



1 While entertainment is the main function of these performances, politics and political figures have always been open to commentary and humor through art. However, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, continues to be honored as a political hero despite recent criticism of his presidency. During Inspection, each group welcomes the judges. In Masquefest 2012, members of Egyaa gave the judges a large wreath to place at the base of the imitated Nkrumah statue; the original is situated at his tomb and memorial monument in Accra.



2 Cowboys are recognizable by their vests and holster (tied around waist). This member of Red Cross No. 4 also wears a straw hat in the shape of an authentic cowboy hat in Masquefest 2012.



3 Dressed as a Roman Soldier, a member of Tumus No. 3, leads the group onto the field for the Masquefest 2012 competition.



4 The profusion of color and creative costume designs along with the synchronized march into the stadium won cheers for Red Cross No. 4 from the audience of over 5,000 at Masquefest 2012.



5 Egyaa No. 2 performs a skit about slavery during the atwim component in Masquefest 2012. Notice the parody of the TV cameraman to the left.



6 Stilt walkers display their best tricks during competitions. This member of Red Cross No. 4 performed during Masquefest 2012.



7 Cross-dressing is an important part of Fancy Dress masquerading. The lewd performance is not only humorous but also reinforces social and cultural morals. This “couple” performed alongside the Nobles No. 1 group during the slow dance portion of Masquefest 2012.

8 Red Cross No. 4 performs in a street parade the day after Masquefest 2012. Groups are named, inspired by both local and imported ideas. Red Cross is named for the boat “Red Cross” which first brought costume materials and masks to Winneba in the 1930s (Kofi Tom Peter Paintsil, a.k.a. Uncle Brown, President, Winneba Masquerade Federation, interview by author, Winneba, September 14, 2009).





9 The day after Masquefest, members parade town in their costumes to dance in the main streets to boast with their trophy and gather additional dashes. Some members sell their old costumes and masks to new members, to people in nearby towns, or less often, to dealers and collectors. Many costumes fall apart or are destroyed. A masquerader dressed as Father Christmas displays the second place trophy earned by Red Cross No. 4 in Masquefest 2012 during the street parade held the day after the Winneba competition.



10 Fancy Dress is the English name for the local Ghanaian equivalents *Kakabotini*, *Kakabotofo*, *Katabotofo*, *Kakabotobe*, and *Kokoorebabaa*, essentially all meaning a group that frightens (usually children). Many young children participate as members or they follow the performers and dance with them. Even so, when one of the adult masqueraders challenges them, the children run away partly in fear, partly in fun.



11 Shoes are crafted around tennis shoes with thick foam or cardboard to produce desired the bootlike shape. Then foil paper, garland, or “shag” is attached. Oversized shoes draw attention to the dance moves, made here by members of Nobles No. 1 during the after Christmas parade in 2011.

12 Groups will not parade without a marching band, even if the band only has a few members. It is a key element in Fancy Dress performance. Brass military bands were introduced to Ghana in the 1880s by the West Indian Rifle Regiment; many members were freed slaves recruited to reinforce British troops in Ghana to suppress Asante forces (Brown 2005:41). Band members today play mostly trumpets, trombones, bass and snare drums, and other percussion instruments. In street parades the band does not dress in costume though they may feel inspired to dance along. In competition they wear matching t-shirts and pants, and march, not dance, behind their Fancy Dress group. The cost of the band is often the group’s largest expense.





13 Although the relatively inexpensive wire mesh masks (about US\$2.50 in 2011) can seem generic in shape, artists individualize some of them via painting. This young member of Nobles No. 1 wears a mask painted with fish around the eyes and wears a bright yellow-and-orange costume during the after Christmas parade in 2011.



14 Talented artists are sought for more inventive wire mesh masks. Joseph "Segu" Prah has created wire mesh and papier-mâché masks in Takoradi for nearly thirty years. Here he models a "one touch" mask with added sisal hair and a neck cloth. While he continues to shape the masks today, he has helpers who paint them. Skilled artists make masks for local groups and others. Segu also makes masks for Winneba masqueraders.



15 Tailors who specialize in Fancy Dress costumes may also be commissioned to make costumes for the groups in their town and outside. Francis Kodwo Coker makes Simple Dress costumes for groups in Saltpond and Tema. 2012.



16 Masqueraders from the Chinese group perform in the main square of Saltpond on New Year's Eve 2011. The Chinese are reputed to be the second group formed in Saltpond, after the Anchors, in 1924. They are oldest group still performing in Ghana.



17 In contrast with the bright colors of the Chinese, the Holy Cities group of Saltpond wears striking Simple Dress costumes in red, black, white, and yellow. Numerous members wore papier-mâché masks with long sisal hair.



18 Members of Holy Cities perform along with asafu groups in the durbar, or parade of chiefs, of Cape Coast's harvest festival Fetu AfahyE on September 5, 2009.



19 Fancy Dress helps children form friendships for life. This duo paraded in Elmina's Bakatue festival July 9, 2011.



20 The mask on the left is the most unusual I've seen thus far. It appears to be an older mask made from sisal fiber into a scorpion form. Unfortunately the masquerader was in no condition to be interviewed. Many of the older performers imbibe in local gin along the parade route. This character was spotted during the Bakatue festival in Elmina on July 9, 2011.



21 Stilt walkers are hired to perform at events outside Fancy Dress parades and competitions. These sakramodu from Saltpond were hired to perform in the harvest festival Okyir in Anomabo on October 10, 2009. Notice the performers do not wear masks for these events.