

Progression of aesthetic: A study of beads and adornment in contemporary Krobo society.

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Progression of Aesthetic: a Study of Beads and Adornment in Contemporary Krobo Society

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[Jordan Ashe](#), *SIT Study Abroad*

Home Institution

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Abstract

- Methodology:** To gain insight into the role of bead heritage and adornment in Krobo, I spent 18 days in Krobo-Nyaso, learning how to make recycled glass beads called *giga*, and observing the use of beads in daily life and ceremonious occasions. I observed one wedding ceremony and parts of a Dipo ceremony, though I was unable to attend a naming ceremony or funeral. To gain insight into

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contemporary bead culture, I interviewed Krobos of all ages, occupations, and social ranks, including one bead vendor, two bead makers, two chiefs, one priest, and four Krobo women. I also sought out previously written accounts on bead and Krobo history, in attempts to create a chronological understanding of Krobo beading history.

- 2. Findings:** The data obtained showed that the contemporary appreciation of beads in Krobo is highly dependent on age and academic status, though the use of beads in ceremonies has remained relatively constant throughout the ages. Reaching far beyond the start of written documentation, there have been many political, economic and religious influences that have made bead use what it is today. The progress of bead heritage has taken styles and beads from other cultures, and adapted it to Ghanaian ideals, creating a history that remains steadfast in some areas, and culturally flexible in others. In spite of these multiple influences, beads continue to be a symbol of cultural and financial wealth.
- 3. Conclusion:** Though there is a large gap between the academic knowledge of beads and social knowledge of beads, both sides play integral parts in the contemporary use of beads in Krobo. People may not know the name of a specific European trade bead, but it is still used the same way it was all those centuries ago: to visually communicate social messages through arrangement and pattern. Be it with a chevron bead, a millifiore bead, or the ever-controversial aggrey bead, the arrangement of beads is able to make a social statement about the wearer, even in today's society. In spite of the uncommon and occasion-specific use of beads today, their presence is intricately, controversially, and in my belief, permanently woven into the lives and culture of Krobo people.

Disciplines

African Languages and Societies | Art and Design | Family, Life Course, and Society | Inequality and Stratification | Place and Environment

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