

A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of Field Archaeologists. Kenneth E. and Martha Ann Kidd. Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History Number 1, pp. 45-89, Ottawa. 1970. Reprinted 1977.

This pioneering attempt to provide a system of classification of glass beads, first published in 1970, is still a useful tool for the historical archaeologist. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is to be commended for keeping it in print.

Confronted by the lack of a suitable system of classification and a bewildering array of conflicting names and descriptive terms, the authors began their researches in 1951 by studying bead collections both in private ownership and in the public museums of eastern North America. Later they were able to study collections in Europe where they also carried out archival and library research. This, combined with an intimate knowledge of about 500 different types of glass beads provided the background for their proposed classification.

They finally settled on a classification based primarily upon the process of manufacture and secondarily upon such physical attributes as shape, size, color, translucency, and opacity. Both parts of the classification can be determined by examination of a given bead and that bead can be compared with any other bead. Logically this system should be able to encompass any wound or drawn bead that has ever existed or is yet to be invented. Roderick Sprague (1971) has pointed out that this system does not take into account pressed and hollow-blown types of beads, but I believe they could be added and handled in the same manner as the wound and drawn beads. And perhaps a mixed process of manufacture should be added despite the fact I cannot now think of any reason to make a bead that was part drawn and part wound. But in any event the Kidds' system of classification as it now stands is useful for the vast majority of beads (I do not include seed beads) that I have encountered in my academic lifetime. Had I used this classification the clarity of my work would have been improved tremendously and therefore of greater use to others. I have the highest regard for the system of classification devised by Kidd and Kidd and will use this work until such time as I find something better.

References

Sprague, Roderick. 1971. Review of "Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 1." *Historical Archaeology*, V: 128-9. Lansing, Michigan.

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