

Fashion from Victoria to the New Millennium

# History of World Costume and Fashion

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# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	.xii
<b>Preface</b> .....	.xiii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	.xv
<b>Chapter 1 - Prehistory</b> .....	.1
• Humankind Before History .....	.1
• Prehistoric Clothing .....	.2
Fiber Crafts .....	.2
• Neolithic Textiles .....	.5
• Neolithic Clothing .....	.6
• Review .....	.8
• Questions .....	.10
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	.10
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	.11
• Legacies and Influences of Prehistoric Styles on Modern Fashion .....	.12
<b>Chapter 2 - The Ancient Near East</b> .....	.15
• Sumer and the Dawn of Civilization .....	.15
Map of Mesopotamia .....	.16
From Fiber to Fabric .....	.17
Era of Metals .....	.20
• The Babylonian and Hittite Empires .....	.22
• The Assyrian Epic .....	.25
• The Golden Empire of Persia .....	.28
• Review .....	.32
• Questions .....	.33
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	.33
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	.34
• Legacies and Influences of Ancient Near East Styles on Modern Fashion .....	.35
<b>Chapter 3 - Egypt</b> .....	.37
• Civilization Along the Nile .....	.37
Map of Egypt .....	.38
Symbolism in Everyday Life .....	.39
• Egyptian Ideals of Beauty .....	.40
• Costumes of the Upper Classes .....	.41
Amulets .....	.45
• Costumes of Ordinary People .....	.50
• Religious Costumes .....	.52
• Military Dress .....	.53
• Review .....	.54
• Questions .....	.56
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	.56
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	.57
• Legacies and Influences of Egyptian Styles on Modern Fashion .....	.58

## Contents

<b>Chapter 4 - The Aegean</b> .....	61
• <b>Crete</b> .....	61
• Peoples of the Sea .....	61
Map of the Ancient Aegean .....	62
Thera and the Collapse of the Minoan Civilization .....	63
• Men’s Costume .....	62
• Women’s Costume .....	66
• Review .....	67
• Questions .....	68
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	69
• Glossary of Costume Terms .....	69
• Legacies and Influences of Minoan Styles on Modern Fashion .....	70
• <b>Greece</b> .....	71
• Mycenae .....	71
• The Greek City-States .....	74
• Women in Greek Society .....	74
• Greek Textiles .....	75
• Clothing Styles .....	76
Male Nudity and Female Modesty in Public .....	80
• Hats, Shoes, and Accessories .....	82
• Military Costume .....	83
• Theatrical Costume .....	86
• Review .....	86
• Questions .....	88
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	88
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	89
• Legacies and Influences of Greek Styles on Modern Fashion .....	90
<b>Chapter 5 - Etruria and Rome</b> .....	93
• Italy Before Rome .....	93
Map of the Principal Etruscan City States .....	94
• Etruscan Clothing .....	95
• Greek Influence .....	97
• Review .....	98
• Questions .....	99
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	99
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	99
• Rome .....	100
• Conquer or Perish .....	100
Map of Major Provinces and Protectorates of the Roman Empire in the Second Century CE. ....	101
• Roman Textiles .....	101
• Roman Textile Dyes, Patterns, and Embellishments .....	102
• Clothing, Class, and Citizenship .....	102
• Women’s Clothing .....	105
• Women’s Accessories and Hairstyles .....	107
• Military Costume .....	110
• Review .....	111
• Questions .....	112
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	112
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	113
• Legacies and Influences of Roman Styles on Modern Fashion .....	115

## Contents

<b>Chapter 6 - Byzantium</b> .....	117
• The Roman Empire of the East .....	117
Map of the Byzantine Empire c. 550 and c. 1025 .....	118
• Byzantine Society .....	118
• Early Byzantine Imperial Costume .....	119
Byzantine Silk Industry .....	122
• Late Byzantine Imperial Costume .....	123
• Costumes of Ordinary Byzantines .....	125
• Byzantine Military Costume .....	127
• Ecclesiastical Costume .....	129
• Monastic Costume .....	134
• Review .....	136
• Questions .....	137
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	137
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	138
• Legacies and Influences of Byzantine Styles on Modern Fashion .....	140
<b>Chapter 7 - Northern Europe in the Early Middle Ages</b> .....	141
• Onslaughts of the Teutones .....	141
Map of Europe at the end of the first millennium. ....	143
• European Society in the Early Middle Ages .....	143
• Teutonic Costume .....	143
Furs and the Cult of Animals .....	144
• Merovingian Dynasties (481–751) .....	147
• Carolingian Dynasties (751–987) .....	150
• The Anglo-Saxons .....	155
• Review .....	157
• Questions .....	158
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	158
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	159
• Legacies and Influences of Styles from the Early Middle Ages on Modern Fashion .....	160
<b>Chapter 8 - Islamic Empire</b> .....	161
• From Arabia to Empire .....	161
Extent of the Islamic World by 1500 .....	162
• Emergence of Islamic Nation-States .....	162
• Islamic Textiles .....	164
• Costumes of Arabo-Islamic Men .....	165
• Military Costume .....	172
• Costumes of Arabo-Islamic Women .....	173
Hijab and Veiling .....	176
• Review .....	179
• Questions .....	181
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	181
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	182
• Legacies and Influences of Islamic Styles on Modern Fashion .....	184
<b>Chapter 9 - China</b> .....	185
• The Third Great Civilization of Antiquity .....	185
Map of Ming China c. 1500 .....	186
• Chinese Textiles .....	187

## Contents

• Chinese Men’s Costumes	188
• Men’s Headgear	193
• Military Costumes	195
• Chinese Women’s Costumes	197
• Women’s Headdresses, Shoes, and Accessories	199
Foot-binding and the Golden Lotus	202
• Modern Chinese Fashions	201
• Review	203
• Questions	204
• Research and Portfolio Projects	204
• Glossary of Dress Terms	205
• Legacies and Influences of Chinese Styles on Modern Fashion	207
<b>Chapter 10 - Japan</b>	209
• An Island Civilization	209
Map of Japan	210
The Ainu Peoples	211
• Early Japanese Textiles and Costume	212
• Japanese Men’s Costumes	213
• Japanese Women’s Costumes	220
• Modern Japanese Fashion	224
• Review	225
• Questions	226
• Research and Portfolio Projects	227
• Glossary of Dress Terms	227
• Influences and Legacies of Japanese Styles on Modern Fashion	229
<b>Chapter 11 - India</b>	231
• Civilization of the Indian Subcontinent	231
Map of India	232
• Indian Textiles	233
Mordant Dyeing	234
• Ancient Indian Men’s Costumes	235
• Islamic to Modern Indian Men’s Costumes	238
• Military Costume	238
• Indian Men’s Headwear and Accessories	242
• The Westernization of Indian Men’s Clothing	243
• Indian Women’s Costumes	244
• Indian Women’s Accessories and Cosmetics	249
• Ethnic Chic and Fashions in the New Millennium	251
• Review	252
• Questions	253
• Research and Portfolio Projects	253
• Glossary of Dress Terms	254
• Legacies and Influences of Indian Styles on Modern Fashion	256
<b>Chapter 12 - Africa</b>	259
• Early Africa	259
Map of Africa and the Ethnic Peoples of Africa	260
• Islamic Conquest	261
• European Colonization	262
Mystical Powers and Bogolanfini Cloths	263
• African Textiles	264
• North Africa	266

## Contents

• West Africa	267
• Central Africa	272
• East Africa	274
• Southern Africa	276
• Modern African Fashion	277
• Review	279
• Questions	280
• Research and Portfolio Projects	280
• Glossary of Dress Terms	281
• Legacies and Influences of African Styles on Modern Fashion	282
<b>Chapter 13 - The Ancient Americas</b>	<b>283</b>
• Ancient Mesoamerica	283
Map of Ancient American Civilizations	284
• Weaving and Textiles	284
• The Olmec	286
• The Teotihuacán	289
• The Maya	290
• The Aztec	295
• The Ancient Andeans	299
• The Inca	300
Inca Quipu	302
• Ancient North America	303
• The Arctic and Subarctic	303
• The Eastern Woodlands	305
• The Great Central Plains	306
Soft-soled and Hard-soled Moccasins	309
• The Southwest and Pacific Coast	309
• Review	311
• Questions	313
• Research and Portfolio Projects	313
• Glossary of Dress Terms	314
• Legacies and Influences of North American Indian Styles on Modern Fashion	316
<b>Chapter 14 - The Late Middle Ages</b>	<b>319</b>
• From Romanesque to Gothic	319
Map of Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century	320
Heraldry	321
• The Idea of Fashion	321
• Men's Dress of the Romanesque Era	322
• Women's Dress of the Romanesque Era	323
• Men's Dress of the Thirteenth Century	324
• Early Medieval Military Costume	328
• Women's Dress of the Thirteenth Century	329
• Prelude to the Renaissance	330
• Men's Dress of the Late Gothic Period	330
• Military Dress of the Late Gothic Period	336
• Women's Dress of the Late Gothic Period	337
• Children's Dress of the Middle Ages	340
• Review	341
• Questions	342
• Research and Portfolio Projects	342
• Glossary of Dress Terms	343
• Legacies and Influences of Styles of the Late Middle Ages on Modern Fashion	345

## Contents

<b>Chapter 15 - Italy and Spain in the Renaissance 1450–1600</b> .....	347
• The Italian Renaissance .....	347
Italian Textiles of the Early Renaissance .....	348
• Men’s Dress of the Early Renaissance .....	348
• Women’s Dress of the Early Renaissance .....	351
• Men’s Dress of the Sixteenth Century .....	353
• Women’s Dress of the Sixteenth Century .....	358
Lacemaking .....	359
• Children’s Dress of the Sixteenth Century .....	363
• Review .....	364
• Questions .....	366
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	366
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	367
• Legacies and Influences of Sixteenth-Century Spanish and Italian Styles on Modern Fashion .....	368
<b>Chapter 16 - Northern Renaissance</b> .....	371
• The Renaissance in Northern Europe .....	371
• Men’s Dress in the Northern Renaissance 1500–1550 .....	373
Slashing .....	374
• Men’s Dress in the Northern Renaissance 1550–1600 .....	375
• Women’s Dress in the Northern Renaissance 1500–1550 .....	378
• Women’s Dress in the Northern Renaissance 1550–1600 .....	381
• Children’s Dress in the Northern Renaissance 1500–1600 .....	386
• Review .....	387
• Questions .....	389
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	389
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	390
• Legacies and Influences of Sixteenth-Century Northern European Styles on Modern Fashion .....	391
<b>Chapter 17 - The Seventeenth Century</b> .....	393
• A New Europe .....	393
• Map of Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648 .....	396
The Age of Baroque .....	396
• Men’s Fashions 1600–1650 .....	401
• Men’s Fashions 1650–1700 .....	406
• Women’s Fashions 1600–1650 .....	411
• Women’s Fashions 1650–1700 .....	414
• Clothing of Ordinary Women .....	415
• Children’s Clothing .....	416
• Review .....	417
• Questions .....	417
• Research and Portfolio Projects .....	417
• Glossary of Dress Terms .....	418
• Legacies and Influences of Seventeenth-Century Styles on Modern Fashion .....	420
<b>Chapter 18 - The Eighteenth Century</b> .....	423
• The Age of Enlightenment .....	423
Map of Disputed territories of the early eighteenth century .....	424
• The American Revolution .....	425
• The French Revolution .....	426
• Developments in Textile Production .....	426
Fashion Marketing .....	427

## Contents

• Men’s Fashions 1700–1750	428
• Men’s Fashions 1750–1799	432
• Women’s Fashions through the 1760s	437
• Women’s Fashions 1770s–1790s	441
• Clothing of Ordinary People	449
• Children’s Clothing	449
• Review	450
• Questions	453
• Research and Portfolio Projects	453
• Glossary of Dress Terms	454
• Legacies and Influences of Eighteenth-Century Styles on Modern Fashion	456
<b>Chapter 19 - The Nineteenth Century 1800–1850</b>	<b>459</b>
• The New World Order 1800–1850	459
Map of Europe of 1815 redrawn by the Congress of Vienna following the defeat of Napoleon.	460
The Invention of the Sewing Machine	461
• Economics and Society	461
• Women’s Empire Gowns 1800–1820	463
• Women’s Outerwear, Undergarments, and Accessories 1800–1820	464
• Women’s Romantic Era Dresses 1820–1850	468
• Women’s Outerwear, Undergarments, and Accessories 1820–1850	472
• Men’s Suits 1800–1820	474
• Men’s Outerwear, Undergarments, and Accessories 1800–1820	476
• Men’s Suits 1820–1850	476
• Men’s Outerwear, Undergarments, and Accessories 1820–1850	478
• Clothing of Ordinary People 1800–1850	480
• Children’s Clothing 1800–1850	481
• Review	483
• Questions	484
• Research and Portfolio Projects	484
• Glossary of Dress Terms	485
• Legacies and Influences of Early Nineteenth-Century Styles on Modern Fashion	487
<b>Chapter 20 - The Nineteenth Century 1850–1900</b>	<b>489</b>
• Nationalism, Industrialism, and Victorianism 1850–1900	489
Map of Europe 1899	490
• Revolutions in Science and the Arts	491
• Worth and Couture	492
Ready-to-Wear Manufacturing and Retail Fashion	494
• Women’s Dress: The Crinoline Period	495
• Crinoline Dress Accessories and Outerwear	499
• Women’s Dress: The Bustle Era	503
• Bustle Dress Accessories and Outerwear	505
• The 1890s	508
• Undergarments	510
• Sports Attire	512
• Hats, Shoes, and Accessories 1870s-1890s	514
• Cosmetics and Hair Treatments	515
• Men’s Clothing 1850–1900	516
• Men’s Outerwear, Underwear, and Sports Attire	521
• Men’s Accessories	522
• Clothes of Ordinary People	524



## Contents

• Children’s Clothing . . . . .	.525
• Review . . . . .	.528
• Questions . . . . .	.529
• Research and Portfolio Projects . . . . .	.529
• Glossary of Dress Terms . . . . .	.530
• Legacies and Influences of Late Nineteenth-Century Styles on Modern Fashion . . . . .	.533
<b>Chapter 21 - The Twentieth Century 1900–1920 . . . . .</b>	<b>.537</b>
• The Edwardian Era . . . . .	.537
Map of Europe after World War I . . . . .	.538
The Changing Role of Women . . . . .	.539
• The World at War . . . . .	.540
• Women’s Fashions 1900–1914 . . . . .	.541
• Women’s Outerwear 1900–1920 . . . . .	.548
• Women’s Sports Apparel 1900–1920 . . . . .	.549
• Women’s Underwear and Sleepwear 1900–1920 . . . . .	.550
• Women’s Swimwear 1900–1920 . . . . .	.552
• Women’s Shoes 1900–1920 . . . . .	.553
• Women’s Jewelry 1900–1920 . . . . .	.554
• Women’s Hairstyles And Makeup 1900–1920 . . . . .	.555
• Women’s Hats 1900–1920 . . . . .	.556
• Women’s Accessories 1900–1920 . . . . .	.558
• Men’s Fashions 1900–1920 . . . . .	.560
• Sports Attire and Outerwear . . . . .	.564
• Men’s Underwear and Swimwear 1900–1920 . . . . .	.566
• Men’s Accessories 1900–1920 . . . . .	.567
• Men’s Grooming and Hairstyles 1900–1920 . . . . .	.570
• Children’s Clothing 1900–1920 . . . . .	.570
• Review . . . . .	.574
• Questions . . . . .	.575
• Research and Portfolio Projects . . . . .	.575
• Glossary of Dress Terms . . . . .	.576
<b>Chapter 22 - The Twentieth Century 1920–1940 . . . . .</b>	<b>.577</b>
• Politics and Nations of the 1920s . . . . .	.577
• Culture and Society in the 1920s . . . . .	.578
• The Great Depression of the 1930s . . . . .	.579
• Influences and Technologies of Fashion 1920–1940 . . . . .	.580
The Zipper . . . . .	.581
• Women’s Fashions 1920–1929 . . . . .	.582
• Women’s Fashions 1930–1940 . . . . .	.586
• Women’s Outerwear 1920–1940 . . . . .	.590
• Women’s Sports Apparel 1920–1940 . . . . .	.591
• Women’s Underwear and Sleepwear 1920–1940 . . . . .	.592
• Women’s Swimwear 1920–1940 . . . . .	.594
• Women’s Shoes 1920–1940 . . . . .	.595
• Women’s Jewelry 1920–1940 . . . . .	.596
• Women’s Hair Styles and Makeup 1920–1940 . . . . .	.597
• Women’s Hats 1920–1940 . . . . .	.598
• Women’s Accessories 1920–1940 . . . . .	.600
• Men’s Fashions 1920–1940 . . . . .	.602
• Men’s Sports Attire and Outerwear 1920–1940 . . . . .	.607

## Contents

• Men’s Underwear and Swimwear 1920–1940	.610
• Men’s Accessories and Sleepwear 1920–1940	.612
• Men’s Grooming and Hairstyles 1920–1940	.616
• Children’s Clothing 1920–1940	.616
• Review	.619
• Questions	.620
• Research and Portfolio Projects	.620
• Glossary of Dress Terms	.621
<b>Chapter 23 - The Twentieth Century 1940–1960</b>	.623
• The Second World War	.623
Map of Europe after World War II	.624
• The Cold War	.624
• The Postwar United States	.625
• American Fashion on Its Own	.626
• Technology and Textiles	.627
Television	.627
• Women’s Fashions During World War II	.628
• The New Look 1947–1959	.630
• Women’s Outerwear 1940–1960	.635
• Women’s Sports Apparel 1940–1960	.636
• Women’s Swimwear 1940–1960	.637
• Women’s Underwear and Sleepwear 1940–1960	.638
• Women’s Shoes 1940–1960	.640
• Women’s Jewelry 1940–1960	.641
• Women’s Hats 1940–1960	.642
• Women’s Accessories 1940–1960	.644
• Women’s Hairstyles and Makeup 1940–1960	.645
• Men’s Fashions 1940–1960	.647
• Men’s Sports Attire and Outerwear 1940–1960	.652
• Men’s Underwear and Swimwear 1940–1960	.653
• Men’s Sleepwear and Accessories 1940–1960	.654
• Men’s Grooming and Hairstyles 1940–1960	.656
• Children’s Clothing 1940–1960	.657
• Review	.659
• Questions	.661
• Research and Portfolio Projects	.661
• Glossary of Dress Terms	.662
<b>Chapter 24 - The Twentieth Century 1960–1980</b>	.665
• Nations and Powers 1960–1980	.665
• Camelot to Disco Fever: U.S. Culture 1960–1980	.666
Technology and Textiles	.667
• Women’s Fashions 1960–1980	.669
• Women’s Outerwear 1960–1980	.680
• Women’s Sports Apparel 1960–1980	.681
• Women’s Underwear and Sleepwear 1960–1980	.682
• Women’s Swimwear 1960–1980	.684
• Women’s Shoes 1960–1980	.685
• Women’s Jewelry 1960–1980	.686
• Women’s Hairstyles and Makeup 1960–1980	.687
• Women’s Hats 1960–1980	.688

## Contents

• Women’s Accessories 1960–1980	.690
• Men’s Fashions 1960–1980	.691
• Men’s Sports Attire and Outerwear 1960–1980	.696
• Men’s Underwear and Swimwear 1960–1980	.698
• Men’s Sleepwear and Accessories 1960–1980	.699
• Men’s Grooming and Hairstyles 1960–1980	.701
• Children’s Clothing 1960–1980	.702
• Review	.704
• Questions	.706
• Research and Portfolio Projects	.706
• Glossary of Dress Terms	.707
<b>Chapter 25 - The Twentieth Century 1980–Present</b>	.709
• The End of the Cold War	.709
• The Digitized 1990s and a New Millennium	.710
The Internet	.711
• The Business of Fashion	.712
• Women’s Fashions of the 1980s	.714
• Women’s Fashions of the 1990s	.719
• Women’s Fashions 2000–Present	.725
• Women’s Outerwear 1980–Present	.728
• Women’s Underwear and Sleepwear 1980–Present	.729
• Women’s Swimwear 1980–Present	.730
• Women’s Sports Attire 1980–Present	.731
• Women’s Hats 1980–Present	.732
• Women’s Shoes 1980–Present	.733
• Women’s Jewelry 1980–Present	.734
• Women’s Accessories 1980–Present	.735
• Women’s Hairstyles and Makeup 1980–Present	.736
• Men’s Fashions 1980–Present	.737
• Men’s Accessories 1980–Present	.743
• Men’s Underwear and Swimwear 1980–Present	.745
• Men’s Counterculture Styles 1980–Present	.746
• Men’s Grooming and Hairstyles 1980–Present	.746
• Children’s Clothing 1980–Present	.747
• Review	.749
• Questions	.751
• Research and Portfolio Projects	.751
• Glossary of Dress Terms	.751
<b>Chapter 26 - The Fashion Makers</b>	.753
• The Preeminence of the Designer	.753
• Dressmakers and Artists	.754
• The Fashion Makers	.755
<b>Bibliography</b>	.775
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	.797
<b>Index</b>	.805



**Figure 9-3.** By the last quarter of the first millennium BCE, bronze and silver hooks called dai gou were attached to wide girdles for fastening the ends. Many were inlaid with intricate patterns of contrasting metals and precious stones. Dai gou, c. third to first century BCE.

a shorter robe continued to be a traditional feature of Chinese costume, the practical one-piece shenyi was adopted nationwide by the beginning of the Han Dynasty. (Figure 9-4.)

Among the Han style variations of the shenyi was the addition of the **xuren**, or extended lapel. (Figure 9-5.) The left front side of the shenyi was cut into a wide triangular point that was wrapped around the torso creating a spiral hemline. The point was girded in the front. The lapel was



**Figure 9-4.** During the Han Dynasty, the one-piece wrap garment called the shenyi became a popular substitute for multiple layers of robes and skirts. Figure of nobleman of the Han Dynasty c. 206 BCE-220 CE.

made of a contrasting color or textile pattern to emphasize the diagonal lines of the spiral wrap.

Sleeves of the shenyi also developed into assorted shapes and sizes quite unlike the narrow, close-fitting styles of earlier robe designs. The most prevalent forms were large, lantern-shaped sleeves gathered into wide cuffs usually made of the same contrasting fabric as the lapels. A bell-shaped variation of this sleeve style was cut with a huge, oval cuff with openings that could measure up to four feet wide and drape to below the knees.

The second innovative costume change of the late Zhou period was the introduction of **hu-fu**, an ensemble of long trousers and a short jacket robe. (Figure 9-6.) Exactly when and how trousers were introduced into Chinese costume is still debated among historians. Most likely, the practical use of trousers was an influence from the styles of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia like those worn by Cherchen Man featured in chapter 1. In the northwest territory, the Chinese warlord Wuling of Zhao is thought to be the first ruler to broadly effect dress reform by appropriating the hu-fu ensemble from his tribal neighbors to better suit the needs of his mounted archers. The close-fitting jacket and trousers eliminated the billowing sleeves and flapping skirts of wrap robes as the horsemen rode at full speed into battle while taking steady aim with their bows. Whatever the origins, by the close of the first millennium BCE, the hu-fu trouser ensemble was a common form of dress throughout China. The comfortable and practical hu-fu would remain popular, especially with lower classes and the military, for the following 2,000 years.

During the centuries of disunity following the end of the Han Dynasty, costume changes were minimal. As with many cultures in times of crisis, a look to the past often provided a degree of security in something familiar and certain. Chinese costumes of this time continued the traditions of the Han and Zhou Dynasties.

When at last the first emperor of the Tang Dynasty reunified the warring factions and restored order, revised guidelines for dress were published by imperial edict in 621. Class distinctions were reinforced by various clothing reforms. Crafts guilds, merchants' associations, medical societies, and trades organizations had hierarchal components



**Figure 10-17.** For special ceremonies and family events, upper-class women of the Edo era wore the uchikake, a large outer kimono made of sumptuous silk textiles. It was cut with a long train and capacious sleeves. *Five Beautiful Women* by Katsushika Hokusai, c. 1800.



**Figure 10-18.** Yuzen-dyed kimono designs of the late Edo Period featured exuberant pictorials such as landscapes, city scenes, birds, and insects. Yuzen-dyed carts and lilies, c. 1675.

the lively Yuzen-dyed pictorials. Another was enhancing the size, materials, and arrangement of the sash, or **obi**. Prior to the Edo Period, the obi was a blindstitched cord or narrow belt about two or three inches wide. These sashes were purely functional to keep the kimono from becoming disarranged. They were kept narrow so as not to compete with the luxuriant textile patterns of the kimonos. Legend holds that during the great Edo fire of 1657, which destroyed a huge section of the city, women were forced to flee in such haste that their obis came loose, causing their kimonos to fly open exposing their nakedness. As a result, the long, flat woven obi first appeared. Instead of simply tying the obi about the waist, which could come loose during exertion, the new styles wrapped about the waist several times and were held in place with complex knots and bows. (Figure 10-19.)

At about the time that the obi was widened and emphasized with a prominent knot or bow, fabrics for the kosode became increasingly soft and fluid. In contrast, the obi was now made of opulent, heavy brocades and tapestry weaves. Today the obi often attracts more attention than the kimono although Japanese women strive to strike a harmonious balance between the two garments. Despite the extravagance of the obi, it must never overwhelm the kosode.

In his book on kimonos, Norio Yamanaka notes that there are as many as 500 different ways to tie the modern obi. Many of these special arrangements reflect their inspi-



**Figure 11-19.** The sari is a woman's wrap garment fashioned from a single, long piece of fabric and usually worn in combination with a choli and petticoat. To drape the nivi sari shown here, the material is first tucked into the waistband of a petticoat all around (A) with gathers or pinch pleats in the front (B-C). The remainder of the fabric is pulled around the back, then forward under the right arm, and across the chest to drape loosely over the left shoulder (D).

blouse button that exposed her bra.

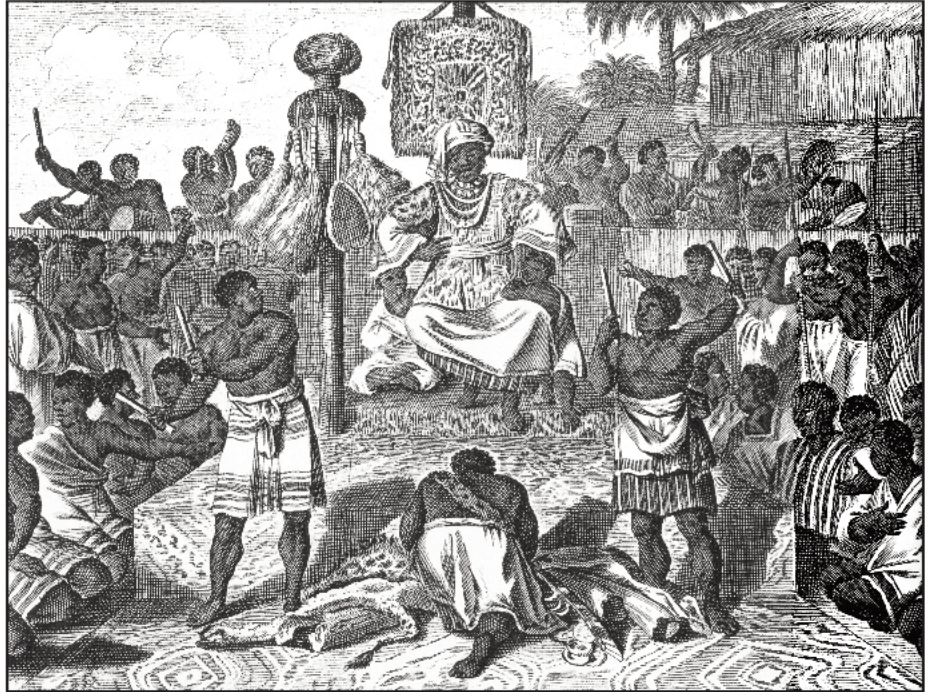
The ensemble of the dupatta, choli, and ghagra is the precursor of the most prevalent style of modern Indian costume for women, the **sari** (also saree). Indeed, some historians erroneously refer to the wrap skirt and scarf arrangements of the ancient or medieval eras as the sari. But in actuality, as a distinct garment, the sari developed only during the late seventeenth century, according to costume historian Arabina Biswas. It is the arrangement of the torso scarf, the **odhni** (also orhni or odhani), that confuses many researchers. By the late Mughal period the dupatta as worn by women had evolved into a longer, wider scarf called the odhni, which literally means "covering." In certain regions, Hindu women used the odhni not only as an upper torso garment but also as a head covering, which they could pull across their face as a gesture of respect and modesty in the presence of elder family members and people of senior status outside the home.

Although the sari is actually a single garment, it may be worn in combination with an underskirt, or petticoat, and a choli. There are numerous ways to drape the sari, some of

which have become characteristic of regional tribal costumes. The most common style today is the **nivi sari** with its distinctive pleated front. (Figure 11-19.) The draping method begins with a single piece of fabric six yards in length and about forty-five inches wide. These oblong textiles are not just yardage of any cut fabric but rather are woven to size with finished borders and a decorative end, called a **pallav**, as part of the cloth panel. Changing trends in border width, the design of the pallav, and the type or color of fabric are key barometers of Indian women's fashion.

According to researcher Chantal Boulanger, to arrange a sari, begin tucking the fabric into the petticoat on the right side of the abdomen, and work to the left tucking across the front. (A.) At the left hip, form a single pleat and tuck that into the petticoat. (B.) Continue tucking the fabric around the back and forward to the right hip, where another single pleat is folded and tucked into the petticoat forming the closing of the sari skirt. (C.) With the remaining length of material, make five or six overlapping pleats in the front, each pleat about four fingers in width, and tuck into the petticoat.

**Figure 12-12.** Almost from the first contact with Portuguese in the 1400s, the ruling class of the Kongo kingdom of the Zaire River Basin adopted elements of European culture and dress, blending and modifying Western elements with their unique traditions. Here the king wears cut-and-sewn cloth garments layered with indigenous woven raffia wraps and animal skins. Illustration from *Description de L'Afrique* by Olfert Dapper 1686.



ly behind the king's head.

For everyday dress, the principal symbol of the Kongo king's authority was a specially constructed cap, the **mpu**. Some caps were made of a single cord of raffia worked in a spiral from the center of the crown to the outer edge. The unbroken line of the spiral symbolized a long life. Other types of mpu were made of sumptuously embroidered squares of woven raffia, each with a symbolic meaning of its

own, sewn together to fashion a tall dome.

Headdresses and coiffures were of special significance to the peoples of the Zaire River basin. Even into the twentieth century, for the elite of many groups, whether they adopted Western clothing or retained customary types of wrap garments, the most important status symbol was a hat or headdress. (Figure 12-13.) Innumerable varieties of materials were employed to shape headgear, including reeds,



**Figure 12-13.** Elaborate headdresses and hair arrangements served as symbols of status and ethnic identity. Distinctive headgear shapes were constructed with wood, basketry, or wire frames and adorned with feathers, fur, shells, beadwork, and precious materials. From the Zaire River Basin c. 1910: left, the wife of Mangbetu chief; center, the wife of Mayogo chief; right, Bangba warrior.



**Figure 13-33.** The elaborate eagle-feather headdress, called a warbonnet, was the most distinctive accessory of the Plains Indians. Richly patterned quillwork on the headband and ermine pelts at each side added to the opulence of the warbonnet. Flathead chief wearing warbonnet with ermine dangles, c. 1910.

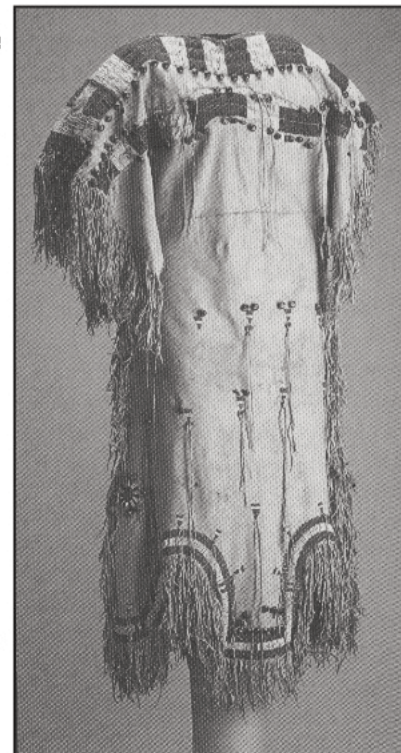
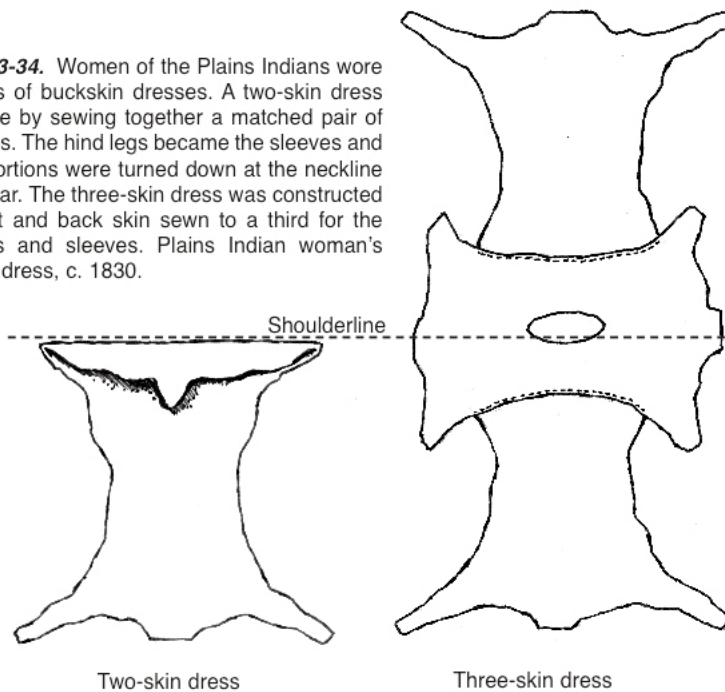
exceptional valor, each feather symbolizing a heroic act. Colorful quillwork across the headband and ermine pelts at the sides added to the magnificence of the headdress.

The principal garment of women was a long, tunic-style dress. (Figure 13-34.) To achieve a longer length than that of a man's tunic, the **two-skin dress** was made from a matched pair of full-size deer or antelope hides. The neckline was formed by folding down the tail portion of the skin and sewing the two halves together. The hind legs became the sleeves. The untrimmed edges at the sides were stitched closed and fringed. The **three-skin dress** was more commonly used by groups of the north central regions such as the Arapaho, Crow, and Dakota. The garment was constructed of front and back hides sewn to a third that formed the shoulders and sleeves.

Buckskin leggings, capes, and moccasins were the basic feminine accessories of the Plains peoples. In addition, women of the most prosperous families wore a wide collar, called a **dentalium cape**, that covered the shoulders and upper torso similar to the ancient Egyptian pectoral. It was made of several rows of tiny dentalium shells strung together in circular bands with a hole in the center for the head. Dentalium shells were also used as appliques for prized utilitarian objects such as men's pipe and tobacco bags. For the Plains peoples, shells were a form of money.

Elk's teeth also were applied to women's garments to symbolize the preeminence of the family. The arrangement of rows of drilled elk incisors on feminine outer tunics and capes represented having a prodigious hunter in the family

**Figure 13-34.** Women of the Plains Indians wore two types of buckskin dresses. A two-skin dress was made by sewing together a matched pair of deer hides. The hind legs became the sleeves and the tail portions were turned down at the neckline like a collar. The three-skin dress was constructed of a front and back skin sewn to a third for the shoulders and sleeves. Plains Indian woman's buckskin dress, c. 1830.







**Figure 16-6.** Men's doublets and jackets of the second half of the sixteenth century were narrow through the shoulders and sleeves. The front of the tight-fitting bodice was padded into an exaggerated protrusion called a peascod belly. Upper stocks had ballooned into globular pumpkin hose, which were layered with vertical strips of fabric called panes. *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, by an unknown artist, 1570.

of lace were reserved for men of the highest ranks until the 1600s when sumptuary regulations were relaxed and lace became more widely available.

Another significant development in the second half of the 1500s was the expansion of the upper stocks into globular melon breeches or pumpkin hose. The style worn by the Earl of Leicester in Figure 16-6 was constructed with vertical strips of fabric called panes that held their balloon, or pumpkin, shape over a padded lining. The panes were often made of a costly brocade or embroidered material, or even tooled leather, and the lining was a less expensive plainweave silk or satin. As much as forty yards of fabric were needed to provide the necessary volume for some cuts of pumpkin hose. During the mid-century, the lining formed puffs of material between the panes, complementing the slashing on sleeves, hats, and shoes. At the end of the century, variants of the pumpkin hose were reduced to barely more than short rolls around the hips. (Figure 16-7 and Color Plate 7.) For the middle classes, pumpkin hose developed into various cuts of



**Figure 16-7.** By the last quarter of the 1500s, some forms of pumpkin hose were shortened to barely more than rolls around the hips. The codpiece gradually disappeared beneath the sack-like shapes of pumpkin hose and baggy breeches. Also abbreviated in cut was the Spanish cape that was more decorative than utilitarian. *Charles IX* by an unknown painter, 1585.

knee breeches without the elaborate layer of panes. The enormous Venetians were popular in Protestant circles, especially among the Puritans in Flanders and England for whom the style demonstrated conservative modesty. In England, simple knee breeches were known as **slops** (sloppes). **Canions** were extensions of trunk hose covering the thighs, usually cropped at the knees, that were made to coordinate or contrast with the full, upper section. The volume of pumpkin hose and the new forms of breeches concealed the codpiece, making it irrelevant to the evolving masculine profile. By the 1590s, the codpiece had disappeared.

**Figure 20-20.** Many of the decorative dress accessories that became popular during the Crinoline Age were carried over into the bustle period. Ornamental neckwear, for example, served the same purposes as before—to provide modest concealment and wardrobe variety. Many of the styles that looked basically the same were cataloged in magazines with a confusing array of fashion terms. Illustrations from *Harper's Bazaar*, 1883.



CAPE AND LACE FRONT COLLAR



FIG. 1.—LACE COLLAR WITH JAWS



FIG. 2.—VELVET COLLAR WITH LACE FLASHES



FIG. 3.—VELVET COLLAR WITH GATHERS OF VELVET, GATHERS, AND LACE

lengths. (Figure 20-21.) Some were layered with detachable hoods and elbow-length capes. The **ulster** was a new form of long coat made of water resistant serge, which was ideal for "traveling or walking," according to *Peterson's* in 1886.

Mantles, capes, cloaks, and other circular wrap garments varied little from the designs of the 1850s. A new type of short cape with wide sleeves was called the **dolman**, which was regarded as a garment for older women. When venturing outdoors in the coldest weather, women often added heavy mantles over their topcoats.

Transitional outerwear—called **demi-saison** styles—were lighter garments for cool days in autumn or spring. These types of jackets and coats were frequently made of furry-looking but lightweight textiles such as **boucle wool** or **frise wool**. Among the new types of light outerwear were sleeveless jackets made of muslin or knit cashmere that looked like vests with basques or peplums. These were worn over dress bodices in chilly weather and should not be confused with the cropped varieties of vests that were worn under suit jackets.

The knit **jersey** was a fashion phenomenon of the 1880s that originated in England. Although the knitted woolen tops worn by fishermen of the Channel Islands had been known as jerseys (also guernseys) since the 1600s, fashion lore holds that the famous actress Lillie Langtree popularized the garment when she donned one to play tennis. Because Lillie was from the Isle of Jersey, her sobriquet was "the Jersey Lily," from which the knit tops are said to have been named. At first the jersey was a plain, long-sleeve top that fitted smoothly over the hips. By 1883, though, *Harper's Bazaar* noted that, "since the Jersey has been deprived of its scant look and improved in shape by American modistes, who have added a collar, cuffs, and pleatings at the back . . . it has become both a popular and a fashionable garment." Because the Jersey was an easy garment to manufacture, the style became widely adopted by middle- and working-class women through the mass-marketing of ready-to-wear makers. (Figure 20-22.)



**Figure 20-21.** During the bustle era, many traditional forms of outerwear such as the pelisse and redingote were easily adapted to the bustle silhouette. Fashion plate of velvet and worsted pelisse from *Harper's Bazaar*, 1883.



**Figure 24-19.** The classic look of the English drape suit was revived in the early 1970s. Adaptations were made in the new polyester double knits as well as traditional fabrics. Gatsby style suit from St. Laurie, 1976.

Parallel with the high style of the Gatsby look in the early seventies was the persistent demand in the menswear market for greater ease and comfort in suiting. The durable, easy-care synthetic knits that had continued to gain popularity throughout the sixties became integral to suit and sports jacket designs of the 1970s. The polyester double-knit or stretch denim **leisure suit** was a casual alternative to the tailored sports jacket or blazer based on the safari coat of the 1960s. (Figure 24-20.) The shirt-like jackets with big patch pockets and wide collars were unconstructed—without the lining and padding of tailored suit jackets. Some were cropped bolero style, but most were worn like an untucked shirt, often with an unfastened front. Flared trousers were of the same material as the jacket with sharp, permanently



**Figure 24-20.** The leisure suit was a popular alternative to tailored sports jackets in the 1970s. Variations included the vest suit for young men and styles with oversized patch pockets based on the safari coat. Left, tweed vest suit with matching overcoat by Jon Jolcin, 1970; right, polyester double knit leisure suit by John Hampton, 1975.

