

“Beadmaking in Islam: The African Trade and the Rise of Hebron,” *Beads* 2

The glass beads which I identified as having come from Hebron, following the lead of Arkell (pp. 23-26, Plate VD), have been further confirmed by their presence in the W.G.N. van der Sleen collection of the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. The collection includes beads of this type and are marked “Palestine.” That would be Hebron (which is now again Palestinian). Double “thanks” to Geralda Jurriaans-Helle.

“On the Date of the Copper Age in the United States,” *Beads* 4

This is a reprint of a paper published in 1862 by A. Morlot, who concluded—on the basis of chevron beads—that the Phoenicians had come to the New World a couple of millennia before Columbus. He quotes material from the pioneer American anthropologist, Henry Schoolcraft, in defense of this hypothesis. Karklins kindly reproduced the relevant material, but there is more to the story.

In the “Editor’s Introduction,” Karklins (1992:39) writes:

Of course, not everyone shared his [Morlot’s] views. In fact, Henry Schoolcraft (1853:103-104), who published descriptions and color illustrations of the Canadian [chevron] beads referred to by Morlot, logically concluded that they dated to the period between the arrival of the French (1608) and the date of the beads’ discovery (1837).

This is both right and wrong. Schoolcraft did reach such a conclusion, but not in the passage quoted by Karklins (Schoolcraft 1853:104) and the one referred to by Morlot. This reads:

The colored enamel beads are a curious article. No manufacture of this kind is now known. They are believed to be of European origin, and agree completely with the beads found in 1817, in antique Indian graves, at Hamburg, Erie Co., N.Y. (Karklins 1992:43).

In this passage and in Part I of *Information*, Schoolcraft does not discuss the age of the beads, only their origin. Morlot happily quotes Schoolcraft. After all, the beads have been found in another (presumably) ancient cemetery and Schoolcraft did not know that chevron beads were still being made, even though to call the Phoenicians “Europeans” is a little farfetched, despite their colonies in Spain. However, Schoolcraft did firmly rule out the chevrons found at Beverly, Ontario, and all other glass beads found in North America as

being ancient (Phoenician or otherwise) in Part V (p. 110) of *Information* in which he wrote:

It is important to distinguish between the antiquarian vestiges of the early French, and of the Indian occupancy. Many of the articles of each period have been confounded, because they have been found in the same locations, and some of them in the same graves or sepulchral. This is the case with all articles of glass-beads, enamel and porcelain, transparent or opaque [sic], and all substances requiring vitrification (Vide. Vol. I, Plate 25, Figs. 7 to 13). [Emphasis mine. There is a misprint here; it is not Pl. 25 but 24, beads 7-11, magnified in Figs. 12 and 13. These are the aforementioned chevrons from Beverly.]

So, Morlot made a big thing of the Phoenicians coming to America and threw much sand in many people’s eyes for a long time, even though Schoolcraft had ruled out such a hypothesis as early as 1846 (Francis 1985). But, would he have done so had he read the passage in Part V? Did he never see it? Did he read it and suppress it, or was he just a lazy scholar? Did he just not see the right volume or did he not look far enough? Was he too enthused about his grand idea or was it all an accident? Is there a lesson here?

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1853 *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*. Parts 1 and 5. Lippincott, Grambo and Co., Philadelphia (Published in 6 parts between 1851 and 1857).

26. SOME NOTES ON THE WORDS FOR BEAD, by Peter Francis, Jr. (1997, 30:11-13)

***Nazhim* in Arabic**

Around 1350, Ibn Battuta wrote about his travels in West Africa. In the French translation by Defrémery and Sanguinetti (1922:394), his words about what to take to trade in the area were translated as: *des ornements ou colifichets de verre, que l’on appelle nazhim, ou rangée* (“ornaments or baubles of glass, which are called *nazhim*, or *rangée*”).

I have cited this passage on several occasions, including in *The Bead Forum* (Francis 1992:9). In the *Forum* article,

I noted that *rangée* was not in the Arabic text, but was a French word the translators were using to mean a “string of beads.” *Rangée* means to put things in order or in a file (to arrange them).

Nazhim was used as “bead,” but I now realize why. *Nazhim* means the same as *rangée*; that is, to put something in order or in a file. It also has the meaning “to string (esp. pearls)” (Madina 1973:675). Post (1911:734) wrote: “The verb *nazam* in Arab., coupled with *lulu* = ‘pearl.’ signified ‘to string pearls.’ Coupled with *s’hir* = ‘poetry,’ it means ‘to arrange verses.’” In short, the translators of Ibn Battuta translated the word literally.

However, in Ibn Battuta’s day, at least in West Africa, the Arabic verb had apparently been transformed into a noun. The correct reading of the passage would be “ornaments or baubles of glass, which are called beads.”

“Bead” in Swahili

While poking around an online dictionary site, I checked out the word for bead in a Swahili dictionary (<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/swahili/>). Swahili is a Bantu language, spoken natively by some 4 million people, but used by another 30 million as a link language (Crystal 1987:314). Bantu is one of many languages with a complex system of classifying nouns. These classifications are not always arranged with Aristotelian logic. For example, there is an insect class, but the word “insect” is classified in the “human being” category (<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/swahili/>). As a result, words for beads appear in several different classifications in Swahili, though they all seem to make sense.

In the class of “things with curved outlines,” *tinda* is a “string of beads to go around the neck.” In the class of “powerful things,” *mdundugo* is a “charm said to make one invisible,” and *mzumai* is a “bead of the Muslim rosary [sic].” In the classification of “collections of discrete things,” *shada* is a “string of flowers, beads,” and in the category of “religious things,” *mzumai* again appears as a “rosary [sic] bead.” I do not know any Swahili. It would be interesting to learn if there are any other associations with these words. To the best of my knowledge, *mzumai* is not Arabic nor derived from that language.

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27. SOME REMARKS ON BODOM BEADS, by Peter Francis, Jr. (2002, 40:10-12)

Recently two articles have appeared on the subject of Bodom beads (Stanfield 2000-2001; Liu et al. 2001). I do not claim to have all the answers about Bodom, but I do believe that some facts have been overlooked in these two articles and ought to be brought to attention.

The principal concern here is the origin of these beads. The fact that the Krobo of Ghana make beads that they call Bodom and that (sometimes) resemble Bodom is not sufficient to assume that true Bodom were made by them as Stanfield (2000-2001:68, 74) asserts. As Stanfield (2000-2001:64) himself points out, the word is of Akan origin and it was likely introduced to the Krobo by Lamb (1976:37-38). Lamb, who was not trained as an ethnographer, took the word of Mr. Tettah, his informant, at face value when he “emphatically” stated that the Bodom he was shown were of Krobo origin. Unfortunately, that is not sufficient. If it were, I would, for example, be convinced that chevrons were made in Yazd, Iran, or that Indian mosaic beads originated in Egypt.

While some beads may be called Bodom in Kroboland or the markets of Accra, this is no more definitive than all the many beads that have been called “aggrey” or “padre” or any number of names. Bodom are beads of the Asante and related Akan speakers. For his “long paper” (roughly a bachelor’s thesis) for the University of Ghana, Quarm (1989) distributed complex questionnaires to fellow students of different ethnic groups in Ghana concerning bead lore and use. His conclusions included: