



## **Indigenous Aesthetics As A Source Of Creative And Intellectual Growth: Focusing On The Intrinsic And Extrinsic Values Of Asante Kente Cloths**

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### **Abstract:**

*The study is about the intrinsic and extrinsic values of some selected weaves of the Kente weavers among the Asantes of Ghana. The researchers employed the descriptive and case study methods to examine and discuss the relationship between the study of aesthetics and the creative and intellectual growth of learners. The study employed questionnaire, interviews and observation as research instruments as well as analyzing the data thematically to enhance quality of the study. The essence of art education is education through art; in this vein, a focus of the art teacher to use art as a catalyst to prepare the learner to develop holistically to be able to be a problem solver in his endeavours rather than becoming a burden to society. Moreover, it does not mean that the learner will by all means end up as an artist but rather a big asset to his community in which s/he lives. If the nation needs creative and intelligent citizens to turn it around, then art education is a great source to achieving this goal. This paper therefore, discusses aesthetic dimensions of Asante Kente through which the learner gains intellectual and creative growth in Art Education. The study has confirmed the idea that indigenous African artists and Kente Weavers of Ashanti have their own standards of Aesthetics, Appreciation and Criticism.*

**Keywords:** *Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Values, Aesthetics, Intellectual Growth.*

**Introduction**

The field of Aesthetics is a very large one. Aesthetic education is a very important but often a neglected area of study in schools and colleges in Ghana (Adu-Agyem, 1990). Studies in aesthetics, appreciation and criticism enhance aesthetic and intellectual growth. The New Encyclopaedia (2003), claims that Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy, species of value theory or axiology, which is the "study of sensory or sensory-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste". Aesthetics is closely associated with the philosophy of art. Today the word "aesthetics" may mean (1) the study of the aesthetics (all the aesthetic phenomena), (2) the study of perception (of such phenomena), (3), the study of art (as a specific expression of what is perceived as aesthetic). Therefore, in summary, the term 'aesthetics' concerns our senses and our responses to an idea, object, event or nature (Adu-Agyem, 1990; Amenuke et al.,1991; Bates, 2000; Haggar, 1962; and Ross, 1982). They elaborated further that these include the sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell and the use of muscular activities. These activities result into spontaneous responses such as expressing love, hate, hope, disappointment, sadness, pleasure, fear and anxiety. They sometimes have compelling influence and reactions in the individual. In brief, aesthetics deals with individual senses of perception which inspires creativity and reaction to beautiful objects, events, ideas and so on (Adu-Agyem, 1990).Hagar (1962), reiterated that aesthetics is the philosophy of the beautiful and its relation to the perception and enjoyment of the appearance of anything artistic. This involves the concepts of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic moment. The latter idea explains as the moment of aesthetic consummation when the spectator becomes united with the object of contemplation. Wilson (1971), holds the view that aesthetic experience is an active and open confrontation with artistic as well as natural phenomena. Aesthetic education helps the student to acquire good morals. Gyekye (1996), emphasized fundamental issues like goodness, beautiful, moral right and evil in the society. For instance, what are the basic rules of creating beautiful things or identifying and interpreting goodness, evil, beauty and ugly or bad? These fundamental issues find meaning in the cultural setting. Originally, the study of aesthetics was on issues of beauty but now it tries to understand what people feel when they see something beautiful, does that thing they see impact on what they learn, does that thing conflict with their cultural background? In this kind of observation, a study is conducted on the individual and appropriate interpretation is collated on him or her. On the relationship between art and aesthetics, Tolstoy (1962), emphasized that human life is filled with

works of art of every kind that gives aesthetic pleasure. He again stressed that art and aesthetics are married, thus, cannot be divorced from one another and from human beings because humans make their daily routines nice-looking by surrounding themselves with pleasing forms and qualities. That is the reason why Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975), and Bates (2000), asserted that art and aesthetics are universal.

### **The Development Of Creative And Intellectual Growth Through Aesthetic Education**

In Aesthetic education, Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975), declared that children have joy in exploring, investigating, and expressing their feelings about their environment. Possibly the effective means of developing aesthetic awareness is through sharpening youngsters sensibilities and strengthening their power of self-expression (Adu-Agyem,1990). Aesthetics can be a basic way of relating oneself to the environment. That is, looking at, responding to, feeling a part of, being aware of textures and forms, reacting to differences and similarities, and liking and disliking an object, noting differences in organization – all are part of the aesthetic response and part of aesthetic growth. Aesthetics may be thought of as the non-factual, non objective reactions of a person to his environment. As such, aesthetics may be an attempt to discover the nature of self. Matters of beliefs and values take precedence over knowledge.

### **Methodology Of Study**

This paper utilized the qualitative research method. It also employed a case study. The paper again examined and analysed some studies that have been done on aesthetic appreciation, education, perception as well as aesthetic growth. The researchers also sought essential information from the sampled population, individuals and experts who have unearthed the concepts of aesthetics, appreciation and criticism. In all, a sample size 80 respondents (weavers) were selected from a population of 300 weavers in the Ashanti Region such as Bonwire, about 20 kilometres from Kumasi, Adanwomase, Ntonso and Centre for National Culture, Kumasi. Apart from Bonwire being the most popular for its unique Kente products, these centres are also noted for their beautiful, elaborate and authentic weaves. This sample size constitutes more than 30% of the entire population as shown in Table 1.

	Position	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Master weaver	62	77.5	77.5	77.5
	Junior weaver	14	17.5	17.5	95.0
	Apprentice	4	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

*Table 1: Position / Status of Weavers  
Source: Authors' Field Study, 2008*

The results of the interviews and questionnaires coupled with observations and review of various related literature on the subject, led to quality discussion of the subject matter. The researchers personally sent sets of questionnaire to these experts (weavers). They were interviewed using one-on-one and focus group methods. Others were observed in their workshops and sometimes participant observation was done.

### **Results And Discussion**

In this section, the researchers discussed the concepts of aesthetics based on the Asante master Kente weavers' philosophy using samples of Kente cloths selected from the various weaving centres namely Bonwire, Adanwomase, Ntonso and Centre for National Culture, all in Ashanti Region of Ghana.

### **Intrinsic And Extrinsic Values Of Some Kente Weaves**

There are several Intriguing Asante Kente designs with a wide variety of aesthetic qualities for which they are made:



*Figure 1: "Adwini asa"*



*Figure 2: "Emmaa Da"*

From figure 1, “Adwini asa”, literally means “all designs are used up” or all wisdom is exhausted” in the design of the cloth. According to the weavers, it was discovered and woven more than 300 years ago. It was the base for discovery of several Kente designs such as “Me Danseni Akasa”, “Obaa Pa”, “Adwini Asa Special”, “Ado Kuffour” and “Theresa Kuffour.” It is a double weave, durable and could be woven in different colours. Previously, it was woven in mostly red, yellow, and green, but now it can be produced in several other bright colours such as orange, purple and blue. According to the Chief Kente weavers, the original designer of “Adwini Asa” attempted to weave a significant or unique cloth to please the Asantehene. In his effort he used all the designs then known to him in weaving one cloth. In the end he remarked that he had exhausted all the repertoire of design motifs known to him. The cloth was therefore, viewed as the most prestigious of Kente cloths, besides those woven exclusively for Asante Kings. Since then the Adwini Asa has been the preserve of Asante kings and people of high status and wealth. It symbolizes royalty, elegance, creative ingenuity, excellence, wealth, perfection, and superior craftsmanship.

This cloth was for a long period judiciously executed by a master weaver which gives the cloth its high excellence. Apart from the fact that the cloth is executed with intentions to convey messages from its cultural background, it is aesthetically pleasing for its intrinsic and extrinsic values, and it satisfies the highest criteria of a beautiful cloth.

Although, there are multiplicity of colours utilized to weave this piece, the weaver has blended them so meticulously that all the colours are well balanced and harmonized. Most of the patterns are symbolic; they depict the idea of peace, significant achievement, perfection and integrity. For example, the researchers have learnt that theoretically, colours like green and red are conflicting colours when placed adjacent to each other. It is argued that the aggressiveness of colour “red” and calmness of colour “green” make these two colours fight by disturbing the eyes of the perceiver. But strangely, the indigenous Asante Kente weaver has been able to incorporate and manipulate these with other colours, running so harmoniously in the weave. The cloth is perceived to be an array of harmonious colours and very smooth by the sense of touch.

Therefore, the idea of unity in diversity is found in the design of the cloth. Irrespective of individual differences, one can tolerate one another very well through understanding and respect for one another. Moreover, this explains Ghanaian culture of tolerance, communal achievement, etc. despite our heterogeneous culture. This is unity in diversity at the national level which is exhibited through our diverse social, political, religious and

artistic cultural postures. It has been discovered that, all the colours are reflecting the colours of the Flag of Ghana which represents national identity and cultural heritage.

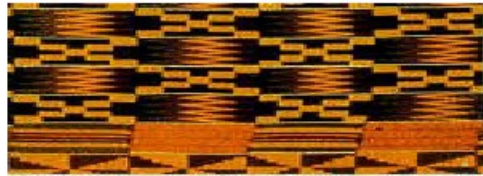
The cloth is aesthetically beautiful and pleasing. It reflects Ghanaian ways of life and a masterpiece. It is also considered as an art piece that could give birth to several hundreds of designs; and also serves as a basis for many designs produced today. Contextually, it reflects how prolific and versatile Ghanaians as well as Africans can be in raising and managing large families and professional activities.

Bohannan (1964), indicated that, in order to appreciate the art fully, something of the cultural background must be known to make the message clear. Pappas ( 1970 ) and Adu-Agyem (1990), also reiterated that an aesthetically good work may be rejected as poor or ugly when it fails to serve extra-aesthetic functions. Truly, the designer of this cloth carefully chose these colours to convey different messages.

According to the field study, the “yellow colour” in the “Adwini Asa” is associated with the yoke of the egg, ripe and edible fruits and vegetables and also with the mineral gold. It symbolizes sanctity, preciousness, royalty, wealth, spirituality, vitality and fertility. When a cloth is produced with yellow as the dominant colour, the user is accorded great respect and held in a high esteem. It is a cloth of richness (Antubam, 1963).

“Red” is also 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. It is full of aggression and action as well as power. It is amazing how the indigenous Asante weavers prudently select colours and design to accomplish a task. Red, according to the master weavers, is also associated with the blood of our ancestors who sacrificed for independence from the British harsh governance.

“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 (Amenuke et al., 1991). The “Black colour” derives its significance from the notion that new things get darker as they mature; and physical aging comes with spiritual maturity. The indigenous Asante Kente weavers blacken most of their cloths to increase their spiritual potency. Black symbolizes an intensified spiritual energy, communion with the ancestral spirits, antiquity, spiritual maturity and spiritual potency (Sarpong, 1974).



*Figure 3: Fathia Fata Nkrumah Also called "Obaakofo mmu Omman"*



*Figure 4: "Obaakofo mmu Omman" New Version of Fathia Fata Nkrumah*

According to the master weavers, Figures 3 and 4 represent both "Fathia Fata Nkrumah", and "Obaakofo mmu Omman" or "Inclusive governance". This means, "one person does not rule or govern a nation." It expresses the Akan system of governance based on participatory democracy. The squares represent "Mpuankron" (nine tufts of hair) a ceremonial hair cut of some royal functionaries who help rulers make decisions. Originally the cloth was named "Fathia Fata Nkrumah", which means, Fathia is a suitable suitor for Nkrumah. They added that, after the overthrow of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of the Republic of Ghana, the original significance of Mpuankron (participatory democracy) was applied to reflect the prevailing political atmosphere. The new name of the cloth symbolizes participatory Democracy and warning against dictatorial or autocratic rule. Now, the cloth is called "Obaakofo Mmu Oman". The name conveys the present-day political philosophy, especially with President Kufuor's regime. Kufuor's administration believed in a participatory democracy, governance where every citizen is free to air his views on issues pertaining to national development. Therefore, the weavers designed this cloth specifically as a gift for the president, reflecting his ideology and leadership style. The researchers discovered that, both Adanwomase and Bonwire Weavers have replicas of this design. But none of these centres could convince the researchers of the true originator of this cloth. Nonetheless, it is a credit to the Indigenous Asante Kente Weavers. The predominant colours used to produce this cloth are red, blue, green, yellow and black. The innovated

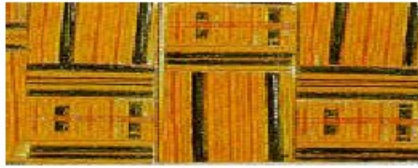
design shows a very significant difference in terms of its current nature to reflect the modern system of governance as compared to the previous one. Although, the indigenous Asante Kente weavers brought some innovations to this cloth ("Fathia Fata Nkrumah"), they preserved certain symbols and styles of the previous designs and incorporated them in the current one. This tells us that, culture is not static, situations change with time, a trend that brings improvements upon existing ways of life. In other words, in spite of modernization, certain norms and values in the past are so paramount that their contributions in today's cultural practices could be stupendous. For example, although the diamond shapes in the cloth are modernized, they are not entirely eliminated but are displayed in different styles. The diamond shapes in the cloth reflect the rich minerals of Ghana. The colour yellow is reflecting purity, royalty and wealth while the red stands for political strength, aggressiveness and boldness. Therefore, it is undisputable that the weavers wove this cloth utilizing these traditional designs to describe Fathia as a woman of substance for Nkrumah. Moreover, the weavers perceived that President Kufour's belief of participatory democracy will bring a lot of rich ideas to enhance and promote national development, hence, they utilized very significant colours and designs to communicate to users and the general public. Both old and new cloths are dominated by yellow and black. The only exceptions are the vibrant green, blue and red colours that are displayed in the current "Obaakofo Mmu Oman Cloth". Both Cloths reflect politics in Ghana, the multiplicity of colours communicate extra to convey the messages clearly about the President's (Kufour) intentions. Black is very powerful which expresses hope and fulfillment, thus this expresses Kufour's ideology, trusting his messages and intentions of fulfillment. In the "Obaakofo Mmu Omman" Cloth (Fig. 4), emphasis is placed on colour and Design. The cloth has inspirations from an "Adwini Asa" Cloth which gives this cloth its unique characteristics. The weaver manipulated design and colour in such a way that there is enough coherence or strong bond between colour and design, in the sense that, interestingly, every design throughout the cloth takes almost all the colours, specifically yellow, black and green, bonding the cloth tenaciously with the background so that one would not tell which is the exact colour responsible for the background. The broad horizontal lines are in red, green, yellow, blue in that order from bottom. The lower part or bottom of the cloth is dominated by black, yellow and green, a wavy nature, the weaver treated it in such a way that it mimics a river. This is a sign of a master hand, balancing every detail so uniquely. This is also enough justification to attest to the fact that, according to the weavers, it takes only the master,



experienced and the most knowledgeable weaver to weave a cloth for the president or the Asantehene in a secret location so that after it has come out of the loom, it is so unique and authentic, an intriguing design that could not be found anywhere in the world until it is used by either the president or the King. Currently, the indigenous Asante Kente weavers are taking a lot of inspiration from the previous designs and adapting them to suit the culture of today. In fact, almost every design that the weavers produce today has a direct bearing on the past designs. Examples of these previous patterns include: "Emmaa Da", (fig. 2), literally meaning, "It has not happened before", or "It has no precedence." It is a novelty. According to Nana Kwasi Afranie of Bonwire, the Asantehene's chief weaver, the cloth was named by one of the Asante Kings, Otumfuo Nana Osei Agyemang Prempeh 1 who was so awed by the uniqueness of the pattern that he remarked "Eyi de emmaa da", meaning, "this one has no precedence." It was designed around 1936 ( Nana Kwasi Afrane, personal communication, January 2009). According to the master weavers at Bonwire etc., the early weavers with the assistance of the then Asantehene , Otumfuo Prempeh 1 and the Chief of Bonwire Nana Mponponsuo and some elders encouraged the weavers to improve upon the early weaves. "Emmaa da" has its root from "Oyoko Man Kente". The cloth was therefore, reserved for the exclusive use of the Asantehene, who is the occupant of the Oyoko stool. Oyoko is the royal clan who are the occupants of the Golden Stool, but its use was later extended to people of high ranks. Aesthetically, the cloth has several unique features. The weaver did not only incorporate many bright colours but was able to blend them so nicely to achieve harmony. Basically, the cloth consists of yellow, green, black, wine, red, orange, cream, white, tinted red (pink) and blue colour dominating as background colour ("ntoma asaase"). The cloth has one major outstanding feature that amazes the researchers - the creativity in the colour harmony. Although the weaver adapted a multi-colour scheme in his creation, he demonstrated heightened skills to marry all the colours so intriguingly. One looks at the cloth at a glance and would hardly tell that the weaver used more than eleven (11) different colours until the perceiver looks with rapt attention. The cloth was first woven several decades ago. Nonetheless, it is still looking so captivating and fresh, for the weaver used colourful silk thread and it is a piece of a master hand. No doubt, it was set aside as a cloth for a king. Again, observing the woven design of the "Emmaa da", critically, the weaver incorporated lines, shapes, space, rhythm, variety and proportion. There are thin horizontal, vertical, zigzag or wavy lines running through the cloth which are made up of blue, orange and white upon which the designs (adwini) are

resting. The designer has varied the shapes and sizes of these patterns to achieve variety. For example, the shapes are in the form of rectangles, rhombus and arrows. What an artistic mind that produced this great art piece! One cardinal thing that an aesthetician should not lose sight of is the fact that the weaver of this cloth uses only lines but varied them so uniquely to achieve his goal-perfection. Indeed “Emmaa da” is a symbol of creative ingenuity, innovation, uniqueness, perfection and exceptional achievement (Dr E. C. Nyarkoh, personal communication, February, 2010). From the philosophical or traditional point of view, the cloth projects a lot of cultural values. For instance, it tells the public that whatever deeds (good or evil) one conceals will be discovered. One could see this from the way the Kente weaver has demonstrated, by arranging the “adwini” in such a way that some are transparent, others are placed side by side and others are placed on the horizontal thin lines so that one cannot see what is happening beneath. (This buttresses the Akan popular proverb: “kata wodee so na gya obi dee”). All these are reflecting ethics or morality. This also reflects Gyekye’s view. In his submission, Gyekye (1996), claimed that African aesthetics considers the beautiful to include more in the life of a person than events, scenes, and works of art; it deals also with the standards of value in appraising other aspects of human life and culture, such as humanity itself and morality. In contrasting the African concept of art with that of the European, Bates (2000), and Gyekye (1996), claimed that, most writers in the past asserted that, while the European held a conception of “art for art sake”, that is purely aesthetic concept of art, the African held a functional and symbolic concept of art. In the view of a Ghanaian artist writing specifically on the Akan concept of art, there is the tendency to stress, in all forms of art, the quality of significance as a criterion of beauty and virtue. The writers point out that, the emphasis on the criterion of significance seems to underscore the social function and relevance of art and its integration into the mainstream of the Akan value system. The Ghanaian artist then contrasts what he considers the Akan conception of art with the European emphasis on “art for art’s sake”. In the Akan – and what most writers would regard as African - Concept of art, the aesthetic value of a given African art is determined by its functional symbolic aspects (Adu-Agyem, 1990). The variety of lines and colour in this cloth means variety of ideas, people, different ways of life, and variety of cultural values with diverse activities, but all these are blended together for national unity. This reflects a Ghanaian philosophy, a Ghanaian way of life. The weaver also uses just lines but his artistic sensibility is so powerful that he was able to vary this into multiplicity of the design elements and principles to communicate his thought in the

creation of a beautiful cloth. This tells us and especially learners that in spite of what limited resources one has “beyond the sky is the limit” for perfection. This teaches versatility and philosophy of deep thinking with purpose.



*Fig.:5: “Wo foro dua pa a na Wopia Wo”*



*Fig.:6: Toku Kra Toma*

“Wo foro Dua Pa a na Wopia Wo”, (fig. 5), literally means “one who climbs the good tree gets the support or help to go higher”. According to the authors’ field work, the cloth was designed to express the Akan social thought which maintains that any good individual effort deserves to be supported by the community. When one climbs a good tree that has fruits on it, people around will give him a push, since they know they will enjoy the fruits of his labour. It is a notion that reinforces the importance of aspiring towards a worthy course. Gyekye (1996), reiterated that beauty is the central notion in African aesthetics (as it is in the aesthetics of other cultures), but the scope of its application reflecting the focus of its concerns is much wider in the African aesthetic experience and evaluation than it is in other cultures. The comprehensive nature and function of African aesthetics play very significant roles in African culture. Aesthetically, the designer utilizes colours such as shades of red, orange, black, green, yellow, gold and white. He also employed just lines but in different directions but more specific movements. He used long against short lines, horizontal against vertical, bright against dark as well as bold against thin lines. These bring rhythm, balance, variety and harmony. The motifs in the cloth represent wise sayings, proverbs, and metaphors. This symbolizes aspiration, hope, mutual benefits, sharing and noble deeds and patriotism.

Toku Kra Toma (Fig.6), literally means Toku's soul cloth. The cloth is designed and named to commemorate the soul of a warrior Queenmother of that name, who, though was defeated and executed in a battle with Nana Opoku Ware I, the King of the Asante kingdom (1731-1742), she was recognized as a courageous, brave and respected woman. It commemorates that historic event and honours the soul of that Queen mother for her bravery. In the past, such a cloth would only be worn by the royalty and of high ranking people during very sacred ceremonies in which the spirits of the ancestors are venerated. The designer made use of several colours such as black, red, yellow, orange, green, wine, and light pink in their original form as well as tones and tints of these colours. He utilized the elements of design such as colour and lines to form square and rectangular shapes and blended these so judiciously by employing principles of design such as repetition, harmony and rhythm. He used short lines in counteracting long lines, vertical against horizontal, broad or bold and thin, dark and light lines, transparent and opaque. He also employed juxtaposition and superimposition. Superimposition is a method of overlapping objects while juxtaposition means placing objects side-by-side or adjacent to each other. Owing to their variations in tones and tints as well as their rivalry, the superimposition created a very pleasing effect of transparency as if there is a source of light from behind this Kente cloth. It is hard to explain the designer's intentions for this technique, nonetheless, as the name of the cloth denotes, the researchers deduce philosophically that the cloth voices out the mutual relationship existing between one's soul and the satisfaction of possessing a treasure of one's heart. Haggard (1962), Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975), Tolstoy (1962), agreed with Gyekye (1996), that, aesthetics is characterized by delight, interest, and enjoyment experienced by human beings in response to objects, events and scenes. It holds the attentive eye and ear of the person, arouses his or her appreciation and enjoyment as he or she looks and listens. Aesthetic values refer to those features of objects, events and scenes that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and interest. The concept or value of beauty is central to the aesthetic experience and evaluation and is generally associated with works of art such as visual and performing arts. Tolstoy (1962), emphasized that human life is filled with works of art of every kind that gives aesthetic pleasure. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975), indicated that Aesthetics is an active perceptual process; it is an active interaction between an individual and an object which provides a stimulating harmonious experience. Each day, everybody reacts several times to the beauties and attractions of things in the environment. Apart from the value in the common enjoyment people derive

from nature and pleasure of sensation in perception; they also create aesthetic values in things in their daily lives through concepts of aesthetics. It is considered 'an active perceptual process' which involves an interaction between an individual and the object being perceived because there is a force of communication that gives rise to response to stimuli. These ideas were also supported by Gardner (1982) and Wilson (1971). The cloth symbolizes courageous leadership, heroic deeds, self-sacrifice, and spiritual vitality and rebirth.

### **Kente Cloth In Modern Perspective ( Kente Cloth For Local Or Foreign Dignitaries)**

Nowadays, as existed with the ancestors, the indigenous Asante Master Kente weavers do not only see beauty externally but also see beauty more from within, the language of an object and its cultural and political implications. Important persons of various political persuasions are now responding positively to patronizing their products because they really understand the philosophies of Kente. Some politicians order production of Kente to suit their tastes and ambitions. The commissioned cloths have attractive names that reflect their political thoughts, achievements, victories, successions, etc. To describe aesthetic experience, Wilson (1971), holds the view that it is an active and open confrontation with artistic as well as natural phenomena. During this process, the individual performs a visual analysis and makes value judgment of the many qualities and aspects present in that phenomena. Individuals' own feelings are transformed towards the situation or object so that judgment can be made on the desirability or otherwise of the object or situation. He further explained that, this experience involves perception, visual analysis and evaluation. Onyewuenyi (1976), as cited in Coetzee and Roux (1998), discussed the distinction between African and Western Aesthetics. According to them African aesthetic standards are different from the "accepted" standards of uniqueness and individuality; that African works of art, be they visual, musical, kinetic, or poetic are created as an answer to a problem and serve some practical end. Their discussions also delineate the philosophical foundation for such differences, and finally propose a theory of African art as Africans see it. Africa has its own view of life as the starting point of philosophy. To the authors, life as actually lived and embodied or "objectified" in the spiritual world we live. Our knowledge of life is above all, contained in certain cultural and personal views of the world – which play a

prominent part in philosophy as well as in religion and poetry. Figures 12 to 14 depict Kente designs with political undertones:



*Figure 7: "Kuffour Apagya Ghana"*



*Figure 8 : "The Cliton" Cloth*

According to the master weavers, "Kuffour Apagya Ghana", (Fig. 7), literally means Kuffour has elevated Ghana or Kuffour's administration has made Ghana see numerous developments. The weavers from Adanwomase in Ashanti Region designed this cloth specifically for the former President to commemorate his enormous contributions to the nation's development. It is an "Adwini si Adwini so" design cloth, that is a triple weave. The rich and vibrant colours utilized in the cloth reflect the handsomeness of his Royal Excellency, President Kuffour. It does not only speak of his personality but also the economic development of Ghana under his able leadership. It symbolizes his giant efforts to uplift the good image of Ghana. The giant, bold vertical lines depicted in black and orange symbolized continuity, firmness or stability, confidence and achievement. They also represent very strong pillars upon which the nation stands. The weaver of this cloth diversified the weave by utilizing several designs and colours to also reflect how dynamic and versatile the President was in implementing his bold decisions. Moreover, the cloth is solid, but not rigid. According to the weaver this is so because the former President was very firm but at the same time tolerant in his governance. He frowned on autocratic governance. The colours green, yellow, black were chosen carefully to symbolize the nation and its natural resources. This concept of rich resources the weaver also emphasizes through various designs and motifs in diamond (rhombus) shapes. The red colour reflects the President's philosophy of sacrifices of everybody's unique effort towards national development. The cloth therefore, reflects uniqueness, achievement, royalty and patriotism.

“Clinton”, (Fig. 8), is the Kente cloth which was purposely commissioned for the commemoration of the visit of the former US president, President Bill Clinton on his first visit to Ghana during the reign of former President Rawlings in the early 2000s. In fact it was a first gift given to him on his arrival and welcoming ceremony at the airport. This design according to field study, is one of the most outstanding Kente products that has contributed significantly to tourism, exports and thus national development. Moreover, according to them, it is one of the most expensive Kente cloths in recent times. It needs a master, most experienced and knowledgeable person to weave this intriguing design. This design is in four colours: black, orange, pink, cream and white, colours that give this cloth its unique, true characteristics. When perceived carefully, one would discover that the weaver used only one design motif, a diamond shape of different sizes. It has been executed in such a way that upon completion of the cloth by joining the strips together, each of these diamond shapes comes together so nicely to form different grades and colours of diamonds in the entire cloth. Inside each of these variety of diamonds shapes are crosses found in all the colours of this cloth. Moreover, in the cloth, there are other diamond shaped designs mainly in two colours (pink and yellow), where the weaver of this cloth exhibits his competence by transforming a conical shaped design through a reflection (mirroring) to get this diamond shape. This requires a mercurial mind to successfully accomplish. Philosophically, this cloth is communicating a lot. Diamond symbolizes wealth. It is a very rich mineral but very scarce. This makes it very expensive. Therefore, when emphasized in black, it makes it very prominent. The weaver chose these colours because of the rich nature of yellow and very gentle, peaceful and graceful nature of pink, describing the true character of President Clinton. The yellow depicts his Royal Excellency, a President of one of the most developed nations of the whole world, USA. Despite his nobility, Clinton is described as a very peaceful man that US has ever had in spite of his political standing, therefore, the weavers decided to use very calm, peaceful but rich colours for this purpose. During the time of interview, the researchers recorded from the weavers that this cloth is strictly woven in these colours, otherwise it loses its value and uniqueness. This shows exceptionally the weavers’ creative abilities and their sense of beauty from cultural context.

### **Conclusion**

Indigenous African aesthetics, appreciation and criticism among the indigenous Asante Kente weavers will augment the teaching and learning of aesthetic education in schools

and colleges in Ghana, which has been totally neglected, therefore, it should be incorporated into the schools syllabus. Such concepts do not only reflect aesthetic values but also cultural philosophies in the form of history, proverbs, aphorisms, idioms, events etc. for development of the student and the nation as a whole. Various Kente Cloths or designs can also be used as instructional materials for the total development of the students and the public, especially from the basic level of education. Ghanaian and for that matter, African aesthetics are good source of knowledge to students. Studies will help students and the public to learn the meaning and significance of Ghanaian cultural values embedded in these artifacts. They will also learn the techniques of appreciating and talking intelligently as well as boldly about woven pieces that will help them grow intellectually as well as also acquire creative skills in all aspects of life.



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