

**BEADS IN THE KROBO CULTURE**

By

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the M.A degree and that to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## ABSTRACT

Beads are an integral part of the Krobo culture and have so many uses and symbolic meanings. But in recent times, the uses and symbolism of Krobo beads seem to be under emphasized. This study focuses on how the beads are produced, their uses and symbolism in the Krobo culture. The study is limited to the *Yilɔ* Krobo district and is divided into five chapters. Chapter one consists of the Introduction which includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, hypothesis, importance of study and ethnographic background of the study area. Chapter two deals with the Review of Related Literature which contains the history and origin of beads and the impact ancient civilisations such as Egyptian, Greek and Roman had on the use and spread of glass beads to the world. Chapter three covers the Methodology for the study. It explains the research design, the sampling technique and instrumentation employed for the study. Chapter four is the Presentation and Discussion of Findings of the study which includes data from questionnaire, interviews and observation. Chapter four also contains the production processes of glass beads in the *Yilɔ* Krobo district as well as the uses and symbolism of Krobo beads. Chapter five summarises all the findings of the study with conclusions and recommendations. Based on the findings, the uses of beads cannot be under emphasized in the Krobo culture. Beads are used in all aspects of their lives and without its vibrancy, their culture will be meaningless. One of the recommendations made was that more research and documentation about the Krobo culture should be done to preserve the rich Krobo cultural heritage. Beads that were identified during the study were put into a chart for easy presentation and referencing with their description, common uses and symbolism.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

i. JHS: Junior High School	4
ii. SHS: Senior High School	4
iii. MCH: Mother and Child Health	4
iv. CHPS: Community-Based Health Planning Service	5
v. NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation	5
vi. BCE: Before the Common Era	5

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter contains the Background to the study, Statement of the problem, followed by the Objectives of the study, the Hypothesis, Delimitation and Limitations. These are followed by Definition of terms, Importance of the study, Ethnographic background and Organisation of the rest of the text.

#### **1.2 Background to the Study**

Beads have been around for a long time so long a time that they have almost become unnoticed and forgotten. In Ghana, beads made of natural materials such as shell, stone and bauxite have been discovered and dated to about 1450 B.C. Originally beads were made from natural materials but they were later replaced by glass beads which European traders brought to trade for slaves, salt, gold and spices. The Krobo are one of the most important glass beads producers in Africa and use beads profusely in their culture. Krobo beads are decorative and have overwhelming uses and symbolism other than for decoration. Many Ghanaians associate Krobo beads with only the initiation ceremony for young adolescent girls known as *dipo* and forget about the many other aspects of the beads. It was therefore important that the true character of Krobo beads be revealed.

#### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Like in other cultures in Ghana, beads are used in various aspects of the Krobo culture. As body ornaments, the Krobo wear beads on different parts of the body, in various colours and



shapes to different places and ceremonies. Wearing a particular type of bead can tell whether a person is sad or happy; tell the social and spiritual status within the community; the association with a particular group or tell a period in life of the Krobo. This makes Krobo beads symbolic. The Krobo beads celebration comes to the fore during the initiation rites (*dipo*) for young adolescence girls into womanhood and adulthood during which beads are used profusely. Many Ghanaians therefore associate the use of beads mainly to *dipo* but there are so many other uses of beads in the Krobo culture. In addition, many Krobo also use beads based solely on personal wishes, feelings or perceptions, rather than on objective facts or principles of their culture. This may be attributed to foreign influences that have infiltrated the Krobo society. As a result many people seem to have forgotten about the overwhelming uses of Krobo beads and their symbolism, hence the study.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

1. To study and describe the processes involved in the production of glass beads in the Krobo culture.
2. To investigate and document the uses of beads and their symbolic meanings in the Krobo culture.

#### **1.5 Hypothesis**

Beads are useful and have symbolic meanings in the Krobo culture and without its vibrancy, their culture will be meaningless.

## **1.6 Delimitation**

This thesis is limited to the production processes, uses and symbolism of beads in the *Yilo* Krobo district and covers the period from 2000 to 2009.

## **1.7 Limitations**

- i. Some respondents especially the traditional priests/ priestesses refused to give detailed information on certain issues because they regarded them as sacred and secret.
- ii. Due to the old age of the interviewees, they were unable to remember the names of some of the beads and their functions.

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

- i. Symbolism: The use of symbols to represent something abstract by something concrete.
- ii. Symbol: Something that stands for or represents something else, especially an object representing an abstraction
- iii. Myth: A traditional story about heroes or supernatural beings, often attempting to explain the origins of natural phenomena or aspects of human behaviour.
- iv. Burins: A prehistoric flint tool that looks like a chisel.
- v. Amethyst: A translucent violet precious stone that is a variety of quartz
- vi. Pantheism: The belief in and worship of all or many deities.
- vii. Hathor: In Egyptian mythology, goddess of the sky and queen of heaven.
- viii. La Tène Culture: Late stage of Iron Age culture in central and north-western Europe.

## **Terms used in the traditional language**

- i. *Tovi*: An important black bead.
- ii. *Nyoli*: An important white bead.
- iii. *Kɔli*: An important blue bead.
- iv. *Manye*: Title for a queen mother.
- v. *Dipo*: The puberty rites for Krobo girls.
- vi. *Dipo-yo*: *Dipo* girl
- vii. *Wɔyo*: Title for a traditional priestess
- viii. *Sɔsɔ*: A mixture of ceramic dye and powdered glass
- ix. *Subui*: loincloth
- x. *Hlowe*: raffia
- xi. *Okɔnya*: Title of a traditional priestess

## **1.9 Importance of the Study**

This thesis will be of help to sociologists, art historians, artists, anthropologists, educationists, ethnographers and ethnologists, cultural institutions, the Ghana Tourists Board, the Ministry of Culture and Chieftaincy and the general public as a body of knowledge and reference material in the uses and symbolism of beads among the Krobo.

## **1.10 Ethnographic Background**

### **Location and size of the District**

The *Yilɔ* Krobo District lies approximately between latitude 6° 00' N and 0° 30' N and between longitude 0° 30' W and 1° 00' W. It covers an estimated area of 805 sq km. It shares boundaries with Manya Krobo District in the North and East, Adangme West and Akwapim

North Districts in the South, New Juabeng, East Akim and Fantekwa Districts in the West. The district is divided into seven Area Council namely Somanya, *Otekpolu*, Boti, Nkurakan, Nsutapong, Klo-Agogo and Obawale. The district capital is Somanya. Fig. 1 shows the map of the Krobo territory.

### **Population**

The total population of the district according to the 2000 Population and Housing Census was 86, 107. The Census revealed that the district had a sex ratio of 96, indicating the presence of more females than males. With a growth rate of 2.5%, the district's population is currently estimated at 98, 699.

### **Settlements**

The district is predominantly rural with more than 67% of its population living in rural areas. There are 237 settlements in the district. The only urban settlement in the district is the district capital, Somanya. Other large settlements in the district include Nkurakan, Klo-Agogo, Huhunya and *Otekpolu*. Nkurakan and Klo-Agogo are very important and popular market towns in the district and in the Eastern Region.

### **Tourism**

Tourism potentials exist in the district. People travel from far and near to visit these sites. During this period, the tourists come into contact with the rich Krobo beads thereby promoting them. There is the imposing Krobo Mountains which attracts people from all over the world during their festivals and grand durbars. The Boti and Nsutapong Falls which have contributed immensely to the development of the district also attract tourists. The area also has other attractions like the Umbrella Rock which is about thirty minutes walk in the forest

from the Boti falls as well as the three-headed palm tree which has a height of about 3.2m, base of about 126cm and a diameter of about 70cm each. These potentials are yet to be developed fully.

### **Financial Institutions**

There are three Commercial Banks in the district. They are Ghana Commercial Bank Limited, Upper Manya Klo Rural Bank and Lower Manya Klo Rural Bank located in Somanya. Social Security and National Insurance Trust (S.S.N.I.T), State Insurance Company (S.I.C.) and Donewell Insurance Company are non-banking financial institutions in the district also located in Somanya. These institutions are able to assist the Krobo financially. They can grant loans to beads producers or support in activities to promote the Krobo culture.

### **Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)**

Telecommunication has improved tremendously in the district following expansion in telecommunication facilities in recent times. A number of communication centres have sprang up in the district, as telecommunication networks namely MTN, Vodafon, Tigo and Kasapa are now operating in and around Somanya. It is important because people no longer have to travel to the district to make enquiries about Krobo beads culture but can make a phone call. Internet facilities have also been established in Somanya and in other parts of the district. This makes it possible to display beads and related items on the internet by creating a website thereby reaching a much larger audience. The district has a well-constructed Post Office located in Somanya, providing 'Western Union Money Transfer' and 'Instant Money Transfer' services to the public. All these have facilitated communication within and outside the district.

## **Education**

Education plays a key role in all aspects of development including culture. The Krobo must be educated about the importance of their culture and the need to understand, promote and preserve it. There are ninety-two (92) kindergarten/Nursery Schools, ninety-six (96) Primary Schools, forty-two (42) JHSs and three (3) SHSs in the district. The famous French Training College in Ghana, Mount Mary Training College, which is located in Somanya, is the only training College in the district. There is one Technical Institution and a Rehabilitation Centre in the district. These two institutions even though inadequate take care of the skills training needs of the district.

## **Health care**

People make up societies and society cannot function if its people are sick. The Krobo need health facilities so that when they are sick, they can be cured in these facilities. The Krobo culture is nothings without the Krobo themselves. The district has three (3) Private Clinics, nine (9) Reproductive/Child Health/Family Planning (MCH) Clinics, one (1) Chest Clinic (Government), four (4) CHPS Centres, three (3) Private Midwives maternity homes and seventy-two (72) trained traditional birth attendants. The district has no hospital. Since the people still believe in traditional healing, there are a lot of traditional healing centres in and around Somanya.

## **Traditional Festivals and Ceremonies**

The Krobo take time off to celebrate their festivals and ceremonies. During these occasions beads are utilized and the income from the sales is used to buy clothing to attend the ceremonies. It is also a time to unwind, meet new people, establish contacts and sell beads. *Dipo* is a major ceremony celebrated between March and May of every year by the people of

Somanya. This ceremony is the initiation rites performed for young adolescence girls to usher them into womanhood and adulthood. *Ngmayem* festival, an annual traditional harvest and thanksgiving festival, is also celebrated. The grand festival, *Kloyo sikplemi*, is an annual festival celebrated in the second week of November. The significance of this festival is to pay homage to the ancestral home of the Krobo Mountains. The festival reminds the Krobo of the eviction from the Krobo Mountains in 1892 by the then British colonial government.

### **1.11 Organization of the rest of the text**

Chapter two deals with the review of related literature. It contains the history and origin of beads and the impact ancient civilisations like the Egyptian, Greek and Roman had on the uses and spread of glass beads in the world. Chapter three covers the methodology for the study. It explains the research design, population of the study, sampling technique as well as data collection procedure and analysis. Chapter four contains the presentation and discussion of findings of the study. It includes the data from questionnaire, interviews and observations made. The data from the questionnaire have been tabulated, described and analysed. Chapter four also contains the production processes of glass beads in *Yilɔ* Krobo district as well as the uses and symbolism of Krobo beads. Chapter five summarises all the findings of the study with conclusions and recommendations. Krobo beads that were identified during the study are contained in a chart at the appendix for easy presentation and referencing with their description, common uses and symbolism.





## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Overview

This chapter talks about the origin of beads, the materials that were used as beads and how beads have transformed into what they have become today. In addition, the chapter takes a look at the origin of glass beads and the involvement of ancient cultures such as Egypt, Rome, Greek, Celts and Native North Americans in the spread of beads all over the world. The history of beads in Africa, especially in Ghana, has also been captured in this chapter.

#### 2.2 History and Origin of Beads

Beads are small perforated objects, usually spherical, that may be strung into necklaces and bracelets or attached to clothing or furnishings. The word 'bead' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *beade* or *bede*, meaning "prayer," and was originally applied to prayer beads. Prayer beads are aids to prayer. They enable a worshiper to count the prayers he or she is praying. The use of beads to count prayers originated with the Hindus of India in the 6th century BCE. As religious artefacts, they are also used in the Christian and Islamic faiths (Encarta 2009).

During most of their 2.5 million years on earth, members of the *genus homo* were distinguished by their ability to fashion utilitarian stone tools. Although anatomically modern men (*homo sapiens*) had already evolved c. 100,000 years ago, migrating from Africa to Mediterranean Europe and eastern Asia, it was not until c. 35,000 years ago (Upper Paleolithic period) that evidence of a great cultural milestone, a new way of thinking, first

appeared. The large quantities of objects found at European (Aurignacian) sites revealed a distinctly different use of materials, not as tools but as symbols (Bead House 2008).

Mostly nomadic hunters and gatherers, small bands of early humans carried literally everything they owned with them, so they had to travel light. Archaeologists have found evidence that as early as 20,000 years later people did not just exist, they were living well. An event referred to by archaeologists as the 'Upper Paleolithic Revolution' occurred at about this time, when people began to invent a large number of new things. These were mostly useful tools like awls and pins of bone, or 'burins' (drill points) made of obsidian, but there were also large numbers of decorative and beautiful ornaments. (Fernandes 2009:1)

One may wonder why early humans turned their attention to producing ornaments instead of concentrating on obtaining enough food and protection. Fernandes (2009:1) writes that:

One reason is that they now had enough time on their hands. It has been estimated that the typical hunter and gatherer teams could obtain enough food for several days within five or six hours. This gave them time to think and dream and a desire to give those dreams form in tangible objects. They were becoming artists and their art began to take the form of complex clothing, ornaments and figurines. Burins were used to pierce wood, bone or ivory. Needles and pins were needed for sewing. Blades were used for carving, cutting, and shaping. Those with the talent to do so could now create objects whose sole purpose was aesthetic beauty. The earliest 'Venus' figurines carved in bone or stone appear at this time. One of these Venus figures, carved in bone from Lespugue in France, shows a woman wearing a skirt made of twisted string.

As soon as humans starting making string, they started to hang things on strings. One of the earliest forms of strung ornament was animal teeth with distinct grooves or notches worn into them. The notches allowed the teeth to be held firmly on a knotted string. One example of this comes from Arcy-sur-Cure, in France which is a string of marmot, fox, wolf, and hyena teeth, dating from 31,000 B.C. The first beads may have been made by perforating shells, small stones, perhaps bits of carved bone, or even seeds (Fernandes 2009:1).

Objects with possible symbolic connotations have been discovered at a few Neandertal sites, including pierced animal teeth that may have been used as pendants, incised bone fragments, and a polished plaque made from a mammoth tooth. Bone and tooth ornaments, including an elegant bone pendant, were found with Neandertal remains at Arcy-sur-Cure in central France (Tattersall, 2008).

Perforation was an improvement on notching. Soon our ancestors were making many kinds of modern looking beads. There were round or oval beads of bone or ivory with carved lines as decorations. There were long beads made from bird bones. Wooden beads were prized for their grain patterns or scent. Often several forms were used in combination. Carved animals of almost any material were strung as well. These abstract forms were the product of sophisticated minds and showed a self-conscious spirituality. For example there are beads carved into the form of a woman's breasts as a symbol of motherhood. Whatever the reason, even the earliest humans had a need to make and accumulate beads and make them into ornaments. With great artistic and spiritual importance attached to them, they were an important aspect of the human society.

### **2.3 Ancient Egypt and Beads**

The ancient Egyptians described their native country as "the black land," recognizing it as a font of fertile abundance in contrast to the harsh, unyielding deserts surrounding them. This fertility applied to more than just agriculture. The inventiveness and creativity of ancient Egypt still exerts influence and inspires awe today. The ancient Egyptians were trailblazers in many fields but particularly in the field of beauty. Pioneers in the arts of adornment, including cosmetics and tattooing, they did not limit themselves to enhancement of only the

body's natural charms. The ancient Egyptians were also brilliant innovators in the creation of jewellery (Filstrup, 1982).

Like many other culture of the world, ancient Egyptians started making jewellery with natural materials like shells, plant branches, bones and stones. These materials were strung with the thread of plants like flax and the hairs of a cow and worn around the neck.

The earliest Egyptians were tremendous pioneers in the making of jewellery. Fine jewellery in Egypt was not only a quantitative measure for beauty but in ancient times it was also considered that jewellery provided spiritual and magical protection. Different minerals and metals had different recognition and relation with different gods. Jewellery was also identified for spiritual and healthful values. Jewellery played different roles as it had religious and supernatural importance in the Egyptian culture and was considered as protection from the dark (Imran, 2005). Minerals and metals were identified with specific deities as well as with specific spiritual and therapeutic values. Thus their words for lapis lazuli and turquoise were synonymous with joy and delight respectively. Copper and malachite were identified with Hathor as gold was connected to the solar deity (Filstrup, 1982).

The Egyptians used a wide variety of minerals which were crafted into jewellery including amethyst, cornelian, jasper, onyx, lapis and quartz crystal. Many of these minerals were obtained only with great effort and cost. Lapis lazuli, which held great spiritual significance for the Egyptians, was not obtained locally but imported largely from what is now Afghanistan.

To make them a bit precious and to give an Egyptian look they started to paint them with coloured glass substances. From the period of first dynasty, Egyptians were much experienced in making the gold and silver Egyptian styled jewellery with different precious

and semi precious gems. The art of making Egyptian gold and silver jewellery reached its peak in the Middle East kingdom. At that time Egyptians mastered the methods, techniques and rules which were used to make authentic ancient Egyptian styled jewellery (Imran, 2005).

Yet as regards the production of jewellery, the Egyptians seemed to have also been faced with some purely practical concerns: what to do should a desired gemstone be unattainable, unavailable or perhaps unaffordable? In typical ingenious and innovative fashion, the Egyptians invented the art of the fabulous fake. The ancient artisans became so adept at crafting glass bead versions of precious stones that it can be difficult to distinguish the mimics from authentic emeralds, pearls and tigers-eye.

This innovation depended upon yet another revolutionary legacy from ancient Egypt, the development of glass. Certainly the roots of glass in Egypt are ancient. Solid glass beads have been found in Egypt dating from 4000 BCE. 'Very simple beads consisting of a true glass glaze over a clay or stone cane have been discovered in Egypt dating back to 12,000 BCE' (Filstrup, 1982).

The oldest true glass beads from ancient Egypt are around 3,500 years old. Forerunners to true glass, like Egyptian faience and glazed steatite, carry the beginnings of glass beads more than 2,000 years further back into history. But although the technique for making glass was well known in very ancient times, and many historically interesting beads have survived from the early millennia, it was in the fourth century B.C. that the unbroken tradition of fine glass bead making really began. The city of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, and the cosmopolitan centre of Egypt, now dominated by a Greek dynasty, provided an outlet for

exporting glass-working skills across the Mediterranean, to Greece, Phoenicia and most importantly to Rome (Alden, 2008).

Glass making eventually evolved into a sophisticated art in Egypt, with shapes and hues becoming increasingly intricate. To the basic formula of sand (silica), soda and lime, cobalt was added to create a blue shade, copper for green, tin was used to produce a milky white while the addition of gold created red. The willingness to incorporate gold into a formula to enhance the beauty of glass indicates that glass was not merely considered a substitute for something precious, but was valuable in its own right.

Although fine glass would be created elsewhere, the glass beads of Egypt were consistently perceived as the finest of the ancient world. Small, easy to transport yet valuable, glass beads became favoured cargo of far-ranging Phoenician traders and were exported all over the ancient world. Egyptian glass beads have been discovered as far afield as China.

The Egyptians did not find the same uses for glass as today. Glass was not used for windows or doors. Mirrors were made from polished copper. Cups, perfume "bottles" and unguent pots were most typically carved from alabaster. Glass was almost exclusively used for ornamentation of the body. Among the finest existing specimens of the Egyptian glassmakers' art are treasures found in King Tutankhamun's tomb. King Tutankhamun's "necklace of the sun" was created from glass beads intermingled with those formed from gold and cornelian.

Shafrin (2008, 1) writes that:

The discovery of thousands of Egyptian mummies in a network of tombs reinforces the fact that Egyptians were obsessed with dressing the mummies in the proper clothing and jewellery to prepare them for their trip to the underworld. Egyptian burial sites have provided knowledge about the history and use of beads in ancient civilizations because so much beaded material has survived in their sarcophagi. Much of this jewellery

was too fragile to have been worn, but has survived because it was made specifically for use in the other world.

Artistic innovations in glass continued in Egypt up until the end of its political independence. By 1200 BCE, Egyptian glassmakers were creating beads intricately patterned with geometric, human and especially floral designs. These flower beads reached their height of perfection in Ptolemaic Alexandria but would then pass out of fashion under Roman rule. Although exportation of glass beads continued for a while, glass jewellery became associated with the poor.

Revival of powdered glass, based upon techniques pioneered in ancient Egypt, occurred in Europe during a period when fascination with ancient Egypt was at its height. Every one wanted to make something which had the Egyptian classical finishing. Not only were the techniques recalled, they were often specifically used to create jewellery and objets d'art in what was then popularly perceived to be the "Egyptian style."

Fittingly, the Egyptian connection was made especially explicit with the newfound popularity of beadwork. No longer associated with the poor and rustic, beaded clothing, shoes and jewellery were suddenly chic, stylish and upscale in the 19th century. In the 1890s, a popular style of Western necklace paid tribute to the last pharaoh, the "Cleopatra" consisted of a row of turquoise from which hung a fringe of agate, coral and other semi-precious beads (Filstrup, 1982).

With the rise of the Egyptian civilization, the knowledge of making glass was discovered. Naturally, glass beads became the norm. The ancient Egyptians became very adept at working with glass and they came up with countless combinations to make glass beads of various shades and hues. Not only that, they learned how to combine the glass beads with other precious and semi-precious metals and gem stones. The result was high quality and

absolutely beautiful pieces of jewellery, which became sought after throughout the whole world (Saunders, 2009).

#### **2.4 Beads in Ancient Rome**

It was the Roman Empire which began the great global trade in glass beads. During the period from 100 B.C. to 400 A.D., many advances were made in the production of raw glass and the techniques to shape it into beautiful objects. An extensive glass industry was developed throughout the Empire and glass beads were a major part of its production. Factories blossomed from the Syrian deserts to the banks of the Rhine and trading routes carried glass beads to far reaches of the Empire and beyond. Roman glass beads have been found in China, Scandinavia and Central Africa. By the time of the Roman decline, the global desire for glass beads had been firmly established.

The breakup of the Empire led to a sharp drop in the production of glass beads. Workshops in other parts of the world stepped in to supply the glass bead trade, shipping its products on all the maritime trading routes. Among the countries which stepped in to save the situation and supply glass beads were India, China and Japan, both with ancient glass bead traditions, continued to supply their own markets.

During the Middle-Ages, glass bead making continued in various locations of the former Roman lands, sometimes in small workshops and often as a cottage industry, but it was up to the Venetians to re-discover many of the more sophisticated Roman techniques and to re-establish a glass bead making industry on a major scale, one which was to find a place among the other vibrant arts of the Renaissance. The importance of the Venetian bead industry should not be underestimated. At one time there were more than 250 separate firms making beads and by the 18th century, the weekly output of the Venetian factories was more than



twenty tons of finished beads. While the beauty of Venetian beads was unrivalled and their role in European fashion undiminished, it was their value as a trading currency in the newly exploited lands of the Americas, Africa and Asia which fed the boom in production (Alden, 2008).

## **2.5 The Greek and Beads**

Around 1,400 BC, the Greeks started using the jewellery made from gold and gems that were beautifully designed and created by the skilled artisans. In past times, they were widely using the beads shaped as shells and animals products. With the advancement in civilization the trend of jewellery also developed. By 300 BC, they mastered in making the jewellery by using the coloured stones and gems like amethysts, pearl and emeralds. However, Greek jewellery was quite simpler than the jewellery used by other cultures. This jewellery consists of simpler designs and workmanship. However, as time progressed, the designs grew in intricacy with the utilization of different materials (Garah, 2008).

Like other cultures, Greeks use their jewellery to display their status and membership. They wore it on special occasions and were mostly for public appearances. It was mainly worn by women to show their wealth, social status and personal body decoration and was commonly specified as a gift. The Greeks used some of the jewellery based on religious belief, to give them protection against the evils and enemies. There were also superstitious thoughts that wearing the special stones endowed the owner with supernatural powers, while others had a religious symbolism. Older pieces of jewellery that have been found were dedicated to the Gods.

## **2.6 Beads in Europe**

Glass and glass beads were invented in the Middle East. Glass bead making is evident in Europe, India and China by around 1000 B.C. India, the Middle East, China and Europe have all been "glass bead maker to the world" at different times. Europe only emerged as a global player in the bead trade in the last five centuries, with two major centres of Venice and Bohemia and several minor ones.

Before the modern period, bead making was concentrated in two regions. In pre-Roman times, the foothills of the Alps and the Danube Valley near Vienna, were the bead making centres. Bead making started there in the eleventh century B.C. and reached an artistic peak in Hallstatt times, an early stage of the Iron Age in central and Western Europe. This was the homeland of the Celts, who in La Tène times spread bead making far around the continent.

Among the various adornments worn by the Celts were beads. Examples dating from the earliest times have been found throughout Europe, Britain and Ireland. Some of the finest of these have been unearthed in burial mounds and chambers constructed for high-ranking Celtic chiefs and their followers. These beads vary from the plain to the highly decorated and they have been found made from gold, silver, electrum, stone, black jet, bone, amber and, occasionally, semi-precious stones. It is quite possible that the Celts were influenced in the making of beads by the ancient Egyptians, who were highly skilled at bead-making and used lapis lazuli, carnelian and jade in their highly polished necklaces (Wealleans, 2008).

The Romans changed the picture. Though they maintained a few European bead making centres like Gaul and Dacia, most beads in the Roman Europe were imported from the old centres of the Middle East.

During Roman times, a new bead making region arose, stretching from Scandinavia to the Black Sea. It was to be important for over a thousand years. Between the Baltic and the Black Sea is a fertile plain with large, navigable rivers. Scandinavian and other Viking centres were the major bead making sites. Viking beads were about the only ones traded outside their neighbourhood to the Finns and perhaps farther afield.

## **2.7 Beads in Africa and Ghana**

The use of beads is universal. Every civilization, nation, or people, at one point in time, have used beads and continue to use them in one way or the other. They have been with man for a long time that they were almost invisible. Men and women made beads to decorate their bodies and to fulfill their spiritual needs. Perhaps beads making started about the same time in widely dispersed locations. This may be compared with the “continuity” theory of modern human development, occurring in parallel among populations around the world. Very old beads similar to each other have been discovered in Africa, Europe and Asia.

“For years, archaeologists believed that acculturation, as a measure of the impact of European colonialism on native peoples, could be understood simply by examining the natives’ artifacts” (Quimby and Spoehr, 1951; White, 1957). Quimby and Spoehr (1951) further explained that:

If you excavated a native village occupied after the residents had met Europeans, you would find several artifacts that reflect the Europeans’ influence. If you spread the artifacts ..., you would notice that some of them look like traditional native objects- chipped stone arrowheads, ground stone axes .... You also would notice that some of the things look as if Europeans had manufactured them. This group might include bracelets, brass kettle fragments, brightly colored glass beads .... If you looked closely, you might also observe that several objects seem to contain elements of both native and European cultures. ... Triangular arrowheads expertly chipped from green bottle glass, and triangular pendants made from melted glass beads would all fall in this category.

The artifacts that are found at a particular place show the way in which the native people, irrespective of where they may be found, were incorporated into the European culture, how they adopted some of the European technological methods and eventually their ways of thought.

Locally made bone, teeth, ivory and stone beads have been recovered from both Iron Age and historic period contexts at several sites in West Africa. Beads were among the commodities traded across the Sahara to the Western Sudan and places on the Guinea Coast (Levzion and Hopkins, 1981). Stone and glass beads totaling over 150, 000 have been excavated at the Nigeria site of Igbo-Ukwu. "...Discoveries of stone beads from ancient sites at Djenne in Mali indicate that the stone was worked there into beads and exchanged for other commodities from neighbouring communities" (McIntosh and McIntosh, 1980:162; 1986:430).

The manufacture and use of beads in the Ghanaian traditional context have a remote antiquity. In fact, the Ghanaian bead tradition pre-dates the arrival of the Europeans to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) at the close of the fifteenth century A.D. The earliest known beads in Ghana like in other parts of West Africa have been recovered from Late Stone Age contexts. In Ghana beads have been discovered at the Kintampo rock shelters, K6 and K8, dated to about 1450 B.C. (C-14 age determination) (Kumekpor, *et al.*, 1995). "Large numbers of small-sized shell beads have been recovered from Ntereso in the savannah grassland region of Northern Ghana (Davies, 1980:219). Studies have shown that the Akan-speaking Akyem people have worked bauxite into beads since medieval times (Davies, 1967:285-7).

Originally beads were made from natural materials but subsequently replaced by glass beads which European traders brought to trade for slaves, salt, gold and spices. The Portuguese,

Dutch, English, French, Belgians and Germans brought millions of Venetian, Dutch and Bohemian glass beads to Africa. “Most of the old, historical glass came from Venetia (Murano), Amsterdam (specially produced for the West African and maybe also for the North American trade) ....” (Kumekpor, *et al.*, 1995).

In Bida (Nigeria) and other places in Africa, glass was heated above a locally made furnace till it reached its molten state. It was then coiled around a thin round metal rod and after cooling, a round bead was formed. This method, known as ‘winding’, was used for over two hundred years by Venetians in Murano in making their beads. Archaeological evidence for the manufacture of local glass has been found at a site in Ife in Nigeria.

Excavations at Daboya in the northern part of Ghana produced a collection of 63 imported glass beads, the majority of which may have been made between A.D. 700-1800. Other excavation sites also uncovered glass beads akin to early Islamic beads. Apart from the imported glass beads, archaeologists have also uncovered glass wasters in Begho in the Brong Ahafo indicating glass bead work. “This provides compelling evidence for local production of glass beads from the seventeenth or early eighteenth century” (De Corse, 1989:48).

The West African trade in glass beads falls into distinct historical categories starting with Islamic bead production and trade, between A.D.800 and A.D.1500. The Islamic faith originated in Arabia in the seventh century and quickly spread to Africa, Asia, south-east Europe and China. Glassmaking centres were established in Egypt, Syria and the Levant (Lebanon). Between A.D. 900 and A.D.1000, Cairo became an important centre for bead makers who imported, processed, and traded coral, pearls, cowry shells and African ivory (Wilson, 2003).

The artificial material that has the greatest variety of technique, both in its original manufacture and its subsequent decoration, is glass (Karklins, 2006). Perhaps it is for this reason that glass beads have been popular in West Africa and in Africa at large. Dubin (1987:1) states that

An enormous range of beads and raw materials for beads have been available to Africans for centuries and therefore have an ancient history in Africa. They have been used as modes of artistic expression, as status symbols, and for religious purposes. The date for the advent of Powder-glass bead making techniques in Africa is not certain, although it is thought that they began appearing in the sixteenth century. Since then, glass bead making in sub-Saharan Africa has been concentrated in today's Niger, Nigeria and Ghana. This tradition remains intact, and today the Bida of Nigeria and the Krobo of Ghana are two of the most important African glass beads manufacturers.

Glass beads production has been a flourishing industry in Krobo for years. Whole villages are involved in glass beads production. Even though glass beads may seem to be foreign, the Krobo have used them for so many years and as a result glass beads have become an integral part of Krobo culture. They use beads in all stages of their lives. This may also have happened out of admiration of the arts of foreign culture. Admiration of art of another culture has been in existence for a long time. Depending on how an individual perceives another person's culture, they may adopt aspects of the culture which are relevant through selection and forego the others.

The Krobo use beads in all the stages of their lives. They produce glass beads in large quantities for both local and international consumption. Almost all the villages in Yilo; Somanya, Agogo, Obawale and Tsebiteyi, to mention but a few, produce beads. Glass beads are made today in much the same way as they were then by artisans in small villages and cottages who learnt the technique from their grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Overview**

This chapter covers the methods employed for the study. It describes the research design, the population, sampling, sampling technique and research instrumentation such as questionnaire and interview that were used. It further discusses the data collection procedure and the data analysis process.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The method adopted for the study was the Qualitative Research method. The descriptive method was used in describing the process of producing glass beads, their uses and symbolism and also the ceremonies the researcher participated in.

#### **3.3 Library Research**

The various university campuses and their libraries were visited in search of related literature. The Main library of K.N.U.S.T and the Library of the Department of Art Education were used extensively. In addition, the researcher visited the Balme library and the Institute of African Studies library, all of University of Ghana, Legon and had a lot of useful literature to photocopy. Newspapers, journals, magazines and past theses were read and the needed information extracted from them. Literature was also obtained when the researcher visited the District Cultural Office in Somanya. Other useful materials were obtained from the internet.

### **3.4 Population for the Study**

The targeted population included all producers of beads, sellers and users of beads in the *Yilo Krobo* district, which was a representation of the Krobo in the district. However, the accessible population was made up of ten bead producers, fifty sellers of beads, twenty chiefs, elders and the priesthood and forty other users of beads. The youth made a greater part of the respondents for the questionnaire because the researcher wanted to find out whether they use beads and understood their symbolism. Traditional priests and priestesses, queen mothers, an old natives and bead producers in the district were identified and selected for the interview. Throughout the research, it was discovered that it is often the old women in the villages who are the most knowledgeable and the most useful in identifying the appropriate beads, their uses and symbolism. The researcher thought that though they were illiterates they were in a better position to give accurate information about the Krobo culture, the use of beads and its symbolism. It was crucial to gather data personally by taking advantage of the resources directly around rather than relying solely on textbook materials.

### **3.5 Sampling**

Respondents were randomly selected by purposive sampling which was most appropriate for this study due to the homogenous nature of the population. The snow-ball effect also occurred where one respondent referred me to others.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **The Use of Questionnaire**

Questionnaire was adopted in the research process to support the interviews. The researcher thought that with the use of questionnaire, there would be no pressure on the respondents to answer the questions. This therefore gave them enough time to give accurate information



relating the use and symbolism of beads. The use of questionnaire was also thought to reduce bias responses that might result from the individual principles and beliefs of certain interviewees.

### **The Use of Interview**

The researcher felt that conducting an interview would serve as a cross check of the authenticity of the responses that may be made by the accessible population sample through the questionnaire. The interview was deemed useful since it provided a platform for the researcher to get personal with the interviewees and extract more useful information as possible. Both the structured and unstructured forms of interview were employed. While the structured form got the process underway, the unstructured form made it possible to explore statements that came out during the course of the interview to extract more information from the interviewer.

### **Participant Observation**

The participant observation instrument was employed in order for the researcher to experience the uses and symbolism of beads and the production processes in a more personal manner. The researcher's observation of events was therefore crucial. Notes were noted down in a notebook on daily basis during the observation. Whilst observing and experiencing as a participant, the researcher retained a level of objectivity in order to understand, analyse and explain the events.

### **3.7 Types of Data**

#### **Primary and Secondary data**

- a) Primary data was obtained from questionnaire administered, interviews conducted and direct observations made by the researcher.
  
- b) Secondary data was obtained from published materials and unpublished long essays, theses from libraries visited and the internet.

### **3.8 Administration of Instruments**

The researcher prepared a set of questionnaire to obtain information based on the objective of the study and the hypothesis. A questionnaire of twenty items made up of both closed and open-ended items was designed. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one sought to obtain personal information about the respondents and part two designed to obtain information on the uses and symbolism of beads in their culture. Thirty respondents largely made up of the youth were chosen at random. This was to find out whether they used beads and understood their symbolism. Since many of the Krobo youth could speak *twi*, the questionnaire was translated into *twi* for them.

The questionnaire and interview questions were pre-tested to find out how effective they would be on the research field. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed in Accra and Somanya. The respondents who answered the questionnaire complained that the questions were too many and should be made concise. In addition, the researcher deduced after retrieving the questionnaire that the structure was confusing and therefore had to be revised. There were no problems with the questions for the interview since they were straight to the point.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher conducted random preliminary interviews whenever he visited the *Yilo Krobo* district. The reason was to assess the feasibility of the research. The researcher, in addition, made personal observations and contact with the District Cultural Officer, who in turn introduced him to local bead makers, sellers, traditional leaders and some elders in the town.

An audio cassette recorder was used to record information from interviewees after which the information was transcribed. The digital camera was employed for taking photographs during the observation to illustrate the views of the researcher and in some cases also used to record interviews. Questionnaire and interview were used to solicit information from the sample population. A notebook was used to record the summaries and observations during the research. To illustrate and explain the views of the researcher, maps, charts, statistics, tables and photographs were used.

For the actual administering of questionnaire, forty-five copies were printed. The researcher combed the streets and personally administered the questionnaire to a section of the accessible population. After retrieving all the questionnaires and making sure that the needed information was provided, the researcher went ahead with the interviews. The interview was conducted with the help of the District Cultural Officer, Mr. Daniel Kwesi Akuffo, who acted as the translator and facilitator. Interviews were conducted with traditional office holders, beads sellers and producers and general users. The researcher asked the questions in English while Mr. Akuffo translated them into the Krobo language. Even though, the interviewees were illiterates, they were well versed in the Krobo culture and answered the questions to the researcher's satisfaction.

### **3.10 Data Analysis Plan**

The researcher used computation of percentages and tabulations in analysing the data collected from the respondents. A summary of data gathered was made, relevant conclusions were drawn from them and recommendation made. The details of this will appear in chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Overview

It has been stated earlier in chapter one that Krobo beads are used profusely during the initiation rites (*dipo*) for young adolescence girls into womanhood and adulthood. Many Ghanaians therefore associate the use of beads mainly to *dipo* but there are so many other uses and symbolic meanings attached to beads in the Krobo culture. Many Krobo also use beads based solely on personal wishes or perceptions, rather than on objective facts or principles of their culture. Due to foreign influences that have infiltrated the Krobo society, many people seem to have forgotten about the overwhelming uses of Krobo beads and their symbolism.

This chapter contains the results of the data obtained from the questionnaire that were administered and the interviews conducted to sort information regarding the above problem. The questionnaire was divided into two parts to obtain personal information about the respondents and about their knowledge in the use and symbolism of beads. The responses to the questionnaire have been tabulated and analysed. Each table is followed with an interpretation and analysis. The processes involved in the production of glass beads in the Krobo culture have also been captured in this chapter to give an understanding as to how Krobo beads are produced. Personal observations of the researcher are contained in this chapter as well.

## 4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data

**Table 1: Age of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage
8 – 12	None	0%
13 – 24	5	17%
25 – 45	16	53%
46 and above	9	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 indicates that five respondents representing 17% of the sample population were within the age range of 13 - 24 years, sixteen respondents fell within the range of 25 – 45 years representing 53% and nine respondents representing 30% were within the age range of 46 and above. There was no representation for the age range of 8 – 12. The table therefore indicates that most of the respondents represented the youth making 70% of the total sample population.

**Table 2: Gender Distribution**

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	43%
Female	17	57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

The analysis of the responses in Table 2 revealed that thirteen respondents representing 43% were males and seventeen respondents representing 57% were females. It can be said that both sexes were fairly represented in the sample even though there were more females than males.

**Table 3: Educational Background**

	Frequency	Percentage
Primary/JHS	13	43.3%
SHS	4	13.3%
Tertiary	9	30.0%
None	4	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

In Table 3, thirteen respondents representing 43.3% were either in Primary/ JHS or had the Primary/ JHS background, four of the respondents representing 13.3% were also either in SHS or had the SHS background and nine respondents representing 30% were in the tertiary/vocational category or had tertiary/vocational education. Four respondent representing 13.3% of the sample population had no formal education. This means that they were illiterates. The table above shows that most of the respondents had the primary/JHS educational background.

**Table 4: Do you use or wear beads?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	93.3%
No	2	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

The analysis of the responses in Table 4 shows that twenty-eight of the respondents representing 93.3% use beads while only two representing 6.7% of the did not use or wear beads. This means that majority of the respondents use beads.

**Table 5: How long have you used beads?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Since childhood	20	71%
Recently	3	11%
Long time ago	5	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

In Table 5, twenty respondents representing 71% had used beads since childhood, three respondents representing 11% had just started using beads while five respondents representing 18% had used beads for a long time. There was no answer from two respondents.

**Table 6: How often do you use them?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Everyday	9	32%
Week-ends	7	25%
Occasionally	12	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in Table 6 revealed that nine respondents representing 32% use beads every day, seven respondents representing 25% use beads on week-ends while twelve respondents representing 43% use beads occasionally. The analysis above indicates that majority of the sample population use beads occasionally.

According to Table 7, twenty-six of the respondents representing 93% of the sample population usually wear the beads either on the waist/ wrist/ neck, no respondent wore beads on the ankle/ calf/ arm and two respondents representing 6.7% said they used the beads as



earrings. It can be said that a majority of the respondents wore beads on the waist, wrist or around the neck.

**Table 7: On which part of the body do you usually wear the beads?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Waist/ Wrist/ Neck	26	93%
Ankle/ Calf/ Arm	0	0%
Other	2	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 8: Why do you use beads?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Fashion	14	50%
Personal wish	9	32%
Symbolic	5	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 indicates that fourteen respondents representing 50% use beads because of fashion, nine respondents representing 32% use the beads based on personal wish and five respondents representing 18% use beads because they are symbolic. This shows that majority of the respondents use beads for the sake of fashion. Only a few use beads because they have symbolic meanings.

**Table 9: Do some of the beads possess special powers?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	83%
No	5	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

From Table 9, it can be said that, a majority of the respondents agree that some beads possess special powers. Twenty-five respondents representing 83% ticked ‘Yes’ meaning some beads do possess special powers while five respondents representing 17% ticked ‘No’ meaning beads do not possess special powers.

**Table 10: Would you like to see more people use Krobo beads?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	100%
No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Asked whether they would like to see more people use Krobo beads, all thirty respondents representing 100% said ‘Yes’.

#### **4.3 Summary of Data from Tables**

The respondents for the questionnaires were considered to be the target group for the research. They were made up of both sexes of which 17% were between the ages of 13-24, 53% were between the ages of 25-45 and 30% fell in the 46 and above age range. The youth made a greater part of the respondents. None of the respondents fell in the age range of 8-12. Thirteen respondents were males and seventeen were females. About the educational background, thirteen out of the thirty respondents were either in the Primary/JHS levels or had the background, four respondents were either in SHS or had SHS background and nine respondents fell in the tertiary category. The nine respondents were either in the tertiary institution or had tertiary educational background. However, four of the respondents were illiterates.

The research found out that majority of the respondents representing 93.3% use beads while 6.7% did not use or wear beads. About how long the respondents have used beads, twenty out of the thirty respondents have used beads since childhood, three had just started using beads while five of the respondents started using beads a long time ago. A majority of the respondents representing 43% use beads occasionally, 25% on week-ends and 32% of the respondents use beads every day. The research also found out that twenty-six respondents representing 93% wear the beads on the wrist, waist and around the neck. Two respondents used beads as earrings. None of the respondents wore beads on the ankle, calf or arm. This proves that majority of the respondents wear beads around the waist and neck and on the wrist.

With regards to the use of beads, 50% of the respondents said they use beads because of fashion, 32% said because of personal wish and 18% said they use beads because they are symbolic. This also proves that a majority of the respondents use beads for the sake of fashion. Even though a majority of the respondents wear beads for the sake of fashion, twenty-five respondents representing 83% said some beads possess special powers while five respondents representing 17% did not agree that some beads possess special powers. All thirty respondents wanted to see more people use Krobo beads.

The research questionnaire found out that a greater percentage of the Krobo have used beads since childhood. This shows that the use of beads is embedded in the Krobo culture and the people have some deep appreciation for their culture. Most Krobo use beads not because they are symbolic but for the sake of fashion. It implies that the Krobo do not place much emphasis on the symbolic nature of the beads but rather on aesthetics. Only few of the ordinary Krobo wear beads every day. The waist, wrist and the neck are the main parts of the body that the beads are worn by the Krobo. The Krobo believe that some of the beads possess

special powers either for healing or for protection. This may be attributed to the popular traditional African belief that trees, stones and bones of animals are inhabited by powerful spirits and for that reason some of the beads also accommodate these powerful spirits.

#### **4.4.0 Results from Interviews Conducted**

The following data was derived from the interviews conducted by the researcher. The Cultural Officer of *Yilo Krobo* district, Mr. Daniel Akuffo, helped in the translation from English to the Krobo language and then vice versa. A summary of the results have also been presented at the end of each interview.

##### **4.4.1 Interview with the Queen Mother (Plau) of the *Yilo Krobo* Traditional Area**

*Manye* Maamiyo Bannerhene II, referred to in plate 1, is the Queen Mother of Plau, a division under *Yilo Krobo* Traditional area. She is an illiterate who must be between fifty and sixty years old because she found it difficult to remember her date of birth. Maamiyo Bannerhene was enstooled as the queen mother of Plau when she was a young woman and has been the queen mother for more than twenty-five years.

The researcher first asked the queen mother how beads are used in their culture. The queen mother answered that beads are worn on so many occasions in Kroboland. Beads are used during the *dipo* custom and marriage ceremonies as gifts for the bride and the bridegroom. During the installation or enstoolment of a chief, Queen Mother, a priest or priestess, beads are used in dressing the candidate. They are a part of the costume of the candidates and they are worn on all official duties as well as throughout their term in office.



Plate 1: *Manye* Maamiyo Bannerhene II, Queen Mother (Plau). (Picture by Researcher)

According to the Krobo tradition, whenever it rained in the olden days and there was a rainbow, beads would be found underneath the ground. Some people followed the rainbow to where it ended and when they reached that place, they found beads on the ground. The researcher believes that in actual sense, the rainbow does not come into contact with the ground but happens in the sky. Perhaps the occurrence created an illusion to them as if it touched the ground. These types of beads are referred to as ‘old beads’. The *metε* and *lε* beads as shown in plates 2 and 3 are examples of the beads that were found in the ground and therefore are considered powerful. She believed that these kinds of beads may possess special powers since they are natural and made by *Mau*, the Almighty God.



Plate 2: *Mεε* (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 3: *Λε* (Picture by Researcher)

With regards to marriage, a woman may decide not to wear beads on her marriage ceremony. Nothing bad will happen to her as many may assume. There is no problem with that if she decides not to wear any beads. It is like wearing gold jewellery. It is optional and not a taboo. Since the Krobo are noted for their rich bead culture, every Krobo would want to appear in beads everywhere they go to be easily identified. But at least, one string of bead must be worn. She will not be complete without the beads. It signifies their rich beads culture. Anyone who wears the beads shows how proud they are of being Krobo. The bridegroom also wears beads during the marriage ceremony. She wears them on her wrist and around her neck. The colour combination of the beads usually depends on the costume that is worn. All the people who witness the marriage ceremony wear beads of different colours and sizes.

Queen mothers wear big beads while their subordinates wear smaller beads. It does not show respect if a lesser ranked queen mother wears the same type of beads with the queen mother. She added that some of the beads have special names according to their design and colour. She identified two types of beads as *powa*; Plate 4 shows a grey *powa* with black and wine

stripes. Plate 5 is a yellow *powa* with green stripes with a pendant. She also identified *zagba*, shown in plate 6, which is yellowish brown beads and the *wadzi* bead which is blue and similar to the *koli* beads but looks rough. Plate 7 shows the *wadzi* bead.



Plate 4: A grey *powa*  
(Picture by Researcher)



Plate 5: A yellow *powa* with a pendant  
(Picture by Researcher)

Beads are also used to decorate the corpse of a dead person. Beads, usually very valuable to the family of the dead person, are placed on the corpse for decoration during the funeral rites, especially when the dead person is laid-in-state. They are not placed around the neck or wrist but placed on the chest for decoration. However, these beads are not buried with the corpse but kept in the family of the dead person to be used for another occasion.

A family which possesses old beads inherited from their ancestors may use them during the death of a member of the family. For example, if a married woman in that family dies, beads are put on her wrist during the burial. A single piece of the old beads such as *mete* or *le* is removed and added to the locally manufactured ones. They are then strung together and put on the left wrist of the dead woman. It is believed that when she reaches the ancestral land and raises her left hand, the ancestors from her family would recognise her by the old bead on



her wrist. The ancestors would then pick her up and give her a befitting welcome because the left the beads for them to use. Such beads are passed on from one generation to another.



Plate 6: *Zagba* (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 7: *Wadzi* (Picture by Researcher)

#### **4.4.2 Interview with the Traditional Chief Priestess of the *Yilo* Traditional Area**

*Okonya* Maku is the traditional chief priestess of *Yilo* Traditional Area. On reaching the entrance of her house, the researcher and Mr. Akuffo removed their shoes before entering. One of the chief priestess' servants told us to put our shoes back on. The chief priestess had lots of pots and plants in her compound. The researcher did not notice any shrine but there were small carved figures made of wood and blood spilled over them. The chief priestess had very long hair which she had wrapped around her head in a white cloth. She wore different kinds of beads on different parts of her body. Some of the beads were made of metal and others of cowry shells. The chief priestess did not permit the researcher to take photographs nor use a tape recorder to record the information given by her due to reasons known to her. The researcher, however, took notes in a notebook he always carried around during the research. The photograph presented here was scanned from a booklet designed by Premier Events during the Ghana at 50 *Kloyo sikipemi* festival held in Somanya.





Plate 8: *Okonya Maku*, Traditional Chief Priestess of *Yilo* Traditional Area.

(Source: Premier Events)

When the interview was ready to begin, the researcher asked the chief priestess what the Krobo use their beads for. She began by saying that when a baby is born and is not given the *la*, it means that the child has not been named and therefore is not regarded as a member of the Krobo society. The *la* is a combination of three special beads strung together; a white bead known as *nyoli*, shown in plate 19, a blue bead known as *koli*, shown in plate 20 and a black bead called *tovi*, shown in plate 21. A child must be given the *la* and named on the eighth day to be recognised. The *la* works. Traditional priests and priestesses do not wear beads for the sake of fashion or pleasure as many a Krobo do. Every traditional priest and priestess also wears the special beads *la*. The *la* differentiates them from the rest of the members of the society. The beads also make them powerful and allow them to carry out their duties as priests and priestesses. This is because of the spirits that are believed to dwell

in them. They are thought to be able to prevent motor accidents, retrieve stolen or missing items and even cause the rain to fall. Every spirit has its own bead it dwells in. All the gods and spirits that the Krobo worship have their beads.

After successfully passing the training of a traditional priestess, the family of the trainee procures a large steel trunk and several items including beads for her graduation ceremony. On the graduation day, the new priestesses provide their own beads but based on the advice of the chief priestess. The beads provided are for the neck, ankle, waist, knee and waist. The beads are strung in a particular order and pattern to represent each deity and ignite their functioning powers.

The *nyoli*, *kɔli* and *tovi* are not worn for fashion. If there is a bad spirit troubling someone, these three beads can be worn to protect that person. The type of troubling spirit will show what kind of beads the person should wear or be prescribed by a traditional priest or priestess. Certain beads are only worn by persons dedicated to a particular deity or shrine. The arrangement of certain colours of the beads is also used to identify those who work in the shrine. If you are not a member of the priesthood, you cannot wear certain kinds of beads.

To the chief priestess, the *la* is a ritual object which they take seriously. They are considered as sacred and used in performing rituals and other functions. They are the embodiment of the beliefs attached to the rituals. Certain beads are made specially for the priests and priestesses for the spirits of the deity and the gods to dwell within. The beads become the abode of the gods and make the priests and priestesses powerful.



Plate 9: *nyoli* (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 10: *koli* (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 11: *tovi* (Picture by Researcher)

When the researcher asked the chief priestess to give examples of the beads specially made for them for spiritual duties, she declined. She refused to give detailed information as to which special beads are made for the priests and priestesses and the ones which are worn by workers of a particular shrine. She also refused to give information on what function each type of bead performs and what they symbolise. She regarded them as sacred objects relating to spiritual matters. The chief priestess added that she oversees the performance of the *dipo* ceremony during which many beads are used and added that these beads do not have any powers but shows the wealth of the initiate's family.

#### **4.4.3 Interview with Maame Korkor Djeagu**

Maame Korkor Djeagu is a sixty-two year old woman and well respected in the district capital of Somanya. She was beautifully dressed for the interview with colourful beads complimenting her cloth. Maame Korkor Djeagu could not tell exactly when she started wearing beads when the researcher asked her. She said maybe from childhood, but she could say that from the age of ten, she has worn beads till the time of the interview. Probably, she had her *dipo* at that age.

The researcher asked her about the use of beads in their culture. Maame Korkor Djeagu answered that every Krobo woman has to wear beads all the time and wear the beads on the wrist, the waist and around the neck. The Krobo do not use or wear beads because they have special powers or spirits in them. The ordinary Krobo wears beads because they are beautiful and portray their rich beads culture. The traditional priests and priestesses wear special kinds of beads because of their spiritual duties. They wear them for protection against bad spirits. It is these special beads which possess supernatural powers. Someone may go to the traditional priest for protection and the same beads maybe given to that person. But this time, a spirit has been invoked into the beads to perform that function.

Maame Korkor Djeagu was quick to separate some of the beads from her collection and referred to them as 'old beads' from the traditional glass beads produced in the district. Asked whether the 'old beads' were different from the glass beads, she answered in the affirmative. Nobody knows the origin of the 'old beads' because the old women say that the kind of beads they were using was acquired from the ground. But it is believed that some people once lived in Kroboland, used these beads and buried them in the ground. So during farming, some Krobo farmers discovered these beads. Nobody actually knew what was used to make these kinds of beads



Plate 12: Maame Korkor Djeagu. (Picture by Researcher)

In the olden days, the Krobo were called *la lin* which literally means ‘*la* people’. If someone meets a Krobo, the *la* was used to identify them. It was their symbol of identity and it is still today. When a child is born, the naming ceremony is performed early in the morning of the eighth day. Before the child is named, the *la*, which consists of a black bead, called *tovi*, a white bead, called *nyoli* and a blue bead, called *koli*, are strung with raffia (*hlowe*) and tied to the right wrist of a male child or to the left wrist of a female child. An old lady, preferably the first-born of the house, does the tying on behalf of the baby’s father, grandfather and grandmother after which she names the child.

The *la*, traditionally, was to be worn on the wrist for a life time and even after death because it symbolised that the child had been named and must bear that name forever. But nowadays, when the child becomes an adult, he or she removes the *la* or it tears by itself. It was used to identify the Krobo. The *la* can be compared to the ethnic marks of the people from the north of Ghana. With the advent of foreign religions like Christianity, most Krobo do not wear the



*la* anymore. Perhaps Christianity and other foreign religions have contributed to the deteriorating state of traditional religion in Ghana and for that matter Krobo culture.



Plate 13: The *la* (Picture by Researcher)

The 'old beads' are usually inherited from the older people in the family. They have been in the family for many years and are passed on from one generation to another. They were considered as precious jewellery for the old ladies of the past. The 'old beads' are not sold. They are kept in the family treasury for years. It is believed that when the beads are given to someone in the family to inherit, they must also give them to their children to inherit. It is believed that when beads are misplaced, lost or borrowed and not returned may cause death in the family. Other families borrow the 'old beads' for special occasions like *dipo* for their daughters. Together with the traditional glass beads, the 'old beads' are used during *dipo*. The Krobo believe that their ancestors will be pleased with them because their beads were used for the customary rites. In addition, when a woman dies, her children inherit her beads and use them during initiation ceremonies for themselves or for their children.

The Krobo produce other beads of various colours that are purely for beautification of the body. These beads are colourful and very attractive. Krobo women wear these beads to compliment the colours of their costumes to grace festivals, wedding ceremonies, naming ceremonies and grand durbars. The same type of beads worn around the neck must be worn around the wrist to bring harmony.

#### **4.4.4 Interview with Mr. Mark Adjadu, a Beads Producer**

Mr. Mark Adjadu is a forty-two year old man who has been in the beads industry for many years. He had been producing beads since he was a teenager. Mr. Adjadu does not have any formal education but is very skilled when it comes to the production of beads. He learnt how to produce beads from his grandfather who was a bead maker. He has a hut under which he works to produce beads. Apart from exporting his beads to other parts of the country and beyond, he has also participated in a lot of exhibitions and grand sales in Ghana. Mr. Adjadu has ten apprentices.

Most of the beads produced in the district are made from glass. Glass items such as Coca cola, Fanta, beer bottles and other glass items like louvre blades are used. He buys them from drinking spots and sometimes collects them from the ground. During the production of the beads, they are very careful because they do not have any protective gears.

The researcher inquired from Mr. Adjadu whether taboos are observed and ritual performed before producing their beads. Mr. Adjadu said they do not observe any taboos and rituals before, during or after the production of the beads. Women are involved in the production of beads in the district. Some of the bead makers are women and most of the people who sell beads are women. Any beads maker can produce beads for anybody. In so far as your beads are quality and attractive, it does not matter whether the client is a lawyer, a teacher, a market

woman, a *shoe shine boy* or a chief or queen mother. They produce beads for all people and one need not be a literate before he can produce beads. Any one at all can learn how to produce beads.



Plate 14: Mr. Mark Adjadu in front of his beads factory. (Picture by Researcher)

The beads that they produce do not have any powers in them. They are made from glass and nothing else. However, if the beads are made from different materials such as bones, metals and cowry, they may possess special powers. There are special black beads called *tovi* and white beads called *nyoli* which some Krobo say have powers in them. But Mr. Adjadu believed that when special rituals are performed on the beads, they obtain the powers. These special beads are sometimes added to the glass beads to give them power which enables them to draw good spirits or repel evil ones.

With regards to the process of producing glass beads, he added that glass beads derive their colour from the type of glass materials used. For example, if green bottles are ground and put inside the oven, they turn out to be green beads. The beads which are further decorated are carefully painted with a mixture of ceramic dye and powdered glass locally known as *ɔɔɔ* to



create a design. One problem the bead makers face in the industry is that when a bead maker comes out with a unique bead design, another person copies the design as soon as they see it on the market. This attitude hinders creativity and originality. Most of the time, the type of colours and decorations made on the beads are done out of the bead maker's own creativity but sometimes by specifications of a client.



Plate 15: Apprentices at work. (Picture by Researcher)

Sometimes, they fuse two or more different colours of powdered glass mixed with ceramic dyes and turn the bead in the mould when just out of the oven. The perforation is checked. The bead is polished by hand with sand and water on a grinding stone to obtain a fused powder bead. They also use fragments of glass arranged in the mould and heat them in an oven until the fragments are fused together. Like the fused powder beads, the perforation is made when the bead comes out of the oven red hot. The shape of the bead is modified by turning the bead in the mould. The result is the fused fragment beads which are normally translucent. Bead makers also use entire or broken beads to produce new beads.

The size of the beads is dependent on the clay mould. Beads can be produced in any shape and size. As seen below, the star shaped mould and the other two filled with coloured powdered glass will take the shape of the mould after it is put inside the oven. The big mould with small and multiple holes is used for waist beads. The cassava stalk put in them will burn during fusion of the powdered glass leaving holes in the beads for threading.



Plate 16: Clay moulds of different shapes and sizes. (Source: GhanaCraft)

The busiest time of the year for bead makers and sellers is during *dipo* celebrations. During this period, family members and friends of the *dipo* initiate order and buy for the occasion. They present them to the initiates as gifts. There is also high demand for beads during festivals such as *kloyo sikplemi*.



Plate 17: Mr. Adjadu and his apprentices at the beads factory. (Picture by Researcher)

#### **4.5 Observation of the *Kloyo sikplemi* festival in Somanya**

During the month of November, the Cultural Officer of Somanya, Mr. Daniel Akuffo invited the researcher to witness the grand festival of the *Yilɔ* Krobo, *Kloyo sikplemi*. This was an excellent opportunity for the researcher to observe the rich Krobo culture as well as the use of beads first-hand. The significance of the festival is to pay homage to the ancestral home of the Krobo Mountains. It reminds the Krobo of the eviction from their Mountain residence in 1892 by the then British colonial government. The venue for the festival was Somanya.

By attending the festival, the researcher was able to make many important observations which later he questioned, researched and analyzed. As part of the celebrations was a pilgrimage to the Krobo Mountains. Together with the District Cultural Officer, Mr. Akuffo, the researcher climbed the mountain. It was a wonderful experience on the mountains witnessing the domicile of the forefathers of the Krobo deserted and overgrown with shrubs and bushes. There were ruins of stone foundation of palaces, walls of houses and remains of broken pots. A grand durbar was held on the foot of the Krobo mountain after the pilgrimage. Chiefs and queen mothers from both *Yilɔ* and Manya were dressed in elegant clothing and adorned with different kinds of beautiful beads and other jewellery. The ordinary people were also dressed in beads during the festival. There was also display of a wide variety of old and new beads for sale during the grand durbar. Various beads shops were visited during that period.



Plate 18: Lady F Beads shop opposite Rite FM in Somanya. (Picture by Researcher)

#### **4.6 The Processes of Producing Glass Beads in the *Yilo Krobo* District**

Before describing the processes involved in the production of glass beads in the *Yilo Krobo* District, it is vital having some background knowledge about the material used for making the beads and that material is glass.

The materials used for the manufacture of beads can be divided into two: Natural and Artificial materials. Natural materials are materials which once they are found only require making into beads. This implies making a perforation in the material for stringing. Examples of natural materials include stone, shale, shell, wood, including seeds and straw, teeth, ivory and bones. Some natural materials such as gold, tin and iron generally need to be smelted or otherwise prepared before they can be made into beads. Artificial materials of which glass belong have to be manufactured. Examples of artificial materials include faience, china, paper, wax and unglazed pottery.

#### **4.6.1 Glass**

Glass is a vitreous compound that has a conchoidal fracture. It is a combination of silica with lime or lead, and an alkali such as soda and potash. Many colours and varieties of glass are made and used as beads. Some of these have great power of resisting corrosion and therefore keep a polished surface for a very long time. Other glasses corrode much more rapidly; in some cases this gives brilliant iridescent colours, but in others the surface corrodes away, and the material at first sight looks like a piece of clay. The artificial material that has the greatest variety of technique, both in its original manufacture and its subsequent decoration, is glass (Karklins, 2006). Perhaps it is for this reason that glass beads have become popular in West Africa and in Africa at large.

Glass beads production has been a flourishing industry in Kroboland for years. Whole villages are involved in glass beads production. The Krobo produce glass beads in large quantities for both local and international consumption. Almost all the villages in *Yilo* produce glass beads. Glass beads are made today in much the same way as they were then by artisans in small villages and cottages who learnt the technique from their grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

#### **4.6.2 Production Processes of Glass Beads**

The researcher witnessed the production of beads at different beads factories in the *Yilo* Krobo district and revealed that beads are mostly made from recycled glass materials. There are three types of glass beads the Krobo produce; the translucent, the powdered and the painted glass beads. Whether producing any one of the types of beads, the tool and materials are similar. The production processes used in the past have not changed much from the ones used today. However, with advent of new technologies, tools, and upgraded knowledge in the



field there has been some improvement. Coca cola, Fanta and beer bottles and other glass items like louvre blades are the glass materials used as shown in plate 19.



Plate 19: Bottles used for making beads. (Picture by Researcher)

### **Translucent Glass Beads**

The glass materials are first washed and sorted out by colours. They are then broken into small fragments for making translucent beads by pounding on a hard stone as platform with a metal mortar and pestle sometimes from vehicle parts. Plate 20 shows the bottles broken into small fragments. The pounding is often done at great risk because the apprentices do not wear any protective attire and may cause injury to the eye. Plate 21 displays an aluminium bucket in which the glass materials are pounded. The small fragments of glass are sieved with a wire mesh, plate 22, to remove the powdered element in them. The fragments are poured into a clay mould known locally as *mue-te*. The clay mould, which determines the shape and size of the bead, is coated with kaolin to harden it, preventing the melted glass from getting stuck at the bottom of the mould and extending its life span.



Plate 20: Broken bottles in small fragments. (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 21: An aluminium bucket which serves as mortar. (Picture by Researcher)

Meanwhile, a locally made mud/clay oven or kiln is heated at a high temperature. Many of the beads producers in the district do not have any devices or instruments to monitor and regular the temperature in the oven. According to Mr. Mark Adjadu, a beads producer in Somanya, since these ovens are fuelled by firewood, they either add more firewood to

increase the temperature or remove firewood to reduce it. The filled moulds are placed in the oven with a long improvised metal spatula to avoid the heat for about thirty-five to forty-five minutes to melt the glass. When the glass reaches its molten state, the moulds are removed. The beads producers use a locally made metal awl to make holes in the molten glass beads as soon as they are removed from the oven. While one awl maintains the mould in place, the other one is used for turning the bead around in the mould to shape it as shown in plate 24. The fused glass slowly hardens at air temperature and left to cool down. The beads are then polished on a stone with water and sand and rubbed vigorously against one another until a smooth finish is obtained. The translucent beads are washed to get rid of the sand, dried sometimes rubbed with oil to give it a glossy finish. It is then threaded for the market.

### **Powdered Glass Beads**

With this powdered glass beads, the glass materials are pounded on a stone until they reach powder state or pulverize. The powdered glass is sieved with a wire mesh, plate 22, to get a very fine and smooth powder and also remove unwanted materials in the powder. The colour



Plate 22: A sieve used in sifting the pounded glass into fine powder. (Picture by Researcher)



of the beads is determined sometimes by the colour of the glass materials used. Ceramic dyes known as *سوسو* can be added to the powdered glass to obtain a different colour desired.

Pieces of cassava leaf stalk are placed in the centre of the mould as shown in plate 23. It is around the cassava leaf stalk that the powdered glass is poured filling the holes. The surface of the mould is smoothed and made compact with a spatula made of either bamboo or metal and put in the oven. Powdered glass beads require a baking period of about thirty to thirty-five minutes. The cassava leaf stalks burn during the fusion leaving the holes in the beads for threading. As soon as the moulds are removed from the oven, the beads are shaped well and the holes refined with one awl holding the bead in the mould and the other shaping it, shown in plate 24. The beads are left to cool down and then are polished in the same way as translucent beads. Threading is the last step after which the beads are ready for the market.



Plate 23: Cassava leaf stalks put into the mould. (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 24: An apprentice working on translucent beads. (Picture by Researcher)

### **Painted Glass Beads**

The beginning processes of producing this type of glass beads is the same as the producing the translucent and the powdered glass beads. The only difference with the painted glass beads process is that when the moulds are taken out of the oven for the first time, they are left to cool down. They are washed to remove dirt from the beads and made to dry. The beads are ready to be painted. A paste, locally called *ᄀᄀᄀ*, made up of powdered glass and ceramic dye is mixed with water to make designs on the beads. After the decorations, the beads are baked or fired for a second time to fix the painted designs. The beads are then left to cool slowly in the moulds at least for about forty-five minutes to one hour to prevent them from cracking. The beads are removed, washed and polished by rubbing them vigorously with water and sand on the smooth granite stone. As shown in plate 26, the beads are ready for threading to be sold.



Plate 25: Powdered glass ready for the oven. (Picture by Researcher)



Plate 26: Powdered glass beads with painted designs ready for stringing. (Picture by Researcher)





Plate 27: A variety of Krobo glass beads for the market. (Picture by Researcher)

#### **4.7.0 Discussion and Analysis of Main Findings**

Below are the discussion and analysis of main findings of the research.

##### **4.7.1 The Process**

The process of producing glass beads has not changed much over the years. Whether producing translucent beads, powdered glass beads or painted glass beads, the processes remain the same throughout the district. The materials and methods their grandfathers used are the same used today. Although the processes remain the same, there has been some improvement in some of the tools which has affected the quality, speed and efficiency of the producer thereby increasing production.

##### **4.7.2 Tools and Material Used**

The basic tools and materials are

- Glass: Material widely used in Krobo for producing beads.
- Metal Pestle: This is used for pounding the glass materials.

- Mortar: It is in the mortar that the glass is pounded.
- Stone Platform: The glass material is pound on the stone platform.
- Clay Moulds: Receptacle for the pounded glass material. It also shapes the beads.
- Cassava Leaf Stalks: The stalks create the holes in the beads during firing.
- Sieve: This is used to sift the pounded glass into fine powder.
- Bamboo or Metal for Spatula: Used to level the powdered glass in the mould.
- Metal Awl: This tool is in making holes in translucent beads and in shaping the beads.
- Firewood Oven or Kiln: This is used to turn the pounded glass into molten state.
- Firewood: Fuel for the oven.
- Granite Stone: It is on this stone that the beads are polished.

#### **4.7.3 Problems Associated with the Tools and Materials**

Most of the tools used by the producers are improvised and sometimes not suitable. Work is therefore slow and affects productivity. Many of the tools and materials are not maintained well. They are left on the ground which sometimes causes a worker to tumble over them and fall. This often results in injuries and damage to the tool or material. The producers complained about how their source of fuel, which is firewood, has become expensive.

The researcher suggests that the tools and materials should be improved and kept in a secured and safe place preferably in a cabinet at the workshop. The right tool should be used for the right job in order not to prolong the life span of the tools. More trees should be planted in the district to avoid de-afforestation since they fell trees for fuel.

#### **4.7.4 Working Conditions**

The environment in which the beads producers work is often in the open, unsafe and not clean. Pure water rubbers, papers and broken bottles are left on the ground. The workers work

at great danger as they do not wear any protective gear for their noses, faces and feet. Any one working with such dangerous material as glass needs to be extra careful as they may injure themselves during pounding. They do not also protect themselves from the heat generated by the oven or kiln and may pose health problems to the workers. However, they are very careful during work and as a result only a few cases of injuries are recorded. But the researcher advised that it was imperative that they protect themselves in order to avoid injuries or illnesses to produce more beads. A bin with a lid should be made available at the site for their rubbish and covered at all times to prevent flies from flying in and out of it.

#### **4.7.5 Taboos and Rituals**

Beads producers in *Yilo* Krobo district do not have any rituals they perform before production, during production and after production. There is no pouring of schnapps as libation to the ancestors. If a beads producer decides to pour libation in the process, then he does it for a personal reason. Everyone can produce beads and any beads producer can produce beads for anybody in Kroboland. Unlike the production of stools in the Ashanti region where it is strictly a male profession, women are widely involved in the production of beads and sale in Krobo culture. The women most often do the decoration and polishing of the beads as well as involved in the marketing. The purpose of producing beads in Krobo culture has always been for aesthetics and not for rituals even though it has its roots from their tradition. Western religions such as Christianity and Islam has had an impact in the lifestyles of the beads producers so much so that they do not regard the beads as ritual objects but objects for beauty.

#### **4.7.6 Education of Beads Producers**

From the interviews conducted by the researcher, it was revealed that the level of education of most of the beads producers was low. They have had either basic school or JHS education.

They did not attend any school to be trained as beads producers. Apprenticeship was their primary source of education and continues to be today. They learn through observation and instructions given to them by their mentors or masters. The apprentices therefore tend to follow in the footsteps of the masters thereby producing the same beads over and over again. Once the inability to try new designs is absent, some of the beads producers tend to copy designs from other producers.

Capacity building workshops and seminars should be organized for especially beads producers and they should be encouraged to attend. This will go a long way to make them better to produce beads to meet international standards. The researcher suggests that beads producers should be educated on relevance of registering their designs with the Registrar General's Department. This will help protect their designs and prevent unscrupulous beads producers from copying the designs of the creative and innovative ones. Centre for National Culture, Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture and other stakeholders should recognize the need to improve the beads industry.

#### **4.7.7 Marketing the Finished Beads**

Mr. Alex Nanor, a beads producer in Agogo, also confirmed that the busiest time of the year for beads producers is during the *dipo* ceremony. Families order and buy beads for their daughters for the ceremony. This provides income for the producers. There is also high demand for beads during the *kloyo siplemi* festival.

The Krobo are noted for producing quality glass beads the world over. Due to this reason, many people from in and all over the world travel to Ghana to see for themselves the famous Krobo beads and purchase them as gifts and souvenirs. This generates the country foreign income. However, the finishing of some of the beads is poor, unattractive design and same designs which have become monotonous. The beads are also not packaged well to attract

potential buyers. They are often put in a basket or metal tray and displayed. Other sellers hang them on nail. This affects appearance of the beads and its demand. Ghanaians who patronize the beads say the Krobo beads are more expensive than the imported ones. The researcher believes this is as a result of the high cost of production especially from firewood, as most of the beads producers complained.

It is suggested that since tourism has a positive economic impact in the district, the beads industry should be taken much seriously and improved by government and other stakeholders to compliment the other tourist destinations in the district. Exhibitions and grand sales should be held frequently at district, regional and national levels so that beads producers can showcase the products to reach a wider population.

#### **4.8.0 Uses and Symbolism of Beads**

Before much can be said about the uses and symbolism of Krobo beads, one needs to know what a symbol is and then its uses. One of the characteristics of culture is that it is symbolic. Culture is partially based on symbols which represent certain ideas, beliefs or behaviours that people of that particular culture understand and are able to communicate effectively with.

Agbeyewornu (2004:294) defines a symbol as “that which is made to stand for something other than itself, because it has qualities that are capable of evoking desired states of mind concerning feelings, ideas and ideals, to the psychological ramifications of which we are thereby led to respond intuitively without being fully able to identify or define them”. Therefore symbolism is the use of symbols to represent ideas or beliefs’.

“The grounds for a symbol’s suitability to stand for what is symbolized do vary a lot. They may be in some genuine or imagined resemblance between the symbol and what is symbolized; they may derive from an historic background of the individual’s or the culture’s



past. In trying to find the motive behind symbolic relationships, one may have to consider the symbol's nature, its daily or ritual use, its name, its location, its equivalent, or its opposite" (Sarpong, 1974:106).

The above explanation is true of symbols. In the African traditional worship, symbols on shrines, temples and other sacred places are often associated with intangible ideas such as purity, procreation, strength and fury. In the African traditional setting, symbolism is much deeper and more involving than in western cultures. Every symbol has its meaning and history behind it. They guide Africans in their everyday life. African symbols have value and are functional. They therefore play a major role in most Ghanaian cultures. They allow the people to represent their abstract and complex ideas such as power, strength, wisdom, beauty, humility and purity easily and directly.

Symbols play an essential role in all Ghanaian cultures. Non-material values such as power, strength, wisdom, beauty, humility and purity would have been difficult or impossible to explain without the use of symbols. People therefore develop more complex and abstract ideas and beliefs and then represent them with symbols so that they would be easily understood. Every ethnic group in Ghana and Africa at large has symbols that represent them. There are many kinds of symbols and these symbols are generally understood by almost every one. Some of these symbols are shapes, colours, certain inanimate objects such as masks and stones. Among the Fanti and Ashanti of Ghana for instance, the colour white is a symbol of victory. Therefore when a child is born, the mother wears a white dress and beads to signify her victory over the evils associated with child birth.

"But there are other symbols which can only be interpreted by a few individuals, as, for example, the symbols used in initiation, divination and secret societies. Religious ideas have

created many of the symbols; and in turn the symbols themselves help to communicate and strengthen the religious ideas. Symbols allow communication without words. Symbols also serve a receptacle in which the culture of the people is stored” (Mbiti, 1975:22)

Form, size, colour and shape of certain objects are also symbolic in the Ghanaian tradition and particular attention is given to them. “All people, irrespective of where they may be, evolve peculiar symbolic ideas about colour, which are often revealed in their traditional practices of everyday life and in casual, religious rites” (Antubam, 1963:75). Traditionally, colours used by Ghanaians in their customary rites and festivals include black, white, grey, yellow, red, silver, gold and brown. When these colour schemes become known and understood by every individual in the society they speak louder than words (Agbeyewornu, 2004:295). For instance, among Ghanaians, the colour white symbolises purity, virginity, victory and spiritual entities as God and the defied spirits of ancestors whereas the colour black symbolises spiritual entities such as the devil and death, sorrow, misery and old age. In the case of shapes and forms, circular forms represent softness, beauty, feminine qualities and the presence and power of God while masculine qualities are represented by rectangular forms.

Like other Ghanaian cultures, the Krobo take into consideration size, colour, shape, position on the body, the length, stringing pattern or arrangement, the number of beads and the type of occasion before selecting a bead for a function. Beads are used as symbols of maturity, wealth, beauty, social status, power and authority and identity in all the stages of their lives from birth through puberty, marriage and death as well as other initiation ceremonies.

#### 4.8.1 Used as a Symbol of Maturity

##### Puberty Rites

Puberty is the period in the human life span during which there is physical enhancement of the body. During this stage, the sexual reproductive organs mature. This maturation is evidenced in females by the onset of menstruation, in males by the production of semen and in both by the enlargement of the external sex organ. In Ghana, when young girls reach this stage, special ceremonies are performed to initiate them into another stage in the life cycle. Puberty rites determine the transition from childhood to adulthood. In the case of females, it is a transition from girlhood to womanhood.

In Kroboland, when young female Krobo reach puberty stage, they are initiated into womanhood and adulthood. At this stage, they are no more considered as children but as adults. Puberty is a sign of maturity. Before they are fully considered as adults, puberty rite is performed to initiate them into womanhood and adulthood as well as gain full ethnic membership. A one-week period is set aside between March and May of every year for the ceremony. Among the *Yilo* Krobo, it is celebrated in Somanya, the district capital. The Krobo culture utilises many beads for the puberty rites known as *dipo* in the Krobo dialect.

In the life of a female Krobo, there is no ritual or ceremony that is of greater importance than *dipo* of which beads are an integral part. The Krobo beads celebration comes to the fore during this period. Without beads, the *dipo* ceremony will be incomplete and meaningless. Large amounts of beads are worn by the initiates or *dipo ye* (*dipo* girl) on the wrist, upper arm, elbow, around the neck, calf and ankle during the ceremony.

In the preliminary stages to mark a girl as an initiate or *dipo-yo* (*dipo*-girl), the string of waist beads which Krobo females commonly wear, is replaced with only one reddish bead known

as *lɛ* tied to a simple string *glo* made from pineapple leaves. The string of *lɛ* serves as an official identification tag and key for the *dipo-yo* to performing the ceremony. It is believed to allow the ancestors and the spirits of the gods to identify the *dipo-yo* as such so that when the family of the initiate prays, the spirits of the gods and ancestors will listen to them. They may grant her favour, protection, blessings and fertility for her future motherhood and throughout the ceremony.

To determine the virginity of the *dipo-ye* (*dipo* girls) and their suitability to preserve the proud tradition of Krobo womanhood, they must climb ‘the sacred stone’ called *tɛgbɛtɛ*. Before the ‘climbing of the sacred stone’, a ritual which is considered as the most important and final ritual during the *dipo*, heavy strings of old and valuable beads are tied around the initiate’s waist, especially reddish-bluish ones called *hunua*. As the initiate has been chaste, she is valuable like the beads. Smaller beads like the *powa* (striped beads) are also fixed around their legs and fastened to their waist and *kɔli* around their wrists and necks.

After the climbing of ‘the sacred stone’, the initiates are confined for a week. During this one-week period, the *dipo-ye* are taught the essence of womanhood and adulthood. They are taught to respect their future husbands and their families, personal hygiene, how to cook, wash, dance and manage a home because after the *dipo*, the *dipo-ye* are considered ready for marriage.

The closing celebrations are full of extravagance and glamour as each family adorns their daughter with precious, uncommon, elegant and heavy beads which have been preserved in the family from generation to generation. The strings of glass beads and old beads are tied around the initiates’ necks, waists, ankles, calves, legs, arms and wrists. The colours of the beads that are usually preferred are red, yellow, blue and brown. These colours, the Krobo believe, symbolises their maturity and readiness for adult life, marriage and procreation.

Since the puberty rites are closely linked to marriage and procreation, certain beads are believed to possess the power of fertility and worn around the initiate's waist and very close to the pubic area to induce fertility. The use of the beads makes the puberty rites colourful, meaningful and fulfills the cultural practice of the Krobo.

As shown in plate 28, the *dipo-ye* are outdoored publicly in their full attire to demonstrate their dancing skills for the chief, queen mother, family members, and most importantly prospective suitors who gather to admire the display of feminine grace and beauty. The parents of young men would look through for a girl to whom they would want their son to be married to. A young man's parents would approach a young woman's parents after the *dipo* about the possibility of marriage between their children. The Krobo believe that the parents know more about the young woman's family better than their son and are in a better position to provide the history of the woman's family. However, the researcher believes that whatever decision that the family of the son makes should be in consultation with their son. If the young woman's parents agree in consultation with their daughter, a day is set aside for the customary rites. After the customary rites have been performed, they would be officially married and recognised by the whole community as husband and wife.

## **Marriage**

In African societies and Ghana for that matter, marriage is considered an important part of the initiation rites that usher young people into adulthood. Marriage is another stage of maturity in the life of the Krobo. Young men and women are educated in matters of sex, marriage and family life and are also taught the responsibilities of adulthood. The implication of a young man and woman who get married is that they are matured and ready for adult life. Here, beads are useful and symbolic in the Krobo culture.



Plate 28: *Dipo* girls dance in their full attire in an open compound.

Among the Krobo, beads are part of the many items that are presented to the wife-to-be as her wedding gift by the husband-to-be. It did happen in the former days that a few years after the birth of the girl or even before the girl was born, the father of a boy approached the parents of a girl to make his promise of marrying their daughter to his son when she reached maturity age. Whenever the girl's parents agreed, the boy's father tied a loin string for the baby and provided a quantity of cowry shells which was used to buy waist beads which held fast to the loin string. Child betrothal has become rare as puberty rites are often performed at an early age of seven or eight years. In the case of the female who was not promised in childhood, the marriage negotiations between the man's family and the female's family begin as soon as the female's puberty rites end. When both families agree, they prepare for the principal rites of

the traditional marriage. Among the items that are presented to the bride as gifts are cowry shells and beads.

The wedding ceremony itself is simple even though not without colour. A variety of beads are worn around the neck and wrist. Beads of different colours are worn by both the bride and the bridegroom as well as all the family representatives present. Usually, the colour of beads that the couple wear match with the colours of their dress. This therefore makes the ceremony colourful and attractive. A newly married woman displays her colourful and expensive beads that were presented to her by her husband during the customary rites. She continues to change the beads so that people around her become aware of her new state. A married couple also continue to change their beads to show their new state. The beads symbolize the new state in which the couple has entered. They differentiate the married women from those who are not married.

#### **4.8.2 Used as a Symbol of Social Status, Traditional Power and Authority**

Beads are worn by political and religious office holders to indicate their status in the community. Beads are worn on the right hand wrist in the case of a chief or on the wrist of either hands in the case of a traditional religious priest or priestess. The chief priests or priestesses wear special white beads called *nyoli* with a mixture of stone, glass, cowry and shell beads as a symbol of their office and authority. They also wear beads around their arm, calf and their ankle. Priests and priestesses who have long strands of hair wear beads in them. The beads are believed to protect them against evil and also give them power to perform their spiritual duties.

In *Yilɔ* Krobo, traditional rulers like chiefs and queen mothers wear their clothes and adorn themselves with beautiful and colourful beads. The combination of the cloth and the beads

are of high aesthetic quality. The rank of a chief, a queen mother or a priest is determined by the number and type of beads worn. Though the beads are worn for beautification, their primary task is for identification on official duties.

Traditional and religious leaders are custodians of the culture of the people. They provide vital leadership at the local level and oversee the task of transmitting oral traditions as well as maintaining historic relics, sites, monuments and cult centres. To a large extent, they display the grandeur of our cultural form through their chiefly regalia during festive occasions. They are important assets for promoting cultural tourism. The beads enable them to carry out their duties successfully.

In Plate 29 below, it can be said that the traditional leader on the left is highly ranked than the elder on the right. This interpretation is made possible through the beads around their necks. One would notice that the colours of the beads in the Plate compliment the colours of the cloth thereby creating harmony.

During formal ceremonies such as the *Kloyo sikplemi* festival, chiefs, queen mothers, priests and other royals become the centre of attraction because of the kind of beads they wear. The occasion is highly regarded and a great deal of emphasis is placed on appearance. Different types of beads are worn around the neck, arm calf, ankle and wrist in their different colours. The colour of the beads worn by the royals is mostly yellow or gold. In the traditional set up, yellow or gold depict wealth and high social standing. The queen mothers wear small and big beads around their neck and wrists. It is the time that the Krobo display their inheritance and prestige. The beads are used to differentiate between lower ranked officials and higher ranked ones. In the Krobo culture, certain beads are allowed to be worn by the chief's wife, the queen mother and elderly women only.



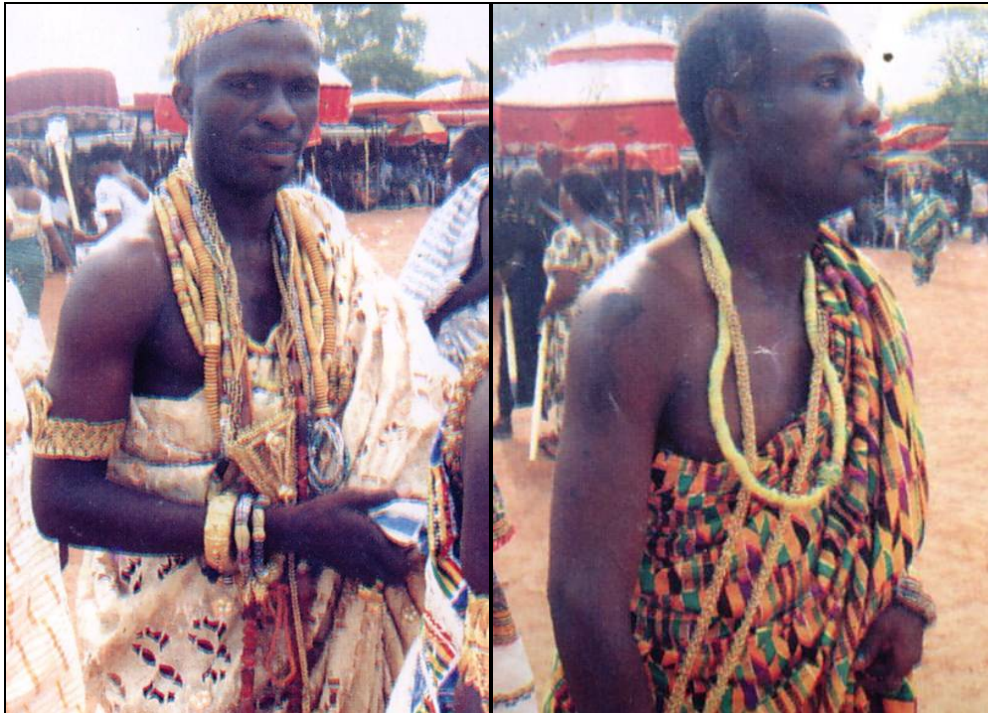


Plate 29: Some traditional leaders at the *Kloyo sikplemi* festival in Somanya.  
(Source: Premier Events)



Plate 30: A queen mother at a durbar in Somanya. (Source: Premier Events)

The presentation of royal regalia can be viewed from the aesthetic point of view as well as the symbolic point of view. Majority of chiefs and queen mothers still hold in high esteem their appearance at such formal festivals and the beads symbolise their status. Beads worn in the priesthood symbolise purity and those who wear them are believed to attract special powers and blessings from the gods. Other individuals of this social ranking are proud to represent their families as well as to exhibit their acquired status.



Plate 31: A young man displaying his beads at a function.

#### **4.8.3 Used as a Symbol of Wealth**

In the past, beads were so valuable that some families' wealth was not counted or determined by the size of the farmland or the number of houses but on the quantity of beads that the

family had. A family could trade beads for land. In the past, one could sell a human being to buy beads. According to Mr. Efo Mawugbe, Artistic Director of the National Theatre, beads were treasures that the family valued and kept for years; it came second to gold.

Krobo beads celebration comes to the fore when young girls who have reached their puberty stage are initiated. Each family adorns the *dipo-ye* or the initiate with beads which have been preserved in the family for years. During the *dipo*, families of the initiates show how wealthy they are by displaying heavy, colourful and quality beads on the initiates. The initiates were virtually naked in the past. Therefore an enormous pile of heavy, colourful beads were put around their neck to hang down over the naked bosom and also around the waist to cover the pubic area of the initiates. If there are enough beads, the nakedness of the initiate will never be seen. Families who did not have enough beads borrowed beads from other families for their daughters to use. This therefore meant that she was not covered just by the beads but also cloaked by their value. A young Krobo girl who passes through the *dipo* ceremony with success means she had remained chaste till that moment. She is considered as valuable as the beads and a marriageable material for any Krobo man.

The *zagba* beads made by Krobo bead makers are both ancient and modern. They are highly prized in Ghana for their beauty, rarity and durability. They are often given as presents. Before the advent of modern coins, they served as a medium of exchange. *Zagba* are even used as collateral for loans or mortgages on buildings and land as well as other expensive items. A string of beads can cost anywhere from as little as one cedi up to ten cedis, depending on the variety, scarcity and number of the string of bead.

Since the colour yellow and gold in the traditional set up of the Krobo culture and indeed most of the ethnic groups in Ghana signifies wealth and royal status, beads worn by chiefs,

queen mothers and their subordinates are either made of gold or painted with gold coloured pigments.

While many of the beads are just for everyday use, there are those that become the property of the family and are preserved for generations. Such family beads are highly valued and often, somewhat revered. They are never sold, and are displayed at funerals in remembrance of dead family members and, sometimes, just to show the family's wealth. When a man dies, the reddish *sɔkɔbɛkɛ* bead, which is very expensive, is not missing. The purpose of such adorning is to show that the deceased person was rich. It also gives the deceased person a worthy appearance when entering the ancestral world.

#### **4.8.4 Used as a Symbol of Beauty**

“Beauty is traditionally and universally held as the central concept in an aesthetic experience. Different cultures hold different conceptions, however, about what beauty (or the beautiful) is and what features of the human experience can be called beautiful” (Gyekye, 1996:130).

Beads symbolise a woman's beauty. The African concept of beauty is not of someone who is slim and slender with cheek bones and collar bones as in the western world. A beautiful woman in Africa means certain features of her body must be well defined. She must have well defined figure, protruding buttocks and hips, well form arms and legs. The only way to achieve this is to wear beads from infancy or at an early age. When beads are worn on these areas, they help to develop them.

Beads define the concept of beauty in the Krobo culture. It places emphasis on certain parts of the female body. Beads that are worn around the calf and arm develop them in a certain way that they make them round. Beads worn around the waist stimulate the nerves around the waist and thus help to enhance the muscles. The waist beads give the waist a round and oval

shape which is characteristic of Ghanaian beauty. Well-developed calves, arms, well rounded buttocks and protruding hips define beauty in Kroboland. Krobo females also use the beads to check their weight. In the olden days when there were no devices to check whether one was gaining or losing weight, beads were used. Women wore waist beads and any time the beads became tight, it meant that they had gained more weight and that their body had become bigger. On the other hand if they realized that the beads were slipping off, it meant the woman was losing weight and had to do something about it.

According to an Igbo saying, 'Good manners constitute beauty'. In Krobo, young men intending to marry are often reminded of this saying. Beauty is not only seen in the physical appearance of a woman but also seen in her character and conduct. A woman's conduct must conform to the rules and norm of the community from which she comes. When she does what is expected of her and adheres to the teaching of tradition, she is appreciated and considered as beautiful. In the Krobo culture, young adolescent girl who reach the age of puberty must perform the *dipo* rites to fully acquire the status of a Krobo woman. Girls who participate in the ceremony are considered beautiful because they are appreciated by the community. They wear beads around their waist, neck, wrist, arm and ankle to fulfill their tradition.

During festival and durbars, Krobo women adorn themselves in beautiful and expensive beads to draw attention. A woman who wears a beautiful bead draws the beauty attribute of the bead to herself. They may receive praises such as 'you look beautiful'.

Beauty is also desired. Since *dipo* is closely associated with marriage and procreation, the rattling of a woman's waist beads is believed to stimulate the male partner during sexual interaction. A man is therefore attracted to the woman who wears waist beads because he desires 'the beautiful'.

#### 4.8.5 Used as a Symbol of Identity

A woman's fertility has always been highly valued in the Krobo culture. It ensures continuity of the family system as well as gives her proper social status. Before a child is born, the expectant mother protects herself by wearing charms and amulets in the form of beads to warn evil agents to stay away. These beads identify her as an expectant mother. A string of *Oblekumi* beads, for example, is worn around the neck of an expectant mother to draw good spirits to herself and to repel evil powers that may want to harm her and the unborn baby. White coloured beads called *aflihiɔ* are used as charms. Expectant mothers wear them after a successful delivery to symbolise their victory in childbirth and to celebrate the happy occasion.

Closely connected with the naming of the child among the Krobo is the custom of tying the *la* string and the fixing of the *kɔli* beads. It is only when the *la* is tied to the wrist of the infant that the name is announced. Without the *la*, the child is not considered as an official member of the community. Therefore the *la* signifies that a child has been named. Both the naming of the child and the tying of the *la* string signify that the child is now officially accepted as a member of the family with its own personality and social status.

The *la* consists of a black bead called *tovi*, a white bead called *nyoli* and a blue bead called *kɔli*. Tied together with raffia fibre called *hlowe*, they are regarded as a symbol of ancient cultural and ritual tradition. These *la* strings which are usually three in number are tied to the right wrist of a male child, or the left wrist of a female. Again, the *kɔli* beads are tied around the wrists, legs, neck and waist of first-born children. The *nyoli* and *tovi* beads are tied around the waists of parents who give birth to twins to mark safe delivery.





Plate 32: *Koryo* Patience Tetteh, a week after dipò.

In times past, reddish *sòkòbèkè* beads were given to children to wear around their waists to signify that they had reached a certain age. However, it was believed that these beads possessed witchcraft because the old women who possessed them were witches. It was believed that if a mother or grandmother gave it to her children to inherit, it implied that she was transferring her witchcraft to them. Because of this, the *sòkòbèkè* is no more used by the Krobo.

In the Krobo culture, white signifies victory or triumph. A child is given *aflihiò* beads, which are white, one week after birth. This means that nothing bad happened to the child one week after birth. It has overcome evil forces and therefore is victorious. The child wears these beads for a month after which the colour of the beads is changed to blue. After two months, it

is changed to green. After three months, *Oblekumi* beads, which are red or brown, are used to show the stage in their growing life. Asked why the colours are periodically changed, some respondents said it is part of their tradition. Other respondents said that it is not compulsory to change the beads. If the mother of the child wishes to change the beads, it is up to her.

Death is inevitable in all cultures. In the Krobo culture, death is not regarded as the end of one's life but as a transition from the physical world to the spiritual. Funeral and burial rites are performed for the dead. As indicated earlier, beads have been found at grave sites through excavations. Beads that are buried with the dead are used as identification or as passage-money on the way to the ancestor world. The beads bear testimony to the fact that the dead person has indeed come from the land of the living. Some family beads are also used to decorate the dead in state as shown in plate 33. These beads are only for decoration and used for the next funeral ceremony.



Plate 33: A dead man laid in state decorated with beads.



When a person dies among the Krobo, the corpse is washed and anointed with shea-oil and other cosmetics after which it is dressed with a loin-cloth, *subui*, and a piece of dark upper garment. Huber (1993:198) describes further that for a man, reddish *sɔkɔbɛkɛ* bead, which is very expensive, should not be missing. The purpose of such adorning is to give the deceased a worthy appearance when entering the ancestral world.

In the case of a woman, the corpse is adorned with beads in the same manner as she was during her *dipo*. When an old person dies, he or she is buried with small white beads. The white beads indicate their victory over death. Dark coloured beads are worn by mourners and sympathisers to signify their grief. In addition to that, the *la* which was given to the dead person during his naming ceremony must be put on his or her wrist. If this is not done, sometimes something bad happens to the family. A member of the family may become sick or be involved in a road accident as a result of the absence of the *la*.

As discussed earlier, the *la* serves as passage-money on the way to the ancestor world. It also bears testimony to the fact that the dead person had indeed come from the land of the living. According to Maame Alice Dede of Somanya, a respectable old woman in the district, if the *la* is absent, the ancestors may not believe that indeed the dead came from the land of the living. The dead person will therefore become stranded. In a personal experience, Mr. Akuffo said that “when my younger sister died, she was buried without her *la*. This happened because we did not know. All of a sudden, my mother became seriously sick. When we realised that it was because of the absence of the *la*, we went back to her grave, dug a portion of it and buried the *la*. My mother became well soon after”.

The Krobo have a special way of threading and wearing their beads. The Krobo say there is the head and the leg of a bead. The head is where the pendant is placed and begins from the

biggest of the beads. The tail is where the string is tied. The arrangement of beads by the Krobo is done by putting all the big beads on the left side and the small beads on the right side. The length is also considered when wearing the beads. Short beads are worn around the neck first and then followed by the longer ones as seen in Plates 12, 30 and 31. This arrangement serves as a symbol of identity of the Krobo from other Adangme groups and ethnic groups in Ghana. During festivals and durbars, chiefs, queen mothers and other officials dress up in costly and rich beads of different colours with huge pendants hanging on them.



Plate 34: Mr. Daniel Akuffo, the District Cultural Officer of *Yilo* Krobo district.

Beads differentiate men from women. Waist beads are worn by women only and are worn throughout their lifetime. The beads women wear are usually smaller than that of the men. Men, on the other hand, put on large beads around the neck and wrist.

#### 4.9 Summary of Discussions

Beads are an integral part of the Krobo culture from all indications. They are used by everybody in Krobo from the living to even the dead. They are used before and after birth by mother, father and child to avert bad luck and draw good spirits. Beads which are scarce, expensive, antique and colourful are fully displayed during puberty rites for young Krobo girls. The gifts which are presented to a prospective bride include beads of different colours and sizes of which the bride wears after marriage. They also accompany the dead to the spiritual world. Upon observation, the *tovi*, *nyoli* and the *koli* are used in almost all the stages of life of the Krobo and they feature prominently in their initiation rites.

The colour of the bead, material used, the length, size, number as well as arrangement all contribute to what the beads symbolise. Each bead is therefore a capsule of cultural information, containing a fascinating tale of the origin of its materials, its manufacture, its uses, possibly its travels and certainly its potent symbolism. Just as beads have been preserved in families from generation to generation, the Krobo culture must be preserved because of its rich cultural heritage. People must be educated about the uses and symbolism of beads so that they would understand them, become aware of their essence and be able to use them appropriately. There is a lot more to beads than just to beautify the body.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Overview

This chapter summarises and draws conclusions out of the findings of the research. In addition, suggestions to the conclusions have been made. The research was aimed at finding out the uses and symbolism of beads in the Krobo culture as well the process of production glass beads. The study was limited to the *Yilo* Krobo district.

This research is a contribution to the documentation of the symbolic heritage of Ghana. It will be of help to sociologists, art historians, artists, anthropologists, educationists, ethnographers and ethnologists, cultural institutions, the Ghana Tourists Board, the Ministry of Culture and Chieftaincy and the general public as a body of knowledge in the uses and symbolism of beads among the Krobo.

#### 5.2 Summary

The research was to study and describe the processes involved in the production of glass beads in the Krobo culture as well as investigate and document the uses of beads and their symbolic meanings in the Krobo culture. From the findings, beads are an integral part of the Krobo culture. Glass remains the material widely used in the production of beads in Krobo culture. The processes, tools and materials have also not changes much. The crushing of the glass materials is at great risk to the pounder as there is no protection. While the men pound, the women assist by decorating the beads. The beads producers do not observe any taboos or perform rituals before, during or after the production of the beads. There are no special beads

producers who produce beads for certain class of people. Any producer can produce for any one.

The people in the district who were able to interpret the meanings and symbolism of the beads are the chiefs, queen mothers, traditional priests or priestesses and mostly family elders. However, many of the members of this group of people are illiterates. Most of the youth had a low understanding about the uses and symbolism of beads in their culture. This is due to their reluctance in contacting the elderly and learning from them. Krobo beads are used in all the stages of life of the Krobo from birth, through puberty to death. They are also used as symbols of maturity, beauty, social status, power and authority, wealth and identity.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions have been drawn.

Apprenticeship is the only primary source of education for Krobo who want to enter into the beads industry. There are no formal educational institutions for studying beads in the district. Apprentices learn through observation and instructions from by their mentors or masters. The process of producing glass beads remains the same throughout Kroboland and the basic tools and materials are glass, metal pestle, mortar, stone platform, clay moulds, cassava leaf stalks, sieve, bamboo or metal spatula, metal awl, oven or kiln, fuel for oven and granite stone.

Beads have overwhelming uses in the Krobo culture apart from been used in *dipo*, initiation rites for young adolescent girls into adulthood and womanhood. They are used during naming ceremonies of a child, initiation rites, marriage ceremonies, enstoolment of chief, queen mother or installment of the traditional priest or priestess and funeral rites. They have symbolic meanings such as symbol of maturity, beauty, social status, power and authority, wealth and identity. Without the vibrancy of beads, the Krobo culture will be meaningless.

The Krobo produce beads for aesthetic purposes. They do not attach any rituals to the beads. The only time the beads would possess powers to healing and protection is when a traditional priest/ priestess/ medicine man has invoked a spirit into the beads. The beads alone do not have any abilities.

Beads are commonly worn around the neck and the wrist for adornment on important occasions such as festivals and durbars. Waist beads are worn by the Krobo females throughout their life time.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

More research and documentation about the Krobo culture should be done to preserve the rich Krobo cultural heritage. In this way, artists, sociologists, art historians, anthropologists, educationists, ethnographers and ethnologists, cultural institutions, the Ghana Tourists Board, the Ministry of Culture and Chieftaincy, the general public and tourists will benefit from it.

Beads producers in the district should come together and form a cooperative body. In this way they will be in a better position to seek assistance from financial institutions and the district assembly. The financial assistance will help them to purchase more advanced tools, materials, equipment and protective gears thereby improving their efficiency and output.

Beads producers should be educated on the importance of registering their designs with the Registrar General's Department. This will help protect their designs and prevent unscrupulous beads producers from copying the designs of the creative and innovative ones. This will also challenge other beads producers to create original designs.

The *Yilɔ* Krobo district directorate should collaborate with the Ministry of Culture and Chieftaincy, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Community Development to

educate students in state owned or private and vocational/ technical institutions in the district about the Krobo beads culture, so that while they learn their trade or profession, they learn about their culture.

Since the elderly (traditional heads such as chiefs, queen mothers, priests or priestesses and family heads) who are more knowledgeable in the Krobo culture may die soon, they should teach their children about their culture and tradition. The youth should not feel reluctant to learn from the old regarding their culture. Educational institutions should employ the services of the elderly as resource persons so that they can impart their knowledge into them. By so doing, the culture and tradition of the Krobo will be passed on from one generation to the other thereby preserving and protecting it.

Many people from around the world travel into the country to see and buy for themselves the famous Krobo beads. The government should therefore invest heavily in the beads industry in Kroboland since it has much potential in boosting tourism in the area.

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APPENDIX A: KROBO BEADS CHART

PICTURE	NAME & DESCRIPTION	COMMON USES	SYMBOLISM
	<p><i>Tovi:</i> An important black bead in the Krobo culture believed to possess supernatural powers.</p>	<p>Added to two other important beads and used during the naming ceremony of a baby. Worn by traditional priests, priestesses and medicine men to identify them and a symbol of their office.</p>	<p>Signifies that a child has been named and officially a member of the Krobo society. It is also a symbol of identity for the Krobo in their different stages of their lives from birth to death. It also symbolises traditional power and authority.</p>
	<p><i>Kɔli:</i> An important blue bead. It is believed to inhibit powerful spirits.</p>	<p>Worn by <i>dipo</i> initiates on their waists and around their necks. Worn as necklace by a bride and a bridegroom during their marriage ceremony.</p>	<p>It also symbolises traditional power and authority. A symbol of identification when a person enters a new state, example a bride and her bridegroom.</p>
	<p><i>Nyoli:</i> An important white bead to the Krobo believed to possess supernatural powers.</p>	<p>Worn by traditional priests, priestesses, medicine men and other traditional leaders like chiefs and queen mothers.</p>	<p>Symbolises purity, sacredness. It also symbolises traditional power and authority.</p>

PICTURE	NAME & DESCRIPTION	COMMON USES	SYMBOLISM
	<p><b>La:</b> The <i>la</i> is a combination of <i>nyoli</i>, <i>tovi</i> and <i>kɔli</i> put together and tied with a raffia string. The <i>tovi</i> and the <i>nyoli</i> are put together while the <i>kɔli</i> is placed below. The <i>la</i> is also believed to possess supernatural powers.</p>	<p>Worn on a baby's wrist during its naming ceremony. It signifies that the child has been named and officially a member of the Krobo society.</p> <p>Worn by chiefs, queen mothers, traditional priests and priestesses to help them perform their duties.</p>	<p>Oneness, Unity, Togetherness. It is representative of the soul and spirit of the Krobo.</p> <p>A symbol of identity for the Krobo.</p> <p>It also symbolises traditional power and authority.</p>
	<p><b>Wadzi:</b> Wadzi beads are translucent beads which are smooth and similar to the <i>kɔli</i> bead but creates an illusion of roughness on the surface.</p>	<p>Worn by <i>dipo</i> girls around their neck and waists during their initiation ceremony.</p>	<p>It is a symbol of identity for the Krobo in their different stages of their lives from birth to death, for example when a young girl reaches puberty.</p> <p>A symbol of Maturity.</p>
	<p><b>Zagba:</b> These beads are yellowish in colour. They are mixed with <i>taga</i>, the flat-like beads of the same colour, to allow bending.</p>	<p>Used as collateral for loans or mortgages on buildings and land as well as other expensive items in the past.</p> <p>Worn by <i>dipo</i> girls around their neck and waists during their initiation ceremony.</p>	<p>Symbolises wealth, beauty and maturity.</p>



PICTURE	NAME & DESCRIPTION	COMMON USES	SYMBOLISM
	<p><i>Meṭe:</i> Mainly black and white stripes with other beads and pendant added for decoration. Found in the ground and believed to be created by God, therefore considered to possess special powers.</p>	<p>Among the many beads worn by <i>dipo</i> girls on their initiation ceremony. Added to the locally made beads and buried with the dead.</p>	<p>This type of beads signifies a family's wealth. It is a symbol of beauty as well as a symbol of maturity. It is also a symbol of identity for the dead that he or she had lived in the land of the living.</p>
	<p><i>Powa:</i> Yellow beads with green stripes with a pendant. Also mixed with <i>taga</i> for bending and other beads such as <i>wadzi</i> for beautification.</p>	<p>Worn by <i>dipo</i> initiates on their legs and also fastened to their waists and elbows. Also worn by a bride and bridegroom during their wedding ceremony.</p>	<p>A symbol of Beauty. A symbol of Maturity. A symbol of Identification when a person enters a new state, example a bride and her bridegroom.</p>
	<p><i>Powa:</i> This type of <i>powa</i> is grey with black and wine stripes.</p>	<p>Also worn by a bride and bridegroom during their wedding ceremony. Worn by <i>dipo</i> initiates on their legs and also fastened to their waists.</p>	<p>A symbol of Beauty. A symbol of Maturity. A symbol of Identification when a person enters a new state, example a bride and her bridegroom.</p>

PICTURE	NAME & DESCRIPTION	COMMON USES	SYMBOLISM
	<p><b>Le:</b> Red beads with beautiful white marks. One of the beads believed to be found in the ground and also considered to possess special supernatural powers.</p>	<p>Added to the locally made beads and used to bury the dead.</p> <p>Worn by <i>dipo</i> initiates on their legs and wrists to develop their calves and rounding the buttocks.</p>	<p>It is also a symbol of identity for the dead that he or she had lived in the land of the living.</p> <p>This type of beads signifies a family's wealth.</p> <p>It is a symbol of beauty as well as a symbol of maturity.</p>
	<p><b>Bucso:</b> This type of bead is white mixed with red, green and blue marks or decorations for beauty.</p>	<p>Worn around the neck and waist by married woman and on the wrist of the man.</p>	<p>A symbol of Beauty.</p> <p>A symbol of Maturity.</p> <p>A symbol of Identification when a person enters a new state, example a bride and her bridegroom.</p>
	<p><b>Oblekuni:</b> Small and tiny black, brown or red beads which are similar to <i>sokobekε</i> beads.</p>	<p>Used as necklace by pregnant women for protection. After birth, it is worn around to child's neck to protect and hold it is fragile neck from falling backwards while sitting.</p> <p>Also used as necklace and waist beads for babies after three months.</p>	<p>A symbol of Maturity.</p> <p>A symbol of Protection.</p> <p>It also symbolises traditional power.</p>

## APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENTS

### **KWAME NKURUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

#### A SURVEY ON THE SYMBOLISM OF BEADS IN THE KROBO CULTURE

This research is an academic requirement to the researcher. Hence, it will be used only for the purposes of academic work. The researcher would like to assure you that any information provided will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

**Tick more than one where applicable**

#### **PART I**

1. AGE  
a. 8 – 12 [    ]      b. 13 – 24 [    ]      c. 25 – 45 [    ]      d. 46 and above [    ]
2. SEX  
a. MALE [    ]      b. FEMALE [    ]
3. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND  
a. Primary/JSS level [    ]  
b. Second Cycle (SSS, 'O' & 'A' level) [    ]  
c. Tertiary (Prof. Inst., Poly, Univ., Vocational) [    ]  
d. None [    ]

#### **PART II**

4. Do you use beads?  
a. Yes [    ]      b. No [    ]      c. Sometimes [    ]
5. How long have you used beads?  
a. Since childhood [    ]      b. Recently [    ]      c. Long time ago [    ]
6. How often do you use them?  
a. Everyday [    ]      b. Week-ends [    ]      c. Occasionally [    ]
7. On which part of the body do you wear the beads?  
a. Wrist [    ]      b. Waist [    ]      c. Ankle [    ]      d. Neck [    ]  
e. Others (specify) .....

8. Why do you use beads?  
a. Fashion [ ]      b. Personal wish [ ]      c. Symbolic [ ]

9. Do beads possess special powers?  
a. Yes [ ]      b. No [ ]  
Please explain your answer

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10. What are people's perceptions on the use of beads?

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11. Would you like to see more people use Krobo beads?  
a. Yes [ ]      b. No [ ]  
Please explain your answer

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12. Give suggestions or recommendations as to how the symbolism of beads can be promoted in Ghana.

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