

## A Photo Essay on Hausa Female Embroidered Caps in Zaria

**Morenike Folabalogun**

Faculty of Humanities Management and Social Sciences

School of Visual and Performing Arts

Department of Creative Arts and Tourism

Kwara State University, Malete

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijasct.2014/vol12n1115>

Published January 09 2024

---

**Citation:** Folabalogun M. (2024) A Photo Essay on Hausa Female Embroidered Caps in Zaria, *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.1-15

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Photo Essay of Female Hausa caps in Zaria, Northern Nigeria is part of their cultural signature and creativity. The methodology adopted for the research is qualitative; which includes non-participant observation, oral interviews, literary, materials, Internet resources and analysis. Pictures of embroidered caps indicated established the existence of female embroidered caps The researcher also concluded that the females work as hard as their male counterparts but face economic, biological and cultural challenges.*

**KEYWORDS:** caps, essay, embroidered, female, photo,

---

### INTRODUCTION

The Hausa male embroidered caps are common, from the ones children wore to that of adults. Hausa males and females have been involved in the art of embroidery of caps for long, however not much is known of the female embroiderers like their male counterparts. The photo essay is a visual documentation of the art, exploring method, artists used by female embroiderers in their profession. The term 'Hausa' actually refers to the language and by extension, to its native speakers, of whom there are about 25 million (Hausa Encyclopedia of World Cultures, 1996). Traditional attire in Nigeria is as diverse as the ethnic groups, and the popular Hausa embroidered caps are not only worn by the Hausa, but are worn by other ethnic group in Nigeria and outside Nigeria. In Nigeria and Africa in general clothing's including caps serves decorative and cultural purposes. The art of working embroidery with raised ornamental decoration or adornment designs in various types of threads like silk, cotton, gold, silver, or other materials, upon any woven fabric, leather, paper, with the aid of a needle, crochet or embroidery machine as a form of decoration has been in existence for long (History of Embroidery, 2016). The variety and luxurious, intricate and elaborate designs of the embroidered caps render them among Nigeria's splendid artistic signatures and historically the medium have been passed down from generation to generation and is vibrant

in the northern part of Nigeria and other parts of Nigeria with Hausa settlements. The exploration, understanding and application of colours, motifs and patterns are done without a formal education or knowledge of the famous German Bauhaus principles of Art and Design of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

**Methodology:** Methodology adapted is qualitative which includes thematic, narrative, descriptive, and expository in terms of detailed shots of Hausa female embroidered caps.

**Statement of the Problem:** The problem of this study is that Scholars, anthropologists, historians and others have discussed Hausa cloth and cap embroidery, but have excluded Hausa female cap embroiderers from their researches. Studies continue to exclude the works of Hausa female cap embroiderers, hence do not consider the existence of the female embroiderers and their works.

**Aim of the Study:** The aim of this photo essay is to establish the fact that, Hausa females are involved in the art of cap embroidery like their male counterparts.

**Significance of the Study:** The photo essay will stimulate further inquiry, and serves as a repository for researchers and scholars in Art History. The photo essay also becomes a historical documentation to raise awareness against the assumption that only the men are involved in the art of cap embroidery. The author, therefore presents a photo essay of Hausa female embroidered caps in Paki village, Zaria, Nigeria as a proof that the Hausa female cap embroiderers exist and are involved in the profession.

**Scope of the Study:** The photo essay on the Hausa female cap embroiderers is restricted in scope to Paki village in Zaria for field study in Kaduna State. Thirty-five pictures of Hausa female embroidered caps, with names of artists and year of production are provided.

**Hand Embroidery:** Some of the basic techniques or stitches of the earliest embroidery are chain stitch, button hole or blanket stitch, running stitch, cross stitch; these stitches remain fundamental techniques of hand embroidery presently (Bryan and Gillon,1999). The materials used for Hausa cap embroidery includes; needles, cotton fabrics, threads of various brands and colours. The fabrics used for cap embroidery are in two pieces the upper part and the main body of the cap. Hausa female embroiderers exist and are involved in the art of handcrafted or handmade caps, using needle and varieties of embroidery threads with trademarks like *mai lamba* (number brand), *mai hanga* (hanger brand), *mai bindiga* (gun brand) on cotton fabrics, a colour is used one after the other in an organized manner.



Plate: I. Embroidered cap, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State.  
Medium: Cotton. Adornment: Male Use. Artist: Muriija Umar  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun. December 2019

**Plate: I.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *bangwal Kube*. The embroidered cap is handmade; using needle and thread classified as *Bangwal Kube* due to the bigger thread patterns in design, with an actual and invented texture, symmetrical in balance. The current is abstraction, and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer, it has been sold. Five prominent colours used for the embroidery include, Ashe, White, Blue, Green and Orange,



Plate: II. Embroidered cap, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State.  
Medium: Cotton. Adornment: Male Use. Artist: Hassana Jibril  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun. December 2019

**Plate: II.** Hausa female embroidered cap. The name of the cap is *Zullum kube*, reflecting the recent governor of Bornu State's influence; he was one of the first to make the design popular. The cap is handcrafted; the designs are made of shapes, lines creating an actual and invented texture, symmetrical in balance with a full drop repeat. The current is abstraction, and this particular embroidered cap is not in the habitat of the embroiderer but it is sold out. The colours that are pronounced on the fabric are black, red, blue, orange, and white.



Plate: III. Embroidered cap, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State.  
Medium: Cotton. Adornment: Male Use. Artist: Suwira Mamman  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun. December 2019

**Plate: III.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Bangwal Kube*. The name is derived from the bigger thread pattern designs on like the normal Kube with smaller pattern designs. Noticeable motif on the bother design is the *Masallaci Qudus* Motif (mosque of West Jerusalem) followed by zigzag patterns and noticeable colours are white, red, black, yellow, dash of green. The type of embroidery is handcrafted; with needle and thread. The current is abstraction with a full drop repeat pattern and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer, it has been sold.



Plate: IV. Embroidered cap *Bangwal Kube*, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Adornment: Male Use. Artist: Aisha Abdullahi  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: IV.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Bangwal Kube*. *Bangwal Kube* indicates a bigger version thread design of the normal *Kube*. Cap embroidery is homemade; with the aid of needle and thread. The genre is abstract, it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer, and it has been sold.

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Colours used for designing include, green, white, black, brown, ochre, blue, with kite like shapes and lines in the design formation.



Plate: V. Embroidered cap Bangwal Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Amina Bello  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: V.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Bangwal Kube*. The type of embroidery is handcrafted; with needle and thread. The designs are made of lines and shapes and some symbolize important expressions, the bother designs on this cap are made of different versions of *Masallaci* motifs, the *Masallaci* motif on the left shows the building and an inner door like greyish and the one on the right has a design within and a solid ochre colour at the edge from one point to another all with an inverted V-shape above. Noticeable colours used include blue, white, ochre, black, brown, grey and green. The design is of actual and invented texture, symmetrical in balance and more of a border layout design. The current is abstraction, adornment is for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: VI. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Jemilah Abubakar  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: VI.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. *Kube* means designs on caps with smaller thread design but this still has centralized big designs. The type of embroidery is handmade; with needle and thread. Distinct colours used in designing are white, blue, orange, ochre, and grey with sugar cube designs like shapes and lines. Within the cap design are five centralized kite like shapes in white with designs within. Some motifs are mere designs while some represent important events or things. Design approach is abstraction and symmetrical in balance, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: VII. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Halimah Buba  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: VII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. *Kube* caps are grouped into caps with smaller motif thread designs. Handcrafted; with diverse motif designs made up of shapes and lines with the aid of needle and thread building an actual and invented texture and symmetrical in balance. Apparent colours include purple, white, black, and ochre. The design is abstract in appearance, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer. Genre is abstraction, adornment for male use.



Plate: IX. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Binta Aliyu

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: IX.** Hausa female embroidered cap known as ‘Kube’. The type of embroidery is homemade; designs are made of lines and shapes using needle and thread of miscellaneous thread brands for embroidery, in other to develop an actual and invented texture. Symmetrical in balance, the vogue is abstract, adornment for male use. The cap is classified as *Kube* because the embroidery thread pattern is smaller intricate shapes compared to *Bangwal Kube* with bigger thread patterns. Eye-catching colours on design include white, green, brown, ochre, blue and orange. The design forms are different sizes of kite like shapes juxtaposed with other smaller designs.



**Plate: XI.** Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Binta Bashir

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019.**Plate: XI.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. The type of embroidery is handcrafted; with the aid of needle and thread. Designs are made of lines and shapes to discover patterns resulting in an actual and invented texture and symmetrical in balance. Motifs used in this cap design include *Masallaci* motif at the bother right hand side and left side of the cap outlined in black lines with black slender pillar like columns on a solid lilac embroidered cap fabric, zigzag lines crossing each other from left and right created a kite-like shape in the middle of the pattern outlined in grey lines on top of another bigger black kite like shape with a flat black edge running the same length as the grey kite like shape on top. The bearing is abstract, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



**Plate XII.** Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Adiza Yahaya  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. Female Hausa embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. Embroidery type is home crafted; designs are made of lines and shapes using needle and thread of unlike thread varieties, to form an actual and invented texture. Symmetrical in balance, the flash is abstract, adornment for male use. The cap is classified as *Kube* because the embroidery thread pattern is smaller, compared to *Bangwal Kube* with bigger thread patterns. Noteworthy colours on cap fabric design include white, green, brown and orange. The prominent design form is the *Masallaci* motif at the edge of the right hand side of fabric, running from one edge to the other outlined in brown while other designs are to create a flow in patterning.



**Plate XIII.** Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Mariam Maliafiya  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XIII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. embroidery type is home crafted; designs are made of lines and shapes using needle and thread of multiple thread qualities, to initiate an actual and invented texture. Symmetrical in balance, the peculiarity is abstract, adornment for



male use. The cap is classified as *Kube* because the embroidery thread pattern is smaller compared to *Bangwal Kube* with bigger thread patterns. Observable colours on cap fabric design include white, blue, brown, and orange. The obvious design form is the *Masallaci* motif outlined in brown at the edge of the left hand side of fabric, running from one edge to the other and infused with light blue column like designs with dash of orange designs, while other designs are to build a flow in patterning.



Plate: XV. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Rabi Lawal  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XV.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. Handcrafted; using needle and assorted threads, conceiving several design stiches to establish lines and shapes in constructing actual and invented texture and symmetry in balance. The technique is abstract; adornment for male use. The cap is grouped under *Kube* because the embroidery thread designs are smaller. Conspicuous colours include black, white, green, brown, purple, and ochre. The design on this cap has no symbolic meaning, it is a design formed for ordinary use.



Plate: XVII. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State

Medium: Cotton. Artist: Hussana Aminu

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XVII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Kube*. Embroidery type is homemade; forming lines and shapes of various thread class, with the aid of needle and thread to design. Actual and invented textures were initiated by embroiderers because of the application of elements of art design. Trait is abstract, adornment for male use. *Kube* caps embroidery thread patterns are smaller in design. Marked colours on cap fabric design include white, brown, and blue. The notable design forms are different sizes of dotted lines, squares, pyramid like and kite-like shapes amongst others.



Plate: XVIII. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State

Medium: Cotton. Artist: Aishatu Ibrahim

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XVIII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Kube*. *Kube* caps are grouped into caps with smaller motif thread designs. Handcrafted; with populous motif designs made up of lines, zigzags, kite-like shapes, triangles and dotted shapes using needles and varieties of thread to actualize an actual and invented texture with symmetrical balance. No symbolic meanings attached to any of the motifs, the motifs were created just for design patterns. Appreciable colours include brown, blue, green, and white. The form is abstract in appearance, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: XIX. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Zanab Maidawa  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XIX.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Kube*. Embroidery type is handmade; using needle and numerous threads varieties, producing peculiar design stitches to conceive lines and shapes in forging actual and invented texture in symmetrical balance. The style is abstraction, adornment for male use. Thread designs on *Kube* caps are smaller. Eye-catching motif on the bother designs on both sides of the fabric is the symbolic motif of *Masallaci* which translate to place of worship in English, the motif on the right hand side is in solid brown with two lines running down, with three dotted white spots at the top of the lines, while the motif on the left is in solid white colour with kite-like design of two big ones and four smaller ones within each *Masallaci* motif. Zigzag patterns to create rhythm in design were used in the middle. Evident colours are deep blue, white and brown.



Plate: XX. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Amina Musa  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XX.** Hausa female embroidered caps of different versions of ‘*Kube*’. Embroidery type is handmade; using needle and thread of different thread grades to forge an actual and invented

texture, symmetrical in balance. The technique is abstraction, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer. No symbolic meaning attached to motifs, the motifs are just design patterns. Notable colours are blue, white, green, ochre, orange and brown on a blue solid embroidered fabric.



Plate: XXI. Hausa Female embroidered cap, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State.

Medium: Cotton. Adornment: Male Use.

Artist: Hansatu Ali, December 2019

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun

**Plate: XXI.** Hausa female embroidered cap named *Ayye*. The type of embroidery is handcrafted, using needle and thread. The name 'Ayye' according to the female embroiderers in Paki village is derived from the Hausa female exclamation when talking or singing. The designs are made of assorted motifs like *Masallaci* motifs (mosque) amongst others. Some of the motifs symbolize important expressions while some are just motifs to create flow in design. Combination of different types of threads are used creating an actual and invented texture, the embroidered cap is symmetrical in balance. The current is abstraction; it is in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: XXII. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State

Medium: Cotton. Artist: Halima Bako

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XXII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. Embroidery is homemade; with the aid of needle and assorted thread brands concocting an actual and invented texture, with symmetry of balance. The background is embroidered in one solid colour of brown. Major motif utilized for the patterning of this cap is another version of *Masallaci* motif (Moque) repeated boldly all over, using two major colours brown and light brown with a dash of blue on the columns. The *Masallaci* motif has a symbolic meaning, but other motifs on the cap are just to continue the flow in design. The style is abstraction; adornment for male use, the cap is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: XXIII. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Mamuna Aliyu  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XXIII.** Hausa female embroidered cap named ‘Kube’. Embroidery is homemade; with the aid of needle and assorted thread brands concocting an actual and invented texture, with symmetry of balance. The background is embroidered in one solid colour of brown. Major motif utilized for the patterning of this cap is another version of *Masallaci* motif (Mosque) repeated boldly all over, using major colours like brown, blue, orange, white, and black. The *Masallaci* motif has a symbolic meaning, but other motifs on the cap like the kite-like shapes on the *Masallaci* motif with some zigzags and dotted spots are for continuity and flow in design. The style is abstraction; adornment for male use, the cap is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: XXIV. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State  
Medium: Cotton. Artist: Hassana Alimi  
Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XXIV.** Hausa female embroidered caps of different types of *Kube*. The type of embroidery is handcrafted; with needle and threads to erect major design forms of white squares and dotted brown in between the white squares all over. No symbolic meanings attached to any of the motifs, the motifs were created just for design patterns. Evident colours are white, blue and brown. Actual texture can be felt when touched and invented texture is seen through the use and application of bringing into existence of designs, design is also symmetrical in balance. The appearance is abstraction, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderer.



Plate: XXV. Embroidered cap Kube, Paki village, Zaria, Kaduna State

Medium: Cotton. Artist: Aisha Bature

Photographed by Morenike FolaBalogun, December 2019

**Plate: XXV.** Hausa female embroidered caps of different versions of ‘*Kube*. The type of embroidery is handmade; using needle and several threads, generating multiple design stiches to set up lines and shapes in creating actual and invented texture and symmetry in balance. The description is abstract, adornment for male use and it is not in the habitat of the embroiderers. Prominent colours on cap include, blue, white, orange, yellow and black. The motifs have no symbolic meanings; they are created for design sake.

## CONCLUSION

Robbins opined that ‘Women do two third of the world’s work, earn ten percentage of the world’s income and own one percentage of the means of production. This saying cannot be over emphasized in the case of the female cap embroiderers in Paki village in Zaria. The sole financier of the embroidery profession for the females in Paki is helping them in a way. But on the other hand, a constant dominance and financial control over the female embroiderers in Paki village Zaria, by a sole financier is visibly a gender issue, that just one man controls the embroidery pattern distribution, quality of production, economical income on embroidered caps, and sales of finished products. The married Hausa female cap embroiderers in Paki village Zaria, battles with these biological issues and labour like pregnancy, local maternity leave given to themselves after delivery, house chores and raising children, lack of financial income which have affected their output in terms of numbers of embroidered caps done in weeks or months. Female embroiderers

in this research continue to work hard in a culturally induced silence that makes the majority of males visible that suggests the females are mere child bearers and raising children. It shows that the females in the research are also capable of working as efficiently as the males, if given the opportunity. During the field work research in 2019, the female embroiderers revealed that, household chores, pregnancies, raising and caring for children, also affected the quantities of embroidered caps done by the females in comparison to the males.

### **REFERENCES**

Bryan, G. . (1999.). *Historical Application and Techniques*. Pp. 12,178

"Hausa" *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. (1996). Retrieved from Retrieved September 08, 2018 from Encyclopedia.com.<http://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedia-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/hausa>.

*History of Embroidery*. (2016). Retrieved from <https://coldesi.com>, retrieved (2019).

Robbins, R. H. (1999). *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*. Boston Allyn and Bacon.