



ITALY
GHANA - CAMEROON

THE GLASS BEADS GAME

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BAROVIER & TOSO

THE 'GLASS BEADS GAME' TELLS THE STORY OF THE VENETIANS GLASS BEADS AND THEIR TRADE TO AFRICA, WHERE THEY ARE STILL USED BY MANY TRIBES WITH DIFFERENT PURPOSES.

THE ART OF GLASS BEADMAKING COULD NOW BE ADDED TO THE UNESCO LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE.

IN 1352 THE MOROCCAN TRAVELLER IBN BATTUTA, LEFT HIS NATIVE TANGIERS AND SET OUT TO THE KINGDOM OF MALI. IN HIS DESCRIPTIONS OF THE COUNTRY AND PEOPLE'S CUSTOMS, BATTUTA WROTE: "IN THIS COUNTRY TRAVELERS DO NOT CARRY PROVISIONS WITH THEM, AND NOT EVEN DUCATS OR DRACHMAS. THEY BRING SALT PIECES, GLASS ORNAMENTS OR CUSTOM JEWELRY THAT PEOPLE CALL NAZHMS (STRINGS OF GLASS BEADS) AND SOME SPICES".

VENETIAN GLASS BEADS PRODUCTION IS ROOTED IN VERY ANCIENT TRADITIONS AND HARKS BACK TO THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE HANDCRAFT.

RECENTLY UNESCO APPROVED THE DOSSIER COMPILED BY ITALY AND FRANCE FOR THIS ART TO BE RECOGNISED AS PART OF HUMANITY'S INTANGIBLE HERITAGE.

THANKS TO THE GOLDEN BULL GRANTED TO VENETIAN MERCHANTS BY THE BASILEUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1082, VENICE EXPANDED THE TRADE WITH THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN BASIN.

IN THE XV CENTURY, AFTER THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE CONQUERED BY OTTOMAN TURKS IN 1453, AND ABOVE ALL THANKS TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW WORLD, TRADE ROUTES CHANGED DRAMATICALLY.

THE GULF OF GUINEA BECAME THE NEW COMMERCIAL POLE WHERE PORTUGUESE, SPANISH, DUTCH AND ENGLISH SHIPS UNLOADED THEIR GOODS FOR TRADING. AMONG THESE GOODS, VENETIAN GLASS BEADS WERE USED AS COINS, WITH THEIR "MAGIC" BEAUTY, HANDINESS AND RESISTANCE.

THE REPORTAGE WAS SHOT IN:

ITALY - VENICE AND MURANO

GHANA - FEMALE INITIATION OF THE KROBO GIRLS

CAMEROON - SCULPTURES AND DANCES OF THE MASKS COVERED BY GLASS BEADS

THE GLASS MELTING FURNACES OF VARIOUS
COLORS TO THE EFFETRE FACTORY OF MURANO.
IT'S THE ONLY ONE THAT STILL REALIZE GLASS
CANES FOR THE PROCESSING OF GLASS BEADS



THE LAST DAY OF THE INITIATION THE GIRLS
ARE CAST UP WITH THE BEST DRESSES AND
GLASS BEADS NECKLACES OF THE FAMILY





AFTER THE LAST STEP IN THE OVEN, THE BLOCK OF MOLTEN GLASS IS PULLED FROM THE 'MASTER' AND HIS HELPER TURNING INTO A LONG ROD. THE EFFETRE FACTORY OF MURANO IS THE ONLY ONE THAT STILL REALIZES GLASS CANES FOR PROCESSING GLASS BEADS

A MERCHANT IN ODUMASE SHOWS SOME NECKLACES OF CHEVRON GLASS BEADS ORIGINATING FROM VENICE



PERFORMANCE DURING A CEREMONY AT THE BAMILÉKÉ
CHEFFERIE OF BAFOU OF SOME ELEPHANT MASKS
DECORATED WITH GLASS BEADS THESE MASKS ARE
WORN BY MEMBERS OF THE SECRET SOCIETY AKAA
WHERE THE ELEPHANT IS THEIR TOTEMIC ANIMAL





DETAIL OF AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC ROYAL THRONE COVERED WITH GLASS BEADS OF THE XIX CENTURY, BELONGED TO A THE BAMILEKÉ KING OF BAHAM POKAM MAX. THE THRONE IS EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF BAHAM CHEFFERIE

FEMALE MASK OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE XIX CENTURY COVERED WITH GLASS BEADS. THE MASK BELONG TO THE BAMOUN PEOPLE AND IS EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF FOUMBAN



CREATION OF A GLASS BEAD WITH THE
TECHNIQUE OF LAMPWORKING BY A CRAFTSMAN
OF CANNAREGIO DISTRICT OF VENICE





THE 4TH DAY OF THE FESTIVAL, ON MONDAY, THE GIRLS CAST UP WITH THE BEST DRESSES AND GLASS BEADS NECKLACES, DANCE IN SMALL GROUPS IN FRONT OF THE PRIEST WHO OFFICIATED THE INITIATION CEREMONY

PAUL TAHBOU, ARTIST AND SCULPTOR
OF THE COURT OF THE BAMILÉKÉ
CHEFFERIE OF BANDJOUN, IS SITTING
ON A THRONE OF WOOD COVERED BY
GLASS BEADS, REALIZED BY HIM



GLASS BRACELETS IN THE OLD
WAREHOUSE OF THE ERCOLE
MORETTI FACTORY OF MURANO



GIANNI MORETTI OWNER,
WITH HIS BROTHERS, OF
THE ERCOLE MORETTI GLASS
BEADS FACTORY FROM
MURANO. HE IS MEASURING
THE DIAMETER OF THE
GLASS CANES USED FOR
THE PRODUCTION OF THE
'MILLEFIORI' GLASS BEADS



SOCIETA' PER L'INDUSTRIA VENEZIANA DELLE CONTERIE 1920



AFRICA



FOLDERS OF THE OLD VENETIAN GLASS BEADS FACTORIES WITH VARIOUS KINDS OF GLASS BEADS THAT WERE PRODUCED AND SENT ABROAD, MAINLY IN AFRICA, WHERE THEY WERE USED FOR TRADE



DANCES OF NTOUSSUEN (ELEPHANT)
MASKS IN WOOD COVERED WITH
GLASS BEADS OF THE GBENKOUGBOU
SECRET SOCIETY OF THE BAMOUN
PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE OF MATOUN



ALESSANDRO MORETTI IN THE STORE OF HIS LABORATORY THAT CONTAINS MANY COFFERS OF OLD SMALL GLASS BEADS CALLED "CONTERIE"

A MEMBER OF THE AKAA SECRET SOCIETY WHO HAS THE ELEPHANT AS A TOTEM WEARS THE ELEPHANT MASK DECORATED WITH GLASS BEADS AT THE BAMILÉKÉ CHEFFERIE OF BAFOU





THE LAST DAY OF THE INITIATION THE GIRLS ARE CAST UP WITH THE BEST DRESSES AND GLASS BEADS NECKLACES OF THE FAMILY

THE COLLECTOR AND DEALER OF
GLASS BEADS ANDREA TURCHETTO
WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER, IN
HIS WAREHOUSE IN VENICE



ARRIVAL IN MURANO ABOARD THE
STEAMBOAT FROM VENICE



THE GIRLS COVERED WITH MANY
NECKLACES OF GLASS BEADS, AFTER
SWITCHING ON THE SACRED STONE
WHICH REVEALED THEIR PURITY,
ARE CARRIED ON THE SHOULDERS
OF THEIR ADMIRER OR A RELATIVE
TO THE HOUSE OF THE PRIEST
OFFICIATING THE CEREMONY



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THE GIRLS ARE CAST
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