



## **AN EXPLORATION OF THE CULTURAL SYMBOLISM OF SOME INDIGENOUS COSMETIC HAIR VARIANTS IN THE DORMAA TRADITIONAL AREA, GHANA**

**Quampah, B.**

*Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Business and Management Studies, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana.*  
*bernice.quampah@stu.ucc.edu.gh*

### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The usefulness of traditional cosmetic variants in enhancing good hair grooming and cultural development cannot be underestimated. This paper focused on the cultural symbolism of indigenous cosmetic hair variations among the people of the Dormaa Traditional Area in the Bono region of Ghana.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This paper used interpretivism, necessitating a limited sample size and inductive reasoning. It used purposive sampling techniques to select seventeen (17) respondents. In-depth interviews and observations were used to gather data. Interpretive analysis was employed for the study.

**Findings:** Some indigenous hair cosmetic variants include shea butter, charcoal, soot, aloe vera and coconut oil. They have undergone very little or no processing to extract the cosmetic product out of it. They signify physical, emotional and spiritual healing, protection and renewal. It unlocks spiritual gateways which have been locked for a very long time. It enhances reproductive health. It also promotes tourism. Modern factors swaying people from using Indigenous products in their original state include globalisation, conformation to current trends and convenience.

**Research Limitation:** This research unbraids the sacred by exploring the cultural symbolism of some indigenous cosmetic hair variants at the Dormaa Traditional Area in Ghana.

**Practical implications:** This research can provide inferences about the sacredness of indigenous cosmetics in Ghana and West Africa.

**Social Implication:** This study will assist traditional rulers and stakeholders in educating the public on the cultural benefits of indigenous cosmetics for present and future generations.

**Originality/ Value:** This study is based on reverence for and projecting cultural values to perpetuate African heritage.

**Keywords:** *African, cosmetic.indigenous. unbraiding. variants*



## INTRODUCTION

The usage and cultural significance of indigenous cosmetics have gained continental attention in the scholarship of African phenomena. For instance, according to McMullen (2023), the Himba people of Namibia are accustomed to using indigenous cosmetic products like wood ash for hair cleansing due to water scarcity. An *erembe* braid is often cleansed with wood ash. Casella (2021) posits that it wards off evil spirits and provides sacred cleansing and healing. Wood ash is obtained from burnt firewood. Plate 1 depicts wood ash surrounded by stones.



*Plate 1: Wood ash surrounded by stones*  
Source: <https://www.share/p/18MaNeGmZJ>

The Himba people are also noted for the *erembe* braid, a unique cultural practice that differentiates them from other tribes in Namibia. Certain Indigenous cosmetic products play key roles in achieving the *erembe* braid. They include goat skin and otijize. Otijize is a mixture of goat fat and ochre (clay). Spiritually, clay in this context symbolises renewal or a process of starting afresh after a failed attempt, while fat stands for abundance (Mauran et al., 2020).

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



The Pokot in Kenya adopt cosmetic variants called animal fat and ochre to smear their braids during their puberty rite. It symbolises moral purity (Sherrow, 2023). Plate 2 depicts a teenage girl in reddish-ochred braids. It provides easy identification to teenagers. The reddish appearance of the hairdo is a result of the clay pigment. The clay is also referred to as ochre. It is obtained from unique places in Kenya. It is believed to contain ferric oxide. The colour ranges from light yellow, orange, and red to brown. The clay is usually mixed with water before it is applied to the hair (Sherrow, 2023).



*Plate 2 : A Pokot puberty initiate in an ochered braided hairstyle, Kenya*

*Source - <https://www.holdenluntz.com/artists/carol-beckwithangelafisher/page/2/>*





Plate 3 depicts a reddish ochre in its natural state. It has not undergone any processing. It is made up of a large amount of fine particles, and when it is wet, it becomes sticky. Aside from its cosmetic use, it culturally symbolises the fruitfulness of the womb and life. In the hunting domain, ochre use signifies success in the hunting venture, with the reddish pigment representing a spill of blood after the hunting has been undertaken. It also symbolises fertility and life in most cultures (Dapschauskas et al., 2022).



*Plate 3: A reddish Ochre (Clay)*

*Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/skgGJ7KzkuAgx8EN8>*

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



In central Africa, Mumuhuila tribe women of Angola usually wear *nontombi* locks with cow dung as the leading cosmetic indigenous material. This is combined with herbs, trunks and oil (Schefer, 2020), which constitute a small minority of cosmetic products. Cow dung symbolises abundance and success. Three (3) dreadlocks signify a recent death in the wearer's immediate family (Sherrow, 2023). Plate 4 depicts a photo of a *nontombi* dreadlock. All these products are raw with very little or no processing. They also possess varied socio-cultural significance.



*Plate 4: Nontombi dreadlocks worn by a Mumuhuilan woman from Angola*  
Source - <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/485896247292698543/>

Irrespective of the rich cultural heritage of the continent, African traditional practices in general and the study of these practices have been viewed as indicating poverty, paganism, and inward-



looking as a course of study in schools (Masolo, 2017) and so, the practitioners and scholars of African culture were sometimes looked down upon.

To address these problems, efforts were made at the indigenous cultural institution and the formal academic levels to inculcate the African culture in individuals. According to Yirenkyi (2019), at the Indigenous cultural institution level, occasions such as an institution of chieftaincy, puberty rites, festivals, and funerals were viewed as an avenue for the colourful display of native cultural activities of which Indigenous hairstyles were not excluded. It allows cultural values to be learned and instilled in individuals. Formally, at the tertiary level, African Studies (*Afrostats*) is a compulsory course for all first-year students in most African universities. Students also get to specialise in African Studies as a major programme from the undergraduate level (first degree) to the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) level. Hence, special departments have been designated solely for teaching African studies, during which multidisciplinary courses like Culture, History and Languages are taught. African studies has been a multi-disciplinary approach to promote and project Africa's rich cultural and historical values. It attempts to correct the misconceptions of Africans and non-Africans about African identity, traditions, and customs. Unfortunately, little success has been chalked due to using the Western educational paradigm to undertake African studies and project some cultural practices (Luke & James, 2015).

Furthermore, efforts have been made at global, continental, and national stages to restore world-endangered cultural and geographical heritages (Yao, 2021). World bodies and movements like the Natural Hair Movement, Aesthetic Movements (Lyon, 2020), United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), International Association of Arts (IAA), Artist International Association, Global Cultural District Network (GCDN), and World Cultural Council (WCC) were formed to tackle cultural issues (Spaskovska, 2020). These conventions set out the duties of States Parties in identifying potential sites and cultural ceremonies and their roles in protecting and preserving them (Ellioth & Schmutz, 2012). By signing the convention, each country pledges to conserve its territory's World Heritage sites and traditions and safeguard its national and local heritage (Ichumbaki & Mapunda, 2017).

At the continental level, mention can be made of the African Artist Association and the Arts Council of the African Studies Association. African Art Gallery Association, Heritage and Cultural



Society of Africa and African Cultural Association. These associations preserve, promote and celebrate African heritage and culture to elevate, unify and create opportunities for socio-economic progress at the continental level. Two main ministries have been established nationally to foster cultural-related issues (Rhisiart, 2013). These are the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture. Other nationally recognised institutions include the National Commission on Culture and the Foundation for Contemporary Art (Asare, 2020).

These global, continental and national efforts to promote cultural and art-related heritage have yielded positive results. However, there seems to be much work to be done; countries are still saddled with particular cultural challenges which retard the growth of the Culture and Art sector. Academics have also directed efforts through vigorous research to restore societies' cultural identity. These efforts have been predominant in religion, language, fashion, music, chieftaincy, festivities, and rites of passage (Sibani, 2018; Awoniyi, 2015). In light of this research-driven effort, the current researcher embarked upon this study to analyse the concept of Indigenous hairstyles and their relationship with local art to augment earlier researchers' efforts in preserving and protecting the African identity concerning hairstyles.

## **THEORY UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

### **Cultural Relativism Theory**

The main theory supporting this study is the cultural relativism theory. It highlights the central tenets of this study.

In the 20th century, Franz Boas established cultural relativism as a cornerstone of anthropological research, and those he taught helped make it famous. Although Boas first put forth this idea in 1887, the term became well-known among anthropologists following his passing in 1942. Cultural relativism's guiding premise is that one should interpret the beliefs and behaviours of others in the context of their own culture. Furthermore, cultural relativists contend that norms and values within one culture should not be evaluated compared to those inside another (Melville, 1953).

Being able to appreciate a culture on its terms instead of passing judgment according to one's cultural benchmark is known as cultural relativism (Franz, 1911). The goal is to raise people's awareness of cultural customs that are uncommon in their own culture. From the perspective of



cultural relativism, no culture is better than another in terms of customs, laws, politics, values, art, and beauty. That is to say, cultural relativism seeks to foster an appreciation for cultural practices and symbolism that are alien to other cultures, such as the wearing of particular cosmetics, hairstyles, and dances. This is because indigenous culture usually provides identity and values to the group of people who originated it and who often practice it (Serpe & Stryker, 2011; Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Stryker, 1980; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; McCall & Simmons, 1978).

It may be argued that, as a result of cultural relativism, Western culture is not better compared to indigenous culture and that cosmetics, music, fashion, technology, and values constitute products of culture. This implies that just because we Africans think Western culture is superior, we should not despise our own. Africans, especially the people of Dormaa, should emphasise their cultural heritage when discussing matters related to their traditional hairstyles. Instead of viewing Western hairstyles as superior to our native hairstyles, we should view our native cosmetic hair products as traditional values embodying Ghanaian culture and work toward their promotion.

According to cultural relativism, no culture is better than any other regarding customs, laws, politics, values, art, or beauty (Erickson & Liam, 2008). Consequently, cultural relativism aims to foster an appreciation of cultural customs and symbolism alien to other cultures, such as using particular ethnic meals, hair care products, dances, and hairdos.

This theory is adopted because the principles of cultural relativism will serve as a foundation for fostering a deeper understanding of indigenous cosmetics. It will also help appreciate the cultural symbolism of hair care products that can be obtained from the immediate environment. This will reduce the usage of foreign products, some of which are detrimental to human health.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section explains the study area, research design, and philosophical underpinnings employed in the study. It also justifies the sampling procedure, data collection instruments, and analysis. The study area was the Dormaa Traditional Area. I chose the Dormaa Traditional Area because most





of the queens in the area adopt indigenous hairstyles, which culturally require the use of indigenous cosmetic hair variants for grooming. This is mainly done during festivals and funerals.

The research design was ethnography. After carefully weighing the study's variables, ethnography was chosen as the research design for this investigation. According to Hammersley (2018), ethnography is the study of cultures and the populations that inhabit them in their natural habitats. Naturalism, context, empathy, numerous data sources, small case numbers, emic and etic views, and ethical concerns are among the fundamentals of ethnographic design (Müller, 2021; Awasthy, 2019). The study's questions and objectives guided the selection of the ethnographic research design.

This paper used an interpretivism method, necessitating a limited sample size and inductive reasoning. Seventeen (17) respondents were sampled. Data from one (1) cosmetologist, six (6) queens, six (6) hairstylists, and four (4) natural hair wearers were gathered to identify the prevalent indigenous cosmetic variations in the Bono region. A purposive sampling technique was used to select study participants from the Dormaa Traditional Area of the Bono region. This suggests participants were selected based on their traits and familiarity with cosmetic hair variations. The sampling approach used in this study is in line with Eitu et al. (2023) explanation of purposive sampling as a way of judgment whereby researchers select specific significant informants from a community.

The instruments used for data collection were in-depth interviews and observation. The semi-structured item style of the in-depth interview guides was used for all seventeen (17) respondents. The study's goals, scope, and nature all influenced the semi-structured interview's selection. The semi-structured interview approach was employed because it promoted effective two-way communication and enabled the interviewer to go deeper to comprehend responses to all questions and the rationale behind them (De Paoli, 2024). Additionally, it gave respondents more time to discuss delicate topics. In addition, it allowed me to forecast future events and compare current data to historical data. Additionally, a non-participant observation technique was used.

The data was analysed using thematic analysis. A six-step thematic analysis procedure involving Observation or interviewing, transcription or familiarisation, code creation, theme development, recoding or retheming, and discussion was used (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Subsequently, Microsoft Word was used to turn the recorded data into text to transcribe the interviews. The actual names of the respondents were not utilised in the code creation process to maintain anonymity. They were



coded with numbers for identification and in-text citation purposes in the analysis. Threaded hair wearer 1, Threaded hair wearer 2, Threaded hair wearer 3, Threaded hair wearer 4 were the codes assigned to each of the eight interviewed persons. Interviews with six queens were conducted, and codes such as Queen 1, Queen 2, Queen 3, Queen 4, Queen 5 and Queen 6 were given to the respondents. Likewise, Hairstylist 1, Hairstylist 2, Hairstylist 3, Hairstylist 4, Hairstylist 5, and Hairstylist 6 were the identities provided for the hairstylists of this current study. A cosmetologist was part of the study. Second, alphabets were also used to code photos of native hairstyles and record responses. Subthemes were later created by combining related responses. Major themes emerged from the subthemes. The authoring of the report came next. Direct quotes from respondents occasionally supported the report.

## FINDINGS

### Types of Indigenous Cosmetic Variants

The findings revealed five (5) types of indigenous or organic cosmetic hair variants among the people of Dormaa Traditional Area. They include *nkuto* (shea butter) *bidie* (charcoal), *pupunuwisie* (soot), *asabo* (aloe vera) and *kube anwa* (coconut oil).

#### *Nkuto (Translated as shea butter)*

The Shea tree is the source of shea butter fat. Its use ranges from cooking to skin and hair grooming. The shea butter's oil is obtained from the nut. It goes through a systematic process for the oil to be finally obtained. According to Didia and Iddrisu (2018), an indigenous native method of shea butter extraction involves cracking, drying, roasting and kneading to separate the oil. Plate 5 depicts a picture of shea butter obtained during the fieldwork. A simple traditional method used in extracting the shea butter fat was provided by a respondent as follows:

*Before the advent of advanced technology, the people of Dormaa had their way of extracting shea butter oil on a small scale. First, the shea nut is obtained by cracking the shell. The seed from the nut is dried, roasted, ground, mixed with water, and kneaded,*



*which releases the oil. It is then boiled and cooled (Queen 3, 2023).*

Another respondent added that:

*The shea fruit is harvested from the shea tree. It is washed and cooked. It is later cracked to extract the seed. Dry and roast the seeds over the fire to release the oils and fats. Grind the roasted seeds into powder and mix them with water to paste. Stir, whisk, or knead until the fat separates and floats on the paste. Then boil the paste (which consists of fat and paste). Fetch the oil that settles on top into a cooking pot. Allow it to cool and solidify to obtain the yellowish-white substance. No chemicals are usually added. Shea butter is used for many purposes, such as hair grooming (Hairstylist 5, 2023).*

Examining the two quotes reveals the indigenous steps required to extract shea butter. It is purely organic and devoid of chemicals.



*Plate 5: Shea butter*  
*Source: Author, (2023)*

*Bidie (translated as charcoal)*

Charcoal is obtained from burnt firewood. In-depth interviews with the queens revealed that it serves as an essential indigenous cosmetic element to the people of Dormaa Traditional Area, particularly among indigenous leaders like the queens of Dormaa. In corroboration, Asenso (2019) postulates that charcoal constitutes one of the critical products of the indigenous dye, used mainly by traditional rulers, particularly the female royals, to groom their hair Akans. Plate 6 depicts a sample of charcoal. Traditionally, it is either grounded or pounded into powdered form before it is applied to the hair. Below is a respondent's comment:





*Charcoal is an essential cosmetic product that is used to apply to hair. Charcoal powder is used to darken the hair. It is either mixed with water or oil. Other forms of charcoal exist, but the one obtained from wood subjected to heat is the best option (Queen 1, 2023).*

Another respondent commented that:

*With the aid of a mortar and pestle or a grinding stone, charcoal powder can be obtained and used for so many purposes, including the grooming of the hair (Hairstylist 2, 2023)*

Examining the quotes above shows that charcoal rock is transformed into powder before grooming hair. Most people, including the traditional rulers, use it.



*Plate 6: Charcoal*  
*Source: Author, (2023).*



*Pupunuwisie (translated as soot)*

Soot is obtained from the gathered smoke of a hearth of a traditional kitchen or the ceiling. It is black in colour. It appears very smooth. It reveals the aesthetic appearance of the hairstyles. Plate 7 depicts a soot.



*Plate 7: Soot*  
*Source: Author, (2023).*

*Asabɔ (translated as aloe vera)*

According to a detailed interview with this study's cosmetologist, aloe vera is a herb with succulent leaves grouped in a rosette with high medicinal value. She further stressed that aloe vera originates from the colourless gels in many commercial and pharmaceutical items. This finding resonates with Rutherford et al. (2018), who iterated that the plant contains juicy leaves with thick jel. Plate 8 reveals several greenish succulent leaves with sporadic white dots on their surfaces. They have sharp spines along their edges.



A respondent had this to say:

*I have been operating my salon for quite some time now. I have an aloe vera plant in my backyard. I only pluck and use it. When used in its raw state, aloe vera provides most of the essential vitamins the scalp requires. Though some refined forms of aloe vera exist on the market, some of my customers prefer the raw ones (Hairstylist 3, 2023).*

Another respondent added:

*Aloe vera is very cheap and can be obtained within the immediate environment. I mostly use it for my hair. I like its okro-like texture (Natural Hair Wearer 1, 2023).*

A third respondent had this to add:

*Considering the country's high unemployment rate, people can volunteer to venture into mass cultivation of aloe vera. Its medicinal value is enormous and does not require much capital to start (Hairstylist 1, 2023).*

To conclude, aloe vera is a cosmetic product used by the people of Dormaa Traditional Area. It is often used in its unprocessed state. A respondent recommended producing aloe vera in large quantities to alleviate unemployment issues in Ghana.



*Plate 8: Aloe vera*  
*Source: Author, (2023)*

*Kube anwa (translated as coconut oil)*

Coconut oil, as shown in Plate 9, appears yellowish-white. It portrays a gallon of coconut oil on the left side. On the right side of Plate 9 are some photos of coconut fruits from which coconut oil is obtained. Coconut fruit, copra (the white flesh of a coconut fruit's matured dried hard portion), is obtained from the coconut plant. The findings revealed that coconut oil is traditionally extracted by boiling coconut milk to evaporate the water, leaving the oil behind.





*Plate 9: Coconut oil and coconut fruit*  
*Source: Author, (2023)*

## **Symbolism of Indigenous Cosmetic Hair Variants**

### *Cultural symbolism of shea butter*

The data obtained from the queens showed that shea butter is helpful in several ways. It signifies physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, protection, and renewal. It unlocks spiritual gateways that have been locked for a very long time. It enhances reproductive health. Alain, Christian,

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



Emmanuel, Avlessi, Dahouenon-Ahoussi, and Sohounhloue (2022) stated that shea butter provides spiritual and physical benefits.

*Since ancient times, our ancestors have used shea butter due to its symbolism. I must admit that its benefits are enormous. It is mostly a cultural requirement, especially for traditional female rulers. Aside from the physical benefits, it also possesses spiritual benefits (Queen 4, 2023).*

Another respondent commented that:

*Shea butter can be used alone or melted and mixed in the right proportion with other products like charcoal and soot, especially by the queen mothers. It is then used to dye Dansinkran haircuts, which are common during festivals and funerals (Queen 1, 2023).*

#### *Cultural symbolism of soot*

According to Hairstylist 1 and Hairstylist 3, soot (obtained from burned wood smoke that collects on traditional kitchen ceilings) has the spiritual potency to drive evil forces away. Aside from the spiritual symbolism, it possesses physical health properties, such as removing dandruff. A respondent commented on the spiritual symbolism of soot.

*Soot obtained from burnt wood, which gathers at the ceilings of traditional kitchens, helps end unfortunate experiences like bad dreams. The soot grants people peace*



*of mind without external spiritual distractors* (Queen 6, 2023).

### *Cultural symbolism of charcoal*

Spiritually, charcoal has the potency of cleansing and reconciliation. The charcoal component of the Indigenous dye used to dye dansinkran helps in the spiritual purification process before one can sit in the palanquin, which is considered sacred. Mavromati (2022) explained that charcoal possesses sacred cleansing properties.

A respondent commented on the cultural symbolism of charcoal.

*Any iniquity that prevents one from connecting to the divine is washed away with the presence of charcoal on the head* (Queen 3, 2023).

Another respondent said:

*It cleanses bitterness, grudges, and hatred, allowing people to renew their lost interpersonal relationships* (Queen 5, 2023).

A third respondent added that:

*Purity enhances concentration on any assigned task, whether spiritual or physical. Traditionally, charcoal illuminates this function* (Hairstylist 3, 2023).

A fourth respondent commented:

*Physically, the charcoal allows the brain to function very well. Since it can detoxify the scalp* (Cosmotologist, 2023).



### *Cultural symbolism of aloe vera*

The findings show that aloe vera helps with hair growth and prevents breakages. Spiritually, it symbolises good fortune, which could be wealth, excellence, or great opportunities. The fortune usually manifests physically. Further in-depth interviews revealed that it gently cleanses the scalp and conditions the hair, reducing the chances of hair breakages. It slows down the process of hair loss and aids faster hair growth.

### *Cultural symbolism of coconut oil*

Data revealed that coconut oil enhances prosperity and reverses the evil eye. It also opens the spiritual eye, enhances divination efficiency, and symbolises strength and vitality. Devi and Ghatani's (2022) assertion that coconut oils play essential roles in rituals and food preparations supports this finding.

To conclude, irrespective of the significance of the cosmetic hair variants, their patronage is not as great as it used to be. The respondents thought that the continual use of these indigenous products should be encouraged as they possess little or no chemical constituents that can be detrimental to humans' health.

### **Modern factors militating against the use of Indigenous cosmetics**

This section discusses reasons for the low patronage of indigenous cosmetic hair products. The outcome of this current study shows that some indigenous cosmetics are no longer used in their raw states as much as it used to be during ancient times. The findings revealed some factors responsible for using refined, processed and more sophisticated indigenous cosmetic hair products. The reasons are explained under four thematic areas. These include education, globalisation, urbanisation and the popularity of foreign cosmetic products.

Education and social media expose People to new concepts and practices from many societies. Schooling makes it possible to meet new people from various cultural backgrounds. In-depth interviews show that people from other cultural settings sometimes use different cosmetic products. In several instances, other non-users of such products are influenced to use such cosmetic variance. Children from many cultural backgrounds, especially international students,





constitute some percentage of many institutions. In collaboration with this, Baharuddin et al. (2022) opined that education, social media and branding of foreign products reduce the patronage of native cosmetics. Nonetheless, preserving our own culture and passing it on to the next generation will support the long-term viability and sustainability of the native products of the Dormaa Traditional Area.

. A respondent commented on the educational factor as follows:

*Traditional hair products are more natural. They are closer to the environment. Sometimes, at school, we hear stories about various other products. Sometimes, our roommates come to campus with diverse foreign products which are well packaged, and we are also attracted to use them (Hairwearer 4, 2023).*

Globalisation is another factor militating against the use of indigenous products. This study's data reveals that popular cultures are now dominant and have expanded due to globalisation. Instead of sticking to their traditions, some people of the Dormaa Traditional Area have embraced other concepts and styles. Globalisation has devalued and undermined local cultural practices and identity. Local producers have lost their jobs to some extent due to it. According to Hwang et al. (2021), globalisation sometimes influences the patronage of local cosmetic products.

A respondent had this to say:

*Globalisation has eroded local cultural identity and customs despite increasing access to worldwide knowledge and understanding, enhancing chances for cultural interchange, and creating new economic opportunities through cultural tourism (Natural Hair Wearer 1, 2023).*



Concerning urbanisation and industrialisation, the people of Dormaa who migrate to urban areas sometimes do not adhere to indigenous herbal products. This is due to the influence of other cultures in the metropolitan areas.

The influx and easy accessibility of foreign cosmetic products are also other factors. The majority of the people of the Bono region now prefer Western cosmetic products, which are more hygienic and scientific. A respondent had this to say:

*Most people nowadays prefer foreign cosmetic hair products. These products have been refined and processed. Some of these products contain chemicals that can easily damage the scalp. People prefer them due to their appearance and easy accessibility and because they want to associate themselves with modern trends in life (Cosmetologist, 2023).*

Another respondent added that:

*Even at the supermarkets and shops, you will see all these processed varieties of hair products being displayed. Still, the people of Dormaa and Ghana must return to their roots by continually patronising traditional cosmetic products due to their significance (Queen 2, 2023).*

A third respondent added:

*The role of the Indigenous priest and priestess in directing the use of traditional products has been undermined to some extent (Queen 5, 2023).*

## CONCLUSION

The research underscores the contemporary relevance of indigenous hair practices, showing how traditional styles adapt to modern contexts while maintaining cultural significance. These adaptations reflect cultural preservation and evolution in response to changing social dynamics.



The findings highlight the role of hair practices in cultural resistance and identity assertion, particularly in contexts of cultural marginalisation. Traditional hair variants serve as visible symbols of cultural pride and continuity.

The findings indicated that natural cosmetics have cultural and health relevance. The difficulties in sustainable usage of cosmetic hair variants in the Dormaa Traditional Area can be ascribed to several reasons, including globalisation, rapid urbanisation, technological advancement, an uncoordinated policy, and low awareness of the benefits. This calls for several policy options to support and facilitate the sustainable use of indigenous cosmetics products within the context of available natural environmental resources and socioeconomic realities.

The study contributes a broader understanding of indigenous communities' material culture and embodied knowledge. It demonstrates how seemingly aesthetic practices carry deep cultural meanings and social functions.

These findings affect cultural preservation efforts, indigenous rights advocacy, and understanding of traditional knowledge systems. They suggest the need for greater recognition and protection of indigenous cultural practices, including hair traditions.

## REFERENCES:

- Alain, K. Y., Christian, K. T. R., Emmanuel, B. O. D., Avlessi, F., Dahouenon-Ahoussi, E., & Sohounhloue, D. (2022). Valorization of *Vitellaria paradoxa* butter in cosmetics and agrifood in Africa. *GSC Advanced Research and Reviews*, 10(1), 096-104.
- Asenso, K. (2019). *Dansinkran Hairstyle Fashion and Its Socio-Cultural Significance in Akan Traditional Ruling*. Ghana.
- Awasthy, R. (2019). Nature of qualitative research. In *Methodological issues in management research: Advances, challenges, and the way ahead* (pp. 145-161). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Baharuddin, F. N., Musa, A. H., Rosle, A. N., Ibrahim, S. S., & Noh, S. N. S. (2022). The Role of Social Media Influencer, Brand Image and Advertising Trust to Purchase Intention among Local Cosmetic Consumers: A Conceptual Paper. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(6), 659-665.
- Borg, G., & Jacobsohn, M. (2013). Ladies in Red: mining and use of red pigment by



- Himba women in Northwestern Namibia. *Tangungen Des Landesmuseums Fur Vorgeschichte Halle, 10*, 43-51.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.
- Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Casella, S. M. (2021). The Ash Tree as “unwobbling pivot” in Pound’s Early and Late Poetry. In *Trees in Literature and the Arts: Humanarboreal Perspectives in the Anthropocene (Ecocritical Theory and Practice series)*. (pp. 95-110). Rowman & Littlefield/Lexington Books.
- Cole, J. (2012). Himba in the Mix: The " Catwalk Politics" of Culture in Namibia. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 41*(1/2), 150-161.
- Dapschaskas, R., Göden, M. B., Sommer, C., & Kandel, A. W. (2022). The emergence of habitual ochre use in Africa and its significance for the development of ritual behavior during the Middle Stone Age. *Journal of World Prehistory, 35*(3), 233-319.
- Devi, M., & Ghatani, K. (2022). The use of coconut in rituals and food preparations in India: a review. *Journal of Ethnic Foods, 9*(1), 37.
- De Paoli, S. (2024). Performing an inductive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with a large language model: An exploration and provocation on the limits of the approach. *Social Science Computer Review, 42*(4), 997-1019.
- Didia, B., & Iddrisu, A. M. (2018). Enzyme-assisted traditional extraction of shea butter using different levels of pre-treated shea kernels. *Journal of Agricultural Biotechnology and Sustainable Development, 10*(1), 1-10.
- Eitu, I., Ogbonna, C. C., & Isabirye, J. (2023). Track II diplomacy: a review of community-based actors’ role in peacebuilding in the Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 4*(2), 45-58.
- Erickson, P. A. & Liam D. M. (2008). *A History of Anthropological Theory*. University of Toronto Press
- Franz, B. (1940) *Race, Language, and Culture*. The Macmillan Company
- Franz, B. (1911), *The Mind of Primitive Man*. The Macmillan Company.
- Hammersley, M. (2018). What is ethnography? Can it survive? Should it?. *Ethnography and education, 13*(1), 1-17.
- Hwang, J. K., Kim, E. J., Lee, S. M., & Lee, Y. K. (2021). Impact of susceptibility to global consumer culture on commitment and loyalty in botanic cosmetic

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



- brands. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 892.
- Mavromati, A. (2022). Wood charcoal macroremains from the Heraion on Samos: firewood and tree management during the Early-Middle Bronze and Roman periods. *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*, 14(12), 231.
- Mauran, G., Lebon, M., Lapauze, O., Nankela, A., D etroit, F., Lesur, J., ... & Pleurdeau, D. (2020). Archaeological ochres of the rock art site of Leopard Cave (Erongo, Namibia): Looking for Later Stone Age sociocultural behaviors. *African Archaeological Review*, 37, 527-550.
- McCall, G. J., & Simmons, J. L. (1978). *Identities and interactions*. New York: Free Press.
- McMullen, R. L., & Dell'Acqua, G. (2023). History of natural ingredients in cosmetics. *Cosmetics*, 10(3), 71.
- Melville J. H. (1953). *The Science of Man in the Making*, Knopf.
- M ller, F. (2021). *Design ethnography: Epistemology and methodology* (p. 93). Springer Nature.
- Rutherford, C., Groves, M., & Sajeve, M. (2018). *Succulent Plants*. London: Rutherford Groves Publishing. pp. 1e100.
- Schefer, R. (2020). Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's Nelisita: Shifting the Boundaries of Art and Science in Angolan Revolutionary Cinema. *South African Historical Journal*, 72(3), 405-430.
- Serpe, R. T., & Stryker, S. (2011). The symbolic interactionist perspective and identity theory. In S. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 225–248). New York: Springer.
- Sherrow, V. (2023). *Encyclopedia of hair: a cultural history*. ABC-CLIO.
- Stets, J. E., & Serpe, R. T. (2013). Identity theory. In *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 31-60). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism: A social structural version*. Caldwell, NJ: Blackburn Press.
- Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 284-297.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of inter-group conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of inter-group relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.