

BANNER- STONES

OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

By
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A specialized illustrated volume prepared for the primary purpose of putting forth conclusions regarding distribution, possible uses, methods of manufacture, evolution of types, adoption of special materials for particular types, and to establish a system for classifying the diversity of shapes of banner-stones by their lines and planes.

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FIRST EDITION

BANNER-STONES FROM RED PAINT BURIALS FOUND NEAR THE ILLINOIS RIVER

The cultural material to be described in this article was taken from two mounds on two occasions; therefore, the objects discovered on each occasion will be described separately.

This site is located on the high bluff overlooking the Illinois River about ten miles east of the town of Versailles in Cooperstown Township, Brown County, Illinois. At this location the bluff is about one-half mile away from the river.

This bluff extends along the river for many miles north and south of this site. Upon the rim of this bluff are many mounds. The flat bottom land that lies between the river and the bluff varies in width from one-half to one mile. During the high water stages of the river, this bottom land occasionally becomes flooded.

THE FIRST DISCOVERY

In the fall of 1933 the two Hemphill brothers unearthed many unusually rare relics from a mound on their land. It was learned from the information obtained that some thirty-five years ago this mound was large and quite high. The original elevation of this mound was greatly reduced during the many years it was plowed over for cultivation. It was also worn down by erosion, and at the time of excavation only a slight trace of it remained.

During the fall plowing of this particular season, some large limestone slabs were struck by the plow at this site. Some of the stone slabs were removed thereby exposing fragments of bone. It was realized that the bones were from a burial.

The two Hemphill brothers decided to dig in this burial, believing that, possibly, something of value could be found. As a result of their efforts revealed many interesting objects. The skeletons of two indi-

From the fact that these specimens are highly specialized designs, one may be led to believe that they were made in a later cultural manifestation. Thus by these objects some light is thrown upon the age of this mound.

The two large perforated tablets, or gorgets, are exceptionally interesting because of the exquisite workmanship displayed in their making. Both of these specimens were made of the same kind of rock, a translucent quartz material, light bluish gray in color, with opaque areas streaked and blotched with black. These objects are rectangular in shape and have two small perforations which were made for suspension. Their thickness is a trifle less than one-fourth inch. The most unusual feature about these superb gorgets is the highly polished surfaces, which are somewhat comparable to that of a china plate.

The majority of the relics taken from these burials were heavily incrustated on one side with a lime deposit. On some of the specimens this crust in places is one-fourth inch thick. This lime deposit can easily be accounted for, being formed from the limestone slabs which were placed over the burials. As these limestone slabs disintegrated the lime and minerals seeped down through the ground and were deposited upon the one side of the objects below. During the course of time this substance hardened. Two pictures of a number of these incrustated specimens are illustrated in Plate 98; one picture shows the side not incrustated; the other shows the side incrustated.

THE SECOND DISCOVERY

In the spring of 1938 the second discovery was made near the same site. The two brothers proceeded to do some more digging, in another mound nearby, and again other burials were uncovered and many relics were taken out.

A short time later the writer was passing through this section of the country and was told that a number of very fine relics were recently discovered at this site. He hastened there to make an investigation, and found that the relics consisted of many very fine and rare specimens, all of which were purchased from the finders. This material proved to be

almost as interesting as the material found during the first excavations, although no banner-stones were discovered. A list of these objects follows:

- 1—Large quartz perforated tablet, rectangular in shape.
- 1—Stone gorget (probably calcite), rectangular in shape.
- 45—Large heads (probably calcite).
- 1—Copper rat-tail spearhead, 9 1/2 inches in length.
- 2—Copper awls, 4 1/2 inches and 6 5/8 inches in length.
- 120—Copper beads, graduated sizes.
- 2—Antler objects, each perforated with a large hole; (use unknown).
- 1—Unfinished plummet of granite.
- A number of perforated rodent teeth (probably squirrel).
- 1—Round jet trade bead, 7/16 of an inch in diameter.

All of the above listed specimens were taken from two burials. The ground surrounding the two skeletons and the relics, was red in color similar to the ground surrounding the burials uncovered during the first excavations. The large stone beads and stone gorgets were heavily incrustated on one side with a lime deposit and were also covered with a heavy deposit of the powdery red paint. This paint, in reality, is probably nothing more than pulverized red hematite.

It is very apparent that this red paint was in powder form and was sprinkled over the bodies. The graduated stone beads which were in place around the neck of one skeleton showed that the small sized beads were on the under-side and the large beads had lain upon the chest of the body. The holes in the small beads were filled with a yellow clay; while the holes in the larger beads, upon which were sprinkled the red pulverized paint, were entirely filled with this substance. A tablespoon full of this red powder was removed from about twenty of these large beads.

The large perforated tablet that was found in one of the burials was made in the same rectangular shape, and of the same kind of quartz material as those found during the first excavations. The size of this specimen is six and one-eighth by two and seven-eighths inches and three-sixteenths of an inch in thickness. A picture of this superb object is shown on page 268.

The copper-beads and the rat-tail spearhead were made of native copper, which was probably secured from the upper Michigan Peninsula. These beads were of graduated sizes, ranging from one-fourth inch to three-fourths inch in diameter. They show that this metal was ham-

mered into bars and then rolled into the shape of beads. A picture of the copper rat-tail spearhead is shown in Plate 99.

Considerable information concerning this mound was gathered during the writer's visit to this site. It was learned that the skeletons were placed at the very base of the mound. It is very probable that the bodies were laid upon the ground on a high point of the bluff, the articles of adornment were carefully arranged, and very obviously the red paint in powder form was heavily sprinkled over the bodies. The bodies were then covered with earth and the limestone slabs to form the mound.

Dr. Fay-Copper Cole and Dr. Thorne Deuel in their book *Rediscovering Illinois* have described the Red Ocher Cultural Complex from this area, and have also shown a cross-sectional drawing of the construction of one of these mounds in Fig. 19 on page 93.

The writer described this newly acquired material in a letter to W. C. McKern, curator of the Milwaukee Public Museum. Apparently he became highly enthusiastic and was particularly pleased to learn of the presence of the rat-tail spearhead in a "Red Paint Burial". Excerpts from Prof. McKern's letter are quoted as follows:

"July 22, 1938

Dear Mr. Knoblock:

In regard to that very productive burial you describe in your letter, someone should keep a complete record, photographic and otherwise, of the find. Such associations are vastly important to archaeological students, as you know. I assume that you or others down there have taken care of this or are engaged in doing so. It seems to have been a truly remarkable find. I believe that the most remarkable of the specimens, from the standpoint of association, is the rat-tail copper spear. I say this because I do not know of a single authentic instance west of New York where copper implements of that type have actually been encountered with burials. We have a theory that a certain group of copper implements, including the rat-tail spears and knives, are of relatively ancient origin. They show a lot of chemical erosion in comparison to our other copper specimens, and they have been stratigraphically found near the bottom of the pile in New York. On the other hand, some of the other objects in with this burial suggest later cultural manifestations. Of course it is barely possible that the spearpoint was not made by the Indians who placed it in the burial; it may have been picked up and retained as a sacred object or spirit stone. In any case, the find is important. The quantity of red paint encountered with the burial suggest the "Red Paint Culture" reported by Cole and Deuel, of which very little is actually known.

(Signed) W. C. McKERN"



PLATE 99.

Copper rat-tail spearhead discovered in the "Red Paint Burial," described in the accompanying text. A thorough description of the possible antiquity and origin of this specimen is given by Prof. W. C. McKern on page 207.

Plate 1/2 actual size.

FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

The most interesting discovery made at this site was the finding of an early trade bead of jet, seven-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. The farmers who did the excavating informed the writer that this black glass bead was taken from one of the burials. If this be true, there were probably many more of these beads in the burial but were thrown out during the careless digging.

Unfortunately, this bead was not seen in-situ in direct association with the material found during this excavation, which corresponds to the material found during the first excavation, which includes the two banner-stones. Consequently any relationship is questionable. In all probability this bead occurred in this mound, but no one can guarantee that it did.

This is the greatest trouble with excavation jobs conducted by untrained men. The demonstration of the association of this bead with banner-stones would have been worth more than all of the material discovered. It would have proved that banner-stones were used up to a comparatively recent time. A picture of this seemingly insignificant but important bead is shown in Plate 100.



PLATE 100.

This picture shows two views of the black glass trade bead, supposedly discovered in the "Red Paint Burial," described in the accompanying text.

Plate actual size.

FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

After conferring by correspondence with Prof. Glenn A. Black, concerning this discovery, the writer was informed regarding the antiquity of the bead. Excerpts from Prof. Black's letter are quoted as follows:

"September 30, 1938

Dear Mr. Knoblock:

This type of bead is rather common in the areas where trade beads are found. It is of Venetian origin as are most of the glass beads used by the French, English and Spanish Traders. This particular bead was made of a solid rod of black glass, as distinguished from other types of beads which were made of hollow canes of glass. With the rod of glass heated to the consistency of putty or hot wax the workman spun the glass around a rapidly revolving spindle or rod of metal. When the bead reached the desired size the rod was broken from the bead. With removal from the spindle the bead was completed even to the perforation. Examination of this bead under a glass reveals the spiral "grain" created by the whirling motion as well as the small projection where the glass rod was broken from the bead.

Since the 14th Century, if not before, the Venetians have been making glass beads for trade throughout the world. As indicated above, these beads were traded by men of all nationality and where ever there was a demand for such a commodity. Also, the Venetian workmen were in demand in other countries and established glass houses in England, France, and even in America where a group set up a house for the manufacture of beads at Jamestown. As these men undoubtedly continued to make beads in the Venetian manner regardless of the country in which they were working it is obvious that it is quite impossible to be sure that any particular bead was actually made in Venice or rather, Italy. Added to this is the fact that beads are still being made in Italy which could not possibly be distinguished from those found on many of our early historic Indian sites. I have sample cards of modern beads which have been quite helpful in identifying old beads.

Beads duplicating yours have been found at the site of Fort St. Joseph (near Niles, Michigan) established about 1690, the site of the Miami Post (Fort Wayne, Indiana) established about 1712, Post Ouiatanon (Lafayette, Indiana) as well as in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and practically all regions where trade beads are found.

If this bead was found in the same mound as the gorgets, banner-stones, axes, copper rod, and other objects illustrated in the proof sheet sent me then I would say without hesitation that the glass bead was with a burial which had been placed intrusive into the mound. Such intrusive burials are common in mounds and only by expert observation is it possible to determine the true nature of such a burial. Even then, the grave earth is sometimes so homogeneous with the mound earth that they almost defy detection. I would be very cautious and conservative in assigning this bead to the same period as the other objects illustrated. I doubt very much if the glass bead is older than the late sixteen hundreds and it may be, of course, much more recent.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) GLENN A. BLACK"