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Body adornment among the Krobo in Ghana: Hair, a crowning glory

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Abstract: Since ancient times, body adornment has been a tradition in many cultures around the world and people still deck themselves out for a number of reasons. In Ghana, the phenomenon is pervasive among community members in almost all sixteen regions, including the Krobo of the Eastern Region, thereby projecting body adornment as part of the country's national culture. Despite the case that any part of the human body can be adorned, the adornment of the hair on the human head has not been in focus among the Krobo of Ghana. Employing a qualitative approach and engaging multiple instruments (a semi-structured interview guide, non-participant observation, and document study), the study explored the adornment of the hair among the Krobo. Anchored on symbolic interaction theory, the findings of the study revealed that adornment of hair among the Krobo permeates three main thrusts: varying dimensions of hair plaiting or braiding, the wearing of scarves, and finally, the wearing of hats. In addition, the study revealed that the need for cultural symbolism is the main driver for adorning hair among the Krobo. Ultimately, the study broadens the existing literature base of the indigenous Ghanaian hair culture with reference to the Krobo people, at a time when such rich traditional ideals are rapidly declining. This tends to promote and preserve indigenous Krobo hair identity for posterity.

Keywords: Body adornment, Costume, Dress culture, Hair, Krobo of Ghana

1. Introduction

Adorning the human body is a practice that exists across several civilisations from ancient times to date (DeMello, 2007; Douglass, 2004; Mayku, 2014). Subsequently, individuals have decked or adorned their bodies in diverse ways (Hesselt, 2005; Szeman & O'Brien, 2017) to communicate non-verbally with others (Dennis, 2022; Essel et al., 2021; Krutak, 2015). Owing to this, the stylistic representation of the adorned body serves as a testament to the philosophy that shaped the orientations of people clothed in such artistry. Significantly, scholarship on body adornment has increased over the years due mainly to the erudite attention it has received all over the world, which has expanded the frontiers of the phenomenon (Demello, 2007).

Defining body adornment, Chivers (2002) asserts that it is generally an accessory or ornament worn to enhance the beauty or status of the wearer. Two key issues arise from Chivers' illumination: First, body adornment is not only the garment worn by a performer, for example, shirts or pairs of trousers; rather, it includes the additions or fixtures that complement the existing costumes in the form of accessories. Second, the need to lend beauty to the human body and also identify the status of the wearer is a key pillar upon which adornment thrives. From a different perspective, Douglass (2004: 3) defines body adornment as "an unspoken language or code that is expressed through jewellery, clothing, hairstyles, and the painting and manipulation of the body". The definition emphasizes two crucial points: to begin with, body adornment is non-verbal and seeks to convey the stylistic representation of the adorned body to spectators, from which they (spectators) can draw inferences and make sound judgments. It may be as a result of the foregoing that Douglass further positions body adornment as a code. By doing so, such codes can be deconstructed by spectators who understand them, and this normally occurs within a given cultural context where such codes can be understood (Douglass, 2004).

In the wake of the aforementioned, Pipe (2012) notes that body adornment is culturally universal but varies greatly across cultures. The other aspect of Douglas' definition is that body adornment provides a variety of stylistic expressions, including hairstyles, which are the focus of the current study. As a result, through the many folds of hairstyles, body adornment can send signals to spectators about the wearer (Essel, 2021; Essel, 2017; Navei, 2023).

Demello (2007: xvii) also defines body adornment from a different perspective. The author avers that it is "the practice of physically enhancing the body through styling and decorating the hair, painting and embellishing the fingernails, wearing makeup, painting the body, wearing jewellery, and the use of clothing." Ingrained in Demello's exposition is the idea that body adornment is a practice done physically on the human body with the prime aim of enhancing it. Again, Demello, like Douglas, as noted in his definition, also offers avenues where body adornment can permeate. Nevertheless, Demello expands the paths for body adornment as offered by Douglas and ropes in other areas such as makeup, embellishing fingernails, and many more. Although Douglas (2004) and Demello (2007) offer a number of areas where body adornment pervades, Smith (2008) provides a more engaging list of practices to include the wearing of clothes, accessories, headwear, shoes, hats, veils, jewellery, cosmetics, hairstyles, and even body modifications like tattoos, piercings, and tooth filing. Smith, like Douglas (2004) and Demello (2007), also focuses on human hair as an avenue where body adornment flourishes. From Smith's submission, it can be deduced that wearing hats, veils, and headgear are among the many ways that hair can be adorned.

There is a wealth of rationale for adorning the human body. These include protection (Smith, 2008); social status and social structure (Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2009); communicating identity and symbolising relationships with others (Fedorak, 2017); expression of independence and self-validation; and as a fashion statement (De Cuyper & Pérez-Cotapos, 2010). Others include meeting cultural standards of beauty as well as religious and social obligations (Chivers, 2002; Sanders & Vail, 2008); protection from evil spirits and attracting good luck (Hesselt, 2005); aesthetic expressions (Johnson, 2001); signal an individual's place in society, mark a special occasion, celebrate a life transition, or to communicate a person's status in society, display accomplishments, encode memories, desires, and life histories (Nyambura et al., 2013).

Through clothing or costume cultures, men, women, and children all use body adornment as a way to express their creativity, communicate their identities, and convey their desires to others non-verbally (Aris & Aris, 2020; Tijana et al., 2014). Although this is prevalent among individuals across the globe, Utoh-Ezeajugh (2009) asserts that body adornment is more prevalent among Africans because of how they create art by using their bodies, similar to how a traditional painter uses canvas. In Ghana, there are a number of communities that engage in body adornment, including the Krobo. Extant studies on aspects of the costume culture of the Krobo have been explored by some scholars (Affum, 2009; Baidoo et al., 2022; Mintson, 2020); however, body adornment as it relates to the hair that complements the entire dressing culture of the Krobo people of Ghana has not been in focus. Thus, the current study takes a detour from the existing scholarly works by concentrating on the indigenous ways of adorning the hair among the Krobo. This tends to add to the existing stock of scientific knowledge on body adornment practices as it pertains to the Krobo in particular and Ghana as a whole. Again, the findings of the study are relevant to a number of stakeholders in the arts and cultural industry, especially performing artists in general and costumiers in particular, whose key responsibility is to release the souls of characters off the page and situate them on stage using visual elements. Granted that a costumier is faced with costuming a production characterised by the body adornment of the Krobo people, the current study will serve as a guiding post in the overall costuming of actors by educating the theatre audience and film viewers of the rich body adornment culture of the Krobo people.

2. Literature review

2.1. Body adornment as dress culture

Dress communicates a person's culture and socially distinguishes him or her from others (Maran et al., 2021; Shoko, 2013). Consequently, body adornment has been in focus among a number of civilisations and is culturally universal, with people from different geographical areas showcasing varied forms of it (Pipe, 2012). In a book titled *Survey of historic costume*, Tortora and Marcketti (2015) bring to light that body adornment played a significant role in the dressing culture during the ancient Mesopotamian era, which was divided into three periods: Early Sumerian (c. 3500–2500 BCE), Later Sumerian and Babylonian (c. 2500-1000 BCE), and Assyrian (c. 1000–600 BCE). While most people preferred to shave their heads, others also allowed them to grow and held them in place at the back of their necks using a fillet during the early Sumerian period. In addition to this, was the wearing of jewellery. The authors further explained that the second period was also characterised by the use of fillets to hold the hair and the wearing of jewellery, including a dog-collar type of necklace made of several rings of metal. The third period saw men wear hats, while women wore earrings, bracelets, armlets, and veils. However, slaves were not allowed to wear veils because it was a privilege reserved for only royals.

According to Barton (1963), Egyptians wore elaborate makeup and braided their hair long before the prehistoric era. They also held their braids in place with decorative fillets. In addition, men and women attached gold ribbons to their hair. Women frequently fixed oil-scented cones on their heads, and as they carried out their daily duties, the oil perfume settled in their hair and gave it a pleasant smell l—a way of adorning the hair. The accounts of Adekunle et al. (2006) also indicate that men in Egypt used red, blue and yellow paints to decorate their faces and dye their hair. These colours of paint were preferred over others because they were in style. As a result, this approach to body adornment influenced the dress culture of the Egyptian populace. In *Cutaneous adornment in the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria,* George et al. (2006) report that community members employed traditional approaches to adorn their bodies. These included tribal marks, scarification, plaiting or braiding the hair, wearing beads, and the use of henna for colouring the nails. In addition to these were oils, soaps, and fragrances, which were typically inexpensive and easily accessible on the market. However, as observed by the authors, this rich cultural heritage has been eroded and replaced with the so-called ideals of Western culture, where practitioners use artificial and dangerous chemicals in the production of such products, which are also pegged at cutthroat rates. Aside from these astronomical rates, the new products are associated with detrimental effects on consumers' bodies.

The wealth of information that a study by Nyambura et al. (2013) brings to light makes it worthwhile to discuss. The authors explored adornment in Kenya's diverse culture and revealed that from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, body adornment culture in Kenya has been influenced by cultural globalisation and technology, where recycling of materials is done to produce ornaments. The authors further noted that the evolution and development of Kenya's adornment practices revolved around their contact with their environment, political and social institutions, religious values, warfare and trade. Beyond these, Kenyans display various aspects of their body adornment customs to the outside world through hairdressing, jewellery wear, pigment application, Maasai and Samburu beaded jewellery, and body painting, among other things. Besides these, Kenya's body adornment culture was also influenced by the age-set system and lifestyle. Schneider (1973) also brings to the fore perspectives from Mozambique, where adorning the body was done through ritual tattooing, scarification, body piercing, face and body painting and the wearing of a scarf.

Aspects of Zimbabwean body adornment culture presented through the lens of the Mutare community, as reported by Shoko (2013), are that women wore necklaces, bracelets, and hair pins in their hair. In addition to the aforementioned, was the wearing of earrings, which was dominant among women, where only the ears could be pierced, though the Tsonga women also pierced their lips. Piercing the nose, navel, and tongue and the introduction of many holes in the ears were done to sexually attract the opposite sex. Painting the human body,

wearing ornaments or jewellery and scarification or tattoos were common symbols of adornment used to achieve beauty in various forms. It is important to note that within the Ghanaian space, many studies have offered intriguing narratives on body adornment (Acquaah et al., 2017; Dzramedo, 2009; Kwakye-Opong, 2011). The treasure trove of information that Kwakye-Opong's (2011) work brings to light makes it valuable to engage. Kwakye-Opong's study investigated the *clothing and adornment culture of the Ga of Ghana from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century*. It emerged that the social, political, and economic lives of the Ga people are impressively entwined and inseparable from their clothing and ornamentation, which project details about the philosophies, virtues, and cultural context of the people. For instance, it was ascertained that the Ga body adornment practices included wearing *nyanya* leaves (*Momodica foetida*) as necklaces; wearing gold bangles and gold rings decorated with tortoise and porcupine motifs; beads; headgear; and many more. In the northern sector of Ghana, Acquaah et al. (2017) explored ways of adorning the body through costumes and concluded that wearing hats or headgear is a key way of adorning the body. The manner in which traditional hats are worn in northern Ghana conveys salient information about the wearer, such as his status in the community or family, to showcase self-actualisation, identify the most economically endowed persons in the community, and provide spiritual protection. It is on the heels of the foregoing that Seiber and Herreman (2000: 15-16) acknowledged that "the traditional African has diverse ways of dressing the hair and all the diverse hairstyles communicate to the onlooker". Having offered scholarly discussion on the adornment culture of several civilizations in Africa, the ensuing section provides a profile of the study area to situate the current research in context.

3. Profile of the study area

The study was conducted in two communities: Odumase and Odometa, both in Manya Krobo of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The name Krobo, which has become the official designation of the people, is spelt *Krɔbɔ* the way Akans pronounce it. The indigenes 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 communities (Huber, 1993). The Akan called them *nkro foɔ awomu ti ɔbɔ 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 date (Puplampu, 1951). Thus, *Klo* became *Kro*. The accounts of Huber (1993: 15) also provide that "the name *Klo* is associated with Akro Mause, the legendary hunter who first discovered the mountain (*Klowe*) which was their first settlement after they migrated 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 into two parts by a dry valley: the south-western (*Yilo Krobo*) and the north-eastern (*Manya Krobo*). Subsequently, *Klowe* has rocky, steep-sided terrain with pockets of gentle slopes and flat portions (Gblerkpor, 2008).

The Krobo lived on the mountain for about 400 years until June 2, 1892, when they were dispersed by the British colonialists. This was because they were accused of human sacrifice in their religious practices. While on the mountain, they incorporated other people, such as the Denkyira and other refugees of war, into their midst. Before they did so, the refugees at the time 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 sɛm* (female nubility rites), and their children were to be given Krobo names (Azu 1926; Huber 1993; Mate-Kole 1955). With regard to the Krobo individuality, Odonkor (1971) argues that a Krobo identity, *dipo sɛm* (female nubility rites), and *sule nya pom* (circumcision) were established long before the pause in the migration at Lorlorvor and subsequently, the Krobo Mountain. In *The rise of the Krobo*, Odonkor (1971) discusses the origins of the paramountcy, agreeing with other scholars such as Sutherland (1956) on the fact that the Krobo paramountcy (chieftaincy system) has an air of Akan origin and thus a foreign influence. According to Odonkor (1971), Nene Sakite I, who reigned from 1867 to 1892, admired the attire and status of Akan chiefs and wanted to be like them.

Nene Sakite I, therefore, ordered a set of drums from the neighbouring Denkyira and also ordered a set of kente. Even though gold was a taboo to the Krobo then, Nene Sakite I ordered gold trinkets from the Fante. Currently, Krobo chiefs dress like Akan chiefs, from whom the whole concept of chieftaincy was 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.

The Krobo community is one of six Dangme-speaking people; the others are Osu Doku, Prampram, Ningo, Ada, and Shai. The Krobo are the most numerous among the Ga-Dangme-speaking people of the south-eastern part of Ghana. The main economic activity of the Krobo people is farming, with the main cash crops being maize and oil palm (Wilson, 1991). There have also been recent investments in Kent and Keitt mango (Okorley et al., 2014). Beyond these activities, some of the men engage in fishing on Lake Volta, which is in the northeastern part of Manya Krobo. 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 might have begun using it because of their affiliation with the Ewe during their migratory movements. Krobo society follows three religions: traditional worship, Christianity and Islam. In terms of traditional festivals, the Krobo people celebrate the *Koda* and *Ngmayemi festivals*.

4. Theoretical foundation

The study was anchored on the symbolic interaction theory developed by George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley in the mid-twentieth century and further developed by Blumer (1969), a student of Herbert Mead (Aksan et al., 2009; Amivi Kumatia, 2018; Carter & Fuller, 2015). Symbolic interaction theory by Blumer (1969) rests on three premises: first, human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Second, the meaning of things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with others, and finally, the meaning of things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others (Carter & Fuller, 2015). By this, symbols are the primary means by which people communicate with one another, and an individual can make meaning of a society by examining its symbols (Turner, 2011; Husin et al., 2021). Symbols are essentially objects that convey meaning (Schneider, 2011), including costumes and apparel, of which adornment is a key example (Amivi-Kumatia, 2018; Kaiser, 1985). As noted by Kaiser (1985), when items of clothing or other outward manifestations have significance to the wearer or reveal information to others about them, they are symbolic. Importantly, the various approaches to adorning the hair by the Krobo and their symbolic meanings inherent in such adornment practices served as an avenue to rely on the symbolic interaction theory for the current study.

5. Research methods

The study adopted a qualitative approach of inquiry. This was because qualitative researchers seek to explore the culture of a group of people (Ospina, 2004; Tenny et al., 2017), which encompasses the costume of a given society (Eze & Akas, 2015; Kwakye-Opong & Adinku, 2013), and more specifically, body adornment. The qualitative **case study** research design was employed because it offers a comprehensive description of an individual case in a bounded context and its analysis (Starman, 2013), with the adornment of hair by the Krobo people being the single case that was investigated. The population for the study comprised individuals who have institutional memory of indigenous ways of adorning hair on the human head in different contexts among the Krobo of Ghana. These ranged from chiefs, queen mothers, kingmakers, informed community members, female elders, chief priests, and linguists. The purposive sampling technique, (expert and snowball sampling techniques), was employed to sample fourteen participants for the study. The expert sampling technique was preferred over others because it seeks to identify participants who possess unique characteristics or experiences under investigation (Omona, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Although the researchers were able to identify participants with such characteristics, there were other participants who were difficult to access because their children had taken them from their initial homes to other places for health care, among other reasons. As a result, the snowballing technique, which seeks to identify other potential participants (Naderifar et al., 2017; Streeton et al., 2004), was employed to identify such participants. The sample size of fourteen comprised four female elders, one queen mother, two linguists, two kingmakers, one chief priest, two sub-chiefs, and two informed male community members.

Multiple instruments (an interview guide, an observation guide, and a document review) were employed to collect data for the study. An interview guide, specifically a semi-structured interview guide, was used because, as noted by Walliman (2011), they are more flexible and also allow the interviewer to probe to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Interviews were conducted in both English and the Krobo language. However, some participants occasionally punctuated their delivery with other local languages, such as Twi and Ga. The thoughts and ideas of participants in the Krobo language have been captured and translated into English at the discussion stage of this article to offer a wider readership. With permission from participants, interviews were recorded using audio tapes, and interview sessions lasted between thirty-five and forty minutes.

Beyond the interviews, the researchers also observed some cultural practices of the Krobo, including the annual *Ngmayemi* festival and the *dipo* puberty rites from 2017 to 2020, and took cues from how the hair was adorned. Again, the researchers observed funeral rites and other related cultural activities, took photographs with permission from participants, and made notes relevant to the development of hair adornment. In all, the researchers observed these traditional cultural events of the Krobo people from a non-participant perspective. This was because the researchers were not actively involved in the performances, since this is the crux of non-participant observation (Ciesielska et al., 2018; Kumekpor, 2002). The third instrument, document review, deals with engaging materials that a researcher studies for research purposes that are either written, visual (photographs), or digital (Bowen, 2009). Subsequently, documents such as photographs of various ways in which hair has been adorned were either retrieved from participants or photographed by researchers for study.

6. Data analysis and presentation

The data were manually transcribed, coded and analysed using document and thematic analytical tools. Document analysis, which is a systematic way of studying and appraising documents such as photographs (Cleland & MacLeod, 2021; Flick, 2013), was employed to give interpretation, voice, and meaning to the photographs. The overall data were presented in two folds: narrative and visual presentations (photographs in Figures). This was to demonstrate, with relevant photographic illustrations and justifications, the indigenous ways of adorning hair among the Krobo people of Ghana.

7. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study

Throughout the research process, participants' privacy and anonymity were maintained. To achieve this, pseudonyms were used to represent the voices of participants other than their names. The researchers also sought the consent of participants verbally to be part of the entire research process, but they were also free to quit at any time they felt the need to do so. Additionally, the researchers obtained consent before taking photographs and assured participants that the photographs would only be used for educational purposes, and for that reason, their faces would appear in the write-up.

The soundness of qualitative studies thrives on the trustworthiness of the study. In order to achieve the trustworthiness of a study, the current study relied on four pillars proposed by Guba (1981): credibility or authenticity, dependability or consistency, confirmability, and transferability or fitness. To achieve credibility in a qualitative study, Guba (1981) asserts that researchers must, among other things, make sure that well-tested

methodologies are used, appropriate sampling techniques are adopted, frequent debriefing sessions are held, the research project is peer-reviewed, and ascertain the correctness or otherwise of the information provided. To ensure a well-established research method, the study adopted the qualitative case study approach of inquiry, purposive sampling technique (expert and snowball sampling techniques), multiple instruments (an interview guide, an observation guide, and a document review), and document and thematic analytical tools to conduct the study. To achieve the quality of the study, the researchers frequently briefed colleague lecturers about the objectives of the study and solicited their input. Draft manuscripts were given to some academics to read, comment on, and make suggestions and relevant inputs were incorporated into the writeup. The researchers used probing questions and occasionally rephrased some of the research questions to probe further in order to determine whether or not the information provided by participants was accurate or otherwise. The information offered by participants was also compared with photographic illustrations to authenticate it.

The majority of the research questions were replicated for each category of study participants in order to ensure the dependability or consistency of the data provided by participants. On the confirmability of the research findings, the researchers exhibited a high sense of objectivity in the transcriptions of the responses of participants and the expansion of field notes. During the data analysis and discussion of the findings, the researchers also avoided bias in interpreting the views, opinions, and narrations of participants.

Transferability ensures external validity. Although the researchers cannot emphatically state that the findings of this study can be applied to all situations in Ghana, readers of this article should be able to apply the research findings to other contexts or different geographic areas. Once more, readers can decide whether the findings are applicable to other circumstances in Ghana by learning more about the research methods used to arrive at the conclusions.

8. Discussion of results

The data analysed for the study revealed that hair is of great importance to the people of Krobo. As noted by a female elder participant one (personal communication, January 30, 2019) "the Krobo believe that "wa yibom lɛɛ muɔ nɛ amanyɛ kɛ wɔ", meaning "our hair is blood and a living part of us that can be used to weave a curse". 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 and is buried away from 'home' (a community within the Krobo enclave), a bit of his or her hair is cut and sent 'home' to be buried (female elder participant three, personal communication, June 15, 2019). Based on this same notion, a synthesis of the data revealed that the Krobo people believe that losing one's hair to an enemy can cause harm to one's soul. Similarly, an individual's soul can be hurt if his or her hair falls into the wrong hands. As a result, women allow only trusted friends and family members to plait and sculpt, while men also go to trusted barbers for haircuts. Also, the data brought to light that there were different types of hairstyles for different occasions and categories of people, such as those for unmarried maidens and those for married women. There is the hairstyle for the traditional priest, and those coiffures are for special rituals. In addition, there are also hairstyles for puberty or initiation rites, such as the tuft of hair left on an initiate's head after the *yise poomi (*shaving of the hair), as indicated in Figure 1. The circle of hair left on the centre of the head is unique to individuals who are going through *dipo* initiation after the *yise poomi* ritual. The circle of hair is later shaved off and is a symbol of both liminality and wholeness, as illustrated in Figure 1.

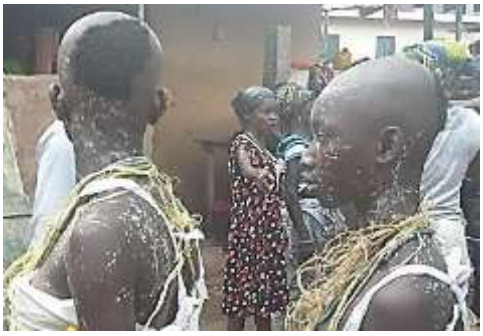

Figure 1: The circular tuft of hair left on the *dipo* initiates head after the *yise poomi* ritual.
Source: Photograph by Sakite Tesaa, Odumase 2017

Even though literature supports that hairstyles depict status among women within the African space (Lorraine & Suk, 2015), among the Krobo royalty, this is not so. As noted by Queen Mother participant one (personal communication, October 5, 2019) "Krobo royalty depicts their status with the beads they wear and the totems they carry". By doing so, the beads and totem convey salient information that communicate non-verbally about the wearer to spectators. On the part of female elder participant two (personal communication, July 22, 2019) "hair threading (*yihɔɔmi*) is part of the Krobo hair adornment practice". She explained further that *-yihɔɔ lɛɛ wa piɔ kɛ je blema, Piɔ sɔ nɔɔ nɛ apeewe hu, nyɛ* perming, perming *hejeɔ* literally, "as for hair threading, we have done it since time immemorial, it is these days that due to the introduction of perming the hair that some young women do not thread hair any more". The data further revealed that *Yihɔɔ* (hair threading) styles are a combination of two pillars: the designs created with a small comb on the scalp and the threaded hair, which is raised and packed away from the scalp (*blɛ)*. *Yihɔɔ* (threaded hair) 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 *kunŋɔ bi fi* and *akwele waobii* (which means chicken droppings and Akwele's fingers respectfully). All other styles are variations of these two. The hairstyle, *Kun bi mafii*, was assigned this name because the plait resembles chicken droppings (Figure 2). This is the first threaded hairstyle that 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 that resemble the droppings of chicks, hence the associated name. The other (Figure 3) 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. Mostly, short hair is best suited for this style.

Figure 2. *Kunŋɔ bi mɛafii* hairdo.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odumase. Fieldwork, April 2018.

Figure 3. *Kunŋɔ bi mɛafii* hairdo.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odometa, Fieldwork, April 2018.

Akwele waobi, translated as "Akwele's fingers", is the basic *yihɔɔmi* (threaded hair) style as illustrated in Figure 4. As noted by female elder participant one, this name was derived from the threaded hairs' resemblance to a variety of pepper called *akwele waobii* in Krobo. Again, Akwele is a Ga Dangme name for the first female of a twin. The stylistic representation of this hair has the threaded hair left standing all over the head, as seen in Figure 4. To achieve this effect, the hair is divided into small portions, and thread (preferably black) is wrapped around the base four to six times, and then the thread wrapping continues to the end of the hair. The extra thread is then cut off. This hairstyle, as illustrated in Figure 4, is the hairstyle for unmarried maidens. The premise is that unmarried maidens are single and for that matter, they live or stand alone. The sociocultural symbolism of this hairstyle is that it communicates to community members about the status of the lady, an unmarried person. Due to the symbolic significance of how a woman has worn her hair (*Akwele waobii)*, it gives men a simple way to ask for a woman's hand in marriage.

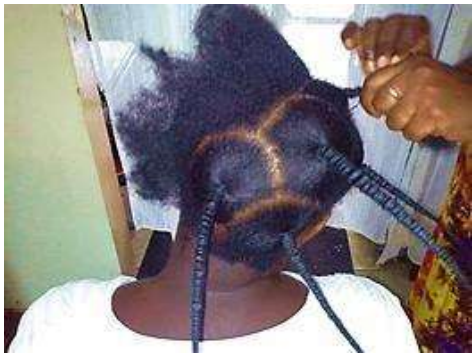

Figure 4: *Akwele waobii* being wrapped
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odumase. Fieldwork, April 2018

Married women, however, connect the threaded strands and pack them into various styles similar to *ananse* web, as seen in Figure 5. Each threaded hair strand is connected to the other to symbolise that the wearer is connected or married. Therefore, this communicates nonverbally to members of the community, the sociocultural status of women who wear such threaded hair.

Figure 5: *Blɛ,* thread wrapped hair with emphasis on the *anane* (spider) scalp design. Anane is a symbol of wit.

Generally, whichever style of threaded hair is chosen, for it to be regarded as pleasing, the sectioned hair should have the appropriate amount of thread around it. For instance, the finished *sinɔ* (snake) strands, as illustrated in Figure 5, 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 clean, well-

threaded, and sculptured hair wins the admiration of many people. Like commemorative fabrics, there are also commemorative hairdos; for example, *wara tu wara sa,* which literally means "dig it yourself, collect it yourself" or "do it yourself (DIY)". *Wara tu wara sa* is a hair plaited design with thread, sculptured in commemoration of 1974's Green Revolution Operation Feed Yourself policy (female elder participant two, personal communication, July 22, 2019). This programme was initiated during the National Redemption Council (NRC) era led by the late Col. I.K. Acheampong (Dogbe 1991), a former military ruler and Head of State in Ghana from 1972–1978 and involved backyard gardening. The expression *wara tu wara sa* is also used to refer to the nature of manual work by labourers who dig trenches for construction purposes. In line with the Green Revolution Operation Feed Yourself policy as espoused, the symbolic basis of the *wara tu wara sa* hairdo in Krobo culture is to encourage community members to engage in farming to sustain themselves and their dependents. Significantly, a synthesis of the data revealed that the *wara tu wara sa* hairdo and its associated philosophy have been translated into concrete terms, where the Krobo people have become major producers of some crops like mango, oil palm, cassava and many more.

Sinɔ (snake) as observed in Figure 6, is another commemorative hairstyle of the Krobo people of Ghana. According to female elder participant four, (personal communication, August 7, 2019), her grandmother was a priestess of the python deity of the Krobo and was called *Sinɔ Yoo* (snake woman). The *sinɔ* hairstyle, as indicated in Figure 6, was, therefore, fashioned in remembrance and honour of *Sinɔ* deity. The *Sinɔ* hairstyle is sectioned and threaded similar to the *akwele waobii,* but in the *sinɔ* hairdo, the hair is sectioned and threaded very close together so that 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 mainly for this purpose. This hairstyle is strictly for adults. This is because among the Krobo people, children cannot pack their hair, as such, hair packing is a preserve of adults only. Beyond this, as noted earlier, *sinɔ* hairstyle was fashioned in remembrance and honour of *Sinɔ* deity; hence, it is not meant for children.

Figure 6: Traditional priestess in *Sinɔ* threaded hairstyle.

Source: Efo Kojo Sela's library, 2019.

The exploration so far has brought up a significant issue: the Krobo people, as part of their approaches to adorning their hair, engage in hair threading or plaiting. This outcome is consistent with existing literature, as advanced by George et al. (2006), that the Yoruba in southwestern Nigeria engage in plaiting or braiding hair as their primary source of caring for their hair. Again, this is also in consonance with hair braiding among the Egyptians long before the prehistoric era (Barton, 1963). Beyond these, the non-verbal communicative nuances of the various hair threading or plaiting that inform spectators of the kind of hair are also in sync with literature by Seiber and Herreman (2000), who assert that the various ways that traditional Africans wear their hair communicate important information to onlookers.

8.1. Sustaining the glory of the hair: Scarves and hats as key visual elements

The data indicated that the traditional Krobo female has three main kinds of head coverings. The first is a scarf; the second is the *dipo pɛɛ* (ceremonial hat used by the traditional priests); and the third is the *kpodzemi pɛɛ* (head covering for formal occasions). Each of these head coverings is 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". Figure 7 shows a woman in silk fabric of the *wo daso bɔ.* The name *wo daso bɔ* 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 daso bɔ scarf* can be tied in various ways, 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. Apart from silk fabric, other fabrics with different dimensions can also be used to tie the head.

Figure 7: A woman in *wo daso bɔ scarf* with ears partly covered.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odometa. Fieldwork 2019

To the Krobo people, a good head tie, which receives much attention, leaves the forehead clear and covers the tips of the wearer's ears. Such a woman receives comments such as *hiɛ 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. As noted by Queen Mother participant one, "a scarf that partly covers the ears is symbolic and means the wearer is not prone to gossip. Figures 7, 8, and 9 reflect this approach to wearing a scarf. On the other hand, tied head scarves that 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 tsɛ* meaning "a quarrelsome woman" (Queen Mother participant one, personal communication, March 12, 2020).

Figure 8: A woman in black scarf at a funeral with her ears partly covered.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odometa. Fieldwork 2018.

Figure 9: Sub Queen mother in kente scarf with ears partly covered, notice the multiple strands of beads.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odumase. Fieldwork 2018

Although scarf-wearing is the preserve of women among the Krobo, some occasions demand that men also tie their hair. Linguist participant one (personal communication, December 16, 2019) informed:

> *Men occasionally tie their heads with lengths of fabric, the purpose of which is determined by the fabric's colour. For instance, at a funeral, the head tie would be red or black as an indication of mourning. For purification purposes, white fabric is used. 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 a white turban on his head. This is to signify his purity and his coming to the throne with a clean heart and mind. This is because white among the Krobo people signifies purity.*

From the submission, it can be deduced that the symbolic interpretations of colours within the Ghanaian space inform the selection of hues of fabrics for tying hair among men in Krobo. Figure 10 portrays a group of men who are mourning, with the regent wearing a red scarf to connote his mourning state.

Figure 10. *Matsɛ Sedalɔ* (regent) in red scarf as a symbol of mourning.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odumase. Fieldwork, 2019

The wearing of a scarf as a means of adorning the hair by the Krobo people is affirmed by Schneider (1973), that the people of Mozambique, as part of the many folds of adorning themselves, wear scarves of various dimensions. Apart from wearing a scarf, a synthesis of the data revealed that the second head covering, the *dipo pɛɛ,* is part of the ritual ensemble worn during the dipo ceremony. The *dipo pɛɛ* is primarily called *gblo* and is the ceremonial hat worn by traditional priests, as seen in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Traditional priest of Manya Krobo wearing a *gblo.* From *The bead is constant* (p 17.) by Alexandra wilson, 2003, Ghana University Press**.**

The *gblo* is made from *sɔni* fibre (*sɔni* fibre is gotten from Borrasus aethiopum, a species of palm) and ranges in colour from cream to light beige. Even though the *gblo* worn by *dipo* initiates is specially 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. Figure 12 depicts *dipo* initiates wearing the *gblo*. Just as the traditional priest is the mouthpiece and advisor to the deities in particular and the community at large, the initiate, by wearing the *gblo,* is also symbolically given a voice to partake in the affairs of the community. After this ritual, it is a taboo for a female to touch the *gblo* of a priest.

Figure 12: Dipo initiates during the wearing of the *gblo* ritual (*Dipo Pɛɛ*).
Source: Jasmine Opare Darko's Library, 2016

The last head covering of the Krobo is the *kpodzemi pɛɛ*, a black smooth and lustrous hat used during outdoor celebrations, either going out or for formal occasions. Nowadays, unlike in the past, the *kpodzemi pɛɛ* is worn by *dipo* initiates on the final outdooring day and may also be worn by women on all other joyous occasions. In the words of Queen Mother participant one (personal communication, March 12, 2020):

> *kpodzemi pɛɛ is supposed to be smooth, with the strands of fibre 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 or separated from the base of the hat.*

To achieve the degree of beauty needed, *Kpodzemi pɛɛ* should closely fit the head. According to the participant, the colour of the hat is also an important element. *Kpodzemi pɛɛ* must be black, smooth and lustrous, and mostly decorated with *huajetor* beads, as shown in Figure 13. *Huajeto*r is a yellow bead made with a kind of blunted double-cone shape, the colour of egg yolk. Among the Krobo, yellow beads are symbolic of fertility, health, and wealth. Subsequently, *huajetor b*eads are yellow and are also a form of prayer for wealth for the woman wearing them 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 dzajeↄ,* which means a hat that declaims, and in Krobo society, a hat that 'speaks' is good and beautiful.

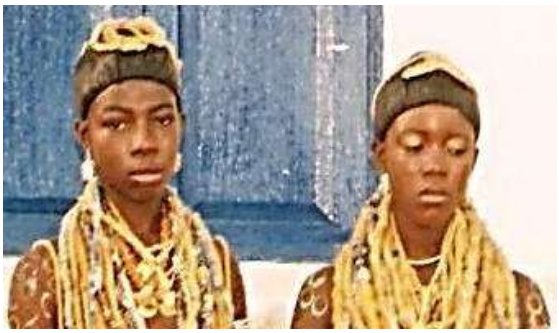

Figure 13: Initiates in *kpodzemi pɛɛ* decorated with *huajetor* beads.
Source: Photographed by researchers at Odumase, 2018

A *kpodzemi pɛɛ* can 'speak' only if it has appropriate symbolic motifs on it. The 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 give the hat its 'speech'. For example, the bead *ohiafo kpewe tɛ,* which means "the poor do not chew stones," is a symbol of hope; *kɛ koku he ba puↄ, lowi tsu maa sɛ 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 without symbols does not speak and as such is not complete, and does not meet the standard value. The *kpodzemi pɛɛ* is used by both the young and the old. The Krobo woman manipulates these basic articles of clothing to create works of art that convey society's values. Apart from women and *dipo* initiates, men within the society also wear head coverings. *Matsɛ pɛɛ,* as illustrated in Figure 14, are hats or crowns worn by chiefs. These come in different colours and styles and are usually made with velvet fabric or leather and decorated with gold or silver ornaments. If worn to funerals, these hats are decorated with dark-coloured talismans and animal fur, as seen in Figure 14. Significantly, *Matsɛ pɛɛ* are a part of the regalia adopted from the Akan. Though there are different designs, they are united by these criteria of value: a *matsɛ pɛɛ* must first of all accurately depict the wearer's status. For instance, the *Asafoatsɛ* (chief warrior) wears a hat made of leopard skin (Figure 15) to show his status as chief warrior. His hat or headband may also be studded with talismans full of spiritual power to protect him from his enemies on the battlefield.

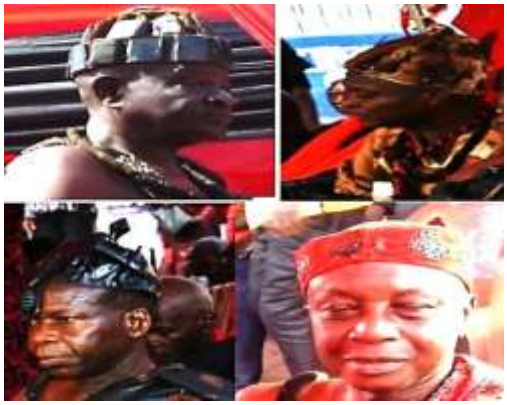

Figure 14: Sub-chiefs in different types of hats

Source: Photographed by researchers at Odumase. Fielwork, December 2017.

The *Konor,* who is the paramount chief and leader of the *Asafoatsɛmɛi,* wears a hat of leopard skin decorated with gold leaf. According to linguist participant one (personal communication, December 16, 2019) 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 as seen in Figure 15. Linguist participant one further elaborated that *matsɛ pɛɛ mɛ* must also fit well by being the correct size, for it is not pleasing to see a chief in an oversized hat. As noted by King Maker participant two (personal communication, July 22, 2019), 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".

Figure 15. Konor Nene Sackite II wearing his gold and leopard skin crown, which sets him apart from other chiefs.

Source: Photographed by Fabiola M. Opare-Darko at Odumase, 2016.

The wearing of hats or headgear as a form of adornment among the Krobo people is systematic in the literature, as corroborated by Acquaah et al. (2017), that wearing of hats or headgear is a key way of adorning the body among the people of the northern sector of Ghana.

9. Conclusion

Body adornment has been in focus in many civilisations from ancient times to the present and has also served as a conduit for identifying the costume or dressing culture of a number of societies. Subsequently, individuals have decorated or accessorised their bodies in a variety of ways to interact with the outside world nonverbally. Body adornment plays significant roles and permeates individuals and groups of people in diverse traditional settings, including the Krobo in Ghana, a town characterised by rich cultural heritage, including their costumes, in which adornment features prominently. The current study therefore explored the diverse ways in which the Krobo adorn their hair. Findings of the study pointed out that the Krobo engage in varying dimensions of hair plaiting or braiding, the wearing of scarves, and finally, hats. Embedded in these approaches to adorning the hair was the fact that they were symbolic and associated with meaning. As a result, the study argues that the need for cultural symbolism was the main driver for adorning the hair among the Krobo of Ghana. Therefore, the study recommends that future research could explore adornment practices associated with the various parts of the body among the Krobo to broaden the discourse on body adornment within the Ghanaian space in general.

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