

Analysis of Glass Trade Beads from 9 Ge 948

During salvage excavations at site 9 Ge 948 in the Wallace Reservoir, two burial pits yielded a number of aboriginal vessels and four groups of glass trade beads. This paper presents a descriptive and comparative analysis of twenty types of beads from this site. The interpretation advanced is that the glass beads represent contact, either direct or indirect, with Spanish groups to the south, sometime during the period 1565-1615.

Glass beads are classified according to their manufacturing processes, colors, and types of decoration. All glass beads recovered at site 9 Ge 948 were constructed by the hollow cane technique, in which a large bubble of glass is drawn out into a long tube, or "cane", which is then cut into short sections for beads. In the case of beads from site 9 Ge 948, these sections of cane were then tumbled over heat with a polishing agent to round and smooth the beads, and are therefore known as tumbled cane beads.

The beads are further classified according to their structure. Simple beads are composed of one layer of glass, Compound beads are composed of two or more layers of glass, and Complex beads have applique or inset decorative elements (See Good, 1972 for further discussion of bead manufacturing techniques and typology).

BEAD TYPES

Necklace beads of Simple Construction

Type 1. Nearly opaque turquoise blue spherical or oblate spheroidal bead. 7-10mm diameter. 50 specimens.

Type 2. Translucent medium blue or blue-green spherical or barrel shaped bead. 4-11mm diameter. 37 specimens.

Type 3. Translucent Green, spherical bead. 5-9mm diameter. 2 specimens.

Type 4. Opaque Navy Blue spherical bead. 5mm diameter. 1 specimen.

Type 5. Opaque white spherical to olive shaped bead. 4mm diameter
3 specimens.

Type 6. Translucent navy blue bead with pressed facets. 3mm diameter.
1 specimen.

Necklace beads of Complex Construction

Type 7. Opaque turquoise blue eye bead. This bead is identical to Type 1 with the addition of three equally spaced white stripes placed parallel to the perforation. Between the stripes are three "eyes" made up of slices of millefiori cane of red and white glass, giving a sunburst effect. 9mm diameter. 1 specimen.

Type 8. Opaque turquoise blue spherical bead with one white stripe. 7mm diameter. 1 specimen. It is possible that the "stripe" is a flaw in the glass, and not an applied stripe.

Type 9. "Gooseberry" bead. this bead consists of a clear inner layer with many white stripes placed parallel to the perforation. The stripes are then covered with a final exterior layer of clear glass. Thus the bead is both compound and complex in construction.

Seed beads of Simple Construction

Type 10. Opaque black donut shaped bead. 7 specimens.

Type 11. Translucent dark navy blue donut shaped bead. 32 specimens

Type 12. Translucent medium navy blue donut shaped bead. 78 specimens.

Type 13. Translucent yellow-amber donut shaped bead. 5 specimens.

Type 14. Translucent "root beer" (purple-brown) donut shaped bead.
14 specimens.

Type 15. Clear donut shaped bead. 15 specimens.

Type 16. Translucent blue-green donut shaped bead. 3 specimens.

Type 17. Opaque blue barrel shaped bead. 3mm diameter. 1 specimen.

Seed Beads of Compound Construction.

Type 18. Translucent green exterior ^{OVER} clear core donut shaped bead.
21 specimens.

Type 19. Clear glass over opaque white core donut shaped bead. 7 specimens.

Seed Beads of Complex Construction

Type 20. "Gooseberry" seed. As number 9 above, but small donut shaped.
1 specimen.

Table 1 gives comparative data from other sites. It is clear that the bead assemblage is closely related to those from the Bradford Ferry Site and the Terrapin Creek Site, both located in northeastern Alabama (Smith 1977; 1979), and with the Philip Mound in Florida (Benson 1967; Karklins 1974). Comparable assemblages were also noted at the Wamassee site on St. Catherines Island, Georgia (Author's notes) and the Taskigi site in south central Alabama (Smith 1979).

Bead types 1, 2, and 3 are collectively called Ichucknee Flain in Florida, and are of Spanish origin. The striped "eye" bead, Type 7, is very diagnostic and has been found only at the four sites listed in Table I. The bead can appear either with or without the white stripes, and both varieties co-occur at the Philip Mound and the Bradford Ferry site, suggesting their contemporaneity. The limited distribution of this type suggests that its use is very restricted in time, thus it is a useful type for crossdating purposes. "Eye" beads in general occur on sites in the northeastern U.S. which have been dated to the period 1550-1615 (cf Smith 1977 Appendix A; I. Smith and Graybill 1977).

Elsewhere I have suggested that the Bradford Ferry site, the Terrapin Creek site, and the Taskigi site were near late 16th century Spanish exploratory routes (Smith 1979). Glass beads from all sites used in the comparison are distinctive and occur in areas controlled by the Spanish in the 16th and 17th centuries. These types are not common in sites in Virginia, Pennsylvania, or New York in areas controlled by the English, Dutch, or French.

The Philip Mound in Florida was originally dated to the period 1600-1700 or slightly earlier (Benson 1967), but later analysis by Karklins (1974) gives additional data favoring an origin in the 16th century. I believe that the fact that this is a burial mound should indicate that it predates the period of heavy Spanish mission activity, certainly being pre-1630. My own studies of early Spanish glass beads leads me to believe that use of the Philip Mound began in the early or mid 16th century.

Finally a small collection of beads from the Wamassee Site on St. Catherines Island, Georgia, collected by members of a University of Georgia field party also provided a relatively good comparison, and an increased sample size would be expected to make correspondences even closer. Spanish military and missionary activities on the Georgia Coast began as early as 1564 and were terminated by 1683 or 1684 (Jones 1978).

Thus the beads from site 9 Ge 948 appear to date from the late 16th century; certainly no later than the early 17th century. Direct European contact in the Wallace reservoir area seems unlikely, as most Spanish exploratory routes are usually placed north, south, or east of the area (Swanton 1939; Smith 1979). Indirect aboriginal trade contacts or aboriginal contacts with the Spanish on the Georgia coast appear more likely at this time. A water

route via the Oconee would lead directly to the Spanish on the coast. Elsewhere (Smith IN Press), I have shown similarities of aboriginal ceramics in the Wallace Reservoir with areas of the Georgia Coast, indicating contact with this area had been going on long before Spanish contact.

TABLE 1. GLASS BEAD COMPARISONS

Bead Type	Bradford Ferry	Terrapin Creek	Philip Mound	Taskigi	Wamassee
	<u>1 Ce 73</u>	<u>1 Ce 310</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓		✓
4	-	-			
5	✓	✓	✓		✓
6	✓	-			
7	✓*	*	✓*	*	
8	-	-			
9	✓	✓	✓		✓
10	✓				✓
11	✓				✓
12	✓				✓
13	?		✓		✓
14	✓		✓		
15					
16	✓		?✓		
17			?		
18	-				
19					
20	Shape Variant				

*Similar eye bead, lacking only the white stripes.

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