



Leveraging Gods' Influence in Sustaining Byelaws in Ghana: A Case of *Dipo* Practice in Yilo-Krobo

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ABSTRACT

This article explored the extent to which the gods' factor in the development and implementation process of Dipo, a womanhood initiation rite of the Krobo people of Ghana, had regulated sexual behaviour among young people. The Dipo womanhood rite has been introduced by the gods many centuries ago as an important part of the socialization process. The study adopted the quantitative research design approach. The target population was all young girls within the age bracket of 15-24 years in Yilo Krobo, which was purposively selected for this study because the Dipo rite was a unique indigenous culture of the people. The simple random sampling technique informed the selection of the respondents. In all, 284 indigenous young girls, 15-24 years old in Yilo-Krobo, Ghana were structurally interviewed to ascertain the power of Dipo practice and the gods' influences on its sustenance. STATA 14.0 was adopted to analyse the data. Findings revealed the need for re-visitation (Sankofa) of some past practices and entrench them for development in the present. Further, the study revealed a strong correlation between the gods' element and the development and implementation success of Dipo, which tends to highlight the relevance of divine command in development. The article espoused the values of African traditional practices and stimulated discussions on leveraging the gods' factor in the process of policy development and implementation in Ghana. Byelaws are very likely to be sustained with compliance if residents are sensitized to believe that they were formulated with the endorsement of the gods of the land. Largely, the average Ghanaian strongly believes that the lesser gods or divinities play a crucial role in their wellbeing and the development of their society. The study therefore recommends the need to apply the gods' factor in policy initiatives to attain compliance and sustainability for development in Ghana.

Keyword: Development, Dipo, Gods

I. INTRODUCTION

Although there is a paucity of studies in Ghana on the attitude of residents towards the implementation of byelaws in traditional societies and, by extension, Ghana, it is common knowledge that most inhabitants are not reaping the full benefits of the existing regulations (Boamah et al., 2012). This is because, despite the associated sanctions and penalties for non-compliance, the inhabitants fail to obey them (Antwi-Agyei et al., 2019). This is occurring at a time of digital technology, where information technology aids regulators to track trends and engage citizens in policy initiatives that ensure high compliance levels and sustenance (Kankam & Robadue, 2013). The power to enact byelaws in Ghana is entrusted to Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) by the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) to regulate activities in their areas of jurisdiction (Kankam & Robadue, 2013). In accordance with this mandate, some measures to address perennial flooding, disposing of rubbish or trash, and building structures on waterways, among many other social problems have been implemented in various districts in Ghana, yet they lack strong power to achieve the desired results (Anane-Amponsah, 2022; Antwi-Agyei et al., 2019; IMANI, 2018). Owing to this, policy-makers at various districts and municipalities in Ghana have preoccupied themselves with finding alternatives to ensure the lasting and adequate implementation of policies for development (Mensah et al., 2022).

Amidst all these challenges, less attention has been devoted to unearthing the fact that prior to colonialism, African traditional societies formulated indigenous mechanisms that had majority acceptance for ensuring social order

(Lasisi & Rekiya, 2019). This was achieved because, aside from their egalitarian nature, they also have a deep respect and reverence for the lesser gods. Consequently, any convention introduced with recourse to the gods was accepted without contestation (Ossom-Batsa, 2008). *Dipo* womanhood rite is one of those interventions introduced to conform residents to acceptable sexual standards among the Krobo ethnic group of the Eastern Region of Ghana (Huber, 1993). In other words, *Dipo* was mainly instituted to train and empower young females to eschew premarital sex since it is a taboo among inhabitants. Its origin is credited to *Nana Kloweki*, the goddess of fertility of Krobo in the Seventeenth Century (Narh, 2017). According to the Krobo tradition, young girls who chose to engage in sex or became pregnant prior to the initiation were detected when they climbed the *tegbete* stone and were sanctioned together with their families as well as the males who impregnated them (Amos, 2013). The *tegbete* is a sacred stone that young girls were assisted by old and expert women from the community to sit on to attest their purity (Steegstra, 2005). The sanctions included stigmatization, payment of fines, or banishment from their family homes or towns (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005). The severity of the sanctions reduced the frequency of early sex and its associated sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues (Anarfi, 2003; Asubonteng-Manu, 2023; Ostrow, 2011).

The Krobo ethnic group, a patrilineal society in Ghana (Nukunya, 2003), valued virginity (Sackey, 2001). In this light, the social mores of the Krobo expect young girls to remain virgins until they are married (Glozah & Lawani, 2014; Sackey, 2001). Consequently, the *Dipo* womanhood rite was instituted and celebrated yearly between March and May in Yilo-Krobo and Manya-Krobo (Steegstra, 2002) to conform pubescent girls to the acceptable behaviour of the community (Odonkor, 1971).

Though *Dipo* survives today, the advent of colonialism, Christianity, migration, and Western education have affected its performance. The rite was customarily performed for virgin girls aged between 14 and 20 years, and those who went through it successfully were believed to make good wives (Amos, 2013; Anarfi, 2003). Nowadays, girls younger than 5 years are initiated, and it is believed to have empowered them to engage in early sex (Langmagne et al., 2018). Also, some devout Christians and Muslims deemed certain activities characterising the celebration, especially the pouring of libation, the worship of ancestors, and the costume that portrays a greater portion of the initiates' naked bodies to the public, inimical to their doctrine (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Ostrow, 2011; Steegstra, 2005; Teyegaga, 1985). Subsequently, they have dissociated themselves from the practice.

It is within this context that this study attempted to comprehend the power of *Dipo* practice and the gods' influential role in its implementation leading to massive compliance and sustenance of the rite. These questions, therefore, guided the study: will understanding the gods' influential role in the implementation of *Dipo* serves any useful lessons that could be mainstreamed in the formulation and implementation of modern policies, and will the implementation of byelaws be sustained if they are endorsed by the gods of the land?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Explanation of Key Concepts

Early sexual debut (ESB): The age for early sexual debut has attracted various definitions from recent scholars. For instance, Seff et al. (2020) defined it as experiencing first sex prior to age 15. In the last decade, studies from West Africa have shown that ESB is significantly associated with multiple sexual partners, substance use, and truancy (Doku, 2012, cited in Seff et al., 2020). For the purpose of this study, ESB refers to engaging in premarital sex before the age of 16. In Ghana, sex below 16 years is an offence since the legal age for consensual sex according to the Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29) is 16 years (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection [MGCSPP], 2018).

Initiated: In this study, the initiated refers to young girls who have passed through the *Dipo* rite. There were two categories: early initiated and late initiated. The former refers to those exposed to the initiation below 12 years old, and some of them were infants who did not understand their initiation. The latter refers to those who were initiated at 12 years of age or older and are regarded as mature since they were developed, experienced menstruation, and understood and appreciated the process of their initiation.

Uninitiated: In this study, the uninitiated refers to girls who were not initiated and had no intention to undergo the initiation at the time of the survey.

Traditional Societies: Within the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology, traditional society is referred to as one that retains most of its past characteristics and is predominantly governed by customs with minimal change from the past to the present. These societies have their own inbuilt mechanisms, such as communal modes of production, that foster conformity to rules and regulations among residents (Lasisi & Rekiya, 2019). In the wake of colonialism in Africa and Ghana, however, most traditional ways of life have become superfluous. Notable among these is the formulation and implementation of policies in traditional African societies, including Ghana. This system

of maintaining social order in traditional societies, hitherto invested in the "collective conscience of the people" (Ibid: p.101), was shifted to the colonial administration. Currently, with an entrenched democratic system of governance in Ghana, coupled with the era of information technology (IT), policymakers, or DAs, can track trends and engage citizens in policy process initiatives. Yet, modern policies have failed to garner a high level of compliance and sustenance among residents due to a lack of proper consideration of the history, socio-cultural beliefs, and development needs of the indigenes (Boamah et al., 2012).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Divine Command Theory

The Divine Command Theory (DCT) was adapted to explore the processes of the institution of *Dipo* by the gods and its productive implementation. Socrates (469–399 BCE) was one of the proponents of DCT when he queried whether an act is good because God commanded it or God commanded it because it is good (Abubakar, 2021). Basically, the DCT states that morality is grounded in the commands or character of God. Simply put, actions that are morally right are the ones that God commands or requires, with sanctions for disobedience. The theory has been supported by classical and contemporary scholars like St. Augustine, Duns Scotus, Immanuel Kant, and John Calvin. However, critics of DCT included Plato, J.L. Mackie, and William of Ockham (Abubakar, 2021).

The critics argue that if God chooses to command abhorrent acts such as theft, murder, or rape, then these acts would be morally acceptable. Also, the theory raises a moral dilemma: are actions morally right because God commands them, or does God command actions because they are right? (Abubakar, 2021). This presupposes that right and wrong preceded God since they were not coming from Him, which runs counter to the general belief among African traditional societies that God alone has no beginning and no ending and is also the creator of all things (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). However, Adams (1987) mounted a defence for the theory that even if God could command actions that are cruel or that would cause suffering and pain, by the nature of God as omnibenevolent and merciful, He would not do them. Hence, humans, who were created in the likeness of God, would also not inflict suffering and pain on their fellows.

Likewise, the belief in lesser gods or divinities is paramount in the African Indigenous Religion ontology (Njoku, 2002; Ushe, 2017). They are regarded as next to The Supreme Being in the hierarchical order of power (Ushe, 2017). Their wishes and commands are therefore respected and binding since they are known to punish offenders and reward obedient people in the community with integrity (Ossom-Batsa, 2008; Purzycki & Sosis, n.d.). The Krobo have an annual ritual of sowing where libations are offered to the divinities to ensure a good harvest. Owing to its importance, the elders, with the endorsement of the gods of the land, decreed it a taboo for any farmer who refused to observe the ritual. During the ritual, the inhabitants were gathered in the presence of priests or priestesses of the *Okumo* and *Kloweki* deities. A person found guilty of an offence was either inflicted with sickness or struck dead by the deity (Huber, 1980; Ossom-Batsa, 2008). The inhabitants endorsed these conventions because they were established with recourse to their respected and revered divinities (see Ossom-Batsa, 2008).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 The Lesser gods in the Context of Traditional Societies

Among traditional African societies, God (The Supreme Being) is believed to be the sole creator of the universe (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). However, an African mythology has it that The Supreme Being is not worshipped directly because, after the creation of the universe and all things were in motion, He withdrew and went to live in a remote place that withdrew Him from human life (Ukpong, 1983, cited in Ndemanu, 2018). This provided the space for Africans to rely on lesser gods or divinities who would stand in for them and constantly channel their problems through him to The Supreme Being. Hence, African religion considered the role of divinities sacred, divine, and supreme to humanity, as they were believed to have attributes of God. Besides, African cosmology regarded the divinities as the lieutenants of God with ministerial power given to them by God to mainly mediate between God and man (Ushe, 2017).

In West Africa, these divinities are called differently according to the needs of the societies (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010; Mbeti, 1969). *Sango* is the divinity of thunder, and *Ani* or *Ala* is the earth divinity among the Yoruba and Igbos of Nigeria, respectively. In Sudan, *Deng* is known as the divinity of rain and fertility (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). In Ghana, it is on record that the Oguaa people (Cape Coast) have seventy-seven (77) recognised divinities or gods who are believed to be the children of The Supreme Being. These are assigned specific functions that they perform for the indigenes (Korsah & Kowornu-Adjaottor, 2019). Each of the gods has a name, and rituals are offered to them in the form of sacrifices and the pouring of libation around stones, rocks, trees, and groves where they are

mostly located. They are believed to send blessings and curses to individuals. These gods are not worshipped on Thursdays because it is a day for them to meet The Supreme Being about the affairs of the Oguaa people (Ibid.).

Current events have affirmed that the mix of fear and reverence accorded to the gods in Ghana is unmatched. More recently, myjoyonline.com reported that river gods in Ampabame I, a farming community in Ashanti Region, Ghana, have registered their displeasure over the location of a modern toilet facility. Consequently, the residents have refused to patronise the 32-seater facility until the gods' demand for five human heads for sacrifice is met (Awuku, July, 2022). This reinforces the belief among Ghanaians that the wishes and commands of the gods remain paramount since disobeying or disrespecting them can provoke curses and death for the individual or the community as a whole.

2.3.2 The Myth Around Nana Kloweki

As noted earlier, the institution of *Dipo* has been famously credited to *Nana Kloweki*, the goddess of fertility in Krobo. The oral history of the Krobo has it that during their migration from Judah in Israel through Notsie in Northern Togo, they met an old woman who took delight in them and was later named *Nana Kloweki*. On their journey, they arrived at *Zugu* and encountered *King Akpate Sukluku*. The latter refused them passage through his settlement unless they honoured his request for human lives. As difficult as it was for the travellers, *Nana Kloweki* gathered her people and sang praises to the king of *Zugu*. The praises pleased the King so much that he gave them unconditional access (Odonkor, 1971). Finally, the people of Krobo, accompanied by *Nana Kloweki*, found a haven on top of the Krobo hills (*Kloyo*) in Gold Coast (now Ghana) and stayed there until the British colonial administration, led by Governor Griffiths, forcefully ejected them to settle on the plains, which has remained their abode since 1892 (Steegstra, 2005).

Again, Krobo history has it that the cult of *Nana Kloweki* may not be the first to arrive in Krobo; however, she's regarded as the 'head fetish' and also the most venerated deity among the people of Krobo (Steegstra, 2005). For instance, while on the *Kloyo*, the membership of a joint council known as *Djameli* that had both ritual and politico-religious functions was all male priests, except one. The only female priestess among them was a representative of *Nana Kloweki*. She was highly regarded, and whenever there was a deadlock in their decision or someone contested their ruling, the case was referred to her for another ruling that was final and 'irrevocable' (Steegstra, 2005). *Nana Kloweki* was associated with the highest moral authority in the land. The priests and priestesses representing her were expected to stay pure and ritually clean (i.e., not to hold firearms, cutlasses, spears, or arrows) since these were weapons for shedding blood. They were also limited in their movements and contacts with strangers (Ibid.).

In another instance, *Nana Kloweki* was said to have fallen into a trance one day and saw a man holding a big cross standing in front of her with instructions that the cross was the 'symbol of purification that was coming'. Soon afterwards, the man vanished from her presence. When she regained her consciousness, she understood that her days with the people of Krobo were numbered and the cross, also interpreted as the 'Cross of Christ', was the 'new light'. She hurriedly made an image (a bust) of herself with clay and set it on a stand. Then she informed her assistant, chief priest *Asikpe*, about her trance and disappeared. Her disappearance occurred around 1820, and a few years later, the Basel Missionaries arrived on the Gold Coast. However, *Nana Kloweki* became an instant deity, and her image was revered and worshipped. Moreover, the Krobo people continue to use the cross as a symbol of protection in the celebration of *Dipo* (Steegstra, 2005; Teyegaga, 1985).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study was cross sectional involving the use quantitative research design to assess the relevance of *Dipo* in contemporary times. The design offered the researchers the opportunity to examine mainstream practices and observations pertaining to *Dipo* rite. The study involved young boys and girls aged 15–24 years. The age group was when most young adults had either been initiated or otherwise (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014). However, since females were exposed to *Dipo*, this article focused on data involving 284 indigenous young girls. This rich data was not only used for the purpose of understanding the power of *Dipo* practice, but also to stimulate discussions on leveraging the gods' factor in policy implementations for development in Ghana.

3.2 Study Area

Due to the nature of the problem, the study was purposively carried out in Somanya (Urban) and Ogame (Rural), both in the Yilo-Krobo Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The Municipality is located approximately 45 km from Koforidua, the capital town of the Eastern Region, and 50 km from Accra, the nation's capital (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2012). The Municipality lies within latitude 60.00'N and longitudes 00.30W

and 10.00W. It covers an estimated area of 805 square kilometres, constituting 3.3 percent of the total land area of the Eastern Region. Lower Manya Krobo Municipality and Upper Manya Krobo District bound the Municipality in the north and east, respectively. In the South, the Municipality is bounded by Akwapim North Municipality and Shai Osudoku District, and in the West by New Juabeng and East Akim Municipalities and Fanteakwa District. The Municipality has about 230 settlements, but it is predominantly rural (GSS, 2014).

Though the selection of Yilo-Krobo was purposeful, it was chosen on the basis that the indigenes have exhibited strongly that *Dipo* is part and parcel of their lives. When *Dipo* was outlawed by the colonial administration in 1892, the elders clandestinely performed it for their young daughters in the community (Huber, 1993). Recently, at the apex of the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic, some elders defied the Government's imposition of restriction Act 2020 (Act 1012) as a measure to control the spread of the disease, to perform the rite and got arrested (kasapafmonline.com, May 2020). In light of this, Yilo-Krobo was considered appropriate and opportune to explore the urban and rural dynamics, which have retained their essence, albeit some activities that have been altered due to the entrenchment of colonialism and rapid social transformation (Anarfi, 2003).

3.3 Sampling

The 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) put the population of young people aged 15 – 24 years in both study communities as 4285. This was made up 3506 and 779 for Somanya and Ogome respectively (GSS, 2012). In view of this, the study applied the mathematical formula proposed by Miller and Brewer (2003) to determine the sample size. The mathematical formula by Miller and Brewer (2003) given as: $n = N/1+N(\alpha)^2$ where, n is the sample size; N was the population of the affected areas and α was the allowed margin of error at (5%) was applied to determine the sample size.

Thus, substituting the population figure obtained into the formula, the sample size (n) was determined as $4285/1+4285(0.05)^2 = 4285/11.7125 = 366$. Though, the sample size estimated was 366, however, due to the fact that population in the study communities might have increased between 2010 and 2020, an estimated projection of 10% was assumed. Hence, the sample size obtained was 402 due to the adjustment. So, the sample size (n) became 402. However, at the end of the survey, 350 (86.8%) questionnaires were successfully retrieved made up of 284 females and 66 males (for details, see Asubonteng-Manu, 2023). In this article, the data obtained from the 284 females informed the discussion.

3.3.1 Sampling Techniques

The purposive sampling technique informed the selection of the study area (Yilo Krobo) because of the uniqueness of *Dipo* rite as a culture of the people. Further, the simple random sampling, a type of probability sampling that gives every member of the population an equal chance of being part of the sample (Taherdoost, 2016), was employed to select respondents. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census report, there are about 5452 households in the study communities (4350 in Somanya and 1102 in Ogome) (GSS, 2014). All the households were assigned with numbers, folded, put them in a container and mixed thoroughly. Then, without replacement (ie. once a number was selected, it was removed from the population or the container to avoid re-selection), the researchers' eyes were blind-folded as they picked numbers from the container (Mustafa, 2010). From this process, the estimated sample size was obtained. At the end of the procedure, the selected sample size was representative enough to cover the three categories of female initiation in the communities.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

A pre-testing exercise was conducted in Dodowa, the capital town of Shai-Osudoku District in the Greater Accra Region, due to its proximity and the fact that they also perform similar womanhood rites. The exercise helped to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and afforded research assistants (RAs) the opportunity to become acquainted with terminologies pertaining to the rites. The actual survey covered a period of one and a half months. Structured interview was used to elicit information from respondents on a one-on-one basis. This technique aided in understanding the reasons behind the answers given by the respondents. For example, the age at initiation and the reason behind that age of initiation. The Microsoft Excel spread sheet was used for data entry and cleaning. STATA 14.0 was adopted to analyse the data for the generation of tables, graphs, and figures to describe the trends and patterns of the information gathered.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Pillay (2014) has declared that strict ethical principles should be applied in research, especially those involving children. Stringent ethical procedures were therefore followed throughout the research process. The issues

of anonymity and confidentiality were observed, whereby participants were identified only by code numbers instead of their names. Moreover, participants were neither coerced nor influenced in any way, as consensus regarding their voluntary participation was obtained from them or their parents. This ensured the smooth collection of quality data because it built a cordial relationship between the researchers and participants. Ethical approval was also sought from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Gods' Influential Role in the Implementation of *Dipo* and its Implications for the Formulation and Implementation of Modern Policies in Ghana

Many oral accounts have been attributed to highlight the influential role played by *Nana Kloweki* in the institution of *Dipo* in Krobo. In this article, however, two of these origins are discussed. First, according to Krobo oral tradition, in the olden days, a man married two women. One of them gave birth to males, whereas the other brought forth only females. In those days, men were needed for war. Hence, giving birth to males was a great honour for the parents and community. It happened that as the male children were celebrated with colourful initiations, the girls attracted no affection whatsoever. The aggrieved woman took solace in an elderly woman in the community called *Nana Kloweki*, who, as a matter of urgency, acted on her concern. *Nana Kloweki* and her elders made a proposal, which was highly endorsed by *Nana Korle Akpankwaa*, an elder of reputable standing. It was proposed that when the daughter experienced her first menstruation, she would be kept in a secret room for some time and given pertinent traditional education, mainly on her duties as a good and adorable wife and mother. The climax of the occasion would involve old women in the community assisting her to sit on a *tegbete* (a sacred stone) specially mounted for her to test her virginity. After successfully completing the process, she would be elegantly dressed in traditional costume and presented to the community as someone who has attained marriageable age. Then, her father and other members of the community would shower her with precious gifts to end the celebration.

Second account acknowledges that while on top of the hills, *Nana Kloweki* established an informal vocational school known as *Dipo*. The intention was to train and prepare virgin young girls who had reached a marriageable age for marriage. Usually, a Krobo young girl of about 14 years old is sent to *Nana Kloweki's* 'school' of domestic science of marriage to commence the training. The girls were kept in a camp for about three years and were trained in cookery, sweeping, caring for kids, knitting, and all female chores, as well as how to be good and respectful wives. The girls who completed the training successfully were given tribal marks on some parts of their bodies (Huber, 1993; Steegstra, 2005) as confirmation.

Given the above role played by the deity in the institution of *Dipo* and its philosophy, respondents who were virgins at the time of the survey were targeted to understand whether the *Dipo* initiation rite was a contributing factor or otherwise. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentage of Relationship between Dipo and Virginity by Initiation Category

Variable	Initiated		Uninitiated	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Still Young/In School/Apprentice	20	40.0	30	60.0
Afraid of Parent/Family Consequences	24	61.5	15	38.5
Dipo Taught me to Remain Chaste	28	93.3	2	6.7
Parents Give me all I Need	3	33.3	6	66.7
My Religion/Custom Forbids	3	27.3	8	72.7
Parents Taught me to Remain Chaste	6	42.9	8	57.1
Personal Decision	7	46.7	8	53.3

As observed in Table 1, while close to two-thirds (61.6%) of initiated girls attributed their virginity to the fear of punishment by their parents or family for disobeying the norms associated with *Dipo*, only about 4 out of 10 uninitiated girls (38.4%) indicated the same. This was expected because the latter mostly belong to Christian and Muslim families who strongly believe that *Dipo* has lost its relevance (Ostrow, 2011). Hence, they were unafraid to defy its rules (Abbey et al., 2021). As a result, most uninitiated mainly attributed their virginity to being in school or an apprenticeship, religion, parental influence, advice, or a personal decision.

Yet, out of the 30 virgin young girls, an overwhelming majority (93.3%) reported their virginity was due to their initiation. This finding runs counter to earlier reports that suggest that *Dipo* is a catalyst for early sexual activities

and teenage pregnancies in the community (Langmagne et al., 2018). Quite a few uninitiated (6.7%) also indicated their virginity was due to the practise of *Dipo* in the community. This validates the notion that the uninitiated also tend to respect the standard practises binding on the indigenes as enforced by the gods. They strictly abide by the systems and initiatives that would help them avoid the stigmatization associated with disobedience. This is largely because traditional societies often regard girls who have not been initiated as immature, irrespective of their age at first sex, and punish them (Dintwat, 2010; Munthali et al., 2018).

Moreover, the fear that anyone who contravenes the norms governing *Dipo* gets punished by the gods has compelled the young men to stay away from licentious behaviours. During the survey, nascent news in town has it that a young man who had carnal knowledge with an uninitiated young girl has vowed to resume active sexual life only when he is married. This followed the stigmatization and reprimands he suffered from his parents and friends, who also cautioned him to eschew such behaviour because it is considered taboo in the community.

Clearly, the above has shown that the gods exuded an aura of power in traditional societies and, by extension, Ghana that is akin to that of The Supreme Being in its affairs. However, in this technological age coupled with emergent democratic dispensations across Africa, including Ghana, the aura of power and respectability around the gods has been dwindled and bastardised (Ndemanu, 2018). But indications are that even some people who, by virtue of their religion or profession, are suspected to be opponents of *Dipo* are covertly behind the celebration (Ostrow, 2011). Writing about *Dipo*, Schroeder & Danquah (2000) observed that even parents who are not in favour of *Dipo* initiation will not agree for their sons to marry a girl who has not passed through the initiation since such girls are regarded as unclean and cursed. Therefore, in this technological era, MMDAs in Ghana should not shy away from leveraging the gods' factor in the process of policy formulation and implementation.

Given that the fear of the gods is entrenched in the thoughts and way of life of the average African (Ndemanu, 2018), it will be prudent for policymakers and MMDAs to fearlessly take lessons from the gods' influence in the successful implementation of *Dipo* and develop modern policies with recourse to them. This is because the gods have distinguished themselves well as far as discharging their duties are concerned, which has won them the highest accolade of respect among the people. Hence, the residents will have no option but to embrace policies emanating from them to transform our societies and country for the better. More importantly, the youth and little kids should be targeted and given intensive education on African traditional beliefs in schools and homes. This will empower them to desist from labelling them as unscientific. It will also enable them to acknowledge the divine role of lesser gods and how they punish people who disobey and reward those who obey their commands.

4.2 Sustaining Modern Policies with the Endorsement of the Gods of the Land

Young girls whose sexual debut occurred at the time they were mature enough were assessed to understand whether the *Dipo* womanhood rite was the reason for the delay or otherwise. This was used to measure the sustainability of *Dipo* and how it has imposed strong control over the sexual activity of girls in contemporary times. Their responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage of Relationship between Dipo and Timing of First Sex

Categories	Did you delay first sex due to <i>Dipo</i> practice?				P-Value
	Yes	%	No	%	
Initiated	86	96.6	13	41.9	0.000
Uninitiated	3	3.4	18	58.1	
Total	89	100.0	31	100.0	

The results in Table 2 indicated that an overwhelming majority (96.6%) of young girls who have passed through the *Dipo* initiation expressed the opinion that the initiation was the reason for delaying their sexual debut. This could be due to two reasons. First, *Dipo* is governed by traditional ethical norms specified by the gods. Consequently, most young girls would want to avoid their wrath by not getting pregnant prior to the initiation. Second, the old women who take care of *Dipo-yoo* (*Dipo* girls) at the *Dipo* camp instruct them about their womanhood. This includes the need for them to remain chaste until marriage, since that is the wish of the gods. This eventually enjoins them to live according to the conventional behaviours of society, because it is the only means to enjoy the rewards of the gods meant for those who obey their commands. The results further indicate that more than half of the uninitiated (58.1%) attributed the delayed sexual debut to factors other than *Dipo* initiation. These included religion, strict parental control, and personal reasons. Yet, an appreciable proportion of them (3.4%) alluded delay of their sexual debut to the practise of *Dipo* in the community. This could suggest that they were equally afraid to indulge in sexual

deviance since the gods have demonstrated through the introduction of *Dipo* that they abhorred early premarital sex in society.

Nevertheless, earlier studies have reported that even with the initiation of young girls in place, the Municipality has consistently remained one of the areas with the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence rates in Ghana (Langmagne et al. 2018). This article, therefore, attempted to investigate socio-economic and cultural factors that expose or inhibit young females from engaging in early sex prior to marriage. This is because, early sexual debut can have negative ramifications, resulting in abortion, teenage or unintended pregnancy, and STIs. In lieu of this, findings from the logistics regression analysis in Table 3 show that *Dipo* initiation and levels of commitment and involvement of young girls have a significant relationship with early sexual debut.

Table 3

Binary logistic regression predicting Early Sexual Debut by Background Characteristics

Early sex initiation	Odds Ratio	P-value	[95% Confidential Level	Interval]
Dipo initiation				
Early Dipo (R)				
Late Dipo	0.044	0.000	0.011	0.182
Attachment to parents				
Sometimes (R)				
Very often	0.222	0.064	0.045	1.090
Commitment and involvement of Dipo				
Not committed at all (R)				
Committed	0.135	0.020	0.025	0.725
Very committed	0.038	0.005	0.004	0.381
Puberty rule beliefs				
Disagree (R)				
Agree	2.089	0.424	0.343	12.716
Age of respondents				
15-19 (R)				
20-24	1.631	0.475	0.179	2.230
Education of Respondents				
Primary (R)				
Junior High School	3.593	0.093	0.809	15.963
Senior High School	2.776	0.195	0.593	12.992
Tertiary	1.377	0.854	0.046	41.465
Migration Status				
No (R)				
Yes	0.384	0.133	0.111	1.337
Locality of Respondents				
Urban (R)				
Rural	0.631	0.407	0.212	1.874
Constant	14.458	0.049	1.007	207.593

The results revealed that young girls who were initiated at mature age were 0.044 times less likely than those initiated early to have indulged in an early sexual debut. Obviously, the belief is that the initiation transposes adolescents into womanhood. Hence there is a likelihood for early-initiated young girls to experience early first sex since they feel they are old enough and would not be punished even when they conceived out of wedlock (Agra & Gbadegbe, 2014; Langmagne et al., 2018). Being a conservative society that eschews premarital sex, the elders have noticed this appalling behaviour with grief. The causation effect is that most parents only tend to enforce maximum controls over girls' sexual conduct when they are yet to undergo *Dipo* to avoid disgrace and shame. In light of this, the Queen Mother has stepped up awareness-creation measures that are yielding positive results. Among them is a caution given to both *Dipo* carers and parents to desist from initiating kids since the practise is not only leading to early sexual debut, but it is also against the commands of the gods.

Further, in Table (3), commitment and involvement in *Dipo* activities also have a significant relationship with early sexual debut. Thus, those who were very committed or involved in *Dipo* activities in their community are 0.038 times less likely than those who were not committed or involved in *Dipo* activities to engage in early sexual debut. Further, those who were committed to or involved in *Dipo* activities in their community were also 0.135 times less

likely than those who were not committed to or involved in *Dipo* activities to engage in early sexual debut. This finding agrees with previous scholarship findings that young people who strongly participate in or are committed to conventional behaviours such as religious activities, beliefs, and practises are more likely to delay early sexual debut than their counterparts who are not religious (Somefun, 2019).

Following from the above, it predisposes that pre-initiation sex is decreed by the gods as taboo among indigenes. Offenders are found out during their investiture at the sacred *Tegbete* stone and are punished accordingly. Consequently, young girls would rather stay pure to avoid bringing disgrace to themselves and their significant others. Thus, as an informal social control mechanism against early premarital sex, *Dipo* more often empowers mothers, especially those who have performed the rite themselves, to discuss issues of acceptable behaviour with their daughters. This includes the punishments for contravening the norms governing the rite and the potential gains the young girls stand to enjoy if they avail themselves of the initiation. The gains include the blessing of the gods, fruitfulness, and a successful marriage. Furthermore, they are often seen as the epitome of sexual morality and are also the most preferred choice of wives for Krobo young men (Steegstra, 2005).

Obviously, despite this era of digital technology, *Dipo* provides an outline for the timing of sexual activities among initiated and uninitiated girls, who tend to revere and respect the standard practise of the communities as decreed by the gods. This is because the average African has a deep reverence for the lesser gods, and their commands on moral issues are followed without contestation (Ossom-Batsa, 2008). Furthermore, *Dipo* has been sustained mainly because it's an informal measure endorsed by the gods of the land to achieve a good course. A study by Ostrow (2011) opined that both Christians and non-Christians agreed that *Dipo* is good, at least on the grounds that it encourages young girls to uphold chastity until marriage. Thus, the philosophy underpinning *Dipo* remains unparalleled and the rite continues to wield strong control over the timing of first sex among indigenes. In a nutshell, sustaining the laudable byelaws churned out by MMDAs will be attained if they are endorsed by the gods of the land.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This article has attempted to explore the extent to which the gods' factor in the development and implementation process of *Dipo*, a womanhood initiation rite of the Krobo to regulate sexual behaviour among young people, has been sustained to achieve the required results. It concludes that *Dipo* initiation over centuries continues to impose strong control over the sexual activity of young girls. Moreover, young men are also afraid to engage in pre-*Dipo* sex with young girls. This is because the gods of the land are ready to unleash their anger on anyone who contravenes their commands without fear or favour. All in all, it tends to highlight the elements of the DCT that like the commands of The Supreme Being, *Dipo* is a morally right control measure grounded in the commands of the gods, which must be revered with sanctions for disobedience.

5.2 Recommendations

Clearly, the article has espoused the values of African traditional practices and stimulated discussions on leveraging the gods' factor in the processes of policy development in traditional societies and, by extension, modern Ghana. In this instance, byelaws will be sustained with huge compliance if residents are sensitised to believe that they were formulated with the endorsement of the gods of the land. In order to achieve this, community engagements on byelaws initiatives should stress the point that recalcitrant will not only be sanctioned according to the dictates of the laws, but also by the wrath of the gods of the land. Like the case of the *Dipo* practice, the average Ghanaian strongly believes that the lesser gods or divinities play a crucial role in their wellbeing and the development of their societies. Hence, the need to apply the god's factor in policy initiatives to attain sustainability for development.

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