

## THE ROLE OF ART IN CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE CEREMONIES: THE CASE OF KROBOS OF SOMANYA, GHANA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Customary Marriage ceremonies among the Krobos of Somanya in the Eastern Region of Ghana involve a lot of display of both visual and performing art forms. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate the role of arts in the marriage ceremonies of the Krobos of Somanya by identifying the art forms and symbols exhibited at such marriage ceremonies, and then evaluating the significance of each art form or symbol in the entire ceremony. Qualitative research method with Semi structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to gather information that addresses the research objectives and questions. The sampling frame for the study included traditional elders within the Somanya community, chiefs, queen mothers, and family heads. The purposive sampling was used to select two (2) traditional leaders, as well as five (5) other persons who are well informed of the traditions and customs of Somanya to serve as respondents for the study. The data gathered were subsequently analyzed using the qualitative technique. From the results of the study, the major findings was that music, drama and appellations were highly used by marriage couples throughout the marriage rites. It was also found that beads play a very important role in the marriage ceremonies, with each bead colour having a particular meaning and significance to the marriage process. It could be concluded that each art form observed at the ceremony has a meaning and significance have endeared most people to the traditional form of marriage in spite of the prevalence of the Ordinance (wedding) type of marriage in other areas. Finally, efforts should be made to establish a gallery as well as a website where the various art forms used in such marriage ceremonies, their meanings and significance can be captured on audio and video for display, preservation, and for sale.*

**KEYWORDS:** Art, Customary Marriage, Ceremonies, Ghana.

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### INTRODUCTION

Customary marriage is one of the three types of valid marriages recognised by the laws of Ghana (Adinkrah, 1980). According to Adinkrah (1980), the other two (2) types of marriages are Marriage by Ordinance (being the type of marriage celebrated by Christians) and Mohammedans Marriage (which is celebrated by Muslims). Customary marriage is, however, the type of marriage that is celebrated in accordance with the customs and traditions peculiar to the marrying couple and their families. Also, Agbosu (1988) states that the most common essentials synonymous with customary marriage celebrations in Ghana involve consent by the man and woman to be married; consent by the man's family as well as the woman's family; presentation and exchange of gifts between the families of the couples; and the celebration of a marriage ceremony. It is thus at the celebration stage that various elements of art in the forms of clothing, gifts, consumables, regalia, as well as the ornaments used in celebrating the marriage are showcased. Each of these art symbols is said to have a specific relevance. According to Agbosu (1988), the use of these various art symbols and features during the

celebration of customary marriage has various connotations which may also differ from one tradition, ethnic group or community to the other. Thus, generally, it has been observed that various communities within Ghana have their unique ways of celebrating their customary marriage rites. It is however worth noting that in spite of the fact that the celebration of each customary marriage rite may be unique to a particular ethnic group or traditional area, the apparent use and display of art has been observed to be a common feature in these celebrations, irrespective of the tribe or traditional area where the marriage is celebrated. For instance the Anlo people, Dagombas, Nzemas, Krobo, among others all have very artistic ways by which they celebrate their customary marriages. It is therefore to be expected that the array of art forms and symbols displayed as such functions, irrespective of the origins of the couple and their families, do have certain relevance that are worth researching into. In the case of the Krobos, Huber (1993) reveals that the people of Krobo migrated together with other Dangme speaking people from Sameh in the Benin republic (formerly Dahomey) to their present location. Wars, farming and trade however led the settlement on various lands, including settlement in Somanya by a section of the Krobo people. Naturally, these settlers have been engaging in their peculiar form of marriage from the ancient times up to today. During such marriage rites, a number of art elements are similarly seen on the marriage couples, their families and guests during such marriage rites. These adornments are hugely made up of beads and woven kente cloth (Huber, 1993). Other elements of art are also present and showcased by the couple and their families during the marriage rites. From the foregoing, it can be said that the celebration of customary marriage rites among the Krobos presents an opportunity for the showcasing of their rich artistic values and customs. The legitimate question that may thus follow is, what then is the role of art in the celebration of customary marriages rites? This study thus intends to unravel the role that art plays in customary marriage rites, using the marriage ceremony among the Krobos of Somanya in the Eastern region of Ghana as a case study. A lot of art and artefacts feature prominently during the marriage ceremonies of the Krobos. However, in spite of the apparent display of art and several features of art during the marriage ceremonies of the Krobos of Somanya, not much is known by the academic world relative to the significant role that art plays in the celebration of the entire marriage process. The significant role of art in the marriage process which is, expectedly, known by the celebrants and the people from the Krobo land is however unknown by the academic world. Within the academic circles, what is described as the significant role of art in the marriage rites can, at best, be described as mere speculations as the researcher could not come across any empirical research that explains the role of art in the celebration of the customary marriage rites among the Krobos of Somanya. The absence of such a scientific enquiry into the role of art in the Krobos marriage ceremonies can therefore be considered as a gap in knowledge. It is therefore this gap in knowledge that this study seeks to fill.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to assess the role that art plays in the marriage ceremonies of the people of Krobos, using celebrations at Somanya as the case study. The specific objectives of the study are, however, to

- a) Examine the marriage ceremonies of the Krobos in Somanya
- b) Identify and describe the art forms and symbols associated with the ceremonies, and
- c) Evaluate the significance of such art forms and symbols in the ceremony.

## Research Questions

In order to achieve the above stated objectives, the study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- a) How do the Krobos of Somanya celebrate their marriage ceremonies?
- b) What are the art forms and symbols associated with the marriage ceremonies? and
- c) What are the significance of art forms and symbols in the marriage ceremony?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept of Marriage in Ghana

In Ghana, there are three main types of marriages. These are customary marriage, Marriage under Ordinance and Mohammedans. Both Marriage under Ordinance and Mohammedans are also referred to as statutory marriages. Statutory marriage is of a comparatively recent origin and is confined mainly to educated young people in towns and cities. It has been clearly considered that customary marriage is still the most predominant form of marriage in Ghana. Dzobo (1975) defines marriage as 'one of the supreme aims of life in the traditional society and as a union between man and woman to perpetuate the lineage through procreation'. Marriage, he noted, has been instituted as the acceptable and respectable mode of ensuring the continuity of the family line. He again opines that an individual's life is therefore not complete if he remains unmarried. A man may therefore marry more than one woman if he feels that his life is not brought to consummation by marrying one woman. Marriage also has an extra social meaning for women besides the general aims. Usually, a woman's status in marriage is further enhanced when she has children. Women therefore consider it a personal tragedy if they cannot have babies. Dzatse (1990) emphasizes marriage as a desirable institution among Ghanaians for ensuring the perpetuation of the lineage for self-fulfillment and companionship. Dzatse (1990) also recounts that marriage is considered as a form of an intimate personal relationship between man and woman and it needs a lot of interpersonal adjustment. Mbiti (1991:108) also describes the African concepts of marriage as, 'to Africans, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet the departed, the leaving and those yet to be born. All the dimension of time meets here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Marriage is a drama in which everybody becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator: Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate and not a spectator. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law-breaker and he is not only abnormal but under-human. Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that, the person concerned has rejected society, and society rejects him also in return. Salm (1996) in Culture and Customs of Ghana also states that, unlike marriage in many other parts of the world, marriage in Ghana is seen as a requisite stage in life, rather than an option, and remains the most important social institution. Marriage sanctions, reproduction is still believed by many to be the most important function of the union between a man and woman. Children are signs of status and wealth. They represent a successful marriage, provide valuable domestic help around the house, and can contribute to agricultural labour. Marriages between individuals from outside their kinship group are most common under customary law. Through this marriage, new social contacts are made and kinship ties are

extended. Marriage therefore, serves to establish alliances between families and between communities. Magesa also in his article titled '*The honour of marriage in Africa*' shares the understanding and value of marriage within the African settings, concluding that within the context of African traditional marriages, marriage is a permanent, stable, sexually exclusive, unity-seeking and unity-generating commitment of love between a man and a woman, for mutual fulfillment, happiness and meaning, and opens to the generation of offspring. These, he thinks are quite common in both Christian and traditional African marriages. Sarpong (1974) also re-affirms that basically, ideas about marriage are all the same all over the world. According to him, everywhere in the world, people leave their mothers, sisters and other relatives in order to enter into alliance with some 'strange' person. They cannot be said simply to be seeking consolation or soliciting help. One would get better help, and solace from one's own relatives. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the main aim of marriage is to have that sexual access to a person which would not be deemed proper in the case of relation. Sarpong went on to stress that examination of the male and female sex organs shows that those of the one are designed to be used with those of the other sex. Unlike such faculties as the eye or the heart which are employed exclusively for one's own benefit, they have altruistic utility. He again emphasized that in Africa, marriage is hardly a personal affair. It is a matter in which the lineages of the contracting parties are greatly interested. In a way, every marriage concerns the whole society in which it takes place, for which reason, all societies lay down rules regulating the use of sex in general and of marriage in particular. It has been noted by the reviewer that the main reasons for customary marriage in Ghana and for that matter in Krobo traditional society are, firstly, to marry, live together and procreate: for the children to receive adequate parental care from both parents. It was realized that often, some single parents were caught between undertaking economic activities for their upkeep and taking care of their children. Where both parents are available, however, one of the parents is always at hand to offer the needed parental care that often eludes single parents. The second reason is to marry in order to command respect and social standing in the society that one belongs to. Another reason is to continue with the lineage as an institution or the formation of new families in order to come together for lineages to be preserved. Children who come out from marriages, as fruits of life are also considered as wealth and value, not only to the biological parents, but also to the community in which they are born into, and to Ghana as a whole. Therefore, it is a paramount responsibility of everybody to see to it that the child is brought up in a proper responsible manner for the good of the society at large. Another essence of traditional customary marriage in the Krobo traditional society is to serve as a uniting link in the rhythm of life. Generations in Krobo are said to be bound together in the act of marriage-past, present and future generations. The past generations are many but they are represented in one's own parents, the present generation is represented in one's own life, and future generations begin to come on the stage through childbearing. It is also a very tragic thing when no children come out of a marriage. Then people do not consider it to truly a marriage, and other arrangements are made to obtain children in the family. Through these arrangements, the children are remembered when their parents die. Anyone who dies without having anyone behind him to pour out libations for him is a very unfortunate person. Therefore, marriage is intimately a confirmation of life beyond death. Marriage is also regarded by the Krobos as the counter-measure against the lost immortality myths. Through marriage the departed are in effects reborn not in their total being but by having some of their physical treasures and characteristics or personality traits reborn in the children of the family. If no children were born these traits and features of the departed members of the family would not be seen again. While death takes away individuals one by one, and disperses families, the purpose of marriage, according to Krobo custom, is to bring people together, to increase them, to multiply them and to keep them alive.

### **Types of art forms and symbols in customary marriages**

According to Huber (1993), there are various forms and symbols of art that are displayed before, during and after customary marriage ceremonies. He opines that these art forms may come in the form of music, dance, musical instruments and even types of dance showcased at such ceremonies. It is Huber's opinion that even the type of dance that is exhibited by couples, families and guests during such celebrations may have a meaning that is peculiar to the marriage occasion. Such art forms exhibited during marriage ceremonies may differ from music and dance forms that are showcased at say funerals, child naming ceremonies and other customary events. In support of this position, Ashe (2012) reveals that marriage ceremonies have been identified within a number of customs, particularly in Africa, as occasions that present opportunity for members of the society to portray their art and culture to the outside world. Ashe (2012) lists some of these art form to include painting of the body, music and dance. Ashe however adds a number of symbols such as beads, jewelry, sculpture, special clothing and other artefacts as some of the essentials of customary marriage displays within a number of African setting. Within the Ghanaian context however, not much have been written in relation to a number of the various ethnic groups found in Ghana. According to Antubam (1963) married couples during the customary marriage rites among a number of traditional groups in Ghana use all types of artifacts ranging from jewels, rings, beads, necklaces, pottery items; bowls, vases, silver wares and foot wears. Drama, dance and poetry are performed during such customary marriage ceremonies.

### **Meaning and significance of art forms and symbols in customary marriages**

A number of literature reviewed pointed to the fact that the various art forms and symbols used during the celebration of customary marriage rites portray certain meanings, most of which were found to be largely similar among the various ethnic groups. For instance Dzobo (1975) writes that the *ayawagba*, an iron pot, gifted to the bride during the marriage rite of Ewe people signify wealth of parents of the couples or the couples themselves. In those circumstances, couples or parents of couples who owned such customary '*ayawagba*' showed that such persons were very influential and wealthy members of the community. Another art form that is used among the Akans and some sects of Ewes is the presentation and sitting of the bride on a gifted traditional stool during the celebration of the customary marriage rites. Edusei (1991) gives an account of what another art form used in during the marriage ceremony – the coiffure or hairdo – symbolizes. He explains that in most of traditional marriages, the type of hair style a bride has during the ceremony enhances her beauty and prestige for the event. It is also a symbol of deep rooted standing into her new marital home. The wearing of beads during the celebration of customary marriage rites is yet another art form whose significance has been explained by a number of literature. Wilson (2003) explains that beads can be worn around the neck just for adornment and day-to-day wear, but more importantly they should be worn for festivals, *durbars*, and going to church. Marriage ceremonies therefore witness the wearing of beads by the couple, family members and guests. Ashe (2012) also explains the significance of the wearing of beads during the celebration of marriage rites. She explains the adornment as a subtle presence that arouses passion in men, and that the wearing of beads is used by a woman to indicate her desire for lovemaking by rattling her waist beads. Such an act was expressly meant for the man she was married to; it was considered great slander for a woman to describe her waist beads to any other man (Francis Jr., 1993). At this stage, the adornment of the beads goes on with selected special dressing of the rite and the entire invited guests. Wilson on the other hand explains that marriage is also a rite of passage that features the use of beads. Both

the bride and groom wear multiple strands of old heirloom beads to both display their identity as a Krobo couple, and demonstrate their wealth. It is customary for the bride to change outfits throughout the traditional wedding ceremony, to show she is entering a new state (Kumekpor 1995).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the qualitative research design, and relied on the case study method of gathering data. Semi structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to gather information that addresses the research objectives and research questions. The sampling frame for the study included traditional elders within the Somanya community, chiefs, queen mothers, family heads, as well as couples who got married through customary ceremonies. The purposive sampling techniques was used to select two (2) traditional leaders, as well as five (5) other persons who are well informed of the traditions and customs of Somanya to serve as respondents for the study. The data gathered were subsequently analyzed using the qualitative technique of content analysis.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

### ***Research Question One (1)***

#### **How do the Krobos of Somanya celebrate their marriage ceremonies?**

This section is in line with the first research question of the study, it provides discussions on the marriage ceremony of the Krobos of Somanya through information gathered from interviews and focus group discussion. The information gathered is compared and contrasted with what was personally observed by the researchers during two marriage ceremonies witnessed at Somanya. There are four stages involved in the customary marriage among the Krobos, namely; courting, knocking, payment of dowry and engagement. On account of these four procedures, two traditional elders namely *Naa Oniko Atiawe* and *Tsiame Osu Tetteh* provided a vivid account of the various stages, which was then compared and contrasted with the information gathered from the focus group discussion. The information gathered in respect of the various stages of ceremony was also compared and contrasted with what the researchers individually observed at the functions. As gathered from the respondents and also witnessed by the researchers, these four (4) stages in the marriage process were all illustrated at the ceremony through enactments of drama and a lot of poetry of recitals.

#### **Dating / Courtship Stage**

It was found that courtship or dating was a prelude to actual marriage, in satisfaction of the customary requirement that men and women should date or court for a while before deciding to settle down to marriage. It was explained that among the Krobos, the act of courting sets the tone for learning to please each other in marriage. *Naa Oniko* explained that the wisdom behind the courting is to give the potential couple adequate time to study each other. Courting therefore had to be done under the strict supervision by the parents of the bride and groom as well as the elders of the community. The discussants believed that the courtship enabled them to be psychologically and emotionally matured before their actual marriage. This disclosure seems

to confirm the position held by a number of anthropologist who have researched contemporary traditional marriages that the advent of grooms looking for their own brides, which is a departure from the previous practice where parents got involved in selecting their would-be partners, justifies why there should be dating or courting so that couples would know themselves before actual marriage.

### **Knocking Stage**

The second stage is the '*knocking stage*'. Naa Oniko explained knocking as an agreement between the groom and his family on one hand and the bride and family on the other hand that the couple intend to marry after the exercise of courtship. Over here, the man and his family then follow up to the bride's house to see the bride's parents. It was revealed that usually, two to four family members of the groom are sent to the bride's parents to ask for the hand of the bride in marriage. It is at this point that a fee is demanded and paid. Again, for the Krobos of Somanya, before a girl marries she is expected to have gone through puberty rites known as "*Dipo*". This is done to usher her into new stage of life and was explained by Naa Oniko as: "We believe that the life of a human being is a development process that involves several stages from conception to death with each stage having significant effects on the individual and also the society. We recognise the puberty stage as one of the stages that is markedly different from all other stages. The rites observed when our ladies attains puberty therefore ensure a safe passage from childhood to adulthood. The initiates are also taught how to perform their roles as responsible adults. After being ushered into adulthood, we believe the girl can now be married off to a deserving suitor." This procedure of transitioning a girl from childhood has been commented on by researchers and commentators to be a common feature in most of the traditional systems in Ghana. For instance, Salm and Falola (2002) state that all traditional Ghanaian societies celebrate girls' transition to adulthood and it is known as *otufu* among the Gas, *bragorɔ* among the Akans and *dipo* among the Krobos. Nukunya (2003) also mentions that a similar practice is found among the Ewes though it appears to be unknown in the northern parts of Ghana. However, Sackey (2001) states that puberty rites are held for both boys and girls in the Northern Region of Ghana unlike the south where it is mainly for girls. In an article by the Ghana News Agency (2004), it is mentioned that in the Upper East Region, situated in Northern Ghana, female genital mutilation is actually practiced as a form of puberty rites. According to Salm and Falola (2002), Ghanaians today do not go through the same initiation rites as their elders, and this is mainly because such rites have gradually faded out with the exception of the *Dipo* which is now the most elaborate rite of passage in Ghana.

Tsiami Tetteh also added,

*"The Dipo ritual does not involve any genital cutting or test of physical endurance. Every Krobo girl is expected to go through these rites else she will never be fully recognized as a Krobo woman. And if you are not a fully grown woman, you obviously cannot enter into a valid marriage."*

Huber (1963) illustrates this fact when he states that there is the strongest of conviction, dating from ancient times, that, no Krobo girl can even become a mature Krobo woman and a wife worthy of a Krobo man, unless she can show on her body and on her hands the visible marks of her initiation.

### **Payment of Dowry Stage**

At this stage, the groom anticipating to marry is provided a list of items that he is required to present to the bride and her family when coming to perform the customary rite. Throwing more light on the procedure, Tsiami Tetteh explained that this procedure which comes just before the actual traditional marriage celebration could actually be performed together with the actual celebration itself. This view was confirmed by Naa Oniko, the discussants at the group discussion as well as personally witnessed by the researcher. Tsiami Tetteh explained that the payment of the dowry by the groom is subdivided into four (4) steps. From the data gathered as well as the observations made personally, the entire four subdivisions of dowry payment can be represented as follows

#### ***Step one (1)***

- a) Sihwɔmi – Sleeping (one (1) bottle of Akpeteshie – a local alcoholic beer)
- b) Sitlemi – Waking-up (one (1) bottle of Akpeteshie)
- c) Hemifɔmi – Washing of face (two (2) bottles of Beer)
- d) Ngami – Greeting (one (1) bottle of Schnapps)

#### ***Step two (2)***

- e) Hesijemi – Introduction (two (2) bottle of Schnapps)
- f) Yobami – Borrowing of the bride (two (2) bottle of Schnapps)

#### ***Step three (3)***

- g) Wekusitome asika – Money for the family (unspecific amount is paid)
- h) Abgosimi – knocking (one (1) bottle of Schnapps)
- i) Wemisɔmi – entering the house (two (2) bottle of Schnapps)
- j) Yosibimi – asking the lady in-hand for marriage (two (2) bottle of Schnapps)
- k) Yosɔlemi – receiving the bride (two (2) bottle of Schnapps)
- l) Yonyasinami – showing of appreciation (two (2) bottle of Schnapps)
- m) Yonyastumihami – showing another appreciation to the entire family (two (2) bottle of foreign Schnapps)
- n) Wekubiasika – money for the family (after everything)(unspecific amount is paid)
- o) Bajɔme asika – money for the brothers-in-law (unspecific amount is paid)
- p) (i) Ngatsɔbokpo – full piece of cloth, two (2) cutlasses, one (1) umbrella and one (1) of native sandals (Ablade) for the father-in-law
- q) Nganyɔsemfɔmi – money for the mother-in-law
- r) Matsɔda – drink for the chief in the town (one (1) bottle of Schnapps)



- s) Adjina yami sika – for consultation (unspecific amount is charge)
- t) Halɔfimi – (amosee in Akan)
- u) Fia pee mi – first female born (marriage) from the both family (two (2) bottles of Schnapps)

#### ***Step four (4)***

#### **Engagement**

From the various accounts of the respondents as well as what was observed by the researchers, it can be concluded that the traditional marriage ceremony, popularly referred to as ‘engagement’, which is the last part of the entire marriage process has been hugely influenced by modernity. In this respect, this section covers what used to be the ‘pure’ traditional marriage celebration as well as what has become of today’s marriage ceremony after the infiltration of ‘modernity’. Tsiami Tetteh explained the revered bit of the traditional ceremony. He disclosed, “Even though the entire marriage process is of much importance to us, the engagement itself counts more because of the relevance of the statements and declarations that are made by the couple in our presence as witnesses. We do not take anything for granted and make sure that they go through all the activities religiously.” However, as indicated previously, this otherwise purely traditional activity has had some significant addition. Notable among these additions is the introduction of some aspects of the requirements under Ordinance Marriage to the customary one. In satisfaction of the requirements under the Ordinance marriage, a list is given to the man to provide some items for the marriage. From the discussion group, it was realised that there has been a blend of the traditional and the Ordinance requirements. This view was confirmed by the list of required items, referred to as the ‘engagement list’, which is given to the potential husband to provide. The list is made up of the following;

1. gold ring and bible
2. two (2) bottles of wine
3. cash
4. six (6) half pieces of cloth
5. six (6) head kerchiefs
6. one (1) suit case (popularly referred to as Eco lack)
7. six (6) under wears and panties
8. three (3) sets of beads
9. four (4) braziers
10. two (2) pairs of sandals
11. two (2) shoes
12. four (4) crates of minerals
13. one (1) bottle of Schnapps, and

14. (1) dozen of handkerchief

### Research Question two (2)

- *What are the art forms and symbols associated with the marriage ceremonies*

#### Art Forms and Symbols associated with the ceremony

The study found that there are various art forms that are portrayed during the celebration of marriage by the Krobos of Somanya. Each of these art forms, as observed, could be placed under either of the two main art forms: performing arts and visual art. In this categorisation, the most dominant art forms observed during the ceremonies that can be placed under performing arts were drama, the use of maracas, singing and dancing, and the pouring of libation. On the other hand, those art forms observed at the ceremony that came under the category of visual arts were the clothing and appearance of the bride in public, body painting, and more pronouncedly, the use of varying colours and types of beads during the celebrations as seen in Fig 6. This section presents discussion and analysis of the various art forms that were observed during the celebration.

#### Libation

In this form of art, the head of family, who served as the Okyeame (linguist) from the bride's side, clad in traditional cloth and holding a glass filled with some Schnapps stood up, and lowered the cloth from his left shoulders onto his left arm as shown in Fig 1. He pulled back his feet from the native sandals, and began to recite certain incantations and appellations in his native language and then began to speak to the ancestral gods, amidst intermittent pouring of some of the Schnapps unto the ground. For every drop of the drink there was some sort of response from the audience. Eventually, he ended his recitation, drank part of the remaining Schnapps in the glass, and poured the final bit unto the floor amidst yet another joyous shouts and clapping from the audience.



**Fig. 1: Picture showing the head of the bride's family pouring libation.**

*Source: Field study 2017*

### Costume and Body Painting

The use of Costumes as narrated by Naa Oniko, one of the traditional leaders, during the customary rites, the bride changes herself about three or four times. Initially, the bride wears exclusively white clothing or blue and white clothing with specially prepared white beads on the neck and on both wrists. She then comes out of her room to greet her groom's family, traditional leaders and other well-wishers gathered at the ceremony. It was however disclosed by the focus group discussants that nowadays, some of the brides wear the beads on the right hand and wristwatch on the left hand. After the initial greetings, the bride goes back to the room and changes herself for the second time. The bride now appears from her room in a rich kente fabric, and also adorned with beautiful beads all over her body. The kente cloth covers the upper torso, leaving the shoulders bare. Another observation that was that the bride was adorned with different body paintings bearing significant customary connotations as shown in Fig 2.



**Fig. 2:** Shows bride exhibiting her body paintings and beads adornments during marriage ceremony

Source: Field study 2017



**Fig. 3:** Depicts the last appearance of the bride in multi-coloured wax print Cloth

Source: Field study 2017

The painting was done with some locally prepared paints. This painting according to Naa Oniko, is referred to as '*mime*' in the Krobo language. She explained that the paint is made from a local material called *ƙƙɔ*, which is one of the gifts presented by the three wise men to Jesus Christ on his birth in Bethlehem. One particular art form that was visibly used by all participants at the marriage ceremonies was the adornments with beads.

## Beads

It was noticed that the bride, her family, groom and his family as well as the traditional leaders who graced these occasions all wore one form of bead or another. The guests as well as children who watched or participated in the ceremony also wore a number of beautifully designed beads as exhibited in Fig. 4&5 below. The beads were in different forms and shapes. It was explained that not all manner of persons can wear the same type of beads to such an event as a marriage ceremony. According to Tsiami Tetteh, the custom of our people is to reserve the wearing of certain types of beads for certain categories of people during various celebrations. We do not expect an adolescent girl or boy to wear the same type of bead that a chief would wear to an occasion like a marriage event. Whereas the adolescent may wear a bead made from uneven  $\text{m}\text{m}\text{m}$ (clay) cast in smallish shapes, the chief would usually wear one large bead, typically decorated with gold, around the neck.' Finally, the wearing of the beads also has its significance in the customary marriage rites of the Krobos in Somanya.



**Fig. 4: Children dressed in Kente cloth with Beads around their necks**

*Source: Field study 2017*



**Fig. 5: Men and women dressed in traditional apparels with beads on their necks and arms singing and dancing.**

*Source: Field study 2017*

Some explanations were offered by the interviewees in relation to the impact of the beads in the marriage rites. 'The wearing of the beads during the marriage ceremonies tells our story: we wear the ring to show our rich cultural heritage. The families of the groom and bride can, without saying a word orally, use the type and nature of the beads worn to portray the status of the wearer within the Krobo community. It is a medium of expressing one's wealth.

### Research Question Three (3)

#### *Significance of the Art Forms and Symbols used in the ceremony*

#### Drama

As indicated in various literature, the various art forms, be it performing arts or visual arts have their respective significance, relative to the traditions and culture of the people who depict or display such art forms (Lodonu, 2009; Mbiti, 1990; Uzoagba, 2002). In this study therefore, the researchers sought to understand the relevance of the various art forms that were depicted during the marriage ceremony. From the interviews, focus group discussions and actual observations of two (2) marriage rites, the study gathered that the various forms such as drama

serves as communications to the audience gathered at the ceremony as well to the ancestral gods who have departed the physical world, but believed to be living with the people in spirit. For instance, one of the dances performed was explained by Naa Oniko signifies the betrothal of the bride from her family to the groom's family. She continued, 'this particular drama is relevant to the extent that the ladies performing are using the drama to ask whether the bride's family will allow the groom to marry the bride. The other part also responded in affirmative, indicating that they have accepted the proposal and are offering their daughter in marriage to the groom'. Naa Oniko also provided insights into another drama and explained that the man is officially allowed to take the woman away. In the drama therefore, prayers were said to call upon the ancestors and gods to protect, bless and protect them from all forms of diseases. In justifying the significance of the drama in communicating with both the living and the dead, Naa Oniko submitted that even though some of the customary practices are gradually fading out due to modernity. The use of drama as a medium of communication to convey important messages during the ceremony makes drama very relevant to the Krobos of Somanya.

### **Singing and Dancing**

Singing and dancing form an integral part of the Krobos culture. As posited by Wilson (2003), the Krobos are a 'musical people'. It can thus be explained that singing and dance is used by the Krobos to express themselves. At naming ceremonies, the Klama dance is performed which emphasizes their gratitude to the ancestors and smaller gods for their gift of children. As disclosed by Naa Oniko, the singing and dancing is used to portray the mood of the couple's families to the outside world. In explaining this, Naa Oniko said, 'As typical of most tribes in the country, the Krobos also use singing and dancing to show their mood. Hence, we sing when we are, sad, angry or happy. The type of songs and dancing one performs tells our people our mood. At our marriages therefore, we use singing and dancing to show how happy we are to the outside world. We use our music to show how we support the new union of our son and daughter'.

### **Calabash art**

Another art form that has some significance on the Krobo marriage ceremony is the use of calabash for performing libation. It was observed, however, at one of the marriage ceremonies that, a calabash was used to perform libation instead of glass or plastic cup. The significance of this art form was explained by one of the traditional leader during an interview. He narrated that, the practice was handed down to us by our forefathers. The actual significance in the whole exercise of the libation is to commit the couple into the gods hands and to usher the marriage unto the care of our ancestors and plead with them to protect the couple and their marriage. We also ask them to ensure that they will take up the fight against whosoever may attempt to curse the couple in their endeavours.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the various art forms exhibited at the marriage ceremonies of the Krobos have contributed a lot in promoting their marriages to the outside world. It can, in this context, be argued that most of the people from other communities and places who through the scenes of Krobo customary marriage do so to observe and enjoy the distinctiveness of the Krobo marriage rites. Items like beads that come in the various shapes

and colours appear to be the most dominant driving force that attract people to the customary marriages of the Krobos in Somanya. Also, it can be concluded that the drama that filled the marriage activity has served to preserve and sustain the culture of the people. Through the drama the history of how the Krobos have been conducting their customary marriages re retold. Newer generations are then able to witness what could have been sent to oblivion had the people not stuck themselves to the usage of memorable dramas to enact the various stages of the marriage rite. Such dramas are always memorable and stuck to the minds of participants to the extent that it can be concluded that it is this art form that has helped to preserve and sustain the marital rites of the Krobo people from ancient times up to today. Flowing from the forgoing point, it can also be concluded that the Krobo people of Somanya are relatively traditional compared to people of other places. From the findings that the Krobo people of Somanya are endeared to their customary form of marriage, it can be safely concluded that they prefer their customary marriage to other forms of marriage, and again, further conclude that they are therefore more traditional than other people from other places. It can thus be concluded that the cultural values have mainly been preserved through the various art forms such as visual arts and performing arts which have influenced the Krobos way of life.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results from the study has led the researchers to offer some recommendations that is believed will help maintain the uniqueness of the customary marriage rites of the Krobos as well as help market the distinctiveness of the Krobo marriage custom both internally and to the entire world. First of all, it is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should map up a strategy that will enable more Ghanaians learn about the unique manner of celebrating customary marriage by the Krobos of Somanya. This can be done by ensuring that the curriculum used in teaching history and culture in Ghanaian schools capture these historical and cultural values that the various art forms can be used to portray in relation to the customary marriages of the Krobos in Somanya and other places. It is important to note however, that this recommendation may not be confined to the customary marriage of the Krobos alone but may be widened to encompass all unique cultural events that are celebrated by the various ethnic groups in the country using various art forms and symbols. Also organizations like the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) should take up the mantle to educate a lot more Ghanaians about the rich cultural values and the historical sceneries that are displayed during marriage ceremonies of the Krobo people of Somanya.. Furthermore, the district assembly and the traditional council under whose jurisdiction Somanya falls should consider capturing the customary marriage scenes and the various art forms used in such celebrations, their meanings and significance into audio and video formats for preservation and for sale. In this context, a special gallery can be established through the collaborative efforts of the district assembly and the traditional council, which can then serve as a repository for viewing the rich art forms that are put on display by the people during their customary marriages. Other art and craft works from people especially pupils and students within the vicinity can be added to this gallery to add up to the items on display. With a lot of talk about tourism being the third source of foreign income on Ghana, this will be an opportunity for the assembly and the traditional leaders to generate more jobs and income for the people. In the same vein, the district assembly and the traditional council can again come together to set up a website as well as publish leaflets that will portray the beautiful art forms that underpin the celebration of customary marriages by the Krobos of Somanya. Over here too, other historical and cultural art forms can be added up to

the web site or published materials to make it more attractive with the purpose of marketing the people and their visual and performing art forms to the entire world. Finally, as a way of reinforcing academic investigation into the role art plays in the customary marriages of the various ethnic groups in the country, it is suggested that a study be conducted into these customary marriages and comparison be made of how art is used in these celebrations.

### Suggestion for future research

In the future, studies could be conducted into the role of art in religious practices among the three main religions in Ghana. The use of art in traditional marriages among other ethnic groups such as Akans in Ghana could also be explored.

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