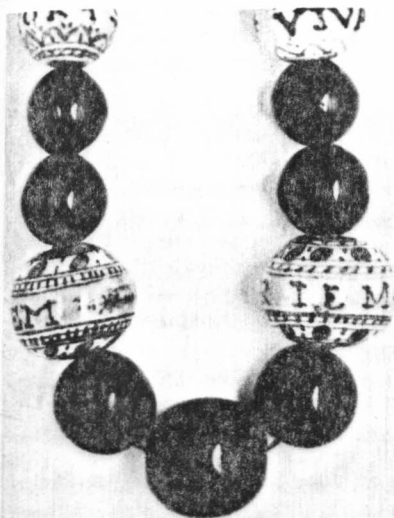


(Continued from page 1)

and as ornaments on draw string bags. Their manufacture was discontinued in the mid-1950's. Rising labor costs priced them out of the market.

I did what I could to raise the consciousness of the local antique dealers as to the value of these beads. Perhaps future visitors to the area will find some for sale.

Elizabeth Harris  
Los Angeles, CA



Courtesy of E.J. Harris.

#### Stringing micro beads

In a misguided moment I bought four small boxes of micro beads in Venice two years ago. I was told that production of them has stopped which may be true, as I found them in only one shop and tried to find different colors in many other shops and had no luck at all.

The problem is how do the Italians manage to string them? I know that they do, as I saw a few single color multiple strand necklaces in Murano. The thread used is regrettably weak and breaks after two or more wearings. I have some extremely fine English needles, but these will take only a fraction of these beads, and then without the addition of thread.

Is there a strong 'micro thread' which has so far escaped me? Wire? I don't care for nylon, as it is also weak and has a springiness which I don't care for. I realize that one probably would have to relinquish the use of a needle and stiffen the end of the threading material, if it can be found.

You might well ask why I didn't ask the Italians how they did it, and the answer is that, of course, I didn't realize what a problem it would be. Next time

there I will, if you can't help me, but my chances of returning this body to the loveliest of cities is unfortunately remote. I only hope Heaven is modeled on Venice, plumbing and all.

Bethune Gibson  
Chevy Chase, MD



I have been pondering about your request for a way to string those micro beads and have been unable to arrive at an answer. Recently I had to restring some Indian stone beads for photography, and had an extremely difficult time, due to the extremely poor perforations in such beads. But the holes in the Indian beads, or in Italian coral are huge compared to those in your Venetian glass beads.

I know of no needle or stringing material that would be thin or strong enough. I am enclosing an example of a wire beading needle, but I think only the thinnest gauge would have a chance of passing through.

#### Glass turning amethyst

Yes, it is true that there is glassware still made that will turn amethyst when exposed to ultra violet light but *not* bottles. By law food stuff bottles are required to be of stable clear glass so that the contents can be observed for changes in color denoting spoilage. This law came into effect about the time of WWI. This was the premise for my suggesting that pot beads from W. Africa containing clear layers could possibly be dated if the clear sections were to turn amethyst upon extended exposure to ultra violet light.

This suggestion was based on the fact that food stuff and medicine bottles were and are readily available in W. Africa and not vases from Hong Kong as Wilma S. Mangum's letter might suggest.

Gerald T. Ahnert  
Syracuse, NY

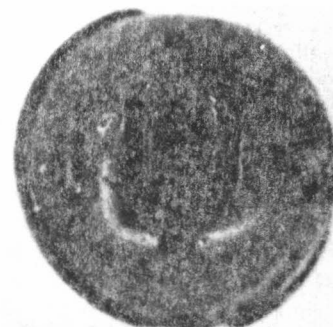
#### Snake and Pibisco beads

The string of Lustre finished 'Snake' beads was purchased last summer in a Pennsylvania flea market. It appears in original condition. Upon close examination, we noticed "Czechlosuakia" clearly

stamped on the clasp. We feel fairly sure that these beads "made for Western wear" were made from the same mold as those typically found in W. Africa, indicating that this type of bead was made in Czechoslovakia. The beads are about 7mm diameter.

The bead marked 'Pibisco' came on a regular string of trade beads from Africa. We have 20 'Pibisco's' and wonder if anyone has any other information on them.

Bonnie A. Donohue  
Philadelphia, PA



#### Criticism: Native North American Seed Beading Techniques: Pt. 1

I have been debating for the past few weeks whether to write this letter or not. It is in regards to the article *Native North American Seed Beading Techniques: Pt. 1 Woven Items* by Carol A. Bowdoin Gil. My immediate reaction was to write post haste but then I got to the last paragraph and read the cop-out that is usually found in articles of this type: "Also keep in mind that the above techniques of weaving are by no means exhaustive. There are still some styles to be explored ... To investigate all the subtle distinctions between tribes and areas would require a small volume."

When an author makes a statement like that it doesn't leave much room for criticism. She is right when she says that the subject requires a small volume and the definitive work on woven beadwork is yet to be written. Her bibliography is long but few of the works cited deal directly with woven beadwork tech-

COMING

# ORNAMENT

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niques and the most in depth study to date (*Unusual Beadwork Techniques, Part 1, A Classification System and a Study of Cross Weaving*, by Milford G. Chandler and David A. Kracinski. American Indian Tradition, Vol. 8-5) is not listed.

Maybe I am being too critical. Maybe her article tells the average reader of *The Bead Journal* more than they ever would want to know about woven beadwork. But this happens to be my field of interest and it annoys me that the same old soup is being re-heated and served out to the unsuspecting public again. What we need are serious and exhaustive studies of these fields and not another "introduction." The published word tends to become holy writ and misconceptions and misinformation are introduced, reinforced and passed on to other students in the field.

To be specific: In the second paragraph she says that, "Plant fibers and animal hair dominate the woven category," and from what she says before and after that statement she clearly means *native plant fibers*, and this is incorrect. Woven seed bead work was predominately done on commercial thread of linen and later cotton. Early pony bead woven work such as garters and sashes were often done with sinew wefts on native fiber or commercial yarn warps. But woven seed bead work was almost always done on commercial threads. And by woven seed bead work I mean that which was woven on a loom or frame, with or without a heddle. Also included would be woven work that has the *appearance* of being done on a loom or frame but was actually produced by a loose warp technique or on a "tension frame" which is not a frame at all. There are at least nine different techniques which can be used to produce woven beadwork that has the *appearance* of "square weave" beadwork. And Ms. Gil has fallen into the trap of relying on appearance.

She illustrates that regular type of loom weaving in Fig. 1 and then indicates that the pieces in Fig. 7, Fig. 8, and Fig. 9 were made using this technique. The bag in Fig. 7 is Winnebago and almost certainly was not done in this technique. The beaded fringes in Fig. 8 positively were not done in the technique she illustrates. A two-needle cross stitch technique was employed.

She says of Fig. 9 that the bag is woven in one piece using the square weave with a join at the bottom. Bags of this type were woven in one piece but not using the "square weave" and there is no join at the bottom. There is no join anywhere in fact, and a loose warp technique without a frame was employed.

Bias weave or side-stitch pieces are usually done on commercial thread. Older examples were sometimes done on horse hair and the example shown in Fig. 12A looks like it is on horse hair and not sinew as stated.

An additional note in reference to the bag in Fig. 7. I have called this Winnebago and while there is a slim chance it might not be Winnebago, it is certainly the Winnebago style. All of the Winnebago bags I have seen have been cross stitched.

The study of woven beadwork in the Great Lakes and Prairie areas is very complex and construction techniques are a very important facet of this study. They are a valuable aid in tribal identification and should not be ignored simply for convenience sake. Ms. Gil could have easily illustrated her article with specimens that were done in the simple "square weave" technique shown in Fig. 1. To do otherwise indicates that she doesn't know or, worse, doesn't care.

F. Dennis Lessard  
Del Enterprise, Inc.  
Mission, SD

#### Reply from author

Because of spatial limitations, it was necessary to keep my article brief. I had to leave out several techniques that produced similar appearances both in the true "weaving" techniques and netting. I chose to include the most common. Also, as very few people ever deal with anything but square weave and bias, I chose to emphasize the other, less known techniques. Too often I run into people whose idea of Native American beadwork is square woven headbands. I felt it necessary to break up this concept.

I believe Mr. Lessard's definition of square weave and mine differ. Mr. Lessard seems to be saying that square weave is a weave where warp and weft are perpendicular to each other with the long, lateral edges straight and smooth and produced *only* on a particular kind of tension loom. I approach the matter from a textile standpoint based on textural appearance for the purpose of helping the amateur (which Mr. Lessard certainly is not) to make the grosser distinctions between the larger categories of beadwork. While I agree that warp and weft are perpendicular to each other and the lateral parts straight and smooth (parallel to the warp), I feel that *any* method used to obtain this falls in this square weave category whether loom or non-loom, tension or non-tension, heddles or no heddles. While other tech-

niques have their particular names, they are still varieties in the larger category of square weave, just as a square is a variety in the larger category of quadrilaterals. Therefore, I feel my labeling of square weave is appropriate. I omitted mention of the non-tension techniques because I felt that their inclusion would confuse the average reader. The impression that the loom illustrated was necessarily the one that produced the artifacts illustrated was not intended. However, I *can* and *have* produced *exact* duplicates of the square weave items shown (except Fig. 9) with a loom such as this.

As for the pieces being Winnebago or not, I merely used the collection's tribal or area attribution. On many of their pieces all provenience has been lost, though general stylistic areas are fairly obvious. Having had quite a bit of archaeological background, I realize when such is the case, the artifacts are practically useless as standards for tribal or narrow cultural-type definitions of style. This does not, however, detract from their artistic or technological value. I did not intend to give any guidelines for tribal identification in this article, most of which are based primarily on design (which is also purposely not included). I dare say Mr. Lessard's identification of the Winnebago bags was based primarily on design, not technique. This was not an article for museum curators struggling with attributions.

When I originally did the captions, they were a paragraph or so long. They were edited by someone else. The first I saw of this editing was in the printed magazine when there was little I could do about it. I realize that such editing could be misleading. As for Fig. 9, the panther bag, the caption needs an 's' on the word join. There *are* joins in the corners at the bottom of the piece (not a seam as the caption and Mr. Lessard seem to suggest, but none the less joins). Since it will take too much space to fully describe (and he and I may be the only ones interested), I will just have to invite him to come out and take a look for himself.

There are also a couple of other slips in the final version of the captions that he didn't mention. The most glaring is Fig. 29, where it is not the blanket stitch border that is unique, but the star pendant (a simple but disastrous misplacement of the word unique). The others are not quite so flagrant, but I intend to edit captions personally in the future.

To refer to Mr. Lessard's comments on the various materials mentioned in the article, I must again emphasize my limitations due to space. My only mention of woven work was to state that plant and animal hair fibers (wool, cotton and

linen as well as horsehair, moose, and native plant fibers) were used more in that category in the historic period than sinew, which was more popular in the sewn category. To go into the whole chronology of when commercial sewing materials replaced traditional ones was, again, not possible because of space limitations. In each geographical section and cultural area of the continent there would be different dates, different preferences and different reasons for the change. In the article the "80 year" deadline is only intended as a general cutoff point in time. After 1900 the traditional materials are extremely rare, though by no means extinct. The Plains area and Southwest were the last to use commercial thread.

The bibliography (because it accompanies a magazine article) is of course by no means definitive. I left out Chandler and Kracinski's article because it is extremely difficult to obtain. According to the Library of Congress Serials listings, the *American Indian Tradition* has been out of print 14 years, before that publishing irregularly for nine years under 2 different titles and they list only two libraries in the country with the complete set of nine volumes. Lyford's volume on *Iroquois Crafts* is also out of print and I have also been trying for years to get my own copy, even a xerox.

The fact that several articles and books cited deal peripherally with beadwork is true. I know of no one work that has contained in it *all* the different methods I have described. The center braiding technique I have never seen explained in regards to beadwork and Atwater's *Byways in Handweaving* is the clearest explanation I've found to this method. I'm sure the word bead is not written at all in her book. Beadwork is, after all, a textile art. Other works, such as Curtis' and Belous' are great pictorial examples of the extent and variety of beadwork in N. America, though I doubt if the main aims of the authors in publishing such books included beadwork study.

This leads me to my last comment on Mr. Lessard's letter. While descriptions of these techniques can be found elsewhere, I feel I have finally synthesized and condensed them. It has taken me years and volumes and miles of travel to do so. I fear I tend to bore most people with my detailed dissections of beadwork. Assuredly I do care about it and I am well aware of what I am leaving out. To limit the article to about 10 typewritten 8½" x 11¼" pages, however, it was necessary to cut ruthlessly and resort to that nemesis of detailed, scholarly study, the generalization.

I want to thank Mr. Lessard for his

concern. I am glad that he wrote the letter because, quite frankly, I was afraid that my article would not generate dialogue.

Carol A. Bowdoin Gil  
Diamond Bar, CA

#### Arca Ornaments

Regarding the *Arca*-pieces described by R.K. Liu in Vol. III, No. 1, p. 39/40, under Identification, it may be of interest to you to learn of my experiences. I found the pieces on markets along the coast from Senegal to Cameroon to be exceptionally rare. In the course of over 20 journeys from 1964-76, I could only find about two dozen pieces, definitely not containing any glass-specimen. Perforations were handmade, sometimes visible on the surface in part. They appear to be very worn and of considerable age. I never found one piece along the East coast or in the Congo. A not very reliable informant told me he had seen quantities in several parts of the Cameroon where they are said to have played a part in the slave trade. I could not find any confirmation and tend to disbelieve it. In my attempts to locate information on bead manufacture in Murano and with a friend's investigations in Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands, we never came across this type.

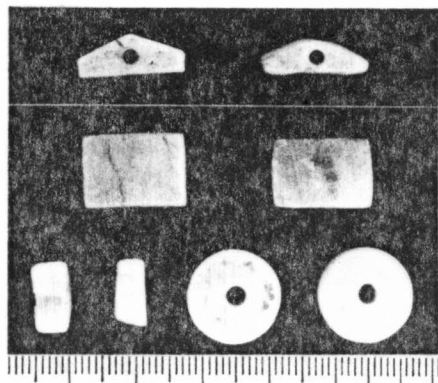
Several years ago jewelry turned up on European markets from Afghanistan, containing silver, coral and *Arca*-pieces of two different shapes: one exactly matching the type known from Africa, the other circular, the size of a coin which I never encountered in Africa. A leading expert on Afghanistan supposed, as he had never seen them on his extensive travels (in spite of his particular interest in native jewelry), that they must have been limited to a remote region, from which they were brought to the Kabul market by dealers withholding any information regarding the origin. It sounds probable, as after stocks sold out, they were never offered again. A conchologist I consulted could not offer any information to further the investigation. Analysis of the material may at it's best indicate the origin of the shells which must not be identical with the manufacture of the beads.

H.L. Diamond  
Vienna, Austria

*As of yet, I have not found any reference to the use of Arca ornaments, especially in the slave trade, although "The Tribal Bead," a handbook of African trade beads (see Vol. III, No. 2) states*

*that the rectangular form was used for trade and cattle purchases, but no reference is given. With regards to Afghanistan, I have seen many necklaces with the circular form of shell bead, although I had not noted any similarity to those made from Arca. As to the form "exactly matching the type from Africa," I have not seen.*

So-called "hippo teeth" ornaments are probably cut from *Sinilia* (*Arca*) *senilis* shells. Maurice Nickles (1950, "Mollusques testace's marina de la Cote occidentale d'Afrique." Paris, *Manuels Quest-Africains* 2: 269 p.) gives the following information about *Sinilia* on p. 167: eaten in large numbers, used for ballast, for repairs of roads and manufacture of lime and chalk. There is no mention of their use for ornaments, nor is there any mention of this genus in P.W. Laidler ("Beads in Africa south of the Zambesi - I, II" *Proc. Rhodesia Sci. Assoc.* XXXIV(1), 1934: 1-27; *Trans. Rhodesia Sci. Assoc.* XXXV(1): 35-46, 1937.), which is otherwise an excellent reference on use of shells as ornaments. There is an excellent discussion about *ndoro* or *impande* or *conus* shell discs. Perhaps Laidler omitted discussion of *Sinilia* (*Arca*) ornaments because their distribution is outside the geographic limits of his papers.



Additional *Arca* beads: plan & end views of *Arca* bead (upper right), with porcelain copy (upper left), courtesy L. Wataghani. Lower row of broken and whole disc beads of *Arca*(?) shell, courtesy of E. Petri.

#### Glass amulets distributed in Egypt

I am enclosing three illustrations of some types of glass amulets that obviously were widely distributed in Egypt in the past and can be seen even today quite frequently as components of certain traditional ornaments. Although working now for quite a long time on the scholarly documentation of Egyptian folk jewelry, I could get no reliable information