



The Archaeology and History  
of Fort Pelly I  
1824 - 1856

by  
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## ABSTRACT

Fort Pelly 1 was a Hudson's Bay Company post which operated in eastern central Saskatchewan from 1824 to 1856. The site was excavated by the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Department of Natural Resources. G. Watson supervised the field excavations, conducted in 1971, 1972 and 1974. Fifteen features, the palisades, and a large sample of artifacts were found.

The report focuses on the archaeology and history of Fort Pelly 1. Emphasis is on the description and analysis of structural and artifactual data as they reflect the social and cultural aspects of the post's historic occupation. Hypotheses were formulated regarding these aspects and were tested using information from historic sources and structural and artifact analyses.

The historical, structural and artifactual analyses demonstrate Fort Pelly's importance and influence in the fur trade in the 19th century. They also reveal various social activities occurring at the Fort; the centres of these activities; the acquisition of goods from outside suppliers; and the degree of luxury enjoyed at the site.

gross of gunworms and bags of mixed gunflints throughout the post's existence (HBCA, PAM, B. 159/d/15, fos. 5d, 9).

Gunflints are representative of the blade flints being produced in England in the 19th century. The largest quantities of gunflints were found in the warehouse and the trading store. A small number was found in the kitchen and the factor's house, with the rest being scattered throughout the post.

Percussion caps, which were introduced in North America in the later part of the 19th century, were restricted mainly to the trading store.

Lead shot was recovered in a number of sizes, but the most common was the 4 mm and 4.5 mm shot. These sizes were found mainly in the store and scattered throughout the warehouse, with the largest concentration in the north cellar of this structure.

As ball and shot were ordered in bags, and since no size was specified, the recovery of large numbers of these two particular sizes (4 mm and 4.5 mm) may reflect those not preferred or used for the type of game being hunted in the area. Alternately, they may represent the most common size and, therefore, the most likely to be lost or misplaced.

The distribution of the musket balls was similar to that of the lead shot.

Comparison of the number of gun parts and associated items recovered at Fort Pelly with the historic documents available reveals that the specimens found do not realistically reflect the numbers that were ordered, received and traded by the post. This could be attributed to the fact that guns were a major item of trade and, therefore, would not be retained at the post. Those few gun items found would represent discarded unuseable or lost parts.

## 5.2.5 Trade Goods

### 5.2.5.1 Beads

Beads recovered at Fort Pelly 1 are generally representative of the 19th century. The majority of beads recovered consist of seed beads with relatively few "necklace" beads represented. The numbers of beads found are small in comparison to the amounts being ordered. For example, the requisition for 1844 alone includes: 60 bunches white agate beads 100 bunches white barleycorn beads, 40 lbs. common light blue beads, 40 lbs. fine light blue beads and 40 lbs. fine white enamel beads (HBCA, PAM, B. 159/d/37a, fo. 2). However, this low recovery is not surprising as beads were ordered explicitly for trade and those found at the post, especially in the kitchen, factor's house,

palisades, and areas of the warehouse, represent lost personal items. The largest concentration of beads, especially seed beads, was recovered from the warehouse and the store. In the warehouse, these seed beads were distributed throughout, with the largest concentration occurring in the north cellar, where an embroidered article of clothing had rotted, leaving only the beads in the applied pattern. The large number of seed beads in the store may represent those that were left behind or forgotten as trading interactions would be conducted here, rather than items from lost clothing, etc.

The two predominant colours found in the warehouse and store were white and shadow blue. These colours appear to be the favoured ones, as they constantly appear in the inventory and requisition accounts of the post (HBCA, PAM, B. 159/d/37b, fo. 2; B. 159/d/7, fo. 10; B. 159/d/37a, fo. 5d; B. 159/d/15, fo. 4d; B. 159/d/2b, fo. 1).

Other colours that appear in large quantities include transparent, rose wine, redwood, teal green, cinnamon, light cherry rose and dark palm green. The colours red and yellow are specifically referred to in one account (HBCA, PAM, B. 159/d/2b, fo. 1), and may suggest a preference for these two colours in addition to white and blue. The presence of large numbers of the other colours may indicate either a preference for these colours by the Indians, or alternately, those colours not preferred by them.

## 5.2.6 Architectural

A variety of items employed in the construction of buildings were found. The numbers of most, such as hinges, door lock parts, were small, except for the nails which represented the largest category found on the site. Both hand wrought nails, which constituted the majority, and machine stamped nails were present. This would be expected, considering the time period of the post's occupation (1824-56). The large number of hand wrought nails as opposed to machine stamped would indicate that the latter were not that easily obtainable. In fact, references to the blacksmith making nails were recorded in 1826, 1829, 1830 and 1853. In 1826, supplies were short and the blacksmith was making nails out of old axes "he for want of better material" (HBCA, PAM, B. 159/a/9, fo. 37).

The remaining architectural items were restricted to four structures: the kitchen, the factor's house, the warehouse and the early blacksmith shop. Items in the first three would represent those used in the actual structure, while those in the early blacksmith shop would represent unuseable, discarded items.

The majority of these items were also fashioned at the post, and a number are extremely crude in appearance and form. Reference is made in 1844 of the blacksmith making hinges for the fort gates, and in 1854

### 3.2 Trade Goods

#### 3.2.1 Beads

Beads were introduced early in the historic period and continued to be a desirable item throughout the fur trade era. Large numbers are found on historic fur trade sites and analysis is focused on bead shape, method of manufacture, colour and size for chronological and temporal purposes. Tracing bead styles to their sources of manufacture in Europe for chronological and temporal purposes is difficult. Therefore, information regarding diagnostic bead traits for various time period has been obtained in the past through comparative studies. With respect to the late historic period, fewer types of beads, except for the seed beads, were used. Polychrome beads are rare, and the bead type found at Fort Pelly 1 of this period is a round bead with polka dots or eyes (Quimby 1966:88). A diagnostic monochrome bead of this period is the multifaceted bead which is mainly translucent, and found in various sizes.

The Fort Pelly 1 beads are analyzed on the basis of: material; method of manufacture; colour; size; and decoration. The basic categories of manufacture include: (1) drawn tubular beads, made by drawing the glass into a long tube and chopping it into desired sizes; and (2) wound, made by wrapping a strand of molten glass around a wire until the desired size and shape are built up (Kidd 1970:48-50). Colours assigned to the beads are based on those provided in Kidd and Kidd (1970) and are based on subjective judgements by the author. Shapes include globular, tubular, barrel or oval, faceted, tear-drop, and subcylindrical (Fig. 91). The beads were measured using a pair of calipers and the diameter of beads is taken at right angles to the string hole. A total of 11,520 beads was recovered with seed beads representing 98% of the collection. The beads are divided into two broad categories, "necklace" beads and seed beads or "embroidery beads", and are basically dealt with in table form, except for the decorated beads which are described.

#### "Necklace" Beads

A total of 248 "necklace" beads which are made of various materials was recovered. Table 28 presents a breakdown of the non-decorated beads by material, method of manufacture, colour (opaque or translucent), shape, and quantity. The range and mean of sizes for the various shapes is provided in Table 29. Ten drawn beads differ from the others in that the tube is six sided. These average 5.7 mm in length and 5.4 mm in width. Five of the glass beads differ from the rest in that they are quite large, averaging 21 mm x 17 mm in size, and are opaque white with the glass having the appearance of porcelain. The surface is dull. They are quite heavy in comparison to the other glass beads. Forty-seven faceted beads were recovered. These are presented in Table 28, according to method of manufacture, colour (opaque or translucent) and quantity.

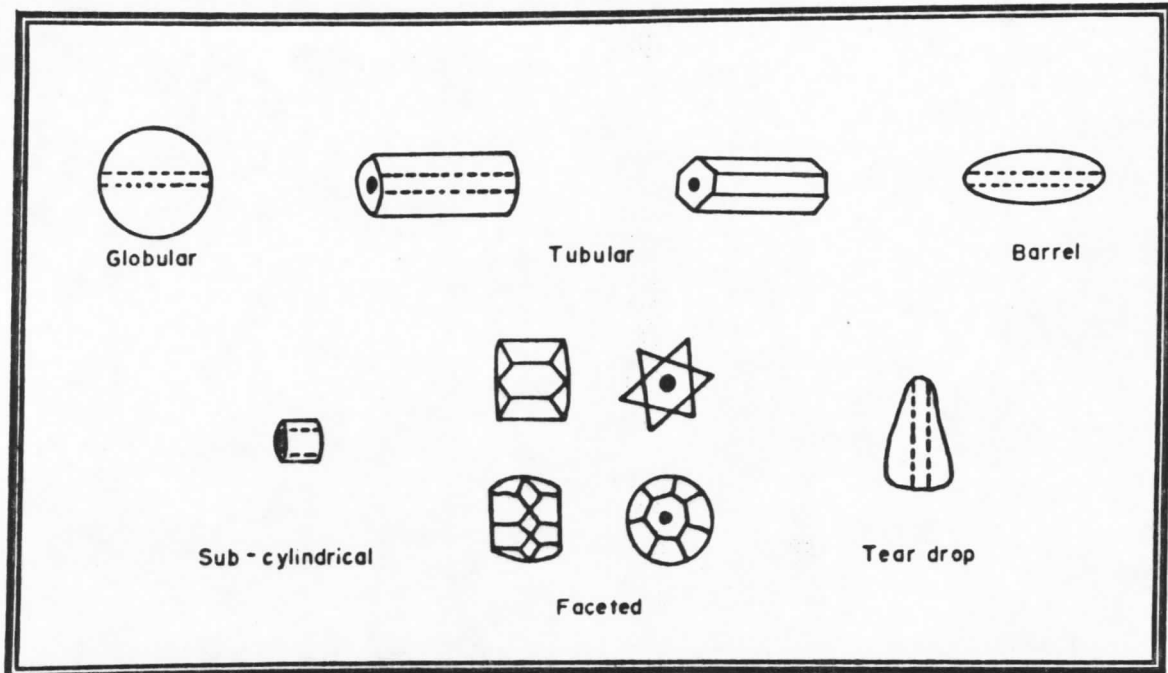


Figure 91. Bead Shapes.

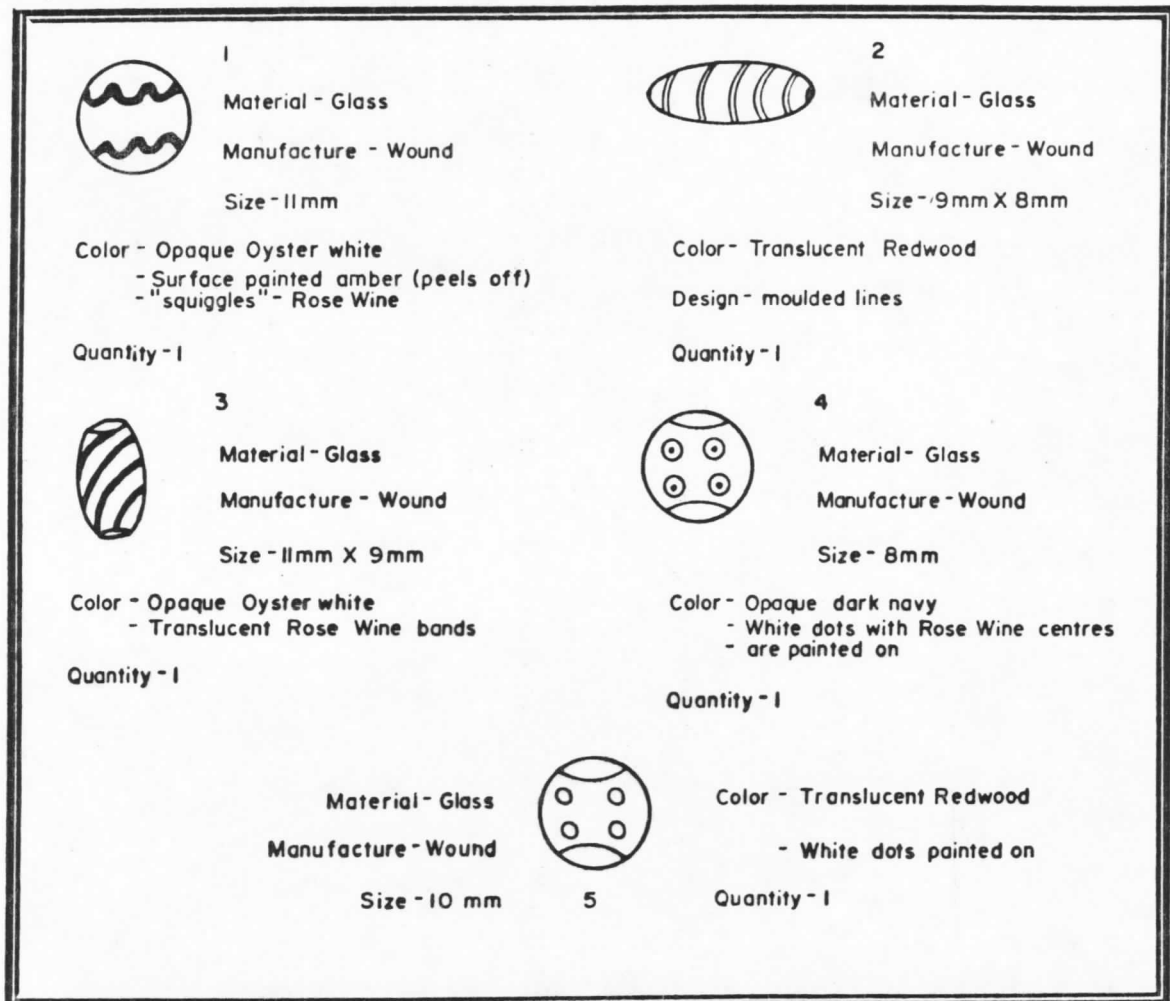


Figure 92. Decorated Beads.

TABLE 28  
Morphological and Quantitative Description of Non-Decorated Beads

Morphological and Quantitative Description of Non-decorated Beads												
Material	Method of Manufacture	Colour	Shape							Total		
			T	O	Glob.	Tub.	Bar.	Fac.	Tr-dr.		Sub-cyl.	
Glass	Drawn	Transparent	x			2					2	
		Black		x	1	5					6	
		Oyster White		x		4	3				7	
		Ultramarine	x		1	7					8	
		Brite Navy	x		1						1	
		Light Gold		x			2				2	
		Turquoise	x		7						7	
		Rose Wine	x		2						2	
		Apple Green		x	1		2		1		4	
		Surf Green	x		1	1					2	
		Light Aqua Blue		x			2				2	
				x		3					3	
		Light Ivory		x	1						1	
		Dark Shadow Blue	x			3					3	
		Redwood	x				3				3	
		Teal Green	x		1						1	
		Aqua	x		1		1				2	
		Mustard Tan		x		1					1	
				x		1					1	
		Dark Palm Green	x			1					1	
	Wound	Transparent	x		21						21	
		Black		x	3		1				4	
		Oyster White		x	7	5	11				18	
				x	7						7	
		Amethyst		x	2						2	
		Amber		x	1						1	
		Ultramarine		x	2						2	
		Light Gold		x	2		4				6	
		Turquoise		x	1		1				2	
				x	6						6	
		Rose Wine		x			1				1	
		Apple Green		x	1						1	
				x	4		1				5	
				x	3						3	
		Light Aqua Blue		x	2						2	
				x		1					1	
		Dark Shadow Blue	x		23						23	
		Redwood		x			1				1	
				x	1		1				2	
		Brite Copan Blue		x	3		2				5	
		Emerald Green	x		1						1	
		Maple		x	1						1	
		Brite Blue		x	1						1	
		Dark Navy		x	1						1	
				x	1						1	
		Dark Palm Green		x	1						1	
				x	9						9	
		drawn Ground Sur- face	Transparent	x			6					6
			Black	x			1					1
			Amethyst	x			3					3



Material	Method of Manufacture	Colour	T	O	Glob.	Tub.	Bar.	Fac.	Tr-dr.	Sub-cyl.	Total
		Amber	x				4				4
		Turquoise	x					1			1
		Rose Wine	x					2			2
		Apple Green	x					1			1
		Shadow Blue	x					5			5
				x				1			1
		Dark Shadow Blue	x					3			3
		Emerald Green	x					1			1
		Teal Green	x					3			3
	wound Pressed Surface	Transparent	x					4			4
		Shadow Blue	x					3			3
		Dark Shadow Blue	x					6			6
		Brite Copan Blue	x					1			1
		Teal Green	x					1			1
		Light Cherry Rose	x					1			1
Shell		White						2			2
Bone						1					1
Wood									1		1

T = translucent; O = Opaque; Glob. = Globular; Tub. = Tubular; Fac. = Faceted; Tr-dr. = Tear drop  
Sub-cyl. = Sub-cylindrical

TABLE 29  
Bead Sizes: Range and Mean

Material	Shape	Range (mm)	Mean (mm)
Glass	Globular	4-16 (l) x 5-17 (w)	10 (l) x 11.5 (w)
	Tubular	4-13 (l) x 2-7 (w)	8.5 (l) x 4.5 (w)
	Barrel	5-23 (l) x 4-17 (w)	14 (l) x 10.5 (w)
	Faceted	5-16 (l) x 5-16 (w)	10.5 (l) x 10.5 (w)
	Tear-drop	9 (l) x 6 (w)	9 (l) x 6 (w)
Shell	Barrel	6-9 (l) x 4-5 (w)	7.5 (l) x 4.5 (w)
Bone	Tubular	35 (l) x 13 (w)	35 (l) x 13 (w)
Wood	Sub-cylindrical	7 (l) x 13 (w)	7 (l) x 13 (w)

l = length  
w = width



### Decorated Beads

Five decorated beads were found. These are illustrated and described in Fig. 92.

### Seed Beads: "Embroidery Beads"

A total of 11,272 seed beads are analyzed on the basis of colour and size. Measurements were obtained by putting the beads through a series of graded sieves. Table 30 lists the colours and sizes of the seed beads. A large number of these beads were found on the warehouse floor in a pattern (Fig. 93), suggesting that an embroidered item had decayed with the beads remaining in the original pattern sewn.

### 3.2.2 Distribution of Beads

#### Palisades

Few beads (6 "necklace" and 31 seed beads) were recovered in the early palisade. The decorated bead, design #3, was found here. A relatively small number of beads were recovered from the later palisade. A total of 46 "necklace" beads, including the decorated bead, (design #5) in the east palisade, and one shell bead in the west palisade, was recovered from the later palisades. A variety of shapes and colours were present. No one colour or shape of bead predominates. Seventy-seven seed beads were found in a number of colours scattered throughout the north, east and west palisades.

#### Stable

One barrel-shaped bright copan blue bead and two seed beads, oyster white and shadow blue in colour, represent the total number of beads found in this structure.

#### Early Blacksmith Shop

Eight "necklace" beads and 25 seed beads were found in this structure. The "necklace" beads were found in a number of shapes, and variety of colours.

#### Men's House

Five "necklace" beads, in three shapes, globular (2), tubular (2), and barrel (1), and one seed bead were all that were recovered from this feature.

#### Store

The large number (24 "necklace" and 4,767 seed beads) of beads

TABLE 30  
Seed Beads: Colour and Sizes

Colour	1 mm	2 mm	3mm	4 mm	Total
Transparent		286			268
Black		110	10	4	124
Oyster White		3493	268	28	3789
Amethyst		1			1
Light Gold		18	1		19
Turquoise		8			8
Rose Wine		1006	21	3	1030
Apple Green		313	1		314
Surf Green		9			9
Light Aqua Blue		85	6		91
Shadow Blue		1675	86	35	1796
Dark Shadow Blue		237	3	10	250
Redwood		927	89	44	1050
Emerald Green		43			43
Teal Green		243			243
Light Cherry Rose		174			174
Mustard Tan		55	1		56
Cinnamon		1367			1367
Dark Navy		103		2	105
Dark Palm Green		196	10	2	208
Lemon Yellow		199	1		200
Robin's Egg Blue		113	2		115
TOTAL		10,643	500	129	

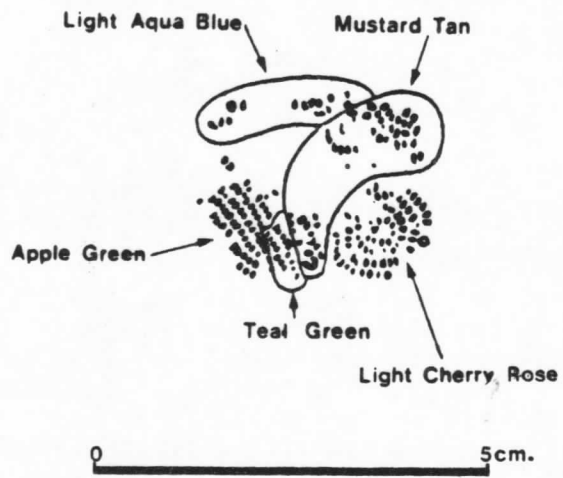


Figure 93. Bead pattern found in warehouse.

found in the store is second only to the warehouse. In this feature, the largest number of beads was recovered from the cellar. Twenty "necklace" beads, including one ceramic-like bead, were present in three shapes, globular, barrel and faceted in a number of colours. No one shape or colour predominated. The largest number of seed beads (4733) occurring in one location was recovered from the cellar. Nineteen different colours were present, with the white being the most numerous (1294). Other colours which appeared in large quantities included: transparent (207), rose wine (340), shadow blue (1112), redwood (327), teal green (241), cinnamon (734) and dark palm green (102). The remaining beads were distributed throughout the hearth (2 "necklace" and 26 seed beads) and foundation (2 "necklace" and 8 seed beads).

### Warehouse

The largest number of beads (93 "necklace" and 5145 seed beads) was recovered from the warehouse. The largest concentration of beads occurred in the north cellar. Forty "necklace" beads, in three shapes, globular (27), barrel (5), and faceted (8), and in a variety of colours (transparent being the most common) were present. A total of 1522 seed beads was found, the majority belonging to the patterned design which was uncovered.

Beads were found scattered throughout the foundations as follows: east foundation, 14 "necklace" beads and 18 seed beads; west foundation, 31 "necklace" beads including the decorated bead (design #2), and 2360 seed beads. The "necklace" beads were found in a number of shapes, globular (16), tubular (5), barrel (11), faceted (12), and colours, with no one colour predominating. Seed beads were found in 17 different colours, with the most popular being white (920). Other colours found in large quantities included: rose wine (120); shadow blue (224); redwood (340); light cherry rose (174); and cinnamon (185).

In the hearth area, only six "necklace" beads, including the decorated bead (design #1) were found. However, 1234 seed beads were recovered. These were present in 14 different colours with the most common being: white (619); rose wine (111); and apple green (105).

### Kitchen

A total of 22 "necklace" beads and 847 seed beads was found in the kitchen. The "necklace" beads were present in four shapes, globular (14), tubular (3), barrel (2) and faceted (3) and in a number of colours with no one colour predominating. The seed beads were present in 16 different colours, the most common being: white (248), rose wine (147), shadow blue (207) and redwood (116).

### Factor's House

In comparison to the kitchen, store and warehouse, relatively few (3 "necklace" and 133 seed beads) were found in the factor's house.

However, the greatest variety of materials were represented. In addition to the glass beads, one bone and one wooden bead were found. The glass "necklace" beads were present in four shapes, globular (9), tubular (1), barrel (3), and faceted (4), and in a number of colours with no one colour predominating. Also, the decorated bead (design #4) was found in this feature. The seed beads were found in only four colours which included: shadow blue (54), redwood (76), dark palm green (2) and lemon yellow (1).

### North Cellar

A total of three beads, one globular, one barrel and one faceted, in colours of white, redwood and cinnamon was found in this feature.

### 3.2.3 Metal Trade Points

Twelve metal trade points, nine complete and three fragmentary, made of ferrous metal were excavated. Points could be manufactured by Indians and traders from sheet iron, barrel strapping or metal from kettles and other utensils and materials. Three point styles are observed. Basically all are triangular in shape with a straight stem. Differences occur at the shoulder, which is either straight (style #1), bevelled (style #2), or tanged (style #3). Of the metal trade points found, five are of style #1, six are of style #2 and one is of style #3. The length and width at the shoulder are recorded for the points. The range for the style #1 points is 51 mm to 75 mm by 20 mm to 24 mm, with a mean of 59 mm by 21.6 mm, and for the style #2 points is 43 mm to 99 mm by 14 mm to 22 mm, with a mean of 61 mm by 18.8 mm. The one style #3 point measures 47 mm by 17 mm.

### 3.2.4 Distribution of Metal Trade Points

The styles #1 and #2 metal trade points were found in the warehouse (5), men's house (2), store (2), factor's house (1) and the west palisade. The style #3 metal point was recovered from the later east palisade.

### 3.2.5 Tinkling Cones

A total of 43 tinkling cones, 38 complete and 5 fragmentary, was found made of various materials in a number of sizes. These were made by rolling a sheet of metal into a conical form of varying sizes and regularity. Tinkling cones were musical ornaments that were sewn onto clothing and made a tinkling sound as the wearer moved around (Good 1972:87). The tinkling cones found are made of either yellow metal (21),