

**CLOTHING AND FASHION IN GHANAIAN CULTURE:  
A CASE STUDY AMONG THE AKANS**

**BY  
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the award of PhD and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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D.E.B.



## ABSTRACT

Clothing generally is an area of great interest to mankind, but its relation to the changing cultural and its significances in the moral drive of Ghanaians generally and the Akans in particular, is perhaps the least talked about by researchers and scholars. The desire to link tradition and morality to modern cultural dynamism in relation to its expression in the dress-life of Ghanaian youth is limited. This has probably contributed to provocative, dangerous and promiscuous life-styles of today's youth in Ghana. Moral break down with regards to clothing is obvious among the Ghanaian youth and it does not speak well of us as a country. Moral codes are based on traditional and cultural acceptable factors regarding what is decent or indecent in the social domain. The researcher therefore attempts to assess the changing trends and significance of traditional systems regarding clothing and adornment. The moral standing of the cultural system relating to clothing and fashion becomes a yardstick of morality to bring to bare the importance of realising situations and addressing them correctly, rather than leaving it to the 'game of changes in fashion trends'. To give a firm indication and implication for immediate action to be taken, this dissertation sought to know the trends of events in the history of clothes, link it to changing trends in recent times in Akan society, both indigenous and contemporary to assess the moral standing of the youth in particular within Akan society on the matter of decency in clothes and the way forward. The researcher employs qualitative and descriptive methods of research, using instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, observations and photographs. The population of the study was centred mainly on traditional leaders, learning institutions and the Ghanaian youth in general. The study is captured in six chapters, besides the first, second and third chapters that dealt with the introduction, review of related literature and methodology

respectively, the fourth chapter described and analysed data gathered from the field study into eight sub headings. These areas addressed historical evidences of clothing in Ghana; clothing associated with traditional institutions: its relevance in colour and beauty concepts among the Akans; clothing and fashion accessories; relevance of colour in Ghanaian clothing and fashion styles; beauty, body shapes and its effects on clothing; body marks, influence of foreign fashion on the culture and fashion of Ghana, with its inappropriate use of clothing among the youth; morality and modesty in Ghanaian fashion and culture: possible health risks associated with body arts. Chapter five dealt with the interpretation of findings with regard to the various ways of collecting and analysing the historical information. These were explained, their significance and changes regarding clothing that are associated with traditional institutions are equally considered. The questionnaire was vividly analysed and interpreted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis instrument to assess the trend of responses from the respondents regarding the various areas of the questions asked. On this note, some main findings were realised, which were elaborated on at the end of this chapter. The last chapter (six) summarised the findings of the study, tested the hypotheses, drew a conclusion and gave recommendations based on the findings. At the end, the findings revealed that, tremendous changes had occurred in the historical trends of clothing and fashion among Ghanaians in general and Akans in particular over the centuries. The changes which are mainly being influenced largely in recent times by foreign styles of fashion are impacting negatively on the moral and cultural lives of the Akans particularly and Ghanaians in general, contributing to undesirable practices among the youth. It is believed that, the situation can be controlled if drastic measures are taken by meaningful Ghanaians and the researcher's recommendations are given consideration.

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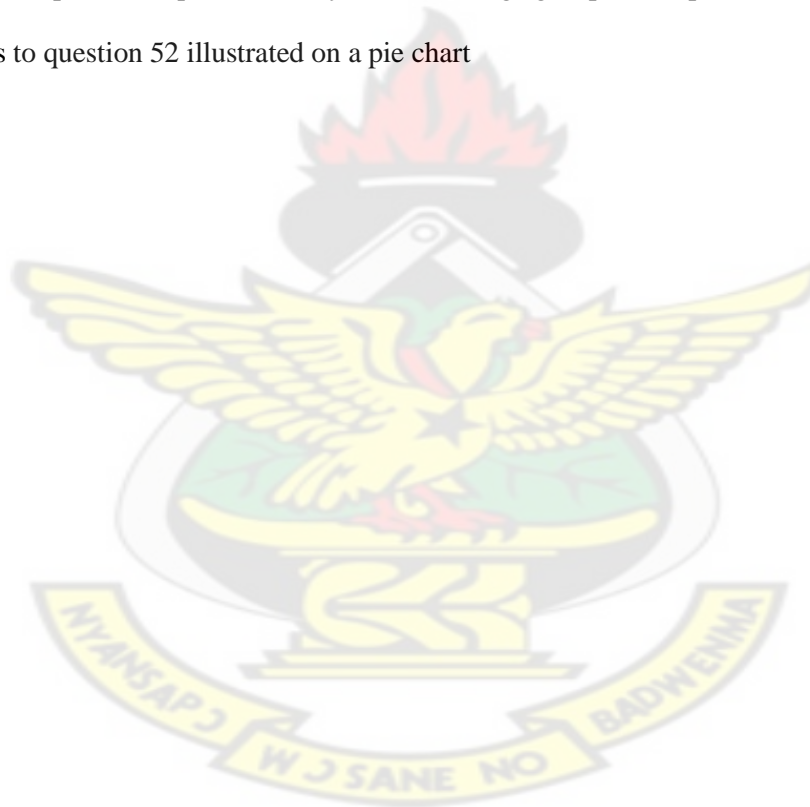
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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Ghana is endowed with rich traditions and cultures in which clothing and fashion form an integral part. Fashion simply can be referred to as clothing styles and its accessories (covering and decoration for a person's body) as seen in appearance. It also depicts the manner in which people dress, wear the hair, behave socially or do other things at a given time. It implies that, all items used in covering, decorating or ornamenting the body as found in body arts can be termed as fashion. It reflects the great culture of the past and present, illustrating the characteristic of an individual in relation to his society over the centuries. Fashion cannot be under estimated, in respect to the role of art in the civilization of man. It is one of the essential arts just like painting and sculpture.

Fashion, no matter what form it takes affects the life of everybody, not solely a specific section of the population but it serves as an expression of the self at a given point in time and place. But the word 'fashion' can equally be expressed in other fields of social life such as a style of dancing and cooking in vogue for a period of time. In other sectors of the academic field where a particular view holds sway for a period of time before being replaced by another as in the field of architecture, interior decoration, medicine, philosophy, sociology, etc are also forms of fashion. However, its use in clothing styles pervades those of academic and social lives.

This idea of body covering exists among different ethnic groups of people in Ghana in relation to their culture and art as seen in the various celebrations found within the communities. Ranging from decorating and adorning of the human body; with the use of such simplest materials for covering as in barkcloth and raffia to elaborate designs and styles such as *kente*, *adinkra*, *fugues* and other African prints, from complicated and elaborate headdresses to very simple head shaves. This signifies that, some aspects of fashion are indigenous to the people and form part of their arts and culture. Meanwhile, forms of body covering cannot be said to exist in isolation without external influence, for some external influences have been inculcated into modern Ghanaian culture.

Clothing has been seen as an intimate part of an individual. It is one of the most personal components of daily life, and at the same time, it is an expression of the social activities embedded in the cultural patterns within a particular era. These are considered from the socio-cultural point of view, which can be based on some three factors; which are: the individual's physical body, the cultural set- up of the community to which he/she belongs and the universe at large. The first, which is the individual's physiological differences with regards to sexes (male and female) determines what to put on the body. In Ghana, the individual physical body is partly enhanced through some traditional practices at the early stage of birth and continues through puberty, marriage and even death, which to some extent influence fashion.

Secondly, humans are social entities; therefore every body is subject to an aspect of the components of social organization, the family, polity, religion and social differentiations in classes or the masses which usually reflected in their forms of dresses and adornments. For instance, the bodies of individuals are marked in some



indelible manner, which often signifies their social belongingness. Chiefs in Ghana appear in full regalia on occasions (which are social events) to identify them with their position, rank, status, maturity, etc. Thirdly, the form and functions of dress within a specific culture are influenced by universal cultural patterns. Globalisation makes it possible for fusion of clothing styles throughout the world. A common practice is the use of suits as a formal dress code in almost the whole world and it is recognised as such.

The culture of a particular group of people is a generality of their dressing, behaviour and reactions; ranging through their lingual utterances, beliefs, taboos, festivals and costumes to their hopes and aspirations. Fashion, forming part of culture has been traced historically, within the sub-region of West Africa, assessing the general trend within 'the Sudan', especially as referred to the early empires between the eighth century and the sixteenth century, which was mainly considered in the review of related literature. This, nevertheless, had influence on the clothing and fashion within the three territories in Gold Coast now Ghana, which was equally considered between the nineteenth century and the twenty first century of modern times. Basically, gathering information on the clothing trends of the past is necessary to enable us shape the present into the future of clothing in Ghana.

The cultural perspective of clothing and fashion and its changes are best referred to in Ghanaian traditional institutions such as chieftaincy, among the Akans; religious practices as in the case of magico-religious rites and social events such as the rites of passage and festivities; the traditional concept of beauty and its effects on the fashion of the people, especially the Ghanaian woman. The uniqueness of clothing does not only embrace the attire that an individual wears but also when, and for what



purpose or occasions as well as the message it communicates about the wearer to the public. These are basic ingredients needed in determining the true cultural identity of people and their moral uprightness through clothing, which is regarded as the second skin.

Fashion pertaining to the culture and traditional practices of the Akans are identified by their ways of dressing and their expression of beauty concepts that embrace forms of body art. The selection of a particular dressing code and its body adornment over another is partly influenced by technology, values, morals, hygiene, rituals as well as aesthetic and symbolism in cultural patterns. Also, customs and laws imposed by a country or social group may be responsible for the stability or changes in dress code of the area.

Notwithstanding this, the level of traditional fashion is being influenced greatly by the system of modernizations. In Ghana and other parts of Africa, the trend has changed drastically towards the European ways of dressing. This results in the adulteration of the local culture, in which the youth of today are grossly involved. The embracement of this Western culture is largely visible in the fashion (dressing code) of the youth in particular, today. The question therefore is, “is anything ‘western’ in terms of fashion good for Africans as well as Ghanaians?” If the answer is ‘no’, then there is the need for us as Ghanaians in totality and Akans in particular to re-visit the traditional mode of dressing within its cultural context out of which modifications can be made to be in line with the local culture and its good ethics. However, if the answer is ‘yes’ then neo-colonialism has swallowed us and our dignity, pride, heritage and culture as Ghanaians and we will leave no legacy and the pride of national identity to our future generation. A nation without a culture, in this case, a

culture that integrates its traditional forms of clothing can simply be regarded as ‘morally and spiritually dead’.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Fashion is known by many as just the construction of garments and its accessories used in adorning the body. In Ghana, historical aspects of courses designed for fashion students mostly focus on European and American fashion histories. There is insignificant information regarding clothing and culture of the Ghanaian setting in general. The significance, symbolism and changing trends associated with fashion within traditional institutions among the Akans in particular and its importance in the life of the people are not dealt with. Lack of historical knowledge and the significance of clothing in traditional setting, partly affects modern trends of clothing as witnessed among Ghanaians. ‘Appropriateness in the use of outfit’ embraces the importance the Ghanaian attaches to what he or she wears and the occasions that demand it; the concept of beauty and dress code which results in their high moral standards. All these which result from their cultural beliefs and practices are gradually losing grounds. The impact is that, fashion which is tailored along the traditional set-up of the Akan society is gradually losing its credibility, identity and moral implication as a result of current foreign cultures that have seeped into the society and have created adulterated culture. These have engulfed our people especially, the youth thereby sidelining the concept of ‘African beauty’, ‘modesty’ and ‘cultural values’ in the society just to satisfy the ego. It is in view of this problem, and the researcher’s desire to draw the attention of Ghanaians to immorality in fashion that sometimes causes promiscuity that this research has been undertaken. And the main purpose of this research is to see to it that indecency and inappropriate use of clothes in Ghanaian society is curbed.

### **1.3 Objectives**

- To trace the history of clothing and fashion in Ghana and its relevance on the fashion of Ghanaians from the nineteenth century to the present day Ghana; as well as the changes that have occurred in the fashion of the Akans of this nation.
- To identify and show the cultural significance and symbolism in clothing and fashion with its accessories as expressed among chiefs, their attendants, traditional religious leaders, festive occasions, rites of passage and the concept of beauty in relation to changes that have occurred.
- To investigate the influences that adulterated foreign fashion has on moral diminution of both the indigenous and contemporary fashion and culture of Ghanaians in general, and specifically on the Akan youths of today.
- To assess the possible health risks associated with body decorating practices (incision, piercing, tattoos and body paintings) seen among Ghanaian youths today and advise accordingly.

### **1.4 Importance of the Study**

- People will have better knowledge about historical evidences of clothing and fashion in Ghana and among the Akans over the centuries as well as some significance associated with clothing and adornment in line with traditional institutions among the Akans.

- To enlighten the public on (the relevance of the Akan beauty concept and figure type on the dress-code of its people with) possible health hazards that might be associated with some body arts as well as possible effects of acculturation on the youth.
- The research will be beneficial to people who are conscious about the sustenance of our cultural values through appropriate forms of dressing thereby promoting indigenous Ghanaian clothing. Beneficiaries of this thesis include, the general public, parents, the youth, fashion designers, textile and fashion students in particular. It will also benefit students and lecturers of African Art and Culture, anthropologists, ethnographers and ethnologists by enriching their knowledge about clothing and fashion in Ghana.

### **1.5 Hypotheses**

- The tracing and documentation of the history of clothing and fashion of Ghanaians and the Akans will lead to the identification of their cultural symbolism and changes in relation to socio-cultural activities.
- Acculturation has a negative influence on the youth, which poses a threat to the sustenance, development of good morals and health issues as expressed through clothing and fashion as well as beauty concepts of the Akan culture.

## 1.6 Delimitation

The research deals with clothing and fashion in the cultural set-up of Ghanaians, tracing briefly their history and development in the sub-region of West Africa between the eighth and the sixteenth centuries and their relevance to clothing and fashion in Ghana between the nineteenth century to the present date. Clothing and fashion in this respect, will look at types of body coverings and symbolism of colours used, beauty concepts comprising what constitute the ideal figure in Ghana and among the Akans, headdresses, tattoos and body paintings. The sign and symbolism associated with clothing and fashion in chieftaincy and religious institutions as well as social activities as in the rites of passage and festive occasions and their relevance to present cultural dynamisms will be considered. Occasionally, references will be made to fashion generally, in other parts of the world. The adulterated culture and its influence on the cultural and moral lives relating to inappropriate mode of dressing among Ghanaian youth in general, and those of Akan provinces situated in Ghana in particular will be considered.

Due to the wide nature of the Akan jurisdiction and the fact that fashion is synonymous with people of similar cultures and is more centred within the urban areas, only selected areas within six out of the twelve principal provinces in Akan (as spelt out by Osafo (2001:1) that Akans have seven original clans known as ‘*Abusuaban-ason*’ and that these provinces comprise twelve principal provinces), will be accessed to collect data for the thesis. To address the generality of the topic; ‘fashion in Ghanaian culture’, limited references will be made to fashion among the Gas, the Ewes and the Dagombas and other ethnic groups of Greater Accra, Volta and Northern Regions, respectively.

## 1.7 Limitations

Series of problems were encountered in the course of the study which includes, high cost and risk associated with travelling, which restricted the research to mainly urban selected areas of Akan provinces for data collection. Insufficient literature relevant to the study and either lack of information or unwillingness on the part of most traditional rulers to willingly release the needed information on clothing and fashion in cultural and religious events to the researcher, partly hindered the processing of data. Retrieving questionnaires from respondents were really frustrating, since the researcher had to personally follow up on some occasions two or more times before questionnaires were completed and submitted.

## 1.8 Definition of Terms

- Culture:** a totality of way of life evolved by people through clothes and experiences in attempt to fashion a harmonies co-existence with the environment.
- Appropriateness in outfit:** knowing what to wear and wearing it at the right time to fit into the occasion at hand correctly.
- Beauty concept:** the structure, the inward and out ward characteristic of the human figure, its various forms of adornment or decoration that goes with it.
- Ethnic Marks:** various forms of cutting the surface of the skin in line



with ethnic beliefs and religious practices with sharp instruments which leave permanent marks on the body surface after the wounds are healed.

**Clothing and Fashion:** manipulating the human body by purposeful modification which includes tattoos, incisions on the body, forms of body painting, dresses and accessories, concept of beauty, all forms of headdress, colour symbolism and changes occurring over a period of time.

**Tattooing:** a way of puncturing the skin with a sharp object, precisely a needle to insert coloured substances of any kind under the surface of the skin as a form of decorating the body.

**Body Painting:** the introduction of colour(s) onto the surface of the human skin. It mainly comprises colours of natural and synthetic origins, these colours usually last on the body ranging from few hours to at most a day or two.

**Headgears:** hats, caps, bands, crowns and other coverings worn on the head, either for shade, status, rank or as a decorative piece.



<b>Hairdos:</b>	the styles in which the hair on the head, especially that of women is arranged, manipulated or cut.
<b>Adulterated Culture:</b>	the inclusion of foreign cultures into the original Ghanaian culture with reference to clothing.
<b>Cultural hybrid:</b>	the fusing of western or external cultures with local or traditional cultures almost in equal blends as expressed within the world of clothing and fashion of today.
<b>Modesty:</b>	simply requires the intimate parts of the body to be covered in public places at all time. This is usually based on the concept and understanding of what an individual's society and culture have classified under 'intimate parts of the human body'.
<b>Morality:</b>	a social rule that raises the question about good or bad behaviour of humans through collective decisions taken within a particular society.
<b>Gold Coast:</b>	the three territories that constitute the present day Ghana and not referring to only the Coastal belt of Ghana.

<b>Guinea Coast:</b>	the stretch of countries within the West Africa Sub-region that shares a border with the Atlantic Ocean.
<b>Apparel:</b>	generally refers to clothing, not necessarily a fashionable attire.
<b>Regalia:</b>	all the paraphernalia used by royals in Ghana, especially the items relating to clothing and its accessories.
<b>Sometotypes:</b>	the various categories of body types (endomorph, mesomorph and ectomorph) with variations from one another.
<b>Made-to-measure:</b>	wide range of clothing made for the wholesale department store and boutique market at different price levels.
<b>Custom-made-goods:</b>	Apparel made to a customer's special order; cut and fitted to individual measurements.
<b>Ready-to-wear apparels:</b>	the production of clothing merchandise in large quantities or mass production of clothing for use.

## **1.9 Abbreviation**

**UNESCO;** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**SPSS;** Statistical Package for Social Sciences

**W. A.;** West Africa

## **1.10 Statements of Assumption**

- It is assumed that, fashion is an integral part of art, meanwhile aspects of beautification concepts, both traditional and contemporary are dangerous to human health risky and need to be modified or exterminated completely.
- That by the end of this research the general public and the youth in particular will realize that fashion is one of the most visible images of our culture that speaks of an inward nature of its people and their moral values, hence all the positive aspects need to be conserved through an appropriate outfit.

## **1.11 Methodology**

### **1.11.0 Descriptive methods of data collecting techniques:**

The researcher visited libraries, archives and museums to collect available data on forms of clothing and other fashion related items like jewellery, sandals used by Ghanaians over the last three centuries. Historians and traditional leaders knowledgeable in history relating to clothing and fashionable items were contacted for information. The descriptive method was employed to describe and interpret all the data that were assembled to assess their validity and authenticity, which is necessary for accuracy in this research.

### **1.12 Research Tools and Instruments**

The instruments used to collect data for this research mainly included, questionnaires, interviews, photographs, note taking, tape recording and observation.

### **1.13 Facilities Available**

- KNUST Libraries (Kumasi)
- Balme Library (Legon)
- British Council Libraries (Kumasi, Accra)
- Centre for National Culture (Kumasi, Accra)
- Textiles Section - KNUST
- Museums
- Chieftaincy Institutions
- Polytechnic Libraries
- Archives (Kumasi, Sunyani and Accra)

### **1.14 Organisation of the Rest of the Chapters**

The research is organised into six chapters. The first chapter of the dissertation contains the introduction which covers the background of the research, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, delimitation, limitation, definition of terms, abbreviations used, assumptions, importance of the study and organization of the chapters.

Chapter two is the review of the related literature, categorised under the following sub-headings; culture; clothing and fashion, under which the researcher considered clothing witnessed among other parts of the West African Sub-region and possible negative effects of clothing; historical significance of hairstyles and accessories; concept of beauty which was further divided into African concept of beauty and Western concept of beauty; types of fashion accessories; significance of tattoos, scarification and body painting; headdresses and their significance as well as colour symbolism in fashion. The third chapter which deals with the methodology, considered the research instruments and methods used such as libraries, archives and museums contacted. Sampling instruments used (questionnaires, interviews and observations) were also elaborated on.

Chapter four has been sub-divided into five main categories under which there are sub-categories. Valuable information obtained from interviews organised during the field study are analysed and interpreted appropriately into the general findings from the field work which form the sum total of this chapter. The first category includes the historical trends of clothing and fashion of Ghanaians from the nineteenth century to the present. Historical evidence of forms of clothing that existed in the Gold Coast, clothing among the Akans found within the southern and central parts of Ghana constitute the sub-divisions of this first category.

The second category assesses clothing which are associated with traditional institutions generally with specific references to the Akans, considering relevance of colour and beauty concepts among Ghanaians. This further looks at the clothing styles of chiefs and their attendants as well as priests and priestesses in relation to changes that have occurred over the years. Forms of clothing and fashion

associated with socio-cultural activities like festivals, games, music, rites of passage (out-dooring ceremonies, puberty rites, marriage and death) and the various accessories that are used to accomplish a dress code; their significance, colour and changes that occurred have been elaborated on.

Beauty, body shapes and its effects on clothing in Ghana, form the third category of the fourth chapter. It comprises differences in body types and its effects on clothing, body shapes, Akan beauty concepts expressing both inward and outward beauty ideas as well as body marks as in tattoos, incisions and body paintings that form an integral part of body decorations. The fourth takes a look at influence of foreign fashion on the Ghanaian culture and fashion with its effect on the inappropriate use of clothing among the youth. This considers the merits and demerits of factors that influence clothing and fashion of Ghanaian culture, specifically, educational, religious, social and economic factors. It also considers the impact of foreign influence on the clothing and fashion of the indigenous and contemporary clothing and fashion of Ghanaians. The fifth considers the concept of morality and modesty factors in Ghanaian fashion and culture as well as possible health risks associated with some beauty concepts expressed through body arts. This assesses what constitutes modesty and appropriate out-fit in Ghanaian culture, why moral diminution and the inappropriate use of dresses and also the risk factors of body marks like body painting, piercing, tattoos and incisions.

The fifth chapter, analyses and interprets findings from copies of questionnaires and the changing trends associated with fashion in Ghana. Responses from questionnaires administered as part of the research tool used were analysed and interpreted. Findings were also made in relation to the changing trends of clothing



and fashion in Ghanaian culture. A summary, recommendations and a conclusion have been presented in the sixth chapter.

### **1.15 Historical Background of the Akans**

Akans are one of the ethnic groups in Ghana, a country in West Africa. Most of the ethnic groups of Ghana were believed to have migrated into the country from areas around Central and Northern Africa within the eleventh century.

Akans form about two-thirds of the population of Ghana and occupy most of the central and part of the coastal belt-south of the country with slight portions extending into the western part of the Volta Region. Akans are made up of a mixture of complex people of different dialect groups within and outside the boundaries of Ghana. This ethnic group has similarity in culture, language, customs and tradition, rites relating to festivals and other social activities like the rites of passage – birth, puberty, marriage and death. Their system of governance, religious beliefs and practices as well as arts relating to fashion suggests that they were initially one ethnic group with common identity. Akans are an integration of Asante (Ashanti); Fanti (Fante-Agona); Bron (Brong); Akyem (Akim) Akwapem, Kwawu (Kwahu); Assin, Wasa, Nzema, Ahanta, Sehwi (Sefwi) and other Twi-speaking peoples in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (see fig. 1).

From the linguistic point of view, most writers consider the Akans as Twi-speaking people but have divergent views on their classification. For instance, Kitson, et al., (1973:58) classified them into three groups as Asante, Fante-Agona and the Brongs, whilst Ellis (1969:6-10) who quoted Adu Boahen, classified them into Twi-speaking and Fanti-speaking people referring to the Asantes and Fantes respectively.



However, all the above writers elucidate that, the Akans were originally people of the same ethnic group, who eventually got separated due to invasion and migration that took place in their previous locations.

There are varied schools of thought as to the origin of the Akans, but most writers have pointed out that, they originated from the Northern part of modern Ghana. Danquah (1988:198) in his assertion traced the Akans from the old kingdom of Ghana (near present Timbuktu) on the bend of the Niger in A.D. 1076, but stated that, the people initially came from countries beyond Western Sudan near Taurus Mountains. He based his view on the similarity in languages and customs. In Ellis' confirmation of researches carried out by Adu Boahen and others, the Akans were part of West African Negros who originated from somewhere in the Benue-Chad or Niger-Congo Region near the Ivory Coast and forms part of the Kwa-Sub family. According to Ellis, Adu Boahen based his opinion on documentary evidence of language identity, certain rites and festivals that also belong to this unclear Kwa-linguistic group along the Gulf of Guinea. Kitson, et al., refer to the Akans as a pastoral race who initially inhabited the open country beyond the forest belt, further into Salaga which is in present Northern Region. Their move to the forest belt was as a result of invasion from the Fulani's and other Northerners, which took place around the fifteenth century A.D.

In spite of the diverse views on the origin of the Akans, one thing seems to be certain: they were initially one ethnic group with cultural homogeneity who migrated into their present abodes as a result of invasions, wars and molestation from the Fulani's and other dwellers of their previous habitation. Others believed that their

clan and systems of governance developed as a result of wars and pressures they faced in their migration era.

#### **1.15.1 Vegetation and Agriculture**

Most of the areas occupied by the Akans, especially in the central-south of the country are covered with hills and mountains, the valleys abound with subtropical forests of hard wood with small water bodies. The species of trees in the forest include *wawa*, *mahogany*, *sapele* and *odum* among others, which give rise to flourishing timber industries in this region of the country, form the bases to their use of bark cloth in the earlier days for clothing. In the context of agriculture, the Akans who live along the hinterland are farmers who cultivate crops and vegetables like cocoa, maize and cocoyam. Hunting and rearing of animals for domestic uses are of no exception. Wild animals are hunted and used for rituals on festive occasions as well as for consumption. Domestic animals are also reared for food and religious purposes; these include fowls, goats and sheep. It is the skins of these animals that they use for the skullcaps, sandals, bags and other fashionable items produced from leather.

#### **1.15.2 Art and Craft**

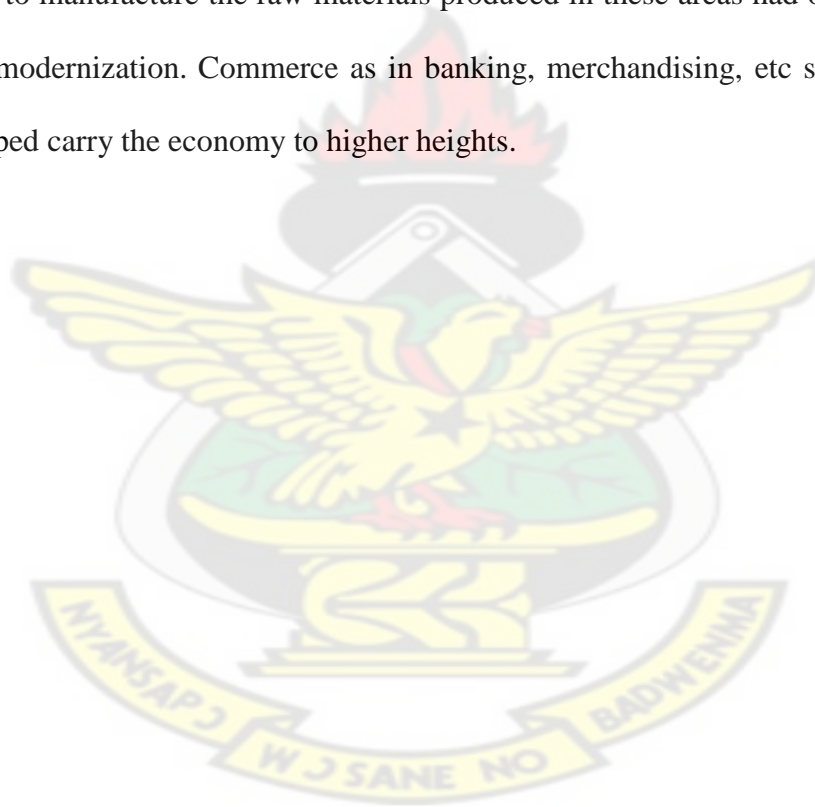
During the minor season, when farming activities are not prominent, some of the people take to carving, weaving and smithing of precious metals into fashionable arts for use and admiration. Asante is blessed with iron and other minerals used in the production of rings, bracelets, wristlets, earrings, etc to adorn their royals. It is also manufactured into weapons for the protection of their respective

chiefdoms; others are used as implements for domestic uses. Leather works are also prominent among the Akans; these are designed by artists into bags, belts, sandals and other accessories for individuals within the community. Cane and wood works are included in the crafts found among the various dialects in Akanland. Items such as stools, drums, spokesmen's staffs, etc are carved for religious and social purposes within the community.

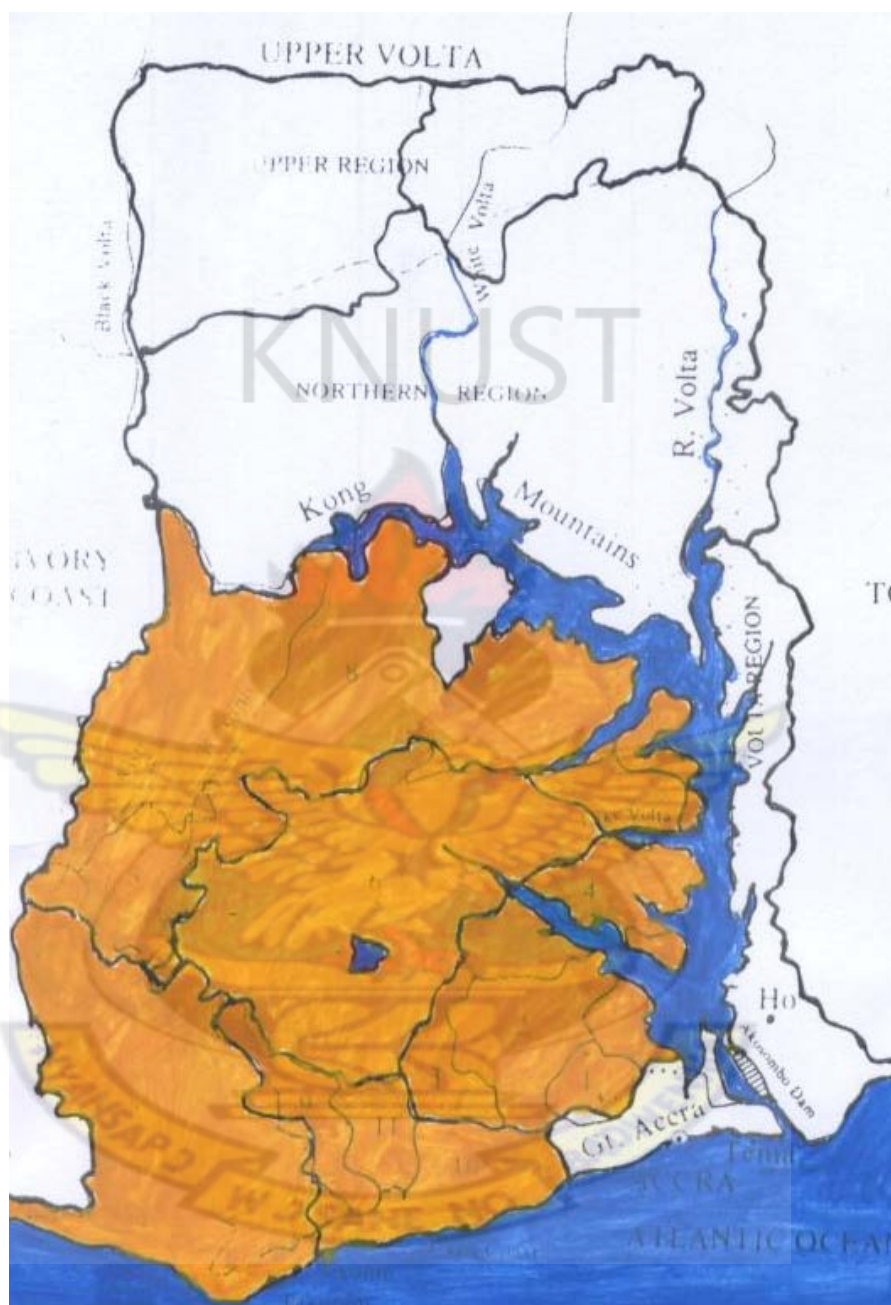
Textile products form one of the important arts in Ghana, especially on Akanland. The Asantes especially put premium on the art of weaving or producing striped woven cloths of significance among the Akan ethnic groups. The use of *kyenkyen*, a tree bark cloth was regarded as the first form of clothing among the Akans, which includes the art of stripping of the bark off the *kyenkyen* tree, softening it and beating it with mallet to loosen the cellulose in order to produce the bark cloth (*kyenkyen*). Prestige is attached to striped cloths used by their royals. Their association and power over the northern sector of Ghana, has integrated the use of smock into their traditional textile arts. The smock becomes an equally important traditional dress among the Akans. Initially most of the good works were reserved for the royals only and at times for religious purposes. The arts contribute to their elaborate forms of fashion and body adornments. These arts are mostly linked with status and class identity among the people. The art and crafts are usually associated with sexes, in that, some arts such as weaving, basketry and carving were previously occupations of men only whilst pottery was for women. But today, this distinction is gradually being erased due to modern education and changes in cultural beliefs and practices.

### 1.15.3 Economic Activities

Initially, economic activities are basically fishing as in areas along the coast; farming and crafts are mainly found with the people in the forest zone. The practices of trade between States and the Arabs existed long before the arrival of the Europeans on the coast. With the commencement of urbanization and industrialization, the economy of the 'Akan States' became boosted with better trade in precious metals, timber, crafts and traditional textiles. The establishment of factories to manufacture the raw materials produced in these areas had opened up the zone to modernization. Commerce as in banking, merchandising, etc sprang up and have helped carry the economy to higher heights.



## MAP OF GHANA



**Fig. 1:** Depicting an Akan Jurisdiction



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This review is deemed necessary, as it will enable the reader to know the extent of work carried out by other researchers on the field of clothing and fashion in relation to Ghanaian culture as well as the moral life of the youth with regard to their current mode of dressing.

Considerable amounts of works have been done by students and researchers in the field of clothing and fashion generally, but there seems to have been no literature on fashion that has a direct link with the culture of Ghanaians. Books by European and African writers who touched on culture and its aspects relating to clothing and fashion in the context of this research have been considered as sources of references for the review. Other sources from journals, brochures and newspapers have equally been considered.

The review is therefore worked into sub-headings which are: culture; clothing and fashion; clothing witnessed among other parts of the West African Sub-region; possible negative effects of clothing; historical significances of hairstyles and accessories; the concept of beauty; African concept of beauty; Western concept of beauty; types of fashion accessories; significance of tattoos, scarification and body painting; headdresses and their significance and colour symbolism in fashion to enhance better understanding of the topic.



## 2.1 Culture

Culture can be seen as a social phenomenon that identifies and associates an individual to a group of people who believe in one ideology that reflects in all facets of their lives including clothing and fashion. Culture gives us our distinctive identity as Ghanaians, especially as Akans in this context and manifests in the humanistic dimension of artistic forms, i.e. elaborated on through clothing and fashion. Cultural trends and its dynamism should draw a fine line between values and principles, decency and indecency as well as 'rights' and 'wrongs' in the clothing and fashion of the Akans to establish the state of identity as a people of common lineage.

The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies (1982:3-4), held in Mexico City defined culture in the following content;

Culture in its widest sense, may now be said to be the whole complex of distinction, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and literature, but also mode of life and economic production, the fundamental rights of the human being, value, systems, traditions and beliefs.

This definition of culture is dynamic and gives a wide spectrum which virtually embraces every aspect of life in Ghanaian setting.

The Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004:3-4) explains Ghanaian culture as "... the totality of the way of life evolved by our people through experience and reflection in our attempts to fashion a harmonious co-existence with our environment. Culture is dynamic and gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious practices of our people. Our culture also gives us our distinct identity as a people." The second aspect stated that,

our culture manifests in our ideals and ideas, beliefs and values; folklore, environment, science and technology, and in the forms of our political, social, legal and economic institutions. It also manifests in the

aesthetic quality and humanistic dimension of our literature, music, drama, architecture, carvings, paintings and other artistic forms.

A further explanation on the dynamism of culture as expressed by National Commission on Culture, relates culture to the symbolic concept of *sankofa* – linking the positive aspect of the past with the present as well as focusing into the brighter future. This therefore does not rule out the possibility or realities of modern fashion's impact on the indigenous clothing. However, there is the need to consciously link only the positive aspects of western dress styles into Akan culture values, ethics and dress styles, so that, we will not be fully swallowed by westernization. That will be 'tantamount to throwing our moral values and aesthetics of concepts of clothing out of the window' in the name of modernity in fashion, in spite of the fact that 'hybrids' of cultures are unavoidable aspects of the modern system of life. Then the concept of distinct identity will then have been erased from our mind as a nation. There is therefore the need to have a collective approach towards solving the problem of indecency in the mode of dressing, especially among the Ghanaian youth of today, that is by way of saying everything should not be allowed to engulf our society, a clear distinction has to be made between what to take-in or absorb as well as what to ignore in our societies.

To address this, we first have to understand the importance of our cultural ways of fashioning the body – then we can look for possible ways of blending our clothing system with the modern trends but still portraying our unique identity as Ghanaians who are proud of their inheritance. Modesty and decency are terms that can be measured in-line with Akan cultural values, which are considering in totality

what are private parts of the body that need to be covered alongside with what can be exposed.

Sue-Jenkyn, (2005:56-58) sees a major relation between culture and fashion which he expresses: "...for a designer to know what to design and how to present it within the time frame, he must together with other things like planning, good research, experimentation, be able to read the cultural trends". As a fashion designer there is the need to seriously assess the fashion in the line of the culture of the society that you design for, in order to aid in the promotion of the culture of the said community.

Sharon-ann, et al., (1998:1-9), speaking as practitioners and consultants in psychology, believed that adequate knowledge on cross-cultural practices is necessary in tolerating each others views and ideals and will help support diverse views of mental health. Taking a broader view on culture, incorporating education, religion, ethnicity, language, nationality, gender, age, geographic location and socio economic factors, she defines culture as 'a way of living that encompasses the customs, traditions, attitudes, and overall socialization in which a group of people engage that are unique (not deficient) to their cultural upbringing'.

Their argument stirred from the fact that, multicultural perspective provides an opportunity for two persons from different cultural backgrounds to have divergent views without one being perceived as right and superior and the other as wrong and inferior. For instance, cultural difference between the Muslim and Christian faith should not generate superiority complex of one faith over the other in terms of clothing or belief. In this instance, Sharon-an indicates that, 'a Christian man shows respect for his religion by taking off his hat but keeping on his shoes, while a

Muslim man in an Arab country will show similar respect by keeping on his hat and removing his shoes’.

In this regard, the researcher personally considers culture in the following manner: ‘the sum total or the distinct norms of life styles, modes and values of any social group and its arts’. Ghana, generally, has a culture as a group of distinct norms that she must be identified with; this must reflect the life of her people in the field of history, social life, geographical location and artefacts including fashionable items. For a culture to be considered dynamic, individual lifestyles must be in conformity with group identity. Though personal aspiration and desire differ even in terms of dressing, they must not be to the detriment of the larger society. Conformity to the social group by members strengthens the culture of a particular society.

## **2.2 Clothing and Fashion**

When the issue of fashion arises in the minds of people, immediate attention is drawn to the style of clothing, footwear, make-up, jewellery and headdress that are in vogue. Though fashion is expressed in other fields of life, its use for body grooming and adornment in various forms is paramount. Fashion as seen in body adornment has even been expressed in diverse ways by different writers.

In explaining what constitute fashion, the New Encyclopaedia Britannica (2003:143), explained fashion as being institutionalized and regularized, becoming continuous rather than sporadic and that it changes cyclically within limits set-up in a stable culture. It further states how fashion tends to differ from ‘fad’ by linking fashion with the higher class in society down to the lower class whilst ‘fad’ emerges from the lower echelons of society. Fashion in the cultural perspectives of the Akans

fit into this category of explanation, since regularity and institutionalism are main features of Akan fashion which is expressed through hierarchy which is a social standing. Nevertheless, changes have also taken place in the outfit of Akan society over the years but in line with the cultural ethics and norms of the Akan districts.

Hazel (1968:75) recognized fashion as ‘a particular kind of dress that prevails at any onetime’. He expressed the view that, fashion is also seen in other fields of endeavour like architecture and interior design. An important expression of every culture is partly revealed in the clothing and other aspects of the fashion of its citizens which form part of its arts. The culture of the people and its art are therefore inseparable as pointed out by Craig. In the same way, the culture of the Akan is integral aspects of their arts which embrace clothing and its changes over the years.

According to Yarwood (1992:5-6), the factors that generate artistic styles that influence fashion are many and varied, and that these factors influence the choice as well as regulate which parts of the body to conceal with clothing or not and also which parts to decorate. The essence of decoration is to enhance the beauty of the human body. Among some ethnic groups in Ghana including the Akans, this is done by the use of body arts such as tattoos, body painting, coiffure, incisions and scarification which form part of fashion, though scarification in particular is virtually absent in Akan districts. The concept of fashion in Africa for that matter Ghana cannot do away with body adornment and our traditional cloths; they form integral parts of our artistic expression and pride.

In a similar instance, Harold and Pomeroy (1992:6) describe fashion as “...social processes in which some people begin by adopting the image of people unlike themselves. Those in the same sector of society tend to emulate the distinctive



appearance, with publicity in the media playing its part, as mentioned ...until the differentiation disappears and the process begins all over again in the search for new appearance.” Fashion therefore comes and goes; it is a style most popular at a given time and implies three components as stated by Frings (1999:54-56) – style, change and acceptance. These three components (styles - involve the look in apparel; changes – the rate at which fashion ‘moves’ that is what is considered fashionable today might be worthless tomorrow; and acceptance – the consumers must buy and wear a style to make it a fashion) trigger fashion evolution or fashion cycle which is usually in five stages. In this case a fashion designer introduces a new design onto the scene as the first stage, then the design rises in popularity of acceptance by consumers as second stage, in the third stage the design gets to the peak of popularity where it is well known and becoming a common design; then it will decline in popularity as the fourth stage and finally fades out or be rejected from the market. All the three components and five stages of evolution in fashion designs, equally apply to designing concepts of Ghanaian designers in modern time. It implies that designs will emerge and disappear with time but not every design, especially from Europe should be accepted by the masses, especially those that undermine the importance of etiquette and values in Ghana.

In another instance, Deola, a designer who granted interview to *Agoo Magazine*, (2002:24-25) is with the view that, African fashion in this twenty first century must radically express what is genuinely African through the use of African fabrics to perfectly match accessories of African touch. This will help to truly celebrate Africa. She proclaimed that, designers in African fashion are best placed to interpret our diversity of cultures and artistry, our passion and skilled craftsmanship



to the world out there. This will enlighten the Ghanaian youth and Westerners on the values and norms as well as the cultural significances and identity that Africans generally and Ghanaians in particular place in the fashion and culture of their people. This when considered adequately by designers in Akan districts can expose them to varied ideas, concepts and designs from the cultural setting of Ghanaians that can enhance their clothing designs and accessories needed in projecting the Ghanaian and Akan images of identity.

Nawal's comment in *Agoo Magazine* (2002:83) points to the fact that, fashion is dynamic, in that it is not restricted in any way whatsoever. It is usually the expression and reflection of the creative mind. She created the impression that, in the fashion world everything is allowed, everything comes, everything goes and everything is sustained and strengthened. Nawal has a broad scope of what fashion is supposed to be, an art that expresses the free will of an individual and his community through an out-fit, but not necessarily isolating the cultural value which plays a vital role in the social entity of everything that must be sustained and strengthened.

Britannica World Language Dictionary (1963:460) shares a similar view to that of Craig when they also see fashion as a prevailing mode, especially in dress and also the way and manner things are made, shaped or formed with references to external appearance. All art forms on the body are external reflections and represent fashion, as they express the mode of life prevailing at the period in question. This prevailing mode and external reflections are visible in Akan traditional form of clothing. The values of costumes are shown in all socio-cultural activities of the Akans.

Rouse (1993:68-73) perceived fashion as a new style, innovative idea, the style of clothing must be worn by some people, acknowledged and recognized as the latest style within a stipulated period of time. This assertion was better emphasized when she stated that:

When we talk about the fashion of a particular era like the twenties or the sixties we mean in the first instance the characteristic styles of those periods, the styles which were different from those that had gone before and those that followed. They are not necessarily the styles that the majority of people wear.

This implies fashion must be distinctive and in vogue within some particular period, it is dynamic and bound to change. In this instance, Rouse had a contradicting statement as compared to that of Yarwood and Wagnall. Meanwhile, styles that characterised the past periods serve as a motivating factor or a point of idea development for modern styles. Some contemporary forms of clothing styles seen today in urban centres of Akan districts are improvements on innovative and creative ideas of traditional symbols and values as well as cloths that partly reflect modern fashion trends of styles.

Sarpong (2004:9-10) on her assertion on fashion, states among others that, bodily decorations such as piercing, tattooing, scarification, teeth filing and foot-binding are ways of fashioning the natural body making it other than just natural and communicating information about that person. Also, people often look more desirable or attractive when dressed rather than being nude. This is not simply because clothes cover up bodily defects or blemishes but also have aesthetic, spiritual or religious as well as communicating factors. Clothing and other forms of fashion on the other hand, can also be used to deceive about the body which they adorn. Some amount of body decorations present among the Akans, which are express mostly during festive

activities such as body painting and the use of heavy accessories in the parts of traditional rulers are done purposely to enhance their traditional dress codes.

On a broader note, Weston (2006:6) explains the word fashion to cover a wide range of items. He states that;

For centuries individuals or societies have used clothes and other body adornment as a form of nonverbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender, sexual availability, locality, class, wealth and group affiliation. Fashion is a form of free speech. It not only embraces clothing, but also accessories and when we wear it, provides others with shorthand to subtly read the surface of a social situation.

He further stressed that; fashion is a language of signs, symbols and iconography that non-verbally communicates meanings about individuals and groups. Fashion in all its forms, from a tattooed and pierced navel, to the newest hairstyle, is the best form of iconography we have to express individual identity. He pointed out that in spite of expressing individual identity; group affiliation and ethnic connotation are a prime concern with regard to fashion. Meaning whatever similarity one identified oneself with fashion, whether current or outdated, it must conform and belong to a particular ethnic group. There is the need therefore, for this generation to copy fashion bearing in mind that it must be in conformity to its parent culture.

Both Sarpong and Weston associate fashion with body adornment; altering parts of the human body to enhance its beauty that will carry out a message to the onlookers. This communicative factor is one of the key ingredients associated with cultural-fashion among the Akans. They zipped it further to clothing and its accessories as well as its subsequent changes. The basis for all these is to communicate rather than cover. But whatever forms the covering takes, the individual's desire and taste must be that of group similarity reflecting the cultures of

a particular social entity. Therefore, in my opinion fashion transcends mere changes in style over a short period to acceptable norms and mode of clothing and body adornment as long as it is not static, not only in terms of style but also in terms of designs and fabrics used and is completely admired and accepted by the community to which the individual belongs. It means that when the larger members of a society abhor a particular style of body adornment, then it ceases becoming a fashion within the said area. Therefore, it is just appropriate and fashionable for the youth in Akan to facilitate their fashion trends in line with cultural norms and ethics of Akanland.

Almost all the writers on fashion agreed on the fact that, fashion is visible in other fields of life such as architecture, interior design, performing art and also in the social and intellectual life. The present research has considered aspects of fashion that relate to external features of the human body and its relationship with one's culture, in this instance, the culture of the Akans specifically, and of Ghanaians in general. With this understanding, the mention of fashion brings to mind, the concept of ideal figure among the Akan and in Ghanaian society, clothing and how it can be worked to fit onto the human body. Therefore clothing plays a major role in fashion. The issue of clothing and how it began, what prompted the use of clothing as well as the concept of a beautiful figure in Africa have been discussed by some writers. Few of these have been considered by the present researcher with regard to the topic, especially from the Ghanaian and African perspective.

Clothing forms a fundamental part of fashion; fashion is meaningless without its reflection in clothing. In attempt to assess what prompts man to wear clothes, modesty and self-consciousness can be seen as what prompted Adam and Eve, from biblical records to wear clothes. Genesis (3:7, 21) reveals that, the first

human beings covered themselves with leaves after realising their nakedness. Real covering was done later with the use of animal's skin. Therefore biblically, civilization of mankind in general, commenced alongside with clothing.<sup>20</sup> As man became more civilized, changes in clothes became paramount, though this happened over longer periods of time. In this context, fashion can be said to be part of man, even many centuries ago.

Wayne and Lewinski (1991:522) suggest that, the identification of people and their history, success and development in one way can be achieved through their dressing code as they put it '...it is not difficult to tell the historical period in which people lived by the way they were dressed'. This assertion is mostly visible through the paintings of the time, which reflect the styles of the period or sketches made on surfaces as well as photographs taken of people in their fashionable clothes of the time. Convincingly, this will help identify all that happened within periods in fashion history in Ghana as well. Historical evidence of dress styles among the Akans are adequately reflected in their oral history and folklores, as well as accounts of written records from Ghanaian and European writers.

"Clothing simply means all items of apparel and body adornment such as scarification, tattoos and any other". This expression by Quist (1995:1) suggests that, clothing therefore includes all forms of accessories used to enhance it such as headgears, hats, rings, earrings, handbags, belts, shoes and so on. Cloths are dresses for human body and all that goes with it, to enhance the individual's look. Various reasons were stated as to why clothing was used; some believe it is meant to protect oneself from physical or external attacks, for religious or spiritual aesthetic purposes or personal possessions. Similar criteria were expressed as reasons for clothing



among the traditional setting in Ghana. This includes different types of clothes and adornments seen in chieftaincy, religion and socio-cultural institutions among the Akans.

Clarke (2002:64), in his discussion on *Kente* as a royal cloth among the Asante mentioned that, '*kente* cloth remains an important contributor to African dress today'. *Kente* which is noticed as a woven fabric of the Asante is currently playing a dominant role as the dress of Africans in general; it even extends beyond the shores of Africa into the Diaspora. It is now a new symbolic affirmation of African identity and Pan-African unity especially among the African-Americans.

Cloth was seen to play a dominant role in the cultural life of the African, relating to social, religious, political and economic life. Cloth was also a major indication of social status and wealth within the African communities. Clothing forms the main artistry and expresses what is associated with vital occasions and ceremonies in towns and cities in Africa. With typical reference to the Yoruba, Clarke (2002:98) elaborates on this by stating that;

... the Yoruba region created numerous more localized styles of more highly decorated cloths for a variety of ritual and ceremonial uses. These included different types of marriage cloths for chiefly funerals among the north-eastern Bunu, a wide range of cloths for wedding and ceremonies for elders....

In the above context, clothing and its changes in styles were seen in Africa as linked to rituals and occasions which are also paramount among the Akans. The research therefore intends to assess the extent to which fashion and styles are involved in our traditional activities generally and especially among the Akans in a situation where wealth and status are exhibited through clothing. Barfuo (1993:30) in his assertion explains how clothing is very important and serves as the prestige of the Asante



King. He pointed out that, the king has sub-chiefs in charge of his wardrobe and he is not expected to wear a single cloth on two or more occasions in his lifetime of ruling as a king. This then explains his status and wealth in the community; such that no other person is permitted to wear that same cloth on the day the king appears in his regalia. This is the level of importance African societies attached to clothing in their respective communities.

Ofori-Ansa (1991:1) enumerated some historical development about the origin of strip-weave, throughout the central and West African regions. This development emphasized the fact that, change which is the hallmark of fashion is evident in African fashion. He also required the need to maintain the prestige of some traditional fabrics as in the case of *kente* which is famous to the Akans. These traditional clothes have now achieved a tremendous international recognition as a result of the advance in technology. These have seen the fabric taking a new dimension in the fashion industry, being fashioned into other accessories like footwear, bags, belts, etc. However, Ofori-Ansa threw a word of caution when he states "... it is recognized that the wheel of change cannot be stopped, a sense of purpose can be brought to bare on the process of change in order to maintain the prestige, dignity and cultural pride associated with this unique artistic contribution of Africa to human culture". It is absolute from Boaten and Ansa's explanation that, changes in fashion should not guarantee a sway from our tradition and culture which reveal our identity as Africans as well as Ghanaians and the Akans. We must appreciate who we are and not allow ourselves to be tossed by every wind that blows from the western world. The expression of man's level of civilization today can still

be expressed through decency in clothing as expressed by societal ethics and values for the benefits and admiration of the present generation.

McLeod (1981:143-144) observed that, clothing has a long history among the Akans and has gone through tremendous changes over the years. Variation in clothing was based on rank and activities upon which they were engaged. They are obvious and important marks in communicating distinctive messages with members of the society. His explanation reveals that the traditional dresses among Asante's range from beads, strips of cloth, large cloths for men and women, smocks, skirts obtained from raffia and barkcloth from *Antiaris spices* (*kyenkyen*). The occasion, ranks and activities determine what form of adornment should go with it. Some writers like Clarke, Boaten, Ansa and McLeod bring to light, how Akans associate dressing and fashion to their occasions and ceremonies. It forms the core of activities within the society but has not been given the due recognition in the very activities it plays a leading role in. Meyer (1994:63,66) describes the earliest textile of Africans as "colorful [sic] world of wood bark". To her, fabrics produced were not only for the purpose of body protection against climate but to express the prestige of dignitaries, to enable them stand out of the crowd.

### **2.2.1 Clothing Witnessed Among Other Parts of the West African Sub-Region**

The ancient Kingdom of Ghana, according to Al-Fazari, an Arab geographer in the eighth century, started to flourish alongside with mini states all

within the Guinea Coast. It was the belief that, ancient Ghana was in the Sahel; Mali in the Sudanic Savannah; the Mossi – Dagomba States in the Guinea Savannah and the Akan States of the forest were more developed states within the periods of eighth to sixteenth centuries as indicated by Levtzion, (1980: 70-76). The developments of these other states were linked up with the success story and achievements of the early kingdom, Ghana. A development which no doubt affects the clothing and fashion lives of the people within the entire region and particularly those of the Akanland.

The region was obviously part of the great development of African's past. The harp of civilization in the eighth century championed by the great empires of the past (Ghana, Mali and Songhai) through trade and commerce, technological development and education, echoed with rich cultural practices of which clothing and fashion were inevitable. Body adornment forms an integral part of most African's fashion, pride and dignity cannot be brushed aside if the true culture and fashion of the people are to be realized.

Indeed, the understanding of the trend for clothing and adornment in West Africa lies partly or precisely in the interaction of people, communities and forms of vegetational zones across the area, language groupings, pre – and – post – colonial states, trade routes and its influence on the entire region. The type of trading networks, among other kinds of relationship, whether internal or long distances trade routes; all provide a kind of structure and system to West African arts, which includes their fashion and mode of clothing.

Islamic influences were paramount in the clothing and fashion styles of these early empires. The presence of Islam has had profound formal implication for development in architecture, sculpture, masquerade, textile and double – heddle

weavings hence the clothing styles of the city dwellers and the decorative arts seen throughout the West African sub-region, that allows the diverse relationships between Islamic and local ritual practice as in the use of talisman on traditional smocks and adornments, as opined by Phillips (1995: 341).

It is therefore certain that, the influences of trade and commerce within these periods affect the clothing and fashion of the entire region, embracing all the modern states within the Guinea Coast. Therefore, a good analysis of the fashion of the people of modern Ghana can best be traced from the major towns and cities within the Guinea Coast that had participated in trade relation before and after the intervention of the Europeans. Though it is an undisputable fact that now fashion has a more of European - oriented concept than African, it will still be a fallacy to say that forms of fashion do not exist within the continent as well as the Guinea Coast before European intrusion.

Archaeological evidence in the field of textile and clothing is vital in enabling us know the importance of the past, cherished aspects of the past culture that can help us select and adopt or improve upon them to equip society to go through the future with success. Some scholars also noticed through archaeological evidence that, woven – striped fabrics were in existence and used around the sixth century in parts of West Africa. This was pointed out in series of papers presented by different scholars in the field on ‘strip woven fabrics and their origins’ which suggested the existence of the art in West African Sub-region as far back as the sixth century A.D. The various papers try to identify the routes of the textile art – tracing it partly from the Roman Kingdom through the Northern parts of the continent, across the Sahara into the Central, Western and extreme Southern parts of the African continent.

In one of the scholars' study, Peggy Gilfoy (1992:53-60), textile history witnesses the production and importation of various ideas from different cultures, integrating foreign elements of textiles into local traditions and methods. She gave an example of the influences of North African textiles on those made south of the Sahara and traced African textile trade from the Phoenician time between the periods of the eighth and tenth centuries where it spread across North Africa to Carthage up to the present-day Tunis. Trade and colonisation were considered as being responsible for the introduction of weaving and dyeing to Northern Africa which spread down South.

Bolland (1992:70-76) on the other hand, assessed the types of clothing used by the people of Mali within the eleventh and eighteenth centuries. Her finding did emphasise on series of burial caves excavations by archaeologies to find out the activities of the past centuries. Radio carbon dating revealed that, textiles used at the time date back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Descriptions of the remnants of the textile fabrics and the forms of tunic worn at the time indicate the use of looms and means of stitching fabrics together. Cotton, wool and leather clothes as well as fibre skirts found in the caves revealed the mode of fashioning at the time. Photographs depicting the remains and variation in woven structures, tunic with caps and colours (Plate 1) used, buttressed the existence of elaborate clothes and civilisation within the Mali Empire at the time.





**Plate 1a**



**Plate 1b**



**Plate 1c**



**Plate 1d**

**Plates 1a - d:** Archaeological Evidences of Fabrics, Tunics and a Cap from a Mali Cave  
**Source:** From the book 'History, Design and Craft in West African Strip-Woven Cloth'

Aspects of the papers revealed the early existences of textile strip woven cloths among the Ewes and the Asantes of Ghana. It traces the Ewe textile from the old city of Notse as described by Merrick Posnansky suggesting the existence and use of cloths by the Ewes as believed to be portrayed in traditional costumes of women during various festivals celebrated among the Ewes (Plates 2). An interview with *Togbe* Amaglo, a 98 year old traditionalist testified to the fact that the dress code was likely what the Ewes used during their departure from Notse.





**Plate 2:** Traditional Costumes of the Ewes  
**Source:** Togbe Amaglo's Library  
 (A traditionalist at Adidome V/R)

Asantes on the other hand, have been famous for their *kente* cloth; woven material of rich blue, gold and red worn by the wealthy families who only could afford them in the olden days, they used them on ceremonial occasions. Each *kente* pattern had a name and associated proverb. It is said the art of wearing *kente* was brought to Kumasi in 1723 after Asantes victory over their neighbouring Techiman who were believed to learn the trade from the Northern part of the Ivory Coast. This date is in contrast to other historical accounts that point to *kente* weaving among the Asante in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Ofori-Ansa (1993:1) wrote that, according to Asante elders and oral historians, the art was developed by the Asante craftsmen during the reign of Asantehene Nana Oti Akenten (1630-1660) and became a royal cloth under the reign of King Osei Tutu (1697-1731). Others think that Asantes learnt it from Malians. Ewes also claim that they introduced *kente* into this country and Asante's might have learnt it from them. Asantes on the other hand, claims that the first Asante *kente*

wearer learnt the art from the manner in which a spider on one occasion was weaving its web.

The development of ancient Ghana and Mali empires in the sub-Saharan Africa is not without the improvement in the clothing and fashion styles of the people. The clothing and fashion that existed within the three empires up to the fifteenth century were mostly the sole privilege of the Kings, chiefs, their crown princes and other nobles in the kingdoms. It was noticed that, by the time the Portuguese navigators reached the Senegal and the Gambia rivers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they became aware of the powerful inland empire of Mali, which exerted influence as far as the Atlantic coast.

Elaborate fashion within the empire in the eleventh century was the sole privilege of the kings and the crown princes. The kings were richly ornamented which clearly distinguished them from their followers. It was known that within the ancient Ghana kingdom only the king and the crown prince wore sewn cloths, other people wore robes of cotton, silk or brocade according to their means, made of unstitched lengths of cloth as indicated by Levtzion, (1980: 109). He further explained that, the kings of these empires did have variation in their dress code, such that some have the simplest form of adorning themselves, which he said was typical of the court of Diawara; he put it;

Their kings have not that awe–spiring [sic] appearance as [other] kings. They do not sit [for audience] dressed in a kingly fashion nor do they go out decorated. They never put on a turban nor are they seated on carpets. Their king has only a cap on his head sometimes when he sits down among his people one would not recognize him among them.

The above declaration suggests that, the people used to wear acceptable forms of dresses, since no king in Africa is expected to go naked, i.e. if the subjects do not have

any form of fashion. It does not on the other hand mean that, some people did not go naked in the Sudan at that time, though absolute nakedness might likely be out of the question. Levtzion in references to Ibn AlFagih suggested that, before the tenth century, rural people in the Sudan went naked, but the Muslims and other traders covered themselves with skin, others wore imported or locally manufactured clothes, while a century later Al-Bakri also described the commoners in ancient Ghana as wearing robes of cotton, silk or brocade, whilst kings went in sewn clothes. The comments look at the trends of clothing and fashion within the Guinea Coast and the gradual changes that took place over a century as far as clothing and fashion were concerned.

Sharman and Wilson (1978: 145), described the Mali king – Mansa Musa's travel to Mecca in the fourteenth century, which involved twelve thousand young slaves dressed in tunics of brocade and silk of Yemen who were carrying his personal belongings, a revelation of the forms of dressing at that time.

Levtzion's (1980: 179) further assessments on clothing within the Sudan, suggested that there was also a cloth industry in the Western Sudan, which started in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He emphasised that, production was for the local Sudanese market and for export to the Sahara and the Maghreb. Levtzion stated that 'In the seventeenth century there were twenty six workshops of tailors in Timbuktu, each with fifty to hundred apprentices'. This statement of his was another confirmation of tailored forms of clothing that existed in the ancient kingdom of Ghana.

Levtzion (1980: 134) opined that, when the Portuguese arrived in the Guinea Coast in the mid 1400s, they established a factory in Arguim in 1455 and

developed commerce with the nomads where they traded in cloths, horses, wheat, and spices in place of slaves, skins, gum and gold dust. In 1471 the Portuguese reached the site where a decade later the fort Sao Jorge da Mina (to be known as Elmina) was established. Portuguese then traded directly with the gold fields of the Akan forest (in the present Republics of Ghana and the Ivory Coast). This established trade routes in gold between Gambia and Elmina, which nevertheless, forms the genesis of European influence in trade throughout the Western harps, which equally affects clothing and fashion of the local people. For instance, Levtzion (1980: 180) stated that:

By 1470, European cloths were trading along side the local ones, but were more or less a reserved for the kings and the wealthy. At the same time around the Atlantic Coast the Portuguese were exchanging their cloths with the local woven cloth. In Elmina the Portuguese met with a demand for Moroccan cloths as the people there developed a taste for these cloths, which had reached them for some time through the Dyula commercial network. The cloths were, however very expensive because of high transport costs incurred in the long overland route and because it changed hands many times. The Portuguese bought the cloths in Morocco, and by taking it directly by sea, sold it on the African Coast at lower prices.

The above statements explain that there have long been cloth influences among the people of West Africa as they developed taste for new cloths manufactured at other areas of the sub-region rather than their own. The desire for trade among people was also reflected in their desire for change in clothing. This simply implies that influences in terms of cloths were not only paramount at the coming of the Europeans, but also existed and cloth making was practiced within the local people. Some early European travellers and traders recorded the activities and appearances of indigenous people along the Coast. Sieber made mention of costumes used within the Guinea Coast with references to Barbot's and Dapper's descriptions and illustrations of indigenous apparels used by the people.



Sieber's (1974: 19) assessment revealed that, men around the Senegalese Coast in 1450s wore shirts of a sort that extended half-way under their thighs, a shirt of a sort or frocks of striped cotton of several colours were used by the nobles in the 1600s. It had a sort of hole or slit for the head to pass through and stretched from the neck to the knees with large open sleeves. Beneath the shirt, it was believed that, they wore thick cloths made after the fashion of Arabs, having long – wide breeches, resembling a women's petticoat, plaited and tied around at the bottom. These types of clothes were used during the cold weather and within hot hours; they wore an old fashion sort of linen shirts with small caps made of leather. Some men go along with umbrellas in their hands similar to those used by the courtiers of the old kingdom of Mali around 1350s, indicating high status, leadership and prestige as expressed among Ghanaian, Beninian and Nigerian chiefs of the present day. A similar illustration by Maree's account on the Gold Kingdom describes modes of clothing among men and women on the coast in the 1600s (Plate 3). However, Sieber's assertion of the use of umbrellas by the coasters suggested contact and adaptation of clothing styles and other art forms from the old kingdom of Mali in the earlier years before European contact.



**Plate 3:** Costumes Used by Coastal Men and Women in the 1600s.  
**Source:** From the Book, Van Dantzig (1973) Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)

A class identity in dress between the nobles and the common men were distinct in the dress code of the people of West Africa. The similarities and distinction in this class stretch from the Senegalese Coast to Angola. The style of the northern parts of the Western Coast which were mainly under the influence of the Mali Empire and the Arabs affects the fashion of the people, right from Mali through Benin to northern Nigeria. These descriptions were recapitulated in the following statement of Sieber (1974:24);

... tailored tunic and breeches were worn by the upper classes, and loincloth or wraparound shirt with cape or veil were worn by the commoners. However, the appearance of the tunic and breeches on the west Coast .... Except for one reference to the northerners called Malay (Mali) at Whida (Dahomey) dressed in long, wide robes ... which hang down to their heels with long broad sleeves [and] a large peaked cap fastened to the robe, so called northerners tailored dress seems not to have been fashionable along the coast.

An early European traveller; Lopez, reports in the middle of the sixteenth century on the art of various sorts of cloths, cut and uncut, described as products from raffia or palm - tree fibres considered to be similar to Taffeta and Damasks, with embroidered designs as types of cloths used by the people along the coast of West Africa as quoted later by Sieber.

It was clear that along the Guinea Coast, Senegal to Angola, a basic mode of dress between the 1500s and 1700s was unstitched wraparound skirt or loincloth and shawl. These cloths mainly from cotton or raffia, at times using leather, were worn by both men and women.

Barbot in 1732, finds out that, a spare dress of upper – class men on the Gold Coast was ‘only a fine clout[sic] about their waist, a cap made of fine deer’s skin on their heads, and stuff in their hands with a string of coral about their neck ....’ Clothing which involves an elaborate mode of adornment of the body



emphasising prestige and rank is pronounced in the use of jewellery and other forms of ornaments. Thomas Astley in the 1700s described the wives of the king of Dahomey, present Republic of Benin as rather loaded than adorned with Gold necklaces, pendants, foot-chains and of bracelets full of gold and silver.

Emphasising on the major forms of dresses and adornments used within towns and cities in West Africa, Hull (1976: 103), gave a wonderful description of an early European observer of the appearance and dress styles of people in Abomey as parading colourful clothing styles and hairdresses. This he put;

In Abomey, an observer found that the rich dressed in cotton garments of European or local manufacture. The king and his ministers wore gold and silver – laced plumed hats while warriors dressed in grass loincloths made of the skin of palm – tree leaves, parted into small threads, knotted or woven. Women adorned themselves with cowries and beads, metal rings and coral-beads earrings. Cloth was woven on local looms, and the dyes, were inferior to none.

The chiefs of Abomey were described as wearing prestigious clothes with significant tapestry designs depicting various religious and historical events. Hull stressed that ‘Artisans at Abomey, capital of Dahomey (now Republic of Benin), fabricated colourful tapestries with appliqué patterns depicting important historical events and achievements in the lives of the various kings. These tapestries graced the walls of the palaces ....’ Various techniques and design patterns were also used to grace styles of clothing at the time.

Hull’s (1976:8-9) further assertion emphasised that, even before the European trade on the African continent, urbanites in Congo dressed in high fashion.

This he expressed was the account of an early European traveller:

In ancient times the king and his courtiers ... wore garments made from the palm tree, which hung from the girdle downwards, and were fastened with belts of same material, of beautiful workmanship. In front also, they wore as an ornament, made like an

apron, delicate skins of civet cats, martens and sables, and also by way of display, a cape on the shoulders. Next the bare skin was a circular garment, somewhat like a rochet, reaching to the knees, and made like a net, from the threads of fine palm-tree cloths .... They threw back (the rochets) on the right shoulder ... on the same shoulder carried a zebra's tail.... They wore very small yellow and red caps, square at the top, which scarcely covered the head and were used more for show than a protection from the sun or atmosphere .... People went barefoot, but the king and some of his nobles wore sandals. The poorer sort and common people wore the same kind of garments ... but of a coarser cloth (they were naked from the waist up).

This gives an elaborate artistic expression of talent, exhibited in clothing and fashion before the arrival of Europeans. Most of the findings reveal the use of raffia, bast and flax grass fibres that were worked into woven fabrics used as covering within the early days of African civilisation. Influences of European clothes were nevertheless prominent, but Arab forms and styles of clothing were also available. For instance, Hull stated again how an European in Kumasi in 1817 was surprised by the sight of the Muslims wearing large cloaks of white satin, richly trimmed with spangled embroidery as well as silk shirts and trousers.

### **2.2.2 Possible Negative Effects of Clothing**

Clothing to some extent is being abused in Ghana today. It is now a common practice to see ladies of all figure types wearing close-fitting bodice clothes, whether slender, plump or busty. These types of clothes only tend to project the abnormality associated with such busty and plump figures. Clothing as seen among the youth today turns to relegate modesty in Ghanaian culture to the background. Clothes that could trigger moral out-cry some years back in the various ethnic setting in Ghana is being embraced with both hands today. Most ladies recently go almost naked

without any sense of shame in recent time. These are deep signs of cultural and moral degradation in Ghanaian and Akan society.

Commenting on the tremendous increase in a worldwide moral breakdown in relation to clothing seen as an integral part, the April 2007 edition of *Awake* expressed the devastating nature of the situation by saying ‘it seems everyone is taking their clothes off and using sex as a sales tool’. The article expresses the view that outrageous dress styles of today contribute to promiscuity in society today.

The issue of a bad dress code among the youth of this country in particular has been a concern for many individuals. One Reverend Father Martey expressed his concern of the current trends of dress styles seen in public domain. Under the heading ‘Dressing to Kill’ in the daily graphic, Saturday, May 20, 2006 edition; he condemned the offensive dressing of the youth of today. Expressing how western lifestyle in clothing is sinking deep into the Ghanaian culture through exposure to weird films and debase forms of entertainment, that are virtually erasing traditional values that frown on these bad practices that turns to expose the private parts of individuals. Considering how individual and family life reflects on the moral standing of the larger community, he entreats parents and decent-minded people to always assist in bringing down this issue of indecency, if it cannot be eradicated completely.

Some people within the community who found the act of immoral dresses to be offensive have taken moves to curb the situation in some parts of the country, through some practices that infringe on the human rights of such individuals. For instance, a report by Yakubu Adul-Majeed, of Tamale in the Saturday, February 17, 2006 edition of the *Spectator* had a headline that suggested that some group of young men in the municipality, who were worried about the skimpy dresses of some ladies,

had drawn-up a dress code for ladies that they were enforcing wrongly by mal-handling the ladies who breach their rules. In this regard, although the concept was right as it attempts to curb the indecency of dress codes, the approach used towards the implementation of the said ideas was wrong. The report suggested that they rained insults on the ladies, called them all sorts of names and even went to the extreme of fondling their breasts and buttocks or stripping the 'offenders' naked in public. To prevent such an awful situation, ladies in this civilised world must change their ways of dressing to stop disgracing womanhood.

### **2.3 Historical Significance of Hairstyles and Accessories**

Hair styles in the art and culture of Africans have unbelievable significance and incredible meanings attached to them. Various communities expressed their hair styles in various forms for various reasons; aside the purpose of beautification, beliefs and rituals are also associated with the hair. Hairstyles like other forms of body arts, can be manipulated based on the result one wants to achieve; it can be kept short or worn long, braided or modelled with one or several crest, lengthwise or crosswise. It can also be dyed or rubbed with different pigments or oiled. African sculptures provide details and varied styles of hair as historical evidences of hair manipulation, defining the extremes in hairstyles, ranging from minimal to elaborate styles and from rudimentary to extremely detailed styles.

In reacting to various circumstances that called for ways of manipulating the hair; Sieber and Herreman (2000:89) cited Ellis' description of Akans of Ghana who use their hair to express sorrow and joyful occasions in the 1880s;

The nearest relations of the deceased of both sexes shave the head and all hair from their bodies. This has commonly been regarded as

a sign of grief; but having in view, the shaving of the head of women on the sacred days of deities, which are days of rejoicing, it appears rather to be a sign of respect, or an offering – in the case of a death, act as offering to the [soul] of the deceased.

Even today, with regard to the pains associated with losing a close relative, people in remote parts of Ghana and other African countries still mourn by deliberately abandoning their normal, well arranged hair, making loud wailing cries through the main streets of towns with disordered and dishevelled hair, as signs of utmost pain and loss. Meanwhile, the state of mourners' hair turns to vary, while some societies believed in shaving their entire hair as a sign of mourning, others in other parts especially men, forgo their usual habits of shaving and trimming beards, moustaches and hair on the head. These dishevelment as signs of mourning are usually maintained throughout the mourning periods of a deceased person.

Strange as it may sound, Hicks (1999:224) suggested that in most societies in Africa, there is a strong bond, between the human hair and other activities; expressing it as a symbol of the genital organ. His assertion pointed out that hair-cutting and shaving are understood as symbolic 'castration'. Aspects of his analysis state that '... head hair is used as a symbol for libidinous aggressive drives of all kinds [and that the] apparently simple act of shaving the beard is nothing less than attempt to control aggressive impulses'.

Though it sounds ridiculous, the connection between sexually related issues and the hair on the human head, it is said to be the finding and expression of views and beliefs held in parts of Africa. The hair historically has different meanings and significance associated with it, covering rituals and beliefs as well as simply beautifying the individual. With regard to hairstyle designs for the purpose of beautification, Hull (1976:107-109) expressed how an European visitor was struck by



the elaborate hair arrangements of women in Benin City in the 1700s as he stated ‘...the woman’s hair is very artificially curled-up in great and small buckles, and divided on the crown, like a cock’s comb inverted, by which means the small curls lie in exact order’. He added in another section that ‘...some [women] divide their hair into twenty or more curls, as it happens to be thick or thin; others oil it with palm oil. By this means its black colour turns in time to a sort of green or yellow, which they are very fond of ...’ Aside beliefs and rituals associated with the styling and arrangement of hair in some West African cities including Ghana, styles for the purposes of beautification also exist, as stated in the above statement by Hulls.

Bosmas (1967:118) on the other hand gave a 1705 description of the varied forms of fashioning the hair among the people of the Gold Coast as;

Some wear very long hair curled and plaited together and tyed [*sic*] up to the crown of the head; others turn their hair into very small curls, moistening them with oil and a sort of dye, and then adjust them in the shape of roses; between which they wear gold ornaments, also a sort of blue coral.

Although most of the descriptions so far look at the fashioning of the female hair, Pieter de Marees also made mention that the males within the Gold Coast had various styles of hair-cuts such that it was almost impossible to find two or three persons with the same hair cut. The story was different up in the North, when Bosmas expressed how odd it looked to see all men, women and children go with their heads closely shaved with a razor.

## **2.4 Concept of Beauty**

Fashion cannot be critically examined and its communication factors assessed, if the human figure is absent. The figure therefore becomes an



indispensable feature in adorning or decorating the body. What is considered beautiful usually varies from one culture and ethnic setting to the other as well as from one continent to another. The fashion of the human figure cannot be in isolation from what constitutes the idea of ideal figure in African society of which Ghana for that matter the Akans are no exception.

Though the concept of beauty is assuming an international dimension in line with a slim figure, Africans for that matter Ghanaians have their own indigenous concept of what constitutes a beautiful figure which is completely different from that of Europeans. There is a similarity in what constitutes beauty in the various ethnic groups in Ghana. The 'building' of a beautiful figure among Akans of Ghana is to the admiration of the community and the future husband of the girl in question. Females are groomed by parents and other relatives to stand the test of time and be regarded as beautiful. In the nubility rites of girls usually performed in Asante as expressed by Sarpong (1991:31), the initiates were taken through the period of ritual bath as they were made to expose themselves and be admired by onlookers who showered praises on the girls. He states that;

They admire the roundness of her head, 'the wrinkles' in her neck, her 'protuberant' breasts, her 'projecting' buttocks, her big shining 'thighs, her 'well-proportioned' legs and so on. They may esteem her eyes, nose, mouth, teeth, ears and checks.

These are the features expected of a young growing Asante lady to tag her as being beautiful, attractive and mature. This ceremony and the fame that goes with it, project the moral standing and status of the girl in the community.

Kitson, et al., (1972:34) touched on the fact that, there is a general view of the human figure all over the country of Ghana, traditionally thought to express certain definite symbols. The symbols such as a circle and oval are linked with the

beauty of the human figure, especially the female figure is classified as beautiful if it portrays more roundness and fullness. It implies that whenever the shape of the human figure is more pronounced then one is considered beautiful. This then becomes a confirmation of Sarpong's assertion of beauty as expressed in connection with girls' nubility rites among the Asantes.

Assessing historically, the general physical look of Ghanaians in relation to beauty, an early European traveller along the Guinea Coast (Marees) in 1602 whose work was edited by Dantzig and Adams (1973:33-39), states the following about the appearances of the people on the Gold Coast;

The men of this country are of fine stature, with beautiful limbs, strong legs and well chiselled bodies, which one observes easily enough ... they have round face, without the long lips or broad mouths of the Barbary Moors, but with flat nose, which they press flat in their early years, because they consider flat noses a mark of beauty. On the whole, their faces are not unbecoming, for they are proportionate to their bodies .... They have small ears, white eyes with big eyebrows and teeth which gleam as white as Ivory ... They have broad shoulders, thick arms, big hands and long fingers. They let their fingernails grow long and scrub them very clean ... they regard such long nails as a mark of beauty ... they have small bellies, long legs, broad feet and long toes. They have little hair on their bodies, but have curly hair on their heads ... their skin is as soft as velvet and not uneven where they do not scarify it.

The description above gave a vivid picture of the Ghanaians along the coastal areas of the country as far back as the fifteenth century which might include some Akans especially the Fantes. The impressive and energetic look of the people at the time coupled with their level of cleanliness equally fit into the description and stature of Ghanaians as described by Antubam with shapes and symbols.

A similar description of beauty among the Akans was opined by Gyekye (2003:25,130-133) in a maxim as "The human being is more beautiful than gold", emphasising the placement of every human in the society of the Akans above everything else. Humans are thus considered more important than the most valuable

material thing on earth. He further emphasised that besides the physical figure such as averagely built figure, height, features and so on, the concept of beauty is expressed among Africans, hence Ghanaians, to embrace a lot that is having a wider application to include not only works of art but also ideas of beauty of speech, thought, action (behaviour) and general appearance of things. The Akans, being an integral part of Ghanaians equally place value on modesty and morality such that anything considered morally right also appeals to the aesthetic sense hence considered beautiful.

The beauty concept as in fashion differs and changes based on cultural changes, as society grows and develops, so does their cultural concept of beauty. This may be the result of discarding certain beautification practices considered ideal in the past but obsolete now and changing to healthier and technologically oriented styles of beautification or as a result of cultural assimilation in the line of beauty which influences beauty as the culture of a particular society. The changing concept of beauty over the years in society was considered by Weston (2006:1) in the following statement;

How we perceive the beauty or ugliness of our bodies is dependent on cultural attitudes of physiognomy. The accepted beautiful female ... painted is subliminally undesirable nowadays, if we are to be considered beautiful in a way that the majority accept beauty in the twenty first century. Today an inability to refashion and reshape our bodies whilst constantly monitoring the cultural ideal leaves us failing the fashion test.

Within the modern context of ideal figure and body beautification, Sue-Jenkyn (2005:78-81) believed that, all societies form an idea of beauty. Those regarded by fashion designers as beautiful and ideal model are not representative of the masses and that only a few percentages of women have the dimension of the fashion model. He stated that, today, models weigh far less than the average person.

This abnormality in fashion model is propagated more often by magazines and advertisements to other forms. These are the female features being promoted among the populist today which virtually does not exist in the real world. Social commentators continue to blame the media and the fashion industry for promoting the unreal body. Though the ideal beauty concept in fashion has changed over the years, today's concept of beauty and ideal model are full of illustrations created by digital technology to manipulate images. This he states as "Indeed, many of the perfect bodies shown in the media do not actually exist. Advertisers use digital technology to manipulate images of women and create impossible standards; eyes and teeth are brightened, waists are whittled down, legs lengthened and cellulite, wrinkles and blemishes airbrushed out". The description of the body parts is the possible idea of beauty expressed in the fashion world of modern time which in real sense does not exist and it is considered to be unhealthy, but these are the physical structures the youth, especially ladies of today, even in Ghana are trying to attain.

#### **2.4.1 African Concept of Beauty**

Different societies in Africa have their own concepts or views of how the body silhouette is classified as ugly or beautiful. This prompts the various ways of manipulating it, to gain the cultural ideal of that era. Beauty is a shape controlled by certain devices that have influence on the natural body's outline. It varies considerably within ethnic groupings. What is considered beautiful in one culture may be considered obsolete or horrific in another; hence it is true that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, and for centuries beauty has continually been reshaped.

In the ancient city of Cairo in Egypt, during the reign of Pharaoh *Amenhotep IV* known also as *Akhenaten* in 1353 B.C. his wife Queen *Nefertiti* was considered as a typical characteristic of beauty among the Egyptians at the time as pointed out by Gilbert (1992:275,385). This was more apparent in her famous portrait bust, with regard to her headdress and elongated neck. A closer observation of the bust draws the viewer close to contemporary female features of beauty: it implies that she might be of extreme features in terms of look in their era of civilization. The bust of *Nefertiti* had a well-preserved paint on it which adds to its naturalistic impression, enhanced by the organically modelled features, the sense of taut muscles lie beneath the surface of the neck and the open space created by the long, elegant curves around the neck. Instead of wearing the queen's traditional headdress, *Nefertiti* has her hair pulled up into a tall crown creating an elegant upward motion. In a whole, the figure has a straight nose, long neck, an oval head and large eyes deeply set in the face.

In other parts of the world, including some parts of African countries, to be beautiful, there must be what can be referred to as a distortion on certain parts of the human body. Within different periods in Western and African fashion and clothing cycles there have been corresponding shapes that support clothes. In some instances, heads were flattened, elongated and lips stretched.

In some African countries, Bernard Rudofsky's assertion as spelt out by Weston (2006:1) suggested how certain features on the human figure portray absolute beauty; moulding of the skull and the practice of head flattening were common in some societies in the past, but are gradually fading for the modern concept of beautification. Protuberances such as the nose, ears and foreheads were flattened to conform to the cultural beauty ideals. The head was flattened by putting the new born



infant's head between two wooden boards creating a mouse trap-like cradle, held in place with bindings. The soft skull slowly moulded to the cultural beauty ideals of flatness and after a few years the boards were removed permanently which help to protect the shape of the head in the required position.

Weston (2006:3) in a subsequent submission explains that, elongated heads have been as popular as flattened heads in some parts of the African continent. A Congolese woman with an elongated head would be thought to be very beautiful by her people. Similarly a Chadian woman would have had her lips supported and stretched by metal rings since early childhood. In adulthood her stretched lips would express the ultimate in beauty. In other parts in Africa, people adorn, using rings to lock the neck in an attempt to stretch the neck and make it acceptable and appropriate in those societies. At times, the number of rings or coils used on the neck identifies the individual with rank or his or her position in the society. A similar practice was recognised in the ancient city of Benin, where traditional rulers supported their necks in this manner as portrayed in some brass sculptures.

Another important requisite of beauty is body decoration where people use mutilation and painting for ethnic and ceremonial identification. For example, the Tiv ethnic group of Nigeria is very particular about scarification. It begins around puberty and may continue until a person reaches forty or forty five. Designs, usually geometric or animal patterns are made on various parts of the body solely for a decorative purpose. In most parts of Africa, scarification forms part of beauty ideas, men have designs on their chests and occasionally their arms while women decorate their backs and legs. Most of the designs are made with a sharp nail or razor and the wounds are rubbed with charcoal or indigo to raise or colour the scars. The above



requisite of beauty confirms how engrossed some African communities are in decoration.

In other instances, to appreciate and understand the aesthetic and the ideal beauty concept of any traditional statuary, it will be necessary to have the cultural aesthetic eyes with which that particular ethnic group judges its sculptures in terms of human beauty concepts.

In this regard the Baule community has its standard of beauty concept, a feature believed to portray in most of its statuary. For instance, it is believed that, the necks of their females should in any way be average; it should approach the ideal of an elegant or beautiful neck – one slightly longer and finer with possible features of beautiful lines (rings). The buttocks should not be too developed or too flat, they should exhibit a correct roundness and firmness. The breast must be well developed as it serves as a sign of her sexual maturity. Talking about both the male and female physique of the Baule, Ravenhill (1996:7-11) states that, ‘a maiden’s beauty is important for her marriageability, and a youth’s form, particularly his musculature, is an indication of his adult potential’. In the male aesthetic ideal figure, there should be definite ideas of plenitude. There must be good musculature, as a sure sign of future success. Well developed pectoral muscles found on male Baule statues indicate a social beauty. Muscularity in thighs and calves represent physical splendour and strength. The legs must manifest stamina and solidity.

In the light of African sculptures as expression of beauty concepts, Rachewitta, et al., (1968:124) opined that, ‘...African art works reflect their comportment and deportment, their ideals of beauty must be present in their sculptures’. The issue of beauty representation in sculpture pieces is as relative as

their belief in Sympathetic Magic – ‘likes produces likes’ affects the beauty concept of some Africans as expressed by Willett (1993:178-180) as ‘sculpture (masks) in Africa; besides its use as a source of pleasure, it also serves as a representation of beauty or ugliness, though sculpted (masks) objects are seen as a source of beauty by its makers and users, the Kalahari view their sculpture with apathy; they therefore compare a man’s ugliness to spiritual sculptures. In this regard, pregnant women are advised not to look at sculpture ‘lest their children acquire its big eyes and long nose and so turn out ugly’.

He further expressed that, it is in contrast to some Igbo groups who have pairs of masks representing beauty and ugliness. Once humans wish to be like their ancestors, their inherent qualities in terms of beauty are expressed in the masks. The concept of beauty ideals as implied by the Masai ethnic group of Kenya focuses mainly on the physical beauty. Thompson’s explanation of the Masai ideal feminine beauty has to do with well-built and slim body. The figure should not be flat but rounded in form. The limbs should also be sufficiently rounded, have an oval face, white teeth with black gums, protruding buttocks, strong thighs and a deep navel.

Most of these are traces of historical concepts of beauty pursued by groups of identity and beliefs. Since beliefs form part of culture, which is dynamic and changes with time, the concept of beauty undergoes through an equal transformation by way of inculcating aspects of modernity into traditional beliefs.

Aside associating beauty in Africa to mutilation and manipulation of the various parts of the body in line with beliefs, ethnicity and culture, beauty can generally be measured in the physical attributes of the people of Africa, especially those along the Guinea Coast as spelt out by Sieber (1974:89) with some reference to

Barbot's comment on the appearance of the black people of the Guinea Coast in the mid – fifteenth century.

The blacks, in this part of Guinea, are generally well limb'd and proportioned, being neither of the highest nor of the lowest size and stature; they have good oval faces, sparkling eyes, small ears and their eyebrows[sic] lofty and thick. Their mouth not too large; curious clean, white and well – ranged teeth, fresh red lips .... For the most part they have long curled hair, sometimes reaching down to their shoulders ... and very little beards before they are thirty years of age .... They are commonly broad –shoulder'd, and have large arms, thick hands, long fingers, as are their nails and hooked, small bellies, long legs, broad large feet, with long toes, strong waists, and very little hair about their bodies. Their skin, tho'but indifferent black, is always sleek and smooth .... In short, they are for the most part well – set, handsome men in outward appearance....

This description confined to the general look of men within the Guinea Coast, casting an impression of a well – built masculine structure, typical of men. A major characteristic of men which is still upheld today. To the women, he stated the following;

The black women, I also observed to be strait, and of a moderate stature, pretty plump, having small round heads, sparkling eyes, for the most part, high noses, somewhat hooked , long curling hair, little mouths, very fine well – set white teeth, full necks and handsome breast. They are ... very talkative ... very covetous ... and proud to a high degree; which is inferred from their costly dress, as if women in any part of the world, did not clothe themselves according to their ability.

The impression in the last statement is a clear reflection of the role of costume on the physical look of the women on the Guinea Coast. Clothe was equally used to enhance the appearance of women over the centuries in Africa as well. The extent of covering is not the issue but the message and prestige attached to what the individual wears and its acceptability among the society in which he or she is found.

#### **2.4.2 Western Concept of Beauty**

Various concepts on beauty have been expressed throughout the periods in history. Within the Greek culture in 600 B.C., the idea of an ideal human body was based on the fact that, perfection of the state is sought through perfection of the individual. Hence an ideal human body symbolized an ideal divine soul, dedicated to the highest principles, (i.e. absolute goodness). A Greek idea of a perfect figure was sought through a sculpture marble over a period of 150 years in three stages. The first attempt was in early archaic period representing crudely curved body. The second was curved still in archaic period some 75 years later which strove towards naturalism. The third successful one took place in the classical period within the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The three developments of the perfect idea of beauty in Greek early culture as indicated above is a reflection of a tall well built figure with very good proportions. A perfect man in Greek culture was later equated to the formulated form of Male Apollo or the Venus of Millo.

Venus of Willendorf was a Paleolithic sculpture piece believed to be a representation of a fertility goddess as expressed by Schneider (1999:26). Venus relates to the Roman goddess of love and beauty, hence the characteristic of Venus of Willendorf was considered as beauty. Its features include rhythmic arrangement of bulbous oval shapes emphasizing the head, breasts, torso and the thighs. The scale of these parts of the body in relation to the whole is quite large, while the facial features, neck and lower legs are virtually eliminated. It is a strikingly expressive figure with a well developed aesthetic sensibility.

Various standards of beauty ideals were recognized all over the world within a stipulated time frame. These concepts change as the taste, culture and civilization of the people change. Most of the historical beauty concepts were in

relation to religious standards, beliefs and practices. Antubam (1963:89) assessed the ideal of beauty held among the ancient Mesopotamian, Byzantine and the Italian Renaissance among others as follows:

The ancient Mesopotamian ideal was that of a conqueror. Strength and power in the male were reflected in the fullness and often over-emphasized muscles in sculpture and architecture ... Byzantine ideal was founded on ideas of the fear and reverence of God, the Divine. The divine beauty was reflected in the weight and almost grotesque expression of feeling in figures in sculpture, architecture and painting. The Italian Renaissance ideal was the basically intellectual and scientific outlook exemplified in Botticelli's Venus, the Primavera (spring), a statue almost like a construction without joints and looking down in shyness of her nakedness.

These expressions of beautiful ideals over the centuries and within different cultures testified to the fact that, beauty cannot be measured with any certainty.

In spite of the fact that, modern ideals of beauty are gaining root in the African society firmly, certain practices can solely be identified with them as an attempt by them to look beautiful, ideal and attractive within their society or social class. Some of these are seen in the form of cosmetic surgery, body and breast enhancement, lips enlargement through implants and to some extent obesity.

During the Victorian era corsets were used excessively to project the image of the ideal figure with an hour-glass look. Therefore the outlines of women's bodies were controlled by corsetry and petticoat constructions. But Weston (2006:3) points out that, now many consumers have their figure faults corrected by cosmetic surgery with implants or liposuction fat reduction. He explained that the first 'face lift' done by Eugene Hollander of Berlin was in 1901. The face lift was linked with the wealthy at the time.

His further explanation reveals that, in the 1920s some women endured breast reductions so they would wear the flat boyish fashion. The fuller the bosom at



the time the better it was for the individual. Expensive surgical enlargement was often done for people such as actresses and musicians, but was not talked about much simply because it was not among the populist. Nowadays some people, including some Ghanaians, with ordinary incomes view breast and buttock enlargement as their right to satisfy emotional and fashionable needs despite the fact that, the larger communities do not take kindly to these practices. Older teenage girls particularly favour breast implants, which became fashionable in search for the ideal silhouette.

Such beauty concepts had been with Ghanaian ladies for some time back, but the practice seems to be dying out which may result from a change of taste in ideal silhouette. Some young ladies of today, express that a big breast is no more a fashion of the time, hence, ladies with breast implant or any other form of breast enlargement are nick named '*breastina*', as a sign of dislike for the act.

In totality, various forms of beautification and body adornment are means of expressing or preparing grounds that will expose or project the true look of 'man' from various social settings and cultures throughout the world through clothing and its forms of adornments and changes that come with them.

## **2.5 Types of Fashion Accessories**

Accessories do not necessarily form an integral part of any particular style or make, however, they enhance the beauty of the wearer. The wearer of a style can do without them, but its presence or usage enhances the look of a person and projects the image and status of the wearer. These accessories come in various forms and styles with their meanings and significances, as in the form of beads, rings, anklets, and the likes produced mainly from metals, textiles and leather materials.



Inclusion of accessories help to improve on the look or attractiveness of the wearer, in other instances, it facilitates the appearance and activities of the wearer. Accessories such as bags, belts, jewellery, are worn or carried as additional items to the clothes on the human body. Although there are other instances when accessories can be used, its use here is fashion oriented and will be considered as such for the purpose of this study. Accessories are usually used for the purpose of attraction, that is enhancing one's look, but traditional accessories as used in Ghana go beyond the attraction factor to cover ranks, meaning and symbolism attached to them. Similar views are expressed by some writers.

According to Amenuke, et al., (1993:158) accessories like jewellery used to enhance the appearance of the body have symbolisms attached to them. This is expressed as 'the symbolic nature of things is ... shown in jewellery. Finger and toe rings, earrings and beads have names which symbolize events or processes in life'. In Ghanaian society, especially among the Akans, meanings are attached to accessories used on various occasions, and in most instances to express rank, status and wealth.

Nevertheless, accessories are responsible for enhancing the beauty or appearance of a person, no manner how simple and cheap they may be. Sue-Jenkyn (2005:13), expressed this sentiments when he stated; "trimmings and cheap accessories such as scarves were used to update and freshen outfits". Though accessories may enhance people's outfit, they can sometimes become a real bother as their fixing and removing can be very difficult. The more accessories a person uses in adornment, the more restricted he or she becomes and the more time is spent in removing them when the need arises, as is the case with chiefs' adornment in Ghana. Jones, hence throws words of caution in the following ways, "beware of using

complicated accessories-tights (panty hose), belts and jewellery all take time to put on and remove”.

Accessories are used for body adornment; in Africa these items are mostly rendered in wood, metal, textile and leather. They are converted into beautiful artefacts used as accessories to enhance the body and project the image of the individual and they are in the forms of beads, rings, sandals, hats, walking sticks, etc. In relation to chiefs in Africa, such accessories form the major part of their regalia. Mayer (1994:100-101) spelt out that, gold earrings worn by African women are sumptuous and made by local goldsmiths. Wealthy women wear elaborate earrings with hair pieces of beads sometimes placed in the hair. She added that, “...splendor [sic] of Akan ceremonies is without equals anywhere, since its goldsmiths are rightly famous for the richness of their jewels in which traditional designs form the main theme. Variety in terms of design are common in rings, necklace, bracelets which form a small part of the regalia of chiefs. Some pendants were large and do not form part of the necklace but worn on ceremonial occasions”.

Beads form part of accessories and come in different types and sizes, but can further be processed into elaborate forms of other accessories as shared by Brincard (1984:38) in the following ways:

Although various types of beads made of stone or clay, ‘aggrey’ beads (sixteenth-century beads made of blue coral), imported glass, or local beads made from melted – down beer or medicine bottles were used to construct necklaces, the true transformation of beadwork is in its ‘embroided’ or ‘woven’ form, as can be seen in the belts, apron, wedding tain, and loincloth from South African, the Luba turtle adornment from Zaire, or the Yoruba golden glass beaded crown from Nigeria.

Therefore the quality, types and uses of beads go beyond necklaces and are expressed in various aesthetic forms throughout the African continent. It is a major player when it comes to fashion in both traditional and contemporary systems.

On the issue of beads as accessories, Clarke (1998:36-55) spelt out the role beads play in the adornment of the body in Africa. He pointed out that beads and beadworks are of social significance in the cultural life of Africans. Their uses are versatile, ranging from the beautification of the body, healing purpose, sign of wealth, rank, affiliation in terms of religion and culture, protection and group identity. To buttress the point made earlier by Brincard, Clarke pointed out that, the Yoruba of Nigeria are noted for their beaded embroidery crowns and clothing reserved as ceremonial dress of kings. He also stressed that beads are fashioned to distinguish between ranks in chieftaincy and their use as regalia. Beads are also embroidered into robes, curtains, staffs and other court items for traditional officials. In Ghana, various ethnic groups use beads on their ceremonial occasions; beads are of maximum prestige among the Krobos, Ewes, Gas, Akans and other northern ethnicities in the Ghana.

Weston (2006:3) speaking on accessories based on jewellery in costume and fashion history, tackles jewellery in the form of necklace, earrings, bracelets and bangles made from silver, gold and platinum. He elaborates on the historical trends of their fashioning to suit the demands of the various periods in history. Weston in tracing the history and fashion role of jewellery classified them under six major headings as; Fine and Fake Jewellery, Gem and Pearls, Real Fake, the Empire Jewellery, Victorian Jewellery, Cocktail Jewellery and Jewellery of the twenty first century. In all the above groups, he indicates with specific dates on which the various jewellery were used over the centuries. This historical analysis reveals that jewellery

formed a dominant accessory that was used to enhance the look of costumes throughout history. This historical evidence of the use of jewellery is equally reflected in the traditional and cultural systems of the Akans over the centuries especially among the Asantes with the establishment of their Kingdom.

Ameunke, et al., (1993:116-119) under their submission classified a number of items from the field of textile, metal arts and leatherworks into the category of accessories: under textiles he made a list of items such as handkerchiefs, socks, stockings, gloves, ribbons, ties and the like. The metal objects include some jewellery that fall under this category; rings of all kinds, necklaces, necklets, bracelets, wristlets, bangles, pendants, belt hooks, cuff links, tie pins and others. Under the leather works, items like bags, purse and wallets, shoes, sandals, belts, straps, hats, in some cases talismans and amulets are mentioned among the list, most of these accessories are used by traditional and contemporary Ghanaian women and men to make their dressing complete and attractive.

Frings (1999:54-56) sees accessories as an important and integral part of the fashion business. He argued from the fact that, though, accessories are at the mercy of apparel designers and how they blend with the costumes that go with them, accessories are equally necessary to the creation and promotion of a total fashion look. He states:

Accessories such as shoes, handbags, belts, hats and jewellery are designed to coordinate with apparel to create a total fashion look. The fashion for particular accessories is usually at the mercy of apparel designers and how they accessorize their designs on the runways.

Within the fashion industry, accessories form part of the driving force as there are industries for shoes and hosiery, handbags and jewellery. It is known that the popularity of various accessories is cyclical. As fashion changes so does the need for certain accessories. For instance, fashion for belt, jewellery and hats relate to individual's interest in apparel, whether clothing is a classic or simple style and the hair styles respectively. This implies that producers of accessories must be aware of fashion trends in order to make accessories that will successfully complement apparel.

The ministry of education (1992:50) touches on accessories as items '... used to complement an outfit by harmonizing or contrasting with it. They are fashion features which add interest'. Accessories therefore form an important part in selecting an outfit, creating a wardrobe to enable you select the right accessories to go with the right outfit for an occasion either to match, contrast or tone with the outfit. Accessory is mainly an European concept but plays a major role in the dress-code of the African for various occasions in the form of items used for body adornment. It also elaborates on rank and class identity within the Akan communities and Ghanaian tradition in general.

Accessories in general form an important part of an outfit, as they aid in complimenting the look of the wearer. As stated earlier, accessories to match are in the mercy of the fashion designer, in that their designs affect the shape and size of handbags, colours and styles of shoes, hats and how they should match, contrast or tone with a particular outfit to project the wearer's image or enhance the complete impression they want to carry out. Accessories are an essential part of a wardrobe and they should always be selected such that they can be easily worn with several fashionable clothes in the wardrobe. The choice and use of these accessories can



make a person 'dress-up' or 'dress-down', therefore they must be given equal attention just like the garment itself.

## **2.6 Significance of Tattoos, Scarification and Body paintings**

All over the world, body beautification and adornment form an integral part of cultures with different meanings and significance associated with them. Though most of these practices have been relegated to the background, it still forms part of the traditional celebrations as expressed in some festive occasions throughout the world.

Painting on the human body can be for the purpose of beautification, religious, medicinal, in times of war and entertainment purposes. It involves the use of dyes, cosmetics (both local and foreign) and earth colours. Body marks such as scarification and tattoos are also for body decorations, medicinal, religious and ethnic identification.

Various interpretations and meanings were given as reasons why incisions and scarifications are done on the body. Amenuke, et al., (1993:161) mentioned three important categories to which they can be classified as a means of identification, for religious reasons and as a means of healing. These are better stated as many class or families practise face-marking as a means of identifying themselves. They further express that, when a family loses two or more babies by death, the next child is marked on the face to disfigure him to make him unattractive to the citizens of the spiritual world. Another instance in which the body is sometimes marked is during sickness. Little cuts are made at specific parts of the body and herbal preparations are applied to the cuts as a form of protections.



As part of body paintings done for a religious purpose, Rattray (1959:134) mentioned that, during the *Odwira* ceremony, which has a lot of interesting account of deliberate violation of a sacred object with a view to its cleansing and ultimate resurrection, the king himself has to be in *kyekyen* in order to perform an aspect of the rite in the celebration by smearing a red dye on the body. Rattray explained that, the king smeared his body all over with red *esono* (red dye made from the roots of the *edwono* tree), then he in turn rubbed some of the red *esono* across the forehead of some of his sub-chiefs. He added that, the executioner of the king who carried the new yams, also smeared on one side of the face red and the other side black. Though Rattray did not spell out the significance of the paints used, they are of no difference in meaning to what red and black signify generally among the Akans. Red is a sign of danger or life and black is a representation of the spirits or a feeling of melancholy.

Beside all the above mentioned reasons why tattoos and scarifications are used in some African ethnic groups, Bubolz (1973:8) disclosed from Bohannon's explanation that, 'searing among the Tiv is not done for identification purposes as weary Westerners (who usually view scarification with horror) assume. Instead, cutting the skin in designs is done for beautification and for erotic purposes as the scarred flesh is sensitive when touched and provides a tactile sensation to the one who is touching'.

## **2.7 Headdresses and their Significance**

A headdress is an ancient art that forms part of man's civilization. Headdresses are varied and range from shaving part or the entire head; various styles

of haircuts and hairstyles both traditional and contemporary; through the use of wigs, plaiting of the hair, *rasta* hairdo and head coverings like headgears, crowns and hats.

Modifying and styling of the human head – be it the hairstyle or headgears of different styles for women or crown, hats and caps for men or both, especially in Ghana, people have their own aesthetic and other purposes for which their hairs are worn or used. The headaddresses are used depending on the purpose for which they are to serve, whether, moral, religious or climatic and sometimes for beauty. Among women communities in Ghana especially among the Akans, much importance is attached to general appearance in terms of clothing. However, every well dressed woman, no matter the circumstances, pays special attention to her hairstyle or headgear to create a good and uplifting impression about herself. Forms of headaddresses are equally accompanied with the specific occasion at hand in order not to look odd or unacceptable at public functions.

Writing solely on headgears, Quist (1997:12), spelled out other reasons aside of aesthetics, why women wear one style or the other, this she put:

...these are used as micro – climates for the wearer's head but also to conceal certain portions of the head or face and also reveal certain portions of the wearers face and head. Besides these, they are also used to reveal the wearer's status and personality to others. Some are able to tell the social sect for which the wearer belongs as well as his or her religious background. Headgear designs are able to tell observers for which purpose and reason why the wearer is wearing it, whether for religious purpose or festive time, or just for wearing of headgear's sake.

Just as changes in apparels were visible over the years, female hairstyles in particular also change. According to Weston's (2006:6) historical analysis on hairstyles, the female hair fashion in 1775 was to wear a wig of arranged curling coils on top of the head letting the natural hair fall loosely down the nape of the neck. By the close of the eighteenth century, the fashion was with cropped simple hairstyles. By 1906, an

electric heat machine was attached to the hair pads protecting the head and curled the hair. Somewhere around 1880s into the 1990s, women hair were regarded as their crowning glory and will only be cut due to severe illness. Though he was expressing these from the European perspective of headdress styles over the years, similar conditions were seen here in Ghana, for that matter Africa as a whole.

Within the traditional set-up of the Ghanaian community, hair-styles are not only for aesthetic reason but equally have religious and social commutation to them. Class or social status is equally linked with hairstyles, whilst some styles were solely reserved for religious leaders, others are for slaves in most communities. As a mode of identification, McLeod (1981:64,143) wrote; “Priests hair was allowed to grow into long, matted locks, the style known as *mpesempese*...uncut hair is usually associated with dangerous behaviour: madmen let their locks grow and the same hairstyle was worn by royal executioners”. In another instance, he emphasised that the *Asantehene*’s (Astante king’s) stool – bearers had different hairstyles from that of the queen mother’s servants, women and other servants within the palace. This is an additional confirmation of the facts that, hairstyles in the indigenous set-up have a long tradition and is associated with ranks and status.

In addition to the above, other general observations in the world include hair as a reflection of one’s place in the cycle of life or as a protection in some instance, Sieber and Herreman (2000:89) point out that “Hair can be protective when small patches are left on the fontanel of an infant whose head is otherwise shaved. The soft area of infused bones on the skull – the fontanel – was believed to be an entry point for dangerous spirits and would be protected by the patch of hair”.

## 2.8 Colour Symbolism in Fashion

Colour is commonly used universally, but its meanings and symbolism vary within cultures and ethnicities in Ghana and throughout the world. Within the frameworks of fashion designers generally, colour plays a vital role in the sort of impression the designer wants to create and the occasion for which a fabric or a style can be used. These responses are very visible in the various occasions and celebrations among the Akans. Colour can equally affect people's responses, either emotionally or physically. For instance, in parts of the world blue and green symbolise colours of the sky and grass and psychologically can lower blood pressure, while red and other intense colours can speed up the heart's rate of beating. White can make you feel cold; yellow is a sunny, friendly colour, grey can be business like or depressing. In other instances, a 'little black dress' can denote sophistication and elegance while a 'little red dress' symbolizes fun and outgoing personality; Sue-Jenkyn, (2005; 113-116). It is also believed that people brought up in an urban setting will respond differently to colour as compared to those from rural or tropical communities possibly as a result of cultural settings and other factors like economic, social and religious ones.

With regards to diversity in meanings and symbolism to colour within various cultures, Sue-Jenkyn (2005:117) again makes it known that, 'There are many social conventions and symbolic meanings attached to colours; in parts of the west it is widely believed that green is unlucky, yet it is also associated with nature and wholesomeness. In India, scarlet, not white, is the colour associated with weddings. In China, white, rather than black is the colour for mourning'.

Colour is a visual sensation. Scientifically, it is believed to result from the reflectance of certain visible light rays that strike the retina and stimulate cells in the nerves of the eye. The nerves then send a message to the brain, which in turn, produces the sensation of a specific hue (colour). This scientific description of colour, however, cannot fully communicate its sensation or emotional effect. It is on this note that Sue-Jenkyn (2005:112-118), states that “colours are also named based on our familiar and shared knowledge of the world – that is after animals (e.g. elephant grey and canary yellow); flowers and vegetables (mushroom, tomato red); sweets and spices (toffee, saffron); minerals and jewels (pearl, coral, jade) and so on”. In his further assertions, he explains that, colour is not influenced in the fashion sector alone and that certain World Organisations were trying to interpret it in their social and cultural context. He expressed this as:

It impacts not only upon clothing but also cosmetics, home furnishings, lifestyles products and the automotive industry.... The principal colour advisory bodies are the British Textile Colour Group (BTCG) ... in the process of analysing social and cultural context and make projections for the future. This informs the likely direction that colours in fashion may take”.

Colour plays a dominant role in shaping the fashion of yesterday and today. Colour in Ghanaian culture is not based on scientific theories but on issues related to daily life. Diversity of ethnic groups does not allow for generalization of colour in Ghana, but some level of relationship can be established with regard to colour among the various ethnic groups. Ameunke, et al., (1993:183) reckon that, the western concept of colour taught in the past, must be woven into our culture which will be relevant to our present ways of living. He explained that, colour is associated with the colour of natural objects, having their meanings, symbolism and uses.



Internationally, the importance of colour and its uses in textile and fashion become prominent after the discovering of synthetic dyestuffs in A.D. 1856, which brought improvement on the colouring of textile fabrics used by fashion designers. Within the fashion industry, the very first thing that draws the attention of the consumer to a product is the aesthetic of colour before considering designs, styles and the other properties like drape, texture, comfort and so on. This is clearly magnified in the statements of Marjory (1980:261) that, 'The importance of color [sic] in textile products cannot be over-emphasized. Color [sic] speaks louder than words. Its appeal is universal and it repeatedly serves as a common concern with selecting the 'just right' color [sic] than there are with other factors'.

Fashion, no matter what form it takes, has colours and their meanings linked with it. Either in a traditional or modern context, fashion without specification in colours used and what occasions to use what for is not complete. Colour forms one of the vital ingredients in the choice and selection of clothing, within the traditional setting of the Akans, colours used for occasions play a significant role in the beliefs and success of any particular ceremony. For instance, in Ghana black usually connotes sorrow, death, loss, symbolising spirituality and age. This is emphasised by Antubam (1963:86) in the following words: 'All objects which are dedicated to the spirits of the dead are purposely treated to appear black, but in spite of this association with spirituality and age, it was never used for any type of celebration'.

Within the culture and fashion of the Akans, four colours are of prime importance, namely white, black, dark brown and red. These in Akan dialects are *fufuo*, *tuntum*, *kobene* and *kokoo* or *memene* respectively. White (*fufuo*) is associated with victory and spiritual purity and symbolises the expression of hope, sacredness,

joy and well-being of its people. Red (*kokoo*) which is linked with blood stands for both life and danger, but it is used to depict danger which out-weights that of life. Black (*tuntum*) and dark brown (*kobene*) stand for death and darkness as suggested by Antubam that they symbolise spirituality and age.

Generally speaking, there is some similarity regarding the meanings and symbolism attached to colour universally. All over the world people turned to associate certain colours with certain occurrences like mourning, joy and the likes. Hicks (1999:337) testify to this in his book entitled, 'Rituals and Beliefs' by stating that;

Although it would be an error to assume that our cultural association of black with death and mourning is universal, there is a wide distribution among the cultures of the world with the use of black to represent death ... there exists an almost universal color [sic] ... triad of red, white, and black. In many societies, white relates to such things as purity and fertility, red to decomposition and death .... The wide distribution of this symbolic color [sic] triad may relate to the association of these colors [sic] with bodily fluids, especially white with milk and semen, and red with blood. Black ... associated with loss of consciousness, such as when one faints or 'blacks out'.

These symbolisms make colour a living reality, in that without it the world could be full of danger and boring as well. Natural occurrences give colour to nature, a basic reason why humans appreciate, enjoy colourful occasion and equally link colour to natural activities such as leaves of plants, flowers, blood, body fluid and to some extent, insects and animals.

In Ghana, clothing and fashion has to do with all forms of art on the human body and changes that took place over the years, such cannot be said in terms of literature. They are only integrated into our major finding in the field of culture, quite a number of works can be found on issues regarding fashion generally in Ghana but not taking the culture of Ghanaians into perspective. Some few writers admitted

that, the dynamism of cultures in modern days create rooms for designers to consider cultural trends in their designing concepts. Cross-cultural practices or better still culture hybrids in modern trends open ways to tolerate diverse views of cultures thereby broadening the scope of culture ideals, which encompass acceptable norms, and the uniqueness of culture upbringing in a parent society.

Historical evidence revealed the existence and changes in clothing as well as various ways of fashionable attires in the country and the sub-regions. It also expressed the impact created by foreign influences in the cultural, religious and political lives of the local people. Beauty concepts vary tremendously over the years and keep on changing in different cultures in Ghana and the world over. Colour symbolism, headdresses and other forms of body decorations serve as a source of fashion language of signs, likewise the symbols and iconography that non-verbally communicate meanings about an individual as well as a group of people.

The logo of KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) is centered in the background. It features a shield with a yellow eagle, a green tree, and a red sun. Below the shield is a banner with the text 'NYANSAPɔ WɔSANE NO BADWENMA'.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter takes a look at the different methodologies employed in obtaining relevant data on clothing and fashion in the culture of Ghanaians. The materials for the study were obtained from various sources, but by the very nature of the research, the technique that were mainly employed were historical findings from libraries and other sources as well as fieldwork where oral information was derived

from interviews and conversations particularly with some old folks and students of second and tertiary institutions whom the culture and matters of fashion affect the most. Relevant information from the questionnaire was also made use of. Since, fashion is a daily affair among people, the method of observation was also employed to have first hand information.

### **3.1 Research Instruments and Methods**

Data collection processes involved the administering of questionnaire, personal interviews, tape recording, photography and note writing. These instruments were designed to help gather information among traditional folks, fashion designers and the academia as well as from a cross-section of the youth especially within Akan jurisdiction. The instrumentation used have assisted the researcher to critically understand and evaluate the values and mode of importance attached to body adornment of today in line with culture.

### **3.2 Library Research conducted**

The first objective necessitated a comprehensive research to be conducted from the library, archives and museums. The library research forms the bulk of this aspect of the study. In Kumasi, the KNUST Main Library, the College of Art and Social Sciences Libraries, the Department of General Art Studies Library, the British Council Library, the Ashanti Library and the Ghana Library Board were visited a couple of times each to collect information. Other public libraries also visited by the

researcher include: the Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon, the George Padmore Research Library, Accra polytechnic library and especially the Ghana Library Board all in Accra and other Private Collections. Great efforts were made in all the libraries to gather the secondary data deemed necessary for this dissertation. Other documentary sources of information were from books, publications, catalogues, newsletters, journals, magazines, unpublished theses and charts.

Literature relating to the subject matter ‘fashion in Ghanaian culture’ and the historical aspects of fashion were scanty and not direct to the topic. In all, about sixty five books were reviewed with about fifteen falling within journals, magazines, newspapers and charts. However, only books that relate partly or wholly to areas under the sub-headings in the literature review were considered. Literature that relates to the historical evidences on the arts and development within the sub-region as well as those on the Akans were found at the Ghana Library Board and Ghana collection sections at the various public libraries. Examples include books titled; *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (1980) by Nehemiah Levtzion; *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (1927) by R.S. Rattray and the *Ghana’s Heritage of Culture* (1963) by Kofi Antubam from Ashanti Library, Kumasi; Balme Library, Legon, and George Padmore Research Library, Accra, respectively.

### **3.3 Archival Research work**

The researcher visited the following archives in Ghana, the Manhyia Archives in Kumasi, the National Archives of Ghana in Accra, (headquarters), Kumasi and Sunyani (regional headquarters) respectively to seek information relating



to fashion in the cultural context of the Akans and Ghanaians in general. Information available was scanty and not directly relevant to the Subject matter at hand.

### **3.4 Museum Research conducted**

Other visits were made to the following museums; the National Museums and Monuments Board in Accra, the Manhyia Palace Museum and the Jubilee Museum (at the centre for National Culture), all in Kumasi to collect data. In all these areas, the researcher extensively examined and analysed the form of fashion within culture as seen in the Historical periods mostly through photographs and textile leftovers exhibited in the museums. The assistance of the curators was helpful in explaining and answering few questions posed to them based on possible fashion of the periods past and now as well as changes that have occurred.

### **3.5 Sampling Methodology**

The sample studies involved categories of possible Ghanaian respondents throughout the country, but with particular reference to the Akans forming the population of the study. Emphasis was placed on students, fashion designers, traditional rulers and elderly persons who are knowledgeable in the culture and fashion within Akan areas of jurisdiction. Observation and participation on some festive occasions among the youth and the society as a whole formed the bases for the researcher's primary sources of data collection which gave first hand information of the situation at hand. Further interactions touch on the historical clothing and fashion of the people. These enabled the researcher to use descriptive, analytical and

historical methods of research, supported with photographs and illustrations to explain the situation on the ground.

### **3.6 Descriptive Method**

According to Osuala (2005:197), descriptive research ‘... specifies the nature of a given phenomenon. The specification can be simple or it can be complicated’. It is employed primarily to describe what has been observed. It is to describe behaviours of variables without an attempt to analyze and interpret them. Descriptive research in effect, portrays an accurate profile of persons, situations and events after careful and deliberate observation with accurate and precise description of such person, event or situation. In this context, the researcher carefully surveys the representative sample in the case of the Ghanaian traditional modes of dressing for various occasions as well as foreign impacts of clothes on the youth and their ways of dressing, its relationship with the moral demands within our cultural set-ups.

Since descriptive method of research is important in providing the basis for eliciting possible policies for alleviating a research problem, its use here is necessary to determine the modern trends in clothing and fashion and the reaction of the elders who are custodians of morality and the way forward for Ghanaian culture, this enabled the researcher to identified the problem at hand and suggest possible solutions.

### **3.7 Population of the Study**

Best (1981:8) referred to population as ‘any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher’. Since the

research focuses on the historical aspects of clothing and fashion as well as the cultural significance and foreign influences on the fashionable life of Ghanaians especially the youth, the population for the study comprised students, members of institutions of learning and the general public, officers of Private and Public establishments, and finally leaders of traditional and other religious bodies. The population was then divided into three categories for easier classification and identification. This comprises:

- A. Cultural officers, historians, curators, archivists, traditional and religious leaders (directors of culture, chiefs, queen mothers, priests, priestesses, pastors, *Imams*, elders who are knowledgeable in culture and tradition).
- B. Members of institutions of learning which mostly includes, second and tertiary students, lecturers, heads of schools, teachers and some media men.
- C. Private and Public establishments, associated with clothing and fashion (heads of fashion institutions, boutique owners, second-hand clothes dealers, fashion designers, beauticians, dressmakers and tailors)

The people in the various categories are:

Category A – 240

Category B – 400

Category C – 160

Total = 800

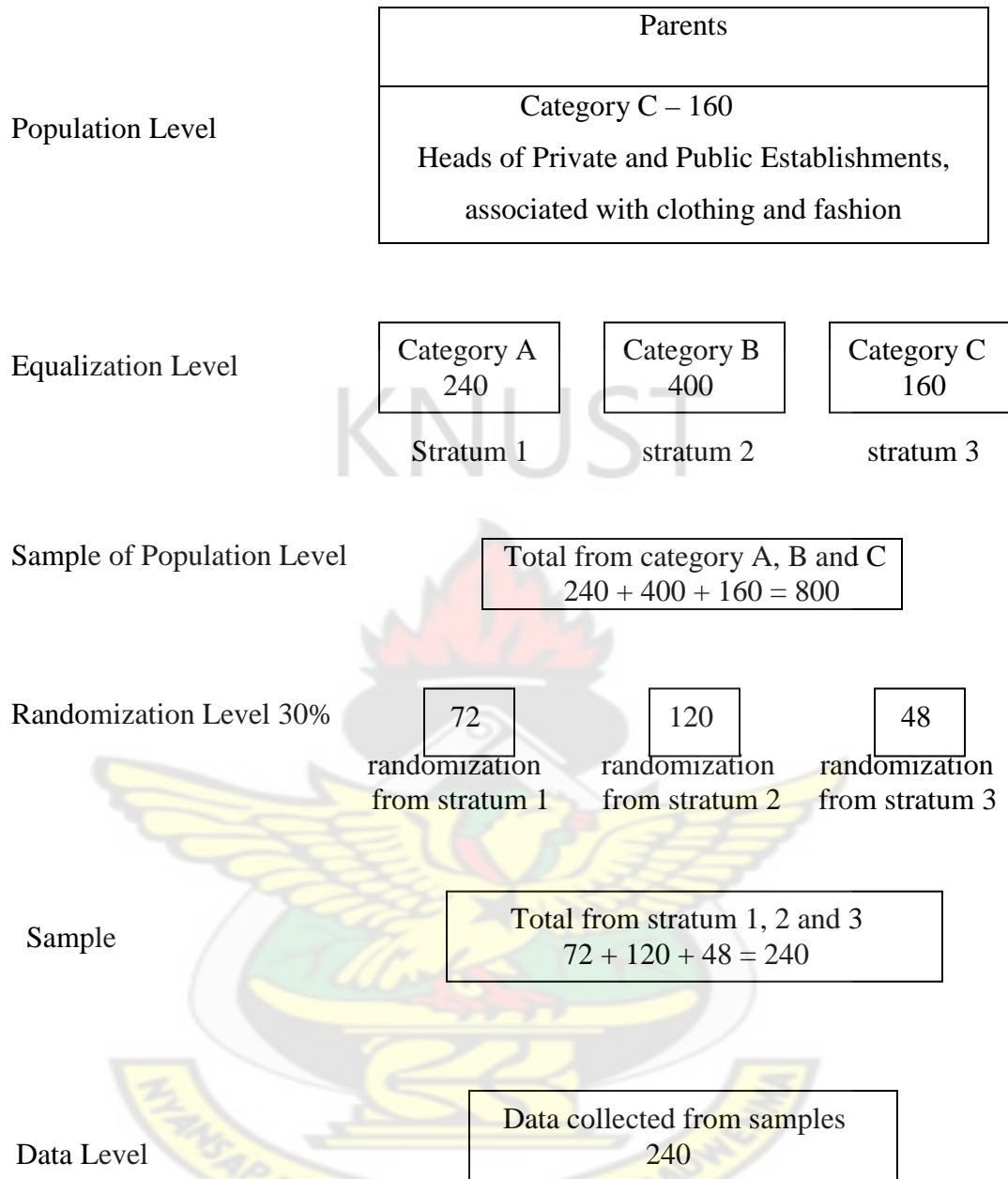
The potential population for this research was 800 respondents. Table I, shows an overview of a stratified random sampling method used.

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TABLE I  
**Schematic Overview of Stratified Random Sampling Method**

Category A – 240 Cultural Officers, historians, traditional and other religious leaders
Category B – 400 Members of Institutions of Learning and



### 3.8 Justification of Samples Selected

The scope of the thesis and the coverage area, coupled with financial constraints justified the need to use a 30% of the total population using the stratified random selecting method. The minimum of 30% was chosen because it is considered the acceptable minimum percentage of any major research work. Hence, 240 samples



which form the 30% of the targeted population of 800 respondents become the accessible population.

The total population categories into three strata differ from each other. For example, cultural officers, historians and traditionalists take a look at historical facts that relate to all forms of historical evidence and changes in clothing and fashion. The members of institutions of learning, which includes; students, lecturers, teachers, the youth in general and parents are the people mostly concerned with fashion and its trends, hence, their views, suggestions and opinions are crucial in addressing the positive and negative influences and its impact on culture and moral life of the youth regarding fashion.

The Private and Public establishments concerned with the designing, production and marketing of fashionable items such as, polytechnic fashion departmental heads, fashion designers, second-hand clothes dealers, boutique attendants, beauticians, etc were considered to know their views on the moral and cultural values on the use of clothing and fashionable items by the general public.

Significantly, this categorization is to help gather the views of people knowledgeable with historical aspects of clothing compared with the modern trends of clothing and fashion coupled with its moral implications on our culture today as Akans, for proper documentation and subsequent education of the youth to commute the trends for a better tomorrow. The thought of the youth, believed to be most affected with negative influences on fashion today and that of those believed to be the brains behind the manufacturing and distribution of the fashionable goods will be considered.

For a better and proportionality representation of the population, stratified random sampling technique was used. This enables a sub-division of the population to smaller homogenous groups of three for the purpose of accuracy. Based on this, 30% of the population (240 respondents) were sampled out of the targeted population (800), which formed the population of interest or accessible population.

The technique was used to select the sample of 240 (30%) of the total population. The total sample was therefore shared among the three selected strata (categories A, B and C) of the total population. The category 'A' had a total of 240 respondents, accounting for 30% of the sample population, category 'B' which is 400, had 50% and category 'C' (160) had 20% in that sequence. The percentage in each category or stratum of the selected sample with detail classification of each group was presented in table II.

### **Details of Categories Selected**

#### **Category A; 240 respondents; 30% = 72**

This group comprises; cultural officers, historians, curators, traditional and religious leaders (directors of culture and chieftaincy institutions; chiefs, queen mothers, priests, Imams, elders who are knowledgeable in culture and tradition).

#### **Category B; 400 respondents; 30% = 120**

It includes; members of institutions of learning, the youth and parents (second and third cycle students, lecturers, teachers, media men, the youth outside the educational system and parents).

**Category C; 160 respondents; 30% = 48**

This comprises; heads of private and public establishments associated with clothing and fashion (heads of fashion related institutions, boutique owners, second-hand clothes dealers, fashion designers, beauticians, dressmakers and tailors).

TABLE II

**Percentages of each Stratum Selected Sample**

Status	No. in sample	% of total
Category A (stratum 1)	72	30
Category B (stratum 2)	120	50
Category C (stratum 3)	48	20

Category A (stratum 1);  $240 \times 100/800 = 30\%$

Category B (stratum 2);  $400 \times 100/800 = 50\%$

Category C (stratum 3);  $160 \times 100/800 = 20\%$

### 3.9 Instruments for Data Collection

Questionnaires, interviews and observations were Survey Instruments designed and used to solicit data from respondents on their opinions relating to the major concerns of the dissertation, such as, history of fashion, beauty concepts,

clothing among Akans emphasising the styles and changes associated with dresses, accessories, headdresses, cosmetics used and the negative influences of foreign fashion on the youth. It is to enable us know the moral and cultural standing of today's generation through fashion which is vital for national identity.

### **3.10 Design and Administration of Questionnaire**

A seven page questionnaire (appendix A) was designed to seek information from the semi-elites and the elites within the three strata of the population, especially strata two and three (categories B and C), which consist of students, parents, teachers/lecturers, fashion designers, dressmakers/tailors, etc. The questionnaire was categorised into eight sections, lettered 'A' to 'I' comprising fifty four questions with sub-sections. Both the closed and opened types of questions were adopted to enable respondents equally express their views when applicable. Each of the eight sections tackles specific area/s of interest in fashion. Section 'A' requested for the particulars of the respondents; section 'B' has a heading 'the concept of Ghanaian culture and fashion'. 'C' asked questions relating to 'the mode of dressing in Ghanaian culture and its influences'; Section 'D' assessed the 'concept of beauty in Ghana'; 'E', accessories used in Ghanaian culture; between 1900 and now'; 'F' touched on 'colour, body painting and tattoos; its meanings and significance'; Section 'G' continues with coiffure in traditional and modern contexts'; and 'H' on the 'religious and other art forms in clothing and fashion'.

Section 'B' to 'G' has headings that relate to specific areas of fashion. Each heading has a major question/s with sub – question/s to solicit the personal opinions of the respondents. The last part of the questionnaire 'section I' was the

open type with the intention to collect personal suggestions and recommendations from the respondents on the entire topic ‘clothing and fashion in Ghanaian culture; A case study among the Akans’.

In all, one hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaires were prepared and administered. One hundred and thirty (130) questionnaires were personally delivered to respondents and (20) sent through the mail with self addressed envelopes attached. After given relevant information on how to complete the questionnaire, respondents were given two to six weeks to complete the questionnaire. The modes of administration of questionnaire were mostly urban – oriented since fashion is believed to be more centred in the major cities and towns embracing the youth than those in the countrysides as well as the elderly folks.

Out of the hundred and thirty (130) questionnaire administered personally, one hundred and eight (108) were collected from respondents. Only three (3) of the mailed ones were received. Though the responses were good, the researcher had to visit some of the respondents several times before they completed answering the questions. Others misplaced their questionnaire and demanded new ones which were issued to them, again out of which some still failed to complete and return the questionnaire to the researcher. As at now, thirty nine (39) respondents have not yet submitted their questionnaires to the researcher. The entire questionnaire received so far amounted to hundred and eleven (111) out of the hundred and fifty (150) administered, which equates 62.5% of the accessible population of 240 respondents. Table III shows a summary of responses from the copies of questionnaires administered.



TABLE III

**Responses from the Questionnaire**

Categories of Persons	Respondents	Returned Questionnaire
Fashion Designers	10	7
Students	45	42
Chiefs	6	2
Lecturers/Teachers	18	15
Religious Leaders	11	5
Second-hand Clothes Dealers	10	7
Cultural Officers	8	4
Tailors/Dressmakers	12	9
Elders	15	10
Boutique Owners	10	7
Media Men	5	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>111</b>

**3.11 Responses from questionnaire**

The details of responses from respondents have critically been analysed in chapter five and presented in tables and pie-charts using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analyses mechanism.

### **3.12 Interviews Conducted**

The formal interviews conducted by the researcher was the more relevant techniques of Data Collection Instruments used. In that, most of the respondents turned to have more to offer by way of talking than writing. There was the opportunity to ask leading questions whenever the need arose. The researcher in this instance gained rapport which enabled him to obtain information relevant to the dissertation and was permitted to visit interviewees anytime the need arose. In all, ninety (90) respondents were interviewed 'face-to-face' at their respective workplaces, classrooms, lecture halls and homes. The respondents interviewed were elaborated on under the sub-heading data collection processes. The ninety respondents interviewed amount to 37.5% of the accessible population of 240 respondents.

Most of the interviews were granted only after a letter of commitment and interview guides (appendix B) were given to the respondents on demand to enable them prepare for the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted directly at either offices or homes of the respondents, using a tape recorder. Some of the respondents backed their claims with old photographs to depict eras of fashion trends. A letter was addressed to the Registrar of the Regional House of Chiefs in Ashanti who replied and linked the researcher to some paramount chiefs and queen mothers who were helpful with vital information for the dissertation. The interviews were conducted both in English and Twi languages where applicable. Ewe and Ga languages were also used for interviews conducted within the Greater Accra and Volta Regions to elicit their views on the general concept of clothing and fashion in Ghana which are part of the requirement of the project topic.

### **3.13 Observation**

Clothing and fashion are sometimes an outward expression of inward character. Through clothing, therefore, one may know the hidden character and mood of the wearer, hence observation became one of the important survey instruments used to solicit data by the researcher. Kumekpor (2002:65) states that, ‘observation brings the investigator into contact, in one way or the other, with the phenomenon being studied. In this way, it becomes an effective means of recording what is observed more precisely and with a greater reliability ....’ Observation is therefore the act of recognising and noting facts or occurrences.

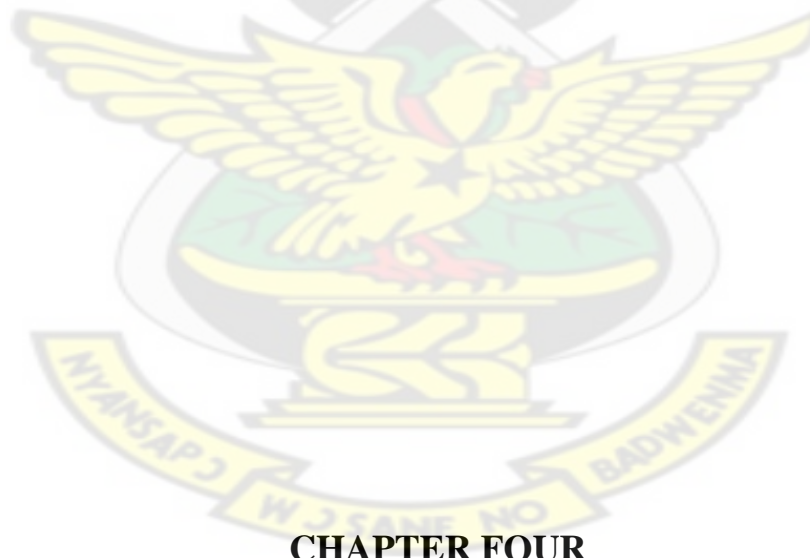
On-the-spot observation of royal regalia, *asafo* groups’ costumes, priest/priestess dresses, community leaders and so on, for funerals and other festive occasions, the youths dressing codes for various functions and occasions, adornments as expressed in sculpture pieces, photographs, paintings and other materials were carried out by the researcher especially at durbar grounds and other gatherings like the Ghana @ 50 gold show, in the palaces, museums, galleries, archives and so on for more information, where applicable, the observation was used to assess the otherwise of the authenticity of some of the data that the researcher was not convinced with.

### **3.14 Data Collection Processes**

Both primary and secondary methods of data collecting procedures were used in this category. The ninety (90) respondents who provided the Primary data collected through interviews were: three cultural officers (the regional registrar of Ashanti regional house of chiefs, Kumasi, and directors of cultural centres in Kumasi and Accra), five chiefs, e.g. (*Offinsohene, Obohene*, etc), seven elders (including

chiefs' spokesmen, '*kontebapenin*', etc), who are knowledgeable on the traditional ways of clothing and possible changes that must have occurred. Some four senior archivists and curators, eight lecturers and teachers, twenty three students, thirteen parents, five designers and second-hand clothe dealers, ten tailors and dressmakers, as well as ten religious leaders comprising three pastors, two Imams and three traditionalists; views of two media men were also sought.

The secondary data were mostly of documentary sources from libraries, archives, and so on which include books, charts, magazines, 'news-prints' and unpublished theses. All the data collected both primary and secondary sources were assembled, critically analysed, summarised and conclusions drawn from them, which were expressed in plates, figures and incorporated in this dissertation.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DOCUMENTATION OF THE HISTORICAL TRENDS OF CLOTHING AND FASHION AMONG GHANAIS**

History is a revelation of perceived realities of people's lifestyle in the past. Art works, which include clothing and fashion, are always transformations of

the experiences of these realities of the people. Fashion, no matter what form it takes, is an integral part of art. Therefore, just as the social and cultural values of people change with time throughout the world as well as in Ghana, so do the fashion and other aesthetics of their arts also change throughout the ages. These changes result from both internal and external influences as far as clothing and fashion is concerned. Cultural hybrid becomes the order of the day, which includes the blending of clothing and fashion styles of various ethnicities into one another. The extent to which other hybrids of cultures can be accepted into a parent culture have to be of concern especially in clothing, if cultures as in Ghana want to keep and maintain their ideal, morally right and correct ways of doing things.

#### **4.1. Historical Evidences of Clothing in Ghana**

Ghanaians like other humans are a complex entity, with varied ethnic groupings and ethnographical evidences, forming the bases of their lives, which include arts in general, factoring in clothing and fashion. To comprehend the complexity of life of Ghanaians generally, all forms of arts including body arts- which in this context embrace body paintings, incisions, tattoos, coiffure, accessories, dresses and other beauty concepts especially among the Akans must be critically studied and analysed. There is the need, therefore, to study and understand what they mean within their respective ethnic contexts. All forms of archaeological findings and records especially within the arts become the channel to a successive finding in the field of fashion history in Ghana and among the Akans.

The development of towns and cities in Ghana equally improved upon the clothing and fashion lives in the people. Many factors were deemed to have



contributed to the emergence of settlements in various places of the country. Notably among them were agricultural potentials, trade, religious and political emancipation. Gadzepko (2005:7,16,121) stated that, 'the towns emerged between 1000A.D. and 1800 A.D. Between the periods of 1600s and 1750s towns like Bono Manso in Brong Ahafo; Begho and Se and Le townships in the Dawhenya community, mostly in the southern parts of the country, have seen development biff-up by commercial ethnic groups from Akanland, Northern Ghana, Cote d' Ivoire and Mali'. Archaeological excavations in these sites indicate commercial links resulting from trade in imported goods. There was an evidence of local industry in ceramics, metallurgy, textiles and ivory technology.

A popular traditional textile in Ghana, i.e. weaving forms the bases of clothing in Ghanaian culture and it is mostly associated with the Asantes in the central zone of the country. They were believed to be the innovators of the art through Ota Kraban and Ameyaw based on oral evidences. Contrary to this, weaving, which was dated back to the Great Empires of Western Sudan, during the periods of Arab trades found the same types of looms used in those days in Northern Ghana as indicated by Asihene, (1978: 56). This art of weaving mostly linked with the Bonwire community in Asantes, was believed to find its origin from Northern Ghana, as spelt out by Kyerematen, (1964:78), a place where cotton is largely grown locally, spun into yarns used for the weaving; though the use of raffia was prior to cotton as suggested in the earlier findings, one may therefore believe that, Ota Kraban and Ameyaw studied the art of weaving from the North.

The people of this land, which became known as Ghana, after her independence in 1957, involved in both internal and external trades which include art

and crafts with her neighbours before the arrival of the Europeans in the fifteenth century. Among the local crafts were textile products that the people were using as clothes before the Europeans arrived on the coast. Gadzepko stated that, ‘the people of Nkoranza-Tekyiman, Asante and Keta were producing textiles, usually produced from local cotton, woven and dyed’. These internal culture and trade infusions were further enhanced by external trade routes from the Northern part (Mali) and the East Dahomey (Republic of Benin) and Beni in Nigeria. These equally influenced the textile industry of the people of Ghana. As the trade was likely to promote cultural fusion of the people of West Africa, their mode of dressing would equally be affected.

#### **4.1.1 Forms of Clothing that Existed in the Gold Coast (now, the southern part of Ghana)**

Prior to the nineteenth century when the level of education was low, most historical accounts on issues including forms of clothing that existed are in oral forms, therefore the authenticity of such information was usually questionable. However, some of this oral information on clothing among the Gold Coasters were back with written accounts from some European travellers along the coast of West Africa between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries; the writings give an account on clothing as observed among the local people at that time. The historical revelation of Ghanaian clothing style in the past coupled with its transformation has been considered from the written records of these early writers and the photographs and illustrations available to back such claims have also been examined. Wayne and Lewinski (1991:522) in their book *Experiencing World History* emphasized that, it is easy to identify properly, the culture and historical periods of people by the way they dressed. The identification can be done through photographs and paintings, which

served as good and accurate information about the past. A similar view was expressed by Aldred (1968:23), when he explained that, historically, sculptures can give a clue to ancient history and can serve as a way of identifying the level and style of fashion that existed in those days, as the sculpture piece also depicts the wear and clothing styles of the people.

Oral tradition holds that the earliest forms of coverings used before the fifteenth century were mainly waist beads and the barkcloth known as *Kyenkyen* alongside forms of body paintings and hairstyles. In the seventeenth century when kingdoms were being established in Asante and other Akan provinces, class and status identity that embraced the clothing of the people began to emerge. Clothing worn from that time was elaborate and complex in nature based on rank and status of the individual within the community. Historical evidences of forms of clothing and adornments from written sources as mentioned earlier in the literature review on the coast and other parts of the Gold Coast especially in Akan land were elaborated on by Sieber, Dantzig, etc with references to Barbot's and Marrees' accounts on clothing respectively within the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. Bosmas also gave his account on clothing in the Gold Coast within the seventeenth hundreds. These were clothing used by the local people and were possibly devoid of western influences in terms of styles and mode of dressing.

Sieber (1974:27-29) with reference to Barbot gave a sixteenth century description of the fashion of the rich and the poor as well as that of women and men, considering the dress code of women as much richer and elaborate than that of men along the Coast of Modern Ghana. He expressed that the difference in the mode of dressing between the rich and the poor lies in the quality and amount of fabric used.

The rich wear three or four pieces of cloths of satin, Indian chintz or other sorts of stuff, usually wraparound without stitches, so that it hangs from the navel downwards, covering half of the legs. At times, they wrap them around the neck and shoulders, two, three or four pieces of richer cloths by passing one end under their arms, like a cloak, holding a rod in their hand when moving in town or visiting other people. The poor persons go in low-grade fabrics but in a simple mode of dressing without rods.

On the other hand, the women who were considered to be more fashionable than men were said to pay greater attention to their hair arrangements and scarification as well as their uses of rings, bangles, necklaces and local cosmetics at the time. They usually wore cloths that were two or three times as long and broad as those of the men. These long cloths they wrapped around the waist and bound them with a long slip of cloth to make it fit to the body. They covered the upper part of their bodies with veils of silk or other fine fabrics. Common women who contributed mainly to the household chores wore housedresses reaching from the waist to the knees. The dresses were produced mainly from locally woven cotton.

Sieber, specifically, gave a better description of the dress of the Gas as cited by Barbot in the late eighteenth century as ‘wearing a loincloth between their legs and looped over leather or a beaded belt. Fashion decreed that the back end hung lower than the front ...’ This description is similar to *danta* worn among the Akans some years ago. He also stated that, ‘the Ga men wear larger cloths which serve as blankets at night and as a lounge dress in the morning usually worn by wrapping it round the body so that one arm was left uncovered’. This description is also similar to men’s traditional clothing styles among the Akans, which has largely become a

national attire among Ghanaian men in general, today. It was believed that during those early days, the Ga men considered it improper not to leave the upper torso bare within the day when the weather seemed to be quite hot, therefore, the cloths were used to cover the waist extending to the knee. All the above styles and changes in wearing the same cloth express variations in the dress code of the Gas or people along the Coast at the time. A Ga woman on the other hand, wore a similar loincloth, supported by a rather narrower belt and a large cloth worn as a wraparound. A second large cloth, finer than the loincloth used as a skirt, was worn at the upper part of the body as a shawl.

Aspects of Sieber's description on the dress-code of people within the coast of 'Ghana' probably the Gas emphasised on that of Dantzig and Adams (1987:56-69,89) edited version of Pieter de Marees' account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602). Dresses described by Sieber as those worn in the Gold Coast between 1500s and 1700s were more elaborated on by Marees within the same period, when he stated;

... they take two fathoms of Linen and put it [sic] between their legs and around their body, like a belt, letting it hang down below the knees, like Portuguese trousers. When they go outside their houses they take another fathom of linen, silk or other cloth around their neck or over their shoulder and under their arms, as if it were a Mantle. ...the female wrap 1 or 1½ fathoms of linen around their bodies, letting it hang from below their breast or navel down to their knees. This is their everyday attire, when their going to the market or outside their house, they take their bath and change their dress. They wrap another piece of linen around their feet. On top of that they put another strip of cloth on, hang it around their bodies, over their shoulders and under their arms like a little mantle.

Although the above description of Marees' account in 1602 was not completely different from that of Bosmas' expression in 1705, there was clear



advancement or changes in the appearance of the people within the Gold Coast. Bosmas' (1967: 118-121) assessment on the appearances of men distinguished their dress codes from that of women on the coast and in addition looked at the styles involved in clothing used in the Northern sector of the country within the same period. Touching on the types of clothes and manner of wearing them, he states;

Their common habit is made of three or four ells of either velvet, silk, cloath, perpetuana or some sort of stuff; and several have this sort of habit or paan; as they call it, made of fifty sorts of stuff. This they throw about the body and roll it up into a small compass it fast; so that it hangs from the navel downwards, covering the legs half way: they wear ornament of rings made of ivory, gold as well as coral.

Other common persons like wine – drawers, fishermen, and such like, are very poorly habited, some with an ell or two of sorry stuff. Others with a sort of girdle only drawn through between their legs and wrapped about them just to hide their nakedness. The fishermen add hats/caps.

With reference to the appearance of chiefs in those periods Bosmas explain that;

The youth do not dress so pompously, like the caboccers: they wear only a good paan, a cap made of hart's skin upon their heads, and a staff in their hands ... a string or chain of coral, about their heads; and this is the dress they daily appear in.

His descriptions were not only limited to men; on the parts of the ladies he stated that:

The Negron ladies on the lower part of their bodies, they wear a paan which often is three or four times as long as that of the men; this they wind around their waist, and bind it on with a fillet of red cloth, or something else about half ell broad and two ells long, to make it fit close to the body, both ends of the fillet hanging out on their paan; which in ladies of quality is adorned with gold or silver – lace: On the upper – part of their body they cast a veil or silk or some other fine sort of stuff; whilst their arms are beautified with rings of gold, silver and ivory. These female Negroes, I can assure you, are so well-skilled in their fashion ....

He described the people from the Northern parts of the Gold Coast as more richly clothed than those from the South. Those from the north were reported to wear several layers of clothes, five to six – wrapped around their body in a decent manner.



With the arrival of the Portuguese and other foreign travellers on the coast of Fanteland, clothing styles of the local people were gradually being influenced through the trade in European clothes and other goods for gold. Although loincloths were used in both the coastal and central parts of the country, including the Asante and the Brong areas, as described by some of the writers above, their use was largely and more influenced with changes when the Europeans gained access to the hinterlands. The earlier forms of clothing in the areas were influenced by Caravan routes used by the Arabs to trade in salt and gold. It implies that, the general influence on clothing was first through the contact with the north from the trade routes and later with the Europeans through the Coast. Some of these influences are elaborated on under the sub-topic 'influence of foreign fashion on the culture and fashion of Ghanaians'.

#### **4.1.2 Trends of Clothing among the Akans of Ghana**

The Akans occupy mainly the western part of the southern zone and the central zones (hinterland) of the country. Within the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the use of clothing was more associated with men within the hinterland than women. This probably resulted from the superiority of men over women as well as their being considered heads on almost every occasion thereby having more roles to play in the family and the community than women.

According to McLeod's (1981:143) statement on forms of clothing among the Asantes backed by a 76 year old woman, an educationist, Madam Stella Oduro at Ejisu, the birth of a female child among the Asantes in the early periods of the twentieth century was only beads on as its first form of cloth and that even happens

just before or after the naming ceremony of the child, this remained her only form of clothing until she was six or seven years of age (see Fig. 2) when she was given the second form of cloth by adding more beads to the waistline if necessary and a strip of cloth, supported by threading it through the beads in both front and back to cover the pubic area, this covering style is known as *etam* (see Fig. 3). This remained her only clothing until she entered into the puberty age when she was given a loincloth which was usually a bark cloth (*kyenkyen*) to wear (Plate 4). As noted in the review of related literature, the bark cloths were produced by stripping off the bark of the *kyenkyen* tree (*Antiaris species*), which was softened in water and the cellulose loosened by beating it with wood mallet. This was wrapped round the waist, extending slightly below the knee; it was wrapped around once or twice and rolled at the waistline to secure it firm, leaving the upper torso with the breast uncovered (see Fig 4). Kumawu *Kontebapenin* – Nana Akua Achamponmaa added that, before the use of *dumas* which was long enough to cover from the breast to the knee, marriage women covered themselves; they covered their breasts with strips of cloths and fastened them behind, leaving the stomach while covering the waist to the knee with loincloths leaving the lower parts of the legs uncovered (see Fig 5).

With the arrival of the Dutch on the Coast, they also traded in cloths considered to be wider and superior to that of the Portuguese indigo-dyed cloth, called by the local people as *yapiisi* as revealed by Osae, et al., (1974:20-36). This well designed and colourful cloth called ‘Dumas’ was patronised by the local people who used it to cover the body from – beneath the arms to the knee as indicated by Ward, (1958:46-51). Nana Achamponmaa added that, a two piece of cloth was used, the first one wrapped around the lower part of the body from the waist to the ankle

while the second one was used to cover the torso, stretching from under the armhole covering the breast and extending to the hip (see Fig. 6), this time without exposing the stomach. She stated that, it was only the queen mothers who used the third piece of cloth in the olden days to cover the left shoulder (see Fig. 7) in the fashion of the men's clothing.

On the other hand, men's clothing according to McLeod was more varied and had a wider and more elaborate range of forms than that of women. The male at a tender age between one and seven wore *danta*, a basic length of cloth tied over the genital organ and extended securely around the waist (see Fig. 8). When they turned seven to ten years, they were given a length of cloth that they wore – by wrapping it round the body under the arm and extending to the knee; the two ends crossed at the torso and were knotted at the back of the neck, leaving both arms free (see Fig. 9), a style called *kɔɔla* by some Asantes. He used this until he became an adult, when he could use the men garment which was usually a rectangular piece of cloth and still is. He wrapped the piece carefully around the body and passed a portion over the left shoulder in a fashion similar to the Roman toga (see Fig. 10).

This traditional style of clothing is mostly an identity for who a Ghanaian man is, through clothing. Among the Akans, especially the Asantes, there are many types or styles of wearing the men's cloths, with meanings and significance that spell out the position, status or the message that the wearer is trying to carry across to the public. Adu-Akwaboa (1992:38-40) spells out fifteen types or ways of wearing the men's cloths, Nana Owusu Ansah (1999:24-39) on the other hand, point to only eleven ways of wearing the men's cloths.

Some of the cloths used are manufactured locally from strips of woven fabric and stitched together to form the *kente* cloth or from a plain cotton cloth stamped with motifs, the cloth thus stamped is called *adinkra*. Aside these two, there are other two types where the cloth is dyed locally with local dyes with or without *adinkra* designs on them, mostly used for funeral rites. Another type of cloth referred to as African prints, is usually designed with traditional motifs and printed, using modern textile technology. These fabrics, aside their used as men's cloths, are equally used by women to sew their *kaba* (blouse) and slit designs for various occasions. Men's cloths are usually worn over tailored shorts, and never over trousers, and usually go with traditional sandals known as *ahenemma* in Twi. Aside the various ways of wearing the cloths, the major changes in this traditional style depend on the designs and techniques used in producing the fabrics and the sandals, but not necessary the styles as in 'cut' of fabric.

These cloths are occasionally slid off the shoulder when greeting or paying homage to an elderly fellow and chiefs or when pouring a libation or offering sacrifices to the deities and at times when performing a dance. In other instances, the torso is laid bare by pulling the cloth off the shoulder and rolling it into a thick girdle above the waist or pulled up under the arm when performing similar functions, a dress style referred to by the Akans as *ntomakwaha* (see Figs. 11 and 12). Aside the use of cloths, as seen in the southern and central parts of Ghana, men occasionally wore cotton smocks believed to have originated from the north, around Gonja and Dagomba. Smock wearing is basically an Islamic influence that transcends from the northern part of Ghana into the central zone and further into the south within the last century. The comfort and free movement associated with these dresses coupled with

the influence of Islamic – inscription talisman, sewn onto the smocks as a means of protection enhance their use by the Asantes especially the warriors and leaders as war dresses. The dress is associated also with mystical powers; hence some priests and elders within the community use them. McLeod, citing Bowdich, gave a description of some sort of the trousers and footwear used with the smock as ‘they wore loose cotton trowsers [sic] with immense boots of a dull red leather, coming half way up the thigh, and fastened by small chains to their cartouch or waist belt ....’



**Fig.2:** A Child with Waist Beads

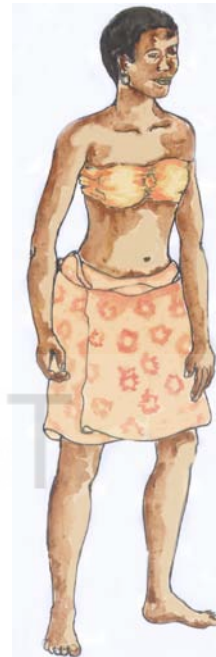
**Fig.3:** Beads with a Strip of Cloth (*etam*)

**Source:** Painted by the researcher





**Fig. 4:** A Woman in Loincloth



**Fig. 5:** A Woman in a Loincloth with the Breast Covered

**Source:** Painted by the researcher



**Fig. 6:** A Two Piece Cover Cloth, Covering the Breast to Hip and Waist to Calf or Ankle.



**Fig. 7:** Wearing of the Traditional Cloth in Toga Form

**Source:** Painted by the researcher



**Fig. 8:** A Boy Wearing the *Danta* style



**Fig. 9:** A Boy in a Cloth Wrapped around the Body and Knotted behind the neck (*kóólá*)

**Source:** Painted by the researcher



**Fig. 10:** Wearing a Cloth in a Toga style



**Fig. 11:** Wearing a Cloth on the waist line (*ntomakwaha*)



**Fig. 12:** Wearing a Cloth on the torso

**Source:** Painted by the researcher

#### **4.1.3 Men and Women Clothing within the Northern Regions.**

In the extreme Northern part of the country, it was believed that clothing among the Dagombas and other ethnic groups started way back from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

According to Mohammed Hafiz, a language teacher at Tamale training college and Naa Alahasan (chief of Nyanshegu, Tamale), before the Arabs' influence of clothing on the people, both males and females were naked until the females attained the puberty age, when they were given skins to cover their private parts. The males on the other hand received skins only on the day of their marriage rites. Both men and women went bare footed and shaved their hair but the women used to adorn themselves with a lot of fashionable items that were believed to be influenced from the Niger and Mali cultures. Body adornments were largely used but also expressed in body marks rather than the use of clothes. Incisions and scarifications were of aesthetic significant.

Monhammed Hafiz and Naa Alahasan stated that, these used to be the modes of dressing until weaving and trading activities were introduced into the northern regions by the Arabs of the ancient kingdom of Mali. Women's clothing gradually changed to the use of large pieces of covered cloths, which cover their breasts down to their knees. The men used the cloths to cover their private parts only by wrapping them around their waists and extending them through the thighs to cover their organs and buttocks, a description similar to the *danta* in the southern part of Ghana. The men used the smocks only when attending funerals, festivals, marriage and other occasions of significance. The smocks are of different types and sizes, at



least three types were mentioned and identified which were discussed later in the dissertation?



**Plate 4:** *Kyenkyen* (barkcloth)  
**Source:** National Museum, Accra

## **4.2 Clothing Associated With Traditional Institutions: Its Relevance in Colour and Beauty Concepts among the Akans**

### **4.2.1 Clothing within Chieftaincy institutions**

Chiefs in Ghana, especially among the Akans are highly respected and acknowledged as the custodians of the land and rulers of their respective traditional areas. Among the Akans, a chief is enstooled after the death, abdication or destoolment of his predecessor. Body arts, that are basically associated with clothing and adornment play a major role in the installation processes of chiefs. Generally, enstoolment or enskinment of chiefs in Ghana are either considered along the

succession of matrilineal or patrilineal inheritance. In parts of the coastal areas and the Northern parts of Ghana, succession to such stools or skins are by patrilineal whilst some of the Akans mainly considered, or go by the 'matrilineal succession' to the stools, prominent among them are the Asantes.

Kingmakers consider variety of phenomena when selecting a successor to the stool even under circumstances that point to a candidate as the rightful successor. These considerations include the health status of the candidate and his attitude and records of good morals among others. Beyond screening the right candidate, he is confined at a secret place where he is taken through a lot of education and rituals regarding his new position, this involves a variety of body arts. In some instances, the head of the chief – elect is shaved and his clothes changed on the day of 'arrest' or appointment, a situation explained by Nana Afari Obougyane II, the chief of Obo as an end to his old state of life and ushering him into a new life and position. As it is believed that, a chief must possess all the good qualities of a 'gentleman' that is, handsome, bravery, eloquent, be diplomatic and have good moral life among others; his confinement is meant to groom him with all the above mentioned including how well to appear in traditional regalia at state functions to make him look good as a traditional leader.

After he has been taught taboos, traditional and religious laws, history, norms and other customs considered vital by traditional intellects, he is given a stool name that he will be identified with throughout his ruling as the chief of the community. The chief is out-doored clad mostly in white colour as a symbol of joy and victory, amidst with drumming and dancing throughout the principal streets of the town. A convenient date is fixed, when he swears an oath of allegiance to his



subjects who in turns swear an oath to him. When ruling under a superior (paramount chief) he swears an oath of allegiance to him as well in a chiefly costume.

Prior to durbars held in honour of new chiefs who dress gorgeously in traditional clothes mostly *kente* among the Akans, two modes of dressing during the installation rites, when chiefs swear oath of allegiance to their people are observed. In the first instance, the *batakarikese* is used during the swearing ceremony. Secondly, the men's cloth is used by lowering it to the chest or waistline during the swearing ceremony. What ever the instance, it is clear that traditional costumes are used during the swearing ceremony.

It looks certain that, at the time kingdoms and chiefdoms were established in various parts of Ghana, the use of cloths and smocks were prominent in terms of clothing used by chiefs. Aside the use of raffia, bark cloths and skins of some palm trees described in the earlier submission under the sub-headings 'Clothing witnessed among other parts of the West African Sub-region' and 'Historical evidences of Clothing in Ghana', most of the clothing the chiefs used over the centuries in Ghana and the West African sub-region were limited to woven structures from the present day northern Ghana, Asante, the Volta Region and Nigeria. These were either put together as large cloths for men or fashioned into loose garments mostly appearing in the form of smocks (*fuguu*), robes or gowns (long flowing garments). These were the types of clothes used by chiefs when performing all their administrative functions including mediating and going to wars and even for funerals.

Though wearing of clothes play a dominant role in the functions of chiefs, the style and motif of wearing them, as well as its meaning convey a particular message to the public. It is stated that, special robes, smocks or cloths with special

powers attached to them were used by chiefs in the past to avert or counteract any other powers that the aggrieved parties might possess in order to tilt or manipulate the chief's judgement in their favour. Speaking on similar issues Kyeremanten (1964:71) expressed that a name like 'hyewo – a – enhye' meaning 'I burn but do not burn' gives the implication of a fabric considered as fire-proof. The cloth is said to have Islamic inscriptions printed in it and it is worn when chiefs are to pronounce judgement in court cases. Plate 5 depicts the formal king of Asante in Arabic inscribed cloth.

Costumes used in times of war, are basically the smock known here as the *batakari*. The smock is believed to give free movement in comparison to the traditional cloth (*ntoma*). Smocks used for war purposes, usually have talismans attached to them. The talisman is believed to possess special protective powers. The smocks are equally worn by chiefs during installation and funeral rites. Kyeremanten again explained that, the smock was used by chiefs mostly on the battle field but he also talked on its use during installation and funeral rites among chiefs within the southern parts of Ghana, although its origin and style came from the North. However, a battle dress used by the early Asantes and some other chiefs in the sub-region that were illustrated by Barbot, (Plate 6) gave a slight variation from the smock (*batakarikese*) used by Asante chiefs in recent history of which there are variations in look and composition, base on the chief using it. For instance, the *batakarikese* of the Asante King is more complex in structure than those worn by other paramount chiefs in Akanland (Plates 7a and b). This indicates that, there is a sort of transformation and variation in war dress used over time, be it through Arab influences or personal innovations of the people. Although the significance and

purpose of *batakari* are virtually the same among chiefs in Ghana, their designs come in various sizes, shapes, types of talisman used and colours as seen in Plates 7a and 7b.

Changes seen in chiefs' dresses are mostly related to the style of the clothes used, the mode of designs, the expensiveness of the cloth used and the manner of wearing these clothes. Among other things the value and types of accessories used by chiefs to adorn themselves also contribute to their appearances. The splendour and styles associated with wearing clothes among the Akans is an ancient art, that have gone through slight changes over the years to suit the taste of modernity while holding on to the good principles of tradition and culture regarding clothing.

Cloth wearing has been among the Akans as far back as the 1800s and has evolved with diversity and changes mostly associated with rank, sexes, ages differences, status and occupations. It was known that among the Asantes, the most expensive, elaborate, complex and splendid cloths were woven specifically for the *Asantehene* and other honourables upon the request and approval of the *Asantehene*.

Clothing and mode of adornment of chiefs vary from that of the general public. Asantes' oral tradition holds the view that, right from the establishment of the Asante kingdom to date, the king is not allowed to use clothes that are common to the ordinary citizens and must always look different in appearance at functions. In describing the appearance of the Asante king seated in state; McLeod (1981:9), citing T.E. Bowdich in 1817, during his first visit to Kumasi, expressed his astonishment with the elaborate arts and adornments of the king of Asante and his courtiers in the following words;

The sun was reflected, with a glare scarcely more supportable than the heat, from the massy gold ornaments, which glistened in every

direction .... At least a hundred large umbrellas, or canopies, which could shelter thirty persons, were sprung up and down by the bearers with their superior captains and attendants, wore Ashantee [sic] cloths of extravagant price .... They were of incredible size and weight and thrown over the shoulder exactly like a Roman toga; a small silk fillet generally encircled their temples, and sassy gold necklaces, intricately wrought; suspended Moorish charms ... a band of gold and beads encircled the knee, from which several strings of the same depended; small circles of gold like guineas, rings and casts of animals, were strung round their ancles [sic]; white leather; manilas and rude lumps of rock gold hung from their wrist, which were so heavily laden as to be supported on the head of one of their handsomest boys. Gold and silver pipes, and canes dazzled the eye in every direction.

An expression that revealed the prestige, nobility and glamour attached to the position and dress of the king of Asante at the time. Due to the prestige and demand associated with the position of chiefs, clothes and other regalia of the chief such as the indigenous sandal, cloths produced from *kente*, *adinkra* or appliqué (Plate 8) with headgears and trinkets must usually be made by the best Artisans of the chieftdom. The artistic splendour of durbars for chiefs and their subjects usually portray their culture which is first echoed around their 'look' due to how they lavishly, dress in traditional cloths and adorn themselves to the admiration of the public (Plate 9).





**Plate 5:** The Late Asantehene – Opoku Ware II,  
in an Arabic Inscribed Cloth  
**Source:** From the Book, Gold of the Akan  
from the Glassell Collection



**Plate 6:** Earlier form of War Dress  
Style among the Asantes  
**Source:** From the Book, African Art  
and Decorative Art.



**Plate 7a**

**Plate7a:** Nana Diko Pim III  
(ɛdweso) in *Batakarikese*  
**Source:** From the Book,  
Gold of the Akan from the  
Glassell Collection



**Plate7b**

**Plate7b:** An elaborate form  
of *Batakarikese* worn by  
Asantehene Osei Tufu II  
**Source:** From collection in  
Manhyia Archive



**Plate 8:** Mamponghe of  
Asante in appliqué  
design cloth  
**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in  
Kumasi, 2007





**Plate 9:** The Late Asantehene – Opoku Ware II, in Full Regalia Seated in State  
**Source:** From the Manhyia Gift Shop

#### 4.2.2 Costumes for Chief Courtiers

Basically, all major attendants of chiefs on any festive occasion wear cloths showing much distinction in their appearances. In spite of the fact that all attendants of chiefs, such as the sword bearers, spokesmen, umbrella holders, executioners or body guards and horn blowers wear cloths, they are mainly distinguished from each other based on their symbols of office. The official duties of these courtiers demand that they appear smarter in their attire. They all use cloths, but they do not wear the cloths in the toga form but rather lower them to the chest or waistline, which is basically the smart form of wearing cloth for activities that demand a lot of movement and freedom. Previously, the *danta* was for young boys but could be used by elders as under garment on which the men's cloth is worn over. This was the earlier form of under garment used before the introduction and use of shorts as under garments for the men's cloth as expressed by McLeod (1981: 145).

*Ntomakwaha* is a way of wearing the men's cloth to make the wearer look smart in executing his activities without enough hindrances. In this case, the cloth can be worn, positioning it at the girdle. It is worn by wrapping the cloth around the body and rolling the ends into a thick girdle; the girdle can be positioned at the chest or lowered to the waistline, leaving the upper torso bare. This style, aside its use by chiefs during the swearing of oath of allegiance and pouring of libations, it is mostly the fashion seen among court attendants of chiefs, spoke persons, umbrella holders, chiefs body guards, horn blowers, sword bearers, executioners and the like. Another style of cloth-wearing used by the courtiers or attendants is *kóóla* – where two ends of the cloth crossed at the chest and extended to the back of the neck where it is knotted. A similar style involves bringing two of the edges to the front and knotting them over the chest or stomach.

Adornments used by these courtiers are the items that mainly identify them with their offices. Though all the above mentioned courtiers wear cloths in a similar style, their symbols of office are what associate them with their position. For instance, sword bearers and personal guards of some paramount chiefs wear skullcaps with swords and guns in their hands respectively. Sword bearers (*mfenatenefoo*) who actually guard the king or paramount chief when he seats in state, have varieties of swords that go with their kits comprising a skullcap and a necklace with large pendants. An example of a *mfenatenefoo* wearing an elaborated skullcap, holding a sword with a number of items worn across the chest and around the neck, most of which are gold plated. This is one of the sword bearer's full regalia with a printed cloth worn in the style of *ntomakwaha* but positioned at the chest (Plate 10).

Similarly, the bodyguards (*atumtufoo*) have their firearms plated with gold or silver decorations. They wear skullcaps with haversacks with one or two straps that hold *sepo* knives, also a shoulder belt with straps for holding *sepo* knives as well (Plate 11). The shoulder belt has a place for horns or a container that usually contains bullets or gunpowder. Executioners holding swords also appear fearful by applying paints on their faces and other parts of their bodies (Plate 12). In the past, they were responsible for carrying out executions and other forms of punishment meted out to convicted offenders. The *brafo* or *akumfoo* (executioners) at times wear skullcap made from the leopard skin, hold the *sepo* knives, bayonets and swords whilst horn blowers, umbrella holders and the like go with their staffs of office in their hands.

#### **4.2.3 Costumes for Chiefs in the Northern Sector of Ghana**

The Northern sector of the country, has a distinctive mode of dressing believed to be triggered by Islamic influence. The use of smock and other Northern - Nigeria styles of costumes are produced from local cotton grown in the area or from imported materials like silk and linen. These are used to produce cloaks and gowns of beautiful colours with elaborate patterns and embroidery designs. Clothing styles in Northern Ghana have direct bearing on Arab influences originated from the ancient kingdom of Mali. Chiefs in these areas dress in long flowing garments or gowns worn as a two or three piece of fabrics (Plate 13). They attend functions with long boot whilst riding on horsebacks with umbrella over them.





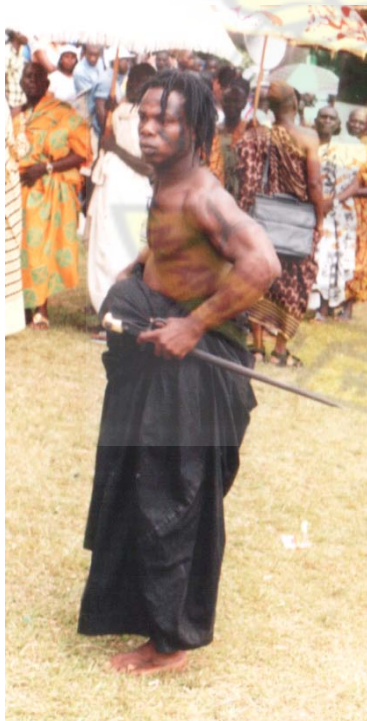
**Plate 10:** A Sword Bearer in Full Regalia

**Source:** Cover illustration of the Book; 'Asanteman Adaekese'



**Plate 11:** Bodyguards in Costumes with Firearms in their Hands

**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007



**Plate 12:** Executioner with a Sword in Hand and Parts of the Body Painted.

**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007



**Plate 13:** A Northern Chief in a Traditional Attire, Wearing Long Boots.

**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007

#### 4.2.4 Clothing Associated with Priests and Priestesses

Priests and priestesses who are attendants of the gods of any traditional community are feared by ordinary people, they, in previous years had their shrines located at the outskirts of most towns and villages. Priests and priestesses have their fashion styles different from the other citizens of any said community. Raffia was the early form of cloths used by these attendants and is still the demanded costume by some gods. In recent times, the ceremonial attires of priests and priestesses defer from that of their casual wears. Among the public, their appearance emphasise their differences. That is, the deity or deities that each of them worships (Plate 14) determine priests or priestesses modes of dressing.

For instance, those associated with dwarfs mostly wear dreadlocks as their hair styles and to some extent raffia or smocks; those attached to the marine spirits (*mamiwɔata*) as seen especially among the Ewe communities most often appear in white costumes or cover cloths and must go bare footed when the need arises; those with *atigari* shrine obtained from northern Ghana, usually use *batakari* as preferred dress by *atigari* gods. In the Volta Region, some renowned priests and priestesses like the *trɔkosi* priests and *avɔyi* priestesses are normally seen in blue and white cloths, the *trɔkosi* priests wear long traditional hats with feathers struck on top of the hat (Plates 15a and b).

Priests and priestesses use less accessories like jewellery, footwears, variety of hairstyles, but are mostly seen with their bodies especially faces painted white, when possessed by the gods. It is explained that, their uncontrollable nature when possessed by the spirits does not encourage the use of accessories in the first place, whilst most of the gods are believed not to have much to do with accessories. It



is believed that, since more than one god can possess a priest during invocations and worship, the separate gods can direct the change of costume of the priests and priestesses to depict or reveal the particular god that possesses the priest or priestess at the said time. The researcher found out that, though they can appear in casual dresses like any ordinary person, when not possessed or during worship, most of them are seen in cloths, smocks and the simplest forms of dresses, this was an explanation given by the director of Ashanti house of chiefs when contacted to explain why two traditional priests observed by the researcher at the Manhyia palace's forecourt were wearing simple smocks and shorts and the other wearing black cloths with dreadlock hairdo, both in *ahenemma*. It is also possible to see priests and priestesses in modern styles of clothing such as suits, for the males and *kaba* and slits for the females. This indicates the extent to which modernity has affected the life of our traditional systems.



**Plate 14:** A Possessed Traditional Priest in his Costume

**Source:** From the Book; Asante Traditional Buildings



**Plate 15a:** Traditional Priestesses Dressed in their Costumes Performing a Dance.

**Source:** From Osofo Ahadzi of Africana Mission



**Plate 15b:** Some Traditional Priests in their Costumes  
**Source:** From Osofo Ahadzi of Africana Mission

#### 4.2.5 Clothing as Expressed in Socio-Cultural Activities in Ghana

Other forms of social and cultural activities aside those associated with rites of passage found in Ghanaian settings are equally connected with clothing and fashion. Ceremonies, occasions and festivities found in Ghanaian traditional and contemporary society have clothing and fashion forming their integral parts. Clothing in these activities will be looked at based on groups' identities and their expression of these clothing items. These will include cultural groups like *asafo* companies, cultural musical groups, masquerade groups, etc. Clothing and fashion associated with festivals in Ghana are mainly prominent on a durbar day. Aside the appearance of chiefs in their regalia and their court attendants as explained earlier on, other groups and the general public exhibit the desire and love for an occasion through elaborate forms of contemporary clothing. Among the Akans, various *asafo* groups are identified by a variety of colours used by the groups and most importantly with the *asafo* flags, but some *asafo* groups are also identified with a variety of dresses used during durbar days.

In traditional social life, music forms an integral part of most socio-cultural activities. Music that is associated with almost everyday life activities cannot do without costumes. Music is involved in games, festivities, communal labour and other joyful occasions with a variety of clothing styles and colour symbolism associated with the various groups. Music performed by cultural groups mostly comes with its own mode of dress codes to identify and distinguish each group from the other. Various cultural settings have their own unique styles of costumes that grace their unique melodies of music. Most of the ethnic settings have their own style of music, dance and apparels used. Some are strictly traditional attire designs and are used for such dances, others have contemporary styles blended with the local ones. For example, 'T' shirts with inscriptions are used by some music groups as part of their costumes, while others stick strictly to traditional styles of dress codes. Some ethnic settings have more than one type of music and dance style costumes, though only one or two may be popular and identified as an ethnic music and dance.

The *adowa* dance is popular among the Akans, various cultural groups perform other types of dance apart from *adowa* with their preferred style of costumes. The *nuwomkroo* cultural group (Plate 16) has a typical traditional style of dress code with colours that they use during their performances. *Densinkran* is actually a hair style, but the name also is said to apply to some type of dress styles over the years, especially the traditional dress style of elderly Asante women. *Dansinkran* is also the name given to a dress style, when young girls are adorned or decorated with *dansinkran* hairdo with a golden band, wearing *kente* cloths with waist bands that are trapped with a handkerchief size of silk, *kente* and other fabrics. The girls wear the female version of the traditional sandals with gold chains and beads wound around

the neck, elbows, wrists, calves and the ankles (Plate 17). This dress code is used during the performance of *adowa* dance. It is now one of the dances that features in most state functions where traditional issues are concerned. During the death of one's in-law, this similar dress style is also displayed by *adosoahemaa* (the queen of *adosoa*) who is just a young girl dressed in this fashion to lead the *adosoa* group who carried items that include java and wax prints, amidst drumming and dancing as ways of honouring the bereaved family of one's husband.

In the northern sector, the *bamaya* dance of the Dagombas comes with a variety of costumes over the years; currently various groups have their own costumes. In Plate 18, the group has a 'T' shirt design for its members with a printed fabric sewn into skirt-like attires and shorts worn beneath the 'T' shirt. However, what makes the dance unique is the use of jingles called *challa* tied around their ankles that produce special sounds by the stamping of the feet on the ground, along side with distinctive waist bands called *buri* that tend to project the waist movement associated with the dance. Another popular dance, *takai* is performed wearing the *fuguu* and the tunic with long traditional boots and caps. The dance movement by some form of rotation, tends to project the circular display of the base of the smocks (Plate 19). Other dance styles with their respective costumes are found in various places all over the country.

Celebrations of festivals usually involve the participation of every citizen. All citizens, working or living outside their hometowns are expected to return and join in such celebrations. The celebrants arrive with items that include various latest styles of clothing. On the eve of the festival, mostly the durbar days when marry-making goes with drumming and singing, the people display their wealth through the



latest clothing and fashionable items they brought along from their respective towns and cities exposing others to new designs and styles in the fashion industry.

Some festivals celebrated especially among the Akans, have *asafo* companies forming as integral parts of the festivities. They are mostly denoted with their body arts and costumes that make them look like traditional warriors and hunters. For instance, the two *asafo* companies associated with the *Aboakyir* festival; *dentsifo* and *tuafo* in Winneba are responsible for deer hunting. Before going for the catch, members of the two groups smear themselves with clay, wear charms and amulets believed to protect them. Costumes used for hunting do not have specifications, but most of them are seen in ladies *kaba* on top with a variety of shorts. After the groups have returned with the deer, the members of the two *asafo* companies dressed in the best clothes; with the *tuafo* group wearing white tops, be it a 'T' shirt or shirt of any sort with green or blue shorts or trousers. The *dentsifo asafo* group also wear white of any sort at the top and red shorts or trousers below. They march through the main streets of the town amidst drumming, singing and dancing.

A Masquerade or the use of fancy dresses in Ghana is mainly associated with the Akans in the Central Region especially the Cape Coasters, meanwhile its use is now assuming a national dimension. Some festivities in the country now have some amount of fancy dresses associated with them. These folk-wears come in different sizes, shapes and designs with or without masks worn on the face. Various categories of people including children also participate in fancy dress occasions wherever it takes place (Plate 20).

People dress elegantly to various ceremonies in Ghanaian society today, weddings, religious services as in Sunday church services for Christians and Friday



prayers for Moslems, all exhibit a variety of traditional and contemporary clothing styles. Generally, wake-keeping that takes place in the weekends between Fridays and Sundays equally showcase variations of clothing though most of them are sewn in mourning colours, that is, shades of red, brown to black and black and white design fabrics for mourning mostly the aged. Also elaborate body paintings and specific hairstyles may be used in ceremonial contexts to identify a particular position or display ethnic pride.

In Ghana, festivals and holidays are celebrated to commemorate important community, religious and national events. Various national holidays celebrated by Ghanaians feature variety of cultural and entertainment activities that call for different styles of clothing. These activities embrace both traditional and modern styles of music and dance as well as clothing. Festivities including sporting competitions and a variety of games, picnic, etc that cannot do without a variety of styles of costumes and body paintings are exhibited on those occasions. Both traditional and contemporary styles of *kaba* and slits, trousers, shirts, 'T' shirts and other fancy costumes are used on such occasions. For instance, during the Ghana at 50 celebrations and the Ghana 2008 football tournament, which were national events, people of all ages, status and religious affiliations showed their support for the nation (Plates 21a and b). All the various holidays: Christmas, Easter, farmers' day celebrations and even valentine days in Ghana come with styles and colours of costumes that are used for such occasions, usually reflecting blends of tradition and foreign cultures.



**Plate 16:** Costume of *Nnwomkroo* Culture Group Performing a Dance  
**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007



**Plate 17:** Young Ladies in *densinkra* Dress-Code with Accessories.  
**Source:** From the Director of NAFAC



**Plate 18:** Clothing Style of the *Bamaya* Dancers from the Northern Sector  
**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007



**Plate 19:** A Traditional Dress-Code Used in Performing the *Takai* Dance  
**Source:** NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007





**Plate 20a:** A Fancy Dress on an Adult  
**Source:** From Ashuns' Library  
 (student-Cape Coast University)



**Plate 20b:** Some Children in Fancy Dresses  
**Source:** Researcher's Personal Collection



**Plate 21:** Costumes of some Celebrants on the 50<sup>th</sup> Independent Eve and  
 During the GHANA 2008, Football Tournament

**Source:** The Spectator and The Mirror, Saturdays, 12/02/2007  
 and 26/01/2008 respectively

#### **4.2.6 Clothing and Fashion Associated with Rites of Passage**

These are organized activities or ceremonies to grace an occasion when one passes from one stage in life to the other. The purpose is to ensure that no breaks occur 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. As such, these cultural rites are marked with rituals and ceremonies involving artefacts which greatly embrace the traditional fashion of the people. But in Ghana today, the observance of these rites has been affected considerably by the incoming of literary education, western civilization and foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam.

##### **4.2.6.1 The Role of Clothing and Fashion in Out-dooring Ceremonies**

Traditionally, pregnancy forms the basis of child bearing and so does its rites; hence, immediately a woman notices that she has conceived, she is restricted in terms of food, movement, attire and the likes. That is to say during pregnancy, the mother is made to observe certain rules and taboos to protect the unborn child against evil forces. She may wear special amulets and also cover the head with a cloth when leaving her compound. All these are efforts believed to protect the foetus in the womb from evil eyes.

The child is therefore given a name on the eighth day and a welcome ceremony with rituals performed to fortify and protect it. Though, other art forms accompany the ceremony, fashion forms the most visible, elaborate and culturally centred phenomenon at the time. In some societies 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.

According to Madam Efua Nyakuwua, an 84 year old woman, a traditionalist at Daben; Akan tradition demanded in the olden years that, *dowa* – a raffia thread was tied around the wrists, ankles and waist of a baby during an out-dooring ceremony to welcome it from the other world. She also stated that, beads are mostly used for body adornment on this special occasion because they communicate specific messages to the members of the society in the early days; but as our culture grows, other accessories are used but the focus is still on the mother and the baby. She explains that, the man as the father is insignificant in the out-dooring ceremony because he does not experience the pain of delivery that the woman has passes through which is considered as a matter of ‘life and death’ hence, her victory over death. The father is therefore dressed, in any attire but decent to reveal his position as the head of the house. In other cases, the immediate members of the extended family dress in rich *kente*, *adinkra* or other printed fabrics preferably white to announce the victory status of the occasion.

This is even explained as the modification of out-dooring ceremony which traditionally does not need all the elaborate forms of dressing but rather regarded as a simple ceremony. This confirms the statement that, ‘a dress intended for great occasions of festivity should not be worn for simple ceremonies, like the out-dooring of a new baby, usually held at dawn and for a very short time’ Gyekye; (2003:128). The trend of modification associated with out-dooring ceremony today, really depends on the financial strength of the family, the ethnic group and perhaps their



religious affiliation. It seems certain that, once none of these infringes on our cultural beliefs and practices as well as moral values they are gradually being integrated into Ghanaian cultural domain.

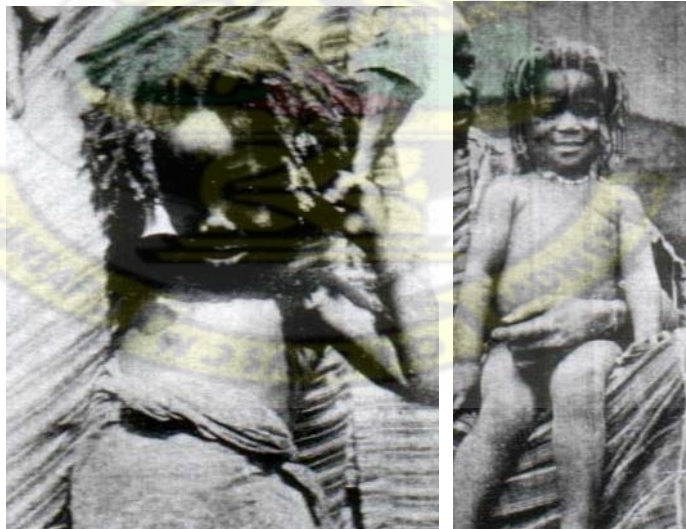
With the present forces of Islam and Christianity which form part of the Ghanaian modern culture, out-dooring with regard to beliefs seems to be more elaborate and fashion oriented than the traditional one. Some Christians carry the ceremony to church or bring pastors and church leaders to their house to perform the out-dooring ceremony, with both couples clad in white attires to celebrate ‘victory’ (Plate 22). The fabrics used are mostly African prints with motifs which denote the occasion at hand. Focuses are on the colour and meanings of the dresses themselves, rather than the styles. Accessories, especially beads, are mostly used as necklaces and bangles, they play a dominant role at such functions. Sometimes, the mother continues to fashion herself in white, blue, and green fabrics to signify victory, love, hope, fertility and growth for both the child and herself.

Traditionally, Rattray (1959:134) expressed that, among the Asantes, children who are dedicated to deities, have their hair matted and left long with charms attached to them (Plate 23). Similar instances are expressed among some Ewe communities, when parents lose repeatedly several children and one survives, the child is usually marked on the cheek, a mark known as *dzikuidzikui* meaning ‘giving birth and losing them to death’. Such childrens’ hair is allowed to grow long and matted (dreadlock) with charms inserted in them as attempts to disfigure the child such that it cannot be identified by the spiritual mother who is believed to take it away into the underworld or make it unappealing to the underworld, such children are regarded as *vixɔfle*, meaning ‘children bought from the deities’. There may be

scarifications or aesthetic mutilations on the head or body for identification or fortification and prevention against diseases and death.



**Plate 22:** Parents Out-Door their Child in Church Wearing White  
**Source:** From Evelyn's Collection (a teacher at St. Louis Jubilee School)



**Plate 23:** A Child's Matted Hair (dreadlock)  
**Source:** R. S. Rattray, (1959) Religion and Art in Ashanti

#### 4.2.6.2 Clothing associated with Puberty rites

In Ghana, the puberty rites are mostly or usually associated with and found among the Akans and the Ga-Adangbe. These rites are usually associated with girls, however, the patronage of these rites seem to be extinct among Akans and Ewes in particular. When young girls attain the stage of adulthood, rituals and ceremonies are performed to introduce them into the society as young adults. The significance of the rites is to teach the children the realities of adulthood. Puberty rites among the Akans are known as *Bragro*; among the Gas, it is *Otofo*; the Ewes call it *Gbɔto* and the Krobos call it *Dipo*. The young females are trained in disciplines relevant to the new stages such as domestic science and personal hygiene to prepare them physically, emotionally and psychologically about the changes that will be occurring in their lives.

Boys, though do not undergo any defined forms of puberty rites, they undergo circumcisions and training related to bravery and taking charge as a head of a house and also as a warrior within the same age periods like the girls. Although, the rites differ slightly from one place to the other, they are all aimed at making the youth better citizens that are well - equipped with cultural norms and values. The artistic expression of the rite is revealed during the passing out ceremonies amidst drumming, singing and dancing. Most parts of the rites are associated with art but for the purpose of this research, only arts on the body in terms of painting, incisions, clothing and all forms of accessories and hair styles used during the periods have been considered, either for the purpose of adornment or for identification. The activities involve, 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 especially from the Kroboland 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 (Plate 24) to imply that they had attained maturity status and men could ask for their hand in marriage. Recently, modification became possible, and the initiates now cover their breasts during the celebration while they still adorn themselves heavily with *aggrey* beads (Plates 25). The *bragoro* among the Asantes takes a similar format, the girl here dressed in a cloth with accessories, the cloth is lowered under the breast to expose it (Plate 26). Sarpong; (1991:31) speculates that the exposure of the girl's breast is to demonstrate her maturity and consequently her right to be counted among Asante adult women. In parts of the Volta Region where the puberty rites are practised, some of the initiates dress using *kete* as cover cloths, covering the heads with headgears, with their bodies decorated with beads and body paints, holding walking sticks and smoking pipes in their mouth to portray the look and toil of an aged woman (Plate 27). This was explained to the researcher as notifying them on the task ahead of them, as they grow into adulthood with responsibly of a woman.





**Plate 24:** Previous Dipo Rite that Exposes the Breasts  
**Source:** From Dede's Library (Dressmaker at Akusi)



**Plate 25:** Revised Dipo Dress-Code in Modern Time  
**Source:** Cover Illustration of the Book 'Dipo'



**Plate 26:** A Girl Adorned During Bragoro Ceremony among the Asantes  
**Source:** From the Book; Nubility Rites of the Asantes



**Plate 27:** Girls Adorned for the Gboto wɔwɔ Ceremony among the Ewes  
**Source:** From Gladys' Collection (a traditionalist – Keta)



#### 4.2.6.3 Clothing Associated with Marriage

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.

The contracting of marriage between two families begins with the payment of the bride price. The paying of the bride price in most cases includes fashionable items like, cloths, rings, sandals, beads, trinkets, etc. for use by the lady. The bride price paid by the bridegroom's family in most Akan provinces is purposely to express appreciation and gratitude for the virtuous way the bride was brought up and taken care of by her relatives. During the period of merry - making, the bride is decorated especially, with body paintings, *kente*, sandals, headgear, beads and other types of jewels. According to Mr. Collins Adusei, registrar of Kumasi Traditional Council, traditional marriages witness the couple appearing in their best attires such as *kente* cloths worn by the men and *kaba* and slits of similar or the same fabric (Plate 28a) worn by the women or the women can appear in cover cloths with headgears, wearing several accessories like beads as well as simple traditional sandals worn by the couple. In some circumstances, the bride goes on changing her wears as frequently as possible while proceeding to perform a dance after each change. Merry – making may continue well into the night and even for days un-end.

With the introduction of wedding into modern Christianity, clothing associated with marriage has assumed a new dimension. The bridegroom has to foot the bill of providing a wedding gown for the bride as well as his own suit for the wedding. Some ceremonies go beyond this, to 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 (Plate 28b). In some cases, dinner wears or eveningwears are sewn for use by the couple after the wedding ceremony. During the dinning period, which may come the same day or a day after the wedding, the couple dress in new attires. In some instances, the couple make similar provisions in dresses for church services and their honeymoon.



**Plate 28a:** Costumes associated with Traditional Marriage  
**Source:** Seyram's Library



**Plate 28b:** Costumes associated with contemporary Christian Marriage  
**Source:** Frank Osei's Library (pastor-community church-Madina)

#### 4.2.6.4 Clothing and Fashion Associated with Funeral Ceremonies

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. That is to say, it is not the end of life but simply marks the passage from this world to the world of the ancestors. Such transitional ceremonies call for elaborate forms of clothing and fashion that are associated with the preparation and burial of the corpse as well as those who mourn the dead.

Funeral rites are determined 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. This equally reflects in the clothing and fashion that accompany the ceremony. For instance, 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. For example, the Akans who are believed to have more elaborate funerals, have four stages which can be grouped as, 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 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 laying in state of deceased chiefs differ from that of other persons. They are mainly traditionally centred with their position highly considered in the decoration and burial rites. Deceased chiefs are decorated with

headgears, headbands, and crowns with their state swords placed (flanked) on their bodies to indicate status (Plate 29). Among the Akans, the funeral rites of paramount chiefs or kings attract the whole community and other sympathizers as well. The prestige demands that, the chiefs or kings are clad in rich *kente* or other cloths and adorned with gold ornaments and placed on a special bed called *kotoko* (porcupine bed), and the room is well decorated; this is done in relation to an Asante king's funeral. Where applicable the royal guards of the king are fully dressed in traditional battle dresses and made to guard the body. The guards with *mmentiafoo* (short horn blowers) wear cloths around their waists without a top but with local caps on their heads holding their horns and guns. The colours of the cloths used are usually black (*kuntunkuni*) or red *koben*. It is believed the tradition has remained so over the centuries and changes can only be associated with the fabric used in terms of designs, motifs and textures.

As people queue to pay their last respect to the king or paramount chief in most areas within Akan jurisdiction, tradition demands that, the general public with the exception of top – ranking members of the society like government officials, go to the bedside of the deceased king without foot wear, necklaces, earrings and wrist watches. Traditionally, these items represent prestige, wealth and are used on joyful occasions, hence, their removal are ways of expressing submission and sorrow to the deceased chiefs and also as means of paying last respect to the chief or king, noted as the ruler of the land.

In modern times, the art of laying the deceased in state has assumed a new dimension with the inclusion of people referred to as 'funeral directors or undertakers', whose job it is to professionally decorate the room, the bed and dress

the corpse as well. The room where the deceased is laid in state is usually enhanced with textile materials such as lace and *kente* fabrics in colourful and attractive manner. The room and bed are decorated with natural and artificial flowers and to some extent decorated lights.

The shroud sewn for the deceased person is usually a white lace, silk or chiffon, in a gorgeous well decorated fabric with a veil and gloves. Men on the other hand, are dressed simply in suit or *kente* cloth, with white lace jumper to match in some cases. In some Christian organisations, the gown used by the deceased female during her wedding day is used as her shroud when laid in state for burial. In some instances, the clothes of the deceased are changed two or three times at intervals while it is usually the final dress that the dead is buried with. In some communities among the Ewes, laying the deceased in state elaborates on ways of positioning the corpse in postures and fashion that depict its statues and occupation in life. They can be dressed at a seating or standing posture. Plate 30 shows a deceased in a seating posture with a lap top on its laps, indicating his occupation as computer engineer in his life time.

The coffin in which the corpse makes its last journey to the grave is highly decorated 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. In some societies personal belongings of the dead such as combs, kitchen utensils, textile products and ceramic objects are buried with the corpse in the belief that they would be used in the life to which the dead goes.

As stated earlier, the type of burial and funeral rites accorded a deceased person are dictated by his sex, age, status, manner of death and reputation in life and



the resources of his living relatives. But generally, rites and ceremonies associated with funerals are characterised by rich display of Ghanaian art forms including varieties of mourning cloths and dresses, jewellery and other forms of accessories which characterise the fashion of mourners in Ghana. 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. Colours used for mourning also relate to the person's closeness to the deceased. Red cloths are used by close relatives, red clay is used for making marks on the body. Black is generally used by mourners who may be relatives. Sympathizers on the other hand wear all ranges of coloured clothes, but mostly dark in shades.

Widowhood rites vary among ethnic groups in Ghana, in parts of the Ewe land, a woman pays her last respect to her late husband, well dressed in rich cloth, preferably *Ewe kete*. She is adorned with rich ornaments of gold and beads to match. This form of clothing is to indicate that the husband in his life time has taken good care of the wife and she must portray this to the public. A man who is a widower, dresses likewise as he goes to see the deceased wife for the last time.

In Asante, widows in the past as opined by Rattray (1959:171) went through a lot of suffering at the death of their husbands. The widows were made to smear red powder (*odame*) on their faces, legs and arms and they bound their foreheads with red bands (*abotiri*). Their right wrists and ankles were fastened with beads known as *gyabom*, strands of woven raffia were used as belts on their waists as substitutes for *toma* (beads). Sorts of wreaths obtained from a plant called *asuani* meaning tears, were worn acrossed their chests and also used as crowns on their

heads. Widows whose husbands came from *Ekuona* clan used small brass basins on their heads. They dressed in skirts of russet brown (*kuntunkuni*), covering the lower parts of the body. Straws of raffia (*dowa*) were used at their elbows (Plate 31). This sort of widowhood rite is virtually non-existent in the era of modern civilisation, the rule of law and the spread of religious organisations like Christianity and Islam that are against such practices. In recent times, costumes for widows are of no clear distinction as to what to wear or not to wear, but some widows in Asante now can be identified by wearing head bands or black headgears, red cloths on top over black ones around their loins (Plate 32). This is even not a laid down rule and varies within clans and families.



**Plate 29:** Laying in State a Deceased Chief in Elaborate Traditional Costume and Accessories

**Source:** From the Library of a Photographer; Pozo's Photo in Accra (Newtown)



**Plate 30:** A Deceased Person Laid at a Seating Posture with a Lap Top  
 Depicting his Profession in Life  
**Source:** From the Library of a Photographer; Pozo's Photo in Accra (Newtown)



Front View



Back View

**Plate 31:** Widowhood Rite among the Asantes in the Olden Days  
**Source:** R. S. Rattray,(1959) Religion and Art in Ashanti





**Plate 32:** Costume Worn by a Widow in Modern Day Asante  
**Source:** From Nana J.V. Owusu Ansah a lecturer (College of Art (KNUST))

### 4.3 Clothing and Fashion Accessories

Accessories that include jewellery, head covers, footwears and the likes, mostly produced from textiles, metals and leather materials aid in completing the look or enhancing the image of the wearer. Some regalia mostly used among traditional folks especially chiefs to complement their dressing codes will be considered as accessories under this dissertation, these include kits used by court attendants like skull caps, *sepo* knives, etc treated earlier on, some other ones including crowns, bracelets, necklaces, armlets, breast plates, finger rings, etc are discussed below;

#### 4.3.1 Jewellery

Among all the accessories used by chiefs, jewellery becomes a major contribution factor to the upliftment and recognition of a person in the position of chiefs. Chiefs are mostly adorned with gold, silver, beads, charms and amulets during

state functions. The quality and quantity of jewellery used to adorned a chief expresses his wealth and position among other chiefs and the general public. For instances, the king of Asante is considered to be the most well adorned king in Ghana throughout history and he in state can simply be described as ‘a mobile museum’ with the splendour attached to the use of jewellery and other fashionable items. Most of these chief’s regalia have their symbols and meanings associated with them, which usually denote the reason for wearing them. Within the contemporary setting, women wear more jewellery than men, but as expressed earlier, chiefs in traditional setting are more adorned with jewellery than queenmothers (Plates 33a and b).

Jewellery used among chiefs in Akan have their names associated with them, jewellery used around the neck are called *ayannee*; the elbow ones are known as *baturum-sebe*; the knee jewellery are referred to as *nantua* or *nananim suman* and the ankle wear are known as *aberePONNaasee*.

#### **4.3.1.1 Necklaces**

Chiefs’ necklaces are made of assorted gold and silver depending on position and rank. Most of these necklaces are seen as *asuman* (charms and amulets) as they do not only play beautification roles only but also protective roles as well. The central piece that forms the pendant of most Akan chiefs has items like mudfish, crab, a stool, cruciform, etc., but are mainly found with triangle and square shapes (Plate 34). The chain-forming elements vary largely including teeth, coins, nuggets, etc.

#### **4.3.1.2 Bracelets**

Most bracelets used on the joints of the arms are gold and amulets, talismans and other charms (Plate 35). Some of the bracelets for the wrist are gold-



cast watches not for time keeping but symbolic. Bell shaped elements are believed to represent the summoning of the spirits of ancestors, the key, locks and matches are symbols of power and control while human teeth and miniature of cannons represent military power. Bracelets and armlets are not always seen in beaded form as elements strung together, but some are moulded with hinges to fit the roundness of the wrist while others are designed such that the hand can slip through easily. The smaller versions of these are mostly for queen mothers. Bracelets, in the form of wrist bands also come in the form of cast-gold or plated wirework of rope like designs creating various styles of knots (wisdom knots) to symbolise wisdom and knowledge that the chief needs in ruling his subjects. Most of these types of wrist bands come with cannon figurative attachments to them with rosette designs.

#### **4.3.1.3 Anklets**

Anklets worn by chiefs are preserved as charms to protect or prevent harm (Plate 36). The anklet charms are reflections of those suspended around the neck of chiefs.

#### **4.3.1.4 Rings**

Various forms of finger rings are used by the general public for beautification and symbolic purposes as in some Christian marriages where they serve as symbols of bond between couple. Finger rings used by most Akan chiefs in particular come in various sizes and types made of gold or are gold plated. They are also worn not only for beautification but also as a representation of proverbs and emblems or totems. Most of the ring symbols are miniatures of what are seen on state

swords, drums, crowns, sandals, gongons, spokesman's staffs, umbrella tops, etc. Some of these rings are presented in images like mudfish, frogs, tortoises, porcupines, birds, scorpions, starbursts, stars, hands, etc., (Plate 37).

#### 4.3.1.4 Beads

Beads are of major significance in the general adornment found in most parts of the country. Beads, unlike other jewellery, are associated with all levels of growths in the traditional settings. Chiefs' jewellery equally includes glass and other expensive beads like the *aggrey* beads used in their adornment. Children, both male and females wear beads at a tender age purposely to shape their waists, calves and arms – a beautification factor. Females continue to wear beads even during puberty stage. *Krobos* are noticed for heavy adornments of *dipo* girls with quality beads like *aggrey* beads, as a sign of wealth and maturity. Beads continue to rule the waists of women even in marriage. They are equally used by both sexes, to adorn themselves during graduation ceremonies of apprentices, in traditional marriages and also during some communal festivities.

#### 4.3.2 Foot Wears

In Ghana, especially among the Akans, foot wears have seen some transformation over the years into what is currently preferred and used as *ahenemma*. Sandals were initially believed to originate from the use of bark of trees as soles and various items for the straps. It was gradually improved upon, until leathers from various animals were used, which have gone through changes and improvements. Kyemanten (1964:85) talks about three types of sandals and names them as *Kyaw-*

*kyaw*, *mpaboa traa* and *mpaboapa*. He refers to the first as being lighter in weight; the second as having an increasing number of layers of hide. The third one, *mpaboapa*, he says, is what the chiefs use even up to date. However, there have been an improvement, adding golden and silver colours to further enhance the position of the wearer. Important aspects of the sandals of chiefs are the symbols on the straps, mostly ornamented in gold and silver. Most of these symbols represent one image or the other, with various meanings in association with the ruling of the chief or king. Images include; fish, stars, the moon, snakes, cocks and other cyclical or triangular shapes as exhibited in the necklace in Plate 38, some of the sandals with projected rectangles and circles to represent cocoon and tiger nuts as indicated by Ross (2002:139). It has been stated that, the king of Asante's feet must never touch the bare ground, hence he goes along in state with people who carry the *sika mpaboa* (sandals with gold studded straps) in readiness in case of eventuality. Similar styles are designed for women as well, but in most cases, the women's sandals are smaller in size and not very elaborated on like those of their men.

Aside the traditional sandals in use, various sandals and foot wears of European origin have been seen in the Ghanaian society with the passage of time. The Northerners, especially the chiefs have the history of their long boots for horse riding and the common lorry tyre used as the soles for their simple – cross sandals. Also varieties of shoes, cross-sandals, flip-flaps by both males and females, coupled with changes have been seen over the years.



**Plate 33a:** An Adorned Chief



**Plate 33b:** An Adorned Queenmother

**Plate 33:** Chiefs are more Adorned with Jewellery than Queenmothers

**Source:** From NAFAC 2007



**Plate 34:** Necklace of King Osei Tutu II of Asante

**Source:** From Manhyia Palace Gift Shop



**Plate 35:** Bracelets of a Traditional Chief

**Source:** From the Book, Gold of the Akan from the Glassell Collection





**Plate 36:** Anklets on a Traditional Chief  
**Source:** Ago Magazine



**Plate 37:** Rings on the Finger of a Chief  
**Source:** From Manhyia Archive



**Plate 38:** Traditional Sandals with Gold Strips  
**Source:** From Manhyia Archive

### 4.3.3 Headdresses and Body Marks

#### 4.3.3.1 Headdresses

Aside the historical evidence of various forms of headgears and head bands used along the Guinea Coast as spelt out earlier in the review of literature, Bosmas' and Hulls' accounts of various hairdos also show the level of headdresses among the Coasters, similar comments were made by Marees on various hair cuts seen among men in their earlier encounter with the local people along the Coastal line



of the Country, Ghana. Sufficient styles and uses of head covers exist among royals in various parts of Akan jurisdiction.

#### **4.3.3.2 Crowns and Head bands**

Crowns form the major part of headgears used by chiefs in Akan. They are mostly produced from black velvet cloths, studded with silver and gold decorative symbols representing the moon, stars and other geometric forms. Some of these, especially the moon and the stars, give a reflection of Islamic influences but are explained by some chiefs as a symbolic representations of a chief and his subjects. A chief used the crown on festive and other ceremonial occasions. Aside chiefs, heralds or court criers in some Akanlands wear headdress in the form of caps called *adomasa*. There are similarities in other skullcaps worn by bodyguards, executioners and sword bearers. A piece of red or dark brown to black cloth tied around the head as turban by chiefs (*Akonko botire*) and others who use the red band (*koogyen*), used them on solemn occasions like mourning, but the red bands can also be used on aggressive occasions to register people's protest against something, this implies a state of danger. Various *Asafo* groups wear various forms of headbands of varied colours to serve as identity of the said groups. Another form of headband used by traditional priests and priestesses to cure or alleviate headaches is *ti pae- sebe*, it is a strip of *kente*, calico or silk studded with talismans.

In relation to the desired shapes used by the Akans in various activities including those used as ornaments on some regalia of chiefs, Amenuke, et al., (1999: 162) gave symbolic meanings to the use of shapes like circles, ovals, squares and rectangles, triangles, and the crescent moon. They relate circles to God's power,

purity and holiness linking them with the circular nature of temples of deities and gods as well as the discs of soul bearers of courts among the Akans. Squares and rectangles were associated with sanctity in the male as well as God, at times as the extent of power of a ruler, relating it to gold bracelets worn on the right wrist of counsellors on royal duties. Referring to the triangle generally as a female influence in society, they emphasised that its use as part of a chief's regalia as in the headgear, elbow bands, sandals, etc are signs of warmth and attraction of friendship. The crescent moon is also seen as chrematistics of female influence in society, involving female tenderness, warmth, affection, kindness, calmness and gracefulness. Its representation in royal appliqué cloths and as the curvature for top seats of various indigenous stools, indicating protection and love, its use with the shape of star indicates female faithfulness in love.

Meanwhile Ross, (2002: 165-166) touching on the influences of Islam on the Akan chieftdom, explains that, the amulets and other symbols used or worn by chiefs contain inscriptions from the Koran and other Muslim holy books often accompanied by a '*khatim*' (magical square) or diagrams, written on paper, folded in a prescribed manner and usually tied with strings according to numerically significant formulae, covered in tanned leather and skins of wide animals with gold and silver foil around them. This gives the impression that, the shapes are predetermined by the text or passages from the Koran and are created for specific purposes. However, Ross explains that, the Akans do not use the amulets based on its created purpose but name them on the basis of their external shapes rather than for any intended function. This therefore makes the explanation and meanings of shapes as explained by interviewees and Amenuke and others as reasons for the various shapes.

#### 4.3.3.3 Headgears

Headgears are also used by women in various forms to cover their heads. These headscarves (*duku*) used mostly by elderly women on occasions and during daily routines have names and significance attached to most of them. Some of the names include *bɔ mframa*, *tikorɔ nkɔagyina* and *trim*. Moslem women also drape a yard or two laces of fabric called *mayafi* over their heads and tossed them over their shoulders (Plate 39).

In this contemporary era, different caps, hats and head bands of western influence are mostly associated with the fashion of the youth in Ghana. These are basically modifications of the previous traditional head covers. This time they come with inscriptions, different colours and designs but are used for the same purpose of shading the head and also as an accessory to match various forms of dress codes, they at times, serve as a means of advertisement. Political parties and various organisations use caps and hats to match their uniforms, shirts, polo shirts, etc as a means of carrying their messages to the public. These form part of the numerous paraphernalia used by organized groups or as a nation on anniversary occasions.



**Plate 39:** A Moslem Lady Wearing *Mayafi*  
With an ethnic mark on the cheek

**Source:** From Alimatu's Library  
(a student of Tamale Polytechnic)

#### 4.3.3.4 Hairdressing and Hairstyles

Hairdressing is an ancient art of styling the hair in various ways which is associated with Ghanaians generally. The art of hairdressing exists mainly among women of various ethnic settings in Ghana. Among the Akans, the Asante women are noted for the *dansinkeran* hairstyle while the Fantes have *takua* and *makai* hairstyles (see Figs. 13a and 13b). As a sign of identification and rank, some attendants of paramount chiefs especially in Asante wear varied hairstyles.

Various forms of hairstyles are displayed during occasions, hair plaiting and cornrow form part of these styles and types of hair arrangements. Hair plaiting in Ghana, has names based on proverbs or current events and can serve as a means of communicating among women in particular. The purpose is such that, the hair is neatly sectioned into patterns and each section tied with threads in various manners, i. e. either coiled, bent, gathered together or left straight standing like sticks. It is said

that, the style is preferred because, aside its communicative factor, it is easy to keep neat and aid the growth of the hair which is of great importance to most women.

Cornrow which is now popular in Ghana like other foreign hair styles does not necessarily make use of threads, it mostly involves twisting together strands of hair close to the head skull in thin rows. Hairdos have much to do with artistic creation to achieve an interesting style. Today various styles of cornrows are popular among Ghanaian women, this improves on their look. Perming or relax and jury curl hairstyles used to be popular among Ghanaian women. Jury curls, prominent among women in the 1990s, are virtually non-existence today. Permed hair, on the other hand is still popular and has seen several improvements and innovations. Hair saloons of today are places where ladies enhance their looks not only in hairstyles but also in facial, toe and finger nail polishing; a fashion that is adopted through European influences.

Hair cuts, seen mostly among men are also aspects of hairdressing and it varies considerably over the years. Various forms of hair cuts evolved over the years, notably among them are the 1950s popular styles known as *freedom now*, *back bush*, *seven up*, *ponk*, *half-bone*, *afro*, and a wide range of hairstyles that have lines, symbols and inscriptions created in the cut. Although, in recent times, the hair is cut close to the skull, some people are still found with those old hair styles common among males. Beside boys, young girls and females in second cycle institutions, are mostly compelled under school regulations to cut their hair short. Few women are also seen with short hair cuts, what is usually referred to as 'down-cut'. Traditional and religious beliefs make some people cut their hair short as a sign of utter loss of a close relation.





**Fig. 13a:** Takua



**Fig. 13b:** Makai

**Fig. 13a and b:** The *Takua* and *Makai* hairdos of the Fantes.

**Sources:** Drawn by the researcher

#### 4.4 Relevance of Colour in Ghanaian Clothing and Fashion Styles

Colour, the prime of beauty, recognition and identification is prevalent in every culture in the world, likewise among Ghanaians and the Akans in particular. Irrespective of where one comes from, colour evolves in the life and daily-living of everybody, coupled with religious beliefs and desires, symbolic ideas and traditional practices. Colour, in fashion, is interpreted in the medium of fashion. The theories of colour combinations are important in creating harmonious effects needed to enhance the beauty of a design, be it traditional or contemporary. Though there are no hard and fast rules for the use of colours, when colours are combined harmoniously by using one colour to enhance the beauty of the other, it projects the image of the design and the wearer.

Textile fabrics without colour can simply be said to be ‘dead’. Life will be boring and dangerous without the inclusion of colour in the world of textile and fashion. In any instance, the choice of a consumer’s textile and fashionable items partly relate to the colours used in manufacturing or designing the items. Colour therefore plays a significant role in the sustenance and continuity of life as expressed in its use in reflective clothing, military uniforms and the likes.

Colour though has different meanings and significance attached to its use in various parts of the world as spelt out under the ‘colour symbolism of clothing and fashion’ in the review; most of its meanings are equally linked with the natural environment and its colours. Ameunke and co., emphasised the interweaving of various concepts of colour taught in the past in our Ghanaian culture, with the process of integrating its relevance to modern existence. It is clear that, the language of colour cannot be over emphasised in the fashion and cultural setting of both Ghanaian fashion designers and among the general public.

Ghanaians for that matter, the Akans, have their meanings and symbolisms for colour and their representatives in life, basically built on philosophical, abstract and spiritual values and not on the basis of scientific analysis and interpretation of colour relating to light. Meanings and symbolisms of colours in Ghanaian traditional customary rites have reflected itself greatly in the costumes and other forms of adornment among Ghanaians, which persist into this twenty-first century. These colours mostly include gold, yellow, black, white, blue, green, grey (silver), red and brown with varieties of tints and shades of them.

Shades of yellow and gold colours symbolize prosperity, glory, royalty, continuous life, maturity and wealth among others. Within the religious and political

realms, these colours symbolize the presence and influence of God in society and the rule of chiefs. This forms the bases why most chiefs and kings in Ghana use gold and gold related ornaments. In most festive occasions in Ghana, where chiefs and their clan members want to portray their wealth and power, it is done by exhibiting rich colours of *kente* cloths, expensive *kaba* designs and above all numerous gold accessories. Jewellery in the form of necklaces, bracelets, bangles, anklets, earrings, hair pins etc, which reflect the gold colours are equally featured prominently during these festive occasions.

Kings and chiefs on special occasions are adorned mostly with the largest and more elaborate form of gold in the form of the crowns, sandals and trinkets with rich *kente* or *adinkra* cloths to match them, to place them first in terms of royalty, wealth and honour before others. White is considered pure in Ghanaian culture and relates to virtue, virginity, joy, success, victory, righteousness and spiritualism. White clothes, beads, bags, shoes, etc used by many Ghanaians in most cases are purposeful in denoting one or more of the above reasons, be it a nursing mother, religious leaders (priests and priestesses), initiated girls, marriage couples and even during the funeral rites of aged people.

Red, black and earthly brown with their numerous shades in most cases symbolize melancholy such as the lost of a close relative, the sign of anger and violence, i.e. a dangerous situation, expression of aggressiveness, etc. The beliefs associated with these colours make their use prominent in funeral rites in almost all communities in Ghana. Traditionally, Akans are noted for elaborate funeral rites that exhibit shades of reds, brown and black, based on the closeness of an individual to the departed soul. Blue on the other hand relates to a serene atmosphere, calmness,

tranquillity, etc; it is also a symbol of feminity. Green denotes fertility, continuity and hope for growth. This is why these colours are seen in puberty rites among the Gas, especially in marriage and at the out-dooring of a new born child. Festivities relating to agriculture are mostly associated with green and its varied shades.

#### **4.5 Beauty, Body Shapes and their Effects on Clothing**

Beauty as expressed in this research will take a look at Ghanaian physical and inward characters, adornment and ideal concept of the human figures that reflect in their clothing specifically considering what the Akans acknowledge and integrate into their concept of beauty and body adornment. Beauty also takes into consideration the various ways of body manipulation, in terms of body marks like incisions and scarifications, body paintings and tattoos practised among Ghanaians.

“The body is the physical link between ourselves, our souls and the outside world. It is the medium through which we directly project ourselves in social life; its use and presentation say precisely things about the society in which we live, the degree of our integration within that society, and the control which that society exerts over the inner man” Brincard,(1984:36). The above expression from Brincard suggests the link between a person’s physical body, the inward attributes and how it reflects or have an impact on clothing and moral lives of individuals in relation to their societies.

In the fabrics of life the individual’s body and its mode of fashioning cannot be in isolation. The society of belongingness has command over what is expected from an individual. This greatly affects the society’s basic concept of beauty and body adornment. Relativity in beauty concepts and ideas differ from one

ethnic/social group to the other, mostly within a particular period of time. The culture of the beauty concept among Ghanaians is varied with little relationship within ethnic groups but is somehow different from that of the western world.

Generally, to convey messages on the concept of beauty and adornment in most parts of Africa over the centuries, the human body is used as a living and mobile canvas which primarily needs to be modified and decorated to suit the various ethnic groups and their measure of beauty. These equate the various indigenous cosmetics used on the body and 'shaping' of the human figure right from birth to project the physical qualities of a beautiful figure as expected in a person. These, coupled with the geometry and texture of the individual human body, engage in an ever-changing dialogue with the adornment selected by the social group for the wearer, sometimes culminated in ethnic identification – interaction between inner thoughts and outer body reality.

Other features boil down to angularity of the body, height, proportion; permanent and temporary alterations of the body's surface such as scarification, tattooing, skin painting or tinting, incisions or modifications of teeth, lips, earlobes and the nose. These modification techniques of the body parts were previously virtually absent in the Akan beauty and adornment concepts. Others relate their beautification to the use of accessories such as heavy metal belts, bracelets or anklets which assist to some extent, in restricting the movements of the body and its gestures necessary in showing one's status and rank within the society concerned. Some of these practices are notable among royals in Akan provinces.



#### 4.5.1 Body Decoration

Body arts found among various ethnic settings in Akanland are partly associated with religious and other ritual practices. They are equally an expression of identification and social belongingness. Within the various cultures of the world including those found in Ghana, adornment of the body is carried out as a means of conveying particular information, such as rank, individual attractions, aesthetics, culture or group belongingness, etc. Sue-Jenkyn (2005:26), confirming this, has stated the following; ‘Adornment allows us to enrich our physical attractions, assert our creativity and individuality, or signal membership or rank within a group or culture. Adornment can go against the needs for comfort, movement and health, as in the form of the temporal additions to or reductions from the human body’.

Within various parts of the country, where the weather is not cold enough to demand body covering in forms of clothing all the time, the people use other forms of body decorations to enhance their look. The people of ancient times believed in the aesthetics of the body, which they expressed through body decorations in the form of scarifications, tattoos and body paintings. It is argued that, fashion is a craze for old or previous things in a modified manner; that is, scarifications and tattoos, for example, regarded as old fashion and unhealthy practices or ‘practice for the uncivilized’ is currently resurfacing with a modern touch to its execution. The youth of today, even in Ghana tattoo portions of their bodies such as the chest, arms, back of the waist-line which seems to be catching up with the young female groups. This in modern culture is considered by some traditional persons as indecent but that is what the youth are fond of doing, ignoring all social norms and values.

Body adornment in modern days has much to do with varieties of hairstyles - beard trimming, shaving of the head and moustache, piercing of the earlobes, the use of cosmetics and false nails. These influences from various parts of the world have largely gained root among the Ghanaian society, with the youth being its target. It is certain that tattooing and piercing especially of the earlobe by men have not been seen as ideal body decorations in Ghana. Interviews conducted with some few Ghanaian youths in tertiary institutions located within Akan provinces, who tattooed their bodies confirmed that, the society especially the elderly abhors the art - they immediately put a tag on you as 'bad' when they find tattoos on your body. These students gave reasons among others for tattooing. For instance, it serves as a means of remembrance, aesthetics, identification purposes, social affiliations and the feel to follow fashion.

The multiple piercing of the earlobes by both males and females are gaining root among the Ghanaian youths. Whilst men are piercing one or both earlobes, the ladies increase theirs from the normal one to multiples (see Figs. 14a and b). Piercing of the navel and the nose are virtually nonexistent in the larger society of the Akans. The chief spokesman of Bekwai, Nana Kwabena Asante II explained that, it is only women who are allowed traditionally to wear earrings and not in multitude as seen today. It is therefore ridiculous for an Akan-man to wear rings on the ears for no apparent reason, since wearing of earrings by men in the ancient time, was a means of identifying men who were slaves. Some who found themselves within this practice explain the rationale behind it as class identities especially with the European and American celebrities in the entertainment cycle. They admit that the Ghanaian society full of cultural standings is always on their

nerves right from the home (parents) through friends (who do not practise the act) to the elders within the community, but admit that, the situation is more calm within the urban centres and at some tertiary schools like the universities than back in the rural communities where culture and its rules are more prominent and more strictly observed.



**Fig.14a:** A Man in an Earring



**Fig.14b:** A Woman in Multiple Earrings

**Fig. 14a and b:** Piercing and Use of Earrings by Some Young Men and Multiple Use of Earrings by Some Ladies in Modern Days

**Source:** Painted by the researcher

#### 4.5.2 Differences in Body Types and its Effects on Clothing

The Ghanaian way of dressing has changed drastically, because of Western influence. This has resulted in so much controversy lately, in that clothes worn by Ghanaians, especially females no longer take into consideration the body type one possesses. Differences in body shapes are essential to the fashioning of the body, in terms of look and body adornments.

The idea of an ideal body type among the Akans vary in terms of shapes and structure from one area to the other, whilst some regard a plump woman with big buttocks, big legs and dark complexion as considered the ideal woman, others believe the slim woman is the ideal figure; civilization, has somehow corroborated the principle of the slim figure type as ideal in modern days. Now people are putting up with western standards such that, some fat young ladies in Ghana today want to lose some weight in order to look smart and 'sexy' as it is termed. Apart from the dream of attaining an ideal figure type by many women, it is essential to have a basic knowledge of the figure type, which is necessary in determining what to wear, to conceal the undesirable shapes of ones figure, thereby fitting into the modern ideal concept of beauty partly.

It is believed that every individual falls under one particular type of the several body types that exist, broadly categorised into three classes as the 'ectomorph', 'mesomorph' and 'endomorph' (see Figs. 15a, b, and c) with wide variations also present. Every individual needs to have knowledge about his or her somatotype to enhance his ability, regarding the choice of clothes.

The ectomorph are characterised as having a typical skinny, stringy muscles, a thin with delicate build, a flat chest with a youthful appearance and a tall figure outlook. Ectomorphs usually have thin shoulders with little width. Mesomorphs are predominantly characterised with hard body with well defined muscles, an overly mature appearance, thick skin, upright posture and a rectangular shape. They have large bonny structure, large muscles and a naturally athletic physique. They are usually best body types for body building. Endomorphs on the other hand are characterised as having a solid and generally soft body, and

underdeveloped muscles. Generally, they have round physique, with short and 'stocky' appearance, usually of a shorter build with thick arms and legs as well as strong upper legs muscles. This figure type is also described as pear shaped.

Women in the context of traditional Ghanaian beauty endeavour to attain the shape of average endomorph thereby having more flesh and roundness. The contemporary woman, conscious of modern beauty concept and health related issues, determines always to attain the ectomorphic body type. The three basic categories of somatotypes must be the determining factor in considering what to wear in a more favourable and applicable ways. In the world of fashion, clothing is used to correct body defaults; for instance, ectomorph seen as an ideal figure type among women has most of the ready-to-wear apparels fitting perfectly, but extreme ectomorph persons should try and use fabrics with broader motifs, horizontal lines in designing his or her clothing to give the illusions of wider width.

Meanwhile, the mesomorph figure type has a midriff size and wide upper torso. This athletic figure is more balanced in size and fits mostly into any form of cloth designs. This figure is mostly associated with males and is usually the type of figure used for male fashion models. It implies that, this model fits into most designs. Women with this masculine characteristic will tend to wear clothes that conceal all this masculinity of their figure. That is to say, avoid strapless tops, sleeveless, off-the-shoulder blouses as well as 'show your back' sort of apparels. Such women should avoid using tops that project the shoulders making them look more masculine. Their choice of colours must be calm and they are to use soft flowing designs for their blouses and they have to reduce the use of geometric shapes in their clothing designs, which only turn to expose their masculine figures. The men on the other hand use

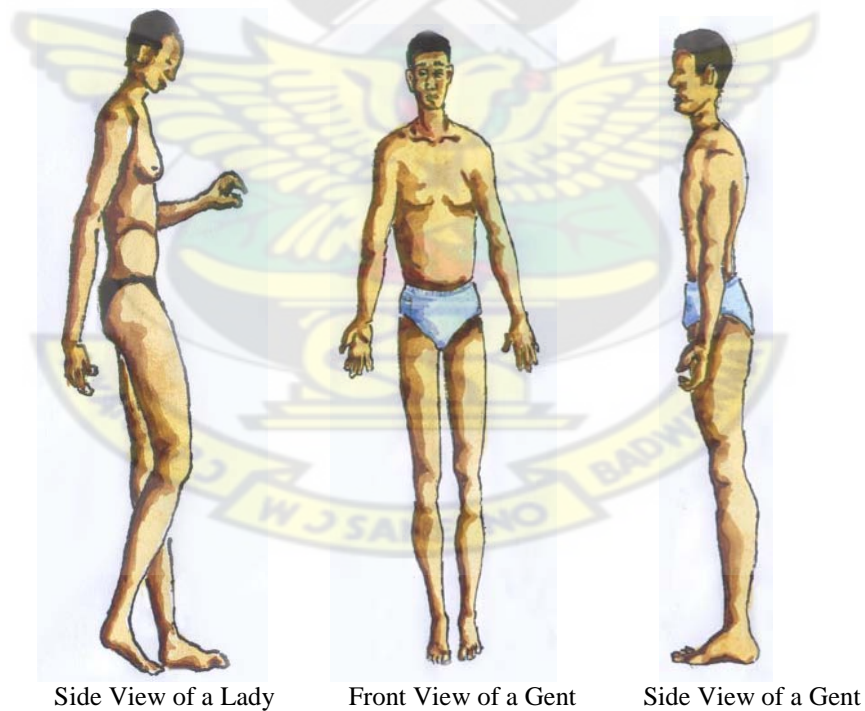


tight-fitting tops like what is termed in Ghana as ‘body tops’-‘T’ shirts, polo shirts that cling to the body revealing all their masculine features associated with the male mesomorph.

The third category, endomorph is considered as having rounded appearances with chunky middle sections and narrower shoulders. To correct this default with a clothe, endomorph somatotype must not wear clothes that rather expose these defaults, like leggings, hot pants, clingy bodice, etc, but rather wear designs that take attention away from the chunky stomach area. Vertical lines and fabrics with smaller motifs will give the illusion of slimmer appearance, thereby reducing the bulkiness. Flowing garments with designs that cover the shoulders could be ideal. The narrow shoulders can be concealed with set-in-sleeves, square and puff shoulder sleeves. The choice and distribution of colours using the principles of designs effectively can also do the trick.

In fashion designing, various parts of the body can be emphasised or de-emphasised, portraying narrowness or fullness using lines. Lines can move in various directions, leading the viewer to look across, up, down or in a sweep around the body. These lines in fashion are revealed in seaming of pattern pieces and fastenings. Vertical seam lines create effects of length and elegance because they lead the eye up and down the body, a movement that might suggest height. Horizontal lines tend to be shorter in span and therefore draw attention to the width of the body. These lines and the textures of the fabrics when applied effectively using the principles of design like rhythm, balance, contrast, harmony and repetitions can go a long way to correct defaults associated mostly with endomorphic and ectomorphic figures.

Even though the relationship between body types and personality is somewhat unclear, considerable evidence shows that body types affect the way we feel about ourselves. In our cultural set up, at least most elderly females want to attain endomorph somatotype especially among the Akans and the Gas rather than what they actually are, while most males desire to be heavier or muscular (mesomorph somatotype). Endomorphic figure types of both males and females in Ghana for that matter among Akans are regarded as wealthy. Men with fleshy body, big belly are perceived as wealthy in society likewise women with similar features referred to as *makola* mummies by the Gas are equally associated with wealth to the detriment of their health status.



**Fig.15a:** Ectomorphic Figure type

**Source:** Drawn by the researcher



Side View of a Lady



Front View of a Gent



Side View of a Gent

**Fig.15b:** Mesomorphic Figure type

**Source:** Drawn by researcher



Side View of a Lady



Front View of a Gent



Side View of a Gent

**Fig.15c:** Endomorphic Figure type

**Source:** Drawn by researcher

#### 4.5.2.1 Body shape and clothing

Within the last three to four decades, Europe has seen the movement to standardize the human body to a slimmer shape by dieting and exercising which has been endorsed scientifically as a healthy practice; this is basically the ectomorph body type. Barely two generations ago obesity was much more common among both men and women and was socially accepted. During those periods, a proliferation of chains of men's wears was made-to-measure suits, home dressmaking or private dressmakers, serving individuals from their homes.

The new wave of considering ectomorphic figure as a standardised human figure among females, projected and catapulted it into the ready-to-wear also known as off-the-peg goods in clothing which triggered the decline of made-to-measure apparels throughout the world. However, made-to-measure goods referred to as custom-made goods are the order of the day in Ghana, especially with the *kaba* and skirt which are designed and sewed by designers and dressmakers who are contributing to the promotion of local textile fabrics. This does not necessarily result from more endomorphic figure types which perhaps do not fit into the standardised body shapes but rather to a desire to have a fitting and unique style of design using 'African print' fabrics. This, many believe, promotes the true Ghanaian identity and mostly designed to conceal 'private parts' of the female body unlike those ready-to-wear garments now backed by second hand clothes from the European and American worlds.

Although the situation has not changed so much in Ghana with regards to made-to-measure market in all its aspects, it has declined in Europe, apparently because of the social desire for slimmer shapes hence more standardised body shapes



which project the consumer-base of the garment industries that sew with specifications for various body sizes. Therefore, the made-to-measure market in the western world is limited to very highly priced garments, to the relatively few with disproportionate figures and also to those whose jobs require that their wears be perfectly fitting such as military officers, diplomats and few celebratives who want to project themselves above the masses with special designs and effects. They usually go for custom-made-goods.

In Ghana, with the influx of these ready-to-wear apparels, coupled with fashion related shows, media and magazine promotions of the slimmer figure as ideal and healthy ways of living, society especially, some young folks are striving to attain this standardised slimmer figure. The slim concept is further projected as it is the figure type considered ideal by many models and beauty pageantry in the country. In spite of the fact that, 'Exopa', a modelling institution in Ghana is trying to incorporate all forms of body types into modelling, the slimmer concept as ideal modelling figure still persist among the larger populist in Ghana. This, to some extent, is challenging the traditional fat-ideal beauty concept with regard to the youth. Lydia Asante, a young fat-looking student of KNUST, in an interview on this concept of ideal figure explained that, she equally admire the slim figure type as ideal, because they look smart in appearance and in whatever they do and that, she sometimes feels shy and unappealing in most clothes she wears especially the ready-to-wear apparels because of her fat body look, although boys and some lady friends turn to admire her appearance; she stated that she sometimes despises herself but she is working through exercise and diet in order to lose weight and look ideal.



The above statement implies that, some young folks equally admire the fat-ideal beauty concept just like some elderly folks in Ghana, especially among some Akan women. This does not imply that slim elderly women are not admired among the Akans, as they used to be nicknamed *ateaa adenkum* or *ahoma teea*. This goes to explain that, both the slim and fat concepts of beauty are admired by many Ghanaians today. For instance, some elderly people still believe that the beauty of a married woman must reflect in the woman's appearances. Madam Eunice Afriyie, a 54 –year old dressmaker at Koforidua stated that, society especially friends and relatives of a married woman try to know if her husband takes good care of her as a wife, by expecting her to put on weight, look fuller at the torso with enough flesh, an attribute which she said reflects in the shaping of necklines of most *kaba* designs as ways of exposing their beauty to the public. These are usually characterised by styles sewed from good African prints with jewellery to match for out-door invents. This then serves as a symbol of pride for one's husband.

Most fashion designers believe that, the body of the individual is necessary in determining the style of any dress that goes onto that figure. The concept of beauty basically varies from one ethnic group to the other, and also changes with time. Although as stated in the three basic figure types earlier, athletic female looking ladies, may virtually take the structure mostly identified with males, likewise some males within the endomorphic and ectomorphic figure types may take-on a characteristic of a female body, for example, an extreme endomorphic male may tend to develop little signs of breasts, have a big belly, therefore resembling a female figure. It is a known fact that, the contours of the schematic male and female bodies are significantly different. The female form is normally more rounded in all

dimensions, classically simplified and often exaggerated as the archetypal hourglass figure – which in some quarters in Ghana is equated with the coca-cola bottle shape referred popularly to as ‘coca- cola shape’. The male body usually has a flat ‘inverted triangle’ silhouetted with broader shoulders.

Different societies form their own idea of what a beautiful figure is. In most cases, these ideas change with time and are re-enforced by collective opinions governed and geared in present days by fashion designers. The trend of the ideal figure in modern times has been switched towards the lanky, slimmer - looking figure among females; especially with the educated young ones in the urban setting of the country like Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Koforidua, Cape Coast, Ho, Tamale, etc. A premium is put on certain features in the human figure that classified them as ideal, youthful and healthy. These are projected or emphasised the more, through various beauty pageants held among the young folks, which promote such body physiques. These were expressed in the following statement of Sue-Jenkyn (2005:78-81);

Thinness and muscularity are seen as indicative of youth, an active superiority: the tall have to look down on others. The ideal is usually healthy and happy with well-groomed hair and with large, symmetrical facial features. However, throughout the last century there have also been significant trends towards using sickly, flat - chested and miserable – looking models .... Today’s model weighs ... less than the average person .... We are so used to seeing painfully thin models in magazines and advertisements that people of average size consider themselves abnormal.

The assimilation of cultures has made it possible to fuse Western and African concept of beauty to create a new look of the African woman. This is usually enhanced through the use of beauty items and tools with the advent of technology and modernity to help re-define one’s actual physical beauty. The views of most designers interviewed, can be summed up as ‘a beautiful and ideal figure now equates ‘a good armature necessary for a perfect sculpture piece’.

### 4.5.3 Akan Beauty Concept

What constitutes the idea of ‘the beautiful’ and ‘ideal figure’ among the Akans for that matter Ghanaians is necessary to determine our fashion and moral rights for our economic achievements. A complete switch from its beliefs is tantamount to throwing away a baby with its dirty bath water. To understand why our people wear clothes or fashion themselves the way they do, we need to understand their concept of beauty.

#### 4.5.3.1 Outward and Inner Beauty concepts

The concept of beauty within the human form among the Akans has to do with both physical and inward characteristics of a person. Beauty is mostly associated with the female figure in Ghana but there are still criteria for what is considered a handsome – gentle man within the society.

The physical features are not the only factor expressed in a beautiful figure, Akans go beyond the physical beauty as a determining factor for total beauty. The total beauty concept also embraces the character of an individual as well as some common virtues desired in a person. These entire factors form the in-depth constituents of beauty among the Akans. For instance, ‘*ahoofe ntua ka*’ which literally means ‘beauty does not pay a debt’ implies that, physical beauty must be accompanied with good character. On the other note the word ‘*bo woho mbodzen ma wobra nye few*’ means you should endeavour to develop a beautiful character. The above maxims in Akan are testimonies to good character infused into physical look (beauty). The concept of beauty again transcends beyond human physical qualities of

aesthetics, values and characters to cover generally, works of art such as paintings, sculptures, music and other artistic expressions.

Among the Akans, beauty therefore is an aesthetic expression that is not only found in humans but in most objects, expressions and religious connotations as well. These ideas of beauty are mostly linked with motifs and symbols as spelt out by Antubam as 'Ghanaians have a peculiar tendency of attaching meaning and sometimes deep philosophical significance to most of the symbols used'. Although a basic principle in the art of drawing relates the various parts of the body to some of the basic shapes, Akans attach philosophical significance to these shapes and how they should look to connote beauty, adding more value to the use of the shapes than it is in everyday life.

It is therefore clear that, they relate beauty to the various parts of the figure in line with symbols mostly circles and ovals. These qualities are what Akan traditional wood carvers try to express in the female *Akuaba* doll (Plate 40). The beauty features portrayed in these dolls are what women desire to see in their children as they grow steadily through the rites of passage into adulthood. Right from the head to the toe, the expression of what is ideal in body shape is linked to these symbols as expressed by Antubam (1963:90-92) while assessing the beauty concept of the body parts among Ghanaians;

Looking at the body from the side or front, the shape of the head and the neck from the top of the head to the end of the chin must appear like an egg with the wider portion uppermost. Looked at it from the side, the head must sit on the neck at an angle of about thirty five degrees with the top part falling back .... To be beautiful, the head must fix into the neck at a point a little below the head to the bottom line of the chin ... The neck which should have wrinkles or rings on it must fall into an elongated oval shape with the smaller part of it tapering towards the head. The wrinkles or rings here must be an odd number when counted to be a perfect beauty. The torso,

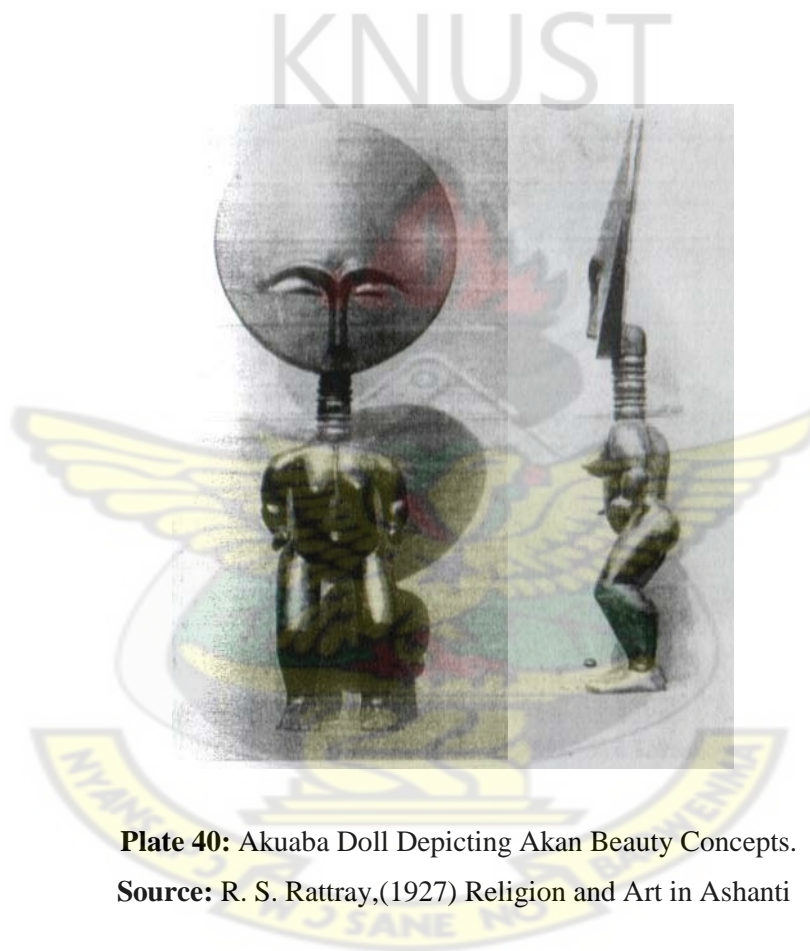
starting from the shoulder line or collar bone to the waist line, must appear an oval with larger part towards the neck. The thighs from the waist line to the bottom of the knee cap must look like an egg with the wider portion towards the waist .... The legs, from the centre of the knee cap to the ground level, put together, must fall in a ground space of an oval with its wider part towards the toes (fig 16).

A brief description of Gorer's (1949:191-192) account of women of the Gold Coast especially in the city of Accra at that time was in line with Antubam's description of a perfect and ideal figure of the Ghanaian woman. After Gorer's assessment of beauty from other parts of the World in relation to that of Ghana, he stated in his writing that, '... I think that the people of Accra have the highest average of personal beauty. They are not very tall but they are perfectly proportioned, their arms and shoulders being particularly lovely ....' He explained that before he arrived in Africa, he considered people in Southern Yugoslavia, particularly around Dubrovnik and Cetinje as the most beautiful he had ever seen; followed by Kiev and Tarragona, until he arrived in Accra. His description gave the impression that the people of the Gold Coast formed part of the highest class of people with all the qualities of physical beauty as far back as the early 1900s.

In a similar circumstance, an attractive handsome Ghanaian man is one who is tall, with a broad chest and has a good muscle build-up which is a sign of strength and must mostly be neat with a clean shave. His manner and bearing must be intimidating and his gait majestic. In like manner, a beautiful Ghanaian woman is expected to have full lips, a gap between her top incisions and plump hips and buttocks, and must equally appear clean, neat and smart. These features nevertheless are important in determining what the individual will wear, how and when to wear them as well as the functions and occasion that demand such items; what to expose or

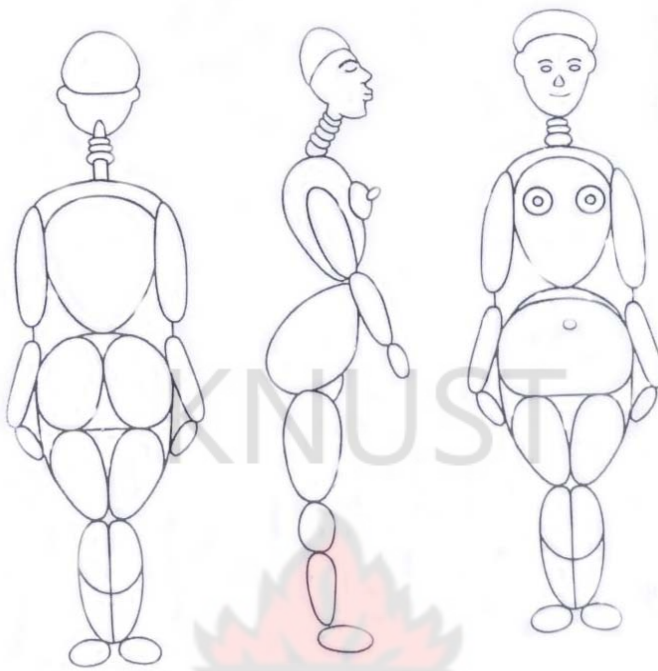


not to expose in order to realize, a complete beautiful or handsome personality among Akans. The thought of doing or wearing the right attire for the right occasion needs an inner discipline, to put value on the importance of the inward criteria of beauty principles among the Akans.



**Plate 40:** Akuaba Doll Depicting Akan Beauty Concepts.

**Source:** R. S. Rattray,(1927) Religion and Art in Ashanti



**Fig. 16:** Antubam's Concept of Ideal Figure

**Source:** Drawn by the researcher

(based on Antubam illustration on ideal figures)

#### **4.5.3.2 Inward Qualities of Beauty**

Clothing is an outward expression of the inward attributes of a person. A person with bad cultural and moral life is believed to portray this in his or her physical look through clothing. Therefore, apart from the physical qualities of beauty, the functional values of a person which relate to cultural virtues form a good criterion of beauty among the Akans.

In an attempt to fish-out the extreme to which character and moral obligation of a person are placed among various societies, Gyekye (2003:130-132) made references to certain maxims in Akan and Igbo lands which expressed the tastefulness or ugliness of a person's inward aesthetics of beauty. He said that, an

Akan maxim that expresses that 'beauty does not pay off a debt' is in recognition to the fact that, physical looks only should not be seen as an ultimate factor in determining a man's life style. It equally implies there is more to beauty than just physical or outward qualities. In a similar view, he explained that Igbo's have a saying that, 'good manners constitute beauty' that is, in making a choice for marriage, both parties must make enquiries about the character of persons they want to marry. These enquiries, definitely consider an observation on the clothing or dress code of each party. He further pointed out that, the physical beauty of a woman eventually fades in importance in the eyes of the members of the man's lineage if grounds are found of reproach to the woman's character and behaviour. The maxim 'the human being is more beautiful than gold', according to him emphasises on the beauty of the humanity itself, not the human figure as such, the aesthetic values of the person which make him or her appreciated. Humanity itself refers to certain moral standing and adherence to social etiquette acceptable within the society, setting the grounds to be considered as 'a well-cultured person'.

The beauty concept among Akans, which involves both the physical and inward beauty ideals, are vital in appreciating what is put on the skin in terms of clothing. It is clear that, people who possessed these physical qualities will be better admired and appreciated when seen in appropriate forms of clothing. It also implies that if an individual's character or attitude is questionable among members of the society, the beauty he or she may exhibit through clothes eventually fade in the eyes of the community members, because his or her lifestyle which is an inward revelation of the person is not endorsed by the society he or she lives in as good.

#### 4.5.3.3 Beauty in Social Etiquettes

The beauty concept is to some extent engraved in social etiquettes within traditional set-ups. Though these phenomena have reduced drastically in recent times, it is still a prime criterion for traditional folks and elders in society when talking about beauty. In Ghanaian thought, social etiquette can be associated with how to, and how not to speak, behave or 'hold oneself up' in the eyes of the society. Speaking on social etiquettes, Mortan's (1981:13) clarification means that whenever people adhere to social etiquettes of the society at the correct time and show appropriate humility and conduct themselves correctly, then that is good etiquette. They are praised for having done something beautiful. This shows the extent to which moral values in upbringing of the youth is inculcated into ideas of beauty in Ghanaian society.

Well cultured persons especially women must hold onto etiquettes that have been taught them. A woman must be humble and soft speaking, polite and ready to carry errands, must not swing her buttocks excessively as it may be likened to tizzing and sexual advances and she must not sit with legs parted. As a sign of respect and humility, she must take-off her flip-flops when entering into an elder's room and must bend to greet elders. She must be a gracious and generous host, a good wife and mother in future and must most importantly respect elders, and have good manners for social values. Young men are equally expected to take-off their hat/cap when greeting an elderly person, be polite in answering questions, give their place of seating to elders where the need arises, etc. The issue of 'not swing buttocks excessively by the ladies', 'taking off flip-flops', 'must not sit with legs parted', removing hat or cap when greeting elderly people in society are social etiquettes but

reflect directly in the fashion codes of individuals. These are evidence of direct relationship between social etiquettes and clothing among the Akan traditional setting.

Aside from what constitutes an ideal figure and the inherent qualities classified as beauty, coupled with social etiquettes; certain prime efforts are put in place right from birth in the Ghanaian community to further enhance the look of a person. According to madam Ewewor, a ninety-five (95) year old traditionalist at Adidome situated in the Volta Region; right after birth, within most parts of the Ewe society, the mother tries to re-shape the head of her baby into an oval shape if she suspects that the baby has what she called a deformed head (that is a shape other than oval). With the artistic mind of perfection held by the mother, warm water and towel are used daily to gently hold the head, legs and arms of the baby in the effort of re-shaping them into what they regard as ideal features in a person. When applying pomade, the muscles of the baby are gradually pushed to give elaborate disposition of the muscles. Waist beads are used for infants of both sexes at tender age just like unisex dresses for children. But, traditionally, females must wear waist beads through their puberty into adulthood as it is believed to shape and define the waist-line and hip of women as part of expressing beauty, apart from the sensitive touch some men derive by touching the waist beads of women. In the same analysis, she re-emphasised that, beads are equally worn slightly above the calves of babies and toddlers to project and shape or define the calves as a sign of expressing beauty.

All the above expressions are means of preparing the female child into a beautiful adult with all the good qualities both inward and outward needed in a good citizen of the land, who can look good in clothing and adornment during socio-



cultural activities like puberty and marriage rites. Beauty concepts are equally expressed in other cultures outside Ghana, Africa and the Western world which also reflect their desire for clothing and adornments as well as their changes over the centuries.

## **4.6 Body Marks**

Various reasons contribute to marks created on the human body among Ghanaians. Notable among them are those based on religious beliefs, medicinal and beautification purposes. Body marks in the context of this dissertation, cover incisions and scarifications, body paintings and tattoos.

### **4.6.1 Incisions and Scarifications**

In Ghana, various forms of marks are created on the human skin; prominent among them are scarifications and incisions which were practiced among some northerners before they were abolished after independence. The then president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah ordered for a ban on ethnic marking which includes incisions and scarifications and other practices such as nudity and female circumcision that he termed ‘uncivilised’ seen mostly in the northern sector of the country (Knudsen 1994:2). This practice is virtually absent within the southern and the middle belts of the country.

Incisions and other forms of ethnic markings are usually symbolic, which are carried out on parts of the body especially on the face for medicinal, religious and identification purposes among ethnic groups. To some extent, people associate it to marks of beautification. These marks range from tiny cuts on the cheek or series of

cuts at the corners of the mouth, on the stomach, to several long gashes placed diagonally across the face. Some of such marks are also made on the napes of the neck, the forehead, the waist, the chest, around the navels, arms and at the joints. For medicinal purposes, herbal medicines mostly in powdered forms are rubbed in the cuts as a form of protection or cure (Plate 39). These medicines used in most instances are responsible for leaving scars or projections on the human skin that give the effects are classified as ethnic markings. Akans in particular do not practise ethnic markings, except for medicinal purposes.

Instances when they are used are linked with religious practices. People are marked because they belong to some religious cults and also to identify people's rank and position within the religious groups. This is much associated with various religious cults found in most parts of the Volta Region as well. It is also a belief that couples who lost their first-two or three children, marked the subsequent ones to disfigure them, making them unattractive, not beautiful to their 'god mother' – 'the sacred beauty loving citizen of the other world who it is believed takes those children back to the underworld because of their beauty as expressed by both Antubam (1963:146) and Amenuke, et al., (1999:161).

#### **4.6.2 Body Paintings**

Body painting is a form of body art. It is considered by many as an ancient form of art. Unlike other forms of body art, body painting is temporary, it is painted onto the human skin, and lasts for only around several hours. Body painting with clay and other natural colours existed in most African countries including ancient Ghana for centuries. These body paintings were worn among Ghanaians during ceremonies

and still exist today. Various ethnic groups in Ghana paint the body on special occasions that demand it. The art of body painting is mostly or usually associated with ceremonies. Both men and women paint their bodies using various materials that yield different effects. The colours used on the body and the occasions determine the aggressiveness or other wise of the activity that calls for its use as the situation may be mostly in traditional activities (Plates 41a and b). Body painting can be done to symbolise growth in various respects, joy, peace, victory or can symbolise a sign of danger, aggressiveness, calamity or disgrace. The items used as colours for painting the body range from clay of varied colours, ashes, charcoal and soot; at times the 'washing blue' used as a brightening agent during washing is also applied. It is said that, colours considered not harmful from other sources like plants are also used.

In modern days, body painting changes a person into a work of art. Emphasising on the visual appeal of the subject, the protective body paint gives it the appeal. People use body painting in these contemporary forms as means of entertainment and also to advertise the products of companies who employ the services of such persons. As a means of entertainment, people express their passion and love for what they do; this is so especially with sport with particular reference to football (Plates 42a and b). Beside sporting activities, it is also common to see young boys employed on anniversary days by companies or during political rallies by political parties to advertise their products or party colours respectively. The colours used in recent times in Ghana for such arts include pigments and acrylic paints.

#### **4.6.3 Tattoos**

Tattoos are equally marks created on any part of the human skin, but this time, using needles. Tattoos though can be a temporary mark, it mostly comes in the form of permanent marks on the body. The way tattoos are preserved changes from country to country. Although not a popular practice in Ghana, over the years, it is gaining grounds in recent times in Ghana just like in other parts of the world. Reasons for tattooing vary, but they include the following: self expression, peer pressure, as a means of beautification, attraction and identification purposes. In tattooing, the words or objects to be tattooed are drawn on the preferred portion of the skin as desired by the client. A tattoo machine, fixed with needles or a number of needles held together by hand are used to pinch and pull off the skin along the drawings or inscriptions. Chemicals in the form of colours are inserted beneath the skin or rubbed on the preferred portions of the skin. During the cause of tattooing, the chemicals mix-up with the blood to make the marks fixed. Tattoos in recent times, are done in tattoo parlours in Ghana, but the local or traditional ways of tattooing are also being practiced along the contemporary types in various parts of the country (Plates 43a and b).





Plate 41a



Plate 41b

**Plate 41a and b:** Traditional body paintings for occasions

**Source:** 41a, From NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007

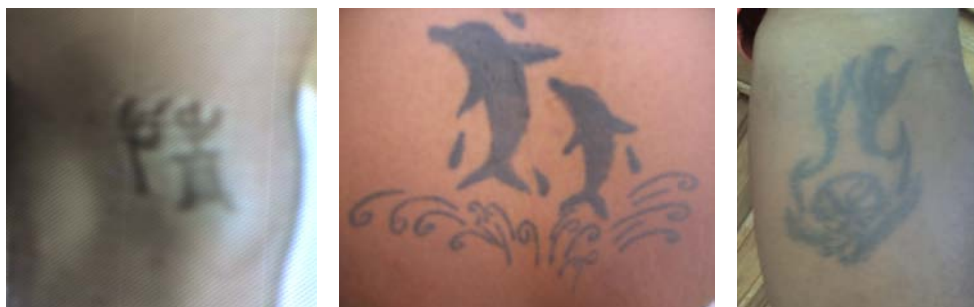
41b, From Gladys' Library (a traditionalist – Keta)



**Plate 42:** Body paintings done with acrylic paints, the contemporary way

**Source:** The Mirror, Saturday, 26/01/2008





**Plate 43a:** Traditional forms of tattoos on parts of the skin



**Plate 43b:** Contemporary forms of tattoos that introduce colours into the skin

**Sources:** Collections from friends of the researcher's personal collections

#### **4.7 Influence of Foreign Fashion on the Culture and Fashion of Ghanaians: With Its Inappropriate Use of Clothing among the Youth**

Generally, the trends and impact of fashion largely have been integrated into Ghanaian society and culture through Islamic and European influences. Most of the earlier influences were accepted and integrated into our culture because they were intended to uplift and project the cultural religious beliefs and moral lives of the Ghanaian society, resulting in an adulterated new form of clothing and fashion. These were possible due to certain factors that influence both the positive and negative changes within the local culture and fashion.

Most of the changes that influence fashion are mostly associated with the teenage group. This group is usually keen in following the current trends of fashion and seizes the youthful opportunity to dress in the styles popular among their peers. Most of these issues of belongingness among peers are sparked by foreign influences especially from Europe and America. The sense of identity and a feeling of belongingness to their social groups become paramount, therefore no matter the cost and the consequences; they will fight their way through in order to attain their dreams. This dream of ‘vanity’ has affected the consideration of factors relating to choice of clothing which is heavily blamed on the external influence especially those from Europe, as eating into the social and cultural fibres of the Ghanaian society.

#### **4.7.1 Factors that Influence Clothing and Fashion in Ghanaian culture**

The desire for change is an integral part of every society. Change and adaptation of fashion are mostly expressed by the desire of individuals to accept new things. Ghanaian culture like all other cultures of the world does not remain uninfluenced by other cultures. Interaction with the world outside its boundaries gave birth to cross – cultural influences, which go a long way to change partly the Ghanaian culture and its mode of dressing. Changes in the traditional attire and adaptation of western styles are largely influenced by Europeans. With their introduction of education, religion and trade activities, the life styles of Ghanaians have greatly been influenced by foreign cultures including their modes of dressing over the years.

#### **4.7.1.1 Educational and Religious Influences**

With the establishment of both formal and informal systems of education by the British colonial masters, education embedded in religion became one of the tools used to influence and impose its dressing styles on the local people. Prior to the coming of the missionaries, the traditional people worshipped the Supreme Being through the divinities, with priests being the intermediaries between the ‘gods’ and the communities. Costumes at the time were traditionally devoid of any western influences, though they were not elaborate in style and fashion. As stated earlier, priests and priestesses’ costumes vary depending on the occasion at hand and the spirit that possesses them during worship, since various spirits have their preferred costumes. Other occasions within the society, also call for variations in costumes as witnessed in the rites of passage among various ethnic groups in Ghana.

Islamic religion was pronounced in the northern sector of the country long before the westerners introduced Christianity. The Moslems also introduced their styles of costumes to the people up north, where men wear long flowing gowns and the smocks with their heads covered with turbans or small caps, while the women on the other hand, cover most parts of their bodies and wear veils. The British and the missionaries set out to impose their ideas of culture and religion through education and Christianity on the people and expected them to readily assimilate them. There were links between education and Christianity; Nudity and semi-nudity were frowned on and taught as a sin in schools and churches, almost every educated Gold Coaster became a Christian. New converts in the churches were taught how to read the Bible.

Most educated persons end up with white-collar jobs; they quietly assimilate ‘western look’ as superior to the local Ghanaian look. These educated

folks, dressed like the whites. In the religious sector, women exposing their shoulders in church were considered 'paganistic' and unrighteous; hence, converts were clothed in garments entirely new to them. Sometimes missionaries distributed clothes especially to their members. Women must cover their hair during church services therefore they wear scarves. This strategy also succeeded in converting more young ones into the Christian religion. Girls though were not normally allowed into the formal sector of education at the initial stage, by their parents they were trained in various domestic and vocational chores to become good servants and homemakers. House helps and other members of the working class received clothes handed down from their colonial mistresses apart from uniforms used during working hours. Women were also trained in sewing with the introduction of the sewing machine.

With the establishment of the 1882 educational ordinance by the British, school uniforms were introduced to students and teachers of the Gold Coast. The styles and dress codes of these students and teachers were a direct influence from Britain. The formal system was categorised into the literate groups whose mode of dressing was mainly of the western styles; the illiterate groups regarded as the informal system used traditional robes and costumes. The trend was that, educated people over the years into the early days of independence, when Nkrumah brought his concept of Africanism which reflected in dress codes, were easily identified with European clothes. Besides, the *kaba* and slit and other traditional related styles which gave a true reflection of the local forms of clothing, women were seen in western styles, sleeves and even gloves to some functions just like their European counterparts.

The impact became so great that, some elite African clubs were found fining members who were seen wearing traditional clothes in public. However, some people like Ephraim Amu in the 1930s fought against the persistence of the Europeans towards wearing foreign dresses to most functions including church services, with the reason that it is not suited to the tropical heat. He as a Presbyterian minister, used to conduct church services wearing Ghanaian clothes against the will of the Synod Committee of the Gold Coast, as opined by Salm and Falola, (2002; 121). They again explained that when the nationalist movement gathered steam in the 1950s, leaders began to wear traditional clothing as a symbol of their independence from the colonial elite and their desire for self-government. This suggests that, western-styles of dress were associated with colonial power and superiority.

The post independent era saw the use of traditional clothes as the symbol of Ghanaian identity, propagated by the then president, Nkrumah. The use of western clothes, however, existed. When more tertiary schools like training colleges and polytechnics were established, more access to higher education increased the taste of elites for foreign fashion styles. Sometimes, training and work opportunities that come with education demand certain dress codes that are considered foreign. For instance, nursing, military and police services called for uniforms. Women in more professional fields because of higher education, now take on jobs previously reserved for men because of numerous field works associated with them. The women are seen in dress codes that are associated with such works that require overalls. They now go in pairs of trousers, shorts, suits, shirts, blouses and other forms of western clothing that are associated with such works believed to enhance free movement and smartness at work.



Education has brought along with it, both internal and external migration that has equally affected cloth adaptation. The assimilation and adaptation of the clothing culture of respective areas that one finds oneself in are all through western influences. Increase in knowledge through education turns to widen knowledge and the understanding of the scriptures. With the introduction of more religious bodies, clothing associated with religion has become more elaborate than ever, with most of the dress styles emanating from Europe and America. Church activities mostly marked with group identities and roles of personalities such as, the Pope, Bishops, Priests, Choristers, Catholic Sisters, Evangelists, Deacons and other players and singing groups have specific attires most of which are strictly influenced from Europe.

In recent times, the awareness and need for carving a Ghanaian identity, has seen more women and men using 'African prints' to sew sophisticated and flamboyant styles which they use alongside the western styles for various functions. Women now wear trousers, shirts with suits for official duties and even to church services, the best *kaba* styles, shirts and ready-made dresses can be seen among others during different occasions. The church now has become one of the places where fashion styles are exhibited especially during weddings and other anniversaries of the churches. Similar comments was made by Antubam with regards to women dressing to churches in order to expose their physique and look to others. Most of these, if not all, are implanted into the Ghanaian society and religion by modern influences from Europe and America.

Fashion institutions and other training centres available for apprentices in tailoring and dressmaking have equally increased on the demand for foreign dresses,

since catalogues, magazines and movies provide easy access to western styles, irrespective of what it is. These help designers to readily copy these modes of western fashions. The concept among the youth especially implies that, to be seen as educated, civilised and fashionable, one must appear often in western fashion. Christmas and Easter bring new designs, this is so because people buy new dresses (ready-to-wear apparels) most of which are imported from western countries. Similar desires for fashion from the 'east' by our Moslem brothers are seen during the celebration of the Moslem festival 'Ramadan'.

#### **4.7.1.1 Merits of educational and religious influences on fashion**

The introduction of education by the westerners, has improved on knowledge, record keeping and other aspects of development of Ghanaians. The colonialist has introduced variations in clothing and made clothes available to the larger community, from childhood to adulthood, with different styles and designs existing today. Today, goods from Europe including second-hand clothes, make it easy for most Ghanaians to have access to cheaper, affordable and quality clothing. With the introduction of the sewing machine by the Europeans, more people have been trained and jobs have been created for people in the field of tailoring, dressmaking, and fashion designing up to today. The presence of these artistes has even contributed greatly to varieties seen today with our own traditional styles of fashion especially the '*kaba*' and slit. Employment opportunities have been created in the clothing sector, the manufacturing and sale of fabrics, garments and their accessories like shoes, bags, belts, second hand goods. Thus livelihood has been created for thousands of Ghanaians today. The influence of education can be seen in

all sectors of lives as it forms the basis for our gradual development over the centuries, since we are more informed today than ever before and can take decisions on our own towards development.

#### **4.7.1.1.2 Demerits of educational and religious influences on Ghanaian clothing**

Fashion in spite of its tremendously improvement through education and religion, it has its own negative effects on the Ghanaian society especially the youth. Western influence in fashion has permeated into the moral fibre of the youth so much, so that most fashionable items are propagated by the youth in schools. Students of secondary and tertiary institutions influences their peers through fashionable attires, such that those who cannot afford to leave by the charges seek easy ways of doing so thereby landing themselves in various moral and ethical problems.

It is suggested that, tertiary students who do go on vacations abroad and come back with modern western styles of clothing exhibit them to the admiration of their friends especially the opposite sex. Hence, those who like to be in vogue with modern western trends of fashion but cannot afford them must look for alternatives in acquiring these clothes. In the religious context, some church activities become a ground for exhibiting latest fashion styles, thereby comparing some youth, if not all to be up to the task of change, in order not to look isolated. These self-impose demands for identifying oneself with changing trends in fashion associated with education and religion can lead an individual into all sort of negative practices. These compel some ladies to take boyfriends and 'sugar daddies' who can purchase these clothes for them or hop from one man to the other to make enough money to buy these items. Gents who follow fashion keenly either as a result of peer pressure, bad companies or just

what to 'show off' as a means of giving signals that they are up to date with modern trends in fashion, fall into all temptations in crave to acquire these items. They go for 'sugar mummies' when possible, take on menial jobs at the expense of their class hours or associate themselves with gangs to steal, rob, pick-pocket, etc to get the money needed to purchase these clothings. The consequence may range between bad academic performance, acquiring transmitted diseases, becoming pregnant on the part of the ladies or being arrested for these crimes and thrown into jail. In this regard, some of them become school dropouts, adding to the economic burdens of the country.

#### **4.7.2.1 Social and Economic Factors that Influence Clothing**

Society is dynamic and ever ready for change; the changes also affect the trends in clothing. The changes are triggered by the desire of individuals to go in for the best in fashion. Designs that enrich the pockets of the providers of various items likewise provide jobs and generate revenues for the country. The desire for new taste is the beginning of the manifestation of the dominance of western fashion in our social setting, mainly in the entertainment cycles. The Gold Coast ladies were going on dates, parties, film shows, theatres and the like, therefore needed clothing that would fit them into that social realm. These were basically western influences that went with western clothing, hence opening more trade opportunities for those in the fashion industry at the time to make money by providing these items to the Gold Coast ladies who needed them to raise their social status.

Around the nineteen-fifties, sixties, seventies, to the present time, all the various changes that took place in fashion, seen in the country, both among women

and men, were direct influences from Europe. Women were wearing mini dresses, pair of trousers of different names and sizes, tight-fitting blouses, maxi dresses, with their accompanying hairstyles and foot wears to social functions. Changes in men's fashion, though not very significant were equally under the influence and trends of western culture and fashion. The social trends and changes in fashion are dealt with under the sub-heading, 'foreign influence on contemporary clothing and fashion'.

Games are mostly social events, backed with its own passion and costumes in almost every society. Most of these games originated from Europe and were gradually introduced into the Ghanaian society. These games which include, football, boxing, basketball, volleyball, table and long tennis, golf, etc were introduced alongside their sport kits. Gradually, women were also integrated into the various disciplines of the games, likewise the various costumes that go with them. These attires for the games are of European Influences. Today, in sporting activities throughout the world, football, one of the most popular games, comes along with its varied paraphernalia that are patronised heavily by football enthusiasts. Most of these clothings are designed and produced from the western countries by companies who owned and managed such products; typical examples of such companies in sport kits production include *Puma* and *Adidas*. For instances, when Ghana hosted the 2008 African football tournament, some special shirts and paraphernalia were designed and produced by Ghanaians while the main designs were done and manufactured in China with only the sole the right to distribute the shirts given to Ultimate Fashion, a fashion merchandising company in Ghana. Meanwhile the productions of the items were done in Asia, stressing further on the level of Western influence on the fashion life of



Ghanaians. Economically, the sale of these fashion paraphernalia provided short-term employments to some people in the country.

In Ghana, *kaba* and slit are recognised as traditional attires, however, it is clear that, contemporary styles of *kaba* and slit produced by local designers are greatly influenced by the advance of fashion from the western world. With the introduction of technologically oriented machineries and various accessories into the fashion industry, *kaba* is no longer a simple design of loose jumper top produced for women, but a sophisticated piece of art designed by local fashion designers who were sometimes trained in Europe or under European influences and styles. The use of state of the art mechanism and items produced from Europe like embroidery machines, trimmings, stiffening, chains, hooks, belts, sleeves, etc have enhanced the designing and production of the local style '*kaba*'.

Marriage in today's concept, with regards to fashion as explained under the sub heading 'rites of passage' has been drastically influenced by westernisation. In recent times, bride price comprises fashionable items of western origin such as Dutch, English and Java wax prints, rings, shoes, sandals and other fashionable accessories. Wedding involves the buying of a wedding gown and the bride's trousseau, which are purely of western influences. Similar instances are seen in Islamic marriages in Ghana today.

This western influence is now greater in the day to day fashioning of the Ghanaian youth. This results from direct influence from western young-celebrities who are in the film and music industries. The influx of second-hand goods from Europe into the country with the level of affordability associated with them has turned to make the influence and love for such goods greater. Boutique owners and

merchants of textile and fashionable goods, who bring these items from Europe contribute greatly to the impact of western fashion and its influence on the fashion and other cultural lives of Ghanaians. Sometimes, security service persons like the military and police personnel, merchants who import textile and fashion goods into the country, government officials and other diplomats who travel to Europe come along with western styles and ways of clothing, which the public readily assimilate.

All these factors mentioned with their negative impacts are responsible for the changes in the local Ghanaian fashion. It has really influenced our local fashion both positively and negatively. The negative aspects in recent times have turned to relegate Ghanaian cultural values and modes of appropriate ways of dressing to the background, thus setting and enforcing its own new codes and principles. This is a sign of great distress for our country and its cultural values, hence the need to check the trend of moral declaims.

#### **4.7.2.1.1 Merits of social and economic influences of clothing in Ghana**

Foreign influence on the society has brought about a change and variation in clothing among various social classes of the people in Ghana. It has encouraged various categories of fashionable items used on various occasions. Social tastes associated with fashion have brought about the production of similar items in large quantities. The desire to associate ourselves with social events as expressed through clothing, such as sporting activities, have a propensity to unite the society under a common umbrella. Economically, these social drives for fashionable items has created job opportunities and satisfactions for some members of the society through

the creation, production and distribution, by means of wholesale and retail outlets of fashion goods as well as the benefits that will be derived from its consumption.

#### **4.7.2.1.2 Demerits of social and economic influences of clothing in Ghana**

Women in particular strive to 'look good' in the society which usually leads to stretching their budgets beyond limit. People tend to spend much on fashion at the expense of their family's, health and other basic needs. The lure of fashion by many Ghanaians be it rich or poor has made many families tend to spend so much on fashion items that it most often goes against their budgets.

The inappropriate dress styles of our young ladies especially of today are other negative impacts of western fashion. These attires expose parts of their bodies, considered culturally as private; these include, the thighs, navels, waist beads, panties and the breasts as indicated in Plates 44a and b as well as in Fig. 17. Such females walk virtually half-naked in our streets in these attires indicating how weak they have become morally, thus indirectly inviting the opposite sex. This has greatly contributed to some of the results of sexual harassments in work places and schools, leading to rapes and defilements.

The decrease in moral standard among Ghanaians today, can be attributed to negative influences of other cultures especially Western cultures on the Ghanaian culture. The decrease in cultural values within the country has indirectly permitted all kinds of fashion goods onto the Ghanaian market, which the public especially, the youth are ever ready to purchase and wear, regardless of what discerning people say about such dresses. Most of these fashion items are expensive, hence those who are not rich and cannot afford such fashionable items look for other ways and means by

which to acquire them in order to be abreast with fashion and be accepted by their peers. This desire may result in robbing, prostitution, increase in sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and its subsequent abortions, which can lead to death, imprisonment as well as other forms of vices seen in the society today.



**Plate 44a,** Some Modern Dress Styles of Young Women  
Described as Indecent

**Sources:** Researcher's Personal Collections



**Plate 44b,** Dress Styles by Some Ladies Regarded as Indecent

**Sources:** Researcher's Personal Collections



**Fig. 17:** A Lady in a Short Blouse with a Mini Skirt Exposing the Breast, Navel and Thighs.

**Source:** Drawn by the researcher



#### **4.7.3 Foreign Influences on Indigenous Fashion and Culture**

The issue of influence started when the Arabs introduced the wearing of smocks and long gowns into the Northern sector of the country, during the times of the Mali and Songhai Empires of which the smock gradually found its way into the traditional and religious setting of the Forest and Coastal zones covering mostly the Akanland. The Islamic inscriptions attached to amulets, charms and talismans seen on smocks used for war by Akans especially Asantes as protective measures testify to this. Other Islamic influences as mentioned earlier are seen in objects and symbols used on their sandals, crowns and jewellery. Also an earlier illustration made by Barbot about the costumes used by Asantes as war dresses do not have a direct link with smocks used later and even now as seen in Plates 6 and 7 of this dissertation. This implies that smocks were later introduced into the traditional system of Akans. The type and styles of dressing for most chiefs in the south and central parts of the country today, are likely to be greatly tailored toward Akans' for that matter Asantes' mode of adorning their rulers. This equally suggests cultural-fusion which affects the mode of adornment and the use of the traditional men's cloths.

Although traditional styles of clothing and fashion existed before European intrusion in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, their introduction of trade into the country equally embraced clothing which gradually influenced all categories of people. An indication of the existence of elaborate dress styles on the Gold Coast was expressed by Amoah Labi's research paper published in the journal of Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana. 'Labi', referred to the astonishment of Europeans on the splendour of dress and adornment exhibited by Ghanaian ladies invited to a party organised for Barbot in 1679 in Accra. Labi cited Hair, et al., (1992:469) which

he states, expressed the following, ‘... Danish agent in Accra organised a party for Barbot and it became apparent how attractive their richly adorned traditional dress could make the Accra women, to the extent of tempting an European when they were invited to attend these occasions’. Labi’s further assertion indicates dress differences in the local people and that of the Mulatto community (people of mixed African and European descent). He referred to the mulatto’s as being fashioned in accordance with European mode of dressing, with some of the clothing imported from Europe or sewn by local tailors, where he referred to Bosmas, (1852:6-7).

The two references indicated that modes of dressing were elaborate among the local folks but there was equally an introduction of European clothes and dress styles into the system in the nineteenth century. It also spells out the existence of tailors and dressmakers who sewed both imported European cloths and traditional ones. Although the types of traditional dresses mentioned above were not described as *kaba* or not, the fact still remains that elaborate dress styles existed prior to Western influence in dress code, in spite of the fact that, European influences are prominent.

The influence of dress code brought by Europeans was not restricted to ladies and ordinary people but extends to the most powerful traditional rulers of the time among Akans, especially, Asantes. ‘As means of extending the hand of friendship by the Asante’s chiefs and King to the Europeans at the Coast, the king started to wear European clothes presented to him as gifts’. McLeod (1981:152-153) giving references to Bowdich, expressed some of the reactions and look of the *Asantehene* when he was presented with clothing items by some of these Europeans. He opined that, among the Dutch gifts to the *Asantehene* in 1816 were lace hats,

shirts and coats; the king dressed in the breeches, which showed off his calves, he appreciated them and promised always to wear them in honour of his Dutch donor.

Giving an account of the look of *Asantehene*, in European clothes, Bowdich stated;

... he had on an old fashion court suit of ... brown velveteen, richly embroidered with silver thistles, with an English Epaulet sewn on each corner the coat coming close round the knees, from which the flaps of the waistcoat were not very distant, a cocked hat bound with gold lace, in shape just like that of a coachman's, white shoes, the long silver headed cane ... mounted with a crown, as a walking staff, and a small dirk round his waist.

These are gradual influences of the Europeans, trying to allure traditional rulers and their people through clothing, probably to build a better relationship. Evidence of some of these accessories emanating from Europe can also be seen in the jewellery used by traditional rulers in Ghana over the centuries, notable among them are the charms and amulets that were believed to originate from the Arabs as well as some pendants that clearly bear foreign symbols of European origin.

Nana Obougyane II of Obo and Nana Dwebisowa of Bekwai expressed the view that traditional chiefs are seen mainly in traditional cloths, and on most occasions they even used cloths as their casual wears; but explained that modernity associated with chieftaincy institution has changed the trends slightly. Nowadays, most chiefs are now educated and are usually in white-collar jobs even before their enstoolment, and to maintain those jobs, they will definitely have to dress to suit positions at their work places. Giving an example, Nana Asante of Bekwai, stated that, he was enstooled when he was still in the Ghana Police Service, and although his retirement was due at the time, he appeared formal in his police uniform when he was on duty and even goes in shirts and trousers.

Both chiefs therefore emphasised that with current economic situations, chiefs maintaining their white-collar jobs such as teaching, banking or in other administrative positions within the public sector, necessarily has to associate themselves with European fashion and its changing trends. They can therefore not appear in traditional attire, that is always in cloths and sandals to their offices; it does not make a person look smart. Therefore, it is an acceptable fact that, westernisation has now played into the traditional chieftaincy institution, but this they consider as a healthy development. Today, the *Asantehene* Otumfo Opoku Ware II, dresses more casual and formal to functions when the need arises. For instance, he was once seen wearing a pair of shorts with a polo shirt and a cap, holding a walking stick during one of Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly's (KMA's) clean-up campaign in Kumasi. He also dresses in suit on several occasions, especially when he travels to visit or inviting other state rulers and presidents. All these are western influences that have eaten deep into the fibre of traditional institutions in terms of clothing but can be seen as a good development to a large extent.

#### **4.7.4 Foreign Influence on Contemporary clothing and fashion**

The factors discussed earlier have contributed a lot to the changes in fashion over the years. Most of these originated from Europe but were gradually integrated into the traditional system of fashion and culture, thereby, resulting in what can now be considered as contemporary fashion in Ghana. The contemporary influence of clothing on Ghanaian culture became stronger after the Second World War, when there had been tremendous changes in clothing styles championed by

designers in Europe like Christian Dior. European representatives and their wives in the Gold Coast promulgated these changes in styles during those eras.

Changing styles in clothes seen in Ghana today are just repetitions of what had been worn years ago. Fashion they say is cyclical – changing almost every decade or two. Apart from the changes in the type and texture of textile fabrics used, slight modifications by way of adding or subtracting from the previous designs by designers, mostly by altering the features or styles of previous garments bring to life a new concept or style in fashion. These results from altering the sizes, length, depth, height and width of sleeves, pockets, openings, fastenings, necklines, cuffs, belts and also by adding or subtracting accessories to match or better still, by making some of the accessories part of the design of the actual garment. These coupled with the positioning of the waistline by either lowering or raising it, led to a prevailing fashion at a particular time.

Contemporary fashion ideas in Ghana have two dimensions, those that stem purely from the western background and those that have been capitalised on with Ghanaian identity. While the former has to do with imported designers' concepts from Europe and America into the cultural setting of Ghanaians, thus creating a new dimension of clothing, which to some extent undermines Akan cultural setting, the latter dwells on the use of printed and locally produced textile fabrics in the form of *kente*, *adinkra*, various appliqué clothes, batik and tie-dye fabrics to design appealing, culturally-centred and acceptable clothing that have the Ghanaian identity attached to them, mostly associated with what is termed as 'African designs' which cover varieties and styles of shirts, *kaba* and slits, among others. Within the contemporary context, an attempt will be made to discuss some of the popular styles, types and



forms of shirts, *kaba* and slits, gowns, trousers, hairstyles and shoes with their names that existed over six decades to the present day.

*Kaba* designs, noted as loose jumper sown to replace the cover cloth knotted at one shoulder, has undergone tremendous changes over the years. *Kaba* styles by the 1940s into the 1960s, were worn over *asitan* (a cloth wrapped around the waist that stretches to the ankle and is fastened with a cord at the waistline). Nana Owusu Ansah though did not spell out the development of the *kaba* designs, gave processes through which the *asitan* can be worn with the *kaba* regarding it as the traditional way of women's clothing, Owusu Ansah, (1999: 9-21).

Into the early periods of the twenty first century, when manufacturing methods were gaining grounds in the USA, enabling companies to produce ready-to-wear clothing, with its resultant mass production, women fashions began to change more rapidly than ever. These changes were envisaged throughout the world including Ghana. Changes into 'boyish look' in cloth by women were triggered by the First and Second World Wars and its aftermath. This was the period when women moved from the home into the factories, hence they desired clothes that would make them smarter and give them the freedom to work. Styles became lighter in weight, looser, simpler and less formal.

As morality broke down due to the war periods, changes in clothes for women became rapid. Within the First World War, hobble skirts were in fashion, the skirts were so tight at the bottom that women could hardly walk. Later the 'boyish look' appeared in the 1920s, when dresses were straight and unfitted with the length ending at the knee or slightly above it. During the late 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, that was the period of the Second World War and soon after, women working in war

industries wore slacks, which soon became a fashion off the factories. Skirts in the 1940s became longer but were further shortened in the 1950s. The 1950s saw straight, tight fitting sheath dresses and shorter hem lines and the early 1960s witnessed a rather very short mini skirt in the United Kingdom. All the above fashions gradually found their way into the Ghanaian setting through the influence of Europeans and their wives who were present in the country. The longing for western taste in fashion was great among the local people.

During the post independence era, that was in the late 1950s and early 60s, the ideology of Nkrumah's Africanism was also promulgate through clothing. The idea of cultural identity, a true national identity further promoted the use of *kaba* among women and the men's cloth with or without a jumper. A course he championed with example, using the smock and men's cloths for state functions. Parliamentarians at that time were encouraged to use clothing that depicted our traditional and cultural identity. These attires then serve as a means of awakening the spirit of nationalism in the states men thereby reflecting in the dress style of the larger communities. The post World War II fashions, surfacing in Ghana as social dresses, had helped improve the confidence and creative abilities of local designers and dressmakers who had improved on the quality and designs of *kaba* styles. The spirit of expressing national identity through the use of local fabrics and styles are slightly on the decline currently in Ghana, although it is stated clearly in the Ghanaian cultural policy of 2004, with all the promises to champion the course of wearing traditional attires at state functions and at other important events.

With the introduction of fashion catalogue in the 1960s, dressmakers further improved on their *kaba* and slit designs. The early 1970s saw *kaba* designs

becoming fitting rather than loose. According to a 67-year-old retired educationist, Madam Teresa Debrah, musicians and their music to a larger extent dictated the pace of fashion trends. The slit that emerged with *kaba* in the 1960s was probably coined out from the influences of 'hobble' and 'bloomers' of American fashion of the time. Meanwhile the idea of the dance *chachacha* which others said were steps-movements of the rock and roll dance, considered as associated with a style of fashion was opposed to by some elderly people contacted later who expressed the view that, *chachacha* did not come with any particular dress code, since all type of fashionable dresses including *kaba* and slit were used to perform the dance.

By the mid of the 1970s, *kaba* with puff sleeves were in vogue with the cover. From the late 1960s into the 1970s, young ladies were interested in mini skirts and short length dresses (Plate 45). Towards the latter part of the '70s, into the 1980s, the platform shoes (guarantees) with the use of wig by women came in vogue (Plate 46). Halter neck dresses and what was then known as balloon and strapless dresses were also in vogue. Apart from the increase and decrease in sleeve length as the fashion of *kaba* in the 1980s, *kaba* styles were more associated with gathered and plaited designs. Close to the 1980s, *kaba* designs came with more fitting shapes at the waistline, moving the cover cloths to the head in order to expose the design and shape of the waistline. The cover cloths became headgears at the time (Plate 47).

Trousers usually meant for men have gradually become popular among women too. This has equally undergone changes over the years. The changes are mostly associated with the addition or removal of pleats, pockets, minimising or enlarging the sizes with or without belt straps. According to one Mr. Yatsorwu, a veteran tailor at New Town in Accra, men's trousers in fashion in the 1960s was plain

faced without pleats and tapered towards the ankle, making it difficult to remove. The style he said re-surfaced in the 80s and was then known as *tunabo*. Two types of ‘bell mouth’ trousers became fashionable in the 1970s and 1980s, with plain face, close fitting pockets right beneath the waist band, one or two in-lay pockets at the back and without belt straps. This dress code went with the bushy hairstyles also in vogue at the time. This first style of fashion known as *Oxford* had the trousers fitting from the waist to the thigh and started opening into a bell form from the knee to the base or ankle (Plate 48). The other known as *Afro* came later with the trousers fitting at the thigh and opening from the calf to the ankle forming the bell shape (see Fig. 18).

When the trousers with a sizable bar came onto the scene, ‘turn-ups’ became popular, given way to one or two pleats being created in front with a slant or straight side pockets in front as well as one or two back in-laid pockets. Most of them had belt holders with varied sizes for different belt sizes. In recent times, the choice and desire of the individual is what is in vogue, since anything is accepted as fashionable today, without any specific fashion trends from Europe or America. The one-half trousers that extended to the calf also came; so are shorts of various lengths, baggy trousers and crazy jeans of various sizes, with inscriptions and colours of all shades have all been in fashion at one time or the other.

All the various styles of trousers with all kinds of tops, sleeveless shirts, shorts and long sleeved shirts, ‘T’ shirts, polo shirts, jackets, pullovers and the likes. Suits are usually of two or three sets of the same fabric, mostly worn together, consisting of a matching pair of trousers and a jacket with or without a waistcoat. The top of the suit comes in single or double-breasted jackets mostly and is worn over long-sleeved shirts with ties, but can also be worn, in recent times, without ties in a

more casual manner (Plate 49), to the extremes with short-sleeved shirts and ‘T’ shirts. Political suits have also been in the system for decades; unlike jackets that are long-sleeves, political suits come mostly in short sleeves top sewn over the same type and colour of fabrics used for the trousers. Political suits in the late 1970s went at times with bore-neck-ties (Plate 50).

Beside influences mainly associated with Europeans, other influences mostly from the Islamic world are also available in Ghana; fashion styles in these regard are easily linked with Nigerians. Clothes of Islamic influence are now common dress styles used by Ghanaians on various occasions. These Islamic styles have long relation with the long flowing gowns of Northern Ghana and Nigeria. Both the men and women styles are integrated into the cultural dress code of Ghanaians in modern times. This *agbala* comes in two or three pieces, a pair of trousers with a top and at times with another long gown worn over the shirt-line top. It is a common dress associated with Moslems who usually wear a hat to compliment the dress style (Plate 51). It is mainly associated with elaborate embroidery designs on the base of trousers, on the neckline of the tops and the long gowns. The *allata* of the women have elaborate tops with wrappers worn beneath them, accompanied with elaborate headgears (Plate 52) most of the times worn from lace fabrics or can be sown into long dresses for the women with interesting embroidery designs using other fabrics as well (Plate 53). These designs are believed to be influenced from Nigeria.

The 1990s saw a tremendous improvement and innovation in the fashion industry in Ghana. More than one design became fashionable at a particular time. This time fashion and selection of fashionable items took a more personalised approach, ‘anything goes’ in fashion. Strict rules were no more tolerated in fashion



among the general public, fashion into the twenty first century, is based on desire and self expression determined not by trends but by ability to afford what you want to constitute your wade-dopes. *Kaba* and slit designs known as traditional wears became more popular and varied. Lengths of slits vary, while most youths was interested in the short slit, covering up to the calf; the elderly enjoy the usual long ones that reach the ankle. Slits equally vary in cuts or splits created for easy movement. Splits in slits that used to be at the back, had once moved to the side, then to the front with the positioning varying every now and then. Some ladies split the slit up to the thigh exposing the thigh partly as they walk. Other styles do not have splits; the slit as they are designed have enough flare, creating room that makes it easy to move the legs.

Sleeveless and Sleeved designs were popular with length and styles of the sleeves changing by reducing, enlarging or lengthening it. Every fashion house became creative and varied their styles based on modern trends in international fashion. Significant features seen in *kaba* designs in the mid 90s into the millennium were necklines being dropped further to expose more of the upper torso of the female round body. The use of traditional fabrics especially *kente* became prominent. Women were fashioning the black and white designs printed by the textile industry into out-going *kaba* and slits (Plates 54a and b). Fashioning of *kente* into *kaba* and slit designs became popular only in the late 1990s into the millennium. Various designs were created with the *kente* and *adinkra* and were used for various social functions, such as state durbars, birthday celebrations, wedding parties, etc. The black and white variations of *adinkra* cloths and other related designs are finding their ways into other sections of social usage such as birthday celebrations and even for church activities, besides its usual role as funeral cloths.

Technological advancement and innovations in the construction of tools for clothing equally enhanced the creative ability of designers, since embroidery, overlock, trimming and other techniques have become possible, with the use of such tools. The use of machinery coupled with the improvement in techniques and varieties seen in the textile fabrics used for these designs, has made it possible for western styles and techniques to be blended into the local system, thus creating varieties in costumes with a traditional touch in them for the Ghanaian public. On the other hand, the advancement in technology has increased access to the use of varieties of costumes from the advanced countries. Between the 1990s to the present, varieties of styles in costumes emerged from the western world, which attracted the interest of the Ghanaian youth. Most of the 'names' given to such dresses were coined by Ghanaians through things that happened within the entertainment sector. Most things seen as fashionable today are not necessary changes in an entirely new concept but rather the way and manner of wearing various dresses with little additions or subtractions from the previous ones.

From the late 1980s into the 1990s, men with big bellies who dressed in big sized trousers with large shirts and 'T' shirts, whilst pulling the waistline of their trousers onto their bellies with two or more neck chains and finger rings, were usually associated with riches likewise those who travelled outside to Europe and America. 'Burger', became the nickname associated with the large-sized trousers that the purported rich people wore. Young persons in the early 1990s soon started moving their shorts and trousers waistline below the waist onto the hip-line, and nicknamed it 'Otto-Pfister'. A dress code that some believed was the usual dressing style of a former football coach of the national team 'black stars' who bore the name. These

dress styles do not necessarily change in ‘cut’ or designs and fabric used but it is rather the manner of wearing the shorts or trousers in the position of the waistline. Dressing among gents have not changed so much in this millennium. This practice is common among Senior High School students, who always want to express their desire for fashion with the little chance that come their ways.

In the early years of the 2000s, some fashion conscious personalities, especially boys were seen in large-sized jean trousers with inscriptions and images on them, which went with ‘combat shoes’ or canvas; large ‘T’ shirts or polo shirts that went with huge size neck chains mostly of silver in colour with big pendants attached to them (*the gblemgblem styles*). These were complemented with caps or a sort of headbands or covers, with earrings, big wristwatches and the likes to put them in the same sort of social class created by their colleagues in Europe and America. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, boys’ dresses had not changed so much except the switch to belts with big reflective fasteners with silver and gold-plated designs. Emphasis now has moved to the waistline on the belts, hence, the tops to match are tacked-in only at the front to reveal the belt design. Long silver chains are currently being used to hook one-side of the trousers; a combination of these dress styles are referred to as *akata* among its users (see Fig. 19). Some of the ‘T’ shirts worn are termed ‘body’, this type of shirt stretches and is close-fitting or clinches to the skin. This is worn to reveal the shape of the male anatomy and it is patronised by gents with well-built muscles in most cases as to show-off their masculinity.

Ladies on the other hand have their fashions changing slightly over the years from 1990s to the present. Most of the styles that have become popular, have names that mostly originated from local music and some *telenovera* series shown on

television as in *Acapulco* and *Apuskeleke* dresses. Some of the names of these dresses are not necessarily associated with the style of sewing the dresses but rather with the mode of dressing. It implies that any style of dressing that expresses such mode is identified as such. For instance, 'I'm aware' is a mode of dressing by ladies that tends to expose their panties and beads with their 'inner passage' partly to the public any time they squat, bend or sit down as indicated in plate 44b above. The word results from the fact that, whenever such ladies are prompted, instead of covering up, their remarks suggest that they are aware of the situation. Most of these styles are associated with wearing the ladies trousers with short blouses that were in fashion until the last days of 2007 into 2008. In-between these, were minor changes that occurred, such as hooks of belts on the waist line were not just positioned at the front, but were turned to the side, even skirts and trousers without belt straps come with fashionable belts which are usually dropped to the hip line. Currently 'micro' or 'super mini' skirts are gradually fading out of fashion in daily use. Ladies jeans trouser in this 2008 are now tightly-fitting to the skin with the bars close to the ankles called skinny, it probably needs a second party to assist in removing it, it is something worn with similar chains used by boys to hook the side of trousers. This is worn with long blouses that extend to the hipline with or without wide belts fastened at the waistline, mostly in contrasting colour to the blouse (Plate 55).

In a nut shell, fashion ideals and influences in Ghana are not restricted or visible with *kaba* and other forms of traditional wears only but also associated directly with western styles in vogue in their respective continents. Fashion styles from America and Europe have influenced a great deal the style and fashion demands of the Ghanaian public especially the youth of today. In the world of fashion, a design

becomes popular only if it is acceptable by the magnitude of its target groups. Designers in Ghana and elsewhere target the young celebrities to promote the popularity of their designs. These include sport heroes and popular music and movie stars who form the icons of most young people. The media and the use of fashion catalogues play important roles in identifying trends and defining certain styles as fashionable. These result in the popularisation and uniformity of styles available to the public, though this uniformity may vary in fabrics, textures and designs as well as colours.



**Plate 45:** Mini Dresses Worn by Ladies  
in the 1960s and 1970s

**Source:** The Spectator, Saturday, 03/01/2008



**Plate 46:** A Woman Wearing Guarantee  
Shoes with a Wig Hairdo







**Plate 47:** A Lady in *Kaba* and Slit with a Cover Cloth Used as Headgear in the 1980s  
**Source:** From Cecilia's Library  
 (a retired nurse - Battor V/R)



**Plate 48:** The *Oxford Bell-Shaped* Base of Trousers in 1970s  
**Source:** From Geoffrey's Library  
 (a retired educationist – Kumasi)



**Fig. 18:** The *Afro Bell-Shaped* Base of Trousers in the 1970s  
**Source:** Drawn by the researcher



**Plate 49:** Wearing a Suit in a Casual Manner without a Tie  
**Source:** Researcher's Personal Collection



**Plate 50:** Wearing a Political Suit with a Bow-Neck-Tie  
**Source:** From Geoffrey's Library (a retired educationist – Kumasi)



**Plate 51:** A long gown worn over a pair of trousers in the fashion of Moslems  
**Source:** From Mallam's Library (head teacher-Darul-Hadith Basic school, Kumasi)



**Plate 52:** A dress style designed from a lace used mostly with wrappers  
**Source:** From Mallam's Library (head teacher- Darul-Hadith Basic school, Kumasi)



**Plate 53:** A Nigerian Dress Style for Men and Women with embroidered designs  
**Source:** Nigeria Planet. Com



**Plate 54a**



**Plate 54b**

**Plate 54:** Kente and Other Fabrics Used for Variety of *Kaba* and Slit Designs  
**Sources:** From the Agoo Magazine



**Fig. 19:** A dress Code with a Big Buckle and a Chain Attached to the pair of Trousers.  
 The *Akata* style of dress  
**Source:** Drawn by the researcher



**Plate 55:** A Young Lady in a Skinny Jean with a Chain Fixed to the Side of the Jean, with Quite a Long Top with a Wider Belt  
**Source:** From Babara's Library  
 (a fashion student – Takoradi Polytechnic)

## **4.8 Morality and Modesty in Ghanaian Fashion and Culture:**

### **Possible Health Risks Associated With Body Arts**

The question of morality or moral values is of great concern to most traditional society leaders in Ghana. Morality is believed to be the ‘dos and don’ts’ of any particular society that tends to establish rules for the behaviour of people in the society, which reflects in their clothing life styles. Morality is basically a social rule that raises the question about ‘right and wrong conduct’ among individuals or ‘good or bad behaviour’ through unanimous decisions taken by the said human society, a decision that a cross-section of the public accepted, which is believed to have been echoed out of religion.

In Ghana, morality seen as a cultural factor, gives adequate recognition to the interest of others within the society. The moral lives of Ghanaians are entrenched in the extended family system. A deeper understanding of the family system expresses generally the socio-cultural standing of individual members of the various societies. That is to say, human beings are collective creatures whose individual well-being is intimately shaped by the communities in which they live. Individuals’ collective belongingness gives them a membership status to become full members of larger communities, hence, every activity of each member including what he wears is of concern to the larger community. It implies that, peers and every folk in the community serve as a check and balance to every individual regarding how he or she exposes himself or herself to the public in what he or she wears or will be rebuked if seen in indecent attires.

Culturally, this integration into the larger society, turns to shape the back and forth movements of persons, which is expressed through languages, moral



obligations and other symbolic representations. This outwardly reflects in the physical appearance and status of every society, which we shape; which in turns shapes us by holding out ideals of moral obligation, which, if we are to lead full lives as members of society, we ought to fulfil.

Social life among Ghanaians and for that matter Akans are a collective responsibility enshrined in the moral values of the community; this morality hence guides the conscience and behaviour of the people since one cannot do anything in complete isolation from the society, considering it as a vital tool for each cultural setting.

This embraces the daily activities of people in a society, factoring the physical look. It is an obligation for every member of the society to dress decently to the tune of the societal values. A total covering of body parts considered sacred in public is a basic requirement of every citizen within the cultural setting of any given society, especially those within Akan provinces.

#### **4.8.1 Modesty and Appropriate Out-Fit in Ghanaian Culture**

Modesty is a feeling or a behaviour that is motivated by shame, in that it essentially bears upon the sexualised body, the genital organs, the anal zone, or any part of the body that, culturally or individually, is endowed with an erotic investment. Modesty signifies moderation, in the context of fashion it takes on the connotation of a sexual virtue particularly important for women. This is a necessary virtue in women because of their physical and sexual weaknesses. The task of expressing the opulent spirit of the age is thus carried out through female fashions. Concepts of modesty



vary greatly based on beliefs but are determined by cultural as well as historical factors.

Customs regarding body modesty vary greatly from one culture to the other, one geographical area or environ to the other and can equally be influenced by other cultures, hence creating a new acceptable culture within the parent culture. It is said that, western culture in general in the earlier days required the intimate parts of the body to be covered in public places at all time, with exceptions made for situations such as public changing rooms, which tended to be single-sex venues and saunas, which tended to be mixed-sex venues (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/modesty>). It is clear that a similar ideology in modesty is expressed among the Ghanaian public generally today. This might probably result from cultural fusion and western influences on Ghanaian culture, which are deemed good and modest hence adopted into the Ghanaian concept of the modesty factor.

The issue of modesty in Ghanaian culture is equally revealed through clothing. The modesty factor has to do with the acceptability of elements of costume within religious, historical and cultural contexts. Obviously, since cultures seem to vary, so do elements of costumes that enforce the modesty factors equally vary. What may be minimally acceptable as a dress in one culture may be as little as a bunch of leaves or a cap for the male penis and in another it may be a complicated assemblage of garments. For instance, while an aborigin woman covers just the private parts, a Moslem woman on the other hand covers the entire body, therefore, culture including religious beliefs shape the modesty factor in the environment that one belongs. Though a mode of dressing in some places may appear strange and ridiculous to an

outsider, only the values of the individual's culture of belongingness is of consequence or meaning for what he or she wears.

The modesty factor of every individual's sense of propriety must be enforced by the mother or parent culture that he or she belongs to. It implies that, though the desire for an individual to express himself or herself is his or her fundamental right, it still dwells on him to factor his social belongingness to a parent culture into what he or she wears and at what time or occasion. Therefore, to dress in line with modesty factor and moral values, one must bear in mind the likes and dislikes of the society as exhibited through acceptable clothing. This therefore guides one's conscience with regard to the choice of appropriate clothing.

Although, these distinct principles are being over ruled by today's designer concepts coupled with modification, certain practices in fashion are still considered inappropriate by the larger society in Ghana, and people will fling at you when seen in such appearances. For instance, wearing a bikini or better still 'super mini' skirt with a transparent blouse that even exposes almost half of one's breast to a church hall or presenting your self at the beach in suit or kaba and slit, would have been out of place (inappropriate). In the past, it was very easy to identify one culture from the other through costume. Each culture evolves its own distinctive fashion that serves to distinguish it from other groups. For instance, the costume of a Masai girl from Kenya can easily be identified from that of an Akan woman (Plates 56a and b). Both expressing their self esteem through cultural identity, which forms one of the prime factors in judging the modesty level of an individual within his or her socio – cultural setting in Africa as well as Ghana.

Knowing what to wear and when to wear it is very crucial in Ghanaian tradition and culture. In this regard, members of the society are identified with an occasion and celebration through their outfit. This practice is not limited to the traditional institutions and their celebration alone, but it is equally expressed in the world of fashion. Costumes and their styles and colours used are identified with occasions and activities.

Clothing in modern time is not just for covering nudity, but is worn to express the beliefs, hopes and aspirations of the individual. Clothing over the centuries is functional and is purposed to be used as such. Various occasions call for types of clothing to go with it. This categorisation extends from the indigenous institutions set-up in Ghana to the contemporary systems. There are clothes designed for wars, religious rites, festive activities, which convey meanings and significance as have already been explained under traditional aspects of clothing in Ghana.

Clothing and their styles are also selected based on daily activities, job options, occasions, climate and other related factors, which slightly have a bearing on the cultural set-up of any particular society. For instance, clothes for work mostly come in the form of uniforms to give specifications to workers and for easy identification and comfort in use. Styles and materials used mainly consider dangers at work, comfortability, hardwearing and easy-to-care for properties. Usually clothes for work have little or no negativity associated with them. They are mainly devoid of indecency, since there are rules governing their choice of styles and colour by their respective companies. Once these uniforms come in formal wear, most of them are devoid of indecent and usurious styles and fashion.

Fashion in the western world is equally designed to meet seasons and occasions. This makes designers categorise and produce their designs to suit events; naming them as casual wear, bridal wear, traditional wear, sport wear, intimate wear, evening wear, etc. Though the functionability of these classes of dresses does not fit perfectly into the Ghanaian cultural system and climate, modernity and youthful exuberance have accepted and integrated them fully. This, it is believed to have partly generated into the inappropriate use of clothing in the country today. Types of costumes designed as in the beach wear, sporty activities and intimate wears (panties and brassieres, bikinis) are currently elbowing their ways into the category of a casual wear among the Ghanaian youth, a situation likened to the changing trends in Europe and America fashion.

Clothes for leisure and for social occasions are what have come to bear the question of modesty and decency in Ghanaian culture. Are our cultural beliefs and practices necessary in giving that true identity of an individual or group of people as Ghanaians or not? Interviews held revealed that the issue of national identity through clothing is very crucial to the elderly within the Ghanaian society. Clothes for leisure activities are mostly worn for easy movement, comfort and relaxation. It implies that, the activities and where they occur dictate what is suitable to wear. These clothes for outing usually comprise casual wears for daily activities, beachwears, sportswears, eveningwears and the like.

Since first impressions are mainly lasting impressions, as they say, it will be appropriate to dress modestly, wear the right attire for interviews and to other functions. These attires must always be neat and clean as well as decent. For interviews, candidates must avoid casual wears in most cases, since employers and

most people in society often conclude that the way a person dresses is the way the person is and will work. It is clear that, people who apply for jobs must appear presentable which is basically formal and decent since they are partly judged on the way they present themselves through their appearance in clothes; hence clothes and immaculate grooming are important. This must probably be the basic reason why dress codes, form part of assessment of post graduate students' theses defences. The importance of this is revealed in the fact that, one's appearance outwardly through clothing is an inherent quality of the person in question.



**Plate 56 a:**



**Plate 56b:**

**Plate 56a and b:** Differences in Traditional Dress codes of two separate cultures  
Massais of Kenya and Akans of Ghana

**Sources:** **56a**, From the book entitled Maasai

**58b**, From NAFAC Durbar in Kumasi, 2007



#### **4.8.2 Moral Diminution and inappropriate use of dresses**

It has been accepted that morality has declined in Ghanaian society as well as the world over. Many of the youth especially, no longer adhere to long-held traditional standards of propriety. People in one way or the other adopt their own codes of behaviour. Many have lost their moral compass, they do not have respect for any authority that might establish standards of right and wrong, people then see everything as relatively normal. Hiding under the cover of human right and self expression, women's liberation movements and sexual revolution with its so-called new morality, began to talk about sexual matters openly and dress anyhow. At the same time, the power of the press, the movies, television and the internet have loosened their moral codes. The consequences in many ways are frightening; self-consciousness is gradually being eroded into thin air.

Young ladies under the cover of modernity and civilisation, express their near nudity to the public in everyday activities without any sense of shame. Young boys are seen in society and without any utter of words or actions are described as 'ruffians' just through their dress codes. Be it true or not, outfits that need to follow cultural, social and moral norms in Ghanaian society are carved out either consciously or unconsciously and once people are not seen in those categories of attire, they are believed to be among gangs of ruffians. It implies that, dress codes in Akan social and cultural standing speaks about a person and who he is. Meanwhile, moral values and ethnicity are gradually being swallowed up by the system of globalisation, thus creating a new adulterated culture relating to dress code among the youth in particular of which some elderly folks in Akan society are concerned with. Young ones, especially ladies at the tertiary schools strongly and courageously defend

their shameful actions exhibited through clothing in cities, towns and university campuses. Daniel Nkrumah, writing on ‘stunners on campus’ in the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2005 edition of the Daily Graphic, described the dress code of some of the female students when he stated that, ‘... ladies are now real stunners as they straddle around town in their straps, transparent blouses, super mini skirts and all that. And yet it is all supposed to be normal....’ As ways of defending their shameful act, he expressed a self defensive attitude put up by some by saying;

There is freedom of expression and if I want to express myself in what I wear who cares? People cover what there is to cover and show what there is to show so if I want to show what I have to show it hasn't got anything to do with others ....

These remarks show an entrenched position taken by some young ladies knowing perfectly what they are doing for they have predestined their mind for it, a phenomenon, most Ghanaians interviewed considered as outrageous and worrying. Some decent – minded Ghanaians expressed their views on the youth's mode of dressing today in the print media, calling for a change, a drastic action to be taken by the authorities concerned.

At times, fingers are pointed at parents because their wards are not dressing the right way. It is believed that moral degradation starts right from the home. It is said that, the quality of the home is a manifestation of the quality of its offspring. An Akan proverb states ‘*bayere ammɔ a, yennumu no ba ne sebere so*’ meaning ‘a yam that does not grow well, is due to its poor soil’ or if the yam does not grow well we should not blame it, it is due to the soil’. This expression shifts the blame or failure of a child to his/her upbringing. Meanwhile parents of today do not have an imposing right over their teenage children as to every detail of their life.

Some parents sometimes clash with their wards over what they wear whilst others simply do not care. Under such instances, children see their parents to be a border and regard them as old – fashioned or ‘*colo*’.

Nevertheless, tastes vary, and everybody has an absolute right to his or her opinions, but should it imply that anything in the name of ‘dress’ is appropriate to wear? Parents and other responsible ones like teachers and elders in society are concerned, because ‘what you wear is really who you are’. Clothing sends a message to others about you, this usually is determined whether you are well cultured; morally weak, a rebellious one, less self-conscience or morally standardised and stable. As young people, the way we dress and carry ourselves have a remarkable impact on the people we meet and greatly affect how they treat or will treat us. Some ladies go through the trauma of sexual harassments, rape and depression based on their utterances, relationship and above all the way they appear in certain indecent clothes.

Most youth believe they are in ‘a world of their own’, a world that carried out new cultural norms for its members, irrespective of where somebody finds his or her self, one must dress to the conformity of the said group. A group may be shaped by western lifestyles, peer pressure under the dictates of young celebrities and their mode of dressing. Youths who adorn themselves in this bizarre and outrageous attire are guided in one way or the other by ‘the winds of fashion’ and peer pressure from friends. The emphasis on compliance from such groups becomes so strong that, members almost seem imprisoned with group norms depending virtually on the group for advice on how to dress to save their faces from being regarded as uncivilised or old fashioned or even sidelined by the group.

Projecting the individual through the use of clothing is a major factor in the world of fashion. People aspire to look different in order to uplift their self-image, status and position in society. Individual's whims and caprices cannot be excluded in this era of fashion, especially among the youth. Meanwhile, this youthful exuberance should not be allowed to over shadow our cultural demands for decency. Efforts must be made to put in some measures to ban indecent dressing among school-going ages in order to reduce the trend in the country.

In relation to modern fashion trends in Ghanaian society, it can be said that society is losing its cultural moorings. Society is growing ever more tolerant towards greater sexual promiscuity and increased use of drugs. Clothes have sadly become a tool for expressing these actions among the youth; a situation that can be seen as a calculated move to join the seeking cultures of western debauchery. 'It seems everyone is taking his/her clothes off and using sex as a sales tool' as echoed by Awake (2007: 3). This phenomena, a generation or two ago, regarded purely as a western lifestyle have recently found root into the Ghanaian society snubbing almost every theory about Ghanaian cultural values. Dress codes and other immoral acts that would have caused moral outrage, some decades ago, bombarded our screens, streets and community from every conceivable angle and have planted themselves firmly in the mainstream of Ghanaian society. This aspect of acculturation or cultural fusion needs to be given a second thought, as a country.

Although, some of these same print and electronic media have been castigated for not controlling issues of decency in terms of dress codes of the youth captured in their print media or net works, the situation still persists. For instance, the front and back pages of some of the entertainment print media expose semi-nude

portraits of Ghanaian young ladies in full colour (Plates 57a, b, c and d). Though some youths, argued that, such attires seen on ladies on the front pages of such papers cannot be used for any outing activities, the issue still remains that, revealing semi-nude portraits of ladies in a nation-wide coverage print media is more serious than the individual wearing such attires parading the streets of only one or two areas. On the other note, these are mostly patronised by the youth, especially gents, some of who admit, it is the sexual exposure that makes them buy them and it edges them on towards sex. It is therefore important to check and regulate such activities of these media houses. Some entertainment programmes shown on the television are equally as guilty as the print media.

Some decent-minded educated folks like cultural officers, teachers/lecturers and designers interviewed, argued that such practices regarding clothing cannot wholly be eradicated, but can be adequately controlled. Such practices when allowed in club houses and other enclosed entertainment centres under strict supervision and not exposed to the general public through television and print media as we see today, will not have generated a lot of public out cry. Since the issue of western influence and globalisation cannot be eliminated in today's society, cultural hybridity in recent times is an integral part of cultures throughout the world. What is more important is the parent culture drawing the line as to what to incorporate or not to incorporate. Their argument was based on the fact that such practices were partly seen in traditional institutions such as puberty rites that expose the nudity of young girls partially but only for a short period, with control and good intentions, such practice (puberty rite) do not generate public out cry. There is a push for modification towards covering most parts of the bodies of these young ladies in



this modern day. It is believed that, there has been a considerable effort in redefining these aspects of puberty rites especially among Krobos of Ghana in their *dipo* rite; hence, much more needs to be done in addressing the outrageous dress codes and the general appearance of Ghanaian youths today.

Generally, some designers, elites and fashion students argue that, in this contemporary environment, the issue of dress-style not being our culture is neither here nor there. Though most of them share the view that, moral values have declined and that clothing is a contributing factor to this decline, they believe it is not just what is worn on the skin, but rather a question of appropriateness, as to whether if what is worn befits the right occasion and time or not. Citing examples as hot pants, skimpy dresses, small and strapless dresses that expose portions of the stomach, the breast, etc and all other forms of dresses regarded by some people within the society as provocative can be worn indoor as lingerie or for evening entertainments as in clubs and sometimes at the beach. Dresses of these sorts seen in such places will certainly not be out of place. Just like how bridal and eveningwears cannot be used as sporty or casual wears that involve smart and brisk activities; intimate wears, beachwears and the likes must equally be used appropriately. There is the need therefore to re-direct the attention of the youth as to the appropriate use of clothes.

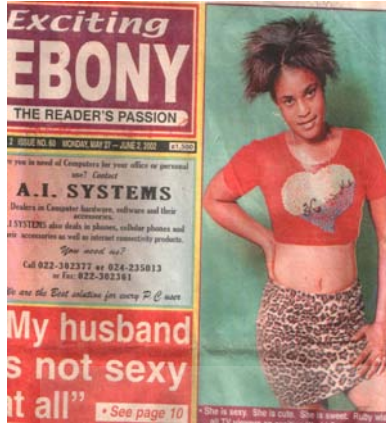


Plate 57a



Plate 57b



Plate 57c



Plate 57d

**Plate 57 a – d:** Indecent Pictorials of Ladies that Parade the Front Pages of some News Papers in Ghana.

**Source:** From News Paper Stands

#### 4.8.3 Possible Health Risks Associated With Body Marks

Some forms of body art form part of the Ghanaian culture but somehow they may have adverse effects on people who may practise them. There are many health concerns with body art. To undergo any body art, one must consider all the risks and facts involved in it and understand its health implications. Within this contemporary era the issue of deciding on the type of body art one wants to have on the body is mostly a matter of personal choice, besides the negative remarks that

might result from traditional and religious settings within ones community. The health implications of some of these practices on the body have to be considered alongside good hygienic practices to avoid infections and contamination of diseases. In all forms of body art, using sterile equipment is very important as unclean instruments can lead to infections.

#### **4.8.3.1 Health practices and risks in Body painting**

Health risks may result from the use of non acceptable paints for the body which include acrylics, posters and other forms of paints produced for other purposes, in place of paints produced for the face and body which are non toxic such as snazaroo, mehron, kryolan, fardel, etc,. Body paints used in recent times are non-toxic, non-allergenic and are easy to wash away. Although the components of various pigments, clay and materials used in traditional body painting with their effects or other wise cannot be readily ascertained, the mere fact that it lasts on the body for only a short period makes it less of concern as to other forms of body arts in form of piercing, incisions and tattoos. Meanwhile in these days, when social gathering, football matches, rave parties and political rallies exhibits much of body paintings, care must be taken as to the type of paints used.

A body paint should only be used if the skin does not throw up a reaction. Some synthetic black dyes can cause serious skin allergies, and require patch tests before the actual paintings commence. If there is, a sign of some kind of allergy during body painting it should be avoided. Wearing body paint for a prolonged period may cause heat stroke by inhibiting perspiration; Body painting should be avoided if there are cuts and sores on any part of the body. Guidelines are necessary in

practising body painting, it is important to be aware of certain potential hazards. Some solvents such as turpentine are intended to clean and dissolve. It is said that all solvents damage the skin to some degree. Some solvents are absorbed by the human skin and it enters the bloodstream. The result may be dermatitis, allergic sensitisation, liver and kidney damage, nerve damage, reproductive system and fatal damage and certain types of cancer. Inhalation of some types of vapours and fine dusts from paints used on the skin especially when using the airbrush, can lead to diseases, that such chemicals in the air could be inhaled get into your lungs and then into your bloodstream. Certain heavy metals in pigments are particularly toxic. These can damage the body in many ways. For example, 'lead can damage the brain, kidneys, blood and other organs. It is therefore advisable, if possible to know the content or components of paints that one applies on the skin as well as follow good practice guidelines when taking on body painting <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body-painting>.

#### **4.8.3.2 Possible Risks associated with Body Piercing, Tattoos and Incisions**

Piercing of the skin does not necessary introduce colour or substances into the skin as in the case of tattooing and various forms of incisions including scarification. Piercing in most cases tends to introduce metal objects into parts of the body especially the face. Apart from the fact that, some of the metals used may be corrosive and toxic, bad practices by body artists, such as the use of non-sterilised equipments may be hazardous to the body. Osborn (2008:15), writing on tattoos and body piercing elaborated that;

A gruesome list of illnesses and health problems contracted by people who have had tattoos and piercings which went wrong was released by the European commission ... in an effort to raise awareness about the dangers of body art. Up to half of all body piercings lead to acute infections which require medical treatment,



and there have been two piercing-related deaths in Europe this year

....

This reveals the extent of damage that incisions, tattooing and various forms of piercing can cause to the body. It is therefore right to take a second look at the various practices, chemical, dyes and hygiene related issues that accompany most of these body arts being practiced today by some Ghanaian youths. Not much is known about the chemical structure and toxicity of many of the dyes used in tattooing and is likely many people are effectively injecting car paint into their skins. Disregards for health standards in tattoo practices can lead to bad practices that can bring about viral infections such as hepatitis, HIV, bacterial and fungal infections, allergic reactions such as skin irritation. Therefore, besides the social, moral and religious issues that rule against a person's right and desire for some forms of body arts, it is equally important to consider proper health and safety guarantees before piercing or tattooing yourself.

On health and safety issues relating to dyes used in tattooing, Andrew Osborn again stated that, 'except for a limited number of dyes that have been approved for use in cosmetics, most chemicals used in tattoos are industrial pigments originally produced for other purposes such as automobile paints or writing inks .... They have little or no safety data to support their use in tattoos'. On this note, it can be asserted that, if so much risk is associated with tattoos in Europe where safety and hygienic practices are of much concern to the public, then we are likely to be at more risks here in Ghana than we imagine. A country where it seems regulatory bodies are not doing their work effectively, where it is possible that bad practices such as non-sterilisation of materials, impurities in dyes and colours, no proper toxicological and risk evaluation are the order of the day, risk factors are likely to be more crucial than



will be in Europe and America. Evidences from those who can be described as tattoo artists and their clients being tattooed are unaware of the components of colours being injected into their skins.

Health risks leading to illnesses and diseases that accompany body arts are numerous; Hudson (2008:5), touching on these issues explain that, ailments that plague many people among others include, diabetes, illness such as cancer and blood-borne diseases such as hepatitis. He emphasises that, diabetes is a rather common ailment and that one must consider how his/her body reacts to every day bumps and bruises before taking the risk of tattooing or piercing which may be arduous and will take time for the wounds to heal. Hepatitis sometimes spreads from dirty tattoo needles, and the only way it could have gotten there in the first place was from an infected client. It is worth noting that, those on prescription drugs must also be careful when considering tattooing, piercing and other incisions on the body, since drugs do alter our physical, circulatory or mental being, which means they can also affect the skin's ability to heal. Those on prescribed medication must be careful when considering body arts. For instance, medication-related problems of some type of drugs can thin the blood – even aspirin. This then reduces the ability of the body's own defensive mechanism to clot blood. In the absence of such protection, one is apt to bleed more during and after piercing or tattooing process of which the consequences can be greater, [http://tattoo.about.com/cs/tatsafety/health\\_risk.htm](http://tattoo.about.com/cs/tatsafety/health_risk.htm).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE CHANGING TRENDS ASSOCIATED WITH FASHION IN GHANA**

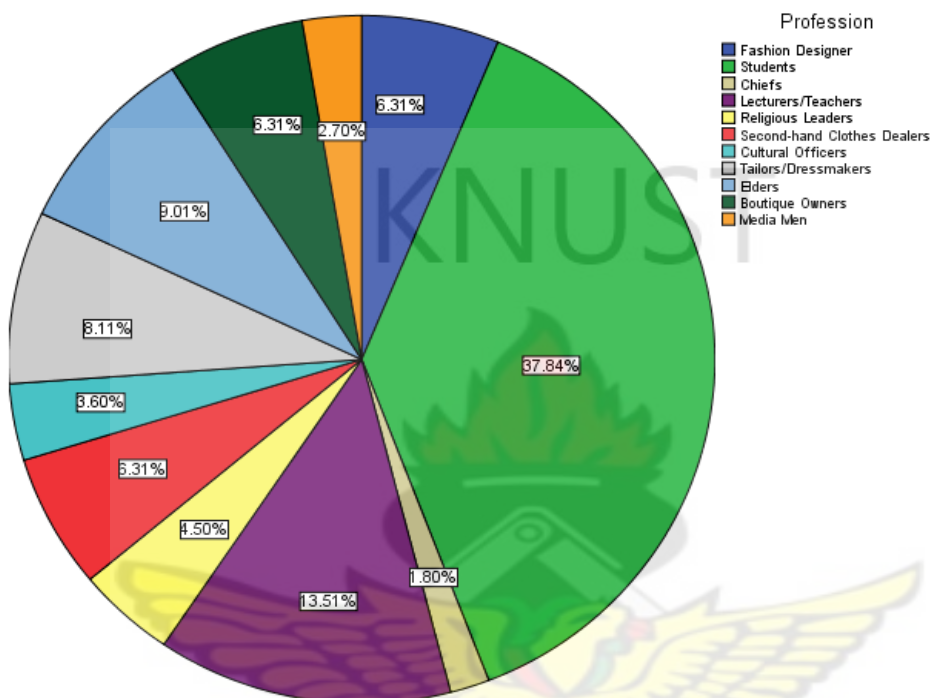
Under this chapter, data collected from both interviews and questionnaire are analysed, synthesised and interpreted based on both primary and secondary data from field study. To ensure accurate, objective, valid and reliable findings, the following data gathering instruments were used; questionnaire, interviews, observation and photography. The information collected from the various selected historians, chiefs, elders, designers, etc., in random sampling are considered as primary data. Only information from those sources confirmed, analyzed and evaluated by the researcher have been accepted for the treatment of the study.

### **5.1 Analysis and Interpretation of Findings from Questionnaire**

The questionnaire comprises both closed and opened ended questions where respondents were made to choose from possible answers provided in the case of closed questions whilst they expressed their views in written forms to the open ended questions. The questionnaire, which was designed into nine parts touched on various aspects of clothing and fashion in relation to Ghanaian culture and contemporary trends as well as its possible effects on the youth in particular. The first part comprises particulars of respondents; the second assessed the concept of Ghanaian culture and fashion. Mode of dressing in Ghanaian culture was the third sub-heading of questions asked; the fourth looked at the concept of beauty in Ghana with specific reference to Akans. The fifth considered the accessories used in the Ghanaian culture; colour, body painting and tattoos with its meanings and significance were equally considered under the sixth part. Coiffure in traditional and

modern contexts as well as religious and other art forms in fashion were considered in parts seven and eight respectively. The last part asked for recommendations and suggestions when necessary from the respondents. In all, 54 questions were asked with sub-questions where necessary, (see Appendix A).

The first part of the questionnaire, comprising question one to seven dealt with particulars of respondents. Out of the 111 respondents who answered the questions, 45 of them were between the ages of 15 and 25, 34 respondents were between the ages of 26 and 35, 21 respondents were between the ages of 36 and 55 years and 11 respondents were above 55 years of age. These responses represent 40.5%, 30.7%, 18.9% and 9.9% respectively. Out of these respondents, 51 of the respondents were males while 60 were females constituting 45.9% and 54.1% respectively. With regards to the educational levels of respondents, 61 of the respondents making up 55% were university graduates; 19 of them representing 17.1% were post-secondary graduates; 24 respondents were secondary school leavers amounting to 21.6% and 7 were post primary leavers representing 6.3% of the total respondents respectively. Concerning the religious status of the respondents, 79 stated that they were Christians, 28 of them said, they were Moslems with 3 stating that they were traditionalists whereas 1 ticked the option 'others' referring to other forms of religions besides the 3 mentioned above. These represent 71.2%, 25.2%, 2.7% and 0.9% respectively. The marital status of the respondents revealed that, 49 respondents were married while 62 of the respondents were not married (single), bringing the percentages to 44.1% and 55.9% respectively. The last question of this first part asked for the profession or occupations of the various respondents. The details of responses from respondents are indicated in Fig. 20 and Table IV.



**Fig. 20: Percentages of respondents' professions indicated on a pie chart**

**Table IV: Profession of Respondents in Percentage**

Categories of Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fashion Designers	7	6.3	6.3	6.3

Students	42	37.8	37.8	44.1
Chiefs	2	1.8	1.8	45.9
Lecturers/Teachers	15	13.5	13.5	59.5
Religious Leaders	5	4.5	4.5	64.0
Second-hand Clothes Dealers	7	6.3	6.3	70.3
Cultural Officers	4	3.6	3.6	73.9
Tailors/Dressmakers	9	8.1	8.1	82.0
Elders	10	9.0	9.0	91.0
Boutique Owners	7	6.3	6.3	97.3
Media Men	3	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The personal details of respondents revealed that more than half of the sets of questionnaire were administered to the youth groups between the ages of 15 and 35. This is because issues of fashion and its trends with regards to western influences are more associated with the youth within these age groups, and this will enable the researcher assess the true reflection of situations on the ground. In a similar instance, fashion is more associated with the female society than male and turns to prevail more among the elite society. This to some extent justified the reason for more female respondents responding to the questionnaire. Besides the fact that university and post-secondary respondents form the majority of the elite groups, they are also best placed to answer the questionnaire. To some extent, the marital status of an individual affects his or her choice and use of clothing. It is alleged that unmarried people are easily swayed by the whims of fashion, more than married people, hence issues relating to fashion trends are likely to involve more single folks especially ladies than married people.



The second section comprised questions eight to thirteen which fall under the sub-topic 'the concept of Ghanaian culture and fashion'. Question eight demanded to know, what fashion the Ghanaian culture embraces. Seven possible answers were given with the respondents expected to agree or disagree with the response by ticking Yes or No. In this regard, the 'a' section of question eight reads, 'dressing to depict the female form', (which refer to wearing clothes to show the physical characteristic of the female body shape) out of which 43 stated Yes and 62 stated No with 6 respondents not ticking either of the two, representing 38.7%, 55.9% and 5.4% respectively. The 'b' section of question eight relates to 'fashion in Ghanaian culture as wearing clothes, jewellery and accessories designed in Ghana'. 70 people responded to this positively by answering Yes, 30 of them answered 'No' with 11 not stating their stand, amounting to 63.1%, 27% and 9.9% accordingly. Question eight 'C' spells out that, 'it is wearing clothes that conform to the society's norms and ethics'. Out of this, 98 respondents stated Yes, representing 88.3% and 10 stated No amounting to 9% with 3 not stating their position constituting 2.7%. Dressing to depict one's status as a Ghanaian was the answer provided in question eight 'd'. In total, 75 respondents answered Yes, 24 answered No and 12 of them did not tick either Yes or No, representing 67.6%, 21.6% and 10.8% respectively.

In addition, the 'e' section of question eight tried to find out if fashion in Ghanaian culture also embraces the concept of beautiful figure, the arts of the body and tattoos related to traditional beliefs and practices. In this respect, 43 respondents said Yes, amounting to 38.7%, 59 responses were No, amounting to 53.2% while 9 do not state their position representing 8.1%. Fashion in Ghanaian culture is seen in question eight 'f' as one's level of civilisation and tuning to the rhythms of modern

ways of dressing. This is accepted as right by 50 respondents who ticked Yes whereas 55 of them said No and 6 do not respond on the question, representing 45%, 49.6% and 5.4% respectively. The last section of question eight, referred to fashion in Ghanaian culture as 'dressing to reveal what you have and expressing a sense of belongingness among peers'. In all 48 of the respondents stated Yes, No by 54 and 9 respondents do not respond to the yes and no answers, representing 43.2%, 48.6% and 8.2% respectively.

From the responses to question eight generally, 70% and above of the respondents agree that fashion in Ghanaian culture embraces, wearing clothes in conformity to societal norms and ethics and also wearing clothes, jewellery and accessories designed in Ghana as well as dressing to depict one's status as a Ghanaian. On the other hand, more than 50% of respondents' believed dressing to depict one's status as a Ghanaian or to reveal what you have and expressing a sense of belongingness among peers or tuning to the rhythms of modern ways of dressing do not reflect fashion in Ghanaian culture.

Assessing opinions of respondents on whether in Ghanaian culture, dressing appropriately for an occasion demands any of these five sections as expressed in question nine. The first section, which referred to total covering of the human parts regarded as sacred with clothes, 83 people responded positively and 21 respondents say No with 7 not ticking either Yes or No amounting to 74.8%, 18.9% and 6.3% respectively. The second section of question nine (b) which considered appropriate dressing for an occasion as wearing elaborate dresses as well as those in vogue had 36 respondents saying No while 62 said Yes, 13 did not agree or disagree with the statement, representing 32.4%, 55.9% and 11.7% respectively. Dressing in

conformity to the moral standard of your community was expressed as the 'c' section of question nine.

Interestingly, out of the 111 respondents, 100 of them ticked Yes constituting 90.1%, 5 ticked No constituting 4.5% and 6 of the respondents did not tick any of the above representing 5.4%. Question nine 'd' suggested that dressing appropriately for an occasion demands wearing attires that you appreciate as an individual. In this regard, 40 stated Yes, 59 of them stated No whereas 11 respondents did not tick either yes or no, constituting 36.9%, 53.2% and 9.9% in that order. As to whether appropriate dressing got to do with knowing the significance and meaning attached to clothes acceptable for a particular occasion and dressing to suit that occasion, 100 and one respondents responded Yes amounting to 91%, 7 respondents responded No equating 6.3% while 3 did not express their views on the issue, representing 2.7% of the total respondents.

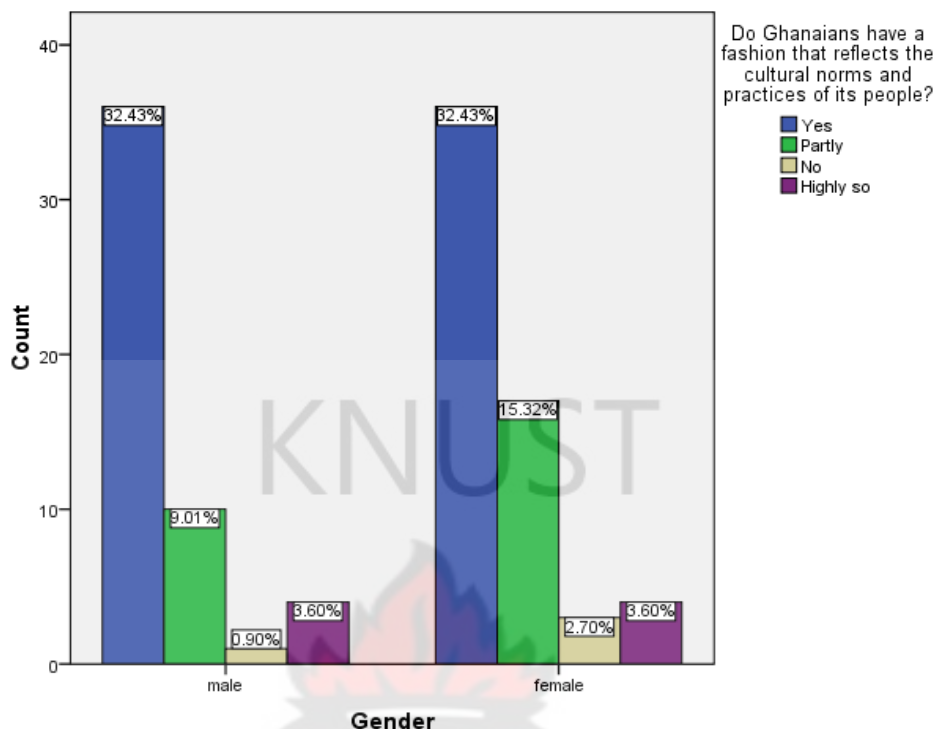
The various responses given to question nine, which tried to look for appropriate ways of dressing for occasion in line with Ghanaian culture, it was clear that, above seventy percent of the respondents endorsed questions nine 'a', 'c' and 'e' as portraying appropriate ways of dressing for occasions in Ghanaian culture. In a similar instance, above 50% said 'No' to wearing elaborate dresses and those in vogue as well as wearing attires that one appreciates as an individual as ways of dressing appropriately for occasions in Ghanaian culture.

Question ten asked whether Ghanaians have a fashion that reflects their cultural norms and practices as a people. Out of 111 respondents, 72 of them stated Yes, 27 ticked Partly as their answer, 4 respondents stated No and 8 respondents stated Highly so. This in terms of percentages represents 64.9%, 24.3%, 3.6% and

7.2% respectively as indicated in the Table V. The responses affirm that, above 70% of respondent who ticked the yes and highly so, believed that Ghanaians have a fashion that embraces cultural norms and practices in this modern days. Gender differences in responses to question ten is also shown in Fig. 21.

**Table V: Responses to Fashion That Reflect Cultural Norms and Practices**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	72	64.9	64.9	64.9
Partly	27	24.3	24.3	89.2
No	4	3.6	3.6	92.8
Highly so	8	7.2	7.2	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	



**Fig. 21: This shows gender variation in responses to question 10**

A leading question (eleven) asked was, as to what factors account for one's choice of answer at question ten. The first (a) response provided duals on strict religious beliefs, rules and regulations as factors responsible. However, 71 respondents believed so and answered Yes equalling 64%, 32 of them disagreed stating No, representing 28.8% whilst 8 respondents equating 7.2% did not respond to either the yes or no answers. The second factor considered in question eleven 'b' was 'respects for elders and sticking to good morals and ethics within the society'. In response, 95 respondents agreed to the statement, by choosing Yes, representing 85.6%, while 11 respondents disagreed with the statement by choosing No, representing 9.9%. The rest of 5 respondents remained neutral, without choosing yes or no representing 4.5%. Question eleven 'c' stated that, good parental and community role in child-upbringing are part of the factors that reflect fashion in the



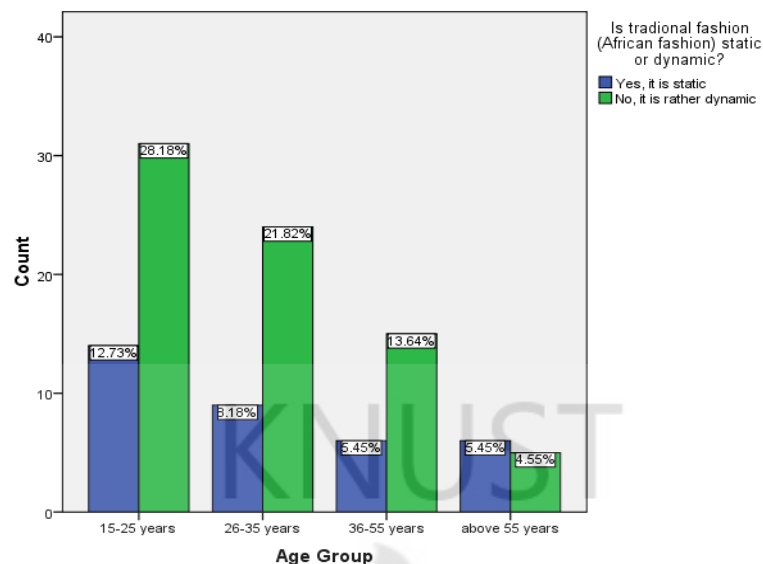
cultural norms and practices of Ghanaians. Out of this, 72 of the respondents ticked Yes, 27 of them ticked No while 12 did not express their position on the issue, representing 64.9%, 24.3% and 10.8% accordingly.

However, question eleven 'd' equates low level of formal education in rural areas as a factor responsible for choice of answer at question ten. Out of the responses given in that direction, 32 respondents stated Yes, 67 of them stated No with 12 of them not expressing their views, amounting to 28.8%, 60.4% and 10.8% respectively. The 'e' section of question eleven, considered the rate of acculturation from the western world as being integral part of factors that account for fashion, which reflects cultural norms and practices in Ghana. In this instance, 33 respondents representing 29.7% agreed to the statement, 63 respondents who opposed the statement representing 56.8% with 15 respondents staying away from the statement, representing 13.4%. The last section of question eleven (f) stated that, it is as a result of good government policy on culture and fashion in Ghana that we have fashion reflecting cultural norms. To this effect, 31 of the respondents believed so by stating Yes, 71 of them did not believe in any government policy on culture and fashion thereby stating No with 9 neither stating Yes nor No. These represent 27.9%, 64% and 8.1% respectively as opinions of respondents in percentage.

Therefore, assessment of the views of respondents to question eleven generally suggested that more than 70 of the respondents stated Yes to express that fashion that reflects the cultural norms and practices of Ghanaians are partly based on religious beliefs, rules and regulations, respect for elders, sticking to good morals and ethics of the society as well as good parental and community role in child-upbringing. Above 60 of the respondents believed, factors that account for Ghanaian fashion that

reflects cultural norms and practices do not include low level of formal education, the rate of acculturation from the western world or any good government policy on culture and fashion in Ghana.

Is traditional fashion (African fashion) static or dynamic? This question (twelve), demanded a Yes or No answer, 35 respondents answered Yes to it as being static, representing 31.5% while 75 respondents answered No, indicating that it is dynamic representing 67.6% as 1 respondent did not state either yes or no, response, representing 0.9%. This indicates that almost 70% of the respondents believed traditional fashion is dynamic and keeps changing over the years. The responses to this question by the various age groupings are shown in Fig. 22. The thirteenth question demands reasons to support the choice of traditional fashion as being static or dynamic referring to question twelve. Four categories of comments were realised as responses to the question, with few others not expressing their views. The details of this concerning the number of respondents and their responses in percentages are shown in Table VI.



**Fig.22: This shows age groups responses to question 12**

**Table VI: Responses as to whether Ghanaian Fashion is Static or Dynamic**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
It is static, because mode of wearing clothes and fabrics use as well as methods of producing traditional fabrics are the same over the years	31	27.9	27.9	27.9
It is dynamic, because the dynamism of Ghanaian culture affects changes in their modes of fashion as well.	28	25.2	25.2	53.2
It is dynamic, because new designs, patterns and motives are seen more often in clothes and use by both young and old folks.	21	18.9	18.9	72.1
It is dynamic, due to western influences & modernisation	22	19.8	19.8	91.9
No comment	9	8.1	8.1	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The Table gives a true reflection to question twelve, in that, 31 respondents explained why they considered traditional fashion as static whereas 71 of the respondents expressed in three various forms and degrees why they considered traditional fashion as being dynamic with 9 respondents not commenting on the static nature or dynamism of traditional fashion.

The third part of the questionnaire, which dealt with mode of dressing in Ghanaian culture and its influence covers questions fourteen to twenty-eight. The fourteenth question, wanted to find out if Ghanaians have traditional ways of dressing that reveal their culture. 101 respondents stated Yes, 6 of them stated No, with 4 not answering the question, representing 91%, 5.4% and 3.6% respectively. This indicates that most of the respondents believed Ghanaians have their traditional cultural ways of dressing. Question fifteen goes further to find out if these traditional clothes are acceptable and admired by majority of Ghanaians. In response, 73 representing 65.8%, of respondents answered Yes, 38 of respondents representing 34.2% answered No emphasising that, traditional clothes are not accepted and admired by most Ghanaians.

Question sixteen comes with sub-answers that demanded Yes or No responses to them. The question asked was what category of dresses are regarded as being modest and decent in Ghanaian culture? The first section of question sixteen (a) stated that, it refers to dresses admired by the opposite sex, out of which 23 respondents agreed, ticking Yes and 88 respondents disagreed by ticking No, amounting to 20.7% and 79.3% respectively. The 'b' section of question sixteen, which suggests modesty and decency in Ghanaian culture relates to dresses that cover

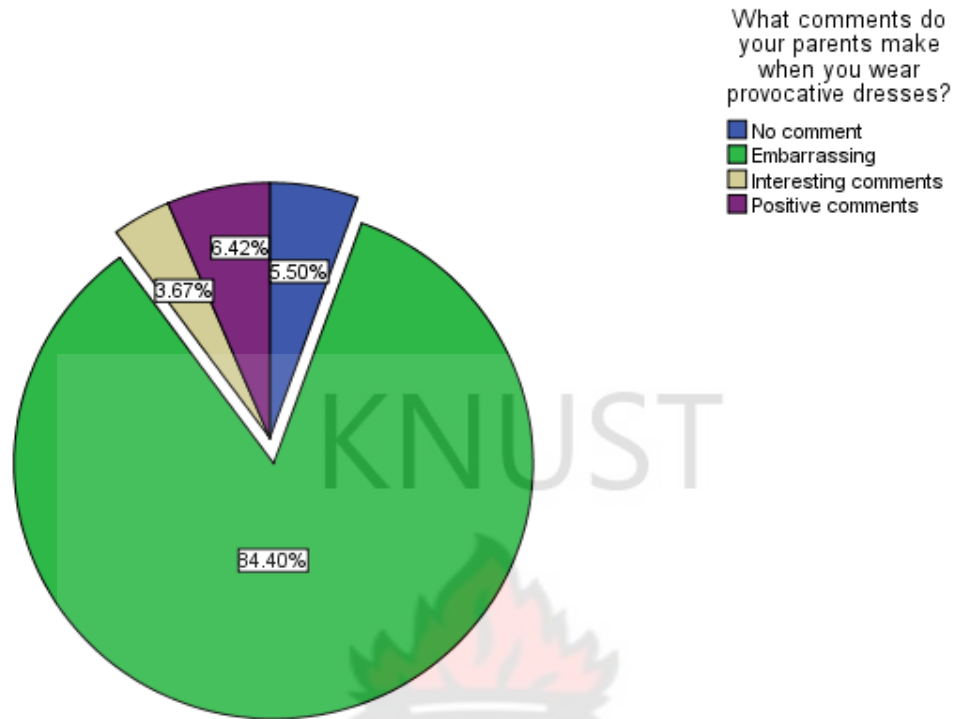
the vital or private parts of the human body. This shows 104 respondents stating Yes amounting to 94.6% while 7 respondents stated No amounting to 5.4%.

Any dress worn and is acceptable by more than half of the society members' forms the 'c' section of question sixteen. 53 people agreed with the statement, 49 disagreed whereas 9 of the respondents did not state their position on the statement, all constituting 47.8%, 44.1% and 8.1% respectively. The 'd' section of question sixteen which referred to modesty and decency in dress as anything in vogue had 10 respondents answering Yes representing 9% and 84 respondents answering No, representing 75.7%, meanwhile 17 respondents refused to express their views on the statement making-up 15.3%. Question sixteen 'e' stated that dresses used for festivals and other social activities that are acceptable within a community constitutes a modest and decent ways of dressing in Ghanaian culture. In responses, 75 equating 67.6% of respondents answered Yes, 29 of the respondents amounting to 26.1% answered No with 7 neither in favour nor against, representing 6.3%.

Responses to question sixteen generally indicate that, out of the 111 respondents, more than 80 respondents disagreed with the statements that, dresses regarded as modest and decent in Ghanaian culture include dresses admired by the opposite sex and any form of dresses in vogue. More than half of the respondents agreed to the issue of modesty and decency in Ghanaian culture regarding dresses to comprise wearing dresses that cover vital parts of the body and is acceptable by half of the society members to which one belongs as well as those used for festive and other social activities that are acceptable within the community. This may imply that respondents agreed to various forms of costumes being used in the socio-cultural activities within a community.

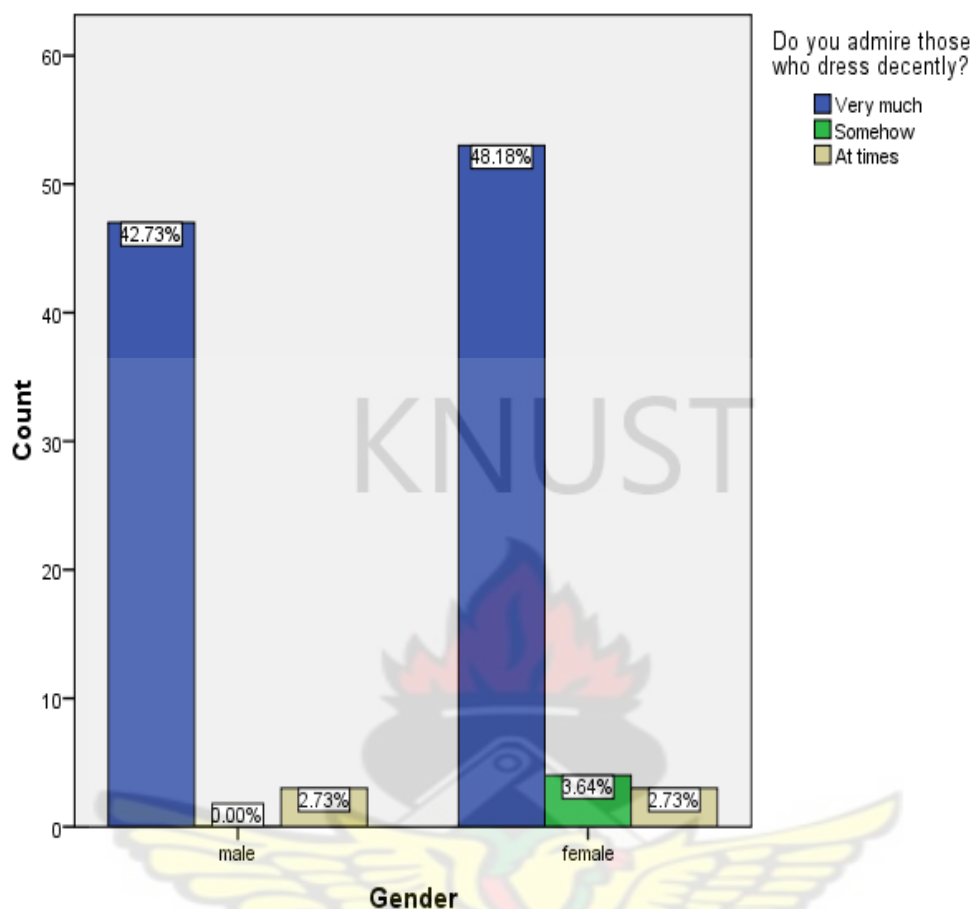


The next question (seventeen) which reads, 'do you always want to wear any type of dress considered as current fashion', had the following responses. 14 of the respondents stated Yes, 27 of them said Preferably, 59 of them answered No while 11 respondents stated that, they would engage in it, if money were available. The responses in percentages represent 12.6%, 24.3%, 53.2% and 9.9% respectively. This indicates that more than half of the respondents will not wear dresses simply because it is considered as current in fashion. The eighteenth question demanded to know, what comments do parents make when they see their children wearing provocative dresses. The following were responses gathered, 7 respondents said that their parents did not make any comment when they wore such provocative dresses, 92 of them stated that comments from parents were very embarrassing, 4 respondents said they received interesting comments from their parents and 8 stated that, comments were generally positive. The responses indicate 6.3%, 82.9%, 3.6% and 7.2% respectively as percentages of responses. This is a clear indication that, Ghanaians in general know what provocative dresses are, and do not endorse its use within the society. The responses in percentages are shown in Fig. 23.



**Fig. 23: Percentages of responses to question 18 illustrated on a pie chart**

Question nineteen asked if respondents admire those who dress decently. 100 people admitted that, they admired those who dress decently very much representing 90%, 4 said they somehow admired people who dress decently amounting to 3.6%, while 7 stated that, they do admired those who dress decently at times, representing 5.4%. It is clear that around 90% of the respondents admired those who dress decently in most instances. This response in relation to gender disparity is shown in Fig. 24. The twentieth question demands an explanation to the responses in question nineteen. Four categories of comments were realised in this direction with six 6 respondents not making any comment in writing whatsoever. The detail of this is indicated in Table VII.



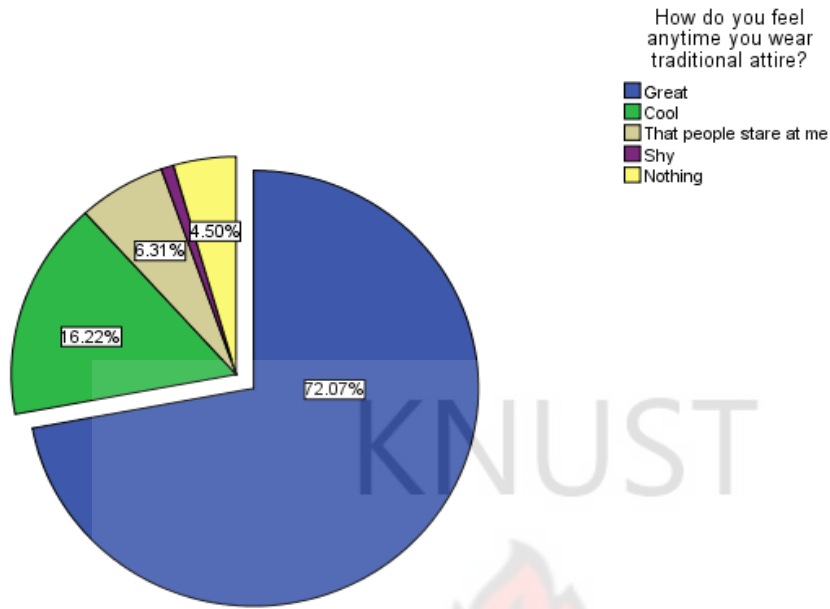
**Fig. 24: Percentages of males' and females' responses to question 19**

**Table VII: Explanation as to Why People Admire or Do Not Admire Those Who Dress Decently**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Those who dress decently command respect, attraction and are held in high esteem in society.	39	35.1	35.1	35.1
Decent dresses are ways of exhibiting inward beauty (character) and these things often speak well of you as an individual.	17	15.3	15.3	50.4

People who dress decently are seen as being more focused, modest, comfortable & well cultured.	46	41.4	41.4	91.8
Decently dressed people cover most parts of their bodies and this make them look older and non-attractive.	3	2.7	2.7	94.5
No comment	6	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

How do you feel anytime you wear traditional attire was the twenty-first question asked. 80 respondents which equate 72.1% said they feel Great, 18 of them representing 16.2% said they feel cool in traditional attire, 7 respondents representing 6.3% expressed that they feel that people stare at them too much, only 1 stated she feels shy in traditional attire representing 0.9%. 5 of them stated that, they feel nothing when wearing traditional attire, representing 4.5%. This means that more than 70% of respondents enjoy wearing traditional dresses. This result is shown in Fig. 25.



**Fig. 25: Pie chart representation of responses to question 21**

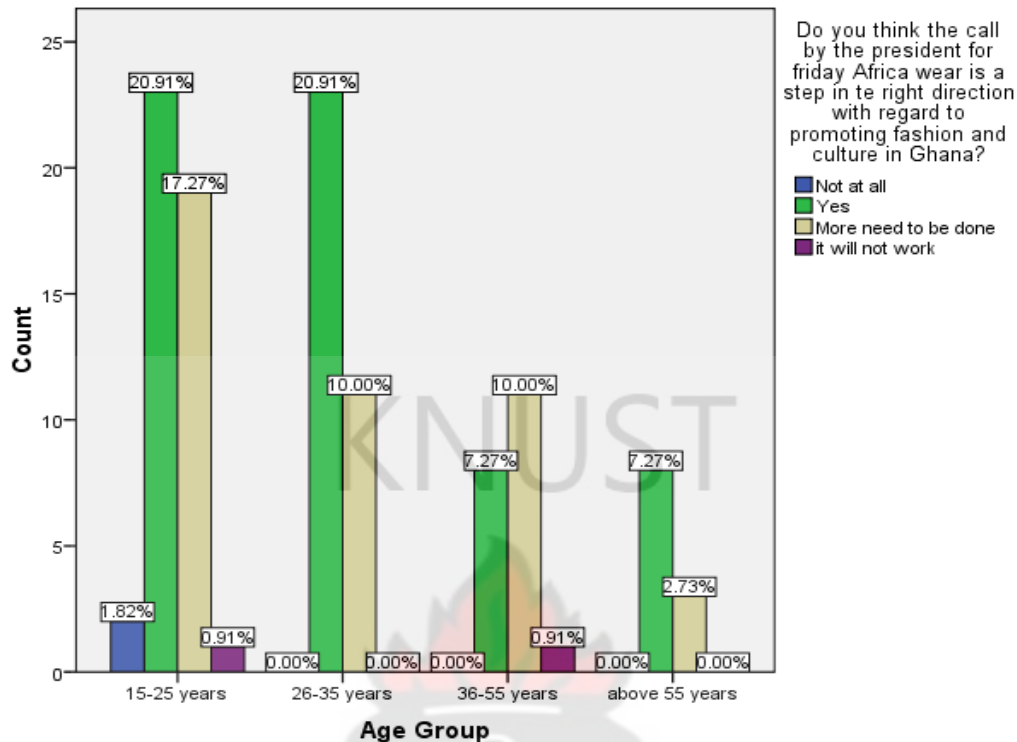
Question twenty-two, assessed which age group(s) of people like wearing *kaba* and other African wears. The outcome suggested that, out of the 111 respondents, 5 ticked the age group between 15 and 25 years as those interested in wearing African wears, representing 5%. 17 respondents ticked the age group between 26 and 35 years, representing 15% as those mostly associated with African styles. 45 respondents chose the age group between 36 and 55 years, constituting 41% as those favourable for using wears that are more African, 22 of the respondents amounting to 19% believed the age group above 55 years are more associated with *kaba* and other African styles.

Beside these, 89 respondents representing 80.1% of the total respondents who chose only one set of age group as favourite for using *kaba* and other African wears, the rest of the 19.9% chose two or more groups as those who most often like wearing African wears. In this instance, 4 respondents believed all the four categories



of groups like using *kaba* and other African wears, representing 3.6%. 2 of them ticked the age groups between 15 and 25 years and 26 and 35 years, constituting 1.8%. The age groups between 36 years and above 55 years were selected by 12 of the respondents representing 10.9% as those who are most concerned with the use of African wears. Finally, 4 respondents constituting 3.6% selected the age groups between 26 years and 35 years and 36 and 55 years as those fond of using *kaba* and other African styles.

The twenty-third question is; do you think the call by the president, John Agyekum Kuffour for Friday African wear is a step in the right direction with regards to promoting fashion and culture in Ghana? This question received the following responses; 4 respondents stated that they did not know, 62 respondents answered Yes, 42 of them believed more need to be done, 1 of the respondents however, stated that it would not work. These responses represent 3.6%, 55.9% 39.6% and 0.9% respectively. Relatively, above 50% of respondents believed, it is a right decision taken by the president and need to be sustained, 40% of the respondents suggested that more need to be done to deepen the desire of Ghanaians towards the use of African clothes. Percentages of respondents' responses in relation to their age groupings are indicated in Fig. 26.

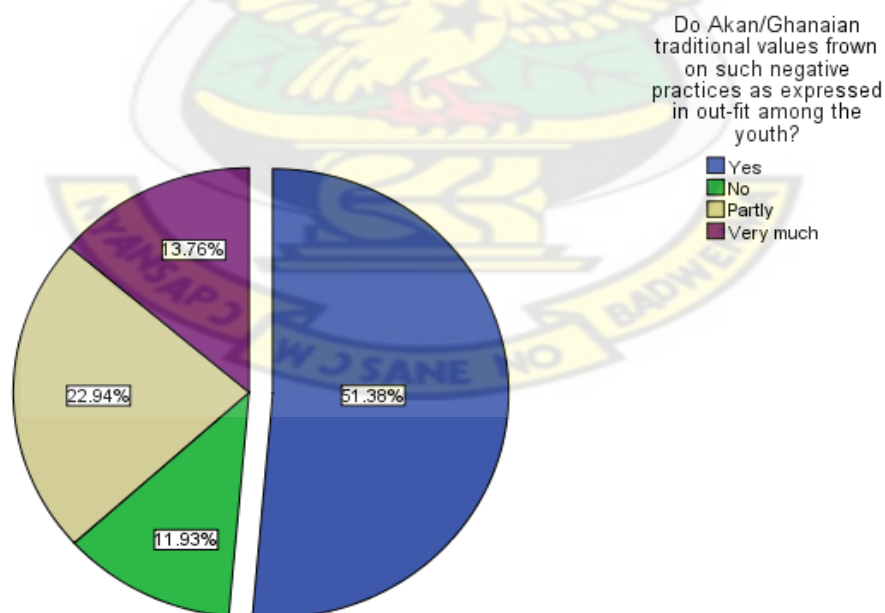


**Fig. 26: Differences in the year groups' responses in percentages are illustrated on the bar chart**

Question twenty-four asked which part of the human body are considered private in Ghana and should not be exposed to the public. The responses indicate that 1 respondent chose the navel as the answer, another 1 also chose the legs as the answer, 38 respondents ticked the breast as part of the body that should not be exposed, and 5 of the respondents ticked only one answer each and 4 did not tick any answer, representing 0.9%, 0.9%, 34.2%, 4.5% and 3.6% respectively. In total, those respondents who ticked one answer amount to 49, representing 44.1%. It implies that the rest, equating 55.9% selected more than one response as their answers. To this effect, 46 respondents selected the navel, the breast, the stomach and the buttock as parts of the body considered private and should be covered, representing 41.5%. 2 of the respondents ticked the breast and the stomach as their answers, constituting 1.8%,

4 agreed to the navel, the breast and the stomach as the preferred choice of answers representing 3.6%. Three respondents representing 2.7% ticked the navel and the breast as areas that should not be exposed in public. 2 respondents selected the navel, the breast and the buttocks as their answers constituting 1.8% whereas 5 of the respondents constituting 4.5% selected the breast, the stomach and the buttocks as preferred areas of the body that need not be exposed to the public in Ghana.

Do Akan/Ghanaian traditional values frown on such negative practices as expressed in out-fit among the youth? This was question twenty-five, 57 respondents representing 51.4% said Yes, No was the answer given by 13 respondents, representing 11.7%, 25 respondents chose 'Partly' as their answer representing 22.5%, 16 respondents representing 14.4% stated that traditional values frown on such negative practices 'Very much'. This is indicated on the pie chart as shown in Fig 27.



**Fig. 27: Percentages of responses to question 25 as illustrated on the pie chart**

Question twenty-six tried to find out, in what form does foreign fashion affect the fashion and culture of Akans/Ghanaians. With six potential answers to the question, the respondents need to tick Yes or No responses. The first section expressed that, the effect was the result of the influx of second-hand clothes. To this, 93 respondents symbolizing 83.8% stated Yes, 15 respondents stated No symbolizing 12.6% with 3 not responding in any form, which stands for 3.6%. Question twenty-six 'b' suggested that, the effects emanated from movies, videos and the print media. The results show that, 103 respondents representing 92.8% ticked Yes and the remaining 8 respondents representing 7.2% ticked No. The 'c' section of question twenty-six expressed that, the foreign fashion kills the Ghanaian textile industry that produces African fabrics. To this effect, 93 respondents answered Yes, 11 of them answered No with 7 respondents not commenting, representing 83.8%, 9.9% and 6.3% respectively.

In addition, frequent travelling of the youth overseas was question twenty-six 'd', which was considered as one of the effects of foreign fashion on the fashion and culture of Ghanaians. 73 respondents amounting to 65.8% stated Yes, 30 of them amounting to 27% stated No with 8 respondents not stating either Yes or No, representing 7.2%. Question twenty-six 'e' suggested that, foreign fashion affects the fashion and culture of Ghanaians through formal education and the gradual breakdown of traditional values, norms and ethics. 87 agreed with this statement, symbolizing 78.4%, 18 of the respondents disagreed, symbolizing 16.2% whereas 6 respondents did not comment on the statement, symbolizing 5.4%. The 'f' section of question twenty-six, expressed that, the effect is the result of no strict measure, put in place to curb importation of foreign textiles and fashionable items. Out of the

responses given, 88 respondents stated Yes, 16 of them stated No with 7 remaining neutral. This represents 79.3%, 14.4% and 6.3% respectively. In a nutshell, above 65% of the respondents believed all the six possible answers given to question twenty-six are factors of foreign fashion that affect the fashion and culture of Akans for that matter Ghanaians.

Question twenty-seven demanded that respondents give possible solutions to problems regarding the indecent fashioning of some youth of today. This open question had six different categories of responses. However, some few respondents did not make any comment forming the seventh category. The details of these categories and responses with their percentages are explained in Table VIII.

**Table VIII: Responses Suggesting Possible Solutions to Indecent Fashioning Among Some Ghanaian Youths, Today**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
There should be laws and regulation put in place and enforced to check foreign importation and use of fashionable goods	31	27.9	27.9	27.9
Bye-laws must be enacted with clear guidelines to barn and punish offenders who dress indecently.	18	16.2	16.2	44.1
Durable, affordable and quality African fabrics must be produced and promoted to whisk-up interest in the use of locally created fashion designs among Ghanaians.	13	11.7	11.7	55.8
Parental care, education on values and morals on proper use of dresses are vital in solving the problems of indecency.	34	30.6	30.6	86.4



Audio-visual programmes and movies sold and shown in public places should be regulated	5	4.5	4.5	90.9
Others believed, the indecency concept in Ghana fashion will go way on its own as trends and tastes change, therefore people should be allowed to freely express themselves to the rhythms of modern fashion.	6	5.4	5.4	96.3
No comment	4	3.6	3.6	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The twenty-eighth question asked was, by what means can the economy of the country be improved if fashion is tailored along the culture set up of Ghanaians? Possible answers were provided with respondents expected to tick Yes or No to each of the four answers provided. The first section expressed that it would enhance the local manufacturing textile industry, which would go a long way to improve on the economy. Out of this, 108 respondents stated Yes, representing 97.3% and 3 stated No representing 2.7%. The 'b' section believed small and medium scale fashion related firms would improve their businesses, which would be beneficial to the economy. 102 respondents representing 91.9% answered Yes, while 6 of them representing 5.4% answered No with 3 of them not stating yes or no, representing 2.7%.

The next answer to question twenty-eight 'c' suggested that improved fashion in Ghanaian culture would boost confidence in people to wear more local clothes and make them proud as Ghanaians. To this effect, 97 respondents stated Yes, ten of them stated No with 4 not stating their position by choosing yes or no. This therefore represent 87.4%, 9% and 3.6% respectively. The 'd' section of question

twenty-eight, supposed that an improved fashion in the cultural set up of Ghanaians would promote good moral, and ethical values and maintain peace in the society. 86 of the respondents representing 77.5% agreed by ticking Yes, 17 of them ticked No, representing 15.3% by way of disagreement while 8 of them ticked neither yes or no amounting to 7.2%. Responses to question twenty-eight, suggested that above 75% of respondents believed the country's economy could be improved if fashion is tailored along the cultural set up of Ghanaians. This can be possible by improving on the textile industry in Ghana, the small and medium scale fashion firms, which will boost the confidence of people in the use of local clothes. Finally, it will promote good morals and ethics necessary in the human resources of this country for rapid development.

The fourth part of the questionnaire that comprises questions twenty-nine up to question thirty-five, generally looked at the concept of beauty in Ghana with special reference to what is expressed among the Akans of Ghana. In this respect, question twenty-nine, wanted to find out if respondents agreed that, the beauty of the human figure is fundamental to the fashion that goes onto the body. 31 respondents ticked, 'Very much' indicating the extent of their agreement with the question, 15 ticked 'No', meaning they do not agree to that assertion of the question, 33 simply ticked Yes whereas 32 of the respondents ticked the statement, 'at times', indicating that the human figure is not always the fundamental factor to consider in fashioning the body. In all, the following are representations of responses in percentages, 27.9%, 13.5%, 29.7% and 28.8% respectively.

The next question had four answers that demanded a Yes or No response to each of them. This question thirty is stated as traditionally, the idea of a beautiful

figure has to do with; and the 'a' section of the answers suggested, a tall, slim female figure, out of which 35 respondents characterising 31.5% say Yes, 67 respondents representing 60.4% say No and 9 respondents did not comment, representing 8.1%. The 'b' section expressed that, an ideal beautiful figure should have a broad bust with bulbous breasts and protruding buttocks. 59 respondents answered Yes, 42 respondents answered 'No', 10 of them did not tick yes or no, thereby standing for 53.2%, 37.8% and 9% respectively.

Question thirty 'c' expressed that the ideal beautiful figure must have the characteristics of the *akuaba* doll. Response to this section revealed that, 86 respondents representing 77.5% ticked the answer Yes, 'No' representing 17.1% was ticked by 19 respondents with 6 respondents representing 5.4% not ticking the answer Yes or No. The last section of question thirty, suggested that the figure must look like the hour-glass, 42 respondents agreed with the statement amounting to 37.8%, while 53 of them disagreed representing 47.7% with 16 respondents not answering yes or no in this direction, representing 14.4%. Generally, question thirty gave mixed feelings of responses, 53 and 67 respondents forming the majority in the 'a' and 'd' sections of question thirty disagreed, stating No with 59 and 86 respondents in section 'b' and 'c' agreeing to those statements by ticking Yes as their responses.

Question thirty-one asked, if it is true that the Ghanaian (Akan) concept of beauty extends beyond the physical appearance to include: adherence to social etiquette; having good manners; good utterances from people within the community or none of the three statements above. The first suggested answer in section 'a' with regards to adherence to social etiquette, had 96 respondents stating Yes, with ten stating No and 5 respondents not ticking yes or no, all representing 86.5%, 9% and

4.5% respectively. The 'b' section suggested a person must have good manners. Responses to this revealed that, 98 respondents amounting to 88.3% agreed, 8 of them constituting 7.2% disagreed while 5 of them remained neutral on the statement amounting to 4.5%. Good utterances from people within the community is the 'c' section of question thirty-two, 90 respondents which equate 81.1% stated Yes, 13 respondents equating 11.7% stated No with 8 respondents sitting on the defence representing 7.2%.

The fourth section suggested that none of the three statements above is an integral part of beauty concepts. In response, 16 of the responses agreed that none of the above statements forms part of beauty concept while 39 stated No, meaning they considered the three points above as integral parts of beauty concepts, with 16 respondents not contributing to the comment in section 'd'. This therefore represent 14.4%, 71.2% and 14.4% respectively. Still on the issue of beauty concepts, question thirty-two tried to find out, if the beauty concept in Ghanaian culture should be improved or ignored. Out of the two possible answers provided, 109 respondents suggested that it should be improved upon representing 98.2% while 2 respondents representing 1.8% suggested that it should be ignored. Question thirty-three is a leading question that asked respondents to give reasons to support their chosen answer at question thirty-two. Comments obtained from the respondents are categorised into four parts, the fifth part indicates respondents who do not make any comment whatsoever. The details of the responses are illustrated in Table IX.

**Table IX: Responses Indicating Whether the Beauty Concept in Ghanaian Culture should be Improved or Ignored**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
There should be an improvement on beauty concepts to give modern touch to our culture, which will equally enhance dress codes.	28	25.2	25.2	25.2
These beauty concepts should be maintained as they give moral appraisal and maintain inward and outward requisite of Ghanaian cultural identity and ideals of beauty.	49	44.1	44.1	69.4
There is a need for improvement, to enable us move away from the bulkiness concept of beauty based on health grounds.	10	9.0	9.0	78.4
Improvement should include education on the right uses of attires for the right occasions; this will increase the patronage of local fabrics and hence provide job opportunities for the youth.	17	15.3	15.3	93.7
No comment	7	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

Question thirty-four also asked respondents to kindly state the possible ways by which a Ghanaian/Akan woman or man can be groomed to expose his or her beauty or handsomeness. The responses were also explained in Table X.

**Table X: Responses as to How Ghanaians can be Groomed to Expose Their Beauty**



Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parents must train their wards in line with etiquette and religious values.	32	28.8	28.8	28.8
Dresses used must reveal societal morals.	39	35.1	35.1	63.9
Grooming should be done using local accessories & beauty items.	19	17.1	17.1	80.0
No comment	21	18.9	18.9	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The next question (thirty-five) demanded to know if the same principles of grooming an Akan woman to be beautiful equally holds for the youth of today. The responses were grouped into five main areas, the fifth being those who do not respond in any form to the question. The information is expressed in Table XI.

**Table XI: Responses on the Concept of Beauty as Expressed Among Ghanaian Youth today**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
To the youth, beauty has to do with the arts on the body and exposure of some 'intimate' parts of the body.	20	18.0	18.0	18.0
To them, beauty is about dressing in conformity to modern trends in fashion or adopting western concept of beauty.	48	43.2	43.2	61.3
Others believed that, the youth often dress decently as a means of expressing their beauty characteristics.	15	13.5	13.5	74.8
The youth of today use fashionable clothes and accessories as well as other facial treatments to express their beauty concepts.	17	15.3	15.3	90.1
No comment	11	9.9	9.9	100
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The next part of the questionnaire, which is the fifth, consists of questions between thirty-six and forty, emphasising on accessories used in Ghanaian culture. Question thirty-six asked, if society frowns on people who use accessories in any of the following ways. The first one being men who wear earrings on one or both ears, 98 of the respondents constituting 88.2% answered Yes, 13 of them constituting 11.8% said No. The second referred to ladies who wear anklets and pinch the nose, 84 of the respondents stated Yes representing 75.7%, 20 respondents said No, representing 18% with 7 of them not ticking either yes or no, representing 6.3%. The third section referred to those that bleach their skins and pluck the eyebrows. The responses show that, 91 respondents ticked Yes, 14 respondents ticked No with 6 of them not responding by ticking yes or no, representing 82%, 12.6% and 5.4%

respectively. The last section of question 36 referred to those that use foreign necklaces, earrings and bracelets. 17 respondents agreed to the statement by answering 'Yes', representing 15.3%; 87 respondents; representing 78.4% answered 'No' with 6 of them making up 5.4% refused to ticked either yes or no as the answer. Above 75% of respondents to questions thirty-six, think that society frowns on men who wear earrings likewise ladies who wear anklets and pinch the nose as well as those who bleach their skins and pluck their eyebrows. It implies that these activities of lifestyles must be discouraged. They however think that, foreign necklaces, earrings and bracelets used by Ghanaians are acceptable norms.

Question thirty-seven tried to find out why Ghanaians turn to prefer foreign accessories to local ones. The section 'a' of the answer suggested that it is because the local ones have poor finishing touches. In response, 89 respondents agreed by ticking Yes representing 80.2%, 17 of them representing 15.3% disagreed thereby ticking No with 5 not stating anything, representing 4.5%. The 'b' section stated that, most people feel inferior in local accessories, 67 respondents believed that the statement is not true thereby signing Yes, 39 respondents agreed with the statement, hence they ticked No, 5 of the respondents decided not to answer the question, representing 60.4%, 35.1% and 4.5% respectively. The third section suggested that, the use of foreign accessories depicts a person as being more civilized. 66 respondents answered Yes, 38 of them answered No, the remaining 7 respondents refused to answer the question, representing 59.5%, 34.2% and 6.3% respectively. The 'd' section believed it is because the level of promotion and popularity given to local accessories is low. In this regard, 92 respondents stated Yes, nineteen 19 respondents stated No, thereby constituting 82.9% and 17.1% respectively.

Do traditional or African accessories have meanings and significance attached to their use as well as occasions that demand their use. This is the thirty-eighth question, out of which 103 respondents representing 92.8% stated that the statement was true with 8 respondents representing 7.2% stated that the statement was false. Therefore the greater portion of the respondents believed meanings and significances are associated with accessories used in Ghana for occasions, hence it becomes important that individuals especially the youth must be made aware of accessories used and know why they are used. Question thirty-nine try to find out, if it is true that Ghanaian women initially used some natural cosmetics and traditional fragrant herbs for enhancing their beauty, 82 respondents said it is true while 29 said it is false, amounting to 73.8% and 26.2% respectively. Majority of the respondents agree that traditional fragrant herbs are used to enhance beauty traditionally. Question forty, therefore asked respondents if natural cosmetics and fragrant herbs used for beauty purposes should be improved and why. The details of the responses were illustrated in Table XII.

**Table XII: Reasons why Some Natural Cosmetics and Fragrant Herbs Used for Beauty Purposes Should be Improved or Not Improved**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Natural cosmetics should be improved, there is easy access to them, they are likely to have limited health risk and their improvement will provide jobs.	27	24.3	24.3	24.3
Improvement on local cosmetics will reduce excessive use of western cosmetics and accessories.	34	30.6	30.6	54.9
Others suggested that, the use of traditional fragrant and cosmetics should be discouraged as they may be harmful to the human skin	16	14.4	14.4	69.3
No comment	34	30.6	30.6	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

Part six of the questionnaire, covers questions forty-one to forty-five. These addressed issues relating to colour, body painting and tattoo with their meanings and significance. To this effect, question forty-one asked if it is true that the use of colour in Ghanaian fashion has meanings and significance associated with them. The possible answers were Yes, No, At times, Very much. Out of the responses, 70 respondents stated Yes, 6 of them stated No, 26 of the respondents stated at times and 9 of them stated Very much. All the above constitute 63.1%, 5.4%, 23.4% and 8.1% respectively. Personally, do your choice of fabric colour and its style depend on a particular occasion, meaning and significance attached to them? This was question forty-two, 7 of the respondents said they do that always, 57 of them said they considered that at times, 38 of them said Yes they do whilst 9 of them answered No, all constituting 6.3%, 51.4%, 34.2% and 8.1% respectively. Responses to the two questions above suggested that, above 50% of respondents considered colour, its



meaning and significance in their choice or selection of fabric styles for clothing and their use for occasions.

The simple question asked in forty-three was, do you think the art of body painting is still vital in our traditional fashion? In response, 43 respondents answered Yes constituting 38.7% as 68 of them answered No constituting 61.3% indicating that more respondents do not see the need to still include body painting as an integral part of traditional means of fashioning the body. The next question (forty-four) asked the respondents' opinions on whether body painting and tattooing of the body have some health implications on the skin. 9 respondents amounting to 8.1% believed it is not possible, 82 of the respondents constituting 73.9% stated Yes, 7 of them representing 6.3% said there is no risk attached to body painting and tattoos on the skin while 13 of the respondents representing 11.7% stated that, they have no idea on the issue. It shows that, above 70% of respondents believed that, it is likely more people are at risk for having tattoos and body painting on their skins. The forty-fifth question, which was open ended, suggested that tattoo is gradually becoming common among the Ghanaian youth. To this effect, the researcher asked the respondents to consider what might be responsible for this changing trend and give reasons to support their claim. The responses to this question were explained in Table XIII.

**Table XIII: Reasons That Account for Tattooing Among the Youth in Ghana today**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Excessive exposure and copying of foreign fashion from the internet, movies, etc. as means of being abreast with things in vogue.	86	77.5	77.0	77.0
It is the result of youthful desire & peer pressure from friends.	9	8.1	8.3	85.3
Tattoos are old tradition and are done for medicinal, identification, decoration and religious purposes.	6	5.4	5.5	90.8
No comment	10	9.0	9.2	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The results from this revealed that, most of the respondents believed foreign influences from the entertainment cycle and the self desire by the youth to follow various trends in fashion, contributes to excessive use of body arts like tattoos. This does not withstand the fact that, few did not answer the question and others believed, the use of tattoos, are for medicinal and religious purposes.

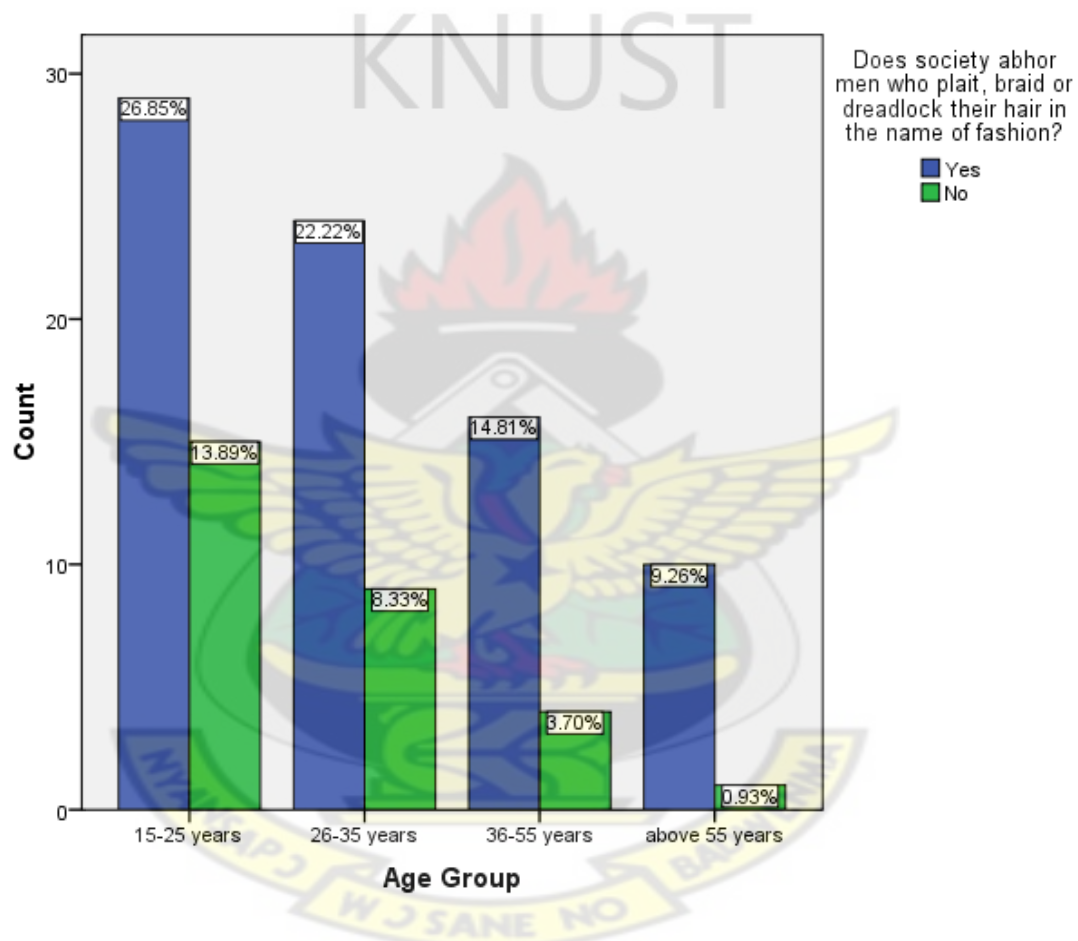
The seventh part of the questionnaire, which contains questions forty-six to fifty looks at coiffure in traditional and modern contexts. The forty-sixth question asked, if hairstyles can be linked with belief and practices as well as occasions within the traditional set-ups of various societies in Ghana. Responses revealed that 86 respondents stated 'Yes' while 25 respondents stated 'No' representing 77.5% and 22.5% respectively. Given a list of hairstyles, the respondents were asked whether these hairstyles are part of Ghanaian culture and have names, meanings and significance attached to them. The first sets of hairstyles on the list were hair plaiting or braiding, cornrows and rasta hair do. Out of these, 77 respondents answered Yes constituting 69.4% whereas 29 of them answered No constituting 26.1%. 5

respondents constituting 4.5% did not answer yes or no to the responses. The second on the list was shaving part or the entire head. 93 respondents agreed that, these hairstyles are part of Ghanaian culture by ticking Yes, 13 of the respondents ticked No, representing 83.8% and 11.7% respectively. 5 respondents constituting 4.5% did not answer yes or no to the responses. The third section on the list referred to perm or relaxed hair, of which 31 respondents agreed by answering Yes, 72 respondents disagreed by answering No with 8 respondents not commenting; this therefore symbolises 27.9%, 64.9% and 7.2% respectively. The 'd' section stated that the use of wigs is part of Ghanaian culture. In response, 35 respondents stated Yes, 70 of them stated No with 6 of them being neutral. These responses constitute 31.5%, 63.1% and 5.4% respectively.

The use of dreadlock as being part of hairstyle in Ghanaian culture was the last section on the list. Out of the 111 respondents, 52 of them believed it forms part of the Ghanaian culture while 54 believed it does not form part of Ghanaian culture with 5 respondents abstaining from the yes and no responses. In all, 46.8%, 48.7% and 4.5% were the responses given by the respondents in percentage. Question forty-eight, asked, whether headgears have meanings, significance and names attached to them and if so, are they of any importance to the fashioning of Ghanaian women generally and specifically among Akans? The yes and no responses revealed that 99 respondents agreed representing 89.2% whereas 12 respondents disagreed, representing 10.8%. This implies that, the use of headgears and its associated meaning and significance, are accepted phenomenon in Ghanaian culture.

The next question (forty-nine), asked was, 'does society abhor men who plait, braid or dreadlock their hair in the name of fashion? 79 respondents agreed by

stating Yes, 29 disagreed by stating No, all constituting 71.2% and 26.1% respectively with 3 respondents not making their intentions clear on the question, by not ticking yes or no, representing 2.7%. The bar chart in Fig. 28 shows the various responses of age groups of respondents regarding question forty-nine in percentages.



**Fig. 28: It indicates responses to question 49 by the various age groups of respondents**

The fifth section of question fifty in this category asked respondents to state in writing, if the different styles of headdresses in Ghanaian culture should be maintained, encouraged or eliminated from the world of contemporary fashion. Responses shown on Table XIV indicate that above 88 respondents think the practice exhibits our identity as Ghanaians and should be maintained or improved upon to fit

into modern trends of fashion that is by way of adding contemporary touch to its styling.

**Table XIV: Responses as to Whether Headdresses in Ghanaian Culture Should be Maintained, Encouraged or Eliminated**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
These headdresses should be eliminated because they are static and out of fashion, some styles might pose health risks to the women who do them.	10	9.0	9.0	9.0
These head-styles exhibit Ghanaian culture and make women look unique and beautiful, hence, they should be encouraged.	59	53.2	53.2	62.2
The head-styles should be upgraded and changes implemented to meet modern trends	29	26.1	26.1	88.3
No comment	13	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

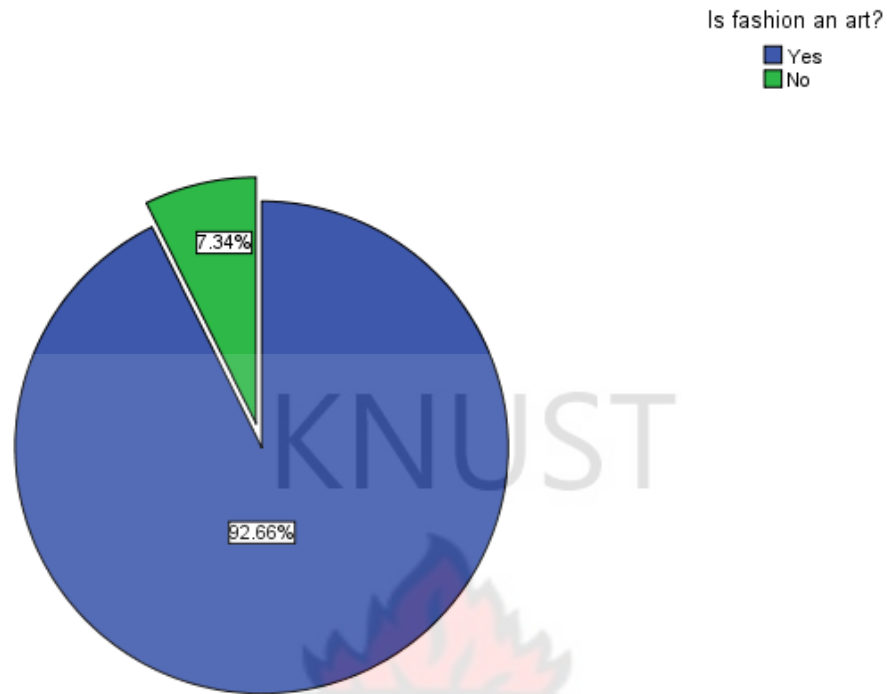
Religions and art forms in fashion form the eighth part of the questionnaire that covers questions fifty-one and fifty-two. The fifty-first question asked was, do religious beliefs and practices of any sort affect the fashion of Ghanaians? Out of the responses gathered, 91 respondents stated Yes representing 81.9% as 20 of them representing 18.1% stated 'No'. It could be interpreted from the analysis here that, two-thirds of the respondents believed religion forms an integral part of fashion in Ghana. In other instance, it can be stated that, since most humans



are part of one religion or the other, their mode of dressing and general fashioning are governed by their understanding in relation to their respective religious stands on the issue of clothing. Hence, issues of indecency, if dear to the heart of various religious leaders as shown during interviews, can best be addressed through their involvement.

Is fashion (dresses, tattoos, incisions, body paintings, headdresses, etc) an art? This is question fifty-two, which had 102 respondents agreeing to the statement that fashion is an art while 9 respondents disagree with the statement that fashion is an art. Percentage wise, 91.8% stated Yes whereas 8.2% stated No as illustrated on the pie chart in Fig. 29.





**Fig. 29: Responses to question 52 illustrated on a pie chart**

The last part of the questionnaire demanded recommendations and suggestions from respondents' based on these two questions. The first being question fifty-three asked if respondents could kindly give comments on how traditional fashion in relation to culture could be sustained and enhanced as well as aspects that need to be discouraged or eliminated. The responses were grouped into four major categories with the first category representing the frequency and percentage of persons who do not comment on the question asked as indicated in Table XV.

**Table XV: Comments of Respondents on whether Traditional Fashion Should be Sustained, Enhanced or Some Aspects Discouraged**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Some respondents believed, traditional fashions expresses our identity as Ghanaians thereby reflecting our true cultural values, hence any changes should be in line with the said concepts. Traditional religious practices that expose the upper torsos of the females' bodies in public should be eliminated. Negative practices in fashion such as body markings and walking bare-footed should be discouraged.	28	25.2	25.2	25.2
Indecency relating to exposure of vital parts of the body and other forms of body art, seen among the youth should be discouraged, in order to promote cultural values.	15	13.6	13.6	38.8
Our leaders must live by examples and put up systems to educate the public on all the negative aspects of clothing especially among the youth.	20	18.0	18.0	56.8
The youth must be encouraged to patronise and use traditional dresses to both contemporary and traditional functions.	23	20.7	20.7	77.5
No comment	25	22.5	22.5	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The second question (fifty-five) requires respondents to comment relating to acculturation among the youth in relation to fashion and its economic implication on the country. The responses gathered were equally classified into categories and presented in table XVI.

**Table XVI: Comments Relating to Acculturation in Line with Fashion  
And Its Economic Effects on the Youth**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Our local textile and fashion industries must produce affordable goods to prevent them from collapsing because of influx of foreign fashion, resulting in economic difficulties.	25	22.5	22.5	22.5
The youth must dress well, since clothes enhance ones ego that equally affect productivity at work.	13	11.7	11.7	34.2
Culturally, clothes promote tourism and use of local fabric thereby brings revenue to the country.	6	5.4	5.4	39.6
The youth waste too much resources on western fashion to the detriment of local ones, which are moderate and will generate internal income for Ghanaians.	15	13.5	13.5	53.1
It should be used more for occasions to improve patronage.	9	8.1	8.1	61.2
No comment	43	38.7	38.7	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

Throughout the study, interviews conducted and responses to questionnaire made it possible to identify some main findings and changing trends in clothing and the general adornments of Ghanaian and Akans in particular that are discussed below.

## 5. 2 Findings Relating to the Changing Trends in Clothes

Major forms of clothing for children within the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries were basically waist beads, strips of cloth called *etam* used by girls. A yard or two of cloth(s) were used for the *danta* and *kɔɔla* styles for boys. These evidences are from both primary and secondary sources with regard to clothing among girls and boys between the ages of one and eight. However, most of the early European writers on their account of clothing among the Gold Coasters do not spell out dresses used for children. These restrict information on dresses and forms of fashion between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century to only adults. Changes in clothing generally became more rampant when missionaries introduced Christianity with the concept of modesty before God demanding ‘total covering’ of the body into the country. Their introduction of western clothing marks an era of rapid changes in the mode of clothing generally. This in the course of time embraced children’s mode of dressing. Children are now clothed in varieties of children’s wears, sometimes prior to their naming ceremony.

Other instances reveal that, there have been tremendous improvements in the use of dresses for children. Children’s wears come with elaborate designs for comfort, with the ability to move freely in mind as well as with colours that appeal to children, such as shades of blue and pink. Further changes include the use of diapers for children to give them comfort and ease the workloads on mothers. Varieties of footwears for children are available, most of these are positive impacts of foreign fashion that contribute positively to the improvement and diversification of Ghanaian culture regarding clothing among children. In addition, the practice where heads of infants, legs and other parts of their bodies are sponged with warm water to re-direct



or reshape the muscles based on beliefs of ideal figure concepts are gradually being relegated to the background as the practice is being questioned on health grounds by health persons.

In parts of the country where the puberty rite is practised, changes have been associated with the rite in recent times. *Dipo* used to take place when girls had their first menstrual cycle, in their 'teen' age, likewise that of *bragorɔ̃* and *gbɔto wɔwɔ* of Asantes and Ewes respectively. In all these practices, exposure of the breasts of these young girls were previously paramount. However, changes in the cause of time have either halted the practice or have introduced some changes. Though these rites have declined in practice considerably, some still prevail. In some of the areas where the rite still exists today, younger girls are taken through the rite before their first menstrual cycle. These changes are attributed to the fact that, the adolescent groups are no longer interested in the rites, probably as a result of contemporary influences, especially from religious bodies like Christianity and Islam. The practice is even considered in modern times by some, especially, those within Christianity and Islamic religions as 'outmoded' tradition that must be discarded.

Other instances reveal that, exposure of the breasts in modern rites is virtually non-existent, as communities are being compelled to modify their practices such that they do not lose their prime concepts but be still tuned with modern trends in Ghanaian culture. Western influences embedded in modernisation and globalisation have changed the trends of dressing among the teenage group. The use of *etam* and cover cloths are restricted to traditional-cultural functions of which children of today even hesitate to participate in them. It is believed that extreme exposures of some parts of the body are limited to stage performances and

expressions of cultural significance. Contemporary trends in fashion have made available variety of dresses that are patronised greatly by women within these three categories as 'young missy, missy and adult missy'.

The young missy between sixteen and the late twenties, prior to their marriage lives are the category mostly associated with changes in fashion. They are moved by any form of 'fashion on the move' with little regard to 'do's and don'ts' in the cultural realm of traditional set-ups. Tremendous changes in fashion are targeted at this group. The ladies in few decades past had seen a variety of changes in their dress codes, promulgated mainly by western influences. There have been remarkable transitions in women's clothing from the sixteenth hundred-upto date. The use of the loincloth around the waist with mantles or shawls to cover the upper portion of the body made of both indigenous and exotic fabrics of Arab influences has seen changes over the years. For simply stitched styles of *kaba*, which have seen great improvement over the last four to seven decades have to use some exotic styles from Europe, such as mini, midi and maxi skirts.

Other changes include long and short dresses with high and low necklines, sleeves, sleeveless tops and the use of attachments on garments as well as varieties of accessories to match. Further developments and changes in women dresses are in the adoption of trousers, which now comes with various designs; these are integrated into the Ghanaian cultural setting although with reservation from traditional and some religious leaders. These forms of acculturation are integral aspects of Ghanaian culture seen in modern days with regard to fashion. The changes equally affect the traditional wears (*kaba* and skirt) which have gone through innovations based on technological advancement and the creative skills of designers. *Kaba* now comes in

various sophisticated forms. Changes in general do not only affect the styles and shapes of garments but also the aesthetics, which combines motifs, designs, colours and interplay of elements and principles of designs into a unique piece of fabric or garment to the admiration of consumers.

The development of boys into men in relation to clothing moved gradually away from the use of basic features of shorts, trousers and shirts, to varieties and variations in trousers with their names, which come about through changes in waistline, the 'bar' of trousers, the length as well as how fit or loose the trousers, contribute in determining changes in styles. Shirts also come in sleeveless, long and short sleeves, openings or no opening, round and 'V' necklines. Changes are also associated with the positioning of the garments, as at one time, the waistlines of trousers move upward from the waist onto the belly and another time back to the waist. The trend continues when in recent times, especially among the youth, the waistline of shorts and trousers move downwards onto the buttocks, in line with the hip or further down. Accessories in the forms of necklaces, caps, bracelets, watches, shoes, belts with fashionable lockets or buckles and the use of earrings form prominent parts of the changes in men's wear.

Changes are equally associated with women in their late twenties into the early forties when they pay more attention to their children and home rather than frequent changes in fashion. The missy group (married and home making women) burden themselves more in the development and sustenance of their family and business than focusing more on every new trend in fashion. This does not imply that, they do not believe in fashioning themselves to be abreast with time, but rather they seem to be more relaxed as compared to the young missy group of women.

The adult missy group, from the mid-forties upwards, become concerned with their ageing factors; hence will like to use clothing to raise their egos. The upper class of the adult missy who are mainly the elite group are more concerned with fashion trends than the middle and lower classes who are mainly from rural and poverty zones of the country. They pay little or no attention to the elaborate fashion trends and changes that come with them. Women of this category who live in the rural settings, as part of their casual clothing, use only cover cloths around themselves; sometimes they cover the waist, leaving their breast and torsos uncovered.

#### **5.2.1 Morality and clothing in Ghanaian setting**

Negativity associated with fashion among the young missy groups is not exactly experienced among the missy group. Their marriage lives to a greater extent influence their mode of fashion, by reducing that youthful exuberance associated with the young missy group of women. Though they adhere to changes in fashion, it is not everything that moves them as they seem to be more pressed with family issues.

Nevertheless, instances when some females within the missy and adult missy groups expose their breasts determine whether their appearances are decent or indecent. For instance, it was suggested that under the situation where a nursing mother removes her breast in public to feed her baby, it is not considered as an act of indecency although some nursing mothers are careful or cautions of the act of breast feeding and try to cover up their breasts as much as possible. Also, in instances when some adult missy group members expose their breasts and torso in their rural setting, most people do not necessarily consider it as being out of place. This is simply

because, the environment merits that attitude and will not cause any moral outcry. However, if similar instances are expressed in major towns and cities, it will raise the question of moral rights. Likewise, people wear all sorts of dresses in their closets or homes which if extended to the public domain will raise lots of questions on morality. Therefore, the issue of immodest in dressing depends on the environment, occasion, place and personality wearing a particular garment in some situations rather than the garment itself or the style of garment in question.

### **5.2.2 Changes relating to beauty concepts**

Previously, the beauty concept among the Akan covered inner and outward beauty. Inwardly, to be beautiful, a woman must have good moral attributes that reflects outwardly. Outwardly, two concepts of beauty were realised, the slim figure type as well as the bulky or rounded figure type of females. The full rounded type of the human figure is held in high esteem, as an ideal beauty concept by most people rather than the slim figure. Men generally must have well-built structures with masculine features as a sign of strength. With regards to changes, it is observed that the two concepts of female figures still hold in traditional settings today. However, the younger or elite society associates healthy look to slimmer and active figures. Fashion models and pageanties that advocate slimness as an ideal figure among ladies thereby assist in promoting the slim figure type among ladies of today as well. This, however, does not create an overwhelming desire among the youth in particular for slimness. The traditional concept of bulkiness or average weight is still held in high esteem as beauty qualities, even among young elites of today in Akan jurisdiction. Some young people especially women still desire to have average hips,



bust and well built calves, because it is believed some men appreciate these features and will encourage women to look as such thereby contributing to the desire of women maintaining their average built or bulky figure types. Knowledge about the three basic figure types in this contemporary environment (endomorph, mesomorph and ectomorph) will help improve on the fashion that goes on the human figure in modern times, to embrace both changing trends and cultural standing with regard to decency in Ghanaian settings.

### **5.2.3 Changes in Relation to Body Arts in Ghana**

Body arts as being considered under beautification processes, comprised incisions, piercing, body paintings and tattooing. Incisions are ancient art, just like scarification, and are done mainly for identification purposes but to some extent, medicinal, religious and beautification purposes as well. Incisions are believed to be virtually absent among the Akans, except on real situation of medicinal purposes. With regard to changes, modern influences associated with modernisation and western religious beliefs as well as orthodox medicines have drastically reduced various forms and reasons for incisions. Piercing is usually connected with the ears among Ghanaians with smaller percentage piercing other portions like the nose and navel. Women piercing of the earlobe and using earrings are normal practices in Ghanaian culture. Changes have been tremendous or magnificent in this direction of ear piercing in recent times. Men are piercing one or both earlobes, inserting earrings in them. An art described by the Akans as an identity for men slaves in the days of slavery, others relate it to homosexuals. Nevertheless, most modern Ghana gents used

it as a form of affiliation with celebrities or modern trends in fashion that they appreciate and affiliate themselves with.

Some forms of body arts as in painting and tattoos are catching up fast among the youths in Ghana. While body paintings (temporal arts) are restricted to occasions like national, political, entertainment events for pleasure and excitements, to a less extent it serves as economic or advertisement opportunities to those who participate in it, tattoos on the other hand are permanent art and are done on the body for identification or personal reasons and satisfaction. The arts especially, tattoos contribute to changes in dress codes, since the tattoos in most cases have to be exposed to the public to catch the attention of people who will admire the art.

Body painting with the use of acrylic and other paints are becoming common in the cultural setting of Ghanaians. Traditionally, paints used are derived from natural sources, such as white clay, charcoal and soot components of which are not known to the people to enable one assess its effects if any on the skin. Modern forms of body paints used today are designed for other purposes rather than the skin; The components of these paints can be harmful to the skin, the fact that the paints can easily penetrate into the skin or even block the pores on the skin for the period that the paint remain on the body thus causing respiratory problems.

Tattoos on the other hand are not new in Ghanaian culture though it was alleged that the art of tattooing is not indigenous to the Akans. The traditional or local forms and ways of tattooing are still being practised today. The conversional forms of tattoos are carried out in a more professional way. Tattoos in many instances introduce various colours into the skin. With regards to the acceptance of tattoos as ideal cultural practices, there is a mix reaction from the public, while some

respondents believe it is a foreign concept and should not be embraced others insist that the art of tattooing existed long ago among Ghanaians and for that matter Africans generally and that it is only re-branded in a modern concept. The researcher however believes that people should be educated well, as to whether or not they really need tattoo, know its health implications on the body. They should also consider their religious, social and family affiliations before opting for the art of tattooing to prevent regrets in the future, since it might be too late at that time.

### **5.3 Main Findings**

Some forms of body covering in terms of clothing were present among the citizens of the land along the coast and in Asante within the middle belt of the country before Europeans arrived on the coast. Records by early writers revealed that, cloths used by women between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries were more elaborate than those of men along the coast while among Asantes, men's cloths were larger than those of women within the same periods.

Wrapping of cloths around the body as in the form of toga or cover cloths among Ghanaians were long-held traditions that have persisted even up to today and will continue to be with us, even in the midst of abundant-stylish clothes and modernisation, so long as our tradition, culture and identity are of prime importance to us as a people.

Changes in the clothing of traditional rulers are prominent in qualities attached to good finishing treatments associated with accessories used today such as rings, necklaces and pendants in relation to those used previously. Changes are not necessarily related to the toga style of wearing the men's cloths, but rather in the

quality of fabrics used, motifs and weave patterns and structures. Colours and other aesthetic qualities play an important role in the changing styles of clothing among chiefs. Similar differences are what can equally be witnessed among the attendants of chiefs. Motifs and accessories like rings used by chiefs express their status as leaders and rulers of their communities. These items are designed with the significance of communicating the position of the chiefs to their subjects.

Modernisation and Higher pursuit of education are positive influences that have affected the lives of chiefs and their mode of dressing. In recent times, chiefs can easily be seen in suits, sport wears and other forms of casual and official dresses outside the usual cloths used for their traditional obligations. These are acceptances of positive aspects of western clothes into the traditional system, a revelation of dynamism of Ghanaian culture.

In spite of today's dynamism of culture, people of both sexes, age groups and religious backgrounds consider certain practices in fashion as indecent and should not be accepted or integrated into modern trends of cultural dynamism in Ghana. These include excessive exposure of female parts to the public through the way they dress. Clothes provide non-verbal forms of communicating information about the wearer, based on the moral concept of a society; therefore, people must be conscious of what ever they put on as clothes. It is partly revealed that, the problem of indecency persists because, child upbringing is no longer of holistic approach which involves all members of a community as it used to be, which aided in molding the moral lives of children, but now it has become the responsibility of the parents in modern times.

The entertainment cycle contribute greatly to most of the negativities associated with clothing and fashion and its modes of adornments in modern days. Body arts especially tattoos and piercing of the skin are believed to be more of western influences today than ever. In spite of the fact that, these things were initially associated with African culture and tradition, what is seen and experienced today are foreign to Ghanaians. Body painting is restricted to socio-cultural events while incisions being practised today are related to medicinal and religious purposes more than for just identification purposes. Body art in the form of tattoos are gaining grounds among the youth gradually; both the local and conventional types introduce colour or chemicals into the skin, but both the practitioners and the consumers do not know the components of the colours being introduced. They equally do not have any health check to know if their body or skin can endure such practices. It implies that, those who partake in tattooing are putting their lives at stake. Similar situations apply to body painting as well, although it is mainly practiced during occasions or events.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



## 6.1 Summary

This dissertation has dealt with fashion in the cultural setting of Ghanaians generally and the Akans in particular, looking at the influence of western fashion on the fashion of the people of this nation. It assessed the impact of clothing on the youths' moral life, with specific references to the indecent mode of dressing seen among the youth as expressed through clothes. To this effect, the significance associated with fashion in the cultural setting of Ghanaians in relation to their modern trends in clothing, associated with its sinking moral factors are of great concern to the research. This however, to the best knowledge of the researcher has not been touched on by other researchers in the field, hence the need to address such a problem. People have various standpoints on the issue of modesty in clothing, especially among the youth in Ghana/Akan jurisdiction.

Within the study, morality in clothing is measured in the context of the Ghanaian, especially, Akan cultural values, which form the yardstick for determining what the society has labelled as right or wrong in terms of dress codes. To effectively deal with this, clothing and its moral connotations in the socio-cultural activities of Ghanaians must be linked with the changing trends of modernisation and national identity of one's culture. This presumably becomes the bases for effective work to be carried out on cultural and moral grounds on clothing in Ghana. This has therefore, propelled the main objectives of this research:

The first objective of this dissertation was, to trace the history of clothing and fashion in Ghana and its relevance on the fashion of Ghanaians from the nineteenth century to the present day Ghana, as well as the changes that have occurred in the fashion of the Akans of this nation. The objective was addressed by

visiting the museums, archives and libraries, as well as interviews organised among the traditional folks constituting primary and secondary data collected, analysed and assembled as a means of documentation on the historical trends of clothing and fashion in Ghana. Written documents on early European travellers and some African writers accounts, which suggested trends of evidence in the earlier periods, have been elaborated on in the first part of chapter four. The various changing trends in clothing among Akans were compiled with illustrations to give a better meaning to the development.

The second objective of the study was, 'to identify and show the cultural significance and symbolism in clothing and fashion with its accessories as expressed among chiefs, their attendants, traditional religious leaders, festive occasions, rites of passage and the concept of beauty in relation to changes that have occurred'. The various colours used traditionally, with their significance were identified and discussed. The forms of fashion associated with chieftaincy institution, traditional religious leaders and some socio-cultural activities like the various forms of rites within the various stages in rites of passage have been discussed. Beauty concepts, seen from both traditional and contemporary points of views were elaborated on, in chapter four as well.

The third objective was, to investigate the influences that adulterated foreign fashion has on moral diminution of both the indigenous and contemporary fashion and culture of Ghanaians in general, and specifically on Akan youth of today. Fashion has a lot of positive influences on both the indigenous and contemporary fashion of changing trends in clothing over the decades; those effects have been elaborated on; so also are the negative factors that have influenced the changes that

have ignited the moral diminution concerns as related to clothing in Ghanaian culture. These were carefully considered and their impacts on the youth assessed.

The fourth objective was, 'to assess possible health risks associated with body decorating practices (incision, piercing, tattoos and body paintings) seen among Ghanaian youths today and advise accordingly'. Forms of incisions, tattoos, body painting and their possible effects were elaborated on in the last part of chapter four with possible safety measures necessary for those who desire to partake in these practices have been spelt out clearly.

Sizable among the literature in the field of study were reviewed to ascertain the level of work done and how vital these are to the success of the study. The review focused on major areas like, clothing and fashion history; culture and other areas that deal with accessories and colour. The total population of the study was limited to two hundred and forty respondents, out of which one hundred and fifty persons responded through questionnaires while the rest were interviewed. The population among others include, traditional leaders, fashion institutions, students and a across-section of the public, most of which were randomly selected. Stratified random sampling was used due to the nature of the population.

## Test of Hypotheses

The first hypothesis states, 'the tracing and documentation of the history of clothing and fashion of Ghanaians and the Akans will lead to the identification of their cultural symbolism and changes in relation to socio-cultural activities'. The Table XVII below shows a statistical representation of the test to this hypothesis.

**Table XVII: Statistical Data on Historical Trends of Clothing, its Symbolism and Changes Relating to Socio-cultural Activities among Akans in Particular.**

Questions	Categories of Respondents				100%
	10	10	5	25	
	Chiefs, Queen mothers, and Knowledgeable elders in the field of culture and tradition.	Cultural officers, History teachers, Historians	Curators, Archivists, Liberians	Total	Total Percentage
Q.1. Was there an established system of body covering in the Gold Coast devoid of western influence before the arrival of Europeans on the Coast, i.e. in term of style and mode of dressing?	Yes: 6	Yes: 7	Yes: 1	14	56%
	No: 4	No: 3	No: 4	11	44%
Q.2. Before European intervention, were there differences in clothes seen among the people of the Southern, Central and Northern parts of the Gold Coast territories?	Yes: 8	Yes: 9	Yes: 3	20	80%
	No: 2	No: 1	No: 2	5	20%
Q.3. Historically, does the culture of Akans reflects in their forms of dresses throughout their existence as organised state?	Yes: 10	Yes: 10	Yes: 4	24	96%
	No: 0	No: 0	No: 1	1	4%
Q.4. Have there been any significant changes in the indigenous and contemporary clothing and adornment of Akans over the last three centuries?	Yes: 9	Yes: 10	Yes: 4	23	92%
	No: 1	No: 0	No: 1	2	8%
Q.5. Are there different forms of clothing and accessories associated with the culture, social live and other activities of Akans, especially with reference to their traditional institutions?	Yes: 10	Yes: 8	Yes: 5	23	92%
	No: 0	No: 2	No: 0	2	8%
Q.6. In chieftaincy institutions found among Akans; are there significances attached to the various forms of clothes, adornments and colours use by Chiefs, Queen-mother and their attendants?	Yes: 10	Yes: 9	Yes: 3	22	88%
	No: 0	No: 1	No: 2	3	12%
Q.7. Do traditional priests and priestesses in Ghana generally,	Yes: 9	Yes: 10	Yes: 1	20	80%

and Akans in particular, have any elaborate forms of clothing and body adornment?	No: 1	No: 0	No: 4	<b>5</b>	<b>20%</b>
Q.8. Do clothing and fashion play integral part of rites of passage in Ghana and among Akans in particular?	Yes: 10	Yes: 10	Yes: 5	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>
	No: 0	No: 0	No: 0	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
Q.9. Do traditional accessories have meanings and significance attached to their uses as well as occasions that demand their use?	Yes: 10	Yes: 10	Yes: 4	<b>24</b>	<b>96%</b>
	No: 0	No: 0	No: 1	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>

In general terms, nine questions were designed to enable the researcher to proof or disproof the first hypothesis of the study, above fifty-five percent of the respondents agreed positively. This indicates that; clothing and some forms of adornment were integral parts of cultural practices and its symbolism. This was in addition to the changing trends in aspects of socio-cultural activities seen generally among Ghanaians and specifically among Akans. Documented evidence on clothing from library, museum and archive researches conducted also confirmed the existence of clothing and adornments among the people of the coastal and forest zones relating to their forms of clothing and socio-cultural activities.

The second hypothesis is, ‘acculturation has negative influence on the youth, which poses a threat to the sustenance, development of good moral and health issues as expressed through clothing and fashion as well as beauty concepts of the Akan culture’. Table XVIII below shows a statistical representation of the test to this hypothesis.

**Table XVIII: Statistical data on possible threats from foreign influences on the moral, health, beauty and body decoration practices associated with indigenous and cotemporary clothing and fashion among Akan Youth.**



Questions	Categories of Respondents					100%
	17	10	8	15	50	
	Fashion Designers, Tailors and Dressmakers, Teachers and Lectures of Clothing and Fashion, Fashion Students	Beauticians, Merchant/ Boutique Owners, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hand Clothes Dealers, etc	Tradition alists, Cultural Officers, chiefs, etc	Students, Parents and a section of the General Public	Total	Total Percent age
<b>Q.1.</b> Does Western Influence in any way impact negatively on the beauty concepts and body shapes of an Akan woman?	Yes: 8	Yes: 5	Yes: 8	Yes: 8	<b>29</b>	<b>58%</b>
	No: 9	No: 5	No: 0	No: 7	<b>21</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Q.2.</b> Does acculturation poses any threat to the cultural, moral and ethical values of Akans through clothing and fashion?	Yes: 7	Yes: 6	Yes: 7	Yes: 10	<b>30</b>	<b>60%</b>
	No: 10	No: 4	No: 1	No: 5	<b>20</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Q.3.</b> Are there any forms of external influences on the indigenous symbolism of colours and body adornments practiced by Akans, especially the youth?	Yes: 11	Yes: 4	Yes: 8	Yes: 9	<b>32</b>	<b>64%</b>
	No: 6	No: 6	No: 0	No: 6	<b>18</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Q.4.</b> To the best of your knowledge, have there been any form of negative influence associated with various forms of body decorating practices seen in Ghana, especially among the youth in relating to piercing, body painting and tattooing?	Yes: 12	Yes: 9	Yes: 8	Yes: 11	<b>40</b>	<b>80%</b>
	No: 5	No: 1	No: 0	No: 4	<b>10</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Q.5.</b> Are there possible risks attached to some of these body decorating practices seen among the youth?	Yes: 10	Yes: 6	Yes: 4	Yes: 8	<b>28</b>	<b>56%</b>
	No: 7	No: 4	No: 4	No: 7	<b>22</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Q.6.</b> Is there anything likes 'appropriate' form of dressing for an occasion in Ghanaian culture?	Yes: 15	Yes: 10	Yes: 8	Yes: 13	<b>46</b>	<b>92%</b>
	No: 2	No: 0	No: 0	No: 2	<b>4</b>	<b>8%</b>

<b>Q.7.</b> Are there category of dresses that can be regarded as being modest or decent as well as immodest or indecent in Ghanaian/ Akan culture?	Yes: 13	Yes: 6	Yes: 8	Yes: 10	<b>37</b>	<b>74%</b>
	No: 4	No: 4	No: 0	No: 5	<b>13</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Q.8.</b> Are there threats to what constitute appropriate and modest forms of dressing among the youth?	Yes: 10	Yes: 6	Yes: 7	Yes: 9	<b>32</b>	<b>64%</b>
	No: 7	No: 4	No: 1	No: 8	<b>18</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Q.9.</b> Do Akan traditional values frown on practices that expose the navel, stomach, cleavage of the breasts and bridges of the buttocks to the public through forms of clothing?	Yes: 9	Yes: 7	Yes: 8	Yes: 10	<b>34</b>	<b>68%</b>
	No: 8	No: 3	No: 0	No: 5	<b>16</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Q.10.</b> Can it be said that, the possible threats of foreign influences are partly caused by the influx of second-hand clothing, inability to regulate the movies/ videos and print industries, also through breakdown of traditional values, norms, ethics and 'coping blinding' fashion and entertainment styles from the western world?	Yes: 12	Yes: 8	Yes: 8	Yes: 13	<b>41</b>	<b>82%</b>
	No: 5	No: 2	No: 0	No: 2	<b>9</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Q.11.</b> Culturally, are wearing of earrings by men, tattooing the body and bleaching of the skin considered as negative influences from external sources?	Yes: 11	Yes: 6	Yes: 7	Yes: 9	<b>33</b>	<b>66%</b>
	No: 6	No: 4	No: 1	No: 6	<b>17</b>	<b>34%</b>

The questions in the table XVIII were designed to ascertain the proof or otherwise of the second hypothesis. The hypothesis suggested that negative influence, resulting from acculturation poses a threat to the sustenance of good moral and its related issue in clothing and adornment among the Ghanaian/Akan youths. Responses to the eleven questions were largely positive, indicating the possibility of threats to

the sustenance of cultural values and morals through the use of clothes. Similar responses were realised after the questionnaire was analysed and interpreted in chapter five. These confirm that, Ghanaian culture is being threatened by negative influences through fashion.

## 6.2 Conclusions

Having looked, however, briefly at the trends of clothing and fashion history associated with personal adornment, it is apparent that, the art of personal adornment has elaborate aesthetic concept. These are lively art, carrying traditional techniques and motifs into modern uses. Fashion documentation from the West African sub-region is keen for acquiring a broader perspective of knowledge, understanding and development of clothing in the culture of Ghanaians. The picture unveils the types of clothing and mode of adornment that were prevalent among the people of the coast between the fifteenth century and the eighteenth century. Notable among clothing styles and adornments were wraparounds, shrouds, forms of beads called *corals* and varied hairstyle. Influences and changes that went on within the periods mentioned above were insignificant. Meanwhile, the status of the rich was clearly spelt out from that of the poor in the society at the time, with references to the types of clothes they wore. The rich clothes were more elaborate than that of the poor man.

The study also reveals the significance of clothing and adornment of the people who live in the three territories of Gold Coast (Ghana) before independence. There were possibilities of internal influences exhibited among the local people within the three territories in the Gold Coast. Though fashion of children and

adolescents were not elaborated on, there was information on the simplest form of covering among them. Common integration in clothes were revealed in smock and men's clothing within the Northern, Central and Southern parts of the country.

Beauty is a major component of the fashion of a Ghanaian woman. Beauty in the context of the Akans embraces both the slim and the bulky figure types. However, the idea of beauty is not only expressed in figure types but also other inherent characteristics of an individual which comprises virtues, morals and etiquettes. Clothing is an important element used in complimenting the physical beauty of any body, but its effectiveness depends on the kind of figure type that one possesses. The three basic figure types endomorph, ectomorph and mesomorph are discussed and what type of clothes that can be used to project or concealed a particular default in a figure type to make it look ideal and presentable. Some forms of beliefs held about beauty and their symbolism in relation with some artworks and elements or shapes of design in various parts of Africa and Ghana in particular were also touched on.

Traditional institutions found among Akans come with rites and celebrations that are inseparable from their forms of clothing and adornments. Among these institutions are rites associated with chieftaincy, religious cults, rites of passage and traditional festivals. Clothes and colours associated with most of these activities have their significance attached to them which were elaborated on in the study. Chieftaincy institutions evolve with differences in class, status and elaborate forms of accessories and clothes. Most of the clothing styles associated are of traditional and cultural significances. Costumes and accessories of traditional rulers have meanings associated with the designs, patterns and colours used. Splendour of traditional

textiles are the order of the day. Costumes and accessories associated with priests and priestesses who are considered as mediators between the gods and the community in our traditional settings have their meanings and significances attached with them. However, besides restrictions given by some gods in the cause of worship with regard to wearing specific attires, priest and priestesses can wear any form of attire when they are not possessed by the gods; ranging from casual to any form of designer wear. Rites of passage which entail the various stages of childhood, puberty, marriage and death equally come with variety of clothing and adornments which have been discussed in the dissertation, with the various changes associated with them in cause of time.

Foreign Influences on clothing and fashion of Ghanaians come with both positive and negative changes within the indigenous and contemporary styles of clothing. Positively, the coming of foreign fashion enhanced the changing trends in the clothing of Ghanaians. This enhances the look of an individual and puts him or her in the spotlight in terms of look and appeal. The negative influences attached to foreign fashion boil down on moral and ethical values in the cultural context, as to which parts of the body to cover or not to cover were also concerned. More fashion styles are considered to move toward exposure of body parts which are considered sacred and must be covered, hence moral war- drums are considered to be beaten. The alarming manner of the situation is the concern that the dissertation tries to address through possible solutions and proposals. These negative influences are being rooted in some body adornment practices with increasing possibility of health risks, which deserved immediate measures to be taken to reduce and reverse the trend. Possible areas of foreign negative influences and concerns raised with proposed solution and



recommendation are touched on, during the cause of analysing the problem in relation to the culture of Ghanaians in general and Akans in perspective.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

1. There is the need to conduct an in-depth research into the historical aspects of clothing and fashion and their relationship with culture and art within the various Regions in Ghana. Such information can be incorporated into fashion course programmes at various levels of the educational systems in Ghana. Further research work should be carried out on prominent fashion designers in Ghana, with focus on Akans impulse to the construction and use of fabrics especially the local fabrics. This will encourage young designers to understand the Cultural terrain in Ghana, especially in Akanland and fashion their works with pride and Akan traditional philosophical genetic ideas behind them. This will be an important factor in projecting Cultural ideology of the Akans and their iconography through clothing construction.
2. It is recommended also that, the electronic and print media be circumspect in what they print and show in the papers and on the television screens, as they are the mouthpiece of the nation. They should guide the youth in their ways of reasoning and in their desire towards the selection of fashionable items. Video clips and lyrics of music must be monitored on our airwaves by stake holders in the entertainment industry, if we as a nation need to make progress in recapturing our steps towards good morals through dresses that are being exhibited mostly by the youth. Meaningful gains can be obtained if measures are put in place by law-making bodies to control the importation of second hand goods and other

fashionable items. The media especially the audio-visual and the print media as well as entertainment houses must have standards to guide their activities.

3. With regard to diminution in the dress codes of conduct, it is important that religious bodies in Ghana improved on their codes of moral values which are reflected in out-fits of their members, since most people are affiliated to one religion or the other. Community structures are being weakened by foreign influences and urbanisation, making it difficult for its leaders to enforce right or wrong conducts associated with clothing. This can be addressed if the legislature as an arm of government defines the codes that are acceptable and should be aired in all media networks and bans put in place to curtail negative dress codes within the Ghanaian society, similar to such bold step taken by the Liberian government in 2008.
4. Education on the art of tattooing and body paintings by skin specialists (dermatologist) through seminars in schools and recreational centres as well as through the print, video and audio media are necessary to eliminate or reduce possible risks that are attached to such arts on the human body. It was gathered by the researcher that, tattooing is catching up with the youth of today, therefore the practice should be regulated and performed by qualified practitioners who should be aware of the safety measures to apply. There are however, some tattoo parlours in the country that practice the art in hygienic conditions, but a lot more, especially those done locally by people who take little or no caution with regard to safety measures in this modern era of HIV/AIDS must be educated. The local processes of tattooing make use of needles, and other local nuts and herbs that might be harmful to the human body. Education in this direction becomes

necessary to avert problems such as virus infections and wounds forming on affected areas where tattoos are performed. Though tattooing cannot be ruled out completely from Ghanaian culture in modern times, on the issue of morals, symbols and objects tattooed on the body such as dragons, scorpions, etc are of concern to sections of the public. It is believe, the beauty and admiration aspects of tattoos on the body that call for exposure of certain areas of the body, especially portions of a lady's body to the public must be checked or discouraged. This is possible through individual and collective awareness creation among the youth, such areas include, portions of the navels, around the cleavage of the breasts and at the back portions of the waistline.

5. All indications suggest that, the components of paints especially acrylics used on the body and other painting measures are either not known or disregarded by both practitioners and patronisers of the arts. It is therefore recommended that, health personals should organise seminars to those interested in the art of body painting to know the risks associated with the practice and also give them simple safety practice measures to reduce risks that might be associated with the art. The evidences suggested that, there is the need to conduct an in-depth research by both artists and health persons into health risks and the technical guidelines associated with all forms of body arts including body painting, to make the youth and the public well informed, before those who are willing to embark on such arts go forward to have them done on their bodies.
6. The museums and archives in Ghana should have collection, documentation and assembling of costumes that depict the styles of past historical evidences of Ghanaians. There is therefore the need to invest into the establishment of

museums of costumes in Ghana to document the past, present and future proceedings of textile and various items used to facilitate the development of body arts and clothing in Ghana. These will provide good sources of reference materials for the nation. This can be provided through collective efforts of government and donor partners who take interest in the preservation of history and Ghanaian culture in general and Akans in particular. This is to help collect and exhibit various items of clothing and mode of adornment, to serve as historical information centre on trends of clothing for the future generation

7. The concept of good moral has to be given serious attention in Ghanaian society by parents, teachers and other organisational heads to enable salvage all the negative practices associated with dresses that expose the immoral standing of the youth in particular. Cultural ethnics and moral values have to be encouraged in schools, churches and at festivals by leaders of those sectors, to correct the possible moral degradation in society, especially through the use of clothes. All concern citizens must act as checks and balances on the mode of dressing of the youth to correct the menace and reduce vices like promiscuity in Ghanaian society.
8. The researcher recommends that the National Commission on Culture in collaboration with the government should implement the inclusion of local designs and patterns into the regalia, uniforms and paraphernalia of institutions like Universities, Judiciary and the Legislature's dress codes as means of awaking the interest of national identity through clothes, as spelled out in the handbook of 'culture policy of Ghana 2004'. This is to encourage ordinary citizens and other leaders of both private and government organisations to appreciate and use more

- locally produced fashion attires, thereby expanding the market for made in Ghana clothing which can be devoid of external negative influences.
9. Young designers in fashion should endeavour to learn more about Ghanaian culture to enable them incorporate ideas from traditional sources such as local accessories, symbols and motifs into designing and construction of clothes that can equally meet international standard, attaching the meanings and significances associated with objects used from these sources. This will propagate the culture of the country to the outside world in a different direction.
  10. There seems to be an over reliance on existing catalogues and magazines, indicating lack of creativity on the part of tailors and dressmakers. There is the need therefore to improve on the creativity and designing concepts of these tailors and dressmakers to bring variations and increase the taste and desire for locally produced clothing styles in the country. This can be done by organizing short seminars and workshops for them by fashion designers to educate them in the aspect of creativity through idea developments, colour techniques and illustrations in fashion. Tailors and dressmakers must be encouraged to suggest or influence their clients' choice of styles so as to limit the exposure of parts considered 'private', when sewing their preferred styles for them.
  11. By-laws have to be put in place to address the indecency paraded by the youth in public places through their dress styles. The by-laws should be enforced by traditional and opinion leaders in their respective jurisdictions. By-laws that will enable chiefs to impose fines on offenders who dress indecently as a deterrent for other people should be welcomed by Ghanaians. With regard to what can be acceptable as decent or indecent, the extent of the exposure or coverage of the



body parts should be in-line with traditional level of tolerance within the various societies in Ghana. In another context, the issue of indecent and inappropriate dress codes are believed to emanate from individual homes. Some parents are not being responsible enough to check the dress codes of their children, probably because they lost control of their wards or are themselves culprits to wearing unacceptable dress codes. Parents and guardians in general must set good standards in dress codes and inculcate them into their wards, if the nation is to make any meaningful headway as culturally centred citizens with the will power to address inappropriate modes of clothing.

The explicitly display of provocative dresses by the youth today, has never been our culture in the past. Cultural fusion is inevitable, but any form of fashion in that regard should not be allowed to permeate the moral fibre of the Ghanaian society in the context of modernity. In Africa, our culture forms the bed-rock of our society and communal life and should not be sold on a silver platter for anything. Akan cultural values give prominence to social etiquettes, beauty concepts and the general appearances of its individual members. Each member of the society is a custodian of its values and ethics; hence every elder in the society qualifies in admonishing anybody's child when he or she goes wrong, even with regard to clothing. This important aspects of our culture needs to be re-visited to curb the menace of indecency through the use of clothes in our societies.

The researcher is much aware of the human rights advocates who are concerned about the rights of every citizen to do what he or she pleases. That is to say, every individual is permitted to wear or dress the way that suits him or her

without any reservation or imposition from anybody whatsoever. However, it is also a known fact that, individual's right has a limit in society so that they do not equally trample on the right of others as well. Therefore individual's right should not be allowed to supersede the general acceptable standards set-up in any society for the general good of that society. The culturally acceptable level of decency in all regard in any society must be obliged to by any citizen of the area as long as it is a collective and acceptable standard set-up by major stake holders of the community. It should therefore be stated that, general indications from the research presume that, if total ban on indecency in society through clothing is impracticable, then at least its display in public domain should be banned and enforced with the assistance of our traditional leaders and authorities for the sustenance of our cultural values and beliefs.



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KNUST



## APPENDIX A

Department of Industrial Art  
College of Art and Social Sciences  
KNUST- Kumasi  
Ghana

My ref no: BED/06/R1

10<sup>th</sup> October, 2006.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am an MPhil/PhD candidate in the Department of General Art Studies of the College of Art and Social Sciences, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana. I am currently conducting a research on the topic; **Fashion in Ghanaian Culture: a case study among the Akans.**

To achieve a successful dissertation, I submit the following questionnaire for your kind response. Please, any information provided will be treated with the outmost confidentiality; as such your views may enhance the final analysis of my dissertation.

I thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely Yours

(Bernard Edem Dzramedo)  
**Research Candidate**

**NB:** Please, to return questionnaire by post; a self - address envelop is attached to this letter.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

A questionnaire to solicit views on the topic:

### **FASHION IN GHANAIAIAN CULTURE: A CASE STUDY AMONG THE AKANS**

**It is to enhance a research to be submitted by an M Phil/PhD candidate of the  
African Art and Culture section of the Department of General Art Studies  
College of Art and Social Sciences (CASS),  
University of Science and Technology,  
KNUST – Kumasi.**

**Contact Number : .....**  
**E-mail : .....**  
**Research Candidate: .....**



## THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS DIVIDED INTO NINE SECTIONS

Please, under each section, tick (✓) the box/s which appropriately answer the question/s and give comment/s when necessary.

### (A) Particulars of Respondent

1. Age group; (a) 15 – 25years ☐ (b) 26 – 35years ☐  
(c) 36 – 55years ☐ (d) Above 55years ☐
2. Gender; (a) Male ☐ (b) Female ☐
3. Educational level; (a) University ☐ (b) Post secondary ☐  
(c) Secondary ☐ (d) Post primary ☐
4. Religion; (a) Christian ☐ (b) Moslem ☐  
(c) Traditionalist ☐ (d) Others ☐
5. Marital Status; (a) Married ☐ (b) Single ☐
6. Profession / occupation; .....
7. Position /Status/ Rank; .....

## (B) The Concept of Ghanaian Culture and Fashion

**Yes**      **No**

8. What does fashion in Ghanaian culture embrace?
- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Dressing to depict the female form?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) Wearing clothes, jewelries and accessories designed in Ghana.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) Wearing clothes that conform to the society norms and ethics   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) Dressing to depict one's status as a Ghanaian  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) The concept of beautiful figure, the arts of the body and tattoos related to traditional beliefs and practices | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) One's level of civilization and tuning to the rhythms of modern ways of dressing                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (g) Dressing to reveal what you have and expressing a sense of belongingness among peers                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- |  | <b><u>Yes</u></b>        | <b><u>No</u></b>         |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9. In Ghanaian culture, dressing appropriately for an occasion demands:  |                          |                          |
| (a) A total cover of the human parts regarded as sacred with clothes   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) Wearing elaborate dresses as well as those in vogue?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) Dressing in conformity to the moral standard of your community   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) Wearing attires that you appreciate as an individual   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) Knowing the significance and meaning attached to clothes acceptable for a particular occasion and dressing accordingly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Do Ghanaians have a fashion that reflects the cultural norms and practices of its people?  
 (a) Yes ☐ (b) Partly ☐ (c) No ☐ (d) Highly so ☐

11. What factors account for your choice of answer at 10?
- |  | <u>Yes</u>               | <u>No</u>                |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Strict religious beliefs, rules and regulations                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) Respect for elders and sticking to good morals and ethics within the society | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) Good parental and community role in child-upbringing                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) Low level of formal education in rural areas                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) The rate of acculturation from the western world                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) Due to good government policy on culture and fashion in Ghana                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Is traditional fashion (African fashion) static or dynamic?  
 (a) Yes, it is static ☐ (b) No, it is rather dynamic ☐

13. Please, give reasons to support your answer in 12.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**(C) Mode of Dressing in Ghanaian Culture and its Influences**

14. Do Ghanaians have traditional ways of dressing which reveal their culture?  
 (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

15. Are these traditional clothes acceptable and admired by majority of Ghanaians?  
 (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

16. What category of dresses are regarded as being modest and decent in Ghanaian culture?
- |   | <u>Yes</u>               | <u>No</u>                |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Dresses that are admired by the opposite sex                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) Dresses that cover the vital /private parts of the human body             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) Any dress worn and is acceptable by more than half of the society members | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) Anything in vogue   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) Dresses used for festivals and other social activities within a community | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

17. Do you always want to wear any type of dress considered as 'current fashion'?  
 (a) Yes ☐ (b) Preferably ☐ (c) No ☐ (d) If money is available ☐

18. What comments do your parents make when you wear provocative dresses?  
 (a) No comment ☐ (b) Embarrassing ☐  
 (c) Interesting comments ☐ (d) Positive comments ☐

19. Do you admire those who dress decently?

- (a) Very much ☐ (b) Somehow ☐ (c) Not at all ☐ (d) At times ☐

20. Give explanation to your response in question 19

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

21. How do you feel anytime you wear traditional attire?

- (a) Great ☐ (b) Cool ☐ (c) That people stare at me ☐ (d) Shy ☐ (e) Nothing ☐

22. Which age group(s) of people like wearing Kaba and other African wears?

- (a) 15 – 25years ☐ (b) 26 – 35years ☐  
(c) 36 – 55years ☐ (d) above 55years ☐

23. Do you think the call by the President for Friday Africa wear is a step in the right direction with regard to promoting fashion and culture in Ghana?

- (a) I do not know ☐ (b) Yes ☐ (c) More need to be done ☐ (d) it will not work ☐

24. In Ghana, which part(s) of the human body is/are considered as ‘private and should not be exposed to the public?

- (a) the navel ☐ (b) the legs ☐ (c) the breast ☐  
(d) the stomach ☐ (e) the buttocks ☐ (f) the head ☐

25. Do Akan/Ghanaian traditional values frown on such negative practices as expressed in out-fit among the youth?

- (a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Partly ☐ (d) Very much ☐

26. In what form does foreign fashion affect the fashion and culture of Akans/Ghanaians?

**Yes** **No**

- |   |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) through the influx of second-hand clothes   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) movies/videos and the print media   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) it kills the Ghanaian textile industry that produces African fabrics                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) frequent travelling of the youth overseas   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) formal education and the breakdown of traditional values, norms and ethics.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) because there is no strict measure to curb importation of foreign textiles and fashionable items. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

27. What will be your possible solution to problems regarding the ‘indecent fashioning’ of some youth of today?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- |   | <u><b>Yes</b></u>        | <u><b>No</b></u>         |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 28. By what means, can the economy of the country be improved if fashion is tailored along the culture set up of the country? |                          |                          |
| (a) it will enhance local manufacturing textile industry  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) small and medium scale fashion related firms will improve their businesses  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) it will boost confidence of people to wear more local clothes and make them proud as Ghanaians                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) good moral and ethical values will be achieved and peace maintained   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**(D) The Concept of Beauty in Ghana (esp. among the Akans)**

29. Would you agree that, the beauty of the human figure is fundamental to the fashion that goes onto the body?

- (a) Very much ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) Yes ☐ (d) at times ☐

- |   | <u><b>Yes</b></u>        | <u><b>No</b></u>         |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 30. Traditionally, the idea of a beautiful figure has to do with; |                          |                          |
| (a) a tall, slim female figure                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) broad bust with bulbous breasts and protruding buttocks       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) a figure that carries the characteristics of the akuaba doll  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) the figure must look like the hour- glass                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

31. Is it true that the Ghanaian (Akan) concept of beauty extends beyond the physical appearance to include the following

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) adherence to social etiquette                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) one must have good manners                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) good utterances from people within the community | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) none of the above is included in beauty          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

32. From the look of things, should the concept of beauty in Ghanaian culture be improved or ignored?

- (a) it should be improved ☐ (b) it should be ignored ☐

33. Please, give reason to support your answer in 32.

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34. Kindly state the possible ways by which a Ghanaian/Akan woman/man can be groomed to expose his/her beauty/handsomeness?

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35. Do the same principles of beauty hold for the youth of today? Please, state their views on concept of beauty/handsomeness.

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**(E) Accessories Used in Ghanaian Culture**

36. Does society frown on people who use accessories in any of the following ways?	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
(a) men who wear earrings on one or both ears	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) ladies who wear anklet and pinch the nose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) those that bleach their skins and pluck the eye brows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) those that use foreign necklaces, earrings and bracelets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

37. Why is it that, Ghanaians turn to prefer foreign accessories to local ones?	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
(a) local ones have poor finishing touches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) most people feel inferior in local accessories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) the use of foreign accessories depicts a person as being more civilized	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) the level of promotion and popularity given to local accessories is low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

38. Do traditional or African accessories have meanings and significance attached to their uses as well as occasions that demand their use?

(a) True ☐ (b) False ☐

39. Is it true that Ghanaian women initially use some natural cosmetics and traditional fragrant herbs for enhancing their beauty?

(a) True ☐ (b) False ☐

40. If your answer to question 39 is true, should it be improved and why?

State reasons .....

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**(F) Colour, Body Painting and Tattoos; Its Meanings and Significance**

41. Is it true that the use of colour in Ghanaian fashion has meanings and significances associated with them?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐ (c) at times ☐ (d) Very much ☐

42. Personally, do your choice of fabric colour and its style depend on a particular occasion, meaning and significance attached to them?

(a) Always ☐ (b) at times ☐ (c) Yes ☐ (d) No ☐



43. Do you think the art of body painting is still vital in our traditional fashion?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

44. In your opinion, can body painting and tattoos on the body have some health implication on the human skin?

(a) It is not possible ☐ (b) Yes ☐  
(c) No risk is attached to them ☐ (d) I have no idea ☐

45. Tattoo is gradually becoming common especially among the youth in Ghana, what do you think is responsible for this? Give reasons

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**(G) Coiffure in Traditional and Modern Contexts**

46. Can hair style be linked with belief and practices as well as occasions within the traditional set- ups of the various societies?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

47. Do you agree, each of these hair styles is part of Ghanaian culture and have names, meaning and significance?

(a) hair plaiting or braiding, cornrows and rasta  
(b) shaving part or the entire head  
(c) perm or relaxed hair  
(d) use of wig  
(e) dreadlock

**Yes** **No**

☐ ☐  
☐ ☐  
☐ ☐  
☐ ☐  
☐ ☐

48. Do headgears have meanings, significance and names attached to them and are they important in the fashion of Ghanaian women especially among the Akan?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

49. Does society abhor men who plait, braid or dreadlock their hair in the name of fashion?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

50. Should the different styles of headdresses in Ghanaian culture be maintained, encouraged or eliminated from the contemporary fashion world? State why.

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**(H) Religious and other Art forms in Fashion**

51. Do religious beliefs and practices of any sort affect the fashion of Ghanaians?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

52. Is fashion (dresses, tattoos, incisions, body paintings, headdresses, etc) an art?

(a) Yes ☐ (b) No ☐

**(I) Recommendation and Suggestion**

53. Can you kindly give comments on how the traditional fashion in relating to culture could be sustained and enhanced as well as aspects that need to be discouraged?

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54. Please, you may also comment, relating to acculturation among the youth in terms of fashion and its economic implications on the country.

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## APPENDIX B

Mr. Edem Bernard Dzramedo  
C/O Dr. O. Osei Agyeman  
Department of General Art Studies  
P.O. Box 50  
University Post Office  
Kumasi – Ghana

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My Ref. No BED/06/R2

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW**

I am an Mphil/PhD candidate in the Department of General Art Studies of College of Art and Social Sciences, KUNST, Kumasi, Ghana. I am currently conducting a research on the topic; **Clothing and Fashion in Ghanaian Culture: a case study among the Akans.**

With regards to this, I kindly request that you grant me a 30 minute interview time out of your tight schedule to enable me complete the dissertation successfully. Attached to this are interview guide and letter of commitment stating my proposed date and time.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely Yours

.....  
(Bernard Edem Dzramedo)

**Research Candidate**

Phone No.....

Department of General Art Studies  
P.O. Box 50  
University Post Office  
Kumasi – Ghana

.....

My Ref. No BED/06/R3

Dear Sir/Madam

Letter of Commitment

Could you, please complete the following letter, detach it and return by post in the enclosed self – addressed envelop.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

.....

(Bernard Edem Dzramedo)

**Research Candidate**

.....

Mr. Edem Bernard Dzramedo  
C/O Dr. O. Osei Agyeman  
Department of General Art Studies  
P.O. Box 50  
University Post Office  
Kumasi – Ghana

.....

Letter of Commitment

Please, tick and fill in as appropriate.

- ☐ I am prepared to answer your questions.
- ☐ I accept the date and time allotted to me on the interview schedule.
- ☐ My preferred date and time are ....., 2006 at ..... am/pm.
- ☐ I am not willing to answer your questions.

Signature of respondent: .....

Name of respondent: .....

Office Stamp: .....

Date: .....

Thanks.

**Interview Guide**

**On the topic:**

**CLOTHING AND FASHION IN GHANAIAN CULTURE: A CASE STUDY  
AMONG THE AKANS**

**NB; The Interview Guide is sub-divided into seven sections; the first and the last sections apply to all categories of respondents whilst the rest are chosen or selected based on the category of respondents being interviewed.**

**Section 1; Personal Details of Respondent**

- Name; .....
- Age; .....
- Occupation; .....
- Religious Background; .....
- Educational Level; .....

**Section 2; Historical View Point of Clothing within the Gold Coast  
(Ghana); Between 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

- Who are the Akans? Where do they originated from to their present home?
- Has development within the Guinea Coast have any impact on the development of clothing and adornments in Southern, Central and Northern parts of the Gold Coast.
- What were the possible forms of clothing associated with men, women and children within the Gold Coast?
- How different or related could be the forms of clothing and adornment from one region to the other in relation to clothing today?
- Have these clothing and fashion seen any significant changes over the years during those eras?
- What were the possible forms of headdresses; body marks (tattoos, scarification, and body painting); accessories (jewelries and beads) and foot wears available as well as their changes between the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present?



- Have there been any changes in clothing over the various periods or centuries in terms of modes of dressing?
- How different are the clothing styles of the Akans from that of the other ethnic settings in Ghana over the past four to five decades?

### **Section 3; Clothing and Fashion Associated with Traditional Institutions Between 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

#### **Part 3.1; Clothing and Adornment as seen in chieftaincy institutions**

- What is culture? Is it dynamic or static and why?
- What is fashion? Does it form part of Ghanaian culture? Is it even important to demand that fashion be inline with culture? If yes or no, why?
- What were the possible forms of dresses worn by chiefs and queen mothers on various occasions?
- What kind of dresses do they use on festive days; adjudication of justice; religious ceremonies; clothing in the installation of chiefs; casual or everyday activities and funeral rites of chiefs?
- How relevant is the traditional textiles (kente and adinkra) in the fashion or dresses of chiefs, their courtiers and the general public especially, among the Akans?
- What are the meanings and significance attached to the various forms of dresses and accessories mentioned above (anklets, bracelets, necklaces, rings) used by chiefs and queen mothers?
- In ceremonial occasions like funerals, installation of chiefs, etc, do various accessories used such as beads, sandals, clothes, have any significance associated with them?
- What types of dresses do attendants or courtiers (referring to stool carrier, horn blowers, umbrella holders, personal body guards, executioners sword bearers, etc) of chiefs and queen mothers use? Have there been changes over the years?
- What types of hairstyles, body marks, and accessories do these courtiers use? Likewise those used by chiefs and queen mothers?

- Do contemporary changes in fashion affect the modes of dressing of chiefs and their attendants?
- By what means do traditional leaders promote culture through clothing and fashion among the young?

### **Part 3.2; Clothing and Adornments of Priests and Priestesses**

- What types of dress code were used by traditional priests and priestesses over the years?
- Have there been any changes?
- Do they have difference in their dress code, such as dresses for everyday or casual use, religious dresses, traveling dresses and those for ceremonial activities?
- What type of hairstyles, sandals, body art and other forms of accessories do they use?

### **Part 3.3; Clothing within Socio-Cultural Activities**

What were the forms of clothing and fashion associated with rites of passage, festivals and other cultural groupings like Asafo groups, Masquerade groups, Cultural dancers and other groups of musicians?

#### **3.3.1; Fashion in Rites of Passage**

##### **3.3.1.1; Clothing and accessories associated with birth rites**

- What types of clothing and accessories are used by mothers of new born babies? Looking at how the babies are also clothed?
- What are the types of colours and accessories used in this rite?
- Have there been any changes whatsoever in fashionable accessories used over the centuries (years)?

##### **3.3.1.2; Clothing in puberty rites**

- What are the forms of clothing and adornments used during puberty ceremonies within Ghanaian societies, especially among the Akans?

- What are the types and significance of beads, jewelries, body arts, colours and other accessories associated with bragoro and dipo rites in Ghana?

#### **3.3.1.3; The role of fashion in Marriage rites**

- What dresses or clothes, body decorations do women used during traditional marriages?
- How different do the marriage couples dress during the marriage festivity?
- Among the Akans, do dowry or bride price paid includes; clothes, jewelries, beads and other accessories like footwears?
- How different will a royal marriage be from that of the general public- considering the role of fashion?
- What have been changes associated with traditional marriage in this contemporary era?
- What forms of clothing and fashion are associated with contemporary Christian and Islamic marriages?

#### **3.3.1.4; Fashion associated with death**

- What forms of dresses are used for deceased persons and that of its close relations as well as other mourners in Akan culture?
- Are there variations in the dress code for mourners throughout the various stages of the funeral rites?
- What types of colours, accessories, sandals, hairstyles, etc are used during funeral rite for deceased persons and by mourners themselves?
- Are there variations between funeral rites of royals and that of the general public in traditional society? What are they, in relation to clothing and fashion?
- Hairstyles of close relation and other mourners?
- Are there varied ways of dressing and laying the deceased in state? What forms of fashion are associated with this?
- What have been the changes and similarities associated with traditional and contemporary forms of funeral rites and burials?

### **3.3.2; Clothing Used during Festive Occasions**

- What are the various forms of traditional groupings associated with festivals?
- Do they have their own dress codes and fashion? E.g. do asafo groups, masquerade groups, cultural dancers and musicians have their own forms of fashion associated with them among the Akans?
- How relevant are their dress codes to the sustenance and successes of such festivals?
- How important are body arts used on festive occasions to the sustenance of culture among the Akans? Are items used for painting the body harmful? What are they?
- Are Akans associated with any of the following body marks; scarification, tattoos, incisions and body paintings? What are the importance and meanings associated with those used?
- If tattoos form part of Akans' body marks, how different are those marks traditionally from what are being practised among the youth of today?

### **Section 4; Beauty Concepts among Ghanaians (Akans)**

- What constitute an ideal figure in Ghana? How is beauty measured among the Akans?
- Is there anything like outward and inner beauty or handsomeness?
- How relevant are social etiquettes to beauty concepts? E.g. respect, greeting elders, good manners, etc.
- How different is Ghanaian or African beauty concept from that of western concept?
- How do these beauty concepts have their impact on the clothing and fashion of a Ghanaian woman?
- Do Akans have ways of nurturing a person to become a beautiful or handsome adult?
- How relevant are symbols or items of beauty to the glory of an Akan woman?

## **Section 5; Influence and Impact of Foreign Fashion on the Contemporary Trends of Clothing and Fashion in Ghana**

- How positively or negatively do other cultures and their fashion trends have had impact on the clothing and fashion trends of Ghanaians for that matter the Akans?
- What roles do the textile and fashion industries in Ghana play in contributing to the success or failure of fashion inline with cultural values?
- Do the youth of today apprehend fashion in the cultural ways, by using or fashioning clothes to that effect? If yes or no, why?
- What were the major trends of fashion between independent era and now (1950s to 2000)? That is, assessing trends in men's wear, women's wear and the changes that occurred over the years?
- What types of headdresses, footwear, bags, beads, jewelries and body arts have been in fashion throughout these periods in Ghanaian history?
- Have those changes affect the wearing of kaba styles, types of smocks and traditional clothes used over the periods? If yes or no, prove it?

## **Section 6; Impact of Foreign Fashion on Moral and Cultural lives of Ghanaian Youths**

- Do moral values in Ghana have any bearing on fashionable items use?
- Has there been moral degradation among the youth? If yes, what are the possible problems associated with them?
- What criteria make a particular fashion or clothing indecent or immoral from the others in Ghanaian culture?
- What factors triggered these actions?
- If culture is said to be dynamic, can't Ghanaian culture embrace these modern trends of dresses? If no, why?
- In today's society, do the youth dress in relation to cultural norms and traditions of the society?
- What is your view, on the argument that, what is seen and recognized today as decent dresses and considered to be inline with Ghanaian culture were western



styles that were adopted and accepted into the traditional system, hence similar approach should be taken towards what is currently regarded as indecent and adopt it into the cultural system?

- What were the possible factors that influence the clothing and fashion of Ghanaians, today? Are these factors contributing to the so called negative influences in Ghanaian moral and cultural lives? Why?

### **Section 7; Suggestions necessary for possible solutions**

- What should be the possible roles of the government and its officials in sustaining the cultural interest through fashion among the public?
- What are the roles of stake holders like UNESCO, UNECEF and NGOs in promoting the use of traditional costumes and reducing the lack of interest in cultural activities in Ghanaian society which is partly reflected in dress codes of today's society?
- What should be the individual's contribution towards controlling the excessive use of foreign fashion and the negativity associated with them that seem to have serious deprecations on Ghanaians today or in the near future?
- What are society leaders doing to salvage the situation of indecency and foreign influences in Ghanaian communities?