

# **COLORS**

**An African Perspective**

## **COLORS: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

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## **Black**

Black symbolizes age, wisdom, masculinity, the fertile rainy clouds, an intensified spiritual energy, communion with Ancestors, spiritual maturity and spiritual potency.

- Ethiopia: Impure, Unpleasant
- Kemet (Ancient): Fertility, New Life, Resurrection, Underworld
- Uganda: Dirty, Evil

## **Blue**

In South Africa, it symbolizes happiness. In Kemet, it symbolizes virtue and protection. In East Africa, blue beads are thought to enhance fertility. In Uganda, the color represents oppression, struggle and activism.

Representing love and peace, blue symbolizes the sky, spiritual sanctity, good fortune, peacefulness and harmony.

## **Gold**

Gold symbolizes wealth, fertility, long life, royalty, elegance, high status, supreme quality, glory and spiritual purity.

## **Gray**

Gray is associated with spiritual blemish but also with spiritual cleansing.

## **Green**

Green represents life. It's a medicinal color and associated with vegetation, plenty, harvesting and herbal medicine. It symbolizes growth, vitality, fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness, abundant health and spiritual rejuvenation. In Ancient Kemet, green was the color of the Eye of Heru/Wedjat which had healing and protective powers.

- Kemet (Ancient): Fresh Growth, New Life, Resurrection, Vegetation
- Kemet (Present-Day): Hope, Spring
- North Africa: Corruption, Drug Culture
- South Africa: Nature
- Uganda: Freshness, Health, Life, Nature

## **Maroon**

Maroon is associated with the color of Mother Earth (red-brown), healing and the power to repel malevolent spirits.

## **Orange**

Orange represents preciousness, royalty, wealth, spirituality and vitality.

### **Pink**

Pink is associated with the female essence of life, tenderness, calmness, pleasantness and sweetness.

### **Purple**

The color worn by Kings/Queens or people of nobility, purple symbolizes royalty, wealth and prosperity. The color can be worn in hopes of achieving prospering or good luck. Purple is associated with the feminine aspects of life.

### **Red**

Associated with death and transformation in many African countries, red represents tension in the spiritual or political world. It's associated with sacrificial rites and a symbol of sacrifice and struggle. In Nigeria, the color is usually reserved for ceremonies and worn by chiefs. Among the Urhobo (Southern Nigeria), it's the ideal feminine beauty of an attractive bride.

- Bullom (Sierra Leone): Blood Lost in Childbirth, Warfare
- Côte d'Ivoire: Mourning, Sacrifice
- Kemet (Ancient): Chaos, Destructive Fire, Disorder, Fury
- Pende (Congo Zaire): Masculinity
- Nigeria: Aggression, Vitality, Wealth
- South Africa: Mourning, Sacrifice
- Uganda: Danger

### **Silver**

Silver is associated with the moon (female essence of life) and symbolizes serenity, purity and joy. In Ancient Kemet, it represents the color of the sun at dawn as well as the moon and stars.

### **Turquoise**

In Ancient Kemet, turquoise represents the color of the sun's rays at dawn. Het-Heru is known as the Lady of Turquoise.

- Kemet (Ancient): Joy

### **White**

White symbolizes spirituality, purity and joy. Usually worn at funerals for elders, white represents the incarnation of mystical unity.

- Ethiopia: Illness, Purity
- Kemet (Ancient): Cleanliness, Purity, Sacredness, Simplicity
- Nigeria: Good Luck, Peace
- Uganda: Cleanliness, Holiness, Purity
- Zulu (South Africa): Goodness
- Zambia: Cleanliness, Good Luck, Goodness

## **Yellow**

Usually reserved for those of high rank, yellow symbolizes sanctity, preciousness, royalty, status, wealth, spirituality, vitality and fertility.

- Ethiopia: Mourning
- Kemet (Ancient): Perfection
- Kemet (Present-Day): Mourning
- South Africa: Wealth
- Uganda: Corruption, Privilege

# Kente Cloth

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The kente cloth/fabric is native to the Akan people of Ghana. Below is a list of color meanings specifically for kente fabric.

- Black: Funeral Rites, Maturity, Mourning, Spiritual Energy
- Blue: Harmony, Love, Peace, Togetherness
- Gold: Fertility, Royalty, Spiritual Purity, Wealth
- Gray: Ash, Cleansing, Healing
- Green: Growth (Nature and Spiritual)
- Maroon: Healing
- Pink: Feminine Qualities, Mildness
- Purple: Femininity (Normally Worn By Women)
- Red: Bloodshed, Death, Politics, Sacrificial Rites, Spiritual
- Silver: Joy, Peace, Purity
- White: Cleansing, Festive, Pureness
- Yellow: Beauty, Fertility, Preciousness, Royalty, Spiritual Purity, Wealth

# Sources

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