

Artistic expressions with the use of costumes in selected Ghanaian video films: The freedom and responsibilities of the costumier as an artist

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Abstract: The increase in advertisements for newly produced films in Ghana is a testament that the Ghanaian film industry has become one of the fastest growing businesses in the country. Contemporary film producers or directors have continued the tradition of their forebears in the use of various traditional visual elements of communication, particularly the use of costumes. Costumes are powerful visual elements employed in film productions for effective characterization and to offer vital narrative cues to viewers. While acknowledging that costumiers have the freedom to express themselves in constructing costumes, both for utilitarian and aesthetic purposes, it is equally important for such artistic expressions to be accompanied by some responsibilities to social norms. Employing a qualitative approach and relying on purposive sampling to sample two Ghanaian video films, this study relied on content analysis to explore how costumes have been used in films. Anchored on the theory of representation, the study contributes to the ongoing debate on the ways in which costumes are used in video film productions. The findings revealed that some costumiers in the third historical phase of film making in Ghana have not articulated their artistic freedoms and equal responsibilities associated with costuming films. This calls for regular in-service training and workshops for costumiers.

Keywords: Artistic expression, Communication, Costume, Responsibility, Video film

1. Introduction

The increase in the advertising of newly produced video films both in the electronic and print media in Ghana is a testament that the Ghanaian video film industry has become one of the fastest-growing businesses in the country. Without a doubt, the production of video films involves people of diverse expertise, and this has, to some extent, led to the engagement of several people, thus serving as a source of employment for some of the Ghanaian populace. There is a seeming understanding that the boost in the film industry serves as an avenue for people solely to make money, as some film producers make a full-length movie in less than four working days and are often plagued with diverse challenges. This was revealed by Nanbigne (2013), a scholar in film making in Ghana, at a Faculty of Arts public lecture at the University of Cape Coast. This yawning doubt is justified by the seeming sub-standard video films in Ghana in terms of content and technical flaws. Ennin (2014: 6) shares Nanbigne's view and notes that "...many private producers with little or no training in film making have been producing hundreds of video films each month." Undoubtedly, the outcome of a video film production with personnel with little or no background in film making has the potential to engage sub-standard elements of production that will culminate in video films with diverse challenges.

Film art has a greater influence on the minds of the general public than any other art form (Onikoyi, 2013), and as such, its content must be efficacious and didactic. Generally, film production tends to document and transmit the culture of a group of people from one generation to the next. Again, some themes in video films conspicuously create awareness for change among viewers about some social, political, and religious issues affecting their communities. Tracing the history of film making in Ghana, Nanbigne (2013) has observed that film making can be examined in three broad historical phases. The first phase, approximately during the first two decades of independence (1957-1970), involved the production of films with nationalist orientations such as

No Tears for Ananse (1968) and *I Told You So* (1970). The second phase was one of introspection when film makers examined the challenges of nation-building, including a re-examination of the nation's political history. Notable examples of such films are *Contact* (1976), *Genesis Chapter X* (1978), *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1981), *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra* (1984) and the multiple award-winning film, *Heritage...Africa* (1988). The third major phase is what is known as "video films" from the mid-1980s onwards. Since film making on celluloid was expensive, video film technology became the new order. Succinctly, video films are films shot on recordable devices like SD cards and are mostly digitized. With this technology, a lot of people have been able to access films via pen drives and other similar devices. Undoubtedly, the video film era has been characterized by some merits, as observed by Ennin (2014: 6).

By the beginning of the 1980s, however, foreign films entered the country (Ghana) on a massive scale with the advent of video film technology and thus made accessible to the ordinary people films which hitherto had been non-existent.

From Ennin's postulation, a key issue emerges: the introduction of video films in Ghana enabled individuals to access video films that were previously rented for a fee, and the Video Home System (VHS) was later returned to the owner. However, while acknowledging that there have been some merits, there are also some challenges associated with video film technology. Haynes (2007), as cited by Yamoah (2014: 155), avers that:

[T]he rise in the video industry in the mid-1990s in Ghana and Nigeria was treated with disdain by the professionals in the industry. The professionals and the established film institutions during that period were unhappy with the technical deficiencies of those films, not to mention the superstition-riddled content that had overtaken the market.

Despite the seeming technological flaws that characterized the emergence of video film in Ghana and Nigeria, the Nigerian video film industry has become a force to reckon with in West Africa. Ekpenyong (2005) identifies the death of celluloid, the commercial vitality, language and thematic factors, the Pentecostal evangelism, and the female audience factor, among others, as some of the factors that led to the growth and popularity of the Nigerian video film industry. In Ghana, the video film era has been characterized by the production of several thousand of films in the country, and Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region, has become a fertile ground for video film making. As a result, video films produced in the Akan language have assumed the term "Kumawood" videos. Kumawood videos are conceived as video films that have a storyline that reflects the day-to-day life of the Ghanaian environment, produced in the Akan language (Kquofi & Croffie, 2017). Specifically, it is the Kumawood video films that the current study focused on rather than the Ghallywood videos in Ghana, where actors express themselves in the English language.

Discussing elements that aid in film making, Atakpo (2004) identifies lighting, costumes, music and sound effects, make-up, set, and, above all, ritual as aesthetic elements in video film. Costume as a visual element contributes immensely to the advancement of the action as it unfolds. This is because, through the use of relevant costumes in video films, they convey salient information such as the sex, age, occupation, social status, and historical background of actors. Others include the setting, ethnic background and geographical areas, time and season in which the production is set, supporting theme, concept, and mood. Additionally, it helps in identifying the culture and religious environments of characters as described by the screenwriter and portrayed by the actors (Dennis, 2018; Lujan, 2017; Monks, 2010). This is because every society is distinct from the other, and one such line of departure is explicitly seen in the use of costumes, which ultimately mirrors the vast culture of the past and present situations of a people. Through this, costume serves as a non-verbal form of communication to viewers. In view of this, it behoves costumiers to read, research and critically analyze the

screenwriters' ideas and translate them into visual, concrete artistic terms under the supervision of a film director to allow for valuable insight for viewers' appreciation. Conversely, there are instances where some costumiers overlook the role costume plays and end up giving actors anything to wear. It is against this offensive practice that Kwakye-Opong and Adinku (2013: 9) have noted that "costume is not just about clothing the performer; it is the process of studying who and what the character in the scripts is". The emerging view from Kwakye-Opong and Adinku (2013) is critical to the advancement of this study because to unearth the disposition of a character in a script demands a full analysis of the said character, including the geographical environment where the character has been situated. When this is achieved, it helps costume designers "create the look of each character by designing clothes and accessories the actors will wear" (Odule, 2013: 341).

A successful accomplishment of this task aids in the telling of the story, which Cole and Burke (2005: 32) indicate that "costume designers tell stories through the costumes they design about characters, family, social conditions, and ways of life..." From Cole and Burke's illumination, it is clear that although screenwriters put their ideas together to form the story, the story is presented in its visual form with the help of the costumier and other personnel. In addition, the costumier, who has conducted scholarly research into the period in which the video film is set and employs such a historical narrative in costuming, ultimately tells the story of the said community through the use of appropriate costumes. As a result, this has the potential for viewers to identify themselves with the storyline in the video film because they can relate to what is being communicated to them in terms of the relevance of the various elements, including the use of costume. This stems from the fact that costume is an influential aspect of visual communication that registers a statement when viewed through the lens of the culture of the people among whom the production is set. However, instead of enjoying the narrative of a video film produced in Ghana, one is likely to ponder the types of costumes worn by the actors because they do not place the actors in a specific geographical context. It is, therefore, imperative that although costumiers have their freedom in designing their costumes, such freedom should be associated with a responsibility that must aid viewers to associate the video within a specified cultural context. As a result, in what follows, this study examines costume as a conduit for cultural identity.

2. Literature review

2.1. Costume: A vehicle for cultural identity

Culture is human because every human society is expected to demonstrate a specific cultural identity as evident in dressing, human relationships, eating, and other related endeavours of mankind (Sesan & Shittu, 2015). Costume, situated within the culture of a people, serves as one of the non-verbal elements of cultural identity because it reflects the philosophy of the people. Through this, several civilizations have used costume as a medium to carry their ideas from antiquity to date. Tracing the history of costume from early Greek and Roman civilizations, scholars (Barton, 1963; Tortora & Eubank, 1992; Wilcox, 1958) have noted that the Romans defeated the Greeks during the Punic wars, after which they took over their art forms, including their costumes. Because of this, Roman art has an air of Greek influence. The Romans took over Greek costumes and added a distinct feature to make them "their own". To achieve this, the Romans dyed their fabric with a purplish substance secreted from a shellfish to produce a band called the 'Augustus clavus'. This was attached to the hem of their toga and was worn only by royals to identify them as Romans and give them an identity.

In Africa, especially in Ghana, the costumes of a particular ethnic group can best be seen through their culture, where the veil is uncovered to draw attention and communicate with viewers. The philosophy undergirding costume usage within an ethnic group's political, social, and religious settings, among others, is best understood within a given cultural space. Festivals, naming ceremonies, performances of marriage and funeral rites, among others, therefore, become a platform to showcase such traditional costumes. All these go a long way towards establishing the cultural identity of the wearer in a non-verbal form. This is because "whether

modern or period, garments make a statement that is perceived and interpreted by an audience” (Anderson & Anderson, 1999: 25). Ingham and Covey (1992: 48) also share in Anderson and Anderson’s assertion and note that “the costume designer is irrevocably linked to the past as well as the present, and is influenced as much by history as by the events of the contemporary scene”. It is through the culture of the people that their past as it relates to costumes can be uncovered, and as Monks (2010: 51) positions it, “costume is identity.”

While acknowledging that video films are cultural artefacts that should reflect specific cultures, a number of African films can only be considered alien in their own countries. This is because the indigenous people cannot associate themselves with such films since they do not in any way portray, project, promote, or preserve their culture (Crane, 2014; Ogunleye, 2014; Sama, 1996, as cited by Croffie, 2015; Ugbam et al., 2014). It is, therefore, important that costume should serve as an avenue that gives a distinct cultural identity to people. In Ghana, for example, each of the sixteen regions has its own distinctive traditional costumes. Similarly, a privately owned television network, TV3, in their reality show, *Ghana’s Most Beautiful*, allows all sixteen contestants representing the sixteen regions of Ghana to showcase the uniqueness of each region’s costumes during their performance (Dennis, 2018). Equally, the use of various costumes in video films must go a long way to reflect the diversity that exists in the use of costumes as a tool for cultural identity in Ghanaian video film productions. This stems from the fact that “Ghana holds a prominent place in African history and culture” (Salm & Falola, 2002: 1) and, for that matter, must showcase their culture, for which “film, like every other art-form, is a cultural vehicle” (Olayiwola 2013: 319). It is, therefore, imperative for film producers to draw on the rich knowledge of the traditions of the people during film making. To this end, films set within any period of Ghana should reflect the Ghanaian culture in which costume plays a pivotal role within the cultural milieu. Sesan and Shittu (2015: 5) have noted that “[a]s a cultural product, a film is expected to represent the culture that informs it and the practitioners are expected to be cultural ambassadors.” If the arts are to educate, then costume as an art form must be a vehicle through which video films can be didactic. This is because costumes communicate non verbally (Navei, & Donkoh, 2022). This is relevant in the Ghanaian context because “Ghana is endowed with rich traditions and cultures in which clothing or costumes ... form an integral part” (Dzramedo, 2009: 1). When this is achieved, it would enhance characterization, and in the next thread of discussion, this study focuses on the relationship between costume and characterization.

2.2. Costume: An essential tool for characterization

Characterization is important in an actor’s performance because the actor must be able to play the character as portrayed by the screenwriter. This can be achieved by the use of the actors’ voice, gestures, costumes, and makeup, among others. The use of costumes helps in defining a character in video films because characterization encompasses a holistic viewpoint in achieving the *mise en scène*. As noted by Anderson and Anderson (1999), the primary function of costume is to enhance the characterization of the roles of actors. To this effect, the costume must be symbolic to carry vital cues from the actors to the viewers. On the heels of the foregoing, Kaiser (1985: 184) succinctly avers that “costumes and other forms of appearance are symbolic when they have meaning for, or supply information to, perceivers about the wearer per se, or about his or her involvement in certain social situations.” This improves the characterization of the actor(s), because the use of appropriate costumes reveals an actor’s identity and roles. As noted by Kwakye-Oppong and Adinku (2013), Kwakye Oppong and Dennis (2014) and Mamiya (2016), through the use of appropriate costumes, viewers can visualize the character in terms of age, the occupation and lifestyle, status in the community, the culture of a group of people, the economic and social status, religion, the time and place, among others. Through this, actors leave their day-to-day traits behind and assume a different personality through the use of relevant costumes.

Citing an example of a movie during the first phase of the history of film making in Ghana, as noted by Nanbigne (2013) in the introductory section of this study, specifically, *I Told You So* (1970), conscious efforts were

made to use costume to aid in the narration. In *I told you so*, Kobina Jones, a Ghanaian, returns from Nigeria to Ghana after working for some years. He goes for lunch at a restaurant and makes acquaintance with Esuaborbou. Kobina Jones informs Esuaborbou that he wishes to marry. Esuaborbou introduces Rosina, his niece, to Kobina Jones, to marry. Esuaborbou arranges for Kobina Jones to perform the marriage rites, although Rosina's father, Kwesi Tsuii, was not in agreement with the marriage. This was because Kwesi Tsuii felt that her daughter must not marry a wealthy man since he didn't know the source of Kobina Jones' wealth. During the performance of the marriage rites, Kobina Jones is arrested by policemen for stealing diamonds and running away to Nigeria some years ago.

It is important to note that conscious efforts were made through the use of costumes for the narration. Through this, the costumier had the freedom to express ideas in a more responsible manner, which helped to give vital cues to the viewers. Evidently, through the use of costumes, scenes such as the restaurant, nightclub, and wedding, among others, were accentuated. At the restaurant, individuals were seen wearing different kinds of costumes, as evident in Figure 1. Similar to the portrayal of the restaurant scene characterized by different costumes worn by actors, the nightclub scene also followed this tradition, as seen in Figure 2. This was because, in day-to-day situations, individuals came from various homes to such social grounds, hence the need to reflect such ideals in the costuming of actors for that purpose. The wedding scene was also characterized by actors wearing costumes, including *kaba* (blouse) and loincloth, skirt and blouse, and straight dress for women. On the part of men, some draped cloth over their left shoulder, evident in the Akan tradition, while others also wore suits, as seen in figure 3.



Figure 1: Restaurant scene of *I Told You So*
Source: *I Told You So*



Figure 2: Nightclub scene of *I Told You So*
Source: *I Told You So*



Figure 3: Marriage scene of *I Told You So*
Source: *I Told You So*

Similarly, during the second phase of the history of film making in Ghana, costumiers carried on with their freedom in costume design and crafted costumes to reflect the Ghanaian culture. This is exemplified in *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra* (1984), where Adi, a lorry driver who plies Accra to Kukurantumi, loses his job because the lorry owner, Alhaji, fails to frequently maintain the lorry. Out of desperation, Adi relocates to Accra,

leaving his wife and child, Abena, a fiancée of Bob, at Kukurantumi. Adi secures a faulty lorry from Mensah and convinces his friend Kofi a fraudulent wristwatch seller for financial assistance. Kofi declines Adi's request. Later, Kofi is arrested and hands over the keys to his house to Adi. Adi exchanges Kofi's wristwatches for lorry spare parts at Mensah's mechanic shop and repairs the lorry for use. Mensah and Adi go back to Kukurantumi with the view that Abena will accept Mensah as a husband. Abena rejects Mensah and relocates to Accra with Bob without the knowledge of Adi. Adi meets Abena in Accra, and Abena falls in love with Mensah, and Bob returns to Kukurantumi. Significantly, in *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra*, efforts were made to portray the Ghanaian environment through the use of costumes. In a scene involving Alhaji and Adi, Alhaji was seen wearing his *jalabia* (a long tunic) and a skull cap, a common costume among Muslims in Ghana. As a result of this, the Islamic religion of Ghana was portrayed through costumes in a non-verbal way, as evident in Figure 4. Again, at the lorry station, several people were seen either boarding vehicles or engaging in trading activities in different costumes. This was reflective of the diverse homes these people were coming from, which informed their selection of different kinds of costumes, as evident in figure 5.

3. Theoretical framework



Figure 4: Alhaji and Adi's scene of *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra*

Source: *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra*



Figure 5: Lorry station scene of *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra*

Source: *Kukurantumi-Road to Accra*

This study is anchored on the theory of representation. Hall (1997: 15) argues that "representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture." Inherent within Halls' position is that various cultures have specific elements they use to represent aspects of their culture that they can associate with and also draw meaning from. As a result, items such as films, costumes, paintings, sculptures, and weaving, among others, serve as cultural elements for representing and mirroring society and culture. Stemming from this, non-verbal communication becomes paramount in sending ideas to viewers and serves as a conduit that connects meaning to the culture of a person. While recognizing that culture is not static and its representation in the mass media may vary (Fürsich, 2010), it is prudent that for media education, the concept of representation within a given culture is didactic and gives a true picture of the happenings of a given period in a given civilization. To this end, costume, which serves as a vehicle through which the culture of a given society can be represented, cannot be compromised.

4. Methods

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. This was because qualitative researchers, in one way, seek to understand the rich meanings of cultural activities or artifact (Tracy, 2013) of which costume is an example. The purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the two video films, Bediahene (2010) and Nomee (2008) for the study. This was because costumes in the narratives of the videos were relevant to this research. These two video films were among several videos that the researcher watched on separate days in 2020, onboard a commercial van from Accra, the capital of Ghana, to Cape Coast, the former capital of Ghana. The shows were part of the services to passengers. The researcher later downloaded these videos from YouTube for careful study

and analysis. Qualitative content analysis was employed in analyzing the video films, as the researcher paid attention to how costumes were used in the narration.

5. Synopsis and costume analysis of selected video films

Produced in three parts, *Bediahene* (2010) deals with how Agya Kunto, a member of the chief's elders, and his wife, Nana Ama, have been married for several years without having a child. The couple is mocked by both young and old in the community. Nana Kwatah, the chief of the community, rules with wickedness and makes several cruel decrees. A key decree was that newly born babies should be brought to him to name them. The elders being unhappy with such decrees, conspired to destool Nana Kwatah. However, Kyekyeku, a member of the elders, secretly informs Nana Kwatah of the plot against him. Around the same time, Nana Ama conceives, and later, Nana Kwatah kills Agya Kunto and Kyekyeku. Nana Ama delivers a baby boy, and when the time was due to take the child to the chief to be named, the little child surprisingly informs the mother not to take him to the chief and that his name is Bediahene. Bediahene grows into a teenager full of wisdom. Fifteen years later, Nana Kwatah plans several plots to kill Bediahene because he is loved by all members of the community. However, Bediahene overcomes all such plots, and Nana Kwatah and his sons die instead of Bediahene. Bediahene is then crowned as the new King of the community.

It is important to note that in *Bediahene* (2010), actors wore the same costume from the beginning of the video film, from part one (1) to part three (3). Surprisingly, little Bediahene grew up to be fifteen years old, and the actors continued to wear the same costume. This contradicts Kaiser (1985), who asserts that costume and other forms of appearance are symbolic when they have meaning for, or provide information to perceivers about the wearer in general, or his or her involvement in specific social situations that help to enhance actor characterization. Specifically, names of actors in the film under review such as Bediahene, Kyekyeku, and Nana Ama, among others, and the setting of the film were reflective of an Akan location in Ghana. In addition, actors delivered their lines in Twi, an Akan language in Ghana, and also used props with an air of Ghanaian origin. However, costumes worn by actors did not represent the Akan culture. For example, Nana Kwatah's costume as a king did not in any way project an Akan chief. As noted by Adrover (2015), Awoyemi (2003) and Reed (2015), a general representation of a chief among the Akan is that they dress in traditional regalia by draping eight (8) to ten (10) yards of fabric over their shoulders and wear rich and elaborate accessories to complement their draped fabric. Again, there are instances where some chiefs within the Akan set-up also wear *batakari* (smock) and a pair of *togas* (loose shorts) with a pair of native sandals. However, in *Bediahene*, the chief wore a tunic down to his ankle. Over it, he wore a cape with a long train that trailed behind him as he walked about. The train was handled by his guards, similar to how a bride's maid handles a bride's train. This is seen in Figure 6 and is alien to the Akan tradition.

Again, all the elders of Nana Kwatah also wore the same costume from the beginning of part one through to the end of part three of the film. Specifically, they draped printed kente loincloths around their waists to their knees, with a printed kente cloth used as a stole around their neck. With this costume, they went to the farm, the chief's palace, and other places for over fifteen years, as portrayed in the video film. Surprisingly, all the elders lived in separate homes, and one might wonder why they all dressed the same way. Indeed, costuming these six elders in the same way is similar to costuming football players, which falls under the category of stereotypical costuming. This contradicts the position of Adjei (2005), Kwakye-Oppong and Adinku (2013), Kwakye Oppong and Dennis (2014) and Mamiya (2016) that costumes worn by actors help to portray their occupation and lifestyle, status in the community, their culture, economic and social status, religion, time and place, and many more. This approach to costuming does not allow a costume to have other functions apart from covering the human body and leaves many questions in the minds of viewers about the place of the costume in the video film. This is evident in Figure 7. The representation of Akan women in the video film also leaves one to wonder

about the kind of culture that is being portrayed. All the women in the film draped loincloths around their bust to their knees and wore waist beads over the cloth around their waist. Besides, they also adorned their hair with some of the beads, similar to the representation of some women in some Nigerian video films. In Ghana, waist beads among the Akan are not worn for viewer appreciation, and it is considered shameful for a second person to view them if they are not meant for ritual purposes (Danso, Adom, Eshun & Adamtey, 2019). Could it be that the concept of blind copying, which Kobina Sekyi addressed in his play, *The Blinkards* (1974), where some Africans copied blindly the culture of Europeans without understanding how such copied elements operated, has gained ground in the costuming of video films in Ghana? In the video film under review, such waist beads were exposed, contrary to the Akan culture.

This is evident in Figure 8. Again, the painting of the lips of actors' black in the video film under review was another area worth examining. This is because there is no such black painting of the lips of all people in a given community among the Akan at any point in their history, hence its representation in the video film. Dzrmedo (2009) in his doctoral thesis on *Clothing and Fashion in Ghanaian Culture: A Case Study Among the Akans*, oral tradition does not point to such lip paintings in the history of the Akan, and, as such, does not portray the Akan culture in any way, but creates confusion in the minds of viewers. This is evident in Figure 9. Although the costumer has expressed his creative intent, such creativity was not associated with the responsibility of situating his artwork into a specified cultural context. My argument is informed by the thoughts and ideas of Rose (2008: 6) that "a costume is a dress which is donned in order to demonstrate, unambiguously, a specific identity." However, no specific identity was created in the minds of viewers in terms of the use of costumes in the video film, which does not in any way represent the Akan culture.



Figure 6: Nana Kwaataa in his costume in *Bediahene*
Source: Video film, *Bediahene*



Figure 7: Elders of Nana Kwaataa in their costumes in *Bediahene*

Source: Video film, *Bediahene*



Figure 8: Representation of women in *Bediahene*

Source: Video film, *Bediahene*



Figure 9: Representation of the lips of women in *Bediahene* black

Source: Video film, *Bediahene*

In Nomee (2008), a Ghanaian video film produced in three parts, the chief of the community falls sick for several months, and various forms of calamities also befall the community. The chief's elders, with the advice of the sister of the chief, Maame Nyantah, seek spiritual assistance from a traditional priest to heal the chief from a different town, rejecting the chief priest of their community. The outcome is that the chief's wife, Amoanima, is a witch and the cause of calamities in the community. Amoanima and her children, Abena and Opoku, are banished. Amoanima dies in the forest. However, more calamities unfold in the community despite the absence of Amoanima and her children. The elders of the community consult the community chief priest and conclude that the sick chief is the cause of his sickness and the calamity of the community. This was because the chief did not obey all instructions for retrieving gold hidden in the forest by his predecessors as he sold them for his gain. To avert these challenges, a royal who is a celibate is to go for the other small pot of gold in the forest to use to purify the community. It turns out that Opoku is the only one who qualifies. Warriors are sent into the forest to look for Amoanima and her children. Opoku and Abena are found, and he (Opoku) accepts and goes to the spiritual forest for the small pot containing the gold. The chief dies, and Opoku is enstooled as the new chief, and the community enjoys peace again.

In Nomee (2008), all the actors wore printed kente cloth similar to *Bediahene*. Specifically, the men in the village wore waist-gathered skirts while some had capes around their necklines. Others also used pieces of fabric with a width measuring approximately four (4) inches to cover their chest in an x pattern. Throughout the history of Akan costumes, men have never worn waist-gathered skirts (Dzramedo, 2009), and their introduction in the Ghanaian video film raises eyebrows. It is against this background that Kwakye-Opong and Adinku (2013: 10) have intimated that "actors like ordinary people are not just costumed only for the purpose of covering the body but also to present and create a lasting impression...to pass information about the character to the audience." In addition, the king's elders wore their skirts and capes around their necks from the beginning of the video film to the end without any change in costumes for the various scenes, as evident in Figure 10. The application of black paint on the foreheads of the elders and other members of the community also leaves a lot of thoughts in the minds of people. In one breath, one would have thought that these were practicing Muslims who, as a result of touching the floor or mat with their forehead when praying over the years, might have had such markings on their forehead as in the case of practicing Muslims. However, there was not any allusion to such a religious fraternity in the video film. Such facial markings are evident in Figure 11. Again, the representation of community members in the same costume was also disturbing. This is because, generally, members of an Akan community would wear different costumes made from diverse colours of fabrics and their representation in

video films should embody happenings in the community to provide education to viewers. Figure 12 is a testament to the use of the same fabric in the film under review. There is a sense in which film producers must take their time to reflect on the artistic representation of actors through costumes rather than produce several video films that are characterized by the misuse of costumes to construct the narrative.



Figure 10: Representation of elders in their costume in *Nomee*

Source: Video film, *Nomee*



Figure 11: Forehead of an actor painted black in *Nomee*

Source: Video film, *Nomee*



Figure 12: Community members in the same costume in *Nomee*

Source: Video film, *Nomee*

From the analysis of the two video films, it is clear that there is a misuse or mismatch of costumes in constructing the narrative of the Ghanaian people. This phenomenon seems to be on the rise in the production of video films in Ghana and must be addressed by stakeholders because the freedom associated with costuming video films must also be accompanied by some responsibilities to social norms in the community.

6. Conclusion

The Ghanaian film industry is undoubtedly booming at an increasing rate and has become an avenue for money-spinning where some practitioners pay little or no attention to the visual elements, especially costumes. From the discussions, it can be argued that during the first two phases of film making in Ghana, costumiers were free to express their creativity, and such creative nuances were characterized by a great deal of responsibility to social norms. The inappropriate use of costumes in some Ghanaian video film productions in the third phase is evident in two ways. This is either the inappropriate way in which Ghanaian costumes are used or the manner in which costumes associated with Nigerian culture are employed in the production of Ghanaian video films. Gradually, the concept of blind copying without unearthing its relevance to the context and content of video films is gaining ground in the film industry. More importantly, is the need to showcase the ever-rich costumes of Ghanaians to project the Ghanaian cultural identity through video films. This has the potential to position and project the

nation on the local and international fronts. In an interview granted by Anyidoho (2000, p 9) to Kaw Ansah on the state of Ghanaian video films, the latter noted that:

Although the film industry continues to grow and the number of local productions continues to rise, the industry is plagued with a number of problems which mitigate against the achievement of quality in production and economic viability in the industry. Poor technical, artistic ethical standards associated with most of the current generation of film made in Ghana are attributed to the inadequate training of film personnel...the absence of effective film distribution system both within and outside the country....

It is obvious that the Ghanaian video film industry continues to thrive but is faced with a myriad of challenges. The costumer, as an artist, has creative freedom in designing costumes, but he must be mindful that this freedom comes with a sense of responsibility to social norms and culture.

7. Recommendations

It is important to proffer some recommendations for the thriving Ghanaian video film industry in the light of the challenges that characterize some video films. In view of this, the researcher recommends that The National Film Authority Board of Ghana responsible for perusing the content of video films before allowing them to be consumed by viewers to ensure good standards are achieved in video films. When this is done, it will help curtail the menace of technical flaws, of which costume misuse stands tall. Secondly, this study recommends that practitioners concerned with the visual elements, especially costumiers, be given in-service training frequently to acquaint themselves with the technical know-how to costume video films. When this is achieved, it will help reduce the level of flaws inherent in some video films. It is also prudent that practitioners in the video film industry be acquainted with the cultural patterns of various ethnic groups in Ghana to project the culture in its true sense. This is because an artist who has a mastery of a specific culture, costume remains a silent language imbedded in that culture (Tortora & Eubank, 1992). By extension, costumiers must have mastery of period costumes and their usage in video films. The successful completion of this recommendation will aid in the education of viewers on the cultural sensibilities of the people from their past to the present. This is because the influx of imported foreign media content is parallel to the Ghanaian culture and does not project "Ghanainness" in any way.

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