

Basic Detail Report



Collar

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Maasai

Medium

Glass beads and metal

Description

Both beads and the practice of beading within Africa have ancient origins. The oldest dated beads globally were made about 72,000 years ago from shell, bones, and other natural materials. Jumping ahead about 71 millennia, beads made in the Middle East and Southern Asia first started appearing in South Africa by around the 7th century of the common era, brought by Arab and Swahili traders. As major bead-making centers were created in Europe, trade beads began to come to Africa by way of Portuguese and Dutch traders. Since the 16th century, there has been a steady trade of glass beads from Europe, with most today now being imported from countries like the Czech Republic. For many cultures, such as the Maasai of Tanzania, beadwork is used to adorn objects that indicate one's status and tribal identity. Maasai women wear different kinds of beaded neck rings depending on whether they are young women, of a marriageable age, or married. The same largely holds true for boys and men, whose rank can be determined from their jewelry. Though this collar has not had its subgroup identified, it would likely have been worn by a man based on the arrow-shaped adornment having traditionally represented warriorhood. Different Maasai subgroups use different color combinations and patterns to distinguish their jewelry from one another.

Dimensions

16 1/4 × 14 in. (41.3 × 35.6 cm)