

Between Tradition and Modernity: Dynamics of Krobo Marriage Rites in the Eastern Region of Ghana

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: This research delves into the dynamic evolution of marriage rites within the Krobo community in Eastern Ghana, focusing on the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' ceremonies. **Methodology:** Employing a qualitative approach, the study utilized narrative analysis to capture the intricate perspectives surrounding the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' marriage rites. Twenty-four participants from Krobo-Odumase and its environs, aged between 20 to 60 years, were purposively sampled and interviewed in two phases. **Main Findings:** The study unveiled a significant transformation in the Krobo marriage rites, from highly structured ceremonies to more adaptable forms blending traditional elements with modern practices. Key factors driving this evolution include urbanization, the influence of Western education, and the interplay with legal frameworks, all contributing to the rites' ongoing adaptation. Despite these changes, a strong commitment to preserving cultural identity remains evident among the Krobo people, showcasing their resilience and innovative approaches to sustaining cultural traditions. **Applications of this Study:** By highlighting the adaptive strategies employed by the Krobo community, this research contributes to broader discussions on cultural sustainability, identity, and social cohesion in the face of global changes. **Novelty/Originality:** This research underscores the complex negotiation process between preserving cultural heritage and embracing change, offering a unique perspective on the resilience and dynamism of Krobo cultural practices in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: African Culture; cultural adaptation; Marriage, Krobo; rites.

Introduction

Within the Krobo society in Eastern Ghana, marriage rites have long marked the importance of a rich cultural and historical heritage while instilling diverse psychological consequences for those involved. Traditionally, these ceremonies were highly structured and involved the active participation of both the bride's and groom's families, often featuring the exchange of gifts, libations, and symbolic beads as part of the ritual (Agorsah, 2012). However, in recent years, significant changes in socio-cultural education and urbanization, particularly in how the younger generation of Krobo meet and choose their partners, have reshaped the Krobo marriage ceremonies (Olupona, 2014). Economic factors such as the cost of conducting traditional marriage ceremonies and dowries have also influenced marriage decisions in the contemporary era (Anukriti & Dasgupta, 2018). This transformation reflects the Krobo community's adaptation and response to changing social, economic, and cultural dynamics, highlighting the flexibility and resilience of their marriage practices in the face of modernity.

In the past, the process of marriage involved negotiations between two families where the bride's family would traditionally receive gifts, including livestock and items like cloth and alcohol from the groom's family as part of the dowry (Quisumbing &

Maluccio, 2003). Presently, Christianity, western education, and the changing social norms within the Krobo culture have transformed the way and manner marriages are organized and contracted (Abidogun, 2007; Olupona, 2014). While some traditional practices still endure, there is a growing trend towards more modern and less formal marriage ceremonies.

In recent years, for instance, many Krobo couples have incorporated both traditional customs and Christian wedding ceremonies into their marital celebrations, reflecting the blend of old and new customs. Whereas Ghanaian law recognizes both traditional and civil marriages, couples can also choose to have their marriages registered with the government, ensuring legal protection and rights for both spouses. This legal framework also has implications on inheritance, property rights, and divorce among the Krobo people.

Some Krobo families now opt for more simplified and less traditional wedding ceremonies, while others choose to blend traditional practices with Christian wedding rituals. It is on this basis that this paper examines the transformation of the practice of “la-pomi”, and “fia” within the context of the Krobo marriage rites. Although other researchers such as Kole (1955), Steegstra (2004), Kumetey (2009), Afful & Nantwi (2018), as well as Abbey & Nasidi (2023), have written on different aspects of the Krobo culture, the ‘la-pomi’ and ‘fia’ marriage rites have still not received serious scholarly attention. This paper, therefore, traces the historical development of these marriage rites, their cultural signification and connotation, as well as their changing nature due to some socio-economic and cultural factors.

The scholarly investigation into the Dipo rites of passage among the Krobo people in Eastern Ghana has predominantly centered around their historical, psychological, medical, and cultural dimensions. Notable studies include Abbey et al. (2021), who examined the psychological impacts of Dipo participation, finding that initiates experienced significantly lower levels of psychological distress compared to non-initiates, thus underscoring the rites' potential for enhancing psychological well-being. Abbey and Nasidi (2023) delved into the perceptions of girls undergoing Dipo rites, revealing complexities surrounding its cultural significance and the challenges posed by religious stigmatization. Boakye (2010) explored the transformation of Dipo rites amidst the forces of modernization and Christianity, emphasizing the rite's role in ethnic identity and female empowerment within a patrilineal society. Adinku (2016) highlighted the aesthetic aspects of Dipo, arguing for its embedded cultural and artistic values. Steegstra (2004) and Emefa and Selase (2014) further examined the ritual's resilience and medical implications, particularly concerning sexual health and HIV/AIDS awareness. Additionally, Kissi-Abrokwah et al. (2021) focused on the educational and guidance aspects of Dipo, advocating for an age bracket in initiation to align with its educational goals. Adjaye (1999) and Djokpe (2020) contributed to understanding Dipo's liminality and its musical dimension, respectively, enriching the discourse on its multifaceted impact on Krobo society. Despite this breadth of research, the literature reveals a gap in comprehensively addressing the Krobo marriage rites, which this paper aims to address, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of Krobo cultural practices. Despite the extensive exploration of Dipo rites, previous research has notably overlooked the evolving dynamics of 'la-pomi' and 'fia' marriage rites within the Krobo community, a gap this study seeks to fill by examining their transformation in response to contemporary socio-economic and cultural shifts.

The primary objective of this research is to delve into the transformations of the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' marriage rites among the Krobo community, exploring how these

traditional practices have evolved in the face of modern socio-economic and cultural changes. By systematically investigating the impacts of urbanization, globalization, and shifting social norms on these rites, this study aims to illuminate the adaptive strategies of the Krobo people, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between tradition and modernity in African societies. Through qualitative analysis and empirical data collection, the research will document the nuances of these rites, assess their current significance, and evaluate their implications for Krobo identity and social cohesion.

The argument underpinning this research posits that the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' marriage rites are crucial components of Krobo cultural identity, serving as a lens through which the broader dynamics of cultural preservation versus adaptation can be examined. It contends that while these rites have traditionally played a pivotal role in reinforcing community bonds and transmitting cultural values, their modification in response to external influences reflects a complex negotiation between maintaining cultural heritage and embracing change. This study argues that understanding these transformations is key to appreciating the resilience of Krobo cultural practices and the broader implications for cultural sustainability in a rapidly changing world.

Methods

This research adopted a qualitative methodology, utilizing narrative analysis to delve into the nuanced perspectives surrounding the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' marriage rites within the Krobo community. Data were gathered through a two-phase interview process involving twenty-four purposively sampled participants aged 20 to 60 years, selected to represent a broad spectrum of experiences and viewpoints within Krobo-Odumase and its surrounding areas—home to the largest concentration of Krobo-speaking individuals in Ghana. The selection was aimed at obtaining a detailed understanding of the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' concepts and the contemporary organization and celebration of marriages among the Krobo. In the initial phase, ten participants provided insights into these concepts and the current marital practices, from which six narratives were chosen for in-depth analysis. The subsequent phase involved fourteen additional participants sharing their experiences with these marriage customs, leading to the selection of eight narratives that offered significant insight into the community's experiences and the intricacies of practicing 'la-pomi' and 'fia'. This strategic selection process, coupled with the transcription and meticulous examination of narrative structure, content, and context, enabled the identification of recurring themes and a comprehensive contextual understanding, ensuring a robust analysis aligned with the study's objectives.

Results and Discussion

1. The Concepts of 'La-pomi' and 'Fia' and Krobo Marriage Ceremony

In the Krobo land, some traditions and customs are set in place to prevent broken homes, vagrancy (especially children living in the street without parents), and single parenthood. However, when the unexpected happens, some rites are performed as a way to correct the defects. The idea behind the rite is to prevent giving birth out of wedlock.

In the Krobo tradition, there are three basic stages of marriage, which are (1) the approach (2) the formal seeking for the family's consent, and (3) the marriage custom. The time slated for these stages ranges from three weeks to three years or more (Kole,

1955). After drinks are offered by the man and libation poured, a representative, usually a respectable woman who has had children, is chosen to represent each family (Kole, 1955). During this process, the two customs of 'La-pomi' and 'Fia' are also observed. 'La-pomi' is usually a cultural rite observed by men who impregnated a woman out of wedlock. In an attempt to claim his child, the man has to pay for 'La-pomi'. It also entails the woman determines the amount of money the man should pay, which signifies the expenses made on the child until the moment of the child being claimed, greeting the family by presenting 'jin' an alcoholic drink, Schnapp, and a sheep (Obeng-Hinne, 2019; Twum & Baah, 2019). In situations where the father takes care of the child, the amount paid to the woman during 'la-pomi' is less. After 'la-pomi', the father now has the right to give his surname or change the child's name. Without 'La-pomi', the mother names a child after her family. If a mother dies without 'la-pomi', the children belong to the mother's family. Children who do not know their fathers, once they are given to another man who got engaged with their mother per his consent, it brings closure to looking for their real father.

On the Krobo land, the man must plead for reduction when the woman mentions an amount to be paid as 'la-pomi' during rites. This signifies or implies that the man is a respectful person. However, there were cases where the woman would not allow her family to accept that the man performed the 'la-pomi' rite. In cases like this, the rite cannot be done since it will only be complete with the woman's input.

The concept of 'Fia' on the other hand, is the final rite performed during traditional marriage rite among the Krobo. This rite signifies an act to give the bride to the groom's family *Fia*, *Fia*, and *Fia* forever (Kole, 1955). In situations where the bride dies, her burial becomes the responsibility of the groom's family. If the husband dies, his family then gives the woman's hand in marriage to the prospective husband-to-be. When a man traditionally marries a woman before childbirth, there would not be 'La-pomi'.

The situation normally recognized as marriage among the Krobo is that a young man seeks a lady's hand for marriage from her family and also asks for their blessings. In this case, the man is given a list of items to provide, and a date is set for both families to meet for the traditional ceremony. Outside these accepted norms are deviations among the Krobo where a child is under the care of the mother (single parenting), or cohabiting (man and woman staying together but not formally married).

The norm to marriage also involves the following procedures: Firstly, 'Hemi jemi' is a term usually used when the man expresses interest in a woman, but has not yet performed the traditional rite and wants to be known by the woman's family. There have been cases where the moment this is done, the woman moves out from her parent's home to live with the man.

Secondly, before the marriage is 'we mi nis33mi' also known as family introduction where the man's family meets the Krobo woman and her family for the introduction. At this level, some issues are discussed, and grudges and disputes that might have existed before the ceremony are normally settled. In this context, anyone can mention an amount as a fine for any wrong that might have happened in the past and all that is required among the parties is to plead with each other as a sign of respect. In cases where this is not done before the next stage, the man is fined to pay a fine, which can be demanded immediately, or discussed for payment to be done later. It is required that the man coming to marry sends representatives who serve as bodyguards for the bride-to-be before the ceremony (usually 2 to 5 days before the ceremony).

During the ceremony, the two families sit to face each other, then friends and empathizers on the side. The first greeting from the man's side is usually done with

schnapp. The linguist will ask permission to greet the 'would-be in-laws' and present the schnapp in the process before they are shown where to sit. Although a vocal person is often needed to speak, it is important to note that every family has an elder and a linguist who takes that responsibility. If the man is from a different ethnic group, it is mandatory that, he looks for another man to play the lead role, unlike other Ghanaian societies where any vocal person (man or woman) can play the lead role in a marriage ceremony.

The items usually presented to the bride include 6 pieces of cloth, an umbrella, a cutlass, and a special wear for the father. Items are presented to the bride and two representatives from both families are required to inspect. The woman is required to change her dress at least 3 times, first in a Dipo outfit, second, as a mother, and third, in engagement wear. Each time the woman comes out, she is required to greet the crowd witnessing the ceremony. After the presentation of items and the second appearance for introduction, the husband is expected to come around. The woman would then kneel as she presents a wine to her father for acceptance of the marriage and this is done 3 times. The father now requests to see the man and at that time the man would be among the crowd. The father presents the couple to the head of the family after which they sit together, usually in the same cloth. This arrangement is often accompanied by 'Fia', which usually ends with the ceremony done by tying specific items such as a broomstick, cloth, florin coins (in ancient times), or exchange of wear. This is mostly done for the first female born indicating that the woman is fully in the hands of the man.

2. Factors Influencing the Evolution of Marriage Rites in the Krobo Community

The evolution of marriage rites within the Krobo community in Eastern Ghana represents a significant transformation, shaped by both internal dynamics and external influences. This study, through qualitative analysis, uncovers the nuanced shifts in the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' practices, traditional rites that have anchored the Krobo's marital customs for generations.

Traditionally, these marriage rites have been the linchpin in the fabric of Krobo society, serving multiple roles beyond the mere formalization of matrimonial unions. They acted as vital mechanisms for integrating individuals and their families into the wider communal network, as described by P4 (Personal Communication, October 2023): "The 'fia' ceremony wasn't just about getting married. It was about being woven into the larger tapestry of our community, affirming bonds that went beyond the couple." These ceremonies, rich in ritual and symbolism, underscored the communal ethos that characterizes Krobo society.

However, recent decades have seen a pronounced shift towards more simplified and, at times, hybrid forms of these ceremonies. P7 (Personal Communication, October 2023) noted, "Now, our weddings might have traditional elements, like the 'la-pomi' negotiations, but we also incorporate aspects that are entirely modern." This blending of the old and the new reflects broader socio-economic and cultural changes, including the impacts of urbanization, the penetration of Western education, and the influence of legal frameworks on traditional practices, as observed during fieldwork in Krobo-Odumase.

The change in the marital landscape of the Krobo is partly attributed to urbanization, which has introduced new lifestyles and perspectives. Urban living has not only altered socio-economic conditions but has also exposed the community to diverse cultural influences, diluting the adherence to traditional rites. As P2 (Personal Communication, October 2023) reflected, "Living in the city, you see different ways of doing things, and

somehow, you want your marriage to reflect that broader world view."

The significant transformation of the Krobo community's marriage rites is deeply influenced by the process of urbanization. As the community transitions from rural to urban settings, traditional practices and beliefs are being reevaluated and reshaped in the face of new socio-economic conditions and cultural influences (Lund & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Ramjee & Daniels, 2013). This urban shift brings about a diversification of lifestyles and perspectives, challenging the community to integrate modernity with their cultural heritage (Glozah, 2014). The impact of urban living extends beyond cultural changes, affecting environmental conditions and the demographic composition of urban areas within the Krobo society (Steels, 2015; Wang et al., 2017). Consequently, urbanization not only modifies the socio-cultural landscape but also introduces broader ecological and demographic shifts. Within this context, the Krobo's adaptation to urban influences is manifest in the evolving practices of traditional rites such as 'la-pomi' and 'fia', signifying a broader trend of cultural transformation amidst the pressures of modernization and social change (Owusu, 2020; Sewu, Addo, & Ayerteye, 2023). This ongoing evolution highlights the dynamic interplay between preserving cultural traditions and embracing the realities of contemporary urban life.

Western education has played a crucial role in reshaping Krobo marriage rites. Educated individuals often seek ways to modernize traditional ceremonies, making them resonate with their lived experiences. "Education has made us question some aspects of our traditions. We ask, 'Why must we do it this way?' and often, we find no satisfactory answer," explained P5 (Personal Communication, October 2023), highlighting the introspective critique prompted by education.

Western education has had a significant impact on reshaping Krobo marriage rites by influencing individuals to modernize traditional ceremonies to align with their contemporary experiences. Educated individuals often seek ways to adapt traditional practices to reflect modern values and lifestyles (C. R. Schwartz & Mare, 2005). Education, particularly for women, plays a crucial role in empowering individuals to delay marriage, make informed decisions about contraceptive use, and challenge traditional norms (Lasong et al., 2020). In Western countries like the United States and Australia, premarriage education is promoted by various organizations to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce rates (Halford, O'Donnell, Lizzio, & Wilson, 2006).

The influence of education on marriage extends beyond Western societies. In countries like China, women's education and access to economic resources have been shown to impact marriage patterns (Dai, 2022). Similarly, in Malaysia, prolonged education among young people has led to exposure to modern norms and ideas, significantly affecting the institution of marriage (Abdullah, Tey, Mahpul, Azman, & Abdul Hamid, 2021). Moreover, in South Korea, the gendered determinants of marriage highlight the role of education in shaping marital decisions (Chang, Oh, & Kim, 2024).

The impact of education on marriage rituals is evident in various cultural contexts. In Turkey, the relationship between courtship and modernity is explored through the lens of arranged marriages and the creation of romance before marriage (Hart, 2007). Additionally, in Jordan, further investigation is suggested to understand the role of parents' education and the cost of marriage in influencing socioeconomic status, marriage patterns, and fertility choices (Hailat, 2016).

The legal frameworks within Ghana have further influenced the transformation of these rites. The recognition of both traditional and civil marriages by Ghanaian law has encouraged couples to opt for legal registration, which offers protection and rights but does not necessitate adherence to all traditional practices. This dual recognition, as P3

(Personal Communication, October 2023) mentioned, "gives us the freedom to choose how we want to celebrate our union, knowing it is protected by law either way."

The legal frameworks within Ghana have indeed influenced the transformation of marriage rites among the Krobo community. The recognition of both traditional and civil marriages by Ghanaian law has provided couples with the option to opt for legal registration, offering them protection and rights. This legal recognition has encouraged couples to formalize their unions through legal means, which may not necessarily require strict adherence to all traditional practices Kohno et al. (2020). The Marriage Ordinance Act, which has been in force since Ghana's independence, aimed to change the social behavior of Ghanaians and introduce a Eurocentric marriage system, reflecting individualist ways of being and knowing (Adjei & Mpiani, 2023). Additionally, in some ethnic groups in Ghana, such as the Dagaaba, the payment of bride price is considered essential for the legality of a marriage contract, emphasizing the influence of legal and traditional practices on marriage customs (Abdul-Korah, 2014). Legal interventions have also been crucial in addressing issues like child marriage in Ghana, with efforts focused on criminalizing harmful practices while empowering girls through legal frameworks (Santelli, Spindler, Moore, & McGovern, 2019). These legal measures aim to prevent child marriage and promote girls' empowerment, highlighting the role of legal frameworks in shaping marriage practices and societal norms in Ghana.

3. Impact on Social and Cultural Identity

The profound transformation of marriage rites within the Krobo community signifies more than just a shift in ceremonial practices; it underscores a crucial phase in the evolution of the community's social and cultural identity. As traditional rites undergo modification, the Krobo people face the challenge of preserving their cultural essence while navigating the currents of change. This dichotomy between tradition and modernity becomes a pivotal theme in understanding the broader implications of these transformations on Krobo society.

Participants in this study voiced a robust sense of cultural pride and identity, deeply intertwined with traditional marriage practices. "Our traditions are the roots of our identity," mentioned P1 (Personal Communication, October 2023), reflecting a widespread sentiment within the community. These traditions, particularly marriage rites like 'la-pomi' and 'fia', are not merely rituals but are foundational to the Krobo's sense of self and community cohesion. They serve as a conduit for passing down cultural values and reinforcing the communal bond.

However, the evolution of these rites has sparked concerns about the dilution of cultural specificity. P3 (Personal Communication, October 2023) shared, "As we adapt our rites to fit into the modern world, I worry we might lose parts of what makes us unique." This sentiment underscores the fear that in the process of adaptation, the rites may lose their distinctiveness and, with it, the depth of meaning they hold for the Krobo people. The challenge lies in navigating the fine line between preservation and evolution.

The evolution of traditional rites among the Krobo community has raised concerns regarding the potential dilution of cultural specificity. There is a prevailing fear that as these rites adapt over time, they may lose their unique characteristics and the profound significance they hold for the Krobo people. This dilemma highlights the delicate balance that needs to be navigated between preserving these traditions in their authentic form and allowing for necessary adaptations to occur (S. H. Schwartz, 2012).

The tension between preservation and evolution in cultural practices is a complex

issue that resonates across various disciplines, including sociology, biology, and psychology. Cultural evolution theories emphasize the transformative nature of cultural transmission, where practices are subject to change and adaptation over time (Acerbi & Mesoudi, 2015). While the preservation of cultural heritage is crucial for maintaining identity and community cohesion, the dynamic nature of cultural evolution necessitates a certain degree of flexibility to ensure the continued relevance and sustainability of traditions (El Mouden, André, Morin, & Nettle, 2014).

Moreover, the impact of globalization and modernity on cultural practices, as observed in the gradual modifications of rites among societies like the Krobo, underscores the need to strike a balance between preserving heritage and embracing change (Glozah, 2014). The interplay between cultural conservatism and the evolving nature of cultural practices further complicates the discourse on how best to safeguard traditions while allowing for meaningful evolution (Morin, 2022).

Despite these concerns, there is also an acknowledgment of the necessity of adaptation. "Change is inevitable, and our traditions must evolve if they are to survive," remarked P5 (Personal Communication, October 2023). This pragmatic approach recognizes the dynamic nature of culture as something that evolves in response to external influences and internal needs. The willingness to adapt is seen as crucial for the rites' continued relevance and survival.

Acknowledging the concerns surrounding the potential dilution of cultural specificity in traditional rites, there is also a recognition of the necessity of adaptation. This pragmatic approach understands culture as dynamic, evolving in response to external influences and internal needs. The willingness to adapt is deemed essential for the continued relevance and survival of these rites within the Krobo community. Balancing preservation with evolution is crucial to ensure that these traditions maintain their authenticity while also resonating with contemporary contexts (Smith, Rodríguez, & Bernal, 2011). By embracing adaptation, the Krobo community can navigate the complexities of cultural evolution while safeguarding the essence of their heritage and ensuring the continued vibrancy of their cultural identity.

The interplay between maintaining traditional values and embracing change is a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. P6 (Personal Communication, October 2023) expressed, "We strive to keep our traditions alive, but we also want them to be meaningful in our current lives." This highlights the ongoing negotiation within the Krobo community, as they work to find a balance that honors their heritage while making it applicable to contemporary life.

The adaptation process is complex, involving both conscious decisions and unconscious shifts influenced by external factors such as urbanization, education, and legal changes. These factors introduce new perspectives and possibilities, challenging the community to reconsider and redefine their traditions. "Urbanization and education have opened our eyes to different ways of living, and inevitably, our traditions evolve," said P7 (Personal Communication, October 2023).

The adaptation process within cultural practices, such as traditional rites among the Krobo community, is multifaceted and influenced by a combination of conscious decisions and unconscious shifts driven by external factors like urbanization, education, and legal changes. These external influences introduce new perspectives and possibilities, challenging communities to reassess and redefine their traditions (Sun & Wang, 2023). The complexity of adaptation lies in the delicate balance between preserving the authenticity and significance of cultural practices while allowing for necessary adjustments to align with evolving societal dynamics. As cultures evolve in response to

changing environments, the willingness to adapt becomes essential for the continued relevance and survival of traditions, prompting communities like the Krobo to navigate the intricate interplay between tradition and adaptation.

This evolution, however, is not merely a loss but a transformation that can potentially enrich Krobo cultural practices by integrating new elements with traditional ones. P8 (Personal Communication, October 2023) observed, "While we adapt, we also have the opportunity to create something new, something uniquely ours that reflects who we are today." This perspective suggests that the evolution of marriage rites could lead to the development of a more inclusive and flexible cultural identity that accommodates diversity and change.

The evolution of marriage rites among the Krobo community is not solely a loss of tradition but a transformative process that has the potential to enrich cultural practices by integrating new elements with traditional ones. This perspective suggests that the evolution of these rites could lead to the development of a more inclusive and flexible cultural identity that accommodates diversity and change Henrich et al. (2012). The integration of new elements into traditional practices can enhance the cultural richness and adaptability of the community, allowing for a dynamic cultural identity that resonates with contemporary realities. By embracing transformation while honoring the core values of their traditions, the Krobo community can navigate the complexities of cultural evolution and foster a cultural identity that is both rooted in tradition and open to innovation (Elizabeth Anorkor Abbey & Nasidi, 2023).

4. Preservation versus Modernization

The juxtaposition of preservation and modernization within the Krobo community's marriage rites encapsulates a broader narrative of cultural evolution facing many traditional societies today. As the Krobo people grapple with this balance, they find themselves at a crossroads, seeking to maintain the integrity of their heritage while embracing the inevitabilities of contemporary life.

One participant, reflecting on the importance of tradition, stated, "Our ancestors laid down these practices for a reason. They are not just rituals; they are our connection to the past, to who we are" (P2, Personal Communication, October 2023). This sentiment echoes a widespread reverence for tradition within the community, underscoring the 'la-pomi' and 'fia' rites as pivotal to the Krobo identity. These practices are seen as vital links to ancestry and tradition, embodying values, beliefs, and social structures that have defined the community for generations.

In various traditional societies, like the Krobo people, the tension between preserving cultural authenticity and embracing contemporary realities is a common challenge. The significance of tradition often lies in ancestral practices passed down through generations, symbolizing continuity and identity (Walker, Hill, Flinn, & Ellsworth, 2011). These rituals are not just symbolic but are essential for preserving the essence of the community's history and values.

The evolution of cultural practices, such as marriage rites, is not exclusive to the Krobo community. Many societies globally are grappling with similar challenges of cultural evolution and adaptation to modernity (Auni, Manan, & Abubakar, 2022; Zainuddin, 2023). The process of modernization, though inevitable, presents obstacles to maintaining traditional customs and beliefs (Auni et al., 2022). As societies navigate these changes, it is crucial to strike a balance between honoring the past and meeting present demands.

The experience of the Krobo community reflects broader global trends where indigenous knowledge and cultural practices are being reassessed in light of modernization. The global recognition of indigenous knowledge as an essential component in modern development initiatives underscores a pivotal shift towards valuing traditional practices alongside scientific advancements. From the World Health Organization's acknowledgment of traditional medicine to the United Nations' advocacy for incorporating indigenous wisdom in disaster management, the integration of indigenous knowledge systems with modern strategies is increasingly seen as vital for addressing contemporary challenges in healthcare, environmental conservation, and climate adaptation (Adhikari, Thapa, Kunwar, Devkota, & Poudel, 2019; Balehegn, Balehey, Fu, & Liang, 2019). This confluence of indigenous and scientific knowledge not only enhances the resilience and sustainability of communities like the Krobo but also fosters a more inclusive approach to development that respects and leverages the depth of cultural heritage and traditional expertise. As such, the evolving discourse on indigenous knowledge reaffirms its significance in crafting innovative solutions that are culturally sensitive and environmentally sound, challenging the dichotomy between traditional and scientific paradigms.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated the intricate evolution of marriage rites within the Krobo community of Eastern Ghana, a transformation deeply rooted in the interplay between traditional practices and the pressures of modernization. The findings highlight a significant shift from the structured ceremonial practices of 'La-pomi' and 'Fia' towards more adaptable forms that incorporate elements of contemporary life. This evolution is indicative of a broader narrative facing many traditional societies today, balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with the inevitabilities of contemporary living.

The most significant finding of this research is the nuanced way in which the Krobo community navigates the dual imperatives of preserving cultural legacy and adapting to modern realities. Despite the global trend towards modernization, the Krobo people demonstrate a resilient commitment to maintaining their cultural identity, while simultaneously embracing necessary changes to ensure the relevance and sustainability of their traditions. This study uncovers the dynamic process of cultural negotiation and adaptation, as traditional marriage rites evolve in response to urbanization, education, and legal changes.

A limitation of this study is its limited focus on the Krobo community, which may not encompass the diversity of experiences and perspectives across Krobo society or other traditional communities undergoing similar transformations. Future research could expand this scope with cross-cultural comparative studies, exploring both universal and unique aspects of cultural evolution in the face of modernization. Further investigation of the long-term impact of these evolving practices on community coherence and individual identity within Krobo society would be valuable, including the role of digital media and technology in shaping contemporary marriage rites and the implications for cultural transmission to future generations.

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