

Minis, afro topped 1960s fashion

By Jacqueline Emodek

Renowned fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent once said dressing is a way of life. It is an aspect of fashion which is a popular trend, especially in styles of dress and ornament or manners of behaviour.

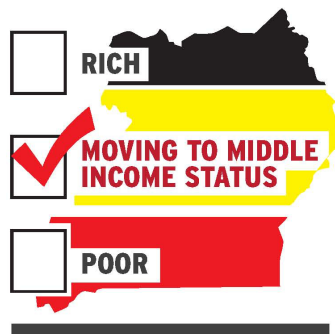
The 1960s have been termed as the decade of fashion rebellion; it was the time when there was a shift from the long conservative dresses to the rising hemlines, famously known as mini-skirts and the shift dresses.

Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of US President John F. Kennedy, became widely known for her beauty, grace and elegant style of dress. Her many public appearances popularised pearl necklaces, the pillbox hat (a small hat with a flat top and straight sides) and simple, big-buttoned suits.

The fashion icons were British teenage supermodel Leslie Hornby, also known as Twiggy and famous actress Audrey Hepburn, whose signature attires comprised flat shoes, three-quarter pants and plain black shift dresses.

In Uganda, in the run-up to independence, Princess Elizabeth Bagaya of Toro kingdom was the ultimate fashion icon, having been the first African woman to appear on the cover of *Harper's Bazaar* and also the first to have been given a spread in the fashion bible, *Vogue*.

However, in the early 1960s, women in Uganda still stuck to the traditional wear (*gomesi*), while others embraced



the British conservative styles.

Perpetua Amuge Odeke, who was 21 years old in 1960 and living in Soroti district, recalls that Ugandan women wore *gomesis*, *kitenge* and long dresses which were later termed 'Amin *Nvako*', a term coined after the former president banned women from wearing miniskirts.

"We also wore bed sheets, which were cut according to someone's size. We did not own shoes because they were expensive," she says.

However, Amuge says they wore wooden shoes, known as *scools*, for the bathroom. Women also adopted suites, hats and body stockings. Round skirts, also known as the 'twist and tight', were a hit, especially for the ballroom dances.

Hair styles

The afros reigned supreme among both men and women. However, some women plaited cornrows, known as *Kiswahili* and *bututwa*. The straight hair syndrome was beginning to take its toll. Amuge says ladies resorted to using pieces of heated broken pot and



Princess Bagaya (left) used to be the fashion icon for Ugandan women in the 1960s

iron sheets to straighten their hair after applying oil to it.

Accessories

During independence, the women's handbags in Uganda were made out of palm leaves and sisal.

Jewelry was a specialty of the Asian women and the most popular piece was a spiral bangle that went round the woman's hand.

"It was known as *ikomo* in Ateso and *kikomo* in Luganda," Amuge says.

Shoes

When it came down to the shoes, women teetered on closed platform shoes, popularly known as *gabon*.

Men's fashion

Kavuma Kaggwa, a veteran journalist,

says after 70 years under British rule, most of the country's way of life was hinged on their characteristics.

He says during and after independence, Uganda's first president, Kabaka Mutesa I of Buganda, was the fashion icon for the males.

"One day in 1958, he attended a football match in Katwe wearing a tweed coat and it immediately became popular among the young men," Kaggwa recalls.

The tweed jacket is a rough woolen fabric of a soft open, flexible texture, closely woven, usually with a plain weave, twill or herringbone structure.

Tweeds are an icon of the traditional Irish and British country clothing, usually worn as informal outerwear because their material was moisture –

resistant and durable. Although it was a thing of the 19th century, the tweed made a comeback in 2015.

Mutesa also made the double breasted jacket a favourite when he wore one adorned with golden buttons to church.

"I do not recall which church it was, but it was either Rubaga or Namirembe Cathedral. All I know is the men immediately wanted to own double breasted jackets after seeing the Kabaka," Kaggwa says.

At least every man ensured that they owned two suits and the art of wearing one dictated that the man wore matching shoes.

"If you wore a black suit, you had to wear black shoes and if the suit was brown, you had to wear brown shoes," Kaggwa notes.

It is impossible to talk about suits in the 1960s and not acknowledge the Kaunda suit, which became a favourite of Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere and many Ugandan men.

Originally called the safari suit, with its roots in India, the quadri-pocket short-sleeved jacket became known as the Kaunda suit, a trademark of former Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda.

The suit also drew influence from the tailored style of China's Mao Zedong.

"Nyerere first saw the suit on Kaunda during a delegates conference, which he attended wearing an English suit. He admired it and chose to make it his signature outfit," Kaggwa explains.

In Uganda, the Kaunda suit was preferred in navy blue, cream and beige.



Happy Independence

UGANDA @54

The Board, Management and Staff of The Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL), congratulate H.E The President and all Ugandans on this occasion to mark the 54th Independence Day celebrations for all accomplishments that have helped to transform the economy of Uganda.



Seated L-R, UETCL MD/CEO Mr. Eriasi Kiyemba and ZTE (U) Ltd MD Mr. Duan Hongliang (Henry) sign partnership certificates witnesses by the outgoing Chinese Ambassador H.E Zhao Yali (Right), Minister for ICT Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, UETCL DCEO Mr. Willy Kiryahika and UETCL Manager, ICT Mr. Peter Ighibolu.

With the development of the mobile technology and booming electronic multimedia applications in the country, there has been a high demand of the fibre services, which has been solved by the introduction of a high speed (100Gbps) data infrastructure called the Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) by UETCL in partnership with ZTE (U) Ltd.

UETCL and ZTE (U) Ltd will use the data infrastructure to provide a high speed, quality and cheap internet connection in Uganda and the East African region.