

A qualitative inquiry into kete weaving as a developing culture in the Akatsi district

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Abstract: In Ghana, *Kente* or *Kete* weaving is known to be done predominantly in areas of Bonwire, Ashanti Region and Agotime, Volta Region however the art is gradually gaining prominence in other communities in the Volta Region. This paper investigates and documents *Kete* weaving as a developing culture within the Akatsi District in the Volta Region of Ghana through a qualitative inquiry. The study focused on the history, production and marketing of the art using narrative and descriptive designs and thematic analysis approaches. Using the purposive sampling method, a total of 20 respondents constituting elders, weavers and cloth sellers participated in the study. The study found that the origin of *Kete* weaving has no roots in the Akatsi District however the art is fast growing as an occupation among the male youth in the district whereas the females, both young and old engage in trading the woven fabric and its accessories. Sadly, the future of this occupation is blurred as the ingenious weavers are faced with challenges including a lack of capital and infrastructure to industrialise their craft. Through the findings, this paper establishes that the art of *Kete* weaving in the Akatsi District is a fertile industry that when expanded and sustained can help create more jobs, thus reducing the poverty rate and improving the standard of living. The Commission for Technical and Vocational Educational Training (CTVET) needs to provide the weavers with additional training on creativity for a wider market target. It is recommended that the Government of Ghana through the Akatsi District Assembly provide infrastructure and financial support for the weavers. Private investors within the fashion industry are entreated to extend their business acumen towards the weavers for expansion.

Keywords: Art, Culture, *Kete*, Textiles, Weaving

1. Introduction

Weaving as an aspect of textiles is one of the oldest processes of manufacturing cloth. Woven fabrics cater for the fundamental human need of providing protection and adornment and though an ancient activity, weaving is not conservative (Colchester, 1991) but rather evolving across time. According to Duncan (2002 as cited in Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014), handwoven fabrics have been a traditional occupation in West Africa and can be traced back to the 9th century C.E (African Textile History, 2016). The art of making handwoven fabrics in Ghana is known among the Asante as *Kente*. Northern tribes such as Fugu and the Ewe people as *Kete* are all characterised by distinct creative and aesthetic qualities. Whereas the *Kente* and *Kete* are both characterised by multi-colourful patterns, the *Fugu* on the other hand largely appears simple in an interchange of duo-coloured stripes. Admittedly, the name *Kente* is the most famous hand-woven fabric in Africa (Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014), however the true originators of the *Kente* ingenious craft remain a bone of contention between the Asante and the Ewe people in Ghana.

Amidst the controversies surrounding who the real originators of the craft are, it is remarkable to note that there are few traditionally known towns like Bonwire, Ntonso, Woonoo, Adanwomase, Safo and Maope in the Asanteland where *kente* weaving is done. Whereas there are many towns in the Eweland such as Agotime, Kpetoe, Abenyinase, Denu, Keta, Weta, Klikor, Agbozume, Anloga, Tsiamé, Borlovi-Norlorpe, Anyako and

Anlofiadenyigba (Tetteh, 2009). As one of the major vocations, *Kete* weaving among the Ewe people has become a developing culture sprouting in many villages and towns within the Volta Region of Ghana than in other regions. As part of the Avenor ethnic group, the main traditional occupations of the Akatsi people are farming, carpentry, blacksmithing and trading (Frazier, 2014) except for *Kete* weaving. In this article, the researchers have consistently used the word *kete* to express the Ewe origin of the craft as done in Akatsi and not the popularly known *Kente* of Asante origin. In recent times, Akatsi has become one of the communities in the Volta Region where the art of *Kete* weaving is fast developing as an occupation among the male youth. This article focuses on investigating and documenting the factors influencing this emerging artistic occupation within the Akatsi locality and its repercussions on tourism promotion as well as the socio-economic livelihood of the people.

The purpose of the inquiry is to present a catalogue of the unique creative *Kete* designs of the weavers in Akatsi locality in a scholarly dialogue. In addition, this article aims at extending a scholarly discussion on the socio-economic benefit of local arts and culture such as the developing weaving culture of the Akatsi area.

2. Review of related literature

2.1. Eweland Kete weaving in retrospective

Kete is the name of handwoven cloth as called by the Ewe people. However, the same handwoven cloth is popularly known as *Kente*. The true originators of this *Kete* (Ewe) cloth or *Kente* (Asante) remain open and unending controversy between the two ethnic groups (Kraamer, 2006). Despite this, the narratives of historical developments regarding the making of this ingenious craft by the Ewe people maintain that the name *Kente* is a corrupted word from *Kete* – which in the Ewe language means ‘*ke*’ (open) and ‘*te*’ (press or close), and as such describes the process of interlacing the warp and weft yarns (Kraamer, 2006). *Kete* weaving among the Ewe people is believed to have originated at Agotitme-Kpetoe where it is also known as ‘Agbamevor’ (Cloth in a case) or ‘Agbatsimevor’ (cloth from a loom) according to the oral legendary of the Ewe people.

The oral history of the Agotime indigenes purports that the Ewe people taught the Asante how to weave the *Kete* cloth under oppression when the Asante invaded Agotime during the Asante wars, capturing some indigenes to teach them (Dotse, 2015). As the leading *Kete* weaving community, the Agotime people instituted the Agbamevorza (Cloth festival) to outdoor their aesthetic master creations and to celebrate the ingenious weavers of their community (Ross, 1998 as cited in Kraamer, 2006). It is perhaps the establishment of the Agbamevorza that led to the widespread of *Kete* cloth weaving in the Eweland. Dotse (2015) recounts that the oldest known *Kete* by the Ewe people is from Agotime dating back into the 1500s as confirmed by the Smithsonian Museum. Ewe *Kete* cloth is characterised by a variety of aesthetical and artistic figurative motifs which are technical and much more complex to weave than the geometric patterns of the Asante *Kente* (Dotse, 2015). It is therefore culturally unfair for some writers like Dzamboe (2016) and Dotsey (2019) to use *Kente* instead of *Kete* to denote the colourful handwoven cloth of the Ewe ethnic groups. Interchanging the names will not only make the Asante *Kente* popular but as well mislead the masses into thinking there are no significant differences between the craftsmanship of the two ethnic groups as far as handwoven fabrics are concerned. Aesthetically, Ewe *Kete* designs appear to have evolved through a logical progression of steps, from simple warp striped patterns to increasingly complex weft designs. Whereas the Asante *Kente* designs are characterised by their unique simple geometric pattern and traditional applique symbols (Dotse, 2015). Commenting on the development of designs in Ewe *Kete* weaving, Kraamer (2006) explained that the making of the designs became possible through constant experimentation of skills by master weavers who later bequeathed the craft generation after generation through apprenticeship. Even as Agotime had been very instrumental in the development of Ewe *Kete* and as such known as the custodians of the craft among the Ewe people, the art of weaving has spread among other communities in the Volta Region over the years.

Some of these well-known weaving communities include Adaklu, Ho, Agbozume, Klikor, Glidzi, Srohume, Denu, Weta, Mafi-Kumasi, Anlo-Afiadnyigba, Tsiamé and Anyako (Dotsey, 2019; Tettehfiio, 2009). It has been noted that there are no industries within the Volta Region (Kwabla et al., 2015) hence many of the indigenes have migrated to other parts of Ghana to enroll in higher education or find well-paying jobs. The only major form of occupation of the Ewe people is weaving especially at Agotime which has the highest concentration of *Kete* weavers in West Africa (Dzamboe, 2016). Many of the local people in the Eweland without travelling options or opportunities have found cloth weaving attractive and satisfying due to the colourful annual festival (*Agbamevorza*) which creates a huge tourist attraction and revenue. Other communities within the Volta Region such as Akatsi which is not initially known as a weaving community have found *Kete* weaving to be a lucrative venture. The following sub-themes present a scholarly discourse on the demographics and historical development of *Kete* weaving as a lucrative culture among the people of Akatsi.

2.2. Brief ethnography, history and culture of the Akatsi people

Akatsi has been the administrative capital of the Akatsi District before its division in 2012 into North and South (Kumasi et al., 2017). However, Akatsi town maintains as the district capital for the South whereas Ave Dakpa town became the capital for the Akatsi North District Assembly. According to the Population and Housing Statistic by the Ghana Statistical Service (2010) (Kumasi et al., 2017), the population of the entire Akatsi District was estimated at 98,684 with a growth rate of 2.4% and predominantly females rating 53.9% as against 46.1% of the male population. However, the 2021 census projects the population of Akatsi South Municipality as 92,494 with 43,062 males and 49,432 females (Ghana Districts, n.d.). By jurisdiction, the entire Akatsi shares territories with Keta Municipal Assembly to the South, Ketu North to the East, to the West by South and Central Tongu Districts and to the North by Akatsi North and Agotime-Ziope Districts (Kumasi et al., 2017).

Ohene et al. (2016) opine that the division of Akatsi was for the administrative purpose to ensure smooth management of the district. As described above, the geographical location of the entire Akatsi district in Ghana (see figure 1) makes it a busy zone, especially the Akatsi Township, which has been described as one of the noisiest towns in Ghana (Frazier, 2014). It is notorious as a hub for the high level of trade activities between the North and South of the Volta Region. The people within the district have been described as hardworking traders, blacksmiths, and carp.

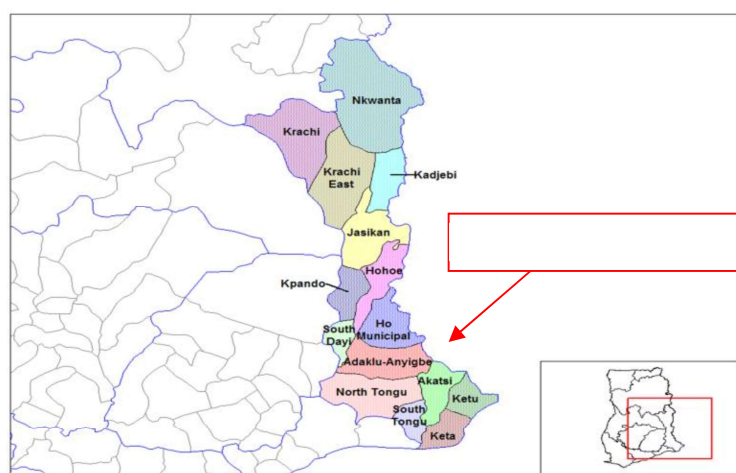


Figure 1: Location of Akatsi District on the Map of Ghana. **Source:** (Wikipedia.com, 2022)

Not only are the people within the Akatsi District meticulous about their work, but also preservers of the rich culture they possess under the auspices of their traditional chiefs. The people of Akatsi traditional area practice lineage systems which comprise an external family system that traces their genealogy to the same ancestor. The

Southern part of the district is made up of the Avenor people who have about thirteen (13) clans with their clan heads who double as chiefs as well as custodians of the lands in the district (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The Avenors are believed to have migrated from their original home, Avenor-Ketukpe in the Republic of Togo and like any other ethnic group in Ghana, the Avenors have their unique cultural festivals. The Ghana Statistical Service report continued to explain that festivals celebrated within the district include *Avenor-Hogbeza*, *Agbeliza* (Cassava festival), *Denyaza* (Homecoming festival) and *Atitoeza* (Velvet Tamarind festival).

Interestingly, it could be observed that the various festivals celebrated by the people of the Akatsi traditional area are predominantly associated with farming thereby confirming the earlier assertion of Frazier (2014) that the people are mainly hardworking farmers. The festivals were instituted to celebrate the importance of the crops they are associated with as well as to help promote the cultivation of those crops during their harvest seasons. The festivals are usually decorated with a variety of exhibitions of the crops along with music and dance such as *Agbadza*, *Ganu*, *Borbor* and *Atsagbekor*. Chiefs are carried in palanquins and dressed in expensive elaborate traditional costumes like *Kete* and *Agovor* (a jacquard woven type of cloth that the Ewes named after the gorgeousness of how one appears when they wore the cloth).

The *Danyaza* which is also known as the homecoming festival celebrated in individual villages was instituted to encourage the indigenes living abroad to come back home to know their hometown. Oral narratives from the indigenes explained that this festival is used to raise money for developmental projects in the settlements. *Avenor-Hogbeza*, on the other hand, is considered the biggest festival involving the entire Avenor ethnic group which is celebrated at Avenorpeme, the traditional headquarters of Avenor people. The *Avenor-Hogbeza* is just like the *Hogbeza* of the *Anlo* people, and it is believed to be borrowed from the *Anlo* people (though there is little evidence) due to their historic influence on the Avenor people. During the festivals, young maidens dressed in beads and cloth without a dress carry stools to the durbar ground amidst singing and dancing.

3. Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study using the narrative and descriptive inquiry methods. This paved the way for describing the experiences of the respondents (Mohajan, 2018; Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2012) and as such facilitated in-depth interrogation and access to rich data. The study principally examined the history of weaving as a developing culture within the Akatsi locality and its current economic disposition on the livelihood of the people through observation and interviews. A sample of 20 respondents constituting 10 weavers, six elders and four cloth traders located at the *Tatorme*, *Anyidzime*, *Zuta* and *Tuime* localities within the Akatsi municipality. The smaller sample size made it convenient for conducting single interviews with the respondents who were mainly residents of the Akatsi community. Through the single interviews, respondents were individually interacted with for detailed probing (Creswell, 2014) to obtain rich information. Initial stages of data collection were instigated by analytical field observations aided by observation guides with foci on examination of the weaving process used by the weavers at Akatsi.

The unobtrusive observations (Lee, 2017) also triggered open-ended and semi-structured questions aimed at delving deeper into the narratives about historical developments of the weaving in the locality. All participants were interviewed in face-to-face interaction. However, some traditional protocols were followed such as presenting bottles of Schnapps to seek permission with the help of a mediator before commencing interview sessions with the elders as custom demands. The Schnapps, according to the customs of the people, represents respect and dignity for the elderly were done on ethical grounds therefore had no reverse influences on the data obtained. It also served as a key to open the link of confidential conversations relating to the history of the people through the pouring of libations.

The observations and interviews were conducted in the local language (Ewe) and were pre-scheduled at the convenience of the respondents while adhering strictly to agreed time schedules. The research team had

profound proficiency in speaking and writing the Ewe language thereby making data collection and transcription much easier. Three-member focused group interviews were espoused after individual interviews to enact validity and reliability. Also, the six elders interviewed on the historical accounts regarding the weaving culture were purposefully selected using the quota sampling technique with age 60 and above as a criterion to ensure the reliability of the historical narratives. On ethical grounds, the participants were allocated pseudo names in the reporting (Gerrard, 2020) and a summary of the demographic information on participants (see Table 1) has been presented. Also, the focused-group interactions aided in triangulation for data reliability and validity.

Data obtained were sorted and presented in text and figures. Pictorial presentation of the phenomena as observed from the field helped to drive home clarity of information and enriches the narratives (Basil, 2011; Close, 2007). The analysis began with data collection, sorting and configuration using descriptive and thematic procedures. Content analysis of the observed weaving processes in juxtaposition with the narratives played a significant role in making sound conclusions. Regarding the weave patterns and cloth designs, themes were developed based on the characteristics of the designs for categorisation and analysis through aesthetic discourse.

Table 1: Demographic summary statistics of participants

Description	Weavers	Elders	Kete cloth traders
Age bracket	35 – 60	60 – 88	37 – 50
Participants by Locality	<i>Tatorme</i> – 4 <i>Anyidzime</i> – 6	<i>Tatorme</i> – 3 <i>Anyidzime</i> – 3	<i>Tatorme</i> – 2 <i>Anyidzime</i> – 2
Total participants	10	6	4
Total	20		

Source: Fieldwork data, 2021

4. Discussions

4.1. Akatsi weaving culture

As stated at the onset, the people of Akatsi have been known as farmers and traders. Like any other ethnicity, these unique practices provide identity for the people of Akatsi as their culture. Even as identity remains the hallmark of a particular group, interaction and encounters with people of different origins impact greatly on the traditions and practices of the people. At every point in time, culture is influenced by the dynamism of time and external factors of modernisation, globalisation and technological advancement (Eicher, 2000; Johnson, 2013; Essel & Amissah, 2015). Perhaps exactly what happened in this case of the Akatsi people. The people of Akatsi have demonstrated the dynamism of culture concerning the time and needs of a people.

As a people who are known to be hardworking farmers and traders, the people of Akatsi, mainly the youth adopted the weaving culture as a lucrative venture to support their financial needs. However, narratives of some earliest weavers in Akatsi as disclosed in a three-member focused-group interview with the elderly respondents indicate that the act was initially practised by some individuals before 1968 but was made popular by some veterans called Amekuedi Joseph and Agbobi. It was said that these genius weavers had learned the craft from Agotime-Kpetoe before settling in Akatsi. Their weaves were characterised by pictorial motifs and geometrical colourful patterns which they firmly cling to until a man named Kpogo joined them in 1987.

Historical narratives as told by one of the respondents, an elderly weaver (age, 70), purports that Agbobi contributed to the spread of weaving in Akatsi when he first organized weaving training for the youth in the district under the auspices of the National Commission on Culture. The training is believed to have opened the floodgates of embracing weaving as a new culture by the Akatsi people. The people of Akatsi have acted in harmony with Owusu (2020) who opines that culture is commercial and for that matter ‘money’, which occupies a crucial role in the socio-economic livelihood of a people. One of the respondents (age, 60) retorts that ‘to the

Akatsi people, this new culture is not just a way of life but an economic life as it were for the farming and the trading' (A. Togbe, personal communication, June 17, 2021).

An interesting and mind-boggling phenomenon observed was that the weavers were all males while the females mainly engaged in the trading of the weaving accessories and the woven cloths. This finding harmonizes with an earlier study by Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014) that Asante *Kente* weavers are also mainly males. This harmony induced a further probe into why weavers at Akatsi were predominantly males. In an interview with one of the elders (aged, 70), it was disclosed that right from the originating village (Agotime-Kpetoe), it is taboo and forbidden for females to sit in the *agba* (meaning loom in Ewe language). The elderly man continued to explain that the taboo has an underpinning of practical wisdom. According to him, "customs of the people require that women take care of their home by cooking and feeding the family, therefore, it would be unwise for women to retard into weaving – an act which demands sitting all day to the detriment of feeding the entire family" (B. Togbe, personal communication, June 20, 2021). This is evidence that in Ghana taboos were made for social benefits (Aryeetey et al., 2016).

Indeed, forbidding women from weaving thus gives the men responsible occupation and capacitates them to fend for their families as well. We find a parallel scientific basis for this taboo for which we argue in favour of this indigenous knowledge that sitting for long hours has medical consequences (Johansson et al., 2020; Naqvi et al., 2013). Commenting on the issue of taboo, another elder explained that forbidding women from weaving is not to render them inferior to men but rather to protect them and establish distributed responsibility among men and women in society. He added that the women at Akatsi locality are hardworking traders who engage in the rotational commercial activities within the sub-region which occurs every four days at Akatsi, Sogakope, Dabala, Adidome, Anloga and others. The trading activities keep the women occupied as they travel from one market to the other selling their farm products and other commodities. It appears that the men have more time at hand when they return from the farm while others who do not engage in farming activities are full-time weavers or commercial drivers. Weaving in Akatsi has gained firm grounds because of the industrious nature of the indigenes.

The study found that currently, there are four major suburbs in the Akatsi community namely, *Tatorme*, *Tuime*, *Zuta* and *Anyidzime* where weaving is done on a commercial scale. At the weaving centres, the master weaver employs and trains other weavers including the youth for the production. According to one elder, most of the youth have benefited from learning the act thereby preventing them from indulging in social vices. It was observed at the weaving centres that most of the weavers are youth between the ages of 18 and 39 whereas few were between the age brackets of 40 and 69. *Table 2* presents summary information on weavers at the two weaving centres within the Akatsi locality.

Again, the study found that the weaving centres dwell on indigenous knowledge and local materials for their establishment and infrastructure. Whereas the structure which serves as the studio was constructed with mud and sticks and roofed with iron sheets, the loom and its accessories were made of simple sticks and stone or blocks. It appears that the major equipment for weaving has not been improved over the years just as in the case of Bonwire and Agotime-Kpetoe weavers.

Table 2: Summary data on weaving centres in the Akatsi locality

Weaving centre	Tatorme Centre (1)	Tatorme Centre (2)	Tatorme Centre (3)	Anyidzime Centre	Zuta Centre	Tuime Centre
Owner	Ayikpa Atsu Christian	Wordi Christopher	Agbodi Francis Yao	Amekuedi Joseph	Nuworza Korshie	Awudi Jerry
Year established	2015	2005	2004	1975	2009	2017
Number of looms	7	15	12	18	20	20

Weavers between ages 18 & 39	7	12	12	12	20	18
Weavers between ages 40 & 69	-	3	-	5	-	2
Weavers of age 70 above	-	-	-	1	-	-
Average quantity produced per day	Female Cloth:4 Male Cloth: 1	Female Cloth: 8 Male Cloth: 3	Female Cloth: 8 Male Cloth: 2	Female Cloth:54 Male Cloth: 18	Female Cloth: 12 Male Cloth:3	Female Cloth:12 Male Cloth: 3
Average weekly sales (GHS)	8,200.00	-	17,000.00	37,000.00	28,000.00	26,000.00
Number of weavers trained since the establishment	5	15	28	54	10	4

Source: Fieldwork data, 2021

4.2. Akatsi Kete designs

As established earlier, weaving has not been part of the local culture of the Akatsi people, rather was learnt from the weavers of Agotime-Kpetoe. For this reason, the research team was curious to establish through critical observation the nature and characteristics of the *kete* design patterns of Akatsi weavers. In a probing interview with the weavers, it was disclosed that the designs and weave patterns (figures 2 to 10) “were duplicates of what is originally produced by the Agotime-Kpetoe weavers” (Summarised response, focused group interview, December 21, 2021).

Another weaver explained that they already have designs and weaving patterns they follow therefore do not have to create new ones. To them, following the already existing design patterns makes it convenient for rapid reproduction. In a critical analysis, we found that duplicating designs by the weaver might seem convenient for them but not a good stand to take in a creative industry. The duplication of patterns not only stifles creativity but also has strong legal implications on copyright issues. Monotonous designs could also have negative effects on consumer choices of patronage. At the weaving centres in the localities visited, it was observed that every centre has a master weaver who provides apprenticeship training for the weavers. The patterns used by the weavers are taught by the master weavers using existing sample weave designs.

The study found that there were no significant differences between the weaving process used by the Akatsi weavers and that employed by the Asante and Agotime-Kpetoe weavers. However, what makes the Akatsi weaves unique is how the weavers are able to combine multiple design patterns of the Agotime or Asante weaves into a single cloth design. The *kete* weavers at Akatsi locality have their unique characteristics and names. A catalogue of the examples has been selected and presented pictorially for aesthetic discourse. In organising the data, the *kete* designs from Akatsi weavers were identified and presented according to the common weave designs.



Figure 2: Takpekpe le Anloga or Xevi wala design. Source: Fieldwork data, 2021.

Takpekpe le Anloga or *Xevi wala* (figure 2) is a tapestry hand-woven Akatsi *Kete*. It is a weft-faced weaving that hides the warp in the completed weave. It has geometric shapes as its motifs. The cloth design can be made in different dominating colours (for example include figures 4, 5, 7 and 11). The rich bright and usually one hue-dominating cloth can be worn by both men and women for joyful occasions like festivals, naming and marriage ceremonies. On such occasions, patriarchs and royals also use it. This cloth can be woven using sixty days. “The name *Takpekpe le Anloga* means meeting at Anloga. Initially, this cloth pattern was woven for the various Anlo chiefs for a paramount meeting of Anlo states at Anloga, which brought forth its name” (Togbe, aged 75, personal communication, December 20, 2021).



Figure 3. Tapestry weave designs. **Source:** Fieldwork data, 2021

Tapestry is the weaving style used in weaving most of the hand-woven *Kete* in Akatsi (see figure 3). The tapestry design is characterised by weft-faced and warp-faced. Most of the cloth hides the warp and the remaining part hides the weft. Its motifs are made up of geometric and amorphous shapes. The cloth has its most in part primary colours and the remaining part has secondary colours. These colours are bright and can be used on joyful occasions such as naming and marriage ceremonies, and religious and festive occasions. This design is mostly used by women, at times by men. It is commonly used by the youth, elders, nobles and royals. About sixty days is used in weaving a male or a set of female cloth.



Figure 4: *Gifty Anti* design. **Source:** Fieldwork, data 2021

Figure 4 presents another *kete* design woven in Akatsi. This design pattern is called *Gifty Anti*. According to the weavers, this design is part of the weave partners collectively also known as *Takpekpe le Anloga* which is also done using the tapestry type of weave. This design is a weft-faced design made up of geometric shape motifs called *Tsakpalu* or *Champion ewuator*. The colours are primary colours, secondary colours and neutral colours. The design is colourful and is worn by women mostly, and by men sparsely during festivals, naming and marriage ceremonies and religious occasions. According to the elderly weavers, “this design is worn by youths, elders, nobles and royals. And it can take 60 days to weave a full length of male-sized and a female set cloth. The *Tsakpalu* is just a name given to the motif. There is no significant meaning ascribed to this motif. It is beautiful and people love it (summarised personal communication, December 20, 2022).



Figure 5: A blue-coloured *Takpekpe le Anloga*. **Source:** Fieldwork data, 2021

The blue-coloured *Takpekpe le Anloga* (figure 5) is also woven using the tapestry weave technique. Using this weave type, the above Akatsi hand-woven *Kete* was woven. The *Kete* is made up of both weft-faced and warp-faced designs with geometric shape motifs called *Ampa* or *Koliko*. The colours are made up of two primary colours. However, the cloth colours generally look cool. The cloth can be worn by both males and females who are youths. Some elderly men, royals and nobles also use it. The cloth is used on joyous occasions. Averagely, 30 days can be used to complete weaving both a full male and a female set.



Figure 6: Aforkpavi ewueve. **Source:** Fieldwork data, 2021

The *Aforkpavi ewueve* (figure 6) is another tapestry-style hand-woven Akatsi *kete* cloth. This *Kete* cloth has a weft-faced design with geometric shapes as motifs known as *Tayati*, *Tobla*, and *Dzikpomor*. The cloth has primary colours with their tints, secondary colour and neutral colour. It is a gay-coloured cloth that can be used by both men and women on happy occasions. Both elderly and youth, male and female and royals and nobles can use it. Weaver is of the view that sixty days can be used in weaving both single male cloth and a set of female cloth. According to the weavers, the motifs originated from AgotimeKpetoe. “What we do here differently is to combine several motifs into one cloth design. It makes our work different and unique” (summarised personal communication, December 20, 2022).



Figure 7. *Nkusoe, Debaya, Tsakpalu and Torgbui Zikpui* designs. **Source:** Fieldwork data, 2021

Another colourful pattern produced among the *Takpekpe le Anloga* weave designs is a multi-motif colourful piece woven with the tapestry style. The cloth has geometrical and amorphous shapes that form its motifs called *Nkusoe* (small eyes), *Debaya* (Branch of palm tree), *Tsakpalu* and *Torgbui Zikpui* (Old man's chair) designs (See figure 7). Some of the shapes have zig-zag edges. The cloth is colourful with primary colours and white colour. The design is weft-faced and is used by both male and female elders or youths, chiefs and queens, and nobles on joyous occasions. According to the weavers, sixty days can be used to weave the design.



Figure 8: *Dzifomor*

Dzifomor (figure 8) is a weft-faced cloth woven using the tapestry weave and is a hand-woven *Kete* weaved by Akatsi Weavers. The cloth has geometrical shapes with zig-zag at the edges as its motifs are called *Tsakpalu* or *ewuene*. It is woven in red, yellow, black and white colours. The cloth is colourful and is used on blissful occasions. Young and elderly men and women, and royals and nobles are fond of using it on joyful occasions. Weavers claimed sixty days is used in weaving a male or a female set.



Figure 9: A Zig-Zag edge *Gifty Anti*. Source: Fieldwork data, 2021

Figure 9 is called *Gifty Anti* and is a tapestry weave *Kete* cloth woven by Akatsi weavers. It is hand-woven *Kete* that has a weft-faced design and is very colourful with motifs that have geometric with zig-zag at the edges. The cloth is colourful with red, yellow, green and violet colours as its palette. The female and male elders and youths wore it during happy occasions. The royals and patriarchs also wore it on the same occasions. A male and female set is woven within forty days.



Figure 10: *Peacetoli*. Source: Fieldwork data, 2021

Peacetoli (figure 9) is a hand-woven *Kete* cloth by Akatsi weavers which is also done using the tapestry weave style. It is a weft-faced design with colours such as violet, white and grey. It has geometric shapes as its motifs

with zig-zag edges. The main motif in the cloth design is called *Fiazikpui* (meaning, the stool of a chief). It is bright in colour and can be used by both elderly and young males and females, and royals due to the purple colour. The weavers claimed forty days can be used to weave both male and female sizes.



Figure 11: Stool motif design, *Takpekpe le Anloga* design. **Source:** Fieldwork data, 2022

4.3. Marketing of Akatsi Kete

The marking of the Akatsi *kete* weaves seems to be on rolling wheels. From the field observation, it was found that there was an available market for the trading of hand-woven *kete* pieces regardless of the few weaving centres with relatively fewer weavers. Questioned the “audacity”, the traders in a focused group interview asserted that “many people come from various places to buy the cloth at Abozome market, majority of the buyers are usually from the Ashanti Region of Ghana” (summarised group interview with *kete* traders, January 20, 2022). However, others view the journey to Agbozume to sell as an additional cost and risk. They, therefore, wish to have *kete* trade market expanded within the Akatsi community.

It was found that the woven fabrics had no special packages. The finished cloth was often wrapped in clear polythene and sealed with a sellotape to shield it from dirt. Moreso, the packaged fabrics had no labels on them. Without the labels, it becomes very difficult to identify the names of the design patterns. However, the traders asserted that the names were known to the dealers and the weavers.

On the part of the weavers, it was observed that they did not have any trademark for their weave design. In a further probe through interviews, it was found that the weavers had little knowledge about patent and copyright issues. Much of their concerns were tuned to the ability to produce more cloth for the returns they make not bothered about copyright protection which they had little idea about. There were no traces of digital branding and marketing found as means of reaching the international market on the weavers and sellers. The only form of technology they rely on is pre-orders which were done through phone calls. To both the weavers and the traders, the need for government support is important. Their responses during the interviews revealed that. Whereas the weaver wished to have funding to expand their weaving machinery, the traders expressed that support to raise capital for buying and selling the *kete* cloth will be much appreciated.

Most of the weavers in all the centres visited are youth between the ages of 18 and 39 (see table 2). In an interactive probe, the respondents expressed there are no jobs for the youth hence weaving is much preferred by them than going to the farm. One elder recounted that many of the youth travel to the capital whereas others go to the Asanteland to weave the cloth there. We found this statement as a potential research area worth exploring. The researchers believe that perhaps exploring the demographic background of kente weavers in the three major weaving villages in the Asanteland will provide further insight into the validity of the assertion that many Ewe people have migrated to do the weaving there. Looking at the structures of the weaving centres, they appeared to be similar to the already documented weaving structures and environment found in existing literature (Kraamer, 2006; Dotse, 2015; Dزامboe, 2016; Dotsey, 2019).

5. Conclusion and recommendation

Kete weaving in Akatsi is gaining its grounds as a developing culture amidst several challenges. The *kete* weaving in Akatsi is predominantly done by the youth. However, many require some level of a financial push to expand the establishment of the weaving industry. The weavers do not have an association and leadership front thereby making it difficult for them to get financial aid from financial institutions. Akatsi weavers depend heavily on weave patterns and designs from Agotime Kpetoe for their weaves. However, what makes Akatsi *kete* weave designs unique is their ability to combine multiple design motifs into a single cloth which makes their cloth much more colourful and somewhat complex. Weavers seem to have little knowledge of branding and copyright issues relating to their craft whereas the traders lack digital marketing strategies to reach wider clients globally.

The study recommends that the Commission for Technical Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) should consider providing entrepreneurial training on branding and packaging for both weavers and traders to enhance their trade. Also, the government through its ministries can take a keen interest in establishing weaving centres to help train more youth in the trade. Given the industrious nature of the Akatsi locality, the weaving centres will intensify the economic culture of the region and become one of the national hubs for *kete* weaving as well as for skill development and training. In this regard, *kete* weaving in Akatsi will thus contribute greatly to attaining the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of poverty reduction in Ghana. Again, given the high number of Akans buyers of Akatsi *kete* from the traders and the allegations regarding the youth in Akatsi migrating to the Asanteland to do their weaving, there is a need for a further empirical study to establish the ethnic demography of *kente* weavers in the three major weaving centres in Ashanti region. The results will be imperative to engage a national discourse on the rebranding of this Master Craft as a Ghanaian brand rather than an Asante or Ewe ethnical ownership claim.

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