

Kitenge Fashion and Design



Kitenge

Also known as chitenge in Swahili in plural it is Vitenge. Chitenge is an East African, West African, and Central African fabric similar to sarong, often worn by women and wrapped around the chest or waist, over the head as a headscarf, or as a baby sling. Kitenges are like kangas and kikoy but are of a thicker cloth and have an edging on only a long side. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of the Congo are some of the African countries where kitenge is worn.



Kitenge Fabric

Kitenge are colourful pieces of fabric. In the Coastal area of Kenya, and in Tanzania, Kitenges often have Swahili sayings written on them. Kitenges (plural vitenge in Swahili; zitenge in Tonga) serve as an inexpensive, informal piece of clothing that is often decorated with a huge variety of colors, patterns and even political slogans.

Its Uses

Chitenges can be used on occasions and in many ways either symbolically or for practical reasons. Chitenges are used in different settings to convey messages. The following list demonstrates uses of the cloths.

Sling

In Malawi, Chitenges are customary for women at funerals.

They are used as a sling to hold a baby across the back of a mother. They can hold the baby at the front as well, particularly when breast feeding. sometimes worn by men but often worn by women and wrapped around the chest or waist, over the head as a headscarf, or as a baby sling

A used gift

Chitenges are given as gifts to young women.

House decorations

They are sometimes tied together and as decorative pieces at dinner tables.

A wraparound

When women go to the beach, often the Chitenge is wrapped around the bathing suit for modesty or to shield cold air. And Sometimes worn by men around the waist in hot weather



Wall Art Decoration

The printing on the cloth is done by a traditional batik technique. These are known as wax prints and the design is equally as bright and detailed on the obverse side of the fabric that can also be framed or otherwise hung up on the wall as a decorative batik artwork. Many of the designs have a meaning. A large variety of religious and political designs are found as well as traditional tribal patterns. The cloth is used as material for dresses, blouses, and pants as well.

Modern African clothes design

Kitenges have also become immensely popular as fashion statements in urban pop culture with youth in Africa. Kitenges are incorporated in clothing items such as hoodies, trousers, and accessories such as bags.

Image examples of African designs



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