

Women's Clothing

English translation:

I: Rutendo, does Zimbabwe have a traditional dress?

L: I'd say Zimbabwe does not have any kind of clothing that could be classified as "traditional clothing." But there is a certain dress code that is expected depending on where you are going and what you will be doing there. For example if there is a funeral, women are expected to wear a "zambia." They are called zambias because they came from Zambia. But their proper name is *chitenge*. People in Zimbabwe call them zambias because they originated from Zambia.

I: Can you explain to us what a zambia is?

L: A zambia is a piece of cloth that women use to tie around themselves. It looks like this [lifts up a piece of cloth]. I'd say when one is going to a funeral, it is expected that a women cover up her clothing with a zambia [stands up to demonstrate how this is done]. As you can see I now look more dignified when I have a wrapper around me. In addition a woman should also tie a cloth around her head. This cloth is known as a *duku*. This cloth looks like this [lifts up another piece of cloth]. I just fold it in half, then tie it around my head, just like what my friend here has on her head [touches Ropafadzo's head].

I: Like what Ropa has?

L: Yes, like what Ropa has. In addition, Zimbabweans have also adopted an African attire which looks like what I have here [lifts a blouse].

I: Can you unfold it nicely so we can see?

L: Okay. This can be made by a tailor after you buy material of your choice. It can be whatever design you want—a skirt and a blouse or a dress. People also include a *duku*, which I mentioned earlier. This kind of dress has been adopted from Nigerians and other North African cultures.

I: So zambias and the clothes that are made from them are just for African women?

L: Mostly, yes. Zambias and their attires are not only used at funerals. They are also used, for example, when a young woman is getting married and is being introduced to her husband's family during the traditional marriage.

I: Is it also used at church, or even when one is just relaxing at home?

L: Yes, at home women usually wear it if they are around their in-laws. This portrays the woman as a dignified person around people as important as her in-laws. Unmarried women still living with their parents also use zambias when sweeping the yard early in the morning because this covers up the woman's legs as she will be bent over. As for churches, people now just wear dignified clothes, not necessarily zambias.

I: Okay, thank you.

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