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Krobo Dipo Dress Fashion Trends and Culture in Contemporary Ghana from 1950 to 2019

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Abstract

The study investigated the major fashion trends that have characterised Dipo rite from 1950 to 2019. The narrative and descriptive research designs, under the qualitative approach, were used to investigate the major Dipo dress fashion trends. The sample for the study comprised of four (4) respondents consisting of two (2) traditional rulers knowledgeable in Dipo traditions and customs and have experienced the Dipo rite for at least two decades; one (1) opinion leader, and one (1) photographer who has been a paparazzi during Dipo rites for more than a decade. Interview and non-participant observation constituted the data collection instruments while thematic and descriptive analysis were the analytical tools used. The suboe (red fabric), Kraala (white fabric), wax print and kente Fabrics are some of such materials that signal the major Krobo Dipo dress fashion trends. The dominant presence of the Euro-Christian and Islamic ideological infiltration and stereotyping of the Dipo rite of passage in Ghana has been unsuccessful in depleting Dipo dress cultural practice. Four major stages of Dipo rites were identified with each displaying an array of Dipo dress fashions in observance of the rite. They are the tying of string (soni), cleansing initiation (wearing of red loincloth), victory initiation (wearing of white loincloth), and dress-ups (Newuom and kawɔ). The wearing of variations of red and white loincloth, and dress-ups (Newuom and kawɔ) that characterised the last three stages of Dipo rite, revealed interesting stylistic Dipo fashion trends that serve as

Keywords

Dipo rite, Dipo dress culture, Krobo, fashion trend, cultural sustainability, wax print

sources of inspiration for fashion designing. These fashion trends are predominately wraparound with accessories to match. Wax print fabrics were dominant fabrics used by initiates during the first dress-up called Newuom while Kente dominated in use for Kawɔ. The flamboyant public display of Dipo contemporary fashion is undoubtedly a unique advertising platform that textile manufacturing companies in Ghana should take advantage of to market their products.

1. Introduction

The Ga-Adangmbe ethnic group in Ghana includes; the people of Shai, La, Ningo, Kpone, Osudoku, Krobo, Gbugble and Ada. The Ga-Adangmbe people originally settled along the coastal plain stretching from Accra to Tema. The Ada people settled on the coast, west of the Volta estuary while other groups settled among the Shai and Krobo hills. The Krobo, also a member of this group, constitutes Yilo and Manya Krobo who are famously known for the celebration of the Dipo rite (Huber, 1993; Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). According to Adjaye (1999, p.11), "Dipo is constituted as an ordered sequence of grouped activities which uniquely enhance ritual efficacy and collectively leads up to cleansing initiates, to be verified as virgins and presented publicly as Krobo women". Dipo rite is a cultural rite where girls who are undergoing puberty rites are housed under the supervision of priestesses and elderly women for some days and are taught household chores, family life education and how to be good adults in life. Studies affirm that the Dipo rite provides Krobo girls with the opportunity to benefit from basic values in education, domestic skills and various family and communal responsibilities as adults (Quarcoo, 1965; Boakye, 2010; Kissi-Abrokwah et al., 2021). The foregoing dialogue situates the Dipo rite as a unique cultural practice of the Krobo people of Ghana which inculcates chastity in adolescent girls to become responsible women. The performance of each stage of the Dipo rite, calls for its own interesting dress culture which heightens the uniqueness, identity and values. Although fashion trends come and go, the Krobo dress cultural values that guide the Dipo rite are firmly upheld in this era of globalisation (Nithyaprakash, 2015) though exceptions may exist.

The fashionability of Dipo dress cultural trends have assumed a standard measure of social acceptance although the interpretations given by people have diverse stance. For example, during the ceremony, the young adolescents who are the initiates are paraded bare-chested and adorned with strips of

fabric and heavily padded beads to cover their nakedness. Some Christians and Muslims influenced by their religious thoughts viewed the Dipo fashion practice as a way-ward dressing (Langmagne et al., 2018; Atuire, 2019). As a result, the scholars argued that the dressing of the initiates is outmoded and needs some modifications. This perhaps accounted for the reason why in some Krobo communities today, initiates are allowed to cover their breast with a piece of fabric while others go through the rite bare-chested (Emefa & Selase, 2014). Whatever trends of transformation that Dipo dress fashion might have gone through, like any other fashion, its embedded sociocultural repositories remain relevant at all times (Dzramedo, 2009). Therefore, there is the need to examine the Dipo dress culture of the Krobo people in Ghana in order to establish its various trends of transformation and sociocultural implications.

Although the Dipo rite, in general, has received elaborative documentation (Boakye, 2010; Steegstra, 2004; Huber, 1963), much focus was placed on its historical background, ethnographic perspective, and unique traditions without critical analysis of its trends of dress culture. For instance, in an anthropological and historical inquiry into the Dipo rite, Steegstra (2004) documented the changes in Krobo society regarding religion and culture. The study investigated the meaning of Dipo, its insights, resilience and dynamics which resulted in the responses of the Krobo people to modernisation in the form of encounters with colonial and missionary influences, and of modern nationalism. Steegstra found that the Dipo rite received some form of contestation from a session of the people due to their Euro-Christian and Islamic religious influences. Consequently, people labelled the rite as outmoded and pagan. They also hold psychologically stereotypical thoughts about the Krobo people and women as promiscuous (Glozah, & Lawani, 2014). It is evident from the analogy that the negative views expressed on indigenous Ghanaian Dipo traditions as evidenced in the study of Steegstra (2004) were inspired by the foreign-borrowed Christian and Islamic indoctrination, concepts and thoughts. In precolonial times, Krobo girl who do not go through the rite before becoming pregnant were ostracised from the Krobo community (Glozah, & Lawani, 2014). It was, therefore, a rite for adolescent girls that helped them to avoid premarital sex and getting pregnant before marriage. Surprisingly, such a cultural practice was attacked by Euro-Christian and Islamic religious influences and labelled as paganistic.

Also, in an ethnographic inquiry, Boakye (2010) inquired into the historical background of the Dipo rite of passage, the changes it has undergone and the reasons for these changes. The results showed that the practice still has the historical background and importance of vocational training for young women

to assume roles as responsible women in society. With the changes in the Dipo rite, it is common for girls as young as two years old to participate in the rite. Though the rites involve bodily exposure, initiates are allowed to cover their breasts sometimes during the rites instead of having them exposed in the past. Boakye (2010) found that the reasons for the changes are Christianity, modernisation, formal education and environmental changes.

Both Steegstra and Boakye have established that the rite has been influenced in modern times and that some practices have evolved which allow some initiates to cover their breasts. Nonetheless, the Dipo rite presents its own uniqueness in dress fashion that needs to be unearthed by investigating the major Dipo dress fashion trends of the Krobo people from 1950 to 2019. Despite the Euro-Christian and Islamic ideological infiltration and stereotyping of the Dipo rite of passage, it has remained resilient with its attendant fashion practices. It is against this background that this study investigated the major fashion trends that have characterised the rite for almost seven decades (from 1950 to 2019) to establish their sociocultural underpinnings and implications.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Upholding cultural beliefs, practices, philosophical thoughts and ideas are essential indicators that tell whether or not a particular culture will continue to exist in the ravages of time. Culture is viewed as dynamic and evolving. However, when the evolution becomes so torrential and drastic to the extent that it wipes the footprints of once a resilient culture, that particular culture could not be considered as sustainable. The concept of cultural sustainability has to do with the tenacity and yielding power to maintain, preserve, protect and uphold a beneficial culture of a society or group of people. Soini and Birkeland (2014) found in their investigation on the discourse of cultural sustainability through the analysis of the diverse meanings that are applied to the concept in scientific scholarly publications that the scientific discourse on cultural sustainability is organised around seven storylines namely heritage, vitality, economic viability, diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience, and eco-cultural civilization. Their investigation showed that the identified storylines are partly interlinked and overlapping, and related to four political and ideological contexts, conservative, neoliberal, communitarian, and environmentalist. They argued in furtherance that the eco-cultural civilisation storyline suggests culture as a necessary foundation for the transition to a truly sustainable society (Soini & Birkeland,

2014).

Dipo is one of the cultural practices that have survived the effects of colonialism, Euro-Christian and Islamic religious doctrinal attacks without fading out. The Dipo rite of passage revolves around the enculturation of young girls into responsible adults and family life. The Dipo cultural practice has its own dress culture. The dress culture that characterised the Dipo rite is considered as a cultural heritage that may be influenced but not totally changed, a prime reason accounting for the classical and contemporary Dipo dress fashion. The Dipo dress fashion items are classical and contemporary that fit into the material culture theory. According to Woodward (2019) material culture theory centres upon objects, their properties, and the materials that they are made of, and the ways in which these material facets are central to an understanding of culture and social relations. Textile and fashion products and accessories dominate the materials used in exhibiting Dipo dress fashion. The study is premised on the cultural sustainability and the material culture theories.

3. Methodology

The narrative and descriptive research designs, under the qualitative approach were used to investigate the Dipo dress fashion trends from 1950 to 2019. The narrative design focused on respondents' lived experiences that tell the story of Dipo dress fashion evolution and trends of transformation. The descriptive research design helped the study to give a vivid description of Dipo dress fashion and the trends that characterised its evolution. The sample for the study comprised of four (4) respondents consisting of two (2) traditional rulers knowledgeable in Dipo traditions and customs and have experienced the Dipo rite for at least two decades; one (1) opinion leader, and one (1) photographer who has been a paparazzi during Dipo rites for more than a decade. The photographer provided pictorial records of past *Dipo* rites. Interviews and non-participant observation constituted the data collection instruments. Permission was sought from the respondents to audio-tape the one-on-one interview sessions for transcription purposes. Observation of the photographs helped to establish the major stages of the Dipo ceremony and the accompanying fashions worn by the initiates. Non-participant observation helped to determine the changes in contemporary practice to establish the Dipo dress fashion trends. Thematic and descriptive analyses constituted the method of data analysis. Trustworthiness and authenticity were achieved through key respondents who were in touch with the Dipo tradition and customs, and the use of triangulation and member checking. The trustworthiness of the study is

partly based on images presented in the study, to show the patterns or trends in Dipo dress fashion. Also, these images on Dipo were sourced directly from the photographer-respondent and two of the respondents. For ethical reasons the faces of some of people captured in the photograph has been partially obscured. This was done to ensure anonymity. In addition, the respondents gave their informed consent and partook in the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Major Dipo Dress Fashion Trends from 1950 to 2019

The study found that the dress culture of the Dipo rite of the Krobo people of Ghana is generally staged in four major spectacular fashion phases. They are the *tying of string* (*sɔni*), *cleansing initiation* (wearing of red loincloth), *victory initiation* (wearing of white loincloth), and *dress-ups* (*Newuom* and *kawɔ*). Each of the stages displays an array of Dipo dress fashions in observance of the rite.

4.1.1 Tying of string

The study established that *Kpawomi* ceremony is an initial rite that involved tying a string in a form of a necklace in the neck of Dipo initiate to serve as a marker of the identity of a *Dipo-yo* (Dipo-girl) as affirmed by previous research (Affum, 2009; Adjaye, 1999). Before the *Kpawomi* ceremony, waist beads or any other bodily adornments such as clothes, sandals, dresses, earrings, amongst others, of the initiates are removed and replaced with a special waist bead made from a special local string (called *glo*) that holds a specific bead known as *lɛ*. Wearing this in Krobo culture means that an initiate has been accepted as a *Dipo-yo* (Dipo girl) which enables her to prepare Dipo items needed for a closed-door ceremony. The *Kpawomi* ceremony is performed by an elderly old woman (*yomoyo*) or priestess (A. Baidoo, personal communication, March 6, 2019). When an initiate is ready for *Kpawomi*, she is made to undress whatever dress she may be wearing. She is then asked to wear a two-yard fabric in a wraparound fashion covering her breast and stretching beyond the knees. Dressed in this style the queued initiates are invited one after the other by a *yomoyo*, sit in front of the 'yomoyo' to be decorated in the neck with the *Sɔni* (raffia fibre) (Figure 1). *Sɔni* serves as an official identification tag, symbolic and a ritual transformation key for the *Dipo-yo*. The tying of the string is believed to allow the ancestors and the gods to identify with the *Dipo-yo* so that when the family of the initiate prays, favour, protection, blessings and fertility would be granted her throughout the ceremony and her future motherhood endeavours. Also, the *sɔni* (raffia fibre) in

the neck introduces the Dipo rite in the community to signify the eve of the Dipo ceremony. At this stage, the initiate is considered unique (virgin) among other female Krobo people in society and is not allowed to run errands (Nanegbe, 2016; Boakye, 2010).



Figure 1. An elderly woman putting a palm string called Sɔni round the neck of girl to be marked as a Dipo-Yo (Dipo-Girl) to start the rite (Courtesy of Shaibu photos, 2008).

4.1.2 Cleansing Initiation of Dipo girls and its Associated Dress Culture

This stage is characterised by wearing a red loincloth, referred to as *suboe* amongst the Krobo people. The wearing of *suboe*, usually made of red-dyed cotton, is a classical undergarment worn that covered the genitals in precolonial Ghana. In the Dipo rite, *suboe* (Figure 2) is worn by securing a strip of loincloth to a waist string made from a string (called *glo*) that holds a single band of carnelian beads or white beads. The respondents explained that *suboe* is folded in strips and affixed to waist beads both at the front and back of a *Dipo-yo* to cover her genitals and buttocks. The consensual exposition by the respondents about *suboe* is consistent with the findings of previous research (Adjaye, 1999; Ostrow, 2011; Boakye, 2010; Emefa & Selase, 2014; Abbey, 2016). This classical Dipo dress culture is still portrayed by some Dipo girls in contemporary times. However, contemporary *suboe* comes in dyed red fabrics such as linen, silk, nylon, polyester, amongst others as pointed out by the respondents, deviating from primary fabric cotton. *Suboe* comes in different variations of colours in contemporary times as shown in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5. With the introduction of colour variety, the choice of colour of *suboe* fabric is based on the initiates'

preferences and therefore not restrictive as in the case when it used to be primary in the reds. Another trend of *suboe* fashion is portrayed by a Dipo-yo, using wax print fabric as cover cloth over *suboe*, while leaving the chest bare (Figure 3 and 4). The baring of the breasts happens when the initiates are confined in the Dipo house as they go through the Dipo doctrines and indigenous family life education. But, when none of the Dipo initiation practices are going on, initiates cover their chest (as shown in Figure 4). This trend in *suboe* dress fashion was dominant in the 2000s. Though there are colour variations in the wraparound fabrics used, the use of white as shown in Figure 5, appeared eccentric at this stage of the Dipo rite since the red fabric is the major symbol and usually worn by the initiates. The use of white loincloth at this stage is permissible when a Dipo girl is a twin to a male. She does not wear the red *suboe* cloth, instead, a white cloth or wax-print cloth (Emefa & Selase, 2014; Boakye, 2010).



Figure 2. Three younger initiates wearing strings and red loincloth with each carrying a calabash containing sponge fibres and holding a walking stick (Source: Shaibu Photos, 2012).



Figure 3. An initiate in red loincloth and wax print wraparound fabric carrying a calabash, and has some part of the hair shaved; and holding a walking stick. (Source: Cita photos, 2006).

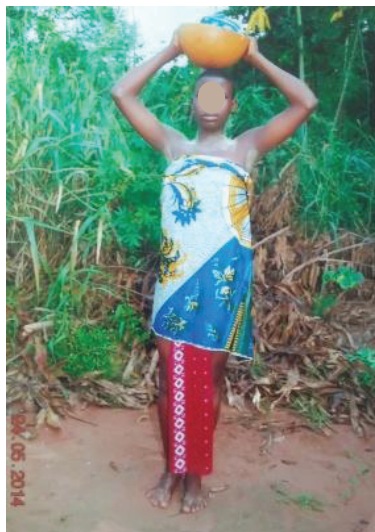


Figure 4. An initiate wearing red loincloth and wax print fabric combination with her breast covered (Source: Cita photos, 2014).



Figure 5. An initiate wearing red loincloth and white fabric combinations with the breast exposed. (Courtesy of Shaibu photos, 2012).

4.1.3 Victory initiation of Dipo girls and its Associated Dress Culture

At victory initiation stages, the Dipo girls are introduced to the Nana Kloweki shrine where they are made to climb the sacred stone. Initiates who have successfully completed the cleansing initiation, are dressed in a white loincloth (*Krala*) just as *suboe* dress fashion (Mutenz, 2005; Sackey, 2001). The white loincloths are either placed beneath the waist beads (as shown in Figures 6, 8, and 9) or passed over the waist beads (in Figure 7). The waist beads (*hungua* or *hunua*) are heavily piled around the initiates' waists representing the fecundity of the initiates. Neck beads (*powa* and *huazi*), knee beads (*zagba*, *huadziato* or *skoboko*), and wrists beads (*koli*) also complement white loincloth (Avotri, 2009; Adjaye, 1999; Affum, 2009; Boakye, 2010). Beads used for Dipo dress fashion come in various colours with symbolic meanings. Blue beads mean something valuable, yellow beads signify maturity and prosperity while white beads signify respect for the gods, ancestors, priests, and priestesses (Abbey, 2016). The type of beads and colour of beads for Dipo fashion depicts the wealth of the initiates' family. Dress accessories such as arm bands, spongy raffia, and long strips of fabric are worn significantly to complement the white loincloth. In addition, an armband made of yellow raffia (dyed) and two black beads, either fluffy or knotted at the ends, are tied to the left arm of the initiates. Also, "spongy raffia fibres and long cut-out strips of white fabrics (formerly goat intestines) are hung

criss-cross around the neck and the shoulders of the Dipo girls” (Kumetey, 2009, p.25), becoming a trend in victory Dipo dress fashion. It has been in practice before 1950, perpetuated throughout the 1990s, and 2000s, and still remains relevant. During the victory initiation, Dipo dress fashion, also varies due to the peculiar stylisation of initiates. Some use a piece of white fabric as breast covers for personal reasons (B. Kofi, personal communication, March 6, 2019). Keen observation of the images on Dipo revealed a gradual decline in breast exposure by the initiates. It was confirmed that there was decreasing rate of breast exposure in public during Dipo ceremony in contemporary times.

The dressing of the initiates is sometimes complemented with a white cape (cut square shape fabric), placed on the initiate’s head as shown in Figure 6. Huber’s (1963) account revealed that goat fat was formerly used before it was changed to the white cape. The white cape may be replaced with a conical hat called *Dipo bee* (millinery) which is a classical practice, used before the 1950s, and is still in practice. The *Dipo bee* is very sacred to the people of Krobo. It is used once in the lifetime of a *Dipo-yo*. The Krobo tradition mandates only Nana Kloweki Okumo (Head priest), and *Dipo-yo* to wear the woven hat because of how sacred it is viewed. In Dipo dress culture, some initiates cover *Dipo bee* with a piece of white fabric (as seen in Figure 10). Figure 11 shows an unusual dress code of a Dipo girl in white loin fabric with wax print fabric as cover cloth.



Figure 6. An initiate (in the middle) adorned with white fabric as loincloth and breast cover. She shows varieties of beads at her waist, arms and neck, across the shoulders and knee. White fabric strips and spongy fibres run crisscross while holding a stick with leaf in the mouth (Source: Cita photos, 2017).



Figure 7. An initiate adorned with white fabric as a loincloth. She wears a few beads at her waist, arms, neck and knee which is complemented with a conical woven straw hat. (Courtesy Cita photos, 1980s).



Figure 8. An initiate adorned with white fabric as loincloth with bare breast. She wears many and varieties of beads at the waist, arms and neck complemented with conical woven straw hat and a yellow band tied to the left arm (Courtesy, Cita photos, 1990s).

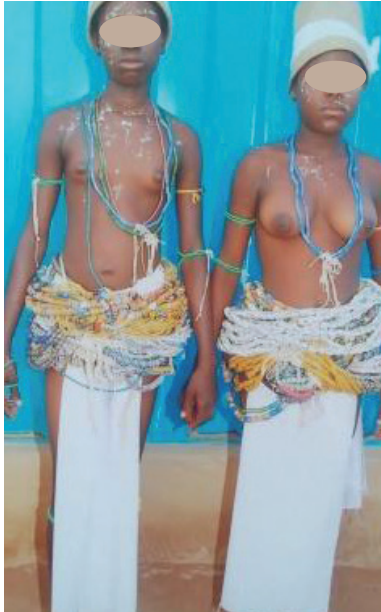


Figure 9. Two bare-chested initiates adorned with white fabric as loincloths. They wear beads at their waist, arms, neck, wrist and knee complemented with conical woven straw hat tied with a strip of white fabric (Source: Cita photos, 2014).



Figure 10. An initiate wears a conical woven straw hat covered with white fabric (Source: Shaibu photos, 2012).



Figure 11. An initiate adorned with white fabric as loin cloth wrapped over with African wax print cloth and bare breast (Source: Cita photos, 2018).

4.1.4 Dress-up Phase of the Dipo Rite and its Fashion Trends

The first dress-up of the Dipo rite is *Newuom*, literally meaning wearing things or wearing many clothes. This type of dress fashion is unique because initiates use African wax print fabrics as a loincloth, and hang from waist beads at different positions around the initiates' bodies (shown in Figures 12, 13,14,15,16, and 17 respectively). MuttENZ (2005) acknowledged that the first three major stages namely tying of string, cleansing, and victory initiations were the only Dipo rite stages until 1897 when the dress-up stage was introduced as *Newuom* and *kawo*, which is still in place and practised. According to Abbey (2016), Basel missionaries demanded *Bobum* (meaning dressing up as an alternative ceremony), which is a revised Dipo rite. Wax print clothes of different Ghanaian indigenous names and symbolisms such as *Obaapa*, *Twa-benkum*, *Nsubra*,

Efie-abosia (Figure 14) and *Akonfem* (Figure 3) were worn. It was observed that the designs of these fabrics and proverbial names did not connect with the Dipo rite. Families of initiates exhibited their wealth, status and socio-cultural importance in society, by resorting to trendy or expensive fabrics on the market to adorn their Dipo girls. As indicated early on, from the early 1950s to present-day Ghana, there has been consistent patronage and use of wax print fabrics in the Dipo fashion trend (Figures 12, 13, 14 and 16).

The hair shaving and bare-chestedness of initiates at this stage have symbolic signification of preventing any bad omen, besides, complementing their dress style. Headgear or wig are also worn to compliment *newuom* fashion. Dipo dress fashion in the 21st century advanced cross-culturally with a spectacular scene that was observed in the year 2012 when an initiate wore a Nigerian headgear style (*Gele*) to complement her heavily adorned beads (Figure 15). In contemporary times, Dipo dress-ups (*Newuom* and *Kawɔ*) in Figures 14, 16, and 20 have become more inclusive with mainstream dress fashion accessories. For example, initiates wore leather slippers; and carried purses, dressing bags, rings, and bracelets to complement Dress-up (Figures 16, 17, 19, and 20).

On the second day of the dress-up phase, initiates wear fabrics they considered valuable or expensive in the cultural settings to perform the symbolic *Klama dance*. This is referred to as *Kawɔ*. *Kawɔ* means heavy or wearing valuable or high-quality fabrics or fashion such as Kente cloth; and in some cases, quality wax print fabrics (Figures 18 and 20). An Example of *Kawɔ* dress fashion is shown in Figure 18 showing puffed-out waist beads worn by initiates. *Kente* cloth is used to cover the puffed beads to signify fertility and identity as Krobo people.

The fashionability of the Krobo people has positioned *Kawɔ* to almost a competitive power dressing event amongst Krobo families and has become a way of showing their wealth, fashionableness and cultural gatekeeping (Figures 19 and Figure 20). Figure 21 displays an initiate whose dressing was influenced by Dipo and Islamic fashion creating a hybrid of fashionableness.



Figure 12. An initiate dressed in the first Dipo outdoor dress up style thus wax print loincloth hung on waist beads. (Source: Shaibu photos, 1980s).



Figure 13. Priest dressed in all white fabric and conical straw woven millinery; seated in the middle and surrounded by initiates in their final ceremony fashion (Source: Chief Priest, 1986).



Figure 14. Two Initiates (teenager and pre-schooler) dressed in their final stage of Dipo Ceremony (Source: Chief Priest, 2000s).



Figure 15. An initiate dressed in the first Dipo outdoor dress up thus wax print loincloth hung on waist beads; wears Gele headgear of Nigeria (Source: courtesy, Shaibu photos, 2012).

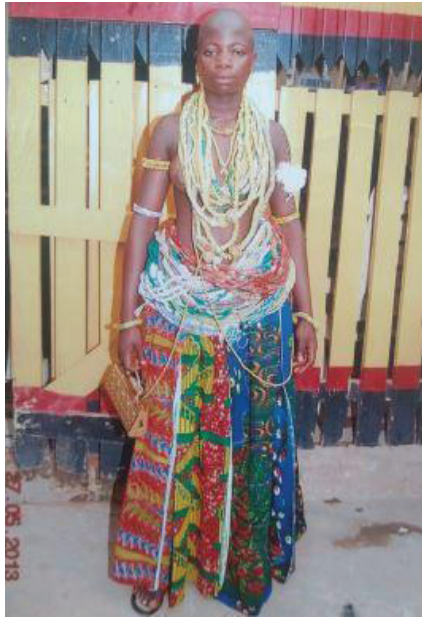


Figure 16. An initiate dressed in the first Dipo outdoor dress up thus wax print loincloth hung on waist beads and have haircut very low with breast exposed (Source: Cita photos, 2013).



Figure 17. An initiate dressed in the first Dipo outdoor dress up thus wax print loincloth hung on waist beads, traditional headgear while her breast are covered (Source: Cita photos, 2013).



Figure 18. An initiate dressed in the second Dipo outdoor dress up in two pieces of Kente cloth and traditional head gear and other dress accessories (Source: courtesy, Cita photos, 1970).



Figure 19. An initiate dressed in the second Dipo outdoor dress up in a non-wax print fabric and traditional headgear and other accessories (courtesy Cita photos, 2000s).



Figure 20. A section of initiates at a durbar dressed in the second stage of Dipo outdoor dress up in two pieces of various local and foreign fabrics with some initiates in traditional headgear and wigs and other accessories (Source: Cita photos, 2008).



Figure 21. An initiate dressed in the second Dipo outdoor dress up in two pieces of foreign; and wears Islamic hijab showing blend of multiple cultures in Dipo dress styles. (Source: courtesy, Cita photos, 2012).

5. Conclusions

The Dipo rite of the people of Krobo has experienced shades of influences, cultural shifts and have proved resilient and sustainable. Interestingly, the shifts have contributed to Dipo dress fashion practices in different ways. Some classical Dipo dress fashion practices such as the treatment and use of goat intestines in the making of fashion accessories including necklaces and chains and goat fat processed in the making of fashion accessories have been replaced with contemporary materials. The use of raffia and strips of cotton-based fabrics has replaced goat intestines that were initially used, likewise, cut square shape of cotton fabrics used as cape replaced goat fat. The photographic data collected in this study showed pieces of evidence that in the early years of the 21st century, Dipo dress fashion assumed a new leaf throughout the initiation and dress-up stages of the Dipo rite. The evolution included a blend of different African and Western cultures in the use of fashion accessories such as metal ornaments, dressing bags/purses, slippers, headgear, wigs and Nigerian *Hijab*). It should be noted that both classical and contemporary Dipo dress fashion are practised together based on the initiate's preference.

Four major stages of Dipo rites were identified with each displaying an array of Dipo dress fashions in observance of the rites. They are the *tying of string* (*sɔni*), *cleansing initiation* (wearing of red loincloth), *victory initiation* (wearing of white loincloth), and *dress-ups* (*Newuom* and *kawɔ*). The wearing of variation of red and white loincloth, and *dress-ups* (*Newuom* and *kawɔ*) that characterised the last three stages of Dipo rite, revealed interesting stylistic Dipo fashion trends that could serve as source of inspiration for fashion designing. These fashion trends are predominately wraparound with accessories to match. Colonialism, Euro-Christian doctrinal infiltrations, Islamic teachings and modernism as some of the factors that have accounted for the change in Krobo Dipo tradition. The change has not been totally negative. Dipo culture has proven to be culturally sustainable. When a Dipo girl is dressed in a red or white loincloth, wax print loincloth or two pieces of cloth (especially *Kente*), it helped in identifying the various stages of the Dipo ceremony and the dress fashion associated with it.

In terms of fashion, the changing trends have been the introduction of Dress up (*Bobum*) as part of the Dipo dress fashion. It was originally not part of the initiation process. *Bobum* has since been fused successfully with the initiation stages as the final ceremony of the Dipo rite and Dipo dress fashion in contemporary times. In the latter years of the 20th century, the democratic environment shifted the trends from the exposure of the breast to the covering of the breast. In cleansing initiation, initiates have the option of whether or not

to expose their breast. However, by the preference of the Dipo girls, they leave their breasts bare in order to experience the rite in the classical way.

With textiles as integral part of the Dipo dress fashion practice, it was evident that linen, silk and regenerated red fabrics were used as loincloth by initiates in the contemporary practice of Dipo dress fashion in addition to the usually cotton-based *suboe* (red loincloth) that was the conventional fabric used. Hence any red fabric is equally representational as *suboe*. Both *suboe* and *kraala* (white fabric) are used in the cleansing initiation and victory initiations respectively.

The study showed that wax print fabrics were the dominant fabrics used by initiates during the first dress up called *Newuom* while *Kente* dominated in use for *Kawɔ*. The flamboyant public display of Dipo contemporary fashion is undoubtedly a unique advertising platform that textiles manufacturing companies in Ghana should take advantage of to market their products. The textile designing companies should consider giving out fabrics to Dipo initiates to wear during their parading of the principal streets of the Krobo township for advertisement purposes.

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