

22. BLOODSTONE, AGATE, AND CARNELIAN, by Peter Francis, Jr. (1993, 22:16-20)

Although glass beads played the most active role in the opening of the bead trade between Europe and Africa and the Americas, not all of the beads that the Europeans used were of glass. One, in particular, has been variously identified, and its true nature often obscured.

On 30 December 1492, Christopher Columbus, on shore at Haiti, “took from his neck a collar of bloodstones and very handsome beads of many pretty colors, which appeared very good in every way, and put it on [the neck of a local chief]” (Morison 1963:125). A more recent translation of that passage by Dunn and Kelly (1988:297), which also reproduces the Spanish, reads: “And the Admiral took from his own neck a collar of fine agates and handsome beads of beautiful colors that looked well in all its parts and put it on the king....” The word in the Spanish version of Las Casas (the nearest thing we have to Columbus’ original diary) is *alaquequas*. Francis (1986:33) has suggested that the “handsome beads of beautiful colors” might be chevrons, but that is another story. What is the other bead?

In the next decade Duarte Pacheco Pereira, who left the earliest diary of Portuguese explorations along the West African coast, described a market at Tucrol in what is now Senegal: “There six or seven slaves are bartered for one horse of no great value, and some gold in return for kerchiefs and red cloths and stones called ‘*alaquequas*’ which we are familiar with as stones that staunch blood” (Kimble 1937:81). Kimble (1937:81, n. 6), translating the work into English, said that this was bloodstone. In the next passage where this stone is mentioned, the text also reads *alaquequas* and a footnote calls them bloodstone (Kimble 1937:88; n. 5). From then on Kimble (1937:92, 98, 105) translates the word as bloodstone.

Another translation of Pacheco Pereira was made later into French by Mauny (1956), with the Portuguese reproduced on the page opposite the translation. In each relevant passage the Portuguese word is *alaquequas* and translated by Mauny (1956:64, 65, 72-73, 84-85, 94-95) as *cornelian* (carnelian).

Kimble (1937:81, n. 6) drew attention to a similar passage written in 1620 by the Englishman Richard Jobson, describing Setico along the Gambian River. Jobson reported: “They [the natives] buy also Bloud-stones long and square of the Portugals, which their Women wear about their middles, to preserve them from bloodie issues, the Mens membrositie seeming to give thereto much occasion” (Purchas 1905:300).

Both Columbus and Pacheco Pereira used the word *alaquequas* (*alaqueques*) in their accounts. Jobson used “bloud-stone” in his. *Alaqueques* was translated twice (Kimble and Morison) as bloodstone, once as agate (Dunn and Kelly), and once as carnelian (Mauny).

Alaquequa appears to have been used exclusively by the Portuguese. At least in modern Spanish there seems to be no equivalent (I am not sure if it is still current in modern Portuguese). Pacheco Pereira was Portuguese, and Columbus spent many years in Portugal, and perhaps even sailed to West Africa on a Portuguese ship (Morison 1942:41-42). *Alaquequa* is evidently derived from the Arabic, in which ‘*aqi*’ is agate and, by extension, a semiprecious stone or simply bead. This word and our own “agate” (*agata* in Spanish) are derived from the Greek *achates*. That the Portuguese *alaquequas* comes indirectly through the Arabic is shown by the *al* prefix, which is the Arabic determiner (compare our words alchemy, alcohol, algebra, alkali, almanac, and so on, all from Arabic).

How did the Portuguese pick up this Arabic word? It was certainly current in the stone-bead trade originating in western India, which by this time was in Muslim hands. We have an almost contemporary account of this industry by another Portuguese, Duarte Barbosa, who visited India in 1518. At Limodura (modern Limudra) he said: “there is a stone for making aquequas, for making beads for Berberia. It is a stone white as milk, and has some red in it, and with fire they heighten the colour.... They also find in this town much chalcedony, which they call *babagore*. They make beads with it...” (Stanley 1866:66-67). And in a later and generally more accurate translation: “Here is found an *alaquequa* rock which is a white, milky or red stone which is made much redder in the fire.... And here they find great abundance of *Babagoure*, which we call... chalcedony, which are stones with gray and white veins in them...” (Dames 1918:167-169).

Barbosa clearly distinguished between *alaquequas*, which are stones that are reddened in the fire (i.e., carnelians), and *babaghoria* or banded agate, named after Baba Ghor, the patron saint of the industry (Francis 1982:22-27, 1985). These two stones have long been the major raw materials for western Indian stone beads.

What, then, about bloodstone? Kimble told us that he translated *alaquequas* as bloodstone because they staunch blood. Jobson, writing on the spot, was also clearly thinking of this supposed effect of the stone. Morison does not tell us why he chose this word. What stone can staunch blood? Homeopathy dictates that it resembles blood; that is, be the color of blood. Kuntz (1971:28) noted this when discussing the ability of red stones “especially the so-called bloodstone” to stop the flow of blood.

However, in English the word “bloodstone” means something else. It is a green stone with specks of red in it, both colors generally considered to be jaspers. The stone is otherwise known as heliotrope. On occasion hematite is also called bloodstone; this is the literal translation of its name. *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists ten citations from 1551 onward for “bloodstone.” Six clearly refer to green jasper and two to hematite. Two others are ambiguous: one from T. Wilson in 1556 (“The bloodstone stoppeth blood”) and one from a will in Bristol in 1587 (“To the said Thomas my blood-stone”) (Simpson and Weiner 1989:307). Hence, the term was fairly new to the language when Jobson was writing in 1620, and perhaps was not yet fixed in its meaning.

But it is now clear that the Portuguese word *alaguequas* means carnelian. This makes sense when we consider the archaeological evidence of European contact with America and West Africa. To my knowledge, no bloodstone is associated with this period, while carnelians certainly are. It is also evident that the early European explorers got their stone beads from India through the Arab trade. The Arabs would have introduced these beads to West Africa, and it may have been his own experience there that induced Columbus to take carnelians (and amber) with him to America.

This discussion should remind us that we have to be cautious when using historical material in trying to identify beads, even when using original sources or translations which are usually trustworthy. I admit to this error myself before working on this problem in detail. I had suggested in my talk to the 1992 Bead Trade in the Americas conference in Santa Fe that Columbus may have been carrying banded agate, but it is now clear to me that *alaguequas* is not agate, as one might suppose, nor bloodstone, as befits its purported medicinal value, but carnelian.

References Cited

Dames, J.L. (ed. and transl.)

1918 *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*. Hakluyt Society, London.

Dunn, Oliver and James E. Kelly, Jr. (eds. and transl.)

1988 *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America 1492-1493, Abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Francis, Peter, Jr.

- 1982 Indian Agate Beads. *World of Beads Monograph Series* 6.
- 1985 Baba Ghor and the Ratanpur Rakshiha. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 29:198-204.
- 1986 Beads and the Discovery of the New World. *Occasional Papers of the Center for Bead Research* 3.

Kimble, George T. (ed. and transl.)

1937 *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* by Duarte Pacheco Pereira. Hakluyt Society, London.

Kunz, George F.

1971 *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*. Dover, New York [original 1913].

Mauny, Raymond (ed. and transl.)

1956 *Esmeraldo de Sito Orbis: Cote occidentale d'Afrique de Sud Marocain au Gabon par Duarte Pacheco Pereira (vers 1506-1508)*. Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa 19. Bissau.

Morison, Samuel Eliot

- 1942 *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus*. Little, Brown, Boston.
- 1963 *Journals and Other Documents in the Life of Christopher Columbus*. Heritage Press, New York.

Purchas, Samuel (ed.)

1905 *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*. Vol. 9. James MacLehouse and Sons, Glasgow.

Simpson, J.A. and E.S.C. Weiner (eds.)

1989 *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Vol. 2. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Stanley, Henry E.J. (ed. and transl.)

1866 *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*. Hakluyt Society, London.

23. MORE ON FUSTAT FUSED ROD BEADS, by Peter Francis, Jr. (1993, 23:3-4)

Mrs. Spaer's observations on the beads from Fustat in *Forum* No. 22 are most provocative. I would suggest continuing to call them “Fustat Fused Rod Beads” rather than simply “Fustat Beads” because it was the name coined by the excavator who brought attention to them and there were other beads made in Fustat as well.

Her comments suggest that we may be dealing with more than one sort of bead here, perhaps produced in different places. Her suggestion of how the bead in the Israel Museum may have been made is quite interesting. Assuming that a beadmaker at that time could have cut a block of glass as she suggests, it would be an elegant way to make beads. However, this is not the way they were made in Fustat. I say that based on two observations:

1) The broken beads show that the spiral lines of the decoration enclose the whole of the decorative rods.