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**CONSTRAINTS AND STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING THE CULTURAL  
HERITAGE OF THE COMMUNE OF KÉTOU IN BENIN**

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<https://doi.org/10.35410/IJAEB.2025.5953>

**ABSTRACT**

The commune of Kétou, one of the historic cities of Benin, remained unknown for a long time despite the existence of many sites from a rich and varied cultural heritage. The present study aims to analyze the constraints that hinder the enhancement of the tourist heritage of the municipality of Kétou in order to propose strategies for their sustainable protection.

The methodological approach used includes data collection through documentary research, observation and interview guides with 90 people (municipal authorities, tourists, cultural heritage promoters, notables, religious leaders, etc.), data processing and analysis of the results using the SWOT model.

It appears from this study that the commune of Kétou has 44 cultural heritages, including 16 tangible, 12 intangible and 16 natural. However, 60% of the population surveyed says that these cultural heritages are in a poor state on the one hand, in a very advanced state of degradation for 30% and unrecognizable for others (10%) because of several constraints. It is therefore urgent to think about a redevelopment of these assets and to redefine a good management policy for this heritage.

**Keywords:** Benin, Commune of Kétou, constraints, enhancement strategies, cultural heritage.

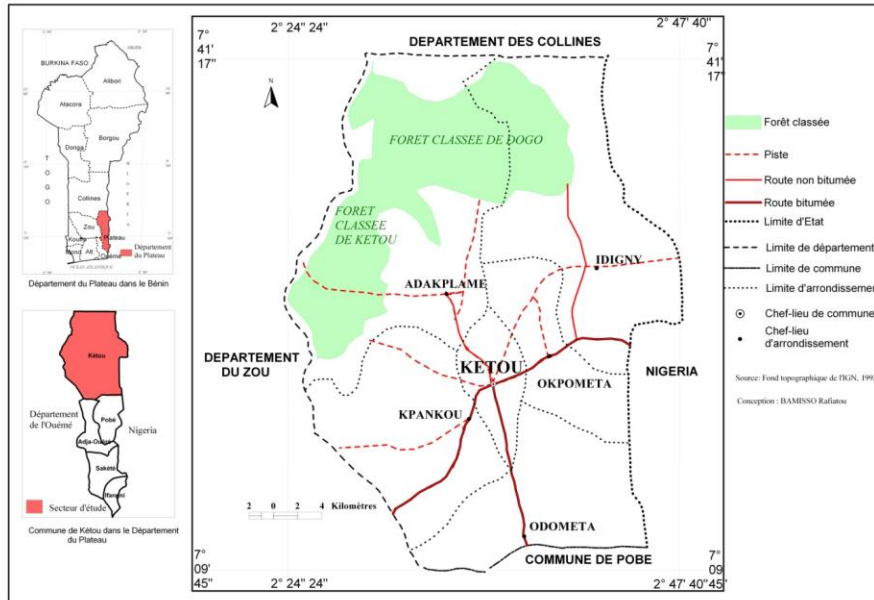
**1. INTRODUCTION**

Since the UNESCO Convention on the "Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural World Heritage" of 1972, some 1000 destinations are currently on the UNESCO list (among them about 750 are classified as "cultural heritage" (E. Fasskaoui Brahim et al., 2014, p. 2). According to aimf (2022, p.5), the enhancement, management and protection of cultural heritage represents a cultural, social and economic challenge for the development of territories. For A. Eradi (2022, p. 410) the management of local cultural heritage is a long-standing issue, the various civilizations have always emphasized the enhancement of their heritage resources in order to safeguard inherited cultures on the one hand and to make them a driver of development. Like other African countries with a strong cultural potential, Benin's tourist heritage is scattered throughout the country's departments. Heritage can be divided into two main categories: tangible heritage (archaeological and geological sites, monuments, temples, landscapes) and intangible heritage (a set of cultural ceremonies, songs, dances, etc.). However, for various reasons, they have not always had this recognition and have long been denigrated, leading or even forcing their owners or holders to abandon them (C.Barillet et al., 2023, p. 8). However, the commune of Kétou, despite its prestigious and historical past, has a tangible and intangible heritage that is in a state of degradation that does not contribute to its local development. This situation is linked to

several constraints and leads to a loss of income for both the municipal authorities and the local population in terms of culture and tourism.

## 2. Presentation of the study area

The Commune of Kétou is the cradle of Guèlèdè and covers an area of 2183 Km<sup>2</sup> and is located at the northern end of the Plateau department between latitudes 7°10' and 7°41' 17" North on the one hand and longitudes 2°24'24" and 2°47'40" East on the other hand (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Geographical location of the commune of Kétou

It is bordered to the north by the Commune of Savè, to the south by the Commune of Pobè, to the west by the Communes of Ouinhi and Zangnanado and to the east by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The border with Nigeria is 17 km to the east, in the village of Ilara. This positioning of the Commune makes it a strategic area for exchanges. The Commune of Kétou covers six (06) districts: Adakplamè, Idigny, Kétou, Kpankou, Odomèta and Okpomèta.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study is carried out using certain tools, existing data collected and an appropriate method of processing and analysis.

The documentary research consisted of the systematic collection of all works (general and specific), articles, journals that concern cultural heritage and its constraints; the Global Position System (GPS) for the geographical coordinates of the different sites in the study area takes into account degraded, rehabilitation or abandoned cultural heritage; The camera was used to take snapshots of some elements of the heritage of the city of Ketou; the sites are chosen according to their condition (conserved, eroded, frequented or not, rehabilitated or under construction); Topographic maps were used to define the investigation routes.

The observation guides were used in six districts of the commune of Kétou: Adakplamè, Idigny, Kpankou, Odomèta and Okpomèta and helped to list the cultural heritage of the commune of Kétou, to identify the factors that affect their degradation and the different forms of use; the interview guides were used to interview the authorities (in charge of tourism; municipal, local and royal associations), cultural heritage tourism promoters, religious leaders; etc. to know their vision of the tourism sector, the actions they carry out for the protection of heritage as well as the problems encountered; They also made it possible to know the strategies implemented in the six districts of the study area for a sustainable management of the sites concerned; Direct observation has made it possible to identify the most degraded, abandoned sites in rehabilitation on the one hand, and on the other hand it has helped to list and carry out a participatory analysis of site management strategies; Socio-anthropological surveys with questionnaires have made it possible to understand the perceptions of the populations on the degradation of the sites and the measures for their conservation or even rehabilitation.

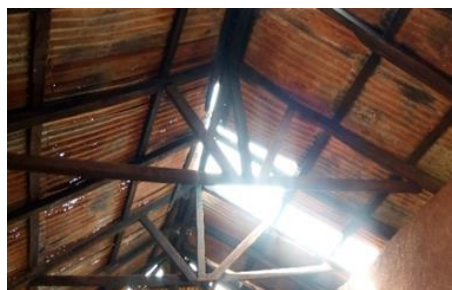
### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1. Constraints related to the enhancement of the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou**

Several constraints hinder the enhancement of the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou. These include:

##### **3.1.1. Socio-economic constraints**

According to 60% of the population surveyed, the socio-economic constraints of the non-promotion of the cultural heritage of the commune of Kétou are linked to the non-organization of the heritage, which is solely the work of the bearer communities. They are therefore limited in their knowledge of standardized cultural heritage management techniques (**Plate 2**).



Degraded roof of Akaba Idéna (1); Scrub and erosion of the Palace (2); Abandoned and overgrown colonial building (3); Silting up and deterioration of the tomb of Akaba Idéna (4) in the commune of Kétou .

**Shooting:** Bamisso, July 2023

**Plate 1:** Degraded state of certain Cultural Heritage Sites of the commune of Kétou

Plate 1 shows the degraded roof of Akaba Idéna (photo 1), the entrance to the royal palace of Kétou (photo 2) which is relatively abandoned to grasses, flooding, erosion and also to cracks in the walls of the palace. Other socio-economic constraints include the absence of an amusement park for leisure, which could lead tourists to travel to the town. In addition, intangible cultural heritage faces recurrent constraints including neglect, the confined conservation of bearer communities that are difficult to open up to others, the impact of foreign religions and the loss of resource persons without having left their knowledge or living human treasures. In addition, the socio-cultural organization of the commune of Kétou remains anchored in the facts and practices inherited from royalty.

**3.1.2. Financial constraints**

The funds allocated to the management and enhancement of the cultural heritage are poorly managed by the municipal authorities who do not involve the dignitaries and followers who are the guardians of these sites to properly play their role as curators and protectors of the heritage of Kétou. The maintenance of fetishes, or even rituals and sacrifices, require enough funds that the latter cannot take care of, which most of the time leads to the degradation, abandonment or even disappearance of certain heritages in particular (fetishes and certain sacred sites).

**3.1.3. Administrative constraints**

According to 80% of the population surveyed, the lack of organization in the management of the heritage of the municipality of Kétou is one of the constraints hindering its development. Only the holding communities, for the few who are interested, benefit above all.

The analysis of the institutional and organizational framework put in place for the management of the cultural and tourist heritage of the municipality reveals the almost non-existence of a responsible and functional organization recognized to manage heritage assets and elements taken as a whole. In addition, there is the non-compliance with prices in museums and other tourist sites as well as the absence of a policy to transform Kétou into a tourist destination.

**Table 1 presents the problem related to the promotion of Destination Kétou.**

Domain	Internal		External	
	Forces	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Organization	- Existence of a municipal commission in charge of cultural	-Non-existence of a tourist office in the municipality;	-Existence of the FADeC fund for tourism;	-Competition from other destinations; -Difficulties in

	<p>and tourist affairs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existence of the communities holding the heritage;</li> <li>Existence of tourism actors;</li> <li>-Existence of political will on the part of the municipal council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of dynamism in the organization of the sector;</li> <li>-Insufficient resources for tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning of actions for the development of tourism in the PDC;</li> <li>- Establishment of funds for tourism in the municipal budget;</li> </ul>	<p>accessing the ADFeC fund;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Constraints in the mobilization of own resources by the municipality;</li> <li>-Constraints in the implementation of the CFP and each year's budget</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existence of the communities holding the heritage;</li> <li>-Existence of tourism actors;</li> <li>- Relative organization of certain actors (craftsmen)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of professionalism in the exercise of the profession;</li> <li>- Insufficient organization of certain actors;</li> <li>-Ageing of the actors;</li> <li>-Insufficient service equipment</li> </ul>	<p>Training project for actors and their organization implemented by the MTCA;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exchange of know-how and skills between local and national actors</li> </ul>	<p>Weak extension of the actions of technical and financial partners to the commune of Kétou;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Competition from tourism players from other Destinations</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism products and services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Availability of tourist products;</li> <li>- Availability of tourist services;</li> <li>- Quality of certain products and services;</li> <li>-Labeling of Guèlèdè by UNESCO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of quality of certain tourism products and services;</li> <li>- Insufficiency of certain products and services at the Destination;</li> </ul>	<p>Recognition of the quality of certain products of the Kétou destination;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Networking of certain products with the tourism market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Competition from products and services from certain destinations;</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existence of community radio in</li> </ul>	<p>Lack of quality of media content at</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project to promote Benin as a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-High cost of the service of national</li> </ul>

<p><b>Tourism Promotion</b></p>	<p>Ketou;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Production and dissemination of content by national press organs on the Destination Kétou;</li> <li>- Existence of community demonstrations for the mobilization of the nationals of Kétou</li> </ul>	<p>the destination;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-integration of promotion in the management of Destination Kétou;</li> <li>-Non-existence of a major Festival for the Destination</li> </ul>	<p>destination initiated by the State;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ORTB's policy for the extension of its services to the municipalities;</li> </ul>	<p>press partners;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Weak support from technical and financial partners of promotional actions</li> </ul>
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**Source:** Field surveys, February 2023

The SWOT analysis method makes it possible to identify the factors (physical, human and socio-economic) an effective strategy that can maximize strengths and opportunities, minimize the impact of weaknesses and threats.

**3.2. Strategies for promoting the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou**

Several strategies can be implemented to enhance the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou. These include:

**3.2.1. Strategies for promoting the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou**

To enhance and better revitalize the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou, 70% of the population and 100% of the municipal authorities proposed that it is important to provide the municipality with a tourist office, to set up a heritage management system that links the authorities, tourism and hotel actors, the heritage holders and the royalty, Perpetuation of the reunion parties that are already taking place and creates more festivals. In addition, there is the construction of entertainment venues that will encourage tourists to make the trip to the town. On the other hand, for 30% of the population, particular emphasis should be placed on the quality of the training of existing tourist staff while periodically organizing refresher sessions and well-defined training.

On the basis of and in addition to the proposals of the populations surveyed, those of the local authorities, and the realities on the ground, it will be necessary to create and promote the Kétou destination. Indeed, the Commune of Kétou must be defined as a tourist destination and a product that must be sold. The strategies for revitalizing and promoting the Destination Kétou are possible thanks to the connectivity of the Destination's offers and products; connectivity of the Destination's tourism stakeholders (facilitators and prescribing actors of the Destination); connectivity of the Destination itself with other Destinations in Benin, Africa and the world. It commits the Destination to two paths:

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Networking of actors and connection to the world through promotion. The networking of actors results in the creation of the management body of the Destination Kétou. As for the connection to the world through promotion, the strategy boils down to creating and adopting effective and modern communication tools (the creation and animation of a website with social networks, Facebook page, Twitter, etc.) on the Destination, to create a major municipal festival; to equip themselves with the means and resources traditionally used in communication (the press (print, radio and television); audiovisual (posters, flyers, T-shirts, kakemono, advertorials) and the Internet) and those specific to the tourism sector.

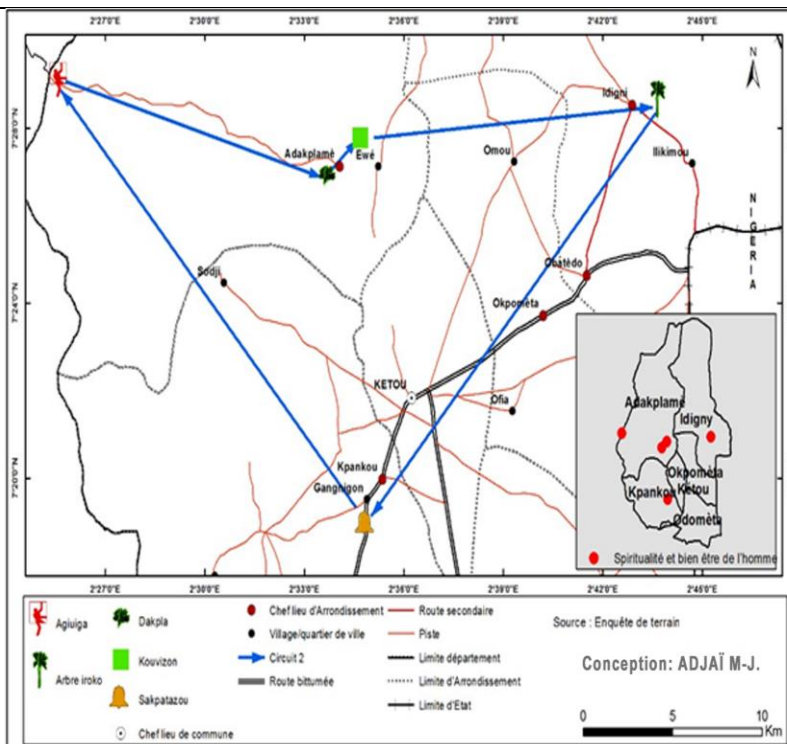
Also, it will be necessary to set up a mechanism for the implementation of the plan to promote the tourist destination which must take into account adequate and consistent human, financial and material resources. Finally, the creation of new tourist offers will highlight the Kétou Destination through some national circuits.

❖ **Tour 1: Immersion in the civilization of the Kétou royalty**

This tour presents the itinerary of the ritual performed by the kings during their enthronement. It takes into account the AKABA IDENA Fortified Gate; Royal Palace; Centenary square of Kétou; Colonial or vernacular architecture; sites of the itinerary of the ritual performed by the kings in the process of enthronement.

**Circuit 2: Spirituality and human well-being**

The commune of Kétou is the cradle of Guèlèdè, the centre par excellence of the practice of Vodoun. It is a commune characterized by the presence of a diversity of deities. There are sacred forests, backwaters charged with spiritual values, and convents fortified by spirits (figure).



**Figure 4:** Tourist circuit 2: Spirituality and human well-being

This tour follows the following route: Guèlèdè Convents, Oro Kouvito, ...; Site of the 221 sacred wells, house of the Fa, sacred forests, etc. These deities, spiritual values and spirits protect Man as a whole and in his existence (Figure 4).

❖ **Circuit 3: The wonders of Kétou**

The Commune of Kétou offers a landscape of valley, swamps and granites. There are wonderful landscapes, megalithic stones, natural and secular wells.

In addition, the enhancement and revitalization of the cultural heritage of Kétou, implies the existence of a quality tourist service as presented in Table II below.

Family of services	Service examples
Accommodation	Gîtes, lodges, watch houses, holiday villages, campsites, etc.
Restoration	Restaurants, bars, maquis, cafeterias... all standardized.
Services supports	Shops (petrol stations, more pharmacies, exchange offices, supermarket, banking, mobile phones, etc.),  Public services (post office, tourist office, etc.), private services (NGOs working in the fields of



	nature, tourism, well-being, food quality, etc.)
<b>Transport</b>	Accessibility (road, public transport), internal service (car rentals, etc.), signage

**Source:** Field surveys, February 2023

This table presents the services that involve tourism actors who officiate in a Destination and carry out the missions of tourism prescribers. They provide the organisation, logistics and prescribers needed for the development of the destination, whose sole raison d'être is to meet the expectations of tourists.

### **3.2.2. Some proposals for the development of some tourist sites in the commune of Kétou**

In order to better promote the cultural heritage of the municipality of Kétou, it is important to think of a system of development of sites and heritage assets. These are:

- Review and redevelop the abandoned colonial building of Kétou while respecting its basic structure and originality;
- Rehabilitate the international house of Guèlèdè;
- To make the Place Oyingin (Place centenaire), a real square following a particular architecture with trees, lawns, cobblestones of pedestrian crossings; a car and motorcycle parking lot; public benches; to install an open-air catering site, with a special décor; Consult the deities in order to see, as far as possible, how to redevelop the 221 wells that are in Ofia, for the comfort, spiritual, health and other satisfaction (depending on the role of each well) of the tourist;
- Consult the deities in order to see, as far as possible, how to renovate the 221 wells that are in Ofia, for the comfort, spiritual, sanitary and other satisfaction (depending on the role of each well) of the tourist.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The sites concerned by the cultural heritage of the commune of Kétou are mainly confronted with several constraints that prevent their enhancement and constitute a loss of income for both the tourism sector and the local population. The observation made at the level of the heritage of the study area is that more than 90% are not valued and are in a degraded state or even disappearing. This confirms the work of H.A. Kombiéni (2021, p.117) for whom in the commune of Karimama, several tourist sites remain unvalued, poorly known and threatened with disappearance because of difficulties in accessing the sites, problems related to human activities, infrastructure, etc. However, the absence of a real decentralization process giving local authorities a real role in the protection and enhancement of their cultural heritage D.Hamour (2018, p.20) highlights a problem common to cultural heritage throughout the world, which is similar to the municipality of Kétou. The heritage sites of the commune of Kétou are in an advanced state of degradation despite the financial resources allocated to their rehabilitation, which corroborates the work of L. Gbémètonou (2016) for whom funds intended for the rehabilitation of cultural heritage are diverted to the benefit of the municipal authorities. In addition, to enhance the cultural heritage of the commune of Kétou, strategies have been developed and involve the establishment of a system of fusion of heritage management that links

the municipal authorities and the local population, in particular the preservations/curators of the sites. It is in the same vein that Calenda (2014, p.3) proposed that for the process of heritage valuation, it is necessary to rethink the communication strategies of institutions, to proceed with participatory management involving both stakeholders (authorities and local populations).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

At the end of this study, the commune that Kétou also called Kétu or Ilou-OWE (for the Ketois) has a very rich and varied tourist potential (material, intangible, natural, historical, etc.). It has a tourist potential capable of bringing tourists and making them stay for a week. Among this heritage we have, a multitude of tangible and intangible heritages, but also a natural heritage richness, which hides behind it, the beauty of nature, and certain ancestral values, which preserves it to this day. However, this variety and tourist wealth that the municipality has has not so far highlighted as it should be. Thus, there are many constraints that are at the root of the non-enhancement of the tourist heritage of the municipality of Kétou. These constraints are divided between the population itself and political leaders.

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