

Factors Influencing the Evolution of Academic Dress at Kenyatta University, Kenya

By Leonard E. Newton

Introduction

Kenyatta University was established in 1985, as Kenya's third university. It is based in Kahawa, which is a suburb of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. It is a modern institution, with well-equipped laboratories and other teaching facilities, state-of-the-art digital communications, including a fibre-optic cable network linking administrative and staff offices, and well-qualified teaching and administration staff. The declared aim of the management team is recognition as a 'world class university'. However, in spite of the effort to achieve a modern image in teaching and research, the university has embraced the centuries-old tradition of wearing academic dress on certain occasions.

The history of Kenyatta University

In December 1963 the former British 'Kenya Colony' became the independent country of Kenya. After independence, the British government handed over to the new Kenya government a British military base called Templer Barracks, saying that it should be used as an educational institution. The barracks had been named for Field Marshall Sir Gerald Templer (1898–1979), a prominent British military officer. In 1965 a teacher training college known as Kenyatta College was established on the site, which lies 22 kilometres from the centre of Nairobi, towards the north-east, and is just within the Nairobi city limits. The college was named for the late Jomo Kenyatta (c. 1894–1978), who was Kenya's first President, and so the name Templer was consigned to history.

Kenyatta College was set up for the training of non-graduate secondary school teachers, offering a post 'O' level three-year Teacher's Certificate and a post 'A' level one-year Teacher's Certificate. In 1970 it became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi, specializing in training graduate teachers, and the name changed to Kenyatta University College. In effect it became the School of Education for the University of Nairobi. The first BEd students were admitted in 1972, and the certificate programmes were phased out. In 1985 full University status was achieved by an Act of Parliament, and the new Kenyatta University started planning other degree programmes in the arts, sciences, and economics. More recently, other programmes have been introduced, including agriculture, engineering, law, and health sciences. From its humble beginning as a teacher training college

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with a few hundred students, it has now grown to a major university with about 40,000 students, including some in satellite campuses and some in open learning programmes.

Following the then-common practice in British universities, teaching departments were grouped into faculties, headed by a Dean. In 2002 the term 'faculty' was replaced with 'school', still with a Dean as the most senior officer.¹ At the same time, new names were introduced, e.g. the Faculty of Arts became the School of Humanities and Social Science, and the Faculty of Science became the School of Pure and Applied Sciences. The University of Nairobi also introduced schools, but some faculties were retained, and so there is now a mixture.² To avoid confusion, in the following text the term 'school' is used throughout, even though earlier developments took place when the term 'faculty' was in use—apart from references to the University of East Africa, in which the term 'school' was not introduced.

The origin of Kenyatta University academic dress

The use of academic dress at Kenyatta University started when it became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi, and so it is necessary to summarize the history of that institution. The University of Nairobi started in 1951 as one of three components of the Royal Technical College of East Africa, when Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were British Colonies (Fig. 1). The other two constituent colleges were in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Kampala, Uganda. It has passed through various phases and identities, of which only a couple are relevant here. In 1961, as Royal College Nairobi, it joined the sister institutions in Dar es Salaam and Kampala (this college being known as Makerere, as it still is today) as a constituent college of the newly established University of East Africa. Universities established in colonial times were associated with British universities, and graduates of the University of East Africa were awarded London University degrees. Thus London University academic dress was used in graduation ceremonies. Programmes for degrees assigned to the University of East Africa were introduced from 1963, and academic dress was designed for these degrees, though for the first few years students who had originally registered with the University of London completed their degree programmes as London graduates. In 1970 the University of East Africa was dissolved, and the three East African countries established their own independent universities. In Kenya, the University of Nairobi was established by an Act of Parliament in 1970.

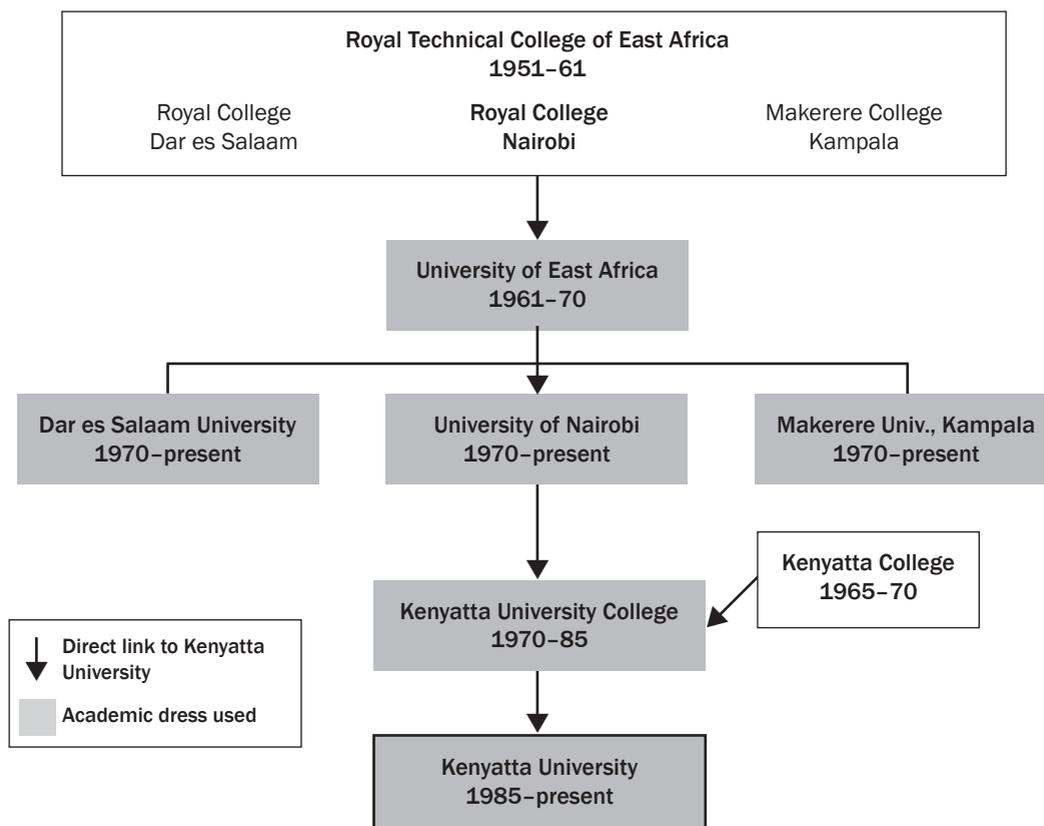
With this British colonial background, academic dress in the universities of East Africa was based on the system of dress used in British universities, as described by Groves (2011) and Smith and Sheard (1970). This trend is seen in other former British colonies (Newton, 2008). In the following account the designs, where known, are assigned a code, shown in square brackets, referring to the terminology presented by Groves (2001 and, for caps, on the Burgon Society website). Official robes were not included by Groves, and as the designs of official robes vary widely in East Africa, with no apparent linking trend relating them to the usual black silk gown (variants of [d4]) with gold lace ornamentation used in British universities, no attempt is made to compare them here.

Description of colours is problematical, as others have found (e.g. Scott, 2005; Groves, 2008). The University of East Africa specified shades of colour. In the Academic

1 Kenyatta University, lists of schools and departments <<http://www.ku.ac.ke/index.php/academics/schools>> (accessed 22 July 2014).

2 University of Nairobi, Colleges, Faculties/Schools/Centers/Institutes & Departments <http://www.uonbi.ac.ke/uon_academic_index> (accessed 17 June 2014).

Fig. 1. History of Kenyatta University



Registrar's office at the University of Nairobi I was shown a long list of colours for hoods, some duplicated for different schools and faculties, but without indicating different shades of the named colours. As a further complication, at Kenyatta University we found that the manufacturers sometimes used a slightly different shade of colour when new hoods were ordered to add to our existing stock, presumably because material of the earlier colour was no longer available and material of the nearest match was used. One of the most comprehensive colour charts is that of the Royal Horticultural Society (1966), which has 808 different shades of colour. However, several colour names seen in descriptions of academic dress are not listed, for example fawn, gold, and russet brown in London (Goff, 1999). Many of the RHS colours have a code but no name. Therefore, colour descriptions in the following text are mostly approximations only.

University of East Africa

As University of East Africa degrees were awarded for only a few years, presumably their robes must now be quite rare, and they are not well known. One person I know who has a University of East Africa PhD degree told me that he just wore his Oxford MA robes when

Table 1. Academic dress of the University of East Africa

| | Gown | Hood | Cap |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Bachelor | Black material, with 'distinctively shaped open sleeves'. | Simple shape, cardinal red lined with pearl, bound 1½ inches inside & ½ inch outside with faculty colour. | Black cloth mortarboard with cardinal red tassel, or soft black cap for women. |
| Master | Same colour and pattern as that of bachelors. | Full shape, cardinal red lined with pearl, bound 1½ inches inside & ½ inch outside with faculty colour, and a 2 inches wide band in faculty colour outside, ¾ inch away from edge. | Black cloth mortarboard with cardinal red tassel, or soft black cap for women. |
| PhD | Same pattern as bachelors, of black material with cardinal red front facings. | Full shape, cardinal red lined with crimson damask. | Round black bonnet with cardinal red cord & tassels. |
| Higher doctor | Same pattern as bachelors, of scarlet panama, with scarlet damask front facings. | Full shape, scarlet damask lined with faculty colour. | Round black bonnet with gold cord & tassels. |

graduating, so it seems that the university was not strict about having the correct academic dress. I have been unable to trace any more details than given by Smith and Sheard (1970), from which the summary in Table 1 is taken.

No details are given of the 'distinctively shaped open sleeves'. The faculty colours are: Agriculture, russet brown; Arts, duck egg blue; Architecture, white; Commerce, orange; Education, strawberry; Engineering, grey; Law, black; Medicine, purple; Science, tartan green; Veterinary Science, lemon. These bear no relation to the faculty colours of the mother institution, the University of London (Goff, 1999), apart from orange for Commerce and the possible similarity of purple (UEA) and violet (UL) for Medicine. Neither do they follow the US Intercollegiate Code (Baxter and Walters, 1966). The rationale for this choice of colours is unknown. Undergraduates wore a sleeveless gown of crimson stuff in Nairobi and Kampala, and of saffron stuff in Dar es Salaam.

University of Nairobi

The academic dress of the University of Nairobi has not been modified since its introduction in 1970, apart from adding colours for new subject areas in later years, such as engineering and medicine. The summary in Table 2 is compiled from personal observations during a visit to their graduation store (Kenyan universities keep stocks of academic dress for use in graduation and other ceremonies). As the University has both schools and faculties, either could have a specific colour, and so the term 'discipline' is used in Table 2.

Table 2. Academic dress of the University of Nairobi

| | Gown | Hood | Cap |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Bachelor | Black cloth with open wing sleeves, similar to the basic CNAA design [b1]. | Simple shape [s1], yellow cloth, lined grey satin, cowl bordered inside with discipline colour. | Modified from the square mortarboard by having two curved sides, meeting as points at the front and the back, black with red tassel. |
| Master | Same as for bachelor. | Simple shape [s1], red cloth, lined pink satin, cowl bordered inside and outside with discipline colour. | Black square mortarboard with red tassel [h1]. |
| PhD | Scarlet cloth with bell-shaped sleeves (like [d2], but slightly more pointed at the back), light blue front facings, sleeves lined light blue (Fig. 3). | Full shape [f5], purple cloth, lined grey, cowl edged inside 7 cm and outside 3 cm with discipline colour, and cape edged 5 cm outside with discipline colour. | Black round bonnet with purple rim and scarlet tassel [h2]. |
| Higher doctor | Light blue cloth with bell-shaped sleeves [d2], scarlet front facings, sleeves lined scarlet. | Full shape [f5], scarlet, lined light blue, cowl and cape bound with discipline colour. | Black round bonnet with light blue rim and gold tassel [h2]. |

The University of Nairobi has a complex system of hood colours. Many colours are used, for a number of individual disciplines. For example, Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, and Veterinary Medicine have different colours, and Mathematics has its own colour, different from the general colour for Science. Some of the older colours are: Arts, purple; Education, brown; Law, brown (similar shade to that of Education); Medicine, blue; Science, gold. These are quite different from those of the University of East Africa.

The gown for higher doctors is the reverse of the PhD colour pattern.

A colleague of mine was an undergraduate student in Nairobi from 1969 to 1972, thus being admitted to the University of East Africa and graduating with a University of Nairobi degree. He said that he wore an undergraduate gown of the kind described for the University of East Africa, but that wearing of gowns by students died out soon after he graduated.

Kenyatta University

After Kenyatta University became independent, a new system of academic dress was adopted. On 18 October 1985 a new Graduation Committee met for the first time, to prepare for the first graduation, which was held on 17 December 1985. The minutes state that academic dress would be borrowed from the University of Nairobi, and anyway the graduates were still registered for Nairobi degrees. In the third meeting of Senate, on 22 April 1986, it was reported that existing students would be transferred to Kenyatta University registra-

Table 3. Original academic dress of Kenyatta University, from 1986

| | Gown | Hood | Cap |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| Bachelor | Black cloth with open wing sleeves, similar to the basic CNAA design [b1]. | Simple shape (close to [s9]), black cloth with cowl edged 2.5 cm outside with school colour (Fig. 4). | Black cloth mortarboard with black tassel [h1]. |
| Master | Same as for bachelor. | Full shape [f3], black cloth lined with school colour. | Black cloth mortarboard with black tassel [h1]. |
| PhD | Maroon cloth with bell sleeves [d2], black velvet front facings 14 cm wide, sleeves lined with black satin. | Full shape [f3], maroon cloth lined with school colour. | Round velvet bonnet with maroon rim and gold cord & tassel [h2]. |
| Higher doctor | | – Same as PhD – | |

tion, and so new academic dress would then have been required. Unfortunately the minutes of neither Senate nor the Graduation Committee give any information on the design and manufacture of academic dress, other than a statement in minutes of the Graduation Committee meeting of 1 December 1987 that new academic dress had been ordered. No relevant correspondence from that period could be found in the university records. Apart from additional colours for new schools, the original styles, summarized in Table 3, remained unchanged until a committee was formed to revise the system (see The Academic Dress Committee, below).

The material used on hoods for the school colours is satin rather than silk, as it is cheaper and more readily available in Kenya.

For several years there were four schools (then called faculties), viz. Education, hood colour blue; Arts, white; Science, yellow-gold; Business, brown. I found nothing in Minutes of the early Senate meetings to explain the choice of colours, though it happens that they are similar to ICC colours. Later additions were Agriculture & Enterprise Development, light green; Applied Human Sciences, purple; Economics, copper; Engineering & Technology, orange; Environmental Studies, green; Health Sciences, red; Visual & Performing Arts, pink; Public Health, pale blue. Apart from Science (yellow-gold) these are quite different from University of Nairobi colours.

Three new schools that were introduced in later years, Environmental Studies, Home Economics (later called School of Applied Human Sciences), and Health Sciences, designed their own hoods for their new bachelor degrees. However, these designs were introduced without being brought to the University Senate for approval, as required by the University Statutes. Under ‘Powers and Duties of the Senate’, Statute xv b (3) m states: ‘To determine the design of academic dress and prescribe its use’. These unauthorized hoods differed from those of other schools in being full shape (similar to some ICC doctoral hoods, but with narrower liripipe) and multicoloured, in one case having a chevron beneath the cape, where it would not be seen if the hood were to be worn with the cape against the back. They have now been replaced by hoods of the design approved by Senate for all schools, with hood colours green, purple, and red, respectively.

No academic dress was prescribed for undergraduate students.

The Academic Dress Committee

At some of the early degree Congregations of Kenyatta University, honorary degrees of DEd, DLitt and DSc were awarded to some prominent personalities in public life. On these occasions the recipients were invested with the PhD dress, and so in November 2002 Senate set up a committee to design academic dress for recipients of honorary degrees. As an afterthought the Vice-Chancellor also asked the committee to consider revising the whole system of academic dress for the university. The present writer was appointed as chairman (probably because it was I who suggested at a Senate meeting the need for distinctive robes for higher degrees), and the members were drawn mainly from the Department of Fine Art (School of Visual and Performing Arts) and the Department of Textiles (School of Applied Human Sciences). The terms of reference for the committee were stated as: ‘to come up with recommendations on appropriate academic dress for various degrees’.

The committee’s work was subject to several delays. Sometimes there was no quorum, with fewer than half of the members turning up for a meeting. Senate meets only a few times each year, and there was sometimes a long delay before committee reports could be presented at a Senate meeting. Another complication to be mentioned is that the composition of Senate is frequently changing. Our Senate consists of high officers (Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, registrars, deans), full professors, and department chairmen. The chairmanship of a department is a revolving post and chairmen are in position for a maximum of four years, after which new chairmen are appointed. Most department chairmen are not full professors; hence the changing composition of Senate. As some members of the committee were department chairmen whose terms of office expired during the life of the committee, the composition of the committee also changed occasionally. A problem arising from these changes was that some new members of Senate disagreed with some of the decisions already taken earlier, and discussion on those points started over again.

Evolution of the new designs

During the first few meetings the committee examined the academic dress of various overseas universities, borrowed from academic staff holding degrees from those universities. An interim report with the committee’s recommendations was prepared, and this was discussed at the 71st meeting of Senate on 16 April 2003. Comments recorded in the Minutes of the meeting include:

Minute 71/4.4.2 Design of Academic gowns [sic – as written by Senate secretariat, but full academic dress was discussed]

Comments/Suggestions:

In choosing the colours for the academic dress the African colour psychology must be put into consideration. The colours chosen for the dress should fit the African context.

The hood should be on the Chancellor’s gown. [This in response to my comment that official robes should not include a hood.]

Recommended:

That a kind of fashion show/catwalk should be arranged so that Senators can see and approve the designs.

There followed a very long period whilst the samples were made in Nairobi by a company that took many months to complete the work, and it was over a year before the

samples were brought to Senate. Even before the manufacture of samples could start, it is a Kenyan Government rule that for any expenditure, estimates must be obtained from three different sources, and one (usually the cheapest) is selected by the university's Purchasing Committee. Apart from the selected manufacturing company's slow pace of work, and the infrequent meetings of Senate, this delay was partly because the university was closed for some months early in 2004 after the students rioted for two days in protest against the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor was replaced, but the next ordinary meeting of Senate was not held until 2005.

Eventually the samples were displayed at the 73rd meeting of Senate on 13 January 2005, modelled by some office staff. Various suggestions were made, on garment shape and choice of colours. It was also suggested that the samples should be displayed in the university library, where staff and students could inspect them and make comments. The Minutes of the meeting include:

Minute 73/4.1 Design of Academic gowns

Observed:

That there is need to get the input of the users of the new designs, especially the undergraduate students.

Agreed:

That the sample designs of the dresses be displayed at the main library reception for input of the students and staff for more comments / suggestions.

In response to my enquiry at the Department of Textiles I was told that they had no dummies for the public display. Therefore the Maintenance Department was asked to make some wooden display stands. On 18 March I received from the Estates Manager an estimate of the cost of making the stands, which was sent to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Finance) for approval. On 23 March the Purchasing Officer was asked to arrange for the materials to be procured. After several weeks I was advised that the stands were ready, and I proceeded to arrange for the public exhibit in the entrance hall of the university library. The exhibit was announced on 9 May 2005 (See Appendix).

During the public exhibit, a large notebook was provided for comments. When the exhibit ended there were 52 pages of comments, from 172 respondents. There was much repetition, and also some misunderstanding. A notice with the exhibit announced that: 'Hoods will be of simple shape (without cape) for bachelor degrees'. It was clear from many comments that 'cape' had been read as 'cap', and there was strong objection to the idea of not wearing caps. The Kenyatta University graduation ceremony takes place in a large open area that was formerly a military parade ground; it is now known as Graduation Square. Bearing in mind the discomfort of wearing a black gown on a sunny day, the committee suggested the possibility of using bachelor's and master's gowns made of a light grey cloth, and a sample was displayed. This idea attracted many adverse comments during the display for the university community. Many commented that the gowns looked like garments ranging from prison uniform to a caretaker's uniform—yet a Professor of Philosophy here regularly attends degree congregations wearing his slate grey doctoral gown of Columbia University. Members of the Kenyatta University community will not have been aware that grey gowns are also used elsewhere, such as in the University of York, UK.

Various details of the proposed designs were discussed at no fewer than ten meetings of Senate. Only a few details of the discussions are given here. Each time a modification was suggested, samples had to be made for display at the next meeting, which caused further delay.

At the 76th meeting, on 8 November 2006, it was agreed that we should continue with black gowns for bachelors and masters. Apart from the general dislike of grey, there was also a financial consideration. The university keeps a large stock of academic dress for hiring to graduands during degree congregations. The bulk of this stock includes robes for bachelor degrees, now numbering about 3,000, so it is cheaper to add something (a front facing; see Identity of gowns with Kenyatta University, below) to existing gowns than to introduce a gown of a different design.

One major factor was that many Kenyatta University academic staff members were trained in the US, and in the discussions they were influenced by their having worn robes specified by the Intercollegiate Code. The following decisions arose from this.

The gowns of British universities are worn open, i.e. the two sides are not fastened in the front, and this also applied to the first gowns of Kenyatta University. The bachelor's gowns are still worn open, but Senate decided that the new masters' gowns should have a hook and eye at the top of the facings, and all doctoral gowns should be fitted with a zip. This is partly a reflection of the situation in the US, but many members probably had another reason in mind. Sitting in the open in Graduation Square on a hot sunny day,³ wearing academic dress over a suit, can be very uncomfortable. Having a gown that is closed, and covers the arms, allows the wearer to discard a jacket. I have even seen bare lower arms emerging from the sleeves of bachelor's gowns, when the wearer has a short-sleeved shirt. In recent years the university has hired some very large tents to provide shade, though many still choose not to wear a jacket. This practice would be viewed by traditionalists as a most unwelcome trend, but the university has not tried to discourage it.

As noted earlier, those graduating with a master's degree had worn the same gown as bachelors, and the committee proposed the introduction of the style of gown worn by masters at most British universities, with a glove sleeve and a slit at the elbow. However, Senate preferred the American version, in which the whole of the wearer's arm is covered, and only the hand emerges from the sleeve through a slit at wrist level. Again, this allows the wearer to discard a jacket, and this style is thought to have been introduced in the USA for the same reason (Sheard, 1962).

For doctoral gowns, my personal preference is for open wing sleeves like those used by the University of London [d1]. As chairman of the committee I led the discussion and convinced the members that this would be the best design. However, many members of Senate with US training insisted that the sleeves should have the three bars that are used on doctoral gowns in the USA. It was not practicable to add the US style sleeve bars to an open wing sleeve, and so the sleeve design had to be changed to that of the Oxford doctoral gowns [d2].

At a later meeting, the committee's proposed colours for doctoral gowns were also unpopular. The committee recommended crimson for the PhD gown and scarlet for the higher doctorates (again, reflecting my British background). However, as the University of Nairobi has scarlet gowns, it was felt by Senate that we should be different. Eventually

³ Graduation is held twice a year, in June, with daytime temperatures about 24°C, and in December, when daytime temperatures can be up to 30°C.

a shade of blue for the PhD gown was chosen and a bright red, slightly more dull than scarlet, for the higher doctorates. Blue is a ‘university colour’, as the university buses have a broad blue stripe along the sides, and blue is a conspicuous colour on the front of publications such as the university Calendar. The Minutes of the 79th meeting of Senate on 9 October 2007 include:

Minute 79/4.2 Design of Academic gowns

Displayed: Sample designs for PhD gowns. [sic—again, hoods and caps were also included]

Members’ comments:

That the blue gown is the best choice because it is attractive and also complements the Vice-Chancellor’s gown.

Identity of gowns with Kenyatta University

The academic dress of most universities is distinguished by a combination of the shapes, sizes and colours of the garments concerned—gowns, hoods and caps. Apart from this combination there is nothing about the academic dress of, say, the University of London, to indicate any connection with London. A few universities have adopted particular distinctive colours that are associated with them (Groves, 2011), such as the palatinate purple of Durham University and the shot silks of the University of Wales (now, alas, superseded by new academic dress of the new universities established from the former university colleges). Universities in Commonwealth countries often simply copied the designs of some British universities, as happened in New Zealand (Cox, 2001). In Australia, the PhD dress of the University of Adelaide is similar to that of the University of Cambridge (Smith and Sheard, 1970). Although the US Intercollegiate Code aims at ensuring that there is no duplication amongst universities in the USA, some US universities have gone a step further. Several universities there have a university coat of arms near the top of the front facings of the gown. Examples are Cornell University and Stanford University (Smith and Sheard, 1970).

As chairman of the committee I suggested that we should introduce a feature that would identify our academic dress specifically with Kenyatta University. Some Commonwealth universities have incorporated some local cultural design in their academic dress (Groves & Christianson, 2004), and I suggested that we should adopt a similar approach. My suggestion of a distinctive front facing for our gowns was influenced by the fact that I took my PhD degree at the University of Ghana, whilst I was a lecturer at another Ghanaian university, in Kumasi. All gowns of the University of Ghana have a front facing of kente cloth (Univ. Ghana, 1973–74). This is a distinctive traditional cloth always associated with Ghana. It is woven on a handloom in long strips about three inches in width, and has various patterns woven in bright primary colours. That used for bachelors and masters is called ‘*akyempem*’, meaning ‘you have given me a thousand pounds’, celebrating the award of a degree. For graduates in medicine (MB, ChB) the kente strip is red and black, whilst other bachelors have gold and black (Fig. 2). On gowns of masters the kente strip is white and black. The Ph.D. gown has gold and black ‘*akyempem*’ alternating with gold, green and crimson ‘*ɔwɔ aforo adoben*’ (Fig. 3). The combined pattern is called ‘*Afuakwa*’ and means ‘one man does not build a nation’, representing plurality of ideas. Gowns of higher doctorates have a more complex ‘*dwenasa*’ pattern, which can be woven only by the most experi-

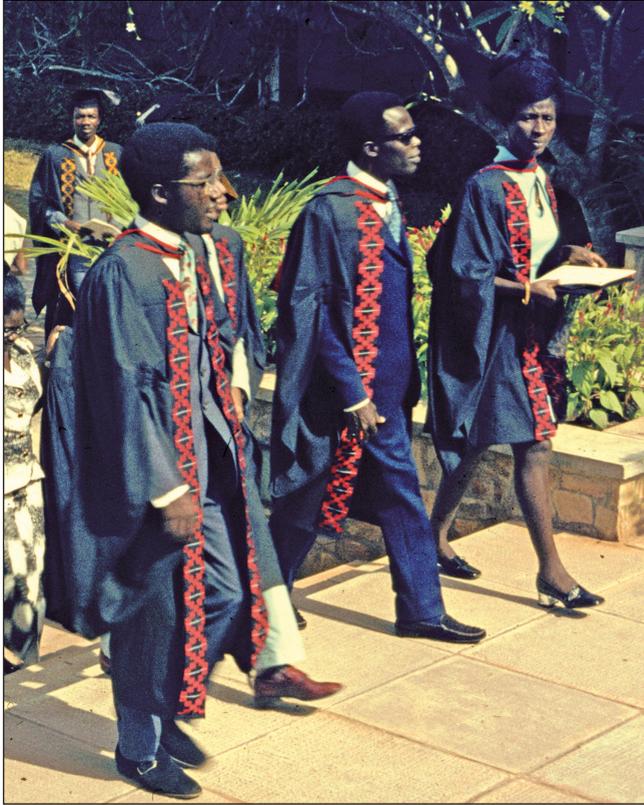


FIG. 2 Kente cloth on bachelors' gowns, above, at the University of Ghana. Foreground MB,ChB; background other bachelor degrees.



FIG. 3 Kente cloth on doctoral gown, University of Ghana. (The author, in PhD dress. Photo by Dr. Michael Powell.)

enced weavers and is normally worn only by chiefs. The meaning of this pattern is 'skill is exhausted'.

I asked the committee, the rest of whom are Kenyans, to think of some cultural pattern that could be adopted. Suggestions ranged from the traditional patterned red cloth of the Maasai tribe to portions of the national flag. The national flag has a traditional shield at its centre, and one suggested design was a row of symbolic shields. The best suggestion came from a member in the Department of Fine Art. He pointed out that the university coat of arms has a scroll in the form of a belt like that worn by Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of Kenya.

Close scrutiny of the coat of arms (which also includes the hand of Jomo Kenyatta wielding the fly whisk that he always carried, against a background of Mount Kenya) shows that the scroll does indeed have a buckle at one end and the other end is appropriately shaped for



FIG. 4 Kenyatta University coat of arms.

Table 4. Current academic dress of Kenyatta University

| | Gown | Hood | Cap |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Bachelor | Black cloth with open wing sleeves, similar to the basic CNAAs design [b1]. Kenyatta belt front facing 6 cm wide, with black triangles outlined in gold (Fig. 9). | Simple shape (close to [s9]), black cloth with cowl edged 2.5 cm outside with school colour (Figs. 4 & 9). | Black cloth mortarboard with black tassel [h1] (Fig. 9). |
| Master (Fig. 10) | Black cloth with glove sleeves, the opening at wrist level. Kenyatta belt front facing, 7 cm wide, with dark blue and very pale yellow triangles. | Full shape [f3], black cloth, lined and edged 2.5 cm outside on cowl and cape with school colour. | Black cloth mortarboard [h1] with gold edge on skull portion and gold tassel. |
| PhD (Fig. 11) | Bright blue cloth with bell sleeves [d2], the sleeves lined with blue satin and with three horizontal gold bars outside. Kenyatta belt front facing, 7 cm wide, with blue-green & gold triangles. | Full shape [f3], blue cloth, lined and edged 2.5 cm outside on cowl and cape with school colour. | Black round velvet bonnet [h2] with blue rim and gold cord & tassel. |
| Higher doctor (Fig. 12) | Bright red cloth with bell sleeves [d2], the sleeves lined with satin of lighter red and with three horizontal gold bars outside. Kenyatta belt front facing, 7 cm wide, with red & gold triangles. | Full shape [f3], bright red cloth, lined and edged 2.5 cm outside on cowl and cape with school colour. | Black round velvet bonnet [h2] with bright red rim and gold cord & tassel. |

passing through the buckle (Fig. 4). The belt has a pattern of triangles, in various colours, and the word 'kenyatta' is a Kikuyu term for this style of belt. Jomo Kenyatta was born as Kamau Ngengi, and he adopted the name Kenyatta when he moved to Nairobi from his rural home near Mount Kenya. Therefore we proposed that the front facing should have a pattern like that of the 'Kenyatta belt', i.e. a row of coloured triangles. This proposal was well received by Senate, and it was adopted.

The new designs

The designs that were finally approved by Senate were not all introduced at the same time. This is mainly because details of some items were controversial, and required further discussion. The new PhD robes were used for the first time at a degree congregation held in December 2007, and at that same event one person was awarded an honorary doctorate, also with the newly designed robes. The new academic dress for masters was introduced in the December 2008 congregation, and that for bachelors in December 2009.

A couple of days before the 2008 Congregation, the Vice-Chancellor decided that the front facing approved by Senate for bachelors was too elaborate for that degree. The committee had proposed that the front facing should be like that on the master's gown, but only 4 cm wide. Graduating bachelors wore the existing black gown on that occasion, and

Table 5. Hood colours for the schools

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Agriculture & Enterprise Development | .light green |
| Applied Human Sciences | .purple |
| Business | .brown |
| Economics | .copper |
| Education | .blue |
| Engineering & Technology | .orange |
| Environmental Studies | .green |
| Hospitality & Tourism Management | .pale yellow |
| Humanities & Social Science | .white |
| Law | .silver |
| Medicine | .red |
| Public Health | .pale blue |
| Pure & Applied Sciences | .yellow-gold |
| Visual & Performing Arts | .pink |

the committee was asked to consider this level again. The committee met to propose an appropriate design, and suggested one of only black triangles outlined narrowly in gold, and samples were made. The revised design was approved by Senate at the 83rd meeting on 13 May 2009.

The full set of academic dress currently in use was finally seen for the first time at a degree Congregation in December 2009.⁴ It should be noted that each school has only one school colour, even if two or more degrees at one level are awarded. For example, in the School of Visual & Performing Arts, both Bachelor of Arts (Music) and Bachelor of Music are awarded, but their academic dress is identical.

The bachelor's gown was retained from the former system, with the addition of the front facing. The bachelor's hood and cap were retained from the former system.

The master's gown has a hook and eye at the top of the front facing and may be worn open or closed. The master's hood of the former system was improved by having the lining carried over to a 2.5 cm edging outside both the cowl and the cape.

All doctoral gowns have three sleeve bars, in the fashion of doctoral gowns in the US Intercollegiate Code. All doctoral gowns are fitted with a zip behind the front facings, and are designed to be worn closed. It was suggested by Senate that the two sides of the doctoral hood should be linked behind with a cord, like those in the ICC, to prevent the hood from slipping off the shoulder. Unfortunately the manufacturer attached the cord on the edge of the cowl, making it impossible to fold down part of the cowl to display the lining. This has now been changed on some of the hoods, with the cord sewn onto the hood along the line where the cowl joins the cape, and this better method of attachment should be followed in future.

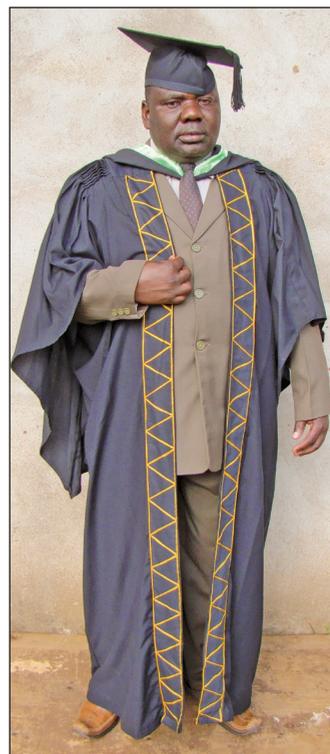


FIG. 5 Bachelor of Agricultural Science, Kenyatta University. The sleeve length varies at the manufacturer's whim, and is often longer.

⁴ Newton, 2011.

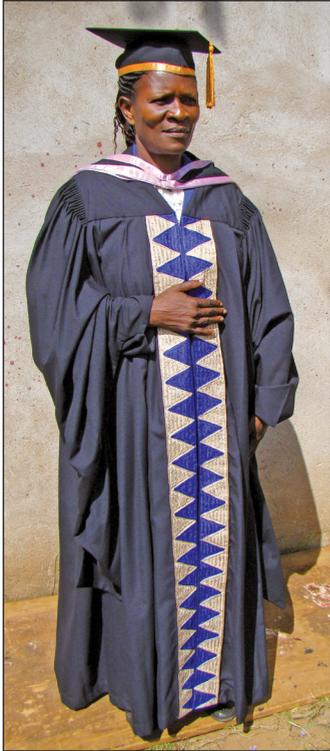


FIG. 6 Master of Arts in Music, Kenyatta University.

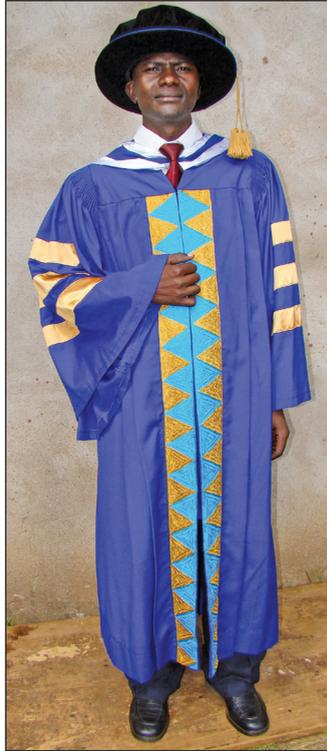


FIG. 7 PhD in Humanities & Social Science, Kenyatta University.

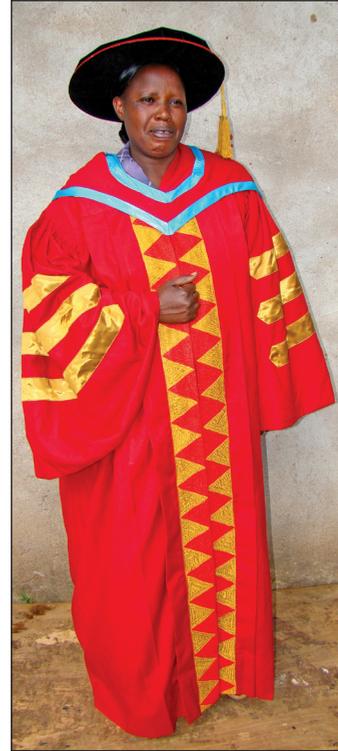


FIG. 8 Higher doctors, Kenyatta University; Doctor of Education.

Since 2002, when faculties were renamed as schools, departments have been re-grouped in various ways, and new schools have been established. There are now 14 schools, with hood trim colours shown in Table 5.

Robes for university officers

In contrast to the practice in most British universities, mentioned above, Chancellors of Kenyan universities wear coloured gowns resembling doctoral gowns, usually including the addition of three sleeve bars. Possibly this also reflects the practice in some U.S. universities.⁵ The committee was expected to follow this practice in recommending designs. Also, the officers concerned insisted that the robes should include hoods, in spite of my pointing out that the hood is the badge of a degree and should not be part of official dress. I suggested that the officers concerned could, if they so wish, wear the hoods of their own degrees with the official gowns. However, the Department of Fine Art was asked to design hoods, which were not discussed by the Academic Dress Committee. Also, the caps are round bonnets, as worn by doctors.

The University Act states that the Chancellor is the Head of State or a person appointed by the Head of State. Jomo Kenyatta (President 1964–1978) and Daniel arap Moi

⁵ Smith and Sheard, 1970.

Table 6. Official robes for the current Chancellor.

| | Gown | Hood | Cap |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Chancellor Fig. 9 | Dark blue satin gown of the same shape as the doctoral gowns, but with a purple collar with the university coat of arms on each side of it. Sleeves lined with satin of a lighter shade of blue, and with three velvet sleeve bars of a light blue edged with gold. Kenyatta belt front facings, 11 cm wide, with coloured triangles and diamonds, outer edge of gold. | Full shape, yellow-gold satin, lined in red with a purple chevron in cowl, cape bordered outside with red. | Black round velvet bonnet with a blue rim and a gold cord & tassel. |

Table 7. Official robes for officers other than the Chancellor.

| | Gown | Hood | Cap |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Vice-Chancellor Fig. 10 | Similar to that of the Chancellor, but in a lighter blue and with the sleeve bars in gold. Kenyatta belt front facings 9 cm wide with coloured triangles and diamonds. | Full shape, red satin, lined yellow, with a green chevron in the cowl, cape narrowly bordered outside with yellow. | Black round velvet bonnet with a blue rim and a gold cord & short tassel. |
| Chairman of Council Fig. 11 | Scarlet cloth with bell sleeves lined with black satin, front facing of yellow-gold satin, 7 cm wide, sleeves with three black bars. | None prescribed. | Black velvet round bonnet with a scarlet rim and a gold cord & tassel. |
| Member of Council Fig. 12 | Maroon cloth with bell sleeves lined with black satin, front facings black velvet 10 cm wide plus yellow-gold satin 4 cm wide on outer edge. | None prescribed. | Round velvet bonnet with maroon rim. |

(President 1978–2002) both took on the post of Chancellor of all the public universities in Kenya. When Mwai Kibaki became President, in 2002, he appointed various other people as chancellors, and from 2013 Uhuru Kenyatta has done the same. Each time a new chancellor was installed, a new gown, hood and cap was designed. This task was always given to the Department of Fine Art.

The University Council consists of some senior officers (Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrars) and several members drawn from outside the university, including a chairman, who is ranked immediately below the Chancellor. The Senate consists entirely of full-time university members (VC, DVCs, Registrars, Full Professors, department chairmen and two student representatives) and it is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Senate is the main governing body on a day-to-day basis.

Apart from the Chancellor, originally all other officers wore the academic dress of their highest degrees. When I joined Kenyatta University the chairman of the universi-



FIG. 9 Chancellor's robes, Kenya University.



FIG. 10 Vice-Chancellor's robes, Kenya University.



FIG. 11 Robes of Chairman of University Council, Kenya University.

ty council, who ranks immediately below the Chancellor, was a businessman with only a bachelor's degree. At degree congregations he wore his black gown, with hood and square cap, whilst many of the teaching staff wore far more colourful PhD robes. Therefore when the academic dress committee was formed, I suggested that special official gowns should be designed for the chairman and members of the university council. When this idea was accepted, the committee was also asked to design an official gown for the Vice-Chancellor.

Official robes for the Vice-Chancellor were introduced when a new appointee was installed in April 2006. The gown for the Chairman of Council was a sample prepared as the proposed gown for higher doctorates, but rejected by Senate. The Kenya belt front facing was replaced with yellow-gold satin for this new use. The gown for Council members, other than the Chairman, is the former PhD gown, with the yellow-gold stripe added to the front facings, and the former PhD cap, with the tassel removed.



FIG. 12 Robes of Member of University Council, Kenya University.

The use of academic dress at Kenyatta University

Oddly enough, there is hardly any mention of the system of academic dress or its use in any official documents. The Kenyatta University Act says nothing about academic dress. In the Statutes there are two statements. One is that quoted above, that one function of Senate is to determine the design of academic dress and prescribe its use (Statute xv b (3) m). The other, in Conferment of degrees, states: 'The procedure for conferment of degrees, the academic dress to be worn and all other matters not provided for in this Statute shall be determined by the Senate' (Statute xxv 5). The revised designs were presented at Senate meetings in supporting papers, but were not described in the Minutes. Apart from the small booklet produced on my own initiative for the university community and the public (Newton, 2011), no university document has a complete description of Kenyatta University's academic dress.

Academic dress is worn on various ceremonial occasions. There is a matriculation ceremony for new students at the start of the academic year, presided over by the Vice-Chancellor. In recent years there has been a new intake of students at the start of the second semester, also marked with a matriculation ceremony. Matriculation starts with a procession of members of Senate, in full academic dress. At degree congregations there is a much longer procession, including all members of academic staff, plus the Chancellor and the University Council. The degree congregation is held twice a year, in June and December. Less frequent occasions include the inauguration of new schools and inaugural lectures by newly promoted full professors. All academic staff are invited to wear academic dress when a new school is inaugurated, but at an inaugural lecture, academic dress is worn only by the platform party, consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, existing professors and associate professors in the school of the new professor, and members of the Inaugural Lecture Committee.

There is no 'everyday' use of academic dress, by staff or students, such as in lectures or examinations, or even in *viva voce* examinations for higher degrees. Consequently there is no undress gown for doctors. There is no gown prescribed for undergraduates, and so they wear academic dress only when graduating. However, there is one anomalous exception to this last statement. At Kenyatta University, there are two undergraduate student representatives on Senate and even on the University Council. Whenever there is an academic procession, these two representatives are included. Before official gowns were introduced for members of Council, the students wore black bachelor gowns. Now they appear in the procession wearing the maroon robes of members of Council.

The Kenyatta University graduation ceremony

The degree Congregation, or graduation ceremony, starts officially with the entry of the academic procession. Participants are positioned in increasing order of seniority, from the front to the back, and the procession is in three sections. At the front is the general procession, followed by the Senate procession, and finally the Chancellor's procession. The mace-bearer, a member of senior academic staff selected by rotation and wearing his/her own academic dress plus white linen gloves, heads the Chancellor's procession. The university mace, an ornate staff, is the symbol of the Chancellor's authority, and is displayed at ceremonial gatherings presided over by the Chancellor.

Graduands who are to receive a degree of bachelor or master, will have entered and taken their seats wearing the gowns and hoods of the degrees to be conferred. At one stage

during the ceremony they will be asked to stand, without caps, as their names are read out by the deans. When all are standing, the Chancellor will pronounce the award of the degree, after which the new graduates will be asked to wear the caps and be seated.

Graduands who are to receive the Doctor of Philosophy degree will have entered and taken their seats wearing the PhD gown. When their names are read out by the deans, they stand, and are hooded by their research supervisors. They then move forward with their supervisors to the dais, where the Chancellor will place a cap on each graduand's head in turn, before pronouncing the award of the degree for all. Thus fully robed, they then return to their seats.

A person who is to be awarded an honorary doctorate enters without wearing academic dress. When the degree is to be conferred, each recipient is called forward and robed and hooded by two officials. The Chancellor will then place a cap on the recipient's head whilst pronouncing the award of the degree.

The future

It has been shown that the factors influencing the evolution of academic dress at Kenyatta University are partly historical and partly based on personal preferences of those involved with decision-making, principally the members of the university Senate. Apart from hood colours, the style of the garments has been largely followed on from the first use of London University academic dress by the early University of East Africa. The other main influence is the preference for US Intercollegiate Code designs by members of the university Senate who had trained in the US.

The committee was set up as an *ad hoc* committee, but its work continues. In recent years, several new schools have been established. When a new school is inaugurated, the dean is asked to suggest a colour for the hoods, which is then discussed by the committee and submitted to Senate for approval. Kenyatta University now has 14 schools, and it is becoming difficult to find a distinctive colour for hoods of the new degrees. One of the most recent is the School of Law, whose Dean wanted silver as the school colour. However, from a distance this is not easy to distinguish from the white of the School of Humanities & Social Science.

A possible solution to this problem now presents itself. There is a move to organize the schools into colleges, i.e. as larger units within the university, not as separate institutions. At present, there is no provision for this in the University Act. An application has been made to the Ministry for Higher Education, and it is hoped that parliament will approve this amendment to the Act in the near future. As the deans wish to retain the use of school colours, I have suggested that college colours should be introduced as an additional feature of the hoods, so that the combination of college colour and school colour will become distinctive. Exactly what form this addition will take has to be considered by the academic dress committee in due course.

Epilogue

In passing, it is to be noted that the history presented here is also the history of other public universities in Kenya, as they too were spawned from Kenya's first university, the University of Nairobi. Two examples will illustrate this.

In 1984 the School of Forestry of the University of Nairobi was moved to Eldoret, a town 310 km north of Nairobi, and Moi University was established to accommodate it, un-

der Moi University Act, 1984.⁶ This was named for Kenya's second President, Daniel arap Moi (born 1924, now retired). This was Kenya's second university, and it now offers degrees in many other disciplines.

One step further removed is Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, situated at Juja, 36 km north-east of Nairobi. This started life in 1981 as a middle level technical college, called Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology. In 1988 it became a constituent college of Kenyatta University, under the Kenyatta University Act (CAP 210 C), thus becoming Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology. Finally, in 1994 it received a charter as the independent university that it is today, under the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Act, 1994.⁷

Other segregate constituent colleges have evolved into independent universities, and there are also some private universities in the country. All of Kenya's universities have their own academic dress. Although limited to ceremonial occasions, there is no sign that academic dress is dying out in Kenya.

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Appendix. Notice for the public display of proposed revised robes.

*PLEASE PUT ON YOUR
NOTICEBOARD*


KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
INTERNAL MEMO

TO: UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY **DATE:** 9/5/2005

FROM: REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)

SUBJECT: SAMPLE DISPLAY OF ACADEMIC DRESSES

The University Senate established an Ad-hoc Committee on Academic Dresses to design academic dresses for Kenyatta University. The Committee has set up a display of the sample dresses at the Library for your comments. The displays will be at the University Library for two weeks, w.e.f the date of this memo, within which to gather your comments on the preferred designs. Please forward your comments to my office for consideration by the Committee within the stipulated period.

Thank you.


DR. G. KATANA
REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)

Cc. Vice-Chancellor
All DVCs
Chairman, Academic Dress Committee ✓