



Religious Costumes

Nuns who leave home when they are old to labour in monasteries, baking bread or caring for the household needs of the priests, wear a simple, full-cut kemis of the coarsest material without ornamentation. A white head-cloth is wrapped about their cropped heads, and the older nuns carry prayer sticks for support. Through it may not be visible; a cross is always about the neck. The Islamic religion had its origin in Arabia around 600 A.D and be considered as equally old in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a multitude of functionaries and the priest, deacon or nun is a familiar sight, especially in the city, where there are large number of churches and religious centers. Priests and deacons dress simply, in a long cotton gown that is a variation of the kemis, a cloche-style hat, sometimes draped with cloth, called a kob; and a cloak of heavy material with stiff stand-up collar, called a kaba. A fly whisk, hand cross, or prayer stick (used for support during the long church services) may be carried. On special occasions the netela worn over the priest's shoulders has a colourful stripe, and priests of the higher rank wear richly embroidered bands and kaba decorated with metallic thread.



However, there is no formal dress whereby one can differentiate the religious hierarchy from the ordinary Muslims. The official structure is as follows; the 'AlemejlusAl'aleaLishu'un Al Islamia' highest rank, equivalent to Archbishop; the 'Muftin', equivalent to bishop by rank; the 'Imam', Prayer leader equivalent to parish priest; the 'sheiks', religious teachers; and the 'Kadis', Judges. Irrespective of their functions, they all wear almost the same dress, i.e long trousers, kemis, koffia and turban or the head. Some put on a large cloak (juba).