



Sudanese Jibba

Sudan, 1890s

Rough cotton with felted wool patches

114 cm long, 120 cm wide

Stock no.: A6076

Provenance: From a British family collection, acquired ca. 1900.

A Sudanese *jibba* made from rough cotton known as *dammur*, with felted wool appliquéd patches. It has a round neckline, A-line body and straight sleeves. Red rectangular panels are applied to the arms, chest, and back, while blue rectangular panels are applied to the bottom of the garment.

The *jibba* is associated with followers of Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi of Sudan, a Sufi leader who led a holy war against the Ottoman-Egyptian ruling class of Sudan. He died shortly after his successful Siege of Khartoum in 1885, but a Mahdist State continued into 1899.¹ The garment is derived from a ragged tunic worn by Sufi mendicants known as a *muraqqa'a*. Initially worn as a sign of ascetism, it became an increasingly lavish symmetrical, designed costume. It is thought that the appliquéd sections may have been used to distinguish different military ranks.²

Many *jibbas* were collected on the battlefield during the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Sudan (1896–1899) and taken to Britain as war trophies. Indeed, this jibba was brought to the UK at this time, and used as a fancy dress costume by children in ca. 1900. Many examples are now housed in UK museums. Of the several Sudanese *jibbas* in the British Museum, all were produced between 1885 and 1900 (see accession nos [Af1909.0315.4](#) and [Af1979.01.5090](#) for similar examples). Others are held in the National Army Museum (accession no. [NAM.1963-11-66-1](#)), collected from the Battle of Omdurman, and Reading Museum (accession no. [1930.115.1](#)), taken from the Battle of Tamai.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

[1] Seri-Hersch, Iris. 'The Mahdiyya Movement in Sudan', in Andrea Alfred J. (ed.), *World History Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, vol. 16, pp. 882–883.

[2] Picton, John, and John Mack. *African Textiles*. London: British Museum, 1989, p. 173.