



Relevance of the Performance of the Dipo Rite among the People of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in The Eastern Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACTS

The Dipo rite is a traditional practice that has been deeply rooted in the culture of the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana for many years. It is a rite of passage that marks the transition of young girls into womanhood, and it is believed to be a crucial part of the social and cultural fabric of the community. This paper provides a comprehensive review of the relevance of the Dipo rite among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The review is based on empirical and conceptual studies that explore the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the rite. The studies reveal that the Dipo rite is an important cultural practice that promotes social cohesion and fosters a sense of community among the people. It is also associated with traditional beliefs and values that are deeply rooted in the community's history and identity. The studies further show that the Dipo rite is an economic activity that generates income for the community, particularly for those who provide services and products associated with the rite. Finally, the paper proposes that the Dipo rite's relevance can be explained through the lens of cultural ecology, which considers the relationships between humans and their environment and how cultural practices are shaped by ecological factors. In conclusion, this paper provides valuable insights into the relevance of the Dipo rite among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana and highlights the importance of preserving this cultural practice for future generations.

Keywords: Dipo rite, Relevance, Cultural practices, Performance, Yilo and Manya Krobo

INTRODUCTION

The Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo residents of Ghana's Eastern Region have been doing the Dipo rite, a traditional cultural practise, for decades. It is regarded as an important component of the community's social and cultural fabric and serves as a rite of passage for young girls making the journey into womanhood. The Dipo ceremony consists of a number of rituals that celebrate and acknowledge the girls' transition into womanhood. These rituals include dance, music, and other ceremonial activities. Scholars, researchers, and cultural enthusiasts have recently developed a greater interest in the Dipo rite as they seek to understand its significance and effects on the community. The social, cultural, and economic significance of the Dipo rite among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo has been the subject of numerous research studies. According to Amankwah (2019), the Dipo rite is considered a vital cultural activity that promotes social cohesiveness and builds a sense of solidarity among the people. The ritual is tied to traditional beliefs and values that are firmly ingrained in the history and identity of the group, the author adds. The economic significance of the Dipo ceremony is also highlighted by Kwapong et al. (2021), notably in terms of producing income for individuals who offer services and goods related to the rite. This essay intends to examine the Dipo rite's applicability to the inhabitants of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in Ghana's Eastern Region. In order to examine the social, cultural, and financial dimensions of the rite, the study will draw on both empirical and conceptual studies. The article will also stress the value of preserving this cultural practise for future generations and offer a theoretical framework to comprehend the relevance of the Dipo rite.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Dipo rite is an important cultural practise among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana. However, despite its significance, there have been concerns regarding the rite's relevance in contemporary society. Some critics argue that the Dipo rite promotes gender stereotypes and is no longer necessary in modern times. Furthermore, there are concerns about the commodification of the Dipo rite, where commercial interests may compromise the rite's cultural significance. These concerns are highlighted in studies conducted by Ankomah and Awuah-Nyamekye (2017), who argue that the commodification of the Dipo rite may result in the loss of its cultural authenticity and significance. Additionally, Asamoah-Gyadu and Asamoah-Gyadu (2020) note that there are increasing concerns about the gendered aspects of the rite, where girls are expected to conform

to traditional gender roles and expectations. Therefore, the problem this paper aims to address is to critically examine the relevance of the Dipo rite among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana in contemporary times. The paper seeks to explore the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the rite and consider the concerns raised by critics regarding the rite's gendered aspects and commodification. By doing so, the paper aims to provide valuable insights into the Dipo rite's significance and relevance to the community and propose strategies to preserve the rite's cultural authenticity while addressing the concerns raised by critics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Dipo Festival

Dipo is a cultural practise of the Krobo people of Ghana that marks the passage of young females into womanhood. According to oral tradition, a Krobo queen named Naa Korle introduced the ceremony to commemorate her daughter's coming-of-age, and it has since become an integral component of Krobo culture (Nukunya, 2003). The Dipo ceremony is a month-long ritual involving a number of significant components. Girls' wearing of beads, which symbolises their transition into womanhood and preparation for marriage, is one of the most significant traditions. In addition, the girls endure a purification ceremony in which they are bathed with special herbs and medicines that are believed to purge them of any impurities and prepare them for their new roles as women. The abusuapanyin, or family elder, performs a vital role in the Dipo ceremony. During the ceremony, the abusuapanyin functions as the girls' guardian, ensuring that they perform all necessary rites and rituals. The elder also teaches the girls their duties as women and the significance of sustaining Krobo cultural values. The Dipo rite is a symbol of the Krobo people's rich cultural heritage and a means of preserving their traditions and values. Additionally, the ceremony fosters a sense of community and belonging among the Krobo (Nukunya, 2003).

EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

One study conducted by Owusu-Ansah et al. (2020) explored the cultural significance of the Dipo rites performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The researchers found that the instrument's sound is closely associated with the traditional beliefs and values of the people in the region. They also found that the instrument's performance plays an

important role in promoting social cohesion and fostering a sense of community among the people.

Another study by Aryeetey et al. (2018) examined the economic importance of the Dipo rite's performance. The researchers found that the instrument's performance is a significant source of income for some individuals who make and sell the instrument to others. Additionally, the performance of the instrument is often used to attract tourists, which generates revenue for the local economy.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Amissah et al. (2019) explored the gender dynamics of the Dipo rite's performance. The researchers found that traditionally, the instrument was played only by men. However, in recent years, women have started to learn to play the instrument, which has led to a significant shift in gender roles and expectations in the region.

In a study by Opare-Addo and Teye (2015), the authors explored the cultural and social significance of the Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study found that the instrument's sound and performance were closely associated with traditional beliefs and values in the region, and that its performance played an essential role in promoting social cohesion and fostering a sense of community among the people.

A study by Annor and Ofori (2019) examined the economic importance of the Dipo rite's performance. The study found that the instrument's performance was a significant source of income for some individuals who make and sell the instrument to others. Additionally, the performance of the instrument was often used to attract tourists, which generated revenue for the local economy.

In another study by Amuzu and Oduro-Kwarteng (2017), the authors explored the gender dynamics of the Dipo rite's performance. The study found that traditionally, the instrument was played only by men. However, in recent years, women have started to learn to play the instrument, which has led to a significant shift in gender roles and expectations in the region.

A study by Aryeetey et al. (2018) examined the cultural and social relevance of the Dipo rite's performance among the youth in the Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo districts. The study found that the instrument's performance played a significant role in shaping the identity and cultural heritage of the youth in the region. It was also found that the performance of the instrument helped to promote social cohesion and foster a sense of community among the youth.

Amissah et al. (2019) conducted a study that explored the changing gender dynamics of the Diporite's performance. The study found that the traditional gender roles associated with the instrument's performance were gradually changing, with more women learning to play the instrument. The study concluded that the changing gender dynamics of the Dipo rite's performance reflected broader changes in gender roles and expectations in the region.

The empirical research suggests that the performance of the Dipo rite plays a vital role in shaping the cultural, social, and economic landscape of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The instrument's sound is closely associated with traditional beliefs and values, and its performance promotes social cohesion and a sense of community. Additionally, the performance of the instrument is a significant source of income for some individuals and contributes to the local economy. Finally, the gender dynamics of the instrument's performance have undergone a significant shift, which reflects changing attitudes towards gender roles in the region.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural ecology is a theoretical perspective that explores the relationships between humans and their environment and how cultural practices are shaped by ecological factors such as geography, climate, and resources (Netting, 1993).

In the case of the Dipo rites performance, the cultural ecology perspective is suitable because it helps to explain how the instrument's sound and performance are closely tied to the natural environment and cultural practices of the people in the region. The Diporite is made from natural materials such as wood and animal hides, and its sound is said to mimic the sounds of nature, such as birds and insects (Opare-Addo & Teye, 2015). This suggests that the instrument's design and sound were influenced by the natural environment of the region.

Additionally, the Dipo rites performance is closely tied to the traditional beliefs and values of the people in the region, which are also influenced by ecological factors such as farming practices and the use of natural resources (Annor & Ofori, 2019). For example, the performance of the instrument is often associated with the agricultural cycle and is used to mark important occasions such as the planting and harvesting of crops.

Furthermore, the cultural ecology perspective can help to explain how the relevance of the Diporite's performance has changed over time in response to changing ecological factors such as urbanization and globalization. For example, the performance of the instrument has become

an important source of income for some individuals in the region, which reflects the changing economic landscape of the area (Aryeetey et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The research design utilized in the study was a case study approach. A case study is a qualitative research approach that centers on a comprehensive examination of a particular individual, group, or circumstance. As per Yin's ((p. 13,2018) definition, a case study is an empirical investigation that explores a modern-day phenomenon in its authentic setting, where the distinction between the phenomenon and its context is not entirely clear. The utilization of a case study design is deemed appropriate for the examination of Dipo rites due to its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive scrutiny of the cultural customs and convictions linked to the ritual. The Dipo rites exhibit a multifaceted and intricate nature, necessitating a thorough and contextualized approach to their examination. The present investigation employed a case study design, utilizing two educational institutions located in distinct municipalities as the focal points of analysis. The educational institutions are Klo-Agogo Senior High School, located in Yilo Krobo, and Obelemany M/A Junior High School, situated in Many Krobo. The selection of these schools was based on their representative locations within the respective towns and aimed to investigate the impact of the Dipo ritual on the educational outcomes of female students enrolled in junior high and senior high schools. The study sample consisted of a diverse group of individuals, including teachers, traditional dipo priests, chiefs, queen mothers, educationists, students, graduates, and pastors, all of whom were drawn from the two municipalities. The study was able to gather concrete data from informants who possessed ample experience with the performance of the Dipo ritual. Apart from elderly individuals who lack literacy skills, most of the population has received education ranging from primary to tertiary levels. Individuals ranging from 15 to 85 years of age. Individuals who were not enrolled as students served as educators, merchants, agriculturalists, and religious leaders. The number of individuals without employment is relatively low. The data was collected by conducting a survey of two schools located in separate municipalities. The educational establishments involved in the interview process are Klo-Agogo Senior High School, situated in Yilo Krobo, and Obelemany M/A Basic Schools, located in Many Krobo. The schools were chosen based on their location in Krobo villages and their potential to yield responses that align with the research questions and objectives of the investigation. Various techniques were utilized to obtain the data. The methodology employed in this study involved the collection of

data through various means, such as participant observation, interviews, documentation, and native speaker intuition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Performance of the *Dipo* festival

The first objective of this study was to examine the performance of the *Dipo* rite among the *Yilo* and Lower *Manya Krobo* areas. In line with this objective, fieldwork was undertaken to collect primary data on the significance of the *Dipo* puberty rite. Analysis of the data has shown that the *Dipo* puberty rite has an origin.

4.1.1 The origin of *Dipo*

In an attempt to find out the origin of the *Dipo* rite, the researcher interviewed *Nene Sakitey (PC)*, a retired educationist and the chief of *Sawer*, a suburb of *Somanya*, has shown that in the olden days, circumcision of boys was seriously observed as a rite of passage among the *Yilo* and *Manya Krobo* people. The rite was compulsory for boys and it was a rite of transition between boyhood and manhood. It was done for all male-born children between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five years, to usher them into manhood. After the circumcision, male friends of the family and neighbours were invited to make merry. This is what a writer has to say about the male circumcision:

“On the day a boy was circumcised, a big party would be held in his honor. The attendants to the party were strictly boys and young men who had already gone through the rite. After the feasting and many gifts were showered on the circumcised boy and the mother. Some of the gifts were cowries, coins, spears and many others”. (Nyumuah 1998:29).

He goes on to say that soon after the party was over, a special dance was organized for the party attendants. This type of dance is called “*Tegble*”, a war dance for the *Krobo* people and was staged at the *kotoklo* shrine. This dance signifies the initiation and recruitment of the circumcised boy as a fully-fledged soldier capable of going to war in future. This ceremony coupled with the gifts that were presented to the mothers of the boys brought about hatred and jealousy from the mothers of female-born children. During the period, a woman named *Kloweki* was observed to have emerged on *Krobo Mountain (Kloyo mi)*, situated in the Eastern region of Ghana. According to Boakye's (2010) report, when queried about her origins, *Kloweki* identified herself as a priestess who maintained an ongoing connection with the spirits in her vicinity.

The circumcision rite brought about tension in the society and the problem was presented to *Kloweki* by the priesthood. *Kloweki* felt, it was unfair that boys had an essential process through which they were able to transit into adulthood but there was no similar process for girls. As a means of treating the female-born children fairly, *Kloweki* instituted the *Dipo* custom (Huber 1993:165). She introduced it as a puberty rite for girls between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Since then, the rite became a transitional rite between girlhood and womanhood for the *Krobo* people and later, this spread to some parts of the Dangme land.

During a subsequent interview with one of the elderly women who consistently participated in the rite, it was revealed that *Kloweki* had transformed the *Dipo* ceremony into a means of facilitating the transition of young girls into womanhood. *Kloweki* aspired to imbue *Dipo* with a greater sense of formality and structure, with the intention of utilizing it to instruct young women in the customs of femininity, while also petitioning the spirits for their safeguarding and prosperity. She went on to say in Dangme that:

‘E ke we kulaa ne fɔli tsuo wo a biyi ɔme ke ba ha Nana Kloweki
ne e se me Dipo ɔ. Ne ke je Nana Kloweki nyakpe laami ɔ se ɔ,
Dipo semi pee Dangme li a kusumi ke ba su mwɔne ne ɔ’. (Nana
Manyeyo, PC)

This literally means that ‘Soon after that, ‘all parents requested that *Kloweki* performed the *Dipo* rite for their daughters; and after *Kloweki* mysterious departure, the performance of the *Dipo* rite remained an important part of *Krobo* girls’ transformation into womanhood’.

The *Dipo* rite was meant to prepare the girls for marriage and to cleanse them spiritually. Another tenet of the custom was to outdoor the girls and adorn them with precious beads, clothes and other ornaments (Nyumuah 1998).

4.1.2 *Dipo nya blimi* (Preparatory performances of *Dipo*).

The analysis of the data gathered for this study has shown that usually, the initiation takes place in the month of April. A period of three weeks is given for people to get themselves prepared for the rite. During this period, the family heads perform libation to call on the ancestors and family gods for their blessings and protection throughout the period. This prayer ends around mid-March precisely. The fourth week after the announcement marks the actual beginning of the *Dipo* custom. Clan priests or priestesses responsible for the *Dipo* rite were also informed and libation are performed on behalf of the girls to ask for God’s blessings.

Among all the ethnic groups mentioned, puberty starts in girls at the first menstruation period. In the olden days, the age range for the *Dipo* initiates was between fifteen and twenty-five years and it last for two to three months (Asiamah and Lugogye, 2008). This is the period in which there are marked changes in the physical, mental and psychological development of the girls. Their waists and thighs get enlarged, hair grows in their armpits and private parts, and they begin to be more assertive and sometimes aggressive. Once in a month, the girl menstruates, and the period of the menstruation lasts between five and seven days. When these things happen, the parents begin to set in motion the necessary processes to perform initiation rites for her. It is a taboo among most Ghanaian ethnic groups for a girl to indulge in sexual intercourse when she had not been initiated into womanhood.

In another interview to find out what preparations are made towards the celebration of the *Dipo* rites, one of the Queen mothers from *Odumase* who was always involved in the *Dipo* performances said these rites are done in a hierarchical manner by the various clans every year, with *Bɔnya-Badzebii* people as the last group of *Yilo-Krobo* to finish celebrating their ‘*wɔ nya yami*’ ritual for their clan god *Ayibida*. The rite for this clan comes-off in March/April and the end of this clan’s rites marks the beginning of the *Dipo* season for the *Yilo Krobo* people.

When the rite of “*Ayibida*” is performed, messengers are sent by the *Nako* Priest (Priest of *Dipo*) to all villages, towns and market places in the *Yilo Krobo* traditional area to announce the opening of the *Dipo* season with a message as follows: -

‘*Ayibida gbe e kusumi ɔ nya. Hɔgba nɛ e ma nɛ ɔ, e maa bli Dipo ɔ nya kone nyɛɛ ba tsukɔ nyɛ yihewi ɔme a he*
(Nyumuah 1998).

This literally means, ‘*Ayibida* has finished the ritual. On the coming Sunday, he will open the *Dipo* season so that you may bring your grown-up girls for cleansing’. A similar announcement is made on the Lower *Manya Krobo* markets by *Asa*, the messenger of *Nana Kloweki*. Upon these announcements, the people in the villages and towns who have uninitiated adult daughters or who, for financial or other reasons, have decided to let the younger girls go through the ritual, begin to prepare towards it.

4.1.2.1 Introduction of the new initiates to the *dipo* rite of passage

Typically, the *Dipo* initiates are acquainted with their ancestral abode. On the day designated for the daughters of a specific "house" to relocate to their hometown on *Krobo Mountain*, her relatives escorted her while chanting their traditional 'hayilalaila' melodies and bringing along

provisions such as plantains, root crops, and palm oil. Shortly after that, their bridegrooms together with some friends follow in a gay procession, with their foodstuffs. It was also a custom for the young ladies to carry big pots of water from the *Okwe* stream up to the hill. Excitement ran high when they arrived. Both the new-comers and the women folk of the girls' kin group joined in the singing and dancing to the peculiar '*hayilalaila*' tune (Huber 1993).

This was also the time for the old ladies to place some grains of millet into a pot and soak them with water, as they now know the number of people presented for the rites. This is the first phase in the process of producing the millet beer called *ngma-da*.

An informant lamented: "*Hmmmm, jame a afeɔ ni ne ɔme tsuo laa nge wa mwɔne ne ɔ Dipo semi mi*" meaning: 'All these beautiful things are no more part of the Dipo rite performance in present days'.

4.1.3 *Susuma tsemi* (Calling of the soul)

At this juncture, the parents of the young lady were required to pay a visit to the shrine, where the priest would seek counsel from the spirits regarding the permissibility of conducting the Dipo rite for the individual. The procedure is commonly referred to as *susuma tsemi*, denoting the invocation of the 'soul', the metaphysical aspect of an individual's identity (Steegstra 2004: 329). The *Krobo* people believe that there are three worlds. They are the physical world, the world of the dead and the world of the ancestors. They believe that life in the world of the ancestors is just a carbon copy of what is happening in this world. It is also believed that in this world, one becomes what he was in the world of the ancestors. As a result of this, the parents of the Dipo girls go to the fetish grove to consult the souls of their initiates as to the form the Dipo custom should take (Nyumuah 1998).

The data shown that the *Krobo* people go by the instruction from the ancestors since it was a believe and legacy they inherited.

4.1.4 *Da puami* (Millet soaking)

This is the process of soaking of millet for the preparation of the local beer called *Ngma-da* that would be used throughout the *Dipo* rite ceremony. I was told that after the announcement is made, a traditional beer is prepared for the week's ceremony. The beer is prepared with soaked millet. The soaking of the millet is done by an old woman in the family from the *Dipo* girl with a girl who is a virgin. This is done so that the beer to be prepared would not be tainted with any filth. The millet is left in water to germinate. If it is realized that if the soaked millet

starts breeding maggots, it means a bad omen, and purification rite has to be performed before the ceremony. The actual brewing of the beer is done on Friday.

4.1.5 The Initiation Ceremony

The initiation ceremony is the ceremony that gives identity to the young girl who is ready for the *Dipo* rite performance. This ceremony is usually done on Thursday or Sundays which are sacred days for *Nana Kloweki*. It is done a week prior to the actual performance of the custom but at present, it is done on Thursday prior to the Friday when everything begins. This initiation ceremony marks the actual transition from girlhood to womanhood and it is a way of changing the appearance of the girls.

One of the priestesses responsible for *Dipo* in *Agɔmaano*, *Odumase Krobo*, indicated that the initiation ceremony is marked by replacing the normal beads women wear around their waists with a simple string known as *glo*, made from the pineapple leaves with only one reddish bead tied to it. This first little ceremony is called *kpa-womi* (tying the string) and, like the preceding rite, is done by a very old lady (*yomoyo*), if possible, a first-born, of the house. After this step, an exceptionally large and shining red loin cloth that almost reaches the ground is worn by each initiate as illustrated in picture 1. The loin cloth is called “*subue*” in *Dangme*.

Figure 1: Young Ladies and Kids Cladded in Red Loin Cloths Carrying Calabashes



Source: Field work 22/04/2016

4.1.6 *Dipo yihi a he so tomi* (Marking the *dipo* initiates)

Another aspect of the initiation ceremony is the marking of the initiates. This is the performances of the ritual shaving of the lower parts of the head “*yi se pomi*” or “*klohue* on the same day. An old woman uses knife to shave the girls’ heads, which, they say, has been the characteristic style of the old *Krobo* fashion (*Kloweki*). This is followed by the tying of a special raffia-liked fiber, around the candidates’ neck. The marking ceremony is the preliminary rite that is performed for the *Dipo* initiates by the priests or priestesses in charge of *Dipo* in the clans. From this stage, a large skin of an antelope is laid on the ground and three times the girls are led by an old woman to stand on it three times. This skin, which is kept in most of the houses solely for the *Dipo* celebration, is held somewhat sacred. There is the belief that, if a girl is pregnant and stands on it, she would become mad. It is an exercise that is used to test the purity and integrity of the girls. As they stand on the skin and the old woman ties a raffia fiber around their neck, she recites the following words: *Ingɛ nyɛ nɔ nɛ ji wa kusumi pee ha nyɛ konɛ e pee nyɛ Dipo yi*” meaning ‘I am performing this traditional rite for you, so that you will become adult *Krobo*-women. (Huber 1993).

4.1.7 Various Forms of Marking the Initiates

This section discusses the various initiation marks of a *Dipo* girl. The marking of the girls’ body parts is of great significance and the various marks girls make them become fully fledged *Krobo* women. The various marks and their related meanings are discussed below:

4.1.7.1 *Bɛɛmi bɔ* (Sweeping marks)

The sweeping marks consist of nine small cuts made between the thumb and the wrists. This mark is a certificate of proficiency, maturity and mastering in sweeping, making and plastering of hearth, washing, cooking, and pounding of *fufu* and palm nut soup, cleaning, carrying, lifting and general sanitation. This is done openly for everyone to witness. The examples of the ‘*bɛɛmi bɔ*’ are as follows.

Figure 2: *Bɛɛmi bɔ* (Sweeping marks)



Source: Field work. 25/04/2017

4.1.7.2 *Fomi bo* (Childbearing mark)

Childbearing mark “*Fomi bo*” is incision on the lower part of the abdomen of the *Dipo* girls. This signifies the maturity of the belly for childbearing and the maturity of the pelvic bones. This always happens between the *Dipo* priest, *Dipo* girls and their mothers.

4.1.7.3 *Gba bo* (Marriage mark)

Gba bo, ‘the marriage mark’ is incised at the back of the waist. This stands solely for sexual fidelity which implies that an initiate should not allow any man to hold her waist or expose her nudity to any man except the husband. To make all the marks visible, the wounds are treated with powdered charcoal so as to form small scars with dark spots. Formerly, the incision of the marks was compulsory but presently people do it if they like. It is done confidentially between the *Dipo* priests, *Dipo* girls and their mothers.

4.1.7.4 *Mumu mi he piε pomi* (Spiritual protection)

Right after the various traditional marks, the girls are taken through a ritual bath for spiritual protection. Libation is then performed with millet beer, palm-wine and schnapps (tripe libation) asking for spiritual blessing and protection for the girls. This is followed by slaughtering of a male goat (*to gbemi*) provided by each girl’s family. The blood of the goat is allowed to flow under the feet of each *Dipo-yo*. This represents a form of spiritual cleansing to prevent anything that will stop the girl from moving into womanhood or adulthood.

4.1.8 *Ngma- da hoomi* (Brewing the millet beer)

This in the preparation of the actual local beer called *Ngma-da* that would be used in the *Dipo* rite ceremony. On the Friday before the said Saturday, is when the women start preparing the millet beer. This brewing is not done in an ordinary kitchen because it demands the use of large cooking pots. In place of the kitchen, they dig a small trench in the form of a cross or a “T” square into which they place some firewood. In large cooking-pots, the millet flour is dissolved in water and boiled on the fire. The ladies stirred with a long wooden stick “*kutsie*” in their hands and begin to dance around the fireplace singing, in the same lively *ha* tune. According to an informant, the grains, which were soaked and allowed to ferment after which is dried are carried to the grinding stone. The old lady in charge holds the hands of each candidate, three times they perform together the action of grinding, according to the old traditional way; i.e. by means of a smaller cylindrical stone, and they mash the millet grains upon a larger hollowed stone or a clay base to flour, which another initiate collects into a calabash (Huber 1993:168).

The data collected indicates that the performance of this rite introduces the *Dipo* girls to the art of grinding on a grinding stone because in the days of old, grinding machines were not available.

In the midst of the brewing, the women dance around the fireplace to the tune of *Klama* songs. After long hours of boiling, the brewing assumes the brownish colour and taste of the so-called, the ancient *Adanme* beer (Huber 1998:170). Should one of the pots break during the boiling, it is taken as a sign that one of the girls is hiding a pregnancy. The beer is not tasted till the following day, the Saturday, when other important performances commence. The brewing ceremony ends the preliminary ceremonies of the *Dipo* rite. No other rites are performed on the subsequent days until the next Saturday. The candidates use this free period mainly to practice dancing.

4.1.9 *Pa mi yami* (Going to the stream)

Pa mi yami is another activity of the *Dipo* rite that the candidates are taken through to prepare them for their future marriage lives. Under the supervision of an elderly woman by the name of Yomo, the initiates are dispatched to the several streams for the ceremonial bath and the demonstration of washing prowess. The *Pa mi yami* rite is performed in the morning, when the *Dipo* girls march one behind the other while only wearing their loincloth and new goods such as a calabash, traditional sponge, and towel. They bring along their family members' soiled clothing and linen for washing. They wash their clothes, take a bath, and then head back home. On their way to and from the stream, applicants are not allowed to speak to anyone. According

to an insider, a Dipo activist, this "pa mi yami" ceremony was performed to ceremonially purify the Dipo girls of any spiritual impurities in preparation for the most important event on Sunday. They are also taught how to wash their clothes and themselves during this time. She claimed that when they return home, people sing and dance to Klama music to welcome them. Then several of the girls start making food for the home, including yams, plantains, and soup (Nyumuah 1998).

Following their traditional bath, the Dipo girls draw the millet drink that was made on Friday into small calabashes and give them to their own fathers, mothers, and relatives before they take part themselves. An anonymous source claimed that this is no longer the case because their fathers no longer take part in the Dipo ceremonies. All of the home guests as well as residents of the neighbourhood were once again served the opulent meals that had been prepared. Because it is thought that the ancestor spirits are the keepers and protectors of all traditions and institutions, some of the dishes are reserved for them. Before the initiates could partake in the communal feast, the old lady placed grains of roasted corn, groundnuts, sugar cane, and coconut on their lips three times in succession. She warns them that they are about to begin their actual initiation period and should refrain from consuming any foods that are not original Krobo diets. According to tradition, the priest of the clan receives a sizable piece of the meals along with the millet beer. Together with girls and women, they marched about the neighbourhood singing and celebrating. They do this in order to invite friends, family, and neighbours who live nearby to participate in the events that would conclude the Dipo ceremony the following day (Huber 1993: 183).

4.1.10. *Hɔ fufui gbeemi* (Saturday's fufu pounding).

The *fufu* pounding is one of the activities that the *dipo* initiates are taken through to prepare them for their future marriage lives. This activity occurs on Saturday.

Krobo diet consisting of plantain *fufu* and palm nut soup is prepared. In the course of this food preparation, the millet drink '*Ngma da*' is served to all people present. Part of the drink is used by an old lady to perform libation to the ancestors, deities and the gods for their blessings. Before the *Dipo* girls eat their meal, a custom is performed for them to remind them that from that moment up to the end of all the rituals, they are not to eat any foreign diet because the *Totloku* 'the sacred stone' hates all diets of foreign origin. Some tubers they are permitted to

eat are water yam and white guinea yam. After that libation is made to the ancestors to ask for blessings for the *Dipo* initiates.

4.1.11 *Dipo tsu mi womi* (Confinement of *Dipo* girls)

During the performance of the *dipo* rite, the *dipo* initiates are confined for seven days to receive pieces of advice and training to prepare them for their future lives.

The analysis of the data has also shown that, on the Sunday night the initiates are led to the *Dipo-room* in which they are separated from the outside world for a week. During the confinement period, the initiates are entertained with games and storytelling to keep them from loneliness. The choice of food during this period of confinement is restricted to: millet and maize dishes, specific kinds of river fishes and vegetables or soup of okro leaves. Whenever the candidates have to leave the room, they should not do it without first covering their hairs with the *Dipo* hats with a white cloth around it. This is done to protect their hairs before it is been shaved since it needs not to be seen until it is finally shaved.

4.1.11.1 Vocational training

In the performance of the *dipo* rite, the initiates are given some vocational training to help them in life. The training given to initiates help them as future *Kloyi* ‘*Krobo women*’ to support the future vocational activities of their would-be husbands. It was indicated that the initiates are given training in house craft, home management and child bearing. The activities included in this period, embraces daily practical sanitation activities such as sweeping, scrubbing, cleaning, dusting, washing, cleanliness and personal hygiene. They are also taught handicrafts, weaving of mats; basket (*digblo*) made from “*womla*”, traditional purse and raffia bags. The preparation of various types of pots such as *ka*, *kutu*, *likokɔ*, *ngmawe* and many others were also taught. The initiates were told stories that concern marriage and how people can contract good marriages. These things were done to let the *dipo* girls have a clear insight into womanhood and its attendant demands. The picture in figure 2 shows an example of a young lady who has attained the actual age and went through the *Dipo* rite performance this year April, 2017, at *Somanya*.

I will suggest that the elders of *Krobo* land allow ladies who are of age like the lady in figure 2 below, to cover their breast up with a piece of cloth. This will prevent many of these ladies from shying away from the *dipo* rite and also discouraged parents from initiating their girl children at their tender ages.

Figure 3: *A picture of a young lady who has attained the age of 22*



Source: *Field work 22/04/2017*

It was further explained that, in the ancient time, the *Dipo-girls*, during this week of confinement, were under the strict supervision of the *Kloweki* priestess.

“In virtue of her religious authority and her blameless reputation, she commanded that respect which was necessary in supervising the ritual dedication of the female young generation. In her personality and her sacred function was epitomized the tenor of ancient Krobo tradition. There are a good number of old women still alive, who passed their initiation on Krobo Mountain” (Nanegbe 2016: 132).

In line with this, it was revealed that the priestess of *Nana Kloweki* use to sit outside the room, in which the girls were confined, preventing the initiates from leaving their seclusion and the young men from entering their *dipo*. It was told that on the Krobo Mountain, there were more than one such rooms of confinement. They used to be attached to the shrine of a deity. Some informants say that the girls were allowed to pass the night in their home-compounds. On the mountain, these closing rites used to start on a Saturday with that ceremony which gave the name to the whole celebration, i.e., with the “washing of the head” (*yi mi fɔmi*). First old woman took the *dipo*-hats off three times. This in effect cleans the girl from any bad omen that might have followed her or impede the success of the girl.

Upon this a magical rite called *gani womi* (fixing the *gani*), which is still practiced today, is performed. The so-called *gani* are said to be hair from an elephant. They are about six inches long. The old lady first touches the ground with them and then puts them on the girl's head. During this rite, the latter acts like someone who is possessed with the spirit of the ancestors swaying her head from one side to the other side. This is repeated three times before the *gani* is tied to the head. This symbolizes of cleanliness from any filth.

On the same day, initiates wear heavy, beautiful garments, silk kerchiefs, beads, diamonds, and scarlet parrot feathers. Women hang beads around girls' necks, wrists, arms, waists, and legs. They sing and dance to *ha-ye* or *sa-yo* while decorating. The ladies' provocative mimicry suggests physical maturity and fecundity. In their full dress, the initiates are escorted to the open complex, where the male members of the "House" and representatives of the mother's and bridegroom's skin groups watch their first dancing performance. In short steps, gracefully swaying her hands, each of them modestly and quietly in "passel" walks ahead, turns right, left, and backward, revealing her charms and dance talents, while the singers, men and women, celebrate their beautiful looks and the happy end of their initiation. Her mother proudly spreads her cloth in front of the dancing daughter, while her father softly embraces her and kneels as her seat of honour. Most houses play drums, and women clap to the dance, which is repeated on Saturday nights and especially on Sunday and Monday (Nyumuah 1998).

4.1.12. *Yo sami nya blimi* (Opening of sex door)

Opening of sex door is a special ceremony that the *dipo* initiates go through during the *dipo* rite performance. This important aspect of the ceremony permits the initiates to accept proposals from men since they can be engaged in sexual activities after that ceremony. It is like a license offered them after the rite.

The text elaborated that this tradition was observed for female individuals during their period of seclusion. During a specific phase, the female individuals are instructed to assume a prone position while their cranial regions are obscured by a textile material. A youthful male, belonging to their group, attired in a white loincloth adorned with beads and possessing lustrous hair, is presented within the confines of the chamber. Like the ceremonial practices observed during the *Dipo* initiation, the individual in question is required to assume a standing position atop an antelope hide, while a group of women perform traditional songs and engage in dance movements around him in a manner befitting a tribal leader. The individual is required to wear

traditional sandals and carry a walking stick adorned with white clay smudges, while also holding a chewing stick known as 'tso kpekpe' in their mouth. The young man is made to walk either on a mat or cloth on the floor three times to and from the *Dipo* room. After the third one, the *Dipo* priestess pours libation to the *Dipo-deity-Nana Kloweki*, the ancestors and the gods to bless the initiates with fertility. This ceremony is done solemnly amidst the singing of songs by the women folk. After the libation is performed, one of the elderly women leads the young man into the room. While the girls are sleeping with their heads covered, the young man is made to sit three times on each girl's buttocks. The old lady says the following words simultaneously with this performance:

'Kε je muene ne ɔ ke yaa, blɔ ke ha nyumu ke yo buami bli ke ha mo. Mo fɔ bime fuu'.

Literally means:

'From today, the way to sex life is opened to you. May you bear many children?'

When the above ceremony is over, the old lady puts broom and a stick into the hands of the girls three times. This is a sign that they have finished their training in home management, housecraft, childbearing and that they are qualified to manage homes like women. "*Yo Sami*" ceremony ritually signifies that the girls are now women, and they may begin sexual life with men and have conception without incurring the displeasure of society and the deities.

4.1.13 *Tεgbεε yami* (Going to the *Dipo* shrine)

The climax of the rites is the Sacred Stone Ceremony '*Tεgbεε yami*' that takes place on Sunday evening before the girls go to a place known as *Yomo we mi* 'the house of the old lady' for the ceremony. Libation is made for them. Old women carrying presents such as millet beer, flour, and dried fish to the priests and priestesses who will perform the ceremony, accompanies the girls. On arrival, libation is made and the girls are led to a sacred pot filled with medicine with which they are washed to cleanse them from any curse against their destiny. They are then marked with sharp knives around their wrists and waists to signify that they are ready for the final ritual. The newly initiated *Dipo* girls are confined between one to two month in the olden days during which experienced women teach them *Krobo* tradition and practices. They also learn *Krobo* songs, dance and dressing. Incisions are made on the thumbs and wrists of the girls. These serve as indicators that they have undergone the initiation rites and that they are *Krobo women*. An elephant hair is tied around the head of each initiate to protect her from evil spirits and ensure her fertility. They are then neatly dressed and led outside the house amid the

singing of *Dipo* songs (*ha-yi*) and dancing *klama* dances. They later go around town thanking relatives and friends who helped to make the initiation ceremony possible. Gifts are often given wherever they go (Huber 1963).

They are dressed in white cotton cloths which signify victory over struggle and purity and are led to the *tegbete* by an old woman who had also gone through the *Dipo* rite.

Figure 4: A picture of the *dipo* girls dressed in white loin cloth and myrrh been led to the *Tegbete*.



Source: field work 23/04/2017

As a proof to ritually certify the maturity of the initiates into womanhood, lifelong visible marks “traditional certificate” is incised on their bodies. These marks are of three different types. According to Obuade (PC), all these things are significant in the *Dipo* rite performance, but they are now neglected because of the changes that have engulfed the performance of the *dipo* rite. *Ma he yami* is a day of rejoicing. Each girl is dressed in a *kente* cloth or the richest cloth her family can afford and wears beads that have been passed on from grandmothers of many generations, a symbol of her family's wealth. Bead adornments may weigh up to 25 kilograms!

Finally all the girls assemble at the village common grounds. As many as 60 maidens-many from nearby villages-sit in a perimeter and dance for their parents in small groups. Boys from the villages stand in the back, each carefully assessing which girl that might become his future wife. If they have found the choice they do everything possible to show their appreciation to

the girls with some being carried shoulder high by these young would be husbands. It is a time of joy as mothers play gourd instruments and the young girls breathe a sigh of relief (Nyumuah 1998). Below is a picture of a young lady carried shoulder high by the future husband.

Figure 5: Picture of a young lady carried shoulder high by the future husband from *tegbete*.



Source: Ghana Dipo Image

The picture above shows a man who has found his spouse and assisting her during the ceremony of the *dipo* rite to the durbar ground for merry making. This assistance of shoulder carrying comes in when the *dipo* girl is tired of walking due to some anticipated difficulties the girl might be going through.

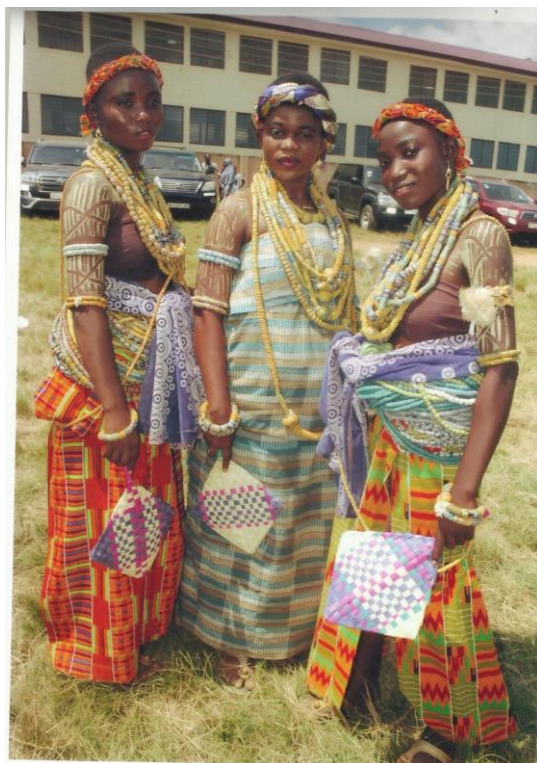
4.1.14 *Yi fɔmi* (washing the head)

The last rite performed for the *dipo* girls is *Yi fɔmi*. It is done on Monday morning. Early in the morning, the *dipo* priestess or an old woman takes off the *dipo* hat from the head of the initiates three times. With a native soap *Klo jale* and *Kitikoto* leaves, she washes their heads three times. She then uses a colour obtained from red cam wood and paints with her fingers. In another development, she places three *Kitikoto* leaves on their heads and replaces the hats for a moment. On the washed head, a magical rite known as “*gani*” is performed. “*Gani*” comprises of the hair of the elephant ears woven into a crown, soul, the spirit and as a special protection for fertility (Numuah 1998).

When the *Yi mi fomi* rite is over, the ban of foreign diet is lifted. This ban is called in *Krobo* *blemi* and the girls can eat any food of their choice.

The initiates are then dressed and sent out to thank the people who came to help with the process. On their outing, these successful *dipo* graduates are well dressed with expensive ornaments from the *Krobo* treasury beads of their ancestors and are worn around their wrists, necks, waist and their knees. In addition to these, *odasobɔ duku* (scarf) and myrrh '*mimɛ*' are also used in the adornment of the *dipo* girls. The scarf is to show the wealth of the family while the myrrh '*mimɛ*' is to take away bad odor if there is any. As they go along thanking people, they display their prowess in *dipo* dancing to the public. Many at times, they are sent to the market areas. From all the aforementioned steps discussed, *Yi mi fomi* draws the curtain on *dipo* as a puberty rite.

Figure 6: *Dipo* grandaunts adorned in rich cloths and *Krobo* ornaments.





Source: Field work 24/4/2017

4.1.15 Significance of the *Dipo* rites to the *Yilo* and *Lower Manya Krobo* People

The *dipo* rite socialises mature adolescent females into gender roles in Krobo culture, which values women. *Dipo* girls learn housekeeping, wifely duties, and cultural gender standards (Nyumuah 1998). Participants said the age of starting helps retain these norms and gender socialisation. Since they are becoming adults, *dipo* rites teach females how to talk to people, reply to questions, handle insults, and prevent fights. The *dipo* rite teaches you to sweep, use a ladle to get from the pot, and grind pepper. Your grandmother teaches you housework, hosting, etc. (Boakye 2010). The rite also emphasises subordination to authority and societal order. Women are trained to be respectful, subservient to their spouses, and how to receive guests and win back their husbands when they try to have extramarital affairs. Therefore, girls' roles and adulthood The *dipo*-rites performance teaches the females, kin group, and tribe. Every year, the *Dipo*-rites resurrect ancient customs and reinforce connection and affinity (Huber 1993: 188). The "house"—men and women in their own ways, as well as representatives of the mother's and bridegroom's groups—prepares, performs, presents gifts, and enjoys hospitality. The dead are notified about the *dipo*-rites and thought to participate in their own ways. The ritual of preparing Saturday's *fufu* and Sunday's porridge with goat meat in both paternal and maternal residences and exchanging portions of these cooked dishes vividly expresses their shared thoughts and reciprocal obligations towards their daughter's initiation. The *Dipo* rite and marriage are necessary. If a girl has been pledged before her initiation, these festivities, along

with the bridegroom's and his family's traditional obligations, are likely to strengthen the new link between these two kin groups. Nonetheless, showing off a lot of well-fed and well-dressed daughters boosts a "house's" reputation.

CONCLUSION

The study came out with the following findings:

1. Another important issue that was brought up by this study was that the required age for the performance of the *dipo* rite had also been changed. Traditionally, the girl child has to be matured to a marriageable age of between 15-25 years before she was taken through the *dipo* rite. This was done to enable them to understand the processes and to prepare them for marriage. Currently, girls as young as three (3) years or less are taken through the womanhood rite which is a pity.
2. The study found out that girls who had gone through the *dipo* rite no longer focus attention much on their education but rather on sexual relationships. Others engage in commercial sex known as prostitution. They end up acquiring some STD's and HIV AIDS which will render them a burden to their family members and society at large. This trend prevents most of the girls from pursuing formal education beyond the Senior High School levels. This has resulted in a higher dropout rate of female students.
3. Some of the girl children who were taken through the *dipo* rite so early and start engaging in early sex perform poorly in academics and are made to repeat their classes when they come back. This in effect may prolong the number of years the girl child had to stay in school. Those of them who were taken from school by their parents to places like Accra, Kumasi, and even Cote d'Ivoire soon after the *dipo* rites were performed do not have the chance to come back at all but rather got introduced to petty trading at the expense of formal education. As they started handling money then the zeal for formal education will be a thing of the past to them. Those of them who wanted to go back to school had to continue from where they left off may not be ready to do so. Majority of these girl children will grow to become adults without securing any better and a good paying job and hence become a low-income earner. This will lead to poverty with its attendance low standard of living. Such future parents will not have enough money to take care of themselves and their future families. This difference goes with the fact that a lot of students at the basic levels were more presented for the *dipo* rite performance than those at the SHS levels where they are fully matured.

In conclusions, the traditional practice of *dipo* puberty rite has of late paved way for foreign way of doing things as Africans have become fully ‘westernized’. Western culture is now considered as the most important civilization. The *Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo* ways of doing things have been seen by natives as primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable and therefore relegated to the background especially, in the performance of the *dipo* puberty rite. Not only were certain aspects of the *dipo* rite in the *Yilo and Lower Maya Krobo* areas are lost to the *Krobo* Christians and the Muslims.

RECOMMENDATION

The study made the following suggestions:

1. **Preservation of cultural heritage:** The performance of the Dipo rite is an essential aspect of the cultural identity of the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. There is a need for stakeholders, including the government, traditional authorities, and community members, to prioritize the preservation and promotion of the Dipo rite as a cultural heritage of the Kroboland.
2. **Education and awareness creation:** There is a need to educate the youth and the public on the significance of the Dipo rite. Awareness creation can be done through cultural festivals, public lectures, and the integration of the Dipo rite into the school curriculum.
3. **Collaboration and partnerships:** Collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including traditional authorities, government, and non-governmental organizations, can help to promote the performance of the Dipo rite. Partnerships can be formed to provide financial, technical, and logistical support to ensure the smooth performance of the rite.
4. **Documentation and research:** There is a need for documentation and research on the Dipo rite. Documentation can help to preserve the rich cultural heritage associated with the rite, while research can provide insights into the historical, cultural, and social significance of the rite.
5. **Promotion of tourism:** The Dipo rite can be promoted as a cultural tourism attraction, which can generate income and employment opportunities for the local community. This can be achieved through the provision of tourism infrastructure, including hotels, restaurants, and transportation services, as well as the promotion of cultural tourism events and festivals.

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