



BRICS FAMILIES

National Heritage



GAZPROMBANK

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BRICS Families – National Heritage

Spanning continents, cultures and languages, “BRICS Families – National Heritage” is an initiative of the Russian and Indian Chapters of the BRICS Women’s Business Alliance, created to celebrate the cultural richness of the BRICS community through the stories of families. From more than one hundred applications, a selection of families was chosen to share the heritage they carry through national attire, cherished traditions and personal stories passed from one generation to the next.

Together, these families reveal culture in its most living and personal form. Their photographs bring us closer to traditions shaped over generations and still present in everyday life today. They remind us that heritage is not something that belongs only to the past. It lives in the rituals we continue, the garments we preserve, the stories we tell and the values we pass on to our children.

The BRICS countries are home to thousands of communities and cultural traditions. Through the families represented in this book, we are offered a glimpse into that remarkable diversity and into the many ways identity, memory and belonging are expressed across cultures. Each story is distinct, yet together they form a broader portrait of a community enriched by difference and connected through shared respect for heritage.

This book is intended to only offer a glimpse into the diversities our countries hold and to celebrate the living heritage that is cherished by all our nations.





Family is our first connection to culture. It is where we inherit not only traditions, but also the stories, values and memories that shape who we are and how we see the world.

BRICS Families – National Heritage captures this beautifully. The contributions from families across 18 countries remind us that the richness of BRICS lies in our differences, but also in the values we share. Our traditions may be distinct, yet the desire to preserve them and pass them on is universal.

As BRICS grows, we must ensure that our cooperation remains rooted in people. Initiatives such as this create connections that go beyond institutions and economies, allowing us to understand one another through our histories, our homes and our lived traditions.

My commendations to Ms Anna Nesterova and the Russian chapter for taking forward this initiative.

Ms. Avarna Jain

Global Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance



BRICS is more than a partnership between nations. It is a unity of people, cultures and traditions, brought together across borders and continents. Oceans and distance may separate us, yet shared values, mutual respect and a common vision for the future draw us closer.

This idea lies at the heart of “BRICS Families – National Heritage” initiative. Family is where heritage lives: where stories are passed on, traditions are experienced, and a sense of belonging is formed. Traditional attire is part of this living memory. Its colours, fabrics, patterns and craftsmanship reflect the history of communities, regions and generations. Some garments are inherited, others are created anew, but traditions endure because people continue to carry them forward.

Together, the families featured in this book reveal the remarkable cultural diversity of the BRICS community. They remind us that lasting international cooperation begins not only with institutions and business ties, but with understanding, trust and respect between people.

I sincerely thank every family that shared its story with us. By preserving our traditions and sharing them with one another, we turn our differences into a foundation for mutual understanding. Embracing this diversity gives meaning to the future we choose to build together.

Ms. Anna Nesterova

Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance Russia Chapter



Egypt Chapter was proud and honoured to participate in the BRICS Families National Heritage Project initiated by BRICS WBA India under Ms. Avarna Jains chairmanship. The project united BRICS WBA Chapters in celebrating heritage, family values, and living traditions. Egypt's contribution proudly reflected how the nation has preserved its cultural identity from the Pharaonic era to the present day. Through heritage costumes, fabrics, jewellery, embroidery, and evolving dress codes, Egypt continues to carry symbols of dignity, beauty, and continuity across generations. These costumes are not only expressions of style, but living evidence of Egypt's enduring civilization and family-rooted heritage.

Ms. Marianne Ghali

Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance Egypt Chapter



Family, tradition and national culture are deeply interconnected and form an essential foundation of our social identity and resilience. The family is where culture is first experienced, values are shaped, and traditions are passed from one generation to the next.

Traditions connect us to our history and collective memory, while families give these traditions meaning and keep them alive in everyday life. Through the stories of our parents and grandparents, the customs we preserve, and the values we pass on to our children, each family contributes to the continuity of our cultural heritage.

At the same time, culture is not static. Families continuously adapt traditions to changing circumstances and contemporary realities, allowing heritage to remain meaningful and relevant for future generations.

Preserving family histories and traditions is therefore more than an act of remembrance. It is an investment in cultural identity, social cohesion and resilience. By documenting and sharing these stories, we ensure that the wisdom of the past remains a source of inspiration for future generations.

Dr. Zahra Rahaei

Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance Iran Chapter



Culture is not something we simply inherit. It is something we practice, protect and continuously pass forward. In Brazil, this idea has a very special meaning. We are a country of many origins, regions and cultural expressions. Our identity can be found in the colours of our celebrations, in traditional clothing, in music and craftsmanship, in the knowledge of Indigenous peoples, in our strong African heritage, and in the customs that have developed across generations in every part of our country. Behind all these expressions are people. And very often, it is within families that culture remains alive. Traditions survive because someone teaches a child a song, prepares a traditional dish, explains the meaning of a celebration, preserves a photograph, tells a story, or proudly wears clothing that carries the history of a community. Women have an especially important role in this continuity. As mothers, grandmothers, daughters, entrepreneurs, artisans and community leaders, they are often the guardians and, at the same time, the innovators of cultural traditions — preserving their meaning while ensuring they remain relevant for new generations.

This is why BRICS Families – National Heritage is such a meaningful initiative. By bringing together families from different countries and cultures, it gives a human face to the extraordinary diversity that exists within BRICS and reminds us that heritage remains alive only when it continues to be shared.

May this publication be not only a record of our traditions, but also an invitation to celebrate our differences, value our roots and ensure that the stories we received from previous generations continue their journey into the future.

Ms. Monica Monteiro

Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance Brazil Chapter



Before BRICS became a partnership of nations, economies and institutions, we were families. Around our family tables, through our ceremonies, languages, clothing, music and stories, generations have passed down the values that define who we are. Long before these traditions were captured in books, they lived in our homes, in the wisdom of our elders and in the memories carried from one generation to the next. That is why BRICS Families – National Heritage matters. As we build new economic corridors, embrace technology and deepen cooperation across our nations, we must be equally intentional about preserving the human inheritance upon which our societies are built. Progress should never require us to surrender identity. When we open our families, cultures and traditions to one another, we move beyond cooperation between countries. We begin to understand one another as people. And therein lies the enduring strength of BRICS: different nations, distinct identities, shared humanity.”

Ms. Lebogang Zulu

Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance South Africa Chapter



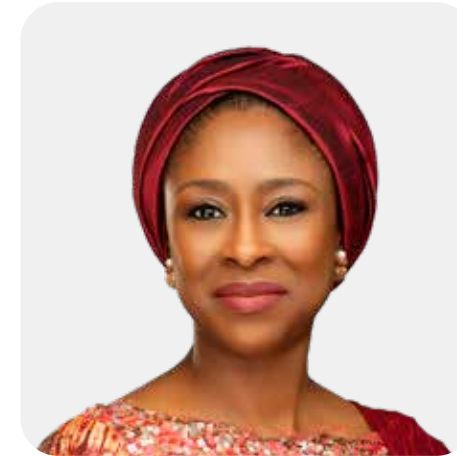
Clothing is civilization worn on the body. When the BRICS Families – National Heritage project explores diverse cultures through the lens of family and traditional attire, we see not only exquisite garments but also the historical memory, aesthetic values, and spiritual legacy of each nation.

China has a long and rich tradition of clothing that carries the wisdom and aesthetics of its people—a vivid reflection of the enduring nature of Chinese civilization. Across the BRICS nations, similarly profound traditions shine in their own distinctive ways.

This volume brings together the clothing heritage of BRICS countries as preserved and transmitted within families—a living example of cultural dialogue. We extend our gratitude to the BRICS WBA Russia Chapter and all participants for their dedication, as well as to the families who contributed their stories. May this shared endeavour serve as a new milestone for people-to-people connection and mutual cultural enrichment among BRICS nations, allowing the beauty of attire to transcend borders and the light of civilizations to illuminate one another.

Dr. Zhao Haiying

Chairperson of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance China Chapter



A nation's strength is not measured solely by its economic achievements or technological advancement, but also by its ability to preserve and celebrate the values, traditions, and stories that define its people. Culture is the soul of a nation; it shapes our identities, guides our conduct, and provides a sense of belonging that transcends generations.

At the heart of every culture lies the family, who are the primary custodians of values, character, and tradition. They teach us who we are, where we come from, and the principles that guide our lives. Through family stories, customs, beliefs, and shared experiences, we inherit a legacy that connects the past with the present and inspires the future.

In an era of rapid globalization and social change, the preservation of family stories and traditions has become more important than ever. When we document and share our stories, we safeguard memories and create a bridge between generations, enabling our children and future generations to understand their roots, appreciate their heritage, and draw strength from the experiences of those who came before them.

This book is a valuable contribution to that noble endeavour. It serves as a record of family history and as a testament to the enduring importance of cultural identity, family values, and collective memory.

May the pages that follow inspire reflection, foster pride in our cultural heritage, and encourage families everywhere to preserve and pass on the stories, traditions, and values that define them.

Ms. Aisha Rimi

Executive Secretary/ CEO of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission



INDIA

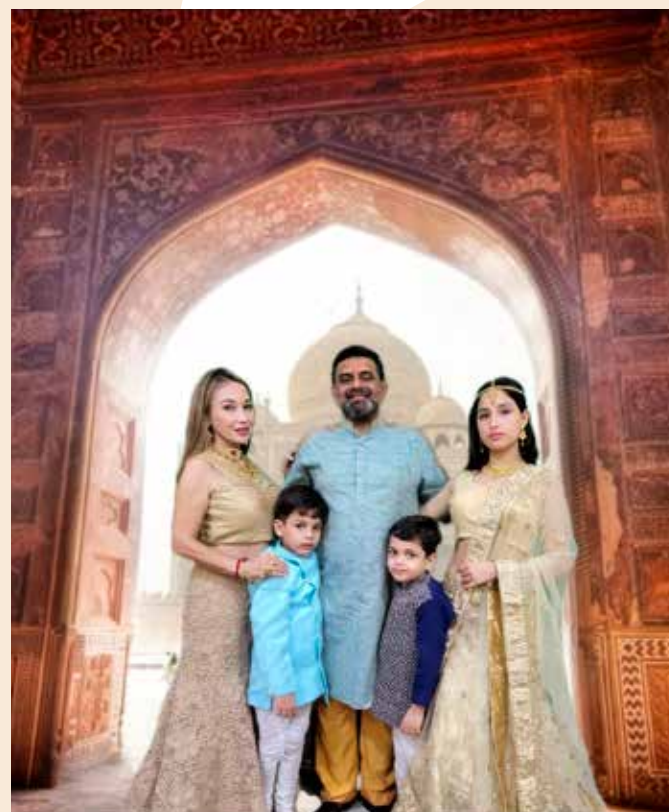
From the snow-covered passes of the Himalayas to the wet rice fields of Assam, India speaks in dozens of costume languages at once, and none of them is the main one. The mountain calls for **wool**, the humid climate for **silk**, the temple for a particular pose and fold, the harvest festival for colour and pattern.

In the northeast, where India nearly merges with Southeast Asia, the caterpillars of a local silk moth produce a silk with a golden sheen found nowhere else in the world: **muga**. In Assam, this silk is used to put together the **mekhela chador**, a women's costume made of two separate lengths of cloth: one is wrapped around the waist like a skirt, the other draped over the shoulder like a wrap. These two pieces are never sewn together. The whole costume holds simply through the way the cloth is wound around the body, and in this art of draping lies a tradition of its own, separate from cutting and sewing, one that took shape as far back as the era of the Ahom dynasty.

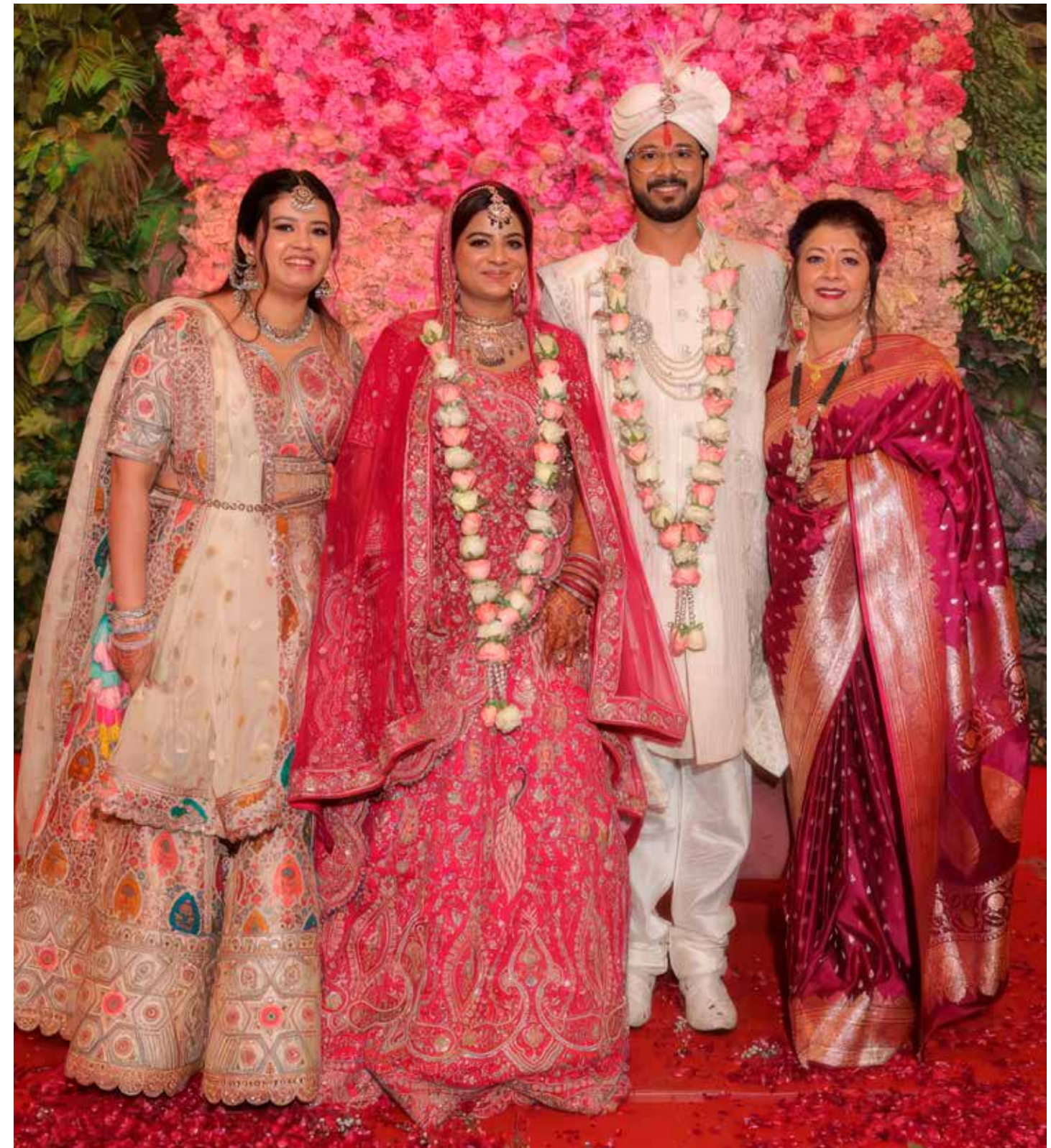
In **Punjab**, clothing answers not to the weather but to movement. **Lohri** is a winter festival marking the end of the coldest days of the year: in the evening a bonfire is lit, and the whole village gathers around it to sing and dance. The women's outfit, loose **salwar** trousers with a long **kameez** tunic, is cut wide enough to move freely by the fire rather than stand still in it. The men's look is finished with a **turban**, a headdress wound from a long length of cloth, tied by hand anew each time; the way it is wound and the colour of the cloth can point to a particular community, even a particular family.

Odisha gave India not clothing but a costume built like sculpture. The **Odissi** dance costume, a fitted blouse, a brightly woven **sari**, and a waist wrap gathered into deep pleats, echoes the poses of dancers carved into the walls of local temples a thousand years ago. The pleats at the waist stay still while the body is at rest and open into a fan only at the moment of the dance, as though the costume itself is waiting for movement to take its true shape.

In **Jharkhand** lives a tradition older than any palace or silk workshop. The Santal people mark the harvest with the festival of **Sohrai**, and their costume, a plain striped and checked cloth without a single gold thread, speaks not in the language of luxury but in the language of the land. It is one of the few Indian clothing traditions to have taken shape entirely outside the influence of city fashion or courtly taste.



Ved Family
North Indian



Verma Family
North Indian Wedding

INDIA

India is home to a rich and diverse culture of textile weaving, dyeing and printing techniques. For instance, in the states of *Maharashtra*, *Gujarat* and *Madhya Pradesh*, although connected by common borders, have three different answers to the same questions - how do we make our threads and cloth carry our stories. In *Gujarat*, the pattern is not applied to a finished cloth. It is calculated and dyed into the threads themselves in advance, so that the design only appears at the moment the threads cross on the loom, a method so exact that an error of a single millimetre destroys the whole pattern. In *Maharashtra*, **sarees** are woven differently, as objects meant to outlive more than one owner: a dense silk with a gold border and a parrot motif is passed from mother to daughter and reappears at weddings decades after it was first woven. In *Madhya Pradesh*, a third path was chosen: a blend of **silk and cotton** produced a lighter cloth in stripes and checks, equally suited to a celebration or to everyday wear.

The Himalayan region of *Kinnaur* answers a completely different challenge: altitude and cold. Here **wool** replaces silk and cotton. From it are woven dense, layered garments with bright geometric patterns, and heavy **silver** jewellery is worn not merely as adornment but as a form of savings built up over centuries, carried quite literally on a woman's body.



Soren Bakhul Family
Santhali

Each of these costumes came into being separately and for different reasons, from climate to craft passed down over centuries. Together they form India's tradition of dress, an inseparable part of the country's culture that continues to live differently in every region.



Edakhe Family
Maharashtrian



Gupta Family
Kinnauri



Mathur Family
North Indian



Mehrotra Family
North Indian



Ghosh Family
Bengali



Verma Family
North Indian



Sehgal Family
Punjabi



RUSSIA

Russia stretches across an enormous part of Europe and Asia, bringing together many peoples and cultural traditions. From the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Arctic north to the Caucasus, both the landscape and the cultural world change along the way. For centuries, people across this vast country have developed their own languages, crafts, customs, and ideas of beauty. This is why the traditional clothing of Russia can never be reduced to a single “national costume”. In every region, dress developed its own character and its own way of telling a story.

In *Central Russia*, one of the most recognisable women’s ensembles combined the **rubakha**, **sarafan**, and **kokoshnik**, although their shapes, fabrics, and decoration varied greatly from one province to another. The **kokoshnik** was worn by married women and could become a true family treasure: festive versions were decorated with pearls, gold thread, and beads, carefully preserved, and passed down through generations. The **sarafan** was worn by women from different social groups. Its loose cut worked equally well for everyday life and for celebrations: a simple shirt could be replaced with a richly embroidered one and completed with a belt, jewellery, and an elegant headdress. Men’s dress centred on the **kosovorotka**, a shirt with its distinctive side opening at the collar, and a woven **kushak belt**. Embroidery was equally important. Its colours, techniques, and patterns differed from region to region, so a person familiar with the tradition could often recognise where the wearer came from simply by looking at the details of the costume.

A completely different artistic world developed in the *Volga region* among the *Kazan Tatars*. Festive clothing brought together the work of tailors, gold embroiderers, fur craftsmen, and jewellers. Its rich forms combined elements associated with the nobility of the *Kazan Khanate* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the urban Tatar dress of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. **Brocade, velvet, fur, gold embroidery, and metalwork** could turn clothing into a visible sign of status and family prosperity. Women’s dress was especially elaborate. A gown was completed with a **kamzol**, a headdress, and jewellery, including the **hasite**, a wide sash decorated with silver, coins, stones, and pendants, almost a piece of jewellery in its own right. Festive **kalfaks** made of velvet were embroidered with gold thread, pearls, and beads. In Tatar dress, decoration was not simply placed on top of the fabric: metal, stone, and embroidery became part of the structure of the outfit itself. Men’s clothing was more restrained but still highly formal, with long outer garments made from expensive fabrics, fur trim, a belt, and a tall headdress that emphasised the wearer’s status.

In *Ossetia*, traditional dress still remains part of festive life today. It is worn at weddings, national celebrations, and dance performances. Men’s clothing was strongly shaped by the culture of the mountain horseman. At its centre is the **cherkeska**, a long coat fitted closely at the waist and opening freely below so that it does not restrict movement. Its most recognisable chest detail is the **gazyrs**. Today they are decorative, but originally the small compartments held measured charges for firearms. Under the **cherkeska**, men wore a **beshmet**, a lighter garment with a high collar, while the full outfit was completed with a belt, **papakha**, and dagger. Practical objects gradually became lasting signs of the traditional *Ossetian* male image.



Plotnikov Family
Slavs

RUSSIA

Women's dress creates a very different impression, built on grace and restrained ceremony. The long **open-front dress** defines the waist and widens towards the hem, while a belt, chest fastenings, and long decorative sleeve pieces complete the outfit. These sleeve elements become especially expressive in traditional dance, extending the movement of the arms and fabric. **Gold embroidery**, made with metallic golden thread, usually does not cover the entire dress but highlights its edges and important details. Even when richly decorated, the women's costume keeps the sense of dignity and restraint that is characteristic of *Ossetian* tradition.



Kozakov Family
Ossetians

At the other end of the country, in *Yakutia*, the traditional dress of the *Sakha* people also remains part of modern festive culture. National costumes are worn at **Ysyakh**, the main summer celebration of the Sakha people, as well as at family and cultural events. Modern Yakut clothing has become lighter in form while keeping traditional ornaments and a vivid palette of **red, green, yellow, and blue**. One recognisable women's garment is the **haladaai**, a long dress decorated with embroidery and jewelry. These ornaments include **bastynga**, worn on the head, and **ilin-kebiher**, an elaborate chest ornament with metal pendants. **Silver** was especially valued, and the richness of such jewellery could also reflect the prosperity of the family.

Men's clothing was more restrained. A shirt could be worn with a **kushat belt**, to which useful objects, including a knife, were attached, and with traditional leather footwear finished with a broad **bile trim**. In modern family costumes, adults' and children's outfits are often connected through the same colours, patterns, and decorative details. Another distinctive object is the **deybiir**, a fly whisk made from horsehair. It was once highly practical, used to drive away insects and even to sweep away tracks in the snow. Later, the deybiir also entered ceremonial life, where it came to be used in purification rituals and as a protective object.

And yet these traditions represent only a few pages of Russia's vast cultural map. Beyond them are many other peoples, each with their own clothing, crafts, and traditions. This is one of the country's greatest strengths: its heritage is made up of many distinctive cultures that preserve their own character and continue through new generations. It is this diversity that makes Russia so recognisable, strong, and truly unique.



Kuchumov Family
Yakuts



Dinmukhametov Family
Tatars



BRAZIL

In Brazil, all it takes is a change of festival or a trip to another part of the country, and the whole language of dress changes with it. A straw hat and a checked shirt lead to a June festival, tall boots and a leather **tirador** lead to the pampas in the south, white layered dresses and coloured beads lead to *Bahia*, and feathers, seeds and plant fibres open up entirely different traditions among Indigenous peoples. Clothing here rarely stands alone. Almost always, it belongs to a place, an event or a community.

A good place to start is one of the country's most widely recognised festive traditions, **Festa Junina**, a June festival cycle tied historically to the days of Santo Antônio, São João and São Pedro. Every June, Brazil fills with straw hats, checked shirts and clothing in the **caipira** style, and the festival's main dance is the **quadrilha**. This image grew out of rural life and is celebrated on an especially large scale in the northeast of the country, though it long ago crossed the border of any single region. Today, June festivals take place all across Brazil, gathering whole communities around music, dance and food.



Festa Junina Family celebration
Northeast Brazil
Tradition: Festa Junina



Gaucha family in the Pampas
Southern Brazil
Tradition: Gaucho Heritage

The south of the country speaks the language of the saddle. In the pampas of *Rio Grande do Sul*, the figure of the **gaúcho**, the cattle herder and horseman, took shape: a wide brimmed hat, a neck scarf called **lenço**, a leather belt, tall boots, and the **tirador**, a traditional leather garment worn over the trousers and historically associated with cattle work and horseback activities. Boys carry on this tradition in loose trousers called **bombachas** with red lenços, and girls wear full, ruffled dresses called **prenda**, while the adult women beside them are often dressed in a fully modern way. The gaúcho tradition does not require every family member to wear the full historical costume in order to stay alive. Standing beside a saddled horse, it becomes clear that every part of this costume, the boots, the leather, the loose cut of the trousers, grew out of the work of a rider, not out of fashion.



Afro-Brazilian Family Tradition
Bahia, Brazil

BRAZIL

A very different layer of Brazilian identity lives on in *Bahia*, and here it becomes especially clear that the tradition of the **baianas** does not mean sameness. The festive costume is built from a full white skirt and blouse called **bata**, a cloth called **pano da costa**, a headwrap called **torço**, and many strands of coloured beads called **fios de contas**, all deeply rooted in the Afro-Brazilian heritage of the region. At the same time, adult and children's dress often continue one another. A child's outfit visually finishes what a parent's dress began, and the white base itself does not create sameness. The cut, the number of bead strands, and the way each woman ties her **torço** are all her own. White works here as a shared canvas, on which every woman keeps her own voice.

Among the Indigenous peoples of Brazil, there is no single traditional form of dress. Brazil is home to hundreds of Indigenous peoples, each with its own identity, traditions, languages and forms of cultural expression. Featherwork, beadwork, seeds, natural fibres and body adornments may carry distinct meanings according to each people and community.



Indigenous Family
Brazilian Amazon

These forms of dress were once shaped by the fields and the road, by faith, festival, craft and land. Life has changed since then, but the forms themselves keep coming back. They are worn at ceremonies, at community gatherings and family celebrations, paired with modern clothing and remade for new generations. In this way, Brazilian dress holds onto not one image of the past, but many living stories, each of which continues to be heard in the present.



Gaucho Family
Southern Brazil



Indigenous family
Brazilian Amazon



Afro-Brazilian Family
Bahia



Bahian traditional attire



CHINA

The history of Chinese dress spans centuries of changing dynasties and regional traditions, yet many of its defining principles have endured far beyond the eras in which they first appeared. In *China*, clothing was never only about beauty. Cut, fabric, colour, and ornament could reflect a person's status, the nature of an occasion, and broader ideas of order and harmony. Silk held a particularly important place. The extraordinary mastery of silk weaving and embroidery became one of China's most celebrated craft traditions and carried its artistic language far beyond the country's borders.

One of the deepest traditions of Chinese dress is **hanfu**, the broad name used for historical forms of clothing associated with the **Han Chinese**. It does not refer to a single unchanging costume. Across different dynasties, proportions, sleeve lengths, layers, and ways of wearing garments evolved considerably. Yet certain features remained especially recognisable: flowing silhouettes, overlapping fronts, wide sleeves, belts, and the graceful movement of fabric around the body. Today, renewed interest in hanfu has brought these historical forms back into contemporary cultural life, where they are not simply reproduced but reinterpreted for a new generation.

Beyond the Han tradition, different ethnic communities developed their own distinctive forms of dress and textile craftsmanship. Among the **Qiang people of Sichuan**, embroidery is especially important. Traditional attire may include **embroidered headscarves** and garments edged with bright decorative trims along the front and cuffs, turning handwork into one of the most visible features of the costume.



Shao Family



Shao Family

CHINA



Family of Chen Yunzhen
Qiang

Further south, among the **Zhuang people of Guangxi**, another textile tradition comes to the foreground. **Zhuang brocade** is woven by hand and belongs to a long tradition of decorative textile making. Traditional dress may include **blue front-buttoned jackets, dark aprons, and printed head wraps**, creating a very different visual language from the flowing forms of hanfu.

A very different chapter is represented by the **qipao**, which has become one of the most internationally recognisable forms of Chinese women's dress. Its high collar, decorative **pankou** knot fastenings, elongated silhouette, and side slit create an image now closely associated with Chinese elegance. Yet the fitted qipao familiar today is relatively modern. Its distinctive form developed largely in *Shanghai* during the 1920s and 1930s, building on earlier Manchu clothing traditions. It became a remarkable example of how an older visual language could be reshaped into a modern classic.

The men's **tangzhuang** expresses this continuity in another way. Its straight-cut jacket, standing collar, symmetrical front, and **pankou** fastenings preserve recognisably Chinese elements of dress. Despite its name, however, modern tangzhuang is not a literal survival from the Tang dynasty. Its present form developed much later, drawing on earlier clothing traditions while adapting them to modern tailoring.

The language of colour and ornament is just as important. **Red** has long been associated with joy, good fortune, and prosperity, which gives it a special place in festive dress, particularly during the *Spring Festival*, or Chinese New Year. **Gold** adds a sense of celebration, while flowers, botanical motifs, and embroidery can carry wishes for happiness and abundance. During the most important family festival of the year, these elements appear in clothing for both adults and children, bringing an ancient visual language into modern family life.

The strength of Chinese dress lies in both continuity and variety. Across centuries, dynasties, and different communities, forms have changed, yet silk, embroidery, brocade, distinctive collars, decorative fastenings, and careful attention to detail continue to return in new combinations. Chinese tradition has never remained fixed in a single historical moment; it has preserved the ability to change with time while keeping the character of its many cultural traditions recognisable.



Family of Li Suying
Zhuang



Shao Family



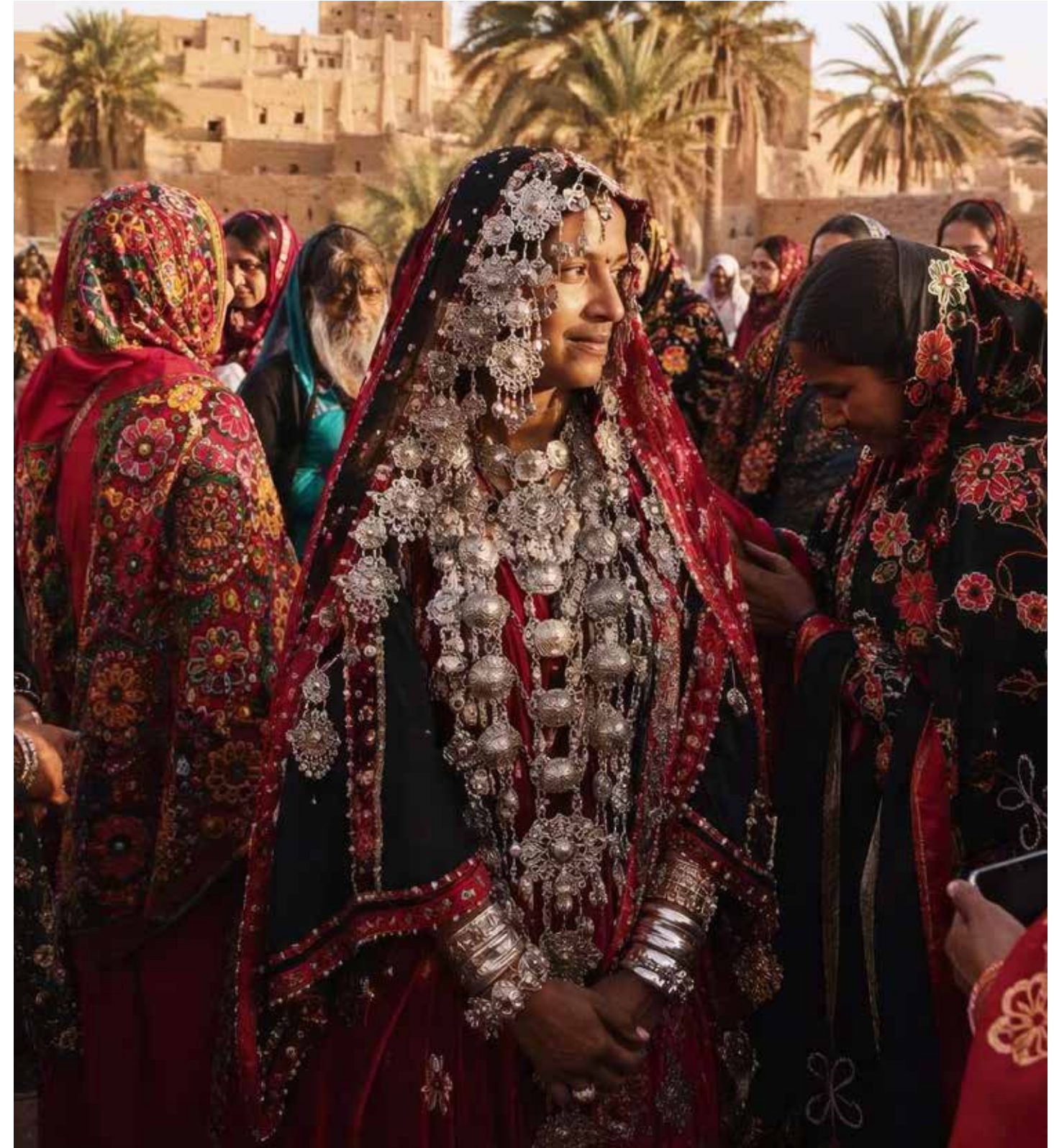
EGYPT

The story of Egyptian dress begins along the *Nile*. Its fertile lands produced **linen**, a light fabric perfectly suited to the hot climate and one that remained central to local textile traditions for thousands of years. In ancient Egypt, linen was used for both everyday and ceremonial clothing: straight **kalasiris**, tunics, wrapped garments, and finely pleated forms. Dress was completed with broad decorative collars, belts, head coverings, and jewellery featuring **gold, turquoise, and lapis lazuli**. The simplicity of white fabric was combined with rich ornament, creating one of the most recognisable visual traditions of the ancient world.

Today, this aesthetic continues to inspire modern recreations. White linen garments, belts, and jewellery are once again made by Egyptian artisans, bringing ancient motifs into contemporary family and cultural projects. Even the **nemes**, one of the best-known forms of ancient Egyptian headwear, continues to appear in modern interpretations of Pharaonic dress. These ensembles still rely on handcraft, metalwork, coloured stones, and decorative details inspired by ancient Egyptian jewellery.



Urban Egyptian Family



A wedding celebration in Siwa

EGYPT

From there, the story of dress develops differently across the country. In Cairo and Alexandria, clothing changed most rapidly as European tailoring, education, cinema, changing public roles for women, and later modest fashion shaped an increasingly layered urban wardrobe. Suits could exist alongside the **galabeya**, dresses alongside coats, and the hijab alongside modern professional clothing. At the same time, older Egyptian references never disappeared completely: Egyptian cotton, gold detailing, collar-inspired forms, and botanical motifs continued to return in new interpretations.

Beyond the major cities, change followed a different rhythm. Here, the **galabeya** remained especially important: a long, loose garment that continues Egypt's centuries-old tunic tradition. Its form suited the climate, work, and everyday life, while women's clothing included patterned fabrics, the **mandil** headscarf, festive embroidery, abayas, and hijabs. Within a single family wardrobe, older local forms could exist beside clothing for work and city life, as well as contemporary youth fashion – several periods of Egyptian life meeting within one household.



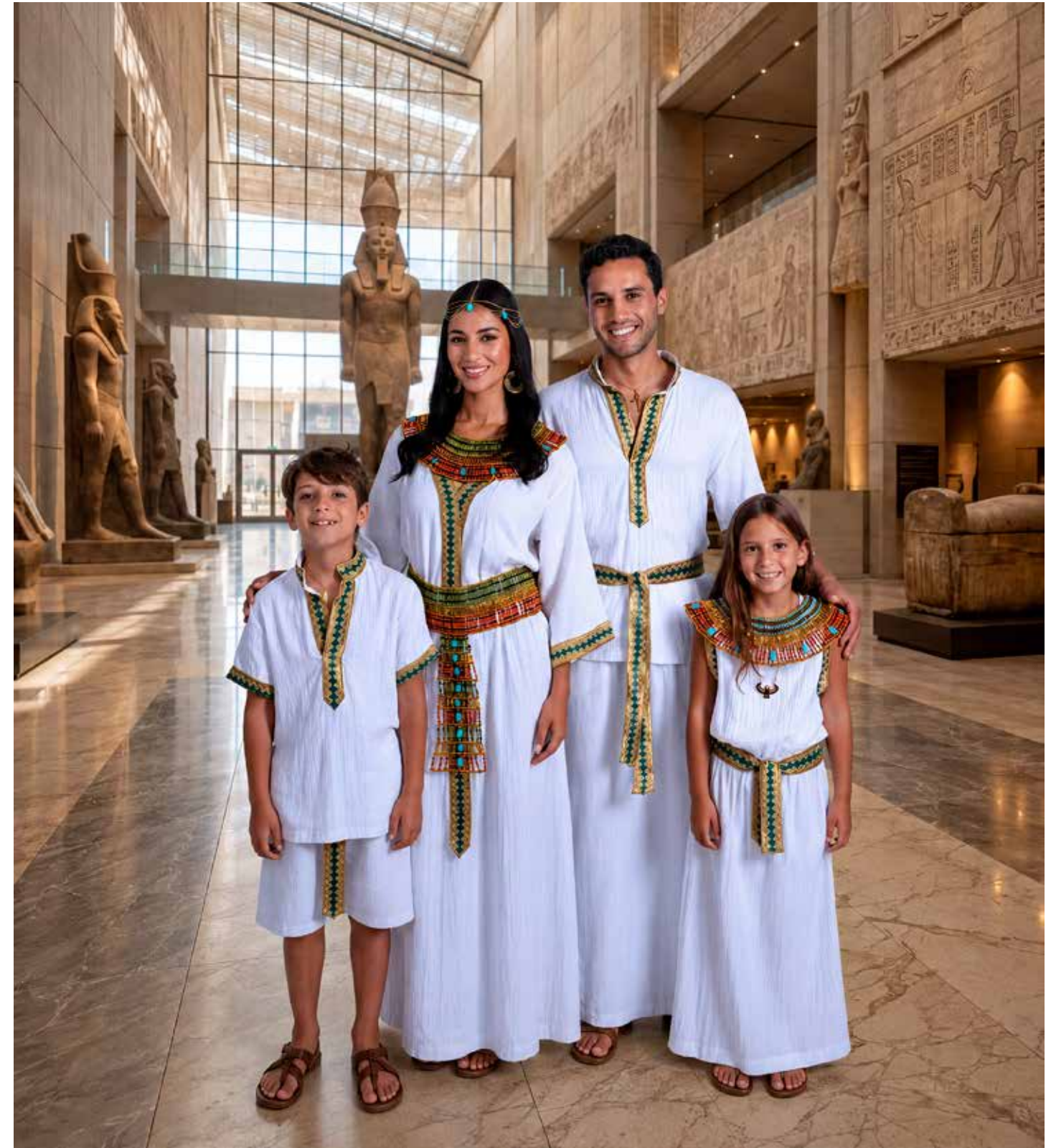
Bedouin Children



Siwan Woman
Amazigh · Siwa Oasis

A very different world has been preserved in *Siwa Oasis*. Here, the **Amazigh** tradition developed in relative isolation and created its own language of dress: white T-shaped tunics, dense embroidery, the large **tarfottet** wrap, and silver jewellery. In *Siwa*, festive clothing remains closely connected with ceremony, family memory, and belonging to place, even as materials and individual details continue to change.

This is one of the defining qualities of Egyptian dress: it does not belong to a single period of history. Pharaonic linen, urban fashion, the rural galabeya, and the embroidery of Siwa all belong to one long story in which the new does not erase the old, but grows around it. The past in Egypt does not need to be separated from the present – it can still be found in fabric, silhouette, ornament, and in the way people continue to dress.



Darwich Family
Pharaonic-inspired Egyptian Attire



ETHIOPIA

Take a length of finely handwoven cloth, pale and light, and you are holding the foundation of one of Ethiopia's most recognisable traditions. From the same fabric come many different forms: a long dress for women, a tunic and trousers for men, a light covering for the head and shoulders, or a heavier wrap for the cool highlands. The cut and purpose may change, but the underlying principle remains the same. The pale cloth provides space, while colour appears precisely where the weaver chooses to give the garment rhythm and definition.



Mohammed Ali Family



Family of Yadeshi Demisse and Sisay Temesge

This fabric is known as **shemma**. Its distinction lies not in cotton itself, which is familiar to many cultures around the world, but in the way Ethiopian weavers work with it. The finely woven cloth can appear almost weightless, while its borders carry the full complexity of the garment. This is where **tibeb** appears, a dense band of geometric ornament woven with supplementary threads or added through embroidery. Silk, coloured cotton, and metallic thread may all meet within a single design. Most of the fabric remains pale and composed, allowing every colour in the **tibeb** to acquire particular strength.



Family of Yadeshi Demisse and Sisay Temesge

ETHIOPIA



Family of Yadeshi Demisse and Sisay Temesge

One of the defining silhouettes created by this tradition is the women's **habesha** kemis. Long, softly gathered, and decorated around the neckline, sleeves, and hem, it relies not on an abundance of ornament, but on the precision of its placement. Over the dress is worn the **netela**, a light rectangular shawl. It may rest across the shoulders, wrap around the body, or be raised over the head. A single movement of the cloth changes the entire form, making the art of draping part of the costume itself.

The same textile logic continues in men's clothing. A pale tunic and loose trousers are given ornament across the chest, shoulders, sleeves, or lower edge, while a woven wrap completes the ensemble. In colder regions, the heavier **gabi** provides warmth, while **shamma** and **kuta** are worn for ceremonial and everyday occasions. These garments also remain closely connected with celebrations, ceremonies and family gatherings, where traditional dress becomes part of the shared expression of family and cultural heritage. In this way, one craft tradition produces clothing for women and men, for celebration, prayer, and daily life.

Ethiopia cannot be reduced to this one silhouette. Its peoples have their own colours, ornaments, and forms of dress, shaped by different religions, climates, and ways of life. Yet pale shemma cloth with bands of tibeb has come to occupy a distinctive place. Rooted in the traditions of the highlands, it has become familiar far beyond them and remains one of the forms through which the country recognises and presents itself.



Mohammed Ali Family



Mohammed Ali Family



INDONESIA

In Indonesia, traditional clothing changes with the islands and peoples of its vast archipelago. Different regions developed their own fabrics, patterns, styles of dress, and forms of decoration, so no single costume can represent the whole country. One of the most recognisable forms is the **kebaya**, a women's front-opening blouse whose deeper origins are still debated. Its development has been linked to West Asian dress brought through maritime trade, Portuguese-era contacts, and centuries of local adaptation. Rather than coming from one single tradition, the kebaya took shape through cultural exchange across the region.

In *Jakarta*, one distinctive form is the **Kebaya Encim**. It developed first among local Peranakan Chinese communities and later became widely adopted by Betawi women. Its history belongs to Jakarta's earlier *tempo doeloe* period, when different communities lived and interacted closely. Chinese Peranakan traditions formed its foundation, while Betawi adoption and European influences also shaped the style. Its fitted form, lace, delicate embroidery, and floral motifs remain characteristic today, even as colours and fabrics continue to change.



Hermaison Family & Friends
Betawi · National Kebaya Day



Hermaison Family & Friends
Betawi · National Kebaya Day

INDONESIA

The kebaya is often worn with **batik**, one of *Indonesia's* most important textile traditions. Its patterns are created with hot wax applied to selected areas of cloth before dyeing; for complex multicoloured designs, the process is repeated several times. Motifs vary widely by region and may include plants, animals, geometric forms, and patterns shaped by different historical influences. Batik remains part of both everyday life and important occasions across the country.



Hermaison Family & Friends
Betawi · National Kebaya Day

The **kebaya** was historically closely associated with formal, ceremonial, and important social occasions. Over time, it also became part of everyday dress, while retaining a strong formal character. Today it continues to be worn for weddings, official events, and graduations. A white kebaya chosen for a school graduation can mark an important transition into adulthood. On 24 July, Indonesia also celebrates **National Kebaya Day**, officially established in 2023, reflecting the garment's continuing place in contemporary culture.

The history of the kebaya has never followed a single path. It absorbed influences, crossed communities, and moved between ceremonial and everyday life while remaining unmistakably recognisable. Today, it carries the memory of centuries of cultural encounter and adaptation, not as a costume belonging only to the past, but as a dignified part of Indonesia's living present.



Wibisono Family



Wibisono Family



IRAN

Iranian traditional dress does not follow a single silhouette. From the forested Caspian coast across the plains of Khorasan to the Zagros Mountains, clothing changes with the land, the climate, and the way people live. The short pleated skirt of the *Mazandarani* north gives way to the loose, pale garments of eastern *Khorasan*, while the bright layered dress of the *Qashqai* stands alongside the black and white geometry of the *Bakhtiari chogha*. Each reflects the history, environment, and traditions of a particular region, together revealing the remarkable diversity of traditional dress across Iran.

In the north, where the Alborz mountains slope down into damp forests and rice fields, live the *Mazandarani*, whose dress was shaped not by fashion but by the wet climate of the coast. Everything here comes in layers: a headscarf called **mekna** and a narrow embroidered band called **qamzeh band** worn across the forehead, a long shirt in floral print, a fitted vest trimmed with coin like pendants, and over it all, the **shaliteh**, a short, full skirt gathered into dozens of pleats and worn over trousers rather than in their place. The men's dress is calmer: a white shirt, a vest called **jelizeh**, a wide sash wound several times around the waist, and a warm woollen garment called **kalak**, made for one purpose only, to survive by the sea, in the fog and the rain.



Ramezani Paji Family
Mazandarani

Further east, near Iran's border, in the Khaf district of Khorasan, dress speaks in a lighter, more open voice. Men's clothing centres on a long loose shirt, wide trousers, and white cloth wound around the head like a turban, a form shaped over centuries by the open, windswept spaces of the eastern frontier. Women's dress is softer: a long gown with hand embroidery and floral patterns, a covered head, bright touches against a pale ground. And what completes this region is not a piece of clothing but a sound, the **dotar**, an old two stringed instrument at the heart of Khorasan's music, in a land where stories are sung with the same care that goes into weaving cloth.



Ramezani Paji Family
Mazandarani



Ramezani Paji Family
Mazandarani

IRAN

Further south, in the mountains and steppe of Fars province, a very different Iran unfolds, an Iran in motion. Here live the *Qashqai*, a nomadic people who for centuries drove their herds between seasonal pastures, and their dress was built not for village work but for the road. The women's dress, called *keynak*, is worn with several wide gathered skirts at once, which open into a full, almost theatrical shape when walking or dancing, visible from far off against sun bleached hills. The headdress, *kolaqcha*, and the scarf, *lachak*, are held in place by a band called *yaghloq*, and the bright colours are chosen on purpose, so as not to be lost in the open space of a nomadic camp. The men's costume is finished with a felt cap called *do gushi*, known for its raised sides, and a wide sash called *shal*. Among the Qashqai, weaving is inseparable from dress itself: the women weave carpets, kilims, and cloth called *jajim* with the same hand that decorates a garment.



Birgani Family
Bakhtiari



Rezayat Family
Khaf / Khorasan

And in the western reaches of the same Zagros range, the *Bakhtiari* speak in a completely different visual language, built not on colour but on line. The most recognisable piece is the *chogha*, a pale men's cloak marked with sharp black vertical stripes, unlike any other costume in Iran. It is worn with unusually wide black trousers, a felt cap called *khosravi*, and light woven shoes called *giveh*, a silhouette so clear it works almost like a sign. Women's *Bakhtiari* dress answers in a different key: a bright gown, a full layered skirt, and a velvet vest, rich and layered against the stark black and white line of the men's costume.

These costumes were once shaped by climate, the road, daily work, and the land itself. Life has changed since then, but the clothing has outlived the world that made it. It is brought out for celebrations, resewn for children, worn alongside modern clothes, and passed on as part of a family's memory. In this way, traditional dress remains not a trace of a vanished past, but a living part of the present, in which each new generation finds its own connection to the land, the family, and the culture.



Dash Zarrin Family
Qashqai



SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, clothing has always worked like a signal, telling a stranger everything about a person before they spoke a single word: whether they were married, how old they were, what family they belonged to. Different peoples built this signal system out of different materials, and each is worth understanding on its own terms.



Family of Nomnikelo Mgxotheni
Themba people



Zulu Family
Zulu and Tswana

The Zulu people developed the most detailed version of this language. A married woman is instantly recognisable by her **isicholo** – a tall, wide headdress woven from grass and fibre, shaped almost like an upturned basket, worn only after marriage. Her skirt, the **isidwaba**, is made from cowhide that has been softened and worked by hand for weeks; wearing it shows she belongs to her husband's family. Men wear the **ibheshu**, a piece of hide attached at the waist that hangs and moves behind the body – traditionally part of a warrior's dress, giving the wearer freedom to move in battle or dance. But the most striking element is the **beadwork**, covering necklaces, belts, and headbands: the colours and patterns aren't random, they were arranged to say something specific about the wearer – their age, whether they were available for courtship, their standing in the community. Zulu dress also changes at major life events: a wedding, a coming-of-age ceremony, a formal visit between families. So a person's clothing shifts as their life does.



Zulu Family
Zulu and Tswana



Lerole Family
Zulu and Xhosa



Mncube Family
Zulu / amaZulu

SOUTH AFRICA

The *Xhosa* people work in a completely different register: black and white, sharply contrasted, almost graphic. Their festive dress, the **umbhaco**, is built on this strict colour discipline, with beadwork placed carefully on top as small bursts of colour. Women wear a head wrap called a **doek**, which turns a simple piece of cloth into a mark of dignity and seniority. This dress reaches its full meaning at umgidi (a celebration held when a young man completes the traditional passage into manhood) where the clothing itself proves, publicly, that his status has changed.

The *Tswana* tell a story of families joining together, worn most visibly in the **seshoeshoe** – a full-length cotton dress in dense printed pattern, rooted in the wider Sotho-Tswana region and still one of the most recognisable dresses in southern Africa.



Zulu Family
Zulu and Tswana



Shezi Family
Zulu Imvunulo

Older than all of these is the dress of the *Khoi-San*, a people whose way of life was shaped by survival in one of the driest environments on the continent. Their clothing came directly from what the land provided: **animal hide** worn much as it came from the hunt, and jewellery made from ostrich **eggshell** – hundreds of tiny discs, each one ground down by hand, threaded together into something surprisingly delicate for such a harsh material to produce.

Five peoples, five different alphabets – beads, hide, cloth, colour, shell – but the same instinct behind every one of them: in South Africa, no one had to ask who you were. You wore the answer.



Zulu Family
Zulu and Tswana



Mtshali and Mashinini Family
Zulu and Swati



Arendse Family (Royalty of the San/Bushman)
Indigenous Khoi-San



BELARUS

The Belarusian folk costume was born from a land of flax fields and rye harvests. Its foundation is white linen, marked with red geometric embroidery and finished with a woven belt. Beneath this quiet, understated dress lies a whole history – of labour, family life, and a people's bond with the land that fed them.

Flax was the defining material. Grown, processed, spun, and woven by hand in the villages, a single length of cloth could take months to make. From it came the **sarochka**, the white linen shirt that formed the base of both women's and men's dress – worn through ordinary days and holidays alike, and woven, in every sense, into the Belarusian cultural code.

Embroidery carried special weight. Diamonds, zigzags, and eight-petalled rosettes were placed at the collar, chest, sleeves, and hem – points the tradition treated as symbolic borders of the body. The patterns were never purely decorative: they were woven wishes, sewn by hand, for prosperity, fertility, and protection over the person who wore them.



Bezmen Family
Belarusian



Kunets Family
Belarusian

BELARUS

A separate place in Belarusian textile culture belongs to the **Slutsk belt** – a wide, shimmering sash woven with gold and silver thread, produced in the town of Slutsk from the 18th century onward as part of noble ceremonial dress, a mark of rank and prosperity. In time, its pattern outgrew clothing altogether, becoming a stand-alone symbol of Belarusian craftsmanship and national identity.

In women's dress, the **fartukh**, the apron, carried its own quiet importance – embroidered with particular care, at times more richly worked than the shirt beneath it, and often the piece that revealed a woman's skill most clearly. A festive look could be completed with the **vyanok**, a wreath of wildflowers, herbs, or rye ears, tied to the midsummer rites of Kupalle.

The **straw hat**, worn during fieldwork, spoke to the same agricultural rhythm – a costume shaped, from crown to hem, by a people whose culture grew in close conversation with the soil and the turning seasons.

Today, Belarusian traditional dress continues to accompany the ceremonies that mark the rhythm of community and family life: Kupalle, weddings, and the gathering of the harvest. And its place within these customs remains unchanged.



Kunets Family
Belarusian



Kunets Family
Belarusian



CUBA

In Cuban culture, clothing has always existed alongside music, movement, and the rhythm of everyday street life. Its most recognisable forms grew directly from life on the island: the tropical heat, rural work, and the need for light, comfortable clothing. Over time, practical garments became cultural symbols, while festive dress grew more expressive. In this way, traditional Cuban dress came to combine natural ease and practicality with the bright, distinctive character of Cuba.

One of the main symbols of men's dress in *Cuba* is the **guayabera**. This loose-fitting shirt is worn untucked and is traditionally decorated with vertical rows of fine pleats known as **alforzas**, together with four pockets. Light fabrics are especially suited to it, above all **linen and cotton**, which make the garment comfortable in a hot and humid climate. Originally worn as practical clothing in rural *Cuba*, the guayabera gradually moved far beyond the countryside. Today, it can be worn both in everyday life and as part of formal men's dress.

Closely connected with the image of the *Cuban guajiro*, the rural farmer and countryman, is the **sombrero de yarey**. This wide-brimmed hat is woven from the fibres of the **yarey palm**. Its original purpose was entirely practical: to protect the head and face from the strong sun during work in the fields. Over time, however, this simple woven hat became one of the most recognisable symbols of *Cuban* rural culture and kept a strong connection with the country's historical memory.

Women's traditional dress has a very different character. The **bata cubana** is known for its wide skirt, layers of ruffles, decorative ribbons, and the free movement of the fabric. Movement is especially important here: the dress comes alive in dance, as the folds and ruffles follow every turn of the body. Bright colour accents, flowers worn in the hair, and the full skirt have made this style one of the most recognisable forms of *Cuban* festive dress.



Cuban Boy in Traditional Attire



Dunia, Leandro & Mireya
Cuban Traditional Attire

CUBA

A special place belongs to the **Cuban carnival**. Here, costume is created not only for the person wearing it, but for the movement of the whole street. During famous celebrations, especially in *Santiago de Cuba*, **comparsas** and **congas** move through the city, while clothing becomes part of the spectacle together with music and dance. Full skirts, vivid colour combinations, elaborate headpieces, and specially designed performance costumes are made for movement, rhythm, and interaction with the crowd. Carnival shows particularly clearly how *Cuban* dress can turn fabric itself into part of the celebration.

This is what gives Cuban dress its distinctive character: it grew directly out of everyday life and never lost that connection. Traditional clothing in Cuba is therefore not seen simply as a page from the past, but as part of the rhythm through which the country continues to live today.



Dunia & Leonel
Cuban Traditional Attire



Dunia & Mireya
Cuban Traditional Attire



KAZAKHSTAN

For centuries, Kazakh families moved across some of the widest open land on earth, and their dress moved with them. What they wore had to speak before words could – of family, of rank, of belonging – while still surviving a climate that offered no second chances. Out of that balance grew one of the richest costume traditions of Central Asia.

At the centre of the women's festive ensemble is the **köylek**, a loose white dress worn as the base layer, and over it the **kamzol** – a fitted velvet vest in green, burgundy, or deep blue, embroidered in gold thread and finished with ornamental braid. This two-layer structure, modest at its foundation and ceremonial in its finishing, has remained the core of Kazakh women's dress for generations.



Amirkhanov Family
Kazakh



Izbasarov Family
Kazakh



Amirkhanov Family
Kazakh

KAZAKHSTAN

Running through it is **oyu-örnek**, Kazakh ornament – gold patterning traced along every collar, cuff, and hem. It was never applied at random: each motif belonged to a decorative vocabulary refined over centuries, passed down as a craft in its own right, on equal footing with weaving or metalwork.

Out on the steppe itself, the same logic turns to survival. The **tymaq**, a tall winter hat with fur-lined flaps that drop to cover the ears, was built to withstand wind with nothing to break it for hundreds of kilometres – and the quality of its fur doubled as a visible mark of a family's standing.

Over everything, men and women alike could wear the **shapan**, a long open coat tied at the waist and bordered in gold at the collar and cuffs. Placing a shapan on a guest's shoulders remains, to this day, one of the highest honours a Kazakh host can extend.



Turdaly Family
Kazakh



Amirkhanov Family
Kazakh

Further back stands the memory of the **batyrs**, the warrior-defenders celebrated in Kazakh epic tradition, echoed in leather armour belted at the waist to carry a sabre – not everyday dress, but a costume that keeps that history in cloth and leather, not only in verse.

And at the crown of the woman's headdress sits its quietest detail: a single white plume, the **ülki**, owl down believed in Kazakh tradition to guard against misfortune – protection carried not as weight, but as a feather.

A steppe with no mercy for the unprepared produced a people who turned necessity into craft. And never once mistook survival for a reason to stop being beautiful.



Amirkhanov Family
Kazakh



MALAYSIA

Malaysia has developed over centuries as a country where different cultural traditions live side by side. This is especially visible in festive clothing: there is no single look that can represent the whole country. Different communities preserve their own garments, fabrics, and jewellery, and this diversity has become one of the defining features of Malaysian culture.

In the Malay tradition, one of the most recognisable women's garments is the **baju kebaya**. It is a fitted blouse worn with a sarong or skirt. A particularly festive look is created with **songket**, a handwoven fabric decorated with gold or silver metallic threads, with the pattern formed directly on the loom. The front of the kebaya is fastened with **kerongsang**, decorative brooches that are both practical and ornamental.

The men's **baju Melayu** has a looser form: a long shirt is worn with matching trousers, while a **sampin** is wrapped around the waist, often made from songket. The outfit is completed with a **songkok**, the traditional black headwear. Its elegance comes not from a complicated cut, but from the quality of the fabric and a few carefully chosen details.

These garments are especially important during **Hari Raya Aidilfitri**, the celebration marking the end of Ramadan. From early in the morning, families dress in traditional clothing, gather across generations, visit relatives, share festive meals, and ask one another for forgiveness. For this reason, **baju kebaya** and **baju Melayu** remain part not only of ceremonial dress, but of modern family life.



Family of Shannim Mohd Sa'ad
Malay



Family of Shannim Mohd Sa'ad
Malay

MALAYSIA

Yet festive dress in Malaysia goes far beyond the Malay tradition. Among the country's South Asian communities, the sari remains an important form of traditional clothing. A long piece of fabric is draped around the body and over the shoulder, while festive versions are made especially striking through silk, gold borders, embroidery, and jewellery. Different styles of draping allow the same basic garment to take on very different forms.

In Malaysia, the value of traditional clothing lies precisely in the fact that it does not make everyone look the same. Different cultural traditions keep their own character while coming together at family celebrations, weddings, and major festivals. Festive dress therefore becomes more than a way of preserving the past. It is one of the clearest expressions of the cultural diversity that continues to shape the country today.



Ummar Gagla Thapa Family
Nepalese



Ummar Gagla Thapa Family
Nepalese



NIGERIA

Nigerian dress begins with shape, not fabric. Before you notice the embroidery or the colour, your eye picks up the form first, wide and almost sculptural, turning an ordinary person into someone dressed for celebration. People here rarely dress quietly.

Among the *Ijebu Yoruba* in the southwest, this shows in the **ag-bada**, a man's robe with huge, loose sleeves. It doesn't fit the body so much as widen it, giving the whole figure size and presence. The embroidery sits at the neck and chest, right where you look first. A small cap called the **fila** and strings of coral beads finish the outfit. Women's dress is softer: a lace blouse called **buba**, a wrap skirt called **iro**, and a head tie called **gele**, which every woman ties her own way, tall and shaped, almost like a piece of her own personality. At the local festival of **Ojude Oba**, each age group appears before the ruler in its own colours and styles, and clothing becomes a way of showing unity and belonging.

Further north, the mood changes. Among the *Hausa*, *Fulani*, and *Kanuri* peoples, men's dress is built around the **baban riga**, a robe so wide it spreads out from the shoulders like a cloud. This isn't just a style choice. It's a visible form of dignity and restraint, values that have mattered in this culture for centuries. Next to it is the simpler **kaftan**, though even that always comes with an embroidered cap, since an outfit here isn't considered finished without a headpiece. Women's clothing in the north is more varied, from loose embroidered gowns to fitted modern outfits made from **Ankara** cloth, and the line between traditional and modern has blurred so much that one flows naturally into the other.



Ade-Zaky Family
Northern Nigerian



Osinowo Family
Yoruba

NIGERIA

One more thing ties north and south together, more than any cut of cloth: families dressing in matching fabric. When parents and children step out in the same colour or pattern, it isn't an accident. It's a statement. What you're looking at isn't just a group of guests, but a family showing itself as one. The custom started among the Yoruba, known as **aso ebi**, or family cloth, and later spread across the whole country, no longer tied to just one people.

In Nigeria, fabric can make family visible. One colour brings generations together, one pattern turns relatives into a single group, and festive dress carries the memory of who a person belongs to. Here, a family doesn't just wear clothing. It becomes the pattern itself.



Ade-Zaky Family
Northern Nigerian



Ade-Zaky Family
Northern Nigerian



THAILAND

Traditional dress in Thailand is shaped by the country's remarkable regional and cultural diversity. The central regions, the north, the highlands, and the far south have preserved their own forms of dress, textiles, and decorative traditions. Even the country's most recognisable garments are therefore part of a much broader cultural landscape, where national ceremonial dress exists alongside Lanna traditions, Thai Malay clothing, and the dress of northern ethnic communities.

One of the most recognisable forms is **chud thai**, the modern form of Thai national dress. In the mid-twentieth century, at the initiative of Queen Sirikit, eight styles of women's ceremonial dress were formalised for different occasions. **Thai silk, long draped skirts, sabai, gold detailing, and jewellery** play an important role in these ensembles. Today, they are worn for weddings, religious ceremonies, official receptions, and other formal occasions.

In the north, the language of dress is quite different. The *Lanna* tradition is especially recognisable for the **pha sin**, a long woven skirt whose patterns, colours, and decoration may vary from one area to another. It is worn with blouses and jewellery, while the textile itself often becomes the main feature of the ensemble. Such clothing remains part of temple festivals, family ceremonies, and cultural celebrations today.

In the far south, particularly in *Narathiwat*, the traditions of *Thai Malay* communities add another distinctive element to the country's cultural landscape. Festive dress here is closely connected with Malay Muslim culture, with **long flowing silhouettes, colourful fabrics, and women's headscarves** often worn for family and religious occasions. During **Eid al-Fitr**, traditional clothing becomes part of the celebration itself, accompanying communal prayers, visits with relatives, and family gatherings.



Narongdej Family
Tha



Jehdueramae Family
Thai Malay · Narathiwat, Southern Thailand

THAILAND

A very different tradition is preserved among the *Lahu*, who live in the highland areas of northern Thailand. Different Lahu groups have their own forms of dress, but many costumes are distinguished by **dark base fabrics, bright coloured bands, embroidery, silver details, and jewellery**. Much of the decoration is made by hand, while more elaborate ensembles are worn for weddings, **Lahu New Year**, and other important community occasions.

This diversity clearly shows how traditional dress in Thailand reflects the country's regional and cultural variety. Rather than following a single fixed model, dress remains a living part of culture, with each tradition preserving its own place within the wider history of Thailand.



Lahu Family of Doi Pu Muen
Lahu



Ruangsomboon Family
Thai · Lanna Tradition



UGANDA

Uganda grew at a meeting point of different ways of life in East Africa. For centuries, the kingdoms of the *Great Lakes* region existed alongside pastoral communities, while trade routes crossed these lands and different languages and customs developed side by side. Traditional clothing therefore never took a single form. Ideas of beauty, status, and ceremony changed from one region to another, and dress became one of the clearest ways for people to express their connection to their cultural roots.

In *central Uganda*, among the **Baganda**, one of the most recognisable women's garments is the **gomesi**, also known as the **busuuti**. Its shape is unmistakable: short structured sleeves rise sharply from the shoulders, a square neckline frames the upper body, and several metres of fabric are gathered at the waist beneath a **wide sash**. The generous volume gives the garment a strong ceremonial presence, whether it is made in lilac, gold, burgundy, pink, or another festive colour.

Men's traditional dress is more restrained. The **kanzu** is a long, loose-fitting tunic, usually light in colour, with fine embroidery around the neckline and down the chest. Its elegance comes from the simplicity of its form rather than heavy decoration. For formal occasions, it may also be worn beneath a jacket, creating the distinctive ceremonial combination that remains familiar in Uganda today.

The history of clothing in *Buganda*, however, reaches much further back than stitched garments. For generations, the inner bark of the **mutuba tree** was beaten and worked until it became a soft material known as **olubugo**, or **barkcloth**. It was worn by both men and women and also played an important role in ceremonial life. The craft of making barkcloth is now recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage. Modern fabrics may look completely different, but barkcloth preserves the memory of a time when clothing could begin not with woven thread, but with the living bark of a tree.



Ugandan Family



Family of Nkwanzu Rachael and Mubiru Marvin

UGANDA

Moving west, the silhouette changes completely. In *western Uganda*, the women's **omushanana** replaces the structured volume of the gomesi with flowing drapery. A long skirt is combined with a broad length of lightweight cloth drawn across the body and over one shoulder. Its appearance depends on the way the fabric is arranged, so even garments made in similar colours can fall differently on each wearer. The **kanzu** is also worn in this part of the country, appearing beside a very different tradition of women's dress.

Farther north-east, the cultural landscape changes once again. The **Karamojong** are a pastoralist people of *Karamoja*, whose way of life has long been closely connected with cattle herding. Their dress is especially recognisable for **layers of colourful beadwork, broad necklaces and wrapped cloths**, creating a visual language very different from the ceremonial clothing of central and western Uganda.

This ability to preserve a strong regional character while allowing different traditions to exist side by side is one of the clearest reflections of Uganda itself. Its cultural heritage is not built around a single model, but around many forms and practices that have developed alongside one another for centuries and continue, together, to shape the country today.



Karamojong Family



Ugandan Family



UZBEKISTAN

The traditional dress of Uzbekistan developed in the cities and oases of the Silk Roads, where fabrics, dyes and craft traditions from different lands came together. Uzbek artisans transformed these influences into a distinctive style of their own flowing in shape, richly layered and filled with colour.

A traditional men's outfit consisted of a loose shirt known as a **ko'ylak** or **yaktak**, wide trousers called **ishton**, and an open-front robe – the **chapan**, also known as a **to'n**. With its straight cut and long sleeves, the chapan was usually secured with a woven sash called a **belbog'**. Lightweight robes were worn in warmer seasons, while winter chapans were quilted and lined with cotton for warmth.



Sultanov Family
Uzbeks



Abdullaev Family
Uzbeks

UZBEKISTAN

The fabric itself was often the chapan's main decoration. Men's robes were commonly made from **bekasam**, a durable silk-and-cotton fabric whose distinctive vertical stripes were created directly on the loom. Colours varied across the country: calm greens and blacks were characteristic of Tashkent, the cities of the Fergana Valley favoured combinations of yellow, pink and purple, while Bukhara became renowned for luxurious velvet robes and elaborate gold embroidery.

An essential part of the men's costume was the **do'ppi**, the traditional Uzbek embroidered skullcap. Its shape, colour and ornamentation could vary according to region, age and occasion. Men's do'ppi were often made from dark fabric and decorated with white floral or geometric embroidery.

A traditional women's outfit consisted of a long dress called a **ko'ylak** and loose trousers known as **lozim**, sometimes finished with decorative braid or embroidery. Over the dress, women could wear a robe, a short sleeveless vest called a **nimcha**, or a specially cut women's outer robe known as a mursak. Festive clothing was carefully layered so that different fabrics, decorated cuffs, jewellery and headwear formed a single harmonious composition.

Natural silk **atlas** held a special place in Uzbek textile culture. Its smooth surface gave colours extraordinary depth and brilliance. Its famous patterns were created using the **abrbandi** technique: selected sections of the threads were bound and dyed in several stages before weaving began. The word abr means "cloud", and the softly blurred outlines of the finished designs seem to float across the fabric. When a silk warp was combined with a cotton weft, it produced the denser, more softly textured fabric known as **adras**.

Women's headwear could include the **ro'mol**, a traditional scarf. A white ro'mol made from natural silk brought particular elegance to festive dress, softly framing the face and setting off the vivid colours of the clothing. Jewellery completed the ensemble: necklaces, breast ornaments and the magnificent **tillaqosh**, whose name means "golden eyebrows". Its curved lower section followed the line of the eyebrows, while its upper part rose like a crown. Stones, beads and delicate metal pendants shimmered with every movement.



Family of Trần Cẩm Nhung
Kinh

There has never been a single, unchanging version of Uzbek traditional dress. Every region developed its own silhouettes, ornaments and combinations of colour. Together, they form a rich textile map of Uzbekistan – a history woven into the stripes of bekasam, the cloud-like patterns of atlas, the embroidery of the do'ppi and the flowing form of the chapan; a heritage worn, remembered and passed from one generation to the next.



Family of Phạm Thị Kim Thảo and Võ Xuân Minh
Kinh



VIETNAM

Vietnam stretches for nearly two thousand kilometres along the sea, from the misty mountains of the north to the warm Mekong Delta, yet one distinctive silhouette has come to represent this long country of varied climates and landscapes: a flowing tunic with high side slits, worn over loose trousers. This is the **áo dài**, a form of dress rooted in the cultural tradition of the Kinh people that has gradually become one of Vietnam's most expressive symbols. It is through this silhouette that Vietnam has long been recognised, both within the country and far beyond its borders.

The cut seems designed to allow the fabric to reveal itself in motion. In the classic women's version, the fitted upper section follows the clean line of the body, while the long panels fall almost to the ankles. The men's áo dài follows the same basic principle, but usually has a straighter, looser, and more restrained silhouette. The high side slits separate the long panels from the trousers, allowing the fabric to come alive with every step, turn, and light breeze. This form brings together dignity and freedom of movement, restraint and expressiveness.



Vietnamese Family Celebrating Lunar New Year
Traditional Áo Dài



Vietnamese Family Celebrating a Wedding
Traditional Áo Dài

VIETNAM

Today, the áo dài belongs to no single age, gender, or occasion. It is worn by women and men, adults and children, although its place in their lives may differ. The women's áo dài remains the most widespread and recognisable, appearing at weddings, family celebrations, school ceremonies, festivals, official receptions, and cultural performances. The men's version is less common in everyday life, but retains an important place during Tết, weddings, temple ceremonies, and traditional festivals. It is not a modern addition to women's dress, but a distinct historical tradition within Vietnamese clothing that is gradually returning to public life.

The áo dài becomes especially visible during Tết, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. During the holiday, it is worn for visits to relatives, trips to temples and pagodas, walks through springtime streets, and participation in public celebrations. Bright fabrics, floral motifs, traditional patterns, and New Year colours form part of the shared visual language of the festival. The meaning of the dress itself expresses respect for the occasion, a connection to the country's culture, and the desire to welcome a new cycle of life in national attire.

Today, the áo dài has become a national image not because it erases the differences between people, but because it can unite them within a single cultural form. As long as it continues to be worn, reinterpreted, and passed on to future generations, it remains not an image of Vietnam's past, but part of how the country presents itself today.



Family of Trần Cẩm Nhung
Kinh



Family of Phạm Thị Kim Thắm and Võ Xuân Minh
Kinh

FAMILIES FEATURED IN THIS BOOK

The communities and traditions featured in this book represent only a small part of the immense ethnocultural diversity of each country. They are not intended to provide an exhaustive portrait or to speak for entire nations, but reflect the families and communities that chose to take part in the initiative and share their heritage with us. Beyond these pages are many more peoples, traditions and cultural identities, each with its own history and living heritage..

The families listed below are represented throughout the pages of this edition and form part of the wider collective contribution that brought BRICS Families – National Heritage to life.

INDIA

Edakhe Family (*Maharashtrian*)
 ...
 Ghosh Family (*Bengali*)
 ...
 Gupta Family (*Kinnauri*)
 ...
 Mathur Family (*North Indian*)
 ...
 Mehrotra Family (*North Indian*)
 ...
 Soren Bakhul Family (*Santhali*)
 ...
 Sehgal Family (*Punjab, Odisha*)
 ...
 Ved Family
 ...
 Verma Family (*Hiresha Verma*)
 ...
 Verma Family (*Shashank Verma, North Indian*)
 ...

RUSSIA

Arshinov Family (*Slavs*)
 ...
 Dinmukhametov Family (*Tatars*)
 ...
 Kozakov Family (*Ossetians*)
 ...
 Kuchumov Family (*Yakuts*)
 ...
 Plotnikov Family (*Slavs*)
 ...

CHINA

Shao Family
 ...
 Family of Chen Yunzhen (*Qiang*)
 ...
 Family of Li Suying (*Zhuang*)
 ...

ETHIOPIA

Mohammed Ali Family
 ...
 Family of Yadeshi Demisse and Sisay Temesgen
 ...

INDONESIA

Hermaison Family (*Betawi*)
 ...
 Wibisono Family
 ...

UZBEKISTAN

Sultanov Family (*Uzbeks*)
 ...
 Abdullaev Family (*Uzbeks*)
 ...

IRAN

Birgani Family (*Bakhtiari*)
 ...
 Dash Zarrin Family (*Qashqai*)
 ...
 Ramezani Paji Family (*Mazandarani*)
 ...
 Rezayat Family (*Khaf / Khorasan*)
 ...

SOUTH AFRICA

Arendse Family (*Indigenous Khoi-San*)
 ...
 Lerole Family (*Zulu and Xhosa*)
 ...
 Mncube Family (*Zulu / amaZulu*)
 ...
 Family of Nomnikelo Mgxotheni (*Themba people*)
 ...
 Mtshali and Mashinini Family (*Zulu and Swati*)
 ...
 Shezi Family (*Zulu Imvunulo*)
 ...
 Zulu Family (*Zulu and Tswana*)
 ...

BELARUS

Bezmen Family (*Belarusian*)
 ...
 Kunets Family (*Belarusian*)
 ...

CUBA

Dunia, Leonel, Leandro & Mireya (*Cuban RUDN Community*)
 ...

KAZAKHSTAN

Akhmanov Family (*Kazakh*)
 ...
 Amirkhanov Family (*Kazakh*)
 ...
 Izbasarov Family (*Kazakh*)
 ...
 Turdaly Family (*Kazakh*)
 ...

MALAYSIA

Family of Shannim Mohd Sa'ad (*Malay*)
 ...
 Ummar Gagla Thapa Family (*Nepalese*)
 ...

NIGERIA

Ade-Zaky Family (*Northern Nigerian*)
 ...
 Osinowo Family (*Yoruba*)
 ...

UGANDA

Family of Nkwanzu Rachael and Mubiru Marvin
 ...
 Nakazibwe Family
 ...

VIETNAM

Family of Phạm Thị Kim Thảo and Võ Xuân Minh (*Kinh*)
 ...
 Family of Trần Cẩm Nhung (*Kinh*)
 ...

PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

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Photographic materials provided with the support of the Brazilian Chapter of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.

EGYPT

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THAILAND

The Narongdej family in traditional Thai attire – Sanook, photographs credited to @kornnarongdej and @sriritajensen.

Supaksorn “Kratae” Rueangsombun and her daughter Punnacha “Chao Kha” Rueangsombun in Lanna-style traditional attire – TeeNee (original source: @iamkratae).

The Jehdueramae family in traditional Thai Malay attire, Narathiwat, Southern Thailand – Kapan-Lagi, photographs credited to @jirayutdaa4official.

Lahu family in traditional attire, Doi Pu Muen, Chiang Mai – Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (Thai Community Wiki)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to BRICS Families – National Heritage. This initiative became possible thanks to the shared commitment, generosity and sincere engagement of all those involved.

We would like to express our special appreciation to the Heads of the National Chapters and the regional Secretariats of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance for their leadership, coordination and continued support throughout the project. We are equally grateful to every family, colleague, partner and volunteer who shared their time, traditions and personal stories.

Each of these efforts became an essential part of this collective work, embodying the spirit of openness and cooperation at its heart.

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