



## Research Article

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## Factors That Influence the Changing Trends of Dipo Rite Performance among the People of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo

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**Abstract:** *The Dipo rite is a significant cultural practice among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in Ghana, signifying the transition of girls to womanhood. However, recent trends have indicated a decline in the performance of this ritual. The purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that have influenced the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The paper highlights the impact of Western education and Christianity, which has led to a shift in values and beliefs among young people in the area, resulting in the view that traditional practices are outdated and irrelevant. Additionally, the changing economic landscape, characterized by rural-urban migration, has resulted in a decline in the number of girls available to participate in the Dipo rite, making it unaffordable for some families. The study concludes that addressing these factors is critical in ensuring the survival of this essential cultural tradition. Understanding the factors influencing the changing trends of the Dipo rite performance is vital in promoting the preservation of cultural heritage in Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo.*

**Keywords:** *Changing trends, modernization, Dipo Rite, Cultural Heritage, Lower Manya and Yilo Krobo*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Dipo rite performance is a traditional practice among the Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo people in Ghana that involves the initiation of girls into womanhood. The practice has been a significant part of the culture of the people for many generations. However, in recent years, there have been changes in the trends of the Dipo rite performance, with some communities modifying the practice to suit their changing social and cultural context. This paper seeks to explore the factors that influence the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in Ghana.

Factors such as globalization, urbanization, education, and religion have been identified as drivers of change in traditional practices such as the Dipo rite performance (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Awoonor-Williams & Anie, 2013; & Owusu-Ansah & Muntaka, 2017). These factors influence the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and communities towards traditional practices, including their willingness to modify or abandon them. For instance, the spread of education has led to increased awareness of the negative effects of harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation, which has led to a decline in the practice in many communities (Awoonor-Williams & Anie, 2013).

Moreover, the changing socio-economic conditions of communities have also contributed to the modification of traditional practices. As communities become more integrated into the global economy, they are exposed to new ideas and values that challenge their

traditional practices. For instance, the growth of the tourism industry has led to the commercialization of the Dipo rite performance, with some communities modifying the practice to cater to the needs of tourists (Owusu-Ansah & Muntaka, 2017).

The traditional rite of passage known as Dipo is an integral part of the culture of the Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo people in Ghana. However, in recent years, there has been a decline in the performance of this rite among the youth in these communities. The purpose of this study is to identify and examine the factors that have influenced the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo.

According to Opong (2018), the performance of the Dipo rite has declined significantly among the youth in the Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo communities in Ghana.

This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the factors that influence the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo in Ghana. The paper will review empirical studies that have examined the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and communities towards the practice and its changing trends, and the implications for policy and practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The study was underpinned by modernization theory largely developed by Rostow (1960). Modernization theory emerged in the post-World War II period as a framework for understanding social change and development in less developed countries. The theory posits that as societies become more modernized, they will experience economic growth, industrialization, and social development (Rostow, 1960). The theory assumes that traditional societies are characterized by low levels of economic productivity, lack of technology, and social stratification, which inhibit development.

The relevance of modernization theory lies in its ability to explain the processes of social change and development in less developed countries. It highlights the importance of factors such as education, technology, and economic growth in promoting development. Modernization theory has been used to guide development policies and programs in many countries, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, when there was a widespread belief that modernization would lead to progress and development (Eisenstadt, 1966).

However, modernization theory has been criticized for its Eurocentric bias and for ignoring the complexities and diversity of cultural and social contexts in less developed countries. Critics argue that the theory assumes that all societies follow a linear path towards development, which ignores the unique historical, cultural, and political factors that shape development trajectories (Escobar, 1995). Additionally, modernization theory has been criticized for ignoring the negative effects of development, such as environmental degradation and social inequality.

According to this theory, as societies become more modernized, traditional practices and cultural beliefs are often replaced by new practices and beliefs (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). In the context of Dipo rite, modernization factors such as education, exposure to global culture, and changing gender roles may be contributing to the decline in the practice of Dipo rite.

The significance of using modernization theory in this context is that it provides a framework for understanding how social change can impact cultural practices. It allows researchers to analyze the ways in which traditional practices may be threatened by modernization and globalization. Additionally, it highlights the importance of examining the factors that drive social change, such as education and technology, which may be contributing to the decline of Dipo rite.

According to modernization theory, as societies become more modernized, traditional practices and cultural beliefs are often replaced by new practices and beliefs (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). In the context of Dipo rite, modernization factors such as education, exposure

to global culture, and changing gender roles may be contributing to the decline in the practice of Dipo rite.

### Empirical Review

According to Ahiaku *et al.* (2020), the shifting patterns of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo are influenced by a number of factors. These factors include the influence of Christianity, the impact of modernization on traditionally practised rituals, and shifting gender roles. The authors carried out a qualitative study among members of the community and discovered that the younger generation is less interested in participating in Dipo ceremonies due to their impression of it as an antiquated and repressive practise. This was one of the findings of the study.

A study by Oduro & Yidana (2019) explored the factors that influence the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The authors found that the decline in the practice of Dipo rite is mainly due to the influence of Christianity and modern education. The study also highlights the changing roles of women in society and their increasing participation in formal education as factors contributing to the decline in the practice of Dipo rite.

In a study by Amuzu and Sakyi-Dawson (2017), the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo were examined, and the authors identified the influence of western education and Christianity as the primary factors contributing to the decline in the practice of Dipo rite. The study also found that the practice of Dipo rite has become increasingly commercialized, with some individuals using it as a means of generating income.

A study by Adomako & Baafi (2018) explored the factors that influence the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The authors found that the practice of Dipo rite is declining due to the influence of western education and Christianity. The study also identified changing gender roles, modernization, and economic factors as other factors contributing to the decline of Dipo rite.

In a study by Tetteh & Appiah-Kubi (2019), the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo were investigated, and the authors found that the decline in the practice of Dipo rite is mainly due to the influence of western education and Christianity. The study also identified changing gender roles and the impact of modernization as other factors contributing to the decline of Dipo rite.

Asare & Amponsah-Tawiah (2019) examined the influence of modernization on the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The authors found that the

increasing availability of formal education, modern communication technologies, and exposure to global culture have contributed to a decline in the practice of Dipo rite, as younger generations perceive it as outdated and oppressive.

A qualitative study conducted by Opare & Akrofi (2017) explored the factors that influence the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo. The authors found that the influence of Christianity, increasing formal education, changing gender roles, and the commercialization of Dipo rite have all contributed to the decline in the practice of Dipo rite.

In a study by Amuzu *et al.* (2020), the changing trends of Dipo rite performance among the people of Yilo and Lower Manya Krobo were examined, and the authors identified the influence of westernization and globalization as key factors contributing to the decline of Dipo rite. The study also found that the practice of Dipo rite has become increasingly commercialized, with some individuals using it as a means of generating income.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed an ethnography research design. Ethnography is a qualitative research design that involves the detailed study of a particular culture or group of people. According to Creswell (2014), "ethnography involves immersion in a culture or social setting over an extended period of time, often resulting in a rich description and interpretation of the culture or setting" (p. 171). Ethnography is a suitable design for the study of Dipo rites because it allows researchers to immerse themselves in the cultural context of the Dipo ceremony and gain an in-depth understanding of the social practices, beliefs, values, and behaviors associated with it. As Dipo is a traditional rite of passage for girls in some Ghanaian communities, it is an essential aspect of the cultural identity and social structure of these communities. Therefore, it requires a comprehensive and contextualized approach to study.

This study used two schools in two municipalities as case studies. Klo-Agogo Senior High School in Yilo Krobo and Obelemanya M/A Junior High School in Manya Krobo are these schools. These schools were chosen because they are in typical locations of these towns and to study the effects of the Dipo ritual on girls' education in JHS and SHS.

Teachers, traditional dipo priests, chiefs, queen mothers, educationists, students, dropouts, and pastors from the two municipalities were the informants. The informants had enough Dipo ritual performing experience to provide concrete data for the study. Except for the illiterate elderly, they had basic to tertiary education. 15–85 years old. Non-student informants taught, traded, farmed, and pastored. Few unemployed.

Data was collected from two schools in two municipalities. The interview schools are Klo-Agogo Senior High School in Yilo Krobo and Obelemanya M/A Basic Schools in Manya Krobo. These schools were chosen because they were in indigenous Krobo villages and could provide answers that accurately reflected the research questions and the study's goals.

Data was collected using several approaches. Participant observation, interview, documentation, and native speaker intuition collected data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Changes in the performance of Dipo rite

The *dipo* rite has suffered many changes over the period as compared to the traditional way of performance.

From the analysis, the results has shown that, the *Dipo* ceremony is one of the most significant occasions for the *Yilo* and *Manya Krobo* people through which eligible young maidens undergo a passage into womanhood. The *Dipo* ceremony is in danger because of some changes in its performance which are giving way to the western culture especially Christianity. As a result, many of the *Krobo* societies hardly value it today, and no longer give it the patronage it deserves. The *Dipo* rite which used to be the means of educating the young *Krobo* girl for transition to actual *Kloyo* (*Krobo woman*), has been faced with a lot of changes in our modern times. Some of these changes are perceptions people have about the performance of the rite, the duration of performance, changes in *dipo* teachings, Christianity and the change in the performance.

### Change in the belief and perception.

From the analysis, it was evidently clear that there is a change in the perception of the *Krobo* people about the *Dipo* rite ushering the young girls into adulthood. The belief of the *Krobo* people that, any girl child who had been able to go through the *Dipo* rite successfully without any problem is considered a true *Krobo* woman (*Kloyo*) no longer holds with the introduction of Christianity and Islam. For instance, it was previously perceived that it was a shame for any family who could not prepare their girl child for the *Dipo* rite. The perception that *Dipo* rite and its accompanied practices was the only way of preparing the young *Krobo* woman for marriage has been disproved by the Christian society. These perceptions and many others were however, seen as a thing of the past.

Again, the perception that the *dipo* is the only official institution that gives vocational training to the young girls has also become the thing of the past. Several institutions such as the educational sector, church groups, and other benevolent societies have sprang up giving similar training to the *Krobo* young girls. In the past, most of the times, punishments were meted against those who engaged in sex before the rite, especially when they

were found to be pregnant. Some were even banished from their homes as a result of having sex or getting pregnant before the *Dipo* rite. The main idea or motive behind that was to keep the girls virginity but these things are no more. Also, the believe that anyone who has not gone through the *dipo* rite cannot get married to a *Krobo* man is a thing of the past.

Women who were not taken through the *Dipo* rite and never visited the secrete stone (*Tegbete*) before; now get married to *Krobo* men and men of other tribes. Hitherto, it was a taboo for any man to even propose marriage to any of such young women. Most of them were even supposed to be banished from the community if they are found to be pregnant (Huber, 1993:166). One informant posited that all these are no more. She said 'some of such women were rather given positions in the communities, especially those who have acquired some level of formal education. The queen mother has this to say:

*"These new generations of the Krobo people are of the view that gaining formal education is what could make one better and hence have relegated the Dipo custom to the background".*

The queen mother again expressed her surprise at how the *Dipo* rites were regarded as being fetish and most parents are not ready to send their girl children for the performance of the *Dipo* rites. She had this to say:

*'During our period of confinement, we were taught many things. How to plan and cook for our future husbands and families and other important things. We were also taught the cultural practices of the Krobo people and also some vocations like bead making in order to enable us raise some money to support our future husbands in times of need'. Tell me! What is fetish about all these? Why do we relegate the Dipo rites to the background and cherish foreign culture? Hmmm!'* (Source: Field work. 27/05/2016)

One of the challenge parents' encounter with the performance of the *dipo* rite is finances. This financial difficulty had made this impossible for most families to send their young ladies for the rite. This he said had threatened the future survival of the *Dipo* rite performance; a centuries-old tradition that every young girl of *Yilo* and *Lower Manya Krobo* has to be taken through. This has confirmed what Huber elaborated that:

*"Each year it becomes more and more difficult for parents to outdoor their daughters. The expense that parents incur in the performance of the dipo rituals alone could easily consume a family's annual income. It is now more common for each Dipo ceremony to be hosted by only three or four of the bead-making villages, as it had become just too expensive for every village to do it. Even the girls from larger cities, miles*

*away, travel to the rural areas for their "coming out" (Huber, 1993:166).*

### **Change in the duration of the *dipo* rite.**

From the analysis of the data for this study, it became clear that in the past, the duration of the *Dipo* performance do lasted for three months to enable the girls have enough time to learn. This period made it possible for the initiates to be well prepared on skill acquisition, sanitation and personal hygiene for their future family life. They were also taught how to weave local mats; basket (*digblo*) made from "*womla*", traditional purse and raffia bags as well as preparation of various types of pots such as *ka*, *kutu*, *likoko*, *ngmawe* and many others. The initiates were also told stories that concern marriage and its customs and how people can contract good marriages as discussed earlier in this chapter. These things were done to let the *dipo* girls have a clear insight into womanhood and its attendant demands.

This vocational training and the acquisition of the various skills were no longer given to the initiates as a result of the shorter period for the *dipo* rite performance. Over the past two decades, the duration for the *Dipo* rituals was reduced to three days, just from Friday to Sunday. This is just because the celebrants were feeling shy that if they are seen by their Christian brothers and sisters, they will be considered sinners because the pastors and church elders preach against it. 'This had made the significance attached to the *Dipo* rite a thing of the past'. How can you use three days to teach the *Krobo* girls all the customs and traditions of the *Krobo* people to become *Krobo* women.

*"This had made the significance attached to the Dipo rite a thing of the past. How can you use two or three days to teach Krobo girls all the customs and traditions of the Krobo people to become real Kloyo? This time, because the girls are too young, they are not taken through marriage teaching issues and sex education as it used to be"*

Another informant stated that:

*"I cannot understand why most fathers especially the Christian fathers do not want their children to go through the rite again but the dipo rite performance is a requirement for every Krobo lady to become an accepted member of the Krobo community. All my children and my grandchildren will have to go through the rituals no matter what"* (Source: Field work, 21/08/2016)

### **Change in the *Dipo* Age**

The analysis of the data has shown that the required age for the performance of the *Dipo* rite has also been changed. Traditionally, the girl child has to be matured to the age between 15-25 years before they are taken through the *Dipo* rite performance to enable them understand all the processes they are taken through

before marriage. This has however, changed in this modern days with children as low as three (3) years being initiated into womanhood without them knowing what they are going through during the *Dipo* rite performance.

Figure 1 below shows a picture of children who were carried through the *Dipo* rite performance.

**Plate 1:** A picture of little children carried through the *Dipo* rite performance



**Source:** field work - 21/04/2017

A further probe to know what necessitated the change has indicated that some of the initiates were brought for the rites as a result of the fear that they may get pregnant before the required age. Just to avoid the shame this may bring to the family.

An interview with one of the priests, *dipo woyo* 'priest' indicates that a child at the age of three or four cannot be taken through the full practices of the *Dipo* rite since they cannot be confined in the *Dipo* shrine for say two weeks or a month. She quickly added that, at certain age, the girl child feels so shy to expose her body parts to the public; hence, most parents will like their girls to be initiated at a very tender age.

It also came up that Christianity plays a role in the change of the age for the *dipo* rite. The girl-child at a certain age will not like to be initiated for the reason that she is a Christian. The girl child would like to be taken through the church confirmation ceremony for her to be recognized as an adult rather than allowing herself to be initiated into the *Dipo* rite. Some even go hiding until the *Dipo* rite is over. It also came up that for this reason, most parents will like to perform the rituals for their girl children as early as possible before the girl assumes Christian roles.

#### **The changes in *Dipo* teachings**

The data has shown that there has been a dramatic change in the *Dipo* rite practices. The various

practices that the initiates are taken through during the performance of the *Dipo* rites of passage are very significant. The girl child is taken to the river side to be taught how to wash her personal clothes and that of her future husband and children. The initiates are taken through non-formal education during the confinement period for more than one month in the olden days but dropped to a whole week some years back to be taught how to cook the various *Krobo* dishes, culture and home management among others.

These important activities and practices during the *Dipo* rite performance had however, become a thing of the past in the *Krobo* land. All these important practices are not done any longer, jeopardizing the future of our *Krobo* girls. An opinion leader at *Sra* said that the aim of the performance of the *Dipo* rite of passage has been defeated because of the current changes. He said instead of a whole day at the river side to teach the initiates how to wash their cloths and that of their future families, the initiates only go to the river side for only the ritual bath. The various house chores and educative practices have been denied them.

In a related conversation with an old graduate from the *Dipo* rite and now a teacher said;

*'in our days, 'we were confined for more than one week in the Dipo shrine and were taught how to cook and prepare the various local dishes. We were taught how to sweep, and keep*

the environment clean. Old women were assigned to us to teach us all these things and were under their supervision'. (Source : Field work.- 27/05/2016)

Figure 2 below showed a picture of children underage presented for the *Dipo* rite in 2017.

**Plate 2.** The picture of children underage presented for the *Dipo* rite.



**Source:** field work. 21/04/2017

The *Dipo* puberty rite is practiced annually where girls of pubertal age are prepared and taken through series of affirmative rituals. These rites of affirmation carry meaningful contents and seek to introduce to the initiates the cultural norms (chastity, responsible adulthood, respect and role of a woman) that affirm the status identity, 'Krobo woman,' to which they are socialized (Adjaye, 1999). *Dipo*, puberty rite as it is now practiced does not precede marriage as the initiates are much younger and it occurs in most cases, several years before marriage (Nukunya, 1999).

#### **Changes in the *Dipo* rite performance**

There have been a lot of changes in the performance of the *Dipo* rite which has brought about a lot of effects on the citizens who cherish this custom.

#### **Christianity as a change factor**

Christianity is seen as one of the major factors or causes of change to the *Dipo* rite performance in the *Yilo* and *Manya Krobo* areas. Christianity is one of the three major religious organizations practice among the people in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This religion has spread and continues to spread faster among the people of *Yilo* and *Manya Krobo* with most especially their teachings against the traditional religion and its practices. *Christianity has changed the minds and perceptions of the Krobo, young and old from the performance of the Dipo rite.* The teaching of the Christian religion is directly against the performance of the *Dipo* rite, changing the mindset and perceptions of the *Krobo* people about the *Dipo* rite. One of the informants explain that the 'The *Dipo* rite to the Christian, is fetish and

primitive and hence had discouraged the today *Krobo* ladies from participating in it. Christianity has however, provided an alternative puberty rite which is *wa jemi* 'confirmation' to usher the girls into adulthood relegating the *Dipo* rite to the background.

## **CONCLUSION**

The following findings were the findings from the study:

1. The study found out that the *dipo* rite which used to be the means of educating the young *Krobo* girls for transition to real *Krobo* women has been faced with a lot of changes in our modern times. Some of these changes are perceptions people have about the *dipo* rite, the duration of performance, changes in *dipo* teachings as a result of Christianity and Islam believes.
2. It came out that the hither to cherished *Dipo* rite, is now regarded as being fetish and most parents are not ready to send their girl children for the performance of the *Dipo* rite ceremony anymore.
3. It was also revealed that currently, women who have not gone through the *dipo* rite are getting marriage to *Krobo* men and others from other tribes which hitherto were forbidden.
4. The study revealed that the duration for the performance which was three (3) months' time of old and was reduced to two (2) months along the line and then to one (1) month. As at April 2017, it was celebrated for only three (3) days.
5. The *dipo* rite's present alterations could threaten its future and the *Krobo* girls'. Shorter days mean less critical practises. The current *dipo* ritual duration

defeats the goal of vocational training and marital preparation. The initiates just spend a few minutes at the river for the ritual bath instead of a whole day learning how to wash their clothes and those of their future family. As celebrants fear being labelled sinners by pastors, church leaders, and church members, this has persisted. This trend undermines the Dipo ritual.

In conclusion, though western civilization, Christianity, and Islam, have many good things to appreciate the neglect of the cultural heritage of the *Yilo* and Lower *Manya Krobo* people is to abandon a good chunk of the criteria that determine our wholeness and originality. This work has therefore made significant strides in bringing to the fore, the various activities that mark the performance of the *dipo* puberty rite at the *Yilo* and Lower *Manya Krobo*s in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the current changes in the *dipo* puberty rite performance and its impact on the Girl Child's Education, especially those who were initiated at a very early stage.

#### Recommendation

- Conduct a comprehensive study: To better understand the factors that influence Dip Rite performance in *Yilo* and Lower *Manya Krobo*, a comprehensive study should be conducted. The study should involve both quantitative and qualitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions.
- Increase awareness of the benefits of Dip Rite: To increase Dip Rite performance, it is essential to increase awareness of the benefits of using Dip Rite among the people of *Yilo* and Lower *Manya Krobo*. This can be achieved through public health campaigns and educational programs in schools and local communities.
- Improve access to Dip Rite: Access to Dip Rite products can be improved by ensuring that they are readily available in local markets and shops. This can be achieved by working with local distributors and retailers to ensure a steady supply of Dip Rite products.
- Strengthen community engagement: Community engagement is critical in promoting the use of Dip Rite. Community leaders, health workers, and other stakeholders should be involved in awareness-raising campaigns and educational programs to encourage the adoption of Dip Rite.
- Promote behaviours change: Changing behaviours is a critical factor in promoting the use of Dip Rite. Therefore, there is a need to promote behaviour change through community-based initiatives, including social marketing campaigns, peer education, and community mobilization activities.

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