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Historical analysis of the Cultural significance and dress identity Politics of Ghana's Parliamentary dress between 1951 to 2023

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HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DRESS IDENTITY POLITICS OF GHANA'S PARLIAMENTARY DRESS BETWEEN 1951 TO 2023

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(201814677)

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Doctor of Philosophy
(Arts and Culture)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **Samuel Donkoh**, hereby declare that this research, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been duly identified and acknowledged has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: ……

Date: ……

Supervisor's Declaration

I certify that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project work laid down by the University of Education, Winneba

Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel **(Principal Supervisor)**

Signature ……...

Date ……....……..…….

Prof. Emmanuel Kodwo Amissah **(Co-Supervisor**)

Signature ……...

Date ……....……..…….

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the speaker of Ghana's parliament, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, the Parliament of Ghana, and my beloved Mother Hannah Nkum of blessed memory.

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LIST OF ABREVIATION

NCC	-	National Commision on Culture
MP	-	Members of Parliament
SP	-	Speaker of Parliament
COP	-	Clerk of Parliament
SOC	-	Standing Orders Committee
HON.	-	Honourable
Rt.	-	Right

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ABSTRACT

Despite Ghana's sixty-seven years of political independence, the historical trajectory and cultural significance of its parliamentary sartorial practices remain a significant scholarly lacuna. This study directly addresses this gap by undertaking a critical historical analysis of parliamentary dress culture evolution in Ghana from 1951 to 2023. Focusing specifically on the attire of Speakers of Parliament and members of the legislative bodies under their leadership, the study employs a qualitative historical design. Utilizing purposive and stratified sampling, a sample size of forty-four participants were engaged. Primary data was derived from meticulous analysis of historical records, archival photographs, stakeholder opinions, and targeted interviews. The investigation dissects the design structure, embedded symbolisms, and national identity constructs manifested in the parliamentary robes of Ghana's Speakers. It critically highlights the enduring influence of Western-sartorial overtones and documents the deliberate, post-independence incorporation of Indigenous Ghanaian elements under President Nkrumah's National Personality concept. This shift signified a resurgence of local dress as an emblem of sovereignty and cultural reclamation. Furthermore, the study engages contemporary discourse, notably analyzing Speaker Bagbin's recent advocacy for decolonizing parliamentary attire. It reveals the perspectives of parliamentarians and cultural custodians on formalizing Indigenous Ghanaian dress styles for parliamentary proceedings. The research also uncovers the tangible impact of parliamentary dress codes on Ghana's local fashion industry, illustrating how political attire influences broader sartorial trends nationally. Key findings illuminate the crucial, yet underexplored, role of clothing in legislative representation and identity formation within a post-colonial African state, Ghana. Theoretically, this study significantly advances understanding of the complex intersection between fashion, cultural identity, and political governance in post-colonial contexts, positioning Ghana within broader African and global discourses. It reveals parliamentary attire as a critical site for negotiating national identity, demonstrating the dynamic tension and synthesis between enduring colonial legacies and deliberate post-indigenous reclamation. Furthermore, the research documents the socio-economic impact of political dress codes on Ghana's local creative industries, informing vital policy debates concerning the formalization and potential legislation of culturally resonant parliamentary attire. Crucially, the findings underscore the urgent imperative for systematic preservation of this evolving facet of Ghana's cultural heritage. The study recommends: further historical research into pre-1951 colonial-era parliamentary dress to uncover obscured cultural expressions; Legislative consideration to formalize Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture; Establishing a dedicated parliamentary museum to preserve robes and artifacts, safeguarding this vital heritage for future scholarship and public engagement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter delineates the nature of the research problem and attempts to justify it. In doing so, it gives the background to the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, specific objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, and organization of the rest of the text.

1.1 Background to the Study

The investigation into Ghana's parliamentary dress culture from 1951 to 2023 constitutes a vital inquiry into the intricate relationship between political transformation, societal evolution, and cultural expression within the nation's legislative sphere. This period, encompassing the twilight of colonial administration, the triumphant achievement of independence in 1957, subsequent military regimes, and the eventual stabilization of democratic governance, provides a rich tapestry against which sartorial choices within Parliament can be analyzed. Parliamentary attire transcends mere functionality; it operates as a sophisticated form of non-verbal communication, visually articulating shifts in authority, national identity, political allegiance, and societal values (Essel et al, 2023; Smith, 2012). The attire worn by Members of Parliament, and particularly by the Speakers who preside, serves as a tangible archive reflecting the nation's journey and its ongoing negotiation of selfhood in the post-colonial era. Ghana's independence marked a pivotal moment demanding new visual symbols of sovereignty, inevitably influencing parliamentary dress as a deliberate move away from imposed colonial norms. Despite this recognized significance, scholarly attention has disproportionately focused on broader political

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history or the functional mechanics of Ghana's parliamentary system (Adomako, 2018; Koomson, 2020), leaving a conspicuous gap in the specific analysis of how dress culture has evolved and functioned as an integral component of parliamentary history and identity formation. While the lingering influence of colonial sartorial conventions in the immediate post-independence period has been noted (Osei, 2015), a critical examination of how these legacies persist, are contested, or have transformed within the contemporary Ghanaian parliamentary context remains underdeveloped (Owusu, 2021). This gap is particularly salient given that dress, as Allman (2004) asserts, is fundamentally interwoven with political and sociocultural expression, a concept powerfully encapsulated in the Akan proverb, *"sɛ wo werɛ firi wo kurom Ohene abɛn a, eyiw bɛgwa ase*" ("When you are unable to recall the sound of the horn of your hometown's chief, you risk losing your way in a gathering"), emphasizing the critical role of cultural tangibles like distinctive dress in anchoring identity and navigating social-political spaces.

The contemporary discourse surrounding parliamentary attire in Ghana is significantly shaped by the call for its decolonization, most prominently championed by figures like Speaker Alban Bagbin. This imperative extends far beyond superficial aesthetic change; it represents a profound project of cultural reclamation and epistemic justice. Decolonizing parliamentary dress entails the deliberate dismantling of sartorial legacies imposed during colonial rule, legacies often designed to signify European superiority and subordinate indigenous identities (manifested in the adoption of British-style wigs, robes, and formal Western suits as exclusive markers of authority and legitimacy). It demands the active centering of Ghanaian (and broader African) aesthetic systems, textile traditions (like Kente, Adinkra, Adanudo, Smock fabrics), garment forms (such as the Batakari, Kaba and Slit, Agbada-inspired

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robes), and symbolic vocabularies within the parliamentary chamber. Persisting with attire fundamentally rooted in the colonial metropole within the seat of Ghanaian self-governance perpetuates a visual language of subordination and neglects the rich sartorial heritage embodying the nation's intrinsic values and sovereignty; decolonization is thus an act of asserting epistemic autonomy and visual sovereignty. This process is further complicated by the forces of globalization and modernization, introducing Western styles and fostering a blending with traditional Ghanaian elements, creating a unique sartorial landscape that requires nuanced understanding (Tetteh, 2022; Eshun, 2023). Furthermore, scholars argue that dress can act as a catalyst for democratic dialogue, allowing individuals to proclaim allegiance and provoke discourse on identity and governance (Essel et al., 2023; Miller, 2004; Essel, 2019; Antubam, 1963; Willard, 2004), underscoring the political potency of this visual language.

Ghana's trajectory towards sartorial decolonization within its parliamentary sphere is significantly illuminated when situated within the broader comparative context of the West African subregion and the African continent, revealing a diverse spectrum of post-colonial approaches to political attire. South Africa, following the dismantling of apartheid, constitutionally enshrined the right to cultural expression (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, ss. 30-31), explicitly embracing cultural diversity within its parliamentary dress code. The National Assembly Rules permit the wearing of "traditional or cultural attire" (Rules of the National Assembly, 9th ed., 2016, Rule 13), resulting in the visible incorporation of vibrant garments such as Zulu *isiNene*, Xhosa *Umbhaco*, Sotho blankets, and Indian saris alongside or instead of Western business wear (Kuperus, 2015). Speakers have further demonstrated this commitment by integrating indigenous motifs into their official robes (Mkhize, 2018).

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Nigeria, conversely, exhibits a pragmatic syncretism. While Western suits remain commonplace, traditional attire like the male *Agbada* or *Babariga* and female *Gele* with *Iro & Buba* is frequently and officially worn, particularly during significant ceremonies and notably by presiding officers (Adebayo, 2017; Akinbode, 2020). This practice, reflecting the deep cultural significance of such garments as markers of status and authority (Renne, 2018), is implicitly sanctioned within parliamentary conventions (Standing Orders of the Senate, 2015 as Amended, Order 6(3).

Rwanda presents a distinct case of state-driven sartorial policy, actively promoting the *Igitenge*, a modernized wrap garment utilizing African prints, as formal wear for government officials, including parliamentarians, in the post-genocide era. This initiative served a dual purpose: fostering a unified national identity distinct from colonial divisions and significantly stimulating the local textile industry (Newbury, 2011; Waldorf, 2012; Hintjens, 2020). Liberia, reflecting its unique historical foundation, demonstrates a contrasting post-colonial trajectory, retaining pronounced influences from 19th-century American formal wear within its parliamentary and judicial attire (Sullivan, 2004; Dunn, 2009).

Senegal, akin to Ghana's evolving practice, features parliamentarians regularly wearing the *Boubou* or suits crafted from locally produced wax prints (*lèpès*), organically integrating distinct West African aesthetics into the formal political sphere (Heath, 1992; Mustafa, 2018). Collectively, these diverse national examples emphasize an active continental trend: the conscious integration of indigenous aesthetics as legitimate markers of political authority and identity. This trend fundamentally challenges the colonial paradigm that equated "formality" exclusively

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with Western sartorial norms (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997; Hansen, 2004) and offers valuable comparative frameworks for Ghana's decolonization efforts.

Decolonizing Ghana's parliamentary dress code holds significant cultural, economic, political, and social implications. Culturally, it asserts sovereignty by centering authority and legitimacy within indigenous traditions, countering colonial legacies and fostering authentic national identity (Allman, 2004; Smith, 2012). Economically, mandating local fabrics and designs boosts the domestic fashion and textile industry, stimulating growth, preserving skills, and spurring innovation (Tetteh, 2022). Politically, attire enhances parliamentarians' legitimacy and relatability by visually connecting them with citizens, affirming cultural heritage in leadership (Adebayo, 2017). Socially, parliamentary visibility educates citizens, instills pride, and transforms cultural symbols into contemporary governance emblems. It also catalyzes public dialogue on identity and power, facilitating democratic expression (Essel et al., 2023; Miller, 2004), while providing a framework for culturally resilient engagement with globalization (Eshun, 2023). The call for decolonization thus represents a critical engagement with post-colonial identity, representation, economic potential, and cultural integrity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The dominance of Western perspectives in the realms of knowledge production, art curation, and cultural policy has effectively marginalized Africa's contributions, overlooking its vibrant art and culture while disregarding indigenous knowledge and creative expressions. This issue constitutes a fundamental critique within postcolonial scholarship (Mudimbe, 1988; Ngũgĩ, 1986; Oguibe, 2004; UNESCO, 2018). As a result, Africa's role in global fashion history has been marginalized, with Eurocentric

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perspectives frequently downplaying or erasing the continent's significant contributions to the fashion industry (Essel et al; 2023; Hegel, 1956; Newton, 1940; Roper, 1963).

The assertion that Africa lacked a historical record was most prominently perpetuated by 19th and early 20th-century Western scholars, whose views framed the continent as uncivilized and devoid of cultural sophistication. This misrepresentation had profound implications, especially in the context of fashion history, where non-Western styles were dismissed or labeled "anti-fashion." Essel (2019) critiques this reductive portrayal, explaining that Africa's exclusion from global history led to the erasure of its cultural innovations, particularly in fashion. He highlights how Western intellectuals like Hegel (1956), Newton (1940), and Roper (1963) played pivotal roles in crafting a narrative that depicted African fashion as inferior or non-existent. These scholars documented fashion through a Western lens, treating it as a phenomenon exclusive to their world and dismissing the diverse and rich traditions of African attire. Hegel (1956), for instance, went as far as labeling Africa as a continent without history, describing its people as possessing an undeveloped spirit and existing in a raw, natural state devoid of morality, religion, or political structures. This perspective not only distorted Africa’s socio-cultural identity but also fueled a legacy of misrepresentation, where African fashion and culture were deemed irrelevant in the broader global context. This position had been held by the Western world, preposterously making defamatory reference to everything African including her colour and cultural ideas as dark (Essel & Acquah, 2016) as if European fashion art owes no allegiance to African fashionable expressions. In furtherance to these descriptions, Nkrumah (1964b, para. 4) gives a vivid account of the monstrous image portrayed about Africa making reference to the unfavourable comments by Europeans

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who described, the history of civilization on the continent as poorer in recorded history than can be imagined. This notion is further asserted in a statement documented in the 11th edition of Encyclopedia Britannica:

> Africa, with the exception of the lower Nile Valley and what is known as Roman Africa is, so far as its native inhabitants are concerned, a continent practically without history and possessing no records from which such history may be conducted … the Negro (referring to the black man) is essentially the child of the moment and his memory, both tribal and individual, is very short, And if Ancient Egypt and Ethiopia be excluded, the story of Africa is largely a record of the doings of its Asiatic and European conquerors and colonizers (as cited in Bomfeh, 2015, para. 8; Essel & Acquah, 2016 p.1024)

As some Western scholars aforementioned continue to damage African art, and negatively label it as primitive, fetishistic, idolatrous, perverse, and folk art (Nkrumah, 1963; Antubam, 1963; Dei-Anang, 1975; Amenuke, Dogbe, & Asare et al, 1991) amongst others, Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, contested the distasteful description of Africa as a continent without history in his opening address to the First International Congress of African States in December 1962, President Nkrumah stated in his address;

> The central myth in the mythology surrounding Africa is the denial that we are a historical people. It is said that, whereas other continents have shaped history and determined its course, Africa has stood still, held down by inertia. Africa, it is said, entered history only as a result of European contact. Its history, therefore, is widely felt to be an extension of European history (Nkrumah, 1962 as cited in Mazrui, 1982 p.16).

President Nkrumah's assertion about Western dominance and influence in Africa is reported to have brought radical transformations into people's cultures, and traditions (Mott, 2004; Panopio & Santico-Rolda, 2006; Ferraro, 2008) and changed the narrative of lopsided transfer of culture in favour of hegemonic global relationships

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that often promote Western culture against other ways of life. As reinforced in the studies of Danso et al (2019), the rapid decaying of Ghanaian traditions and cultural values especially on the part of the youth regarding dressing poses a threat to dress cultural identity of its people, leading to discarding the known Ghanaian traditional ways of dressing for the more liberal, but often less decent Western style of dressing.

> …It is no shame to see a Ghanaian lady wearing a dress that reveals their thighs, back, stomach, and breasts as well as waist beads or underpants in the full glare of the public. These dresses disgracefully violate the accepted cultural norms of the Ghanaian society, which propagates decency and modesty in dressing (Danso et al, 2019).

Building on previous arguments, it is essential to support African scholars (Kiwanuka, 1973; Keita, 1974; Mazrui, 1982; Fuglestad, 1992; Kuykendall, 1993; Boubia, 1997; Zachernuk, 1998; Hassen, 2004; Babacar, 2005; Belfanti, 2008; Loughran, 2009; Aissat & Djafri, 2017; Essel, 2019; Danso et al., 2019; Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Essel et al, 2023) in refuting European conceptions of the African past through African perspectives. The dress fashion story in Ghana's Parliament is untold, partly causing the exclusion of Africa's fashion story from the global historical narrative and causing some Western scholars to claim that Ghana's legislative dress fashion, including our art expressions, is emergent. Nkrumah (1964a) observes that:

> Our history needs to be written as the history of our society, not as the story of European adventures… African … history must be a mirror of that society, and the European contact must find its place in this history only as an African experience… (p. 63).

This observation by Ghana's first president and the distortions by some Western scholars emphasize the need for Ghana to reclaim and tell her own cultural narratives, with dress fashion in Parliament as a significant aspect. Within this context, one of

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the objectives of this study is to trace the historical foundation of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture.

Having traced the historical foundation of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture, another area that has attracted scholarly attention in recent times is how clothing can define the political and social status of a wearer. Essel (2019) examined the inaugural dress fashion choices of Ghanaian presidents from 1960 to 2017, highlighting the significant visual communicative power of these sartorial selections in evoking patriotism, nationalism, and a sense of belonging. Essel's study shed light on how the dress politics of presidents-elect during their inauguration ceremonies have shaped Ghana's cultural identity. However, while the study yielded valuable insights into executive dress fashion since independence, it inadequately explored legislative attire, particularly the Speaker's robe's design and symbolism. This gap necessitates further investigation into how parliamentary dress contributes to national identity and political symbolism within Ghana's overall governance. Similarly, Navei and Donkoh (2022) explored the symbolic relationship between the Ghanaian print fabrics worn by President Akufo-Addo during his COVID-19 addresses and the content of the messages delivered to the nation. Their study revealed that the president's dress code not only aligned with the themes of his addresses but also served as a nonverbal tool to communicate his nationalistic identity and promote the aesthetic and symbolic value of Ghanaian fabrics to both local and international markets. However, while the study provides valuable insights into President Akuffo Addo's sartorial choices, it offers minimal attention to the legislative arm of government, leaving a gap in understanding how parliamentary dress codes, particularly the speakers robes communicate national identity and political symbolism.

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The parliament of Ghana is headed by the speaker who presides over all parliamentary business. This mandate is stipulated in Article 101 of the 1992 constitution with the powers of the speaker clearly articulated in Article 57(2). These constitutional provisions position the speaker of Ghana's parliament as the third highest commander of authority in the governance structure. Therefore, what a speaker of parliament or parliamentarian chooses to wear and what not to wear, as an important public figure, plays a significant role in influencing the dress fashion of the citizens of the country as opinionated in different context by scholars (Frings, 1999; Ulzen-Appiah, 2003; Jamal, Maqbool; Zafar, 2013; Essel et al, 2021). Hence, a scholarly examination of the design structure, philosophy, and national identity constructions associated with the Parliamentary robes for speakers adds a layer of importance to this study.

The Parliament of Ghana, apart from making laws, is one of the institutions of the state expected to promote Ghanaian nationalistic dress identity, through the exemplary wearing of indigenous Ghanaian classics for parliamentary business (Ghana Cultural Policy document, 2004 p.44). However, it sounds puzzling why after many years of attaining independence, many African nations including Ghana, struggle in their quest to decolonize their dress code to the extent that, the admirable indigenous African dress fashions seemed forbidden in the precincts of some African parliaments, let alone adorned for the conduct of parliamentary businesses (Essel, Navei, & Donkoh, 2023). The leader of Ghana's parliament, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin acknowledged the need to decolonize the country's parliamentary dress code in a statement made during his maiden address in 2022 during the first meeting of the second session of the eighth parliament, he stated;

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> This is the Parliament of Ghana… We must create a unique set of values and norms that will give a unique character to our Parliament to set it apart from the colonial legacies of the British system… I am convinced that Ghanaians define the representation of the people to include representation of the full identity of the Ghanaian i.e. Culture, Tradition, and more importantly their dress code…The government dress code of members of the National Assembly of Independent Ghana was a native costume. Where we got it wrong I don't know! …My outfit today, as the Speaker presiding, is to set in motion that agenda, (Speaker Bagbin's Facebook post, 2022).

On May 7, 2022, the Speaker expressed renewed concern about the current state of parliamentary dress culture, reiterating his stance. He directed the Majority and Minority Whips to enforce discipline regarding the dress code within the House of Parliament. The Rt. Hon Speaker's reference to the dress code of parliamentarians raises keen contextual gap and an invitation to elicit views of members of Ghana's parliament to ascertain their views on speaker Bagbin's clarion call for decolonizing the parliamentary dress code in Ghana. Though, a similar study of that nature has been conducted by Essel et al (2023) where the sentiments of Ghanaians on social media were sampled regarding Speaker Bagbin's exemplary adornment for parliamentary business, however, this study in contributing to the decolonisation agenda adds a layer of views from parliamentarians and discussions to the speaker's clarion call.

Institutional dress codes serve as powerful symbols that convey professionalism, discipline, and national unity. They act as emblems of identity, reinforcing the authority and purpose of institutions (Agyeman & Donkor, 2023). This is especially true in political and governmental settings, where dress codes, such as those in parliaments or during presidential inaugurations, carry substantial weight in projecting national identity and cultural pride. In Ghana, the dress code has historically played a

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key role in expressing national identity and resisting colonial influence. Presidents and members of parliament have often used their attire to communicate messages of sovereignty and cultural pride (Essel, 2019). Traditional Ghanaian dresses like the kente cloth, frequently worn during state events, have become symbols of the nation's rich cultural heritage and its post-colonial self-determination (Navei & Donkoh, 2022). The use of such attire fosters a sense of patriotism and belonging, not only for the wearers but also for the wider populace.

Given the significant role of dress in national identity, and in response to the call by Ghana's parliamentary leader to decolonize the parliamentary dress code, there is a growing focus on the need to legislate Ghana's parliamentary dress code. This is in line with the recommendations by Essel and Amissah (2014) to amend laws, policies, and practices regarding dress fashion in Ghana. Legislating a formal dress code for institutions like Parliament would preserve Ghana's indigenous dress traditions, ensuring they remain central to the country's cultural expression. Countries like Nigeria and Kenya have already implemented standing orders regulating parliamentary attire to uphold the integrity of their indigenous dress cultures, reinforcing cultural identity and heritage while promoting inclusivity and respect for traditional values within formal institutions. The Ghanaian experience can benefit from these examples, ensuring that its dress codes reflect both cultural pride and national identity.

Cultural Custodians are pivotal figures in Ghana's cultural construction, holding significant roles in preserving heritage. Speaker Alban Bagbin's advocacy to decolonize parliamentary dress by promoting traditional attire challenges Western formal wear dominance, sparking national debate. This push aligns with broader

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African movements (Akyeampong, 2022; Mensah & Asare, 2023). However, the proposal faces mixed reactions, particularly from Cultural Custodians, traditional leaders and heritage experts who gatekeep cultural norms. Their perspectives are critical: some argue indigenous attire enhances national pride and identity in governance, while others raise concerns about practicality, consistency, and perceived erosion of professionalism (Osei & Adjei, 2023). As key shapers of discourse on tradition and identity, their stance on integrating indigenous wear into the legislature is pivotal. Yet, little research exists on their views regarding Bagbin's call, creating a gap in understanding cultural leadership's perception of this legislative change. One of the objectives of this study seeks to address this gap by exploring the views of Ghanaian cultural custodians on the Speaker's clarion call to decolonize the parliamentary dress code. It aims to provide insight into how these custodians of tradition perceive the relationship between cultural identity, governance, and formal attire, and what implications their perspectives may have on national policy and identity (Tandoh, 2023). The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on cultural representation in formal institutions and provide a basis for potential policy reforms in the Ghanaian Parliament.

Studies have increasingly shown that dress fashion plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the broader fashion industry, particularly when prominent figures such as parliamentarians adopt specific styles of dressing. In many countries, including Ghana, the attire worn by lawmakers is more than just a reflection of personal style; it carries cultural, political, and symbolic weight. When parliamentarians adhere to a particular dress code or embrace certain fashion trends, they can drive demand, shape consumer preferences, and promote national identity, all of which have ripple effects on the fashion industry. The fashion industry in Ghana

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has experienced significant growth over the past decade, driven by rising demand for locally produced textiles and clothing that reflect the nation's rich cultural heritage (Owusu & Boahen, 2022; Amponsah, 2023; Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2021). However, the influence of formal institutions, particularly legislative bodies, on the development of the fashion industry remains underexplored. Legislative dress codes in many African countries, including Ghana, have historically adhered to Western standards of formality, often overlooking local fashion. In recent years, there has been increasing advocacy for the adoption of indigenous dress in Parliament, which some argue could act as a catalyst for growth in the local fashion sector (Amoako & Quartey, 2022). Speaker Alban Bagbin's call to decolonize Ghana's parliamentary dress code has renewed attention on the potential of legislative fashion to shape national identity and influence the fashion industry. While countries like Nigeria have successfully incorporated traditional attire into their legislative dress codes, fostering growth in their fashion industries, the impact of such a shift in Ghana remains largely speculative (Nyarko & Yeboah, 2023). Despite this growing interest, there is limited empirical research on how legislative dress fashion affects the fashion industry in Ghana. Existing studies have primarily focused on cultural identity and political symbolism rather than the economic implications for local designers, textile producers, and artisans (Kwame, 2022). This gap in the literature triggers the need to investigate how the adoption of indigenous attire in Ghana's Parliament could have the potential to contribute to the broader economy. The attire worn by parliamentarians is not only a significant expression of a nation's ideals, traditions, and aspirations, but it also holds considerable socio-political relevance. This research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the historical evolution of parliamentary dress

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culture in Ghana from 1951 to 2023, shedding light on its cultural components and socio-economic significance.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of conducting this research was to unravel the historical development of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture. The study delved into the historical development of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture, focusing on understanding the evolution, the dress culture, and the significance of the dress culture of members of parliament and speakers. This research aimed to uncover the design structure and meanings of the speaker's dress code, and established the views of major stakeholders of Ghana's parliament within the study's context, contributing to a broader understanding of Ghanaian identity and the symbolic meanings embedded in parliamentary robes.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study sought to:

1. trace the history of Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture from 1951 to 2023.
2. examine the design structure, symbolism, and national identity constructions associated with the Parliamentary robes for speakers in Ghana.
3. ascertain the views of parliamentarians on speaker Bagbin's clarion call for decolonizing the parliamentary dress code in Ghana.
4. establish the need for making the Ghanaian fashion classics statutory for parliamentary business in Ghana's parliament.
5. ascertain the views of cultural custodians on parliamentary dress culture.
6. discuss the impact of legislative dress fashion on the growth of Ghana's fashion industry

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1.5 Research Questions

1. How has the parliamentary dress culture of parliament evolved since 1951?
2. What are the design structure, symbolism, and national identity constructions associated with the Parliamentary robes for speakers in Ghana?
3. What are the views of parliamentarians on speaker Bagbin's clarion Call for decolonizing the parliamentary dress code in Ghana?
4. Why should there be a need for making the Ghanaian fashion classics statutory for parliamentary business in Ghana's parliament?
5. What are the views of cultural custodians on state of parliamentary dress culture in Ghana?
6. How does legislative dress fashion impact the growth of Ghana's fashion industry?

1.6 Significance of the study

This research holds substantial significance across multiple domains. For policy direction, it directly informs the decolonization debate ignited by Speaker Bagbin (Bagbin, 2021), providing critical evidence on balancing statutory dress codes between reinforcing Ghanaian cultural pride and preserving sartorial freedom, thereby guiding legislative decisions on national identity representation (Mensah, 2020). Educationally, it counters Eurocentric narratives of African fashion's insignificance (Sarpong, 2012; Rabine, 2002) by establishing a vital academic archive documenting Ghana's parliamentary dress evolution since 1951, enriching global fashion scholarship and curricula with indigenous perspectives. The dress choice of parliamentarians has become an important subject for research globally due to its significance in boosting the fashion industry and cultural identity. Focusing attention on Ghana's parliamentary dress cultural history will bring to bear the historical facts,

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developments, and faces behind Ghana's parliamentary dress culture. The study will increase the historical understanding of Ghana's dress fashion and reshape any stereotyped thinking about Ghanaian dress fashion. This study serves as an archive of visual representation, showcasing how dress within Ghana's legislative arm has reflected shifting cultural, political, and ideological currents.

The history of African fashion is often and largely organized by the reign of Europeans and other Western countries. Bringing the evidential proof and value of Ghana's parliamentary dress fashion from 1951 to the present is one of the constructive silent ways of repudiating that negative perceptual thinking. By so doing, it will offer Ghanaians the opportunity to tell their own dress fashion stories.

Uncovering the design structure, philosophy, and national identity embedded in the Parliamentary robes of Ghana would reveal the profound connection between dresses and power. This objective would allow fashion devotees to critically assess how robes have been used as symbols of sovereignty, legitimacy, and national pride, reflecting the values and aspirations of different eras. Also, it would deepen the understanding of how clothing plays a vital role in the projection of authority and national character. Socio-culturally, uncovering the design philosophy and national identity embedded in parliamentary robes will reveal their profound role as symbols of sovereignty and legitimacy empowering Ghanaian self-narration and bridging governance with traditional custodians' values to foster cultural autonomy and reclaim pre/post-colonial identity intersections.

In addressing Speaker Bagbin's call to decolonize the parliamentary dress code, this research would bring into focus the intersection of Ghanaian pre-colonial and post-colonial identity. The opinions of parliamentarians will shed light on the broader

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conversation surrounding autonomy, cultural pride, and the desire to break free from colonial influences. This will offer a platform for understanding how dress fashion, as a form of cultural expression, could reflect a renewed sense of independence in Ghana's legislature.

The research would further explore the necessity of formalizing Ghanaian dress codes for parliamentary business, questioning whether a statutory dress code could reinforce cultural pride or hinder sartorial freedom. This investigation is key to understanding the balance between cultural preservation and dress culture and how such laws could influence the symbolic representation of Ghanaian values. The perspectives of cultural custodians in this study will deepen the conversation on how traditional values and contemporary legislative practices interact. The custodians' views provide a cultural lens that reveals how parliamentary dress culture is perceived beyond the political sphere, bridging the gap between governance and Ghanaian traditional gatekeepers.

Again, this study will significantly contribute to increasing the numeric strength of literature in the global fashion press and academia and will draw the attention of the cultural world to the dress fashion of Ghana's parliament and bring to light the aesthetic and symbolic analysis of Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture.

Finally, this study taps into the impact of legislative fashion on the growth of Ghana's fashion industry. Thus, the study not only documents history but also positions fashion as a driving force in both cultural and economic development. The study significantly will provide a basis for policymakers to institute measures to ensure the preservation of the Ghanaian identity in the parliament of Ghana.

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1.7 Delimitation of the study

The study is delimited to the Parliament of Ghana, with a specific focus on the dress culture of Speakers and parliamentarians from the Legislative Assembly of 1951 to the Parliament of 2023. It examines the parliamentary robes of ten (10) past and present Speakers. Additionally, the study gathers the perspectives of twenty-five (25) parliamentarians, each with at least 12 years of parliamentary experience. The selection of parliamentarians, clerks, and Speakers was based on their years of service and the relevance of their experiences to the data required for the study. Cultural custodians from all sixteen regions of Ghana were included; selected based on their status under the Cultural Institutions Act of 1961 (Act 81). The study further explored the impact of legislative dress fashion on Ghana's fashion industry, focusing on its broader cultural and economic implications.

1.8 Operational and Conceptual Definitions

Dress Culture: Refers to the practices, traditions, and social standards that govern clothing and decoration within a specific group or society. It includes the manner in which people utilize clothing to express their identity, status, values, and beliefs.

Parliament: The legislative body of the Government of Ghana**.**

Identity: Refers to how individuals or groups see and define themselves and how other individuals orngroups perceive and define them.

Ghanaian Fashion Classics: Refers to Ghanaian dress fashion styles that is adorned and practiced by Ghanaians and stayed

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	over generations, example, breats and waist covers, kaba and slit, toga style, smock, kente.
Legislature:	The branch of government responsible for making the laws of a country or state. It is one of the three main branches of government, alongside the executive and judicial branches.
Prorogation:	Prorogation is a term in the Westminster system of government and refers to the action of proroguing or interrupting the parliament. It is a formal name given to the period between the end of a session of parliament and the state opening of parliament that begins the next session
Dress Fashion:	Refers to the style, design, and aesthetic of clothing and attire or the clothing aspect of fashion.
Speaker of Parliament:	The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Parliament of Ghana and the third highest office in the country.
Parliamentarian:	An elected member of a parliament, which is the legislative branch of government in a country or state. Parliamentarians, also known as members of parliament (MPs), represent the interests of their constituents and play a crucial role in the functioning of the government.
Speaker's Robes:	Speaker's robe is a traditional garment worn by the Speaker of the Parliament in many countries,

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including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and others. The robe is a symbol of the Speaker's office and is worn during parliamentary proceedings.

Symbol: Graphic representations used to convey information about a group of people.

Clerk: The heads of the parliament administration and are responsible for the services provided to meet the House's corporate objectives.

Ghanaian Identity: The cultural, national, and personal characteristics that define Ghanaians as a people.

Republic: A state where the power is held by the people or their elected representatives, rather than a monarch or a small group of individuals. In a republic, the head of state is usually a president or a prime minister, who is elected through a democratic process.

Indigenous Ghanaian Classics: A Ghanaian dress fashion that portrays Ghanaian identity.

Fashion Industry: The fashion industry encompasses the design, production, marketing, and distribution of clothing, footwear, accessories, and other wearable items. It is a vast and dynamic sector that involves various stages, from the creation of original designs by

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	fashion designers to the manufacturing of garments, and their eventual sale to consumers.
Cultural Custodian:	Chiefs and traditional rulers in Ghana.

1.9 Organization of the Rest of the Text

This chapter reviews relevant literature to provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. It examines existing research, key themes, and debates pertinent to the study, identifying gaps that this research seeks to address. This was done to get a better understanding of the research objectives and research questions and position them in an appropriate context in achieving the objectives. Chapter three details the research design, methods, and procedures adopted to achieve the study's objectives. It touches on how to arrive at the set objectives. It deals with research design, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis plan. Ethical considerations are also highlighted. Chapter four presents the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research objectives and existing literature. It has been presented chronologically in line with the set objectives that necessitated the study.

The final chapter, five, summarizes the main findings of the study, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter engages in in-depth empirical dialogue regarding existing concepts and theories that relate to the study in gaining conceptual and contextual clarity of the research objectives and questions. Since the study focuses on the historical development of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture, related literature on the historical and cultural foundations of clothing, African dress culture, symbolism and identity construction, as well as fashion diplomacy, are among the specific thematic areas under review.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The study is situated within a diversity of theories owing to the demands of the research objectives, the object-based theory of Taylor (2002), Steele's (1997) fashion theory, and Riello's (2011) methodological model of the material culture of fashion and Blumer's (1969) theory of Symbolic Interactionism are among the selected theories that guide the study.

2.1.1 Object-Based Theory

Object-Based Theory, particularly drawing on Taylor's (2002) conceptualization, which emphasizes materiality and the documentation of clothing, artifacts, and other items for historical purposes. This framework highlights the significance of contextual features, including displays, oral histories, company histories, and the design philosophies of fashion manufacturing (Taylor, 2002; Skov & Melchior, 2008). By centering on physical objects such as the dress fashion of speakers and

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parliamentarians as critical sources of knowledge, Object-Based Theory provides a structured approach for analyzing their cultural, historical, and social contexts.

At its core, Object-Based Theory focuses on the materiality of objects, their physical attributes such as texture, colour, shape, and craftsmanship, which serve as lenses through which cultural, social, and historical significance can be explored. Objects also function as tangible evidence of past practices, traditions, and technologies, enabling scholars to reconstruct historical narratives and understand cultural transformations. Additionally, the contextual features of objects, such as the settings in which they are displayed, used, or produced, whether in exhibitions, manufacturing environments, or consumer interactions, are pivotal to their interpretation. The theory's interdisciplinary nature integrates perspectives from history, sociology, and design studies, offering a comprehensive understanding of objects and their multifaceted roles in society.

Applying this theory, the study examines the contextual features of Ghana's parliamentary dress fashion. The analysis incorporates oral and written histories, dress fashion history, and the detailed description and documentation of parliamentary dress. By doing so, the study highlights the socio-cultural relevance of these dress fashion objects within the Ghanaian context. This theoretical stance positions Ghana's parliamentary dress fashion as central to historical studies and narratives, using the material and cultural significance of these objects to illuminate broader themes of identity, tradition, and socio-political representation among the Ghanaian populace.

2.1.2 Theory of Material Culture

The theory of Material Culture is a multidisciplinary framework that explores the relationship between people and the physical objects they create, use, and interact

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with. This theory examines how objects, artifacts, and technologies shape and are shaped by cultural, social, and historical contexts. It highlights the symbolic, functional, and economic roles of material objects in human society. Over time, this theory has been developed and refined by various scholars from fields such as anthropology, sociology, archaeology, and cultural studies (Miller, 2010; Appadurai, 1986).

Early contributions to the theory can be traced to Karl Marx, who emphasized the material conditions of human existence and the relationship between labor, production, and material goods. Marx's materialist philosophy provided a foundation for understanding how objects are embedded in social and economic structures (Harvey, 2018). Another key figure, Marcel Mauss, in *The Gift* (1925), highlighted the role of material objects in fostering and maintaining social relationships. Mauss showed that objects, particularly in the context of gifting, have symbolic and cultural significance, shaping the fabric of society (Godelier, 1999).

In the early 20th century, Bronisław Malinowski emphasized the functional role of objects in traditional societies, particularly in meeting human needs and sustaining social systems. His anthropological studies revealed the practical and symbolic functions of material culture in various cultural contexts (Young, 2004). Building on these foundations, Arjun Appadurai, in his influential book *The Social Life of Things* (1986), introduced the concept that objects have "social lives." He argued that the meanings and values of objects are not fixed but evolve as they circulate across different cultural contexts. This perspective emphasized the dynamic and interactive nature of material culture (Appadurai, 1986).

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Contemporary contributions include Daniel Miller, whose works, such as *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987) and *Stuff* (2010), focus on the everyday interactions between people and objects. Miller's research highlights how material possessions shape identity, social relationships, and cultural practices (Miller, 2010). Similarly, Igor Kopytoff, in his essay *The Cultural Biography of Things* (1986), argued that objects have "biographies," meaning their significance changes over time and across social contexts. This approach underscores the importance of historical and cultural shifts in understanding the role of objects (Kopytoff, 1986).

The study is supported by Riello's (2011) methodological model of the material culture of fashion which was borrowed from art history, anthropology, and archeology. This theory makes fashion art objects central to historical studies and narratives, be it socio-cultural, economic, or other practices of a particular period (Essel, 2017). Informed by object-based theory and material culture of fashion, the study considered the contextual attributes of the parliamentary dress code, its oral history, design philosophy, description, and documentation to bring out its history and identity construction implications, and relevance amongst the people of Ghana. This theoretical stance took the parliamentary dress code as central to historical studies and narratives in a sociocultural context.

2.1.3 Symbolic Interactionism,

The study applies the theory of symbolic interactionism, developed by Blumer (1969), to analyze the symbols and designs in the Speaker's ceremonial dress in alignment with the second research objective. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals respond to social and physical objects or symbols based on the meanings these objects or symbols hold for them. Guided by this theoretical lens, the study

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explored the interpretations respondents attributed to the dress fashion choices of Speakers of Parliament during parliamentary meetings. These interpretations were framed within the broader context of Ghanaian parliamentary dress cultural identity, emphasizing the habitual use of Ghanaian traditional textiles and fashion products such as kente cloth, smocks, and traditional sandals like *ahenema* (Allman, 2004; Essel & Amissah, 2015; Essel, 2019; Essel, 2021).

Huber (1973) links the epistemology of symbolic interactionism to George Dewey's pragmatic model, which was influenced by Hegel's evolutionary and holistic view of reality. Dewey and Mead emphasized rationality and progress as natural human tendencies. Blumer (1964) further argued that the study of human behavior must prioritize understanding how individuals associate and interact with each other rather than treating individuals and society as separate entities (Meltzer & Petras, 1970; Carter & Fuller, 2015). Symbolic interactionism is thus regarded as a theory centered on self-interaction, meaning, and joint communication tools within society.

Carter and Fuller (2015) describe symbolic interactionism as a framework that explains how societies are created and sustained through the repeated actions of individuals. Using this perspective, the study examines how dress functions as a medium of communication, relating to identity. Scholars such as Stone (1962), Goffman (1963, 1971), Stryker (1980), and Weigert, Teitge, and Teitge (1986) have made significant contributions to this field, exploring different dimensions of symbolic interactionism.

Stone (1962) extended the interactionist approach to include communication through appearance, incorporating dress, gesture, and location. He highlighted that dress often precedes verbal discourse in social encounters, granting it a unique role in

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establishing identity. Stryker (1980) integrated concepts of identity and appearance into a broader symbolic interactionist framework, emphasizing the interplay between society and individual identity. Similarly, *Society and Identity: Toward a Sociological Psychology* by Weigert et al. (1986) provides a comprehensive review of literature on identity, focusing on its meaning and relationship to the self.

Symbolic interactionism also draws on foundational ideas from scholars such as Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902). Mead argued that self-image develops through interactions with others, while Cooley's concept of the "looking-glass self" posits that an individual's understanding of their self-concept is shaped by how others perceive them. Others act as a "mirror," allowing individuals to judge themselves through societal feedback.

From this theoretical standpoint, individuals acquire identities through social interactions across diverse physical, social, and biological contexts. Dress serves as a powerful communicator of identity, announcing the wearer's social position to both themselves and observers within specific interactional settings. Symbolic interactionism thus provides a distinctive approach to studying human behavior, focusing on the creation of complex symbols that give meaning to the world. These meanings, shaped through interactions with society, influence and are influenced by others, creating a dynamic process of identity formation and social communication

2.1.3.1 Nature of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism rests on three premises: first, human beings act towards things based on the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include everything that human beings may note in their physical world, physical objects such as trees, designs, fabrics, chairs, and humans. People in society understand their social

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worlds through communication and the exchange of meaning through language and symbols. Symbolic interactionism pays attention to these individuals' subjective viewpoints and how they make sense of the world from their perspective (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

The second premise is that the meanings of such things are derived from social interactions that one has with one's fellow; in simple terms, the meanings are created by men. Society is about as structured as individuals' interactions among themselves (Collins, 1994). Because meaning is constructed through the interactions between individuals, meaning cannot be fixed, and can even vary for the same individual.

Finally, the third is that these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things encountered. The position of the theory in this context denotes that the meanings that things or objects have for human beings are central in their own right. However, all three premises are interrelated in use and meaning by the human in his action and application of already established meanings. Symbolic interactionism theory assumes that people respond to elements of their environments according to the subjective meanings they attach to those elements, such as meanings being created and modified through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is made up of several helpful ideas that are logically connected to either clarify the direction of the research or specify the lens through which it is carried out. In other words, it establishes the framework for contextualizing a study rather than making future predictions. (Jabareen, 2009; Levering, 2002). Using conceptual frameworks serves the same purpose of helping

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the researcher identify the main variables and concepts in a particular study, and offering information on the research approach (methodology including research design, target population, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, and data analysis techniques) (Imenda, 2014).

Scholars and creative artists have made significant claims about African dress culture, make-up, body designs, and the dress fashion choices of people, including ones used in myriad performances spread across the continental landscape (Kwakye-Opong & Adinku, 2013; Rovine, 2019; Eicher, 1972). These claims have mostly been based on Eurocentric categorizations (Egan, 2012, and Starck, 2020); however, other scholars have also made different attempts to redefine the practice of Indigenous dressing based on scholarly inquiries rooted in African lived experiences and practical experiments. These postulations invariably provide the basis for the classification and conceptualization of African adornment practices (Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2021; Okadigwe, 2015); and the deconstruction of Eurocentric perspectives. Similarly, Hansen (2004), Loughran (2009), Rovine (2010), Jennings (2011), Oberhofer (2012), Richards (2015), and Essel (2018) hold that fashion is not a preserve of the Western countries, rather, African fashion predates colonial hegemony and domination in Africa and is not inferior to Western fashion. Africa has a long history of fashion. Examples include the Aksum Empire, which traded in ivory, clothing, and murrhine from West Africa to the Mediterranean and across the Indian Ocean; the use of cloth as a medium of exchange with the Dutch and Europeans as early as the 16th century; and the assembly of locally made clothing, such as "Quaqua," and less expensive European imports into various styles on purpose to accommodate the expanding number of elites and slave traders (Nyarko, 2022; Green, 2019).

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This study adopts the framework of *Cultural Renaissance of Identity Construction* within the context of Ghana's Parliament to strengthen advocacy against Western misconceptions and misrepresentations and establish a common ground for articulating a culturally grounded point of departure. The concept is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) theory of cultural reproduction. According to Bourdieu (1970), cultural reproduction refers to the process by which dominant cultural forms, norms, values, and practices are transmitted from one generation to the next, ensuring the continuity of cultural experience over time. In other words, reproduction in the cultural context is the passing on of cultural elements from one person or society to another.

Applied to this study, the concept rests on the notion that precolonial Ghana, like many African societies, had a rich and distinct sartorial tradition long before colonial contact. However, Eurocentric historical narratives often present fashion as a geographically specific and proprietary system rooted in European traditions, particularly those emerging from the fourteenth-century French court of Louis XIV (Skou & Melchior, 2008), thereby marginalizing African fashion histories (Rovine, 2010). This distortion not only displaces African fashion but also promotes the mistaken view that fashion is the exclusive domain of the West.

In scholarly resistance to this perspective, several theorists argue that fashion is neither the preserve of any racial identity nor confined to a specific socio-economic or geographic space. Instead, it is a global, democratic practice that reflects diverse cultural expressions. For instance, Lipovetsky (1994) conceptualizes fashion as a defining feature of modern democracies—one that coexists with individuality rather than undermining it. Although each generation may exhibit varying degrees of

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adherence to the cultural norms of its predecessors, the process of enculturation often results in the preservation and adaptation of earlier customs. This study emphasizes how successive generations reinterpret cultural norms not only to maintain continuity but also to foster social, economic development and national identity formation.

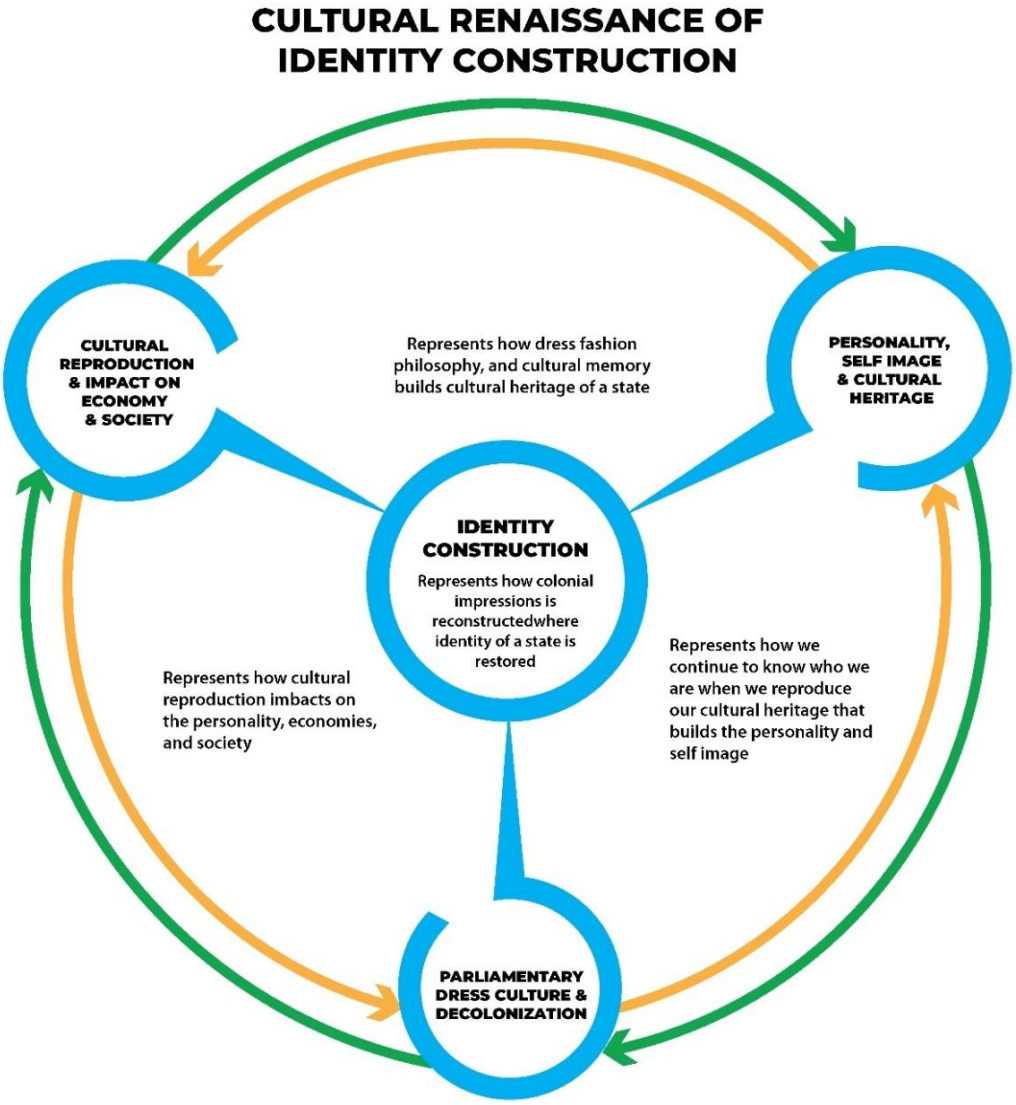

Figure 2.1 Graphical depiction of Cultural Renaissance of Identity Construction
Source: (Researcher's Construct, 2023)

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2.2.1 Cultural Renaissance of Identity Construction

Del Guerra et al. (1999, p.121) define identity as" something that holds humans together", and cultural meaning is derived from culture, without which we have no identity (Anderson-Levitt, 2012). We would not know who we are, and we would not be able to continue knowing (by continuing to produce our culture) if we do not have a memory of who we are or the heritage that reminds us of where we stem (Katende, 2013). This is so because culture is constituted by cultural heritage, and culture produces cultural identity. Yakubu (2002), asserts that culture encompasses both tangible and intangible representations of a people's holistic social experience spanning from antiquity to the recent past. This means cultural heritage is the meaning created by a particular culture and passed down to its members through collective memory from antiquity to the present through dress fashion (Asante, 2007). Furthermore, cultural heritage produces cultural memory, which produces the culture that produces identity and reproduces the culture to impact the people or the economy. Hence, cultural heritage is mobile through the mobility component of culture (McCraken, 1986) through the transmission of meaning into culturally constructed artifacts such as fashion (McCracken, 1986) by cultural individuals who name the objects (Asante, 2007). Geertz (1973) has pointed out that there is no such a thing as human nature that is independent of culture. Individuals become human under the guidance of historically created systems of meaning, which give form, order, and direction to social life. Once there is a denial of self-identity awareness and its cultural meaning, this results in the loss of cultural heritage and cultural memory of oneself and rather submission to non-self-cultures that come under control.

The conceptual framework, *"Cultural Renaissance of Identity Construction,"* illustrates the interconnected processes that contribute to identity construction through

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cultural heritage, personality and self-image, culture, decolonization of national identity, impact on personality, economy, and society, and transmission into cultural reproduction. This framework is particularly relevant to understanding Ghana's parliamentary dress culture, emphasizing how clothing serves as a medium for preserving and expressing Ghana's unique cultural identity. *Cultural Heritage*: This aspect of the framework emphasizes how dress fashion, cultural memory, and traditional philosophies contribute to the cultural heritage of a nation. Ghana's parliamentary dress culture incorporates garments like *kente* cloth and *fugu*, which symbolize Ghana's rich history and identity. These traditional garments, when worn during parliamentary proceedings, reflect a deliberate effort to preserve and promote cultural continuity. For instance, *kente*, with its intricate patterns and meanings, has become a symbol of authority and pride in official settings (Owusu-Ansah & Frimpong, 2023).

Personality and Self-Image: Cultural heritage significantly influences the personality and self-image of a nation, as represented in the framework. The use of traditional attire in Ghana's parliament reinforces national identity and projects an image of unity, respect, and pride. This practice demonstrates how dress serves as a visual representation of Ghanaian values, fostering a shared sense of cultural consciousness (Mensah & Amissah, 2022). Parliamentary attire, therefore, plays a pivotal role in reinforcing Ghana's self-image as a nation deeply rooted in its traditions while adapting to modern governance.

Culture, the framework emphasizes the role of cultural reproduction in sustaining traditions over time. In the context of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture, the consistent use of traditional garments reflects the resilience of Ghanaian culture in an

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increasingly globalized world. By blending indigenous textiles with contemporary designs, parliamentarians demonstrate how culture evolves while retaining its authenticity (Tetteh & Opoku, 2021). This highlights the adaptability and relevance of Ghanaian traditions in modern governance.

Decolonization of National Identity: The framework's focus on decolonization highlights the importance of reclaiming and reconstructing national identity. Ghana's parliamentary dress culture challenges the remnants of colonial influence by embracing traditional attire during official ceremonies. The adoption of *kente* cloth, *fugu*, and traditional sandals such as *ahenema* signals a deliberate rejection of Western norms and a reaffirmation of Ghana's cultural sovereignty (Adjei & Boateng, 2023). This cultural renaissance positions Ghanaian attire as a symbol of independence and pride in governance. *Impact on Personality, Economy, and Society:* beyond cultural significance, parliamentary dress has economic implications. The growing demand for traditional textiles like *kente* and *fugu* supports local artisans, weavers, and the textile industry. This economic contribution bolsters Ghana's creative economy, creating jobs and promoting local craftsmanship (Agyeman & Essel, 2023). Additionally, the symbolic use of traditional attire enhances Ghana's societal personality, fostering pride in its unique cultural heritage and traditions.

Transmission into Cultural Reproduction: the framework's final component highlights the transformation of cultural heritage into tangible artifacts that perpetuate traditions. Ghana's parliamentary dress serves as a living artifact, narrating the nation's values and historical identity. By consistently showcasing traditional garments in governance, these cultural expressions are preserved and transmitted to

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future generations, ensuring their continued relevance and appreciation (Amponsah & Ofori, 2023).

The cyclical nature of the Cultural Renaissance of Dress Fashion framework provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing Ghana's parliamentary dress culture. Through the integration of traditional attire in governance, Ghana reinforces its cultural heritage, reasserts its post-colonial identity, and supports its textile industry. These practices not only showcase Ghanaian values and sovereignty but also ensure that these traditions are reproduced and sustained for future generations.

2.3 Dress Fashion and Identity Construction in Ghana

Dress fashion and identity construction are inseparable in constructing and signaling national identity and pride in the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic nation of Ghana. The word fashion originates from the Latin word `*mondus´*, which means" matter" and was first recorded in 1300 and first appeared in the French language in 1482 as "*manner of dress*" (Katende, 2013). Identity construction, on the other hand, as postulated by Yorke (2015), is about how individuals or groups see and define themselves, and how other individuals or groups perceive and define them. Identity, therefore, places individuals into the culture in which they grow. Guibernau (2004) is of the view that, traditionally, the life of individuals revolved around a small territory where family, work, religious, and administrative structures were originally concentrated, and an individual's identity is defined by the roles he or she played within that limited territory.

The history of fashion and identity formation through dress in Ghana can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, when Indigenous Ghanaians used tree bark and animal hides to clothe themselves. Fashion encompasses clothing, furniture, housing, and

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automobiles, among others; nonetheless, in Ghana, fashion is narrowly defined as a style of clothes, cosmetics, and dress accessories that are trendy or most admirable and worn by people at a particular time or season. In Ghana, fashion is usually about dressing as it is a critical component of the Ghanaian culture (Dzramedo, 2009). In the 1700s, clothing in Ghana was fundamentally traditional in nature and wasn't influenced by Western culture. The nature of clothing in 18th-century Ghana was reflective of the rank and status of the individual within the community (Amankwah, Howard & Sarpong, 2012). Clothing was usually wrapped around without stitches so that it hung from the navel downwards, covering half of the legs and sometimes wrapped around the neck and shoulders (Owusu, 1999).

Moreover, people wore loincloth between their legs and looped over leather bead belts with the back end hung lower than the front. The garments were larger clothes that served as blankets at night and as a lounge dress in the morning, usually worn by wrapping it around the body so that one arm was left uncovered, and were commonly noticed amongst those in the southern part of Ghana (Seiber, 1974). Those of the northern part wore several layers of clothes usually five to six decently wrapped around their body, and the youth wore a cap made of hart's skin upon their heads and a staff in their hands, a chain of coral about their head (Amankwah et al., 2012; Gadzekpo, 2005).

Danso et al (2019) further state, Ghana as a country is endowed with rich traditions and cultural values of which clothing forms an integral part. For example, Ghanaian traditional clothes such as Adinkra, Kente, and Fugu (smock) communicate extensively about the rich Ghanaian cultural values. As a symbol of identity, the Adinkra cloth is mostly worn by Akans during iconic events in their lives such as

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funerals, whereas the Fugu (a variety of loose garments sewn from strips of cloth woven on traditional looms in Northern Ghana) is used mostly by Northerners during festivals. The Abosoo or Slit (a wrapped or sewn skirt) and Kaba (a syncretic three-piece ensemble consisting of a European-inspired sewn blouse) are also the most recognizable and visible forms of women's attire in Ghana (Danso et al, 2019). Kaba is a mixture of international and local fashion styles that signify a distinctly Ghanaian identity.

An individual's identity is moulded through socialization stages involving family, society, educational structures, and media (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Erikson, 1968). National identity constitutes a person's sense of belonging to a nation, shared among its people regardless of legal citizenship (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1991). This implies that national identity is fundamentally a felt experience rather than externally observable signs (Billig, 1995). Consequently, it encompasses shared attributes, beliefs, history, and culture within a nation (Smith, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

Dress fashion is associated with societal development. Though at the early stages of human development, dress fashion was heavily associated with the upper social class and privilege (Kawamura, 2005, p.3, p.5), modernity and the growth of industrial capitalism (Davis, 1992) have trickled it down to the ordinary in society. That being said, it is crucial to state that the addition of meaning to clothes by fashion occurs on an intrinsic level that is only operable by fashion because it is intangible and non-touchable and exists only in the minds of those who believe in it. As a result, Bell (1976) contends that fashion serves as a vehicle for social production because it adds psychological and identity worth to clothing and influences the behaviours of both

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believers and nonbelievers (as cited in Kawamura, 2005). Fashion is related to social identity as humans share similar conditions in life, and share yearnings, tendencies, discontents, and concerns (katende, 2013). People wish to express themselves in communication with others through their dress identity. Fashion addresses itself to these collective facets of our identities: the things that we share. These facets are contributions that we all make in the communication of aspects of ourselves to others (Davis, 1992).

Dress Fashion in identity construction is a multi-faceted phenomenon expressed in various cultural forms (Lemire 2010) as they are key identity markers. Warritay (2017, p. 51), affirms that in Ghana, Indigenous colour prints and patterns on fabrics are "meaningful; they mark life events, social standing, age, gender, occupation and more". Although there are a couple of reasons for wearing dresses, they could be worn for aesthetics and/or to communicate the wearer's mood, and/or cultural identity (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Essel, Navei, deGraft-Yankson, 2021). Mamiya (2016) adds that apart from serving as protection, dress functions as a channel for nonverbal communication. Mamiya explains that the non-verbal expressive attributes of dress, among others, equip one with the age, gender, social status, political status, mood, economic background, intellectual state, religious affiliation, and identity of the wearer (Mamiya, 2016). Dresses are worn to suit particular occasions. There are dresses for funerals, work, religious activities, and other ceremonial occasions in Ghana. Such dresses are worn to speak about the wearer's identity and mood (Essel, Navei, and deGraft-Yankson, 2021). What people wear provides the opportunity to express their culture, national philosophy, and aesthetics. Researchers have shown that fashion or what we wear is always in cultural, social, political, economic, and aesthetic contexts at any given time (Frings, 1999; Ulzen-Appiah, 2003; Jamal,

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Maqbool & Zafar, 2013). Therefore, dress fashion has the potency to influence the way and manner people construct their identity. This means that how individuals dress and adorn themselves plays a symbolic, communicative, and aesthetic role and is definitive of their cultural and social identity.

Howard, Sarpong, and Amankwah (2012) point out that due to the nonverbal communication effectiveness of clothing, Ghana's identity and cultural heritage are being projected and preserved to the extent that Ghanaians are noted for building a wardrobe of African prints with symbolic patterns. Warritay (2017) corroborates that clothing is used to signal identity as well as to reflect the cultural and social landscape of a people. Akwetey (2007, p. 69) notes that "the style and drape of the cloth on the body do a lot to give information about the wearer's identity and actions. In other words, the way the cloth is moved, arranged, or held around the body is a language". This means that clothing has what it takes to determine a person's personality and social status identity. It further connotes that the various distinct and vital symbolism associated with the wearing of indigenous Ghanaian cloth has the potency to reveal the unique cultural identity and social status of the wearer's individual or ethnic grouping. Akwetey (2007, p. 71) exemplifies that the "Asantehene may of necessity wear his cloth without a tunic in or outside Ghana as a symbol of his identity". Adrover (2015) is also of the view that dressing is a strategic and powerful element to the extent that Ghanaian noble chiefs rely on the visual and sensorial impacts of dress to actively draw attention to their authority. Therefore, dress fashion in Ghana plays a symbolic, communicative, and aesthetic role and is definitive of their cultural and social identity (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Essel, Navei & deGraft-Yankson, 2021).

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The first conscious effort engendered at the national level to create a cultural identity through costume in the form of national attire is attributable to Kwame Nkrumah, the first democratically elected president of Ghana. Nkrumah did not only tout the ideals of nationalism and Pan-Africanism but he also brought the people of Ghana together through his dress code. According to Guibernau (2004), among the main strategies generally employed by the state in its pursuit of a single national identity capable of uniting its citizens are: First, the construction and dissemination of a certain image of the 'nation', hence, Nkrumah popularized the smock from the Northern and Upper regional cultures and wore the Asante Kente with the tunic. By doing so, he identified with all the sub-cultures of the nation thus forging a national unity (Akwetey, 2007, p. 116). The dress codes of all Ghanaian presidents-elect (from 1960-2021) for their inaugural ceremonies witnessed, all of them except two did not wear indigenous Ghanaian classics (fashion from Kente, Adinkra cloths, and Smock) to express their Ghanaian cultural identity locally and externally (Essel, Navei & deGraft-Yankson, 2021; Essel, 2019b; Akwetey, 2007). Essel (2019 b) observes that the Indigenous fashions adorned by Ghanaian presidents-elect consisted of; symbolic kente weave patterns, the construal of colours, and Adinkra motifs sourced from Ghanaian cultural repertoire with multi-ethnic nationalistic character and mindset to foster unity, nationalism, a sense of belonging and display of their Ghanaian identity.

In addition, Essel, Navei, and deGraft-Yankson (2021) in their recent study on presidential fashion choice found that Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo wore a Eurocentric three-piece suit for his second term of presidential investiture in 7th January 2021 which is alien to the indigenous Ghanaian dress cultural identity and, therefore, described as non-nationalistic in the context of Ghanaian nationalistic identity construction. In view of that, Essel et al. (2021) recommend that succeeding

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Ghanaian presidents-elect should endeavor to source their dress fashions from the rich Ghanaian traditional fashion and textile products in order to visually communicate their Ghanaian nationalistic identity as well as promote the unique Ghanaian fashion and textile industry for the patronage of the local and international community.

As if President Akufo-Addo came to terms with the findings of Essel et al. (2021) which revealed his adornment of a Eurocentric three-piece suit for his 2021 presidential investiture as alien to Ghanaian dress cultural identity, a recent study by Navei and Donkoh (2022) observe that President Akufo-Addo continuously wore Ghanaian authentic print fabrics for his COVID-19 addresses to Ghanaians. The authors argue that since the President is the number one Iconic Figure with a massive following in Ghana, his devoted wearing of indigenous Ghanaian classics for public occasions communicates his Ghanaian nationalistic identity; and promotes the beautiful and symbolically rich Ghanaian fabrics for the patronage of a larger (inter)national market as well as contributes to decolonizing the dress culture of Ghanaians.

From the foregoing dialogue, there is consensus in the literature that identity construction is a significant part of building a global society, as it is only after countries have established their own identities and learned to respect that of other individuals and groups that it can be possible to appreciate the similarities shared. It is generally after this stage that people form social connections with others. This is because if people do not have an identity, they would lack the means of identifying with or relating to their peer groups, to their neighbours, to the societies in which they lived or to the people they come across in their everyday lives. Also, dress fashion is one of the major ways through which Ghanaian cultural and nationalistic identity

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could be showcased internally and externally, with the associated economic benefits to the Ghanaian textile and fashion industry. Besides, it shows fashion diplomacy. Therefore, if Ghanaians, particularly those in leadership positions, deliberately wore indigenous Ghanaian dress fashion products for public occasions and on a daily basis, the cultural and nationalist identity of Ghana would have been restored, if not decolonized. It is evident in the aforementioned discussion that Clothes are important in the construction of personal identity because they enable the individual to have a clear interpretation, a clear meaning construction, an unambiguous meaning of self-identity that is reflected in the clothes that they have chosen to reflect them (Davis, 1992; Doo & Lee, 2012).

2.4 Historical foundation of dress fashion

The term dress is used as a gender-neutral collective noun to designate either a social group's body modifications and supplements or those of an individual. The word dress is gender specific and may carry either masculine or feminine meanings depending upon certain inflections (dress) (Eicher, 1992). One of the key ways individuals of society interact consciously is through their bodily self, distinctively in the form of clothing style. Fashion is universal to all cultures, whether ethnic, regional, national, or continental, and this manifests in the broad base definition of what fashion entails in contemporary times.

Roach & Eicher (1965) initially noted "dress" overlaps with terms like appearance and adornment. Eicher later sought a precise, cross-cultural definition, culminating with Roach-Higgins (1992): dress is "an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body," encompassing both body alterations (coiffed hair, piercings) and supplements (garments, jewelry). Fashion, however, is distinct. Davis

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(1992), Barthes (2006), and Kawamura (2005) argue that fashion emerges *from* dress/clothes but transcends them, adding social meaning and value. Katende (2013) positions fashion as a mediator of social interaction and a dynamic social institution reflecting cultural norms, where changes can reshape the system itself. Barthes (2006) further conceptualized fashion institutionally using Saussure's model, distinguishing individual dressing (*parole*) from the normative system (*langue*), arguing the institution's survival depends on transcending individual acts. This institutional view aligns with Kawamura (2005), Loschek (2009), and White & Griffiths (2000).

Fashion is how identities are culturally constructed, with a focus on sociocultural appearances (Nyarko, 2022). He further asserts that the word "fashion," which first appeared in writing in the sixteenth century, represented the temporal and social structures that shaped and defined social identities. Dress fashion remains inseparable from life (Essel, 2017). Globally, the term fashion is applicable in many fields of human social activities, it has been almost exclusively linked with clothing, costume, footwear, and anything that decorates a person. Dress fashion is connected with personal inclinations, religious norms, and conversions, however, dress fashion is now recognized for its seminal role in global, colonial, and post-colonial engagements and its role in personal and collective expression (Lemire & Riello 2020). Rovine (2010, p. 134) adds that “Fashion is difficult to define in a global context, requiring a cooperation of the slippery territory between practices classified as “African” and categories associated with the Western cultures.” These theoretical positions confirm that fashion (dress) is a complex discipline that is difficult to define in order to capture all its attributions. Its attributions include style, design, clothing, body art, and change perceived by the senses. This concept is firmly fixated in the general

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population's heads, so much so that a mere mention of "fashion designer" will usually remind someone of a branded clothing designer rather than an expert in a different profession.

Despite the efforts by scholars to convert the word dress into a usable technical term for identifying these broad categories of clothing and various subcategories within them, a major shortcoming remains: The word dress is most frequently used to emphasize enclosures that cover the body and generally omits body modifications. The literature clearly points out that the dress culture, body designs, costumes, and make-up used by the many ethnic groups found in Africa evolved through circumstances of geographic location, weather conditions, interethnic interactions, colonial activities, foreign interests, religious orientations, and the impact of local and international migrations. Ethnographic and archaeological evidence point to a vibrant and sustained body adornment culture among Africans (Ezeajugh, 2021). This involves the use of permanent and temporary body decorations to enhance beauty or compose identity.

Ezeajugh (2021) further reports that varied woven and matted fabrics for dressing the body and various objects for accessorising the attire, aided personal and collective identity. For the traditional society, distinctiveness in dressing did not necessarily require distinct gender classifications in terms of items of clothing or even items of body adornment; rather, the emphasis sometimes lay on the positioning and selection of the beads, motifs, symbols, and patterns utilized on attire or body decorations. Usually, items of clothing and body designs are embodied with visual signs that communicate the socio-cultural context in which they are being paraded (Utoh-Ezeajugh 2010, p.25). This communicative essence is very significant because

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members of the community usually possess the ability to read the language of the cultural attires such that African aesthetics of beauty are artistically expressed in the dress and body designs of the traditional society as well as in the evolving contemporary styles.

2.5 Misperception of African Dress Fashion

Fashion is as old as the very existence of humans and has been practiced by all races globally. Despite its existence and practice globally, one common deficiency is that many societies (particularly in Africa) that practiced fashion did not prioritize its documentation and historicity for posterity. Consequently, the early societies that placed much concentration and deepened fashion history research and documentation have portrayed the field as a European invention. It is reported that Western perceptual experiences of non-Western fashion, especially, African fashion is negative (Essel, 2019). Though fashion practice has been in the African continent since prehistoric times, inadequate written documentation by Africans in telling their fashion art history is one of the key issues that have caused the misperceptions. Niessen (2003), in *Re-Orienting Fashion*, was one of the first scholars to address the boundaries set by fashion theory and reimagine fashion history as global. It was discussed in her studies that the problem of Eurocentrism in reference to dress history and argued that if others are seen as outside the fashion system, then they are viewed as people without change, progress, taste, style, and preferences. Even though fashion studies started to embrace the global sense, Niessen (2016) believed that Western bias is still dominant in fashion studies. Welters and Lillethun (2018) address that the same is true for African fashion history, which mostly followed a Eurocentric approach and neglected the fashion systems that operate historically in regions beyond Euro-America, apart from a few authors who explored the phenomenon. It

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was made to appear that the definition of fashion is beyond the modern West and the fallacy of defining fashion as exclusive to post-1350 Europe (Welters and Lillethun, 2018). The general assumption has been that fashion did not exist before the fourteenth century, and it developed in the European courts with the rise of market economies and spread to the rest of the world through the expansion of Euro-American power. The term 'fashion', usually thought to be of a Western connotation, exemplifies various definitions such as the latest trends, sameness, aesthetic expressions, latest differences, styles, and collections. It describes the social and temporal systems that influence and 'drive' dress as a signifier in social context during a particular period (Kaiser, 2019; Fletcher, 2012).

The remnants of fashionable objects in some African museums and archeological sites are important elements of history to diffuse the western phenomenon, but the presence of intentional blindness a "phenomenon in which observers fail to notice an object that is fully visible in the display" (Encyclopedia of Perception, 2010, p.640), perhaps, to avoid giving a credible account of social reality, in the researcher's view, has contributed immensely to the misperception of African fashion history. Over the last two decades, there has been growing interest in the scholarly documentation of African fashion historicity and the contributions of African fashion to the global fashion industry. This needs to be sustained and deepened with more scholarly works. Scholars who have contributed in this direction include Essel (2019), Hansen (2004), Loughran (2009), Rovine (2010), Jennings (2011), Oberhofer (2012), and Richards (2015). They hold forth that fashion is not a preserve of Western countries. From the aforementioned scholarly exposition on African dress fashion, it is evident that the fashion of Africa predates colonialism, African fashion is not inferior to Western

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fashion, and the Modern African fashion system of daily fashion release differs from the seasonal collections of Western fashion.

2.6 African Dress Fashion

African dress fashion embodies a rich cultural heritage, reflecting the continent's diverse traditions, histories, and identities. Across Africa, clothing and adornments are more than functional items; they serve as visual languages, narrating stories of ethnicity, status, age, religion, and gender. African dress fashion is deeply rooted in cultural expressions and identity construction. Traditional textiles such as *kente* from Ghana, *bogolanfini* (mud cloth) from Mali, and *shweshwe* from South Africa are emblematic of local artistry, spirituality, and community identity. These textiles often carry symbolic meanings tied to color, pattern, and design, with each piece narrating a cultural or historical story (Amponsah & Ofori, 2023; Eicher & Ross, 2020). For instance, *kente* cloth is recognized not only for its aesthetic beauty but also for its communicative function, as specific patterns signify proverbs, social status, and occasions (Mensah & Frimpong, 2022). Dress and adornments in Africa often mark rites of passage, such as weddings, funerals, and initiation ceremonies. In many cultures, clothing is used to symbolize transitions in social status, affirming connections to the community and ancestral heritage (Essel & Amissah, 2021). Moreover, African dress integrates various forms of identity, including ethnicity, gender, and religion, emphasizing the multifaceted role of attire in social interactions and cultural preservation (Allman, 2004; Owusu-Ansah, 2023).

Dress has historically been used as one of the most important and visually immediate markers of class, status, and ethnicity in East African coastal society. As one of many forms of expressive culture, clothing practice shaped and gave form to social bodies

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in East Africa. In early-twentieth-century urban Zanzibar, Dress played a critical role in this process, as did the creation of new forms of ritual, particularly that associated with women's puberty initiation ceremonies in which new forms of dress were worn as public articulations of women's new definitions of self (Allman, 2004). Allman, drawing on the cultural elements of Zanzibar's varied, transnational pasts, women in urban Zanzibar crafted newly imagined identities as Zanzibaris, an identity that sought to overcome historical divisions between Arab and African, slave and free, and replace them with a new and decidedly modern cosmopolitanism.

According to Allman (2004), clothing among the Yoruba people of Nigeria denoted more than just one's physical appearance; it also served as a means of determining and negotiating social ties as well as one's gender, character, money, and rank. Yoruba popular thought has conveyed the idea that social interaction and attire are related, as in the proverb *"iri ni si ni isonilojo"* the degree of respect one obtains is determined by their look. Yoruba women wore an undergarment, two or three wrappers, a headpiece, and a knee-length apron or petticoat called a *tobi* that was fastened around the waist with a sturdy chain or band in the eighteenth century. Women's clothing combinations were dictated by their age. Despite the fact that among the Yoruba, various costumes served to distinguish social groups, such as religious organisations, those clothes were not always exclusive to those communities. Their application gained traction, and their societal significance expanded (Allman, 2004). Sarah Tucker, in chronicling the early missionary work in Abeokuta, reported that "Independently of any religious motive, some of the gay young men affect the Mohammedan costume, and wear wide sack-like trousers, much embroidered, and confined close around the ankle, with loose upper garment, and turban... Some of them are beginning to adopt the English dress,". A similar trend is reported by Allman

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(2004) and Lou (2002) to have occurred in women's clothing and by the end of the nineteenth century, women were increasingly adopting a tailored blouse, the *buba.* As tailored blouses became more broadly accepted, they lost their status as distinctive markers of Christian conversion since women who practiced Islam and the Yoruba religion also adopted them. The popularity of fitted blouses lends credence to Barnes and Eicher's argument that, on occasion, style takes precedence over ideology and replaces a symbol that has political significance. It is evident from the scholarly exposition that, because clothing had a significant role in Yoruba aesthetics, the kind of fabric used to make an outfit had equal significance. Since only the wealthy could afford the best clothes, an individual's socioeconomic rank and wealth might be inferred from the quality of the cloth. Early cultural nationalists in Lagos had a deep affinity for Yoruba culture. A strong cultural awareness campaign was launched by the media, particularly the Lagos Weekly Record and the Lagos Standard, with the aim of igniting public interest in African history, language, and culture. Twenty African attire, polygamy, women's education, Yoruba secret organizations, and the use and study of the Yoruba language in schools were some of the main topics of discussion. Some early nationalists were greatly influenced by Edward Blyden and started studying Yoruba culture.

In the late 1880s, a campaign for dress reform was started in Sierra Leone by the Creoles, who were descended from African-American, Jamaican, and Afro-British immigrants. The removal of European clothing, according to fashion reformers, was a crucial first step toward achieving gradual independence from all European traditions (Allman, 2004).

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In the early years of Somalia's post-independence, men wore Western-style clothing more often than women. According to Akou (2004), one reason why they weren't accepted by women was the Western miniskirt trend of the 1960s and 1970s. A woman ran the risk of humiliating her family by being called a prostitute if she showed too much of her body (Allman, 2004). To keep an eye on prostitution and the attire of Somali women, the police department established the buona costume, or excellent costume, division.

The sight of Western Kenyans "in their fullest undress" astounded Western tourists in the early 1900s, and "the naked Kavirondo" became a popular tourist attraction that was frequently documented in photos. Photographic collections from this first colonial era are far better preserved than those from the second. Allman (2004) recounts that geologists upon encounter thought they had travelled back in time when they discovered themselves surrounded by "a tribe of naked savages, who ornamented themselves with coils of iron wire like the [ancient] Caledonians." The married woman's tassel, which several guests thought was absurd, was described as "a tail at the bottom of the spine, which waggles in a ludicrous way as they walk." However, African males who imitated Western fashion were met with the same disdain by authorities and missionaries, who attempted to impose a coastal style of dress in their place.

Early 1900s conceptions of proper dress in Kenya focused on the most basic forms of clothing (often made of hides), along with paint and embellishment (of beads, wire, plaited fibre, and carved bone), suitable for particular occasions: visiting funerals, meeting one's in-laws, going to the market, or traveling a considerable distance from home. Typically, women and girls wore coils of iron wire around their arms or legs,

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waist beads, and beaded necklaces in addition to a short, plain sisal fibre apron (or a more complex beaded one for special occasions). Married ladies wore a soft fibre tassel, called a *chieno* in Luo, which hung from a chain around their waist and hung low on their backs. The tassel served as the equivalent of a wedding ring in modern times, and Luo women who had to go far from home would sometimes wear one on a *chieno* to scare off would-be suitors (Allman, 2004). Young ladies occasionally had decorative designs shaved into their hair, and women frequently had elevated cicatrices on the front and sides of their chest below the breasts, as well as occasionally on their back and upper arms. Typically, married men would wrap a tiny goatskin around their loins, and occasionally they would tie a larger skin over one shoulder. Rich or powerful men, known as "chiefs" in European legends, wore a lot of jewelry, coils of wire around their limbs, and beaded cloaks made of goat or leopard leather. Iron wire wrapped around their arms and legs, beautiful headdresses made of carved tusks or ostrich feathers, red and white facial paint, and spears and shields carried by the warriors were characteristics that set them apart. For funerals, grown-ups dressed more thoughtfully (Allman, 2004).

African dress fashion is a dynamic and evolving expression of the continent’s cultural identity, artistic innovation, and global influence. While rooted in tradition, it continues to adapt and thrive, reflecting the resilience and creativity of African societies. With increasing global recognition and support for local industries, African dress fashion holds immense potential to contribute to cultural preservation, economic growth, and international cultural exchange.

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2.7 Worldview of Parliamentary Dress Culture

The concept and practice of parliamentary dress culture is nearly as old as the concept of a nation. Reminiscing about the American Revolution in 1856 (perhaps because of the approaching Civil War), Fry (1856) wrote an article to the Ladies Repository demanding, "Let Us Have a National Costume." Rebuking other Americans for buying European fashions when their parents and grandparents had fought so hard to gain independence from Great Britain, she wondered,

> Is it true that Americans . . . have already become so incompetent, so utterly wanting in the article of ingenuity, that they cannot even contrive to model for themselves a costume at once neat, comfortable, and elegant; and which might be regarded by other nations as something of an index to their professed democratic principles (Fry, 1856).

Numerous revolutions, the Napoleonic Wars, and the two World Wars sparked an interest in national attire throughout much of Europe in the 1800s and early 1900s, including Scotland, Germany, France, Russia, Norway (which broke away from Sweden), and Germany (Allman, 2004). According to Akou (2004), in the 1800s and early 1900s, a series of revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, and two world wars created an interest in national dress in many parts of Europe, including Norway (which seceded from Sweden), Scotland, Germany, France, and Russia.

The question of the admissibility of wearing indigenous African attire to African parliaments for parliamentary business is at a crossroads in several parliaments in Africa. In Kenya, Speaker Muturi points to a case involving Hon. Koigi Wamwere (then Member for Subukia) who entered the Kenyan parliament house smartly dressed in African attire. Hon. Dr. Bonaya Godana became interested in this and asked the Chair to interpret whether the Hon. Wamwere was appropriately clothed. Despite his

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apparent decency, the Speaker concluded that the Member was not appropriately attired (Muturi, 2019, p. 6).

However, in the case of the South African parliament, there is no specific dress requirement for the Speaker as well as parliamentarians (South African Legislative Sector, 2019; Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2004). Whereas the Speaker may be expected to dress formally, parliamentarians have the liberty to dress according to their personal tastes, provided such dress code is in accordance with the dignity of the House (South African Legislative Sector, 2019; Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2004). Formal dress in the context of the South African parliament has become "*customarily identified with a lounge suit or dark suit for men, day or evening dress for ladies, or formal traditional attire*" (South African Legislative Sector, 2019, p. 56). Although the South African parliament "*recognizes diversity, and therefore Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures are allowed to wear their religious or traditional attire in Parliament*" (South African Legislative Sector, 2019, p. 56), it still places a premium on the adornment of colonial dress fashion (lounge suit or dark suit) for parliamentary business.

Africans have long practiced bespoke fashion, which has changed over time but is still relevant to their lives today (Essel, 2023). Ambassadors from Ghana and Nigeria, two independent countries, arrived at the UN in various forms of "national dress" in the late 1950s. Their departure from the three-piece suit served as a powerful visual representation of their transition from a colonial to an independent state. At the same time, their specific choices of dress, kente cloth, and the agbada revealed new sources of identity and tension. The agbada was a style of Nigerian dress that combined elements of clothing from the Hausa and Yoruba (Allman, 2004; Akou, 2004).

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Although it would have been challenging to incorporate even more ethnic symbolism, this "national dress" excluded other groups, such as the Igbo, and highlighted their marginalization in national politics. In the 1970s, the governments of Nigeria and Zaire banned citizens from importing, buying, or wearing Western styles of dress. The ban was intended to instill national pride, but also to bolster the national economy by supporting local industries and blocking the outflow of money to Europe and India for the purchase of clothing and textiles.

2.8 Parliamentary Dress Culture in Ghana

The parliament of Ghana is made up of two hundred and seventy-five parliamentarians from different constituencies scattered across the various ethnic groups in the country. One would expect that their dressing as reported by Botchway (2008) that ‘‘people belonging to diverse ethnic and national groups have always, in one way or the other, tend to be nationalistic as they try to protect the cultural, economic, political and social interest of their ethnicity and culture’’ (p.169) will be reflective in their practice.

In a similar account, Bowdich (1819) states that dress fashion was a common pre-colonial practice by the people of Ghana. It has been defined by the interplay between traditional African heritage and its re-interpretation into contemporary fashion. This interplay of contemporary fashion with historic cultural reference points expressed through native textiles has contributed significantly to shaping the African fashion narrative of Ghana. There are several dress fashion classics that have been accepted and practiced for a long period in Ghana, including smock, *Kaba, batakari,* and wrap-around unstitched styles such as breast and waist covers, toga style, and tunic combinations, and queen mothers’ style. Smocks come in a variety of styles and sizes

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(Essel, 2019) and despite their great aesthetic functionality, the styles may give hints of the status of its wearer in society based on the context, in terms of place, space, and time used.

Humanity is very interested in clothing because of its connection to people's cultural values. Regrettably, the traditional cultural values that the people of Ghana embraced are not reflected in the clothing and dressing styles of today's Ghanaians. Buah (1998) observed that colonialism negatively impacted the dress culture of the *educated* Ghanaian who, as a result, became an imitator of the colonialists' dressing, speech, and mannerisms and discarded his/her own cultural roots. Nkrumah had made it clear to the teaming population during Ghana's independence declaration in March 1957 where, in an attempt to help in rewriting and reinterpreting the Ghanaian indigenous art and culture, Nkrumah looked inward to tap the fashion practices of the people as one of the cultural bonds of unification and as a symbol of anti-colonialism (Essel, 2019). Using smock fashion as a collective style, Nkrumah, together with his fellow compatriots, sought to construct a true African Ghanaian dress identity (Essel & Amissah, 2015) during the independence declaration in March 1957.

2.9 Fashion Diplomacy

Fashion diplomacy is an emerging field that examines the role of fashion in international relations, cultural exchange, and soft power strategies. It reflects how countries use fashion as a tool to enhance their global image, promote cultural identity, and foster diplomatic relationships. Fashion diplomacy operates at the intersection of fashion studies, cultural diplomacy, and international relations. It involves the strategic use of fashion by governments, cultural institutions, and designers to influence global perceptions and build cross-cultural connections

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(Rocamora, 2018). The concept is rooted in the broader theory of soft power, as articulated by Nye (2004), which emphasizes the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce. Through fashion, countries can project a positive image, promote their cultural heritage, and create a platform for dialogue.

Historically, fashion has been a medium for expressing national identity and political power. For example, during the Cold War, fashion shows became a subtle means of showcasing the cultural superiority of Western nations, as seen in the "Battle of Versailles" fashion show in 1973, where American designers were pitted against their French counterparts (Troy, 2012). This event is often cited as a turning point in fashion diplomacy, demonstrating how fashion can serve as a battleground for soft power (Troy, 2012).

Dress fashion diplomatic perspectives on the appropriation and application by the political class in countries across the globe have a deep-rooted history. In so doing, this study connects the perspectives of the diplomatic fashion history of other countries and Ghana, fashion studies, and nation branding to shed literature light on the worldview and Ghana’s prestigious fashion diplomacy while contributing to integrating the role of fashion for diplomacy and, reciprocally, the perspective of diplomacy and nation branding to fashion studies.

The notion of "nation brand," which was initially introduced in 1996 by British policy advisor Simon Anholt, has had a tremendous impact on public diplomacy in addition to creating a new area of study and practice (Dube'-Senecal, 2022). Appearance is powerful and fashion cannot be ignored in international relations and public diplomacy, as it is a tool of communication, a cultural and economic force that can be used to transform a society (Liberatore, 2013). Leaders of governments worldwide

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love to dress heavily so as to enhance their charisma, to gain more respect from people, and at times to distract people from governance issues, depending on the nature of followership. Generally, leaders try to distinguish themselves from others and, as a rule or convention, devote a great deal of their time to 'brand-building exercises. Some would go out of their way to attract attention and, for that reason, foster a relationship with the media (Terblanche, 2011, p.156).

Rizwan (2021), revealed the intentions behind Queen Elizabeth's fashion choices, particularly during President Trump's meeting. The brooch is a staple accessory for the Queen for nearly every occasion and she often matches it to the theme of the day. On the first day of the Trump visit, the Queen wore a simple green brooch given to her by the Obamas. On the second day, she wore a brooch given to her by Canada in the shape of a snowflake (a term commonly employed by the right). And, for the last day, she chose a brooch the Queen Mother wore to the funeral of her father, King George VI. Given that her role does not allow her to dictate foreign policy, a subtle accessory like a brooch can communicate her disapproval of President Trump and his administration.

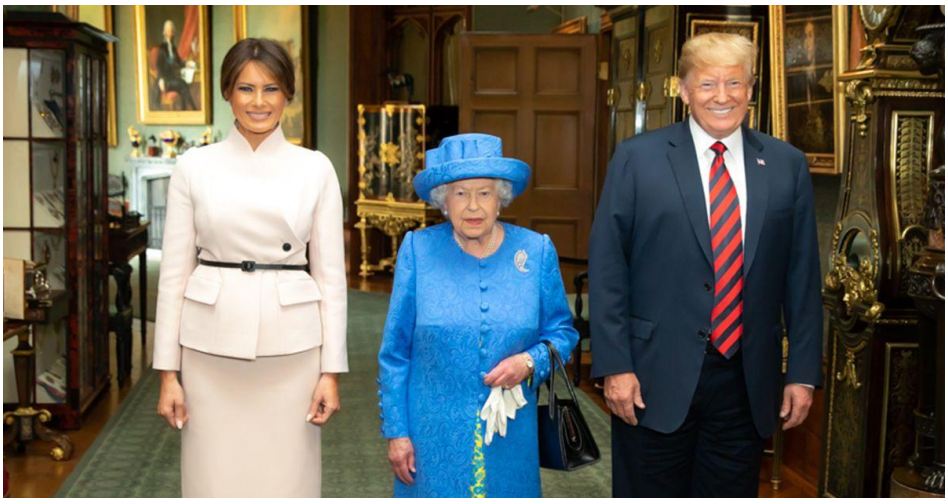

Figure 2.2: Queen Elizabeth's (middle) fashion choices, meeting President Trump
Source: Rizwan (2021)

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Similarly, the U.S Secretary of State under former president Clinton Madeleine Albright, for example, after imposing sanctions on Iraq, following the Gulf War, a poem appeared in the Baghdad press referring to her as an “unparalleled serpent”. During her next meeting with Iraqi leaders, Albright reclaimed the serpent image in retaliation with an elegant pin. In her book, Read My Pins, the Secretary of State explains how she used her jewelry and pins as a diplomatic tool during the years she served under the Clinton Administration (Rizwan, 2021).

Figure 2.2.1: Notes: U.S Secretary of State under former President Clinton Madeleine Albright

Source: (Luce, 2022) https://www.ft.com/content/368fcee5-407e-4e34

Fashion and style have the ability to connect states through cultural and economic ties, convey respect to host nations, underscore political agendas, and send messages to various social communities (Rizwan, 2021). Dube-Senecal (2022) illuminates French public authorities' attribution of two distinct roles to fashion as part of France’s diplomacy, with one taking over the other starting in the mid-1970s. It was tied to the two post-war contexts of the Glorious Thirty Years (1946–75) and the Long Sixties (1958–74), with the socioeconomic and sociocultural upheavals they

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respectively fostered. The government of France carefully wove its international relations Plan with fashion–led modernization of Western Europe.

The growing inconclusiveness as to any meaningful increase in French fabrics exports through ‘couture propaganda’ was only paralleled by the growing interest of French diplomacy in couture’s general promotional influence (Dube-Senecal, 2022). This diplomatic interest dated back to 1957, with the first aid-to-couture plan, and kept growing in the 1960s with subsidized participation in haute couture events, such as French Weeks and French Fortnights, to promote French consumer goods at large. With the start of the aid-to-couture ‘propaganda’ plan in 1968, the worldwide dissemination of haute couture films by the Cultural Relations Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France added a new layer to the industry’s influence by widening its reach (Dube-Senecal, 2022).

Jackie Kennedy, former U.S first lady through the power of her appearance as First Lady communicated a positive image of the United States to the world, particularly on her Goodwill Tour to India and Pakistan in 1962. In bridging the ties between the United States and Uganda, purchased recycled necklaces from Uganda’s Jackie as a means of using fashion as a tool of public diplomacy (Liberatore, 2013). Liberatore further contends that Jackie’s sense of fashion diplomacy promoted her husband’s legacy of foreign policy of graciousness, flexibility, and diplomacy lived on in her unwavering image.

In Africa, leaders have a robust relationship with fashion. Osiebe (2020) asserts that Fashion is useful to the political class for a number of reasons. They include: improving charisma, access to respect and recognition, and distracting or focusing attention. Fashion is also a richly privileged site from which to survey a society. Some

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of the political values of certain leaders are exposed by their fashion choices. Certain patterns and colours on title clothes are signs of power and leadership, and as well determine the rank of the leader (Osiebe, 2020). In order to project wealth, high social status, religious piety, and political authority, the ceremonial dress of leaders extends beyond ordinary adornment functions.

African leaders in authority, like a monarchy, exhibit themselves in rituals with robes, crowns, and scepters; they assume public identities as representatives of their state. By contrast, political leaders in a democracy don't wear a uniform (Eicher, 1992). They wear body augmentations and modifications that are comparable to those used by other residents. Political leaders, in order to prove their political identities in public and to assert their right to the power that has been granted to them by the nation-state or other governmental unit, representatives of the government in the judicial and military spheres don specific attire like robes and uniforms.

Political identification is occasionally a form of identity that is rarely shown by attire, speech, or behaviour. However, the fervour of a political campaign or a popular uprising in protest of some political act or policy may result in an individual's flaunting of political affiliation by use of pins, badges, armbands, unique hair arrangements, and other forms of identifying dress (Eicher, 1992). Specific examples can be found in the dramatically changed dress that signaled and promoted South Africa's Julius Malema and members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) using the red beret as a uniform (Osiebe, 2020). Similarly, Bobi Wine's quest to unseat a 34-year-old dictatorship in Uganda appropriated the red beret as a symbolic fashion accessory.

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Arguably the closest piece of research to the intersection of fashion and legislative politics transpired in South Africa through Alude Mahali's work (2016) on the EFF's workers' tropes. Before engaging with Mahali's contribution, Leitch (1996) observes that dress is cultural capital, serving political designs, consorting with hegemonic norms and domination; and bearing a regulating force that incites conformity and resistance at times. "To adopt a uniform is to choose a socioeconomic milieu and a future; the manufacture and maintenance of clothing involve domestic economies and various trades and guilds" (Leitch 1996, p.122).

South Africa's Julius Malema has, thus, proven skilled at using his own sense of style, both in rhetoric and in cloth, to his advantage a skill, Goldhammer (2014) writes with conviction, is shared with Mandela. The EFF's contribution to fashion in parliament discourse is strengthened by the synonymy of the party's uniform with a fashion culture. Focusing on post-apartheid South Africa, Mahali (2016) as cited in Osiebe (2020) is concerned with the domestic worker dress as appropriated by MPs of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by former Youth League President of the ANC, Julius Malema. Mahali's concern came through when she asked whether there is substance beyond the Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF) 'symbolic imagery' and 'self-fashioning'. Mahali's point is more on the subversion of inference represented by the political party's appropriation of the domestic worker dress as a uniform than on how it promotes/mitigates legislative work. Osiebe (2020) stresses that the ANC fought hard to ban the uniforms of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) MPs and had some of them expelled from parliament (Makinana 2016). This incurred the following reaction from Malema: "To you proper is white, to you proper is European. We are not white; we are going to wear those uniforms… We are defying colonialist

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decorum. We are not English-made. We are workers, and we are going to wear those clothes and we are unapologetic about it" (Goldhammer, 2014).

It is interesting to point out that since the ability to possess power is usually expressed in the outward expressions of African leaders, it often dissipates when signs of power are removed from persons (Aris 2006), it is worth pondering if Malema would consider his authority challenged were one or some of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF's) MPs to carry on without uniforms or to boycott uniforms in staging a party protest. The red berets used by Julius Malema are reported by Osiebe (2020) to be envisioned to convey revolutionary zeal and discipline, and are a tribute to the likes of Che Guevara and Thomas Sankara, with the added bonus of party members being easy to spot in a crowd. A pool of red is increasingly visible at public events in South Africa including recent memorial services for Nelson Mandela (The Economist, 2014).

Arguably "political dressing may be fashionable, but it isn't fashion" (Delgado, 2018). Delgado blames the confusion on a capitalist all-encompassing fashion industry that takes advantage of erroneous use of the terms "dress, style and fashion [interchangeably] without regard for their fundamental semantic difference" (Delgado 2018: np). Indeed, the EFF's adoption of a political dress and its induction as fashion raises fundamental questions in fashion theory (Encomendero 2018). What do uniforms, including uniform berets, make of Malcolm Barnard's (1996: 71) argument that since there are alternative interpretations of garments between the designers and the wearers, meaning cannot be a product of the designer's intentions. Similarly, in Nigeria, Omoyele Sowore's preference for orange berets after losing out at the country's 2019 presidential elections, the human rights advocate, sustained a series of

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protests tagged “Revolution Now,” to incite mass action against the ruling government. His followers were easily recognized by their orange berets (Osiebe, 2020).

The dawn of ‘nation brand’ as a concept, pioneered in executive diplomacy was promulgated in the earliest part of the 1960’s by Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah in his quest to nationalise the Ghanaian way of dressing. The distinction between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy was largely consensual, with the former encompassing formal relations between state representatives and the latter studying the relationship between ‘the government, the media, and public opinion. President Nkrumah’s choice of Ghanaian fabrics was strategic and demonstrated his speculative visuality of transformational leadership qualities such as patriotism and self-sacrifice that could help in shaping national identity through Ghanaian indigenous practices and for cultural diplomacy (Essel, 2019). It would have been more obvious if Nkrumah’s education overseas and frequent global trotting had obscured his burning desire to tap from his cultural nuances in laying the foundation for the building of the then-new nation-state Ghana, however, the leader of the Africa’s first republican state was completely opposite in his dress fashion expression. He had expressed his dissatisfaction about the ‘colonial students who gained access to metropolitan universities on account of their social standing’ and saw their knowledge acquired as personal distinction and privilege rather than an instrument to illuminate society (Essel, 2019).

Nkrumah’s expectation was that those educated should have joined hands with the many who had a deep sense of national cultural consciousness to use the knowledge acquired as an ‘instrument of national emancipation and integrity’ (Nkrumah, 1964, p.

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4). This portrayed him (Nkrumah) as a cosmopolitan political leader of distinction who dwelled on the world of Ghanaian dress-cultural knowledge to make a particularistic fashion statement, which was a visible manifestation of contemporary ethnic nationalism (Essel, 2019). Essel further contends that Nkrumah's decision to Nationalise the Ghanaian way of dressing was his demonstrative testimony of patronizing locally produced fashion and textiles products and a conscious effort to whet down the appetite of the high taste for foreign fashion and textiles, which was an exploitative colonial trade apparatus that did not encourage high promotion of local textiles and fashion. At the time, there was high patronage of European fashion, especially, amongst the then Ghanaian elite who resorted to the European suit as a mark of erudition (Essel, 2017).

In recent times the dress choice of the Ghanaian political leaders particularly president's elect has become an important subject for research due to its significance in boosting fashion and textile's identity and diplomacy beyond the borders of the country as well as its internal benefits to the sector (Essel, Navei & deGraft-Yankson, 2021). Essel (2019) revealed that seven out of the eight presidents-elect from 1960 to 2017 selected their inaugural ceremony dress fashion from the repertoire of Ghanaian fashion classics to signal their Ghanaian dress cultural identity. Essel further contends that the only president-elect who wore the Western suit fashion for his inauguration was Edward Akuffo-Addo, the biological father of the 7th and 8th president of the 4th republican Ghana. In furtherance, Essel (2019) as cited in Essel, Navei & deGraft-Yankson, (2021) points out that though what a president-elect wears during the presidential inauguration in Ghana is non-statutory, it acts as a salient visual communication apparatus that pulls the strings of patriotism, nationalism and fosters a sense of belongingness. For these reasons, the presidents-elect of Ghana sourced their

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dress from the repertoire of Ghanaian fashion classics with the aim of fostering unity, nationalism, and display of Ghanaian identity. From the historical precedence, Ghanaian presidents-elect have worn unique kente fabric designs with nationalistic symbolism that gave a sense of pride to the citizenry.

From the foregoing dialogue, there is consensus in the literature that dress fashion is one of the major ways through which Ghanaian cultural and nationalistic identity could be showcased internally and externally. Fashion diplomacy represents a significant yet understudied aspect of cultural diplomacy and international relations. As countries increasingly recognize the power of fashion in shaping global perceptions, the strategic use of fashion in diplomacy is likely to grow. Future research should explore the impact of fashion diplomacy on global politics and its potential to promote more equitable cultural exchanges.

2.10 Major Textiles Decorative Techniques

Textile decorative techniques are generally classified into two – surface and structural. Surface decorative techniques, which include dyeing, painting, printing, embroidery and applique, are the embellishments or designs applied to textile fabrics after it has been constructed or formed while the structural decorative effects are achieved in the forming stages of the fabric structure (Essel, 2017). It is the anatomical patterns and arrangement that typify a textile fabric or article due to its method of construction or formation. Structural decoration includes bonding, felting, and netting, weaving, knitting and crocheting (Essel, 2017). Adinkra printing and kente weaving are part of the dominant indigenous textile fabric decoration technologies (Rattary, 1927; Bowdich, 1819; Antubam, 1963; Agbenaza, 1965; Glover, 1969, Asihene, 1978; Hiamey, 1981; Adler & Barnard, 1992; Fosu, 1994;

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Willis, 1998; Ross, 1998; Ofori-Ansa, 1999; Picton, 2004; Kraamer, 2006) that are far researched than any Ghanaian textile art. Though both Adinkra (motifs and printing technology) and kente of Ghana have been extensively researched, the latter seemingly outweighs the former in terms of the extent. Bowdich (1819) hinted at the ethnic art tradition of the Asantes and other ethnic groups in Ghana and gave hindsight of the practice of naming fabrics after noble people, royals, kings, heroes/heroine and or events. Adinkra cloth is said to have derived its name from a Gyaman King named Adinkra (Ofori-Ansa, 1999) who is automatically a royal. It was produced using the calabash stamps dipped into natural dyes called Adinkra aduro and stamped onto woven fabrics. Adinkra symbols are non-verbal communicative symbols of proverbial nature with idiomatic tone that may 'eschew straightforwardness but imminent in brevity of expression. Its usage prompts interpretational rhetoric dependent on the circumstantial contextualisation of a particular Adinkra symbology. Adinkra links a particular symbol to a unique meaning in the culture of the Akan' (Essel & Opoku-Mensah, 2014, p.31). Kente, a stripe-woven cloth stitched to form a broad fabric, on the other hand derived its name from the process involved in its production and or its pattern and association with basket weave pattern according to two different historical accounts of the Asantes and Ewes who have both claimed original creators of the unique fabric often incorporate Adinkra symbols in the construction of woven kente fabrics and printed adinkra fabrics**.**

2.11 Symbolism in Ghana

Traditional symbols are the forms in indigenous Ghanaian art that are primarily a usual translation of thought and ideas, expressing and symbolizing the values and beliefs of the people among whom they occur (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Appiah, &

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Nartey, 2016). They further assert that in a number of cases, these images have become symbolic by having certain ideas or proverbs arbitrarily imposed on them. While there are certain historic symbols with clear meanings, others are left up for interpretation, and nothing seems to be known about them at all. The objects that are represented in symbolic art forms among the ethnic groups in Ghana are textiles, pottery, stools, umbrella tops, and linguist staff.

According to Gyekye (2002, p.125–133), symbolism,meanings and ideas expressed through art is necessary in the preliterate cultural setting of artistic productions. Sarpong (1974, p. 101–108) talks on Asante fabric designs. "Akan artistic symbols, especially the Adinkra symbols, reflect religious, aesthetic, and cultural values," claims Nkansah-Obrempong (2002, p. 39). He believes that these symbols, which interpret Akan faith and culture, have a special quality.

2.11.1 Adinkra Symbolism in Ghana

Adinkra symbols are non-verbal communicative symbols of a proverbial nature with an idiomatic tone that eschews straightforwardness but is imminent in the brevity of expression. When it is used, interpretational rhetoric based on the contextualization of a specific Adinkra symbolism through circumstantial evidence is prompted and connects a specific emblem to a distinct meaning within the Akan culture (Essel & Opoku-Mensah, 2014, p.31). Particularly for textiles used for clothes, motifs provide a better chance of being recognized. One of the fashionable textiles gaining popularity across the globe are the traditional African fabrics, which are crafted in striking hues. African textiles are adorned with complex symbols and vibrant colours that represent the people's culture. This demonstrates the significance of symbols and their symbolism, illustrating where they originate from and how they are incorporated into

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clothing or adornments. Among the Akan people of Ghana, the adinkra are visual, indigenous symbols that signify death and symbolise objects that hold symbolic meanings related to traditional life, wisdom, and beliefs. Since their creation, the symbols have been primarily used to create funeral cloth, which is worn by both men and women as wrappers.

The ability to communicate is essential to human existence. This is more prominent in Ghanaian culture and tradition, it is considered an invaluable substance when it comes to social and relational issues. The Akan ethnic group, being the universal umbrella of several clans or factions, has a distinguished characteristic, which is its capability to communicate messages and ideas through symbols. The Ashanti kingdom, being the principal component and constituting the majority group of the Akan tribe does not underestimate the use of communication through symbols and other mediums. The manufacturing of adinkra cloth and its symbolism are preserved by the Ashanti people. The insignia were created by Nana Kofi Adinkra, an Ivory Coast-based Gyaman leader. Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri & Moses (2022) recount that the Ashanti won a battle against the Gyaman, killed their monarch, and carried their artisans as captives into their own realm. Around this time, the Ashanti started employing the symbols as motifs in their textile creations. There are several symbols, each with a unique meaning or symbolism. Due to the constant introduction of new symbols into the traditional textile industry, the overall number of adinkra symbols is unknown. Adinkra symbols refer to more than just Ghanaian textile production,they also refer to the global community. The symbols, which stand for historical occurrences, sentiments, animal behaviours, plant life, and items or shapes, are employed in the fabrication of textiles to depict aphorism and aesthetic reasons. This has made it possible for designers and artists to explore the symbols in different ways. In addition,

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adinkra symbols can be found as motifs in jewelry, book covers, chairs, bowls, and other plastic objects, clothing accessories, and architectural designs (Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri & Moses, 2022). The relationship between societal norms regarding the experience and presentation of affect and the interpretation of symbols has not received much attention in the literature up to this point.

Adinkra symbols foster awe and respect for human and spiritual authority, foster sentiments of love, care, and security, and meet expectations about overcoming hardship by encouraging virtues of tenacity and hardiness. They also urge the maintenance of societal harmony and the avoidance of confrontation. In Ghana's Akan tradition, these teachings play a crucial role in helping people control their emotions. The Africans in the diaspora community, which values the symbols as a link to their African heritage, may also find cultural significance in these teachings (Dzokoto, Twum-Asante & Hayfron, 2018).

Several authors and researchers present different accounts regarding the number of Adinkra symbols available. Tetteh, (2006) and Abissath, (2004) in their exploratory studies organized and interpreted some selected Adinkra symbols. Below are some commonly used adinkra symbols in Ghana.

Figure 2.3 Duafe (Wooden Comb)
Source : (Tetteh, 2006).

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The wooden comb, also known as a "duafe," is one of the symbols created by the Gyaman's king, Nana Adinkra and his artisans. It represents behaviour or attitude that demonstrates high moral standards, particularly among females. Philosophically, it connotes an attractive or useful quality of women and their eternal love (Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri & Moses, 2022).

Gyekye (2002) in reviewing this specific symbol, writes that the wooden comb is designed for the Asante women for plaiting or combing their afro hairs. It is highly regarded as an important tool in female body decoration or adornment. The comb is one of the household items used during the puberty rites of the Asante girls. During the puberty rites, “duafe” is offered to the girls by their fiancés along with items like mirrors, stools, sandals and traditional pormade.

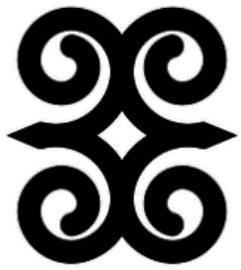

Figure 2.4 Dwannimen (Ram’s Horn)
Picture Credit : (Tetteh, 2006)

The Ram’s horn (Dwannimen) is one of the commonly used symbols among the adinkra in the local cloth production of the Ashanti. According to Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri and Moses (2022) , the ram’s horn symbol represents concealment, humility, strength, wisdom and education. The strength of the ram is in the horn. Adom et al (2012) share similar views concerning the symbolism of the ram’s horn but their interpretation only concentrates on the humility and strength. When it comes to struggle and fighting, the ram is capable of fighting fiercely its enemy but submissively humble itself towards the slaughterhouse. The ram's behaviour and

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character convey a philosophical message: although people, particularly leaders and those in positions of authority, can be strong, powerful, and influential, their actions or operations within society should be subject to some level of scrutiny. The symbol teaches everyone, regardless of background or connection to powerful people, the value of humility. Regardless of their level of influence and authority in society, people should practice humility (Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri and Moses, 2022).

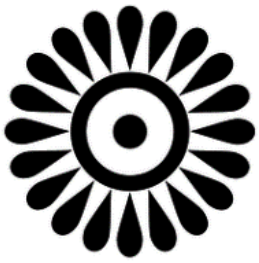

Figure 2.5 Mako (Pepper)
Source: https://www.adinkrasymbols.org/ symbols

The Akan proverb *"Mako nyinaa mpatu mmere,"* which translates to "All peppers (presumably on the same branch) do not ripen simultaneously," is condensed into the symbol mako used in adinkra. This proverb instructs the more fortunate to assist the less fortunate, implicitly understanding that things might turn around and that they might also require assistance (Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri and Moses, 2022). Time changes, as the Akan say, *"mmere dane,*" meaning "any advantage one may have now, may not stay forever." *"Mako nyinaa mpatu mmere*" may also mean to inspire or exhort those who are behind to work for their goals and not give up on them. The fact that greatness has been accomplished demonstrates that it is both achievable and feasible at all costs. All the peppers will eventually ripen, even though some may grow ahead of others initially.

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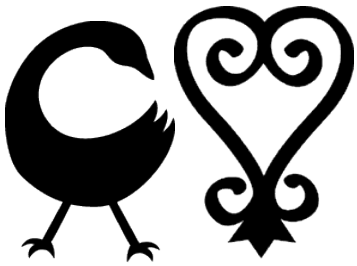

Figure 2.6 Sankofa
Source: www.adinkrasymbols.org/symbols/sankofa

This Akan proverb, "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," expands on the meaning of the word Sankofa, which in Akan Twi literally means "to retrieve." It says, in other words, that it is OK to go back and collect anything you neglected. The core idea behind Sankofa's power is that understanding your past and heritage helps you better understand who you are today, the world you live in, and how to improve. Two distinct symbols are used to symbolize Sankofa. The bird with the twisted neck is the most well-known, but there is also another one that resembles the traditional heart symbol. This figure has two spirals, one at the top and one at the bottom, and is symmetrical around a vertical axis. The spirals most likely symbolize the idea of circling back to a point, which is most likely the source (Glover, 1992).

Adom et al (2012) posits that there are two variations of this Adinkra symbol, but the most widely used one shows a bird turning around to retrieve or gather something from behind or the back. This symbol is commonly used in the manufacturing of adinkra cloth. The motif or symbol conveys the idea to "go back and fetch," "return and get it," or "learn from history" in its literal sense. The Ashanti people greatly value this symbol because it conveys a message to individuals who are open to learning. Correcting wrongs committed in the past is not a mistake when viewed through a symbolic lens. the symbol teaches Ghanaians that going forward, it is preferable to develop and get ready for opportunities by learning from experiences

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Amongst the Akans of Ghana, It says *"se wo were firi na wo sankofa a yennkyi"*. This imply that going back to retrieve anything that one has forgotten or rejected for whatever reason is unacceptable. In their analysis of the Sankofa sign, Adom, et al (2012) state that it represents reawakening of historical experiences, cultural practices, and ideals that previously lifted the Ashanti kingdom above certain other tribes in Ghana.

Offences can be corrected to foster peace and tranquillity in the society. The message of the symbol is applicable in marriage, business (employer and employee relationship), politics and all matters involving peaceful human relations where mistakes and offences are not far from happening (Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri and Moses, 2022). The Ashanti (Akan) strongly have faith in their ancestors and are always ready to emulate and follow the right paths and experiences laid down by the old generation. Consultation with the aged for wisdom is practiced by the Ashanti. In contemporary living, abandonment of one's good and treasured culture for foreign values and customs that have little or no better influence on the local populace is considered misleading and a stark deviation of peoples' heritage. Sankofa is a warning against conceit. Because the experiences and events that gave rise to established conventions and traditions would have long since passed from the collective awareness, future generations may become so conceited as to disregard them. Many Akan conventions and aphorisms reiterate that this is a serious mistake that ought to be avoided.

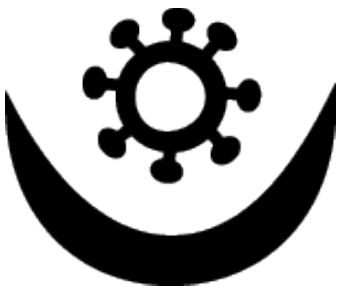

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Figure 2.7 Osrane ne Nsoroma (The moon and star)
Source: (www.adinkra symbols.org).

Osram ne Nsoromma means "moon and star." It is a symbol of faithfulness, fondness, harmony, benevolence, love, loyalty, and femininity, from the proverb, "Kyekye pe awaree," meaning "The North Star loves marriage." She is always in the sky waiting for the return of the moon, her husband (www.adinkra symbols.org). The moon (osrane) forms part of adinkra symbols with the symbolic interpretation as patience and confidence as expressed by (Yankah, 1995). Contemplating the moon as adinkra symbol, Yankah (1995) recounts that the Akan communities in the olden days were dominated and ruled by women because of their attributes. The Akans believe that women possess qualities of patience, faithfulness and humility as factors that necessitate societal and national governance and development. Currently, in the enstoolment discourse among the Akan, the queen mother plays a pivotal role for the enstoolment and distoolment of kings and chiefs. Philosophical lessons deduced from the symbol indicate the influence of women in the society. Women are hospitable, faithful, generous, charming and most of all national development greatly depends on them. The qualities enumerated earlier imply that empowering women into high positions and offices are the means to check and control corruption in society.

Figure 2.8 Asaase ye Duru (The Earth has Weight)
Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2023).

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Asase ye duru literally means “the earth is heavy or has weight”. Anything that falls from the sky can always be held by the earth without complaint. In the traditional Akan context, it is said that the sky drops them to the earth when it can no longer support them. This statement has an intriguing quality in that the sky feels content and that the ground has nothing to worry about. Symbolically, asase ye duru stands for divinity, providence, power, wealth and authority. In the philosophical sense, it is believed all powers come from the earth. This concept admonishes people living on the earth to be vigilant and to live beyond reproach since there are gods watching and recording the acts of the inhabitants on the earth.

Figure 2.9 "ZIGZAG" is NKYIMKYIM.
Source: Researcher’s fieldwork (2023)

Meaning taken literally: Turns & Twists, the symbol connotes that the essence of life is dynamism or adaptability. Sometimes people are afraid to take any kind of initiative because they think they won't succeed. According to Kuwonor et al (2016) the symbol teaches a moral lesson of life that it is not a series of straight lines. However, being prudent means striking a balance between zigs and zags.

The Nkyimkyim symbol represents caution, attention to detail, and equilibrium (Glover, 1992). The image inspires people to take on challenging tasks and succeed in them as well as to take on negative circumstances and turn them around. It also exhorts people to live with optimism.

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Figure 2.10 BESE SAKA (Bunch of Kola-Nut)
Source: http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra/bese.html

In Ghana's economic existence, the Kola nut is very significant. It is a popular cash crop that is directly linked to wealth and plenty. This emblem also stands for the ability of trade and agriculture to unite people (Kuwonor et al, 2016). Plants in the equatorial rainforest yield cola, a crop of great commercial importance. West Africans trade it with one another. People in the northern region of West Africa have a strong demand for cola nuts, which they purchase from the southern region where they are grown. Economic prosperity and a high standard of living were brought about by the Kola Nut trade, particularly for the Ashanti Kingdom and those who engaged in it. People chew kola nuts for its stimulant properties, medical benefits, and capacity to keep them awake. Symbolically, It symbolises economic well-being, affluence and authority over other people and nations (Kuwonor et al, 2016).

This adinkra symbol symbolises affluence, power, abundance, togetherness and unity. The bunch refers to unity because separate pods each with a number of seeds have been brought together. Here, one can mention the philosophy of unity in diversity. The symbol encourages agriculture, trade and industry among nations and people because it brings about economic progress. It also stresses the need to evaluate one's status in life, through genuine commercial activities. This is a symbol of economic power and affluence (Kuwonor et al, 2016).

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Figure 2.11 NYAME DUA (God's Tree)
Source: http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra/

Nyamedua is a three-pronged steak that is placed in front of houses and in courtyards. For purification and cleaning rituals, a brass basin, calabash, or small ceramic pot filled with water and herbs is put between the forked stake. Regarded as the tree of God, it is a sacred spot where rituals are performed known as the Nyame Dua ase, a symbol of God's protection and presence. The Nyame Dua is erected in front of a house or compound in indigenous Ghanaian societies. As explained by Kuwornu et al (2016) The planting of Nyamedua in Indigenous Ghanaian households represents a way of coming full circle with God and ancestors. Every home had a Nyamedua in the past, which guarded the family and fended off evil spirits and terrible omens. It functioned as a place of prayer or a divine altar. It also represents God's protection and presence (Kuwornu et al, 2016). The term "Nyamedua" supports the assertion made by the majority of Ghanaians, including Akans, that they were aware of God before European settlers brought Christianity to their homeland. Symbolically, the adinkra symbol exhorts people to genuinely worship and revere God, and to acknowledge his presence and protection. This is an object of adoration and respect.

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Figure 2.12: MATE MASIE (I have heard and kept it).
http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra/mate.html

"Mate masie" translates to "I understand," as an implicit connotation. Understanding is synonymous with knowledge and wisdom, but it also denotes the caution that comes from considering what someone else has stated. It is a symbol of discernment, understanding, and caution. Certain information might incite terror and dread when it is made public. Rumor-mongering, gossip, and loose conversation all demonstrate immaturity. Among the Akans of Ghana, those who engage in them are despised. Additionally, those with short memories are not valued. The symbol teaches Knowledge and wisdom. Kuwornu et al (2016) recounts that Akans view as knowledgeable and wise anyone who hears something and retains it for future reference. It is required of someone receiving any kind of communication, guidance, or knowledge to save it and use it when needed. The sign emphasizes the value of carefully considering the information you are given in order to become wise and knowledgeable. It emphasizes the value of maintaining confidentiality and suggests that people consider topics carefully before making judgments (Kuwornu et al, 2016).

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Figure 2.13: Gye Nyame (Except God)
Source: https://www.adinkrasymbols.org/symbols

The Gye Nyame symbol is quite likely the most well-known of all the Adinkra symbols. In Ghana, Africa, the Gye Nyame have been utilized for millennia to transmit culture. The phrase "except for God" (Gye Nyame) denotes God's omniscience (Kissi, Fenning & Asante, 2019). It is an expression of the Ghanaian people's religious nature. Examining the symbol closely reveals that it depicts a human inside a hand. It serves as a metaphor for how God holds us. This is a further interpretation of the Gye Nyame symbol: Nobody has ever lived to witness the beginning of this enormous panorama of creation, and nobody will ever survive to witness its end except the creator. Gye Nyame, is a symbol of God's omnipotence. In Ghana, this exquisite and distinctive symbol is widely used. It is overwhelmingly the most widely used for ornamentation, a testament to the strongly religious nature of the Ghanaian people. It symbolises God's might and presence everywhere, It may also serve as a reminder of God's vastness in comparison to all of us. The Gye Nyame sign can also mean that wisdom and knowledge are valuable (Swenzy, 2021). It serves as a reminder to constantly strive to understand more about the world.

Figure 2.14 BI-NNKA-BI (Bite not one another).
Source: https://www.adinkrasymbols.org/symbols

Historically, the adinkra symbol *Bi nka bi* originated as a result of the evil intentions and deeds perpetrated by people against other people. These vices provoke people and

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the provoked ones usually try to retaliate. it literally means let's not offend each other. People should have their freedom in the course of discharging their duties. The symbol cautions against gossiping, blackmailing, backbiting, provocation, cheating, bribery and corruption and other social vices which can retard societal growth and generate conflict (Kuwornu et al, 2016).

Figure 2.15: NYAME BEWU NA MAWU (I will die only when God is dead).
Source: https://www.adinkrasymbols.org/symbols/nyame-nwu-na-mawu/

The phrase "God won't die for me to die" is Nyame Nwu Na Mawu. It is a symbol for the eternal nature of the human soul and confidence in God to keep one's soul intact. Saying that God will not die in order for me to die is saying that the only way I can pass away is if God passes away. However, since God is eternal, this implies that I am likewise incapable of passing away.

Symbolically the symbol connotes Immortality and perpetual existence of God **(**Kuwornu et al, 2016). They further assert that it is believed amongst several ethnic groups in Ghana that the okra (soul) is part of God's soul giving to mankind. This gives man life; and at death, the okra which is immortal returns to God. Because the okra is part of God, it can only die when God himself is dead. However, since God does not die, the okra cannot also die. This Adinkra symbol is said to have direct association with belief in the Supreme Being, the cult of the ancestors and life after

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death in the Akan society. The symbol signifies spiritual protection and perpetual existence. This translates the optimism of users who may feel invincible and possibly derived from such optimism the courage and resilience required in the face of the hardships and dangers faced in life (Kuwornu et al, 2016).

Figure 2.16 Ako-Ben (Horn)
Source : Willis (1998)

The **Ako-Ben** symbol, representing a war horn, signifies a call to arms and a readiness for action. It reflects a spirit of voluntarism, preparedness, and a willingness to respond when called upon (Willis, 1998). Historically, the war horn was used to rally people, signaling the need for collective action, particularly in times of conflict. Willis (1998) emphasizes that understanding the horn's message was crucial, as it communicated the urgency of the situation. The **Ako-Ben** symbol embodies vigilance and alertness, reminding individuals and communities of the importance of being prepared to act in defense of their values and responsibilities (Arthur, 2001; Danzy, 2019). This symbol continues to hold relevance as an emblem of readiness and proactive engagement in contemporary contexts.

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Figure 2.17: Nsoroma (Star)
Source : Willis (1998).

Nsoromma is the Akan word for “star.” It literally translates to “child of the heavens.” It is a symbol of faith and the belief in patronage and dependency on a supreme being (Willis, 1998). The **Nsoroma** or "star" is one of the many revered Adinkra symbols used by the Ghanaian people, particularly the Akan. The symbol, which translates to “children of the heavens,” holds profound spiritual significance. It represents the guardianship of God, conveying the belief that a supreme being, or God, watches over all living things. The symbol highlights the idea that human beings are under divine protection and guidance, reflecting the broader Akan worldview of dependence on a higher power for sustenance and support. In Akan cosmology, Nsoroma is more than just a symbol; it embodies the deeply-rooted faith in a benevolent, omnipresent force that governs the universe. As Willis (1998) notes, Nsoroma is a visual representation of this patronage and dependency, reminding individuals of the ever-watchful eye of the Supreme Being.

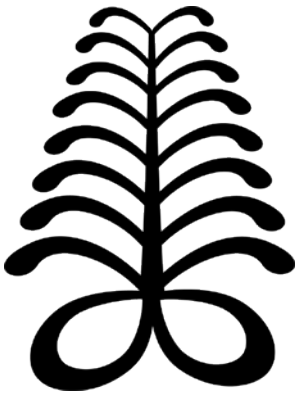

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Figure 2.18: AYA (fern)
Source : Willis (1998)

The Aya symbol, representing the fern, carries a profound message of strength and resilience in Akan culture. It is associated with the phrase "I am not afraid of you," which encapsulates the symbolic values of endurance, independence, defiance in the face of challenges, and perseverance. As a plant that thrives in difficult conditions, the fern becomes an ideal metaphor for overcoming adversity, symbolizing the hardiness and resourcefulness necessary for survival and growth even in unfavorable environments (Willis, 1998).

The fern, in its natural habitat, often grows in harsh and rocky terrains where other plants struggle to survive. This ability to flourish in tough conditions mirrors the qualities that Aya embodies: the capacity to endure hardship and maintain one's integrity and strength despite external pressures. In the Akan context, Aya serves as a visual reminder of the resilience required to navigate life's challenges. It encourages individuals to be resourceful and determined, to stand firm in their beliefs, and to face difficulties with courage and independence (Rattray, 1927; Asante & Mazama, 2009).

Figure 2.19: Dwennimmen (the horns of a ram)
Source: https://www.adinkrasymbols.org.

The Adinkra symbol Dwennimmen, which translates as "the horns of a ram," represents a powerful combination of strength and humility. This symbol embodies

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the virtues of learning, wisdom, and resilience, highlighting how one can possess both physical and mental strength while maintaining a humble disposition (Willis, 1998). The ram's horns, as a natural defense mechanism, are strong and formidable, symbolizing power and authority. Yet, the ram itself, as a creature, is known for its meekness and obedience, easily guided by a shepherd, unlike the more rebellious goat. This juxtaposition makes Dwennimmen a potent metaphor for the balance between humility and strength,a reminder that true power does not need to boast but can coexist with modesty (Danzy, 2019). Humility holds a central place in Akan culture, often reflected in daily life, attire, and spiritual beliefs. The symbol Dwennimmen serves as a constant reminder that no matter how much wisdom or strength one accumulates, humility remains a necessary virtue. This aligns with other Adinkra symbols such as Owuo Atwedee ("the ladder of death"), which signifies the inevitable mortality of all humans. The message embedded in Owuo Atwedee is that no matter how powerful or accomplished a person becomes, they must eventually confront death, reminding individuals to remain grounded and humble throughout life (Willis, 1998; Arthur, 2001). The Akan believe that no matter the achievements or strength of a person, there is always a higher power whether it be nature, God, or destiny, governing the human experience (Asante & Mazama, 2009). The design of Dwennimmen, with its symmetrical depiction of two opposing ram’s horns, further enhances the symbol's meaning. When rams engage in battle, they charge at each other, locking horns in a display of dominance and strength. This physical confrontation is a dramatic and intense demonstration of power, but it also highlights the ram's willingness to endure pain to assert authority. Despite their humble nature, rams are capable of immense strength when necessary. This visual metaphor underscores the idea that strength and humility are not opposing forces but

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complementary attributes, reinforcing the need for balance in personal and social conduct (Willis, 1998; Danzy, 2019).

The prominence of Dwennimmen within the Adinkra lexicon reflects the deeply spiritual and philosophical outlook of its creators. Many Adinkra symbols, including Nyame Dua (God's Tree) and Nyame Nwu Na Mawu (God never dies, therefore I will not perish), emphasize the relationship between human beings and the divine. This suggests that Adinkra creators, contrary to earlier assumptions, were deeply spiritual, with a worldview that was strongly influenced by both indigenous beliefs and possibly Christian teachings introduced through colonial encounters (Willis, 1998; Asante & Mazama, 2009). The inclusion of religious motifs in Adinkra symbols points to a thoughtful engagement with the divine, where symbols like Dwennimmen articulate the Akan understanding of human strength in relation to higher, uncontrollable forces

2.12 Symbolism of Colour in Ghana

Ghanaian culture places great importance on colour. According to Antubam's (1963) study on Ghanaians' perception of color, red denotes peril, violence, death, and grief while also standing for courage, earnestness, vigor, and the ability to overcome death. It was discovered by him that blue is connected to love, peace, gentleness, and affection, while yellow and gold stand for monarchy, affluence, high social standing, joy, a good life, and the rule of a king or god. Green is associated with growth, youth, vitality, fertility, and greenery. He went on to say that black is connected to history, strength, grief, and death. White represents happiness, triumph, liberty, virginity, and purity. The plurality of colours used in kente fabrics according to Amenuke et al

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(1991, p.183) add up ‘to make a total life’ since life in itself is full of ups and downs, twists and turns, joys and sorrows (Essel, 2019).

Interestingly, alternation of warp and weave patterns and floats characterize kente designs. The names of kente fabrics in the Ghanaian community is partly influenced by the usage of weave patterns, which are typically composed of geometric shapes and their expert conjunction with colour selection. They could be called after famous people, plants, or animals. For instance, one design is called akyem and has a vibrant bird that is regarded as a beauty symbol. Even though the designers and weavers provide the fabrics names, society occasionally suggests or assigns names depending on the who, what, and context of the cloth. Fabrics have symbolic connotations because of these factors (Essel, 2019). Black is associated with death, ageing, the devil, and intensely depressing emotions, while white is associated with virtue, joy, purity, and "spiritual entities (such as God and the deified spirits of the ancestors"). When it comes to personifying "blame and various degrees of degradation and shame," grey is connected with ashes, while green is used to symbolize "newness, fertility, vitality, and primeness in growth." Specifically, indigo is linked to "womanly tenderness and love" and invokes "early dawn and the crescent moon." In Ghana, gold primarily "stands for royalty" (Claire, 1980, p. 4).

2.13 Implications of Dress Fashion to Global Economies

Fashion has evolved from a basic need to protect the body to an artistic necessity to promote rapid industrial growth. Dress fashion plays a significant role in the global economy. Swatski (2021) asserts that Society and the fashion industry are more interrelated as the industry of fashion has a huge impact on the economy and is responsible for both the recent and future growth of the apparel industry. The fashion

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industry employs millions of people worldwide, particularly in the poorest countries where fast fashion production often takes place (Swatsky, 2021). The global fashion industry, valued at approximately $1.7 trillion, plays a critical role in economic growth, employment, and cultural exchange across countries (McKinsey & Company, 2023). The intersection of fashion and global economics is multifaceted, influencing everything from trade policies to labor markets and sustainable development. This review explores the key economic implications of dress fashion, including its contribution to GDP, labor dynamics, cultural influence, and the sustainability challenges it presents.

2.13.1 Fashion as a Contributor to Economic Growth

Fashion is a significant contributor to the global economy, especially in countries where textile and apparel industries form a substantial part of their GDP. In emerging economies, such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Ethiopia, the fashion industry acts as a catalyst for industrialization and economic diversification (UNCTAD, 2020). For instance, Bangladesh, the second-largest exporter of ready-made garments after China, generates over $30 billion annually from fashion exports, accounting for nearly 84% of its total exports (World Bank, 2022).

Fashion's economic impact is not limited to emerging economies. In developed nations such as the United States, France, and Italy, the fashion industry contributes significantly to GDP through luxury goods, fashion retail, and design innovation (Statista, 2023). These countries leverage their design and branding strengths to capture high market value, with the luxury sector alone contributing approximately €115 billion to the European economy (EY, 2022).

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2.13.2 Employment and Labor Dynamics

The fashion industry is one of the largest employers globally, providing jobs for over 75 million people, particularly in developing economies where labor-intensive production processes dominate (ILO, 2021). While the fashion industry creates employment opportunities, it also raises issues related to labor rights, wages, and working conditions. Fast fashion, in particular, has been criticized for its reliance on low-cost labor in countries with less stringent labor regulations. This leads to debates on the ethical and economic implications of fashion production, with critics arguing that the industry exacerbates income inequality and perpetuates exploitative labor practices (Nixon & Blakley, 2020).

The rise of automation and digital technologies in fashion production is also reshaping labor dynamics. As companies adopt advanced manufacturing technologies, concerns arise about job displacement in traditional garment factories. However, new opportunities are emerging in fashion-tech sectors, particularly in design, marketing, and digital retail, which are reshaping the workforce in developed economies (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

2.13.3 Cultural Influence and Soft Power

Dress fashion is a powerful cultural force that contributes to the global soft power of nations. Fashion capitals such as Paris, Milan, and New York are not only economic hubs but also centers of cultural diplomacy, where fashion serves as a tool for branding nations and influencing global tastes (Breward & Gilbert, 2021). The cultural capital of fashion can enhance tourism, elevate a country's international profile, and drive investment in creative industries. For example, France's fashion

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industry is intertwined with its cultural identity, contributing to its status as a leading tourist destination and attracting significant foreign direct investment (OECD, 2021).

In a globalized world, fashion serves as a medium of cross-cultural exchange, promoting diversity and inclusion. However, this same global exchange can lead to the commodification and appropriation of cultural symbols, raising questions about the ethical implications of cultural representation in fashion (Miller & Barnard, 2020). The tension between cultural authenticity and commercial exploitation remains a critical issue as fashion brands increasingly incorporate diverse cultural elements to appeal to global consumers.

2.13.4 Sustainability Challenges and Economic Impact

One of the most pressing issues in the global fashion industry is sustainability. The environmental impact of fashion production, particularly in the fast fashion sector, is significant. The industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions and is a major contributor to water pollution, textile waste, and overconsumption of natural resources (UNEP, 2019). These environmental challenges pose economic risks, as consumers, governments, and investors increasingly demand sustainable practices.

The transition to sustainable fashion has the potential to reshape the global economy, creating new markets for eco-friendly products and sustainable innovations. Circular fashion models, which promote recycling, upcycling, and resource-efficient production, are emerging as economically viable alternatives to traditional production models (Fletcher & Tham, 2020). Brands that prioritize sustainability not only reduce environmental harm but also enhance their market competitiveness by appealing to the growing segment of eco-conscious consumers.

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Furthermore, the fashion industry's response to sustainability is increasingly influencing international trade policies. The European Union, for instance, is proposing stricter regulations on textile imports and exports, requiring fashion companies to meet specific environmental and labor standards (European Commission, 2022). These policies could have wide-reaching economic implications, particularly for developing nations reliant on fashion exports, pushing them to adopt greener practices or risk losing access to key markets.

4.13.5 The Digital Economy and Fashion Retail

The digital transformation of the fashion industry is reshaping global economic interactions, particularly in retail. E-commerce has emerged as a dominant force in fashion retail, with online sales accounting for 21% of total fashion sales globally in 2022 (Statista, 2023). This shift is leading to the decline of traditional brick-and-mortar stores in favor of digital platforms, which allow brands to reach a global audience with greater efficiency and lower costs. The rise of digital fashion,clothing that exists solely in virtual spaces,also highlights how technological advancements are creating new avenues for revenue, particularly in the metaverse and gaming sectors (Barnes & Mattsson, 2021). However, the growth of e-commerce also presents challenges, particularly in terms of logistics, returns, and waste management. The surge in online shopping has led to increased transportation emissions and packaging waste, raising concerns about the environmental sustainability of digital fashion retail (GFA, 2022). As the industry continues to evolve, addressing these challenges will be crucial to ensuring that the economic benefits of digital fashion do not come at the expense of environmental health.

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From the afore discussed literature, the implications of dress fashion on global economies are vast and multifaceted, touching on areas such as economic growth, labor dynamics, cultural exchange, sustainability, and digital transformation. While the fashion industry generates significant economic value, it also raises critical issues related to labor exploitation, environmental degradation, and cultural appropriation. As global economies become more interconnected, the fashion industry must navigate these challenges while continuing to adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing world.

2.14 Implications of Dress Fashion on Ghana's Fashion Industry

Over the past few decades, Ghana's fashion industry has witnessed remarkable growth, solidifying its role as a vital contributor to the nation's cultural and economic landscape. As a sector that harmoniously blends traditional aesthetics with contemporary global influences, Ghanaian dress fashion transcends mere self-expression, serving as a dynamic force for socio-economic transformation. This section critically explores the implications of dress fashion on Ghana's fashion industry, emphasizing its cultural significance, economic contributions, and the challenges and opportunities shaping its future.

2.14.1 Cultural Significance and Identity

Dress fashion in Ghana is a profound reflection of the nation's cultural heritage, symbolizing ethnic identity, social hierarchies, and communal values. Traditional garments such as kente cloth and Adinkra textiles are emblematic, serving as visual narratives that encapsulate Ghanaian history, values, and beliefs (Yankah, 2020). These textiles often function as conduits of storytelling, with their patterns, colors, and designs carrying rich socio-cultural meanings. As Owusu-Ansah (2019) aptly

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notes, “fashion in Ghana is more than just clothing; it is a living narrative of the people, reflecting their history, values, and beliefs.”

The enduring relevance of traditional attire is evident in its incorporation into contemporary settings, including parliamentary dress codes, ceremonial events such as weddings, and cultural festivals. These practices underscore the resilience of Ghana’s cultural identity in the face of globalization (Frimpong, 2021). However, the fusion of indigenous designs with Western fashion has sparked ongoing debates about cultural authenticity and appropriation. While critics argue that such hybridization risks diluting traditional aesthetics, proponents view it as an avenue for innovation, enabling designers to create styles that resonate both locally and internationally (Asante, 2022). This interplay between tradition and modernity highlights the dynamic and adaptive nature of Ghanaian fashion.

2.14.2 Economic Contributions

The fashion industry is a pivotal driver of economic activity in Ghana, significantly contributing to employment, entrepreneurship, and national income. The Ghana Statistical Service (2022) estimates that approximately 10% of the national workforce is engaged in the fashion and textile sector, with the majority operating within informal markets. Tailors, seamstresses, and artisans form the backbone of this industry, producing garments that cater to both local and international demand.

The rising popularity of "Made in Ghana" products has further bolstered local production, appealing not only to domestic consumers but also to the diaspora and global markets (Mensah, 2020). This trend underscores a growing appreciation for Ghanaian craftsmanship and authenticity in fashion. The sector’s export potential has also expanded, with opportunities emerging through frameworks such as the African

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Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Aryeetey and Amankwah-Amoah (2021) highlight the potential for Ghanaian fashion exports to flourish within regional and international markets, supported by trade agreements that facilitate cross-border commerce. Moreover, platforms such as Accra Fashion Week have elevated Ghana's visibility on the global stage, attracting buyers, investors, and collaborators from around the world (Boateng & Ntiamoah, 2021). These events not only showcase the creativity and talent of Ghanaian designers but also serve as critical avenues for fostering partnerships and driving industry growth.

Ghana's fashion industry is a vibrant and evolving sector, deeply rooted in cultural heritage and poised for continued economic expansion. Its dual role as a custodian of tradition and a driver of innovation positions it as a significant force in shaping both national identity and economic resilience.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This section details the research methodology. It specifies the research approach, philosophical assumptions, research design, study population, data collection instrument(s), data analysis tools, sampling technique, sample size, and ethical considerations employed. It provides the framework and plan for conducting the investigation effectively to achieve the research objectives using the chosen methods and tools.

3.1 Philosophical Assumptions

Conventionally, every academic research, especially research degrees must be underpinned by certain philosophical assumptions (Agyarkoh, 2021). Also referred to as Paradigms, it is considered an important aspect of research (Mikkelson, 2005; Bracken, 2010). For this reason, Guba and Lincoln (1994) consider it imperative that the researcher must clearly articulate the philosophical assumptions around which the study revolves. Often, research assumptions are informed by the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions on the problem being studied. It is based on these philosophical assumptions that the researcher can ask questions about the problem which leads to solutions solving the problem. Holden and Lynch (2004) assert that philosophical perspectives are the basis on which all academic researchers are grounded. Blaikie (20100 also agrees that social researchers explicitly or implicitly work within the context of a set of philosophical ideas and ontological and epistemological assumptions.

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Based on the ontological and epistemological positions towards the study, the researcher situated the study within an interpretivism paradigm which influenced the development of the framework for the study, the research design, the research methodology, and the style of data analysis. The tenets of interpretivism mainly is that research cannot be objectively observed from the outside rather it must be observed from the inside through the direct experiences of the people. founded on the notion that reality is subjective, diverse, and socially produced. Intepretivisists mainly grasp someone's reality by their experience of it, which may differ from another person's due to historical or social context.

Furthermore, researchers of this paradigm seek to understand and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants (Agyarko, 2021; Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2007 p.19). Regarding the tenets of this study and the opinion of the researcher, situating the study within the interpretivism paradigm was appropriate because the study was historical research that sought to weave pieces and fragments of information about a particular art (dress fashion) and how it has legislatively evolved throughout the ages. Again, the nature of the information was such that it was based on personal experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of certain individuals who had been associated with the evolution of the dress culture of parliament and the observation of the researcher.

3.2 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative methodological approach whereby the research participants' lived experiences on the subject were contextually explored. This approach was adopted based on the flexibilities of qualitative research, the nature of the research problem, research questions, objectives, and inherent characteristics that

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are commensurate with the philosophical assumptions and the research methodology. For instance, Qualitative research allows the researcher to gather data from the natural setting of the study and recognizes the researcher as a key instrument in the research process. The qualitative research approach explores behaviours, perspectives, feelings, in-depth experiences, quality, and complexity of a situation through a holistic framework (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002).

The qualitative research approach takes researchers closer to the phenomenon of interest and helps to understand peoples' beliefs and theoretical models for how they perceive and organised their life activities and routines in a subjectively meaningful way. According to Merriam (2009), the goal of qualitative research is to comprehend the meaning that individuals have created, or how they interpret the world and the experiences they have had in it.

The choice of qualitative research approach for this study is in tandem with the assertion that qualitative research is an interpretative approach, which attempts to gain insight into the specific meanings and behaviors experienced in a certain social phenomenon through the subjective experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). This study, therefore, adopted the interpretative modalities of the qualitative approach to textually reconstruct the worldview of the research participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) regarding the dress culture of Ghana's legislative arm of government.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is the overall plan connecting conceptual research problems to empirical inquiry, providing direction for procedures. It concerns the research aims, purposes, and practical constraints (Hakim, 2000), binding the study together through

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a structured plan to address questions and prevent frustration (Asenahab, 2019), acting as a blueprint for implementation (Burns & Grove, 1998, p. 745).

This study employed a historical research design. This design investigates past events, cultures, and phenomena through rigorous analysis of historical materials, including primary and secondary sources like documents, artifacts, and testimonies (Higher Education and Research, 2024). Given the study's aim to trace Ghana's parliamentary dress cultural history, this design facilitated the vivid description and rigorous analysis of historical events, enabling sound conclusions through interpretation (Schutt, 2009). It sought to reconstruct past events, establish their relationship to the present, and inform the future, aligning directly with the objective to provide a historical account. Historical research identifies, analyzes, and interprets old texts and testimony (Špiláčková, 2012; Vansina, 1985), seeking patterns, causes, and effects through critical analysis and contextualization within chronological frameworks. This inherently descriptive process, systematically detailing conditions, populations, or phenomena (Creswell, 2009), aims to analyze significance within broader historical contexts, requiring ethical sensitivity to diverse viewpoints. Within this historical framework, the researcher narratively inquired into participants' experiences over time, contextualizing them and fostering relational engagement. This involved analyzing lived and told stories through narrative analysis, retelling them chronologically with attention to social, cultural, historical contexts, and key themes (Creswell, 2007; Haydon & van der Riet, 2017; Cline, 2020).

3.4 Population

The research population encompasses all entities sharing characteristics relevant to the study (Koul, 1997; Best, 1981). It defines the study's scope and generalization

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boundaries, providing essential context (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). This establishes focus and prevents overgeneralization. For this study, the population comprised stakeholders of Ghana's Parliament, as they possess the commonality central to the research inquiry (Casteel & Bridier, 2021; Murphy, 2016).

3.4.1 Target Population

The target population for the study consisted of Ghanaian parliamentarians, Speakers of Parliament (past and present), Parliamentary Clerks, Cultural Custodians, Cultural experts, Parliamentary Robe Designers and Cultural Policy experts. These groups of respondents have the appropriate responses to the questions that the study sought to answer.

3.4.2 Accessible Population

The accessible population, defined as the reachable subset of the target population from which the sample is drawn (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 147), comprised forty-four participants for this study. Stratification into eight distinct strata was employed to ensure representation of key subgroups within the population (Cohen & Arieli, 2011), facilitate comparative analysis across relevant categories (Lohr, 2019), and enhance statistical precision by reducing sampling error within homogeneous groupings (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013). Creswell & Poth (2018), emphasize selecting individuals or sites that maximize differences on specified characteristics to capture diverse perspectives" (p. 165), this aligns conceptually with stratification's goal of ensuring subgroup representation. Patton (2015) contend, that for ensuring representation of meaningful perspectives rather than statistical subgroups stratification can be used in qualitative studies.

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Table 3.1 Distribution of the sample for the study

Strata	Respondents	Number of respondents
Stratum A:	Speakers' of Parliament	1
Stratum B:	Cultural Custodians	10
Stratum C	Cultural Experts	2
Stratum D	Cultural Policy Experts	1
Stratum E	Members of parliament	25
Stratum F	Members of the Standing Orders Committee	2
Stratum G	Parliamentary Clerk	1
Stratum H	Robe Designers	2
Total Number of Respondents		**44**

Credit: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023)

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed disproportionate stratified sampling combined with purposive sampling techniques (homogenous and expert types) to address the eight strata's varying sizes, yielding forty-four participants. Disproportionate stratified sampling involves selecting samples from population subgroups (strata) at differing sampling rates, resulting in stratum sample sizes disproportionate to their population sizes (Kalton, 1983). This method reduces error and ensures adequate representation of smaller subgroups (Kalton, 1983). Stratification was essential to align specific respondent groups with the research objectives.

Stratum A addressed parliamentary dress history, Speaker's robe symbolism/structure, factors influencing the Speaker's dress code, and statutory potential. Stratum B provided broad perspectives on parliamentary dress culture. Strata C and D

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specifically examined Speaker Bagbin's decolonization call and its cultural implications. Stratum E dealt with statutory adoption of Ghanaian dress and Bagbin's advocacy. Stratum F (Standing Orders Committee) assessed statutory feasibility for parliamentary functions. Stratum G contributed historical context, interpretations of robe symbols, and fashion influences. Stratum H analyzed robe design patterns, structure, and symbolic meanings. This structured approach ensured each objective was addressed by participants with relevant expertise

The study employed expert type of purposive sampling to select cultural experts, clerks of parliament, and cultural policy experts with extensive knowledge of Ghanaian dress culture and parliamentary traditions. This technique was chosen to ensure that the insights gathered would be deeply informed and relevant, as expert respondents are typically well-versed in the nuances of cultural practices and historical context (Palinkas et al., 2015). By targeting individuals with specialized knowledge, the research was able to uncover rich insights into the cultural significance, historical evolution, and practices related to parliamentary dress culture.

In addition to expert sampling, homogeneous purposive sampling was utilized for selecting robe designers. This approach is effective when the research population shares common characteristics or experiences, which is essential for gathering focused and comparable data (Mason, 2010). The robe designers selected for this study not only share a common background in designing parliamentary robes but also possess specific knowledge related to parliamentary robes, thereby enriching the data with their unique perspectives on design structure, symbolism and meanings in the dress culture. Employing expert and homogenous purposive sampling techniques, the researcher aimed to select respondents capable of providing critical insights that are

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not accessible through other participant choices. This method ensured that the selected pool of respondents was not only relevant but also convenient for the researcher, facilitating a more in-depth exploration of the study's objectives. As noted by Henn, Weinstein, and Foard (2006), this approach is fundamental in qualitative research, as it allows for a focused and meaningful engagement with individuals who possess specialized knowledge relevant to the inquiry (as cited in Essel, 2017). Such a carefully curated sample enhances the study's validity and reliability, providing a rich foundation for analysis and interpretation

Convenience sampling was employed for parliamentarians, and cultural custodians, who are responsible for maintaining and promoting Ghanaian fashion classics and cultural practices. This method allows for the quick and efficient selection of participants, particularly when time and resources are constrained (Etikan et al., 2016). Cultural custodians were conveniently sampled from various regions in Ghana to ensure a diverse representation of cultural practices and perspectives, thereby capturing their views regarding the study.

Moreover, members of parliament were also sampled conveniently to include those who were readily available and willing to share their experiences regarding parliamentary dress. Convenience sampling in this context is justified, as it facilitated quick access to data and allowed for the inclusion of perspectives from individuals directly involved and with rich experience in the parliamentary process (Cohen & Mannion, 2011). This sampling strategy enabled the research to gather a variety of viewpoints from individuals interacting with parliamentary dress in multiple capacities, thus enhancing the richness of the data collected. Each sampling technique

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was strategically chosen to optimize the depth and breadth of insights, aligning with the research objectives while ensuring effective data collection.

3.5.1 Criteria for Selection

The study sample consisted of different categories of respondents constituting different strata. It could be noticed from the eight strata that Stratum A, constituted speakers of Ghana's parliament. The criteria for selecting the sepeaker was based on at least twenty years of parliamentary experience as a member of parliament and speaker of the house. Among all the speakers Rt. Hon Bagbin is the only speaker with over two decades of parliamentary experience, for which reason he was solely sampled for the study.

Stratum B consisted of cultural custodians, referring to the chiefs under the Chieftaincy Act 1961, and Act 81 that received accent on 29th August 1961. A chief herein is a person who has been nominated, elected, and installed as a chief according to customary law. The study convieniently sampled chiefs who were available and have been on the throne for at least two decades of paramouncy status. Based on this criterion for selection, cultural custodians from sixteen regions were classified under three zones; Savannah, Middle, and Coastal Belt. The five (5) regions in northern Ghana; Upper East, Upper West, North East, Northern region and Savannah were captured under the *Savannah Belt*. Bono, Bono East, Ahafo, Ashanti, and Eastern regions were captured as the *forest belt*, whilst Oti, Volta, Western North, Western, Central, Greater Accra, and Volta were captured as the *Coastal belt.* Figure 3.2 presents the map of Ghana indicating all the sixteen regions.

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Figure 3.1 Ghana Map showing all Sixteen regions
Source: (https://ontheworldmap.com/ghana/)

Stratum C comprised cultural experts, individuals who have received academic training in cultural studies with two decades of experience in Ghana's cultural institutions, preferably the Centre for National Culture. These experts possess a wealth of knowledge about cultural practices, and interpretations that are crucial for understanding the intricate layers of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture. Their insights enabled a deeper exploration of the symbols and meanings associated with dress, providing a robust framework for analyzing the cultural narratives embedded in parliamentary fashion.

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Stratum D consisted of cultural policy experts who were directly involved in the drafting and implementation of cultural policies in Ghana. Their expertise offered a unique perspective on how policies influence cultural practices and dress codes, particularly within parliamentary settings.

Stratum E included selected members of parliament with a minimum of sixteen years of consecutive parliamentary experience and members of the eight parliament of the fourth republic of Ghana. Their long service and parliamentary experience positions them as respondent with a repository of parliamentary history, practice and dress culture. Their lived experiences and observations are vital in understanding how dress codes are perceived and practiced within the parliamentary framework.

Stratum F consisted of members of the parliamentary Standing Orders Committee, including some former members of parliament who currently work in parliamentary roles. Their insider knowledge of parliamentary procedures and the historical context of dress codes contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the formal guidelines that govern parliamentary attire. This group plays a crucial role in ensuring that parliamentary practices align with both tradition and modern expectations.

Stratum G comprised parliamentary clerks with rich experience in parliamentary practice, specifically those with at least twenty years of service in parliament. Their long-standing involvement in parliamentary affairs equips them with valuable insights into the practicalities of dress codes and their implications for parliamentary functionality. This experience allows them to discuss the operational aspects of implementing dress standards and the challenges that may arise.

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Finally, Stratum H included robe designers contracted by parliament to create the ceremonial robes worn by Speakers. These designers bring an artistic and functional perspective to the study, highlighting the design philosophy and craftsmanship involved in creating these garments. Their contributions are essential for understanding the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of parliamentary dress, as well as the role of design in conveying authority and tradition.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The study employed semi-structured interviews, observation, opinionnaires, photography, and document review as the data collection instruments. Both text-based and non-textual primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data are original eyewitness accounts and documents. In other words, it is the first-hand record of events or situations in textual and non-textual forms such as minutes of meetings, law reports, diaries, autobiographies, photographs, songs, posters, bills, films, official records, books, journal articles and all other documents that provide a first-hand account of a situation or events (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2006). Primary data are also defined as the data collected to address specific research using befitting research procedures (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Secondary data are reused from primary data (Hox & Boeije, 2005). They are second-hand accounts of primary data.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews enabled the respondents to share their lived experiences regarding Ghana's parliamentary dress culture. Open-ended questions were crafted to allow the respondents to narrate their stories. Follow-up questions meant to seek further clarification of the told lived stories were posed during the

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interview sessions. Sample semi-structured interview questions for the speaker of parliament, members of the standing order committee, parliamentary clerks, cultural custodians, cultural experts, robe designers and cultural policy experts are attached to this document in the Appendixes C, D E, F, G.

The semi-structured interview guide was accompanied by an Informed Consent Form **(see Appendix A)**, and an Introductory Letter **(see Appendix B)** from the Department of Music Education of the University of Education, Winneba. The Informed Consent Form considered the ethical issues in doing historical research that bothers on the identity of the respondents, for instance, in documenting the histories and displaying photographs. With the consent of the respondents, the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed after. After, data gathered were transcribed by the researcher, and shared with respondents to verify the content before introducing their voices in the study. The researcher paid personal visits to the offices of the speaker of parliament, the clerk, cultural custodians, cultural policy experts, robe designers, members of the Standing Orders committee, and cultural experts for face-to-face interviews. The researcher also attended parliamentary sessions to observe proceedings, unobtrusively focusing on the dress culture of parliamentarians and the speaker.

3.6.3 Observation

The study employed the unobtrusive and obtrusive types of observation. Unobtrusive observation is a research method that allows researchers to study subjects without their awareness, minimizing the influence of the observer on the behavior being studied, and has the advantage of yielding more authentic data (McCambridge, Witton, & Elbourne, 2014). This method can be particularly useful in environments

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where social desirability bias may affect participants' self-reported behaviors (Fowler & Cosenza, 2008).

In the context of this study, the unobtrusiveness in the observation process was done during the researcher's visitation to parliamentary sessions to affirm what the parliamentarians wore to parliament. This reduced the social reactant effect of the respondents and aided in gathering relevant information.

The design structure and content of the speaker's dress fashion were observed to gather data through obtrusive observation using an observation checklist (see Appendix I),, which aided in the examination of the design structure and physical exhibits of the speaker's dress.

3.6.4 Photography

Photography serves as an invaluable data collection instrument, enhancing qualitative research methodologies (Magnusson, 2011). Its ability to present data through visual imagery offers a unique perspective that can complement traditional forms of data collection, such as interviews and surveys (Barbour, 2014). By capturing the nuances of cultural artifacts, photography facilitates a deeper understanding of the subjects under study and enriches the overall research narrative (Balmer, Griffiths, & Dunn, 2015). In the context of this study, photography played a pivotal role in gathering data pertinent to the historical aspects of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture and the designs of the various robes. The visual documentation of parliamentary robes allowed for a comprehensive examination of their design elements and the cultural significances embedded within them. Photographs were utilized not only to illustrate the aesthetic attributes of the speakers' robes but also to highlight the intricate

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symbols and patterns that inform the broader context of Ghanaian identity and heritage.

Moreover, the use of photography in this study provided a visual framework that assisted in analyzing the design structure of the speakers' dress codes. Each image captured served as a piece of evidence that aided in elucidating the meanings attached to parliamentary dress culture. This visual evidence supported the textual argument that were raised and revealed in the study. The incorporation of photographic evidence into qualitative research of this nature enhanced the richness of the data, allowing for a multi-dimensional approach to analysis. As noted by various scholars, visual data can evoke emotional responses and stimulate discussions that might not arise from textual data alone (Rose, 2016; Wells, 2016). Consequently, the photographs collected in this study grounded the research findings in real-world examples, bridging the gap between theory and practice in the exploration of Ghana's parliamentary dress culture.

3.6.5 Document Review

Document review was used as a data collection instrument for the study, based on its historical nature and the demands of the research questions. The study employed document review to elicit data from parliamentary Hansards, Ghana's parliamentary Standing Orders archival documents from the parliamentary library, and other relevant documents to confirm interview responses and also to present holistic findings for the study.

Documents provide background information as well as historical insight, and such information and insight can help researchers understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently

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under investigation. The researcher can use data drawn from documents, for example, to contextualize data collected during interviews. Second, the information contained in documents can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research.

The qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods. Apart from documents, such sources include interviews, participant or non-participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 1994). Document review is often used in combination with other qualitative research instruments as a means of triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1970, p. 291).

3.6.6 Opinionnaire

An opinionnaire is an inquiry form of data collection (Angadi, 2018; Donkoh, 2021). Unlike traditional questionnaires that focus on closed-ended questions, opinionnaires emphasize open-ended questions, enabling participants to express their thoughts in their own words, thus facilitating the exploration of complex social, cultural, or behavioral phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Designed with clarity, neutrality, and alignment with research objectives, opinionnaires encourage participants to elaborate on their responses, often including prompts for deeper reflection, such as, "Can you explain why you feel this way?" (Flick, 2018). Administered in either paper-based or digital formats, they allow for flexibility and broad reach, making them accessible to geographically dispersed participants while promoting thoughtful responses at participants' convenience (Hennink et al., 2020). Data collected from opinionnaires is analyzed using qualitative methods such as thematic or content analysis, where

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patterns and themes are identified to draw meaningful conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach is particularly effective in providing nuanced insights into participants' personal perspectives, making opinionnaires a valuable tool for exploring social and cultural phenomena in qualitative research (Patton, 2015). The researcher employed an opinionnaire in a Google form; a special form of inquiry to elicit the views of members of parliament regarding the speaker's clarion call to decolonize parliamentary dress code in Ghana and also seek their responses for legislation on dress code in Ghana's parliament. See Apendix HS for a copy of the opinionnaire

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The historical research tool of narrative analysis, which adopted a hermeneutic approach of transforming raw textual data into findings, was used for the study. With this approach, the researcher was acquainted with the heuristic many historians use. Under heuristics, historians consider the source and the context of the data and corroborate it to ensure the validity and reliability of the data gathered. Historical research thrives on the identification, analysis, and interpretation of old texts (Špiláčková, 2012 as cited in Essel, 2017), eyewitness accounts, and other oral history and interviews. Having collected the data, it was subjected to hermeneutics, which positions the researcher to seek an understanding of the data for interpretation by tying it to strong contextual historical connections.

The identification, analysis, and interpretation of related documents, eyewitness reports, and other oral histories and interviews are vital to historical study (Špiláčková, 2012). Given this, the researcher was in a position to seek comprehension of the data for interpretation by connecting it to compelling contextual historical links after gathering the data and subjecting it to hermeneutics. Within the

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framework of the narrative, data analysis was carried out to highlight consistency and suppress contradiction, accounting for shifts in interviewee tone and other textual breaks, in order to produce a logically sound interpretation (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) without reducing the substance of the stories that the interviewees shared about their real-life experiences.

Also, the historical analysis prioritized the source of the data, the context of the data, and the corroboration of the data for the purpose of ensuring its trustworthiness and authenticity. Using the narrative structure, data analysis was done to accentuate consistency, suppress contradiction, and produce rationally sound interpretation (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) without truncating the content of the told stories about the lived experiences of the respondents. The historical narration was supported with photographs of parliament, and dress fashion of speakers of parliament and parliamentarians taken with the permission of parliament.

The researcher believes that images are powerful tools for understanding human experiences, behaviors, social dynamics, and cultural phenomena in qualitative research. They offer a different perspective of the reality, one that is richer and more nuanced than what textual data may occasionally be able to convey (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024). Photographs subjected to visual analysis was useful for expressing difficult and sensitive subjects, encouraging, and starting conversations. The researcher, realizing the ability of visual analysis, closely examined and interpreted visual data to find themes, patterns, and interpretations. The study employed a two-step process typically used by researchers: description and interpretation (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024) to analyse the images.

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Document review was used as a data analysis tool, employing the methodical process of examining and assessing documents, both printed and electronic, the researcher had the opportunity to connect bits and pieces of scanty information, weaving them together to construct history. Document review, like other analytical techniques in qualitative research, necessitates the examination and interpretation of data to extract meaning, gain comprehension, and produce empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007).

Data gathered through opinionnaire was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as Charts, graphs, and tables. Based on the data gathered, thematic analysis, a flexible and content-sensitive tool where patterns and themes are identified to draw meaningful conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Harwood & Garry, 2003; Cole, 1988) was used to generate categories, themes, and explanations that were derived from the responses.

Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process involved a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data. The researcher took a closer look at the selected data and performed coding and category construction, based on the data's characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon. The codes used in interview transcripts were applied to the content of documents. The codes and the themes generated served to integrate data gathered by different methods. The researcher demonstrated objectivity (seeking to represent the research material fairly) and sensitivity (responding to even subtle cues to meaning) in the selection and analysis of data from documents. This helped in analyzing factors

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that influence their reasons for selecting their dress fashion and the views of parliamentarians on speaker Bagbin's clarion call.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Ethical conduct and methodological rigor are fundamental to qualitative research. This study was guided by established ethical principles that ensure the protection, welfare, rights, and dignity of all participants. Ethical protocols such as informed consent, voluntary participation, participant anonymity, and data confidentiality were strictly observed. Participants were briefed on the study's objectives and were provided with interview guides ahead of time, fostering informed decision-making and building trust. In adherence to ethical research standards and to ensure participant anonymity, all respondents were assigned unique alphanumeric identifiers. For instance, members of the Standing Orders Committee were designated with codes such as SOC-03; respondents from the Clerk's Department were identified as Clerk 1 and Clerk 2; and the Speaker of Parliament was represented as Speaker 1. Cultural experts were coded as Cultural Expert 1 and Cultural Expert 2, while parliamentarians were anonymized using alphabetic labels (e.g., A, B, C, D, E). The cultural policy expert was identified as C.P.E 1. In cases where original names or personally identifying materials, such as photographs, were included, prior informed consent was explicitly obtained from the individuals concerned.Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were returned to participants for member checking to confirm accuracy and enhance data credibility.

3.8.1 Ensuring Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through Guba and Lincoln's (1989) widely accepted framework for evaluating qualitative research, comprising credibility, transferability,

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dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, member checking, and peer debriefing with qualitative experts. These strategies ensured accurate representation of participants' views and reduced researcher bias. *Transferability* was achieved through rich, thick description of the research context, purposively selected participants (e.g., Cultural Custodian 1, MP for Member of Parliament), and detailed documentation of data collection procedures, allowing readers to assess the relevance of findings to other contexts. *Dependability* was demonstrated through a transparent audit trail that documented the sampling logic, data collection techniques, and analytical decisions. An iterative code-recode strategy (Saldaña, 2021) was employed, and intercoder reliability checks were conducted to ensure coding consistency. *Confirmability* was supported by rigorous researcher reflexivity and triangulation of data sources, including interviews, documents, and visual materials, thereby reinforcing objectivity and analytical depth.

3.8.2 Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher maintained continuous reflexivity throughout the study. Reflexive journaling was used to document preconceptions, emotional responses, and decision-making processes. These reflections were instrumental in bracketing personal biases during coding and theme development, as recommended by Finlay (2002) and Pillow (2003).

3.8.3 Pilot Testing and Expert Validation

To strengthen the validity of the interview instruments, a pilot study was conducted with local assembly members, who represent the legislative arm of local government. Feedback from this exercise, along with expert review, informed revisions of the semi-structured interview guide. Historical studies and ongoing consultation with

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field experts also helped refine the questions to enhance their clarity, relevance, and appropriateness (Bruhn et al., 2002; Davison, 2004).

3.8.4 Data Collection and Analysis

During interviews, participants were encouraged to express their thoughts freely, with the researcher offering clarification when necessary. To ensure data integrity, the researcher immersed themselves in the data through transcription and multiple readings of the interviews. Data were analyzed thematically using descriptive and constant comparative techniques, with themes reviewed and validated by qualitative research experts. Visual materials provided by participants were included in the analysis with full consent.

3.8.5 Data Saturation

Data saturation, defined as the point at which no new themes or insights emerge (Hennink et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2018), was carefully monitored. Transcripts were coded iteratively, and sampling continued until interviews and opinionnaires yielded no new themes. Saturation was confirmed at 44 participants, distributed across eight distinct participant strata, including parliamentarians and cultural custodians. This ensured both the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Overview

The study's findings are presented and discussed in this chapter. To meet each of the six study objectives, it evaluates, synthesizes, and interprets the data that has been gathered. Concerning research objective one, the study used the narrative analysis tool to convert the raw textual data into findings, paying close attention to the historical events in the Ghanaian parliament concerning the dress culture of speakers and parliamentarians. The data collected regarding research objective two was processed using both descriptive and visual analysis to examine the design structure, philosophy, and national identity constructions associated with the speakers' dress codes Objective three was analyzed using descriptive and simple statistical tools to ascertain the views of parliamentarians on speaker Bagbin's Clarion Call for decolonizing parliamentary dress code in Ghana. Objective four, five, and six approaches with thematic and descriptive analysis tools.

4.1 Brief Chronology of Ghana's Legislative Arm of Government.

Legislative power was first formally introduced in the Gold Coast during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901), marking a significant milestone in the colony's governance under British rule. Between 1850 and 1865, the Gold Coast became a distinct dependency of the British Crown, and its legislative framework began to take shape through the establishment of the Legislative Council.

> This council, formed in 1850, symbolized the inception of legislative governance in the colony and was modeled as a parliamentary body comprising delegates appointed by the British colonial administration

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> (Personal Communication with respondent Clerk 1 of Parliament, 17th October, 2023).

Confirmed by (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019; Gocking, 2005; Kimble, 1963), The structure of the Legislative Council was dictated by Royal Instructions, with its membership initially including the Governor and at least two other officials selected by the Crown. While its composition and powers were limited, the council represented a critical step in the colonial administration's attempt to formalize governance and assert control over the region. This period also reflected Britain's broader strategy of indirect rule, blending colonial authority with minimal engagement of local traditional governance structures (Arhin, 1995).

> During the colonial era in the Gold Coast, the Legislative Council was established to create laws and ordinances aimed at maintaining peace, order, and good governance. However, the council's role was largely advisory, as the Governor retained full legislative and executive powers, effectively sidelining the council from any meaningful supervisory authority over the colonial administration (Personal Communication with respondent Clerk 1 of Parliament, 17th October, 2023).

The council's lack of autonomy reflected the broader hierarchical structure of British colonial rule, where decision-making power was centralized in the hands of the colonial governor (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019; Kimble, 1963; Gocking, 2005). As intimated in the responses of one of the study's participant;

> The Governor was solely responsible for enacting laws and policies deemed necessary for governance. The Legislative Council served as a mechanism through which colonial directives were formalized rather than as a platform for deliberation or representation (Personal Communication with Clerk 2, 17th October, 2023).

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For instance, colonial ordinances were enacted primarily to regulate labour, taxation, and trade, often without significant input from the local populace or their representatives (Arhin, 1995). This arrangement was emblematic of British indirect rule, where the colonial government maintained control while consulting selectively with local stakeholders for administrative convenience.

As documented in colonial instructions and proclamations, the rationale for such legislative practices was rooted in ensuring the "peace, order, and good governance" of the territories, as explicitly stated in royal directives (Kimble, 1963). These measures prioritized colonial interests over local aspirations, with the council acting as a nominal legislative body that legitimized the policies of the colonial administration. Gold Coast Ghana witnessed limited scope of legislative independence during the mid-19th century, a feature that persisted until reforms in the early 20th century gradually incorporated African representation.

Until then, the Governor was required to withhold assent to any ordinance which was distasteful or repugnant to any act of the British Parliament or to the Royal Charter or Royal Instructions, or which interfered with the Christian Worship, diminished public revenue, permitted divorce etc (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019). In simple terms, no ordinance was to be affected until the pleasure of the Crown was met.

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Figure 4.1: Notes: James Bannerman, Governor of Gold Coast 1850
Picture Credit: africanlisbontour.com

In 1850 the Gold Coast became a separate dependency of the British Crown, its governor, James Bannerman, was responsible to London and in that year, the Legislative Council was established with members including; James Bannerman *(Figure 4.0)* Merchant and Civil Commandant of Accra, Lieutenant Governor 1850-1856, George Kuntu Blankson- Merchant of Cape Coast 1861-1873, Robert Hutcheson, Merchant of Cape Coast 1861-1863, Francis Chapman Grant, Merchant of Cape Coast 1863-1866. John Sarbah, Member of Anomabo and Cape coast 1887 (as extraordinary member) 1888-1892 William Hutcheson - Merchant of Cape coast 1887, Chief John Vanderpuye-Merchant of Accra 1894-1904 and Thomas Hutton-Barrister of Accra 1898-1900 (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019).

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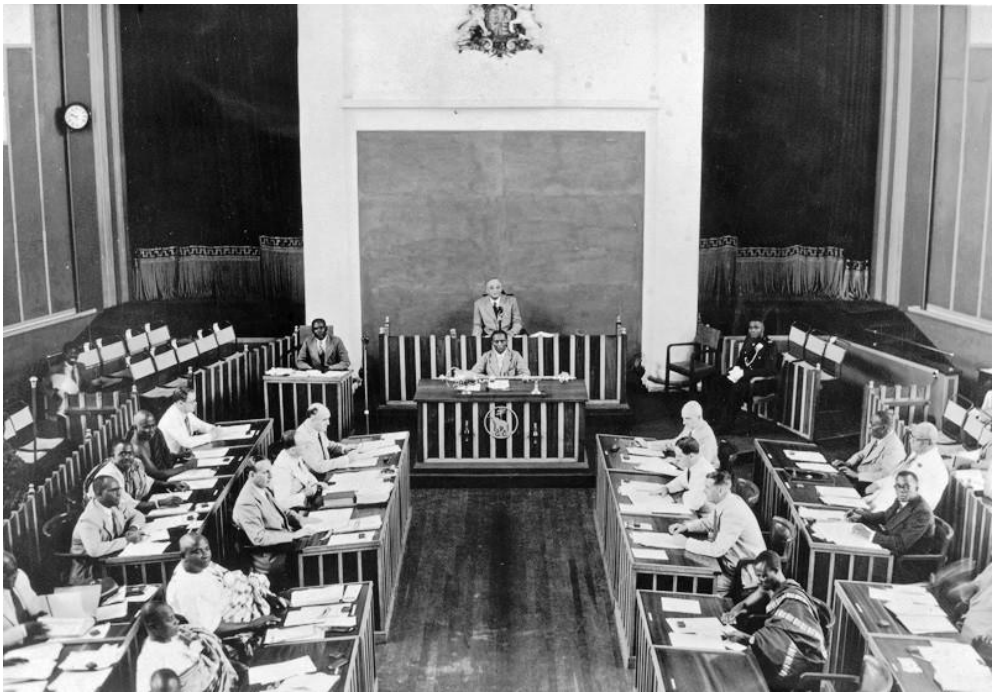

Figure 4.2 Legislative Council Ghana, 1949
(**Source**: http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/1147; 22 Sep. 2023)

At the end of the 19th century, the powers of the legislative council were still limited and undefined. Under the 1946 constitution, provision was made for an elected legislature and Ashanti was for the first time given representation. Under the 1946 Bums Constitution which replaced the Guggisberg Constitution, the representatives of the people formed the majority in the Legislative Council. The Governor ceased to be ex-officio President of the Legislative Council and an unofficial Member was appointed President. This system continued until 1951 when the first large-scale elections to the Legislative Assembly took place and 75 Members were elected, the Legislature elected its first Speaker under the 1950 Constitution and there were three nominated ex-officio Members and six special Members representing commercial and mining interests (Parliament of Ghana, 2024). The 1954 transitional Constitution provided for an Assembly of a Speaker and 104 Members elected on party lines on the basis of universal adult suffrage (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006).

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Figure 4.3 Ghana's Legislative Assembly Hall, 1954
Sourced from: (Ghana National Archives, 2023 *file No G/797/1)*

The latter sitting re-enacted the historical final session of the colonial Legislative Assembly in 1957, which the Duchess of Kent had graced with her presence, representing Queen Elizabeth II, and during which the Speaker of Parliament had read the Governor's message to terminate the Legislative Assembly and announce that the body would reconvene as the newly independent Parliament the next morning (Lentz, 2008).

On March 6th, 1957, Ghana attained full political independence. The Queen's representative, the Duchess of Kent, seated fifth from left next to the governor in the middle in figure 4.2 below, Opened the first session of Ghana's parliament with an independence constitution fashioned from the Westminster model with the Prime Minister as head of government business and the Queen as the head of state as shown in Figure 4.2 below. On both occasions during the jubilee year, Parliament was decorated festively with Ghanaian flags and banners in the national colours as well as with lavish traditional kente cloth, an expensive, colourfully woven fabric associated

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with prestige, wealth and, in the Asante tradition, royal authority. The special kente cloth that during the commemorative sittings adorned the back of the parliamentary dais, left and right (Lentz, 2008).

Figure 4.4: Notes: Ghana's Legislative Assembly, 1957.
Sourced from: *National Archives,2023 file No G/797/1*

Figure 4.3: Notes: Opening of Ghana's Parliament, 1957.
Source: (*Ghana National Archives, 2022).*

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In the words of the then Prime Minister Nkrumah, Ayensu (2006) recounts that on the eve of Independence Day, the colonial legislature held its last sitting at 11 o'clock that evening. The Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, made the following statement:

> Mr. Speaker, we have assembled on this happy occasion to honour the new status of a nation. When the day dawns we shall have left behind us the chains of imperialism and colonialism, which have hitherto bound us to Britain. By twelve o'clock midnight, Ghana would have redeemed her last freedom (Nkrumah, 1957).

Ghana has experienced four Parliaments under four distinct Republics following its independence in March 1957 (First Republican Constitution of 1960, Second Republican Constitution of 1969, Third Republican Constitution of 1981, and Fourth Republican Constitution of 1992). The first three Parliaments ended in 1966, 1972, and 1981 due to the military's constant meddling in politics and governance. In an interview with a key parliamentary clerk expert, it was stated that;

> Up until 1993, when democracy was finally restored under the Fourth Republic, Parliament remained an unstable institution of government due to the democratic instability as a result of intermittent coup d'état that pervaded the period. Currently with 275 members, the Ghanaian Parliament is a unicameral legislature. There is no cap on the number of terms a representative may serve; they are elected to four-year terms (Interview with Respondent Clerk 1, October, 17th 2023).

Clerk's assertion aligns with Essel (2018), who notes that following Ghana's independence in 1957 and its transition to a republic in 1960, the country experienced alternating periods of democratic rule and military coups, which hindered the stability of democratic institutions, such as Parliament. The findings emphasize the historical instability of Ghana's parliamentary system prior to 1993, attributing the turbulence to repeated military coups. The transition to the Fourth Republic marked a turning point,

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ushering in an era of continuous democratic governance and institutional reform. The Clerk's insights highlight the current structure of Parliament as a stable, unicameral body with relatively open re-election policies. This is corroborated by the study's of Essel (2018), which contextualizes the challenges faced by Ghana's democracy in its formative years. Together, the data suggests that Ghana's legislative institution has evolved from a fragile system under military regimes to a more resilient democratic body with enduring structures.

4.1.1 Dress Culture of Parliamentarians and Speakers of the Legislative Assembly-1951-1960.

The 1951 Ghanaian Legislative Assembly consisted of 75 elected members, three ex-officio members, and six special members representing commercial and mining interests (Sarpong, 2019; Aryee, 2017; Price, 1971). The dress code adopted by members of this legislative assembly reflected Ghanaian indigenous fashion, as illustrated in *Figures 4.2 and 4.4.* below. Following a convention established by the legislative assembly members under the leadership of Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, parliamentarians wore indigenous Ghanaian classics. This typically included varied toga styles made from woven Kente fabrics paired with a white jumper or the Smock, a garment representing the sartorial traditions of northern Ghana. These clothing choices symbolized a deliberate embrace of Ghanaian cultural identity within the legislative space at the time. Bowdich (1819), as cited in Essel (2019), confirmed that this fashion was a common precolonial practice among the people of Ghana. Other scholarly postulations have confirmed that Nkrumah believed that the use of indigenous Ghanaian fashion by Ghanaian top leadership would significantly help in decolonizing the minds of Ghanaians as it signifies a break away

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from the shackles of colonialism, serves as a dress cultural visual aesthetic order for Ghanaians and promote the use of made in Ghana clothing (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Essel, 2014; Essel & Amissah, 2015).

Figure 4.4 Members Dressed in Session, Gold Coast Legislative Assembly, 1954
Source: *(Information Services Department, 2023).*

Figure 4.5: Members of the Legislative Assembly 1951 to 1957, seventh from the second lane seated is Prime Minister Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, seated next to him on the right is Rt. Hon Speaker Charles Quist.
Picture Credit: (Information Service Department, 2023).

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Figure 4.6: Nkrumah, the Prime Minister, seated middle (fourth from right) in a group picture with some legislators of the National Assembly, 1954.
Source: Information Services Department, File No. G/754/2.3.4

The dress code of the parliamentarians, as shown in *Figures 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6* above portrayed them as cosmopolitan political leaders of distinction who dwelled on the world of Ghanaian dress cultural knowledge to make particularistic fashion statements, which was a visible manifestation of contemporary ethnic nationalism (Essel, 2019). In an interview with a key Cultural expert, the statement and dress culture of the legislative parliamentarians were corroborated in a statement;

> …Nkrumah himself, who conceived the idea of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana which eventually became the Commission on Culture, promulgated a non-statutory culture policy that was spearheaded by the dress fashion of his dominant parliamentarians in the legislative assembly… this dominant dress culture in Ghanaian way made them stand out and portrayed different ethnic groups in the chamber and uplifted the textiles industry (Interview with a respondent from the N.C.C 1, 14th July 2023).

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The statement above by N.C.C. respondent affirms the assertion of Essel 2019 that the legislative assembly dress code inspired intellectually productive conversation among the populace and was demonstrative testimony of patronizing locally produced fashion and textiles products. It was a conscious effort to whet the appetite for the high taste for foreign fashion and textiles, which was an exploitative colonial trade apparatus that did not encourage the high promotion of local textiles and fashion. However, what is significantly conspicuous in the picture in *Figures 4.5 and 4.4* is the dress code of the queen's representative, the governor, and the speaker of the legislative assembly. The speaker, seated first from right *(Figure 4.4)* in an unconventional arrangement order, is seen in a Westminster robe depicted in *Figure 4.5*, with a bib and a headgear that is mimetic of the British parliament dress code for the speaker. The governor, as expected, is fully dressed in a military costume with several decorated titles and ornamentations. The Queen's representative, the Duchess of Kent, is seen in a fully dressed western smart casual for ladies. Though the Queen's representatives were dressed in Eurocentric styles of fashion, the Parliament of the legislative assembly was predominantly covered by Ghanaian indigenous classics since the parliamentarians outnumbered the ex officio members and the speaker of the assembly. There was little room for parliamentarians, the Ghanaian elite who resorted to the European suit as a mark of erudition. Under the Gold Coast (Constitution) Order in Council, 1950, the position of Speaker was initially established in the then-Gold Coast. Rt. Hon. Sir Emmanuel Charles Quist, *as shown in Figure 4.7 below*, who presided over the National Assembly in 1951, was the inaugural speaker of the Ghanaian Parliament. A few months after Ghana attained independence, in December 1957, he continued to serve in his role.

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In an interview with one of the speakers of parliament, it was revealed:

> … they [colonialists] also brought with them the gown, the wig, and all the other equipment. And they were the embodiment of the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, as was practiced in the UK in the early years. So with that, we transited to the executive council, the legislative Council, and that's where the lawmaking started. And when we gained independence, we realized that in the transition, they were wearing those clothing. And our speakers took over from that tradition, hence the practice of wearing the gown and wig by some speakers (Interview with Speaker 1, *July 22, 2024*).

The Rt. Hon Bagbin further asserted that, in the UK, formal attire such as the gown and wig had long been a tradition, especially within the legal and parliamentary spheres. These garments were not merely symbolic; they represented continuity, authority, and the weight of the law. When British colonial officers served in the colonies, they wore these same garments to signify their roles as administrators of justice and governance in a foreign land.

Figure 4.7: A picture of the Rt. Hon. Speaker Charles Quist, 1951 to 1957, in close view
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2023).

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In the pre-independence period, Ghanaian parliamentary traditions continued to be influenced by British customs. This is evident in the practice of wearing gowns and wigs by some speakers of the parliament. As Rt. Hon. Bagbin's statement suggests, Ghanaian speakers adopted this ceremonial attire as part of the transition from colonial to independent rule. This practice symbolizes both the continuity of governance and the reverence for the legal and political systems that were established during the colonial period. The dress code of speaker Quist is in lieu with another statement made by the current speaker that;

> The dress code of the legislative assembly… was a British tradition that was carried into the House of Parliament. The speaker used to be, not now, the representative of the King or Queen. So he was attired as a representative of the king or queen. That's how come the issue of gown came in… they used to wear the wig with all the other accoutrements attached to represent the king or the queen. And that is what brought the word majesty into Parliament. So the Speaker represents the majesty of the House. And because of the power and authority of the King, which he represented in the House, he added the might, the authority, the might. So Parliament was described as an institution of might and majesty. That influenced the dress code of speakers and the whole of the Commonwealth. Because as they colonized us, we tended to follow (Interview with Speaker 1, *July 22, 2024*).

Speaker Bagbin's statement is indicative of the role of the speaker in Ghana's parliamentary system and that, the Speaker's role has evolved, and they no longer represent the monarch directly. This explains that the Speaker's attire, including the gown, was a symbol of Ghana's parliament representation of the monarch with additional symbols of monarchic representation, including the wig and the gown. Furthermore, the Speaker's representation of the monarch's power and authority at the early stages of Ghana's parliamentary system contributed to the perception of Parliament as an institution of might and majesty.

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During the 1957 parliamentary session, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Sir Emmanuel Quist On November 4, 1957, prior to the adjournment of the House, delivered a statement announcing his intention to resign. This resignation paved the way for Rt. Hon. Molade Akiwumi to assume the role of Speaker:

> I have to inform you that I am this day occupying for the last time the speaker's chair in this parliament as I have decided after mature consideration and for health reasons, to resign the office of the speaker of this house, and I propose to hand to his Excellency the Governor General in the course of the day, the necessary papers (*Speaker Quist, November 14 1957).*

The statement posited by Rt. Hon Quist brought an end to the era of Rt. Hon Charles Quist who was the speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1951 to 1958. Rt. Hon Augustus Molade Akiwumi, as shown in Figure 4.7 below was elected unopposed and took over from February 1958 to June 1960 as the speaker of the legislative assembly. He was conducted into the chamber upon submitting himself to the will of the House, took and subscribed to the oath of Allegiance and the Speaker's Oath of office, under the guidance of Minister of Justice, E. Ako Adjei (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019). Between 1958 and 1960, he was Speaker of the Ghana Parliament and the second person to occupy the seat following Ghana's independence in March 1957.

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Figure 4.8 Portrait of Rt. Hon Augustus Molade Akiwumi, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, February 1958 to June 1960, National Assembly.
Source: (Parliament of *Ghana Archives, 2023).*

Speaker Molade Akiwumi, a British-trained barrister and High Court judge, adhered to a Eurocentric dress code, wearing the speaker's robe over a lawyer's gown at every parliamentary session during his tenure, as seen in session photographs *(see figure 4.8)*. A member of the clerk department of parliament revealed more in an interview that;

> The speaker is expected to be in a formal dress code in presiding. Formal wear, per our definition, is not limited to a suit; however, the speaker of the legislative Assembly opted for the robe in practice of a new parliamentary system for the Gold Coast, Ghana… That was couched in a British system. Hardly did I see speaker Molade in anything apart from the robe, headgear, and judicial gown (Interview with a member from the clerk department, December 2, 2022).

The statement made by the respondent Clerk above is reflected in the picture shown in *figure 4.9* below, where Rt. Hon. Speaker A.M Akiwumi, is seen first in line of procession next to the table and in front of the parliamentary mace. The Rt. Hon

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speaker is seen in Eurocentric dress code for parliamentary speakers processing to parliament to exercise his duty.

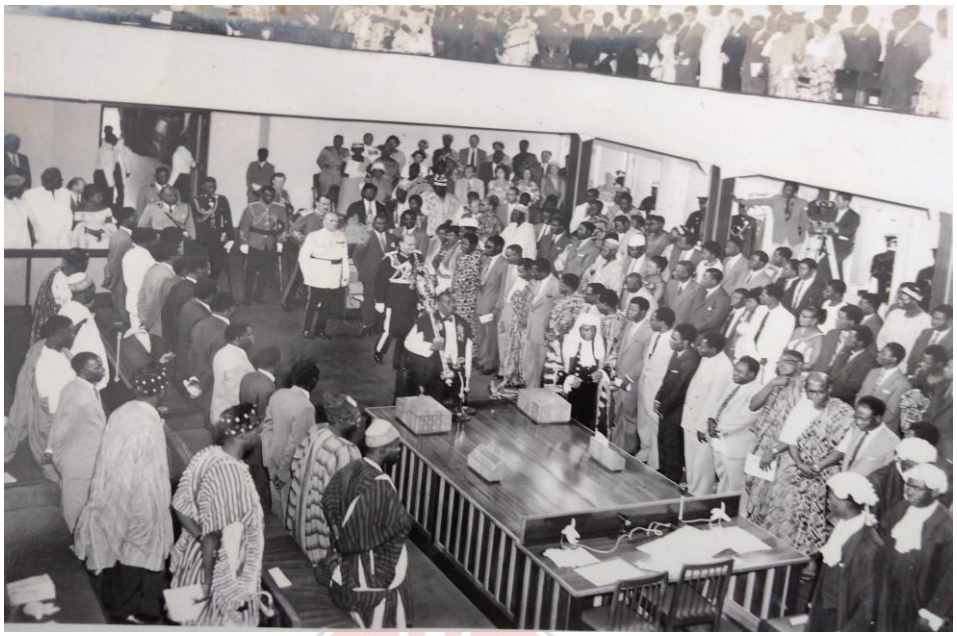

Figure 4.9 Speaker A.M Akiwumi dressed in a robe, head gear and judicial gown leading procession to parliament to exercise his duty as a speaker of the Legislative Assembly, 1960.
Source: Information Service Department, File No. R/G/8/14-1

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Figure 4.10 Speaker A.M Akiwumi dressed in a Eurocentric three-piece suit
Source: (Queen's College, Taunton, 2010).

On the 1st of July 1960, the 1957 constitution was amended with a new constitution adopted, changing the Gold Coast, Ghana, to a republican state. Ghana gained Republican status where parliament, fashioned from the Westminster model, was duly established for the smooth execution of the legislative duty. As a result, President Nkrumah, as shown in Figure 4.11, standing next to the table, signed for the prorogation of the 1st republican parliament.

Figure 4.11 Prorogation of Parliament, June 1960
Source: Information Service Department, File No. R/G/8/14-18

After the president, Nkrumah signed the prorogation of the 1960 parliament under the independent constitution of 1957 Ghana became a republic with a five-year term for the political parties represented, Convention People's Party and United Party. This momentous occasion was duly captured in one of the most authoritative newspaper headlines at the time, Ghanaian Times (as shown in figure 4.12 below).

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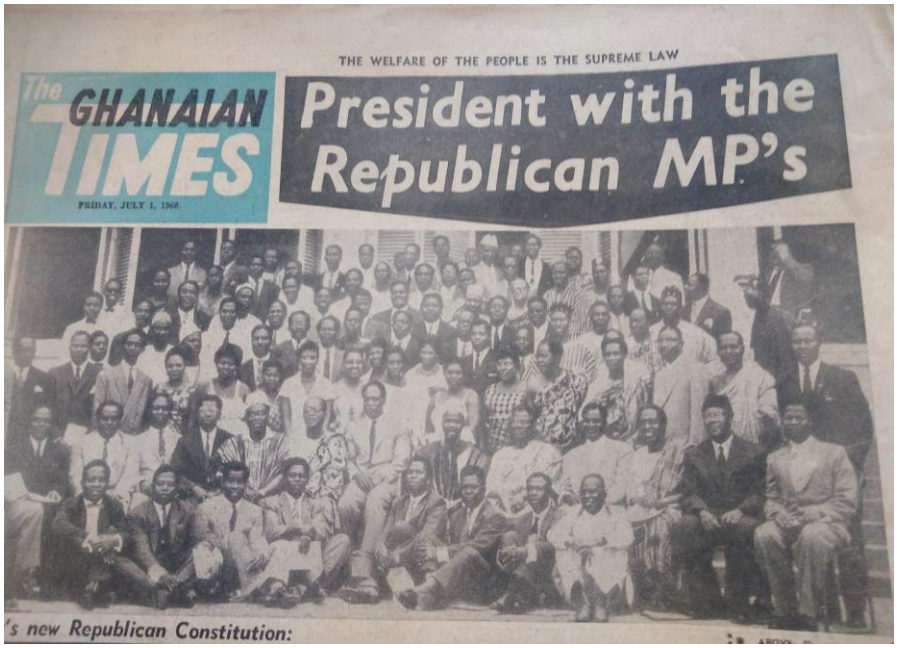

Figure 4.12 Ghanaian Times publication of President with Republican Members of Parliament, 1960

Source: (Ghanaian Times News Paper, 1st July, 1960).

The photograph above captures President Kwame Nkrumah seated with members of the Republican Parliament during the early days of Ghana's First Republic. Interestingly, both Nkrumah and many of the parliamentarians are dressed in formal Western-style suits, a stark departure from the indigenous classic attire that characterized earlier parliamentary sessions. Nkrumah, positioned at the center, exudes authority and leadership, yet his choice of a suit reflects a shift towards Western formalism, diverging from the Ghanaian classics such as Kente cloth or the Northern Smock, which were often used to symbolize cultural pride. The surrounding parliamentarians similarly adopt this formal attire, with only a few incorporating traditional Ghanaian elements. This visual portrayal reveals a one-off paradoxical moment in Ghana's history, where the optimism of the new Republic is expressed through a blend of modernity and Western influence, raising questions about the tension between tradition and the drive for international alignment during this pivotal era. In an interview with a member of the clerk department it was revealed;

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> President Nkrumah and the other members of the assembly just wanted to look formal for the occasion, I mean, western concept of formal… so they perhaps dressed like that to appeal to the governor and the foreign press. Originally, they always adorned themselves in Ghanaian way (Personal Communication, a member of the clerk department, parliament of Ghana, October, 2023).

The choice of attire by President Nkrumah and the members of the Republican Parliament, as captured in the photograph, reflects an intentional alignment with the Western concept of formality for the occasion. According to the Clerk, this sartorial decision was likely made to appeal to the expectations of the colonial governor and the foreign press, emphasizing a diplomatic presentation in line with global standards of formal dress. Historically, Nkrumah and the parliamentarians had often adorned themselves in traditional Ghanaian attire, such as Kente cloth or Northern Smock, which symbolized cultural pride and identity. However, the shift to Western suits for this event signifies the strategic negotiation of identity in a post-colonial context, where local leaders sought to project modernity and competence on the global stage (Allman, 2004; Essel, 2021). The adoption of Western attire may also have been a statement of readiness to engage with international frameworks while maintaining the optimism and aspirations of the newly established Republic. Such moments illustrate how clothing becomes a medium for navigating between traditional identity and the demands of a globalized political environment, reflecting the complexities of cultural diplomacy in a transitional era (Eshun, 2019; Tetteh, 2022).

4.1.2 Dress Culture of Parliamentarians and Speakers of the 1st 2nd 3rd Republican Parliaments, 1960, 1969, and 1981.

For the first time after independence, a Ghanaian parliament was constituted under the republic with a Ghanaian speaker, Rt. Hon Richard Asiedu *(as shown in figure 4.13)* whose dress code, an indigenous Ghanaian classic, was consistently seen in line with

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the entire membership of Parliament. The dress code of Ghanaian parliamentarians of the 1st republican parliament was an Indigenous Ghanaian classic. This is emphasized in the account of respondent Clerk 2 from the clerk department of parliament that;

> …in the first parliament of the first republic, traditional wear was dominant… of course, some also wore suits, just a few, at times the members of the parliamentary service, but what was the speaker's outfit, the first speaker of the first republican parliament was an indigenous Ghanaian wear. He was mostly seen in kente fabric wrapped around (Interview with respondent Clerk 2, December 3 2022).

Similarly, one of the speakers of parliament revealed that;

> …because our founding father, Osagefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, was talking about Africanization… he, together with the majority of the members of parliament, used to dress in the Kente and other local traditional attire, and as a result of his imprisonment, he took interest in the northern smock. That is why at independence, at the Polo Grounds, he was attired in the northern smock to declare independence. And throughout, it was one of those dresses he used to wear, the kente, the smock. Even at international, United Nations conferences, either his kente or smock and represented the Ghanaian identity. (Interview with Speaker 1, 22nd July 2024).

The dress culture of the parliamentarians suggested a classic rendition of a pioneer and trailblazer of using the indigenous Ghanaian toga style of dressing for parliamentary sessions led by the president of the first republic Dr. Nkrumah and the speaker Rt. Hon Richard Asiedu *(as shown in Figures 4.13, 4.14, and 4.15).* The parliamentarians and the speaker wore a white round-neck short-sleeved shirt and a three-quarter trouser-like tunic that covered their waist and extended beyond their knees as shown in the case of speaker Rt. Hon Richard Asiedu and President Nkrumah in Figures 4.13 and 4.15 respectively.

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Figure 4.13. Rt. Hon Richard Asiedu left, delivering Key Note Address in parliament, 1960. Right, Speaker Richard Asiedu presiding in a session, 1st Republican Parliament, 2nd July, 1960.
Source: Information Service Department File No. R/R/23/14-22

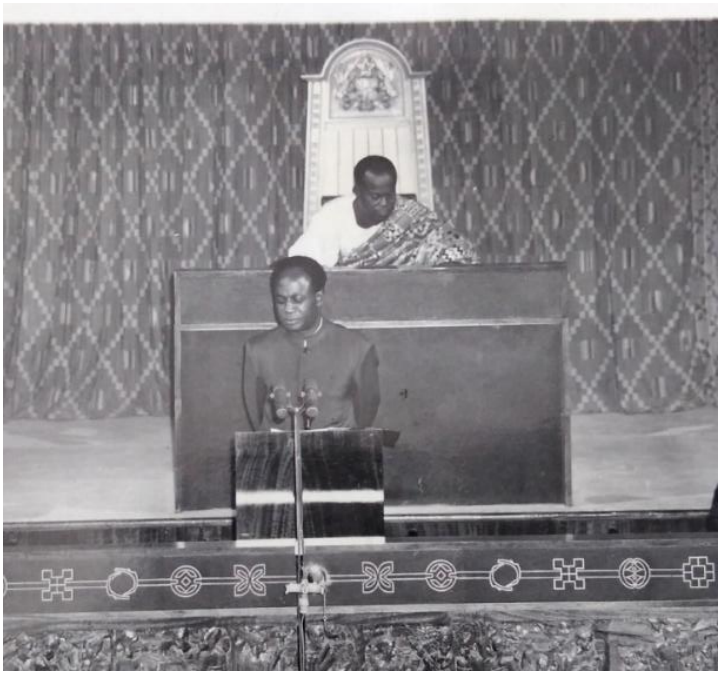

Figure: 4.14. Rt. Hon. Richard Asiedu (seated behind President Nkrumah) dressed in Ghanaian Indigenous classics for Parliamentary business, whilst the president delivered his address before the signing of the instrument ratifying the Charter of Organisation of African Unity, 21st September 1963.
Source: Ghana National Archives, SN- G/2118/1-5

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Notes: President-elect Dr. Kwame Nkrumah dressed in toga fashion, one of Ghana's classics, during his inaugural ceremony as the first president of the Republic in July 1960.
Picture Credit: (Information Service Department, File No. 58/42/1-16).

Figure 4.16: Parliamentarians seated in Session predominantly dressed in Indigenous classics, whilst the President, Nkrumah delivers his speech, 1960.
Source: Information Service Department File No. R/R/23/14-22

President Nkrumah, after Ghana had achieved independence, championed a national identity program where members of parliament were in charge of placing positive

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human rights infused with Ghanaian dress culture. This continued over the years until the regimes came in. The picture above in Figure 4.16 is in axiom with the findings of Essel (2019) that the dress code of the 1st republican parliament was intended to reflect the statement made by the president in the declaration of Ghana's independence; 'The new African is ready to fight his own battle and show that after all, the Black man is capable of managing his affairs'.

> …the point also has to do with the fact that Nkrumah's desire to dress in an indigenous Ghanaian way was also a culturally strategic message to the West. I mean, at that point, the political atmosphere was really good for Nkrumah to make certain fashion statements. And you know that in the traditions of the smock, it is also a wardress. So, when you go into the traditions of the Northerners, from the beginning, it was only the chiefs who wore the smock. And they did not wear only one, Nkumah wearing that to even declare independence, bridged the gap between the South and the North and also sent a message to the North that he was their leader. Then also sends a message to the West that he is ready for the war. Right? So… You know, and not just to the West, but even to us, that we are on the battlefield. The black man is capable of managing his affairs. You cannot always say that when you are ready for the battle you will forget your identity (*Interview with a respondent from the National Commission on Culture, 15th November, 2023).*

From the account of respondent cultural expert, President Nkrumah, thereby, the president and parliamentarians symbolically used their dress choice to make a fashionable appearance as portrayed by the kings of precolonial Ghana to make a profound Ghanaian fashion statement to Ghanaians and the world at large, thereby communicating Ghanaian cultural heritage and ideals to the world. Similarly, in an interview with a key member of the National Commission on Culture it was revealed that;

> Western influence is what really at a time took over the elite class… because within the period of colonial rule, there was a large influx of

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> Western textile products on the Ghanaian market. After the republic in 1960, they (westerners), wanted to shift because Nkrumah had an agenda to personify the Ghanaian Identity through dress code… hence the parliamentarians were dressing after him, Nkrumah. Unfortunately, the Westerners spearheaded his overthrow to once again dominate here, push here into Ghana their ideals in dress styles, to even take away any idea of who Nkrumah was. Just to chip in that before I forget… So what it means is that, this dress code of these parliamentarians or these leaders have significant impact on national identity construction (Interview with Respondent Commission member 14th October, 2022).

In a similar account of a member of the clerk department of parliament, it was recounted that:

> The first republican parliament really showcased the vibrant dress culture of Ghana and they did so in line with Nkrumah's National personality concept… the practice even transcended parliament to diplomats outside the country. They were made to dress in the Ghanaian way to reflect our rich culture in diversity everywhere they appeared (Interview with respondent Clerk 2, December, 14th 2022).

The assertion of respondent Clerk 2 above is in tandem with the assertion of Yorke (2015, p.107) as cited in Donkoh (2021) that Nkrumah and Ghanaian political leaders were concerned about nationhood at the time, they wanted to get the new nation-state on track of her national identity. Their decision to wear *Fugu* and *Kente* dominantly had great influence on the pride Ghanaians had in the wearing of these national attires to important state functions both at home and abroad. It was primarily anchored on pronouncements made by President Kwame Nkrumah that, "the time has come for us to call ourselves Ashanti Ghanaian, Ewe Ghanaian, Fante Ghanaian and also reconcile the culture of your ethnic group with that of the other ethnic groups (Yorke, 2015). Again, Scholarly evidence (Essel, 2019; Spencer, 1999 as cited in Warritay, 2017;

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Essel & Amissah 2015; Booth Library, 2009; Akwetey, 2007; Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Allman, 2004) corroborates Nkrumah's deliberate adornment of Indigenous Ghanaian classics such as kente and smock fashion for (inter)national ceremonies, turned such classic wears into Ghanaian nationalistic and/or Pan-Africanist symbols of identity, freedom, and independence which contributed significantly to the Ghanaian dress decolonisation agenda. This is supported by Hagan (1991a, p. 1) when he claimed that:

> One abiding effect of the leadership of Nkrumah is that the people of Africa now have a consciousness of their cultural identity and possess a definite pride in their culture. Africans are also aware of the need, in fact of necessity, to discover their cultural heritage and develop it (Haggan, 1991, p.1).

Hall (1994) argues that "the designers of national identities and national cultures aimed at 'linking membership within the political nation-state and identification with national culture' so that culture and state become identical" (p. 205). This suggests that perhaps, President Nkrumah, as a creator of national identity, first increased the knowledge of Ghanaians about the culture of their ancestors to be in a position to effect the desired change. This is further highlighted in the account of one of the respondents.

> …now, the earlier parliaments, apart from the first parliament which was the Westminster model, the parliamentary system, 1957 to 1960, where really Nkrumah tried to enforce the Africanization policy. The 1960, when we then gained a Republican status on the 1st of July, 1960, then changes started. We had a lot of those who were trained outside the country transiting from wearing the traditional wear or attire to copying the suits, particularly the three-piece suit with tailcoats. My colleagues in the learning profession, the lawyers, were the first accused in that direction. And that is where you had the JB Danquah and the rest come in with that kind of attire (Interview with Rt. Hon. Speaker Bagbin, 22nd July, 2024).

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Rt. Hon. Bagbin's statement raises critical questions about cultural identity and the negotiation of tradition and modernity in post-colonial Ghana. While the Western suits reflected aspirations of progress and international engagement, they also risked diminishing the visibility of indigenous sartorial expressions in the political sphere (Essel, 2021). Bagbin's commentary underscores how dress became a contested site of identity, where colonial legacies, professional affiliations, and nationalist aspirations intersected.

4.1.3 Dress Culture of Speakers and Parliamentarians, 1965 to 1966.

Figure 4.17: Rt. Hon. Kofi Asante Ofori Attah, Speaker of Parliament, 1965 to 1966.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Rt. Hon. Ofori Attah *as shown in figure 4.17 above*, was a Ghanaian educator, lawyer, and astute politician took over the speaker's seat of Ghana's parliament as the fourth speaker and Second of the first republic. Rt. Hon. Ofori Atta appeared in parliament consistently adorned in Ghanaian indigenous classics. Meanwhile, the dress culture of

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parliamentarians still remained the Indigenous Ghanaian classic practiced in the previous parliament *as shown in figure 4.18* below when parliament was in session with the speaker presiding. The dress culture was predominantly the toga style with Kente and smock fashion with hats.

Figure 4.18. Rt. Hon. Kofi Asante Ofori Atta in a closer view dressed in an Indigenous Ghanaian Classic, seated and presiding first from left in Ghana's parliament
Source: Information Service Department Ref. No. R/R/7063/1-53.

The Speaker and parliamentarians' choice to wear traditional clothing can be seen as a deliberate effort to preserve and promote Ghanaian culture at the highest levels of government. This practice also served as a visual representation of the nation's sovereignty and independence from colonial influences, where Western-style suits might otherwise dominate such formal settings. In an interview with a member of the clerk department of parliament, it was recounted that;

> Rt. Hon. Ofori Atta's adornment in Ghanaian indigenous classics reinforces the importance of cultural identity in Ghana's parliamentary and cultural

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> system. The speaker's choice of attire, including kente cloth, symbolizes a deep connection to Ghana's rich cultural heritage. This adherence to indigenous dress is not merely a personal preference but also a statement of national pride and a reminder of Ghana's pre-colonial traditions (interview with a key member of the clerk department of parliament, October, 2023).

The Speaker's consistent use of such attire in official settings like Parliament underscores the cultural significance and reverence for traditional garments in Ghanaian society.

The dress culture of the parliamentarians, as described in picture 4.19 below, also reflects an appreciation for indigenous Ghanaian classics. The fact that the indigenous dress code practiced in previous parliaments continues to be maintained in the 1965 and 1966 parliaments, as depicted in *Figure 4.19*, indicates a continuity of tradition and respect for cultural values. Parliamentarians, by following this dress code, demonstrated their commitment to representing the people of Ghana authentically and acknowledged the importance of Ghanaian cultural heritage. Ghana's national identity is deeply intertwined with its traditional attire.

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Figure 4.19. Speaker Ofori Attah, dressed in an Indigenous classic, seated second from left on the dais in a Parliamentary Session, whilst the President, Kwame Nkrumah, delivers his address.
Source: Information Service Department, 2023 File No. R/R/7063/1-53.

Speaker Ofori Attah's consistent adornment in indigenous classics can be interpreted as an embodiment of cultural diplomacy, where clothing becomes a tool for expressing national identity and unity. The continuity in dress culture among parliamentarians, as seen in previous parliaments and demonstrated under the leadership of Rt. Hon. Kofi Asante Ofori Atta, further solidifies this practice as an essential aspect of Ghanaian parliamentary tradition in the early stages of independence.

Figure 4.20. Rt. Hon. Ofori Attah dressed in an indigenous Ghanaian classic, seated 16th from left next to President Nkrumah, 17th position, together with the entire membership of the 1st Republican parliament, predominantly dressed in an Indigenous classic,1965.
Source: (Information Service Department, 2023).

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Figure 4.21. Ghana's 1965 Parliament dominantly represented in Ghanaian Indigenous classics.
Picture Credit: (Information Service Department, File No. 58/42/1-16).

Parliamentary democracy in Ghana has experienced significant interruptions and restorations, reflecting the country's turbulent political history. The first major interruption occurred on February 24th 1966, when the first republican government, led by Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, was overthrown in a coup d'état. This coup marked a significant departure from the democratic process, as it dismantled the existing government structure and replaced it with military rule. The overthrow of Nkrumah's government halted the progress of parliamentary democracy and dress culture, with the former which had been established under the 1960 Constitution, where Nkrumah and his ministers were both members of Parliament and held executive power (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019). The period following the 1966 coup illustrates the challenges of maintaining a stable parliamentary democracy in the face of military interventions. The restoration of democracy in 1969 signaled a renewed commitment to constitutional governance, though it was not without its complexities.

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4.1.4 Dress Culture of Parliamentarians and Speakers from 1969 to 1972

The influence of colonial legacies on Ghana's early legislative leadership's dress culture under the regimes was evident with speakers constantly adorning themselves in Western-style suits and ties when Nkrumah's government was toppled. However, the parliamentarians' dress culture as exhibited in the first republican parliament appeared to have slightly tilted due to the military invasion of governance in the country. This is further highlighted in the account of a respondent.

> …after Nkrumah had exited the scene and subsequent parliaments has been overthrown with military rule, there was little room for legislative dress appearances, the tension in the country was to the extreme. I think it was then, we lost most of these beautiful practices in parliament… the whole setup before handing over is a kind of colonial system. where a president comes and introduces something, and then he stays when there's a breakup, and then we have its implications, we are saying that even our local industry is suffering from people patronizing them and protesting them. Most factories producing these clothes died off due to military constant meddling of affairs… there's a need to revisit just what the speaker has indicated (Interview with a C.P.E 1, October 13, 2023).

The narrative suggests that after Kwame Nkrumah's exit and the subsequent overthrow of his government by military force, there was a significant disruption in the continuity of Ghanaian cultural practices within the legislative environment. The tension in the country during these periods of military rule was so intense that it left little room for the preservation of traditional dress codes and other cultural practices within Parliament. The loss of these admirable dress cultural practices as mentioned, can be seen as a broader reflection of the cultural erosion that often accompanies political upheaval. In synch with this assertion, other scholars assert that when military regimes take power, they frequently impose strict controls and prioritize stability over cultural expression and this often results in the marginalization or

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abandonment of cultural traditions, including those that had been integrated into formal institutions like Parliament (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2019). The cultural policy expert's viewpoint points out that these disruptions had long-term consequences, not only on parliamentary culture but also on Ghana's local industries. The decline of factories producing traditional clothing is a stark example of how military interference in governance can lead to the degradation of cultural industries that were once vibrant and integral to the nation's identity.

Rt. Hon. Nii Amaa Ollenu *(figure 4.22),* was the first speaker of the second republic, 1969 to 1972 and members of parliament was a renaissance of speaker's Westminster robe and Indigenous Ghanaian classics for the parliamentarians as shown in *figure 4.22 and 4.23 below.*

Figure 4.22: Rt. Hon Nii Armah Ollenu Speaker of the 2nd Republic, 1969 to 1972
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2023).

In parliamentary sessions, the speaker of the second republic was mostly adorned in a parliamentary robe and the wig and, in the interior of the robe, a dress code of a court

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judge. In contrast to the postulations of some participants discussed earlier, available images of the 1969-1972 parliament suggest that an overwhelming majority of parliamentarians dressed in indigenous Ghanaian attire, except for the speaker of the House, as shown in *Figure 4.23 below*.

Figure 4. 23: Rt. Hon. Ollenu Seated first from left to right, next to Prime Minister K.A. Busia on the dais in a session in Ghana's Parliament, 1969
Source. (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The picture above in *Figure 4.23* depicting the dress culture of parliamentarians in the Second Republic is corroborated in the account of a key member from the clerk department.

> …The parliamentarians or members of the Second Republican Parliament were not too different in their dress culture compared to that of the 1st Republic, except for the Rt. Hon. Speaker Ollenu who was a supreme court judge by practice, typical of them, judges, the like to wear the wig and the robe for proceedings…the parliamentarians were always fully represented in their numbers wearing Indigenous Ghanaian dresses like fugu, kente and the women were also seen in Kaba and slit of Ghanaian printed fabrics (Interview with a member of the Clerk 2, December 3rd 2022).

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The statement above highlights that the parliamentarians of the Second Republic, much like their predecessors in the First Republic, predominantly wore Indigenous Ghanaian attire. This included the *fugu* (a traditional smock often worn in the northern regions of Ghana), *kente* (a colorful woven cloth that is symbolic of Ashanti and Ewe culture), and for the women, the *kaba* and *slit* made from Ghanaian printed fabrics. This continuity in dress culture underscores the deep-rootedness of traditional attire in Ghanaian political and social life. Despite changes in government, the commitment to wearing indigenous dress in Parliament in 1969 signified a respect for and adherence to Ghanaian cultural norms.

The assertion of the respondent clerk above, and evident from the picture below in *Figure 4.24,* reflects the awakened consciousness of Ghanaian parliamentarians on the need to continuously portray Ghanaian national identity through all forms of legislative cultural expressions.

Figure 4.24: Rt. Hon speaker Nii Armah Oleenu (Seated 10th from left) in a group picture with Prime Minister K.A. Busia and Members of the 2nd Republican Parliament, 1969 to 1972.
Source: Information Service Department Ref. No. R/R/7063/1-53

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As shown in *Figure 4.24 above*, the adherence to indigenous dress by the majority of parliamentarians, contrasted with Speaker Ollenu's use of a colonial speaker's gown, illustrates the dual cultural influences at play within Ghana's parliamentary institution. On one hand, the parliamentarians' dress symbolizes a conscious effort to promote and preserve Ghanaian culture within the highest legislative body. On the other hand, Speaker Ollenu's attire represents the lingering colonial influences that persisted in the judicial branch, a sector of government where traditional British practices were more resistant to change. This juxtaposition of indigenous and colonial dress within the same institution highlights the complexities of post-colonial identity in Ghana. While there was a strong push to assert Ghanaian cultural identity through dress and other practices, certain colonial legacies, particularly amongst the elite, speakership, and judiciary remained intact (Mensah, 2021). This duality reflects the broader challenges faced by many post-colonial states in reconciling traditional practices with the inherited systems of their former colonizers.

Figure 4.25 Prime Minister K.A. Busia seated sixth from the right with Members of the 2nd Republican Parliament from 1969 to 1972.
Source: Information Service Department Ref. No. R/R/7063/1-53

The practice of parliamentarians wearing indigenous Ghanaian classics continued during the 3rd republic when Akuffo Addo was made ceremonial president with K.A. Busia as Prime Minister. What was more conspicuous is that the speaker, Rt. Hon

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Oleenu and the ceremonial president, Akuffo Addo, were highly Eurocentric in their sartorial representation in parliament. Unlike Nkrumah, who led the National personality Concept that was further adopted occasionally by his political opponent K.A. Busia, the Ceremonial president Akufo Addo and the speaker Ollenu were always seen dressed in Eurocentric suits and Eurocentric speakers' robes for parliamentary duties as shown in *Figure 4.24 and Figure 4.25*. As intimated by a cultural expert;

> With Akuffo Addo serving as the ceremonial president and K.A. Busia as Prime Minister, the contrast in dress between these leaders and the rest of Parliament was particularly notable. The ceremonial president, Akuffo Addo, and the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Ollenu was often seen in Eurocentric suits and robes, in stark contrast to the indigenous attire worn by many parliamentarians. This choice of Eurocentric dress by the highest-ranking officials in Parliament suggests a continued adherence to colonial-era sartorial norms, especially within formal and ceremonial contexts (Interview with Cultural Expert, 14 October 2023).

The Eurocentric suits and speaker's robe worn by Oleenu and Akuffo Addo are emblematic of the colonial legacy that persisted in Ghana's political and legal institutions, where European styles were often seen as symbols of authority and professionalism (Mensah, 2021). Essel (2019) asserts that in the preachment of the *national dress* agenda of the early independent parliaments of Ghana, the decline in the use of eurocentric three-piece suits by members of parliament was a symbolic gesture of signaling their independence status, and a marker of new national identity construction and instillation of national pride (Akou, 2004). This was perhaps attributable to the fact that clothing was one of the means through which the British used to colonize Ghana and as a measure of civilization (Allman, 2004).

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The Eurocentric sartorial representation of the two leaders in high office during the 1969 and 1972 parliaments is particularly striking when compared to the approach of former leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, who was instrumental in promoting a cultural policy agenda that emphasized the importance of indigenous identity. Nkrumah's adoption of traditional Ghanaian attire, even in official settings, was a deliberate political statement aimed at fostering a sense of national pride and breaking away from colonial legacies. His political opponent, Prime Minister K.A. Busia, although less consistent, occasionally adopted indigenous dress, reflecting a degree of alignment with Nkrumah's cultural agenda *(see figure 4.26).*

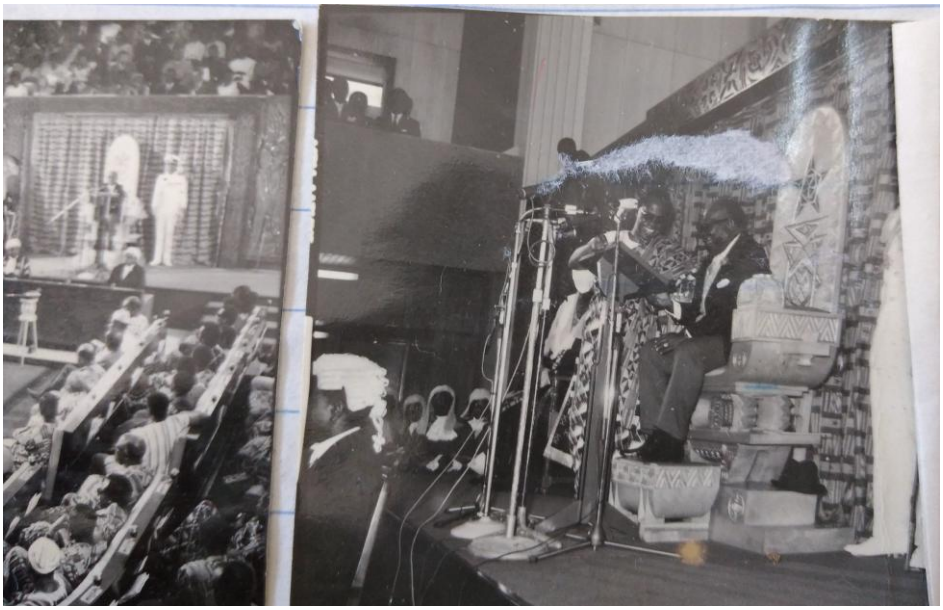

Figure 4.26 Prime K.A. Busia (Right picture) dressed in an Indigenous Ghanaian Classic exchanging pleasantries with Ceremonial president Akufo Addo (In suit) in parliament. (left) Parliamentarians seated in parliament, 1971.
Source: Information Service Department Ref. No. R/R/7063/1-53.

The contrast between the indigenous dress practices of the broader parliamentary body and the Eurocentric attire of Ceremonial President Akuffo Addo and Speaker Oleenu highlights the ongoing tension between tradition and modernity in post-colonial Ghana at the time. On one hand, the continuation of indigenous dress among parliamentarians represents a commitment to Ghanaian cultural identity and a rejection of colonial influence. On the other hand, the Eurocentric dress of the highest

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officials indicated a misconceived lingering perception that European styles are more appropriate or authoritative in formal political settings. This dichotomy suggests that while Ghana made significant strides in reclaiming its cultural identity through previous parliaments, certain colonial legacies remain deeply ingrained, particularly in the symbols and practices associated with some members in high office (see figure 4.27 below).

Figure 4.27: Rt. Hon Speaker Oleenu seated fourth next to President Akufo Addo in a group picture with some members of the 3rd Republican Parliament, 15th July, 1971.
Source: Information Services Department File No. PS/734/1-37

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Figure 4.28: *Rt. Hon Speaker Oleenu (left) and President Akufo Addo (right) seated next to each other on the Parliamentary dais, 1971*
Source: Information Services Department File No. PS/734/1-37.

Perhaps, Ceremonial President Akufo-Addo and Rt. Hon Oleenu as revealed by the participants, may be part of the tiny percentage of educated Ghanaians at the time, as reported in the findings of Yorke (2015), who opposed the acceptance of Nkrumah's Cultural Policy direction of constructing an identity for the new nationhood through Ghanaian dress culture. They did not accept the cultural policies because some felt it went against an already established colonial order that made them act British. The process of that transformation was already taking place under colonialism, where our elite, after they had become educated even to an elementary standard, were not supposed to put on clothes (Yorke, 2015).

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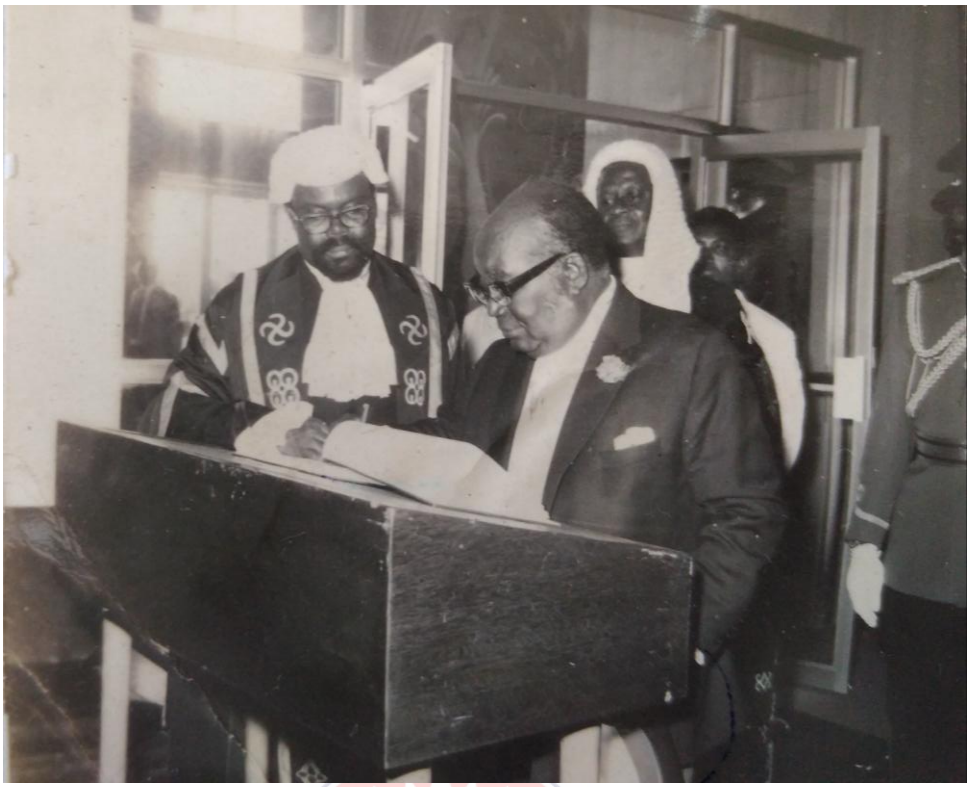

Figure 4.29 Ceremonial President Akufo-Addo dressed in a black suit (Signing), accompanied by Rt. Hon. Oleenu in the speaker's Robe and Wig (standing behind the president), 15 July 1971, after a parliamentary session.
Source: Information Services Department, Accra, File No PS/734/1-37. Shot by Ocansey.

The responses of study participants reveals the cultural tensions that characterized post-independence Ghana, particularly in relation to Kwame Nkrumah's cultural policies on dress. The opposition to these policies, as exemplified by figures such as President Edward Akufo-Addo and Rt. Hon. Nii Amaa Ollennu reveals a deeper ideological conflict between the enduring colonial legacy and the emerging nationalist identity. These individuals, representing a small but influential segment of the Western-educated elite, resisted Nkrumah's sartorial agenda, which sought to elevate traditional Ghanaian dress as a symbol of national pride, cultural authenticity, and postcolonial autonomy.

For many in this elite class, Western dress had long been internalized as a marker of civility, education, and socio-political status. This association was deeply rooted in

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the colonial period, during which even those with minimal formal education were socialized to view European clothing as an essential component of modern identity and respectability. Nkrumah's cultural vision, by contrast, challenged these norms by redefining indigenous attire as emblematic of progress and unity in a decolonized nation. However, to those who had come to equate Western fashion with sophistication and upward mobility, this shift appeared regressive and ideologically disruptive.

This cultural contestation reflects a broader struggle within postcolonial Ghana to reconcile indigenous values with imported norms. Drawing on Fanon's (1963) analysis of internalized colonialism and Bhabha's (1994) concept of mimicry, the resistance to Nkrumah's policy can be read as a manifestation of ambivalence, where colonial subjects both resist and replicate colonial authority. Ultimately, the politics of dress during this period provides a critical lens through which to understand the complexities of identity formation, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the challenges of achieving cultural sovereignty in postcolonial African states.

4.1.5 Dress Culture of Speaker and Parliamentarians from September 1979 to December 1981

Rt. Hon. Jacob Hackenburg Griffith took over the speakership from Rt. Hon Oleenu in the 3rd republic. He was a Superior Court judge at Bolgatanga, Cape Coast, and Tamale, and a Commissioner of income tax. With the handover of power by the military in September 1979, the 3rd republican parliament unanimously selected him to become the speaker of parliament, where he served as the speaker from September 1979 to December 1981. During the presidency of Dr. Halla Liman, whose

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government was overthrown by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, there was a break in the representation of Ghanaian indigenous classics in parliament.

> As expected from a man who has been in exile because of criticizing President Nkrumah in the 1960s, he would obviously reject the dress cultural policy of representing himself in a Ghanaian way in parliament… knowing very well that Nkrumah promulgated it (Interview with Clerk 1, 17th October, 2023).

The response bridges the relationship between political instability and cultural identity within Ghana's parliamentary history during the Third Republic (1979–1981). After the military transferred power in September 1979, the Speaker of Parliament was chosen unanimously, marking an initial attempt at democratic consolidation; however, this stability proved to be fleeting, as the parliament was disbanded in December 1981 following a coup led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings. Throughout this era, there was a significant disruption in the representation of Ghanaian indigenous cultural identity within parliament, especially regarding traditional attire, which had been promoted by President Nkrumah as part of his decolonization efforts. The Speaker, as intimated by the clerk, a man who had previously been exiled in the 1960s, deliberately dismissed the cultural dress code policy, perceiving it as an extension of Nkrumah's ideology. This decision exemplifies how individual political histories can shape symbolic practices within parliamentary settings. This action not only demonstrated ideological opposition to Nkrumah's Pan-African nationalist vision but also indicated a more profound struggle over postcolonial identity and representation within formal governance structures.

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Figure 4.30 A portrait of Justice Jacob Griffiths-Randolph 24th September 1979 to December 1981
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Rt. Hon. Speaker Griffiths Randolph, a successor of Speaker Oleenu inherited a state of Political instability, including military coups and authoritarian governance, that persisted after Ghana gained independence. As revealed by a respondent from th clerk department;

> During this period, the chaotic political climate frequently overshadowed parliamentary members' dress culture, with military commanders imposing tight clothing codes. Traditional Ghanaian dress, long a sign of national identity, was abandoned in favour of military uniforms and Western-style suits preferred by the governing class (interview with respondent Clerk 2, 17th October, 2022).

According to Aning (2012), traditional Ghanaian apparel, once a sign of national identity, was replaced by military uniforms and Western-style suits preferred by the governing class. The dress culture of speaker Griffith was similar to Rt. Hon. Oleenu his immediate predecessor was also a judge in the same profession. Speaker Griffiths was seen dressed in the speaker's ceremonial robe and the wig for all the

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parliamentary sessions he presided during his tenure as shown in figures *4.31 and 4.32* below.

Figure 4.31 Justice Jacob Griffiths-Randolph, dressed in the speaker's ceremonial Robe and Wig, swearing the Speaker's Oath of office, 24th September, 1979.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Contrary to the Eurocentric style of dressing by the speaker, the president, Hilla Limann, and the parliamentarians under the 3rd republic predominantly dressed in indigenous Ghanaian classics. Essel (2019) recounts in his findings as evident in *Figure 4.32 below* that the president carefully selected *batakari* fashioned with rich *kente* fabric for his inauguration, which was a creative way of representing and displaying multi-ethnic nationalistic unity and peaceful co-existence between the two major divisions of the country, southern and northern parts of Ghana. Apart from his peculiar exploration with a fashion classic predominant in the northern sector that was constructed with *kente* from the southern sector, he complemented it with the symbolical wearing of the cap accessory in oblique posture (towards the left), which

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is a dress fashion gesticulation and code that symbolises peace and unity (Essel & Amissah, 2015).

Figure 4.32 Speaker Griffiths dressed in Eurocentric robe and wig seated first from left on the dais whilst President Limann reads his keynote address to parliament, 1979.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2022).

The participants revealed that the Eurocentric robe and wig worn by Speaker Griffiths (*see above figure 4.32*) serve as a direct reflection of British colonial influence, a legacy that has persisted in many of Ghana's institutional practices.

> Following Ghana's independence from Britain in 1957, the country inherited numerous aspects of British parliamentary traditions, including the official dress code for key political figures such as the Speaker of Parliament. The robe and wig, iconic symbols of authority within British governance, were adopted in Ghana as part of the transition to self-governance, yet they represent a complex relationship with colonial heritage (Interview with participant Cultural Expert, October 15, 2023).

As historian Akyeampong (2020) observes, the adoption of British parliamentary dress by Ghanaian officials was not merely a matter of practical continuity but also a

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symbolic gesture linking the new republic to its colonial roots, perhaps as a means of asserting legitimacy within the framework of modern governance.

However, the cultural implications of this adoption are significant. The robe and wig, while embodying status and authority within the British context, contrast sharply with traditional Ghanaian forms of attire that signify leadership and respect. Scholars like Essel (2019) argue that this choice of clothing reflects a form of cultural dissonance, an imposed foreign identity that clashes with Ghana's rich heritage of formal dress, such as the kente cloth worn by chiefs and elders. In this sense, the persistence of colonial attire, particularly in the 1970s, raises important questions about identity, autonomy, and post-colonial legacies in Ghanaian society. As Frimpong (2021) highlights, the maintenance of these symbols during Ghana's early years of independence underscores a deeper ambivalence within the new state's efforts to balance modernization with a return to indigenous cultural pride.

The fact that these colonial practices, as revealed by the research participant's continued to be used in the 1970s also suggests a more complex relationship between the newly independent military state and its colonial past. The retention of the robe and wig during this period, when Ghana experienced a series of political upheavals, including military coups, reflects how colonial legacies persisted even within a climate of political instability. According to Acheampong and Smith (2022), the use of these garments could be seen as an effort to project continuity and authority during a time when the nation's political future was uncertain. Despite efforts by some leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah, to promote a return to African cultural values, the influence of British systems and symbols remained deeply embedded in the country's political institutions. The robe and wig worn by Speaker Griffiths not only reflect

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British colonial influence but also symbolize the complexities of identity, tradition, and power in post-colonial Ghana. While they signify authority in a British legal and parliamentary sense, their adoption in Ghana highlights a period of cultural negotiation and ongoing colonial influence, as well as the challenge of redefining national identity in the wake of independence. The persistence of these symbols into the 1970s reveals how deeply rooted colonial legacies were, even as the nation sought to forge its path.

Figure 4.33 a. Rt. Hon Speaker Hackenburg, seated far left, dressed in Eurocentric robe and wig, next to President Limann
Source: Information Services Department, File No. 81

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Figure 4.33 b. President-elect Dr. Hilla Limann dressed in Batakari, left, during his inaugural ceremony as President of the Republic of Ghana on September 24, 1979.
Source: Information Services Department, 2022. File No. 82.

President Limann's dress fashion *(as shown in Figure 4.33. above)* was in line with the parliamentarians of the 3rd Republic. The *kente smock* fabric he wore was patterned with *nkyimkyim*, a symbol of dynamism, versatility, and enterprising, rendered in blue, yellow, and red colours. This was his way of deepening the dress cultural aesthetic order that Nkrumah began in the first legislative assembly as the Prime Minister. In the account of the respondent's key Cultural expert, it was recounted that;

> …despite the complex job of the third republican parliament from 1979 to 1981, the parliamentarians and the president, apart from the speaker, displayed Ghanaian cultural heritage in the form of their dress culture in Ghana's parliament most often… The speaker was accustomed to Western training and dress representation (Interview with respondent Cultural expert, October 15, 2022).

President Hilla Limann's sartorial choices during the Third Republic (1979–1981) serve as a deliberate continuation of Kwame Nkrumah's cultural vision, particularly

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in the symbolic use of traditional dress within political spaces. By wearing a kente smock patterned with the *nkyimkyim* motif, symbolizing dynamism, versatility, and enterprise, Limann visually affirmed Ghanaian cultural values within the highest office of the state. The color choices (blue, yellow, and red) further emphasize vitality and national identity, projecting a pan-African aesthetic and ethos of self-determination. This act of dressing was not merely personal or decorative, but political. As noted by the cultural expert respondent, Limann and the majority of parliamentarians, with the exception of the Speaker, frequently showcased Ghanaian heritage through their clothing in parliamentary proceedings. This suggests a collective consciousness among Third Republic legislators to assert postcolonial identity through cultural representation, positioning indigenous dress as a form of political rhetoric and national pride.

However, the Speaker's continued adherence to Western dress underscores the lingering influence of colonial training and the uneven adoption of cultural decolonization across political leadership. This contrast reinforces the view that dress culture in Ghana's parliament became a symbolic battleground between inherited colonial norms and the aspiration for an authentically African modernity. Limann's fashion choices, therefore, can be interpreted as an intentional reinforcement of cultural sovereignty, linking the Third Republic to Nkrumah's foundational efforts to reframe Ghanaian identity on its own terms.

The third republic was short-lived and ended with the coup of 31st December 1981 by the National Defence Council (NDC) of Flt. Lt Jerry John Rawlings. Coup leader, Rawlings, seized the country and subjected it to military rule until 1993 when the fourth republican parliament was constituted under the leadership of Rt. Hon D.F.

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Annan *(as shown in figure 4.34 below)*, the longest-serving (1993 to 2001) speaker of Ghana's parliament in Ghanaian history. The Fourth Republic was inaugurated on 7th January 1993.

4.1.6 Dress Culture of Parliamentarians and Speaker of the 4th Republican Parliaments, 1993-2000

The restoration to democratic administration in 1992 marked a slight renaissance of Ghanaian cultural pride and a revitalization of legislative dress culture. With the advent of multiparty democracy, legislative members began to reclaim indigenous clothing as a sign of national unity and cultural variety, causing Ghanaian textiles like Kente, Batakari, and Smock fashion to become more popular in parliament, signifying a newfound awareness of the country's rich cultural history (Ampofo, 2010). He further asserts that indigenous Ghanaian textiles such as Kente, Batakari, and Smock have become increasingly popular in parliament, demonstrating a revived respect for Ghana's rich cultural history. Though there was an attempted renaissance of indigenous Ghanaian classics in parliament at the inception of the 4th republic, it didn't have enough oxygen to survive the prevailing Eurocentric domination.

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Figure 4.34 Rt. Hon. Justice Daniel Francis Annan (left) 7th January 1993 - 6th January 2001.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana Archives, 2023).

Rt. Hon D.F. Annan was chosen to be the Speaker of the First Parliament of the Fourth Republic in 1993 when Ghana adopted a constitutional democratic governance system. His success in the role re-elected him in 1997 to serve as the Speaker of the Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic. A position he held till 2001. Justice D.F. Annan was crucial to the establishment of the Fourth Republic and the current democratic system that Ghana is practicing.

The dress Culture of the first speaker of the Fourth Republic was the traditional attire of judges, the parliamentary robe, wing collar, and bands at the neck as shown in *Figure 4.34* above, exemplifies the dress code of the speaker. In the account of a member of the clerk department who served under Rt. Hon D.F. Annan, it was reported that

> …The first speaker of the fourth Republic was Justice D.F. Annan. he was a judge… he was a justice of the highest court of the land before he was

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> appointed, and so he was used to suiting and he wore a suit and also wore the robe, that is what he used before he left.. In fact, I dare say that I never saw Justice D.F. Annan in a smock or cloth, the first speaker, I never saw him in Ghanaian dress fashion (Interview with respondent Clerk 2, December 3rd, 2022).

The statement regarding Justice D.F. Annan, the first Speaker of Ghana's Fourth Republic, highlights the complex interplay between identity, professionalism, and colonial legacy in post-colonial Ghana. As noted by the respondent, Justice Annan, formerly a judge of the highest court, consistently appeared in a suit and robe rather than traditional Ghanaian attire. This sartorial choice reflects the enduring influence of British colonial norms, particularly within Ghana's legal and political institutions, where Western dress continues to signify professionalism, authority, and institutional legitimacy.

Justice Annan's attire exemplifies the tensions faced by post-independence African leaders, who were often caught between asserting national cultural identity and adhering to inherited colonial standards. Contrary to the assertion of the Clerk 2, figure 4.32 reveals an interesting dress feature in the speaker's dress code. A cursory look at the Speaker's dress reveals that, while he maintained the Western structure of the judicial robe, his incorporation of Ghanaian *kente* fabric into its design suggests a conscious, albeit symbolic, gesture toward cultural integration. This hybrid approach, merging indigenous elements with Western forms, reveals an attempt to navigate postcolonial identity by asserting cultural presence within colonial frameworks, rather than rejecting them entirely. Thus, Justice Annan's dress reflects both continuity and transformation, revealing how Ghana's postcolonial leadership negotiated cultural expression within the confines of institutional tradition, and how identity could be subtly asserted through symbolic adaptation rather than overt rupture.

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The account of the respondent Clerk and the observations made are in tandem with the pictorial evidence shown in *figures 4.34.1 and 4.35 below,* where the Rt. Hon speaker Annan is seen discharging his duty in the speaker's robe (a Westminster culture).

Figure 4.34.1 A.B. Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan, dressed in a Westminster Robe Structure with Kente embellishments (left), exercising his duty as Speaker (1993)
Source: Ghana's Parliamentary Archives, file No. KZ 22A.

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Figure 4.35 Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan (left), dressed in a Eurocentric Robe structure embellished with Ghanaian Indigenous fabrics, exchanging pleasantries with President Rawlings during a parliamentary session
Source: (Parliament of Ghana Archives Library, 2023).

The parliamentarians of the first parliament of the fourth republic, unlike the previous parliaments of the first, second and third republics which were predominantly decorated with Ghanaian indigenous dress fashion styles, shifted significantly away from the domineering dress culture of the previous republics except for president Rawlings (*as shown in figure 4.33 amd 4.35)* who occasionally abandoned his military uniform for a Bobou anytime he visited parliament for an address. Perhaps the account of the respondent, Cultural Expert, may have accounted for the paradigm shift in the dress code of the fourth republican parliamentarian.

> Dr. Nkrumah, after Ghana had attained independence, championed a national identity policy where members of parliament were in charge of placing Ghanaian dress culture in a positive light, unlike the 1993 parliament. And I think it's continued over the years until the regimes came in. From the pictures that I picked from archives, and readings from literature, the intermittent regimes may have affected the dress culture of parliament of the 4th republic due to the intermittent coups, because during the 60s, Parliamentarians, as much as possible, dressed in a serious and native way… There was overwhelming dominance of Ghanaian dress culture at the time compared to recent times (Interview with Cultural expert, November 15, 2023).

The statement by the respondent cultural expert above indicates a significant shift in parliamentary dress culture with the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1993. Unlike the First, Second, and Third Republics, where indigenous dress styles dominated, the initial Fourth Republican Parliament saw a marked decline in the public display of Ghanaian cultural attire. This shift, as observed by a cultural expert, may reflect broader historical and political disruptions, notably the series of military coups

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between the 1960s and 1980s, which interrupted the continuity of cultural policy development.

President Rawlings, though a military figure, occasionally signaled alignment with Ghanaian tradition by wearing a three-piece agbada during parliamentary addresses. However, this was the exception rather than the norm, as most Fourth Republic parliamentarians adopted Western-style clothing, signaling a possible erosion of Nkrumah's post-independence national identity agenda. The cultural expert's commentary suggests that the political instability of previous decades weakened the symbolic role of parliament as a site for promoting indigenous identity. The decline in traditional dress may thus be interpreted not simply as a matter of fashion, but as a reflection of disrupted cultural continuity, where post-coup regimes failed to maintain or renew the cultural nationalism that once animated Ghana's political institutions.

The fourth parliament had members of parliament consistently seen in Eurocentric three-piece suits for parliamentary business, as shown in figures 4.29, 4.30, and 4.31 below.

Figure 4.36 Session of Parliamentarians predominantly adorned in Eurocentric dresses for Parliamentary session, 1993

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Source: (Ghana's Parliamentary Archives, 2023)

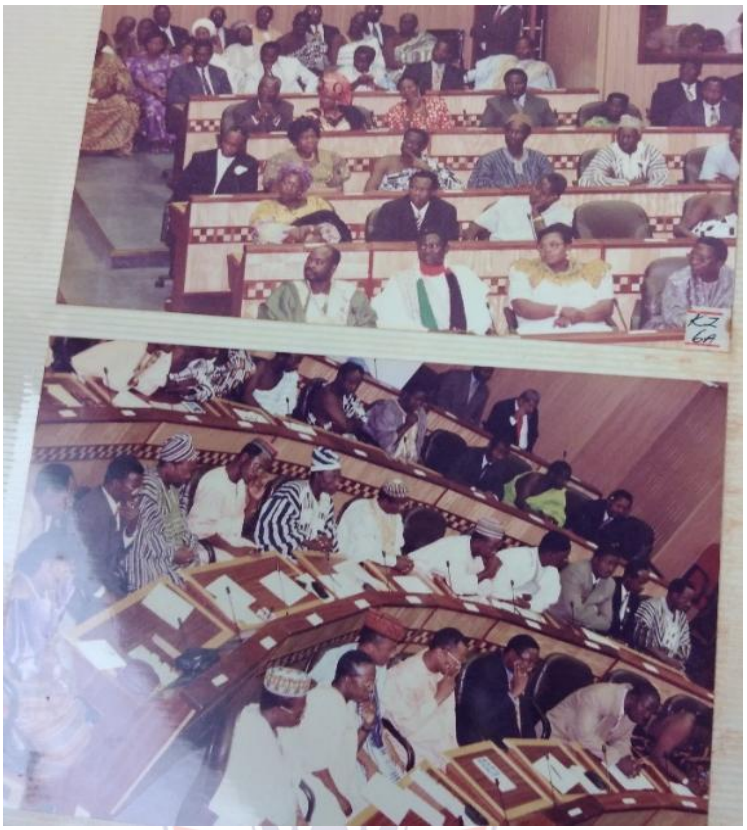

Figure 4.37 Session of Parliamentarians under Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan
Source: (Ghana's Parliamentary Archives, 2023).

The first Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana was inaugurated in January 1993 and lasted until January 2001, marking a crucial period of legislative consolidation following years of political instability and military rule. These eight years were overseen by Rt. Hon. Justice Daniel Francis Annan, who served as the Speaker of Parliament. His tenure is widely regarded as instrumental in laying the foundation for parliamentary procedures, democratic governance, and the re-establishment of constitutional order in Ghana. As a former High Court judge, Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan brought to the position a deep understanding of legal and constitutional matters, which proved vital in guiding a newly restored democratic legislature through its formative years. Upon the conclusion of his term in January 2001, the speakership passed to Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey, who presided over the

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Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic. Like his predecessor, Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey also had a distinguished background in the legal field, having served as a Justice and a prominent lawyer. His appointment ensured continuity in the tradition of legally trained individuals guiding the legislative process, reinforcing the integrity and independence of Parliament during Ghana's democratic consolidation.

The transition from Rt. Hon. Annan to Rt. Hon. Ala Adjetey (See Figure 4.38 below) thus signified not only a successful democratic succession but also the continuation of the professional legal dress code, a Eurocentric dress style, into Ghana's parliament.

4.1.7 Dress Culture of Parliamentarians and Speakers of the 4th Republican Parliaments, 2001-2005

Ghana's legislative dress culture evolved over the first half of the twenty-first century in response to changing political dynamics and worldwide influences. While Western-style suits remained the typical outfit for formal events, there appeared to be a rising tendency to add traditional Ghanaian aspects into legislative wear. The introduction of the National Friday Wear Policy by President Kuffuor increased the desire to incorporate Ghanaian wear into parliament. In the account of the respondent Cultural policy expert, it was revealed that:

> … from 2000 to 2008, Ghana's parliamentarians predominantly were adorned or decorated with Eurocentric attires, from my observation, it was not until the promulgation of National Friday Wear that I think triggered the desire of some parliamentarians to wear Ghanaian printed fabrics to parliament (Interview with Cultural Policy Expert (C.P.E), 15th November 2023).

The statement above by the participant C.P.E highlights a shift in the sartorial culture of Ghana's parliamentarians between 2001 and 2008, emphasizing the dominance of Eurocentric clothing styles during that period. According to the interviewee, it was the

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introduction of the National Friday Wear policy as a non-statutory policy (Donkoh, 2022), a state initiative that promoted indigenous textiles, and catalyzed a renewed appreciation for Ghanaian identity through dress (Donkoh, 2022). This suggests that formal policy interventions can influence cultural expression within political institutions. The circumstance point to a broader issue of postcolonial identity, where Western norms continued to shape elite behaviour until state-led efforts encouraged the visibility of indigenous aesthetics. It further emphasizes how cultural policies, like National Friday Wear, can serve as tools for national identity assertion and the decolonization of public representation, even at the highest levels of governance. The statement of participant C.P.E. is further corroborated in the response of a member of the Standing Orders Committee of Parliament (S.O.C.P).

> … Indeed, I was in parliament, and it was President Kuffour's National Friday Wear that impacted workers in state institutions including the House of Parliament to adopt Friday as a day when a parliamentarian can do what we call a smart Casual, or wear a printed fabric or something Ghanaian, *In fact until then we mostly did suit and tie for* sessions (Interview with a S.O.C.P, September 14, 2023).

The response affirms that President Kufuor's National Friday Wear initiative significantly influenced attire within state institutions, including Parliament. As noted by the respondent, before this policy, parliamentarians predominantly wore Western formal attire such as suits and ties. The policy introduced the idea of a culturally conscious "smart casual" dress code on Fridays, creating a space for the display of Ghanaian identity through clothing. This shift particularly empowered female parliamentarians to express Ghana's cultural richness by showcasing a wide range of indigenous fabrics, styles, and patterns. As Mensah (2018) observes, female members especially embraced this transformation, using fashion as a form of cultural

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storytelling and identity, thereby turning parliamentary dress into a medium for national pride and heritage celebration.

Figure 4.38 Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey, 3rd Speaker of the Fourth Republic, January 2001 to January 2005.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The speaker of the second parliament of the fourth republic dressed in a Eurocentric dres structure with adinkra embellishments, just like his predecessor, D.F. Annan. Throughout his period as the speaker of the second parliament of the Fourth Republic, it was recounted by a member of the Clerk department that;

> Peter Ala Adjetey, the second Speaker of the Fourth Republic, was an astute and vibrant lawyer at the bar. I never saw him in an indigenous Ghanaian Classic. He rose to become the president of the African Bar Association. He was a typical lawyer. He was always in a suit and Gown, and he even, at some point, had to procure a hat embroidered with a symbol specifically made for him. He was always in either a suit and tie or the dress code of a Justice of the

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Supreme Court with the Robe covering it (Interview with Respondent Clerk 1 17th, 2023)

The Speaker of the second parliament of Ghana's Fourth Republic, Peter Ala Adjetey's attire reflected his strong professional identity and adherence to the formalities of Western legal tradition. As recounted by a Clerk Department member, Adjetey, an "astute and vibrant lawyer," was never seen in traditional Ghanaian dress; instead, he consistently appeared in a suit, tie, or judicial gown, often covered by the robe typical of a Supreme Court justice. His dress underscored his identity as a "typical lawyer," which, while conventional within legal circles, diverged from the local cultural norms, emphasizing a preference for global, Western standards of professionalism. His special, custom-embroidered hat, a notable accessory within his otherwise conventional attire, symbolized his esteemed status and individuality, revealing his influential role in both Ghanaian and African legal communities, as he once held the title of president of the African Bar Association. The description of his attire choices by the respondent reveals admiration from colleagues, who saw his image as aligning with the authoritative, British-influenced legal practices that shaped Ghana's judicial system, marking him as a figure of gravitas who straddled Ghanaian leadership and international legal prestige.

The account of the respondent from the Clerk Department of parliament corroborates the evidence portrayed in the picture shown in *figures 4.38 above and 4.39* below, where Rt. Hon Speaker is seen with his customized parliamentary hat.

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Figure 4.39. Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey seated in a parliamentary meeting
Source: Ghana's Parliamentary Library (2023)

Figure 4.40 Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey (middle from left) on the dais in a Session. 2003.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

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Figure 4.41. Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey in his customized parliamentary hat bearing the logo of parliament.
Source: (Daily Graphic, October 10, 2008; https://www.modernghana.com/news/185709/parliament-pays-tribute-to-ala-adjetey.html)

The Eurocentric dress culture of the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey, from 2001 to 2004, was a clear reflection of the broader fashion preferences within Ghana's Parliament during that period. His consistent choice of suits and ties, in alignment with Western formal standards, mirrored the dominant sartorial trend among male parliamentarians, who largely adhered to Eurocentric modes of dress for parliamentary duties. This trend signaled the lingering influence of colonial legacies on official appearances in Ghana's democratic institutions, where Western-style clothing was often associated with professionalism and authority. Traditional Ghanaian attire among male members was rarely observed, except on ceremonial occasions such as State of the Nation addresses or special commemorative sittings. On such days, a few members would don toga-style garments, the Batakari (a flowing gown ensemble with intricate embroidery), or the northern-inspired smock (fugu), offering momentary glimpses of indigenous identity. In contrast, female parliamentarians maintained a more consistent connection to Ghanaian heritage in their fashion choices. They regularly attended parliamentary sessions in a variety of locally woven or printed textiles, including Kente, African wax prints, and other traditional fabrics. Their styles often celebrated regional diversity and cultural heritage, serving as a subtle but powerful form of cultural expression and resistance to the prevailing Western dress norms within the parliamentary space.

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Figure 4.42 A view of a session of parliamentarians under the second parliament of the Fourth Republic
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Figure 4.43 A view of a session of parliamentarians under the second parliament of the Fourth Republic
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

Following the end of the era of Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey and the third parliament of the 4th republic, Rt. Hon. Ebenezer Begyina Sekyi Hughes *(as shown in figure 4.44) took* charge of parliament within the period of 7th January 2005 to January 2009. The

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dress code of Rt. Hon Hughes was in line with that of his immediate predecessor Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey. Speaker Hughes was a distinguished legal practitioner and is typical of legal practitioners who have become speakers of Ghana's Parliament, Pre and Post-independence, except that a few have always demonstrated a dress culture of court Justices.

> … the practice of speakers representing their professional background in parliament was dominant in the fourth republic, the speakers who were Supreme Court Justices and legal practitioners, such as Rt. Hon. Begyina Sekyi Hughes occasionally wore in smock, but not when he was presiding in the House of Parliament. Anytime he sat in the chamber, he wore the gown and the suit while presiding. I never saw him presiding in a Ghanaian dress fashion (Interview with respondent, Clerk 1, *October, 17th, 2023)*

According to the respondent, the dress choice of Rt. Hon. Begyina Hughes (as shown in Figure 4.44 below) was Eurocentric in structure and mirrored the sartorial practices of his predecessor. This choice, as critiqued by Essel et al. (2021), diverges from the distinctive characteristics of Ghanaian traditional dress culture. Respondents viewed the attire of this group of Speakers as representative of foreign influence within Ghana's parliamentary space. It was widely agreed that their professional backgrounds, often rooted in legal or Western-trained institutions, played a significant role in shaping these dress preferences. In contrast, the dress culture of parliamentarians during the third parliament of the Fourth Republic was more diverse. While many male members favored Eurocentric three-piece suits for official proceedings, there was a modest presence of traditional Ghanaian attire, particularly among female parliamentarians. These women occasionally incorporated indigenous garments and accessories, signaling a limited yet notable effort to maintain cultural representation within the formal setting of parliamentary business**.**

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Figure 4.44 Rt. Hon Ebenezer Begyina Sekyi Hughes (Right) exchanging pleasantries with President John Agyekum Kuffuor, January 2005.
Source (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

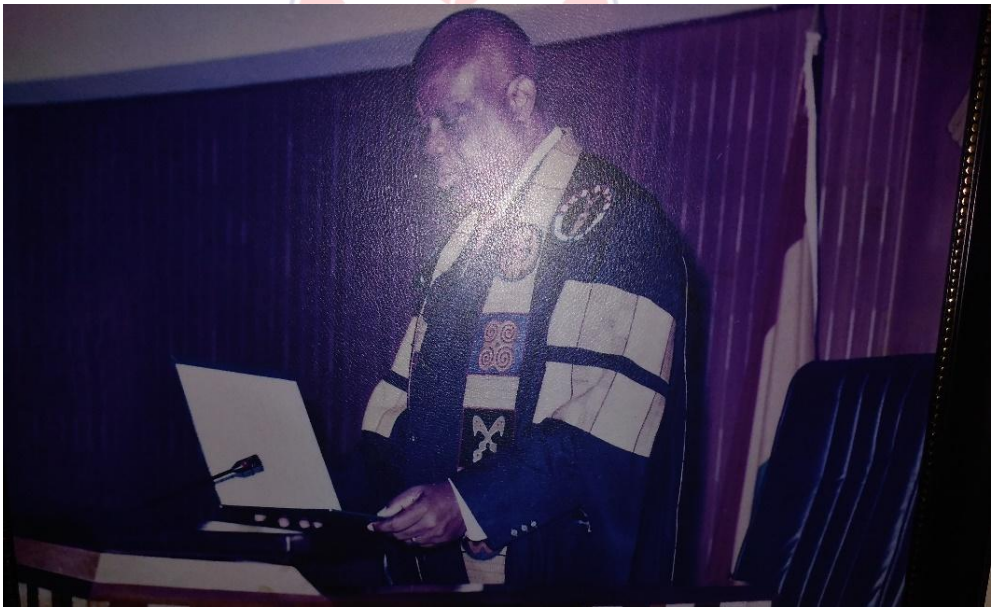

Figure 4.45: Rt. Hon Ebenezer Begyina Sekyi Hughes giving an Opening Prayer during the opening of Parliament on 7th January 2005
Source: (Ghana's Parliamentary Library, 2023).

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Figure 4.46: Rt. Hon Ebenezer Begyina Sekyi Hughes, seated 3rd from Right, adorned in a Parliamentary Speaker's robe during Commemorative Sitting of Parliament, 5 March 2007
Source: (Lentz, 2008).

The dress culture of parliamentarians and speaker of the third parliament of the Fourth Republic who were predominantly parliamentarians of the second parliament of the Fourth Republic, and had retained their seat during the December 7th General elections in 2004, contravenes Ghana's long-fought dress cultural advancement agenda that was advocated by Kwame Nkrumah (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Essel & Amissah, 2015). The main reason behind Nkrumah's advocacy for a dress cultural advancement in Ghana was premised on the fact that clothing was one of the means through which the British used to colonize Ghana and as a measure of civilization (Allman, 2004; Essel, 2019).

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Figure 4.47 (Left) Majority Leader of Parliament of Ghana in 2008, addressing the house with a group of Parliamentarians seated behind, all adorned in Eurocentric three-piece suits. (Right) A cross-sectional view of Parliamentarians seated in the Chamber, 2008.
Source: (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), 2023)

The images shown in *Figure 4.47 above* present a 2008 snapshot of Ghana's parliamentary culture, highlighting the formal Eurocentric dress code adopted by members of the legislative body. On the left, the Majority Leader addresses the Parliament, with several members seated behind, predominantly wearing Western-style three-piece suits. This choice of attire portrays the influence of Western professional norms within Ghana's parliamentary setting, reflecting an alignment with formal, Eurocentric standards of dress that may denote authority, professionalism, and alignment with international political customs. On the right, a broader cross-sectional view captures Parliamentarians similarly dressed, further emphasizing this trend toward Western-style professionalism in the nation's legislative proceedings. These images, subtly illustrates how Ghanaian lawmakers visually adopted and promoted Eurocentric standards as part of their public service identity within the parliamentary chamber.

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Figure 4.48 Rt. Hon. Justice Bamford Addo, fourth Speaker of the Fourth Republic
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The Speaker Rt. Hon Bamford Addo *(as shown in figure 4.48 above),* a judge and attorney who presided over the Ghanaian Parliament as its first female speaker from 2009 to 2013, took over the reign of power to preside in Ghana's parliament when President J.E.A. Mills took over in January 2009. In the sub-region of West Africa, she was the first woman elected to that position. Additionally, Bamford-Addo was the first female justice on Ghana's Supreme Court from 1991 until her retirement in 2004. As was typical of Court Justices who were appointed and elected as speakers who presided over parliament, her dress code for parliamentary duty was formal robes, gowns, collars, or wigs.

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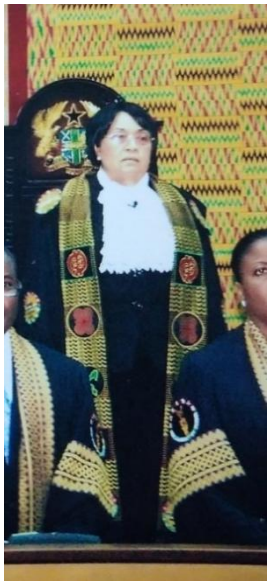

Notes: (left) Rt. Hon. Joyce Adeline Bamford Addo (seated second from right) 5th Speaker of the Fourth Republic, Ghana, 2009. During the Inauguration of President J.E.A Mills. (**Right) S**peaker Banford stands in parliament for the National Anthem
Sourced from: (Ghana's Parliamentary Library, 2023).

Rt. Hon. Joyce Adeline Bamford Addo (seated first from right) 5th Speaker of the Fourth Republic, Ghana, 2009. During the Inauguration of President John Dramani Mahama
Sourced from: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

A cursory look at the dress code of Rt. Hon. Bamford Addo in Figures 4.41 and 4.42 above is reflective of the adornment of Ghana's Chief Justice's (Georgina Theodora

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Wood seated first from left) dress, which is a testament to the alignment of the speaker's dress background. In the account of a respondent from the clerk department of parliament, it was stated;

> Banford Addo, a typical justice of the Supreme Court… and so she was virtually in her judiciary attire as akin to that of the justice of the Supreme Court. Never did I see Banford in a slit and Kaba, as in presiding (Clerk Department Respondent *December, 17th 2023).*

The statement above corroborates the dress code of the speaker in Figure 4.38. confirming the Eurocentric dress culture of Rt. Hon. Bamford Addo. In a similar vein, parliamentarians of the fifth parliament of the fourth republic dressed in a predominantly Eurocentric style in the exercise of their parliamentary duty as shown in figure 4.49 and 4.50 below

Figure 4.50. Rt. Hon Doe Adjaho seated middle next to President John Dramani Mahama (left on the dais) 2013.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

Rt. Hon. Edward Doe Adjaho *(as shown in figure 4.50)* assumed the reigns of speakership for the parliament of Ghana within the period of 7th January 2013 to

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January 2017. He was the fifth Speaker elected in the Fourth Republic of Ghana and the first Speaker to have been elected from amongst members of Ghana's parliament in the Fourth Republic. Rt. Hon. Edward Korbly Doe Adjaho is a formidable man in Ghana's democratic structure being speaker of Ghana's parliament in 2013 having taken over from Joyce Adeline Bamford-Addo.

Figure 4.51: Rt. Hon Doe Adjaho, 7th January 2013 - 6th January 2017.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The dress culture of Rt. Hon Adjaho was highly Eurocentric in structure, as revealed in the photographic evidence gathered; his dress code for parliamentary duty was in line with the practice of his predecessor, legal practitioners who have ascended the seat as speakers of the parliament of Ghana. Rt. Hon Adjaho appears to be a fan of suits for both parliamentary and outside parliamentary duties, as shown in Figure 4.52 below. On countless occasions, when he was attending parliamentary duties outside

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parliament, his adornment was predominantly Eurocentric. It is not surprising that a respondent from the clerk department refers to him as “a man of the suit”.

> Rt. Hon Edward Adjaho was a typical Eurocentric-inclined gentleman; he hardly appeared without a suit and was predominantly seen in Western adornment for many parliamentary duties. He was a man of the suit, and he had a collection of them. As far as I recall, during his tenure in parliament, he never wore a native Ghanaian indigenous classic for parliamentary duty (Interview with a key respondent from the clerk department, November 15th 2023).

The statement above is reflective of the pictures shown below in Figure 4. 52

Figure 4.52: Rt. Hon. Edward Doe Ajaho, 5th speaker of the Fourth Republic, adorned in Eurocentric dress
Source: (https://www.primenewsghana.com/images/2016/aug/20/job-doee.jpg).

Parliamentarians of Ghana’s parliament from January 2013 to January 2017 (four years) adorned themselves in a multiplicity of dress codes predominantly Eurocentric in nature. The dress culture of parliamentarians was significantly paralleled with the

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preceding parliament of the Fourth Republic. Not all respondents suggested that the dress culture of Rt. Hon Adjaho's parliament threatened by Western apparel viewing was a challenge to their legitimacy in representing the various ethnic groups they represent. Rather, the respondent consistently suggested that maybe the parliamentarians wanted to show their Eurocentric elitism, as many of such parliamentarians had been trained abroad. However, the culture through Indigenous Ghanaian clothing would have perhaps been the pedestal to differentiate between socioeconomic levels, and thus visually displaying the prestige of members of parliament, their status s against that of their constituents.

Figure 4.53: session of parliamentarians seated in the parliament of the Fourth Republic under Rt. Hin Adjaho in their adornment (predominantly Suit and Tie). Source: (Information Services Department, 2023).

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Figure 4.54: A cross-sectional view of parliamentarians in session, 2013.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

Figure 4.55: A sectional view of parliamentarians adorned in their respective dress seated in session, 2015.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

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In an interview with a respondent from the Clerk Department of Parliament it was intimated that;

> within a period of four years under Rt. Hon Edward Adjaho, I didn't witness a massive drive for traditional attire, our parliamentarians were mostly seen in suits, at best, in what parliament refers to as Smart Casual or political suits. Once in a while some parliamentarians dressed in printed fabrics (Interview with respondent Clerk 1 October 17th, 2023).

The observation that during the four-year tenure of Rt. Hon. Edward Adjaho there was no "massive drive for traditional attire" in Parliament, where lawmakers were predominantly attired in Western suits or what was termed "Smart Casual" or "political suits", reflects a broader trend of Eurocentric sartorial norms persisting in Ghana's political institutions. According to Essel (2019), dress choices by public officials in postcolonial Ghana are not merely aesthetic decisions but are imbued with semiotic power, often reinforcing dominant ideologies of modernity aligned with Western fashion constructs. The predominance of suits in parliamentary settings during Adjaho's era exemplifies this symbolic alignment with Western parliamentary decorum and its underlying colonial legacies.

Rt. Hon. Professor Aaron Mike Oquaye (*as shown in Figure 4.45 below)* succeeded Rt. Hon. Adjaho from 7th January 2017 - to 6th January 2021, Rt. Hon Oquaye is a Ghanaian politician and is the Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana. Oquaye was sworn in as the Speaker of Parliament on 7 January 2017. As a member of the New Patriotic Party, he was the Member of Parliament for Dome-Kwabenya from 2005 to 2013 and was Ghana's High Commissioner to India from 2001 to 2004, then Minister of Energy from 2005 to 2006, and Minister of Communications from 2006 to 2009. He served as the Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament from 2009 to 2013. It is instructive to note

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that Rt. Hon. Mike Oquaye was not a stranger in Ghana's parliament when he was elected as the 7th speaker of the parliament of Ghana.

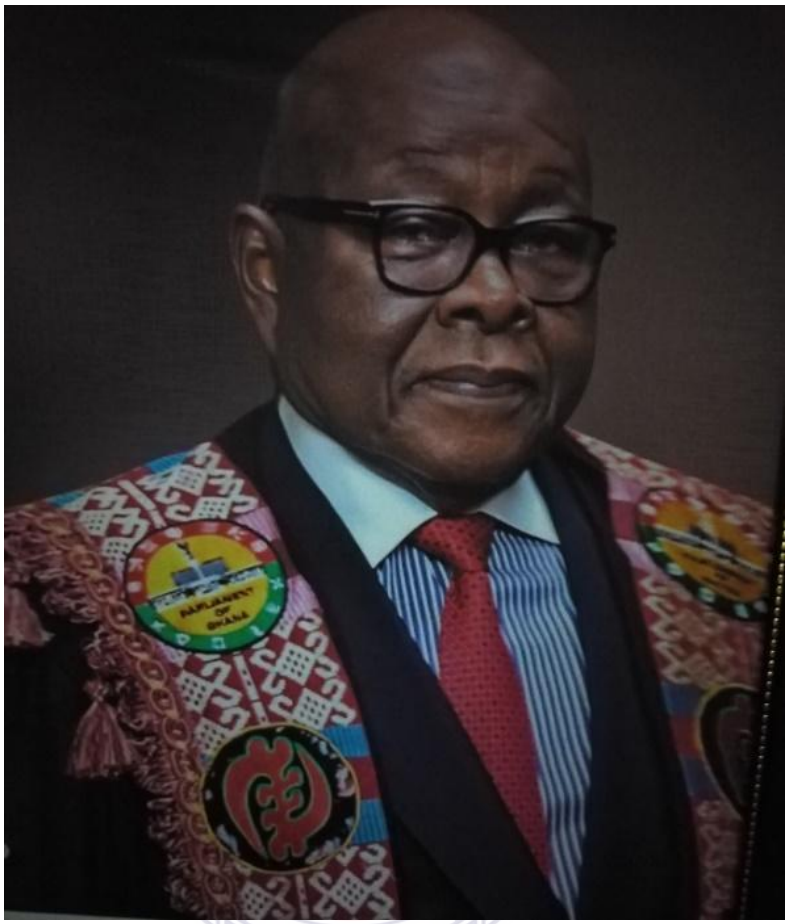

Figure 4.56: Rt. Hon. Prof Mike Oquaye, 7th Speaker of the Fourth Republic
Picture Credit: (Parliamentary Archives, 2023)

Rt. Hon. Prof. Mike Oquaye is a known United Party activist, a product of the UP tradition that gave birth to President Edward Akufo-Addo's administration. According to Duodu (1970, August 31 as cited in Essel, 2019), Edward Akufo-Addo perceived Kwame Nkrumah as a man obsessed with African 'superstitious' beliefs and indigenous systems (p.9). Going by Duodu's account, it was Nkrumah's love for indigenous knowledge and statecraft that informed his choice of indigenous classics for the early parliaments of the first republic. It also presupposed that the overtones of President Edward Akufo-Addo's choice of the Eurocentric suit demonstrated during his tenure are what have transcended political ideological descendants, such as Rt.

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Hon. Mike Oquaye, owing to his repulsion to indigenous fashion as formal wear or classic for his inauguration and subsequent parliamentary sitting throughout his tenure, is telling of how Eurocentric the seventh speaker of the fourth parliament was. In line with the inauguration outfit of Rt. Hon. Mike Oquaye, Essel, Navei & de-Graft-Yankson (2021) as cited in Essel (2019) assert that seven out of the eight presidents-elect from 1960 to 2017 selected their inaugural ceremony dress fashion from the repertoire of Ghanaian fashion classics, the only president-elect who wore the Western suit fashion for his inauguration was Edward Akuffo-Addo. In furtherance, the picture in figure 4.50 points out the dress fashion choice of Rt. Hon Mike Oquaye during his inauguration.

Figure 4.57: Inauguration of Rt. Hon. Prof Mike Oquaye (adorned in suit and tie), 7th Speaker of the Fourth Republic, 2017
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

In an interview with a respondent from the clerk department, it was further confirmed that,

> …Rt. Hon Professor Oquaye was a typical reflection of how judges appointed as speakers in the past upheld their Western ideals, he was always in suit in presiding, and as far as my memory can set me right, he never wore a traditional or Ghanaian outfit in presiding. He was always in a suit and tie with the gown (interview with a respondent from the clerk department, October 2nd, 2023).

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The respondent's statement highlights Rt. Hon. Professor Mike Oquaye's consistent adherence to Western sartorial norms while serving as Speaker, a legacy of Eurocentric influence among judges-turned-parliamentarians. His exclusive use of suits and ties *(as shown in Figure 4.57 above),* complemented by the Speaker's gown, reflects a deliberate continuation of colonial dress codes within parliamentary authority. The absence of any traditional Ghanaian attire suggests a symbolic disconnect from indigenous cultural identity, reinforcing perceptions that Ghana's legislative leadership, particularly those with judicial backgrounds, often privilege Western aesthetics over national representation in official spaces. This exemplifies how institutional dress practices can perpetuate colonial ideologies within postcolonial governance structures.

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Figure 4.58 Rt. Hon. Prof Mike Oquaye (adorned in robe, suit and tie) in the exercise of his duty as Speaker of the 7th Parliament of Ghana
***Source**: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)*

The dress culture of parliamentarians of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic was similar to the 6th Parliament of the Fourth Republic. Parliamentarians adorned themselves in a multiplicity of dress codes. The dress code in Parliament has stayed consistent and in line with that of the previous parliament headed by Rt. Hon Edward Adjaho. Male MPs, under the convention of parliament, wore a formal suit, shirt, and tie, a tradition adopted from the British parliament. Some members of parliament wore the Smart Casual (a glocalised men's political suit).

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Figure 4.59 Members adorned in their various dresses (predominantly suit and tie) during a parliamentary session of the 7th parliament.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Succeeding Rt. Hon. Prof. Mike Oquaye is the Rt. Hon. Alban Kingsford Sumana Bagbin. Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin holds the historic distinction of being the first opposition Member of Parliament elected as Speaker under a sitting president from a rival party, an unprecedented development in Ghana's Fourth Republic. Beyond this political milestone, Bagbin has emerged as arguably the most vocal, publicly engaged, and symbolically resonant Speaker since the return to constitutional rule in 1992 (Mensah, 2022).

> Notably, his sartorial choices represent a deliberate and culturally assertive departure from the Eurocentric dress conventions of his immediate predecessors. In a symbolic nod to Ghana's First Republican Parliament, Bagbin's dress culture evokes the legacy of Rt. Hon. Richard Asiedu, the inaugural Speaker, who embraced traditional aesthetics as a form of national identity (Interview with a Cultural Policy Expert, October 13, 2023).

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With the exception of his inauguration in 2021, where he wore the official Speaker's ceremonial robe, Bagbin has consistently appeared in Indigenous Ghanaian garments, including kente, smock, and lace ensembles. His dressing serves not only as a personal expression of identity but also as a visible act of decolonial resistance and cultural affirmation within the highly symbolic space of parliamentary authority.

Figure 4.60: Inaugural Ceremony of Rt. Hon Speaker Alban Kingsford Bagbin, Eighth Speaker of the Eighth Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, 2021. Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

To highlight the cultural and political intent behind his sartorial choices, Rt. Hon. Bagbin has openly articulated his alignment with Ghana's foundational values and decolonial aspirations. In a parliamentary address, he invoked the legacy of Ghana's first republic and clarified the symbolic role of the Speaker's ceremonial attire. In the words of the Rt. Hon Speaker;

> …I am glad that this decision accords with some of the propositions of the first President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, and the other founding

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> members of the Parliament of the First Republic. The dominant dress code of members of the National Assemblies of independent Ghana was a native costume. The Speaker of the first Parliament of the First Republic of the Country, 1960 to 1965 – Rt [Right] Hon Joseph Richard Asiedu appreciated and practiced it… …the robe, i. e the long garment, the headgear, and the bib, constitute the ceremonial dress of the Speaker. This ceremonial dress is worn to distinguish the Speaker from members and to reflect the pomp and pageantry of special national occasions... The ceremonial dress is not meant to be the daily apparel of the Speaker. Even the British have long abandoned this dress code. Ghana has long abandoned only the headgear and the bib. Hon Members, I assure you, we are not on a walk in the park in this journey of renaissance and transformation (Rt. Hon. Bagbin, 2022).

A cursory look at parliamentary proceedings since 2022, Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin has since the statement made a notable departure from the Westminster tradition of wearing the robe by opting for Indigenous Ghanaian classics during parliamentary sittings. On Tuesday, January 25, 2022, he presided over the House wearing a kente cloth over a white lace shirt, along with a crown as shown *in Figure 4.61 below*. This move marks the first time a speaker under the 4th Republic has conducted official business in the chamber wearing a traditional outfit instead of the usual gown. Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin's decision to forgo the traditional British Speaker's gown in favor of indigenous Ghanaian attire, such as kente cloth, lace shirt, and a traditional crown, marks a powerful act of symbolic decolonization within Ghana's parliamentary culture. Far from a cosmetic alteration, Bagbin's sartorial choice is a deliberate political gesture aimed at dismantling lingering colonial symbols embedded in state institutions. He explicitly grounds this move in the historical precedent of Ghana's First Republic under Kwame Nkrumah and Speaker Augustus Molade Akiwumi (Bagbin, 2022), positioning it as a return to a decolonial ethos rather than a break from tradition.

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In this context, clothing becomes a performative tool of resistance. By replacing the British parliamentary gown,a relic of Westminster imperial authority,with garments rooted in Ghanaian cultural identity, Bagbin enacts what Frantz Fanon (1963) describes as a necessary deconstruction of the psychological dimensions of colonial domination. This shift confronts not only the external trappings of empire but also the internalized norms that continue to shape African postcolonial governance. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) suggest, decolonization involves a reimagining of symbolic structures as much as political ones. Bagbin's attire also functions as a counter-narrative within the discourse on "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). While the British Speaker's gown is often perceived as timeless, it is, in fact, a historically contingent invention. Bagbin disrupts this illusion by reviving an alternative tradition rooted in Ghana's own post-independence parliamentary identity. Through this act of "symbolic substitution" (Edelman, 1985), he supplants colonial vestiges with culturally resonant symbols: kente cloth signifies royal authority and Pan-African unity (Ross, 1998), while the crown asserts an indigenous conception of leadership and legitimacy.

Thus, the Speaker's body becomes a contested site of national meaning-making. His clothing is not merely decorative but declarative, visually asserting Ghanaian cultural sovereignty within a legislative space long shaped by colonial aesthetics. This act aligns with Achille Mbembe's (2001) call for postcolonial societies to move beyond imposed forms and reclaim authentic self-representation. In redefining what parliamentary authority looks like, Bagbin's wardrobe signals an ongoing struggle to indigenize state institutions in the Fourth Republic, transforming the chamber into a space that not only speaks for Ghana but *looks* unmistakably Ghanaian.

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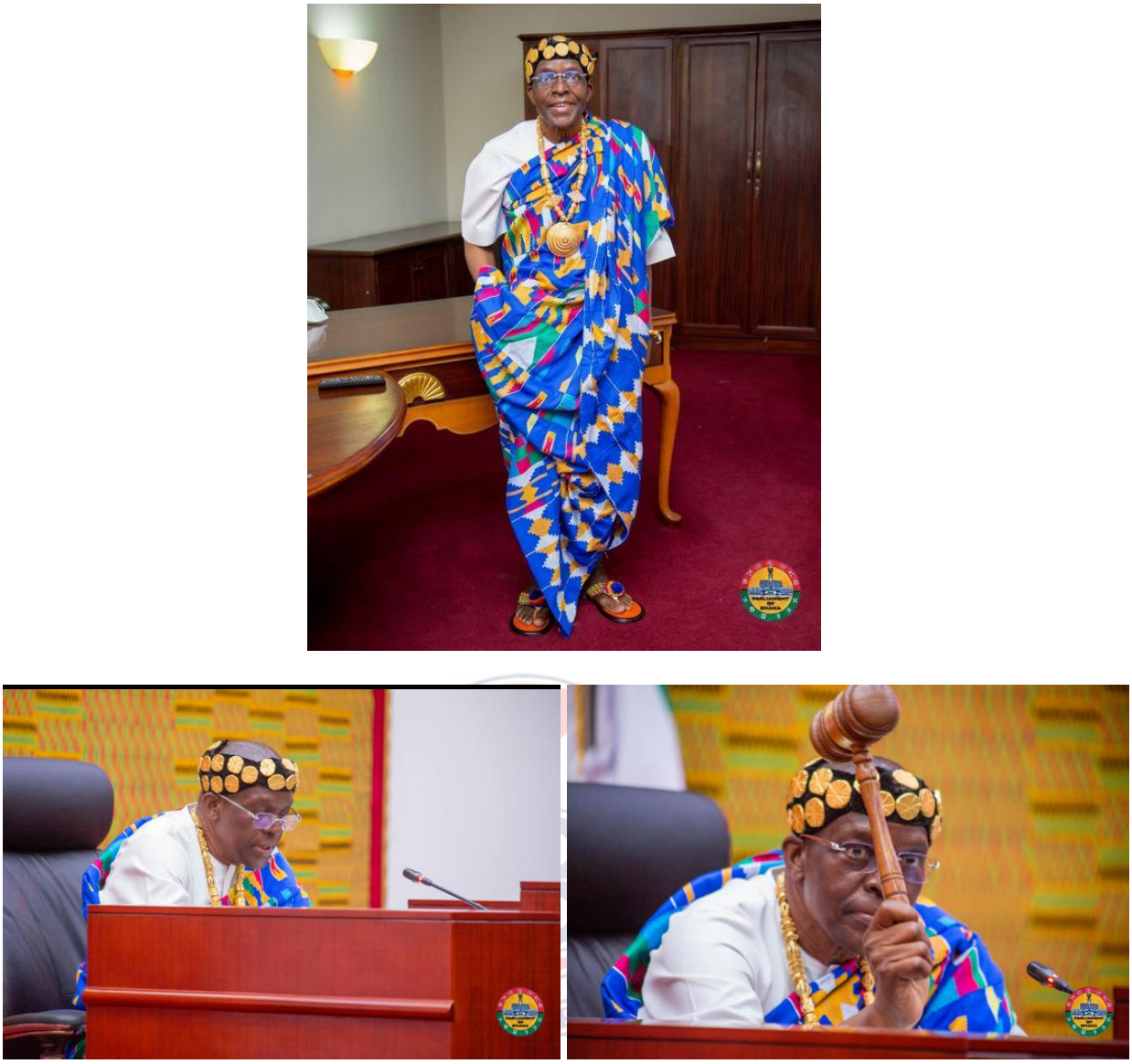

Figure 4.61: Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin Adorned in a Ghanaian Indigenous classic for parliamentary sitting, 2022.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The speaker further recounts,

> When I got into Parliament, I met many of our speakers wearing the British gown, which is that of the Crown, but I knew and saw several pictures of one of the earlier speakers who was in Kente quite often. The name is Rt. Hon Richard Asiedu. Exactly. He was fond of wearing the kente with the inner vest. But since I, before I became a speaker, was always wearing a smock, mostly wearing the traditional, I decided that the unique culture of Ghana should be seen in our apparel. And so we should dress as Ghanaians. After all, it's when you give value to yourself, that other will be prepared to buy that

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> value, because they don't have it. And that is where this issue of trade with Africa becomes important, because we don't place much value in our own resources and ourselves. And we try to appeal to the others. But it's for lack of knowledge that my people perished (Interview with Rt. Hon. Bagbin, July 22nd 2024).

The Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin's decision to revisit the past and dress in Ghanaian indigenous classics as demonstrated in figure 4.54, was further re-echoed in an interview with Citi News room where in describing the cloak worn by speakers as aristocratic, the Rt. Hon Speaker stated;

> …You may be seeing me more in traditional dresses. I may use that [the cloak] only for ceremonial occasions, which is what is in the literature of Ghana concerning that cloak and gown."… "We also have to provide the market for our produce… We cannot always rely on what others manufacture and sell to us when we are capable of manufacturing even better ones," the Speaker said (Interview with Citi News Room, 31st December 2021).

In a similar fashion, as illustrated in Figures 4.62, 4.63, and 4.64, Speaker Bagbin's dress culture reflects the assertions made by Essel, Navei, and Donkoh (2022), and earlier supported by Akwetey (2007). These scholars argue that, in his pursuit of a Ghanaian national identity, President Kwame Nkrumah not only championed the ideals of nationalism but also embodied them through his sartorial choices. By popularizing the smock, originating from Northern and Upper Regional cultures, and pairing it with the Asante kente and tunic, Nkrumah symbolically united the diverse cultural subgroups of Ghana. Speaker Bagbin, in echoing this tradition, visually aligns himself with this inclusive nationalistic ethos, reinforcing a sense of unity across Ghana's multifaceted cultural landscape.

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Figure 4.62: Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin adorned in Northern dress culture for parliamentary sitting, 2023
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

Rt. Hon. Bagbin, in line with his dress choice, revealed in an interview that;

Figure 4.63: Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin adorned in toga-style dress culture for parliamentary sitting, 2023
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

To further demonstrate his commitment to cultural representation and national identity through dress, Speaker Bagbin reflects on the personal and symbolic

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dimensions of his use of indigenous textiles. He highlights the diversity of kente styles he wears, spanning Ashanti, Volta, and Fante traditions, and underscores how this cultural embrace has fostered communal support and national pride. In his words:

> Regarding the Kente, I have different types of Kente. I have those from the Ashanti region, that of Volta, Fante land, so I wear them differently. My luck is that because the idea caught on with the traditional people, most of the Kente and Smock you see me wearing are given to me by the people. I don't buy them. In fact, some members of parliament themselves volunteered and looked for the quality ones for me. So I have a full wardrobe of different types of kente and smock and that has saved the nation some money. Because I don't now ask parliament to give me money to sew the gown or the suit and the western attire. Ghanaians have come in to take that cost, and I am extremely grateful, particularly to the traditional leaders (Interview with participant Speaker 1, 22nd July, 2024).

Speaker Bagbin's reflection on his use of indigenous textiles, specifically the diverse kente styles from Ashanti, Volta, and Fante regions, reveals a strategic cultural performance rooted in nationalism and unity. His choice of attire transcends personal preference; it functions as a symbolic embodiment of Ghana's plural cultural identity. By integrating regional textile traditions into his public image, Bagbin reinforces a sense of inclusion and solidarity, echoing Nkrumah's sartorial nationalism, which used dress as a unifying political tool (Essel, 2019; Akwetey, 2007). As noted by Eicher and Sumberg (1995), dress in African contexts often serves as a visual narrative of identity and collective belonging. Bagbin's wardrobe, gifted by traditional leaders and citizens, further demonstrates how cultural leadership is co-constructed by the public, legitimizing his symbolic representation of national unity. This participatory exchange between state officials and citizenry situates the Speaker's attire as both a cultural artifact and a political statement of decolonial identity.

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Figure 4.64: Rt. Hon Speaker Bagbin adorned in an Indigenous Ghanaian classic-Northern smock fashion, for the Parliamentary session
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

Compared to the speaker of the seventh parliament, Rt. Hon. Prof. Mike *Oquaye,* who was mostly Eurocentric in dressing, in views expressed by participants, the speaker of the eighth parliament of the fourth republic, Rt. Hon Bagbin, in this context, wanted to uniquely present himself to become a subject of attraction as well as generate a national dialogue to create a sense of Ghanaian nationalistic dress cultural identity worthy of emulation (Essel, Navei & Donkoh, 2023). Speaker Bagbin's dress choice (*Figure 4.64, 4.65, 4.66, 4.67),* therefore, gives an impression of Ghanaian cultural representation and a viewpoint of portraying diverse cultural backgrounds through the use of diverse royal dress culture. This resonates with the assertion that in his quest to create Ghanaian nationalistic identity, he did not only touted the ideals of nationalism but he also brought the people of Ghana together by popularising ethnic and religious *(as shown in figure 4.65 below)* sartorial constructions. In this context (figure 4.65), it appears the speaker wanted to uniquely present himself to become a subject of

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attraction as well as generate a national dialogue to create a sense of Ghanaian nationalistic dress and cultural identity worthy of emulation.

Figure 4.65: Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin adorned in a royal regalia for the parliamentary sitting, 2024
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024).

For instance, the picture in Figure 4.65 above shows the speaker's attempt to draw beyond cultural and religious boundaries. The Rt. Hon. Bagbin posited in response to the dress code in 4.65 above that;

> …we have our dress culture as Ghanaians, and because that is what markets us and that is what is usually blown over that world, and that shows that it is the parliament of Ghana in session, and this is how we dress. It is something I like to do it. You see me sometimes in the Muslim dress. Sometimes I wear even the highest award that the Holy Prophet Mohammed established, called the ***Saifu-Illah,*** and this is what adorned me by the whole Muslim community in

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> Ghana. You have a beautiful, long hat with a flowing gown. They honoured me for my courage and in admiration of my courage and some of the things I do in presiding for the right thing to be done for mankind. So this is how we have to go, because the country is a secular nation. I have requested that of the Catholic to give me a dress and I am still waiting to dress in that

In Figure 4.65, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin is depicted wearing a richly symbolic royal-Islamic regalia during a parliamentary sitting in 2024. This sartorial choice reflects more than aesthetic variation, it marks a deliberate political and cultural gesture aimed at repositioning Ghanaian identity within the officialdom of parliamentary practice. By donning an outfit historically associated with Muslim leadership and Northern royal traditions, Bagbin appears to transcend religious and ethnic boundaries, invoking a broader, inclusive national symbolism. As Bagbin himself explains, his choice to wear such attire, including the *Saifu-Illah*, an honor bestowed by Ghana's Muslim community, was a form of gratitude and solidarity. He articulates that dressing this way affirms Ghana's diverse cultural roots and projects an authentic national image: “We have our dress culture as Ghanaians… and that shows that it is the Parliament of Ghana in session.” His intent, therefore, is not only personal but strategic, seeking to transform Parliament into a visual site of Ghanaian identity, diversity, and pride. This aligns with Blumer’s (1965) theory of symbolic interactionism that dress in contexts operate as a medium of political expression and collective identity. Bagbin’s regalia thus becomes an instrument of *cultural diplomacy*, sparking national dialogue and encouraging emulation in the quest for a decolonized, inclusive public dress culture. In a similar corroborative response revealed in an interview with a respondent from the clerk department;

> The only speaker who has decided not to use the gown is the Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, because he feels that we should project our culture so that is how he adorns himself for parliamentary business….the clerks are expected to be in

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> robes, suits, cloaks, a white shirts when the house is in session. Until this very speaker, Rt. Hon Bagbin made the checks and said we should move away from the suits and ties. To the extent that we only do the suit and tie when it is a ceremonial occasion, like the state of the nation's address, where the president is received in the house… these days, we have moved away a bit from the suit and tie to the traditional wear. We have chosen Thursday to be in the suit. Because we cannot be wearing the same African wear for the whole week due to cost. So we have to be changing (Interview with a respondent from the clerk department of parliament, 2nd December 2023).

The practice of the Rt. Hon Bagbin dressing in indigenous Ghanaian classics for parliamentary sittings is part of his resolve to change the dress code and code of conduct of parliamentarians. The speaker's decision and dress code align with the findings of Adrover (2015) that dressing is a strategic and powerful element to the extent that Ghanaian noble opinion leaders rely on the visual and sensorial impacts of dress to actively draw attention to their authority. Corroboratively, the study confirms that dress fashion in Ghana plays a symbolic, communicative, and aesthetic role, and is definitive of their cultural and social identity (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Essel, Navei & deGraft-Yankson, 2021). As intimated by one of the study's participants;

> The first conscious effort engendered at the national level to create a cultural identity in the form of national attire is attributable to Ghana's First President, Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah, the first democratically elected president of Ghana. Nkrumah and the first speaker of the republic not only touted the ideals of nationalism and Pan-Africanism, but they also brought the people of Ghana together through their adornment for national events. It has been over sixty-five years, and the only speaker I have seen follow such practice is the current speaker, Rt. Hon Bagbin (Interview with a member of the clerk department, December 2nd, 2023).

Though the speaker's decision to dress in indigenous Ghanaian classics for parliamentary activities appears to be celebrated and commended by scholars (Essel,

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Navei & Donkoh, 2023). It is, however, interesting to posit that the parliamentarians who are expected to adorn themselves in line with the leader of the house appear to dress in a multiplicity of sartorial representations, with Eurocentric suits and ties taking centre stage as shown in figures 4.61, 4.62, 4.63, 4.64, and 4.65 below

Figure 4.66: Parliamentarians adorned in their respective dresses, seated in a parliamentary session, 2024
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024)

From the pictures shown above in ***Figure 4.66,*** it is evident that Ghanaian parliamentarians are largely noted for their accustomed Western suit fashion for parliamentary business, as posited in the study of Essel (2023). Despite the demonstrative attempt made by Rt. Hon. Bagbin to extend a clarion invitation to Ghanaian parliamentarians to reorient their parliamentary dress choice from their accustomed over-subscription to Eurocentric suits to the detriment of indigenous Ghanaian dress fashions for parliamentary business, the narrative has not impacted significantly, like the parliament of the First Republic. Maybe another reason that may have occasioned the current eurocentric state of dressing could be one that was positioned in the account of a cultural expert that;

> … The point is that most of these parliamentarians had their education overseas, and the cultural inertia of changing from Western dressing to the Indigenous Ghanaian way of dressing will always pose a challenge to them. But what I know is that the moment you substitute your identity or abandon it

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> for others, you are completely lost as a person (Interview with a Cultural Expert, August 13th, 2023).

The statement provided by the cultural expert above highlights the sartorial tension between Western influence and indigenous cultural practices, particularly in the context of Ghanaian parliamentarians. Individuals who have been educated in Western countries in adopting and maintaining their cultural identity upon returning to their home country appear to experience different forms of cultural inertia. "Cultural inertia" refers to the resistance to change that individuals may experience when attempting to shift from one set of cultural practices to another. In this context, the cultural inertia mentioned is the difficulty that Ghanaian parliamentarians, who have been educated overseas, face in transitioning from Western modes of dressing to indigenous Ghanaian attire. Western education often comes with an exposure to and adoption of Western norms, values, and practices, including dress codes. These parliamentarians may have become accustomed to Western styles of dress, making it challenging for them to fully embrace traditional Ghanaian attire, despite the cultural significance of doing so.

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Figure 4.67: Ghanaian Parliamentarians predominantly dressed in Eurocentric suits and ties for parliamentary session, 2024.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024)

Figure 4.68: Parliamentarians adorned in their respective dresses and seated in a parliamentary session, 2024
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024)

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Figure 4.69: Parliamentarians adorned in their respective dresses and seated in a parliamentary session, 2024
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024)

Figure 4.70: Parliamentarians adorned in their respective dresses and seated in a parliamentary session, 2024
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024).

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Figure 4.71: Parliamentarians adorned in predominantly Eurocentric attire for parliamentary sitting
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2024)

Figure 4.72: Parliamentarians of the 8th Parliament of the Fourth Republic seated in session, predominantly dressed in Eurocentric dresses.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

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The visual evidence from Ghana's 8th Parliament in 2023 and 2024 reveals a persistent preference among parliamentarians for Eurocentric suits and ties during legislative sessions. Despite the cultural significance of traditional Ghanaian attire such as kente, batakari, or smock, many MPs appear accustomed to Western styles of dress, possibly due to long-standing colonial influences, internalized institutional norms, or perceptions of professionalism tied to Western aesthetics. This dominant sartorial choice reflects a deeper symbolic incongruity, where the nation's legislative body, meant to embody national identity, visually aligns more with foreign standards than indigenous heritage. While occasional appearances in traditional dress are evident in a few instances, these remain sporadic and largely ceremonial, indicating that cultural attire has not been normalized in everyday parliamentary proceedings.

This trend also suggests a broader cultural displacement within official spaces, where traditional symbols are underutilized despite growing discourse around decolonization and cultural reclamation. The resistance to indigenous dress may stem less from ideology than from habit and institutional inertia, requiring deliberate reorientation through sensitization and policy. As a symbolic national space, Parliament plays a critical role in projecting identity, and the continued dominance of Eurocentric dress points to missed opportunities for cultural assertion. A more consistent embrace of traditional attire could reinforce Ghana's cultural confidence and postcolonial maturity.

The evidence shown in corroborative responses and the pictures above in figures *4.69, 4.70, 4.71, and 4.72 contradicts* Ghana's National Cultural Policy document (2004) that highlights the need "to promote national identity, where institutions like the legislature (parliament) shall be encouraged to adopt local design and patterns in their

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regalia, uniforms and paraphernalia" (p. 44). Unfortunately, scholars (Essel, 2019; Essel, Navei & de-Graft Yankson, 2021) recount as corroborated in the responses of participants that, post-colonial impressions and their attendant Western ideals have brought their own dress and cultural practices, which have greatly impacted the legislative arm of African governments. As a result, the Ghanaian elite who received Western education show their elitist nomenclature through Eurocentric dress aesthetic order. To the detriment of their indigenous Ghanaian classic fashion practices, some government officials and elite parliamentarians in Ghana appear to have adopted a non-culturally representative, Eurocentric three-piece suit, which has created a huge void in the country's dress code for parliament. This borrowed usage has also undermined the Ghanaian people's unique identity.

4.2 The Design Structure, Philosophy, and Identity Constructions of Ghana's Parliamentary Robes for Speakers.

This research session focused on a discursive analysis of views gathered from respondents (parliamentary clerks, Speakers' of parliament, cultural experts, and robe designers) regarding the dress code (robes) of speakers of Ghana's parliament, analyzing their design structures, philosophies, and national identity constructs related to selected dresses of speakers of parliament. This is presented in themes. The study, in order to examine the dress fashion of selected speakers' robes, subjected ten of the speakers' robes that were provided and accessible for the study.

4.2.1 Structure of Parliamentary Robes for Speakers in Ghana

The study established two sets of robes for Speakers of Parliament that are used for parliamentary sessions, the procedural and the ceremonial robes. A cursory view at all the speakers' robes revealed a similar design structure rooted historically in a

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colonial origin. The design structure, according to the views of the respondents, was adopted from the British colonialists. Emphasized in the Companion to the Standing Orders and the Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords - Companion to Standing Orders of the United Kingdom, "the Lord Speaker sits on the Woolsack, wearing court *dress and a black gown*. In the absence of the Lord Speaker, a Deputy Speaker wearing a parliamentary robe occupies the Woolsack (p.1). In an interview with one of the speakers of Ghana's parliament, it was admitted that;

> The gown is the costume of the Crown of the United Kingdom, so why should we take that one and adopt it for our speaker, even if they have abandoned and discarded it, they don't wear it anymore. That is for ceremonial occasions, they just used. So I just introduced the traditional, and I wear these things plus all the others… I am looking forward to representing the church or the religious bodies too, the catholic or the Apostolic, and many more (Bagbin, 2023)

Speaker Bagbin's assertion is in tandem with the provisions on the Ghanaian Parliament's information sheet for visitors, which explicitly and self-consciously states that, despite the introduction of a unicameral legislature instead of a two-chamber system as in Britain, Parliament operates very much on the lines of the Parliament in Westminster (Lentz, 2008). It follows, to some extent, the Westminster model. Similarly, in one of the recently published books on Parliament's history, and parliamentary organisation and procedure in particular, the Speaker of Parliament at the time, Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey, proudly states: 'The Ghanaian Legislature is a complex institution rooted in the Westminster tradition' (Parliament, 2004 p.11). It could therefore be corroboratively realistic that the dress culture of the speaker, using the gown, is deeply rooted in a British system of dress culture for speakers. A similar view was shared by the speaker in a parliamentary engagement forum with former members of parliament, the speaker, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin stated;

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> The parliamentary robe for speakers, as it is now, was handed over to us by colonial masters… rightly referred to as a colonial cloak. So a number of speakers have been wearing the gown and the wig since the inception of the legislative assembly …You may be seeing me more in traditional dresses. I may use that (Robe) only for ceremonial occasions, which is what is in the literature of Ghana concerning that Cloak and gown... We also have to provide the market for our produce. We cannot always rely on ***what others manufacture and sell to us*** when we are capable of manufacturing even better ones *(Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, in a Forum with former members of Ghana's parliament, December 31, 2021https//citinewsroom.com/2021/12/Bagbin-to-stop-wearing-speakers-cloak-for-regular-parliament-sittings/*

The statement made by the Rt. Hon. Speaker above is in direct relationship with the assertion of a respondent from the clerk department who stated that;

> Ghana is operating a Westminster Model of parliament, or was fashioned around it, when parliament was inaugurated during the legislative assembly speakers travelled under state sponsorship to learn the culture of the British parliament to be practiced in Ghana, the dress code of the speakers, a gown as it is now, was handed over to us by colonial masters, and so the speaker (Alban Bagbin) rightly referred to it as a colonial cloak and as far as I have been here, I have seen a considerable number of speakers use to be wearing the gown and the wig for a longer period in our history (Interview with respondent Clerk, 17th December 2023)

Corroboratively, it can be asserted that the design structure of the speaker's gown was borrowed from the British parliament. What is more revealing in the case of Ghana's robes (both ceremonial and procedural robes) is the seeming likeness in the structure of all the gowns as compared with the current cloak of the speaker of the UK House of Commons as shown in Figure 4.73, 4.74, 4.75 and 4.76 below

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Figure 4.73 United Kingdom House of Commons Speaker's ceremonial Robe (right), 157th speaker of the House of Commons, Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle (left), 2019.
Source: U.K. parliament, https://youtu.be/hxwFcWEMd-Y?si=oMr4jpWKV0JlgMbW

A cursory observation of the Speaker's robe reveals that they are typically made from high-quality fabrics such as wool, silk, or polyester, in dark colours like black to symbolize respect and formality.

> The structure of the robe design is characterized by a full-length, loose-fitting structure that ensures ease of movement while maintaining a dignified appearance. The robes feature a double-breasted front, which is designed to be open. The design structure, similar to the British model, has the collar and cuffs of the robe often decorated with distinctive details, with contrasting colours, such as the collar adorned with velvet or decorative Ghanaian prints. Additional embellishments like hoods or stoles, often bearing institutional insignia or embroidery, are common and serve to signify the speaker's rank or role. The lining of the robe features contrasting colors such as red or black, enhancing its ceremonial appeal. symbols representing the parliament of Ghana as an institution or body served by the speaker are embroidered on the chest, stole, collar, or shoulders, further reinforcing the robe's symbolic importance (Interview with a Parliamentary Robe Designer, October 2nd, 2023).

The response from the robe designer offers a detailed and descriptive account of the Speaker's robe, highlighting both its material composition and symbolic significance. The use of high-quality fabrics such as wool, silk, or polyester in dark colours,

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especially black, serves to evoke respect, authority, and solemnity, aligning with the formal and ceremonial tone of parliamentary proceedings. The robe's loose-fitting, full-length structure not only provides ease of movement but also reflects a dignified appearance appropriate for the high office of the Speaker. Notably, the double-breasted front and open design resonate with the British judicial and parliamentary traditions, suggesting an inherited colonial influence that continues to shape the visual culture of Ghana's legislative attire. At the same time, the incorporation of local elements, such as Ghanaian prints on the collar or cuffs, signals a hybrid design that blends foreign institutional models with indigenous aesthetics. Embellishments like stoles or hoods, often embroidered with national or parliamentary insignia, enhance the robe's ceremonial appeal and assert the Speaker's identity as a symbol of state authority. The contrasting inner linings, often in red or black, add a layer of visual sophistication and elevate the robe's status beyond ordinary dress. Altogether, this description affirms the robe's function not just as attire but as a visual embodiment of political legitimacy, continuity, and national identity.

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Figure 4.74: Rt. Hon. Charles Quist, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, 1951, adorned in Ghana's parliamentary speaker's Ceremonial Robe
Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2023)

Figure 4.75: Ghana's parliamentary robe for speakers (left), Rt. Hon Edward Doe Adjaho (Right), fifth Speaker of the fourth Parliament in a parliamentary Speaker's Robe
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

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Figure 4.76: Speaker Rt. Hon. Adjaho, 2nd from left, adorned in Ghana's parliamentary robe in the midst of the parliamentary clerks who are wearing the same. **Source**: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The Structure of the Robes

The Ghanaian Parliamentary robes, though structurally modeled after those of the Westminster Parliament, exhibit distinct cultural adaptations, as illustrated in Figures 4.75 and 4.76. These adaptations include additional embellishments and design features that infuse the garments with a uniquely Ghanaian identity. While the foundational design remains Eurocentric, Ghanaian robe designers have creatively reinterpreted this structure to reflect local aesthetics and symbolism. This is particularly evident in Figure 4.76, where the robe incorporates cultural elements that differentiate it from its British counterpart.

As shown in *Figure 4.77 below*, which presents the initial Eurocentric structure of the Speaker's robe before its modification, Ghanaian designers begin with the traditional British framework and then innovate upon it to produce garments that honor both parliamentary convention and Ghanaian cultural expression.

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Figure 4.77: Eurocentric Structure of speaker's robe,
Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2024).

The selection of the structure for the robe and the creation process is further confirmed in an interview with one of the parliamentary Robe designers.

> There are many structural formations of the garment, and symbols to use, but our focus was specifically on the parliament-selected symbols and the structure of previous robes adopted from the Western parliament. The clerk department of Parliament chooses and confirms the kind of structure and symbol to use for the construction of the robes. The choice of colour and materials is made by the parliament. The clerk and speaker had to confirm the choice of materials used for them, although we gave technical advice (Interview with Robe designer, October 2nd, 2023).

Respondent robe designer emphasizes that the structure and symbols of the robes worn in Ghana's Parliament are largely adopted from Western, specifically British, parliamentary traditions. This reflects the historical influence of colonialism on Ghanaian institutions, where British norms and practices were integrated into the fabric of governance, including the symbolic aspects of parliamentary attire. The use of "previous robes adopted from the western parliament" indicates that the Ghanaian Parliament has continued to follow a tradition established during colonial rule, rather than developing a uniquely Ghanaian approach to parliamentary attire. The statement also highlights the role of the Clerk's Department in selecting and confirming the structure and symbols used in the construction of the robes. This department acts as a gatekeeper, ensuring that the attire aligns with the established norms and traditions of the Parliament. The involvement of the Parliament in choosing the colors and materials for the robes suggests a deliberate and considered approach to maintaining certain traditions, possibly reflecting a desire to uphold a sense of continuity and formality within the parliamentary setting.

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4.2.1.1 Parliament Ceremonial Robes for Speakers of Ghana

The Parliament of Ghana's ceremonial robes for speakers are worn to distinguish the speaker from the rest of the parliamentarians and to reflect the pomp and pageantry of special national occasions. The ceremonial robes are worn only on ceremonial occasions. The study revealed that the parliament of Ghana does not have a permanent robe designer; rather, under the supervision of the clerk department, commissions renowned and expert Ghanaian fashion designers to produce the speakers' ceremonial robes for elected persons who are to occupy the seat of the speaker of parliament.

> The clerk's department of Parliament is officially in charge of the production of ceremonial robes for speakers. Inasmuch as I am the creative director, we did group work and I frontiered it, we have a think tank group …that frontier this work. A lot of thought went into it, there was a lot of liaison between us and parliament to produce exactly what parliament wanted with a creative touch (Interview with respondent Robe designer, October 2nd, 2023).

The production of ceremonial robes for the Speakers of Ghana's Parliament is officially overseen by the Clerk's Department. However, as revealed in the verbatim account by a robe designer, the process involves significant collaborative effort. The respondent, who serves as the creative director, emphasized that although he led the project, it was fundamentally a group initiative facilitated by a dedicated think tank. This team undertook extensive deliberation and engaged in continuous liaison with parliamentary authorities to ensure the final garment aligned with institutional expectations while incorporating creative and culturally resonant elements. The comment reveals the balance between administrative oversight and artistic innovation, highlighting how the robes are not only ceremonial garments but also thoughtfully designed symbols of authority and national identity.

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The study further revealed that before a speaker is elected, the robes are already in place for use. This had been the practice for ages until the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019 changed the world order and tilted the practice of the clerk department providing stocked robes for clerks and speakers of parliament, as stated by the respondent, Robe Designer, below.

> Parliament initially had robes already made for speakers and clerks in stock, but when Ghana experienced COVID-19, they decided that each and every one get his own robe. Before the pandemic, the clerks at the table, for instance, had a lot of gowns there, so you could put them up anytime you are needed at the table to use it. Perhaps due to comfort, choices, and other things, that is why we currently have every speaker or clerk having his or her own gown (Interview with respondent Robe Designer, October 2nd, 2023).

Though there are no museums in parliament that house the robes, except for the speaker's wardrobe, the study established two forms of designs that have been used for the speaker's robe construction since the legislative Assembly in 1951, surface designs and structural designs. In synch with the assertion of Essel (2017) and the account of a parliamentary Robe designer that;

> We, the designers, are very much aware that the structure of the robe emanates from Western philosophy, as Parliament's mode of operation is a replica of the colonial master's practices. So, in designing, we use varied forms of techniques; however, *the surface and structural constructions* are what we do. We had to follow the colonial style, but we try to always incorporate what is ours. Like the symbols to give it that Ghanaian heraldic appeal (Interview with a Ghanaian parliamentary Robe designer, October 6th, 2023).

The robe designer in the response above acknowledges that the foundational structure of the Speaker's robe is rooted in Western philosophy, reflecting the broader colonial legacy embedded in the operations of Ghana's Parliament. As stated by a Ghanaian parliamentary robe designer, while the colonial form must be followed due to

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institutional tradition, deliberate efforts are made to infuse the garments with indigenous identity through symbolic and stylistic interventions. The design process involves the use of varied techniques, with particular emphasis on both structural and surface decorative elements. According to the respondents, textile surface design includes post-construction embellishment techniques such as printing, embroidery, and appliqué, which allow for the incorporation of Ghanaian cultural motifs and heraldic symbols. In contrast, structural decorative effects are embedded during the actual formation of the fabric, lending depth and identity to the base material. This dual approach, respecting the inherited structure while asserting local creativity, enables the robes to serve not only as formal attire but also as culturally resonant artifacts that represent Ghana's political sovereignty and artistic heritage within a postcolonial framework.

Figure 4.78: Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey's Ceremonial Robe, with surface Embroidery decorations front view, right, back view, left. Bottom, Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey adorned in ceremonial robe
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

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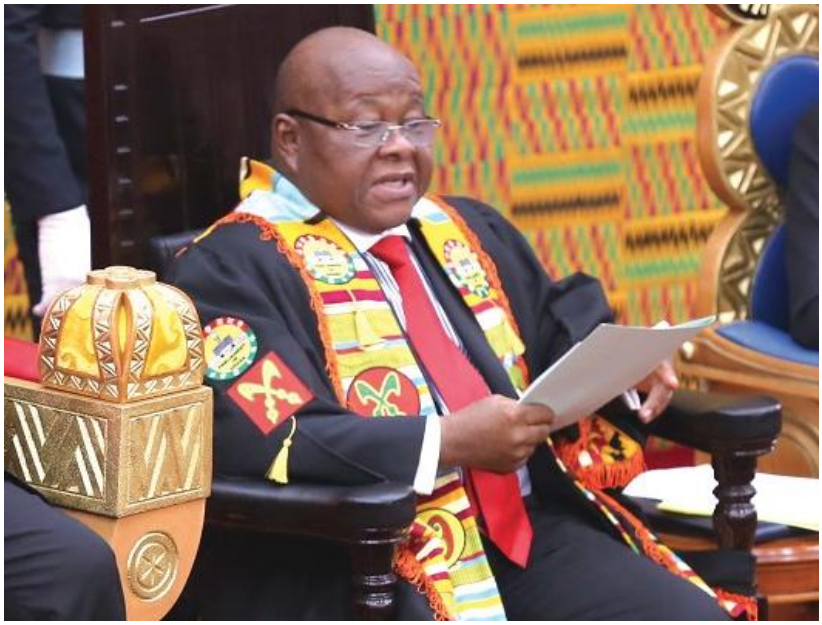

Figure 4.79: Rt. Hon. Prof. Mike Oquaye adorned in Parliamentary Ceremonial Robe for speakers, with surface Embroidery decorations and structural kente designs.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

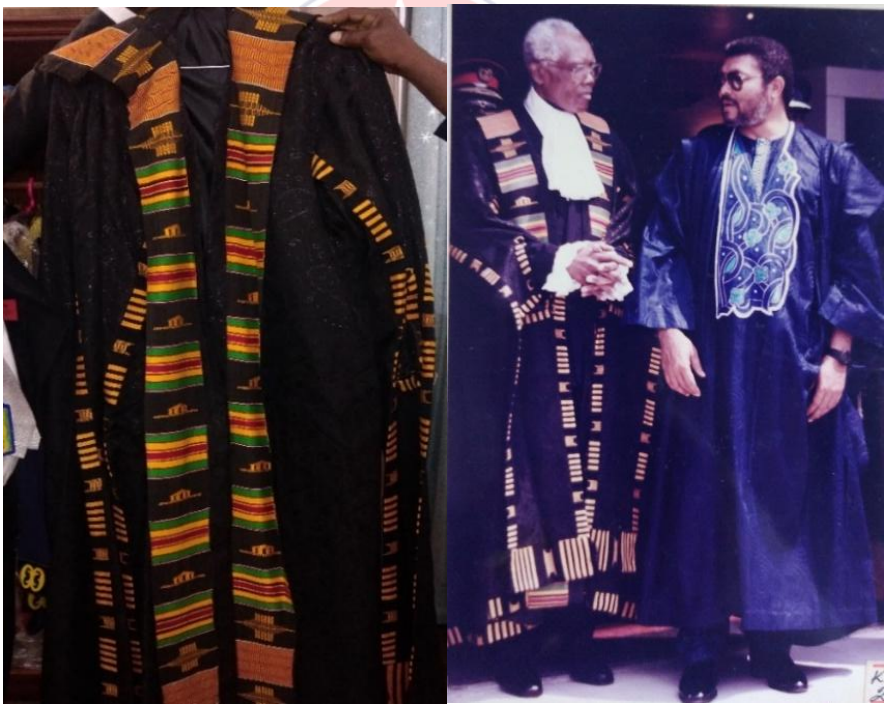

Figure 4.80: Left, The Ceremonial Robe of Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan, with structural designs (Kente) Right, Rt. Hon D.F Annan adorned in the speaker's ceremonial robe in a picture with President Jerry John Rawlings, after a parliamentary session.
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

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Figure 4.81: Right, Rt. Hon. Ebenezer Hughes adorned in the speaker's ceremonial robe for the Inauguration Ceremony of President Kuffuor, 2005, left, the ceremonial robe used by Rt. Hon. Hughes (right).
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

A cursory view of the ceremonial robes, such as the ones shown in *Figure 4.80 and Figure 4.81* above, reveals mostly kente and embroidery decorative designs combined together for a unique Ghanaian cultural effect. What is particularly striking, however, is the selective incorporation of traditional Ghanaian symbols into both the structural and surface designs. These symbols, often derived from Adinkra motifs or other indigenous iconography, carry deep cultural and philosophical meanings. Their presence on ceremonial robes is not merely decorative but serves to convey messages of wisdom, strength, leadership, and heritage. The careful integration of these symbols into the fabric and embroidery enhances the ceremonial importance of the robes, making them not only garments of cultural pride but also visual narratives that communicate Ghana's rich heritage and values. Thus, these robes become more than just attire; they are wearable art that encapsulates Ghanaian identity, spirituality, and communal ideals.

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4.2.1.1 Parliament Procedural Robes for Speakers of Ghana

In Ghana's Parliament, procedural robes are specially designed for the Speaker to wear during routine parliamentary duties. By established convention, the Speaker is expected to dress in a manner that visibly distinguishes them from other members of the House. Given that ceremonial robes are reserved for formal state occasions and cannot be worn for every session, procedural robes serve as the appropriate alternative for regular parliamentary proceedings. These robes maintain a similar structural formation to their ceremonial counterparts but are typically less ornate. The design incorporates both surface and structural decorative elements. Surface decorations may include embroidery, appliqué, and printed motifs applied after the fabric is formed, while structural embellishments are integrated during the construction of the fabric itself. This combination ensures that the procedural robes preserve the dignity and authority of the Speaker's office while also offering practicality and comfort suitable for daily legislative functions. In an interview with a participant from the clerk department, it was revealed that;

> The procedural robes for speakers and clerks are used regularly for parliamentary duty, Until Covid, we had in stock several of them that any speaker could choose from…several comfortability and Covid 19 protocols compelled us to procure specific procedural robes specifically for specific speakers (Interview with a key member from the clerk department 2nd December 2023).

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Figure 4.82: Speakers Procedural Robe
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The procedural robes (*as shown in figure 4.82 above),* normally produced from silk with a flat hood and distinctive wings that hang from the open elbow sleeves of the robe, are fastened over the shoulders, hanging in the middle of the garment. The robes are distinct in colour, particularly black, which is commensurate with the black tricorn hat dating back to the 18th century and pays tribute to the Canadian heritage deeply rooted in Britain's Westminster parliamentary traditions. They are meant to distinguish and draw attention to the speaker's position in the chamber and have remained fundamentally unchanged since their inception in Ghana.

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Figure 4.83: Procedural Robe for Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin, with structural designs
Source: (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024; Gyedu, 2021)

Several surface and structural designs are used for the production of the speakers' procedural robes, which appear similar in design structure to that of the ceremonial robes. However, the parliamentary ceremonial robes have more decorative embellishment than the procedural robes. This is evident in the picture below in *Figure 4.84*

Figure 4.84 Distinction between the speakers' procedural robe (Right) and the ceremonial robe (left)
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

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The procedural robes worn by the Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, as illustrated in Figure 4.82, are typically crafted from silk and feature a flat hood along with distinctive wings that extend from the open elbow-length sleeves and fasten across the shoulders, draping toward the center of the garment. These robes are traditionally black, reflecting the colour of the black tricorn hat, a symbolic item dating back to the 18th century, which pays homage to Canada's adaptation of British Westminster parliamentary customs. Designed to visually emphasize the Speaker's unique status in the chamber, these robes have remained largely unchanged since their adoption in Ghana. As seen in Figure 4.83, structural design elements are carefully integrated into the construction of the robe worn by Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, reflecting continuity in style while fulfilling functional and symbolic roles.

While the procedural robes closely resemble the ceremonial robes in structural design, they are less ornate in terms of surface decoration. As shown in Figure 4.84, ceremonial robes typically include more elaborate embellishments and decorative detailing. The study found a consistent design framework across all Speaker robes, developed in close collaboration with the Clerk's Department of Parliament. These garments represent a rich interplay of tradition, authority, and symbolism, rooted heavily in Western parliamentary heritage. Although the process involves consultation with technical advisors and creative input from designers, the final outcomes tend to prioritize established conventions over deeper integration of indigenous Ghanaian cultural motifs, reflecting the formal institutional character of Parliament.

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4.2.2 The Meanings of the Symbols in the Parliamentary Robes for Speakers of Ghana's Parliament.

The meanings associated with the designs embedded in the robes for speakers of Ghana's parliament are anchored on the philosophy and power given to the parliament of Ghana. The power of parliament is to make laws for the nation-state of Ghana; therefore, the choice of designs for constructing the parliamentary robes of speakers reflects the essence of the power that parliament holds. The study established that the designs in the parliamentary robes have three key connotations; philosophical, Symbolic, and National Identity Constructions.

> There are those traditional Adinkra designs with very important meanings in the robes, mostly talking about some values that we as Ghanaian people treasure. Essentially, the symbols are things meant to bring us together to imprint those in our minds and our conduct… many of these things are not portrayed, or manifested and they are not being practiced and inculcated in the youth. If they were, you would see that we would be having a very peaceful and harmonious society. Many of such symbols are inscribed in the gown I use for ceremonial occasions. The symbols are "meant to bring us together, they function as a unifying force, symbolically connecting the nation's leaders to the cultural heritage of the people they represent. (Interview with Speaker 1, July 22nd, 2024).

The Rt. Honourable Speaker's statement reveals the cultural significance of traditional Adinkra symbols in the design of ceremonial robes worn in the Ghanaian Parliament. Adinkra symbols, which form part of Ghana's rich cultural heritage, each carrying deep meanings related to values, wisdom, and social harmony. Adinkra symbols are not merely decorative elements; they are imbued with philosophical meanings and are integral to Ghanaian culture and identity. As Rt. Hon. Bagbin points out that these symbols "talk about some values that we as Ghanaian people treasure." The use of these symbols in parliamentary robes serves as a reminder of the values

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that are central to Ghanaian society, such as unity, peace, and respect for tradition. The incorporation of Adinkra symbols into the robes, the Parliament actively preserves and promotes Ghanaian cultural identity. This is particularly important in a post-colonial context, where the reclamation of indigenous symbols and practices is seen as a way to assert national identity and sovereignty (Arthur, 2017).

Rt. Hon. Bagbin further expresses concern that these important cultural symbols are not being "portrayed, manifested, and they are not being practiced and inculcated in the youth." This statement highlights a broader societal issue, the potential erosion of cultural values and traditions among the younger generation. Adinkra symbols are more than just visual motifs; they are intended to be imprinted in our minds and our conduct, serving as constant reminders of the principles that should guide personal and collective behavior. The neglect of these symbols in everyday life could lead to a weakening of the cultural fabric that holds society together (Mensah, 2020).

The design philosophy for all the robes is anchored on the main symbols of parliament as embedded in the official logo of parliament shown in *Figure 4.72.* According to one of Ghana's parliamentary Robe designers, as consensually posited in the responses of the parliamentary clerks interviewed

> The symbols in the garment of the speaker that you see, are symbols that the parliament of Ghana has adopted and are using in their logos for official duties. So the official logo of parliament has an adinkra symbol surrounding the logo. The logo is designed in a circular form with the Parliament of Ghana building enclave in the middle and the maze of parliament at the center of it. The symbols at the top of the logo in a red background are the most important ones ((Interview with a Ghanaian parliamentary Robe designer, October 6th, 2023).

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A cursory glance at Ghana's official Parliament logo (figure 4.85 below), depicts thirteen adinkra symbols, present in all parliamentary robes (ceremonial and procedural) and embedded with distinctive Adinkra symbols that have various philosophical and symbolic meanings confirming the claim of the robe designer's posited above.

Figure 4.85 a: Official Logo of the Parliament of Ghana
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Figure 4.85 b. The Official Logo of parliament is embroidered on a robe for speakers.
(Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024)

The official symbol of Ghana's parliament as shown in Figure 4.85a and embroidered in Figure 4.85b above reveals three departments of designs: a sequence of adinkra symbols rendered in white on a red background at the top of the circular shape, the

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central design in black where the parliamentary Maze and the house of parliament is depicted on a yellow background, and the white rendered adinkra symbols against a Green background. The adinkra symbols (four) on the upper part of the logo are referred to as the main symbols adopted by parliament, whilst the symbols in the circular shape at the bottom are used on the basis of their symbolic meaning. The findings reveal that the official logo of Parliament is consistently embedded across all the parliamentary robes examined. Its presence played a significant role in informing the design process, influencing the stylistic rendition, decorative elements, and overall embellishments of the garments. This deliberate incorporation of the logo underscores its symbolic importance in visually reinforcing institutional authority and identity through parliamentary attire.

Figure 4.86: The Official Logo of Parliament depicted in Parliamentary robes for Speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

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In an interview with a member of the clerk department and a robe designer, they consensually reported that, there are four main adinkra symbols depicted in the upper part of the logo as shown in figure *4.86 above,* First from left is said to be an adinkra symbol by name, ***ese ne tekerema,*** *literally* translated as teeth and tongue, which in parliamentary terms connotes a symbol of improvement, advancement, growth and the need for friendliness and inter-independence of Ghana's parliament. This symbol is used in the majority of the parliamentary robes (identified in the study) for speakers of parliament as shown in figure 4.79 below. In an interview with a cultural expert, it was recounted that,

> *Ese ne tekerma* symbol is a unification symbol and that is the role the speaker plays in parliament… There are two sides of parliament and the speaker is expected to play a middle role of unifying both sides of the houses. The tongue and the teeth are in the mouth together; they know how to live harmoniously so that they don't bite one another. So the symbolism in the use of that particular motif is to speak the fact that we are all in this together, we agitate, disagree sometimes, but we are all aiming at national development… So as the speaker, his role is to unify all the sides of the house for a common goal (Interview with Cultural Expert, 14th August, 2023).

The cultural symbolism embedded in the Speaker's robe is deeply intentional, as explained by a cultural expert during an interview. The inclusion of the *Ese ne Tekrema* Adinkra symbol, which literally translates to "the teeth and the tongue," is particularly significant. This motif represents unity, mutual respect, and coexistence despite occasional conflict, reflecting the natural relationship between the tongue and teeth within the mouth. Its use on the Speaker's robe metaphorically reinforces the Speaker's constitutional role as a neutral unifier between the two opposing sides of Parliament. While debates and disagreements are inevitable in democratic discourse, the Speaker's duty is to ensure that these differences are managed harmoniously in

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pursuit of national development. The symbol thus serves as a visual reminder of collective responsibility and the shared purpose of governance, affirming the Speaker's position not merely as a presiding officer but as a custodian of unity and democratic balance within Ghana's legislative process.

Figure 4.87: Depiction of Adinkra Symbol Ese ne Tekerema in Parliamentary robes for speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The second symbol is ***Akofena,*** also known as the War Sword In the words of the robe designer, it represents the state authority, the authority that the parliament of Ghana has. Kuwornu et al (2016) share a similar authoritative interpretation of the

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symbol in Ghanaian society. In Ghana, when a president or chief is sworn into office, the Akofena is used to signify the power and authority given to the leader. Using Akofena in the official logo of parliament, therefore, represents the authority of the House of Parliament. The akofena symbol is used in several of the parliamentary robes for speakers of parliament, as shown in Figure 4.88 below.

Figure 4.88

Notes: Depiction of Adinkra Symbol Akofena in Parliamentary robes for speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The Akofena, a symbol of crossed swords, is deeply rooted in Akan culture and is widely recognized as a symbol of authority, leadership, and power. As noted by Opoku (2017), the Akofena is traditionally used during the swearing-in ceremonies of presidents and chiefs in Ghana to signify the power and authority bestowed upon the leader. This symbol is not merely decorative; it carries profound cultural meaning, representing the ability to protect, lead, and make decisive judgments on behalf of the people. In an interview with a cultural expert, a profound interpretation of the use of Akofena in the speaker's robe was interpreted as

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> The two swords crossed, known as *Akofena* is usually given as a souvenir to warriors or people who are victorious in Indigenous Ghanaian society, that was what led to the creation of that Adinkra if you are to juxtapose this in a parliamentary context and to find out if it has a role, The speaker is more of a squadron leader and they are supposed to represent the law machinery of the country, and so his position is more of a frontline one when it comes to decisions for the state. The interest of parliament is for Ghana and parliament is anchored on fighting for the good people of Ghana in shaping policy direction and having oversight responsibility on the government structure. The speaker requires such an adinkra symbol in the robe in line with fighting to make the right decisions for the state. The speaker is also the third in command in the government structure, he holds authority (Interview with Cultural Expert, August 13th, 2023).

The *Akofena* symbol, depicting two crossed swords, traditionally signifies bravery, authority, and victory in Indigenous Ghanaian culture. As explained by the cultural expert, this Adinkra symbol is often awarded to warriors or individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership and courage. When interpreted within the parliamentary context, the *Akofena* becomes highly symbolic of the Speaker's role as a leader on the frontline of national governance. As the third most powerful figure in Ghana's political hierarchy, the Speaker wields significant authority in directing parliamentary affairs, ensuring checks and balances, and safeguarding democratic principles. Just like a squadron leader, the Speaker is tasked with championing the interests of the nation, guiding legislation, and enforcing parliamentary procedures. Incorporating the *Akofena* symbol into the Speaker's robe visually affirms this authoritative and combative role, not in warfare, but in the ideological and legal battles required to uphold justice, accountability, and the collective good of the Ghanaian people.

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The next symbol evident in the logo is the ***Dwemimen,*** translated as the horns of the Ram. this symbol represents the strength and the might of parliament as an arm of government and the power that they hold.

Figure 4.89: The Dwemimen symbol is incorporated in the Ghanaian parliamentary robes for Speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Dwemimen, as shown in Figure 4.89 above, also symbolizes the strength (in mind, body, and soul), humility, and wisdom of parliament. Several educational institutions in Ghana such as the University of Ghana, have adopted and used this symbol.

> The parliament of Ghana is essentially created to make laws for the state, and in discharging this core mandate, there is a need to fundamentally incorporate wisdom, you need strength and cooperation to make laws (interview with Robe Designer, 4th October, 2023).

The view of the respondent, Robe designer, sits in context with Sarah, Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, and Moses (2022), that the ram's horn symbol represents concealment, humility, strength, wisdom, and education. The use of Dwennimmen as a design in fabrics reflects not only its aesthetic appeal but also its profound symbolic meaning. As a key Adinkra symbol, Dwennimmen embodies the balance between strength and humility, making it a powerful motif in textile design. By incorporating this symbol into fabrics, designers are able to infuse garments with a deeper message that

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resonates with Akan values. The horns of the ram represent resilience and mental fortitude, while the ram's humble nature signifies modesty and wisdom (Willis, 1998). Thus, wearing a fabric adorned with Dwennimmen becomes an expression of inner strength and dignity, reminding the wearer to balance power with humility. The use of this symbol in clothing also serves as a spiritual and philosophical statement, connecting the individual to the Akan tradition of acknowledging human strength in relation to divine forces. The Dwennimmen motif transforms the fabric into more than just clothing; it becomes a wearable affirmation of endurance, resilience, and the harmony between humility and power.

The findings further reveal that the *Gye Nyame* symbol, prominently featured at the center of the symbols on the upper section of the parliamentary logo, holds deep spiritual and symbolic significance. According to a respondent who is a cultural expert, *"in the context of Ghana's Parliament, Gye Nyame, which translates to "Except God," represents the omnipotence and supremacy of God".* Its central placement within the logo is intentional, symbolizing that the authority exercised by the House of Parliament is ultimately derived from divine power. This strategic positioning emphasizes the belief that all legislative functions are under the guidance and sovereignty of God, reinforcing a sense of moral accountability and spiritual legitimacy in the exercise of parliamentary duties.

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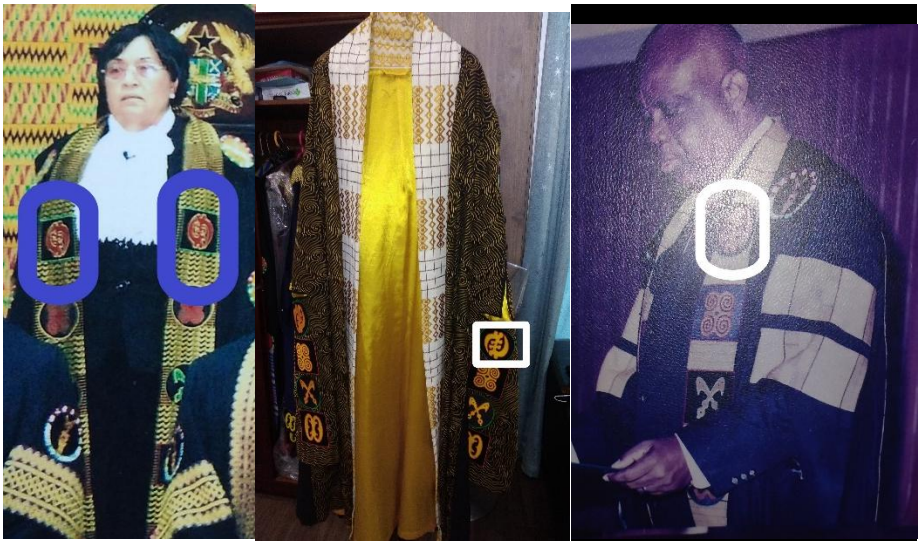

Figure 4.90: Depiction of Adinkra Symbol GYE NYAME in various Parliamentary robes for speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The inclusion of the Gye Nyame in the official logo and further used for constructing the robes of the Speakers of the Parliament of Ghana is a deliberate choice that portrays the authority of the legislative body. As explained by Nkrumah (2020), the adoption of this symbol in the parliamentary logo is intended to convey the supremacy of God in Parliament's role as a central pillar of governance in Ghana, endowed with the power to legislate, scrutinize, and hold the executive accountable. It represents the belief in the supremacy of God over all human affairs, a concept deeply embedded in the Ghanaian worldview. This symbol is often associated with divine protection, sovereignty, and the acknowledgment that all power and authority ultimately come from God (Opoku, 2017).

Again, the incorporation of Gye Nyame into the design of the Speaker's robes, Parliament reinforces the message that the Speaker's authority is derived from and is accountable to God. This aligns with the cultural and spiritual belief that leaders are stewards of power given by God and must govern with justice, humility, and a sense of divine responsibility (Mensah, 2019). In this vein, the use of Gye Nyame can be seen as a form of cultural assertion, reinforcing Ghana's unique identity and values in

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the face of globalization and the influence of Western political traditions. It is a reminder that, despite the adoption of modern democratic practices, Ghanaian governance remains deeply rooted in its cultural and spiritual heritage.

The remaining adinkra symbols (Figure *4.90)* that sit at the bottom of the circle are, first from the right, Akoma Ntoaso, followed by Mate Masie, Akoben (War Horn), Fiankra (Compound Horse-Security), Akoma (heart), and Tabono (Oar or Paddle).

Figure 4.91: Addinkra Symbols in Parliament of Ghana logo
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Akoma Ntoaso in parliamentary concept means a collective joining of hearts. It also means united hearts which represents agreement, togetherness and unity or a charter; an amplification of the concept of *Akoma* is best represented in how parliament is created to work together. “Akoma ntoaso” is further confirmed by Asamoa (2023) to be in tandem with the Zulu concept of Ubuntu, it ensures no one sinks into despair. It is believed that one may be sad for a while, but the strength and joy of the hearts linked to theirs will pump in joy and lift them up in the house of parliament.

The Parliament of Ghana considers this symbol as a Symbol of Wisdom and Prudence. *Mate Masie* is an adinkra symbol that translates to the secrecy and integrity of parliament of Ghana. "*what*

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I hear, I keep." The symbol is supposed to represent four linked ears, which serves to remind people of the importance of listening and communicating, especially in oral histories and cultures.

War horn, in Ghana's parliamentary construct, is considered a symbol of a call to action, readiness to be called to action, readiness, and voluntarism. The war horn was blown to assemble the nation or a group of people for action (Willis, 1998). It is a symbol of vigilance and wariness.

Fihankra", is an adinkra symbol adopted by Ghana's parliament to represent social, cultural and philosophical values of Ghanaian cultural practices. Derived from the concept of the traditional compound home which has only one entrance and exit, Fihankra is made up of two Akan words, Fie (house), and hankra (compound) symbolises the safety and security of the parliament of Ghana. It is a symbol of brotherhood, safety, security, completeness, and solidarity.

The Akoma symbol modified with an inbuilt cross (second from left) is a representation of patience and religious tolerance. In the account of one of the respondents from the clerk department, it was revealed that;

> Parliament tolerates every form of religious group. Mother Ghana has a big heart to tolerate all forms of beliefs and practices. What it means is that parliament adopted the original Akoma adinkra and modified it a bit with the cross signifying the religious components (Interview with a respondent, Clerk 1, 17th October, 2023).

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It is a representation of the traditional ideograph of a heart. Metaphorically, Akoma embodies understanding and agreement, as well as patience within the Parliament of Ghana. One of the Adinkra symbols that succinctly depicts the Akan concept of patience is Akoma.

At the heart of the logo is the House of Parliament rendered in a silhouette form, symbolically the building represents the central point of the entire logo, connoting the presence of the building where legislative power is exercised. The House of Parliament is used in only one of the speaker's robes (the ceremonial robe of Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan) as shown in Figure *4.92 below.*

Figure 4.92: Speaker D.F. Annan's Ceremonial Robe depicting the House of Parliament in a woven structure as a stole
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023)

Rendered in woven form, this architectural motif occupies a central position, signifying the institutional space where national laws are debated, formulated, and enacted. Its inclusion in the robe, as illustrated in Figure 4.92, highlight's the symbolic importance of Parliament as the epicentre of democratic governance. Notably, this design element is unique to Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan's ceremonial robe makes it a distinctive artefact among parliamentary garments. The use of the

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parliamentary building in the robe's design not only reinforces the Speaker's connection to the legislative institution but also visually anchors the role within the physical and ideological space of the House. It stands as a reminder of the Speaker's duty to uphold the integrity and authority of Parliament.

The findings indicate that the parliamentary mace, prominently positioned at the centre of Ghana's legislative chamber and symbolically perched atop the parliamentary building (see Figure 4.93), represents a significant emblem of authority and institutional tradition. As a central object within parliamentary proceedings, the mace signifies the legitimacy and operational capacity of the House. Parliamentary sessions cannot be formally conducted in its absence, underscoring its essential role in affirming legislative authority. While it is widely recognized for its ceremonial function and visual grandeur, the mace also embodies deeper constitutional and democratic principles that govern parliamentary procedure in Ghana. Its presence serves as a constant reminder of the rule of law, order, and the enduring traditions upon which the legislative system is built.

Figure 4.93: Ghana's Parliamentary Mace
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

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In accordance with the Standing Orders of Parliament, Section 62, the Mace is a symbol of authority, great respect and reverence in the chamber, which “stands upright before the table during a sitting of the committee of the whole House or at the consideration stage of a bill when the mace stands tilted”. It is a silent protector of power that stands tall before the Clerk's Table at every House session, except on certain parliamentary occasions such as Committee of the Whole House meetings and Bill Consideration Stages, when it tilts slightly but symbolically. The current Mace of Parliament was created in 1960, the year Ghana became a republic. The Mace's upright position in the Chamber can be compared to the staff of an official linguist; it also highlights the Mace's head, the eagle, which serves as the nation's heraldic bird (Ghana News Agency, 2005). The use of Mace in designing parliamentary robes for speakers is evident in the robes of the Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, Rt. Hon. Bamford Addo, Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey, Rt. Hon. Sekyi Hughes, and Rt. Hon. D.F. Annan.

Figure 4.94: (left) Parliamentary Robe for Speaker Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey, (Right) Parliamentary Robe for Speaker Rt. Hon. Hughes
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

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Figure 4.95: (left) Parliamentary Robe for Speaker Rt. Hon. Bamford Addo, (Right) Parliamentary Robe for Speaker Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

4.2.3 National Identity Construction of the Parliamentary Robes for Speakers.

There is scholarly and respondents' consensus that the designs on the parliamentary robes for speakers have a significant National Identity dimension because they relate to Ghanaian cultural practices, affect ethnic relationships, are key identity makers and connect with Ghanaian citizens leading to social transformations (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Warritay, 2017; Adrover, 2015; Aris, 2007; Miller, 2005). The robe in structure is foreign and the dress codes of speakers predominantly look Eurocentric as established earlier in the study, however, the embellishments are what give it a Ghanaian construction or outlook. In an interview with a cultural expert, it was further stated that

> When you are talking about Ghanaian identity construction, it means, they must dress to reflect Ghanaian identity. At the moment, they don't have any specific dress code that binds them to dress in a specific manner, and clearly, it is not all of them dress to reflect Ghanaian Identity. Some dress in suits and ties others do Ghanaian wear like printed fabrics… Their convention is not specific and that has always been a problem for Ghanaian identity construction. You see… the gown and suit basically, is an exotic costume and

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> goes specifically with a tie, so you can't be in Ghana and dress like a European and take off certain elements, they are not making it compulsory though, but if you want to go Eurocentric then you must do so on specific occasions not on regular basis, considering the fact that parliament is a Ghanaian institution of state (Interview with Ghanaian cultural expert, August, 17th, 2023).

It is evident from the statement of the cultural expert and aforementioned discussions that Ghana's speakers of parliament predominantly have looked more Eurocentric over the years, however, the speaker's robes are embedded with indigenous colour prints, embroideries, and patterns that are "meaningful; they mark life events, social standing, age, gender, occupation and more. Although there are a couple of reasons for wearing dresses, the parliamentary robes for speakers in the words of speaker Rt. Hon Alban Bagbin is worn to reflect the pomp and pageantry of parliament and also distinguish the speaker from other members of parliament. However, the most conspicuous part of the robe is the designs embedded in it. In an interview with one of the robe designers for the parliament of Ghana, it was recounted that;

> … In creating the speaker's robe, we normally use black as the background material, and carefully select symbols for the designs (sanctioned by the clerk department of parliament) that have Ghanaian cultural connotations for detailing… For instance, Rt. Hon Bagbin's cloak appears to be together but there is a cap to it, when you look at it, it appears together but it can be detached. We did customized embroidery on the shoulder part with carefully selected symbols from the official logo of the Parliament of Ghana, the yoke side and the sleeve. The other designs were inspired by the adinkra symbols that I saw in a burglar-proof during the lockdown period (Interview with a robe designer, November, 2nd 2023).

Dresses in Ghana are generally worn for aesthetics and/or to communicate the wearer's mood, and/or cultural identity (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Essel, Navei and

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deGraft-Yankson, 2021). A cursory look at the various robes designed for the speakers *(as shown in figures 4.97, 98 below)* of parliament puts them beyond nuclear ethnic boundaries or expression but demonstrates their unique Ghanaian nationalistic and cultural sensibility in putting up the robe for parliamentary duty.

The statement by the respondent robe designer above describes the design process of the Speaker's robe, highlighting the following details: *Background material*: Black is used as the primary material for the robe. *Symbol selection:* The designer carefully chooses symbols with Ghanaian cultural significance, approved by the Clerk Department of Parliament, for the designs. *Customized embroidery*: The shoulder part features customized embroidery with symbols from the official Parliament of Ghana logo. *Adinkra inspiration:* The designer drew inspiration from Adinkra symbols, a traditional Ghanaian printing technique, which the robe designer saw on a burglar-proof during the COVID-19 lockdown period. *Detachable design:* The cloak appears to be one piece but has a detachable cap, adding a functional element to the design. The designer aimed to create a robe that honours Ghanaian culture and heritage, incorporating meaningful symbols and elements that reflect the country's rich history and traditions.

This is even more evident in the account of one of the robe designers that

> …The colour choice for the embroidery design of the yoke of Speaker Bagbin's Ceremonial robe was gold on a black fabric, the choice of the colour gold hinges on the huge symbolic significance of gold as a mineral and its cultural importance to the state. In an attempt to show power and authority, the fringes on the edges of the cap were depicted with a gold colour to show something distinctive, separating the higher office from the subordinate. We used the fringes to create that huge distinction between the speaker and the clerks of parliament... Also, the choice of red for the speaker's lining is based on our artistic expression and the need to represent the seriousness, the rise in

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> adrenaline, and the passion that the colour red symbolizes. Psychologically, we believe when the speaker wears the gown it compels him to discharge his duty diligently in the spirit and history of patriotism (Interview with a parliamentary robe designer for speakers of Ghana, November, 2nd 2023).

A similar account was made by a cultural expert

> Ghanaians are very sensitive and are very aware of Adinkra symbols due to their history and relevance in cultural construction. Adinkra symbols communicate, for instance, when Akofena is used or when a chief or person in authority is seen with a sartorial representation in an Akofena symbol, people portray different characters towards them. This is a symbol of authority, hence its usage in speakers' robes tells and communicates a strong message to the viewing public (Interview with Cultural expert, 14th August, 2023).

The comments herein referred, emphasized the Ghanaian sense of identity in the construction of sartorial identity of leadership by example through clothing. The speaker's dress paves the way for the Ghanaians (parliamentarians) to gladly follow suit. As observed in articles 57(2) and 60(11) of the 1992 constitution, Speakers of parliament who are the head of the legislative arm of government (parliament) have been copiously referred to as the third in command, illustrating them as the third iconic figures of the land with the president as the number one and vice president as number two. In the scheme of the democratic dispensation of Ghana, Speakers occupy a high-ranking portfolio. Therefore, the speaker's adornment of robes with indigenous Ghanaian symbolism conveys strategically, to add meaning to the Ghanaian identity construction. This resonates with Adrover's (2015) assertion that leaders strategically rely on the optical and sensorial powers of dressing to draw attention to their authority. As observed in some of the robes, the colour choice is pivoted on the National colours of Ghana, Red, Gold, Black and Green as shown in the robes in 4,86 below.

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Figure 4.96a: Parliamentary Robes adorned by speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

Figure 4.96b: Parliamentary robe adorned by speakers
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The robes worn by the Speakers, as depicted in Figures 4.96a and 4.96b, are visually striking, largely due to the deliberate use of colour in the fabric selection. Colour serves a crucial role in expressing the identity and cultural symbolism embedded in Ghana's parliamentary robes for Speakers. According to deGraft-Yankson (2020), in Akan societies of Ghana, colour extends beyond scientific categorization; it is understood and interpreted through its connection to elements found in nature. This

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cultural lens assigns meaning to hues based on their resemblance to natural phenomena, thereby imbuing the robes with deeper layers of symbolic significance. In this context, the choice and combination of colours in the Speaker's robes do not merely enhance visual appeal but also communicate identity, authority, and alignment with Ghanaian aesthetic traditions. In Ghana, there are four national colours as depicted in the symbolic logo of the parliament and the flag of Ghana: Red, Gold, Black and Green. These colours are dominant in all the parliamentary robes for the speakers, constructing a typical Ghanaian identity. The names given to the colours amongst ethnic groups in Ghana have the tendency of affecting the perception, understanding and accurate adaptation of colour amongst them. Colour has strong cultural significance (deGraft-Yankson, 2020). In line with this assertion, it could be said that the choice of national colours in designing the speaker's robe connotes a sense of strong patriotic and cultural significance. In an interview with one of the robe designers it was revealed that

> …the choice of colour red connotes the blood of Ghanaian ancestors and the toil they went through in their struggle for independence, Red was used to put the speaker into a reflective and commemorative mood, knowing how important the office he holds is dear to the heart of many Ghanaians… the colour Gold was used to depict the riches or wealth of Gold Coast, Ghana… the black is essentially the symbol of emancipation and unity in the struggle against colonialism (Interview with a parliamentary robe designer, November 2nd 2023).

The statement explains the symbolism behind the colours used in the design of a parliamentary robe. The respondents interpreted Red as a Representation of the blood of Ghanaian ancestors who fought for independence and an evocative reflective and commemorative mood, acknowledging the significance of the office and the struggles of the past. Gold: Symbolizes the wealth and riches of the Gold Coast, Ghana and

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represents the country's rich cultural heritage and resources. Black: Represents emancipation and unity in the struggle against colonialism and symbolises the fight for freedom and the unity of the Ghanaian people. The designer used these colours to create a robe that honours Ghana's history, culture, and struggles, and serves as a reminder of the importance of the office and the responsibility that comes with it.

Amidst the symbolism and identity construction dimensions expressed by the participants regarding the speakers' robes, the participant Speaker expressed worry despite the cultural and national significance of the robes:

> I am particularly worried, because most of the Robes of the past speakers are not here in parliament, it appears some take them along, and also the culture of speakers dying with the robe has made us lose a number of them, but we still have some. I don't want to die with the robe anyway, hahahha (Interview with Speaker 1, 22nd July, 2022).

It is evident from the Speaker's response above that, while participants acknowledged the cultural and national identity embedded in the Speaker's attire, the Speaker himself highlighted a pragmatic and institutional challenge, the apparent disappearance and loss of historical robes. His comment draws attention to the fragile continuity of material heritage within Parliament, pointing to a practice where outgoing Speakers either retain their robes or are buried with them as shown in the *figure 4.97b below*.

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Figure 4.97b Speaker Peter Ala Adjetey, buried with the Speaker's Robe
Source: (G.N.A., 2008) https://www.modernghana.com/news/185757/former-speaker-ala-adjetey-laid-to-rest.html

This parliamentary cultural norm of burying speakers with their robes, though rooted in personal or traditional significance, inadvertently results in the erosion of tangible institutional memory. In the account of one of the participants who is cultural expert;

> I think that practice is detrimental to the survival of parliament's rich history… we cannot continue to bury speakers with robes that are of national symbolic importance. I witnessed that of Peter Ala Adjetey and it, for me, look too strange (Interview with a cultural expert, October 23rd 2023)

Based on the account of the cultural expert, burying speakers with parliamentary robes is a reflection that is not merely logistical but indicative of a broader tension between personal legacy and national heritage preservation. The Speaker's humorous remark, "I don't want to die with the robe anyway," serves as a subtle critique of this precedent, signaling his intention to break with the tradition in favor of maintaining the robes as part of Parliament's historical archive. His statement emphasizes the symbolic weight these garments carry, not just as a dress, but as repositories of political history and cultural identity.

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From an institutional perspective, the absence of robes worn by past Speakers may hamper efforts to visually trace the evolution of Ghana's parliamentary culture and the sartorial choices that defined different political eras. It also reflects a missed opportunity to exhibit these robes as part of a broader national narrative on governance, tradition, and symbolism. The concern raised by the Speaker thus points to an urgent need for policy interventions around the archiving, documentation, and preservation of such significant cultural artifacts within state institutions.

Furthermore, the concern echoes a subtle call for a shift in how institutions treat material culture, advocating a movement from individual ownership to collective memory. This gesture is not just administrative; it is symbolic of a desire to institutionalize legacy, not only through written records but through visible, enduring objects like the robes, which embody Ghana's evolving democratic identity.

4.3 Views of Parliamentarians on Speaker Bagbin's Clarion Call for Decolonizing Parliamentary Dress Code in Ghana.

The first sitting of the first meeting of the second session of the eighth parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, which occurred on January 25th, 2022, was stylishly graced by the Speaker, Rt. Honourable Alban S. K. Bagbin in an indigenous Ghanaian royal dress fashion as shown in *(Figure 4.97 below).*

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Figure 4.97: Speaker Bagbin dressed in an Indigenous Ghanaian Classic for parliamentary business
Source: (Parliament of Ghana, 2023).

The statement made by Rt. Hon Bagbin on the floor of parliament seemingly generated public debate. Essel, Navei & Donkoh (2023) opine that Bagbin's call seemed to be informed by his twenty-four (24) consecutive years of experience as a parliamentarian (1992 – 2016). Perhaps he might have observed high patronage and use of the Western (foreign) three-piece suit for parliamentary business to the detriment of the indigenous Ghanaian classics, as discussed earlier in this study.

In an interview with a Speaker of parliament, it was recounted;

> …I realized that in opting to make politics a career, instead of continuing my profession as a lawyer, I knew I was going to represent the people, the Ghanaian people, and the Ghanaian people have an identity. So since I joined politics, it is that identity that I portrayed throughout…and I knew that Ghanaians had that identity. And so since I joined parliament, I've been wearing the attire of our country and traditional people. The smock, the fugu, the kente, and any other attire that portrays the Ghanaianess of our country's identity. So that's what I've been wearing, and in fact, that influenced the dress code in the house. And when for eight years I was the minority leader, I wore that throughout, and my friend, Honourable Osei Kyei Mensah, when he also

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> became minority leader, changed from his suits to also wear the Fugu and the Ghanaian traditional wear. And so that's what I believe influenced so many members. And when His Excellency, President John Agyekum Kuffuor, also declared the wearing of traditional dresses once a week, it also influenced the dress code of the house (Interview with Speaker 1, 22nd July 2024)

In the account of Essel et al (2023), this observation by the lawmaker is, however, not peculiar to the Ghanaian parliament. Many parliaments in Africa have similarly adapted Western dress fashion as their official dress code for parliamentary business. Specific reference could be made to the Kenyan parliament (National Assembly of Kenya), which has consistently raised motions for some senators to be expelled from the chamber of their parliament for wearing indigenous Kenyan attire (Muturi, 2019). The speaker, Rt. Hon. Bagbin, on the occasion, did not only outdoor himself in a prestigious indigenous Ghanaian classic, but he seized the opportunity to passionately make a clarion call for all Ghanaian parliamentarians to reorient parliamentary dress choice from the accustomed over-subscription of Eurocentric suits to the detriment of indigenous Ghanaian dress fashions for parliamentary business. In his opening remarks, Rt Honourable Alban S. K. Bagbin posited;

> "Hon Members, this is the Parliament of Ghana, a unique made in Ghana product, and we must showcase and market it to the world as a brand. We must create a unique set of values and norms that will give a unique character to our Parliament to set it apart from the colonial legacies of the British system. My outfit today, as the Speaker presiding, is to set in motion that agenda. The practice of MPs decently dressed in traditional attire, led by the Speaker, is long overdue. Ghanaians accept representation of the people to include representation of the full identity of the Ghanaian, i.e., culture, tradition, and more importantly, their dress code.
>
> I am glad that this decision accords with some of the propositions of the first President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, and the other founding members of

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> the Parliament of the First Republic. The dominant dress code of members of the National Assemblies of independent Ghana was native costume [indigenous fashion]. The Speaker of the first Parliament of the First Republic of the Country, 1960 to 1965, Rt [Right] Hon Joseph Richard Asiedu, appreciated and practiced it. Where we got it wrong, I don't know!
>
> …the robe, i.e., the long garment, the headgear, and the bib, constitute the ceremonial dress of the Speaker. This ceremonial dress is worn to distinguish the Speaker from members and to reflect the pomp and pageantry of special national occasions... the ceremonial dress is not meant to be the daily apparel of the Speaker. Even the British have long abandoned this dress code. Ghana has long abandoned only the headgear and the bib. Hon Members, I assure you, we are not on a walk in the park in this journey of renaissance and transform*ation.* We will not walk alone in this matter. We have a lot of followers and supporters. It is with this, I happily invite all of you to wear Ghana, grow Ghana, eat Ghana, brand Ghana, and transform Ghana. From now I want to see more members appear in Parliament decently adorned in traditional dress" (Bagbin, 2022).

The statement by the Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, Hon. Alban Bagbin, serves as a powerful call for the reassertion of Ghanaian cultural identity within the legislative framework of the country. It reflects a conscious effort to distinguish Ghana's parliamentary practices from the colonial legacy left by the British, advocating for a revival of traditional Ghanaian dress and customs as a symbol of national pride and cultural authenticity.

Speaker Rt. Hon. S.K. Bagbin's historical reference to the first President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and the first speaker of the first republic, Rt. Hon. Asiedu, as a notable advocate and pioneer of advancing Ghanaian nationalistic dress cultural identity, is succinctly the case. Scholarly evidence (Essel et al, 2023) and earlier discussions in this study concur the views of Speaker Bagbin that Nkrumah's

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deliberate adornment of Indigenous Ghanaian classics such as kente and smock fashion for national occasions turned such classic wears into Ghanaian nationalistic symbols of identity, which contributed significantly to the Ghanaian dress decolonization agenda (Essel et al, 2023; Spencer, 1999 as cited in Warritay, 2017; Essel & Amissah 2015; Booth Library, 2009; Akwetey, 2007; Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Allman, 2004).

4.3.1 Views of Parliamentarians on Speaker's Clarion Call

This section presents findings from a thematic analysis of responses gathered from members of Ghana's current Parliament. The purpose was to examine their perspectives on Speaker Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin's public call to decolonize the parliamentary dress code, a call he made on the floor of the House in line with efforts to promote Ghanaian cultural identity within political institutions. *Figure 4.98* below illustrates a thematic distribution of comments collected from parliamentarians during the fieldwork (2023), specifically in response to the Speaker's decolonization appeal.

To ensure systematic analysis and inferential clarity, four thematic indicators were developed through an inductive coding process. These indicators emerged from recurring patterns and language used in the participants' responses and were further refined based on their alignment with the objectives of the study. The indicators are: Admiration, Dress Fashion Decolonization, National Identity Construction, and Leadership capturing key dimensions of parliamentarians' responses to Speaker Bagbin's call for decolonizing the parliamentary dress code. *Admiration* assessed the emotional and symbolic support for the Speaker's initiative; *Dress Fashion Decolonization* captured views advocating a shift from Eurocentric to indigenous attire; *National Identity Construction* examined how dress was linked to cultural

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representation and nation-building; and *Leadership* evaluated perceptions of the Speaker's role as a transformative figure championing Ghanaian values within parliamentary governance. These indicators were not pre-imposed but rather organically derived through close reading and thematic coding of participants' narratives. They were selected to reflect the ideological, cultural, and institutional dimensions of the Speaker's statement as perceived by fellow legislators. The assessment through these lenses provides both qualitative richness and analytical depth to the findings.

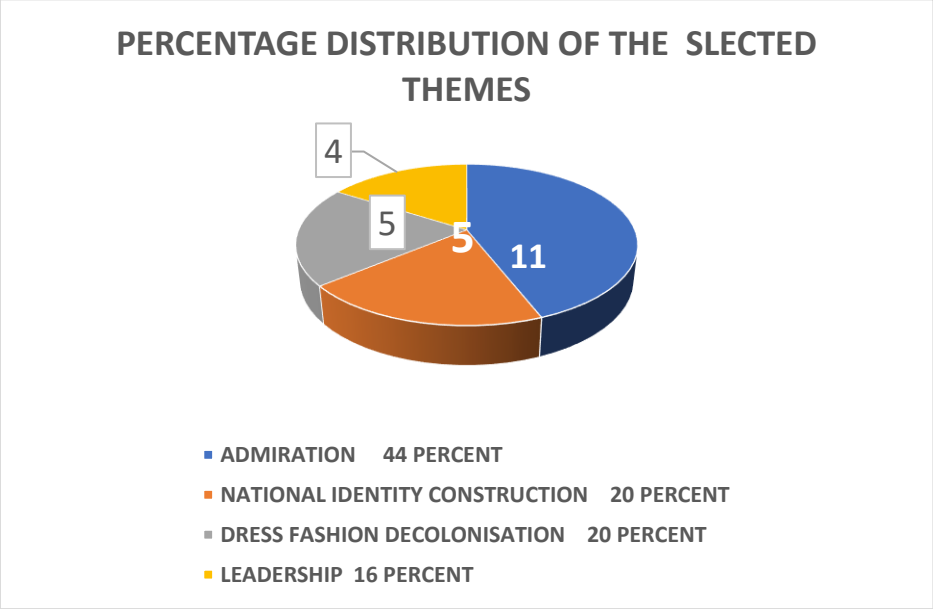

Figure 4.98: Thematic Representation of Views of Parliamentarians on speaker's statement
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

Figure *4.78* above presents a thematic distribution of twenty-five (25) comments on Speaker Bagbin's statement made on the floor of parliament regarding the decolonization of the parliamentary dress code. Rigorous analysis of the comments revealed the following themes: Admirations, Dress fashion decolonization, National Identity Construction; and leadership.

Admirations (44%)

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The largest proportion of comments, 44%, fall under the theme of Admirations, indicating that a substantial portion of respondents expressed positive reactions to Speaker Bagbin's statement. This suggests that the Speaker's call for decolonizing the parliamentary dress code resonated with many individuals, who likely view his stance as progressive and aligned with broader efforts to reclaim cultural identity. The high level of admiration can also be interpreted as an endorsement of his leadership and vision, reflecting the public's appreciation for leaders who advocate for the preservation and promotion of indigenous culture in official settings (Appiah, 2020).

Dress Fashion Decolonization (20%)

The theme of Dress Fashion Decolonization accounted for 20% of the comments, highlighting a significant interest in the specific idea of breaking away from colonial influences in parliamentary dress culture. This suggests that a notable portion of Ghanaian parliamentarians are engaged with the concept of redefining dress codes to better reflect Ghanaian cultural heritage. The interest in decolonization reflects a broader societal trend of questioning and challenging remnants of colonialism in various aspects of life, including fashion (Quartey, 2017). This theme indicates that there is considerable support from parliamentarians for initiatives that seek to replace Western-style attire with garments that are more representative of Ghanaian identity.

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National Identity Construction (20%)

Similarly, another 20% of the comments focused on National Identity Construction. This theme reveals the significance of dress as a tool for constructing and expressing national identity. The fact that a substantial portion of respondents linked Speaker Bagbin's statement to national identity suggests that many view the parliamentary dress code of the speaker as more than just a matter of fashion; it is seen as a critical component of how Ghana projects its cultural values and heritage to the world. The connection between dress and national identity is well-documented in cultural studies, where clothing is often regarded as a powerful symbol of collective identity and pride (Asante, 2011).

Leadership (16%)

The final theme, Leadership, which garnered 16% of the comments, reflects respondents' perceptions of Speaker Bagbin's role and influence as a leader. The comments under this theme likely recognize his leadership in bringing attention to the issue of dress code decolonization and advocating for change. This theme suggests that the public values leaders who are willing to challenge the status quo and push for reforms that align with national interests. Leadership in this context is seen not only in terms of political authority but also in the ability to inspire and guide cultural transformation (Adjaye, 2016).

The thematic distribution of comments reveals a strong public interest in the decolonization of the parliamentary dress code and its implications for national identity and leadership. The high percentage of comments under the Admirations theme indicates that Speaker Bagbin's stance has broad support, reflecting a public desire for leaders who prioritize cultural reclamation. The equal emphasis on Dress

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Fashion Decolonization and National Identity Construction themes suggests that the public views these issues as interconnected, with dress codes seen as a vehicle for expressing and solidifying national identity. The presence of the Leadership theme, although the smallest, is significant as it points to the importance of leadership in driving cultural and institutional change. Speaker Bagbin's initiative is viewed as an example of how leadership can shape the cultural narrative and influence public attitudes toward national identity and decolonization.

4.3.2 Views of Parliamentarians that Admire Speaker Bagbin's Statement

A careful analysis of the comments made by the members of parliament revealed most of them to be words of admiration for the Speaker, S.K Bagbin regarding his clarion call for all MPs to follow suit, and his leading by-example style demonstrated by adorning indigenous Ghanaian classic for parliamentary business. Some of the comments were in admiration of the Speaker's outfit while others called on MPs, the president as well as Ghanaians to embrace the clarion call made by Speaker Bagbin. Some of the comments read;

> Positive direction from the statement made by the Rt. Hon. Speaker, we are Ghanaians and this is certainly a good call for all of the legislators (View of Parliamentarian A)

> The Call made by Speaker Bagbin is the best way. Our dress code must reflect the people we represent hence his call is in the right direction (View of Parliamentarian B).

> Complex, but profound move by the Rt. HON speaker, but he needs to be commended for taking a bold step in issuing such a statement on the floor of the House. Personally, I think it's in the right direction (View of Parliamentarian C).

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The speaker's move is commendable, however, some of his colleague speakers argue that when he was changing into a Ghanaian mode of dressing, he did not discuss with them to move together. So if you observe his deputies don't wear the indigenous dresses to preside except on Fridays, which happened during President Kufuor's time. On Fridays, since President Kuffuor's era speakers are allowed to wear smart casual Ghanaian wear to occupy the seat of the speaker presiding. Parliamentarians are allowed to do the same (View of Parliamentarian V).

I support it and the speaker needs to be highly commended for making such a clarion call to us members of parliament (View of Parliamentarian D).

Rt. Hon Bagbin spoke very well regarding the need to decolonize our way of dressing, I think it is Long overdue, we have to promote our culture as Ghanaian Parliamentarians (View of Parliamentarian E).

Good move as it will show our cultural heritage (View of Parliamentarian, F).

Powerful statement from the Rt. Hon Speaker, It's speaks to the outside well about our Culture (View of Parliamentarian G).

I really admire the manner in which he was dressed and the statement he made on how we parliamentarians have been dressing over the years, I believe we are Ghanaians and his statement makes a lot of economic and cultural Sense (View of Parliamentarian H)

We are Ghanaians and parliament is a Ghanaian institution where we are representatives of Ghanaians, therefore, showcasing our culture here shouldn't be a problem, the speaker was right in saying that, I support it fully (View of Parliamentarian I).

The call is a good one for Ghana, in all we all want to project Ghana, I support his call (View of Parliamentarian J).

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> I admire the fact that the speaker didn't only make the clarion Call but also led the charge with his royal dress code, his statement is commendable as the leader of the house (View of Parliamentarian K)

The sentiments from sampled parliamentarians reflect widespread approval of Speaker Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin's call to decolonize the parliamentary dress code, with many describing it as a "commendable," "bold," and "powerful" move. Parliamentarians emphasized the symbolic and emotional resonance of the initiative, positioning it as a rightful affirmation of Ghanaian identity and values within a postcolonial political institution. Statements such as "we are Ghanaians and this is certainly a good call" (A), and "our dress code must reflect the people we represent" (B), underscore the strong link between cultural expression and national identity construction. This aligns with the views of scholars such as Essel et al (2023), Fanon (1961), and Appiah (1992), who argue that decolonization must include the reclamation and visibility of indigenous cultures in formal institutions. Bagbin's act, therefore, is not merely a stylistic preference but a cultural and political gesture toward dismantling colonial residues in public leadership, resonating with Arthur's (2010) argument that national attire within Parliament is a legitimate expression of political identity.

Moreover, several participants (e.g., C, K, H) applauded the Speaker for leading by example, linking his actions to principles of transformational leadership, as conceptualized by Burns (1978) and Bass (1990), which emphasize cultural modeling from the top. However, concerns expressed by Parliamentarian V about the lack of collective action among deputy speakers point to institutional ambivalence, echoing Bhabha's (1994) notion that decolonial acts often face internal resistance even as they challenge dominant paradigms. Importantly, the responses also reflect a growing

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awareness of the socio-economic value of indigenous dress, as noted by Parliamentarian H, who sees the initiative as making both "economic and cultural sense." This view supports Anholt's (2007) and UNESCO's (2013) positions on cultural policy and nation branding, where symbolic acts like clothing reform can contribute to national cohesion and support for local creative industries. Collectively, the responses demonstrate that Speaker Bagbin's call is perceived not only as timely and culturally affirming but also as a meaningful stride toward a distinctly Ghanaian political identity.

4.3.3 Views of Parliamentarians that suggest Dress Fashion Decolonisation

Some of the comments expressed by parliamentarians regarding the Speaker's Clarion call to decolonize the Ghanaian parliamentary dress code reveal overtones of Dress Fashion Decolonisation. The comments support Rt. Hon. S. K. Bagbin's open invitation to his colleagues in parliament to join the agenda of decolonizing the Ghanaian parliamentary dress code. Other comments revealed that the speaker's comment resonated well with his apparel and was considered novel; making some parliamentarians to demand similar dressing by members of parliament to take a paradigm shift from their predominant Eurocentric dress code to incorporate Ghanaian Indigenous dress styles. The comments stressed that Ghanaian culture has symbolic elements in the Speaker's dress code which presents a uniquely African and Ghanaian identity and communicates a message of decolonialism. Some of the comments read:

> The Speaker has shown the way and has encouraged us to wear more Ghanaian clothes to Parliament: Wear Ghana, Project Ghana. Hopefully, other organs of government will learn from it. Why should we parliamentarians and our Lawyers and Judges continue dressing like British several years after independence (View of Parliamentarian D)

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> Sixty-six years after Independence we are still repeating the adopted Western style of dressing in a Ghanaian Parliament, I mean what are we doing to our local industries? I agree entirely with the speaker on the need to decolonize our dress code to give impetus to the textile factories in this country (View of Parliamentarian L).
>
> Political leaders love to dress heavily so as to enhance their charisma; to gain more respect from people … A politician can use fashion to distract from governance issues depending on the nature of followership. If the people are intelligent enough to look at the fundamentals, they can see themselves through a politician's fashion. However, in a multi-cultural society like Ghana where Suit and tie is considered a colonial outfit. We politicians in line with the speaker's clarion call must quickly abandon our Western suit and revisit what the first republican Parliamentarians did. We must surely decolonize (View of Parliamentarians M).
>
> Hopefully, the speaker will continue to lead the charge as he has started in words and his maiden regalia, which we are observing keenly and will follow suit to decolonize. In fact, I used to dress in Ghanaian dresses lately (View of Parliamentarians N).
>
> The speaker's statement is actually a complex one; we are representatives with different backgrounds,… I have cross-checked from history as he entreated, and evidently, the first parliamentarians dressed in cloth and smocks… I think the military government is what distorted the entire fashion of Ghana's parliament.. Revisiting it to decolonize the Western impact on us won't be a bad idea, I so agree with the Speaker (View of Parliamentarian O).

The comments reinforce Speaker Bagbin's strong demand for the decolonization of Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture through the use of traditional Ghanaian garments and highlight the argument that the country's parliamentary dress culture is foreign-driven. For instance, Parliamentarian O's remarks highlight the layered complexity of Speaker Bagbin's call for decolonizing Ghana's parliamentary dress

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code, situating it within both historical continuity and institutional disruption. The respondent notes that early Ghanaian parliamentarians customarily wore indigenous garments such as cloth and smocks, affirming historical evidence of traditional dress as a normative mode of representation prior to the influence of military regimes. This observation aligns with scholarly arguments that colonial and post-colonial political transitions, particularly under authoritarian military rule, contributed significantly to the erosion of indigenous sartorial expression within formal institutions (Essel et al., 2023; Rutayisire, 2021). The respondent's acknowledgment that revisiting these historical practices could counteract the lingering Western cultural imprint on parliamentary fashion reinforces Bagbin's stance as both culturally restorative and politically symbolic.

This view is further substantiated by Aris (2007, cited in Essel et al., 2023), who posits that clothing operates as a tool of both cultural expression and political resistance, capable of enacting and subverting colonial power relations. Speaker Bagbin's call thus becomes an enactment of cultural resistance and a reassertion of identity through dress. The respondent's support illustrates how the proposal resonates with wider efforts to reclaim indigenous heritage, as argued by Navei and Donkoh (2022), who advocate for a paradigm shift that legitimizes traditional dress codes in governance spaces. In this context, the Speaker's statement is not merely rhetorical but serves as a catalyst for a broader cultural renaissance aimed at reestablishing Ghanaian sartorial identity within national institutions.

4.3.4 Views of Parliamentarians that Suggest Ghanaian Identity Construction

Dress fashion forms a critical part of ethnic civilization in Ghana. People wear what they wear for various reasons. Studies have confirmed that dresses are worn to suit

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particular occasions and are always in cultural, social, political, economic, and aesthetic contexts (Frings, 1999; Ulzen-Appiah, 2003; Jamal, Maqbool; Zafar, 2013; Essel et al, 2021). For instance, there are dresses for funerals, work, religious activities, and other ceremonial occasions in Ghana. Such dresses are worn to convey information about the wearer's cultural identity, nationality, mood, and social status, among others (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Essel, Navei and deGraft-Yankson, 2021; Warritay, 2017; Mamiya, 2016; Howard, Sarpong & Amankwah, 2012; Willard, 2004; Antubam, 1963). This suggests that how individuals dress and adorn themselves plays a symbolic, communicative, and aesthetic role and is definitive of their cultural and social identity construction. Typical of this narrative (role of dress) is the ways the kings, chiefs, and other members of the traditional leadership display their political power and supremacy through their heavily diversified dress fashion practices at durbars, festive occasions, funerals, and other traditional ceremonies (Essel, 2019).

Speaker Bagbin's assertion was overwhelmingly endorsed, according to data gathered with overtones of Ghana's identity construction, which was done to strengthen Ghanaian nationalism. The remarks positioned the Speaker's statement as a crucial tool to further Kwame Nkrumah's vision of Ghanaian national cultural identity. Among the remarks were the following:

> The call made by the Rt. Hon Speaker is a legitimate one, but whether it is attainable is the problem. We inherited the parliamentary dress code from the British. So we took the British culture or the mode of their dressing, and even today, the Americans and the British we are copying have all departed from their original mode of dressing to parliament. the speakers or the presiding officers wear the ceremonial dress, you only find them on ceremonial occasions where you only find them in the cloak and the wig and whatnot. But I think the U.S. has completely departed from it, but the UK does a bit of it on

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ceremonial occasions. The speaker sometimes does only suit and tie. And that is what speaker Bagbin is attempting to introduce here, you only dress in the parliamentary way only on Ceremonial Occasion. Yeah, so the speaker has departed from it and rather he want to promote the Ghanaian Personality on ordinary parliamentary sitting days (View of Parliamentarian U).

Excellent statement from the Rt. Hon. Speaker. With this, I suggest we parliamentarians should stop wearing Ghanaian wears occasionaly and make it an everday wear. I believe that both sides of the house and leadership will demonstrate same going forward…will gladly accept this and emulate what Mr. Speaker has initiated to promote Ghanaian values and culture as well as create employment opportunities for he teaming Ghanaian youth (View of Parliamentarian P).

As the motion has been placed on the agenda by the much respected Mr. Speaker, we Members of Parliament gladly accept it and will do everything in our power to show that Parliament can hold the cultural identity of Ghana in high esteem. Maybe a move for Wear Constituency Day will be a step in to commemorate the identity of Ghana's numerous ethnic groups moving forward (View of Parliamentarian Q).

Dressing in parliament or for parliament duty does not follow strict regulations, except for parliamentary convention and the need for a parliamentarian to be decently dressed to parliament, Yes we are Ghanaians and I am of the firm conviction that when the speaker's clarion call is adhered to, we will make a lot of gains and as well preserve our national identity (View of Parliamentarian R).

While Rt. Hon. S.K Bagbin has made a profound statement on the need to decolonize Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture through the adornment of Ghanaian indigenous classics. Some parliamentarians are moving for a day where all 275 members of parliament will represent the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their constituencies in parliament through sartorial adornment. The comments by Parliamentarians U, P,

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Q, and R collectively affirm the legitimacy and symbolic relevance of Speaker Bagbin's call to decolonize the parliamentary dress code, while also engaging with the practical and historical complexities surrounding its implementation. Parliamentarian U, for instance, acknowledges the colonial origins of Ghana's parliamentary dress conventions, specifically the British legacy of wigs, cloaks, and formal regalia—but notes a global shift away from such practices even in their countries of origin. This perspective situates Bagbin's initiative within a broader international trend toward more contextually relevant political dress codes. As observed by Duplessis (2016) and Rutayisire (2021), many postcolonial states are rethinking inherited European norms in political institutions, often modifying them to reflect their own cultural realities. Bagbin's departure from daily Eurocentric regalia in favor of Ghanaian traditional wear mirrors what Essel et al. (2023) call a re-Africanization of public symbolism, an effort to construct a national identity that is both authentic and contemporary. Parliamentarian U's reflection reveals that Bagbin is not abolishing formality, but rather redefining it in terms of Ghanaian cultural values, reserving ceremonial dress for formal occasions and elevating indigenous wear for everyday proceedings.

Building on this perspective, the expressions of Parliamentarians P, Q, and R further emphasize the transformative and unifying potential of the Speaker's cultural intervention. Parliamentarian P proposes a more consistent adoption of Ghanaian dress in Parliament, linking it to broader socio-economic benefits such as youth employment in the textile and fashion sectors, a view echoed by UNESCO (2013) on the cultural industries' role in development. Parliamentarian Q's suggestion for a "Wear Constituency Day" reflects a deepened engagement with the idea of cultural representation, drawing on the example of President Kwame Nkrumah, who famously

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embodied multiple ethnic dress traditions as a strategy for national cohesion (Essel et al., 2023; Akwetey, 2007). Parliamentarian R reinforces the idea that while current dress expectations in Parliament are governed more by convention than strict regulation, adherence to the Speaker's call would strengthen national identity and visibility. These responses align with the scholarship of Aris (2007) and Appiah (1992), who assert that sartorial choices within political spaces serve as instruments of cultural self-assertion and ideological resistance. Bagbin's call, therefore, is not only about attire but about crafting a visual and ideological narrative of Ghanaian unity and pride—one that encourages Parliament to serve as a stage for cultural affirmation and national dialogue.

4.3.5 Views of Parliamentarians that Suggest Leadership.

Scholarly agreement suggests that clothing has important political leadership implications because it influences how citizens relate to one another, which can result in social changes (Essel et al., 2023, Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Adrover, 2015; Aris, 2007; Miller, 2005). Miller (2005) goes on to say that discussion is a component of democratic culture and that fashion is a viable catalyst for democratic action that could spark conversations about social and political issues (Miller, 2004). Miller emphasizes that a person's attire can serve as a public declaration of their political, cultural, religious, and professional affiliations. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the study's findings align with Speaker Bagbin's leadership role. Some of the comments read;

> The speaker has set the tone for another step to be taken in the house, it's good he appears to lead by example, hopefully he continues that way and we, the members of parliament will try to adapt (View of Parliamentarian S).

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> Our Leader is Rt. Honourable Bagbin and if he has delved into history and spoken like that, we accept it in good faith. Some of us are learning for the first time and hopefully, we will look at it going forward (View of Parliamentarian T).
>
> …Indeed we can't be in the walk in the park alone, we have a leader in parliament. I want to believe this practice by the speaker will not be a nine-day wonder. Yes, parliament is a Ghanaian arm of government and we must protect the cultural part of it, if it is to be done through our dressing, so be it (View of Parliamentarian U).
>
> Good statement, educative, informative, and adorable dress code… Bagbin is a great leader who is a son of parliament (View of Parliamentarian V).
>
> Mr Speaker is on a mission as a leader to rebrand Parliament as an independent Institution of govt. We must support him. MPs must wear local attires to work to help boost the local/traditional textile industry and create employment. Nigeria's Senate is a typical example, not everyone wears a Suit & Tie (View of Parliamentarian G).

The comments above, highlight the nobility of leadership by example through statements. The fact that Speaker Bagbin's dress code reflected his clarion call, paves the way for the MPs to gladly follow suit. As observed in some of the sentiments, Speaker Bagbin who is the head of the legislative arm of government (parliament) has been copiously referred to as one who is leading by example. Therefore, Speaker Bagbin's Clarion Call and adornment of indigenous Ghanaian classics to deliver the statement, strategically, adds a lot of leadership impetus to the entire agenda of decolonizing Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture. This resonates with Essel et al (2023) as cited in Adrover's (2015) assertion that leaders strategically rely on the optical and sensorial powers of dressing to draw attention to their statements of authority.

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The call has become imperative because the dress culture in Ghana's colonial historical development as revealed in studies (Rutayisire, 2021; Duplessis, 2016) suggests that the colonialists embarked on a mission to specifically enforce their fashions on Africans to the detriment of African's dress cultural identity leading to the devaluation of not only the African clothing system but also of the African people. Therefore, the clarion call made by the Speaker for Ghanaian MPs to decolonize their parliamentary dress code finds expression in Aris's (2007) assertion that dress provides a way to enact and challenge colonial relations and serves as a method of cultural expression and resistance. The attempt made by the Ghanaian Speaker of Parliament, Right Honourable Alban S. K. Bagbin, therefore, offers a renaissance paradigm shift to the promotion of the rich indigenous dress fashion culture for the patronage of the larger Ghanaian populace, thereby, contributing to decolonizing the dress culture of Ghanaians (Navei & Donkoh, 2022).

For Ghanaian parliamentarians, who are public figures and leaders, their choice of attire is more than a personal preference; it is a statement of cultural allegiance and identity. The difficulty in transitioning to traditional dress could be seen as indicative of a broader issue where leaders struggle to fully embody the cultural values and practices of their own country.

4.4 Views of Cultural Custodians on Parliamentary Dress Culture and Speaker Bagbin's Clarion Call to Decolonise Parliament Dress Code.

Each ethnic or subcultural group in Ghana has formed or retained distinct cultural modes that distinguish them from other groups and the larger society. The chiefdom or leaders of these groups display all forms of unique sartorial adornments for their

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various festivities and occasions, showing pomp and pageantry of their rich cultural heritage.

This section of the study analyzes all the comments made by sampled Ghanaian cultural custodians from selected zones (regions) regarding the speaker's clarion call for MPs to revert to the wearing of indigenous Ghanaian fashion for parliamentary business. The sentiments expressed by the cultural custodians are categorized into two main groups, general views and specific views on the speaker's clarion call to decolonize parliamentary dress culture.

The speaker, according to a report from the Department of Official Parliamentary Report stated in his 2022 maiden address;

> Hon Members, this is the Parliament of Ghana. It is a unique made-in-Ghana product, and we must showcase and market it to the world as a brand. We must create a unique set of values and norms that would give a unique character to our Parliament to set it apart from the colonial legacies of the British system. My outfit today, as the Hon Speaker and presiding officer, is to set in motion that agenda. *[Hear! Hear!]* The practice of MPs decently dressed in traditional attire led by the Rt. Hon Speaker is long overdue. *[Hear! Hear!]* Ghanaians accept representation of the people to include representation of the full identity of the Ghanaian culture, tradition, and more importantly, their dress code. I am glad that this decision accords with some of the propositions of the first President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, and the other founding members of the Parliament of the First Republic. The dominant dress code of members of the National Assembly of independent Ghana was a native costume, but I do not know where we got it wrong.
>
> The Speaker of the First Parliament of the First Republic of the Country – 1960 to 1965 – the Rt Hon Joseph Richard Asiedu appreciated and in fact, practiced it. And people could cross-check from history. Hon Members, the robe, that is the long gown, the headgear, and the bib, constitute the ceremonial dress of the Speaker. We inherited it from the British. This

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> ceremonial dress was worn to distinguish the Speaker from the Members and to reflect the pomp and pageantry of special national occasions. It was therefore meant to be worn on only those special occasions. The ceremonial dress is not meant to be a daily apparel of the Speaker. Even the British had long abandoned this dress code. Ghana has long abandoned only the headgear and the bib. Hon Members, I assure you, we are not on a walk in the park in this matter. We are not in a walk in a journey of renaissance and transformation alone. We will not walk alone in this matter. We have a lot of followers and supporters in this matter. It is in this regard that I happily invite all of you to wear Ghana, grow Ghana, eat Ghana, brand Ghana, and transform Ghana. *[Hear! Hear!]* From now on, I want to see more Hon Members appear in Parliament decently adorned in traditional dress. *[Hear! Hear!]* I actually had taken note long ago of some Hon Members in the House who have already practiced it for a long time. I think some Hon Members will see me to change from yesteryears. Hon Members, I call on you to dig deep into the wealth of your innate wisdom and let us do this together in peace, joy, love and respect for the diversity of cultures, traditions and ways of dressing in the country. All I have to tell the leaders, particularly the Whips, led by my good self is to enforce the dress code of being prime, prompt, and decent in appearance in the House (Department of Official Report, D.O.R, Parliament of Ghana, Tuesday, 25th January 2022).

The Speaker, Rt. Hon. Bagbin, from the statement above, highlights the importance of showcasing and marketing the Parliament of Ghana as a "unique made in Ghana product," suggesting that the institution should embody the full identity of the Ghanaian people. This reflects a broader movement towards decolonization, where former colonies seek to assert their cultural norms and values rather than simply replicating those of their colonizers. Whilst emphasizing the need for a distinctive set of values and norms, the Speaker is advocating for the creation of a uniquely Ghanaian parliamentary culture, one that reflects the traditions, culture, and identity of the nation. Generally, the views of cultural custodians are expressed below.

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4.4.1 General Views of Cultural Custodians on Ghana's Parliamentary Dress Culture.

This section presents the perspectives of cultural custodians on the dress practices of Ghanaian Parliamentarians. As key stakeholders in the preservation of Ghana's cultural identity, these custodians offered critical reflections on how parliamentary attire reflects, or fails to reflect, the nation's heritage. Their views reveal a general discontent with the dominance of Eurocentric fashion within parliamentary settings, contrasting this with commendations for Speaker Alban Bagbin's advocacy for indigenous sartorial expression. This aspect of the findings focuses on the broader cultural discourse on decolonizing institutional dress codes and reinforcing Ghanaian identity through national symbols and attire.

In expressing their general concerns about how Ghana's Parliamentarians present themselves in the House, the respondents overwhelmingly disagreed with the prevailing mode of parliamentary dress. They conveyed significant disappointment in the continued reliance on Eurocentric sartorial styles, which they felt undermined the expression of Ghanaian cultural identity within the legislative space. In contrast, Speaker Alban Bagbin was widely commended for his deliberate promotion of indigenous Ghanaian dress culture, particularly through his use of traditional royal regalia during parliamentary proceedings. Notably, the respondents' views aligned with Speaker Bagbin's advocacy for the decolonization of parliamentary dress practices. Selected comments reflecting these perspectives are presented below:

> Whether our Parliamentarians dress to reflect our National Identity, unfortunately, No!!… since parliament is the eye of Ghana to the whole wide world, we must wholeheartedly dress in the way we are for people to see us as Ghanaians. As Ghanaians, we wear clothes and costumes, depending on where

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or the ethnic background they come from. We are not portraying the Ghanaian culture in parliament, it is always the suit and tie, which is non-Ghanaian (View of Respondent Custodian Central Region).

No! I don't think they dress to reflect Ghanaian Identity, they are always seen in suits and ties. I remember what President Kuffuor did in the 2000s when he directed that we initiate a Friday wearing of Ghanaian-made fabrics which was a good initiative, propelling Ghanaians to wear printed fabrics every Friday….but the parliamentarians, I don't see them practicing the same. It is when they do it that we can also look up to them and practice the same. Once you enter parliament you must highlight and show through your dressing the culture of Ghanaians. This will let everyone know that these are truly Ghanaian parliamentarians (View of Cultural Custodian Western Region).

I don't think they dress to reflect Ghanaian identity except for a few who do it occasionally…Trust me if we (Nanaanom) had not been consistent and firm, some chiefs would have abandoned it for a western suit for their regalia. Interestingly, the parliamentarians are happy when they see us in our regalia. The president is always excited seeing us dressed in this manner when there is a big gathering he has to honour an invitation. Sadly, they want Nananom to be in Ghanaian dress but when they are on their own they go for the Eurocentric suit and tie… I understand we are in a circular world, so why not blend them, we can go for the trousers and blend them with a Ghanaian printed fabric. It is important for parliament to ensure that we project indigenous Ghanaian textiles, fugu, kente, and Jumper. When that is done, we know it is Ghanaians who are representing us (View of Cultural Custodian, Greater Accra).

It is about time people understand that without clothes we are nothing, and how we appear is how we are respected. It is about time parliament takes the Ghanaian form of representation seriously, we cannot be a sovereign state and continue to practice another person's culture (View of Cultural Custodian, Ashanti).

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> No! Their dresses do not represent us, it is highly Europeanised, and their dress code is mostly not Ghanaian. Sometimes I wonder how they feel after wearing those foreign dresses to a Ghanaian Parliament… Most of them schooled outside the country and adopted such practices (View of Cultural Custodian, Volta Region).

> You see, for some reason, we do not believe in ourselves and we always rely on somebody and that is why we have an acculturation of identity in Parliament. Look at our own economy, we don't want to eat what we grow. To the extent that even toothpick is imported. This is what happens to people who do not believe in their own selves. This is what our forefathers left for us, and you can confirm from history, that you wouldn't see any Ghanaian in a suit and tie in the first parliament. The colonialist has come to change that and we also, having realized that we are being changed, and we keep following is a problem. We have our own ways of doing things, the food we eat, these days fried rice has taken over. Maybe the consciousness hasn't dawned on us to resume our own identity (View of Cultural Custodian, Savannah Region).

The views expressed by cultural custodians across various regions of Ghana reflect a shared concern regarding the Eurocentric dress culture of Ghanaian parliamentarians. Respondents unanimously lamented the absence of visible Ghanaian identity in parliamentary attire, criticizing the consistent use of Western suits and ties as a failure to uphold and project national culture. The sentiment is that Parliament, being the face of Ghana to the world, should showcase indigenous textiles and styles such as *kente*, *fugu*, and *jumper*, reflective of the diverse ethnic identities within the country.

Some respondents referenced past initiatives, like President Kufuor's "Friday wear" policy, as a positive step in promoting Ghanaian dress. However, they noted with disappointment that Parliament did not adopt similar practices. Others highlighted the irony of MPs admiring traditional regalia worn by chiefs (*Nananom*) yet failing to model such cultural pride themselves. There was also a broader critique of identity

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erosion linked to colonial legacies and global cultural dependence. The discourse suggests that restoring national pride must begin with symbolic acts such as dress, which influence how Ghanaians see themselves and how they are perceived globally. Ultimately, the respondents called for a conscious, consistent sartorial assertion of Ghanaian cultural sovereignty in Parliament. Corroboratively, the general comments of the cultural custodians find expression in the statement of a key respondent from a Cultural Expert;

> They are our members of parliament, supposed to represent us in Ghana's parliament, not the British parliament. are they doing what representatives of the people do, or are they representing themselves there? And in our own Ghanaian cultural sense, what is the role of a representative? Are they really doing what representatives of the people are, or are they representing themselves there and doing what they like? (Interview with a Cultural Expert 1 from National Commission on Culture, 14th July 2023).

The comments situate the Speaker's statement as a powerful tool posited to advance the Ghanaian national cultural identity vision envisioned by the legislative assembly and the first republican parliament of Ghana. It also corroborates the responses of Parliamentarian U and Parliamentarian R, who confirm that parliamentarians need to take bold steps to resolve the current eurocentric nature of parliamentary dress culture.

4.4.2 Views of Cultural Custodians on the Speaker S.K Bagbin's Clarion Call to Decolonize Parliamentary Dress Culture

Commenting on the speaker's statement on the need to decolonize the parliamentary dress code, the majority of the cultural custodians expressed identical sentiments that suggest overwhelming support and endorsement for the speaker's statement. Some of the comments expressed are;

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Yeah, I think I agree with the speaker. We are Ghanaians, generally Africans We have our own culture. Culture is defined as the totality of the life of a people. The food you eat, the music, your dress code, values and traditions, norms and practices, that in effect is culture… So our dress code in this regard, specifically, is very important to us. All over Ghana, we wear suits, go to the office in suits, and all tie and all that. That is not our dress code. Our dress code generally is Cloth, perhaps batakari, and those things are what best represent us as a people, culturally. So if Parliament now, after so many years, they now realize that we have missed the road and they have to go back to our culture why not! I agree with the speaker of parliament. I wish all parliamentarians would go to Parliament in cloth (View of Cultural Custodian, Ashanti Region).

I wholeheartedly agree with the speaker's statement, we are an independent state and being Independent as a state means we do not rely on anybody especially when it comes to our culture, that set us apart from the rest of the world. So if you are looking for a Ghanaian, that is what the creator gave us as Ghanaians, that's our culture… And our parliament is there to portray to the whole world what Ghana's culture is. And we cannot do that without repping our culture. We are Ghanaians, we've had independence from a previous time and we still dress as if we are white people, we are British. It is deceit. We are deceiving ourselves and we are deceiving our children and grandchildren. That fits into our economic situation. We haven't done well as Ghanaians. Why? (View of Cultural Custodian, Central Region) .

I support the speaker, because, if we don't take care we are gradually losing our identity as Ghanaians on the local and international front. We go to them for loans, we go there for machinery, and very soon we may even go there for their suits because we are always seen wearing their dresses. And what God created for us has been abandoned and we are wearing someone's culture. Meaning we are losing our own identity by wearing somebody else's dress, even in our own parliament. Hitherto the western countries why are they not wearing ours to their parliament. So why can't we wear our own dresses to parliament? (View of Cultural Custodian, Bono East Region)

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The speaker has stated facts and the exact thing Ghana needs to do. The speaker has taken a bold and positive step that needs to be encouraged. We are Ghanaians and we have to portray our culture. The moment you see or enter parliament one must know that this is Ghanaian by his or her dress code. We cannot say that we are Ghanaians and we will portray a different culture. I have been watching Television, the Nigerian Parliament, they wear their Agbada to show that they are truly Nigerians. We need to show our culture to the world, I agree with the Speaker (View of Western Region Cultural Custodian).

I agree with the speaker well well well… because it appears In Ghana we only pay lip service to the fact and claim that we are a Sovereign state. However, our attitudes and actions don't portray we are independent. Every Sovereign state has and holds his or her Identity and does things without influence from the Western world. The situation has made Ghana a photocopy of the Western world and gradually we are losing our enviable culture. The speaker's statement is an eye-opener for Ghanaians to go back to our roots, culture, and traditions…Now, as Ghanaians, what dress were our forefathers who won independence for us wearing? It was Kaba and Slit, when Independence was gained for this country our female national assembly representatives were wearing Kaba and Slit; the mother of Auntie Efua Sutherland, and Madam Wilmot were all wearing Kaba and kente slit to parliament (View of Cultural Custodian, Northern Region…

When Queen Elizabeth visited Ghana's parliament she made a categorical statement that Indeed this is a colorful parliament. So what exactly, what caused the demise of all these beautiful cultures that we had to return to the ideals of the same white man's actions we tagged as slavery and improper? Now we have independence, so what we rejected for independence why are we going back for them? Who is deceiving who? I agree totally with the speaker's Call and I am for it (View of Cultural Custodian, Greater Accra Region)

I think the speaker has made a profound statement, but what were they doing all this while? Nkrumah wore the smock together with his cabinet to declare

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independence in an attempt to build a united Ghana. You know in the northern region, a vast majority of them were part of the trans-Togoland. The Northerners wore smocks, the Voltarians wore smocks as well. … Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah brought them on board to join Ghana for a united Gold Coast. Nkrumah wanted to use his dress fashion to be identified with them. The smock primarily was meant to represent religious, and ethnic unity. It wouldn't have been news if Nkrumah had worn cloth wrapped around because he is an Nzema, clearly, his decision to wear the dress fashion of the North was to explode and engender identity discourse in the country (View of Cultural Custodian, Eastern Region).

Ghanaian code of dressing is what we should do and should be practicing... The colonialists are the cause of it. I heard him say he doesn't know where we got it wrong. He should know!! Because it is not our culture. The colonial mind is still with us. That is why they have been wearing suits to parliaments everywhere, offices and so on we should change it and take our Ghanian dress code identity. Okay! now aside from that I want to say that the dress code alone is not important to me, the most important thing to me is our language which must also be used in parliament., I don't see why we should adopt the white man's language in our parliament. To me, it doesn't make sense. It means you are still under the colonial master. You don't have your language. You don't have a language; the colonialists came to tell us that our language is not important. Our language is crude (View of Cultural Custodian Savannah Region).

Yes, everything we do has an identity construction. if you dress in the white man's dress code it means you are attuned to the white man, if you dress in the Ghanaian code, it means you are attuned to your Ghanaian identity. So if you go to Parliament and you dress suit and go and sit there you don't look Ghanaian. I think that we should dress in cloth or we should dress in kente cloth or whatever cloth or whatever Ghanaian dress, but that is what our forefathers gave to us, that is the symbolism that it gives to Ghanaians especially our children who are growing up. Now everything is from the colonial master "Abrokyiri". Do the westerners consider themselves as

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> Africans and Ghanaians? Do they wear our clothes to their parliaments?, so why should we wear their clothes to our parliaments? It shows how degraded we are in culture (View of Cultural Custodian, Western North).

> I admire the speaker for making such a clarion call. However, apart from what the speaker is saying our current parliamentary dress is colonial, and we had a Ghanaian way of dressing to parliament, if that is what the case was, why have we changed? After independence, it means we didn't learn anything? We didn't learn anything? so we should stop talking about the white man who colonized us. He is no longer colonizing you. What are you doing with your mind? So, we must re-align ourselves to our culture, to our way of life, to our dress code, and all that…talking specifically about dress code, we are lost and if you get lost in the way you dress yourself you are lost completely (View of Cultural Custodian, Upper East Region).

The cultural custodians acknowledges that the current parliamentary dress code in Ghana is a remnant of colonial influence, highlighting the disconnect between Ghanaian cultural identity and the imported practices that have persisted since colonial times. The custodian questions why, after gaining independence, Ghanaians have continued to adhere to these colonial practices instead of reverting to or preserving their indigenous ways of dressing. This suggests a broader concern about the long-lasting impact of colonialism on Ghanaian culture and identity.

While there is general consensus and commendation by respondents on the statement made by the Rt. Hon Speaker S.K Bagbin, the cultural custodians are deeply worried about the current state of parliamentary dress culture. In their account, they refer to the dress culture of Ghana's parliament as a photocopy of the western parliament. which was recounted in the account of a respondent from the National Commission on Culture that;

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> …even before 1951, there were several projections of how Ghanaians wanted to behave more than the Europeans who were influencing them. And I think that really penetrated into political leadership in this country. what also metamorphosed into the naming of the guitar music as high life all had to do with musicians playing for people in suits and ties. Just imagine, the Ordinary Ghanaian saw that music and the people playing in such dresses as okay, this is not suitable for me. It is for the people of high life on the guitar music really has nothing to do with the music itself. But it has to do with the first patrons of that type of music. People of elite class, high on the economic ladder, and all those things. And that is really the Westernized kind of influence that political leaders at the time wanted to present themselves at a certain point... from our education, you can imagine, if you were part of that generation that performed or read Macbeth, and Julius Caesar, how would you want to dress? We were reading much of the history of other people that are on and the images we saw in literature, that at some point we performed. Sadly, these literature tests were also mounted as productions. Students really acted in place. Okay, so they were not just read, but they were also mounted as productions in training colleges, especially Cape Coast, it started with training colleges competing with secondary schools at that level. So, Komenda training college and school will come on stage to perform while secondary students are also performing. or even if they were doing Ghanaian plays, where did they get the impact and the influences from? They got them from Western liturgies, right? And here again, a lot of the concepts we adopted, even in our judicial system, today, how do lawyers dress to court? How do judges, magistrates, and all that dress to court? (Interview with a respondent Cultural Expert 1 from the National Commision on Culture, 14th July, 2023).

The statement by the respondent Cultural Expert, is in sync with the findings of Essel, Navei, and Donkoh, (2023) that the parliamentarians of the 4th republican parliament do not dress to reflect the Ghanaian culture. Also, the comments from the cultural custodians align with provisions in the Cultural Policy of Ghana, which emphasizes that "*to promote national identity, institutions like the University, the Judiciary, and*

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legislature shall be encouraged to adopt local design and patterns in their regalia, uniforms and paraphernalia" (p. 44). Per the aforementioned policy framework of the Ghana National Commission on Culture, the parliament of Ghana is one of the critical institutions expected to promote Ghanaian nationalistic dress identity through the exemplary wearing of indigenous Ghanaian classics for parliamentary business for the larger emulation of the Ghanaian populace. Unfortunately, available evidence from corroborative sources regarding the dress culture of parliamentarians in Ghana doesn't support the provision in the Cultural Policy document.

4.5 The Need for Making the Wearing of Indigenous Ghanaian Classics Statutory for Parliamentary Business in Ghana's Parliament

The study established that the parliament of Ghana's dress code is guided by convention and not necessarily a law. The standing orders of Ghana's parliament from the standing orders of the National Assembly, 1st December, 1960, the standing orders of the consultative Assembly of Ghana, 199, standing orders of the Parliament of Ghana, 30th November, 1995, the standing orders of 1st November, 2000 and the current standing orders of the Parliament of Ghana October 2021, all do not make a clear-cut provision on what a parliamentarian must wear to parliament. Except for Article 291 of the November 1st, 2000 standing Orders that states, *"a member may be allowed into the Chamber with a handbag of reasonable size".*

This provision only makes room for the size of bags that are allowed into the chamber and does not specifically address the type or mode of dressing for parliamentary duty by parliament. However, the speaker, Bagbin, on 26 May 2022 stated in the House of Parliament, during a session that;

> The dress code mandates and enjoins us to come to this house formerly dressed, they used the term decent, but some of the things that I see you

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> wearing are singlets, and when you wear a singlet into the House of Parliament, you are naked… therefore you have difficulty in catching the eye of the speaker. Leaders please take up the role and make sure the proper thing is done, particularly the whips, that's why you are there, it's your area of focus, to maintain discipline and order. I have seen it for some days now, I will not recognize any naked person in this house again, we will see you as a stranger and and you will be walked out of the house (Bagbin, 2022).

Speaker Bagbin's statement is anchored on the convention of parliament, which has been the basis of precedential occurrences in the House of Parliament. For instance, in 2004, during the speakership of Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey rebuked the then member of parliament for Ga South Constituency, Hon. Ernest Atuquaye, for improper dressing. A similar incident happened in 2003 when Dr. Nduom, the then minister for economic planning, was kicked out of parliament for wearing a short-sleeved shirt with no tie. A more recent incident in parliament was the case of Honourable member of parliament for Adenta Constituency in the Greater Accra region (2009 to 2013), Kojo Adu Asare, in 2012, was forced to hide under his desk to avoid heckling from fellow MPs for not wearing a tie. The findings, therefore, highlight the reliance of the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, on parliamentary conventions and precedents to uphold standards of dress and decorum within Ghana's legislature. Historical instances from 2003, 2004, and 2012 demonstrate a consistent approach to enforcing dress codes, which emphasizes the institutional significance of formal appearance in the House. The measures taken against Hon. Ernest Atuquaye, Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom, and Kojo Adu Asare indicate that failure to adhere to sartorial expectations has frequently resulted in censure or ridicule, emphasizing how tradition influences acceptable behaviour. Therefore, Bagbin's position is not arbitrary but is grounded in parliamentary norms and the necessity to preserve the dignity of the

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House. The speaker, Rt. Hon Speaker Bagbin, during the announcement and promulgation of the new standing orders on 7th February 2024, recounted that;

> …the processes and procedures in the House are challenged, with time and practice exposing the gaps and deficiencies in the November 2000 Standing Orders… the present composition of the House has brought those gaps and deficiencies into sharper focus, even though those deficiencies surfaced as far back as early 2001. We must start aligning the conduct of business in the House with the evolving and changing trends and requirements of our Parliament. We need to know how to apply and cope with the January 2024 Standing Orders, which have replaced the 2000 Orders. These are some of the reasons we are here today. As we say in Africa, "When the drummers alter their beats, the dancers must adjust their steps (Bagbin, 2023).

The year 2000 standing orders were challenged and hence needed a revised edition, the study revealed that the current standing orders of parliament also fail to capture specific prescriptions for, or on how a legislator must dress to the House of Parliament in Ghana.

In an interview with one of the speakers of Parliament, it was revealed;

> … I have not seen a rare code in the form of a law where it is stated, but it's possible it could be in one of the old ordinances or the initial acts that were passed by the earlier parliament. But in the Fourth Republic, we have actually not legislated on dress codes. We've been guided by the past and also the realities of today. So you see that our dress code has relaxed and because of the economic situation, we allow even casual dressing into Parliament (Interview with Rt. Hon. Bagbin, 22nd July, 2024).

The processes and procedures governing the operations of Ghana's Parliament, as outlined in the Standing Orders, have undergone significant scrutiny and transformation over the years. As Speaker Alban Bagbin (2023) aptly acknowledged, the November 2000 Standing Orders, which previously guided parliamentary

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business, became increasingly inadequate over time. With evolving democratic practices and a more diverse and assertive parliamentary composition, these outdated rules exposed several operational gaps and deficiencies. As Bagbin noted, although some of these deficiencies emerged as early as 2001, their full implications became more pronounced in recent years, necessitating a thorough revision. In his words: *"When the drummers alter their beats, the dancers must adjust their steps,"* emphasizing the need for institutional responsiveness to contextual shifts.

The adoption of the January 2024 Standing Orders aimed to address these limitations and align the conduct of legislative business with contemporary demands. However, this study reveals that even the revised Standing Orders fall short in providing explicit prescriptions or guidelines concerning the sartorial presentation of Members of Parliament. While the Orders may enhance procedural clarity and legislative efficiency, they remain silent on matters related to the cultural or symbolic representation of Ghanaian identity through dress. This silence is significant. In an interview with one of the Speakers of Parliament, it was revealed that although informal norms and traditions may influence how Members choose to dress, there is no legally binding provision or formal rule governing dress codes within the Standing Orders. This institutional oversight persists despite growing public and scholarly interest in promoting a national dress culture within the highest law-making body of the land (Essel, Navei, & Donkor, 2023).

Furthermore, the symbolic and communicative power of dress in Parliament has been widely discussed in Ghanaian political discourse. Speaker Bagbin himself has, in several instances, appeared in traditional kente and northern smocks, emphasizing the value of embracing indigenous identity in public office (GhanaWeb, 2022). Yet,

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without codification in the Standing Orders, such gestures remain personal or symbolic rather than procedural mandates.

This institutional gap presents a broader tension between formal legislative procedures and the informal, evolving expectations of national representation. As argued by Frempong (2017), parliaments in transitional democracies like Ghana must not only function effectively but also embody cultural authenticity to reinforce legitimacy and public trust. Conclusively, while the 2024 Standing Orders represent progress in terms of procedural governance, they still do not address all aspects of representational culture within Parliament, particularly those tied to dress as a symbol of national identity. This omission suggests an ongoing need for institutional reflection on how formal regulations can evolve to support cultural decolonization and authentic Ghanaian representation within democratic spaces.

The study further investigated whether the Standing Orders of Ghana's Parliament contain specific provisions for dress codes, with responses captured in Figure 4.99 below.

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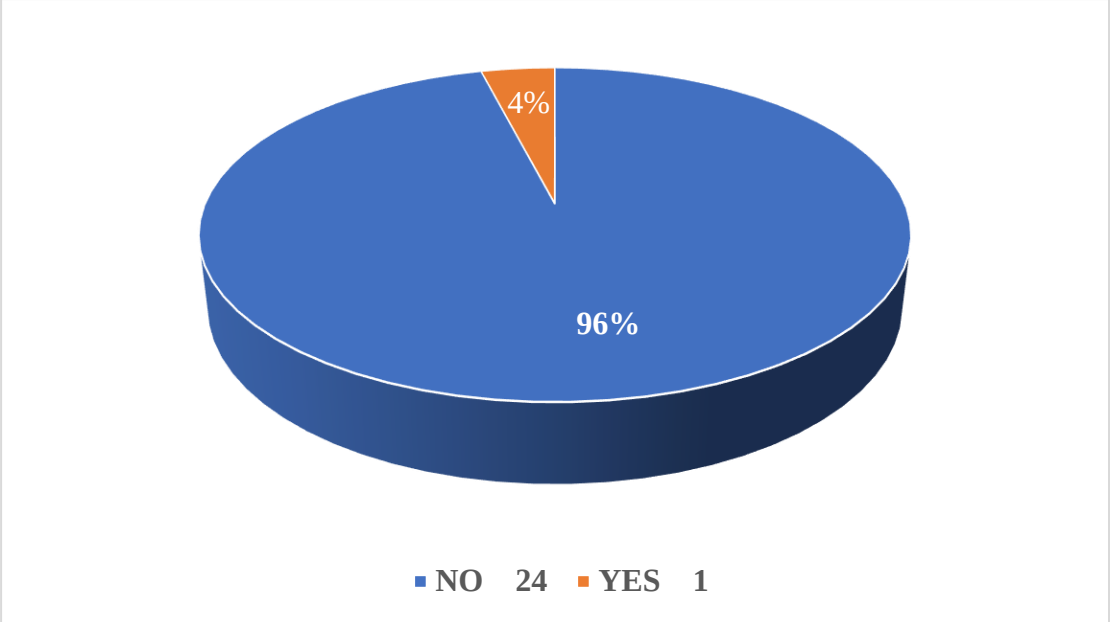

Figure 4.99 A chart displaying the responses of Parliamentarians on whether parliament has a dress code
Source: **(**Researcher's fieldwork, 2023)

The data in Figure 4.99 demonstrates that a substantial majority of parliamentarians reported no formal dress code within their Standing Orders; only 4% suggested otherwise, likely due to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of procedural language. Those few claimed that "parliament has a provision in the Standing Orders that caters for that," yet their view stood in stark divergence from the overall consensus. This finding is supported by the broader literature on the topic of legislative attire and decolonisation in Ghana. Essel, Navei, and Donkor (2023) highlight that despite Speaker Alban Bagbin's public appeal for a traditional dress code, symbolized by his kente and royal regalia during the commencement of the Second Session in January 2022, there remains no statutory requirement governing MPs' attire; instead, his plea was informal and normative. The Parliament's official rules, derived from colonial antecedents, focus predominantly on behavioural decorum (such as language and conduct) and make no explicit mention of dress. This aligns with Ghana's 2004 National Commission on Culture report, which

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recommended that institutions, including Parliament, incorporate indigenous dress into their symbolic representation, yet stopped short of mandating it. In sum, while there is growing scholarly and political momentum to 'decolonise' parliamentary dress through rhetorical advocacy and culturally resonant practice, no binding provisions exist in the Standing Orders. The 4% minority who believe otherwise may reflect awareness of normative customs or misinterpretation of informal guidance, but their view is not supported by formal legislative texts. These finding is further asserted in the account of a member of the standing order's committee of parliament and another member from the clerk department. The clerk stated;

> …The chamber of parliament is a hallowed place; the chamber is hallowed. In the words of Mr. Speaker, parliament is an institution of might and majesty, and so decorum is key. You often hear phrases like the dignity of the institution of parliament is invaluable. Our conduct, of course, which includes our dressing, should uphold and enhance the dignity of parliament. And so, members are required to dress appropriately. If you have to be in a suit, be in a suit. When a member decides to wear a suit, there is nothing like what we call smart-casual, where you put on a suit without a tie, or you are in a shirt with a jacket on. You can't dress like that to parliament. If you have to be in a suit, it must be a suit and tie. Otherwise, you can be walked out. When the house is on recess, in some cases, members are allowed to dress down, but not in all cases. In all cases, you must appear formal and decent. Being formal doesn't necessarily mean only a suit in this instance; you can be in a political suit, but a very formal, fugu (smock) that looks formal. There are some of the smocks that are formal and others that I describe as singlets. The one with short sleeves, where all your armpits show. If you have to be in that, then you need a shirt to cover up. You can also decide to be in clothes, but you and I know the complexities of wearing clothes and environmental conditions, so that has been de-emphasized a bit…Talking about dressing for MPs, formal wear is what is required. For the women, they can be in slit and Kaba, styled in a decent manner that is formal wear. I am yet to see a lady dressed in jeans or pants and a shirt in parliament. That is unacceptable**.** Decent Dressing as we

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> **prescribe, is not captured in the standing orders or by law. It is a matter of convention** (Interview with a Clerk of Parliament, 15th October, 2024).

In a similar vein, another member of the Clerk Department was opinionated;

> …whether parliament has a dress code, YES AND NO… Yes, in the sense that you cannot come to parliament as a member or officer in a sportive outfit or in a very casual outfit. When I say Casual, it comes in the form of jeans, a T-shirt, short sleeves, or what the speaker refers to as singlets. However, it is a no, because we do not have specific attire, necessarily you must appear in (Interview with respondent Clerk 1, October 17th, 2023).

From the afore discussions, it is evident that there is a broad prohibition against certain types of informal attire, yet a lack of specific requirements for formal dress. This approach can be seen as both a reflection of and a response to the need for maintaining decorum while allowing flexibility. It further suggests that there is no strict dress code in parliament that dictates specific attire (NO). However, there are implicit guidelines and expectations for dressing appropriately (YES) The guidelines suggest not wearing overly casual or sporty clothing, such as:

a. Jeans
b. T-shirts
c. Short sleeves
d. Singlets (tank tops)
e. Instead, members and officers are expected to dress more formally and professionally, but there is no specific required attire. In essence, parliament has an unwritten dress code that encourages formal dressing without specifying exact requirements.

In an interview with a member of the standing order committee of parliament, the assertion of the respondent from the clerk department was reinforced that;

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> ...At the moment, we don't have anything of the sort in our standing orders, except for conventions, we are done reviewing the standing orders for now, otherwise, we could have considered introducing it, but for me, I think there is a need to weave our culture into our parliamentary affairs. However, if you make it statutory, will you consider what is acceptable and what is not acceptable? What is legal and what is illegal? And then the Sanctions? Meaning you want to make a law. You want to make a law to regulate people's dressing conduct which will be a problem; otherwise, you are making a uniform of the sort. Why don't we rather consolidate the current gains spearheaded by the speaker to carve out an identity that best represents the parliament of Ghana? This can be done through encouragement, To legislate, it needs latitudes and not particularize what you mean by Ghanaian dress in the law to be enacted, would you say they should be in SMOCK or what? What about those who don't hail from the traditional areas? But the purpose of having our customs and traditions patented for it to be upheld is complex in this jurisdiction but welcoming news (Interview with participant SOC 1, January, 14th 2024).

Clearly, from the aforestated corroborative positions of the respondents, it is further asserted that the parliament of Ghana does not have legislation on what a member of parliament must wear to the house of parliament for business. In view of the prevailing circumstance, the views of members of parliament were sought on the need to legalize the parliamentary dress code in Ghana, the chart in Figure 4.90 below reveals the position of selected parliamentarians on the subject under consideration.

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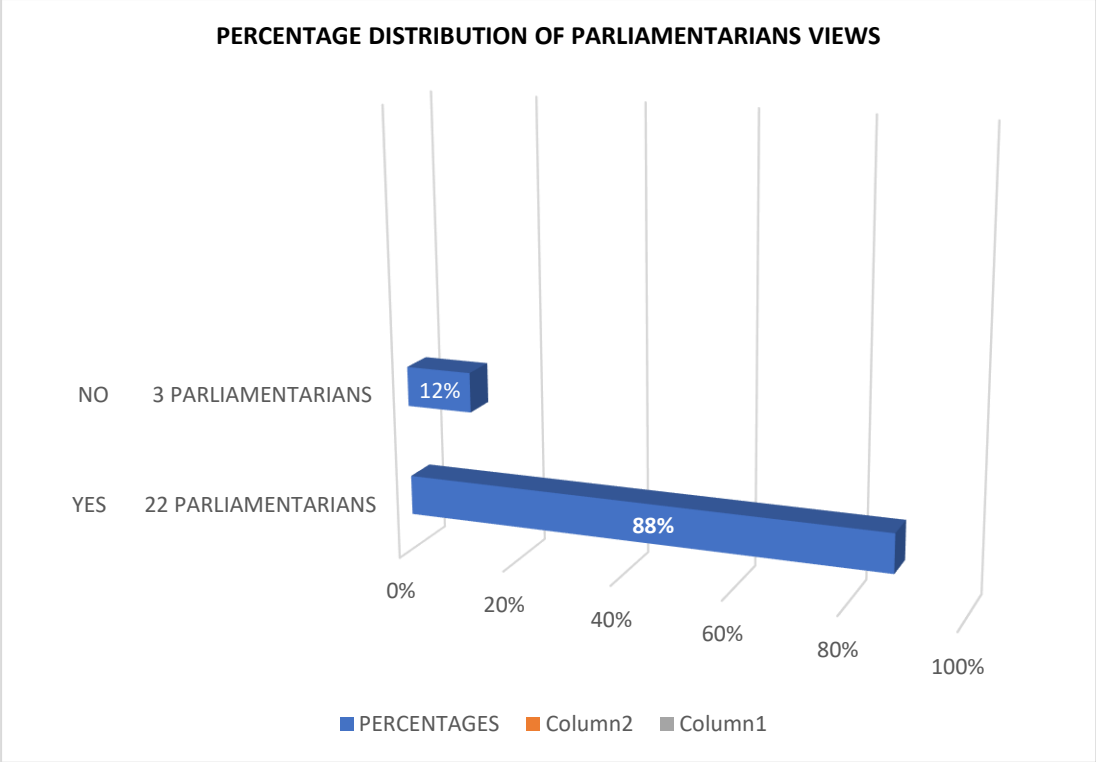

Figure 4.100 Notes: Percentage Distribution of Views of Parliamentarians on whether Parliament should legalize dress code or not.
Source: (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2023)

The views of parliamentarians expressed in *Figure 4.90* above is a clear indication of majority consensus on parliamentarians' resolve in the context of the sampled respondents to decolonize Ghana's parliamentary dress code through legislation. The position held by the parliamentarians is reinforced in the account of a respondent member of the Standing Orders Committee;

> …it is a legitimate concern, In the sense that this dress code initiative by Rt. Hon Bagbin has completely departed from the Western style and is his personal initiative and whether it is sustainable is another problem.. you know the parliament of Ghana inherited a British system and that is what has impacted us so greatly… strangely, the British have long abandoned some of these things and we are still doing it (Interview with participant SOC-03 September 14th, 2023)

Twelve percent of the respondents who opposed the view that there is no dress code legislation appeared to rely on a misconception rooted in a non-existent provision

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within the Standing Orders, and accompanied by fear of sanctions. While the Standing Orders do not formally prescribe any specific dress code for Members of Parliament, some respondents referred instead to parliamentary conventions or unwritten norms. One such respondent remarked:

> If it is dressing to portray our culture, where I come from, then there is no need for any law to come in, because anytime there is a law, there are accompanying sanctions... The sanction is what everybody is afraid of; besides, we have a dress code in our standing orders. But I think the best law is your conscience, if your conscience is well prepared or groomed, that is the best thing. Why do we have all the laws around but people misbehave? But if your conscience tells you that something is wrong you wouldn't need a law to make it rigt (View of parliamentarian C).

Some of the parliamentarians expressed the following views;

> I witnessed the first parliament a bit and saw Dr. Nkrumah pursue the personality agenda; ever since, I haven't witnessed any under the fourth republic. Speaker Bagbin's idea to move for the use of Indigenous Ghanaian dresses in parliament is a novelty and deserves commendation. However, the problem now has to do with sustainability; God forbid if another pro-Westminster Speaker comes and abolishes the practice. For example, Speaker Oquaye never occupied a seat in the chamber in anything other than a suit. The nearest he went was a tunic dress, which was also a suit and foreign. Speaker Ajaho was also consistent in suit, and Ala Adjetey was also more Eurocentric; he added a cap on top of it, even though he didn't wear the hat in presiding. The reason is that if you wear the hat, you are taking the position of the Crown. That's the practice in the UK… if a law is needed to shape this call, why not? I am for it, but in what form is it going to take? (View of Parliamentarian, B)

> If enacting a law is what can make them portray what the true Ghanaian is, then so be it. Yes, they are there representing the Ghanaian culture, and culture is a critical part of the representation. You cannot wear a tie and suit and say you are representing Ghanaians; so if it will take a law for parliament to dress

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> to reflect the Ghanaian culture, then that must be done (View of Parliamentarian J).

The responses above regarding Parliamentarian B and J are in synch with the assertion of the Cultural Custodian Central region, which states

> Well, I think there is a need to regulate or legalize the dress code of parliament to include Ghanaian indigenous classics. The convention is not enough, because you wouldn't go to the British Parliament and see a white man dressed in cloth to go and sit there. That is their rule, that is their regulation. So why do you come to Ghana and bring the white man's dress to our Parliament? Are we an appendix of the British Parliament or what? So I think it should be made law. They should debate it and accept it. Because it is Ghanaians, it is we Ghanaians who voted them to go to our Parliament. We didn't vote for them to go to the British Parliament. We voted for them to go to Ghana's Parliament. And Ghana's Parliament must reflect the Ghanaian way of dress code whether we like it or not. Otherwise, we should strip ourselves of the Ghanaian identity and go and live in Britain and go to their parliament (Cultural Custodian, Central Region).

In a similar opinion shared by a respondent from the National Commission on Culture, it was revealed;

> …Yes, I think the legislation is very important. That if you really want to be a representative of the people, with people, the Ghanaian people, then what identity are you putting out there to represent us in parliament? It should be statutory that every parliamentarian goes to the chamber in an indigenous classic. It should be. And I can imagine the impact it will make on our Ghanaian fashion industry and all that. Because these people are iconic figures in our society and a lot of people look up to them, including the way they dress and want to look like them. I am afraid that when the speaker leaves, it might die with his exit. Right? If today it is not Alban Bagbin, then go to hell with indigenous Ghanaian dressing. It so sad we have a Eurocentric situation, the parliament of Ghana should be known for our identity across the globe,

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> and here in Ghana, if you call yourself a representative of the people, the Ghanian people, then you should be seen working in the parliament in something that can be identified with the Ghanian people (Interview with a respondent from the National Commission on Culture 14th July 2023).

The statements made above and the statistics provided in Figure 4.90 collectively support the call by Essel et al (2023) that in order to ensure exemplary leadership of wearing made in Ghana by the legislature, executive, and other arms of government to push the decolonization agenda beyond mere rhetoric of wear Ghana, is to make the practice statutory. Clearly the statistics and corroborative statements made support the call for the legalization of the Ghanaian legislative dress code on the grounds that the dress culture of parliamentarians sends powerful signals to followers, and peers, plays a crucial role in the identity politics of Ghanaian societies, and projects the National personality concept promulgated by the first republican parliament in 1960. Any artifact placed on the body takes on social meaning in relation to its wearer, serves an important socializing influence, and acts as a symbol of social status and identity.

4.6 Impact of legislative dress fashion on Ghana's local fashion industry

The study concurred the studies of (Entwistle, 2000; Essel, 2019) that dress fashion or Sartorial expression has functioned as a salient instrument of political communication and social stratification across historical epochs. The dress choices of political figures constitute potent semiotic tools, influencing public perception and catalyzing sartorial innovation within national industries (Craik, 2003). In the Ghanaian context, political elites have historically deployed dress as a mechanism to both reinforce hegemony and subvert established socio-political conventions (Quarcoopome, 1993; Ross, 2010). This study interrogated how parliamentary legislators' sartorial practices in Ghana mediate impacts on the domestic fashion

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ecosystem. Analysis revealed five interconnected dimensions through which parliamentary dress cultivates industry development. The five key areas of impact included: Consumer Awareness, financial growth, Restoration of Confidence in Ghanaian Dress fashion, Provision of strong local Competitive Market, and Fashion and Cultural Identity.

4.6.1 Consumer Awareness

To unravel the major implications of legislative dress fashion on the growth of the Ghanaian fashion industry, the respondents consensually revealed consumer awareness as one of the major implications. The respondents asserted that Parliamentarians are key figures in societies and can play a role in the awareness creation of Indigenous Ghanaian classics produced by local manufacturers in Ghana. In furtherance to the creation of awareness, it was also revealed that legislative dress fashion in Ghana can further promote sustainable practices in the fashion industry by raising awareness among consumers. By this, parliamentarians, through advocacy will ensure measures that provide consumers with more information to make sustainable choices, such as labeling requirements for sustainable textiles. Respondent National Commission on Culture intimated that;

> It does have an implication on consumer awareness... if legislative dress fashion is taken seriously in this country, Ghana will rake in more gains, we are a country with over thirty million dressing population… it has the tendency to influence the fashion industry because parliamentarians are some way, somehow also seen in show business and leadership roles… so people learn from them. People see what they do as the ideal way. So seeing your parliamentarian dress in a suit may influence your fashion choices as well. And so it means that if the majority or any number is influenced by suit and tie, that is how they are also going to be like them, want to behave like them, or want to connect with them. When they see their parliamentarian more often

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> in smocks or Indigenous classics, they may also want to dress in a similar fashion and may want to procure one or two smocks that they will be wearing to connect with their MP. So indirectly and directly, their fashion choices create some sort of public awareness to the people who follow them (Interview with a respondent from the National Commission on Culture, 14th July, 2023).

A similar opinion was shared by respondent Parliamentarian B, that;

> …Members of parliament are iconic figures, speakers are iconic figures and we represent various constituencies with huge followings and so it is believed that what and how we dress can influence or incite consumer awareness, that is our followers, leading them to patronize Ghanaian products (Interview with respondent Parliamentarian B, 16th December 2023).

The assertion of both respondents sits in the accounts of respondent parliamentarian E that;

> Sometimes, I wonder how we have allowed all the numerous factories built by Nkrumah to collapse… we, politicians and citizens of this country are partly to be blamed. These factories could have shored up the cedi in terms of production and once we politicians or legislators take up the need to dress in the Ghanaian way in the exercise of our duty we can easily boost the industry through awareness creation… the programmmes we attend, not only in parliament but every visible space we find ourselves, India can be a case study (Interview with respondent Parliamentarian E, 14th October 2023).

The statements posited by respondent Parliamentarian B and Parliamentarian E suggest that the dressing of a parliamentarian holds a significant position in pulling the strings of consumer awareness. Also, there is a consensus on how a leader (parliamentarian) dress can influence their followers. Their assertion is in synch with the findings of Setiawan and Sesilia (2019) that dress fashion trends are reflections of social and economic status, which is typically defined and propelled by leadership influence and popularity. Dress fashion, which answers consumers' demand for trendy

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and affordable clothes, has a huge economic impact, driving recent and future growth in the apparel industry regarding consumer preferences.

4.6.2 Financial Growth of the Fashion Subsector

One of the key implications posited by the respondents was the tendency of legislative dress fashion to boost the financial growth of the fashion industry in Ghana. Howard (2016) had previously revealed that one of the major factors accounting for the inability of the Ghana textile subsector of the fashion industry to operate effectively was primarily due to the lack of capital investment in the sub-sector by the government, financial institutions, and stakeholders. The studies of Essel (2019), and Howard (2016) have further established that the sector whose management control is by the government is confronted with serious financial constraints and is crying for the government to recapitalize the sector. Since the legislature is part of the three arms of government and has a critical role in promoting Ghanaian dress identity the respondents revealed that;

> …To boost the financial strength of the local Fashion industry, I believe when Ghanaian legislators take the bull by the horns, and lead the charge, wearing products from our Ghanaian fashion industry, and considering the fact that parliamentarians have a huge following this can go a long way to affect the financial growth of companies. Followers of our parliamentarians can easily be impacted by their role models who are the MP's. When followers purchase such Indigenous Ghanaian dresses or clothes, it is money we are talking about (Interview with a respondent from the clerk department on 15th October, 2024).

Another respondent reiterated a similar assertion that

> Ghana's Fashion industry requires huge financial investment to shore up it competitiveness in the global market space. The Dresses of leaders are often imitated by followers…patronage of Ghanaian traditional fashion can be

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> enhanced when parliamentarians rally their supporters behind them and represent them fully in their ethnic identity (Interview with a respondent from the National Commission on Culture (NCC) 14th July 2023).

The statements made by respondent Clerk and NCC re-echoes with the findings of Swatsky (2021) and Nayrkoh (2022) that the fashion industry is a multi-million sector that has the capability of improving the financial state of economies. With the emerging rate at which parliamentarians gather momentum with their huge following, it is most likely that their identity construction through dress fashion can be imitated by their followers. Moreso, legislators are iconic figures who can influence public perception regarding Ghanaian cultural heritage to cause a restoration of Ghanaian cultural memory. A parliamentarian's attire can shape how they are perceived by the public, affecting their image and credibility. By embracing and showcasing legislative dress fashion, the implications are that it will promote sales in the Ghanaian fashion industry to cause a resurgence of interest in traditional craftsmanship, cultural heritage, and sustainable practices, ultimately driving financial growth of the subsector.

4.6.3 Promotion of Ghana's Fashion Business

The fashion industry is globally valued at about US$ 2.76 trillion (Nyarkoh, 2022) with Ghana's ever-rising fashion population not being an exception regarding its business prospects. The study revealed that legislators' dress fashion accompanies huge economic factors, as legislators constitute automatic brand ambassadors for the promotion and development of the textile and fashion business in Ghana. When legislators wear or adorn themselves in indigenous Ghanaian classics it can serve as an endorsement, increasing brand recognition and credibility and driving sales. Legislators' deliberate effort to wear Indigenous Ghanaian classics such as smock,

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kente, and wrap-around, stimulates a sense of imitation by followership, revives interest in cultural heritage, and promotes cultural exchange and understanding once there is a careful construction of identity and nationalism. This enhances fashion art production which is an important part of Ghanaian ethnic traditions in the account of Essel (2019). In an interview with one of the respondents it was revealed;

> The legislative arm of government is a very sensitive branch of every democratic system, their dressing connotes a great deal of impression on Ghana's fashion business, Look, all legislators are default and automatic brand ambassadors for Ghana, irrespective of the field, either, culture, fashion or diplomacy. Their dressing has the tendency to promote tourism and investment in the state. They can promote local fashion talent with their dressing through international relations *(Interview with respondent Robe designer, October 2nd, 2023).*

Legislators are iconic images, inspiring fashion editorial content, and cementing their status as style icons, further promoting the fashion industry. From the account of respondent Robe Designer, it can be said that legislators hold a significant place in the fashion industry as key business promoters, they can serve as influential trendsetters, pace-setters, driving growth and innovation in the fashion industry, while promoting cultural heritage, and local talent and economic development. This assertion is further corroborated in the account of (Essel et al., 2023, Navei & Donkoh, 2022) regarding how the dress fashion of leaders influences how citizens relate to one another, which can result in social changes, hence promoting the subsector.

In a similar account from another respondent, it was reiterated that

> …most businesses in the fashion industry will feel more belonging when parliamentarians are seen wearing their products... and this will help increase their production capacity for the individuals to also have an interest in

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purchasing some of their goods (Interview with Cultural Policy Expert, October 13th, 2023).

The assertion of respondent policy experts suggests that legislative fashion has the potential to increase the promotion of fashion goods to sustain the chain of jobs in the industry. The position of respondent Policy expert is in tandem with the findings of Essel (2017) that in every buoyant fashion industry, the chain of fashion workers works hand in hand. The business of fashion is a mega industry on its own that employs thousands of workers based on its market size. The workers include fashion designers, technicians (machinists), fashion coordinators, fashion models, cosmetologists, illustrators, stylists, photographers, costume designers, fashion educators (historians, teachers), writers (journalists, bloggers, editors), and merchandisers (Career in Focus, 2007 as cited in Essel, 2017). The statement also touches on the economic implications of MPs' sartorial choices. When MPs wear locally made garments, they do not only promote Ghanaian fashion but also support the local textile and garment industries. Increased visibility of these garments in high-profile settings can drive consumer demand, leading to greater economic opportunities for local designers, tailors, and artisans (Quartey, 2017). This patronage can create a positive feedback loop, where demand for Ghanaian dresses leads to job creation, skill development, and economic empowerment, particularly for young people entering the fashion industry.

4.6.4 Restoration of Confidence in Ghanaian Dress Fashion.

The dress of a leader can play a significant role in restoring confidence within the fashion industry by setting a standard for professionalism, authority, and charisma. Leaders are role models and their fashion choices can inspire others to follow their style, creating a trend and increasing demand for similar clothing and accessories.

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Legislators are leaders, and once their dressing falls in line with Ghanaian identity construction it intend to endorse local designers, textiles, and fashion brands and restore confidence in the fashion space. In the estimation of the respondents, legislators can revive people's interest or confidence in Ghanaian dress fashion;

> Ghana has come a long way, and we need to see our textile and fashion sector flourish for the gains of this country… the purposeful effort to have our customs and traditions involved should be projected through parliament, upheld, and sustained to restore consumer confidence in the sector. We live in a global space where it is difficult to tame the export and importation of dresses completely, we can appeal to the cultural and patriotic conscience of the people to buy into our dresses… should parliament take the lead things can change and there will be considerable and impactful restoration of confidence in the local fashion industry (Interview with a respondent from the National Commission on Culture, 14th July, 2023).

It is evident from the respondent above that a leader's dress (parliamentarian) has the tendency to promote national pride, showcasing and preserving the heritage of Ghana. When leaders portray themselves in Ghanaian dresses, it reflects the authentic and genuine connection to their culture.

> Members of parliament are role models to the people they represent, and so, wearing a Ghanaian dress, communicates a lot to the public. And many people would have confidence in our local fashion which would encourage a lot to patronize our fashion which will go a long way to creating a lot of jobs for our youth (Interview with respondent Parliamentarian A, 10th September, 2023).

The statement above suggests that the parliamentarians have a responsibility to promote Ghanaian culture and fashion, which can have a positive impact on the fashion economy and job creation. By wearing Ghanaian dresses, they are setting an example and inspiring others to do the same, ultimately supporting the growth of the local fashion industry. Parliamentarian A suggests that MPs, as public figures and role

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models, have a powerful influence on the citizens they represent. By choosing to wear Ghanaian attire, MPs are not just making a fashion statement but are also communicating deeper messages about cultural pride, national identity, and economic support for local industries. The statement implies that when MPs adopt traditional Ghanaian dress, it can inspire confidence locally among the public, potentially leading to increased patronage of locally made garments. This increased demand could, in turn, stimulate job creation within the fashion industry, particularly among the youth. The idea that MPs serve as role models underscores the notion that political leaders are often seen as cultural ambassadors. Their clothing choices are not merely personal but are viewed as representative of broader societal values and norms (Entwistle, 2015). By wearing Ghanaian dress, MPs can reinforce national pride and encourage the public to embrace and take pride in their cultural heritage. This is consistent with the idea that political figures have the power to influence fashion trends and cultural practices, particularly in post-colonial societies where national identity is closely tied to the reclamation of indigenous practices (Allman, 2004).

4.6.5 Provision of Strong Local Competitive Market

Ghana's fashion industry suffers a great deal of competition from the global market's cheap and usually inferior products that find their way onto the Ghanaian market space through the loose Ghanaian borders, which cost the nation millions of cedis. Since the products are not screened for quality checks and the required taxes imposed on them, they hit the market and are sold at very low prices that compete strongly with the local products. This unfair competition has had dire consequences on dress fashion businesses in Ghana (Essel, 2017). Principally imported from the Asiatic countries especially, China, with the others from Europe and America. Several studies (Quartey, 2006; Sarpong, Howard & Osei-Ntiri, 2011; Asare, 2012; Uqalo, 2015)

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have confirmed this report and needs efficient solution. In the estimation of the respondents, Legislative dress fashion when fully realized in the context of indigenous Ghanaian dress classics will provide a stern competition for this western phenomenon that appears to collapse Ghana's fashion industry. One of the respondents posited that;

> Parliamentarians are people's celebrities, they command a lot of respect and authority in society. They are the reason behind most of the actions of some youth in recent times. Should they adopt a constant practice of promoting Ghana's dress fashion during their businesses in the House of Parliament and beyond, this will go a long way to impact our success in the sector as Ghanaians. Recently the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCTA) arrangement was passed which has exacerbated the rate at which imported goods like textiles can come into our country. Trade liberalization history in this country has not helped us in comparative terms, I think this is an opportunity for us, if only our parliamentarians we know, who are highly Eurocentric will initiate the move and practice it (Interview with respondent parliamentary robe designer, October 2nd, 2023).

From the respondent's statement above, it is evident that there is a feeling of uncertainty regarding the trade liberalization policies the government of Ghana has embarked on over the years. There is an uncertain fear of the new arrangement, AFCTA compounding further market damages, hence the urgent need for legislators to initiate the practice of wearing Ghanaian indigenous classics in an attempt to promote the industry to have a competitive advantage over existing market forces. The statement resonates with the findings of Howard (2016) as cited in Egu (2009) that the collapse of the textile industry in Ghana is attributed to the trade liberalization policy emphasizing that the liberalization in trade in Ghana led to the flood of textile products from China and other countries which due to their relatively cheaper prices compared to those produced in Ghana made it difficult for the local producers to cope with the competition. However, Ghana can equally benefit from these open markets of

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neigbours and the opportunities of trade liberalization as argued by economists that trade liberalization in the context of protectionism flies against the theory of comparative advantage, which suggests that opening up world markets, and reducing trade barriers (Trade liberalization) would lead to gains from trade for all concerned (Globalization & Gender Brief Series, 2009 as cited in Howard, 2016).

4.6.6 Fashion and Cultural Identity.

The social phenomenon of fashion holds great significance in constructing national identity. In certain respects, fashion uses visual representation to help express personality. It's a way for you to express yourself and can be viewed as an expression, a necessity, an art form, or a function. It is an object that makes you feel in charge and in control.

The study revealed that the dress of legislators have the tendency to inspire a sense of cultural identity. Respondents admonished the ability of legislative dress fashion to contribute to cultural revivals, revitalizing interest in indigenous Ghanaian dress and cultural practices. Also, once their dress fashion when adopted in a Ghanaian way will portray some form of symbolism: These symbols can convey cultural values, and beliefs, and reinforce the cultural norms and traditions of Ghana. Moreso, a parliamentarian dress culture can create iconic images, inspiring cultural pride and national identity construction. This was further emphasized in the account of respondent Robe Designer stating that;

> …I believe, legislative dress fashion can encourage a sense of belonging as a Ghanaian. We feel lost sometimes when our dress does not depict our cultural identity. If legislators dress to represent Ghanaian cultural values or identity, it creates a sense of belongingness amongst the followers and further deepens the sense of cultural pride amongst citizens or viewers and this will go a long

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> way to affect their patronage of Ghanaian goods positively (Interview with respondent Parliamentary Robe designer, October 2nd 2023).

A similar opinion was shared by respondent Cultural Expert

> …Political leaders often use clothing choices to convey power, authority, and confidence. For example, when certain types of smocks are worn with hat attachments, it connotes specific symbolic meanings and cultural identity… In as much as legislators would want to have their dress associated with power, it is a platform for them to showcase the Ghanaian identity which can be copied by followers, and this in the long run promotes the fashion industry (Interview with Cultural Policy Expert, October 13th, 2023).

The use of clothing by political leaders to project power, authority, and confidence serves not only as a means of personal expression but also as a strategic tool to communicate specific messages to the public. This is particularly true in the context of traditional garments, such as the smock worn in Ghana, which carries deep symbolic meanings and embodies cultural identity (Eicher & Sumberg, 1995). The smock, when paired with traditional hat attachments, is more than just a garment; it is a cultural artifact that conveys the wearer's social status and authority within the community. As noted by Allman (2004), clothing in many African societies is imbued with cultural significance, and the choice of attire by political figures is often a deliberate act of cultural expression and identity reinforcement. In the Ghanaian context, the adoption of traditional attire by legislators serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it aligns them with the symbols of power and authority that are recognized and respected within their cultural framework. Secondly, it functions as a public display of Ghanaian identity, which can influence the fashion choices of their followers. According to Asante (2011), the visibility of traditional clothing in public and political spaces can have a ripple effect, promoting the local fashion industry by encouraging the broader population to embrace these styles. The interview with a

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Cultural Policy Expert on October 13th, 2023, highlights this dynamic by emphasizing that the clothing choices of legislators not only reflect their desire to associate with power but also provide a platform for showcasing Ghanaian identity. This public display has the potential to be emulated by the general population, thereby driving demand for locally produced fashion items. This process, in turn, contributes to the growth of the fashion industry by fostering a sense of national pride and supporting local artisans and designers (Quartey, 2017). It can further be deduced from the account of respondent cultural experts and Robe designer that a parliamentarian's dress fosters cultural representation that can showcase traditional clothing, fabrics, or accessories, representing their cultural heritage and promoting cultural awareness. It is evident from the assertion that a legislator's dress fashion fosters a sense of unity and pride among citizens falling in line with the findings of Hall (1994), which confirms that national identity construction of national cultures aims at 'linking membership within the political nation-state and identification with the national culture of leaders. This further confirms that the creators of national identities first increase their knowledge about the culture of their people to be in the position to effect the desired change.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter recaps the major findings of the study. Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn from which corresponding recommendations have been given. In light of the study's findings, it also suggests possible directions for future investigation. For ease of verification, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations have been listed in the itemized form.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study, premised upon six specific research objectives, investigated the evolution, significance, and contemporary debates surrounding dress culture within Ghana's Parliament from 1951 to 2023. The first objective traced this sartorial history, revealing a complex trajectory influenced by colonialism, independence, military interventions, and democratic consolidation. Analysis demonstrated that Ghana's parliamentary dress initially reflected dominant Eurocentric styles. However, following independence in 1957, a discernible shift occurred during the First Republic (1960-1966), championed by Head of State Nkrumah's "National Personality

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Concept." This non-statutory policy encouraged parliamentarians, including Speakers Asiedu and Ofori Atta, to adopt indigenous Ghanaian attire as a means of decolonising cultural expression and forging a unified national identity centred on shared ethnic heritage. This indigenous emphasis was abruptly halted by the 1966 coup. Subsequent republics exhibited a return to predominantly Eurocentric dress codes for Speakers, particularly under the Westminster-influenced Fourth Republic commencing in 1993, despite occasional displays of Ghanaian attire by parliamentarians or visiting heads of state. A significant revival of indigenous dress has been initiated by the current Speaker, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin (2021-present), marking a conscious return to First Republic ideals.

The second objective examined the design structure, philosophy, and national identity constructs embedded within the ceremonial and procedural robes worn by Speakers of Parliament. Findings indicate these robes are structurally derived from British models, typically fashioned from high-quality fabrics like wool or silk in formal dark colours (often black). Key design features include a full-length, loose-fitting cut, double-breasted front, and decorative elements such as velvet or Ghanaian print collars/cuffs, hoods, stoles, and institutional insignia (notably the Parliament's official logo and Adinkra symbols) embroidered on the chest, shoulders, or stoles. Symbolically, the robes are designed to convey the authority, dignity, and solemn tradition of the Speaker's office, distinguishing them within the chamber. Crucially, the incorporation of specifically Ghanaian motifs (Parliament logo, Adinkra symbols) represents an intentional effort to infuse these vestments with national significance, linking them to cultural practices, acting as identity markers, and aiming to foster connections with citizens, thereby contributing to national identity construction and potential social transformation.

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The third objective ascertained Parliamentarians' views on Speaker Bagbin's call to decolonise the parliamentary dress code. A significant majority of respondents expressed strong support, viewing decolonisation as essential for embracing Ghanaian cultural heritage and moving beyond imposed Eurocentric norms. Notably, 44% articulated admiration, aligning the Speaker's stance with core Ghanaian values. Themes of national identity construction (20%) and leadership (16%) were prominent, with many perceiving the initiative as vital for advancing Nkrumah's vision of a distinct Ghanaian cultural identity. The Speaker's consistent personal adoption of indigenous attire lent considerable weight to his advocacy, inspiring interest among some MPs who subsequently requested similar styles. However, concerns were raised regarding potential perceptions of indigenous attire as indecent or unprofessional within the parliamentary context, prompting calls for clear guidelines to ensure an orderly and widely accepted implementation of any cultural shift.

The fourth objective investigated the necessity of mandating indigenous attire for parliamentary business. An overwhelming 96% of sampled Parliamentarians advocated for legislation formalising a Ghanaian dress code, citing potent economic benefits for the local textile and fashion industries. The study confirmed the absence of any formal statutory framework, with current practices relying solely on convention. Respondents strongly argued that legislating indigenous dress would powerfully communicate national identity to the public, aligning with the First Republic's "National Personality Concept" and reinforcing cultural pride and symbolism within the highest legislative body.

The fifth objective captured the perspectives of Ghanaian cultural custodians on parliamentary dress culture and Speaker Bagbin's decolonisation call. Custodians

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unanimously endorsed the initiative, commending it as a crucial step towards preserving and promoting Ghana's cultural heritage. They asserted that adopting indigenous attire in Parliament would serve as a powerful tool for national identity construction, fostering authenticity and pride. This shift was seen as symbolically vital for reclaiming Ghana's cultural narrative from colonial legacies. Furthermore, custodians highlighted its transformative potential, suggesting it could inspire unity, self-expression, and cultural revival among citizens, potentially positioning Ghana as an African exemplar in celebrating indigenous heritage within governance. They emphatically viewed the time as ripe for Parliament to shed colonial sartorial influences and embrace Ghanaian heritage.

Finally, the sixth objective evaluated the impact of legislative dress fashion on Ghana's fashion industry. Findings identified multiple significant influences: heightened consumer awareness of indigenous styles and local brands; direct promotion of Ghanaian fashion businesses; substantial potential for financial growth within the fashion sub-sector; creation of a stronger local competitive market; restoration of public confidence in Ghanaian design; reinforcement of cultural identity; and encouragement of sustainable practices. Parliamentarians, as influential societal figures, are pivotal in raising awareness and endorsing local fashion through their attire. Their choices can stimulate economic activity, with respondents stressing that consistent patronage by legislators would yield significant financial benefits for the industry. Moreover, legislative fashion choices are deeply intertwined with national identity politics. When parliamentarians wear indigenous attire, they embody cultural values and traditions, creating iconic imagery that inspires public pride, strengthens cultural memory, safeguards national heritage, and actively promotes Ghana's unique cultural legacy.

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5.2 Conclusions

Ghana's parliamentary dress culture reflects a complex evolution shaped by colonial and post-colonial influences, traversing four republics since 1951. Initially marked by Indigenous Ghanaian attire, the early parliaments, especially under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, promoted a strong national identity through dress, with parliamentarians proudly wearing traditional Ghanaian classics. This era fostered cultural pride and reinforced Ghana's distinctive identity on both parliamentary and diplomatic stages. However, Nkrumah's exit in 1966 and a series of military coups from 1966 to 1992 brought a eurocentric shift that eroded this indigenous dress culture, marking a "dark age" for Ghana's legislative identity and heritage. In contrast, the early parliaments had adhered closely to Ghanaian dress traditions, cultivating a shared cultural pride among citizens. Unfortunately, recent trends in parliamentary dress have shown a resurgence of eurocentric styles, driven by increased foreign exposure and the gradual adoption of Western cultural norms, which undermines the independent Ghanaian identity in parliamentary representation.

Despite these challenges, there are efforts to revive this heritage. The current speaker of parliament has initiated steps to honor the practices of early parliamentarians, such as those from the first republic led by Rt. Hon. Richard Asiedu and Rt. Hon. Ofori Atta. Though a limited number of members from the eighth parliament have embraced these revival efforts, this partial return to Indigenous dress offers hope for reclaiming Ghana's authentic legislative cultural identity and rekindling national pride in its parliamentary institution.

Ghana's parliamentary robes for speakers, both ceremonial and procedural, serve as symbols of national identity and authority within the House of Parliament. These

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robes, rooted in a Western concept of speaker supremacy, were adopted from British parliamentary traditions to confer distinction and reverence upon the speaker's role. While the British, who originally colonized Ghana, have since abandoned the practice of wearing a speaker's robe in parliamentary sessions, the Ghanaian parliamentary system continues this tradition. However, out of the thirteen individuals who have served as speakers, only three, Rt. Hon. Richard Asiedu, Rt. Hon. Ofori Atta, and Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin has appeared in the parliamentary chamber without the speaker's robe. Among these, only Rt. Hon. Bagbin wore a Eurocentric three-piece suit with the ceremonial robe reserved for inaugural and formal occasions, whereas his predecessors maintained Indigenous Ghanaian attire for all events.

The design and production of the speaker's robes are managed by Ghanaian fashion designers, following directives from the parliamentary clerk's department. These robes incorporate Adinkra symbols from Ghana's cultural heritage, which align with the official parliamentary logo and carry significant cultural and parliamentary symbolism. Although some speakers request specific design preferences, all robes adhere to a standardized structure with variations in color and embellishments. Despite the robes' cultural and symbolic importance, the Ghanaian parliament lacks a dedicated museum to preserve these artifacts as national relics, resulting in their gradual extinction. Traditionally, retiring speakers either retain or pass away with their robes, further contributing to the loss of these historical garments.

Successive speakers often depart from the dress code of their predecessors, frequently opting for Eurocentric styles, which has left the dress culture of the current speaker in a state of ambiguity. Concerns are rising that the tradition of speakers wearing

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Indigenous Ghanaian attire may eventually disappear, jeopardizing an important aspect of Ghana's parliamentary and cultural heritage.

Speaker Bagbin's call to decolonize Ghana's parliamentary dress culture has sparked widespread support among members of parliament, who view it as an important step toward asserting Ghanaian national identity and redefining the role of cultural representation in leadership. Expressing sentiments of admiration and a commitment to national identity construction, parliamentarians rallied behind the speaker's vision for dress fashion decolonization. His choice of attire during the address served as a powerful visual reinforcement, symbolizing the call for a restoration of Ghanaian dress traditions within the halls of parliament. This initiative has not only attracted considerable support but also strategically reignited and propelled the agenda to realign parliamentary dress codes with Ghanaian cultural values, a shift that emphasizes self-representation and cultural pride. By championing this cause, Speaker Bagbin has invigorated a movement to reclaim Ghana's dress identity in parliament, setting a precedent that could shape a renewed sense of cultural integrity in Ghanaian legislative traditions for future generations.

Ghana's parliament currently lacks formal legislation on dress code, relying instead on a convention that encourages members to dress "decently." This term, while not strictly defined, sets some specific guidelines, particularly for members choosing Eurocentric or traditional attire. For instance, those opting for the three-piece suit are required to wear a tie, while smock wearers must adhere to sleeve styles. Failure to comply with these informal guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including being asked to leave or overlooked by the speaker.

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While there is recognition among parliamentarians of the need for a more structured dress code policy, there is also caution regarding how such legislation should be crafted. Members are concerned about potential misinterpretations and the risk of creating a policy that could harmfully impact Ghana's dress culture in parliament. Therefore, a thoughtful approach to codifying parliamentary dress culture is advocated to avoid undermining the cultural significance and flexibility currently observed in Ghanaian parliamentary attire.

The cultural custodians in this study unanimously support Speaker Alban Bagbin's call to integrate Ghanaian cultural heritage into parliamentary dress, viewing it as an important initiative to enhance national pride and provide a platform for genuine self-expression. They believe that adopting Ghanaian attire in parliamentary settings could visibly reinforce Ghana's cultural identity and serve as a proud statement of Ghanaian values on both national and international stages. However, alongside their support, these cultural custodians expressed a cautious optimism, voicing concerns that Ghanaian institutions may stray from the foundational principles outlined in the Cultural Policy of Ghana. They stressed the importance of maintaining the integrity of this policy, emphasizing that any shift in parliamentary dress codes should align closely with the established guidelines to avoid diluting the core tenets of Ghanaian cultural preservation. In this light, they advocate for a balanced approach that champions cultural expression while remaining faithful to Ghana's formal cultural policy and heritage.

The intersection between fashion and politics is both historic and profound, with the sartorial choices of legislators significantly influencing public perception, cultural identity, and economic development. This study has underscored the critical role that

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legislative dress fashion plays in shaping the trajectory of Ghana's fashion industry. As highly visible public figures and representatives of diverse constituencies, Ghanaian parliamentarians possess the symbolic capital to influence societal norms, fashion trends, and consumer behaviour.

One of the most notable impacts of legislative dress fashion is the enhancement of consumer awareness. When legislators consistently adopt dress codes that reflect Ghanaian cultural identity, such as the wearing of kente, smocks, or traditional wrap-arounds, they not only affirm national heritage but also project this identity onto regional and global stages. In doing so, they serve as inadvertent yet powerful brand ambassadors, whose fashion choices function as endorsements that elevate the credibility and visibility of local designers and fashion entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the purposeful adoption of Indigenous dress by parliamentarians has direct implications for the financial growth of Ghana's fashion subsector. Given their high public profile, their sartorial endorsements can stimulate consumer demand, drive product sales, and influence national attitudes toward traditional dress. Such practices have the potential to restore and reinforce Ghanaian cultural memory, reawakening appreciation for traditional aesthetics within contemporary society.

Additionally, this influence extends to the strengthening of the local competitive market. Parliamentarians, as style icons, can set trends that catalyse consumer interest in Indigenous fashion, positioning Ghanaian fashion businesses to compete more robustly within both local and international markets. Their visibility and reach offer a strategic advantage in amplifying the presence and viability of locally made fashion products. Furthermore, sustained legislative patronage of Indigenous fashion can contribute to the restoration of public confidence in Ghanaian dress culture. By

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incorporating traditional garments into their official attire, legislators can validate and normalize cultural expression in formal state settings, thereby encouraging wider societal adoption and support. Finally, the fashion choices of lawmakers serve as powerful vehicles for cultural expression and identity construction. Through the public display of Ghanaian classics, legislators become conduits for transmitting symbolic cultural values, reinforcing norms, and asserting Ghana's distinct national identity in the face of increasing global homogenization. legislative dress fashion is not merely a matter of personal choice or aesthetics; it is a potent socio-political tool with the capacity to influence national identity, cultural continuity, and economic transformation. The findings of this study suggest that deliberate, culturally informed sartorial choices by Ghanaian parliamentarians can play a transformative role in both celebrating and sustaining Ghana's fashion industry and cultural heritage

5.3 Recommendations

The miseducation of Ghana's younger generation, as if Africa's Ghana did not have its dress culture before the invasion of the colonialists, should be downplayed and heavily contested. Fashion historians should pay scholarly attention to the study of the legislative dress fashion culture of Ghana in rewriting her fashion history. The concept of National Personality, as adopted and practiced in the earliest part of independence, should be encouraged and practiced in our current parliament and subsequent ones. It will be prudent to reposition the parliament of Ghana in the light of true Ghanaian identity to be reflective of the early parliaments, where Ghanaian clothing culture was strictly adhered to and practiced, leaving little opportunity for error or relegation of indigenous classics on the route to developing a dominant cultural heritage with the potential to restore pride and Ghanaian culture.

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It is recommended that the Parliament of Ghana establish a dedicated museum or heritage archive to preserve and exhibit the official robes worn by past and present Speakers of Parliament. These robes are not merely ceremonial garments; they are significant cultural artifacts that embody the institutional memory, symbolic authority, and evolving identity of the Ghanaian legislature. The Clerk's Department of the Parliamentary Service should be mandated to systematically collect, document, and safeguard all Speaker robes as part of Ghana's national parliamentary heritage. This would ensure their preservation for public education, academic research, and national reflection. Importantly, the long-standing practice whereby Speakers are buried with their robes should be formally discontinued. This tradition, though symbolic, results in the permanent loss of valuable historical artifacts that carry rich narrative and symbolic significance. Each robe reflects a specific era, personal legacy, and cultural context, making them vital identity markers and visual storytellers of parliamentary history.

By institutionalizing the preservation of these garments, Parliament would contribute meaningfully to the documentation and celebration of its own legacy, while also reinforcing the broader goals of cultural conservation and national heritage development.

To enhance the introduction and incorporation of Indigenous Ghanaian cultural symbols in the production of the robes for the speakers, the clerk department must consider employing a cultural expert and a parliamentary fashion designer to handle every speaker's wardrobe. The robe designers must strictly adhere to Ghanaian symbols as incorporated in the official logo of parliament, and possibly explore ways

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of entirely glocalizing the full gown in an Indigenous Ghanaian fabric structure. This will tone down the Western model of speakers' robes on an independent nation-state.

The overwhelming parliamentary endorsement of the speaker's clarion call to decolonize parliamentary dress culture expressed in sentiments of Dress fashion decolonization, Admiration, National Identity Construction, and Leadership reinforces the charge for a restoration of Ghanaian dress identity in Ghana's parliament. It is therefore recommended that Ghanaian parliamentarians walk the identity construction path of their predecessors in the early parliaments. The speaker's dress code should be formalized to avoid the practice of successive speakers abandoning the culture of their predecessors and choosing their own dress culture. The practice of speakers dressing in indigenous classics must not go extinct; it's good for the industry.

The Speaker, Rt. Hon Bagbin's invitation to decolonize Ghana's parliamentary dress code is a broader call for national unity and cultural pride. The study recommends that parliament extend the invitation beyond Parliament, urging all Ghanaians to embrace and promote their cultural heritage in everyday life. This invitation will not only advocate for a change in dress code but also enhance a wider agenda of cultural transformation and economic self-reliance, aligning with efforts to support local industries and foster national pride.

In light of parliamentarians' calls for formal legislation on the parliamentary dress code, and given the lack of existing regulations beyond the general guideline of "decency," the current conventions do not adequately reflect a distinct Ghanaian dress identity. It is therefore recommended that the Standing Orders Committee prioritize incorporating specific provisions for Ghanaian dress culture within the parliamentary dress code. This should be approached within a broader framework of consultation to

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ensure cultural accuracy and to prevent misrepresentation, aligning the policy closely with the principles of the Cultural Policy of Ghana. Additionally, periodic reviews of the dress code policy should be instituted to maintain alignment with Ghanaian values and cultural developments. Also, members of parliament and other stakeholders are encouraged to introduce a private member's bill to legislate on parliamentary dress culture.

Cultural custodians should actively engage in advocating for the promotion of Ghanaian dress and cultural values within the Ghanaian Parliament. Such advocacy would not only strengthen the movement toward integrating national heritage in parliamentary attire but also address concerns that Ghanaian institutions might stray from core principles aimed at projecting a unified national identity, as outlined in the Cultural Policy of Ghana. Also, this advocacy will fuel the cause for action and diffuse any fear of Ghanaian institutions losing the core principles and provisions of projecting the identity of Ghana as established in the Cultural Policy of Ghana. This advocacy can be done in collaboration with the National Commission on Culture to deliberately reinforce the need to decolonize Parliamentary dress culture in Ghana. By collaborating with the National Commission on Culture, this advocacy can help systematically advance the decolonization of parliamentary dress culture, emphasizing the importance of Ghanaian identity in legislative representation. This partnership would enable both cultural custodians and the National Commission on Culture to amplify the significance of Ghana's cultural heritage in official settings, ensuring that parliamentary dress aligns with and celebrates Ghana's unique cultural values.

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It is recommended that Members of Ghana's Parliament institutionalize the regular use of Indigenous Ghanaian attire in their official dress code as a deliberate strategy to support and stimulate the growth of the domestic fashion industry. As highly visible public figures and de facto cultural ambassadors, parliamentarians occupy a unique position of influence; their consistent patronage of locally made garments can serve as a powerful endorsement that promotes public appreciation, enhances consumer confidence, and drives demand for Indigenous fashion products. Such sartorial representation in the legislature would not only reaffirm Ghana's rich cultural heritage but also catalyse broader societal adoption of traditional dress, thereby aligning national governance with cultural pride and identity. Moreover, this symbolic gesture has the potential to translate into tangible economic benefits, including increased employment opportunities, value addition in local textile production, and greater competitiveness of Ghanaian fashion brands on both regional and global markets.

It is further recommended that this initiative be integrated with comprehensive public education and awareness campaigns that communicate the intrinsic link between national identity, cultural sustainability, and economic development. In doing so, Parliament would contribute not merely to the symbolic affirmation of cultural values, but also to the practical advancement of Ghana's creative economy

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study explored the cultural history of parliamentary dress in Ghana from 1951 to 2022, uncovering insights into its evolution and historical significance. Future research could extend this timeline by investigating the dress culture of preceding legislative assemblies and councils before 1951. Such a study would provide a more comprehensive view of the historical roots of parliamentary attire in Ghana and offer additional insights into early legislative dress traditions.

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Additionally, a comparative study of dress codes in parliaments across other African countries could be valuable. Examining how various African nations incorporate traditional attire into their legislative practices would offer broader context, illuminating the role of dress in fostering national identity and cultural preservation within parliamentary settings.

Further research could also delve into the cultural symbolism embedded in specific garments worn by Ghanaian parliamentarians beyond the speaker's robe. A symbolic analysis of the patterns, colors, and materials used in parliamentary attire could reveal deeper cultural meanings within Ghanaian society and enhance understanding of how parliamentary dress reflects and preserves Ghanaian heritage.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Responsible Project Supervisor: Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Researcher: Samuel Donkoh

Department of Art Education

School of Art Creative Arts

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is to explore the dress culture of Ghana's parliament through the historical perspective of their changing styles from colonial times to present. The study also places premium on searching for speakers dress fashion and highlighting on their major influential contributions to building a national culture.

What you will be expected to do

Please, if you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in a guided interview with the researcher (tape-recorded). This interview will take approximately 45minutes of your time.

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Your rights to confidentiality

The obtained data will be treated with absolute confidentiality. A random number will be assigned to you in order to conceal your actual identity. No information will be released to expose your identity. Only the responsible project researchers will have access to them.

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Your right to ask questions at any time

You may ask questions about the research at any time by emailing the responsible project researcher at akwahamantsi@gmail.com or eyensempii@gmail.com by phone at +233 54-72-8055.

Your right to withdraw at any time

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can skip questions you prefer not to answer. You may withdraw from it or discontinue participation at any time. You may also request for the destruction of your data without any consequences.

Benefits

Your participation in this research may benefit the general populace of Ghana as it touches on issues of policy formulation and implementation in fashion art education and culture. The research has a direct implication for national culture in curriculum development that could impact the value choices of students.

Possible risks

To our knowledge, there are no risks or discomforts involved in this research beyond those found in everyday life. You can refrain from answering any question if you find it to be uncomfortable.

Dissemination

The results will be disseminated through Ph.D. thesis. They may also be disseminated at conferences and in journals.

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Giving consent to participate

By signing the consent form:

- You certify that you have read, and understand the above, that you have been given satisfactory answers to questions concerning the research, that you are aware that you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the research any time, without any prejudice.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the office of the Dean, School of Creative Arts by phone on

+233 502260039 (collect calls will be accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant).

Participant: I have read and understand the above information, and that the interview will be audio-recorded, and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name (……)

Signature & Date……..

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

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APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH, CULTURE AND CREATIVE ARTS
P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana
cerrca@uew.edu.gh
+233 (0)242490743

10/07/2023

To Whom it May Concern,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

I am pleased to introduce Mr Samuel Donkoh, a PhD student with index Number 201814677 who is my supervisee to you.

Mr Donkoh is undertaking research on *Historical Development of Ghana's Parliamentary Dress Code from 1950 – 2023*. This study stands to contribute to knowledge on parliamentary dress and its relationship to Ghana's textiles and garment manufacturing development and its effect on national identity.

As the principal project supervisor, I would very much appreciate if you could kindly give him the needed assistance in that regard.

I implore that you kindly offer him the needed assistance.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

PROF. DR. OSUANYI QUAICOO ESSEL
AG. DIRECTOR, CERRCA
+233208900892

www.uew.edu.gh

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CULTURAL CUSTODIANS

Researcher: Samuel Donkoh

C/o University of Education, Winneba, P. O. Box 25, Winneba-Ghana

Contacts (tel.): 0547280555

My Ref. No.: NN-BP/1/I1/23 Date: September 18, 2023

Responsible Project Supervisor: Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education

School of Art Creative Arts

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. Contacts (tel.): +233 20 899 0892,

…….

……..

……..

……..

His Royal Majesty,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOU ON MATTERS REGARDING PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE IN GHANA.

I, Samuel Donkoh, humbly request your kind permission to interview you on matters regarding a study I am currently conducting for an award for a Ph.D. in Art and Culture, titled: ***"Historical Development Of Parliamentary Dress Code In Ghana From 1950 To 2023".*** The primary purpose of the study is to reconstruct Ghanaian parliamentary dress history and to establish its impact on Ghana's local fashion industry.

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Nana, the study is necessitated by the clarion call of speaker Alban Bagbin on January 25, 2022, on the floor of Ghana's parliament on the need to decolonize the Ghanaian parliamentary dress code. In his statement he said;

> "This is the Parliament of Ghana, a unique made-in-Ghana product, and we must showcase and market it to the world as a brand. We must create a unique set of values and norms that will give a unique character to our Parliament to set it apart from the colonial legacies of the British system… I am convinced that Ghanaians define the representation of the people to include representation of the full identity of the Ghanaian i.e. Culture, Tradition, and more importantly their dress code…The government dress code of members of the National Assembly of Independent Ghana was a native costume. *Where we got it wrong I don't know!* The speaker of the first parliament for example, of the first republic of this country, that is 1960 to 1965, the Right Honourable Joseph Richard Asiedu appreciated and in fact practiced it. And people could crosscheck from history…My outfit today, as the Speaker presiding, is to set in motion that agenda.

The call comes against the common backdrop that Ghanaian parliamentarians are often Eurocentrically dressed (three-piece suit) for parliamentary business to the abandonment of the rich indigenous Ghanaian classics. Since you are a cultural custodian in Ghana, the study places a premium on your responses to shape its outcome.

If my request is consented to, kindly find attached semi-structured interview questions, regarding areas of interest for your consideration before the interview session. I humbly request that you schedule a date and time of your convenience to pave the way for the interview session.

Counting on your kind feedback.

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SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is your view on speaker Bagbin's clarion call on decolonizing Ghanaian parliamentary dress code?
- Do parliamentarians dress to represent the full identity of the Ghanaian people?
- Are there any significant implications of parliamentarians' dress code on Ghanaian Identity construction and the local fashion industry?
- Should Parliament consider making the Ghanaian way of dressing to parliament by parliamentarians statutory? Any reason?

Please do not hesitate to add any relevant information in relation to the study.

THANK YOU

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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CULTURAL EXPERT

Researcher: Samuel Donkoh

C/o University of Education, Winneba, P. O. Box 25, Winneba-Ghana

Contacts (tel.): 0547280555

My Ref. No.: NN-BP/1/I1/23 Date: March 18, 2023

Responsible Project Supervisor: Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education

School of Art Creative Arts

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Contacts (tel.): +233 20 899 0892,

……

…….

National Commission on Culture

Accra.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOU ON MATTERS REGARDING PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE IN GHANA.

I, Samuel Donkoh, humbly request your kind permission to interview you on matters regarding a study I am currently conducting for an award for a Ph.D. in Art and Culture, titled: ***"HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE IN GHANA".*** The primary purpose of the study is to enhance the advocacy for the decolonization of the parliamentary dress code of Ghana, to bring to academia

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lamplight the admirable Ghanaian dress fashion culture of past/present speakers, and members of parliament for state functions, and its implications for the Ghanaian identity construction.

Sir, the study is necessitated by the clarion call of speaker Alban Bagbin on January 25, 2022, on the floor of Ghana's parliament on the need to decolonize the Ghanaian parliamentary dress code. The call comes against the common backdrop that Ghanaian parliamentarians are often Eurocentrically dressed (three-piece suit) for parliamentary business to the abandonment of the rich indigenous Ghanaian classics.

Since you are a cultural expert in Ghana, the study places a premium on your responses towards shaping this study.

If my request is consented to, kindly find attached semi-structured interview questions, regarding areas of interest for your consideration before the interview session. I humbly request of you to schedule a date and time of your convenience to pave the way for the interview session.

Counting on your kind feedback.

1. **Historical Development of Parliamentary Dress Code**

a) What are the major historical developments of parliamentary dress fashion in Ghana?

b) How did the first speaker of the first parliament dress?

c) How did the parliamentarians dress?

d) Was there any reason for their choice of dress for parliamentary business?

2. **Meanings of the Designs in the Speaker's Ceremonial Dress**

a) Are there meanings behind the designs/symbols in the speakers' ceremonial dress?

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b) What are the meanings of the designs (Cultural, philosophical, and symbolic meanings)?.

Picture Credit: parliament of Ghana (2023).

Picture Credit: AFP via Getty Image (2009).

3. The need to make the Parliamentary Dress Code statutory in Ghana

i. Does the dress fashion choice of parliamentarians have any impact on Ghana's fashion industry and Ghanaian Identity construction?

ii. Should parliament consider making parliamentary dress code statutory in Ghana and why?

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If there is any other relevant information you wish to add regarding the study kindly don't hesitate to do so.

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APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SPEAKER'S OF PARLIAMENT

Researcher: Samuel Donkoh

C/o University of Education, Winneba, P. O. Box 25, Winneba-Ghana

Contacts (tel.): 0547280555

My Ref. No.: NN-BP/1/I1/23 Date: March 18, 2023

Responsible Project Supervisor: Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education

School of Art Creative Arts

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Contacts (tel.): +233 20 899 0892,

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Rt. Hon. Speaker,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOU ON MATTERS REGARDING GHANA'S PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE.

I, Samuel Donkoh, humbly request your kind permission to interview you on matters regarding a study I am currently conducting for an award for a Ph.D. in Art and Culture, titled**: "HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE IN GHANA"**. The primary purpose of the study is to reconstruct parliamentary dress history, to deepen the advocacy for the decolonization of the parliamentary dress code of Ghana and to bring to academia lamplight your admirable Ghanaian dress fashion choice for state functions, and further establish its implications for the Ghanaian identity construction and the fashion Industry.

Rt. Hon Speaker, the study is necessitated by your clarion call on January 25, 2022, on the floor of Ghana's parliament on the need to decolonize the Ghanaian

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parliamentary dress code and the need to reconstruct the history of parliamentary dress culture.

Rt. Hon, your call comes against the common backdrop that Ghanaian parliamentarians are often eurocentrically dressed (three-piece suit) for parliamentary business to the abandonment of the rich indigenous Ghanaian classics.

Since you are an Iconic Figure (Third gentleman of the Land) in Ghana and the longest serving parliamentarian, the study places a premium on the public statements made by you during your maiden address in 2022 to elicit responses that can shape the outcome of the study.

If my request is consented to, kindly find attached semi-structured interview questions, regarding areas of interest for your consideration before the interview session.

I humbly request of you to schedule a date and time of your convenience to pave the way for the interview session. Counting on your kind feedback.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. **Cultural Background**

a) How has your cultural background influenced your dress code for parliamentary sittings?

2. Parliamentary Dress code

a) Is there any dress code that mandates you as a speaker to dress in a specific manner for parliamentary business?

b) What types of dress fashions' do you adorn for parliamentary sittings and why?

c) What factors influence your dress fashion choice for parliamentary business?

3. Historical Development of Parliamentary Dress Fashion

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a) What are the major historical developments of parliamentary dress fashion in Ghana? b) Was there a dress code for the first parliament?

c) How did the first speaker of the first parliament dress?

d) How did the parliamentarians of the first parliament dress?

4. Meanings of the Designs in the Speaker's Ceremonial Dress

Figure 1.0 Ceremonial Dress of past speakers of parliament
Picture Credit: AFP via Getty Image (2009).

a) Are there meanings behind the designs/symbols in the speakers' ceremonial dress?

b) What are the meanings of the designs?

c) The relation between the symbols and parliament

d) Why are there differences in the design of the speaker's ceremonial dress e) If there are changes kindly add…

5. The need to make Parliamentary Dress Code statutory in Ghana

a) Does your dress fashion choice have any impact on Ghana's fashion industry and Ghanaian Identity construction?

b) Is there a dress policy on what a parliamentarian must wear and what not to wear for parliamentary sittings in Ghana?

c) Should parliament consider making parliamentary dress code statutory in Ghana?

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Is there anything you wish to add regarding your dress fashion choice for state functions in Ghana?

a) YES or NO

b) If YES, kindly add…..

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APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CLERK DEPARTMENT

Researcher: Samuel Donkoh

C/o University of Education, Winneba, P. O. Box 25, Winneba-Ghana

Contacts (tel.): 0547280555

My Ref. No.: NN-BP/1/I1/23 Date: March 18, 2023

Responsible Project Supervisor: Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education

School of Art Creative Arts

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Contacts (tel.): +233 20 899 0892,

.....

The Clerk Department

Parliament of Ghana

Accra, Ghana.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOU ON MATTERS REGARDING GHANA'S PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE.

I, Samuel Donkoh, humbly request your kind permission to interview you on matters regarding a study I am currently conducting for an award for a Ph.D. in Art and Culture, titled**: "HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE IN GHANA"**. The primary purpose of the study is to reconstruct parliamentary dress history, to deepen the advocacy for the decolonization of the parliamentary dress code of Ghana and to bring to academia lamplight your admirable

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Ghanaian dress fashion choice for state functions, and further establish its implications for the Ghanaian identity construction and the fashion Industry.

Sir, the study is necessitated by the speaker's clarion call on January 25, 2022, on the floor of Ghana's parliament on the need to decolonize the Ghanaian parliamentary dress code and the need to reconstruct the history of parliamentary dress culture.

Since you are a key stakeholder in Ghana' parliamentary affairs, the study places a premium on your responses.

If my request is consented to, kindly find attached semi-structured interview questions, regarding areas of interest for your consideration before the interview session.

I humbly request of you to schedule a date and time of your convenience to pave the way for the interview session. Counting on your kind feedback.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

2. Parliamentary Dress code

a) Is there any dress code that mandates speakers to dress in a specific manner for parliamentary business?

b) What types of dress fashions' do speaker's adorn for parliamentary sittings and why?

c) What factors influence their dress fashion choice for parliamentary business?

3. Historical Development of Parliamentary Dress Fashion

a) What are the major historical developments of parliamentary dress fashion in Ghana? b) Was there a dress code for the first parliament?

c) How did the first speaker of the first parliament dress?

d) How did the parliamentarians of the first parliament dress?

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4. Meanings of the Designs in the Speaker's Ceremonial Dress

Figure 1.0 Ceremonial Dress of past speakers of parliament
Picture Credit: AFP via Getty Image (2009).

a) Are there meanings behind the designs/symbols in the speakers' ceremonial dress?

b) What are the meanings of the designs?

c) The relation between the symbols and parliament

d) Why are there differences in the design of the speaker's ceremonial dress e) If there are changes kindly add…

The need to make Parliamentary Dress Code statutory in Ghana

a) Does parliamentary dress fashion choice have any impact on Ghana's fashion industry and Ghanaian Identity construction?

b) Is there a dress policy on what a parliamentarian must wear and what not to wear for parliamentary sittings in Ghana?

c) Should parliament consider making parliamentary dress code statutory in Ghana?

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APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARLIAMENTARY ROBE DESIGNER

Researcher: Samuel Donkoh

C/o University of Education, Winneba, P. O. Box 25, Winneba-Ghana

Contacts (tel.): 0547280555

My Ref. No.: NN-BP/1/I1/23 Date: March 18, 2023

Responsible Project Supervisor: Prof. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education

School of Art Creative Arts

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Contacts (tel.): +233 20 899 0892,

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……

……..

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOU ON MATTERS REGARDING GHANA'S PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE.

I, Samuel Donkoh, humbly request your kind permission to interview you on matters regarding a study I am currently conducting for an award for a Ph.D. in Art and Culture, titled**: "HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE IN GHANA"**. The primary purpose of the study is to reconstruct parliamentary dress history, to deepen the advocacy for the decolonization of the parliamentary dress code of Ghana and to bring to academia lamplight your admirable

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Ghanaian dress fashion choice for state functions, and further establish its implications for the Ghanaian identity construction and the fashion Industry.

Sir, the study is necessitated by the speaker's clarion call on January 25, 2022, on the floor of Ghana's parliament on the need to decolonize the Ghanaian parliamentary dress code and the need to reconstruct the history of parliamentary dress culture.

Since you are a key stakeholder in Ghana' parliamentary affairs and a parliamentary robe designer, the study places a premium on your responses.

If my request is consented to, kindly find attached semi-structured interview questions, regarding areas of interest for your consideration before the interview session.

I humbly request of you to schedule a date and time of your convenience to pave the way for the interview session. Counting on your kind feedback.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. Meanings of the Designs in the Speaker's Ceremonial Dress

Figure 1.0 Ceremonial Dress of past speakers of parliament
Picture Credit: AFP via Getty Image (2009).

a) Are there meanings behind the designs/symbols in the speakers' ceremonial dress?

b) What are the meanings of the designs?

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c) The relation between the symbols and parliament

d) Why are there differences in the design of the speaker's ceremonial dress

e) If there are further suggestions kindly add…

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APPENDIX H

Opinionnaire on Dress Fashion Culture of Ghanaian Parliament (1951 - 2023)

I am Samuel Donkoh, a PhD student of University of Education, Winneba conducting a study titled, ***Historical development of parliamentary dress culture in Ghana from* 1950 to 2023**. The study stands to contribute to knowledge on Ghanaian parliamentary dress culture and its effect on Ghanaian national identity construction and the textile industry. Since you are an Iconic Figure, and member of Ghana's parliament (representative of your constituent), the study places a premium on your responses to shape the outcome.

Data collected on this study will be treated with the necessary confidentiality and purely for academic purposes. It will therefore not be used outside its intended purpose.

Instruction:

Please thick (√) what you think is the right answer from the alternatives given and provide written answers where necessary.

1. Gender of respondent
*

Male
Female
Prefer not to say

2. Which constituency do you represent?
*

Short-answer text

3. How many years have you served as a parliamentarian?
*

Short-answer text

4. What is your ethnic (cultural) background?
*

Short-answer text

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5. Does your ethnic (cultural) background have any implication on the way you dress?
*

Yes

No

6. What are the major factors that influence your dress choice for parliamentary business?
*

Short-answer text

7. Does what you wear have influence on your followers?
*

Yes

No

Maybe

8. Are you aware of speaker Bagbin's clarion Call to decolonize parliamentary dress code in Ghana?
*

Yes

No

9. If **Yes** what is your view about it?
*

Long-answer text

10. Is there any law on dress code that mandates you as a parliamentarian to dress in a specific manner for parliamentary business?
*

NO

YES

11. Kindly state if there is

Long-answer text

If there isn't, why?
*

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Long-answer text

12. Do you think if a parliamentarian dresses in indigenous Ghanaian fashion it would have an impact on the fashion industry of Ghana?

*

Yes

No

13. Is there the need for parliament to make the wearing of indigenous Ghanaian dress fashion for parliamentary business statutory?

*

YES

NO

14. Explain your responses for question 13

*

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APENDIX I

Observation Checklist for the Study

General Information

- Date of Observation: 22nd March, 2023
- Time of Observation: 11: 00 am
- Location: Parliament of Ghana
- Observer's Name: Samuel Donkoh

Section 1: Speaker's Robes

1. **Design Structure:**

Type of fabric (e.g., silk, cotton, other)

Color and patterns

Length and cut (e.g., floor-length, mid-length)

Presence of any embroidery or embellishments

Overall style (e.g., traditional, western)

2. **Symbols**

Specific symbols present (e.g., national emblems, logos, adinkra)

Placement of symbols (e.g., front, back, sleeves)

Color significance of symbols

Historical context or meaning of symbols

3. **Additional Accessories:**

Presence of other accessories (e.g., stoles, cuffs)

Color and design of accessories

Any insignia on accessories

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Section 2: Dress of Parliamentarians

1. **General Attire:**

Common styles observed (e.g., suits, traditional attire)

Fabrics used (e.g., kente, linen, polyester)

Color palettes (dominant colors, patterns)

2. **Variations by Gender:**

Differences in men's and women's attire

Traditional vs. modern influences

Use of cultural attire by gender

3. **Symbols and Insignia:**

Presence of any symbols or logos on attire

Meaning or significance of these symbols

Consistency of symbols across different parliamentarians

Section 3: Contextual Observations

1. **Cultural Significance:**

How does attire reflect Ghanaian culture?

Are there any historical influences noted in the attire?

Observations on the atmosphere and significance of dress during parliamentary sessions.

Section 4: Additional Notes

- Observations on any changes during the session (e.g., changes in attire)
- Reflections on the overall impression of parliamentary dress culture.

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Meeting with the Speaker of parliament, Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin