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Hair Pipes in Plains Indian Adornment

A STUDY IN INDIAN AND WHITE INGENUITY

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17TH-CENTURY TUBULAR TRADE ORNAMENTS OF GLASS

Before the middle of the 17th-century white traders introduced long, tubular glass beads of European manufacture among some tribes of the northeastern woodlands. These trade beads seem to have been accepted by the Indians as substitutes for native-made tubular ornaments.

In 1946, Kenneth E. Kidd excavated a Huron Indian ossuary in Tiny Township, Simcoe County, Ontario, which he believed to have been the ossuary visited by the Jesuit missionary, Jean de Brebeuf in 1636, and to have contained burials of Huron Indians who died between the years about 1624 and 1636. Scattered throughout the ossuary were grave goods of native and European manufacture. Included among them were a number of long, tubular glass beads, some of twisted glass, examples of which are illustrated in figure 123 of Kidd's report on this site (Kidd, 1953). The ossuary also contained a number of tubular beads of dull-red slate (also shown in fig. 123). Kidd concluded that the glass trade beads had been introduced in imitation of the native-made slate beads. However, these ornaments were not associated with the skeletal materials sufficiently closely to illustrate their method of use as ornaments (*ibid.*, pp. 359-379).

John Witthoft, Pennsylvania State archeologist, has kindly informed me of the finding of a number of tubular, glass trade beads at the Strickler site, Washingtonboro, Lancaster County, Pa., in the region occupied by the Susquehanna Indians in the 17th century. Witthoft stated that the site may be dated between 1640 and 1675, and that the glass beads seem to be in a trade-goods context of the 1640's. They are, therefore, nearly contemporaneous with the tubular glass beads of the Huron ossuary in Ontario. Nearly two decades ago Donald Cadzow (1936, p. 92) expressed the opinion that the glass beads of the Strickler site were introduced by the French and may have reached the Susquehanna Indians through their alliance with the Huron.

About 30 tubular glass beads have been found at the Strickler site. Arthur Futer, of New Holland, Pa., who excavated most of the graves at this site, kindly sent me two of the glass beads for study. They are reproduced in plate 13, *a* and *b*. Both are of translucent, twisted, green glass. Figure *a* is 5½ inches long, ⅜ inch in diameter, and has a narrow hole less than ⅙ inch in diameter through the center of its length. The twist is gradual, forming not quite a complete revolution in the length of the specimen. Figure *b* is a little shorter (5¼ inches) and a little thicker (⅜ inch diameter), but the center hole has the same diameter. The twist is more pronounced. A complete revolution is made in 1¼ inches of length. Witthoft has informed me that these beads have been found in close association with the skulls in burials

at the Strickler site. There were never more than four of them at the sides of a single skull. Probably the Indians used them for hair ornaments.

Cadzow (1936, p. 82) mentioned the finding of tubular, conch-shell beads in association with a burial at the Strickler site. This would suggest that among the Susquehanna the tubular glass beads may have been accepted as substitutes for earlier, native-made, conch columella beads.

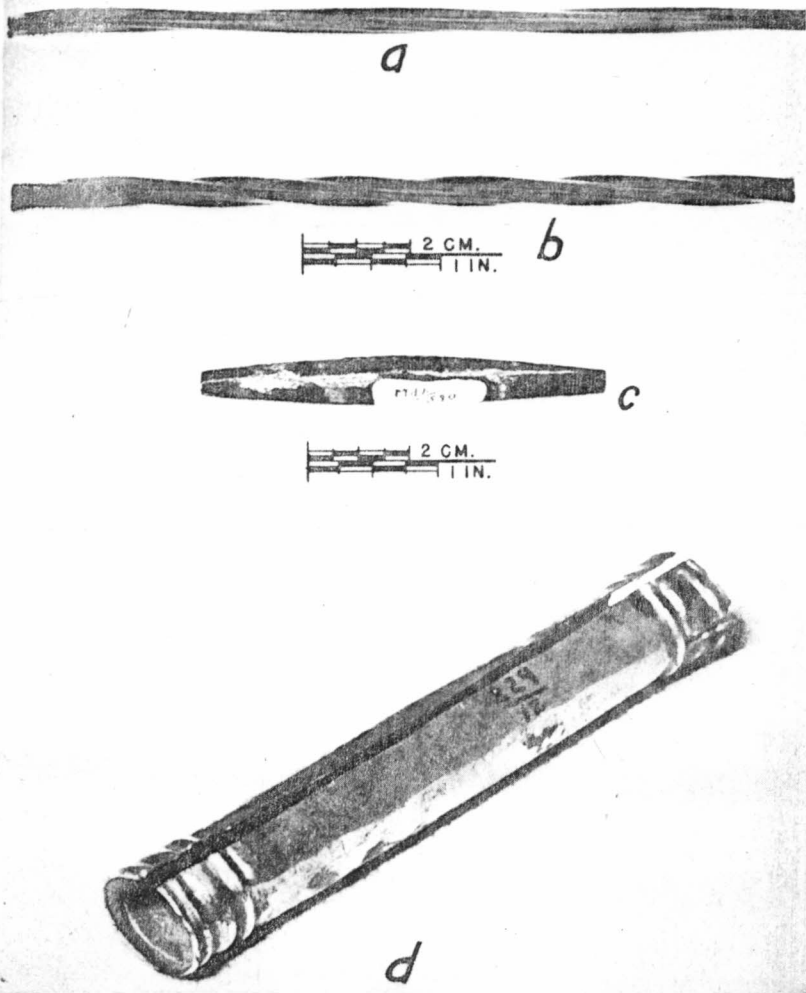
The case of the tubular glass beads as here presented is of particular interest as an indication of the progress made by white traders among the Indians of the northern woodlands before the middle of the 17th century in getting Indians to accept long, tubular beads manufactured by white men as substitutes for tubular ornaments of native origin. We can only speculate as to the motives of the Indians in accepting the glass substitutes. We have no information on the relative cost of native-made and European-made tubular beads in trade at that time. Perhaps the Indians were attracted to these early, glass, tubular beads because of their attractive colors and their initial rarity. Certainly the fragility of the glass material was not in its favor. Surely they were much less practical ornaments than were the manufactured tubular ornaments offered Indians by traders in later colonial times.

18TH-CENTURY SILVER AND BRASS HAIR PIPES

The first recorded use of the term "hair pipe" in the Indian trade of which I have knowledge, had reference to silver ornaments furnished Indians of the Ohio Valley in 1767. On October 18th of that year George Morgan of Fort Pitt ordered from Boynton and Wharton of Philadelphia two dozen silver hair pipes (Gillingham, 1934, pp. 114-115). The same article may have been known to traders in the Ohio Valley by the name "hair bob" as early as 1760. In that year several dozen hair bobs made by Philadelphia silversmiths were sent to Pittsburgh (Gillingham, 1936, pp. 14, 16-19). I find no contemporary use of the terms "hair bobs" and "hair pipes" in the lists of silver ornaments employed in the Pennsylvania Indian trade of the 1760's. The name "hair bob" seems to have disappeared from these lists after the name "hair pipe" first appeared in 1767.

Apparently the numbers of silver hair pipes furnished the western Indians in colonial times never was great. By far the largest order for these articles, dated August 27, 1784, listed by Gillingham (1934, p. 122) comprised 12 dozen hair pipes to be used in the purchase of land in the State of Pennsylvania.

No specimens of silver hair pipes are known to have been found in archeological sites in Pennsylvania. Nor does there seem to be a record of the finding of these specimens in documented historic sites



Early forms of tubular trade ornaments. *a*, *b*, Glass (Susquehanna). *c*, Brass (Angel Site, Ind.). *d*, Silver (Courtesy Ohio State Univ.).