

The Relevance and Symbolism of Clothes within Traditional Institutions and Its Modern Impacts on the Ghanaian Culture

Bernard Edem Dzramedo^{1*} Robert Ahiabor² Richard Gbadegbe³

1. Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, University for Development Studies (UDS), P. O. Box TL 1882, Tamale – N/R, Nyankpala Campus, Ghana
2. Department of Fashion Design and Modelling, Wa Polytechnic, P. O. Box 553, U/W, Ghana
3. Department of Fashion Design and Textiles, Ho Polytechnic, P. O. Box Hp 217, Ho, Ghana

*Email of corresponding author: edemqua@yahoo.com

Abstract

Traditional institutions in Ghana present themselves with Clothes that are symbolic and portray the culture values and heritages of the country. However, there is concern as to what extent modern influences through clothes can be embraced within the cultural and traditional setting of systems that are mandated to hold fast to these indigenous beliefs and practices. The study was designed to find out, the extent to which modernity influence clothing lives of Ghanaians within the very core of tradition and what the impacts on the sustenance of traditional costumes are. Cluster sampling techniques was used exclusively with descriptive approach to collect data among six ethnic settings in Ghana. The result emphasized that, African clothes are symbolic and are not just for their aesthetic purposes. They are however, facing tremendous modern influences resulting largely from trade liberalization, entertainment industry and advancement of technology within the textile and fashion industry which local artisans are not matching up to. Generally, striking a balance between traditional and modern forms of clothes is vital to the total development, growth and forward match of Ghanaians to promote national unity and reflect our common identity.

Key words: Traditional Institutions, Culture, Clothing, Ghanaian Identity and Modern Influences

1. Introduction

Different cultures have different costumes and fashion history that identifies them, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated, using clothes and adornments as means of communicating their social and personal status. Though perception through clothes as objects of ethnic identity may be misleading sometimes, clothes still remain as vital tool for non-verbal communication mode of the language of fashion, indicating the significance that accompany the motifs and symbols expressed in them (Sue-Jenkyn, 2005: 56-58' Omatseye and Eneriewen 2002: 58-60).

Clothing is an integrated part of culture, and most nations developed because they paid attention to their cultures which comprises local languages, beliefs, religious customs as well as costumes in the mist of modernization (Gyekye. 2003: 173).

The way of life of many people has been destroyed by contact with the West, by colonial settlers who introduced wax prints and imposed their 'ways of dress' on the local people to the detriment of the indigenous ones (Turling, 2000). The traditional way of life of those groups which remain has become increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of outside influences. However, these societies are traditionally characterized by their egalitarian structure, organisation in terms of kinship, religious standards, simple division of labour, simple technology and subsistence economy. In some societies in Ghana, especially among the Asantes, status was usually hierarchically legitimized and enshrined in religious belief and notions of divine kinship. The expressiveness of these hierarchical, social order and religious standing in traditional setting that turns to influence the activities of its people has led to a dynamic tradition of royal patronage of court regalia including textile products (Ross, 1998: 21).

Costumes generally are expressive and forms essential part of civilization, just like other forms of arts. It affects every individual and reflects the great culture of the past. In the African continent and in Ghana, the parameters are driven by factors such as social, political and religious affiliation throughout the centuries. The social and political background has always been influential as religion has play important role, regulating which parts of the body should be concealed with clothing and in certain ages has ruled more firmly with greater details on specific colours, fabrics and forms of decoration which should or should not be worn by all or by sections of the society (Yarwood, 1992:5).

Clothes within indigenous lanes are transmitted from one generation to another and are established through periods of relatively long usage establishing what is known as clothing customs. These indigenous arts and customs are caught in the crossfire between the need to protect and project the Ghanaian unique cultural heritage and the adoption of a perceived modernity (Horns, 1968:57; Ross, 2004:117) which are key factors in creating identity for ourselves as a country.

2. Overview of Literature

Institution is identified with a social purpose that is commonly applied to customs and behaviour patterns important to a society. Institutions are permanent, they have purpose and rules which can be enforced to guide or regulate human behaviour. A social institution is a complex, integrated set of social norms organized around the preservation of a basic societal value. Sociologists often reserve the term "institution" to five basic areas of life, which may be designated as the primary institutions covering the family, government, economy, education and religion (Ravigull, 2012:19). These five areas are fundamental to the key areas considered as traditional institutions in this study. These comprise the chieftaincy institution, traditional religious institution and the rites of passage (birth, puberty, marriage and death). These institutions have influences in the religious, political, economic, education mostly informal and the family lives of the communities in which they operate. The institutions band groups of persons and individual members together for the common purpose of having rights, goals, objectives within the cultural norms, values and beliefs of the society which equally influences their mode of clothing tailored along these lines.

Reference to traditional institutions in most instances is in relation to the chieftaincy establishments and their mode of ruling and contributions made within their local jurisdiction. This comes in form of politics, economics and social matters relating to their cultural beliefs and practices. The result being that, these institutions still have some amount of influences and the state to some extent is equally grounded on indigenous social values with gradual changing realities (Economic Commission of Africa, 2007; Galiev, 1998), thereby making these institutions point of contact. By so doing, these institutions have affirmed their legitimacy, resiliency and relevance in the socio-cultural, economic and political lives of Africa throughout the centuries particularly among the rural folks (Economic Commission for Africa 2007). This institutions lead mainly by kings, chiefs and queenmothers in most African states hold fast to cherished traditional beliefs, values and customs of the people (though some of these are considered absolute) making them a major force in influencing the lives and development within their communities even within the present force of modern systems of governance. Governments are urging these traditional rulers to modify or eliminate cultural practices that are socially harmful and hinders development (Steegstra, 2005; 309) making their roles crucial in the psychological and physical enhancement of their communities.

Culture is identified as a social phenomenon that encompasses the customs, tradition, attitudes and overall socialization in which a group of people engaged that are unique (not deficient) to their upbringing (Sharonnann, et al, 1998). This identifies and associates an individual to that group who believe in one ideology that reflects in all facets of their lives including clothing. Culture gives us our distinctive identity as Ghanaians, expressed in ethnic content and manifests in the humanistic dimension of artistic forms which are elaborated on through clothing and fashion. Cultural trends and its dynamism should draw a fine line between values and principles as well as 'rights' and 'wrongs' in the language of costume to establish the state of identity as a people of common lineage. In a similar vein, the Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004: 3-4) duals on the totality of way of life evolved by Ghanaians through experience and reflection in attempts to fashion a harmonious co-existences with the environment. This will bring awareness to bear on Ghanaians that, culture is not 'static', not 'pagan' or not just 'drumming and dancing' but 'a way of life'. This is because it is not reflective of our daily life, but perceived as something subject to choice (Steegstra, 2005: 319-310). Culture is dynamic and is evolving but should be promoted through the support of festivals in which traditional institutions play vital roles in projecting

the tourism potentials of a country, especially through its artifacts for marketing and unifying diverse groups (Achempong, 1998 in Steegstra, 2005) However, general cultural trends must be checked from negative infiltrations within modern society in order to project and portray Ghanaian unique identity through our proud inheritance.

Throughout history, societies use clothes and various forms of body adornment to non-verbally communicate rank, gender, occupations, class, wealth and group affiliation, serving as a form of free speech. Which are also expressed in forms of signs, symbols, and iconography and served as non-verbal but visual forms of expressing of the habits, thought, techniques and condition that characterized a society as a whole (Weston 2006; Horn 1968). Clothing relates to all items of clothing and body adornments and represents self expressiveness and ways of communicating information about the individual which can be emphasized through various means of bodily decorations including piercing, tattooing, scarification, teeth filing and foot-binding (Sarpong 2004; Queit 1995).

Adornment enhances individual's look. Various reasons were promulgated as to why clothing was used including that of religious or spiritual connotations, for aesthetic or personal possessions. These criteria were equally expressed as reasons for clothing among traditional setting in Ghana incorporating different types of clothes and adornments seen in chieftaincy, religious rites, rites of passage and other socio-cultural activities within the Ghanaian ethnic settings. This communicative factor is one of the key ingredients associated with cultural-clothing which should be reflective of traditional institutions in Ghana. The basis for clothing in traditional setting therefore is to communicate rather than cover. But whatever the situation, taste and desire must conform to group similarity reflecting the cultures of a particular social entity.

3. Research Methodology

For the purpose of authenticity of data and to increase confidence in the finding, data was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. The study areas of the research cover Asante, Fante, Gas, Ga-Adamgbes, Dagombas and the Ewes which were selected based on their profound cultural practices especially in relation to textiles and clothing. The justification for selecting these ethnic groups as representative of the others emanate from the fact that, the traditional reflection of costumes and modern influences in these ethnic setting reflects similarities on the other ethnic groupings within the country and equally represent a good geographical distribution of the country.

3.1 Population and Sampling Technique

The accessible population for the study comprises chiefs and queenmothers, community leaders knowledgeable in traditional issues, students and tutors of cultural, textile and fashion at some second and third cycle institutions believed to have adequate knowledge in clothing and textile as well as traditional and philosophical issues concerning tradition and culture in Ghana. Cluster sampling techniques was chosen to sample four hundred and ninety (490) respondents from all the ethnic setting mentioned above. It is to enable the researcher focus the study on communities within the selected sample areas where traditional and cultural activities are prominent with educated rulers and leaders who perhaps felt the impact of modernity in the course of their duties.

The research design triangulated data collected via participant observation, interviews and structured questionnaire. Out of the four hundred and ninety (490) copies of questionnaires administered, four hundred and twenty six (426) were retrieved representing 86% of the responses, considered sufficient for the study (Moser and Kalton, 1993). Questions designed for the questionnaires were mainly close ended, since it is considered to have the likelihood of reducing bias in questions and answer processes. Meanwhile, open ended questions were used where there is a need for further clarity or suggestion for improvement. The interview questions were fashioned along those of the questionnaires, but purposely for chiefs, queenmothers and semi-literate leaders who do not wish to answer questions from questionnaires and mainly for the purpose of in-depth clarification on the subject matter.

The questions asked in both instances were tailored along the following areas;

- Personal profile of the respondent
- General outlook of tradition and cultural reflection in clothing

- Relevance of traditional institutions in promoting cultural identity through clothes
- Symbolism and significance of clothing used by traditional institutions
- Individual stake on influences of modernity in Ghanaian clothing
- The way forward for projecting Ghanaian clothing

The responses from the copies of questionnaires were factored into the analysis using simple frequency tables; those from the interviews were represented in the results as views from those respondents, most of which were supported with secondary literature where applicable.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the study have been tabulated and discussed descriptively.

Table 1: Representing the Profile of the respondents

Respondents	No of Responses	Percentage (%)
Chiefs and Queenmothers	18	4
Community Leaders	48	11
Tutors	72	18
Students	288	67
Total	426	100

Source: Field Study - 2011

Table 1 is a representation of the respondents profile, out of four hundred and twenty-six (426) retrieved questionnaires, representing 86% of the responses to the survey were eighteen (18) chiefs and queenmothers being 4%, forty-eight (48) community leaders knowledgeable in the subject matter equating 11%, seventy-two (72) tutors of both secondary and third cycle institutions teaching courses relating to culture, textiles and clothing/fashion being 18% and two hundred and eighty-eight (288) were students of institutions from which the staffs were drawn representing 67%. The largest respondents representing student body were between the ages of seventeen (17) and thirty-five (35) as issues of fashion and modern influences affects them most. The tutors and community leaders are trapped between modernity and tradition, culture and fashion and are considered as people who 'shape' the youth of today for a better tomorrow, hence their inputs are very significant. The chiefs and queenmothers are custodians of tradition and influential figures in the determining the trends in culture and modern influences.

To comprehend the relevance of clothing in the complex life of Ghanaians, oral information from primary sources backed with evidence of written records ascertain the source of clothing and its significance in the live of Ghanaians generally. A popular traditional textile in Ghana, that is weaving provides the basic form of clothing among Ghanaian which are seen as being culturally centred. These weaves come from the North, the Volta and the Ashanti regions with the Asante *kente* being the most popular traditional cloth. Although the art of weaving among the Asantes as revealed through oral tradition was believed to be innovated by Ota Kraban and Ameyaw (Personal communication, 12 May, 2010). Documented evidence suggested similarity in looms used by Asantes and those found in the Northern sector of Ghana believed to be influenced by Arab in trade routes, hence the believe that the art of weaving, considered as one of the most important aspect of Ghanaian cultural identity might found its true origin from the Northern part of Ghana (Asihene, 1978; Kyerematen, 1964).

Kente, adinkra clothes and smock production are the main traditional forms of clothing for the past few centuries among Ghanaians. The relevance attached to these weaves and other forms of indigenous clothes as reveal in table 4 are mainly associated with their weave structures and colour combination as most weaves and motifs come with names and symbols associated with them. These clothes are worn to reflect our cultural identity, class, status and prestige associated with them. Table 2 has two classes of questions; the first one assess the types

of outfits commonly used by Ghanaians and if they reflects our tradition and culture. The second category found out if Ghanaians really patronized these forms of clothes and why.

Table 2a: Assessing the categories of clothes that truly reflects Ghanaian culture and tradition

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
All garments produce in Ghana	61	14
Those from African prints	104	24
Batik, tie-dye, adinkra, kente, smock	229	54
Any form of clothe worn by a Ghanaian	32	8
Total	426	100

Source: Field study – 2011

From the responses in table 2a, thirty-two (32) respondents believed any attire worn by a Ghanaian is representative of the Ghanaian tradition and culture while sixty-one (61) of them relate it to all forms of garments produced in the country representing 8% and 14% respectively. On the other hand, one hundred and four (104) respondents believed that, tradition and culture of Ghanaians are reflective in the use of African prints while two hundred and twenty-nine (229) respondents associated true culture identity and reflection to clothes produced locally or traditionally and used by Ghanaians as in *kente*, *adinkra*, smock, batik and tie and dye fabrics. These represent 24% and 54% of respondents pointing to the issue that, Ghanaian culture is reflective in traditional designs and fabrics produced in Ghana bearing Ghanaian identity, hence the need to patronize them for cultural upliftment and economic improvement.

Table 2b: Asked respondents if Ghanaians patronizes their own locally produced textiles and clothes?

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	118	28
No	308	72
Total	426	100

Source: Field study -2011

Table 2b is a reflection that Ghanaians do not enjoy wearing our traditionally produced clothes in comparison to imported or foreign clothes, as three hundred and eight (308) respondents representing 72% response in the negative to whether Ghanaians patronizes their own textile and fashion products.

Reasons given, however, relates to foreign influences from cheap importation resulting to affordability of imported clothes compare to locally produced ones. Influences from the entertainment cycle, especially within the foreign music scene and its celebrities form of clothing. Others were associated with the collapsing of our textile industry, the slow processes associated with the production and high cost of our locally produced textiles and garments as well as poor finishing treatments of garments produced in the country which buttresses points made by (Sarpong, et al, 2011: 101- 104).

4.1 Traditional Institutions and their forms of Costumes

Traditional institutions are major stakeholders in the sustenance of traditional values exhibited through clothing. These institutions mainly comprise chieftaincy establishments, traditional religious activities portray by priest and priestesses, rites of passage, traditional festival as well as culture music (Dzramedo, 2009). These institutions are liable for the promotion of cultural values and identities of which clothing is an integral part.

Table 3a, reveals the extent to which respondents believed these institutions contributed to cultural identification and promotion through the use of clothes.

Table 3a: Traditional institutions responsible for promoting cultural identity through clothes

Traditional Institutions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chieftaincy costumes and Regalia	156	37
Costumes associated with traditional festivals	96	22
Costumes relating to traditional music and games	68	16
Costumes associated with traditional religious activities	46	11
Costumes relating to rites of passage	60	14
Total	426	100

Source: Field study – 2011

From the table, most of the respondents believed chieftaincy costumes and regalia forms adequate revelation of cultural identity of Ghanaians, representing one hundred and fifty-six (156) being 37% of responses. Costumes used in relation to traditional festivals had ninety-six (96) of responses from respondents as responsible for promoting cultural identity; sixty-eight (68) in connection to costumes associated with cultural music and games; sixty (60) were believed to be related to clothes in rites of passage whilst forty-six (46) believed were reflections of costumes associated with traditional religious activities especially with regard to traditional priests and priestesses costumes; all representing 22, 16, 14 and 11 respectively in percentage terms. This clearly signifies that, more Ghanaians believed creating cultural identity is much more embedded in the costumes and activities of our traditional leaders which is considered vital in promoting national recognition and identity as Ghanaians.

4.2 Clothing within chieftaincy institution

Chiefs in Ghana are highly respected and acknowledge as custodians and administrative heads of their respective traditional areas. A chief referred in various ethnic setting as *Fia* (Ewes), *Mantse* (Ga), *Ohene* (Akan), etc is enstooled after the death, abdication or destoolment of his predecessor, the legitimacy of the person must be ascertain before he/she ascend the throne (Article 277 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana; Odotei, 2010). Body arts associated with clothing and adornment forms an integral part in projecting cultural significance of costumes used by tradition rulers in most instances.

In considering the various traditional institutions that promote cultural identity through clothing, the chieftaincy institution has one hundred and fifty-six (156) respondents representing 37% attesting to the fact that, costume and regalia used by chiefs convey significance meaning and symbolizes the cultural standing of the people of Ghana as revealed by the respondents in table 4a regarding the significance and symbolism of clothes used in tradition institution. Their administrative and political authorities are emphasized by the values, significance and symbolism of their outfits. Prominent chiefs especially the King of the Asantes, must not appear in public wearing the same cloth twice and have an official who is solely in charge of his clothes and their mending. Some of these clothes served as protective shells against parties who will want to spiritual manipulate the king's judgment in their favour during adjudication of justice (Ross, 1998).

4.3 Costumes in the Activities of Traditional Priests and Priestesses

Priests and priestesses served as intermediary between the gods and their traditional communities. They are revered and feared to some extent by community members because their seen to posses powers from the gods and can unclenched it on people who offended the gods and the community leaders. Priests and priestesses have their fashion styles different from the other citizens of any said community. Their modes of costumes were believed to be under the influence of the deities they served and are often significant and symbolic (McLeod,

1981:64; Debrah, 2009:12). The activities of traditional priests and priestesses are mainly religious in nature. In table 3a, only forty-six (46) respondents representing 11% believed their activities or mode of costumes promote cultural identity through what they wear. This low responses could be attributed to the fact that, almost all their activities including costumes used on daily bases are under dictatorship of the deities they served. The costumes used by them covers raffia, smock, cover clothes; these are simplest forms mostly devoid of accessories.

4.4 Clothing in Rites of Passage

In table 3a, sixty-eight (68) respondents representing 16% entrenched that, clothing in rites of passage promotes cultural identity and enhance continuity of values and tradition. Rites of Passage is an instituted aspect of Ghanaian society which sees growth and movement of its members from one stage of life leading to the other which are marked by events in most traditional societies in Ghana, either formally or informally of which clothing and adornments play their significant roles. The purpose is to ensure that no break occurs between the various stages. They are marked with special rites in most parts of Ghana within its traditional context. The various stages in life are marked by birth, puberty, marriage and death (Rattray 1959:48-50). As such, these cultural rites are marked with rituals and ceremonies involving artifacts which greatly embrace the traditional fashion of the people.

Considering the role of rite of passage in the promotion and sustainability of values, norms and culture of the Ghanaian through clothes; table 3b give respondents views on the significance of costumes in these rites of passage as in Ghanaian culture.

Table 3b: Are rites of passage and their associated clothing items still relevant in the promotion and sustainability of values, norms and cultures of Ghanaians?

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Clothing and Artifacts in naming Ceremonies	74	17
Arts and Forms of Adornments in Puberty Rites	32	8
Costumes and Arts Associated with Marriage Rites	198	46
Adornment and Costumes in relation to Funeral Rites	122	29
None of the Above	0	0
Total	426	100

Source: Field study

The responses from table 3b indicates that Ghanaians still put premium on their arts especially clothing and its accessories in relation to rites of passage but are more enthused with rites relating to marriage and death than to naming ceremony and puberty. The result reveal that in Ghanaian society, the rite of marriage promotes our values, norms and sustain our traditional arts and costume more than rite relating to death, naming ceremony and puberty, representing one hundred and ninety-eight (198) responses as against one hundred and twenty-two (122), seventy-four (74) and twenty-nine (29) being 46%, 29%, 17% and 8% percentages respectively. However, all the respondents believed at least one of those rites is still responsible for the promotion and sustainability of values, norms and the culture of Ghanaians, since none opposed the rites thereby recording zero (0).

In respect to naming ceremony in traditional setting, seventy-four (74) of the respondents representing 17%, believe this ceremony is still vital for the promotion and sustainability of values, norms and culture of Ghanaians. In this rite, pregnancy forms the basis of child bearing. The child is therefore given a name on the eighth day after birth and a welcome ceremony with rituals performed to fortify and protect it. In some instances, the baby is clad in new dresses preferably white, marked with white clay for joy; the mother adorns herself in a new white *kaba* and slit design in most of the situations, with accessories to match, white or blue necklaces, earrings, sandals, bangles and new hairstyles with cosmetics to match. The inclusion of extended members with

elaborate display of clothes in recent years is considered as influence of modernity, as traditional naming ceremony does not need all the elaborate forms of dresses intended for great occasion like festivals, since naming ceremony is seen as a simple event preformed at dawn (Gyekye: 2003).

Modernity, coupled with other religious beliefs and practices like Christianity and Islam have discarded most of these traditional beliefs associated with child birth and have introduce various ways of naming ceremonies which in most instances are more elaborated and financially demanding than the traditional ones.

Puberty is a rite in parts of Ghana, perform for young girls in particular to usher them into adulthood, mostly after their first menstrual cycle. These rituals were initially pronounced among the Akans known as *bragro*; Ga-Adamgbes call it *dipo*; the Ewes call it *gboto* and the Gas-otofo, but now a privilege of the Ga-Adamgbes in a revised form. This is evidence in the responses provided as only thirty-two (32) of the respondents representing 8% indicate that, this rite is still vital for the promotion and sustainability of values, norms and culture in Ghana. The rite is to introduce the young girls into the society as young adults. The significance of the rite is to teach the children the realities of adulthood (Steedstra, 2005:105-107). There are large numbers of artifacts associated with these rites which includes clothing of various styles and expressions, body painting and the use of beads, trinkets and hairdos. All these which form part of their secret training, feature prominently in the puberty ceremony.

The initiates in most instances wear beads around the upper arms, waists, necks, knees and ankles and their bodies are neatly painted with white clay in geometric patterns as further adornments. Previously, the girls exposed their breasts as part of the initiation rites to imply that they had attained maturity status, that is, they have the right to be counted among adult women and hence men could ask for their hand in marriage (Sarpong 1991; Steegstra, 2005). Recently, modification become possible and in most instances the initiates cover their breasts during the celebration while they still adorn themselves heavily with *aggrey* beads (traditionally revered beads among Ghanaians) giving credence to the fact that, modernity is pushing leaders within our traditional institutions to modified practices considered detrimental to social and economic development in Ghana, but not to consider these cultural practices as 'backward' and hindrance to progress (Steedstra, 2005: 309; Coe, 2000: 310; Gyekye 2003:76).

Marriage is contracted after the children enter into adulthood. Marriage is a basic institution, which in no doubt, contributes to the sustenance of every human society subsequently the growth of a nation. This is evidence in the responses as one hundred and ninety-eight (198) respondents representing 46% ascertained that, marriage rite and its associated costumes and arts promote cultural sustainability of values and norms in Ghana. This therefore emphasized the importance of marriage rite and its associated forms of costumes in the Ghanaian society. The contracting of marriage is between two families and not just two individuals in love, but begins through secret inquires from both lineage for surety of good values then, the payment of the bride price to show appreciation and gratitude for the virtuous way the bride was brought up and taken care of by her relatives (Gyekye, 2003: 78-80). During the period of merry-making, the bride is decorated especially, with body paintings, *kente* or other traditional cloths, sandals, headgear, beads and other types of jewels. The queen mother of *Kumewu* (personal communication, 12th June, 2011) attest to the fact that, traditional marriages witness the couple appearing in their best attires such as *kente* cloths worn by the men and *kaba* and slits fashioned from *kente* or other African prints of similarities. The women can also appear in cover cloths with stylized headgears, wearing several accessories like beads as well as simple traditional sandals worn by the couple. Clothes used in marriage rites do not only reveal the aesthetics of the fabric and the wearer but also portray symbolisms associated with various styles and manner of wearing them, mostly emphasizing on the importance of the occasion.

With the introduction of wedding associated with modern Christian marriages, clothing and adornment modes have taken a new twist; the bridegroom has to foot the bill of providing a wedding gown for the bride and a suit for personal use. Some provide bridal wear(s) for the best man (men), maid(s) of honour and flower girl(s). This includes all other accessories to match like, shoes, rings, chains, gloves, watches, a veil for the bride, a hand bag and flowers. In some cases, dinner wears or evening wears are sewn for use by the couple after the wedding ceremony. These influences championed by western religious practices add cost to marriage rites in modern Ghana.

Death in the first place, being inevitable is regarded as a transition from this earthly life to another life in the land of the unknown or spirits. It is considered as not being an end to life but simply marks the passage from this

world of the living to the world of the ancestors (Rattray, 1959:106). Such transitional ceremonies are elaborate in forms of clothing associated with the preparation and burial of the corpse as well as those who mourn the dead.

Traditionally, the kind of funeral performed are by the circumstances surrounding the death (either accidental or natural) as well as the age, religion, social standing, the status and the financial strength of both the deceased and its relations (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979:253-256). This equally reflects in the clothing and fashion that accompany such ceremonies. Funerals of adults, royals and the affluent in society differ from those of children, which are quite brief. The former are more elaborate, sacrosanct and splendid. The extent of the ceremony also differs from an ethnic group to the other. Among the Akans, funeral arrangement is believed to be four stages in most instances covering, preparation of the corpse; pre-burial mourning, burial and post – burial mourning which all involve the use of clothing and other forms of body arts. The elaborate use of these art forms was confirmed by one hundred and twenty-two (122) respondents representing 29% who believed this rite is vital in the promotion and sustainability of values, norms and cultures of Ghanaians.

The body of a deceased person after bathing it, is clad in all its finery including gold ornaments and laid in state. The corpse is clothed in gorgeous and intricately designed *kente* cloth or another expensive dress and decorated with gold, silver, glass beads or other accessories on the neck, arms, and wrists with sandals or shoes when necessary. The dressing and lying in-state of the dead has various modern twist to it, some are laid in standing or sitting postures in addition to the normal ways that corpses are laid in various societies in Ghana.

Rites and ceremonies generally associated with funerals are characterized by rich display of Ghanaian art forms including varieties of mourning cloths and dresses, forms of accessories mostly in colours used for mourning. The mourners, including the bereaved relatives, wear red-to-dark shades of colours. An aged persons' death is associated with the use of white cloths and dresses, as a means of portraying that, the deceased person has died a natural death and at old age.

Modernity is equally influenced by the type of coffin used in burying the dead. Corpses make their last journey to the grave in highly decorated coffins to befit the status of the deceased and his family. The decoration does not end with the coffin for it is extended to the grave as well.

4.5 Traditional Festivals and its associated Costumes

Festivals in Ghana forms bigger umbrella under which various forms of arts and costumes relating to culture of any society in Ghana is exhibited. It is a place that exhibits both traditional and contemporary forms of clothing; a place where modern influences relating to clothing and accessories exhibits itself to the fullest coupled with some negative practices associated with dressing. In the questionnaire, ninety-six (96) respondents believed festivals helped in promoting our cultural identity as Ghanaians representing 22% of responses. Just as Achampong in Steegstra, (2005) acknowledge that, cultures in Ghana are best promoted through festivals that exhibits our artifacts and promote tourism, thereby equally banding us together as Ghanaians with common identity.

4.6 Costumes associated with Cultural Music and Games

In the context of traditional music and games as indicated in table 3a, sixty-eight (68) respondents representing 16% believed they help in promoting our cultural identity as Ghanaian. Although, the government effort to project cultural music as not just drumming and dancing but a way of life is not yielding much results (Coe, 200), the costumes associated with these performances revealed the true culture costumes to both Ghanaian and the outside world. This might probably be the reason why it received the third largest response to its promotion of cultural identity through clothes. This enhances the cultural standing and impacting the spirit of appreciation of Ghanaian clothes and mode of dressing in the younger generation.

4.7 Significance of Clothes in Traditional Setting

The symbols, motifs and images associated with Ghanaian arts are of tremendous significance to the identification, recognition and display of our rich Ghanaian cultural heritage (Ross, 2004:117).

Table 4a: Symbolism and significance of clothes associated with traditional institutions

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aesthetic Associated with of the Textile		
and Garment	94	22
Accessories Used in Traditional Context	43	10
Colours Convey Meanings and Significance		
in Cultural Setting in Ghana	38	9
Cultural Influences in Ghana	22	5
All the Above Mentioned	229	54
Total	426	100

Sources: Field Study

Table 4b: Symbolism and significance of clothes associated with traditional institutions

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aesthetic Associated with of the Textile		
and Garment	165	39
Accessories Used in Traditional Context	31	7
Colours Convey Meanings and Significance		
in Cultural Setting in Ghana	76	18
Cultural Influences in Ghana	27	6
All the Above Mentioned	126	30
Total	426	100

Sources: Field Study

Table 4a indicates that, out of the four hundred and twenty-six (426) respondents, whose views were sorted as to whether clothes used among traditional institutions in Ghana have meaningful and morally uplifting symbolisms and significance associated with them, in relation to aesthetic, colours, accessories and cultural influences. To this effect, more than half of the total respondents being two hundred and twenty-nine (229) representing 54% believed that all the four categories listed above are connected with symbolism and significance of clothing in traditional institutions. Meanwhile, ninety-four (94) of the respondents believed this symbols and significance are revealed through the aesthetics of the clothes used only, forty-eight (48) of them relates it to the use of the accessories, 38 believed the significance and symbolism are revealed in the colours used while twenty-two (22) respondents associated it with cultural influences representing 22%, 10%, 9% and 5% respectively.

However, table 4b which sort out the views of the respondents regarding the same theme, but in references to the general public, had one hundred and twenty-seven (127) respondents stating it has to do with all the four categories being considered while one hundred and sixty-five (165) of the respondents believed the symbolism and significance of clothes used by the general public are purely based on the aesthetics of the textile and

garments produced. These represent 30% and 39% respectively. These responses revealed that, while the general public considered aesthetics reasons largely to influence their use of clothes, those associated with traditional institutions considered all the other aspects as in colour, accessories, cultural significance and aesthetics of the clothes when adorning themselves especially for occasions.

In Ghana, the type of fabric used, the motifs and colours used with those fabrics help in expressing the views, prestige and status of the wearer. Most of our indigenous costumes used especially on occasion have their significance associated with them. Colours and mode of costumes to a large extent speaks more than words and denotes occasions and activities at hand (Amenuke, et al 1993: 178-80; Antuban 1963:86; Marjory 1980: 261).

It again emphasized that, clothes used within traditional institutions in Ghana are not just for the sake of body covering and protection from the weather, or for the purpose of its aesthetics only, but have deep philosophical meanings associated with their usage. These therefore are importance in the sustenance of values, norms and the promotion of cultural identity; hence the youth must be educated to dress in decorum to reflect our cultural values.

4.8 Dealing with Modern Influences on the Ghanaian Culture

In the state of globalization, influences from other cultures, both within and outside a particular culture are inevitable, but the extent to which it is allowed to integrate with existing culture and imparting on it, should be the concerned of all cultures. Acculturation is unavoidable but can be controlled to be in line with values and norms of a cherished culture of any society like Ghana.

Table 5: What are the possible courses of modern influences on clothes associated with Ghanaian culture?

Influential Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trade Liberalization	178	42
Entertainment Industry	70	16
Advance Technology in the Textile and Fashion Industries	98	23
Degrading Cultural Values and Norms	43	10
Education and Economic Emancipation	26	6
Lack of Self Realization	11	3
Total	426	100

Source: Field study – 2011

Table 5 intends to find out, how modern influences in relation to clothes do affects the cultural lives of the Ghanaian. Six (6) influential factors were considered as possible means for these influences; out of four hundred and twenty-six (426) respondents, one hundred and seventy-eight (178) of them representing 42% believed that trade liberalization among countries which enable people to import clothing goods into the country without restriction affects the use of our traditional or indigenous clothes. Ninety-eight (98) respondents' represents 23% believed the influences resulted from the advancement in technology within the textile and fashion industry which Ghanaian clothing techniques cannot match up with. In other responses, seventy (70) of the respondents relates it to the gradual degradation of cultural values and norms within the Ghanaian society creating vacuums which those modern influences are determine to feel; twenty-six (26) of them believed formal education and economic empowerment of individuals call for modernity which is believed to be revealed through modern influences whilst eleven (11) of the respondents associate it to lack of self realization, that is failing to

recognized who you and be proud of it, hence copying blindly through foreign influences. These represent 16%, 10%, 6% and 3% respectively.

Table 6: Possible ways of projecting the use of Ghanaian clothes

Prospects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Financing and Resourcing Textile and Fashion Industries	146	34
Training of Locals to International Standard	102	24
Intensifying Cultural Awareness through Clothes	80	19
Banding Second-hand Clothing	98	23
Total	426	100

Source: Field Study

To correct the menace and improve on the use of Ghanaian Clothes, the possible ways suggested were the financing and resourcing of local textiles and the fashion industries to come out with innovative ideas which are still tailored in the values and norms of Ghanaian culture; to train local or traditional artisans to produce works that are of international standard; to intensify cultural awareness through clothes and also place a band on the importation and sell of second-hand clothing to enable boost the demand for domestic clothes. In the responses, one hundred and forty-six (146) out of the four hundred twenty-six (426) believe there is the need to finance and resource the industries; one hundred and two (102) called for training of local artisans; ninety-eight (98) suggested the band of second hand goods while eighty (80) of them see the need to intensify cultural awareness through clothes, these represent, 34%, 24%, 23% and 19% respectively as indicated in table 6. Modern technology has both positive and negative influence on our indigenous clothes as it relegate our cultural costumes to the background, but on the other hand, projects Ghanaian traditional fabrics throughout the globe especially in the Diaspora through printed versions of *kente* clothes done in the industry often outside Ghana (Ofori-Ansa (1993;1). Although this development have negatively affected the patronage of the original *kente* fabrics in Ghana, it to some extent help project the Ghanaian pride (*kente*) outside.

These emphases that, modern influences can be matched up with equal technological improvement; these measures are important in uplifting or project clothes designed and produced by Ghanaians which must have cultural touch to them, with good finishes to compete favourably in the market place. A balance need to be created in order not to lose out on our traditional textiles and costumes but also be abreast with modern trends for economic, cultural and social gains. This is important in projecting our small scale industries within the sector. Stake holders and government are being advice to make finances available to support local artisans in the textile and fashion industry to improve on their products. Producers must make effort to upgrade their skills in order to improve on their product to compete within the international market.

5. Conclusion

Leaders of traditional institutions in Ghana are no doubt, custodians of our culture and values, their activities were recognized to a large extent of being reflective norms and values through clothes used by them. The African for that matter the Ghanaian clothes are reflective of the arts and life of the people. These are champion mainly by the symbolism and the insightfulness of the conceptions of those clothes revealed in the dress-life of traditional leaders (Omatseye and Eneriewen, 2002: 57). They must constantly encourage the masses especially the youth to uphold these values through their outfits. Clothes used in Ghana to some extent is being considered as reflective of modernity and culture but are more tailored towards modern influence. Efforts must be made by all stake holders to balance the equation. Government officials must be seen wearing clothes of cultural significance. Other government organizations must equally embrace the idea of African clothes of significance beyond just the 'Friday African Wears' in Ghana. This will create more avenues for the local industry and put more people in employment, thereby reducing the unemployment situation in Ghana.

Caution is therefore important, so that we do not improve on our socio-cultural lives in modern Ghana without carrying along the right ingredients of our culture values and its clothing items. All Ghanaians must help to promote the use of Ghanaian outfits of cultural significance to assist in creating that image for ourselves as 'proudly Ghanaian' and provide employment opportunities for our people.

References

- Asihene, V. E. (1978) *Understanding the Traditional Art of Ghana*, Cranbury, N. Jersey; Associated University Press, Inc.
- Awulala, J.O and Dopamu P.A (1979) *West African Traditional Religion*; Onibonjo Press and Book Industry Limited, Ibadan, Nigeria, pp. 254-256, 268
- Coe, C. (2000) 'Not Just Drumming and Dancing': The Production of National Culture in Ghanaian Schools, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania. pp. 56-80
- Cultural Policy of Ghana, (2004) Accra, National Commission on Culture; Anttis Printing Co., Limited
- Debrah, I.N; Duon-Naa, P.; Acheampong B.O and Ivor, N. (2009) *Asante Traditional Buildings*; Ghana Museums and Monuments Board. pp. 12-14
- Dzramedo, E. B. (2009) *Clothing and Fashion in Ghanaian Culture: A Case Study among the Akans*, Unpublished Dissertation, University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi-Ghana
- Economic Commission for Africa, (2007) *Relevance of African Traditional Institutions of Governance*; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Printed by ECA Publication and Conference Management Section (PCMS)
- Galiev, A. (1998) *Traditional Institutions in Modern Kazakhstan*; The Slavic Research Center, retrieved on 30th Jan, 2013
- Gyekye, K. (2003) *African Culture Values: An Introduction*, Accra, Ghana, Sankofa Publishing Company
- Horn, J. M. (1968) *The second skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing*, Houghton Mifflin company, Boston, USA p. 57
- Kyerematen, A. A. Y. (1964) *Panoply of Ghana*, Norwich, Great Britain, Jarrold and Sons, limited
- McLeod, M.D. (1981) *The Asante*, England, British Museum Publication Ltd.
- Moser, C. A and Kalton, G. (1993) *Survey Methods in Social Investigation*. 2nd ed., Dort worth, Alder hot, England.
- Odotei, K. I. (2010) A Paper Presented to German Students on the Go Africa ...Go Germany Programme on 20th March, 2010, Kumasi-Ghana, Retrieved on 12th February, 2012
- Ofori-Ansa, K (1993) *Kente is more than a Cloth; History and significance of Ghana's Kente Cloth*, MD 20783 [Chart]
- Omatseye, B. O. J. and Emeriewen A. (2012) An Appraisal of the Aesthetic Dimension of the African Philosophy of Cloth; *Journal of Language, Technology and Entrepreneurship in Africa* Vol. 3 No. pp 57 – 67
- Quist, C. Z. (1995) *The Human Figure, A Major Determining Factor for the Choice of Clothes*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi-Ghana
- Rattray, R. S. (1959) *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, Great Britain; London; Oxford University Press, Amen House
- Ravigull, (2012). *Social Institutions*. StudyMode.com. Retrieved 31, Jan. 2013, from <http://www.studymode.com/essays/Social-Institutions-1032179.html> p.19
- Ross, D. H. (1998) *Wrapped in Pride; Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity*, UCLA Fowlers Museum of Cultural History, Los Angeles p.21
- Ross, M. (2004) *Art at the Crossroads: The Contested Position of Indigenous Arts in Ghana's Post-Colonial Education Systems*; *Studies in Art Education, A Journal of Issues and Research*, 45(2), pp. 117-134
- Sarpong, G. D; Howard, E. K. and Osei-Ntiri, K (2011), *Globalization of the Fashion Industry and its Effects on Ghanaian Independent Fashion Designers*; *Journal of Science and Technology* Vol 31. No. 3 pp 97-106
- Sarpong, P. (1991) *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*, Germany; Ghana Publishing Cooperation
- Sharon, A.; Gepaul, M and Brice, B. B. (1998) *Cross-Cultural Practices Assessment, Treatment and Training*, Canada, John Weley and Sons, Inc.
- Steegstra, M. (2005) *Dipo and the Politics of Culture in Ghana*, Woeli Publishing Services, Accra-Newtown, Ghana. p.309
- Sue Jenkyn, J. (2005) *Fashion Design*, 2nd edition, London; Laurence King Publishing 71 Great Russell Street
- Turling, Y. (2002) *Ghana Investment Profile: from* www.ghaantextilenews.org. Retrieved 14th September, 2008
- Weston. T. P. (2006) <http://www.fashion-era.com> Retrieved on 22nd of December, 2010
- Yarwood D. (1992) *Fashion in the Western world 1500-1990*, B.T. Batsford Ltd, London p.5.

First Author: Bernard Edem Dzramedo is born in 1975 and come from the Volta Region but leaves in Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana. He had his first degree in Industrial Art, with specialty in Textiles (2004) and an Mphil/PhD in African Art and Culture (2009), all from the University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi in Ghana. I am currently lecturing at University for Development Studies in Tamale, at the department of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Second Author: Robert Ahiabor obtained his first degree in BA Industrial Art (Textile) in 2007 and MFA in Textile Design in 2011 all from University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi in Ghana. Robert is currently lecturing at Wa Polytechnic, in the Upper West Region of Ghana at the department of Fashion Design and Modelling.

Third Author: Richard Gbadegbe obtained a BA (Hons) degree from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, and an Mphil/ PhD degree in African Art and Culture from the same University. Dr Gbadegbe, who is a native of Ho, is currently lecturing at the department of Fashion and Textile Design at Ho Polytechnic.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

