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A COMPARATIVE CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF AN INDIAN  
BURIAL SITE IN SOUTHEAST WASHINGTON

By

RODERICK SPRAGUE

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## ANALYSIS OF TRADE GOODS

by Arthur Woodward

Altadena, California

Beads - The most common denominator among the specimens from burial #10 are the various sizes of the red beads with the translucent exteriors and the opaque white or yellow cores. These were known to the trade as the "Cornaline d'Aleppo," taking the name from the famous city in the Near East which was a distribution point for beads out of Venice. These beads, listed as numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are very common in Indian burials and on ethnological specimens ranging from the Interior of Alaska, northwestern Canada, the Great Plains down into the southern Plains, and the full length of the San Joaquin Valley of California with the heaviest concentration of them in the northern part of the valley.

In 1844 the red and white beads were the principal type of beads at the Russian trading post of Nulato on the Yukon River about 500 miles above its mouth. The other type of ornament in demand at the same time among the Athapascans in Alaska was the dentalium, known among those tribes as tzukli. At Nulato an Indian woman was hired to string the glass beads, the unit of trade being one fathom of such beads of the medium size. Twelve fathoms of beads were usually obtained from one pound of the ornaments. In 1843 the Russians sold 280 pounds or 3,360 fathoms.

During this period, 1840 - 1860, an infinite variety of beads came out of Venice, or rather Murano, a small island near Venice, the center of the glass bead making industry during the first half of the 19th century.

Accompanying the red and white beads during this period, over the areas already mentioned, were types listed as numbers 14, 16, 17, and 18 and occasionally numbers 34, 35, 36, and 37. The later were the inlaid beads or, as the traders termed them, "fancy beads." These took more time in the making than the general run of glass beads, hence cost more, and the traders had to charge accordingly.

The names of the various bead types changed from generation to generation with the exception of some terms which lingered on down through the centuries. Thus in the period 1855 - 1860 the ordinary beads used by white women as well as Indians were divided into different categories and sizes. For example the large size, faceted beads represented by numbers 17 and 18 were known, for some mysterious reason unknown to the chap who described the beads in 1858, as "O.P." beads. These beads were somewhat roughly made by taking the usual glass tube, breaking it down into the required sizes, and then grinding varying numbers of facets on each end, roughly seven. These 14 ground facets, plus the untouched areas on the tube, presented a series of 21 facets altogether, in some instances even more or less. The colors ranged from clear, uncolored glass through topaz, green, and blue. In the main, these were translucent beads but others, such as number 17, were opaque glass.

The coarser small, round beads of all colors; white, yellow, blue, green, black, red, pink, etc.; were sold in bulk or in masses. These were graded according to colors and numbers, and were termed "pound beads." These were rather coarse beads, approximating in size those listed as number 4 and 12. This size bead in the opaque white glass enamel or paste is often termed "pack pony" or simply "pony beads" because they are commonly believed to have been the first beads carried into the Indian country on

pack animals. The fallacy of this nomenclature is that at the same time these coarse white beads were being taken in, many other types and sizes were likewise being traded to the tribesmen. Tribal preference as to color and size often dictated the types of beads used by the different Indians. This held true from the Eskimo in the north to the Aztecs of Mexico, and from the Iroquois of New York to the Athapascans of Canada. On the plains in the 1820's and 1830's, it is true that the coarse white, black, red, and blue beads were used largely (and somewhat sparingly) in the ornamentation of skin garments, but the smaller beads as well as the large ovoid, heavy beads were also used.

The smallest glass beads, translucent and opaque, of many colors, were known to the trade as "seed beads." The Indians used them on garments, cradle covers, knife sheaths, moccasins, etc. Typical small seed beads are represented by numbers 26, 28, and 31 of burial 10; numbers 10, 21, 22, 23, 27, and 29 of burial 17; numbers 9 and 25 of burial 11; number 32 of burial 16 and a coarser size in number 24b of burial 17. Even number 2 of the Cornaline d'Alleppe type would be of a size coming under the classification of a seed bead.

Of the larger, coarser beads which were usually made into necklaces or occasionally fastened on the ends of thrums attached to garments, quivers, bags, etc., the beads were of two general classes; the round opaque "enamel" or "paste" beads and the translucent beads of different colors. The enamel and clear glass beads are of the same basic materials except that the opaque beads such as numbers 14, 15, 34, 35, and 36 have had other ingredients added to make them opaque. Numbers 16 and 37 are examples of the clear glass specimens.

Before discussing the "fancy" beads I will explain briefly the

manufacture of glass beads. Glass tubes were chopped into the assorted sizes and then placed in an annealing oven or revolving drum in which ashes were deposited. The drum was heated and the fragments of tubing tumbles; and, as they slithered around in the ashes, the holes were filled, preventing them from squeezing together. The tumbling and the heat rounded the edges. In some instances, as in the case of numbers 17 and 18, the tubes were simply broken into sections and the individual beads faceted by hand grinding.

In the case of the "fancy beads" the basic rod was given various figures by an overlay of differently colored glass. Some of the effects were quite elaborate. During the 19th century the technique and effects varied considerably from the earlier styles. The ancestry of these inlaid beads is two or three thousand years old. Number 34, for example, is a type of bead which has a very ancient ancestry and is known to collectors of Syrian-Egyptian beads as the "melon" bead. Originally it was in black glass. Eighteenth and nineteenth century examples are crystal clear, yellow, black, pink, blue, and white. Number 19 which is octagonal in this instance also appears in spherical and cylindrical forms. During the latter half of the 18th century spherical beads; white body and inlaid dots, usually pink center in blue; were facetiously termed "Kitty Fisher's eyes" by the lace makers of England who used them to weigh the ends of bobbins. Kitty Fisher was a popular actress at that time. Other fancy beads include numbers 35 and 36.

The round brass beads (numbers 38, 39, 40a, and 40b) were familiar trade objects during the period 1850 to 1870.

Buttons - The brass military buttons were struck by Obed and Otis Robinson, Attleboro, Massachusetts, between the years 1820 to 1832. The buttons are for coat and sleeve and were U.S. General Service. For that

Germany.

For what purpose the small metal can found in burial 10 was used can not be determined. It may have been a cap box or it may have been for baking powder. The fragments were probably part of the lid. Tin (i.e. sheet iron) containers date well back to the 1820's in this country and a few years earlier in England and France.

The brass hooks and eyes date from the period 1840 to 1860.

Marble - This is a glazed, fired clay marble of a grade just above the common unglazed marble, commonly known as a crocky.

The cloth fragments, aside from those with patterns, might be from any period. The patterned pieces indicate the period 1840 to 1860.

Summary - Burial number 5 appears to be about the oldest. At least it contained the oldest definitely datable material, i.e. the brass military buttons. It may date from the 1840's.

Burial number 10 seems to have been the most prolific interment. Judging by the beads, in association with the 1856 bronze coin this burial falls within the very late 1850's and early 1860's.

Burial number 11 falls into the same period as burial number 10.