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Art and Symbolism in Ewe Religion: Ritual Objects of the Yewe and Tro Mami Worship In Klikor, Ghana

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Abstract

This project investigated the symbolism represented through art in the Yewe and Tro Mami Worship in Klikor, Ghana. The research questions were- what are the symbols expressed through art of the two religions and how do these symbols serve the religions. In order to do this I conducted informal interviewing, participant and non-participant observations on several different occasions. Through this I was able to learn about the various relics and the function that they play in worship. The material I collected suggests that art symbolism play a vital role in religion.
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Misnomers and Misconceptions

I have decided to begin my paper by including a list of terms, which I choose not to use in my work. These words have been used, throughout history, by many western scholars to describe African traditional religion. They all hold a very negative connotation and by using them I would only be helping to perpetuate the ignorant ideas and prevailing misconceptions about traditional African religion. My hope is that if we all can change such language our understanding of traditional African religion can be more enlightened. We must then look at some of these terms with a critical eye in order to see how they have hindered a proper understanding of traditional African religion.

1- **Animism**- this term was first used by the British anthropologist E.B. Taylor in an article in 1866. The word actually comes from the Latin word anima, which implies and association with the idea of spirit or soul. Africans do not believe that every object has a soul but rather that spirits can have certain objects as the abode. It is therefore a misnomer.

2- **Paganism**- This term originally meant to describe anyone who is not a Jew, Christian or Muslim. L. has come to refer to people who have no religion at all. By calling African traditional religion paganism is too connotative that it is not a proper religion at all.

3- **Ancestor Worship**- first used by anthropologist Herbert Spenser in his book Principals of Sociology published in 1885. As stated by Opoku "There is no doubt that the ancestors play an important role in the religion of traditional
Africa, but to use the term ‘ancestor worship' represents an oversimplification." (Opoku 25). It is also not true that ancestors are 'worshiped' but rather they are venerated.

4- Primitive or Savage- both words have been used to describe all aspects of African culture. These words imply that African culture is not advanced but rather at a low stage of some evolutionary timeline (this stage being closest to that of animals). "The religion of West Africans often used to be refereed to as 'primitive', but this is an inaccurate term. 'Primitive religion' means either religion as it appeared in its earliest forms among mankind, or else religion that has remained in the lowest stages even in modern times" African religion deserves to be in comparison with all the religions of the world including those of the west. Just because traditional religions do not dominate the world dose not mean that they are not as advanced or sophisticated.

5- Juju- French word meaning 'toy'. When the word juju is used it is referring to the medicinal preparations which can be used for negative or positive things. This word implies that traditional practices are nothing more than the dealing with toys. Proper word is Doze- in Ewe.

6- Voodoo (Vodzu in Ewe)- this word has grown to have extreme negative connotation. In the western world this word is associated with witchcraft of black-magic. The word when taken apart actually means: vo- finish completely; to make free or comfortable and, du- town/community. When put together it is speaking of forms of worship that make the community feel good. These words may come from the word gbadu, gba- break; du-
town/community, which is a deity that can harm the town if its laws are not abided. It can also bring good if those laws are kept. So in essence, it is the belief that if certain laws are abided than goodwill will come and the people of a community will be living with comfort. But, if those laws are broken than harm will come to the town. This being much like the laws of Karma in eastern philosophies.

**What is Art?**

In order for you to understand why I choose to call some things art and others not is an integral part of your understanding of what my approach has been during my research. My ideas on art are always changing and this project has yet again widened my vision. In this project I am not speaking of aesthetics or even technique but rather the contents behind the art. I am more concerned with what functions that art plays symbolically. My only criteria on answering the question- what is art? - has been: a man made creation which has been made to serve as some symbolic communication. The debate over art is always on for me and I am in no way sticking to this way of looking at things. I am merely expressing to you the audience what I used and applied to my research. I hope that this will give you a better understanding of how I approached my study.
Introduction

'A close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African culture and is the determine principal of African life. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that in traditional Africa, religion is life, and life, religion" (Opoku 1.)

In Ghana, religion is an integral part of life. And in my study of art, I have learned that if you are to study African art you will be seeing that it is most often within a religious context. My choice of studying both Art and religion in Ghana has proved to be very appropriate.

Symbolism is the essence of all religion- it is what makes the religion whole. What I have attempted to do in this study is to find out, through studying its symbolisms expressed in art, what the essence of two religions are. I am going to be talking about two cults, which are found all over Africa- the worship of water deities and thundergod deities. These deities are called, in Ewe: Yewe or So (thundergod); Mami Water or 7ro Mami (Sea goddess/god).

We are going to look at the different religious symbols that are expressed through visual artistic means. By looking at these we will use them as a window into the religious traditions of the Ewe people in the village of Klikor (in the Volta Region of Ghana). Dale Massiasta one of my most valuable resources stated in his unpublished work "Ritual Objects", "Symbolism in particular, as enacted by rituals and the items involved, is the essence of religion. In dealing with supernatural forces or powers-symbols, relics or images help to attain objectivity in a largely ritual exercise-religion." In the light of this, we will use the ritual objects as a way of understanding that essence. My objective in
this research is to answer two main questions: What are the symbols that are used to make up the Mami Water and Yewe worship? How do these artistic expressions serve the religions themselves?

But first before we begin, I would like to discuss a little background of the Ewe people and their belief systems. This information is necessary for you to understand in order for you to know more specifically about the Yewe and Tro Mami worship. This is in no way an attempt to fully discuss West African Religion or Ewe history but rather a brief summary of the main points involved.

Background on the Ewe People of Klikor

Klikor is a town in the Volta Region of Ghana, which is in the southwest portion of the country. It is situated very close to the Togo border (see appendix A and 13). The Ewe people migrated to Ghana and our originally all the way from Nigeria or what is today called Benin. "Like most people of present-day Ghana were immigrants who came to their new home only a few centuries ago. Ewe traditions tell a movement from Ketu what is now the Peoples' Republic of Benin, making a number of stops of varying duration on the way" (Agdodeka 14). The Notsi kingdom was established and a tyrannical king ruled over the people. The Ewe people dispersed to Togo and the eastern region of Ghana, today's Volta region in order to get away from the horrible rule. This all happened around 15'h and 16'h centuries. The cultures of Togo, Benin and even Nigeria (specifically Yoruba peoples) strongly influenced the culture of the Ewe because of their migration. Many similarities can be found between all of these cultures and Eweland.
Klikor is home to peoples who still hold on to and practice traditional African religion. Much of Ghana has become Christian and Muslim and Klikor is one of the few places where traditional practices are dominant. The Ewes of Klikor are a people who value their traditions and will continue to preserve them.

**Background on Ewe Religious Belief System**

**The Concept of God**

There is the belief in an almighty God all over West Africa. In Ewel and it is referred to by the name Mawu and the spiritual or sacred name Sogbo Lisa. "The origin and meaning of the word is obscure; 'none greater' or 'overstretching' have been suggested as possible meanings." (Parrinder 17). The nature of Ciod, as told to me by many of my informants, is expressed in its name. Ma - wu: Ma is translated to the workman and Wu is translated into - being greater. Literally it is somebody who is greater than man. The spiritual name given to Mawu- Sogbo Lisa- also expresses god’s nature as believed by the Ewes. Sog- bo: So meaning the sky and bo meaning greater than; Lisa is translated into chameleon. When put together the word means someone who is greater than the sky and someone who is ever changing and versatile like a chameleon.

The general belief is that Mawu can never be seen but is only revealed through Mawu's creations. "To West Africans, God is essentially a spirit, a being without concrete form or body. He is therefore never represented in the form of images or worshiped through them. God is also thought of as different from all the other spirits and divinities His powers transcend theirs and he has the unique attribute of immanence."
God cannot be objectified so it has the help of divinities and spirits to work in the matters of man.

Humans are believed to be apart of God and each person has part of Mawu's creative spirit in them. "Mawu created all souls. The soul is Se or Mawase, the Mawu who lives in everyone's body, like a guardian spirit of genius."(Parrider 18). Through this idea we can see that God is working within humans and is a large part of peoples' purpose.

The Concept of Deities

Spirits or deities are called 7ro (sing.), Trowo (pl.) in Ewe. The belief in deities can be found throughout West Africa. The Orate of the Yoruba, the Vodu of the Fon, Abosom of the Akans or Alusindimmuo of the Ibo, is just to mention a few. "I he general belief concerning divinities is that they were created by God to fulfill specific functions and that they did not come into existence on their own volition. As creatures, the divinities share the limitations of all other creatures. Their power is limited to the performance of specific functions and none of them enjoys the unlimited powers ascribed to God." (Opoku 54).

Tro act as children and agents of God and work to do Mawu's will. I hey may be good or act evil, male or female (even both in one), and they are given places to act as their abode. They are often revealed to man through nature and personified. This is stated by Parrinder, "Many of the divinities worshiped in West Africa seem to have come from the personification of natural forces, since all the universe is thought to be people with spirits" (Parrinder 26).
The most popular deities of West Africa are those of the Sky- (Thunder, Lightening, Storm); Those of Water (River or Sea); Those of reptiles (snake, alligator, chameleon); Those of Mechanics and Metals; Protective guardians or tricksters (for example: Elegba-in Ewe-Fon, Eshu in Yoruba); the gods of divination (for example: Afa- Ewe-Fon and Ija-Yoruba); and most often the “mother earth” is expressed as a spirit to be worshiped.

The Concept of Ancestors

West Africans often believe that after death the dead enter into a spiritual state of being and become Ancestors. Ancestors are still working within the family community after their death but just through the spiritual plane. One must make offerings to them usually through the pouring of libation (an offering of hard alcohol-usually gin or shnapps). The prayers and offerings to them ensure that they will help you in whatever you request.

This involvement with the ancestors is an integral part of the spiritual ideologies of West African Religion, including the Ewe belief system. They are called open just as often as the divinities are to help or hurt in the matters of man. In order to understand the traditional religious belief system of the Ewes the ancestors must be included.
Methodology

When coming to Ghana I had a clear idea of what my area of interest was—Art and Religion. More specifically, I wanted to study people's own spirituality and the way that is expressed through art. I was unsure of what art would be the most adequate for this type of study. My advisor then suggested that I look into studying the shrines of Ghana. What better way, I thought, to see not only a wide variety of artwork but also within a religious context. On our educational tour around the country I sought out the best location and as soon as I got to Klikor, in the Volta Region, I knew that it was the place. There was a shrine on almost every corner, for one thing, but that wasn't the only deciding factor. It was also seeped in a deeply religious tradition. Klikor is a town where traditional religion is apart of everything and is revealing itself every moment of everyday. I felt that presence and knew I had to return.

During my field research I chose to do participant observations and informal interviews. I also had the opportunity to do a non-participant observation of a Yewe festival at the Sofatsi Shrine just before I came to do my research. My participant observation was almost every day taking part in the prayer and rituals involved in the shrines I visited. I also had the opportunity to attend a ceremony of initiate at the Mami Water or Tro Mami shrine in Klikor (The Abotsi Akpe II shrine). All of these observations were integral to my understanding exactly how the ritual objects were used. The objects themselves would not have been fully understood unless I witnessed them being used in ritual and ceremony.

I chose to do informal interviewing for the purpose of approaching people in a free manner. When I did my mini-independent study in the village of Banko in the
Ashanti Region, I found this method to be most affective. People are more open when the are not a ridged set of questions to be answered. I did, though, use similar questions in order to get a more consistent result. I wanted to broaden my research and reach out to other villages around klikor in order to get an idea if the objects and beliefs about them were similar. This was very helpful in order to clarify some points that needed to and to make my findings more reliable.

Dale Massiesta, Director of the Blackbud Research Center in Klikor, had helped my to find a very good guide/translator named Ojukwu. And when he was not around or I needed to travel to another village I had plenty of people to assist me and they were all very competent. The only thing I needed at times was a little dose of patients and creativity in order to get some of my points across to my assistants but that was easily done.

My topic was originally "The Art and Architecture of the Shrines in Klikor." But after a couple of days in klikor it became more and more specific. I had read an article that Dale Massiesta had written on ritual objects, which included a section on the village artist. I was completely amazed and knew that since the artist was the starter of all that I would be studying I should get to know their point of view. That led me to two informants, A carver who was a relative of the Mami Water priest Abotsi Akpe II and three blacksmiths from a nearby village who made the metal works for the Yewe Shrines. After speaking with them about certain aspects of the religion I knew that they were the two cults I was going to focus on. I originally was thinking of concentrating on Yewe and the Da (snake god) circle but after Mami Water I was drawn to it.
I had a lot of trouble in the beginning of my research coming to terms with what my own personal mission was in doing this research. Through relentless confusion I realized that it was obvious that my passion lied more in the learning of religion then the art itself. Art was merely a medium for expressing and objectifying something that transcended the material plane. I also came to really understand that in order to understand a religion you had to look at its roots- the symbolism's involved. So I had an epiphany- I can study the symbolisms through the art in order to understand the religions. It soon became a truer learning experience than it was before when I was just following my interests and not following what my true personal mission was. Sometimes it is very hard to do what you know you really want to do for fear of what is really your own dreams- I think we all have experienced this. I realized that my opportunity was there so I better take. Through all of this my project has evolved into something move cohesive and direct. I am very thankful for chosen to follow my heart.

The only real problem that I had during my research was detaching from my own spiritual awakenings in order to get my research done. It was very hard to come out of an Afa divination, for example, and be able to focus my work on myself. But, I had many wonderful people around me who helped me stay focused.
Chapter 1: The Artists

**The Carver of Klikor (See Appendix E, Fig. 1)**

Blafo Mensah Akpe works in a small shop in the town of Klikor. He makes many carvings that are used as icons or relics of deities for use of individual worship or in the shrines. He believes that all of his talent is a gift from God.

Many people go to a diviner in order to fix a problem in their life. They ask a question and it is answered often times with certain tasks to be done in order for things to be rectified. Often times the diviner will tell a person to get an image made in order to worship and nourish that deity. That is where Blafo Mensah Akpe's talent comes in.

Blafo only knows what to carve because he has a vision that is given to him by the deity. The person who wants the carving will give an offering (a small consultation fee). So that the deity will grant the carver with the vision. It is only through the deities' power that he is able to carve the correct image that the deity wants.

There are many rituals involved in carving an object because of their spiritual usage. The choice of materials is always important and one must choose the specific wood that a deity may request. After the object is made they use a drink and a *poor libation in order to evoke the spirit. Then they ask the deity to do what they want of it. Blafo plays a very important role in the community and his artwork plays an integral part of the spiritual lives of the people in Klikor.

**The Blacksmiths of Kpoglo (See Appendix E, Fig. 2, 3)**

Kwame Sampson Akpabli, Alex Akabli, and George Akpabli all work as blacksmiths in a village near Klikor called Kpoglo. (See Appendix B for location). The
workshop the go to almost everyday is considered sacred ground because they play a part in creating ritual objects. They smith many of the objects used in the Yewe shrines. For example, the Fiagble, Gong Gong, Asie and Abla (See Appendix E).

I had the pleasure of watching them smith a fiagble and saw all of the rituals involved in making a relic for the shrine. First, one must call upon the dieties, I-Gu-diety of mechanics, metals and tools; 2-others are mentioned i.e. Yewe... 3- the ancestors. A hard alcohol drink of gin is poured on the ground along with a corn powder and water mixture, pouring libation. The drinks and food are also poured on the anvil, weel and the other tools in the workshop. The reason for this is that all of the tools are empowered by Cu and Gu must be fed before he works just like any being. Then he is ready to begin after all his prayer and offerings.

I he existence of such rituals during the process of artistry shows the significance the artist role is. Even in the process of an object being created there are specially rites involved. The artist is the medium through which these spiritual objects come into the work and they are given that gift especially for God.
Chapter 2: Yewe (So) Worship: A case study of the Tohono Sof'atsi Shrine

The Nature of the Thundergod (Yewe, So)- as explained to me be Togbi Adalaku (see appendix E, fig. 5)

The thundergod was revealed to man through thunder and lightening. The Almighty God is worshiped in many ways and the thundergods power comes from the Almighty God who created heaven and earth. Yewe was first revealed to Togbi Adalaku the Tohono Sof'atsi shrine's founder. This is believed to have happened over three hundred years ago. The thundergod or the sky gods in variation can be found all over the world (i.e.-Yaweh of the Israelites; Ra of the Egyptians. . . ) This is also stated by Parrinder, "Thundergods are found almost everywhere in West Africa as in many parts of the world" (Parrinder 29).

The Sacred name of Yewe is Tohonor- To-father, ho- wealth, nor-mother. The god is both male and female because the almighty God created everything in pairs. It is both mother and father as the name implies. The reference to wealth is to imply that there it is a god who can supply spiritual wealth. The thundergod is a god of justice, authority and protection. It will act wrathful towards those who are unjust or unlawful. Much like Yahweh in the Old Testament of the Bible. With its lightening it will hurl stones at anyone who has done wrong and strike them down (see Appendix E, Fig. ).
All of the relics of the thundegod were revealed to Togbi Adalaku when Yewe came through the thunder and lightening. The Circle of relics makes up the thundegod and without anyone of them the thundegod is not whole. This is also true of the deities involved with Yewe (i.e. -Afa, Da..., see appendix F). They all work together and one cannot be separated from the others.

**Minaow Alorwuso Adaleku, Togbui Adaleku and Initiates** (see appendix E, Fig )

Minaow Alorwuso Adalaku is the priestess of the Tohono Sôf'atsi shrine and Togui Adalaku(named after its founder) is the priest-see Appendix E, Fig 4,5. They are called by Yewe to come and work in the shrine. Their duties are many such as performing the rituals of the shrine. Their main duties are to pray for the whole world and act as the heads of the shrine.

There is also what is called 'initiates' in the shrine. They are called by Yewe to come to the shrine for one year. There are two types of initiates Soshi- which represent the male part of Yewe and Agroshi, which represent the female part of the god. When someone is called to do the work of the thundegod, be it priest or initiate, you will miraculously appear in the shrine. The leaders of the shrine will then observe what signs you show (which only they know) that tell if you are of the male part or female part of the god. When you are an initiate you must observe certain taboos and laws for the time you are there to do the work of the Yewe. There are certain relics that are specifically for the Soshi-the male part and the Agroshi- the female part. A man can be apart of the female side and a woman apart of the male side it all depends on what Yewe calls of you.
Chapter 3: The Relics of Yewe

(In no specific order of importance)

I -Ase- (see appendix E, Fig. I )

The Ase is an integral part of many deities such as Afa, Da and So or Yewe worship. It serves as an altar to receive offerings from which food and other things are placed. When Minaow must leave the shrine to perform rituals she will carry this along with her so all of the deities will come along with her. Through this they can be worshiped outside of the shrine. It is in a sense a deity per se, the pathfinder. It is found in the temple ("the holiest of holys") for So.

2- Abla- (see appendix E, Fig. 2, 14,17)

The Ahla is a mettle rattle with a set of bells on each end. It is used during many rites and ceremonies for Yewe. It is used to evoke the spirit of the Thundergod through music and jubilation. The seven bells-three on one side and four on the other-represent the seven days it took for the almighty God to create the world and the seven days of the week which exist because of this. The two pairs of bells on either side represent the "two" in everything. God created pairs of everything and one cannot exist without the other. It also signifies a combination of forces that work together because there are so many bells coming together to create a sound. There is another variety of Abla that resembles something like hand weights-see appendix. E, Fig. They embody the same idea of the "two" in all creation that work together.

3- Fiagble (see appendix. E, Fig. 3, 17)
This is a horn shaped metal blade similar to the zodiac sign of Aries, the Ram (Agbo in Ewe). The ram is a sacred animal to the So followers. The Ram is sacrificed to Yewe and therefore forms the basis for Yewe worship. (As seen in the Bible-Yahweh told Abraham to sacrifice a Ram instead of his son Isaac). The object is used to create the deity. It is also signifies the wisdom of Yewe. When a priest of initiate carries this during ceremony or festival it is showing aggressiveness and or their authority.

4- Gbaka (see appendix. E, Fig. 4 and appendix D)

These are earthenware pots, which are placed on fixed pillars. There are two found in the thundergod shrine representing the two pillars of So (male and female). The male Gbaka is situated in the East and the female in the West. It is used to 'cool down the tension of man'. If there is a problem or sickness a person will use the water in the pot to cleanse. From this process they will be cured. The material used for such an object must be created by Mawu, because it is the most holiest, that is why it is made of earth.

5- Aleyba (see appendix E, Fig. 5, 6, 7)

These are man-made earthen mounds. Often times cowries shells are used to represent eyes and a figure is represented. The Alegba act as defenders of shrines, households and even neighborhoods. They are found in front of almost every home in Klikor. They are also to be found in front of the two So shrines I visited. They are the first beings you must meet before going into the shrine. If you have any evil force within you they will not let you enter. They will look right inside of you and if they detect any evil they will force your body to collapse to the ground.
There are three Alegbas in front of the Sofatsi shrine. Two are male and one is female. Again, this is representative of the two found in all God's creations. There are seven sticks in front of the tallest of the males this is representative of the seven days of the week. Because he has the most number of sticks and he is the tallest this makes him the master or leader of all the rest. The sticks are painted red and white- red meaning aggression and white meaning peace. This symbolizes the double nature of the Algebra they can either bring forth aggression or peace. Their acts will all depend upon what you bring to the shrine. The black and White clothe around them represent the symbiotic relationship of night of day and light on dark. The palms (aza in Ewe) are placed around them in order to drive away any sign of death that comes to the shrine. There is also an earthenware pot with water inside placed in front of the Alegba. This is there is order to bring peace (water) anyone who brings war (fire).

The Alegba deity helps to make the Thundergod complete. With the help of Alegba there would be no defense and peacemaker. They serve as the intermediary between Yewe and man. One must pass their tests before one enters.

6-Soebo- (appendix E, fig 8,9,15,16)

The Sogbo consists of small red glass seed beads that are strung together to make a large banded necklace that is bound together by one large bead. Initiates and Priestesses where this necklace to signify the Thundergod's greatness. The word Sogbo actually means So- means sky or the thundergod; gbo- means great. Meaning that in the Thundergod is surpassing all that is in the world.

7-Vegle (appendix. E, fig. 9, 10,15)
This is a necklace consisting of different types of beads worn by the Soshi (male part of god) initiates. After you have passed through your period of initiation this is given to you as a sign of your acceptance. The mixture of colors used signifies that the thundergod is only one but it is worshiped in many different ways (diversity). Red-aggression, yellow-fairness or justice, and blue-peace. These colors also all testify the different natures of the only thundergod.

8-Hudze (appendix E, fig. 11, 16)

This is the bead necklace worn by the "female" initiates (Abloshi). It is also the necklace of the god to be worn after one has completed initiation. Red symbolizes aggression and yellow, justice.

9-Diagbla (appendix E, fig. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16)

This is a long strand of cowry shells strung together. It is placed over the body around ones shoulder and resting on ones hip. All of the cowry shells are placed in pairs around the band to signify the "two" in everything. The Soshi and Abroshi initiates have different sets of Diagbla. The Soshi initiates can be told apart from the Abroshi by the black bead that is strung in-between each alternating cowries shell pairs. The black and white together symbolizes the dependence of night and day on each other.

Cowry shells are very important objects in West African societies. They serve many purposes- magical, medicinal, divinatory or sacred prepossess. They most often represent ones material wealth of ones "spiritual" wealth for they were once used as
currency in West Africa. They also symbolize fertility or prosperity in that they resemble a woman's vagina. I have also been told that they represent transcendence.

10-Se (appendix E, fig 14, 17,18)

The Se is a red parrot feather that is worn by "male" (Soshi) initiates. It is placed in an intricately woven headband and worn on festival occasions. It signifies "the law" of existence- the nature of all things that must be followed. One can compare it to the principal of Tao in the Far East. When the Soshi initiates wear this it is because they are on the side of Yewe that is the side of the law (the male). During festival time when Soshi initiates wear this they are not to laugh or even talk because they are representative of the law.

The "female" initiates (Abroshi) on the other hand wear a headband that does not have Se in it. They are free to be more relaxed when it is festival time. They often bring humor and fun to the gathering because they are not under the law. The more relaxed part of So is the woman acting in the god.

11- Other modes of adornment

There are certain ways of dressing during festival time that signify your wealth. People dress at times in a specific way to display their wealth and prosperity (See Fig 19). This traditional attire is worn by male initiates and consists of over fifty different pieces of cloth to make up one "skirt". It is called Awlaya and the undershorts are called Chaka. Other initiates will put on their best cloth and gold jewelry on like in Figure 14. Another way of dressing during festival time is the Tsina dress (Fig. 17,18). It also is a
way to show ones prosperity but on a smaller scale it is more for personal display and ornamentation.

12- Apeli and Shinaow (see appendix D for location)

These two objects are earthen mounds, which are situated in the shrine. The Shinaow acts as the mother of the house. The Apeli is the root of the Tohono Sof'ati shrine. There are wooden cooking utensils placed in the top of the Apeli. This is communicating the idea that Everyday God must supply people with food to eat. With this in mind you must love everything because you eat what god has created and if god created your own food how can you hate other creations.

13-Zekla- (see appendix D for location)

This object is a broken earthenware pot that has been placed on top of one of the temples in the shrine. When one enters it is to be one of the first things you must see. It represents the impermanence of all God's creations. There is a beginning and an end to everything. It is a reminder for all people to speak the truth because one day you will end up just likes the pot broken and dead.
Chapter 4: Tro Mami (Mami Water) Worship

The Nature of the Divinity

Mami Water is a goddess/god of the sea. It is both male and female. Because it is a god of the Sea it does not like to be dirty and you must make sure you are clean and smelling good in order to please her/him. Mami Water loves perfume and perfume talcum powder. Mami Water is a god of commerce and wealth; she brings prosperity into one's life.

Human hands do not create Mami Water, because it is a spiritual being, but it is identified by images such as paintings or wooden sculptures. It is often personified and shown as a white lady with dark bushy hair. She is identified by different objects that she is adorned with. Snakes can be wrapped around her and she often is wearing certain jewelry (i.e.-silver, coral beads, blue beads) She is often represented as a mermaid or merman (with a fishtail instead of legs) and a bare upper body.

Mami Water Initiates

When mami water calls a particular person to have her/him as a guardian spirit she is very persistent and particular. One must not refuse to her wishes or else she will surely taunt you. You may fall ill or even have strange things happen to you. When man is called by Mami Water a woman will appear to him in a vision during sleep. When it is
a woman it will be a man to appear. She he will sometimes come behind you and fondle you as you sleep. When you are then initiated into mami water and through that process you will marry or commune with your "spiritual husband" or "spiritual wife". This does not mean that you are not free to marry in the physical world it just means that you have communed with your spirit guide. But, if you do not respond to mami water's requests you may have trouble committing to marriage or she/he may cause a divorce.

Mami Water is more of a personal spirit guide then that of Yewe initiates in the sense that every person has there own spirit husband or wife. Not everyone can be called to mami water just like in the Yewe worship it is only those who are chosen by the god. Mami water is similar to Christian idea of a guardian angel. Mami water will come to you in your dreams and advise you on what steps to take in life. People are believed to have there own destined path, or star, which guides you along in life. Mami Water helps to steer you on your correct path and gives you advise on what is good for you and what is bad for you.
Chapter 5: Images of Mami Water

Objects of Togbui Abotsi Akpe II

1- **The Divine Messenger with Sword**. (Appendix E, Fig.22) This object is the messenger of Mami Water in the Togbui Abotsi Akpe II shrine. It is named Kofi Jabako. It sends different communications to other spirits. It holds a knife in order to protect himself on his journeys. He is also wearing Se on his head so when he moves into other shrines like the Yewe shrines he will be able to enter. The Se also represents that he is under the law so he must do what is asked of him. He is seated on a stool because everyone must sit and rest when getting ready for work.

2- **Queen Elizabeth and Attendents**. (Appendix 23, 24, 25). Queen Elizabeth is the Mami Water that comes to Togbui Abotsi Akpe II in vision. All Mami Waters are from different parts of the world (different bodies of water) and his comes from England as communicated by Mami water to Togbui. She also told him her name and that is why he calls her as such. The way that she is show is the way that she was revealed to him in dream. To her right is Togbui's (fig 24) se, or creative spirit. Every person is believed to have a se or special energy that comes from Mawu that makes them an individual with their own path. This se helped to bring him into this world. On his right is Queen Elizabeth's linguist (Fig. 24) and on her right is Queen Elizabeth's maidservant (Fig 2S). Every divinity needs to have a group of attendants to help them in this world just like the queens of the physical world. That is why they are all placed together. In front of them stands the offerings of perfume, talc, alcohol and flowers.
**Images of Mami Water Adorned with Snakes**

1-**Figs. 26 and 27**- These carvings were shown to me by Blafo. These were made to fulfill and image someone saw of Mami water with snakes wrapped around her. The snakes are there to protect her wherever she goes. She has white skin like the other carvings and her hair is dark and bushy. She is seated in a stool because she must be grounded in order to do her will. Notice her dress and stool are white, white is the color of mami water signifying her purity. Mami Water also bears a red dot in the middle of her head representing her "third eye". The third eye signifies her spiritual power because of her ability to see what others cannot.

2-**Figs. 28, 29**- Similar to the Mami Water just mentioned but this is from the village of Amedzikope (see appendix B for location). It belongs to Adzakofi T lomawu (see Fig.*37). She again has white skin with dark bushy hair. She is also seated and wrapped with snakes. The cloth is white with a little yellowish embellishment.

**Images of Mami Water as Mother**

1-**Figs. 30, 31, 32, 33**- These are also owned by Adzakofi. These images show Mami Water nursing her child. This is a sign that she is a very good mother. The idea of motherhood implies that the deity will take good care of people just like she does her children. She is a loving and nurturing deity.
**Constructed Temple/Shrine of Togbui Segadzi 11**

Togbui Segadzi 11 is a priest of Mami Water. In his temple is a well-constructed shrine for Mami water (see Fig.34). The carved figures at the top (as seen closer by fig 35) are of Mami Water. The one on the left is the woman part of Mami Water and the one on the right is the ale half of Mami Water. In Tobui Segadzi's vision he saw two of the God. The female acts as his wife and the male his friend. The woman has a box next to her, which contains the perfume she likes. This perfume gives her spiritual power. The man holds a pen and paper in his hands because he is an educated person and on their travels he will record everything that occurs.

Placed under them is a small figure, which represents the linguist for Mami Water. The linguist staff he carries (as shown in fig 36) is to the left of him. The images that make up the staff are very important because they help the deity on her travels. At the bottom of the staff is the image of a gun. This gun will help Mami Water defend herself against and evil. If the gun does not work the sword which is on top of the gun will be used to stab her enemy. After she has defended herself and won the victory she (represented by the figure) will sit on her thrown of victory (represented by the stool).

To the right of the linguist, just peeking out is a carved wooden image of a crocodile. This is the animal she sits on that takes her from place to place (it is also a diety). There is a carving of a snake, which is sticking out of the very bottom to the right of the gin bottle. This snake acts as the pathfinder or torchbearer for the gods. Draped around them is a white and black cloth. The white cloth is the main cloth of the god and the black is there for her to use so her enemies will not see her.
Discussion/Conclusion

I have taken you through the various symbols that make up Yew and Mami Water Worship through the subsequent text. These objects are the religion, in a sense, because without them there would be no objectification of the abstract ideas involve. The Transcendent can not be understood without the help of these objects to place the spirit world within the world of the material. It is therefore necessary for these art forms to exist in order to complete the religions themselves.

I have not in anyway shown all the objects and symbols that are used in these worships. Nor have I fully explained the totality of the religions themselves. If I was to do a complete study it would take many years and I was only given over three weeks to throw this together. I have simply tried my best to begin this study. There is a lot more information that I gathered but because of writing time constraints I can only really do what is possible. I plan to revise my paper when I return home in order to include some things that were left out but even in that it will be incomplete.

I also would like to conclude with the notion that this paper is hopefully the beginning of a very thorough and comprehensive study of these two religions and the artwork involved. I wish that others will go to Klikor and pick up were I have left off in order to document and share the absolutely amazing traditions that these people have to offer the world. Their religions are too often under speculation or threat and never really understood. It is important for all of you who make judgments in any manner to really see things for yourself in order to understand what these religious traditions are. I have had my own spiritual life expanded by immeasurable standards because I was allowed to see the beautifully different world. I am now forever blessed so I suggest that other look into it too.
References

Agdodeka, Francis. A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewes of Southeastern Ghana


**Informants**


Akpabli, Alex. Blacksmith. Interview. 15, Nov 99. Poglu, Ghana


Fig a: Blafo Mensah Akpe

Fig b: Blacksmith molding a file into shape

Fig c: Pouring of Libation before any work begins (at blacksmiths' workshop)
Fig d: Minaow Alorwuso Adeleku
Fig 1: Ase
Fig 3: Fiagble

Fig 4: Alegba
Two male Alegba Fig. 5

One female Alegba Fig. 6

(right left)

male and female Alegba
Sogbo fig 8 and Sogbo-Ve Fig 9
Fig 12: Diagbla (Abroshi) and fig 13: Diagbla (Soshi)

“male” (soshi) Fig 14: initiate of Yeve
Fig 15: “male initiate (soshi) of Yeve Sof’atsi Festival (November 1999)

Fig 16: “female” initiate (Agroshi) of y Sof’atsi festival
Fig 17: Male initiates wearing Tsina and caring fiable and Abla at Adorkor gbowuwu festival (2 Sept. 1999)

Fig 18:
Fig 19: Male initiates wearing Awlaya holding Fiagble and Abla
Sof’atsi festival (November 1999.)

Fig 20: Priestesses of So (Yeve) dressed in white calico and dancing the Husago.
Fig 21: Togbui Abotsi Akpe II. Mami Water priest

Fig 22:
Fig 23: Queen Elizabeth (Mami Water) Fig 24: se and linguist. Fig 25: The main servant of Queen Elizabeth
Fig 34 Togbui Segadzi II. Priest of mami water at his temple

Fig 35: close up photo of temple. Fig 36: close of linguist staff used by Mami Water’s
As Mother

Fig 30: Mami Water (Dale Massiasta). Fig 31 Mami Water (Dale Massiasta)
Fig 37: Adza Kofi Ho mawu with Mami Water Carryings