

# Artistic Values of *Kusakɔkɔ* or “Cloth Giving” Initiation Rites of Avatime in the Volta Region

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## Abstract

The woman is an important figure in the development of Avatime community. People of Avatime recognize and value the role of women in society and therefore mark the transition of a female from girlhood to womanhood by giving them cloth. The problem is that many artistic values are embedded in the celebration of this transition called *kusakɔkɔ* initiation rites, yet they have not been described, discussed or documented, therefore they could be misplaced. Moreover, appreciable amounts of vital information embodied in *kusakɔkɔ* initiation rites are not being taught in the schools of Avatime. Sadly, the rich cultural heritage embodied in the artistic values which should be preserved have not been documented to put the area in the spotlight of the world. This research adopted a qualitative approach, specifically ethnography, to collect data through observation and interviews. The main findings are that, the Avatimes mark the passage of their girls into womanhood by performing series of rituals known as *kusakɔkɔ*. Numerous artistic values are evident in the rituals. Artistic values are demonstrated in the use of ritualized visual and performing arts including Textiles (costume, ritual cloths, kente, loincloth,), Pottery (ritual pots, ritual bowls, the heaves), Sculpture (ritual stools, special wooden paddles, wooden ladles, wooden trays, drums), Jewellery (beads, ear rings), Basketry (baskets, specially made ritual straw brooms), Calabash art (ritual calabashes, calabashes for measurement), Leatherwork (special sandals *oheneba*, hand bags, belts, etc.), Body art (hairstyle, body painting, hair gear), Photogenic artery, Metal Art, Music (melody), Dance (boogie), Verbal art (poetry recitals, appellation), Drama (excitement)The performing arts serve as symbols of identity and means of communication. Recommendations were that there should be collaboration between the pastors and the custodians of Avatime traditional area to erase the notion that there are sacrilegious beliefs and superstitions embedded in *kusakɔkɔ* rites. It is also recommended that more group ritual activities be encouraged and done once a year for school going girls and workers to participate during school holidays and weekend respectively. Control measures should be instituted to curb promiscuity in the area. Finally, it is highly recommended that this document should be incorporated in the Art Education Curriculum to put the values of *kusakɔkɔ* in the spotlight of the world.

**Keywords:** Artistic values, womanhood, transition, cultural heritage, initiation rites.

## 1. Introduction

Avatime recognizes the value and support of women in society and therefore marks the transition of a female from girlhood to womanhood using special cloth. The woman is a significant figure in the development of Avatime community. Considerably, such recognition is not given to males. Avatime has been identified as an important tourist site which means it will be exposed to the rest of the world physically, culturally, socially and artistically through written and photo documentation.

### 1.1 A brief history of Avatime

The Avatimes are one of the Guan traditional ethnic groups found in the western part of the Volta Region near Ho. They are believed to have migrated from Axim area in the Western Region of Ghana. They settled on the mountain called Gemi, which is the second highest mountain in Ghana.

According to Brydon (1976), the Avatime people who are known in their own language as Avatimes, migrated from Ahantaland currently in the Western Region of Ghana. Dzogbefeme is the seventh settlement of the Avatime people. They were believed to be among the few Guans to settle in the Volta Region. The people of Avatime left Ahanta after a fight broke out as a result of claims over ownership of gold around 1300 years ago. On their journey, they made a brief stopover at Labadi and were joined by the people of the present day Agotime Kpetoe (who still speak Adangbe today). They proceeded to Ada and faced serious opposition when an argument broke out between them and the people of Ada over a pregnant woman.

According to Brydon's (1976) report, the Avatimes and Adas both argued whether the pregnant woman would give birth to a male or a female. The argument resulted in killing the woman to find out what was in her womb, and so, Avatime people had to leave Ada and settled at Amedeka, near Akuse in the Tongu area. They were

joined by Tongu people after leaving Akuse looking for a place to settle. The Agotime, Tongu, Gafe and Avatime later settled at Matse in the Volta Region. They separated after a misunderstanding which led to a fight. The Agotimes who left first went Southwards to Ho and settled across the Zui river while the Avatimes left and settled at Biakpa. The rest of the group left for the present day Gafe and Likpe near Hohoe in the Volta Region. The people of Avatime met settlers already in Biakpa known as *Bayawa* thus they were regarded as last or late settlers known in their language as *Kedane*. The small number of *Bayawa* was subdued by the Avatimes, hence, Avatimes permanent settlement at this hilly area. It is worth noting that the *Bayawa* can still be found today in Biakpa, Fume, Dzokpe, and Vane; however, there are none in Amedzofe and Dzogbefeme (see Figure 1.1).

There are two schools of thought as to how the name Avatime came about. The first school of thought as explained by Brydon says Avati who had been their leader for a long time, later died at Taviefe hence the name Avatime. The second school of thought also has it that the name came from the Ewe word *Avatiwome* implying “in the war trees” because they were war-like. The two Avatime towns Amedzofe and Gbadzeme are those believed to originate from Benepe in Nzima.

The land currently occupied by the Avatime people was avoided by the earlier settlers of the neighbourhood; that was mainly because the place was inhabited by some wild giant people called Bamakle and Baya. The Avatime language, locally known as Siya, can easily mean the language of the Baya. The language, as it is now, must have been a hybrid of two dialects. The Baya and Bamakle were wild and aggressive therefore, they terrorized anyone who strayed into their territory. It is even believed that the Baya migrated from somewhere and routed the earlier settlers who then moved to Akpafu area.

Brydon (1976) describes the Avatime migrated groups as crack warriors. She says when they arrived at the mountains they were so much impressed and satisfied with the well drained fertile lands, crystal clear waters from the springs, freshness of the atmosphere, the imposing views created by the topography, and the contrasting vegetation types as observed from the highlands. They were therefore determined to subdue the Baya tribe so as to take authoritative possession of the land.

Brydon adds that drinks for the ceremony were provided by the two sides. The Avatime people poisoned the drinks and allowed only selected elderly volunteers to take the drinks. Not long after the ceremony most of the Baya in the combatant age bracket died together with the few elderly martyrs of the Avatime people. The Avatime immediately went on the offensive and captured those who remained alive. The signs of habitation as envisaged by the lifestyles of the giant people still abound in the land. Additionally other interesting physical features associated with hilly and mountainous terrain are also available.

*Kusakɔko* is an initiation rite celebrated by the people of Avatime in the Volta Region of Ghana. It marks the transition of girls from childhood or adolescence to adulthood. During this period, the young girls are prepared for adult activities and responsibilities. It is believed only after this initiation that a girl is religiously and socially born into full womanhood with all the privileges, secrets, responsibilities and expectations to meet adult status. These initiation rites are celebrated with visual and performing arts. These values are exhibited in music, dance, drama, poetry recital and the use of art works such as costumes (textiles), pots, beads, body art, sculpture, footwear and other articles made of leather, special stools, cooking utensils and baskets to mention a few.

Many artistic and educational values are embedded in the celebration of *Kusakɔko* initiation rites, yet they have not been scholarly described, discussed or documented, therefore they could be lost. Those values are essential elements that could support art education. Moreover, appreciable amounts of vital information embodied in *Kusakɔko* initiation rites are not being taught in the schools of Avatime. Sadly, the rich cultural heritage evident in *Kusakɔko* which should be preserved has not been documented to put Avatime in the spotlight of the world.

It is imperative therefore to identify, describe and discuss effectively the artistic and educational values of *Kusakɔko* initiation rites of Avatime as a resource material for art education. The study gave exposure of a very important cultural activity and the dynamism of indigenous cultural practices that are hidden in artifacts used during this special initiation rites. Culture consists of the learned, shared and socially transmitted forms of adaptation of human beings to the environment which includes the habitat, other people, and their creations. Culture is the pattern of living among a given group of people. The pattern is developed by the group's shared values, beliefs and opinions on acceptable behaviour. Within the pattern, people have roles to play and work to do. The culture, directs how children are trained and how beliefs and values are maintained from generation to generation. Culture includes education, religion, science, art, folklore, and social organization. Differences in values and beliefs are expressed through language and art forms such as dress, architecture and decoration.

Art is involved in transmitting what man has learned of his adaptation to his environment. The purpose of studying art in different cultures is to give teachers a somewhat broader basis for understanding how art functions in society generally and how its functions are varied in meaning and style in any one specific society that has an identifiable cultural pattern of values and attitudes. A society is a group of people who are organized for some political or social purpose. They do not necessarily have the same culture. Adams (1999) opines that, we study arts and their history because they teach us about our own creative expressions and those of our past. Art is a vital persistent aspect of human experience. But where does the artistic impulse originate? The data on *Kusakoko* would be a very important material for Art Education. Works of art are valued not only by artists but entire cultures. The periods of history that we tend to identify as the high points of human achievement are those in which art was most highly valued and encouraged. Artists express themselves through a visual language which has pictorial, sculptural and architectural rather than verbal elements. As a result, no amount of description can replace the direct experience of viewing art as it happens in *Kusakoko*. The findings serving as resource material for Art Education will go a long way to be used as a study guide because in the field of art education, *Kusakoko* makes connection between the arts and beliefs of the people. This will also help to preserve the rich culture of the people of Avatime area and enrich the art education programmes sociologically, intellectually, philosophically, historically, aesthetically, physically and spiritually.

### 1.2 Concept of Art

Art, according to Rader and Jessup (1996) is an impression of a stimulus of imaginative life, which is separated from actual life by the absence of responsive action. From the definition, it is clear that, art is the idea or emotion let in the mind which is executed practically for appreciation. The nature of art has been described by Wollheim (1980) as a very elusive problem of human culture. It has been defined as a vehicle for the expression or communication of emotions and ideas, a means for exploring and appreciating formal elements for their own sake, and as mimesis or representation. Wollheim (1980) further said that, art is the process or product of deliberately arranging elements of design in a way that appeals to the senses or emotions. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations, and modes of expression, including music, literature, film, sculpture, and paintings. The meaning of art is explored in a branch of philosophy known as aesthetics. Traditionally, Wollheim (1980) said, the term *art* was used to refer to any skill or mastery. This conception changed during the Romantic period, when art came to be seen as a special faculty of the human mind to be classified with religion and science. Generally, art is made with the intention of stimulating thoughts and emotions.

*Kusakoko* deals with visual signs to convey ideas, moods or generalized emotional experiences. It may be called a language of visual signs. Unlike the language of words, however, art is not meant to be informative. Information is the province of symbols and it is in the words of literature or the numbers of mathematics. Sometimes in the interpretation of ideas or moods, however, the artist may employ visual symbols, but the meaning of such symbols is embodied in the forms or images which the artist creates just as are the ideas, moods, or experiences he conveys (Ocvirk, et al, 1962). There are therefore a lot of symbols used in *Kusakoko*.

The most common usage of the word art, which rose to prominence after 1750, is understood to denote skill used to produce an aesthetic result. Britannica Online defines art as the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others. By any of these definitions of the word, artistic works have existed for almost as long as humankind: from early pre-historic art to contemporary art. The second and more recent sense of the word *art* is as an abbreviation for *creative art* or *fine art*. Fine art means that a skill is being used to express the artist's creativity, or to engage the audience's aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audience towards consideration of the *finer* things. Some art followers have argued that the difference between fine art and applied art has more to do with value judgments made about the art than any clear definitional difference. However, even fine art often has goals beyond pure creativity and self-expression. The purpose of works of art may be to communicate ideas; such as politically, spiritually, or philosophically motivated art; to create a sense of beauty to explore the nature of perception; for pleasure; or to generate strong emotions. The purpose may also be seemingly nonexistent.

From the various definitions of art, and for the purpose of the subject under review, one cannot agree with these any more than to say *Kusakoko* communicates ideas, spiritually and philosophically motivated, to create a sense of beauty. We study the arts and their history because they teach us about our own creative expressions and those of our past. Studying the history of art is one way of exploring human cultures, both ancient and modern, that have not developed written documents (Adams, 1999).

From what the various scholars have expressed above it is clear that art can describe several things as a study and process of using the creative skill, a product of the creative skill, or the audience's experience with the creative skill. The creative arts are a collection of disciplines that produce *artworks*. They are characterized by activities and echo or reflect a message, mood, or symbolism for the viewer to interpret as experience. Artworks can be defined by purposeful, creative interpretations of limitless concepts or ideas in order to communicate something to another person. Artworks can be explicitly made for this purpose or interpreted based on images or objects. Art may be something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, or ideas through the senses. It is also an expression of an idea and it can take many different forms and serve many different purposes as in *Kusakoko* celebration. What is art in Avatime? What is beautiful?

Amenowode as cited in Kemevor (2004) in his lecture notes, states that some philosophers think, art is the physical manifestation of man's inner concepts of his being and environment. They think this concept is determined by his culture and beliefs. To the African, art is referred to as culture and beliefs which are expressed in visual forms. The concept of art in the context of *Kusakoko* agrees that the art forms used are the bodily demonstration of the people's feelings in Avatime and milieu characterized by their way of life and values. The art of Avatime expresses the culture through *Kusakoko*. Antubam (1963) also explains the significance of basic symbolic motifs of Ghanaian concept of beauty through the use of shapes such as the circle, rectangle, triangle, the crescent moon, the whorl and the oval. For example he says the oval is a symbol of female beauty which bears an element of cleansing power. Antubam further states that, ideas of beauty reveal themselves in a people's manner and rules of doing things. These ideas of beauty he says appear in people's preferences for certain methods which to others may be strange and gave examples of the manner of sitting, speaking in public, bathing, eating and marriage.

*Kusakoko* at its simplest is a form of communication. As most forms of communication have an intent or goal directed toward a motivated purpose, emotions, moods and feelings are also communicated through art. That is why Mithen (1999) makes his observations and asserts that art is a set of artefacts or images with symbolic meanings as a means of communication. Mithen's statement implies that though *kusakoko* appears to be a form of entertainment for the people of Avatime, it also seeks to bring about a particular emotion or mood, for the purpose of relaxing or entertaining the viewers, moreover puts them right in the spotlight of the world by communicating the artistic values and educational values of their rich cultural practice. This is often the function of the art industries of pictures and video.

### 1.3 Artistic value

Values are broad, abstract, shared standards of what is right, desirable and worthy of respect. Values set the general tone for cultural and social life (Gelles & Levine, 1995). The people of Avatime value family loyalty, adaptability, propriety, morality, activism, norms or sanctions and symbol. All these are exhibited in the culture of the Avatimes and at every stage of celebrating them, art is richly used. Gelles and Levine (1995) also see values as, those elements within a culture to which individuals and groups attach a high worth. They opine that within a social system there are values that influence the groups' feelings towards food, human life, behaviour patterns and attitudes toward people who belong to out-groups. Sociologists have studied the ways in which values develop within societies and how they are inculcated by individuals in a community. Values, like attitudes and beliefs, are learned from groups in which the individual is socialized; we are not born with a set of values and do not derive them independently. Groups use norms and sanctions to assure that individuals inculcate the pervasive values with their culture or micro culture.

People have various ways of appreciating art works. Some individuals may look at the work of art to be balanced while others look out for just the beauty. The artworks used in the *Kusakoko* initiation rites assumed these artistic values. Somewhat in relation to the above, the word *art* is also used to apply judgment of value, as in such expressions as "that meal was a work of art" (the cook is an artist), or "the art of deception," (the highly attained level of skill of the deceiver is praised). It is this use of the word as a measure of high quality and high value that gives the term its flavour of subjectivity. (Wollheim, 1980)

### 1.4 Elements and principles of design

According to Bates (2000), design is the organization of parts into a coherent whole. He argues that designs of accomplished artists should convey the feeling that nothing in the designs could be changed without violating the structure. All the elements of design in use should make a complete and as far can be judged, harmonious whole. Bates adds that, in visual items, a design is the organization of materials and forms in such a way as to fulfill a specific purpose. It is the act of arranging things to create a single effect. In design the artist must consider

importantly the use of elements and principles of design. Bates implies in his statement that, elements must be put together in an activity or event such as *Kusakoko* and when these different parts fit together and pleasing, will show good an art exhibiting a lot of skills. He also indicates that, the event will communicate ideas and feelings indirectly to give the right information about the people whether they show emotions of happiness or sadness. Norton (1950) also agrees with Bates and adds that a good design is the purposeful assembly of various elements into a whole that delights the eye of an observer either because it evokes pleasant to look at or because it is particularly suited to its purpose.

These statements view decoration as arrangement of various elements just as in *Kusakoko* celebration and putting them together in an organized manner intended to achieve its aesthetic qualities. To be successful as Norton indicates, the decorator must strictly adhere to the principles of design. In this study, arrangement of the ritual cloths for presentation, beautiful look at the a procession throughout the principal street of the communities showing people forming lines in rows with the initiate and their witnesses with the family member and interest groups behind, all display the aesthetic qualities, pleasing to the eye. That is why, Norton further states that, to plan an object to best suit its principles of design will make it pleasing to the sense of those who come in contact with it and to be harmonious with its surrounding. People from all over the world came to witness this ceremony. This year's rituals (2011) was the first to be organized on the Easter festivity and about twenty seven (27) initiates were allowed to go through their initiation rites, which attracts people from all walks of life to witness.

Norton is of the opinion that, the exercise involves planning or careful thinking of arrangement of elements in agreement with the aesthetic requirement of the observers. The statement therefore, applies to the arrangement activities or events together with the use of various art forms in *kusakoko* celebration.

Norton further asserts that, all natural and human-made objects can be defined by lines. He says, a line is a mark made by a pen or drawing instrument or can be any continuous mark, which causes your eye to follow along its path. For example, when one rubs his finger across the top of a dusty table, the mark that is left is called a line. The procession of *Kusakoko* was formed in three lines and as they move their footsteps were left behind as they pass through the sandy area to create patterns, just in agreement with Bates' affirmation.

A line moves and as it does, it indicates direction by traveling in a path that leads somewhere up, down, under, around through, back, forward, left, right, into, over, diagonally or across. Straight line leads the eyes swiftly across the picture plane but the eye travels more slowly when following the path of the other line. Bold lines also indicate a feeling of power, while fine lines project a feeling of sensitivity. Lines used in varying weights and directions with definite control placed on its direction can create optical sensations. Amenuke (1995) claims that, line in nature appears as cracks in trees, rocks, surfaces, roads, tree branches, grass, climbing stems, animal trails and paths and various examples as straight, curve, zigzag, broken, undulating, diagonal, dark, light, vertical, horizontal, parallel, thick, thin, rough, and smooth lines. He went further to reveal the symbolism of a few lines by indicating that, undulating lines represent the stream of life and sometimes used to decorate water pots which are believed to support the life-force. Line is used to create accent. Bates (2000) relates a line to space as he states that, a line begins, takes a path, turns and meets itself, creating a shape. Line is quickly used by artists to capture their impressions. It conveys dimensionality, used as variations in value and has expressive qualities. Bates explains that all natural and human-made objects can be defined by lines. The use of lines as observed in the study cannot be overemphasized especially as different types such as straight, bold, undulating, zigzag and spirals formed the basis for the design patterns the kete cloths that were used both for rituals and worn for body decoration.

Amenuke (1995) explains the symbolic significance in the Ghanaian arts of some basic shapes including, the circle, the oval, the square, the triangle, the crescent moon and the concentric circle or whorl. He talks about the symbolism of the circle being the presence and power of God which also symbolizes purity and holiness. He explains further how it forms the basic shape of indigenous pot for storing water symbolic of 'life stream' and the all parts of the region of sex and sensory organs regarded as sacred. Certainly the people of Avatime also share the same sentiments as indicative of used of pots for storage, cooking and for other decorations, the beads were worn on the wrists and waist. Amenuke also touched on the oval shape and says it is the symbol of female beauty and cleaning power in the society, and adds that it forms the basis of all the conceptions about the ideal of the female human figure. Natural and man-made objects have a combination of basic geometric shapes such as spheres, cylinders, cones, cubes and pyramids. In translating the idea, it means in the imagination to an original art form, an artist selects a suitable material with which to work. The various art forms used in *Kusakoko* celebration have different shapes exhibited and include final shapes of the initiates after they have been dressed glamorously and gorgeously in their costumes. The principle also affects the pottery products, sculpture, metal, beads, and all the other art products used in the various activities.

Mass is also not left out of the aesthetic values because the three-dimensional equivalent of shape, although it may be found in art works that gives an illusion of mass, Bates (2000) refers to as volume or bulk of objects in a work of art. The aesthetic effect of mass is most readily grasped in architecture and sculpture forms used in the celebration such as the stool, the utensils used to stir the ritual porridge (*bimukɔ*), the mortar and pestle used for *amutoto*, the drums among others. According to Bates (2000) colour is a sensation, which causes stimulation of the eye. It made the whole celebration very colourful and attracts the eyes of many who came to grace the occasion and is one of the most obvious points of attraction around the fête. Bates declares that, colour is the absorption and reflection of light on a surface and shows psychological effects such as emotional responses. For example when one says the *Kusakɔkɔ* celebration gave a clear, bright blue sky on a cool, crisp day and quickens an emotional response, it is suggesting cheerfulness. Again, one may say colour also conveys information in purely descriptive terms, symbolic of the meaning and significance of the various costumes and beads used for decorations in the celebration of *Kusakɔkɔ*. Bates makes a distinction here and says, scientists may define colour as an effect of physical forces on our nervous system through impact on the retina while to painters, however, colour is far more complex: It is a vital element closely related to all the other design elements. It is the sensitivity, with which painters use colour can convey a personal style that gives meaning to a particular work. Ultimately it can influence the varied responses of viewers to a work of art (Bates, 2000).

Amenuke et al, (1991) propound that, in Ghanaian indigenous subculture, the beauty of colour is in its visual qualities and in its social meaning and these are not assigned to modern scientific theories but on philosophical, psychological and spiritual meanings related to life. For example, they tried to give the symbolism of some colours as Gold: royalty, continuous life, warmth and controlled fire, rule of God or king, prosperity of individual, Silver: female royalty, feminine qualities, Red: close blood relations, Blue: love, female tenderness, rule of a queen, Green: newness, fertility, growth and vitality, White: joy, happiness, puberty, virginity, faultlessness of God. However these concepts seemed foreign to the people of Avatime.

## 2. Methodology

Qualitative research was used to explore and understand beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions of the people of Avatime in the Volta Region. Qualitative research techniques such as focus groups and in-depth interviews were also used to find out more about the *kusakɔkɔ* initiation from the chiefs, the various sub-chiefs some elders, opinion leaders, the pastors, some church elders and some initiates. The main research method that was used to do the study on *kusakɔkɔ* initiation rites was ethnography. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) assert that, the qualitative researcher may make observations either as a relative outsider or especially in the case of ethnography, as a participant observer. Leedy and Ormrod indicate that, ethnography differs from a case study in the sense that, case study studies a person, programme, or event while ethnography studies an entire group that shares a common culture (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

Creswell (2003) also defines ethnographies as a situation in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data. The focus is on everyday behaviours to identify norms, beliefs, social structures, and other factors. In Avatime, the researchers tried to understand the changes in the groups' culture over time. As a result, findings made were limited to generalization on the study after visiting all the selected communities. In the ethnography methodology, the researchers were immersed in the daily lives of the participants in order to observe their behaviour then interpreted the culture or social group and systems (Creswell, 2003).

In anthropology and sociology, it is a common practice to distinguish between primary and secondary data. Generally speaking, primary data are unpublished and are gathered by the researcher from the people or organization directly. The distinguishing feature of ethnography, however, is that the researchers spend a significant amount of time in the field. The fieldwork notes and the experience of living there become an important addition to any other data gathering techniques that may be used. More often, qualitative researchers are intentionally non-random in their selection of data sources. Instead, their sampling is purposive. They select those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). Owing to the fact that *kusakɔkɔ* is common to all the people of Avatime, purposive sample was used to access information relevant to the topic in Amedzofe, Biakpa and Vane.

The sample for the research was based on the adults aged between 18 and 70 years. The researchers sampled people for the purpose of data collection including chiefs, elders in the traditional area, and community or opinion leaders in the area, various musical groups, church leaders, and beneficiaries of the programme also called the initiates, teachers and some University students who are also natives of the traditional area. One

hundred and ninety (190) respondents were interviewed. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), there are common tools of research that majority of researchers, regardless of the field of enquiry, use. These are the library and its resources, the computer and its software, techniques of measurement statistics, the human mind and language. They include that in any single study qualitative researchers generally use multiple forms of data obtained through observations, interviews, objects, written documents, audiovisual materials, electronic document (e.g., e-mail, websites), and anything else that can help them answer their research questions. Besides, the researcher should record any potentially useful data thoroughly, accurately, and systematically using field notes, audiotapes, sketches, photographs or any suitable means (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Some of these data collecting instruments were used to gather data for this study.

The instrumentation used for the collection of data included participant observation and interviews. The instruments mentioned above helped trace the historical facts of the customary rite. They helped to assess the philosophical and symbolic meanings behind *kusakoko* initiation and also identified the various artefacts and how the participants value them artistically and the educational implication of the entire social activity.

Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) define observation as the systematic process of recording the behavioral patterns of people. The researchers relied on the cultivation of personal relationships with local informants as a way of learning about their culture, involving both observing and participating in the social life of a people of the various communities in Avatime. By living with them, the researchers were able to formulate first-hand accounts of their lives and gain novel insights. This same method of study was successful, sharing a strong sense of identity, where only by taking the observer truly got access to the lives of those being studied.

Participant observation is usually undertaken over an extended period of time, ranging from several months to many years. An extended research time period means that the researcher will be able to obtain more detailed and accurate information about the people he/she is studying. Observable details (like daily time allotment) and more hidden details (like taboo behaviour) are more easily observed and understandable over a longer period of time. A strength of observation and interaction over long periods of time is that researchers can discover discrepancies between what participants say and often believe should happen (the formal system) and what actually does happen, or between different aspects of the formal system; in contrast, a one-time survey of people's answers to a set of questions might be quite consistent, but is less likely to show.

The participant observation gave a more detailed and accurate information about the people of Avatime and also because a key advantage of observation research is that often the respondents are unaware that they are being observed, it allows their behaviour to be observed naturally. The interview method of research, typically, involves a face-to-face meeting in which a researcher (interviewer) asks an individual a series of questions. Personal interviews were used to collect in-depth and comprehensive information on the history and philosophy behind this rich cultural practice, also seek their understanding and appreciation of the artefacts used and the educational implications. The participants were asked to respond to general questions to also explore their responses to identify and define the people's perception, opinions and feelings about the topic. Corroboration was used to increase the understanding of the probability that the findings will be seen as credible or worthy of consideration by others (Stainback and Stainback, 1988). Related to validation of data, researcher-participant corroboration was employed, which has also been referred to as cross-examination. There was a follow up where some respondents were cross-examined again to ascertain the facts about *kusakoko*.

In the case of *kusakoko*, the informants were interviewed multiple times, using information from previous informants for clarification and deeper responses upon re-interview. This process was intended to reveal common cultural understandings that were related to the phenomena under study. These understandings were interpreted to be more significant than objective data and this also validates the data. The researches focused on three communities in the Avatime traditional area namely: Amedzofe, Biakpa and Vane and selected informants who were known to have an overview on the *kusakoko* activities. Prominent among them were the 'ritual mothers' who were well prepared to be interviewed. The researchers undertook participant observation and strived to avoid theoretical preconceptions instead, to induce theory from the perspectives of the members of the culture of the people of Avatime and from observation. He lived among the people of the three communities during the festive occasions such as Christmas, Easter and some special days designed for those who were ready to be initiated. These days were scheduled between July and August which were months when many people are on holidays. They chose these festive periods also because of the modern economic activities where most people migrate to the cities to work may be on break. The researchers also strived to understand the cultural connotations associated with symbols.

Interviews were conducted on the age groups between 18 and 70. These groups were specifically the youth and

adults. They were categorized them within the age group of (60 and above) - 15% were aged (50-59) -18% for the age group of (40-49) - 20% were with the age group of (30-39) - 50% for (20-29) - 07% were from (19 and below) they include the chiefs and elders, ritual mothers, church elders, the females who benefited from the puberty rites and other youth groups. In all 83% of respondents who were interviewed were females as compared with their male counterparts (17%). This is so because the initiation is for females. In all 190 respondents were interviewed. The large population of female respondents came as a result of the subject for the study being a predominant female ceremony. The data were to find out the educational values of this important cultural practice *kusakɔkɔ*. The sources of the data were obtained right from interviewing the sampled population and also observing the activities at Amedzofe, Biakpa and Vane in the Volta Region. The researchers travelled to the location of the data and collected information and also participated in the activities.

### 3. Results of the study (Artistic values in *kusakɔkɔ* or cloth giving initiation rites)

There are identifiable artistic values exhibited in the *kusakɔkɔ* (cloth giving) initiation rites. Visual and performing arts were used in the *kusakɔkɔ* celebration. Amenuke et al (1991) differentiated between visual art and performing arts. According to them visual arts are those that can be seen while the performing arts are forms perceived by our senses of hearing, seeing, and our kinesthetic senses but they are performed rather than made. These art forms are functional because they have multipurpose or specific use. They are also very symbolic and express the essential things of the life of the people of Avatime.

#### 3.1 The philosophy of Art in Avatime

The people of Avatime like the Yoruba people as indicated by Thompson (1973) equate art to 'beauty' and 'quality' and to them, beauty relates to success. Anything done successfully, is regarded as being beautiful, because to them beauty is both internal and external. They equate success with toil in the sense that, after every hard work and toil, there is success. They express these sentiments in Ewe language as "Enya kpɔna menya wɔna o" meaning it looks beautiful but difficult to achieve and these words are chanted throughout the *kusakɔkɔ* period. They believed that, it is difficult to study and be educated, therefore a girl who has undergone series of processes as the societal accumulated knowledge is handed down to her means success, hence it being beautiful and has quality. To the Avatimes, it is difficult for one to observe, societal norms, beliefs, taboos, relate well with people, dress well, cook well, respect the elderly, observe good hygiene, obey parents, spin cotton and all other things to qualify the girl to be accepted as a complete member of society. Some cultural forms used include myths, music, dance, and a wide range of productions with pleasing visual imagery. Art forms were also used as teaching aids introducing what was culturally tasteful especially when the initiates were confined.

#### 3.2 The philosophy of line in Avatime

The philosophy of line in Avatime according to one of the sub-chiefs called Togbe Dzema (personal communication, 2010), symbolizes civilization. He indicated that, the people believed the first human beings lived in isolated colonies, but became more civilized when they made paths for communication hence the introduction of lines. One important artistic value identified during the study was the structure of the whole celebration. Thus, the celebration has a beginning, the climax and the end or finishing which in itself, is artistic as indicated in Figure 1

Most of the visual and performing arts in the celebration were as follows:

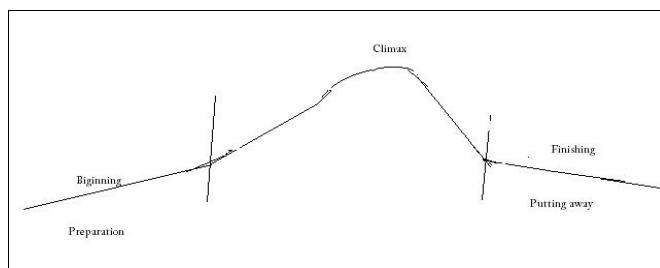


Figure 1: The artistic impression of *kusakɔkɔ* process

#### 3.3 Textiles (costume, ritual cloths, kete, loincloth)

A textile is any kind of woven, knitted, knotted (as in macramé) or tufted cloth, or a non-woven fabric (a cloth made of fibres that have been bonded into a fabric, e.g. felt). Textile also refers to the yarns, threads and wools that can be spun, woven, tufted, tied and otherwise used to manufacture cloth. The production of textiles is an ancient art, whose speed and scale of production has been altered almost beyond recognition by mass-production and the introduction of modern manufacturing techniques. An ancient Roman weaver would have no problem



recognizing a plain weave, twill, or satin. There were many textiles used in the celebration of *kusakɔkɔ*. These include: costume, ritual cloths, kente, loincloth handkerchiefs, socks and furnishes among others. The people of Avatime choose clothes with colour and motifs that bear symbolic meanings and significance. They wear clothes and other costumes which signify the feelings of *kusakɔkɔ*.

The costumes include, set of clothes (*basawa*), dress (*awula*), outfit, attire, gear and uniforms sensitive to aesthetic value that were used throughout the celebration. The initiates used different sets of clothes for different activities. The ceremony itself is based on the principle of the use of textiles that is why it is called *kusakɔkɔ* meaning “cloth giving” as stated in the background. Costumes are clothes worn by the people to cover or protect their bodies.

The ritual cloths were hanged on the right arms very decorative indicating a successful ritual process. The names given to these symbolic cloths show their significance and meanings associated with the activities of the society expressing the general concepts, beliefs and ideas of the people of Avatime. The colours and weave patterns in the ritual kente have symbolic significance which expressed the manner in which the yarns were interwoven. Lines were used to create designs such as straight lines, bold lines, zigzag lines, curve and undulating lines. The special ritual cloths used are two, namely, *Bewue* and *Kotokoto* including other kente products used by the people at the celebration. The loincloths are also used as a symbol of puberty where the initiate is taught how it was formerly worn during menstruation period and the time of bathing ritually at the river side. Scuff and handkerchiefs were used to fan and wipe sweat and other foreign materials thrown to the initiate as part of the enjoyment. Furnishes including curtains, bedspreads, floor carpets, table cloth and cushions were used to decorate the rooms of the initiates making them colourful. In some homes they used tarpaulin and big umbrellas to protect them from rain and sunshine.

Kente cloth is beautifully woven in strips hand-sewn together, with good combination of designs. There are intricate lines used to form designs indicating the names hence their use. The kente in question is the Ewe kente which is mostly woven by the people of Agotime kpetoe, Agbozume, a few people in Amedzofe and others in the Volta Region. The dominant colours used are yellow, red, blue, green white, brown, pink and black. For example, the bachelor night (*treza*) saw the use of a set of outfit different from the *kusakɔkɔ* day where a ritual cloth called *bewue* (Plate 1) was seen held on the right arm bearing black and white colours which introduces the main *kusakɔkɔ* cloth called *kotokoto* also bearing colours, of pink, yellow, blue, green and brown as indicated in Plate 4.13a and b. It is important to note here that, the colours of the *bewue* are described as just black and white because of the notion of colours in Avatime traditional area are in agreement with Agbo (2009) which indicates the use of only three colours by the Ewe as red, black and white. The colours which relate to black are all referred to as black, likewise red and white respectively. Black related colours found in the *Bewue*, especially blue relates to the sky in Avatime, symbolizing love of God and his blessings both spiritually and materially signifying good tidings to the *kusakɔkɔ* initiates. The white related colours on the other hand, symbolize victory, peace, joy and positive sentiments as reviewed in the literature signifying in *kusakɔkɔ* a successful woman ready to marry. *Bewue* also has straight and bold lines and in agreement with Kaplan and Norton (2000), bold lines are symbolic of feeling of power together with fine lines projecting feelings of sensitivity while straight lines also signify stability as they lead the eyes swiftly following the path. In *kusakɔkɔ*, it is indicative of women empowerment and stability in the home.

The second ritual cloth called *kotokoto* as indicated in plate 2, has the combination of all the three related colours, red, black, white per the notion of Avatime colours. Red related colours found in the *kotokoto* symbolize life, because of the colour of the blood, protection against dangerous spirits or forces and also empowerment of the female in society signifying power to ‘act’. Black related colours in the *bewue* cloth also symbolize growth, fertility and vitality, prosperity, success, love, and good health. The white colour also signifies purity, peace, victory wealth, and positive sentiments suggesting a successful *kusakɔkɔ* woman. *Kotokoto* cloth bears a lot of significant lines and shapes. They have five strokes of lines conveying various information and meanings. Those with five lines relate to the five finger of the hand symbolizing success after toiling using the fingers. It also signifies individual differences because all fingers are not the same but together there is success. Some lines are also zigzag lines indicative of wisdom (*kuboteo*) while undulating lines show the stream of life (*abgetsi*) or in Avatime *ligbene ku neo*. Again in *kotokoto*, the squares refer to mutual love or *Sukli likpɔ* while joint hexagon appearing chain-like indicative of togetherness or unity in diversity (see Plates 3). In all the combination of the colours in the *kusakɔkɔ kotokoto* ritual cloth signifies unity. These ritual cloths were chosen because of the cool weather condition in the Avatime area.

There is also a display of clothes by the family of the initiates as required by the custodians of Avatime, bringing people from all walks of life to come and witness. The display of clothes signifies the readiness of the family to

clothe their 'girl' when she becomes a 'woman'. They are clothes made of different colours symbolic of unity, including kente with very intricate lines forming the weave patterns symbolic of the ideas of the society. All the elements of design which they learned from natural objects around such as leaves, bark of trees, fruits and paths were used to weave the clothes and make them, harmoniously whole as indicated by Bates (2000).

Looking at the kete, the designs were the organization of materials and forms in such a way as to fulfill a specific purpose, arranging lines, shapes and colour to create a single effect for the significant use of *kusakoko*. The designs of the accomplished weavers conveyed the feeling that nothing in the designs could be changed without violating their structure. Kaplan and Norton (2000) assert that, a good design is the purposeful assembly of various elements into a whole that delights the eye of an observer either because it evokes pleasant to look at or because it is particularly suited to its purpose. This statement made by Kaplan and Norton views designs in the cloth and all the decorations as arrangement of various elements as lines, shapes, colours in *kusakoko* ritual clothes putting them together in an organized manner intended to achieve its aesthetic qualities. Textiles also include the *kusakoko* initiates' training skills of spinning. The ritual mothers spent a significant amount of time to teaching the initiates how to acquire the skills of spinning.

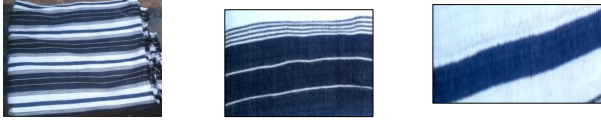
According to Bates (2000) straight line leads the eyes swiftly across the picture plane but the eye travels more slowly when following the path of the other line. Bold lines also indicate a feeling of power, while fine lines project a feeling of sensitivity. Lines used in varying weights and directions with definite control placed on its direction can create sensations. Lines were used to create accent, a line begins, takes a path, turns and meets itself, creating a shape. Lines were used quickly by the designers to capture their impressions. They convey dimensionality, used as variations in value and have expressive qualities. The lines found in the *kusakoko* kete show the way the yarns were interwoven. They used straight lines, zigzag lines, bold lines, dotted lines and shapes. The various art forms used in *kusakoko* celebration have different shapes exhibited and they include final shapes of the initiate after they have been dressed glamorously and gorgeously in their costumes. The *kusakoko* festivity gave a clear, bright blue sky on a cool, crisp day and quickens an emotional response suggesting cheerfulness. Colour also conveys information in purely descriptive terms, symbolic of the meaning significance of the various costumes and beads used for decorations (Bates, 2000). Texture on cloths shows the quality of the surface whether smooth, rough, dull or glossy. It gave an expressive quality and conveyed through the use of line, colour and shape, however, the elements were arranged out following certain rules.

The lines, shapes, texture and colour were all balanced as a sense of stability in the cloth designs applied to opposing visual attractions or forces and the composition contributes to its strength, and this is very important in aesthetics. For example, a shape, which is placed in the exact center of the surface, is at perfect equilibrium, like being at rest. Moving the shape off centre can increase its importance. The designs were placed off centre also to attract more attention. Moving lines, shapes, colour and patterns of light in the cloth created a rhythmic flow as the principle directs one towards a specific point in the designs. Rhythm means controlled movement or repetition of elements in a composition. Rhythm in aesthetics suggests so many things. Horizontal rhythms in the patterns suggest relaxed and quiet states and vertical rhythms suggest stability, formality, importance, and alertness while diagonal rhythms may be movement, excitement and agitation and all these elements and principles are found in the ritual cloths referred to as *kotokoto* and *bewue* locally.

Unity pertains to wholeness or oneness. Unity of the elements in the cloths refer to ways in which the parts work together to create a harmonious or inharmonious composition. Transition means gradual change in a composition. This is achieved through changes in hue, value, intensity, shape, line and texture. It connects parts of a composition of the elements in the kete cloths and provides movement. When the people of Avatimes come together to celebrate *kusakoko*, there is unity. Also the coming together of initiates of one town anytime in favour of *kusakoko* is unity.

Variety shows differences of lines, texture, colour and shapes in the composition of the clothes used in the *kusakoko* and it is obvious that nature has the aesthetic values that make the individual to feel that some things are beautiful and others are not. These visual representations have elements such as lines, shape, space, texture, and colour, which are beautifully arranged. Colour is a sensation, which stimulates the eye. It attracts the eye and is one of the most obvious points of attraction around us. It is the absorption and reflection of light on a surface. Colour shows psychological effects such as emotional responses to suggest cheerfulness. On the cognitive level, colour conveys information in purely descriptive terms, as when leaves change colour and in symbolic terms, as in the celebration of *kete* cloth. The colour in the assembly of cloth in plate 4 by family members shows, cheerfulness, positive sentiments, and unity (Bates, 2000). The other textiles products include the *bewue* held in the left hands of the initiates in a procession as indicated in plates 5 and *kotokoto* in plate 7

The loincloth is normally a piece of cloth used to cover the female sexual organs. The initiate was made aware of ritual dressing using this piece of cloth in her menstrual period. It is normally red (Plate 6), red or orange in colour to symbolized blood and worn in between the beads in the front and back.



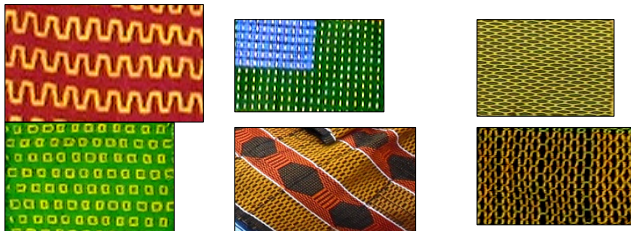
Source: Field work

**Plate 1:** Shades of *Bewue* ritual cloth



Source: Field work

**Plate 2:** Shades of *Kotokoto* ritual cloth



Source: Field work

**Plate 3:** Different types of designs or Textures of *Kotokoto* cloth



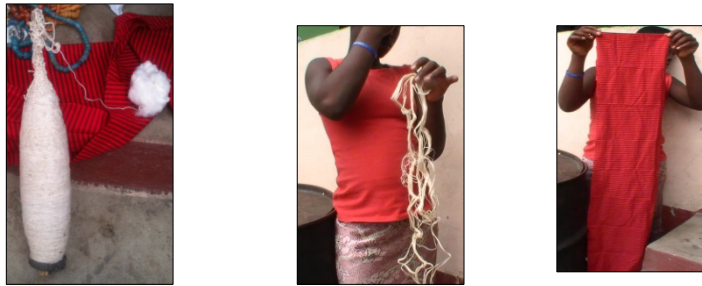
Source: Field work

**Plate 4:** Colour in the assembly of cloth



Source: Field work

**Plate 5:** *Bewue* cloth held on the left hand in the procession



Source: Field work  
**Plate 6:** Pieces of Loin cloth and spinning skills used for the ceremony



Source: Field work  
**Plate 7:** *Kotokoto* ritual cloth used for the ceremony

### 3.4 Pottery (ritual pots, ritual bowls, the heaves)

Pottery also includes pots and bowls for cooking and for serving food during the celebration. The ritual pot is called *kefukpa*. In one of the observations, the initiate was asked to cook or paddle the ritual porridge called *bimuko* in the pot *kefukpame* for ritual mothers to inspect (Plate 8), due to that, she was made to practice first as shown in Plate 9. It is symbolic to prepare the porridge in a clay pot because it is not supposed to be as strong as the metal pot. *Kefukpa* is also used by the initiate to keep jewels, special local sponge called *asapolo* and herbs when they want to bath in plate 10.

The people of Avatime also use the pots to fetch water from the river side and store water in a very big pot called *ozolo*. Pots for the celebration are spherical, round as a circle symbolizing perfection and purity. The pots signify things that are holy and clean associated with God who they called *Aya* and they are therefore a symbol of life because they store and hold things of life such as food, water, medicine and jewels. The clay bowls are used to serve food but the ritual bowl called *kposie* is used to serve special ritual meal called *bimuko* for the nieces of the initiates' family called *bavima*, as shown in the Plate 11, ritual mothers in and also used to sprinkle the ritual meal for the ancestors called *batretrewa* in (Plates 12). The shapes of the meal bowls are half spherical. They also believe that these bowls signify the warmth and affection of a mother. The initiates also use the hearths made locally of clay for cooking the ritual meal called *asubolo* meaning clay mould. They appreciate the use of the hearths because they believed that the clay absorbs the heat and prevents it from reaching them directly, so they do not sweat too much. They are taught to fetch firewood and set fire in the hearths while they are also kept clean by smearing on them clay slip or painting them with clay slip. It is also symbolic to paint the kitchen with the same clay slip.



Source: Field work  
**Plates 8-12:** Pottery products used for the ceremony

### 3.5 Sculpture includes carved items such as ritual stools, special wooden paddles, wooden ladles, wooden trays, drums used in Avatime traditional area.

The various parts of the carvings are clearly formed or visible with the blocking out of masses and in fine detail, Also, they are given luminosity or shiny smoothness of the surfaces especially the stools, porridge stirring sticks, soup stirring ladles and the pestles used to pound *fufu*, however the whole carvings offer a play of light, and shadow with straight upright posture and symmetrical arrangement of the parts, adding serenity, coolness, or composure. The ritual stools are symbolic of a queen and loving embrace of a mother and the warmth of the female influence in society. That is why it is called *likusigbole* and it is very significant and symbolic in Avatime because every female adult after going through *kusakoko* is supposed to enter her marital home with the stool. During the preparation of the ritual meal, these stools are also displayed significantly. The shape of the top of seat of carved stool for the initiate or Avatime woman is crescent moon shown in Plate 13 which signifies the woman's contribution in the development of the traditional area. It symbolizes a woman's love, benevolence, and serenity, compassion, and agility. Those who are permitted to use the stool during the celebration are ritual mothers, old beneficiaries of *kusakoko* and the current initiates.

Special sticks are also carved for the preparation of the ritual porridge called *bimukome*. The stirring of the porridge involves two or more people going back and forth. The materials used to carve the paddles are special and edible because they are used to prepare food. However, the people believe in animism where they think plants have life in them hence life of the porridge stirring stick and food symbolizes the continuity of life. It therefore gave the people in the area skillful employment. The porridge stirring stick is locally known in the area as *osilo* as seen in Plate 14. In stirring the porridge, it is done in an artistic way to maintain a certain rhythmic movement, making noise which produce sound or music, rhythm and drama as demonstrated in Plate 14.

There are also very huge ladles carved for the purpose of fetching soup (Plate 15) with the large beans specially meant for the ritual meal. The special ritual ladle which is indicated in Plate 16 is locally called in the area *keplewia*. This time people borrow from ritual mothers in case they cannot buy, but it is symbolic of womanhood in Avatime. The mortars and pestles are used for pounding the ritual rice *amutoto* before milling it into powder to prepare the porridge (*bimuko*). The mass in these forms relates to a three-dimensional equivalent of shape as it has been reviewed by Bates as he refers to it as volume of the material used as shown in (Plate 17). The group pounding of the brown rice is rhythmic, dramatic and creates music.

There were special wooden trays called *kite* (Plate 18) which were used to blow the rice chaff and also served as a tray on which the *bimuko* are arranged just after being prepared. The round shape is mostly used by the Avatimes because of their philosophy of the circle as omnipresence. They believe that in every activity and stage of life, God's presence must be acknowledged. All the items mentioned above are used as household utensils except the drums (Plate 19) which were used to make music. They were drummed throughout the days of the rituals including leading the procession along the streets to introduce the initiates. The drums were carved in a way to produce different sounds. Two of them were carved in oval shape covering the top with leather while the bottom is left opened to allow the sound to come out loud. The wider the bottom is left opened the deeper the sound produced by the drum. The top and the bottom were also carved in circular shape with small pegs attached to the top which tied the cords to the leather giving a beautiful design almost like the zigzag symbolizing communication and lightening signifying that, drums talk to educate from darkness to light.



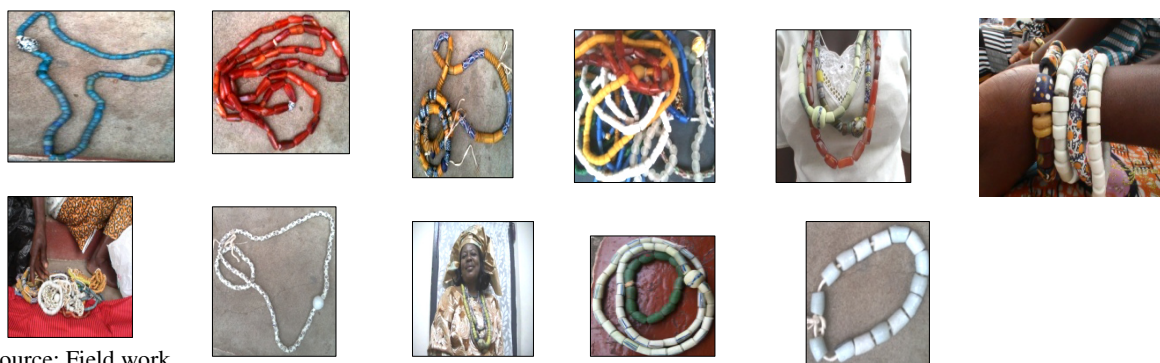
Source: Field work

**Plates 13-19:** Sculpture products used for the ceremony

### 3.6 Jewellery (beads, ear rings)

Bead are small pieces of glass, stone, or similar materials, typically rounded and perforated for threading with

others as a necklace or rosary or for sewing onto fabric. Beads are small, decorative objects that are usually pierced for threading or stringing. Beads range in size from under 1 millimetre (0.039 in) to over 1 centimetre (0.39 in) in diameter. Beads can be woven together with specialized thread, strung onto thread or soft, flexible wire, or adhered to a surface (e.g. fabric, clay). The beads used in during *kusakoko* in Avatime bear different names depending upon their material sources. Some of the names are *okporoe* having brown being a black related colour dominating the threading process, *odungle* having a combination of white and spotted violet being a black related colour, *Duadza* having the colour blue dominating regarded as black, *sansa* having the mixture of almost all colours and *wodze*. The more beads an initiate puts on, the weight, and colours determine how prepared your family is for the performance of the rituals. The various colours used for the beads signify the notion of colours in Avatime as asserted by Agbo (2009). The white related coloured beads (*ihua pititi*) as gray, ash and cream symbolize positive sentiments, peace and joy, expressing purity and innocence and wealth. The black related coloured beads (*ihua kpikpi*) include green, blue, and brown symbolizing vitality, prosperity, fertility, love, royalty and growth. Red related colours on some beads (*ihua tsitsi*) include pink; maroon and violet represent blood which symbolizes power and protection of life against evil spirits or forces. See Plates 19 – 27 for illustration.



Source: Field work

**Plates 19-27:** Different types of ritual beads used for the ceremony

### 3.7 Basketry (baskets, specially made ritual straw brooms)

Basketry is usually considered to be the oldest of all the art forms and the most fascinating aspects is that its generation has been adapted to fit in the everyday life of the people of Avatime. The versatility of basketry is a never – ceasing wonder and articles were used for storage, accessories, carriages such as baskets, specially made straw brooms, mats and trays. The baskets used for storage purposes are woven using all techniques as randing, pairing, and waling made of palm frond material. They have circle shape forming the top and base with upright or vertical stakes making the sides of the basket having close to brown colour (28 - 31). The straw broom is a special ritual broom highly valued in Avatime and it is supposed to be found in every home in Avatime. The straw in Avatime is a very important material which they believed has life in it. It is commonly used in the area for roofing thatch houses symbolizing protection and health. Certain rituals are sometimes performed after cutting them from the mountain to pacify them before they are used since they believed there is still life in them. Straw broom also known as *lidzule* is first woven like a mat and braided or plaited at the head leaving the other side to be used as broom to sweep (Plate 32). In *kusakoko* it symbolizes cleanliness hence every Avatime woman must possess at least one.



Source: Field work

**Plate 28-32:** Basketry products used for the ceremony

### 3.8 Calabash art (ritual calabashes, calabashes for measurement)

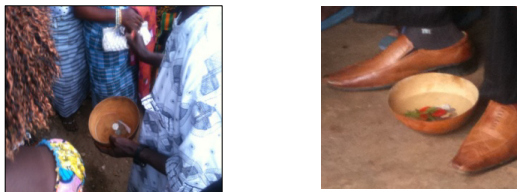
Half-spherical cut or carved gourd as ritual calabashes for performing libation (plate 35-37) and calabashes for measurement. Calabash in Avatime is known as *kepliwia* but there is a particular one meant for a special task in the preparation of the local rice during blowing and it is called *kekpoa* (Plate 33).

Calabash in Avatime symbolizes increase. The philosophy of increase is as a result of a number of seeds found in the raw gourd before it is cut into calabash and how the plant spreads on the ground before bearing fruit. Every *kusakoko* initiate is expected to possess these calabashes for their various uses in the home and they are mostly displayed and used during the preparation of the ritual meal called *bimukome* (see Plate 34 & 35).



Source: Field work

**Plates 33-35:** Calabash Art products used for the ceremony

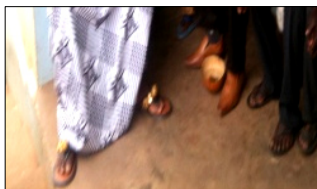


Source: Fieldwork

**Plate 35-37:** Calabash art for making libation

### 3.9 Leatherwork (special sandals *oheneba*, hand bags, belts, etc.)

Leather art also includes special sandals *oheneba*, hand bags, belts, etc. as indicated in plate 38



Source: Fieldwork

**Plate 38:** Leather Art foot wears

### 3.10 Photography

This includes taking pictures, taking videos, snapshots, and scenic, etc. Artistic photography work was employed during the study (plate 39). Basically the main foundation skills in photography techniques used during *kusakoko* celebration were composition techniques, exposure techniques and colouring techniques.



Source: Fieldwork

**Plate 39:** Photography

### 3.11 Metal Art

Metal art includes plates, frying pans, sauce pans, bowls, trays, spoons, cooking pots, knives, buckets, jewellery - rings, necklaces, bracelets, wristlets, bangles, belt hooks, etc. For metal casting to make jewelry, the emphasis is on delicacy and attractiveness. This form still involves a lot of detailed fine handcrafting and handmade work. Jewelry that is made out of metal casting often ends up being extremely fragile therefore the Avatimes handle them with extreme care, as they are prone to breaking very easily. Plate 40 shows an initiate wearing a beautifully decorated necklace in a rectangular shape representing the Ewe symbol of love as explained by Agbo (2009). The colour gold also symbolizes royalty and prosperity. Plate 41 also shows metal pots used to prepare the ritual meal.



Source: Fieldwork  
**Plate 40:** Jewel used for the ceremony



Source: Field work  
**Plate 41:** Metal Art pots

### 3.12 Music (melody)

Music an aspect of performing art includes sound made by drumming (Plate 42, singing, clapping of hands, ringing of bells, and playing of tape recording. Music organized for the puberty rite in *kusakoko* symbolizes, joy, happiness and success but to a few respondents, it could also mean, the beginning of the struggle for the initiates in life especially when marriage follows just after the performance of the rituals.



Source: Fieldwork  
**Plate 42-44:** Music used for merry making at the ceremony

### 3.13 Dance (boogie)

Dance is another form of performing art includes, making a systematic organization of the footsteps in relation to movement of various parts of the body as indicated in Plate 43. That is shaking of body, swerving and tilting of the body, moving the arms, feet, legs, to jump, hop, and kick things all about. The art of organizing these movements into the various dances reveals the artistic values of *kusakoko*. Free-style dancing was used to express their mood of purely joyous and happy celebration. They danced to the tune of brass band music, *bobobob*, church choir, record players and the like. The dance formation is organized either with the drummers sitting in the middle while the dancers move around them or the drummers sit in the left as the dancers make their rhythmic move at the right side or behind the drummers.



Source: Fieldwork  
**Plate 45:** Drama used as merry making at the ceremony

### 3.14 Verbal art (poetry recitals, appellation)

Poetry recitals were made in terms of speech making or verses. The words were symbolic of pleading with the ancestors of long life, prosperity, good health and successful marriage for the initiates. Among the words recited were "*ligba dzedze*" and "*ku nyime zeno gba*". Amenuke et al. (1991) repackaged this performing art as verbal



art simply put, the art of talking which involves speech making such as recitations, making pledges, and telling stories. To explain further it was observed that, recitals were made when praying and during performing of libation especially when certain patterns are created on the ground (see plate 46 & 47). Items included in the calabashes for pouring libation gave their significance. These items found in the libation package are three pieces of palm fruits, herbs and coins. The verbal activity is an essential part of *kusakoko* initiation rites because this was where the people believed that their life for the rest of their stay on earth depends on these verbal pronouncements. Just as Amenuke et al. (1991) propound, the communities involved used this platform to give knowledge about the societal values or cultural values. In other words, performing arts are used as a communication medium to make commentaries, converse, as a means of counselling and cheering people up to promote communalism and unity.



Source: Fieldwork  
**Plate 46:** Making blessing libation



Source: Fieldwork  
**Plate 47:** Artistic pattern created by making libation

### 3.15 Drama (excitement)

Drama involves the concerts or performances expressing puberty ceremony. They also perform songs, poems and personal feelings expressed in their joy, happiness, love, victory and unity. According to Amenuke et al. (1991), drama involves performance of concert, cantatas, comedies which take the form of music, dance, and verbal art. Amenuke et al., went ahead to categorize drama into three groups as ceremonial drama, narrative drama and dance drama. The study shows that at least, the ceremonial drama and dance drama were well represented as found in Plate 48. These groups of drama were used during cheering up and encouraging the initiate, more so, they also expressed their joy and happiness.



Source: Fieldwork  
**Plate 48:** Drama used as merry making at the ceremony

## 4. Summary of the Major Findings

- Many artistic values are embedded in the celebration of *kusakoko* initiation rites, yet they have not been described, discussed or documented, therefore they could be lost. Those values are essential elements that could support art education.
- Moreover, appreciable amounts of vital information embodied in *kusakoko* initiation rites are not being taught in the schools of Avatime.
- *Kusakoko* means 'giving of cloth' to females in Avatime. Avatime recognizes the worth and contributions of women to society therefore mark the transition of a female from girlhood to womanhood.
- The woman is an important figure in the development of Avatime community. Significantly, such recognition is not given to males. *Kusakoko* rites is a way by which the people of Avatime transmit and preserve their cultural heritage hence the artistic values.
- Both traditional religion and Christianity play a very important role in the celebration of *kusakoko* by way of educating the girls through rituals to prepare them to become useful members of the society.

- *Kusakɔkɔ* rites are associated with marriage, so the ceremonies are most times performed before marriage rituals. The rituals of *kusakɔkɔ* may be performed alongside marriage rituals if not performed before marriage.
- Sanctions are imposed on the girls who did not go through the rituals to check the deviant behaviour of members. If a woman dies without performing the rituals, the rituals are performed when lying in state before burial.
- There are identifiable artistic values exhibited in *kusakɔkɔ* initiation rites. The visual arts identified in the celebration were the use of the ritual *kente* cloths, loin cloth, different types of costumes, table cloths, curtains, ritual pots, ritual earthen bowls, hearths, ritual stools, special wooden porridge stirring sticks, wooden ladles, wooden trays, drums, beads, jewels, ear rings, baskets, special ritual straw brooms, ritual calabashes, calabashes for measurements, special sandals, bags, belts, hairstyles, body art and photography. The performing arts included music from *bɔbɔbɔ*, church choir, spinners and dance groups, verbal art, drama and appellation, drumming, clapping of hands and ringing of bells which were symbolic of expression of joy, happiness or excitement and success.
- The art forms also provide education of the people intellectually, socially, psychologically, spiritually, physically and artistically. The artistic values in *kusakɔkɔ* provide sources for teaching Aesthetics, Appreciation, Criticism, Art history, Hands-on-skills in Visual Arts for Art Education. The production of the art forms also provides some economic venture for the youth in the area.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings and observations provide information and answers for the research questions. Avatimes mark the passage of girls into womanhood by performing a series of rituals known as *kusakɔkɔ*. The most noteworthy of the transitions frequently celebrated in the area is the move from childhood to adulthood. This is the time the youth, especially the females, are prepared for adult activities and responsibilities, hence the initiation rites is called *kusakɔkɔ* literally meaning 'giving of cloth'. *Kusa* means cloth while *kɔkɔ* means giving. *kusakɔkɔ* initiation has transformed girls from the relatively ignorant and irresponsible state of childhood to the state of knowledgeable responsible adulthood ready for marriage in Avatime. There are a lot of artistic values locked up in the celebration of the *kusakɔkɔ* rites which were not documented but successfully, they have now been identified discussed and revealed that their celebration was artistic because things were done skilfully, tasteful and aesthetically satisfying. The development of skills or character through knowledge received, thus a body of artistic and educational information that exist in Avatime which were unearthed during the study are now brought to the fore of Art Education as a resource material for reference purposes.

## 6. Recommendations

- Observation has shown that religion is believed to shape the peoples' perception and reaction to situation about *kusakɔkɔ* puberty rites and that some aspects of the rites are sacrilegious to the Christian faith. There should be collaboration between the Pastors and the ritualists to educate members about the educational benefits of *kusakɔkɔ* as individuals as well as the society.
- Education and occupation are factors which are negatively affecting the smooth process of *kusakɔkɔ* rites thereby making it less attractive currently. It is therefore recommended that more group ritual activities be encouraged to be done only once a year for school going girls and workers to participate during school holidays and a weekend respectively.
- Despite the fact that the initiation rites are meant to educate the young girls to become good home makers and virtuous women for marriage, the successful graduates see the process as coming of age or licence to practice sex leading to teenage pregnancy in the area. The researcher therefore recommends strict rules or control measures to prevent this menace or provide education about the cultural meaning for ritual mothers to be transmitted to the initiates.
- Though the rites are aimed at promoting education and developing or empowering the girl child, most young girls in Avatime traditional area see the rituals as a gateway to marry early, hence drop out of school. They prefer to stop schooling or apprenticeship training leading to unemployment and lack of education. Chiefs and elders of Avatime should use incentives such as rewards or awards as forms of motivation during the celebration of *kusakɔkɔ* to encourage these young ones to attend school and also curb the menace.

- The people also value norms and sanctions, so they impose sanctions on those who refuse to go through the rituals. The rites are still performed on the corpses of those who did not perform the rites in their life time as punishment. The researcher believes that members should be allowed to exercise their freedom of rights and decide on what they also believe in these modern times.
- The initiation does not directly relate to HIV transmission just because the rites do not involve sexual interaction, may be, as other practices, but its attraction to people from all walks of life suggest some amount of sexual activities because observation shows that, most people do not know details about HIV, let alone preparing to protect themselves. It is recommended that Ghana AIDS Commission, PPAG, and NGOs take advantage of the celebration to educate people in the area. The ritual mothers should also be trained with the requisite information necessary for the education of the initiates on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease.
- It is was observed that some people in Ghana and other parts of the world have no knowledge about *kusakɔkɔ* and rather, refer to Dipo rites anytime puberty rites or initiation rites are mentioned .It is therefore highly recommended for the educational values of art in this document to be incorporated in the General Knowledge of Art syllabus of the Senior High School to put it in the limelight of the whole world.
- Finally the researcher recommends the continuation of *kusakɔkɔ* because it provides education for the people intellectually, socially, psychologically, spiritually, physically, and artistically.

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