



An African Perspective of Drama: The Case of the Homowo Festival Among the People of Teshie, Greater Accra Region – Ghana

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ABSTRACT

There have been literary scholars such as Ruth Finnegan who have argued and asserted that drama is not a literary genre that is well developed in Africa. Although this assertion has been refuted and disproved by other literary scholars such as Euchero, Enekwe and Owomoyela, people still struggle with exactly what drama in Africa entails and is about. Whether the dramatic elements and traditions found in the performances are simply not remnants of the encounter with the western world as popularly postulated or they are actually traditions deeply rooted in the culture and identity as Africans. The paper used a qualitative research method that is essentially rooted in ethnography and historical facts that surround the *Homowo* festival. Also, with Afrocentric theory and Structural Theory of Myth, this paper has critically examined the *Homowo* festival of the people of Teshie in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana as an African drama and established that the various performances during the festival festivities have the features of drama and not only that, but they practically and vividly show how the performances are rooted in history, myth, rituals and the belief of the people in the community; thus, exhibiting a clear perspective of African drama. This study further contributes to the existing knowledge on oral literature and the treatment of festivals in Africa as a literary genre. It presents the *Homowo* festival as a fully fledged cultural practice that takes into cognizance essential dramatic elements embedded in its performance.

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Publication History

Received 3rd June, 2022

Accepted 17th August, 2022

Published online 29th

August, 2022

Keywords: *Festival, African Drama, Myth, Homowo*

INTRODUCTION

Nkala asserts that “that African drama exists is not in question: the question concerns whether what exists as African drama can pass the test of euro-centric minds.”¹ This assertion by Nkala shows the confusion and conflicting opinions that surround what an African drama is, the assertion does not deny

¹ Nathan Nkala, “Traditional African Drama (An Ancestral Deformity).” *M.C Ugo Magazine*, (1990): 1-15

the existence of African drama but acknowledges that there are a lot of conceptions of what constitutes drama and this hinders drama from getting a unified definition. This is so because of how African culture is viewed through the spectrum of an euro-centric paradigm. Nkala's assertion becomes clearer when Finnegan maintains that "it would perhaps be truer to say that in Africa, in contrast to Western Europe and Asia, drama is not typically a widespread or a developed form."² A number of literary critics have disproved this assertion by Finnegan.³ They argued that Africa can be said to have a developed form of drama when a keen look is taken at some of the festivals and performances. Responding to Finnegan who referred to dramatic elements of some African drama as "quasi-dramatic," Yankah cited in *African Theatre Festivals* laments that "in spite of the evident link between festivals and theatre, some critics of African theatre downplay the significant dramatic elements that undergird African festivals."⁴

Abrams defines drama as "a composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the role of characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue."⁵ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms also defines drama as "the general term for performance in which actors impersonate the actions and speech of fictional or historical characters (or non-human entities) for the entertainment of an audience, either on a stage or by means of broadcast; or a particular example of this art. i.e., a play."⁶ These definitions of drama have a couple of things in common, the sense of performance, which implies the need for performers, performance space, and the presence of an audience. However, drama only focuses on performance, the other two, performers and performance space are only there for the sake of the performance itself. Albeit, the presence of a performance, performers, and a performance space does not simply mean that drama has occurred. There is a whole lot that fits into such a framework. Morgan and Brask posit that, "what is performed may be dance, musical drama, variety entertainment, mime, the improvisation and portrayal of a story involving impersonation and dialogue or the acting out of a written script including plot and character portrayal."⁷ Opoku opines that a festival is a celebration of a sacred or religious historical event, symbolized by the remembrance of heroic deeds, infused with religious and ritualistic undertones and activities.⁸ A festival is a cultural event because it bestows on all members of the community a sense of belonging from which they tap/source identity and uniqueness. Festivals therefore can serve as a channel through which the living and the dead and deities communicate their needs. In this light, Mbiti affirms the spiritual import of festivals when he says that some societies "hold worship ceremonies at harvest festivals at which, they offer sacrifices or offerings to God."⁹ Festivals are not merely analyzed as drama that is just meant to entertain but essentially, one that seems to impart lessons and impact lives positively. Opoku also opines that:

Festivals are rituals that recur at regular intervals and which have their purpose, the expression of beliefs held by a particular community... Festivals take place at special times set aside by a community in order to commemorate some events of historical, cultural, or religious significance and by the performance of certain rituals; such events are re-enacted, giving both individuals and their communities, a sense of meaning and cohesiveness."¹⁰

² Ruth Hilary Finnegan. *Oral Literature in Africa*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 500.

³ Michael Joseph Chukwudalu Echeruo. "The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual." *Research in African Literatures* 4(1) (1973): 21-31. doi:https://www.jstor.org/stable/3818611.

⁴ Victor Yankah. *African Theatre 11: Festivals*. (United Kingdom: Boydell and Brewer, 2012,) 45-55.

⁵ Meyer Howard Abrams. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 1999): 69.

⁶ Chris Baldick. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 71.

⁷ Per Brask, and Morgan Williams. "Towards a Conceptual Understanding of the Transformation from Ritual to Theatre." *Canadian Anthropologica Society Stable* 30 (2), 1988.

⁸ A.A. Opoku *Festivals of Ghana*. (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1970).

⁹ John Mbiti. *African Religious and Philosophy*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1970).

¹⁰ Kofi Asare Opoku. "Religious Themes in West African Festivals. Dialogue and Alliance." *A Journal of*

Some examples of festivals celebrated in Ghana include *Ohum* of the *Akyems*, *Feok* of the *Builsas* in the Upper East, *Hogbetsotso* of the *Anglos* in the Volta, *Kundum* of the *Nzemas* and *Ahantas* in the Western, *Fetu Afahye* of the people of *Oguaa* in the Central, *Akwasidae* of the *Asantes*, *Aboakyir* of the *Effutu-Winneba* people in the Central, *Damba* of the people of *Dagomba*, *Gonja*, and *Mamprusi* in the Northern. One thing that is distinctly clear and aligns with Opoku's assertion on festivals is that these festivals are celebrated in Ghana either to commemorate events of historical, cultural, or religious significance and they are always infused with the performance of certain rituals that give the individuals and their communities a sense of unity, identity and meaning.¹¹ This study is to show that African drama exists and it might not necessarily align or pass all the euro-centric concepts of drama but that does not make the drama in Africa flawed or any less than drama. This paper, is, therefore, an attempt to show the African perspective of drama, which is to establish that there are elements of drama embedded in the performance of the Homowo festival celebrated by the Ga's of Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative approach because the nature of the subject demanded a design that is rooted in the practice, process, and context of the research. It was highly observational and descriptive. In the course of the observation of the festival, pictures were taken, video recordings were made, and fifteen (15) interviews were conducted with custodians of the Ga culture to obtain historical facts that surround the *Homowo* festival. Due to the nature of the research, the author relied on ten(10) key interviews conducted with the traditional custodians who have direct contact with and are responsible for the festivities of the Teshie *Homowo* festival. Discussions of data collected were also grounded in theories that have been formulated by scholars and academicians. Also, a research assistant who understood the Ga language, a chief, and some elders of Ga culture were recruited to help with the translation of the Ga language, concepts, and symbols of the festival.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Afrocentric Theory

This theory is centered on the notion that Africa is unique and different in a recognizable way. Owusu-Frimpong asserts that the central feature of the Afrocentric paradigm is that there is a particular African worldview and value system which can be related to all other central concepts including those of religion, morality, and social organization.¹² It recognizes that there is a certain way that all Africans are connected despite the variations among different groups, a way that is different from that of the European and Asian. This theory by affirming the differences between Africans and others concretizes the idea that the performances of African drama must not be subjected to the standards of Europeans and Asians. Owusu-Frimpong opines that the;

Afrocentric theory provides a methodological approach that directs our attention to our language, folktales, root rituals, Ebonics, music and the symbolic boundaries and iconic signposts not only for locating a text but also for generating substantive discourses and debates that would guide the knowledge about self as African people and transmit the knowledge to future generations.¹³

In this light, the Afrocentric theory shows that there are differences in the same art form across various cultures and that these differences arise from the methods of expression and experience in those cultures.

International Religious Foundation, 4 (1) (1990): 71.

¹¹ Opoku, "Religious Themes in West African Festivals. Dialogue and Alliance."

¹² Yaw Owusu-Frimpong. "Afrocentricity, The Aday Festival of the Akan, African-American Festivals and Intergenerational Communication." *The Journal of Black Studies* 35(2) (2005): 730-750. doi:10.1177/0021934704268575.

¹³ Owusu-Frimpong. "Afrocentricity, The Aday Festival of the Akan, African-American Festivals and Intergenerational Communication." 731.

Structural Theory of Myth

The common understanding of myth is that it is a traditional tale that relates “events alleged to have taken place in time: before the world was created, or during its first stages-anyway, long ago.” through which human societies express certain basic feelings such as love, hatred, or revenge as well as provide an explanation for certain natural phenomena.¹⁴ The close connection between myth and ritual and the various disagreements about the relationship(s) that they share has resulted in difficulties in theorizing about myths. While on the verge of proposing a structural study of myths, Lévi-Strauss emphasizes this difficulty when he writes that, “from a theoretical point of view, the situation remains very much the same as it was fifty years ago, namely, a picture of chaos.”¹⁵ Kowalzig wrote several years after Lévi-Strauss and delved into the relationship between myth and ritual based on their performance context and how this performance strengthens the belief in gods.¹⁶

In his study, Lévi-Strauss proposes a structuralist analysis of myth along the same lines as the structuralist analysis of language. The key ideas expounded in his work are, firstly, myth, just like language, constitutes *langue* and *parole* and can be evaluated along synchronic and diachronic lines, or better put as a form of language that exists at a particular point in time and also as one that exists through time. By advocating a study of myths from a structuralist point of view, Lévi-Strauss is able to account for how a myth, set in a particular time or one point in history (synchronic) is a story that is nevertheless timeless or exists through time (diachronic). Secondly, just like language, myth is composed of constituent units which are put together with certain rules in mind.¹⁷ For the author, the constituent units of myth – which he calls “mythemes” – share a certain relationship (of binary opposition) that gives rise to similar myth structures across the world.¹⁸ By emphasizing the relationships between the events that form a myth, Lévi-Strauss moves away from analysing myths based on the content to analysis that is based on structure, and, by nature, seems more objective and scientific.¹⁹ Klages also asserts that myth can “be translated, paraphrased, reduced, expanded, and otherwise manipulated without losing its basic shape or structure.”²⁰ Lévi-Strauss analysis of myth based on structure, therefore, offers a laudable explanation for the tendency of many similar myths existing across the globe, despite the fact that each myth in the process of composition (or narration) is subject to chance and possibility.²¹

Therefore, the *Homowo* as a festival fused with rituals, which themselves are based on, explained by, or associated with myths, can be seen as a combination of performances that re-actualize past events.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE GA’S AND THE HOMOWO FESTIVAL

The people of the Ga tribe are a littoral community occupying the south-eastern part of Ghana. Their territory is bounded on the east by the *Laloi* Lagoon, on the west by the river *Densu* which is also known as ‘*Sakumo fie*’ and on the north, about 18 miles from the coast by the *Akwapim* Ridge which is inhabited by the Akwapims who form part of the Akan ethnic group. According to an interview with the *Wulomo* of Teshie, the Ga state comprises the following six main towns lying from west to east. Accra, which is the capital of Ghana, *Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua*, and Tema. It is widely speculated that the Ga's immigrated from farther east of Yorubaland in Nigeria. The Ga people are said to have arrived

¹⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss. "Structural Study of Myth." *The Journal of American Folklore* (1955): 428-444. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/526768>.

¹⁵ Lévi-Strauss. "Structural Study of Myth" 428.

¹⁶ Barbara Kowalzig. *Singing for the Gods. Performance of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Lévi-Strauss. "Structural Study of Myth" 428.

¹⁸ Michael Klages. "Claude Lévi-Strauss "The Structural Study of Myth" and Other Structuralist Ideas." (2010) Accessed 29th June 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.colorado.edu/English/eng12010mk/levistrauss.2001.html>.

¹⁹ Lévi-Strauss. "Structural Study of Myth" 428.

²⁰ Klages. "Claude Lévi-Strauss "The Structural Study of Myth" and Other Structuralist Ideas." 1.

²¹ Lévi-Strauss. "Structural Study of Myth" 428.

in three parties, each of them led by its priest (*Wulomo*). The Ga *Wo* (Nungua) settled in the village of *Wodoku* and *Wofagba*. The Ga Boni or La people settled at *Ladoku* on the *Laloi* lagoon near *Prampram* (*Gbugbla*), moved to *Adzanote*, and finally drove the *Nungua* from *Wodoku* (present-day La) and settled there. Teshie is an off-shoot of La which came with other groups. The third-party *Ga Mashi* settled in the west at Accra and *Ayawaso* (Okai Koi Hill).²²

Ammah posits that *Homowo* is the main festival of the Ga people. Its actual origin is shrouded in mystery and attempts to solve it provide only plausible conjectures. Many writers seem to agree that *Homowo* is a first-fruit festival in which celebrants commemorate the past suffering of famine of their ancestor settlers. In certain respects, it is not unlike the harvest festival of other tribes. Essentially, *Homowo* is a religious festival and also one of the chief instruments of social control in the Ga communities.²³

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE FESTIVAL FESTIVITIES

Below is a list of keywords that run through the discussion of the events of the Homowo festival:

- **Wulomei/Wɔyei**- priests/priestesses (individuals chosen by ancestral spirits to act as their mouthpieces among mortals.)
- **Wolɔiatse/Wulɔtsɛ Shia**-the chief fisherman/the chief fisherman's abode or residence
- **Mantse/Mantsemei**-Chief/traditional chiefs (each of the six Ga traditional states is headed by a *Mantse*; the individual villages and towns under the capital town of each state may have their own *mantse*)
- **Tsese**- a wooden bowl that is used as a vessel for mixing and carrying medicinal herbs, herbs that are used for cleansing, healing, and spiritual uplifting of the Ga community.
- **Ataa-Naa Nyonmo** – Supreme Being, creator of the universe.
- **Jemawɔjɔjɔ** – Deities (lesser). These deities through which the Ga people commune with Nyonmo are believed to be harboured in places such as rivers, lakes, trees, hills, groves, shrines as well as animals.
- **Sɛj (Sacred Stools)** - The broom cleansing of these stools and worship of sacred deities creates the opportunity for the people to be in harmony with the universe.
- **Foiblɔ (Broom)** – Symbol of authority for the priest and priestesses (*Wulomei/Wɔyei*) used to ward off evil, to cleanse the town of all evil.
- **Yele (Yam)/Yele Yeli** – Eating of yams; an occasion in the festive celebration where yams are sent to the chief's palace and after rituals are done, shared amongst the clan members, symbolizing an abundance of food.
- **Nshor (Sea)/Nshornaa (Seaside/Beach)**
- **Kpokpoi** – A traditional festive meal made with steamed corn, mashed and mixed with palm oil.
- **Kutuwa** – A small cup made of the hard shell of the coconut, used to collect the alcoholic drink for pouring libation.
- **Kotochi** – A bundle of powerful medicinal leaves (with spiritual underpinnings) tied together into a cone hive shape and used as a symbol of the sea god.
- **Mletsɪ** – Short brownish broom used by the *Wɔyei* and *Wɔhin* for spiritual cleansing.
- **Wolɔiatse** – Overall chief fisherman responsible for the sea festive activities.
- **Flɔnɔɔ** - Oval-shaped clay oven.
- **Banku** – A cornmeal made from fermented corn dough.
- **Manjaano** – Centre of Teshie town where the chief and his elders sit in state to see to affairs of the community. Most activities of the community take place there.

²² Interview with Wulomo, Nii Anan Gyeayɔɔ, Teshie, 10/08/2020.

²³ Charles Ammah. *The Ga Homowo*, (Accra: Advance Publishing, 1968).

- **Opokute, Adjeshimankonoaa, Odamenaa, Akelena, Sankonaa, Blɔkojo, Kosekose, Kublegɔɔno** – They are the abodes of deities of the Teshie people.
- **ɲgɔɔwa** – Traditional greetings of good health and life during festive occasions.
- **Clay symbol** – The indigenous participants (male and female) responsible for the ritual performances of the festival wear all-white attires (as costumes) for the occasion. Included are the chief priest and the priestesses (*Wulomei and Wɔyei*). In addition to their costume, they are marked with clay on their bodies and wear 'nyanyara' (braided leaves) around their neck. The custodians of the land who are very close to the *Mantse* and perform very significant roles in the festivities are marked with two strands of clay marks on the backs of the palm, their temples, their feet, and their foreheads, and go barefoot. After the festival, members who are set apart for deity service wear white throughout the year.

Clan Names in Teshie (Plus Heads)

- *Agbawe – Siketele*
- *Krobo – Mankrado*
- *Klemusu – Wulomo*
- *Gbugbla (war group) – Asafoatse*
- *Lenshie - Mantse*

THE HOMOWO FESTIVAL AS AN AFRICAN DRAMA

The *Homowo* festival of the people of Teshie in all its full expression, glamour and beauty is fitting for the title of **drama**. In light of Herskovits's explication of drama, he opines that;

... the role of our (western) theatre in broaching and emphasising problems in living, ordinarily sidestepped by the average person, does not take into account in studying the drama in (traditional) societies. For where drama is a part of life, a psychological toughness is engendered, especially since compensations are social and culturally determined, this, in turn, is closely connected with the fact that supernatural beings to whom these folks look for support and guidance are so real to them. To the extent that (traditional) dramatic performances reinforce an escape mechanism, they do so in terms which merit and receive social understanding, since the tales they tell are known to all... thus in traditional societies, the spectator, as often as not, is participant and actor as well... Theatre in the sense in which we understand it does not exist. The (traditional) stage has no need for the proscenium.²⁴

In Herskovits's explication of drama, the African drama bears with it an exceedingly overwhelming desire to represent faithfully the way and manner in which their ancestors, gods, spirits and nature acted during the period of struggle, victory and survival of their traditional area. The traditional chief priest and priestess (*Wulomo and Wɔyei* and attendants) the chief and his elders, various *Asafo* clans and the members of the community come together during the *Homowo* festival to re-enact the significant events and activities which paved way for their ancestors to possess the land and survive on it. The imitation of the activities of their forebears is held in high esteem because of the reverence, respect and admiration they have for them. These actions are re-enacted during the festival to excite varieties of emotions among the audience. Emotions of fear, anxiety, joy and hope for a brighter future are intricately fused within the performers and audience. The volume of the performance and the significance it holds for the people of Teshie helps to show and establish the *Homowo* festival as an African drama. The ritualistic performance of the *Homowo* festival is made up of various stages in

²⁴ Melville Herskovits. "Dramatic Expression Among Primitive People." *Yale Review* xxxiii (Yale University Press, 1994): 299-306

order of their performance. They include; the *Blɔhejuu*, *Ablekuu/Yele Yeli*, *Nshorna Wodjin Adjamo*, *Nshor Bulemɔ*, *Gbe Min Laa*, *Mansee Shia Baa*, *Kpokpoi Shwamo*, *Noo Wala Hamo*, *Tsesse Kpa Faa* and *Tsetse Bumɔ*.

The *Homowo* festival starts in the last week of the month of July and throughout the month of August to the second week of September. The festival is marked by different district activities that come together to ensure the wholesomeness of the festival. This analysis will, therefore, delve critically into the various stages of the *Homowo* festival and how these stages shed light on how the *Homowo* festival can be categorized as an African drama.

Blɔhejuu

The *Blɔhejuu* (broom-cleansing) is the main ritual performance done in the last week of the month of July, the *Blɔhejuu* is an integral part of the festival and also begins the whole ritual festival festivities. The *Blɔhejuu* injects into the festival a profound understanding that holds the festival together. It is during *Blɔhejuu* that the absolute inclusion of the supernatural is invoked which gives weight to the *Homowo* festival and ignites the passion with which every performer acts his/her role within the festival.

Cleanliness is prioritized during this time; thus, the people are conscious of the fact that the deities prefer to dwell in a clean environment. This ritual cleansing is performed at dawn, the beginning of the day, from the hours of 3 am to 4 am on the first day of the festival week. The traditional chief priest and the priestess (*Wɔyei and Wɔhin*) on the first day of the celebration perform the ritual broom-cleansing. This cleansing has two main significances. Firstly, it is to officially announce the beginning of the *Homowo* festival, and secondly, it is a way of cleansing the environment so as to invite the full participation of the deities.

The stage designed for this performance is clearly noticeable, it is the “*Manjaano*” which is the central location where the Teshie community gathers for various activities. It measures about 20 meters wide. In the middle of the stage is a fully rounded clay oven (*flɔnɔɔ*) with a small opening known as *Tutueno*. A day before the celebration this oven-shaped mound is completely whitewashed. Legend has that, the people of *Gbugbla* (beyond *Prampram* to *Nokopho* in Accra) approached the Teshie elders to be given a place to settle down. The elders would not be convinced about them, especially since they came along with their numerous deities. To prove to the Teshie elders that they would not cause any conflict when they are given a place to settle, the strangers from *Gbugbla* presented a virgin who was buried alive seven feet. The oven-shaped mound was then erected on the grave of this maiden to signify their resolve to unite with the people of Teshie. The oven-shaped mound symbolizes the unification of all souls in Teshie land. The *tutueno* mound wherein lies the remains of the virgin who was buried alive as ransom to establish the loyalty and resolve of their forebears to live in peace with their neighbours also implies that the festive celebration is deeply rooted in the myth of the people.

The time for the performance of the broom-cleansing ritual is also very significant. This performance spans a limited time of about 3 am to 4 am under the cover of dawn, this is mainly because the ritual is to be seen by initiates; thus, the time provides a kind of covering that insulates the priest and priestess (*Wɔyei and Wɔhin*), the performers of the ritual from the prying eyes of ordinary men. The performers of this ritual are made up of about twenty-five traditional priests and priestesses consisting of about fifteen males and ten females. These traditional priests and priestesses wear white calico. The white colour of their clothing is symbolic. Hagan posits that “colour symbolism in ritual ceremonies may be used to differentiate the categories of individuals who are involved in the ritual” and also to define their roles in the drama of ritual enactment.”²⁵ The wearing of white calico differentiates the priests and priestesses from the ordinary folks as well as their purity and consecration to the gods whom they serve. The women wear the calico with the fold around their chest and above

²⁵George Hagan. "A Note on Akan Colour Symbolism." *Research Review* (Legon Institute of African Studies, 1970) 19.

their breast, while the men wear the calico as a jumper with a loose-sleeve white calico top. The neck of the priest and priestesses are adorned with garlands of *nyanyara* leaves. The *nyanyara* leaves are the leaves of the bitter melon fruit. Its major spiritual use is to ward off evil spirits while at the same time cleansing the wearer. Once they put the *nyanyara* leaves on, they feel safe and secure to perform the rituals.

They hold short brooms known as *mlets*i (very short brownish brooms) which in line with the Afrocentric theory symbolize their authority as custodians and protectors of the land. The brooms are symbolic and represent the totality of the cleansing ritual. These brooms are usually not used to sweep, their presence on stage signifies the cleansing itself, however, its short and brownish nature symbolizes overuse and establishes the fact that cleanliness is an old age tradition adhered and guarded in the community. This broom cleansing festival illustrates dramatic elements in the sense that within this performance, the present generation mimicking the actions of their forebears is observed. There is a set time, that is 3 am to 4 am and there is a set stage, which is the centre of the community. The actors and their props here, signaled by the brooms and attires all enhance the drama of the performance. This performance is in tandem with the Afrocentric theory which clarifies that African folktales and rituals guide knowledge about Africans and transmit the knowledge to future generations.²⁶ In the hour ritual, each of the twenty-five priests and priestesses holds a short *mlets*i in the right hand amidst hushed mysterious tunes. They point the *mlets*i to the skies as a way of seeking the approval of the heavenly deity. Broom in hand, they move around the community in a symbolic sweep-cleansing of the town, then converge again at their central location where each priest and priestess put the broom in front of them, while the chief priest (*Wulomo*) pours his final libation and offers a prayer to the deities and thus ends the ritual. The ritual performance with the *mlets*i is essential on two accounts; firstly, it seeks to cleanse the community of all spiritual filth and announces the beginning of the festive season. Secondly, it denotes the reaffirmation and allegiance, and loyalty to the deities.²⁷

Ablekuu/Yele Yeli

The following Friday of the last week of July is the *Ablekuu* and *Yele Yeli* ritual performance. This performance is also done at dawn between the hours of 3 am to 4 am by the priests and priestesses (*Wɔyei* and *Wɔhin*). The traditional priests and priestesses all clad in white attire pour libation at all the deity spots around the town. The five clan heads (*Lenshie*, *Agbawe*, *Klemusu*, *Gbugbla* and *Krobo*) carry five bags of corn at waist level, to the *Manste*'s (chief) palace. There, more libation is poured by the *Wulomo* to announce their harvest of corn and he seeks blessings from the deities for a smooth celebration. The corn, the principal ingredient for the preparation of the *Kpokpoi*, a steamed corn dish prepared solely for the festival meal is at the core of this and needs to be ritually sanctified for the meal. After the libation, each clan head takes a bag of corn home to await the festive meal preparation. *Yele Yeli* follows after this activity on the same day around the same time, at the same place, which is the *Mantse*'s palace. A sack of yam is carried by the clan heads to the palace and after pouring libation and seeking blessings from the deities, each clan head picks a tuber of yam and takes it home. The yam is added in case the corn planted does not grow well and where there is a shortage of corn for the festive food, the yam can serve as a substitute.

In this ritual performance, there is a clear and defined plot. The traditional priest and priestesses all gather to pray and pour libation to thank the gods of the land for their crop's growth throughout the year while at the same time leaning on the gods for the abundant supply of their needs. All the priests and priestesses, clad in white, go to all places in Teshie town inhabited by deities to pour libation to thank them for a bountiful harvest and ask for a continuous supply of food.

The clan heads, who can be viewed as characters, carry five bags of corn to the chief's palace. At this stage, more libation is poured by the *Mantse* and *Wulomo*, after which each clan head carries home a bag of corn as well as a tuber of yam for later use. Symbolically, the corn and yam represent the

²⁶ Owusu-Frimpong. "Afrocentricity, The Aday Festival of the Akan, African-American Festivals and Intergenerational Communication." 731.

²⁷ Interview with *Wɔhin*, Nii Anan Akitiwa, Teshie, 15/08/2020.

physical manifestation of the abundance of food made possible by the gods of the land. It is also a way of encouraging the members of the community to take to farming seriously so that they do not go hungry.

Nshɔnaa Wɔɔɔjin Adjamo

The *Homowo* festival is occasioned with a lot of ritual performances which simply demand numerous libations pouring. The pouring of libation is not just an act of revering the ancestors, gods and natural elements to invoke both their presence and elicit specific responses from them. Essel asserts that libation is a beneficial and tangible cultural heritage permitted by Ghana's constitution and international laws.²⁸ Essel further advances a strong case for the relevance of libation and argues strongly that its place in the cultural heritage of a people demands attention.²⁹

The first libation prayer that takes place is the *Nshɔnaa Wɔɔɔjin Adjamo* which comes off on Tuesday in the first week of August. The *Wolɔiatse* and his entourage of clan heads (*Leshie, Agbawe, Klemusu, Gbugbla, and Krobo*) are responsible for this ritual performance. This ritual also takes place at dawn between the hours of 3-4 am at the bank of the sea (*Akelena*). The *Wolɔiatse* and his entourage of clan heads go to pour libation at the seaside to announce to the sea deity as well as all the people who might have been drowned by the sea (It is believed by the people of Teshie that their souls might be hovering around) that it is time for the *Homowo* festivities. Their belief that the souls of people who drowned need to be informed at the onset of the festival advances the idea of myth in the performance. The *Wolɔiatse* and his entourage go there with four goats, firewood, palm oil, corn dough and pots for cooking.

As the *Wolɔiatse* and his entourage near the bank of the sea, only the *Wolɔiatse* who is in his white jumper and white loose sleeve top with a straw hat, trudges into the sea, while his entourage is confined within the banks of the sea humming a mystic tune to get him moving to his dignified stage. This ritual paves way for the Afrocentric theory in the sense that there are peculiar symbols associated with Africans as clearly seen in their costume. Wilson opines that "theatre clothes send signals similar to everyday costume: but as with other elements of the theatre, there are significant differences between the costume of everyday life and those in the theatre."³⁰ The costume of the *Wolɔiatse* alludes to Moses of the Christian faith, who led the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. He is believed to be pure in heart, sanctified, and elected to lead just as it was in the case of Moses, the *Wolɔiatse's* white attire gives him access to the holy ground. The straw hat he wears is made up of natural materials untainted by anything unclean and it bonds him to nature. By forging a link between his costume and that of the Biblical Moses, the *Wolɔiatse* is leaning on a Biblical occurrence with an intent to verify that he has the approval of the gods.

The day and time of the performance are significant as well. It starts on Tuesday from 3 am to 4:30 am. On Tuesdays, no fishing is allowed, it thus becomes an appropriate day to perform a sacred ritual away from the prying eyes of on-lookers, since the hours of 3 am to 4:30 am is a time when the sky is hazy. The covering of dusk in itself provides not only a shade but connects them to the sea god which is believed to be a Tuesday born. The stage, which is the banks of the sea where the *Wolɔiatse's* entourage stays during the ritual performance, and the lightning there creates an atmosphere that contributes to aiding the ritual. As the *Wolɔiatse* trudges into the sea, he does so till the water rises right below his breast while standing on a designated stone. The moment where his upper torso is out of the sea, he is certain that he has occupied the right stage. The importance of this partial immersion is that he is connected physically and spiritually to the gods. Holding a bottle of schnapps (gin) with his two hands, he raises it to the skies and chants some mysterious utterances to establish the link between the gods and himself. As he chants on, he pours the schnapps into the sea. The pouring of

²⁸ Osuani Quaicoo Essel. "Libation Art in Art of Ghana: Linking The Underlinked." *International Journal of African Society, Culture and Traditions* 1-(1), (2004): 39-49.

²⁹ Essel, "Libation Art in Art of Ghana: Linking The Underlinked."

³⁰ Edwin Wilson. *The Theatre Experience*. 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies Inc, 2001).

libation at this time is a prayer to the gods and ancestors to announce to them that the *Homowo* is about to begin and to ask for their permission to grant them a peaceful celebration and a complete realization of all that they expect to gain from the celebration. When he is done, he throws the empty bottle into the sea which signifies that everything in the bottle belongs to the deity. He then walks back and joins his entourage who are waiting for him at the bank of the seashore for the second part of the ritual to begin.

The *Wolɔiatse* who is the major performer of the libation invokes the attention of both the participant and audience and the gods. There is a godly aura associated with the process of libation pouring, with the *Wolɔiatse* keeping a six-inch space between him and his retinue, there is a feeling of spiritual visitation as the whole atmosphere becomes intense and charged. The *Wolɔiatse* holds the *kotuwa* which contains the Schnapp with his two hands and starts the pouring act. As the alcohol drizzles onto the ground, it is believed that the gods are partaking in the drink. While the *Wolɔiatse* pours the Schnapp he utters the following words;

Ga

Wolɔiatse: Agoo, Agoo, Agoo
Attendant: *Amɛɛ, Amɛɛ, Amɛɛ*
Wolɔiatse: Nyɛmei kɛ tɛmei
Ni ekpeshi yɛbee
Beele yɛ jee efɔŋnaa
Shi omanyɛ naa
Akɛ wɔkane beiaaho
Nshɔ wɔjin
Ni amekɛ Otwediampong Kwame
Kɛ egɲa Asaase Afia, Bɔɔ mawu
Baajɔɔ anfra nɛɛnɔ ehawɔ
Meini etsɔ amɛsɛ
Kɛ meini yɔɔ
Baaha amɛ wala
Naagbe nɔɔji, nyɛhea daa
Naa bosɔŋbo
Gbeiamlalo gbeiamlalo
Shitɛ Odoma, omanfo akebuɔ
Nii Osei, Ayala, Asowɛ, agbetsei
Okpei nyɔmotsaana, Bɛŋtɔɔ kɛ bɛŋtɔɔba
Osabu, Nii kɔaa beile Eshɛ
Ajeshimaŋkɔ, Nana Sanko, Okpoite
Nyɛbajia gbele yɛ wɔsutanɔ
Kɛ helai fɛɛ

English

Agoo (repeated thrice, craving the attention of participants to which they reply *amɛɛ*)
 Men and women
 Gathered here
 This time is not for bad tidings
 but good tidings
 we have counted the days till now
 Gods of the sea
 and together with God above
 and his partner Asaase Afia. God our creator
 Bless our offering here for us.
 those who have left us (ancestors)
 and those yet living
 Grant them health/life
 to crown it, here is your drink
 these are the gods
 libation is poured for
 starting with
 the gods closer
 and mostly known to them to
 lesser gods in and around
 the community in that order
 come and remove death from our midst
 and all sickness too.

As a verbal art, the words spoken by the *Wolɔiatse* concurrently with the pouring of the libation of the Schnapp are rendered in a systematic order where appellations to the gods are followed by the incantations and intercessions. This is in light of Kemevor and Duku's assertion that "when libation is performed, the spirits of the ancestors are accorded reverence but not worshipped."³¹

After the libation, the elders bring out the goats, firewood, corn, and palm oil which will be used for the ritual performance. The custodians of the Teshie community are each given a goat for the ritual preparation. Once the goats are given out, these custodians now take center stage. At this point,

³¹ Kofi Asare Kemevor, and Frimpong Kaakyire Duku. "Art: The Pivot of Ghanaian Festivals." *Journal of African Arts & Culture* 1, (2013): 53-62.

the goats act as characters within the performance because they are going to be sacrificed to the gods to ensure the welfare of the society. The goats are killed, singed, dressed and the meat cut into pieces. Part of the raw meat is sprinkled about the seashore and the other is boiled; part of the boiled meat is also sprinkled around as well. The raw meat signifies the live goats that are used as a sacrifice while the boiled meat becomes food for the gods to partake. It is essential to note that the other half of the boiled meat is shared with the partakers who are strongly cautioned from eating the bones of the goat meat. The belief is rooted in the idea that the gods expect that the goats do not have any deformity before or after death and this is why the participants are warned not to break any of the bones. The *Wolɔiatse* then pours libation and offers more prayers for the next phase of the upcoming festival festivities.

Nshɔ Bulemɔ/Kpelekemo

This ritual performance happens on the following day, that is Wednesday and Thursday for the *kpelekemo* (arrival of the fishermen). There are two aspects to this particular ritual performance. The first part is only for initiates and is done in the early hours of 3 am to 4:30 am at the home of the *Wolɔiatse*.

Early dawn, the *Abluwe* clan of *Teshie* goes to the exclusive forest on the outskirts of the *Teshie* community to gather seven different types of leaves. One observes a concurrent operationalization of the Afrocentric and myth theories as discussed in the theoretical framework; the purposively selected leaves are brought to the *Wolɔiatse's* quarters, they are then tied together and put into a big calabash in the *Wolɔiatse's* room. The *Wolɔiatse* then pours libation on these leaves which are now referred to as *kotochi*, a symbol of the sea god. This particular libation is performed in the *Wolɔiatse's* room, which is bare except for a calabash gourd containing the *kotochi*. Standing barefooted in an empty room except for the calabash containing the *kotochi* and surrounded by some *Abluwe* clan members, his assistant pours the Schnapp into the *kotuwa* as he utters the prayer:

Ga

Okpɛɛ Nyomo tsaanaa
Kɛ egɲa nyomo tsaabee
Beɲto kɛ beɲtoma
Abajɔɔ nɔ ehawɔ
Weɲ agbe amedeɲ ni
Ame ba fɛɛ seɲnɔ talɔ ehawɔ
Ni amefɛɛ ehe butu
Kɛha mɛini baa ya nshɔnɛɛ naanɛ
Kɛha nshɔ bulemɔ

English

God of *Tsaanaa* (sea deity)
 and his wife *tsaabee* (goddess)
 Male and female gods
 Come and bless our undertakings
 Heaven should open its arms and
 Come and chair our undertakings
 and become supporters as well
 for those about to go fishing
 to awaken the sea god.

This prayer which accompanies the pouring of libation is for all supernatural protection for those who go deep fishing on the high seas to bring fish for the preparation of the *Homowo* festival meal. The *kotochi* then lies in wait, locked up in the *Wolɔiatse's* room until the afternoon of the day when the *Teshie Mantse* (chief) and his entourage come to add their blessings with more prayers to the *kotochi* and the *Wolɔiatse*. The *Wolɔiatse* then takes the lead with the *kotochi* and the others follow him to the seashore for the performance of the other half of the ritual activity for the day which starts in the late afternoon around 2 pm.

At the seashore, the *Wolɔiatse* and his entourage pour more libation to the sea god. He then dumps the *kotochi* at *Ajeshimankonaa*, the abode of the sea god that is very close to the sea. The fishermen, who are prepared for the event of the day, then bring their canoes for sail for a bumper harvest. The *Wolɔiatse* pours more libation for a bountiful catch as well as the safety of the fishermen going to fish. Two canoes are made ready to go fishing; the men of the traditional custodian clan house of *Teshie*, *Agbawe*, *Lenshie*, and *Gbugbla* occupy one boat in preparation to embark on a journey on the sea. The other two clans, *Klemusu* and *Krobo*, also occupy a second boat. At around 3 o'clock late

afternoon, when all is said and done, the canoes set sail on their journey to come back the following day, which is Thursday around the same time.

For a bounty catch to be realized, it is evident that the audience, the traditional priest (*Wolɔiatse*), and the fishermen support each other. The effort of all parties involved contributes greatly to the bumper catch. Thus, the audience sing songs to liven the spirits of the fishermen and encourage them to bring a bumper harvest. This offers a unique reassurance to the people, the audience, the fishermen and the clan heads, energizing their hopes of the kind of bumper harvest they are to expect. Here, it is seen that for the ritual to be effective, the audience comprising the people of Teshie, with their clan heads and fishermen will have to exercise a unifying belief in the potency and power of the gods. This reechoes the reality of the audience-performer relationships predominant in African theatre or drama as seen in the works of Sutherland and Herskovits.³²

Once the canoes of the fishermen set sail, the *Wolɔiatse*, his entourage, and the spectators disperse to their various homes to return to the seashore the following day at 3 o'clock noon. This is to welcome back the heroic fishermen who they believe have gone into the deep sea to bring a bounty harvest of fish for their festivities. Upon seeing the fishermen coming to the shore, the audience breaks into a song:

Ga

Nyeya kwɔɔ ake
Asha awolo
Tsile awolo
Asha wolo

English

Go and check if
 Big /huge catch
Tsile (redfish) big ones
 Big /huge catch

The song presents the joy, faith, and satisfaction that the participating audience has in the fishermen and the ability of the gods to give them a bumper fish harvest. The fishermen dock on the seashore and bring out their harvest. The fish are lined up as proof that their prayers have been answered. After lining the fish up on the shore for everyone to enjoy the sight for a while, the *Wolɔiatse* takes his *kotuwa* from his attendant to pour schnapps into it and with two hands clutched on the *kotuwa* he offers prayers to the gods. This is the last prayer he offers to the gods upon the return of the fishermen with their catch of big fishes. He prays:

Ga

Wɔnda Okple jishi
Wɔnda naayoo bosunbo shi
Ekweɔ ake jee, ebeji wɔ
Wɔnda le shi
Jenkojin kpawo fɛɛ da le shi
Ake ni tsu keba
Enye ejie loo keha wɔ
Wɔnkpa Okpalejen fai
Ake ehawɔ wala ni sɛɛ jeke
Keji wala yehawɔ le
Nɔfianɔ ni wɔtawɔɔ wɔbaana
Shi keji wala be, wɔnaa nokonoko
Okplejin oyiwala dɔnɔn

English

We thank the All-knowing God
 We thank the goddess of the sea
 for taking care of us, protecting us
 We thank him
 All seven gods of the land thank him
 for when sent for
 He was able to give us fish
 We plead in gratitude with the All-knowing
 for giving us long life
 If we have life
 Whatever we want we will have
 but if there is no life, we have nothing
 All-knowing, thank you very much

³²Theodora Efua Sutherland. "Theatre in Ghana." Edited by Janice Nesbelt. *Ghana Welcomes You* (Orientation to Ghana Committee, 1968): 84; Herskovits, "Dramatic Expression Among Primitive People."

The significance of this prayer offered by the *Wolɔiatse* to thank the gods and seek their further protection is common with most rituals in which the acknowledgment of the gods is considered paramount. The creative use of the *Wolɔiatse's* language establishes that he is well versed in the history and traditions of his people and also adds to the cultural identity of the Teshie people. After the prayer, the *Wolɔiatse* invites children who each pick the fish, and in a straight line walk with the fish on their heads to the house of the *Wolɔiatse* amidst shouts of “loo eh loo eh loo” (fish oo fish). When they arrive, the fishes are divided, some for the Chief of Teshie, the various clan heads, the *Mankrado*, and the fishermen who brought the catch, and the rest is left in the *Wolɔiatse's* compound for the preparation of soup, to be eaten with any accompaniment of their choice after the day's hard work.

Gbe Mlin Laa

Gbe Mlin Laa (path closure) is performed the following week Monday, between the hours of 3 am to 4 am. The whole idea behind this ritual is based on the hunger which beset the people of Teshie upon settling at their present location. They swiftly got involved in weeding, tilling, and planting corn so they can get food to survive.

At the *Manjaano*, the traditional priest gives out seven hoes to the elders of the clan (*Ashiawe, Gbugbla, Lenshi, Klemusu, Atwuade, Abluwe*). The hoes are literally used in symbolic weeding exercises and digging of the earth for planting corn. It is vital to note how the action of the elders of the clan falls in line with the classical definition of drama by Aristotle that it is “the imitation of an action.” This imitation of the elders of the clan weeding by scratching the ground with hoes is fueled by their belief that wherever their feet and hoe touch, it is spiritually recognized as the beginning of the weeding and planting season as it happened in the days of old when the actual weeding was done. It is this myth that fuels this performance, just as their forebears upon arrival on *Teshie* land devoted themselves to farming and worked hard to ensure a bumper harvest. The re-enactment of this myth showcases an event that happened in the past and is being initiated in the present generation as though time is frozen within history.

The plot of this event comprises the exposition, the action, the climax, and the falling action. The exposition introduces the clan leaders and their conflict. As leaders, they need to ensure that their people have a regular supply of corn to eat with their fish. The rising action consists of the announcement to the people that it is time to start the planting which is illustrated by the mimicry of weeding; thus, scratching the earth with their hoes. The climax occurs when the seven clan elders announce again that they have finished planting and are closing the paths to the farm to allow the plants to grow. The falling action is when the seven elders turn to go back to their various homes. Through the re-enactment of this act, they remind themselves as people who through hard work and determination were able to hoot at hunger.

Immediately, after this ritual performance, the chief priest (*Wulomo*) announces the immediate ban on drumming and noise-making. It is believed that the gods, home, and around are visiting the community and they should not be disturbed. The ban is in place till all festivities are over.

Mansee Shia Baa

Two weeks after the *Gbe Mlin Laa*, precisely on Monday is the “Shia Baa” (Homecoming). This is the day for the homecoming of Teshie citizens abroad and from far and near. This is the time of the year when all Teshie indigenes from various locations and residences come home for the *Homowo* festivities. In the past, they come in their wooden vehicles known as *tsolɔle*, they drape the front and sides of their vehicles with various colours depicting their clans and on reaching the outskirts of Teshie, the vehicles beep their horns to announce their presence amidst a cheering welcome from the townsfolk. The decorated *tsolɔle* on that day used to symbolize the joy that comes with the arrival of the indigenes. Each clan and vehicle try cheerfully and zealously to outdo the other in song, horn-tooting, and dance. All these activities take place on the roads leading to the main Teshie town.

Now, things have changed, the warm euphoria that characterizes this homecoming jubilation has dwindled. Even though relations and members of the community who have traveled far away arrive, they come in their private cars, taxis, and other means of transportation apart from the *tsolole* but whatever the cause may be, they all arrive from their journeys to welcome family members and friends to partake in the festival celebrations.

Kpokpoi Shwamo

The following day, Tuesday is time for “*Kpokpoi Shawmo*” (the sprinkling of *kpokpoi*). In the early morning of Tuesday, all households including that of the *Teshie Mantse* (*Teshie* Chief) prepare *kpokpoi*; a traditional meal made of steamed cornmeal and palm oil served with palm soup which serves as the traditional food for the occasion. Every household prepares and eats this meal of *kpokpoi* and palm soup on this festive day. A greater part of this cornmeal dish is sprinkled all over the town by the *Mantse* and his entourage for the deities of the land and other deities who might be visiting the town too. The sprinkling of the *kpokpoi* is a ritual performance that aims at showing appreciation to the gods for giving them a bumper harvest, thus, the meal of *kpokpoi* is sprinkled at the designated traditional places and practically all over the community.

The *Mantse*, who is the major character in this ritual performance is guarded by his attendants, some of whom will be holding the *kpokpoi* as he fetches and sprinkles around. The *Mantse* starts the sprinkling of the *kpokpoi* at the *Lenshie* quarters because he is the head of the *Lenshie* clan and continues to the *Shikitele* quarters (the *Shikitele* is the head of the *Agbawe* clan). All the designated places are households of various clans. The *Mantse* then moves to the town square, *Manjaano*, and continues to sprinkle to *Gbugbla* quarters and then to the *Atwaade* quarters. The *Atwaade* people provide the *Wulomo* (traditional priest) who is part of this entourage, with a bottle of schnapps. This act by the *Atwaade* people is essential because the Schnapp given to him is what the *Wulomo* will use to pour libation to mark the end of the *kpokpoi* sprinkling.

All the designated places that the *Mantse* goes to sprinkle the *kpokpoi*, are analogous to the different stages. The props consist of the earthenware bowls from which the *kpokpoi* is scooped and sprinkled. The Schnapps presented by the *Atwaade* people is also a prop. There is dialogue, not with humans but with the gods. As the *Mantse* sprinkles the *kpokpoi*, he speaks directly to the gods with the belief that they are physically present; thus, even though the gods are not seen talking or eating, the *Mantse* believes that their presence fuels the dialogue. They are not heard talking but they listen, they eat and they are happy.

The *Teshie Mantse*'s actions in this performance are steeped in the actions of their forebears who led the people to first give food produced from their first harvest to the gods before they ate their own. The methodological approach of sprinkling *kpokpoi* by the *Mantse* as well as the various props signified by the earthenware is in line with the Afrocentric theory which clearly shows that Africans have their own unique ways of doing things and transmitting knowledge to future generations.

Noo Wala Hamo

Noo Wala Hamo (health and well wishes to all) happens on a Wednesday after the *Kpokpoi Shwamo*. Members of every household in Teshie use this opportunity to unite with other family members and family heads and those who are at home for the festivities. Children born outside the community get to know family members and their people. During this reunion, there is a lot of merrymaking and feasting.

Also, there are various family meetings during this day, where people willingly donate cash towards the upkeep of the family and the community. The spirit of family and unity carries on throughout Thursday, and Friday until the afternoon when there are sporting activities such as football between Teshie and Nungua, in the name of fostering unity and friendship.

On the dawn of Saturday, the elders and custodians of the Teshie land walk through the town and into every household greeting “*wala ehh wala*” meaning “life and health to all.” As the people respond to these well-wishes, they are reminded that the *Homowo* is once again here.

Tsesse Kpa Faa

This takes off on Sunday after the *Noo Wala Hamo*. With this ritual performance, the *Wolɔiatse* and his attendants are responsible for organizing the *tse* (a wooden bowl specially crafted for this ritual performance) and its content. This wooden bowl, *tse*, is painted with the colours, white, black and red. The colours represent the natives who bravely fought and fiercely defended their people during their early migration, the black represents those who fought and lost their lives during that period, the red also represents the blood that was shed in the midst of the chaos and confusion to possess and maintain their land while the white symbolizes the living; those who are alive and still celebrate the *Homowo* festival. The *tse*, therefore, symbolizes the united soul of the people of *Teshie*. The *Wolɔiatse* and his attendants leave for the cemetery at dawn to gather potent medicinal leaves (like *nyanyara*, *tsobaa*, *adedenkuna*, *gbe*, *tome*, and *aroke*) while on their way to the cemetery, they pick some small selected stones.

Back at the *Wolɔiatse*'s home, the stones together with the leaves are put inside the *tsetse*. The *Wolɔiatse* pours ritually sanctified water and libation onto the content in the *tsetse*, invoking the healing and restorative power of the gods to bless the contents of the *tsetse*. By 10 o'clock in the morning, the *tse* content is ready for use in the afternoon of the day.

When the content of the *tse* is ready to be used, every indigene with a need (from childbirth, healing from various forms of ailment to the desire for prosperity and protection) comes to the home of the *Wolɔiatse* to scoop some of the water in the *tse* to wash their body. It is believed that when this is done, the individual's need is met. The *tse* with its content is now ready to parade the streets to purify any other person who wishes to use its water.

The principal actor, who is the carrier of the *tsetse* carries the *tsetse* with its content from the *Wolɔiatse*'s abode at *Nyomokyawenaa*. He serves as a messenger of the gods with a mission to deliver healing and protection to his people. He has white calico wrapped around his waist with *nyanyara* leaves for garland as his costume for the role. He looks heavily possessed by the gods. The elders of the clan, all clad in white follow the *tsetse* round to perform the libation ritual at designated places in town with the *Wolɔiatse* leading the procession. Here, costuming set the performers apart and elevates the custodians of the traditions into another realm, a realm where they are now directly in tune with deities and serve as their intermediaries and mouthpiece.

The *tse* carrier moves from one designated place to the other to pour water from the *tse* and libation to the place as part of the ritual performance. While the carrier takes the rest of the *tse* around the town, members of the community engage in *Kpashimo* songs of merrymaking to entertain themselves. When all is done, the carrier goes to keep the *tse* and its content in the *Wolɔiatse*'s house for the rest of the week until the following Saturday when the *tse* carrier goes to carry again, following the same ritual formation as the previous week.

The day for this *Tsesse Faa* ritual takes the whole of the *Teshie* town as a grand stage. The various places for pouring libation as visited by the *tse* carrier become the various scenes of this one act. As the *tse* moves round, the acts keep changing with the ritual activities done at the various clan houses which serve as the scenes. The drama keeps unfolding as the *tsetse* carrier moves the audience through the scenes to the end of the performance.

Tsesse Bumɔ

The *Tsesse Bumɔ* is the dumping of the contents of the *tsetse* into the sea. This is done on the second week that the *tse* carrier makes his last journey around the town in the order of the first week before dumping the content of the *tse* into the sea.

During this ritual performance, the *tse* carrier who looks possessed, intermittently staggers in between walking but does not fall, and most times, water from the *tse* splashes onto the people watching the performance. The carrier of the *tse* followed by the *Wolɔiatse* and the elders of the various clans, all clad in white follow the *tse* around the town to pour libation at various designations of the lesser gods that surround the town. Libation is poured to these lesser deities soliciting their help and support for a smooth festival celebration. From noon of the day, the townsfolk and everyone who

has come to witness the ritual patiently wait for the performance of *Kpashimo* songs by various clan groups and other minor groups along the main street of *Teshie*.

Seven recognizable official performance groups, as well as other groups, file past with different songs and captivating performances to entertain the spectators. *Kpashimo* is one of the popular traditional songs performed during festive occasions like *Homowo*. The songs mostly topical cover the grievances of the people and events that have taken place in the community throughout the year, as well as other notable events that have taken place in the country, including maladministration, corruption, victories, celebrations, and many others.

All this while, the *tsese* carrier, and his entourage are doing their job of going round with libation pouring until the linguist of the town announces that the *tsese* carrier and his entourage are ready to pass through the main street to the seashore to dump its content.

As the announcement is made, the performance stage is cleared by the linguist to pave way for the *tsese* and its entourage before anyone else is supposed to follow them. The white costume of the *tsese* carrier sets him apart from the people and ushers him into his role. His possessed demeanor gives him the ability to perform his duty of carrying the healing and restorative powers of the gods; symbolized by the *tsese* and its content is clearly evident in this scene. This allows for those who are in various needs access to the healing water from the *tsese* that falls on them; for as the *tsese* moves along, its carrier intermittently staggers but does not fall, and the water from the *tsese* splashes on those immediately around it and to the few lucky ones who quickly dash to have a feel of the splash.

The path of the *tsese* carrier which is the streets of *Teshie* becomes the stage for this long act, with the spectators serving as the audience of the scene. The gods bless their own through the sanctified water which intermittently falls on the audience who believe in the power of the gods to heal and restore them through the sanctified water in the *tsese*. Before 6 pm, the *tsese* carrier with his entourage reaches the seashore and dumps the content of the *tsese* at *Ajeshimankonaa*, the abode of the sea god which is very close to the sea. The *tsese* carrier is then carried shoulder-high by his entourage amidst cheers and songs back home for a job well done. This ends the *tsese bumɔ* festival festivities until another year.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this paper has been to show the African perspective of drama; thus, by establishing the dramatic elements embedded in the *Homowo* festival of the people of *Teshie* in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The paper has clearly and thoroughly examined the use of dramatic elements such as characterization, costume, stage, setting, monologue, dialogue, audience participation, plot, scenery, and libation that are pivotal and dominant in the various stages of the *Homowo* festival festivities of the people of *Teshie* and how these dramatic elements wholly contribute to the significance of *Homowo* festival as an African drama.

It is clearly seen that although the *Homowo* festival of the people of *Teshie* in the Greater Accra Region does not strictly follow the rudiments of the Euro-centric paradigm, it fully establishes its own nuances of drama made by Africans and for Africans. Thus, Finnegan's assertion that Africa does not have a developed form of drama is simply untrue.

The findings, therefore, validate the argument that Africa has its own well-structured drama that is deeply rich in its cultural stipulations and identity.

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