

A cultural appraisal of *Odadaa*: an artistic practice of the lifting of the ban on drumming and noise-making amongst the Ga people of Ghana

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Abstract

The practice of lifting of the ban on drumming and noise-making amongst the Ga Mashie is celebrated with pomp and pageantry as it heralds the people into the annual celebration of the Homowo festival, a celebration that ridicules the hunger that once plagued them when the people arrived at their present settlement. However, it appears the significance of the practice, its artistic and other cultural aspects are not scholarly acknowledged when it comes to the appreciation of this cultural heritage. The ceremony is performed by the priesthood and a coterie of eminent elders who recite artistic prayers and pour libation, followed by beating of the sacred drums by the Gbese chief. This article explores the ideologies and significance of the various rites and more importantly the role of art which are with a number of other cultural aspects. In sum, though the celebration is a conglomeration of numerous aspects of the culture of the Ga people, it is preponderantly an artistic exemplar for art history.

Keywords: *Odadaa*, artefacts, celebration, ban on drumming and noise-making, art history

1.0 Introduction

The lifting of the ban on drumming and noise making known as *Odadaa* is one of the most significant pre-celebration among the Ga during their annual festival called *Homowo*. The Ga people residing at the South-eastern part of Ghana celebrate *Homowo* an annual corn harvest festival that ridicules the famine that once plagued them when they arrived at their present settlement. Various writers such as Opoku (1970), Quarcoo (2000) and Amoako-Atta (2000), mentioned that there was severe famine among the Ga during their travel to their present settlement. Nii Ammah (1980) and Hendersen-Quartey (2001) speculated that the journey of the Ga people from the east might have taken them across the arid sands of the Sahara Dessert. Over the vast stretch of barren land, the incidence of famine logically cannot be ruled out. However, according to these writers, when it begun to rain and the people cultivated the few corn left which yielded much fruit, the people ate and sprinkled some on the earth. To the people, it signifies the spiritual feeding of the ancestors who died famishing and also to ridicule hunger that had once plagued them.

The celebration of *odadaa* by the Ga Mashie is a foretaste of the usual pomp and pageantry associated with the celebration of the important August festival called *Homowo*. One important pre celebration activity is the customary tilling of land and sowing of corn on sacred farms. The tilling of the sacred field serves as a way of removing danger from the field (Mbiti, 1991). Dantu is the first to till the land. He does the tilling on Monday. It is followed by Sakumo on Tuesday, Korle Klottey/ Gbese on Friday, Gua on Saturday, Naide on Sunday and finally by the Nai the next Tuesday. It is also important to note that this succession of the tilling of the land is related to the traditional history of the arrival in batches by the Ga people on different calendar dates. This is followed by the customary sowing of corn in the

first or second week of the month of May in sacred fields of the various priests, which heralds the thirty day ban on drumming and noise-making. Consequently, the ban on drumming and noise-making affords the divinities and the ancestors of the land a serene atmosphere to meditate and bless the people. The ban is imposed by the Ga Traditional Council and although one of its cruxes is to give the full scope of active drumming and dancing that would soon follow after the ban has been lifted. The ban obviously, throws the entire area into a state of absolute silence and boredom. However, the ban is lifted on the immediate Thursday following the thirty day count with a special ritual ceremony by the various priests. The priests and priestesses, chiefs and elders, heads of organizations, flag bearers of the various political parties and celebrants gather at *Odadaa tso shishi* the ceremonial ground for the celebration. *Odadaa tso shishi* is located off the Accra High Street and directly opposite the Gbese Chief's Palace in Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

1.1 Biblical and conceptual ideologies behind the ban

The concept of this thirty day ban on drumming and noise making is biblical. According to the various priests of the Ga, the book of Habakkuk 2: 20 in the Old Testament states "The Lord is in his Holy Temple, Let all the earth keep silence before him" (Crossway Bibles, 2001). This quotation from the scriptures suggests it is through stillness that a full meditation could be achieved. Moreover, during the time of Jesus it was read from the Bible that when the hour came, He left his disciples to a quiet place in the garden to pray. This seems to substantiate the view of the Ga who believe that they must be silent before their maker to pray, meditate and plead for the Lord to provide rain and make the land fertile for a bountiful harvest. There is another quotation in the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes 3: 7b which states, "A time to keep silence and a time to speak" (The Crossway Bible, 2001). The quotation lays bare the fact that there is time for everything, and people speak to their God and an ancestor almost throughout the year and the thirty-day ban is the period for them to do the listening. In addition, we should understand that the world we live in is a noisy one. Many people cannot even drive their vehicles without music blaring from them, or the beat of the bass vibrating their vehicle. Even many church services are marked more by noisy rather than by quiet reflections. In ancient times the pagans cried out in a noisy frenzy to their idols. In sharp contrast, the wisdom of silence should be noticed because in quiet reverence God may be heard.

2.0 Methodology

The study based on a qualitative research was limited to the Ga Mashie people in central Accra who have been celebrating *odadaa* since the 14th century. The Ga Mashie is made up of seven quarters namely, Asere, Gbese, Sempe, Ngleshie, Abola, Otublohum, and Akanmaiadzen. The lifting of the ban known as *odadaa* was observed on two annual celebrations (2005 and 2006). The study was primarily focused on the rich description of the observances of both the rituals and artistic creations of the celebration. Using the qualitative research allowed the systematic process of describing, analysing and interpreting insights discovered during the celebrations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The data collected from the field were assembled, grouped according to patterns and meanings, analysed and interpreted the insights in order to draw informed conclusions from the discoveries in the practice of the lifting of the ban.

3.0 Presentation of Findings

3.1 The Ceremony

The ceremony begins in the afternoon at 14: hrs GMT (2pm local time) with the arrival of the chiefs in a sequential manner amid cheers from the jubilant celebrants. To the chiefs, it is a time to show their grandeur and authority as they dress in rich cloths and, decorate themselves with beads, rings on their fingers, and ornaments of beautiful artefacts around their ankles. The researcher shares the same idea with (Cole and Ross, 1977) that "the regalia that surround and embellish royalty and the institution of chieftaincy are the most visible of arts, designed to publicly proclaim their power and grandeur".

Immediately the various chiefs of the Ga Mashie quarters arrive at the ceremonial ground, the Sakumo Wulomo (Priest of Sakumo) also starts off to the ceremonial and having reached the *Nai We* (family house of the Sea Priest) blows a horn to signify the *Nai Wulomo* that the people are all gathered for the ceremony. The two priests with a coterie of other priests, priestesses and heads of the families pray and pour libation in a three artistic circle as shown in figure 1. These artistic circles in which the prayers are said and libation poured are believed by the custodians of the rite to ward off evil spirits. The three circles are also very symbolic. The circles symbolize spiritual protection and therefore, are used universally by Ga Traditionalists. During the recitation of prayers and the making of libation, they thank *Ataa Naa Nyonmo* (The Sovereign Lord), the divinities and ancestors for their protection and ask for guidance in the coming year. This act of artistic prayers and making of libation is evident in figure 2. The prayers are attributed as artistic due to its manner of performance. The rise and fall of the voice tones coupled with occasional long pauses as if the orator is receiving a message from God, and sudden pronouncements make the prayer artistic. The liquid used in the making of libation is the Henkes Aromatic Schiedam Schnapps which is a spirit widely used and accepted by many Ghanaian traditionalists.

Immediately after the priests complete the ritual, it is the responsibility of the Gbese *Mantse* (chief) to beat the sacred drum to finally lift the ban on drumming and noisemaking. The Gbese Chief, sometimes assisted by *Mankralo* (caretaker of the land) simultaneously lift the drum sticks up high for all gathered to see before beating the drum. This act is repeated three times, and on the third beating, received with applause and cheers from the joyous celebrants. The ban has been lifted and the whole Ga indigenous area is thrown into ecstasy and wild jubilation. Figure (3) shows evidence of how the Gbese Chief and the *Mankralo* (caretaker of the land) simultaneously beat the drum to lift the ban.

The sacred drums are brought out of the shrine once in a year - during the *odadaa* celebration. The two sacred drums indigenously called *Tweneboah* (*Entandrophragma*) are alleged to be of a male and female drum and are quickly carried away to their shrine just after being beaten by the Gbese chief. Immediately the ban is lifted, there is euphoria and loud sounds pulsating from individual windows are heard in the entire area, making the whole scenario one of absolute jubilation. The celebrants customarily allow the chiefs to dance to the staccato rhythm from the divine drummers before they take their turn. The chiefs lighten up the ceremonial ground with their graceful steps and symbolic dance gestures amid appellations from their people. Gun shots from the chiefs' officials are also heard and this influences the people to believe that the shots come to drive away bad spirits. It is interesting to see older and younger people playing *ampe*, a local game played by a group of females especially young girls who jump, clap and sing at the same time. In the process of jumping, they move one leg forward in that order to outwit their counterpart.

3.2 Artistic Appraisal

3.2.1 Beads

Special beads are worn by the custodians of the *odadaa* celebration. These beads are indicative of the wearer's hierarchical position and more importantly enable them perform the rituals that are associated with the celebration. The most seen bead is the *afili* bead which is worn by the priests, priestesses and chiefs of the traditional area. The priests and priestesses are seen wearing a combination of beads with different colours which is believed to provide spiritual protection during the performance of their various duties of the celebration, (See figure 4). The beads in addition signify their office and protect them from malevolent spirits.

The first type of bead [from left to right in figure 4] of the five is called *afili*, -which is indicative of the wearer's social or hierarchical position or rank in the traditional area as a priest, priestess or a chief. It has an off white colour and looks like cowries tied on a rope. The second bead on the wrist is *fufua* which is made up of *silibaa*, a precious traditional stone which is pulverised and processed and mixed with any fluxing agent, mostly feldspar. The colour of any traditional beads is determined by the colouring oxides used in making the bead. The *fufua* bead is made up of blue and ash colour and it is believed to provide spiritual protection. The third bead on the wrist is *Tonyoro* made of recycled glass. This bead is red in colour and endowed with immediate self defence from evil spirits. The fourth and fifth beads on the wrist are *Ade* and *bihii ale nii* respectively are also made of recycled glass. *Ade* bead

is a blend of yellow and green colour and the latter is light green. These two beads are for magico - religious purposes. These beads are made from recycled glass. Bottles and other glass items are first washed and sorted by colours. Apart from *Afili* and *fufua* beads, the beads are made from recycled glass which is broken into small fragments, pounded in a metal mortar with a pestle, and sieved to get a very fine powder. Fluxes are added and colouring oxides to determine the colour. After the production, a ritual is performed to imbue the benevolent spirits to reside in the beads (Tumomli Yartey, head of Nai family, personal communication, 2011).

Another bead made of the local sponge worn by the priests is *Komi*. During the celebration, the priests wear this bead for protective and religious purposes. The *nyanyara* bead which is made of the *nyanyara* (*Momordica charantia*) leaf is also twisted to form a garland and worn around the neck of the priests. The wearers of this leaf bead believe they are cleansed and purified. According to the *Nai Wulomo*, David's prayer in Psalms 51 the verse 7 substantiates this assertion; "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (The Crossway Bibles, 2001).

From this Bible quotation, it was believed by David that if he is purged with hyssop, he shall be clean. For this reason, *Nyanyara* (*Momordica charantia*) which is believed to be hyssop would cleanse the priests of all filth and make them pure. The *nyanyara* (*Momordica charantia*) bead, for example and the *komi* bead are worn purposely during the performing of rituals of *odadaa*. If these beads indeed as believed by the priests cleanse, protect and provide them the power to perform the rituals, then it is safe to assert that these art works fuel the success of the *odadaa* celebration.

There are other beads worn on the upper part of the ankle and upper part of the arm. The bead that is worn on only the left of the ankle of priestesses is *Shishe*. The bead on the upper arm is *Dade kulo*. *Nakutso nii* is the name of the bead worn on the upper part of the ankle. There is also *adiagba* bead which is traditionally worn by all heads of families to signify their position in the traditional area. Although it is not a common sight to see heads of family wearing this bead, they are vividly seen during the *odadaa* celebration. All these beads are worn for protective and religious purposes.

3.2.2 *Putua: the receptacle and the pouring of libation*

The making of libation forms an integral part during the celebration. The making of libation is not per se an art work but the performative in the act of pouring makes it artistic. The priest lowers the *putua* (the receptacle) in front of the attendant to be filled with the liquid. During the libation, the attendant pours the liquid into the *putua* three consecutive times. After each pour, he pauses till the third one when he stops completely. The notion behind the three times is the belief that people do not offer anything less than three to their loved ones. The pouring furthermore becomes artistic when the priest after a pour, stops and gazes up as if receiving a message from the Sovereign Lord and then unexpectedly continues with the act. *Putua* is the nut of coconut which has been designed as a container. According to the chief priest, the coconut tree is indeed a blessed one. Before one can eat and drink the water in a coconut, one has to take its greenish or yellowish cover off, then the fibres, followed by the cracking of the nuts before getting to the liquid and food in the nut. In this vein, the priest believes that anything that is poured into *putua* becomes holy.

3.2.3 *Drumming, Singing and Dancing*

The celebration of *odadaa* is believed to be in connection with supernatural protective spirits and the ceremony largely employs music. Through the music the benevolent spirits are thought to be drawn to their mediums to perform their duties. Again, without drumming, singing and dancing, the entire celebration would be monotonous and unattractive. Singing and dancing are often inseparable forms of artistic and emotional expressions (Salm and Falola, 2002). Drumming which serves as a form of music produced from instruments such as the *fontonfrom* and the *atumpan* (talking drums) give staccato rhythms for the chiefs to dance immediately the ban is lifted. *Nono* (gong), rattles and the castanet are also employed in producing music during the celebration. *Nono* and the castanet are used as the time signature which determines the number of beats and the tempo of the song. They are also used as accompanying instruments. The beating of gong provides an unchangeable rhythm, maintaining a

steady metronome throughout the entire performance since a mistake on its part would inadvertently cause the dancers some difficulties in articulating their gestures.

All these instruments when dexterously played and harmoniously blended produce melodious music enjoyed by the celebrants. It is a delight to hear the castanet beater initiating the music with the sound ko!ko!,ko! ko!,ko!ko, in a six eight time signature and the rattle shaker joins in the same time signature as tsa!, tsa!, tsa!,tsa!, tsa!, and when the divine drummers fuse in, the whole arena is thrown into a state of euphoria and everyone is swept off their feet. One important feature of the music produced is the manner in which the music makers play in a short and detached manner which is said to be in staccato.

The indigenous dance of the people is called *kpanlogo* and for this reason, the music produced is just suitable for the rendering of the *kpanlogo* dance. It is a delight to see these music makers applying crescendo and diminuendo effects to their music to embellish it. These dynamics enhance their production and thus become a good performing art. The various forms of music produced help in fostering unity among the Ga Mashie.

It is not only singing and drumming that makes the music really artistic; it is the combination of the quality of words or libretto, the quality of the voice, the dexterity of the drummers and the desired harmony that the music achieves which in effect draws the benevolent spirits into their medium, and which inspires connoisseurs to categorize it as a great work of art.

If music is being provided, then dance cannot be ruled out of the celebration of the *odadaa* celebration. Through the dance forms or movements such as *kpanlogo*, the celebrants of the festival express their moral and social behaviour expected of the members of the traditional area. This is to draw attention to the fact that, some of the most important events in the traditional area are expressed through these dance forms in remarkable gestures thus enhancing their meanings and significance. Oparebea, (1994) is of the opinion that “dances serve as a medium of communication and always convey an idea to the beholder, which could be joy, sorrow, hatred, love, happiness”.

The importance attached to the dance does not lie only in the joy it provides, for the release of emotions stimulated by music but also used as a social and artistic medium of communication. The dances seen in the celebration convey thoughts or matters of personal or social importance through the choice of movements, postures and facial expression. By these, the chiefs, priests, priestesses, elders and the people demonstrate their social unity, co-operation and friendship. All these are expressed through the choice of appropriate symbolic gestures. For example, when the chief throws his hands to the west and to the east and assemble both hands on the chest, it symbolises that all the people are under his jurisdiction. These dances are characterised by graceful and artistic foot steps, the pouting of lips, broad smiles and manipulating of the torso.

3.2.4 Music, Dance and Visual Art

The chiefs of the various quarters under the Ga Mashie dance to the staccato beats of the drums and the Ga paramount chief makes artistic gesticulations pointing both hands to the left, right, upward and downward directions after which the left hand and right are brought towards the chest signifying that all the people of Ga Mashie indigenous area are under his supreme jurisdiction. The various chiefs also take turn in dancing to the music provided by the drummers by making quick steps, and manipulation of the hands and neck. Sarpong (1974) is of the view that, “when there is music, it is accompanied by bodily movements like beautiful footwork, gestures, manipulation of neck, raising of the eyebrows, pouting of the lips, pliability of the torso, and shaking of the lower part of the trunk”. According to him all these movements add a lot to the aesthetic aspects of dancing.

During the *odadaa* celebration, the older women having heard the sound of the sacred drums shout *akpa he hawo!* which literally means ‘our boredom have been taken away’. They make intricate artistic strides with their waists, arms and legs in hailing the lifting of the ban. They sing and dance simultaneously making strutting and bobbing up and down movements whilst exhibiting dance movements that entail swinging of the arms and legs. Moreover, the dances displayed by both the older men and women go with the rhythm from the divine drummers. As if it has been a well dressed rehearsal between them and the music makers, they are able to interpret the percussive patterns of the sounds through their graceful steps, postures, gestures and articulations. While these dances are performed, all customary social statuses and constraints are in abeyance. During such ceremonies, the people dismiss the usual age barrier, gender, and status divisions (Salm and Falola, 2002).

3.3 Cultural appraisal

The celebration of the *odadaa* embodies a great deal of some aspects of art which is enveloped with a number of other cultural components. Socially, acquaintances, friends and loved ones gather after the celebration at drinking spots and leisure spots to share their dreams together. Obviously, there is a lot of buying and the owners of the drinking spots realize increase in profit during the period and eventually they are able to pay their utility bills which the government utilizes to supplement the funds used in providing social amenities such as schools, clinics and community libraries for the indigenous area and the nation as a whole.

Politically, the chiefs are seen to be adorned in their rich kente (a traditional hand woven fabric which includes an array of pattern colour, including geometric shapes and designs which are large and eye catching) and velveteen cloths which throw the entire ceremonial ground into aesthetic elaboration. The celebration of the *odadaa* provides an amazing opportunity for the people of Ga Mashie to get acquainted with their various chiefs. As mentioned earlier, Ga Mashie has seven quarters namely Asere, Otublohum, Gbese, Sempe, Ngleshie, Abola and Akanmaiadzen and during the celebration of the *odadaa*, the chiefs of the quarters gather to lift the ban on drumming and noise-making. It is possible, most of the people from these quarters do not even know their various chiefs, and more to it, the symbols that identify them as a particular quarter. The occasion therefore provides an amazing chance for the celebrants to know their rulers, thereby according them due reverence.

In addition, the celebration of *odadaa* also provides the chiefs the opportunity to show their power and grandeur. Speeches are heard from the chiefs concerning the welfare of the people and the indigenous area. During the celebration, the chiefs publicly discuss their plans for the year, critically talk about their shortcomings and encourage collective decision making. It provides the opportunity for the people to lavish their leaders with praise and also to lampoon insults, which are not considered disrespectful.

Furthermore, through this collective decision making, the chief and elders are able to unite the people of the traditional area, and their great traditional cultural heritage is explained to their understanding. In this light, misconceptions are likely to be cleared and a spirit of unity and one accord is instilled in them to help keep the tradition alive.

Economically, since the celebration of the *odadaa* entails a lot of merry making, there is a high propensity to spend and low propensity to save during the celebration. Most celebrants overspend in the buying of drinks and travelling around. The high propensity to spend leads to high withdrawal of money from their bank savings. This leads to individual bankruptcy after the celebration. This invariably, affects their finances in terms of sustaining the educational foundation for their children and wards and also the frequent payment of utility bills.

The health aspect of the ceremony is seen in the swirling of umbrellas, the carrying of chiefs by the subjects during the celebration and the graceful dance by the chiefs and the people could be seen as a great form of exercise. Perhaps, due to the busy schedule and daily routines of the people, there is a possibility that one may ignore the act of exercising the body, thus, these swirling of umbrellas, carrying of chiefs, the vigorous processions serve as exercises for the celebrants. The celebrants sweat profusely during these activities and they burn excessive fats from their bodies. The swirling of umbrellas, the dances, the carrying of chiefs etc. also strengthens the bones and the joints. These great forms of exercise help in the circulation of blood in the veins and arteries and help prevent heart and cardiac illnesses.

Assimeng (1989) is of the view that, religion appears to be the acknowledgement of a force that is believed to be higher than man, and with which human beings seek an association of independence. In this vein, the people during the celebration of the *odadaa* acknowledge the Supreme God as protector and sustainer of their lives. This is seen through the artistic prayers and the pouring of libation by the various priest of the indigenous area. They furthermore thank the various divinities and ancestors for their guidance and protection in celebrating another year. Adegbola (1983) opined that the prayers said to the divinities and the ancestors are to purify the whole society so that the people can enter into the New Year with confidence and hope.

4.0 Discussion

The last phase of my study involves discussion-interpretation of my findings by inter-relating the findings with local and expert opinions. During the celebration, the artefacts, which are seen as static art forms in the palace are transformed into 'kinetic art' during the festival. In other words, the art works are seen in motion (Thompson, 1974). This indeed means the art works are seen in their full functions. For example, umbrellas are raised and swirled in dance; state swords, stools and chairs are orderly carried in processions. The palanquins are ridden by chiefs; talking drums are beaten by divine drummers to sound praises to the chief, narrating history and announcing proverbs and wise sayings. These arts coupled with the performing arts like dances and poetry recitals are realized in their full performance. In this light, the celebration can be regarded as means of unifying the arts of the people of the Ga, because it is the occasion whereby the citizens have the opportunity to display their art in all forms and shades.

Apart from the artistic qualities and excellence portrayed by the artefacts, their symbolism serves as a written document whereby historical facts pertaining or relating to the social, political, religious, philosophical and medicinal beliefs and values of the people are kept for posterity. This would help the incoming generation to know more about the history of their forefathers. Notwithstanding the chieftaincy dispute within the Ga system, the then Paramount Chief of Ga, King Tackie Tawiah III laid bare the fact that it is a period to reconnect with their forefathers who toiled to ensure the wellbeing of their people and solicit their blessing. (Tetteh and Attram, 2008) This he believed would promote unity among the Ga as well as portraying the indigenous value of the people.

There is family reunion and a possibility of settling disputes and burying of differences. Many of the young ones born outside the family homes get to meet their relations. In the course of this spree, the youth within the community have a golden opportunity to choose new wives and the occasion is sometimes utilized for honeymoons. The atmosphere also becomes conducive for the people including adolescents who put on their best apparel or dresses, hairstyles and footwear to exhibit the uncontrollable joyous mood.

The celebration also serves as a mechanism for adjusting social behaviour in the context of Ga people within their communities. The celebrants get rid of all ill feelings of their rulers through songs which are not considered disrespectful. This finds expression in Asihene's (1980) account of the *Apoo* festival in which the lampooning liberty allows the common people to publicly sing out the shortcomings, faults and villainies of their superiors who have incurred their displeasure in order to turn over a new leaf. This also has parallelism with Johnson's (1993) version of the *Ajumako- Ba Akwambo* festival songs, which are satirical, allusions to historical events, and offences of citizens which have the effect of adjusting social behaviour. The arts may be a vehicle for social comment, embodying the virtues and the defects of society, a collective symbol of a society, or they may be an individual avenue and visions as well as the physical state of people (Kaufman, 1966).

The celebration of the *odadaa* indeed involves a great deal of art. The prayers and words that are said in the form of verses by the Nai Wulomo and Sakumo Wulomo are very poetic and artistic. Below is an example literally translated as:

Make way, Make way, Make way,
God of our Fathers, this pleading is yours
Let the rain fall and dew fall
So that the land be fertile
For the corn to germinate
To feed children and pregnant women
Give life O' life
We seek for life for children and pregnant women
May we live to see another year.

The prayers are artistic in the manner in which they are recited. Another artistic point worth mentioning is the hierarchical arrangement of power and authority during the procession and sitting arrangements of the chiefs at the ceremonial grounds *odadaa tso shishi*. This gives a form of design, which eventually creates order, balance and harmony in the spiritual realm. As Art educators, during compositions of an art work, emphasis is placed on order which is the primary aim of the artist as he produces an artefact. For this reason, any work of art or design without order may cease to be a good work of art or design and this point goes to substantiate the statement made by Macquet (1986) that, “artefact with aesthetic quality is a tangible symbol standing for the idea of order”. In this light, the hierarchical procession which rests manifestly on order and balance can be used in teaching composition in art and therefore an exemplar for art education.

The hierarchical structure of the chiefs’ procession creates a form of balance, order and unity. In art, there are the general principles concerning the designing of an art piece and these are the elements of design namely lines, shapes, colours, space, dots, textures, and the principles of dominance, contrast, proportion, variety, harmony, rhythm and balance. The procession to the ceremonial ground seems to justify all these elements and principles which are paradigms for art education.

One disadvantage of the celebration is that it brings about indiscriminate sexual relations. The joy and merry making attached to the celebration of the festival provide the opportunity to the celebrants to start new relationships which sometimes end in sexual promiscuity. This inadvertently leads to the spreading of sexual transmitted diseases. It also results in unwanted pregnancies. The female celebrants who later realized they are pregnant, are left to single parenting since their sexual partners would not be available or even be informed to take responsibility of the pregnancy.

5.0 Conclusions

The study has offered new insights about the celebration of *odadaa* one of the most significant traditional practices of the Ga Mashie in Ghana and has examined its artistic and other cultural aspects. The ceremony on the whole has been realized to give psychological well-being and mental or inner peace to the celebrants and elevates the boredom and monotony associated with the thirty-day ban. The arts and other cultural aspects which have been laid bare in this study are crucial to the promotion of the *odadaa* celebration and without them; the celebration might be a failure. It should therefore be obvious that, the arts are so paramount in the celebration of *odadaa* and they are more than likely to remain bound with the ceremony for eternity, because the arts serve as glue to the unification of the ethnic group.

The sequence of activities involved in the celebration of the *odadaa* and the idea of the ban on drumming and noisemaking in the traditional area can be brought into the classroom in educating students. The ban which throws the entire area into absolute silence could be exemplar in the production of an art work in that, the acquisition of wisdom starts from being silent in class because it is through that that one will be able to understand better. Also, the implication for art education is that a great composition of an art work can be achieved through careful planning and gathering of materials and tools and sound environment to meditate. The study’s principal conclusion is that the celebration is an enjoyable one which comes with psychological well-being and mental or inner peace to the people and involves a great deal of art. In this light, though the celebration is a conglomeration of numerous aspects of the culture of the Ga people, it is preponderantly an artistic exemplar for art history.

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Figure 1: The three artistic circles symbolizing spiritual protection



Figure 2: The Sakumo Priest pours libation as he prays



Figure 3: The Gbese chief assisted by Mankralo beating the sacred drum to lift the ban on drumming and noisemaking



Figure 4: A priestess adorned with five types of beads



Figure 5: Putua being held by the priest during libation

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