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Non-Verbal Communication of bin-ɲmaa and zuy'pilgu among Dagbamba

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Abstract

This paper discusses the non-verbal communication (NVC) of bin-ɲmaa 'smock' and zuy'pilgu 'hat' among Dagbanli speakers known as Dagbamba in the northern region of Ghana. The paper examines bin-ɲmaa and zuy'pilgu from the general premise of non-verbal communication by considering the cultural and social contexts of the Dagbamba society. The paper seeks to, in line with the theory of semiotics, highlight some signs and symbolic meaning of bin-ɲmaa and zuy'pilgu in the Dagbamba mythology. Through participant observation, interviews and content analysis, the paper posits that the artistic performance of bin-ɲmaa and zuy'pilgu is rooted in the Dagbamba tradition. The bin-ɲmaa and zuy'pilgu are not only aesthetically applied but they communicate the values of the Dagbamba.

Keywords: bin-ɲmaa, Dagbamba, NVC, semiotics, zuy'pilgu

1. Introduction

The objectives of this paper are in three folds: (i) find out the types of bin-ɲmaa 'smock' worn and the people who wear them. (ii) how zuy'pilgu 'hat' is worn and the semantic realisation (iii) find out the functions of bin-ɲmaa and zuy'pilgu and if wearing bin-ɲmaa is still relevant. Dagbamba, a Mabilia family speak the language Dagbanli mainly in the northern region of Ghana (Inusah 2021; Abubakari et al 2023; Bodomo 2020; Inusah & Issahaku 2019; Inusah & Mahama, 2019). Dagbamba who practice patrilineal system of inheritance constantly work to uphold their cultural practices and revere their traditional festivals and chieftaincy. Even

though a patriarchal society, they have female chiefs (e.g. Gundo Naa 'Gundoyu chief, Kpatu Naa 'Kpatuya chief') in the kingdom.

Like all cultures around the world, the culture of the Dagbamba society embraces both verbal and non-verbal communication using the non-verbal message greatly to overpower the verbal messages. NVC in the Ghanaian context is expressed through nonlinguistic means such as face, gestures, touch, dress, vocalic, intention, movement or distance between interlocutors (Agyekum 2002). Waiflein (2013:1) describes NVC as "communication primarily conducted through the use of gestures, facial expressions, and body

language.” Byron et al. (2007:260) argue, “interpreting emotions from non-verbal cues can have interpersonal and professional benefits”. Among the Dagbamba, NVC unlike the spoken word is constant, being encoded and decoded through variant media such as (i) speech (e.g. *luɔ-yila* ‘praise song’, *vilungu* ‘whistling’) and (ii) channel/medium (e.g. *luɔa* ‘drum’, *nyɔhi* ‘smoke’, *nyɔm* ‘smell’). The illustration below present a popular adage in Dagbanli to show evidence in speech about blinking of the eye as NVC.

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
| 1. | toɔ’si | zani | n-nya | nin-kahimbo |
| | talk | stand | I -see | eye-blinking |

‘Blinking the eyes reflects an issue discussed.’

The example in (1) describes a verbal evidence of NVC in a situation of facial expression in Dagbanli that is used to communicate non-verbally to avoid the use of words especially when the interlocutors do not want a third person to know what they mean. This, as it is in other cultures may either have the same meaning or not. Note that there are some people who naturally blink their eyes, which is not typically an NVC.

Again, kneeling before an elderly person is across all Ghanaian cultures but differs in meaning. In a Dagbamba culture where hierarchy system is practiced, children always kneel to greet the elderly, women kneel to serve their husbands and both young and old also kneel to greet the chief; so kneeling is a kinemes that is recognizable in some cultures but not unique in meaning. In other cultures, it may be a symbol of apology. Among the Dagbanba kneeling is a kind kinesics that communicates greeting by the use of human body motion as noticed in verbal comment alerting an elderly person in Dagbanli in a popular adage illustrated in (2), which provides evidence in speech to show kneeling as NVC in the language.

- | | | | | | |
|----|-------|---|-------|------|-------|
| 2. | damgi | n | puɔi | a | bapra |
| | kneel | I | greet | your | uncle |

‘Kneel and greet your uncle.’

Tools for NVC among the Dagbamba include visual and material culturally produced to represent rich diversity of styles, weaving techniques and regional origins. The art of Dagbamba encompasses a wide range of forms, styles and materials, which includes *tani* ‘textile’ characterized by expressive power, technical skill, cultural richness and significant influence on the development of modern art. The *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuɔ’pilgu* ‘hat’ produced from the textile known as *chinchin maɲli* ‘proper cloth’/bin-ɲma *tani* ‘smock material’ are more than just a garment which represent a powerful symbol of Dagbamba heritage, authority and northern identity.

The art in Africa has always been a reflection of the culture of the people (UNESCO 2008); culture in this context encompasses language, values, tradition as well as clothing. Bewaji (2003:193) asserts, “Textiles and clothing are important kinds of African art forms that are essential to the people’s culture.” However, clothing and dressing have been described as a mirror of the culture of the people in any society (Payne, 1999). Clothing symbolizes the practices of a society as the functions of cloth and dress have been encapsulated within boundless limits of the culture of a people. Perani & Wolff, (1999:28) observe that apart from shelter and protection, the cloth has many other roles or functions. One of them is the measurement of the self and personal worth. This

means the cloth one wears tells something about him or her. It tells who you are and your worth in society. This could be announcing one’s role in society or positions that one occupies or even an announcement of how weak a person is by the cloth you wear. This is indicated by the name of the cloth. In addition, cloth could be an indicator of occupation, measurement of social value, definition and negotiation of traditional power, religious signifier and repository of supernatural powers and lastly indicator of culture and change. It is clear that dressing communicates non-verbally. In this paper it is not about dressing in general but specifically dressing in *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuɔ’pilgu* ‘hat’ among the Dagbamba of northern region of Ghana.

2. Theoretical Framework

The relevant framework for this paper is Primary Message System (PMS) developed by Hall (1959). PMS labels the non-linguistic forms of communication for that matter NVC as a tool for i. interaction ii. association iii. Subsistence iv. Bisexuality v. territoriality vi. Temporality vii. Learning viii. Play ix. Defense and x. Exploitation. The framework’s methodology consists of the creation of a chart which allows the individual to compare and to identify combinations of the Primary Message Systems. The framework describes this chart as the “cultural equivalent of the periodic table of chemistry” and describes societies as being guilty of ethnocentrism. Waiflein (2013) posits that most cultures are ethnocentric and this could be partially remedied with an effort to understand intercultural communication and how one culture differs from others. Related to this is semiotics theory. The core of semiotic theory is the definition of the factors involved in this permanent process of sign making and interpreting and developing of conceptual tools that help to grasp the understanding as it goes on in various arenas of cultural activity (Agyekum 2002; Yankah 1995; Bal & Bryson 1991).

3. Understanding Nonverbal Communication (NVC)

As this study is about NVC through *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuɔ’pilgu* ‘hat’, this section throws light on non-verbal communication as a background within the context of semiotics, one of the categories of Hall (1959). Waiflein (2013:2) notes, “the interest in non-verbal communication was a subject of concern for American Anthropologist known as Franz Boas.” Davidson (1950) describes some folk gesture and sign languages as para-linguistic ethnography of non-verbal communication specific to certain social units. He observed that nearly everyone is expected to master non-verbal communication skills in order to function successfully in society.

Non-verbal communication, an area of interest to anthropologists, linguists, and others became a field of its own due mostly to Birdwhistell (1970) who estimated that only 30% of information is transferred during conversation from spoken words. He said that much of what is conveyed is through non-linguistic such as bodily movement: signs, bodily gestures, facial expressions, touch, spacing, silence, smell, whistle, drum language. They account for the rest of the 70%. Fromkin and Rodman (1983) say that up to 90% of the communicative process takes place non-verbally. Riggio and Freeman say,

“.....non-verbal communication is expressed through nonlinguistic means. It is the actions

or attributes of humans, including their appearance, use of objects, sound, time, smell, and space, that have socially shared significance and stimulate meaning in others. It includes visual/kinesic cues such as facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, and body orientation; vocal/paralinguistic cues such as volume, pitch, rate, and inflection; proxemic cues such as space and distance; olfactory or smell cues; cues provided via artifactual communication and appearance; cues sent via colour; and chronemic or time cues (1983, p.152).

Silence is also non-verbal communication. Bonvillain (1993:47) defines silence as “an act of non-verbal communication that transmits many kinds of meaning, depending on cultural norms of interpretation.” Agyekum (2002:1) says it is simply defined as “the absence of speech or talk in communication.” According to Salzmann (2004), “[l]iterally, the term non-verbal communication refers to any transmission of signals accomplished by means other than spoken or written words.” He further stated that there is a disagreement on what the term encompasses and whether or not it is definable. Mwanza (2011 :120) mentions that “in our daily lives, we use many contemporary forms of non-verbal communication: pictures advertisements, hand signals and many others. He notes that these instances of non-verbal communication are only modern adaptations of ancient practices of non-verbal communication which constitutes both a significant basis and a powerful expression of cultural identities. In this regard, NVC can be summarized as a cultural practice that involves non linguistics forms such as sounds, signs, movements, smell, touch, colours, face etc.

3.1 Types of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal Communication's basic classifications are under kinesics, semiotics, Chronemics and paralanguage. However, this study is focused on semiotics. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), defines semiotics as the study of signs and symbols and their meanings in a particular language and society. This definition was further espoused by Michael Facault (1926-1984) arguing that semiotics is an assemblage of knowledge and technical skills that enable people to perceive where signs might be, to define what constitutes signs, and to understand the relationship between signs and the laws governing them. Semiotics is very pervasive and covers six main areas including; “codes, structure, sign, discourse, symbols and text” (Larsen, 1998:834). This study, however, concentrates only on the use of signs and symbols inherent in the philosophy of the Dagbamba *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuy’pilgu* ‘hat.’

Symbolism is a sign that refers to an object that denotes ideas, emotions and state of the mind by virtue of the socio-cultural conventions of a particular society (Sebesta, 1994). Symbols are the replica of the meanings of words, things, actions, emotions, behaviour and ideas of a people within a particular culture (Agyekum, 2006). Symbols are of a systemic character, they create networks of meanings (Roseman & Rubel, 1998; Leathers, 1986). This paper looked at signs and symbols that are characteristics of Dagbamba *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuy’pilgu* ‘hat.’ in social contexts.

3.2 Semiotics: Signs and Symbols

The use of *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuy’pilgu* ‘hat’ as a non-verbal language is long standing in the Dagbamba mythology. The use of signs and symbols in these material artifacts, are efficient means of communication, thus, an iconography that is understood by many who understand the culture of the Dagbamba. It is necessary to analyze and correlate the signs, meanings, and philosophies that support Dagbamba culture in order to properly explore semiotics in the context of the Dagbamba *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’ and *zuy’pilgu* ‘hat’. In Dagbanj (the state of Dagbamba), a person's cultural and social background has an influence on the themes of communication when interpreting the semiotics of the Dagbamba hat and smock.

Various scholars such as Kwakye-Opong (2014), Sebesta (1994) have propounded theories of semiotics of costume that are relevant to this discussion. Writing on Weavers of Fate: Symbolism in the costume of Roman women, Sebesta (1994: 24) explains that “clothing and adornment are universal features of human behavior, and an examination of what they reveal, an attempt to conceal, contributes to our knowledge about the fabric of cultures and our understanding of the thread of human nature”. Clothing therefore, is an embodiment of the culture of a society. (Kwakye-Opong & Jebuni, 2015).

Semiotics, therefore, is made up of signs or symbols, each of which stands for something other than itself and people within a particular culture are able to make sense of those signs and symbols.

“Semiotic silence is a surrogate language, where the message is presented in the form of a traditional symbol in lieu of the spoken word” (Yankah 1995, p. 33). In the semiotic view, “the orator does not make a speech but relies entirely on the rhetoric of the visual icon and the addressee decodes it” (Agyekum, 2002: 43). Decoding such communication requires some knowledge of the culture. Semiotics represents a wide range of NVC among the Dagbamba too. These include, *binkɔb gban* ‘animal skin’, *bin ɲmaa* ‘smock’, *zuy’pilgu* ‘hat’ *wahi* ‘dances’, *bindirigu* ‘food’, *ɲmani* ‘calabash’ etc.

4. Methodology

The study was carried out in Yendi, Sangnerigu and Tamale. The participant-observer methodology and interviews were used. Fifteen (15) chiefs from these three communities were interviewed. In addition, fifteen (15) natives, five (5) from each community and fifteen (15) non-natives, five from each community were also interviewed. The traditional chiefs were purposively sampled and interviewed. The natives and the non-natives were accidentally sampled and interviewed. Secondary data from books, journals were also used. The interview guide had three sections; the first part was made of items about the type of smocks, who wear them, when they are, differences between the chiefs and ordinary people. The second part was on the hat, basically trying to find out the position of the hat and what it means and the third part was about the functions and relevance of the smock in current times.

5. Findings and Discussion

Among the Dagbamba, nonverbal communication is constant, being encoded and decoded through different media. With informal interactions and observations between researchers and some Dagbamba, the study has established that the Dagbamba have all the four main types of non-verbal communication. *Bin-ɲmaa*,

'smock' is one of the most highly respected clothing of the Dagbamba. It is worn as every day dress and a dress for very important occasions such as festivals and funerals. It is an icon of NVC among Dagbamba in communication. Apart from being a symbol of identification for the people, it has a lot of semiotic functions. Responses showed that the Dagbamba communicate through *bin-ηmaa* 'smock' non-verbally as it has different interpretations depending on the type of smock, who wears it and how it is worn.

As it is common knowledge that anyone could wear *bin-ηmaa* 'smock' and *zuy'pilgu* 'hat', respondents during the interviews and interactions added that anyone can wear a smock, hat or both. The smock and hat according to them are normal clothing. One of the chiefs in Sangnarigu, however, said that there are different kinds of smocks and the different ones are to be worn by people in different social classes. This was confirmed by all the chiefs. A chief in Tamale added that "although anyone can wear a smock, chiefs have to wear smocks and hats every day and depending on the occasion, the smock will be different." He continued: "As for us chiefs, sometimes we wear more than one". It was not enough to know who wears the smock and hat but also to know when they can be worn. A chief in Tamale explained that wearing the smock and hat every day is not compulsory but during traditional festivals such as Damba, the smock and hat are expected to be compulsory for Dagbamba but not all of the Dagbamba wear them even during special occasions. Other occasions that smocks and hats have to be worn include visiting a chief on Mondays and Fridays, when people are officially sent by one chief to another, during festivals and funerals.

Verbal communication is easy to understand because people learn in context and use the context for understanding what is going on. They do repetitions of sounds, phrases and sentences to be

competent and so immediately begin to understand and speak the language. Unlike in verbal communication, NVC is difficult to understand just by context. As in the theoretical underpinnings, understanding comes with knowledge of the culture.

A person may learn a language, acquire a reasonable amount of content, yet will not be able to understand much of what is happening around him or her. This is because understanding or knowing a language is not simply about vocabulary and grammar but also about understanding the culture of the people. This is why Hall (1968) said understanding the cultural context is key for understanding people.

Respondents were asked whether they knew any interpretations for the different smocks worn by different people and ways in which hats were worn. As would be expected, all the chiefs and elders said there were differences. Out of 15 native respondents, 6 of them said they know there are differences but do not know these differences. Nine knew the differences. The non-natives also said they think there were differences because what the chiefs and elders wear are different from the ordinary man. What most of them observed was that the chiefs wore heavy and very beautiful smocks. Of the fifteen non-natives, twelve said they did not know the differences. This means it takes cultural knowledge to decode the signs, symbols, posture and this was a challenge for even a small number of natives who did not know that aspect of their culture. The interpretation of NVC is dependent on the knowledge of the culture of the people as suggested by Hall (1959) framework.

There are six different types of smocks which give messages by virtue of who uses them and the kind. The types as well as who wears what kind of smock are found in Table (1), which is based on Primary Message Systems (PMS) chart.

Table 1: Type of Smocks and users

S/N	Type	Description	Users	Significance
1.	<i>Dansichi/ bin-ηma gbin-ni</i>	Short sleeve smock or under smock	1. Chiefs and elders 2. Ordinary native persons 3. Non natives	1. Casual ware 2. singlet for chiefs
2.	<i>bin-ηmaa/ bin-ηma bɔyiri</i>	Long sleeve smock	1. Chiefs and elders 2. Prominent person 2. Ordinary person	1. Ceremonial dress 2. singlet for chiefs
3.	<i>barimansu</i>	Long sleeve smock with divide in front and back	1. Chiefs and elders 2. Horse riders	1. Ceremonial dress for chiefs and horse riders 2. War dress
4.	<i>yeb-li</i>	Very large smock with long sleeves and broad design	Chiefs who can rise to other ranks.	Ceremonial dress for chiefs
5.	<i>kpaakuto</i>	Royal smock	"big" chiefs	Ceremonial dress for chiefs
6.	<i>Alichebba</i>	Long gown with open sleeves that can be rolled up on the shoulder	Chiefs who have terminal ranks and chief butchers	Ceremonial dress for paramount chiefs

The use of any of the smocks in Table 1 communicates some meaning culturally. Smocks symbolize many things and as indicated earlier in the literature, symbols are the replica of the meanings of words, things, actions, emotions, behaviour and ideas of a person within a particular culture (Agyekum, 2006). While

natives wear according to meaning and significance, non-Dagbamba wear for beauty. From the responses and observations, non-natives prefer the *dansichi* 'the short sleeve smock' because according to them it is simple and common in the market. It is also

easy to wear. Chiefs use *bin-ɲma gbin-ni* as singlet and *barimansu* as war dress.

The smock is traditionally sewn with the hand with the fabric traditionally called *chinchin manli*, ‘proper cloth’ or *bin-ɲma tani*, ‘smock material’, which has different designs and colour combinations that are also symbolic e.g. *kpaɲ kɔbigu* ‘guinea fowl feather’, *boon-ga* ‘multicoloured’ etc. Multicoloured here refers to any material that is woven with two or more colours as its design. Traditionally, in Ghana, the smock is associated with Dagbamba and other northern ethnic groups such as Gonjas, Manpurisi, Nanumba, Wala, Frafra, etc. The top (smock) was the focus of the study but it comes with a trouser (*kuligu*) in most traditional functions, thus a brief presentation of it below.

Table 2: Ways of wearing a hat and their interpretations among the Dagbamba

S/N	Position	Interpretation	Users
1.	Raised upright	<i>n-kpee ka yaɲɔ</i> ‘I have no equal in this community’	1.Chief 2. Wealthy person
2.	Pushed to the front	<i>Man’ baya kani</i> ‘I don’t care’	1.Chief 2. Wealthy person
3.	Pushed to the back	<i>n-nyan la n-yala zaa</i> ‘I am ‘capable or I have overcome all my problems’	1.Aspiring/potential chief 2. chief’s elder
4.	Pushed to the right	<i>n-layi layi ndaa tarima</i> ‘I don’t want any trouble-emphatic’	1. ‘chief’s elders’ 2. ordinary person
5.	Pushed to the left	<i>n-jeviri</i> ‘I want no trouble’ (less emphatic)’	1. ‘chief’s elders’ 2. Ordinary person

The picture in plate 1 illustrates a semiotic item that shows Dagbamba wearing *bin-ɲmaa* ‘long sleeve smock’, *jinjam lani* ‘special trouser’, *zupiligu* ‘hat’ and *muyiri* ‘cow boy boot’ and *dansichi*, which are commonly used by everyone including non-natives.



Plate 1: Source: (picture from a traditional display, in 2021)

Dagbamba women use *chinchin manli* ‘traditional cloth’ or *bin-ɲma tani* ‘smock material’ mostly woven by hand and the “factory textile” like other Ghanaian women. The cloths, even the normal textile have names that speak to the Ghanaian cultures. The traditional cloth have designs that communicate non-verbally. Certainly, there is a direct link between design and the associated names of the cloths, as found in a cloth with stones which represent a proverb in Dagbanli below:

Kuligu, ‘special big trousers’ which is larger than usual is mostly used by chiefs and the elderly and *jinjam lani*, also a ‘special trousers’ but smaller and mostly used by the young people are traditional trousers that also communicate that one may be a chief, a royal or an ordinary Dagbamba (singular). Depending on the type, particularly the size, one’s social level in social structure is communicated.

The use of the *zuypligu* ‘hat’ is another semiotic symbol that also communicates non-verbally. It also shows the status of a person without words. It is used in five different ways to communicate non-verbally about one’s social status within the cultural set up. This is explained in Table 2.

(3) *buyim diri kuya*
fire burn stones

“fire is burning stones” (if fire burns stones, then shrubs would start running away).

This proverb implies that if the privileged or strong people are in a bad situation, how would it be for the less privileged or weaker ones? A proverb of reminding people of their statuses. Agyekum (2006) states that public symbols are cultural system of the language shared, known and understood by members of the society, and transmitted from generation to generation. This is true about the knowledge of smocks and hats among the Dagbamba.

6. Functions and Relevance of *bin-ɲmaa* and *zuy’pilgu*

Respondents in this study were asked if they thought wearing smocks and hats had any role in the lives of the Dagbamba. Again, the chiefs and natives were so proud of their smock and hats that they said that among many other clothing, the smock and hats stand out as cultural heritage and therefore important for preserving their culture.

The smock and hats also give them their identity. A chief in Yendi said: “How can the son of Dagbarj not have a *bin-ɲmaa* ‘smock’? Every Dagomba works hard to own a smock to be worn on festive occasions and funerals”. The responses of non-natives were not different. They too agreed with the chiefs and other natives that smocks are important for the preservation and portrayal of the culture of Dagbamba. It is not just the smock but the type of smock

and the design of the cloth used for the smock. For them, this is significant and Dagbamba must be proud to keep it. Probing further for more roles, nearly all respondents said that the smock and hat communicate the hierarchy and social status of the people but not in an obvious way. To understand that communication, one must also know the culture as words are substituted for signs and symbols. Other responses were that wearing the smock and hat makes the Dagbamba elegant. show the importance of traditional rulers and emphasises verbal messages about dressing. They also keep traditional imagery and play out some proverbs in the language. Because of the hierarchical nature of the Dagbamba society, some respondents also said that relationships between and among the people are regulated through dressing and reinforce verbal messages. Some of these fall in line with the findings of Riggio and Freeman (1983) and Richmond et. al (1991).

As modernity takes over, sometimes, many stop to ask whether traditional practices are still relevant in our current times. Consequently, it is worth looking at the relevance of smocks and hats in the face of several available choices of clothing. All categories of respondents expressed in different ways that the smock is the top most tangible manifestation of Dagbamba culture and feel that it has some relevance even in modern times. One of the natives in Yendi said that “many other ethnic groups wear the smock but anywhere there is an important gathering a Dagbamba (singular for Dagbamba) shows up in a smock”. The smock has the role of announcing the arrival and presence of a Dagbamba not only because someone is in smock but also the design of the cloth and style used for sewing it. The smock also has an educative relevance. While most of the elderly may know what the different patterns and styles as well as the way the smocks are worn with hats mean, many of the youth do not know that. Therefore, it creates an opportunity to learn the “smock culture” during big occasions and festivals.

Although the smock cannot be described as exclusive for Dagbamba, they take a lot of pride in exhibiting it wherever they are. Consequently, the smock is now being promoted as a national attire and is recognized during national gatherings. The production of smocks is now a major economic activity for some people.

Responses also showed that wearing smocks has created unity and socialization. As mentioned above, the smock has brought Northern and Southern Ghana together. More and more, smocks as gifts are gaining some prominence in the appreciation of northern people to anyone who visits and or has contributed to the development agenda of the country, more so the north. Very well sewn beautiful smocks are given to important visitors to Dagbamba as gifts. Clearly, the wearing of smocks, which gives opportunity to learn about the smock and hats, other related cultural practices of the Dagbamba and the business side of it makes the idea still very relevant even in current times.

7. Conclusion

The paper examined the semiotics of *bin-ɣmaa* ‘smock’ and *zupiligu* ‘hat’ as symbols of NVC among Dagbamba. The paper showed the various types of smocks, the different categories of people who wear them, their significance and the implications of flipping one’s hat to a particular position. Through the non-natives, the paper observed that although some NVC may be the same, their interpretations may vary due to different cultural backgrounds. This was demonstrated by non-natives not being able to tell the

differences in the way the smocks and hats are worn because they do not understand the “dress culture” of the Dagbamba.

This study also found that *bin-ɣmaa* ‘smock’ and *zupiligu* ‘hat’ still have a lot of relevance to the Dagbamba even in current times. Some of their relevance include the respect of the smock as cultural clothing that gives the Dagbamba their identity and the wearing of a smock and a hat as another channel for learning how to be culturally appropriate when one dresses in a smock and hat. The study showed that the social structure of the Dagbamba is still very strong. This means wearing the smock and hat also call for respecting the hierarchy since what the chief wears, the ordinary man does not wear. In a similar way. The way in which one’s hat is flipped could also show his social standing or spiritual powers. No ordinary man puts his hat upright. This will call for: “spiritual testing” by more “spiritual people”, a practice that could lead to injuries or death as claimed by respondents. Regardless of the current times, the smock and hats are still of high significance and relevance to the Dagbamba.

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