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BURIAL PRACTICES AS AN INDICATOR OF CULTURAL
CHANGE IN THE LOWER SNAKE RIVER REGION

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CHAPTER II

THE SITES AND THE METHODS

A detailed account of the procedures used in these excavations and some of the problems encountered are of significance to the reader. This section will deal with the physical appearance of the sites, the excavation procedures, and the various physical factors encountered.

Ford Island (45-FR-47)

In 1960, excavations were undertaken on Ford Island which is located 21 miles upstream in the Snake from its confluence with the Columbia River. Ford Island was mentioned as a possible site by the Columbia Basin Project River Basin Survey team (Osborne 1948), but they were unable to gain access to the island because of high water. The site was brought to the attention of Dr. Daugherty by the sons of R. L. Latham in 1959. Members of this family are long-time residents of the area and actually lived on Ford Island at one time.

Ford Island is located in Franklin County, Washington (SE 1/4 sec. 23, NE 1/4 sec. 26, and the SW 1/4 sec. 24, T11N, R33E). Fryxell describes the island in this manner:

Ford Island . . . actually separated from the northern bank of the Snake River only during the high water stage of spring and early summer . . . is a large gravel bar about 3/4 mile long and 1/4 mile wide, with a maximum vertical relief of about thirty-five feet above seasonal low water. Most portions of the island remain exposed

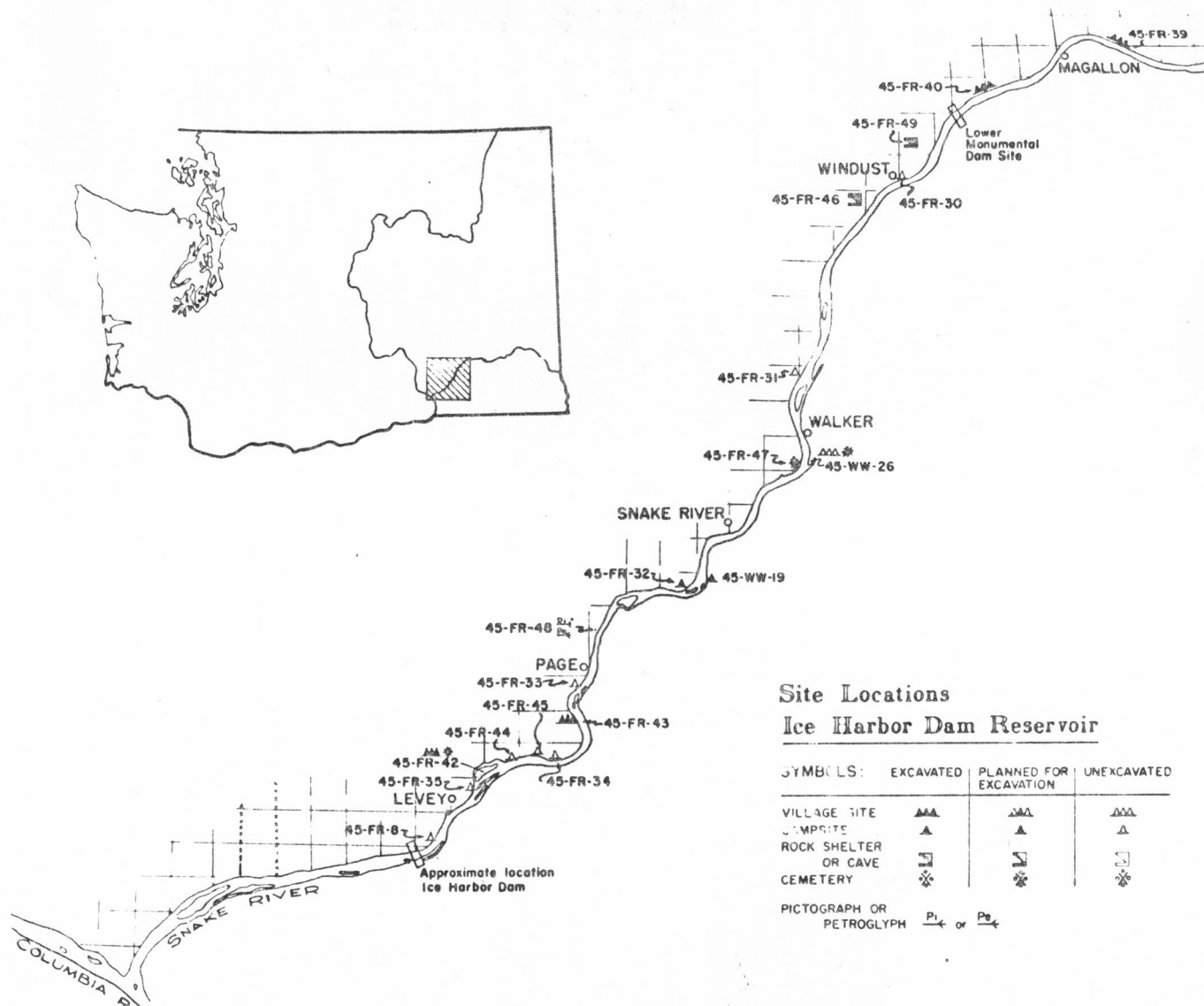


Fig. 1.--Map of the Ice Harbor Reservoir area and the site locations.

at bank-full flood stage; at over bank stage most, if not all, of the island is subject to slack-water flooding with the possible exception of the higher up-stream end where no evidence of driftwood accumulation could be found. Overlying the gravel of which this island is primarily composed, are weakly stratified floodplain silt and windblown sand (1962).

The island is divided into two natural areas: the up-stream one-third is composed of river gravel; the remaining two-thirds is made up of a uniform windblown sand. This downstream portion has been cultivated in the past and more recently has been used for grazing of livestock.

The burial grounds (area A) are located in the southeast corner of the river gravel region and adjacent to the main channel of the river (see Fig. 2). This location has been the target of many local collectors of Indian artifacts, and there was no evidence of any type of grave markings remaining. The locating of undisturbed burials presented a difficult problem. The gravel was so compacted that it eventually became necessary to employ the use of a bulldozer. The operator removed approximately 6 inches of gravel each pass through the area. This was continued until evidence of a canoe or coffin appeared, indicating the location of a burial. From this point on more refined archaeological techniques were used. This method seemed to be quite effective, and little if anything was destroyed or disturbed. For the most part preservation was extremely poor due largely to water leaching.

A midden (area B, Fig. 2) was roughly 75 yards from the burial area in the sandy portion of the island. The habitation area paralleled the river at approximately 70 yards distance,

occupied by the Walulas and the Asotin Site by the Nez Perce whose major subsistence patterns were identical with the Walulas (Anastasio 1955: Fig. 2). We are also reminded that one of the Walula's major dyads was with the Nez Perce.

The grave goods recovered from burials of the historic phase contained items that were almost entirely of Euro-American origin. While discussing "trade goods" it is appropriate to quote Arthur Woodward, a noted authority on early historic items:

The use of the term "trade goods" in relation to those objects of European origin which found their way into the hands of the Indian of the North American continent from the 16th century through the 19th century is, in a sense, a misnomer. Under this category collectors, archaeologists, historians, and ethnologists have lumped all items either traded, sold, or given outright to the tribesmen. In certain areas as many gifts were made of blankets, guns, beads, paint, weapons of the edged variety, kettles, agricultural implements, textiles, bottles, buttons, ornaments, etc., by the French, British, Dutch, Spanish, and American governments as were exchanged by individuals for profit.

However, since the terminology seems fixed, there is no logical reason for discriminating in either the types or methods of the distribution of these goods. Hence, . . . the term "trade good" may be understood to mean all classifications, official and unofficial, of the hundreds of articles given or traded to the Indians (1959).

The Asotin Site grave goods of the historic phase are essentially the same as those recovered at Ford Island. A date estimate for the burials at Ford Island of from 1850 to 1900 seems reasonable. This date estimate is strengthened by the teaspoon recovered from burial 4 and the army buttons that were common to most of these burials. Arthur Woodward estimated that army buttons similar to these reached the Indians occupying this region sometime during the 1850's (1959: 103). The teaspoon resembles very closely Rodgers Bros. A 1, Threaded pattern.

This pattern first appeared just prior to 1847 and probably came into the hands of the Indians in the second half of the nineteenth century. The end of the Indian occupation at Ford Island was around 1900 (Marvin E. Jones, land owner, personal communication).

The historic grave goods recovered from Ford and Fish Hook Islands are typical of those found throughout the region and the entire plateau area. The only possible exception are iron digging sticks which were recovered at Ford Island, but in his recent excavations, Sprague (personal communication) reports their occurrence in the large Palus burial site located at the confluence of the Palouse River with the Snake River.

APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTIVE DATA FROM FORD ISLAND (45-FR-47)

Most of the burials of Ford Island (45-FR-47) were representative of the historic period, and the grave goods consisted almost entirely of historic artifacts.

In presenting the information about the burial practices, the following scheme has been used. Each interment is presented in a modified outline form accompanied, in some cases, with a schematic diagram of the burial. The numbers placed around the skeleton refer to the associated grave good specimens and correspond to the numbers in the burial outline presentation. The schematic diagrams of the skeletons are essentially in the position they were in when exposed. This method of presentation is taken from Combes (1964).

Table 5 presents the classification of trade beads found in this site which is based upon the size and technique of manufacture. Each category is called a style; style variants are based on color differences only. Burial numbers indicate the burials in which the bead styles occurred. The beads were counted only for burials that were undisturbed. The descriptive terminology conforms to that of Woodward (1959).

TABLE 5

TRADE BEADS OF SITE 45-FR-47

Bead Styles and Variants	Description	Number of Beads*	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)
1	Very small (seed bead size) Cornaline d'Aleppo	44	10	2	.5	1
2	Small (large seed bead size) Cornaline d'Aleppo	330 3	6 10 11 12	3	1	2
3	Medium small (coarse seed size) Cornaline d'Aleppo	43 13	6 10 12	4.5	1	2.5
4	Medium (pound bead size) Cornaline d'Aleppo	8	6	5	1	2.5
5	Medium large Cornaline d'Aleppo	1	6	7	2	5
6	Medium and very wide Cornaline d'Aleppo	9	9	5	1.5	7
7	Large and extra wide Cornaline d'Aleppo	9	10	8	3	14
8, a	Very small seed: White	8953	6	2	.5	1
b	Red, translucent	1245	6			
c	Green, translucent	426	6 7			
d	Dark blue, translucent	5 790	10 6			
e	Light blue, opaque	325	6 7			

TABLE 5--Continued

Bead Styles and Variants	Description	Number of Beads	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)	
f	Light green, opaque	1245	6				
		1	10				
g	Black	1270	6				
			7				
h	Pink		7				
		1	9				
		81	10				
i	Yellow	14	6				
j	Yellow-orange		7				
k	Blue-green	1	10				
9,a	Small seed: Green translucent	1	10	2.5	.5	1.5	8
b	White	456	9				
c	Light green, opaque		12				
d	Dark blue		7				
		11	10				
			11				
e	Light blue		7				
		68	10				
			11				
			12				
f	Royal blue	401	10				
			12				
g	Black	179	6				
		181	9				
			12				
h	Yellow	1	10				
			11				
i	Pink	978	6				
		25	10				
			11				

TABLE 5--Continued

Bead Styles and Variants	Description	Number of Beads	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)
10,a	Large seed: White	15,724	6	3	1	2
			7			
		2,093	9			
		1,283	10			
			11			
			12			
b	Black	2,000	6			
			7			
		42	11			
			12			
c	Yellow	112	6			
			10			
			12			
d	Green, translucent	64	6			
			11			
e	Red, translucent	3	9			
		35	10			
f	Brown, translucent	19	6			
g	Light blue	8	6			
h	Royal blue	35	6			
		26	10			
			11			
			12			
i	Yellow-orange	3	6			
		1	10			
			11			
			12			
11,a	Coarse seed: White	43	6	4	1.5	3
			7			
		646	9			
		1283	10			

TABLE 5--Continued

Bead Styles and Variants	Description.	Number of Beads	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)
b	Black	11	6			
c	Rust	1	6			
d	Light blue	3	6			
e	Royal blue	8	6			
f	Light green	4	6			
g	Brown, translucent	14	6			
12,a	Extra large coarse seed: White	30	6	7	2	5
		1	10			
b	Light blue	16	6			
c	Royal blue	1	6			
d	Black	1	6			
e	Green, translucent	74	6			
f	Brown, translucent	1	6			
g	Light-yellow, translucent	1	6			
13,a	Very large, almost spherical: Yellow, translucent	1	10	10	2	8
b	Light blue	4	6			
c	Royal blue	4	10			
			11			
14,a	Very large, necklace: Dark blue, translucent	6	9	11	2	10
15,a	Very large, necklace: Dark blue, translucent		4	12	3	11
		1	9			
		2	10			
16	Large white paste	1	10	12	3	11
17	Extra large white paste	1	10	19	3	18
18	Medium white paste	12	9	10	2	10

TABLE 5--Continued

Bead Styles and Variants	Description	Number of Beads.	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)
19,a	Small tubular with 18 facets: Green translucent	3	6	5	2	5-6
b	Brown, translucent	125	6			
		2	9			
c	Dark blue, translucent	74	6			
20,a	Medium tubular with 18 facets: Dark blue, translucent	17	6	5	2	7
		8	9			
b	Brown, translucent	61	6			
		1	9			
		2	10			
21,a	Large tubular with 18 facets: Blue, translucent	7	9	8	2.5	7
		75	10			
b	Green, translucent	1	10			
c	Clear	2	10			
22,a	Small tubular, 6-sided: Black	17	6	4	3	4
		200	10			
23,a	Medium tubular, 6-sided: Dark blue, translucent	10	6	6	3.5	5
24	Very large and very wide necklace	1	10	18	3	29
25	Yellow melon	2	9	10	2	11
		6	10			
26	White paste circumscribed by 5 grooves perpendicular to stringing axis	1	10	6	2	6.5
27	Tubular, annealed ends, turquoise	1	11	3	1	5

TABLE 5--Continued

Bead Styles and Variants	Description	Number of Beads	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)
28,a	Nearly spherical, multi-faceted, cone-shaped hole: Light turquoise	1	6	7	1&3	6.5
b	Black	1	6			
c	Royal blue	1	10			
d	Brown, translucent	34	9			
29	Nearly spherical, multi-faceted, cone- shaped hole, brown, translucent	36	9	10	1&3	9.5
30	White paste with 5 grooves circum- scribed perpendicular to stringing axis, 4 black dots inlaid around girth	1	6	5	1.5	6
31	White paste, 4 green stripes paralleling stringing axis	1	6	8.5	3	6
32	Dark blue, translucent, multiple white stripes paralleling stringing axis	1	10	8	2	8.5
33	Black paste with three white inlaid right-hand helices	1 1	10 11	6	2	6
34	Dark blue, translucent, ovoid	1	6	7	1.5	10
35,a	Elongate ovoid paste: Yellow-orange	2	6	4	1.5	8
b	White	1	9			
c	Turquoise	1	7			
36	White paste with 8 inlaid alternating pink and green dots superimposed on white dots around girth	1	10	8	2	9
37	Spherical Cornaline d'Aleppo with multicolored inlaid spiraling design	1	10	11	2	11

TABLE 3--Continued

Bead Styles and Variants	Description	Number of Beads	Burial Number	Bead Dia. (mm)	Hole Dia. (mm)	Width (mm)
38	White paste with 6 alternating red, blue, and green flower designs parallel to stringing axis	1	10	13	2	13
39	Green paste with multicolored inlaid spiraling design	1	10	12	2	12
40	White paste, three green lines perpendicular and intersecting 4 blue lines paralleling stringing axis with a red dot in each octant	1	10	11	2	11
41	White paste, green line circumscribing ends with 6 alternating red and blue dots around girth	1	10	10	2	10
41	Black paste, green and white intertwining lines dividing beads into eighths, yellow dots superimposed on green in each octant	1	9	13	3	12
43	White paste, orange lines, 8, paralleling stringing axis intersecting 4 green lines	1	9	12	2.5	12
44	Spherical Cornaline d'Aleppo	1	8	10	3	10
45	Hollow brass	147 14	9 4	9	3	7

* Beads were counted only for burials that were undisturbed.