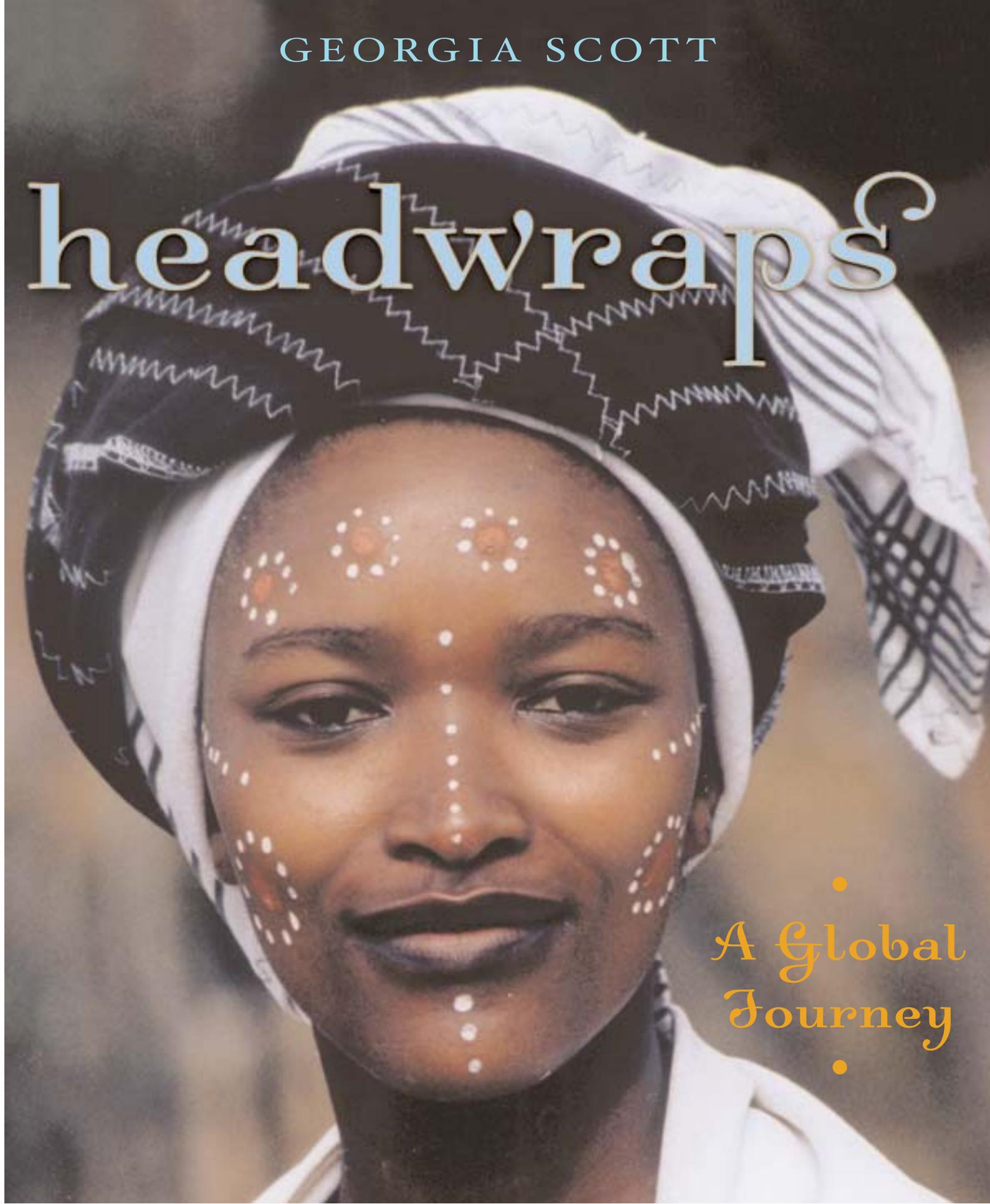


GEORGIA SCOTT

headwraps

•
A Global
Journey
•



AFRICA

The Sahara Desert (Morocco and Tunisia)

The Sahel Desert (Mali and Niger)

West Africa's Gulf Coast
(Senegal, Ghana, Benin and Nigeria)

South Africa

Ethiopia

Kenya



EUROPE

Italy

France

Russia

The Czech Republic

Turkey



MIDDLE EAST/WEST ASIA

Israel

The United Arab Emirates

India

Nepal



ASIA/SOUTH PACIFIC

China

Thailand

Vietnam

Malaysia

The Philippines

Indonesia



THE AMERICAS & THE CARIBBEAN

Jamaica

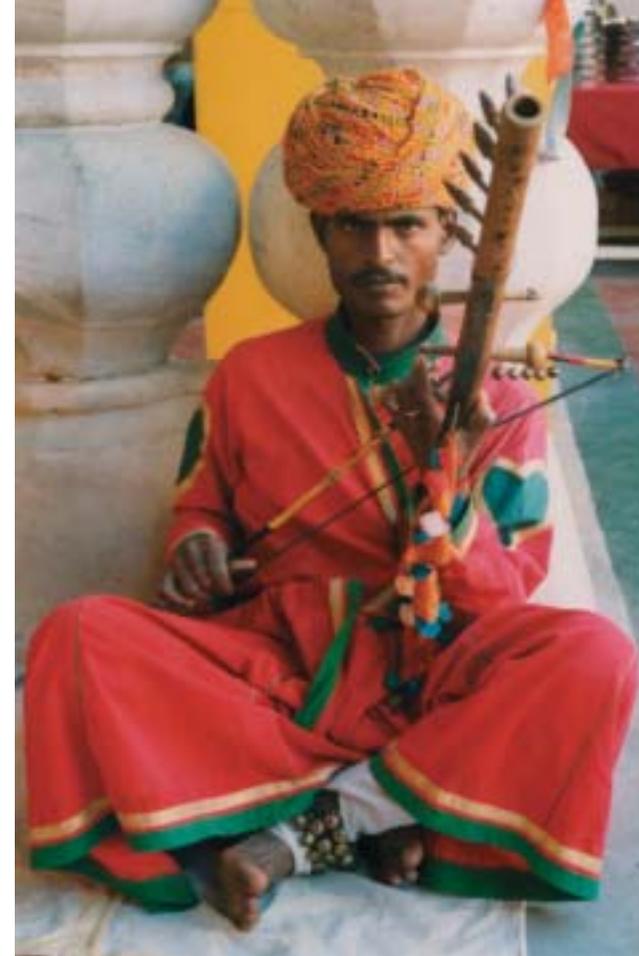
Trinidad

Martinique

Guatemala

The United States

From the Introduction



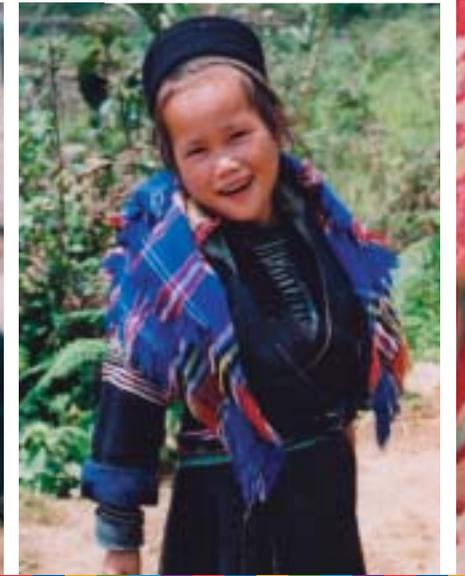
I have this thing about headwraps. It began simply enough; I hated combing my hair. I could never get that salon-fresh look. Then I noticed a phenomenon in New York City: women—especially black women—were wearing headwraps—towering, exotic creations made from yards of fabric in all varieties of color, texture, and pattern. These were architectural structures for the head. I wanted in on the trend.

In 1994, my attempts to learn how to tie my own headwraps inspired me to investigate their origins. I started by interviewing immigrants and was surprised to learn many had little knowledge of their own traditions. I also called cultural institutions and scoured libraries, but still found almost no information. No one, it seemed, had ever written about headwraps.

In 2000, I took a leave of absence from the *New York Times*, mapped out an itinerary, cashed in my stock, and bought a stack of plane tickets five inches thick. I set off for a trip across five continents and a dozen seas with the singular, determined purpose of documenting the world's headwraps. Along the way, I got a rash from bed bugs, ate a heaping bowl of fish-lip soup, took almost 4,000 photographs, and logged more than 55,000 miles of travel. I also saw lots and lots of headwraps. This book is the result of that adventure: the world in headwraps.



Vietnam



Western ideas of personal space do not appear to apply in northern Vietnam. Within minutes of walking into an outdoor market in a mountain village near the Chinese border, four women wearing candy apple red and white floral print turbans tugged at my braids. They groped my tresses from the hairline to the ends. One even put a braid up to her nose and smelled it. A little later, a woman with a mound of yarn spiraled around her head as wide as a tire, came over and stabbed me in the arm with her finger. She pinched a section, pulled up an inch of skin, and released it—as if to see if it was attached. Then she raised my sleeve up to my shoulders—presumably to see if the brown continued up my arm.

They were *montagnards*, a French label for mountain people. The women with the red turbans were Red Dzao and the woman with the spiral of loose yarn was Red Hmong. The Dzao and the Hmong are two separate ethnic groups common to the area. Their headwraps are a quick and easy way to differentiate between them.





For a trip to the market, a simple head-wrap knotted at the crown of the head suits this family.



In West Africa headwraps are high fashion. Styles have names like “Zoré,” after the wife of Nigeria’s first president, and “Madeleine,” after a Senegalese actress. I caught up with Madeleine at her home in St. Louis, northern Senegal. Her living room was decorated with a large portrait of her (in headwrap) painted by her husband.

The Madeleine style began in the early 1990s. One day, the actress stood in front of a mirror with two yards of fabric at the nape of her neck. Rather than doing something elaborate, she simply flipped the two ends over her head. The left end went to the right side; the right end went to the left. And she was done. Her new look quickly caught on in Senegal and Gambia. For a time, it was the rage in West Africa.

Most headwrap styles are inspired by events in society, such as a new currency or a winning soccer team. Others are inspired by world trends, such as the growing popularity of Mercedes Benz cars, or the construction of high-rise buildings. To create a new style, a knot is added or removed, points are pulled out, tilted to one side, tucked in the center, or tucked under the outside rim. The sides can be puffed out, angled, or elongated. Parts of the cloth can be twisted, rolled, wrapped or tucked. Props, like



cardboard and newspaper, give height. Stick pins and bobby pins hold things in place.

Most new fads last a few months. To keep up, women often pay a professional “stylist” to tie their most elaborate styles. Maman Tête, a stern-faced, heavy-set woman in Cotonou is one such stylist in southern Benin. For the last twenty years, she has created elaborate headwraps in the style of the Yoruba-designed *gélés*. She has a weather-worn painted steel sign hammered in the ground up the street from her home/shop. She prefers to work with hayes, a stiff, metallic fabric imported from Holland, and wax, a crisp, cotton material similar to batik; and she uses two-inch straight pins to hold the many folds and tucks in place. Each *gélé* is shaped around a foam mannequin, so she doesn’t accidentally prick a paying customer.

As for me, learning to tie the most popular styles was more than I could handle. It was hard enough for me to just keep my *boubou* on my shoulders and my sleeves from falling in my food. So I either wore my head uncovered, in hassle-free braids, or handed my fabric to a local, plopped down on a chair in front of her, and let her do what came so naturally.



A stylist carefully prepares a headwrap for a customer.

headwraps[®]

A Global Journey

Georgia Scott

A spectacularly designed and illustrated full-color volume takes readers on a trip around the world, exploring one of the world's most versatile sartorial statements: the headwrap.



Stop for a visit in the Czech Republic, where satkas serve as symbols of national pride. Journey east to Malaysia, where handwoven *kain dastars* are wrapped for grooms by village elders. Explore the origins of the *pagri*, a turban worn by male Sikhs in India. Or swing by southern Nigeria to admire the color-drenched *gélés* of Yoruba women. These headwraps all look remarkably different and serve very different functions in dramatically different cultures. How and why does the headwrap exist in such variety? What are its meanings? How has it changed?



Headwraps are stunning creations of silk, cotton, gauze, muslin, wool and other fabrics. They are tossed, wrapped, draped, tucked, tied or pinned in hundreds of styles. They can distinguish the highbred from the pauper, Christian from Muslim, men from women, and clan from clan. They currently make for hip fashion statements in France and America.



In *Headwraps*, Georgia Scott retraces the dizzying year she spent travelling the globe in search of headwraps. Scott researched their styles, documented their folklore, and snapped photos wherever she went. The result is a stunning collection of photographs and anecdotes of a remarkable journey to chronicle our mysterious and fascinating efforts to cover our heads.

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