

**MAKE-UP AESTHETICS: BODY ADORNMENT PRACTICES OF
THE KROBO**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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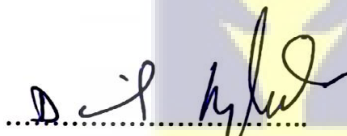
DECLARATION

I declare that except for references to works, which I have duly cited, this dissertation is my original research, and that it has neither in part nor in whole been previously presented for another degree elsewhere.


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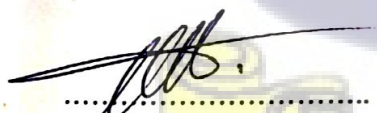
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the glory of God and to my husband, Mr. Davies K. Opare-Darko, without whose encouragement and support both emotionally and financially, this dream would not have come true.



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My first thanks go to *Mawu* (Jehovah God) for guiding and guarding me through the completion of this course. Secondly, I have profound gratitude for my supervisors. To my principal supervisor, Professor D. K. Avorgbedor, whose mentorship and encouragement helped me immensely, I say a big thank you. Prof. Kwame Amoah Labi, I thank you for being there for me and responding to my emails even during Christmas and Easter holidays. You are highly appreciated. Dr. Moses Nii Dortey, I thank you for the patience, tolerance and continuous support and guidance shown me. Dear supervisors, you were indeed essential in the making of this book of literature. I also wish to thank all faculty and fellows of IAS for their support and contributions to this thesis.

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GUIDE TO PRONOUNCIATION

Krobo is written in the Roman script. Orthographic and phonemic correspondences in this thesis include the following:

ɔ	au as in the English word caught
ŋ	nasal velar pronounced ng as in the English word song.
ɛ	open mid oral vowel, pronounced as ‘ ae ’ in the English word jacket.
Kp	is a voiceless labial–velar stop and a type of consonantal sound. It is [k] and [p] pronounced simultaneously. To make this sound, one can say <i>Coe</i> but with the lips closed as if one were saying <i>Poe</i> ; the lips are to be released at the same time as or a fraction of a second after the <i>C</i> of <i>Coe</i> is pronounced.
Dz	is a voiced post alveolar non-sibilant affricate. It is produced by first stopping the air flow entirely, then allowing air flow through a constricted channel at the place of articulation. As in the English word jump.
Ny	a palatal nasal pronounced ny as in the English word canyon.
Gb	is a doubly articulated plosive. Pronounced at the soft palate through a simultaneous closure of the lips and released simultaneously without aspiration. Such as the gb in the sport, rugby.
Ts	pronounced as in the English word bats.
Ngm	pronounced as in the English word hangman.



GLOSSARY

<i>A wo le tsumi</i>	Confinement
<i>Ade</i>	Name of antique bead with eye-like motifs made from slices of millefiore beads.
<i>Aflihior</i>	Name of tiny white beads.
<i>Akweley waabii</i>	Basic style of hair threading
<i>Alalee</i>	Rainbow
<i>Aplechi tɔ</i>	Hairstyle resembling a goat's scrotum for young maidens.
<i>Asafoaatseme</i>	Chief Warriors
<i>Azagba</i>	Barrel shaped beads with wavy stripes.
<i>Bɔ womi</i>	Skin of the roan antelope used for rituals.
<i>Bɛ bɔ</i>	Scarification given to an initiate on the back of her hand on the completion of the <i>dipo</i> puberty rite.
<i>Blema nii nɛ ahe jua wa</i>	Vintage, antique
<i>Bo mibo</i>	Traditional underskirt made by folding and tying a piece of fabric around ones waist in a specific manner to add volume. <i>Bo mibo</i> also serves as a storage facility for the travelling woman to store an outfit or two.
<i>Bɔboyuu</i>	Tiny
<i>Bobum</i>	Traditional draping of cloth leaving the right arm bare (toga style) worn by both genders.
<i>Boham</i>	Traditional wrapper skirt
<i>Dipo</i>	Krobo puberty rite for girls usually held in the month of March.
<i>Dzemeli</i>	Senior priests and seers.
<i>Dzɛh</i>	Diastema commonly called gap tooth, is a symbol of beauty
<i>Eda</i>	Upright
<i>Ede</i>	Crooked
<i>Ehe tsɔ</i>	It is clean, pure
<i>Ehe tsɔ</i>	This is neat
<i>Ehe tsɔ we</i>	This is not neat
<i>Ehi</i>	It is good
<i>Esa</i>	It is suitable

<i>etsiŋo</i>	Traditional skin care product made from boiled palm oil mixed with lime juice and powdered camwood.
<i>Fufui kusah</i>	Day old fermented <i>fufui</i> .
<i>Fufui</i>	Local dish made from pounded boiled cassava, plantain, yam or cocoyam eaten with soup.
<i>Gba</i>	Red soft stone
<i>Gblo</i>	Ceremonial hat of traditional priest also worn by <i>dipo</i> initiates.
<i>Gbo ba</i>	Scarification given to babies who are believed to ‘die and come back’ as a deterrent of death.
<i>Hedrami</i>	Body dressing. One of the three pinnacles of the Krobo concept of uprightness (<i>eda</i>)
<i>Hefeo</i>	Beauty
<i>Hekorami</i>	The way one carries him or herself with regards to dress, style.
<i>Hem te ke nɔ pem</i>	Improvisation
<i>Hialɔ</i>	One who is possessed by dark spirits.
<i>Hiem ke emiklem</i>	Volume
<i>Huajetor</i>	Short, double- cone shaped bead the colour of egg yolk. These beads represent fertility and prosperity.
<i>Huanim</i>	A place of pureness where the Krobo believe <i>Mawu</i> resides.
<i>Huza</i>	Krobo land tenure system.
<i>Kaa noko ne a na ke je ta</i>	Like something received from war.
<i>Kaba ensemble</i>	Traditional Ghanaian female wear consisting of a blouse, slit or wrapper skirt, and cover cloth
<i>Kɔli</i>	Blue translucent bead of high value.
<i>Klama songs</i>	Traditional songs of the Krobo which record their history and culture.
<i>Klowe</i>	Krobo Mountain the first settlement of the Krobo after they moved from Lolovor.
<i>Koda</i>	Krobo festival celebrated to ensure rainfall.
<i>Konor</i>	Title of chief warrior now given to the paramount chief. Meaning, “He who sits on the shoulders of men.

<i>Kpa kpɔ</i>	Knot serving the double purpose of locket and lock for a bracelet or strand of neck beads.
<i>Kpɛɛ</i>	Locally woven basket.
<i>Kpɛɛsisi bo</i>	Large skirt worn by <i>dipo</i> initiates on the last day of ceremony made from cloth borrowed from elderly female members of the extended family.
<i>Kpodzemi</i>	Outdooring ceremony, a ceremony which introduces a person to the public. This could be for a new king, queen, traditional priest or <i>dipo</i> initiate.
<i>Kplokpoyoo</i>	Simplicity
<i>Ku tso</i>	Long wooden spoon used for stirring traditional meals such as <i>banku</i> , <i>dzidzi</i> and <i>ɲma daa</i> .
<i>Kusumi</i>	Culture, could also mean ritual
<i>Kunɲɔ zɔ</i>	Yellow the name comes from the colour of chicken fat
<i>La</i>	A bracelet consisting of the <i>kɔli</i> , <i>tovi</i> and <i>nyoli</i> bead. An embodiment of Krobo philosophy and identity.
<i>Lasogblei</i>	Whirlwind
<i>Lɛɛ</i>	Agate coloured antique beads with special significance during the <i>dipo</i> rite.
<i>Manyɛ</i>	Traditional title for Krobo queens who are also referred to as queen mothers.
<i>Manyɛɲwa</i>	Traditional title for paramount queen or paramount queen mother.
<i>Matse</i>	Traditional name for Krobo Kings
<i>Mawu</i>	God or Supreme Being
<i>Mɛmɛ</i>	Powdered camwood paste used as perfume and a basis for body presentation.
<i>Mue nitse</i>	High quality beads, usually antique beads.
<i>Muɛɛ</i>	Bead mold made from clay.
<i>Munyu</i>	Speech. One of the three pinnacles of the Krobo concept of uprightness (<i>eda</i>).
<i>Nako</i>	Python

<i>Nɔkɔtɔma</i>	Traditional male elders
<i>Nɔ tsami</i>	Repetition
<i>Nene</i>	Traditional title for Krobo king.
<i>Ngmayemi</i>	Annual festival commemorating a large harvest held in the month of October.
<i>Nokuɔm nokuɔm</i>	Hierarchy
<i>ɲuɔ</i>	White clay
<i>Nukunu</i>	Shea butter
<i>Nyoli</i>	White bone bead
<i>Oblekuma</i>	Red seed beads.
<i>Okata</i>	Flat disc-like beads.
<i>Okumo</i>	Title of the most senior priest.
<i>Okyeame</i>	Adopted Akan word for chief's spokesperson.
<i>Okyeame tso</i>	Spokespersons staff
<i>Pa yami</i>	Going to the river ritual. The <i>dipo</i> initiates have a cleansing ritual bath.
<i>Pe eli eha</i>	He does not know his trade or he does not know how to use his knife
<i>Pɛmpɛoo</i>	Small
<i>Powa</i>	Striped or chevron beads of high value.
<i>Sinɔ yoo</i>	Name of priestess of the python deity
<i>Sika tsu</i>	gold colour
<i>Su</i>	Character, one of the three pinnacles of the Krobo concept of uprightness (<i>eda</i>).
<i>Subue</i>	Thong-like garment which can be used as an undergarment or a ritual garment as in <i>dipo</i> ceremony.
<i>Sule nya pomi</i>	Circumcision
<i>Tɛgbɛɛ</i>	Sacred stone of the Krobo used to perform the chastity rite during <i>dipo</i> .
<i>Tovi</i>	Seeds of the jobs tears plant used as beads
<i>Tsimi</i>	Calabash
<i>Tso sisi mue</i>	Low-grade quality beads
<i>Wɔnɔ</i>	Traditional priest

<i>Wo su</i>	Blue (sea character) the colour gets its name from the colour of the sea.
<i>Yi blɛmi</i>	Packed/up do threaded hairstyle.
<i>Yihɔɔmi</i>	Hair threading
<i>Yise poomi</i>	Ritual haircut of the <i>dipo</i> rite.
<i>Yoo kama</i>	Ideal woman
<i>Yoomewii</i>	Traditional female elders
<i>Yoo ne e kwe si poo poo</i>	A woman with ring folds around her neck—a symbol of beauty.

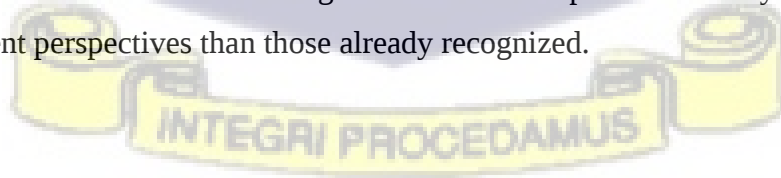


ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates body adornment practices as a visual culture of the Krobo of the Eastern Region of Ghana from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. In order to also document the depth and impact of Krobo embellishment, the study identifies and confirms a relationship between the different genres of verbal arts among the Krobo and their standards of visual beauty within the Dangme society. The study further analyses the impacts of these ideas and beliefs on Krobo adornment and examines how the Krobo apply them to their daily, ceremonial and ritual forms of dressing.

Using aesthetics as a methodology, and positioning it as a framework, this dissertation investigates the perceptions, cultural symbolisms, and significance inherent in the art of Krobo body ornamentation. The methods of research for this dissertation are mainly qualitative; I employ instruments such as interviews, participant-observation and photograph analysis. In this research, I hypothesise that the aesthetics of the Krobo is determined by the people's worldview and aspects of their verbal arts which are expressed in, and inform, the evaluation of body adornment.

Unlike the works of previous scholars whose research focused on the visual aspects of aesthetics in Ghana and the world at large, this thesis makes an important contribution by drawing from the language, religion and philosophy of the Krobo. My research findings further demonstrate that the main principles governing the Krobo social structure, and thus the way they dress, are ground in *Mawu* (God) and the tripartite concept of *eda* (uprightness) namely, *munyu* (speech), *hedrami* (dress), and *su* (character). These findings which are largely informed by language, religion and the philosophy of the Krobo people will not only play a major role in illuminating the study of concepts and practices among other ethnic groups with specific emphasis on their aesthetics but also encourage other scholars to pursue the study of aesthetics from different perspectives than those already recognized.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates body adornment as a visual culture of the Krobo of the Eastern Region of Ghana from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century¹. The study, in doing this, interrogates the significance and multifaceted meanings, cultural symbolisms and aesthetic concepts of Krobo body adornment in order to appreciate what is of good taste, pleasurable and acceptable. According to Aloysius Lugira (1973), a social anthropologist, although the nature of aesthetic value is, in itself, complicated by its own nature as a multi-dimensional and multi-level and human phenomenon, a reaction to beauty is traditionally (and universally) held as the central concept in an aesthetic experience.

Lugira thus posits,

Aesthetics is the answer to the twofold question: what is Beauty? What is art? Beauty is multi-dimensional, i.e. it may be physical, intellectual, moral or literary. It is multi-level in that one may consider the merely pretty, as graceful or as sublime. Through art, beauty can be reached by human endorsement and industry (1973: 52).

This dissertation leans on Lugira's assertion of aesthetics being multi-level to explore several aspects of Krobo culture, proverbs, axioms, historical narratives and beliefs with the intention to help unearth deeper layers of appreciation in relation to the body adornment practices of the Krobo of Ghana.

¹ This falls within the period the Krobo were moved by the British colonizers from Klowe, the Krobo Mountain (1892) to their present day location. In relation to periods, the Krobo have three historical periods. *Oleeno* and *onumakpobe* refer to the periods the Krobo domiciled on Klowe. *Oleeno* marks the time when the Krobo first settled on the mountain whereas *Onumakpo be* describes the period when the Krobo experienced their first locust invasion on the mountain. The third period, *Obele*, refers to that time when the Krobo were dispersed from Klowe- by the British- to the plains, their present settlement. This period was chosen because prior to this, there is no substantial documented works on Krobo adornment practices.

The word ‘make-up’ in the thesis title is referring to the total make-up of a person. And this involves everything an individual uses to enhance his or her body including good grooming.

1.1 Background

The literature on Krobo costume before they settled on the Krobo Mountain is scant. However, there have been some reports by William Bossman (1704; 1967) about the Ga along the coast. If we assume that a part of the Ga travelled with the Dangme² then it can be argued that, to an extent, the Dangme had some similarities in their culture, such as clothing. Wilhelm Bossman (1967:117-121) in referring to the Ga body adornment in the 18th century narrates,

The fashion of adorning their heads vary; some wear very long hair curled and platted together and tied up to the crown of the head; others turn their hair into very small curls, moistening them with oil and a sort of dye, and then adjust them in the shape of roses; between which they wear gold, fetishes or a sort of coral here called Conte de Terra which is sometimes of quadrupled value to Gold, as also a sort of blew (*sic*) coral, which being moderately large, is so much valued, that it's generally weighed against Gold. They are very fond of our Hats ... Ladies plait their hair very artfully, and place their Fetishes's (*sic*), Coral and Ivory, with a judicious air, and go much finer than the men. About their necks they wear gold chains and strings of coral, besides ten or twelve small white strings of Conte de Terra and gold about their arms and legs also they are plentifully stored therewith.



² According to Azu (1926:23) it was the Ga that left *Nadu* to the Krobo to worship when they separated from them. Thus, it can be deduced that the Ga and the Krobo were one group of people who travelled together. Also, according to Ebenezer Fioorgbor, Johnathan Kuwonu-Adjaottor and Melvin Nartey (2019:30), “Part of the Osu- Doku people who moved to Ga maintained their names as Osu. The other group kept their aborigine name La. The rest of the people departed to their present locations”.

The above description by Bossman, on the adornment by the Ga, resonate with the traditional threaded hair styles and ornamentation of the Krobo. Additionally, the description of ‘blew coral’ could possibly be the *koli* bead, which the Krobo value greatly. Though wearing of gold among the Krobo did not start until the 19th century, gold certainly was not a thing to be worn by commoners because of its price and accessibility. Considering weight of gold, I wonder if his statement “And they wear them so thick about their waist, that their nakedness would be sufficiently covered...” is accurate. Probably, what Bossman saw was women covered in multiple strings of beads.

Meanwhile, Jean Barbot (2nd ed, 1992:294) had earlier in the eighteenth century described the garb of the Ga men who at the time, lived in close proximity with the Dangme during the period, inferring that the Ga wore loin cloths wrapped and folded in a way similar to that of the *danta* of the Akan. Barbot further describes a bigger cloth which was used as a “lounge dress in the morning usually worn by wrapping it around the body so that one arm was left uncovered” and doubles as a covering or blanket at night. In a more recent publication by Regina Kwakye-Oppong (2009:77), she states that “the Ga men found it appropriate, convenient and healthier to uncover their upper torso when the weather was extremely hot. Cloths were therefore worn from the waist down to their knees”. These descriptions of the Ga men given by Bossman, Barbot and Kwakye-Oppong also correspond with descriptions of dress from oral history of the Krobo.

As early as the 1800s, the first missionaries who came to Krobo land attempted to modify aspects of Krobo culture, particularly the *dipo* rites. The *dipo* costume was for instance, referred to as the ‘tail dress’ and the young maidens wearing that were discriminated against by the missionaries who “saw the exposure of the body of the *dipo* girls as evidence of the sensuality of the negro” (Streegstra 2005: 95). Also, the quantity of beads the females wore around the neck was considered ‘vulgar and profane’. These

criticisms against the Krobo dressing are also evident in the writings of Johannes Zimmerman (1855)³, a missionary to the Krobo area. In the mid-1800s for instance, Zimmerman wrote a report on Krobo girls being “almost naked but for the many glass beads and other jewelry they were wearing” (Streegstra 2005:98).

In the early postcolonial period in the country, Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister and later President of Ghana, made deliberate efforts to modify some of the forms of adornment throughout Ghana. Presently, various female activists have found the *dipo* costume in particular, offensive and a violation of human rights. Joana Opere, the National Programmes’ Manager of the United Nations Systems for Promoting Gender Equality (Accra, Ghana) in 2010 stated in an interview with Fiona Gibson that, she “made the Queenmothers (*sic*) promise that the next *dipo* would not be like the others where the girls were displayed naked in public” (Gibson 2010: Appendix 1-25).

In spite of these accusations of ‘dressing naked’, the Krobo have maintained their dress traditions, and allowed only the draping of cloth over the *subue*⁴ rather than changing the entire costume. But then what does the word nakedness mean to the Krobo people? Should they yield to these suggestions just because they come from people in high positions of influence in government? I asked Nene Okumo, one of the traditional leaders, whether the traditional council would consider changing the costume into a skirt whilst maintaining the numerous waist beads, but he said the proper Krobo dress was draped clothing and that stitched clothing was not part of the Krobo tradition⁵. The idea of stitched clothing is therefore rejected by Krobo traditional leaders not only because it is foreign but also because it contradicts with the traditional value system of dress, as is with the numerous

³ *Mission Magazine* 1856 (II), p.74 cited in Streegstra (2005).

⁴ *Subue* is a traditional thong.

⁵ Draped clothing is made from lengths of unstitched fabric, which are wrapped around the body in diverse ways to create different styles. The draped garment provides the wearer with great freedom of movement.

beads worn at puberty, which forms part of Krobo identity. External influences where western and other African dress styles, in the form glocalization are, however, copied and added on to create hybrids that the Krobo call their own.

Krobo body adornment practice is an art form that embodies their culture evident in their ornamentation, gesture, coiffeur, body marks and dress. In Krobo society, this art form constitutes both the spiritual and daily material/physical aspects of the people⁶. Beads are central to the Krobo people and their culture, and widely used in several contexts (such as marriage, title taking, the annual *ngmayemi* festival etc.) in addition to other forms of adornment⁷. They are seen in the most elaborate and extravagant manner and in rich varieties that raise interests for enquiry. During the *dipo* celebrations for instance, many ropes of expensive beads are draped around the necks and hips of initiates: and according to Madam Adelaide Obeng, the more the beads, the more attractive it is to the Krobo⁸ — in this way, families sometimes show off their wealth during the *dipo* festivities. For instance, in the past beads were once a means of currency among the Krobo, and are currently used as a means of collateral. Additionally, just as gold is valued for its ability to stay untarnished, well-kept beads also stand the test of time: the older the bead is, the better its monetary and aesthetic value.

Krobo oral tradition suggests that beads were gathered at the end of a rainbow after a heavy rain or were gathered after they sprouted up from the ground^{9,10}. According to Madam Wemtagwe, *blemaa, a muo mue ne alalee ɔɔ nya Mawu ne eke keɔ* - meaning, “In the past we used gather beads from the ‘mouth’ of the rainbow, they were a gift from God”. In a similar study among the Ewe of Togo, Gott 2002:30 cites a respondent who suggests

⁶ Interview with Nana Kloweki, Chief priest of *Kloweki* shrine on the 28th October, 2017.

⁷ The *Ngmayemi* festival, which literally means ‘millet eating’ is celebrated as thanksgiving for a good harvest.

⁸ This was confirmed by all respondents who were questioned on the topic of bead wearing among the Krobo.

⁹ Interview with Madam Adelaide Obeng at her residence. Odumase.

¹⁰ Interview with Madam Wemtagwe at her residence. Odometta, October 2018.

that these beads are the “excrement of a serpent that lives in the ground and these beads were then found at the end of a rainbow”. This similarity in beliefs,¹¹ could be further proof of a relationship between the Dangme and the Ewe. In my opinion however, an explanation for the findings of such beads could be that beads were buried with the dead¹², which after a long period of erosion become exposed to the surface of the soil. This fact of the Krobo burying the dead with beads is supported by archeological evidence and recorded by Gblerkpor (2009:177) and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board¹³.

My interest here is despite efforts to modify the Krobo *dipo* adornment, why have they maintained this extensive wearing of large quantities of beads in addition to other forms of adornment? What is the ideological framework that guides this particular form of elaborate dressing on this occasion and generally their body adornment? Pursuing questions such as (1) What are some significant ways in which indigenous philosophical systems and core values inform Krobo body adornment practice? (2) To what extent are these philosophical and aesthetic principles embodied in Krobo verbal art forms? and (3) How do these sites of Krobo world interrelate, and what is the significance of this interrelationship in understanding aesthetic perceptions and evaluation of Krobo adornment practices? will be explored. In addition to Krobo philosophy, the thesis shall draw references from their language, in the form of proverbs, adages, axioms, myths, metaphor and *Klama* songs and will constitute important elements to help in understanding what underpins the persistence of some of their mode of adornment¹⁴ and aesthetics. These evaluations will be gleaned from proverbs and song texts¹¹ as well. Some evaluations will

¹¹ The Krobo also have a python called *Nako* as one of their deities.

¹² According to some of my respondents, Nana Kloweki and Madam *Dipo* Yoo, a sub-queen, the Krobo have burial practices which include adorning the dead in special beads as well as giving them some beads to use as currency to pay for their fare to the land of the ancestors.

¹³ ghanamuseums.org/arcaeosites-others.php [Accessed 22/6/2020]

¹⁴ *Klama* is the recording of past histories, belief systems and cultural values (Azu 1920). It plays a role in the preservation of Krobo identity by affirming the indigenous proverbs and axioms.

¹¹ Puplampu (1951) calls these the epic of the Dangme.

also be distilled from nonverbal forms of communication such as cloth forms which have their own embedded names and meanings and other texts such as totems and determine if these contribute to part of underlying factors that contribute in determining Krobo aesthetics. Other interests to be pursued are the visual values in the traditional and socio-cultural functions of adornment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although Antubam (1963) —as well as Sagoe (1981), Warren (1990), Gyekye (2003), Fiagbedzi (2005), Sabutey (2009), and Nketiah (n.d) —attempted a discussion on Ghanaian aesthetics, there is a gap in the scholarly works discussed above with regards to body adornment practices of the Krobo. While the literature concerning aesthetics of Krobo body adornment is absent, those on Krobo visual culture have paid little or no attention to their body adornment practices. By simply associating Krobo body adornment with the numerous beads worn during the puberty rites (*Dipo*), scholars and students are deprived of two things: the depth of various cultural considerations of determination of what is satisfactory, and the philosophical thoughts and historical reasons that underpin Krobo body adornment, its significance and symbolism. In this regard, this dissertation proposes a study that considers the ideology of the Krobo as well as their religious belief systems, and events in their history that guide and form the basis of determining what adorns their bodies.

The scholarship on different aspects of examining the Ghanaian visual culture and activities that arouse emotions of observers and wearers, and visual appeals has been Akancentric. However, other forms of studies on the Krobo discussed above give indication of an elaborate cultural and everyday attitudes towards dressing and adorning the body. Will a detailed and focused study taking guidance from their, history, philosophy, and beliefs yield any new knowledge on Krobo aesthetics? My interest in this work therefore

is to explore, as stated earlier, the aesthetics of Krobo body adornment practices by considering new evidence in the field of aesthetics. I thus seek to introduce new dimensions into the study of Ghanaian aesthetics by considering Krobo belief, ideology and philosophy as paramount in determining what is visually pleasurable and satisfies the community's standards and aesthetics.

1.3 Research Questions

The above review of the scholarship suggests different subjectivities or partialities to the study of aesthetics of which adornment is one of such modes of aesthetic expression. Body adornment is one of the ways for the depiction of cultural values, symbolic communication and expression of personal values and taste. Therefore, a community's beliefs are reflected in their outward appearance, particularly dress and adornment. The visual thus goes beyond what is seen and has deeper underlying meaning and significance. Therefore, in order to engage closely with Krobo aesthetics, this study is approached by asking some fundamental questions such as:

1. What is the influence of Krobo religion, belief system, values, ideology and perceptions on their visual forms including clothing and adornment?
2. What verbal arts, and myths support the way the Krobo adorn themselves and provide meaning and understanding to help the onlooker appreciate their forms of adornment practices?
3. What historical experiences, skills and acquired knowledge systems influence the Krobo in adorning their bodies in the manner as is seen today?
4. What physical attributes constitute the essential ingredients for Krobo adornment and its standards for acceptance and appreciation?
5. What forms do the Krobo translate these beliefs, ideas, and notions into and

6. What kind of body is suitable for the wearing of beads, and particular forms of clothing? Will answers to these provide an understanding and appreciation of Krobo body adornment and aesthetics? It is the objective of this thesis that the answers to these questions will illuminate what Krobo aesthetics truly is.

1.4 Objective of the Study

Kofi Antubam's (1963) pioneering work on the main characteristics of Akan aesthetics paved the way for other writers such as Silver (1983) and Warren and Andrews (1977) to pursue further studies on Ghanaian aesthetics. These latter studies include how the Gurensi express aesthetic judgments through wall paintings, pottery and facial decorations (Smith 1978:36-41). More recently, Suzanne Gott (2007) adds a gender dimension to the studies demonstrating how Asante women take advantage of feuding multiple wives and use their desire for fashion to employ aesthetic strategies in funerary presentations at burials. Away from this, Gott (2010) investigates another perspective on Ghanaian aesthetics through her studies on Ghanaian *kaba*, thus introducing a new dimension of studies on Ghanaian aesthetics.

The objective of this study therefore is to contribute to this growing scholarship on Ghanaian aesthetics, by building on previous methodologies that primarily analysed the visual aspects of the body, to include analysis of different categories of verbal arts of the Krobo. Drawing on the Krobo value systems, including ideologies, belief, and philosophy, this study analyses what the Krobo find pleasurable and satisfying. Furthermore, the thesis also explores the extent to which adornment practices illuminate, construct and shape the identity of the Krobo. Finally, the study aims to investigate the symbolic meanings of modes of Krobo visual expressions found in the wearing of coiffure, headgear, beads, clothes and other related works in the form of body adornment.

1.5 Historical and Socio-cultural Background of the Krobo People

The Krobo society is one of six Dangme speaking people— the others being Osu Doku, Prampram, Ningo, Ada and Shai. Dangme, as classified by Greenberg (1964) and Kropp Dakubu (1972), is part of the Kwa subfamily of Niger-Congo family of languages. The Krobo are the most numerous among the Ga-Dangme speaking people of the SouthEastern part of Ghana. Like all the other Dangme groups, the Krobo believe they have their origins in Sameh. Sameh, according to B. D. Teyegaga (1985:11) “Today is a semi grassland between Benin and Nigeria in Ogun State.” However, other scholars say Sameh can be found in present day Nigeria. From Sameh (in present day Nigeria) the group traveled on to Ngotsie which can be found in present day Togo. The group of people that migrated from Ngotsie included the Anglo, the Dangme and the Akwamu. Teyegaga’s assertion is supported by Ray A. Kea’s (1969:29) account of the Dangme migration (see Figure 1) in which Kea states:

From Ngotsie first the Akwamu, then the Ga, then the Anglo followed our ancestors. The Ga and Anglo went on; so, did the Akwamu who let the battle sword of our ancestors go with them and who therefore became warriors.

The relationship between the Anglo and the Akwamu is further highlighted by Andreas Bloern, Governor of the Danish Guinea establishments (1789-1793) whom according to Kea also commented that “the Anglo have from ancient times been allied with the Aquamboes” (Bloern (1788:222). From Sameh, the group of Dangme and Ewe including a section of the Akwamu as cited by Kea journeyed on to Lolovor on the Togologo plains, now the Accra plains, where the Ewe, Akwamu, Krobo and other groups went their separate ways. From Lolovor, the Krobo migrated to their present location in Ghana in the early 1700s (Teyegaga 1985; Huber 1993). It is believed that the Dangme migration was due to political conflicts and wars.

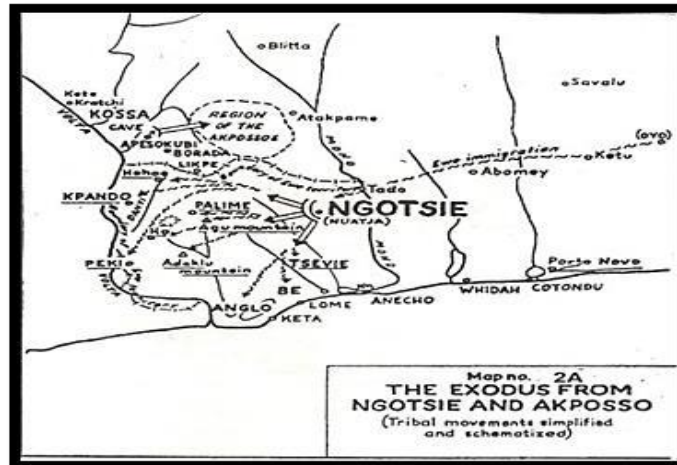


Figure 1. Map showing Exodus from Ngotsie. Asiamah, 2003

In a discussion with Daley Mate-Kodjo, an eighty-nine-year-old female elder of Odumase, it was confirmed that there is extensive reference to Sameh within the popular narratives of the Krobo. She mentioned that in giving the dead money to cross over to the ancestral world, the Krobo say “...*Ni nye yaa Sameh ni ji wa tse me awe nɔɔ*...” literally meaning, “...as you go to Sameh, the land of our ancestors...” She added that in the past¹⁵, during burials, the head of the coffin was always turned to the direction of the East (where Sameh is believed to be) to show the deceased the way ‘home’. Madam Darley MateKodjo’s view on Sameh is confirmed by the *Konor* (Nene Azu Mate-Kole) who was interviewed by Peter Asamoah-Obeng (2012) during the latter’s study on the politics of the stool in Manya Krobo¹³. Obeng-Asamoah goes further to make reference to the following *Klama* song which is sung during the *ngmayemi* festival.

English Translation:

Apepe hamgye tseme

They have become prosperous

Maano bime Ke Tseme

Children and fathers of the land,

¹⁵ When the Krobo say, “in the past” they could be referring to a time as current as five years ago or as distant as one hundred years ago. What it means is that whatever is being referred to is no longer being done. However, when they need to be specific the particular periods of *Oleeno-* the early time of their settlement on the Krobo mountain, *onumakpo be-* the time of the locusts (also when they were on the mountain) or *obe-* from when the Krobo came down from the mountain to live on the plains to the present- would be referred to. ¹³*Konor* is the Paramount Chief of Manya Krobo Traditional Area.

Nye tote ne nye nu samenyo gbe

be alert and listen to the voice of one
from Sameh.

Sameh sameh nye nu o

Listen to one from Sameh.

Nye no Samenyo gbe.

Sameh, Sameh, listen well

Listen to one from Sameh

There are also *Klama* songs that refer to Sameh.

English translation:

Onyue, modu ehe

Onyue, wash me clean

Maya Sameh

That I may go to Sameh

The name Krobo, which has become the official designation of this ethnic group, is spelt *Krɔbo* the way Akans pronounce it. The people themselves use *Kloli* in the plural form and *Klono* in the singular. The name *Klo*, as the indigenes call the town, has been corrupted by the neighbouring Akan (Huber 1993). The Akan called them *nkro foɔ awomu ti ɔbo ne so*, meaning, “The Kro people who live on top of the mountain”. The Akan phrase later became *Kro bo fuɔ* meaning, “Kro mountain people” and has been so to this day (Puplampu 1951). Thus, the name *Klo* became *Kro*. However, according to Huber (1993:15) “the name is associated with Akro Mause the legendary hunter who according to tradition first discovered the mountain (*Klowe*) which was their first settlement after their migration from Lolovor”.

Klowe, the Krobo’s first mountain home, is located between (0° 05'E- 6° 20'N) and is about 70km north-east of Accra, along the Tema-Akosombo highway. It is situated about 2km south-east of Okwenya, and about 4km east of Somanya in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The mountain is separated by a dry valley into two parts; the south-western (Yilo Krobo) and north-eastern (Manya Krobo) sections. *Klowe* has a rocky steep-sided terrain with pockets of gentle slope to flat portions (see Figure 2) (Gblerkpor 2008).

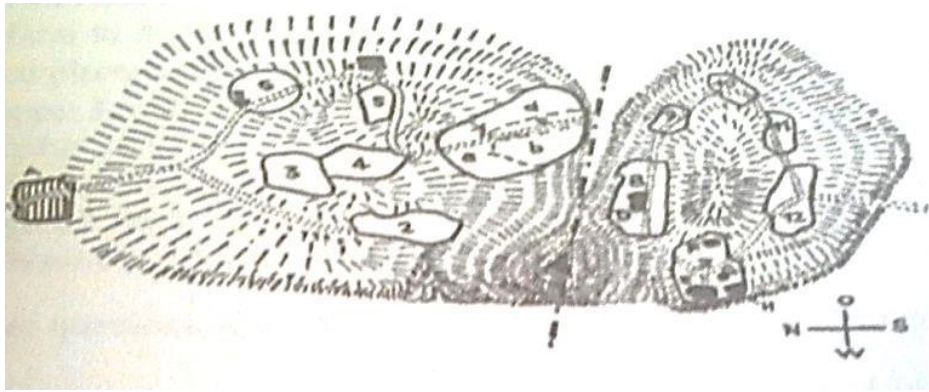


Figure 2. Arial view of Klowe (Many and Yilo Krobo).
Source: Huber, 1993.

The Krobo lived on the mountain for about 400 years until 2nd June, 1892 when they were dispersed by the British colonialists. They were accused of human sacrifice in their religious practices and were thus expelled from the mountain with gunfire and canons. Whilst on the mountain, they incorporated other people such as the Denkyira and other refugees of war into their midst. Before they did so, however, these refugees had to swear allegiance to the Krobo and promise to speak the Krobo language. If they were males, they would have to go through *sule nya pomi* (circumcision), and if female, *dipo sem* (female nubility rites) and their children were to be given Krobo names (Mate-Kole 1955:136, Azu 1926:242¹⁶; Huber 1993:19). With regards to the Krobo individuality, S. S. Odonkor (1971) argues that a Krobo identity, which incorporates the ruling system, *dipo sem* and *sule nya pom*, was established long before the pause in the migration at Lorlorvor and subsequently the Krobo Mountain¹⁷. In his book *The Rise of the Krobo*, Odonkor (1971) deals with the settlement of the different clans and their order of arrival on *Klowe*. He also discusses the origins of the Paramountcy, agreeing with other scholars such as D. A. Sutherland (1956), on the fact that Krobo Paramountcy (chieftaincy system) has Akan origin and thus, a foreign influence. According to Odonkor (1971) Nene Sakite I who reigned from 1867 to

¹⁶ Gold Coast Review, 2(2), 239-270

¹⁷ S.S. Odonkor is a Krobo historian and minister of the Presbyterian Church

1892 admired the attire and status of Akan Chiefs and wanted to be like them. He therefore ordered a set of drums from the neighbouring Denkyira and also ordered a set of kente. According to one of my respondents, Okyeame Boate, even though gold was taboo to the Krobo then, Nene Sakite I undeterred, ordered gold trinkets from the Fante. Currently, Krobo chiefs are all dressing like Akan Chiefs from whom the whole concept of chieftaincy had been borrowed. Presently, the Krobo are divided into two main groups, the Yilo and the Manya. The major Yilo town is Somanya, and the major Manya towns are Odumase and Agomanya. Oral tradition has it that the Manya are the original Dangme and the Yilo are descendants of the Denkyira, the Ewe and other Akan refugees who had been assimilated into Krobo society— this is supported by scholars such as Wilson (1991:7) and Huber (1993:19).

1.6 Economy, Culture and Governance

According to the 2010 Ghana Statistics Board (GSB), the Krobo District Assembly is part of the 26 municipalities and districts within the Eastern Region of Ghana. The lower Manya District covers an area of 1,476km, representing about 81 percent of the total land area within the region (81,316km). The administrative centre is Odumase, which is the main focus area of this study. The District shares boundaries with Upper Manya Krobo District to the North, to the South with Dangme West and Yilo Krobo Municipal and the East with Asuogyaman District.

The Krobo's are about 8,246 in number (GSB 2010) making them the most numerous among the Dangme of south-eastern Ghana. Males take up to 46.5 percent of the total number, and females consist of the remaining 53.5 percent. The main economic activity of the Krobo is farming with cash crops being maize and oil palm (Wilson 1991:72). Other crops planted are cassava, plantain, cocoyam, oil palm, okra, pepper, and

tomatoes. There are also recent investments in Kent and Keitt mango (Okorley 2014:76), and this has both Krobo and non-Krobo farmers investing in mango plantations in the municipality. Some of the men engage in fishing on the lake Volta, which is at the North-Eastern part of the Municipality.

According to the GSB 2014 report, the Municipality is endowed with natural resources such as limestone and tourist attractions like the Agomenya beads market, the *dipo* celebrations and the *Ngmayemi* festival. Some of the natural attractions include the Volta Lake and Krobo hills. These natural phenomena provide cool and serene atmosphere for relaxation and recreational activity.

Among the Krobo there is a general belief in a Supreme Being, known as *Mawu*. However, Huber (1993:233) states that the name *Mawu* is of Ewe origin and that the Dangme must have began using it because of their affiliation with the Ewe during their migratory movements. Huber's thought process is that the Ga, who use a similar language use the word *Nyɔɲmɔ*. This thought is supported by the following *Klama* song: *Wanɔ blɔti watse Nyiɲmo! Watse Nyiɲmo! Nyiɲmo nu!* Meaning, "Let us call God with foolishness! We called Him and he heard!" Similarly, Enoch Azu in his book *Adanmge Historical and Proverbial Songs* (1920) captures the use of *Nyiɲmɔ* in these *ohuesabe* songs:

English Translation

Kogbe mi! I po Nyiɲmo,

Do not kill me! I appeal to *Nyiɲmo*.

And

Wa yaa Nyiɲmo we.

We go to *Nyiɲmo*'s house.

Ayi nɔko la kɔkɔkɔ.

One never eats hot food there.

The above give evidence of the Krobo borrowing words from the ewe and the Ga with whom they have historical relations.

Traditional worship, Christianity and Islam are the three religions practiced in Krobo society. Both the traditional religion and Christianity are embedded in almost all aspects of Krobo life and thus play major roles in daily socio-religious life and during festivities.

Although Islam is practiced, it is not widespread among the Krobo and its influence on Krobo culture is hardly visible. Christianity, on the other hand, has gained more traction in recent times, a phenomenon that has greatly impacted social life to the obscurity of the practice of traditional religion including sacrifices.¹⁸ This can be attributed to the early contact with the Basel missionaries.

Krobo festivals include *Koda*, which ensures rainfall and a big harvest, and the *Ngmayemi*. During the *Ngmayemi* festival, the Krobo make a trip to *Klowe*, their ancestral home. The Paramountcy (which constitutes the paramount chief, his elders, priests, etc.) goes there to perform rituals for the sustenance of the Krobo people. Some townspeople also go there to pay homage to their ancestors. Others also go there for sightseeing—to see the relics of what once was their ancestral home.

In the past the Krobo were led by *Dzemeli* (Senior priests) but has since changed to the chieftaincy system. This latter system as practiced by the Krobo is a centralised form of governance with the *Konor* being the traditional head. The change in the Krobo ruling system came about from the mid-18th century when continued wars of expansion between the Krobo and their Akan neighbours produced major social adjustments within the Krobo society (Mate-Kole 1955:134). In that time the need for constant military readiness gradually strengthened the role of the supreme war chief *Konor*, whose title means “He who rides on the shoulders of men”. The *Konor* slowly took over where the supreme

¹⁸ In Krobo traditional religious practice, there is the worship of deities such as *Nadu*, *Kotoklo* and *Kloweki*.

authority had once been that of the senior priest *Okumo*. However, Wilson (1991:8) has reported that “two factors further expanded and solidified the *Konor’s* authority: a new system of land tenure (the *huza*) and colonial rule¹⁹. The *Konor* rules with the help of elders and sub chiefs. Presently, women —Queenmothers— are also part of the ruling system. New Queenmothers go through the formality of: 1) *nɔ dzra mi* (ritual cleansing- this is done through the burning of herbs as incense, washing with herbal water or sheep’s blood); 2) *ɲuɔ womi* (marking with white clay); 3) *klala bumi* (dressing in a white cloth); 4) *amuɔ le la* (tying the *la*); 5) *anɔ le hi sɛ nɔ* (seating the candidate three times on a stool); 6) *awo le tsumi* (confinement) and 7) *kpo dzemi* (outdooring). These rituals serve the principal elements of purification, seclusion and enthronement. Queenmothers are an important part of the ruling system as they “reinforce group identity and solidarity” within the state (Streegstra, 2009:11). These installation rituals are the same in the other Dangme groups and indeed similar over the southern parts of Ghana. The only difference is the tying of the *la* which is part of the Krobo identity. The installation rites of a Queen mother are similar to that of a *Konor* with only a few minor contextual differences.

1.7 Socio-cultural Significance of Body Adornment among the Krobo

Ghanaian scholar Kwame Gyekye (2003: xiii) uses the term culture in a comprehensive sense to encompass the entire life of a people: their morals, religious beliefs, social structures, political and educational systems, forms of music and dance, and all other products of their creative spirits. The Ghana National Commission on Culture (2016:9) confirms Gyekye’s assertion by positing that

¹⁹ *Huza*, is a system of cultivating farmlands with farmsteads. *Huza* is cultivated by groups of farmers with or without blood connections, and are presided over by a *Dade mastse*. The *huza* system helped the Krobo become major cultivators and producers of palm oil in the Gold Coast

Culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by our people through experience and reflection in our attempt to fashion a harmonious co-existence with our environment. This culture is dynamic and gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious practices of our people. Our culture also gives us our distinct identity as a people. 2.02 Our Culture manifests in our ideals and ideas, beliefs and values; folklore, environment, science and technology; and in the forms of our political, social, legal and economic institutions. It also manifests in the aesthetic quality and humanistic dimension of our literature, music, drama, architecture, carvings, paintings and other artistic forms.

This means that culture is articulated in both tangible and intangible forms giving us our unique identities. Like Gyekye and the Ghana National Commissions on Culture, Clifford Geertz (1973) also postulates that the culture of a people is a deliberate arrangement of symbols produced in the dance, food, religion, scarification, architecture, clothing or oral traditions of a people, with an intention, which is open to interpretation.

The Krobo word for culture is *kusumi*. *Ku* being the community and *su* being the character of the community or the way they do things within the community; *mi* literally means inside. It is evident, considering the above assertions by Geertz, Gyekye, and the Ghana National Commission on Culture, that dress practice is part of the Krobo culture — a storehouse of collected indigenous learning and practices. Young Krobo are, for instance, taught the appraisal systems through ornamentation practices — a total performance and embodiment of the knowledge and know-how of the people which is always specific to a particular definite time frame.

Hall (1976) in his book *Beyond Culture* suggested that culture is like an iceberg. He likens the parts of the iceberg to culture and suggests that culture has two parts: an external part and an internal part. The external part he likens to the tip of the iceberg and this encompasses the visual aspect of culture; and the internal part of culture is likened to the part of the iceberg under water. This part is value based and an embodiment of behaviour,

cosmology, religion, unspoken and unconscious rules. In this regard, the external or surface culture consists of the first things that are easily distinguishable when one enters a community, such as clothes, hair styles, makeup, body paint, jewelry and other adornment crafts. The internal or deep culture on the other hand consists of rituals, worldviews and could include kinship, notions of modesty, concepts of beauty, theory of disease, health, attitude towards sex and concept of self, philosophy and belief system. Among the Krobo for instance, it is these aspects of deep culture (the rites and rituals, with particular reference to the *dipo* puberty rite) and belief systems, determination and judgement on taste, which prepare the individual to face life on the 'surface' — this is always specific to a particular context and historical period.

In this thesis, I define culture as a self-sustaining and developmental form of behaviour that embodies the know-how of a people. This know-how includes its symbols, beliefs, values and forms of appreciation and criticism; and meets the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Krobo body adornment is a reflection of this definition.

1.8 The Study

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, this dissertation seeks to understand the criteria used by the Krobo in the determination of things that are of good taste, pleasing to the eyes, and giving pleasure to the senses, also generally known by the word, aesthetics. In order to do this, it is critical to frame the study within the body of knowledge and belief systems that guide Krobo visual expressions and appreciation. These can be broadly classified as the philosophical ideas that underpin the decision-making process and determination of what is acceptable and visually pleasing to the eye and stimulates emotions. Thus, it makes the wearer also communicate both consciously and unwittingly about his/her environs, status, habits, religious concerns and other preferences through the use of colour, lines, texture, balance, and shapes. These are encapsulated with Krobo

symbolic interpretations and meanings which are further attached to Krobo cultural and visual expressions of taste.

The study is therefore in two broad categories comprising ideas and beliefs as they are visually expressed in everyday usage, rituals, and in ceremonies; and a detailed discussion of Krobo visual culture. However, the cultural significance of these bodily forms and associated art works requires the deployment of appropriate methodologies such as aesthetics to understand their process of determination of what conforms to their belief, arouses their emotions and the use of iconography to explain the various meanings and their history and relations in Krobo art and visual culture.

1.9 Framework

For a research such as this to be well explored and advanced, one needs a conceptual framework or hypothesis. The thesis is guided by hypothesis that- the aesthetics of Krobo body adornment is determined by their worldview and certain aspects of the verbal arts. Part of the Krobo worldview for instance is their belief in *huanim*, the place of pureness, where *Mawu* (God) lives and sends people to be born on earth. According to the Krobo, humans must continue to live in this pureness after they leave *huanim* to the earth. This belief is expressed in the Krobo idea of the *la*— a bead presented to newborns to remind them and their parents of the purity humans must continue to uphold. What other values and instructions accompany them from *huanim* and how are they visually expressed? These are the broad ideas and accompanying questions that will be tested in this dissertation.

1.10 Justification

Over the period, the Krobo have demonstrated a unique and strong culture of art and aesthetics through their extensive use of beads and other visual forms in adorning young girls in one of the stages of their rites of passage known as *dipo*. This has attracted

extensive interest and studies on the Krobo which have been approached from historical, anthropological, religious and other perspectives. These studies in discussing the Krobo society and culture do touch rather briefly on their aesthetics. Therefore, this research conducts a broader examination on adornment practices among the Krobo by examining the philosophies and verbal arts of the people that underpin their aesthetics. The study thus explores the impact of these aspects of the Krobo culture in determining what they accept as pleasing and acceptable, and how this is reflected in their ornamentation. It is therefore important to fill this lacuna with a study such as this as this thesis will contribute to the scholarship on Ghanaian and African aesthetics in general.

1.11 Organisation of the study

At this point, I provide the organisation of the study to show how the rest of the dissertation is organised. As stated at the beginning of this dissertation, this study investigates the determination of cultural and visual sensual pleasure as practiced by the Krobo in the adornment of their bodies. It further analyses various aspects of their culture that provide philosophical, religious and other cultural guidance that frame and underpin Krobo adornment that makes it appealing and emotionally gratifying. To achieve this objective, Chapter 1 of this dissertation served as a general background to the study and therefore provided the context of the study by addressing questions such as is there a new way to investigate the study of Ghanaian aesthetics? And do the Krobo belief systems, values, ideological perceptions impact on their visual forms? Will answers to these provide a set of ideas to frame such a study of body adornment practices and aesthetics adornment practices of the Krobo of Ghana? The chapter continued to provide the hypothesis that will serve as a framework for the study. A background of the study area including the socio-cultural significance of body adornment among the Krobo was also discussed.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on aesthetics from both Western and African scholars. The intent of this chapter was to examine existing literature to see if similar work has been done on the Krobo. The chapter started by discussing the origin and development of aesthetics as a tool for making judgements on beauty that began with German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735). The interest in the subject has since gained the attention of other scholars such as Kant (1760), Hume (1910), among others. These scholars approached the subject from the perspective of art for art's sake and thus believed that for art to be aesthetic, it must be contemplative and not functional. This view however is not reiterated by African scholars such as Gyekye (1996), Abiodun (2001) and several more who are of the view that art can be functional as well as aesthetic. The discussions however leave no doubt that there is extensive literature on different aspects of aesthetics as a method for assessing how a work of art makes an impression on the mind and stimulates different senses. Literature in this chapter also highlights what information exists on Ghanaian aesthetics as well as the various perspectives of scholars on Krobo society. The chapter meanwhile, makes clear the fact that aesthetic research on the Krobo is almost negligible and when at all, is focused on the beads worn at puberty rites. This led to posing a series of research questions to address the gaps as well as investigating what determines and guides Krobo aesthetics.

Because of the insufficient attention given to the study of Krobo cultural practice of dressing, the Chapter 3 sought to design an appropriate method to investigate what constitutes the components of the society's aesthetics. This included a consideration of appropriate and well-tested methods and those applicable for such a study. A key component to the methods was the contributions of local leaders and knowledgeable persons. The information gathered was crosschecked with other documented local sources in the form of theses and works of Ghanaian scholars to validate them. The data was further reviewed within the context of current literature by consulting online journals and other

published scholarly works. The collected data was then validated by using the longitudinal and cross sectional approach.

In Chapter 4, I explore Krobo notions and how they inform the evaluation of the society's adornment practices. Is there a relationship between what the Krobo believe, the way the Krobo think and the way they dress? What is the guiding philosophy of the Krobo people? Also, is there a relationship between Krobo verbal arts and the evaluation of what is acceptable and pleasing within their dress? These are the broad ideas and accompanying questions that will be explored in this chapter. The focus of this chapter therefore is to deliberate on Krobo notions of identity embedded in certain expressions, such as language, and to see how they provide an insight into Krobo visuals of adornment.

Using the results of the Chapter 4 as a basis, Chapter 5 explores Krobo body adornment by analysing the impact of Krobo ideas and beliefs. The chapter further examines how the people apply these beliefs to their daily and ceremonial forms of dressing and adornment. The following questions guided this chapter: What are some of the themes found in their clothes and accessories? What interpretations and symbolic analysis are made from these practices? Finally, to the Krobo, how is a person expected to look? Finding answers to these questions will leave no doubt regarding the rational and justification of Krobo aesthetics and body adornment. This chapter relies mainly on the field data that have been analysed and grouped into various themes of Krobo favored ideas of social practice. In all, Chapter 5 investigates the judgments of taste and what the Krobo find pleasing within the adornment practices of their society.

The discussion on Krobo body adornment practices is inadequate without the investigation of what accessories complement their choice of apparel. Thus, what kind of articles of ornamentation do they use? How do the Krobo evaluate a pleasing and acceptable hairstyle? What other types of modifications do they do to their bodies? And what are the reasons for these? The Chapter 6 of this dissertation therefore, examines the accessory

choice for Krobo attire, the different kinds of modifications the Krobo make to their bodies, and the symbolisms attached to these.

Chapter 7 serves as my concluding section. It addresses the question of whether the study was able to contribute to knowledge by introducing new dimensions into the study of Ghanaian aesthetics. In order to expound this question — is the study able to establish Krobo belief, ideology and philosophy as paramount in determining that which is visually pleasurable and satisfying to Krobo standards on aesthetics? — The chapter gives a summary of the whole dissertation on the extent to which adornment practices illuminate, construct and shape the ethnic identity of the Krobo. It also presents the findings of the study and finally, its recommendations.

1.12 Summary

The chapter has introduced the rationale for the thesis, and provided an overview of the historical and sociological background of the Krobo people as the largest group of the Dangme speaking people which include the Osu Doku, Prampram, Ningo, Ada and Shai. This section on the history of the Krobo, explains how the *Okumo* who were the original leaders of the Krobo gradually relinquished their supreme authority to the chief warrior, *Konor*. In introducing the discussion on adornment, the discussion was on some definitions of culture as posited by Gyekye (2003), National Commission on Culture (2016), and Geertz (1973), and explored the Krobo word for culture —*kusumi*— and concludes that Krobo culture (which also observes dress practice) is a store house for collected traditional knowledge and social behaviour.

The discussion in this chapter therefore introduces readers to the subject under consideration and how it is framed in order to investigate Krobo aesthetics and iconography of their adornment through an examination of their belief system and its impact on its visual manifestation and cultural interpretations. Finally, it also contains the organization of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines and reviews scholarship on aesthetics as it relates to body adornment. Therefore, it discusses the works of selected scholars whose works relate to the chosen topic, identify what they studied, the trends in the scholarship, and establish the missing and uncharted areas in their works, which this study intends to contribute to by filling in these gaps, and bring new perspectives and contribution to the studies on Krobo body adornment. There is a vast amount of scholarship from different perspectives, which may all not be relevant to this work. Therefore, a careful selection of only those directly related to this topic has been selected for discussion. These include diverse investigations on body adornment practices in Ghana and Africa. The scholarship has therefore been discussed thematically. For example, those that studied fashion including publications such as *Clothed in Symbols* (Mato 1994), *The Poetics of Cloth: African Textiles/ Recent Art* (ed. Gumpert 2008), *African Ceremonies* (Fisher and Beckwith 2002), *African Print Fashion Now! A Story of Taste Globalization and Style* (Gott 2010), *The Ghanaian kaba: Fashion that sustains culture* (Gott 2010), *Liminality and contested meaning in Krobo (Ghana) dipo girls initiation* (Adjaye 1999), *Ghana: Where the bead speaks* (Sutherland-Addy, Aidoo and Dagadu 2008), and many more. From the above titles, these authors tell us about the visual culture as well as the significance and meanings in the body adornment practices of cloth wearing. While some of them do not talk about the Krobo directly, my review reveals that all the above referenced works further contribute to the general applicable knowledge to be considered in this dissertation.

Over the years, several methods have been employed by scholars to examine body adornment practices of societies. Among these methods is an old European methodology called aesthetics, which has been used in diverse ways and has developed with different

branches across various disciplines including music (Agawu 2001), philosophy (Graham 1997), architecture (Scrotun 1979), and the behavioural sciences among others. These different branches of aesthetics help to evaluate the quality and appreciation of a work of art. There is therefore extensive literature on the subject by both Western and non-Western scholars.

This chapter begins with a broad discussion of aesthetics as interrogated by Western scholars. The chapter then proceeds further to review other literature on aesthetics, as discussed by African as well as Ghanaian scholars, by addressing the question of aesthetics in Ghana and its visual manifestations through body adornment. The intent is to establish an understanding of the various notions of aesthetics, and if they relate or can be applied to the other methods in different cultures in assessing the quality of art works, including dressing and adornment of the Krobo, or how different these publications and methods of assessment are from the study area and what new methods can be used to evaluate taste and beauty. As the focus of this study suggests, this chapter will also review the literature on body adornment by scholars such as Susan Gott (2010), Dzamedzo (2009), Ibagere (2010), among others. Doing this will help highlight and comprehend the cultural symbolisms that determine and underpin Krobo body adornment and their multifaceted meanings. After reviewing and discussing the literature the chapter concludes with the problem statement that will frame the study.

2.1 The Question of Aesthetics

Since the 1700s, the concept of aesthetics has evolved and is now used to refer to any work of art and their relation to human behaviour. For instance, new paradigms in the study of aesthetics include Architectural Aesthetics (Scruton 1979); Representation (Goldman 1995); Feminist Aesthetics (Kosmeyer 2004); Aesthetics of Adornment (Davies 2014); Expression (Davies 2015); and Environmental Aesthetics (Berleant 2014).

From the above, it is evident that aesthetics is a subject well covered in several areas by different scholars. Some of the specialised areas are the philosophy of the subject as well as the determination of what the word actually means and the contexts within which it is used and understood. Micheal Hardt, a professor of visual communication (2002), Van Damme (1991), a professor in art history and many other scholars have credited Alexander Baumgarten as the originator of the word aesthetics in the early 18th century. Hardt reports, “[t]he term aesthetics was introduced in our language in 1750 when the German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten wrote a book with the title ‘*aesthetica*’ from the Greek word *aisthanomai* meaning “the science of sensual perception” (Hardt 2002:2). In other words, aesthetics is the science of the perception of what is beautiful. Baumgarten, however, was not the first to theorise the science of perception. Hardt (2002:2) says ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle “dealt with perception long before in relation to philosophical research about semiotics”.

Although the word ‘aesthetics’ was used in Germany soon after its inception by Baumgarten, the word did not come to play in England until the early 19th century (Hume 1910; Van Damme 1991). Hume asserts that rather, Aesthetics was inferred to as the study of “standards of taste” or “judgments of taste”. It is therefore evident from Hume’s perspective that the English interpretation of aesthetics is self-explanatory and thus a branch of philosophy, which studies the sensory or judgment of sentiments or taste. Even though the arts of Ghana have been studied from diverse perspectives, investigations on the aesthetics of the arts in the country are few. As regards to the Krobo, the publications available to me do not indicate that any comprehensive work has been done.

Meanwhile, other scholars have broadened the discussion and given further insights to Aesthetics. For example, Arthur C. Danto (2013:136) an art critic, philosopher and author of *What Art Is* posits that “aesthetics is a matter of enjoyment, of the way things

show themselves, together with the reasons for preferring one over the other, and a way of showing itself to another”. Danto’s assertion suggests that aesthetics is the deconstruction of whatever is viewed into various elements of what is acceptable and pleasing. On his views on art philosophy, Danto also suggests that art philosophy “never really presents itself as a candidate for deconstructing a premise for the study of theoretical underpinnings of art” (2013:142)²⁰. Danto also believes that aesthetics is a subset of art philosophy in that knowing the aesthetics of a people helps in understanding the broader view of their philosophies. Like Danto, Donald Crawford (1989:228), a professor of philosophy, also argues that the term ‘aesthetics’ as a philosophy of art is “primarily concerned with the nature of works of arts as products of artistic creative activities and as the focal point of aesthetic appreciation and arts criticism”. This insight by Danto and Crawford, is typical of the responses from respondents that there are deep thoughts, experiences and reasons that justify Krobo choice for adornment.

2.1.1 Aesthetics and beauty

Meanwhile, questions such as what are the origins of this art form? Who made it? Why was it made this way and not another? And, what does it mean? Are all answered by scholars of aesthetics by applying certain tools and methodologies such as colour theory, effects on our senses and emotions, and the principles of art when they study the nature of beauty. These methodologies help them in analysing the piece of art in question. For instance, aesthetics in Western art as discussed by Gerald F. Bromer (1981) is also the term used to sum up the search for beauty, balance, proportion and conscientious use of materials, in order to achieve good craftsmanship in art objects.

²⁰ Admittedly, there is a close relationship between philosophy and aesthetics as it is the philosophical ideas or ideologies that underpin the determination of preference.

In relation to beauty being closely related to the concept of aesthetics, Gordon Graham affirms

...it is not difficult to construe the connection between art and beauty as a normative thesis, that it, beauty is something valuable and art is valuable because it consists primarily in the creation and contemplation of beauty...to call something beautiful is not just to describe it but to react to it (Graham 1997:12).

Graham's assertion suggests that whatever is considered appealing or whatever gives pleasure is often said to be beautiful; and anything that draws your attention and causes you to fall in love is beautiful. To Graham therefore, falling in love becomes a reaction to that thing. Hume, however, is of a contrary view. According to him,

Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others (Hume 1910: 218).

Different people, as Hume and Graham suggest above, may react differently to various forms of art. It can also be deduced from Hume's assertion that the various elements in an object is what determines a person's reaction to the object. Thus, love for the 'thing' leads to the appreciation, and evaluation of the said thing in question.

Hume and Graham's assertions, although may be applicable to every society, are only partially reflected among the Krobo. For instance, a strand of beads could be termed beautiful if it has all the proportions, colouring and texture which are the measures of a good bead among the Krobo society. Such a bead will evoke a reaction of pleasure from the onlooker. However, the Krobo do not think each mind perceives a different beauty.

German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1790, 1987) confirms this Krobo belief— he is of the view that experience of beauty is a judgment of both the subjective and objective; thus, even though individuals might have their opinion over what is acceptable, there is a standard within any given community. To the Krobo therefore, an object is either beautiful because it follows the creative rules of the community or it is not because in the creation of the specific art piece, the rules were not followed. So, a strand of beads may be perceived as beautiful to a non Krobo, but to a Krobo who knows ‘the rules’ it may not be— beauty, to them, is the interpretation of balance, harmony, and colour of form that gratifies the senses and leads to emotional satisfaction and pleasure.

According to Lindsey (1993:6), “the understanding of ‘aesthetic’ is no longer limited to things that are ‘beautiful’ but for anything that is intriguing or fascinating in a certain special way.” Like Lindsey, one of the pioneers of intentional ugliness of African art, Robert Farris Thompson (1971b), in observing the masks of the Yoruba people of Nigeria proposes that their aesthetics is equal to that of the beautiful. While Thompson’s assertion may seem to have been made in passing, a later study by Van Damme (1987: 53) in sub-saharan Africa also observes that in certain ethnic groups in Africa, certain art forms are deliberately created to express ugliness. In this sense, the gnarled trunk of a tree, the broken pot, or the asymmetrical dress or jacket and the Yoruba mask can be judged as having aesthetic value. It can therefore be argued from these assertions by Lindsey, Thompson, and Van Damme that, finding the beautiful or the ugly in any kind of art depends on the observer’s perception of the said art— as Hume posits, “each mind perceives a different beauty” (1910:218). This combination of both the beautiful and the ugly aesthetic in principle thus suggest a holistic art expression as evident in Krobo body adornment practice.

2.1.2 Aesthetic appreciation

In judging the worth, nature or significance of any piece of art or artifact—whether visual or performing—an aesthetic appreciation is being made. This kind of appreciation according to David Lauer and Stephan Pentack (2007) delineates all subjectivity and establishes certain principles like harmony, balance, isolation and repetition. The appreciation also establishes observable features such as age, texture, and colour. These all come together in determining the values of an art form. While Lauer and Pentack's assertion are evident, it is worth stating that there are some art forms that require the observer to be part of the art work hence his/her appreciation for the work becomes partly subjective. Body adornment is generally individualistic and though a particular piece of art may follow all the rules and contain all the appropriate cultural symbolisms, once the garment does not suit the wearer, it will be described as not being culturally "correct". The wearer therefore places him or herself within the said art piece.

The term aesthetics, however, repeatedly provokes debate in scholarly discussion "because of the tendency for the discussants to overlook certain salient factors for example, what is valid and why" (Harrison 1982:5). These factors of course also include the fact that, the definition of aesthetics depends on a cultural frame of reference and also the discipline on the premise of who says what within a community, and what the guiding ideas are.

Harrison's words are repeated by Grant Pooke and Diana Hewal (2008:5) who state in their book *Art history the basics* that "regardless of categorization, all definitions of art are mediated through culture, history and language. To understand these differing concepts of art, we need to look at their social and cultural origin." Though Pooke and Hewal are referring to the definition of the art product itself, their approach can also be applied to test the judgment of value of an art piece. And like the aforementioned scholars, they are also stating that the appreciation of a piece of art depends on whether the critic has background knowledge of the said art work in question. Conversely, one could argue that since

aesthetics is a tool for the evaluation of a work of art, it is therefore standard. Nonetheless, there are certain common factors within different cultures which affect the values of appreciation. In other words, because art is part of culture, the appreciation/interpretation of art and art forms is context specific. This is maintained by Anitra Nettleton (2011:8) who in *Writing artists into history* asserts, “one can read objects in more informed ways when one considers them against particular historical contexts”. What these reviews suggest is that, to comprehend and appreciate the complete body adornment of the Krobo, a study of the people’s culture and history is necessary—by this, one can view the complete body adornment of the Krobo from the society’s perspective.

2.1.3 The everyday aesthetic

Another branch of aesthetics worth considering is the everyday aesthetics, a recent development in aesthetics which started circa 20th Century. This branch of aesthetics, functionally related to art for life’s sake, has to do with art works that are appreciated for both their function and aesthetic value. In his work *Art as experience*, Dewey (1932) for instance, argues that even though aesthetic response to the body, dress, scarification etc. is mostly aroused by visual stimulation the importance of recognising the significance of all aspects of human experience — such as washing, bathing, reading, threading beads, dressing up etc. — is necessary²¹. Apart from the customary range of the visual and hearing, Dewey further posits that there are other dimensions of sensorial display such as the tactile, which could be added to the range of the aesthetic— this too, is evident in Krobo body adornment. Yuriko (2001:87) in her essay ‘*Everyday aesthetics*’ discusses the fact that “aesthetic objects do not constitute a set of special objects, but rather are determined by our

²¹ Visual stimulation such as when the eyes and the brain perceive form, colour shape and symmetry. Like Dewey, Katya Mandoki (1994) — the first to consider the role of sensibility in everyday life —, argues that the study of aesthetics should include not only the beautiful (art objects), but also everyday experiences.

attitudes and experiences”. To Yuriko, an object attains a certain level of aesthetic beauty depending on the emotions and experiences a person attaches to it. Thus, our individualistic, routine activities and experiences are dissolved in art by “drawing element(s) of everyday life into art”.

Among the Krobo, adornment practice falls within everyday experience within which examples of the everyday aesthetic are manifest. For instance, traditionally beads are worn on the right wrist simply because it is the appropriate and right thing to do, hence the Krobo saying *eda*. The right hand is functionally ‘appropriate’ for doing things: for greeting and also used for prayer (libation), for pointing to an object or direction, among others. Thus, the Krobo deem it appropriate to have the right hand adorned. Similarly, the daily activity or technique of hair braiding by a woman illustrates an individual’s artistic creativity in sculpting hair. The individual relies on cultural codes of hair braiding to realise her creativity. This way, the woman’s style must conform to what is deemed ‘appropriate’ within the cultural context. These everyday experiences are codes of ‘appropriateness’ in which aesthetics can be constructed and appreciated, thus showing the overlap of everyday experience and art for life’s sake.

2.2 African Scholars and Aesthetics in Africa

Although Europeans had began interaction with African art around the 15th century, the widely held debate as to whether Africans are artistic or not, was somewhat settled in the early 1900s by Pablo Picasso, after his encounter with the Ivorian mask²². Vernon Blake

²² African art has in the past been presented, by the West, as purely ethnographic items, curiosities or as functional objects, not as works with any aesthetic value (Oriely, 2002). According to Boas (1920) the belief was that ancestral Africans were far too backward and mentally naïve to handle the concept of aesthetics (Boas, cited in Acquandah, 2006). Picasso was a Spanish painter whose introduction to an Ivorian Dan mask by Henri Matisse would later influence his future paintings in cubism. Some of his African inspired works include *Bust of a Woman* (1907), *Mother and Child* (1907), *The Three Women* (1908). Picasso’s period of African inspired art, however, began with the painting *Les Femmes d’Alger* which was the antecedent to cubist art (Gelonchi-Viladegut, 2011).

(1927:346) in *The Aesthetic of the Ashanti* argues out the fallacy of the British in thinking there was no aesthetics in Africa. He continues his argument by comparing the Asante figure of *sasabonsam* which Europeans thought was unproportioned and unrealistic to the western figures of the centaur. To Blake however, each ethnic group had its own thought systems and logic, in creating these pieces of art.

In her book *Reinventing Africa* (1994:27), Anne Coombes discusses how British aesthetic values affected the shifting notion of African art in Europe. She goes further to discuss how the anthropological field, as a scientific discipline, challenged modernist views of African art as primitive. In doing so, she also discusses how prejudices concerning African art changed in England and Europe, to reform views on non-Western art— notably the collections seized from Benin to be considered of equal artistic values as those of Europeans renaissance art works. All these indicate that traditional African art has some value and has its own system and structure for appreciation. The discussion so far, on how scholars have discussed aesthetics in Africa is interesting particularly the revelations by Coombes on the transition of European views on art from Africa as ethnographic to possess qualities of art and to be appreciated as such. Obviously, there must be ways and tools for the examination of Krobo body adornments and the ideas and rationale behind their choices. This will help us journey into the mind and culture of the Krobo in order to bring some understanding and appreciation of their perspective in the discussion before us. Several studies on African aesthetics have thus appeared in the scholarship. For example, some of the themes and subjects that have been discussed are, concepts of colour in, *Ghana's heritage of culture* (Antubam 1963). In this study, Antubam discusses colour as being appreciated for both its value and its significance in tradition. He also posits that colour is considered based on “philosophical symbolism founded on deep abstract and spiritual values” (p75). *The aesthetic of the cool* is what (Farris 1973) describes as being a “detached expression and somnambulistic movement and attitude” associated with composure and self-control, the cool is often used as an expression of admiration or

approval; In discussing the standards of aesthetic judgment in *Is there an African philosophy?* Onyewuenyi (1976) deliberates on the advocacy of an African approach to consciousness (African philosophy) to help us clearly explore and understand deeper truths in relation to our identity. In the discussion of the concept of fittingness in Akan aesthetics in *African cultural values: an introduction* (Gyekye 1996), examines the notion of appropriateness as a measure for judging what is beautiful. The study of African visual aesthetics –*Verbal arts and the study of African visual aesthetics* (Van Damme 2000); and inward character of beauty in *African aesthetic* (Abiodun 2001) have all made important contributions to our understanding of aesthetics in Africa.

Among the several scholars who have attempted a methodology to deconstruct an artwork in order to establish different levels of appreciation is Susan Vogel (1986). She proposes five ways of examining this. They include the following:

- Resemblance to a human being: African artists praise a carved figure by saying that it “looks like a human being”.
- Luminosity: the lustrously smooth surface of most African figural sculpture, often embellished with ornamental scarification, indicates beautifully shining, healthy skin.
- Self-composure: The person who is composed behaves in a measured and rational way; he or she is controlled, proud, dignified, and cool.
- Youthfulness: A youthful appearance connotes vigor, productiveness, fertility, and ability to labor.
- Clarity of form and detail, complexity, balance and symmetry, smoothness of finish: African artists place a high value on fine workmanship and mastery of the medium.

However, recent scholarship has gone beyond Vogels’ method and have introduced more complex methods, which take several cultural, philosophical, and religious aspects

into the aesthetic evaluation of a work of art. A good example, worth citing is the pioneering scholarship on the Yoruba, is that of Rowland Abiodun (2014), a Professor of Art History²³.

In defining the African aesthetic, Abiodun (2014) illustrates this concept, by comparing

Michaelangelo's sculpture *David* to the Yoruba *Ere-Ibeji*. Michealangelo's sculpture lays emphasis on the perfect anatomy of the human form which is the standard of ancient Athens, whilst *Ere-Ibeji* emphasises the parts of a person that have high social significance. Each of the sculptures meets the standards of acceptable art for its audience. Abiodun further interrogates the use of philosophical concepts in oral traditions to analyse Yoruba art and African art in general. He uses the words *ìwà* (character), *ewà* (beauty) *àṣà* (style), *àṣe* (ritual power or life force), *iwapele* (gentle character) and others to demonstrate how Yoruba indigenous concepts were used to project ethical and artistic frameworks. Abiodun also expresses that pre-literate Africans not only used their artifacts for functional purposes, but they also reflected on the art forms they created²⁴. He further raises the complex issue of what the artists seeks to portray and in order to learn to appreciate the work of artists, "[o]ne has to walk with the elders", meaning one must study and learn from the elders. According to him the art works represent communal ideas.

African aesthetics can be assessed in many spectrums: a typical African market scene, the arrangement of market stalls, market women seated behind their wares, the colours and smells of different foodstuffs, the tap of a coconut to determine its quality, and the shouts and gestures from persuasive sellers — these are tools to assess a market scene. Farris Thomson (1983:5) clarifies this aesthetic assessment in the Yoruba perspective. He shows that,

²³ Like Abiodun, scholars such as Henry Drewal and John Pemberton have also made important contributions and achieved great strides to the understanding of Yoruba aesthetics. They provide classic examples and suggest future possible areas of exploration to improve our understanding of African aesthetics (The Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought (1989); African Aesthetics (2001) respectively).

²⁴ It is worth noting that driving points for Abiodun's assertion are the inner character and the outer beauty.

The Yoruba assess everything aesthetically- from the taste and colour of a yam to the qualities of dye, to the dress and deportment of a woman or man. An early entry in one of the earliest dictionaries in their language, published in 1858, was *amewa*, literally “knower of beauty” or “connoisseur”, one who looks for pure manifestation of pure artistry.

Farris’ work on Yoruba aesthetics is something akin to what happens in the Ghanaian culture. With the art of gesture for example, Victor Turner (1966) the British anthropologist not being aware of the Krobo culture mistook the cool expressions on *dipo* initiates faces to be expressions of suffering and humiliation during the puberty rites. However, it is unfortunate that Turner misinterpreted what he experienced. The facial expression of the young girls is part of the cultural formalities to create and complete the desired look of Krobo feminine demureness, a phenomenon Thompson (1973:41) describes as “the expression of the cool”. Coolness is an aesthetic of attitude, behaviour, comportment, appearance and style, which is generally admired within Africa and the Black American society. According to Thompson, ‘cool’ has been used to describe a general state of wellbeing, a transcendent, internal state of peace and serenity:

It can also refer to an absence of conflict, a state of harmony and balance. Cool is related in this sense to both social control and transcendental balance. Since ‘coolness has varied connotations alongside its subjective nature, it really has no single meaning (1973:40).

However, it has associations with self-control and composure which are part of the value systems of what is acceptable and is part of the embodiment of the values of the Krobo and many other African societies.

Notwithstanding, scholars do have a set of canons by which art is analysed. As mentioned earlier, scholars such as Vogel (1986), Bromer (1981), Abiodun (1986) and Drewal, H. J., Pemberton, J and Abioudun (1989) have also come up with aesthetic methodologies by which African art may be analysed, for example, visual quality and the

representative and inner beauty and character. It is now important to look at the Ghanaian perspective of aesthetics in the next discussion.

2.3 Ghanaian Views on Aesthetics

There is some scholarship on aesthetics in Ghana written by scholars from different disciplines and perspectives due to the approaches they adopted. The earliest publication on Ghanaian aesthetics is a chapter written by Vernon Blake as part of Robert S. Rattray's book *Art and religion in Ashanti* (1927). In that chapter, *Aesthetics of the Ashanti*, Blake (1927:369) compares the curves and straight lines of the Asante stool—that analysis is similar to Kiel's interpretation of Tiv arts—and suggests that there is aesthetics in Ghanaian art. Though Blake relates the Asante use of curves and straight lines to Chinese art, he also concludes that both lines play a dynamic role in revealing the philosophical thoughts and behaviours of the Asante. He further puts forward the fact that early anthropologists who came to the Gold Coast were convinced that Asante art had to be influenced by Chinese or European art (Blake 1927: 369). He, however, puts up an argument on the fact that to appreciate 'primitive' art, the observer must look beyond what he sees. To him, the Asante and other African ethnic groups for that matter, create works of art for use as metaphor of their experiences and representations of abstract ideas. He further suggested that the context and methodology for assessing/discussing aesthetics was fundamentally different in both the African and Western world. It is therefore imperative that African systems are used in the evaluation of African aesthetics especially when each society has its own criteria for what is good or judged as beautiful. Thus, trying to critique African art with Western logic will be an exercise in futility (Blake 1927: 366-367). In the case of Krobo aesthetics, the multilayered level of appreciation is critical to studying the people's cultural and visual values. It is significant that one should have some background knowledge on the values pertaining to Krobo society in order to fully comprehend and

appreciate the people's artifact. After Blake's first scholarly work on Ghanaian aesthetics in 1927, other scholars have explored the field within various areas of the Ghanaian culture. For instance, Kofi Antubam (1963) the foremost Ghanaian artist was probably the first Ghanaian born to attempt an artistic evaluation of Ghanaian art and culture. According to Kwame Amoah Labi (2015:107), Antubam's work "paved the way for extensive attention to Akan aesthetics". In touching on the visual aesthetics of the Ghanaian female form, Antubam (1963) focuses on shape—equating the female figure in ovals and circles (curved lines). He also interrogates the concept of Ghanaian colour in that work. Even though Antubam discusses a broad area of Ghanaian culture, his work lacks explanation on the notions behind these concepts. After Antubam's publication, Akan aesthetics have come to the attention of other scholars through the works of Silver (1983), and Warren and Andrews (1977). Further studies include the Gurense by (Smith, 1978; & Gott, 2007, 2010).

Apart from Antubam, another scholar who has explored the field of aesthetics in Ghana from a different perspective is Daniel Avorgbedor. His research on the aesthetics of Anglo-Ewe music highlights how the appreciative value of tangible artifacts can sometimes be compared to the evaluative judgment within the intangible. According to him, "the criteria for what is good or beautiful are relative to each society and even within each society these criteria may shift depending on the category or genre of music or performance type" (Avorgbedor 2014:1). In addition to this truism by Avorgbedor, I would like to add that the criteria for what is good or beautiful is also dependent on age and gender. Hence, one's interpretation or appreciation of any form of art is dependent on the values that differ from one society or culture to the other.

Meanwhile, in the closing two decades of the twentieth century the scholarship on Ghanaian aesthetics has broadened. In all of these, however, studies on aesthetics in Akan society seem to be dominating. Student theses such as Isaac Kismet Sagoe (1981), *Criticism in Akan traditional visual art* for instance, demonstrates how the Akan evaluate their local

art (textiles, pottery and sculpture). Though the style of each artist conforms to the standards of taste of the community, Sagoe unearths the techniques used by the art critic in recognising the artist by his style. Similarly, Michael Warren's (1990) *Studies in technology and social change* explores Akan aesthetics from a different perspective and demonstrates a link between verbal language and Akan local art by exploring the relationship between insults and Akan notions of the human body. Warren also examines the people's judgments of taste with regards to their different art forms such as metal forging, textiles, and carving. In his PhD thesis, Gordon Terkper Sabutey examines the aesthetics of indigenous Asante kente weavers. He analyses and discusses the concept of appreciation and assessment of the kente cloth. In his work he also explores the symbols and colours of the kente fabric, combined to make a particular cloth appropriate to be worn to specific functions. It is these symbols within the kente cloth which partly make up the aesthetic of the Asante.

Kwame Gyekye (1996:127) in interrogating Akan value systems equally explains the concept of *nea efata* (appropriateness or suitability) as the criterion of aesthetic value and judgment. Actually, Gyekye's explanation is supported throughout Ghana because to the Ghanaian, for something to be aesthetically pleasing, it has to be appropriate or 'correct' for that particular setting. This 'setting' cuts across from food, drink, manners, beauty, morals to pots, carvings, song, etiquette, beads and other body adornment practices. In the understanding of Gyekye therefore, Akan aesthetics is an embodiment of society, and is part of their cultural values, rituals, ceremonies and everyday life as well as the people's everyday aesthetics. Gyekye (1996) further perceives the African aesthetic as being both art for life's sake and art for art's sake. Art for art's sake articulates the perspective that the inherent value of art is divorced from any educational, moral, or utilitarian purpose. The phrase expresses the belief held by many writers and artists, especially those associated

with aesthetics— that art needs no justification. Such art works are sometimes described as being ‘complete in itself’.

In the Ghanaian society specifically Akan, which has dominated the scholarship, aesthetics is expressed in moral principles and etiquette, customs, works of art like sculpture, music and dance, festivals, spokesperson’s verbal art, regalia, poetry, scarification, body painting, beads, terracotta and other visual, vestibular, tactile and auditory phenomena. Regrettably, the symbolisms and deeper meanings of the elaborate adornment of the Krobo particularly during festivals and during one of the few remaining puberty rites celebration in Ghana has been minimally discussed by scholars. From the diverse perspectives discussed above Krobo adornment is understudied though it presents a good source for an aesthetic study. This study will further enquire if there are other elements in Krobo art different from previous studies on the Akan.

2.3.1 Beauty and aesthetics in Ghana

Different studies have suggested that “beauty” as is visually seen is subjective and not the only standard in accessing what is acceptable. According to Gyekye (1996:131), character, a standard of courage, integrity and fortitude are additional qualities that makes a woman beautiful. African societies believe in the inner beauty of an individual. Thus, in Gyekye’s view, inner beauty (such as good manners, good speech and whatever is considered truthful in a person’s community) is the total beauty of a person. Gyekye (1996:125-6) in furthering his position on African concepts of beauty states,

African aesthetics considers the beautiful to include more in the life of the person than events, scenes and works of art; it deals also with standardizations of value and appraise other aspects of human life and culture, such as humanity and morality.

What Gyekye is implying here is that the judgment of taste in Africa goes beyond the description, deduction, speculation and emotional response to an art object, but often

includes the evaluation of a person's character and moral fiber. Gyekye regards aesthetics as being part of a reference system comprising social, artistic and philosophical values, which may be studied empirically. He argues that the aesthetic canon is part of the symbolic and signic system of community. This canon, according to Gyekye, falls within the totality of specific value systems in culture or history and thus influences a society's (such as the Krobo) meaning-making apparatuses. From a Krobo perspective, there is thus a wide range of proverbs, axioms, and virtues which add up to the requirements for the people's determination of what should be the standards a person should uphold in meeting societal preferences and taste. The Ewe people of Ghana say of the beautiful girl who has bad character *nɔnɔ me gbegble* literally meaning, 'The girl is a rotten/corrupt beauty who has a bad character'. The Krobo would say of same *yoyo nɔr hi, esuban de* meaning, "The young woman has a crooked character", the opposite being *yoyo nɔr hí esuban da* meaning, "The young woman has a good or righteous character". This is similar to Abiodun's description of the Yoruba concept of a beautiful person.

Having reviewed and discussed how various scholars from different academic backgrounds have perceived and studied how visual and cultural objects arouse emotions and attract viewers, I shall briefly summarise the discussion here by examining how this can be applied in a study of a group of people such as the Krobo. Body adornment involves whatever and however one dresses oneself and it forms an integral part of most societies' fashion, pride, and identity. It also displays, communicates and gives character to the identity of both an individual and the society at large. Antubam 1963; Kyeremanten 1964; Opoku 1978; Twigg 2009; Kwakye-Oppong 2009 and Hristova 2014²⁵ have all discussed this extensively. These scholars see body adornment as mediums of individuality, symbols

²⁵ Identity and dress are closely associated. Whether we do it on purpose or not, humans use clothes as a way of identification to ourselves and to others.

of social prestige and a kind of communication system. They affirm that the way you portray yourself by your dress, gives the onlooker insight into who you are. According to Bacchiocchi (1995:7) “The subject of dress and adornment is sensitive because it touches on what some people treasure most, namely, their pride and vanity”. For what we wear is very much a part of who we are. This is exemplified in Docea Fianu’s (2007) *Ghana’s kente and adinkra* where she discusses both the pride of *kente* cloth among Ghanaians and the economic role textiles play in a contemporary society. Gordon Tekper Sabutey (2009), in his doctoral thesis, has also unraveled the concepts of appreciation and criticism of Asante *kente* and its implication on national development.²⁶

Gyekye’s (1996) ideas about African philosophical values within the judgement of taste will be of great value to this work in that, it will inform my study of the Krobo by helping in the analysis of my field data. Gyekye’s indication will assist in looking beyond how the Krobo present themselves in public to see the deeper philosophical meanings ascribed to their body adornment practices. Kwakye- Oppong’s (2009) scope on Ga identity created with clothing will be meaningful to this study and can be examined to determine the relationship of the Ga and the Krobo. As Bachiochi (1995:7) has suggested, “the pride of any people is embedded within their culture” and dress and the verbal arts are part of a peoples’ culture. Thus, this dissertation will use this statement as a guide to examine the impact, if any, of the verbal arts of the Krobo on their adornment practices.

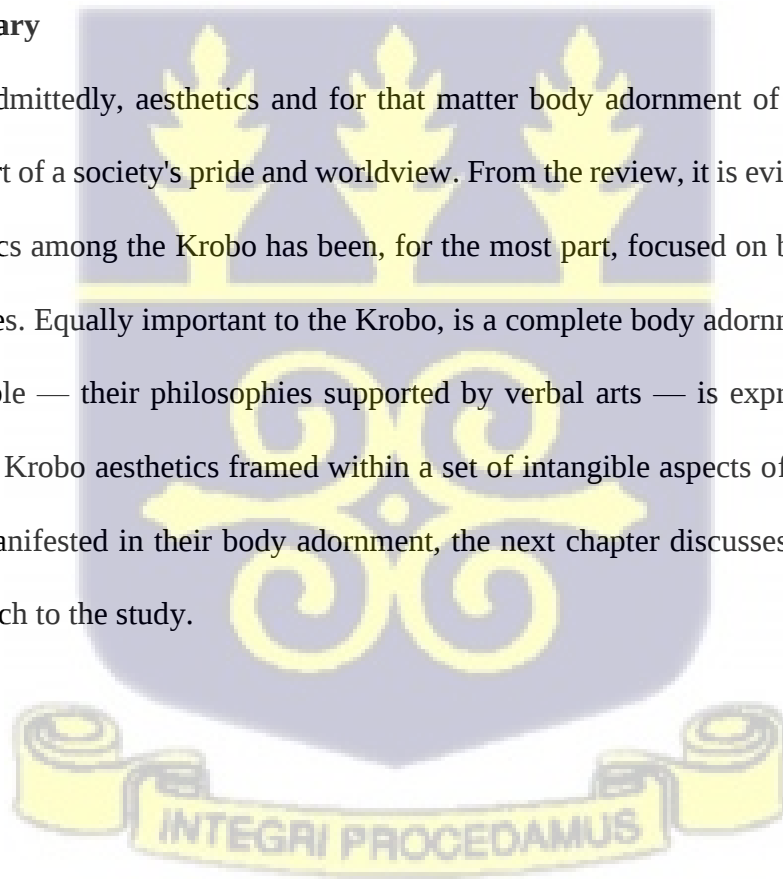
The discussions above leave no doubt that there are extensive scholarly works on different aspects of aesthetics as a method for evaluating how a work of art arouses different senses, as well as in the study of African and Ghanaian art forms. The publications provide a wide range of perspectives and some common tools that can be used in assessing the

²⁶ Sabutey explores the Ghanaian values in the form of proverbs, events and historical records that are embedded in the *kente* cloth.

quality of work. Abiodun (2001) in his article “African Aesthetics” shares his ideas on possible factors for consideration thus providing a departure from the status quo that will lead to new information and enrichment of the studies. Just as Abiodun emphasises the importance of African scholars to initiate new revolutionary methods, away from the European standards and methods, which so abound in the scholarship, he suggests methods to connect African art through ‘sight’ and ‘sound’ and also to include the element of the ‘soul’. He emphasises local language should be part of our studies in order to break new grounds. Thus, in determining what is aesthetically pleasing to a community, new methods can even be possibly experimented within the evaluation.

2.4 Summary

Admittedly, aesthetics and for that matter body adornment of a people form an integral part of a society's pride and worldview. From the review, it is evident that literature on aesthetics among the Krobo has been, for the most part, focused on beads worn during puberty rites. Equally important to the Krobo, is a complete body adornment within which the intangible — their philosophies supported by verbal arts — is expressed. In order to investigate Krobo aesthetics framed within a set of intangible aspects of their culture, and visually manifested in their body adornment, the next chapter discusses the methodology and approach to the study.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research methods used in collecting data from informants to answer my principal questions. This dissertation, as stated in chapter 1, interrogates the basis and how the Krobo determine what visual culture, art and adornment must constitute for acceptance or rejection. Furthermore, what are the set of ideas and beliefs that frame this and how has language informed the community to see through this visual lens to impact on their emotions? Hence, is it this part of their culture that guides them to appreciate what is of good taste, pleasurable, and acceptable? The objective is to introduce new dimensions into the study of Ghanaian aesthetics from a Krobo perspective and contribute to the growing scholarship on Ghanaian aesthetics. Thus, I chose to write this thesis on the body adornment of the Krobo because it deals not only with the tangible, but also with the intangible aspects of their culture. Doing this allows me to answer several questions ordinarily unanswered if the works are only seen visually or from the perspectives of other disciplinary approaches discussed in the previous chapter.

In undertaking such a research, it is necessary to have a clear and well defined approach that will help provide information to answer the questions posed in the work and the hypothesis which guides the work. Therefore, language, ideas, beliefs, close observation and sometimes participation, when possible, were all important methods employed. It was important to “get into the mind and soul” of the Krobo people to gain understanding. The research method was a combination of different methods of collecting data, among which were interviews, analysis of their language, proverbs, songs etc. as related to the topic under discussion, examination of documentary evidence, photographs and participation in selected cultural activities.

3.1 My Research Site

As stated above, the research was conducted in two sites: Odumase and Odometa, both of which are in the Manya Krobo district. The study was conducted between September 2015 and February 2019. This helped me to critically observe Krobo practices such as the annual *Ngmayemi* festival (2015, 2016, 2017, & 2018) and the *dipo* puberty rites (2016 & 2017), multiple times, which further contributed to my in-depth interviews. The time series approach thus served as a measure for clarity and confirmation. It also enabled me to further study different groups of people within my area of study over different time periods. While it is expected that a researcher should stay in his/her research site for long periods— maybe months or sometimes a year or two— I was not able to stay in the research area for long periods due to health issues.²⁷ This made the field work take longer than I had envisioned.

Meanwhile, I tried to be as transparent and as open as possible during interviews. I used simple language and spoke the language the respondent was most comfortable in whenever possible. Though my question guide was in English, interviews were conducted in both English and some of the local languages. These languages ranged from Krobo, Twi and Ga. Speaking the language of the respondent gained their trust and gave me a feeling of belonging to the research community. In one instance at the Agomenya market, the bead seller I wanted to interview spoke only Ewe. Fortunately, the escort given me by the sub-queen *Dipo* Yoo could speak Ewe and therefore acted as translator. When repetition of answers started coming through from the various respondents, I then knew the research had reached its saturation.

²⁷ The longest time I was able to stay was two weeks at a stretch

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Primary Sources of Data

The methodology used for this work was largely based on qualitative data collection based on interviews and participant-observation. This allowed respondents to expand their answers without any limitation or inhibitions. In addition to this was the consultation of primary sources of data. The method of participant-observation allowed me to familiarise myself with the ceremonies and further unfold the underpinning philosophies to the various ways of adornment among the Krobo. Being a participant-observer helped me to refine my questions to include some observations from these ceremonies. My approach towards the interviews (in-depth and unstructured) was based on the purposive sampling method. In undertaking the purposive sampling, some of my informants recommended some specific people to interview due to the in-depth knowledge and experiences these people have acquired on Krobo body adornment, over the years.

I began my data collection with an initial visit to Konor Nene Sakite II to tell him of my intent to focus on Odumase as my research area. Nene Sakite II in turn asked his elder Nanor to call a meeting to inform the necessary leaders. I then went to Odometa to see the Dade Matse (Chief Farmer), who is the leader of the Odometa farming community. Dade Matse in turn promised that his subjects would cooperate with me and help me with my research. These trips, of course, went with the initial protocol of a bottle of schnapps and an amount of money.

3.2.2 Participant observation

Participant-observation allows the researcher to “increase his/her awareness, raise the level of attention to tune in to things usually turned out” (Spradley 1980:56).²⁸ This means the researcher must pay attention to the minutest detail; so that s/he may give an

²⁸ The word participant-observation was coined by Bronislaw Malinowski after his ethnographic study of the Trobriand Islands. According to Burgess (1982:2-4), Malinowski broke the status quo of arm chair research which was the norm during the early twentieth century and went out onto the field.

accurate contextualised description, that is, give a detailed elaboration of the cultural practices observed. Participant-observation thus allows the researcher to experience meaning in the everyday experiences of the respondents in that “when you are involved with participant-observation, you are able to observe naturally unfolding worlds of the population under study” (Berger, 1998:106).²⁹

Because body adornment is an embodiment of the cultural practice of any given people including the Krobo—a part of their everyday lived art and experience—I deemed it most appropriate to involve myself in participant-observation³⁰. It is very necessary to live with a people when studying the way they dress. To study the cultural symbolisms within the adornment practices of the Krobo demanded that I reside among them and spend time in different circumstances, taking part in various ceremonies so I could see things from their perspective. This research technique allowed me to gain knowledge in some of the sociocultural practices of the Krobo and gave me the privilege of seeing my study area through the lens of Krobo society.

Being a Krobo myself, one of the errors of reasoning was the mistake of assuming that hailing from the area gives me some level of personal experience; thus, I could easily commit the error of pre-empting the end of a respondent’s sentence and ending an interview before s/he had finished talking. Thus, committing the error of inquiry of premature closure. To address this in interviews, I took a position by assuming to be an outsider rather than an insider. This position helped me to negotiate my objectivity whenever I was faced with the insider/outsider challenge. To be sure I have minimised my biases, I also asked the same question in different ways and sought the answers to the same questions from different

²⁹ Indeed, to be able to observe the Krobo adornment practices to the fullest, I had to attend rituals and festivals all in which dress acted as a kind of meta-language speaking to the audience about the ongoing performance.

³⁰ Participant-observation is a tool that is used to find facts about a people and their culture in qualitative research (Babbie, 2012) it involves the researcher living amongst the people within his/her research area and taking part in everyday practices, thus giving him/her a firsthand experience.

sources. Even though I went to the field with a question guide, participant-observation helped me to relate with respondents before asking questions. It also helped me focus my questions appropriately. Taking part in ceremonies and rituals also created a sense of belonging in me and my respondents who then opened up to my questioning. I participated in some ceremonies such as the burial rites of a Krobo king and queen (outlined below), 3 marriage ceremonies, *Ngmayemi* festival and observed the annual *Dipo* rites. As part of my primary data, I also relied on the audiovisual recordings I made as well as the photographs I took while conducting my interviews, participating in, and observing the ceremonies. In brief, the chapter thus discusses the data collection tools used in gathering field data for this study. This study has applied a method that unfolded the underpinning philosophies to the various ways of dressing among the Krobo and thus has helped in understanding what the Krobo find appropriate and pleasurable.

3.2.3 Secondary Sources of Data

There is quite a substantial body of literature on Krobo history by scholars such as Azu (1926), Puplampu (1951), Odonkor (1971), Teyegaga (1985), Huber (1993) and others in various libraries on the University of Ghana campus. Though the focus of these scholarly works was on Krobo history, they also speak about some aspects of Krobo culture. It was my view that I could get more literature on the study area from Odumase. So, I decided to use the Odumase Palace Library which is under the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. The Palace Library contained several theses on the Krobo. It seemed as though everyone who did research on the Krobo brought a copy back to this library.³¹ These are

³¹ Arlt (1995) *Diplomacy and power politics in mid-nineteenth century Krobo-Krobo chieftaincy seen through the reports by Basel missionaries* Un-published M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Basel, Basel.; Coplan (1972). *Krobo Klama*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon; Debrah (1982). Gblerkpor, (2005). *An archaeological Investigation of the Krobo Mountain Dry-stone Terraces* M. Phil Thesis Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon; Nimako, (2005). *An archaeological investigation at Mount Mary College and Adjikpoyokonya*. Unpublished

not very well kept though— they were dusty and, in some instances, falling apart with age. There were also a lot of books on the history of the Gold Coast, which contained some information on the Krobo. Apart from discussing aspects of Krobo history, literature from Odonkor (1966), Teyegaga (1985) Huber (1993), Streegstra (2005), and Tetteh (2006), also proved very valuable in the area of documented scholarly works on Krobo adornment. Meanwhile, friends and colleagues who became aware of my research gave me access to their personal libraries. I found academic materials on fashion design and Krobo beads in these private libraries. Most of the literature I found on the Krobo have, however, been documented by Huber, Streegstra and Wilson.

Apart from library material, I also consulted online journals. The internet had material on some aspects of Krobo adornment especially the area of beads as well as information on Krobo festivals and the topography of the area. To make sure I had empirical data, it was only those materials from reputable online libraries and journals such as JStor, *Journal of aesthetic education* and a few others that were used. I also referred to the University of Ghana space where I was able to read some theses on the Krobo and aesthetics in general. Other emergent media practices including digital art, movies and television were also referred to. Images in the movies and on television programmes were compared to actual scenes I encountered on the field. In brief, a combination of data from libraries, the internet, and television reality shows (such as Ghana's Most Beautiful) were combined with primary data to best understand the socio-cultural practice of ornamentation among the Krobo.

M.Phil Thesis, Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon : Opare- Darko (2015) *Defining our lives with music: The case study of the Krobo woman* M. Phil Thesis, Department of Music, University of Ghana and many, many more.

3.3 Sampling techniques

3.3.1 Purposive sampling and choice of respondents

In order to have well-structured and comprehensive information, there was the need to have a more direct method of questioning. The purposive sampling method was therefore used in order to gather information from structured questions from a particular group. Purposive sampling is done through the stratifying of the sample size. This means classifying or categorizing the sample framework which was selected from among experienced Queen mothers and female elders. These women were considered part of the purposive sampling framework because they are also important and active culture bearers with expert opinions on what the Krobo find appealing and pleasurable. Additionally, they are also experts on local philosophy on art. It became evident, however, that I needed vital information from certain people such as Kings, traditional Priests and Elders of the town. This latter group form the custodians of Krobo culture. I thus, concluded the purposive sampling with the following groups of people: A) senior priests, Kings, Kingmakers, Queenmothers and male and female clan elders (see Table 1). The criteria for choosing the respondents for purposive sampling invariably ended up being:

- People over the age of forty who had experienced some level of the Krobo culture.
- People who were abreast with the history of the Krobo
- People who knew the Krobo culture and traditions

I was able to make an informed decision of the respondents with the help of the Paramount King, Dade Matse, and the Paramount Queen mother. Interviews were done at specific locations such as the courtyard of the Palace, the Queenmother's house, Dade Matse's house, Nana Kloweki's compound and the Agomanya market. These locations were central to the officials of Krobo and the Agormanya market was a good place to meet bead sellers, cloth sellers and other market women. The Agomanya market was also a good place to

meet commoners to validate some of the information I had received from the Krobo officers.

I initially did create some questionnaires but received poor responses. The questionnaires were distributed among members of the Ga- Dangme society on the University of Ghana Campus. Others were given to students of the School of Performing Arts of the same institution. My thought process was that these groups would give me an insight and some background information to begin my research in Odumase and Odometa. However, this proved futile; out of the first sixty forms that were distributed, I only had thirteen positive responses. Where positive responses mean that these thirteen questionnaires were returned. Some of these returned questionnaires were mostly blank. It became evident that the respondents knew almost nothing about the Krobo, except that the Krobo make and wear beads and perform *dipo*. This was disappointing and discouraging. However, it informed my decision to focus on key informants and have in-depth interviews with a keen sense of observation and documentation during the participant observation component of the research. I thus summarised the eighty-question questionnaire into a question guide of forty questions and used that for my in-depth interviews in Odumase and Odometa. This also informed my choice of random interviews to a particular section of academia.³² The questions were grouped into two main themes: the first being concepts behind Krobo adornment practices. This theme dealt with the reasons for the Krobo dressing the way they do. It addressed the question of what the Krobo look out for in adornment. This part of the question guide was also geared towards discussing the different supplements and modifications used as part of Krobo dress. For instance, must a Krobo wear beads at all times? Why do the Krobo prefer scarification on the back of the wrist for women instead of facial scarification and is there any particular reason for the different

³² My thought process was that lecturers of Ghanaian history and Ghanaian aesthetics might be able to give me some information on the study.

colours and shapes in body paint? The second theme of the question guide was in relation to Krobo philosophy and ideologies on beauty and what is acceptable to them. It encouraged discussions on Krobo belief system and its relation to dress practices including the philosophy behind the *dipo* costumes and costumes of the *nadu* priests. It also brought to the fore ideas from the different sections of Krobo society on what is visually pleasing and also acts as stimuli for their emotions for satisfaction.

3.3.2 Snowballing

Purposive sampling resulted in interviewing more people, as many of my respondents referred me to others at some point³³. For instance, on the subject of the *dipo* costume and why the initiates wear the *gblo*, Okyeame Boate referred me to Mamle *Dipo* Yoo, a sub queen, who also referred me to Nana Kloweki.

3.4 Data collection tools

3.4.1 Photography

Since this is a visual study, making and having visual evidence for later analysis was very important. Taking photographs was deemed an effective approach to capture images for later reference and examination. Photography was used as “an extension of my eyes” (Collier 1986) and was an essential tool in the course of this research. With the still shots freezing time and space, I was able to capture the moment and “learn to see through the eyes of the indigenes” (Hall 1990: xii)³⁴. A DSLR camera (Canon Eos Rebel T6I) was employed for capturing performances in video and still pictures. I mostly took photographs myself but once in a while, especially during interviews and in the event of several

³³ Just like a snowball gathers more snow as it rolls along, the snowballing as an interview technique begins with one respondent or interviewee and ends with the researcher discussing areas of research with several respondents (Babbie, 2012).

³⁴ Foreword in *Visual anthropology. Photography as a research method*

performances happening simultaneously, an assistant in the person of my son, a graduate of the School of Performing Arts, Legon, assisted with a second camera. Though he was able to record whatever was happening elsewhere, there was the drawback of “beauty lying in the eyes of the beholder”. My research assistant sometimes took pictures and videos of what appealed to his taste and not what was necessary for my research. This was a drawback which made me lose some amount of important data especially in the case where a particular scene was part of a ritual which was not repeated. The camera was also used to record the processes of wearing and applying Krobo clothes and cosmetics. Being a professional camera, it was able to give detailed and clear images.

Even though during my field work I did my own documentation with still pictures and video, I also appreciated other ethnographic materials provided to me by some of my respondents which included photographs, videos, field notes and others. I analysed and categorised photographs from various respondents, as well as those I took myself. A few days to the royal ceremonies (installation of a Queenmother), permission had to be sought from the Chief Priest, head of families and female elders and protocols to enable me film the ritual. This protocol served as a kind of ‘open access’ in some instances and allowed me to witness certain rituals such as bathing for a dead King. The ‘open access’ however, did not extend to my taking photographs or a video and ended at witnessing the ritual. In the instance of me participating in a king’s burial bathing, I was told not to overstep my welcome and that the nakedness of the king must not be seen by the public. This action did not help my investigation very much because I could not remember every detail when I began to write. I therefore had to rely on the voice of some of the female elders who were present at the bathing ritual. And they could decide to tell me what they thought I should know and not what I wanted to know.

3.4.2 Audio recordings

To receive firsthand information from respondents, audio recordings were made in addition to photographs. These recordings were used as a point of reference to help expand my writing at the end of the day. Like the use of video recordings, audio recorders receive firsthand information from the respondents. This acts as evidence against future distortions and reported speech. With the audio recorder, I also documented information from interviews with the Senior Priests and Queenmothers of the clan on issues such as how Krobo beads and dress have evolved, through to how best to conserve Krobo ideologies. This saved the time of writing whatever the respondent said. The recorded information was later transcribed. A journal was used in order to illustrate and explain my views on recorded summaries and observations taken during my data collection period.

3.4.3 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are those in which respondents are encouraged and prompted to talk in depth about the topic under investigation.³⁵ This kind of interview allowed me to, as Blaikie states, “get close to the social actors meanings, and interpretation, and also to understand their accounts of the social interaction in which they have been involved” (2000:234). I used a question guide, which permitted only open-ended questions. This was made so as to be able to follow-up on previous questions. Interviews were conducted in English, Krobo, Ga and Twi³⁶. Before starting my questioning, I followed the research process of selecting topics for the various areas of the research, with their focus questions as this would aid in collecting, and interpreting my data. The question guides were not

³⁵ In-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce, 2006).

³⁶ Though a Ga Dangme community, some Akan settlers live there other Twi speaking respondents were met at the Agomenya market.

rigidly followed. Interviewees were allowed to dictate the pace of interaction. Beads sellers were also interviewed.

3.4.4 Unstructured interviews

Apart from the in-depth interviews and participant-observation, I engaged in, informal ethnographic interviews (unstructured interviews) were also conducted. This kind of interview, as Spradley notes, “Occurs whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant observation” (1980:123). Although this kind of interviewing was done without any afore planned structure in mind and questions were asked based on whatever I was observing at the time, I was able to gather valuable information. Answers to my questions were also quickly jotted down in my notepad for analysis.

3.5 Data Validation

The casual human inquiry of observation is not necessarily accurate and is liable to mistakes because of poor memory or the fact that one cannot see around three-dimensional objects at a glance. I therefore supported my data collection with scientific observation, which involved audio-visual and still cameras. This method of scientific observation helped reduce mistakes and made the findings more accurate. However, there were one or two instances where I could not use a camera and this made my writing at the end of the day a bit difficult because I could not remember everything I had seen. To resolve this, the next day, I had to visit the elders who were present at the ceremonies to refresh my memory.

To avoid over generalisation, the validity of my findings from participant observation had to be measured by replication. I needed to see whether my observations were true over a period of time. One method of replication employed is triangulation. Triangulation is achieved by testing the data gathered with different viewpoints (Babbie, 2012:105). The data I collected from the town officials (Kings, Queenmothers and Elders) was therefore measured by asking commoners the same questions. The mixed methods of

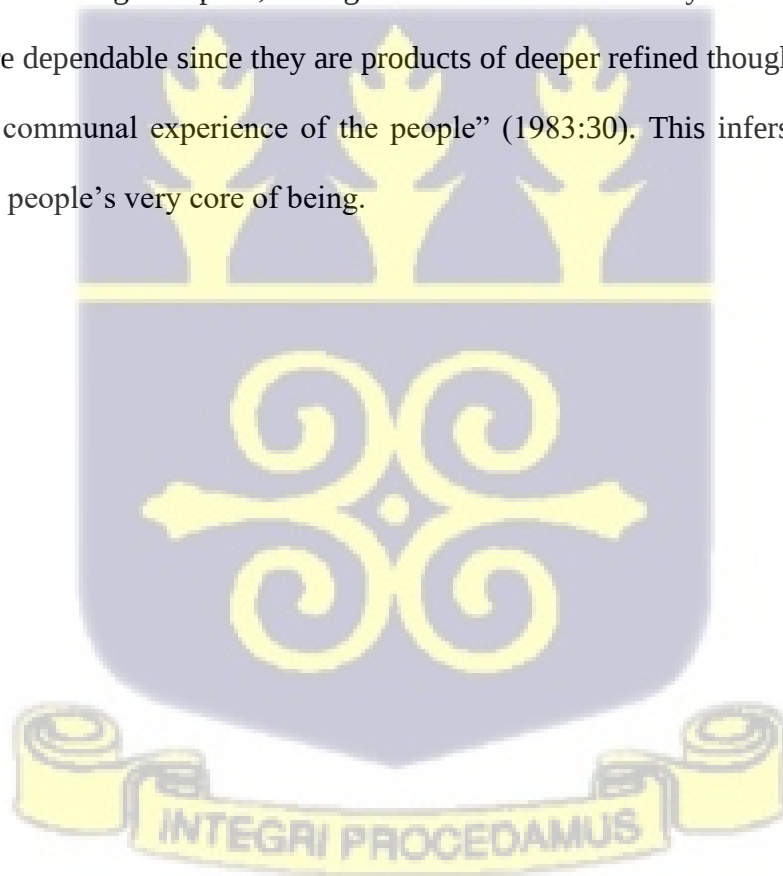
longitudinal and cross-sectional approach (Babbie 2012:105-6) which are a kind of triangulation were also used. The longitudinal approach meant my interviewing the same people over the period of field work (between September 2015, to February, 2019). Whereas the cross-sectional approach meant I had to interview a different set of people each time over the same period. Getting similar answers from these two groups of people thus validated my data. Meanwhile, careful judgment had to be employed to distinguish between the personal knowledge and the experience of the informant— from common knowledge broadcast on radio and television networks to already published works.

To further triangulate data received from the in-depth interviews and participant observation, I employed random sampling. In this case, I was able to draw from other nuances from outside as well as within the Krobo community. From within the universal set of academia, random sampling was conducted in the following subsets: research fellows, lecturers, and students in tertiary levels. Two research fellows, four teachers, and ten university students were therefore interviewed at random, making a total of sixteen people from academia.

3.6 Analysis

In analysing the body of information, I collected for the research, I took into consideration the information on the various beliefs, ideas and language that informed me about their ideas about beauty and what constitutes it. These are the interpretation of colour, the meaning and significance of different shapes, texture, and line and how these influence their senses. Concepts of colour were also used to analyse how the Krobo use colour to express their emotions. The Krobo use colour, shape, line, and silhouette and quite often blends of all four, to create visual messages within the context of their adornment practices. Messages that were relayed through the dress symbolisms were analysed with the help of the elders of the clan and other respondents.

Both metaphor within the Krobo ornamentation and the verbal arts (oral language, historical narratives, *Klama* songs, proverbs, axioms etc.) were also analysed. This was done to discover the relationship between the verbal arts and what the Krobo find visually appealing and acceptable. Scholars such as Vansina (1985:190-191) have acknowledged the challenges of relying on oral traditions as history because of the lack of chronology and the issues of selectivity and interpretation which sometimes may arise. He however also posits that all art is metaphor (1985:11); thus agreeing that the interpreting and using of verbal arts as a source of history, should actually be no different from the use of fine or plastic arts as a historical source. In as much as metaphor is subjective and can be interpreted differently by different cultures, in agreeing with Adepaga (1983) I argue that verbal arts, including metaphor, are a good resource for this study because “oral traditions are far more dependable since they are products of deeper refined thought which certainly reflect the communal experience of the people” (1983:30). This infers that language is related to a people’s very core of being.



CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT INFORMS KROBO ADORNMENT?

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is a study of Krobo ideas, values and beliefs that guide how they conduct themselves about dressing. These can be found guided in the intangible aspects of their culture in the form of religious beliefs, songs, proverbs and speech. These communal experiences of the people are what Yankah (1989) calls cultural truisms. According to Fearon (1999:4), a person's identity can be confirmed through the continuous practices that are handed down through generations thus sustaining the traditions and values of the society. These intangible aspects of Krobo culture influence how the society determines what should be the appropriate outward appearance of members of their community. Consequently, we need to address certain important questions regarding where these beliefs originate from, and what some of the narratives that accompany them are. What are their socio-cultural implications and who have been the guardians and custodians of this Krobo intangible heritage? In what forms do these evidences present themselves and what do we adduce from them? What are the explanations to their adherence and consequences for non-compliance? What are the benefits for adherence to these standards, and are there sanctions for nonconformity? These may all be summed up as part of their philosophy. An examination of these will form the foundation to understanding the philosophical and ideological principles of the study area and set the stage for our journey towards the philosophical and ideo-visual relationship and understanding of the aesthetics of Krobo body adornments and embellishments. The objective of this chapter therefore is to discuss some Krobo cultural and philosophical ideas on their identity that are embedded in certain axiomatic expressions in the language and to see how they can provide an understanding to its visual manifestations.

This chapter is based largely on various oral narratives collected and analysed. Various themes and subjects have been derived from these narratives and grouped in the most appropriate manner to explain what my informants told me. The data has been as much as possible crosschecked with other knowledgeable informants and literary forms such as songs, proverbs, oral histories and some common understanding discussed here. This chapter is structured to primarily take into account what constitutes the elements of Krobo philosophy and ideology and how these elements frame Krobo art and visual culture. After this, there is an examination of how speech, character and dress forms form the basis of Krobo identity through certain Krobo ideas. Because language influences greatly on Krobo culture, attention is paid to metaphor as part of the Krobo appraisal in the third subsection. Next is the examining of the phrases used by local critics in the evaluating of Krobo adornment. These phrases are an expression of what is either acceptable or not within the values of the Krobo community. After this, the chapter discusses Krobo perspectives on colour, and then concludes with an examination of shapes and motifs used in Krobo adornment.

4.1 Krobo Philosophy and Ideology

An embodiment of Krobo philosophy and ideology can be found in the first piece of jewelry given to a Krobo child during his /her naming ceremony. This piece of jewelry which the Krobo view as the personification of their identity is called *la*— a visual representation of the connection between Krobo origin, religious belief and expectational behaviours, and indigenous values³⁷. It consists of a *nyoli* bead, a *koli* bead and a *tovi* bead tied together with raffia. The *nyoli* is a white bone bead and is symbolic of God's place or

³⁷ The *la* is a type of metalanguage, a piece of adornment which speaks or acts as a reference to adornment practice.

the spiritual realm. The metaphor of the *la* is created on the Krobo belief that every human comes from a place called *huanim* where God rules and “sends people to be born on earth” (Huber 1993:137). The *kɔli* is translucent blue and per Krobo belief, is symbolic of ‘shininess’. Through these two attributes the wearer is being cautioned by an elder or priest—an authority on Krobo tradition and philosophy— to shine in his/her new place. For the newborn, this new place is earth. The bead therefore serves as a caution to the newborn: as s/he shone in *huanim*, he should continue to ‘shine’ here on earth by making an effort to excel in everything so s/he can become precious (just like the *kɔli* bead) to the community.

Shining to the Krobo means one must have high moral and religious standards, speak, and dress well. During Krobo festive ceremonies, it is not uncommon to hear the words “*aww o ɲɛ kpɛɛ nɛ!*” literally meaning, “You are shining”, but which actually means, “You are looking resplendent”. This is considered a great compliment. Meanwhile, the various body adornments are not only supposed to fit personal body shapes; rather they are to fit the shape of a ‘shining personality’.³⁸ These human characteristics are related to balance, symmetry and a visual representative of the ideas and ideals of the community. Among the Krobo, a person with a shining personality is self-composed, and acts in a dignified manner that is appreciated within the social statutes. It is therefore obvious that there is a link between narratives about origin, religious belief and expectations of acceptable behaviours, indigenous values and aesthetic preferences, representational art and the social statutes. A person who ‘shines’ therefore is said to have a good spirit and is living according to her *nyɔli*, as opposed to the *hialɔ* who are believed to have dark spirits.³⁶ This quality of the *nyɔli* is in reference to the inner beauty that is able to show from beneath

³⁸ Interview with Madam Darley Mate-Kodjo 20th/7/2017

³⁶ witches

the layers of clothes, accessories and body paint. According to Krobo worldview, God places people on earth to re-create the ambiance of *Huanim* within individual communities. And so this shining ambiance of *Huanim* is replicated here on earth when certain rules are followed. These rules, manifested not only through the judgement of what is pleasurable but also in the verbal arts of the Krobo, and perceived within Krobo ideologies and religious systems. For instance, over the years, the Krobo have built a repertoire of proverbs and *Klama* songs that help keep them on track in their quest to maintain a ‘shiny’ community on earth. Nonetheless, Nana Kloweki acknowledges that the Krobo also believe that *Mawu* to an extent, gives humans choice by allowing them a parting word. This is evident in a local story:

One day Anane the spider was upset because he could not get a wife. He complained so much until Mawu came and carried him off to *huanim*. Once in *huanim* Mawu made Anane look into a calabash of water and Anane saw himself giving Mawu his parting words of when I get to *zugba*, I will never marry. Mawu also made Anane look around to see other people giving their parting words. One said, when I get to *zugba* after the birth of my first child I will come back. Anane heard another saying, when I get to *zugba* I will eat nothing but human flesh. And Mawu dismissed them to *zugba* with *nye ke nyiemi, wa bie me*.

According to Nene Okumo Madjorna, a traditional priest, if this parting word is contrary to *Mawu*’s wishes of creating a shining ambiance on earth by living in harmony with nature, it becomes irrevocable and will result in a human bringing suffering, pain and communal rejection on him/herself³⁹. This myth was again narrated to me by Dade Matse in Odometa. According to him, Anane, the spider’s children all died and so he accused *Mawu* for their death. Mawu, however, was able to prove that Anane was the cause of his own misfortune because of his parting words.

³⁹ Nene Okumo Madjanor is head traditional priest, at the time of interview he was acting For the Kloweki shrine whilst the shrine was choosing a new priest.

This belief of ‘shining’ is also exemplified in the *payami* (going to the river) ritual of the *dipo* puberty rite. In a study of the *dipo* of the Krobo Adjaye (1999:14) elaborates

...its symbolic signification lay in the belief that the action cleanses and purifies the ritual subjects. Their past state, along with its imperfections and impurities are believed to have been washed away in a river which is associated with ritual potency. Not only were the individual bodies cleansed but selected items of clothing from the girls as well as any member from the house was washed, thus enhancing the cleaning process of individual bodies as well as items of body adornment.

The *payami* ritual helps in maintaining both the physical and the spiritual aspect of ‘shining’ to the Krobo. The bathing ritual is actually a kind of re-birth—the initiate goes into the water ‘unclean’ and comes out clean and ‘shining’ (Adjaye 1999:15). The young maidens are also taught the act of physical cleanliness by being taught the proper way to bathe and the appropriate way to wash their clothes. They are also taught the values of the community. These contribute in the young initiates understanding of uprightness and ‘shininess’ for the community.

The third bead of the *la* is the *tovi*, a black irregular shaped seed associated with the spiritual. It is believed to have supernatural powers and is highly valued by the Krobo as can be seen in the following Krobo proverb: *Blefo no ke e na nii hluu, se yomoyo ɲo tovi ke kpa le*, meaning, “The white man says he is rich but the old lady with her black bead [*tovi*] surpasses him”. The *tovi* bead is symbolic of death, a reminder to the wearer that death is inevitable in the cycle of life and there is a reward or judgment awaiting all. A person who lives in accordance with the values of *tovi* lives carefully by speaking well, dressing well and being of good character.

The combination of ‘shining’— having high moral and religious values, speaking well, dressing well, and careful living is highly valued by the Krobo and a person who is judged as such is accorded high standing within the community. This is because; according to Krobo ideology, such a person is believed to be adhering to the reasons for his/her, being put on earth by *Mawu* and thus, such a person will be described as *nɔmlɔ ni eda* meaning

“An upright person”. On the other hand, a person who does not dress well, nor have moral standards will definitely not speak well. This person is hence described as *nɔmlɔ ni ede* meaning, “A crooked or unbalanced person”. Nene Okumo continued by stating that the society may point fingers at such a person and say that *munyu ne eke sɛɛ ehi* meaning, “His/her parting words were not good”. From this it can be argued that the spiritual and physical values of the Krobo are enshrined in the *la*.

The crooked of the Krobo society are sometimes related to the drunkard because, the proverbial drunkard totters when s/he walks, and creating a line of unbalanced crooked footsteps. The Krobo therefore say *Nenɛ edeɔ enyiɛmi dɛ* meaning, “He who is drunk has a crooked walk and is unbalanced”. In relation to adornment in Krobo society, one who does not dress well is equated to a drunkard. For instance, a man can dress in an appropriate cloth to a funeral but if he adds the wrong accessories or swaggers when he walks, his whole outfit will be considered inappropriate hence the phrase *ehe dramɪ ɔ dɛ* meaning “His dressing is not upright”. This is because at funerals, people are expected to be solemn and not swagger in gait showing off. To the Krobo, this swagger in gait is not socially accepted and is again compared to the lop-sided posture and gait of a good-for-nothing drunkard.

Another example of being upright can be found in the appropriate use of beads. According to Manye Makutsu, one of the Queens I interviewed, within the traditional setting it is expected that beads meant for joyous occasions are not worn to funerals and those meant for funerals are not supposed to be worn to weddings, outdoorings⁴⁰ or other festive functions⁴¹. One’s adornment should be in sync and appropriate for every particular function. Thus, Krobo assessment of a person who is upright— a person whose parting

⁴⁰ An outdoorings, (*kpodzemi* in Krobo language) is the traditional naming ceremony for infants in Ghana. Apart from travelling from the hospital of birth to its parent’s home, this day officially introduces the baby to the elements of the outside world. Outdoorings are celebrated on the eighth day after a child is born and on this day, the infant is given a ‘day’ name.(a name which represents the day the child was born e.g. Kwesi for a boy born on Sunday.

⁴¹ The use of beads is discussed further on in the chapter.

words were good— is threefold: *hedrami* (body dressing), *munyu* (speech) and *su* (character).

4.2 Dress, Speech and Character: The Basis of Krobo Identity

The dress and speech of any individual can be interpreted to ascertain his or her character and, or identity. Among the Krobo this kind of interpretation is no exception. *Hedrami* defines the way one is dressed and is associated to *hekorami* (style). A person that has a good sense of style is referred to as *noko ne ele ehe korami*, literally meaning, “He/she knows how to hold him/herself”; but which actually means he/she knows how to carry him/herself with a good sense of style. According to Nana Kloweki, to know how to carry one’s self is for one to be in balance and harmony with nature and hence with *Mawu*.

Living a well- balanced life results in a person ‘shining’ and being described as ‘upright’ and to the Krobo, this is the will of *Mawu*. This sense of style can be dress oriented or speech oriented since the dynamics of expression within body adornment is also inherent in speech. Clothing as a language is a vessel through which the Krobo share and store knowledge, values, attitudes of various types. Madam Wemtagwe, a respondent from Odometa in explaining this stated that the clothes of the King’s guard tell the onlooker the role he (the wearer) is playing at a particular time⁴²; for instance, whether he is guarding a Queen or if he has just finished fortifying himself with a ritual. The physical state of the garment also tells the onlooker how spiritually strong he (the wearer) is. Another example is evident in the way cloth is draped by the females. Traditionally, young maidens drape their cloth around their chests leaving their arms bare. This is to facilitate house chores. A young maiden who uses a second cloth and covers her left arm is considered lazy. Just as verbal speech has different dialects that can determine where the speaker hails from, clothes

⁴² Interview with Madam Wemtagwe at her residence in Odometa, October, 7th 2018

do same. Each garment speaks a specific ‘dialect’ and tells the audience the wearer’s specific location. For instance, the baring of the left shoulder by a man in traditional cloth is formal language and instantly communicates to the audience that he is speaking with someone of higher authority. In addition, the torn and slashed jeans of the youth in contemporary times is ‘street jargon’. A person can therefore tell an audience about his/her environment, religious beliefs or status in society by the choice of clothing worn.

The Krobo derives his or her moral principles from the instructions of *Mawu*. These principles are expressed in an ever-present presence for *Mawu*, which is articulated in the oral traditions — the *munyu*⁴³. *Munyu* is speech and to the Krobo, the totality of manner in which a person speaks and what s/he says. *Munyu* is an embodiment of proverbs, metaphor, axioms, historical narratives and all verbal arts. A person whose *munyu da* meaning, “speech is upright” is competent in his/her speech and knows what to say and when to say it. If one does not speak well, he is again compared to a drunkard, this time his/her speech is compared to the slurred speech of the drunkard. He/she who slurs his speech has a ‘crooked mouth’ and thus, has a crooked character. During a funeral I attended, the person who welcomes the guests and announces donation —the family’s *Okyeame* for the function made certain speech remarks, which, according to the Krobo, are considered mistakes⁴⁴. In a remark, he said, “Mr. So So and So has donated 100gh, I thank him” instead of “we thank him”. I was informed by an elderly woman sitting next to me that, “*eli munyu tum, emunyu ɔde*” meaning “He does not know how to talk, his speech is not upright”. Another elderly woman retorted “*o ne boni e taade ɔ kplasi ɲe ehe kpanya kpanya! Ke o hiε e he dramɪ ɔ pe! O ma na kaa e jewe sika ɲe wem!*” Meaning “Do you not see the manner in which his shirt is hanging on his body? As soon as you see the way he is dressed you can easily see

⁴³ This relation of *Mawu*’s instruction to the oral traditions explains the adherence to the norms of the society.

⁴⁴ Funeral of the Late Dr. F.F.T Djabonor

he is irresponsible and does not give chop money at home”. The *okyeame* was wearing a pair of brown khaki trousers and a brown pinstriped long sleeved-shirt. The women made these remarks for two reasons: the trousers and shirt were not the appropriate garb for an *okyeame* at that particular time also, the fact that the deceased was a royal. Thus, the speaker’s unbalanced speech was compared to his clothes and therefore his character. Therefore, within this short comment a judgment has been passed. This episode reveals that what goes on in the mind can be transformed and manifested in one’s clothes and outward appearance.

Su (character) is very much related to the idea of beauty among the Krobo. The same word *su*, is also used to mean colour. So *su* is actually the description of something, for example: *me ne esu ɲe tuum kikenɔ?* Meaning, “Why is his character so black” or *mue nɔ su de*, meaning, “The colour of this bead is wrong”. The indigenous knowledge system equates *su* (character) with *hefeɔ* (beauty). Gyekye (1998:100) in a related study among the Akan affirms, “Beauty is thus seen not only in works of art and in the human figure but also in moral behaviour...” Antubam (1963:93) in relation to beauty being equal to good character also states, “It [beauty] appears in a people’s social value, cherished mannerisms and all that goes to make for order, balance and peace in their society”. Thus, to the Krobo, a beautiful person, being male or female, is someone who is not only endowed with the physical attributes of what the Krobo deem attractive in a person; but more importantly, also has *su*: good morals, good manners and is generally a person who upholds the values of the community. A person with all these traits has a *su ehio* (a white character) or *sunieda* (A person whose character is upright).

A good example to cite here is something that happened during *ngmayemi* 2018⁴⁵.

The Krobo are usually happy around the time of *ngmayemi* because *Mawu* has seen them through another year. Notwithstanding, ill feeling towards the Paramountcy may also run high if the people feel disappointed in their chief. That particular year, the town's people were not very happy with the *Konor* because of the alleged sale of Krobo lands to non-indigenes and the alleged making of the Krobo hill part of Greater Accra jurisdiction. These actions did not put the *Konor* in good standing with his people. Most of the indigenous respondents I questioned about the *Konor's* regalia during the durbar, gave negative remarks. One young man said “*Nene tade ke muɛɔ sɛ lɛ. Hiɛ boni e pee ehem kpɔbɔɔ, e hwɔwe mayo. Kemapee ke ne emaa hwɔmayo ke? Muɔ noɔ lɛɛ Nene e tade ɔ dɛ*”, meaning “Nene’s clothes and beads do not suit him. His face is looking so puffy he has not been sleeping. How can he sleep? As for today Nene’s attire is not upright”. Meanwhile, in the Ghanaian setting it is taboo to insult your ruler. So, for this young man to say this about the Paramount Chief to me, a stranger, speaks volumes of the emotional turmoil and conflict that the community was going through. Similar responses were received when I posed the same question randomly amongst the crowd. This seemingly ‘rehearsed’ and agreed upon answers of the community brings to bear Emile Durkheim’s terminology ‘mechanical solidarity’— social bonding based on common sentiments and shared moral values⁴⁶. This confirms the fact that when “emotions are diminished there is a corresponding reduction in interest” (Prinz 2007:3). It was the non-Krobo visitors’ I questioned, who were fascinated by the resplendency of the Paramountcy adornment and, who remarked on how the chiefs’ gorgeous ornamentation evoked feelings of African pride within them. To the Krobo

⁴⁵ Though the festival was without incident, the sub chiefs and some residents were displeased at Nene Sackite’s selling of private lands. This silent unrest resulted in a demonstration on the 20th December 2018, Adom News.

⁴⁶ Cited in Scull, A. (2013), *Durkheim and the law*.

community, however, at that time in question, even though the *Konor* may have looked nice to the visitors, his *munyu* and *su* did not comply with his dressing, so he was not well dressed and did not please his people.

These three concepts of *hedrami*, *munyu* and *su* work together to form the criteria of what is acceptable and what is pleasing to the Krobo people. One cannot be described as *nɔmlɔ nɛ eda* if his *munyu* is upright but his *hedrami* is not. Neither can one be described as having *su* if his *hedrami* is upright but his *munyu* is not. Closely related to *eda* are other words like *ehi*, (it is good) *esa* (it is suitable) and *ehe tsɔ* (it is clear/clean/bright).

4.3 Metaphor as Part of Krobo Appraisal

Like most Ghanaian communities, the use of metaphor within Krobo speech is admired. It is proof of *munyu ni eda* (upright speech). According to Lackoff & Johnson (1980) the body can illustrate the collective traditional worldviews and individual convictions of people through the use of metaphor. It does this by “the use of experiential gestalts which serve as the grounding of conceptual metaphor” (p117). Hermine Feinstein (1982:2), further suggests that we use metaphor to understand our experiences because it (metaphor) helps us to look beyond what we see to get a deeper understanding of our everyday occurrences. What Feinstein elucidates is that metaphor is making meaning of that which is beyond what you see or hear. It is a highly complex system of transmitting idiomatic and traditional symbols. This transmission is done verbally or by the means of visual metaphor as is done in the case of ornamentation.

In the Krobo speech act *ohi kaa mɛ*, meaning, “You are as valuable as a bead”, is metaphorical and this criterion of ‘*ohi*’ is of great importance and standard value to the Krobo. The word *ohi* focuses not only on the outward beauty but on the fact that the person in question has a good character; does not gossip and is generally flawless like a valuable

bead⁴⁷. Alternatively, in the negative one could say “*Mue nɔ de!*” meaning, “This bead is crooked”. Implying that the person being spoken of has a bad character. In the *Klama* song below, the use of the word ‘*hi tsɔ*’ is not only in praise of the daughter’s beautiful appearance, but also in praise of her virtue.

Krobo

Translation:

Ibi yoo nɔɔ hi tsɔ

My daughter is so good/ precious that

Tɔnnya nu ni ma kɛ du hale 2x

I shall bathe her with rain water that drips
from the palm thatch eaves. 2x

In viewing the bead as metaphor, it enables us to make sense of how the Krobo use the beads and other aspects of body adornment as symbols and visual markers to express their worldview, beliefs, attitudes and thoughts. This perspective makes it possible for us to see how the Krobo link words and images or how they construct meaning by metaphorically, transforming words into visual images and vice versa. Thus, we observe a similar form of verbal-visual nexus as first used by Cole and Ross (1972) in their work on the Akan. Another example is the saying *ohem tsɔ ka Dzanɛ*, meaning, “Your face is clear and as cool as the *Dzanɛ* River”. The *Dzanɛ* River of old was very clear and still, unlike the *Okwenya* and other rivers which are rough and silted. But *ohem tsɔ ka Dzanɛ* has a bevy of virtues in its meaning. It could also mean, you are focused, wise, smart or as cool—where cool means you are always in control of situations—as the river *Dzanɛ*.

During the *dipo* ceremony, mothers of initiates sing the following song not to speak of discomfort in the stomach but rather to show joy that her ward had passed the ultimate test of *Tɛgbete*⁴⁸:

⁴⁷ Meaning: you are as valuable a bead

⁴⁸ *Tɛgbete* is the sacred stone on which all *dipo* initiates sit as part of the final ritual. It is believed that if an initiate is pregnant, the stone will tip over or spin. The parents of any initiate who violates the *tɛgbete* with pregnancy will have to perform a purification ritual.

Krobo

English translation

Imimi ɲɔ mi kɔ ee kpa saaa

I have had a bad stomach ache

Imimi ɲɔ mi kɔ ee kpa saaa 2x

I have had a bad stomach ache

pɔɔ nɔ lɛɛ imimiɔ ɲɔ oo

But right now the ache is gone.

This song in comparing the anxiety of a *dipo* initiate's parent to a stomachache, expresses the importance attached to a successful *dipo* ritual and the anxieties a mother would go through hoping that her daughter will be successful in the rituals.

Daddesio (1995) observes that, in this context, metaphor is much more than a figure of speech; it is a rationale for the bodily expression of the value systems of the society. The poetics of language can be made visible in dress and the Krobo translate cultural metaphor into a variety of postures within dress. This is possible because of the close link between clothes and language.

4.4 Evaluating Krobo Adornment

The art and craft of Krobo clothing and dress is often rich with proverbs and metaphors, which express the worldview and beliefs of the people. Thus, the art of dress is often judged on how well they express the values of the Krobo people.

The 'office of local critic' is usually given to the *nokɔtɔmai* (elders of the clan) or *yomo wii* (female elders) of the clan. Though anyone may give his or her opinion on art, it is these elders and specific individuals whose critique on what are accepted and appreciated is highly valued. This is due to their experience and knowledge within specific fields of Krobo culture and beliefs. However, critics and evaluators may also be young people who have excelled in their fields of artistic endeavor and are able to *fɔ ade nɛ akɛ matɛ mɛɛ a yenɪ* literally meaning, "Wash their hands and eat with chiefs". Such as one young man I met called Sakite Sixteen, a forty-two year old drummer in the Paramount Chief's court

and Azariah, a thirty five year old teacher. To wash your hands to eat with Chiefs simply means that these young men know how to comport themselves in *su*, *hedrami* and *munyutum* and thus have good standing in the Krobo society and these qualities have enabled them to comment on the art of their elders. This is similar to what Abiodun (2001:20) in his study of Yoruba aesthetics declares “for one to qualify to walk with the elders, one must possess and demonstrate these qualities: *ifarabale* (calmness and control), *iluti* (teachableness and comprehensibility), *imoju-mora* (sensibility) and *tito* (steadfastness)”. For a Krobo to be judged as having *su*, and thus able to be a critic, he must first possess special qualities to earn him that privilege similar to those stated by Abiodun among the Yoruba as these are indications of maturity and wisdom to qualify one to be a critic.

Yoomo wii (old women/ female elders) are well-respected critics among the Krobo. Their experiences make them good ‘cultural judges’ who, among others, wield the power to shape societal values and cultural knowledge within the society. The head of the *yoomo wii* (old women/female elders) is the Paramount Queen mother (no matter her age) for it is believed that she has been schooled in the customs and traditions of the people. Her education is supposed to include the visual evaluation of body adornment. So that she may make good artistic judgments concerning the chiefs —both living and those to be laid in state, *dipo* initiates, fellow Queen mothers and herself. Perception of what is pleasurable and acceptable is also opined from sub-chiefs and other individuals who attend to the chief’s royal regalia and family heads who are custodians of family heirlooms. The various critics must also have good knowledge of Krobo history, proverbs and symbols. For as stated above, body adornment practice is an embodiment of the history, cultural symbols and proverbs of the Krobo. In sum, all these stem from their culture, which embodies their philosophy and beliefs.

Several phrases abound to demonstrate the expected high standard from artists of good visual quality among the Krobo. Here are some examples of phrases used to evaluate

art (body adornment) and the artist (the creator). They are *Nɔ̃ kpakpa* (This is of good quality); *Enɔ̃ tutuun tu ni ake appeeɔ̃ nɛ* (This is exactly what was commissioned); *Tɔ̃miko behe* (There is no mistake/There is no blemish); *Eje e nine gwɛ nya* (The artist has removed his fingertips actually meaning the artist used his best skill); *Enɔ̃ lɛ munyu behe* (There is no talk with this); *Epee nɔ̃ ehe ne anɛ gble* (He has done something never seen before, meaning, this an original unique piece); *Munya kusikusi hehiawe* (There is no need for whispering here); *Noko behii kɛ hetom* (This is incomparable) and *Kpokplokployo* (simple and nice). These comments and phrases are used in the evaluation of all art forms including verbal arts, architecture and music. To the Krobo, a good art is art that is able to speak to its audience; art that conveys the cultural norms and ideologies to its spectators. As a result, the society has a set of phrases commonly used to express appreciation of its art and visual culture.

Notwithstanding, there are also some objects and circumstances which according to Maa Doe, do not constitute a set of special Krobo artistic works and are not functional yet are appreciated. This falls within the study of *The body in the mind* as discussed by Johnson (2008). For instance, the lithe jump of a young girl playing *ampe*, or the dimpled smile of a baby are both gestures with no particular societal function but are both admired. The cool attitude of a mother as she goes about her wifely duties is also greatly admired. The smell of smoke from swept up piles of fallen leaves in the mornings, tickles the senses and creates a standard which is missed once away from home. In a conversation with Maa Doe, she attested to the fact that even the smell of rain on the *tɔ̃m*⁴⁹ and the rain water dripping off the same, is considered pleasing to the nose and ears. To the Krobo these are all aesthetic experiences facilitated by both the body and the mind.

⁴⁹ *Tɔ̃m* is the Krobo name for thatched roofs made from palm fronds.

On the contrary, there are also phrases, which indicate displeasure with a piece of art. Such phrases include *Pi nɔ nitse, ehi* literally meaning, “This is of poor quality”, and *Enine nya befeɔ* literally meaning, “The artist’s handwork is not pleasing”. These and other similar phrases, may be heard among the Krobo during the valuation of poorly baked beads as well as when body paint or scarification does not meet the standards of the community. In the case where one has a big facial scar, the Krobo say *nɔnɛ be feɔ* meaning, “This is not beautiful” because they do not conform to Krobo social standards. According to Nana Kloweki, facial and body scars are only done for ritual and spiritual purposes and should therefore be small and shallow— big scars are therefore attributed to strangers⁵⁰.

To show displeasure with any bodily expressivity, ranging from a person’s stance and gait to meaning that s/he is wearing an inappropriate garb, the Krobo say *ede* literally meaning, “This is not correct at all”. *Ede* is also used to say that a person is socially ‘crooked’. For example, because of the Krobo belief that a good woman should not drink strong liquor—at least not in public—a woman who drinks hard liquor in public would be described as *yoo nɛ e su de* meaning, “This woman has a crooked character”.

In describing an untidy finish of any craft, the Krobo employ the phrase *Ehe tsɔwe* meaning, “This is not neat”. Here, the critic assumes that *ɛɲwe tsui sitom* or *ena we tsui ke peemi* meaning, “The art piece was done in a rush”. Considering the fact that there is high demand for certain adornment forms such as hair plaiting, beads and body painting during festivals and the *dipo* season, substandard art will be referred to as *dzukwe ni peepee* or *dzukwe ninenya ji nɔ nɛ*. Literally meaning, “This is child’s play” followed by remarks such as *ehewe bie, a li le-* meaning, “He has not bought a name” meaning, this artist has no reputation; *Ebe bie* meaning, “It has no name”; *enɔ lee wa nɛ eko gble* meaning, “The likes

⁵⁰ An example of such scars made for ritual and spiritual purpose is the *bɛ bɔ* marks made at the back of an initiate’s wrist upon successful completion of the *dipo* rite.

of this have never been seen”; *enɔ le wa ne nya* meaning, “We cannot make head nor tail of this”; and *aah! Wa ma wo le dza-* meaning “We will take it like that”. Concerning the last phrase, Sakite Sixteen stated that there are certain exceptions to the rules: it is used either out of respect for the elderly or when the artist is a child. In the case of a child artist, though his mistakes would be pointed out, the customer or critic may accept the art piece and “take it like that” as a form of encouragement to the growth of the youngster’s craft. So how and why must art conform to the Krobo social standards? Is it the ancestors or rather fear of their sanctions that makes the Krobo artist try his best to conform to these standards? Where standards means that, the art must reflect the voice of the ancestors, oneness with nature and *Mawu*. It has been mentioned earlier that the Krobo create an ever-present presence of *Mawu* through the verbal arts. These oral arts act as his voice guiding them through life on this earth. If this is true, then I can confidently argue that the Krobo also ‘see’ *Mawu* in other art forms such as beads and clothing because, these art forms reflect the standards of the society just like the proverbs, *Klama* song and other metaphors⁵¹.

Upholding standards in effect results in a form of social control in the Krobo society. Among the Krobo, as stated above, art is considered ‘poor’ when it does not conform to the social standards of what is acceptable. Art that does not meet the expected standards is therefore attributed to a ‘child artist’ who has not yet understood how to interpret social uprightness into his/her art form.

4.5 Krobo Perspectives on Colour

Colour is vital to creating a pleasant appearance. Krobo society, for instance, uses colour to enhance the different levels of the everyday occurrences such as wearing of

⁵¹ This confirms Vansina (1985:11) view that there is metaphor in both verbal and fine forms.

clothes to informal events and colour coding of attire for ceremonies and rituals. In the Ghanaian traditional context, Antubam (1963:75) posits that “though symbolic ideas of colour are revealed in the practice of everyday life, the use of colour in Ghana is not based on the scientific analysis of it with light considered in relation to rainbow colours. Colour in Ghana is a philosophical symbolism founded on deep abstract and spiritual values”. Gyekye (1996:127) adds on by stating that colours (in clothing) are used for both the visual impact and symbolic meanings. Ayiku (1998:160) also states that the Ghanaian appreciates colour in three steps. First by relating nature to a particular colour, second, relating the colour to a historical and philosophical meaning and third; by exploring its uses or social relevance.

Krobo colour codes are similar to other colour codes in Ghana⁵². The main colours are white, red and black and all other colours are nuances of these three (Hagan, n.d.:8)⁵³. Turner, in a related study of the Ndembu of Congo, however, concludes that each of the three colours of white, red and black are seen within a broader scope of shades and tones of colour and thus have more than one symbolic meaning within the African context of ritual.

For instance, the colour black is used for mourning but is also symbolic of the sacred and the spiritual. Consequently, Ghanaian traditional royal stools and swords are blackened. What distinguishes Krobo colour code from other ethnicities is their use of, and symbolic attributes to the colour blue and yellow/gold. Every year during the *ngmayemi* festival, the Paramount Chief’s palace is draped with yellow and blue swags; the wax print cloth chosen to commemorate the celebration also has blue and yellow/gold.

⁵² See, Antubam (1963) *Ghana’s heritage of culture*; Turner (1973), *Symbols in African ritual*; Brienbach (1976), *Colour symbolism and ideology in a Ghanaian healing movement*

⁵³ *Akan colour symbolism* by G.P. Hagan is one of the papers archived the African e-Journals Project by the Michigan State University Libraries <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/> accessed 20/6/17

A respondent pointed out that, Krobo love the colours blue and yellow because of the *koli* and *zagba* beads which mean so much to them. However, after careful consideration and analysis, I realised that apart from visceral reactions, subconsciously, the Krobo are drawn to these colours because of their historical memory. Historical memory is recognised when a community creates, identifies and is influenced by a particular sequence of historical events. It is also called collective memory and is reliant on memories and experiences passed down by families and memories created by storytelling of ritual and religion. Historical memory helps to shape the social and cultural identities of a people. Even though these memories can be changed with respect to current occurrences.

4.5.1 Blue (*wo su*)

According to Antubam (1963:82), in Ghanaian colour symbolism, dark blue represents authority of a Queen mother. Antubam's assertion is supported by the Krobo who according to Madam Adelaide Obeng and Eurika Asare believe blue is also symbolic of Krobo queenly and motherly authority. This is evident in the dark blue scarf sometimes worn by the paramount queen. Or by the blue *bohām* she sometimes drapes to official functions. Consequently, most Krobo men buy blue cloths and blue beads for their wives because of the high value Krobo society places on women⁵⁴. To the Krobo, every woman is a queen in her own right. The colour blue is also a symbol of historical memory. They stated that in the past, because of their strategic position on the Krobo Mountain, the Krobo were able to conquer all enemies who attempted to invade their *klowe* home. Consequently, the Krobo welcomed many refugees into their midst, making the Krobo a 'mother' to many strangers of neighboring ethnic groups who were refugees of wars fought. Similarly, other people were of the view that since the Krobo were a feared group; it would be safer to dwell

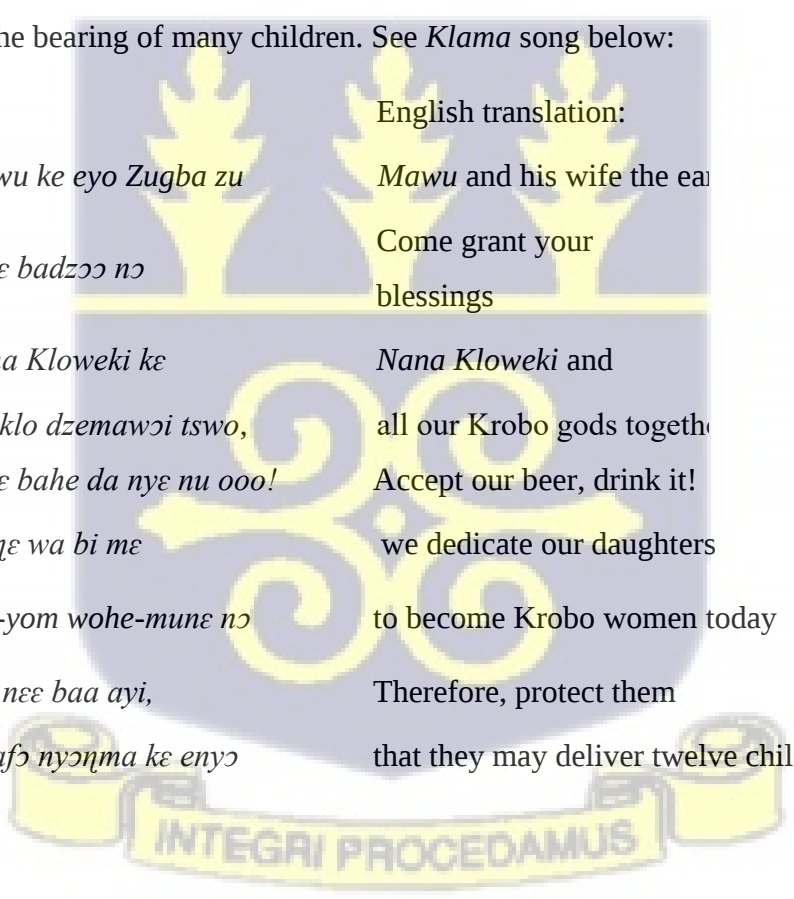
⁵⁴ Interview at Okyeame Boate at his residence, Odumase 2016.

with them. So, the Krobo grew in their status as ‘mother’. Hence, their subconscious love for the colour blue. In the past, if one had enough money the *kpodzemi bo* for the final outdoor of the *dipo* initiate was made from dark blue velvet⁵⁵. Like the wearing of the *dipo pɛɛ*, which is actually called *gblo*⁵⁶, a priest’s hat, authority is given to the initiate by draping her in dark blue velvet on the final day of the *dipo* ceremony.

4.5.2 Yellow (*kuŋɔ ɔɔ*)

According to Madam Darley Mate-Kodjo a *yoomoyo* (a female elder of Odumase), the colour yellow represents egg yolk that is symbolic of fruitfulness. The Krobo are subconsciously attached to this because of their worldview concerning fertility. The Krobo believe in the bearing of many children. See *Klama* song below:

	English translation:
<i>Mawu ke eyo Zugba zu</i>	<i>Mawu</i> and his wife the ea
<i>Nyɛɛ badzɔɔ nɔ</i>	Come grant your blessings
<i>Nana Kloweki ke</i>	<i>Nana Kloweki</i> and
<i>Wa klo dzemawɔi tswɔ,</i>	all our Krobo gods togeth
<i>Nyɛɛ bahe da nyɛ nu ooo!</i>	Accept our beer, drink it!
<i>Waŋɛ wa bi mɛ</i>	we dedicate our daughters
<i>Klo-yom wohe-mune nɔ</i>	to become Krobo women today
<i>lɔɔ, nɛɛ baa ayi,</i>	Therefore, protect them
<i>Nɛ afo nyɔŋma ke enyɔ</i>	that they may deliver twelve children



⁵⁵ Interview with Madam Darley Mate-Kodjo, 20th July, 2017

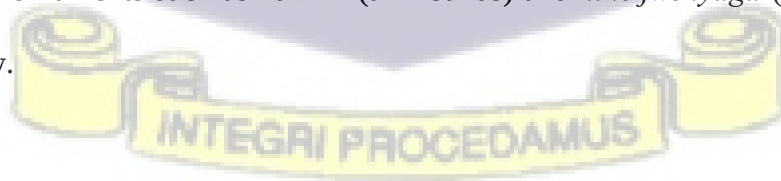
⁵⁶ *Gblo* is the cylindrical hat worn by Dangme traditional priests and *dipo* initiates. It is made from a kind of palm locally called *tɔm* with the scientific name *borrasus aethiopum*.

This belief is also exemplified during the *dipo* nobility rites with the yellow raffia strands and white clay, which are draped and sprinkled on the initiates as a prayer of fertility. The symbol may also be seen in the yellow waist beads a new bride wears like a charm to promote her ability to bear children and to ensure prosperity in her marriage. Yellow signifies life and its power over the sick among the Krobo and can be observed when a traditional priest places small yellow *huajetor* beads around a sick patient's right wrist to promote healing.

4.5.3 Gold (*sika*)

Gold to the Krobo is a symbol of authority and majesty just like the Akan (Antubam 1963:90). As discussed in chapter one, the acceptance of the colour gold came along with the advent of Nene Sackite I introducing gold trinkets as part of the royal regalia in the early 19th century (Odonkor 1966). This is part of the larger Akan influence on the Krobo when the latter adopted chieftaincy – an Akan system of governance. Currently, women mostly order small trinkets for themselves and their babies. During celebrations, it is a common sight to see women wearing a string of beads with a small gold nugget as the *kpo* (pendant).

The Konor (Paramount Chief) and other sub chiefs mostly wear the precious metal. The *Konor* wears a gold crown and other neck and arm pieces made from gold and other gold-plated ornaments such as *koni ni* (arm bands) and *nineɲwenyaga* (rings) as symbols of authority.



4.5.4 Blue (*wo su*), yellow (*kunɲɔ ɔɔ*), and the dress

When it comes to dress, I realised that Krobo women actually prefer wearing a blue bead with a blue cloth unconsciously emphasising their symbol of their motherhood; rather

than wearing a blue cloth with a contrasting colour. During the *ngmayemi* festivals I attended, it was not unusual to hear remarks such as *omue nɔɔ sa mo* and *omue nɔɔ kɛ obo ɔ yaa saminya*, meaning, “Your beads suit you and your beads match your cloth very well”. Even when the strand of beads was *asaasa* (a mixture), there is usually a combination design of yellow or blue beads running through. When I questioned a few people during the festival about the communal attraction towards these two colours, the responses I received were “*ahh wali, wa swɔ kɛkɛ*” (we do not know, we just like it) or “*oh pe aɲɛ fɛo, a muɔ wa hɛ*” literally meaning, “They are beautiful, they smile our face” meaning, “they are beautiful and give us pleasure”. My conclusion on this seemingly contradiction on the reasons for Krobo love of blue and yellow is that the younger generation are not aware of these historical facts pertaining to Krobo colour, they assume that their preference is just because ‘it smiles their faces’. Based on the facts given on the Krobo’s stay on *Klowe* (Krobo mountain), I can conclude that historical memory is the main cause of the Krobo attraction to the different shades and tints of blue and yellow. The Krobo are intuitively drawn to blue and yellow because of the stories they have heard about *Klowe* being a ‘mother’ to many groups of people on *Klowe*, hence the colour blue. I also surmise the Krobo love the colour yellow because it is a symbol of fertility, fruitfulness and prosperity. This corresponds with Ayiku’s (1998:160) second point of Ghanaian colour appreciation, which states that for the Ghanaian to appreciate a colour it must be related to a historical and philosophical meaning.

4.6 Appreciating Shapes and Motifs

Shapes such as circle, spiral, triangle and star have different meanings and symbolisms to different groups of people. Within adornment practices of the Krobo, colours are not just splashed on a surface or used in isolation, but are applied with different

shapes. Particular shapes such as the circle give meaning to certain forms of architecture (such as shrines and stool houses). According to D.D.N. Tetteh⁵⁷, this is because the circle with its unending line, with no beginning or end, is seen to be a symbol of *Mawu* (God). He continued by affirming that particular attention is also paid to the shape of ritual fire places represented as ‘star shape’ and burial sites (rectangles).

4.6.1 Circle (*kokloo*)

According to Nana Kloweki, to the Krobo, the circle is seen as a symbol of wholeness, unity and infinity. This symbol can be seen in the tuft of hair left on an initiate’s head after the *yise poomi*⁵⁸. This circle of hair, which is later shorn, is a symbol of both liminality and wholeness. It means that the initiate though in the liminal state is soon to become a full woman and member of the clan. Nana Kloweki further stated that, “circles of *ɲuɔ* (white clay) drawn on the arms and shoulders of women serve as symbols of femininity and the entirety of womanhood, which are highly appreciated.” These circular body marks are observed in the make-up of females during festivities such as the final day of *dipo* or during the *ngmayemi* festival. The circle is also seen in the naturally formed rings around the proverbial beautiful woman’s neck—such a woman is described as *yoo kwe tso* or *yoo ne e kwe si poo poo* meaning, “A woman with beauty ‘cuts’ around her neck” The Krobo also believe that a rope of beads worn around the right wrist must be a perfect circle. This indicates that the wearer is well dressed and is in a balanced state of mind. The Krobo interpret a circle as wholeness and unity. Thus, a bracelet of beads worn in a perfect circle is a symbol of a person’s wholeness of thinking and her/his affinity to Krobo land and understanding of his/her society. Meanwhile, beads, which form a perfect circle, also show

⁵⁷ Interview with D.D.N. Tetteh at his residence in Odumase. These facts were reiterated by Nana Kloweki during a later interview with him at the *Kloweki* shrine.

⁵⁸ This is a ritual hair style of *dipo* initiates.

that the beads were properly shaped and strung. A crooked or imperfect circle can therefore be interpreted to mean that the wearer is not aware of Krobo values or does not appreciate Krobo standards. On the other hand, it could simply mean that the wearer dresses in an imbalanced and haphazard manner and thus cannot be considered as an upright person in the society. A crooked string of beads may also be related to the crooked temper or mood of the person who strung them. Such an artist is considered a ‘fresh child artist’ who does not bother to interpret the societal values in his/her works. The circle is also seen in the designs of various wax prints like *yoo kama* (ideal woman) and *nsu bura* (life’s well) which most Ghanaians as well as Krobo women admire.

4.6.2 Dotted markings (*omasi*)

The Krobo appreciate dotted markings on young maidens and women especially during nubility rites and traditional marriages. Spots of white clay are sprinkled over *dipo* initiates completing their second costume. This attire is worn before they take the ultimate test of sitting on the sacred stone. The spot is also a mark of fertility for the young maidens. Traditional healers also mark their patients with the dot as a symbol of the beginning of new health.

4.6.3 Spiral (*lasogblei*)

The spiral represents the life force starting from a point and growing wider to maturity⁵⁹. In an interview with Nanor Mate-Kole, he stated that, the Krobo relate the spiral with the whirlwind (*lasogblei*) which manifests itself anytime the *nadu* performance is held. In body ornamentation, an inverted *lasogblei* is evident in a variation of the *aplechi to* hairstyle. *Aplechi to* is a hairstyle for young maidens. It is created by parting the hair in

⁵⁹ Catherine Beyer (2019) <https://www.learnreligions.com/geometric-shapes-4086370> [Accessed 10/7/19]

sections and loosely wrapping black thread around the sectioned hair creating a spiral pattern. The finished section of threaded hair is broad at the base and tapers to a point and has little tufts of hair sticking out through the gaps created in the spiraling thread. According to Madam Darley, the broad base of the hair represents the innocence and gullibility of the young as they accept everything and anything. And the tapering part of the hairstyle represents the shedding of innocence to become a more discerning adult. This assertion was reiterated by Madam Wemtan̄wɛ in Odometta. The spiral is also sometimes seen on the finial of the *Okyeame tso* which is the symbol of office for the chief's spokesperson.

4.6.4 Triangular (*koni ete*) markings

The triangle (*koni ete*) is used extensively in Ghanaian traditional art. It is used in kente weaving; hair parting in hair braiding, motifs on traditional stools, on canoes and many more. It is also widely used as part of chieftaincy regalia in the southern part of Ghana. As a representation of authority, a large equilateral triangle is worn as a pendant by the *Konor*. Smaller ones are used as decor on *koni ni* (arm bands) for sub chiefs. According to one of my respondents D. D. N. Tetteh, in Krobo ideology, the triangle represents the number three (3) and the trilogy of God, earth and deity. It is the worldview of the Krobo that the Earth, God, and deities are linked hence, prayers are said to all three. To elaborate further, a Krobo chief is believed to be enstooled by God to rule on earth with the help of his deity. When libation is poured by traditional priests, this traditional interpretation of the trilogy of God, i.e. God, Earth and deity are invoked; one can therefore not be prayed to whilst ignoring the others. The triangle being a symbol of the trilogy is also eminent among the Ga. To the Ga, however, the trilogy represents the sky god *Nwei* a male, *Shikpon*

the earth who is considered female and their child *Nshɔ* the sea⁶⁰. The idea of triangle is also seen within the Krobo philosophy of uprightness — *hedrami* (dress), *munyu* (speech) and *su* (character) — where one cannot be seen as being upright unless all three concepts are upheld. Thus, the triangle is also a symbol of entirety.

4.6.5 Vertical and horizontal line

To the Krobo, the vertical line is symbolic of the direction of a person's spirit. This line is perceived especially during the funeral celebrations of a distinguished person of the society, for example a chief. The vertical line is seen on the body painting of mourners. The Krobo like most groups believe in life after death. The linear body markings are therefore believed to help usher the dead person's spirit back to *huanim* where God and the ancestors reside. The vertical line or stripe is also seen on the *powa* bead, which is used to adorn the limb joints of the dead. Used in this particular context, the Krobo believe the *powa* bead helps to hasten the process of the spirit of the deceased moving on to join the ancestors.

According to D.D.N. Tetteh, the Krobo believe that the horizontal line represents this earth whilst the vertical line, the spiritual. This was reiterated by Nana Kloweki in an interview at his house. Thus, according to Nana Kloweki, the crossing of these two lines implies a meeting of the earthly with the Godly. This symbol is sometimes observed on the facial paint of newly inducted traditional priests.

4.6.6 Adopted symbols

Apart from the traditional interpretation of the cross, a supposedly 'Christian cross' has also been incorporated into the Krobo culture. This was made an important part of the

⁶⁰ <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/wp-content/uploads/Ga-People-and-Homowo-Festival.pdf> (Accessed 24/4/18)

dipo costume after the first Nana Kloweki saw a man holding such in a dream⁶¹. The cross is also used as part of the regalia of chiefs and is interpreted as the seat of government with the sections created by the four arms being under the rule of the centre—this symbol is sometimes observed on the *koni no* of chiefs and on the state umbrellas. While this adopted symbol may not fit into traditional Krobo philosophy, they form part of changes occurring in the culture.

4. 7 Summary

This chapter was based on the analysis of different collected Krobo oral narratives. The chapter was structured taking into account what constitutes the elements of Krobo philosophy and ideology and how these elements frame Krobo art and visual culture. There was also an examination of how speech, character and dress forms form the basis of Krobo identity through certain Krobo ideas. From the above, it is evident that the Krobo believe that it is part of God's essential plan for the Krobo to 'shine' where shining is an embodiment of good character, speaking well and dressing well. It is also obvious that there is a direct correlation between what a person thinks, and how it influences his/her dress and speech. In addition, the chapter has also discussed a range of proverbs, sayings and everyday expressions, which expresses that, which is acceptable and expresses the concept of 'shininess' of the Krobo.

How do the Krobo express the concept of shininess in their garment style? The next chapter presents a visual interpretation and application of Krobo philosophy. It explores the way the Krobo express their intangible culture within the visual culture of adornment.

⁶¹ It has been recorded in Krobo myth and history that Nana Kloweki dreamt she saw a man holding a cross in a dream who told her that a time would come when all will worship him Teyegaga (1985).

CHAPTER FIVE

KROBO BODY ADORNMENT

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter extensively discussed the philosophical ideas and values that underpin the determination of acceptable taste, behaviours and conformity to Krobo societal norms. Religious beliefs, historical experiences, language in the form of sayings, proverbs, adages, metaphors and songs were the means through which Krobo aesthetics were discussed. In this chapter, I intend to analyse the application and impact of these ideas and beliefs on their daily and ceremonial forms of dressing and adornment which the hypothesis as discussed earlier in the study supports the fact that the cultural values of the Krobo are determined by their worldview of which includes the verbal arts.

Body adornment covers a wide range of body wear and accessories, but the Krobo also have some unique ways of altering their body shapes. In order to present a specific and detailed discussion and analysis of these alternations and adornment, I shall address what kind of undergarments forms part of Krobo traditional wear, what type of clothing is acceptable to each gender and other embellishments to the body and so on. What are some of the subjects and themes found in their clothes and accessories such as coiffure, body painting and beads? Moreover, how is a person expected to look and assessed? Finally, how is Krobo body adornment evaluated?

This chapter relies primarily on the field data, which have been analysed, grouped into various themes and structured as would be seen in the subsequent pages. The first theme focuses on Krobo notions of human form—the distinguishing features (of the body) that highlight what Krobo culture considers an attractive body shape. This is followed by an examination of Krobo gendered dress that discusses the types of clothing worn by females and males. The last theme is Krobo visual preferences, and this section explores

the notions of volume, vintage, hierarchy, repetition, improvisation and simplicity as seen and understood by the Krobo.

5.1 Krobo Notions of Human Form

I shall begin my discussion on Krobo adornment by examining what their expectation of a gratifying body should be. I shall demonstrate this by discussing various measures taken to enhance the body as well as the clothes they wear. What is visually pleasing to the Krobo, encapsulates both the art (ornamentation) and the adornment of the body. It is therefore important to discuss Krobo concepts of human form believed to be acceptable and which gives delight to the onlooker. Laura Mulvey (1989:16) in *Visual Pleasure* posits, “[t]here are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at”. Mulvey’s assertion supports an accepted fact, in Krobo society, that *nɔmlo ne eda, emuo nɔhe*, literally meaning, “An upright person makes a face laugh”. Although the Krobo adage does not mention ‘looking’ as stated in Mulvey’s assertion, my research suggests that it is implied—the upright person who is well dressed enjoys being looked at and admired.

Like most ethnic groups in Ghana, Krobo concepts of the human form that are experienced is gendered. Among the Krobo for instance, having wide hips and a narrow waist is greatly admired. In the past, therefore, Krobo men were so obsessed to have wives who epitomised the Krobo preferred body type of ringed neck, big breasts, big hips and protruding buttocks. Because of these, Krobo men would follow their wives at a distance when they were going to the market or to fetch water. They would watch to see if their wives were admired and received compliments from other men. If they did, then it was confirmation that their wives were truly beautiful and this gave them satisfaction.

All through the history of Krobo, healthy teeth have always symbolised beauty, strength and health, and for a person’s anterior teeth to have a gap was and is considered

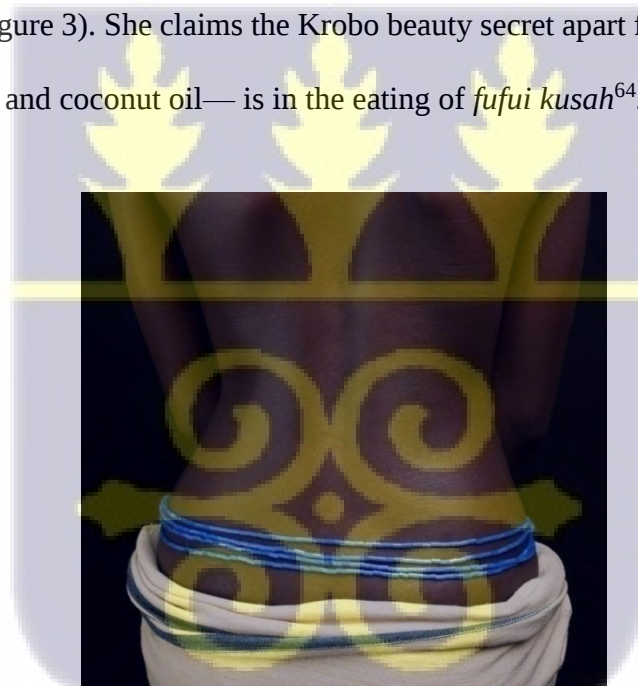
appealing. According to Madam Adelaide Obeng, gap teeth locally called *dzrɛh* are found to be attractive and so it is a plus if a woman has a gap between her two front teeth⁶². The Krobo believe that a woman with gap teeth maintains her good looks for a very long time, as it is believed her teeth do not fall out with old age. Apart from being pleasing to look at when the bearer of the gapped teeth smiles, the space also allows for easier spitting. Obeng further added that, though hardly practiced currently, in past times, young boys with this gap had spitting competitions to see who could spit the farthest. She also stated that in the past some people actually practiced dental mutilation (had their teeth sawed) to create the gap between the two front teeth. However, the teeth ended up with a ‘v’ shape and though were accepted; a manmade gap did not reflect the true Krobo form and was considered a second class gap’.

Contrary to the fact that short hair is accepted and appreciated among Ewe elderly women, among the Krobo for an elderly woman to be considered upright she must have the opposite and wear her hair in a long style because long hair is one of the physical qualities appreciated on a Krobo woman. It is expected that after the shaving of the head at *dipo* (*yise poomi*) (Huber, 1993; Streegtra, 2005; Boakye, 2010), should allow hair uninterrupted growth cutting it only if she becomes a widow. According to Obeng, long hair is a symbol of female maturity and women with long hair are held in high regard. It is also believed that a woman with long hair has intuitive perception and a connection to her environment. Probably this is one of the reasons why the traditional priestess of Somanya, Okornya Maku, has her hair down to her feet. With regards to long hair being a symbol of maturity, a woman, according to Krobo culture and tradition, must have hair long enough to weave into hair styles befitting her status. I remember my grandmother (who was in her late eighties) used to have a threaded hair attachment, which she pinned to the back of her head

⁶² Interview with Adelaide Obeng at Okyeame Kodjo We, on the 17th July, 2017

whenever she went out. This was visible from beneath her head tie giving the illusion that her hair was very long.

In addition to the Krobo appreciating body curves, gapped teeth and long hair in a woman, the human body is also appreciated when smooth and glossy. Smooth skin is an indicator of good health. A respondent in Odometa, Maku Lanor, said that in the past *etsiyo* was used to dress the hair and skin and that during the *dipo* rite especially, the young maiden's skin was polished with palm oil until it glistened and shone which, was delightful⁶³. Though there are several body creams on the market, currently, the traditional Krobo mostly use shea butter, which they call '*nukunu*'. According to Maa Kumasi Yoo, one of the female elders, Krobo women have always prided themselves on their beautiful dark skin (see figure 3). She claims the Krobo beauty secret apart from massaging the skin with shea butter and coconut oil— is in the eating of *fufui kusah*⁶⁴.



**Figure 3. The velvety and luminous skin of Nuerki, a young Krobo woman.
Picture taken by Jasmine Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2018.**

⁶³ *Etsiyo* is made by boiling palm oil till it becomes whitish in colour, cam wood powder and lemon leaves are then added for fragrance.

⁶⁴ *Fufui* is a Ghanaian dish of pounded cassava, plantain, cocoyam or a combination of cassava and plantain and eaten with a variety of soups. *Fufui kusah* is day old *fufui* which is heated by boiling in soup.

Apart from the effect of makeup on the skin, the Krobo are also particular about the presentation of their cosmetics. These receptacles of *nukunu* (shea butter) (see figure 4) were seen in Odometa. They were brought out for me to admire when during an interview I asked if there was anything special related to the female that could be shared with me.



Figure 4. Some receptacles for storing *nukunu* (shea butter) for cosmetic use. *Nukunu* in a calabash decorated with beads (left) and in a small ceramic bowl (right). Courtesy of Maku Lanor's wardrobe, Pictures by Jasmine Opare-Darko, Odometa (2017).

Apart from having these physical qualities, the Krobo woman must be demure, move gracefully and be hard working as expressed in the following proverbs: *nɔmlɔ nɛ eda he dzwawa pe sika*, meaning, “A person in good standing is more expensive than gold”, and *akɛ hefɛo wi hiɔ* meaning “Debt is not paid off with beauty”. A person who has attractive bodily features but no moral character is said to be *yaka gu* literally “empty” and is compared to a badly baked bead which has no purpose. According to *Manye Maku Tsu*, a sub queen of Odumase, to compliment the physical structure of a Krobo woman or for a Krobo woman to be considered beautiful, she must be a ‘total woman’. A total woman to the Krobo is one who knows how to cook well, manage a home, have some knowledge of traditional medicine to care for her family when they fall ill, and be very good in bed to satisfy her husband sexually as these form part of the training of *dipo* initiates (Hugo 1993). To the Krobo, a beautiful/ handsome man is one that is tall and sports a moustache (see figure 5). I was told that Sir Emmanuel Mate-Kole⁶⁵, the third *Konor* of the Krobo, only

⁶⁵ He reigned from 1892 until his death in the year 1939. He was knighted by the Queen of England.

wanted tall men as his courtiers and in-laws and if they sported a moustache, the better. A broad chest is also considered manly, Ruby Amarteifio, daughter of *Manye* Okle Yoo said “*ke okɛ o yi fɔsi ɲe nyumu guwem nɛ e ɲe munyu tu ɔ, e munyu o pɛɛ ‘gbun gbum’ ɲe e gugwem, nɛ eɲe buadzorm pe!*”, translated as “When you place your head against a man’s broad chest and he speaks, his voice sounds ‘*gbu gbu*,’ resonates deeply, and it gives much pleasure”. In an informal all women discussion, Maa added that, though a man with a crooked penis (*sule nɛ eki*) is said to have a dubious character she prefers *sule nɛ e ki* to a straight penis any day. According to her, such a man hides behind the deformity of his penis and pretends he is too shy to have sex. But when he does, it is very enjoyable. Other women agreed with her. Skinny legs on a man are not admired and he would be referred to as *bɛ wo nane* meaning “Broom stick leg”. These were the personal opinions of the women I spoke with however; it is a strict Krobo societal norm that a man must be circumcised. A man may have all of the physical qualities, but if he does not know how to ‘throw his cloth’ or cater for his woman, he is not considered ‘beautiful’.



Figure 5. From left: Nene Sackite I, Sir Emmanuel Mate-Kole and Oklemekuku Mate-Kole II, Past Konors of Manya Krobo District all wearing moustache. Source: Cropped from Manya Krobo Historical Calendar, 2003.

5.2 Gendered Krobo Dress

Culture defines attire for both men and women. Traditional expectations and behaviours are related to the meanings of being either male or female and are very much connected to appearance. Gender analysis within the context of dress, explores the different modes of ornamentation that distinguishes male from female. According to the UNESCO

Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework, “The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity)⁶⁶. Gender roles and expectations are learned. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures”. This supports Judith Butler’s theory of performativity which states that genders are created or formed out of repeated actions (Butler 1988:528). Among the Krobo for example, in the past, babies and young girls were taught how to wear the *subue* and they continued to wear it as they grew creating a ‘girl thing’, which grew into a ‘woman thing’⁶⁷.

Many western scholars have written about gender in relation to body adornment practice. For instance, Butler (1990) in discussing fabrics suggests that textiles reflect and signify the feminine and masculine identities. Lurie (1992) follows this performative gender trend and proposes that dress is a form of nonverbal statement with its own semantics and grammar. Damhorst (1999) in *The Meaning of Dress* also puts forward that certain fabrics with rounded design lines (like flowers and other curved lines) and delicate translucent fabrics (such as voile and organza) may be used to create clothing for women and not men. However, in my opinion, this is culture-specific as Ghanaian men sometimes wear floral patterned laces stitched into ‘jumpers’, with Kente cloth. Gender is also represented in the art forms such as sculpture, which represents the human body.

It was noticed that among the Krobo, gender differences in basic dress is minimal. For example, both male and female wear the traditional thong undergarment. However, the male uses a bigger size of fabric than the female and neither does he wear his with waist beads as the female does. In addition, both genders wear beads in the Krobo culture in all the life cycle events, from birth to death. The males wear bigger beads and there are specific

⁶⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BSP/GENDER/PDF> [Accessed 5/11/18]

⁶⁷ *subue* is an under-garment equivalent to the western panty. It will be explained further on in the chapter.

designs for females. Though the different designs worn by both male and female may have specific colours, the blue and yellow *okata* beads are mixed with other beads at specific intervals to create the effect of repetition and beauty, and are worn by both sexes. Both genders admire cloths, ‘which speak’. Thus, though it is common and expected to see women in fabrics with proverbial names, Krobo men also prefer fabrics with proverbs⁶⁸. This is an indication of the Krobo male trying to live up to the standards of uprightness.

Whilst fertility, which is a crucial part of the Krobo belief system, it is emphasized within the size and volume of female garments, it is the size and produce of a man’s farm that is a symbol of his being fertile or not⁶⁹. This may be because both the land and women need careful ‘tilling’ to produce and multiply.

5.2.1 The female attire

Generally, female attire begins with garments worn closest to the skin. These are the undergarment, which are worn either to protect the genitals or to provide extra padding to the body and also to create a fuller silhouette of the garment to be worn. The *subue* is the main traditional thong and under garment worn by Krobo women. It was used in the past by both the young and old. Currently, however, it is mainly used by the elderly women and as a kind of recyclable sanitary towel by some youth. A respondent, Madam Wemtagwe stated that the use of this particular garment is to stop air from entering a woman’s private part. The specific colour, red, is important in the evaluation of this piece of adornment. The colour acts as a camouflage to any bloodstains left by a woman’s monthly flow. Preferably, it should be eighteen inches wide and about forty-five inches long. If the *subue* is too wide or too long, it will create a hump when the back ends are tucked through the waist beads and this is not acceptable since this hump is not the

⁶⁸ Initially, I thought that was a feminine trait until I was told that a man must not only speak well with his speech, but also with his attire.

⁶⁹ This sentiment as shared Okyeame Boate is also confirmed by David Copland (1979:35).

deliberate ‘buttocks extension’ which will be described later. When the *subue* creates a hump visible through one’s garment, the overall dressing is seen as ungainly and un-lady-like. When visible through one’s dress, it can be compared to the western practice of showing of a woman’s undergarments. Other criteria include the ability of the *subue* to breathe (this helps to regulate the body temperature between the thighs) and also, the smoothness and the permeability of the fabric is considered. A *subue*, which conforms to these standards of colour, length and its ability to breathe and absorb, is described as *subue kpakpa* (a good *subue*). Apart from being an undergarment, the *subue* is part of the costume worn during Krobo puberty rites.

When the *subue* is worn as part of the *dipo* costume, both the front part and back ends are left hanging so that these hanging ends give a slight covering to the wearer’s thighs and buttocks. These hanging ends earned initiates the name “girls in tail dress” by the early missionaries to Krobo (Streestra 2005:95). Again, when used as a *dipo* costume, two colours of fabric, white and red, are used to show the different stages of the ritual. The red is used at the onset of the *dipo* ritual and the white is used when the initiates are going to sit on the sacred stone. The colour white represents purity and victory and is given to the initiate by her father or grandfather. The following *Klama* song refers to the white *subue* which is given to an initiate by her father on her passing the first test of sitting on the *bo womi*. This white *subue* is a symbol of passing this principal test of chastity, and becoming a woman of the community:

Krobo

Translation

Ee-e! mune ho no eh,

On this Saturday.

Omle o bo

This is your waist cloth

Ne ofeɲem o hahedzi no ne,

Which your father is giving you

Ne ekeɲemoklo-yopeɛhe.

To make you a Krobo woman

Nana Kloweki, badzoo no

Nana Kloweki, grant your blessings!

Ne efo gbo

That you may deliver in the early

Ke gbie

and in the late seasons.

The *subue* is worn with waist beads. Unless of ritual importance, like *dipo* or marriage, waist beads can be of any colour, design and size depending on the preference of the wearer. Even though a predominantly female garment at birth and at death, males are also adorned in waist beads.

The next garment worn is the *bomi bo*, which depending on how it is worn can be comparable to a modern underskirt or the modern padded undershorts. In the past clothes were stiffened by starch for a smart appearance and also as a dirt deterrent. The undergarment *bomi bo* was also stiffened which according to Maa Agbotse, a female elder, was to create the illusion of a bigger and broader backside, which is more preferable than an un-starched one which did not ‘stand’. She continued by saying *bomi bo lee esane e dasi-* meaning, “As for *bomi bo* it must stand”. One that does not stand will not be able to create a good illusion of a bigger backside. A big backside is very necessary, as this is one of the standards of value in dress⁷⁰. After the appropriate undergarments of waist beads, *subue* and *bomi bo* are worn, the Krobo woman then adorns herself with wax prints. These could be in the form of *kaba* (blouse) with *boham* (wrapper skirt) or the *bobum* (toga) style. Mansvelt (1924:238-243) was the first to suggest that the first wax prints (Dumas) came to the Gold Coast through soldiers returning from the Second World War who brought them as gifts and this is supported by Rodenburg (1967:47), and Kroese (1976)⁷¹. The acceptance of these paved the way for a bigger market by Scottish merchant Ebenezer Brown Flemming (Gott et al., 2017:54). These were brought in lengths on a bale, which were cut up into lengths of two yards. When worn, one was wrapped around the waist and fell to the

⁷⁰ The *bomi bo* will be discussed in further detail under the discussion of volume.

⁷¹ Van Kessel (2005:191) cited in Williem Ankersmit’s *The waxprint its origin and its introduction on the Gold Coast* is, however, of the view that soldiers did not keep in touch with family during their tours and thus did not send gifts home. He is also of the view that returning soldiers would not have enough money to purchase expensive fabrics and that people in the Gold Coast were used to batiks because of European traders importing imitation batiks from Europe.

ankle, one was wrapped around the chest under the arms and fell to the knee and the last was wrapped around the shoulders or used as a head-tie. Though the first wax prints were imported, I do agree with Lisa Folawiyo, a current fashion designer cited by Gott & Loughan (2017:23) who opines, “Our mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers have worn this cloth for many years for it not to be ours”. It is therefore not surprising that these wax prints are now called African Print Fabrics. Notwithstanding, Gilfoy (1992) has mentioned that Ghanaian’s had fabric long before this time and that other scholars have noted through archaeological evidence that woven stripped fabrics were in existence and used around the 6th century in parts of West Africa.

The Krobo evaluate the quality of wax prints by proverbial names, symbolic designs and colour. The names of the cloth should match the social standing of the wearer. For example, an elder must not use a cloth with insinuating remarks such as *ke o maa tu ehe munyuo, lee we se!* Meaning, “If you want to gossip about me you better sit on a stool and do it well!” An elder who adorns him or herself in such fabrics is considered quarrelsome and not matured and would be described as *ebe su* meaning, “[s]he does not have good character”. In short, that elder is not ‘cool’. Other criteria include the fastness of the dyes and the standing of the manufacturer. Phrases used to describe wax prints are *enɔ le epa we* meaning, “This cloth is colour fast”. *Bo nɔɔ lee Holland*, meaning, “This cloth is produced by Vlisco.” Other fabrics with different qualities are also judged using phrases such as *bo nɔɔ lee Togo* meaning, “As for this cloth, it is from Togo”. This particular phrase of *bo nɔɔ lee Togo* is used to evaluate all clothes that are deemed inferior, whether they are produced in Togo or not. Another phrase used in the evaluation of cheap fabric is *bo nɔɔ ɲe fetefete* meaning “This cloth is light”, which infers that the cloth when sewn, will not ‘stand’.

Among the Krobo, smoothness and shininess go beyond sculpture and spirituality and they modify the feel and look of their cloths to suit this expectation. *Bo ni eda*, cloth which is standing or an upright cloth, only qualifies to be so if it is smooth to the touch and has a glossy luminous feel. To get an even more luminous and glossy look, cassava starch is applied to wax prints. Thereafter when worn, compliments such as *obo nɔɔ hem dasi* (your cloth's face is standing) will be received. On the other hand, poorly woven fabric, which has evidence of skipped loops, is rough to the touch and is not admired. This practice of starching wax prints clothes is still currently prevalent. However, because of modernity and technology, there is now the prepackaged starch spay which is also used.

A style of the Krobo dressing with wax print is creating a *boham* (wrapper skirt). As the name suggests, this style is created by draping the fabric around the body, with no stitching. For a woman of medium to large size, two yards of fabric forty-five inches wide is used to create the *boham*. An extra-large size might need two and a-half yards of fabric. What makes the *boham* (wrapper skirt) pleasant to the eye is the even hemline of the wrapped skirt. The final lap of fabric should be arranged such that the opening is at the back of the wearer, preferably the right side. The opening is situated at the back to eliminate exposure when walking or when the wind blows. Older women are more experienced but when a young woman especially wears her cloth in this manner, the elder womenfolk compliment her with the words *O bo ni o ha nɔ eda nɔ* meaning “Your cloth is standing on the mark”. According to *Manye Aplam* (Paramount Queenmother), the even hemline of *boham* is equated to a balanced life style. A woman whose cloth is always well wrapped is said to be ‘cool’ and have control. On the other hand, a cloth which is not well wrapped receives comments such as- *o bo kpla o he kpanyakpanya* meaning, “The ends of your cloth are flying all over the place” and to the Krobo this means the wearer has a lackadaisical attitude towards life. Currently even though the *boham* is still popular among the elderly,

most young women sew the *boham* into a long skirt and thus avoid being assessed by the hemline.

To the Krobo, female dress tells its audience the level of cultural values the wearer has. The length and drape of a garment can also depict the wearer's point of view towards life. The colours of a garment also play a role in the interpreting of the wearer's character and mood. Because 'shininess' and uprightness are Krobo qualities which are replicated in adornment, fabrics are textured to have a glossy and stiff appeal.

5.2.2 Male clothing

A Krobo male who is perceived as being in upright standing in the community is self-conscious about his attire. He makes a deliberate effort for his *hedrami* to be appropriate and upstanding because he knows that his dress has an impact both on him and the society at large. Krobo men (and women) have to make a conscious effort to adhere to the values of the society against the gravitational pull of their own preferences and desires in that, the individual has to put his/her own desires aside especially when they do not conform to the 'rules' to adhere to the societal norms of the Krobo community. S/he has to be strong and stand firm against all odds and in all spheres of their life for it is this inner strength that they portray that earns them the praise of *eda*.

According to Manye Aplam, non-conformity and not adhering to the social rules results in an individual being termed as a *nɔmlɔ ne ede* and this comes with the following sanctions:

1. Your words will not be taken seriously.
2. You would be ignored at important gatherings as you would be seen as a deviant.
3. She or he would find it difficult to get a good marriage partner.
4. A *nɔmlɔ ne ede* will not be deemed fit to become an ancestor.

In my opinion, it is likely that it is this adherence to the societal rules which has made the Krobo culture be described as “resilient” (Steegstra 2005).

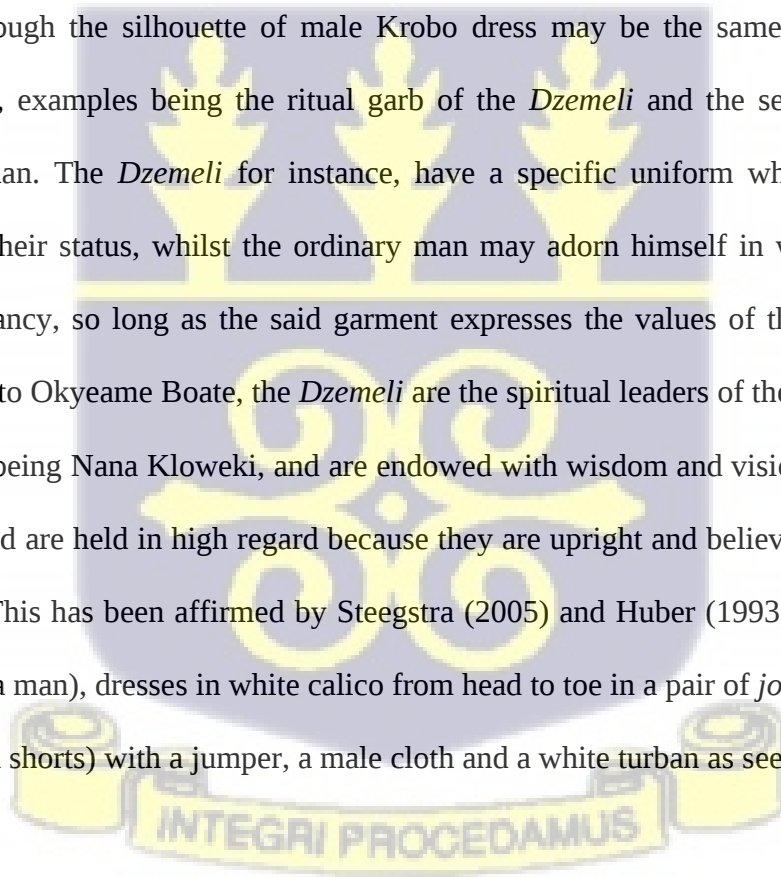
Bodzwe is the under garment worn by the males. It is equivalent to the female *subue*. However, unlike the female *subue* which is worn with waist beads and which must be red, the *bodzwe* is made from white cotton. It can be as long as two and a half yards in length and twenty-four inches wide. The length of fabric is wrapped around the waist once, then passed through the legs from the front. The ends of the fabric are then tucked into the waistline at the back creating a temporary pair of pants locally called *bodzwe*. Nana Kloweki stated that for a *bodzwe* to be classified as being good, the finished wrap must not be too low on the thighs it must not look like a pair of shorts. Even though most men have stopped wearing the *bodzwe*, it is still used by traditional priests, members of the *nadu* cult and is also worn by Chiefs during certain rituals including those related to death.

Bo bum is the traditional toga drape style. Though both male and female wear it, the men use a larger piece of fabric measuring about twelve yards if the man is tall and muscular. And ten yards if the man is of average height. Fabrics used for *bo bum* range from kente, through imported cotton fabrics to wax prints. During mourning periods local Akan fabrics like *brisii* and *adinkra* are also used. The criterion for the evaluation for *bo bum* is the deepness of the contrasting lines within the garment after the length of fabric has been draped. These lines are created by the diagonal and vertical folds of draped cloth within the garment. The evaluation therefore includes the size of the cloth in relation to the wearer’s size and height. If the cloth appears too small the man may be ridiculed behind his back with phrases such as *-eba bo no nge no bobo yuu de*, meaning, “He borrowed the cloth from a smaller sized person”. He may also be ridiculed as having worn his wife’s cover cloth by mistake. A ‘real man’ does not wear a small cloth but rather drapes a large cloth which creates deep multiple folds. This style of clothing was worn in the past and is

still being worn today by both the young and old. It is important to note that Krobo men also prefer to wear wax prints that speak.

The *bobum* (cloth) is worn with a loose pair of pantalon, which is locally called *jokoto*. This is a calf length pair of loose shorts with wide fitting legs, the wider the leg, the more pleasing it is. Currently the *jokoto* is mostly made from velvet fabric, and is secured at the waist with a draw string. A good pair of *jokoto* has large patch pockets on either side and must be of a contrasting colour to the *bo*. Even though the *jokoto* is currently used with the *bobum* some men choose to wear any type of shorts that are made with other fabrics such as khaki or gabardine. In recent times, the male *bo bum* is sometimes worn with a garment called a 'jumper'.

Though the silhouette of male Krobo dress may be the same, there are a few differences, examples being the ritual garb of the *Dzemeli* and the secular garb of the ordinary man. The *Dzemeli* for instance, have a specific uniform which they wear to announce their status, whilst the ordinary man may adorn himself in whatever garment takes his fancy, so long as the said garment expresses the values of the Krobo society. According to Okyeame Boate, the *Dzemeli* are the spiritual leaders of the community with their head being Nana Kloweki, and are endowed with wisdom and vision. They interpret the stars and are held in high regard because they are upright and believed to live beyond reproach. This has been affirmed by Steegstra (2005) and Huber (1993). Currently Nana Kloweki, (a man), dresses in white calico from head to toe in a pair of *jokoto* (wide, loose, calf- length shorts) with a jumper, a male cloth and a white turban as seen in figure 6.





**Figure 6. Researcher with Nana Kloweki, Senior Priest of Odumase-Krobo.
Picture taken by Jasmine Opare-Darko, 2017.**

In an interview with Nana Kloweki himself, he stated that white is worn as a mark of purity. When he is performing official duties at *dipo* or the *ngmayemi* festival, he dons a *gblo* (conical straw hat) to perform his rituals. This hat is a symbol of his authority. Nana Kloweki goes bare foot and wears no jewelry, the only piece of jewelry he wears is the *la* at the time of his enstoolment which is taken off after three months. To his office, jewelry is seen as a mark of vanity. This belief that accessories are a mark of vanity is also evident in the Kloweki shrine. The shrine is a bare room painted white with the only fixture being a clay pot of water; his priestess on the other hand, wears beads of office around her wrist. These beads act as texts telling the onlooker of the priestess's status to the public. These beads also represent the gods she serves. Elders well versed in the dress semantics of the *Dzemeli* would be able to identify the gods she serves just by seeing the beads she wears. Priestesses also wear white and blue wax print loincloths with white cloths around their chest falling to their knees or mid-calf with a white scarf as seen in figure 7.



Figure 7. Traditional priestesses seated at *Ngmayemi* in white scarf and white chest cloth. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare- Darko. Odumase.

This is similar to what the Anglo-ewe priestesses wear⁷². This could probably be proof of the link between the Krobo and Ewe. The male priests of lesser rank wear a white loin cloth and a white scarf when performing rituals. Other traditional priests who are subordinate to Nana Kloweki also wear a white turban, but when at home may wear any other attire (see figure 8). I met one at home in a pair of khaki shorts and a jumper. I was told the white turban is symbolic of justice, a clear heart and mind.

⁷² personal communication with Efo Sela Adjei



Figure 8. Nene Okumo Madjanor of Odumase seated home in traditional white headgear worn by priests. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opere-Darko, Odumase April, 2017.

The *wɔnɔ* of Somanya (Yilo Krobo) on the other hand dresses rather extravagantly. She wears beads on all her joints and around her neck. Her head is bare. This according to Okyeame Boate might be because of the influence of the Akan who are better known for their flamboyance of costume. The people of Yilo are descendants of refugees from Denkyira and other towns who sought refuge on the Krobo Mountain in the 1700s (Streegstra 2005). However, according to D.D.N. Tetteh, *Wɔnɔ* Maku of Somanya (see figure 9) dresses this way because, she is not part of the *dzemeli* who are accountable to the society⁷³. D.D.N. Tetteh further asserted that she ‘bought’ her magic and thus dresses up in whatever costume chooses her fancy. To strictly assess the *wɔnɔ* with Krobo standards of taste would mean that she is not ‘cool’ because she dresses in a ‘hot’ manner, causing awe and confusion just to attract ‘customers’. According to D.D.N. Tetteh, her dressing does not conform to the standards of the *dzemeli*, the implication of this is that she is not pure therefore *ede*.

⁷³ Dzemeli are the spiritual leaders of the land and are considered holy and this is personified in their dressing. They are religious leaders authorized to perform sacred rituals of the land. On the other hand, *wɔnɔ* are freelance mediators between the spirits and the living. They are not bound by the community and can dress according to personal preference. They sometimes charge money for their services.



Figure 9. Okonya Maku, *Wono* of Yilo. Photograph courtesy of Malek Appiah Affum, 2009.

A much more recent addition to Krobo male dress is the *fugu* which the Krobo use for both secular and ritual purposes. *Fugu* is the strip cloth from the northern part of Ghana and oral tradition suggests that *fugu* was introduced to the Dagbas from Ouagadugu during the reign of Yaa Naa Zongina. This kind of fabric does not have motifs woven into it, but rather comes in plain coloured stripes. According to Tettehfio (2009:109), *fugu* means cloth in the Mossi language and he also suggests that the word *fugu* is used to describe an assortment of loose-fitting garments sewn from strip-cloth from the Northern part of Ghana. The *fugu* has evolved from being restricted to royal wear among its autochthonous, and is currently worn by all and sundry. Wearing of *fugu* became very popular after Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, made it part of his personal attire. Essel and Amissah (2015:32) suggest that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah wore *fugu* to portray his African identity as he proclaimed Ghana's independence on March 6th 1957. The wearing of *fugu* at that function projected the costume as a national dress in addition to the *ntama*. Thus the Dr Kwame Nkrumah unified the northern and southern sectors of Ghana with dress. The Mossi, Mamprusi, Lobi, Dagomba, Kokonba and Gonja are the main producers of *fugu*.

According to one of my respondents, Okyeame Mate, the Krobo first connection with the *fugu* was during the Akatamanso war with the Asante. In my opinion it's more

likely that the *fugu* came to Krobo with the migrant section the Denkyira and other Akan that were incorporated into the Klowe society in the late 1800s. With time the *fugu* has been absorbed into the Krobo ritual society because of its convenience. It conducts easy movement as opposed to the *bo* during ritual performances and also, with the instances of war, talismans could easily be attached for spiritual protection, again as against the *bo*. The Krobo prefer to call the *fugu batakali*⁷⁴. The *Yensichi*⁷⁵ and *Bingmbaa*⁷⁶ styles of *fugu* are the most often used by the Krobo and they use them as adornment for mourning, especially during the funeral of a chief or prominent person in the society and also as ritual garb for Nadu priests.

5.3 Krobo Visual Preferences

5.3.1 Volume in Krobo attire (*hiem ke emiklem*)

The Krobo people are particularly conscious of how a person looks with the proper adornment, but also the importance of the size of appearance during two major rites of passage. Why is the size of adornment important to the Krobo, and why the preference for certain sized sillouttes in clothing? And how do the Krobo depict this within dress? Who determines the appropriate size of clothing within their society? This section discusses the preferred size of clothing at the celebration of puberty and at the funeral of a deceased father. The volume or size of one's clothing has always been admired among the Krobo and is exemplified in padded undergarments to create huge backsides, voluminous draped clothing and the wearing of various beads in abundance to create a heavy collar of beads.

According to Mamle *Dipo* Yoo, a sub-queen mother, the *subue* which is the traditional underwear, can also be used to create the illusion of protruding buttocks. However, to achieve this effect, it is necessary that a larger *subue* is used. The *subue* is

⁷⁴ *Batakali* means outer gown in Hausa (Essel and Amissah 2015:32)

⁷⁵ *Yensichi* is the mid- thigh length sleeveless upper body *fugu* with usually loose and wide sideways openings from which the arms appear. It has no sleeves but its generally oversized shoulders dimensions drop over the shoulders to reach the elbow.

⁷⁶ *Bingmbaa* is the upper thigh length *fugu* with wide loose sleeves.

passed over the waist beads at the front and passed between the legs to the backside. It is then looped around the waist beads at the back from the centre to the side and back through the centre to the other side creating a hump as seen in figure 10. This hump can be compared to the hip roll or bustle pad worn in Europe during the restoration period (see figure 11) (Anderson & Anderson, 1984).



Figure 10. *Subue* as buttocks extension. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2017



Figure 11. Baum roll of the restoration era. Courtesy of Anderson & Anderson, 1984.

Appreciation of large dimensions is also reflected in the Krobo love for large female backsides and breasts. In a personal conversation with eighty-two year old Tetteh Angmor, he confirms that Krobo men admire a full hourglass body figure with wide hips and protruding buttocks⁷⁷. I asked Angmor why this was so and his reply was “*Oh e nge fɛo nɛɛ e haa nɔ fɔɔ hu. E tsɔɔ kaa, bibii mɛ fuu ɲɛ e mlimli*, meaning, “Oh it’s beautiful and means the woman can have a lot of children”. Angmor is saying that, the wider the hips, the wider the stomach area for babies to be conceived. This concept of the hourglass figure being susceptible to fertility has also been discussed in other cultures⁷⁸. Confirmation of Angmor’s assertion is not only apparent in the *bue* as a buttock’s extension, but is also evident in undergarments of elderly women. The elderly women wear a double cloth ‘*bomi bo*’ (cloth within cloth) around their loins, and this is supposed to give them the illusion of rounder hips and a fuller backside. The *bomi bo* is usually made of wax print, cut into two (2) yards long and forty-five (45) inches wide⁷⁹. This length of fabric is then folded and tied in a particular way around the wearer’s hips, giving an illusion of fuller hips (see figures 12 and 13). Notwithstanding, this *bomi bo* also doubles as a storage facility for a change of clothes when one is traveling as seen in figure 12. It is folded in a particular way that leaves some space to carry her extra clothing. Though the wide hips are admired by both the young and old, it is only the elderly women who practice this these days. The younger generation prefer factory made under shorts that serve the same purpose as one elderly woman Dedo Wahiemawude affirms, “*le gbi te nɔɔ, jama China, China fitɔmɛ nɛ yewi ɔɔ mɛ hii woo ne nge nɔ. Mɛ ali benɛ a hia blɔ kɛ de gu. Befɛ benɔ, baagi kplaahɛ kpanyakpanya*, meaning, “These days the young ladies are all wearing China made buttocks⁷¹. They don’t know how

⁷⁷ Interview April 27, 2017, at his residence at Kojonya, Odumase.

⁷⁸ BBC News, Hour Glass Figure Fertility Link. May 4th 2004. Bhattachra.S. May 5th 2004. Barbie Shaped Women More Fertile. *New Scientist*

⁷⁹ In fact, sometimes a woman’s *bomi bo* is just a *nɔham bo* (cover cloth) from a different *kaba* ensemble ⁷¹Dedo Whiemawude is a female elder and made this contribution at a meeting of women at Daley Mate Kodjo’s house.

to travel inconspicuously; they always have a bag dangling from a part of their bodies”. What Dedo Wahiemawude means is that, in the past, a woman could travel from Odumase to Accra without any one in her immediate vicinity knowing she was going anywhere because she did not carry any hand luggage. Unlike the youth of today who invest in large bags which draw attention to themselves even if they are not going anywhere in particular.

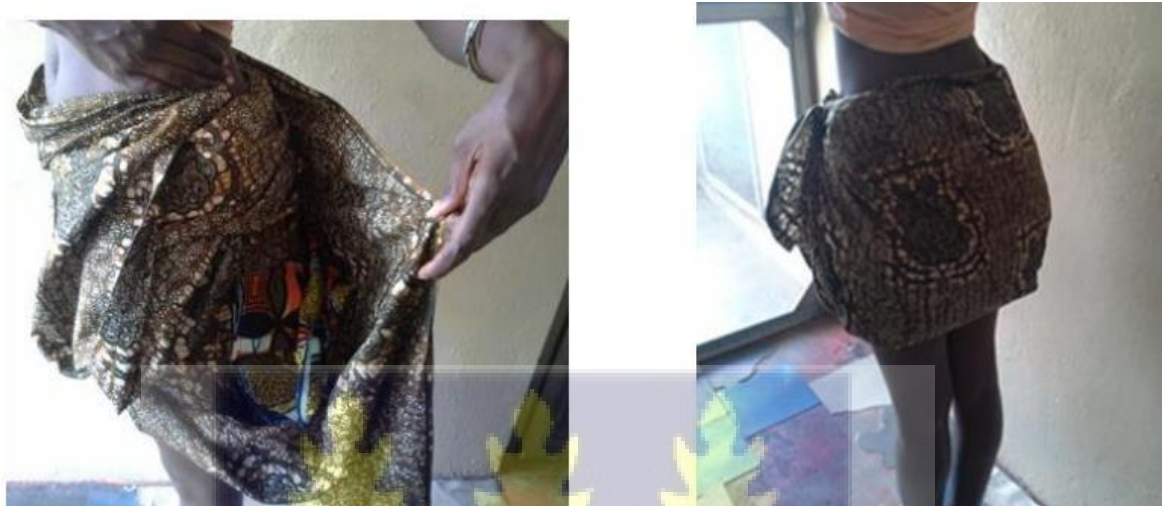


Figure 12. Folded blouse in *bomi bo* (Left) serving and back view of *bomi bo* (right). Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare- Darko Odumase, 2017



Figure 13. Wrapper Skirt worn with *bomi bo* (left) and wrapper skirt without *bomi bo* (right). Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2017.

To the Krobo, volume means nobility and success. Thus, a Queen mother is expected to have a large cloth with ample folds in her *bo bum*. When she is able to achieve this, she is hailed and cheered with the words *hiε boni e bo ɔ dasi ne esa le ha* meaning, “See how well

her cloth stands and suits her”. The largeness is again observed in the huge skirt of the final day *dipo* costume, the *kpee sisi bo*. This proportion is achieved because of the multiple layers of cloth used to create the skirt. The *kpee sisi bo* meaning, “Basket under cloth”⁸⁰ outfit consists of the initiate wearing numerous waist beads under multiple half pieces⁷³ of cloth which create massive folds of a wide skirt (see figure 14).



Figure 14. *Kpee Sisi Bo*: a Skirt-Like Outfit made from multiple half pieces of cloth to create the size of the adornment and worn with multiple stands of beads around the neck. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, April 2016.

The *Dipo* costume (as well as most traditional performance costumes) brings about an awareness of the body which allows for the quality in movement for the performance.

According to Madam Darley, onlookers look out for fluidity in the initiate’s movement for it is believed that if the young woman can move smoothly despite the weight of the beads, then she will be able to exercise self-control over her emotions in marriage and

⁸⁰ In the past Krobo women kept their belongings in a basket called *kpee* and the most valuable cloths were kept at the bottom of it, hence the name *kpee sisi bo*, literally meaning basket under cloth

⁷³ A half piece of cloth derives its name from the fact that it is half of the twelve (12) yard bale, and is six (6) yards in length.

life in general. The different layers of fabric used for this skirt are borrowed from the *kpee sisi* of aunts and other female well-wishers; the borrowed fabric is a symbol and metaphor of support of the community. This concept of interdependency is also found in the weaving and colours of kente cloth where a combination of different bright colours depend on each other to form a fabric that satisfies the eye and accepted by the community⁸¹. Apart from the skirt being proof of the initiates support from the community and being a reminder of their dependency, a voluminous skirt is more attractive to the eye as opposed to a slim one. Phrases such as *ee nyie kaa manye* meaning, “She walks like a queen” or, *noko behii ke hetom* meaning, “This is incomparable” are used in appraisal of an initiate’s voluminous skirt. In this case, the *Manye* who clothes herself in voluminous fabric is the yardstick of comparison for the *dipo* initiate.

In the past, the number and choice of fabrics used for this outfit tells the onlooker whether she comes from a wealthy family or not. However, I was told that currently some parents hire the finery for their daughters. Parents going to the extent of borrowing finery for their daughter’s puberty ceremony demonstrates the extent to which this dressing up means to the Krobo society, as is evident in the *Klama* song below:

Translation

Hayo lee

Haye lady

Hayoo lee

Haye lady

Dza wa le hayoo

This is how we do it for *Haye* ladies

Hayoo lee, dza wa le hayoo lee

Haye lady, this is how we do it

Mo hisi nabu mo booo

Sit down and be adorned in fine cloth.

The *Klama* song is referring to the dressing up and pampering of the young initiate into her “costume” by the female elders and other females of the house going through her puberty

⁸¹ Personal conversation with Ameyaw, a kente seller in Accra.

rite. The clothes of the *dipo* initiate are symbolic of either her liminal or aggregated status in the society.

Multiple strands of beads are worn under the *kpeɛsisi bo* and these serve as the ‘wire’ through which the yards of fabric are strung to create the skirt. The beads worn under the skirt, act as an instigator, bringing awareness to the weight of the pelvis. Thus, the initiate is able to execute her dance steps and body movements more gracefully and with better fluidity. The dance steps she takes are small. She shuffles her feet, moving forwards, backwards, and to the sides while her arms move ever so gracefully, the left arm at waist level whilst the right arm hangs somewhat limply at her side, in time to the rhythm of her feet. All this while, her neck sways slowly to the left and then to the right. The movement is slow and graceful, adding beauty to the outfit (see figure 15).



Figure 15. Young initiates being schooled in the art of *dipo* dance by a female Elder before they go to the market square. Picture by Fabiola M. Opare- Darko Odometta, 2016.

A variation of the final day *dipo* costume also projects magnitude in size, and this is the *kpodzemi bo bum* (see figure 16). In this outfit, the initiate is draped full length in a large male cloth of twelve yards made from either kente or velvet fabric which is belted at the waist. The excess length of fabric is pulled over the belt thus creating a balloon-like peplum.

This outfit is either worn with a *kpodzemi pɛɛ* or a silk scarf as in figure 16. The initiates neck and arm joints are adorned with precious beads and a special decoration called *koni nɔ* which she wears on her left upper arm. She also carries a scarf that has been folded to resemble a small purse. This folded scarf is to carry any gifts she might receive as she dances through the town. Currently, a small purse sometimes replaces the scarf.



Figure 16. Researcher modelling a variation of the *dipo* final day *kpodzemi* costume carrying a folded scarf. Photograph by Sakite Tesaa, Odumase, 2017.



Figure 17. Initiates performing *dipo* dance adorned in variation of *kpodzemi* costume. The dancer is holding a small purse in her right hand, a modern addition as opposed to the scarf held in figure 16. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Ngmayemi, Odumase 2017.

In the not too distant past, the Krobo used scarfs to wrap and convey small parcels. The item was laid in the centre of the scarf and the opposite ends of the scarf tied together over it creating a firm bundle that could be carried. One would have thought that since using scarves to carry parcels or loads is somewhat outmoded, the folded scarf would be removed from the ensemble altogether. So then, why is the holding of a small receptacle an important part of the garment? Based on the symbolism of the *kpee sisi bo* and the borrowing of beads for initiation⁸², the Krobo accept the gesture of giving and receiving gifts especially during this period, to strengthen the notion of interdependency and unity. For the reason that, in the exchange of gifts, the giver gives a part of his being and the receiver receives a part of his

⁸² It has been earlier noted that the concept behind the *kpee sisi bo* and the borrowing of beads from family members are symbols of interdependence and societal unity among the Krobo.

spirit. Thus, re-affirming the bond of interconnectedness and Krobo identity. Whether carrying a purse or carrying a folded scarf, initiates are encouraged to perform well by audiences of relatives singing and cheering them on with songs, shouts and cheers. Songs such as:

Krobo text.

English translation

Nɔne li domi e ma kpe kuŋo nane (2x) Bad dancers will chew the feet of the chicken (2x)

Nɔne le domi e ma kpe kuŋo loo (2x) Good dancers will chew chicken meat (2x)

And

Anite! Wɛɛ yoo nɛ nɛ haye doo nɔ! Anite! Look at the girl! How she dances the *haye*!

Large dimensions of dress are not only for joyous occasions but also is also evident in garments of ritual and the celebration of death. During funerals of people with high social standing, individual women dress with voluminously padded backsides and carry elongated *kutso*⁸³. This large backside is created by the woman wearing a large *bo miibo*. Her exaggerated backside is a symbol of affluence and the *kutso* she dances with is a symbol telling all who see her that the deceased was a responsible man who was able to feed his family (figure 18). These are all meta-performances that narrate the life of the deceased.



Figure 18. A woman with exaggerated buttocks, holding a *kutso*. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2017.

⁸³ Wooden spoon for making *banku*. *Baku* is a local dish prepared from fermented corn meal

Among the final burial rites of the Krobo is the *yoo se do fiam*. It is a ritual performed after the burial. According to Asare Urica, this ceremony used to be held the day after the deceased was buried but currently, due to visitors travelling from other parts of the country to attend the funeral, *yoo se do fiam* is sometimes performed on the day of burial and is done by the daughters and sons-in-laws of the deceased. All daughters of the deceased (biological and adopted) perform this in honour of their father. Anyone the deceased has given away to marriage is also qualified to perform this ritual. The in-laws drape fine voluminous cloths over their mourning clothes. Fabrics like kente, velvet, or brocade cloth are used. Valuable beads are worn around their neck and wrists, and the sons-in-law head are wrapped in kente turban. The daughters of the deceased are dressed in similar manner as seen in figure 19. The sons-in-law perform by dancing first and are preceded by female family and friends wearing black mourning dress and carrying basins of assorted drinks for presentation to their in-laws and for their wives as well. It is a must that the cloth be big. With this in mind the daughters are draped in male cloths which are a full piece of cloth (twelve yards). This large drape of cloth symbolically demonstrates the affluence of the deceased and also the ‘covering’ of her husband who is ‘wiping her eyes’.



Figure 19. Daughters and Sons-in-law of deceased Nene Apor draped in kente cloth and velvet wearing valuable beads for the *yoosee do fiam* ritual. Source: Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2017.

Why do the Krobo appreciate large volumes in dress? Is it only to exaggerate and show off the preferred Krobo body type? Alternatively, is it merely a symbol of affluence in the society? Based on the Krobo belief of productiveness being central and fundamental, they prefer large dimensions because it resonates with the Krobo belief in fertility. To the Krobo, wide hips in a woman infers the possibility of bearing many children (see p.114) and thus, big breasts implies food for the children born and, a protruding buttocks guarantees that the children born will have a comfortable back ride. It is interesting to note that one of the ways of expressing a woman's conception is *edasi* meaning, "It stands". This could mean that, being able to conceive is one of the criteria for a woman to be in good standing in the society. The large dimensions of the human form are transmuted into clothing and the theme of fertility is repeated in the different types of dress forms such as the *kpee sisi bo*, the *bomibo*, voluminous cloths draped by Queenmothers and the abundance of beads worn around the neck and hips.

5.3.2 *Blema nii ne ahe jua wa-* 'the older the better': vintage as a standard of value.

Vintage refers to things that are of high quality and of lasting value especially from the past⁸⁴. Among the Krobo, things that are referred to as vintage, are considered to have high value. They include, certain beads, traditional costumes, and fabrics. Older print designs of these cloths are preferred especially those with names. The most popular prints are those with names in the different Ghanaian languages such as *ohiafokpeete*⁸⁵, *obaatan pa wuo yeya*⁸⁶, *Dabi-dabi ebe ye yie*⁸⁷, *Gbomo sa yijiemo*⁸⁸, and many more. These names do not only describe the motif in the fabric but are sometimes proverbs that the wearer uses

⁸⁴ Cambridge English Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vintage> [Accessed 12/1/18]

⁸⁵ Ga language- the poor don't chew stones

⁸⁶ Twi language- the death of a mother is very painful.

⁸⁷ Twi language- it shall be well with me one day

⁸⁸ Ga language-Give praise where praise is due

to cast insinuations. Below are some vintage designs of wax prints that Krobo women admire and are often worn.

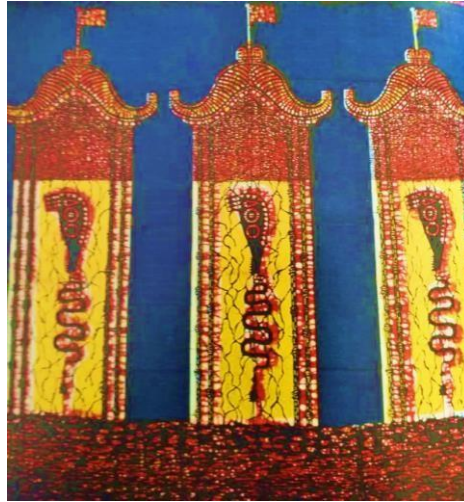


Figure 20. Staff of Kingship Source: Gott, Loughran, Quick, Rabine, (eds) (2017: 58)

The Staff of Kingship (figure 20) is valued not only for its motif design of a royal sword, but also because of the colours blue and gold which are the colours most preferred by the Krobo. *Cascading Coins* is also valued for the fact that it is symbolic of wealth (see figure 21).

According to Madam Darley, this particular design is a favorite choice among mothers giving gifts of cloth to daughters getting married. She submitted that “*Piɔɔ nɔ lɛɛ akɛ ‘cons’ pee we noko. Se blemaa, wa kɛ trɔ yaa dzuanɔ ne wa baa wem kɛ trom fuu, obi nyɛɛ tlem po!*” Meaning, “Currently we cannot do anything with coins. In the past we could go to the market with *trɔ* (two and a half pesewas) and come home with a large head load of goods, which we could not even carry!” She continued and said that even though coins are no longer of much value in Ghana, the cloth has a history and is still symbolic of wealth and prosperity.

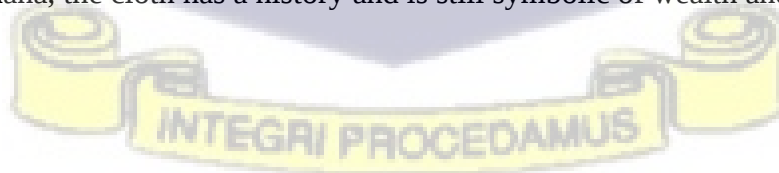




Figure 21. Cascading Coins represents wealth. Source: Gott, Loughran, Quick, Rabine, (eds) (2017: 69).

Other old wax prints that the Krobo prefer are *Unity* which has a motif of a traditional broom (See figure 22). This cloth is also called *suɔmi kɛ kake peemi* meaning, “love and togetherness” by the locals and is extensively used by women’s groups. According to the Queens, Manye Aplam and Manye Maku Tsu, the women use this particular fabric as a visual reminder of the amenity and harmony that must exist between families, friends and the community at large. *ABC*, has a motif of a black board with the alphabet in little boxes (See figure 23). According to Darley, in the past wealthy parents gave this wax print to ‘scholars’ when they completed standard four or when they were confirmed by the ‘Basel Mission’. This was presented as a symbol for having gone through some formal education. Currently, however, this cloth is valued for the fact that it is a vintage design.



Figure 22. Unity. Source: Gott, Loughran, Quick, Rabine, (eds) (2017: 64)



Figure 23. ABC Source: Gott, Loughran Quick, Rabine, (eds) (2017:81)

Bibii me anye means, “Mother of many children” this particular fabric has the same undertone of fertility in women. Because the Krobo believe in having many children, this cloth (Figure 24) as a gift to a newly married woman or to one who is having a *nyɔɔma sa*—meaning “tenth born bed” is priceless. The ‘tenth born bed’ is a ceremony performed by a husband to his wife to congratulate her for giving him ten children. It is also to thank the deities for taking the woman through the ‘death’ of childbirth and allowing her to come back to the land of the living safely. Here, one can see the relationship between the verbal art of the fabric and the community’s values.

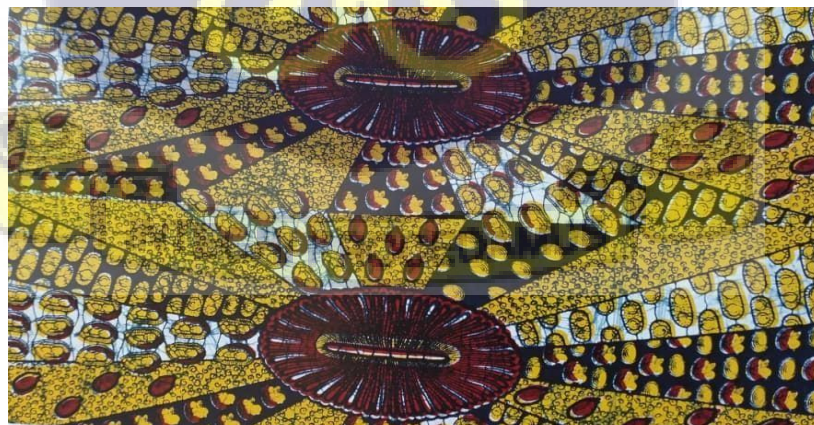


Figure 24. *Bibime anye* (Mother of Many Children). Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2018.

It is interesting to note that all of these above cloths are designed by *Vlisco* with some of them being more than a hundred years old. The Krobo woman, however, will replace the default factory concepts with local names. One would wonder why there is a continuous localization of industrial concepts. The rich verbal arts and the local notion of *eda* of the Krobo make it pleasing for them to be clothed in fabrics with names, so that individuals may express moods, occasions and cast insinuations when the occasion demands it. These axioms which are orally derived need a tangible medium to enhance articulation and externalization of ideas thereby making the renamed fabrics a valuable medium for personal, social and religious expression (Gott 2010; Kojo 2001). In the light of this, *Bo manye ɔɔ mɛ* (the wax print queens) of the various markets, together with the main stream distributors name the fabrics in ways that are meaningful to them. Fabrics can also derive their names from circumstantial happenings such as the death of a great leader, as in the case of the fabric *Oklemekuku* which was named in commemoration of Nene Azu Mate- Kole. It is worth noting however that this renaming of fabrics is not peculiar to the Krobo, the practice is also common among the Gurune, Dagaabas and Akan of Ghana. The practice of renaming cloths is also found in other West African countries such as Nigeria, La Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Congo.

Apart from being evaluated by their proverbial names, the fabrics are also judged by symbolic designs and colour. For these vintage cloths (as well as others) to have more value, in spite of their age, they must be smooth to the touch and have good colour on both sides. Other criteria include the fastness of the dyes and the standing of the manufacturer. Phrases used to describe wax prints are *enɔ le epa we-* meaning, “This cloth is colour fast” and *Bo no lee Holland* literally “this cloth is from *Vlisco*”⁸⁹. Other fabrics with lesser

⁸⁹ *Vlisco*, a textile factory, was founded in 1846, by Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen with the aim to produce and sell hand printed fabrics in- and outside of the Netherlands

qualities are also judged using phrases such as *bo nɔ Togo* meaning, “This cloth is from Togo” or *bo nɔ nɛ fɛtɛfɛtɛ* meaning, “This cloth is light”.

Though wax prints are popular among the Krobo, it is these designs (and others) that are most preferred because of their vintage qualities. By Pierce’s statement “A sign can be defined as anything that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (vol 2, 1984:228), I can say that the Krobo use these vintage prints with proverbial names to express themselves in several physical ways through their bodies. In addition, this mode of expression among other things runs through language and different ways of dressing. These signs convey feelings and externally exhibit ideas. McLuhan cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2005) sees this as an extension of the human faculty, where an extension occurs when an individual or society makes or uses something that extends the human body and mind in away that is alien to the original. McLuhan further explains, “...the wheel is an extension of the foot... clothing an extension of the skin...” (Littlejohn and Foss 2005:329). The Krobo have thus achieved in extending their philosophies to include ‘the very skins on their backs’. In effect, the Krobo now has a remediated body, which functions as an artistic medium through the traditional and nonverbal means of clothing.

Some of the names the more contemporary designs go by are: *If you go out, I will go out*- this name suggests a challenge to men when their wives doubt their fidelity; *Michelle Obama’s hand bag*, *Love letter*, *Cars*, *Cinderella*, *Water bottle* and many more. Concerning the Krobo concept of *eda*, most of the names of the new fabrics give out signs that do not comply with Krobo values. To the Krobo some of these names are either taboo (such as- *If you go out, I will go out*) or meaningless (such as *Michelle Obama’s handbag*). Since the names of these fabrics do not support the concept ‘speaking well’, the Krobo woman would not mind wearing a worn-out vintage-designed fabric as opposed to a new contemporary design that has ‘no meaning’ to a festive gathering. To them it is the messages that the fabrics communicate which are of utmost importance.

Though it is mostly women who are recognized as appreciators of wax prints, Krobo men equally appreciate them. The competition for proverbial fabrics is embedded in the values that structure the Krobo man and the way he is expected to comport himself in public, and by his speech which can be verbal or can be metaphorical in his ornamentation. When a man leaves his private sphere and enters the public arena, his body is subjected to behavioural codes through which he is able to dialogue with others. When he wears appropriate proverbial prints, this compliments his male status thus allowing him to ‘speak well’. For instance, as seen in figure 25, the proverb *Dzukwe lɛɛ ewia alua, ewiawe alu* meaning, “A child can break the shell of the snail and not that of the tortoise” is associated with societal hierarchy which is a highly regarded value among the Krobo. The fabric design *Nyɔm kɛ piani* meaning, “Night and Day” just like the *nyoli* and *tovi* beads, reminds the wearer of the two forces of life and death, or subsequently good and evil, which exist side by side on this earth. Meanwhile the patchwork print in itself also expresses the Krobo value of unity through diversity, as well as the concept of interdependency (see figure 25 top). Though the fabric design *Wam tso* meaning, “The tree of life” is sometimes associated with *Mawu* being the source of all creation, it is also sometimes related to male virality (see figure 25 down left). The *Fence* design represents protection or protector (see figure 25 down right).

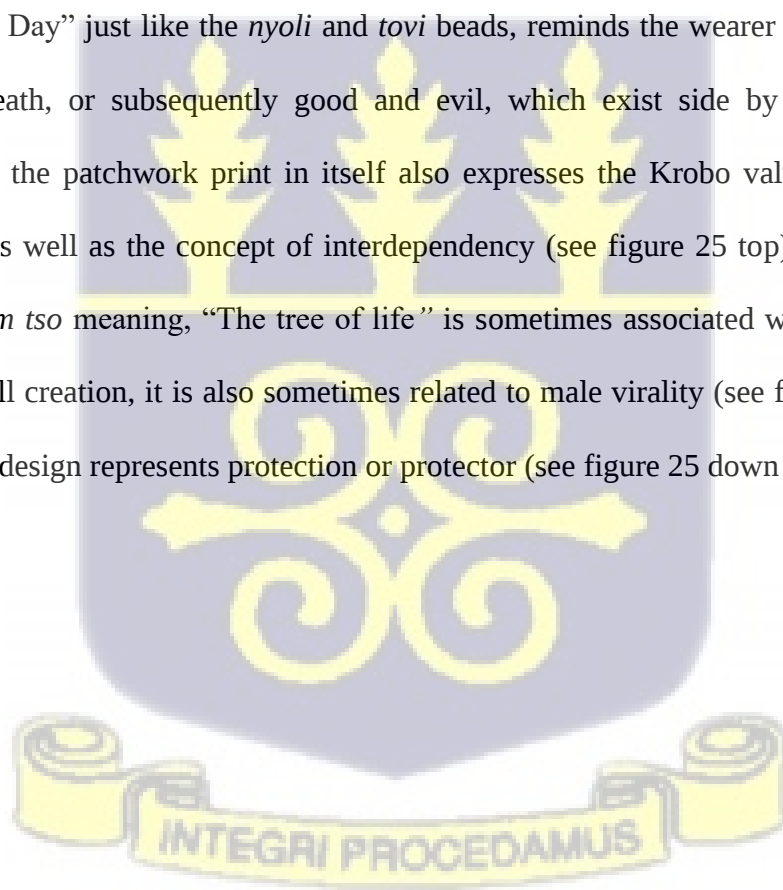




Figure 25. (Top) Elders greeting Nanor Mate-Kole at his residence, wearing symbolic wax prints. Right corner ABC; first elder with bared left shoulder is wearing a printed patch work fabric *Dzukwe læ e wiaa aluha ewiwe alu* (A child can break the shell of a snail, but not that of a tortoise) and day and night designs. Photograph by courtesy of Nanor Mate- Kole's personal collection. (Down left) Man wearing *Wam tso* (the tree of life) (Down right) Man at traditional wedding wearing Fence. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare Darko, Odometa 2018.

Also relating to vintage, to males, is the costume of the chief's guard. During my research, I realised that on normal days the chief's guard is inconspicuous; blending in with visitors to the palace, like an undercover security. On state occasions, however, he adorns his regalia, which is sometimes just a wrapper cloth and a sheathed sword. Alternatively, on other occasions like the death of a chief, the chief's guard metamorphoses into a *Nadu*

warrior, in an aged *fugu*, showing off his battle skills, and ready to defend the Paramountcy (see figure 26).



Figure 26. Chief's guard performing the *nadu* in an aged smock holding a dagger (left). Man performing *nadu* in an aged smock holding his shrine (right). Photographs by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2017.

When I asked why the guard wore and valued such tattered smocks (figure 27), the response I received was *beni batakali ɔɛ gbɔɔ, kɛkɛ ɛka hu kleɔ* meaning, “As the smock grows in age, its strength also increases”⁹⁰. The Krobo believe that each guard has some power and when he dies that power still resides in his smock which is passed on to another guard. So, the older the smock the more spiritually powerful it is and the more valuable it becomes. An old smock within this context is regarded as *batakali ne ehi ne ehewa* meaning, “This is a good and spiritually strong smock”. In my analysis, the Krobo notion of the ‘old’ which is valued in other adornments is equally expressed in the timeworn smock. The smock also metaphorically represents the resilience of the Krobo culture. For example, right from Sir Emmanuel Mate-Kole’s era (see chapter one), there have been several attempts to stop the *dipo* custom but it bounces back more powerfully than ever. The worship of *nadu* has also been forbidden (Huber 1993:268) but though subtle, there are still a few members of the *nadu* cult existing today. Most importantly, I think that the voice of Mawu from the past is made strong through the practiced societal values today.

⁹⁰ Sackite Sixteen, Drummer of the Paramount Chiefs court

Apart from the guards/warriors who wear aged clothing, elders and sub chiefs, wear a form of aged smocks/*batakali* to funerals as a sign of deep mourning (see figure 28). Within the frame work of anti-aesthetic the Krobo community agrees and accepts the aged and tattered clothing, and finds them acceptable and pleasing. This is what Thompson (1971a: 374) describes as “the application of consensual notions of quality to particular problems of form”.



Figure 27. Guard on Kloyo, Krobo Mountain, carrying a sword and wearing tattered smock and black trousers. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2016.



Figure 28. Guarding the gate to where the body of the deceased Manye Okleyo lay in state. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2013.

5.3.3 Hierarchy (*nokuɔm nokuɔm*) within Krobo body adornment

Traditional adornment of the Krobo create a text that when analyzed can be read to depict, among other things, the hierarchy of the society. Krobo society is structured such that who you are determines what you wear or use as an accessory. Therefore, there are political, social, class and gender differentiations through the types of clothes that are worn, ornamentation, signifiers and other forms of regalia. For example, this helps differentiate the society based on different hierarchical or vertical relations of age, experience, and birthright, which are very important to the Krobo and are incorporated into their daily lives. Therefore, aesthetics among the Krobo is also viewed in relativity terms. This is to say how one group interprets part of the whole— religion, beliefs, history and so on, which together give a complete meaning and appreciation of their aesthetic senses. It is a deep sense between their thought process and the outward manifestations.

Hierarchy is seen and interpreted for example, in wearing the *kaba* ensemble. Married women and the elderly wear it with a loin cloth depicting their status to all who encounter them. The young maidens on the other hand wear the *kaba* and *slit* without the loin cloth. Currently however, one may find some elderly women dressing without the use of the cover cloth. To the traditional women, this is not right. Hierarchy is also depicted in traditional hair styles. For instance, the young girls who thread their hair do not pack it at the back but rather leave the threaded strands standing like de-foliaged coconut trees⁹¹. It is neither acceptable nor pleasing for a young girl to ‘pack’ her threaded hair. Hairstyles will be discussed in more detail further on. In the picture below (Figure 29), there are three females walking together on their way to the *Nmgayemi* durbar. The adult on the left is of higher rank/status than the one on the right. Cloths and accessories are used here to distinguish between them. Their statuses are evident from the number and type of beads

⁹¹ Though this is a traditional style that was used in the past, current fashion is going back to this kind of hair style and young as well as adults also sport this style.

each one is wearing, and also from the style of cloth. One has a cover (*bobum*) and the other is in just the drape around the chest (*boham*). There is also difference in the headgear. The attendant, a young maiden on the left side of the photo is wearing her scarf in a plaited headband whilst the two women have their heads fully covered.



Figure 29. Women depicting hierarchy in dress. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2017.

Even though the Krobo place value on the hierarchy of dress in everyday living, and in ritual dress, this chain of command in actual garments is not very obvious among the chiefs and Queen mothers. According to *Okyeame* Boate, chief spokesperson to the Paramountcy, “today, there is no fast rule governing the dress of the chiefs. Rather, the hierarchy is perceived in their totems”. The late Oklemekuku Nene Azu Mate-Kole (third Paramount Chief of Manya Krobo) confirms this in an interview with Mr. E. O. Bartimeus the then deputy executive director of the Ghana Tourist Board, by saying “The idea of no one out dressing the chief is most prevalent when the chief assumes the place of an emperor, but as a father of the people, this is never so”⁹². The late *Konor* himself did not insist on the appearance of his sub-chiefs—, he said, that is for the Akan. Indeed, *Nene* is the father figure

⁹² This was in 1978, Nene Azu Mate-Kole was the chairman of the Ghana Tourist Board. This interview was conducted for one of their quarterly journals and titled ‘Our Boards Paramount Chief’.

to all his subjects, and is approachable by all. Even though Nene Azu Mate-Kole had a good reason for not imposing hierarchy in dress among his sub-chiefs, it is my opinion that the decision has resulted in a kind of in-subordination in costume. Sub-chiefs have the right to go to the market and purchase regalia of their choice. In addition, visitors who attend festivals and durbars need to ask about the hierarchy as all the chiefs may be adorned in valuable beads and wearing crowns bedecked with plated gold. In this regard, the Krobo present an interesting and unique flat chieftaincy form of adornment where there are no specific guidelines to which regalia one wears.

Hierarchy among Queen Mothers is not very obvious either, as there is no particular fabric assigned to any of them. All Queen mothers adorn themselves with either wax prints, kente, velvet or lace. Each of them also wears antique beads. However, the *Manye nwa*'s (Paramount Queen mother) head scarf is tied bigger than her sub queens⁹³. Maa Agbotste, chief attendant to *Manye nwa* added:

ke manye ke e ma bu Dumas, lee, esane e hla dumas ne dzewe no se mom ehla none dzadze myunu ne da kaa, suomi, kakepeemi, ke edzropeemi. Ke kente hu, sani kente dzadze munyu ni ehi. (If Manye should decide to wear Dumas (wax print), she must be certain not to wear one which insinuates or insults but rather those that portray unity, steadfastness, love and other virtuous proverbs. It is also important she chooses the right proverbs in the kente cloth to wear).

⁹³ *Manye nwa* is the only female allowed to sit in a palanquin.

5.3.4 Repetition (*no tsami*) as an aesthetic marker

Within African performance repetition is very important. As an aesthetic marker, repetition or continuity is used to reflect a single theme throughout a particular cultural performance. This helps the people, both the indigenes and visitors, to absorb cultural nuances equally consciously and unconsciously. Repetition is the recurrence of something that has already been said or done. Lauer and Pentack (2007) in their book *Design Basics*, in relation to design, describe repetition as a valuable device for achieving visual unity, emphasis, balance and rhythm. In other words, it is one of the minor principles of design that supports almost all the others. Such is evident in the use of makeup for certain ritual ceremonies and scarification. Since clothing and oral speech are closely related, it is not out of place to cite Okpewho (1992) and Scheub (1977) who argue that, repetition is the most fundamental characteristic feature of oral literature in Africa, and that, it has both aesthetic and functional purposes. Notwithstanding, repetition is not only fundamental in African speech but also fundamental in the non-verbal speech of African dress.

One of the functions of repetition to the Krobo is to give emphasis to certain themes that need to be stressed (see figure 30). The women sometimes adapt this art of repetition when they repeat certain colours within their dress. For example, a woman may compliment a brown *kaba* ensemble with a black scarf and repeat the colour black in her cover cloth and foot wear, the colour may also be repeated in the colour of her bead jewelry. Repeating the colour black is to emphasise the emotion of mourning she may be going through. Certain colours are repeated to create rhythm, and also to depict status as with the number of repeated pairs of black and white beads of traditional priestesses. In relation to gesture (as part of adornment), repetition is articulated in pouring of libation, the subtle dance of Nana Kloweki, the *dipo Klama* dance, the sitting of the *dipo* initiates on *tegbete*, *dipo* egg ritual, and enstoolment of a chief etc.⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ *Tegbete* is the sacred stone on which *dipo* initiates are seated for the final test.



Figure 30. Even though the *Koli* bead in itself is valuable, it is made more valuable and thus more pleasing when interspersed with gold. Courtesy of Maa Doe's bead collection, Odumase,

Another example lies in the repetitive marks of body paint on the *dipo* initiate as part of a meta performance, sending a message to the informed onlooker. Messages confirming and emphasizing her fertility or messages announcing her being 'ripe for' marriage can all be read within the repeated ritual markings on her body. Repetition is also found in the design of strands of beads used to create patterns and mixtures of different colours and sizes of beads, which are pleasing to the eye as depicted in figure 31.



Figure 31. Repetition of blue beads within yellow beads. These colours of beads reinforces the Krobo love for the colours blue and yellow. Courtesy of Maa Julie beads, Agormanya Market. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2017.

I observed that among the Krobo that repetition in its meaning goes beyond repeating and the recurrence of performance, design or phrase. It creates a form, which attracts our attention and then gives room for our minds to accept what is being repeated at that particular time. This forms an atmosphere for familiarisation, which leads to understanding and reflexion; as is in the resultant case of the colour red during Nene Apor's funeral (see figure 32). This funeral as well as others use repeated forms to create unity through diversity. In that, the single theme of mourning was repeated throughout the commemoration but in different ways.



Figure 32. Nene Apor's funeral; Red scarves of mourning is repeated on the Okyeame staff. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, 2017.

Another example of repetition leading to understanding and reflexion is obvious in the recurrence of a particular theme throughout the Krobo culture, for example the belief in fertility. Here, the theme is repeated in body padding, body paint, the names of certain fabrics that are used as clothing, names of beads, shape of beads, certain colours, *Klama* songs, proverbs, metaphor, and even certain foods.

5.3.5 Improvisation (*hem te ke no pem*) and creativity as a Krobo artistic quality

Another aesthetic mode that is dominant with the Krobo is the art of improvisation. This *hem te ke no pem*, is a quality that can be found in either dress, speech or character. For

instance, even though there is the standard traditional way of wearing cloth, this does not work in isolation, but with hair dress, jewelry and sometimes body paint. And the peculiar aesthetic of improvisation or the imperative for personal output or input is seen in most of these areas of body adornment practices. It may be seen in the draping of cloth where the wearer drapes the standard silhouette but creates folds within his or her cloth that are not common, thus making the style of cloth his or her own. Or, instead of just creating simple circles which stand alone for the adornment of the female body during festivals, some of the local make-up artists create three or more overlapping circles. People who appear in public with these improvised markings are admired and praised for the difference because it is considered original and originality in any art form is one way of measuring the aesthetic. Local hairdressers also show the aesthetic of improvisation by adding on or taking away from a particular basic hair do. Avorgbedor (1994) rightly argues that the aesthetic of improvisation involves not only a gift of words but also entails a combination of the areas of intellectual activity and luck⁹⁵.

The Krobo place high value upon the individuality of adornment style, and believe that though the fabrics for example, have slight variations, the main motifs are the same and therefore unite which ever group of people wearing them. Individuality can also be achieved by improvising creatively to distinguish one from the other.

Though improvisation is much admired, artists are bound by the concept of the variety of theme. In that whatever improvisation they come up with must be within the frame of the values of the society. Creativeness in the type of medium used for threading beads and even the type of under garments to create the voluminous silhouette⁹⁶, dictates a shift

⁹⁵ I take 'Words' to represent the words/language within the dress.

⁹⁶ Beads used to be strung using fibre bought from Juapong textiles but has now evolved to using firm cotton thread as the latter does not wear and tear easily. According to Madam Julie, when a few beadmakers improvised with sewing thread because of a shortage from the Juapong factory, they were told "*apeewe le ja*". But over the years, white cotton sewing thread has become acceptable because it conforms to the principles of the community. In place of using the *bo mli bo*, the younger generation

from the local to modernity. According to Okyeame Boate, the upper echelons of the spiritual and political hierarchy however, are restricted in how much they can improvise either their speech or dress, because they are the custodians of the culture and thus, must uphold the standard.

5.3.6 Simplicity (*kplokployoo*) in Krobo dress

Even though the Krobo find satisfaction in seeing things of voluminous nature, there is also the paradox of complexity of their taking pride in very modest dress. In an interview with Nana Aplam II, the *Manyɛɛwa* (Paramount Queen Mother) of Odumase, it was realized that presently, the Krobo are traditionally, very simple when it comes to dress. Both male and female prefer to dress simply and rather enhance their dressing with beads. A simply or modestly dressed person is referred to as *nɔmlo kpokployoo*. The Krobo dress simply but wear extravagant beads. This according to Nana Aplam II is the Krobo way. She states, “*mue ne e tuo munyu ɔ ne*” (it is the bead that speaks) meaning it is the beads, which beautify the person, and also tells the audience or onlookers whether the dressing is formal, casual, or streetwise. However, judging from the Krobo concept of *eda*. I can again conclude that *nɔmlo kpokployoo* or dressing in a simple manner is a Krobo visual representation of humility, one of the virtues of *su*.

5.4 Dance and Dress Connections

Among the Krobo, dances during puberty, marriage and funeral celebrations all come with specific attire, which make them complete. The dancing ring could be the reception of the outdooring of a baby, the performance of *dipo*, the durbar grounds, funeral compound or the traditional shrine. The aesthetics of the Krobo within the framework of

might improvise with the *China fitɔrr me* as Madam Wahiemawude stated earlier. This may give them the needed width and is less cumbersome to wear.

adornment is highly observed during these times. It is when the costume is in such arenas that both the wearer and the art form of dress and dance can be critiqued. This criticism forms an expected part of the performance by which various artists can improve themselves.

In the wearing of Krobo adornment, it is evident that there is a close relationship with the clothes and dance. The size of the *kpeɛ sisi bo* skirt and the number of beads worn by the *dipo* dancer, for example, depict to the onlooker that the maiden celebrating that rite has achieved a certain status of 'queenliness'. Therefore, the outfit is symbolic of queenly patience depicting the fact that "a Queen does not hurry to make decisions." The dance performed in this particular outfit is also slow and unhurried. The abundance of beads worn during the dance also shows reverence for the deep-rooted cultural beliefs as most of them are proverbial. The virtue of patience is supported in the following proverbs. *Tsui si tomi ne haa nomlo naa tatuu mlini-* meaning, "It is patience that makes a man dissect and see the intestines of an ant" and another is *-kɛ o be tsui si tomiɔɔ obi nyɛɛ ne omaa hoo ɲmada*. meaning "If you don't have patience, you cannot brew millet beer".

Funeral and religious dances also help to articulate the language of the dress. In the *nadu* dance for instance, the costume of a short aged smock with dirt or bloodstains and a pair of shorts, coupled with the props of a short sword, is an exhibition of viciousness and strength. The *nadu* dance itself is a mime of the stalking of an enemy and his execution by beheading.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that the Krobo visual preferences encapsulate the beliefs of the *la*, which is an embodiment of the society's philosophy. It is evident that Krobo clothing is a reflection of the people's deep culture which when observed, tells the informed on looker the hidden principles within the Krobo community — from their belief in multiplying to fill the earth, hence, the symbolic broadly- padded under garments and love

for particular prints of fabrics with proverbial names, to the community belief in showing respect to elders — anyone who is older than you — and especially those in authority. From the chapter it is also evident that, just like well-tested theories, the Krobo appreciate the old in that, they are not in a hurry to discard old entrenched traditions for new untested and unproven ones. In addition, repetition of themes in Krobo dress are evident of the resilient nature of the Krobo when it comes to the portraying their cultural values.

Do the Krobo express their values within the wearing of their accessories and body modifications in the same manner? The next chapter explores how the Krobo use their cultural belief systems as a vehicle for employing cultural and personal identity through body alterations and decorations.



CHAPTER SIX

KROBO ACCESSORIES AND MODIFICATIONS

6.0 Introduction

In the past five chapters, I have argued a case intended to enable an appreciation of the underlying principles and different aspects of Krobo aesthetics seen through their visual culture, namely their philosophy, language, proverbs, sayings, and notions about what should be the norm regarding what constitutes or reflects their values expressed through adornment. The purpose of this approach was to isolate the various components that make up the details of their aesthetic expression - verbally and visually. The significance and the multifaceted meanings of their verbo-visual culture and symbolisms on the choice of adornment, largely clothing has been examined in order to appreciate what is pleasurable, of good taste and acceptable to them. The discussion so far is incomplete without further examination of what accessories accompany their choice of attire and the different kinds of modifications they make to their bodies. In fact, Krobo attire is not complete without these accessories and no Krobo outfit is worn without them. It is the accessories and modifications, which make the attire complete. But why do certain parts of the body have to be highlighted and emphasised by adding articles of ornamentation and value. This chapter argues that the beliefs associated with certain parts of the body such as the hair are emphasised for beautification. Therefore, why do the Krobo place emphasis on the head or hairstyles? And what forms and shapes do these hairstyles take? The chapter also submits that having developed the extraordinary skill of bead making, the Krobo have continued throughout their history and cultural changes, to maintain the extravagant use of beads, in that, it almost overshadows the clothes worn. Hence, what constitutes *mue ne eda* (upright beads) and how is the use of beads assessed among the Krobo? What kind of other modifications do they do to their body and what are the reasons for this?

This chapter is organised based on my visual observations and notes taken during my field work, analysis of photographs and video footages, as well as respondents' answers to my questions during my formal and informal interviews. The ideas that emerged have been organised to answer questions on how the hair is perceived and treated, as well as how the head is enhanced. The chapter also takes guidance from previous studies on aesthetics and refers to them where appropriate. The chapter begins with dialoguing the head and thus, a discussion on hair followed by scarves and hats. It is then continued by exploring totems as indicators of hierarchy as used by the Krobo. The chapter then progresses with an exploration on the use of beads among Krobo. Next, the chapter explores the Krobo visual preferences of variety, abundance and hierarchy in beads and finally ends with the modification of scarification.

6.1 Hair, a Crowning Glory

The Krobo believe that *Wa yibom lee muo ne amanye ke wo*, meaning "Our hair is blood and a living part of us which can be used to weave a curse". It is interesting to note how curses are related to the woven fabric. Curses are pronounced on a person's worst enemy and for them to manifest, must be performed in a particular process or order. This is akin to the systematic process a weaver goes through to get a piece of well-designed fabric. Apart from this, hair is considered a spiritual part of the human body and this is manifested in the fact that when a person dies away from 'home' a bit of his or her hair is cut and sent home to be buried. Based on this same notion, it is the belief that a person's soul can be hurt if his/her hair falls into the hands of one's enemy. It is on the premise that a person's soul can be hurt if his/hers fall into the wrong hands that the women allow only trusted friends and family to plait and sculpt whilst the men also go to trusted barbers for haicuts.

According to Seiber (2000:15, 16), the traditional African has diverse ways of dressing the hair and these diverse styles all communicate to the onlooker. There are different

types of hairstyles for different occasions and categories of people such as hairstyles for unmarried maidens and those for married women. There is the unkempt hairstyle for the traditional priest and those coiffures especially for special rituals. Then there are also the hairstyles for puberty or initiation rites such as the the tuft of hair left on an initiate's head after the *yise poomi*. This circle of hair is later shaved off and is a symbol of both liminality and wholeness (figure 33).



Figure 33. The circular tuft of hair left on the *dipo* initiates head after the *yise poomi* ritual. Photograph by Sakite Tesaa, Odumase 2017.

Even though hairstyles depict status among women, among the Krobo royalty this is not so. Krobo royalty depict their status with the beads they wear and the totems they carry. Madam Darley disclosed that hair threading (*yihɔɔmi*) is part of the Krobo hair adornment practice. She said -*yihɔɔ lɛ wa piɔ kɛ je blema*, *Piɔ sɔ nɔ nɛ apeewe hu, nyɛ perming*, *perming hejeɔ* literally, “As for hair threading, we have done it since time immemorial, it is these days due to perming the young women don’t thread hair any more”. *Yihɔɔ* styles are a combination of two things- one being the designs created with a small comb on the scalp and the other, the threaded hair which is raised and packed away from the scalp (*ble*). *Yihɔɔ* comes with various names and these are given depending on the length of the hair and the designs cut out on the scalp with the most basic ones being *kunɔɔ bi fi* and *akwele waabii*—all other styles are variations of these two.

The hair style *Kunɔɔ bi mɛafii* is given this name because of the plait’s resemblance

to a chick's droppings (see figure 34). This style is the first threaded hairstyle which a young maiden may wear. There are two variations of this style. One is created by threading small sections of hair at the base only. This creates little tufts of hair which resemble the feces of chicks; hence the name. The other has the hair sectioned and threaded to the tip. Then the threaded strand is bent and wound three or four times around the base of the threaded strand, shortening the strand to form a kind of knot. Short hair is best suited for this style.



Figure 34. *Kunɔ bi mɛafii* hairdo. Photograph taken by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase, April 2016.

Akweley waabi, translated as “Akweley’s fingers”, is the basic *yihɔɔmi* (see figure 35)⁹⁷. With young girls, the threaded hair is left standing all over the head. To achieve this effect, the hair is divided into small portions and thread wrapped around the base four to six times and then the thread wrapping is continued to the end of the hair. The extra thread is then cut off. It is a style for unmarried maidens.



**Figure 35. *Akweley waabii* being wrapped
Photograph taken by Author, Odumase, April 2018**

⁹⁷ This name was derived from the threaded hairs' resemblance to the pepper called *akwele waabii* in Krobo language. Akwele is a Ga Dangme name for the first female of a twin.

Married women, however, connect the threaded strands and pack them into various styles (See figure 36)



Figure 36. *Blɛ*, thread wrapped hair with emphasis on the *anane* (spider) scalp design. *Anane* is a symbol of wit. Photograph by Jasmine Opare-Darko. Odometta, 2016.

Whichever the style of threaded hair chosen, for it to be regarded as pleasing, the sectioned hair should have the appropriate amount of thread around it. For instance, the finished *sino* strands must be smooth with no loose hair poking through the threads. Parted lines must be clear and well oiled, without strands of hair making the lines look fuzzy. The Krobo believe that a woman with a clean, well-threaded and sculptured hair wins the admiration of many.

Like commemorative fabrics, there are also commemorative hairdos, for example *Walantu walansa*, which literally means, ‘dig it yourself, collect it yourself’ but which actually means “do it yourself (DIY)”. *Wanlantu Walansa* meaning, “Dig it yourself and carry it yourself” is a hair plaited design with thread, sculptured in commemoration of the 1974s green revolution, operation feed yourself policy initiated during the National Redemption Council (NRC) era led by the late Col. I.K. Acheampong (Dogbe 1991:15), a former military ruler and Head of State from 1972-1978 which involved backyard gardening⁹⁸. Just like *walantu walansa*, which was a nationwide hairstyle, *Sino* (snake) is

⁹⁸ *Walatu walasa* was also used to refer to nature of manual work by labourers digging trenches for road construction drains, etc.

another commemorative style for the Krobo. According to Mrs. Adelaide Obeng, a female elder of Odumase, her grandmother was a priestess of the python deity of the Krobo and was called *Sinɔ Yoo*⁹⁹. The *sinɔ* hairstyle (figure 37) is in remembrance and honour of this deity. The hair is sectioned and threaded similar to the *akweley waabii*, but in *sinɔ*, care is taken to place the thread very close together so as no part of the hair is visible. To achieve the *sinɔ* effect, the threaded hair is curled around a piece of stick or cane, which is kept for this purpose. This hairstyle is strictly for adults.



Figure 37. Traditional priestess in *Sinɔ* threaded hairstyle. Source: Efo Kojo Sela.

6.2 Scarves and hats

The traditional Krobo female has three main kinds of head covering. The first being a scarf, the second is the *dipo pɛɛ* and the third is the *kpodzemi pɛɛ*. Each of these head coverings are perceived through different lenses, and thus, has its own standards of what is accepted and appealing. The scarf is either a perfect square of silk fabric popularly called (in the Akan language) *wo daso bɔ*, meaning “You are still wearing it”. The name alludes to the fact that this particular type of scarf is durable and long lasting. The scarf measures 34 inches by 34 inches. The *wo dasu bɔ* scarf can be tied in various ways¹⁰⁰; with some of the tied-up styles having names such as *Piɔ sɔnɔ e susi* meaning, “I have just arrived”; *koo hawu mi* meaning, “Do not disturb me” and others. The colour of scarf is usually in contrast with

⁹⁹ Her name translates to mean ‘snake woman’

¹⁰⁰ Other fabrics with different dimensions can also be used to tie the head.

the rest of the outfit unless it is being worn to a funeral, which in that case will be black or red just like the attire being worn. To the Krobo, a good head tie, which receives much attention, is one that leaves the forehead clear and covers the tips of the wearer's ears. Such a woman receives comments such as *hiε boni o hinya masi ha! O duku nɔɔ samo!* Meaning, "See how clear your face looks, your head tie suits you"—a scarf tied in this manner leaves a person's face clear, like a mirror. Partly covering the ears is symbolic and means the wearer is not prone to gossip (figures 38 and 39). On the other hand, tied head scarves which cover the forehead are not appreciated. It means the wearer has a character flaw or something to hide. Also, a woman who ties her head in that manner is said to be a *Yookunɔ tse* meaning, "a quarrelsome woman".



Figure 38. Woman in black funeral scarf with ears partly covered. Picture taken at Odometa. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2017.



Figure 39. Sub Queenmother in kente scarf with ears partly covered, notice the multiple strands of beads. Odumase, 2017. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko.

The second head covering, the *dipo pɛɛ* is part of the ritual attire worn during the *dipo* ceremony. The *dipo pɛɛ* is actually called *gblo* and is the ceremonial hat used by the traditional priests such as Nana Kloweki and Madjanor Okumo (see figure 40).

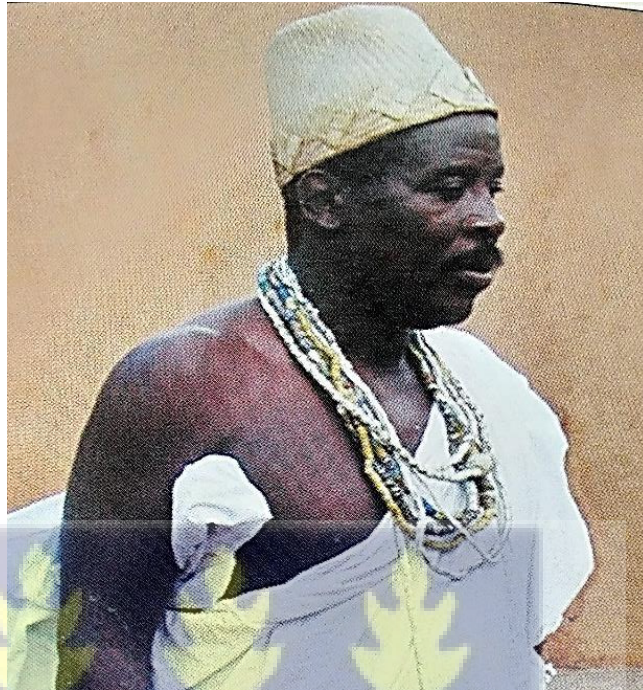


Figure 40. Nene Madjanor Otreku Okumo Aklojemeliatse, Traditional Priest of Many Krobo wearing a *gblo*. Photograph by Wilson, 2003.

The *gblo* is made from *sɔni*¹⁰¹ fibre and ranges from cream to light beige in colour. Even though the *gblo* worn by *dipo* initiates are especially made for them, it is worn by a Krobo woman only once in her lifetime and holds a special significance. The initiates wear this hat as a symbol of their coming of age and acceptance into the community. Just as the traditional priest is the mouth piece and advisor to the community, the initiate by wearing the *gblo* is also symbolically given a voice to partake in the affairs of the community (figure 41). After this ritual, it is a taboo for a female to touch the *gblo* of a priest.

¹⁰¹ *Sɔni* fibre is gotten from *borrasmus aethiopum* a particular species of palm.



Figure 41. Dipo Initiates during wearing of the *gblo* ritual (*Dipo Pɛɛ*). Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko at Odumase, 2016.

The last traditional head covering of the Krobo woman is the *kpodzemi pɛɛ* and like the name suggests, is used during the time of outdoorings celebrations or other ‘going out’/ formal occasions. Currently, as in the past, the *kpodzemi pɛɛ* is worn by *dipo* initiates on the final outdoorings day, and also may be worn by women to all other joyous occasions. It is supposed to be smooth with the strands of fiber used to create the hat layered to at least half an inch in thickness. The strands should be seen as one fabric and not be loose and seen to be separating from the base of the hat. *Kpodzemi pɛɛ* should closely fit the head like a cloche hat¹⁰². The colour of the hat is important as well. Unlike the *fante tekua* which may be interspersed with gold or silver coloured fibers, *kpodzemi pɛɛ* of the Krobo must be black, smooth and lustrous, and mostly decorated with *huajetor* beads¹⁰³ as shown in figure 42. *Huajetor* beads are yellow in colour and are also a form of prayer for wealth for the woman wearing it, or a prayer for the fruit of the womb for the *dipo* initiate. A *kpodzemi pɛɛ* which has the right texture and the right symbols constitutes a *pɛɛ ni dzajeɔ* which means a hat that declaims and in Krobo society, a hat that ‘speaks’ is good and beautiful.

¹⁰² The cloche was invented by French milliner Caroline Reboux in 1920 and was thus named because it looked like a bell; otherwise one would have thought the cloche was influenced by the *kpodzemi pɛɛ*.

¹⁰³ *Huajetor* is a yellow bead made with a kind of blunted double - cone shape being the colour of egg yolk. Yellow beads are symbolic of fertility, health and wealth.



**Figure 42. Initiates in *kpodzemi pɛɛ* decorated with *hwaɣetɔr* beads.
Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2017**

A *kpodzemi pɛɛ* can speak only if it has appropriate symbolic motifs on it. These symbols are embedded in the type of beads used for decoration and the weave of the fibre used in making the hat. Thus, it is the meanings of the beads used in the decoration of the hat that gives the hat its ‘speech’. Such as the bead *ohiafo kpewe te* which means “The poor do not chew stones” is a symbol of hope; *ke koku he ba puɔ, lowi tsu maa se mi*, meaning “The holes in a damaged anthill allow other animals to enter it”; *oduɔ hewa* meaning “Bile is bitter or the cup of bitterness is hard to drink” and others. However, one that has an acceptable base but no symbols and therefore does not speak is not complete and does not meet the standard value. The *kpodzemi pɛɛ* is currently used by both the young and old. The Krobo woman manipulates these basic articles of dress to create works of art that convey the society’s values.

Apart from women and initiates, men within the society also wear head covering. *Matse pɛɛ* are hats or crowns worn by chiefs. These come in different colours and different styles and are usually made with velvet fabric or leather and decorated with gold or silver ornaments or if worn to funerals, decorated with dark coloured talismans and animal fur (see figure 43). *Matse pɛɛ* are a part of the regalia adopted from the Akan, and the meanings and symbolisms of the hats have been lost over time. Though of different designs, they are united by these criteria of value; a *matse pɛɛ* must first of all accurately depict the wearer’s status. For instance, the *Asafoatse* wears a leopard skin hat to show his status as chief warrior. His

hat/headband may also be studded with talismans full of spiritual power to protect him from his enemies on the battle field.

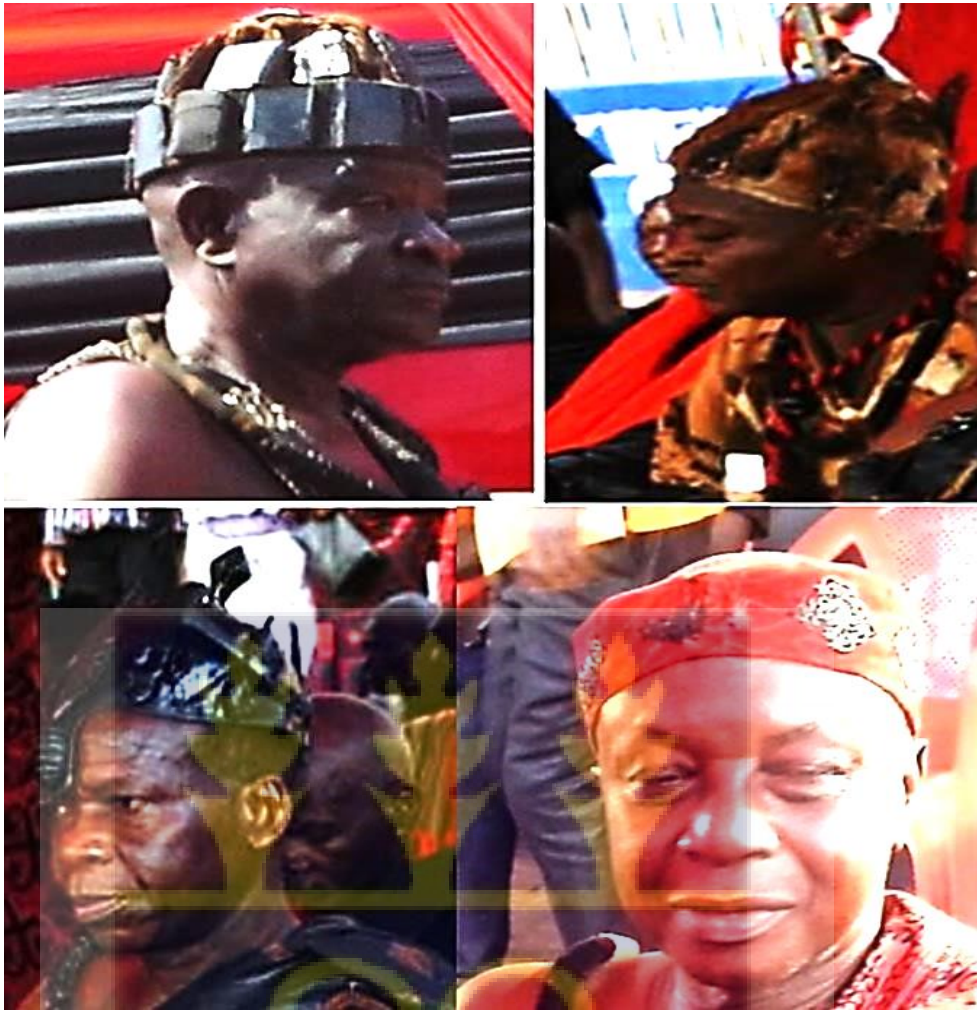


Figure 43. Sub chiefs in different types of hats worn mainly for beautification purposes, showing no symbol of hierarchy or status. Asafoatsɛ Apor's funeral. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, December 2017.

And the Konor, who is the paramount chief and leader of the *Asafoatsɛmei*, wears a hat of leopard skin decorated with gold leaf. According to Okyeame Boate, a sub-chief must not wear the representation of the Paramount Chief and the *Asafoatsɛ* who is the leader of warriors must depict his status with the appropriate head gear (see figure 44). Okyeame Boate also elaborated that, *matɛ pɛɛ mɛ* must also fit well by being the correct size, for it is not pleasing to see a chief in an oversized hat.



Figure 44. Konor Nene Sackite II wearing his gold and leopard skin crown, which sets him apart from other chiefs. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase 2016.

According to a respondent Awetse Lawer, the implications are that his chiefdom is too big for him to rule. In effect, a chief's crown is assessed by its suitability, size and function. Sometimes especially during funerals and rituals, men tie their heads with lengths of cotton fabric with its colour determining the function. For instance, for a funeral the head tie would be red or black (see figure 45) as an indication of mourning and for purification purposes it would be white. For instance, at the swearing in of a new chief, the one being installed would not only wear a white cloth but would also wear white turban on his head. This is to signify his purity and coming to the throne with a clean heart and mind.

Indeed, among the Krobo, specific female hairstyles depict status and females hats for example the *gblo* and the *kpodzemi* are symbolic and declaim. However, among the males, it is quite the opposite. The Krobo seat of power (except the Paramount Chief) wears a hat mostly to suit his dressing and not as a totem, class distinction or visual marker of his status is an indication that not much importance is attached to the head and the hair contrary to the belief of what female hairstyle can be used for.



Figure 45. *Matse Sedalo* (regent) in red scarf as a symbol of mourning. Photograph by Fabiola Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2019.

6.3 Totems as indicators of hierarchy

Unlike the chief's headgears, which indicates no distinction among the wearers, totems are the main indicators of hierarchy among Krobo chiefs. These also come in different symbols carved onto *okyeame* staffs and can also be observed on the finials of royal umbrellas. The *okyeame* refers to the position of chief speech intermediary or royal orator. He is a liaison between the chief and his subjects and occupies the most crucial diplomatic and communicative position within a traditional hierarchy (Yankah 1983). He carries the staff as an emblem of his position and a representation of his chief. According to Okyeame Boate, the *okyeame tso* is usually made from three separately carved shafts which are joined together, each piece usually having a different design carved on it. These could range from swirls and little squares to pin-stripes. The last piece has a finial which is a visual representation of either a myth or a proverb.



Figure 46. Finial in the shape of a lion painted in gold showing the supremacy of a chief. *Kɛ gbe kwe oo, dzata bi ehe poo-* meaning, “The lion does not turn around when a dog barks”. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2017.

For instance, a lion being the king of the animals is sometimes used to represent the supremacy of a chief as seen in figure 46. Okyeame Boate revealed that the *okyeame tso* is usually about 5 feet long but could be slightly longer depending on the type of finial that is attached to the staff. The finial could also be the totem of the chief the *okyeame* represents and these finials are sometimes gold plated or just painted silver like the rest of the shaft as shown in figure 47. According to Okyeame Boate the staffs are painted or gold plated so that they shine as a symbol of the energy God gave man in *Huanim*; making the carrier of the staff God’s messenger¹⁰⁴. The handles of the *okyeame tso* is appreciated when carved smoothly.

The leopard is a symbol of bravery; thus, it is the symbol used by *asafoatse mɛ*. The *Asafoa tse mɛ* are the chief warriors such as the chiefs of Ogome and Atua whose ancestors exhibited bravery when they led their people to war. There are other symbols such as the

¹⁰⁴ The Krobo believe that Chiefs are Gods representation here on earth.

tortoise which means- *eso hu hi, bleo hu hi*- meaning, “Speed is good, slow is also good”. This symbol is addressing the fact that a chief solving a problem may be quick or sometimes slow, which everyone must accept; a carving depicting someone being helped up to the top of a tree to pick its fruit-*ke noko ne tso kwɔyio, a tsee e fito nya*, meaning, “If someone is doing a good thing, he needs to be helped and encouraged”. This is addressing the fact that a chief alone cannot change, rule his community; he needs the encouragement of his people. Two birds facing each other with their beaks touching means that “When two mouths meet, conflict does not arise as a result” it advocates the use of dialogue rather than physical confrontation. *Manyɛwa*’s (Paramount Queen mother) totem is a mother surrounded by children as the finial on her *okyeame tso*, which is symbolic of good motherhood, as she is the mother of the community. One of the sub Queens has a symbol of woman stirring a pot on the finial of the *okyeame tso*. I was told this represented provision. (See figure 47).



Figure 47. Queenmother’s *Okyeame tso* with finial of a seated woman with children. A symbol of motherhood.

The criteria of a good *okyeame tso* is that, the staff, which is made of wood, must be smooth and that the finial of the staff must have a carving. The carving is usually a visual representation of a proverb or myth and must be a symbolic of Krobo philosophy.

6.4 Beads

Beads have exciting histories, philosophies, cultural contexts and adornment roles. The themes of cultural contexts and adornment roles can be identified by the shape, colour, age and design from even a single bead. Dubin (1987) suggests in his book *The history of beads from 3000 BC to present* that, beads could be the beginning of long-lasting jewelry. In that, before the use of robust beads, humans used materials that could easily deteriorate or disintegrate such as seeds, soft bones, and wood. For the Krobo, however, myth has it that the ancient Krobo women started designing beads with the colourful scales of the royal python (python regius) which is one of the Krobo deities. However, Nana Kloweki and Manye Maku Tsu both agree that the Krobo were making early beads from the seeds of the Job's-tears plant (*Coix lacryma-jobi*) as shown in figure 48, and also from stones and clay (see figure 49).



Figure 48. Tovi or Jobs tears beads. Courtesy of Wilson, 2003.



Figure 49. (Left) Abor is a bead made from mined bauxite which the locals call 'clay'. Abor beads are also worn during funerals. However, one may see elderly women wearing bracelets of the bead as a status symbol. (Right) Ancient stone beads worn as a status symbol and for ritual purposes. Courtesy of Madam Darley's wardrobe, 2017.

It is the irregular black seeds from the Job's tears plant that is locally called *tovi*. The *tovi* is one of the ritual beads of the Krobo. This fact is supported by scholars including Huber (1993) and Wilson (2003) among others. Beads are also made from bone as in the *nyloli* bead (see figure 50). These days, Krobo women make a large variety of beads from powdered glass; and even recycle beads by smelting broken beads and fusing them together, to create new and more exciting colours (see figure 51). The Krobo have been synonymous with beads for many centuries¹⁰⁵ and there can be no festive celebrations without beads. Currently, there are bead factories in Huekper, Kojonya, Ogome, Suiasi, Agomanya Odumase and most of the Manya villages. Apart from some large scale well-established factories such as Cedi beads in Odumase, people have small home industries in their court yards.

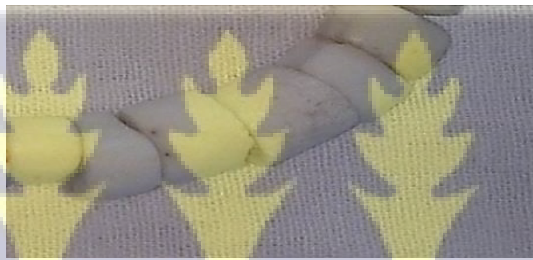


Figure 50. Nyloli bead made from carved bone. Courtesy of Madam Darley's Wardrobe, 2017.



**Figure 51. Recycled beads.
Picture by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2017.**

¹⁰⁵ Oral traditions suggest that Krobos have used beads since the 9th Century AD. From their days of migration from the North-East Africa, through to Ile-Ife in Nigeria to their arrival around the 14th Century in the then Gold coast, now Ghana (*The bead culture among the Krobos of Ghana*. Dangme News modernghana .com 20/03/2016).

6.4.1 The bead-making process / materials used

Generally, materials used for making beads range from natural to artificial, where the natural materials are bone, wood, shell, animal teeth, clay and stone. Artificial materials include plastic, glass, and some metals including gold and brass. The Krobo, however, make their beads out of glass. According to Juliana Kole a bead maker, there are three main types of glass beads produced by the Krobo, these are the painted glass beads (see figure 52), the translucent (see figure 53) and the powdered and fused bead (see figure 54). Kole, however, mentioned that whilst the technique differed slightly, the tools and materials for producing any of these beads is the same.



Figure 52. *Kunḡ nana nya* is a glass painted bead means “the feet of a mother hen” and alludes to the fact that the feet of a hen do not kill its chicks. Meaning a mother’s discipline does not kill a child. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2018.



Figure 53. Translucent glass beads. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2018.



Figure 54. Fused powder glass beads.
Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2018.

Old bottles which are the main ingredient for making Krobo beads (see figure 55) are first crushed then pounded to a fine silt. At TK Beads, this was done in a metal mortar (see figure 56) and sieved to get a fine powder. Bottles of any colour are used because once the bottle is pounded it loses its colour therefore a ceramic dye, locally called *sɔsɔ*, is added to the glass powder to give the base bead its colour. The glass powder is then dished into clay molds called a *muete*, which have been painted with kaolin to prevent the melted glass from sticking to the mold. Before then, pieces of cassava stalk are placed in the centre of each space to create the “eye” of the completed bead (see figure 57). The glass is then baked in an oven made from anthill clay (see figure 58). According to both Juliana Kole and Florence, the proprietress of TK Beads, this type of clay could withstand the high temperatures needed for the glass to melt.

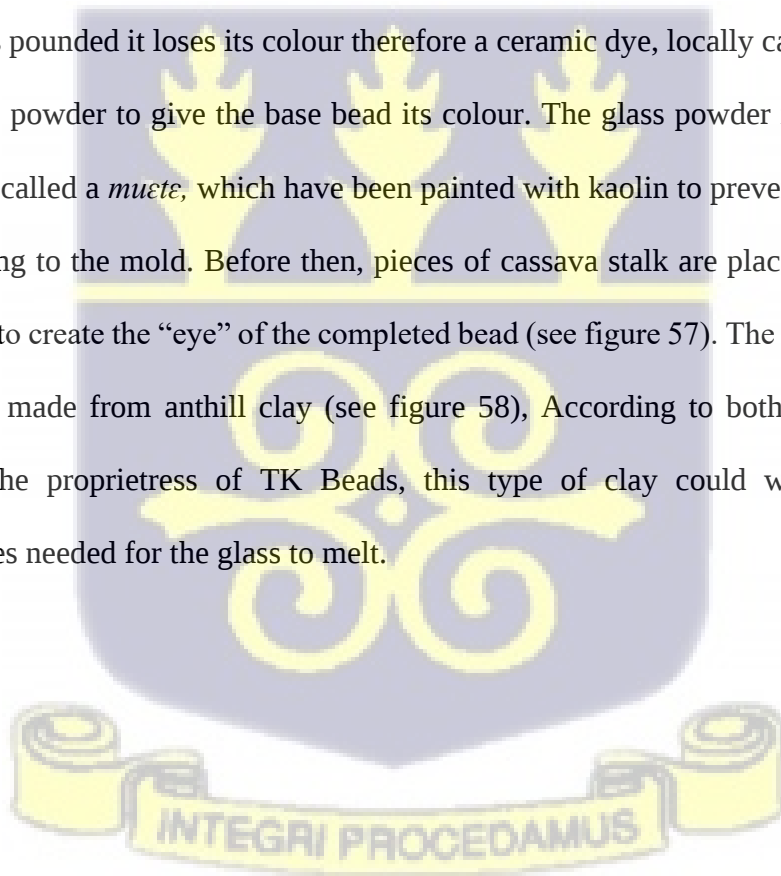




Figure 55. Old bottles waiting to be processed into beads. TK Beads, Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. October 2016.



Figure 56. Beads being pounded in metal mortar TK beads, Photograph by Jasmine Opare-Darko. October 2016.



Figure 57. Clay mold called *muete* (left) covered in kaolin with cassava stalks in the center. These serve as baking tins for the powdered glass. Photograph by Jasmine Opare-Darko, 2016.



Figure 58. Oven for baking the powdered glass. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, October 2016.

After the beads are baked, they are taken out of the oven, cooled and are then strung on metal prongs and decorated from the top bead to the bead closest to the hand holding the metal prong. This is to prevent the bottom bead getting smudged if it is decorated first. Each

bead is individually decorated as evident in figure 59. After the beads have been decorated, they are baked again, then washed and polished with sand on a granite stone.



Figure 59. (Left) Author preparing *sɔsɔ*. (Right) Author decorating beads at TK Bead factory. Photograph by Jasmine Opere-Darko, October 2016.

6.4.2 Texture

To the Krobo adornment that give visual pleasure must be smooth to the touch and this criterion includes beads. Manye MakuTsu, Juliana Kole and all my respondents who answered to my questions on beads agreed that, though beads differ slightly in texture, the overall value is that, they must be *srasra* meaning, “Smooth”. For instance, the *ade* bead also called the eye bead because of the milifore slices which look like eyes on its surface (see figure 60) and the *lee* bead (see figure 61) have a much glossier and smoother finish than the *powa* and the *powa* has a smoother texture than the bead *ohiafo kpewe te* (see figure 62). Notwithstanding, whether the texture of the bead is glossy, mat or textured, it must be smooth to the touch to gain approval from a local Krobo critic.



Figure 60. *Ade* bead and *Lɛɛ* bead. Courtesy of Madam Darley's wardrobe. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2017.



Figure 61. *Ohiafo kpewe tɛ* bead has a rough texture that still feels smooth to the touch. Courtesy of Dedo Wahiemawude's wardrobe. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, 2017.

Texture to the Krobo is not only what one feels with the physical senses, but goes beyond what is felt with the five senses. Smoothness thus goes beyond the physical that can be seen and is also an innate thing and suggests something beyond mere touch. For instance, a person's character may be judged as smooth or rough. A rough character connotes deviant behaviour and immoral character whilst a smooth character is the opposite.

The question is why must there be a semblance of smoothness on a bead, even when the design of the bead depicts the roughness of stone and gravel. After a careful analysis of my data, I conclude that though a smooth bead is comfortable to wear, it also reflects the bead makers' knowledge of Krobo values. I can also comfortably suggest that the smoothness of the bead is metaphorical, a symbol of uprightness within the Krobo culture acting as a kind of social control and reminding the individual to strive for Krobo perfection. For as the adage goes- *ohi kaa mue* meaning, "You are as perfect as a bead". Therefore, whether the bead is supposed to be textured or not, there must be a semblance of smoothness to it to make it acceptable. In addition to this, the textured feel of the *ohiafo kpewe te* bead could represent the snags and hitches in life. However, if the person can depend on *Mawu* whose voice is heard through the verbal arts and values of the society; the distressed person would 'stand' throughout his trials.

Breaking the monotony of a strand of beads with a repeated pattern of another colour is greatly preferred to wearing a solid colour. During my fieldwork, I realized that the Krobo prefer breaking a strand of beads with either blue or yellow beads. The interesting thing I noticed was that, when yellow beads are used to intersperse other colours at regular intervals, they call the strand of beads yellow. They do not regard the other colours within the strand at all. They do not see the other colours in between the yellow, so their eyes just follow a continuous line of the yellow bead. At first it was confusing until I realized the gestalt principle of closure and continuity was at play. All this means is that the brain fills up information that is not present, in this case of strung beads, the brain fills up the gaps within the strand of beads with the desired colour, and the eyes continue to 'see' thus making it seem like a continuous strand of yellow.

6.4.3 The shape of beads

Smoothness and colour are deemed very important in the evaluation of beads, thus they are polished on granite stone with sand and water after being baked at the factory (see figure 63)¹⁰⁶.



Figure 62. Beads just after being taken out of the *muete*, beads being polished with sand and water, polished bead ready to be strung. Photograph by Jasmine Opere-Darko, 2016.

Apart from the individual beads having good colour, most beads must also have a good shape. A bead with good shape means it has asymmetrical sides¹⁰⁷. With at least one side at a slight angle so as to enable each bead to fit into the other like a jig-saw puzzle and thus create a smooth curved strand when threaded (See figure 64). This is also a reflection of the Krobo philosophy on family. The slanted sides of the bead represent the male and the female thus just as well-formed beads fit into each other forming a smooth strand, good parenting brings about a content family and peace for all within the community. The strung beads must also have good colour harmony or good contrasting colours which are also part of the evaluation criteria. The colour, smoothness and fit of the strung beads all contribute in giving both tactile and visual pleasure. When this is achieved the critic would say *muε nɔhi* literally meaning “the beads are good”.

¹⁰⁶ Personal experience T.K. Beads Dodowa, October 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Some beads are disc shaped and thus do not warrant the a -symmetrical balancing of the sides.



Figure 63. A woman wearing a choker of yellow beads depicting the asymmetrical cut of the beads.

Photograph taken by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2017.

6.4.4 Stringing of beads

Apart from the texture, shape and colour of the bead, a strung bead bracelet is evaluated by the *kpa kpɔ* or knot of string that holds the beads together. This knot should be neat since it is perceived to be an extension of the strand of beads. However, an untidy knot would make the whole bead bracelet look '*kpanya kpanya*'. This means the bead is looking untidy or unbalanced.

Is the knot merely a beautification and an extension of the bead? My encounter with the Krobo has brought to bear that the Krobo are a traditional and religious people. Their belief in *Mawu* and his support, is exemplified in names such as *Mawukeni*, (God's gift), *Mawu kɛ wa nɛ* (God is with us), *Mawu maa pee* (God will do it), *Mawu ne e haa nɔ* (It is God who gives), *Mawu dzi wa tse* (It is God who is our father), *Mawu nɛ* (God exists), *Mawu ne e tsaa kpɔ* (God the tier of knots), and many others. Based on the Krobo proverb, *lile tsaa*

kpɔ ne nine nyewe penem- which means, “The tongue ties knots which the fingers cannot undo” and the fact that the Krobo verbal arts influence the Krobo aesthetic, I argue that knots, as part of beads, are not only for beautification but also used as a caution to Krobos to have *munyu ne eda* meaning, an “upright speech”.

However, the different types of beads are measured differently. According to Manye Maku Tsu, neck beads are sometimes strung with the pendant shifted slightly to the left side instead of it being in the centre giving an asymmetrical balance, which is pleasing. She claims that the asymmetrical balance is a ‘Krobo thing’ that is replicated in the *dipo Klama* dance. However, when I tried wearing an a-symmetrical bead necklace she had given me, even within Odumase, people kept on touching it and telling me that *O kpɔ ɔ de* meaning, “Your pendant is crooked”. I decided to verify from Madam Darley who agreed with Manye Makutsu so I did not understand why some people still said my pendant was crooked. My analysis of the situation was that, the ones who tried to correct my necklace did not know the Krobo notion of ‘balance being in unbalance’ which Manye Maku Tsu and Madam Darley explained to me. It could also mean that some of the Krobo in Odumase see the centre as the powerful place thus, they prefer the *kpɔ* in the middle bringing symmetrical balance to the overall dress look.

6.4.5 Functions/uses

Maa Doe, a female elder said that beads were an essential part of the Krobo from birth to death. The words she used were, *Mue lee Mawu ke po wa lamɲɔ* meaning, “As for beads, God used them to cut our umbilical cords”. She went on to mention that there are special beads for every life cycle event and this fact is supported by scholars such as Avotri (2009), Affum (2009) and Sutherland-Addy, Aidoo, and Dagadu (2011). For instance, according to Maa Doe, the Krobo value family and children a lot therefore utmost care is taken to protect the unborn child and its mother from the ‘evil eye’ to ensure safe delivery. This is done by the pregnant woman wearing a string of *oblekumi* beads around her neck. These are believed to possess the power of averting mishap. *Oblekumi* are very small seed beads and are brick red in colour (see figure 65).



Figure 64. *Oblekumi*. Courtesy of Wilson (2003)

When a Krobo woman gives birth, the *oblekumi* beads are exchanged for a thin string of tiny white beads called *aflihior*. Actually, anyone who has been ‘given a new birth’ is adorned with *aflihior*. A new Queen to be out doored will be adorned in *aflihior* (see figure 66).



Figure 65. Manye Aplam on the day of her outdoorings. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase 2016.

The baby on the other hand is adorned with a single *tovi* and a single *nyoli* and a single *koli* which form the *la* and is the symbol of Krobo identity. The *nyoli* and *tovi* are symbolic of the good and evil in the world and serve as a warning for the child to make the right decisions in life. The *la* (see figure 66) is also given to people who go through a period of ‘gestation’ and are ‘born’ into leadership and given a new name, such as Kings and *Dzemeli*.



Figure 66. The *la* on the wrist of a traditional priest at home. Photograph taken by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2016.

In an interview with Mamle *Dipo* Yoo, a sub *Manye* of Odumase, it was disclosed that the waist beads apart from broadening the hips of the female figure (see figures 67 and 68), are also used as sex toys to intensify pleasure during the act of lovemaking, and that in the past when the *Dipo* ceremony lasted a whole year, initiates were actually taught how to use the waist beads in erotic dances to tease and entice their husbands to be. Currently, this particular aspect of the *dipo* ritual is absent and if at all, young women have to be taught the art of love making by their mothers, aunts or grandmothers.



Figure 67. Woman in waist beads. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2018.

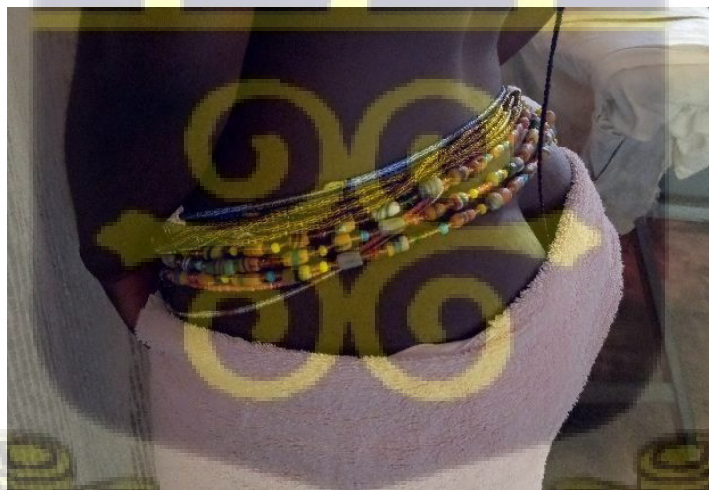


Figure 68. Young woman in a mixture of modern and traditional waist beads. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2018.

Apart from the bead itself, part of the value is placed on how and where the beads are kept. According to Madam Darley Mate-Kodjo, for beads to keep their luminosity and smoothness they must be smeared with shea butter and kept in a *kpee* (locally woven basket) or *tsimi* (calabash). An old jewelry box (see figure 69) was shown to me which belonged to

an elderly woman in Odometa. This jewelry box was carved from one block of wood and had symbols of an eagle, a *dipo* initiate and an elephant, which are of traditional value to the Krobo, carved all over it as seen in the photograph. When I asked where she got it from, she said: *pe itsee tse ne egbo ha eyo*, meaning, “It was my father’s father who carved it for his wife”. Even though the box was dull with age, it still showed marks of good craftsmanship¹⁰⁸. The engravings were well marked out and the inside of the box was smooth. Again, parts of the engravings which were supposed to depict hair or scales were well textured. Among the carvings was one of a crocodile with a fish in its open jaws which is a representation of the deity *Elo* who both the Krobo and Ewe believe in¹⁰⁹.



Figure 69. Old carved jewelry box made from a single block of wood, with crocodile vomiting a fish as handle. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odometa, 2017.

Anyone may admire a strand of beads within the Krobo society, however, to be able to have credibility on the subject, the critic must be an experienced bead maker, *yomoyo* of the clan or have gained experience by ‘walking’ with the experienced of the clan.

¹⁰⁸ Ross, D. (1984). The art of Osei Bosu. Osei Bosu’s standards were a smooth finish, a rough finish would be described as *fufu* which had fallen into sand.

¹⁰⁹ In a related research among the Ewe of Volta region, I found a woman with a similar tattoo. This I thought was further evidence that the Ewe and Krobo travelled together and had some shared experiences. An interview with Manye Aplam on 30th June, 2018 confirmed this by her stating that the crocodile with the fish in mouth was a god who helped them cross a river and then fed them during their exodus.

6.5 “*Sloto Sloto Fuu*”- Variety and Abundance in Krobo Dress

Wa suɔ nɔ nɛɛ pee sloto sloto fuu! Meaning, “We admire it when we have a mixture and abundance!” I received this response when I asked the question of quantity in relation to what the Krobo find attractive. Related to the idea of volume is the artistic theme of variety and abundance. The plentiful use of beads also gives volume and this is represented in the wearing of multiple strands of beads. The Krobo love to see multiple strands of beads. Whether worn on the neck or around the waist. This kind of multiplicity is evident in the number of beads worn around the *dipo* initiates waist and neck in the third garment she wears as shown in figure 70. The more the beads around these body parts, the more pleasing to the Krobo eye it is. Using a variety and abundance of beads is not the preserve of *dipo* initiates alone. Males and chiefs to be precise, also adorn themselves with a variety of beads around their necks during *durbars* and other important state functions (figures 72 and 73)

Chiefs, Queenmothers and the Krobo elite especially wear multiple strands of beads to depict their royal status and wealth. According to Manye Maku Tsu “*Mue nitse ɛɛ, enyia ke nye we, abua ahe nya koni asa nɔ, etsoo hene nɔɔ gye.*” Meaning, “Good beads need company, they complement each other and emphasize the wearer’s status.” For example, a queenmother might wear the following collection of beads at a time:

	NAME OF BEAD	TRANSLATION	SYMBOLISM
1.	<i>Kuɔ nane nya</i>	The foot of a mother hen (The feet of a mother hen does not kill its chicks).	Discipline
2.	<i>Ade</i>	The eye of God	The Queenmother sees and hears everything that happens in her town.
3.	<i>Kɔli</i>	Symbol of Krobo identity	Traditional power and authority
4.	<i>Powa</i>		Symbol of beauty, maturity
5.	<i>Sowenɔ</i>	Sowe is a huge pan used for dishing food at social gatherings. It is also used as a measure as rich people sometimes store their precious beads in a <i>sowe</i> . The bead thus named <i>sowenɔ</i> and is metaphorically compared to this pan to mean- Expensive thing that is stored in a <i>sowe</i> .	Symbol of wealth
6.	<i>Zagba</i>		Symbol of wealth and beauty
7.	<i>Wazii</i>		Symbol of Krobo identity in the different lifecycle events.
8.	<i>Akoso</i>	A bead made for royalty	Wealth and Royal status

To the audience that can read the symbols in this queenly adornment, the names of all the beads are a meta language that expresses the Queenmothers status within the Krobo society.

Another example of wearing multiple and various types of beads by both males and females, is at a funeral. Beads such as those in the following table may be worn in several strands to funerals.

No	Name of bead	Translation	Symbolism within the Krobo culture
1.	<i>Oduo he wa</i>	Bitterness is hard	Worn to depict sorrow
2	<i>Aboda</i>	Boiled corn and groundnut meal	Because of the opposed colours of white and brown, <i>abode</i> is worn to depict the ups and downs of life situations. In this case, the death of a loved one.
3.	<i>Oblekumi</i>		<i>Oblekumi</i> beads are believed to have control over misfortune and calamity.
4	<i>Tovi</i>	Spiritual power and Krobo identity	It is also worn to protect the wearer against any spiritual attacks during the funeral ceremony. Reminder that the wearer shall also die one day.
5	<i>Te mue/ Abor</i>	Bauxite (stone) beads	Symbol of maturity but are worn to funerals because of its colour.

From the above it is evident that though some ethnic groups may not wear jewelry to funerals out of respect for the dead, among the Krobo, the perception is different. As long as the names of the beads are appropriate, multiple strands of beads may be worn to funerals as this help reinforce the mourning mood.

With regards the puberty rites, the *dipo* initiates whole body is adorned in multiple strands of beads which form a large heavy ‘cowl’ on her chest. Her hips are also decorated with piles of beads which exaggerate her hip size. Beads which depict maturity, Krobo identity, wealth, fertility and beauty are used. These all emphasise Krobo traditional values. This large

volume of beads are symbolic of not only of her family's wealth but also of the unity, love and interdependency within the community¹¹⁰.

The following *Klama* song records the use of the numerous beads and is in praise of *dipo* initiates adornment and appearance.

Krobo language

English translation

Adzaki

Adzaki,

Emaa ku yo ɔ ɲmɔɲmɔ2x

It will break the girl's hips 2x



Figure 70. *Dipo* initiate displaying her family's wealth and support through the volume of beads around her waist. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2016.

¹¹⁰ See section 5.3.1



Figure 71. A sub-Chief wearing a variety of neck beads, preceded by his Okyeame on the way to Laasi, the Ngmayemi durbar ground. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2017.



Figure 72. A new chief in a variety of beads swearing allegiance to Nene Sakite II. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odumase 2009.

6.6 Hierarchy in Beads

Hierarchy is an important measure in the everyday life of the Krobo, Children sport hairdo's that depict their status and women wear the traditional cloth in the *kaba* ensemble also depicting the different statuses of womanhood. Hierarchy can also be observed in the stringing of beads. A strand of neck beads which are pleasing to the eye is graduated with

the smaller ones at the top near the neck line and the bigger heavier ones towards the centre of the necklace. There is also hierarchy in the arrangement and wearing of multiple strands of beads worn around the neck. Elderly people and those with traditional authority usually wear *mue nitse*. *Mue nitse* literally means “good beads” and refers to antique beads on which the Krobo place high value such as the *sowenor* (figure 73) and the *koli* (figure 74). The younger generation, on the other hand, put on *tso sisi mue*. *Tso sisi mue* literally means “tree under beads” and refers to a modern, cheaper brand of beads. Among the traditional priests, for instance, the length of their black and white beads shows rank. The longer the beaded necklace the higher in hierarchy the wearer is. Another aspect of beads that show rank is the shape, for instance, according to Manye Maku Tsu, medium to large double-cone shaped beads such as the *bodom* bead used to be the prerogative of Kings. Okyeame Boate reiterated this fact. In the Krobo society, a person of a certain status must wear certain grade of beads and these beads must be whole, meaning they must not be chipped nor damaged. When this occurs, it casts a slur on the persons rank¹¹¹.



Figure 73. *Sowenor*, an example of *mue nitse*



Figure 74. *Koli* interspersed with gold

¹¹¹ Even though chipped beads sometimes means the beads have stood the test of time, a person of high rank is expected to wear beads that are whole as this is an indicator of a well thought out choice.

It is important to consider the appropriate quality, quantity and weight of beads to be used for each category of persons. For example, even though a child may be from a rich home, because of the proverb “a child can break the shell of the snail but not that of the tortoise” and “the head will not sit down for the knee to wear a hat” among others, she would not be allowed to wear antique beads around her waist. An adult on the other hand may wear *koli* or any other expensive bead of her choice around her waist. Similarly, royalty must always appear in public in beads that reflect their status. Such statuses are expressed in the cost, size, and even the name of the bead.

6.7 Modifications

6.7.1 Body painting among the Krobo

Body painting is one of the temporary modifications the Krobo do. It is mostly practiced by females of all ages during puberty rites, marriage celebrations and funerals. Body painting is also practiced by men on specific occasions such as during the death of a chief or during the performance rituals for or during war. Maku Yoo Ewie, one of my respondents affirms

*Ke oma de ke he ηmlami hi ɔ, lee esa kaa afutu ηuosaminya.
Ese kaa emi ti tsɔ le ema kpɔ. Ese kaa epee nyu nyu hu lɔ, lee
abi ηmlami ɔ naa.*

Meaning:

Good body paint must be mixed well and be of a good consistency. It must not be too thick otherwise, the paint will peel off when dry. Nor must it be too watery otherwise; the makings would not be visible.

What Maku Yoo Ewie is explaining is that, for this kind of body modification to be described as correct, the final paintwork on the body is evaluated in terms of how well the paint mixture was made i.e. whether the paste is too thick or too watery. If watery the marks would

be faint and indistinct, and if too thick, the paint will crack and fall off after it is dried, leaving a very faint or no mark on the body. For the paint work to be described as *ηmlami ni eda*, (upright or good body painting) the dried paint must leave clear and readable marks for interpretation (figures 75).



Figure 75. A woman in circular paint marks. Courtesy of Efo Kojo Sela, Ho 2016.



Figure 76. A Mourner at Manyε Mamle Okleyo's funeral. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2013

Symmetry is also part of body paint evaluation. The designs on the left side of the body (or face) must be symmetrical with the opposite side. When this is so, the remark one would hear is *ohe ηmlamioɔ da* which literally means your body paint is ‘standing’. It is important to note that even though improvising is important, however, symmetry in the body marks is highly emphasized. Smearing of *gba* (pounded red stone into a paste) on limbs indicates the death of a royal. Members of the royal house would smear their bodies with *gba* paste, (see figure 76). According to Maku Yoo Ewie¹¹², funeral marks are made in horizontal lines on the chest and vertical lines on the arms and legs (figure 77). Her submissions are the same as those made by D.D.N.Tetteh when he was interviewed on Krobo notions on shapes.



Figure 77. A mourner at Asafoatse Apor's funeral with her legs painted with *gba* in vertical stripes. Photograph taken by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, December 2017.

Body painting is also a crucial part of the Krobo puberty rite. Different markings are used during the different stages. For instance, the sprinkling of white clay on the initiate's body is

¹¹² Maku Yoo Ewie is a bead seller at Odometa. Interviewed at her home on 10th July, 2017.

a symbol and prayer of fertility (see figure 78). Below is a *Klama* song that records the use of *meme*, powdered cam wood paste during the rite.

Song:

Wa ma du kusta
Wa ma sa meme (2x)
Nye de kee, yoo he tso
Eee yoo he tso
e sa le
Eeee e sale

Translation

We will bath
and we will apply *meme* (2x)
Say with me that the lady is beautiful
Eeee she is indeed beautiful *Nye de kee*
say with me that her markings suit her
Eeee they suit her!

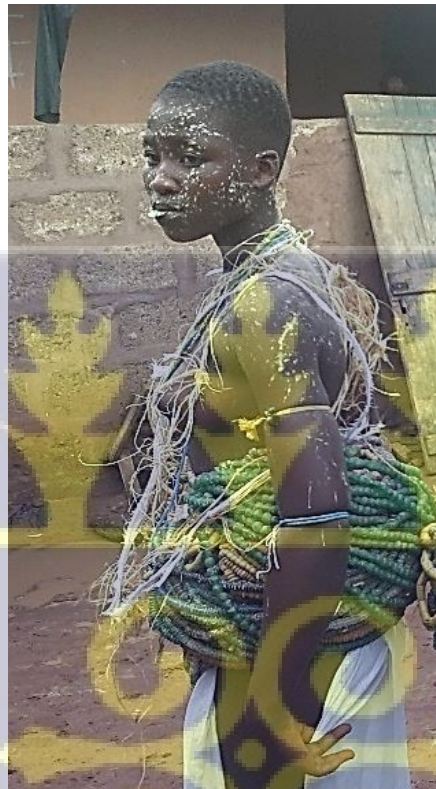


Figure 78. *Dipo* initiates with sprinklings of *ηuo* (white clay) getting ready to go to the sacred stone *tegbete*. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko. Odumase, 2017.

Maku Yoo Ewie, Nana Kloweki and Madam Darley at different times, all attested to the fact that the Krobo do not usually adorn their bodies with tattoos. Nana Kloweki specifically stated that, this type of modification is not something usually practiced by the Krobo. However, at a funeral at Odometa, I did see a man with a tattoo on his right shoulder. When I asked about it, I was told it was medicinal. This is one of the rare examples and reason for tattooing within the Krobo society.

6.7.2 Scarification

According to De Mello (2007:235), scarification can be described as a permanent modification of the body by use of a sharp object to incise visible cuts on the body. These cuts when healed leave permanent marks on the skin. The Krobo as a rule do not engage in facial scarification¹¹³. According to a respondent, Madam Wemtaŋwe, the kind of scarification mostly practiced by Krobo is the *be bo* which can be interpreted as ‘sweep marks’ which initiates receive on the successful completion of the *dipo* puberty rite as shown in figure 79.



Figure 79. Initiate receiving a *be bo* on successful completion of *tegbete* test.
Source: Boakye, (2010).

The Krobo in the female period of liminality (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1966) place little notches on certain parts of the neophyte's body. This is believed to be a mark of transition which transforms the initiate into a full woman of the community. These incisions made on the outer part of the wrists of the *dipo* initiates towards the end of the initiation

¹¹³ Scarification is employed only when used for healing and ritual purposes. Facial scars are also given to *gbobalɔ*. *Gbobalɔ* are those children who are believed to die soon after birth and return to their mothers' wombs to be born again. Such babies are given a particular mark on their face as a deterrent for death not to come for them again (Kwakyie-Oppong, 2009; Dzamedo, 2009).

process represent a successful graduated from the *dipo* puberty rite initiation test. The wrist incisions represent only one of the many examples in Ghanaian ritual where the body is recognized as locus of signification (Adjaye 1999). The initiates also receive marks on their lower back during the ‘opening of the womb rite’ which is also part of the *dipo* ceremony (figure 80).

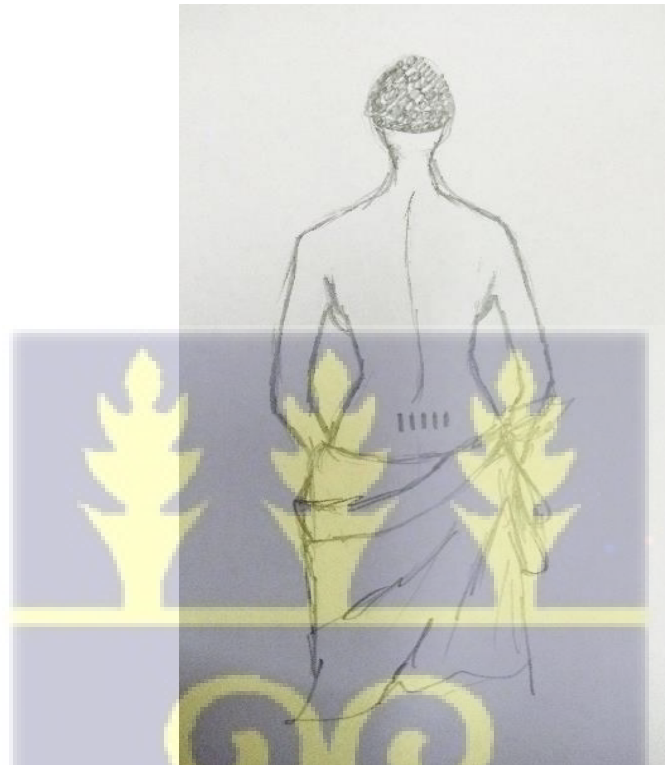


Figure 80. Sketch of a young maiden with ‘opening of the womb’ marks on her lower back. Sketch by Fabiola M. Opare- Darko, 2018.

Madam Wemtagwɛ, however, stated that even the practice of these type of scarifications have almost disappeared due to modernity. She continued and attested to the fact that currently it is mostly medicinal (see figure 81) and ritual scarification such as *gbo ba* (see figure 82) that are practiced. In times of ill health, incisions are made on the face.



Figure 81. A woman with medicinal scars. The scars were given to her as a deterrent to seizures when she was eight years old. Photograph by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko, Odometeta 2017.

When parents have experienced several still births, a set of facial marks called *gbo ba* are given to the baby which finally survives. This practice is supposed to deter death from coming to take the child. No matter the reason for scarification, the marks must be “*pempɛo*” or “*bɔbɔ yuu*” (small) and not gaping like as a respondent said “*kaa noko nɛ e na keje ta!*” (Such as a scar received from war). The giver of the mark would be criticized as *pe eli e ha* meaning “one who does not know his knife”. Among the Krobo, people who have big scars are singled out as strangers.



Figure 83. A woman with *Gbo ba* marks. Photograph by Mukaila Mohamed. Agormanya, 2018.

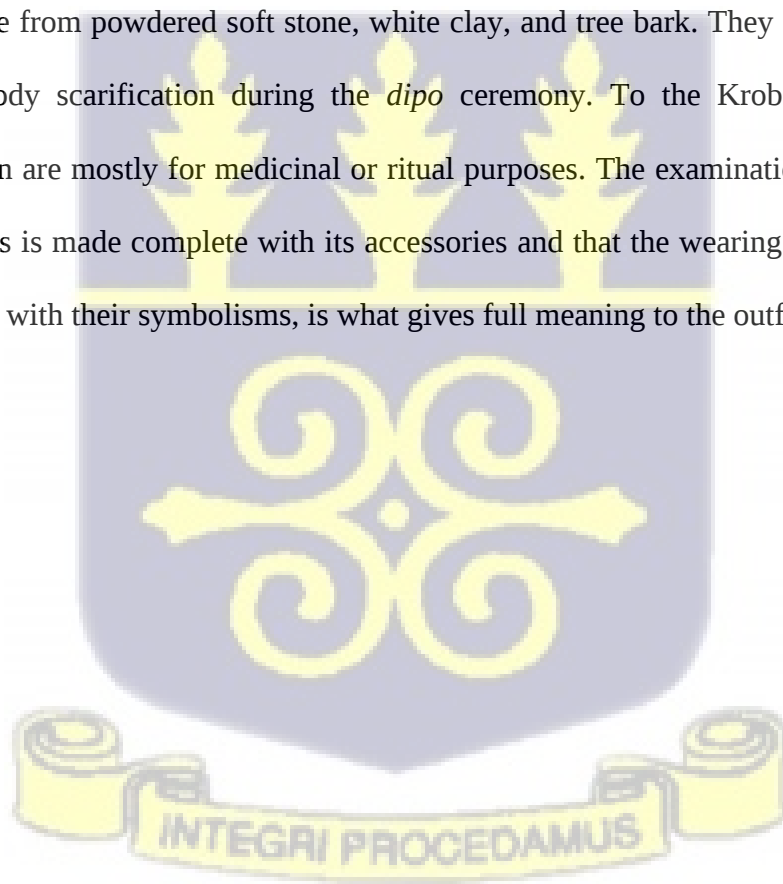
In terms of measuring the different types of scarifications, the Krobo have no particular gauge. From the field research conducted it was realised that the length and angle or curvature did not matter. Neither were geometric levels significant to locating and appreciating local articulation of beauty in Krobo scarification. As a rule, the Krobo do not indulge in facial scarification nor tattoos. Instead of facial scarification for identity as other ethnic groups practice, the Krobo tie the *la* on the right wrist of a new born. However, the Krobo do use scarification as a kind of certification for a successful completion of *dipo* and also sometimes use scarification for medicinal purposes.

6.8 Summary

This thesis argues a case of examining the multifaceted aspects of Krobo culture in order to appreciate the characteristics of Krobo aesthetics through body adornment. In order to appreciate what delights and gives contentment to the Krobo, some of the areas which were examined are the verbo-visual culture and other symbolisms in dress. Whilst the previous chapter largely examined clothing to assess what the Krobo find delightful, this chapter has examined hairstyles, accessories and modifications which serve to complete the Krobo dress. It has been realized that each garment worn has its corresponding accessories and modifications. These serve to inform the onlooker about the wearer including his status within the Krobo society and several others.

In examining hair styles, it was realized that though there is hierarchy in female hairstyles for instance *akwele waabii* for young maidens and *yii blemi* styles for married women; among males, hierarchy is not evident among hair styles nor is hierarchy depicted in the ordinary male head coverings. Rather, hierarchy among males is mostly depicted with totems among royals. Totems in body adornment that were briefly examined in this chapter were the symbols on spokespersons' staffs.

In a dialogue on the use of beads as a dress accessory among the Krobo, a brief discussion on the process of bead making and some of the markers that are used within the valuation process such as colour, texture and shape were given. Beads are evaluated on individual basis before being evaluated as a strand. Many strands of beads come together to form the Krobo visual preference of variety and abundance. An abundance and variety of beads are worn by both males and females. Just as female coiffure, beads can also depict hierarchy. Beads depict hierarchy by the way they are threaded from small to large, and also from the type of bead worn. For instance, a King is expected to adorn himself with *mue nitse* such as *sowenor* and not *tso sisi mue* such as ‘pineapple’ that has no proverbial meaning. The Krobo practice certain forms of modification such as the application of body paints made from powdered soft stone, white clay, and tree bark. They also practice some form of body scarification during the *dipo* ceremony. To the Krobo, other forms of scarification are mostly for medicinal or ritual purposes. The examination has proven that Krobo dress is made complete with its accessories and that the wearing of the appropriate accessories with their symbolisms, is what gives full meaning to the outfit.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary

This dissertation has examined body adornment as a visual culture of the Krobo of Ghana from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. In doing this the study interrogated the significance and multifaceted meanings, cultural symbolisms and aesthetic concepts of Krobo body adornment in order to appreciate what is of good taste, pleasurable and acceptable to them. In concluding this study, it is imperative to re-state its underlying hypothesis, which is that- the aesthetics of the Krobo is determined by their worldview and aspects of the verbal arts which are expressed in, and inform, the evaluation of body adornment. Young Krobo are therefore taught the appraisal systems through ornamentation. The belief is that Krobo body adornment is one that reflects the society's values and forms of appreciation and criticism, symbols, and further meets the spiritual and physical needs of the people.

Language is an important part of culture, and plays a role in the way a person analyses everyday events in his or her surroundings. Among the Krobo, language has a close relationship in determining what should be acceptable. This is represented in Krobo proverbs, axioms, metaphor, historical narratives and *Klama* songs. All these verbal arts are used as tools in measuring the value of what is acceptable and pleasing to the Krobo. Even the very act of speaking itself is measured as acceptable or not, based on the way the speaker 'knows' and addresses his/her audience. Knowing the Krobo language thoroughly means knowing the Krobo culture and thus, being able to analyse other speakers' thoughts, which means, speaking well. Speaking well is one of the rules of living upright.

The Krobo concept of living upright is perceived on a God-given instruction to live right and to shine on earth. Shining to the Krobo means to excel in all areas of endeavor whilst

living in harmony with nature on earth. It also means living in accordance and practicing Krobo belief systems whilst expressing these beliefs in everything, as well as in art forms. Thus, the Krobo baby is given a *la*, a beaded bracelet as a mark of identity and as a reminder to its parents of *huanim*, earthly excellence and death. To live upright the Krobo must satisfy the concepts of *hedrami*, *munyu* and *su*, which they believe encapsulate Gods instructions to mankind.

Modifying and padding the body, which makes it more acceptable and pleasing to the Krobo, falls under the concept of *hedrami*, and this is practiced even during formal times such as funeral events/mourning. Modifying the body to create more fullness in the hip and buttocks area is admired, preferred and sometimes analysed to mean affluence and prosperity. A woman who dresses in this manner is not only praising her husband and her family's heirloom through her dress, but also projects her community and its values of *hedrami* as a whole. The wearing of numerous, weighty beads is only observed once in any Krobo woman's lifetime—during her nubility rites, never before and never after. On no other occasion will any true Krobo woman wear such abundance of beads. Apart from demonstrating the community's concept of interdependency, the weight of the beads represents the burdens of life and the trials every woman must overcome. Thus, the initiates physically experience the values which they will teach to future generations. This philosophy explains why initiates of the *dipo* nobility rites, who are being trained to represent future custodians of the community's values are adorned with abundance of variety of beads thickly around the hips and neck.

Another dimension of *hedrami*, which also partially expresses the Krobo notion of *munyu* can also be expressed in the non-verbal communication with cloth. The Krobo use the proverbial patterns and names of the various wax prints to convey messages about their personality and temperament at any specific time. Cloths appropriately draped and worn with abundant beads give the wearer an elaborate body language that is used in the

assessment and judgment of the adornment. Elaborate body language and an appropriately draped cloth is a symbol of a well-balanced life style. A harmonious combination of colour and gender- appropriate clothing go together with other contextual issues such as place, company and occasion among others as elements of evaluation. These are bound by a catalogue of normed behaviours and choices that Krobo individuals will recognize and appreciate.

The Krobo also take pride in cloths and beads that have stood the test of time. Aged beads and cloth provide a kind of hierarchy when worn. Also, aged ritual clothing is believed to be a rich source of spiritual power. In addition, aged article of adornment provides a lived metaphor, being symbolic of the fact that the Krobo value and hold fast their past traditions. Krobo aesthetics have a close relationship with dance. This is expressed in the gorgeous dance of *dipo*, the slow movements of the *ohue sabe* funeral dance, and the ritual performances of the *nadu* cult among others. For instance, dancing slowly but gorgeously under the weight of large volumes of beads has deep meaning and value. Every woman is expected to achieve this, thus to conduct herself with dignity even in the face of adversity. Though the Krobo identify with colours that are traditionally used in Ghana, they are drawn to the colours blue and yellow because of historical memory that binds the community together. Colours are used to emphasise the themes of occasions.

The Krobo believe that God speaks to them through the set of cultural values, which He gave them. They therefore rely on His words presented to them through proverbs and other verbal arts. Such verbal texts are guided by the strict ethical injunctions of Krobo philosophy. In effect, the Krobo have managed to create a temple to the highest God, *Mawu*, within their living space. They have achieved this by surrounding both every day and ritual occurrences with symbols such as metaphor in body adornment, and proverbs in speech, which represent the voice of *Mawu*. Body adornment is assessed by how well they portray these metaphors.

7.2 Findings

7.2.1 Krobo philosophy

Having set out to investigate the body adornment practices of the Krobo, the study has revealed that Krobo have philosophies that guide their quotidian activities. The most central being the belief in a God-given code of conduct articulated in their notion of *eda* (uprightness). It is from this philosophy of uprightness that they derive their guidance to aesthetic principles and qualities.

The study further reveals that Krobo perception of a well-dressed person is also shrouded in the same idea of uprightness (*eda*). Thus, Krobo body adornment is not merely about how well a person dresses; rather, is concerned with one's uprightness. This uprightness within their belief system and philosophy is expressed largely in the forms of dressing (*hedrami*), speech (*munyu*), and character (*su*). These three concepts of *hedrami*, *munyu* and *su* are inseparable in forming acceptable aesthetic criteria of what is pleasing to the Krobo people.

The study again establishes that the Krobo believe that proverbs and metaphors, which are expressed both verbally and through ornamentation, are the voice of *Mawu*. This voice guides humans through their existence on earth.

The study, on the notion of philosophy, concludes that clothing as language, is a channel through which the Krobo share and store knowledge, values, and attitudes of various types.

7.2.2 Krobo perceptions on colour

This research has revealed that the Krobo perceive the colour blue (*wo su*) as a symbol of 'motherly authority'. To the Krobo 'mother' goes beyond child bearing. The term comprises anyone who takes on the affairs of a household or community. The colour yellow (*kunŋɔ zɔ*) or gold (*sika*) on the other hand, signifies life, fertility, riches and prosperity. This

notion of progress (*nɔyami*) shapes the Krobo's idea of advancement of the society. Based on the facts given on the Krobo's stay on *Klowe* (Krobo mountain), I conclude that historical memory is the main influence of the Krobo attraction to the different shades and tints of blue and yellow.

7.2.3 The Krobo aesthetic

The study revealed that among the Krobo, the concept of fertility is reflected in the size of a man's farm and the size of a woman's hips and bust. The size of a man's farm is dependent on the number of children he has to help him work on his farm. The children are produced by a woman with a well-developed body. It is believed that the hips act as a receptacle for the child and the bust is the feeding duct. Therefore, both complement each other when it comes to the issue of fertility. In the aspect of the notion of human form, the research further revealed that, the Krobo believe that a woman with long hair has intuitive perception and a connection to her environment.

It is evident from the research that, Krobo notions of volume, aged and vintage, hierarchy, repetition, improvisation and simplicity create dress codes which are highly appreciated and accepted as the standard or norm of artistic and material expression, involving knowledge and craft demonstrated by the creators of artifacts. Whether bead, cloth, clay paint or scarification, they all involve elements of judgments on the level of skill of the practitioner or artisan and his/her technical skills, artistic knowledge and conformity to Krobo aesthetics.

The study further discovered that beads are the identity of the Krobo and are used to represent the notions of death, life and earthly distinction. Specific ones such as the *kɔli* are used in all life cycle events. The research further discovered that, whilst the Krobo use beads as adornment for all limb joints as well as the waist, it is the right hand that is functionally

appropriate and the height of aesthetic preference among the Krobo. Thus, the right hand is symbolically adorned for both secular and ritual purposes.

Krobo dance movements are influenced by the weight of beads as in the *dipo* dance, and the voluminous nature of the costumes, as in the *yoo se dofiām* and *dipo* dance, the movement of the performer support in articulating the values within the dancers' garb. To a large extent, their movements are an embodiment of their beliefs. Dancers move symbolically expressing their cultural philosophies, experiences and status. Therefore, understanding the relationship between Krobo dance and the costume means understanding the aesthetic world view of the people.

The study revealed that, by wearing a ritual dress such as the *gblo*, the Krobo woman is transformed from being just any female, and given authority and a voice to participate in matters of the land.

Furthermore, the research discloses, on the issue of aesthetics, that the Krobo embrace new ideas in dress—such as new wax prints, new colours and designs in bead production—only if these ideas fit into the Krobo values.

7.2.4 Krobo royalty

The research findings establish that, there is no particular distinction in dress among Krobo Kings except for the *Konor's* crown. Likewise, the *manyē ŋwa* (Paramount Queen) is distinguished by her use of a bigger head scarf as a mark of distinction in social gatherings. In spite of the lack of hierarchy in dress, Krobo royalty is expected to adorn ancient and proverbial beads such as *mēte* which means “To draw wealth to one's self” and *kunṇɔ nane nya*, which means “The feet of the mother hen do not kill her chicks”. The research has further revealed that all Krobo kings from the reign of Nene Odonkor Azu till present have all sported a moustache and this is because, the Krobo perceive moustaches to be a symbol of vitality, courage and masculinity.

Based on the findings, this work confirms the hypothesis which is that- the aesthetics of the Krobo is determined by their worldview and aspects of the verbal arts which are expressed in, and inform, the evaluation of body adornment.

7.3 Recommendations

This dissertation has examined Krobo adornment practices from the mid-19th to the 21st centuries. However, the impact of trade and cultural relations on Krobo body adornment is one important area that are beyond the stated focus of this thesis. Therefore, it will be important to examine the details of modernity, political developments and changes in adornment, globalization, technology such as the internet and social media. Christianity and other religions have all impacted on the Krobo aesthetics. I therefore propose the need for further research into Krobo aesthetics with emphasis on trends and changes. I also recommend a study into the ways in which Krobo aesthetics may illuminate concepts and practices among other ethnic groups. Undertaking such a research will mean that the new researcher has to engage the following areas:

- Contemporary/Modern dress culture among the Krobo.
- Internet, mobile phone connectivity, easy access to global market, fashion and trends.
- The drive towards import-oriented trade.
- New academic disciplines and Non-Governmental Agencies seeking the interest, rights and dignity of women.

These suggested areas will set the stage for the discussion on culture change among the Krobo, with specific emphasis on their aesthetics.

Although it falls beyond the remit of an artistic study such as this, I believe that there is a need for further study in the field of traditional cosmetics.

Researchers in the field of biochemistry could take up the study of traditional body paint of *meme*, *nuɔ* and *gba* and other types of traditional cosmetics even beyond the Krobo.

The general assumption is that the linguistic affinity among the Ga-Dangme makes them one unit. The question however is: Are there dynamics, either cultural or environmental, that distinguish the Krobo from other Dangme communities that will further illuminate our understanding of Dangme aesthetics? I recommend a further study to establish additional differences between the Krobo and other Dangme to determine if they are really one unit as is generally believed. I also recommend a study to seek ways in which Krobo aesthetics may illuminate concepts and practices among other ethnic groups.

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has been an examination of Krobo aesthetics from the perspective of what the drivers and determinants of good taste and beauty are, giving pleasure and impacting on their emotions and vision. Previous scholars have approached aesthetics in Ghana largely from the visual aspects alone, but this study includes a new aspect which is language, religion and philosophy. This has been a departure from Antubam's pioneering attempt largely on the Akan, Andrews and Warren and other scholars who have studied Ghanaian aesthetics. In order to appreciate Krobo aesthetics, one has to understand them beyond what is visible and learn to perceive their culture through a Krobo lens.

What the Krobo see and appreciate is greatly related to their ideas and beliefs in *Mawu* and His rules for living on earth. They believe that their body adornments metaphorically and proverbially speak the word of God. With the use of repeated metaphor of their worldview and the replication of symbolic actions, the Krobo manage to create a temple of worship within their communal space. Also, this study has brought to light, some of the significant ways the Krobo assess the concept of beauty. This is evident in the structure of their adornments, where the ornamentation reflects the values of Krobo society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Informants Interviewed by the Researcher

	Name of informant	Name of town	Age	Status	Occupation	Reference to thesis page/ footnote
1	Nanor Mate-Kole	Odumase	c.91	Elder/King maker	Retired Policeman	Pg. 46
2	Okyeame Boate	Odumase	94	Chief linguist	Retired teacher	Pg.11,47,77,94,101,103,127,147,149,150,171
3	Darley Mate Kodjo	Odumase	84	Female elder	Baker and cloth seller	Pg-8,61,77,78,109,117,118,138,164,167,175
4	Nana Kloweki	Odumase	30	Chief Priest of Kloweki shrine		Pg 5,47,48,622,65,73,74,83,84,99,101,102,130,152,175
5	Nene Okumo Madjanor	Odumase	c.60	Traditional priest		Pg. 4,62,64
6	Maku Yoo Ewie	Odometa	c.70		Bead Seller	Pg. 174,175
7	Manye Maku Tsu	Odumase	79	Queen Mother		Pg. 91,118,152,164,171
8	Tetteh Angmor	Odumase	82	Elder	Retired teacher	Pg. 106
9	Dedo Wahiemawude	Odumase	60	Female Elder	Social worker	Pg. 107
10	Mamle <i>Dipo</i> Yoo	Odumase	60	Sub-queen mother	Retired secretary	Pg. 47,105,166
11	Manye Aplam II	Odumase	48	Paramount Queen mother	Educationist	Pg. 98,118
12	Maa Agbotse	Odumase	62	Female Elder	Trader	Pg. 96,
13	Adelaide Obeng	Odumase	82	Female elder	Retired teacher	Pg. 77,88,141
14	Maa Kumasi Yoo	Odumase	79	Elder	Bead Trader	Pg.89
15	Eurika Asare	Odumase	82	Elder/Wetse	Farmer	Pg.77
16	Dade Matse	Odometa	c.70	Sub-Chief	Farmer	Pg. 46,62
17	Madam Wemtagwe	Odometa	69			Pg. 65, 94
18	Sackite Sixteen	Odumase	42	Drummer		Pg. 124
19	Azariah	Odumase	35	Teacher		Pg. 71
20	Maku Lanor	Odometa	c.60			Pg.89
21	D.D.N. Tetteh	Odumase	92	Herbalist	Herbalist/retired Presby. minister	Pg.82,83,103
22	Awetse Lawer	Odometa	82	Elder	Farmer	Pg.148
23	Ruby Amarteifio	Odumase		Princess	Retired Nurse	Pg91
24	Juliana Kole	Odumase	64		Bead seller	Pg. 154,156,159
25	Florence Asare	Dodowa		Director of TK beads	Bead seller	Pg. 156
26	Maa Doe	Odumase			Female elder	Pg. 164

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Approval



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)

P. O. Box LG 571, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No.....

30th August, 2018

Ms. Fabiola M. Opare-Darko
Institute of African Studies
University of Ghana
Legon

Dear Ms. Opare-Darko,

ECH 185/17-18: MAKE-UP AESTHETICS: BODY ADORNMENT PRACTICES OF THE KROBO

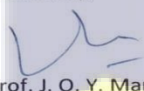
This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date:	28/08/19
On Agenda for:	Initial Submission
Date of Submission:	18/07/18
ECH Action:	Approved
Reporting:	Annually



Please accept my congratulations.

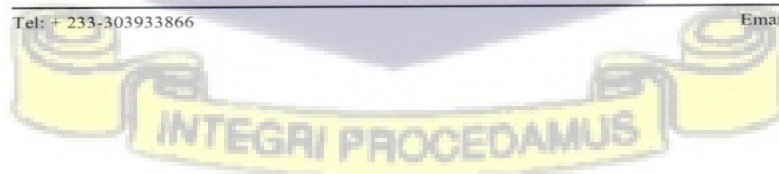
Yours Sincerely,


Rev. Prof. J. O. Y. Mante
ECH Chair

CC: Prof. Dzodzi Tsikata, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana

Tel: + 233-303933866

Email: ech@ug.edu.gh





November 20, 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

SUBJECT: Research Opportunity and Clearance for Research Assistant Ms Fabiola Opare-Darko, PhD Candidate, Institute of African Studies and School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon

Dear Fellow Citizens, Elders, Chiefs, Cultural Experts and Practitioners:

First, I take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation for your various contributions and ways of life that sustain and encourage our Ghanaian cultural traditions and social norms. I believe we will continue to build a stronger Ghana as we build on these traditions and responsibilities, including the sharing of knowledge and skills on ethnic traditions of Ghana.

It is my privilege to introduce to you officially my personal **Research Assistant Ms Fabiola Opare Darko, who is one of our PhD candidates in the Institute of African Studies and the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon.** Since last year, 2016, I have engaged Fabiola, both as Research Assistant and advisee in my ongoing research among the Krobo, Ga-Adangme and Ewe communities; I remain her principal Supervisor for her thesis.

I choose to work with Fabiola mostly because of her vast knowledge and skill in our performance traditions, and also because of her honesty and sense of duty. Thus, I am very certain she will be able to relate to you in these honest and professional ways and that we can all derive mutual benefits that will make us proud of our cultural heritage. I therefore introduce Ms Fabiola Opare Darko to you and will seriously appreciate any help or information you can give her toward our ongoing research projects on the cultural and performance traditions of the Krobo, Ga-Adangme, Ewe and other ethnic groups. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any suggestions or questions, both about the research or about Fabiola. The results of this ongoing project will be written and stored in the Institute of African Studies Archive, and some of which will be published as a way of educating our own generations and outsiders so that they can cultivate deeper respect for and knowledge in our golden cultural heritage. **Copies of the research data (including audiovisual recordings, photos, and hardcopies of printed or published materials) will be shared with you for your own archive and personal records.**

Thank you very much and we look forward to working with you in the capacity described above.

Sincerely,

Professor Daniel Kodzo Avorgbedor
Cell: 0207060435; Email: davorgbedor@ug.edu.gh; perazimm@gmail.com
Personal Homepage: <http://beaconpros.com>



Appendix C: Question Guide for Make-Up Aesthetics: Body Adornment Practices of the Krobo

Background of respondent

1. Name..... 2.
- Age.....
3. Gender.....
4. Status.....
5. Occupation.....

Krobo notions and perceptions

1. What religion do the Krobo practice?
2. What are some of the values and belief systems?
3. Who have been the guardians and custodians of Krobo intangible heritage?
4. What are the Krobo standards of value?
5. With regards to dress, what do the Krobo consider beautiful and appealing?
6. What are the explanations to the adherence of the standards of value?
7. What are the penalties or sanctions for non-conformity or for non-compliance of these values?
8. What physical attributes constitute Krobo visual?
9. How do the Krobo translate their beliefs into visual culture of dress?
10. In what way do you think that the Krobo language expresses what the Krobo consider beautiful?
11. What historical experiences, skills influence the Krobo in adorning their bodies in the manner it is seen today?
13. Are there any historical myths that you could tell me?
14. Please mention a few proverbs related to dress.
15. Please mention a few axioms related to Krobo belief systems.
16. Could you please sing some *Klama* songs that speak to Krobo belief systems?

Body Adornment

18. Have religious beliefs and practices influenced Krobo dressing?
19. What is the appropriate apparel expected at the different traditional ceremonial occasions?
20. How different are the clothes of the Paramount Chief from that of his sub chiefs?
21. Do the sword bearers and attendants in Krobo traditional institutions have their mode of dressing?

22. Do Krobo priests and priestesses wear similar outfits?
23. What is the symbolism associated with *okyeame* staffs?
24. Do Queen mothers show a form of hierarchy in their dress?
25. When a baby is being named how is it adorned?
26. Is it culturally important to continue with the *dipo* rite as well as its associated costumes?
27. Are there any significant changes between costumes previously used for the *dipo* rite and those used today?
28. Do the Krobo have particular cloths, body markings and colours traditionally prescribed for marriage ceremonies?
29. What are the articles of dress demanded from a man as bride price?
30. What are the differences/similarities between clothes used during marriage rites performed in the past and those of the present?
31. What informs the clothes worn at a funeral?
32. Are Krobo's very particular about what they wear for funerals?

Accessories and modifications

33. Do traditional accessories have symbolisms attached to their use as well as the occasions which require their use?
34. Do accessories define the role, rank, personality or occupation of the wearer?
35. Do you know that the scarification and colour in body painting have associated meanings and significance?
36. Do you think body painting and scarification are culturally symbolic?
37. Does scarification and body painting depict a stage in life, social status as well as a spiritual defense?
38. In your opinion, does scarification and body painting have health issues, hence should not be practiced?
39. Are head coverings and hair styles associated with the beliefs and practices of the Krobo people?
40. Do the following hairstyles; Rasta, cornrow, shorn hair, have names and meanings in the Krobo culture?
41. Do you consider the adornment practices of the Krobo as an important art that needs to be preserved?
42. Is Krobo dressing tradition in danger of acculturation and deterioration?
43. Is every Krobo indigene acquainted with the clothing culture and its significance?