DAVIS, WAYNE L. 82

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ANALYSIS OF GLASS TRADE BEAD MATERIAL FROM ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE (FcPr - 2)

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The bead material recovered during the 1966 season of excavation at Rocky Mountain House (FcPr-2), compared to that from the earlier FcPr-1 site is very limited, both in the actual number of specimens found, and the types of beads represented. The total number of beads from the later site is approximately 430. The majority of the beads are of the white "seed" variety. Noble's use of Millar's (1960:63) definition of "seed" bead as being less than 2 mm. in diameter, will, with reservation, be used again here. This writer feels, however, as do Kidd (1970) and Murray (1964) that the popular use of the term "seed" bead has little real support or significance. Meanwhile, the use of this term in this present report, and its general acceptance in bead studies, suggests that it would be easier to refer to it in a qualified sense, than to dispense with it entirely. Essentially, the 2 mm. maximum diameter for "seed" beads is an arbitrary limitation, and has no bearing on either the manufacture or the use of these particular beads (Murray 1964:15).

In the FcPr-2 collection there are in one lot 42 white beads which have a diameter of 3 mm and there is no good reason not to include these with the smaller beads in the "seed" bead category. In addition to these small monochrome beads in this lot, is a bichrome specimen which also has a 3 mm. diameter. This particular bead has a brick red cortex and a thin light translucent inner core or layer. This same lot contains six pale blue opaque beads of 2 mm diameter and one opaque red bead of the same size. There is also one extremely small white bead with a diameter of only 1.25 mm. The last two beads in this lot are of cherry red translucent glass with a 2 mm. diameter. Both beads are irregular in shape, as the sides of each have been ground to produce tiny facets. The largest lot of beads in the FcPr-2 collection consists entirely of ca. 370 small white "seeds"

with a 2 mm diameter.

In addition to these two lots of "seed" beads are eight "necklace" size beads. There is a general consensus that there are essentially two major divisions of beads, based on their traditional use as either costume or body decoration. The smaller "seed" or slightly larger "pony" or "real" beads were used primarily to decorate leather and cloth clothing, being sewn directly to the material. These beads were therefore known as garnishing or embroidery beads. Because they were also sold by the pound, and were the most common beads offered by the traders in return for furs and other items, the small beads are also referred to in order forms and inventory lists as "pound" or "common" beads. Those with sharp facets were usually called "cut" beads.

The "necklace" beads were used primarily as decorative elements in necklaces, and on other articles, both sacred and utilitarian. All the eight larger beads in the FcPr-2 collection are monochrome, except for one which is another example of the brick red opaque cortex with a light green translucent core. This single specimen has a diameter of 6 mm. length of 5 mm. and perforation of 2 mm. The bead is subcylindrical or "barrel" in shape. The cortex is very thin, while the core, viewed end on, forms 1.5 mm of the 2 mm thickness of the wall of the bead.

Another single specimen is the same shade of pale blue opaque as the six small "seed" beads. It appears to be of wire-wound construction, irregular doughnut shape, with a 6 mm diameter, 3.5 mm length and 2 mm perforation. The six remaining large beads have all been damaged in the past and are in fragmentary or eroded condition. One dark translucent blue bead appears to have been badly burnt, and is now only a small irregular mass of glass with little indication of

its original size or shape. Only the longitudinal half of a dark green translucent spherical bead was recovered. The bead had a length of 8 mm, an estimated diameter of 8 mm and perforation of 2 mm. A rather unusual bead consists of a white porcelain with a navy blue glaze. The surface of this bead has been severely eroded. Its diameter is 1.5 cm, length 1.3 cm, and perforation 2 mm.

The last four large beads are also of white porcelain. At least one appears to have been glazed. All are oval in shape, and only one is whole. One end has been slightly chipped, but otherwise it is intact. This bead has a diameter of 1.9 cm, length of 2.5 cm. and perforation of 5 mm. A somewhat rounder specimen is represented by a similar bead of which only 3/4 now remains. Its diameter is 2.2 cm, length 2.5 cm, and perforation 5 mm. Only the basal quarter of an even larger bead remains. The estimated dimensions are: diameter of 2.9 cm, length of 3.2 cm, and perforation of 4 mm. The basal half of a smaller oval white porcelain bead, suggests that the original specimen had a diameter of approximately 1.8 cm, length of 2.5 cm, and perforation of 6 mm.

There is good reason to believe that the bead material from FcPr-2 does not accurately represent the range of bead types which one would expect to find at a trading post site of this late date. No doubt much of the bead material was picked from the surface after the site was abandoned. The excavation of the occupied area was by no means total, either with regard to the areas investigated or the recovery methods employed. Many small beads were probably lost, and many others never excavated. Nevertheless, some rather general observations concerning the beads from this site are possible.

As was true at the site of the earlier fort (FcPr-1) reported here, small beads again predominated, and blue and white are by far

the most popular colours. The vast majority of the beads from both sites are monochrome. FcPr-1 yielded beads of seven colours (white, blue, red, purple, green, black and yellow). FcPr-2 produced only four colours of beads (white, blue, red and green). At the earlier site, four major bead forms were recovered (subcylindrical, tubular, barrel and globular) and ten subvarieties. All but the tubular shape were included among the FcPr-2 collection. No effort will be made here to consider subvarieties among this small sample. The later site also did not provide any examples of the two blue globular beads with seven parallel flutes, but did produce fragments of four large ovoid white porcelain beads.

The best preserved of these four beads is a fine example of the so called "pigeon egg" bead, which Catlin and other early 19th century artists have depicted in portraits of Northern Plains Indians, where they were worn in necklaces. To judge from inventory lists, order forms, archaeological and historical evidence, these "pigeon egg" beads attained their greatest popularity with tribes farther to the south and east of the Blackfeet, between 1830 and 1850. It is interesting to note that none was found among the earlier FcPr-1 collection.

Many large necklace beads were kept as heirlooms, and were passed from one generation to the next. The smaller beads were usually used in decorative panels, and also resisted wear and aging better than the leather or cloth they were meant to adorn. Therefore, they too were often used again and again. This reuse of beads complicates efforts to date them; however, most of the bead types represented in the FcPr-2 collection are common varieties which had a long period of popularity in the Northern Plains.

In the Plains area in general, it would seem that beadwork using small "seed" and "pony" beads to decorate leather and cloth

was little practiced until about 1835-40 (Douglas 1936:91). Larger beads were earlier used for necklaces, and for ear and hair decoration, but clothing appears to have been usually decorated with painted and/or quilled, rather than beaded, designs. The first beads to be used for costume decoration were called "pony" beads, and were approximately twice the size of the later "seed" beads. The former had an average diameter of about 1/8 inch, and the latter varied between 1/16 and 3/32 of an inch.

In Blackfeet Crafts, Ewers (1945:32-35) suggests a similar three-period development of beadwork, but happening somewhat later among the more northerly Blackfeet. The first pre-embroidery or necklace bead period began as the Blackfeet received the first trade beads from Crees and others who had direct contact with the Europeans to the east. By the 1780's European traders had established direct contact with the Blackfeet. Most beads were over $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter, and were both monochrome and patterned in different colours. They were expensive and consequently were often just placed at intervals on a necklace along with pieces of bone, shell, teeth, dried berries and other natural products.

By the mid-19th century, a second or "real" bead period began, as smaller costume beads gained favour among Northern Plains tribes including the Blackfeet. These were the "pony" beads earlier mentioned by Douglas. These irregularly shaped monochrome beads of china were available in light blue, dark blue, dark red, deep yellow, white and black. The blue and white colours were most perferred by the Blackfeet. These beads were sold by the bunch or hank, each hank consisting of 10 strings, each about eight inches long. Ewers (1945:33) indicates that "...about the year

1870, eight hanks of different coloured 'real beads' were worth a good robe." These beads were usually applied in narrow bands to decorate articles of costume: women's dresses, men's shirts, leggings, and moccasins. The beginning of the third or "seed" bead period among the Blackfeet, Ewers (1945:34) dates at about 1875, saying that the change from the older "real" beads to the smaller "seed" beads was a gradual one.

It is possible that the smaller "seed" beads, in the FcPr-2 collection, those 2 mm and under in diameter, represent the third and last trade bead period on the Northern Plains. The larger "seeds" fall into the "pony" bead range, and therefore may represent the previous period in Ewers' proposed development. They may also indicate the reuse of older decorative beaded panels on new pieces of costume material. The entire "seed" bead problem deserves further research and investigation as there is still considerable question as to the exact temporal and spacial distribution for this very important bead type in the Plains and elsewhere.

Little can be said about the large fragmentary necklace beads as to their definite source of origin, date of introduction or geographic distribution. Large translucent globular green beads, such as the split specimen represented in the FcPr-2 collection, are often seen in necklaces, on breastplates, and with medicine bundles among both Blackfeet and Cree museum items dating from the second half of the 19th century. The single pale blue opaque doughnut shaped bead with a 6 mm diameter may be a variety of the "Crow beads" Ewers (1945:32) mentions as a common necklace bead among the Blackfeet. No trace of the much rarer "Skunk beads" were found in either the FcPr-1 and 2 collections. These fancy polychrome necklace beads were apparently very popular among the

Blackfeet, and even more popular among the neighbouring Crow.

Among the most interesting and distinctive bead types represented in the small sample from FcPr-2 is the red/green necklace and "seed" specimens known as Cornaline d'Aleppo. In areas administered by the Hudson's Bay Company, these particular beads became known as "Hudson's Bay beads" (Orchard 1929:87). The earliest of these beads had a brick, or Indian red, cortex and a translucent core which appears to be black, but by transmitted light is usually green. A more recent variety has a translucent red exterior and an opaque yellow or white core (Orchard 1929:87).

This writer is currently trying to chart the chronological and spacial distribution of certain diagnostic bead types, known from excavated archaeological sites in the Northern Plains-Upper Missouri region. It would appear from studies made to date that the white or yellow centered Cornaline d'Aleppo beads began to replace the older translucent green centered varieties in the general Plains area around about 1850 (Davis 1970). It is quite possible that these few older Cornaline d'Aleppo specimens in the FcPr-2 collection are either heirlooms or a time-lapse resulting from the northerly and isolated location of Rocky Mountain House.

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