

Sartorial commemoration of Princess Yennenga through Wiyaala's War Costume Mimicry**Nyamawero Navei*** ¹ Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba – Ghanannavei47@gmail.com*Correspondence: nnavei47@gmail.com**Received:** 20 October, 2023 | **Accepted:** 02 January, 2024 | **Published:** 11 January, 2024

Abstract: History is an invaluable reflective resource for progressive national development. In Africa, various studies have delved into the memory lane to identify and commemorate past heroic or iconic figures for their diverse contributions to shaping the destinies of societies and nations. However, such commemorative studies are inexhaustive, as many unsung heroic or iconic figures still abound. One such unsung heroic figure is Princess Yennenga. The current study sets out to sartorially commemorate Princess Yennenga's iconography by delving into Wiyaala mimicry of Princess Yennenga's war costume regalia for a teaser movie shot by Mothertongue in Ghana. It adopted the methodological blueprint of qualitative historical design, with Wiyaala as the principal and homogeneous respondent purposively sampled and interviewed. An in-depth historical and thematic analysis of primary and secondary data found Princess Yennenga to be a warriorress of northern Ghanaian origin and the emblematic founding mother of the Mossi Kingdom in Burkina Faso. It was also established that the materiality, accessories, and props that constituted Wiyaala's dramatic mimicry of Yennenga's war costume were locally self-constructed. The study concludes that the wild, dramatic character projected by Wiyaala through her self-constructed war costume symbolically reimaged Princess Yennenga's warriorress identity and thereby contributes to commemorating Yennenga's heroic legacies in the historical development of the Dagomba and Mossi Kingdoms of Ghana and Burkina Faso, respectively. It will, therefore, be plausible if similar sartorial commemorative studies are conducted on other unsung heroic/iconic figures to highlight the instrumentality of costume art in heroic and iconic identity construction.

Keywords: Mimicry, Princess Yennenga, sartorial commemoration, war costume, Wiyaala.

1. Introduction

History is an invaluable reflective resource for progressive national development. Špiláčková (2012: 22) affirms that "the past is a source of experience [and therefore], ignorance of the past or forgetting it means a loss of an inexpressible value". Therefore, a responsible society is one that dutifully identifies and commemorates its past heroes, heroines, and/or iconic figures for their diversely remarkable contributions to community or national progressive development. The emphasis is that a society that commemorates its heroic figures is worth dying for (Cagé, Dagorret, Grosjean & Jha, 2023; Canevaro, 2019; Eriksson et al., 2013; Schwartz, 1982), and the opposite is factual. Commemoration of community or national heroic/iconic figures takes diverse dimensions. While Performing and Visual Arts are public means through which some landmark contributions of iconic or heroic figures could be commemorated, scholarly documentation is also uncontentious.

From the perspective of Performing Arts, particularly filmography, it is observed that film has become one of the foremost storytelling media for cultural education, the commemoration of heroic or iconic figures, and

the general development of the historical consciousness of a particular society (Donnelly, 2020; Davie, 2011). Reference is made to Davie's (2011) analysis of five films such as; *The Battle of the Bulge*, *A Bridge Too Far*, *Platoon*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *The Hurt Locker*, which revealed some historical contexts to the heroic and nonheroic actions of the characters of the films studied. As a result of the social, cultural, educational, and historical contexts embedded in some films, teachers have increasingly opted to use relevant films as thoughtful pedagogical media in mainstream educational settings (Donnelly, 2020; Stoddard, 2012). Using film as a historical visual textbook allows a large population of learners to easily and concretely develop conceptual and historical knowledge on historical issues (Donnelly, 2020; Stoddard, 2012). In the Ghanaian context, Kquofi and Croffie (2017) did a case study of six Kumawood movies to ascertain how Kumawood movies presented the cultural values of the Asante people of Ghana. The authors found that Kumawood movies showcased diverse Akan cultural elements such as; proverbs that centre on positive morals, indigenous Akan fashion culture, and traditional festivals, among others. This makes filmography an appropriate tool for the reconstruction, preservation, and promotion of Ghanaian cultural values and an alternative platform through which distinguished Ghanaian heroes, heroines, and icons could be commemorated. Kquofi and Croffie, however, observed that using foreign cultural elements such as; Western decorations, music, dress fashion, continental meals, and others distorted the rich Akan traditional cultural values in the movies studied and recommended their abhorrence.

On the aspect of scholarly commemoration of heroic and/or iconic figures, a plethora of studies abound. It is so because, as Davie (2011: 52) succinctly contends, "the study of heroes is important as heroes are connected to who we are as a society and have been a part of our traditions as far back as we can recall.". In the Ghanaian political landscape, for instance, scholarly commemorative studies have shared insights into the lives and times of distinguished compatriots such as; Kwame Nkrumah, Hilla Limann, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Adu Boahen, Kofi Abrefa Busia, Nana Susubribi Krobea Asante, Simon Diedong Dombo, Kwegyir Aggrey, Amidu Isahaku Chinnia, and others (Navei, 2022; Ashong, 2019; Anti, 2016; Dartey-Baah, 2015; Ibrahim, 2014; Damwah, 2011), placing such personalities in the context of Ghana's political struggle for independence, democracy, and national development. In chieftaincy and war fronts, the valiant Asante royal heroine, Yaa Asantewaa, has been commemorated by many studies in response to her victorious war waged against the British in Gold Coast/Ghana (Sackeyfio-Lenoch, 2021; Nti, 2020; Fuller, 2014; McCaskie, 2007). Given her outstanding contribution to Ghana's independence, Yaa Asantewaa has been commemorated variously with Ghanaian nationalist symbols such as; monuments, museum exhibits, postage stamps, paper currency, and others in remembrance of her distinguished contributions to Ghana's political independence and national development (Fuller, 2014). Similar commemorative studies have been conducted to highlight the warship, priestly, and spiritual magnanimities of Akomfo Anokye of the Asante Kingdom of Ghana (Hanserd, 2015; Kumah, 2009; McCaskie, 2007; 1986).

The foregoing empirical discussion highlights the importance of commemorative studies as critical components of community and nation-building agenda as such studies inspire (reveal what was accomplished by who and how) as well as instil feelings of patriotism in the minds of readers (Ashong, 2019) about the exemplary and remarkable deeds of past compatriots. Considering the significant role commemorative studies play in contextualising the heroic deeds of deserving personalities in a community and national history, it has become imperative for scholars to identify and document the lives and times of unsung heroes, heroines, and icons who once contributed their quotas towards community and national progressive development. One such heroic figure with little scholarly documentation is Princess Yennenga. Although little existing historical documentation has identified Princess Yennenga as an iconic warrioress of northern Ghanaian descent and the mother of the Mossi kingdom of Burkina Faso (Tiéné, 2021; Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; Sheroes of History, 2014), much is not known about Princess Yennenga's war costume regalia, thereby presenting a scholarly

lacuna (knowledge gap). The current study attempts to fill the prevailing scholarly lacuna by focusing on Princess Yennenga's war costume regalia as mimicked by Wiyaala (a Ghanaian and internationally reputed female music icon) in a teaser movie shot by Mothertongue (2022) in Ghana. Specifically, the materiality, accessories, props, and cultural symbolism associated with Wiyaala mimicry of Princess Yennenga's war costume regalia are reconstructed by this study within the context of reimagining Princess Yennenga's heroic identity for women's empowerment in contemporary Africa (Ghana).

2. Empirical review

2.1. Theoretical framework

The study was framed in the social context of commemoration propounded by Schwartz (1982). According to Schwartz, recollection of the past is an active and constructive process and not a simple matter of retrieving information. Schwartz further argues that to remember is to conceptualise both past events and the needs of the present (Schwartz, 1982). Predicated on this theoretical background, the social context of commemoration calls for the remembrance, conceptualisation and prioritisation of past extraordinary events, past heroic and iconic actions of distinguished personalities of a given society for progressive development (Schwartz, 1982). Pivotal to the social context of commemoration theory is the issue of iconography, as aforementioned. Schwartz contextualises iconography to entail any extraordinary person or event a society thinks is important to remember. If Schwartz's theory of commemoration focuses on the need for a society to remember its past extraordinary icons and events, what is its theoretical link and suitability to the current study? The fact that the current study, from a sartorial perspective, sought to reconstruct the iconography of Princess Yennenga in a commemorative discourse, portraying her as an extraordinary warriorress of northern Ghanaian origin and the mother of the Mossi Kingdom of Burkina Faso, justifies the suitability of the social context of commemoration as a theoretical framework for the study. In simple terms, reconstructing the materiality, accessories, cultural symbolism, and historicity associated with Princess Yennenga's war costume as mimicked by Wiyaala in a teaser movie shot by Mothertongue (2022) situates the study within the perspective of commemorative research.

2.2. Historical Review on the Life and Times of Princess Yennenga

There is convergent historicity to Yennenga's persona and ancestral root of origin. The available historical knowledge about the life and times of Princess Yennenga, as mostly gleaned from Mossi oral tradition (origin tales, stories, dynastic timelines, among others) and contemporary historical writings, generally identify Princess Yennenga as a very distinguished African heroine, widely known for her bravery, war-mindedness, and time-tested spiritual potency thought to have lived between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries (Funtimes, 2021; Tiéné, 2021; Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; *Sheroes of History*, 2014; BBC, 2001). In terms of Princess Yennenga's ancestral root and exact place of geographical origin in Africa, the readings of the aforementioned historical knowledge consensually identify her as the beloved daughter of King Nedega of the Dagomba Kingdom in northern Ghana who, for self-freedom, relocated to Burkina Faso to become the founding mother of the Mossi ethnicity (Mossi Kingdom).

Growing up with her three brothers, who all commanded their battalions under the auspices of King Nedega of the Dagomba Kingdom in northern Ghana, Princess Yennenga acquired practical battle skills to become an expert horse rider, skilful in using spears, bow and arrow for warfare and ultimately became the commandant of her battalion (Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; *Sheroes of History*, 2014; BBC, 2001). It is asserted that Princess Yennenga successfully commanded her army in numerous battles, particularly against the neighbouring Malinké people, to become a feared warriorress in and outside the Dagomba kingdom (*Sheroes of History*, 2014). Due to her tall height and slender physique, she was nicknamed Yennenga the Svelte, and

when she rode with her army wearing her war robes, people occasionally mistook her for a man (Sheroes of History, 2014). Princess Yennenga's war prowess and battle successes highly placed her as the fulcrum of her father's battle plans, to the extent that when she attained marriageable age, the father banned her from doing so (Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; Sheroes of History, 2014; BBC, 2001). Although Princess Yennenga endured sacrificing her marital urge to forefront the execution of her father's battle plans, she looked up to the best opportunity to protest for self-freedom to marry as her peers did. In one of such protestation attempts, Yennenga cultivated some crops in the backyard of her father's residence, and instead of harvesting them when they matured, she abandoned them to go waste to signify how her father had allowed her, a lady of marriageable age, to go to waste (Bawah, 2015; Sheroes of History, 2014; UNESCO, 2014; BBC, 2001). This infuriated Yennenga's father, who is said to have locked her up in one of his rooms. Whether Yennenga was imprisoned by her father or not, she is said to have escaped, disguised herself in male clothing, and disappeared into the forest on her stallion (Bawah, 2015; Sheroes of History, 2014; UNESCO, 2014; BBC, 2001). It is unclear how long Princess Yennenga remained in the forest, but historical records suggest that she eventually met Riale, a well-known elephant hunter who initially mistook her for a man but later discovered that Princess Yennenga was a woman and a skilled hunter as well. (Bawah, 2015; Sheroes of History, 2014; UNESCO, 2014; BBC, 2001).

Soon, romance blossomed, and Yennenga and Riale fell in love and had a child. They called their son Ouedraogo, which means 'Male Horse' or 'Stallion'. This was a tribute to the horse that had taken Yennenga into the forest, where she met Riale. Ouedraogo grew to become an important leader and founded the Mossi Kingdom, which is why Yennenga is known as the mother of the Mossi people. (Sheroes of History, 2014: 1-2)

The afore-stated historicity about Princess Yennenga's cultivation of crops and allowing them to wither in protestation against her father's disallowance of her marital urge and her bolting into the forest and subsequent relocation to have a settled marital life thereafter and becoming the mother of Mossi Kingdom are widely affirmed by a plethora of historical sources (Funtimes, 2021; Tiéné, 2021; Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; Sheroes of History, 2014; BBC, 2001). Princess Yennenga rose to become not only an icon in Burkina Faso but also a recognised African feminine figure. After her demise, Princess Yennenga has since received nationalist recognition in Burkina Faso, as statues of her (Figure 1) have been erected in Ouagadougou, the capital city, and other public spaces in Burkina Faso; roads named after her; the African film award, the Golden Stallion of Yennenga, which depicts a woman on horseback while brandishing a spear (Figure 2); as well as the Burkina Faso national soccer team named 'Les Étalons' which means the Stallions, also named after Princess Yennenga's legendary horse (Sheroes of History, 2014).



Figure 1: Sculptural Representation of Yennenga in War Action (Photo Credit: Sheroes of History, 2014).



Figure 2: The Golden Stallion of Yennenga (Photo Credit: African Heritage, 2023).\

2.3. Indigenous Ghanaian War Costume in the Context of Yennenga's Sartorial Elegance

The costume is an essential regalia element of African warriors/warrioress. Studies affirm that African warriors/warrioress draw their supernatural powers from ritually fortified war costumes (Navei, 2023a;

2023b; 2021; Fusheini, 2020; Fusheini & Adu-Agyem, 2019; Agaasa, Duut, Kokonu & Adongo, 2018; Ademin, 2016; Adjei & Osei-Sarfo, 2016; Adjei, Osei-Sarfo & Adongo, 2016; Smith, 1987). For instance, among the Sisaala people of Ghana, the sacred war costume (smock) remains the special costume adorned during warfare (Navei, 2023a; 2023b; 2021). Such sacred war costumes (Figures 3A A & B) are ritually dyed and copiously affixed with leather-cased magical accessories such as talismans, charms, amulets, and other elements believed to possess unmatched metaphysical powers that can protect their wearer against all forms of spiritual and physical attacks, including spiritual missiles and gunshots (Navei, 2023a; 2023b; 2021). Also, the war costumes of the Builsa warriors (Figure 4) in the Upper East Region of northern Ghana, which bear close semblance to the Sisaala war smock regalia, are described as armour costumes applied with powerful charms, amulets, and talismans to protect and repel evil forces and neutralise gunshots (Agaasa, Duut, Kokonu & Adongo, 2018; Ademin, 2016). Similarly, the traditionally classified war smock (Figure 5), which functions as a bulletproof to protect the wearer against gun bullets, is only worn by Dagomba warriors of northern Ghana during times of danger where human life could be at risk through fights, conflicts, and wars (Fusheini, 2020; Fusheini & Adu-Agyem, 2019). Also, the *batakari kese*, a large smock battle dress (Figures 6 & 7), which is copiously affixed with leather-cased charms and other powerful attachments, is usually adorned by Asante warriors and kings during warfare since the inception of the empire-kingdom but nowadays worn for ceremonial purposes (Fuller, 2014). Similarly, the traditional military units of some communities in the Central Region of Ghana, such as Effufu, Cape Coast, and others, resort to the use of the Asafo warrior costumes during warfare (Brako & Dennis, 2023; Safo-Ankama & Donkor, 2023; Safo-Ankama & Sawyerr, 2023). According to Safo-Ankama and Sawyerr (2023), the Asafo battle costumes, which project and protect the wearer, come in different types such as; fugu (smocks), tapestries, plain white, blue-red, and yellow fabrics, depending on their source of allegiance or objects of benevolence.



A



B

Figure 3(A & B): Sisaala War Costumes Adorned by Warriors for Ceremonial War Dance (Photo Courtesy: Navei, 2023a).



Figure 4: Builsa Warriors Dressed in War Costumes (Photo Courtesy: Agaasa et al., 2018)



Figure 5: Dagomba Warriors Dressed in War Costumes (Photo Courtesy: Fusheini, 2020).



Figure 6: Status of Yaa Asantewaa
Clad in *Batakari Kese* Wardress



Figure 7: Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II
Clad in *Batakari Kese* Battle Dress for a Ceremony

(Photo Courtesy: Fuller, 2014).

From the empirical discussion, it seems that smock, although a notable indigenous northern Ghanaian dress fashion (Navei, 2023a; 2023b; 2021; Atampugre, 2018; Acquaaah et al., 2017; Adjei et al., 2016; Essel & Amissah, 2015), is a common war costume regalia utilised by various traditional military groups in both northern and southern Ghana. This positions the smock as a universally accepted indigenous Ghanaian dress suitable for war costumes.

In the context of Princess Yennenga's war costume regalia, which is the focus of the current study, there seems to be academic silence. However, Princess Yennenga's Dagomba origin in northern Ghana provides firm evidence that her war costume regalia should be appreciated within the context of Dagomba ritually dyed war smock regalia, as observed in Figure 5. The linkage is authenticated with a cursory view of Princess Yennenga's sculptured status (Figure 1), which depicts her clad in a smock costume with charm attachments, as similarly observed in the case of the Dagomba war smock (Figure 5) and other similar Ghanaian battle costumes (Figures 3, 4, 6 & 7) which all have charms affixed to function as bulletproof to protect the wearer against gunshots and all forms of spiritual missiles.

3. Methods

Delving deep into the memory lane to identify distinguished personalities (heroes, heroines or icons) and embarking on scholarly commemoration of their outstanding contributions to societal and national progressive development has a historical dimension. This study, which engaged in the sartorial commemoration of Princess Yennenga through Wiyaala's war costume mimicry, could be situated within the confines of historical research. Therefore, the qualitative historical research design defined the conduct of the study. With qualitative historical research design, the real worldviews of research elements are explored in their purest form, as well as allowing elements that were previously unknown and/or unnoticed by others to be explicitly revealed (Lune & Berg, 2017). Simply put, qualitative historical research engages in an in-depth examination of research elements from history to find the answers to specific questions, explore the unknown, look for connections or ramifications between historical events and the present, evaluate the prior actions and achievements of people, organisations, or agencies, and generally support the comprehension of human civilisation (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Anchored on the methodological blueprint of qualitative historical research design, as espoused, the study, from a sartorial perspective, commemoratively reconstructed the historicity surrounding Princess Yennenga's iconography as an extraordinary warriorress of northern Ghanaian origin and the founding mother of the Mossi Kingdom of Burkina Faso. This was achieved through in-depth historical and thematic analysis of the materiality, accessories, props, and cultural symbolism associated with Wiyaala mimicry of Yennenga's war

costume regalia in a teaser movie shot by Mothertongue (2022) in Ghana. While Wiyaala constituted the principal homogeneous participant purposively sampled for the study due to her dramatic mimicry of Yennenga's war costume regalia, the contextual explanations offered by Wiyaala through a personal interview constituted the primary data for the study. Also, historical data were gathered from secondary (external) sources to authenticate Wiyaala's primary (internal) accounts, thereby ensuring the fidelity of the study's findings, as affirmed by Lune and Berg (2017). For clarity, Wiyaala is an indigene of Funsu in the Upper West Region of northern Ghana. She is a well-established and internationally renowned musician notable for her commitment to promoting and preserving indigenous African (Ghanaian) dress cultural identity through her locally sourced musical stage costume art (Navei, 2023b).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Background to Prince Yennenga's Commemorative Teaser Movie

In commemoration of Princess Yennenga's emblematic achievements, Mothertongue launched a teaser movie shooting activity in Tamale dubbed: *In Search of Yennenga* (Mothertongue, 2022). According to Mothertongue, the teaser movie shooting activity was in preparation for *Nuotma Bodomu's* work-in-progress substantive movie titled; *Yennenga: A Warrior in Her Becoming* (Mothertongue, 2022). Mothertongue further explained that the yet-to-be-produced movie (*Yennenga: A Warrior in Her Becoming*) seeks to commemorate Princess Yennenga on one side and, on the other hand, metaphorically mimic the return of Princess Yennenga to Ghana, her ancestral root of origin, since she bolted into Burkina Faso many centuries ago. The historical narrative about Princess Yennenga's Ghanaian origin and relocation to become the emblematic founding mother of the Mossi Kingdom in Burkina Faso between the 12th-15th centuries is consensually affirmed by a plethora of historical studies (Funtimes, 2021; Tiéné, 2021; Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; Sheroes of History, 2014; BBC, 2001). In choosing a best-fit character to mimic Princess Yennenga's persona in the Mothertongue's teaser movie (*In Search of Yennenga*), Wiyaala, colloquially known as the Lioness of Africa and an internationally recognised Afro-pop musician as well as songwriter from Funsu in the Upper West Region of northern Ghana, was chosen. Wiyaala is renowned for her deployment of self-constructed war, pseudo-spiritual and other indigenous Ghanaian costumes for her musical stage performances across the globe (Navei, 2023b). Having distinguished herself with the adornment of indigenous African (Ghanaian) costumes for her energetic musical performances (Navei 2023b), it is no surprise that Wiyaala was chosen by Mothertongue to dramatise the warrior character of Princess Yennenga. According to Mothertongue (2022), Wiyaala was clad in a reimaged retro-futuristic indigenous northern Ghanaian war costume (Figure 8 A, B & C) and walked around selected streets of Tamale in the northern region of Ghana as she asked passers-by, "Have you seen Yennenga?" This was to symbolically commemorate Princess Yennenga's legendary and to metaphorically beacon her return to Ghana.

According to Wiyaala, most of the people contacted in the northern region of Ghana during the teaser movie shooting exercise looked very green about Princess Yennenga's iconography, except for a very few elderly men who had heard about the historicity around her. "Interestingly, when we went to shoot the movie at Tamale, only the elderly people seemed to remember Princess Yennenga and were able to relate the history about her. However, many of the people we met did not have any information about Princess Yennenga" (personal communication, February 11, 2023). This suggests that the historicity of Princess Yennenga's legendary status is gradually phasing out in the historical repository of Ghana, even at Princess Yennenga's ancestral origin, as no monumental status of her or any form of public nationalist symbolic recognition of Princess Yennenga could be spotted in her home northern region of Ghana, as revealed by Wiyaala. This calls for a dispassionate public dialogue that would lead to the establishment of nationalist symbols such as; monuments, museum exhibits, street names, and others in recognition of Princess Yennenga's legendary status in Ghana, particularly her home (northern) region. This is a worthy discourse because Princess Yennenga is

not only of Ghanaian descent, but her warrioress fame was nurtured and chalked in Ghana before her relocation to Burkina Faso, as affirmed by a plethora of studies (Tiéné, 2021; Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; Sheroes of History, 2014). Such nationalist symbolic commemoration of Princess Yennenga will go a long way toward imbuing confidence in Ghanaian ladies to strive to become heroic and iconic figures who will be instrumental to the progressive development of Ghana.

4.2. Wiyaala's Dramatic Mimicry of Princess Yennenga's War Costume Regalia

This section of the study presents an analytical reconstruction of the materiality, accessories, props, and cultural symbolism associated with Wiyaala's dramatic mimicry of Princess Yennenga's war costume regalia in Mothertongue's (2022) teaser movie titled; *In Search of Yennenga*.



A



B



C

Figure 8 (A, B & C): Wiyaala Clad in Self-Constructed War Costume Regalia in a Dramatic Mimicry of Princess Yennenga's Battle Mood (Photo Courtesy: Life in Lens, 2022).

In Figure 8 (A, B & C), Wiyaala is shown clad in locally constructed costume regalia in a public dramatic mimicry of Princess Yennenga's battle character in the streets of Tamale in northern Ghana. When questioned about what informed her choice of materiality, costume design, and its symbolism, Wiyaala revealed that she self-constructed the costume all by herself, explaining that:

Besides the waist belt, the bow and the arrow that were given to me by the movie costume directors, the entire costume regalia from top-down was hand-sewn by me. When I was told that I was going to mimic Princess Yennenga's warrior character, I resorted to this unique war costume that I had already made. It is entirely made of leather, the boots, the skirt, and the top [Figure 8A, B & C] and decorated with natural cowries. Symbolically, the combined effect of my self-constructed war costume regalia and my holding of

the bow and arrow weapons portrayed me as a wild, roaring lioness of Africa who is ready to devour, thereby reconstructing Princess Yennenga's warriorress imagery. (Wiyaala, personal communication, February 11, 2023).

Wiyaala added that besides skin-wrappers being the first garments of human civilisation in Africa, for which reason leather was used for her self-constructed war costume (Figures 8 A, B & C), the dominant brown colour of the costume was deliberately chosen to symbolise the colour of mother earth, the origin of humanity. She further explained that her choice of the brown colour for the costume was to reflect the usual brownish dyed and spiritually-fortified war smock costumes often used by warriors of northern Ghana not only for their spirituality but to disguise the warriors when laying ambush in search of the targeted enemy due to its brownish earthly colour, as corroborated by Navei (Navei, 2021). Navei (2021) reports that the protective costumes adorned by Tumu hunters are commonly dyed in brown not only for spiritual imbueement but to disguise the wearers, as they unidentifiably appear as though dried leaves even at close distance with the prey or victim, leading to successful hunting expeditions as in the case of warfare. Also, Wiyaala's use of bow and arrow props to mimic Princess Yennenga's warriorress character is in tandem with the historical evidence that indicates that Princess Yennenga was skilled in the use of spears, bows and arrows during warfare (Bawah, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; Sheroes of History, 2014; BBC, 2001), as conspicuously displayed in Princess Yennenga's monumental status erected at Burkina Faso's capital city, Ouagadougou (Figure 1), and also in the case of northern Ghanaian warriors (Figure 4).

In interpreting the overall concept behind Princess Yennenga's commemorative teaser movie, which metaphorically starred Wiyaala in her self-constructed war costume in mimicry of Princess Yennenga's warriorress character, the study found that the movie director, a young lady who hails from the Upper West Region of Ghana but is based in the United States of America, saw the urgency to commemorate distinguished feminine heroic figures in Africa (Ghana), drawing inspiration from Princess Yennenga's emblematic iconography, as revealed by Wiyaala. Wiyaala further contended that unlike Yaa Asantewaa, a renowned Ghanaian woman who successfully waged a war against the British in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana) for political freedom, and a few other heroines who have received some commemorations (Sackeyfio-Lenoch, 2021; Nti, 2020; Fuller, 2014; McCaskie, 2007), many unsung heroines and/or female iconic figures exist in Africa. Wiyaala therefore asserted that the Princess Yennenga's commemorative teaser movie shooting activity by Mothertongue was to symbolically extol the many unrecognised super-heroic or iconic women of African descent. In furtherance, Wiyaala was of the view that it was time African women themselves showed deliberate interest in identifying and commemorating distinguished women who have played a part in shaping the destinies of their societies or nations instead of allowing foreigners to present distorted facts or demeaning tags about African women. To Wiyaala, if African women themselves take deliberate interest in commemorating their heroines or female icons, it tends to inspire and instil the feeling of confidence in the upcoming African women to break unbreakable boundaries worthy of global celebration, likewise Princess Yennenga. For the instance of commemorating Prince Yennenga as a warriorress of northern Ghanaian origin and the founding mother of the Mossi kingdom in Burkina Faso, Wiyaala believed that the choice of materiality, accessories, and props that constituted her dramatic mimicry of Princess Yennenga's warriorress character was succinct.

5. Contributions of the Study to Scientific Knowledge

This sartorial commemorative study of Princess Yennenga adds to the existing body of scientific knowledge on the diverse contributions of distinguished African heroic and/or iconic figures whose emblematic deeds have contributed to shaping the destinies of African societies and nations. Also, the findings of the study highlight

the instrumentality of costume in heroic identity construction and, therefore, serve as vital reference material for similar future studies.

6. Conclusion

The sartorial commemoration of Princess Yennenga through Wiyaala's war costume mimicry in a teaser movie shot by Mothertongue in Tamale, Ghana, constitutes the focus of this study. Specifically, the study delved into the materiality, design makeup, and symbolism regarding Wiyaala's costume choice, its associated accessories, and props for the movie role that sought to reimagine Princess Yennenga in contemporary African (Ghanaian) heroines' awareness creation. Historical analysis of available primary and secondary data consistently revealed Princess Yennenga as a warriorress of northern Ghanaian origin and the emblematic founding mother of the Mossi Kingdom in Burkina Faso. In commemorating Princess Yennenga's heroic contributions in Burkina Faso, she has received nationalist symbolic recognitions such as; the erection of monuments (status) in Ouagadougou, the capital city, and other public spaces; roads named after her; and a prestigious African film award (the Golden Stallion of Yennenga) also named after her, among others. However, none of such nationalist symbolic recognition of Princess Yennenga could be found in Ghana, particularly Princess Yennenga's home (northern) region, where her warriorress fame was nurtured and chalked. Regrettably, the historicity of Princess Yennenga is on the verge of dying off in Ghana since it was established by the study that only a few elderly people in her home northern region of Ghana could attempt to retell Princess Yennenga's heroic achievements.

The study therefore found Mothertongue's attempt to reconstruct Princess Yennenga's imagery with a teaser movie to be a step in the right direction. After a cursory examination of the materiality, accessories, and props that constitute Wiyaala's dramatic mimicry of Princess Yennenga's war costume in the Princess Yennenga's teaser movie shooting activity, the study found that the costume was self-constructed by Wiyaala, drawing inspiration from the indigenous Ghanaian war costume repositories. The study concludes that the wild, dramatic character projected by Wiyaala through her self-constructed war costume and props ably reimaged Princess Yennenga's warriorress identity in contemporary Africa (Ghana). Therefore, Wiyaala's dramatic mimicry of Princess Yennenga's warriorress character through her self-constructed war costume regalia symbolically reimaged Princess Yennenga's warriorress identity and thereby contributes to commemorating Princess Yennenga's heroic legacies in the historical development of the Dagomba and Mossi Kingdoms of Ghana and Burkina Faso, respectively. It also demonstrates the natural power behind feminism and the potential it presents for females to be inspired by Princess Yennenga's heroic accomplishments and strive to break boundaries in life.

7. Recommendation

While Wiyaala is encouraged to continue with the deployment of her self-constructed indigenous Ghanaian costumes for her ensuing movie roles and other public engagements to preserve and promote the richly diverse African (Ghanaian) dress cultural identities, the study recommends similar sartorial commemorative studies to be conducted on other unsung heroic and iconic figures to highlight the instrumentality of costume art in heroic and iconic identity construction.

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ORCID

Nyamawero Navei  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4133-3712>

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