

Youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu: An exposé on the Ceremonial Costume Art of Fuowie Nasolo, a youth cultural iconic figure in Tumu

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Abstract: Youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Africa (Ghana) has been on the decline due to the alarming rate at which African youth assimilate foreign cultures. Many African (Ghanaian) youth nowadays mock African (Ghanaian) ethnic cultures in favour of Western cultures. However, previous research suggests youth cultural activism in Tumu, Ghana. This positive development has the tendency to preserve and promote the cultural identity of Tumu. This study, therefore, sought to establish the motivation behind youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu with a specific focus on the costume art of Fuowie Nasolo, a youth cultural iconic figure in Tumu. Qualitative descriptive analysis of interview transcripts and photographic data gathered from twenty-five (25) heterogeneous-purposively sampled informants reveal that youth cultural activism in contemporary Tumu is engendered by the sustained cultural tutelage provided by the elders of Tumu. Additionally, it was emphasised that youth cultural participation in contemporary Tumu is extrinsically motivated by the admirable cultural activism of Fuowie, the unifying leader of Tumu youth cultural group. A cursory study of the cultural manifestations of Fuowie's ceremonial costume art, reveals the royal, heroic, and wardress culture of the indigenes of Tumu. Since Fuowie's cultural activism significantly complements the effort of Tumu elders in promoting youth cultural participation, the study calls for sustained collaboration between Fuowie and the elders of Tumu to massively promote youth participation in traditional cultural activities for cultural preservation, cultural restoration, and the construction of authentic cultural identity of the people of Tumu for posterity.

Keywords: Ceremonial costume art, Cultural participation, Fuowie Nasolo, Traditional cultural practices, Tumu, Youth cultural iconic figure

1. Introduction

Traditional cultural practices are primordially rooted in African societal evolution. In Ghana, traditional cultural practices are charitably perpetuated in the past and present due to their sociocultural, sociopolitical, socioreligious, and other relevancies. According to Mikail and Abdullah (2017), African societies have their own unique cultural festivities, beliefs, and traditions. Africans' distinctive traditional cultural practices set them apart from other human societies (Idang, 2015). Although Africans are noted for their rich cultural practices and arts (Ofori, Kushiator, Baah, & Agyeman, 2021; Dennis, 2018; Sibani, 2018), it is also observed that colonialism and/or globalisation have adversely affected youth participation in traditional African cultural practices (Navei, 2021; Ofori et al., 2021; Dennis, 2018; Sibani, 2018). According to Ofori et al. (2021), cultural assimilation largely accounts for youth abandonment of African cultural practices for that of western cultures. It is emphasised that:

....Deplorably, the youth have been so much influenced by the assimilation of other cultures to such an extent that communal participation in cultural practices is becoming a thing of the past. In the case of the nation Ghana, the youth has assimilated foreign cultures at such an alarming rate that they seem to have forgotten about their very own culture. (Ofori et al., 2021: 80).

Similarly, Dennis (2018) points out that the legacy of the many years of colonial governance and education in Africa (Ghana), as well as globalisation, have cumulatively led to the unfair distribution of information and culture across the globe to maintain a hegemonic cultural imperialist system of global relationships that favours the Euro-American civilisation to the detriment of Africans. Dennis (2018) epitomises the fact that many Ghanaian societies have lost the beauty and richness of the ceremonies and rituals accompanying events such as naming ceremonies, puberty rites, marriage rites, funeral rites, and other initiations/performances. Unfortunately, such enviable cultural ideals “have largely been replaced by so-called modern fads, practices and styles which are mostly Eurocentric” (Dennis, 2018: 178). Navei (2021: 42) observes that the high rate of Western cultural assimilation in Africa has “pushed Africans into a serious conflict situation over what constitutes their real identity and, to some extent, has recreated a fake identity that is neither Eurocentric nor African”. Since “it is now abundantly clear that we are in an accelerating culture change period all around the world regardless of whether we try to resist it or not” (Sibani, 2018: 69-70), African societies need to embark on cultural restoration paths to avert the situation. Sibani (2018: 70) recommends that “in order to avoid cultural extinction, there is an urgent need for cultural restoration in Africa owing to erroneous impressions or Western indoctrination. This is very necessary because a people without a culture are a people without an identity”.

The urgent need for African cultural restoration to protect and preserve the unique identity of Africans, as recommended by Sibani (2018), remains the key reason why there is high youth participation in traditional cultural practices in Tumu as reported by Navei (Navei, 2021). Tumu is an ancient Sisaala (corrupted as Sissala) community situated in the Sisaala East Municipality of the Upper West Region of northern Ghana. In contemporary Tumu, traditional cultural practices have notoriously survived the associated negative effects of post-colonialism that are generally witnessed in Africa (Ghana) to the extent that the place identity of Tumu is well-defined, preserved, and promoted during traditional cultural ceremonies. While previous studies have generally noted that colonialism, Western education, and globalisation have adversely affected youth participation in traditional African cultural practices (Ofori et al., 2021; Dennis, 2018; Sibani, 2018), it is observed that a good number of the youth in the Tumu Traditional area are noted for their active participation in traditional cultural practices, particularly during the celebration of the Paari-gbiele (post-harvest) festival (Figure 1 A, B, C & D) in this contemporary era (Navei, 2021). This creates a contraction, and for that matter, a contextual lacuna that needs further examination to reveal the motivation behind youth cultural activism in contemporary Tumu. Given this, the study sought to investigate the motivating factors that account for youth active participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu, with a particular emphasis on Fuowie Nasolo's costume art, one of the leading youth cultural activists in contemporary Tumu. This affords the study the opportunity to specifically make an in-depth exposé on Fuowie Nasolo's cultural activism, and decode the embedded cultural symbolism and manifestations of his ceremonial costume art in light of the preservation and promotion of the cultural identity of the Sisaala people of Tumu for posterity.



A



B



Figure 1 (A, B, C & D): Photo evidence of Youth Participating in traditional Cultural Activities during the Celebration of the Paari-gbiele festival in Tumu (**Source:** Navei, 2021).

2. Review of related literature

2.1. Conceptual framework

The concept of cultural participation serves as the lens through which the study could be contextually viewed. Cultural participation is a resilient framework that pivots the cultural policy of many nations due to its propensity to preserve and/or promote the ethnic cultures of a nation as well as create cultural democracy for posterity and socioeconomic gains (Šebová & Révészová, 2020; Jancovich & Stevenson, 2020; Jancovich & Stevenson, 2019; List, Kononykhina & Cohen, 2017; Stern, Mark & Seifert, Susan, 2002; Fokkema & Rigney, 1993). "Cultural participation has been conceptualised in different ways using the terms art participation and cultural consumption" (Šebová & Révészová, 2020: 2). Generally, cultural participation encapsulates the patronage of cultural products such as; reading culturally related materials (books and press); visiting museums, libraries, archives, and the historic environment (heritage); visiting cultural performances (concert, theatre, dance, drama); multimedia art (film-making, taking photography); Visual Arts (includes galleries, architecture, design, and crafts); cultural broadcasting through media (TV & Radio, internet); and others (Šebová & Révészová, 2020; Jancovich & Stevenson, 2020; Jancovich & Stevenson, 2019; List, Kononykhina & Cohen, 2017; Roose & Daenekindt, 2015; Delaney & Keaney, 2006; Stern, Mark, & Seifert, Susan, 2002; Fokkema & Rigney, 1993). Cultural participation, however, transcends being a passive consumer of cultural products to being an active producer of culture and/or a combination of both. Fokkema and Rigney (1993) see cultural participation as the productive and receptive roles individuals play in producing, transmitting, and conserving cultural knowledge. According to UNESCO (2012: 51), cultural participation entails "participation in any activity that, for individuals, represents a way of increasing their own cultural and informational capacity and capital, which helps define their identity, and/or allows for personal expression". This means that the participation of ethnic folks in their unique cultural activities for purposes of identity construction and other compelling reasons falls under the umbrella of the concept of cultural participation. Active cultural participation, primarily, refers to artistic expression and creation (List, Kononykhina & Cohen, 2017) that form "an integral part of cultural life" (Shaheed 2013; as cited in List, Kononykhina & Cohen, 2017). List, Kononykhina and Cohen (2017) further argue that such artistic expressions and creativity contribute to the development of vibrant cultural life in a society.

This makes the concept of cultural participation one of the most potent means of cultural restoration with the merit of (re)awakening and re-energising youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary African ethnic societies such as Tumu. As the study examined youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu with a specific focus on the costume art of Fuowie Nasolo (a youth cultural iconic figure in Tumu), it is contextually fitted in the conceptual framework of cultural participation

which focuses on people's active cultural participation either as producers or receptors of culture, or both for identity construction, cultural restoration, promotion, and preservation for posterity.

2.2. Ghanaian Ceremonial Costume Art

Traditional Ghanaian ceremonies of various kinds are invaluable cultural ingredients for ethnic survival. In the performance of such public traditional ceremonies, costume art inalienably remains a primary apparatus in defining the cultural, and social status, and identity of the celebrants. The general significance of clothing, and by extension costume art, can be seen in the indispensable role it plays within African traditions and cultures, where it helps to identify and define the wearers in light of their cultural background (Navei & Donkoh, 2022; Dennis, 2022; Essel, Navei & deGraft-Yankson, 2021; Amali, 2020). Amongst all the different means of human cultural expression, costume art is, undoubtedly, one of the most popular tangible cultural materials, probably because it is an art that is as old as creation (Kwakye-Opong & Adinku, 2013). It “constitutes one of the most formidable and versatile cultural agents for the transmission of knowledge and values across ethnic, national, and international boundaries” (Kwakye-Opong & Adinku, 2013: 9).

Costumes transcend everyday casual clothing to involve “a form of symbolic expression of oneself as well as a communicative tool that interprets its sociological effects at any given time” (Eze & Akas, 2015: 23). This means that the adornment of costumes during traditional cultural ceremonies showcases the sociocultural identity, and many a time, the status of the wearer within a particular cultural setting. In the considered view of Okpu (2015), most traditionally produced costumes have links with religious rituals, marriage rites, social status, and other sociocultural initiations. In an attempt to define costume art, Adjei and Osei-Sarfo (2016), and Okpu (2015) corroborate that costume is an inherited dress style or a set of clothes (which includes garments, accessories, and hairstyles) that has links with the history of the society, appropriately adorned by ethnic folks for a particular traditional occasion. Although costume enhances the physical appearance of the wearer, its main purpose transcends what is seen visually and involves the communication of loaded cultural codes to the understanding of the cultural grouping involved (Adjei & Osei-Sarfo, 2016). During the celebration of the Gologo festival by the Talensi people of Tenzug in the Upper East region of northern Ghana, Adjei, Osei-Sarfo and Adongo (2016: 29) observe that “costume is a vital aspect of the Gologo festival both for partakers and spectators. Many are [costume] articles that are put on by celebrants during the festival dance. Some of which are functional while others are symbolic”. The authors identified and aestheticised notable costumes associated with the celebration of the Gologo festival such as; *gbeong* (special costume made of animal) worn by the *tindaana* (landlord) of the community; *kpalang* (symbolic aprons); towels and others.

Also, in examining the costume art used for the Dia war dance by the Frafra people of the Upper East Region of Ghana, Adjei and Osei-Sarfo (2016) observe the display of ceremonial headdress (*Zufaka*) such as *gebebo* (a cap made of calabash that is covered with fabric and decorated with cowries with horns mounted on it); smock regalia; various animal skin costume regalia that communicate the hunting mastery and the spiritual endowment of the wearers. From a historical perspective, Agaasa and Ampa-Korsah (2016) reveal that Feok festival costumes were designed and crafted by the forebears of the Builsa in the Upper East Region of Ghana and served as protective (armour) regalia used in defeating Babatu and other slave raiders. Agaasa and Ampa-Korsah (2016) add that such war costume art showcased during the celebration of the Feok festival is to signal the celebration of emancipation and freedom from the days of Babatu. It was also established that the people of northern Ghana are noted for the deployment of various kinds of smocks in terms of size, colour, and design for cultural events (Acquaah, Amissah & deGraft-Yankson, 2017). Acquaah et al report that some of the smock regalia are strictly worn by a certain class of people during public ceremonies, and attached to some of the special smock costumes, are multiple leather-cased charms and talismans worn during ceremonial events for protection and other purposes. It was also reported that during the celebration of the Paari-gbiele festival, its Sisaala-celebrants were

observed to have adorned glamorous traditional costume regalia which has codified cultural connotations and relevance to the people of the Tumu Traditional Area in the Upper West Region of Ghana (Navei, 2021). Through the costume regalia, the social status of the Paramount Chief of Tumu Traditional Area could be distinguished from others; the spirituality of the warriors and hunters of Tumu Traditional Area was communicated through their costume regalia, whereas, the traditional costume of drum performers during the Paari-gbiele festival was equally identified.

Also, during customary marriage ceremonies amongst the Krobos of Somanya in Ghana, Afful and Nantwi (2018) establish that the bride wears exclusively white clothing or blue and white clothing with specially prepared white beads on the neck and both wrists and later changes into *kente* cloth complemented with body paintings to meet the customarily required dress code of a bride. Ndah, Ohene-Amoako, Issa, Kokro and Walden's (2021) study on funeral rites of the people of Asante Mampong found that a costume of red colour, symbolising blood relation, is worn by the close relatives of the deceased with black (signifying sadness) adorned by any sympathiser, whilst black and white costumes are worn for thanksgiving service. In addition, a funeral of an old person who died naturally could be celebrated with black and white costumes to signify a life well lived whereas a red costume could be adorned during the funeral rites of a young person to express an emotion of sadness (Ndah et al., 2021). In documenting the costume regalia of queen mothers in the Kwawu traditional area in southern Ghana, Nkansah (2008) identifies two major types of colourful costume regalia used by queen mothers of the area for joyous, and sorrowful ceremonies. Nkansah (2008) further reveals that the golden yellow costume adorned by queen mothers in the Kwawu traditional area symbolises riches, royalty, and happiness preferably used for joyous occasions such as grand durbar of festivals, anniversaries, and other moments, while white Kente with black lines which signifies peace, joy, and tranquillity are largely used for occasions such as thanksgiving, birth, and death anniversaries. Amongst the Akan people of Ghana, *adinkra* symbols which are ideographical representations of proverbs, philosophies, thoughts, and values of the Akan people of Ghana are incorporated into the ceremonial costume of chiefs and others to proverbially communicate the embedded meanings to the viewing public for their expansive interpretations in different contexts of applicability (Owusu, 2019). This implies that Ghanaian traditional costumes are not only identity markers but are effective communicative products that disseminate salient but thought-provoking proverbs and philosophies of a given society. According to Kemevor and Duku (2013), ceremonial costume art serves as a unique visual communicative tool during durbars, distinguishing the social hierarchical status and authority of chiefs to all and sundry. Also, Kwakye-Opong's (2014) study on the clothing and identity of Ga deities and spiritual responsibilities found that Ga deities are symbolised with specific costumes and accessories and thus, require the servant to be adorned accordingly, regardless of his/her gender. Kwakye-Opong (2014) adds that the use of specific clothing items also empowers the priest/priestess spiritually during healing.

In conclusion, the foregoing discussion on Ghanaian ceremonial costume art points to the case that the deployment of costumes during ceremonial events is a deliberate affair. The Ghanaian costume art, as espoused, conveys a repertoire of the various cultural ideals of a particular ethnicity, and many a time, the social status and mode of the wearer are manifestly communicated to the viewing public.

3. Research methods

The primary focus of the study was to investigate the motivation behind youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu with a specific focus on the costume art of Fuowie Nasolo, a youth cultural iconic figure in Tumu. Since the study focused on gathering experiential, revelatory, and valid data, a qualitative research approach under the precincts of case study design, was found to be suitable and adopted. The adoption of a qualitative case study design was to adequately generate in-depth data from the lived experiences of the research participants in their social settings (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Marczyk, DeMatteo &

Festinger, 2005; Kothari, 2004) regarding youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu with a specific focus on the costume art of Fuowie Nasolo from amongst the many youth cultural activists in Tumu. The specific study of Fuowie Nasolo from amongst the many youth cultural activists in Tumu was solidly grounded on the consensus reached by qualitative case study scholars that case studies involve an in-depth examination of a single person or a few people to provide an accurate and complete description of the case (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005; Kothari, 2004). In this instance, the specific focus on Fuowie Nasolo, a cultural iconic figure in Tumu, provides an opportunity for the study to specifically make an in-depth exposé of his cultural activism as well as decode the cultural symbolism and manifestations of his massively and differently deployed indigenous Sisaala costume regalia during traditional ceremonies. A total of twenty-five (25) purposively sampled informants were heterogeneously drawn from the general population which consisted of; the paramount chief of Tumu Traditional Area, the elders, and youth cultural activists in Tumu township all in the Sisaala East Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The study made use of a semi-structured interview guide, obtrusively non-participant observation (unstructured), and photography to collect qualitatively triangulated data through personal interviewer-interviewee interactions that were tape-recorded, transcribed, coded, and thematically analysed through textual and pictorial descriptive means. During data analysis, the study deliberately adopted pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality as well as conceal the identities of the research participants, except Fuowie Nasolo - the researched. In instances where the study made use of photographic data, approvals through written consent were duly granted by the research participants.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu

Many youth have notably become active participants in traditional cultural activities in contemporary Tumu. The motivating factors for this positive development, as revealed by both the elders and youth of Tumu, is primarily attributable to the unadulterated and typically rich Sisaala enculturation system notable among the indigenes of Tumu. The youth, when interviewed, explained that the motivation behind their cultural activism was inherently founded on the cultural tutelage provided by their fathers and the elderly in Tumu. They, however, added that their biggest extrinsic motivation was drawn from the admirable cultural activism of their leader, Fuowie Nasolo. They argued that although Fuowie Nasolo was a young man, he was well-versed in the traditional cultural practices of the Sisaala people of Tumu. The youth interviewed saw Fuowie Nasolo as a point of attraction and a distinguished youth cultural model whose leading cultural activism in Tumu is the reason why many of the youth have become active participants in traditional cultural activities. The youth consensually added that they draw their morale, fortification, and positive energies from Fuowie Nasolo's charismatic cultural participatory leadership. One of the youth cultural participants revealed that:

Fuowie Nasolo's cultural activism is a major motivation for my public participation in traditional cultural activities in Tumu. He is a cultural unifier for youth and a symbol of confidence for the Tumu youth cultural group. When we go to places outside our jurisdiction for cultural performances, he not only leads the performance; his presence provides the group with the necessary fortification and morale (Youth cultural activist 1, personal communication, June 7, 2022)

From the discussion, it is quite clear that youth cultural activism in contemporary Tumu is influenced by their rich cultural upbringing. However, the discussion emphasises the prominent motivating role of Fuowie Nasolo in arousing and sustaining the interest of the youth in cultural activities. Fuowie Nasolo could therefore be seen as the symbol of hope as far as youth participation in traditional cultural activities in Tumu is concerned.

That notwithstanding, the youth cultural activists variously enumerated some of the challenges they face in contemporary Tumu. They reported that they are overly stigmatised by practitioners of foreign religious faiths

(Christianity & Islam) and assimilators of foreign cultures in Tumu as being atheistically idolatrous and/or primitive thereby demeaning and ridiculing their social status. As a result of the associated ridicule, all the youth cultural activists contacted stressed that they often lose their girl lovers to other men. One of the youth cultural activists explains that:

...I lost my lifetime girl lover to another man just because she once saw me publicly partaking in a public cultural performance during the traditional funeral rites of an elder in Tumu. She said there was no way she, a Muslim, coming from a pious Islamic family would marry a *kafir* (nonbeliever). That neither she nor her family would ever allow that. That ended the relationship. Although it worried me at the beginning, I have found a new love who has never complained about my participation in traditional cultural activities although she belongs to a different faith. One thing I am sure of is that nothing can prevent me from participating in the cultural activities of my Sisaala ethnicity. Being Sisaala transcends speaking Sisaali. It entails being identified with the unique Sisaala cultural ideals. I am a proud Sisaala and would forever remain so by actively participating in the Sisaala traditional cultural practices. (Youth cultural activist 1, personal communication, June 7, 2022)

The foreign faith-based and culturally-minded stigmatisation endured by the youth cultural activists in contemporary Tumu is one major general cause of African lost cultural identity. Africans have lost confidence in the pursuit of their rich cultural identities and have rather now become ardent critics of African cultural manifestations in African societies. The accounts of the youth cultural activists do not only affirm the general lack of understanding of the difference between religion and culture, but a clear manifestation of colonialists' recruited mindset and/or religiously indoctrinated reasoning of Ghanaian origin who see nothing positive about their own culture except the foreign faiths and cultures they practise. This finds expression in the assertion that the Ghanaian youth have assimilated foreign cultures at such an alarming rate that they seem not to have forgotten about their very own culture (Ofori et al., 2021) but ridicule it. In the midst of all of these, one thing that remains pertinent is how to erase the erroneous and indoctrinated impressions possessed by people about the suitability and manifestation of Ghanaian traditional cultural practices in this contemporary era. It is noteworthy to emphasise that religion is only a subset of culture and should not be misconstrued as culture. The basic distinction is that while religion bothers on faith, culture hinges on identity construction. Although it is admissible that aspects of both religion and culture do, many a time, intersect, religion is religion and culture, culture. The harmony of religion and culture is, therefore, required for the progress of a society. It is so because, a highly religious "people without a culture are a people without an identity" (Sibani, 2018: 70).

4.2. Cultural background of Fuowie Nasolo

Fuowie Jonathan Yussif Nasolo, colloquially known as Jagon, was found to be an indigene of *Siguoljan* subsection of Tumu, the capital town of Sisaala East Municipality in the Upper West Region of northern Ghana. Fuowie is a frisky young cultural activist born on 3rd November, 1981, and nurtured in a typical Sisaala traditional home in Tumu. The elderly informants of the Nasolo family of which Fuowie hailed, consensually corroborated that their family has always taken deliberate steps to enculturate its younger generation, from infancy, with the rich values and traditional cultural practices and so was the case of Fuowie Nasolo's cultural upbringing. In reconstructing his cultural upbringing, B. Nasolo (personal communication, June 10, 2022) affirmed that he was groomed culturally by his family, particularly his late father, Nasolo Bayang. Fuowie revealed that:

My father was very active in traditional cultural activities both at the family and community levels. He was one of the known leading cultural activists of Tumu who had publicly performed *Bayiila* (war dance) during traditional funerals and festivals. Although I was born and bred in a traditional home, I was publicly initiated into traditional cultural activities at age 8 by my father. It all happened when my father enclothed me in a sacred Sisaala war costume regalia and led me to participate in the

traditionally classified *Bayiila* (war dance) performance during the final funeral rites of one of the senior-most elders of Tumu, the late Bakerikpa, on 13th April 1989. As young as I was, it is difficult to remember in detail what happened during my public cultural initiation. But, what I do know is that my father has always prepared me for all public traditional activities, and, I have continued to participate in cultural activities up-to-date even after the death of my father in 2010.

From the foregoing revelation, it means that Fuowie was well-enculturated into the Sisaala traditional cultural practices by his family, particularly his father. The accounts of other elderly informants in Tumu variously resonated that Fuowie was indeed publicly initiated into traditional cultural activities at a younger age. It was emphasised that Fuowie public initiation into traditional cultural practices during the final funeral rites of Bakerikpa, a heroic figure of Tumu, came with no surprise considering how immersed his father (late Nasolo Bayang) was as far as traditional cultural activism was concerned. One of the elders of Tumu argued that Fuowie cultural activism is a replica of how culturally active his late father was. Adding that:

Fuowie has demonstrated an in-depth understanding of Sisaala [Tumu] traditional cultural practices for which reason he has, for some time now, been leading the youth for public cultural performances during funerals and festivals while we the elderly sit back and provide the necessary guidance when the need be. You know, he [Fuowie] acts as the liaison between the elders of Tumu and the youth as far as our cultural activities are concerned. Fuowie is a notable youth cultural figure in Tumu who due to his lasting cultural activism, has won the hearts of many of his peers and younger ones who have developed an enthusiastic interest in our cultural practices and have always participated in the performance of *Bayiila* (war dance) and others to our expectations. To me, he [Fuowie] needs to be honoured publicly for his immense contributions to the preservation and promotion of our culture. (Tumu Elder1, personal communication, June 6, 2022)

The exaltations herein made about Fuowie's cultural activism were profoundly corroborated by the youth cultural activists in Tumu when contacted by the study. The youth interviewed, who are notable cultural activists in Tumu, variously consented that Fuowie is not only a towering young culturalist but a huge source of motivation for youth cultural activism in Tumu. Besides the argument that Fuowie is a key booster of youth morals for public cultural performances in Tumu, the youth informants variously stressed that Fuowie has always led them successfully during public cultural performances within and outside Tumu. Although they (youth informants) strongly believed that the guiding presence of key elders during cultural performances, particularly when they have to perform at what they described as dangerous jurisdictions outside of Tumu, they believe that Fuowie's protective leadership roles transcend that of the ordinary. They see Fuowie not only as a leading youth culturalist but as someone whose costume regalia and other fortifying elements provide them with the needed protection against evil eyes/hands.

4.3. Ceremonial costume art of Fuowie Nasolo

Costume art is one captivating element of Sisaala's traditional cultural practices as ascertained by the study. The captivating nature of the costume art of the Sisaala people of Tumu is founded on their aesthetics and cultural manifestations. Fuowie Nasolo is well noted for his massive display of variant traditional costume art during traditional ceremonial events. All the research informants consensually corroborated that Fuowie's ceremonial regalia is uniquely and symbolically representative of the costume culture of the Sisaala indigenes of Tumu. Besides the colourful and aesthetic nature of Fuowie Nasolo's ceremonial costume art, they are embedded with cultural codes. This section of the study makes an exposé of the ceremonial costume art of Fuowie Nasolo with an in-depth focus on decoding their cultural symbolism, and manifestations.



A



B

Figure 2 (A & B): Fuowie Nasolo in Sisaala Royal Smock Outfit.
(Photo courtesy: Fuowie Nasolo's Gallery, 2022).

Figure 2 (A & B) presents Fuowie Nasolo in a Sisaala royal apparatus. The outfit, as adorned by Fuowie, is a handwoven smock fashion indigenously reserved for the royal, noble, and well-revered class of the Sisaala ethnicity. While the hat and the top outfit take the design of a casual smock fashion, the pair of trousers (Figure 2: A & B) has a uniquely bulky extended crotch identified as *banuoka* in Sisaali. The *baluoka* pair of trousers goes with a special royal boot, as observed in Figure 2 (A & B), described in Sisaali as *jajinli nanteng-nye* (horse riding footwear). The study established that in the olden days of the Sisaala chieftdom, horses were owned and ridden by only prominent chiefs and a few nobles. The appropriate riding boots into which prominent riders (chiefs) tuck their pairs of trousers are the *jajinli nanteng-nye* as similarly adorned by Fuowie Nasolo. Fuowie's outfit is not only peculiar to the Sisaala people of Tumu but a northern Ghanaian dress fashion as affirmed by previous research. For instance, Acquah, Amissah and deGraft-Yankson (2017) note that the Dagomba people of Northern Ghana refer to Fuowie's *banuoka* kind of outfit as Kurugu. The authors observe that Kurugu by design is a voluminous local pair of trousers usually sewn from several yards of smock fabric and mostly adorned by the royal and high class in Dagbon society during festive occasions (Acquah, Amissah & deGraft-Yankson, 2017). In establishing the motif behind the adornment of the royal dress fashion by Fuowie Nasolo, the study found that the outfit was worn on the 19th of March, 2022 to celebrate the final traditional funeral rites of Issifu Siew, Nanyua's sectional landlord in Tumu. According to Fuowie, Issifu Siew, was one of the oldest heroes of Tumu whose funeral rites had to be celebrated with pomp and pageantry to bid him a befitting farewell to the

ancestral underworld. The brown-coloured smock regalia (Figure 2A&B) has vertical decoration of cowries harmoniously combined with achromatic amulet attachments which makes it outstandingly unique with not only the ability to fortify its wearer against evil forces but to aesthetically and elegantly project the wearer.



A



B

Figure 3 (A & B): Fuowie Nasolo in Full Scale War Costume Regalia leading War Dance during Kanton's Commemorative Day in Tumu (Photo courtesy: Ayamga Fatawu's Gallery, 2018).

In Figure 3 (A & B), Fuowie Nasolo is costumed in indigenous Sisaala war regalia as he led a group of people, the majority of whom were young men, for the performance of *Bayilla* (war dance) during the annual celebration of Royal Kanton commemorative day in Tumu. A view of Figure 3A reveals Fuowie in a kneeling posture with the other *bayilla* dancers squatting. The study established that the kneeling of the leader (Fuowie) and the squatting of the rest of the performers was a polite symbolic posture of greeting the elders and seeking their fullest permission for the *bayilla* dance. Fuowie together with the elders interviewed explained that war costume regalia are revered protective apparatus with multiple spiritually-fortified attachments (amulets, charms & talismans) specifically and sparingly worn by Sisaala warriors on war missions and/or for self-defence. A study by Navei (2021) corroborates that the spiritual powers of the warriors in the Tumu traditional area are largely drawn from their ritually dyed smock regalia which have multiples of leather-made attachments (amulets, charms & other mystical accoutrements) with resilient spiritual powers to fortify the wearer against all forms of attacks (physical or spiritual) including arrows from bows and bullets from guns during warfare. Inquiring the reason why Fuowie chose to adorn such war regalia for a non-war mission, he explained that the occasion in question (Kanton commemorative day) reckoned the adornment of war costume regalia. It was consensually corroborated by the research informants that Kanton was one of the greatest warriors of Tumu and the Sisaala enclave who made significant contributions to the sociocultural and sociopolitical facets of the Sisaala enclave before his dignified passing.

Hence, every 29th day of January (Kanton's death day and month) has been set aside to commemorate him. Navei (2021) concurs that Kanton was a famous hunter and one of the leading known warriors who fought and succeeded the slave raiders in Sisaala land during the era of the slave trade. With such unbroken records of achievements, the people of Tumu, led by the Kanton family, have set aside 29th January yearly to commemorate his heroic and hunting prowess that contributed immensely to the development of the Sisaala enclave (Navei, 2021). As a heroic icon, Kanton's annual commemorative event always calls for the adornment of war costume regalia for the performance of *bayilla* (war dance) which he once actively participated in. Therefore, Fuowie's wearing of full-scale war costume regalia during Kanton's annual commemorative celebration is to reaffirm kanton's dignified valour, bravery, and warlike. The research participants consensually agreed that *bayilla* is highly classified and sparingly performed during the celebration of traditional funeral rites of dignified men of Tumu. Its performance is mandatorily characterised by the adornment of war costumes and holding of indigenously and ritually made sharp or pointed metal-edged weapons (Figure 3A&B) once used by the forebears of Tumu for self-defence during warfare. The research informants stressed that a cut or piecing no matter how little it is, from such inherited weapons could lead to the death of the victim. As a result, such weapons are advisedly used for non-warfare with their metal tips blocked with objects such as fruits, and others to prevent accidental hurting of one another during the *bayilla* performance. Due to the deadly nature of the war weapons, some *bayilla* performers, many a time, symbolically use stakes in place of the actual war weapons to prevent any eventualities.



Figure 4: Fuowie Nasolo in Black Sleeveless War Costume leading a Group of *Bayilla* Dancers (Photo courtesy: Ayamga Fatawu's Gallery, 2019).

Another uniquely different ceremonial costume art of Fuowie Nasolo as observed in Figure 4 was showcased on January 29th, 2019 during Kanton's yearly commemorative day. It was ascertained that the sleeveless black costume adorned by Fuowie Nasolo is not an ordinary dress but mini war regalia. Although its protective powers are not as robust as the bigger war costume regalia adorned by Fuowie, as observed in Figure 3A&B, the black costume art of Fuowie is one of the diverse war costumes of the Sisaala people of Tumu. It has some powers to protect the wearer against any evil spell. Fuowie explained that the black sleeveless war costume could be worn under bigger war regalia for a combined spiritual enhancement and protection of the wearer.

Similar to the black sleeveless war costume (Figure 4), the study found another uniquely different sleeveless ceremonial costume art displayed by Fuowie Nasolo (Figures 5 A, B & C). Although it is plain without any attached charms, it is said to be one of the most powerful protective costumes ritually prepared from potent herbal dyes.



A



B



C

Figure 5 (A, B & C): Fuowie Nasolo in White Sleeveless War Costume leading a Group of *Bayilla* Dancers (Photo courtesy: Ayamga Fatawu's Gallery, 2020).

Fuowie revealed that the costume art exhibited in Figure 5: A, B & C was adorned for the centenary celebration of the dignified passing of Kanton the great. The celebration which took a week long climaxed on 31st January 2020. A cursory view of the costume regalia (5: A, B & C) reveals powerfully benevolent neck-hanging charms made of leather, calabash; amulets as well as multiple publicly-exposed cowries' ornamented waist talismans. The sleeveless wardress and the accompanying powerful charms and talismans worn by Fuowie Nasolo, as afore-identified, give him a wild and fearful appearance.



Figure 6: Fuowie Nasolo in a Brownish Sleeveless War Costume in a Group Photograph with Two Ladies after *Bayilla* Dance in Kumasi (Photo courtesy: Fuowie Nasolo's Gallery, 2022).

In Figure 6, Fuowie Nasolo showcased yet a different costume for the maiden Sisaala traditional festival organised in Kumasi in May, 2022 to promote key Sisaala traditional cultural performances for the Sisaala people living in southern Ghana. Fuowie's brownish sleeveless smock costume art for the said occasion was identified as war regalia with protective powers. It was clarified that Fuowie's costume (Figure 6) is as potent as the other previously discussed sleeveless war costumes (Figures 4 & 5: A, B & C). Besides the observable dye differences among Fuowie's sleeveless war costumes, the incorporation of leather-cased charms (red & white) in the makeup of the costume art observed in Figure 6 makes it uniquely different. In enquiring about the implications of people (such as ladies) touching the ritually revered war costume regalia as observed in Figure 6, Fuowie explained that as long the ladies were clean and free from menstrual and sexual dirt, they were safe to touch the costume. Contrary to that the consequences are dire particularly when a mensurating lady touches the war costume. Such a lady will suffer prolong menstrual discharges until she confesses.

Usually, I caution people particularly ladies about the implications of touching my war costume regalia. So, if out of malice or recalcitrance you are unclean but decide to touch my war costume regalia, you suffer dearly for such self-inflicted calamity. Such a lady will have to confess and bear the ritual expenses to be healed. (B. Nasolo, personal communication, June 10, 2022)

Fuowie further added that he himself is not spared if he dared adorn the war regalia when in a compromised state without proper ritual cleansing of himself. This suggests the existence of restrictions to be observed before touching Fuowie's war costume regalia.



Figure 7 (A&B): Fuowie Nasolo in Full Scale War Costume Regalia leading war Dance at a Funeral in Navirongo. (Photo courtesy: Fuowie Nasolo's Gallery, 2022).

For the final funeral rites of Ghana's former Minister of Aviation, Kofi Adda, in February 2022, at Navrongo in the Upper East Region of Ghana, Fuowie Nasolo opted for full-scale war costume regalia (Figure 7), which is similar to that of Figure 3 A and B. Fuowie explained that his choice of full-scale war costume regalia for Addai's funeral was influenced by the fact that he was to lead the Tumu warriors in displaying some indigenous Sisaala war dances outside the confines of Tumu. And as the leader and frontliner, he needed to adorn very powerful costume regalia to withstand and rebut in multiple folds any malevolent force fired against him or any member of his group.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examined the motivation behind youth participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu with a specific focus on the ceremonial costume art of Fuowie Nasolo, a youth cultural iconic figure in Tumu. The study was motivated by youth active participation in traditional cultural practices in contemporary Tumu which is contrary to scholarly evidence that suggests that many African (Ghanaian) youth seem to have not only forgotten about their ethnic cultures as a result of their increasing taste and assimilation of Western cultures, but they rather mock African (Ghanaian) ethnic cultures in favour of Western cultures. An in-depth analysis of the findings of the study reveals active youth participation in traditional cultural activities in contemporary Tumu which is engendered by the sustained cultural tutelage the youth receive from their fathers and/or elders. It also profoundly emerged that, alongside cultural upbringing, youth cultural participation in Tumu is extrinsically motivated by the admirable cultural activism of Fuowie Nasolo. Fuowie is consensually upheld as the unifying leader of the Tumu youth cultural group whose in-depth understanding of Sisaala (Tumu) traditional cultural practices is manifestly observed in his cultural activism, particularly, his massive deployment of differently coded indigenous Sisaala costume regalia for traditional ceremonies. A cursory view of Fuowie's ceremonial costume art reveals the rich indigenous dress culture of the Sisaala people of Tumu.

His ceremonial costume art, which comes in various fashions, on the one hand, reflects a royal dress culture and, on the other, the heroic and wardress culture of the indigenes of Tumu. Since Fuowie's cultural activism significantly complements the effort of the elders of Tumu in promoting youth cultural participation, the study calls for sustained collaboration between Fuowie and the elders of Tumu to ensure the continuous provision of unadulterated traditional cultural upbringing to the youth of Tumu. This would not only contribute to stripping off any foreign-induced misconceptions associated with Tumu traditional cultural practices but positively and inherently deepen the understanding, practical knowledge, and confidence of the youth to massively participate

in traditional cultural practices for cultural preservation, cultural restoration, and the construction of authentic cultural identity of the people of Tumu for posterity.

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