

Archaeological Indications of Past Lifeways on the Krobo Mountain, Ghana

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Abstract

Data from a recent archaeological survey and excavations conducted on the Krobo Mountain confirm claims that the settlement was the main religious and political centre for the Krobo people of south-eastern Ghana. Despite the physical separation of the settlement into Yilo and Manya sections, there is a remarkable similarity in the cultural landscape of the two groups. The ruins of shrines, houses, palaces, as well as the advanced nature of the settlement pattern suggest that the communities had attained a high level of socio-cultural and landscape development before their expulsion in 1892. The typical association of schnapps bottles, with palm-wine tapping/storage vessels, *mumui* indicates the twin utility of imported and local liquor during traditional rites and festivals in the past. The identification of iron anklets and bells, cowries, and glass beads in contexts similar to those found in communities in present-day Krobo suggests retention of some aspects of ancient customs and religious rites.

Introduction

This article presents results of an archaeological survey of the main ancestral settlement of the Krobo, Klowem, conducted during 2004 to 2007. The study provides archaeological insights into socio-cultural and landscape

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development of the inhabitants during their 500-year (c.14th to 19th century) stay [Wilson 1991: 15-16]) on the Krobo Mountain. A variety of elements have been studied including landscaping and architectural techniques, local religious rites, contacts and commerce, food processing, water management, and political institutions.

The significance of the archaeological heritage of the Krobo in our understanding of the past lifeways of the group has since the 1950s been acknowledged by anthropologist Hugo Huber (Huber 1993:32). In 1955, Huber visited the Krobo Mountain to collect data for his book on the Krobo titled *The Krobo – Traditional, Social and Religious Life of a West African People*. The book contains very useful anthropological and limited archaeological information on the study area, particularly the mountain. The book provides useful information on the site including insight into architecture, religious structures, and the settlement pattern of the ancient mountain settlement (Huber 1993: 35). The sketch map (see Huber 1993: 35, fig. 2), provides information on the main suburbs, special locations, and shrines on the mountain. The reliability of the historical information concerning the historic landscape of the site was probably enhanced by Huber's access to informants who were themselves part of the population that lived on the mountain. He also benefited from the obvious material culture that dominated the landscape during the first 53 years of the abandonment.

Archaeological Research Activities in the Krobo area

Despite the early recognition of the archaeological importance of the Krobo Mountain site it did not significantly benefit from the first archaeological surveys of the east Accra plains undertaken by western scholars such as Ozanne (1962, 1965a, 1965b, 1965c). In 1976 and 1982, the archaeological research team of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) conducted reconnaissance surveys on the mountain. The outcome of the study has been disappointing because the only documentation of the study is a single-page article titled *Archaeological Survey of the Krobo Mountain Ancient Settlement* (Debrah 1982: 1). Since 2004, research teams of students and staff of the Archaeology Department, University of Ghana, Legon have been undertaking archaeological surveys and excava-

tions on the mountain and its surrounding plains (see Gblerkpor 2005, 2006, 2008; and Nimako 2005).

Site Location and Description

The Krobo Mountain ($0^{\circ} 05'E$ - $6^{\circ} 20'N$) is located about 70km north-east of Accra, along the Tema-Akosombo highway. It is located about 2km south-east of Okwenya, and about 4km east of Somanya in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Figs. 1 and 2). The mountain is separated by a dry valley into two peaks namely the south-western (Yilo Krobo) and north-eastern (Manya Krobo) sections. It is a rocky steep-sided terrain with pockets of gentle slope to flat portions.



Fig. 1: An aerial view of a portion of the south-western section of the Krobo Mountain (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)

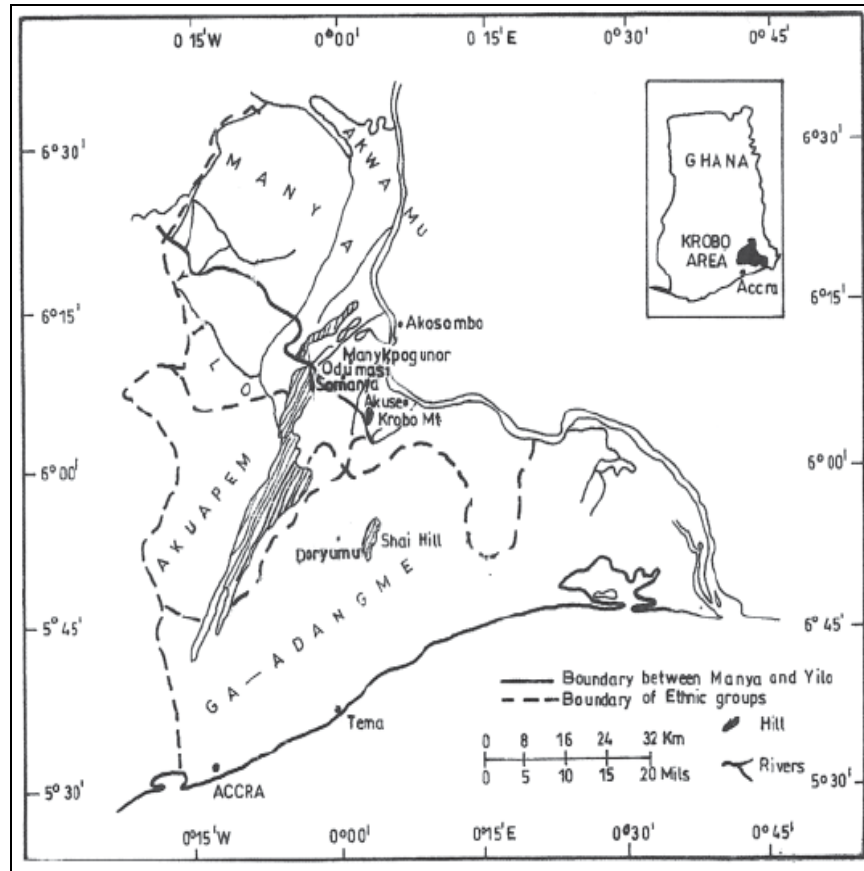


Fig. 2: A Map of the study area showing sites mentioned in the paper

The vegetation is grassy, interspersed with mainly big cotton and baobab trees. There is a pocket of forest that appears to be a reserve located near the peak of the mountain. The site also has many caves, rock shelters, boulders, sacred groves and water cisterns. The entire site measures about 2 x 2.5km and stands at a height of 350m above sea level.

Currently, the site faces threats from Fulani herdsmen who graze their animals on top of the mountain, thereby destroying fragile artifacts such as pots and glass bottles whilst the annual burning of the vegetation cover by these herdsmen constitutes an even greater threat to the archaeological evidence; because the fire destroys some of the

archaeological record and the bare terrain exposes artifacts to treasure hunters. The erosion of the top soil by runoff water from the torrential rains that follow the bush burning dislodges the buried archaeological remains, thereby disturbing their original context (Gblerkpor 2005; 2006). The construction of a terrace garden at a portion of the north-eastern section of the mountain to attract visitors to the site has also resulted in the destruction of some of the archaeological record. To prevent further destruction of the site, the two traditional councils in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon, and the Krobo Hills Resort Ltd. is addressing the situation through education, and by providing security on the site.

Historical Background Guidance

Until 1892, the Krobo Mountain was the major political and ritual centre of the Krobo (Steedstra 2005: 29). There were two groups with two separate political units on the mountain; Many Krobo and Yilo Krobo (Debrah 1982:1; Wilson 1987:273). The Krobo are a group of Dangme-speaking people whose language belongs to the Western Kwa language family (Dakubu 1982: 246). They are found in the southeastern part of Ghana. According to one-version of Krobo traditions, their ancestors migrated from a place called Lɔɔvor² to settle on the Krobo Mountain, after the Dangme had separated into several groups (Wilson 1987: 474). Security reasons have been cited for the selection of the rugged but defensive mountain as against the more habitable flat land that surrounds it (Huber 1993: 32). The mountaintop settlement was so defensible that since its establishment about the 14th century, its inhabitants were only defeated in the 1850s after more precise rifles and rockets were developed; and was first occupied by enemy forces in 1892 (Wilson 1995: 7-8; 15-17).

In July 1892, the British colonial authorities ejected the Krobo from their mountain settlement for alleged acts of ritual murder (Huber 1993:32). Scholars who disagree with this assertion have instead cited economic and political reasons for the ejection (Omenyo 2001:15, Steedstra: 2005: 31). After the sacking of the settlement, the population moved to live permanently on their plantation villages located in the plains, and at the foot of the Akuapem-Akwamu Hills. These locations

had served as settlements where the youth, farmers and traders periodically stayed to work on their farms and to carry out economic activities such as exchange of commodities. Somanya, Manyakpogunor and Odumase are among the major successor towns that emerged from these villages after the abandonment of the mountain settlement.

Methodology and Evidence

The research for this paper used historical linguistics, ethnography, ecology and archaeology of the site. Oral tradition was collected in addition to the study of written historical records. The archaeological research involved surface survey and excavations. Data from ethnography, and written and oral history provided guidelines for the archaeological survey and excavations. Information from the non-archaeological sources and archaeological indications on the surface influenced the selection of specific areas for survey and excavation. The non-archaeological information was also useful in the identification, interpretation, and explanation of the archaeological data. For instance, the ethnographic analogues provided an interpretative framework for the elaboration of the indigenous religious structures and objects, architecture, food processing, land use, water management and burial practices on the mountain.

Historical and Ethnographic Evidence

The Krobo are knowledgeable about their past, especially with reference to the last century of the mountain settlement. Despite the forceful removal from their ancestral town, the destruction of their shrines and deities, as well as banning of some customs there is ample ethnographic evidence that suggest the retention of some aspects of past local traditions and cultural practices. This consciousness may also have resulted from the retention of some socio-religious institutions and practices such as the *Dipo*¹ and *Klama*² by the successor population. These two performances preserve and perpetuate the traditions, culture and history of the Krobo (Coplan 1972). There are great similarities in the material culture (orna-

mentation, architecture, and pottery) recovered from the mountain and those from the successor settlements.

Because they are well informed about their cultural heritage, and the events of the 1892 sacking of their ancestors, the Yilo Krobo Traditional Council decided in 1992 to launch the *Kloyo-sikplemi*³ festival, a cultural concert, which initially sought to commemorate the centenary of the ejection, and to showcase Krobo traditions and cultural heritage. The festival is now an annual event. During celebrations ancient costumes and food are displayed. There are also musical performances. Indigenous religious rites such as pouring of libation and animal sacrifices are performed. Traditional performances of this nature and their accompanying narrations proved useful for the study. Through interviews, oral traditions were collected from priests, priestesses, royals, teachers, elderly men and women, and others conversant with the oral traditions of the area.

A number of visits to some of the contemporary Krobo settlements such as Sra, Somanya and Odumase enabled the collection of information about socio-economic and other cultural practices of the people. Particular attention was paid to local shrines, their structures, associated artifacts and functions. The traditional architecture was also examined. I further studied building materials, structural designs and functions of historic buildings dating to the first decades following the development of the lowland settlements. Additional information on contemporary cultural practices was collected during the *Kloyo-sikplemi*³ festival and *dipo* rites held in 2003 to 2007.

The functions of some contemporary artifacts identical to artifacts and features recorded on the mountain were observed at first-hand during traditional performances at the annual *Kloyo-Sikplemi* festival and *dipo* rites. For instance, the use of local oil lamps, iron anklets, specialized ceramic vessels, beads, and cowries was observed (Figs. 3 -4). Other relevant observations that I made included the use of shrines, and medicinal plants that have also been identified (usually associated with shrines) on the mountain. Indigenous religious rites including ritual bathing, wearing of costumes, food preparation, the sacrificial slaughter of animals and their application, which rarely survive in the archaeological record were also observed and recorded.

Historical documentary sources also proved very useful in this study. The works reviewed included Huber (1993); Omenyo (2001); Steegstra (2005); and Wilson (1991, 1995). Each of these works evaluates some aspects of Krobo socio-economic, religious and political developments through time and space. For instance, issues about the origins of the chieftaincy institutions, *dipo* rites, commercial farming, the *huza*⁴ system of land acquisition, historic landscapes of the Krobo Mountain; land disputes, destruction of shrines by the colonial army, architectural designs, population and external influences on the people are highlighted in these sources.



Fig. 3: Cowries recovered from the Krobo Mt. (left), and the Yilo Krobo state Priestess wearing a hat decorated with cowries [right] (Photos by William N. Gblerkpor)

Surface Survey

The surface survey provided an insight into the nature, distribution, function and chronology of some of the cultural and natural features

identified on the mountain. For example, results from the survey were useful in the determination of the relative age of imported ceramics, glass bottles, and associated socio-cultural developments. Artifact assemblage, individual artifacts, surface features as well as the landscape were observed, analyzed, and recorded. The distribution pattern of the local pottery, glass bottles, and architectural remains was recorded. The ancient architectural landscape (including stone walls, stone terraces and foundation, and house mounds), caves, rock shelters, water cisterns, shrines, burials and other features were also studied (Figs. 5 -11).

The surface survey was extensive, covering the accessible portions of both the north-eastern and south-western sections of the mountain. The main survey was done on foot, and involved observation, collection, recording and mapping of selected archaeological features.



*Fig. 4: Ka-si-tsotsɛ, (dish with base, right) containing soil and a chicken bone
(Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)*

This survey strategy facilitated the identification and on-site analysis and interpretation of a substantial amount of archaeological and environmental data. The survey also involved aerial observation and photography. In 2006 and 2007 the author and his associates conducted a series of flights over the mountain and its surrounding plains and took many photo-

graphs and made a video coverage. The aerial survey afforded the team a rare opportunity to study the landscape from the air. The topography of the site, old footpaths, river valleys, and settlement patterns were recorded.

The artifact assemblage retrieved through the surface collection involved selective sampling of artifacts and ecofacts considered relevant to the study. Dateable imported objects such as schnapps bottles, drinking glasses and imported ceramics, as well as diagnostic local pottery, metal objects were preferred. This artifact assemblage bears makers' marks or seals that indicate source and period of production. The relative chronology for the site was obtained through the evaluation of these artifacts. Human and animal bones were also recovered and the discovery of exposed human bones from a number of locations provided data on burial practices in 19th century Krobo. The ground survey provided some insight into household units, settlement pattern, and local resource utilization.



Fig. 5: Ritual objects- an iron Anklet (left) and a miniature copper Bell (right) recovered from the Krobo Mt. (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)



Fig. 6: Some elders of the Yilo Krobo State eating a ceremonial yam



meal at the site of the old palace in 2007 (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)

*Fig. 7: Remains of a shrine (hut) marked by stone blocks
(Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)*



Fig. 8: Didz, vessel for storing water (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)

Although the archaeological survey was extended to the north-eastern section of the mountain during the 2007 research, only limited surface collection was undertaken. This was due to logistical and time constraints. For this reason, whereas the historical references in this article relate to both the Yilo Krobo and Manya Krobo, the bulk of the archaeological evidence pertains to the Yilo Krobo (south-western) section. However, it is worth noting that both the Yilo and Manya sides bear similar physical environment, archaeological records recognizable in the physical and cultural landscapes. For instance, the stone terraces and foundations, pottery, schnapps bottles, beads, cowries and oyster shells recovered and/or recorded from the surface are similar.



Fig. 9: A stone-mud wall (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)



Fig. 10: A Terrace Wall (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)



Fig. 11: Schnapps Bottles and Mumui, a palm-wine tapping/storage vessels (Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)

The Excavations

The excavations undertaken to date provided material evidence about some aspects of past burial practices and indigenous rituals on the mountain. It also supplied data for the development of a relative chronological framework for the settlement. This was achieved through a comparative analysis of finds from the surface survey and excavations. The comparison was undertaken to ensure proper ordering of the surface finds that were mixed up by erosion and human activities on the mountain. Five units comprising two pits (P1 = 1 x 1.5m and P2 = 2 x 2m), and three trenches (Trench 1 = 2.5 x 4m; Trench 2 = 1 x 9m and Trench 3 = 2 x 3m) were excavated. The first excavation (P1, T1 and T2) was done in 2004, and it was aimed at providing information on the techniques used in building the terraces. For this reason all three units were opened close to

terrace walls. The idea behind this was to reveal the hidden parts of the terraces, and thus expose the original terrain for assessment.

Two units were excavated in January 2007 (P2 and T3). Pit 2, P2 was opened at a spot with a circular stone formation believed to be remains of a shrine. The excavation was aimed at determining whether the structure was a shrine or not, because local tradition and historical accounts claim that all Krobo shrines (especially huts) are circular in shape. T3 on the other hand, was excavated in one of the rooms of the Konɔ's palace. This unit was aimed at providing data for working out a relative chronology and to have an idea about artifacts to expect from the palace. Additionally, each unit excavated during both seasons also sought to provide insight into the chronology of the settlement through recovery of dateable finds from stratified context.

The 2004 excavations were restricted to the Okpɛ suburb. The suburb was selected for excavation because it had the highest concentration of terrace foundation platforms and artifacts and the main ritual ground of the entire settlement, locally known as Okpɛ-Tɛsa was located there (Huber 1993: 34). It is also believed that the abundance of house foundations in the area as well as the associated dateable artifact assemblage reflected what was below the surface. As expected, large amounts of diagnostic finds were recovered from the excavations. The 2007 units were opened at the palace located at the Nyɛwɛ suburb, south of the Okpɛ suburb. The area was selected for excavation because it was the seat of government for the settlement.

Features and Finds

A total of over 13,680 archaeological remains were recorded and/or recovered during the survey and excavations on the Krobo Mountain (Tables 1 - 4). The site yielded cowries, oyster shells, hollowed and grinding stones, pottery, iron implements, glass bottles, glass beads, animal and human bones. Seven hundred and seven (707) features including stone terraces and foundations, natural rock shelters and caves, circular pits for extracting palm oil, mounds representing collapsed buildings were also recorded.

TABLE 1: Summary of the Archaeological Remains from Krobo Mountain Site

<i>Category</i>	<i>Local pottery</i>	<i>Imported goods: glass beads, smoking pipes, glass beads, cowries, ceramics, glass bottles</i>	<i>Human and Animal bones</i>	<i>Hollowed stones and grinding stones</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total No.	9,235	4,085	123	237	13,680
Percentage (%)	68.0	30.0	0.9	1.7	App. 100%

TABLE 2: Classification of Local Pottery

<i>Category</i>	<i>Ka-serving bowls</i>	<i>Pɔ-buɛ: cooking pots</i>	<i>Ka-grinding bowls</i>	<i>Water-storage pots</i>	<i>Takpa-carrying water</i>	<i>Gbaku-Washing Pot</i>	<i>Kaduɔ-bath pot</i>	<i>Ritual vessels</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total no.	3,010	530	2,500	2,000	392	150	188	465	9,235
Percentage (%)	33.0	5.7	27.0	22.0	4.2	1.6	2.0	5.0	App. 100%

TABLE 3: Some imported Glass and Ceramic Objects

<i>Items</i>	<i>Schnapps Bottles</i>	Medicine bottles cosmetics, wine glasses, etc.	Beads	<i>Ceramics</i>	Total
<i>Total No.</i>	2,150	490	703	742	4,085
<i>Percentage (%)</i>	53.0	12.0	17.2	18.2	<i>App. 100 %</i>

TABLE 4: Stone Features Recorded

<i>Category</i>	<i>Terrace walls</i>	<i>Building platforms</i>	<i>Special locations: shrines, sacred places, burials, treasury and prison</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total No.	150	1100	50	1,300
<i>Percentage (%)</i>	11.5	84.6	3.9	<i>App. 100%</i>

Architecture and Landscaping

The architectural landscape of the Krobo Mountain settlement is astonishing. So far, over one thousand architectural features including stone terraces and foundations, house mounds, swish walls, and piles of stone blocks were recorded (Table 4; Figs. 6, 9 - 10). This figure would have been much higher but for the fact that the mud (usually without foundations) that have been reported by historical sources have collapsed and their remains eroded by rain water. The figure is also expected to increase further if further data from subsequent archaeological survey is published.

The mountain was characterized by several stone terraces and building foundations ranging between 1.5 and 2.0m in height and 6.0 to 30.0m in length. They were located at pockets of accessible areas of the mountain, where stone foundations and piles of stone blocks were recorded. But the terraces and foundations were absent at the extremely steep slopes that were often inaccessible, and portions where the gradient was flat and could permit mud structures that did not require the erection of platforms. Wherever the terraces occurred in groups of more than 10 walls, a very interesting landscape developed. This landscape composed of giant steps or short walls built with stones, capped by a gentle rising clay mound, and separated by a series of gaps. All these were connected to form a continuous drainage system which prevented the fast-flowing surface run-off water from washing away buildings along the slope in the area. Behind, and on-top of most of these stone walls, were mounds formed by collapsed mud structures.

Three major types of terrace walls were identified: terrace walls that served as foundations, which directly supported stone and/or mud houses; terraces that served as retaining walls to check erosion ("hill-side erosion and gullying" [Anquandah 2006: 7]); and terraces that helped to level the steep sloping portions of the landscape to facilitate normal domestic activities and easy climbing (Fig. 10). The terraces provided the basic adaptive tool with which the people coped with the rugged mountainous environment. The abundance of naturally occurring stone made stone-terracing the most logical response to the demands of the environ-

ment. The structural designs of the terraces, coupled with abundant domestic artifacts suggest that the terrace walls were built for settlement purposes rather than for agricultural use (Gblerkpor 2006). The discovery of two piles of stone blocks similar to those used to build the terraces suggests that stone terracing was in vogue right up to the sack of the settlement.

In addition to the terraces, two other walling styles were identified. The classification was based on the building materials used — swish and clay-stone (see Fig. 9 which is clay wall with a number of stone blocks fitted in the corners and other parts of the wall). The archaeological evidence indicates that the people used both clay, and stone masonry, with stone dominating as a construction material in the building ruins recorded. This is evident in the over 1200 stone structures as against 35 swish walls identified on the site, and this is understandable, since on the mountaintop, stone was (and is more) common than clay, the latter being the usual traditional building material in southern Ghana. It must also be noted that stone structures last longer than mud ones, which explains the relatively lower figures recorded for mud houses.

Based on the available archaeological data, one cannot establish with certainty whether the clay or stone masonry was the first form of house architecture that was developed on the mountain. According to Arlt (1995: 7), during the second quarter of the 19th century, the people built European style houses in stone to entice the Basel missionaries working in the Krobo area to settle on the mountain. This was particularly the case with the area occupied by the Many Krobo who are said to have embraced the Basel missionaries and western education. Piles of stone blocks, possibly for the construction of stone houses were recorded in this area.

The two house shapes identified at the ancient settlement site were the square and circular, and these were similar to those found in the present-day Krobo area. Basel missionaries who visited the site in the 19th century confirmed the existence of these architectural designs (Huber 1993: 34). So far, 7 circular foundation stones representing circular buildings have been recorded, but many more could be uncovered in subsequent surveys. The majority of the house foundations and ruins of buildings recorded measured about 5-8m x 6-10m, which indicates their

small size. This archaeological evidence is consistent with Johannes Zimmerman's (a Basel Missionary) report that the houses on the mountain looked "like eagle's nest" with one room (Wilson 1995: 8-7). Traditional architects in the study area still employ these designs in the construction of buildings, though the circular shape is restricted to indigenous shrines. According to Steegstra (2005: 29), many of the houses on the mountain were two-storey structures. However, except for the ruins of two structures including the palace, the study did not find any archaeological evidence to support this view. Nevertheless, there are several old two-storey building structures in many of the successor towns such as Somanya and Odumase, as well as neighbouring Akuse which are believed to have been constructed in line with the architectural designs used on the mountain.

The oral traditions also mention wood and grass as the main building materials besides stone. Ten pieces of building hardware including door hinges, a keyhole plate and parts of a door-lock were recovered. These door accessories suggest that there were locks on the wooden doors of some of the houses. Even though most doors and windows were reported to have been secured with straw mats and woven palm fronts (Huber 1993: 36; Wilson 1995:7).

Population Density

The archaeological evidence indicates a high population density on the Krobo Mountain during the 19th century. With a current figure of over 1000 house units on the mountain, distributed over such a relatively limited habitable area (about 1 x 2km), the settlement must have been densely populated. Even if 1000 out of the estimated 1200 buildings served as dwelling places/rooms, and with each room occupied by an average of three persons, there would have been 3000 people staying on the mountain in the 1800s. This estimate applies to the sedentary mountain population, that is, the people that used the mountain as their permanent settlement. The population of the Krobo Mountain could increase substantially when the populations of the farming villages ascended the mountain to celebrate the *dipo* rites or perform funerals.

According to Krobo traditions, the mountain population increased considerably during periods of religious and social celebrations, when a small room then accommodated more than five persons at a time. In addition to the houses, there is ample archaeological proof of cave habitation on the mountain. Some of the caves identified are big and comfortable enough to accommodate people. Several domestic utensils such as cooking, storage, serving and drinking ceramic vessels recovered from the caves could have been used by the inhabitants of the caves. Oral history confirms that several of the caves were inhabited by the pioneer settlers prior to the construction of houses on the mountain (Debrah 1982:1).

After the Krobo had settled on the mountain, they were joined by other people fleeing the Asante invasions and slave raids during the 18th century. These included Denkyera refugees who fled the Denkyera-Asante War as well as Ewe groups (Huber 1993:34; Arlt 1995:9). The influx of these refugees substantially increased the population of the mountain settlement, and led to a shortage of land in the immediate surroundings of the mountain. Subsequently, the Krobo acquired new territories from the Akwapem and other neighbouring groups. By the 19th century, the Krobo Mountain settlement had become densely populated. When Rev. Heck, a European missionary visited the Krobo Mountain in the 19th century, he described the settlement as, "a curious town! We stand on the flat roof of a house, we look up, and high above our heads on a majestic rock there stands a second house. We look below, and straight beneath our feet there, a third house. Such are the conditions of the entire town" (Reported in Huber 1993:32-36). Evidence of most of the houses described by the missionaries can be found in the stone-foundation platforms capped by clay mounds, ruins of walls, and the door accessories described earlier.

Water Resources and Management

The inhabitants of the Krobo Mountain, located 350m above sea level, and without any major source of water, were faced with the challenge of acquiring water for domestic and other uses. Two small water ponds formed by depressions on rocks were discovered. The first pond meas-

ured 1.5m in depth and about 3 x 6m in surface area. It was fed by rain-water that flowed from boulders located on higher ground. The surface area of the second pond was about 1 x 6m and about 1.3m in depth. Three depressions believed to have been used as cisterns were identified. Also, a water storage facility comprising up to 20 huge pots for storing water, *didɔ* was located at the western wing of the palace of the paramount chief, *Konɔ*. However, even if all these water points supplied water at their maximum they could not have satisfied the water needs of the population, especially during the dry season.

The archaeological evidence suggests the adoption of other water management strategies by the inhabitants. For instance, out of the about 9,235 local potsherds found on the site, as many as 2,392 (26.2%) belonged to vessels for carrying or storing water. Examples included *takpa* for carrying water; *gmawe* and *didɔ* for storing water (Table 2). These storage vessels measure over 1m high and 2m in diameter and can hold up to 800 litres of water. It is also possible that the residents harvested rainwater from the roofs of their houses. This traditional water harvesting technique is still practised in the successor settlements, and in many other villages in Ghana. The oral accounts claim that in the dry season, additional water was obtained from nearby streams such as *Okue*, located on the plains. Although hauling water from the plains up the mountain may have been difficult for the population, it was not impossible.

Indigenous Religious Practices

There is considerable archaeological evidence on indigenous African religious practices on the Krobo Mountain. The study produced a number of architectural remains, natural features and an artifact assemblage known to be associated with local religious performances. These included five circular house foundations representing “room-kept shrines”, and five “out-door shrines” as well as iron bells, and terracotta figurines (Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 7). Traditionally, shrines found in Krobo and other Dangme areas are rarely housed or built in permanent building materials. But when they are, the structures are circular in shape, representing a design believed to be a typical Dangme building design (see also Huber 1993: 36). The presence of circular *dipo* shrines in present-day Krobo and Shai areas

provide examples that corroborate the archaeological record and the written and oral historical accounts (see Huber 1993 for alternative description of shrines and other ritual sites in Krobo).

The most obvious religious structures identifiable on the mountain are the huge rocks associated with artifact assemblages and plants associated with indigenous rites of passage and worship. These rocks appear in three major categories: 1) 'large' flat-surface rocks (40-50m in width and 50-60m in length), 2) rock shelters, and 3) rock boulders. The Okpɛ-tɛsa (rock of Okpɛ) (40 x 60m), located within the Okpɛ suburb typifies the 'large' category. The Okpɛ-tɛsa (shrine) was littered with several schnapps bottles, beads, potsherds and cowries. It was also enclosed by cactus and jatropha plants. These and other local plants like the *buna* tree and *nyabatso* provided herbs for ritual cleansing and curative purposes. These plants are found at present-day Krobo shrines, including the palace shrine of the Yilo Krobo paramount chief. These plants also serve non-religious functions such as their use for the construction of fences for gardens. Perhaps the plants ability to withstand drought and fire makes them suitable for use in religious practices.

The use of the Okpɛ-tɛsa for the performance of the mandatory *dipo* ceremonies may have accounted for the prominence of the Okpɛ-tɛsa shrine in Krobo traditions. According to the oral traditions, it was specifically here that the *dipo* ceremonies were performed. As noted by Steegstra (2005: 129), shrines played important roles in ancient Krobo, and as many as 133 'fetish haunts' (shrines) were reportedly destroyed by the Hausa soldiers who enforced the ejection order of the British authorities.

Artifacts retrieved from the excavations and associated with indigenous religious activities include a terracotta figurine. These items served various purposes in the shrines. For instance, the *Ka-si-tsotsɛ* (vessel with stand) was used for serving porridge-like corn or millet flour solution, *mamu-nyu* to the gods. Glass beads of all shapes and colours as well as cowries have been collected from shrine contexts. The ethnographic information suggests that these beads and cowries were worn by traditional priests and priestesses of the Krobo. White-coloured beads, which signify purity in Krobo tradition, are the most preferred ones by indigenous priests and priestesses (Fig. 3). More than 2,150 19th century schnapps glass bottles representing about 90.0% and 28.0% of glass objects and total

finds respectively were recovered. In addition to the liquor bottles, local pottery vessels, *mumui* and *likɔkɔ* (little clay cup) for tapping palm-wine and pouring of libation have been retrieved (Fig. 11). This suggests an extensive use of liquor by the inhabitants. Although social drinking may have contributed to the liquor collections, the constant association of these artifacts with shrines suggests their use in rituals and religious practices.

Alcohol libation constitutes an important aspect of Krobo indigenous religion. This is consistent with local traditions and ethnographic practices among the Krobo, whose religious, social and political activities are accompanied by lavish use of schnapps. The ancient Krobo were polytheistic. They had gods that were responsible for various natural and human events. For instance, there were Ohue dumla (rain god), Medoku Aye (god for blacksmithing), Nadu and Kotoklo (war gods) and Likpotsu (god responsible for peace, riches, and prevention of infectious diseases). As an integrating element of the Krobo society, the *Dipo* rites and the worship of the war gods, Nadu and Kotoklo, were of great importance.

The indigenous priests and priestesses played important roles in 19th century Krobo. They conducted the customs and rituals associated with the worship of the gods. They still play various key roles in contemporary customary rites and festivals in the area. For example, the Yilo Krobo priestess, Mama Adzovi, seems to have a lot of influence on the community because her safe ascent and descent of the mountain is a pre-requisite for the formal commencement of the *Kloyo-sikplemi*. The author witnessed this during the 2006 festival when the durbar of chiefs took place after her descent from the mountain.

There is the archaeological evidence to support significance evidence of external influence on Krobo indigenous religion. Apart from three rusted iron gong-like bells and some glass beads whose origin may be attributed to the neighbouring Ewe groups, very little archaeological evidence in this respect was retrieved. Perhaps subsequent study may bring out more data to enhance our knowledge on external influences on Krobo religion. But the historical accounts and ethno-linguistic evidence acknowledge considerable Ewe elements in Krobo religion. For instance, the name Mama Adzovi for the Yilo State priestess is Ewe. The priestess spoke the Ewe language with at least one of her associate priestesses dur-

ing the 2006 *Kloyo-sikplemi* festival (Kodzo Gavua, Personal communication 2006). This can be explained by the fact that the Ewe were among the non-Dangme groups which joined the Krobo on the mountain before they were ejected by the British (Huber 1993: 48).

Burial Practices

A total of nine human bones were recovered from the excavations and from the surface of the site. This comprised two skulls, four forelimbs and a thigh bone retrieved from the excavations, and two more forelimb bones recorded during the surface survey.



Figure 12: 19th Century Imported Glass Beads
(Photo by William N. Gblerkpor)

The bones came from under the foundations of two house mounds, suggesting that they were originally buried in rooms. A number of rectangular stone arrangements suspected to be graves were also identified. Grave goods recovered included an earthen pot, Hebron beads, cowries, and 19th century European composite glass beads (Figs. 12). The disclosure of the human remains is noteworthy as intramural sepulture was prohibited by the colonial authorities under the Native Cemeteries Ordinance of 1888 (Steegstra 2005: 123). Although the associated trade goods date the excavated burial to the 19th century, it could not be determined whether the burial took place before or after the passage of the 1888 ordinance. Although intramural burials are not generally practised, some people in the Krobo communities bury their loved ones in their homes. This is however done only with the permission of both the paramount chief and National Health authorities.

Finally, the discovery of some beads around the waist and knee areas of one of the remains shows that at least one of the deceased was female. In Krobo and other Dangme customs, waist beads are the preserve of females of all ages and sometimes infant males. From the archaeological evidence, it is clear that the people buried their dead with grave goods, such as precious beads and domestic vessels, suggesting belief in life-after death. Nowadays less grave goods are buried with the dead, because grave looting is rampant in some of the communities in the area.

There is strong archaeological evidence of high liquor use on the mountain. For instance, numerous J. H. Henkes schnapps brands were retrieved. They include the Stork, Worm and Star brands (Fig. 11). In many traditional African societies, funeral ceremonies are usually accompanied by drinking. There were reports by some Basel Missionaries that the Krobo consumed a lot of liquor during funerals to forget their anguish from the loss of their loved ones (Steegstra 2005: 123).

Economic Activities

The archaeological evidence points to a prosperous 19th century Krobo society. The density and diversity of imported artifacts such as schnapps, glass beads, cowries, roofing sheets, and door accessories on the site suggest the active participation of the people in the economic activities of the

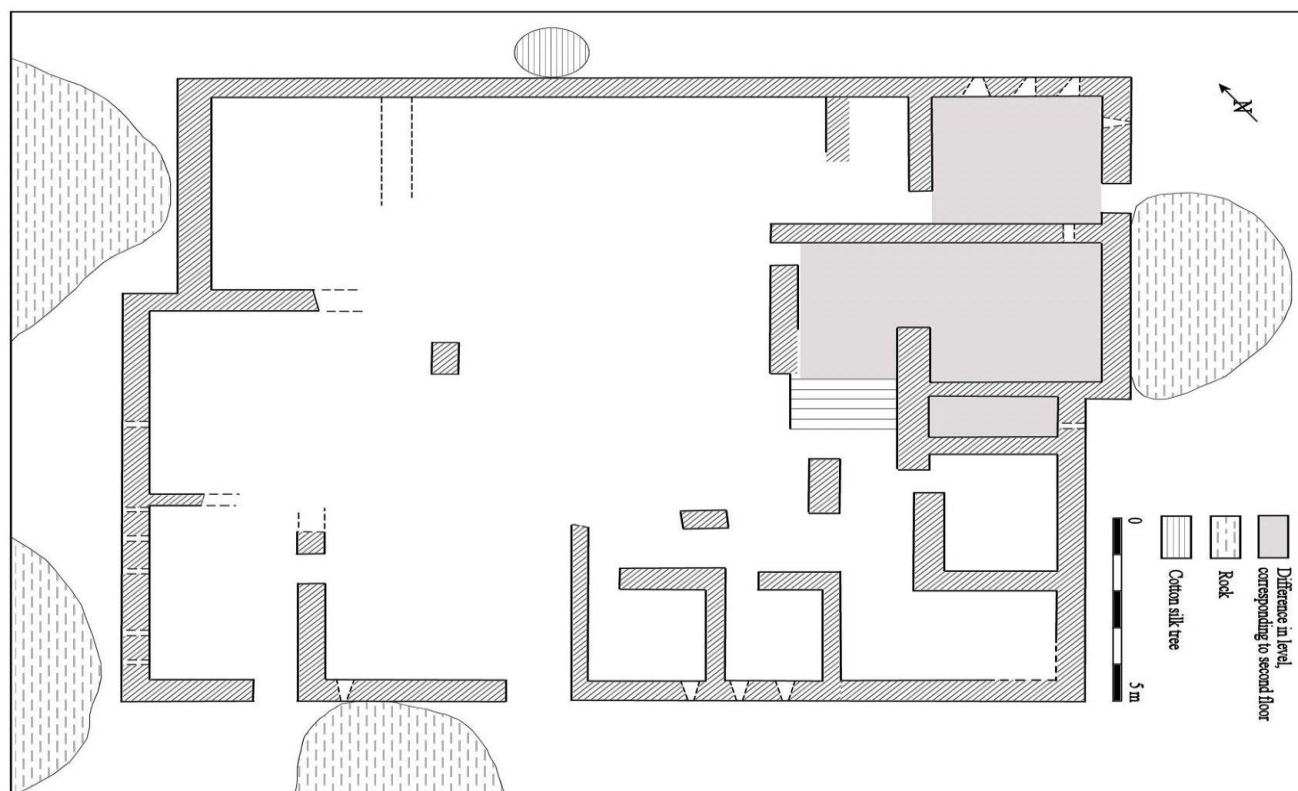


Figure 13: Plan of ground floor, palace for the Kono of Yilo Krobo

Gold Coast at that time. Four features identified as palm oil extraction cisterns (tɛmuɔ) show that there was communal or commercial production of palm oil on the mountain. The economic benefits were also noticeable in the construction of several well planned square stone buildings, including the two-storey palace (Figs. 6 and 13) that was constructed in the 1850s during the reign of Konɔ Ologo Patu (c.1832-69) (Wilson 1990:278). Although yet to be investigated archaeologically, the presence of a cave claimed by oral tradition to have served as the treasury for the settlement gives further support to the apparent economic prosperity enjoyed by the people.

The historical accounts confirm the economic achievements of the inhabitants as major producers of oil-palm fruits and palm-oil in the Gold Coast. It is estimated that the export value of palm-oil from the Krobo area amounted to 900,000 litres per annum (Anquandah 1985: 21). To sustain their oil-palm plantations, they purchased new territories at the foot of the Akwapem Hills (Arlt 1995:4; Huber 1993:32) using the *Huza* system.

The overall performance of the Krobo economy can be inferred from the numerous cowries and schnapps bottles (also used as currency in the past) that are found at the site (Figs. 3 and 11). The use of cowries as a medium of exchange was widespread in the Gold Coast (Bredwa-Mensah 2002: 160). At the beginning of the 19th century, the English were shipping about 100 tons of cowries to Africa annually. But with the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, their shipment dropped to an average of about six tons a year between 1810 and 1815. The cowrie trade however, recovered with the development of the palm oil trade. By the 1830s, between 60 and 100 tons went annually to the Gold Coast alone, and from 1835 at least 50 tons a year to the area that is east of the Volta. Later on in the 19th century, the *cypraea moneta* was replaced by the *cypraea annulus* in West Africa, and it (*cypraea annulus*) was accepted by the palm-oil merchants. By 1850 the Gold Coast was importing cowries at the rate of some 150 tons a year (Johnson 1970:49; York 1972: 96 - 98). Large numbers of cowries were traded in the Krobo Mountain as the inhabitants participated in the booming economy of the 19th century.

Political Structure

The existence of a huge 19th century stone palace on the mountain, the well planned nature of the architectural landscape, as well as the sighting of two structures described as a prison and a treasury indicate the presence of a strong political leadership or institution. The old palace represents the single largest and advanced building on the mountain (Fig. 6). This two-storey palace was strategically located at almost the centre of the settlement, among huge boulders with an excellent view of the surrounding plains. The comparatively large size of the palace and its strategic location on the mountain, as well as the attachment of a 'water reservoir' confirm the prominence of the position of the *Konɔ* in 19th century Krobo. According to Wilson (1995), the Krobo Mountain settlement was a strong chiefdom by the 19th century, ruled by a paramount chief (*Konɔ*). But prior to the emergence of the chieftaincy system of governance the settlement, like many other Ga-Dangme groups, was ruled by priests and priestesses, a kind of political system that Wilson refers to as a "priestly oligarchy" (Wilson 1995: 49).

There are various local traditions concerning the emergence of the chieftaincy institution in Krobo. One version states that refugees, who fled to the mountain after the defeat of Denkyera by the Asante, introduced the chieftaincy institution. This tradition is supported by a section of the Krobo population, and some of the royals of the Yilo paramountcy profess their Denkyera ancestry.

Contacts, Commerce, and Influences

The archaeological evidence indicates that the Krobo Mountain settlers had contacts with neighbouring ethnic groups in the Accra plains, as well as with Europeans and other local peoples on the coast. The occurrence of 30.0% European imported goods in archaeological contexts suggests direct and indirect European contacts and influences in the area. For instance, apart from the square structural designs of some of the stone houses including the palace, the building hardware such as the roofing sheets, nails, bolts, and door accessories were definitely European. Many more archaeological remains such as the cowries, schnapps bottles, glass

beads, wine glasses, ceramic vessels and pipes dating to the first half of the 19th century were certainly European imported goods. The historical evidence confirms this conclusion. By the second quarter of the 19th century, the Basel Missionaries were stationed in the Krobo area; and as part of their efforts to Christianize the local population, they constructed Western styled houses and introduced formal education. These early European architectural designs influenced the houses recorded on the mountain.

Although the archaeological evidence for the local contacts and influence are not as diverse and obvious as those for Europeans, they are still significant. The stone terrace walls on the mountain have also been identified at neighbouring Shai Hills ancient settlements, the ancestral homes of the Shai (also sacked in 1892 [Anquandah 2006]). Furthermore, a high percentage of the local pottery retrieved from the site and other contemporary sites in the east Accra Plains have been credited to the neighbouring Dangme Shai people (a closely related socio-linguistic group [Anquandah 1985: 22]). Even though the results of the mineralogical analysis of the pottery from the Krobo site did not point to the Shai area as the sole source of the ceramics, the ethnographic and historical evidence support Shai origins for the majority of the pottery recovered (a view contrary to an earlier submission [Gblerkpor 2005: 104]). Whereas a potting tradition persists in the Shai area and the potters still produce ceramic vessels similar to those recovered from the site, the potting tradition in Krobo is weak, and moreover, the act of potting is almost absent. Also, Krobo oral and historical accounts allege that the Shai were commercial potters who supplied the predominantly farming Krobo population with pottery for domestic use and for the export of their palm oil to Erurope (Anquandah 1985: 22). Based on the available data, it is maintained that even if the Krobo produced some pottery while on the mountain, the bulk was probably of Shai origin.

Conclusion

The presence of state structures including shrines, palaces, as well as the well planned nature of the settlement pattern suggest that the communities had attained a high level of political, socio-cultural, economic and

landscape developments before their expulsion in 1892. The high numbers of domestic and ritual artifacts and the near absence of agricultural implements at the site, indicates that the site was principally used for habitation rather than for agricultural purposes.

The high representation of artifacts such as iron anklets and bells, cowries, glass beads, and schnapps associated with traditional ceremonies corroborates reports of intense indigenous religious rituals by the Krobo on the mountain. The close similarity between artifacts recovered from shrine context on the mountain, and ethnographic ritual objects from the present successor communities indicate retention of some aspects of past customs and religious ritual. The typical association of schnapps bottles with *mumui* indicates the utility of both imported liquor and palm-wine during local rites and festivals in the past.

The prevalence of imported trade goods, the presence of what is believed to be the treasury for the settlement and the massive infrastructural development suggests economic, social and political prosperity of the settlement during the 19th century. The study also shows that the stone terraces of the Krobo Mountain were a land reclamation strategy that was aimed at creating more habitable areas for occupation. The terraces provided the basic adaptive tool with which the people coped with the conditions posed by the steep-sided nature of the terrain. The abundance of naturally occurring stone made stone-terracing the most logical response to the demands of the environment. The finds also confirm that stone masonry survived up to the time of the abandonment of the settlement.

To a very large extent, the present landscape was created by the ancient Krobo. The demand for more houses by the increased population led to the construction of stone terraces and building of two-storey houses to accommodate more people. The landscape demonstrates the industrious spirit of the Krobo, and shows their resolve to make the hostile mountain terrain their dwelling place in the prevailing hostile political environment. The research therefore reveals the complex interaction between the inhabitants and their natural habitat, which demonstrates how nature and culture influence each other in a complex manner.

The high representation (22.0%) of pottery for storing water, as well as the absence of a major source of water on the mountain is indicative of the water crisis the people faced on top of the mountain. The figure also shows that the inhabitants developed rigorous traditional water management strategies. On the other hand, the hundreds of whole pots found on the mountain support oral and written historical claims that the settlement was abandoned in haste. So far, the earliest dateable artifacts are dated to the 18th and 19th centuries. Future excavations in cave and rock shelter are expected to produce data that will help determine the earliest occupation level of the settlement.

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Notes:

1. Dipo: Krobo traditional puberty rites for females.
2. Klama is Krobo folk music
3. Kloyo-sikplemi is the annual festival for the Yilo Krobo.
4. Huza is a traditional Krobo cooperative land acquisition system.
In this traditional land purchasing system, a group of interested land buyers selected a wealthy or rich person in the Krobo society to buy a plot of land on their behalf. The plots were later paid for and shared among the individual contributors.

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