Glass Beads and the Gold Burials of Zambia

Peter Robertshaw and Marilee Wood

The archaeological site of Ingombe Ilede in Zambia (Figure 1) was excavated in the 1960s, first by James Chaplin and then, early in his career, by Brian Fagan, better known as a prolific author of archaeological books for a wide readership. The site comprises a typical African Iron-Age village but one with an associated cemetery containing exceptionally rich grave goods of gold, bronze, and copper, as well as cloth, marine shells, and glass beads. The elite residents of this site had become rich from their involvement in long-distance trade that connected the site to and across the Indian Ocean, as well as across different regions of the African interior. These exciting discoveries prompted debate over the age of the burials: did they precede or postdate the arrival of the Portuguese in this part of the world? The dating evidence that was assembled over the next few years indicated that the burials were probably about 600 years old, placing them in the 14th or early 15th century, just prior to Portuguese contact along the Zambezi River.

The glass beads recovered from Ingombe Ilede offer a means of independently dating the site (Robertshaw and Wood 2017). Although we were unable to find the beads themselves, which were supposedly housed in the Livingstone Museum in Zambia, it was possible to examine a collection of beads from the site mounted on a card that is housed in the MuseuMAfricA in Johannesburg (Figure 2). This card had been prepared by A.P. du Toit (1965, 1969) during his analysis of the excavated beads. Our examination revealed that the great majority of the beads belong to the Khami series of (drawn) beads which are found widely across southern Africa and are well dated to between the mid-15th to mid-17th centuries (Wood 2011), thus confirming the new later dating of the site. The identification of Khami series beads was confirmed by chemical analysis, using LA-ICP-MS, of a sample of the beads. They are made of mineral-soda-
alumina glass of sub-type 2, known to have been manufactured from raw materials in India (Dussubieux et al. 2010).

The bead card also includes examples of Zimbabwe series (wound) beads which generally date to the 14th-15th centuries (Wood 2011). In this case, the fact that the Zimbabwe series beads were found in association with those of the Khami series in most of the burials provides a terminus post quem for these burials as the mid-15th century. It seems then that the Zimbabwe series beads must have been kept as heirlooms, perhaps specifically for later internment among the grave goods of high-status individuals. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that these beads, which are larger than those of the Khami series, appeared only on necklaces worn by the deceased, a location where they were less likely to be lost or damaged compared to beads worn on the arms and legs. Chemical analysis again confirmed the identification of the Zimbabwe series beads; they are made of soda-lime glass, with relatively high levels of alumina, which was fluxed with plant ash. The origins of this glass are not well understood, though stable isotope analyses seem to point to a Middle Eastern source (Fenn, Killick, and Robertshaw: unpublished data). What is also intriguing is that while the glass chemistry of the Zimbabwe series beads unequivocally identifies them as such, only one of them conforms to the standard morphology of the Zimbabwe series which is characterized by small drawn beads. It is possible that these large wound beads were produced somewhere in the region by reworking the small imports.

In sum, the new dating and bead evidence disproves any notion that the rise of Ingombe Ilede may have contributed to the decline of Great Zimbabwe. Instead we must now view the wealth of Ingombe Ilede within its own regional context, involving not only possible connections to Portuguese and Swahili traders along the coast, but also ties with other interior regions such as the Zambian Copperbelt, the Mutapa state south of the Zambezi, and the Luba kingdom of Central Africa (Killick 2017).

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Update on Imitation Amber Bead Sample Cards in the Jablonec Museum of Glass and Jewelry

Rosanna Falabella and Floor Kaspers

Investigation of the origins of imitation amber beads made from early synthetic materials such as Celluloid, Galalith, and phenol-formaldehyde (PF) resins has yielded little in the way of firm documentation of such beads on historic sample cards. One group of sample cards, photographed in the 1980s by John Picard and discussed recently (Falabella 2016), possibly showed PF beads from the inter-war period. In order to verify the composition, Floor Kaspers visited the Museum of Glass and Jewelry in Jablonec nad Nisou, Czech Republic, and was able to inspect and photograph the beads on these cards.

The sample cards bear the logo of the Sachse Company, a well-know jewelry and bead export firm that operated out of Jablonec (Kaspers 2014). Since the Sachse Company was in business from the late 1880s to 1920, the cards document imitation amber beads being manufactured during that time period.

Figures 1 and 4 compare bead sample cards nos. 196, 197, and 198 as documented in the 1980s and again in March 2017. The cards were nailed into a shallow wood box for storage so the reverse sides were not available for inspection. Figures 2 and 3 show close-ups of sections of cards nos. 196 and 198. The beads and bulb-like objects (possibly walking stick or parasol handles) have deteriorated greatly in the last 30+ years. Beads that are still intact have faded in color and show internal cracks and crazes. Other beads and bulbs have chunks that have fallen out, or have broken into pieces. Both the disintegration and the color change from yellow-brown to yellow-white are confirmation that these items are made of Celluloid, an early thermoplastic material invented in 1870, and made from cellulose nitrate and camphor.

The deterioration of Celluloid items is well documented in the conservation field; such items require low humidity, low temperature, and continual air exchange for optimal storage (Reilly 1991). The degradation of Celluloid produces nitric acid which can attack metals or other cellulosic materials such as paper and wood in close proximity. The large amount of brown-colored debris in Figure 4 is from the oxidation of the metal nails or tacks by the acid fumes generated during the degradation of the beads. The nail heads can be seen in Figure 1 at the corners of the cards, along with a small amount of rusty particles near some of them. In Figure 4 the nail heads are mostly gone.

Based on this finding, it is easy to understand why imitation amber beads made from Celluloid are not found in the African trade today. In all likelihood, any that were sent to that continent around 100 years ago have literally fallen apart after exposure to heat and humidity.

It is useful to note that in contrast to Celluloid (a thermoplastic), Galalith and any PF materials such as Bakelite® are highly crosslinked polymers and are very resistant
to environmental degradation under ambient storage conditions. The authors hope to return to the archived bead cards at the museum in the near future and report on both Galalith and PF beads from the inter-war period.

Thanks to Gerard Chingas for provided photo-editing assistance.

Figure 1. Sachse Co. imitation amber bead sample cards nos. 196, 197, and 198 (photo: John Picard).

Figure 2. Close-up of beads on Sachse card no. 196 (photo: Floor Kaspers).

Figure 3. Close-up of Sachse card no. 198 in March 2017 (photo: Floor Kaspers).
Figure 4. Sachse sample cards nos. 196, 197, and 198 in March 2017 (photo: Floor Kaspers).

References Cited

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Carbonized Botanical Beads from the Ontario Pre-Contact Archaeological Record
Rudy Fecteau

Introduction

Carbonized botanical artifacts are rare in the Ontario pre-contact archaeological record. During the past four decades I have been actively involved with archaeobotanical research and have examined tens of thousands of samples from hundreds of pre-contact sites spanning a 4,000 year period. I have identified only a few carbonized botanical artifacts, two of which are beads. Other researchers have also identified some. Recent excavations by Archaeological Services Inc. in 2014 recovered wooden beads at a 15th-century Huron-Wendat site in Whitby, Ontario, among the tens of thousands of artifacts (Watson 2017).

This article stems from chance encounters with charred botanical artifacts from unfamiliar archaeological contexts. Normally I am busy examining and reporting on carbonized plant material from light fraction samples processed by CRM companies. I have rarely had access to heavy fraction material and only once to quarter-inch screening samples. Below I discuss single carbonized beads recovered from a Meadowood-occupation site and an early-17th-century Huron-Wendat village in southern Ontario.

Wood Bead

In 2013, I examined and reported on carbonized botanical remains in feature samples from the Stavebank Road site (Fecteau 2013). This is a multi-component camp with a significant Meadowood (ca. 2,500 years B.P.) component (Wood 2015:127) located on a terrace overlooking the Credit River in Mississauga, Regional Municipality of Peel, Ontario. The site was excavated by New Directions Archaeology, a CRM company based in Ancaster, Ontario.

The information from my report was also included in Lara Wood’s M.A. thesis (Wood 2015). In addition to light and heavy fractions, I examined feature remains from quarter-inch screening, the first time I have had the opportunity to do so!

The matrix of this sample consisted of mud chunks that contained tiny charred wood remnants. One mud fragment in particular had a barely noticeable tubular shape protruding from its side. I carefully teased the specimen from its mud crust and it revealed itself as something that had been manufactured – a bead (Figure 1). The charred object weighs .80 g and is 19.35 mm in length by 8.56 mm in diameter. A 1.0-mm hole was drilled completely through its long axis. The interior cell structure appears to be “caramelized,” making identification of the tree species difficult. I was, however, able to make a partial identification as deciduous wood. Charred wooden beads are rare at Ontario sites and this bead’s early date of circa 2,500 years B.P., as well as its location in screening material, make it an exciting find.

Plum Seed Bead

In early 2015, several bags of carbonized macro-botanical remains from a looter’s back dirt pile at the Allen Tract site (now the Ahatsitstari Site) in northern Simcoe County, Ontario, were given to me for analysis by Dr. Alicia Hawkins of Laurentian University, Sudbury. Work to remediate eroding banks created by looting was an initiative of the Huronia Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society. All the sediment was screened through 1/8-in. mesh screen. The glass bead assemblage from this site clearly places it in Glass Bead Period II (early 17th century) (Hawkins 2014). The
remains were examined, identified, and documented (Fecteau 2015).

The Ahatsitstari samples provided an opportunity to examine floral material from an unlikely source. In the carbonized botanical matrix I noticed a Canada plum (Prunus nigra) seed measuring 12.0 mm x 11.0 mm x 7.0 mm with apertures in both sides (Figure 2). Under closer magnification, I noticed that the drilled holes exhibited a distinct beveled pattern seen in beads made from other materials such as bone and marine shell. Subsequent photos provided by Dr. Katherine Paterson at Sustainable Archaeology, McMaster University, Hamilton, clearly show this distinct pattern (Figure 2).

**Conclusion**

Botanical beads are rarely encountered (or recognized) at archaeological sites in Canada, and North America in general. It is, therefore, interesting to note their presence at both a prehistoric and a post-contact aboriginal site in southern Ontario. It is hoped that this will encourage others to look for them in their archaeological material and report any new findings.

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The Polk Purse: An Iroquois Gift to a U.S. President
Dolores N. Elliott

In September of 1845, James N. Cusick, a Tuscarora chief, led an Iroquois delegation to Washington to meet with President James K. Polk. He carried special gifts for the president and his wife.

James K. Polk was the 11th president of the United States and served from 4 March 1845 until 4 March 1849. He made good on his pledge to serve only one term. Three months after the end of his term, he caught cholera and died on 15 June 1849. Polk is often considered the last strong pre-Civil War president, having met during his four years in office every major domestic and foreign policy goal set during his campaign. He is responsible for the annexation of Texas, Oregon, California, and most of the Southwest after victory in the Mexican-American War that nearly doubled the size of the United States. He also worked with the Six Nations Iroquois, encouraging them to move west.

Polk’s diary records that on Monday, 8 September 1845, “A delegation of Five Indians from the six nations of New York had an audience with the President & presented their grievances, accompanied by an application of 600 [members] of these tribes to migrate West of the Mississippi” (Quaife 1910:20-21). The president held a talk with them through their interpreter.

Two days later, he met with them again:
Had another interview with the delegation from the six Nations of Indians in New York. In which it was agreed that [if] as many as 250 [members] of their tribes would agree to emigrate to their country West of [the] Missouri this Fall, the U.S. would remove them. It was agreed also that a Treaty should be held with the Oneidas (who were represented in the delegation) of Greenbay, for a cession of their lands to the U. States, with the view to their emigration to the same country West of the Missouri.

After the talk was over, Kusick, a Tuscarora chief, presented a bead bag from his wife to Mrs. Polk, and a small bead pocket-book to the President (Quaife 1910:22-23).

The pieces of beadwork are the only gifts mentioned so they must have been very special. The chiefs...
by their request were conducted to Mrs. Polk’s parlor and introduced to her. They appeared to be much gratified at the manner in which their business had been settled. In their talk, they addressed the president as their Great Father and Mrs. Polk as their Great Mother.

One of the beaded items (Figures 1-2) is now in the collection of the President James K. Polk Home and Museum in Columbia, Tennessee, where I came across it during a museum tour in May of 2017. Thomas Price, the curator of the museum, generously shared his information on the purse with me and provided photographs of both sides. It is not clear whether this piece is the “bead bag” or the “small bead pocket-book.” The curator reported that Sarah Polk retained the purse along with most of the objects that they collected during a lifetime in politics. After her death in 1891, her great-niece and heir inherited the objects, and brought the objects including the beaded purse to Columbia in 1929, where they have been ever since.

The purse is beaded in the manner used by Seneca women in the 1840s, and similar purses were collected during that time period by Lewis H. Morgan and illustrated in his publications (e.g., Morgan 1851). One of the purses (Figure 3) adorns the cover of Lewis H. Morgan on Iroquois Material Culture” by Elisabeth Tooker (1994).

When the Polk purse was reported on at the 2017 International Iroquois Beadwork Conference, Mary and Samantha Jacobs, two contemporary Seneca beadworkers in attendance, interpreted the designs on the purse. They recognized the figure on the front as a bird (Figure 1) and the reason it is not symmetrical is to fit in the head. The design on the back (Figure 2) they identified as a plant, perhaps a fiddlehead fern. The knowledge of those designs has been passed down through generations of Seneca women for 175 years.

Special thanks to Thomas Price, Curator, President James K. Polk Home and Museum; Richard Hill, Sr., Tuscarora educator; and Lawrence Hauptman, historian and scholar.

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The Tucson Bead Symposium

The Tucson Bead Symposium will be held 31 January 2018 starting at 6:30 PM at the Sonoran Glass School, 633 West 18th Street, Tucson, Arizona, in conjunction with the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. Presented by Ornament magazine, The Ethnographic Group, and Sonoran Glass School, this event will feature a diverse range of thought-provoking, inspiring, and informative presentations on subjects relating to ancient and antique beads from around the world.

Robert K. Liu: A Critical Examination of Early Mosaic Face Beads Excavated by George Reisner in Nubia

Building on previous research, the author hopes to determine if all mosaic face beads excavated by Reisner were locally modified, and if so, were mosaic face beads of Medusa as a Gorgon with stylized snake hair the basis of all early face beads? This would mean that all mosaic face beads of Medusa as a woman with long hair, bust, and necklace are the result of altering the basic face cane by secondary hotworking.

Jamey D. Allen: The Albert J. Summerfield Collection – Great Glass Beads

Albert Summerfield, one of the two principal bead collectors in the Pacific Northwest, amassed a world-class collection of beads and jewelry representing quite a few materials and cultural origins. His greatest interest was glass beads, particularly Venetian beads, including those traded into West Africa and this presentation will highlight some of these.
Floor Kaspers: Beadmaking in Bohemia – The Interaction Between Supply and Demand

Czech beadmakers in the region of Jablonec have produced a great variety of glass beads to match artifacts and materials that were popular around the world in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Talhakimts, prayer beads, shells, coral, lion’s teeth, amber, all made in glass and ceramic, were only some of their products. This presentation will focus on the way the Czechs created a demand for their beads in parts of Africa and Asia, and will show a variety of examples.

Jonathan Mark Kenoyer: Sourcing and Authenticating Ancient Stone Beads – New Approaches to Bead Analysis and Sourcing

Systematic studies of beads from excavated contexts in the Indus region dating to 2600-1900 B.C.E. have made it possible to define specific aspects of ancient bead styles and production techniques. This has led to the determination of trade patterns within Asia. Beads made with Indus technology and raw materials were also produced outside the Indus region and this can be determined using both stylistic analysis and the geological sourcing of carnelian.

Tom Holland: The String, the Knot, and the Bead

Join in an exploration of the human relationship with the knotted string and the bead. Along with highlighting the use of stringer work in glass bead history, this presentation will illustrate some of the earliest beads, then advance through time to the discovery of glass.

Paul Engle: The Alchemy of Color

Paul will explore glass coloring in Renaissance Europe for beads and ornaments.

Linda Sweeney: What Makes Contemporary Glass Beads Collectable?

Thomas Stricker: A Closer Look at African Powder Glass Beads

Explores Kiffa (Muraqat), Bodom, and akoso beads, plus a brief introduction of Billy Steinberg’s new book on the subject, Wild Beads of Africa.

You can help keep The Bead Forum vital by sending us your news items, short articles, and interesting tales from the bead world.

Next Deadline: April 1
Recent Publications

Allen, Jamey D. (Billy Steinberg, ed.)

This lavishly illustrated volume offers new insights into the art and technology of powder-glass beads (often referred to as *Bodom* or *akoso*) while also providing an extensive glossary of related bead history, manufacture, and classification.

Anderson, Marcia G.

A detailed study of these elaborate bags. It is lavishly illustrated with a wealth of color images of some of the finest extant beaded bandolier bags in museum and private collections, as well as a mass of historic photos of bags in use, both indigenous and non-Native.

Brumm, Adam et al.

Late Pleistocene finds at the Leang Bulu Bettue...
rockshelter on Sulawesi, Indonesia, include two bead blanks fashioned from the same lower incisor of a pig-deer and a pendant consisting of a bear cuscus phalange with a perforation at its proximal end. Includes information regarding production techniques.

Díaz-Guardamino Uribe, Marta et al.

Provides a general characterization of garments adorned with beads documented in the Montelirio tholos in southwestern Spain, including considerations of their manufacture and use in mortuary practices. In Spanish.

Foulds, Elizabeth M.

This book aims not only to address regional differences in the appearance and chronology of beads, but also to explore the role that these objects played within the networks and relationships that constructed Iron Age society. It seeks to understand how they were used during their lives and how they came to be deposited within the archaeological record, in order to establish the social processes that glass beads were bound within.

Green, Richard

An examination of the beaded gloves of various North American native tribes including Athapaskan, Ojibwe, Stoney-Nakoda, Plateau, Swampy Cree, and others. Well illustrated with numerous color photographs.

Green, William et al.

Suggests that the decoration of pots with beads in the Plains and elsewhere in North America was a syncretic practice that illustrates occasional Native experimentation with glass use in a volatile medium.

Guzzo Falci, Catarina and Maria Jacqueline Rodet

Site MMA-02 in the Serra dos Carajás region of Brazil, associated with the Amazonian variant of the Tupiguarani tradition, was a specialized place for the production of body adornments from a raw stone material known as silicified kaolinite. Disc beads were the main product. In Spanish.

Heckel, Claire E.

The organization of bead production during the Aurignacian has significant implications for understanding the role of these artifacts in Upper Palaeolithic societies, and the evolution of symbolic behavior and social organization more generally.

Irwin, Robert

Description with photographs of the making of colorful mud beads deep in the countryside in Côte d’Ivoire, with demonstrations by beadmaker Dambili Mamouri.

Kanungo, Alok Kumar (ed.)
2017 Stone Beads of South and Southeast Asia: Archaeology, Ethnography and Global Connections. Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar.

This is the most comprehensive book on stone beads. With contributions from 25 leading scholars, the book dwells on related matter from ancient as well as modern India and other regions of Asia.
The Bead Forum

Delves into the composition and manufacture of the beads, as well as the source of the material.

Mitchem, Jeffrey M.
Examines how Spanish objects were incorporated into the lives of Florida’s Native peoples and what sorts of alterations were made to the objects.

Mucci, Robert
An overview of Kuba royal belts of beads, cowries, hide, and cloth showing an example from the author’s collection as well as those from other private and public collections. Well illustrated.

Nguyen Kim Dung
Focuses on a comparative study of ornaments manufactured from semi-precious stone, metals, and glass recovered from Sa Huynh jar-burial sites in Vietnam with those from contemporary sites across Southeast Asia and demonstrates how Sa Huynh society played a significant role in regional trade networks during the Iron Age.

Panini, Augusto
This handsome, large-format book is richly illustrated with excellent color images which reveal the wide range of bead manufacturing types, decorative styles, and forms that poured out of Venice by the ton during

Karklins, Karlis
Beads fashioned from the stems of clay tobacco pipes have been found at a number of archaeological sites, principally in the Northeast. This practice appears to have begun in the early 17th century and continued until at least the beginning of the 19th century.

Keegan, William F. and Corinne L. Hofman
Beads and pendants of shell and stone from various archaeological sites around the Caribbean are mentioned throughout the book (see the index for specifics).

McCoy, T.J. et al.
the 19th century. Includes many sample cards and histories of several prominent Venetian beadmakers.

Peche-Quilichini, Kewin et al.

In a natural shelter at Campu Stefanu, Corsica, the Middle Bronze Age levels yielded a necklace composed of vitreous and resinous beads. Radiocarbon dating indicates these artifacts were deposited during the 13th century B.C. (last part of the Middle Bronze Age). In French.

Pymm, Rachael

The medicinal uses of the snakestone bead within the British Isles during the 18th and 19th centuries are surveyed and considered for the first time.

Råhlander, Moa
2017 How Beads Come Together: Late Iron Age Glass Beads as Past Possessions and Present Sources. Masteruppsats i Arkeologi, Stockholms Universitet.

Demonstrates the potential for understanding first millennium glass beads not as individual representatives of types, but as collections of objects brought together and curated by owners. The author uses her experience as a skilled beadmaker to investigate processes of bead production and the mechanics of bead collection current in Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England during the 6th to 9th centuries. Includes a catalog with color macro images of all the bead types.

Wiesenberg, Frank

Experimenting with a bead furnace to replicate Roman-period beads and vials. In German and English.

To find other publications related to bead research, visit the SBR’s Researching the World’s Beads Bibliography ([https://beadresearch.org/resources/researching-the-worlds-beads-bibliography/](https://beadresearch.org/resources/researching-the-worlds-beads-bibliography/)).
The Bead Forum

Who We Are

The Society of Bead Researchers is a non-profit corporation, founded in 1981 to foster research on beads and beadwork of all materials and periods and to expedite the dissemination of the resultant knowledge. Membership is open to all persons involved in the study of beads, as well as those interested in keeping abreast of current trends in bead research. The Society publishes a biannual newsletter, The Bead Forum, and an annual peer-reviewed journal, BEADS: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers. The Society’s website address is www.beadresearch.org. Free PDF downloads of articles from Volume 28 of Beads are available at our Journal website www.beadresearchjournal.org.

Contents of the newsletter include current research news, listings of recent publications, conference and symposia announcements, and brief articles on various aspects of bead research. Both historic and prehistoric subject materials are welcome.

The deadline for submissions for the next Bead Forum is 1 April 2018. Electronic submissions should be in Word for Windows 6.0 or later with no embedded sub-programs such as “End Notes.” References cited should be in Historical Archaeology format (http://www.sha.org/documents/SHAStyleGuide-Dec2011.pdf).

Send electronic or paper submissions to the Forum editor:

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