

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**SCULPTING SELECTED SIGNIFICANT PHASES OF DIPO RITE
AMONGST THE KROBO PEOPLE OF GHANA**

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partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **Harry Kyei-Nimako**, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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Supervisor's Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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Date:

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Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother, Mrs. Nora Gyimah, and my beautiful wife, Mrs. Vida Arabe, whose overwhelming support, spiritual, physical, and financial, sustained me throughout this academic journey. I also dedicate it to my amazing children (Nana Ama Nimako, Maame Afia Achiaa, and Nana Kwaku Ofori Amanfo Kyei-Nimako Jnr), whose unwavering spirits and encouragement were instrumental in my perseverance.

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ABSTRACT

The Dipo rite, a cornerstone of Krobo cultural identity in Ghana, profoundly encapsulates the transition of girls to womanhood through its significant phases; however, existing scholarship remains predominantly textual, critically lacking three-dimensional visual representation capable of conveying its embodied and spatial essence. Addressing this gap, this artistic research employed a studio-based design methodology to sculpturally interpret the rite's key phases; Spiritual Bathing and Purification, Public Parading and Community Integration, Tekpete Stone Ritual and Virginity Testing of Dipo-yo, Adornment and Body Art of Dipo-yo, and the Reintegration of the Dipo-yo into the Community, as practised in Somanya. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, with primary data comprising oral narratives, experiential accounts, and visual-cultural observations relating to ritual practices, symbols, materials, and performative gestures. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and visual analysis involving a homogeneous sample of twenty-four (24) stakeholders; elders, ritual practitioners, initiates, and artists, selected through convenience sampling within the community. The interview data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and systematically analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring meanings, symbols, and ritual structures that inform the cultural logic of the Dipo rite. Through the thematic interrogation of ritual gestures, material culture, and symbolic acts, the study translated ephemeral moments, such as ritual bathing and bead adornment, into tangible sculptural forms. Indigenous and locally sourced materials, including clay, resin, and recycled glass beads, among others, were employed to embed cultural semantics and ensure material authenticity, thereby enabling a three-dimensional visual articulation of the Dipo rite's intangible heritage. The resultant sculptures depicting the phases function as three-dimensional ethnographies, materialising transient rituals and offering a multisensory archive previously absent from Dipo documentation. In conclusion, this research demonstrates that sculptural mediation, grounded in indigenous materials and community engagement, provides an unparalleled pathway for preserving and reanimating the Dipo rite's complex embodied knowledge. The study recommends that The Chiefs and elders of Somanya should protect the Sculpted phases of Dipo rite to serve as educational and tangible cultural heritage and take steps to sculpt the remaining significant phases of dipo to have a complete representation of the rite.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Krobo people, a significant subgroup within the Ga-Adangbe ethnic cluster, constitute a vital cultural presence in Ghana's Eastern Region, distinguished by their resilient traditions and vibrant heritage. Their ancestral origins trace back to Seme (or Seme), a semi-grassland area situated between contemporary Benin and Nigeria, specifically within Ogun State (Teyegaga, 1985). Driven by internecine conflicts, political upheaval, and warfare, the Krobos migrated from this homeland, eventually seeking refuge and establishing themselves on the formidable Krobo Mountains, locally known as Kloyo (Salm, 2002). This rugged terrain served not merely as a physical sanctuary but evolved into the symbolic and spiritual nucleus of Krobo identity. From this mountain stronghold, they meticulously developed cohesive sociocultural systems, encompassing chieftaincy structures, sophisticated agricultural practices, and deeply ingrained rites of passage that continue to define their communal life.

Foremost among these enduring traditions is the Dipo rite, arguably the most emblematic cultural practice of the Krobo people. While numerous initiation ceremonies across Ghana have experienced decline or significant transformation under the pressures of modernity, religious conversion (notably Christianity and Islam), and globalising influences, the Krobos have remarkably sustained Dipo as a dynamic, annual ritual (Mintson, Essel & Acquah, 2023). Celebrated predominantly between March and April, Dipo functions as a puberty initiation ceremony, formally ushering adolescent girls into recognised womanhood. Its consistent celebration

emphasizes its deep-rooted significance, attracting participants and observers from across the nation and internationally. The Dipo rite transcends mere symbolism; it constitutes a multidimensional framework for moral, social, and spiritual education, intricately interwoven with Krobo identity and cosmology. Comparable to female initiation rites among groups like the Ndembu and Bemba of Zambia, the Kaguru of Tanzania, or the Gisu of Uganda – all meticulously documented by anthropologists like Turner (1967), Richards (1982), Beidelman (1997), and La Fontaine (1972) – Dipo serves to affirm the crucial social and reproductive roles assigned to young women within Krobo society. Within Ghana, analogous rites exist, such as the Akan bragoro, the Ga otufo, or certain Ewe *nɔvi dzɔdzɔ* practices (Nukunya, 2003). However, the Krobo Dipo distinguishes itself through its sustained vitality and elaborate nature, positioning it as arguably the most extensive and resilient female puberty rite in contemporary Ghana (Adinku, 2016).

The Dipo rite embodies a complex sociocultural system, reflecting core Krobo values, norms, and beliefs. It acts as a profound moral compass, guiding the conduct of young women and preparing them comprehensively for their anticipated roles as wives, mothers, and future community custodians. As Salm and Falola (2002) emphasise, such rites are central to traditional African socialisation systems, transmitting essential customs, taboos, and adult responsibilities. For the Krobos, Dipo is a potent celebration of femininity, social obligation, and spiritual purity, simultaneously functioning as a vital medium for fostering communal identity and solidarity. The ceremony commences with a public declaration of the initiates' (known as Dipo-yo) readiness. They subsequently enter a period of seclusion within the sacred Dipo-yo ni fi (Dipo house), guided by experienced female elders (dipoyemi). This secluded phase involves intensive instruction covering personal hygiene, domestic proficiency, the

paramount importance of chastity, obedience, and respect for authority figures (Adinku, 2016). Ritualistic elements include symbolic bathing in designated sacred rivers, head-shaving, and the consumption of specific ritual foods. The initiates are meticulously adorned with traditional beads (koli), cloths (kente or kete), and ornaments, each element laden with symbolism pertaining to beauty, fertility, and their transition status (Quartey, 2021). The rite culminates in a vibrant public procession, where the Dipo-yo present themselves to the community, demonstrating their acquired knowledge, grace, and readiness for womanhood.

Each distinct phase of the Dipo rite – from the ceremonial entry into seclusion, through the teaching and cleansing rituals, to the climactic public presentation, possesses inherent artistic and symbolic significance. The Krobos utilise this occasion to showcase their exceptional artistic heritage, particularly their world-renowned beadwork, intricate body painting (ayilo), and distinctive textiles (Mintson, Essel & Acquah, 2023; Boakye, 2010). Consequently, Dipo transcends its religious and social functions, manifesting as a rich visual and performative art form. The bodily adornments of the initiates serve as narrative devices, communicating lineage, spiritual connection, and social standing. Similarly, the spatial arrangement and decoration of ceremonial sites, incorporating natural and symbolic artefacts, poignantly reflect the Krobo people's deep relationship with their environment (Odotei, 2002). Despite facing transformative pressures from formal education, modern reproductive health discourses, and dominant religious doctrines, Dipo persists as a dynamic tradition. It has demonstrated adaptability, evidenced by shifts in the typical age of initiates and the modification or omission of certain physically demanding historical practices (Mintson, Essel & Acquah, 2023; Adinku, 2016). Crucially, however, its core values – emphasising pre-marital chastity, the sanctity of

womanhood, and the necessity of communal endorsement, remain fundamentally intact. This resilience positions Dipo as a compelling lens through which to examine the adaptive strategies employed by indigenous African cultures confronting globalisation and modernity (Odamtten, 2018).

The enduring vitality of Dipo within Krobo society can be attributed to several interconnected factors. Firstly, the rite is profoundly embedded within the Krobo religious cosmology, where ancestral spirits (*worn*) are believed to actively oversee and bless the initiation process, imbuing it with spiritual legitimacy (Salm & Falola, 2002). Secondly, Dipo enjoys robust institutional support from the traditional authority structure – the Konor (paramount chief), divisional chiefs, queen mothers (*klo yo mami*), and elders – who act as indispensable custodians of the ritual's integrity and cultural knowledge (Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, 2018). Thirdly, Dipo has garnered renewed interest as a significant cultural heritage and tourism attraction, drawing researchers, artists, photographers, and cultural enthusiasts. This external visibility, while presenting challenges regarding commodification, has concurrently contributed to a revitalisation of the rite, fostering both authentic preservation and innovative expressions (Akyeampong, 2015).

It was within this context of profound cultural continuity and thoughtful adaptation that the specific motivation for this doctoral research emerged. The initial spark arose not within an academic library, but during a pedagogical exercise at the Seventh Day Adventist College of Education, Asokore-Koforidua. While teaching a module on Ghanaian festivals, students engaged in a role-play activity simulating aspects of the Dipo rite. Witnessing this enactment ignited a deep personal curiosity regarding the rite's intricate phases, symbolism, and enduring cultural resonance. This experience

catalysed a desire to understand Dipo more profoundly, leading to preliminary investigations and ultimately, the conceptualisation of a feasibility study focused specifically on its artistic potential. This initial research phase confirmed a notable gap: while Dipo is richly documented through anthropology, photography, and film, there exists a scarcity of sustained, three-dimensional artistic interpretations, particularly large-scale sculptural representations capturing its sequential narrative and embodied experience. This identified lacuna presented a unique opportunity to leverage my specialised skills and training in sculpture. The prospect emerged to translate the ephemeral performances and deeply symbolic moments of the Dipo rite into tangible, permanent sculptural forms, thereby creating a novel visual archive and public engagement tool.

Therefore, this research is fundamentally driven by the convergence of academic curiosity, sparked by an educational encounter, and the identified scarcity of sculptural documentation of this significant Ghanaian cultural practice. It aims to move beyond textual or two-dimensional representations by harnessing the unique capacities of sculpture to materialise the dynamic forms, gestures, spatial relationships, and emotional weight inherent in the Dipo ritual. The selection of sculpture, particularly for public installation, is deliberate and theoretically informed. As argued by scholars like Dondolo (2010) and Marschall (2010), public art in African contexts frequently acts as a crucial mediator between past and present, enabling communities to visually reconnect with their heritage in accessible and participatory ways. Sculpture possesses an inherent physicality and permanence that photography or performance lack; it occupies space, invites circumambulation and tactile engagement (conceptually, if not physically), and endures as a persistent landmark of cultural memory. By creating sculptural representations of selected,

significant phases of Dipo – such as the solemn entry into seclusion, the transformative cleansing rituals, the meticulous bead adornment signifying new status, and the triumphant public presentation – this study seeks to construct an artistic narrative. This narrative aims to both meticulously preserve the visual and symbolic lexicon of the rite and offer a platform for its contemporary reimagining and dialogue within the public sphere.

Furthermore, this research aligns with significant scholarly movements advocating for the centring of African indigenous knowledge systems and aesthetic philosophies within academic and artistic discourse. As Dei (2012), Yankah (1995), and others have compellingly argued, African epistemologies and expressive forms have historically been marginalised within dominant Western-centric academic frameworks. By situating a profound indigenous ritual like Dipo at the heart of a sculptural and research-based inquiry, this study actively contributes to the ongoing project of decolonising knowledge production. It validates African cultural expressions – in this case, a complex rite of passage and its associated material culture – as legitimate, sophisticated, and vital sources of wisdom, creativity, and social organisation worthy of serious artistic engagement and scholarly attention. The project thus transcends mere documentation; it represents an act of cultural affirmation and epistemological rebalancing. Consequently, the study is structured around three core objectives: to meticulously investigate the significant phases of the Dipo rite among the Krobo people of Somanya; to create and publicly install sculptural representations of selected phases; and to ascertain and critically analyse the views of the *Krobo* community in *Somanya* regarding these sculptural interpretations of their cherished tradition.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Sculpture, as a tangible and enduring medium, has served as a vital conduit for preserving intangible heritage across cultures, embodying narratives, values, and rituals that textual documentation alone risks rendering abstract or ephemeral (Mensah, Abraham, Newton & Enchill, 2025; Mensah & Abraham, 2023; Adom & Christian, 2023). Within Ghana, while traditional sculptural forms like Asante heroes are recognized (Adom & Christian, 2023), the potential of contemporary sculpture to actively preserve and interpret complex, living rituals remains significantly underexploited. This study leverages sculpture's unique capacity to materialise transient cultural practices, focusing specifically on the endangered Dipo puberty rite of the Krobo people in Somanya. In contrast to the plethora of textual and anthropological research documenting Dipo, this project proposes sculpture as an innovative methodology for capturing its multisensory essence, countering the limitations of purely verbal or photographic archives and offering a three-dimensional ethnography rooted in place and materiality. The Dipo rite, which comprises a sequence of sacred rituals, including head shaving, ritual bathing, sitting on the sacred stone, bead adornment, and Klama dancing, constitutes a culturally sanctioned process through which Krobo girls are ritually transitioned from childhood into socially recognised womanhood (Mintson, Essel, & Acquah, 2023; Huber, 1963; Boakye, 2010). Each phase of the rite embodies layered symbolic, moral, and social meanings: head shaving signifies purification and the shedding of childhood identity; ritual bathing represents spiritual cleansing and moral renewal; sitting on the sacred stone affirms endurance, moral readiness, and ancestral approval; bead adornment visually communicates femininity, fertility, and social status; and Klama dancing functions as a communal celebration that publicly announces the initiate's new adult

status. Collectively, these interconnected practices extend beyond biological maturity to affirm cultural values surrounding discipline, sexuality, identity, and communal belonging, thereby legitimising the initiate's transition into responsible womanhood within Krobo society. However, its integrity faces profound challenges demanding a novel approach to preservation, moving beyond the well-trodden paths of textual analysis exemplified in studies of other Ghanaian regions like Winneba, where festivals have received more extensive, though still predominantly non-sculptural, scholarly attention.

A foundational gap concerns the fragmented understanding of the rite's precise structure and socio-aesthetic significance within its specific Somanya context. While anthropological studies exist (Abbey, Mate-Kole, Amponsah & Belgrave, 2021; Adinku, 2016), they often prioritise sociological outcomes or broad overviews, resulting in incomplete documentation of the significant phases, their precise sequencing, embodied meanings, and local variations. Modernisation has drastically compressed the once year-long training into mere days, diluting essential pedagogies on sexual health and domestic skills embedded within specific phases, while adaptations like cloth coverings signify ongoing cultural negotiation (Tandoh, 2018; Nukunya, 2003). This erosion obscures the distinct "ritual anatomy" – the interconnected flow and symbolic weight of each phase – particularly within Somanya, where nuanced local practices remain inadequately documented compared to other Krobo areas or sculpturally explored traditions elsewhere in Ghana (Odotei, 2002; Van der Geest, 2003). Consequently, the first investigative aim responds to a pressing need for a holistic, temporally sensitive, and aesthetically attuned reconstruction of the rite's core structure in Somanya, synthesising anthropological

insight with participants' lived experience to establish a comprehensive baseline essential for any meaningful cultural preservation effort before further dilution occurs.

Building upon this detailed ritual anatomy, the study confronts a more profound gap: the absence of durable, materially resonant visualisations of Dipo that capture its ephemeral and embodied nature. Krobo artistry, particularly in magnificent glass beads and ceramics, is celebrated (Quarcoopome, 1993; Cole & Ross, 1977), and sculptural traditions exist in other Ghanaian contexts (e.g., Asante, Fante royal regalia, or Winneba's Aboakyer festival symbols). However, visual representations of the Dipo rite itself remain scarce and predominantly confined to fleeting photographic records or brief film clips (Kumetey, 2009; Anquandah, 1982). These mediums fail to convey the rite's essential tactile, spatial, and kinetic dimensions – the weight and texture of sacred stones, the dynamic arc of libation pouring, the intricate symbolism encoded in beadwork patterns adorning initiates. Crucially, specific sculptural explorations of complex rites like Dipo, particularly using indigenous materials imbued with semantic resonance, are notably absent from scholarly discourse and public art in Ghana (Willet, 1971). Sculpture's inherent capacity to materialise ephemeral moments and embody cultural memory (Morphy, 2009; Edwards, 2006) remains largely untapped for this ritual. Therefore, the creative aim to translate key ritual phases into permanent sculptural forms using culturally significant media – laterite clay mixed with soils from ritual sites, recycled Krobo glass beads, and sacred woods – is fundamentally innovative. This approach embeds cultural semantics directly into the artwork (textures evoking initiation scars, beads mapping clan identities), actively countering critiques of heritage preservation as static museum artefacts (Appadurai, 1996; Pepper, 2009) and creating tangible anchors for embodied, multisensory memory, distinct from purely visual representations.

The efficacy of such sculptural preservation, however, is intrinsically tied to its contextualisation within the Krobo lived environment and its reception by the community, revealing the third critical gap. While public art's role in sustaining cultural memory is established globally and within Ghana (Hoelscher, 2011; Kwami, 2013; evident in monuments commemorating historical events or figures in places like Accra or Kumasi), its application within Krobo communal spaces specifically for ritual commemoration like Dipo is minimal. Existing Krobo monuments rarely engage the specific ritual geography vital to the rite – sites like Tegbe Rock, sacred groves, or festival procession routes where Dipo's spatial narrative unfolds (Adler & Barnard, 1992; Sarpong, 1977). Confining artefacts to museums dislocates them from their performative contexts, fragmenting heritage understanding (Kreamer, 2002; Silverman, 2015). Furthermore, while scholars like Abbey, Mate-Kole, Amponsah & Belgrave (2021) have examined psychosocial aspects of Dipo, Krobo perspectives on artistic reinterpretations of their sacred rites, especially when proposed for public installation within their ritual landscape, remain entirely unstudied. This omission is critical amidst ongoing community debates, where younger generations increasingly critique certain aspects like virginity testing (Ampofo, 2001). Understanding whether sculptural mediation can foster reflexive dialogue rather than exacerbate generational conflict is paramount. Therefore, the analytical aim to ascertain and interpret community views pioneers essential reception analysis, addressing a significant void in cultural sustainability frameworks (Burton & Paragahawewa, 2011; Stefano & Davis, 2016). It evaluates the proposed sculptures not merely as artworks, but as potential "eco-resilient heritage tools" integrated into the community's spatial and social fabric, aiming to reconcile authenticity with necessary innovation in the face of

contemporary pressures like HIV risks and cultural change (Akyeampong, 2000; Coe, 2005), ensuring preservation strategies align with community-defined values.

By systematically addressing these interconnected gaps – the fragmented understanding of Dipo's ritual anatomy in Somanya, the lack of materially and sensorially resonant sculptural representations distinct from other Ghanaian traditions, and the absence of community-validated strategies for integrating such representations into the ritual landscape – this study transcends conventional anthropological documentation. It positions sculpture as an active agent in cultural sustainability, offering an innovative, emplaced, and community-engaged model for preserving endangered global rites through embodied material practice.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the significant phases of the Dipo rite among the Krobo people of Somanya, with the aim of preserving and reinterpreting this cultural heritage through sculptural representation. By examining the symbolic rituals, practices, and transformations that define the Dipo rite, the study sought to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary understandings of this important cultural practice. Additionally, the research explored the potential of public art installations to promote cultural appreciation and dialogue by identifying a suitable public space to mount the sculpted phases of the Dipo rite. Through this effort, the study aimed to foster a deeper understanding of Krobo heritage while assessing community perceptions of the sculptural work, contributing to the documentation, preservation, and revitalization of the Dipo rite in both academic and cultural contexts.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the significant phases and existing modes of artistic representation of the Dipo rite among the Krobo people of Somanya.
2. To create and publicly install sculptural representations of selected significant phases and modes of visual art expressions of the Dipo rite as practiced by the Krobo people of Somanya.
3. To find out and analyse the views of Krobo people of Somanya on the sculpted works.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the significant phases and existing modes of artistic representation of the Dipo rite among the Krobo people of Somanya?
2. How can the significant phases and visual art expressions of the Dipo rite be effectively represented through sculpture for public installation?
3. What are the views of Krobo people of Somanya regarding the sculptural representations of the Dipo rite?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the preservation and revitalization of the cultural heritage of the Krobo people through an investigation of the significant phases of Dipo rite. Through an investigation of the significant phases of this initiation rite among the Krobo people of Somanya, the research addresses a critical gap in the academic documentation of the practice. Understanding these phases, which encapsulate symbolic rituals, social values, and cultural expressions, is essential for comprehending the historical and contemporary relevance of the Dipo rite. This study will enhance knowledge about the rite's role in shaping Krobo identity

and its adaptation to changing societal contexts, providing valuable insights for scholars, cultural practitioners, and policymakers interested in the preservation of Ghanaian traditions.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on creating sculptural representations of the Dipo rite offers a novel approach to documenting and communicating its cultural significance. Sculpture, as a visual art form, has the potential to provide a tangible and enduring interpretation of the symbolic phases of the rite, making it more accessible to both local and global audiences. This artistic endeavor not only serves as a medium for preserving Krobo heritage but also fosters a dialogue between traditional practices and contemporary artistic expression. It highlights the capacity of visual art to bridge generational gaps, engage younger audiences, and promote cultural appreciation in a modern context.

Identifying an appropriate public space to mount the sculpted representations of the Dipo rite adds another layer of significance to this study. Public art installations have the power to transform cultural narratives into accessible and interactive experiences, thereby increasing the visibility of Krobo traditions. Such installations can serve as educational tools, cultural landmarks, and symbols of community pride. They provide a platform for the Krobo people to reclaim and celebrate their heritage while offering an opportunity for non-Krobo individuals to learn about and appreciate the rich cultural practices of the community.

Lastly, analyzing the views of the Krobo people of Somanya; particularly the Chiefs, Queen mothers, Elders, and indigenes on the sculpted work ensures that the project remains culturally sensitive and aligned with community values. Engaging with the community not only validates the relevance of the artistic representations but also

encourages participatory cultural preservation. This aspect of the study fosters a sense of ownership among the Krobo people and highlights the importance of community involvement in safeguarding and reinterpreting traditional practices. The study, therefore, holds significance not only as an academic contribution but also as a cultural initiative that bridges heritage preservation, artistic expression, and community engagement.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on the significant phases of the Dipo rite including; Spiritual Bathing and Purification, Public Parading and Community Integration, Tekpete Stone Ritual and Virginity Testing of Dipo-yo, Adornment and Body Art of Dipo-yo, and the Reintegration of the Dipo-yo into the Community as practiced by the Krobo people of Somanya, in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The investigation is limited to identifying and analyzing the cultural, symbolic, and ritualistic elements embedded in the Dipo rite, with emphasis on the above stated significant phases. While Dipo is practiced in other Krobo communities, this study specifically targets Somanya to provide a localized and in-depth analysis of the rite as it is performed in this particular context. The study is further delimited to the creation of sculptural representations of the significant phases of the Dipo rite. These sculptures are designed to visually communicate the cultural essence of the rite, focusing on its symbolic and aesthetic elements. The research does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of all artistic forms associated with Dipo, such as music, dance, or oral traditions, but rather focuses on how these elements can be encapsulated through sculpture.

Additionally, the study confines itself to a public space within Somanya where the sculptural works were mounted. It does not extend to exploring spaces outside of

Somanya or other Krobo communities for the installation. The chosen location will align with the cultural and social significance of the Dipo rite to the Krobo people. Finally, the research was delimited to collecting and analyzing the views of the indigenes of Somanya on the sculpted works. It does not include the perspectives of individuals outside the Krobo community or those unfamiliar with the cultural practice of Dipo. Focusing on the perspectives of community members, the study ensured that the sculptural representations resonate authentically with Krobo cultural identity and values.

1.8 Organization of the rest of the Study

This thesis is structured into five chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the study on the Dipo rite and its sculptural representations. The chapters are organized as follows: Chapter One is Introduction: This chapter presents the introduction to the study, outlining the background of the research, the problem statement, the purpose, and the significance of the study. It also includes the research objectives, research questions, and the delimitation of the study. The chapter establishes the context for the research and highlights the gaps in existing scholarship on the Dipo rite, setting the stage for a more comprehensive investigation into its phases and cultural significance through sculpture. Chapter Two: Literature Review In this chapter, a comprehensive review of relevant literature on the Dipo rite is provided. The chapter explores the historical and cultural foundations of the Dipo rite, its evolution over time, and its relevance in contemporary Krobo society. Existing studies on the rite's symbolic rituals, phases, and interpretations are critically examined. The literature review also explores the potential of visual art, particularly sculpture, in documenting and preserving cultural practices. Key studies on Krobo traditions, sculpture in cultural heritage, and the role of public art in community engagement are discussed to

frame the study within existing research. Chapter Three: Methodology, This chapter outlines the research design, approach, and methods used to gather data for the study, Sampling technique, data analysis tools, population. The chapter also details ethical considerations, data analysis techniques, and limitations of the study are also discussed. Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of Data, this chapter presents the findings of the study. It includes a presentation of the significant phases of the Dipo rite, as discovered through fieldwork and analysis. The sculptural representations of these phases are described, alongside analysis of the process of creating the sculptures. The chapter also presents the views and responses of the Krobo people of Somanya on the sculpted works, analyzing their interpretations in line with the sculptures and the research objectives. The chapter draws connections between the community's feedback and the broader cultural meanings of the Dipo rite. Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations. This final chapter provides a summary of the study's findings and draws conclusions based on the analysis. Recommendations for future research are made and the chapter concludes with reflections on the overall contribution of the study to the field of cultural preservation and artistic representation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter provides a review of the theoretical framework underpinning this study, which focuses on sculpting the significant phases of the Dipo rite among the Krobo people of Ghana. The chapter is anchored in Mimetic Theory, which emphasizes the representation of reality through art. This theory is examined in the context of its relevance to capturing and preserving cultural practices through sculpture, highlighting how visual art can serve as a medium for documenting the symbolic and ritualistic elements of the Dipo rite. The chapter also reviews literature on the history of dipo rite, the phases of the rite, public space as a medium for cultural Expression, how public art influences cultural memory and identity.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory of mimesis (imitation) offers a significant theoretical framework for understanding and representing the significant phases of the Dipo rite through sculpture. Originally developed by Aristotle in *Poetics*, the concept of mimesis is central to how human actions, expressions, and desires are shaped through imitation. The theory has evolved over the centuries, notably being expanded by René Girard, who connected mimesis to social dynamics, emphasizing the role of imitation in human behavior and cultural practices. By applying mimesis to the Dipo rite, one can explore how the phases of the rite can be translated into sculptural forms, reflecting both the traditional cultural practices and their reinterpretation in contemporary contexts.

2.1.1 Mimetic Theory

Mimesis, as a philosophical and aesthetic construct, remains central to understanding how artistic forms replicate, interpret, and transform cultural realities. Rooted in classical Greek philosophy, particularly in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the concept of mimesis has evolved to encompass not merely the replication of the external world but also the creative interpretation and symbolic reconstitution of human experience. Aristotle (1996) advanced the idea that mimesis is not a mere mechanical reproduction but a purposive and imaginative act wherein art imitates actions, emotions, and character types in order to provoke catharsis and convey ethical or philosophical truths. Within this interpretive lens, the representation of the Dipo rite through sculpture functions as a mimetic process that seeks to distil and project the symbolic, performative, and socio-cultural dimensions of the rite into a tangible artistic medium.

The Dipo rite, with its rich tapestry of symbolic acts, ranging from seclusion and adornment to dance, libation, and public procession, presents a fertile ground for mimetic engagement. In this study, mimetic theory provides a conceptual apparatus for understanding how the ritual phases of Dipo are recontextualized through sculptural forms. Rather than offering static depictions, sculpture as mimesis engages in what Bishop (2013) describes as "re-presentational labour," whereby traditional practices are not merely rendered visible but are actively reinterpreted and adapted to contemporary audiences. Such visual translations allow for the ritual's underlying ideologies, such as the transition to womanhood, the communal validation of identity, and the embodiment of moral instruction, to be re-imagined in a contemporary visual discourse.

In this context, sculpture becomes a culturally responsive medium, capable of capturing the nuances of Krobo traditional practices while dialoguing with modern aesthetics. As argued by Essel (2021), mimetic representation in African visual arts goes beyond formal accuracy to engage with layered cultural meanings, community memory, and symbolic codification. Sculptural interpretation of the Dipo rite thus operates on multiple levels: it serves as a didactic tool, a mnemonic device, and a site of aesthetic and cultural negotiation. The process of sculpting Dipo phases, such as the symbolic washing (Nudu), bead adornment, and Klama dance, provides an avenue for what Foster (1996) calls "archival mimesis," wherein the artwork becomes an alternative archive that preserves and transmits ephemeral cultural knowledge. Furthermore, the mimetic function in the context of Dipo rites also resonates with the psychological and sociological dimensions of what Girard (1977) termed "mimetic desire." Within the ritual, young initiates aspire to emulate the esteemed feminine virtues embodied by elder women, ritual specialists, and community heroines. This desire is not simply imitation for its own sake but a profound internalisation of cultural ideals concerning maturity, virtue, and social belonging. In sculptural terms, this mimetic desire can be visually encoded in posture, expression, material, and compositional choices that suggest both aspiration and transformation. As demonstrated in studies of performance and visual culture, including those by Taylor (2003) and Hall (1997), mimesis is often performative, involving not just the outward copying of behaviours but the remaking of the self in relation to social norms and expectations. Thus, the sculptures derived from the Dipo rite in this research act as mediators of cultural identity, rendering visible the processes through which cultural roles are learned, rehearsed, and embodied. This aligns with Gell's (1998) theory of the "art nexus," which positions art objects not simply as aesthetic commodities but as

agents within social relationships. Within the Krobo context, these sculptures can be read as relational artifacts, engaging viewers in conversations about cultural continuity, memory, and transformation. They become part of a network of meaning that links past and present, tradition and innovation, individual creativity and collective consciousness. Moreover, the mimetic transformation from ritual to sculpture facilitates what Freedberg (1989) terms “the power of images”, the idea that visual representations evoke emotional, cognitive, and somatic responses that parallel lived experience. In this sense, sculptures of the Dipo rite are not passive objects but active participants in the cultural life of the community. They offer a sensorial entry point into the rite’s complex symbolism, allowing both insiders and outsiders to experience aspects of Krobo womanhood, spirituality, and communal cohesion. These mimetic works function as visual metaphors, simultaneously revealing and concealing, embodying the sacred while inviting secular interpretation.

From a methodological perspective, the application of mimetic theory in this sculptural research allows for the merging of theory and practice. The sculptural process, ranging from conceptualisation to material execution, mirrors the mimetic arc of selection, transformation, and representation. Each artistic decision, whether regarding scale, materiality, or abstraction, becomes an interpretive act shaped by the artist’s negotiation with cultural codes, historical memory, and contemporary relevance. As Kwon (2004) notes in her discussion of site-specific art, such works are always situated within larger discursive frameworks that inform their reception and meaning. In this case, the site of Somanya itself, imbued with the spiritual and historical resonances of Dipo, adds another layer to the mimetic engagement. Additionally, the theoretical grounding in mimesis challenges the simplistic binary between tradition and modernity often imposed on African cultural practices. Instead,

it offers a dynamic model for understanding how traditional rites can be continuously remade in dialogue with evolving social contexts. This aligns with Hall's (1997) notion of cultural identity as "a production" that is always in process, never fixed. Sculptural interpretations of Dipo thus resist the museological tendency to freeze cultural practices in time; they participate instead in an ongoing cultural performance that navigates between preservation and innovation.

Conclusively, mimetic theory offers a framework for ethical representation, particularly important in rendering rituals that are both sacred and gendered. By recognising the interpretive nature of artistic production, it becomes possible to avoid voyeuristic or reductive portrayals, and instead strive for representations that are dialogic, respectful, and culturally situated. The collaboration with Krobo elders, ritual practitioners, and community members throughout the sculptural process ensures that the mimetic representations are not merely aesthetic but also epistemologically grounded. Mimetic theory provides a robust and multifaceted framework for the representation of Dipo rites through sculpture. It enables a critical understanding of how cultural practices can be artistically re-imagined, socially interpreted, and visually encoded in ways that respect both traditional significance and contemporary relevance. Through its focus on imitation, desire, performance, and transformation, mimesis facilitates a scholarly and creative inquiry into the ways sculpture can serve as a living archive of Krobo cultural identity.

2.1.2 The Role of Sculpture as Mimesis

Sculpture, as a visual form of mimesis, serves not just as an imitation of the Dipo rite but as an active engagement with the cultural meanings behind the rite's phases. Sculpture is particularly potent because it transforms cultural practices into tangible,

three-dimensional forms that transcend the limitations of verbal or written descriptions. As mimesis involves both replication and transformation, sculpture offers the opportunity to re-imagine the phases of the Dipo rite turning them into artistic expressions that are both reflections of the traditional practice and contemporary reinterpretations of its significance (Bishop, 2013). The sculptural representations of the Dipo rite would not merely replicate its phases; they would reinterpret the rites in a manner that resonates with both the younger generation and the broader community. These sculptures would serve as visual records of the ritual's significance, capturing the transformation of young girls into women while illustrating the intersection between tradition and modernity. The potential of sculpture as mimesis lies in its ability to serve as both a representation and a re-imagining, ensuring that the Dipo rite's cultural significance is preserved and communicated to contemporary audiences (Adinku, 2016).

The theory of mimesis offers a compelling framework for understanding the Dipo rite and its significant phases as represented through sculpture. Applying Aristotle's and Girard's concepts of mimesis, this study explores how sculpture can serve as a medium for both imitating and transforming the cultural practices of the Dipo rite. Sculpture, in this context, does not simply replicate the rituals but re-imagines them, making them relevant to contemporary audiences while preserving their cultural essence. Through the lens of mimesis, the phases of the Dipo rite can be understood as dynamic processes of imitation, transformation, and social negotiation, allowing for a deeper engagement with the cultural heritage of the Krobo people.

2.2 Historical Origins of the Dipo Rite Among the Krobo People of Ghana

The Dipo rite stands as one of West Africa's most resilient and culturally significant female puberty rituals, serving as the primary initiation ceremony for young Krobo girls into womanhood for centuries. This comprehensive literature review synthesizes scholarly research on the historical origins and evolutionary trajectory of this complex socio-cultural institution among the Krobo people of Ghana's Eastern Region. By examining anthropological, historical, and sociological studies, this review traces the rite's development from pre-colonial spiritual practices through colonial encounters to contemporary adaptations, revealing how Dipo has maintained cultural continuity while demonstrating remarkable adaptive resilience in response to social change. The analysis remains strictly focused on historical origins and transformations, excluding contemporary debates about gender dynamics or human rights considerations to maintain thematic precision.

2.2.1 Pre-Colonial Foundations and Indigenous Origins of Dipo rite

The Dipo rite emerged organically from the Krobo people's indigenous belief systems and social organization long before European colonial contact. According to Huber's (1963) seminal ethnographic work, the Krobo migrated to their present location in the Shai Hills during the 16th century, bringing with them foundational spiritual practices that would evolve into the Dipo complex 16. The ritual's name itself derives from the Krobo word meaning "to sow" or "to plant," reflecting its agrarian symbolic roots and intrinsic connection to fertility concepts central to Krobo cosmology. Historical evidence suggests Dipo functioned as the primary social mechanism for preparing adolescent females for their future roles as wives, mothers, and economic actors within Krobo society's matrilineal structure. Nukunya (2003) documents how pre-colonial Dipo served as an intensive vocational training

program where initiates received instruction in domestic skills, child-rearing practices, sexual health, and moral conduct during extended seclusion periods lasting up to one year.

The ritual's structural components reveal deep connections to Krobo spiritual cosmology and ancestral veneration. Adjaye (1999) identifies the sacred stone (Dipoyo) ritual as the ceremonial centerpiece, explaining that this element commemorates the Krobo's mythical migration narrative where ancestors carried sacred stones embodying communal spiritual power. During initiation, girls sat upon these stones to demonstrate virginity and receive ancestral blessings, a practice Steegstra (2004) interprets as a liminal passage where participants temporarily existed between childhood and adulthood states. Bead adornment rituals held particular significance, with archaeological evidence suggesting Krobo artisans incorporated recycled glass trade beads (later known as "bodom") into ceremonial regalia as early as the 17th century, transforming external materials into cultural symbols of maturity and prosperity. These material elements functioned alongside performative components like the Klama dance, which invoked ancestral presence through rhythmic movement and song, embedding initiates within Krobo cultural memory.

Table 1: Core Elements of Pre-Colonial Dipo Rites

Element	Art Form	Symbolic Function	Historical Reference
Sacred Stone (Dipo-yo)	Granite rock carried during migration	Ancestral connection and virginity verification	Adjaye (1999); Steegstra (2004)
Bead Adornment	Waist beads (up to 25kg), necklaces	Fertility, wealth, and readiness for marriage	Affum (2009)
Klama Dance	Ritual dance with specific footwork patterns	Invocation of ancestral spirits and communal unity	
Ritual Seclusion	Extended separation (several months to one year)	Transitional liminality and intensive instruction	Nukunya (2003); Huber (1963)
Libation Rituals	Pouring of ceremonial liquids	Communication with ancestral spirits	

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2024)

The ritual's social architecture reinforced Krobo societal structures through strict gender specialization. Historical accounts confirm that priestesses (known as "wonyemi") exclusively administered the rites, exercising significant authority over female socio-religious life. This matriarchal control represented what Steegstra (2005) terms a counter-patriarchal space where Krobo women managed knowledge transmission independent of male political structures. The rites simultaneously fulfilled population management functions by delaying marriage until physiological maturity, a practical response to high adolescent mortality rates in pre-modern societies. Economic anthropologists note how Dipo reinforced intergenerational wealth transfer through bride-price systems, with initiated women commanding higher marital value, thereby incentivizing family investment in daughters. These multilayered functions, spiritual, pedagogical, and economic, established Dipo as

the institutional cornerstone of female Krobo identity formation prior to colonial disruption.

2.2.2 Colonial Encounters and Transformative Pressures (Late 19th - Mid 20th Century)

The arrival of European colonial powers, particularly German missionaries in the mid-19th century, initiated profound transformations in Dipo's practice and cultural standing. Basel Mission archives reveal intense missionary opposition grounded in Christian moral frameworks that condemned Dipo's perceived sexualization of adolescents and indigenous spiritual elements. As Steegstra (2002) documents, missionaries launched systematic campaigns labeling Dipo practitioners as "immoral" and threatening converts with excommunication for participation, thereby creating religiously-based social divisions within Krobo communities. This opposition centered particularly on ritual components involving partial nudity, ancestral veneration, and the sacred stone ceremony, all deemed incompatible with Christian doctrine. Colonial administrators compounded this pressure by characterizing Dipo as barbaric tradition within emerging colonial legal frameworks, though records indicate inconsistent enforcement of anti-Dipo policies due to Krobo resistance.

Facing these external pressures, Krobo traditional authorities demonstrated remarkable strategic adaptability by modifying ritual elements while preserving core functions. Huber's (1963) fieldwork documented how ritual mothers ("dipome") introduced waist cloths to cover initiates' lower bodies during public ceremonies, a compromise addressing missionary concerns about nudity while maintaining symbolic bead displays. More significantly, Krobo leaders compressed ritual timelines from the traditional year-long seclusion to several weeks in response to colonial economic

demands for youth labor, fundamentally altering the pedagogical scope of initiation. This temporal compression necessitated curricular prioritization, with Annor and Ofori (2019) noting increased emphasis on Klama dance performance (visible cultural marker) over intensive domestic training during this period.

The colonial cash economy simultaneously reconfigured Dipo's economic dimensions, transforming it into a commercial enterprise. Archival trade records examined by Arlt (1995) reveal how Krobo bead-makers capitalized on colonial infrastructure to import European glass beads, expanding ceremonial beadwork's scale and complexity as statements of familial wealth. Kwapong, Asamoah, and Dapaah's (2021) economic analysis demonstrates how monetization crept into previously reciprocal practices: ritual specialists began charging fees for services, sacred bead sets transformed into rentable commodities, and initiation ceremonies evolved into tourist spectacles marketed to colonial officials and travelers. Despite these accommodations, Krobo communities fiercely protected Dipo's spiritual core. Steegstra (2004), documents how elders maintained "secret" nocturnal rituals involving libations, ancestral invocations, and virginity testing away from colonial surveillance, preserving the rite's religious integrity through strategic concealment.

2.2.3 Post-Independence Evolution and Modernization

Following Ghana's independence in 1957, the Dipo rite entered a complex phase of national identity negotiation and modern adaptation. The Nkrumah government's promotion of "African personality" ideology initially favored cultural revitalization, yet state modernization agendas often conflicted with traditional practices. School enrollment mandates directly clashed with extended seclusion periods, forcing Krobo communities to further compress initiation into April vacation periods, an

accommodation documented in Annor and Ofori's (2019) temporal analysis of ritual scheduling. This period witnessed Dipo's transformation from comprehensive education toward symbolic ritual, with ethnographic studies confirming the near-disappearance of intensive domestic training by the 1970s. Instead, emphasis shifted toward public performance elements, particularly the Klama dance and bead adornment ceremonies that projected Krobo cultural distinctiveness within Ghana's pluralistic national framework.

By the late twentieth century, the commodification of the Dipo rite intensified, driven largely by the growth of cultural tourism and global heritage markets. As Ankomah and Awuah-Nyamekye (2017) observe, Krobo communities began to strategically adapt Dipo performances for international and tourist audiences, creating modified versions that foregrounded visual appeal and spectacle while downplaying the rite's deeper spiritual and intimate dimensions. This entrepreneurial adaptation generated significant local revenue, Aryeetey, Kwapong, and Acquah (2018) calculate Dipo-related tourism contributes substantially to Odumase's economy, but simultaneously introduced performative distortions as initiates became "cultural performers" rather than spiritual participants. The bead industry underwent parallel commercialization, with traditional artisans creating simplified "Dipo-style" jewelry for tourist consumption, diluting symbolic color codes while expanding economic opportunities for Krobo women.

Table 2: Post-Colonial Transformations of Dipo Elements

Traditional Element	Colonial Period Adaptation	Post-Independence Transformation
Duration	Reduced from 1 year to several months	Compressed to 4-7 days during school vacations
Pedagogical Focus	Reduced domestic training, maintained Klama dance	Symbolic performance emphasis, minimal life skills training
Bead Adornment	Incorporation of European glass beads	Mass production of simplified versions for tourist market
Virginity Testing	Conducted privately to avoid missionary criticism	Publicly maintained but increasingly controversial
Economic Model	Monetization of ritual services	Full tourism commodification with ticket sales

Source: (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024)

Christianization presented perhaps the most profound challenge to Dipo's continuity in modern Ghana. As Pentecostalism spread rapidly in the 1980s-1990s, church leaders reignited anti-Dipo rhetoric framing the rites as demonic worship. Fieldwork by Steegstra (2004) documents how Krobo Christians developed "sanitized" alternatives, retaining bead ceremonies and Klama dancing while eliminating libations, ancestral invocations, and sacred stone rituals. This syncretic approach enabled participation without violating Pentecostal prohibitions against "idolatry." Meanwhile, urbanization facilitated diaspora adaptations where Krobos in Accra conducted condensed weekend initiations, replacing extended seclusion with intensive

workshops, a functional adaptation preserving symbolic transition markers while accommodating urban realities.

Despite these adaptations, the ritual's core identity markers proved remarkably culturally persistent. Krobo Scholars Collective (2021) confirms that virginity testing remains the non-negotiable element across all Dipo variations, maintaining its controversial yet central role despite NGO opposition. Similarly, bead symbolism continues to communicate social meanings: multi-strand waist beads still signify wealth, yellow beads represent prosperity, and blue beads symbolize affection, preserving chromatic vocabulary documented in pre-colonial accounts. This selective retention of core symbols demonstrates what Adjaye (1999) identifies as Krobo cultural resilience, the strategic preservation of essential meanings within flexible ritual forms.

2.2.4 Historiographical Considerations and Research Gaps

Scholarly understanding of Dipo's origins remains constrained by significant source limitations and methodological challenges. Pre-colonial reconstruction relies heavily on oral traditions vulnerable to interpretive drift, with Krobo migration narratives containing mythological elements complicating historical verification. The earliest written accounts come from hostile sources, 19th century missionary records analyzed by Steegstra (2004) contain obvious ethnocentric biases requiring critical deconstruction. While archaeological evidence like bead typologies offers material corroboration, systematic excavations of Krobo ritual sites remain limited. Furthermore, as Narh (2023) observes, existing scholarship disproportionately emphasizes female experience, leaving male perspectives on Dipo's social functions largely unexplored despite men's roles as fathers, husbands, and community

stakeholders. Significant historiographical gaps persist regarding Dipo's regional variations and internal evolution. While studies focus predominantly on the Manya Krobo in Odumase, Yilo Krobo practices receive scant scholarly attention despite documented differences in ritual sequences. The 20th century compression from year-long to week-long rituals lacks comprehensive documentation, creating what Adjaye (1999) terms a historical rupture in understanding pedagogical diminishment. Furthermore, insufficient research traces how specific ritual elements, like the Klama dance, evolved choreographically in response to socio-political changes. Economic historians have yet to produce granular analyses of Dipo's role within pre-colonial Krobo exchange systems despite evidence of specialized bead production and ritual service economies.

The Dipo rite's historical trajectory reveals a dynamic cultural institution whose resilient core has persisted through radical external transformations. From pre-colonial agro-spiritual ritual to modern heritage performance, Dipo has continuously adapted its form while preserving its fundamental purpose: marking Krobo girls' transition to socially recognized womanhood. This review demonstrates how the rite's material elements, particularly sacred stones and ceremonial beads, served as cultural anchors maintaining continuity amid change. The historical record confirms Krobo agency in selectively modifying peripheral elements (duration, public modesty standards, pedagogical content) while protecting essential spiritual components through concealment and reinvention. Dipo's survival through missionary opposition, colonial suppression, Christian condemnation, and tourism commodification attests not to static traditionalism but to sophisticated adaptive innovation grounded in cultural confidence. Future historical research must further illuminate the indigenous epistemologies underlying this resilience while centering Krobo perspectives on their

own ritual heritage. As both historical artifact and living tradition, Dipo remains what Turner (1967) might call Krobo society's "ritual mirror", reflecting communal identity while adapting to changing social realities

2.2.2 The Influence of Colonialism on the Practice of Dipo Rite

The advent of colonialism in Ghana during the 19th century marked a significant turning point in the practice of many indigenous rite, including Dipo. Colonial authorities, especially European missionaries, sought to replace local customs with Western ideals of education, religion, and social order. As part of these efforts, many traditional rituals were either suppressed or radically altered. The Dipo rite, with its emphasis on indigenous spirituality and gender roles, became a target for colonial scrutiny. According to Stregstra (2018), colonial rulers and missionaries viewed the rite as a backward practice, incompatible with Western ideals of marriage and gender equality. As a result, some aspects of the Dipo rite were either abandoned or transformed to align with colonial norms, reducing its traditional significance.

The colonial era also introduced Western-style education and legal systems that further undermined the cultural validity of indigenous practices. As a consequence, the Dipo rite, along with other similar rites of passage, was marginalized, and its practice became less frequent, especially in urban areas. Schroeder and Danquah (2000) argue that colonialism, in particular, led to the erosion of many indigenous African customs, with rites like Dipo being relegated to the periphery of public life. Despite this, the Krobo people maintained the core elements of the Dipo rite, albeit in a more subdued and modified form.

2.3 Rituals and stages involved in the Dipo rite.

The Dipo rite, an elaborate female puberty ceremony among the Krobo people of Ghana's Eastern Region, encompasses a complex sequence of interrelated rituals and stages that collectively facilitate the transformation of adolescent girls into socially recognized women. It is deeply embedded within Krobo cultural frameworks: a rite of passage that transmits moral values, reinforces gender identity, and asserts communal belonging (Nukunya, 2003; Steegstra, 2004). While scholars have engaged extensively with particular elements of the ritual, such as virginity testing, bead adornment, and ceremonial seclusion (Mate-Kole, 2011; Adinku, 2016), there remains a need for holistic analysis that interlinks these practices with their symbolic, pedagogical, and performative dimensions. This literature review explores the entirety of the Dipo rite in five main stages, preparation and initiation; ritual cleansing and adornment; instruction and moral training; symbolic enactment and public performance; and blessing and reintegration, highlighting their interconnectedness and cultural significance.

2.3.1 Preparatory Phase: Admission and Initiation

The first stage of the Dipo rite functions as both selection and transformation. Known locally as the nanyoros stage, it involves community acknowledgement of a girl's readiness to enter womanhood and her eligibility to undergo initiation. Boakye (2010) emphasizes that this stage is not a private decision: it requires parental request, elder approval, and public recognition of maturity. The selection process reflects communal responsibility in identity transmission and societal continuity. The ritual begins with physical grooming, cleansing the body and hair, trimming nails, and applying cosmetic oils or ochre, indicating hygiene, beauty, and readiness for transformation (Mate-Kole, 2011). These practices prepare both body and psyche for the next stage.

The institutional structure of the Dipo house, or nadu, provides controlled space where selected girls enter seclusion. According to Mate-Kole (2011), seclusion typically lasts from several days to weeks and functions as a liminal period analogous to Van Gennep's (1960) liminality concept. In this interim stage, the girls are separated spatially and socially, allowing ritual specialists, usually older women or wonyemi priestesses, to transmit cultural norms and moral values in a disciplined setting (Nukunya, 2003; Steegstra, 2005). Instruction tends to center on taboo avoidance, fertility expectations, sexual ethics, and marriage obligations (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). Thus, the preparatory phase combines bodily preparation, moral instruction, and communal sanction. It sets the stage for spiritual transition, highlighting community solidarity and the structured transmission of cultural knowledge.

2.3.2 Ritual Cleansing and Purification

Following initial seclusion, the cleansing phase serves a symbolic rebirth: girls wash in sacred rivers or ponds to purge childhood impurities and signal spiritual readiness for womanhood. Adinku (2016) interprets this as an enactment of Krobo symbolic cosmology, whereby water becomes a transformative agent bridging the realms of youth and adulthood. The act of communal bathing communicates collective cleansing, both literal and moral, and functions to integrate the girls into ancestry-centered identity frameworks.

Immediately after cleansing, girls are adorned with beads, described by Adinku (2016) as visual articulations of identity and maturity. Waist beads (bodom), in particular, are gradually introduced in increasing quantities, often numbering up to 25 kg, emphasizing fertility symbolism and beauty ideals (Affum, 2009). The beads'

colors also carry coded cultural messages: amber beads for prosperity, blue for affection, and white for purity (Krobo Scholars Collective, 2021). Complemented by traditional scarification, ceremonial cloth, and metal regalia, these adornments constitute an embodied cosmogram, where fashion becomes ritual text. This phase argues that adornment is both aesthetic expression and material semiotics; each layer carries encoded meanings about reproductive potential, social standing, and spiritual preparedness. Through bead layering and scarification, the girls become living tableaux of Krobo identity.

2.3.3 Instructional Phase: Lessons in Cultural and Moral Values

Where the preparatory phase offers bodily transformation, the instructional phase (nugum) deepens cognitive and communal integration. As revealed by some scholars, elder Krobo women utilize storytelling, song, proverb, and enactment to teach girls about social roles, wifehood, motherhood, community participation, through a pedagogical style that emphasizes oral transmission (Núñez-Janes & Méndez, 2014). Schroeder and Danquah (2000) note the inclusion of sexual education modules: information about reproductive health, chastity, menstruation, and marital responsibility aims to shape normative behaviour within Krobo ethics (Ampofo, 2001). Conversations about fidelity, domestic skills, and community expectations structure gender role formation within the symbolic seclusion space.

Further, the instructional phase reinforces ancestral lineage and mythic origin stories. According to Adjaye (1999), ceremonial songs about migration, sacred stones, and ancestral interventions not only educate girls but also affirm their membership in Krobo historical narratives. This communal historiography promotes social cohesion by linking individual transformation to collective memory. Pedagogically, this phase

demonstrates how ritual acts as informal schooling, immersive, sensory, relational. It completes the transformation begun in the previous phase by embedding values within the body and psyche.

2.3.4 Symbolic Acts and Public Presentation

Having undergone preparation and internalization, the girls then enact a series of symbolic gestures meant to validate transformation both privately and publicly. One such practice is the carrying of the sacred stone (*dipo-yo*), a granite boulder associated with Krobo origin myths (Adjaye, 1999; Steegstra, 2004). The stone serves a dual function: it tests the girl's physical strength, suggesting maturity, as well as symbolically connects her to ancestral ancestors (Steegstra, 2002). The physical burden of the stone becomes a metaphor for social responsibility and ancestral endorsement, crucial for qualifying as a Krobo woman.

The culminating act consists of public parade and ceremonial performance (Klai et al., 2003). Dressed in ceremonial cloth, waist beads, and scarification patterns, the girls dance *Klama*, a series of coded footwork, while standing before elders, parents, chiefs, and community members (Affum, 2009). Boakye and Nkrumah (2020) interpret this as a public affirmation, enabling spectators to witness the rite's completion and reinforcing public legitimacy. This performative stage thus marks a communal "revelation" and signals acceptance of the girls into female Krobo collectives. These symbolic acts embody collective memory, public dramaturgy, and social legitimation; they are vital in the ritual's intersection with public life.

2.3.5 Final Phase: Blessings and Reintegration

The final stage of the *Dipo* rite involves blessing, reconciliation, and communal reabsorption. As Ofori-Ansa (2019) highlights, libations and prayers recited by ritual

mothers acknowledge the girls' transformation, invoking ancestral protection and collective support. The ritual closes, a reversal of seclusion, transforming the girls into active social citizens. They further describe how ancestral sacraments anchor the girls' identities within lineage networks. The ceremony of reintegration is deeply social, and celebratory, frequently involving communal feasts and dances. At this point, the girls have achieved formal recognition as adult women, eligible for marriage, economic participation, and public roles. The rite thus transcends individual maturation and affirms communal perpetuation.

2.3.6 Interlinked Ritual Logic and Cultural Significance

While the Dipo rite can be understood as a sequence of phases, it is more accurately comprehended as a dynamic, relational process. The preparatory rituals, grooming and seclusion, prepare the body and mind; cleansing rituals purify and mark threshold; instruction transmits moral and communal values; symbolic acts validate transformation before peers; and blessings integrate individuals within social and spiritual networks. Each phase is mutually reinforcing: instruction makes visible the meaning behind physical acts; public ceremonialism visualises moral claims; and reintegration allows the wider community to invest in the rite's significance. This processual approach aligns with Victor Turner's (1967) interpretive framework, where rites of passage are LTC: separation (preparatory), liminality (instruction and seclusion), and aggregation (public reintroduction). Turner's model aligns with the Krobo experience: girls are separated for teaching, undergo transformative acts, and are aggregated through public performance and communal blessing (Turner, 1967; Steegstra, 2004).

Beyond structure, the ritual performs ideological work, it produces Krobo femininity, social networks, and ancestral continuity. It produces cultural capital, marriageability, female solidarity, and communal legitimacy. According to Ampofo (2001), amid modern pressures, education, tourism, religion, Dipo's symbolic elasticity enables selective preservation. For example, bead adornment continues with tourism adaptation, while some elements (such as libation) recede in Christian contexts, demonstrating ritual resilience (Steegstra, 2004; Ankomah & Awuah-Nyamekye, 2017). The Dipo rite is more than a collection of rituals, it is a culturally integrated transformational process that knits together Krobo history, morality, gender identity, and social continuity. Through five distinct yet interdependent phases, girls are guided, purified, educated, displayed, and finally reintegrated. Each phase contributes to establishing Krobo womanhood, symbolically, pedagogically, relationally, and communally.

Future research should address temporal and spatial variations in the rite, investigate the ritual adaptations within diaspora communities, and highlight male perspectives, especially those of fathers, husbands, and chiefs. Researchers should also critically assess the impacts of tourism, urbanisation, and Christian conversion on Dipo practices. These further inquiries will deepen understanding of how rituals evolve while maintaining cultural identity under social change.

Despite the cultural significance of dipo, the Dipo rite has undergone several adaptations in response to modernization and changing societal norms. Scholars like Adinku (2016) note that some traditional elements, such as seclusion and ritual bathing, have been modified to align with contemporary values. Additionally, the rite faces criticism for its perceived loss of traditional purpose and relevance, particularly

in urban settings (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000). The stages of the Dipo rite encapsulate a rich combination of Krobo cultural, social, and spiritual values. From initiation and purification to public presentation and reintegration, each phase reflects a carefully structured process designed to prepare young girls for adulthood. While modernization poses challenges to its traditional practices, the Dipo rite remains a vital part of Krobo identity. Ongoing research and artistic efforts can help bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, ensuring the rite's preservation for future generations.

2.4 The Role of Art in Representing Dipo

The Dipo rite, a significant female initiation ceremony practised by the Krobo people of Ghana, has historically been transmitted through performative, oral, and embodied traditions. In recent decades, however, there has been an increasing scholarly and artistic interest in the use of visual art, particularly sculpture, as a tool for representing and preserving the rite's symbolic and cultural dimensions. While much of the earlier literature on Dipo has focused on its anthropological, sociological, and ritualistic functions (Nukunya, 2003; Steegstra, 2005; Adjaye, 1999), contemporary explorations are now extending into the visual and plastic arts, attempting to capture and communicate the essence of this ritual through more durable and visually expressive means. Sculpture, in particular, emerges as a powerful medium for cultural documentation and transmission, bridging historical ritual practice with contemporary artistic innovation.

Adinku (2016) identifies sculpture as an ideal vessel for the preservation of cultural practices, particularly those rich in symbolism and performativity such as the Dipo rite. Sculpture, by its very nature, allows for the materialisation of cultural memory,

offering a visual narrative that can endure time and space in ways that performance alone cannot. This is particularly relevant in the context of Dipo, where much of the ritual's significance is conveyed through gesture, posture, body adornment, and communal interaction. Sculptural representations of these elements do not merely replicate physical forms; they distil the emotional, symbolic, and historical layers of the ritual into static yet evocative artefacts. The use of sculpture in this context functions on multiple levels. First, it serves an archival function, preserving critical cultural knowledge in a form that can be accessed intergenerationally. Second, it performs an educational role, providing contemporary and future audiences, many of whom may be detached from the ritual due to urbanisation, religious conversion, or Westernisation, with tangible insights into traditional Krobo values and beliefs. Third, sculpture operates as a medium of cultural advocacy, making visible and legitimate a form of knowledge often marginalised in global art and academic discourses. As Asante and Ampofo (2020) note, when indigenous rites such as Dipo are represented visually, they claim space in broader conversations about identity, heritage, and national culture. Moreover, the sculptural depiction of Dipo aligns with wider national efforts in Ghana to protect and exhibit cultural heritage through public art and museum practice. Institutions like the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board have increasingly embraced visual art as a means of narrating history and reinforcing communal identity (Agyeman-Duah, 2018). By translating Dipo's phases into sculptural form, whether through monumental public installations, gallery exhibitions, or community-based art projects, artists contribute to the creation of alternative archives that are both accessible and affectively powerful. These representations allow for intercultural dialogue, not only within Ghana's diverse ethnic landscape but also on international platforms where African art is gaining renewed scholarly and

commercial interest. The representational power of sculpture also lies in its capacity to symbolise liminality, transformation, and embodiment, concepts central to the Dipo rite. Drawing on Turner's (1967) theory of ritual and liminality, one can argue that sculpture encapsulates the moment of passage between childhood and adulthood that defines Dipo.

The static form of sculpture paradoxically evokes the dynamic process of transformation. For example, a sculpted figure of a girl in the seclusion phase may freeze a fleeting moment of vulnerability, contemplation, and instruction, yet in doing so, it invites viewers to imagine the continuum of ritual that precedes and follows that moment. This act of freezing the ephemeral is not a reduction of meaning but an expansion, it allows the viewer time to contemplate, interpret, and connect emotionally with what would otherwise be an elusive experience. In the context of Krobo cosmology, physical symbols such as beads, sacred stones, and specific postures carry profound cultural meanings. Through careful sculptural interpretation, these elements can be foregrounded and celebrated. For instance, the bead adornment phase of Dipo, rich with semiotic meaning, can be intricately rendered in sculpture to show the layers of identity construction that young Krobo women undergo. The materials chosen, be it resin, fibreglass, terracotta, or bronze, can further reinforce thematic messages. Terracotta, for example, with its earth-bound connotations, may allude to fertility and tradition, while metal may symbolise resilience and continuity.

Scholars such as Antubam (1963) and later Quarcoopome (1995) have long advocated for the use of indigenous Ghanaian motifs and narratives in modern art as a means of asserting postcolonial cultural identity. Sculptural interpretations of Dipo directly answer this call. They offer a counter-narrative to the Western gaze by presenting

African traditions not as primitive curiosities but as sophisticated systems of knowledge worthy of aesthetic and intellectual engagement. This shift also empowers contemporary Ghanaian artists to become custodians and interpreters of their heritage, using their work to question, affirm, or reimagine the role of rituals in modern life. It is important to note, however, that sculptural representations are not mere reproductions, they are interpretative acts. Every choice made by the artist, pose, scale, material, texture, facial expression, conveys a particular reading of the Dipo rite. This makes the artist not just a technician but a cultural theorist in their own right. For example, choosing to depict the initiate in an upright and frontal pose may convey confidence and social emergence, while a seated posture might suggest introspection and instruction. In this sense, sculptural practice becomes a form of ethnographic inquiry, translating lived experiences and oral histories into material form. Furthermore, sculpture opens up space for dialogue between tradition and innovation. While the Dipo rite is rooted in longstanding customs, its representation in contemporary sculpture invites new interpretations and meanings. For instance, by incorporating contemporary materials or abstract forms, artists can challenge audiences to reconsider the relevance and evolving nature of the rite in a rapidly globalising world. This tension between fidelity and innovation reflects broader debates within anthropology and heritage studies about how best to preserve traditions without freezing them in time (Smith, 2006).

The educational implications of sculptural representation in the context of the Dipo rite are both profound and multifaceted. In formal educational settings such as schools and colleges of education, sculptural artefacts offer pedagogical value by bridging textual knowledge with visual and experiential learning (Adinku, 2016; Quarcoopome, 1995). These artistic forms enable students and observers to engage

with the Dipo rite not merely as a subject of academic inquiry but as a tangible, visualised cultural experience. Sculpture thus facilitates an embodied understanding of cultural heritage, particularly for learners who may be distant from the rite's original performative contexts. According to Asante and Ampofo (2020), visual arts function as effective educational instruments because they stimulate critical thinking and cultural empathy, particularly in multicultural learning environments.

For Krobo communities experiencing the erosion of oral traditions due to urbanisation, religious shifts, and declining participation in indigenous rites, sculpture provides a valuable medium for intergenerational knowledge transfer. As Steegstra (2004) notes, the transformation of ritual practice in contemporary Krobo society has created gaps in cultural continuity that sculpture can help bridge. Sculptural representations can embody layered cultural meanings, inviting storytelling, communal reflection, and reinterpretation among younger generations. Moreover, the integration of Dipo-themed artworks into public and educational spaces reinforces a sense of cultural pride and belonging, fostering continuity in a form that transcends the limitations of oral narration. From a museological perspective, however, the display and interpretation of Dipo-inspired sculptures raise complex curatorial challenges. Scholars like Coombes (1994) and Agyeman-Duah (2018) have highlighted ongoing debates about whether such works should be exhibited in ethnographic museums, as artefacts of cultural heritage, or in art galleries as creative expressions. This dichotomy risks simplifying or exoticising the symbolic complexity of Dipo if not carefully addressed. The ritual's deep spiritual, social, and philosophical meanings can be obscured or misrepresented when artworks are detached from their cultural contexts. As Smith (2006) argues, curatorial practices must be guided by collaborative frameworks that centre indigenous voices and

cultural custodianship. In this light, any display of Dipo-inspired sculpture should involve Krobo traditional leaders, artists, and scholars to ensure authenticity and ethical representation. Such inclusive curation aligns with global calls for the decolonisation of museum spaces and the reassertion of indigenous epistemologies in heritage discourse.

Co-curation and community engagement are vital to ensuring that these sculptural interpretations maintain cultural integrity while appealing to diverse audiences. The evolving role of sculpture in representing Dipo also intersects with broader movements around decolonising art and re-centering indigenous voices. As Ghanaian and African artists increasingly assert control over how their cultures are depicted and understood, projects like the sculptural representation of Dipo serve not only as artistic endeavours but also as political acts of self-definition. They resist reductive portrayals of African traditions as static relics and instead present them as living, adaptable systems of meaning. In doing so, they affirm the agency of communities like the Krobo in shaping their own cultural futures. Contemporary artists engaged in representing the Dipo rite through sculpture often engage deeply with the community, conducting fieldwork, interviewing elders, and observing rituals with consent. This participatory approach not only enriches the authenticity of the work but also fosters community pride and continuity. It aligns with what Coombes (1994) terms “ethnographic collaboration in art,” where the boundaries between researcher, artist, and community member are blurred in the service of shared cultural expression. In summary, the role of sculpture in representing the Dipo rite reflects a broader shift in how Ghanaian cultural practices are being preserved, interpreted, and communicated in the 21st century. Sculpture offers a durable, visually compelling, and interpretative medium through which the symbolic richness of Dipo can be explored. It

complements oral and performative traditions while adding new layers of meaning and accessibility. As artists, scholars, and cultural custodians continue to engage with this medium, they open new pathways for understanding, preserving, and celebrating the Krobo people's unique contribution to Ghana's cultural heritage. The Dipo rite, once confined to ritual space, now finds new life in the public realm, transformed but not diminished, through the enduring language of art.

2.5 Representation of Cultural Practices through Visual Art.

Visual art has long served as a medium for documenting, preserving, and interpreting cultural practices. The representation of rituals, traditions, and societal values through artistic forms is a critical means of cultural expression that transcends time and geography. Scholars and practitioners alike recognize the transformative power of visual art in conveying the essence of intangible cultural heritage. Visual art, including sculpture, painting, and photography, has been used historically to document cultural practices, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Adinku (2016) emphasizes that art is not merely an aesthetic pursuit but a repository of historical and cultural narratives. By capturing rituals, ceremonies, and daily activities, visual art provides a tangible record of practices that might otherwise be lost to oral traditions. In the context of African traditions, for example, Ofori-Ansa (2019) highlights that sculptures and carvings often serve as visual embodiments of cultural beliefs and practices. Masks, statues, and other forms of visual art are used in festivals, rites of passage, and other ceremonies to symbolize spiritual and social meanings. These works of art are imbued with layers of symbolism, making them vital tools for cultural documentation and education.

2.5.1 Visual Art and Interpretation of Rites

Visual art plays a pivotal role in interpreting, preserving, and reimagining traditional rites, offering a visual language through which cultural meaning can be communicated across time and space. In the context of African societies, where oral traditions have long been central to the transmission of knowledge, visual representation provides an alternative yet complementary medium that ensures cultural practices remain vibrant and accessible. Ottenberg (2014) argues that visual art enables artists to dissect, reinterpret, and reconstruct the philosophies, emotions, and symbolic meanings embedded in ritual performances. This process of artistic engagement allows rituals, especially rites of passage such as puberty and initiation ceremonies, to be explored not just for their aesthetic qualities but for their sociocultural depth.

Among many African communities, such as the Krobo people of Ghana, rites like the Dipo ceremony embody values related to identity, morality, gender, and spiritual development. As Boakye and Nkrumah (2020) note, visually representing these rites through sculpture, painting, or multimedia installations makes the abstract elements of cultural practices tangible and intelligible to diverse audiences. These artistic interpretations serve dual functions: they offer educational tools that support intergenerational learning and cultural continuity, and they promote cross-cultural understanding by making indigenous rituals more relatable to outsiders.

Moreover, visual art has the unique capacity to foster critical reflection. It allows viewers, both insiders and outsiders, to engage with tradition not as fixed history, but as a living and evolving discourse. In this way, art challenges audiences to consider the relevance of traditional practices in contemporary society, bridging the gap

between past and present. Through museums, public installations, and digital platforms, visual art becomes a conduit through which rituals like Dipo are not only remembered but reinterpreted in ways that reflect the complexities and dynamism of modern African identity.

2.5.2 Sculpture in Cultural Representation

Sculpture, in particular, has emerged as a powerful medium for representing cultural practices. Its three-dimensional nature allows for dynamic and tactile interpretations of traditions. As Okeke-Agulu (2009) asserts, sculptural works often serve as bridges between the past and present, enabling contemporary audiences to engage with traditional practices in meaningful ways. For example, the use of sculpture to depict the phases of initiation rites, such as the Dipo rite among the Krobo people, offers a unique way to preserve and celebrate these practices. By translating ritual elements into sculptural forms, artists can create enduring representations that evoke the spiritual and social essence of the ceremonies (Adinku, 2016). Such representations not only preserve the cultural heritage but also provide a platform for dialogue about its relevance and adaptation in modern society.

2.6 Visual Art as a Medium for Cultural Preservation and Identity

Visual art is instrumental in preserving cultural identity, especially in the face of globalization and cultural homogenization. Artworks that depict cultural practices serve as reminders of shared heritage and collective memory. As Anatsui (2012) notes, art can act as a cultural anchor, helping communities maintain their identity amidst external influences. Moreover, visual art facilitates intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Artistic representations of practices like the Dipo rite provide younger generations with a visual and tangible connection to their

heritage. This connection fosters pride in cultural identity and encourages the continuity of traditional practices (Schroeder & Danquah, 2000).

2.7 Social, cultural, and religious significance of Dipo rite in the lives of the Krobo people.

The Dipo rite, a prominent cultural practice among the Krobo people of Ghana, occupies a central place in their social, cultural, and religious identity. It serves as a rite of passage that marks the transition of young girls into adulthood. The multifaceted significance of this tradition encompasses moral, social, and spiritual dimensions, making it a cornerstone of Krobo heritage.

2.7.1 Social Significance

The Dipo rite is pivotal in fostering communal identity and social cohesion among the Krobo people. As an initiation ceremony, it prepares young girls for the responsibilities of adulthood by teaching them essential life skills such as home management, child-rearing, and community service. Teyegaga (1985) highlights that the Dipo rite involves rigorous training sessions where initiates are taught proper etiquette, discipline, and respect for elders, which are crucial for maintaining harmony in Krobo society. Moreover, the ceremony functions as a platform for fostering solidarity among families and the broader community. According to Abbey et al. (2021), the communal participation in Dipo fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces traditional values. It also serves as an opportunity for elders to transmit the collective wisdom of the community to the younger generation, ensuring the continuity of Krobo cultural heritage.

2.7.2 Cultural Significance

Culturally, the Dipo rite encapsulates the artistic and symbolic essence of the Krobo people. The ceremony is marked by vibrant displays of traditional music, dance, and adornments that reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Krobo community. Adinku (2016) notes that the use of traditional attire, body markings, and beadwork during the Dipo rite is a powerful expression of Krobo identity. These elements not only beautify the initiates but also signify their readiness for adulthood and marriage. The Dipo rite also preserves oral traditions, as storytelling and ancestral teachings are integral to the initiation process. As Omenyo (2001) emphasizes, these oral narratives serve as a repository of Krobo history and values, connecting the present generation to their ancestral past. This cultural continuity underscores the significance of the Dipo rite in sustaining Krobo identity amidst the pressures of modernization.

2.7.3 Religious Significance

The Dipo rite is deeply rooted in the religious beliefs of the Krobo people. It is considered a sacred ritual that sanctifies young girls and prepares them for their roles as women in society. Boakye (2010) explains that the various phases of the Dipo rite, such as the pouring of libations and the invocation of deities, underscore its spiritual dimensions. These rituals are believed to invoke blessings and protection from ancestral spirits, ensuring the physical and spiritual well-being of the initiates. Additionally, the rite reinforces the moral framework of the Krobo community. According to Mbiti (1991), the emphasis on chastity and moral conduct during the Dipo rite reflects the community's commitment to upholding traditional values. The initiation process serves as a moral compass, guiding young girls to lead virtuous lives that align with the expectations of Krobo society.

2.8 Meaning of Sculpture and Types

Sculpture constitutes one of humanity's most profound modes of cultural expression, distinguished by its capacity to transform inert matter into embodiments of collective memory and spiritual consciousness. As defined by authoritative scholarship, sculpture encompasses "the art of representing in three dimensions any object, whether real or imagined, in tangible material" (Barrett, 2011, p. 17), existing along a continuum from utilitarian objects to autonomous aesthetic statements. This medium's unique power derives fundamentally from its tactile physicality and spatial presence, enabling sensory engagement beyond purely visual reception. Sir Herbert Read's seminal assertion that sculpture operates primarily as "an art of touch" (Read, 1956, p. 23) underscores its primal connection to haptic experience, a quality with particular resonance for documenting tactile ritual practices like the Dipo initiation.

The evolution of sculptural practice reveals persistent dialectics between tradition and innovation, material constraints and expressive freedom, individual creation and cultural transmission. Within this expansive history, sculpture consistently functions as a material archive of human transitions, making it uniquely suited to rendering the Krobo Dipo rite, a complex female initiation ceremony where sculptural forms materially encode rites of passage, communal identity, and ancestral cosmology. This review examines core theoretical frameworks defining sculpture's ontological status, classifies its diverse typologies, and situates these concepts within the specific context of documenting Ghana's Dipo rite through three-dimensional representation.

The philosophical foundations of sculpture reveal deep interconnections between material substance and cultural meaning. Traditional Eurocentric perspectives, historically dominant in art historiography, often privileged formalist criteria, mass,

volume, and spatial relations, while assimilating non-Western traditions into familiar aesthetic taxonomies. This perspective, as critically examined in Oxford Bibliographies (2018), frequently obscured indigenous epistemologies by imposing "European and North American master narratives" as universal evaluative frameworks. Contemporary scholarship increasingly adopts interdisciplinary approaches from anthropology, material culture studies, and postcolonial theory to redress this imbalance. Central to sculptural theory is the form-space duality, wherein the artwork actively shapes its surrounding environment while being reciprocally conditioned by it. Modernist theorists like Rudolf Wittkower argued that spatial dynamics, voids, interstices, and environmental integration, became as significant as solid mass in twentieth-century practice (Wittkower, 1977, p. 89). This conceptual shift birthed kinetic and environmental sculptures where movement and site-specificity redefined art's temporal and spatial boundaries, offering methodologies relevant to capturing the performative dimensions of rites like Dipo.

Materiality constitutes another critical theoretical axis, where choice of substance is never neutral but laden with cultural signification. Marble's translucency historically signified divinity in Classical and Renaissance works, while African wood carvings retain spiritual associations with ancestral forests (Visonà, Poynor, & Cole, 2000, p. 112). Germain Bazin's material iconology demonstrates how substances acquire "cultural biographies" through ritual use, transforming raw matter into active signifiers (Bazin, 1981, p. 45). Semiotic theory further illuminates sculpture's capacity to function as symbolic text. Iconographic elements, whether the abstracted forms of Yoruba ibeji figures or the geometric patterns in Krobo beadwork, operate as visual languages encoding societal values (Cole, 1982, p. 73). This symbolic potency renders sculpture particularly suited to documenting rites of passage, where

transitional states demand tangible manifestation. Alfred Gell's theory of material agency posits that ritual objects exercise social influence beyond symbolic representation, functioning as "participants" rather than mere representations within cultural systems (Gell, 1998, p. 21), a framework essential for interpreting Dipo's sacred stones and bead regalia.

Sculptural practices manifest through diverse typologies defined by technique, form, and medium, each offering distinct possibilities for ritual documentation. Technical processes form the primary classificatory framework. Subtractive methods like carving involve removing material (stone, wood, ivory) to reveal form, demanding foresight and respect for the material's inherent structure. Michelangelo famously conceptualised this as "liberating the figure imprisoned in the marble" (Duby & Daval, 2002, p. 134), a philosophy requiring deep material engagement. Modeling employs additive techniques with pliable substances like clay or wax, permitting spontaneity and revision, evident in Ghana's ancient Nok terracottas. Casting bridges these approaches through intermediary mold-making, enabling replication in durable metals like bronze, perfected in Benin royal portraiture (Visonà et al., 2000, p. 187). Contemporary innovations include assembly (welding, constructing) and digital fabrication, expanding sculpture into kinetic and virtual realms relevant to documenting dynamic rites. As Farag (2020) notes, "The sculptor's choice of technique fundamentally shapes the conceptual possibilities of the work" (p. 88), with each process offering distinct affordances for cultural representation.

Formal configurations further classify sculptural practice. Freestanding sculpture (in-the-round) asserts autonomy within space, exemplified by Akan goldweights or commemorative figures. Their independence makes them ideal for embodying deities

central to rituals (Harrison, 2009, p. 184). Relief sculpture projects from backgrounds, functioning as narrative devices on architectural elements and ritual objects. The Dipo rite's symbolic sequences could be documented through relief techniques capturing initiation stages hierarchically. Installation and environmental works transform viewer perception of space, with artists like El Anatsui using this form to evoke communal memory through material transformations (Anatsui, 2012, p. 32), conceptually apt for conveying Dipo's ceremonial environments. Kinetic sculpture incorporates movement, potentially metaphorising ritual dances' dynamism within Dipo ceremonies. Earthworks engage landscapes directly, resonating with site-specific Dipo rituals where geography holds mnemonic significance (Butler, 1975, p. 211).

Material innovation continually redefines these typologies. Polymer composites enable lightweight installations resistant to tropical degradation; 3D-printed bioplastics offer sustainable alternatives; augmented reality introduces "virtual sculptures" overlaying physical sites with digital narratives, potentially mapping Dipo's phases onto Krobo sacred geography (Rocky Mountain College, 2023). These advances necessitate rethinking sculpture's ontology while expanding its documentary potential.

Sculpture's socio-cultural functions centre on materialising collective memory and identity, particularly within rites of passage. Anthropological studies reveal its integral role: Bakongo minkisi figures containerise spiritual forces; Chokwe initiation masks regulate adolescent transitions; Greek kouroi mediate between life and death (Cole, 1982, p. 91; Harrison, 2009, p. 201). These functions align with Victor Turner's theory of ritual as "social drama," where symbolic objects become transitional anchors embodying liminal states (Turner, 1967, p. 93). Sculpture

operates within this framework as a tangible interface between human experience and cosmological order.

In West Africa, sculptural traditions frequently encode ancestral wisdom. Akan akuaba figures promote fertility; Dogon door lintels narrate creation myths; Yoruba ere ibeji commemorate twins (Visonà et al., 2000, pp. 154, 213). Crucially, such objects function as active participants in communal governance and spiritual practice, their creation often involving ritual protocols like libations to trees before felling wood (Cole, 1982, p. 67). This ritual embeddedness directly parallels the Dipo rite, where beadwork, sacred stones (Dipo-yo), and body adornments operate as sculptural elements within ceremonial performance. Krobo bead artists transform materials (glass, clay, seeds) into cultural texts signifying lineage and status through colour and pattern semiotics (Steegestra, 2004, p. 118).

Colonialism disrupted indigenous practices through missionary condemnation and museological appropriation. Yet resilience emerged through adaptive hybridization. Contemporary artists like El Anatsui repurpose discarded materials into monumental forms critiquing consumerism while invoking traditional techniques (Anatsui, 2012, p. 28), a strategy relevant for documenting Dipo amidst globalisation. Sculpture's mnemonic resistance makes it vital for cultural preservation against erasure. The Dipo initiation rite exemplifies sculpture's entanglement with ritual transition. Scholarly research identifies sacred stones (Dipo-yo), bead regalia, and body ornamentation as culturally coded sculptures central to the rite's efficacy (Adjaye, 1999, p. 11; Nukunya, 2003, p. 142). The Dipo-yo, granite rocks mythically tied to Krobo migration, are sat upon by initiates to verify virginity and receive ancestral blessings. These stones parallel monolithic sculptures globally: non-representational yet charged

with communal memory, transforming geology into cultural artefacts (Steegstra, 2004, p. 89). Beadwork constitutes another sculptural dimension. Krobo women craft intricate waist beads (dekornu) weighing up to 25kg, their layered accumulation during initiation visually encoding temporal progression (Adjaye, 1999, p. 18). Colours hold specific semantics: yellow signifies prosperity, blue represents affection, white denotes purity (Nukunya, 2003, p. 145). This chromatic vocabulary transforms the initiate's body into a living, evolving sculpture, a three-dimensional canvas embodying societal values.

Sculpting Techniques

Sculpting constitutes humanity's most ancient tangible expression of cultural consciousness, transforming inert substances into embodiments of collective memory through material intelligence. As defined by authoritative scholarship, sculpting encompasses "the art of representing in three dimensions any object, whether real or imagined, in tangible material" (Barrett, 2011, p. 17), existing along a continuum from utilitarian craft to autonomous aesthetic statements. This technical domain transcends mere manual dexterity, demanding profound understanding of material behaviours, structural physics, and cultural symbolism. The evolution of sculpting techniques reveals persistent dialectics between tradition and innovation, material constraints and expressive freedom, individual creation and cultural transmission. Within this expansive history, sculpting consistently functions as a knowledge system where technical processes encode cultural values, making it indispensable for documenting rites like Ghana's Dipo initiation.

Materiality as Meaning-Making

Sculpting techniques operate within complex theoretical frameworks that transcend practical execution. Traditional Eurocentric perspectives, historically dominant in art historiography, privileged formalist criteria, mass, volume, and spatial relations, while assimilating non-Western techniques into hierarchical taxonomies. This perspective, as critically examined in Oxford Bibliographies (2018), often obscured indigenous epistemologies by imposing "European and North American master narratives" as universal evaluative frameworks. Contemporary scholarship increasingly adopts interdisciplinary approaches from anthropology, material culture studies, and postcolonial theory to redress this imbalance. Central to sculptural theory is the material-signifier dialectic, where substance selection inherently communicates cultural narratives. Germain Bazin's material iconology demonstrates how materials acquire "cultural biographies" through ritual use, transforming raw matter into active signifiers (Bazin, 1981, p. 45). Alfred Gell's theory of material agency further posits that ritual objects exercise social influence beyond symbolic representation, functioning as "participants" within cultural systems (Gell, 1998, p. 21), a framework essential for interpreting techniques like Krobo beadwork where materiality embodies ancestral presence. The haptic epistemology of sculpting, knowledge gained through tactile engagement, distinguishes it from visual arts, creating embodied understanding crucial for documenting tactile rituals like Dipo's sacred stone ceremonies.

Table 3: Technical Processes and Ritual Documentation Applications

Technique	Material Traditions	Cultural Documentation Application
Subtractive Carving	Granite, wood, ivory	Rendering sacred stones (Dipo-yo); ancestral figures
Additive Modeling	Clay, wax, polymer clays	Community co-creation of bead forms; ritual object replication
Metal Casting	Bronze, aluminium, resin	Preserving fragile ceremonial artifacts; editioning symbolic items
Digital Fabrication	3D printing, CNC milling	Virtual preservation of endangered ritual objects; hybrid material

Materials for Sculpting

Artists have employed diverse materials, clay, stone, metal, wood, resin, and mixed media, to realize sculptural form, each offering distinct aesthetic, technical, and conceptual potential. Clay has long served as a foundational modeling medium due to its plasticity and immediacy. It grants artists freedom to shape and refine expressive details, and fired ceramics result in durable clay sculpture (Baugh, 2012). While some scholars observe clay's limitations in scale, they also note how its ephemerality and handcrafted qualities lend intimate authenticity to object production (Margolis, 2015). Stone, including marble, limestone, and granite, is deeply rooted in sculptural tradition. Marble's crystalline structure facilitates fine detail and soft finish but demands considerable technical skill and labor (Johnson, 2010). Granite, by contrast, is even more durable, suitable for monumental public art, yet also more demanding to carve. Lithic media have long been associated with permanence and monumentality (Carter, 2008), with recent research highlighting how stone choice aligns with contextual meanings, from civic monumentality to sacred ritual spaces (Meier, 2014).

Traditional Materials in Sculpture

Historically, sculpture was largely defined by its material constraints, with stone, wood, clay, and metal being the most commonly used media. These materials were not only abundant but also malleable under the right conditions, allowing artists to develop techniques that suited their inherent properties.

Stone is among the oldest materials used in sculpture, noted for its durability and permanence. Scholars like Boardman (1993) have documented its use in ancient Greek and Roman sculpture, where marble, in particular, became a preferred medium due to its fine grain and translucence. The use of tools such as the point chisel, claw chisel, and rasp allowed for detailed shaping and finishing (Tanner, 2003).

Wood was equally prominent in many African, Oceanic, and Asian traditions. Wood's ease of carving and availability made it suitable for ritualistic and decorative works. However, its susceptibility to decay and pests often limited its longevity. According to Vogel (1981), the spiritual significance of wood in African societies often outweighed concerns about its preservation, emphasizing the importance of material symbolism over durability.

Clay has served as a foundational material for both modelling and casting. In traditional societies, clay was used for terracotta sculptures and figurines. As Gettens and Stout (1966) observed, its plasticity allowed artists to work quickly and intuitively, making it a central material in early human figurative art.

Metal, particularly bronze, revolutionized sculpture through its strength and ability to capture fine detail. The lost-wax casting technique, traced back to ancient Mesopotamia and Benin (Dark, 1987), allowed artists to produce intricate hollow

forms. This process required sophisticated knowledge of mould-making and metallurgy, pointing to a close relationship between art and early technological innovation.

Contemporary Materials and Approaches

With industrialisation and technological advancement, sculptors have gained access to an expanded range of materials. Contemporary practices incorporate synthetic and experimental materials such as plastics, fibreglass, resins, concrete, and found objects, reflecting a shift towards conceptual and environmental concerns.

Plastics and Resins have become increasingly popular due to their versatility and adaptability. Artists like Claes Oldenburg and Eva Hesse have utilized these materials to challenge conventional notions of form and permanence in sculpture (Lucie-Smith, 2006). Thermoplastics and epoxy resins allow for casting, moulding, and layering techniques that were previously impossible with traditional materials.

Fibreglass, a lightweight and durable material, is often combined with resins to produce large-scale public art installations. Its capacity to mimic textures of metal, wood, or stone while being easier to transport and install has made it a preferred choice in contemporary outdoor sculpture (Curtis, 1999).

Concrete has re-emerged in modern sculpture, particularly in architectural and environmental art. As Foster (1996) notes, concrete allows for monumental expressions and has been widely adopted in Brutalist aesthetics. Its ability to be cast into diverse forms makes it suitable for both figurative and abstract sculptures.

Found objects and assemblage have blurred the line between sculpture and everyday life. Pioneered by artists such as Marcel Duchamp and later embraced by movements

like Arte Povera, found object sculpture repurposes industrial or domestic materials into art, often with socio-political commentary (Bishop, 2012).

Metal casting, particularly in bronze, offers sculptors ability to realize large-scale work that endures outdoors. The shift to bronze allowed for reproduction through lost-wax casting (Cort, 2011). Contemporary artists and conservationists emphasize bronze's resilience but also its vulnerability to patination and environmental pollutants (Martin & Birt, 2019). Aluminum emerges as a lightweight, corrosion-resistant alternative, with anodizing treatments improving finish and longevity (Chen & Ramirez, 2020). These advances have broadened public sculptural practice.

Wood remains vital in many cultural contexts due to its availability, warmth, and organic form. Species such as oak, teak, and mahogany are chosen for work requiring fine carving and resistance to decay (Nguyen, 2017). However, insect damage and rot pose challenges; therefore, effective surface treatments, linseed oil, beeswax, and modern polymer coatings, are necessary (Perez, 2018). Wood is frequently paired with metal or pigments to create hybrid works that exploit the material's physical juxtaposition (Duncan, 2021).

Synthetic materials, fiberglass, polyester resin, and polyurethane foam, enable lightweight, large-scale or modular works. These materials have revolutionized modern sculpture since the mid-20th century. Rosenthal (2013) charted how fiberglass and resin are celebrated for surface versatility and ease of finishing, though they require proper handling due to toxicity and environmental concerns. Recent research by Lee (2021) highlights the sustainability potential of eco-resins that reduce volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and incorporate biodegradable fillers.

Composite and mixed media practices are increasingly prevalent. Artists combine steel armatures, wire mesh, found objects, and digital fabrication technologies (CNC milling, 3D printing) to achieve innovative form and texture (Klein & Yates, 2022). Social-material theorists argue that this hybridity reflects cultural complexity, enabling sculptures to mediate between tradition and technology (Marshall, 2020).

In sum, the selection of materials in sculpture is a multidimensional process that encompasses both technical precision and conceptual resonance. Scholars have increasingly emphasised the importance of material-conceptual coherence, where the physical and aesthetic properties of a material are not chosen arbitrarily but are deeply aligned with the thematic intent of the sculptural work (Rosenthal, 2013). This means that artists consider not only how a material behaves or looks, but also what it signifies within cultural, historical, and symbolic contexts. For instance, clay may be used to evoke earthiness and tradition, while metal might suggest strength, endurance, or industrial modernity.

Alongside these conceptual considerations, environmental and conservation factors have become central to contemporary sculptural practice. As many sculptures are intended for public or outdoor display, durability against weather conditions and environmental stressors is paramount. Research by Perez (2018) and Lee (2021) underscores the increasing demand for sustainable materials that reduce ecological harm while maintaining aesthetic and structural integrity. This includes the use of eco-resins, biodegradable fillers, and innovative surface treatments that protect wood, metal, and synthetic composites from decay, rust, and UV degradation.

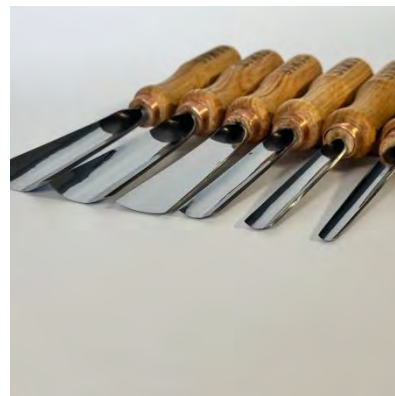
Furthermore, recent discourse highlights the rise of hybrid and digital-materialist approaches in sculpture. These practices reflect the fluidity of contemporary cultural

identities and artistic processes, combining traditional craftsmanship with emerging technologies such as 3D printing, CNC milling, and laser cutting. According to Klein and Yates (2022), these hybrid methods allow for new forms of expression that blur the lines between the digital and the tactile. Marshall (2020) supports this view, arguing that such material hybridity enables sculptures to act as cultural mediators, bridging tradition with innovation and embodying the layered complexities of contemporary life. Together, these insights point to a dynamic and evolving field in which material choices are inseparable from the cultural, environmental, and technological currents shaping the practice of sculpture today.

Tools in Sculpture Production

Tools are as integral as materials in shaping the final form of a sculpture. The choice of tools is determined by the nature of the material and the intended sculptural technique, be it carving, modelling, casting, or assembling.

Carving tools include chisels, mallets, rasps, and saws, traditionally used for subtractive processes in stone and wood. Modern versions of these tools now include power tools such as pneumatic hammers and angle grinders, which expedite the process and allow for greater precision (Graves, 1970).



Source: https://www.etsy.com/market/wood_chisels

Modelling tools are employed in working with pliable materials like clay, wax, or plastilina. These tools often include loop tools, ribs, knives, and spatulas. Their function is to shape, smooth, and add detail to the sculpted form. Armatures, which act as internal skeletons, are essential for supporting soft materials during modelling (Opie, 1996).



Source: <https://nobelarts.com/products/basic-modelling-tools>

Casting tools and apparatuses have evolved significantly, especially with the adoption of silicone and alginate moulds for fine detail replication. Kilns, furnaces, and crucibles are crucial for processes like bronze casting and ceramic firing. These tools demand a high level of technical knowledge, aligning sculpture with metallurgical and ceramic sciences (Hurst, 2007).



Source: <https://www.sustainlife.org/update-on-the-wood-fired-kiln/>

Digital tools are now widely used in sculpture production. 3D modelling software like Rhino and Blender, as well as 3D printers and CNC routers, enable sculptors to prototype and produce works with a degree of precision and complexity that would be unachievable by hand. This digital shift has introduced a new paradigm in sculptural production, blending artisanal and industrial methodologies (Paul, 2003).

Material Selection and Conceptual Frameworks

Material selection is not merely a technical decision but a conceptual one. As Gell (1998) argues, the material agency of a sculpture, the capacity of materials to signify, affect, and interact, must be understood within broader cultural and symbolic frameworks. For example, in African art, beads, cloth, and natural fibres carry spiritual and ancestral connotations, and their inclusion in sculpture is not arbitrary but deeply meaningful (Ross, 1998). Environmental sustainability has also influenced material choices in recent years. Artists have begun exploring eco-friendly alternatives, including biodegradable polymers, recycled metals, and locally sourced materials. Such practices reflect a growing consciousness around environmental ethics in the arts (Kagan, 2011). Moreover, the sensorial experience of materials, their texture, weight, temperature, and sound, plays a critical role in viewer engagement. Geurts (2002) discusses how bodily ways of knowing in African cultures are shaped by multisensory encounters with material forms, reinforcing the idea that sculpture is not merely visual but experiential.

Sculpture Installation

The installation of sculpture works occupies a central role in contemporary art practice, bridging the realms of artistic expression, spatial dynamics, audience engagement, and material durability. As a multifaceted process, installation

encompasses not only the physical placement of a sculptural object but also its conceptual positioning within a cultural, environmental, and social context.

The evolution of sculpture from classical statuary to immersive installations reflects broader shifts in artistic intention and public expectation. Historically, sculptures were primarily static, autonomous objects intended for formal display in galleries or religious contexts (Boardman, 1993). However, from the 20th century onwards, artists began to challenge these traditional paradigms. The work of Constantin Brâncuși and Henry Moore redefined how sculpture engaged with space, favouring organic forms and open environments (Read, 1982). Their works laid the groundwork for installation-oriented approaches that emphasise integration with natural and built surroundings.

The post-war period witnessed a surge in installation art that blurred boundaries between sculpture and architecture. According to Krauss (1979), this shift marked the emergence of a "sculptural field," where the object no longer stood alone but was embedded in an environment that co-constituted its meaning. The minimalist movement, championed by artists such as Donald Judd and Richard Serra, further reinforced the importance of scale, repetition, and spatial engagement (Meyer, 2001).

Spatiality and Site-Specificity

A significant body of literature addresses the spatial dynamics of sculpture installation. Site-specific art, a term popularised by Miwon Kwon (2004), emphasises the inseparability of a work from its location. Kwon categorises site-specificity into phenomenological, social/institutional, and discursive frameworks, arguing that contemporary artists often navigate between these to construct multi-layered meanings.

Site-specific sculptures are designed with particular locations in mind, often responding to the historical, cultural, or environmental attributes of a space. For example, Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982) in Washington, D.C., integrates sculptural form with the landscape to evoke emotional resonance and collective memory (Young, 1994). The process of installation, in this context, involves detailed site analysis, community consultation, and negotiation with local authorities (Senie, 1992).

Public Art and Community Engagement

The installation of sculpture in public spaces introduces questions of access, ownership, and community identity. Public art is typically commissioned with the intent of enhancing civic aesthetics, commemorating events, or fostering dialogue. As Hein (2006) argues, public sculpture should be understood not only as aesthetic intervention but as a form of cultural negotiation.

Community-based approaches have become central to the installation process, particularly in socially engaged art. Kester (2004) highlights dialogical aesthetics as a framework in which artists collaborate with communities to co-create works that reflect shared experiences. The installation becomes a participatory act, rather than a unilateral imposition. This methodology is evident in the works of artists like Suzanne Lacy and Krzysztof Wodiczko, whose projects involve public discourse and activism.

Curatorial Practices and Institutional Contexts

In gallery and museum settings, the installation of sculpture is governed by curatorial strategies that consider visual hierarchy, narrative sequencing, and visitor flow. Bishop (2005) notes that curators function as mediators between the artist's vision and the audience's interpretation. The placement of sculptures within these institutions

involves logistical planning, such as load-bearing analysis, lighting, and accessibility, as well as conceptual coherence within exhibitions. Temporary installations, such as biennales and art fairs, pose additional curatorial challenges. The Venice Biennale and Documenta are renowned for showcasing large-scale sculptural installations that require innovative display solutions (Filipovic, van Hal, & Ögüt, 2010). These contexts highlight the global mobility of sculpture and the adaptability required in installation practices.

Material Considerations and Conservation

Material durability is a critical factor in sculpture installation, particularly in outdoor settings. Different materials respond variably to weather, pollution, and human interaction. According to Gettens and Stout (1966), bronze and stone are traditionally favoured for their longevity, while modern materials like fibreglass and plastics require specific maintenance protocols. Conservation literature emphasises preventive measures in the installation process, such as the application of protective coatings, anchoring systems, and drainage solutions (Caple, 2000). The role of conservators has expanded to include not only the restoration of damaged works but also consultation during the installation phase to mitigate future deterioration (Muething & Ashley-Smith, 2014).

Technological Advancements and Digital Integration

Contemporary sculpture installation increasingly incorporates digital tools for design, visualisation, and structural analysis. Software such as Rhino and AutoCAD enables artists to simulate spatial configurations and test material behaviours before physical execution (Paul, 2003). Digital fabrication tools like 3D printers and CNC machines

have expanded possibilities in form-making, influencing both the scale and intricacy of installations.

Augmented Reality (AR) and projection mapping are also reshaping the viewer's experience of sculptural space. These technologies allow for interactive elements and real-time modification of the installation environment (Grau, 2003). The integration of digital media necessitates new modes of curation and maintenance, prompting interdisciplinary collaboration between artists, engineers, and IT specialists.

Interpretative Frameworks and Audience Experience

The interpretation of sculpture installations is shaped by the sensory, cognitive, and emotional responses of viewers. Sculpture, by virtue of its three-dimensionality, invites movement and bodily engagement. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests, the act of perception is embodied, and sculpture activates this bodily awareness through spatial navigation. Audience studies in museum and public contexts reveal that installation design influences dwell time, interpretative depth, and emotional resonance (Falk & Dierking, 2016). Elements such as scale, texture, and spatial arrangement guide viewer behaviour and meaning-making. Participatory installations further blur the distinction between artist and audience, transforming viewers into co-creators of the sculptural experience (Bishop, 2012).

Cultural and Ethical Dimensions

The installation of sculptures in culturally sensitive contexts requires ethical reflection. Postcolonial critiques challenge the transplantation of Eurocentric display models into non-Western settings (Enwezor, 2002). Issues of cultural appropriation, indigenous representation, and community consent are central to contemporary installation discourse.

Furthermore, the decolonisation of public space through sculpture is an emerging theme. Artists and activists have called for the removal or recontextualisation of monuments that perpetuate colonial or racist ideologies. This has led to the installation of counter-monuments and ephemeral interventions that provoke critical reflection (Young, 1994). The installation of sculpture works is a complex and dynamic practice that encompasses artistic, technical, social, and ethical dimensions. The literature reveals a trajectory from object-centred approaches to context-sensitive, participatory, and technologically integrated models. As sculpture continues to engage with diverse publics and evolving media, the process of installation must be responsive to spatial, cultural, and environmental contingencies. Interdisciplinary collaboration and critical engagement with community and context are thus essential to the future of sculptural installation.

2.9 Public Space as a Medium for Cultural Expression

Public spaces are essential arenas where cultural identity is both shaped and reflected, providing dynamic platforms for communities to share heritage, preserve collective memory, and strengthen identity. Scholars have emphasized the socially produced nature of these spaces, understanding that their meanings emerge not from design alone but from the cultural artifacts and practices they host (Lefebvre, 1991). Sculptures, murals, and monuments in public areas serve dual roles: as visual representations of cultural practices and as educational tools that communicate historical and social values. By placing cultural artifacts in accessible shared environments, including parks, town squares, and thoroughfares, public spaces invite people from diverse backgrounds to engage with and take ownership of these expressions. This democratizing approach is especially relevant for traditions like the

Krobo people's Dipo rite, as sculptural representations in communal settings bring the significance of the ritual to wider audiences and foster collective pride.

Public spaces also open avenues for dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity. Amin and Thrift (2002) identify these sites as adaptive environments that allow cultural expressions to evolve and stay relevant amid social change. In representing rites such as Dipo, through sculpture, artists can reimagine traditional narratives using modern material forms, reflecting evolving identities while honoring ancestral knowledge. Sculptural expression enables tangible engagement with rituals that may otherwise remain ephemeral: initiates' postures, ceremonial beads, sacred stones, and ritual seclusion become enduring visual narratives. According to Ottenberg (2014), art preserves rich symbolic and experiential layers embedded within rituals, ensuring they transcend time and geography. Sculptures, when placed in public space, become mnemonic devices, providing communal anchors of memory. They transform passers-by into witnesses of cultural narratives, reminding communities of their collective heritage (Miles, 1997). These installations also foster embodied memories; through their physical presence, size, posture, material, they invite viewers into tactile and emotional resonance with communal values (Putnam, 2000). Monumental statues depicting Dipo rites, for instance, impose visibility upon Kūbo identity, compelling public acknowledgment. Conversely, more intimate sculptures in community hubs stimulate reflection, dialogue, and storytelling at a personal level (Sharp, Pollock, & Paddison, 2005). By bringing indigenous rituals into the public realm, sculpture acts as a pedagogical tool. It bridges academic knowledge with visual literacy, inviting contextualized interpretation and prompting critical engagement with evolving identities (Kwon, 2004). Publicly displayed Dipo-inspired sculptures can facilitate intergenerational learning, especially in communities experiencing cultural erosion

due to urbanization, religious conversion, and reduced ritual participation (Steegstra, 2004). These artworks also carry a political dimension, challenging dominant cultural narratives by placing indigenous traditions in mainstream visibility (Amin, 2006). Nevertheless, public art is not neutral: its curation and interpretation shape meaning. The dialectic between ethnographic display and aesthetic objecthood presents curatorial challenges: should these artifacts be framed as cultural specimens or creative art? How can exhibition practices safeguard symbolic depth and cultural sovereignty? Co-curatorial models advocate for collaboration with cultural custodians, artists, and scholars to ensure authenticity and respect (Coombes, 1994; Karp & Lavine, 1991). Without such community involvement, artworks risk being reductive or misappropriated (Smith, 2006), and their narratives could become contested if local voices are sidelined (Young, 1994). Critical public art theory underscores that without complementary educational outreach, guided interpretation, signage, programming, public sculptures risk becoming once-off spectacles devoid of meaningful engagement (Hein, 2006; Sharp et al., 2005).

In sum, public sculptures of rites like Dipo operate along multiple interlinked dimensions. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) spatial theory, they embed memory in space; they democratize culture; foster dialogues between tradition and modernity (Amin & Thrift, 2002); activate communal bonding through shared memory (Putnam, 2000); narrate identity (Miles, 1997); and demand inclusive curatorial ethics (Smith, 2006). As physical manifestations of cultural heritage, they transform everyday public spaces into visible narratives of identity, enabling both community reaffirmation and external recognition. These sculptures, when developed through participatory processes, have the potential to educate, commemorate, and assert cultural dignity, making them powerful mediators between past, present, and future.

2.9.1 How Public Art Influences Cultural Memory and Identity

Public art significantly contributes to the construction and preservation of cultural memory and identity. Connerton (1989) posits that cultural memory is sustained through performative acts and material representations, with public art serving as a tangible medium for collective remembrance. Monuments and sculptures, for instance, encapsulate historical narratives and serve as markers of identity, anchoring community values in physical form. In the African context, public art has been instrumental in preserving indigenous practices and countering the erasure of cultural heritage caused by colonial influences. An example is the erection of sculptures that celebrate traditional rites, such as the Dipo, which help reaffirm cultural identity while educating younger generations about their heritage (Nkrumah & Addae, 2020). Through such representations, public art bridges the gap between oral traditions and visual documentation, ensuring that cultural practices remain relevant in modern settings. Public art also stimulates emotional and intellectual engagement, creating opportunities for reflection and dialogue.

Young (1994), asserts that public sculptures and installations evoke collective emotions and encourage communities to confront their histories and identities. In the case of the Dipo rite, sculptural representations in public spaces could provoke discussions about its relevance and adaptation, fostering a deeper understanding of Krobo cultural values. Furthermore, public art contributes to place-making and the cultivation of cultural landscapes. As Mitchell (2003) asserts, public spaces adorned with cultural symbols transform into sites of memory and identity, where communities feel a sense of belonging and connection to their heritage. This transformation is especially significant in urban settings, where traditional practices risk marginalization. By integrating visual representations of rites such as Dipo into

public spaces, communities can reclaim their cultural narratives and assert their identities in diverse environments. Public spaces serve as powerful mediums for cultural expression, enabling the display of artifacts and practices that reflect and reinforce community identities. Through the strategic use of public art, communities can preserve cultural memory, foster dialogue, and assert their heritage in contemporary contexts. For the Krobo people, integrating sculptural representations of the Dipo rite into public spaces offers a unique opportunity to celebrate their traditions while engaging broader audiences. This potential of public art bridging the past and present, ensures that cultural practices remain relevant and meaningful for future generations.

2.10 Public Space as a Liminal Holding for Cultural Artifacts

Public sculptures of indigenous rites have become increasingly visible in public spaces worldwide, stimulating dialogue on cultural representation, community engagement, and heritage ownership. This literature review explores how communities perceive and claim cultural ownership of sculptural representations of indigenous rituals in public spaces, focusing on Tinbergen's core domain of community perception. It synthesizes perspectives from cultural geography, visual anthropology, museology, and heritage studies to examine how local communities interpret, accept, or contest sculptural depictions of their sacred practices. Emphasis is placed on the conditions under which these sculptures are perceived as authentic, culturally meaningful, and empowering, versus when they are seen as misrepresentative or appropriative.

Henri Lefebvre's (1991) thesis that space is socially produced has been foundational to understanding public art as more than physical installations. Through public

sculptures, spaces become stages where memory and identity unfold. Lefebvre stresses that these spaces are shaped by collective practices, not merely infrastructure. In this paradigm, sculptural representations of indigenous rituals serve as semiotic anchors that allow communities to negotiate meaning. The public arena becomes a space of liminality, where artifact and observer intersect to enact identity and memory (Lefebvre, 1991).

Amin and Thrift (2002) have described public spaces as inherently dynamic, sites of continuous reinterpretation in response to social change. Sculptures in public spaces are thus not static; their meaning evolves as community frames shift. Framing the ritual object within these spaces renders the sculpture a symbolic node where identities are reaffirmed or contested. Yet, such representations can only yield meaningful engagement when they resonate with local perception and heritage. Scholars emphasize the need to understand the ‘public’ contextualized through lived community experience, not just urban geography (Sandercock & Attili, 2014).

A central question facing public cultural sculptures is whether they are seen as legitimate cultural artefacts or as cultural appropriation. Smith (2006) defines cultural heritage as the framework through which communities claim their identity; without community support, such heritage is vulnerable to external appropriation. Coombes (1994) contends that display context, the narratives built around a sculpture, is critical: without co-curatorship, the object may become an exotic spectacle rather than a valid embodiment of tradition. Young (1993) argues that memorials and monuments become contested sites when their meaning diverges from community intent. Case studies support the idea that community involvement in commissioning, design, and dedication is critical to perceived legitimacy. In New Zealand, for example, Maori-led

sculpture installations that followed whakawhanaungatanga (relational process) garnered stronger community endorsement than top-down commissions (Bennett & Charman, 2015). Similarly, Native American communities that co-designed warrior-girl sculptures report stronger sense of authenticity than mainstream museum-sponsored projects (Hayden & Silverman, 2006).

These findings imply that community perception is deeply informed by cultural ownership. When the community sees a sculpture as co-authored and contextually grounded, they are more likely to see it as a living marker rather than a museum artefact. This resonates with Ajunga (2019), whose Ugandan study demonstrates that youths from the Acholi community felt “heard” when mural works reflecting their matrilineal rite were designed in community workshops, highlighting the link between process and acceptance.

Monumental sculptures can express power through visibility but can also suppress minority histories when the process excludes them (Young, 1993; Kwon, 2004). Public art is inherently political. The choice of whom to depict, elders, women, initiates, or leaders, influences public memory construction. Monumentalist works depicting heroes are lauded, but works portraying subaltern rituals have sparked controversy when local power brokers are marginalised or when gendered agency is excluded “by design” (Gorman, 2016). Schooled in relational aesthetics, Kwon (2004) critiques site-specific works that neglect community continuity. Public sculptures often claim a universal voice, but without local context, they risk misrepresenting the very culture they try to honour. Similarly, Gorman (2016) notes that sculptures depicting indigenous rituals can be seen as tokenistic if wrought by outsiders without deep community collaboration.

Public sculptures are typically permanent or long-term. While oral rituals are temporal and ephemeral, making space for temporality in static art can be challenging. As Miles (1997) argues, monuments must establish a dialogue between permanence and lived time. The tension between static stone and transient rituals is therefore meaningful only when the sculpture signals "continued belonging", for instance, through inscriptions, orientations, or ceremonial usage. Sharp et al. (2005) highlight the importance of ritual reactivation, when sculptures are used as focal sites for ongoing rites or commemorations. When communities treat these sculptures as active cultural nodes, holding ceremonies, pilgrimages, or dedication ceremonies, public space transcends its static boundaries and becomes a living cultural platform. Putnam (2000) and Sandercock & Attili (2014) echo this: the civic bonds formed through repeated performances at the site infuse community memory into the stone.

Public sculptures of ritually symbolic characters can work pedagogically as A-frame artefacts, they can be interpreted visually and narratively by both formal and informal audiences. Lukinbeal and Zimmermann (2011) describe how such sculptures become "open texts" that foster critical dialogue on culture. Artwork with complementary plaques, QR codes, or digital media become sites of multilayered learning, citizen heritage platforms. However, Hein (2006) warns that public sculptures may "read" superficially if interpretive aids are lacking. A sculpture of a female initiation ritual might simply evoke beauty without educating on sacred meaning. Local communities may feel "othered" if the iconography does not reflect lived traditions (Nolan & Feinberg, 2010). Context-rich storytelling and active cultural programming ensure the sculptures are seen as theirs, not relics from the outside world.

The Importance of Sculpture

Sculpture, as a form of visual art, has held significant cultural, social, spiritual, and educational roles across civilizations. As three-dimensional art, sculpture interacts with space and engages viewers more directly than many other forms of art, serving as a bridge between aesthetics, function, and symbolic communication. The importance of sculpture extends beyond its physical form to influence public discourse, commemorate history, express identity, and shape communal environments.

Historical and Cultural Relevance

Sculpture has historically played a critical role in expressing societal values, religious beliefs, and political ideologies. In ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Greece, and Rome, sculpture was used to honour deities, glorify leaders, and record cultural narratives (Honour & Fleming, 2009). African traditional sculpture, as exemplified in the works of the Yoruba, Ashanti, and Dogon, holds deep spiritual and ritual significance. As Vogel (1997) notes, African sculptures often functioned within religious and communal rites, serving as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual worlds.

In Ghana, particularly among groups like the Krobo, sculpture functions both as artefact and living heritage. The Dipo rite, for instance, has inspired sculptural works that symbolise female initiation, community identity, and social transformation (Essel, 2021). Sculpture thus preserves intangible cultural knowledge and becomes a pedagogical resource for intergenerational education.

Public Memory and Monumentality

One of sculpture's enduring functions is to commemorate significant events or individuals. Public monuments and memorials are sculptural forms that serve as focal points for national identity, collective memory, and historical consciousness. According to Young (1993), monuments can solidify collective memory while also stimulating public debate about whose history is being represented. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the U.S. or Ghana's Independence Arch serve not only as artistic installations but as cultural texts that communicate values and ideologies. Moreover, contemporary practices have challenged static conceptions of monumentality, moving towards interactive, participatory sculptural works. Kwon (2004) argues that site-specific sculpture and installation art have evolved to involve community engagement, reflecting the shifting dynamics of memory, identity, and space.

Social and Political Expression

Sculpture has long been a medium through which artists challenge dominant ideologies and voice social critique. Gell (1998) emphasises that artworks are not just objects but agents in social relationships. Political sculptures, whether protest art, anti-monuments, or guerrilla installations, are used to challenge injustice, resist oppression, and inspire change. In post-colonial contexts, sculpture helps to reclaim indigenous voices and question colonial narratives. Oguibe (2004) asserts that contemporary African sculpture engages critically with history, identity, and modernity, often juxtaposing traditional forms with contemporary materials or themes. The power of sculpture in this regard lies in its capacity to visually negotiate tensions between tradition and innovation.

Educational and Cognitive Significance

Sculpture also plays a key role in arts education and cognitive development. Working with sculpture fosters spatial reasoning, tactile sensitivity, and problem-solving skills. Dewey (1934) advocates for art as experience, where the process of making and interacting with art contributes to holistic learning. In educational institutions, sculptural practice helps students understand form, structure, and design thinking through experiential engagement. The integration of sculpture in curricula also reinforces cultural literacy and critical thinking. As Sullivan (2010) notes, art practice can be a form of inquiry. Sculptural education thus encourages reflective practice and the development of interpretative skills. In Ghanaian colleges of education, the inclusion of sculpture in Creative Arts curricula helps to contextualise artistic knowledge within local traditions and contemporary realities (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

Aesthetic and Sensory Engagement

Unlike two-dimensional art, sculpture's three-dimensionality invites physical movement and sensory exploration. It interacts with light, space, and texture in ways that make it more immersive. According to Krauss (1979), modern sculpture broke from classical form to explore new materials, configurations, and sensory dialogues. The viewer becomes part of the spatial dynamic, enhancing aesthetic experience. This interactivity is especially significant in public art contexts, where sculpture contributes to place-making and social engagement. The aesthetics of sculpture can evoke emotion, curiosity, or contemplation, thus enriching public spaces both visually and psychologically (Miles, 1997).

Economic and Touristic Value

Sculpture also holds economic value, contributing to the creative economy and cultural tourism. Cities with strong public art programs, such as Accra, Cape Town, or Lagos, use sculpture to beautify urban spaces and attract visitors. According to Florida (2002), the presence of creative artworks like sculpture enhances a city's livability and cultural capital. Local craftspeople and sculptors benefit economically through commissions, exhibitions, and art markets. Community-based sculpture projects, often tied to festivals or heritage initiatives, foster local enterprise and capacity building (UNESCO, 2010). In Ghana, sculptural depictions of rites like Dipo have drawn attention not only for cultural reasons but also for their potential to boost cultural tourism (Aryeetey, Kwabong, & Acquah, 2018).

Environmental and Material Innovation

Contemporary sculptors are increasingly exploring sustainable practices, utilising recycled materials, earth-friendly substances, or biodegradable media. The turn to eco-conscious sculpture reflects broader environmental concerns. According to Gablik (1991), art must become a force for ecological renewal. This has led to the development of land art, installation works using organic materials, and participatory environmental sculpture. This material experimentation opens possibilities for sculptural innovation. Resin, found objects, metal alloys, and fibre composites now accompany traditional media like wood, stone, and clay. These new materials offer sculptors expanded aesthetic vocabularies and challenge conventional production methods (Brett, 2005).

Psychological and Spiritual Functions

Sculpture has long been connected to rituals, healing, and psychological symbolism. Jungian analysis often explores how sculpture externalises archetypes and collective unconscious symbols (Jung, 1964). In therapeutic settings, sculpting is used for trauma processing and emotional expression. In African contexts, spiritual function remains central. Rattray (1927) observed that Asante sculptures were deeply embedded in religious cosmology. Similarly, Krobo sculptures linked to rites like Dipo convey ancestral presence, initiation power, and communal well-being. The tangible form of sculpture serves as a repository of metaphysical beliefs and communal memory. The importance of sculpture spans multiple dimensions, cultural, educational, economic, and spiritual. From ancient monuments to contemporary installations, sculpture remains a dynamic medium through which societies represent, reflect, and reimagine themselves. It is an art form that not only beautifies but also teaches, commemorates, challenges, and heals. Its materiality and spatiality give it unique power in the visual arts, and its ability to evolve with changing cultural contexts ensures its ongoing relevance

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the Research Methodology, Materials and Methods adopted for the study. It entails the Research Approach, Research Design, Population, Sampling Technique, Data Analysis as well as Material, Tools and Equipments.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted artistic research as its methodological approach. This choice recognises creative practice as a primary mode of knowledge generation where insights emerge through material engagement, aesthetic decision-making, and critical reflection rather than solely through verbal or textual analysis. Artistic research considers the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the art is created and experienced. Artistic research often combines art, science and humanities to create new perspectives. Artistic research positions the studio as a legitimate site of inquiry where knowledge production occurs through the very act of creating (Barone & Eisner, 2012; McNiff, 2008). As Sullivan (2010) argues, visual arts practice generates distinct forms of understanding that complement and extend traditional research methodologies. This approach is particularly suited to investigating culturally embedded practices like the Dipo rite, where symbolic meanings often transcend verbal articulation and reside in sensory, embodied, and visual domains (Leavy, 2015). The artistic research framework integrates three interconnected epistemological strands: practice-led research where studio processes generate insights inaccessible through purely discursive methods (Haseman, 2006; Smith & Dean, 2009); ethnographic sensibility requiring deep cultural immersion to

contextualise artistic interpretations (Pink, 2015; Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2015); and aesthetic intersubjectivity acknowledging meaning co-creation between artist, participants, and materials through embodied engagement (Gerber, & Scotti, 2015; Brown, 2011). This triangulated framework addresses critiques of artistic research by embedding rigorous contextualisation and ethical accountability while honouring the transformative potential of aesthetic experience described by Gadamer (1975/2003) as leaving participants fundamentally changed. The methodology thereby transcends conventional qualitative boundaries by treating sculptural production as both data generation and analysis, where clay becomes an active interlocutor in cultural understanding (O'Donoghue, 2011; Coemans & Hannes, 2017).

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a studio-based research design to guide the sculptural production of selected phases of Dipo rite. The pre-studio phase, lasting approximately four months, focused on cultural immersion, contextual understanding through document review, and technical preparation including anatomical studies and material experimentation. The production phase, spanning nine months, constitutes the core of the research, involving iterative sculpting cycles, ongoing dialogue with participants, structured observation of relevant cultural practices, and continuous documentation through studio journals and visual records and identifying a suitable place for mounting the sculpture pieces. This phase operationalises the practice-led research component, where knowledge generation occurs through the material process of sculpting itself (Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Nelson, 2013). Crucially, this phase incorporates deliberately structured rupture points, moments where artistic practice actively confronts ethnographic data and cultural complexities, creating

methodological pivots for reflection and adaptation (Leavy, 2014; Gerber, Templeton & Myers, 2012).

The post-studio phase, extending over five months, focused on community validation through exhibitions and feedback sessions, thematic reflection on the entire process, and scholarly interpretation. This phase acknowledges the importance of returning research outcomes to the community for validation, a principle emphasised in decolonising methodologies (Smith, 2012; Chilisa, 2012) and participatory arts research (Foster, 2012; Vaughan, 2014). The embedded nature of the design reflects concept of the "aesthetic epistemic" where knowledge resides in "pre-verbal sensory-based, embodied perceptual and imaginal knowledge," positioning the clay work as a form of epistemological translation.

3.3 Research Population:

The research engaged a carefully defined population comprising four distinct stakeholder strata within the Krobo traditional area of Ghana's Eastern Region, specifically focusing on Somanya in the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality. This stratification recognises the Dipo rite as a multivocal cultural text requiring polyphonic interpretation from diverse perspectives integral to its meaning and transmission (Geurts, 2002; Nukunya, 2003). The primary strata include Chiefs (N=4), serving as custodians of ritual authority and historical continuity whose perspectives provide insight into the rite's structural and governance dimensions (Awedoba, 2000; Krobo Scholars Collective, 2021). Elders (N=4), functioning as living repositories of procedural knowledge and oral history, offer deep contextual understanding of symbolic meanings and ritual evolution (Adjaye, 1997; Odotei, 2002). Dipo Practitioners (N=6), including priestesses, trainers, and ritual specialists

actively involved in conducting the rites, provide experiential knowledge of the enactment and embodied dimensions of Dipo (Henderson, 2018). The General Public (N=10), comprising community members with lived experience of Dipo (including both initiates and non-initiates), offers perspectives on the rite's contemporary social significance, personal impact, and community perceptions (Akyeampong, 2000; Coe, 2005). This population definition consciously reflects the Krobo conception of communal personhood, where identity and knowledge emerge through relational networks rather than individual autonomy, necessitating collective representation in any artistic interpretation seeking authenticity (Gyekye, 1998; Menkiti, 1984). The inclusion of non-initiates and a spectrum of community voices responds to scholarly findings that globalisation and social change have altered traditional perspectives on puberty rites (Henderson, 2018; Ampofo, 2001), capturing emergent tensions and adaptations. Geographical focus on Somanya ensures manageable scope and acknowledges internal diversity within Krobo society while providing sufficient depth.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was deliberately structured to reflect the stratified nature of the research population, ensuring representational breadth across the key cultural actors involved in the Dipo rite within the Krobo traditional area, specifically Somanya in the Lower Manya Krobo Municipality. A total of 24 participants were purposively selected from four stakeholder groups based on their distinct yet interrelated roles in the conception, transmission, and contemporary perception of the Dipo rite, and also representing the accessible population. This sample was carefully constructed to enable a nuanced, polyvocal interpretation of the rite as both a cultural practice and a symbolic performance.

The breakdown of the sample includes: Chiefs (N=4), who offered insights into the institutional and historical governance of the ritual; Elders (N=4), whose oral histories and procedural memory provided deep contextual grounding; Dipo Practitioners (N=6), including priestesses and trainers who contributed embodied and experiential knowledge of the rite's performance; and General Public (N=10), encompassing both initiates and non-initiates whose perspectives captured the social meanings, evolving perceptions, and community relevance of the practice in contemporary Krobo society. This purposive sampling approach allowed for the gathering of rich, diverse data while maintaining a focused and manageable scope for in-depth qualitative analysis.

3.5 Sampling Technique

A dual-layered purposive sampling strategy integrates homogeneous and convenience sampling approaches to address the distinct characteristics and accessibility pathways of the identified stakeholder groups, ensuring both information richness and practical feasibility. For the Chiefs, Elders, and Dipo Practitioners, homogeneous purposive sampling is employed. Selection is based on explicit, culturally relevant criteria: a minimum of fifteen years' experience in their specific role; direct, verifiable involvement in at least three complete Dipo cycles; and formal recognition by the Krobo Traditional Council or relevant community structures as legitimate knowledge holders (Patton, 2015; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This approach ensures the selection of "information-rich cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 264) possessing deep, authoritative knowledge capable of illuminating Dipo's intricate "cultural heritage, vitality, and diversity" (Krobo Scholars Collective, 2021, p. 45). For the General Public cohort, convenience-volunteer sampling is utilised. Recruitment occurs through community noticeboards, local organisations, and word-of-mouth, with selection based on self-

identification of relevant experience (as initiates or community members), residency within Somanya for at least ten years, age (18+), and willingness to engage iteratively with the studio process over time (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This pragmatic approach accommodates access constraints inherent in community-based research while prioritising participant agency and willingness (Robinson, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Crucially, sampling procedures incorporate cultural vetting through liaison with the Krobo Traditional Council and designated community representatives, respecting indigenous protocols identified as essential in research involving traditional knowledge and rites (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012). The final participant numbers reflect principles of data saturation within each stakeholder group (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017) while acknowledging logistical limitations inherent in longitudinal, studio-based research involving multiple forms of engagement. The hybrid approach balanced the methodological rigor of this study with cultural responsiveness, acknowledging Patton's (2015) assertion that "purposeful sampling must be consistent with the aims and assumptions inherent in the use of either method" (p. 272).

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection employs a suite of integrated instruments (photography, semi-structured interviews, document review and observation deployed strategically across the three studio phases, creating a dialogic relationship between artistic practice and cultural context that generates diverse yet interconnected forms of data. During the Pre-Studio Phase, documentary review was used, involving systematic analysis of scholarly literature on Krobo history, culture, and iconography (Odotei, 2002; Nukunya, 2003); photographs of Dipo regalia, adornment, and participants (Geurts,

2002; Henderson, 2018); ethnographic accounts detailing ritual sequences and symbolic interpretations (Adjaye, 1997; Awedoba, 2000); and relevant art historical texts on African portraiture and ritual art (Visonà, Poynor, & Cole, 2000; Sieber & Herreman, 2000). This creates essential "clear references" (Kärkkäinen, 2024, para. 5) for informed representation. Concurrently, an Anatomical Reference Database was compiled, collating 3D skull scans for structural accuracy, facial plane studies for proportional mapping, and ethnic-specific anthropometric data where available, addressing the fundamental need for anatomical foundations emphasised in portraiture (Kärkkäinen, 2024; Simblet, 2001).

In the Production Studio Phase, three primary instruments operate synergistically. A Structured Observation Framework guided the documentation of ritual performances during key Dipo stages (where permissible and ethically appropriate), focusing specifically on facial expressions in ceremonial contexts, the kinesthetic dynamics of body adornment application, and the interplay between individual participants and the ritual collective (Pink, 2015; Emerson et al., 2011). This instrument informs "sensory/kinesthetic/embodied ways of knowing" (Chilton et al., 2015, p. 15) crucial for sculptural interpretation. Semi-Structured Interview Guides facilitate deeper exploration with participants, probing the personal significance of Dipo (especially for initiates), the symbolic interpretation of specific facial adornments and expressions, perceptions of identity transformation through the rite, and responses to initial sculptural sketches or maquettes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Roulston, 2010). These interviews complement visual data with "participants' stories" (Riessman, 2008, p. 8), enriching understanding. Central to this phase is the Studio Journaling System, a multi-modal documentation practice capturing material resistances and breakthroughs encountered while sculpting, the researcher's emotional responses to participant

dialogues and ritual observations, ethical dilemmas in representation, and reflexive analysis of artistic decisions (Sullivan, 2010; Gray & Malins, 2004). This journal documents the "intrinsic immersive and reflective experience" (McNiff, 1998, p. 29) of artistic research.

The Post-Studio Phase utilises two key instruments. Community Feedback Sessions, structured as focus group discussions centred around the completed sculptures or photographic documentation, explore perceptions of sculptural interpretations, cultural authenticity, emotional resonance, and the perceived success of the artworks in conveying significant aspects of Dipo (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Chilisa, 2012). This embodies principles of "intersubjective transcendence" (Viega, 2016, p. 112) and community validation. Semi structured Interviews were utilized to gather views of the Krobo people of Somanya with key participants (especially practitioners and elders). Participants' responses to seeing the artistic process and decision-making unfold provide rich data on their interpretations of material choices, moments of rupture or difficulty, and the negotiation between cultural forms and artistic expression.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis employs a concurrent triangulation design integrating two distinct but interdependent analytical approaches operating recursively throughout the research process: visual analysis of the sculptural process and outcomes, and thematic analysis of textual, verbal, and observational data.

The Visual Analysis Framework adapts and extends Panofsky's (1939/1972) three-tiered iconological analysis specifically for the context of sculptural practice and cultural interpretation. At the Pre-iconographic Description level, the formal properties of the sculpted faces are meticulously documented and analysed, including

proportion, texture, volume, spatial relationships, and technical execution details (tool marks, surface treatment, material qualities) (Kärkkäinen, 2024; Simblet, 2001). Techniques like comparative morphological mapping using reference scans ensure structural fidelity (O'Donoghue, 2011). Iconographic Analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting symbolic elements integrated into the sculptures, such as specific Adinkra motifs, representations of ritual scarification or body painting, hairstyles, and the cultural coding of facial expressions captured in clay (Geurts, 2002; Visonà et al., 2000). This level explicitly references "Krobo artistic elements embedded in Dipo" (Henderson, 2018, p. 87). The deepest level, Iconological Interpretation, seeks to understand the cultural narratives, transformation metaphors, and philosophical concepts materially embodied in the sculptures, alongside the intersubjective meanings co-created through the process between artist, participants, and community viewers (Panofsky, 1939/1972; Sullivan, 2010). This framework incorporates aesthetic response documentation, capturing viewer reactions during work-in-progress showings, acknowledging that artistic meaning emerges through "dynamic interactive aesthetic phenomena" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 250).

The Thematic Analysis Procedure rigorously applies Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) reflexive approach to the rich textual data from interviews, field notes, observation records, and studio journals. The process involves six phases: deep Familiarisation through repeated reading/listening and note-taking; systematic Initial Coding of semantic content and latent meaning across the dataset using NVivo software for organisation (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006); iterative Theme Development by collating codes and identifying patterns across data types; critical Theme Review checking coherence against the dataset and refining through discussion and preliminary member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); Thematic

Mapping visually organising themes and sub-themes and exploring relationships; and crucially, Arts-Based Synthesis where emerging themes directly inform ongoing or subsequent sculptural decisions, and material outcomes provoke new analytical questions for the textual data (Leavy, 2015; Coemans & Hannes, 2017). This embodies and adapts Gerber et al.'s (2012) concept of "deductive thematic analysis of written accounts" for practice-led contexts, ensuring the analytical dyad addresses the identified "critical gap" in documenting the artistic elements of cultural practices (Sieber & Herreman, 2000, p. 15) while honouring indigenous meaning systems. Analysis is not a final phase but an ongoing, recursive process embedded within the studio practice.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of this study were ensured through methodological transparency, consistency, and culturally grounded verification processes. Prior to data collection, an official introductory letter was formally obtained from the University of Education, Winneba, authorising the researcher to conduct the study. This letter was presented to traditional authorities, community leaders, and participants before entering the field, thereby legitimising the research process and facilitating trust, access, and informed participation. Reliability was enhanced through the consistent application of semi-structured interviews and participatory observation protocols across all field sites. Interview guides were used uniformly while allowing flexibility for participants to express culturally embedded knowledge in their own terms. Audio recordings and detailed field notes were maintained to ensure accuracy and enable cross-checking of data. Validity was strengthened through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources (interviews, observation, and

artistic practice), and participant verification. Participants were given opportunities to clarify meanings, review interpretations, and confirm the accuracy of representations derived from their narratives and embodied practices. In the artistic component of the study, preliminary sketches, maquettes, and conceptual interpretations were shared with key informants to ensure that visual outcomes authentically reflected cultural meanings and lived experiences associated with the Dipo rite. These strategies collectively enhanced the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to established university ethical guidelines while extending ethical practice through principles informed by decolonising research and indigenous methodologies. Ethical clearance was supported by the official introductory letter from the University of Education, Winneba, which was obtained before fieldwork commenced and presented to all relevant stakeholders to secure permission and informed consent. Ethical practice was structured around four interrelated dimensions. Representational integrity was prioritised by avoiding cultural stereotyping and reductive imagery. Sculptural representations were developed either as individualised portraits, with explicit participant consent, or as composite forms informed by multiple narratives. Participants were actively involved in reviewing preliminary sketches and maquettes, ensuring collaborative approval of likeness, symbolism, and meaning. This approach respected cultural specificity and local interpretations of identity. Knowledge reciprocity was ensured through reciprocal engagement with the community. Participants and cultural custodians contributed to exhibition texts and interpretive narratives, reinforcing shared ownership of knowledge. Skills-transfer

workshops in basic sculptural techniques were offered to interested community members, and clear agreements were established regarding attribution and potential royalties from any future commercial use of the artworks. These measures addressed power asymmetries often associated with artistic ethnography.

Ritual sensitivity guided engagement with sacred and restricted knowledge. Visually representing prohibited ritual elements was deliberately avoided based on guidance from recognised Dipo practitioners and elders. Consultations were conducted at critical stages of artistic decision-making, and culturally appropriate practices, such as the performance of libation before studio sessions involving sacred imagery, were observed in accordance with local customs. Material symbolism was also recognised as ethically significant. Where possible, sculptural materials such as clay were sourced through culturally approved channels. The disposal of material remnants, including shavings and failed works, followed ritually appropriate methods advised by elders. Studio tools used in producing representations of sacred figures were symbolically consecrated, acknowledging indigenous understandings of material agency. Overall, ethical practice in this study was not treated as a procedural requirement alone but as an integral component of methodological rigour. By embedding cultural responsibility, reciprocity, and respect within both the research and artistic processes, the study responds to contemporary debates on the cultural sustainability of the Dipo rite and carefully negotiates the tension between artistic licence and indigenous accountability.

3.9. Materials, Tools, and Equipment used for Executing the Work

The translation of the ephemeral Dipo rites into enduring sculptural form necessitated a rigorously curated material and technical framework. This section delineates the

properties and uses of the materials, tools and equipment used in sculpting selected significant phases of Dipo rite. Structural permanence began with mild steel rods (6–12mm diameter), selected for their high tensile strength (400–550 MPa) and weldability. These formed the primary armature framework, engineered to bear dynamic loads imposed by monumental figures (3–7 ft) while preserving culturally significant postures. Corrosion susceptibility necessitated supplementary galvanised wire mesh, zinc-coated for environmental resistance, which provided a deformable substrate for clay adhesion and volumetric bulk. Concrete (20–40 MPa compressive strength) and stone aggregates stabilised permanent plinths, leveraging density and drainage properties to mitigate soil subsidence at the Somanya installation site.

Modelling processes relied on the innate plasticity of clay, whose hydrated state enabled nuanced articulation of anatomical details and ritual regalia, including beadwork and scarification patterns. Its air-drying rigidity permitted iterative refinement but demanded meticulous moisture management. Transitioning to replication, plaster of Paris (P.O.P) proved indispensable for sectional mould fabrication. Its rapid setting (5–15 minutes), moderate compressive strength (9–14 MPa), and capacity to capture surface micro-textures facilitated high-fidelity negative impressions, though brittleness required jute fibre reinforcement to withstand demoulding stresses.

Casting introduced polyester resin, catalysed by methyl ethyl ketone peroxide (MEKP) into a rigid, UV-resistant matrix. Filled with P.O.P to enhance viscosity, it replicated fragile clay forms into durable heritage artefacts. Surface finishing employed acrylic paints for their UV stability and chromatic precision, enabling culturally resonant polychromy, notably the symbolic application of white to denote

ritual purity. A final polyurethane clear coat provided molecular-level environmental shielding, its hydrophobic properties preventing moisture ingress while unifying surface sheen. Auxiliary mould oil ensured clean separation of resin casts, while polymer coatings preserved vulnerable wood elements against tropical degradation.

Tool selection mirrored this material intentionality. Structural fabrication deployed a MIG welder with Argon/CO₂ shielding to forge load-bearing armature joints, paired with an angle grinder (>10,000 RPM) for precision steel cutting and resin refinement. Modelling spatulas of varied profiles translated ethnographic data into tactile form, sculpting clay with anatomical exactitude. Critical safety protocols involved a powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) to filter carcinogenic resin vapours and an auto-darkening welding helmet (reaction time <1ms) to mitigate arc-eye risk. Installation leveraged a 3-ton hydraulic jack for precise positioning and a concrete vibrator (2000–3000 VPM) to eliminate plinth air pockets, ensuring geotechnical permanence. Silicone caulking guns later sealed joints against equatorial rainfall, completing a holistic methodology where material properties and tool capabilities converged to materialise ritual temporality.

Table 4: Materials Used in Sculptural Production of Dipo Rite Phases

Material	Properties	Uses
Mild Steel Rods	High tensile strength; weldable; corrosion-prone without coating.	Armature framework for structural support of large-scale figures.
Clay	Hydrated plasticity; air-dries rigid; friable.	Primary modelling medium for anatomical and ritual details.
Plaster of Paris (P.O.P)	Fast-setting; moderate compressive strength; brittle.	Sectional mould fabrication to capture surface details.
Polyester Resin	Thermosetting; rigid when catalysed (MEKP); moderate UV resistance.	Casting durable replicas; mixed with fillers for viscosity control.
Galvanised Wire Mesh	Zinc-coated; corrosion-resistant; flexible.	Armature reinforcement; substrate for clay adhesion.
Jute Fibres	High tensile strength; biodegradable.	Mould reinforcement to prevent P.O.P cracking.
Acrylic Paints	UV-stable pigmentation; water-soluble.	Rendering flesh tones, symbolic colours (e.g., white for purity).
Polyurethane Clear Coat	Weather-resistant; forms moisture barrier.	Protective top layer; unifies surface finish.
Concrete	High compressive strength; slow-curing.	Permanent plinth construction for site installation.
Stone Aggregates	High density; inert; drainage-enhancing.	Foundation infill to stabilise plinths.
Mould Oil	Non-reactive; slippery consistency.	Release agent for demoulding resin casts.
Polymer Coatings	Water-repellent; forms protective film.	Wood surface protection against insects/decay.
Paradox Base Paint	High-build; epoxy/urethane-based.	Primer layer for uniform topcoat adhesion.

Table 5: Tools and Equipment Used in Sculptural Production

Tool/Equipment	Properties	Uses
MIG Welder	Gas-shielded (Argon/CO ₂); adjustable voltage/wire feed.	Joining steel armatures; creating load-bearing joints.
Angle Grinder	High RPM (>10,000); compatible with cutting/grinding discs.	Cutting steel rods; smoothing welds; refining resin surfaces.
Modelling Spatulas	Stainless steel; varied tip profiles.	Shaping clay; compressing surfaces; detailing beadwork/fabric folds.
Auto-darkening Welding Helmet	Adaptive shade (10–13); rapid reaction time.	Eye protection against arc radiation during welding.
Hydraulic Jack (3-Ton)	Mechanical/hydraulic lifting mechanism.	Positioning heavy sculptures during installation.
Pneumatic Chisel	High-impact force; air-compressor dependent.	Texturing surfaces; carving stone effects in resin.
Concrete Vibrator	High-frequency vibration (2000–3000 VPM).	Compacting foundation concrete to eliminate air pockets.
Airbrush Kit	Dual-action control; fine nozzle (0.2–0.5 mm).	Applying gradient paint finishes; faux metallic/stone effects.
Steel Frames	Rigid; load-bearing.	Securing armature bases during concrete casting.
Silicone Caulking Gun	Manual extrusion; precise application.	Sealing sculpture-plinth joints against moisture ingress.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

This section of the study presents a discussive analysis of the findings about the cultural embodiment of dipo rite. Since the study is studio-based, this section also presents the studio activities covering the pre-production, production, and post-production stages of the sculptural representation selected significant phases of Dipo rite. The section is wrapped up with the views of the Krobo people of somanya on the sculpted Figures.

4.1 Significant Phases of Dipo Rite

This section of the study discusses the Dipo rite of the Krobo people of Ghana, drawing upon detailed testimonies from the participants and field observational data, contextualising same within established scholarly literature. It structures the analysis around the five distinct phases identified by the participants, critically evaluating their symbolic, social, and material dimensions.

4.1.1 Dipo Rite Phase 1: Spiritual Bathing and Purification

The initial phase of dipo rite involves a profound act of spiritual cleansing at a sacred river at the precincts of Somanya. The dipo initiates, locally referred to as *dipo-yo*, undergo a ritual bath, carrying calabashes containing bathing implements on their heads while adorned in distinctive red cloth as observed in Figures 1 and 2. This act is not merely hygienic but constitutes a fundamental spiritual prerequisite as corroborated by all the respondents. An elderly woman-practitioner (Dipo-yemi) highlighted that "this is a spiritual bath every dipo-yo needs to undertake to spiritually

cleanse them and prepare them for all other dipo rituals that will follow." (Dipo-yemi 1, Personal communication, April 10, 2023).

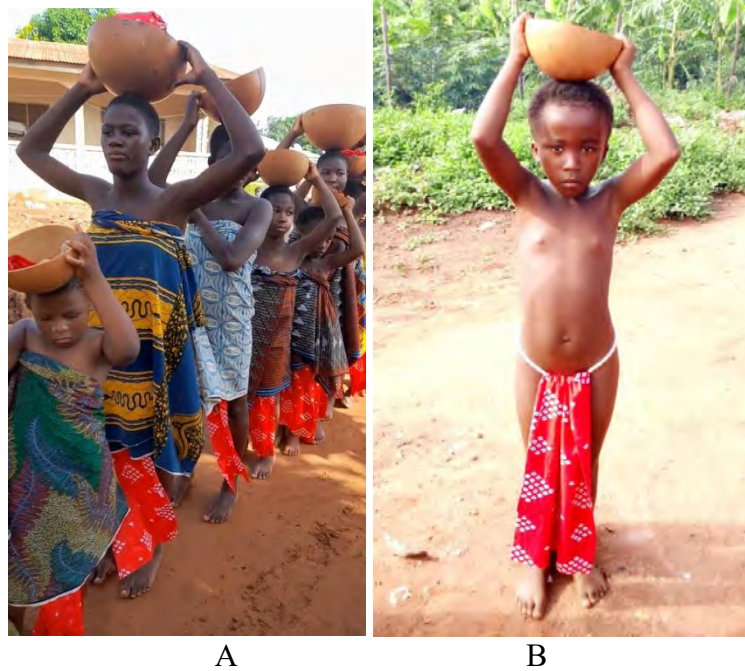


Figure 1(A&B): Dipo-yo (Dipo Initiates) Carrying calabashes in ritual dressing for spiritual cleansing (Source: Fieldwork: 2023).



Figure 2(A&B): Family Members Giving Dipo-yo (Dipo Initiates) the Needed Support as they are Ready for Spiritual Cleansing (Source: Fieldwork: 2023).

This purification signifies the shedding of childhood impurity and entry into a sacred liminal state, a concept central to Van Gennep's (1960) and later Turner's (1967) theories of rites of passage. The practitioner's emphasis on the necessity for the ritual bathing underscores its role as the foundational threshold for dipo rite. The red attire, noted consistently, symbolises transition, potency, or connection to ancestral/spiritual forces. The subsequent "special haircut" (Figure 3), shaving the sides and leaving a rounded topknot, acts as a permanent, visible marker of this transition, physically distinguishing the initiate and signalling their altered status to the community, reinforcing the separation stage (Mintson et al., 2023; Van Gennep, 1960). Steegstra (2004) confirms this haircut's role as an essential identity marker within the ritual sequence. The inclusion of twin brothers, while exceptional, highlights the ritual's flexibility in accommodating specific kinship bonds, challenging overly rigid gender-exclusive interpretations and demonstrating its embeddedness within complex social realities (Nukunya, 2003).



Figure 3(A&B): Dipo-yo (Dipo Initiates) in a Ritual Hair Cut as Part of the Cleansing Rituals (Source: Fieldwork: 2023).

4.1.2 Dipo Rite Phase 2: Public Parading and Community Integration

Following the initial purification rituals, the dipo-yo (initiates) engage in public parading. Dressed in cloths covering their breasts and waist, and carrying walking sticks (Figures 4), they walk through community streets. This performance serves a crucial communicative function: "to create that awareness of the ceremony..As part of the dipo rite, the public must be aware of, and also come in their numbers to witness and legitimize the ceremony as having been performed the dipo-yo" (Dipo-yemi 2, Personal communication, April 12, 2023). Figure shows the public parading of the dipo-yo.



Figure 4(A&B): Public Parading of Dipo-yo (Dipo Initiates)
(Source: Fieldwork: 2023).

This phase exemplifies Turner's (1967) concept of the public nature of liminality in rites of passage. The parade visually presents the initiates in their transitional state to the community, making their transformation a collective concern rather than a private affair. The specific dress code (covered breasts) and props (walking sticks) are performative symbols communicating their current ritual status, neither children nor fully integrated adults. The act of seeking public witness and support underscores the communal participation in the rite's success and the social recognition integral to the

transition (Adjaye, 1999). Consuming "food and palm nut soup" beforehand signifies both practical sustenance and communal sharing, reinforcing bonds before this public display. This phase bridges the intensely private purification and the subsequent intimate ritual tests, embedding the initiates within the communal gaze.

4.1.3 Dipo Rite Phase 3: *Tekpete* Stone Ritual and Virginity Testing of *Dipo-yo*

The *tekpete* stone ritual represents a core, symbolically charged phase focused on testing virginity. Initiates ritually touch their buttocks to a sacred stone three times, and sit fully on the third round:

...this is done to test the virginity of the girls... It is believed that a girl who has previously indulged in any form of sexual intercourse, will get suck to the Tekpete stone during the ritual process. So, for such girls to be able to continue the ritual process or tekpete, a special ritual cleansing exercise is pre-performed for them before the continuation of the Tekpete rituals." (Dipo Priestess 1, Personal communication, April 11, 2023)

This practice resonates deeply with Adjaye's (1999) documentation of the sacred stone (*Dipo-yo*) as the ritual's centrepiece, embodying ancestral power and communal history. The act of sitting connects the initiate physically and symbolically to Krobo origins and ancestral blessings. The virginity test, while controversial in contemporary discourse (Ampofo, 2001), remains a non-negotiable element for the community (Krobo Scholars Collective, 2021), linking female social value and marriageability to pre-marital chastity within the traditional framework (Nukunya, 2003). The practitioner's testimony confirms its enduring centrality. The belief in supernatural consequences for non-virgins powerfully materializes social norms, making abstract values tangibly consequential. This phase represents a critical moment of validation within the liminal journey, where the initiate's conformity to a key societal norm is ritually confirmed (Steegstra, 2004). It is worthy of note that the researcher was

disallowed from witnessing the *tekpete* ritual process on grounds that the *tekpete* ritual exercise is highly classified and reserved for the *dipo-yo*, the *dipo-yeme* and the priestess, highlighting the strict gender specialisation historically managed by Krobo priestesses (*wonyemi*), a counter-patriarchal space identified by Steegstra (2005).

4.1.4 Dipo Rite Phase 4: Adornment and Body Art of *Dipo-yo*

Following the *tekpete* ritual, initiates undergo elaborate adornment, marking a shift towards celebration and visible transformation. This phase involves intricate beadwork, body tattooing, and dressing in white calico. “At this stage, the *dipo-yo* are decorated with assorted colourful beads combined with white cloth and body art to showcase their beauty, the Krobo major bead art and our culture in general” (Dipo-yemi 4, Personal communication, April 13, 2023). Figure 5 (A,BC&D) shows the adornment and body art of *dipo-yo*.



A



B



Figure 5(A,BC&D) Adornment and body art of Dipo-yo.
(Source: Fieldwork; 2023).

The intensive decorative phase of the Dipo rite constitutes a moment of profound visual transformation in which the initiates are reconstituted as living embodiments of Krobo aesthetic philosophy and social order. As illustrated in Figure 5 (A, B, C & D), the body becomes a curated surface upon which cultural values, moral expectations, and communal aspirations are meticulously inscribed. Every element of adornment operates within a coherent visual grammar that communicates status, transition, and becoming. Central to this aesthetic language is the elaborate arrangement of colourfully assorted beads (*bodom*), which envelop the body in layered rhythms of colour, texture, and sound. These beads are not randomly assembled; rather, they are carefully selected and positioned according to culturally established conventions. Their chromatic vibrancy animates the body, creating a sensorial spectacle that is at once visual, tactile, and auditory. As the initiate moves, the beads shimmer and resonate, reinforcing the performative dimension of the rite. As documented by Affum (2009) and Steegstra (2004), bead adornment functions as a sophisticated semiotic system through which fertility, lineage, prosperity, femininity, and marital

readiness are publicly declared. The density and multiplicity of the beads amplify the body's presence, transforming the initiate into a visible archive of Krobo womanhood. Equally significant is the chromatic progression in clothing, which marks ritual movement and ontological change. The initial phase, characterised by red attire (Figure 1 A & B), visually announces transition, vulnerability, and heightened ritual intensity. Red, as a colour of potency and liminality, situates the initiate between social states. This gives way to the dominance of white in the later phase (Figure 5 A, B, C & D), a colour that radiates purity, moral clarity, ritual victory, and social rebirth. The visual shift from red to white does not merely reflect a change in costume but signifies the successful navigation of ritual thresholds and the attainment of a renewed social status. The placement of a leaf across the mouth of the initiate introduces a striking visual and symbolic restraint. This temporary silencing imposes a disciplined stillness that contrasts sharply with the visual opulence of the adornment. Aesthetically, it draws attention to the face as a site of controlled expression, while symbolically enforcing humility, introspection, and oral restriction, features commonly associated with liminal phases of rites of passage (Turner, 1967). The leaf becomes a powerful visual metaphor for suspended voice and inward reflection, underscoring the seriousness of transformation before reintegration into the communicative life of the community. Hair adornments further enhance the sequential aesthetics of identity formation. The initial use of decorative hair gear elevates the head as a focal point of ritual visibility, reinforcing the initiate's heightened symbolic status. The later replacement of these hair gears with a white scarf signals a softening and stabilisation of identity, suggesting completeness, calm, and acceptance into womanhood. This gradual unveiling mirrors the broader ritual process, where complexity yields to clarity, and spectacle gives way to dignified composure.

Crucially, this entire aesthetic display unfolds before the gaze of the community. The public witnessing of the adorned body transforms personal transition into collective affirmation. The initiate's appearance becomes visual evidence of ritual success, confirming her readiness to assume new social responsibilities. In this sense, adornment functions not only as decoration but as communal testimony. This phase vividly exemplifies Gell's (1998) theory of material agency, wherein objects are not passive embellishments but active participants in social processes. The beads, fabrics, leaves, and hair elements do more than signify change; they materially enact it. Through their weight, texture, colour, and symbolic resonance, these adornments collaborate in the construction of the new social person. The initiate does not merely wear the ritual, she becomes it, embodying Krobo values through an aesthetic that is at once disciplined, expressive, and profoundly transformative.

4.1.5 Dipo Rite Phase 5: Reintegration of the Dipo-Yo in the Community

The final phase signifies successful completion and reintegration into the community as recognised women. Characterised by white attire (scarf, calico, underwear), beads, and the removal of the silencing leaf, it embodies triumph (Figure 5). A participant revealed that "the last phase symbolises victory to the girls that they've gone through a lot. And now they have come to the end of the entire process." (Dipo-yemi 1, Personal communication, April 10, 2023)

This stage aligns perfectly with Van Gennep's (1960) aggregation or Turner's (1967) reaggregation, where the transformed individual is reincorporated into society with a new status. The white colour dominates, symbolising purity, achievement, and the new beginning of adulthood. The removal of the leaf signifies the end of the enforced silence of liminality; the initiate can now speak as a woman within the

community. The *kleme* dance, mentioned as a moment where some initiates might expose their breasts during dancing, could represent a final, controlled expression of fertility or embodied confidence within the celebratory context, though the practitioner noted that it is not universal. This phase culminates in communal recognition and celebration, affirming the initiates' new identity and eligibility for marriage and full participation in Krobo society (Nukunya, 2003; Ofori-Ansa, 2019).

The practitioner's testimonies, as herein discussed, provide invaluable granular detail on the Dipo's five-phase structure, purification, public parading, ritual testing (*tekpɛtɛ*), adornment and body art, and victorious reintegration, confirming its function as a complex female rite of passage of the Krobo people of eastern region of Ghana (Nukunya, 2003; Steegstra, 2004). The study found that it is compulsory for all Krobo girls to undergo the ritual phases of dipo rite from the beginning to the end for cultural acceptance and community integrations as Krobo indigenes of chaste life ready for decent adulthood.

4.2 Sculpting Production Stages

This section meticulously details the studio production steps underpinning the project. It presents the intricate production journey from pre-production, actual production and post-production stages of the sculptural artefacts that represent the selected significant phases of Dipo rites.

4.2.1 Pre-Production Stage

This section contains comprehensive details of the pre-production phase of sculpting selected significant phases of the Dipo Rite of the Krobo people of Somanya. Pre-production constitutes the critical foundation upon which the entire studio practice rests. It is the period of rigorous intellectual, conceptual, and practical groundwork

preceding the physical act of sculpting. For this project, pre-production encompasses: extensive contextual and theoretical research; the development of a robust conceptual framework integrating anthropology, art theory, and material studies; detailed analysis of the three chosen ritual phases; formulation of the sculptural strategy and methodology; comprehensive visual research; ethical considerations; and meticulous logistical planning. This phase ensures the studio work is deeply informed, culturally sensitive, methodologically sound, and conceptually rigorous.

4.2.1.1 Conceptual Genesis and Preparatory Framework

The genesis of each sculptural component relied on the deep engagement with the participants, ethnographic research, photographic documentation, and, direct observation of the Dipo rite. The aim of this project was not mere replication of the Dipo rite but a profound understanding of its major phases distilled into form.

4.2.1.2 Visualisation and Pose Definition

The process commenced internally, crystallising the specific ritual moment or posture to be captured. This involved the use of picture models of selected significant phases of the Dipo rite, and studying photographic references (Figure 6) of participants (adhering strictly to ethical protocols concerning representation and consent), and analysing the ritual's choreography.

Decisions regarding pose, whether a dynamic contrapposto reflecting tension and transition, a grounded seated position denoting instruction, a serene reclining form symbolising liminality, or an upright stance embodying communal presence, are paramount. Each posture is selected for its narrative and symbolic potency within the Dipo sequence. In the context of the study an upright pose was employed.



Figure 6(A,B&C): Photographic Reference to Guide the Sculpting Process
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

It is important to note that the decision regarding the selection of the postures to be sculpted was not arbitrary but deeply considered based on the views of the study participants. Each selected posture (Signifying an upright, frontal stance projecting communal presence) was chosen for its potent narrative and symbolic capacity within the Dipo sequence. The pose needed to function as a synecdoche, evoking the broader phase and its cultural weight. Considerations included.

4.2.1.3 Scale Determination

Decisions on scale (life-size, and heroic) were integral to conceptualisation. While the life-size scale aimed for the average human height; the heroic scale deliberately exaggerated some Figures beyond true life-size to convey grandeur, idealisation, or symbolic culture uniqueness of dipo rite.

4.2.1.4 Sculpting Challenges and Opportunities

Capturing the selected significant phase of the Dipo rite, inherently dynamic, within the static medium of sculpture presents substantial challenges, yet concurrently offers

rich opportunities for interpretation. Key amongst these is conveying movement or procession; this might be achieved through implied motion utilising compositional elements like diagonal lines, varied stances, and flowing garments, or sequential positioning of figures.

A further challenge lies in balancing the depiction of unique individual facial expressions and postures against uniform markers such as specific hairstyles, sticks, and attire, thereby expressing both cohort solidarity and individual experience within the liminal group. The symbolic sticks demand careful rendering to suggest their weight and purpose as extensions of the initiates' emerging status, with material choice potentially enhancing their symbolism. Employing texture contrast (smooth body as against rough textured hair as well as the drapery of the clothing) also presents a challenge. Another challenge is the cost of materials and tools as well as the availability of some of the materials such as resin.

Opportunities also exist as the researcher is a practising sculptor with skills to address the challenges identified. With material related challenges, the researcher leveraged on his existing sculpture resources and placed early orders to address the issue of availability of materials such as resin.

4.2.2 Actual Production stage

The actual production stage witnessed a studio based activities at Winneba, commencing with frame planning, armature construction, modelling, Safety and Reinforcement; Material Selection and Properties of the armature. The other studio activities include Fabrication Process; Modelling stage; Surface Treatment and Finishing; Mould Making; Preparation of the Original Model; Selection of Moulding Materials; and Mould Construction Process. The rest are Curing and Demoulding;

Casting; Mould Preparation (Laminating); Resin Preparation; Assembly (Joining), and Finishing.

4.2.1 Framework Planning

Before the physical construction of the armatures could commence, a systematic framework planning process was undertaken to translate pictures into accurate full-scale versions. This planning phase ensured that each sculptural figure adhered to both artistic intention and anatomical accuracy while remaining structurally viable at scale. The dimensions of each sculpture were predetermined based on the narrative weight of the Dipo phase it represented. For example, transitional phases like Adornment and Beading, were envisioned as larger-than-life to symbolise empowerment and community spectacle, while more introspective phases such as "Seclusion" were maintained at a life-size human scale to reflect personal transformation and inner contemplation. To convert the maquette dimensions into full-scale proportions, a grid scaling technique was applied as shown in Figure 7. This involved overlaying a grid on the two-dimensional drawings and maquettes and reproducing each square at a larger ratio on a full-scale grid mapped onto cardboard or plywood templates. This proportional enlargement technique allowed for accurate measurement and replication of features such as limb length, torso width, and head height across different sizes of sculpture. The framework planning also accounted for practical considerations, such as the maximum allowable height for the studio space, transport logistics (if pieces were to be moved post-production), and the availability of materials suitable for large structures. The result of this meticulous planning was a series of dimensionally consistent, visually expressive, and structurally sound bases upon which the sculptures were constructed. Through this methodical approach, the transition from photographic ideation to physical execution was not only seamless but

also respectful of both the symbolic and material demands of the Dipo rite representations.

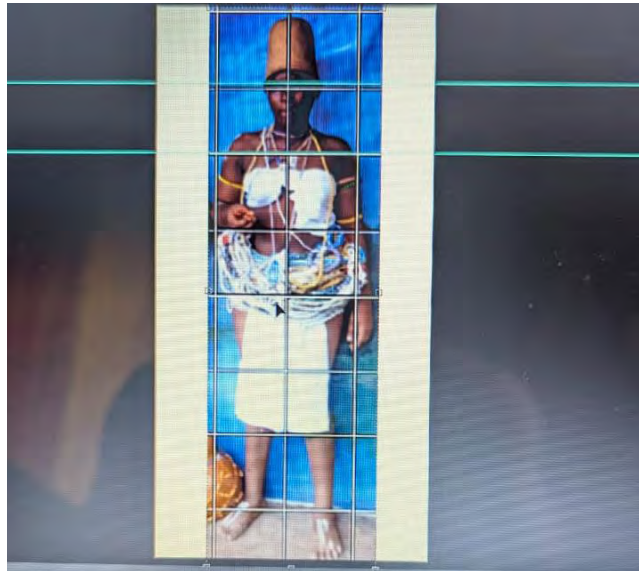


Figure 7: Grid Scaling of Figures (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.2 Armature Construction

4.2.2.1 Material Selection and Properties of the armature

The study utilised various types of steel rod (Figure 8) depending on the scale and the load-bearing requirements, and section - thicker for legs/spine, thinner for fingers and other smaller extensions. Steel rod offered an optimal balance of tensile strength, malleability (for cold bending), weldability, and cost-effectiveness compared to alternatives like stainless steel or aluminium.



Figure 8 Steel Rod for Armature Constructions

(Source: (Fieldwork, 2024))

4.2.2.2 Armature Fabrication Process

The selected picture model of various poses, including front, side, and sometimes top views, guided rod cutting and bending. Critical measurements (overall height, limb lengths, key joint positions) were transferred directly to the studio floor or a large template board using chalk or tape. The rods were cut to approximate lengths using a heavy-duty hacksaw or, more efficiently, an angle grinder fitted with a metal cutting disc.

Achieving precise curves (spine, limbs) required careful manipulation (bending). Bending techniques used included manual bending, which involved leveraging the rod against a sturdy bench vice or pipe benders for larger radii. Heat bending was also applied using an oxy-acetylene torch to soften the steel for tighter bends, followed by rapid quenching to re-harden.

The researcher proceeded to join the steel rods into skeletal frameworks through electric welding (Figure 9). This was done using safety protection gears.



A



B



C



D

Figure 9: Welding of steel rod into Armature
(Source : Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.2.3 Safety and Reinforcement

Due to the scale and weight of some figures, internal bracing with angled steels and crossbars were added to each armature (Figure 10) for reinforcement purpose before modeling.



Figure 10: Armature supported with Back iron as Reinforcement
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.3 Modelling Stage

Once the armature construction was completed and all structural reinforcements were in place, the modelling stage commenced (Figure 11). This phase involved the gradual application and manipulation of modelling material, specifically mixed clay, onto the pre-constructed armatures to develop the desired sculptural forms. The clay used was prepared through a rigorous process of wedging and mixing to ensure uniform consistency, plasticity, and workability. The application of clay was done incrementally, in small manageable bits, beginning with a base layer to cover the

welded mesh and establish the general bulk and mass of the figures. This underlayer served as a rough build-up or "blocking out" of the overall form. With this foundation in place, the researcher continued to model progressively, working from the larger body masses (torso, limbs, and hips) to the more delicate features (hands, faces, and ornamental details).



A



B



C



D

Figure 11 Modelling Processes

(Source: fieldwork, 2024).

Particular attention was paid to anatomical proportions and the fluidity of gesture in each figure, in order to faithfully convey the symbolic nuances of the Dipo rite phases being represented. The tactile process of hand-modelling allowed the researcher to respond intuitively to the form, making real-time corrections and refinements. Tools such as wooden modelling spatulas, loop tools, and metal ribs were employed to shape and smooth surfaces, define muscle contours, and emphasise traditional Krobo hairstyles, scarification patterns, and bead adornments. The modelling process was iterative; once the general form was achieved, layers of detail were added to enhance expression and cultural specificity. Facial features were sculpted to reflect emotion and identity, while body posture and gesture were carefully considered to match each phase's thematic significance, for instance, the dignified stillness of the initiation figure in the bathing phase or the exuberance captured in the sculpture when they are paraded in the community asking for support for the next activity. Throughout the modelling phase, moisture control was crucial. The figures were regularly wrapped with damp cloths or plastic sheeting to prevent premature drying and cracking. This ensured workability over extended periods and allowed for thoughtful sculptural refinement across multiple sessions. All five figures were modelled in this way, each constructed directly onto its corresponding armature. The result was a series of richly detailed, contextually grounded sculptures that brought the ritual phases of the Dipo rite to life in a tangible, three-dimensional form. This stage of the studio process served as a crucial bridge between conceptual vision and finished artwork, allowing for deep cultural interpretation and creative engagement with Krobo traditions.

4.2.3.1 Surface Treatment in Modelling

Surface treatment was conducted on the modeled Figures to give tactile and visual effect. A variety of tools and techniques were employed, with the modelling spatula

serving as the principal instrument for surface refinement. The spatula was used to compress, scrape, and shape the clay, allowing the sculptor to even the surface, sharpen contours, and define delicate features such as facial lines, bead patterns, and drapery fold (Figure 12).



Figure 12 Surface Treatment in Modelling
(Source: fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.4 Mould Making

After the completion of the modelling and surface treatment, the next critical stage in the sculptural production was mould making. Given the fragile nature of the clay modeled figures, creating a negative mould was essential. This process not only ensured the preservation of the form but also enabled the reproduction of the sculptures in more durable materials such as resin, fibreglass, or cement-based composites. Mould making is a delicate procedure that demands meticulous planning, material sensitivity, and technical skill, especially when working with large-scale or

detailed sculptural pieces. The goal of this stage was to produce a negative impression (or cavity) that accurately captured all surface details of the clay figures, without damaging or distorting the original forms.

4.2.4.1 Preparation of the Surface for Mould Picking

Before the mould picking process, the surface of each clay sculpture was thoroughly cleaned and examined for cracks or loose segments. Any inconsistencies were repaired using additional clay and re-smoothed to maintain the integrity of the form. After smoothening, seamlines were drawn and a clay slab was fixed on the seamline, segmenting the figures into pieces of mould (Figure 13). Next, a releasing agent, typically a thin layer of mould oil (Figure 14) was applied uniformly to the entire surface of the clay sculpture. This step was crucial in preventing the moulding material from adhering to the clay, thereby ensuring a clean release and reducing the risk of damaging the original during demoulding.



Figure 13: Creating Seamline for Piece Mould Production

(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



Figure 14: Application of Oil during the Mould Picking process

(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.4.2 Application of Mould Picking Materials

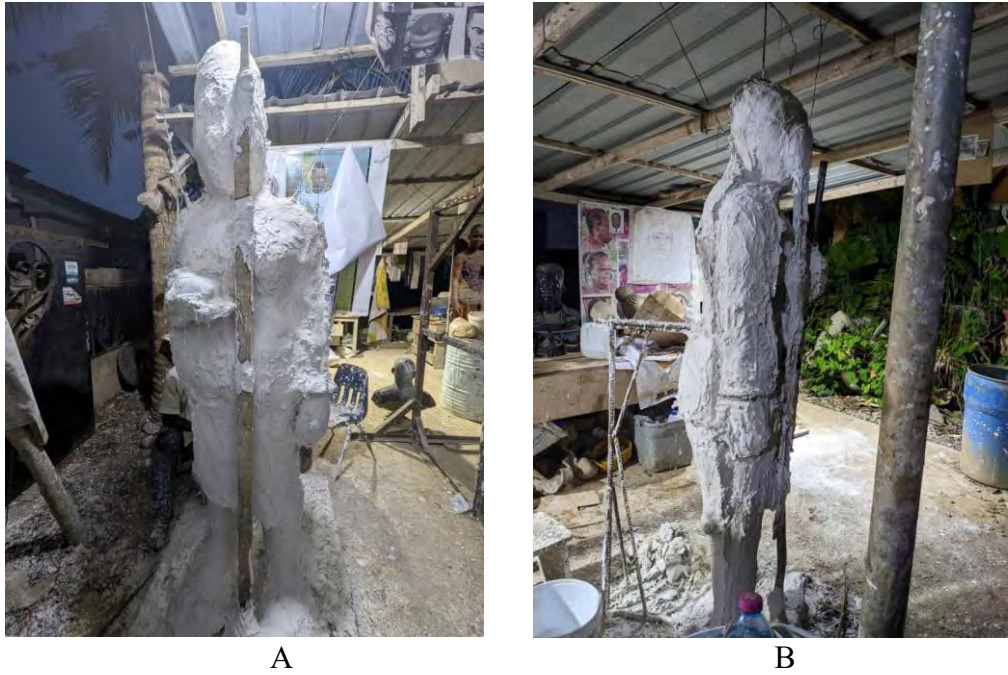
The primary materials used in picking the moulds were Plaster of Paris (P.O.P), natural fibers (mesh), and silicon. P.O.P was selected for its affordability, ease of application, fast setting time, and noted for its excellent ability to capture fine details. To enhance strength and reduce the likelihood of cracking during the separation process, especially given the size and weight of the moulds, mesh fibres (mesh) were incorporated into P.O.P for re-enforcement. Figure 15 shows the application of P.O.P in mould picking. The silicon material was applied to pick intricate details like the hair, eye brows among others (Figure 16). Figure 17 shows the complete mould on the modelled works.



Figure 15: Application of P.O.P in Mould Picking (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



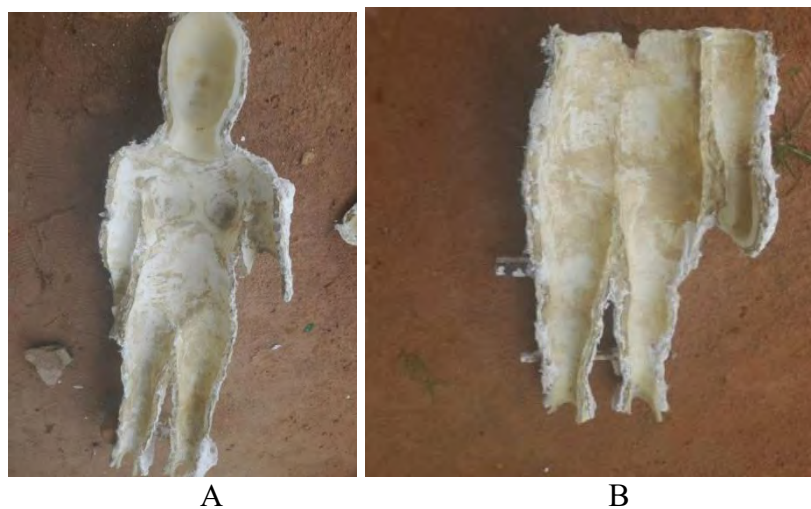
Figure 16: Application of Silicon in Mould Picking (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



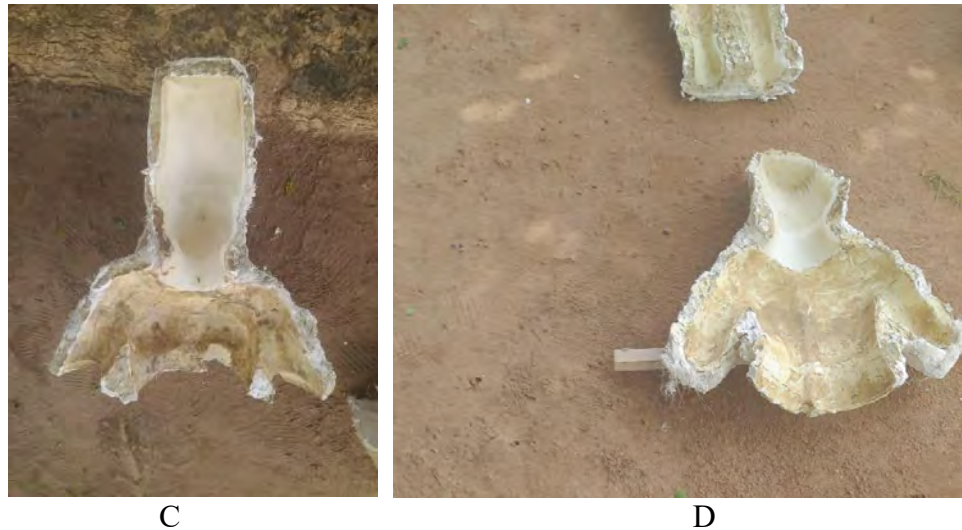
A
B
Figure 17 (A&B): Complete mould on the modelled works.
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024)

4.2.4.3 Separation of Piece Moulds

The moulds were carefully separated using a wooden chisel and a mallet. The sculptor carefully placed the wooden chisel on the seamline and carefully hit to separate the piece moulds. This process continued until all the piece moulds were separated from each other. Figure 18 shows some of the separated piece moulds.



A
B



C D
Figure 18 (A,B,C &D): Separated Piece Moulds.
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

After the separation of the piece moulds, the mould sections were cleaned, marked, and stored systematically. Any chips or cracks were repaired using a fresh mix of P.O.P. Each mould was then left to dry completely in a well-ventilated space before casting commenced.

4.2.5 Casting Process

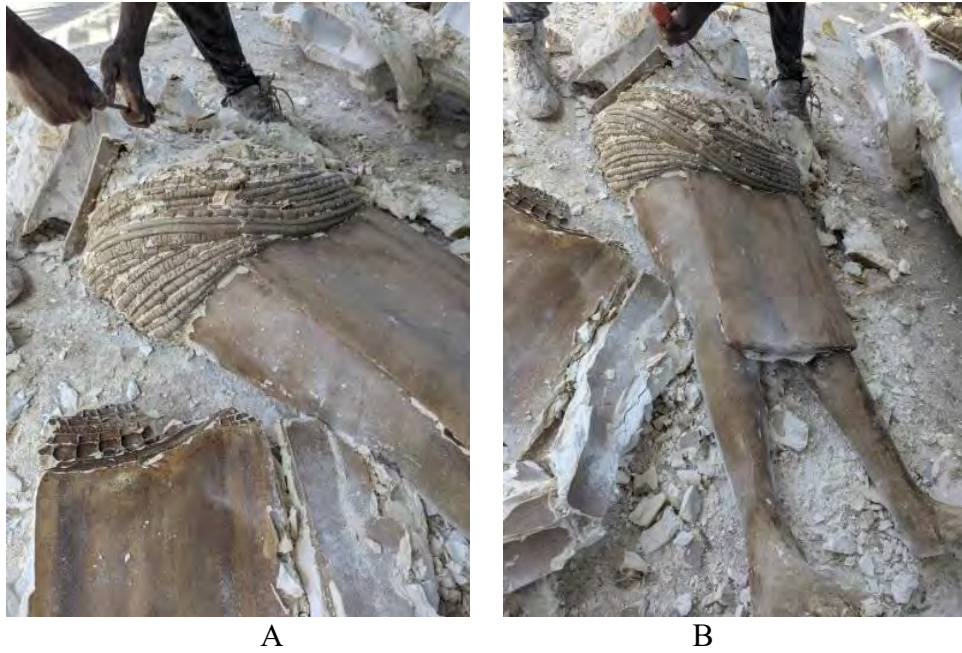
The casting process commenced with the application of a separation agent (oily-based liquid) to laminate the cavity of the negative mould. This was followed with the application of mixture of P.O.P., resin, hardener and accelerator as the first coat of the casting process. This was allowed to set halfway after which fibre glass was cut into pieces and spread through the cavity on the first coat. Again, a mixture resin, hardner and accelerated was mixed and spread over the fibre blas in the cavity for reinforcement purpose. This activity was repeated a number of times till the desired body thickness was achieved. Figure is shows some of the cast moulds.



Figure 19: Cast Moulds
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.5.1 Breaking of Cast Moulds

The cast body was separated from the moulds using a wooden chisel and mallet such that every parts of the cast body were retrieved (Figure 20).



C
Figure 20: Breaking of Cast Moulds
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.5.2 Joining of Cast Pieces

The cast pieces were variously assembled using binding wire. After the assemblage and tying of the various cast pieces, they were joined together using mixture of resin, harner, accelerator and fibre glass. Figure 21 shows the joing of cast pieces.

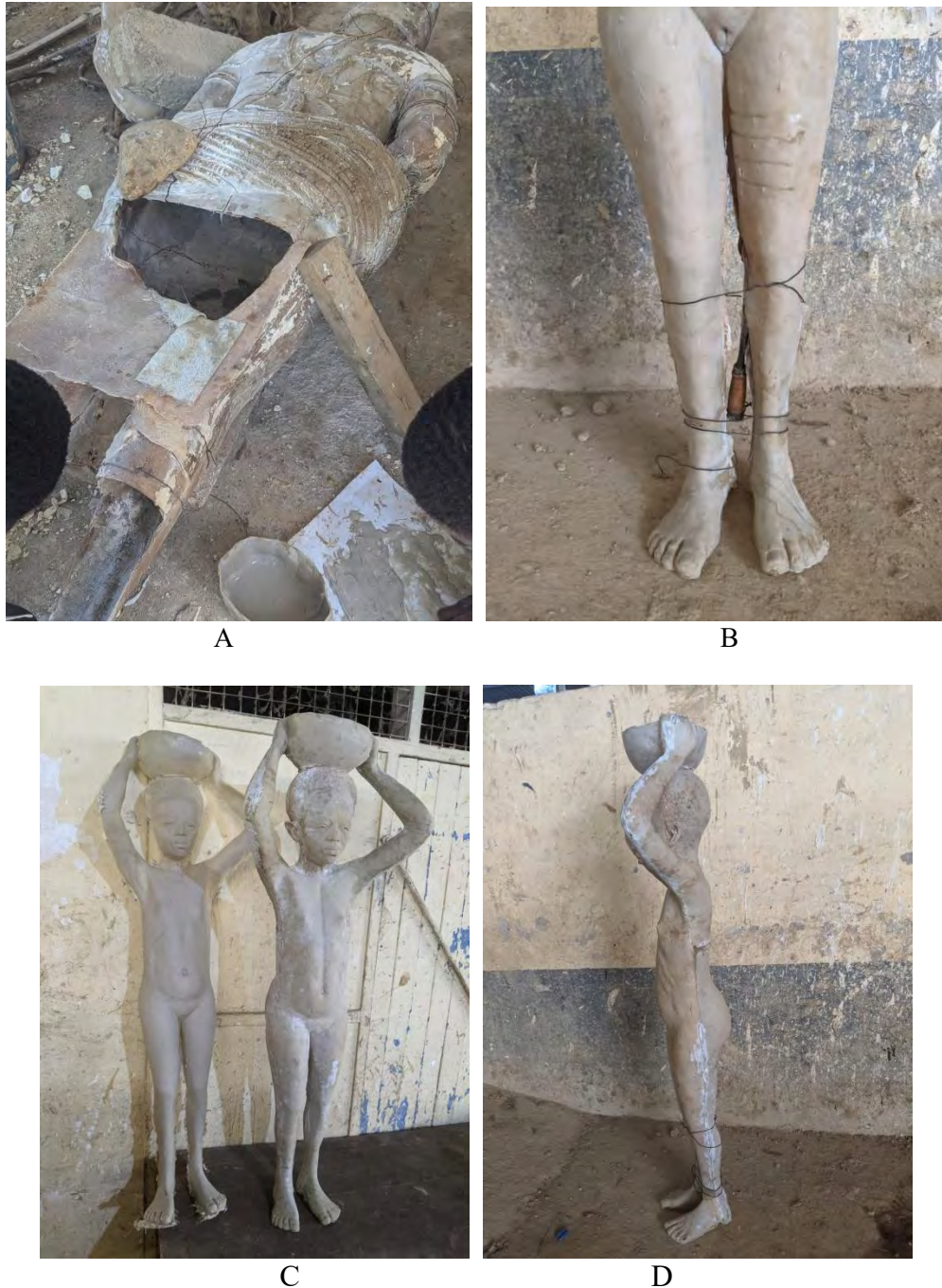


Figure 21(A,BC&D): Joing of cast pieces (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.6 Finishing Stage

4.2.6.1 Priming:

Priming was a crucial preparatory stage in the surface finishing process of the sculpted figures, particularly when materials such as resin, Plaster of Paris (POP), and fibre-reinforced composites were used. The primary purpose of priming is to seal the

porous surface of these materials, which otherwise tend to absorb paint unevenly, resulting in blotchy or inconsistent finishes. A high-quality primer acts as a barrier coat, reducing surface absorption and creating a smooth, uniform base that enhances the adhesion of subsequent paint layers. Additionally, the application of primer (potty) helped to reveal minor surface imperfections, such as pinholes, scratches, or uneven patches, that may not have been visible during earlier finishing stages. These imperfections then be corrected through light sanding or spot filling. Priming also prevented print-through effects, where textures or patterns from the fibreglass or filler materials appear visibly through the topcoat. As shown in Figure 22, this step is essential for achieving a refined, professional-quality final surface.

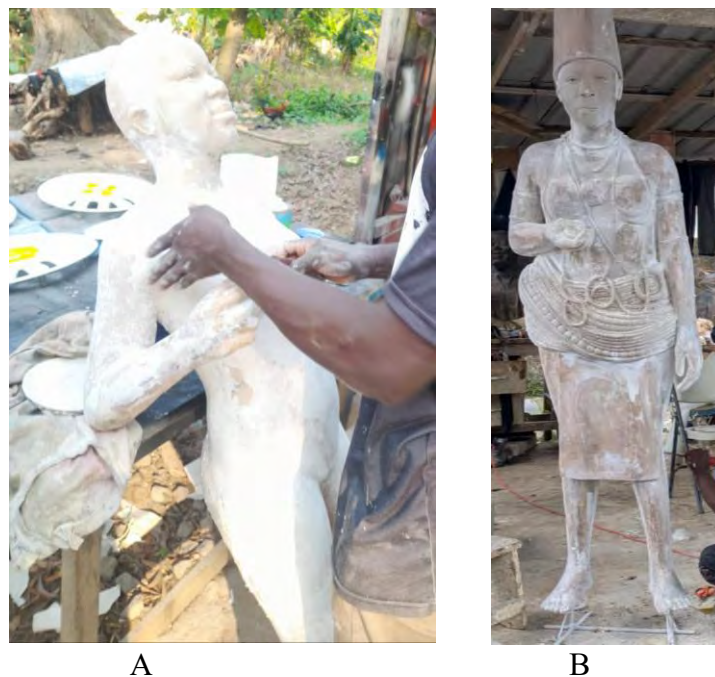


Figure 22: Priming the Surface of the Joined Figures
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.6.2 Forming and Wrapping of Garments on *Dipo-yo*

Wrapped garments play a vital role in the Dipo rite, symbolising modesty, transition, and cultural identity. Recognising the significance of this phase, the researcher carefully constructed the clothing element as part of the sculptural representation. To

achieve this, wire mesh was skillfully shaped and secured around the waist region one of the figures, extending from the waist down to the base, mimicking the traditional draping style worn by initiates (Figure 23). This mesh served as both a structural support and a visual form, capturing the flow and contours of the ceremonial cloth. The technique ensured that the garment appeared integrated with the figure while retaining its cultural authenticity and symbolic weight. The process allowed for the inclusion of surface textures and folds that reflected the fabric's movement and elegance during the rite.



A



B



C
D
E
Figure 23 (A,B,C,D&E: Forming and Wrapping of garments on Dipoyo
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



A
B
Figure 24: Wrapping of Garments on Dipoyo
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.6.3 Painting

The figures thereafter were painted using brush and super shine polidox paint for the works reflect the colourful and aesthetic nature of dipo-yo. Figure 25 shows the painting process.



A



B



C



D


E

F

Figure 25(A,B,C,D,E&F): Painting of Figures (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.2.6.4 Faux Finishes

To enhance the visual realism and symbolic depth of the sculptural figures, faux finishing techniques were employed in the final surface treatment. These finishes not only contributed to the aesthetic appeal but also reflected the cultural gravitas of the Dipo rite. For the metal effects, the clothing elements, sculpted using wire mesh and fabric, were first dipped into specially prepared paints and then layered over a base coat comprising colour pigment and resin. This process created the illusion of aged bronze, copper, or iron, evoking a timeless, artefactual quality reminiscent of ancestral regalia. These effects are observed in Figure 26. Complementing this, stone effects were achieved using a combination of textured paints, staining, and dry-

brushing techniques to simulate the metallic effect. Together, these faux finishes elevated the sculptures from mere representations to symbolic artefacts that resonate with both historical and spiritual significance.



Figure 26 Faux Finishing for Metal Effect

Source: (Fieldwork, 2024).

4.3 Post Production

4.3.1 Installation and Finishing of the Sculpted Dipo Rite Figures at Somanya

The post-production phase marks the culmination of the creative and technical efforts invested throughout the pre-production and production stages of the sculptural project. In the context of the installation of all five figures at Somanya, this stage required a coordinated set of operations aimed at ensuring the structural integrity, aesthetic fidelity, contextual appropriateness, and environmental durability of the completed sculptures. As a studio-based research project with site-specific implications, this phase was treated not merely as a logistical conclusion but as an

extension of the sculptural process, where form, space, meaning, and cultural narrative converge in public display.

4.3.4 Site Preparation and Foundation Engineering

The site for the installation was formally designated at Somanya through the collective authority of the traditional custodians of the land, the chiefs, and the Somanya Municipal Assembly. This process affirmed the cultural legitimacy of the project and embedded the sculptures within a socially sanctioned and symbolically charged landscape. By granting the site, these custodial bodies positioned the artworks not merely as aesthetic interventions but as enduring public heritage artefacts anchored in communal ownership, historical memory, and spatial identity. The location itself carries deep cultural resonance, functioning as a shared civic and ritual space within the Krobo community. Its selection reflects an intentional alignment between the subject of the sculptures and the lived cultural environment of the people, reinforcing the sculptures' role as visual narratives situated within their original socio-cultural context rather than displaced or neutralised settings. Following the formal allocation of the site, a comprehensive programme of site preparation was undertaken prior to installation. This included detailed assessment of ground conditions, land levelling, and the development of an appropriate foundation design. These preparatory processes were guided by both technical engineering considerations and symbolic intent. Structurally, the foundations were designed to ensure stability, durability, and resistance to environmental stressors, recognising the sculptures' exposure as outdoor installations. Symbolically, the act of grounding the sculptures within carefully engineered foundations represented permanence, continuity, and respect for place. The foundation served not only as a physical anchor but also as a metaphorical rooting of the sculptural forms within Krobo land, history,

and collective memory. Given the cultural and educational significance of the works, the integrity of the base was treated as integral to the overall meaning of the installation, ensuring that the sculptures stand as enduring markers of heritage, identity, and public art within Somanya.

4.3.4.1 Land Leveling

Land levelling was a crucial preparatory activity prior to the installation of the five sculptural figures representing the major phases of the Dipo rite at Somanya. The process involved a thorough assessment and modification of the natural terrain to create a stable, uniform surface capable of supporting the weight and spatial arrangement of the sculptures. The site was initially surveyed to determine its slope, and drainage patterns. This ensured that the ground was not only visually levelled but also structurally compacted to support heavy concrete plinths and mitigate risks of future subsidence or structural instability. Beyond providing a flat surface, land levelling facilitated precise spatial planning for the installation. The leveled site allowed for a circular or sequential arrangement of the figures that mirrored the narrative progression of the Dipo rite.

In addition, land levelling was not merely a technical requirement but a foundational step in the transition from studio fabrication to successful public installation. It provided the physical groundwork upon which the symbolic, cultural, and artistic integrity of the sculptural ensemble was anchored.

4.3.4.2 Profile and foundation Digging

Profile and foundation digging (Figure 27) was undertaken immediately after land levelling to mark out and excavate precise locations for each sculpture's base. Using standard profiling techniques, boundary lines were drawn with pegs, string, and chalk

to define the exact position, depth, and orientation of each figure's foundation. This step ensured accurate alignment with the overall site layout and maintained uniform spacing between the sculptures. Once profiled, foundation pits were manually dug to appropriate depths based on the size and weight of each sculpture, typically ranging from 2 to 3 feet deep. The dugged areas were cleared of loose soil and compacted to create a firm sub-base. This foundational digging was essential not only for anchoring the concrete plinths but also for ensuring long-term stability, especially given the outdoor setting and varying environmental conditions at Somanya.



A B
Figure 27: Profiling and Digging of Foundation at Somanya

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2024)

4.3.4.2 Laying of Blocks of the Pedestal



Figure 28: Laying of Blocks of the Pedestal
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

4.3.4.2 Filling of the Pedestal Framework

After the foundation pits were dugged and the block pedestal frameworks installed, the next critical step involved filling the base with stones (Figure 29) to enhance

stability and load distribution. Selected medium- to large-sized stones were packed tightly within the steel pedestal framework, serving as a structural infill that reinforced the foundation and reduced the risk of subsidence under the weight of the sculptures. This stone filling also facilitated effective drainage by preventing water accumulation around the base, which is crucial for preserving the longevity of both the concrete and the sculpture above. Once the stones were compacted, the remaining voids were filled with a concrete mix, allowing the stones to bond firmly with the structure and form a solid, immovable pedestal upon which the sculptures could be safely mounted.



Figure 29 Filling of the Pedestal with Stones
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

After the filling of the pedestal, each figure was mounted on a reinforced concrete plinth extending from the base of the sculpture, as observed in 30. These were pre-fabricated on-site and aligned to the dimensions of each armature's base plate.



Figure 30: Concrete Plinths at the Base of the Figures
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



A



B

Figure 31 Complete Casting/Concreting of Pedestal

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2024)

4.3.5 Final Assembly

The final mounting marked the culmination of the entire installation process, where each completed sculptural figure was securely positioned onto its prepared pedestal

base, as shown in Figure 32. With the concrete foundations fully cured and reinforced, the sculptures, now cast in durable materials, were carefully transported to the site at Somanya and aligned precisely with the profiled layout. Each sculpture was then anchored using embedded steel bolts and plates that had been integrated into both the sculpture base and the pedestal during casting. To ensure maximum stability and safety, additional concrete or epoxy grout was applied around the base connections to seal any gaps and absorb movement or vibration. Once fixed in place, each figure underwent a final surface cleaning and inspection to address minor blemishes from transport or handling. This phase completed the transition from studio to public space, transforming the site into a dynamic sculptural narrative that honours and preserves the significant phases of the Dipo rite within the cultural landscape of Somanya (Figure 33-).



Figure:.32 Front View of the finished work.

(Source: Fieldwork, 2025).



Figure: 33 Front View of the finished work

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2025)



Figure 34 Full view of the life size figures

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2024).



Figure 4.35; Front view of the finished work

Source: (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024).



Figure 4.36: Front view of the finished work

Source: (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024).

4.3.6 Feedback of Krobo people of **Somanya** on the Sculpted Figures

This section presents the post-production phase of this studio-based project, which sculpted some significant phases of Dipo," culminated in the public display of the sculptural works within the Krobo community. This critical stage necessitated a thorough evaluation of public feedback from the chiefs, queen mothers, elders, initiates, all indigenes of the community, serving as a vital measure of the project's success in achieving its core objectives: cultural representation, resonance, preservation, and community engagement. The feedback, gathered directly from key

stakeholders and community members following the installation, provides rich, multifaceted insights into the reception and perceived impact of the artworks. This analysis presents a comprehensive evaluation based on verbatim quotations from primary sources, organised thematically to illuminate the depth and breadth of community response. The consistent application of British English grammar and spelling conventions ensures academic coherence throughout.

1. Overwhelming Institutional Endorsement and Cultural Validation

The most significant and resounding theme emerging from the feedback is the unequivocal institutional endorsement from the highest traditional authorities. This endorsement transcends mere permission; it represents a profound cultural validation of the project's intent, execution, and significance. The Paramount Chief of Yilo Krobo Paramountcy explicitly framed the project as an essential act of cultural reclamation and education:

Well, me being the paramount chief of Kroboland, the Yilo Kroboland, I strongly support what the gentleman has come up with... may the ancestors bless you for thinking about us as Krobols and bringing to us back our culture. Talking about the gap you mentioned, I must say and admit that we have created the gap. That one is a fact. We have created that gap ourselves because we haven't or we don't normally even think about our culture, even we as Krobols. So if you have thought of us this way, to this direction, I say congratulations and that may you continue to think about us and even give us more and project our culture and that you'll be blessed... The Yilo Krobo Paramountcy respectfully writes to endorse the request submitted by Mr. Harry Kyei-Nimako of the University of Education, Winneba, seeking permission to mount a public sculpture that honours and symbolises the Dipo rite, an esteemed traditional initiation ceremony of the Krobo people. The Dipo rite stands as one of the most cherished cultural legacies of our community, signifying the passage of girls into womanhood, the transmission of values, and the strengthening of our communal identity. As custodians of

Krobo tradition, we view this artistic initiative as both timely and commendable, especially in an era where cultural preservation through visual and educational means is increasingly essential... The Council believes the installation will contribute positively to heritage education, cultural tourism, and public appreciation of Krobo customs." (Paramount Chief of Yilo Krobo Paramountcy, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

The statement issued by the Paramount Chief of Yilo Krobo represents a significant moment of cultural introspection and authoritative endorsement. His reflections affirm the perceived erosion of cultural consciousness among the Krobo people, attributing the widening gap in traditional knowledge and practice to internal neglect rather than external imposition. This admission aligns with scholarly observations that many African communities, in the wake of globalisation and modernisation, have inadvertently contributed to the marginalisation of their own cultural heritage through disengagement and shifting priorities (Nukunya, 2003; Gyekye, 1998).

By acknowledging this cultural gap, the Chief reframes the proposed sculptural intervention not merely as an aesthetic exercise, but as a restorative cultural mechanism. His invocation of ancestral blessings bestows spiritual legitimacy upon the project, situating it within the cosmological framework of Krobo belief systems wherein ancestors continue to guide and validate communal decisions (Mbiti, 1969; Opoku, 1978). This spiritual dimension reinforces the argument by Grimes (2014) that ritual and artistic expressions are often inseparable in African societies, functioning together to maintain moral and cultural coherence. Moreover, the Chief's formal endorsement of the public sculpture initiative as a means to honour and symbolise the Dipo rite reflects a broader understanding of the role of public art in cultural preservation. The Dipo rite, a central ritual marking the transition of Krobo girls into womanhood, encapsulates not only female socialisation but also the

transmission of core values such as chastity, respect, and communal responsibility (Steegstra, 2004; Ankomah & Awuah-Nyamekye, 2017). In endorsing this project, the Chief affirms the potential of sculpture to serve as a mnemonic device and pedagogical tool, capable of visually encoding and transmitting cultural knowledge across generations, a view supported by Ottenberg (2014) and Vogel (1997), who highlight how African art often functions didactically within communal settings. His emphasis on the installation's contribution to "heritage education, cultural tourism, and public appreciation of Krobo customs" reflects a nuanced awareness of the socio-economic and educational potential of cultural heritage in contemporary society. As Odotei (2002) argues, festivals and traditional practices are increasingly being recontextualised as both identity-affirming and economically viable through their engagement with heritage tourism and public display. The sculpture, in this regard, is envisioned as both a symbolic and functional asset, serving local epistemological needs while also attracting broader public engagement. This authoritative endorsement thus establishes a foundational legitimacy for the project. It embodies what Taylor (2003) describes as the "repertoire" of embodied cultural knowledge, re-activated in public space through performance and visual representation. It also sets the tone for community reception by aligning the artwork with ancestral approval, traditional authority, and contemporary relevance. In so doing, it marks a vital convergence between tradition, modern public discourse, and arts-based educational strategies (Leavy, 2015; Sullivan, 2010).

This institutional validation was reinforced by a member of the Traditional Council, who contextualised the approval within broader council deliberations and highlighted the project's perceived historical significance and the artist's perseverance:

"Well, I'm also one of the chiefs of the community and I do not have much to say but to support what our paramount chief said... So as chiefs of the community, we are the custodians. And so we see your contribution to this community as being very enormous. In fact, history will remember you. Your name is going to be written down and then our children will grow up to see your contribution, though you are not even from here... It's a council decision. Whatever the paramount chief indicated conveyed to you is a decision. We took that decision at council... In fact, your perseverance, being able to go through the processes up to this point. Some people came here some time ago and we didn't allow them. And the fact that you've been able to do this is an achievement. So your name will go down in history as having contributed your quota to the promotion and preservation of our deeper culture." (Yilo Krobo Traditional council member, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

This feedback confirms the collective nature of the council's support and elevates the project beyond a simple artwork to a historically significant "contribution" to the community. The statement from a member of the Yilo Krobo Traditional Council offers an important layer of institutional validation that complements the Paramount Chief's endorsement. While more concise in expression, the message communicates a deep recognition of the cultural, historical, and communal weight attached to the proposed sculptural project. The chief's remarks frame the initiative not simply as a singular artistic contribution but as a legacy-building act, echoing the collective values and custodianship responsibilities of traditional leadership (Mbiti, 1969; Gyekye, 1998). By affirming that the approval was a decision reached collectively by the council, the speaker emphasises the legitimacy of the endorsement within the context of traditional governance structures. This kind of group deliberation, often grounded in consensus and ancestral mandates, is typical of Ghanaian chieftaincy systems where decisions on cultural matters are rarely unilateral (Nukunya, 2003). The council member's reference to the artist's perseverance and adherence to

procedural expectations reflects a cultural appreciation of endurance (or *nkontompo*), a moral virtue celebrated in Akan and Krobo social systems, where commitment to community processes reflects one's respect for collective authority (Opoku, 1978; Adjaye, 1997). Furthermore, the invocation of historical remembrance, "history will remember you," and "your name is going to be written down", speaks to African conceptions of legacy and social immortality. In many West African traditions, acts that contribute to the wellbeing or cultural continuity of a people are seen as imprinted upon collective memory, with oral histories, songs, or communal artifacts preserving the individual's name across generations (Field, 1961; Coe, 2005). This aligns with Hall's (1997) theory of cultural identity as "being" and "becoming", a lived archive shaped by historical action and future-oriented recognition.

The acknowledgment that the artist is not a native of Kroboland, yet is embraced for his cultural contribution, represents a compelling moment of inclusivity and intercommunal alliance. This form of cultural openness counters the exclusionary tendencies sometimes present in heritage discourse and affirms Taylor's (2003) assertion that cultural memory is performative and expandable, constructed through acts of engagement rather than inherited bloodlines alone. Importantly, the reference to earlier rejections of similar proposals illustrates the uniqueness of this project's acceptance. It speaks to the credibility the artist has earned through a patient and respectful engagement with traditional protocols, echoing Chilisa's (2012) advocacy for indigenous research and creative practices that build trust through community-centred processes.

2. Fulfilling a Long-Standing Community Aspiration for Cultural Representation

A powerful and emotionally charged theme in the feedback is the expression of a long-felt absence of visible cultural representation within the Krobo community, particularly Somanya, and the profound sense of fulfilment the sculptures provided. The Somanya Queen Mother articulated this with striking clarity and personal resonance:

"Okay, I'm also in this community, and I want to speak for the women. I've been here for the past 30 years, and I've never seen anything like this. Oftentimes I hear people talk about the poor culture, the poor culture, but I don't know, and I've never seen any of such things mounted anywhere in our community. But when I travel to other places, when I go to Kumasi, and I'll go to even somewhere, I once visited a friend at Winneba, I saw a lot of, they have a festival, they call it Aboakyer or something, and I saw a lot of these images that they have placed in their communities. But over here, I once asked, why don't we have anything arts in our community that represent us? So when I saw this, I said, hey, my dream has come true. I've been dreaming about these things over the years, and today somebody has rescued us. It's a very powerful and beautiful work, and I say thank you to the person who did this work. God bless him, because this is my first time, I'm also enjoying a work like this, an artwork like this, that represents us as Krobos, and that is also projecting us as Krobo, as a depot girls in the community... We need more of such beautiful works in our community." (Somanya Queen mother 1, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

The feedback from the Somanya Queen Mother powerfully reveals a longstanding void in public cultural representation within the Krobo community, particularly in Somanya. Her statement, which is imbued with both emotion and historical awareness, speaks to a collective yearning for visibility, affirmation, and identity through culturally rooted artistic expression. The sculptures depicting the Dipo rite

emerge not merely as aesthetic contributions, but as deeply symbolic interventions that address this absence. The Queen Mother's reflections offer rich qualitative data that underscore the intersection of memory, identity, and cultural belonging. The Queen Mother begins by situating her commentary within her own lived experience: "I've been here for the past 30 years, and I've never seen anything like this." This temporal framing is significant. In qualitative research, the testimony of long-term community members holds considerable weight, as it captures intergenerational perceptions and changes (Chilisa, 2012). Her observation points to a historical and spatial erasure or neglect of cultural representation in public spaces within Somanya. The lack of visual markers affirming Krobo identity, particularly in relation to women's roles and rites such as Dipo, contributes to what Appadurai (1996) describes as a "crisis of representation" in postcolonial and marginalised contexts.

Contrasting Somanya with other towns such as Kumasi and Winneba, the Queen Mother introduces the concept of cultural comparison and symbolic capital. She mentions seeing artistic installations during the Aboakyer Festival in Winneba, suggesting that these communities have successfully embedded cultural memory in the built environment. The absence of such expressions in Kroboland generates feelings of cultural insufficiency and longing, what Bourdieu (1986) might term a form of symbolic disempowerment. Her comment, "I once asked, why don't we have anything arts in our community that represent us?" reveals a broader communal questioning of cultural priorities and infrastructural neglect.

The Queen Mother's language moves from observation to revelation: "When I saw this, I said, hey, my dream has come true." Her tone here reflects what Turner (1969) might categorise as the "communitas" stage in ritual practice, a liminal moment when

individuals feel a collective transformation. The sculpture has not only filled a void but catalysed a renewed sense of communal pride. This aligns with Taylor's (2003) assertion that cultural memory is not just archived but performed, and public art becomes the stage upon which such performances occur. Further, the Queen Mother's specific identification of the artwork with Dipo girls, "projecting us as Krobo, as a depot girls in the community", affirms the sculptures as gendered symbols of cultural continuity. This speaks to the embodied and performative dimensions of cultural identity, particularly among women, whose roles in rites of passage are central yet often underrepresented in public memorials (Mbiti, 1969; Opoku, 1978). The Queen Mother's use of the phrase "rescued us" elevates the artwork to a redemptive act, portraying the artist as a cultural agent who has restored visibility and pride to a silenced tradition.

Her final plea "We need more of such beautiful works in our community", transcends personal praise and becomes a strategic call for cultural placemaking. As urban and rural African communities increasingly navigate modernisation and cultural erosion, public art initiatives like this become vital tools for anchoring identity in the face of global homogenisation (Coombes, 2003). This call aligns with Sullivan's (2010) conception of art as research, where the aesthetic object also functions as a mode of cultural inquiry and renewal

This sentiment of filling a critical void was echoed passionately by Somanya Community Member 1, who framed the project as unique and divinely inspired within the Krobo context:

"As a Krobo person, seeing this work in my community resonates with my culture and the very beginning of all of us and so it's one of a kind. I haven't seen such a monumental work for a very long time in our and I don't think that

there is such a sculpture piece in any part of Krobo land. I mean, this is a God-send project that I've seen here... The poet writes, if you people don't do this for us, you the artists and then you the creators, if you don't do this for us our culture can easily go extinct... I'm hoping that they will even give you additional contracts to produce some of these sculpture works in different places... It clearly portrays the culture that we talk about." (Somanya Community 1, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

The member's assertion that this is the first "monumental work" and likely the only such sculpture "in any part of Krobo land" reinforces the Queen Mother's point about the unprecedented nature of the installation. The description "God-send project" elevates its perceived importance beyond the merely artistic to the providential. Most critically, the member voices a stark existential concern: without such tangible representations created by artists ("if you people don't do this for us... if you don't do this for us our culture can easily go extinct"), cultural erosion is inevitable. This powerfully articulates the perceived role of public art in combating cultural amnesia and providing a visible anchor for identity. Like the Queen Mother, the community member advocates for replication ("additional contracts to produce some of these sculpture works in different places"), seeing the sculptures not as a singular endpoint but as a replicable model for broader cultural affirmation. The simple yet profound statement, "It clearly portrays the culture that we talk about," confirms the artwork's efficacy as a visual manifestation of lived cultural concepts.

3. Recognition of Ethnographic Fidelity and Artistic Mastery

A recurring and detailed strand of feedback focused intensely on the sculptures' perceived accuracy in depicting the Dipo rite's specific phases, regalia, and material culture, alongside admiration for the artistic skill involved. Community members demonstrated sophisticated visual literacy in assessing how well the artworks captured

the essence of the rituals. Somanya Community Member 1 provided an exceptionally detailed analysis, correlating specific sculptural elements with precise stages and components of the Dipo ceremony:

"I'm so excited, particularly with the folds that we have in the work and then the beads that have been surrounded by the figure and itself connoting the real culture. You know, we deal with the beads more. We are more into these natural beads and then what is even interesting is the flow, the flow of pattern around the sculpture piece and all that and how the body, the skin has been treated. I don't know how you did it but this is so unique and it gives it that natural feeling. There's so much detail in this work. Anybody who sees it knows that this is a typical Krobo tradition... Look at the kids, the way you treated their skin color, the costumes that they are coming with. This is typical of the entire process that you go through where they have to go and bath, they have to come parade around the streets and then seek for assistance for the meeting and then even the final stage where you have the white cloth all over with the duku and all that. I mean this is just what we do here... Look at the platform, the platform, the treatment you're giving to the feet, the foot of every figure that you have on it is so solid and then the rendition, it makes it look so real. This is just like the human beings who are into practice and every element of the process have been factored into the entire thing. I like the stick. Just look at how the stick looks like. Just like normal, the stick that we know because it is, I believe that when they are parading the streets, they need a support system because you have to hold a stick to go about when you're walking around seeking for assistance and all that. So the stick is an integral part of the process and then the wraparounds, the fold that has been depicted, as if the thing was just put on a human being and then the human being is standing there. It's so real and it connotes the relevance and the importance or the cultural relevance of the Krobo people... So and it clearly portrays the culture that we talk about. And you see, when we talk about the depo rite, it goes through several phases... the significant portion of the entire process. They take a bath, so you have to carry your calabash to the stream... You come and parade and then you go around seeking for assistance and all that... when you are done with that, that is where you go for the actual initiation

process, where they will have to decorate you with the beads, the cloth and everything, the ornamentation, the full adornment of the body... That stage, they take you there, you go through the entire process. When you are done, that is where they put the white cloth on you... the long hat, which is depicted in the other figure... you wear the white hat, and then you have the white dress as well. Like the loin cloth that is put around your waist and all that. So for me, this whole project that we have done, and mounted here, I've shown here, is a clear depiction of the significant phases that we have. Major, major significant phases of the deposited rightsists of Dipo." (Somanya Community 1, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

The feedback provided by a community member from Somanya offers a richly layered interpretation of the Dipo sculpture installation, blending aesthetic appreciation with deep cultural insight. This response not only affirms the accuracy and authenticity of the visual representation but also positions the work as a living ethnographic text that narrates, preserves, and educates on the intricacies of Krobo tradition. From the enthusiastic tone and detailed observations, it is clear that the sculpture resonates profoundly with lived experiences, validating its relevance within both historical and contemporary contexts.

A central theme in the speaker's response is the *material and symbolic authenticity* of the work. The community member expresses admiration for how the sculpture embodies key cultural elements: "the folds... the beads... the skin... the stick," noting that "anybody who sees it knows that this is a typical Krobo tradition." This aligns with visual anthropology scholarship, which emphasises how material culture can serve as a repository of communal memory and identity (MacDougall, 2006). The emphasis on beads, for example, draws attention to one of the most iconic markers of Krobo identity, especially among women. Beads are not merely decorative; they function as cultural texts that communicate status, maturity, and spiritual meaning

(Agyekum, 2020; Eicher, 1976). The respondent's praise for the "natural feeling" and "flow of pattern" indicates a sensory alignment between cultural memory and artistic form ,a key principle in sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015).

Equally compelling is the respondent's detailed account of the *ritual sequence*, which validates the sculpture's ethnographic fidelity. The speaker highlights the various phases of the Dipo rite, including bathing at the stream, street parades, solicitation of community support, and the culminating initiation adorned in white cloth and elaborate beadwork. These phases are described not in abstract, but through specific visual cues found in the sculptures: "the stick," "the foot," "the calabash," "the white hat." These objects and gestures, when rendered in sculptural form, become what Turner (1967) termed "dominant symbols" ,concentrated vessels of cultural meaning that both reflect and construct social processes.

The visual interpretation also demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of *embodiment* in cultural ritual. Statements such as "as if the thing was just put on a human being and then the human being is standing there" or "this is just like the human beings who are into practice" suggest a visceral, mimetic connection between the sculpture and its referent. This speaks to what Csordas (1994) refers to as the "embodied knowledge" of ritual participants, where the body becomes the locus of cultural experience and performance. In this context, the sculpture not only commemorates but reactivates the rite, allowing viewers to reinhabit the ritual space visually and emotionally. Furthermore, the respondent implicitly addresses the pedagogical and intergenerational significance of the artwork. The use of the phrase "every element of the process has been factored into the entire thing" indicates that the sculpture serves as a comprehensive archive. Public art of this kind can be understood through the lens

of cultural sustainability, where visual artefacts aid in the transmission of intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003). This is particularly critical in communities facing cultural erosion or generational disconnect, where oral traditions may no longer suffice in preserving complex ritual knowledge.

The mention of the calabash, bathing, parading, and seeking assistance reinforces the cyclical and performative nature of Dipo ,not merely as a singular event but a communal performance embedded in Krobo cosmology and values. The speaker's attention to the "final stage," with its adornments and ceremonial dress, is also consistent with the scholarship of Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969), who conceptualise rites of passage as marked by phases of separation, liminality, and reintegration. The sculpture's depiction of these phases visually mirrors this anthropological structure, thus making it a compelling medium for teaching and preserving ritual knowledge.

The Woman Dipo Initiator, speaking from direct experiential knowledge, also confirmed the sculptures' evocative power and resonance with personal memories, implicitly validating their fidelity:

"But then I must also say that when I look at the work, it reminds me of my days when I was a young girl and was initiated into womanhood. I can see myself in some of the works that I see up there because I dressed like this some years back. I remember eating the fufu and the plantain fufu and the soup with my colleagues. And seeing my mummy around behind me, following me everywhere, seeing the work, that is what came to my mind. It brought memories back. And it was so wonderful because after everything, I felt that yes, I'm now through with this and I feel that I belong to the Krobo land." (Woman dipo initiator, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

While less focused on specific details than Community Member 1, the Initiator's testimony is profoundly significant. Her ability to "see myself" in the sculptures and the vivid, sensory memories they triggered ("eating the fufu," "seeing my mummy") demonstrate a deep personal connection rooted in lived experience. This autobiographical resonance is a powerful indicator that the sculptures successfully captured not just the external forms but also the internal, emotional essence of the Dipo experience – the sense of belonging and identity transformation ("I feel that I belong to the Krobo land"). In evoking the taste and communal setting of the meal, the participant not only recalls a rite of passage but also reinforces the social bonding embedded in the process. This aligns with Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus*, where bodily practices (e.g., ritual dress, shared meals, movements) shape an individual's sense of place within their culture. The sculpture thus becomes a trigger for this *habitus*, allowing the respondent to reinhabit her cultural identity in the present.

Her feedback confirms that the artworks function effectively as mnemonic devices, powerfully evoking the personal significance of the rite for those who underwent it. The personal testimony of a woman who underwent the Dipo rite offers a deeply reflective and emotional perspective on the sculptural representation of the ritual. Her narrative foregrounds the intersection of memory, identity, and visual culture, demonstrating how public art can serve as a powerful mnemonic device that reactivates personal and collective experiences. In this instance, the sculpture not only captures the outward aesthetics of the Dipo rite but also evokes its internal, affective dimensions, those of belonging, familial connection, and cultural pride.

A central motif in the respondent's reflection is **embodied memory**. As Halbwachs (1992) argues in his theory of collective memory, individual recollections are shaped

within the context of social frameworks, and in this case, the Dipo rite becomes a memory scaffolded by familial presence, ritual activities, and cultural symbolism. The woman's ability to "see herself" in the sculpture, "I dressed like this some years back", suggests a kind of visual mirroring, where the artistic representation triggers a personal return to a pivotal moment in her life. This act of visual recognition reflects what Taylor (2003) calls *the repertoire*, those embodied acts of memory and performance that carry cultural knowledge across generations.

Furthermore, the emotional presence of her mother, "seeing my mummy around behind me, following me everywhere", underscores the **intergenerational dimension** of the Dipo rite. Rites of passage are rarely individual experiences; they are communally witnessed, maternally guided, and socially affirmed. The respondent's memory reaffirms the maternal role in shepherding girls through liminal spaces, a role that anthropologists like Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) have identified as critical in successful social transitions. The sculpture's ability to evoke these layered social relationships confirms its depth as a pedagogical and emotional artefact.

Perhaps most striking is her final statement: "*I feel that I belong to the Krobo land.*" This sentence encapsulates the rite's function in reinforcing *ethnic belonging and cultural identity*. Identity, as Stuart Hall (1997) notes, is not fixed but is continually constructed through discourse, memory, and representation. By experiencing the sculpture, this woman not only remembers her initiation but *reaffirms* her cultural rootedness. This moment of affective affirmation speaks to the broader goals of cultural revitalisation and visual sovereignty, where marginalised communities reclaim their histories through self-representation (Smith, 2012).

In sum, the sculpture operates as a *catalyst for cultural memory*, not merely a depiction of tradition, but a living archive that activates past experiences and re-inscribes them into present consciousness. This respondent's feedback thus provides compelling evidence that public art grounded in Indigenous epistemologies can perform vital restorative and educational functions, particularly for historically underrepresented communities like the Krobo.

4. Deep Emotional Resonance and Aesthetic Appreciation

Beyond the validation of cultural accuracy, the feedback overflowed with expressions of profound emotional connection and unadulterated aesthetic appreciation for the sculptures. The artworks were not merely understood intellectually; they were *felt*.

The Woman Dipo Initiator conveyed a sense of captivation and awe:

"The entire work looks so amazing, very powerful, and so, you know, good that I wish I had this thing to rise in other palace... But all the same, I must say that the artist has done so well. How he had the idea of doing this for us, whilst he is not a Krobo, is so wonderful... But then I must also say that when I look at the work... It brought memories back. And it was so wonderful... In fact, I can't just leave because I came here to do other things, but I can't just leave. Looking at it, I feel I should stand and watch and watch and watch again. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Thanks so much if I mean to talk, I'll talk and talk and talk. But thanks so much." (Woman dipo initiator, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

Her description of the work as "amazing" and "very powerful" speaks to its aesthetic impact. The inability to leave ("I can't just leave... I feel I should stand and watch and watch and watch again") vividly illustrates the sculptures' captivating power. The repetition of "Beautiful" and the expressed desire to keep talking underscore a depth of feeling that transcends simple verbal description, pointing to a deeply affective experience. The wonder expressed at the artist (an outsider) conceiving and executing

such a resonant work ("How he had the idea... is so wonderful") adds another layer of appreciation. Somanya Community Member 1 similarly expressed intense aesthetic admiration intertwined with recognition of the artist's skill and effort:

"This is so amazing. Look at the kids, the way you treated their skin color, the costumes that they are coming with... This is so amazing... Look at the platform, the platform, the treatment you're giving to the feet, the foot of every figure that you have on it is so solid and then the rendition, it makes it look so real... This is so amazing and for me, I think that the chiefs and the people of Krobo community needs to even reward you for what you have done. This is a big project. I'm just imagining the kind of work that has entered into this and then the finishing is what even kills me... It's a good work. It's an excellent and an exciting place to be... It's good, it's good, it's good, it's good... this is so unique and beautiful. Isn't it beautiful... So that stage... it is so beautiful." (Somanya Community 1, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

The repeated exclamations of "amazing," "good" (multiple times), "excellent," "exciting," "unique," and "beautiful" convey unalloyed aesthetic pleasure. The member specifically highlights the technical mastery evident in the skin treatment, costume rendering, solidity of the platform and feet ("so solid"), and the overall "finishing." The statement "the finishing is what even kills me" is a particularly strong colloquial expression of being overwhelmed by the quality of execution. Recognising the scale of effort ("big project," "imagining the kind of work that has entered into this") and explicitly calling for the artist to be "rewarded" demonstrates a deep appreciation that goes beyond passive viewing to an acknowledgment of the labour and dedication involved. The suggestion that the site is now "an exciting place to be" speaks to the transformative impact the sculptures have on the physical environment, enhancing its aesthetic and experiential quality.

The Somanya Queen Mother's succinct but powerful description, "It's a very powerful and beautiful work," similarly encapsulates this blend of aesthetic appreciation and emotional impact. The Paramount Chief's blessing and the Traditional Council member's assertion that "history will remember you" also carry an implicit emotional weight, acknowledging the significance and beauty of the contribution.

5. Perceived Impact on Cultural Preservation, Education, and Identity

Integral to the feedback was a strong projection and recognition of the sculptures' potential long-term impact on cultural preservation, education, and the reinforcement of Krobo identity, particularly for future generations and those outside the community. The Paramount Chief explicitly linked the project to cultural preservation and education:

"may the ancestors bless you for thinking about us as Krobols and bringing to us back our culture... The Council believes the installation will contribute positively to heritage education, cultural tourism, and public appreciation of Krobo customs." (Paramount Chief of Yilo Krobo Paramountcy, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

His framing of the project as "bringing... back our culture" positions it as an active agent in cultural revival. The anticipated contributions to "heritage education" and "public appreciation" highlight the didactic role envisioned for the public artwork. The Traditional Council member emphasised the project's historical significance and its role in future remembrance and identity formation:

"In fact, history will remember you. Your name is going to be written down and then our children will grow up to see your contribution... So your name will go down in history as having contributed your quota to the promotion and preservation of our deeper culture." (Yilo Krobo Traditional council member, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

This explicitly connects the sculptures to the community's future historical narrative. "Our children will grow up to see your contribution" positions the artworks as permanent fixtures in the landscape that will shape the cultural awareness and identity of the next generation, serving as tangible links to "our deeper culture."

Somanya Community Member 1 articulated the most urgent concern regarding preservation and the artwork's role in combating cultural loss, while also envisioning its impact on diaspora and visitors:

"The poet writes, if you people don't do this for us, you the artists and then you the creators, if you don't do this for us our culture can easily go extinct... We are so much appreciative of what you've done and I think that anytime someone visited Krobo land, particularly Somanya here, the person will be so excited to see some of these cultural elements. Apart from the fact that we practice it every year... We know that Krobo people who are outside the community, there's a losing a craft mass when they come back and see this. I mean this will be... They have to actually move upon the surroundings here so that we can come here and have recreational activities here and enjoy ourselves together... It clearly portrays the culture that we talk about." (Somanya Community 1, personal communication, January 12, 2025).

The stark warning about cultural extinction without such interventions underscores the perceived high stakes. The member anticipates the sculptures becoming a significant landmark for visitors ("anytime someone visited Krobo land... the person will be so excited"), enhancing cultural tourism. Crucially, they highlight the impact on the diaspora ("Krobo people who are outside the community"), suggesting the sculptures will serve as a powerful, tangible reconnection point for those physically separated from the community, combating the "losing a craft mass" (likely meaning a sense of detachment or cultural erosion). The suggestion to develop the surroundings for recreation indicates a vision of the site becoming a community cultural hub, further embedding the sculptures in social life and identity. The final statement, "It

clearly portrays the culture that we talk about," reaffirms its efficacy as a defining visual symbol.

The Queen Mother's statement, "that represents us as Krobos, and that is also projecting us as Krobo," succinctly captures the identity-affirming and projecting function she attributes to the work.

6. Community Ownership, Aspirations, and Future Directions

The feedback revealed a strong sense of community ownership over the sculptures and aspirations for their future role and replication. This transcends passive appreciation towards active engagement and future planning.

(i) Ownership and Pride

The language consistently used – "our culture," "us as Krobos," "our community," "mounted *in our community*" – signifies an immediate sense of possession and pride. The sculptures are not seen as external artefacts but as belonging to and representing the community itself. The Woman Initiator's wish that the Assembly officially received the work ("I wish I had this thing to rise in other palace. If not, at least the assembly could have also received this thing") reflects a desire for formal institutional recognition matching the community's informal embrace.

(ii) Desire for Replication

Both the Queen Mother ("We need more of such beautiful works in our community") and Community Member 1 ("I'm hoping that they will even give you additional contracts to produce some of these sculpture works in different places"; "I wish you can also do one for me. Me, I wish to get some of these things in my house again") explicitly expressed the desire for more sculptures. This indicates a view of this

project not as a conclusion but as a catalyst for further artistic-cultural initiatives, spreading representation throughout Krobo land and even into private domestic spaces.

(iii) Envisioning the Site's Future

Community Member 1 proposed developing the sculpture site into a community space: "They have to actually move upon the surroundings here so that we can come here and have recreational activities here and enjoy ourselves together." This vision transforms the installation site from a passive viewing point into an active social and cultural hub, integrating the artwork more deeply into community life and rituals.

(iv) Acknowledgment of Outsider Contribution:

A noteworthy sub-theme is the repeated, appreciative acknowledgment that this significant contribution came from an outsider ("though you are not even from here" - Council Member; "whilst he is not a Krobo" - Woman Initiator). This highlights the community's openness and gratitude, valuing the act of representation itself highly, regardless of the artist's origin. It underscores the project's success in building trust and cultural bridges.

Conclusively, the post-production evaluation feedback from the Krobo community regarding the sculptural representations of the Dipo rite presents an overwhelmingly positive and deeply insightful picture. The project achieved its fundamental goal of resonating with the community it sought to represent. The feedback reveals a profound sense of cultural validation, emanating strongly from the traditional custodians (Paramount Chief, Traditional Council) who endorsed the project as timely, commendable, and essential for preservation and education. Simultaneously, it fulfilled a long-expressed community aspiration, articulated powerfully by the Queen

Mother and Community Member 1, for visible, high-quality public art that reflects Krobo identity and specifically honours the significant Dipo rite. The meticulous attention to ethnographic detail, the accurate depiction of ritual phases, costumes, beadwork, props like the "poma," and the physical treatment of the figures – was not only recognised but passionately celebrated by community members, particularly Somanya Community Member 1, whose detailed analysis served as a powerful verification of the artwork's cultural fidelity. This accuracy was key to triggering personal memories and emotional connections, as evidenced by the Woman Dipo Initiator's testimony. Beyond accuracy, the sculptures elicited deep aesthetic appreciation and emotional resonance. Descriptions like "amazing," "powerful," "beautiful," "unique," and "real" permeated the feedback, alongside expressions of captivation ("I can't just leave") and awe ("the finishing is what even kills me"). This aesthetic power is inseparable from the cultural significance; the beauty is found in the faithful and evocative representation.

Crucially, the community perceives the sculptures as powerful tools for ongoing cultural preservation, combating the "gap" and potential "extinction" they themselves identified. They are seen as permanent educational monuments for future generations ("our children will grow up to see your contribution"), points of reconnection for the diaspora, attractions for cultural tourism, and defining symbols that "clearly portray the culture that we talk about." The feedback expresses a strong sense of ownership and clear aspirations for the future: replication of such works throughout Krobo land, the development of the installation site into a community hub, and a profound gratitude for the contribution of an outsider artist who successfully navigated cultural sensitivities to create something embraced as authentically and powerfully Krobo.

The Public evaluation of the sculptures was conducted through structured and feedback gathered from a diverse group of community members, including practising dipo women, traditional leaders, cultural custodians, youth, and the general public within the Yilo Krobo community. Among the respondents were locally recognised sculptors, bead makers, carvers, and visual arts teachers whose experiential knowledge enabled informed aesthetic judgement beyond lay appreciation. Their assessments, alongside non-artist community voices, ensured that evaluation reflected both professional artistic standards and culturally grounded expectations. To ensure fairness, consistency, and analytical rigour, the aesthetic appeal of the sculptures was interpreted through an implicit evaluation rubric aligned with established criteria in visual arts assessment. Respondents frequently highlighted the precision of modelling, durability of materials, and careful finishing as evidence of high technical competence. The second criterion, composition, addressed the balance, proportion, scale, and spatial arrangement of sculptural elements within the site. Community feedback noted the harmonious relationship between the figures, their environment, and the viewing angles afforded by the public space. The placement and sequencing of the sculptures were perceived as visually coherent and narratively progressive, enhancing both aesthetic engagement and interpretive clarity. The third criterion, expression and meaning, examined emotional resonance, thematic relevance, and clarity of artistic intent. Viewers consistently interpreted the sculptures as powerful visual narratives of the Dipo rite, capable of evoking memory, pride, and cultural continuity. The expressive postures, symbolic gestures, and material choices were recognised as effectively communicating the values, transitions, and moral teachings embedded in Krobo womanhood and identity. Respondents acknowledged the project's originality in translating an intangible ritual process into monumental three-

dimensional public forms. The synthesis of ethnographic knowledge, indigenous symbolism, and contemporary sculptural language was perceived as a distinctive and forward-looking artistic contribution. Taken together, this multi-criteria evaluation confirms that the sculptures have successfully transitioned from studio-based artefacts into significant cultural landmarks within the Yilo Krobo community. They are validated not only as artistically accomplished works but also as culturally authentic representations that fulfil a deep communal need for visibility and self-representation. Functioning as catalysts for memory, identity reinforcement, and intergenerational dialogue, the sculptures inspire optimism regarding their enduring role in the ongoing project of Krobo cultural preservation and celebration. As revealed through this rich community discourse, the project stands as a substantive contribution to the visual culture, public art practice, and heritage consciousness of the Krobo people.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings, draws relevant conclusions, and provides key recommendations based on the research conducted. The study focused on exploring the views of the Krobo people of Somanya on sculptural representations of the significant phases of the Dipo rite and the artistic processes involved in creating these works. It sought to examine how sculpture can serve as a medium for cultural expression, interpretation, and preservation. Drawing from interviews, observations, and studio-based practice, the research unearthed rich insights into community perspectives, symbolic meanings, and the potential role of visual art in sustaining indigenous traditions. The findings informed a set of conclusions and recommendations aimed at enhancing cultural education, community engagement, and the documentation of Krobo heritage through sculpture.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

Among the several stages of the Dipo rite, five significant Phases within multiple interconnected Stages of the Krobo Dipo rite, were revealed. The Ritual Cleansing phase serves as the definitive separation from childhood, marked by a river crossing symbolizing the threshold into liminality. Key elements include the symbolic purification using calabashes (representing the womb, fertility, and cultural continuity) and locally sourced sponges/soap, alongside a ritual meal (Fufu and Palmnut Soup) signifying communal support and the integration of Krobo cultural sustenance. The Public Parading phase represents a critical, visible liminal state. Emerging from seclusion, initiates, identified by their shaved heads with a single

small ponytail (symbolizing the stripping of childhood identity and the "seed" of potential rebirth), process through the community. Carrying ceremonial sticks prefiguring adult authority and responsibility, they actively solicit communal recognition, blessings, and support, generating a powerful sense of *communitas*. The community's active participation is essential co-creation of the ritual's efficacy. The Final Rites and Symbolic Transition phase culminates in incorporation as socially recognized women. Conducted at the spiritually charged sacred site *Kpetekpe*, the core act involves sitting three times on the *Dipo Stone* (*Dipo tɛ*), perceived as an agent of ancestral judgment testing adherence to societal norms regarding fertility. Successful passage leads to elaborate adornment in beads (signifying wealth, maturity, fertility readiness, and Krobo identity) and the donning of a white cloth (*yadeɛ*), the definitive polysemic symbol of purity, achieved womanhood, virtue, and readiness for marriage. This final transformation marks the initiate's re-entry into society with new rights and responsibilities. The profound cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions of these phases, rich in layered symbolism and embodied experience, form the essential foundation for their translation into sculptural form.

The creation of sculptural representations for the Dipo rite's significant phases necessitated a rigorous, multi-stage production process grounded in both traditional and adapted sculptural methodologies. Central to this was the engineering of robust armatures using welded mild steel rods and galvanized wire mesh, designed to bear the structural demands of life-size to colossal figures (3ft-7ft) while accurately capturing culturally significant postures. Systematic framework planning, including grid scaling and logistical analysis, ensured dimensional accuracy and symbolic resonance across phases, transitional stages like Public Parading were rendered monumentally to convey communal spectacle, while introspective phases like Ritual

Cleansing retained life-scale intimacy. The modelling phase involved meticulous clay application over armatures, with careful attention to anatomical proportions, Krobo-specific details (hairstyles, beadwork, scarification), and moisture management to preserve workability. Critical mould-making employed sectional plaster of Paris (P.O.P) reinforced with jute fibres, capturing fine surface details and enabling reproduction in durable polyester resin composites. Post-casting, assembly involved precision bonding of resin sections with internal dowels and adhesive paste, followed by extensive fettling and sanding to achieve seamless joins. Surface finishing incorporated culturally informed techniques: realistic flesh tones for human presence, faux metal/stone effects using pigmented resins to evoke ancestral gravitas, and symbolic colour fields reflecting ritual stages. The installation phase at Somanya featured site-specific engineering, land levelling, profiled foundation digging, and reinforced concrete plinths filled with compacted stone, to permanently anchor sculptures. Final assembly integrated structural securing via bolting and epoxy grouting, weatherproofing, and spatial arrangement mirroring the Dipo's narrative progression, successfully transitioning the studio-based works into a cohesive public testament to Krobo cultural heritage. This integrated approach demonstrated that translating ephemeral ritual into enduring sculptural form requires synthesizing material innovation, structural engineering, cultural fidelity, and site-responsive installation.

The identification and preparation of an appropriate public site in Somanya for mounting the sculptural representations of the Dipo rite phases necessitated a culturally informed and technically rigorous approach. A comprehensive site assessment confirmed Somanya's significance as the cultural epicenter of the Krobo people, ensuring contextual relevance and community accessibility. The installation

process involved meticulous land leveling to create a stable, uniform base capable of supporting the sculptures' substantial weight, followed by precise profiling to achieve optimal spatial arrangement that mirrored the ritual's narrative progression. Critical foundation engineering included constructing reinforced concrete plinths integrated with stone-filled steel pedestals for enhanced load distribution and drainage, ensuring long-term structural integrity against environmental stressors. Permanent mounting employed embedded steel bolts, cement grouting, and anti-theft welds for security, while weatherproofing with epoxy resin and silicone caulk safeguarded against corrosion. The final circular arrangement of the five life-sized to colossal figures transformed the site into an immersive cultural landmark, successfully anchoring the sculptural narrative within Krobo heritage space and demonstrating that effective public installation requires synthesizing geotechnical stability, cultural sensitivity, and narrative spatial design.

The Krobo community of Somanya strongly affirmed the cultural and historical value of the sculptural representations of the Dipo rite. Traditional authorities, including the Paramount Chief and Traditional Council, viewed the installation as a meaningful act of cultural reclamation. They recognised a long-standing gap in cultural preservation and positioned the sculptures as tools for heritage education and the reinforcement of collective identity. Ancestral legitimacy was symbolically bestowed on the works, underscoring their significance in preserving Krobo traditions. Community members, especially women and former participants of the Dipo rite, expressed profound emotional satisfaction. The traditional authorities noted that the installation fulfilled a long-held desire for public cultural representation, filling a visible void in Somanya when compared to other Ghanaian towns with established cultural monuments. The sculptures were praised for their ethnographic accuracy, as they faithfully depicted

ritual elements such as ceremonial sticks (poma), bead adornments, the white initiation cloth (yadeε), and the three-phase narrative of cleansing, parading, and incorporation. These precise visual cues resonated deeply with the lived experiences of the people, evoking autobiographical memories and sensory recollections, including meals and social gatherings associated with the rite. The artistic craftsmanship was widely applauded, with the texture of the skin, intricate folds of clothing, and the monumental scale of the figures being particularly celebrated. Community members frequently associated this aesthetic quality with a sense of cultural pride and dignity. Many perceived the sculptures as vital safeguards against cultural erosion, envisioning them as instruments for educating younger generations, reconnecting with the diaspora, and promoting cultural tourism. There was a strong sense of communal ownership of the work. Residents proposed its replication in other locations and advocated for transforming the site into a social and cultural hub. Interestingly, the community also embraced the artist's outsider identity, interpreting it as a sign of inclusive cultural dialogue and a bridge across different cultural perspectives.

5.2 Conclusions

This research has provided a systematic and in-depth examination of the Krobo Dipo rite, illuminating its profound structural organisation and layered symbolic complexity. The findings reveal that the rite is coherently articulated through an overarching tripartite framework of separation, liminality, and incorporation, within which several distinct yet interrelated ritual phases are embedded. Together, these phases function as an integrated mechanism for the social, spiritual, and cultural transformation of Krobo girls into recognised womanhood. The Ritual Cleansing

phase emerges as a decisive moment of separation from childhood, with the river operating as a powerful liminal threshold. This phase is constituted by a convergence of symbolic elements that reinforce Krobo cosmology and values: calabashes that metaphorically reference the womb, fertility, and cultural continuity; locally sourced sponges and soap that signify sacred purification grounded in communal self-reliance; and the ritual consumption of fufu with palmnut soup, which embodies collective nourishment and the deep interweaving of sustenance, culture, and identity. These elements collectively establish the moral and spiritual conditions necessary for transition.

The Public Parading phase represents an intensified state of liminality, during which initiates become highly visible social actors. The shaved head, marked by the retention of a single ponytail, functions as a potent visual metaphor that simultaneously signifies the erasure of childhood identity and the preservation of latent potential for rebirth. Through public procession, the initiates actively engage the community, carrying ceremonial sticks that symbolically prefigure adult authority, responsibility, and social accountability. This performative engagement generates a heightened sense of *communitas* and affirms the community's indispensable role as co-participant in the rite's transformative efficacy. Incorporation is fully realised during the Final Rites and Symbolic Transition phase, centred on the spiritually charged sacred site of Kpetekpe. The act of sitting three times on the Dipo Stone (*Dipo te*) constitutes the ritual climax, with the stone understood not as an inert object but as an active ancestral agent that adjudicates moral conduct, particularly in relation to fertility within the socially sanctioned framework of post-Dipo marriage. Successful passage culminates in the initiates' final transformation through elaborate bead adornment, signifying wealth, social maturity, fertility readiness, and affirmed

Krobo identity, alongside the donning of the white cloth (*yadee*). As a polysemic symbol, *yadee* encapsulates purity, virtue, achieved womanhood, and readiness for marriage, marking the initiate's formal reintegration into Krobo society with newly conferred rights and responsibilities.

The translation of the Dipo rite's ephemeral ritual phases into enduring sculptural form demanded a rigorous, interdisciplinary studio practice synthesizing traditional craftsmanship with innovative technical adaptation. Central to this process was the engineering of structural armatures fabricated from welded mild steel rods and galvanized wire mesh to support life-size to monumental figures (3ft–7ft) while preserving the postural integrity essential to each phase's cultural symbolism. Methodical framework planning, incorporating grid scaling and logistical analysis, ensured dimensional precision and narrative intentionality: communal stages like Public Parading were rendered at a colossal scale to evoke collective spectacle, while introspective moments such as Ritual Cleansing retained life-size immediacy to amplify embodied intimacy. The modelling phase entailed meticulous clay application over armatures, with acute attention to Krobo-specific anatomical details, hairstyles, beadwork, scarification patterns and controlled hydration to maintain material workability throughout refinement. Critical mould-making deployed sectional plaster of Paris (P.O.P) reinforced with jute fibres, capturing surface intricacies and enabling replication in resilient polyester resin composites. Post-casting assembly required precision bonding of resin segments using internal dowels and adhesive pastes, followed by exhaustive fettling and sanding to achieve seamless unity. Surface finishing integrated culturally resonant techniques: lifelike flesh tones honoured human presence; faux metallic and stone patinas (achieved through pigmented resins) evoked ancestral gravitas; and symbolic colour fields aligned with ritual semantics.

The site-specific installation in Somanya involved terrain levelling, profiled foundation engineering, and reinforced concrete plinths with stone infill for permanent stabilization. Final assembly employed structural bolting, epoxy grouting, and environmental weatherproofing, while spatial sequencing mirrored the Dipo's narrative arc transitioning studio artefacts into a cohesive public heritage landscape. This multifaceted approach conclusively demonstrated that materializing ritual temporality into enduring form necessitates the synthesis of cultural anthropology, structural innovation, and site-responsive stewardship, thereby anchoring Krobo intangible heritage within the tangible realm of communal memory and identity.

The successful siting and installation of the Dipo sculptural ensemble in Somanya demanded a dual commitment to cultural intentionality and engineering precision, transforming theoretical research into a permanent heritage intervention. Site selection was predicated on Somanya's identity as the Krobo cultural epicenter, ensuring the works would occupy a space of profound communal significance and accessibility. The technical execution began with rigorous terrain modification: strategic land leveling created a stable substrate capable of bearing the sculptures' substantial mass, while meticulous profiling established a spatial syntax that physically mapped the Dipo's ritual progression. Foundation engineering employed reinforced concrete plinths integrated with stone-filled steel pedestals a hybrid solution optimizing load-bearing capacity, drainage efficiency, and resistance to environmental stressors like soil subsidence and erosion. Permanent anchoring fused embedded steel bolts with cementitious grouting and anti-theft welds, ensuring immovable security, while epoxy resin seals and silicone caulking provided molecular-level defense against moisture ingress and corrosion. The final spatial choreography, arranging five life-sized to monumental figures in a circular continuum, transcended mere display to create an

immersive narrative landscape. This synthesis of geotechnical innovation, anti-degradation protocols, and heritage-conscious spatial design did not merely *place* the sculptures but *rooted* them within Krobo cosmology, demonstrating that enduring public commemoration necessitates the interdependence of cultural resonance, structural resilience, and narrative embodiment in the built environment.

The Krobo community's reception of the sculptural installations stands as a profound testament to their efficacy in embodying cultural memory and revitalizing communal identity. Traditional authorities, notably the Paramount Chief and Council, conferred ancestral legitimacy upon the works, framing them as corrective interventions against generational erosion of Dipo heritage. This institutional endorsement positioned the sculptures not merely as artistic artefacts but as pedagogical instruments for heritage education and identity reinforcement. Community members, particularly Dipo initiates and elders, expressed visceral validation through embodied recognition, the precise rendering of ritual paraphernalia (poma sticks, yadee cloth, beadwork) triggered autobiographical recollections of sensory experiences (communal meals, ritual choreography). Ethnographic fidelity was inseparable from aesthetic resonance: the monumental scale, lifelike skin textures, and fabric detailing were celebrated as acts of cultural reclamation, transforming perceived voids in Somanya's public space into sites of visual sovereignty. Critically, the community projected the sculptures as bulwarks against cultural dissolution, envisioning their role in diaspora reconnection, youth education, and cultural tourism. The collective call for replication and spatial activation of the site as a social hub revealed deep ownership, while the embrace of the artist's outsider status underscored a commitment to inclusive cultural dialogue. Thus, the installations transcend static representation, emerging as dynamic socio-ritual anchors that reconcile Krobo heritage with contemporary placemaking.

5.3 Recommendations

To ensure the perpetuation of the Dipo rite's intricate structure, revealed through this research as foundational to Krobo cosmology, it is recommended that traditional authorities institutionalize a multimodal preservation framework. This necessitates establishing a curated oral archive under the stewardship of traditional authorities in Krobo and elders to document esoteric knowledge (e.g., ancestral invocations at Kpetɛkpɛ, semiotics of the yadeɛ cloth), thereby safeguarding hermeneutic layers beyond sculptural representation. Concurrently, stakeholders should advocate for formal heritage zoning of sacred geographies, particularly riverine thresholds and the Dipo tɛ stone, to protect their ritual agency against spatial encroachment. Furthermore, integrating the research's phase-specific symbolism (calabashes as womb-vessels, the shaved ponytail as liminal duality) into matrilineally guided pedagogy for Krobo youth will embed anthropological insights into intergenerational identity formation. Finally, replicating the study's sculptural methodology for endangered Krobo rites could extend its material-heritage praxis, transforming academic contributions into enduring tangible epistemologies of Krobo social structure.

To sustain and institutionalise the methodological innovations demonstrated in the material translation of Krobo ritual temporality, this study recommends the formal adoption of a heritage stewardship protocol by traditional authorities. Such a protocol should codify the interdisciplinary praxis employed in the research, ensuring that future engagements with similar cultural materials maintain epistemological and ontological fidelity. Central to this recommendation is the development of technically regulated apprenticeship frameworks, managed under the leadership of Queen Mothers and master artisans. These programmes should facilitate the intergenerational

transmission of the sculptural methodologies documented in the study, specifically, techniques of armature engineering, culturally responsive scale modulation, and ritual-specific surface patination. This would serve to guarantee that future restorations or new commissions uphold the standards of authenticity and cultural integrity established by the original project. Simultaneously, it is imperative that stakeholders enact robust conservation policies for sacred ritual sites such as Kpetekpe. These policies should incorporate the geotechnical stabilisation strategies employed in the current study, including the use of reinforced plinths and stone-infilled foundations, which proved effective in safeguarding the ritual topography from environmental and human-induced degradation. The integration of these engineering solutions into broader conservation frameworks would help protect the physical and symbolic integrity of sacred landscapes critical to Krobo cultural heritage.

Given the project's success in spatialising ritual narrative through sequenced sculptural installations, there is significant value in adapting this approach into a mobile pedagogical archive. This would involve producing scaled replicas of the sculptures accompanied by curated ritual commentaries, allowing them to circulate across Krobo educational institutions. Such a mobile archive would transform the sculptures from static public monuments into dynamic teaching tools, fostering cultural literacy among younger generations and enriching initiation pedagogies with tangible, place-based learning resources. The methodological framework established in this study holds potential for broader application across other endangered Krobo rites such as Kpledomi and Ngmayem. Replicating this interdisciplinary and material-centred approach in those contexts could support the preservation of ephemeral ritual knowledge by rendering it into durable, interpretative sculptural forms. In doing so,

this methodology positions itself as a decolonising preservation mechanism, one that converts intangible cosmologies into enduring, culturally embedded hermeneutics, capable of resisting the erasures of modernity and cultural marginalisation.

To preserve the geocultural stewardship model demonstrated by this project's successful siting methodology, it is recommended that traditional authorities of Yilo Krobo traditional council formalize a heritage infrastructure protocol mandating three core principles: first, the codification of Somanya's sacred geography through legally binding conservation easements that preserve ritual sightlines and soil integrity using the study's hybrid plinth-pedestal system (reinforced concrete with stone infill) as a bulwark against anthropogenic stressors; second, the establishment of technically regulated installation standards requiring anti-degradation measures, embedded steel bolts with cementitious grouting, epoxy resin moisture barriers, and silicone caulking joints, for all future commemorative monuments in Krobo space; third, the institutionalization of narrative spatial design as non-negotiable heritage praxis, wherein ritual sequencing dictates site choreography. Furthermore, this methodology should be adapted into a replicable conservation framework for imperiled Ghanaian heritage sites, transforming the project's synthesis of geotechnical innovation and cosmological embodiment into a national standard for decolonial placemaking.

Leveraging the empirically validated efficacy of the sculptures as socio-ritual anchors, it is recommended that traditional authorities codify a multimodal heritage praxis institutionalizing three evidence-based interventions: first, establish a Dipo Heritage Council (Paramountcy-appointed ritual custodians, Queen Mothers, and initiates) to mandate replication of the works at Krobo diaspora hubs, utilizing their proven capacity for embodied recognition to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer;

second, formalize the site's visual sovereignty through ritual-activated programming, monthly poma-bearing processions culminating at the sculptures, curated testimony sessions by elders, and augmented reality overlays of beadwork symbology, transforming aesthetic resonance into sustained pedagogical action; third, develop ethnographic certification protocols requiring future public artworks to undergo hermeneutic validation by initiates, ensuring the visceral authenticity (yadee draping techniques, scarification patterns) that triggered autobiographical recall in this study remains non-negotiable. Crucially, adopt the project's inclusive co-creation framework as policy, mandating outsider artists' collaboration with ritual specialists to transform "corrective interventions" into scalable decolonial curatorship.

5.4 Areas of Further Research

While this study focuses on sculpturally representing the significant phases of the Dipo rite to highlight the artistic and cultural heritage of the Krobo people, several potential areas of further research have emerged. These could provide broader insights into indigenous rites, cultural resilience, gender identities, and the role of art in cultural preservation. One potential area for future research is a comparative study of female puberty rites across Ghanaian ethnic groups. While Dipo is widely celebrated among the Krobos, similar initiation practices exist among the Akan (*bragoro*), the Ga (*otufo*), and some Ewe communities. A comparative analysis of these rites could examine differences and similarities in symbolism, ritual phases, and the use of artistic elements such as costume, music, and body art. Such studies would offer a broader cultural understanding of female initiation in Ghana and highlight the shared and unique elements of these rites across ethnic lines.

Another important avenue is the exploration of intergenerational perceptions of the Dipo rite within Krobo communities. This line of research could investigate how different age groups, elders, middle-aged adults, and youth, perceive the relevance, value, and transformation of the rite. It would offer insight into how cultural practices are preserved, contested, or adapted over time, especially in the face of modern influences such as formal education, Christianity, and urbanisation.

The role of beadwork and costume in expressing Krobo identity also presents a rich area for scholarly inquiry. As central features of the Dipo rite, beads are not only decorative but serve as cultural texts that communicate messages about status, fertility, and morality. A focused study on Krobo bead-making traditions could delve into their historical development, symbolic meanings, and current trends in local and global markets. This research could contribute to wider discussions on material culture, indigenous knowledge systems, and economic sustainability.

In the domain of art and heritage, there is considerable scope for studying the use of sculpture and visual art in preserving intangible cultural heritage. While this study explores sculptural representation as a means of documentation and cultural education, further research could evaluate the broader impact of such artistic interventions in African contexts. Scholars could investigate how sculpture functions as a medium of memory and narrative, especially in preserving rituals and oral traditions that are often excluded from textual records. Additionally, studies could examine the public's engagement with these works and their role in promoting cultural tourism and education.

Another pressing area for investigation is the influence of religion and formal education on the Dipo rite. Many families in Krobo communities now navigate

conflicting values between Christian or Islamic teachings and traditional beliefs. Research could focus on how religious leaders, teachers, and parents view the rite, and how girls themselves experience these dual influences. Such a study could address cultural negotiation and syncretism, contributing to discussions on identity, spirituality, and generational change in Ghanaian society.

Closely related is the opportunity to engage in a gender-focused analysis of the Dipo rite, particularly from feminist or gender studies perspectives. This research could critically assess whether Dipo empowers young women by preparing them for adulthood or whether it reinforces patriarchal control through expectations of chastity and submission. Exploring themes such as bodily autonomy, agency, and the evolving roles of women in Krobo society would enrich the discourse on gender and tradition in African settings.

In an increasingly digital world, scholars could also explore the possibilities of digital documentation and virtual reenactment of the Dipo rite. Employing tools such as 3D modelling, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR), researchers could create immersive experiences that preserve the rite without disrupting its sacred integrity. This approach would be particularly useful for educational institutions, museums, and diaspora communities, offering an ethical and engaging method of cultural transmission.

Furthermore, the reception of sculptural representations of indigenous rites by local communities is a critical area that deserves attention. Research could be conducted to assess how the Krobo people interpret and emotionally respond to sculptural works that depict their sacred traditions. Do such representations foster pride and continuity, or do they provoke debates about authenticity, ownership, and commodification?

Engaging communities in dialogue about these issues would provide essential insights into the ethics of cultural representation.

A more spatially inclined line of research could focus on ritual architecture and sacred spaces associated with the Dipo rite. Investigations into the layout, symbolism, and evolution of spaces such as the *Dipo house*, sacred groves, and river sites would reveal how physical environments contribute to the spiritual and educational dimensions of the rite. This could be expanded to include studies on how such spaces are being preserved, altered, or threatened by urban development and environmental change.

Finally, future research may consider arts-based research methodologies within African ethnographic contexts. This study has employed sculpture as a method of inquiry and representation, aligning with growing scholarly interest in decolonised research practices. Further work could explore how other artistic forms, such as performance, textiles, or ceramics, can function not merely as outputs but as research processes themselves. These approaches challenge the dominance of Western academic methods and elevate indigenous ways of knowing, creating, and documenting cultural life.

The study of the Dipo rite through sculpture opens numerous interdisciplinary pathways for further exploration. These include comparative cultural analysis, generational and gender studies, visual anthropology, material culture, spatial ethnography, and digital heritage. As the cultural landscape of Ghana continues to evolve, it is essential that research efforts expand to include these diverse dimensions, ensuring that traditional rites like Dipo are preserved, understood, and appreciated within both local and global contexts.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Researcher: Harry Kyei-Nimako

Institution: University of Education, Winneba

Department: Music Education

Supervisor: Theophilus Mensah (PhD)

Study Title: *Sculpting the Significant Phases of the Dipo Rite among the Krobo People of Somanya*

Introductory Statement

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This discussion seeks to document and interpret community knowledge of the **Dipo rite**, with particular attention to its **significant phases**, existing **artistic modes of representation**, and **community views on sculptural interpretations** of the rite. There are no right or wrong responses. Your perspectives, experiences, and reflections are central to this study. All information shared will be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes.

Section A: Participant Context

(Provides interpretive background for analysis)

1. Please describe yourself in terms of your age group, gender, role or status within the Krobo community, and occupation.
2. How long have you lived in Somanya, and what is your relationship to Krobo traditions?
3. In what ways have you participated in, witnessed, or learned about the Dipo rite?

Section B: Community Understanding of the Dipo Rite and Its Significant Phases

(Research Objective 1)

4. From your understanding, what does the Dipo rite represent within Krobo society?
5. Can you describe the major phases of the Dipo rite as they are traditionally observed?
6. Which phases are considered the most significant or sacred, and why are they regarded as such?
7. What key rituals, symbols, objects, or actions define each phase of the Dipo rite?
8. How are cultural values, moral lessons, and identity transmitted to initiates during these phases?
9. In your view, have any phases of the Dipo rite changed over time? If so, what factors (social, religious, economic, or modern influences) account for these changes?

Section C: Existing Artistic Representations of the Dipo Rite

(Research Objective 1)

10. How has the Dipo rite traditionally been expressed or represented through art (for example, body adornment, costume, performance, carving, objects, or ritual materials)?
11. Are there specific artistic forms or artefacts associated with particular phases of the Dipo rite? Please explain.
12. In what ways do these artistic expressions help preserve, communicate, or reinforce the meanings of the Dipo rite?

13. Which phases of the Dipo rite, in your opinion, are well represented artistically, and which are not adequately captured?
14. How appropriate or meaningful do you consider three-dimensional forms such as sculpture in representing the Dipo rite compared to other artistic modes?

Section D: Community Views on Sculptural Representations of the Dipo Rite

(Research Objective 3)

15. What are your personal views on representing the Dipo rite and its phases through sculpture?
16. How do you emotionally and culturally respond when you encounter sculptural works depicting the Dipo rite?
17. In your opinion, can sculpture effectively communicate the spiritual, cultural, and symbolic meanings of the Dipo rite? Why or why not?
18. Which specific phases of the Dipo rite do you believe are most suitable for sculptural interpretation, and what makes them appropriate?
19. What cultural elements, symbols, or values must a sculptor consider to ensure that such works remain authentic to Krobo traditions?

Section E: Collective Perception, Cultural Ownership, and Interpretation

(Research Objective 3)

20. How do members of the Krobo community generally perceive sculptural representations of the Dipo rite?
21. Do these sculptural works contribute to cultural education, identity affirmation, or heritage preservation within the community? Please explain.
22. Are there any cultural concerns, taboos, or ethical boundaries related to sculpting certain aspects or phases of the Dipo rite?

23. Where do you think sculptures representing the Dipo rite should be located or displayed, and why (e.g., public spaces, cultural centres, shrines, museums, schools)?
24. Who should have the authority or responsibility to guide how the Dipo rite is visually represented through sculpture?

Section F: Reflective Insights and Recommendations

25. What guidance would you offer to artists or researchers who intend to sculpt the significant phases of the Dipo rite?
26. How can sculptural representations contribute to safeguarding Krobo cultural knowledge for future generations?
27. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the Dipo rite, its phases, or its sculptural representation that has not been discussed?

Closing

Thank you sincerely for your time and valuable insights. Your contributions are crucial to shaping the outcome of this study.

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Researcher: Harry Kyei-Nimako

University of Education, Winneba

Department of Music Education

Corresponding Email: haryknn@yahoo.com

Responsible Supervisor: Theophilus Mensah (PhD)

University of Education, Winneba

A. SITE AND CONTEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Site is culturally recognised or sanctioned by traditional authorities	☐	☐	
Evidence of ritual or symbolic significance of the site	☐	☐	
Presence of chiefs, elders, or custodians of the land	☐	☐	
Spatial organisation reflects ritual or cultural hierarchy	☐	☐	
Public accessibility and community engagement with the site	☐	☐	

B. PARTICIPANTS AND ROLES

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Presence of initiates (Dipo-yo)	☐	☐	
Presence of ritual specialists/practitioners	☐	☐	
Presence of elders or female custodians	☐	☐	
Participation of family members and general community	☐	☐	
Clear differentiation of roles and responsibilities	☐	☐	

C. RITUAL ACTIVITIES AND SEQUENCE

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Ritual cleansing activities observed	☐	☐	
Use of river or water body as ritual threshold	☐	☐	
Public parading or procession	☐	☐	
Sitting on the Dipo Stone (<i>Dipo tɛ</i>)	☐	☐	
Final rites of adornment and reintegration	☐	☐	

D. MATERIAL CULTURE AND SYMBOLISM

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Use of calabashes	☐	☐	
Use of beads (<i>bodom</i>)	☐	☐	
Use of ceremonial sticks	☐	☐	
Presence of white cloth (<i>yadeɛ</i>)	☐	☐	
Symbolic objects explained by elders or practitioners	☐	☐	

E. AESTHETIC AND VISUAL ELEMENTS

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Colour symbolism clearly evident (e.g. red to white transition)	☐	☐	
Body adornment enhances symbolic meaning	☐	☐	
Hairstyles or head coverings signify ritual stage	☐	☐	
Visual coherence of adornment and costume	☐	☐	
Aesthetic elements elicit emotional or communal response	☐	☐	

F. COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Verbal instructions given by ritual leaders	☐	☐	
Periods of silence imposed on initiates	☐	☐	
Use of gestures, symbols, or non-verbal communication	☐	☐	
Communal responses (chants, applause, blessings)	☐	☐	

G. COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND PARTICIPATION

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Community gathers as witnesses	☐	☐	
Expression of approval or validation	☐	☐	
Intergenerational participation	☐	☐	
Evidence of communitas and shared identity	☐	☐	

H. SCULPTURAL / PUBLIC OBSERVATION

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Sculptures accurately reflect ritual stages	☐	☐	
Craftsmanship and material durability observed	☐	☐	
Symbolic elements clearly recognisable	☐	☐	
Community interaction with the sculptures	☐	☐	
Sculptures function as educational or memorial objects	☐	☐	

I. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING OBSERVATION

Observation Item	Yes	No	Notes
Informed consent observed	☐	☐	
Restricted or sacred elements respected	☐	☐	
No intrusive documentation of prohibited rituals	☐	☐	
Cultural protocols followed by researcher	☐	☐	

J. REFLECTIVE NOTES (OBSERVER)

- Key impressions:
.....
- Emerging themes:
.....
- Cultural insights gained:
.....
- Relationship between ritual practice and sculptural representation:
.....