



Second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion criticisms through highlife music in post-independence Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the lyrical texts of four Ghanaian highlife music in the 1960s and 1970s to decipher their communicative role in giving exposure to post-independence Ghanaian fashion history. Four classical Ghanaian Highlife music of the 1960s and 1970s were purposively selected since they centre on a common subject matter – second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion artifice critiques. The selected songs were *Obroni Woewu*, released in 1962, by Ramblers International Band; *Ewuraba Artificial*, composed by Joe Eyison and recorded by Ramblers International Band in 1963; *Wobe tumi No*, by Kwadwo Donkoh, and recorded by Uhuru Dance Band in 1966; and *Rokpokpo* by Joe Mensah in 1977. The selected songs were analysed using textual analysis to unravel their social and historical contents and contexts to fashion practice during the post-independence (republican status change) of Ghana. The four classical Ghanaian Highlife music of the 1960s and 1970s drew attention to the growth of second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion practice at the time, which the colonialists portrayed as superior to indigenous Ghanaian dress fashion culture. The musicians raised the red flag for the colonialists' undermining of the indigenous Ghanaian dress and fashion culture for policy direction. The musical compositions of the highlife musicians served as Ghanaian dress cultural and beauty standards gatekeepers and ambassadors through their repulsion against colonialists' fashion ideological imposition. It is envisaged that further studies on governmental policy efforts to ban and or minimise second-hand clothing in Ghana from the post-independence period to the present would benefit the study of Ghana's fashion history.

Keywords: second-hand clothing, Ghanaian fashion, highlife music, beauty culture standards

Introduction

Highlife emerged in Anglophone West African countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, and Serra Leone, as African sub-regional music; however, the term *highlife* was coined in Ghana around the 1920s (Bender; 1991; Collins, 1994; Coplan, 1978) [7, 12, 16]. According to Collins (2018)^[15], highlife is Ghana's most influential and popular homegrown music. In this regard, the influence of highlife on Ghana's musical space cannot be overemphasised; hence, the diverse stylistic trends such as guitar and dance bands, palm wine, burger, and hiplife give credence to the assertion by Collins (2018) [15]. Globally, *highlife* is Ghana's musical image since it remains a unique genre of music that has "projected Ghana so well on the world's music map" (Coffie, 2012, p. 2)^[8]. Dr Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, used to travel with highlife guitar and dance bands as part of his business trip as a deliberate attempt to promote highlife music (Collins, 1994) [12]. It is quite interesting to note that veteran Ghanaian highlife musicians, such as Gyedu-Blay Ambolley, Pat Thomas, and modern highlife bands, such as Santrofi and Wazumbians keep touring globally with the highlife music promotion and entrepreneurship agenda. Furthermore, Ghanaian highlife bands such as Tempos, Stargazers, and Uhuru have significantly influenced African music greats, including Hugh Masekela (South Africa), Miata Fanbulleh (Liberia), Victor Owaifo and Fela Kuti (Nigeria), among others in the past (Collins, 2016) [14].

It is axiomatic that music is a powerful communication tool in many societies. Many African communities, especially Ghanaian societies, use music to communicate important information about their fundamental ideals, beliefs, philosophies and concerns – performers from various musical traditions usually employ songs to convey social attitudes around births, destiny, witchcraft, gender roles, and death (Adinkrah, 2008). Similarly, there is a diversity of highlife songs' themes that address issues from birth to death. As a result, some scholars have explored the use of proverbs, witchcraft, and political commentary in highlife songs (Adinkrah, 2008; Agyekum *et al.*, 2020; Obeng, 2015) [2, 3, 30] and their related expression of sentiments and topical issues. Over the years, highlife composers, through their songs, have contributed immensely to correcting societal ills and enhanced the overall social-cultural fibre of Ghana, apart from the socioeconomic and entertainment benefits. More so, highlife has also been used as a music of protest to criticise poor government policies over the years (Collins, 1994) [12].

Remarkably, highlife music studies continue to attract an ever-growing number of scholarly contributions in social history, musical and textual analysis, performance practices, sonic representation, and disciplinary interrogation (Acquah *et al.*, 2021; Coffie, 2019; 2020; Coffie *et al.*, 2020; Collins, 1994, 2005; 2016, 2018; Emielu, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013; Owusu-Poku, 2021, 2022; Gyebi-Tweneboah *et al.*, 2022) [1, 8, 9, 10 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 31, 32, 25]. In an attempt to add to

these scholarly baskets of knowledge, this interdisciplinary study centred on highlife music as a source of primary material in telling Ghanaian post-independence fashion history. This study extended the pioneering studies on highlife by examining how classical highlife composers used their music to criticise Ghana's reliance on second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion practice in the post-independence era. Specifically, the study examined the lyrical texts of four Ghanaian highlife music in the 1960s and 1970s to decipher their communicative role in telling post-independence Ghanaian fashion history.

Conceptual Framework and Related Literature

The study dives into criticisms against the nation's over-reliance on second-hand clothing and foreign fashion practice to the detriment of indigenous Ghanaian dress culture when the country was leading the African personality agenda spearheaded by Kwame Nkrumah, the then-president of the Republic. Nkrumah used Ghanaian dress cultural aesthetic order to redeem and reconstruct Africa's Ghana cultural dress identity and nationalism (Essel, 2014) ^[21]. Leading by example, he had paraded in the toga-like dress style of Ghana in 1957 at the Commonwealth Nations assembly in London, African Union meetings, and on several occasions on various national platforms; and used other indigenous Ghanaian fashion, *fugu* and shirts with trousers, during the declaration of independence in Accra with his fellow pan-Africanist compatriots (Essel, 2015) ^[22]. 'Serving as a beacon of dress cultural visual aesthetic order, his cabinet was often rooted in modernised indigenous dress styles' (Essel, 2014, p.52) ^[21]. Nkrumah's choice of Ghanaian dress styles accentuates the Ghana African personality ideology of patronising what is Ghanaian instead of the taste for colonialist-inspired fashion. This is because the colonialist viewed African dress styles as anti-fashion, relegating it to the background. The highlife musicians, having been inspired by the preachment of Nkrumah, the study hinged on the African personality ideology of Kwame Nkrumah that favours the patronage of Ghanaian and African fashion in counteracting the colonialists' hegemony. It is this ideology of dress cultural aesthetic order that conceptualises the study.

Again, highlife music gives a unique identity to the Ghanaian musical culture, therefore, the discourses on Ghanaian music and its related issues could be located within the framework of social identity theory, which Tajfel (1979) as well as Tajfel and Turner (1979) ^[34, 35] project. The scholars see social identity as 'the individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership' (p.28). In our case, we consider the social identity theory to dovetail into the utilization of the highlife music to unfold a historical event of the perception of the society regarding second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion criticisms. Understanding the emergence of social constructions and contextualization of used clothes, introduced into the Ghanaian clothing culture by the colonial masters, through highlife music, indeed, can be placed within social identity discourse. Tajfel (1979) ^[35] lays emphasis on the social identity theory to connect how the various groups within the society project their cultural heritage through time, as in the case of development of highlife music to deal with topical

issues in the Ghanaian society. Thus, adding to issues of multiculturalism, national identity and patriotism.

In discussing Ghanaian music and the communicational forms it generates, Yankah (1984) ^[39] indicates that highlife songs has wide range of themes including misery, those brought about by social mobility, marriage, treachery, poverty, hard luck, witchcraft, death and so on. This has come about as a result of multiplicity of highlife-performing ensembles that emerged during the post-colonial era, the most influential being dance bands and guitar bands. The expatiation of these subthemes in highlife texts brings into existence topical issues in the society. Asante-Darko and Van der Geest (1983) ^[4] also aver that "the popularity of highlife shows itself also in the fact that titles of successful songs are given to particular cloth designs (p.249). This is to say that the text of highlife music is so 'popular and it lends itself as a medium of communication. It is reported by Van der Geest and Asante-Darko (1982) ^[38] how the texts of highlife songs touched on politics in Ghana:

During Nkrumah's regime E. K. Nyame composed a highlife song saying: Before it is going to rain the wind will blow. I warned you but you did not listen. Nkrumah's opponents interpreted the song as a critique of his government and Nkrumah banned the song. Similar incidents took place under Acheampong and during other regimes. (p.32)

Our view is that the texts of the four selected highlife songs relate to the subject of second-hand clothing that functioned to reflect the colonialist ideological stance on fashion. The songs touch on the theme *Buroni Woewu*, a term used to refer to second-hand clothing or used clothing from the Western world by the Akan people of Ghana, which literally translates as 'The Whiteman is dead,' meaning used clothing of the dead White folks. Ghanaians also refer to second-hand clothing as *forold*, a Middle English (Wiktionary.org, 2019) ^[37] used to express obsolete things or ideas. Perhaps this expression has been corrupted as *foos* in reference to second-hand or used clothing. Apart from the expression *Buroni woewu*, other jargons used in reference to second-hand clothing in the song are *Kwame Attack*, *Bonshop*, and *Dee ehuoo*. Interestingly, these different coined expressions about used clothing intermittently employed created variety and relieved boredom in the composition. It is plausible that the discussion better reflects the ideas and expectations of the people and presents a true picture of the beliefs about the wearing of second-hand clothing as projected through highlife music in post-independence Ghana.

Methodology

The study was rooted in the historical case study research design. Nouri (2020) ^[29] quoting Krull and Widdersheim) describes historical case study as a research design that provides evidence to uncover patterns and processes of changes and development of specific cases, events or programmes. We, therefore, used historical case study to address an in-depth examination and analysis of highlife music, regarding second-hand clothing within the context of history. It sought to gain insights into post-colonial societal practice through a historical narrative by examining the lyrical texts to understand their historical communicative role. Four classical Ghanaian Highlife music of the 1960s and 1970s were purposively selected since they centred on a

common subject matter – second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion artifice criticisms. The selected songs were *Obroni Woewu*, released in 1962, by Ramblers International Band; *Ewuraba Artificial*, composed by Joe Eyison and recorded by Ramblers International Band in 1963; *Wobe tumi No*, by Kwadwo Donkoh, and recorded by Uhuru Dance Band in 1966; and *Rokpokpo* by Joe Mensah in 1977. The selected songs were subjected to textual analysis to understand, by describing and interpreting (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 1999) [24] their content and historical context to fashion practice during the post-republican status change of Ghana.

This is because the messages embedded in the songs, whether written or spoken, provided cues through which their communicative elements may be understood based on the culture that produced them. Textual analysis involves understanding language, symbols, or pictures in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences (Hawkins, 2017) [26]. The study focused on the messages in these creative musical works and how they contextualise the fashion practice of the 1960s and 1970s. The selected songs were composed in the Akan language (with occasional borrowing of some English words). They were transcribed into English using verbatim and the intended meaning of the musical expressions.

Results and discussion

Second-hand clothing business and jargons

Oburoni Woewu, a Ghanaian highlife music created by Jerry Hansen-led Ramblers Dance Band (which later became known as Ramblers International Band), was recorded and published in 1962 by DECCA Record Company Limited. The Akan (Twi) inspired lyrics paint a lively dialogue between second-hand clothing retailers and customers during sales. In Ghana, some second-hand clothing retailers carry bales of used clothing on their heads, of which some selected ones from the bale hang loosely in their hands as they trek around, from house to house, to make sales. The display in their hands invites customers. Others, too, display second-hand clothing in stores, shops in market centres, and other public spaces for sale.

The lyrical composition in the song titled *Oburoni Woewu* and its performance dramatise how itinerant second-clothing retailers trot communities, moving from house to house, ringing their bells to seek people’s attention to purchase. The composition uses call-and-response techniques to introduce the music amidst classical Ghanaian highlife instrumentation to attract listeners’ attention. Although the song is organised in stanzaic format, the textual and intriguing instrumental variation adds to the quality of the music.

The composition starts with the dramatised voice of a buyer who calls the retailer saying *Buroni Woewu ee*, expressing an invitational tone. It is worth noting that the singer’s voice mimics the bargaining conversation and commentaries that usually ensue between retailers and buyers during sales of used clothing. The music portrayed the customer commenting that ‘the shirt hidden over there looks tough,’ ‘this brassiere... it looks scary and needs alterations’, and ‘the tie [fly tie] hidden over there looks tough [good],’ amongst others. The entire lyrical composition hinges on second-hand clothing retail business interaction between the seller and the buyer on the surface value and one hand, the covert negative perception associated with it in the social and cultural context. There is some shyness in buying used clothing in the open market. People, generally, prefer purchasing new clothing, not used ones, but the economic difficulties leave them with little option in their shopping spree.

In one sense, the song creates a humorous dialogue and expressive engagements in the transaction process. It puts forward that one must often alter purchased second-hand clothing before using it because it may not be fitting. However, the people patronise them fundamentally due to the low economic conditions. Second-hand clothing provides low-cost clothing for people living in poverty and undermines the growth of local textile and garment industries; nonetheless, it creates employment in the receiving countries (transporting, cleaning, repairing, and restyling (Baden & Barber, 2005) in some developing countries, including Ghana.

Song 1: *Oburoni Woewu* by Ramblers Dance Band (1962)

Twi lyrics	English translation
<i>Buroni woewu ee, eeeeeiii!</i>	Buroni woewu’ eeeeeiii!
<i>Talking) Meeba oo!</i>	(Talking) I am coming!
<i>Shirt bi na esen hɔ no</i>	There is a shirt hanging over there
<i>W’eyi de nensa sua dodow</i>	As for this, the hands are too small
<i>Kwame Attack’ wura eee, eeeeeiii!</i>	Kwame Attack’ wura eee, eeeeeiii!
<i>Momma yen soe no na se yebekye bibi wɔ mu a</i>	Let’s uncarry him if we can get something from it
<i>Wo kae oo, shirt bi na εε hɔ no, eye tough!</i>	You said it; some shirt hidden, it is tough (good)
<i>Bodice yi dze, eye hu mapa nanso alteration wɔ mu oo</i>	As for this brassiere, it looks scary but it contains alterations
<i>Eye hu oo (8x)</i>	It is scary (8x)
<i>Bonshop wura ee, eeeeeiii!</i>	‘Bonshop’ owner, eeeeeiii!
<i>(Talking) Meeba oo!</i>	(Talking) I am coming!
<i>Ewuraba bi se εε bodies</i>	A lady says she buys brassiere
<i>Dee ehuoo wura ee, eeeeeiii</i>	Owner of a dress easily blown away
<i>Momma yen soe no na se yebekye bibi wɔ mu a</i>	Let’s uncarry him if we can get something from it

<i>Wo kae oo, tai bi na ete ho no, eye tough</i>	You said it, some fly tie hidden, it is tough (good
<i>Coat yi dze eye hu mapa nanso alteration hye mu oo</i>	As for this jacket, it looks scary and contains
<i>Eye hu oo (8x)</i>	alterations
<i>Buroni woewu ee, eeeeeiii!</i>	It is scary (8x)
<i>(Talking) Meeba oo!</i>	Buroni woewu' eeeeeiii!
<i>Coat bi na ete ho no</i>	(Talking) I am coming!
<i>W' eyi dze eso dodow</i>	There is a jacket hanging over there
<i>Kwame Attack' wura eee, eeeeeiii!</i>	As for this, it is too big
<i>Momma yen soee no na se yebekye bibi wo mu a</i>	Kwame Attack' wura eee, eeeeeiii!
<i>Wo kae oo, tai bi na ete ho no, eye tough</i>	Let's uncarry him if we can get something from it
<i>Pant yi dze eye hu mapa nanso alteration hye mu oo</i>	You said it, some fly tie hidden, it is tough (good
<i>Eye hu oo (8x)</i>	As for this pant, it looks scary, but alterations are in
	It is scary (8x)

Joe Mensah's highlife song titled *Rokpokpo* (Song 2), released in 1977, gives other coined jargon for second-hand clothing, in addition to using the expression *Dee ehuoo* (meaning what is blown away) in affirmation of Ramblers Dance Band (Song 1,) expression. Furthermore, he introduced the terms, *Rokpokpo*, *Pelele*, and *Bonshop* regarding second-hand clothing. No doubt, *Rokpokpo* became the title of his music. With these "jargonistic" expressions in his composition (Song 2), he shows his outright distaste for wearing second-hand clothing, which does not come with pride. He views it as a marker of class at the expense of indigenous Ghanaian dress cultural practice. He lyrically emphasised:

*If you want to be my friend, then wear a good dress.
Wear a good dress, for a dress easily blown away,
I don't like it.
A dress easily blown away, we don't like."*

Interestingly, the colonialist fashion introduced in Ghana was viewed by those trained in the Western school system as a mark of the upper class and enlightenment. Therefore, they wore that to show that they were educated. This is

because the 'advent of colonialism and its attendant Western formal school education brought its dress cultural practices. Consequently, "the Ghanaian elite who received Western education showed their elitism nomenclature through Eurocentric dress aesthetic order" (Essel, 2019, p.36) [23].

Born in Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana, Joe Mensah, the composer, experienced the school lifestyle as a student at the then Takoradi Polytechnic, where he performed in the Broadway Band with his peers and later became the lead vocalist (Collins, 2018). He experienced school life in Takoradi in addition to performing with the late Chief Billy Friday's Ambassador Beats Band in Nigeria, coupled with his association with Broadway Band, which became Uhuru Band (Collins, 2018). Joe Mensah left the shores of Ghana for the USA in the 1960s, where he gained admission to the Julliard School of Music in New York. Joe Mensah carefully selected the jargon about second-hand clothing for the youth to relate to. No doubt, this release became a hit. He became the President of the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) in 1992 (Collins, 2018)

Song 2: Rokpokpo by Joe Mensah in 1977

Fanti Lyrics	English Translation
<i>Se nyem' beye dze a, nye a hye atar pa</i>	If you want to do with me, then wear a good dress
<i>Hye atar paa oo! na dee ehuoo dze mempe oo</i>	Wear a good dress!, for a dress easily blown away, I dislike
<i>Dee ehuoo oo', nye a dee ehuoo na yempe</i>	Adress easily blown away, is the one we don't like
<i>Rokpokpo oo', nye a rokpokpo na yempe</i>	Inferior dress, we don't like
<i>Pelele oo', eye a, pelele na yempe</i>	Pelele oo,' we don't like
<i>Bonshop oo', nye a bonshop na yempe</i>	Bonshop', we don't like
<i>Se nyem' bokɔ dze a, nye a hye atar pa oo</i>	If you want to go with me, then wear a good dress
<i>Hye atar pa oo, na dee ehuoo dze mempe oo!</i>	Wear a good dress, for a dress easily blown away, I don't like
<i>Dee ehuoo oo, nye a dee ehuoo na yempe</i>	A dress easily blown away is the one we don't like
<i>Rokpokpo oo', nye a rokpokpo na yempe</i>	<i>Rokpokpo</i> , it is <i>Rokpokpo</i> that we don't like
<i>Pelele oo', eye a, pelele na yempe</i>	Pelele,' it is <i>Pelele</i> that we don't like
<i>Bonshop oo', nye a bonshop na yempe</i>	Bonshop', it is <i>Bonshop</i> that we don't like

Colonialists’ fashion artifice and artificial beauty

Before Joe Mensah’s release of *Rokpokpo* in 1977, Joe Eyison, a prolific highlife composer in the 1960s and 1970s, born in Moree in the Central Region in 1933 and educated in Cape Coast and Takoradi (Collins, 2018), had released a compelling and daring composition titled *Ewuraba Artificial* (meaning ‘artificial lady’). In that composition (Song 3), he takes an allusive swipe at ladies at the time who wore second-hand clothing, padded their buttocks with heaps of fabric and stuffed their chests with cotton wool to appear attractive as artificial beauty and visual scam. To Joe Eyison, they do this amidst facial makeovers to lure men. Ladies who paraded in the said artificial artifice, according to Joe Eyison, boast and look down on indigenous Ghanaian feminine beauty culture standards and rather see their ‘borrowed colonialists’ beauty’ as a touchstone for emulation. Also, using chemical hair relaxers to straighten natural African hair has become a craze (Harmon, 2018; Morrow, 2014; Pierre, 2013; Tiffany, 2013) [27, 28, 33, 36]. It was the Ghanaian indigenous beauty culture standards attack through colonialists’ fashion ideological imposition and structures (including the school education and missionaries) that Joe Eyison addressed in his strong-worded musical composition. He warned, “You can’t snatch somebody’s husband with your artificial looks... What! Your hair that I see is all artificial... Your attractive breast that I admired is full of cotton wool.”

Nonetheless, his composition in the Ghanaian cultural and social contexts is not an attack on feminism or personality attack but rather plays the role of Ghanaian dress culture and beauty standards advocacy for preservation purposes. Newspapers and television adverts advertised chemical hair straightening products and skin bleaching creams which featured various images of very light-skinned African Americans (particularly women) as a perfect standard of

beauty (Pierre, 2013) [33]. In addition, the colonialist banned indigenous Ghanaian fashion at public events, including churches, nightclubs, and dances (dance band shows). One of Ghana’s newspaper columnists wrote on February 20, 1955 (Bankole, 1955):

THE BRAINS Trust team at the British Council last Thursday deprived me of a topic which I had proposed to discuss in today’s column in detail. It is this business of imposing a ban on our women who attend night clubs or dances dressed in Gold Coast [Ghana] national costume [fashion].

THESE WOMEN are frowned upon and what is worse, they are told that the management will not allow them to dance because they are dressed in cloth. The proprietor of an Accra nightclub tells me that the object of such imposition is... [to] prevent prostitutes dancing. At the same, an inveterate and unrepentant prostitute who is dressed in European dress is free to dance...

It is a sad commentary on our understanding of nationalism and national identity that such a ban should be imposed at all; it is exasperating to think that some of our best women in every sense – education, morality, etc. – should suffer such indignity because they appear publicly in their national costume [fashion]. (p.3)

Bankole (1955) gives a fair idea of the colonialists’ attempt at promoting their dress culture and despising Ghanaian indigenous dress practices that border on their African personality and identity. The colonialist cultural imposition triggered the criticisms of the highlife music composers. Joe Eyison, one of the founding members of the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) (Collins, 2018), threaded the Pan-African pathway cautiously by preaching against Ghanaian cultural adulteration with his music in response to the colonialists’ dress hegemony.

Song 3. *Ewuraba Artificial* by Joe Eyison, recorded by Ramblers Band in 1963.

Fanti Lyrics	English Translation
<i>Ewuraba artificial eei!, gyaɛ ma nyimpa ndwen oo</i>	Artificial lady! Give us a break!
<i>Ewuraba artificial eei!, nde yehu w’akyir ooh!</i>	Artificial lady! Today we have seen your scam
<i>Saana wo dede pii yi a, eye kyere hen bebrebe yi, People shop adahoroma, na w’edzi, egyina mu ooh!</i>	So, after all your unceasing boastfulness, It’s People’s shops that are interceding for your looks!
<i>W’akyir yi a, saana enye hwee, etam a!</i>	So, this your big buttocks, it is nothing but stuffed fabrics.
<i>Akoko yi a, me hu a na mee wu ooh! asaaba nko</i>	Your attractive breast that I admired is full of cotton wool
<i>Ewuraba artificial eei! eye a dwen w’ara woho oo!</i>	Artificial lady! Think about yourself ooh
<i>Na w’artificial yi a, emfa ngye obi ne nsamu kun</i>	You can’t snatch somebody’s husband with your artificial looks
<i>Ebeei! wo tsir hwi yi a, saa na ne nyinaa ‘arti’ nko</i>	What! Your hair that I see is all artificial
<i>W’anan yi a, ede esuma pii saa na Ananta</i>	Your legs, you are hiding from me, they were crooked
<i>Ewuraba artificial eei! eye a dwen w’ara woho oo!</i>	Artificial lady! Think about yourself ooh

<i>Na w'artificial yi a, emfa ngye obi ne nsamu kun</i>	You can't snatch somebody's husband with your artificial looks
<i>Ewuraba artificial eei!, gyaе ma nyimpa ndwen oo</i>	Artificial lady! Give us a break!
<i>Ewuraba artificial eei!, ene yehu w'akyir ooh!</i>	Artificial lady! Today we have seen your scam
<i>Saana wo dede pii yi a, eye kyere hen bebrebe yi</i>	So after all your unceasing boastfulness.
<i>People shop adaworm a, na w'atum, egyina mu ooh!</i>	It's People's Shop that is interceding for your looks!
<i>W'anyim yi, saa naa enye hwee 'atrap'</i>	Not knowing your face is full of makeover
<i>Akoko yi a, me hu a na mee wu ooh! Odonti sɔɔnyɔ!</i>	Your attractive breast that I admired is full of cotton wool

Song 4. *Wobe tumi no* by Kwadwo Donkoh, recorded by Uhuru Dance Band in 1966.

Twɛ Lyrics	English Translation
<i>Wobe tumi no? 2x</i>	Can you withstand her? 2x
<i>Sister Efia mafa no hye</i>	Sister Efia, I admire her
<i>Atar wa ba yi, ɔno deɛ ɔnti ye oo!</i>	She has not heard of the new dress in town
<i>Nanso wohu noa, wobe trust</i>	But if you see her, you'll trust
<i>Wig a w'aba yi, ɔno deɛ ɔnte ye oo!</i>	She has not heard of the wigs in town
<i>Nanso wohu noa, wobe trust</i>	But if you see her, you'll trust
<i>Obu adeɛ so kaho, afei nanni ebue</i>	She also respects and is very enlightened
<i>Sister Efia, me trust no papa</i>	Sister Efia, I trust her very well

In adding his musical voice to the debate of Ghanaian beauty standards and identity preservation, Kwadwo Donkoh's *Wobe tumi no* ('Can you withstand her') was released by Uhuru Dance Band in 1966 (Song 4). With that succinct composition, Donkoh eulogised Ghanaian feminine unadulterated beauty. He showed unparalleled admiration for a lady who did not resort to Eurocentric dress styles and wigs yet looked spectacular. Besides, such a lady is respectful, very enlightened, and trustworthy.

Kwadwo Donkoh, christened Opoku Agyeman Kwadwo Whittle Donkoh, was born to Charles and Agnes Donkoh on November 12, 1934, at Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana (Coffie *et al.*, 2020). He had his elementary education in Wenchi and proceeded to Mfantshipim School in Cape Coast for his High School certificates from 1950–1955. He then proceeded to the University of Ghana, Legon, in 1956 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in History in 1959. During his days at Legon, he was made the entertainment secretary of Third Hall, where he used to invite the Black Beats Band to the hall's entertainment shows due to his rapport with Jerry Hansen, a big band highlife great, for whom he later composed a song for his band, Ramblers Dance Band (Coffie, 2020).

Conclusions

The study examined four Ghanaian classical highlife songs: *Obroni Woewu* (released in 1962) by Ramblers International Band, *Ewuraba Artificial* by Joe Eyison and recorded by the Ramblers International Band in 1963, *Wobe tumi No* by Kwadwo Donkoh (recorded by Uhuru Dance Band) in 1966,

and *Rokpokpo* by Joe Mensah in 1977. It focused on examining the lyrical texts of these highlife songs within the 1960s and 1970s to decipher their role in contributing to unraveling post-independence Ghanaian fashion history through the realms of music.

The four classical Ghanaian Highlife songs of the 1960s and 1970s drew attention to the growth of second-hand clothing and colonialist-inspired fashion practice at the time, which were portrayed by the colonialists as superior to indigenous Ghanaian dress fashion culture. The local names and expressions used about second-hand clothing (*Buroni woewu, Kwame Attack, Bonshop, Dee ehuo, Rokpokpo, Pelele*) by the highlife musicians were negative and sarcastic in the social and cultural context, implying a positive thought about their indigenous Ghanaian fashion despite colonialists' dress culture imposition at the time. People used second-hand clothing mainly because of low economic conditions. The musicians raised the red flag for the colonialists' undermining of the indigenous Ghanaian dress and fashion culture for policy direction. Further studies on governmental policy efforts to ban and/or minimise second-hand clothing in Ghana from the post-independence period to the present would benefit the study of Ghana's fashion history.

The musical compositions of the highlife musicians served as Ghanaian dress cultural and beauty standards gatekeepers and ambassadors through their repulsion against colonialists' fashion ideological imposition. Therefore, their lyrical choice in the Ghanaian social and cultural contexts is not considered an attack on feminism; instead, it played the

role of Ghanaian dress culture and beauty standards advocates and social commentators. This role of music must not be downplayed but encouraged through the recognition of their roles in society by the creative arts and culture industry. Instituting an annual award scheme in recognition of the socio-cultural role of music in the development of Ghana would be helpful in that regard.

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