representativeness of rural weaving communities through their commercial networks in these markets. This approach ensures that the research reflects the cultural richness and socio-economic dimensions of traditional Ethiopian clothing across the selected regions.

3.2. Data Collection

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining primary and secondary data to explore Ethiopian traditional clothing practices.

Primary Data Collection: Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 100 handweaver representatives from various ethnic regions, including Oromia, Tigray, Amhara, Siltie, and southern areas. The interview guide focused on traditional weaving techniques, the cultural and socio-economic significance of garments, and challenges faced by artisans. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

Participant Observation: Observational data were collected at 10 representative weaving and marketplace sites, including Shiromieda, Saris Abo, and Guellele in Addis Ababa. During these visits, I engaged in and observed key activities such as cotton spinning, handloom weaving, embroidery (tibe), and garment sales. Detailed field notes were systematically maintained, documenting processes, social interactions, and contextual details to ensure both reliability and replicability of observations.

Secondary Data Collection: Secondary data were obtained through a comprehensive review of academic literature, books, journal articles, and industry reports on Ethiopian traditional clothing, handwoven textiles, and their socio-cultural and economic significance. This triangulation of data sources allowed for a robust and

comprehensive understanding of the research topic. By combining these methods, the study ensures rich qualitative insights into traditional weaving practices while contextualizing them within broader historical, cultural, and socio-economic frameworks.

3.3. Data Analysis and Integration

The study employed a qualitative analytical approach to examine Ethiopian traditional clothing within its socio-cultural and tourism-related contexts. Data from semi-structured interviews with 100 handweaver representatives and participant observations at 10 representative weaving and marketplace sites were systematically coded and analyzed thematically. The thematic analysis focused on identifying patterns related to weaving techniques, symbolic meanings, socio-cultural significance, and economic implications. To strengthen analytical rigor, the primary data were integrated with secondary data obtained from books, journal articles, and industry reports. This integration involved triangulating field observations and interview insights with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, including cultural identity theory, heritage studies, and the Theory of Reasoned Action [39]. For instance, emergent themes from interviews regarding cultural intentions and behavior in wearing traditional clothing were cross-examined with the literature on socio-cultural influences on fashion choices and heritage preservation. This integrated approach allowed the study to construct a coherent narrative linking individual and community practices with broader theoretical constructs. By combining empirical observations with scholarly evidence, the analysis provides a holistic understanding of how Ethiopian traditional clothing functions as a medium of cultural expression, socio-economic activity, and a driver of tourism experiences.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Identity and Symbol of Ethiopian Traditional Clothes

In many regions of Ethiopia, including Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, and the eastern, western, and southern areas, traditional weaving and craftsmanship provide a significant source of livelihood. Skilled artisans produce handwoven fabrics, often in white or vibrant colors, which are subsequently crafted into garments imbued with cultural meaning (Temesgen et al. 2019) [40-43]. Field observations revealed that these garments function as visual markers of identity, signaling not only the wearer's regional and ethnic affiliation but also their social norms, beliefs, and community roles. One artisan in Tigray explained, "The patterns we weave are not just decoration; they tell the story of our ancestors and show the wearer's place in society" (Interview, 2025). Similarly, a weaver in Oromia noted that the choice of color and embroidery conveys information about marital status and social position (Field Observation, Shiro-mieda Market, 2025).

Thus, Ethiopian traditional clothing operates as a form of cultural symbolism, reflecting historical continuity, communal values, and societal organization. The intricate designs encode information about religious beliefs, social hierarchy, and community affiliation, creating a visual language understood within and beyond the community. Figures 2 to 17 illustrate the diversity of these garments across regions, highlighting both aesthetic and symbolic elements documented during interviews and field observations. By integrating empirical data from interviews and observations with existing literature, this section underscores the multi-dimensional significance of traditional clothing in Ethiopian society [40-43].

4.1.1. Amhara-Region Traditional Clothes

In the Amhara region of Ethiopia, traditional clothing varies by locality and is shaped by cultural, environmental, and social factors (Figure 2) [44,45]. Garments are primarily made from handwoven cotton fabric known as shemma, often featuring distinctive decorative borders called tilet. Men typically wear a white cotton wrap, such as a gabi or kuta, while women wear a long, flowing dress called habesha kemis, adorned

with colorful embroidery along the neck, sleeves, and hem [44,45]. In Gondar and Bahir Dar, men wear the thick gabi draped over the shoulders, particularly in colder weather, while women layer a lightweight shawl called netela over the shoulders or head during special occasions [44,45]. In the Wollo zone, traditional garments reflect a blend of Amhara and neighboring cultural influences. Women's dresses feature bold geometric embroidery in bright colors, and men wear white wraps complemented with decorative belts or sashes [44,45]. In Gojjam, men wear lighter kuta wraps, and women's dresses incorporate intricate hand-stitched embroidery in earth tones suitable for cooler climates. The Agew-Awi zone, home to the Agew people, exhibits unique weaving patterns and color combinations distinct from other areas of Amhara. Men wear traditional cotton wraps such as shama and gabi, while women's dresses feature regional motifs in their embroidery [44,45]. These variations demonstrate the Amhara region's rich textile heritage, where clothing serves both practical and symbolic roles in community life. Traditional garments are worn in daily activities, religious ceremonies, festivals, and social events to convey respect, cultural continuity, and belonging. Despite modern fashion influences, Amhara traditional clothing continues to preserve ancestral textile techniques and cultural identity [44,45].



Figure 2. Map of Amhara Region;(Source: Figure content uploaded by J. Sanford Rikoon).

4.1.1.1. Gojjam Traditional Clothes

In Gojjam both men and women wear white handwoven cotton cloth. The main feature is the use of different types of ornaments and detailed embroidery on their clothes [46,47]. Older Amhara societies wear wider red and green embroidery along the edges of the handwoven fabrics like shema, kemis, gabi or netela for religious reasons (as seen in Figure 3). The "Gojjam abebe" or "Gojjam agene" is a special traditional Ethiopian clothing in this area worn by men. It's more than just fabric; it's full of meaning and represents their cultural history, their social status and even their religious belief [46,47]. The colors, designs and threads used in these clothes tell the story of who the wearer is and where they come from. This type of clothing is worn in the colder areas of Amhara (Figure 3a). Gojjam women's clothing including Habesha kemis, netela and meket is more than just an outfit; it's a powerful symbol of their cultural heritage and their regional identity within Amhara (Figure 3b) [46,47].



Figure 3. Gojjam Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com)..

4.1.1.2. Gonder Traditional Clothes

Habesha clothes from Gonder are very important in Ethiopia as shown in Figure 4. Men wear white trousers and a traditionally sewn shirt with a red cross (mostly handwoven from cotton) as shown in Figure 4a. Women wear white habesha kemis as shown in Figure 4b with embroidery which means peace and harmony and is worn for religious events, weddings and get togethers [47]. The gold color in the tibeb (the decorative trim) means honor and big celebrations. Blue and red colors in the tibeb means faithfulness, knowledge and spirit. Shapes and designs also have meaning like crosses means belief and wavy lines means life's path or family ties and protection from bad omens. Similar arguments were reported by Akinbileje [40,47].

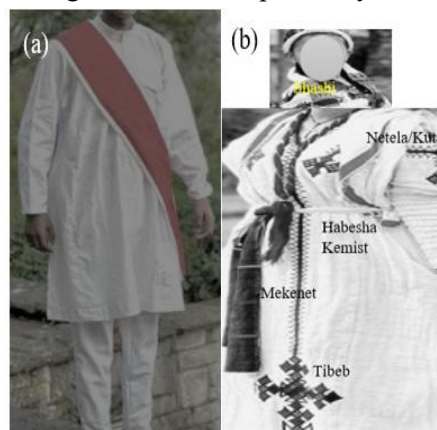


Figure 4. Gonder Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com)

4.1.1.3. Wollo-Raya Traditional Clothes

The traditional clothing of the Wollo people, especially handwoven clothes like the Gabi and Netela, is much more than just clothes for men and women, as shown in Figures 5a and 5b, respectively [48]. Wollo traditional clothes have powerful symbols of who they are, their history, and their place in society. Think of them as wearable stories, woven with beautiful designs, embroideries, and different colors that articulate the Wollo's past and skilled artistry [47,48]. These special outfits express their beliefs, convey values, and even the roles people play in their community. These traditional clothes are not just for show; they represent significant messages like identity and the cultural principles that guide them. They're often worn for important life events, weddings, and festival celebrations to link their traditions with others [47,48].



Figure 5. Wollo-Raya Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com)

4.1.1.4. Agew-Awi Traditional Clothes

Garments in the Agew-Awi community of Ethiopia's Amhara Region are handwoven from local cotton and feature district specific embroidery. This is the wear which displays the weavers' skills and sense of aesthetics which have been developed over years [48,49]. In the Agew-Awi community traditional clothing plays a large role in culture which we see in Figure 6. From our informants we hear that the Agew-Awi garments and traditional clothes are very much used as symbols of identity and heritage, which also play a great role in social status. In the community these garments which are featured in Fig 6 play a large role in cultural practices which include ritual and community life. At formal events, during the like the rites of passage or festivals, both men and women can be seen in the traditional garb as in Figures 6a and 6b [48,49].



Figure 6. Agew-Awi Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com)

4.1.2. Tigray-Region Traditional Clothes

In this section the evolution, materiality and socio-cultural significance of Tigray traditional attire was examined highlighting that sustainable efforts should be made for preservation of practices on traditional clothes to up bring for future generations as depicted in Figure 7. Costumes in Tigray Traditional attire in Tigray reflects the sociocultural heritage and history of the local people and represents an element of identity [49,50]. Figure 8a, b and c show that the traditional dresses had unique weaving methods and patterns with Tigray clothing being typically made from locally available material with symbolic representations of social position, religious belief and regional origin. These costumes, which in most instances are enhanced by subtle designs and symbols, are traditionally worn at important rituals, religious celebrations and life-cycle occasions not only as clothing but also as visual manifestations of identity, status and common history that unifies the

local community ensuring the continuation of cultural traditions. Even though Tigray textile traditions are increasingly threatened by modernization and globalization, preserving the traditional craft is important for preserving the region's intangible cultural heritage [49,50].

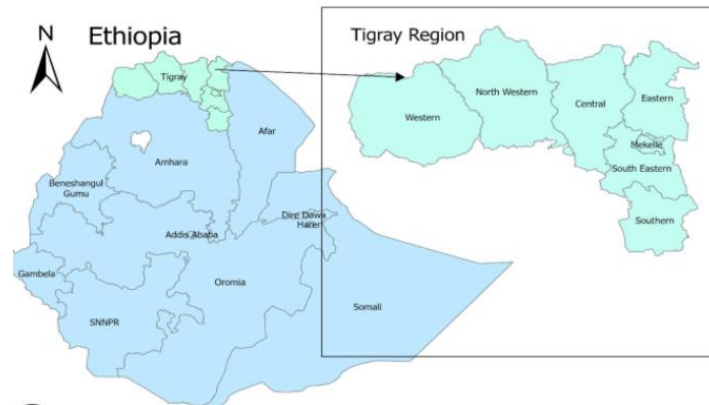


Figure 7. Map of Tigray Region;(Source: Figure content uploaded by Asgedom A. et. al.,2024)



Figure 8. Tigray Region Traditional Clothes: a) Men wearing style, b) Ashenda Holiday clothes, and c) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com)

4.1.3. Oromia-Region Traditional Clothes

The most culturally diverse zone of the Oromia, described in Figure 9, is rich in different types of traditional clothing attire, which vary from ethnic group to ethnic group and between zones, brought about by local traditions, natural environment, and prevailing social norms, among others. In the western zones of Oromia, which include those of Jimma and Illubabor, men and women tend to dress in hand-woven cotton attire: robes or wraps in white or cream-colored material, frequently by going shirtless [50,51]. Women commonly wear a white garment worn all over body and is made up of cotton some wears shirts them perdipeso these are known as jilbab al-ummeedh (Similar to thobes), but very few people follow this due to Somalis traditionally having another type of attire. Ornament or beads are also worn with the attire. In East Oromia, (in the Arsi and Bale zones), girls dress more under the influence of other communities they have contact with. Women don long, colorful dresses and skirts with multiple layers of petticoat, while men's clothing consists of tunics and wraps made of cotton or leather. The animal skins and leather accessories of some pastoralist populations are famous. Borana is a region in southern Oromia where pastoral life is the norm, which one can still see reflected in indigenous dress. Men usually wear leather apparels, a long belt with a knife and weapons; while the women put on brightly colored skirts which they teamed up with gorgeous, beaded jeweler that indicates their social status as well as identity. Generally speaking, the indigenous wear of Oromia is so wide that it fully reflects the

ethnic diversity and cultural richness of the region. Such costumes are not only instrumental but also emblematic of identity, social roles and group values [50,51].

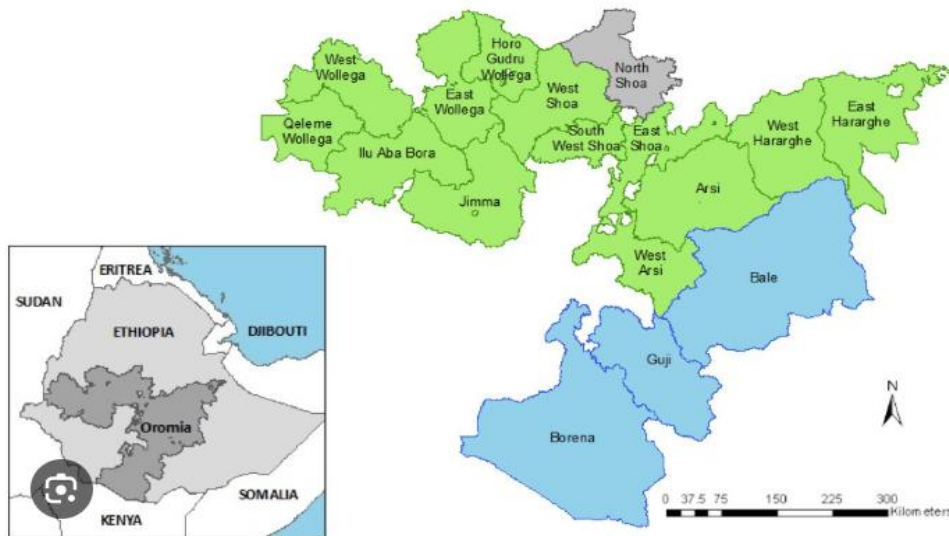


Figure 9. Map of Oromia Region;(Source: Figure content uploaded by Ashton R.A.et. al.,2011).

4.1.3.1. Jimma Traditional Clothes

The Jimma costumes prefer simple and bright colors, no different from the way they wear them now [52,53]. The most common color, dark green (a darker shade of the country's national flag), represents the lush ecosystem where Jimma is located and is associated with prosperity, fertility, vividness/healing, and relation/association to land, among others [52,53]. The rich, sauced-up fabric seamlessly transitions into the normal headwrap, all creating that flowing, classic look that balances beautiful art with cultural storytelling. These clothes are regularly made of one saturated color and are commonly used during marriage, community gatherings, or religious festivals, as well as during everyday use, and reflect the combination between functionality and tradition [52,53]. Men's traditional dress (seen in figure 10a) presents these traits with its simplicity and subtle dignity, and the color configuration, which is so symbolic Jimma Oromos' women wear single-colored dresses, but every color pattern has its own cultural representation, can also be seen in the Figure 10b. The commonality and symbolism of these clothes enhance social identity, create a sense of belonging, and share heritage visually among the community [52,53].



Figure 10. Jimma Traditional Clothes: a) Borena Men and b) Bale Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.1.3.2. Bale-Borena Traditional Clothes

The typical attire of the Bale-Borena area is characteristic of the pastoralist culture and way of life, suits that define Borena Oromo people. Abdulahi's [54] following study, specifically focusing on their traditions and clothing in Bale-Borena areas, is indicative of these cultural expressions. Men tend to dress in loose pure cotton clothing with leather accessories (Figure 11a), while women adorn themselves with bright clothes and intricate beadwork and multiple layers of jewelry (see Figure 11b) that provides a mix of practical attire fit for the semiarid conditions that incorporates a distinct aesthetic sense along with symbolism representative of social status, age group, and clan identification. Bale-Borena attire is used in significant social ceremonies such as rituals, festivals, and communal dances that are important symbols for the communal unity and cultural identity [54].

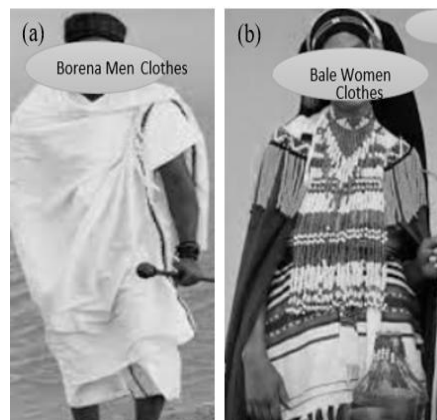


Figure 11. Bale-Borena Traditional Clothes: a) Borena Men and b) Bale Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.1.3.3. Gujji Traditional Clothes

Gujji people traditional costume is colorful portray of their agro-pastoral way of living and cultural wealth, which combines utility with symbolic identity, social status and communal ethos expression (Figure 12) [55]. They are by no means just functional garments, but clothing that is dense with meaning, recognizably representing individuality as well as unity of community and tradition. traditional costumes for men usually consist of simple cotton clothes (frequently adorned with leather belts and practical accessories that preserve their cultural coat), as portrayed in Figure 12a, whereas women wear colored dresses enriched with artful beadwork and different jewels, not only decorative elements, but also markers of the social status, age and community belonging within the Gujji society witchcraft would involve the preparation or wearing of clothing or jewelry associated with a specific evil ritualistically opposition to someone's sense. treated by their enemies [55], as depicted in Figure 12b. Gujji conventional attire harmonize practical utility with ritual significance, and is frequently worn on special cultural festivals, rites and feasts [55].



Figure 12. Gujji Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.1.3.4. Arusi Traditional Clothes

The traditional attire of the Arusi Oromo people is characterized by its vibrant traditional clothes and distinctive patterns that reflect their cultural identity and social structures, as shown in Figure 13 [56]. The Arusi traditional clothes are designed to accommodate both the region's climate and the cultural significance of various life events, such as ceremonies, religious and weddings [56]. The men usually attire loose-fitting cotton garments, often accompanied by scarves or shawls, as shown in Figure13a. Whereas women's traditional clothing includes colorful dresses and wrapped cloths, frequently decorated with intricate embroidery and beadwork [56]. The traditional clothes serve as important symbols of status, belonging, and continuity of Arusi heritage [56].



Figure 13. Arusi Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.1.4. SNNP Region (Previous Region Division) Traditional Clothes

Figure 14 depicts the SNNP region of Ethiopia, which is endowed with a rich tapestry of ethnic diversity, having different traditional clothing styles that demonstrate their specific cultural identities, environments, and social practices [57,58]. The traditional attire of the SNNP people is highly significant in terms of social identity, cultural heritage, and ceremonial life. Despite the influence of modern fashion, many communities still maintain their traditional heritage through traditional clothes [57,58]. The Hadiya prefer handwoven dresses and trousers for men made from cotton, with women's dresses embroidered in delicate designs, worn with colorful scarves. Adult Hayu men wear white cotton robes and wraps layered with heavy cloaks in winter [57-59]. Though traditional Pallu clothing for the Sidama traditionally includes brightly colored women's cotton dresses, usually worn with shawls called "shamma," which are patterned in different colors. Men will wear a white cotton wrap (kikoi) or tunic with decorative accessories during ceremonials [57-59]. Likewise, the Wolayta people always wear handwoven cotton clothes, such as (Sodoinia-gabadhun), a long dress featuring a different-colored embroidered sash for women [57-59]. The men wear white-to-cream tunic and trousers; their gourds are decorated with beads and metal ornaments. Women also use beads and metal Jewellery worn around the head, neck, and wrist on special occasions mentioned elsewhere [58]. The people of Silt'e have a centuries-old tradition of dress, which signifies ethnic identity as well as the Islamic faith in the local environment. The traditional Silti dress is modest, brightly colored, and richly embroidered and differs slightly among different areas of the zone due to variables such as urbanization, social status, or event [57-59].



Figure 14. Map of SNNP Region (Previous region) ;(Source: Figure content uploaded by loveinactionethiopia.org).

4.1.4.1. Silti Traditional Clothes

The Silti people, who are largely based in the Silti Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) region of Ethiopia, have a particular style of traditional costume that signifies their culture and is extracted from Islamic tradition [59,60]. While the basic features of traditional Silti clothing are similar throughout the zone, some variation is seen due to local preferences and influence from neighboring societies. [59,60] In more urban populations, the embroidery can be quite ornate, whereas in rural settings it is often simpler. The typical Silti dress is an important item in social occasions, which include religious ceremonies, weddings, and community events, that stands as the symbol for identity and the continuity of culture [59,60]. Silti men's everyday attire is typically simple: a white or pale cotton shirt and some loose-fitting trousers. On top of these, a 'kuta' or 'gabi,' large cotton shawls providing some modesty and warmth [59,60]. On such occasions it is not uncommon for men to don embellished caps along with patterned cloaks, usually as shown in Figure 15a [59,60]. On the contrary, women's siltis are long gown-like dresses of light cotton and/or silk fabrics, which men wear like dress shirts over loose pants with the tunics from around (figures 12 a & b) adorned by mostly multi-colored embroideries along the neckline, seams, and hems in at least eight colors [59,60]. Some of the cultural and religious elements are manifested in what people wear: a shashi (headscarf or veil) worn over their hair is part of most outfits. In more formal contexts, women also wear only a long outer cloak called "habesha gabi" or other kinds of shawls, as shown in Figure 15b [59,60].



Figure 15. Silti Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.1.4.2. Welayita Traditional Clothes

The indigenous clothing for the Welayitá consists of bright, handwoven cotton wrapped around the body adorned with embroidery and bold patterns [61]. The garments represent the Welayita's colorful culture and close relation to home-based loom weaving [61]. An example is represented by the dress of the men who wear

white or cream-colored tunics with matching trousers; see Figure 16a [61]. Women wear long dresses known as “wotet”, which they accessorize with vibrant sashes and shawls (as in Figure 16b); during cultural festivals or important ceremonies, men and women adorn themselves with metal jewelry, beads, and occasionally head ornaments to showcase collective identity and social standing [61].



Figure 16. Welayita Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.1.4.3. Sidama Traditional Clothes

The Sidama, who reside in the south of Ethiopia, are distinguished by their colorful indigenous clothing, which is indicative of cultural identity and ritual life [62]. Sidama traditional attire are worn not only for clothing but also to depict social status, age-set, and communitarian affiliation [62]. Sidama men commonly wear a plain white cotton wrap or tunic, decorated with belts and jewelry on special days (Figure 17a) [62]. While Sidama women are commonly seen in colorful cotton dresses dyed and endowed with distinctive designs, these are often accompanied by shawls, known as shamma, that are transparent but woven/slitif so (refer to Figure 17b) [62]. Preserving Sidama textile practices is significant for the culture and heritage of the region [62].



Figure 17. Sidama Traditional Clothes: a) Men and b) Women wearing style (Source: Google.com).

4.2. Ethnographical and Cultural Phenomenon of Ethiopian Traditional Clothes

Ethiopia, Being the second most populous country in Africa, its population is more than 122 million, and it encompasses around 80 ethnic groups having their specific languages, cultural practices, and traditional wear [63]. The country is administratively organized into twelve administrative regions (Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Central Ethiopia, Gambella, Harari, Oromia Region and Region 20 (Sidama), Somali, South Ethiopia, Southwest Ethiopia, and Tigray) and two city administrations (Addis Ababa City Administration and Dire Dawa City Administration) [63]. The vast cultural and demographic heterogeneity of Ethiopia underscored the paradox about Ethiopia, which is one of the countries that are ethnically highly diverse [63-65]. Types of traditional Ethiopian clothing The Ethiopian tradition of clothes is known for its diversity in fabrics, designs, and colors, with types specific to each ethnic group, region, or religion. Officially these cultural identifications were recognized as part of the Ethiopian National Census 2007 [63-65]. The traditional shemma (handwoven cotton textile in a long narrow strip pattern using traditional wooden apparatus) is at the heart of this clothing practice, which then gives birth to garments such as the habesha kemis (women's ankle-length dress), netela or

shamma (light wrap/shawl), gabi (close-woven cotton blanket used only for cold seasons) and kuta (male scarf) [63-65]. Most of the pieces also incorporate tibeb, embroidered decorative borders, with geometric, floral, and symbolic patterns that convey to the viewer who the wearer is; a woman from which region or ethnic group, her economic status in society, or her/his religious affiliation. It is a pure white, which stands for purity and peace. These clothes are worn at important cultural and religious festivals such as Timket (Epiphany), Meskel (Finding of the Cross), weddings, and other celebrations [63-65].

4.3. Ethiopian Traditional Clothing as Religious Signifier and Repository of Supernatural Powers

Ethiopian national dress is influenced by religious as well as ethnic and cultural beliefs; hence, each region and clan has their specific styles and designs [66,67]. Ethiopian cultural clothes, particularly Habesha kemis and shamma, play a prominent role in religious identity, and they also reflect and reinforce the individual belief through their aesthetic that is buried into the cloth [66,67]. White garments, often embellished with intricate Tibeb (traditional Ethiopian clothing featuring bold, woven cotton) motifs and embroidered crosses, are usually worn during religious festivals and ceremonies, symbolizing purity, peace, and spiritual connection [66,67]. The Tibeb is an ornamental border on Habesha wear and is frequently adorned with cross designs, which represent faith and protection from evil. These crosses originate from a belief of protecting oneself and repelling evil forces and misfortune, reinforcing the religious association [66-68]. Ethiopian religious men, especially those belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, wear white clothing when going out and on certain dates (holidays or holy days) [66-69]. Men, on the other hand, wear a cotton-made sweater and pants with or without cloth, which will be thrown if the bride comes. Women also wear white dresses made of cotton with a netela. With the traditional clothes (Habesha or Hager Lebs), fancy designs at the upper and lower hems of clothing, embroidered crosses, etc., may be taken as decoration along with the decorative cross embroidery effects of things like Netela's two side edges. The white color represents purity and joy [66,67]. The Oromos and Bales of Ethiopia, however, are characterized by elaborate leather garments, which may have been brought about due to their extensive involvement with animal husbandry [66-69]. On the other hand, among Ethiopian Muslim society, especially in the east and southeast, a gabi is also a versatile article of clothing. [citation needed] A gabi can be worn from age 14 to death; it embodies all types of classes (upper, middle, and lower); and despite evolving fashions or times, there's always space to embrace tradition, which has been preserved for centuries. Muslim men can wear the gabi covering their shoulders and chest to go along with traditional attire such as a jelabiya [66-69]. The gabi in a few areas may have discreet embroidery or color accents, but white is the primary color, and it represents purity, cleanliness, and religious respectability [29-32]. The Harer and the Silti Muslim Ethiopians are easily distinguishable by their bright and attractive dressing. Women are clothed in amazing, vivid dresses, while men wear shorts and a big colorful cloth wrapped up around their bodies [66-69].

The netela (also the lightweight and handwoven cotton shawl) is worn in traditional Ethiopian style. Image courtesy of [66-69]. An Orthodox Christian is typically draped from left to right over the shoulders as shown in Figure 18a. This way, the fabric will fall onto the left shoulder and then wrap around behind for it to drape over towards right. This style is common at church services, during the major religious holidays of Timket (Ethiopian Epiphany) and Meskel, as well as other formal events [66-69]. Ethiopian customary clothing is especially observed in these celebrations, and people wear white-colored clothes, which symbolize purity and spiritual cleansing [66-69]. TOMS could also be seen as representing modesty, piety, and respect for Orthodox cultural rules of dress code. Whereas, among Ethiopian Muslim communities, especially in the eastern and southeastern areas of Ethiopia, for example, the shendatta or related netela (or similar) cotton shawls could be taken from right to left, falling over the right shoulder first, as depicted in Figure 18b, which can denote regional tradition or interpretation of modesty, possibly under the influence of other traditional clothing like the “jelabiya” and gabi [66-69].

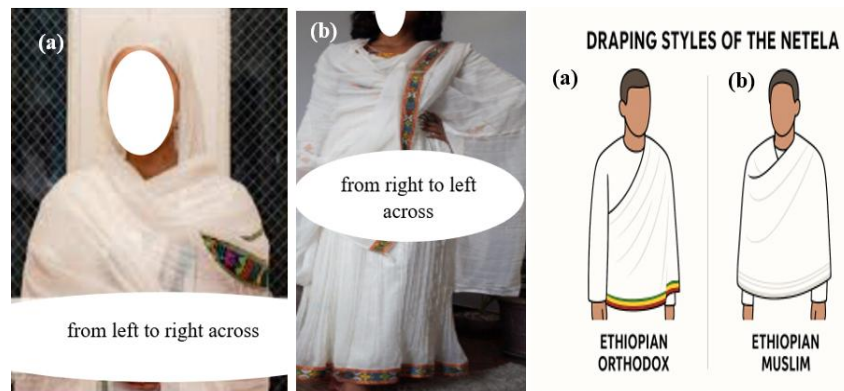


Figure 18. Traditional Clothes Wearing Direction for Women and Men: a) Ethiopian Orthodox Christians communities and b) Ethiopian Muslims communities (Source: Google.com).

4.4. The Impact and Reflections of Ethiopian Traditional Clothes On Fashion

Indigenous dress has greatly impacted modern fashion in terms of design ideas, patterns, and material choices, as well as reflecting the history and conserving the culture [70-74]. Historical costume studies indicate that over time, clothing has been formed by cultural accumulations, which led to great changes [70-74]. There are many such things as beliefs, wars, climatic condition changes, social changes, and migrations that took place through time and affected clothing culture. As a result, people's clothing styles have become more similar around the world, and there is less variation in what people wear from one place to another [70-74]. Contemporary designers often use bright African prints, elaborate Indian embroideries, or Japanese kimono silhouettes in their collections, which leads to the combination of historical and modern designs. This osmosis adds value to the worldwide fashion scene, bringing cultural diversity and depth to what is fashionable today. More specifically, Ethiopian design motifs and forms of traditional dress, such as the lineal tibebe patterns, exaggerated shapes, and locally produced fabrics, get picked up and recast into modern lines displayed on African and international runways. Such aspects of heritage when incorporated into modern-day fashion can help preserve culture, support artisanal economies, and promote sustainability in production methods through cultivation of locally grown cotton, natural dyeing, etc. [70-74]. Traditional Ethiopian clothing involving popular costumes like Habesha kemis, shamma, netela, and gabi have also contributed significantly towards molding cultural identity and contemporary fashion statements. Woven by hand from cotton and decorated with elaborate woven tibebe embroidery and locally recognized patterns, the clothes express social status, ethnic identity, and spiritual belief. For example, white garments donned during religious holidays like Timket (Ethiopian Epiphany) and Meskel are symbolic of purity and spiritual rebirth, while colorful clothes in areas such as Harer or Silti represent social festivity and cultural dynamism [70-74]. Integration of traditional Prelude and folk furnishings and modish fashion should be sensitively intertwined as they are incorporating a dynamic relationship with cultural legacy and contemporary outlook. While traditional dress plays an essential role in cultural identity, modern fashion can rejuvenate it via the introduction of new designs, sustainable production, and inclusive strategies. Ethiopian traditional dress depicts a profound culture, which designers can use as a strategic tool to promote their products. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, traditional wear is an important cultural commodity marketed at home and abroad [70-74]. Other useful marketing strategies for traditional attire are highlighting the culture stories that explain each design, using social media to get more audience, creating an online community of friends who appreciate your craft, and working with other talented professionals in the creative industry for better exposure all around town and at fashion events abroad. Additionally, sustainable production methods, social commerce incorporation, and the development of mobile-responsive e-commerce platforms could improve the commercial success of Ethiopian fashion businesses and African fashion brands in general. Promising marketing strategies, especially in connection to Ethiopian

costume, would be promoting its cultural value, introducing high fashion for tourists, and blending the traditional with the contemporary design. By adopting these measures, designers and brands may successfully facilitate wider exposure of Ethiopian traditional attire, as well as development of cultural preservation and economic activities. The Ethiopian national dress is an essential element in fashion tourism and serves as a cultural emblem for tourists and inspiration for designers. Such dresses offer a colorful glimpse into the glorious past of Ethiopia, and different styles and fabric types from Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and SNNP gaining international attention. Fashion tourism is an economic development tool for Ethiopia and other African nations, as international designers, buyers, and fashionistas are drawn to cultural events like Ethiopian New Year and religious festivities. It also supports the buying of local textiles and crafts, which helps develop artisanal economies and environmentally sustainable cultural industries. Besides economic contribution, traditional costume that is rich in culture and beauty can be considered as an effective way to create a destination image and market cultural tourists. It acts as an important facilitator of destination marketing, providing tourists with a novel and authentic experience in which both the cultural aspect and the art assets of the region is emphasized [70-74]. By promoting fashion tourism in which traditional clothing is included, Ethiopia may also be able to strengthen cultural visibilities within the world market and to generate appreciation for the value of their own crafts and traditions around design [70-74]. The paper proposes an industry-interface model involving BPHT that would mediate and promote the above engagements, including its joint participation in value creation among collectors, textile cooperatives, designers, and tourism boards, such that fair value distribution (FVD) is instituted, educational tourism is promoted, and cultural heritage is protected; this way, Ethiopian traditional clothing to be adopted as a case for sustainable fashion tourism.

4.5. Comparative Analysis of Ethiopian, European, and Turkish Traditional Cloth Fashion Industries

Ethiopia, Germany, and Turkey's traditional fashion each embody specific cultural legacies and respond in different ways to modern international fashion. Ethiopian traditional skirts and blouses (habesha kemis and netela) showcase delicate flower motif designs featuring handwoven embroidery that reflect social status, culture, or religion. Tracht Traditional German clothing, referred to as Tracht, has been exercised for decades. Hailing from the Alps, they are considered a mark of Bavaria and for Oktoberfest in particular. The Dirndl is a blouse that is combined with a bodice, full skirt, and apron whereas Lederhosen are traditional leather pants for men. These dresses have gained urban popularity and are even showcased in regional and international fashion circuits with new interpretations coming through. The former has an abundance of historical dress from various civilizations that inhabited the region over thousands of years. Traditional clothing consists of the şalvar (baggy pant), gömlek (chemise), and entari (robe), which are made from cotton, wool, and silk. The quality and the hand of these fabrics are legendary. But in time with the fashion scene, younger Turkish designers like Aslı Filinta fold classic elements into a softer design palette to find collections that are appealing across both domestic and international audiences. What's more, Turkey is blessed with geography and a labor force that have made it a powerhouse as an apparel supplier worldwide. Nevertheless, recent projects such as Liya Kebede's lemlen aim to include these craft economies into global sustainable fashion markets in the face of infrastructure and international visibility issues [74,75]. Indeed, the Tracht in Germany's Bavarian state (representing traditional costumes such as Dirndl and Lederhosen) has effectively diversified from its agrarian roots into an iconic Bavarian image but also a modern fashion statement reinforced by global festivals, namely Oktoberfest [76]. The use of şalvar, gömlek, entari, or other dress traditionally worn in Turkey, like traditional şalvar (loose pants), gömlek (loose shirt), and entari (long tunic), is an indication of a historic cultural context where it has been used among different civilizations, with current generation fashion designers such as Aslı Filinta again mixing the traditional arts and craft methods in contemporary design, resulting in government support through its textile industry for equilibrium between the artisan heritages versus industrial manufacture [77,78]. By contrast, industry in Ethiopia is enjoying a fresh start, focusing on sustainable and cultural fashion,

while Germany manages to connect tradition harmoniously with modern and commercial industry, and Turkey knows how to make the most of its historic craftsmanship alongside industrial potential for domestic production and export markets.

5. Conclusion

Ethiopian traditional clothing provides a rich lens for understanding culture, functioning as both an ethnographic relic and a bridge between past and present. Garments such as the habesha kemis and netela, crafted from handwoven cotton and adorned with intricate tibeb embroidery, not only showcase artisanal skill but also communicate identity, heritage, community membership, and regional affiliation. Differences in attire between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims further highlight the role of clothing in expressing gender roles, ritual obligations, and spiritual identity. Primary data from 100 handweaver representatives and observations across 10 marketplaces revealed that traditional garments contribute significantly to local livelihoods. Over 75% of interviewed artisans indicated that sales of traditional attire are a primary source of income, while 60% noted that diaspora demand strongly influences production patterns. Observations also showed that cultural tourism, including visitors participating in weaving demonstrations and purchasing garments, provides additional revenue streams for artisan communities. These garments extend beyond aesthetics to play a role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, promoting sustainable textiles, and supporting fashion tourism, while ensuring that local artisans benefit economically. However, artisans face challenges such as limited access to broader markets, commercialization pressures, and the risk of cultural appropriation, which threaten the sustainability of these traditions.

- Effective preservation and promotion strategies include:
- Systematic cultural documentation of weaving techniques and embroidery patterns.
- Capacity-building and training programs to strengthen artisan skills and career opportunities;
- Intellectual property protection for collective designs to prevent exploitation.
- Market integration initiatives, including support for cooperatives and promotion of Ethiopian textiles in tourism and export frameworks.

Overall, Ethiopian traditional clothing exemplifies the convergence of cultural identity, heritage preservation, and sustainable economic practice. By integrating artisanal expertise with modern market opportunities and tourism engagement, these garments maintain cultural continuity while contributing to sustainable development and global recognition of Ethiopia's rich textile heritage.

Author Contribution

The authors, Alhayat G. Temesgen, J. Kaufmann, and H. Cebulla, participated in the conception of the study, presented results, and manuscript preparation.

Funding

The author(s) received no specific grant from any funding agency, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors for the research article.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study did not involve human participants, interviews, or experiments requiring ethical clearance. Therefore, approval from an institutional ethics committee was not applicable. All information utilized in the study was obtained from publicly available sources and academic literature.

Declaration of Competing Interests

Alhayat G. Temesgen, J. Kaufmann, and H. Cebulla declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could be perceived to influence the work reported in this paper.

Availability of Data and Material

The data and materials utilized in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. All relevant information presented in this article is derived from publicly accessible sources, scholarly literature, and documented observations pertaining to Ethiopian traditional clothing, global fashion dynamics, marketing strategies, and fashion tourism. No proprietary or confidential data were used in this research.

Acknowledgment

The authors also express their gratitude to the staff at Wollo University KIOT for their assistance in gathering the data and those sharing different Ethiopian Traditional Clothes.

Reference

- [1] Alhayat-Getu T., Ömer Fırat T., Recep E. and Dr. Yusuf U. 2018. The Art of Hand Weaving Textiles and Crafting on Socio-Cultural Values in Ethiopian (Review). *Int. J. Adv. Multidiscip. Res.* 5(12): 59-67.
- [2] Chattaraman V. and Lennon S.J. 2008. Ethnic identity, consumption of cultural apparel, and self-perceptions of ethnic consumers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 12(4), pp.518-531.
- [3] Gizaw C. Y. and Ba O. 2020. Weaving and its socio-cultural values in Ethiopia: A review. *Asian Journal of Agricultural Extension, Economics & Sociology*, 37(4),1-11. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajaees/2019/v37i430289>
- [4] Frodl-Dietschmann S. 2023. A Historical Perspective on the Traditional Ethiopian Textile Industry and Its Significance for Modern Ethiopian Society. In *Industrialization in Ethiopia: Awakening-Crisis-Outlooks: The Example of the Textile Industry*, 241-252. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
- [5] Franco P. A. I., & Njogu K. 2020. Cultural and Creative Industries Supporting Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Mapping and Analysis. (ifa-Edition Kultur und Außenpolitik). Stuttgart: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen). <https://doi.org/10.17901/AKBP1.07.2020>
- [6] Tajuddin F.N. 2018. Cultural and social identity in clothing matters “different cultures, different meanings”. *European Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 1(4), 21-25.
- [7] Dzamedo B.E., Ahiabor R. and Gbadegbe R. 2013. The relevance and symbolism of clothes within traditional institutions and its modern impacts on the Ghanaian culture. *Journal of Art and Design Studies*, 13(1), 1-14.
- [8] Araya S.G.T. and Beyene B.B. 2024. Effect of cultural appropriation on the cultural garment weaving industry: The case of weavers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1),2351679.
- [9] Khurana K. 2019. Ethiopia. In *Cultural Governance in a Global Context: An International Perspective on Art Organizations* (pp. 21-50). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- [10] Akale K. and Yimer T.T. 2024. Documentation and design development of a multipurpose maternity collection based on Southeastern Ethiopian costume. *Ethiopian e-Journal for Research and Innovation Foresight (Ee-JRIF)*, 14(1), 23-32.
- [11] Shurman A., Qaqish R. 2024. Traditional Clothes Around the World: A Cultural Reflection. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 29(12), Series 2, 01-04. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2912020104>
- [12] Temesgen A.G. and Sahu O. 2022. Investigation of Warp and Weft Knitted Fabric Acoustic Structures Derived from Garment Waste. *Journal of Textile Science and Technology*, 8(1), pp.35-42.
- [13] Tania Y. 2024. An Introduction to Traditional Chinese Clothing. Chinese-culture.<https://studycli.org/chinese-culture/traditional-chinese-clothin>
- [14] Albion G. 2024. History and Culture of Traditional Romanian Clothing. Europe:<https://albiongould.com/history-and-culture-of-traditional-romanian-clothing/>:(Accessed Date: 18.07.2025).
- [15] Ağamalyeva, Y. and Salehzade, G.Ü.L.Ç.Ö.H.R.Ö., 2024. Cultural and historical significance of the traditional attire of the Far East. *Scientific Publishing Center «InterConf»*, 6(43). <https://doi.org/10.51582/interconf.19-20.03.2024.020>
- [16] Roach-Higgins M. E., & Eicher J. B. 1992. Dress and Identity, *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*.
- [17] Yetisen A.K., Qu H., Manbachi A., Butt H., Dokmeci M.R., Hinestroza J.P., Skorobogatiy M., Khademhosseini A. and Yun S.H., 2016. Nanotechnology in textiles. *ACS nano*, 10(3), 3042-3068.
- [18] Stéphane, R. 2024. Cultural Influences on Fashion: Global Trends and Local Styles.” *J Textile Sci Eng* 14(3), 604.
- [19] Temesgen A.G. and Sahu O. 2021. Effect of Weaving Structures on the Mechanical Properties of Woven Fabric Reinforced Composites. *Indian J. Eng*, 18, pp.102-108.

- [20] Temesgen A.G. 2019. Weaving Technology: Teaching Material on Woven Fabric Manufacture-I. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- [21] Nicholson, G. Edward. "The Production, History, Uses and Relationship of Cotton (*Gossypium* spp.) In Ethiopia." *Economic Botany* 14 (1, 1960), 3-36.
- [22] Itagaki J. 2013. Gender-based textile-weaving techniques of the Amhara in Northern Ethiopia. *African study monographs. Supplementary issue.*, 46, 27-52.
- [23] Skvortsova E.L. 2016. Far Eastern Tradition as a Foundation of Cultural Complexity. *Voprosy filosofii*, 7, pp.97-105.
- [24] Grottanelli V., Ausenda G., Bernardi B., Bianchi U., Bodemann Y.M., Goody J., Jablonko A., Kertzer D.I., Lanternari V., Marazzi A. and Miller R.A. 1977. Ethnology and/or cultural anthropology in Italy: Traditions and developments [and comments and reply]. *Current Anthropology*, 18(4), pp.593-614.
- [25] Rabha, A. 2024. Significance of Traditional Costume, Clothing, And Its Motif in The Rabha Society. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(1), 1349-. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.1574>
- [26] Granger, J.T., 2025. Woven by Culture: A Comparative Study of Traditional Dress Across Regions and the Societal Forces Behind Fashion.
- [27] Akinbileje, T.Y., 2014. Symbolic values of clothing and textiles art in traditional and contemporary Africa. *International journal of development and sustainability*, 3(4), 626-641.
- [28] Temesgen A.G., Cebulla H. and Kaufmann J. 2025. Investigation of the sound absorption performance of cellulosic fine fibres fabricated from agricultural waste fibres. *Agricultural Sciences: Techniques and Innovations*, 3, pp.13-33.
- [29] Hamid J., Moelier D.D. and Abeng A.T. 2023. Symbolic meaning in traditional clothes of Makassar. *Humaniora: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Education*, 3(1), 55-60.<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.56326/jlle.v3i1.3096>
- [30] Power E.J., Tyler D.J. and Disele P.L.P. 2011. Conserving and sustaining culture through traditional dress.15-45. <http://hdl.handle.net/10311/1177>
- [31] Adepeko E.O., Oyinloye M.A., Adepeko A.O. and Adeloye,A.A. 2023. Preserving Traditional Clothing Identity. *Journal of Urban Culture Research*, 75.1-302.
- [32] Fülemile Á. 2020. Social Change, Dress and Identity. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 65(1),107-186.
- [33] Matthews L.B., 1979. Relationship between traditionalism of dress and social values of Ghanaian women. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 7(6), pp.389-398.
- [34] Priest A. 2005. Uniformity and differentiation in fashion.*International Journal of Clothing Service and Technology* ,17(3/4), 253–263.
- [35] Neda T. F. & Homa M.J. 2020. An investigation of the positive impacts of traditional fashion tourism, *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*,*Journal of Policy Research in Tourism Leisure and Events* 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2020.1808004>.
- [36] Ahmed J.U., Chowdhury M.H.K., Uddin M.J. and Ferdous M.M. 2014. Sadakalo: Marketing of traditional fashion in the modern fashion industry, 18(2),125-135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972262914528600>
- [37] Qinyi D.2024.Research on the Inheritance and Innovation of Traditional Elements in Modern Clothing. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 35(1),1-5.<https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/35/20240021>
- [38] Jung J., Kim S.J. and Kim K.H. 2020. Sustainable marketing activities of traditional fashion market and brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 120,294-301.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.04.019>
- [39] Anyanwu E. C. & Chiana C. A.2022. Socio-Cultural Influences on Fashion Consumption Behaviour of University Students. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*,2(1),47-65. <https://doi.org/10.35877/soshum735>
- [40] Akinbileje T.Y. 2014. Symbolic values of clothing and textile art in traditional and contemporary Africa. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 3(4),626-641.ISDS Article ID: IJDS13042001.
- [41] Ada Özdil M. 2021.The Effect of Clothing as A Marker on Identity. *Motif Akademi Halk Bilimi Dergisi* 14(33): 117-130.<https://doi.org/10.12981/mahder.867867>
- [42] Hošić I. 2012. Clothing as a Symbol of Identity.*Art History, Clothing, Fashion*.https://www.academia.edu/38137087/Clothing_as_a_Symbol_of_Identity. Accessed Date:03.08.2025
- [43] Einashe, I. (2017). Ethiopia in crisis, closes down news: The Oromo people use traditional clothing as a symbol of resistance and it is costing them their lives. *Index on Censorship*, 45(4), 32-35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306422016685977>
- [44] Demelash, A. and Derb, E., 2025. Habesha cultural cloth classification using deep learning. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), p.14000.
- [45] Mekuriaw, K. 2020. Classification of Habesha Kemis Using embroidery design: a hybrid feature extraction approach (Doctoral dissertation).

- [46] Dessie W.M., Mengistu G.A. & Mulualem T.A. 2022. Communication and innovation in the performance of weaving and pottery crafts in Gojjam, Ethiopia. *J Innov Entrep* 11, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-022-00204-9>
- [47] Suraasedg686.2025.Amhara Traditional Clothing. <https://www.scribd.com/document/860742008/Amhara-TraditionalClothing>
- [48] Eyobe M. and Mhamed D. 2017. Potential Cultural Practices of Raya Alamata People For Tourism Development Ethiopia. *Journal of Exclusive Management Science*, 6(08), 1-6. ISSN 2277-5684 1.
- [49] Balehey S. and Balehegn M. 2019. The Art, Aesthetics and Gender Significance of Ashenda girls' Festival in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia.
- [50] Elias H.2020. How clothes reflect growing Oromo ethnic pride in Ethiopia. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54513438>
- [51] Wayessa B.S. 2010. Socialization, symbolism, and social structure: Aspects of traditional pottery making among the Jimma Oromo, Western Oromia. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 17(2), 75-100.
- [52] Hassen, M. 1990. *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570–1860*. Cambridge University Press.
- [53] UNESCO. 2021. *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ethiopia*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- [54] Abdulahi, A. 2017. The Cultural Heritage of the Oromo People: Traditions and Textiles in Bale and Borena. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 50(2), 45–67.
- [55] Mohammed, S. 2018. Cultural Expressions of the Gujji Oromo: Traditions, Clothing, and Identity. *Ethiopian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(1), 78–95.
- [56] Dibaba T. 2019. Cultural Traditions of the Arusi Oromo: Textiles and Identity. *Ethiopian Journal of Anthropology*, 15(3), 112–130.
- [57] Tesfaye, G. 2015. Textile Traditions of Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Cultural Studies*, 9(1), 33–50.
- [58] Alemu, B. 2017. *Cultural Dress and Identity in the SNNP Region*. Addis Ababa University Press.
- [59] Ahmed K.M. 2017. *Clothes and Ethnic Identity: (Re)Constructing Identity through Cultural Clothes as Ethnic Markers The Case of Siltie Nationality of Southern Ethiopia*. Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies. Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education. The Arctic University of Norway (UiT).
- [60] Mekonnen, T. 2019. The Role of Traditional Dress in Preserving Cultural Identity: A Case Study of the Silti Community in Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Cultural Studies*, 14(2), 88–104.
- [61] Fekadu D. 2016. Textile Arts and Cultural Identity among the Welayita People of Southern Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Cultural Anthropology*, 11(1), 57–73.
- [62] Hassen, A. 2018. Cultural Expressions and Textile Traditions of the Sidama People. *Journal of Ethiopian Cultural Studies*, 13(2), 101–120.
- [63] Zemedet T. A. 2024. *Automatic Identification of Ethiopian Cultural Clothing Using Deep Learning*. Master Thesis, Master of Science in Computer Science. St. Mary's University.
- [64] Memon, H., ranathunga, G. m., Karunaratne, V. m., Wijayapala, s., & Niles, N. 2022. sustainable textiles in the past“wisdom of the past: i nherited weaving techniques are the pillars of sustainability in the handloom textile sectorof sri Lanka. *Sustainability*, 14(15), 9439.
- [65] Elleuch M., Mezghani A., Khemakhem M., and Kherallah M. 2020. Clothing Classification Using Deep CNN Architecture Based on Transfer Learning. *Hybrid Intelligent Systems*, 240–248, Aug., https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49336-3_24
- [66] Courtney A. 1996. The Extraordinary Ethiopian Dress. <https://museumofthepeacecorpsexperience.org/story/the-extraordinary-ethiopian-dress#:~:text=The%20borders%20come%20in%20two,with%20the%20Ethiopian%20teaching%20staff>
- [67] Pozzo, B. 2020. Fashion between Inspiration and Appropriation. *Laws*, 9(1), 5. <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws9010005>
- [68] Mewded Y. 2012. Ethiopian traditional and cultural dresses In *Ethiopia Culture – People*. <https://ethiopiantour.com/ethiopia-traditional-cultural/#:~:text=If%20viewer%20were%20to%20witness,Ethiopian%20Muslims%20of%20Harer%20are>
- [69] Demelash A., Derb E. 2025. Habesha cultural cloth classification using deep learning. *Sci Rep* 15, 14000. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-98269-5>
- [70] Mahmut K., Lale Y., Nuray O.C.2024. The Impact and Reflections of Cultural Clothes on Fashion. Book Chapter: *Current Studies In Social Sciences-5*.Publisher: Iksad Publications

- [71] Rhonda P.H. 2015. Fashion in Ethiopia | An Interview with Yefikir Design, EDGE Afropolitan, EDGE Out of Africa, EDGE Radar. <https://edgexpo.com/2015/06/14/fashion-in-ethiopia-an-interview-with-yefikir-design/#:~:text=It%20is%20growing%20and%20becoming,%2C%20embroiderers%2C%20designers%2C%20etc>
- [72] Tekeli E. 2024. Life in the Heart of Southwest Ethiopia: Preliminary Reflections on the Pastoral Life of the Hamar People, *Africana Dergisi*, 4 (2), 14-28. <https://doi.org/10.58851/africana.1477827>
- [73] Ali S. and Raed Q. 2024. Traditional Clothes Around the World: A Cultural Reflection. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 29(12),01-04.
- [74] Kaufmann J., Temesgen A.G. & Cebulla H. 2025.A comprehensive review on natural fiber reinforced hybrid composites processing techniques, material properties and emerging applications. *Discov Mater* 5, 227. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43939-025-00419-z>
- [75] Demelash A. 2025. Habesha cultural cloth classification using deep learning. PMC. Retrieved from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12015309/>
- [76] Bastl B. 2001. Clothing the Living and the Dead: Memory, Social Identity and Aristocratic Habit in the Early Modern Habsburg Empire. *Fashion Theory*, 5(4), pp.357-388.
- [77] Aktas C. 2025. Sustainable fashion through traditional Turkish women's clothing techniques. *Fashion Highlight*. Retrieved from <https://riviste.fupress.net/index.php/fh/article/view/3117>
- [78] Tatman D. 2025. Analysis of traditional Turkish clothing pattern forms: 3D virtual applications. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication*, 15(3), 676-690. <https://doi.org/10.7456/tojdac.1671475>