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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on Kente and Adinkra cloth made by the Asante people of Ghana. People in this region traded with neighboring countries: Burkina Faso to the north, Ivory Coast to the west and Togo to the east. Most books fail to link these connections with the origin of the textiles. Rattray discussed how both textiles were introduced to Asante from Cote d'Ivoire but gave minimal explanation how the Asante were able to incorporate them into their culture (Rattray 1927: 222). The study of these two Asante textiles will enable us to understand the history, designing processes, cultural beliefs, and the economic and religious significance of Kente and Adinkra cloth. The Akan are the greatest cultural cluster in Ghana, consisting of several ethnic groups such as the Nzema, Fante, Akyem, Brong, Kwahu, and Asante. The common language of the Akan is Twi with slight variations according to region. Asante power resides its strong military, trade, and unified political system (Boateng 1996: 12). Their textiles reflect their
cultural traditions and beliefs. The colors, symbolism, and the spirituality associated with this cloth can be seen in the life of the Asante.

Attending funerals, weddings, naming ceremonies, and other festive occasions is an important part of Asante culture. These occasions are times where people try to wear the best Kente or Adinkra cloths. Kente and Adinkra, unlike other textiles, are symbolic cloths: they have meanings relevant to the society and reflect on the status of the wearer. Leaders like politicians and kings in the society also wear Kente and Adinkra, but they are different from those worn by the ordinary citizens. Asante show respect to authority by not wearing cloth similar to the king's personal pattern. A person may be subject to punishment if they do not honor this custom.

Kente is a strip-woven cloth made of bright colors and complex designs woven on a narrow loom. Adinkra is a printed or stamped cloth. It is usually stamped or printed with several designs. Each symbol has meaning. The symbols are chosen based on the status of the wearer and the message they want to portray. Some of the traditions associated with these cloths such as the techniques and production methods used to create them have been handed down from generation to generation. Children who intend to become weavers start weaving at a tender age: the son of a weaver normally becomes a weaver (Rattray 1927: 233). Kente and Adinkra are used in several celebrations. They have also been adapted to modern day fashion and are seen in almost every celebration from graduation ceremonies to festivals both in Ghana and internationally.

These two Ghanaian textiles are chosen because of the traditions and intended meanings associated with these cloths. The Asante belong to the Akan ethnic group. It is the largest and
most influential group in Ghana. They are very rich in gold, mighty and victorious in battle, sophisticated in art and government and have a successful kingdom, which started in the Seventeenth century. They are experts in goldsmithing, gold weight, elaborate and intricate Kente cloth, skillful wood carving, and the use of teaching proverbs. The complex social, economic and governmental system of the Asante provided the structure within which these arts flourished. All these attributes are reflected in these two textile traditions.

Over the past several centuries there has been little change in design of the Kente and Adinkra cloth. They show the culture and the traditions of the Asante through the messages they convey in their designs. Adinkra symbols and Kente design go hand in hand. They are sometimes used together based on the choice of the customer and the designer. These two textiles were chosen for this research based on their similarities and differences, that is, the messages conveyed in the design and the importance for the Asante. Chapter one gives a general overview of Kente cloth: production processes, meaning of the woven designs as well as the color symbolism. Chapter two discusses Adinkra cloth: its origin, types of Adinkra, symbolic meanings, and production process. The economic, social and religious significance and functions of these two textiles will be discussed. Both textiles will be compared, and the similarities and differences will be discussed. Chapter three concentrates on the use of these textiles in contemporary designs and how this new global market affects the economy, culture, and traditional weavers of Ghana. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connections of these textiles, how they have moved beyond traditional use and been adopted by other cultures and the impact of modernization on the Asante textile tradition.
CHAPTER I
KENTE

Kente is a colored patterned strip-woven cloth made on a loom. This chapter discusses various aspects of Kente cloth: designing process, techniques, and the economic, religious and social functions. The spirituality and cultural symbolism of Kente cloth will also be presented.

Both the Asante and related Ewe people weave Kente. However, for the purpose of this research, only the Asante Kente will be considered. According to Doran Ross, while the word Kente has become commonplace in Ghana, referring to both Asante and Ewe (pronounced ay-vay) hand woven strip weaves. The term has also been applied to machine-woven cloth with Kente designs.

The origin and meaning of the word Kente are much disputed. Some say it is named after a former king of Asante, Oti Akenten; others, after the wife of an early chief of Bonwire, a major weaving center. Still others say kente is a Fante word for basket. Proponents for Ewe origin of the word say the words ke and te ("open" and "close") refer to the raising and lowering of the warp threads. One popular interpretation states that kente, Ke-ente in the language of the Asante, means "whatever happens to it, it will not tear." This translation has been widely circulated in the United States, where it has become a potent metaphor for unity, strength, and shared commitment within the African-American community.

The origin of Kente is explained by both legend and historical accounts. A legend has it that a man named Ota Kraban and his friend Kwaku Ameyaw from the town of Bonwire (now the leading Kente weaving center in Asante), learned the art of weaving by observing a spider weave its web. Taking a cue from the spider, they wove a strip of raffia fabric and later improved upon
their skill. They reported the discovery to their chief Nana Bobie, who in turn reported it to the Asantehene, who was at that time, Otumfuo Agyemang Prempeh I. The Asantehene adopted it as a royal cloth and encouraged its development as a cloth of prestige reserved for special occasions. Rayon and silk thread is the major material used in the production of Kente cloth. The threads used for production now include both bright and Shaded yellow, which are all imported (Kent 1971: 29). Bonwire is the official weaving town for Kente. Two men named Ota Kraban and Kwaku Ameyaw brought weaving from the north into this region.

Planning and Production

Kente is woven in strips and joined together either by hand sewing or machine stitching. This makes the process very tedious, as weavers have to put all these strips together to make a full cloth. A cloth for a man may contain up to 20 strips. This cloth is worn wrapped over the body and draped over the left shoulder (Cooksey 2011: 74). Before a cloth is woven and finished, it undergoes several processes with strict supervision from the master weaver in order to produce unique and quality Kente. This process involves careful planning to execute the best design. Weaving is restricted to only males among the Asante. However, spinning of cotton into thread is the work of older women who are post-menopausal. There are various processes undertaken before the actual weaving begins. These include warping, raddling, beaming, heddling, tying of ends and tie-up. The following pages will explain these processes and give examples. For the purpose of this research, the following tools will be explained to give a general idea of needed equipment: shuttle, tension boxes, reed, and shuttle. First of all, a shuttle mostly made of wood has two ends that are tapered to help easy movement. While weaving, it is thrown through an
opening (shed) created when the pedal is pressed. Shuttles have smooth ends to prevent entangling and tearing of the yarns. Tension boxes are used while beaming to secure and give equal tension to the warp ends. These are wooden boxes with rock weights in them to make them heavy. The reed resembles a comb. It has small openings in it called dents. It may be made in wood or metal. The edges are secured at the bottom as well as the top. These weaving processes are comprised of warping, raddling, reeding, heddling and tie-up. Warping (figure 2) is the first step in the production of the fabric. Warping is defined as the parallel winding of yarn from the cone of the thread on to a warp beam (textilefashionstudy.com). This process involves stretching up the thread or yarn to a certain length. Warping is important in weaving as it disentangles the yarns from each other for a smooth weave. Figure 3 shows how raddling is done. Raddling is a process that evenly distributes the warp yarns on the loom for proper balance (textilefashionstudy.com).

Figure 2: Warping process
Source: Center for National Culture, Kumasi (Broadloom section)
Beaming is one of the important processes done before heddling. Figure 4 shows the beaming process where the warp ends are tied to the tension boxes to ensure there is equal tension in the warp. Heddling is done based on a design pattern. During this process, the warp threads are
passed through the eye of the heddles. Extra care is taken to pass all the warp threads through the eye of the heddles. Figure 5 shows an almost finished heddling. Adomako, a master weaver and the head of the broadloom department at the Kumasi Cultural Center, has stated that this arrangement is made based on the heddling order, which is the process where the warp yarns are drawn through the heddle’s eye. This process gives the fabric its design characteristics (Phone communication, July 14, 2014).

Figure 5: warp yarns been passed through the eye of the heddles
Source: Kumasi center for National culture

After heddling is done, the warp yarns are passed through the dents in the reed with the help of a hook. Dents are the holes in between the reed. This hook is primarily made of a flattened bamboo that has an opening at the ends to receive the warp yarns through the dents. This process is termed reeding. It is the reeding that determines a fabric’s size and width. After the yarns are
received through the dents, they are tied to prevent the warp yarns from slipping from the dents. Figure 6 shows how this tying is done.

In the tie-up process, (Figure 7) the lambs are attached to the correct pedals to form the desired pattern. According to Ike Smith, a worker at the broadloom department at the Center for National Culture in Kumasi, this is also based on the pattern of the design to be made (Smith, I. phone communication, July 16, 2014). The weaver chooses the desired colors and the weft is prepared with the help of a bobbin winder. The bobbin winder (figure 8) is a machine used to unwind the threads from the cones onto the bobbin for weaving. It can be operated manually or mechanically. After undergoing all these steps, a test weaving is done. The test weaving is done to ensure that the appropriate colors are used and the design pattern is right. After all these processes actual weaving takes place.

Figure 6: Reeding  
Figure 7: Tie-up  
Source: Kumasi center for National culture
Weaving is done on the broadloom or the traditional loom. Figures 9 and 10 show the two basic looms used in weaving Kente. Figure 9 is the traditional loom, which is used, for weaving Kente in strips (figure 11) that are later joined together by a machine or hand sewing. The Broadloom (figure 10) is the modernized version of the traditional loom. According to Mr. Adomako, the head of the weaving section at the Kumasi cultural center, broadloom weaving is believed to have started in Japan. However, in 1971 Mr. EKow Idan, who used to be the director of the Kumasi Cultural Center, introduced it (broadloomweaving.blogspot.com). Many people are beginning to like the broadloom Kente as opposed to the traditional one. Since the Kente woven on the broadloom is lighter it makes it more conducive for the weather conditions in this region when compared to the heavier traditional Kente. The broadloom differs from the traditional loom in many ways:
• The broadloom is larger in size when compared to the traditional loom.

• Unlike the traditional loom, which produces heavier Kente, the broadloom produces lighter Kente that is less compact.

• The broadloom has more treadles or pedals when compared to the traditional loom.

• Broadloom has both cloth and warp rollers, but the traditional loom only has a cloth roller and a tension box.

• The broadloom produces a wider Kente cloth while the traditional loom produces strip-woven Kente that are later joined together.

Figure 9: weaving on the Traditional Loom

Figure 10: The Broadloom

Source: Kumasi Center for National Culture
Figure 11 strip woven Kente to be joined to make a cloth
Source: Center for National Culture, Kumasi

Figure 12: Warp yarns and weft thread
Source: trueup.net
Color

In weaving, colors play a significant role. The weaver or the customer chooses the colors, and each of these colors bears some symbolism. These colors provide esthetically pleasing cloth when they are combined appropriately. Most of the thread used is imported, and the types of thread used are chosen for strength to minimize breakage during the weaving process. They may be rayon, silk, or cotton and come in a variety of colors (Kent 1971: 28). The colors are chosen for their brilliance and the meaning they convey.

A weaver's choice of colors for both weft and warp designs, may be dictated by tradition or by individual aesthetic taste. Color preferences may depend on gender. As a convention, rather than a strict code of dress, women tend to prefer Kente with background or dominant colors that are lighter or tinted, such as white, light yellow, pink, purple, light blue, light green, and turquoise. Men tend to prefer backgrounds or dominant colors that are more shaded, such as black, dark blue, dark green, maroon, dark yellow, orange and red. Social changes and modern living have led people to ignore these traditional norms, resulting in color choice based on individual taste. Kwaku Ofori-Ansah provides the meaning and significance of some of the colors used when weaving (kente.midwesttradegroup.com).

- Yellow is associated with the yoke of the egg, ripe and edible fruits and vegetables and also with the mineral gold. It symbolizes the sanctity, preciousness, royalty, wealth, spirituality, vitality and fertility whereas pink signifies the female essence of life.
• Red is related to blood, sacrificial rites and the shedding of blood. Red-eyed mood means a sense of seriousness, readiness for a serious spiritual or political encounter. Red is used as a symbol of heightened spiritual and political mood, sacrifice and struggle.

• Blue represents the sky, the abode of the Supreme Creator. It is used in a variety of ways to symbolize spiritual sanctity, good fortune, peacefulness, harmony, and love-related ideas.

• Green relates to vegetation, planting, harvesting and herbal medicine. It symbolizes growth, vitality, fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness, abundant health and spiritual rejuvenation.

• Violet signifies earth, and it is used in rituals and healing purposes. It reflects feminine aspects of life. Women mostly wear cloths bearing these colors.

• White symbolizes the white part of the egg and the white clay used in spiritual purification, healing, sanctification rites, and festive occasions. In some situations it symbolizes contact with ancestral spirits, deities, and other unknown spiritual entities such as ghosts.

• Grey symbolizes ash and is used in rituals for protection against malevolent spirits. Grey is, therefore, associated with spiritual blemish, but also with spiritual cleansing.

• Silver relates with the moon that represents the female essence of life. Silver is used in the context of spiritual purification, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and other community festivals. It symbolizes serenity, purity and joy.

(kente.midwesttradegroup.com)
Pattern

Kente comes in different designs and patterns, and each pattern has a name. These names are derived from historical events, proverbs, literature, and legends. Kente is a warp emphasis cloth with a stripe pattern, and it is through this pattern that the name of the cloth is derived. These names may be names of past royal figures, nature, or may come from the many proverbs of the Akan peoples. Some are only associated with royalty (www.kentecloth.net). In the past, the King of Asante was believed to have the ‘copyright’ to new designs. He may decide to keep the designs or give some to members of his court (Rattray 1927: 235). Some of these patterns include SikaFuturo, Oyokoman, Babadua, Mmeeda, Mpabo, Kuduo and Fathia fata Nkrumah.

Figure 13: Sikafuturo pattern (Gold dust pattern)
Source: Kentecloth.net
In figure 13 is the “Sikafuturo" which means gold dust. This pattern mostly serves as the basis of all complex weavings. It is very scarce (Ross 1998:107). The Oyokoman pattern is the most popular. It has a deep red background with wide gold and green stripes as seen in figure 14. Many complex Kente cloths make use of this warp pattern. The cloth was made in honor of the royal Oyoko clan, the origin of Kings and Queen mothers of Asante (Ross, 1998: 108). The yellow and green colors in the cloth represent the two main groups in the Oyoko family while the red between them symbolizes fire.

![Figure 14 Oyokoman pattern](Source: Kentecloth.net)

Another design is called Sama, this is named after the son of a Bonwire chief. It is made of yellow warp threads with red, black, and green weft (Rattray1927: 236). Some patterns are very complicated, and weavers have named them according to the stress they go through to execute the pattern. An example is the Adwene asa pattern, which is one of the most popular patterns and is woven only by master weavers. Adwene means 'brain/idea' and Asa means 'finish' in the Akan
language (Twi). When both words come together, it means all ideas have finished or been exhausted. The meaning describes the extreme difficulty of its production. Some of the patterns derive their names from politicians, great kings, and others. An example of such patterns is seen in figure 15. This cloth is called Fathia fata Nkrumah meaning Fathia is deserving of Nkrumah. Fathia was the wife of the president of Ghana, who led the country to independence in 1957. This cloth is characterized by an X pattern with nine squares (Ross 1998: 119). On Queen Elizabeth's visit to Ghana in 1961, a Kente cloth was made to commemorate her visit. This Kente cloth is the "Ohemaa aba Ghana" meaning "the queen has come to Ghana."

![Figure 15: Fathia fata Nkrumah](Source: Kentecloth.net)

There is also the "Nkyimkyim" meaning to turn or twist pattern. This is used to characterize an individual with an unstable mind. As seen in figure 16, they are mostly designed with zigzags that depict a person with an unsteady mind. Some of these patterns relate to proverbial sayings...
that teach morals. Akoko baatan (figure 17) is an example of such designs, and it means 'the mother hen': symbolizing parental care, discipline, motherliness, and tenderness.

Kente was formerly restricted to royals. The Asante king controlled the designs and the use of the Kente. A pattern may reflect that person’s status in the community. Within the king’s court each status had its own pattern. Today everyone may wear Kente. It may be seen during funerals, installment of chiefs, festivals, naming ceremonies, weddings and numerous other occasions. The elite and non-elite in the society may wear Kente but the designs vary according to the status of the wearer and it may be worn in several ways. Kente of a king is not supposed to touch the ground and must not reveal a lot of his body, which is different from how an ordinary person
wears it. Some of the ways in which Kente may be worn can range from Kyerew’anan
tu which is said to show the physique and prowess of the wearer. A lot of the cloth is drawn onto the shoulders in a way that makes it shorter. This style is most used by common people in society.

On the other hand, the king has a special style that does not show much of the body. An example is the “Okatakyie” which means a brave man. In this form the majority of the cloth rest on the left arm instead of the shoulders. It is made to cover the knees unlike the Kyerew’anan
tu. Kente is believed to be worn correctly when the woven patterned strips stand horizontally and vertically, and the bottom edge of the cloth should be even all around.

Women also have distinct styles of wearing Kente cloth. An example is the dansinkran style in which any other cloth is worn beneath the actual Kente cloth. This style is used because of its aesthetics. A complimentary colored cloth is worn beneath the Kente cloth for a more fashionable style. Another forms of wearing Kente by women is shown be the woman in the center on figure 18. In this style the Kente extends onto the left shoulder and the left hand secures the Kente in place whereas the Kente cloth covers the upper body of the women on her sides leaving the back and the hands bare (Adomako, F. phone communication, August 10, 2014).

Figures 19-21 show other occasions in which Kente could be worn. Kente is not only used to celebrate life but to celebrate death as well. During funeral ceremonies, Kente may be used by both royals and common people to bury the dead. Kente may also be used in creating royal fans; the Oyokoman cloth is used for making one particular royal fan for the queen mother of Mampong (Ross 1998: 53).
During engagement ceremonies Kente may be worn by the couple. However, figure 21 shows a different form of Kente worn by the Asantehene. This Kente design is made solely for him. It depicts his role as a royal and the leader of the Asante kingdom and it distinguishes him from his sub-chiefs and common people.

Figure: 18 Woman in the middle wearing Makoma so ade3 Kente pattern
Source: Ike Smith, Kumasi Center for National Culture
Figure 19: Young woman wearing Dakoro ye sere Kente cloth during an engagement ceremony
Source: Ike Smith, Kumasi Center for National Culture

Figure 20 Kente cloth worn for a traditional marriage ceremony
Source: Ike Smith, Kumasi Center for National Culture
Royal drums are also decorated with Kente cloth, which according to Ross, the war drum of the king of Kokofu is covered with Kente together with amulets; this is not done not only for the aesthetic purposes but to assist in the power of the instrument.

Kente has gone beyond its esthetics and provided knowledge to its wearers through the meanings they convey in the designs as well as the color symbolism that may be proverbial sayings that reflect the life of the Asante.
Adinkra cloth is known to have come from Gyaman in modern day Cote d'Ivoire as result of a war between the then Asante king, Nana Osei Bonsu, and Adinkra, the king of Gyaman. This war was caused, by Adinkra making a replica of the Golden stool. The Golden stool is a sacred symbol for the Asante. It keeps the soul of the nation. According to legend, the Golden stool descended from the heavens and landed in the hands of King Osei Tutu, who was the first king of the Asante. Okomfo Anokye, who was the king's priest, declared that the unity and strength of the Asante depended on the Golden stool. Many battles have been fought to protect the Golden stool. In 1900, a war was fought between the Asante and the British in the Yaa Asantewaa war. The Asante chose the Golden stool over their last sovereign king, Prempeh I, who was exiled by the British (pbs.org), thus illustrating the importance of the stool over any king.

After Adinkra was killed his kingdom became part of the Asante’s territory. Legend has it that when Adinkra was taken into captivity he was wearing a patterned cloth that symbolized his sorrow as he was taken to Kumasi, the capital of the Asante. Around the nineteenth century, the Asante people started to paint these Adinkra symbols on cloths. At first the Adinkra cloth was worn when mourning dead royals among the Asante but modernization has allowed people to wear them to other occasions beside funerals.
Unlike the Kente cloth, which is woven on the loom, Adinkra is made on colored or white fabric, which is stamped with motifs that bear religious and cultural meanings. The wearer may carry messages through the design, the color scheme and how the motifs are placed in the cloth (Polakoff 1980: 91). The dye used for stamping on the Adinkra cloth is obtained from the bark of a tree called “Badie” in Asante (Rattray 1927: 262). The stamps are carved from wood or calabash but may have handles to make it easier to use, and they are dipped into a dark tar which serves as a printing paste. The motifs used are derived from proverbial sayings that stem from the Asante culture, and they may express moral values, historical events, human behavior, and plant life. Adinkra designs have evolved over the years as craftsmen try to improve on the old ones or make completely new symbols (Adomako F. phone communication, August 15, 2014).

Adinkra cloth undergoes several planning stages before the craftsman finally executes the design. The following pages will focus on the processes it undergoes before it reaches the buyer. There are two main ways to produce Adinkra cloth and they are the traditional and the modern production processes.

Traditional Production Process

Traditionally the cloth is made by first producing the dye to be used for stamping. The dye is made from the bark of the Badie (Adansoniadigitata) tree (Rattray 1927: 95). The bark as seen in figure 22 is cut and broken into pieces and soaked in water for about a day, then pounded in a wooden mortar for about 3 hours. According to Rattray, after pounding they are placed in a big pot together with iron slags and boiled on a wooden fire until 2/3 of the water evaporates. Then
the remaining water is strained off as seen in figure 23. The leftover residue is called "Adinkraaduro” which means the Adinkra medicine.

The stamps are made from thick-skinned calabashes that are covered in shea butter for a year to make them soft. A piece of the calabash is cut, and Adinkra patterns are drawn in them with the aid of a pencil. The unwanted portion is carved with the use of a knife or gouge (figure 24), and wooden sticks are used to suspend the carved pattern. This allows the stamps to be held firmly in the hand for easy printing. Design choices for the Adinkra cloth depend on the occasion the cloth is to be worn and the status of the customer. Once these choices have been made the actual stamping begins. Most cloth produced using the traditional process is worn for funeral occasions. Akofena Adinkra Akofena (figure 25) is an example of a traditional funeral cloth. The two crossed war swords symbolize courage.
Figure 23: Straining after boiling to be used for the dye preparation
Source: iweb.tntech.edu/cventura/adinkra.htm

Figure 24: Carving the unwanted part of the pattern
Source: iweb.tntech.edu/cventura/adinkra.htm
Other examples include Mframadan, meaning *wind house*. Unlike Akofena, the threads used for stitching the cloth together are more colorful and made with a technique called Nwomu (figure 26), which is the advanced version of the traditional process.

The traditional Adinkra cloth is made by first selecting specific Adinkra symbols that bear meaning and reflect the status of the wearer. A flat ground is prepared, and the cloth is stamped with different Adinkra symbols as seen in figure 27.

The modernized form of producing the Adinkra cloth differs from the traditional process. In this technique strips of colored cotton are printed with Adinkra symbols and later pieced together manually with the aid of a needle and a variety of colored threads (figure 28).

Figure 25: traditional Adinkra “Akofena” worn during a funeral ceremony
Source: Kumasi Center for National Culture

Figure 26: Mframadan (wind house)
Figure 27: Fabric laid on the ground and stamped with varied Adinkra symbols
Source: iweb.tntech.edu

Figure 28: how the “Nwomu” is done
Source: iweb.tntech.edu
Modern Production Process

One of the modern techniques employed for a faster process is screen-printing and another process is computerized machine embroidered on a single-colored ground cloth. Digitally embroidered cloth is mostly made for royals. They are first designed on a computer with varied Adinkra symbols and then the design is fed into an embroidery machine. They are very colorful and look more like Kente. An example of this modern version of Adinkra cloth is seen in figure 29. This Adinkra cloth is a combination of Nyame Dua, meaning God's tree and Funtufunenfu Denkyenfunenfu, meaning shows two crocodiles with one stomach. The "OnyameDua" signifies a place of worship and the Funtufunenfu Denkyenfunenfu symbolizes unity.

Figure 29: Modernized version of Adinkra cloth
Source: Kumasi Center for National Culture
Colors and Symbols Used In Adinkra

Like Kente, colors play a significant role in Adinkra cloth. It determines the occasion in which the Adinkra cloth may be worn. There are a series of colors that may be available during production.

The colors in Adinkra bear similar meanings to that of Kente but have some slight variations. White signifies purity, virtue, joy and other spiritual beings like God and the spirits of the ancestors. Black represents the opposite qualities of white. It relates to the devil, death, and old age (Polakoff 1980: 98). Blue is associated with love and female tenderness. Green signifies newness, fertility, and passion. Gold is used to depict royalty. It also acknowledges the presence and influence of God in the society.

Adinkra symbols have several meanings. The names, meanings and description of some of these symbols are listed in figure 30. The symbols represent various moral values that, when worn, guide and remind the wearer of the lessons. The Asante chose some of the names and meanings of the symbols from historical, magical and religious beliefs. An example that is not included in the chart is Gyawu Atiko (figure 31). It means 'the back of Gyawu’s head'. Gyawu was said to be one of the sub-chiefs in Bantama a suburb in Kumasi. During a festival, he had a hairstyle similar to this motif.

Another motif called “kuntinkantan” (figure 32) teaches us not to be boastful or arrogant. “Kuntinkantan" means to bend and spread out. Other symbols like the "Aya" (figure 33) also
advise people not to be afraid. People who normally wear cloth with this symbol indicate by this selection "I am not afraid of you" and "I am independent of you" (Rattray 1927: 265).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Adinkrahene" /></td>
<td>Adinkrahene</td>
<td>Chief of Adinkra symbols</td>
<td>Greatness, charisma, leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akoben" /></td>
<td>Akoben</td>
<td>War Horn</td>
<td>Vigilance, Wariness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akofena" /></td>
<td>Akofena</td>
<td>Sword of war</td>
<td>Courage, valor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akokonan" /></td>
<td>Akokonan</td>
<td>The leg of a hen</td>
<td>Mercy, nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akoma" /></td>
<td>Akoma</td>
<td>The heart</td>
<td>Patience and tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akoma Ntoso" /></td>
<td>Akoma Ntoso</td>
<td>Linked hearts</td>
<td>Understanding, agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Denkyem" /></td>
<td>Denkyem</td>
<td>Crocodile</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ananse Ntontan" /></td>
<td>Ananse Ntontan</td>
<td>Spider’s web</td>
<td>Wisdom, creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Asase Ye Duru" /></td>
<td>Asase Ye Duru</td>
<td>The earth has weight</td>
<td>Divinity of mother earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Aya" /></td>
<td>Aya</td>
<td>Fern</td>
<td>Endurance, resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bese Saka" /></td>
<td>Bese Saka</td>
<td>Sack of cola nuts</td>
<td>Affluence, abundance, unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bi Nka Bi" /></td>
<td>Bi Nka Bi</td>
<td>No one should bite the other</td>
<td>Peace, harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Boa Me Na Me Mmoa Wo" /></td>
<td>Boa Me Na Me Mmoa Wo</td>
<td>Help me and let me help you</td>
<td>Cooperation, interdependence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 30: A chart that shows some selected Adinkra symbols and meanings  
Source: earthmetropolis.com
Cultural and Economic Significance of Kente and Adinkra

The production of Kente and Adinkra is important to the economy because it sustains jobs and retail commerce. Adomako, who has worked for the Kumasi Cultural Center for many years, says a significant number of tourists want to purchase these textiles and in some cases learn the craft. This provides income for the center and the country (Phone communication, August 15, 2014). The center also teaches people in and out of Ghana about Kente and Adinkra cloth and the historical, religious, and moral values of the people of Asante and Ghana as a whole. When meanings of colors, designs, and symbols are understood, people feel more related to the culture of the Asante.

The Kente and Adinkra production industry serve as a source of employment. It provides many job opportunities to many people in Kumasi and Ghana. When people learn the craft of Kente and Adinkra cloth, they can set up their own business and employ others. This has greatly cut
down unemployment in Ghana. With decreased unemployment, more money goes into Ghana's economy.

Although the Kente and Adinkra production is a fast booming business, it is coupled with many problems. Many Kente and Adinkra cloth industries do not have many looms or tools to produce in large quantities; as a result it becomes difficult when people make large orders. Craftsmen who work in these industries do not get any form of loans to help them meet the rising cost of materials and tools. In addition to these problems, there are no copyright laws to protect the craftsmen's designs. They often receive no royalties when other craftsmen use their designs. Due to these problems not everyone benefits from the growing Kente and Adinkra cloth industry.

The introduction of technology is destroying the local traditional textile industry. Through the introduction of automation and mass production, imitated Kente and Adinkra cloths are cheaper than the traditional textiles. Many people prefer these imported textiles because they are more affordable than the authentic cloth. The growth of the Kente and Adinkra cloth industry shows how popular it has become and through its expansion beyond traditional uses a global market has emerged. This benefit has overshadowed the decline of the traditional Kente weavers and Adinkra craftsman.

In this chapter we have discussed how Kente and Adinkra cloth are different in origin, design, and production. However, in terms of the economic and cultural significance they are the same, both in how the new industry is impacting traditional culture and in economic expansion.
CHAPTER III
KENTE AND ADINKRA IN CONTEMPORARY DESIGNS

Kente and Adinkra cloth have influenced many contemporary designers in Ghana, who have utilized the style and motifs of these textiles to embellish architecture, upholstery, jewelry, bags, and T-shirts. Some of these items are for local consumption while others are made for tourists; yet most of these designers concentrate more on producing works for tourists since this is where they get most of their income. Both tourists and locals purchase these products more for their fashion than the meaning attached to the motifs. These contemporary designers range from architects, woodcarvers, interior decorators, and tailors/seamstresses.

Kente and Adinkra cloth has gone beyond its traditional usage both locally and internationally and is now being incorporated into the fashion industry. This chapter will discuss how Kente and Adinkra cloth is used by contemporary designers to make various items of clothing and accessories in Ghana and the United States.

In architecture, Adinkra symbols are used in making wall decorations and tiles which are used in either interior or exterior decorations. These may be incised or embossed on buildings. The symbols utilized in the design of the buildings are selected based on the homeowners' status and preference. An example of such buildings is the Golden Tulip Hotel in Kumasi (figure 34). The symbols used include Gye Onyame, which means ‘except God there is nobody that can harm you’. Akofena (war sword), “denkyemfunemfu" that is two embodied crocodiles with one
stomach and symbolizes unity. Figure 35 shows Adinkra symbol in wall tile produced by Lea-way Designs, which is based in Minneapolis in the Minnesota. Their designs are mostly influenced by West-Africa symbols to convey a sense of home being a physical or spiritual sanctuary (Lea-way.com). Lea-way's design philosophy shows that some contemporary designers outside Ghana are influenced by the meanings of Adinkra symbols.

Figure 34: Adinkra symbol used to design the wall of a building.
Source: Ike Smith, Kumasi Center for National Culture

Figure 35: Adinkra symbol (Aya) tile
Source: Lea-way.com
Contemporary woodcarvers use Kente cloth and Adinkra symbols in their designs in a range of items from drums to chairs. Some of the designs use a combination of Kente and Adinkra symbols. These motifs may be carved or printed on the carved objects. Figure 36 show an example of a printed drum with both Kente and Adinkra symbols.

![Printed Kente motif and Adinkra symbol on a drum.](Source: freedomdrums.com)

Contemporary fashion designers in Ghana are now using Adinkra cloth in their T-shirt designs. With the introduction of Adinkra symbol fonts, it has become easier for these fashion designers to choose from these symbols. “Gozee Dezines" who is a Ghanaian designer currently located in Boston Massachusetts has mastered this art. Gozee is wearing a sweatshirt designed by using this modern technique (Figure 37). According to Gozee the design is first made on a computer using Adinkra fonts. The designs are then transferred onto the screens for the screen printing process. Varied printing pastes colors are used based on the designers or the buyer’s preference (Phone
communication, August 20, 2014). The colors used here have no meanings or symbolism when compared to the colors used in traditional cloth.

Figure 37: Gozee a contemporary fashion designer wearing a sweatshirt designed with Adinkra symbols
Source: NiiGozee

Other international fashion designers have begun using both Kente and Adinkra textiles in their designs. Tekay Designs, located in Houston Texas specialize in using Kente in their bridal, formal, and ethnic wear. Their designs embrace various cultures, but they concentrate on the African culture in their collections for both children and adults. Figures 38 and 39 are examples of Kente incorporated designs by Tekay Designs. The groom’s suit (figure 38) has Kente sewn on the suit lapels with Adinkra symbols embroidered in them, and on the sleeves and the hat. In addition, the bride’s dress (figure 39) has Kente stitched around the upper bust and the hem.
Hemma Designs, a New York based designer group specializing in women’s clothing and accessories, has been inspired by Kente. Hemma Designs has used Kente inspired designs for blazers, corsets, skirts and dresses. In their 2010 collections (figure 40-41), Hemma designed corsets and blazers with Kente cloth. (passage-project.typepad.com).

Figure 38: groom’s suit
Source: www.tk-designs.com

Figure 39: Bride’s dress

Hemma Designs, a New York based designer group specializing in women’s clothing and accessories, has been inspired by Kente. Hemma Designs has used Kente inspired designs for blazers, corsets, skirts, and dresses. In their 2010 collections (figure 40-41), Hemma designed corsets and blazers with Kente cloth (passage-project.typepad.com).
Contemporary fashion designers have created countless items with Kente cloth and Adinkra symbols such as phone cases, armrests, shoes, bags, and jewelry (Figures 42-46). Their innovations and introduction of Kente and Adinkra cloth in their designs has expanded the ideas and usage of these textiles beyond their traditional purpose.
African-Americans have adapted Kente cloth into their ceremonies to symbolize pride in their connection to African culture. During occasions such as Black History Month, Kwanzaa, and Martin Luther King Day, which highlights African American culture, Kente is often worn. Kente cloth is used during Kwanzaa celebration. Kwanzaa is a uniquely African-American holiday celebrated on 26 December through 1 January, and it honors heritage, achievements and appreciation of the Creator and creation. Kente cloth may be given as gifts as a symbol of one's heritage or they are worn during rituals as seen in figure 47 (Quick, 1998: 211). Kente cloth may also be used to decorate the altar during Kwanzaa celebrations. According to Dr. Mulana
Karenga, the creator of Kwanzaa “Kente cloth may be worn as a symbol of culture rootedness” (Quick, 1998: 211).

Figure 47: Father and son wearing Kente at Kwanzaa
Source: pridepublishinggroup.com

Figure 48: Kente cloth decorating an altar at St. James cathedral during Martin Luther King Jr Holiday
Source: stjames-cathedral.org

Figure 49: African-American fraternity and sorority members wearing Kente stoles during graduation
Source: alumni.brown.edu
Kente cloth is also popular during Martin Luther King Jr. Day festivities. This holiday is celebrated by many activities ranging from poetry readings, gospel concerts, and prayer breakfasts. T-shirts, cards, and various prints embellished with Kente are seen throughout these activities. Kente cloth has been used to decorate an altar as seen in figure 48. Graduation celebrations may also use Kente stoles (figure 48) that are worn by members of African-American fraternities and sororities. These stoles may have the letters and colors of their various organizations incorporated into traditional designs. They are either worn around the neck or sewn on sleeves (Quick, 1998: 266).

These examples indicate that Kente has gone beyond its traditional use. Although used in new ways, the traditions associated with Kente are recognized in the African-Americans. An example of this is the use of Kente by African-Americans in graduation ceremonies as compared to the Asante naming ceremony. Both of these are rites of passage in which the individual is moving into a new place in society. The use of the cloth is different, but the meaning is similar.
Conclusion

This study has discussed and compared the production, origin and meaning of both Kente and Adinkra cloth in their traditional and modern forms. The comparison of these two textiles shows and that although there are differences, these traditional textiles have similarity in their use and significance in Asante society. This cultural importance has contributed to the continuity of the craft and its significance in Ghanaian society.

The craftsmen producing both Kente and Adinkra cloth were concerned with innovation and ways to improve on their craft. These innovations can be seen in new production processes, tools and materials. All these advancements aim to improve the beauty of the textiles and make the production more efficient.

Local craftsmen have helped to shape the Kente and Adinkra cloth industry through their innovations. With modernization certain international contemporary fashion designers such as Tekay Dezines, Hemma Designs and Gozee Dezines are now incorporating Kente and Adinkra into their collections. This has caused a shift from traditional forms of production to more advanced and sophisticated production methods such as screen printing or embroidery.

Contemporary fashion designers have not restricted themselves to traditional uses but have created new styles of clothing and other fashionable accessories. Artists and interior designers explore and use these textile designs in architecture, sculpture, and ceramics, which has expanded the market for Kente and Adinkra cloth.

Although economically beneficial, the success of Kente cloth and Adinkra symbols being incorporated into contemporary designs, has had negative consequences, such as the decline of
traditional textile craft. Contemporary designers mass-produce these textiles, but local craftsmen who do not have access to many of the new production methods cannot be effective in competing in the new market. The traditional production methods take several days to make Kente or Adinkra cloth. Textiles produced this way are more expensive when compared to modern production methods for Kente or Adinkra cloth. Craftsmen complain about the authenticity of these mass produced textiles. They believe traditions are lost because the consumer does not appreciate the meanings associated with the designs, but buy the imitation Kente and Adinkra cloth because it is cheaper. As a result of these craftsmen not being able to compete with mass production methods the traditional Kente and Adinkra cloth market has been hurt.

The Government of Ghana has strengthened its copyright laws and has placed a ban on the import of these imitations. But this does not work because these imitations still find their way into the black market. Without the help of resources such as Kumasi Cultural Center, the tradition craftsmanship could be lost in the growth of cheaper mass-produced contemporary fashion textiles.

Kente and Adinkra cloth has found a large and successful market in the United States within the African-American community. The uses of Kente and Adinkra symbols in this community has in fact expanded the traditional use. Although the occasions where these textiles are worn differ, their importance is similar. This expansion of use of these textiles and motifs has drawn attention to the meanings, origins, and significance of the Kente and Adinkra cloths and the Asante culture. Although mass production has diminished the traditional textile industry, it has brought
to light the culture and traditions of Ghana. With this increased interest from outside of Ghana and the governments continued efforts to protect the local textile industry there is hope that the traditional forms of Kente and Adinkra will continue to be made and the meanings and traditions surrounding them will not be lost.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


