



Social Construction of Cultural Identity: A Communication Perspective of Smock Use in Daboya - Ghana

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Abstract

The use of the smock is an important aspect of the people of Daboya "Wasipe" Traditional Area of Ghana, and its cultural values interests' the people of the area. The traditional smock of Daboya in the Savanna Region of Ghana conveys much information about the identities of the people's traditional cultural values without using words. The objective of this paper is to assess the Social Construction of Cultural Identity, a Cultural and Communication Perspective of the use of the Smock in Daboya 'Wasipe' Traditional Area. The interpretivism paradigm served as the driver of the entire research process. The study adopted social identity theory as a philosophy to guide the study. Purposive sampling dominated the study. The main data collection methods were in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. Data was analysed qualitatively. Smocks represent the culture and identity of the people of Daboya and are produced there by traditional indigenous weavers and commercial printers. Key among the findings include: the three (3) major types of smocks in the area and the symbolic meaning of the threads and colours of the smock. The sociocultural significance of the smock was also identified and how it communicates traditionally about the people's traditional cultural values. For policy implications, to ensure smock quality and to meet the ever-increasing demand for the smock, factories should be established to handle the raw materials required for the mass manufacture of smock in huge quantities. Additionally, a branding plan should be created for the smock product in the Daboya "Wasipe" area so that organizations and corporate bodies can brand it for their uniforms.

Keywords: Smock, Daboya, Communication, Identity, Social Construction.

Introduction

Identity construction amid complexities has led to several typologies that explain the concepts of identity and allegorical meanings within the framework of modernity. Taylor's (2015) views on construction theories presume that the identity of self is socially produced and transformed in the interactional setting and socio-cultural contexts. Morales (2018) asserted that fashion and clothing is a language. In the semiotic sense, the representation of the self and the represented meaning from the use of various types of clothing remains utopian. Societies worldwide have uniform dress codes and social roles and hierarchies (Simon & Schuster, 2021; Shinn et al. 2018). Shinn et al. (2018) examined how dress code policies are essential visual expressions of organizational cultures linked to self-value and performance. Blacks in the early 1960s wore their Sunday best uniforms to protest the socially low rank and the lower black people's dignity in America (DE Witte, 2021). Clothing assists in expressing new ideals of individual liberty, rationality and equality within American society and hierarchies (Simon & Schuster, 2021).

Dressing in Africa reflects cultural, ethnic and religious roles, and an expression of communication to others (Biney 2014). Some of these identity clothing include; the Dashiki of West Africa, the Kitenge of East Africa, the Smock (Fugu) for the Mole-Dagomba and Gonja group, the Kente for the Akan group, the Aso-Oke, the Iro and Buba of the Yoruba, the Isiagu of the Igbo people, the 'Babban Riga' and 'Jalaba' of the Hausa, the 'Masai Shuka' for the Massai people, the 'Umutsha/ 'Isidwaba' of the Zulu people, the 'Boubou' of the Senegalese people and the 'Toghu' or 'Atoghu' of the Cameroonians.

The smock is an integral part of the Daboya people's culture and used for durbars and funerals. It is produced and used by the Gonja's. Biney (2014) compares the Daboya smock to Asante Kente. In her

view, the choice of the smock "was considered the archetypal dress of the common man as an identity, particularly the northerner, as opposed to the privileged Kente attire of the Asantehene and his royal court." The study sought to assess how smock is used as a socially constructed identity for the people of Daboya in the North Gonja District of Ghana from a cultural and communication perspective. Lee, (2020) posits that clothing is a nonverbal communication system often used to signify people's age, roots, gender, political views, and economic status. The study will add up to the gap of literature and also show how the smock can be used as a socially constructed identity for the people of Daboya and Ghana.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study adopted the identity construction and the social identity theories. According to Agboada (2017), as a social constructionist viewpoint, a person's sense of self is formed through careful consideration of their interactions with others in their social surroundings. Social constructionists, taking a pragmatic stance and referencing the writings of Bamberg et al. (2011), make the assumption that meaningful communication involves coordinated meaning between people in which each can consider the viewpoint of the other with relation to their own gestures and symbols. In situations where this reflexive objectification of the self takes place, people choose how to exist in society and their personal identities are distinctively socialized. Identity is dynamic and constantly changing throughout life as a result of constant social contact. The conceptual framework of personal identity encompasses social construction of identity through communication, the I and me of proof of identity, the generalized other, and identity evolution over the course of a lifetime, culminating in an accumulated identity with several roles within a society. Smart (2014), viewed social identity theory as a philosophical theory of modern

materialism that holds that while mind and matter are logically capable of being differentiated, they are only various manifestations of a single material reality. Social identity theory aims to define and forecast the conditions under which people perceive themselves (Smart, 2014). The theory also considers the effects of social and personal identities on how people perceive themselves and behave. Our identity is our perception of who we are as a people and as members of social groups. Social identity theory allows for a collection of people who categorize themselves as belonging to the same social category. The theory will guide the study in judging oneself as a group member and held to be associated with the outcome of social comparisons between the in-group and relevant out-groups.

Smart (2014) also indicated that, linking the two theories, people can experience who they are as a person when they come into contact with the generalized order. A person chooses aspects of their personal identity from a variety of angles, depending on the social situation. Every interaction with another person allows a person to reflect on both on how they see themselves and how others perceive them. One may imagine other people's viewpoints, and self-adjustment creates a distinct and individual identity. Based on this theoretical framework, it is envisaged that the objectives of the study will be met.

Insights from History (Smock)

The Moshie from Ouagadougou brought the smock fabric to Northern Ghana (Acquaah et al. 2017). They were thought to have met through trade with the North from the Upper Volta, exchanging woven items for guinea fowls, rice, millets, yams, and other commodities. Adinku, (2016) observed that, over one hundred (100) different ethnic groups make up Ghana's diversified population of Northern Ghana. In Northern Ghana, men wear smocks more than women.

Oral tradition indicates that the people of Northern Ghana wore clothing made of animal skin when they first arrived in Northern Ghana. Later, women spin the cotton into threads and men use hand looms to weave the threads into strips after they have been stretched, coloured, and dried on the line. Four-inch broad strips are combined by hand to transform the fabric into smocks. Clothing served more political and military than commercial purposes (Adinku, 2016). The smock is usually worn during Damba festivals, wedding and funeral rituals in Northern Ghana.

'*Gbanyachebi*' as in Gonja or Daboya smock as it is popularly known, comes from a textile practice that originated in Ghana centuries ago. The fabric has come to represent cultural affinities with West Africa throughout the diaspora through mythology. Each fabric's colours have a symbolic meaning in the nature and culture of the Daboya area (Shanunu et al. 2022). Chiefs, Queen mothers, princesses, and royal prince have all royally worn the fabric among the people of the Daboya ethnic group. According to Sue-Jenkyn (2019), even though the perception of clothes as symbols of ethnic identity can occasionally be deceiving, the smock is still an essential part of non-verbal communication in the language of fashion and identity.

Jones (2018) opined that the print piece of fabric is utilised worldwide to create academic stoles for graduation ceremonies. The fabric may have originated from a range of weaving traditions in Ghana since the 11th century, as evidenced by the discovery of spindles, whorls, and loom weights during regional excavations (Jones, 2018). The complexity of the smock ("*Gbanyachebi*") pattern designs varies, and each weaver-created design has a name or message. Although lengthwise patterns are used to identify the fabrics, there is frequently little connection between appearance and name (Kaiser 2019). Names of the smock are created through

Proverbs, historical occurrences and plants (Todorović et al., 2017).

Fabric production is influenced by gender (Kaiser 2019). Smock weaving is an indigenous textile production sector; according to Dzamedo and Dabuo (2015), it has long been a well-known rural enterprise with a promising future for economic sustainability.

Origin of the Daboya Smock ('Gbanyachebi')

In a focus group discussion with some of the prominent chiefs of the Daboya traditional area and some natives about the origin of the Daboya smock ('Gbanyachebi'), it was established that the smock originated in Zaria in Northern Nigeria. A Muslim priest, businessman, and farmer, is thought to have travelled from Nigeria intending to conduct business in the Daboya area. A man called Zezebi provided housing for all other Hausa travellers on the same mission. One of the guests began weaving around Zezebi's house. The landowner expressed interest and offered his son, Baba Liman, to receive weaving instruction. Baba established himself as a weaver and farmer. Baba also taught the family's male members how to weave. This venture turned into a household enterprise.

In Daboya, smock weaving is a locally significant economic activity, almost the entire community participates in its manufacture. There are three types of people involved in the creation of smocks, according to Essel (2016). individuals who supply the fibre for spinning, those who deal in woven goods and clients who come to purchase the finished smock. Various schools of opinion exist regarding the precise origin of smock in Ghana. They said the craft originally consisted of woven fabric strips to conceal their nakedness (Essel 2016).

Clothing and Culture

Culture distinguishes a particular group of people from all human communities; it is

the foundation of every community (Kaiser (2018). It is believed that one of the controversial phrases that is challenging to describe is culture. Hence, it lends itself to numerous definitions. Essel (2016) in their foundational work, described the culture of an ethnic, religious, or social group as the chronological accumulation of notable accomplishments, beliefs, and habits. Kaiser (2018) agrees and believes that culture is a learned system of knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, values, and standards a group shares.

Bennett (2017) indicated that a particular socioeconomic group's distinctive arts and attire make up Culture. Culture, in its broadest explanation, refers to people's beliefs, behaviours, and means of subsistence (Dennis, 2018). Culture and traditions tie the previous generation to the present and future generations, as opined by Dennis (2018). Our everyday activities take on more subtlety thanks to clothing, which conveys a group's attitudes and culture (Akinbileje 2017).

In traditional institutions, wearing clothes is a practical way to uphold a society's traditional ideals (Idang 2020, p. 97- 111). According to Adom (2020), being a group member makes one feel encouraged and satisfied. People's clothes make their sex, age, identity, and class known; it may even reveal their profession, place of origin, tribe, character, and taste (Gott, 2019). Ahmed (2019) claimed that females' age and marital status are gauged by their dress among the Siltier group in Southern Ethiopia. Indigenous people create tribally specific clothing to express belonging (Anawalt, 2017).

Cultural Identity and Social Construction

Naturally, we yearn to belong to a group; therefore, when we are under stress, we turn to unconsciously resort to the behaviours that make us "feel" safe and accepted (Gyekye 2013).

Eicher (2016) reiterated that we can only reach our full potential, when we become conscious of how our identities can either spur or inhibit growth.

Our cultural identity is crucial because it shapes how we perceive and respond to unavoidable circumstances, which can impact our success in life (Shete 2017). Thao (2021) opined that the range of self-interests one possesses, identity might be considered self-understanding. Personal, cultural, and social identity are the three primary types of identity (Ahrndt, 2019). There are roughly 8.2 billion People worldwide (US and World Population Clock, 2021). Each person has unique qualities and carries their personality. Identity is employed, according to Brubaker and Cooper (2020), "to highlight non-instrumental kinds of activity; to focus on self-understanding rather than self-interest". "Some persons would have the content of their identities decided in part by others, notably those of the same identity," claims by Appiah (2015). A person's identity is greatly influenced by their culture (Schwartz et al., 2016). Social identities derive from social groupings are part of a society (Ahrndt, 2019). Social identities differ from personal identities (Ahrndt, 2019). It has been proposed that people dress as a means of social identification and communication (Davis, 2018). The definition of what it means to be a "woman," "male," "Black," or "white" is historically and culturally contingent as well as impacted by power, according to Andrews (2016). Burr (2017) opined that early Western philosopher like Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, social constructionism is also the underlying philosophical perspective that holds that rather than reflecting an "objective" reality, our understandings of the world are jointly created by people.

Social construction is an understanding that our material reality only has value to us because of the ideas we attach to it, rather than a denial of material reality (Alexandra

2016). We shape the social world through words, deeds, and media creations.

Dress as a form of communication

People can express themselves and make a statement through their attire (Davis, 2018). According to Rosenfeld and Plax (2017), clothing is a form of nonverbal communication. People decide how they want to dress based on their comfort level, conformance with society, sociability, decorating, insecurity, submissiveness, or economics. Rosenfeld and Plax (2017) suggested that people dress according to their interests, because clothing is a visual clue that others might use to determine social class, it can indicate a person's social class (Crane, 2019). People's dress choices serve as a signal that expresses who they are, and self-expression is directly tied to communication (Green, 2017). Clothing tends to be inseparable from the culture of society because habits influence it, and customs exist in society (Thao, 2021). The indigenous Maya conveys their culture, history, religion, and personality through exquisitely woven motifs that differ in style, colour, material, and techniques (Thao, 2021).

The world is now a global village through technological innovations. Distant cultures are now near neighbours (Electa, 2018). To bridge the gap between different cultures, according to Adinku (2016), an event must use methods of communication that cut across cultural boundaries, foster a climate of safety and acceptance, educate attendees about other cultures, and engage them as fully and honestly. The following six factors are frequently cited as justifications for wearing clothing: protection, modesty, occupational, religious identity, attraction, social standing, and formal affiliation (Jonas, 2018).

Anthropologists and Sociologist hypothesised that cloth was created from natural resources which include animal skins, plant fibres, and leaves. According to Marshall et al. (2017), clothing is also

utilised to draw attention. Clothing has been used in deception and is still used today (Watkins 2017). Fashion and attire undoubtedly function as nonverbal cues and means of expression (Marshall et al., 2017). We can express our age, gender, social class, school loyalty, or religious beliefs through clothing. According to McDowell (2020), "Rituals and meanings of dress, as well as the integral part that clothing plays in the formation of a character conveys a story that is both real and significant. Many, if not most, Nkrumah's would disagree with Biney's (2014) comparison of the Daboya smock to Asante Kente. She claimed the smock was preferred over the privileged Kente costume worn by the Asantehene and his royal court because it "was regarded the typical garb of the common man, particularly the Northerner."

Methodology

Study setting

The study was conducted in Daboya in the Savanna Region of Ghana, encompassing the 'Wasipe' Traditional Area of North Gonja District. The composition of smocks in this area exhibits variations in texture, hues, patterns, and modes, each imbued with distinct symbolic connotations associated with the utilisation of said garment. The selection of Daboya as the study site was purposive, as it was deemed to be an area with significant diversity among its clan traditional groups and was known as the "Smock City" in the Savannah region, a phenomenon that the study aimed to elucidate.

The social organizations of the area are based on kinship patterns, and the social structure is based on the lineage system. Patriarchal inheritance dominates the area. The Overlord or Paramount Chief of the traditional area, "Wasipe-wurah", resides in Daboya. It is one of the main paramountcy to the highest "Gonja skin" ('Yagbon-wurah') (Shanunu et al., 2022).

Research Design and Sampling Procedure

The research process for this study was guided by the anti-positive paradigm. The argument put forth by anti-positivists is that reality is characterized by its multifaceted and relative nature (Leitch et al., 2010). The knowledge obtained in this field is socially constructed rather than founded on objective criteria. Qualitative research is based on a philosophical tradition and utilizes adaptable data collection methods that consider the social environment in which the data is generated. The items above were deemed suitable and fit for the present investigation, as the primary objective was to scrutinise the social construction of cultural identity using cultural and communicative lenses, with specific emphasis on the utilization of smocks in the Daboya area of North Gonja district of the Savanna Region of Ghana. The methodology employed techniques such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions, providing a benefit of attaining proximity to the phenomenon under investigation and obtaining a profound exposure to its underlying structure.

The target population encompassed all parties involved in the production and marketing of the Daboya Smock. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who are directly involved in the production and distribution of smocks in Daboya, the Savanna Region of Ghana. These participants include traditional thread spinners, sub-chiefs, chiefs, opinion leaders, weavers, dyers, smock tailors/sewists, and distributors/sellers. The selected participants possess in-depth knowledge of the meanings attached to the styles and designs of smocks worn in the area. The study accidentally included a sample of individuals who wore the smock and were prepared to respond to questions.

Table 1: Summary of sample size

S/N	Response Units	Number
1	Traditional thread spinners	37
2	Weavers and dyers of smock	34
3	Tailors/seamstresses	19
4	Distributors/sellers	24
5	Traditional Leaders (Chiefs and Sub-chiefs)	17
6	Opinion leaders in Daboya	9
7	Accidental sampled individual dressed in smock	50
8	Total	190

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Data collection methods

Consistent with the qualitative orientation of the research, the methods employed for data collection include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. This study used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as the primary data collection methods for all participants. Using the probing technique facilitated the exploration of latent connotations and implications associated with the Daboya smock. The study involved conducting observations to generate visual representations and structural analyses of the smock industry in the Daboya area.

Data analysis

Connelly and Clandinin (2010) opined that narrative analysis is a kind of qualitative data analysis that concentrates on deciphering the central narratives from the individual stories of study groups. Data was gathered and arranged using first-person narration to help with proper comprehension of the subjects. The data was evaluated to show how people use stories to make sense of their experiences and the world around them, how these narratives reflect and form social identities, and how they are interwoven into larger social discourses, narrative analysis is especially pertinent to data analysis. The task was executed manually, devoid of any analytical software tool.

Results and Discussion

This section captures the results and discussion from the interviews with the participants of this study. The section is in two parts. First part presents the results on the types and factors that influence people's choice of smoke, as well as the cultural significance of the use of the Daboya smock. Second part reports on the social and cultural symbolism of the smock.

Types of smocks produced in Daboya

This section presents results on the types of smocks produced and worn in the study area. The data was collected from the chiefs and sub-chiefs, opinion leaders, producers, and distributors of the smock. These categories of people are believed to have an in-depth knowledge on the use of the smock in the area and have stayed and worked in Daboya for a long time. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather the data. According to the Chiefs, Sub-chiefs, and opinion leaders, there are three main types of smocks produced in Daboya: the authentic original fabric made by traditional indigenous weavers, the print made by businesses like Vlisco and Akosombo Textile LTD, and the mass-production pattern made in China. A key respondent listed some of the local traditional names of the original, genuine fabrics, including "Badari," "Baabu," "Kutogefa," "Kanyiti-wale," and "Bore-nyi che," among others. The interviews revealed that the smocks can also be

distinguished by the type of fabric used, the texture, the pattern of the designs and the section of Daboya that the smock is coming from. This result confirms Ayegboyin et al (2019) opinion that traditions are ingrained in every element of life in Africa and are utilized to explain every occurrence in ordinary activities, hence the different names and types of smocks in Daboya.

Factors that influence people's choice of Smock

Traditional textiles continue to be extremely important to many societies in Ghana, especially those in Daboya area, and they still reflect much of the people's social customs, culture, and traditions. The field data gathered from distributors, sellers and tailors/seamstresses through interviews and observations showed the following:

Personality: A person's style of dress and fashion can be used to quickly assess their personality, values, and culture. One of the participants remarked: *".....Choosing a smock depends on the occasion and one's income level....."*. Another factor the participants stressed was that people's decision to get a smock from them is because they need a ceremonial garment

made from plain white fabric with no pleats, and is used for Enskinning and burial purposes. It has two primary uses, they added: First, it raises someone from being an ordinary person or prince to becoming a chief, and second, it is used as a shroud for a dead chief's funeral. One of them indicated that *"....it is significant to note that this kind of gown cannot be bought on the open market, it is only ordered when a person is ready to be enskinned as a chief or for a chief's funeral...."*. As a result, it is given to the authority that will bestow the title on the person and added to the accessories gathered when a person is to be enskinned as a chief. They also identified a few names that are commonly used for the smock, including *"Densikyi"*, War/Funeral Dress (*"Gbagno"*), and *"Zalabiya"*. Clothing is one of the most common forms of media for expressing Ghanaian symbolic art. The smock is the most distinctive dress from Daboya. These findings are consistent with Benedict (2019), who depicted the "arc of human potential" to show that every culture makes decisions from various options for each type of behaviour or attire.



Figure 1: *Daboya local smock*

Source: Field data.

Cultural significance of the use of smock in Daboya

The arts and costumes that define a particular social group constitute culture (Tijaodoms, 2017). In an in-depth interview and observation with the chiefs, sub-chiefs, and opinion leaders on the cultural significance of the use of smocks in Daboya, it was revealed that these individuals use smocks just as a ceremonial gown, and it acts as a regal cloth and identity of that Northern personality coming from Daboya. The smock is typically worn on festive occasions for dancing at festivals. Also, when visiting in-laws, as the data suggested, one of the opinion leaders indicated that, ".....*It transforms a person from a commoner or prince into a chief, traditionally and culturally, it serves as the shroud for the funeral of a dead chief....*". Smocks allow for the transmission of customs and traditions through extended family networks, and they grant historical power over social, familial, and agrarian issues to the chiefs or traditional leaders. Relationships in conventional society are based on family membership, inherited

rank, and ancestral beliefs, which enable the transmission of traditional beliefs through the clan system. They also contend that it upholds religious and spiritual activities, impacts and preserves cultural standards, and constitutes an artistic expression to maintain some natural resources and childcare customs. Speaking to the team, one of the sub chiefs indicated that; "..... *there are some regalia that ordinary chiefs do not wear in Daboya and Gonja land as a whole. E.g. the regalia on the neck of 'Yagbon-wura' is called 'Brumuso' in Gonja.....*" They look shinier and Gold-like in colour.

They emphasized how it validates funerals, outdoor activities, and marriage. They also observed that, culturally, the smock has taken on new significance for exiled Daboya indigens and their brothers and sisters around the globe, for whom it stands for kinship with their forebears and triumph over adversity across the African diaspora. Andrews (2016) opined that ascribed identities are personal, social, or cultural identities placed on us by others, while avowed identities are those, we claim for ourselves; the results and findings support. Because a nation's customs and cultural

values may be seen in its attire, clothing serves as an expression, image, and personality of that society. The values, morals, economy, aesthetics, and technological advancements of specific individuals and groups can also be reflected through clothing.

Symbolic meanings of the use of the smock

Bridging the gap between different cultures, an event must use a means of communication which transcends cultural barriers, create an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, teach people about other cultures and engage them as fully and honestly with both body and mind (Akpabli 2016). The respondents agreed that smock communicates, but how well it does so depend on its form. Many of the indigenes of Daboya use headwear and hats in various styles to communicate. The study revealed that a headdress (hat) that is won and slanted or skewed towards the front denotes *"I have no equal around or Leadership, no coequal"* which literally means being the richest and strongest person in that area or physically, spiritually strong or both. The participants emphasized the significance of noting how hats and other headwear served as a means of communication throughout the Daboya area. The respondents stressed that wearing it differently would also imply or show that you do not respect local elders. The respondents also indicated that there is war smock, known locally in Daboya as *"Nyankale"* in Gonja and also a funeral attire. There are two sizes available, one with sleeves and one without. According to a key informant, *".... whenever these smocks are worn, it denotes a nonverbal communication that depicts a symbol of war or an action..."*. A demonstration was made by one of the participants: Folding the top of the hat to the left side of the head: this signifies that *"he is actually telling the public that he is a humble person and he doesn't want trouble"*. When a person folds his hat towards the right side of his head, it signifies that he is a *"person of strength"*.

He could either be a rich man or an influential person in society. Smocks are frequently used as a way for people to express their age, gender, political opinions, and socioeconomic standing, as stressed by the respondents.

One of the respondents remarked that: *".....the cultural customs of the people of Daboya, which were passed down from their ancestors, have not altered significantly but the smock connected with these practices has undergone little changes instead of being adjusted to meet modern demands..."* (Interview with a key informant in Daboya, 22nd November 2024) Another demonstration was made by one of the opinion leaders, with a stiff's standing position of the hat which signifies *"no co-equal"* or *"except God"* or *"I stand tall"*.

One of the chiefs quickly added that *".....this style of wearing the hat and their meaning does not cut across all the sections of Daboya area....."*. For the Savannah Region, he gave an example: tilting the hat to the left means *"still expecting from the mother's side"*, then tilting the hat to the right means a *'man's child'* and also expecting from the father's side". But for those from Upper West who are residing in Daboya, tilting the hat to the left means *"I am clean, honest with no ill intention"* and tilting to the right means *"do not try me, I am spiritually armed"* he added.

A critical finding from the research was the use of the towel as a symbol of communication, and this was revealed by one of the respondents who resides in Daboya but is a Dagomba by tribe. She stated that in Dagbon, *".....people regularly wear towels as a sort of headwear to express bereavement...."*. She added that all mourners would wear this until the last burial rites are carried out because the wearer grieves for the chief's passing. It is typically worn rolled up like a smock over the head, though some people like to tie it

up like a hat so they may take it off and put it back on.

The respondents agreed that the Daboya smock is a traditional garment mostly unique to people of Northern descent, as a symbol of wealth, traditional political power, commoner and religious influence. The respondents concluded that while the smock has maintained its use and character over time, imitations of its form and uses have occurred. Ascribed identities are assigned to us personally, socially, or culturally by others, while proclaimed identities are those we claim for ourselves, according to Martin & Nakayama (2010). The data also revealed that, the 'war dress' of the Daboya smock's fortification is

generally done with the talisman, and sometimes cowries, but its abilities and potency are secret. It is significant to note that although the war dresses are made of white cotton, they are either dark reddish or brownish. To complete the fortification rites, an opinion leader recounted that *".....the dark reddish or brownish colour is owing to the charms that it has been washed in and sometimes buried in the ground for some number of days or weeks...."*. he further on added that: *"..... traditionally, indigens are not allowed to buy the war smock on credit"*. The reason he gave was that the ancestors will punish you for that.



Figure 2. War dress.

Source: field data,

Social and cultural symbolism on the threads and colours of the Daboya smock

This section presents results on the social and cultural symbolisms of the threads and colours of the Daboya smock. Cultural identity can be understood only when various cultural sectors are considered together and connected by a single factor, human communication and interaction. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather data from the traditional thread spinners, weavers, and dyers of smock. The data showed that a

smock is an essential piece of clothing since it communicates in every way possible. The respondents indicated that: each of the fabric's colours has a symbolic meaning. Gold represents prestige and tranquility, yellow represents fertility, green represents rejuvenation, blue represents the unadulterated spirit and harmony, red denotes passion, and black denotes kinship with the dead and spiritual awareness. The field data revealed that, the smock is among the most popular forms of expression for the indigens of Daboya's symbolic art.

Because social norms and traditions impact it, clothing is frequently inextricably linked to societal culture. Social constructions can become so ingrained that we take them for granted as "normal" and "natural." However, they are always influenced by the sociocultural situations that gave rise to them, as agreed by Eicher (2018).

Factors that influence the selection of a particular smock as a dress

The most recognizable and important garment from Daboya is the smock, hence its name, the "Smock City". The locals use the smocks for practical daily purposes. However, they have also been decorated with symbolic geometric patterns that communicate the mythical beliefs of the community to the outside world. The data was collected using a focus group approach with Chiefs, sub-chiefs, opinion leaders, and ordinary people on the street.

One of the sub-chiefs noted that: *".... the smock originated in the Daboya area but is now widely used throughout West Africa and the Diasporas and frequently exude authority and power...."* Traditional smocks currently come in various styles for various occasions, including festivals, rituals, funerals, marriages, child-naming ceremonies, casual wear, and everyday occasions. Kings and chiefs wear smocks as daily costume. The wearing of smocks has increased in popularity in Daboya, so the smock is a means of expressing our identity, including our tribe and group as the data indicated.

Scupin (2018), revealed that numerous personal and social identity options exist. Clothes are primarily worn to cover the body. Even though smock use has increased in Ghana, Daboya and "Wasipe" continue to place a high value on it and recognize its significance. Some smock styles are royal and spiritual clothing worn primarily on special occasions. Kings and chiefs wore smocks as normal costume. The study accidentally sampled some individuals

dressed in a smock and ready to respond to the research questions. Most of the study's participants chose the Daboya smock in response to this question because of its distinctive traditional adaptability. A few of them also said the kind of smock depended on the occasion. One of the accidentally sampled individuals dressed in a smock made a crucial distinction. She said: *"..... Smocks made in other areas, such as Dagbon, usually does not come with the same hat colour, but smocks made from Daboya- Savannah region is usually accompanied by the same hat colour....."*

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The study sought to examine how smock is used as a socially constructed identity of people in the Daboya area of the Savannah region, Ghana. Even if the prevalence of smocks has grown over time, the entire country of Ghana continues to recognize their significance and how they shape people's identities. The study concludes that the traditional smock of Daboya in the Savannah region of Ghana conveys much information about the identities of the people's conventional cultural values without using words. Clothing must frequently be shared with a particular society's culture since societal customs and norms influence it. The smock now symbolizes kinship with one's ancestors and the victory of the Northern and African diaspora's fights for displaced indigens of Daboya and their brothers and sisters worldwide. This study makes it clear that smock fashion culture, which is prevalent in Daboya in Ghana's Savannah Region, has intriguing philosophical connotative and denotative undertones and rich cultural and communication identities.

It has been determined that if severe or immediate action is not taken, the rich cultural and communication values connected to the smock and its symbolism in the Daboya area of Ghana may be lost. In addition, the study concludes that the traditional smock of Daboya conveys much information about the identities of people's

conventional cultural values without using words. It is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Trade and Industry ensure the quality of the finished Daboya local smock is enhanced. The Central Government should partner with other world trade bodies to set up factories to process the raw materials required in sufficient quantities. Declaring and promoting the use of the smock to promote national events such as cultural identity and Heritage months by various Assemblies. Policy direction could be made by all stakeholders in education for all students in pre-tertiary institutions in the Savannah Region of Ghana to wear smocks on some specific days in school. This will significantly contribute to the local and global marketing of the smock.

The findings of this study will contribute significantly to the knowledge and literature of the sociocultural and communication significance of the smock as a nonverbal communication tool and serve as the foundation for social identity and more precise assessments of personality based on clothing practices.

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