BEADS
HAND LOOM
CARDBOARD LOOM
STRING WARP
MAYAN BACKSTRAP LOOM
WARP & WEFT
OTHER MATERIALS
CAMEL HAIR
WOODEN HAND LOOM
FLOOR LOOM
KENTE WEAVING IN GHANA
KENTE WEAVING

• Although Kente, as we know it was developed in the 17th Century A.D. by the Ashanti people, it has its roots in a long tradition of weaving in Africa dating back to about 3000 B.C. The origin of Kente is explained with both a legend and historical accounts.
LEARNED TO WEAVE FROM A SPIDER

A legend has it that a man named Ota Karaban and his friend Kwaku Ameyaw from the town of Bonwire (now the leading Kente weaving center in Ashanti), learned the art of weaving by observing a spider weaving its web. Taking a cue from the spider, they wove a strip of raffia fabric and later improved upon their skill. They reported their discovery to their chief Nana Bobie, who in turn reported it to the Asantehene (The Ashanti Chief) at that time. The Asantehene adopted it as a royal cloth and encouraged its development as a cloth of prestige reserved for special occasions.
HISTORY KENTE WEAVING

- Historical accounts trace the origin of Kente weaving to early weaving traditions in ancient West African Kingdoms that flourished between 300 A.D. and 1600 A.D.
- Some historians maintain that Kente is an outgrowth of various weaving traditions that existed in West Africa prior to the formation of the Ashanti Kingdom in the 17th Century.
- Archaeological research has dated examples of narrow-strip cloths woven in West Africa as early as the 11th Century A.D. and perhaps earlier.
- Some examples of woven fabrics have been found in the caves of the Bandiagara cliffs in Mali. These cloths used in burial ceremonies, probably, during the medieval Ghana, Mali and Soghai Empires, have technical and aesthetic features similar to many of the narrow-strip cloths in many parts of West Africa.
AS EARLY AS 3200 B.C.

• While Kente Cloth may have its roots in 11th Century West African weaving traditions, weaving in Africa as a whole was developed earlier.

• Elsewhere in Africa, archaeological excavations have produced such weaving instruments as spindle whorles and loom weights in ancient Meroe Empire which flourished between 500 B.C. and 300 A.D. in other African Civilizations in the Nile Valley such as Kemte (Egypt) and Nubia or Kush.

• There is an abundance of pictorial and archaeological evidence proving the existence of a weaving industry as early as 3200 B.C.
EGYPTIAN
Kente is a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, religious belief, social values and political thought.

- Aesthetics and Usages
- In its cultural context of use, Kente is more than just a cloth. Like most of Africa's visual art forms, Kente is a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, religious belief, social values and political thought. Originally, its use was reserved for their royalty and limited to special social and sacred functions. When its production increased, it became more accessible to those who could afford to buy it. However, its prestigious status was maintained, and it has continued to be associated with wealth, high social status and cultural sophistication. Today, in spite of the proliferation of both the handwoven and machine printed Kente, the authentic forms of the cloth are still regarded as a symbol of social prestige, nobility and a sense of cultural sophistication.
- According to Akan traditional protocol, Kente is reserved for very important and special social or religious occasions. Originally, it was not meant to be used for commonplace daily activities or as an ordinary wear. Its use for making clothing accessories was limited to items deemed sacred or special and were used only for special occasions.
- In many cases the use of Kente has a sacred intent. It may be used as a special gift item during such rites and ceremonies as child naming, puberty, graduation, marriage and soul-washing. It may also be used as a symbol of respect for the departed souls during burial rites and ancestral remembrance ceremonies. Its significance as a symbol of prestige, gaiety and glamour is evident during such community celebrations as festivals and commemoration of historical events, when people proudly wear the best of their Kente Cloths to reflect the spirit of the occasion.
COLORS ARE CHOSEN

• Colors are chosen for both their visual effect and their symbolic meanings.

• A weaver's choice of colors for both weft and warp dominant colors that are lighter or tinted, such as white, light yellow, pink, purple, light blue, light green and turquoise.

• Generally, men tend to prefer cloths with background or dominant colors that are on the shaded side, such as black, dark blue, dark green, maroon, dark yellow, orange and red.

• Social changes and modern living have, however, led some people to ignore these traditional norms, resulting in color choice based on individual taste.
YELLOW in all its variations is associated with the yoke of the egg, ripe and edible fruits and vegetables and also with the mineral gold. In some spiritual purification rituals mashed yarn is rendered yellow with oil palm and served with eggs. It symbolizes sanctity, preciousness, royalty, wealth, spirituality, vitality and fertility.
PINK

PINK is associated with the female essence of life. It is viewed as red rendered mild and gentle, and therefore associated with tenderness, calmness, pleasantness, and sweetness. According to Akan social thought, these attributes are generally considered as essential aspects of the female essence.
RED is associated with 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 therefore used as a symbol of heightened spiritual and political mood, sacrifice and struggle.
BLUE

BLUE is associated with the blue sky, the abode of the Supreme Creator. It is therefore used in a variety of ways to symbolize spiritual sanctity, good fortune, peacefulness, harmony and love related ideas.
GREEN is associated with vegetation, planting, harvesting and herbal medicine. Tender green leaves are usually used to sprinkle water during purification rituals. It symbolizes growth, vitality, fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness, abundant health and spiritual rejuvenation.
PURPLE is viewed in the same way as maroon. It is considered as earth associated with color used in rituals and healing purposes. It is also associated color used in rituals and healing purposes. It is also associated with feminine aspects of life. Purple cloths are mostly worn by females.
MAROON has a close resemblance to red-brown which is associated with the color of Mother Earth. Red-brown is usually obtained from clay and is therefore associated with healing and the power to repel malevolent spirits.
WHITE derives its symbolism from the white part of the egg and from 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. It is used in combination with black, green or yellow to express notion, spirituality, vitality and balance.
GREY derives its symbolism from ash. Ash is used for healing and spiritual cleansing rituals to re-create spiritual balance when spiritual blemish has occurred. It is also used in rituals for protection against malevolent spirits. Grey is therefore associated with spiritual blemish but also with spiritual cleansing.
SILVER is associated with the moon which represents the female essence of life. Silver ornaments are usually worn by women and are used in the context of spiritual purification, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and other community festivals. It symbolizes serenity, purity and joy.
GOLD derives its significance from the commercial value and social prestige associated with the precious mineral. Gold dust and gold nuggets were used as medium of exchange and for making valuable royal ornaments. It symbolizes royalty, wealth, elegance, high status, supreme quality, glory and spiritual purity.
BLACK derives its significance from the notion that new things get darker as they mature; and physical aging comes with spiritual maturity. The Akans blacken most of their ritual objects to increase their spiritual potency. Black symbolizes an intensified spiritual energy, communion with the ancestral spirits, antiquity, spiritual maturity and spiritual potency.
IN GHANA
SAMPLES OF KENTE WEAVINGS
CARDBOARD LOOM
6th Grade Students Weavings
6th Grade Weavings
6th Grade Comic Strip
“How to Create a Weaving Using Recycled Materials”