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BEADS IN GHANA (WEST AFRICA) PART 1



"OUTDOORING" AFTER THE DIPO CEREMONY (see p. 2)

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Through the Eye of a Needle: The Editor's Page

February to May of 1990 were hot; it tends to be that way five degrees north of the equator, especially near the Gulf of Guinea. Everyone remarked on how dry the plants were; I thought they were quite lush. In time, the rains came, vast torrents reminding me of monsoons in India and making even short trips impossible. With the advent of the rains two of my favorite fruits -- mangos and avocados -- grew so plentiful that people were giving them away.

It was my first time in West Africa, an experience not to be forgotten. A glimpse of the bead-trade in large city markets and even more frenetic markets in smaller towns, visits to beadmakers in lost-wax bronze and in the powder-glass technique, and everywhere in Ghana people who love beads.

Most of my time was spent in Ghana. Except for Sarawak (East Malaysia, on Borneo), I have never been to a place where beads are so important in the lives of the people. Everyone or their mothers knew about them. Then it was time to be leaving on a jet plane. I was saddened to say good-bye to many new friends, happy to be going home, satisfied that I had gotten a lot done, dissatisfied with what I had missed.

So much information was gathered that not only this issue, but the next one as well, will discuss nothing but beads in West Africa, particularly in Ghana. The next issue will be devoted to only two beads, but two very important ones: the Aggrey and the Bodom. I hope you enjoy this excursion and am hoping I will see many of you in Washington in October.

The drawing which graces our cover is a sketch for an oil painting donated to the Center by Bibia "Martin" Abuga, of Medina, Accra, Ghana. Bibia's talent and school record have earned him admission and a scholarship to one of America's most prestigious art schools. Unfortunately, the school cannot give him a full scholarship, and without it he cannot attend. If any reader can help or can offer advice as to where a gifted young African could find financial aid, I would be most pleased to pass the word on to him.

His description of the drawing, called "The Pride of Womanhood":

"Proud womanhood! And prouder still, for in modern Africa with technology all around, tradition sits so beautifully upon them. This girl is being 'outdoored' following the Dipo puberty rites. She comes from Somanya to Accra 'to look for a husband.' This is a valued part of the ceremony, for she is now marriageable in the truest sense -- the goddess of Dipo will bless their union. Now she is ready for a 'good, worthy man.'"

The Dipo ceremony is the coming of age for Krobo girls. Most of the beads which must be worn are made by the Krobo (see Powder-glass beads story). They are treasured heirlooms, and on a visit to Odumanse, Larko Sackity showed me her fine collection. She does not wear them anymore (she doesn't know her age, but her grandson is 26), but rents them out to poorer families so that their daughters will be properly attired for the Dipo.

Thanks to: Robert Corbin of Austin TX; Dr. James Anquandah, Dr. J.E.J.M. van Landewijk, and Leonard Crossland, all of U. Ghana, Legon; Dr. Peter Shinnie of U. Calgary and Kumasi; Kassimu "Orlando Parking" Ibrahim, Bibia Abuga and "Natios" Adibuer in Medina; and many, many others both here and there....

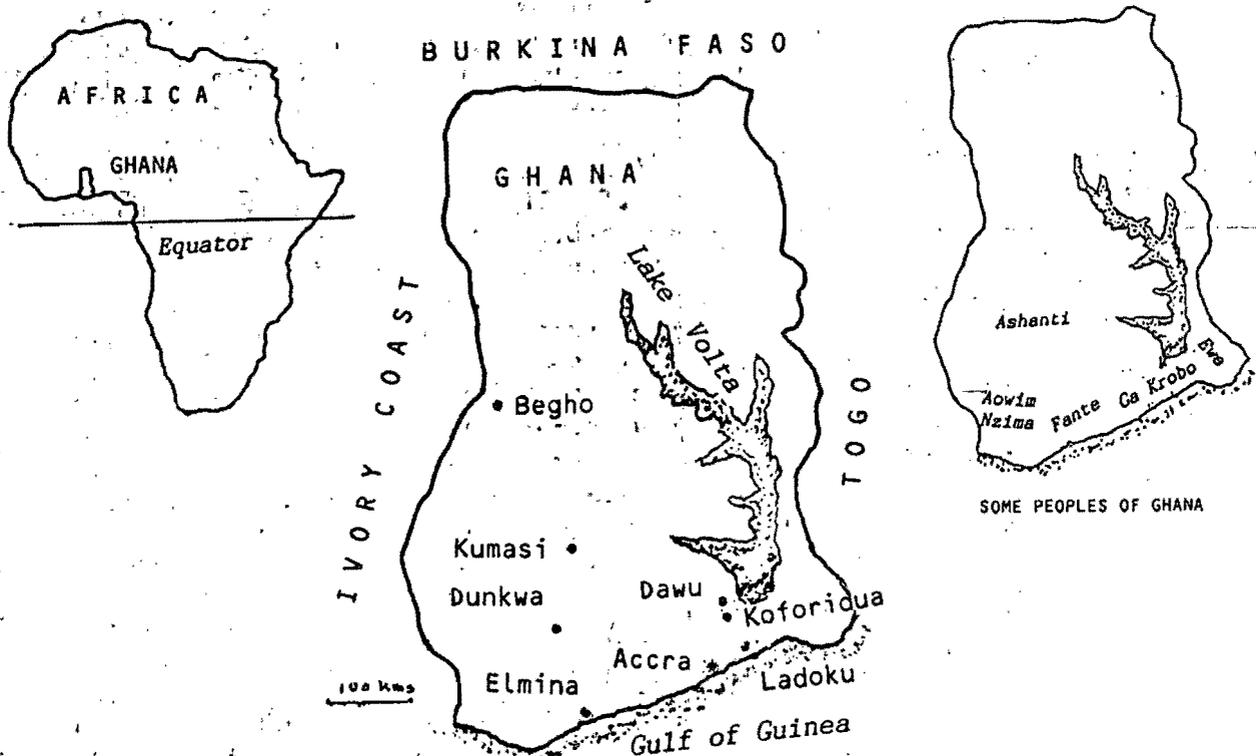
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BEADS IN GHANA (WEST AFRICA) PART 1

THE TRANS-SAHARAN ARAB BEAD TRADE: HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The first glass beads to reach Ghana came across the Sahara Desert. After the camel was introduced into North Africa by the Arabs, the possibility of trade between the Muslims of the north with their neighbors across the great "sea of sand" was exploited. Manufactured goods were exchanged for gold and slaves. Glass beads were always in demand. We shall let contemporary writers describe this trade for us:

The Greek-born Yaqut (12th century) wrote of trade between the merchants of Sijilmasa in southern Morocco and the kingdoms of the Sudan: "Their wares are salt, bundles of pine wood ... blue glass beads, bracelets of red copper, bangles and signet rings of copper, and nothing else." [Levtzion and Hopkins 1981:169]. In the same century Al-Idrisi described the caravans of the Berber traders, "with numbers of camels bearing immense sums in red and coloured copper and garnets and woolen cloth and turbans and waist wrappers and different kinds of beads of glass and mother-of-pearl and precious stones and various kinds of spices and perfumes and tools of worked iron." [Ibid.:128]. Two centuries later Ibn Batutta advised travelers, "in these countries there is no need to burden yourself with provisions for the mouth [i.e. food], nor mets, nor ducats, nor dirhams [all coins]; one should carry with him a bit of rock salt, ornaments or trinkets of glass, which they call nazhem [beads], or rangee, and a few aromatic substances." [Defremery and Sanguinetti 1922:393-4; my translation from the French].



What beads were packed with the salt and bangles atop the camels? The excavations at Jenne-Jeno, the ancient capital of the Mali kingdom found

rather few beads [McIntosh and McIntosh 1984:90; S. McIntosh, pers. comm.], but they have been looted from around the area. I have seen two types among them: 1.) Wound glass beads very similar to those found and likely made at Fustat (Old Cairo) Egypt, and 2.) The small drawn monochrome Indo-Pacific beads, made in Asia, brought by the Persians to Egypt, sent across North Africa, and on down south to the kingdoms of the Sudan.

This trade reached as far as Ghana, though Begho is the only Ghanaian city found in the Arab texts [Posnansky 1971:115-8]. The oldest quarter of Begho has given radiocarbon dates in the 11th and 12th century. The beads in the later Muslim quarter were similar to those found around Jenne-Jeno. A few fragmentary furnace-wound black glass beads decorated with white zones and one with small circle eyes are similar to beads from Fustat. Another Muslim import was a small green segmented bead. There were also Indo-Pacific beads in red, blue-green, green, and yellow. Five of the 38 beads were from the early European trade: a couple of "gooseberry" beads (clear drawn beads with white stripes), a four layered chevron with blue and red stripes, and a few striped drawn beads.

THE EUROPEAN BEAD TRADE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The Europeans did not come across the Sahara; they sailed along the coast. Ghana (then called the Gold Coast) was well situated to receive their beads, and the trade began immediately. All 6 beads found at the Artisan's quarter at Begho were European: drawn striped beads and the only seven layered chevrons in any sites surveyed here. They date between 1480 and 1600.

Next in date are two ancient capitals near the modern capital of Accra. Ayawaso was the capital of the Ga, among the first people to meet the Europeans. A radiocarbon date of 1480 ± 50 is reported, and it was abandoned about 1680. Ladoku, the Dangme capital, has given radiocarbon dates of 1660 ± 80 , 1680 ± 80 and 1785 ± 70 . Some Ladoku beads come from a large rubbish pit, and thus span the whole period of occupation.

The Ayawaso beads could have come from an early American site. They include the drawn "early blue," with characteristic striated sides; tubes of blue-white-blue glass and other long, striped tubes; a barrel gooseberry; and three and four layer chevrons with stripes and clear coats. There were also many locally made beads of stone, and especially shell. Longer-lived Ladoku has the same chevrons, blue-white-blue tube, an "early blue," and a "flush eye" bead, but it also has many later beads, including yellow and black Venetian lamp-wound beads, pressed uranium glass beads (Bohemian, from ca. 1820), and small oblate Prosser beads, which can be no earlier than 1840. (For more on these beads and color pictures see Francis [1988].)

The latest important site is Elmina, a village at the side of the ancient Portuguese fort. De Corse [1989] wrote a preliminary report on these beads; here are some general observations. Most common were Venetian lamp-wound beads and white hearts with clear red, yellow, or blue coats, and Bohemian beads, such as cornerless hexagonals, and many pressed beads, including green and other "mandrel pressed" or "Vaseline" beads. The white hearts, the cornerless hexagonals, and the "Vaseline" beads were first produced between 1820 and 1830. Elmina was destroyed by the British in 1873. This gives us a "snapshot" of bead use at that time, and the large number of Venetian lamp-wound beads, already identified as early to mid 19th century [Francis 1988:26-8] can now be seen to have been used down until the 1870s.

It is noteworthy that among the tens of thousands of beads from Elmina not a single millefiori or mosaic bead was found. This confirms the growing conviction that though the Venetians could have made these beads a long time ago, and though many writers say they did, the vast bulk of them are products of the late 19th or early 20th century [Francis 1988:28; De Corse 1989:49; K. Karklins, pers. comm.]

THE J.F. SICK & CO. SAMPLE CARDS

J.F. Sick, a German, founded a bead trading company probably in the early 20th century, based in Hamburg. In 1927 it moved to Amsterdam (one card has Rotterdam as head office). The next year Sick sold the company to a Dutch concern N.V. Handelsmaatschappij. The company bought beads from many sources and had them made in Venice, selling mostly to West Africa. It was bought out by Hangemeyer of Amsterdam in 1959, which closed its Venetian offices in 1964 [Picard and Picard 1988:4].

Thurstan Shaw acquired a set of at least 193 sample cards for the Achimota College Museum [Lamb and York 1972:112], which were later transferred to the Museum of Archaeology at the new University of Ghana at Legon. At present 178 cards are there. They had never been systematically studied. A complete report on them is being prepared to be sold with color plates of the cards; this is a summary of that paper. The cards have been placed into 7 groups. For statistical purposes each card was counted only once, assigned to a group in the same priority as this list (i.e. a "Laughing Girl" card with "Made in Czechoslovakia" is counted in group 1.) The groups are:

1. "Made in Czechoslovakia." Cards so marked hold beads made in Bohemia between October 1918 and October 1938. Those with "Made in Czecho-Slovakia" or "Czecho Slovakia" were made during the "Second Republic," October 1938 to March 1939. 40 cards, 22.5% of the total.
2. "The Laughing Girl." This trademark of the company features a smiling African maiden wearing a necklace. It was mostly used for Venetian beads, but a smaller, monochrome version often has Czech beads (5 of the 8 have "Made in Czechoslovakia"). 24 cards, 13.5 % of total.
3. Small cards with fancy red borders and legends written in French. They were apparently made in southern French (near Lyon), an industry which was long allied with Venice. 16 cards, 9.0 % of total.
4. Accra-Kumasi cards, marked with the name of one of the two cities in the Gold Coast with J.F. Sick & Co. offices. Many have nothing else other than a triangular rubber stamp with "J.F.S." 36 cards, 20.2 % of total.
5. Sample/Counter Sample cards hold beads labeled "your sample" and "our counter sample." They were made upon request for a certain bead. We do not know if the samples were made on demand or taken from stock or where the cards were assembled. Most beads are Venetian. 18 cards, 10.1% of total.
6. No identification. These have only J.F. Sick & Co. labels (20) or no identification at all (19). 39 cards; 20.2% of total.
7. Others. An interesting group. One card has a engraved heading with the lion of St. Mark, symbol of Venice, but holds Czech beads. Another has short cylinders of light blue drawn glass marked "spulite." Another has "Hauskollektion" (House Collection in Dutch). 5 cards, 2.8% of total.

One may determine the origin of most of the beads on the cards, either because they are marked or because the beads are well known. The results are tabulated on Table 1; see next page.

TABLE 1: Origin of the J.F. Sick & Co. Bead Cards

Country	n.	%
Czechoslovakia	73	41.0
Italy (Venice)	59	33.0
France	16	9.0
Unidentified	30	16.8
TOTAL	178	99.8

The Czech cards are most numerous, but the Venetians were not far behind. The surprise is the number of French cards. Recently, there has been growing evidence of the importance of the French bead industry [Francis 1988:47-50; 1989a]. The Rhone-based industry made drawn beads, as on these cards. Many are longitudinally striped. There are also many chevrons with few layers in "unusual" color schemes. It may be that many of these beads, always thought to be Venetian, are, in fact, French, and we must learn more about the connection between these two industries.

As for dates, 36 cards are dated (3 have 2 dates) from 1929 to 1941 (this card also has 1937). Eight years of this 12 year span are represented, but 78% are between 1935 and 1937, and 39% from 1935. The 11 "Made in Czechoslovakia" cards were made between late 1938 and 1939. Some dates are mere pencil notations. Most French cards were dated in ink by the maker, and some Laughing Girl cards have rubber stamps with months written in Italian.

The 44 cards marked Accra or Kumasi (some counted in other groups) give us a glimpse of different markets and tastes. Of the 20 Accra cards, 10 have Czech beads and 9 "seed" beads. But of the 24 cards from Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, there are 8 with Czech beads, only 2 with "seed" beads, and 11 or 12 with Venetian beads. This suggests an Ashanti preference for larger, more expensive beads, and perhaps more beadwork in the south, though beadwork is not very popular in Ghana.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE BEAD TRADE

How large was the bead trade to the old Gold Coast? Simply put: enormous. It was especially so in the early part of the last century. Between 1827 and 1841 the yearly average weight of imported beads was 74,952 pounds (341 metric tons), with 5 years importing more than 100,000 pounds of glass beads [Reynolds 1974:183]. The value of beads as a percent of total imports was staggering: in 1846 it was 15.7 % of all imports; in 1847, 13.9%; in 1848, 10.8%. Table 2 shows the percentage of the value of beads imported compared to the value of total imports. The data has been computed from the official government Blue Books; those from 1846 to 1861, are averages of the given years, computed from Reynolds [1974:101, 137].

TABLE 2: Value of beads as a percent of total imports

1846-50	8.97 %	1912	1.15 %
1850-55	5.08 %	1916	0.60 %
1856-61	2.21 %	1921	1.08 %
1901	1.47 %	1925	0.93 %
1906	0.75 %	1931	0.30 %

The overall weight of beads remained rather steady. For example, in 1931 it was 123,727 pounds and in 1936 was 86,774, comparable to the amounts from 1827-41. But as the economy of the Gold Coast demanded more European goods, the relative percentage of the value of beads declined. It was around 10% during the mid 19th century; by the early 20th century it had settled to around 1.0%, still, not an insignificant business.

As for the sources of these beads, in 1912 it was reported that the U.K. furnished over half the value of beads to Ghana, with Germany close behind. This obviously reflected the location of the exporting companies; neither Italy nor Bohemia in any form were even listed until 1925, when they each accounted for more than a third of the trade. Since the J.F. Sick & Co. cards were used in the 1930s, it is instructive to look at the sources for the imported beads during that time. The "Other" group on Table 3 includes the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, the Gambia, Holland, Belgium, Egypt, Liberia, and Togoland. Since these are glass beads, most of these may be re-exports.

TABLE 3: Glass Beads for the Gold Coast (percent of total beads)

	1931		1936	
	Value	Weight	Value	Weight
Italy	45.9 %	57.7 %	31.5 %	46.8 %
Czechoslovakia	24.1 %	17.5 %	45.7 %	30.3 %
Germany	13.1 %	9.6 %	6.1 %	5.3 %
France	12.0 %	9.8 %	12.0 %	11.1 %
United Kingdom	0.9 %	1.0 %	0.1 %	0.3 %
Other	4.1 %	4.3 %	4.5 %	6.2 %

Interestingly the figures are roughly comparable to the percentage of bead sample cards we identified in Table 1, especially in 1936, when the bulk of the cards are dated. This may be coincidental, but the big three importers on the cards are the big three in the import lists, with Germany as the "hidden source." Another point to note is the relative greater value of Czech (also French and German) beads over Venetian beads.

We can compare the price of a pound of beads in the Gold Coast with an Asian British colony, Malaya [Francis 1989b:23]. In the years 1927-34 the price was quite steady in Malaya, between \$.29 and \$.39, averaging \$.34. In Ghana, comparable prices were: in 1925 \$.57, in 1931 \$.49, and in 1936 \$.76, averaging \$.58. (All figures rounded to nearest U.S. cent; Ghana figures calculated from dollar/pound sterling rate; Malayan from silver content of U.S. and Straits dollars.) Thus, a pound of beads cost on average 70% more in Ghana than in Malaya, despite Ghana being much closer to Europe. Perhaps more valuable beads were involved, or maybe the greater demand in Ghana (it imported 2 to 3 times the weight of beads) raised the price.

TESHI HOUSE AND THE ALTERATION OF BEADS

Teshi House is a most imposing home in the center of Accra's old city or James Town, built in 1912 and named for the village from which the owners came. It was built by beads, and my visits there were fascinating. The matriarch is 91 year old Elizabeth Maamu Bruce, who remembers walking with her grandmother to the Accra market to sell beads. Jemimah Sackey, her

daughter of 60, continues the business, which has been in the family for some 150 years!

On one of my visits a worker, herself an elderly lady, was grinding beads. She strung new European beads on wires, and ground them atop a large sandstone block that sits in a corner of the patio. This makes the beads smooth and all the same size, characteristics valued in Ghana. At times, she mounts single beads on sticks through their perforations, and grinds the ends to bevel them, so that they will fit snugly together on a strand.

Teshi House is carrying on very old traditions. Peter DeMarees, now known to be the Dutchman quoted in an earlier issue [Francis 1986], gave the first account of Africans altering European beads; it is worth repeating:

They also use [a] great store of Venice beads, of all kinds of colours, but they desire some colours more than others, which they break into four or five pieces, and then grind them upon a stone, as our children grind cherry stones; and then put them upon strings, made of bark of trees, ten or twelve together, and therewith traffic much: those ground corals [beads] they wear about their necks, hands and feet.

We sell many Venetian Madrigetten [margarite], and corals (for the common people traffic much therewith by grinding and selling them one unto the other)... [Purchas 1905:282, 302]

Teshi House used to perform another service for their customers: they would cook beads. The beads used were new, bright drawn European beads. A small clay pot (that was still around) was packed with a layer of palm oil husks, a layer of kernels, the beads, and a last layer of husks. They were put on a small charcoal burner and heated about an hour, casual attention and stirring being necessary. Why? To make the beads more opaque and alter the color into a softer hue. Blue beads thus worked are called "koli" beads; yellow ones "soso," which means "quickly." Short white cylinders, yellow by transmitted light, called "numli koli" or "water koli" and some striped beads were also cooked.

The "cooking" of the Koli beads has been described at some length by Sordinas [1964]. He said plantain peels and cassava chunks were used along with the oil palm nut kernels and husks. According to Elizabeth Bruce, no one does this work anymore. Is this, too, an old craft? Yes, but we cannot say for sure how old yet. A typical Koli bead was uncovered at Ladoku, but as we have said, there are beads as late as the mid 19th century there. This bead was a dichroic blue (light green by transmitted light). Dichroic blue tubes have also been found at Elmina (pre-1873) and Woduku, a site truncated by Kotoko International Airport, probably mostly 18th century, but with at least one Prosser bead (post-1840) found there. These dichroic blue beads have something to do with the "Aggrey bead problem" (see next issue).

One thing is clear, however, the altering of European beads by grinding them, cooking them, and most especially by making new beads from them, is an old craft in Ghana. Many trade beads imported from Africa have been ground on the ends or the sides. This was often done there, but the J.F. Sick & Co. cards also have many mosaics and millefioris which had been ground into square cross sections in Europe, perhaps to imitate African work. In any case, the specific African bead aesthetic, so strong among people who value beads, has an old and still hallowed role to play.

POWDER-GLASS BEADS

There seem to be few Americans with much interest in powder-glass beads made in West Africa. This is a shame, but understandable; the disinterest comes from a lack of appreciation. The term "powder-glass" was coined by Lamb [1976] to cover beads made by heating finely crushed glass in a mold. Most of the papers on these beads have concentrated on their technology. Here we shall begin to explore their history.

How old is this technique? Lamb [1976:34] suggested a 16th century date for it, on the basis of beads excavated at New Buipe; these have never been published [York 1973]. Kalous [1979:19] suggested an age of 100 years. None of this is satisfactory, due to lack of evidence.

Archaeologically, powder-glass beads have been reported from Adansi Ahimsan, 1680-1750 [Calvocoressi 1969:6]; Twifo Hemang, 1690-1710 [Bellis 1972:85]; Dawu, 1400-1700 [Shaw 1961], but perhaps better dated 1600-1700 [Ouzanne 1962]; and Elmina, pre-1873 [DeCorse 1989]. Only the Elmina beads were available for examination; I am not sure all those reported by De Corse were powder-glass beads, but there were some there. Other examples I have seen came from Woduku (17th - 19th century) and Dixcove (date unknown).

John Barbot [1732:157], in his massive compilation of West Africa noted glass working along the Gold Coast: "They are so great artists at melting all sorts of glass, as to give it any shape or figure they fancy." This may be working with melted glass, still practiced at Bida, Nigeria, but reported for bangle making in central Ghana in the last century [Freeman 1898:230-3].

However, another passage sounds like powder-glass making, "The third sort of false gold, grown pretty common among the Blacks, is a composition they make of a certain powder of coral, which they cast and tint so artificially, that it is impossible to distinguish it in any way but the weight.... As for the small pieces of mountain gold, lay them on a hard stone and beat them with a hammer; if they are made of coral, they will moulder away into dust..." [Barbot 1732:231]. Barbot and contemporaries often used "coral" for glass beads. That powdered glass was cast (molded?) to imitate gold, strongly recalls the dominant yellow color of many Ghanaian powder-glass beads, though few can be said to really be good imitations of gold.

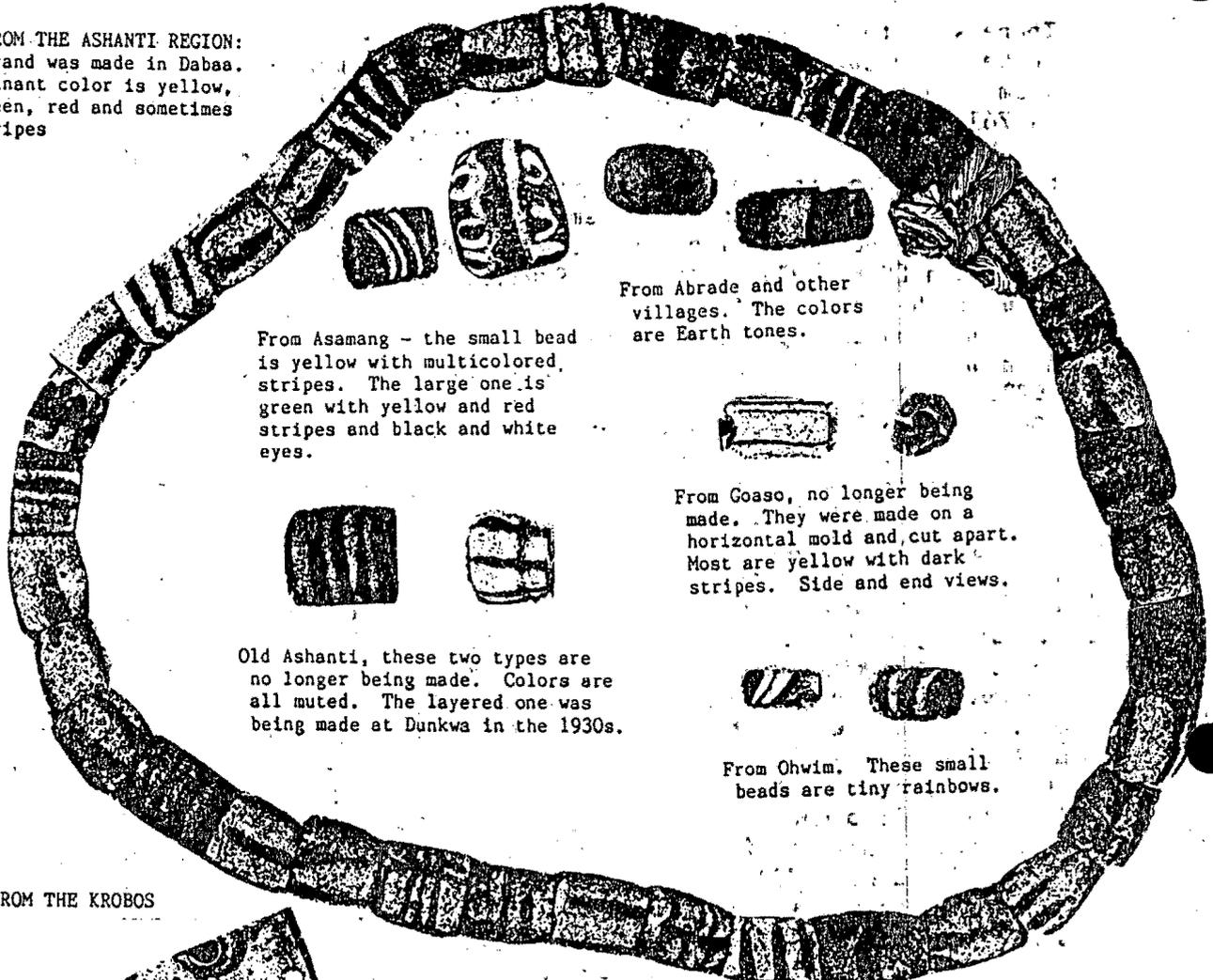
In 1814 T.E. Bowdich led the first Europeans to the kingdom of Ashanti. His chapter on "superstitions" discussed Aggrey beads, and said: "The natives pretend that imitations are made in the country, which they call boiled beads, alleging that they are broken aggrey beads ground into powder and boiled together, and that they know them because they are heavier; but this I find to be more conjecture among themselves, unsupported by any thing like observation or discovery." [1819:268] Bowdich's arrogant and often patronizing attitude toward the locals was extended to his countrymen (see Ward's introduction in the 1966 reprint). This sounds like a mangled account of both Koli beads and powder-glass beads.

In short, we have firm archaeological and historical evidence to show that the making of powder-glass beads in Ghana goes back at least 300 years.

Where did this beadmaking technique develop? In modern Ghana there are two areas where these beads are made. One is in the southeast, among the Krobos, and the other in the center among the Ashanti. I visited beadmaking villages in both areas. The Technology Consultancy Centre of Kumasi Tech [1975:App. B] listed eight Ashanti villages making beads. I verified five of them and discovered four others. All are related; wherever I asked when and how the industry started, the trail led to Dabaa.

SOME BEADS FROM GHANA.

BEADS FROM THE ASHANTI REGION:
The strand was made in Dabaa. The dominant color is yellow, with green, red and sometimes blue stripes



From Asamang - the small bead is yellow with multicolored stripes. The large one is green with yellow and red stripes and black and white eyes.

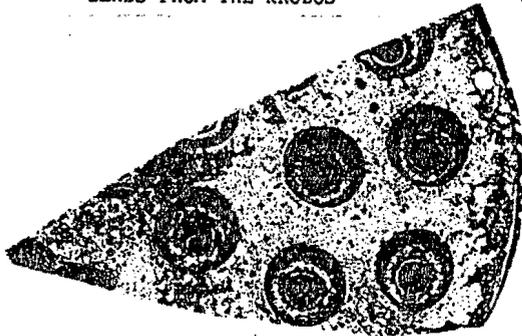
From Abrade and other villages. The colors are Earth tones.

From Goaso, no longer being made. They were made on a horizontal mold and cut apart. Most are yellow with dark stripes. Side and end views.

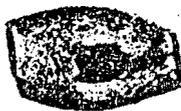
Old Ashanti, these two types are no longer being made. Colors are all muted. The layered one was being made at Dunkwa in the 1930s.

From Ohwim. These small beads are tiny rainbows.

BEADS FROM THE KROBOS



Section of a mold for disc beads from Sikaben. The spots in the center are the holes for the cassava stems.



Adjagba bead with spots, Krobo.



From Aboabo: Small Adjagba beads.



An old Akosu bead, highly valued. These may have been made by the Krobo a few centuries ago.

Koli "cooked" beads, opaque blue. Note the "stretch marks, made when elongated bubbles burst in the cooking.

Sorry, no color (yet). All beads full-size. Perforations parallel the bottom of the page.

After traveling a horrendous "road" that almost took out the truck, we arrived in Dabaa. Immediately I was told that the industry was started by Osie Kwame (d. 1978) in 1937. Following protracted negotiations over the nature of libations and gifts required, two elder statesmen agreed to relate Osie Kwame's story. It went something like this:

One fine night in 1937 Osie Kwame had a dream. That morning he went to the river, gathered clay, and fashioned molds. The next day he gathered cassava stems (to be burned away to form the perforation), finding that only dry ones would work. The third day he went to Kumasi and bought European beads of particular colors. The next day he powdered them and poured them into layers of five colors, topping them with a sixth. We were told by others afterwards that he fired his beads only for 15 or 20 minutes, while today it takes 45 minutes to an hour.

This story cannot be taken at face value. As we have seen, Bowdich heard of this industry in the area in 1814. The earliest description of such a process is by Wild [1937], describing beadmaking by people from Apollonia, in the southwest near the Ivory Coast border. They came inland to Dunkwa in Ashanti country to make beads, but refused to tell him how they learned the craft. He assumed they brought it with them (they are distantly related to the Krobos); they may have learned it there. Beadmaking has apparently stopped at Dunkwa [Quarm 1988:14, 48]. The beads and molds pictured by Wild were in the British Museum before 1937; layered beads must have been made in the Ashanti region before Osie Kwame's dream.

Sinclair [1939] described a different technique using a longitudinal mold to make long, striped beads at Goaso. The Ashanti beadmaker used prepared powdered glass, but affirmed that "in old times" bottles were broken up. These beads were difficult to make and no one is making them now.

Concerning Krobo beadmaking, writers have quite different opinions about its origin. Huber's [1963:68] generally excellent ethnographic study of the Krobos says, "There are hardly any other crafts [than pottery] found which could claim to be traditional. One must admit that there are some weavers, goldsmiths, carvers of native stools and drums and manufacturers of beads, but their masters come from Akan, Agotime and Keta side." Kalous [1979:15-17] agreed, saying that the old Krobo way of life was "hardly conducive to the sophisticated production of beads." But Lamb [1976] stressed the high sophistication of Krobo beadmaking, and his point is well taken; many Krobo beads are much more sophisticated than any modern Ashanti beads.

What do the Krobos say? Every beadmaker I met said that they had no idea when the craft started; they had nearly all learned from their parents. Dominick Ogbordjor of Sikaben said that the industry originated at nearby Tsibi, that he was taught by his mother, and that his great-grandfather made beads. Lamb [1976:38] said that he found evidence of beadmaking in old Krobo settlements in the Shai Hills, by which he meant Krobo Mountain, from which the Krobo were forced out by the British in 1892.

We have not solved the problem of the origin of powder-glass beadmaking in Ghana. That will take more work in Ghana itself. But we have made some progress. The work is clearly older than many had thought, with deep roots in both the Ashanti and Krobo regions. The story of the Bodom bead (next issue) may well provide more clues to the history of this craft. We can now also identify some villages where many of these beads were made, and some beads no longer being produced (page 10). All of this progress, though, as the editorial stresses, there is always more to be done.

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