

**FROM THE VERTICAL LOOM TO THE PRINTING TABLE AND UNTO THE BODY:
TRANSFERRING WOVEN DESIGNS OF THE AKWETE-IGBO ON CLOTH AS PRINTS FOR
CONTEMPORARY FASHION...Chika Chudi - Duru**

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AS PRINTS FOR CONTEMPORARY FASHION.**

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Abstract

Most African cultures have certain fabrics attributed to them. Some are hand woven, printed or painted. Most are produced manually. Most of these indigenous fabrics especially the hand woven pieces are quite heavy and due to the climate of the tropics where they are produced, they are used for special occasions only, they are not often utilized to construct some fashionable clothing to suit the weather. Thus it has become imperative to produce some printed versions which bear the same information as the woven pieces. The printed versions can be mass produced in the industries to reach a good number of people more than the woven pieces which consume much time, money and energy. In this study, some woven design symbols of Akwete fabrics were transferred to cotton fabrics to enable it register its name in the ever competing world of printed textiles, where newer designs evolve every day to replace the older ones and thereafter used in contemporary fashion. In the absence of a woven piece, a printed piece could also serve because it is still communicating the same message. This is a mixed method research, which comprises of qualitative and quantitative (statistical tools). Therefore, this study utilized the descriptive survey and studio exploration as the research designs. It employed the use of questionnaire and focus group discussion to collect some data because the weaving tradition and their products were investigated. Also photography and observations were the instruments used in collecting some data. One among the findings is that Akwete woven designs produced appropriate prints when transferred on to fabrics as prints. It recommends that some further researches should be carried out on other indigenous fabric designs for it to remain the best choice for constructing indigenous fashionable apparels.

Keywords: Akwete woven designs, vertical loom, printed fabrics, contemporary fashion.

Introduction/background to the study

Interestingly, the art of cloth weaving known as Akwete weaving is still practiced by women and girls *in* Ndoki and Asa areas of Abia State in Nigeria. Akwete woven fabrics are named after a prominent town called Akwete in Ndoki clan where they are majorly produced. The heavily ornamented woven cloth-Akwete is a distinctive woven cloth which is revered in Igbo society. That justifies why they are utilized for special occasions. For instance, in Igbo land the woven pieces are used as royal costumes during coronation. It is also one of the most famous of the women vertical loom clothes in Nigeria produced by females with gifted hands (chudi-duru 2017). Sinha (2012) also strongly affirms that the weavers of these traditionally hand woven cloth of the Igbo are highly talented women who use a uniquely wide version of the single heddle loom known as the women's vertical loom. This study notes that, Chudi-duru (2017) and Sinha (2012) made their observations based on dexterity displayed by the weavers on woven structures of their weaves. She further mentions that the

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skills are being transferred from mother to daughter or female to female since ancient times till date. A sample of the vertical loom for weaving Akwete fabrics is placed below on plate 1.



Plate 1: A weaver in Akwete Co-operative Women's Society (ACWS) weaving center using the vertical loom. Photograph by Chika Chudi-Duru (2017).

This study notes that there are many stories on the origin of Akwete woven fabrics. For instance, Ekwueme (2009) is of the view that from the island of Bonny in Rivers State, came the ancestors of this Igbo traditional costume of the highly gifted community. She says that while the men were fishermen, the women designed and wove the intricate patterns now known as *Akwete*. She reveals that weaving is the traditional profession of the women folk who started weaving from the time their hands were strong enough to handle a vertical loom. Ogu and Ndebilie (2011) share the same view with Ekwueme (2009), and declare that most women in *Akwete* know how to weave and the younger ones are taught to weave as soon as they can operate the vertical loom. But Afigbo (1981), Goodlife (2010) and Sinha (2012) also disagree with this view of Ekwueme (2009) concerning the origin of its weaving vocation, and said that *Dada Nwakwata* the legendary weaver, is the founder of *Akwete* weaving. This study notes that all the stories on the origin of Akwete weaving, mention that the women all wove and still weave with the women's vertical loom till date.

However, the woven fabrics are becoming more unpopular among the women, men and the youths because it cannot compete favourably with the other fabrics sold in the market, for instance, wax prints, laces and other woven fabrics. Okeke (1996) strongly suggests that modern students of textile design should explore methods of making the Igbo traditional fabric and its decorative designs more acceptable to modern consumers so that the usage of

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foreign textiles can be reduced. Raji et al (2007) in Musa et al (2011), are of the same view with Okeke (2006) and emphasize that Nigerian people generally prefer foreign (textiles) goods over the homemade materials. This is the belief that the performance properties of the foreign-made textiles are better than those produced locally. They further mention that the quality of a textile material is often determined by the texture, usefulness, aesthetic properties, comfort ability during use, and probably past experience.

According to Ekwueme (2009), 1963 was a remarkable year for the *Akwete* cloth manufacturing industry. It was showcased in an exhibition in the United States of America. This particular act boosted its value as a cultural representation of the Nigerian people. This contact internationally intensified awareness of the aesthetics of *Akwete* cloth. It has continued to attract international attention as the largest in size and most elaborate of all the woven cloths in Igbo region but yet, to the best of this study's knowledge they have not been sufficiently utilized in the contemporary fashion industry in Nigeria.

In the contemporary fashion of Nigeria, the fashion industry has grown. According to Osa- Brown and Emelike (2012) 'Nigeria has come out of its shell and presented her fashion to the world because the world needs to know that there is more to Nigeria in fashion'. The local fabrics used to make these new fashion statements are the adinkra and kente from Ghana, aso-oke of the Yoruba, African wax prints, laces, george materials from Asian countries with *Akwete* cloth not in the list. All these are in the fashion scene in Nigeria, always undergoing one modification or the other and effortlessly finding their way in to the wardrobes of the fashion conscious because the contemporary fashion allows for both the traditionally handmade and factory made fabrics (contemporary) to be combined in colourful designs to make appropriate styles in fashion.

Furthermore, this study has observed that the designs and decoration on *Akwete* hand woven fabrics are symbolic and depict Igbo culture and Davis (1974), reported that *Akwete* hand woven fabrics have been used in producing household items. It is assumed that if they are also used in other aspects of Nigerian costumes like prints, for both adults and children, they will be appreciated by everyone. According to Fibre to Fashion (2013), Nigerian designers are making a space for themselves globally in the fashion scene and also bringing international fashion home. It has observed that the Nigerian fashion industry is no longer recognized as an amateur industry, confined to local limits and it is paving its way into global fashion destinations like; Paris, London, New York and Milan by a rise in appearances as African prints were used to construct some clothing but the absence of *Akwete* hand woven cloths and its printed versions were noticed by this study. It further mentions that Nigerian designers are not just following or imitating the global trends or styles rather some of the Nigerian fashion brands are utilizing the Nigerian culture and promoting the local fabrics like African wax fabrics (*Ankara*), which has gained good popularity worldwide since it appeared on the fashion runway during New York fashion week and other fashion events worldwide in the twenty-first century. This study, therefore, is of the view that suitable and appropriate designs be obtained from traditional designs and adapted on printed textiles (*Ankara*) for producing some garments to reflect Nigerian culture. Thus it is against this background that this study on the *Akwete* weaves motifs was carried out, the motifs were extracted from the woven pieces and utilized as design motifs on printed textiles to produce *Akwete Ankara*.

Contemporary fashion

Contemporary in this context means modern, things of the present age. Contemporary in fashion means any fashion item that is conformed to modern or current ideas in style and design (Simmons 2015). In the global context the cloth fashion is always presented in a

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contemporary way, otherwise people will find it difficult to be adorned in the clothes of their forebears without any modifications to suit the current trends. According to Jennings (2011), Africa is fashion's new boundary and did not receive a recognition in the worlds' fashion for over half a century. She further mentions that this days' generation of talented designers have attracted international customers by combining contemporary and African fashion to produce some designs. These designs are found in most cities of Africa. Jennings (2011) also mentions that Africa's indigenous fabrics have survived and adapted to the introduction of cheaper industrially made products and imports of luxury fabrics which include lace, silk, velvet, damask and so on and so forth.

Miguel (2015) asserts that contemporary designers conduct researches on fashion trends and interpret them for their audience. Several attempts were made by them to design clothes that are functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. In designing, who is likely to wear a garment and the situations in which it will be worn were usually considered. This study, is of the opinion that these processes mentioned by Miguel (2015) should be applied to *Akwete* printed fabrics in fashion designs.

Problem of the study

It is not in doubt that *Akwete* hand woven fabrics of the Igbo have not been utilized in the contemporary fashion of Nigeria, while some of its counterparts are still in constant use in African fashion. Since it is heavy, and regarded as a traditional cloth, should it be allowed to be found in international museums and private collections only? Or should it be regarded as the most celebrated of all the woven cloth in Nigeria woven by the Igbo women without any modifications to thrill and draw the attention of the Igbo and Nigerians at large to it for body adornment?

This study has observed that the Kente woven cloth of Ghana has Kente printed version which is worn by even Nigerians. Also, the Mud cloth from Mali also has Mud cloth print and other indigenously produced fabrics in Africa, which many designers in Europe and America have utilized in producing some apparels that were showcased on runways. In Nigeria, Ojo (2004), has also adapted contemporary motifs on light-weight hand woven fabrics (*aso-oke*) using screen printing as a technique and the results obtained, during this exercise, were positive. Therefore, the problem of this study is that *Akwete* woven fabrics and its symbolic woven motifs are almost fast disappearing in the contemporary fashion scene in Nigeria. Thus, there is a need for more innovations to re-launch it into the fashion scene as suggested by Okeke, (1996). Since it has some appropriate motifs that tell the story of Igbo worldview and are cherished by the Igbo that own them, it has become pertinent that this study is carried out. Therefore, this study surveyed *akwete* weaving tradition, collected and examined some woven fabrics, the motifs were extracted and utilized as design motifs on printed textiles in the studio for constructing some apparels, so that the *Akwete* weaving traditions' story could record its presence in the world of African printed textiles, kept alive by adding the prints as fabrics for fashion designers to showcase their creativity, satisfy peoples expectation for the printed version of *akwete* woven fabrics and also aid their sustainability. During the course of this study, two set objectives were raised; and they are as follows:

Objectives of the study

1. Identify the importance of *Akwete* woven fabrics in the traditional Igbo society and fashion industry in Nigeria.
2. Explore the suitability of *Akwete* woven motifs for printed textiles.

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Research questions

1. In what ways have Akwete woven fabrics been utilized sufficiently enough in Igbo land to attract much attention in Nigeria contemporary fashion and beyond?
2. What will be the outcome of the exploration of Akwete woven design motifs on printed textiles?

Methodology

This study made use of descriptive survey and studio exploratory research designs. Akwete weaving tradition was investigated to obtain some information. It also made use of a mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative) in collection of data, and adopted some research instruments. The qualitative was used because the Akwete weaving tradition was observed, studied, described, documented and experimented with in the studio. In quantitative method, the descriptive statistical tools of mean and standard deviation were employed because it used measurable attributes and information to create statistical data about the population that was studied. The results from the questionnaire were thereafter analyzed and presented on tables.

Area of study

The study area is Akwete in Abia state, the place where the woven fabrics are woven. Almost all the houses in Akwete town, have the vertical looms places at the balconies. They weave most times after they must have come back from their farms or other jobs. The weaving there, have become more of part-time activity in recent times.

Population for the study

The population of this study is the woven fabric designs found during this study in Akwete, weavers and some staff and students of some selected higher institutions in Abia state. In reducing the population to a sample size that was used to investigate the phenomenon, this formula as propounded by Krejcie and Morgan (2001) was used to determine the sample size of the known estimated population of forty-eight thousand, three hundred and twenty four thousand (48,324) from the three tertiary institutions surveyed in Abia State University Uturu, Abia State Polytechnic, Aba and College of Education (Technical) Arochukwu, Abia State. The calculated sample size for the study is 381. These respondents were randomly selected based on their faculties and departments. Faculty of environmental sciences was selected because it is considered knowledgeable enough to provide constructive answers for this study.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study are questionnaire, Photography and observations. The questionnaire was a five point likert scale questionnaire with response ratings of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Undecided. It was used to examine the Akwete weaving industry. A theoretical mean of 3.0 according to Davies (2005) was taken as a criterion to judge the means for the items in the structured questionnaire having five Likert rated format. For this study, the researcher administered three hundred and eighty one (381) questionnaires to the respondents.

Reliability of the instrument

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The questionnaire and focus group questions were designed by the researcher and scrutinized by some experts in the field from the Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Administration of the instrument

The instrument was administered to the respondents in those higher institutions using purposive random sampling because this study is of the view that since *Akwete* woven fabrics are not just woven and worn by only *Akwete* people but the whole Igbo land and beyond and it is necessary that one samples the higher institutions because those are the places where one can find many people from different parts of the country to respond favourably to the questionnaires. The questionnaires were shared among the three higher institutions chosen in the study area, 161 questionnaires were administered to Abia State University, Uturu in Abia South, Abia Polytechnic Aba in Abia Central was administered with 120 questionnaires while Abia State College of Education (Technical), Arochukwu in Abia North was administered with 101 questionnaires. After the coding and processing of data using the SPSS scale, three hundred and thirty seven (337) of the questionnaire were considered valid at 88.5% return rate and were used in the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. This was made possible through the help of some assistants co-opted by the researcher during this study.

Studio exploration: Printing Tools and Materials used for producing the Printed Samples.

In this segment, the woven designs are transferred to the paper as designs for surface decoration on plain cotton fabrics on a printing table as sample prints. The printing tools and materials used for producing the printed samples are: *Akwete* woven motif designs, Printing table, organdy silkscreen fabric or polyester, laser printer film paper, smooth wooden frame, staple gun, squeegee, set of silkscreen photosensitizer and emulsion, printed designs in black and white for photographic transfer, plain 100% cotton fabrics, buckets of water, a piece of foam, a sheet of clear non-coloured glass, masking tape, fabric inks, acrylic paints, 3D fabric paint, a spoon, small containers for mixing the pigments, ruler, paper and notebooks, scanner and a computer or laptop, tape, acrylic yarn.

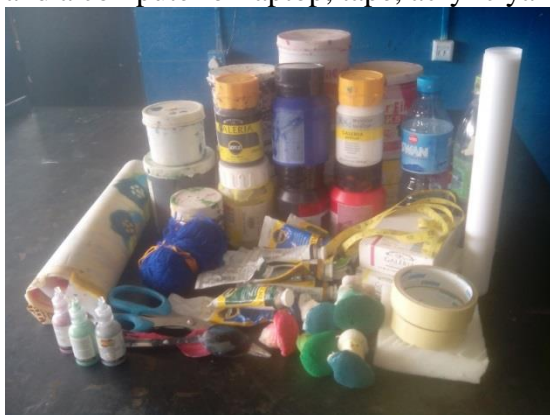


Plate II: Some of the printing tools used for the studio exploration.

Source: Chudi-Duru (2016)

Studio exploration 1



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Ebe motif



First stage



Second stage



Third stage



Final stage

Plate III: Ebe afomkpo design motif printed fabric **Source:** Chudi-Duru (2016)

The printing process utilised in this studio practical is the stenciling technique only. It is a two coloured printed fabric. The fabric was desized in order to remove any industrial finishing which was applied during its manufacturing in the industry so as to be more absorbent to the printing inks. After its' pretreatment, it was ironed to remove any form of crease. The fabric was placed on the printing table with a masking tape so as to be firm while printing. The portions in which the designs will be printed on were demarcated with a tiny sewing thread. This was done according to the measurement of the design to be printed. Before the printing, a preliminary study was carried out and the design was sketched. The design was then scanned into the computer and arranged the way the researcher felt it will be appropriate for printed fabrics. The ebe motif was stylised a bit to make it more attractive but still retained its traditional shape. Instead of utilizing one colour and showing the woven details, the researcher chose to stylize the motif and see if it will be appropriate for printed fabrics. At the end of designing with the CorelDraw, a design was created out of the *ebe* motif.

The design was printed out on laser film papers and the stencils were cut. A total number of 4 stencils were cut before embarking on the printing process in the studio. The stencils were separated into 4 pieces. The *ebe* motif itself with the dots is number one, the little *ebe* inside the *ebe* motif which is red in colour is number two, the stem-like lines to the right is number three, while the other stem to the left is number four. During the printing, the designs on the stencils were dabbed on the fabrics using a piece of tied foam. The paints that were used to carry out this studio practical were the acrylic paints. Another experiment comprising of another colour scheme was carried out with the *ebe* motif during the studio practical. Below on this figure is the computer aided design format.

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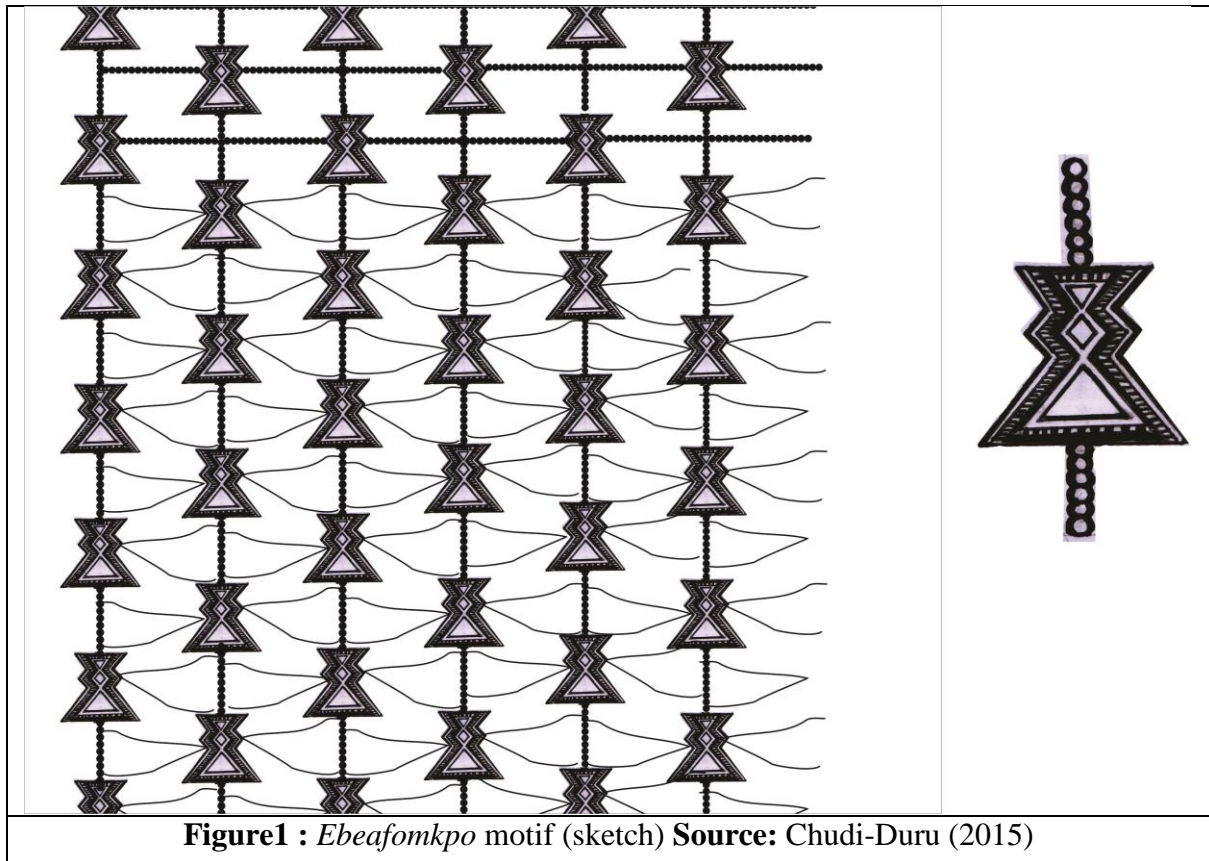


Figure1 : Ebeafomkpo motif (sketch) Source: Chudi-Duru (2015)

Studio exploration 2



First stage



Second stage



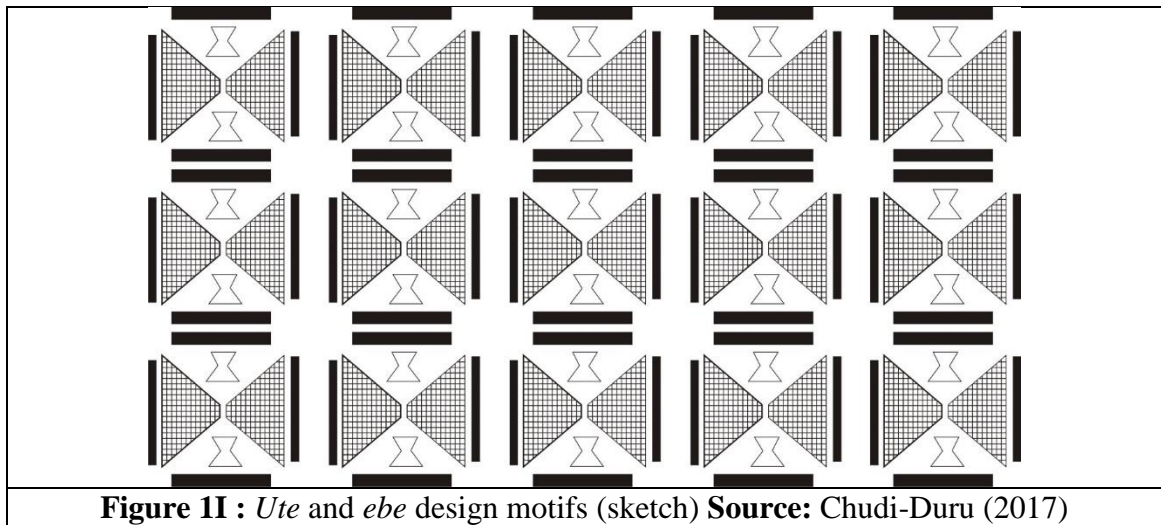
Third stage

Plate IV : Ute and ebe design motifs printed fabric. Source: Chudi-Duru (2016)

The technique that has been utilised in this studio exploration is the stenciling. This is a two coloured printed fabric. The processes utilised in the studio exploration are documented below. The hundred percent cotton fabric was desized in order to have more affinity for dyes and printing inks. First of all, the fabric was block dyed to colour yellow before printing on it. The materials that were utilised for the dyeing exercise are a yellow dye, caustic soda, sodium hydrosulphite, buckets of cold and hot water, white cotton fabric. It was dried, ironed and fixed to the table with a masking tape. The dimension of the design was taken and marked on the fabric laid on the printing table. Before the printing commenced, there was a

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preliminary study conducted by this study after which the motif was scanned into the computer and arranged the way the researcher wanted it to be, using the Corel draw application. The design made in the computer with these motifs was printed out in a laser film paper. Stencils were cut out of the printed designs. After which the researcher cut the stencils with a cutter. Two different stencils were cut for this studio practical. Other spares were also kept standby in case there's a cut. The printing commenced. This particular design was carried out by dabbing with a piece of foam that was tied with a string to provide a handle that can be held while printing. It has a smooth base which serves as a carrier of the colour of the desired ink required for the design. Below on this figure is the computer aided design format.



Studio exploration 3



First stage



Second stage



Third stage



Final stage

Plate V : *Popo*, *ebe* and *ute* motif design (printing stages). Source: Chudi-Duru (2017)

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This is a six coloured printed fabric and three motifs were involved. The techniques that were utilised in this studio exploration were the stenciling technique and block dyeing. Before the exploration began, preliminary studies were conducted with these motifs. After which the fabric was prepared for printing. The processes are recorded below.

The white fabric was desized. After the pretreatment, it was dyed into a purple colour. The fabric was ironed after the dyeing process and drying. The fabric was laid and fastened to the printing table with a masking tape to enable its firmness on the table. The portions in which the designs were printed on were demarcated with a tiny sewing thread. This was done according to the measurement of the design to be printed. A total number of five stencils were cut before embarking on the printing process in the studio. The design which was the result from the preliminary studies was scanned into the computer and arranged. At the end of designing with the CorelDraw, a design was created out of these motifs.

The design was printed out on film papers and the stencils were cut. The stencils were separated into different parts according to their various colours to be printed. The printing was carried out by making use of a piece of tied foam which was used to dab the designs that were cut out on the stencils onto the fabric. The paints that were used to carry out this studio practical were acrylic paint. Below on this figure III, is the computer aided design format.

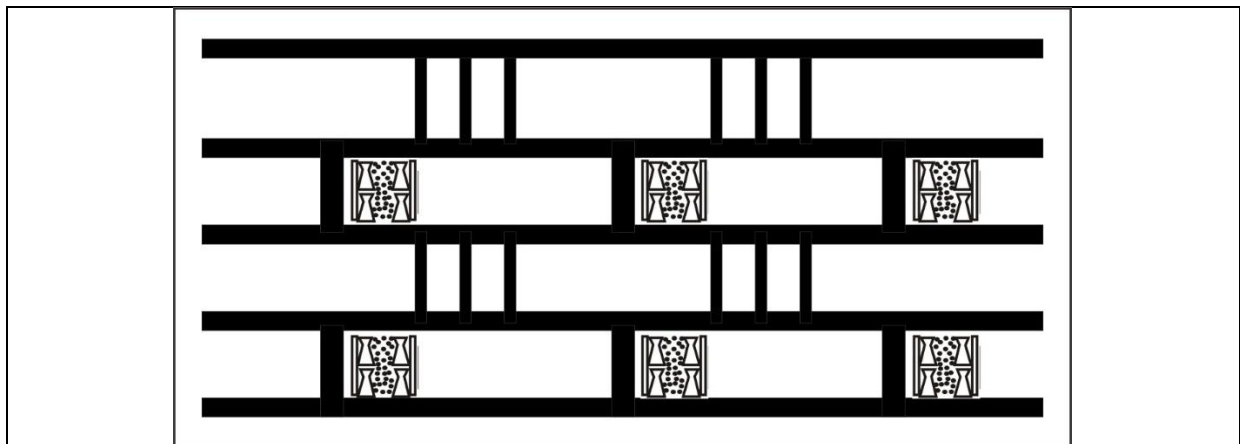


Figure III : *Popo, ebe* and *ute* motif design computer aided design lay-out. **Source:** Chudi-Duru (2017)

Studio exploration 4

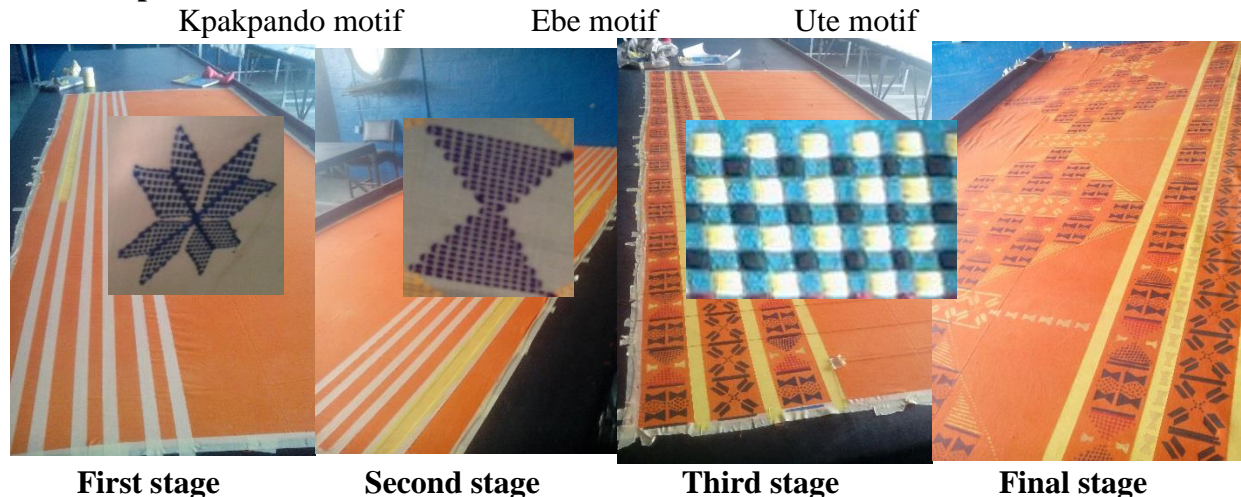


Plate VI : *Ute, ebe* and *kpakpando* design motifs printed fabric. **Source:** Chudi-Duru (2017)

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This is a 5 colour print. The orange background of the fabric was dyed. The fabric was initially white in colour. The motifs were extracted from the woven fabrics by drawing them on the sketch pad during the preliminary study. This was done because the researcher wanted to make use of the outline, not the simulation. The motifs sketched were then scanned into the computer, arranged to form a design which was printed on the cloth. Three motifs were combined to for a design pattern. The dyed cloth was dried, ironed and fixed to the table with a masking tape. The dimension of the design was taken from the paper print out and marked on the fabric laid on the printing table.

The design made was printed out on a film paper. Stencils were cut out of the printed designs. Four different stencils were cut for this studio practical. Other spares were also kept standby. The printing commenced. This particular design was carried out by dabbing with a small piece of foam that is tied at one end to form a flat soft surface. Below on this figure is the computer aided design format.

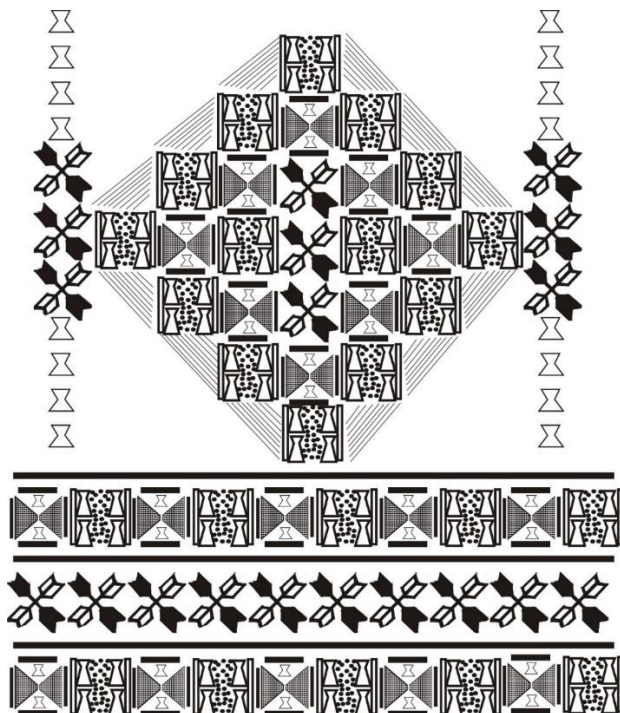


Figure VI: *Ute, ebe* and *kpakpando* design motifs computer aided design. **Source:** Chudi-Duru (2017)

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

In what ways have Akwete woven fabrics been utilized sufficiently enough to attract much attention in Nigerian contemporary fashion?

In order to obtain information on this research question, a questionnaire comprising of ten (7) items were formulated and administered to the respondents. Table 1 shows the items, mean scores and other information on the research question. The data was analyzed by coding the results with the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) after which the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were obtained.

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Table 1. Utilization of Akwete woven fabrics in Nigerian contemporary fashion

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Std. D.	Remarks
1	<i>Akwete</i> hand woven fabrics have been utilized in contemporary fashion in Nigeria to attract much attention.	3.32	1.31	Rejected
2	<i>Akwete</i> hand woven fabrics have been showcased in fashion shows in Nigeria	3.48	1.37	Rejected
3	Contemporary fashion designers have designed a lot of clothes using <i>Akwete</i> hand woven fabrics in which I have some	2.12	1.36	Rejected
4	A lot of users are discouraged by the weight of some <i>Akwete</i> woven fabrics	3.61	1.33	Accepted
5	<i>Akwete</i> weavers should incorporate new ideas to make <i>Akwete</i> more acceptable	4.09	1.21	Accepted
6	<i>Akwete</i> woven fabrics should always undergo a lot of innovations in methods of weaving, types of yarns, colours, and embellishments so as to withstand any form of competition from its counterparts	4.17	1.06	Accepted
7	These innovations will enable the <i>Akwete</i> woven fabrics to be in constant use in the contemporary fashion	3.71	1.42	Accepted

Key: 1 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 3 = strongly disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.
Weighted mean score is 3.84

Source: Chudi-Duru, 2016

Table 1, indicates the responses of respondents on the utilisation of *Akwete* fabrics in the contemporary fashion. The table shows that users and potential users of *Akwete* woven fabrics strongly agreed to some of the items on the questionnaire as follows: A lot of users are discouraged by the weight of some *Akwete* woven fabrics with a mean score of 3.61, *Akwete* weavers should incorporate a lot of new ideas to make *Akwete* more acceptable with a mean score of 4.09, The *Akwete* woven fabric should be made to be more appealing to the buyers with a mean score of 4.09, *Akwete* woven fabrics should always undergo a lot of innovations in methods of weaving, types of yarns, colours, and embellishments so as to withstand any form of competition from its counterparts with a mean score of 4.17, the *Akwete* design motifs should be printed on cotton fabrics so as to be a constant use in the contemporary fashion with a mean score of 3.71, these innovations will make the *Akwete* woven fabrics to be in constant use in the contemporary fashion with a mean score of 3.93, the *Akwete* printed fabrics will convey the same message the woven one has with a mean score of 3.60 and the *Akwete* printed fabrics will also be more affordable to people in Igbo land and beyond local boundaries with a mean score of 3.84. Here also in the table, the respondents disagreed with the assertions that *Akwete* hand woven fabrics have been utilized in contemporary fashion in Nigeria with a mean score of 3.32, *Akwete* hand woven fabrics have been showcased in fashion shows in Nigeria with a mean score of 3.48, contemporary fashion designers have designed a lot of clothes using *Akwete* hand woven fabrics in which I have some with a mean score of 2.12.

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Based on the value of the weighted mean average of 3.84 recorded from the table, it can be inferred that *Akwete* woven fabrics have not been in constant use in contemporary Nigeria. A lot of ideas including the printing of these motifs on fabrics should be incorporated to make it more accepted to the fashion designers who will now use them to produce apparels that will suit the current fashion in Nigeria.

From the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the women claimed that *Akwete* weaving fabrics are being utilised in the contemporary fashion of Nigeria, but the potential users strongly disagreed with this. Some of the weavers said that *Akwete* woven fabrics should not be transferred into prints as they prefer weaving with their hands though there is very low patronage. While some of them want to see the printed versions. Mrs Brown (discussant) revealed that, if the cherished *Akwete* woven cloths are transferred into prints, they will not be able to compete with the other woven fabrics. They still prefer weaving with their hands, which is strenuous but their great grandmothers passed this vocation down to them. They gave birth to them and the weavers saw them weaving. They do not allow other people to encroach into their weaving activities that is why they guard it jealously.

They also pointed out that government needs to come to their aid and promote the weaving industry. This will, in turn, enable the weavers to be more accessible to some quality yarns which will be much cheaper and used to produce more woven wrappers.

Research Question 2: What will be the results of the exploration of *Akwete* woven design motifs on printed textiles?

In order to obtain information on this research question, a questionnaire comprising of ten (10) items were formulated and administered to the respondents. Table 2 shows the items, mean scores and other information on the research question.

Table 2: The Exploration of *Akwete* Woven Designs as Design Motifs for Printed Textiles

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Std. D.	Remark
1	<i>Akwete</i> design motifs are appropriate for prints on cotton fabrics	3.66	1.50	Accepted
2	The design motifs of <i>Akwete</i> woven fabrics should be printed on cotton fabrics to create room for variety	3.81	1.26	Accepted
3	The design motifs of <i>Akwete</i> woven fabrics should be printed directly on the cotton fabrics without alterations.	3.52	1.49	Accepted
4	The design motifs of <i>Akwete</i> woven fabrics should be altered a bit to create other designs and printed on cotton fabrics	3.75	1.5	Accepted
5	The production of <i>Akwete</i> printed fabrics will create a room for more recognition of <i>Akwete</i> weaving tradition	3.85	1.39	Accepted
6	The production will also create awareness and put the printed fabric in constant use in the fashion industry	3.99	1.29	Accepted

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7	The printed fabrics will be demanded by many more than the woven one because of its price and weight	3.88	1.39	Accepted
8	The printed <i>Akwete</i> fabrics should be produced so that people can use them in the contemporary fashion always	4.11	1.31	Accepted
9	The printed <i>Akwete</i> fabrics will not change the symbolic motifs which depict the Igbo world view	3.61	1.53	Accepted
10	The <i>Akwete</i> printed samples can be likened to the adinkra print which consists of adinkra symbols from Ghana, which has got recognition worldwide	3.75	1.45	Accepted

Key: 1 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Weighted mean score is 3.79 **Source:** Chudi-Duru, 2016

Table 4.12 points out, the responses of respondents on the exploration of *Akwete* woven designs as design motifs for printed textiles. The respondents strongly agreed to the following items: *Akwete* design motifs are appropriate for prints on cotton fabrics with a mean score of 3.66, the design motifs of *Akwete* woven fabrics should be printed on cotton fabrics to create room for variety with a mean score of 3.81, the design motifs of *Akwete* woven fabrics should be printed directly on the cotton fabrics without alterations with a mean score of 3.52, the design motifs of *Akwete* woven fabrics should be altered a bit to create other designs and printed on cotton fabrics with a mean score of 3.75, the production of *Akwete* printed fabrics will create a room for more recognition of *Akwete* weaving tradition with a mean score of 3.85, the production will also create awareness and put the printed fabric in constant use in the fashion industry with a mean score of 3.99, the printed fabrics will be demanded by many more than the woven one because of its price and weight with a mean score of 3.79, the printed *Akwete* fabrics should be produced so that people can use them in the contemporary fashion always with a mean score of 4.10 the printed *Akwete* fabrics will not change the symbolic motifs which depict the Igbo worldview with a means score of 3.61, the *Akwete* printed samples can be likened to the adinkra print which consists of adinka symbols from Ghana, which has got some recognition worldwide with a mean score of 3.75.

Based on the value of the weighted mean average of 3.79 recorded from the table, it can be deduced that *Akwete* woven designs are suitable for the exploration as prints on cotton fabrics as this has created a room for variety. The designs that are altered and the ones that are not altered should be utilised for printing on fabrics. The unique qualities of the prints which are its' light weight, easily conveyable and more accessible to the potential users and fashion designers will enable it to be in constant use in the contemporary fashion in Nigeria. In the plates below, the studio exploration results (*akwete* printed fabrics) for research question 2 are placed.

Results and findings

These are the results obtained from the studio practical.

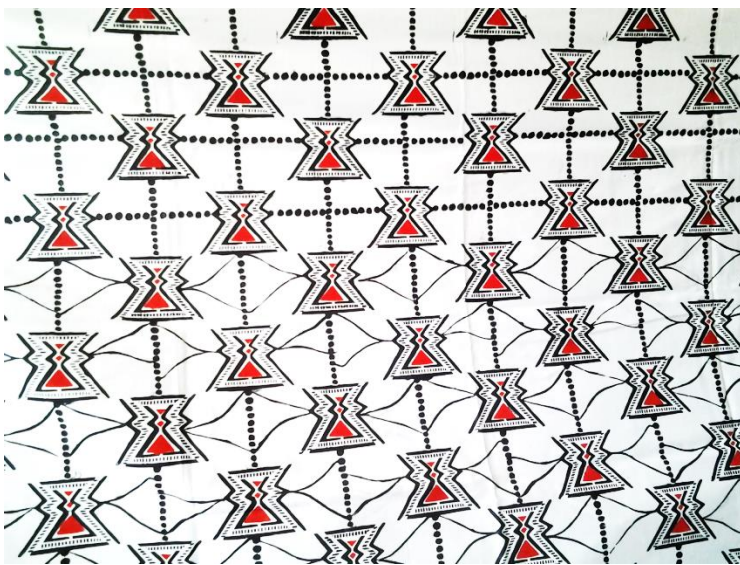
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Studio experiment 1 result. Source: Chudi-Duru (2016)



Studio experiment II result. Source: Chudi-Duru (2017)



Studio experiment 1III result. Source: Chudi-Duru (2016)

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Studio experiment 1V result. Source: Chudi-Duru (2016)

Conclusion

Although some of the weavers kicked against producing some printed versions of the woven pieces, this study advanced to heed to the clarion call of Okeke (1996), some weavers and the potential users of Akwete printed fabrics; who are yearning to behold the printed samples. The studio exploration produced appropriate samples of Akwete printed fabrics by taking the woven samples from the vertical loom, extracted the motif symbols, used them as patterns of designs, then proceeded to the printing table and printed the designs, then made it ready for constructing the printed version into apparels for body adornment.. It has proven that some printed samples could be produced from traditionally hand woven fabrics utilizing their motif symbols. After the whole exercise, it is a pointer that the printed version is still conveying the same message and bearing the same information as their woven counterparts.

Recommendation

This study suggests that Akwete weaving tradition should not be left the way it has been, devoid of innovations. By so doing, it will gradually drift into extinction, which many will frown at. As its counterparts have embraced some variety to aid the sustainability of their traditionally produced fabrics, those designers of Igbo extraction and beyond should also do so by experimenting with the motifs to produce other wearable objects which can be utilized in Nigeria contemporary fashion. It further proposes that the same likeness showered on Ghanas' kente printed fabrics should also be transferred to Akwete printed fabrics, by acquiring and utilizing it in fashion designs perhaps these steps might draw some attention to this weaving tradition and push it to greater heights and also touch some people hearts to desire to behold the woven pieces. Some people that were ignorant of Akwete woven fabrics might come to appreciate printed samples and utilize them quite often. In this way, the sustainability in the fashion world could be sure.

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